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**THE
BOOT-BOY
BARONET!**

New Series No. 90.

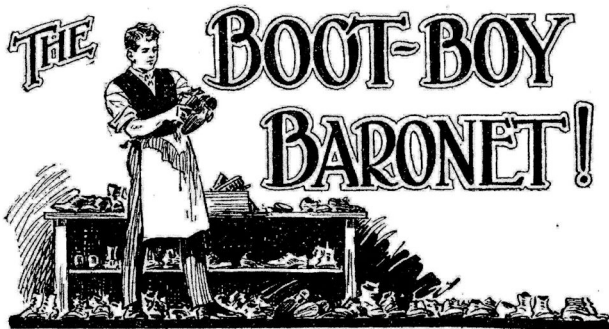
OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

January 21st, 1928.



Handforth felt a curious grip on his arm, a sudden pressure in the small of his back. Next moment he turned a complete somersault and landed flat on his back on the platform. Handy's discomfiture was increased when he saw that Irene and Co. had witnessed the entire incident.

The First Yarn of a New and Startling Series!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

A baronet in his own right and yet a boot-boy at St. Frank's! That's the amazing position Sir Jimmy Potts is compelled to take in order to earn his bread and butter. But there are no airs and graces about young Jimmy; he buckles to with right good will and accepts the blow Fate has handed out to him without whining.—Ed.

CHAPTER I.

The New Fellow.

VIVIAN TRAVERS, of the Remove Form at St. Frank's, came to a halt in front of a third-class compartment on the platform of Victoria Station, and glanced through the open window.

"Room for a little one?" he asked amiably.

Ten concentrated stares were bestowed upon him by way of answer. For, as it happened, that compartment held all the leading lights of the Remove.

Edward Oswald Handforth was there, of course—including his faithful chums, Church and McClure, of Study D. Nipper, the popular Junior Captain, was there, too, with Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson. Archie Glenthorne occupied a corner seat, and Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and Ralph Leslie Fullwood were much in evidence.

"What's that?" said Handforth, at last.

"I merely asked if there was room for a little one," replied Vivian Travers coolly, as he opened the door. "As I have always heard that silence gives consent, I'll trouble one of you to move up a bit. Thanks awfully!"

He was in the compartment before any of the juniors could try to stop him, and they even shifted up, in response to his request. Travers sat down, and looked round him indulgently.

"Train's pretty packed," he remarked. "Hardly room anywhere."

"Not even in the first-class compartments?" asked Nipper meaningly.

"Eh?" said Vivian Travers. "Oh! You mean this?" he added, with a laugh, as he flicked the first-class ticket which he held in his hand. "Confound it! Beastly careless of me! I didn't mean you fellows to see it!"

"What's the idea, you cheeky ass?" demanded Handforth. "If you've got a first-class ticket, why don't you travel in a first-

class compartment? What's the idea of barging in here?"

"Somebody told me that the famous Handforth was in this compartment," replied Travers smoothly. "I also heard, on the best authority, that the redoubtable Nipper—Captain of the Remove—was to be found in this select company. Well, naturally I preferred to travel third."

All those prominent Removites gazed at this stranger as though he were a new kind of novelty. Even Handforth hardly knew what to say. It was impossible for him to take offence, in any case.

"Oh, so you heard that I was in here, eh?" he said gruffly. "Who told you?"

"One of the fellows on the platform," replied Vivian Travers. "Pleased to meet you, Handforth. I imagine that you are Handforth?" he added politely. "I was told to look for a burly fellow with a lot of untidy hair, and with a face that resembled an Alpine view. Put it there, old man!"

He held out his hand, and Handforth turned red—while all the other fellows in the compartment chuckled.

"Oh!" roared Handforth, at last. "So you were told that I had a face like an Alpine view!"

"Rugged, you know!" murmured Travers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly funny, isn't it?" bellowed Handforth, glaring round at the other juniors. "Who the dickens is this chap, anyhow?"

"That's an easy one!" said Travers.

"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Vivian Travers, and I belong to the Remove at St. Frank's. This is my first term, and I haven't had the pleasure of visiting the school yet. I've been told that I'm in for a wonderful time. According to all the rumours, St. Frank's is the only public school in the length and breadth of the land. The others are simply 'also-rans'."

"Well, that's about right, after all!" chuckled Reggie Pitt.

"Hallo! The train's starting!" said Tommy Watson. "It's too late to chuck this cheeky merchant out now, even if we want to. We don't stop until we get to Bannington—and that's nearly the whole distance."

"That's good!" said Travers. "We shall be able to get nicely acquainted."

"If this were a corridor coach, we'd bung you out into the passage in two ticks!" said Handforth aggressively. "So I've got a face like an Alpine view, have I?"

"My dear fellow, I was quoting the remark of somebody else," said Travers smilingly.

"Who was it?"

"How on earth should I know that?" asked Travers. "I don't know anybody's name yet—I'm merely a little ewe-lamb in the fold."

"Well, you seem to be pretty cool—for a new kid!" said Nipper, with a grin. "Most new kids are as shaky as the dickens for the first day or two. I don't think you'll show any of the recognised symptoms, Travers."

"Why should I?" asked Travers languidly.

"What's the good of being nervous? You're only boys—and I'm only a boy. Why have a lot of foolery about getting acquainted? I'm booked to be with you for good now, so we might just as well start in a friendly fashion at the beginning."

In spite of themselves, all those Removites in the compartment felt drawn towards Vivian Travers. There was something refreshingly different about him. He was cool, calm, and yet, in some indefinable way, he was not in the least bit supercilious. And the fact that he had deliberately come into a crowded third-class compartment, when he could have travelled in luxury on his first-class ticket, was undoubtedly a compliment.

Yes, this new boy was a novelty.



CHAPTER 2.

Handforth Doesn't Approve!

INTRODUCTIONS all round were made, and Vivian Travers solemnly shook hands with every junior in turn. Without any question, this new boy was very, very likeable.

He was rather tall, about the same age as the other juniors, and he was exquisitely dressed—although his attire showed absolutely no sign of foppishness. Archie Glenthorne, who was the St. Frank's expert in dress, took to the new fellow at once. Anybody who could attire himself with the taste of Vivian Travers was one of the right sort.

"Well, now we're all acquainted," said Travers, at length. "I understand that you valiants are the famous leaders of the recent barring-out?"

Handforth frowned.

"Don't remind us about the barring-out!" he said gruffly. "We're trying to forget it. We lost most of our Christmas holidays because of that revolt, and we've only been home for just over a week. Still, we won!" he added, in a satisfied voice.

"Naturally you won," said Travers. "I couldn't imagine such fellows as you admitting defeat. Rather an exciting business, wasn't it?"

"In a way," said Nipper. "But we'd rather not talk about it, if you don't mind. Travers. We've heard that St. Frank's is absolutely normal again now. The Modern House has been completely repaired, and when we get back to the school we shan't see any sign of the trouble. We want to go on exactly as we left off—before the barring-out started."

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "Of course, I entered into the good old sport with tons of enthusiasm—but now that it's all over, I can't help admitting that I missed Phipps in the most frightful way. Good gad! I don't dashed well know how I lived through that ordeal! Weeks and weeks without Phipps, you know!"

"Horrible!" grinned Reggie Pitt. "Phipps is this chap's valet," he added, by way of explanation to Travers.

"Valet?" said Travers. "I didn't know we were allowed to have valets at St. Frank's."

"Well, we're not really," said Nipper. "But Archie is an exception. He's such a helpless sort of fellow—"

"Oh, really!" protested Archie.

"Well, he pretends to be helpless," amended Nipper, with a chuckle. "Actually, he's a bag of surprises. When he likes, he can be as energetic as any other chap—and a good deal more so! It's just a whim of his to have a valet."

"And a rather good whim, too, I should think!" chuckled Travers.

He felt in his pocket, and produced a gold cigarette case. For a moment, the others hardly knew what he was doing—but when he opened the case they were no longer in any doubt. For it was filled with cigarettes, and Travers proceeded to offer the case round.

"No, thanks!" said Nipper briefly.

"No?" said Travers. "Anybody else?"

"No, thanks!" said the others in one voice.

"All the more for me!" said Travers dryly.

He selected a cigarette, closed the case with a snap, and flicked an automatic lighter with his finger. There was a dead silence for a moment as Travers lit his cigarette and puffed away at it.

"By George!" said Handforth, at last.

There was such a wealth of indignation and anger in his tone that Travers looked up in astonishment.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Yes—that cigarette!" roared Handforth. "Put it out!"

"Here, steady, Handy!" muttered Church. "If the chap wants to smoke, let him smoke! It's none of our business!"

"He's not going to smoke in our compartment!" bellowed Handforth.

The others were silent. They took the view that, while they did not like smoking themselves, it was none of their business if another fellow were ass enough to indulge in it. They did not set themselves up as judges, and there was really no reason why they should force their views upon a stranger. But Handforth, of course, was different.

"Well I'm jiggered!" he said contemptuously. "And I thought this chap was a decent fellow, too!"

"Is it indecent to smoke?" asked Travers wonderingly.

"It may not be indecent—but it's dotty!" retorted Handforth, in a fierce voice. "It's a beastly habit!"

"Well, of course, I agree with you!" nodded Vivian Travers.

"What!"

"Smoking is, of course, a beastly habit—and a most pernicious habit, too, especially for boys," said Travers. "I rather admire you fellows for being non-smokers."

"If you admire us so much for it, why don't you become a non-smoker on your own account?" asked Fullwood.

"Haven't got will power enough, I suppose," replied Travers, as he took a long puff. "Too much fag, too. Not that there's any real harm in it," he added. "Of course, if you fellows really object I'll put the thing out."

"Oh, smoke if you want to!" growled Reggie Pitt. "We don't want to spoil your pleasure!"

"Don't we?" roared Handforth. "Well, I do, anyhow! Smoking isn't a pleasure at all—it's a vice! And I'm jolly well not going to let this fathead smoke in front of our faces like this!"

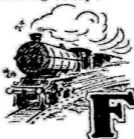
With one movement he whipped the cigarette out of Vivian Travers' mouth, and he flung it upon the floor of the compartment. The next moment his heel ground the cigarette into fragments.

"That's what I do with cigarettes!" he said fiercely.

Travers dabbed his mouth with his handkerchief.

"I don't mind the loss of the cigarette," he said gently, "but if you indulge in that little trick again, Handforth, will you be good enough to leave my lips intact? You may not know it, but you dragged about half an inch of skin off my anatomy just then."

And even Edward Oswald Handforth had nothing to say!



CHAPTER 3.

A Surprise Packet!

FOR a few moments there seemed to be an uncomfortable feeling in the compartment. Not that Vivian Travers showed any sign of sharing it.

"Well, that's that!" he remarked, by way of breaking the silence. "Anybody care for a chunk of chocolate?"

He produced a slab and handed it round.

"I'm sorry about your lip!" growled Handforth.

"Don't mense, old man," smiled Travers. "Accidents will happen."

There wasn't the slightest trace of annoyance in the new boy's tone. He accepted the situation good-temperedly. Handforth, who could never quarrel with anybody unless they opposed him, completely melted.

"I suppose it was a bit off-side when I yanked that cigarette out of your mouth," he said uncomfortably. "After all, if you want to smoke, Travers, you can smoke—and blow you!"

"Let's forget about it," said Travers.

The conversation drifted to football, although Travers took no part in it. He sat listening, and after a while he picked up a

magazine and became immersed in it. For a time the other fellows, remembering the cigarette incident, treated him rather coolly, but by the time the train was nearing Bannington the ten juniors were inclined to be more friendly with Travers.

They could not help being struck by the fact that he had respected their wishes, and there had been no further sign of cigarettes.

"Well, we shan't be long now," remarked Reggie Pitt, as he reached up for his cap. "Nearly into Bannington, Travers. We change there."

"So I understood," said Travers, nodding. "We take a local train, don't we?"

"Yes," said Reggie. "Sometimes known as 'the Bellton snail.'"

"Ah, well, dear old fellow, we must learn to bear these trials with fortitude," said Travers, as he roused himself. "Hallo! We're nearly in the station already!"

He leaned out of the open window and took a look at Bannington as the train slowed down against the platform. It was a clear, crisp January afternoon, and the town was looking at its best.

"Charming!" said Travers, with approval. "In fact, bewitching."

"It's not a bad old town," said Fullwood.

"Well, as a matter of fact, dear old fellow, I wasn't referring to the town just then," said Travers. "I just happened to catch sight of two or three young ladies, waiting on the platform—and, as they appear to be waving, I imagine that there is a certain friendliness? I wonder, by any chance, if the fair Irene is here?"

Handforth started as though he had been stung.

"Irene!" he repeated, staring at Travers. "What do you know about her?"

"Nothing," replied Vivian Travers, as the train jerked to a standstill. "I was merely informed that one young lady, known as Irene, was particularly attractive. In passing, I might also mention that I was warned to look out for something amusing when you met the young lady, Handforth."

"Oh!" said Edward Oswald, breathing hard. "Something amusing, eh?"

"I have been led to believe that you have a particularly soft spot for the damsel, dear old fellow," said Travers mildly.

The juniors were tumbling out upon the platform, and they were grinning. For, sure enough, the young ladies were Irene Manners & Co., of the Moor View School. Their own term had started a day or two earlier, and as they had happened to be in Bannington they were waiting for the local train to Bellton.

Edward Oswald Handforth seized Travers by the shoulder as soon as they reached the platform. Handforth had seen, during that little glance, that Irene & Co. were some little way up the platform, and there was time to teach this cheeky new fellow a lesson.

"Look here, Travers!" said Handforth thickly. "It's like your blessed nerve to poke fun at me!"

"My dear old chap——"

"I'm going to punch you on the nose!" roared Handforth aggressively. "I'll give you just ten seconds to put up your hands—and then I'll let fly!"

"You mean that?" asked Travers languidly.

"Yes, I do!"

"Then, as I object to having my nose punched, there is only one alternative," said the new boy, in a tone of resignation.

Handforth did not exactly know what happened. He had rather an idea that Vivian Travers came close to him. The leader of Study D felt a curious grip on his arm, and a sudden pressure in the small of his back.

The next moment Handforth turned a complete somersault, and before he could realise anything else he was lying flat on his back on the platform, staring up at the wintry sky.

"Awfully sorry, Handforth," said Travers cheerfully. "But you asked for it, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other fellows were almost as surprised as Handforth—for Travers had floored the mighty Removite with the most consummate ease. Handforth sat up dazedly, and his discomfort was only increased when he saw that Irene & Co. had witnessed the entire incident.

"Great Scott!" panted Handforth, leaping up. "What—what happened?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite a simple little trick, I assure you, dear old fellow," said Travers. "Ju-jitsu—that's all!"

"Ju-jitsu!" gasped Handforth, in a helpless voice.

"I am considered to be something of an expert," explained Travers indulgently.



CHAPTER 4.

Another New Arrival

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH was fuming.

"Right in front of Irene, too!" he said

fiercely. "By George! I'll—I'll——"

"Cheese it, Handy!" grinned Church. "You can't blame the chap. You told him plainly enough that you were going to punch him on the nose, and he only floored you in self-defence."

"How were you to know that he was such an expert in ju-jitsu?" chuckled McClure. "It was just a piece of bad luck for you, old man."

Handforth snorted.

"I'm not sure about that chap!" he said darkly. "He's got a smooth way with him—he's got the gift of the gab all right—but I don't trust a fellow who smokes cigarettes! I believe he's a rotter!"

"Oh, come off it!" protested Church. "You haven't had time to judge him yet—and, as

far as we've seen, he's a pretty good-tempered, amiable sort of fellow. He may be a silly ass for smoking, but that doesn't mean to say that he's a rotter."

Handforth granted again—more expressively than ever.

The famous chums of Study D had escaped from Bannington Station, and Handforth could still hear the shout of laughter that had gone up as he had dragged Church and McClure off the platform. After that humiliating experience, Handforth hadn't even had the nerve to face Irene. He had bolted precipitately.

Now, of course, he was sorry that he had done so—since he had had time to realise that he had only cut a ridiculous figure. Well, he would make matters right later on—when he met Irene & Co. at the school. In the meantime, he was bubbling with indignation.

Handforth had previously arranged that he and his chums should leave the railway at Bannington, and complete the rest of the journey to St. Frank's in his Austin Seven. For Handforth's little car was waiting for him at a local garage, where it had been greased and oiled, and one or two minor adjustments had been made.

"I've never known anything like it!" Handy said, as he and his chums were speeding along the road in the little car. "Before I knew what had happened, I was on my giddy back!"

"Yes, it was pretty smart!" admitted Church.

The Austin was humming along in its usual valiant way, and the three chums were by no means sorry to be back in normal times. After the excitement of the barring-out, they were looking forward to a feast of football.

Church and McClure tried to get their leader's attention fixed on footer, but it was an impossible task. Handforth could think of nothing except Vivian Travers, and the in which he—Handforth—had been floored on the Bannington platform.

Even when St. Frank's was reached, Handforth was not allowed to slip into the ordinary run of things.

He was a fellow who disliked changes. He wanted everything to go on normally, and if there was any alteration it upset all his calculations. Thus, he was considerably disturbed when he marched into the Ancient House and found a totally strange boot-boy waiting in the lobby.

"Hallo!" said Handforth, staring. "Who the dickens are you?"

"Potts, sir!" said the boot-boy brightly.

"Potts, eh?" retorted Handforth. "And what are you doing here, you ass?"

"I'm the page, sir," said the stranger. "Boot-boy, or whatever you like to call me."

Handforth didn't seem to be at all pleased. Yet there was nothing whatever in the new boot-boy's appearance to upset him. Potts was resplendent in buttons and a brand-new uniform. He was a curly-headed youngster,

with a cheery smile and an infectious twinkle in his eyes. He was sturdy and well-built, and there was an indefinable air of decency about him. He looked so clean, so fresh, that it was almost impossible not to take to him.

"Oh, so you're Potts, are you?" repeated Handforth. "Any other name?"

"Jimmy, sir," said the boot-boy.

"Well, Jimmy Potts, I should like to know why you couldn't have gone into the Modern House?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you that, sir," said Potts. "There was a job vacant here and I applied for it. It was Mr. Lee, the House-master, who told me to work in this House."

"Here, cheese it, Handforth," grinned Church. "You don't suppose Potts put himself in this position on his own, do you? Besidee, what does it matter, anyhow? If Tubbs is in the Modern House, good luck to him! This chap will be just as good, I expect."

"I'll do my best, young gentlemen!" said Potts earnestly. "Shall I carry your bags? If you'll tell me where to take them I'll have them in your studies in a jiffy!"

They surrendered their bags, and Potts made light work of them.

"Just a minute!" said Handforth. "You're not a chap from the village, are you?"

"No, sir," replied Potts. "I'm a stranger here."

"All by yourself, eh?"

"Well, not exactly, sir," replied the new boot-boy. "You see, my mother has got a job as housekeeper up at the Moor View School—and that's really why I'm here, at St. Frank's. Mother thought it would be rather nice to have me in a job near by, so to speak."

"Oh!" said Handforth. "All right, kid! Take our bags to Study D. And here's half-a-crown for yourself."

The boot-boy thanked him with another of his infectious grins. After he had vanished Church and McClure seized Handforth and spun him round.

"Why can't you leave the chap alone?" demanded Church. "What does it matter to you whether his mother lives in the district, or whether she lives in Timbuctoo? Don't be so jolly inquisitive, Handy!"

Handforth frowned.

"Rats!" he said. "The chap may be all right, but what was wrong with Tubbs? Why couldn't we keep Tubbs? I don't believe in all these changes!"

"In that case," said McClure sarcastically. "I should advise you to go and have a word with the Housemaster! Tell him that you don't want Potts here, and Mr. Lee might listen to you. It's far more likely that he'll grab his cane and give you a couple of swipes!"

Edward Oswald Handforth dropped the subject!



CHAPTER 5.

A New Leader for Study A?

JIMMY POTTS was universally liked in the Ancient House. He was proving himself to be extraordinarily willing, and the most remarkable fact about him was that he seemed very reluctant to take any tips. Nearly all the fellows were compelled to force their shillings and half-crowns upon him, and it was clear that his reluctance was not affected, but genuine. Not many of the fellows were sorry to lose Tubbs. Tubbs was quite all right in the main—a thoroughly decent little chap. But he had his shortcomings. He was apt to shirk his work, and to get out of carrying bags, and it was also one of Tubbs' little habits to attach himself to those juniors who were in the habit of tipping more liberally than the others.

But Jimmy Potts was quite impartial. He made himself useful to one and all.

Not that a new boot-boy caused any comment among the rank and file. Handforth, of course, was different—but even he soon forgot all about Potts, too.

This was the first day of term, and there was much to be done.

It was nearly tea-time now, and the majority of the fellows were bustling round, eager to indulge in an extra-special spread in their studies. Tea on the first day of term was always a big occasion. There were luxuries galore, and special parties were the order of the hour.

In the Ancient House lobby, Nipper was accosted by Vivian Travers.

"Just a minute, Hamilton, dear old fellow," he said.

"Call me 'Nipper,' the same as the other fellows," smiled the Remove skipper.

"Right you are—Nipper it is!" said Travers, nodding. "I was going to ask you about football."

"Ask anything you like," said Nipper obligingly. "By the way, have you seen the Housemaster yet?"

"Yes—your celebrated gov'nor," nodded Travers. "I must say, dear old fellow, that Mr. Lee is one of the best. I like him tremendously. If it comes to that, I like St. Frank's tremendously. A topping place, by what I've seen of it."

"You'll like it better after you've been here awhile," said Nipper. "Well, who's your study? I suppose Mr. Lee—"

"Yes—he's placed me in Study A, with a couple of fellows named Swift and Bell. I haven't met them yet, but I dare say I shall have that pleasure before long."

Nipper smiled.

"I suppose you mean Gulliver and Bell?" he asked.

"Ah, yes—that's it!" said Travers. "I knew it was something to do with 'Gulliver's Travels.'"

"Well, I'm not going to say anything, but— Well, you'll find out soon enough," said Nipper. "Anyhow, Study A is just along the passage—first door, as a matter of fact. I'll show you, if you like."

"Don't trouble," said Travers. "I imagine that Gulliver and Bell are not quite respectable, eh? Sporty lads, no doubt? Well, well! We shall have to see what we can do with them!"

"What were you going to ask me about football?" said Nipper, changing the subject.

"Ah, yes!" said Travers. "Is there any chance for a new fellow?"

"Every chance," said Nipper promptly. "You can report for practice as soon as you like—"

"I'm reporting now," said Travers.

"Good man," said the Junior skipper. "Are you keen?"

"Most frightfully."

"That's all the better," said Nipper. "All right—you can turn out at the first practice, and you'll be judged by your form. If you're no good, you won't have an earthly chance; but if you *are* good, you'll have just the same chances as any of the other fellows. You probably know that smoking is bad for the wind."

"I've heard a rumour to that effect."

"It's not a rumour," said Nipper bluntly. "I wouldn't have spoken to you ordinarily, Travers; but if you want to go in for football, it's my job as Junior skipper to warn you against smoking. That's all."

"I'll remember!" said Travers, nodding.

He passed on, and made his way to Study A. He walked in, and found Gulliver and Bell wallowing in a haze of blue smoke. In fact, they were both looking rather guilty as Travers stood there in the doorway.

"Don't mind me!" said Travers. "I'm the new fellow. Mr. Lee has put me in this study with you chaps, Gulliver and Bell, eh? Pleased to meet you, dear old fellows. Put it there!"

He shook hands with them both, and although he did not appear to scrutinise them at all, he gave them a very close inspection.

And he was by no means impressed.

He did not care for Gulliver's thin and weedy figure—his skinny legs and arms, and narrow shoulders. Still less did he like Gulliver's pointed nose and thin lips. And Bell, with his narrow-chested figure and supercilious expression, aroused a feeling of contempt in Vivian Travers.

But he showed none of these feelings.

"Well, I rather hope that we shall get on well together," he said, as he sat down and opened his cigarette-case. "I'm afraid I caused you to throw away a couple of perfectly good cigarettes, didn't I? Help yourselves, dear old fellows—they're quite good."

"Thanks!" said Gulliver and Bell.



"Smoking is a vice!" roared Handforth. "I'm jolly well not going to let this fathead smoke in front of our faces like this!" He leaned across the compartment and, in one movement, whipped the cigarette out of Vivian Travers' mouth!

They were relieved and pleased. It seemed to them that Vivian Travers was one of their own breed. It was quite a long time since they had had a leader. And, leaderless, Gulliver and Bell were mere nonentities. Since they had lost Bernard Forrest, the black sheep of the Remove, they had been innocuous. True, Gordon Wallace, of the River House School, had taken Forrest's place for a time, but Wallace had left St. Frank's, too, and since then Gulliver and Bell had been at a loose end.

It seemed that they had found another leader in Vivian Travers.

CHAPTER 8.

A Surprise for Two!



TEA in Study A was a strained kind of meal, on the whole. Gulliver and Bell did not "cotton on" to the new fellow's whimsical ways during that first hour. They hardly knew how to take him. He was amiable, and he was pleasant. But the rascals of the Remove had an idea that he was amusing himself at their expense.

At all events, they escaped—as soon as the

meal was over, and they made their way to the common-room.

"A queer sort of blighter!" said Bell. "I don't know what to make of him, quite."

"I'm not sure that I like him," said Gulliver. "He's too jolly smooth-tongued! And he's got too much to say about football, too. He couldn't jaw of anything else during tea. What the deuce do we care about football?"

"Nothing—and we let him know it, too," said Bell. "Yet he smokes, and he knows a lot about card-playing, too, by the way he was talking."

"I dare say he'll be all right," said Gulliver. "It doesn't do to be too friendly with a new fellow all at once. New kids only get swelled head if you start being familiar with them. Our best policy is to be stand-offish for a time—just to let him know his place!" "That's the idea!" said Bell, nodding.

In the meantime, Vivian Travers was lounging in the easy-chair in Study A, musing over the events of the afternoon.

Taking everything into consideration, he was thoroughly enjoying himself. He had only told the perfect truth to Nipper when he had said that he liked St. Frank's immensely. He did like it. But he wasn't sure that he liked Gulliver and Bell. True, it was rather a relief to know that they did not object to smoking—but, at the same time, Travers was a keen judge of character, and

he had read nothing but meanness and snobbish pride in the characters of his two study-mates.

"Well, well, why worry?" he murmured languidly. "Are they worth it? Certainly not! My policy is to go my own road—and bang everybody else!"

A tap sounded on the door, and he roused himself.

"Come in!" he called. "I'm going to put a card on this door reading, 'Don't knock—walk in.' It saves such a lot of trouble, you know."

The door had opened, and Potts, the boot boy, stood there smiling. He was carrying Travers' attache-case, and he was looking as bright as ever.

"Master Nipper told me to bring——"

And then Jimmy Potts came to a sudden stop, dropping the bag he was carrying. Every atom of colour fled from his cheeks, and a startled expression sprang into his eyes. He stood there, staring blankly at Vivian Travers. There was something dramatic in his attitude.

And Travers, starting forward in his chair, was staring at the smartly-uniformed boot-boy in utter amazement. There was nothing pale about Travers' face. But, undeniably, he was startled.

Yet, after that first moment, he recovered himself. A slow smile came over his features, and he waved a hand.

"Shut the door, Potts, dear old fellow," he said complacently.

The boot-boy shut the door—hastily.

"I—I didn't know you were here—at St. Frank's, Travers!" panted Potts huskily.

"No, I don't suppose you did," said Travers. "As a matter of fact, I'm a new fellow—haven't been in the school for more than an hour. Well, a couple of hours, at the most. What, exactly, is the idea?"

Potts said nothing. Having closed the door, he just continued to stare at Vivian Travers. It almost seemed that he was fascinated by the sight of this new boy. A little colour was returning to his cheeks, but his eyes were still full of anxiety and alarm.

"Well, I'm waiting," said Travers amusedly. "What's the idea?"

"What—what do you mean?" panted Potts, at last.

"Oh, come!" smiled Travers, indicating Potts' uniform with an expressive wave of his hand. "What's all this? What's this fancy-dress idea? A bet, or something?"

"Oh, you—you mean—this uniform?" asked the boot-boy.

"Precisely!"

"No, Travers, it's not a bet!" said Potts desperately. "I am the boot-boy of the Ancient House."

"Rubbish!"

"I tell you——"

"I hate to speak bluntly, dear old fellow, but—piffle!" said Travers. "Great Samson! What next? Why not come out with the

yarn, Potts, straight from the shoulder? Who did you have the wager with? And, by the way, how's Beccleston getting on?"

Potts gulped.

"I—I've left Beccleston, he panted. "I—left soon after you went, Travers. I never dreamed that I should ever meet anybody here from Beccleston! Beccleston is right out in the West of England, and—and— Oh, well, it never occurred to me that I should meet anybody that I knew!"

Travers smiled.

"Well, it's not a tragedy, is it?" he inquired. "I don't think we were very close pals at Beccleston, dear old fellow, but at least we were on speaking terms." And it would be the decent thing if you told me the meaning of this masquerade. What on earth are you doing here, dressed up in that fancy costume, like a boot-boy?"

"I tell you I am the boot-boy!" said Potts fiercely. "I am the boot-boy!"

"You mean it?" asked Travers, leaning forward, struck by the earnest tone of the other.

"Yes, I do!" said Potts defiantly.

"Well I'm hanged!" murmured Vivian Travers, with a whistle. "Well I am hanged!"



CHAPTER 7

Explanations!

JIMMY POTTS seemed to recover some of his composure. Perhaps it was Travers' easy manner that reassured him—perhaps it was Travers' friendliness and quiet tone.

"Excuse me being so sceptical, Potts, dear old fellow, but you have given me a surprise," said Travers coolly. "I'll admit that it takes a great deal to surprise me. I'm a hardened case. Even now, you know, I don't believe it."

"Well, it's true, whether you believe it or not," said Potts.

Vivian Travers pulled out his cigarette case, selected a cigarette and lit it. Then he leaned back in his chair.

"Go ahead," he invited. "Let's have the yarn. Great Samson! To think that you've come down to this, Potts!"

"I'm not ashamed of it!" said the boot-boy, with sudden fire.

"No, I don't suppose you are," agreed Travers. "You never were a snob, were you? Good man! And here you are—a baronet in your own right, so to speak, filling the position of boot-boy in the Ancient House at St. Frank's! Well, well! There's one thing about Life—it's always providing us with variety."

"What a fellow you are, Travers," said Potts.

"Yes, aren't I?" said Travers. "Well, we have our ups and downs, don't we? Sir James Potts, Bart. It sounds a bit different to Jimmy Potts—and yet they're really exactly the same. Well, Sir James, I'm still waiting for the yarn."

The boot-boy glanced hastily at the door. "Don't!" he muttered, in alarm. "Don't be an ass, Travers!"

"But you *are* Sir James!" insisted Travers. "I'm not—I'm not!" panted Potts. "How can I be—he-e?"

"Well, I'll admit it would be rather difficult for a boot-boy to go round with a 'Sir' in front of his name," acknowledged Travers. "I could have sworn that you were doing it just for a joke. I always thought that your people were rather well off."

Potts glanced at the door again.

"Is it safe to talk in here?" he asked cautiously.

"Perfectly safe, dear old fellow," said Travers. "Gulliver and Bell have gone off, and I don't suppose they'll be back for some little time. But you can turn the key in the lock, if you like—and make doubly sure."

Potts did so, then he walked across to the table, and sat on the edge of it.

"Yes, I'm Sir James Potts—Baronet!" he said, with a touch of bitterness in his voice. "When you last saw me, Travers, I was in the Fourth Form at Beccleston."

"Junior skipper!" nodded Travers. "Good old days!"

"Yes, you were a ripping footballer then, Travers," said Potts.

"And I'm a ripping footballer still," smiled Vivian Travers. "It's not my habit to boast, as you know, but on the subject of football I am liable to get conceited. And I will say, with all modesty, that I'm a pretty hot forward."

"Beccleston!" said Jimmy Potts dreamily. "Yes, Travers, those were the days! But that was before my father died," he added quietly. "That was before the crash came."

"I imagined there had been a crash," said Travers, nodding.

He leaned forward and patted Potts on the knee.

"I'm frightfully sorry, dear old fellow," he continued, speaking earnestly. "I'd no idea that things were so bad. I heard, of course, that your father had died—and I knew that you were Sir James. But I didn't know that the family fortunes had sunk so low that you could get nothing better than a job as a boot-boy."

Potts flushed somewhat.

"That's not quite true, Travers," he said. "I could get a better job—but I didn't want to."

"Well, we all have our little idiosyncrasies," said Travers smoothly. "Shall I be inquisitive if I ask how it all happened?"

"There's nothing much to tell," said Jimmy. "I only know that my father got into the hands of a man named Mortimer Grayson—a stockbroker in the city. Oh, there was nothing crooked about it—nothing

that the law could get hold of. But mother and I both knew that Mr. Grayson fooled poor father right and left, and finally rooked him out of every penny he owned—out of every stick of property! And it was all done 'within the law,' as they put it," he added bitterly. "Yet nothing can alter the fact that Mortimer Grayson robbed—yes, robbed—my father of everything he owned!"

"There are city men and city men," murmured Vivian Travers. "My father is a city man, by the way."

"I'm not saying that all stockbrokers are the same," said Jimmy. "I only know that Mr. Grayson took a mean and contemptible advantage of father's trusting nature. Anyhow, there was a big crash, and the old home was sold up, and mother and I were left penniless."

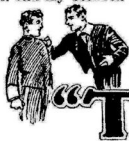
"No income at all?"

"Not a cent!" said Jimmy quietly. "Honestly, Travers, there was nothing—absolutely nothing! If you want to know the real truth, quite a lot of money was left owing. Grayson took the lot—and left us paupers."

"Did this crash come after your father died—or before?"

"Before, of course," said Jimmy, his eyes flashing. "It was the crash that caused my father's death. The shock was such a great one—it knocked him completely over—that he had a kind of stroke, and never recovered. Poor old dad! Such a fine old chap he was, too, Travers—the best in the world!"

Potts paused for a moment, for there was a big lump in his throat. And Vivian Travers said nothing. His cigarette had gone out, and he was not even aware of the fact that it still lay between his fingers.



CHAPTER 8.

The Boot-boy Baronet!

"WHAT'S about all there is to tell," said Jimmy Potts, at length. "You realise, don't you, how impossible it is for me to use my title? What's the good of it to me? Titles are not much good, anyhow—and they're an absolute burden to anybody who is broke."

"I can quite believe it," said Travers sympathetically. "Poor old Potts! What a dirty trick—you having to leave Beccleston, I mean. You were such a lion there, too—with every fine prospect. Everybody used to say that one day you would be Captain of the School."

The boot-boy smiled, and shook his head.

"It's no good regretting," he said quietly. "In this life, Travers, it is better to take things philosophically. I'm happy enough, anyhow—I'm finding plenty of enjoyment in this job of mine. And I'm near mother!" he added softly.

"Ah!" said Travers. "So that's it, eh?"

"Yes, that's it," said Jimmy.

"And where is—Lady Potts?"

"You mustn't call my mother Lady Potts!" said Jimmy earnestly. "She's just Mrs. Potts here, Travers—and she would lose her job in a minute if anybody got to know that she was the mother of a baronet."

"But I can't for the life of me understand why it was necessary for her to get a job at all," said Travers wonderingly. "Surely you had a big circle of friends, Jimmy? I mean, people of social standing—people who would help—"

"My mother wouldn't accept any help!" interrupted Jimmy defiantly. "I don't blame her, either. I've got the same independent spirit. How do you suppose we could sponge on our friends?"

"No, you couldn't," agreed Travers, at once. "You're quite right, Jimmy—independence is worth everything. I've always been an independent beggar myself. Always chose my own road—and always trod it. But couldn't your mother have got a job as a companion to somebody, or something like that?"

"Yes—tons of them," replied Jimmy Potts. "But do you think she could stand it? As a companion, everybody would have known that she was Lady Potts, and that sort of thing would have broken her up. No, she preferred to get right away—to start all over afresh, as it were—and she found a position as housekeeper in a big girls' school. It's a good position, really—and a lady's position, too. But it's far better that she should be known as Mrs. Potts. Her title would only be in the way."

"A girls' school, eh?" mused Travers.

"Near here?"

"Yes—the Moor View School, just up the road."

"Ah, where the fair Irene dwells," said Travers. "I've heard of the place—and, one day, I hope to become better acquainted with it. I have a strange and unaccountable partiality for the fair sex. So your mother is housekeeper at the Moor View School? Well done! I admire her spirit, Jimmy—and I admire yours, too."

"It was only by chance that I heard that a boot-boy was needed at St. Frank's," said Potts. "Of course, I had to leave Beccleston—it's a big school, Travers."

"Nearly as big as St. Frank's," nodded Travers. "And quite as expensive."

"I had to leave, and for a time I stayed with an aunt of mine," went on Jimmy. "But I didn't like it—I felt that I was living on charity, you know. And as soon as I heard that there was a job going here, I grabbed at it."

"I imagine that your mother issued a few horrified protests?"

"Yes, she did," said Jimmy softly. "I don't mind admitting that she was absolutely against it. She wouldn't hear of me taking a job as a boot-boy. But when I pressed her, what could she say? If she was earning her living, why couldn't I earn mine? And as I've never been trained for anything, what

else could I do? Besides, by coming to St. Frank's, I should be near her—and on my evenings off, I can pop along to the Moor View School, and spend an hour or two with her. That was the whole idea, you see."

"And she thawed when you explained all that?"

"Yes, of course," smiled Jimmy. "The people at the Moor View School know that I'm her son, but they haven't the faintest inkling that we're—well, that we're different from what we pretend to be. Not that titles really make any difference. We're far better off without them."

"Yes, I can believe it," said Travers dryly. "Well, Potts, I must say that I admire you."

"Hang it, Travers, I don't want your admiration," said Potts awkwardly. "Here was a chance for me to be at a big public school, and I seized it with both hands. If I can't be at a public school as a pupil, then why not as a boot-boy?"

"Why not, indeed?" said Travers.

"Anyhow, here I am—Sir James Potts, Bart—ready to clean your boots, and run your errands," said Jimmy, grinning. "I'm not so sure, Travers, that I don't enjoy the life almost as much as I enjoyed the old life. I feel—well, I feel more independent. I'm earning my own living, and that's rather a fine feeling, you know. It gives a chap confidence."

Vivian Travers felt strangely drawn towards this unfortunate youngster—this boy who had been with him at Beccleston College as a fellow pupil, but who was now at St. Frank's as a mere boot-boy!

It was, indeed, a strange situation.



CHAPTER 9.

Mum's the Word!

A SUDDEN change came over Jimmy Potts' face. An expression of anxiety crept into his eyes—an expres-

sion of suspicion and alarm.

"Travers," he said earnestly, "you won't tell anybody, will you?"

"Tell anybody, dear old fellow?" said Travers. "I suppose I'm very dull, but I don't catch on."

"I mean, you won't tell anybody at St. Frank's that I'm really a—a baronet?" asked the boot-boy. "It would seem so ridiculous—so idiotic! We're both keeping the secret—mother and I—and it would ruin everything if a mere hint of the truth got about. We should both have to go—we should be—"

"Anybody might think that you were a criminal," interrupted Travers whimsically.

"Well, it's almost the same thing, isn't it?" asked Potts. "What's the difference?"

"Well, there's a great deal of difference, I should imagine."

(Continued on page 13.)

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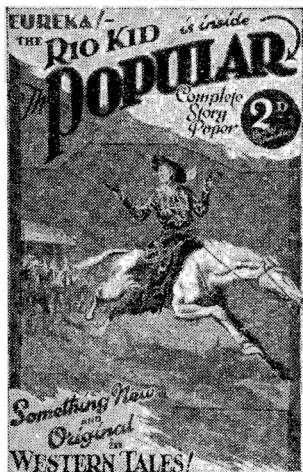
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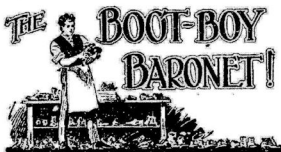


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(Continued from page 12.)

"Oh, you know what I mean," said Jimmy. "It isn't a guilty secret—we've nothing on earth to be ashamed of—but both mother and I would lose our positions if people knew who we really were. You won't tell, Travers, will you?"

Vivian Travers rose to his feet, and stretched himself.

"If it comes to that, Jimmy, I might ask you the same question," he said. "You won't tell, will you?"

"Tell what?"

"Ah, there we have it," said Travers. "You're in my hands, in a way of speaking—and I'm in yours. So it will pay us both to keep quiet. Mum's the word, dear old fellow—mum's the word!"

"But I don't understand!"

"You may be quite sure that I shall say nothing whatever about your true position in life," said Travers. "As far as I'm concerned, you're just the boot-boy. And if you go on an errand for me, I shall tip you—whether you like it or not."

"Yes, but—"

"Since you are the boot-boy, you must be the boot-boy," continued Vivian Travers. "There mustn't be any half-and-half business about it. I'll hold my tongue, dear old fellow—on condition that you hold yours."

"What do you mean?"

"Silence for silence!" said the new fellow. And then suddenly Jimmy Potts started.

"By Jingo!" he said sharply. "You—you mean that you were sacked?"

"Exactly," murmured Travers. "A blunt way to put it, Potts—a somewhat crude way to put it. But since it is the truth, who am I to complain? Yes, I was sacked from Beccleston."

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings—"

"That's all right—my feelings are perfectly intact," said Travers. "At Beccleston I experienced the doubtful honour of being publicly expelled. Now, let me see, what was my sordid crime? There are so many black deeds in my history that I find it difficult to pick out this particular one. Ah, yes, I remember now!"

"You were caught playing cards, weren't you?"

"A most careless affair," said Travers, nodding. "In a moment of sheer absent-mindedness the headmaster of Beccleston wandered into my study. At any ordinary time he could have wandered with impunity. But his wanderings, on that occasion, led him into

the middle of a most exciting poker game, and I can still vividly remember the Head's expression when he saw me scooping in the kitty."

"The kitty?" repeated Potts.

"The pool!" explained Travers indulgently. "Quite a big pool it was, too, dear old fellow—something in the neighbourhood of twenty-five pounds. And as it was my study, and as the other players were my guests, I received it very forcibly in the neck. At certain changes of the weather I can still feel pains in my old wounds," he added reminiscently. "Yes, the headmaster of Beccleston *did* know how to lay it on thick!"

"Well, Travers, you deserved it," said Potts shortly.

"Perhaps I did—in fact, I'm certain that I did," said Travers. "I deserved it for my carelessness."

"But I can't quite understand how you got here," said Jimmy Potts. "I didn't know that a fellow who had been expelled from one public school—"

"How he could get into another, eh?" interrupted Travers. "Particularly such a famous and exclusive public school as St. Frank's? Yes, that's where you've hit it, Jimmy. That's where you've got me on toast. No, you see, if I give your secret away—and compel you to leave St. Frank's—you have a weapon of equal power in your own hands. For you can swiftly and unmercifully have me hounded out of this noble academy."

"You know very well that you can rely upon my silence," said Potts.

"Exactly, dear old fellow," smiled Travers. "As I just said—silence for silence. Mum, in fact, is the word. I don't exactly know how the affair was wangled. But it was wangled, and the wangling was done by my dear old pater. A great wangler is the pater. In some mysterious way he worked the oracle, and the exclusive doors of St. Frank's were opened to me. All the same, I haven't the slightest doubt that if the school governors got to know my real record, they would swiftly and ruthlessly apply the boot. But where there is ignorance there is bliss. Who are we to disturb their innocence?"



CHAPTER 10.

The Challenge!

THE next day provided a rather pleasant surprise for the football enthusiasts of the Remove.

For Vivian Travers, at practice, revealed the most astonishing form.

Handforth, as was only to be expected, had rather turned up his nose at the idea of Travers being any good at football. According to Handforth's idea, if a fellow smacked it stood to reason that he couldn't possibly be any good at games. But the new fellow in Study A was not only as quick as a flash

on the ball, but he revealed unaccustomed braininess in his tactics. And his keenness for the game was refreshing.

Even Handforth was compelled to admit it after Vivian Travers had twice put the leather past the Remove custodian.

In goal, Edward Oswald Handforth was well-nigh invincible. In many ways, Handforth was a blunderer. He was clumsy—he was rash. But in goal he was a tower of strength, and it needed a very brilliant forward to send in a shot that would beat the redoubtable Handforth.

Yet Vivian Travers had Handforth guessing every time he essayed a shot. And when Travers did shoot, the leather sped from his boot like a six-inch shell. On one occasion, Handforth didn't even see it; on another occasion he did see it, but it swerved in the most startling manner and eluded Edward Oswald's outstretched hands.

"You'll do, Travers!" said Nipper enthusiastically.

"Good enough for a place in a House match?" asked Travers, with sparkling eyes.

"Good enough for a place in the Junior Eleven," said Nipper. "As I told you, Travers, footballers at St. Frank's are chosen according to their form—not according to the number of terms they've been here. In some schools, perhaps, a new fellow doesn't stand an earthly chance of getting into the Eleven. But we're not like that at St. Frank's."

"I always maintained that St. Frank's was the best of all schools," said Travers enthusiastically. "And, by the way—look at me."

"I'm looking," said Nipper.

"Listen to my breathing," said Travers.

"All right—I'm listening!"

"Can you hear any wheeziness?" went on the new fellow. "Can you hear any shortness of breath?"

"What the dickens—"

"I'm just trying to show you, dear old fellow, that the cigarettes have done me no harm," said Travers blandly.

"You silly ass!"

"Of course, it may be the cigarettes," went on Travers. "They're a special brand—guaranteed not to injure the throat! The tobacco is so treated that—"

"I don't want to hear about your beastly cigarettes!" smiled Nipper. "If you're ass enough to smoke that's your trouble. But as soon as you show any signs of short wind, it'll be my trouble. And then you'll hear all about it from me. Well, Travers, I shall put your name down for the House match on Saturday."

"That's jolly decent of you," said Travers. "Thanks, dear old fellow. I may have all sorts of horrid vices, but football is one of my virtues."

He strolled away, highly pleased with everything in general.

"Rummy sort of beggar!" said Handforth, frowning.

"He's not so bad," said Nipper. "I can't quite understand him—but he can play football all right. What's all the excitement over

on Big Side?" he added, staring across the field. "What are all those seniors gathered in groups for?"

"There's no accounting for the seniors!" said Handforth, with a grunt.

All the same he strolled over towards Big Side, and it was not long before the juniors discovered the reason for the flutterings that were disturbing the usual peace and equanimity of the Senior Eleven.

Fenton and his men were out for practice, but the seniors, instead of practising, were standing about, talking—and they were all looking rather excited.

"What's it all about?" asked Handforth, as he approached Browne and Stevens of the Fifth.

William Napoleon Browne turned.

"Ah, Brother Handforth, I was rather expecting such an inquiry," he said benevolently. "It seems that the worthy villagers have honoured us with a challenge."

"A challenge?" said Handforth, staring. "The villagers?"

"Your capacity for grasping a fact is remarkable, brother," said Browne. "You may, or may not, have heard of one, Brother Catchpole. It is he who has exploded this bombshell."

"Old Joe Catchpole, who works on Holt's Farm?" asked Handforth.

"I am referring to Brother Bob," said Browne. "Brother Bob, I believe, is a nephew of the esteemed Brother Joe. And Brother Bob is the captain of the Bellton Rovers. The team is, I believe, high up in the Bellton and Edgemore District League. In the goodness of his heart, Brother Catchpole has invited the St. Frank's Senior Eleven to a match on Saturday afternoon. I must say that I am all in favour of this spirit of good will."

"There's no reason why we shouldn't accept," said Stevens. "Some of the fellows seem to be a bit sceptical about it."

"They, of course, are the snobs, Brother Horace," said Browne. "I trust that we are not snobbish at St. Frank's? Let us not dwell upon such a horrifying possibility."

Handforth scratched his chin.

"Well, there's something in the idea," he said. "Why shouldn't the St. Frank's Senior Eleven give these villagers a game?"

"Why not?" repeated Browne. "And echo, like the St. Frank's Senior Eleven, will probably answer 'not'!"



CHAPTER 11.

A Word from the Head!

IMON KENMORE, of the Sixth, sniffed contemptuously.

"It's like the infernal nerve of those village louts!" he said, with a sneer. "Do they expect the St. Frank's First Eleven to play them on their rotten ground? I don't

know what these common brutes are coming to nowadays!"

"Disgusting!" said Sinclair.

But then, of course, Kenmore and Sinclair were not only snobbish to a degree, but they were two of the worst rotters in the Senior School. Fortunately, there were not many like them at St. Frank's.

Such seniors as Reynolds, Carlile, Stanhope and Biggleswade were more or less amused. Fenton, as captain of the school, found it necessary to be serious. He had to consider the question whether the challenge should be accepted or not.

"Well, of course, it's up to Fenton," said Reynolds. "But personally, I don't see any reason why we shouldn't play the villagers, for they're pretty sure to give us a decent game."

"No reason at all," said Morrow, the head prefect of the West House. "Bellton Rovers have done very well in the district league, and they are considered to be hot stuff. Of course, I dare say we should easily wipe them up, but they'd give us a good game all right."

As it happened, the seniors were strolling within the precincts of Inner Court. This section of the school grounds was out of bounds for the juniors, but the men of the Sixth were at liberty to walk there.

And as the headmaster came striding by, with his gown flowing in the wind, all the seniors raised their caps. Dr. Stafford acknowledged the salute, and then paused.

"I have heard a rumour, Morrow, that the —er—village team has challenged us to a match," he said hesitatingly. "Do you know anything about it?"

"Why, yes, sir," said Morrow.

"And has any decision been reached?"

"Not yet, sir," said Morrow. "Fenton is thinking about it, of course—and I rather think that he will accept the challenge."

"H'm!" said the Head, frowning. "Well, of course, it is entirely up to Fenton. I should not dream of advising him one way or the other. But if I were in Fenton's shoes I should hesitate."

"Why, sir?" asked Reynolds. "What's wrong with it? We're not snobbish."

"Dear me, no!" said the Head hastily. "Good gracious, certainly not! It would be a very bad day for St. Frank's if we became snobbish. I detest snobbery in all its forms—and nothing pleases me better than to see St. Frank's on the best of terms with the village folk of the district. But there are certain reasons— Well, there is *one* certain reason why it may be advisable to delay this proposed match."

"I'm afraid I don't understand, sir," said Morrow.

"I am really referring to this youth, Catchpole," said the Head gravely. "He is, I understand, the captain of the —er—Bellton Rovers?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, exactly," said the Head. "Well, I

have been given to understand that Catchpole is under a cloud at the moment. The vicar, indeed, is quite upset about it. He will not hear a word against Catchpole, but the fact remains."

"What fact, sir?" asked Reynolds, staring.

"Of course, you will not have heard of it, since the school only reassembled yesterday," said the Head. "But Catchpole has been accused of some very serious fouling tactics in a game that took place at Midshott last week. According to several witnesses, Catchpole was guilty of some very questionable conduct."

"We knew nothing about it, sir," said Morrow, looking concerned.

"I thought not," nodded the Head. "Well, of course, it's not my business, and I shall not presume to interfere. But Catchpole is, nevertheless, under a cloud, and I rather thought— Well, until the matter was cleared up it might be better to postpone this match. I cannot really believe that Catchpole is guilty, for I have always understood that he is a very admirable football captain. However, the district League has taken the matter up, and is holding an inquiry. Until that inquiry has delivered its verdict, it might be advisable— Still, go ahead, if you want to," added the Head.

"It is not for us to judge this youth. As I have said, I am all in favour of friendly relations between the school and the young people of the neighbourhood."

The Head walked on, leaving the seniors somewhat uncertain.

"Of course, the old boy didn't like to commit himself," said Morrow thoughtfully. "He hates any idea of snobbishness, and yet, all the time, he's got the good name of St. Frank's at heart. He doesn't want us to play a game against a side that has a reputation for fouling. I wonder what Fenton will do about it?"

But it wasn't really a question for Edgar Fenton at all. The rumour about Bob Catchpole was soon being talked of freely throughout the length and breadth of the Senior School, and a feeling was rapidly growing that the challenge should be refused. It was felt that Catchpole should have waited until after the inquiry—until he had been exonerated.



CHAPTER 12.

The Vote!

ALL unconsciously, Dr. Stafford had caused a mild sensation.

Left entirely to themselves, the

seniors would undoubtedly have accepted that challenge from Bob Catchpole, of the Bellton Rovers. Some of the seniors might have been snobbish about it, but the majority would have approved the acceptance.



As Jimmy Potts saw Vivian Travers sitting in the armchair, every atom of colour fled from his cheeks, and a startled expression came into his eyes. Travers, too, was looking extremely startled. "I—I didn't know you were here—at St. Frank's!" panted Jimmy.

But the Head's little talk to Morrow and Reynolds and the other seniors had made all the difference.

Indeed, that afternoon there was a meeting of the Senior Eleven to go thoroughly into the matter. Fenton had heard so many comments that he decided to leave the matter to a vote.

"The position is quite clear, you fellows," said the school captain, as he faced the meeting in the senior day-room of the ancient house. "There's no need to make a mystery about it. The Rovers have challenged us to a match on Saturday, and, personally, I'm inclined to accept."

"Stout words, Brother Fepton," said Browne approvingly. "I, too, am in favour of this policy. Let us not imagine for a moment that we are any better than our fellow-beings. Who are we, indeed, to gibe?"

"If you don't mind, Browne, you'll kindly refrain from being an ass," said Fenton. "We've got to come to some decision about this challenge. As you all know, Catchpole has been accused of some pretty dirty play."

"Does that make any difference?" asked Browne.

"As far as I'm concerned, it doesn't," replied Fenton. "I understand that Midshott was soundly thrashed during that

match, and a nasty spirit was displayed by the home supporters. Fortunately, incidents of that sort don't occur very often—but when they do occur there are all sorts of misunderstandings. Perhaps there was a lot of bad feeling, and some of these Midshott fellows have accused Catchpole of fouling when he didn't foul at all."

"Well, they're holding an inquiry of some sort, aren't they?" asked Reynolds. "Don't you think it would be better if we held the match over until some sort of decision has been reached?"

"Yes, that's the best idea," said Stanhope.

"Hear, hear!"

"I deplore this spirit of procrastination," said Browne regretfully. "Can we not, in the generosity of our hearts, give Brother Catchpole the benefit of the doubt? From our own personal experience of the man, we know that he is an excellent footballer, and a sportsman. Why should we heed these Midshottian scandal mongers? In these modern days it is just as well to be broad-minded. Let there be good will all round."

"That's all very well," said Reynolds. "But we've got to think of the good name of St. Frank's. We don't want to go about playing village teams that are in bad odour for foul play."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll tell you one thing," said Parkin

aggressively. "If you fix this match up, Fenton, I shan't play in it! You can cut my name out of the eleven!"

Fenton glared.

"We don't want any of that spirit, Parkin," he said sharply. "And you won't do yourself any good by threatening me."

"I didn't mean to threaten you," growled Parkin. "But there are lots of other fellows who will back me up. We don't want this match—and you can't force us to play in it."

"I'm going to put the matter to the vote," said Fenton curtly. "We're all here—including the reserves. Those in favour of accepting Catchpole's challenge, hands up."

Fenton raised his own hand, and Brown's was in evidence, too—also Morrow's, and a good many others. But it was seen, at a glance, that the "ayes" were in the minority. The voting, as Fenton had expected, went against Catchpole.

"That's settled, then," said Fenton briefly. "I shall drop Catchpole a line, and tell him that we can't play."

"I trust, Brother Fenton, that you won't definitely close the door?" asked William Napoleon Brown, pained. "Surely you will intimate that the challenge can be repeated after the Wise Men of the Village have passed judgment?"

"I shall leave it open to Catchpole to do just as he likes," replied Fenton. "If you want to know the truth, I'm rather sick of the whole thing. I think we ought to have shown a friendly spirit, and accepted the challenge. But as the majority of you fellows don't want it—well, I'm not going to force you to play a team that meets with your disfavour."

The captain of St. Frank's went out of the senior day-room in a bit of a huff, and the other seniors dispersed, feeling uncomfortable.

When the Junior School got to hear of the decision, there was much excitement. Unfortunately the Junior School did not know the exact details.

Nobody had heard of the accusations against Catchpole, and it was assumed, at once, that the seniors had refused the challenge out of a spirit of snobbishness. And as none of the Sixth Formers felt inclined to explain matters to the juniors, a delicate situation arose.

"The stuck-up snobs!" said Handforth indignantly as he stood in the Triangle with a number of juniors round him. "They've refused to play Bellton Rovers! What do you think of it?"

"They out to be boiled!" said Fullwood hotly. "The sort of thing that gives us a bad name, you know! People will say that we're a lot of stuck-up rotters!"

"Too proud to play against working boys!" shouted Handforth. "I call it rotten—and something ought to be done! This is a fine way to begin the new term, isn't it?"

And the feeling in the Junior School grew intensely.

CHAPTER 13.

The Rag in the Triangle!



NOBS!"

"Too proud to play!"

"Yah, rotters!"

Chambers and

Phillips and Bryant, of the Fifth, came to a halt as they were half-way across the Triangle. They were all looking rather startled. In fact, the three West House seniors were inclined to be anxious, too.

"Are those kids lawling at us?" asked Chambers uneasily.

"Sounds like it!" said Phillips. "Cheeky young bounders!"

A crowd of nondescript juniors were collected near West Arch. Such fellows as Hubbard and Long were prominent, and they were all looking excited.

"Snobs!" went up the yell again. "Down with the seniors!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's rag these three Fifth Form fat heads!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a sudden rush, and before Chambers & Co. could escape, they were surrounded by the yelling hordes of Removites and Fourth Formers.

"Here, steady!" roared Chambers. "Keep back, you young idiots! What the dickens—"

Splash!

The unfortunate Bryant had been pitched backwards into the fountain pool, and a yel of laughter went up. Other indignant juniors were swarming round by now, and the excitement grew.

"That's the style!" shouted somebody. "Let's duck them all!"

"Down with the snobs!"

Jimmy Potts, coming out of the Ancies House on an errand, gazed at the scene a surprise. He didn't know anything about that challenge from the Bellton Rovers, and he wondered why these juniors were shouting in such high tones. So Jimmy stood looking on, puzzled.

"Pretty, isn't it?" asked an amused voice behind him.

The boot-boy turned, and found Vivian Travers by his side.

"What does it mean—sir?" he asked.

"Cut out the 'sir', dear old fellow!" murmured Travers.

"No; any of the other fellows musn't be that we know one another," said Jimmy hastily.

"Perhaps you're right," nodded Travs. "Only it seems all wrong to me, Jimmy.

Well, well! They seem to be having quite a lot of trouble out here," he added, as he glanced across the Triangle. "Not that our seniors don't deserve it."

"But what have they done?" asked Jimmy.

"Haven't you heard about the challenge?" said Vivian Travers. "Bellton Rovers are

lenged the First Eleven to a game on Saturday, and the First Eleven refused. Too snobbish, I suppose. Pity, of course."

"I didn't know there were any local teams," said the boot-boy.

"Then your ignorance must be colossal," said Travers. "There is not only a senior local team, dear old fellow, but a junior local team. I have been hearing all about it from Handforth, who is a perfect mine of information. Bellton may be a small village, but, in the matter of football, it is a centre of much importance."

"A junior team, eh?" said Jimmy musingly. "Do you know who the captain is?"

"A worthy youth of the name of Joe Spence, I understand," said Travers lightly.

"Unless my information is wrong, he is the son of the station master, and a rising young star in the Bellton firmament. But what have we here?"

Travers looked on with interest as two or three prefects appeared. Incidentally, the prefects carried canes, and the way in which they went through the ranks of the juniors was enlightening. The Triangle was cleared in no time, and Chambers and Phillips and Bryant were rescued.

"Young sweeps!" said one of the prefects angrily.

"It's not safe to go across the Triangle!" roared Chambers. "These kids are calling us snobs, and—"

"Well, there's a certain amount of justification for 'em!" said Biggleswade, who was one of the prefects. "I daresay there'll be a lot of ragging for a day or two. The whole Junior School is inflamed because we refused to play the Rovers."

"They'd better mind their own business!" said one of the other prefects, in a gruff voice. "What has it got to do with the Junior School, anyhow?"

"Nothing—but the Junior School has a habit of interesting itself in our affairs," said Biggleswade. "We prefects are safe enough, I dare say—but the other seniors will have to be jolly careful!"

There was every indication that Biggleswade was right.

No sooner had the prefects disappeared than the juniors emerged once more, and more than one unwary Fifth Former discovered that it was a precarious thing to cross the Triangle alone.

It was simply an indication of the feeling that had been aroused in the Junior School. The majority of the fellows considered that the seniors were snobbish and caddish. They had refused to accept Bob Catchpole's challenge, and therefore they were a lot of outsiders.

Jimmy Potts went on his errand, and after he had returned to the Ancient House he continued with his work eagerly. He knew that he had an hour off duty at tea-time, and an idea had come into Jimmy's mind. His eyes were sparkling, and a new kind of flush had appeared in his cheeks.

"Ecotee!" he murmured, as he carried on

with his job. "By jingo! I wonder— But I mustn't count my chickens before they're hatched!" he added cautiously. "Still, there can't be any harm in hoping."

When Jimmy's hour of liberty came he slipped on his overcoat, and emerged from the servants' door of the Ancient House. With quick footsteps, he made his way round to the back of the West House, and started off for the village.

Football!

At Beccleston, Jimmy Potts had been the Junior Captain, and he had been as keen as mustard on the great winter game. Here, at St. Frank's, he was only the boot-boy—and he had taken it for granted that he would have no opportunity of playing the great game. But Vivian Travers' words had put an idea into his head, and he was filled with a great optimism.

Just as he was passing out of the side gate, he heard a hail. He looked round, and in the gathering dusk he saw a burly figure. The fellow was a senior—a stranger to Jimmy Potts.

"Were you calling me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, I was!" said the senior, in an unpleasant voice. "Come here!"

Jimmy Potts went—his independent spirit rebelling against the bullying, authoritative tone of the other.



CHAPTER 14.

Another Shock for Jimmy!

HAROLD GRAYSON, of the Fifth, was a most unpleasant specimen of humanity.

He belonged to the East House, and in that establishment he had the reputation of being the worst bully of all. Incidentally, Grayson was unscrupulous, too, and he was the leader of the Fifth Form "smart set."

"I want you!" said Grayson curtly.

It was Jimmy's hour of liberty, but he did not tell Grayson of this fact. He merely looked straight into Grayson's eyes, and hoped for the best.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Come with me to my study!" went on Grayson. "You're Potts, aren't you? Potts, the Ancient House page-boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"What's your other name?"

"Jimmy, sir."

"Gad!" muttered Grayson. "I can hardly believe— All right—come along!" he added suddenly.

Jimmy Potts wondered what was in the wind—particularly when this senior led him into the East House. The East House had a boot-boy of its own, and Grayson had absolutely no right to give Jimmy any orders, or to expect him to run any errands for him.

Grayson led the way straight to his study,

and after Jimmy had entered, the door was closed. Grayson stood for a few moments before the fireplace, his hands clasped behind his back, his gaze fixed on the stalwart figure of the overcoated boot-boy.

"So your name is Jimmy Potts?" said Grayson, at last.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy. "But I'm attached to the Ancient House, and—"

"I don't care what you're attached to!" interrupted Grayson unpleasantly. "I've brought you here because I want to have a talk with you. Somebody told me that there was a new boot-boy in the Ancient House, and that his name was James Potts. It's not a particularly common name—although it sounds common—and I wanted to have a close look at you."

There was something in Grayson's manner which caused Jimmy to feel slightly uncomfortable. He had set this fellow down at once as an unpleasant character. But he always remembered that he was only the boot-boy, and that it was his place to obey orders.

"Yes, sir," he said quietly.

"James Potts!" repeated Grayson, a contemptuous note creeping into his voice. "I had my suspicions when I first heard the name—and now I'm certain of it. You may try to hide it, kid, but you can't fool me. You were never brought up to be a boot-boy. Come on—out with it! Your full name is Sir James Potts, isn't it?"

Jimmy started—and Grayson leered.

"I—I don't know—" began Jimmy.

"Not good enough!" interrupted Grayson. "That start of yours has given you away, Potts! You're Sir James Potts, Bart! Ye gods—and little fishes! What a come down—what a fall was there, my countrymen, as they say in 'Julius Caesar'!"

There was such a note of mockery in Grayson's tone that Jimmy Potts flushed to the roots of his hair. He started forward, his eyes blazing.

"How did you know this?" he asked hoarsely.

"Then you don't deny it?" jeered Grayson.

"I—I—"

"That'll do!" said the bully of the Fifth. "And your mother is at the Moor View School as a housekeeper, eh? Mrs. Potts!"

"Don't—don't speak about my mother in that tone!" shouted Jimmy fiercely.

"That's enough!" snapped Grayson, with a sudden frown. "Infernal impudence! Don't forget who you are, Potts! You're only the boot-boy—a common, low menial! You're a servant, you understand? And when I give you orders—"

"I don't belong to this House!" muttered Jimmy thickly.

"Silence!" roared Grayson. "You'll take orders from me—and you'll obey them, too! Perhaps you wonder how I knew about this?"

Jimmy was, indeed, filled with sudden apprehension. For a second he half feared that Vivian Travers had been talking, but he dismissed this idea almost before it had

formed itself. Travers wasn't that kind of fellow.

"Well, when I tell you my name, perhaps you'll understand," went on Grayson, in that same mocking tone. "My name is Grayson."

Jimmy started back.

"Grayson?" he said hoarsely. "You—you mean that your father—"

"My father is Mr. Mortimer Grayson!" nodded Grayson coolly. "Do you see? Naturally, as soon as I heard that your name was James Potts, I put two and two together. Oh, yes, young 'un! I know all about it—I heard all about the crash. I knew that you were a pauper, and—"

"Then it was your father who ruined us?" panted Jimmy Potts fiercely. "It was your father who took advantage of my dad! He was killed through that, and—"

"Hold your confounded tongue!" snarled Grayson, with sudden fury. "What the deuce do you mean? Are you trying to make out that my father swindled your family out of the money? If your father was fool enough to invest his capital in rotten stocks, it was his own fault—"

"You'd better not say too much!" panted Jimmy, turning white.

"I'll say just what I like!" jeered Grayson.

"And, what's more, you'll obey all my orders, or I shall tell the whole school who you really are! Then you'll get kicked out of your job—and you'll no longer be near to your doting mother! I'm not quite a fool, young Potts! I know where I stand—and you ought to know where you stand!"

Jimmy clenched his fists, and his breathing was hard.

"You'll be very useful to me," went on Grayson, with a leer. "In fact, Potts, you might as well look upon yourself as my slave. How does that sound, eh? The first time you refuse to obey any of my orders, out comes the cat out of the bag—and crash goes your job!"

Just for a moment it seemed that Jimmy Potts would hurl himself at his tormentor. But in the nick of time he remembered his position. He was down—he was the underdog! By a supreme effort of will, he controlled himself, and stood there with down-cast eyes.

"Can I go now?" he asked huskily.

"Yes, you might as well clear off," replied Grayson. "I am glad to see that you have accepted the position in the right spirit, kid! I don't want you just at the moment—but when I do want you, you'd better be ready to serve me! Understand—always do as you're told, and your little secret will be safe. But if you don't—"

Harold Grayson broke off, and he shrugged his shoulders. Without a word, Potts turned on his heel and strode out of the study. As he closed the door he heard a faint echo of malicious laughter.



CHAPTER 15.

Like Father, Like Son :

OUTSIDE, in the dusk, Jimmy Potts walked like a boy in a daze. Mechanically, he made his way towards the

main gates—forgetting that he was not allowed to use them. As a servant, it was his place to use the small side gate.

"Mortimer Grayson's son—here!" muttered Jimmy tensely. "And he knows!"

For the time being, Jimmy was almost stunned. He wasn't surprised to find that Harold Grayson was a rotter. It was only to be expected. Yet Jimmy had never dreamed that one of Mortimer Grayson's sons would be here, at St. Frank's, as a pupil.

It had been a shock for Jimmy to find Vivian Travers here. But Grayson was different—more of a menace. At any moment, the bully of the Fifth might take it into his head to give Jimmy away, and then it would mean dismissal.

For if that story got broadcast throughout the school, the authorities would be compelled to give Jimmy the sack. They couldn't have a baronet in the Ancient House as a boot-boy. It would be too incongruous—too fantastic. In all probability, the authorities would get Jimmy another post, but what would be the good of that? Jimmy wanted to be here—at this famous old school—within half a mile of the place where his mother had employment.

"Steady!" said Vivian Travers.

Jimmy had almost blundered into the new boy of the Remove. He came to a halt, and started. Travers looked at him closely.

"What's the matter, dear old fellow?" asked Travers. "You're as pale as a sheet! Anything wrong?"

"I would like to speak to you for a minute, Travers, if you don't mind!" said Jimmy tensely. "Can—can you come out into the lane for a bit?"

"The pleasure is mine," said Travers obligingly.

They went out, and in the dusk, Travers caught hold of Jimmy's arm and gave it an affectionate pressure.

"Don't!" muttered Jimmy. "Somebody might see!"

"Let them!" replied Travers, with a laugh. "Who cares? If we're spotted, I can easily say I am taking a course of anti-snobbish medicine. Hobnobbing with the boot-boy, eh? Rather a joke, Jimmy!"

"Travers, Mortimer Grayson's son is here—in St. Frank's!" said Jimmy fiercely. "I've just come from his study, and he knows!"

Travers pursed his lips.

"Great Samson!" he ejaculated. "You don't mean it?"

"I do!" panted Jimmy. "He said that he had heard my name from somebody, and he knew that we were paupers, and he put two-

and-two together. When he asked me if I were Sir James Potts, I couldn't deny it. I had to admit it!"

"Pity!" said Travers, frowning. "And what sort of fellow is this Grayson? What is he—a senior or a junior? Don't forget that I am a stranger within the gates, practically, and I don't know a tenth of the fellows yet."

"He's in the Fifth Form, I think—and he boards in the East House," replied Jimmy. "He's a senior, anyway. A bullying, mocking, contemptible hound!"

"Like father, like son!" murmured Travers.

"Oh, I felt like knocking him down!" panted Jimmy fiercely. "I don't know how I restrained myself!"

"Well, it's all to the good," said Travers. "If you had knocked him down it would have meant the sack. And you mustn't leave St. Frank's, Jimmy—I want somebody to come to when I'm feeling blue. You always were a good tonic."

"Oh, don't rot, Travers!" said Jimmy Potts. "Grayson says that I've got to be his slave! Yes, he actually said that word—slave! I've got to take his orders, and I've got to obey them! If I don't, he'll give the game away, and have me dismissed!"

"There's absolutely nothing to worry about, dear old fellow," said Vivian Travers smoothly. "Don't take any notice of this Grayson fellow—leave him to me."

"To you?"

"Exactly!" nodded Travers. "Beyond football, I had no interest in life. But now the omission is filled. This fellow, Grayson, interests me. He is the son of the man who swindled your family out of their fortune—and he is a chip of the old block, according to what you tell me. There ought to be quite a lot of entertainment obtained out of Grayson."

"But—but I don't understand!" said Jimmy, staring.

"No, I don't suppose you do," replied Vivian Travers. "But that doesn't matter—that doesn't make any difference. Just carry on, dear old fellow, and let your mind be at rest. I'll see that Grayson doesn't persecute you. Don't you worry yourself in the slightest degree."

"But—but—"

"I shall take an early opportunity of introducing myself to Grayson," continued Travers. "He is probably one of the Bad Lads of the Fifth, and it ought to be easy for me to get an intro. I always get on well with the bad lads!"

"What a queer fellow you are," said Jimmy.

"So I've been told before, dear old fellow," nodded Vivian Travers coolly. "Deep, eh? Yes, I very much doubt if you'll ever get to the bottom of me. Anyhow, don't worry. Don't let this blighter give you any uneasiness. In fact, leave him to me."

"But what can you do?" asked Jimmy, in wonder.



There was a sudden rush by the yelling hordes of Renovites and Fourth Formers. Then, before Chambers and Co. could escape, they were surrounded and roughly handled, while Bryant found himself pitched backwards into the fountain pool. "Down with the snobs!" yelled the angry juniors.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I don't know yet," replied Travers. "But that's an unimportant detail. Brilliant ideas will rapidly come to me. I'm celebrated for my brilliant ideas, you know. You'll promise not to worry?"

"It's awfully decent of you, Travers, but you shouldn't do this," said Jimmy Potts earnestly. "I'm only the boot-boy, and—"

"Nonsense!" said Travers. "I don't regard you as the boot-boy. We were both at Beccleston together—both in the Fourth. To everybody else in St. Frank's you may be the boot-boy, but to me you're Potts, of Beccleston. And I'm telling you quite frankly that if I help you it will be for my own amusement. You see, I'm selfish."

"Yes, but—"

"That's all right, then," said Travers, nodding. "Going to the village, eh? Good enough! I'll buzz along indoors and join Gulliver and Bell at tea. They're waiting for me, I believe. Well, so-long, Jimmy!"

Vivian Travers strolled off, leaving Sir James Potts feeling much more comfortable in mind. Somehow there was something reassuring in Travers' manner. Jimmy no longer regarded Harold Grayson as a menace, and he went on his way to the village with a lighter heart, and with his thoughts reverting once again to football.



CHAPTER 16.

The New Recruit!

BY the time Jimmy got to the village, his high spirits had returned.

After all, why should he worry about Grayson?

Quite apart from Travers' promise, everything would probably be all right. Grayson had talked very big—he had acted like a cad and a blackguard—but when it came to the actual test, he would not be able to do much. Perhaps he would force Jimmy to run a few errands for him, but there the thing would end. Jimmy's post was in the Ancient House, and it was quite likely that he would see nothing of Grayson for days on end.

With these thoughts, Jimmy dismissed the unpleasant subject from his mind. His expression was eager as he remembered the real nature of his errand.

Jimmy had always been a very keen footballer, and at Beccleston College he had not only been captain of junior football, but he had more than once played for the seniors. His record there was one to be proud of.

For a youngster of Jimmy's stamp, this sudden and dramatic downfall in the social scale had not been so devastating as one might suppose. Jimmy was full of a natural

pluck—full of determination—and he was by nature optimistic and sunny.

He possessed a wonderful faculty for making the best of a bad job.

Grumbling was no good, anyhow. Beccleston was a memory, and now he was the boot-boy of the Ancient House at St. Frank's. Jimmy Potts was practical, and he wasted no time on idle regrets. His mother was in a good position at the Moor View School,



There was a sudden rush by the yelling horde of Removii surrounded and roughly handled, while Bryant found himself p

and so Jimmy was determined to get as much out of his new life as he possibly could.

Never for an instant had he believed that he would have any chance at football. And football, with Jimmy, was very much like an obsession.

There was a village team here—in Bellton—a junior team. Well, why shouldn't he try and join that team? Perhaps he would be rejected—but he would at least have the satisfaction of knowing that he had tried. Jimmy was always a trier. His Saturday afternoons were free, so there was nothing whatever to prevent him playing for the

village team—if the village team would have him.

According to Travers, the captain was named Joe Spence, and he was the station-master's son. So Jimmy walked straight through the village high street, and did not pause until he arrived at Belton Station.

Here, attached to the booking-office and cloak-room, was a modest dwelling-house. He found a side-door, and after a moment's

"Shan't be a minute, mother," came a cheery voice from within the house.

A moment later, a tall, lanky, freckled youth of about sixteen put in his appearance. One cheek was bulging, and he held half a slab of bread-and-butter in his hand. He looked at Jimmy in surprise.

"Hallo!" he said. "I don't know you!"

Mrs. Spence withdrew, and Joe leaned against the doorpost and inspected Jimmy Potts with interest.

"No," said Jimmy. "I'm—I'm from St. Frank's, you know. I'm the boot-boy in the Ancient House."

"Oh!" said Joe. "What's become of Tubbs, then? And what's your name?"

"My name's Potts," replied Jimmy. "Tubbs has been transferred to the Modern House. I—I was wondering if there'd be any chance for me in your team," he added diffidently. "I'm pretty keen on football, and as I'm living at St. Frank's, I thought— Well, if there's a vacancy—"

"What position?" interrupted Joe Spence practically.

"Forward, as a rule—inside-right's my favourite position," said Jimmy.

"We're short of forwards," said Joe Spence. "If you're any good, Potts, we shall welcome you. Anyhow, you can practically call yourself a Belton chap, can't you?"

"That's what I thought!" said Jimmy eagerly.

"All right, then," said Joe, taking another bite at his slab of bread-and-butter. "Could you manage to nip down to-morrow afternoon, for about half an hour? Just before tea, you know?"

"I'll try," said Jimmy.

"That's all right, then—we'll give you a trial," said the captain of the Belton Junior eleven. "And if you're all right, I'll put you in the match for Saturday. We haven't fixed up a game yet, but I dare say we shall be lucky."

"Thanks awfully!" said Jimmy, with real gratitude. "I'll do my best for you, Spence! I'm awfully keen on football, and—"

"Oh, by the way," interrupted Joe, with his mouth full, "do you know anything about the Rovers?"

Have those St. Frank's seniors taken their challenge? The Rovers are a jolly good team, you know, and they could give those school chaps a smart game."

Jimmy's face became rather serious.

"I believe the St. Frank's fellows have turned the challenge down," he said slowly. Joe Spence looked indignant.

"Well, that's a bit thick!" he protested angrily. "What's the matter with the Rovers, anyhow? Are those St. Frank's fellows too jolly proud and stuck-up to play?"

Jimmy, who believed that this was the cause of the non-acceptance of the challenge, remained silent.



mers. Then, before Chambers and Co. could escape, they were into the fountain pool. "Down with the snobs!" yelled the

hesitation, he knocked upon it. After a brief delay, the door was opened by a comely woman of about forty, with an apron round her waist. She looked at Jimmy inquiringly.

"Mrs. Spence?" asked Jimmy, raising his hat.

"Yes," said the lady. "I suppose you'll be wanting to see young Joe?"

"If you don't mind, ma'am, please," said Jimmy Potts. "It's—well, it's about the football."

Mrs. Spence nodded, and turned her head.

"Joe!" she called. "Here's one of your friends called for you."

"Thought so!" granted Joe Spence. "My! There'll be a regular row in the village when this gets about! Them school chaps might have had the decency to accept, you know!"

"Yes," said Jimmy, "but—but that doesn't make any difference to me playing, does it? I mean, the Rovers aren't connected with your team, are they?"

"Not likely!" said Joe, with a grin. "Our team? Why, our lot is only a kind of rag-time affair compared to the Rovers! The Rovers are in the League, and they're all jolly good players. Most of our chaps are only kids. Still, we do try!"

This wasn't very encouraging, but Jimmy Potts was philosophical. At all events, he was certain of some football—although there was no guarantee as to the quality.



CHAPTER 17.

The Big Idea!

SNOBS!" said Handforth angrily. "That's what they are—snobs!"

"Oh, rather!" said Church, in a mechan-

ical sort of way.

"You bet they are!" declared McClure stoutly.

Handforth & Co. were at tea in Study D of the Ancient House, and Handforth, as usual, was laying down the law. But as he had already told Church and McClure at least fifty times that the seniors were snobs, the statement was beginning to lose its novelty.

"And something's got to be done!" said Handforth darkly.

"Yes, old man," agreed Church, nodding.

"Naturally!" said McClure.

It was far safer to agree with Edward Oswald Handforth when he was in one of these moods. Neither Church nor McClure knew exactly what could be done, and they held the private opinion that nothing *would* be done. At the same time, it was just as well to let Handforth have his say.

It was much easier than arguing, and this policy also had the advantage of keeping Handforth in a good temper.

"I'm jolly glad that you chaps are willing to support me," he said, thumping the tea-table. "The Senior School has disgraced St. Frank's. That's what it comes to, in

blunt language. The Bellton Rovers, in the best of good spirits, have challenged the school to a match—and the seniors turned it down! Why?"

"Eh?" gasped Church, who had allowed his thoughts to wander.

"Why?" thundered Handforth. "Because they're a lot of snobs!"

"Oh?" said Church, with relief. "Snobs, eh? You mean the seniors? Oh, rather, Handy! What a chap you are! Always saying something new and novel!"

Handforth gave his chum a suspicious glance.

"I don't want any sarcasm, either!" he snapped. "We've got to decide——"

A tap sounded on the door, and the next moment Nipper projected his head into the room.

"Meeting called in the common-room—within five minutes," he said briskly. "Important, you chaps!"

Handforth spun round.

"A meeting?" he repeated. "What about?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I've got a little idea that I want to put before the Form," said Nipper. "It's about the seniors—about that challenge from the Bellton Rovers."

"By George!" said Handforth. "I'm thinking of an idea——"

"Don't trouble, old man," interrupted Nipper hastily. "I've thought of one already—and you don't want to put your brain to a greater strain than is necessary."

Nipper vanished, and Church and McClure grinned with appreciation. But those grins had vanished from their faces by the time Handforth looked round at them. They were both as solemn as owls.

"Cheeky ass!" said Handforth gruffly. "Does he think that his idea is better than mine?"

"But you haven't got an idea, old man," said McClure gently.

"Eh? Well, perhaps I haven't—yet!" admitted Handforth. "But I shall soon get one."

However, much to the relief of his chums, he didn't try. He was far too curious to know what Nipper's plan could be. So the chums of Study D hurried out and made their way to the common-room.

They found a full gathering of all the Remove footballers. There were quite a number of other juniors there, too—fellows who seldom appeared in the Junior elevens. Naturally, a strong force had come over from the West House, headed by Reggie Pitt.

"Speak, O Oracle, for we await thy words of wisdom," said Reggie cheerfully. "In other words, Nipper, old man—spill it!"

"Yes, I think we're all here," said Nipper, nodding. "Well, the idea isn't much——"

"We didn't expect it to be!" interrupted Handforth. "You wait until you hear my idea——"

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"Dry up, Handy!"

A storm of protest arose, and Handforth was obliged to subside.

"Well, in a nutshell, it's this," said Nipper, when quietness had been restored. "I rather think that these snobbish seniors need a lesson. I'm ashamed of them—although I don't believe, for a moment, that Fenton could help himself."

"He's the Senior captain—and he ought to have helped himself!" said Handforth sternly.

"There's something pretty rummy about the whole affair," went on Nipper. "Anyhow, we needn't bother ourselves with it. They've refused to play Belton Rovers, and my idea is just this. Why not invite the Bellton Junior team to play a match here—on our own ground—on Saturday afternoon?"

There was an immediate buzz.

"The junior team?" said Handforth, staring. "Never heard of it!"

"Neither have I!" said Tommy Watson.

"Well, it's not exactly a team," amended Nipper, with a grin. "According to all I've heard, it's rather a ragtime affair—it was only formed this season, you know, and didn't really get going until after Christmas."

"Are there eleven men in it?" asked Reggie Pitt dubiously.

"I think so," chuckled Nipper. "Anyhow, Joe Spence, the station master's son, is the skipper—and we know he's a decent sort of fellow."

"Well, it would be a bit of a lark!" said Reggie Pitt, smiling. "And, by Jove, wouldn't it teach those seniors a lesson, too! They're too snobbish to play the Rovers—and yet we have these village kids up here, and give them a match on our own ground!"

"That's just the idea!" nodded Nipper. "We haven't any fixture for Saturday, so why not have some sport?"

Handforth pursed his lips.

"It's a rummy thing," he said slowly, "a jolly rummy thing. I'm jiggered if that's not the idea that I was going to get!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you know you were going to get it?" grinned Pitt. "Good old Handy—always late for the fair!"

"You silly fathead!"

"But you approve of it, don't you?" asked Reggie, with mock anxiety.

"Well, not exactly," said Handforth. "It's a pretty rotten idea—"

"And yet it's the one you were going to think of yourself!" murmured De Valerie.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "I—I mean, it's a jolly good idea, really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it'll teach those seniors a lesson!" roared Handforth, as the whole Common-room yelled. "Why shouldn't we play these village chaps?"

"If you ask me, it's a crazy idea!" said Hubbard.

"We didn't ask you—so that's that!" replied Nipper promptly.

"I agree with Hubbard!" said Gulliver sourly. "By Gad, it's come to a pretty pass when we've got to play against a crowd of village archers!"

"Too jolly thick!" said Teddy Long, with a sniff.

But these dissenters were in a minority. They were, after all, the nonentities. Vivian Travers was enthusiastic in his approval of the plan. Rather to the surprise of everybody, he heartily endorsed it.

"The very scheme!" he declared. "Good will all round. That's the idea! After all, isn't the son of a station master just as good as the son of an earl? And isn't a boot-boy as good as a baronet?"

He chuckled heartily at that last remark of his—but nobody else in the room knew of its true significance.



CHAPTER 18.

Excitement in the Village!

HANDFORTH was essentially a "do it new" fellow.

"Dry up, Travers!" he said, frowning upon the new boy. "You're not on in this act, anyhow—and it's like your nerve to put in your spoke! You're only a new kid!"

"Sorry!" said Vivian Travers languidly. "But I rather thought I was interested. As a member of the team for Saturday—"

"Oh, yes—I'd forgotten!" interrupted Handforth. "Nipper's been ass enough to give you a place in the team, hasn't he? You're jolly lucky—considering that you're a new kid! Well, come on!"

"Are we going somewhere?" asked Travers politely.

"Yes!"

"Then I'm with you, dear old fellow," said Travers. "I'm always ready for an evening out. The village? Is there any chance of a cheery game of billiards? Do we indulge in a little flutter—"

"No, we don't!" roared Handforth. "You howling ass! We're going down to the village to see Joe Spence!"

"Ah, better still!" nodded Travers coolly. "I don't mind admitting that it is one of the passions of my young life to meet Joe Spence. A way with all thoughts of revolry and dissipation! Let us now wallow in football!"

"You're mad!" said Handforth pityingly. "As mad as a hatter!"

"So I have been told before," nodded Travers. "Well, well! Are we all ready, dear old fellows? Good!"

"Yes, we might as well go down, I suppose," said Nipper, nodding. "There's nothing like getting the thing fixed up straight away. We'll see Joe Spence, make the match an official fixture, and then we'll come back and broadcast it throughout the

school. My hat! That'll make the seniors sit up and take notice!"

"Rather!"

"Good old Nipper!"

"We'll show the village chaps that we're not all snobs!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorpe. "I must be allowed to remark, dear old fruits, that the scheme is jewelled in every hole. I'm dashed if I won't drag myself out, and stagger down to the village with you."

Quite a party of Removites set off, five minutes later. They were led by Nipper & Co., and the chums of Study D. All the members of the Elexen were included in the party, and quite a few non-players came, too.

It was dark by this time—not that the juniors cared. For Nipper had been to the Housemaster, and had obtained a special pass for the whole crowd of them. Nipper had promised, however, to be responsible for them all, and to see that they were back within gates before the end of an hour.

"We'll go straight to Joe Spence's house," said Nipper. "He may not be there, but if he isn't his mother will probably be able to

tell us where to find him. He's one of the village boy scouts, anyhow, so he might be—"

Nipper broke off, for his attention had been distracted by a concerted yell from a number of village youths who were just within sight.

The St. Frank's party had crossed the bridge which spanned the River Stowe at the end of the village. They were now in the High Street, and the gleaming lights from one or two village shops glowed ahead, on either side of the picturesque little thoroughfare.

"What's the row about?" asked Reggie Pitt wonderingly.

"Yah! St. Frank's chaps!"

"Snobs—snobs!"

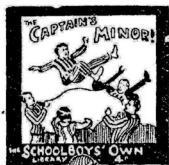
"Pelt 'em, you fellows!"

"Not 'arf, we won't!"

"Snobs!"

The Remove footballers came to a halt uncertainly. Altogether, there were sixteen or seventeen of them. But this crowd of village boys numbered anything from twenty-five to thirty. It was quite obvious that a

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meeting had been in progress in the village street—and it was equally obvious that the subject of that meeting had been the non-acceptance of the Belton Rovers' challenge.

"I say, we'd better explain things—quickly!" said Nipper. "These chaps will get rough, and—"

"Let 'em!" said Handforth aggressively. "If they want a fight, we'll give 'em one."

"You silly ass!" said Church. "We don't want to fight!"

"Good gad!" said Archie. "The lads of the village are absolutely whizzing to the attack! Tally ho, and all that sort of thing!"

"Hi!" yelled Nipper, charging forward. "Just a minute, you fellows! You don't understand! You don't—"

But the rest of Nipper's words were drowned in the yell of rage that went up. The crowds of village boys were charging down, and they were intent upon mischief.

The excitement had grown with extraordinary rapidity. For the St. Frank's footballers had arrived at the crucial moment—just when the village meeting had passed a resolution of condemnation against St. Frank's.

"Steady, you idiots!" panted Nipper, as he struggled. "We've come down especially to—"

"Let him have it, Bill!" shouted Jem Potter.

And Lumpy Bill, the bally of the village, prepared to "let Nipper have it." But Nipper, who was never reluctant to get in a pinch at Lumpy Bill, acted first.

Crash!

He delivered a beautiful right-hander, which sent Lumpy Bill reeling back. It was the signal for a roar of rage from the other villagers. They all came crowding round, and it really seemed that the affair would work up into a first-class riot.

Lumpy Bill was obviously the instigator of all the trouble. He and Jem Potter had been egging the village boys on.

At the moment, Handforth was busily engaged with Ernie Sprigg, the cobbler's son, and Alf Catchpole—the brother of the Belton Rovers' skipper—was going hammer and tongs for Reggie Pitt.

Harry Belcher and Tom Biggins were prominent among the village boys, too. Quite a number of these fellows were respectable youths—who ordinarily had nothing whatever to do with Lumpy Bill. Then, too, there were a choice number of real village leuts.

Nipper looked round desperately. He did not want this fight to develop. It was such an idiotic thing—so unnecessary.

"Wait a minute!" hellowed Nipper, at the top of his voice. "We've come down here to see Joe Spence—"

But again Nipper was interrupted by a prolonged yell, and the next moment the two parties were going at it hammer and tongs!



CHAPTER 19.

Harmony Restored:

JOE SPENCE came out of Binks' the confectioner's, and stared down the street in wonder.

"Crikey!" he ejaculated. "What's all that noise about?"

"Well may you ask, young man!" said Mr. Binks tartly. "Some of your friends, like as not, having trouble with those St. Frank's boys!"

A frown crossed Joe's brow.

"Well, them St. Frank's chaps have asked for it, haven't they?" he growled. "Fancy them refusin' to play the Rovers! Sauce; I call it! They're only a lot of snobs—"

"And while you boys quarrel, I suppose I must starve?" demanded Mr. Binks, with much annoyance. "In all probability, these boys were coming down to make purchases—"

"I'll go and see about it, Mr. Binks," said Joe.

He hurried off, and he noted that many other shopkeepers had come to their doors, and were gazing down the street. All the noise seemed to be coming from the lower end of the thoroughfare, where there were hardly any lights.

Joe arrived just as the scrap was developing into a genuine fight, and he went charging in, bent upon making a few inquiries.

"What's all this about?" he demanded, at the top of his voice. "What are you chaps fighting about?"

"Is that you, Spence?" roared Nipper, from the heart of the fight.

"Yes!" bawled Joe.

"You're the chap I want!" shouted Nipper. "I've come to offer you a match for Saturday!"

"What!"

"A match—for Saturday!" thundered Nipper.

Joe Spence jumped about a foot into the air.

"Here!" he panted, fighting his way through the struggling boys. "Half a minute, you chaps! Steady on! It's Nipper—the St. Frank's Junior Skipper! Don't you understand, you idiots? He's offered us a match!"

"Crunch!"

"Stop it, you chaps!"

"We didn't know anythin' about it!"

"It's all spoof!" shouted Lumpy Bill. "They're just tryin' to pull your leg, Spence, you blockhead!"

"Oh, you're here, are you?" shouted Joe Spence angrily. "I might have known it! Don't you fellows take any notice of Lumpy Bill! He's always tryin' to make trouble!"

"And he's found it this time, too!" said Handforth fiercely.

"Steady, old man!" gasped Nipper. "Don't keep it up!"

He found himself face to face with Joe Spence, and the others crowded round, excited, bruised, disheveled and breathless.

"Hold on, you fellows!" said Joe. "Evenin', Master Nipper! Was that right, what you just said?"

"Of course it was right," said Nipper. "We're the Remove Eleven, with a few other chaps, and we came down especially to offer you a match for Saturday."

"Crikey!" said Joe. "Why didn't you say so?"

"I've been trying to say it for five minutes past," retorted Nipper. "We know that the seniors have refused to play Bellton Rovers, and we don't approve of it—"

"Good old Nipper!"

"He's a sportsman, he is!"

"I hope we're all sportsmen," said Nipper. "I believe there must be some misunderstanding about Bob Catchpole's challenge."

"They've refused Bob the game, haven't they?" asked Alf Catchpole aggressively.

"Now, you be quiet, young Alf!" said Spence. "You know jolly well that Bob had some trouble over at Midshott last week. Maybe them St. Frank's seniors have heard about it."

"What was that?" asked Nipper.

"Oh, nothing much," said Alf. "But my brother was accused of fouling, and the League nobs are goin' to hold an inquiry about it. It's all rot, of course. Bob ain't the kind of chap to foul. One of the cleanest players in the Rovers!"

"Oh-ho!" said Nipper. "Perhaps this explains the milk in the coconut! Perhaps our seniors aren't such snobs, after all. Anyway, you can take it for granted, Spence, that we're not snobs. We want you to play us on Saturday—on our own ground."

"You mean my team—the Junior Eleven?" asked Spence eagerly.

"Of course I do!"

"Then you're a good 'un!" said Spence, excited and delighted. "And what's more, Master Nipper, I want to apologise for these chaps settin' on you as they did. They ought to be ashamed of themselves!"

"Don't mention it!" smiled Nipper. "Merely a misunderstanding."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie Glenthorne, adjusting his collar. "I mean to say, an apology puts everything absolutely right, what? I'm dashed glad, laddies, that the trouble has ceased. Odds horrors and confusion!" he added, in a startled voice. "Some foul blighter has absolutely shoved a yard of ventilation into the good old bags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind, Archie—you've got plenty of other bags in your wardrobe!" grinned Nipper. "Well, that's fixed, you chaps?" he went on, turning to the village boys. "You'll turn up on Saturday? Half-past two, sharp, don't forget. We'll give you a good game."

"I dare say you'll lick us, too!" said Ernie Sprigg. "Still, we'll do our best."

"You bet we will!" remarked Alf Catch-

pole. "Lumme! A game against the St. Frank's chaps. We are comin' up!"

Complete harmony was restored, and the village boys were so overjoyed that they were sincere in their repeated apologies. The St. Frank's fellows had come down to offer them a match and they had set upon them! Certainly an apology had been essential.

Lumpy Bill and his own particular clique slunk away—only too glad to get out of further trouble. Much to their consternation they had found themselves getting the worst of the fight. And now they cleared off because they had an inkling that Joe Spence and his sturdy friends would set upon them on their own account.

"It's always that there Lumpy Bill!" said Alf indignantly. "It was him who started all the trouble."

"Blow him!" said Joe Spence happily. "These young gents have offered us a match, an' we're honoured. It ain't as if the Bellton Juniors are a proper team. We haven't had any real good fixtures yet. But, crikey, we'll try to show what we can do on Saturday!"

And so everybody was happy.

The village footballers unanimously declared that the St. Frank's boys were sports, after all, and Nipper and his companions went back to the school fully content. They had proved that St. Frank's did not consist of snobs, and they were looking forward to Saturday's match with a good deal of interest and amusement.

Of course they would whack these village boys into a cocked hat—but, at the same time, the match would probably be a novelty.



CHAPTER 20.

A Surprise for the Remove I

JIMMY POTTS, the boot-boy baronet, was hovering a b o u t anxiously in the Ancient House lobby,

later on that evening.

It was nearly his bed-time, and he was full of a deep concern. Every time footsteps sounded he pretended to be busily pinning something on to the notice board. Already he had pinned an unimportant sheet on that baize six times.

"I'd better give it up!" he muttered desolately.

Footsteps sounded again, and he hurried towards the notice board. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Vivian Travers stroll languidly out of the Junior passage into the lobby. In a flash Jimmy turned, and his eyes were gleaming.

"I've been waiting to speak to you, sir!" he said, in a low voice.

"Great Samson!" ejaculated Travers.

"What are you siring me for?"

"Somebody might hear—"

"Come along to the study," said Travers



The St. Frank's footballers stared in astonishment as they saw that Jimmy Potts wore the Belliton Junior colours. "But this is all wrong!" ejaculated Handlorth, striding up. "Potts is a St. Frank's chap!"

obligingly. "If you wanted to see me, why on earth didn't you come straight in?"

"I—I thought it would look—well, funny," said Potts. "I don't want anybody to suspect—"

"You'll be having all sorts of people suspect if you indulge in this sort of thing," said Travers, as he propelled Jimmy towards Study A. "You'll be far safer if you come straight to my study and walk in. If Gulliver and Bell are there you can simply 'sir' me, and say that I'm wanted outside."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Jimmy.

"Brains!" nodded Vivian Travers. "That's what you want, dear old fellow—brains! Come on in!"

They went in, and Jimmy was greatly relieved to find that Gulliver and Bell were not there.

"I say, Travers," he said eagerly, "is it true that the St. Frank's fellows—the Remove team—are going to play the villagers on Saturday afternoon?"

"Perfectly true," said Travers. "I'm in the Eleven, as a matter of fact."

"Then—then I shall be playing against you!" panted Jimmy. "Don't you understand, Travers? I went down and saw Joe Spence this evening, and he's promised to give me a chance in the village Eleven!"

"Good man!" said Travers heartily. "That's the stuff! You haven't wasted much time in getting to work, Jimmy! You always were hot on football, weren't you?"

"But—but will this make any difference?" asked Jimmy anxiously. "Do you think the fellows will object?"

"Why should they object?" asked Vivian Travers. "You're just as good as any of the village chaps, aren't you? A jolly sight better I should think! And as for playing football—well, you'll leave them all on the starting line. In fact, my son, between you and me and the poker, you're going to give the Remove team a pretty big shock!"

"Oh, cheeze it!" growled Jimmy. "I'm not such a wonder as all that, Travers! I'm out of form, too. I was wondering if I ought to go and see Nipper and explain!"

"Then don't wonder any longer," replied Travers promptly. "Forget it!"

"But—"

"Don't say a word about it to a soul!" continued Travers. "In fact, give Joe Spence the tip to keep it dark. Think of the surprise you'll give our chaps on Saturday! The Ancient House boot-boy turning out against the Remove Eleven!"

"They might be awfully wild!" said Jimmy doubtfully.

"Don't you believe it!" laughed Travers. "You go to bed, dear old fellow, and set your mind at rest. And as for Grayson, I hope you've forgotten him."

"Yes, nearly," smiled Jimmy. "I don't think he can harm me. The only trouble is, he might take it into his head to tell some of the fellows who I really am."

"He won't do that as long as he thinks you're going to be useful to him," replied Travers. "I've been making a few inquiries this evening, and I've learned all I want to know about Grayson. He certainly is a chip of the old block! A gambler, a bully, a twister and everything that's rocky. I don't pretend to be a saint myself, but I'm not quite such an outsider as Grayson."

He wouldn't hear any more protests from Jimmy Potts, and soon afterwards Jimmy went to bed, his mind at rest. He was beginning to feel that life at St. Frank's, as boot-boy for the Ancient House, had many more advantages than he had first suspected.

The secret was kept until Saturday, too.

Jimmy went down to the village, and he practised with Joe Spence and his team. Those village boys had had one or two surprises in their lives—but Jimmy Potts had eclipsed them all. When the villagers presented themselves at St. Frank's, on Saturday afternoon, they were looking extraordinarily confident.

It was a clear, crisp day, with a fairly stiff breeze blowing down Little Side.

The Remove footballers were already in the pavilion, and crowds of fellows had gathered round the ropes. There was a good deal of interest taken in this match against the village boys—particularly as it had been organised to prove that St. Frank's was not snobbish.

The Fourth, who had no match of their own, turned out in large numbers, and Willy Handforth and his valiants of the Third were there, too.

"Welcome to St. Frank's, old man," said Nipper genially, as he shook hands with Joe Spence. "Let's hope we have a good game. It's a glorious afternoon, and—Hallo! What the—"

He broke off, and he was staring at Jimmy Potts—who was there with all the other village boys, wearing the Belton Junior colours.

"He's playing inside-right for us," explained Spence carelessly.

"Well I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Handforth, striding up. "Is Potts playing for the village?"

"Yes," said Spence.

"But this is all rot!" ejaculated Handforth. "Potts is a St. Frank's chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be an ass, Handy," laughed Nipper. "Potts is a boot-boy—and therefore he comes within the category of Belton residents."

"Of course he does!" said Travers, with a glance at the anxious Jimmy. "Our worthy Potts will have the singular experience of playing against a lot of footer boots that he cleaned this morning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's something new, anyhow!" chuckled Reggie Pitt. "It's the first time we've ever played against our own boot-boy! Well, let's hope you play a good game, Potts, old son!"

"I'll do my best!" said Jimmy breathlessly.

"You wait!" said Spence, with a strange smile. "Just you wait!"

But none of the St. Frank's footballers took much notice of that significant advice.



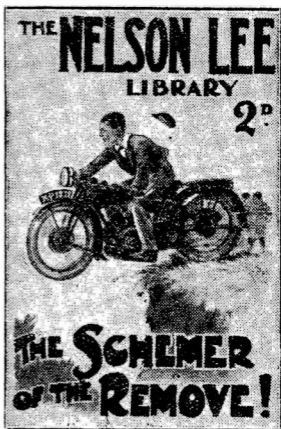
CHAPTER 21.

Playing the Game!

JIMMY POTTS, who even now couldn't quite believe that everything was all right, plucked at

Nipper's sleeve.

NEXT WEDNESDAY! ~~~~~



"I say, sir, you don't mind, do you?" he asked.

"Mind?" replied Nipper. "Mind what?"

"Me playing against you, sir?"

"My dear chap, why should I mind?" smiled Nipper. "Go ahead, and good luck to you!"

He clapped Jimmy Potts on the back, and Jimmy flushed with pleasure.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't play for the villagers," continued Nipper. "And if you show any form at all, Potts, I don't mind coaching you a bit, if you like."

"Thanks awfully, sir!" said Jimmy. "I say, sir, you're a real good 'un!"

"Rats!" smiled Nipper.

Vivian Travers, who was near by, chuckled heartily to himself. He felt that he was going to enjoy this game tremendously.

Browne, of the Fifth, had promised to act as referee, and the lanky Fifth-Former now came striding on to the field, his whistle ready.

"Come, brothers!" he sang out. "Let us not dally. It is no exaggeration to state that the spectators are quivering with eagerness and expectancy. I am all in favour of this game. Let there be goodwill and comradeship all round!"

"Well, go ahead, Browne, old man," said Nipper. "We're waiting for you!"

The teams were lined up, and a prelimin-

was the direct cause of the early disaster. Every member of the Remove team felt quite convinced that this game would be fairly easy for them.

The forwards had made up their minds to go easily, and not to score too often. The defence were frankly slack, for they felt that they would have no need to exert themselves. Handforth, in goal, was actually leaning against one of the posts, idly chatting with some fellows behind the net.

Exactly as the St. Frank's fellows had expected, the villagers were inclined to bunch themselves up, and to leave their places and to miskick.

Joe Spence was centre-forward, and right at the beginning of the game he missed a glorious opportunity of getting through. One of the St. Frank's defenders ambled up and robbed him of the leather just as he was preparing to get away.

And it was at that moment that the miracle happened.

Jimmy Potts, the boot-boy, robbed the St. Frank's half-back in turn—robbed him so neatly and so cleanly that everybody thought it was a fluke.

But the next moment Jimmy was off—off like lightning.

He sped for goal, and the Remove backs bore down upon him, grinning. They would soon dispossess this cheeky boot-boy!

With the skill of a master, Jimmy feinted, dodged, and was then off again, leaving both the St. Frank's backs in his rear. It was one of the neatest manoeuvres that the St. Frank's spectators had ever seen.

And Jimmy Potts was controlling the leather with that uncanny skill which marks the born footballer; he was moving like the wind, the ball seeming glued to his feet. A roar of yelling went up from the onlookers. The St. Frank's backs, frantic with anxiety, were racing after Jimmy at top speed—but he had them well beaten.

"Look out, Handy!" went up a yell. "Eh?" gasped Handforth. "What the—I say! What on earth—"

Slam!

From the edge of the penalty area, Jimmy Potts let fly. It was a terrific drive—a shot that left Handforth absolutely helpless. The leather curved obliquely across the goal-mouth, and banged into the net at a high angle.

"Goal!"

"Oh, well kicked!"

"Great Scott! They've scored!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Good old Jimmy!" murmured Vivian Travers, as he ran past Potts. "Same old form!"

"I—I— It was such a ripping chance!" panted Jimmy.

"It was a ripping shot, you mean!" grinned Travers. "What do you mean by telling me you were out of form?"

But then Joe Spence and his fellow players came crowding round, showering congratulations upon their inside-right. As for the

"THE SCHEMER OF THE REMOVE!"

Leaping over a deep ravine on a motor bike!

A reckless thing to do—but then, Vivian Travers is a reckless fellow, and he thinks there's nothing in it. Nevertheless, something unforeseen happens and he comes a nasty cropper; indeed, Travers is in danger of losing his life when—

Ah, what happens then?

You'll have to wait until next week when you can read about this thrilling incident—and many others, too—in the next stirring yarn of this magnificent series. To make sure you don't miss it, just place an order with your newsagent NOW!

"SONS OF SPEED!"

The next extra-long instalment of this tear-away serial is the best yet!

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

any cheer went up from the spectators as Browne sharply blew his whistle. The villagers had won the toss, and they would have the wind with them during the first half.

"Our chaps will win by about twenty goals to one, I expect!" chuckled Buster Boots, of the Fourth.

"Twenty goals to nil, you mean!" said Bob Christine. "I'll bet these village chaps won't score one! They'll never get the leather past Handy!"

"They'll have their work cut out, anyhow," agreed Boots. "Handy's a champion in goal!"

Perhaps it was this over-confidence which

Remove team, nearly all the fellows were looking blue. Nipper gave them a few sharp words.

"It's no good being slack, you fellows," he said. "Potts never ought to have got through there—although, by Jove, it was a lovely run! That young fellow is a dark horse!"

"Horse!" ejaculated Reggie Pitt. "More like a hare!"

"Come, brothers—come!" said Browne. "Let the battle continue. In your consternation at the prowess of Brother Potts, do not let the game be delayed."

The teams lined up again, and play re-started. But there was a different story to tell now.

The Remove Eleven felt humiliated by that goal against them, and they went all out to equalise. In no circumstances must they let that deficiency stand.

And so the Belton defence found itself harassed to breaking point during the next few minutes. The Remove forwards put their utmost efforts into their play, and following one of Reggie Pitt's famous runs down the wing, Nipper got the leather at his feet, and sent in a first-time drive that the Belton goalie hardly saw.

"We've equalised, anyhow!" said Handforth.

It was strange but true, however, that less than five minutes later, the villagers were up again! For once more had Jimmy Potts scored—and he had scored by another such run as his first. This time it had been much more praiseworthy, since the Remove defence was on the alert.

Yet they could do nothing with this boot-boy footballer! He streaked clean through them, tricking defender after defender—until he let drive a shot that Handforth only just managed to save by the skin of his teeth. He punched the leather back into play, and Jimmy's head met it—to send it whizzing, high up, into the net. And that piece of headwork of Jimmy's had stamped him, once and for all, as a footballer of extraordinary ability.

The Remove was certainly getting a big surprise!



CHAPTER 22.

A Near Thing!

WHEN half-time arrived, the score stood at 3—2.

The Remove had gained another two goals, and were one up. But, according to the spectators, this was a disgraceful score—since everybody declared that the Removites ought to have gained at least ten goals.

But, then, the spectators had reckoned without Jimmy Potts.

Jimmy had played a marvellous game, for not only was he displaying a positive genius for first-time shots, but he was constantly

going to the rescue of the defence. Time after time he had smashed up a perfect movement of the St. Frank's forwards, and had retrieved the blunders of his fellow players.

Jimmy, in fact, was playing such a game that he was the centre of all attention. The St. Frank's spectators were nearly as enthusiastic for him as the village boys who had come up to cheer their own champions.

As soon as the second half started, Vivian Travers distinguished himself by scoring a beautiful goal. From the very beginning of this game, he had been playing well, and Nipper had long since marked Travers down as a certain player for the next big junior match.

Travers had a style all his own. In this game, he was playing in the half-back line, but it was quite obvious that he was a forward; and although he seemed to be taking the game in a lackadaisical manner, he was really working hard. His passing was accurate, his timing splendid, and he had a curious little trick of hesitating and confusing his opponents.

"We're doing well this term," chuckled Reggie Pitt, during a brief breather, while the ball was out of play. "Travers is hot stuff—and we've got a boot-boy who's equal to any chap in the team!"

"Pity we can't play him for ourselves!" said Jack Grey. "He's a wonder!"

The praise was by no means undeserved. For during the next five minutes Jimmy Potts made it quite clear, beyond all question, that he *was* a wonder.

With the score at 4—2, and with the villagers seemingly in a hopeless position, Jimmy set himself out to retrieve it.

By his forceful tactics, he compelled Handforth to concede a corner, and although the resulting flag kick was by no means perfect, Jimmy leapt up with such accuracy and judgment that he got his head to the ball before any of the St. Frank's defenders could know what was happening. And in went the leather, over the top of Handforth's head.

"Well, I'm blown!" gasped Handforth blankly.

"Goal!"

"Oh, good header, Potts!"

"The man's a marvel!"

"That's three times!" gasped Handforth.

"That chap's scored three times!"

During the next minute, Jimmy Potts scored for the fourth time! It seemed altogether too absurd to be true—but unfortunately it was true. And here were these village boys, a ridiculously ragged team, equal with the Removites!

Four—four!

It seemed utterly fantastic. But, without question, Jimmy Potts was the sole and only cause. All those four goals had been scored by him, even Joe Spence showing himself to be a weakling in attack compared to the remarkable boot-boy.

However, the thing could not last, and before the game ended Nipper and Reggie

Pitt had scored, and the teams left the field with St. Frank's two goals up. But they had had to fight for their victory—they had had to fight all the time. And they had confidently told themselves beforehand that it would be a walk-over!

Jimmy Potts was surrounded by an enthusiastic, yelling crowd.

"Good man, Potts!"

"You nearly won the game for your team, Potts!"

"It's all right, young gents!" panted Jimmy, never forgetting for a moment his position. "It was gorgeous, wasn't it? I did my best, and I hope you don't mind me scoring—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd have been a silly ass, Potts, if you hadn't scored!" laughed Nipper. "But I want to know one thing, my son. Where on earth did you learn to play such ripping football? Where did you spring from before you came to St. Frank's?"

Jimmy had been fearing this question. It was impossible for him to make any reference to Beccleston. But a way out occurred to him, and he was quick with his reply.

"Why, Master Nipper, I was coached by a professional," he replied.

"Oh, you were, were you?" shouted Handforth. "Then that explains it! Did you hear that, you chaps? Potts says that he was trained by a professional!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Why didn't he tell us that before?"

Vivian Travers chuckled to himself. Potts' statement had been perfectly correct. For at Beccleston a professional had been on the spot to coach the school Elevens.

"Well, Potts, you've given us a big surprise," said Nipper. "And we hope we shall play against you in some other game. There'll probably be a return fixture—on your own ground."

"I hope so, sir!" said Jimmy eagerly.

"You played well, too, Travers," went on Nipper, turning to the new boy. "You were a bit unlucky in the second half, but if you had been in the forward-line you would have scored more than one goal. In the next game you'll play inside-left, old man."

"Good!" said Travers. "That's my favourite position."

"Where's Potts?" asked Handforth, looking round. "I want to ask him who that professional was! And I want to know where he was coached, too!"

"Better not trouble, old man," said Travers.

"I've got a sort of idea that Potts doesn't want to say much. He's a bit shy, dear old fellow. I suppose he feels it—being only a boot-boy, you know."

"Yes, leave him alone, Handy!" said Nipper.

Jimmy Potts had gone. He had seized the opportunity to slip away, having made some excuse that he had to get back to his duties.

Later on, Vivian Travers found an opportunity of seeking out this remarkable boot-boy and congratulating him fervently.

"Oh, it was gorgeous, Travers—just gor-

geous!" said Jimmy, hugging himself. "I never dreamed that I should be able to play real football at St. Frank's! How could I dream of it? It—it seemed so impossible."

Vivian Travers patted him on the back.

"Nothing's impossible, dear old fellow," he replied. "And this life is full of little surprises. You may be a baronet, and you may have blue blood in your veins—but here you are, cleaning boots for us. Somehow, I've got an idea that your life at St. Frank's will be adventurous."

"It's a lot better than I ever thought it would be, if that's what you mean," said Jimmy.

"It's a good joke, isn't it?" chuckled Travers. "I wonder what these fellows would say if I told them that you used to be Junior Captain at Beccleston College—and that you were known in the Fourth as 'Sharp-Shooter Jimmy,' because of your genius for goal getting?"

"You won't tell them, Travers, will you?" asked Jimmy anxiously. "Don't forget that if you give the authorities an inkling of my real position it would be fatal. They'd sack me at once!"

Travers smiled whimsically.

"Jove!" he muttered, half to himself. "What a sensation it would cause if they did know. Wouldn't Nipper and Handy and all the others get a shock. Why, they wouldn't believe it at first. What is that old saying? 'Truth is stranger than fiction.' How well it fits this case, Jimmy, old fellow!"

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes, it would sound rather impossible," he agreed. "Then I can rely upon you to keep silent, Travers?"

"Mum's the word, Jimmy!" Travers smiled, then added: "And just the same, I ask you to keep my little secret. Don't forget that I was sacked from Beccleston, and it is in your power to get me kicked out of here. So we're quits. I can get you kicked out of St. Frank's, and you can do the same. From now on 'silence' is our motto!"

Jimmy Potts breathed a sigh of relief. He knew he could trust Travers, and he certainly did not intend to give away that fellow's secret.

And so Jimmy Potts, the boot-boy baronet, started his life at St. Frank's. When he went to bed that night he had a feeling within him that it was too good to be true.

Perhaps there was some excellent reason for this thought. Certainly the immediate future was likely to provide Jimmy Potts with some strange adventures and with some great trials.

Incidentally, it was to provide Vivian Travers with some peculiar sport, too!

(Well, that's the first yarn in this new series, lads. Great, wasn't it? Next week's story—which is entitled "THE SCHEMER OF THE REMOVE!"—is even better. Don't forget to tell your pals—and don't forget there's only one way to make sure you don't miss it. ORDER YOUR COPY NOW!)

EXTRACTS FROM THE ST. FRANK'S MAGAZINE

STAR GAZING

By

CLARENCE FELLOWES.

In the heavens, bright blue heavens,
Twinkle out a myriad stars;
In the school when all are sleeping
Stands old Tucker, watching Mars.

Lost to time and place, he gazes
Through a telescope to view
Jewels of the mist above him
That mean nought to me or you.

Suddenly he starts as phases
Flit across the brilliant lens
Never seen before by mortal;
Faces, human faces—men's!

"What star's that?" he asks himself,
Hardly daring now to breathe
As once again those moving figures
Loom up, turn round and take their leave.

Beads of perspiration running
Down old Tucker's wrinkled face;
Excitement high with proud discovery
Of a planet's human race.

Calls the Head in jubilation,
Watches quiet as a mouse;
Head looks long, and hen looks angry,
In the distance sees a house.

Telescope has not been bearing
On the sky at all, 'tis plain;
In the distant lighted window
Moving figures cross again!

Poor old Tucker, little dreaming
Telescope is trained on hill,
Shown at last the lighted cottage,
Is convinced—a bitter pill!

All his dreams of fame and fortune
Disappearing in a flash,
Poor old Tucker, in confusion,
From his study makes a dash.

MORAL:

Never jump to wild conclusions,
Specially when you gaze at stars;
See your telescope is bearing
On a planet—fr instance, Mars!

NIPS FROM
NIPPER'S PEN!

I've often heard it said that Reggie Pitt's features are finely chiselled; but he's just had a terrific scrap with Handforth, and now they look finely hammered. If you don't believe me trot along and have a squint at him for yourselves.

There's a rumour floating around that Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorpe—what a name!—went to the Land of Nod for the latter part of the Christmas vacation. We quite believe it!

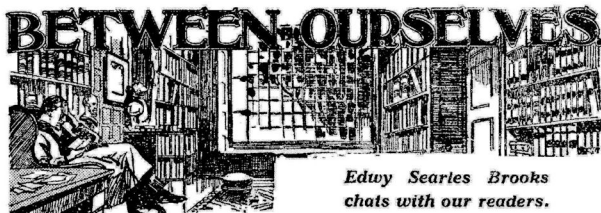
Is it true that Simon Kenmore helped to make the Christmas puddings at home, and is it true that, instead of putting the usual number of threepenny pieces in the puddings, he shoved in I.O.U.'s? We wonder!

E. O. Handforth thinks that this leap year business is all rot. We wonder what leap year thinks about him? And does this three hundred and sixty-sixth day mean an extra day in the Form-room? If so, shew me the fellow who "invented" leap year and I'll burst him!

Jack Grey has announced his intention of learning to play the saxophone. We give him fair warning if he does that there'll be a grey Jack knocking around, and a vacancy in Reggie Pitt's study!

Mr. Pycraft is anxious to know who put the gum in his slippers. Sorry, can't oblige. But if the entertaining chappie who did the dirty deed is in need of any more gum for a similar purpose, let him just say the word.

No one will grudge Teddy Long the distinction of being the Sneak of the School, but if he doesn't soon alter his ways it won't be long before he takes the long jump!



Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with our 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: EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.A. Every letter will have my personal attention. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star (*) against the sender's name. My photo exchange offer is still open; my autographed photo for yours—but yours first, please.—E.S.B

UP to the present—Thomas Portwin* (Moonee Ponds, Vic., Aus.)—the only Australian boy who has featured in the St. Frank's stories is Jerrold Dodd, who shares the Remove Study F, in the Ancient House, with Tom Burton and Hubert Jarrow. Jerry Dodd's introduction to St. Frank's College was related in Old Series, No. 312, dated May 28th, 1921. The ages of Handy & Co.—and of most of the other juniors in the Remove and the Fourth—vary between 14 and 16. The ages of the fags in the Third range from 12 to 14.

Thanks for all your welcome letters—Harry McMahon* (West Broken Hill, N.S.W.)—and I can almost include you, now, amongst my select few regular weekly correspondents. The juniors in the Remove number 46 just at present. But, as constant changes are naturally going on in a progressive Public school like St. Frank's, this number may vary from time to time. As to how many nationalities are represented at the famous old college—well, I can't exactly tell you off-hand. But one of these days, when I've got nothing better to do, I'll go round among the boys, and make a list of their lands of origin for you. Will that do?

Yes—Matthew H. Clanachan (Glasgow)—the Fifth and Third Forms are both represented in all four Houses at St. Frank's—as well as the Sixth, of course. The Remove Form is divided between the Ancient and West Houses, and the Fourth between the Modern and East Houses. The occupants of Study B, in the Ancient House, are Arthur Hubbard and Edward Long. I can't tell you exactly how many fellows there are in the school altogether. But, when I go round after those nationalities for Harry McMahon, I'll count 'em up, and let you know. But, as near as I can make out, only about 144 boys have so far been named by me in the tales.

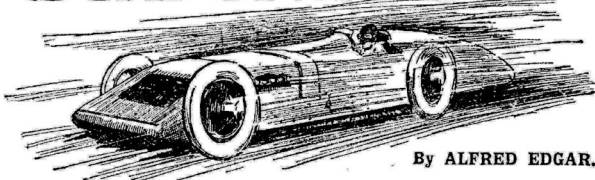
These are the St. Frank's colours—Stanley Green (Sutton, Cambs.); Ancient House—Red and Blue; West House—Mauve and Yellow; Modern House—Green and Gold; East House—Black and Orange.

G. Rudge (Plymouth), A. Collings (Kingston-on-Thames), W. Robinson (Southampton), Gordon H. Harrison* (Douglas, I.O.M.), Ernest Rae (Howrah, India), Alfred Newman (Portsmouth), Maxwell Baultrop* (Feilding, N.Z.), C. V. Hopkins* (Chard), A. J. Doyle (Sydney, N.S.W.), James Sall (Christchurch, N.Z.), "A Loyal Reader" (Wolverhampton).

Yes—Mrs. T. Goodwin (Ascot Vale, Vic., Aus.)—you are in good company, for during the past few years I have, I am glad to say, had many proofs that the married women among my readers are astonishingly large in numbers. It is good of you to pass on your copy of the Old Paper every week to another reader—who also passes it on. This all helps, in a way, of course. But the way to give us real loyal aid is for all you readers who pass your copies on and to place them in *different* hands every week. Then, not only are new readers being constantly recruited, but those to whom you formerly lent the weekly copy will probably buy it for themselves. So, by doing as I say, you will be helping us doubly. And now, if you want to give the Old Paper some real practical support, you all know what to do.

WIN—OR BUST! That's Dick Barry's motto as he sends his Kent racer hurtling over the hazardous Targa Florio course. He's got to win—he's got to beat Lynch—for was it not Lynch who "crashed" Big Bill? Can Dick do it?

SONS OF SPEED!



By ALFRED EDGAR.

HOW THE STORY STARTED—

DICK BARRY achieves his greatest ambition when he gets the chance to drive a Kent racing car in the Targa Florio—the most hazardous of all motor races. His brother—

BIG BILL BARRY, is also driving; he is the star driver for the firm. His biggest rival in the race is—

MARK LYNCH, and the two are also working against one another in an effort to break the world's record for speed. Lynch drives for the firm that builds Ince Eight cars, and they have constructed an enormous machine which they call the Ince Giant. In its tests, this car proves a failure, and because of this Lynch damages the Kent Flyer—a wonderful car, which has been built by—

"PROFESSOR" KENT, who owns the Kent firm. Dick and Bill hope that their Flyer will be repaired by the time that the Targa Florio race is over, and in this event they are using ordinary speed machines. From the start of the race, Big Bill and Lynch fight for the lead, while Dick takes fourth position on his car. Half-way round on the first lap, Dick takes a corner and Hurst, his mechanic, lets out a yell, while Dick stamps on the brake-pedal. Two cars lay smashed on the road. One is a Delage, and the other is Big Bill's machine. Bill is lying half out of the cockpit, and in the distance is a black blotch marking Lynch on his car, roaring into the lead!

(Now read on.)

The Wrecks on the Road.

DICK brought his car to a slithering halt, its radiator checking a bare yard from the wreckage of the two machines blocking the course.

He could see Big Bill lying half out of the cockpit of his wrecked car, blood on his face, and his shoulders in the dust of the road. One hand was still clamped about the steering-wheel, as though he had been trying to avert disaster right to the last.

Over the two cars, locked together at the very lip of the drop on the outside of the curve, there hung a haze of bluish smoke. At the side of the road, Bill's mechanic was twisting slowly round, his knees bent and his arms drooping—moving like a boxer knocked out on his feet. He crumpled to the ground as Dick and Joey Hurst scrambled madly from the car.

The moment that Hurst's canvas shoes

hit the road, he went tearing back. Already Dick could hear the thunderous roar of the two Bugattis that were behind him; they were hurtling up the gorge, and unless they were warned of what lay round the bend they would smash full-pelt into the wreckage.

Both the low-built, blue cars came swooping round the curve, one on the tail of the other. They saw Hurst, and through the fierce scream of their gears Dick heard the tearing whine of brakes.

He saw the front axles of the machines judder and shake, wheels kicking and stamping on the road as the tails of both cars slewed round, dust spurting from the whining tyres until they came to a quivering stop behind his own machine.

From the moment that they had appeared until they halted, it seemed but a split second. Barely had they checked than the drivers and mechanics of the

machines leaped from their smoking cockpits and came rushing in a grim-faced bunch for the tail of Bill's car.

Dick bent over his brother, hands tucked under his shoulders as he tried to drag him out. He had him lifted when he saw that the crews of the other two cars were lifting the tail of Bill's machine.

They dragged it round, hauling wildly, with a broken wheel scraping on the surface of the road as they pulled. One of them jumped to help Dick pull Bill out of the wreckage. Hurst rushed to the collapsed mechanic and hauled him off the road, just as the low, screaming shape of a Delage came slashing round the corner.

For an instant the driver braked, then he saw that the road was being cleared and he came on. He went roaring by in a smother of dust, showering grit and stones all over them—passing in the instant that the Bugatti crews got Bill's car out of the way.

Men were now scrambling down the rocky slope on the inside of the road—peasants and soldiers, police and two agile, uniformed fellows with Red Cross brassards on their arms. They came swarming across the road, picking up the Delage crew injured in the smash.

One of the soldiers caught Dick's arm as he was helping to lift his brother away. The man shook his carbine towards Dick's car, telling him to get back into the race. The crews of the Bugatti speedsters were already leaping into their cockpits, as from around the curve a Fiat came hurtling, a Mercedes and the third of the Delage team on its tail.

They went past in a welter of shattering sound, flinging grit on either side, while Dick pushed the soldier off and then bent over his brother.

Big Bill's eyes were opened now, and he tried to sit up. He stared dazedly around, blinked blood out of his eyes as he saw the wrecked cars, then Dick heard him gasping:

"Didn't—go over, did we?"

"Bill, it's all right! I'm here!" Dick bent to call the words into his ear above the smashing sound of the Bugattis' exhausts as the blue cars thundered away. Hurst came stumbling up.

"Bill—your mate's all right!" he yelled to him. "Busted arm, that's all! The Delage blokes are knocked out. How'd it happen?"

"Lynch cut—in!" Bill gasped. He dropped himself on one elbow, and only then did he seem to realise that Dick was there. He looked from the boy to

the halted shape of his car. "Here, you—you get on!" he said huskily, and he began to struggle, trying to get to his feet.

Half a dozen hands from the group around came out to support him, but he swayed heavily when he got upright, and Dick could see that he was trying to say something.

From the curve more machines came tearing, pelting past while willing hands dragged the two wrecked cars still further on to the grass that edged it before the drop.

"You—you drive on!" Bill exclaimed shakily. "Dick, get back and—carry on!"

"Are you hurt, Bill?" Dick caught his brother's arm, his own face drained of all its colour. "Sure you're all right?"

"Not hurt!" his brother gasped. "But shaken up!"

Bill grinned, then reeled back on the men who held him as his knees gave out. He made an effort and braced his legs again; quite suddenly he seemed to find strength from somewhere.

"Get back in the race!" he half yelled. "Drive on, Dick—catch that foul-ridin' swab an' lick him, boy! Get back to y'r car!"

The Last of the Team!

"H E'S all right! Come on!" Hurst half dragged Dick away, and before he realised it the boy was behind the wheel. He knocked off the hand-brake, while Hurst pushed the machine clear of the smashed cars. The wiry little mechanic swung frenziedly on the starting-handle, and the engine roared.

Yet another car erupted from around the bend, a blood-red screeching Alfa-Romeo. It shot past as Dick got going, with Hurst still climbing over the side of the cockpit. Behind, Dick got a glimpse of someone on the bend, waving a big yellow flag, which warned approaching cars that there was trouble round the curve; then all that was lost as they streaked after the wagging tail of the Italian machine.

"All out! Catch 'em up!" Hurst bawled the words in Dick's ear. "Lynch ran Bill off the road! Catch him an' beat him, Dick! Put your foot down!"

Dick put his foot down! He kept it down until they were dancing on the Alfa-Romeo's tail, then he drew out, took a bend beside the other car, and surged past on the short straightway beyond. He had a glimpse of the driver's

face, teeth gritted and hands twitching on his shifting steering-wheel, then the machine was taking the Kent's dust, and Dick was chasing the cars that had passed during the stop.

How far he was behind Lynch now, he didn't know. It would take some doing to catch up with the Ince Eight, because Bill had been going all out to hold him, but Lynch might slow a little now that he knew his chief rival was out of the race.

Dick flung the car on. He was wedged down in his seat, hands steady on the wheel. In the first burst of mad driving he forgot the heat and fumes from the engine, the burning of the sun and the jarring crash of his back against the squab every time that the car jumped on the road.

He was going to catch Lynch up, and pass him. The rotter had crashed Bill, but he wasn't going to benefit by it. Dick was going to lick him!

The thoughts beat incoherently at the back of his brain, and then merged into a fierce urge for more and more speed. The car dropped like a coloured streak off the side of the mountain, travelling by turn and twist, bend and curve down the rock-hewn road until it slammed into the purple depths of the valley, and passed a Fiat that stood pulled off the road.

Its crew was bent under the bonnet, working feverishly, never even glancing up as the Kent went crashing past. That was one less between himself and Lynch!

They spun round a hairpin turn in the heart of a little, white-walled village. Dick hardly saw the spectators there. As they came out of the turn the road opened in a long, winding drop that ended with half a mile of straight leading back to the starting-point—which, when reached, would mean that they had completed one of the five laps.

The car was weaving under its mad speed as they hurtled on. The clustered buildings of the town seemed to rise before them when they hit the straight, and on the road ahead Dick saw the short, white, dusty shape of a roaring Mercedes.

"Catch him!" Hurst reached up to yell in his ear. "Put it across him, Dick!" And he bent to the oil-pump and worked vigorously on the plunger, clinging to the side of the car with one hand.

The German was going fast, but the Kent covered the ground at a mad, smashing pace which blurred everything on either hand as she ate up the distance between herself and the Mercedes.

Dick caught the other car up just as it reached the stands. He saw the line of the replenishment pits—banked faces in the squat stands—flaring advertisements—and they were up to the dust-slashed white car, passing it as though it had been standing still.

Dick had the barest hint of excited spectators standing up and waving, and, sounding oddly through the machine's shattering roar, he caught the strains of a band—one chord in a tune which passed like a momentary glimpse of light.

"One lap done!" Hurst bawled at him, as they went booming up the sloping straight to the corner at the end.

One lap, and there were four more to do! Dick gritted his teeth and hurled the car into the turn. Somehow, the engine seemed to have got into its stride; he took turn after turn easily, with hardly a skid.

Actually, the machine was running better than when he had started. Everything about the car had warmed up to the pitch of perfection. Even Dick had warmed up; he'd got used to the speed and was driving faster now than before.

They roared to the heights of the mountain, with the blue depths of valleys opening below, and cloud-capped peaks rising on either hand. Twice they passed cars, but whether they were machines which had been ahead, or whether they were cars that had halted for repairs, Dick could not tell.

They came to the two-mile straight before the big gorge, to hurtle down the one and thunder through the other. Dick eased a little for the blind turn, beyond which Big Bill had crashed.

The two wrecked cars were still there, drawn full on to the narrow, grassy strip that edged the precipice. Half a dozen soldiers were guarding them, with a little cluster of peasants standing by. Of the crews there was no sign.

"Where've they—got—to?" Dick bel-
lowed the words to Hurst as they stormed past.

"Gone on. We've got a—station—a bit further along!" the mechanic yelled back, then added: "Five miles!"

Dick remembered the station now, one of three which the Kent racing team had established. In no time at all he saw the pennant flying from the pole. A little group stood there, and in front of them all was Big Bill.

He had his helmet off, and there was a bandage round his head. He lifted both arms high as they rocked up towards the replenishment station, and

waved his helmet wildly as, with his other hand, he indicated his mechanic.

The man was sitting on a boulder, his left arm in a sling, and his right waving them on. Both Bill and his mechanic were grinning, and the mechanics behind were cheering their heads off as Dick rocketed past.

"They're all right!" Dick gasped the words as Bill faded behind.

"Stop there next time round!" Hurst called to him. "Change all wheels and fill up. It'll be half distance!"

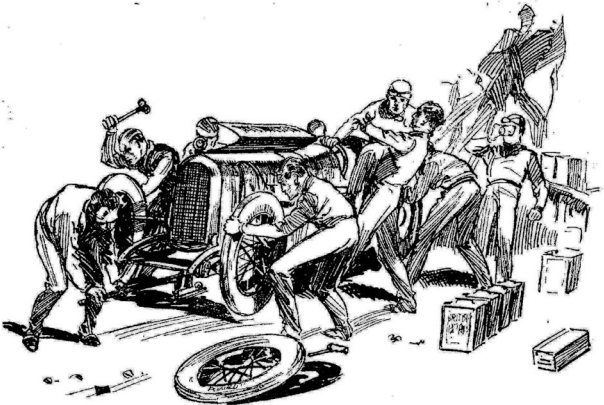
By the time that Dick had finished the second lap, he was feeling the real strain

clutter of boulders and hardy bushes—they came upon the third car in the Kent team.

The machine was drawn right off the road. The driver and his mechanic were squatting on the coarse grass, but they leaped up when Dick's car came in sight. Hurst leaned over the side of the cockpit as he saw the two signalling to him. The driver was pumping one fist up and down, and twiddling his finger above it in a little circle.

The car and the men swept behind. Hurst leaned over to Dick.

"They've broken a piston—blown a



The moment Dick drove the Kent racer into the replenishment pit, a number of mechanics rushed forward to change wheels and refill petrol and water tanks, while Bill went to the cockpit and billed Dick out. "You're lying fourth!" roared Bill.

of the race. Over his eyes came an odd, pressing feeling, almost as though he had iron bands there—that was nerve strain. His arms grew a little heavy, and his throat became parched and dry. But he forgot all that as they went past the stands and the great score-board. Hurst tried to see where they were placed in the race.

"Goin' too fast—figures all blurred!" he yelled. "Bill'll tell us when we stop! Gosh, I can do with a lime juice or somethin'! Mouth's like a brick-yard!"

Up into the mountain again, and on the first bit of straight—where the outside of the road ran steeply down in a

hole through it!" he shouted. "Only us left in the race, Dick! Keep your foot down, boy! Win or bust!"

Twenty minutes later, the car slammed up to the secret station where Big Bill was waiting, skidded a little with its tail wagging, then stopped before the petrol cans and the waiting, eager group of mechanics.

In the Targa Florio race, the men at the replenishment stations are allowed to work on the car. Before either Dick or Hurst were out of the machine, the mechanics had crashed great jacks under front and rear axles, and were smacking at the quick-release caps on the hubs.

"You're lyin' fourth—seven minutes behind Lynch!" Big Bill half lifted Dick out of his seat as he roared the words in his ear. "You'll get him, young 'un!"

Dick's feet hit the ground; they were so numbed that he could barely feel them. A grimy, excited mechanic jammed a brimming glass of liquid to his lips. The boy took it, swilled the dust out of his mouth, and then drank. Somebody else rammed sandwiches into his fist as the glass was snatched away, then Bill was talking:

"You'll get him, Dick, if you can keep it up—he's slowing! You'll be —" He broke off abruptly to bawl at the sweating mechanics. "Don't swamp the seats with that juice—mop it out! Steady with that water; keep it below the cap!"

The mechanics worked with mad energy around the machine. In an incredibly short time the two jacks were yanked away and the car stood re-shod.

"Hop in!" Bill caught Dick's shoulder. "Swing her over, Sammy!" Then he added to Dick: "We've got a board here, we'll signal you how much you've caught up on Lynch when you come round. Big figure shows how many minutes you are behind—little one what you've made up on the lap. Good luck!"

Dick paused, half in his seat.

"Bill, won't you take over now? Drive the rest of the race instead of me—"

"Can't! I got a busted rib in that smash!" The big fellow grinned as he tore open the front of his overalls. Dick got a glimpse of tightly-strapped bandages, then a mechanic had swung the engine. It roared fiercely, like a giant with strength renewed. A man snatched at the bonnet straps, buckles glimmering in the sun as he drew the broad leather bands tight.

"Off you go! Keep your foot down!"

Dick waved his hand, shouted something, then they were into the race once more, seven minutes behind Lynch, and with a hundred and sixty miles to go.

The brief respite had put new life into Dick. Once, during the next mad lap, he asked Hurst if a broken rib was a very serious injury. The mechanic bawled that it wasn't, but it hurt a lot if you bent or moved. Dick wondered how much it had hurt Bill to lift him out of the car when they stopped. All that was wiped from his mind as he recognised one of the two blue Bugattis which had been close after him at the start of the race.

He caught up the car and passed it. Ten minutes after he passed the second

of the pair, just before they again passed the replenishment station where Bill was standing. He was holding aloft a big square blackboard. On it were chalked figures; a huge three and, beneath it, a smaller four.

It meant that they were now only three minutes behind Lynch.

"He must have stopped for juice!" Hurst shouted. "We caught up four minutes on that circuit. A lap and a half to go. Step on it, Dick!"

Hurst's thin face was a mask of oil and dust. His teeth were covered with a film of grit, and his eyes glittered behind his goggles. When they ripped down to the grandstands again, with four laps behind them, and only one more to do, he riveted his gaze on the great score-board, picking out the figures.

Dick could see that people in the stands were on their feet as they hurtled past, waving their arms and shouting. The whole scene dropped behind in a maze of blurred colour, then Hurst was bawling exultantly in his ear:

"We're third! Fiat and Lynch only in front! We must be right behind the Fiat!"

Two miles up the tortuous mountain road, a trail of dust lifted ahead, showing that there was a car just in front. A mile further on, and Dick made it out as the Fiat that was in second place.

He could see the red car's knife-like tail wagging and jumping as the machine leaped on the road. They came up to it, and Dick eased a little as he waited for a chance to pass. He could see the Italian driver's mechanic roaring in the speedman's ear, telling him that they were about to be passed. From somewhere, the Fiat found ounces of extra speed, and he held Dick for five miles before the boy came to a safe, straight stretch.

There was a drop on the outside of it, but he'd got used to running with two of his wheels kicking stones over the edge of a yawning gulf. He pulled out, drew level, saw the swarthy face of the Fiat driver grinning gamely in his knowledge of defeat, and then was past and away after Lynch.

"He can't be far ahead now!" shouted Hurst. "Give her all she's got; I'll watch for Bill's signals. Neck or nothing now, Dick!"

The mechanic's voice was jerky as he bawled the words. Some of them were snatched away by the wind, and some were so slurred that Dick hardly heard them.

He didn't know that Hurst was nearly

all in, that the heat and the bumping, the fumes and the smashing roar of the car's progress had sapped his strength. When Hurst worked the auxiliary oil-pump, he jarred his head against the instrument board, knocking himself sick, because his grip on the side of the car was weak. But he wasn't going to let Dick know that.

Dick himself was—well, he didn't know how he felt. His whole body was so bruised and shaken that it had become numb. His movements were almost instinctive, and his legs seemed to be burns up to the knee. But he knew they'd a chance of victory—a chance to beat Lynch.

Through his mind flashed a memory picture of Lynch before the race:

"You driving? Then look out for yourself!" he had snarled.

The blind corner, with its huddled, broken cars just beyond, and they were up to the secret station again. He didn't even glance over to it, because inches counted now, and to look might mean a swerve that would slow the car. From the tail of his eye he glimpsed the mechanics there, waving their arms and shouting.

"Thirty seconds—behind Lynch!" Hurst gasped in his ear. "Bill's not there; gone down—to the finish to see you—come in! After him, boy!"

Half a minute behind Lynch! They'd get him. But Lynch would know how close they were behind, because the Ince people had stations out on the hills which would warn him of the closeness of the pursuit.

The dust-slashed Kent machine slid down the slopes, brakes whining on the corners. She ripped up the gradients, her gears screaming a song of sustained speed. But they saw nothing of Lynch until they came to the last little village, with a winding road that led to a half-mile straight and the finish.

Here there was a hairpin bend. Dick had to slow for it. As he slowed, spectators leaned over the palisading, thin voices piercing the car's roar as they urged him on, and around the bend he saw the Ince Eight!

"That's him!" Hurst roared, all his fatigue forgotten.

If the Kent had never gone before, she went now. The road sloped downwards, and she took it with her engine roaring on its limit. In half a mile they were up to Lynch's machine, and pulling out to pass.

Lynch pulled out as well—balking

them! Dick started to draw to the other side, when Hurst reached up.

"Wait—wait! Sit behind until you get to the straight, then put it across him! The road's wide there!"

Dick held his position until the last bend, which brought them to the half-mile, dead straight, flat road that led to the winner's flag.

He pulled out again; drew level with the Ince Eight. He could see the angle of Lynch's set jaw, and the twist of his thin lips as, from the corner of his eyes, he saw Dick coming up. But he could do nothing. They were in full view of the stands, and if he tried to balk Dick again, the stewards would disqualify him.

On, on, with first the radiator of the Kent machine nosing forward, only to fall back as Lynch found extra speed from somewhere and sent his car surging ahead.

People lining the course were cheering frantically. Never before had there been such a finish to the Targa Florio as this!

Dead level—juddering together on the broad road. The Kent was stealing the lead— inching forward—poking her radiator in front—drawing away!

"We win!" Hurst yelled.

They were clear—still going ahead. Dick saw the flag-decked stands lift up in front, with every man in sight turned to watch this neck-and-neck finish.

They swooped on, Lynch still falling behind. Dick made out a group of officials, one of them with the chequered winner's flag in his hand, waiting to slash it down on the air as the winning machine crossed the line. Dick could see the massed spectators waiting to cheer him in—yelling mechanics craning from the pits. Only a quarter of a mile to go, and they'd have done it!

They'd won! They were home! They

From his off-side front wheel there suddenly fountained a streak of black. In the same moment there came a sound like the muffled report of a gun. He felt the steering-wheel kick in his hand, then they were lurching across the road.

He was dragged half from his seat as he used all his strength to straighten the car. In the same moment, Lynch seemed to leap almost to their tail.

"Burst tyre!" Dick yelled to Hurst.

"Don't matter!" the mechanic bawled.

"Keep going!"

(Who's going to win? Can Dick keep going on with a tyreless wheel? Obviously he can't stop to change wheels, for that would mean a fatal delay. Next week's instalment is extra long and extra thrilling. Watch out for it!)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 89.

SECTION

A

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.

SECTION

B

MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.

I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me..... (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

SECTION

C

NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer)..... to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."

(FULL NAME).....

(ADDRESS).....

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms leave in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of

the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for id., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.



Our Weekly Pow-Wow

By
The Editor.

Always in a Stew.

Much sympathy will be felt for a Manchester pal who obviously worries a lot too much. The fellow who is always plaguing himself as to whether his job is well enough done, is pretty sure to come a cropper. He needs to take lots more open-air exercise and to try to get more of the cheerio spirit into him. Any ass can worry, but that won't help him to a cool head and efficiency.

I am not going to suggest that he should slack off a bit, but if he lives on his job, thinks of nothing but his job, dreams of it, and so forth, he is heading for grave trouble. Some of those slackers we hear about will beat him at the post. For, be it remembered, that there are various shapes and sizes in the slacker brigade.

I met a fellow recently who had the reputation for taking things far, far too easily, a sort of leave-it-till-to-morrow johnny. But suddenly came a call for special service, and he showed himself ready enough for the emergency. There seemed to be nothing he could not tackle. All that air of laziness was just so much bunkum. He was really a live wire of the wiriest kind. I should not half wonder if the slacker has been misjudged altogether. Maybe he is only wanting his chance.

The New Programme.

That reminds me about the new yarns which are coming. Mr. Brooks has turned out some extra extraordinarily fine yarns—stories which will make the cheery old Weekly Tonic even better worth attention than now, and well calculated to bring in hundreds of new readers. They will find the usual welcome awaiting them.

A Note of Warning.

Members of the St. Frank's League are warned against having any dealings with any persons calling themselves "high officials" or "representatives" of the League.

The St. Frank's League is run entirely from this office by correspondence, and the Chief Officer can take no responsibility for the bona fides of any person who may approach members personally with the object of organising camps, excursions, etc., under the auspices of the League.

(Continued overleaf.)

"The Rio Kid."

WHO is the Rio Kid? He is a real lad, and one of the best. Look out for this astounding newcomer, whose amazing adventures will appear each week in the pages of our companion paper, the "Popular," which is published every Tuesday. This splendid new series of Wild West tales are fresh, brilliant and full of vim. The Rio Kid is a true sport, and even his sworn foes admire him. I advise all chums to get this week's "Popular"—now on sale—and see what's doing. They are safe for thrills.

The Weekly Tonic.

A Queensland pal so describes the N.L.L. At Longreach, where he hails from, they are all dead nuts on Handforth and the merry Co. It seems to me the advice tendered by this keen supporter is jolly good.

Forming A Club.

As a rule members of the S.F.L. know all about starting a club. It may be for sports or for games of all sorts, but the procedure is much the same.

You want first to get hold of a good chairman for the opening meeting, and this fellow in the chair, once he has been elected, has got to be obeyed. It is no use throwing things at him because his ruling does not happen to please you. That's the beauty of running these things according to the old-established custom. If the right programme is followed there will be no ructions. If interruptions are allowed out of time, and no attention is paid to the tap of the president's hammer, then there's sure to be ructions. Of course, the more notions brought forward the better, but one idea has to be considered at a time.

I have had a few complaints about meetings which came to grief. This was due in the main to everybody trying to talk at once. Naturally, every serious proposal should be jotted down by the secretary in the minute book. And the best place to put the sec. is right up close to the man in the chair so that he may hear well.

OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW!

(Continued from previous page.)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Laurence W. Nelson, 17, Third Avenue, The Vale, Acton, London, W.3, wishes to correspond with readers in Australia, India, South Africa and New Zealand, as he wants to learn about life overseas. He is thinking of emigrating. All letters answered.

Henry Curtis, 65, Pevensey Road, Eastbourne, Sussex, wishes to hear from N. Gozzett, Norman Terrace, Priory Road, Dover.

Israel Herr, P.O. Box 3116, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, requires the following numbers of the "Nelson Lee Library" (old series): 6, 8, 12, 13, 19, 30, 33, 37, 46, 50, 51, 54, 55, 60, 63, 73, 76, 77, 79-85, 88, 89, 91, 99-112, 118, 120, 128. Sixpence offered for 112. Write first.

O. V. Wain, Homeleigh, 932, Upper Serangoon Road, Singapore, Straits Settlements, wishes to correspond with readers.

E. A. McLaren, 9, Sidney Road, Stockwell, London, S.W.9, wishes to hear from readers in Australia living or working on a farm. He is going out to Australia to learn farming, and would be glad of advice.

Norman Williams, 7, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, London, N.4, wishes to hear from readers who have Nos. 1-43 and 56 "Nelson Lee Library" (new series) for sale. He would also like to hear from stamp-collectors.

B. Bloch, 30, Myrtle Street, Commercial Road, London, E.1, wants to hear from football secretaries, 1½ miles of Stepney, ages 11-15; home games wanted.

A. Dyer, Box 4102, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants to hear from the Hampstead reader who asked for postcard views.

L. Cooper, 34, Bacchus Road, Winson Green, Birmingham, wishes to correspond with a reader about his own age—eleven.

Alfred Rich, 88, Blackfriars Road, London, S.E.1, wishes to hear from members.

N. Kirkman, 236, Boom Street, Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa, wishes to hear from readers in Australia, New Zealand

and America who are interested in music and books and postcard collecting.

B. J. Rixon, 91, Alexandra Road, Newport, Mon., wishes to hear from a club in his district.

H. Leslie Hyett, South Cottage, Moorend Crescent, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Glos., wishes to hear from a member who will help him form a sports club.

Miss A. Gibson, 240, Cannhall Road, Leytonstone, London, E.11, wishes to hear from girl readers only.

Fred Clark, 5, Coventry Road, Wavertree, Liverpool, wants to exchange football photos with members in Leeds, London or Colonies.

Albert Simmons, 350, Claremont Road, Rusholme, Manchester, wishes to hear from readers in India, Canada and Africa.

M. J. Mackridge, 55, Northumberland Road, Old Trafford, Manchester, wants to hear from members of the League in his district, also from a club. Keen on cycling.

J. Fawbert, 11, Herbert Road, Brighton, wishes to obtain "Nelson Lee Library" Nos. 1-12, new series.

Daniel Hughes, 2, Chemical Street, Belfast, has for sale 140 copies of the "Nelson Lee Library."

G. Bertram Thompson, 2, Newsham Road, Bowerham, Lancaster, Lancs., would like to correspond with readers in the Pacific, New Zealand, Gibraltar, Canada and Africa. All letters answered.

T. G. Rigby, c/o Box 758g, G.P.O., Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, especially overseas; any subject, especially stamps. All letters answered.

Gerald Buck, 20, Homerton Terrace, Homerton, London, E.3, wishes to correspond with readers in India, Africa and Australia who are interested in stamp collecting.

Leslie James, 76, Crown Street, Brentwood, Essex, wishes to hear from readers in his district.

Robert Locke, 122, Cox Street, Coventry, wishes to correspond with readers in Australia, Canada, Africa, U.S.A., and Portuguese and French Colonies.

W. Leach, 4, Vernon Terrace, Victoria Street, Burton-on-Trent, wants to hear from readers about wireless, also any other subjects. All letters answered.

William McGregor, 15, Cotton Street, Aberdeen, wishes to exchange cigarette cards (2,540) for boys' books.

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MAGIC TRICKS, etc - Parces, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument Invisible. Imitate Birds. Price 6d each. 4 for 1/- - T. W. HARRISON, 239, Pentonville Road, London, N.1.

All applications for Advertisement Spaces in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "The Nelson Lee Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Printed and Published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian magazine post. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 11/- per annum; 5/6 for six months. Sole Agents for South Africa: Central News Agency, Limited. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Limited; and for Canada: The Imperial News Co. (Canada), Limited.