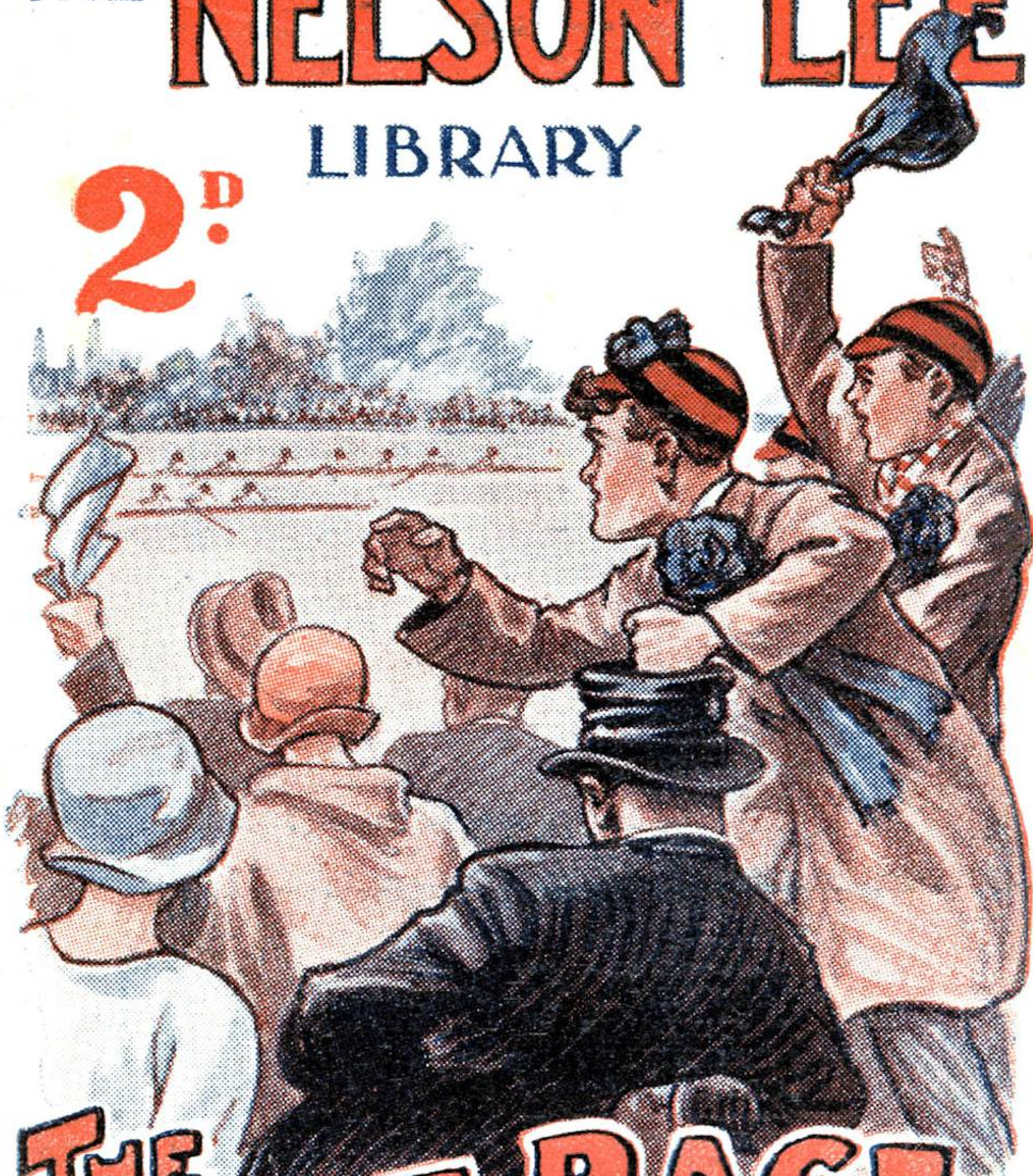


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THE BOAT RACE TRUANTS

A grand extra-long topical yarn, featuring the Boys of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 100.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

March 31st, 1928.



Splash! Thud! Squelch! The tomatoes thrown by the Boat Race night "raggers" rained upon Handforth, and he staggered back, blinded by them. "You—you ruffians!" he shouted passionately; then appealing to the audience, added: "Chuck them out, everybody! Grab them by the scruff of their necks and pitch them out!"

This Magnificent Story Contains Sport, Thrills, Fun and Adventure!

THE BOAT RACE TRUANTS!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The idea of a party of Removites going to London to watch the Boat Race is received with scorn when Handforth first makes it, for it's about one chance in a million that the Head will grant his permission; but William Napoleon Browne steps into the breach—and his fluent tongue makes the thing possible.—Ed.

CHAPTER 1.

Leave it to Browne!

LEGGO!" panted Handforth furiously. The famous leader of Study D at St. Frank's struggled with all his strength, but Church and McClure clung so tightly to him that his endeavours to free himself were futile.

"Not this time, Handy!" said Church, with unusual firmness. "Usually, we let you have your head. But there are times when we have to put a stopper on your little capers!"

"You—you rotters!" roared Handforth. "You—you traitors. By George, if you don't let me go within ten seconds, I'll smash you to pulp! I'll knock you into a couple of jellies! Lemme go, bust you!"

The struggle continued as fiercely as ever, and the three Ancient House Removites

swayed to and fro in the comparative shelter of Big Arch. It was just when matters were at this interesting stage that a tall, lean figure loomed up from Inner Court.

"What have we here" observed the newcomer, halting, and viewed the scene with benevolent interest. "Pardon my intrusion, brothers, but am I right in assuming that there is a spot of bother here?"

"Not yet!" breathed Handforth thickly. "The bother starts in about half a tick—when I get free!"

William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, shook his head reproachfully.

"Let us see if we cannot adjust this little difference," he said soothingly. "Tell me your trouble, brother Handforth. Allow the tale to flow smoothly into my responsive ear. I would point out, in passing, that this spot is more or less public."

"That's what we keep telling him," said

McClure desperately. "We're jolly lucky not to have been spotted, as it is. We shall all get lines if we're caught scrapping here!"

Browne coolly elbowed his way into the midst of the combatants, and then he proceeded to dust Handforth down. The volcanic leader of Study D was so surprised that he forgot all about "wiping up" Church and McClure.

"Now, Brother Handy, let us delve into the cause of this distressing scene of violence —"

"You howling ass!" interrupted Handforth, with a glare. "There hasn't been any violence yet! Just wait until I start!"

"Look here, Browne, I'll give you the whole thing in a nutshell!" said Church rapidly. "This idiot wants to go to the Head, so as to ask for special permission to go to the 'Varsity Boat Race to-morrow. Mac and I have told him that it's impossible, but he won't take any notice of us!"

Browne shook his head.

"This is far worse than I had feared," he said sadly. "Brother Handforth, do you not realise the difficulties of your mission? Do you not appreciate the hazardous nature of your undertaking?"

"I realise that you're talking out of the back of your neck!" said Handforth bluntly. "I've made up my mind to see the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race to-morrow, and —"

"Unfortunately, it is the Head's mind that has to be made up—not yours!" said Browne smoothly. "And I venture to predict, Brother Handforth, that if you go to the dear old gentleman with this suggestion, he will slay it with one fell blow. Have you forgotten that St. Frank's breaks up next week for the Easter vacation?"

"Of course I haven't forgotten it," replied Handforth. "But what difference does that make?"

"A great deal of difference, brother," replied the lanky Fifth Former. "The headmaster, not unreasonably, will point out that as you are naturally going to London next week it will be quite unnecessary for you to go to London to-morrow. Furthermore, why should he grant this special favour to you alone? Alas! Go to the Head if you wish, Brother Handforth, but the prospect is mottled and murky."

Edward Oswald Handforth began to look doubtful.

"Well, of course, I hadn't thought of it in that way," he growled. "As it's so near the Easter vac., the Head might cut up rusty. H'm! All the same, a little tact——"

"Precisely!" interposed Browne. "Tact is undoubtedly a quality that is essential in such an affair as this. Therefore, Brother Handforth, you are hardly the man for the job. Do not be offended by my simple words. It has been truly said that the truth invariably hurts."

"You silly ass!" frowned Handforth. "I'm jolly tactful, and if you'll leave me to myself,

I'll go to the Head and get permission to go to the 'Varsity Boat Race to-morrow."

"Not," said Browne thoughtfully, "that the idea is a bad one. On the contrary, it has its good points. I, too, would like to witness the Boat Race. And why not? Why should we not all witness the Boat Race? Why should not a few other stalwarts join us in this harmless recreation?"

Handforth & Co. stared.

"But you just said it was impossible to get permission!" said Church.

"Exactly!" agreed Browne. "Impossible for Brother Handforth. But not impossible for William Napoleon Browne. I would remind you, brothers, that *nothing* is impossible when I am in command. Leave this problem to me, and all will be well. Place yourself in my hands, and I will work the trick!"



CHAPTER 2.

Working the Oracle!

HANDFORTH & Co. were not impressed, and suspected that the long-winded skipper of the Fifth was attempting to pull their legs. It was always difficult to know whether Browne was talking seriously, or whether he was letting off hot air; and the calm way in which he had decided to interview the headmaster was decidedly suspicious.

"Look here, Browne, we don't want any of your bunkum!" said Handforth tartly. "If I can't talk the Head over, neither can you."

"In that assumption, Brother Handforth, you are sadly at fault," said Browne benevolently. "The whole question resolves itself into one of treatment. Everything will depend upon the way in which Brother Stafford is approached. We must be wily. We must indulge in a trifling amount of subterfuge. In other words, it requires a cool head and a colossal nerve to put this thing over. I venture to suggest that I possess the necessary qualifications. Leave this to me, brothers!"

"I say, Browne, do you really mean it?" asked Church, staring. "Do you mean that you're going to ask the Head for permission to go and see the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race to-morrow?"

Browne shook his head.

"It would, I consider, be indiscreet to make any mention of the Boat Race to the Head," he replied. "Indeed, it would not merely be indiscreet, but any such mention would undoubtedly chew the gears up on the spot. No, brothers, we must not be so rash. Wait here, and within twenty minutes I will return, bringing glad tidings."

Whereat William Napoleon Browne turned on his heel, and passed out of the archway. He made his way across Inner Court towards

the Head's house. Handforth & Co. stood there, staring after him.

"My only hat!" said McClure. "He means it!"

"Like his nerve!" growled Handforth indignantly. "If he can wangle the Head, why can't I?"

Church and McClure did not think it necessary to make this point clear. It would, indeed, have been risky to have pointed out that, whereas Browne was renowned for his tactfulness, Handforth was famous for his blundering. If any fellow in the whole school could "work" that pass out of the headmaster, that fellow was Browne.

And Browne, with characteristic impudence, was determined to interview Dr. Malcolm Stafford without any delay. The idea of witnessing the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race appealed to him, and, as he had a strange partiality for junior society, he decided that it would be a bright scheme to take about a dozen members of the Remove to the Boat Race, too.

How this miracle was to be accomplished only Browne himself knew.

The preliminaries were easy enough. Within three minutes, Browne was being ushered into the headmaster's private sanctum. Boldly Browne had asked for a brief interview, and his request had been granted. He soon found himself facing the kindly old Head.

"Good-afternoon, sir," said Browne genially. "Without exaggeration, I can safely say that you are looking particularly braced to-day, sir."

The headmaster smiled.

"The weather is certainly very sunny and cheerful, Browne," he said. "But you did not come here, I presume, to comment upon my personal appearance?"

"To be perfectly truthful, no, sir," agreed Browne. "The fact is, I am getting up a little select party, mainly consisting of juniors, and I was wondering if you would give us a pass for the week-end."

"Really, Browne, this is a most unusual request," said the headmaster, leaning forward over his desk. "A pass for the week-end? How many of you will there be in this—er—select little party?"

"Roughly, sir, fourteen," replied Browne promptly. "Brother Stevens, of the Fifth, and a dozen Remove fellows."

"And you want a pass for the week-end, Browne?"

"There, sir, you have it in a nutshell," nodded Browne. "But let me point out that we only desire to be absent from the early hours of to-morrow morning until tea-time on Sunday. Needless to add, I shall be in charge of the party. I think you will admit, sir, that it is unnecessary to say more. With me at the head of this band, there can be no question of risk. I shall be responsible—and, to a Browne, responsibility is the breath of life."

Dr. Stafford drummed on his desk with his finger-tips

"This won't do, Browne," he said, frowning. "You must surely realise that I cannot grant you permission to take such a party of junior schoolboys off for the week-end. What are your plans? Before I even begin to consider the project, I must know—"

"Allow me to make myself clearer," interrupted Browne gently. "I was thinking that it would be a joyous scheme for my little party to run along to Edgemore Manor. As you may know, sir, the Earl of Edgemore has recently regained possession of his ancestral home. I think you also know that the Remove Form was largely responsible for his lordship's good fortune."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Dr. Stafford heartily. "A splendid piece of work, Browne. I am proud of the fine spirit that the Remove boys displayed over that curious affair. And I am glad, too, that the old Earl of Edgemore is once again in possession of the Manor. As you say, the Remove boys served the old peer well."

"Is it unnatural, therefore, that our brothers of the Remove should desire a week-end?" asked Browne calmly. "Do I detect a light of understanding in your eyes, sir?"



CHAPTER 3.

The Magician of the Fifth!

R. STAFFORD smiled and nodded.

"Well, of course, Browne, I can quite understand now that

you have explained," he said pleasantly. "And I must say that I admire your good-nature in wanting to take these junior boys to spend a week-end at Edgemore Manor. The request is by no means unreasonable—particularly as these junior boys have been so staunch in their support of the unfortunate old earl."

Browne made no comment, but he stood there smiling contentedly. Was it his fault that the headmaster jumped to these conclusions? Was he to blame for this little misunderstanding? Browne assured himself that he was not. If the Head assumed that the party would spend the week-end at Edgemore Manor, it was entirely his own fault. Certainly Browne had not stated any such thing.

He had asked for the week-end off—for himself, and for twelve or thirteen companions. He had mentioned that they would go to Edgemore Manor—and that, if Browne's plans materialised, would be absolutely true. But had Browne said that the party would spend the week-end at Edgemore Manor? Certainly not!

As for the headmaster, he only thought for a few moments. After all, Edgemore was only a mile or two away, and it would be arbitrary to refuse this simple request. The boys had helped the old earl through thick

and thin, and now that his lordship had got over his troubles it was rather nice of the juniors to want to visit him in his own home.

"Well, Browne, I think you know what my answer will be," smiled the Head, at length. "Certainly, my boy. Certainly you may have this week-end for yourself and your companions."

"I was sure, sir, that I could rely upon your generosity," said Browne gracefully. "Have no fear, sir. Always remember that I am at the helm. I am in charge, and I will dutifully bring these juniors back to the fold by tea-time on Sunday."

"That is quite all right, Browne," said Dr. Stafford. "You will be safe enough at Edgemore Manor."

"Might I suggest, sir, that you give me a written pass?" asked Browne carelessly. "Merely a few words will do, with your autograph on the dotted line. Armed with such an official pass, we shall fear no man—we shall care not from whom any challenge comes."

"It is usual for your Housemaster to write such a permit, Browne," said the Head. "But in the circumstances, perhaps I will give it to you myself."

Browne took the slip of paper a minute later, and he glanced at it with satisfaction. He was coolness itself.

"I take it, sir, that we shall be allowed to make an early start?" he inquired casually.

"You will be free to go after morning school to-morrow, Browne."

"Allow me to point out, sir, that such a suggestion is at variance with my own view," said Browne. "I have asked for the week-end, sir—and the week-end naturally included the whole of Saturday."

"No, Browne, certainly not," replied the Head. "You must not neglect your studies."

"It is understood," said Browne, "that the three lost hours of to-morrow morning will be compensated for during the course of next week. Leave this to me, sir."

"But, really, I cannot——"

"I shall make a point of interviewing my own Form-master, sir, and also the Remove Form-master," continued Browne glibly. "I shall make it quite clear to these gentlemen that they need not worry. We may lose three hours to-morrow morning, but next week we will slip in an hour here and an hour there, until the deficit is made up. I have your sanction, sir?"

"Well, of course, if you are willing to make up for the lost time——"

"Thank you, sir!" said Browne contentedly. "Splendid! Then we shall be able to make an early start in the morning. A week-end, as you will admit, is liable to be spoilt if there is a delay at the starting-post. Good-afternoon, sir! I am intensely grateful, sir! And I trust that you will allow me to thank you on behalf of my party and myself."

"Really, Browne, you are a most persistent fellow!" smiled the Head. "I'm not at all

sure that I am doing right in giving you permission to miss lessons in the morning."

"You are acting generously, sir—and generous actions are all too scarce in these days," said Browne smoothly. "Let me again repeat that you can trust to my discretion. I will interview Mr. Pagett and Mr. Crowell, and I will make these gentlemen comfortable. Knowing, as I do, that I have your sanction, I shall be serenely confident. And I hold myself responsible for the safe return of the entire contingent."

William Napoleon Browne then bowed himself out of the headmaster's presence. He was looking cool and happy as he strode across the Inner Court. By sheer cheek he had gained his end. By a piece of colossal nerve he had not only gained the desired week-end, but he had made it possible for the party to start immediately after the sound of the rising-bell, which would be absolutely necessary if they were to witness the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, for it was timed to start at 10 a.m.

Only the headmaster knew nothing of this subsidiary plan. Why worry him with such details? Why bother him with trifles? He was content in his own simple, placid way. It would be a pity to disturb the dear old boy's peace of mind by any unnecessary reference to the Boat Race!



CHAPTER 4.

Browne Explains!

"WELL?" demanded Handforth eagerly. The chums of Study D were still waiting in the shadow of Big Arch. It was nearly tea-time now, and most of the other fellows had gone indoors. But Handforth & Co. were determined to remain outside until Browne came back with his report. And Browne had just arrived.

"All is well, Brother Handforth," said the Fifth-Former calmly.

"You—you mean that you've done the trick?" ejaculated Handforth, staring. "You've got the Head's permission?"

"Here, on this slip of vellum!" replied William Napoleon Browne, displaying the magical permit. "But let us not discuss this matter out here in public. A meeting is at once necessary, as there are a few points to be discussed."

"What the dickens have you been up to, Browne?" asked Church curiously. "You're spoofing, aren't you? You haven't really got permission for us to go and see the Boat Race, have you?"

Browne held up a warning finger.

"In all the circumstances, it will be advisable to make no open reference to the Boat Race, Brother Church," he said, lowering his voice. "I urge you to be cautious. Discretion is very necessary here. Therefore,

let us gather the clans, and then we shall know where we are."

The clans, as reeled off by Browne, turned out to be Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson of Study C, Archie Glenthorne, Vivian Travers, Jimmy Potts and Ralph Leslie Fullwood. As an afterthought, Browne included Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey of the West House; and Stevens was naturally a member, since Stevens was Browne's bosom chum of the Fifth.

Within ten minutes the party had collected together in Browne's own study, in the Fifth Form passage. Nobody knew what the game was, but it was obvious that Browne had something special up his sleeve.

"We are all here?" asked Browne, at last, as he looked round the crowded apartment. "Good! Brother Horace, kindly stand near the door. If any intruder ventures to enter, be good enough to show him no mercy."

"I'm blessed if I know what you're driving at, Browne," said Stevens. "If you've invited all these fellows to tea, I'm sorry for them. We've only got half a loaf of bread, and——"

"A few simple words will suffice," interrupted Browne. "Here we have fourteen staunch and true brothers. We all know one another—we all trust one another. We are, in fact, all possessed of the same desire. Our one common inclination, at this period of the year, is to seek the Thames-side, somewhere between Putney and Mortlake, and to witness the annual struggle between the Eights of Oxford and Cambridge."

"What are you getting at, Browne?" grinned Nipper. "Of course we should like to see the Varsity Race. But how the dickens can we?"

"Merely by placing yourselves entirely under my wing," replied Browne. "Be good enough to regard yourselves as my protégés, and all will be well."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie Glenthorne. "You don't absolutely mean to say——"

"To-morrow, in the early hours, we shall take our departure from St. Frank's," said Browne calmly. "We shall, for the sake of appearances, go on our bicycles. We shall make a detour through Edgemore, calling upon Lord Edgemore by way of diversion. Then we shall proceed onwards to Bannington, and catch the early train to London. We shall therefore arrive in full time to get to the course, and, with any luck, we shall witness this herculean struggle between our great Universities."

"Rats!" said Reggie Pitt, grinning. "You can't kid us like that, Browne!"

"I can assure you, Brother Pitt, that I am talking in all earnestness," said Browne. "Indeed, in proof of my words, I have here a permit, signed by Brother Stafford himself."

"A permit!" yelled half a dozen juniors, in one voice.

"A permit!" said Browne smoothly.

"But—but it's impossible!" exclaimed Fullwood, staring. "We know you're a bit

of a marvel, Browne, but you couldn't have wangled a thing like this with the Head!"

"It is quite true," went on Browne, "that the headmaster is labouring under the delusion that we shall spend the week-end at Edgemore Manor. But what does that matter? It is not for us to enlighten him."

Nipper opened his eyes wider.

"So the Head thinks that we're going to spend the week-end at Edgemore Manor, eh?" he said shrewdly. "You deep bounder, Browne! So that's the game? I hope you haven't been telling fibs to the Head? It will be hardly the thing to deliberately deceive him——"

"On the contrary, Brother Nipper, I made a point of being perfectly candid with the Head," said Browne. "I asked for the week-end off—for my party and myself—and I obtained Brother Stafford's official sanction. Perhaps I made some mention of Edgemore Manor—but if the Head cares to draw wrong conclusions, who am I to correct him?"

And William Napoleon Browne, to the gleeful delight of his audience, proceeded to explain exactly what had taken place in the Head's study. Before another five minutes had elapsed, the juniors were all trying to clap Browne on the back at the same time. They were excited and delighted. The apparently impossible had been achieved. On the morrow they were to travel to London, to see the great race between Oxford and Cambridge!



CHAPTER 5.

The Programme!

HANDFORTH took a deep, deep breath. "Well, dash it, I don't mind admitting that this wheeze of old Browne's is a lot better than mine!" he said handsomely. "It's not merely an achievement—it's a work of art!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Absolutely!"

"Good old Browne!"

The captain of the Fifth bowed.

"Having dispensed with the congratulations, let us now proceed with the necessary preliminaries for to-morrow's spree," he said. "I shall, of course, make a point of running over to Edgemore Manor this evening, in order to have a few confidential words with his lordship. I venture to predict that the good old earl will come up to the scratch nobly, without any application of the spur."

"But I thought you said that the Edgemore Manor business was only a blind?" asked Stevens.

"Precautions, Brother Horace, are always advisable," replied Browne smoothly, "and I consider it essential that our mutual friend, the earl, should know a few of the details. Imagine what might happen if we neglected

this simple measure. A chance meeting of the Head and Lord Edgemore—a few polite words—and in less than no time the whole of our plan would become unstuck; upon our return we should find ourselves splashing about in the oxtail!”

“You’re quite right, Browne,” said Nipper, nodding. “I thought you were only joking at first, but I really believe that you mean it. Why on earth did you select a crowd of Remove fellows, though?”

“Strange to tell, Brother Nipper, I have a preference for youthful society,” replied Browne blandly. “It may be incomprehensible to you, but it is nevertheless a fact. Greatly as it hurts me to say it, the seniors, as a whole, give me a pain. I may be a member of the lordly Fifth, but my spirit is still in the Remove. In other words, I enjoy a good old jape as much as any of you infants.”

“Well, thanks awfully, Browne, for thinking of us like this,” said Fullwood heartily.

“Begad, rather!” nodded Sir Montic.

“You’re a brick, Browne!”

“Hear, hear!”

Browne modestly lowered his gaze.

“I would remind you, brothers, that the situation is becoming embarrassing,” he said, with a little cough. “To one of such a retiring nature as myself, this situation is trying. Let me urge you, therefore, to venture forth upon your usual avocations. There will be another meeting at this historic spot half an hour before bed-time. Is that agreed? Splendid!”

Even after the juniors had dispersed, they could hardly believe that William Napoleon Browne had been serious. An hour later, many of them were beginning to doubt. Perhaps old Browne had been spoofing them, after all. He was a renowned practical joker.

Yet there had been something in Browne’s manner which told them that he had really worked the oracle; and later, at the second meeting, their doubts were completely dispelled.

“Good news, brothers!” said Browne, by way of opening the meeting. “Let me hasten to inform you that I have been in conference with Brother Archibald, and it is no exaggeration to state that Brother Archibald has proved himself to be a true and trusty sportsman.”

“Oh, I say!” protested Archie. “I mean, dash it! Absolutely not, Browne, old cheese! What I mean is, it’s absolutely nothing!”

“We will leave the populace to decide,” replied Browne. “Brother Archibald has telephoned to his people, and all is well. It so happens that Brother Bertie is down at the old ancestral home at the moment, and his flat in London is therefore locked up.”

“Absolutely!” nodded Archie genially. “Dear old Bertie is a real sport, don’t you know. Some of you chappies have been to his flat in Jermyn Street, haven’t you?”

“Rather!” said Handforth. “You’re talking about Captain Harold Bertram Glen-

thorne, aren’t you? Your eldest brother, Archie? The one who’s in the Royal Air Force?”

“That’s the blighter!” nodded Archie. “Well, you see, Browne and I have been talking about this, and we’ve been talking about that, and we’ve absolutely mapped the whole dashed thing out. After seeing the Boat Race we’ll rally round at Bertie’s flat. I imagine that tea will figure in the programme at this point—but afterwards we will trickle to a good old show, then sleep at the flat, and catch the early train back the next morning. Not so frightfully dusty, what?”

“Why, it’s too gorgeous for words!” said Church breathlessly. “I say, Browne, have you really planned all this?”

“Let me further explain that I have interviewed the Earl of Edgemore,” said Browne smoothly. “And it is no perversion of the truth when I state that the old boy is full of glee at the prospect. He has entered into the spirit of this little game with all the enthusiasm of a sportsman. I had a few choice words with him, and he has agreed to everything. Officially, we shall be his guests from to-morrow morning onwards. If anybody inquires at Edgemore Manor for us, the earl will simply say that we are out. So, brothers, every avenue is protected—and in the morning we will start forth on what might accurately be termed a high old time!”

When the meeting broke up it was generally voted that William Napoleon Browne was a giant amongst men!



CHAPTER 6.

The Boat Race Truants.

IT was mutually agreed that nothing should be said to any of the other fellows.

Of course, the real object of this week-end was kept an absolute secret. But Browne and his fellow conspirators did not even mention to a soul that they had a special pass to spend the whole of Saturday ostensibly at Edgemore Manor. It was felt by the plotters that there would be a good deal of jealousy expressed if the project were generally talked about.

So it was a case where silence was golden.

Afterwards, of course, it wouldn’t matter. The rest of the Remove would begin making inquiries at breakfast-time, and during morning lessons, and when the party returned there would be a storm to face. But what did it matter? Browne had invited a number of fellows to accompany him, and that was all there was in it. The rest of the juniors could be jealous—but they could never justly claim that they had been shabbily treated. It was impossible for Browne to take everybody.



"Cave!" hissed Church. "Old Pycraft!" The Removites started as though they had been stung. Just at the crucial moment—just as the rival boats were speeding past—old Pycraft! "Crumbs!" gasped Handforth. "Run, you chaps!"

So not a word was spoken by any of the conspirators. Handforth very generously offered to get all the members of the party up in the morning. According to him, it would be the easiest matter in the world for him to awaken an hour before the rising bell was due to clang out. Then he would go round, pulling out all the others.

But nobody took any notice of him. Which was just as well, for when Nipper entered Handforth's dormitory, early the next morning, he found the leader of Study D snoring soundly—ten minutes after the hour that he had decided to get up.

"Eh? Hallo!" he mumbled, as Nipper dragged the bedclothes from him. "Hi, you ass! What the dickens do you think you're doing? Gimme those bedclothes back!"

"Not on your life!" replied Nipper grimly. "You're a fine kind of chap to rely on, aren't you, Handy? I thought you promised to get us all out?"

"Why, what's the time?" asked Edward Oswald dazedly.

"Getting on for seven," replied Nipper. "You ought to have been dressed by this time, you slacker! Come on—out with you! The other fellows are getting up now, and we're due to buzz off within five minutes. The sooner we're away from the school, the better. We don't want any last-minute hitches."

"Rather not!" said Handforth, as he

rapidly commenced to dress. "That's a funny thing, you know! I—I just dozed off."

"Yes, one of those long dozes," nodded Nipper. "In fact, Handy, you started dozing at about ten o'clock last night!"

He chuckled, and left the dormitory, but Church and McClure were too wise to show their grinning faces to their leader.

Long before seven o'clock struck, the entire party, with Browne at the head, cycled away from St. Frank's, and went along the lane in the bright spring sunshine towards the hamlet of Edgemore. They had got away successfully, and they were all feeling in the highest of spirits. Everything was going well.

Edgemore Manor was soon reached. Browne gaily led the way up the old drive, and soon the boys were dismounting on the great terrace in front of the house.

"Well, we've come to Edgemore Manor, haven't we?" grinned Handforth. "There's no deception about it—no trickery! By George, and here's the earl himself! Good-morning, sir!"

"Good-morning, sir!" echoed all the others.

A tall, upright figure had appeared in the main doorway of the Manor. The Earl of Edgemore was chuckling amusedly. And what a difference in the old fellow now! What a change from the haggard looks of only a few weeks earlier!

"Well, boys, I am heartily glad to see you!" he exclaimed boisterously. "Splendid! Welcome to the manor! My guests for the week-end, eh? Good—good!"

Browne waved a hand

"You see, brothers, everything is perfectly straightforward," he declared. "We are here, as I have already pointed out to you, as the guests of his lordship."

"Exactly!" chuckled the old earl. "My guests, eh? Well, I'm a broad-minded host, I hope. While you are my guests, boys, you may do just as you please. If you would prefer not to come in yet, all well and good. Go and enjoy yourselves—do anything you please! And, whatever you do, don't miss your train!" he added, with a chuckle. "Cheer the Oxford crew all you can. Cheer them to victory!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

Within another two minutes the "guests" were off again. The old Earl of Edgemore had told them, quite plainly, that they would still be his guests, even while in London.

The rest of the programme was easy.

Bannington was reached in good time, and the train for London was caught without trouble. The journey up was uneventful, and in due course the boys found themselves on the Thames side, somewhere between Putney and Hammersmith. By this time they were all sporting plenty of favours, Handforth especially being smothered with them, for he always did things on an exaggerated scale

"Well, here we are!" said Handforth contentedly. "By George! Look at the crowds, too! How long before the start?"



CHAPTER 7.

A Bolt from the Blue!

THE apparently impossible had been achieved.

Here were the prominent members of the St. Frank's Remove, mingling with the joyous crowds on the Thames side, waiting to see the historic Boat Race between the rival crews of Oxford and Cambridge.

"Absolutely the real thing, old dears," remarked Archie Glenthorne complacently. "I mean to say, no dashed substitutes, what? No listening-in, while some sportsman makes juicy references to the Boat Race into the good old microphone. Here we are, on the good spot—ready to see the real race."

"And it was my idea," said Handforth genially.

"Ahem! Perhaps so, old man," said Church, with a cough. "But it needed Browne's ingenuity to wangle the thing. I've never known anything so jolly smooth in all my life. We're supposed to be

at Edgemore Manor, and here we are, on the Thames side. We shall go to a good old show to-night, and when we return to St. Frank's to-morrow, nobody will know. What a lark!"

"Yes, we're safe enough," agreed McClure. "There isn't one chance in a million of anybody from St. Frank's spotting us in London. It's a good job that London is so big."

"Hallo!" said Handforth excitedly. "Here comes a tug, or something. They're getting ready! It's nearly time for the race, anyhow!"

It was noticeable that a wave of excitement had passed through the crowds of spectators. Everybody knew that the time was getting short. Before very long the rival boats would come speeding past.

Somehow or other, Handforth & Co. and Archie had become separated from all the rest of the St. Frank's fellows. Browne and Stevens were several hundred yards further along, with Nipper & Co. Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey were just in sight, still further on, with Travers and Potts and Fullwood.

"Hadn't we better go and join the rest?" suggested Church, as he glanced through the crowds. "We shall lose them unless we're careful."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "What does it matter if we do lose them? We know the way to Archie's brother's flat, don't we? And we're all going to collect there, after the race."

This was true enough; and, in any case, the excitement on the river bank was now growing apace.

"They're off!" came the cry.

All along the river-side the spectators crowded as near as possible to the edge. Everybody wanted to get a glimpse of the boats as they swept up river. There were all sorts and conditions in this great crowd—which stretched all along the river banks as far as the eye could see. And practically everybody was wearing a dark-blue or a pale-blue favour.

Young and old were represented. It was noticeable, too, that a large proportion of the watchers were members of the fair sex. Girls, indeed, seemed to predominate. They were just as excited as any of the youngsters. There is always something magnetic in the attraction of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. Wet or fine, the crowds gather.

A swelling roar from downstream denoted the first appearance of the Eights.

"Here they come!" shouted Handforth enthusiastically. "Get ready, you chaps! Hurrah! Oxford's leading!"

"Rats!" grinned McClure. "We can't see them yet!"

"That doesn't make any difference!" retorted Handforth. "Oxford's bound to be leading!"

From that moment the excitement grew and grew. A tumultuous roar arose when the boats appeared in sight. On they came, sweeping through the water cleanly—the

Eights rowing as though they were part and parcel of one fixed mechanism. There was something magical in the sight of those athletic young men pulling steadily at the oars as one.

"Oxford leads!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Oxford!"

"Come on, Oxford!" roared Handforth. "Stick it! You're leading!"

In his enthusiasm he waved his arms about wildly. Suddenly there came a roar of wrath from his neighbour as Handy's fist crashed on the top of that gentleman's hat, squashing it over his head.

"Oh, I—I'm awfully sorry, sir!" gasped Handforth, in genuine concern.

Luckily for the Study D leader the man proved to be a thorough sport, for after a moment he grinned good-naturedly.

"That's all right, my lad," he said, as he endeavoured to pull the ruined hat from off his head. "Only in future please keep those windmill fists of yours to yourself." At that moment there came a fresh shout of excitement from the crowd, and the man, having succeeded in wrenching off the battered headgear, turned his attention to the race again. While Handforth, immensely relieved that the incident had ended without a bother, did likewise.

In an incredibly short space of time, the boats were almost opposite, and one might have imagined that they were joined together by unseen rods. Behind them came the tugs and the launches—one of these fitted with a miniature wireless aerial, and containing a couple of energetic gentlemen who, armed with binoculars, were closely watching the race and reporting progress into the magical microphone.

"Come on, Cambridge!" sang out somebody.

"Hurrah!"

"Cambridge leading!"

"Rot!" shouted Handforth. "Oxford's leading now! Good old Oxford!"

"Oh, blow it! Cambridge are ahead!" said Church excitedly. "Oh, why the dickens don't the Oxford men quicken their stroke?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I mean to say, what ho! Odds disasters and mishaps! It'll be absolutely poisonous, dear old fellows, if Oxford gets left behind!"

"Quick—quick!" urged Church abruptly.

"Oh, my goodness! Back, you chaps!"

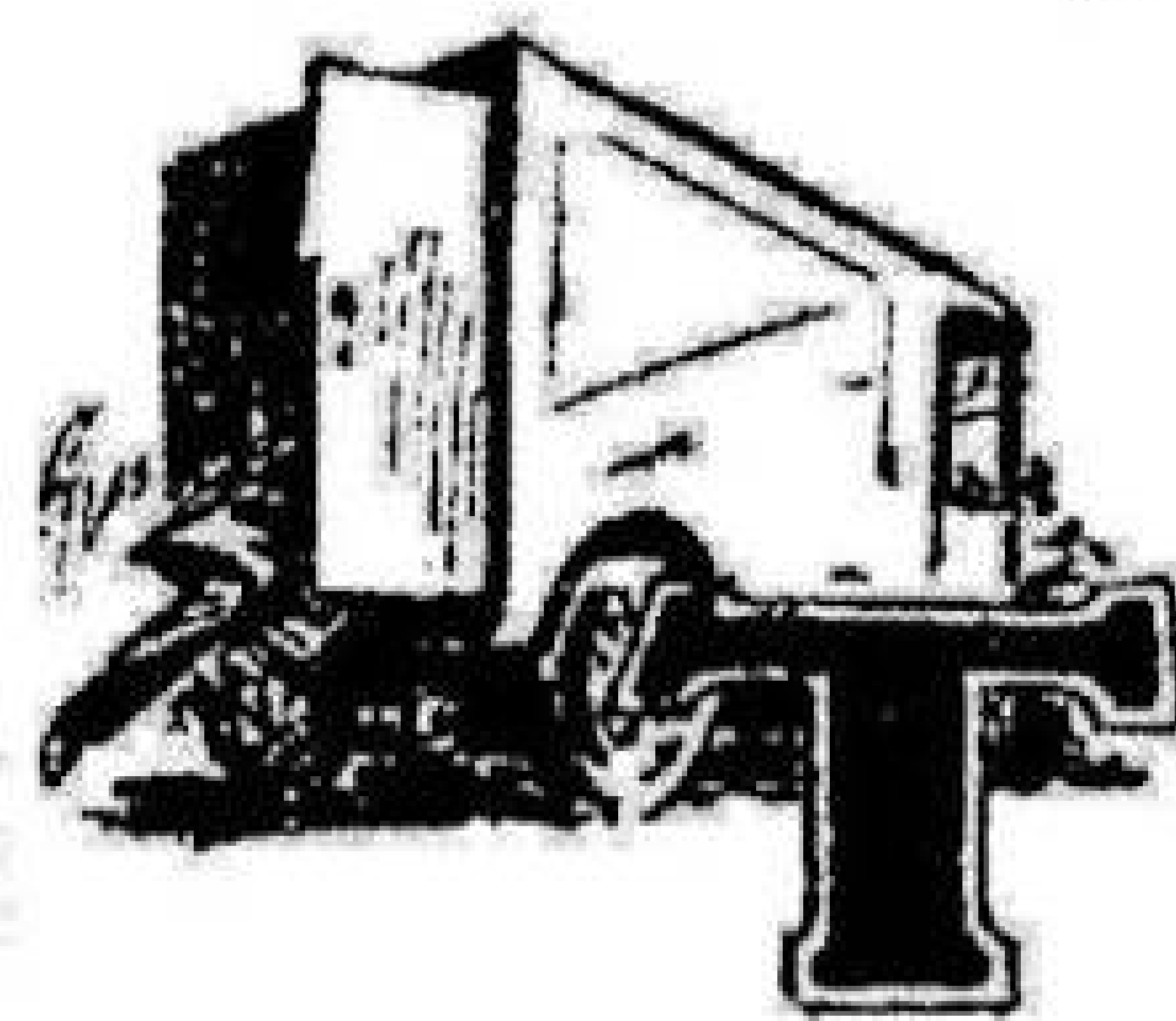
"What?" said Handforth, startled by Church's alarmed tone.

"Cave!" hissed Church, in real anguish. "Old Pycraft!"

The other three Removites started as though they had been stung. Just at the crucial moment—just as the rival boats were speeding past—old Pycraft!

"Where?" gasped Handforth, looking round wildly. "You're dotty, Churchy! Pycraft can't be here— Oh, goodness! Run, you chaps!"

There wasn't a doubt about it. Mr. Horace Pycraft, the interfering master of the Fourth Form at St. Frank's, was bearing down upon Handforth & Co. and Archie! Pycraft—the busybody!



CHAPTER 8.

Any Port in a Storm!

THE unexpected advent of Mr. Pycraft was a bewildering shock for the four juniors.

Vaguely, they remembered that Mr. Pycraft had left St. Frank's several days earlier. He had had an attack of lumbago, or something equally frightful, and he had gone away for a week in order to recuperate. And here he was, at the Boat Race! It was the most excruciating stroke of bad luck.

Any other St. Frank's master would have been bad enough at this moment. But Pycraft! Handforth & Co. and Archie Glen-thorne had but one desire; that was to flee. And they fled.

Mr. Pycraft was quite near by—barging his way through the crowds—and it was painfully obvious that he had spotted the well-known red-and-blue caps of the Ancient House fellows. Yet there was just a chance that he had not actually recognised the wearers. Therefore the only safe course was to "shift," as Archie picturesquely put it.

For, if Mr. Pycraft recognised them definitely, the fat would be in the fire.

Strictly speaking, these juniors were truants. They had never received permission to come to the Boat Race. Caught red-handed by Mr. Pycraft, they would be compelled to tell the truth, and then there would be an inquiry—and heavy punishment as a consequence. This was undoubtedly a case where discretion was the better part of valour.

Some of the St. Frank's masters might have been sporting over such an incident. Many, no doubt, would have walked rapidly the other way upon catching sight of those St. Frank's caps.

But not so Mr. Horace Pycraft.

He was always looking for trouble—he was always butting in. Indeed, it was one of Mr. Pycraft's favourite recreations to catch the fellows "on the hop." He was hated like poison in consequence. Never for a moment had these juniors believed that there was any danger of being spotted by the master of the Fourth. And here he was—just where he wasn't wanted!

"Come on—quick!" panted Handforth, as he dogged round a crowd of onlookers, with Church and McClure and Archie in close attendance. "Great Scott! The old beggar is absolutely running after us now!"

"The beast!" said Mac breathlessly. "He'll catch us, too! The very fact that we're run-

ning proves to him that we know him. What's the good, Handy? We might as well stop, and face the music!"

"Not likely!" replied Handforth. "He can't have recognised us—although he spotted our caps. If we can only dodge him successfully, he won't be able to say anything positive—Hullo! What's that? Come on, my lads! In here!"

They were well away from the river bank now, and had just rounded a corner. A big van was standing in the road—a covered motor-van. The driver was absent, evidently taking a look at the race, and Handforth noted, to his joy, that the rear of the van was open. That is to say, one of the swing doors was ajar.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "I mean to say—Really, Handy, old thing, isn't this a bit steep?"

"In with you!" rapped out Handforth. "Pycraft's coming like the wind! If only we can get inside here in time, he'll dodge straight by, and he'll think he's lost us! Come on!"

It was certainly an excellent dodge. Mr. Pycraft was still a good many yards in the rear, although he was keeping up the chase with relentless vigour. Nobody else took much notice, for all eyes were directed towards the river. The juniors themselves had quite forgotten the Boat Race in the urgency of this unexpected crisis.

"Boys—boys!" came Mr. Pycraft's unpleasant voice. "Stop at once! It is useless to run away from me! Stop, I tell you! I demand to know how you got here! You young rascals! If you think you can elude me—"

Mr. Pycraft, panting heavily, raced round the corner. And then he came to an abrupt halt. The four juniors, with their familiar caps, had completely vanished. There was no sign of them.

"Good gracious me!" panted Mr. Pycraft blankly.

He mopped his brow, and looked darkly in the direction of some dense bushes, which grew some distance away. His eyes were glittering now.

"Indeed!" he said savagely. "So they think they have fooled me, eh? We shall see! Yes, we shall certainly see!"

He moved off, convinced that he had discovered the hiding-place of the missing juniors. They had vanished so abruptly—so mysteriously—that those bushes could be the only possible hiding-place for them. There was open ground in every other direction. Never for a moment did Mr. Pycraft think of looking inside that van.

But, directly he had gone, one of the doors opened for an inch or two, and Handforth peeped out.

"Good egg!" he murmured. "The old rotter has gone!"

"Then we've dished him?" breathed Church. "Oh, I say, and I thought we were going to be collared! Let's get out, Handy, and dodge back into the crowds."

"Not yet!" replied Handforth. "Old Pycraft has got eyes like gimlets, and he'll spot us the very instant we move. We'd better stay here for another three or four minutes."

"Can you see him?" asked McClure.

"Not now," replied Handforth. "He was in sight a second or two ago, and I believe he's looking among those bushes—"

Slam!

Unexpectedly, the door of the van was closed with considerable force. Then followed the sound of a key turning in the lock.

"Great Scott!" panted Church. "Who the dickens did that?"

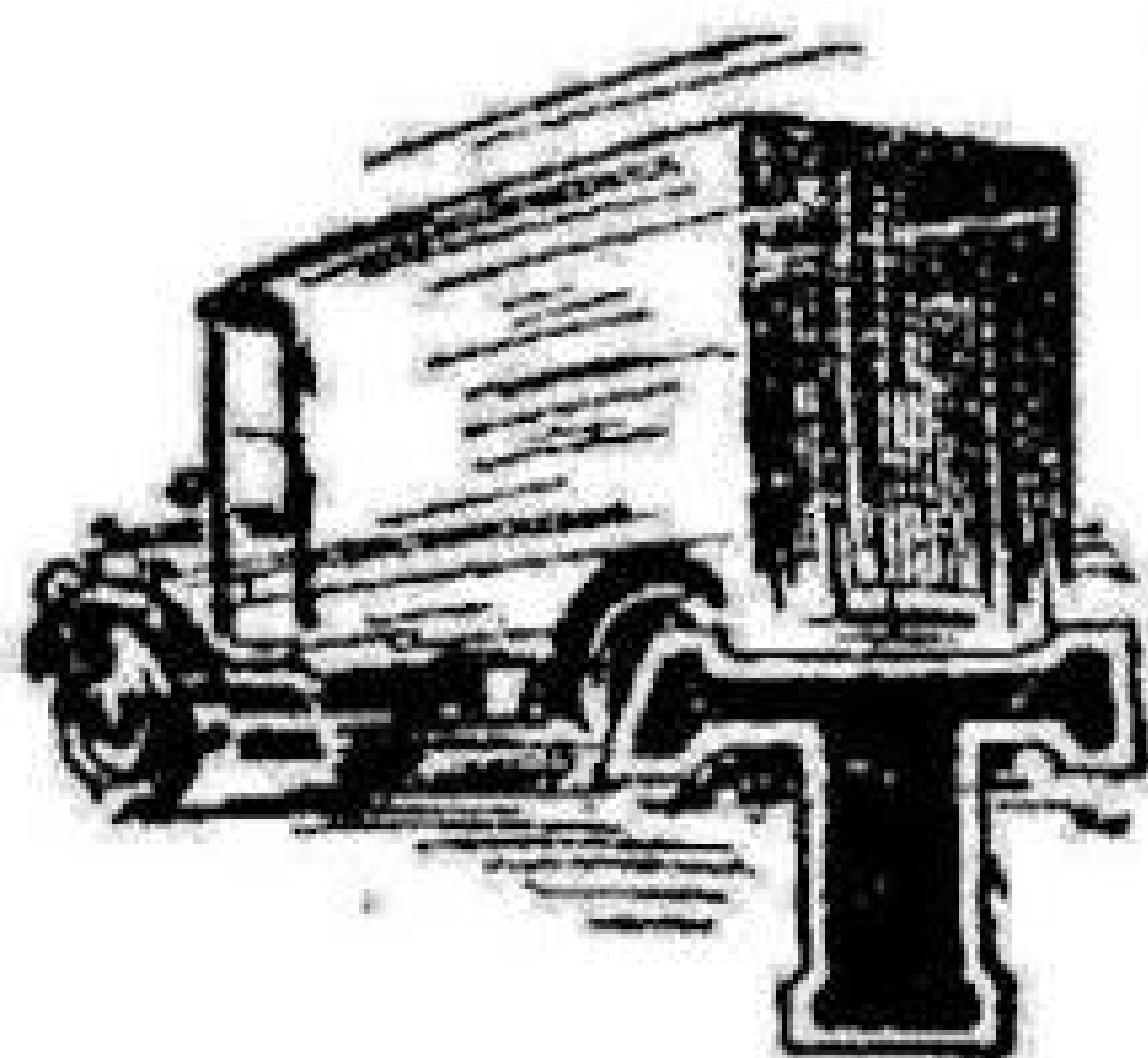
"I'm blessed if I know!" said Handforth, startled. "Some silly ass has locked the door, too! I say, we're locked in! We'd better—"

Throb-throb-throb!

"The engine's going!" gasped McClure, as the van began to vibrate.

"Good gad!" said Archie feebly. "If it comes to that, laddies, so are we!"

For there had been a jolt, and the van containing the imprisoned juniors was rattling off on its way!



CHAPTER 9.

A Free Ride!

HIS was certainly an unlooked-for development!

Yet, after all, it was perfectly natural.

the van-driver had stopped his vehicle so that he could run to the river side, in order to catch a glimpse of the race. Perhaps he had been making deliveries near this spot, too. At all events, he had come back, he had locked the rear doors, and he had driven off. It had never occurred to him to look inside, and thus the four juniors were imprisoned.

"Hi!" panted Handforth, as he lurched giddily into the arms of his chums. "We'd better yell, or something! Stop the thing, for goodness' sake! We don't want to be carried away in this van!"

"Absolutely not!" agreed Archie Glen-thorne, as he clung tightly to a projection of the woodwork. "At the same time, laddie, it seems to me that we're pretty dashed well helpless. We've escaped from old Pycraft, but the fire is a degree more foul than the frying-pan!"

"It was Handy's idea to get into this van!" said Church bitterly.

"How the dickens was I to know that it would move off?" demanded Handforth, with indignation. "We only meant to dodge in here for a couple of minutes!"

"And now we're locked in!" said Mac. "Come on—all together! Let's yell. Perhaps the driver'll hear us and stop!"

They can't win matches up at Bedwell Park; the Storrydene Villa eleven wants gingering up. And then comes Tiny Scannan—Tiny weighing umpteen stone, standing over six-feet-two in his socks, and with fists like legs of mutton. He soon becomes known as the MAN OF IRON. Certainly the methods he employs to put ginger into the Storrydene team carry weight behind them—eighteen stone of brawn and muscle and unlimited "nerve" to be precise. Read about this he-man in the wonderful story of football and adventure which starts in

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THE MAN OF IRON!



They took deep breaths and yelled. But there wasn't the slightest result. The van continued on its way—speeding so much now that the juniors were compelled to clutch at one another, and at the sides of the van, in order to maintain their balance.

"It's no good!" said Handforth, at last. "We shall have to wait until the giddy thing stops. Blow it! Bust it! What about the Boat Race? We shan't even know the result now! And it's all Pycraft's fault!"

"Still, we managed to elude him, didn't we?" said Church. "That's one consolation, anyhow. Whoa! Sorry, Mac!" he gasped. "Crumbs! We must have swung round a corner or something!"

They were pitched this way and that, and as conversation was increasingly difficult they gave it up. In fact, they spent all their time holding on.

Owing to the construction of the vehicle, it was impossible to signal to the driver. The van itself was three parts full of goods—apparently eatables, by the odour that filled the interior. Boxes and shelves were packed from the floor to the roof, and there was only just enough room for the four juniors in the rear end. The locked door

made it impossible for them to fall out, and that barrier of cargo formed an effective "deadener" between the boys and the driver.

"Oh, well, it's no good growling," said Handforth, during an easy spell while the van was running along a smooth section of road. "We're bound to stop sooner or later, and we can easily explain to the driver."

"Can we?" said Church. "If he turns out to be nasty, he might make a lot of trouble. He'll probably say that we got into the van to pinch some of his stock, or something. The best thing we can do is to bolt as soon as he opens the door."

The others were rather dubious.

"I'm not so sure about that," said Handforth. "It would look suspicious, on the face of it. Why, the driver might even chase us, and set the police on us, or something. No, we'd better explain the facts to the man, and give him a tip. He can easily tell that we haven't touched any of his giddy stock."

Handforth was very exasperated, although he said little. It had been his idea to dodge into this van, and the ruse, although

successful, was leading to an adventure that had been totally unexpected.

It was becoming very stuffy in that enclosed space, and it seemed to the juniors that the journey was endless. They went on and on, and they even began to fear that they were being taken right out of London—perhaps on some long, country run. The whole thing was becoming serious.

Then, just as they were feeling genuinely desperate, the van lurched wildly, bumping and jolting along over rough ground. The speed decreased, and finally, the vehicle came to a stop.

But only for a few moments. Almost at once it moved again—but this time it seemed to be reversing. One or two manoeuvres of this kind, and then, finally, an abrupt halt—so abrupt that the juniors found themselves jolted about in all directions. Apparently the driver of the motor-van had failed to apply his brakes soon enough, and the vehicle had bumped against something unyielding. And now there could be no doubt that the van had come to a definite halt, for the engine had been stopped.

"Well, we've got somewhere at last!" said Handforth, with relief. "Now, we'd all better hammer on the door, and—"

"Wait a minute," said Church, in a low voice. "There's somebody just outside!"

They could hear footsteps—and then a key rattled in the lock. The door swung half-open, and the juniors caught a glimpse of a man in a peaked cap. But, by a fortunate coincidence, the man did not see his unwilling passengers.

For at that very second he turned his head. Just as he had got the door open, he swung round.

"What's that?" he shouted, evidently in answer to some question. "Yes! I've got it all here. Late, am I?"

It was fairly clear that the man received a provocative answer, for he muttered something under his breath, and moved rapidly away. The juniors heard him shouting as he went.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" breathed Handforth. "He didn't even spot us!"

"It seems to me, dear old lads, that we'd better trickle forth!" said Archie. "I mean to say, a chance in a thousand, what? Tally ho, and so forth!"

"Rather!" said Church eagerly. "Come on, you chaps! It's our chance!"

They fairly tumbled out of the van, and with hardly a glance round them they plunged into a big building. The van had backed right against a pair of open doors, and the four juniors thought only of putting as much space between themselves and the van as they could.

Within the building, they hurried past one or two men, who gave them queer glances, but who did not stop them. And then, much to their relief, they discovered that they were alone. There was no sign of a chase. They had got away safely.

But luck had certainly been on their side.



CHAPTER 10.

Another Surprise!

"ELL, that was easy!" grinned Handforth.

"Rather!" said Church, with relief.

"But where the dickens are we? This is a rummy kind of show, isn't it? What building is this?—For all we know, we may be inside some business house, or something like that. We're bound to be questioned soon."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie Glenthorne. "The sooner we find a good old exit, the better. Kindly lead the way into the outer atmosphere, Handy, old onion. I mean to say, you're supposed to be the leader, aren't you?"

"No, I'm not supposed to be!" retorted Handforth coldly. "I am the leader!"

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "I see what you mean."

Handforth suddenly grinned.

"Why, we're in a railway station!" he said contentedly. "Look there!"

They had suddenly come upon a sumptuous buffet. There were tables, and waiters were hovering around them. Well-dressed people were walking in and out, too.

"Of course, the thing's easy to understand now," continued Handforth. "That van was delivering some food for this buffet. It must be Charing Cross, or Victoria, or some station like that. Anyhow, what's wrong with the idea of buzzing in, and ordering a bit of lunch?"

"Nothing wrong at all!" said Church promptly.

"In fact, that idea is right in every respect!" said McClure.

"Absolutely correct-oh!" nodded Archie. "A spot of lunch will give us time to restore the good old balance."

They entered the buffet and sat down at a table, and before long they were partaking of a simple luncheon. It was just as well to do this, even if only for the sake of appearances. But the juniors were very hungry, and food was just what they wanted. After all, there was no hurry. The Boat Race was over by this time, and they could easily learn the result later on.

"Well, that was good!" said Handforth, as he sat back in his chair at the end of the spread. "You can put that note-case of yours away, Archie."

"Eh?" said Archie. "But really, old chap—"

"I'm paying the bill!" went on Handforth. "Hey, waiter! Let's have our bill, will you?"

"Certainly, sir," said the waiter, coming across to the table.

"This is the best railway station buffet I've ever been in!" said Handforth, as he took out a ten shilling note. "By the way, waiter, what station is this, anyhow?"

Church and McClure gave Handforth a warning glance. What would the waiter think if these diners confessed that they did not even know where they were? But it was just like Handforth's tactlessness.

"Seventeen shillings and fourpence, sir!" said the waiter smoothly.

"What?" ejaculated Handforth, staring at the bill. "Don't be such a chump! We haven't eaten five bob's worth of grub! You must have made a mistake."

"No, sir!" said the waiter coldly. "Seventeen shillings and fourpence is the amount of the bill."

"Well, I've never heard of such a giddy rush!" ejaculated Handforth indignantly. "Railway stations are generally reasonable in their charges."

The waiter was looking at Handforth very strangely.

"You will have your joke, sir," he said unemotionally.

"Joke? What joke? Isn't this a railway station?"

"You know very well it isn't sir," said the waiter.

"I don't know anything of the sort!" replied Handforth, looking round. "If this isn't a railway station, what is it?"

"You know perfectly well, sir, that this is the buffet in the grandstand at Hurst Park Racecourse," said the man, his impatience breaking down his air of well-trained restraint. "And if you will be good enough to settle this bill——"

"Hurst Park Racecourse!" gasped Handforth blankly.

"Good gad!" murmured Archie.

"Oh, my hat!" grinned Church. "Hurst Park Racecourse! And we thought we were in a railway station! I say, Handy, you'd better settle that bill up quickly, and we'll scoot. We don't want to stay in this place!"

"Rather not!" said Handforth indignantly. "So this is the grand stand of a racecourse, is it? Of all the nerve!"

He glared at the waiter as though that individual was solely responsible for the situation. However, in the meantime, Archie had deftly slipped out a pound note, and had indicated to the man that he could keep the change.

Then, before Handforth quite realised it, his chums had dragged him out of the buffet, and they were making their way out of the building. They hoped to reach an outer exit, but in this they were disappointed. For when they arrived in the open, they found themselves in a large crowded enclosure. The racecourse was in full sight, and at that very moment horses were being paraded on the turf.

It was a gay enough scene, with the bright dresses of the ladies, the smart toppers of the gentlemen, and the general air of bustle. Never before had these juniors found themselves within an exclusive enclosure at a great racecourse.

They didn't like it much. This was not the atmosphere that appealed to them, and their

one desire was to get out as quickly as possible.

"It strikes me, laddies, that the sooner we ooze forth, the better," murmured Archie. "There's a dashed blighter in the offing eyeing us in a suspicious sort of way. One of the steward chappies, or officials, or whatever they are. Good gad! He's absolutely legging it towards us!"

The official came up to the juniors, and he regarded them closely.

"May I see your tickets, or cards?" he asked bluntly.

"Well, the fact is, we haven't got any!" said Handforth. "We're here by mistake, you know."

"By mistake?" repeated the man, staring.

"Well, we dodged in here, and we didn't know what the place was," replied Handforth. "You don't think we like being on a racecourse, do you? Not likely! Which is the exit? We want to get out of here. We wouldn't stay if you paid us!"



CHAPTER 11.

Another Shock!

THE official was even more suspicious than ever. He insisted upon knowing how the boys had got into the enclosure, what they were doing there, and who was responsible for them.

But he got no satisfaction from Handforth & Co. and Archie.

They were deliberately vague in their replies, for it would hardly have been the thing to explain that they had arrived in a food van, and that they had succeeded in dodging out of it unseen.

In the end the official hustled them out of the exclusive enclosure, and they found themselves elbowing their way through crowds of keen-faced men. They were now in a cheaper enclosure, and they were deafened by the shouting of the bookies, who seemed to be everywhere.

"How the dickens do we get out of this beastly place?" asked Handforth impatiently. "By George! Look at all these idiots. Waiting to back their fancies!"

"Easy, old man!" said Church, with concern. "No need to speak so loudly."

"I'll speak as loudly as I like!" retorted Handforth, with a glare. "I don't believe in betting on horses. It's a mug's game, and if I want to speak my mind I'll speak it!"

"Hadn't we better put our caps into our pockets?" suggested Church, by way of changing the subject. "It'll mean the sack for all of us if we're spotted here."

"Odds horrors and frightfulness!" said Archie in dismay. "You mean, if we're seen here? Good gad! I see what you mean. It's bad enough for a schoolchappie to shove money on horses, but it's absolutely

frightful for a schoolchappie to be absolutely seen on the dashed racecourse!"

"Who's going to see us here?" said Handforth tartly. "It was only by a piece of sheer bad luck that old Pycraft spotted us watching the Boat Race. But nobody can see us here—nobody connected with St. Frank's, anyhow."

"I'm not so sure about that," said McClure uneasily. "This is a public place, Handy, and some of these bookmakers might be the very chaps who come to the Bannington race-meetings. Supposing they recognise our caps? Why, it's even possible that some of them may be acquainted with Gulliver and Bell and that crowd. Let's get out of here as quickly as we can."

"Yes, rather!" said Archie, with concern. "I mean, how frightfully frightful, when you come to think of it. Here we are, positively innocent. Not one of us had the slightest desire to come into a dashed racecourse enclosure, and here we are. And the trouble is, if we're spotted by somebody the truth will sound most poisonously false!"

"Archie's right," said Church. "Who would believe us if we tried to explain? Fancy getting into a racecourse enclosure by accident. And think how awful it would be if the Head got to know of it. After we've dodged off in secret from St. Frank's, too. It would look as black as ink against us!"

"Good gad!" gasped Archie, suddenly clutching at Handforth. "That is to say, odd shocks and thunderbolts! Am I dreaming, laddies, or can you see the same as I can see?"

"See what?" said Handforth, staring.

Archie pointed with a feeble finger.

"Gaze upon it, laddies!" he whispered.

"Tell me, is it—or not?"

"It is!" gasped Handforth in sudden amazement. "Great Scott! Old Pycraft! Here—in this enclosure!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered the others.

They were almost stunned by this fresh shock. Here, in this very enclosure with them, was Mr. Horace Pycraft, the Form-master they had gone to such length to elude. Here he was, not twenty yards from them!

"If he spots us here we're booked!" said Church frantically. "It'll mean the sack for the lot of us!"

"But we haven't done anything!" protested Handforth.

"That won't make any difference!" said Church, with a gulp. "Our very presence in this place will be black enough. Oh, the old rotter! He must have followed that food van, and now he's—"

"Pycraft never followed the food van!" interrupted Handforth curtly. "In fact, he doesn't even know we're here. And when you come to think of it, his own presence isn't so much of a coincidence. I expect he was on his way to the races when he spotted us watching the Boat Race. By Jove! Look at him now!"

"Yes, but—but—"

"Look!" said Handforth contemptuously. "There he is—the sanctimonious, miserable old humbug!"

"Here, I say!" protested Archie. "I mean, dash it, kindly moderate—"

"I'm speaking too jolly generously!" said Handforth. "Pycraft—the man who always pretends to be so straightlaced at St. Frank's. The chap who's always down on gambling and all that sort of thing. Look at him!"

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

There was something in Handforth's tone which caused the others to lose their alarm. As it turned out, there wasn't the slightest fear that Mr. Horace Pycraft would spot them. For Mr. Pycraft was giving all his attention to the race-card which he held in his hand, and to a little transaction which he was making with a red-faced bookie. In a word, Mr. Pycraft was "having a bit on."

There he was, handing his money to the bookmaker, and receiving a ticket in exchange.

This was a discovery, indeed. By sheer chance Mr. Pycraft had spotted the juniors at the Boat Race. And now, as though by way of recompense, chance had brought the juniors here so they could witness Mr. Pycraft's folly!



CHAPTER 12.

Dodging Old Pycraft!

OOD gad!"

Archie Glenthorne was very shocked.

He stared across at Mr. Pycraft with stern disapproval; if it hadn't been for the presence of Handforth & Co., he would probably have gone across and read Mr. Pycraft a lecture on the evils of betting. Not that Archie was in any way qualified for this task.

"What the dickens are we going to do?" breathed Church hurriedly.

"Get out of here as quickly as we can!" retorted Handforth.

"Yes, but where's the exit?" said McClure.

"Laddies, one moment!" said Archie firmly. "In all the circles, and after looking at the thing this way and that way, it might be a ripe scheme to confront the Pycraft bird and dashed well show him that we know all about his frightfulness!"

"That's not a ripe scheme, Archie—it's a rotten one!" said Handforth bluntly.

"I mean, this chappie is a master of St. Frank's—"

"Well, we can't help his little weaknesses," said Handforth. "Our only course is to dodge him, and to get out of here in double-quick time. But first of all we'll take our

caps off. We don't want him to spot the colours!"

"My hat!" breathed Church.

"No, you ass—your cap!"

They removed their headgear, and keeping a wary eye on Mr. Pycraft's back, they endeavoured to find an exit. This wasn't so easy as it sounded, for the enclosure was packed, and it was difficult enough to move through the crowds.

"Look out!" gasped Mac suddenly. "Old Pycraft's looking round this way!"



Mr. Pycraft handed the bookmaker some money, and received a ticket in exchange. The inquisitive master of the Fourth was "backing his fancy!" He little suspected, however, that Handforth and his two chums and Archie Glenthorne were, somewhere in the crowd, watching!

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Odds horrors and disasters!"

Sure enough Mr. Pycraft had turned and was looking in their direction. Not that there was much chance of him spotting them in that great congregation. But it seemed to the juniors that the Form-master was looking directly at them.

"Duck!" urged Handforth huskily.

He pulled Church and McClure down, and they dodged behind a group of men, who were arguing the odds or something. Archie

ducked, too, and they waited for a few moments.

"I don't think he spotted us!" murmured Handforth. "Wait a tick—I'll just have a squint. I'll see if he's coming this way!"

He rose and peeped over the shoulder of a perfect stranger. In fact, Handforth was so interested in Mr. Pycraft's movements that he gave no thought to his immediate surroundings.

"It's all right!" he said, with relief. "He's turned again, and—"

"Ere!" broke in a strange voice. "What's the game, kid?"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth.

Until that moment he had not realised that he had been talking practically into the ear of the stranger.

"Sorry!" he said hurriedly. "I was speaking to my chums here."

"If you ask me, they're up to no good!" said one of the other men, eyeing the juniors suspiciously. "What's the game, young 'uns?"

"What are you doing, prowling about us?"

"Nun-nothing!" said Church, with a gulp.

"That won't wash!" retorted the man.

"We'd best feel our pockets, mates!"

"You're about right, Albert!" said one of the others. "Pickpockets—that's what they are. Clear off, you young rips. Here where's a copper?"

"Good gad!" said Archie aghast. "Odds slanders and insults. You're not absolutely suggesting, you poisonous blighter, that we're thieves?"

The man started, and looked at Archie darkly.

"What's that you called me?" he said, moving a step forward.

"I say, dash it——"

"Poisonous blighter, Albert," said one of the other men, with a grin. "That's what the youngster called you."

"Ho, did he?" said Albert, flushing red. "We'll see about that. Hold my hat a minute, Jim. I'll soon show this young shaver——"

"Bunk!" panted Church urgently. "Archie, you ass—bunk while you're safe!"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "I'm dashed if I'm going to show the dashed white feather. This poisonous blighter referred to us as pickpockets, and when I say he's a poisonous blighter, I dashed well mean that he's a poisonous blighter!"

"Why, you young imp, I'll smash you!" roared Albert furiously.

Fortunately at this moment a great shout went up from hundreds of throats:

"They're off!"

"'Ere, chuck it, you fellers!" said one of the other men. "Didn't you 'ear that? They're off! There they go! Where's number four? That's my 'orse. Bet you five bob, Jim, 'e gets a place!"

All the men were staring excitedly at the racecourse, and the juniors breathed with relief. For the moment they were forgotten.

"Come on!" said Handforth, seizing Archie's arm.

"If it's all the same to you, laddie, nothing doing!" said Archie firmly. "I mean to say, the Glenthornes never run away from a fight. Absolutely not!"

"Well, this time one of the Glenthornes is going to be dragged away!" said Handforth determinedly.

And in spite of Archie's protests he was hauled through the crowds.

"Odds indignities and horrors!" he protested. "You frightful frights! Really, Handy, old scream——"

"Idiot!" interrupted Handforth. "We've got to get out of this place!"

"Absolutely! But those foul chappies——"

"Never mind them!" said Handforth. "Can't you understand, Archie, that if we were to stop there and allow those men to start trouble, old Pycraft would be attracted? He'd spot us in a tick then!"

"Good gad!" said Archie, with a start. "I hadn't thought of that, laddie!"

"Well, you'd better think of it now," said Edward Oswald gruffly. "Thank goodness we're near the exit, anyhow!"

"Are we?" said Church. "Where is it?"

"Well, it must be somewhere here," argued Handforth. "We're a long way from the course now; we're right at the back of the enclosure. Here!" he added, grasping somebody's arm. "Do you know which is the way out?"

The individual turned and grinned.

"What, fed-up already?" he asked, with a chuckle.

"Eh? I was asking you——"

"Yes, I know!" said the man. "The way out, eh? Well, I dunno any more than you do. You kids ought to know better than to bet on horses. I suppose you come a cropper on this race, hey?"

"No, we jolly well didn't!" said Handforth indignantly. "Not likely! We didn't come in this rotten place to bet on horses!"

The man's smile vanished.

"You'd best mind who you're talkin' to, kid!" he said darkly. "Any more o' your sauce an' I'll give you a clip over the ear!"

"Crumbs!" muttered Church in alarm.

"I only asked you a civil question," said Handforth hotly. "I'd jolly well like to see you give me a clip over the ear, anyhow. Just try it on, and see what you get!"

In dire alarm Church and McClure dragged their leader away. Handforth failed to realise that he had asked for trouble. The man was probably a peaceful, law-abiding citizen, and it was only natural that he should not understand Handforth's antipathy towards betting. The very fact that Handforth was here seemed to indicate that he liked it.

"Oh, you hopeless ass!" gasped McClure, when they were clear. "You might have expected that, Handy."

"Expected what?"

"Oh, never mind!" said Mac, with a gulp of relief. "Good egg! Here's an exit! Now perhaps we can get out."

A minute later, to their satisfaction, they were outside the racecourse—out in the open air, away from those packed crowds. And now there was no danger whatever of being spotted by Mr. Horace Pycraft.

"Oh, my only hat!" said Church. "What a game! We're lucky to get out of that place without any more trouble!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie Glenthorne. "I'm afraid we're in a frightful state of disorder and so forth. Still, we're out, and that, I mean, is something pretty frightfully priceless!"



CHAPTER 13.

More Trouble.

HANDFORTH & CO. and Archie Glenthorne had always held dubious opinions regarding race-courses; now their worst convictions were confirmed. One visit was enough for them. Never again.

"I can't understand why people go at all," said Handforth gruffly, as he and the others walked away. "What the dickens is there to enjoy? Nothing but crowds of people, yelling bookies, and a general atmosphere of unhealthy excitement."

"Well, it's all a matter of opinion, Handy," said Church diplomatically. "If those

people like it, it's not for us to judge them. And I suppose it means lots of work for people, so it may be all to the good. If the mugs weren't caught this way, they'd be caught in another!"

"Well, I don't approve of it!" said Handforth magisterially.

And it was left at that. Since Church and McClure would not argue with him, Handforth had nothing much to talk about; and Archie Glenthorne was far too concerned regarding his personal appearance to enter into any discussion concerning race-meetings.

"The best thing we can do is to get to your brother's flat as quickly as possible, Archie," said Church. "Even as it is, we shall be late, and the other fellows will be wondering what has happened to us."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "A good old dash for the good old flat, what? Kindly give signs to the first taxi!"

"Taxi be blowed!" said Handforth. "What's the matter with a 'bus?"

"Absolutely nothing," replied Archie. "But I mean when a chappie is in a hurry a taxi seems to be indicated. I'll pay the fare."

"No, you jolly well won't!" said Handforth firmly. "No taxis, Archie. I don't believe in this extravagance. There are plenty of 'buses about here, and we'll soon find one that'll take us to Piccadilly Circus. We're only a minute away from Jermyn Street there."

"Wouldn't it be better to find a station?" suggested Church. "We're a long way out, you know, and Archie isn't far wrong. 'Buses are pretty slow——"

"Well, I'm going by 'bus, anyhow!" broke in Handforth, with an air of finality. "If you fellows like to desert me, you can jolly well do it!"

So they gave it up. They knew perfectly well that Handforth would only get himself lost if he were allowed to go off alone. The chances were that he would get on the wrong 'bus, and find himself somewhere out in the country. Handforth had an amazing facility for taking the wrong bus, or the wrong train.

And thus it came about, ten minutes later, that the four juniors were on the top of a 'bus, London bound. The racecourse was left behind, and they were thankful for it. The whole adventure had been unexpected, and they were now anxious to get back to the main party.

As his chums had predicted, however, Handforth was soon fed-up with the 'bus. It seemed to him that the vehicle was just crawling along, and the stops were interminable.

"What's the matter with the rotten thing?" said Handforth irritably. "We can walk it quicker."

"Well, you know, dear old boy, I rather thought a taxi——"

"Rats!" frowned Handforth. "Taxis aren't must better!"

He was always cross at delays. Handforth was an energetic youth; he liked to keep going, and there can be no doubt that continuous driving in his Austin Seven had affected him. All car owners are more or less impatient when they get on a motor-bus.

"I'm fed-up with this!" he said at last. "Where are we?"

"Somewhere near Putney," replied Church. "There's a station over there—District Railway."

"Good egg!" interrupted Handforth, rising from his seat. "Come on. We'll take the Underground!"

"But we've got our tickets to Piccadilly Circus!" protested Mac.

"That doesn't matter; we shall be all day on this silly 'bus!" said Handforth.

There was a certain amount of reason in his argument. That particular 'bus happened to be early, and the driver, no doubt, was purposely going slow. It was all right from his point of view, but it was very irritating to his passengers.

So the juniors transferred to the District Railway, and eventually arrived at Charing Cross without any further trouble. At Charing Cross Church and McClure and Archie wanted to get out and walk the rest of the way. As they pointed out, it wasn't very far—only just across Trafalgar Square, up Haymarket, and then into Jermyn Street.

But Handforth wouldn't hear of it.

"Rot!" he said firmly. "We'll pop down the escalator, get into the Tube, and in half a jiffy we shall be at Piccadilly Circus. Come on. We've wasted enough time as it is!"

There can be no doubt that Handforth "popped down the escalator." The others were not quite so rash.

Having descended some wide stairs the juniors found themselves in a broad sort of place where there were two escalators—for at Charing Cross there is a regular hive of railways.

"This way!" said Handforth briskly.

"No, you're wrong, Handy," said Church wearily. "My hat! When the dickens are you right? That's not the way!"

"Follow me, and you can't go wrong!" retorted Handforth in a stubborn voice.

But the others refused to follow him. They came to a halt near the top of the moving staircase, and Handforth turned his back.

"I rather think, old teapot, that we'd better walk, after all," said Archie doubtfully. "I mean, all these dashed tubes and things. They're liable to confuse a chappie."

"They don't confuse me," replied Handforth. "Don't be such idiots. Come on!"

He took a step backwards as he was turning, without realising that he was just at that point where the ground ceases to be stable. And it is a very unwise thing to walk backwards on to an escalator.

"Hi!" gasped Handforth. "What the dickens— Whoa!"

Thud!

Handforth lost his balance, crashed over, and then gave a wild howl.

"Look out!" roared Church.

But Edward Oswald Handforth was "popping down the-escalator." He was rolling down the long flight of moving stairs with ever-gathering speed, and there were shouts of alarm from many voices. More than one stranger was compelled to dodge adroitly, in order to avoid the tumbling figure of the junior.

At last, battered and bruised, Handforth reached the bottom, and he was whisked off the escalator and deposited upon the solid concrete. Church and McClure and Archie were there at almost the same time, for they had run down the stairs at full speed.

"What's the idea, young gent?" inquired an attendant. "Is this a new game, or what?"

"You—you funny idiot!" panted Handforth, as he rose to his feet. "Oh, my goodness! I'm hurt! Do you think I came down those stairs like that on purpose? Somebody pushed me!"

"Rats!" said Church crossly. "It was your own fault, for stepping on the thing backwards. Besides, if you hadn't been such an obstinate ass we should have walked to Piccadilly Circus!"

Somehow they managed to get on to the right train, and Handforth was quite astonished when he found that Piccadilly Circus was reached within a couple of minutes. He had apparently had the idea that Charing Cross and Piccadilly Circus were separated by a distance of several miles.

"Odds relief and thanksgiving!" murmured Archie Glenthorpe, as they emerged into the open. "Here we are, laddies. Absolutely in Jermyn Street. What-ho! I rather think that the next item on the good old agenda is a spot of tea."

And Handforth & Co. and Archie, safe after their adventure, found themselves at the end of their journey.



CHAPTER 14.

No Need to Worry.

"HERE they are!"

"And about time, too!"

Edward Oswald Handforth marched

into the comfortable flat in Jermyn Street, and he was closely followed by his chums and Archie Glenthorpe. They found the sitting-room full of fellows, and somewhere in the background Captain Bertram Glenthorpe was talking with Browne and Stevens, of the Fifth. Archie's brother had come up to London especially, to act as a kind of chaperon. He was in the secret, and he

was sporting enough to allow these juniors to overrun his chambers as though they owned them.

"Where the dickens did you get to, Handy?" asked Nipper, as the chums of Study D came in. "And you, too, Archie. Why didn't you keep with us?"

"Old Pycraft spotted us—that's why!" said Handforth bluntly.

There was an immediate chorus of shouts.

"Pycraft saw you?" ejaculated Fullwood, aghast. "Phew! That's done it, you chaps! We knew that old Pycraft was away from St. Frank's, but who the dickens would have thought that he would be at the Boat Race?"

"Just our luck!" said Reggie Pitt sadly. "The first time we've ever played the truant, and now we're spotted."

"Not all of us, though?" asked Jack Grey.

"No, only we four," said Church. "But we dodged him, you know. And there's just a chance that he didn't recognise us."

All the other fellows crowded round while Handforth told the story. There was much amusement when Edward Oswald explained how they had been locked in the food van, and how they had finally found themselves at Hurst Park.

"But that's not the cream of the affair!" continued Handforth. "Before we could get out of that beastly betting place who do you think we saw? Who do you think we spotted shoving some money on with a bookie?"

"Goodness knows!" said Nipper.

"Old Pycraft!" grinned Handforth.

"What!" went up a general yell.

"Absolutely, laddies!" nodded Archie. "Absolutely the Pycraft bird! There he was, looking dashed excited and all that sort of thing, shoving his money on the gee-gees! Pretty disgraceful, what?"

"Well, I don't know that you could call it disgraceful," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "Masters, after all, aren't like schoolboys. Pycraft is on leave from duty, and I suppose there's nothing to prevent him from attending a race meeting if he wants to. If he chooses to make an ass of himself, that his own concern."

"But what about when he gets back to St. Frank's?" asked Church. "Supposing he recognised us? What are we going to say when the Head hauls us on the carpet?"

"Let me indulge in a brief interruption at this point," said Browne benevolently. "I understand, brothers, that there is some little perturbation? Brother Pycraft spotted you in the innocent occupation of watching the Boat Race?"

"That's hardly the point, Browne," said Church. "We're all supposed to be at Edgemoor Manor, as you know, and if Pycraft tells the Head that we were watching the Boat Race, there'll be trouble."

"Have no fear," said Browne complacently. "Always remember that Mr. Pycraft will not turn up at St. Frank's until Monday morning, at the earliest. By then we shall be back, and all will be well."

"All won't be well if Pycraft has a chat with the Head about us," said McClure uneasily.

"But I venture to suggest that Brother Pycraft will have no such chat," said Browne. "It merely resolves itself into a question of strategy. Somebody must have a word with Brother Pycraft before he arrives at the school. Much as he would like to give us away, he would regard the prospect of being given away himself as both murky and mottled."

Nipper grinned.

"That's true enough!" he said. "Pycraft wouldn't like to have the whole school talking about his indiscretions. Of course, there's no disgrace in it—he wouldn't be dismissed for it. But he would hate to have the chaps chipping him. We shall be safe enough if we can only get in a word with Pycraft before he has time to make any report."

And so Mr. Horace Pycraft was completely forgotten. The entire party was together again, and a hearty meal was the next item on the programme.

It was then found that there was plenty of time for visiting a picture theatre, and as the Plaza was so close at hand, the entire party went off and spent an enjoyable three hours in that luxurious place.

An excellent dinner followed—brought into Captain Glenthorne's flat especially from some neighbouring swell restaurant. Then, as a fitting wind-up to a splendid day, the party went off to see a musical comedy at one of the most famous West End theatres.

Archie's brother had chosen the particular theatre—for he knew most of the shows, and he was able to recommend this musical comedy as being a perfectly harmless, wholesome entertainment. In point of fact, Captain Glenthorne went along to the theatre with them. But, being a thorough sportsman, he left them to themselves.

"Well, here we are, all settled!" said Handforth genially, as he looked down the row at all the other smiling faces. "Just in time, too. Curtain's going up in a couple of minutes. By George, we've had a great day, haven't we?"

"Rather!" said those juniors who were within earshot.

"There's only one thing I don't quite like!" continued Handforth. "There are too many undergrads in this theatre! They're everywhere, by the look of 'em!"

"All the better!" grinned Fullwood. "They'll help to liven up the show. Hallo! Here we go! Up goes the curtain!"

All the lights in the theatre were lowered, and a moment later the curtain rose. As it did so, several score of young men rose in their seats; they cheered loudly, waving their arms and generally behaving as though they had suddenly gone off their heads.

The St. Frank's party knew the truth in a moment. The theatre was crowded with Boat Race night "raggers!"



CHAPTER 15.

A Bit Steep!

“AH! ‘RAH! ‘RAH!’”

These opening cheers were curiously uniform—as though the whole

thing had been prearranged; and they came from all parts of the house. It was, however, a perfectly good-natured demonstration, and the rest of the house looked on and listened with tolerant amusement. Youth would be youth.

The stage was occupied solely by chorus girls, and they were dancing energetically to the opening spasm of the piece. The very instant they had finished, however, the cheers rang out again. Then as each principal walked on, he or she was cheered to the echo. Undergrads rose in their seats, shouting encouragement and praise.

It was all very well as a novelty, but before fifteen minutes had elapsed, this pointless demonstration had become rather tedious. It was tedious, at least, to all those members of the audience who had come here to enjoy the show. The raggers seemed to be thoroughly amused by their own nonsense.

"I don't know what you think, Handy, but in my opinion this sort of thing is a bit too steep!" said Church, after an unusually noisy spell, following the entrance of the chief comedian. "Dash it, these fatheads are spoiling the show!"

"They ought to be chucked out!" said Handforth darkly. "Just because they're undergrads, they think they can do as they jolly well like! I hope to goodness I don't made a fool of myself in this way when I go up to Oxford!"

"They seem to think it's funny!" said Pitt, shaking his head. "Poor chaps, they must have a perverted sense of humour! I may be old-fashioned, but I'm ashamed of 'em!"

"Same here!" echoed several of the other juniors.

There was very little protest from the management. The principal comedian made one or two sarcastic remarks, but in this he was unwise—since they only caused greater and more prolonged interruptions.

The whole affair was an example of Boat Race Night hilarity. Upon the whole, it was good-natured, for most of the raggers were harmless undergrads who were out for a bit of fun.

However, before long, the scene began to take on another aspect.

The audience contained a minority of young fools. In all probability, they were not undergrads at all. They were taking advantage of the 'Varsity men's presence, in order to indulge their own perverted sense of pleasure. And, insidiously, the rag became more and more unpleasant.

Stepping backwards on to an escalator is a risky business—as Handforth found to his cost. For when he tried to do it he came an awful cropper, and found himself rolling down the long flight of moving stairs with ever-increasing speed!



Indeed, these young hooligans, masquerading as undergrads, were doing their best to ruin the show, merely for their own idiotic pleasure. They were all attired in evening-dress—all ostensibly gentlemen. But their behaviour proved that they were fools or hooligans—or both.

"The beastly cads!" said Nipper angrily, after a particularly loud outburst. "We can't hear a thing! Here we are, sitting in the stalls, and yet we can hardly hear a sound from the stage! It's too bad!"

"Brother, your complaint is undoubtedly justified," said Browne. "Let us trust that no members of the genuine audience suspect us of being in league with these blighted imbeciles."

"They're ruining the show!" said Stevens hotly.

Horace Stevens was famed at St. Frank's as an actor. He was, indeed, an amateur actor of extraordinary ability, and it hurt him deeply to see these artistes labouring under such a handicap. He felt keenly for them. He did not expect to see any great acting in a musical comedy, but even musical comedy artistes cannot do justice to their parts if they are constantly being interrupted.

After the show had been going for perhaps half an hour, a really serious change took place.

In the middle of some funny "business" between the comedian and the leading man, a party of the ragers came noisily into the auditorium. Perhaps they had been away to the bar, and their behaviour certainly lent colour to this supposition.

For as they came through the swing doors they shouted and roared with laughter; one or two of them hurled things upon the stage. There was a clatter of money, and a perfect yell went up from the young fools. Something struck the comedian on the face, and a squashed orange fell to the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I protest!" shouted the comedian furiously, as he took a step towards the footlights. "We all know perfectly well that it is Boat Race Night, and we are prepared for a little harmless amusement. But this sort of thing is altogether beyond the bounds of—"

He was interrupted by catcalls from almost every part of the house, and the tumult was only increased when hundreds of legitimate members of the audience rose to their feet, shouting in angry condemnation.

"Why cannot these young hooligans be turned out?" demanded a gentleman who was sitting just behind the St. Frank's juniors. "We have paid for our seats, and we want to see this performance. Why are these idiots allowed to remain here? Where are the police? What is the matter with the management?"

Handforth jumped to his feet.

"Hear, hear!" he shouted hotly. "You're right, sir! If these fellows are 'Varsity men, they ought to be jolly well ashamed of themselves!"



"Sit down, Handy!" urged Church. "You'll only make things worse!"

But Handforth took no notice.

"Sit down, you rotters!" he bawled, at the top of his powerful voice. "Why can't you let us enjoy the show? If you want to yell and hoot, why don't you go outside into the street?"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the spirit, boy!"

Handforth had the audience with him—the greater proportion of the audience, that is. He was encouraged to proceed.

on to an escalator is a risky business—as Handst. For when he tried to do it he came an awful himself rolling down the long flight of moving stairs with ever-increasing speed!

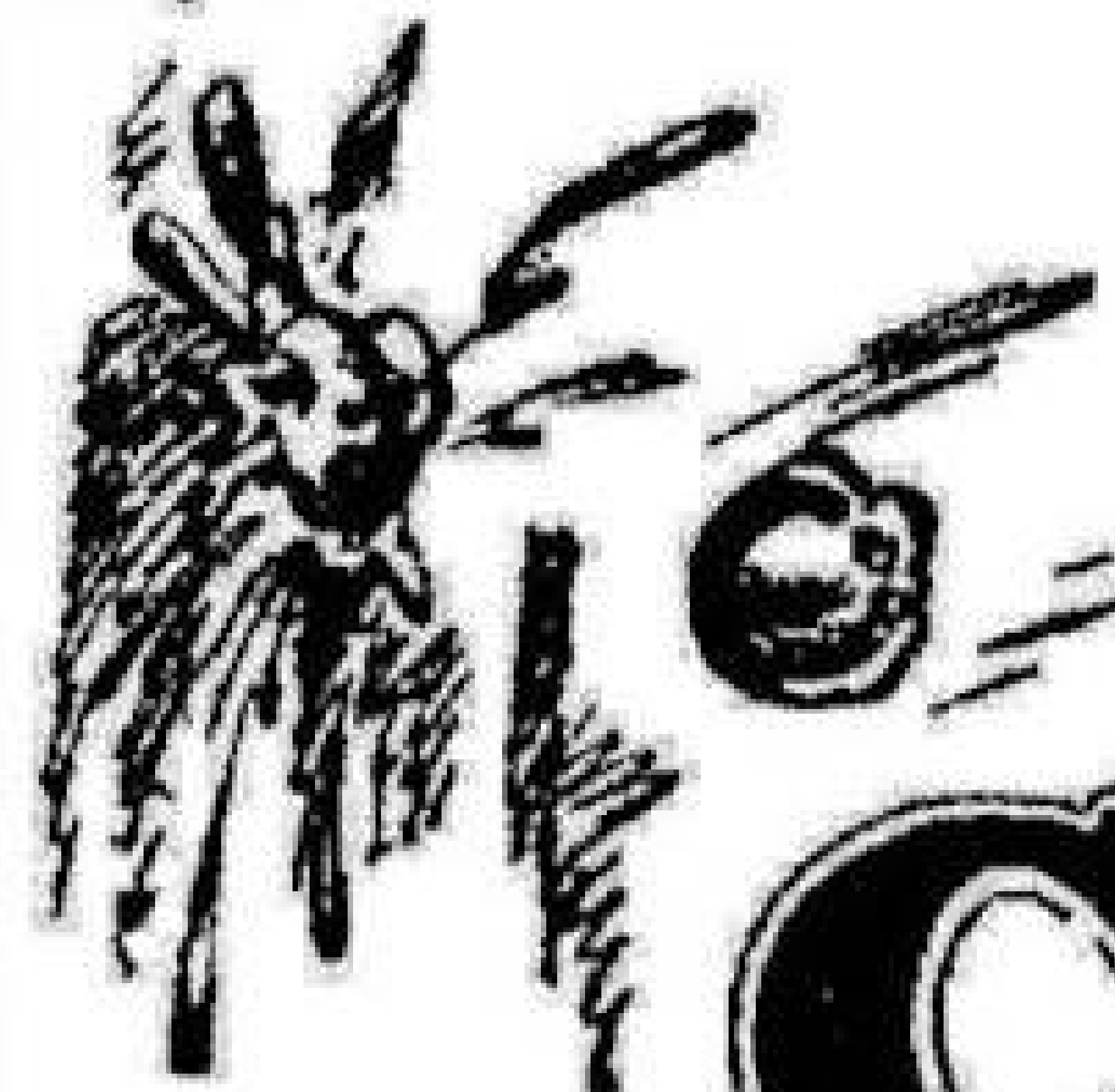


"Haven't you any decency?" he went on scathingly. "And what about the good name of your 'Varsity? Do you want to drag it into the mire? A rag is all right—I'm just as keen on a rag as anybody. But this isn't a rag—it's an exhibition of boogi-
ganism!"

"That's the stuff, kid!" howled one of the ragers. "Go it! Why don't you get on the stage, and make a speech?"

Edward Oswald Handforth took a deep breath.

"By George, I will!" he retorted. "If the management hasn't got enough pluck to do it, then somebody's got to show them the way!"



CHAPTER 16.

Not Very Successful!

CHURCH and McClure were aghast. Nipper and Pitt and the other juniors, perhaps, were not so startled by Handforth's action. After all, they approved of it. They felt, in their hearts, that he was doing the right thing. And it was a plucky thing, too.

Not that it was really plucky in Handforth's case. He acted upon impulse, as he always did.

He was enraged at these constant interruptions—these senseless catcalls and shouts which spoilt everybody's amusement. The majority of the 'Varsity men were silent now. Only the minority kept up the din. Incidentally, it is invariably the minority that creates the most noise.

As Handforth reached the aisle, the big plush curtains came tumbling down, and the auditorium lights were switched on. Attendants were running about helplessly, and the orchestra had struck up some kind of lively music. There was a great deal of confusion all round.

But Handforth reached the orchestra in less than ten strides, and with one of his agile leaps he jumped on to the orchestra rail, and then leaped cleanly across the footlights on to the stage. His arrival there was the signal for a perfect yell of derision from the ragers.

"Oh, the ass!" moaned Church. "Why the dickens did he interfere? He'll only get himself into trouble!"

"What can we do to stop him?" asked McClure. "You know what a fathead he is! Besides, I agree with him!" he added stubbornly. "Handy's doing the right thing. These rags are getting too much of a good thing!"

"Ladies and gentlemen!" roared Handforth, holding up his hand.

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, kid!"

"Shssssh!"

Over seventy five per cent of the audience were anxious to hear what Handforth had to say, and the air was filled with "shssssh-ing." And such was the power of Handforth voice that he made himself heard above the din from the ragers.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I don't want you to think that I'm one of the young idiots who came here to spoil the show!" roared Handforth. "I'm only a schoolboy, and I came here with a party of chaps to see this performance. And we want to see it, too! We don't want to have it messed up by a lot of hooligans!"

"Good lad—good lad!"

"Splendid!"

"As the management won't do anything, it's up to us to act for ourselves!" went on Handforth fiercely. "Now then, everybody! Get out of your seats, and pitch these idiots out of the theatre! Chuck them out, neck and crop!"

"Gad, the boy's right!" shouted an old gentleman of military bearing, from the middle of the stalls. "It's the only thing to be done! Pitch 'em out!"

"They're not real undergrads!" went on Handforth contemptuously. "Or, if they are, they're not fit to be undergrads! We've paid to see this show, and if we're not allowed to see it, it's a swindle!"

"Good old Handy!" shouted the St. Frank's fellows, in one voice. "That's the stuff to give 'em!"

"Undoubtedly, brothers, it is the material to ladle out!" said Browne, nodding. "I regret, however, that Brother Handforth should have thought fit to forestall me. It was my intention to go upon the stage, and I have no hesitation in stating that my own native tact would have triumphed. Alas! Even as I feared! Brother Handforth is now fairly in the soup!"

Whizz-whizz-whizz!

One of the young fools had commenced throwing things at Handforth. And these "things" turned out to be tomatoes. It was conclusive evidence that the ragers—or this small minority, at all events—had come to the theatre deliberately prepared to commit assault upon harmless artistes. Otherwise, why should this brainless dolt in evening dress have provided himself with a big bag of tomatoes?

Splash! Thud! Splosh!

One after the other, the tomatoes burst upon Handforth's person. Some splashed over his face, others hit him in the chest—in the neck. He staggered, blinded by the juice.

"You—you ruffians!" he shouted passionately. "By George, doesn't this prove what I've just been saying? You're not what you seem to be! You're only a crowd of rioters! Chuck them out, everybody!"

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The scene was becoming wilder every moment. By now oranges were being thrown—boxes of chocolates, and one dangerous lunatic was even throwing a pair of opera glasses. By sheer good fortune, they missed Handforth by an inch, and thudded harmlessly into the curtain.

"Let him have it!" sang out a tall, red-faced young fellow near the exit. "He's asked for trouble, so we'll give it to him!"

This young man appeared to be the ringleader of the ragers. At all events, his call was instantly answered by the other wealthy young hooligans. They made the air hideous with their senseless catcalling. In various parts of the auditorium, indignant members of the audience were grappling with the ragers, and about seven or eight free fights were beginning to develop. The whole affair, in fact, was becoming grave.

"You cowards!" shouted Handforth fiercely. "Go ahead—chuck your tomatoes and things at me! I'm not going to dodge away—I'm not a funk! I came up on this stage to make a speech to the audience, and I'm going to do it! Ladies and gentlemen—at least, gentlemen! Why don't you get up, and chuck these fools out? They're not fit to mix in decent society! They think they're gentlemen, but they're worse than heathens!"

"Good—darned good!" leered the tall young man at the side. "And now, how do you like the feel of these?"

He dived under his seat, and produced a big chocolate box. Then he commenced throwing. An egg struck Handforth in the middle of the chest, and burst. Another egg hit him in the face, and he staggered drunkenly. And in that second Edward Oswald Handforth saw red. Exactly what he smelt was another matter.

"All right!" he panted. "You cad! You're the one who's leading the rag! By George! I'm going to smash you to pulp!"

With one prodigious leap, Handforth jumped clean across the orchestra pit, reached the side aisle, and raced for the ringleader.

Cheers rang out from every part of the theatre.



CHAPTER 17.

The Impulsiveness of
Handy!

"COME on!" gasped Church frantically. "Eh?" said McClure. "What the dickens

"We'd better get over to that side—to help old Handy!" said Church rapidly. "These cads will pile on him like a ton of bricks, and we've got to stand by the old chap, haven't we?"

"Yes, rather!" said Mac.

But, as it happened, the management had been acting during all this excitement.

Actually, only a few minutes had elapsed since the "rag" developed into such a serious business. The curtain had not been lowered for more than four or five minutes.

Practically every member of the audience stood on his or her feet. Excitement was at its highest pitch. And at that very moment the police arrived.

Burly constables came pushing their way through doors on both sides of the orchestral stalls. They entered the pit—the grand circle, and other parts of the house. Evidently the management had arranged that these constables should enter the auditorium at the same moment, from all quarters.

So Handforth's fight did not come off. He had raced right up to the tall young fellow who was leading the raggers, when a constable came pushing his way through the doors. He butted straight into Handforth, and grabbed him.

"Lemme go!" roared Handforth indignantly.

"Now then, young man—now then!" said the policeman grimly. "There's been about enough of this! You're coming with me!"

"What!" gasped Handforth. "But—but I'm not one of these raggers!"

"You don't look like it, do you?" said the policeman.

His mistake was forgivable. Handforth was in a terrible state. He was smothered in tomatoes, eggs, and other horrid substances. The constable had naturally concluded that this excited youngster was one of the worst offenders.

But Handforth was not having any.

"Lemme go!" he repeated desperately, as the policeman held on to him. "By George! Can't you see I'm on the side of law and order? I want the audience to chuck these rioters out! I was making a speech from the stage, and——"

"That'll be enough!" said the policeman sternly. "You're coming with me!"

"Am I?" hooted Handforth. "We'll see about that!"

"Let him go, constable!" said a lady, who was sitting near. "This boy has been most brave—most praiseworthy in his efforts to——"

But her words were lost. Handforth, in his excitement, got in a beautiful right-hander. It struck the constable under the chin, and the astonished officer staggered back, slipped on the carpet, and sat down with a jar that shook every bone in his body.

To make matters worse, Handforth stepped on the constable's chest, and ran on. But he was just in time to find himself in the arms of Church and McClure; and they acted with commendable promptitude.

"This way, Handy!" said Church briskly.

Before Handforth could protest he was whirled through the swing doors, for Nipper and Fullwood and most of the other Removites had dodged along by this time. Handforth found himself being half carried, half dragged up one of the plush covered corridors

"You—you silly asses!" he gurgled. "I want to get back at that chap who started all the rioting! I'm going to smash him——"

"Sorry, old man, but there's been enough of this scrapping!" said Nipper. "You just biffed a constable over, and goodness knows what the result will be!"

"It was his own fault!" panted Handforth. "He tried to stop me, and he accused me of being one of the raggers! Of all the nerve! I'm not going to——"

"This way!" said Church grimly.

Before Handforth realised it, he was whisked into one of the wash rooms; and he was forced over a basin, and he was told that unless he started washing himself within twenty seconds, he would be forcibly washed by the others.

So Handforth gave it up.

By this time, too, he had cooled down. But he wasn't in the least degree sorry for what he had done. He was rather pleased with himself. He had, at least, shown the audience that the St. Frank's crowd was totally against the disturbance.

"You did jolly well, Handy, old man," said Nipper heartily, "and we're all proud of you—although, at the same time, you were a bit unwise."

"How was I unwise?" demanded Handforth, emerging from a towel.

"Have you forgotten that we came up to London on the strict Q.T.?" asked Nipper.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Supposing this affair gets into the newspaper?" went on Nipper. "If it comes to that, it's bound to be in all the London newspapers to-morrow. Your name might be mentioned—or perhaps all our names. That would be pretty lively, wouldn't it. We might even get the sack!"

Handforth looked startled for a moment, and then he turned red.

"Get the sack?" he repeated. "Not likely! We haven't done anything to be ashamed of! We supported the peace-loving members of the audience against those hooligans!"

"Quite so, old man, but that's not the point," said Nipper. "We don't want our names to be mentioned at all—or even the school. Let's hope the journalists are lacking in enterprise. As for the raggers, they've been cleared out by this time, you can bet; and as soon as you've finished your cleaning down process, we'll go back to our seats and enjoy the rest of the show."

"That's the idea!" said Reggie Pitt, nodding. "It's a good thing this affair happened, really. It's high time that something drastic was done with these 'Varsity raggers. I don't believe that the undergrads are so much to blame. It's the others—the irresponsible idiots—who make all the din."

At this point there was an interruption. A man entered the wash-room. He was in evening dress, and he looked very stern as he singled Handforth out from the others.

"I want your name and address, young man!" he said, in a hard voice.

"My name and address?" repeated Handforth. "What for?"

"You ought to know what for!" replied the other. "It is a very serious thing, assaulting the police in the execution of their duty!"

"But I didn't!" protested Handforth. "That constable grabbed me, and he tried to make out that I was one of the raggers."

"That makes no difference!" said the man sternly. "You knocked the officer down, and I have been instructed to get your name and address. Come on! You had better be quick about it!"

"I won't tell you!" said Handforth defiantly.

"I suppose that means that you are afraid—eh?" said the man, with a curl of his lip. "You know that you have been guilty—"

"No, I'm not afraid!" interrupted Handforth fiercely. "My name's Handforth—Edward Oswald Handforth, and I'm the son of Sir Edward Handforth, M.P. By George! If you kick up any fuss over this, I'll see that my pater asks some questions in Parliament!"

"Edward Oswald Handforth!" repeated the stranger, as he made some notes in a pocket-book. "What's your address?"

"St. Frank's College, Bellton, Sussex," replied Handforth thickly.

"All right; you'll probably hear more of this later!" said the other. "As I said before, it's a very serious affair, assaulting a constable in the execution of his duty!"

And he went out, leaving Handforth and the other juniors with long, grave faces.



CHAPTER 18.

Very Serious!

AFTER the first shock of it, Handforth was inclined to be bitter.

"And that's all the thanks you get—when you try to help!" he said hoarsely. "I got



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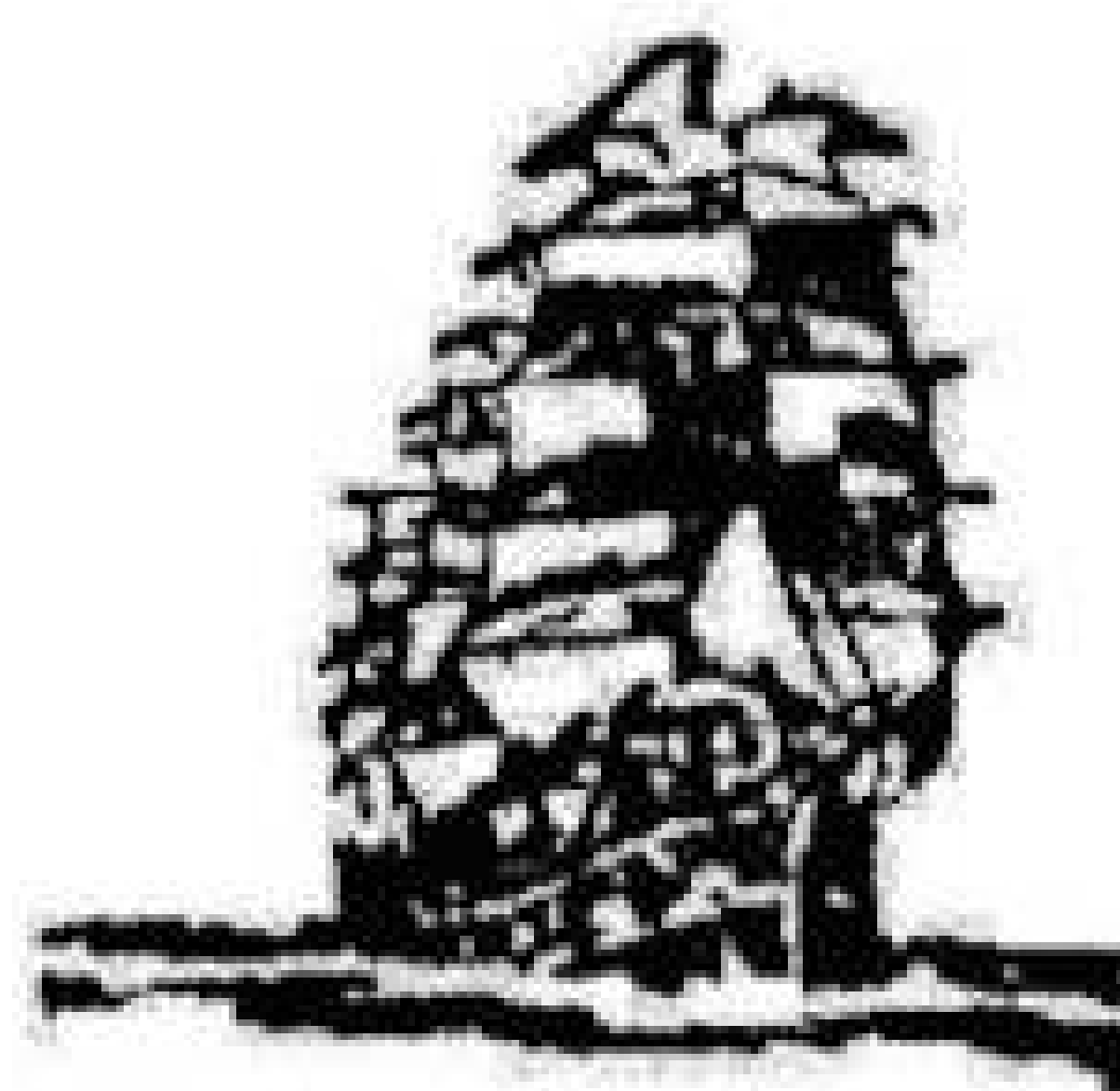
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on the stage, and I told the audience what to do. I allowed myself to be the target for all those rotten tomatoes and things. Now I get my name and address taken for assaulting the police! Doesn't it make you feel sick?"

"It doesn't make us feel sick, old man; but you must be feeling pretty bad," said Reggie Pitt, shaking his head. "Poor old scout! What a beastly shame! I hope to goodness that nothing bad comes of this."

"Bad?" repeated Handforth. "What do you mean?"

"Well, assaulting the police, you know!" said Pitt vaguely. "Chaps are sent to prison for that!"

"Prison!" repeated Handforth, with a start.

"Well, Handy, you did biff that constable pretty hard under the chin!" said Nipper. "And the police are liable to take a very peculiar view of incidents like that. You knocked the officer down in full view of the audience, and the dignity of the whole force was set at naught."

"Rats!" said Handforth, frowning. "He was trying to hold me, and I wouldn't stand any rot like that!"

"Well, old man, you'll be lucky if you get off with a caution!" said Fullwood solemnly. "The fact that you were on the side of law and order doesn't make any difference at all. You knocked the constable down, and you'll be charged with that offence."

"Charged?" repeated Handforth, staring.

"Well, you never know," said Fullwood. "It's quite likely that you'll be summoned."

The door opened, and William Napoleon Browne came in. The lanky Fifth-Former was looking unusually troubled.

"Ah, Brother Handforth, then you are still with us?" he asked, with concern.

"Still with you?" repeated Handforth. "Where else did you think I'd be?"

"I was wondering if they had arrested you yet," said Browne, with a sigh. "Alas and alack, Brother Handy, I fear the worst! Do you know the identity of the gentleman who entered this apartment a brief spell since?"

"He was the manager, or somebody like that, wasn't he?"

"I wonder!" said Browne. "It is so difficult to tell these Scotland Yard officers."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth blankly. "Was that chap a Scotland Yard detective?"

"Who can say?" replied Browne. "I believe he took your name and address?"

"Yes, he did, the rotter!" said Handforth.

"Ah!" sighed Browne.

"What do you mean—'ah'?" asked Handforth, with a jump.

"Nothing, brother—nothing!" said Browne. "At least, I mean nothing that I would care to explain to you. Let us be merry while we can. I would remind you that the show has recommenced, and we are missing the choice portions. Let us, therefore, return to our seats."

There was something mysterious in Browne's manner. It was almost as though he hinted at some disaster to come. Handforth tried to look unconcerned—and, indeed, he was feeling quite indignant about it all. Why should he be in any trouble? Hadn't he covered himself with glory? Why, therefore, should he worry himself? True, he had knocked that policeman down, but that had been the policeman's own fault. And so Edward Oswald tried to console himself.

He returned to his seat in the stalls with the others, and his arrival was the signal for a big round of applause from all parts of the house. Handforth swelled visibly as he heard those handclaps. He knew that they were for him.

There were still a good many undergraduates in the audience, and it was noticed that these, too, joined in the applause. The unruly raggers had been forcibly ejected. Many of them, as a matter of fact, had been arrested. All those who were left were peaceable citizens, and they had no desire to ruin the show.

And so the first act came to its conclusion. Hardly had the curtain fallen when the manager of the theatre came in front, and made a brief speech.

"It is to be greatly regretted that this disturbance should have occurred," he said, in the course of his apology. "I need hardly add that the management knew nothing whatever of the projected rag, otherwise special precautions would have been taken. I would like to say a special word of thanks to the fearless schoolboy who jumped upon the stage during the height of the disturbance, and did his best to knock sense into the heads of the young idiots who were making such a din."

"Hear, hear!"

"A fine boy, that!"

"He did splendidly!"

Another round of applause came from all parts of the house, and Handforth flushed with embarrassment—and pleasure. It cannot be denied that he liked this sort of thing.

"That schoolboy's action was utterly fearless," continued the manager. "He and his companions possess the right spirit, and I am very glad to see that the younger generation is opposed to these vicious, nonsensical exhibitions of unnecessary hooliganism. We all like to be indulgent on such a night as this, but there never can be any excuse for deliberate rowdyism. I can only add, ladies and gentlemen, that the management regret any inconvenience that has been caused, and I can assure you that we will do our best to send you home feeling that you have had your full money's worth."

After one or two other remarks in the same strain, the manager retired, followed by a long round of applause. And when this was over, Handforth came in for a third ovation.

"There you are!" he said, turning to Church and McClure with a triumphant light

in his eyes. "What have you got to say about it now? Blow the police! Blow that chap who came and took my name and address! Do you think I care a fig about him? The manager of this place and everybody in the audience knows that I did the right thing. So I'm not going to worry about biffing over that constable!"

"I only hope you'll be safe, Handy," said Church, with a gloomy shake of his head. "But you never can tell. You knocked that policeman over, and you'll be awfully lucky if you escape without any further notice being taken of it."

"Rot!" said Handforth, as the curtain went up for the second part of the show. "You mark my words, we shan't hear any more about it."

But he didn't quite like the way in which his chums and the other juniors exchanged grave, significant glances. It almost seemed as though they knew something that had been kept from him—as though they feared some blow that was about to fall!

CHAPTER 19.

The Midnight Visitor!



"JOLLY good show!"

"Absolutely!"

"Thanks to Brother Handforth!" said Browne smoothly.

They were all gathered round the festive board in Captain Glenthorne's flat. It was late now—getting on for midnight. Having returned from the theatre, the fellows had found an excellent supper ready for them, and they had piled into it with a will. The meal was nearing its close now, and all the juniors were feeling comfortably tired.

"Yes, thanks to Brother Handforth," repeated Browne. "But for the fact that he had the courage to stand forth in the face of the multitude, our evening would have been completely ruined. Without any exaggeration, it is safe to say that Brother Handy saved the evening."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Handy!"

Handforth flushed and grinned.

"Rats!" he said. "I didn't do anything much. But it made me wild when all those idiots tried to mess up the show. I don't mind a harmless rag any day. Goodness knows, we do enough ragging at St. Frank's, if it comes to that! But there's a difference between a rag and a deliberate and wicked attempt to spoil a show. I don't believe the undergrads are really to blame, either."

"Well, we needn't discuss the point, of course," said Nipper. "On Boat Race night all Oxford and Cambridge men are liable to get a bit noisy. But I'm pretty sure that the ringleaders in that theatre this evening were in no way connected with either 'Varsity. They just saw their opportunity to kick up a shindy, and they thought it was funny."

"I'm rather worrying about the newspapers," said Reggie Pitt. "That affair is bound to be reported, you know. And don't forget they took Handy's name and address."

"The police, you mean?" asked Browne smoothly.

Handforth winced.

"I don't believe it was the police!" he growled. "Why should the police take my name and address?"

"It has already been pointed out to you, brother, that you assaulted a constable in the execution of his duty——"

"Dry up about that!" said Handforth fiercely. "It was the bobby's own fault. He shouldn't have interfered with me! He asked for trouble——"

"And I do not hesitate to say that you will get trouble without even asking for it," cut in Browne solemnly. "Mind you, Brother Handforth, I am not making any predictions. I do not pretend to know the workings of these police officials. But nothing can alter the fact that you assaulted a constable in the execution——"

"I don't want to hear it again!" broke in Handforth desperately. "I've been hearing that phrase all the giddy evening! I'm fed up with it! And if my name comes out in the papers, all the better!"

"All the better?" repeated Church and McClure in one voice.

"Yes!" said Handforth. "I want everybody to know that I'm against these acts of ruffianism."

"That's all very well," said Pitt, "but what about us? Dr. Stafford is bound to see that report, and my Housemaster, too—and your Housemaster. What are they going to say? There'll be an inquiry, and then the whole truth will come out. It might mean a flogging all round."

William Napoleon Browne raised a hand.

"I will let you into a secret, brothers," he said benevolently. "It may interest you to know that I have had an important interview with the newspaper men. I might mention that these gentlemen were the heads—the Ones who Count."

"You've had an interview, eh?" chorused the others.

"I have!" said Browne. "And I have silenced them very effectually. You need have no fear about the morning's newspapers!"

"Good old Browne—always on the spot!" said Nipper heartily. "What, exactly, have you done?"

"I have impressed upon these gentlemen the necessity of suppressing all names, and all references to St. Frank's College," replied the captain of the Fifth. "When, therefore, you see a report of the recent rag in the London newspapers, you will find that everything will be satisfactory. Schoolboys will undoubtedly be mentioned—but they will merely remain schoolboys. There will be no names—no mention of St. Frank's. I am telling you this in order that you may sleep comfortably."



"You have confessed, from the dock, that you assaulted a constable in the execution of his duty," said the magistrate, pointing sternly to Handforth. "Therefore I have no alternative but to sentence you. You will go to prison for six months!" As Handy heard the sentence he nearly jumped out of the dock.

"What-ho!" said Archie Glenthorne. "Absolutely, old scout! I might mention that you have taken a vast load off the good old mind. Absolutely lifted it clean away. The good old tissues are considerably restored by this chunk of information."

"Rather!" said Reggie Pitt. "That was jolly thoughtful of you, Browne—jolly cute, too!"

"I am famed," said Browne, "for my cuteness. I am also famed for my careful attention to detail. As I consider myself in nominal charge of this party, I regarded it as a duty to interview these newspaper gentlemen. And so all is well."

"That's fine!" said Nipper, as he glanced round at the clock. "By Jove! One minute to twelve! What time does our train leave in the morning, Browne?"

"Nine-twenty, from Victoria," replied Browne. "It behoves us, therefore, brothers, to tumble into bed. I have a vague suspicion that the accommodation will be somewhat restricted, but who are we to grumble? Some of us will be compelled to sleep three in a bed. Others will find it necessary to doss on the hearthrug, but what matters?"

Bang-bang-bang!

The sound of thunderous knocking came from the front door of the flat. All the conversation ceased, and the juniors looked at one another in astonishment. Archie

rose to his feet, and his monocle dropped out of his eye.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated. "I mean to say, it seems to me that somebody is absolutely at the good old door!"

"Your brother, perhaps?" suggested Fullwood.

"No, it's not Bertie," said Archie. "Bertie very decently went off to a pal's, leaving us the whole dashed flat. Besides, he's got a key. I rather think he preferred to be elsewhere, being a chappie who likes a fair amount of comfort."

"Never mind your brother, Archie," said Nipper. "You'd better go to the door, and see who's there."

"Oh, rather!" replied Archie. "You mean me? Go to the good old door, what? Oh, I see!"

"Well, it's your flat during your brother's absence, so you'd better answer the door," said Nipper.

"What-ho!" agreed Archie. "Of course, old dear!"

He went out of the sitting-room into the little lobby. He left the door wide open, and there was a hush from all the juniors as they heard him open the outer door.

"Good gad!" came a startled gasp from Archie.

"Is there a young gentleman here of the

name of Edward Oswald Handforth?" came a heavy, gruff, rolling voice.

"Eh?" bleated Archie. "I mean—Odds frights and turns! You absolutely gave me a start, old lad! Yes, Handforth is here, if you want him!"

"I do want him!" said the other voice. "I've got a warrant for his arrest, and I'm going to take him away with me!"



CHAPTER 20.

A Terrible Development!

HANDFORTH sat perfectly still, as though frozen to his chair.

"Did—did you hear that, Handy?"

whispered Church, leaning over towards him.

"I must be dreaming!" breathed Handforth, with a gulp. "Oh, rot! Of course I'm dreaming! I thought I heard somebody saying that he had a warrant for my arrest!"

"Alas and alack, brother, you heard only too well," sighed Browne. "This is no dream—but grim actuality. Even as I feared, the long arm of the law has reached out, and is about to clutch!"

Handforth recovered the use of his limbs, and he staggered unsteadily to his feet. His movements broke the spell, and all the other fellows were now on their feet, too. At the same time, the door opened, and Archie Glenthorne came backing in. He was followed by a burly police constable, and the latter had a grim look on his face.

"It's no good, young gent, I've got to do my duty!" he was saying. "Now, which of you is the one I want?" he went on, scanning the crowd of startled juniors. "Which one is Master Handforth?"

"He's Handforth!" said half a dozen fellows simultaneously, pointing to Handforth with one movement of their arms.

"Good!" said the policeman, taking a step nearer to the startled Edward Oswald. "Sorry, young gent, but I've got to arrest you."

"But—but it's all Tommy rot!" panted Handforth frantically. "Going to arrest me! What for? I've never heard such piffle——"

"Your name is Edward Oswald Handforth, isn't it, sir?"

"Yes!" said the leader of Study D.

"Very well, young gent, here's my warrant!" said the policeman, bringing forth a formidable-looking blue paper. "I arrest you on the charge of assaulting an officer in the execution of his duty."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Handforth in a hollow voice.

"But—but this is all so silly!" protested Nipper, with a gulp. "You can't arrest him, officer!"

"My warrant——"

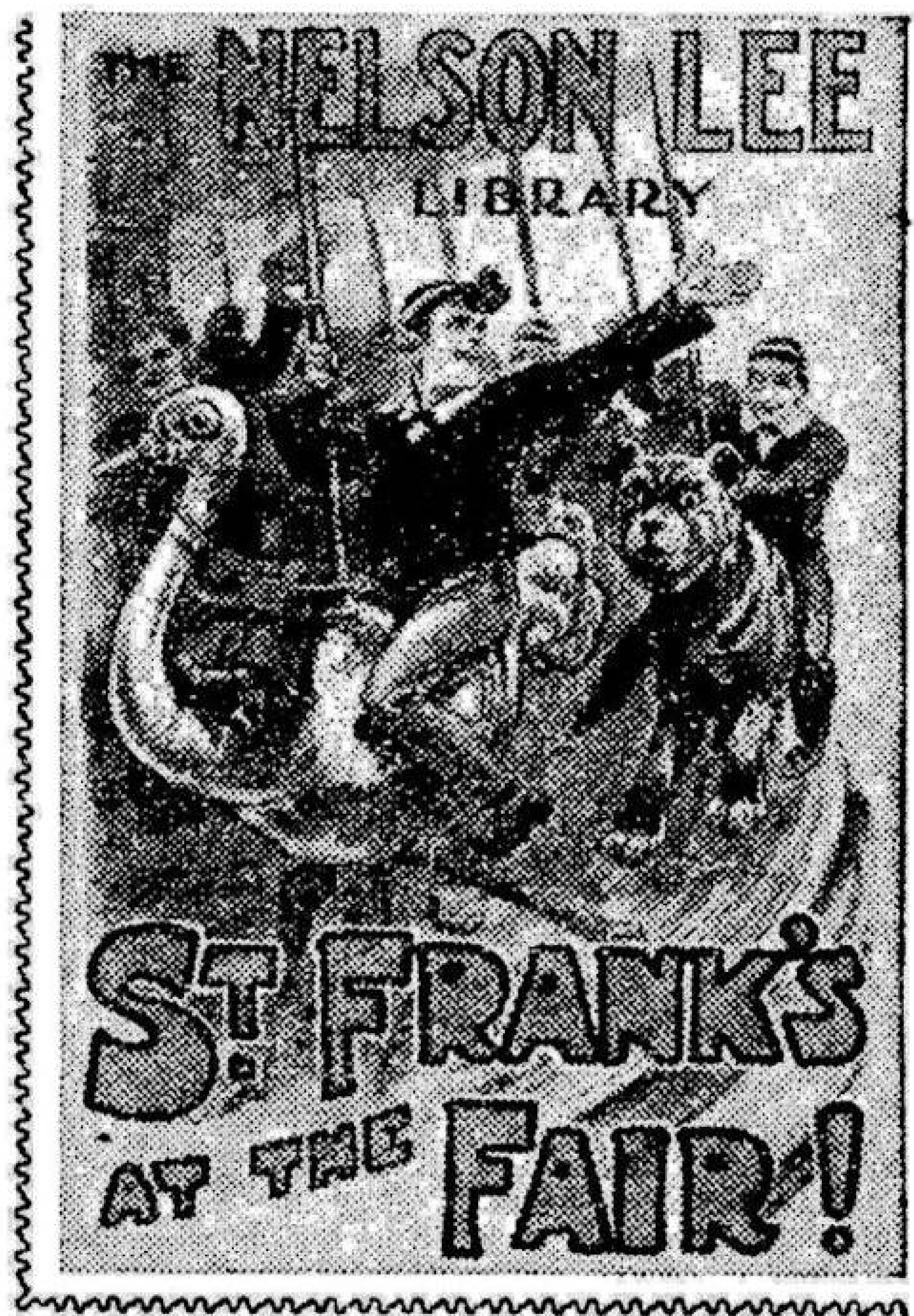
"Never mind your warrant!" interrupted Nipper. "There must be a mistake somewhere. We half expected that Handforth would be summoned, or something like that. But to arrest him!"

"Odds gad and good gracious!" said Archie pallidly. "A St. Frank's chap arrested—and in dear old Bertie's flat, too! It's too absolutely frightful for words. You can't do it, laddie—you simply can't!"

"We'll see about that!" said the constable, reaching a hand round, and producing a pair of handcuffs.

"Oh, my only aunt!" gasped Church, staring dazedly. "You're not going to handcuff him, too?"

NEXT WEDNESDAY! ~~~~~



"And why not?" asked the policeman. "By what I've heard about this young gent, he *needs* handcuffing! He was a pretty big proposition in that theatre this evening, and I'm not taking any chances."

Handforth backed away, his face pale, his eyes glittering.

"You'd better go easy!" he said tensely. "You're jolly well not going to arrest me like this—for nothing! That policeman tried to hold me, and I just biffed him. That's all!"

"You assaulted a policeman in the execution of——"

"I know it!" howled Handforth. "But I'm always biffing chaps over!"

"Very likely you are, sir," said the officer.

"It don't matter to me how many fellers you biff over at your school. But when it comes to a police constable, it's a different thing. Anyhow, here's the warrant, and I've got my duty to do. I'm sorry, sir, and I can tell you plainly that I don't care much for the job. But I've just got to do it."

"As I had feared," murmured Browne. "Brother Handy, you are undoubtedly up to the neck in the mock turtle. Alas, that one so young should become a gaol bird!"

Handforth looked round wildly.

"Aren't you going to help me, you chaps?" he panted.

"But what can we do?" asked Nipper, in desperation. "This policeman has brought

—a double click—and Edward Oswald stood there, gazing dazedly at the steel bracelets over his wrists.

"Now, young sir, you'd best be sensible, and come quietly," growled the constable. "I'd like you to remember that I'm only doing my duty. There have been a good few arrests to-night, I might add."

"Undergrads, do you mean?" asked Nipper.

"You've hit it, sir!" said the policeman. "Special measures this year. We had a lot of trouble last Boat Race night, and this year we've prepared ourselves. The police mean to teach these high-spirited young gents a lesson. The public has had enough of rioting."

"But—but I'm not one of them!" gasped Handforth frantically. "I tell you, you've made a bloomer! I'm not one of the raggers! I was against them—I did everything I could to restore order!"

"That doesn't make any difference, young gent," said the policeman stubbornly. "You assaulted a policeman in the execution—"

"Shut up!" babbled Handforth. "I shall go dotty if you keep on repeating that phrase!"

He suddenly became very cool, and he found Church and McClure looking at him with horrified anguish.

"Handy, old man!" said Church. "We—we never thought—"

"Well, I'm not whining!" said Handforth coldly. "But, by George, there'll be a row about this later on! Just wait until my pater hears! Just wait until my pater kicks up a fuss in Parliament! It will be a fuss, too! I'll show the police whether they can arrest me like any ordinary rowdy!"

Now that he had grown accustomed to the thing, he was resigned; he even seemed to take a gloomy pleasure in the immediate prospect. There was a long, significant silence as the policeman led him out of the sitting-room, down the little lobby, and out through the main doorway. The fellows seemed to be stricken into silence.

Slam!

The door closed, and Handforth found himself walking downstairs, with the constable's hand on his shoulder. Arrested! Handcuffed like an ordinary thief—being marched to the police station! This was a fine end to the day!

"ST. FRANK'S AT THE FAIR!"

Edward Oswald Handforth is holding an Easter party consisting of St. Frank's juniors at his pater's London house; and when Lord Dorrimore blows in with the idea that they shall all go to the Fair at Hampstead there is great excitement, especially when his lordship gives them all a fiver each to spend.

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a warrant, Handy, and if we obstruct him, we shall only make things worse. We'd better let him take you round to the police station, and then we'll come and bail you out."

"Oh, my hat!" said Handforth, with a gulp. "Prevention is better than cure, isn't it? Why let him arrest me at all? Rescue, St. Frank's! Come on—hold him while I escape!"

"No, you don't!" said the constable grimly. "I was warned about this—and it seems that I was pretty right in bringing my handcuffs!"

He made one movement, and the next second Handforth was helpless in the officer's grasp. There was an ominous click



CHAPTER 21.

The Night Session!

TAXI-CAB was waiting opposite the big doorway of the block of flats. With swift strides, the constable

took Handforth across the pavement, and bundled him into the waiting vehicle.

The driver evidently knew his orders, for he started off at once, and the policeman

settled back into the taxi, leaving one of his hands on the prisoner's arm.

"If you'll take my advice, young gent, you'll try no tricks," he said, not unkindly. "It doesn't do to play such dodges with the police. There's no need for you to be afraid, neither."

"I'm not afraid!" retorted Handforth. "I'm wild! And this is what you call justice, I suppose? I do all I can to help——"

"It's no use saying those things to me, sir," interrupted the policeman. "I didn't issue that warrant for your arrest. I'm only doing my duty. I don't suppose you'll be dealt with very severely, seein' as you're so young. It's a special Court you're bein' taken to, you understand."

"A special Court?" said Handforth dully.

"That's it!" said the other. "A special session for you high-spirited young gents. You're not ordinary arrests, as you might say."

Handforth was silent. He knew very little about the machinery of the law, and it was of no interest to him to hear that a special Court was sitting—to deal with these 'Varsity raggers. He was overwhelmed by the injustice of his arrest. From the very first, he had been opposed to the ragging. And just because he had accidentally biffed over a constable, he was classed with those young hooligans. Now he was arrested—he was being taken to the police station. It was outrageous—it was well-nigh unbelievable. Indeed, but for the fact that this constable was obviously an officer, he might have believed that he was being japed.

Any such lingering doubt was completely removed when the taxi came to a halt. For Handforth found himself led through a dingy doorway, and he recognised the place as a police-station. Under these new regulations, whatever they were, he was not even taken into the charge-room. Instead, he was led straight down a stone-flagged passage, and a door was flung open.

"In you go, sir!" said the constable gently. "Sorry, but I don't suppose you'll be here for long."

Handforth made no reply. In a vague kind of way he saw that the door had bars in its upper portion, and after he had passed through, he found himself in a tiny cell, with a little bench running along one stone wall. A key was turned in the lock, then the constable's heavy footfalls receded down the passage.

Handforth went to the door, and stared out. A little further along a gas-jet was flaring, and he could dimly see into his cell by the means of that light. It was just as Handforth had always imagined a prisoner's cell to be—only worse.

"Oh, my goodness!" he muttered at length. "What a game!"

He sat down on the bench, and he looked dully at his manacled wrists. The constable might have had the decency to take those handcuffs off. Perhaps he would soon come

back, though. Perhaps he had just gone to report to his superior officer.

And what about the bail?

"I wonder if those chaps'll come along and get me out?" Handforth asked himself. "By George! They'll be a lot of rotters if they don't! A fat lot they care about me!"

He shook his head.

"No fear, though!" he decided. "Old Churchy and Mac will be along in no time—and if they can't raise the money to bail me out, they'll get it from somewhere. I'll bet they won't let me stay in here all night, anyhow. Pah! It's awful!"

Another wave of indignation came over him. Oh, what a fuss there would be over this—later! When his father got to hear about it—when the story came out in the papers! By George! There would never be an end——

But at this point Handforth's thoughts were interrupted. Footsteps sounded in the stone-flagged passage again, and a moment later a key was thrust into the lock of his cell, and the heavy door was flung open.

"Now then, young gent—this way!" said the voice of the constable.

Handforth went to the door, and stood there in the flickering gaslight.

"Are you going to set me free?" he asked eagerly.

"Sorry, sir, but I'm afraid not," replied the officer. "I'll take those handcuffs off, if that's what you mean. But you've got to go before the magistrate."

Handforth stared.

"Go before the magistrate—now?" he said blankly.

"Yes, young gent."

"But that's rot!" said Handforth. "There's no Court sitting until the morning, and——"

"It's a special session, sir," interrupted the constable. "As I told you before, we've made some very particular arrangements this year. And there's a magistrate sitting now—to hear these 'ragging' cases. It's best that you should go into the dock straight away."

"The dock!" muttered Handforth huskily. "Oh, my hat!"

He didn't know whether to be relieved or dismayed. Upon the whole, he felt dismayed. He had expected that he would be bailed out, and then, of course, he would have gone straight along to his father's house. He would have dragged his father out of bed, would have told him the whole story, and Sir Edward, of course, would have set things in motion pretty rapidly.

But what could be done now?

Handforth was to be taken before the magistrate at once—and that left no time for seeking advice, or for getting a lawyer to defend him, or anything.

In a dull kind of way, he found himself led by the constable along the passage again, and then, almost before he knew it, he found himself in a small court-room.

He had often read of such places, although he had never been into one. This court-room was typical of its kind. But, as Hand-

forth glanced round, he was relieved to see that the public gallery was empty. There was a solitary magistrate on the bench, and he was a thin, grey-haired, crabbed-looking specimen of humanity. In his wig and gown, he seemed to be a sort of modern Judge Jeffries, to Handforth's startled imagination.

Then, as Handforth looked round again, he started. The constable he had assaulted was sitting there, at one of the tables near the bench. Yes, this was the same man—the very man he had biffed over. He gave Handforth a cold, baleful look as the junior appeared.

"So this is the boy, eh?" said the magistrate, in a rasping voice. "Put him in the dock!"

"Here, I say, you don't understand—" began Handforth desperately.

"Silence in court!" snapped the magistrate.

Handforth was placed in the dock, and he was feeling more dazed than ever. He hadn't pictured anything like this. But the constable had given him the tip, so he ought to have known what to expect. This was a special night session, and the magistrate was naturally ill-tempered.

In the dock, Handforth leaned against the rail, and he looked round the court-room once more. There were no solicitors—no counsel. He felt trapped. He saw that the magistrate was reading some papers in front of him, and then he suddenly looked across at the dock.

"Your name," he said, "is Handforth?"

"Yes!" said Edward Oswald defiantly.

"Do you plead guilty, or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, of course!" replied Handforth. "The whole thing is a mistake! You've no right to put me in this dock—"

"Silence!" broke in the magistrate. "Constable Robbins, go into the witness-box and give your evidence!"

The policeman whom Handforth had knocked down rose from his seat, and a slow, vindictive smile came over his face. He strode heavily to the witness-box, and that expression on his face boded ill for the prisoner!



CHAPTER 22.

The Sentence!

POLICE - CONSTABLE ROBBINS cleared his throat.

"I was on duty in Piccadilly, m'lord,

when I was called into the theatre to put down a disturbance," he said, without any preliminaries. "I found the place in an uproar, and the first person to come near me was the prisoner."

"What was the prisoner doing?" asked the magistrate.

"He was just jumping down from the stage, m'lord," said the witness. "He was smothered with tomato juice and raw egg, and he was very excited. I seized him, and

told him to come quietly, but he took no notice."

"And then?"

"Then he started fighting me, m'lord," said the constable fiercely. "I did my best to keep him quiet, but it wasn't any use. Suddenly he managed to get one of his arms free, and he caught me under the chin and knocked me down. I wasn't ready for it, or he wouldn't have done it. I'm not used to being knocked down by school kids."

"That will do!" said the magistrate sternly. "There is no reason, Constable Robbins, why you should refer to the prisoner as a school kid. Remember where you are!"

The constable scowled.

"I went clean over, m'lord," he said sullenly. "It was a deliberate case of assault, and before I could get hold of the prisoner again, he had gone."

The magistrate nodded.

"That will do!" he said. "I have heard all that is necessary. Prisoner, what have you to say in answer to this charge? I may as well tell you that it is a very serious charge. You stand in the dock, accused of assaulting a constable in the execution of his duty, and—"

"It wasn't his duty to arrest me!" broke out Handforth. "I was the only chap in the whole theatre who made a deliberate stand against the raggers. Why, the whole thing's ridiculous! I oughtn't to have been arrested—and it's downright injustice to have me here, in this dock, accused of assaulting the police."

"Do you admit that you knocked this constable down?"

"Of course I do!" replied Handforth. "I caught him a lovely swipe with my right—"

"That is tantamount to pleading guilty!" said the magistrate triumphantly. "Having made that admission, anything further that you may say will be utterly valueless. Therefore I have no option but to sentence you with the utmost severity of the law."

Handforth stared dazedly.

"Sentence me?" he repeated, with a gulp. "But—but you can't! I want a counsel to defend me! I want a lawyer—and I'm going to put the whole thing before my pater—"

"You seem to overlook the fact that this session is a special one," broke in the magistrate coldly. "This is no ordinary court, my boy."

"But—but—"

"I am determined to make a sharp example of all such cases as yours!" continued the magistrate sternly. "This rioting, indulged in under the name of ragging, must cease, and the only way to stamp it out is to make an example of such ringleaders as yourself."

"But I'm not a ringleader!" denied Handforth. "I keep on telling you that I was all against the ragging—"

"But you have confessed, from the dock, that you assaulted a constable in the execution of his duty," said the magistrate relentlessly. "Therefore I have no alternative

but to sentence you. You will go to prison for six months!"

Handforth nearly jumped out of the dock. "Prison!" he panted hoarsely. "For—for six months?"

"With hard labour!" said the magistrate grimly.

"But—but you're mad!" shouted Handforth desperately, as he clung to the rail of the dock. "You can't give me six months' hard labour! I've never heard such injustice! I want to see my pater—I want somebody to take him a message——"

"Silence!" said the magistrate, rapping his desk. "That will do! Next case!"

The constable who had arrested Handforth moved forward towards the dock, and opened the little gate.

"This way, sir!" he said briskly.

Handforth spun round, and stared at the magistrate again.

"You'll be sorry for this!" he shouted fiercely. "It's an outrage! Six months' hard labour—for nothing! You'll be sorry——"

"Take him away!" broke in the magistrate harshly.

And the unfortunate Handforth was seized and fairly dragged across the court-room. He could hardly believe the evidence of his ears. Six months' hard labour! He, a schoolboy, sentenced to prison! It was inconceivable—it was beyond belief.

But here he was, in the dingy court-room, and there sat the magistrate, and there, near him, was the very constable that he had knocked over. It was all true—it was all sordidly true!

Where were the other fellows? Why hadn't they been called as witnesses? Why couldn't they go into the witness-box and give evidence in his favour? It was all so unfair—so unjust!

He had been sentenced—he would now be taken away to prison, and thus he would have no chance——

"This way!" said the constable gruffly.

They had arrived at some big double doors, and these were flung open. Handforth found himself thrust through into an apartment beyond.

And then he came to an halt in the doorway, staring. This new apartment was brilliantly illuminated, and there were many figures in there—familiar figures. Church and McClure, Archie Glenthorpe, Nipper, Browne——

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A shriek of laughter went up from the whole crowd. It was no ordinary laughter, either—but the sudden expulsion of long-pent-up mirth. It was an absolute yell, which caused the old rafters to echo and re-echo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Handy—six months' hard labour!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in court!" said the magistrate sternly.

Handforth spun round, too bewildered to speak—too dazed to take it all in during the first second. And there stood the magistrate, peeling off his wig, and rubbing his face with a handkerchief. Slowly, the features of Stevens appeared—Stevens of the Fifth, the schoolboy actor!

"It wasn't such a bad effort, was it, Handy?" grinned Stevens.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows came crowding round him, and they were still shrieking with merriment. But only for the first minute was Handforth robbed of his speech; and when he recovered it, he also recovered his emotions. His face went red with indignation, and his eyes blazed.

"You—you spoofing rotters!" he shouted. "Then—then it's all a jape, after all?"

"Brother Handy, you have guessed it!" said Browne blandly.

"You funny idiots!" said Handforth scathingly. "That's right—laugh! Very funny, isn't it? And I suppose you think I've been fooled, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

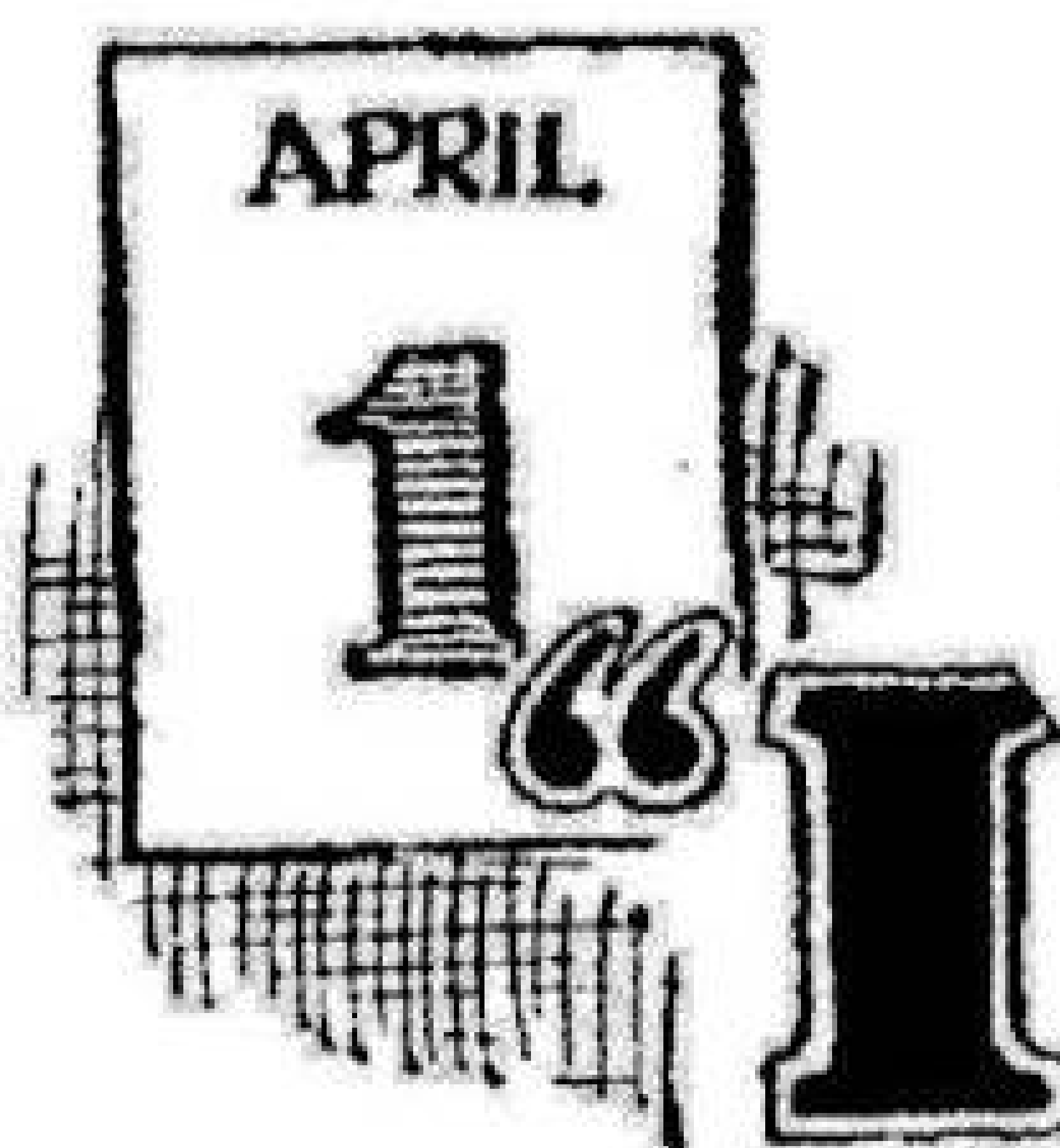
"Oh, Handy, old man, you'll be the death of us yet!" sobbed Pitt, holding his sides. "Fancy trying to make out you weren't fooled!"

"But what's the idea of it?" demanded Handforth aggressively. "By George, I'm going to pulverise the lot of you—one after the other! What the dickens do you mean by japing me like this?"

A dozen hands pointed straight to the wall, and Handforth followed the direction of those pointing fingers. He saw a calendar there, and then he gave a violent start.

For in the centre of the calendar was a big figure "1," and over the top was the name of the month—"April."

A great light flooded into Edward Oswald Handforth's mind.



CHAPTER 23.

The End of a Perfect Day!

"RATHER think," said Browne gently, "that something is stirring within Brother Handforth's masterly brain."

"April the First!" gasped Handforth.

"In other words, old man, All Fools Day!" grinned Reggie Pitt happily. "And if you're the sportsman that we believe you to be, you'll admit that you've been handsomely fooled."

The look of anger left Edward Oswald's face, and he gazed round with a sheepish smile on his rugged features.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he said breathlessly. "So it's only an April Fool stunt! You—you bounders!"

Truth to tell, Handforth was so relieved to find it was only a joke that he forgave them all on the spot. And he had to admit that it had been excellently carried out. He had completely forgotten about the close proximity of April the First. Yet it certainly was April the First, since midnight had struck long since. He now vaguely remembered that the constable had not come to arrest him until the clock had struck the midnight hour.

"I'll bet this was Browne's idea!" said Handforth accusingly.

"M'lord, I must plead guilty!" said Browne, with a nod. "You see, I couldn't resist. After you had biffed that constable over in the theatre, Brother Handy, the idea flashed into my brain like the searing stroke of forked lightning. It was an opportunity too good to be missed."

"But—but how the dickens did you manage it?" asked Handforth, in bewilderment.

"How did you wangle the thing?"

"I am in no way egotistical when I state that a Browne can wangle anything," replied William Napoleon modestly. "I would also remind you, Brother Handforth, that I am the son of the famous Mr. Justice Browne. In other words, my esteemed father is a celebrated judge. And therefore I have certain privileges."

"And this place?" asked Handforth, staring round him. "What is it?"

"It is an old court-room that is not much used nowadays!" replied Browne. "It is officially locked up for the night, but I—being who I am—easily obtained the keys. In other words, I wangled it with the minimum of trouble. Let me assure you that the two constables are genuine. They are the real article, and a little word of explanation to them was sufficient. Naturally, they are now off duty, but they were by no means adverse to earning a little overtime for the sake of our amusement!"

"Well, you're a lot of bounders!" said Handforth, with a return of his former sunniness. "But, by George, it was a jolly good First of April jape! For weeks and weeks I've been planning to work off a stunt on some of the chaps, and now you've spoilt it. You've caught me first!"

And so they all went back to Archie's brother's flat, and it was generally felt that they had had a jolly good day. In the morning they were much relieved to find that the newspapers contained only a brief reference to the affair in the theatre. Schoolboys were mentioned, but no names were given—and no school was specifically stated. No newspaper gave any detail that was liable to upset the appercart of the truants.

"So we only need fear old Pycraft," said Nipper, as they were on their way to Victoria Station. "If he didn't recognise you fellows, everything will be as right as rain."

It really seemed that the escapade was to be a complete success. For, in due course, the party arrived back at Edgemore Manor,

and the genial old earl welcomed them heartily. They remained at the Manor for an hour or two, and had an early tea there.

And so, in accordance with their plan, they arrived back at St. Frank's on their cycles, just as though they had spent the week-end at Edgemore, as they had given the Head to believe.

By a few discreet inquiries, it was learned that Mr. Horace Pycraft was expected back that very evening—so that he would be in time for duty on the morrow.

There was only one evening train on Sunday, and when it steamed into Bellton Station Handforth & Co. and Nipper and one or two other juniors—all dressed in their Sunday best—were hanging about the station yard. As Mr. Pycraft came striding out, they politely raised their toppers.

"Ah!" said Mr. Pycraft darkly.

He came striding towards them, and his eyes were glittering with eagerness.

"Handforth!" he rapped out. "I want a word with you, boy!"

"As many as you like, sir," said Handforth genially.

"Were you in London yesterday, Handforth?" demanded Mr. Pycraft. "Were you on the Thames side, watching the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race?"

Handforth looked blank.

"I, sir?" he said. "In London? Why, a whole crowd of us, myself included, received a permit from the Head to spend the week-end at Edgemore Manor."

Mr. Pycraft's eyes glittered.

"That is a deliberate evasion, Handforth!" he said triumphantly. "I can well understand the meaning of it. You received a permit to go to Edgemore Manor—but you actually went to London. I shall make it my business to report the whole affair to the headmaster. I saw you in London with two or three companions. You eluded me. You knew that I was calling to you, but you took no notice——"

"I think you must be mistaken, sir," said Nipper gently.

"I wasn't mistaken!" retorted Mr. Pycraft.

"Did you see me there, too, sir?"

"No, Hamilton, I did not—but I do not doubt for a moment that you were there!" said the master of the Fourth. "I shall go straight to the headmaster, and I shall tell him of your trickery. I have not any desire to be malicious, but since you boys did not have a permit to go to London, it is my duty——"

"But it is so easy to make a mistake, sir," said Nipper. "Anybody is liable to make a little blunder like that—especially in a crowd."

"I made no blunder!" said Mr. Pycraft.

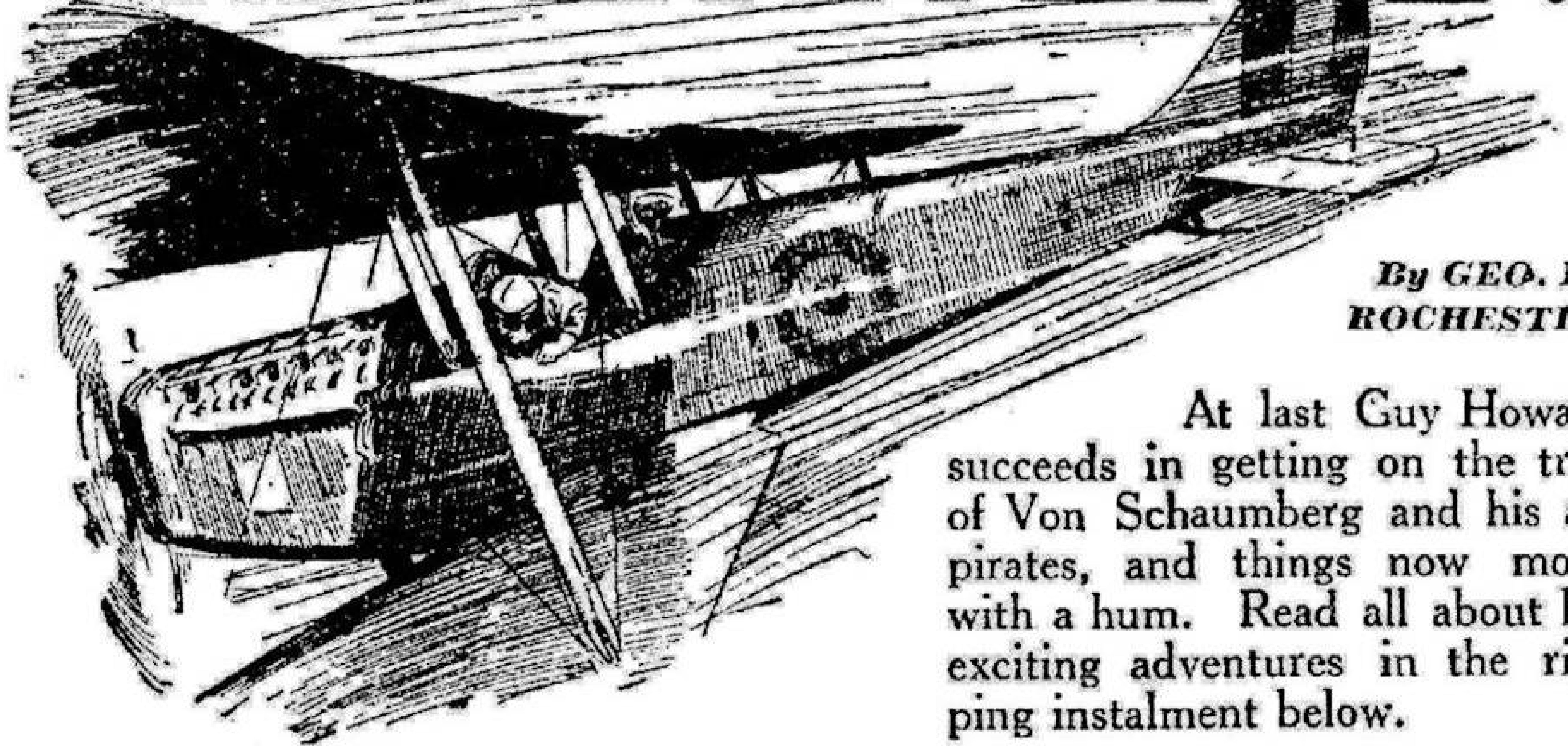
"But it is possible, sir, really!" said Nipper.

"For example, I met a fellow to-day—no need to mention names—who told me, quite positively, that he had seen you at Hurst Park races yesterday. You, sir!" added

(Concluded on page 41.)

It's Not Too Late For New Readers To Start This Serial Now!

THE AIR PATROL!



By GEO. E.
ROCHESTER,

At last Guy Howard succeeds in getting on the trail of Von Schaumberg and his air pirates, and things now move with a hum. Read all about his exciting adventures in the ripping instalment below.

WHAT'S ALREADY HAPPENED:

GUY HOWARD, youngest and most intrepid "scout" in the Atlantic Rangers—whose duty it is to guard the air routes between Britain and America—is attached to Aerodrome D, one of the six huge, floating aerodromes placed across the Atlantic Ocean. Just recently the big bullion and passenger-carrying air liners have been attacked by air pirates, whose leader is VON SCHAUMBERG. The headquarters of the pirates is unknown. Guy has sworn to exterminate them, and Von Schaumberg, on his part, has vowed vengeance against Guy for killing one of his confederates. Guy obtains a roving commission, and sets out to discover the

pirates' headquarters. On the way he is met by four of Schaumberg's fighting planes, and in the resulting battle Guy disposes of two of them, and forces a third to land on the water, while the remaining plane escapes. The young ranger, then thinks of a daring idea. He changes places with the pilot of the machine that has landed, undamaged, and follows the air pirate who has escaped. When he catches up with the pirate plane, Falze, the pilot, does not notice the difference! Later, the planes land alongside a tanker in mid-ocean for fuel, and it needs all Guy's pluck and resource then to carry through his imposture.

(Now read on.)

On the Water!

THE two black seaplanes took the water almost simultaneously. Falze ran in close to the tanker, but Guy, giving his engine the throttle for an instant, surged forward till he was a full fifty feet from Falze.

As his machine slowly lost way and lay heaving on the swell, he leaned back in his seat and gave himself up to a survey of the vessel.

She was riding low in the water, evidence of full tanks aboard. Her deck houses and squat stack were well aft, separated by a long stretch of steel deck from her towering forward bridge.

The iron plates of her hull were rusted, and sorely in need of paint. At first sight she gave the impression of being a slow, lumbering craft, but this was strangely belied by her sharp cutaway bows on which was

painted, in dingy and chipped white lettering, the name "Guillemot."

In the lee of the deckhouses stood a tarpaulin-covered gun, which the Ranger guessed to be a six-pounder. Her port rail was lined with seamen, staring down at the two black seaplanes. On the bridge stood a smart, uniformed man, hands in the pockets of his reefer jacket.

Boat derricks were slung outboard, and a boat splashed down to the water. Half a dozen seamen tumbled into the boat, and long lengths of rubber piping were passed down to them after being connected to small, hydraulic pumps on deck.

The boat pulled first to Falze's machine, and, as the piping was connected to his tanks, there came the regular pounding of the pumps.

Falze, standing in his cockpit, was evidently anxious to be off. Whilst he took fuel aboard he turned, time and again, and

scanned the horizon to southwards. Guy, watching him, smiled grimly. He knew Falze was fearing pursuit, and he wondered what the pirate would do, should he suddenly discover the truth.

Five minutes sufficed to fill Falze's tank, then the piping was disconnected and the "Guillemot's" boat headed towards the ranger's seaplane. Guy drew off his right-hand glove and, sliding his hand into the pocket of his flying coat, fingered the cold butt of his automatic.

But, masked and goggled as he was, he knew he had a sporting chance of coming through undetected. The boat reached his machine, bumping against the starboard float.

A seaman came scrambling up the fuselage, the brass nozzle of the piping in his hand.

"All right, sir?" he demanded huskily.

Guy, hunched in his seat, nodded weakly.

"Mister Falze says as how Zwolfe and Di Courci have gone!" continued the fellow. "He thought you'd be gone as well! By hokey, it must've been a fight! Don't know what the Boss'll say!"

Guy made an impatient gesture towards the petrol tank and, still talking, the seaman unscrewed the cap.

"Mister Falze wants to get off as soon as he can!" he went on, whilst petrol from the tanker came gurgling through the piping and splashed hollowly into Guy's almost empty gravity and main tanks. "He's scared that ranger is coming after him! By cripes, but we've got to get that feller! He killed Mister Struben!"

He switched over to the oil tank, and gave the grimly silent Guy some highly-coloured descriptions of Von Schaumberg and his wrath at the death of Struben.

"Went mad, he did, they say. Cursed and swore like as though he wasn't in his right mind. Tore great chunks out of his beard and felled Falze—Mister Falze, I mean—when he said that Struben could be replaced. But you know all this, of course, Mister, don't you? You were there, of course! Still, I'm wondering what the Boss is going to say to you and Mister Falze when you get home!"

Unsuspectingly he chatted, that great dolt of a seaman; now with easy familiarity, now with the respect which he suddenly seemed to remember was due to Von Schaumberg's pilots.

He might have discovered that Guy was not Larasche; but to have done so would have necessitated his peering from inches into the boy's face. And even then it's doubtful if his bleary eyes would have registered the truth to his inert brain. He was no Nelson Lee, that fellow. Even Guy's silence did not seem to intrigue him. Perhaps he put it down to Guy being wounded, for even he couldn't but help notice the dried blood on the flying coat; blood from Larasche's wound. Perhaps Larasche never talked too much. Who knows?

"Well, reckon you're fixed all right now, sir!" he said, at length, screwing the tank caps into place. "Sure you can make the base?"

"Yes!" muttered Guy, the word coming muffled through his face mask.

"S'long, then!"

"G'bye!"

The seaman dropped down into the boat, and it pushed off from the float.

"Larasche!" Falze's voice came across the water. "Are you—"

Guy switched on, yanking open the throttle. The shattering roar of his engine cut short Falze's inquiry, whatever it might have been. The seaplane shot forward, tearing across the water. Her tail came up and, as Guy pulled back on the control, she took the air, roaring right over the "Guillemot's" decks.

Circling, Guy saw Falze skim along the water and take off in a steep, upward climb. He swung widely, until Falze had the nose of his bus pointing towards the north-north-east. Then, pressing on rudder, Guy turned in behind him.

His eyes were grim—for he knew that he was on the last lap of his journey to Von Schaumberg's base!

Fog!

SLOWLY afternoon merged into evening, and shadows of the coming night crept in across a grey and desolate sea. But on and on roared the two seaplanes, holding steadily towards the north-north-east.

They were flying at ten thousand feet, Falze slightly in the lead. The cold was intense. It bit through thick flying kit, right to the very bones. Guy's hand on the control-stick was numbed.

Dusk deepened into night, and Falze's navigation lights on tail and wing-tips glowed redly in the darkness. Without navigation lights there was a serious risk of collision as the machines were flying so close together.

Guy, half-frozen in his seat, peered ahead, wondering just how far northwards they were going. But hour after hour passed by and still those two black seaplanes roared onwards through the night sky.

Then came slow realisation to Guy that the darkness ahead was thickening. He glanced downwards towards the grey blur of the sea. All was blackness. The greyish blur had been blotted out. So had the stars before another mile had passed. Guy wiped a gloved hand across his goggles, then leaned forward and examined it in the faint light of the illuminated dashboard. It was wet with moisture.

He peered ahead again. The red tail light of Falze's bus seemed to be dancing, faint and cerily, like some strange, elusive will-o'-the-wisp. Then suddenly it vanished. And yet Falze was no more than a hundred feet ahead, flying a point on the Ranger's starboard plane.

With despair in his heart, Guy faced the

truth. The machines were flying into thick, impenetrable fog. It would be impossible to keep in touch with Falze, and Guy had been staking everything on the blissfully ignorant Falze showing the way to the base of Von Schaumberg.

It was cruel luck, having won through so far. But the boy kept on, determined that there should be no turning back. He rubbed the frosted rime from the glass of his compass. The needle was steady at twenty-two degrees. It was possible, of course, that the machines were flying through a low-lying cloud belt. Guy tried to console himself with the thought, but he knew in his heart that it was fog—fog drifting down from the Arctic wastes.

Hunched over the controls, numbed in the icy slip-stream of the whirling propeller, the thought came to him that it was the very acme of madness to keep on. Far better acknowledge defeat and swing westwards towards the coast of Greenland.

The thundering rotary engine seemed to beat out the word in deep, pulsating rhythm.

Madness! Madness! Madness!

The ranger compressed his lips in grim determination. He would keep on. He was master of the machine; not the machine master of him. His was the brain which controlled it; and it could roar at him as it liked. He would not listen. Great Scott! What thoughts were these?

He pulled himself together with a jerk. He had been in the cockpit for hours, without either food or water. He was wounded as well—wounded in the head. For the moment reaction had had him in its grip.

Wearily he passed gloved hand across his goggles and peered again at the illuminated dashboard. He was still holding the course Falze had set. And if all was well, Falze was somewhere just ahead.

Raising his head, he leaned outboards and peered past his racing propeller. He stiffened, staring, staring. Then he slumped back in his seat and slapped his knee with joyous hand.

"My hat! We're there!" he yelled.

For ahead the fog was glowing with a strange ruddy light. Aye, glowing up to fifteen thousand feet and further. And there was only one material thing which could cause that phenomena.

It was the ray of a powerful Neon beacon such as was used to guide aeroplanes to their landing grounds in dense fog!

The Arrest!

GUY circled widely, knowing that Falze, in the lead, would take the water first. Then, throttling down, he dived towards the Neon beacon somewhere far below in the fog.

At five hundred feet he sensed a thinning in the fog bank, and at one hundred feet he saw below him the greyish blur of the sea. The fog was lifting.

A searchlight beam cut the darkness, its

powerful ray level with the sea, and tracing a path of pure shimmering gold on the water. It came from the foot of huge cliffs, dimly seen in the darkness.

Falze's machine, starkly silhouetted in the searchlight beam, was taxiing slowly along the water towards the cliffs. Gliding down into the path of golden light, Guy landed on the water and gave his engine a burst which took the machine alongside a natural jetty of rock where Falze's bus had already lost way.

Switching off his engine, Guy leaned back in his seat and pulled off his flying gloves. The searchlight had shut down, and in the darkness men were gathering on the jetty, hurricane lamps and dry battery lamps in their hands. To Guy there came a growl of low-toned, excited voices.

"Who's back?"

"Zwolfe and Di Courci missing? By hokey—"

"Howard! Falze says it was Howard what done it!"

"Falze and Larasche have come through—"

Guy smiled grimly and fingered the handcuffs and automatic in his flying coat pocket. Then stiffly he rose to his feet. He made no effort to remove his flying kit, goggles or helmet, with its leather face mask.

"Larasche!" Falze's voice came to him sharply from the jetty. "Are you all right? Do you require assistance?"

Guy replied by placing one ungloved hand on the fuselage and vaulting to the rock surface of the jetty.

Falze, his leather face mask unstrapped and goggles pushed up, gripped him by the arm.

"There'll be the very devil to pay about this!" he muttered. "Von Schaumberg's waiting for our report! Come on, we'd best get it over!"

"Yes!" grunted Guy gruffly.

The two pilots pushed their way through the press of staring men. Mechanics were already swinging themselves up to the cockpits of the two machines, preparatory to housing them for the night. With a grunt to his companion, Guy swung on his heel and stalked back to his machine.

"Keep her here—I want her!" he called up to the mechanic in the cockpit, trusting that his muffled voice would be sufficiently like Larasche's to avoid suspicion for the moment. "I want her—you understand?"

"Aye!" replied the mechanic surlily.

It was no business of his to question the movements or wishes of Von Schaumberg's pilots.

"Where the devil have you been?" snapped Falze, as Guy rejoined him.

"Wanted a word with the mechanic!" grunted Guy, and squinted at Falze with narrowed eyes.

He had little fear of detection, apart from his voice. It was a dark night, and he was of similar build to Larasche. But to talk was dangerous, for he had never heard Larasche speak, except for a muttered husky curse

when Guy had clambered into his cockpit that afternoon.

But Falze had other things to think about. His face was a ghastly blur in the darkness. He came to an abrupt halt in front of the large iron door which led into Von Schaumberg's vast living quarters.

"Listen to me, Larasche!" he said urgently. "We dare not tell Von Schaumberg the truth!"

"No?"

There was query in Guy's grunt.

"No, you fool!" snarled Falze. "We dare not tell him that, single-handed, Howard got Zwolfe and Di Courci, and that you and I bolted!"

The ranger nodded in silence.

"So you back me up. I'll fix this thing somehow—spin some sort of plausible yarn. You agree with it, d'you hear?"

"Yes, I hear!" muttered Guy.

"Come on, then!" said Falze. "And, remember, back up my statements or he'll get the truth out of us, and you know what that'll mean!"

his great bearded, repulsive face flushed, sat Von Schaumberg. On his right and left were seated his pilots, their tunics unbuttoned.

Von Schaumberg raised his head and glared with little bloodshot eyes through his long, matted eyebrows as Falze walked slowly up the room towards him.

"So you're back, Falze?" he roared.

The ranger, who had halted in the shadows by the door, was watching the scene curiously. He had never seen Von Schaumberg, but he had no doubt in his mind that the bearded one was he.



When Von Schaumberg heard that Guy had once again triumphed over him, his fury was terrible. He lashed out at Falze with his huge fist, and it caught the man full on the jaw, crashing him sickeningly against the table. "You dog!" roared Von Schaumberg, his face livid with rage. He little suspected that Guy himself was in the room at that moment!

Guy didn't know what it would mean, but he guessed that Von Schaumberg would indeed have something to say should he discover that two of his pilots had run from one lone Atlantic Ranger.

So he followed Falze through the wicket gate in the large iron door, and stepped into the long, high-roofed dining-room hewn by Nature out of the solid rock.

Men were sitting drinking and smoking at the table which ran almost the length of the rocky floor. The atmosphere was foul with the reek of tobacco fumes.

At the head of the table, his arms asprawl,

"Yes, sir, we're back!" replied Falze, and his voice was strangely weary.

Ah, cunning as a rat was the fair-haired Falze!

"But where is Zwolfe?" demanded Von Schaumberg growlingly, as Falze came to a halt by his chair. "And where is Di Courci? And why does Larasche linger by the doorway?"

Falze spread out his hands with a gesture.

"Zwolfe is dead, sir!" he replied, and now his voice was bitter. "So also is Di Courci—"

"What?" roared Von Schaumberg, and

reared his massive bulk to his feet. "What's that you say, you dog?"

Falze shrank back, appalled by the fury of those blazing eyes.

"We were outnumbered, sir!" he pleaded. "Outnumbered by three to one! Only Larasche and I escaped! They came upon us from above——"

Von Schaumberg bellowed an oath.

"You should have avoided a fight, you hound! I sent you to get that cursed ranger, Howard! You should——"

"But Howard led them, sir!" cut in Falze protestingly. "We know his machine, sir! He led them; and Zwolfe would not run, even although we were so heavily outnumbered!"

The fingers of Von Schaumberg's great hairy hands clenched convulsively.

"Howard led them, you say?" he repeated slowly, gratingly. "Howard led them? And—and he still lives?"

"Yes, sir!" muttered Falze, then leapt backwards to avoid the rage-mad swing of Von Schaumberg's massive fist.

But it took him full on the jaw, crashing him sickeningly against the table.

"You dog!" roared Von Schaumberg, his face livid with passion, his great bearded mouth showing broken and blackened teeth as thick lips were drawn back. "You dog, to return to me with this tale of failure!"

He wheeled on his pilots, and gripped the back of his chair with convulsive hands. His breath was coming in pants, and eyes blazed in a face now white with overpowering passion.

"Listen to me, you scum!" he roared. "You dogs that call yourselves men! I sent four of you to-day to get Howard! He killed Struben, the hound, and now he has sent Zwolfe and Di Courci to their deaths. I will give twenty thousand pounds to the man who gets him and brings him here to me! Aye, thirty thousand pounds to the man who can put him in the grip of these hands of mine——"

He broke off. The fingers of his now upturned hands clenched slowly, horribly.

"I'll break him!" he snarled pantingly. "Break his nerve and then his cursed body! But Falze says he has a squadron with him

now! It seems that no longer the dog dare hunt alone——"

"Falze has lied!"

A stern voice cut in on the words. Von Schaumberg slowly turned. His great massive body was hunched, his head thrust forward. Before him stood the leather-clad and helmeted figure whom Falze had taken for Larasche.

"Larasche!" he said slowly, harshly, and his voice rang in the deathly silence which had settled on the room. "Larasche——" he repeated, his little eyes raking the motionless, black-clad figure; but into those eyes was creeping a look of amazement, incredulity.

"You—you are not Larasche!" he almost whispered. "Who——"

"I am Howard of the Atlantic Rangers!" came the stern reply. "Von Schaumberg, I arrest you for piracy on the Atlantic air routes!"

Something whipped upwards from Guy's pocket, scintillating for a fractional second in the light from the hanging bulbs.

Click!

And handcuffs snapped shut on Von Schaumberg's hairy wrists!

Out of the Cave!

FOR one long moment Von Schaumberg stared as though hypnotised at the steel handcuffs on his wrists. Not a man stirred. So dramatically, so terribly sudden had this thing come about that they were frozen into immobility.

Then realisation seemed to come to Von Schaumberg.

"You fool!" he

screamed, and there was almost hysterical triumph in his voice. "You confounded fool, you'll never—a-a-ah!"

He broke off with a strange, bestial snarl as his little bloodshot eyes took in the squat automatic covering his heart.

"Listen to me, you scum!" cried the ranger, in a ringing voice. "I am taking Von Schaumberg from here, and at the first hostile move I shall shoot him dead!"

The grim determination of his voice was apparent to the thickest skull in the cave.

"Now walk!" he commanded curtly to Von Schaumberg.

The pirate leader hesitated. His little eyes were squinting to left and right, but—always



VON SCHAUMBERG

they returned to that unwavering automatic. He touched thick, bloodless lips with the tip of a dry tongue.

"You—you dare not fire!" he said hoarsely.

"I shall fire in just three seconds!" replied Guy Howard harshly.

A chair scraped on the rocky floor as a swarthy-faced pilot eased himself from the table, his hand sliding towards his tunic pocket. Von Schaumberg swung his great bearded face towards the man, and now there was real terror in his eyes.

"Vorzetzen—you fool!" he screamed. "Hold your hand—confound you!"

The swarthy Vorzetzen nodded, and brought his hand up to the table. Von Schaumberg turned again to Guy.

"You—you mean this?" he demanded hoarsely. "Listen—every man has his price—put up your gun and—"

"Walk!" rapped Guy sternly, and his automatic jerked forward threateningly.

One instant more did Von Schaumberg hesitate, passion flaming in his eyes. Then, turning, he moved slowly through the cave towards the door.

The ranger walked by his side, the rim of his automatic pressed against Von Schaum-

berg's rib, and he took the precaution of keeping the pirate leader between himself and the men at the table.

Thus they reached the door. The ranger swung open the small iron one and stepped out backwards, Von Schaumberg between him and the men in the cave.

He brought the prisoner out at the point of the gun, then slammed shut the door. It was but a few yards to the seaplanes lying against the natural rock jetty. The gaping seamen who had witnessed the arrival had dispersed, and only a few mechanics were tinkering with the machines.

"If you don't make it you're a dead man!" whispered Guy tensely.

Von Schaumberg realised that Guy meant what he said, and, propelled by the gun, he crossed the intervening yards between himself and the seaplane without any attempt at resistance.

The iron door of the cave crashed open and men poured out on to the jetty.

"Back, you dogs!" roared Guy. "Back, or your leader dies!"

(Don't miss next Wednesday's exciting instalment, boys!)



(Continued from page 35.)

Nipper, with an amused smile. "Isn't it silly?"

Mr. Horace Pycraft started as though he had touched a red-hot iron.

"Hurst Park races!" he bleated feebly.

"Yes, sir," said Nipper, in a sweet voice.

"This chap positively told me that he saw you there. So you see how easy it is to make a mistake."

Mr. Pycraft made a gurgling kind of noise.

"Of course it was a mistake!" he said hastily. "A ridiculous mistake! Hurst Park Races, indeed! Nonsense! Rubbish! I deny—"

"Why go to the trouble of denying it, sir?" asked Nipper, in surprise. "Naturally, I told this chap to go and eat coke. Just as if we'd believe a thing like that!" he added scoffingly. "But it just shows you how mistaken identity—"

"Exactly!" broke in Mr. Pycraft, with a deep breath of relief. "I—I see your point, Hamilton! Perhaps—perhaps I was mistaken after all. Doubtless the boys I saw belonged to some other school."

"And you won't mention anything to the

Head, sir?" asked Handforth casually.

"No, certainly not!" replied Mr. Pycraft. "On second thoughts, I realise that I must have blundered. Since you boys received a permit to spend the week-end at Edgemore Manor, it stands to reason that you must have remained in this district."

And Mr. Pycraft hurried on—quite realising the exact nature of the position. It was a case of silence for silence! As long as he held his tongue about the Boat Race, the boys would hold their tongues regarding Hurst Park!

Not that Mr. Pycraft had transgressed any school rules by his visit to the races. In his own time, he could do as he pleased. But he certainly did not wish to have the whole of St. Frank's chipping him—as it undoubtedly would, if the story came out.

So, on the whole, it was far wiser to hold his tongue.

And so the Boat Race truants heard no more of the matter, and their escapade was thus a complete success.

And now there were the Easter Holidays to be looked forward to, and Handforth was very busy, preparing for a big party in London. He had made up his mind to invite all his best friends—and when Edward Oswald made up his mind the results were generally startling!

THE END.

(The St. Frank's juniors spend Easter Bank holiday in lively style; they go to the Fair at Hampstead! "ST. FRANK'S AT THE FAIR!" is the title of this grand yarn, and it's a yarn you'll all enjoy, for Handforth and Archie Glenthorne are at their liveliest and funniest. Get your newsagent to save you a copy of next Wednesday's N.L.L.)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 94.

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| 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 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 they have secured the requisite number of readers they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver one.

These Application Forms can be posted for £d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

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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.

NOTICE!

The St. Frank's League has now attained such proportions that we are compelled to discontinue the offer of gold medals in connection therewith. The silver and bronze medals will still be available, however, as heretofore, to those who qualify for them in accordance with the rules.



Our Weekly Pow-Wow!

By
The Editor.

Your Editor welcomes letters from all his readers; send him one now. Address it to: The Editor, "Nelson Lee Library," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

At Concert Pitch.

A curious complaint reaches me from a chum up north. No end of a stout fellow he is, too, but all the same he gets disappointed. And for why? It's because in his office he is worked up to splendid enthusiasm by the day's work, but next morning he has, as he says, to start all over again. Just so; but he will find it fairly easy to get back to where he left off, whereas the slacker who never in his life feels any spot of enthusiasm about work, play, or anything else, simply drags on in the usual perfunctory way, taking no sort of interest in his job. I congratulate this quaint old grouser on having the right spirit in him. It is O.K. He won't be long in improving his position. It's a lot to be enthusiastic—really enthusiastic; not a thin make-believe. In course of time I shouldn't half wonder he will find himself in receipt of a fat salary, and others will draw comparisons and say it isn't fair. It is, though. The man with a big wage has pretty nearly always earned the increase off his own bat, and by taking the opportunities as they bob up. No hesitation about him.

How to be a Cook.

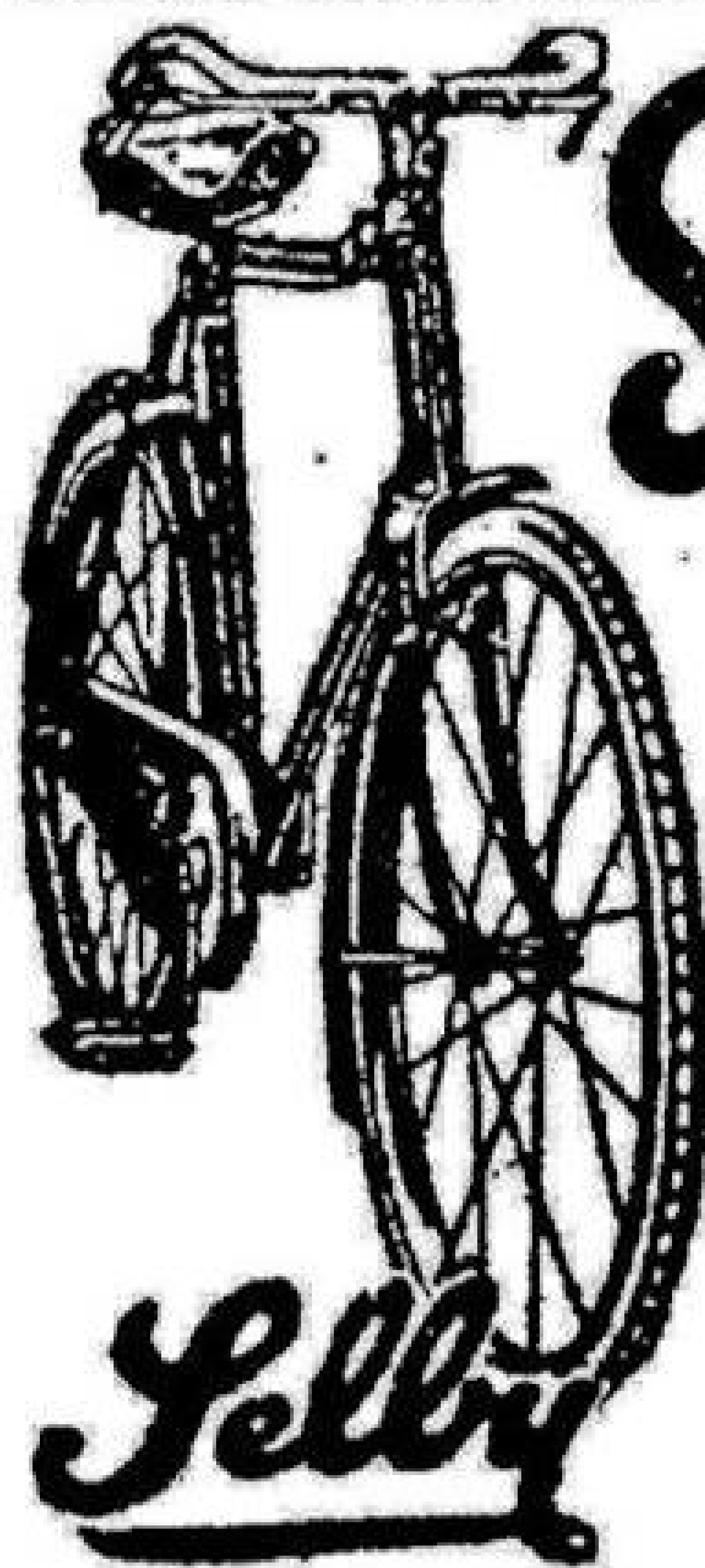
The other day I had a letter from a reader who aspires to be a chef in a large hotel. It's what they call a cordon bleu. I was able to drop a hint or two as to how to go about it, and back comes a return letter, full of cheery thanks, and with the information that the first step has been taken, and that the prospects are rosy. It wants a special talent to succeed as a cook. We have all met the amateur camp cook. He makes a mess of things—gets head over heels into the soup, instead of serving up a really good dish of it. All things considered, a clever chef has a fine position, with substantial emoluments. He is run after because he knows how to make ordinary, commonplace food tempting to the most particular diner. There are one or two St. Frank's fellows who are quite brilliant at the business.

Making a Speech.

An editor in his time plays many parts; not a scintilla of a doubt on that point. Once

again it has fallen to my lot to run up a speech for a chum who has been dumped into the chair at a debating society. He said he did not want to make a mush of things. I hope he will sail along all right, and escape that sense of flurry when all the words vanish. It is not pleasant to stand dithering on a platform. The room or hall seems to be about six miles square, and crammed with thousands of mockers, all on the snigger. One can feel intense sympathy for the individual who is too nervous to say what he wants. It is a species of stage fright. All the starch has gone out of the would-be speaker. Not one of the grand phrases he intended to hurl at his audience is at his command. There is a miserable feeling of incompetence, and he thinks he would like to be in bed. Really the only remedy for this state of nerves is constant practice. It is well worth while remembering that some of the finest speakers have been afflicted with the "dithers" in their time. Almost as bad is the too great readiness of the over-confident, drawing party, who can say "Er—er" and "Hum—ha," and meander on in a deadly manner, cool as a cucumber, but not half as useful. If a speaker cannot

(Continued overleaf.)



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OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW!

(Continued from previous page.)

be bright and interesting, he should sit down, and hand the job over to somebody cast in gayer, more attractive mould.

Biking in Bucks.

I am recommending a Kilburn reader who wants to know of interesting twenty and thirty mile bike runs to try the picturesque Chalfont country. He can work northward from where he lives, or swing west to that A 1 town, Uxbridge, and then go north into as pretty a district as the eye could wish. He should not miss Chenies either, nor Burnham Beeches, the latter as notable a forest stretch as anything in England.

Best Thanks.

I am greatly obliged to the following supporters for their excellent letters: E. Titterton, Manchester; Miss Norah Haines, Uxbridge; G. A. Gascoine, Kentish Town; Percy A. Higgins, Glasgow; he will be glad to hear that the map is coming; Stanley Munford, Manor Park; Syd Thomson, who can get the addresses he requires from the local Telephone Directory; Eric S. Hutton-Taylor, Brackley; Frank W. Hobden, Peven-

sey; Eric Besche, Ravenscourt Park; "La Femme," London, E.; Cyril Chamberlain, Worksop; William G. Batt, St. Leonard's—a real star letter; Miss Margaret Hutchinson, Maidenhead; Leslie Wenlock, Rochford; Stanley Mitchell, Bradford; William A. Lester, Walsall; Fred Miller, Edmonton; Harry McMahon, New South Wales; Nagi S. Tessa, Baghdad; John Hewitt, Birmingham, who will find a club by inquiring at the local gym.; Jack Rose, Melbourne; Owen Matthew Hughes, Albury, N.S.W.; Edward Stack, Chatswood, Australia.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

T. G. Rigby, c/o G.P.O. Box 758g, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, would like to hear from readers in his district to help form a club. Also from N. Watson, of Wellington Parade, East Melbourne, and from readers anywhere. Interested in sports, swimming, wireless, photography, etc.

W. A. Coombes, 40, Waldo Road, College Park, Harlesden, London, N.W.10, wants to exchange his stamp album—which contains over a thousand stamps—for back numbers of N.L.L. or anything useful.

C. T. Browne, 74, Victoria Road, Lower Edmonton, London, N.9, wishes to secure in good condition N.L.L. Nos. 1 to 455 (old series) also Nos. 1 to 36 and 47 (new series). Will pay full price and postage.

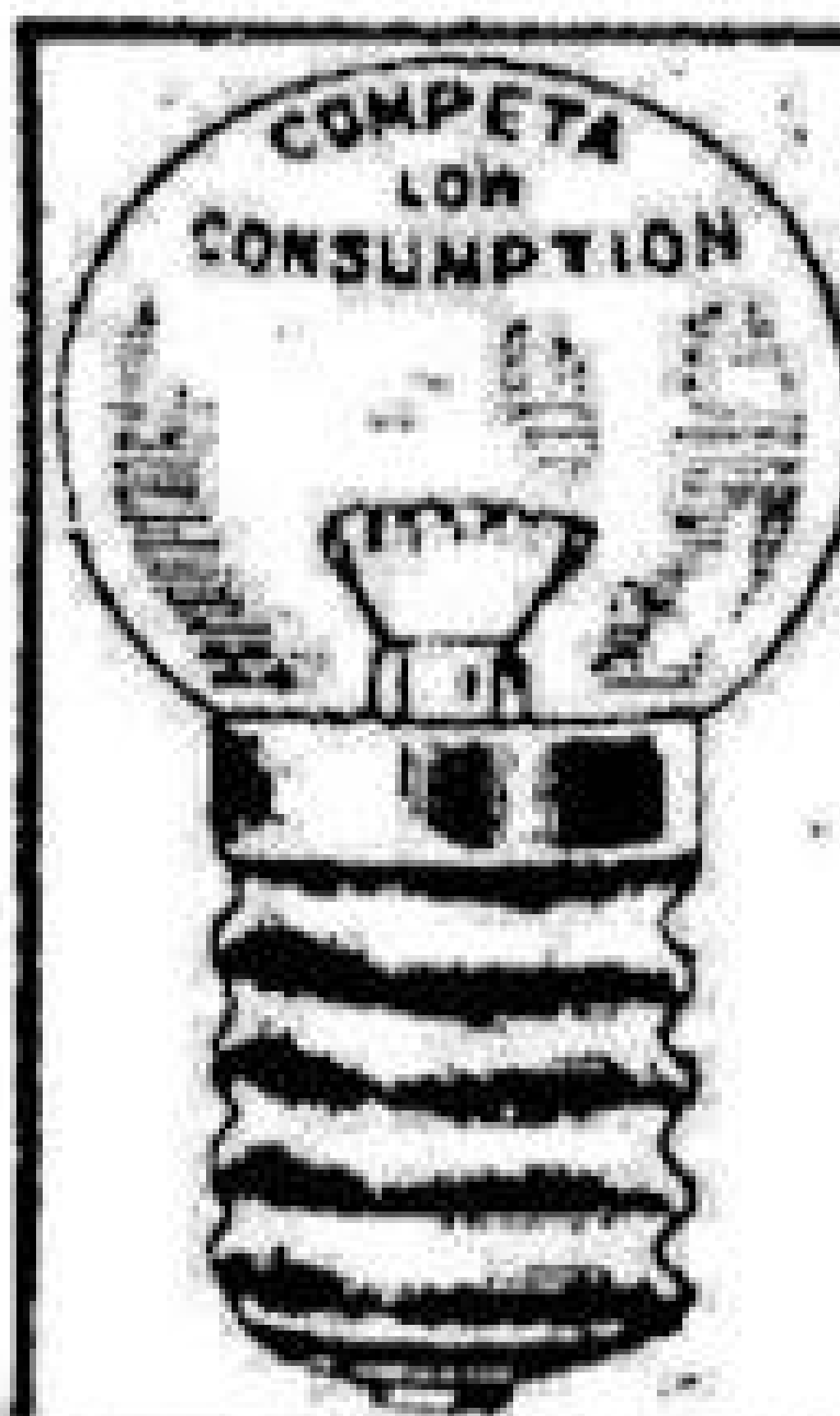
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