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## THE OUTCAST OF THE REMOVE!

A dramatic long school yarn, featuring Edward Oswald Handforth and the Chums of St. Frank's.

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OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

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Slam! Handforth closed the door of the box-room with a crash, and a moment later he had turned the key in the lock. And inside the box-room was Castleton, the junior who had been selected to take Handforth's place in the cricket match!

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# THE OUTCAST OF THE REMOVE!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

No longer is there a bluff, genial, good-natured Handforth at St. Frank's. Now it is a bad-tempered, sulky Handforth. No longer is he one of the most popular juniors in the school. Instead, he's an outcast, shunned by everybody! This dramatic yarn will grip you from the first chapter.—Ed.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Trouble in Study D!

**W**HIZ—thud—crash!

A heavy volume sailed out of an open doorway in the Remove corridor of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and struck the opposite wall. Then it fell to the floor with half the cover torn off.

Just round the corner, in the lobby, Church and McClure had paused, chatting. They were both looking very worried—very unsettled. Nobody else seemed to be about just then, for it was the quiet hour of the evening, when most of the fellows were in their studies.

Whiz—crash!

"What's all that beastly din?" said Church, glancing over his shoulder.

"Never mind that!" growled McClure. "Only some idiot larking about, I suppose. Look here, Churchy, we've got to decide this point now. Are we going to have it out with Handy, or not?"

Church sighed.

"We seem to go round in circles," he said wearily. "How many days is it, now, since Handy acted the giddy ox? It seems like weeks—months. Yet it can't be even a week! And he's just as bad as ever!"

"Hasn't spoken a word to us for three solid days!" said McClure.

There was trouble in Study D. Edward Oswald Handforth and his chums were no longer on speaking terms! This, indeed, was trouble!

Church leaned against the wall of the lobby, and stuck his hands into his pockets.

"The more I think about it, the sillier it seems," he remarked, after a pause. "I mean, what does it amount to?"

"Nothing!" growled Mac.



"Absolutely nothing!" said Church, nodding. "First of all, Handy got wild because it was raining on the day of the River House match. Then he was irritable because some cash hadn't turned up from his pater. In fact, he acted the fool all day, and got into a whole pile of trouble. And since then he's been a misery to himself and everybody else!"

There, in a nutshell, was the source of the worry.

Handforth—the bluff, genial, good-natured Handforth—was experiencing an unusually long fit of the tantrums. For Handforth to get angry, and punch a fellow in the eye, was nothing out of the common. But for him to remain sulky—yes, sulky!—for nearly a week was unprecedented.

Of course, Handforth boiled with rage when fellows told him that he was sulky. In his own opinion, he was firm. He would not admit, even to himself, that he had been in the wrong. He wouldn't acknowledge that his pig-headedness and stubbornness had led to all the trouble.

"The Form wouldn't have been against him so much, only he was idiot enough to wreck Crowell's study," said McClure, after another painful pause. "He got a public flogging for that—and serve him right, too! Ever since then he's been going about like a bear with a sore head, and practically everybody in the Form has cut him."

Incidentally, Handforth had been flogged undeservedly—for the damage in Mr. Crowell's study had been done by Marmaduke. Marmaduke was Willy Handforth's pet monkey, and he had escaped on that memorable evening. But, as Handforth had been uttering all sorts of threats against Mr. Crowell throughout the day, and as the evidence against him had been fairly conclusive, he had had to face the music. Only Handforth and his minor knew that Marmaduke was the guilty one. The whole school accepted Handforth as the culprit. Willy had attempted to tell the truth to some of the juniors, but they had laughed at him. So what was the use?

Besides, it was ancient history now.

Nevertheless, Edward Oswald Handforth was still going about "on his own." He hadn't spoken to Church and McClure for days, and he took exaggerated care to avoid them. If he came into Study D while they were there, he turned on his heel and went out again. And Church and McClure, not to be outdone, copied these tactics.

As a consequence, the famous chums were miserable. But while Church and McClure were ready to forget and forgive, Handforth's stubbornness egged him on to make the breach wide, and wider.

His was the fault, so Church and McClure had been waiting for him to make some move. They had been expecting to see some show of the olive branch. But none had come. And now Church and McClure were beginning to review the situation.

"It's no good waiting for him, Mac," said Church. "We shall have to wait all the term. Oh, what's the use? Why not finish with it this evening—once and for all?"

"But how can we?"

"Easily enough. Let's go straight up to the ass, thump him on the back, and tell him that we've had enough rot, and that we'd better let bygones be bygones."

It was a simple enough plan, and with any other junior, it might have worked. But Edward Oswald Handforth was in a very stubborn humour these days, and it was by no means certain that he would respond to the peaceful overtures of his former chums.

"Oh, well, we might as well try it, I suppose," said McClure. "The only thing I don't like about it is that it's a bit of a come-down for us. I mean, dash it, Handy's the chap who ought to make the first move."

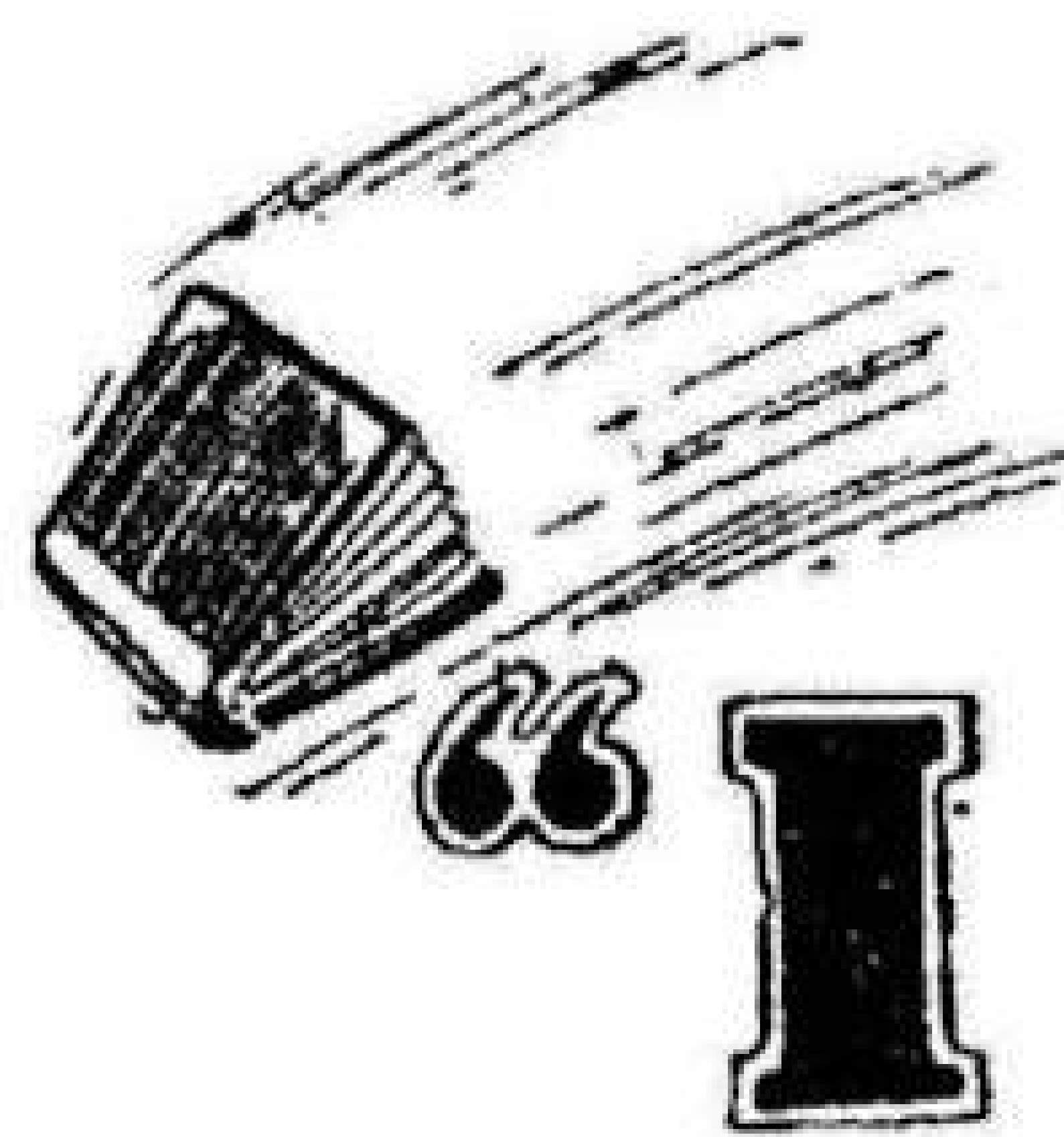
"Yes, I know that—but he never will," said Church. "You know what a chump he is like that. Let's get it over and done with."

They turned the corner into the Remove passage just as further thuds and crashes sounded. These noises had, indeed, been going on all the time, but the two juniors had only subconsciously noticed the sounds.

But now, as they turned fully into the passage, they suddenly came to a halt. A little further down, opposite an open doorway, a pile of litter had accumulated; books, boxing gloves, cricket pads, and all manner of articles. There they were, strewn on the floor, and further articles were coming out to join them.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Church, with a violent start.

For he suddenly saw that the open doorway was that of Study D. And he also recognised a volume, with a particularly vivid blue binding, as his own property!



## CHAPTER 2.

### Not Very Peaceful!

"IT'S our study!" ejaculated Church breathlessly.

"Yes, and they're our things lying on

the floor!" said McClure.

Whiz—whiz!

"Oh, corks!" gasped Church. "What the dickens is happening?"

With one accord, they ran down the passage and came to a halt opposite the open doorway of Study D. It was rather a rash thing to do, for at any moment further articles might come shooting out. But Church and McClure did not think of the peril just then. They stared into the dust-smothered study.

And their worst fears were realised. For there stood Edward Oswald Handforth, amid all the disorder, collecting the last few



articles belonging to his chums preparatory to throwing them out.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said McClure thickly

He and Church exchanged a rapid glance. All their peaceful intentions were forgotten. The words that they had had ready on their lips were forgotten. They charged into the study, burning with a very righteous indignation.

"Hi! What the dickens are you doing, Handy?" roared Church.

Handforth turned.

"Get out of that doorway!" he said curtly. "I want to throw this cricketing blazer outside!"

"But it's mine!"

"That's why I want to throw it!"

"Why, you—you—"

"I've decided to have this study for myself!" said Handforth magisterially. "You fellows aren't my chums now, and I don't want you in here. So I'm just chucking your belongings out. You can sort them out when you like, and cart them away."

Church and McClure were utterly staggered. This high-handed action was unusual, even for a fellow like Handforth. A junior was occasionally pitched out of his study, it was true, but only after he had made himself thoroughly objectionable to his companions. Or perhaps he had indulged in practices which they did not approve of. But for one fellow to take it upon his shoulders to turn out both his study mates was "a new one." It was all the more outrageous because Church and McClure were the most peaceful fellows under the sun.

Not that they looked peaceful now.

A minute or two earlier they had been prepared to slap Handy on the back, and to let bygones be bygones. But all that was forgotten. Handforth was throwing their things out into the corridor! And Church and McClure, just then, were about as peaceful as Papuan head-hunters.

"Look here, Handy, you can't do this!" shouted Church furiously.

"Can't I? I'm doing it!"

"Well, we're not going to stand it!" roared Church. "This is our study, just as much as yours! What do you mean by biffing our things outside?"

"I've already told you!" replied Handforth coldly. "We're not on speaking terms any more—and I'm waiving a point by talking to you even now! I'm chucking your things out into the passage, and you can go and find other quarters!"

There was certainly not much sign of the olive branch here!

"We're not going to clear out!" said McClure hotly. "Of all the nerve! You can't force us out of our own study, Handy! Besides, what's the idea of it? We haven't interfered with you—"

"I don't want to argue!" interrupted Handforth frigidly. "I've made up my mind that I'd rather be alone. I don't want you fellows in this study. I'm not going to have you here. Is that plain?"

"But we've as much right—"

"If I say you've got to go—you're going!" broke in Handforth. "That's final! Understand? You fellows have believed all sorts of rotten things against me, and you've sided with the whole Form. Very well, then! I'm not going to have anything more to do with you!"

Church and McClure boiled.

"And we'd made up our minds to come to you and forgive you!" said Church bitterly. It wasn't a happy choice of expression, and Handforth jumped on it at once.

"Forgive me?" he repeated. "Forgive me for what?"

"For being such an obstinate, arrogant ass!"

"Oh, you were going to forgive me, were you?" said Handforth, with a mirthless laugh. "Thanks awfully—thanks most frightfully! Well, you can jolly well go and boil yourselves. I don't want your forgiveness, or anybody else's! I've done nothing that needs forgiving!"

"What about what you're doing now?" yelled McClure. "Why, we haven't spoken for days. We've done nothing to make you act like this. Churchy and I have been all for peace—"

"Well, you can keep your peace to yourselves!" interrupted Handforth. "I've decided to have this study for myself, and the sooner you fellows submit, the better."

"This is what happens when we come to you in a friendly spirit," began Church.

"We shall never be friends again!" interrupted Handforth harshly. "You believed me guilty of wrecking Crowell's study—"

"Well, you did wreck it, so what's the good of talking rot?" said Church. "You were flogged, and that ended the thing."

"But I didn't wreck Crowell's study!" thundered Handforth. "There you are! You're only making things worse! By George! I was right when I decided to pitch you rotters out! Stand out of the way!"

"We won't!" shouted McClure angrily.

Whiz—whiz!

Two or three articles left Handforth's hands, and Church and McClure ducked with the dexterity of long practice.

"You rotter!" shouted Church furiously. "You'll be sorry for this!"

All hopes of an armistice were at an end. The smouldering animosity between the three famous chums of Study D had burst out into a flame of lurid warfare!



### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Deadlock!

**M**ORE out of force of habit than anything else, Church and McClure backed out of the study, and came to a halt in the corridor. But then they



pulled themselves up. Their blood was hot, and they were not prepared to put up with any more of Handforth's rot.

"Well, what's it going to be?" muttered Church, looking at McClure with burning eyes. "Are we going to stand it?"

"Not likely!"

"We'll cart all our things back, eh?"

"Good egg! That's the idea!"

Handforth, who thought he had triumphed, was astonished and shocked a minute later to find Church and McClure striding back into the study, loaded with books and cricket blazers and boxing-gloves and other things.

"What's all this?" he shouted.

"We're bringing our things back," said Church defiantly.

"Why, you—you——"

"We're not going to take any dictation from you!" said Church. "This is our study, and we're staying here!"

"You're the one who's going!" put in McClure, dropping his load on the table, and picking up a cricket-bat.

"Hi, leggo!" roared Handforth. "That's mine!"

"I know it is!" said Mac fiercely.

Whiz!

The cricket-bat went sailing out through the open doorway, and it was fortunate that nobody was passing at the moment. But Church and McClure were so enraged by this time that they were thoroughly reckless.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Handforth, startled by the turn things were taking. "So that's the game, is it?"

In a sudden fury, he started pitching things off the table. Not to be beaten, Church and McClure grabbed at every article of Handforth's they could see, and these, too, joined the collection outside the door.

Of course, the situation was quite impossible.

As fast as Handforth flung Church's and McClure's property outside, Church and McClure brought it back. And they, for their part, threw all Handy's things out.

The air was filled with dust, and the confusion, which had been bad enough to start with, was now "worse confounded." In fact, it was such an unholy mix-up that it couldn't last for long.

Now and again there would be a lull in the proceedings. But only in the property-hurling proceedings! For these lulls were occasioned by desperate hand-to-hand struggles between the principals.

For the moment, all other activities would cease, and Handforth & Co. would sway round Study D in a confusion of whirling arms and stamping feet.

A fog of dust half obliterated the whole scene, and the furniture of the study was rapidly being reduced to matchwood. Already one chair had gone to pieces, and the table was developing an ominous list to starboard.

At this point in the proceedings, Nipper thought it rather a good idea to stroll out of Study C to find out what all the rumpus was about next door. Indeed, half the

Ancient House Remove had turned out. Vivian Travers and Jimmy Potts, of Study H, came along. Fullwood and Russell put in an appearance, and even Archie Glenstone gathered up sufficient strength to stagger into the picture.

"Well, well!" said Vivian Travers, as he viewed the battle from afar. "So Handforth is himself again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Study D is 'as you were,' by the sound of things," went on Travers complacently. "Splendid! I was wondering how long it would be before Handforth & Co. resumed their normal lives!"

"There's nothing normal about this!" said Nipper grimly. "This isn't one of the usual Study D scraps. By Jove! Look at all that mess on the floor! Half the study is outside in the corridor!"

"Hadn't we better chip in?" asked Fullwood.

"Of course we'll chip in," replied Nipper.

"We can't let this din go on!"

Nipper, being Form captain, felt that it was up to him to do something. He didn't believe in butting in during an ordinary scrap, but there was something very special about this affair. It was rather a wonder that a prefect hadn't descended on the passage long before this. The noise from Study D was deafening.

So Nipper and Watson and Fullwood and two or three others went crowding into the battle zone. They found things in a very interesting state. Handforth was on his back, in the middle of the floor of Study D, and Church was sitting on his head. McClure was hopelessly entangled in Handforth's legs, and dust was rising in clouds.

With a terrific heave, Handforth managed to get free, and then Church somehow got underneath. There was a splintering crash as McClure backed against one of the table legs, and a roar came from Handforth.

"By George!" he bellowed. "I'll show you who's boss in this study!"

"You think you are—but you're not!" roared Church. "And we're not going to clear out at your orders!"

"Now, then, what's it all about?" demanded Nipper, pushing forward.

"You clear off!" panted Handforth, glaring at him. "I've made up my mind to kick Church and McClure out of this study—and I'm doing it!"

"You don't seem to be getting on very rapidly!" retorted Nipper. "And you're crazy, anyhow. You'll have a master on the scene in half a minute——"

"I don't care if half the masters at St. Frank's come on the scene!" said Handforth. "I've made up my mind, and——"

"Grab him!" sang out Fullwood. "Grab all of them! We can't let this rot continue!"

There was a fresh confusion of whirling figures. But the combatants were sorted out at last, and they were held well apart.



It took four fellows to hold Handforth, and Church and McClure needed two each.

"Now, what's all the trouble about?" asked Nipper grimly. "Come on, Church—speak up!"

"You—you interfering busybodies——" began Handforth thickly.

"Will somebody kindly gag him?" said Nipper. "We'll hear Church and McClure first!"

Somebody wound the tablecloth round Handforth's face, and the hearing commenced.



## CHAPTER 4.

### Nipper's Decision!

**W**ALTER CHURCH took a deep breath, and wiped a smear of crimson from his nose.

"It's all Handy's fault!" he said tensely. "The rotter! The vindictive bounder! The quarrelsome idiot! The stubborn lunatic——"

"Yes, we all know about that!" put in Nipper gently. "We know exactly what Handy is, old man. But what started this particular trouble?"

"Handy started it!"

"We know that, too," said Nipper. "But how did he start it?"

"Why, Mac and I decided to be sporty, and to let bygones be bygones," said Church indignantly. "So we came along to the study to thump Handy on the back, and to tell him that everything was all right. But when we got here we found him pitching our belongings out into the corridor!"

"So that sort of threw a spanner into the gear-box?" asked Travers.

"Yes, it jolly well did!" said Church hotly. "We asked him what he was doing, and he told us that he was chucking our things out because he was going to have the study for himself! I mean to say, the nerve of it! This is just as much our study as his, and yet he was biffing all our things out into the corridor, ruining half of them!"

"H'm!" said Nipper judicially. "It seems to be a pretty knotty problem."

"There's nothing knotty about it," said Church. "Mac and I won't leave this study for Handforth, or for anybody else! It's ours, and we're not going to clear out of it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the spirit, my lads!"

"If anybody clears out, it's going to be Handforth!" said McClure fiercely.

Somehow, Handforth got free from the tablecloth.

"Never!" he gasped. "This is my study, and here I stay! I've decided to have the room for myself. These rotters are going out, and——"

"Exactly!" murmured Fullwood.

The tablecloth was readjusted, and Handforth subsided into a gurgling murmur.

"As far as I can see, the Form will have to decide this matter," said Nipper thoughtfully. "It's no good leaving it to these hot-headed idiots. We'd better call a Form meeting at once, and discuss the whole situation."

"We're not hot-headed!" protested McClure. "It was all Handy's fault——"

"Of course it was!" put in Church. "We came here with peaceful intentions, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The onlookers could not fail to see the humour of the situation. The peaceful intentions of Church and McClure had evidently been thoroughly shipwrecked.

"There's nothing to laugh at," said Nipper earnestly. "I don't like to see this bad feeling in a study. The only thing is to get to the root of it at once, and come to some decision. So let's have a meeting."

"The whole Remove?" asked Tommy Watson.

"No, only the fellows in our own House," replied Nipper. "No need to bring the West House men into it. Let's leave them in peace for this evening."

"And what are we going to do with Handy?" asked Fullwood.

"Better release him."

So Handforth was released, and for a moment or two it seemed that he was going to fight the whole crowd. But he thought better of it, and he contented himself by giving vent to many bitter remarks.

"The Form can decide what it likes!" he concluded. "The Form can order me out of this study if it wants to! And the Form can go and eat coke! I'm the boss here, and I'm going to have my way!"

"Isn't it about time that you became yourself, Handy?" asked Nipper.

"I *am* myself, you idiot!"

"I don't think you are!" replied Nipper. "For nearly a week you've been an arrogant, bad-tempered stranger. We don't recognise you as the old Handy. And as long as you keep up this rot we'll treat you as you deserve."

"Do you think I care?" snorted Handforth, as defiant as ever. "Why the dickens can't you mind your own business? This is my study, and if I like to chuck Church and McClure out, I'm going to chuck them out!"

"It's not a bit of good going on like this," said Nipper. "You're just as stubborn as ever, Handy, and it's time the Form took a hand."

"Blow the Form!" roared Handforth. "I'm going to do what I like——"

"You know what a Form meeting is, Handy, and you'd better attend," said Nipper quietly. "We shall want Church and McClure to attend, too. You will have a chance of stating your case, and——"

"Rot!" interrupted Handforth. "I'm not going to attend this idiotic meeting! And



you can't make me, either! You can all go and fry yourselves!"

He shouldered his way out of the study, and stamped off down the passage in a fine temper. Nipper bit his lip.

"What a chump the man is!" he said, with regret. "He's just keeping it up—that's all. Won't admit that he's in the wrong—won't give way in the slightest degree. Church and McClure were willing to extend a friendly hand, but he wouldn't recognise it. So now it's up to the Form."

The Form, incidentally, hailed the idea with delight.

The meeting, of course, would be something of a rag, and, as it was a dull, showery evening, the proceedings would help to pass the time away. Besides, it would be a jolly good excuse to neglect prep.

And, naturally, any scheme that involved the neglect of work was regarded as a brain-wave!



## CHAPTER 5.

### Browne Steps In!

H, Brother Handforth!"

The leader of Study D looked round with a scowl

on his rugged countenance. It was dusky out in the Triangle, and there was a lull between the showers. Handforth was leaning against the wall of the gymnasium, and he could now see a tall, lanky figure looming up. The tall, lanky figure belonged to William Napoleon Browne, the captain of the Fifth.

"Go and fry your face!" said Handforth, as Browne came to a halt.

"This is not the spirit of true brotherliness," said Browne, with regret. "Knowing, as I do, the many defects of my countenance, I should nevertheless hesitate before frying it. No, Brother Handforth, we will cut that suggestion out, if you don't mind. I am here to talk earnestly with you, and to give you the benefit of my vast experience—"

"You can clear off!" broke in Handforth aggressively. "I don't want any advice from you, Browne—or from anybody else!"

But William Napoleon Browne did not accept this dismissal. He had heard most of the details of the squabble, and he knew that the Remove was now holding a meeting in the small lecture hall. And it seemed to Browne that this was eminently one of those occasions when his famous diplomacy and tact would work wonders.

Indeed, Browne had been thinking of something of the sort for two or three days past. He knew that Handforth was at loggerheads with the rest of the Form, and, being a peace-loving fellow, he wanted to set things to rights. And who, of all people on earth, could do that better than himself?

"We must keep cool and calm, Brother Handforth," he said gently. "Hot words, alas, have already caused needless pain and suffering. Let us see if we cannot get at this canker, and tear it out by the roots."

"I tell you, I don't want—"

"Patience!" interposed Browne smoothly. "I have heard, on the best authority, that you have been acting the fool for days."

"Look here—"

"Let us not mince our words," went on Browne. "The truth may hurt, brother, but you are strong enough to stand the pain, and so let us come out with the blunt facts. You have been acting the fool for days, and it is high time that—"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Handforth. "Why can't you leave me alone?"

"It is possible," said Browne gently, "that Church and McClure have been acting the fool, too. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the whole Form has been acting the fool. Who can say? In any case, why go into these matters at all? The trouble is here—it is with us—so why not cut it out? I venture to suggest that you have been unutterably miserable during these past days—"

"Then you can venture to suggest something else!" interrupted Handforth. "I haven't been miserable at all!"

"There, brother, I suspect that you are deluding yourself," said Browne. "It pleases your present mood to tell yourself that you are happy. In a spirit of perversity you are enjoying your exile. But, in your heart, you detest it."

Handforth was silent.

"Do not contradict me when I say that you are longing to be back in the good books of your Form fellows," continued Browne, greatly encouraged. "Is it not a fact that you would again like to be regarded as the bluff, genial stalwart of old? What pleasure do you gain from mooning about by yourself? What delights do you experience by quarrelling with all and sundry? Come, brother, let us be frank."

Handforth's only comment was a grunt, but Browne was even more encouraged.

"It is not for us to apportion the blame," he said, laying a hand upon Edward Oswald's shoulder. "And does it really matter, brother, who is guilty? Would it not be a big act on your part to shoulder this blame?"

"Eh?" said Handforth, startled. "Who? Me? Shoulder the blame?"

"Assuredly," said Browne gently. "Your shoulders are broad—your skin, if I may be allowed to say so, is as thick as armour-plating. Come with me into the lecture hall, and—"

"Rot! I'm not coming to that giddy Form meeting!"

"Come, come!" urged Browne. "I appeal to your better nature, Brother Handforth. Come with me to this meeting. Face these doubting Thomases bravely and courageously. Let them see that you are bold and strong."





Church and McClure came to an abrupt halt. A little further down the corridor, opposite an open doorway, was a pile of books, boxing gloves, cricket pads, and still more articles were being flung out to join them. And then the two juniors gave a gasp. For the things were being thrown out of their own study!

"My only hat!" ejaculated Handforth. "Are they saying that I'm afraid to go to the meeting?"

"Is it not possible—indeed, probable—that your absence will be misconstrued?" said Browne earnestly. "Therefore, brother, come with me! And once on the platform, a few expressions of regret will make a vast difference to the whole situation."

"What do you mean—expressions of regret?"

"Brother Handforth, you will be surprised," declared Browne. "I venture to predict that the Form will forgive you, and that it will take you back into the fold with open arms. A few words will suffice. Humble words, perhaps—but, as I have already said, you are strong. And it is the strong man who can be humble. It is only the coward who remains defiant."

Handforth suddenly made up his mind. "All right!" he said tensely. "I'll do it!"

"Splendid!" beamed Browne, delighted with his success. "You have justified my faith in you."

And they moved off towards the Ancient House, with Browne's arm linked in Handforth's.

There was a burning light in Handforth's eyes, but in Browne's there was nothing but complacency and gratification.



## CHAPTER 6.

### The Form Meeting!

AND as far as I'm concerned," said Church fiercely, "he can keep up this game as long as he likes. I'm past

caring!"



The meeting of the Ancient House Remove was in full swing, and the small lecture hall was noisy and excited. Church was on the platform, with Nipper and McClure.

"Good gad!" murmured Archie Glenthorne, from somewhere in the first row of seats. "I mean to say, hardly the good old forget-and-forgive spirit, what?"

"What's the good of forgetting and forgiving?" demanded Church bitterly. "Look what happened this evening!"

"Yes, we all know about that, Churchy," said Nipper. "But you can't get away from the fact that old Handy is a sportsman at heart. He just happens to be in a perverse mood. He's doing everything he can to make himself awkward. We've all been like it ourselves, at times—it's a perfectly human weakness. But, generally, it doesn't last long. We soon get over it."

"Handy's been like it for nearly a week!" said McClure gruffly.

"Yes, and it's high time that he climbed down," said Nipper, nodding. "The great question before this meeting is—how are we going to make Handy climb down?"

"Give him a Form ragging!" suggested Fullwood.

"Hear, hear!"

"Have him dragged in here, and tell him that unless he stops this rot we'll send him to Coventry," said De Valerie.

But Nipper shook his head.

"That will be perfectly useless," he said. "Handy will simply say that he doesn't care. He'll glory in it. No, we've got to do something diplomatic. This meeting must decide—"

The door opened, and the lanky figure of Browne appeared.

"Outside!" said Nipper, pointing. "Sorry, Browne, old man, but this is a Remove meeting. Seniors are not admitted!"

William Napoleon Browne walked in, and Handforth followed him. Browne shut the door, and came with long strides towards the platform.

"I am sure," he said, "that you will forgive this intrusion, brothers. I am well aware of the fact that I have no right here. But the circumstances are exceptional. Brother Handforth has been having a heart-to-heart talk with me, and he is now prepared to mount the platform, and say a few words to the throng."

There was a buzz at once. All eyes were turned upon Handforth. The leader of Study D did not seem to be in a contrite mood. He looked aggressive—indeed, more aggressive than ever before. But perhaps appearances were deceptive. He mounted the platform in the wake of Browne, and there was a hush.

"Before calling upon Brother Handforth to speak, I feel it necessary to say a few simple words," remarked Browne, holding up a hand. "I am sure that you will be patient——"

"Cut it out, Browne!"

"We want to hear Handy!"

"Yes, yes!"

"I can appreciate your eagerness," said Browne smoothly. "However, I claim my right to make a few introductory remarks. Brother Handforth, kindly take your stand on my right side. Splendid!"

Handforth stood there obediently, and the Remove wondered. By what magic had Browne done this thing? Church and McClure, a little further along the platform, waited with bated breath. Was this to be the end of their worries?

"I am gratified to announce that Brother Handforth is prepared to express his regret for all that has happened," said Browne calmly. "But let me beseech you to meet him half way. Remember, brothers all, that there has been fault on both sides——"

"No, no!"

"Remember that we have here a penitent," proceeded Browne, with some haste. "And what, after all, do his sins amount to? I do not hesitate to state that the whole rumpus has been caused by the merest trifles. So, while you are listening to Brother Handforth's words, do not allow harsh thoughts or recriminations to bar the peaceful character of the occasion. I now call upon Brother Handforth to address the meeting."

Browne bowed, and stood aside, fully expecting a round of applause. But none came. The Removites were too interested in Handforth.

"Come on, Handy—let's have it!"

"Speech—speech!"

Browne need not have concerned himself. The Remove was, in all truth, very ready to meet Handforth half way. They were sick and tired of the present deadlock, and they wanted to see it over. It wasn't natural to see Handforth mooning about on his own, snapping at everybody who came near him.

"I've come here because Browne told me that you fellows are saying that I was afraid to face the meeting!" said Handforth aggressively. "Well, I'm not afraid—and here I am!"

It did not sound a very peaceful beginning, and the Remove wondered.

"As for expressing any words of regret, I refuse to do anything of the sort!" continued Handforth. "I've done nothing that I'm sorry for, and I'm jolly well not going to eat humble pie! I've only come here because I want to tell all you fellows that I'm sick of you!"

"What!"

"Good gad!"

"Why, the idiot is worse than ever!"

There was an uproar at once, and over half the fellows were on their feet. Handforth stepped nearer to the edge of the platform, and he glared down at the meeting. He was just beginning to enjoy himself.

"Yes!" he thundered. "You can all go and eat coke! That ass of a Browne thought that I was coming here to apologise, or something. Not likely! You all thought I was afraid to come, and——"

"Brother, brother!" urged Browne, leaping



forward. "This is hardly the line that I anticipated. Without question, you are on the wrong wavelength. I am distressed to hear this oscillation. I beg of you to tune in——"

"You're a prize ass!" interrupted Handforth witheringly. "You're potty! I only came here so that I could have the pleasure of telling the fellows what I thought of 'em!"

The uproar increased, and there was a general move towards the platform. Taking everything into consideration, Browne's peace efforts did not seem to be an overwhelming success!

## CHAPTER 7.

### Dampening Their Spirits!



**H**ANDFORTH was flushed and excited. He stood there, waving his arms, and there wasn't the slightest doubt that he was enjoying himself in a vindictive kind of way. It wasn't natural for the bluff Handforth to be vindictive, and that was the painful part of it all.

"Yes, I've come here to tell you all what I think of you!" he thundered. "You're a crowd of rotters! You're a lot of cads! You thought you could jolly well get round me by soft words, but I'm not having any! I'll go my own road, and all the rest of you can go to the dickens!"

A roar went up, and Browne grasped Handforth by the sleeve.

"Let me remind you——" he began.

"I don't want reminding of anything!" shouted Handforth. "And as for you, Browne, you may be all right in your own way, but this ought to teach you not to interfere with the Remove!"

"Alas!" sighed Browne. "That my kindly efforts should be so described!"

"These chaps have been down on me all the week!" went on Handforth angrily. "They've ignored me—they've cut me dead! Well, they can carry on with it, for all I care——"

"Just a minute, Handy!" interrupted Nipper grimly. "You might as well stick to the truth while you are at it!"

"Are you suggesting that I'm telling lies?"

"You're not telling lies, but you're misrepresenting the case!" snapped Nipper. "I'm captain of this Form, and——"

"I don't care if you're captain of a fishing smack!" bellowed Handforth. "I'm not going to take any orders from you, or anybody else!"

"Just now," said Nipper, "you shouted out that everybody had been cutting you. That's not the case, Handy. You're the one at fault. You've been going about for days, mooning and sulking."

"Sulking!" yelled Handforth.

"Yes—sulking!" said Nipper. "Sulking like a mere kid! You've been peeved because the Form got fed up with your tantrums. And the sooner you realise that you're not a little tin god, the better!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the stuff to give him, Nipper!"

"Absolutely!"

"That's right—jump on me!" yelled Handforth, turning to the Form. "Go it—the whole crowd of you. I don't care. I've finished with you all. I'm done with you!"

"Yah! Sulky!"

"Didums lose ums ickle temper!"

Catcalls came from all parts of the room, and Edward Oswald Handforth quivered with rage. Many times on the platform, he had caused the Form to roar with laughter. Many times he had been indignant at the spirit of levity which had been displayed while he was speaking. But never had he been treated with such scorn and contempt as now.

But this demonstration did not penetrate his thick skin in the usual way. It did not pain him. It only made him "see red."

"You'd better go easy!" he shouted thickly. "By George! I'm not in a mood to stand——"

"Dry up!"

"You're a naughty, wilful child, Handy!"

"You ought to be spanked!"

"Go away and sulk somewhere else!"

The fellows were genuinely annoyed. They had come to this meeting in a goodhearted way, and they had hoped that something would be done to bring Handforth to his senses. But here he was, worse than ever.

"You'll be sorry for yourselves if you shout any more insults at me!" panted Handforth. "By George! I'll show you what I can do if you keep this up!"

"Rats! Go away and play marbles!"

"Let's grab him, and frog's-march him outside!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll teach him a lesson!"

Handforth uttered a shout of rage, and rushed to the back of the platform. With one grab, he seized the fire-hose, which was neatly folded and placed on a handy bracket.

"Hold him!" gasped Nipper. "The silly ass is going to—— Quick! Don't let him turn that wheel!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Stop him!"

A wave of consternation swept over the juniors who were on the platform. The others, in the body of the hall, did not know what was going on. But Handforth had already twirled the little red wheel which controlled the water supply, and the folded hose was springing into life. It was acting as though it had become bewitched.

The next second a stream of water came spurting and gurgling out of the nozzle. Handforth stood back, his face flushed, his eyes glittering with reckless enjoyment.

"Now, then!" he roared. "I told you I'd do something, didn't I?"



Swisssss!

The water was coming out at full pressure now, and Nipper, as he ran up, received the stream in the middle of his chest. He went over backwards, and Handforth roared with fresh triumph. In the body of the hall a stampede was taking place.

"Outside—quick!"

"Lemme get out!"

"Handy's gone dotty!"

"Gangway—gangway!"

Everybody was shouting at once, and the next second the stream of water from the hose-pipe rose in the air, and a deluge commenced.

"Good gad!" gasped Archie Glenthorne, dodging like a hare. "S.O.S.! The poisonous blighter is absolutely going to——"

Archie got no further, for the stream of water took him in the neck, and any further words of his were literally drowned. To and fro swayed the hose, and in less than ten seconds everybody in the lecture hall was drenched. The confusion was worse than ever.

Browne, in a valiant attempt to grab the hose-pipe, only succeeded in getting himself knocked clean off the platform by the terrific stream of water. Browne went over backwards, the water splashing from his chest in foaming cascades.

"Now what about it?" roared Handforth victoriously. "This will jolly well show you that you can't mess about with *me*!"



## CHAPTER 8.

### In The Net!

**G**ASPING, panting, and soaked to the skin, the Removites fought their way out of the lecture hall. Every-

where they went, they carried puddles of water. And never had they been so infuriated.

"The chap's mad!" gasped Fullwood. "He'll get the sack for this!"

"Serve him right!"

"Oh, the reckless idiot!" moaned Church. "He must have gone off his rocker!"

Down the passage went the juniors, flying helter-skelter for the dormitories. Not one of them hoped that they would be able to avoid meeting a prefect or a master. This affair was too big to escape such unwelcome attention.

Their worst hopes were quickly realised. The leading fellows had only just got into the lobby when they ran into Mr. Horace Pycraft, the ill-tempered master of the Fourth Form. Mr. Pycraft lived in the East House, but he had been visiting one of his colleagues on this side of the Triangle.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated, as he saw the drenched and dripping juniors coming towards him. "Boys, what has happened?"

"We've got wet, sir," said Fullwood shortly.

"You stupid boy! Cannot I see that you are wet?" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "How did it happen? Good gracious! Is there a flood somewhere?"

"A flood, sir?" repeated Travers, in surprise. "What an idea! We've only been having our evening dip in the fountain!"

The fellows were crowding by, taking very little notice of Mr. Pycraft. And that gentleman stormed off, mentally deciding that he would inquire into this outrageous affair.

"Impertinent young puppy!" he snapped to himself.

It was easy enough for him to locate the source of the flood. Water was everywhere down the corridors, and more and more juniors were rushing past. But the last of them had gone when Mr. Pycraft reached the open doorway of the small lecture-hall.

Inside, Handforth was standing triumphantly on the platform. He had got rid of all his persecutors—as he chose to call them. Everybody had gone, even Church and McClure. He was left in sole possession.

The only emotion which filled Edward Oswald at that moment was a sense of victory. Never for a second did he think of the consequences. He had always been reckless.

And then Mr. Pycraft came rushing in.

"Want some more?" shouted Handforth, failing to recognise the newcomer. "All right—here you are!"

Swoooooosh!

A column of water swayed across the lecture hall, steadied itself, and then caught Mr. Pycraft in the middle of the chest.

"Help!" screamed Mr. Pycraft wildly.

He turned a complete somersault, backwards. The force of that water was terrific, and Mr. Pycraft was a frail man, in any case. He went over like a nine-pin, and he hardly remembered how he crawled out into the corridor. He picked himself up, swaying. He was staggered, bewildered, half-dazed.

"Help—help!" he screamed.

As it happened, a couple of prefects were rushing to the scene. They were Fenton, the captain of the school, and Conroy major. They gazed at the drenched Mr. Pycraft in amazement.

"What's happened, sir?" asked Fenton sharply.

"In—in there!" gurgled Mr. Pycraft, pointing feebly. "There is an insane boy, and——"

But the prefects didn't wait. They hurried into the lecture hall, and then they came to a halt. Handforth was standing on the platform, allowing the stream of water to play over the upturned seats. Truth to tell, Handforth was just beginning to recognise the appalling nature of his folly.

"Handforth!" shouted Fenton, in astonishment. "What has happened here? Has there been a fire?"

"No, there hasn't!" retorted Handforth. "There's been a meeting!"



Utterly regardless of the consequences, he pointed the hose in the direction of the two prefects, who attempted frantically to dodge out of the way of the hissing stream of water.

"Turn that hose off, you young idiot!" shouted Conroy major.

"The Remove held a meeting, and I cleared them all out!" said Handforth, with satisfaction. "That's what's happened!"

"You dangerous young lunatic!" shouted Fenton, running up the hall and leaping on to the platform. "Look at the damage you've done here! The place is swimming with water! Confound it, why can't you— Hi! Turn that thing away!"

Swish!

Fenton was drenched, but, with a terrific heave, he shouldered Handforth out of the way, and he managed to grab the nozzle of the hose. The next moment he had turned off the water, and the deluge was ended. In the momentary silence that followed, the steady drip-drip-drip of water from the rafters and walls sounded ominously.

"Have—have you got him?" panted Mr. Pycraft, poking his head round the doorway.

"Yes, sir!" growled Fenton, looking down at his soaking person. "You infernal young idiot, Handforth! What on earth do you mean by this? You had a flogging last week, and you look like getting another one this evening!"

"I don't care!" retorted Handforth defiantly. "The chaps dared me to come here—and I came! They called me names, so I soaked them."

"Well, you're coming along with us—to the Housemaster!" said Fenton grimly. "We'll leave it to Mr. Lee to decide what shall be done."

Three minutes later, Handforth was standing in front of Mr. Nelson Lee's desk, and the famous schoolmaster-detective was listening to the evidence. And as he heard, the expression on his face became very grim.

"By what I can understand, there was a heated quarrel amongst all you boys," said Lee, at length. "But that was no excuse, Handforth, for this action of yours. You had no justification whatever for turning on that fire-hose."

"I thought they needed cooling down, sir!" said Handforth rashly.

"I don't think we need bother the Head with this matter, Fenton," said Nelson Lee, turning to the school captain. "You tell me that the damage is only slight?"

"Well, it's not much, sir," said Fenton. "The lecture hall is pretty flooded, but there's nothing in there to hurt, really. It looked a lot worse than it actually was."

Nelson Lee nodded, and rose to his feet.

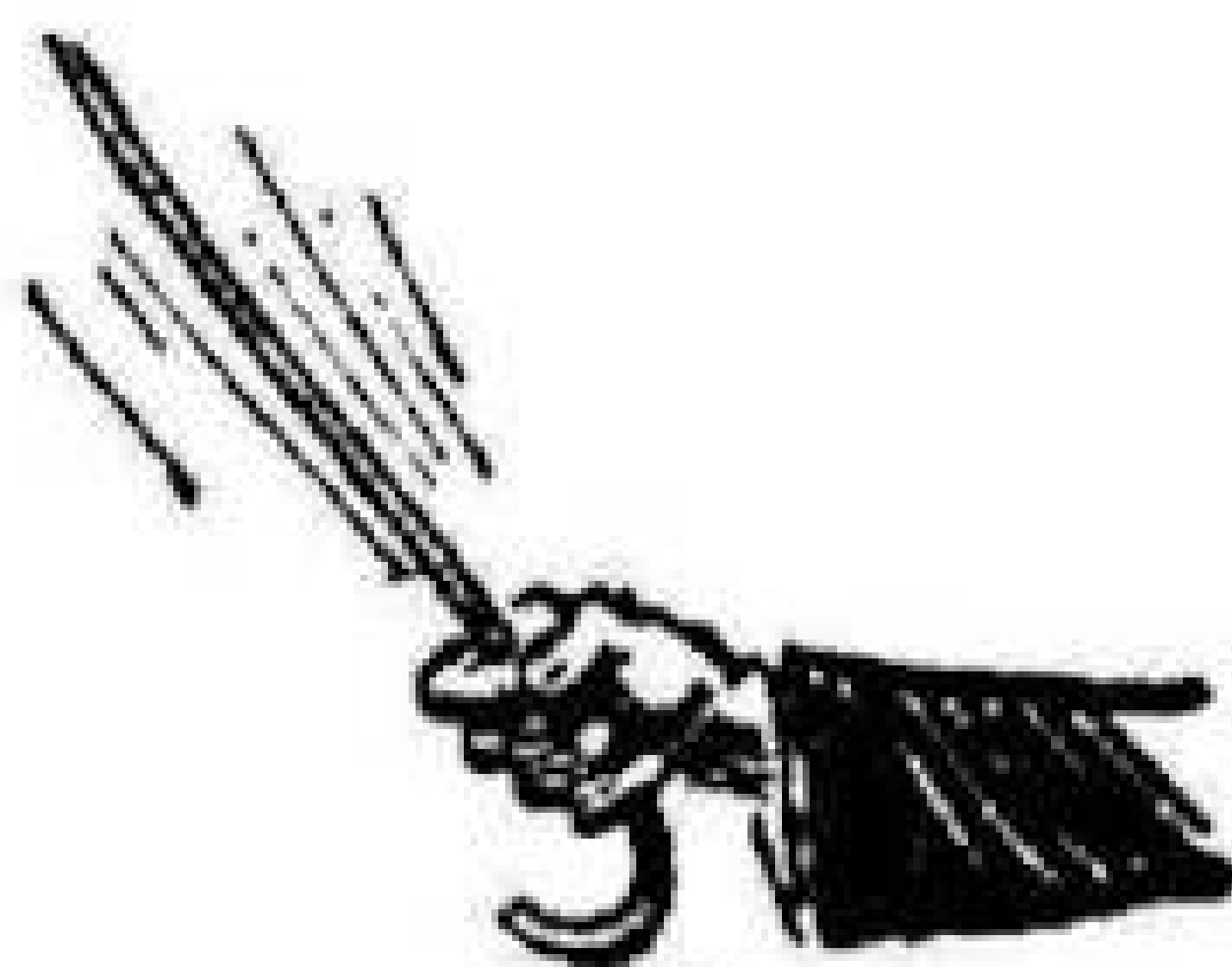
"I am going to deal with you now, Handforth," he said sternly. "Come over here!"

"What—what are you going to do, sir?" asked Handforth, with a gulp.

But that question was entirely unnecessary, for the Housemaster-detective was already testing the whippiness of his cane!

## CHAPTER 9.

## Bitter Blood I



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B

END down, Handforth!" said Nelson Lee curtly.

"Here, I say, sir

—"

"Bend down!"

And there was such a world of power in Lee's tones that Handforth could do nothing but obey.

Chatting over the affair afterwards, in the Senior Day-room, Fenton and Conroy major were of the opinion that Handforth had received the most terrific swishing that Nelson Lee had ever administered. And both the prefects agreed that Handforth had got off very lightly. Any other master would probably have hauled him before the Head, and it might have meant expulsion. But Nelson Lee was different. He understood the reckless, blundering nature of Handforth's character, and he considered that a severe swishing met the demands of the case; and, much to the relief of the Remove, the whole matter was allowed to blow over.

"Good old gov'nor!" said Nipper, when he heard about it. "It's just like him, of course. I understand that old Pycraft is going about, spoiling for blood. But nobody will take any notice of him, thank goodness!"

"Supposing he tells the Head?" asked Tregellis-West.

"Well, it won't make any difference," said Nipper. "The Head won't take any action—particularly after the gov'nor has dealt with the matter. No, it's over now."

But, of course, it wasn't over.

Nothing more of it was heard from the masters or prefects. But the Remove, even after changing into dry things, seethed. They wanted Handforth's scalp. Only with great difficulty did Nipper calm them down.

"We'd better leave the chap alone," he said. "I've heard from Conroy major that he received a terrific swishing, so he's had his punishment."

"What about all our clothes?" asked Hubbard. "They're ruined!"

"Well, we can't do anything," replied Nipper. "We can't expect Handforth to buy new suits, all round. Besides, your clothes will be all right after they're dried. That's the matron's trouble. Poor old girl, she's in for a fine time, by the look of things!"

"Well, Handy had better keep to himself!" said De Valerie darkly. "If he barges into three of four of us this evening, we shan't be very gentle with him!"

"No fear! We'll scrag him like the dickens!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Church miserably. "It'll be a lot safer to leave him alone."



"Safer?" said De Valerie. "We're not afraid of him!"

"Well, then, it'll be a lot more sensible," amended Church. "We don't all want to be down on the old ass. And Mac and I have decided to clear out of Study D."

"Well, you are a couple of weaklings!" said Hubbard scornfully.

"If you're looking for a black eye, Hubbard —" began McClure hotly.

"Cheese it!" said Nipper. "Church and McClure are right. It's the line of least resistance—and it will pay in this case. There's no sense in goading Handy when he's in this mood. He's proved how reckless he can be, and he might do worse things unless he's left alone."

"That's what we were thinking," said Church, nodding. "Let him have the study to himself, and blow him! We're fed up to the neck with him!"

Vivian Travers smiled.

"In the goodness of our hearts, Jimmy and I have decided to take these homeless ones into Study H," he said smoothly. "It will be rather a crowd, but life is short."

So Church and McClure, with the help of some of the others, moved their belongings into Study H. It was decent of Travers and Potts to take them in like this. But there was a good deal of sense in the move, for Handforth was robbed of his thunder.

Finding that he had Study D to himself, he had no further excuse for creating havoc. And as everybody in the Remove ignored him, his victory was more or less hollow. He was now bitter and sullen. Incidentally, he was very sore, and he did not appreciate the charms of the big armchair in Study D. He found much greater comfort in standing.

Yet, in spite of everything, he felt that the evening had been a success.

"I'm an outcast!" he muttered fiercely. "All right! I don't care a hang! I've shown the Remove that I don't care a toss, and there's the end of it! Rats to them all!"

And so his spirit remained unbroken—his obstinacy was as tough as ever.

As for William Napoleon Browne, he sadly registered a failure.

"A tragedy, Brother Horace," he said, in the privacy of his own study in the Fifth Form quarters. "Without exaggeration, a tragedy."

"Well, it was your own fault," said Stevens, without sympathy. "You shouldn't interfere in the affairs of the Remove! You asked for trouble, and you got it!"

"A piebald way of looking at things, Brother Horace," said Browne, shaking his head. "I am disappointed in you. Try to realise the sad nature of this affair. For the first time in history, the Browne diplomacy has failed. Am I losing my grip? Is it possible that I am becoming feeble and flabby in my old age?"

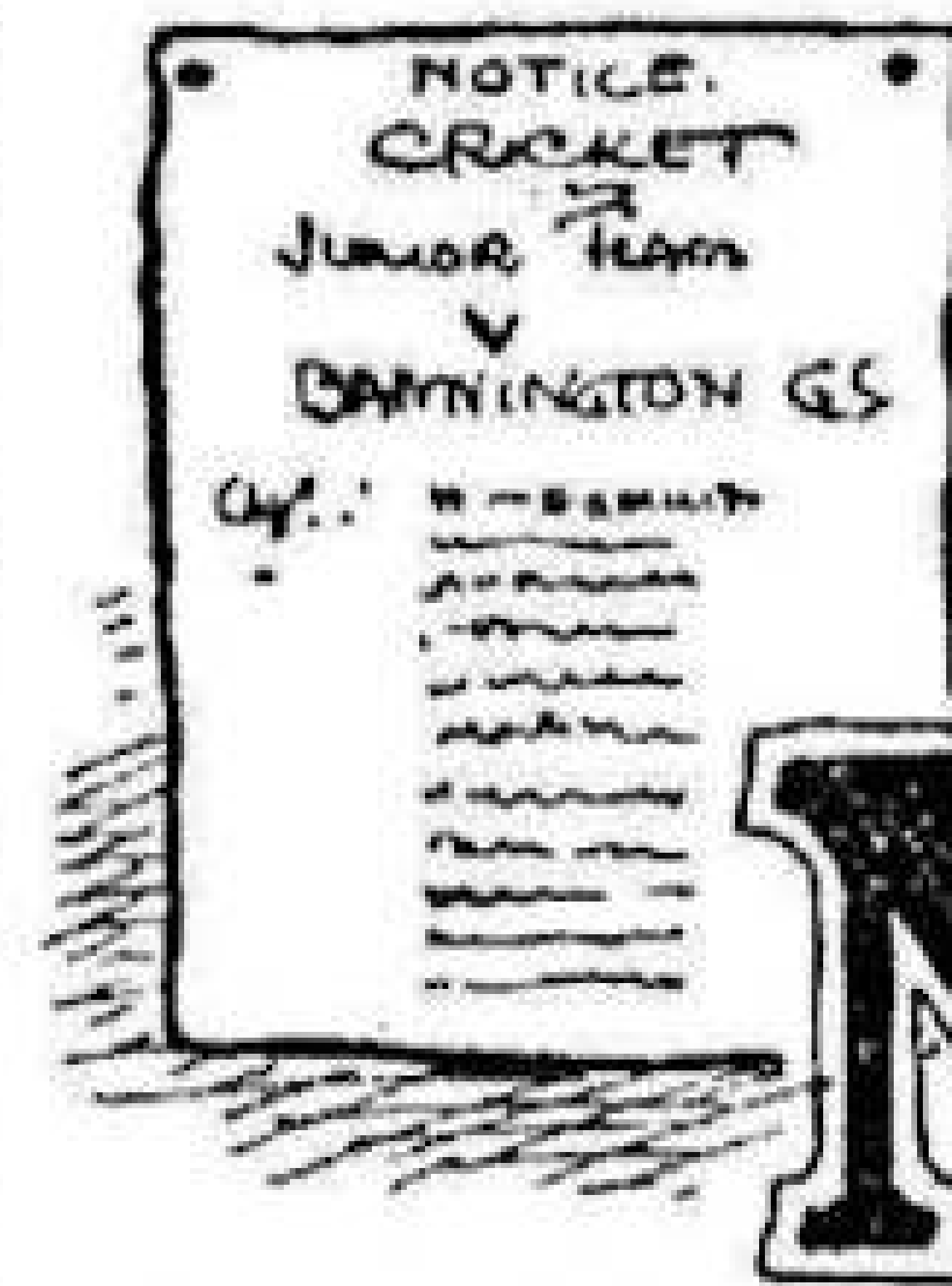
"I don't know anything about that," said Stevens. "But this ought to teach you that these juniors had better be left alone. You've

always been rather partial to the Remove, and I should hope this will show you the error of your ways."

"On the contrary, brother, I am more determined than ever to carry on with this good work," said Browne, as he stretched his long legs. "Brother Handforth is sound in the main. I shall make it my life work to show him the error of his ways, and to turn this tragic failure into an overwhelming success."

"Well, I wish you luck!" grinned Stevens. "But, if you ask me, you're going to land yourself into a pile of trouble. Handforth is the most obstinate chump under the sun, and when he gets a bee into his bonnet like this, there's no arguing with him. Take my advice, and leave him alone. If he likes to be such a hopeless idiot, let him get on with it!"

There was a good deal of truth in Stevens' words. In any case, the rank and file of the Remove were already letting Handforth "get on with it." He had acted the giddy ox, and he was an outcast!



## CHAPTER 10.

### Trouble for Nipper!

**N**EXT morning there was a bit of a row.

Nipper was the main cause of it, although, of course,

Handforth was at the root of the trouble.

It was a half-holiday that day, and when the Remove poured out from morning lessons a sensation was created round the notice board in the Ancient House.

Nipper was there. In fact, he had just pinned up the list of the players for the Junior match against Bannington Grammar School. The game was to be played that afternoon, and Nipper had left his selection until the last available minute.

"Here, I say!" protested De Valerie hotly, as he looked at the list. "What the dickens does this mean, Nipper?"

"What does what mean?"

"Why, you've got Handforth's name down here."

"Well, what of it?"

"What of it?" echoed De Valerie. "You're not going to play that cad, are you?"

"Handforth isn't a cad," said Nipper promptly. "He may be an obstinate chump, but—"

He was interrupted by a perfect roar of indignation. Crowds of other juniors had come in now, and they had all heard the sensational news. At least, they were pleased to regard it as sensational.

"You're not really playing Handy, are you?" asked Fullwood, in surprise.

"Oh, don't you start, Fully, for goodness' sake!" said Nipper shortly. "Handforth is a good bat, and he's in fine form just now."



The season's only just beginning, I know, but Handy has done well at the nets——"

"That doesn't matter!" interrupted De Valerie. "We don't want him in the team!"

"No fear!"

"We're not going to have that sulky beggar in the eleven!"

Nipper looked round coldly.

"I'd like you to remember that I'm Junior skipper!" he said. "And a sports skipper can't allow any personal feelings to enter into his selections. Handy is a good cricketer, and he's wanted for this afternoon's game. That's all I've got to say."

"Well, it's rotten!" declared Hubbard fiercely.

"I don't see that it matters to you," growled Church, turning on Hubbard. "You're not in the eleven!"

"But I'm in the Remove!" retorted Hubbard. "Handforth has made a fool of himself, and doesn't deserve to be in the eleven. I think he ought to be dropped!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We've all decided to ignore him," said De Valerie. "Goodness knows, I'm not a vindictive chap; I don't want to tread on the fellow. But, at the same time, he'll only cause ructions if he comes to Bannington with us."

"That's just what I was thinking," said Fullwood thoughtfully. "When he's in a mood like this, there's no telling what he'll do. It's a bit of a risky thing, Nipper, to play him at all."

Nipper was silent. Not that he was thinking of changing his decision. He was rather worried about the bluff Handforth. He wanted to bring Edward Oswald back to his usual sunny state, and it might help matters if he played in the match that afternoon. Some good honest cricket would probably do much to lift Handforth out of his Slough of Despond. Quite apart from this, he was a good man. The team needed him.

"I say, Pitt," exclaimed De Valerie, as Reggie Pitt strolled in. "Nipper has included Handforth in the team for to-day's match!"

Reggie Pitt, of the West House, looked surprised.

"What about it?" he asked. "What's the cause of all this excitement?"

"We don't want Handy!" said Val briefly.

"If Nipper has chosen Handy it's good enough for me," said Pitt cheerfully. "I've heard all about the trouble you had last night, and a place in to-day's eleven will probably put old Handy into a better temper. If you ask me, Nipper has done the right thing."

"Hang it, I believe you're right," said Fullwood thoughtfully.

But many of the other juniors were still indignant and noisy. The majority of these were not in the team at all, so their opinions did not count. At the same time, they were members of the Remove, and they felt they had a right to express themselves.

In the middle of it all, Handforth himself came along.

He was apparently on his way out of doors. Obviously he had no knowledge of the row, for he looked just a little surprised as he turned out of the Remove passage and entered the crowded lobby. But only for a second did he hesitate. Then he squared his jaw, and strode onwards.

"Seen this notice, Handy?" asked Church.

Handforth came to a halt, but he did not deign to reply. Instead he looked them up and down with dignified contempt—at least, Handy thought it dignified—and then, with a sniff, turned his head away significantly.

The juniors, as they realised the meaning of that gesture, howled with laughter. Handy had sent them all to Coventry!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was something comical in the idea of Handforth sending the entire Remove to Coventry. But Handforth was the only fellow who didn't see the humour of it.

In spite of himself, he glanced at the notice on the board. A little gleam came into his eyes as he saw the name, "E. O. Handforth," on the list. He could hardly believe the truth of it for the moment.

His first emotion was one of thrilled pleasure. Bitterly, he had told himself all the morning that he would be dropped out of the cricket. He was an outcast, and nobody cared a rap about him.

But yet, here was his name down—as a player!

It ought to have shown him, at once, that there was no need for his sullenness. Indeed, during that first moment he was filled with intense gratification; and then, abruptly, a little demon within him commenced its deadly work. His old stubborn spirit returned.

He turned to Nipper, and stared at him coldly.

"Is this right?" he demanded. "Have you really put my name down?"

"You can read, can't you?" said Nipper.

"There's no spoof about it?"

"I don't usually spoof with cricket notices," replied Nipper. "You're wanted for this afternoon's game, Handy, and we shall have to start immediately after dinner. So you'd better get changed into flannels before hand. There'll be no time afterwards."

Flannels! Sunshine! The green grass! Bright figures on the Bannington Grammar School playing fields! It was an alluring vision. But Handforth cast it all aside in his folly!



## CHAPTER 11.

### Not What He Expected!

HERE was an obstinate look about Handforth's jaw as he faced Nipper.

"I want to know why my name is down on that list!" he said curtly.



Everybody was silent, and Nipper was rather taken aback by the nature of the question.

"Why?" he repeated. "Because I've decided to play you, that's all."

"Oh, have you?" said Handforth. "Well, who gave you permission to put my name down?"

"My dear idiot—"

"Who told you that I was willing to play?" went on Handforth aggressively. "It's like your beastly nerve!"

He took a pencil out of his pocket, leaned over to the notice-board, and scratched his name off. Then he waited. He was calm and triumphant.

Of course, Nipper would plead with him, Nipper would urge him to play in the match! And then he would be gracious enough to consider the matter, and he would finally consent, as a special concession, to play. It was all very gratifying to Handforth in his present mood.

"There you are," he said tartly. "That's what I do with your list!"

Nipper's eyes glittered. Never for a second did he waver. He turned, looking thoughtful, and his gaze alighted upon Alan Castleton.

"Are you fixed up this afternoon, Castleton?"

"I'm going over with you chaps, to watch the match," said Castleton, of the West House.

"No," said Nipper. "You'll take Handy's place."

"By Jove!" said Castleton eagerly. "Thanks awfully, old man!"

"That's all right," said Nipper. "Be ready to leave with the rest of us, won't you?"

"By Jove, you bet I will!"

Castleton's voice was full of satisfaction, and Nipper turned aside. Handforth stood there, blank and bewildered. This wasn't what he had expected at all!

"Yes, but look here——" he began.

"My dear fellow, I realise that I made a mistake," said Nipper, glancing back. "These other chaps were inclined to jump on me for including your name in the list. Perhaps they were right. In any case, since you have expressed such a strong desire to be dropped out of the team, I'm perfectly willing to oblige you."

And Nipper walked outside, followed by all the other fellows, who were shouting with laughter. They were genuinely gratified to see the expression of consternation and dismay which had overspread Handforth's face. He had asked for this—and he had got it!

Alone, Handforth stared dizzily at the pencil-mark he had drawn across his own name. It was almost too awful to be believed. Nipper had taken him at his word!

"The awful bounder!" panted Handforth, aghast.

His dodge had failed. Failed miserably. He had been vain enough to believe that the team could not get on without him. And now he had received his reward for his egoism.

That act of folly of his—scratching out his own name—had deprived him of his place in the game. He was furious with Nipper—he was furious with himself. He stalked outside, boiling.

And he was unjust enough to put all the blame on to Nipper's shoulders. He felt that the junior skipper had played a dirty trick on him. Never for a moment did he see that he, himself, was the only one at fault. If he had taken Nipper's action in the right spirit, all would have been well. But his fatal pigheadedness—his present perverseness of spirit—had landed him into this mess.

Handforth loved cricket. If anything, he preferred it to football. There was plenty of limelight in cricket, and the mighty Handforth always loved the limelight.

As a batsman, he had a valiant reputation in the junior school. Yet, if the truth be told, Handforth was something of a fraud when it came to cricket. He only had two or three strokes, and he was a great slogger. Scientifically, his cricket was not worth a cent. But, from the spectacular point of view, he was a great player. It was no uncommon thing for him to go in on a difficult wicket and to knock the bowling all over the field. As a batsman, he was utterly reckless—as he was reckless in most things.

And now, it seemed, his recklessness had robbed him of his place in the eleven. He could hardly believe it. It was a stunning blow to him. He was at loggerheads with the Remove, it was true, but why should that make any difference to his cricket?

"It's not fair!" he muttered fiercely, as he hung about in the Triangle. "By George, I'm not going to be ousted from my place by that beast, Castleton!"

The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. It was a glorious day, with the sun shining brilliantly. It was more like late May than the last week of April. Better weather for cricket would not be imagined.

And Castleton, of all fellows!

Alan Castleton was a West House junior, and when he had first come to St. Frank's he had been several kinds of a rotter, although now he was a reformed character, and was quite popular in the Junior School. He had played in one or two preliminary House games, and he had revealed excellent form. But Handforth felt it was a perfect disgrace that Castleton should be pitchforked straight away into a school match. Handforth did not realise that he was the one who had used the pitchfork, so to speak.

A group of Fourth-Formers approached him, looking solemn.

"Got a pencil, Handforth?" asked one.

"What do you want a pencil for?" demanded Handforth unsuspectingly.

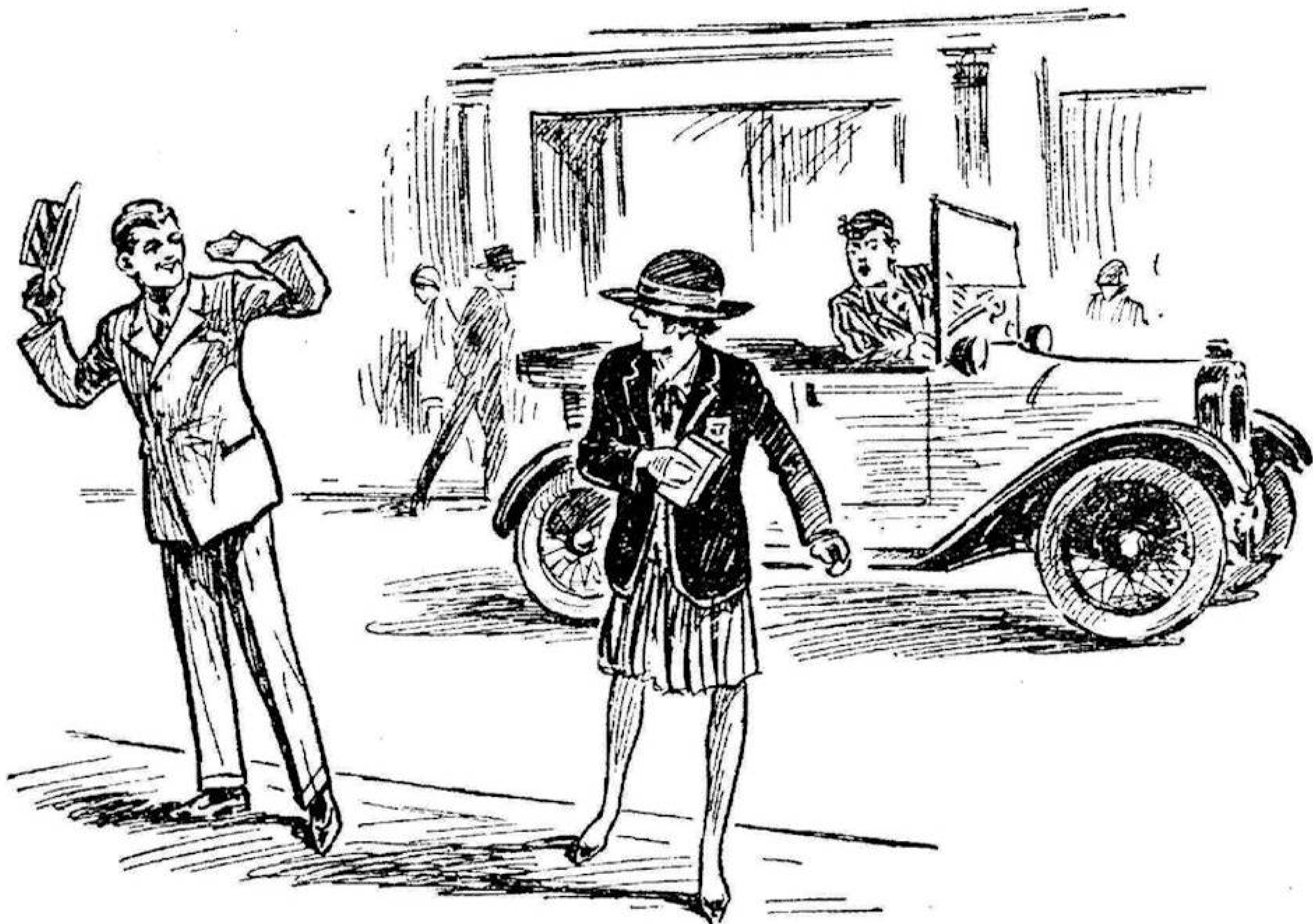
"Oh, nothing much!" said the Fourth-Former. "We only want to scratch a few names off our notice-board!"

"Why, you—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers retreated, yelling,





As Handforth saw the stranger turn and blow Irene a kiss, he nearly turned green with jealousy. "By George!" he said thickly.

and Handforth, red with wrath, strode off into the Ancient House. He stamped upstairs, and went into his dormitory. Church and McClure were there, changing into flannels.

"Oh!" said Handforth gruffly.

He went out again, and wandered disconsolately up and down the passage. He waited until Church and McClure came out, then he barged into the dormitory, locked the door, and changed his own clothes.

"I'll show them whether I'm going to be left out of the game!" he muttered fiercely. "They're not going to dish me like that!"

And he went downstairs, resplendent in white bags, and red-and-blue blazer.



## CHAPTER 12.

### Nothing Doing!

**D**URING dinner there were many whispers. Everybody noticed that Handforth had changed, and everybody wondered. What did the old idiot expect? Was he optimistic enough to suppose that Nipper would give him his place again?

"Oh, he's impossible!" growled Church, after the meal. "Imagine it, Mac! He deliberately gives up his place, and then

goes and changes into flannels! What the dickens can you do with a chap like that?"

"Don't ask me!" said McClure. "I suppose he thought that Nipper wouldn't take any notice. He's mad enough for anything nowadays! He probably believed that Nipper would beg of him to reconsider his decision. I thought it was jolly decent of Nipper to give him a position in the eleven at all!"

"Yes, rather!" said Church. "So it was. And now he's thrown it away. Well, he can jolly well whistle for a game!"

Handforth's optimism was amazing.

He hung about in the Triangle, trying to look indifferent. Actually he was expecting Nipper to approach him, and to invite him to play. The fact was that Handforth couldn't realise that he was only a cog in the wheel. He still believed that the Remove would go to pieces now that he was at enmity with all the rest. Unhappily for this little conceit, the Remove was carrying on exactly the same as usual.

Some of the cricketers were already out, and they were collecting together, waiting for the others. There were a number of non-playing juniors who were also ready to go.

But nobody took the slightest notice of Handforth. Fellows passed him, and walked to and fro, but he might not have existed for all the attention they paid him.

A little argument was going on between Buster Boots, of the Fourth, and Reggie



Pitt, of the Remove. Handforth could hear every word, and he wanted to chip in. He was always having arguments, and it was only by the greatest will-power that he held himself aloof now.

"It's an unfair division," Buster Boots was saying. "The Fourth and the Remove are about equal in numbers, and the fellows in both Forms are about the same age. Yet there are only three Fourth-Formers in the team!"

"Shocking!" murmured Reggie.

"And the Junior Eleven is supposed to represent St. Frank's junior cricket!" insisted Boots. "Only Christine and Yorke and myself! Three Fourth-Formers as against eight Removites! Do you call that fair?"

"Quite fair!"

"Why, you silly Remove ass—"

"Keep your hair on, Buster!" grinned Reggie. "You know as well as I do that the Fourth has been slack for ages. All the best men are to be found in the Remove —"

"What!"

"With one or two notable exceptions—yourself, for instance," went on Reggie diplomatically.

"Oh!"

"It's no good blaming Nipper," said Pitt. "He naturally chooses the best material, but you can't deny the fact that the Remove is miles ahead of the Fourth."

"I don't admit it!"

Handforth listened, fuming. He wanted to point out to Buster Boots that the Fourth had been beaten in every football and cricket match for ages. It was an absolute phenomenon if the Fourth won a match against the Remove. But Handforth held himself in check. He was not allowed to join in this argument. Indeed, if he had chipped in, the other juniors would have casually walked off.

It only increased Handforth's exasperation when he saw that the Junior School was carrying on exactly the same as it had always carried on. His exclusion meant nothing! And yet he had pictured to himself the disorganisation of everything. With him out of it, what could the rest do? Apparently they could do very well indeed without him!

It was a big shock for Handforth, and, in a way, it did him good. It made him realise that he wasn't so indispensable, after all. It took a little of the conceit out of him. He was able to see things in their correct focus.

Nipper came out of the Ancient House and looked round.

"Everybody here?" he asked briskly. "We ought to be off within five minutes. Where's Castleton?"

"He won't be a tick," said Reggie Pitt, glancing round.

Handforth was gripped by another impulse. He was a great fellow for acting on the spur of the moment. With him, in nine cases out of ten, to think was to act. And, generally, he got himself into trouble owing to this impulsiveness.

"Look here, Nipper, I want a word with you!" he said bluntly, as he strode up to the junior captain.

"As many as you like," said Nipper obligingly. "But I'm in rather a hurry, and if it's not important—"

"It is important," said Handforth. "I'm going to play this afternoon."

"Really?" said Nipper, with interest. "Well, I'm glad to hear it."

Handforth's heart leapt.

"Then—then you mean that it's all right?" he asked eagerly.

"It's all right as far as I'm concerned," replied Nipper, in surprise. "What you do, Handy, is none of my business."

"None of your business?" echoed Handforth, staring. "But you're skipper, aren't you?"

"I'm skipper of the Junior Eleven, if that's what you mean?" said Nipper. "Naturally, you can't mean that you're going to play for St. Frank's Handy. You gave up your place in the side before dinner. I suppose you've picked up a game somewhere else?"

Handforth gulped.

"No," he muttered. "Don't be an ass! Of course I haven't. I mean that I'm going to play for the Junior Eleven against Bannington Grammar School!"

Nipper shook his head.

"That, of course, is impossible," he said. "You know well enough that Castleton has accepted your place, Handy."

"Blow Castleton!" said Handforth, with sudden violence. "I tell you I'm going to play! I've changed my mind!"

"Unfortunately for you, I haven't changed mine," said Nipper coldly. "You can't fool about like that, Handy."

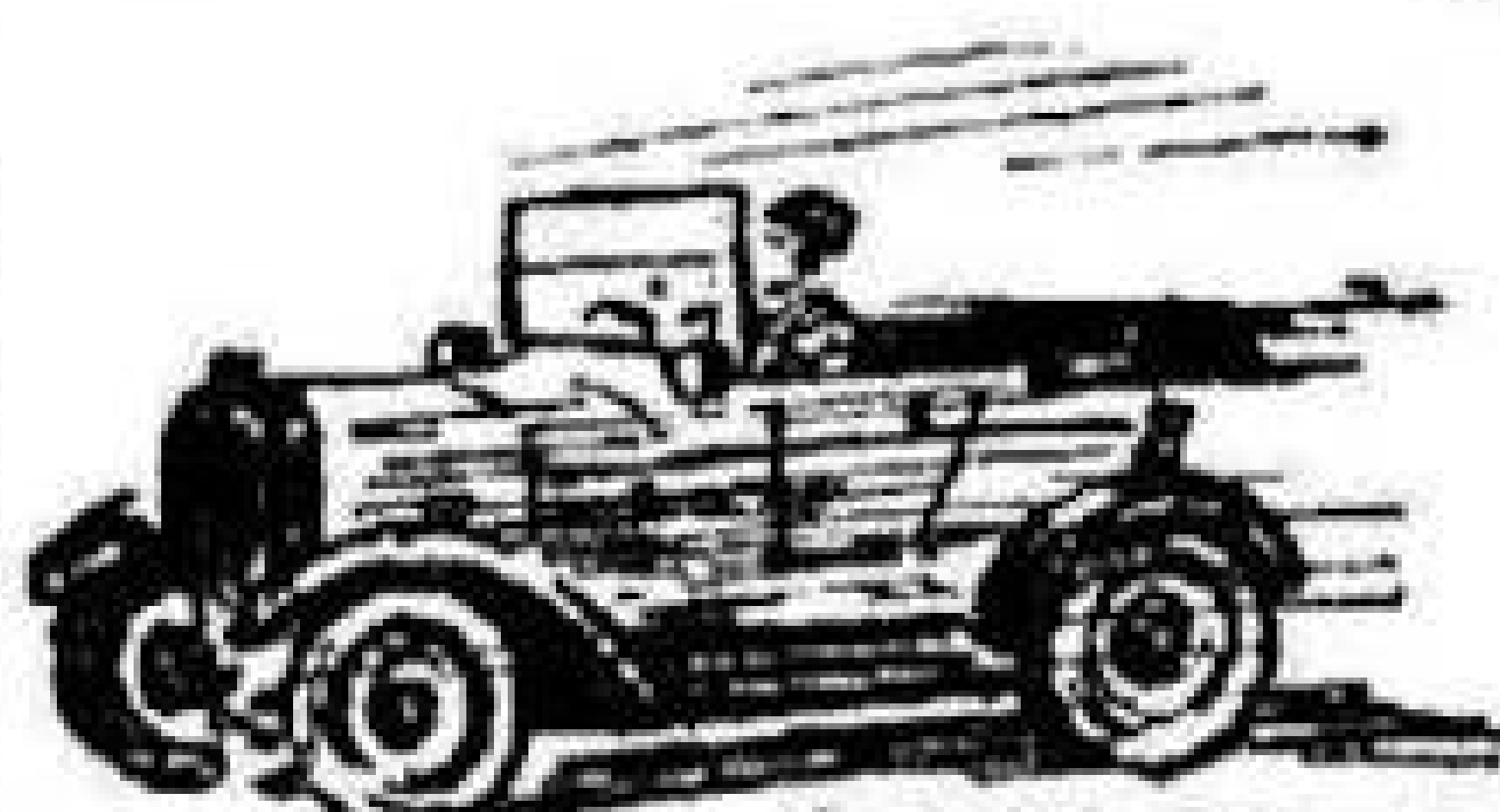
"I—I can't fool about?"

"No, you can't," said Nipper. "You gave up your place, and Castleton has filled it. There's an end to the matter, as far as you're concerned."

Nipper strolled off, leaving Handforth as motionless as a statue.

"You might buzz along and find the rest of the fellows, Reggie," Nipper was saying. "We ought to be going soon, you know. How about the bikes? Are they all ready?"

Handforth hardly heard a word that was being said round him. He had offered to play in the match, and his offer had been rejected!



## CHAPTER 13.

### Alone!

**H**OW on earth Handforth could have expected any other result was a point which he alone could explain. Perhaps even he couldn't explain it. His mind was in very much of a whirl. He only knew that he had made the suggestion to Nipper in desperation.



What a fool he had been to cross his name out like that! He had been chosen for the match, and everything had been all right. And then he, like a lunatic, had spoilt all his chances!

But only for a few moments did such thoughts as these find a place in Edward Oswald's mind. He soon shrugged his shoulders, and his face became flushed with anger.

"Rats!" he muttered savagely. "It's not my fault! Can't a fellow change his mind if he likes? I'm a member of the eleven, and Castleton is only an outsider. And yet, even when I offered to play, I'm turned down. They're all against me—the whole lot of them!"

He strode out of the Triangle, acutely conscious of the fact that all eyes were turned in his direction. Somehow or other, he got out into the West Square, and even here he was watched. He walked on, and as he was walking he thought of something.

"By George!" he muttered. "I'll take out my Austin! What do I care about these rotters? Blow them and their silly cricket!"

He lost no time in getting his little Austin Seven out, but even as he was turning into the road he did not know which direction to take. He had no plans. One way was just as good as another.

He had already turned down towards the village when he noticed a group of fellows standing near the main gateway. He frowned, and applied his brakes.

"Some of the chaps ready to start for Bannington on their bikes," he muttered. "If they see me going past empty, they might ask for a lift. It's likely I'm going to give anybody a lift after what's happened!"

So he turned the car round, watched with interest by the knot of fellows near the gate. His route would now take him past the Moor View School, and this brought another idea into his head.

It was a half-holiday at the Moor View School, too, and this meant that Irene Manners was probably free. She might be booked for tennis, or something like that, but Handforth found a little consolation when he thought of Irene.

She would be all right, at all events. She wouldn't turn him down!

Edward Oswald had always had a soft spot for the fair Irene, and he gave a little jump as he came within sight of the girl's school. Why shouldn't he take Irene out? That was it! He would take her out to the pictures.

He tried to convince himself that he would thoroughly enjoy a visit to the cinema on this warm, sunny afternoon. It would be rather ripping, sitting in the pictures with Irene. He would be able to forget the cricket match, and—

But what was the good of fooling himself? He knew very well that he hated the thought of pictures on this glorious afternoon. He wanted to be out in the open air, under the sun. He wanted, more than anything else, to

be playing cricket. But, owing to his own idiocy, he was barred from it.

In his indecision, he brought the Austin to a standstill and stopped the engine. He sat there biting his lip. What should he do? How on earth was he going to while away the afternoon?

And then the solution came to him.

"I know!" he told himself. "I'll fetch Irene, and take her over to the match! If I can't play in it, I can jolly well watch it. Yes, by George! And all the other fellows will stare when they see Irene with me!"

During the journey he would be able to state his own case very elaborately, and perhaps Irene would "cut" the other Removites. That would be too topping for words!

It was decidedly unfair of Handforth to think of a thing like this. After all, it wouldn't be playing the game to drag Irene into this quarrel. But it must be remembered that Edward Oswald Handforth was not himself. All sorts of ideas came into his head which at any ordinary time would find no place there.

While he was thinking in this way, two figures came into view from round the bend, some little distance ahead, and as Handforth stared at them his heart jumped.

One of them was Irene herself—Irene, very slim, very short-skirted, and all in white. She certainly looked charming on this sunny afternoon.

But, for once, Handforth hardly gave her a glance. He was gazing at her companion—a young fellow! Not one of the other Moor View girls, but a young chap of about sixteen. A stalwart sort of youth, dressed in grey flannels, with a straw hat on his head.

He was a perfect stranger to Handforth. He didn't belong to St. Frank's, or to the neighbourhood. Handforth had never seen him before in all his life. And yet this young fellow—this stranger—was laughing and chatting with Irene as though he had known her all his life!

To Handforth's other troubles jealousy was now added.

"Who's that ugly-looking rotter?" he muttered fiercely. "Oh, my goodness! I haven't seen Irene for days—practically a fortnight. Who the dickens has she got friendly with now?"

He watched, fascinated.

He fairly writhed when the pair came to a halt on the side of the road without even having glanced in his direction. They probably did not know that the little Austin Seven was standing there. They stood talking, and Irene was laughing merrily, obviously enjoying herself immensely.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Handforth blankly.

This stranger—this confounded outsider—seemed to be on very intimate terms of friendship with the girl. And Irene was Handforth's own special chum! He sat there in his Austin, wild with acute jealousy.

He had come to Irene for consolation, and he had only found further misery!





CHAPTER 14.

Another Break!

IT seemed to Handforth that Irene and her companion stood chatting there for hours. Actually, scarcely two minutes had elapsed. Handforth had not been absent from St. Frank's for more than five.

Now, much to Handforth's relief, the stranger raised his hat, playfully blew Irene a kiss, and walked off. He came along in the direction of the Austin Seven, whistling cheerily.

As he drew nearer, Handforth gave him a searching inspection. Actually, the stranger was by no means unprepossessing. His features were well-cut, and his figure was upright. But Handforth thought that he had never seen a more hideous specimen of humanity in all his life. The fellow was positively revolting. A blot on the landscape.

Just before reaching the Austin, the stranger turned and blew Irene another kiss. Then he came on, grinning cheerily.

"By George!" said Handforth thickly.

He spoke so loud that the stranger distinctly heard it, and glanced at the figure in the Austin Seven in some surprise. Handforth was looking at him with concentrated hatred. It was no ordinary stare, but a fierce, baleful glare.

It was rather a wonder that Handforth didn't jump out and knock the stranger down on the spot. He felt like it. But Irene was still in the road—still in view—and so even Handforth hesitated.

The stranger passed, puzzled and mystified. As soon as he had turned the bend, just in the rear, Handforth leapt out of the little car and ran up the road.

"Renie!" he sang out hoarsely.

There was no need for this call, for Irene was coming towards him, smiling with all her usual brightness. She certainly looked particularly attractive this afternoon. She was always pretty, but just now she seemed infinitely prettier. Perhaps it was her dress, combined with the cheery brightness of the spring day.

"Why, hallo, Ted!" she hailed him gladly. "I didn't expect to see you this afternoon. I thought you were playing away with the eleven?"

Handforth did not even hear the remark.

"Who's that chap?" he burst out, coming to a halt and pointing down the road:

There was something so violent in his manner that Irene looked at him in astonishment.

"That boy who was with me a minute ago?" she said.

"Yes!"

"Really, Ted, I don't see why you should roar at me——"

"Who is he?" demanded Handforth chokingly.

"I'm beginning to believe that the rumours I've heard are true!" said Irene coldly. "At first I only laughed at them, but some of the girls have told me that you have been awfully difficult to get on with all this week, Ted. They said that you've been going about like a bear with a sore head, and——"

"Never mind what they said!" panted Handforth. "I want to know who that chap was?"

It was not surprising that the gentle Irene was annoyed by his dictatorial tone. After all, what business was it of his? What right had he to assume this air of proprietorship? And the girl, being only human, resented his rudeness.

"If you can't speak to me in a better tone, Ted, I shan't answer you at all," she said frigidly.

"Then you're afraid to tell me who that chap was?"

"Don't be silly!" flashed back Irene. "He's Jack."

"Jack?"

"Yes, Jack Winston."

"But—but I've never heard of Jack Winston," said Handforth blankly.

"No?" murmured Irene. "Jack and I get on awfully well together. He's staying down here for a bit, you know. I met him three or four days ago."

But she failed to mention that Jack Winston was one of her cousins. Why should she explain this? If Handforth had acted in a proper way, she would have laughed at him, and she would have readily told him the full nature of her relationship with the mysterious Jack Winston.

"So—so you get on awfully well, do you?" panted Handforth. "What about me?"

"I don't know what you mean!" said the girl warmly.

"Yes, you do!"

"Ted!" protested Irene, pained. "Why are you so rude to me?"

"I'm sorry!" growled Handforth thickly. "I—I don't mean to be rude, Renie! But—but I'm disappointed. What's the idea of chucking me over, without telling me anything about it?"

"Chucking you——" Irene paused, with a little catch in her throat. "You don't know what you're talking about!" she went on coldly. "I'm nothing to you, am I? We're only just—just friends."

Handforth started as though he had been stung.

"That's it—only just friends!" he said bitterly. "I rather thought that we were special friends in a way of speaking. But, of course, I'm wrong. I'm always wrong nowadays! Everything I do is wrong!"

"Oh, Ted!" said Irene, her heart softened by Handforth's obvious misery. "You don't understand, that's all. Jack Winston is——"



She was about to explain to him, but he ruined everything—as usual.

“I don't want to hear anything about him!” he broke in gruffly. “You've chucked me over, and you've got this Jack Winston rotter as a new friend! All right—you can keep him! Do you think I care? Everybody's against me—even you! You've thrown me over, and——”

“Oh, stop!” cried the girl angrily. “I think you're perfectly horrid, Ted! I didn't know that you could be so—so ungentlemanly!”

Handforth was too full of emotion to speak.

“And until you can apologise, I don't want to speak to you again!” said the girl, tossing her head. “So please don't come near me until you are in a different mood. I'm ashamed of you! I never dreamed that you could be so caddish!”

She swept round, with a whisk of her skirt, and strode off, leaving Handforth standing there, feeling suddenly weak. He knew, in a flash, that he had acted with amazing boorishness. Only when it was too late did he cool down sufficiently to see himself in a true light.

“Renie!” he panted, running after her.

“I don't want to speak to you!” she snapped, walking on without even glancing round.

And Edward Oswald Handforth came to a halt, bewildered by this fresh disaster!



## CHAPTER 15.

### All His Own Fault!

**H**ANDFORTH'S entire world had crashed.

It had been serious enough to have the whole Remove indifferent towards him, but now Irene had joined them! She, too, would have nothing to do with him! His cup of bitterness and misery was filled. And yet it was all his own fault!

He could not see this—he blindly refused to look at the thing squarely. He could only see it from his own point of view. He did not possess the knack of putting himself in the other fellow's place. If only he could have seen himself as the Remove saw him, he would have got a shock.

As it was, he climbed back into his Austin Seven, reversed, and drove back along the road towards St. Frank's. He didn't know what to do now—he didn't care. He was in the most reckless of all his reckless moods.

But he couldn't go for a run now. What was the good of careering over the countryside alone? He had some vague idea of locking himself in Study D, and spending the afternoon sprawling in the easy chair. There, at least, he would have solitude. There would be no curious eyes to gaze upon him.

An experience of this sort was novel to Handforth.

He had always been the bluff, genial Handy. He had always been the butt of everybody's jokes—and, for the most part, he had taken these jokes good-naturedly. Masters, prefects and juniors had had a good word for him. They had nodded to him, chatted with him, laughed with him.

But during these dark days they had ignored him.

At least, this was what Handforth told himself. Actually, the masters and the prefects had been just the same—and so had the Fourth-Formers. But Handforth, in his unreasonable humour, put everybody into the same category. He considered that they were all against him.

And what had he done?

That was the cruel, unjust part of it all! What had he done? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! Willy's monkey had got into Mr. Crowell's study, and had wrecked it. He—Handforth—had been accused; had been flogged, and, just because of that, everybody in the school held him in contempt.

That was what Handforth told himself—and a more outrageous perversion of the truth could not have been imagined. But never for an instant did Handforth think that he had arrived at any wrong conclusion. He completely forgot all the other incidents. He forgot that he had been hopelessly cantankerous on that memorable day—that day when Mr. Crowell's study had been wrecked.

He had been ill-tempered in class; he had goaded Mr. Crowell beyond human endurance, and had, in consequence, received a heavy imposition. Then not only had he “cut” extra lesson, but he had been dragged indoors by the infuriated Form-master, by the scruff of his neck. And Handforth had threatened all sorts of violent revenge upon Mr. Crowell.

Thus, when the latter had found him in his study, with hopeless disorder round him, the Form-master had jumped to the conclusion that Handforth was responsible. Nobody had believed that story of Willy's monkey.

But it would have been very different on any ordinary occasion. If Handforth had not been so awkward throughout that tragic day, his word would have been taken. He could not see that all this trouble was of his own making.

Even afterwards, the rank and file of the Remove had been ready enough to forgive him. He had been flogged, and there the matter had ended. It had been Handforth himself who had “kept it up.” For nearly a week he had refused to acknowledge all friendly advances, until, at last, events had culminated in this present situation.

Everybody was against him. He was thrown out of the cricket. Irene was no longer his chum. What further tragedy could befall him now? Even in these two latest incidents,





Hose in hand, Handforth stood back and gazed upon the angry juniors with reckless enjoyment. Swissssh! Nipper, running up to the platform, caught the stream of water full in the chest. He toppled backwards, and Handforth roared with fresh triumph.



Handforth blindly believed that he was the victim.

Yet he could have kept his place in the eleven, and Irene would have explained Jack Winston quite freely. Handforth himself was the cause of these fresh troubles. From first to last, he had brought everything on his own head.

He drove unthinkingly into the Triangle, and then his thoughts were scattered. There, standing about, were the members of the Junior Eleven, ready with their bicycles. Handforth could hardly believe his eyes. He glanced at the school clock, and started again.

A bare ten minutes had elapsed since he had gone out. Yet it seemed hours to him. Here were the cricketers, still waiting, and yet he had vaguely imagined that by this time the game had started.

He swerved round, and took his Austin back to the garage. He didn't want it any more that afternoon. He was only anxious to get away somewhere, to be alone, and it seemed to him that Study D was his only haven of refuge.

But as he entered the Ancient House by the rear door, and walked along the long corridor, he was more restless than ever. He passed one or two fellows outside the studies, and he gritted his teeth. He walked on, with smouldering eyes.

No, he wouldn't go into Study D. Perhaps Church and McClure would come in—or some of the other fellows. It would be a lot better to go upstairs—into the dormitory. There wasn't one chance in a thousand that he would be disturbed up there. Besides, he could sprawl full length upon the bed and take his ease.

But he didn't go into the lobby. Some of the juniors were hanging about there. He didn't want to pass them. If he had only realised it, this very reluctance on his part to meet the other fellows was an admission of his own guilt. He knew, subconsciously, that he was sulky and awkward. But in his conscious mind he did not see this.

So he went down towards the domestic quarters, and went upstairs by the back way. This wasn't allowed, but he didn't care; and, by luck, he got upstairs without anybody noticing him.

Then he strode along the dormitory passage, breathing freely at last. Now he was safe—now he could get into his dormitory, and spend the afternoon in peace!



## CHAPTER 16.

## A Sudden Temptation!

**N**IPPER impatiently compared his watch with the school clock. "This is a bit too thick, Reggie," he protested. "We can't wait any longer."



Hose in hand, Handforth stood back and gazed upon the angry juniors with reckless enjoyment. *Swisssssh!* Nipper running up to the platform, caught the stream of water full in the chest. He toppled backwards, and Handforth roared with fresh triumph.

"All right, then you hurry off," said Reggie Pitt. "I can't understand why the ass is so long. He ought to have been out five minutes ago."

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "The good old Grammarians will be tearing their hair out in chunks. It's frightfully bad form to be late."



"Yes, let's be going on," said Bob Christine, of the Fourth.

"Half a tick!" sang out Pitt. "He's coming. Castleton, you silly ass, what the dickens do you think you've been doing? What's the idea of keeping us waiting like this?"

Alan Castleton came up, panting. He had just run out of the West House, and he was looking concerned.

"I'm awfully sorry!" he said breathlessly. "You chaps had better get off. I can't come yet."

"Why not?" asked Nipper. "And where's your bat? I thought you went indoors to fetch it?"

"That's just it," said Castleton, looking worried. "I couldn't find the giddy thing

belong to the eleven, and now I'm keeping everybody waiting because of my rotten bat. I've tried to bind it, but it was taking so long that I came out—"

"I should think you did come out," grinned Nipper. "You hopeless optimist! You can't do anything with that bat this afternoon. Look here, Castleton. You'd better pop into the Ancient House, and get my spare one. It's a first-class bat, and I think it'll just about suit you."

"It's awfully decent of you," said the West House junior. "If you will tell me where it is—"

"Up in the top box-room—right at the top landing at the very end of the passage," said Nipper. "You know the way, don't you? There's a kind of end door, and after you go through that you'll find yourself in a dark little passage, with a box-room further along. The bat is stuck in one of the corners. I meant to bring it down, but I forgot to."

"Right!" said Castleton. "You're a brick, Nipper. I'll buzz indoors and get it. Don't you fellows wait for me. I'll catch you up."

"Oh, we might as well wait now," said Nipper good-naturedly. "You'll only be a couple of minutes."

"No, please!" urged Castleton. "Don't wait for me. You chaps go along on your jiggers now—and I'll catch you up."

"Just as you please, then," smiled Nipper. "We'll ride fairly easily, so as to give you a chance. But buck up!"

Alan Castleton sped indoors, and all the other cricketers got on their bicycles and pedalled off. Quite a number of the other juniors had gone on in advance, with the idea of taking the ride leisurely.

Castleton ran up the Ancient House stairs three at a time, and when he got to the top he nearly ran full tilt into Fatty Little. Fatty Little was a West House junior, too, and he looked at Castleton in surprise.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated. "Great pancakes! I thought you'd gone with the team, Castleton?"

Down the corridor, Handforth was just turning into his dormitory. But now he paused. He heard Castleton's voice, and his temples throbbed.

Castleton! The fellow who had dished him out of his place in the team! This was a most unfair way of looking at it, in the circumstances. But Handforth was not rational just now.

"So I am in the team, you fat ass!" he heard Castleton say. "But there's something wrong with my bat, and I'm going to borrow



at first, and then, when I did find it, I discovered a whacking great split in it."

"Well, you can't play with a thing like that," said Reggie. "You'll have to borrow somebody else's bat."

"That's what I was thinking," said Castleton uncomfortably. "But it's a bit thick, when you come to think of it. I don't really







at the top, tucked away beyond earshot. And all the other cricketers had ridden on. They would get right to Bannington, and they would still think that he was following. Then when the match started—

"Let me out!" yelled Castleton frantically.

He hammered until he hurt his hands, and at last, breathless and husky, he desisted. It was only too obvious that somebody had deliberately crept up behind, and had locked him in. But who could have done it? And why? What object was there to be gained by this senseless trick?

Castleton struck further matches, and his heart was like lead when he saw that there was no window in this little apartment. There was a kind of ventilator, near the ceiling, but what was the use of that? It was only four inches square. He came round to the door again, and hammered afresh.

Outside, Handforth listened with entire satisfaction.

He had passed through that other doorway, and had closed the door. From here, even at the top of the House, he could only faintly hear Castleton's thumps and shouts. Downstairs, on the lower landing, no sound would be heard at all. Yes, without doubt, the prisoner was secure up there for the whole afternoon.

"Now we'll see!" muttered Handforth feverishly.

He went downstairs very calmly. A strange coolness had come over him now. He was trembling a little, but he took no notice of this. He was filled with a gloating sense of triumph.

Castleton was the fellow who had been chosen to fill his—Handforth's—place. Very well, then! Castleton was locked up, and he wouldn't be able to play. If Handforth couldn't play, then Castleton couldn't! Nobody else in the school was to have Handforth's place in the Junior Eleven!

The leader of Study D went downstairs and wandered leisurely about for a time. Then he went up to his dormitory, straightened his tie, and went out again. He paused at the bottom of the upper staircase, listening. No sound came down to him. Everything was quiet and peaceful on this summer-like afternoon.

Handforth went down again, visited Study D, and got out his cricket bag. He saw that his pads were in it, also his bat. Then, with that same gleam in his eyes, he seized the bag and walked out of the House by the rear door. He went along to the garage, and got into his Austin Seven.

He looked at his watch.

"H'm! They're nearly there by this time," he decided. "Well, there's no hurry. The best time for me to turn up is just before the start of play. No sense in getting there too soon. Might spoil everything."

He was still gloating as he glided out into the lane, and started off towards Bannington. What a brainy scheme! He congratulated himself again and again. The

whole thing was so easy, so simple! That impulse of his had been a corker!

And while he sped on his way towards Bannington, the victim of his trickery sat in the box-room, disconsolate and well-nigh inarticulate. Now and again Castleton rose to his feet, and he raised his clenched fists in the air.

"Wait!" he muttered repeatedly. "Wait! When I find the chap who played this trick on me, I'll smash him! Oh, the cad! The miserable hound! The first chance I've had to be in the Junior Eleven, and now I'm dished! What a filthy trick!"

Castleton hadn't the faintest idea as to the identity of his persecutor. He only knew that the fellow was a cad and a rascal. No decent chap could have done such a thing as this! It was obviously the work of a vindictive, mean-spirited rotter.

The unhappy Castleton had lived for this hour. How he had practised at the nets! How he had thrown himself wholeheartedly into his training! And now, just when he had reached the reward of his perseverance, some cad had deprived him of his right!

He thought of a possible enemy. Gulliver or Bell? Teddy Long? Merrell or Marriott?

But why? Why should any of those fellows—who were known to be cads—play this trick on him? He hadn't spoken to any of them for weeks! They didn't owe him any grudge, either. Alan Castleton was completely bewildered—utterly and absolutely baffled.

But one thing was certain. He would never get out of that box-room until somebody let him out!



## CHAPTER 18.

### The Trick That Worked!

WELL, I'm dashed if I can understand it!" said Reggie Pitt, frowning. "Why hasn't the ass come? He's had tons of time. Goodness knows, we dawdled enough on the road!"

"He ought to have overtaken us long before we got into Bannington," said Nipper, striding across the turf. "Not a sign of him! And we're due to start within three minutes!"

"What on earth will you do if he doesn't come?" asked Fullwood. "You haven't a reserve here, have you?"

Nipper's gaze rose over the spectators, including many of the St. Frank's Remove fellows. He frowned as he realised that none of them were much good at cricket.

"No, I didn't bring a reserve," he said gruffly. "What was the need? It's only a single innings match, and it'll be over this afternoon. If Castleton doesn't show up, we shall have to play one of our chaps who came down to watch the game."



"Well, let's hope that Castleton turns up," said Reggie.

They couldn't understand the non-arrival of Alan Castleton. He had only gone upstairs to get that bat, and he ought to have overtaken the other members of the eleven somewhere between Bellton and Bannington. Yet there had been no sign of him.

Even now, after the juniors had been on the grammar school ground for fully a quarter of an hour, there was still no evidence of the missing player. It was quite a mystery.

"He must have had a puncture," said Jack Grey.

"I've thought of that," said Reggie, "but even that doesn't account for it. No matter where he had the puncture, he would have been ten minutes run from a telephone. And he could have 'phoned, couldn't he? But we haven't heard a sound!"

"By Jove!" said Nipper suddenly. "I'm

hanged if Handy hasn't turned up, after all!"

"Just like him!" grunted Church, who was near by. "What an idiot he was! He might have had his own place in the team if he hadn't acted the giddy ox!"

The Grammarian skipper approached. He was a tall, lanky junior, and a stranger to the St. Frank's fellows. His name was Hope, and he had only been junior sports skipper at the grammar school for a couple of weeks.

"Hasn't your man turned up yet?" he asked cheerfully.

"No, not yet," said Nipper.

"Well, time's getting on, you know," remarked Hope casually. "What about it, old man?"

"We shall have to make a start without him, that's all," said Nipper. "If I win the toss, I shall send you fellows into the field. Then, perhaps, you won't mind Castleton not being here at the start?"

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"Not a bit," said Hope. "He can turn up when he likes. But you're not going to win the toss, all the same!"

And he was right. Nipper called "heads," and a gleaming tail glinted in the sunshine. Hope picked up the coin, grinning.

"Well, we're going in first," he said genially. "You Saints can get out into the field as soon as you like. What about your eleventh man?"

At this point Handforth came strolling up. He had timed his arrival with uncanny precision. For the last two or three minutes he had been watching, and he had now made up his mind to walk forward.

"What's the trouble here?" he asked bluntly.

"Oh, clear off, Handy!" growled one of the others.

But Nipper saw no reason to be unpleasant.

"Castleton hasn't turned up, that's all," he replied. "We're a man short."

"No, you're not," said Handforth promptly. "What about me?"

"You!"

"I'm the proper member of the eleven, aren't I?" said Handforth. "I came along to see the match, but I don't mind obliging you by playing, if you like."

There was a short silence.

"Castleton might turn up any second now," muttered Reggie Pitt anxiously. "It would not be quite fair if Handy got the place and then Castleton turned up—"

"That's all right!" put in Handforth quickly. "If Castleton turns up, I'll give him my place. That's all right with you, isn't it?" he added, turning to the Grammarian skipper.

"As right as rain!" replied Hope. "Only, for goodness' sake, let's get started!"

"All right, then, Handy," said Nipper briskly. "You can play."

"Thanks!"

"Only, don't forget—as soon as Castleton comes you've got to give him your place," said Nipper. "It was your own suggestion —"

"Keep your hair on!" interrupted Handforth. "When I say a thing, I mean it. It's jolly lucky I was here. It only shows you that you can't trust these West House fat-heads!"

Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey glared, but some of the other Removites were grinning. Church and McClure, indeed, were looking happier than they had looked for days. Handforth seemed quite his old self again. The change in him was remarkable.

"Done it!" he muttered exultantly, as he moved aside, alone. "I'm safe now! I'm in the match, and I'll eat my boots if Castleton turns up!"

Nipper placed his field, and Harry Gresham was put on to bowl the first over. Gresham was the son of Sir Stewart Gresham—"Hat Trick Gresham"—the famous Hampshire amateur.

"Let them have all you know, Harry!" said Nipper cheerfully.

Handforth was placed out in the long field. He was better out there. In the slips he was too clumsy, too liable to let a ball get past him before he noticed it. But if he had plenty of time, and even if he had to run like mad, he was dead sure of himself at the crucial moment.

He was rather glad of his position, for he was comparatively alone. He could watch the game at a distance, and in the meantime he could privately gloat over his success.

The game started without any sensations. Gresham's first over was a maiden. The Grammarians paid very great respect to his bowling, and the particular batsman who was facing it made no attempt to hit out. Then the field changed over, and Jerry Dodd, the Australian junior, got busy.

Handforth watched it all as though he were a mere spectator. It seemed like a dream. Here he was, playing in the match, after all. And Alan Castleton was locked away in that box-room in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. What a joke it was!

But, somehow, the humour of it didn't seem to appeal to Handforth now. The thought of Castleton almost made him wince. Doubts were creeping into his mind!



## CHAPTER 19.

### Conscience!

AS far as the game was concerned, Handforth was sound asleep. He hadn't the faintest idea of what was going on. Now that he had got his place back in the eleven—at such a cost!—he was about as useful to the side as a wooden boundary-post.

The Grammarians were now beginning to wake up, and Hope, who was one of the opening batsmen, was scoring rather freely off Gresham. But, luckily for Handforth, the ball had not once come in his direction, and thus the leader of Study D was able to dream on undisturbed.

He saw nothing of the field of play. He was totally unaware of the white figures near the wicket. He could see only a dim figure disconsolately mooching about the gloom of the top box-room in the Ancient House.

Handforth was always sudden. It was characteristic of him to be so. And now, all in a moment, he realised that he had acted shabbily. He had played a cad's trick! The shock of it was so great that he was stunned. He was disgusted with himself.

At the time it had seemed a very smart dodge. He had congratulated himself gleefully. He had considered that he was a very bright fellow. But now that realisation had dawned upon him, he could have cried aloud in his remorse.

The fact was, Handforth's conscience had awakened.



And, as he was prone to exaggerate everything, he exaggerated this. He saw himself, not as a fellow who had played a rather questionable practical joke, but as a villain of the deepest dye. He was unutterably wicked; he was unfit to be touched. He was a cad—a hound!

The more Handforth thought about it the hotter he became.

After all, what had Castleton done to him? Nothing—absolutely nothing! He himself had thrown his place away, and Castleton had been appointed by Nipper. And then he, like a brute, had looked Castleton in that box-room. Now he was here, on the field—in Castleton's place. The very ground seemed to leer at Handforth, and to accuse him.

There was nothing wrong with Handforth at heart. He was obstinate, he was perverse, he was unreasonable. But, apart from these minor failings, he was as straight as a die.

He had been passing through a bad time lately, and his whole nature was embittered. True, it was his own fault, but that was neither here nor there. Handforth himself was big-hearted and generous. He was the soul of honour.

And so, now that he found his conscience at work, he was horrified. What had he done? What right had he to be here? He had got his place back in the eleven by fraud—by mean, contemptible trickery!

Clack!

One of the Grammarians had brought off a tremendous drive. The batsmen were running, and the spectators were shouting. The red leather hit the turf, and rolled—rolled with incredible speed. But Handforth stood there, unseeing, although the ball was speeding for the boundary within ten yards of him.

"Wake up, there!" shouted Nipper urgently.

Handforth didn't move. He stood there, with his hands behind his back, for all the world as though he had gone to sleep standing up.

"Handy!" went up a general yell. "Quick, man!"

With a violent start, Handforth came to himself. He had heard his name. He looked round in bewilderment. He caught a glimpse of the ball roiling past him. The batsmen were just starting on their third run. Then they came to a halt. The leather had reached the boundary—and Handforth could have saved it easily. A run clearly given away!

Handforth recovered the ball and sent it in. He was red with self-consciousness. With fresh dismay, he realised that he had failed badly. Not only had he obtained his place by fraud, but he was no good.

"Come in a bit nearer!" sang out Nipper. "Handy, I'm talking to you!"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "What's that?"

"Come in a bit nearer—that's right, over to your left! Good! That'll do!"

Within three minutes the Grammarian had fallen into the trap. He let drive at a ball

which he should have left severely alone. Up it rose—up, up!

"Oh, hang!" said Hope disgustedly.

He knew that he was out. At least, he ought to have been out. The ball was dropping, and then a frenzy of yells broke out. Handforth, who should have brought off the easiest of easy catches, wasn't taking the slightest notice. He hadn't moved from his position! And yet the leather was dropping within a couple of yards of him!

"Handy!" howled a general chorus. "Quick!"

Handforth started, and gazed round in bewilderment.

"Eh?" he panted. "Who the dickens—"  
Thud!

The ball dropped within a foot of where he was standing, and he stared stupidly up into the sky. A perfect roar of indignation went up from the Saints, while the Grammarians howled with laughter and delight.

"What on earth's the matter with you, Handy?" shouted Nipper, running up. "Man alive, are you playing in this game or not?"

"Sorry!" muttered Handforth, with a gulp. "I—I didn't see it!"

"Didn't see it!" repeated Nipper, aghast. "Aren't you paying any attention to the game?"

"No! I—I mean, yes!" muttered Handforth. "Sorry, Nipper! Don't make a fuss! I shall be all right now!"

He pulled himself together, and the game proceeded. But Handforth was having a fight. It was the utmost he could do to concentrate on the game. Continually his thoughts reverted to that prisoner in the box-room. Only by the sheerest exercise of will-power did he confine his attentions to the game.

And that miscatch of his was costly.

Hope had already scored 27 runs, and after he had been missed he went on to knock up a total of 63 off his own bat.

Putting Handforth into the team this afternoon was a very costly business.



## CHAPTER 20.

### The Reward of Trickery!

**T**WICE more during that memorable Grammarian innings did Handforth blunder.

He was absolutely useless. Once, when the batsmen ran recklessly, and when a quick return would have got one of them out, Handforth fumbled the ball. He only noticed it at the last second, picked it up, dropped it, and then hurled it wildly to the bowler, instead of to the wicket-keeper.

On a second occasion he missed another catch. Aroused by a general yell, when it was too late, he leapt upwards and sideways to meet the descending ball, and it slipped





Handforth should have caught the falling leather with the greatest of ease—but he was not paying the slightest attention to the game. . . . The ball fell within a foot of where he was standing, and a great roar of indignation went up from the St. Frank's players and supporters.

through his fingers. As it happened, it didn't matter much, for the batsman was clean bowled before he had made another run. But this made no difference to Handforth's atrocious exhibition.

"He's hopeless!" said Nipper angrily. "I wish to goodness I'd never played him! I've a good mind to send him off the field! Better play with only ten men than have a duffer like this!"

It was all the more surprising, because Handforth was generally as keen as mustard. He was one of the best fieldsmen in the Junior Eleven—always full of energy—always on tip-toe. He was famous for his prowess in reducing apparent boundary hits to mere twos.

His failure in the game only made him all the more wretched.

He knew that he had no right to be there. If only he could have undone his act of treachery, he would have been relieved. But he could do nothing now. He hoped against hope that Castleton would escape in some way, and would turn up; yet, in his heart, he knew that this could not be.

So he stood there, calling himself every name under the sun, bitterly reviling his own character. All these other fellows were right—they had been right from the very start. He was an obstinate, cantankerous rotter! He deserved their contempt and scorn.

It would have been far better if Handforth had kept these reflections until after the game. He was doing no good to himself or to anybody else by allowing them to fill his head, to the exclusion of all else.

When, at last, the Grammarian innings came to a close, they had knocked up a total of 163. But for Handforth's play, they would probably have been all out for well under the century.

Nipper approached him as they walked off the field—and, incidentally, so did nearly all the other members of the Eleven.

"It's all right—don't jaw at me!" said Handforth harshly, as the other players converged upon him. "I know what you're going to say, Nipper!"

"Well, that's saved me a lot of trouble," said Nipper. "What the dickens do you mean by it?"

"I'm sorry!" muttered Handforth awkwardly. "I—I made rather a mess of things."

"You did!" agreed Nipper. "Aren't you feeling well?"

"Yes, I'm all right."

"Then what do you mean by giving an impersonation of a stuffed dummy?"

"A fellow can be off his form, can't he?" burst out Handforth irritably. "I couldn't help it, I tell you! I know I made a mess of it, and I've admitted it. What else do you want? Shall I grovel at your feet, and ask for forgiveness?"



"Don't be an idiot!" said Nipper gruffly.

It was evident that Handforth was still in his "tantrums." As a matter of fact, Handforth wanted to express his regret for everything. But he couldn't bring himself to do it. He was wild with himself—infuriated by his own awkwardness. And now, instead of frankly coming out with everything that was in his mind, he turned on his heel and strode off.

It was only natural, perhaps, that some of the other members of the eleven should have dark suspicions in their minds.

"He's doing it on purpose!" said Fullwood angrily. "He's in such a rotten humour that he's deliberately mucking up the game!"

"Oh, cheese it, Fullwood!" protested Gresham.

"Man alive, can't you see it?" said Fullwood. "You know what a beast he's been all the week! Perverse and stubborn! He's taken a delight in opposing everybody. Hasn't he been saying that he would get his own back? And now, when he finds himself in the eleven again, he lets us all down!"

"By Jove, it looks jolly suspicious, I must say!" remarked Buster Boots. "But I never thought it of Handy!"

"Oh, I don't believe it!" said McClure. "Handy's been playing the goat, but he's not such a cad as that!"

However, the idea had taken root, and it grew. Handforth, mooning about alone, had never felt so miserable in his life. He couldn't face the others. When the Gram-marians took the field shortly afterwards, and Nipper and Boots went out to open the batting, he sat by himself, near the pavilion, biting his lip and watching the field with smouldering eyes.

He longed for some excuse to get away. He wanted to rush back to St. Frank's in his Austin, and to release Alan Castleton. But he knew that he couldn't go. He was wanted here. He had been told that he would be fourth man in, and he knew that the Remove was expecting him to make good. He would do it, too! Yes, by George! He would show these fellows that he wasn't such an absolute duffer!

It was his chance to kill that suspicion. If only he put up a good performance in the St. Frank's innings, nobody could possibly say that he had joined the eleven for the especial purpose of letting it down.

He waited in a fever of impatience. He wanted to be in—he wanted to be slogging at the leather. Yes, he would show them! He would go in, and make a century off his own bat! Then, perhaps, they would change in their rotten attitude towards him. He would get back his old popularity—and all this rotten business would be over. They might even forgive him for locking up Castleton if only he piled up a century.

Nipper had bad luck. After making a faultless twenty-two, he and Buster Boots had a misunderstanding. Boots ran for a single, and Nipper didn't. Boots yelled, and ran

back. For a fraction of a second, Nipper's bat was out of his crease, and off came the bails.

"Awfully sorry, old man!" said Boots earnestly.

"That's all right," smiled Nipper. "All in the game."

Gresham came in next, and he soon settled down. But Boots was out shortly afterwards, caught neatly in the slips.

With four men out, the total stood at 69, and as Handforth strode out of the pavilion, with his bat tucked under his arm, a hush fell over the spectators.

What sort of a showing would old Handy give?

**NEXT WEDNESDAY!**



## CHAPTER 21.

### Doubts!

**F**ATE played Handforth a very shabby trick. But perhaps it wasn't Fate at all. Perhaps it was only his conscience.

However, the facts were concrete enough. Just as Handforth was preparing to accept his first ball, he caught sight of a figure in flannels running madly towards the pavilion. He only saw this figure out of a corner of his eye.



"Castleton!" he gasped.

Of course, it wasn't Castleton at all—it was only one of the Grammarians. But Handforth was in such a state of conscience-stricken nervousness that he immediately jumped to the conclusion that Alan Castleton had arrived.

The leather came hissing down the pitch. Handforth struck wildly, almost when it was too late. The ball rose, soared easily back, and fell into the hands of the bowler.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

Handforth stood there, dazed. Out first ball! A shout of anger went up from the St.

## "HANDFORTH'S NEW CHUM!"

Handforth finds him in a country lane—a ragged lad named Bert Hicks. Handy takes pity on him and carts him off to St. Frank's, little suspecting that Bert is a thorough rascal; a foopad who tried to rob Irene earlier on in the day!

Even when the Removites tell Handy what his new found "friend" really is he refuses to credit it; and when they chuck Bert out of the school Handy thinks they're a lot of snobs.

He determines there and then to stick by Bert more than ever—which is just what that rascal wants!

You'll all enjoy next week's grand yarn, so make sure you don't miss it.

Look out, too, chums, for another full-o'-thrills instalment of "The Air Patrol."

## ORDER IN ADVANCE!

Frank's fellows. They had never seen anything so obvious in all their lives. Handforth had deliberately played the ball back into the bowler's hands! There wasn't any accident about it—he couldn't have done a thing like that by chance. He had thrown his wicket away on purpose.

But still he stood there, unable to realise the extent of this calamity. A second glance had assured him that the running figure was not Castleton. He looked round, and met the wicket keeper's eye.

"Sudden death!" said the wicket keeper, grinning.

"Eh? I—I— What's happened?"

"Come off it!" said the Grammarian.

"You're out, my son!"

Handforth walked back to the pavilion like

a fellow in a dream. He hardly saw the glares that were bestowed upon him. He did not hear the fierce mutterings. He walked off, and sat down in the shade of a tree.

How long he remained there, he did not know. He had lost even his desire to rush back to St. Frank's and release Castleton. What did it matter now? He had made the most hopeless mess of things. He had let his side down—and all because of his trickery and treachery.

Nobody came near him. Nobody wanted to. Even Nipper was beginning to have doubts. Had Handforth deliberately thrown his wicket away? Had he deliberately missed those catches? Had he offered to play so that he could purposely let the side down?

These were the doubts that assailed the Junior skipper. Church and McClure were equally tormented. Many of the others openly expressed their opinion that Handforth had "done the dirty" on them. There wasn't any question about it. The thing was obvious.

One thing was quite certain. If Castleton had been playing, the result of that match would have been very, very different. For Castleton was an excellent cricketer, and he could almost certainly have been relied upon for anything between fifteen and twenty runs.

And Fate ordained that St. Franks should be beaten by ten runs! Hard as the "tail" worked, they could not manage the trick. St. Frank's was all out for 153.

"This is all Handy's fault!" said Fullwood bitterly, as he stood talking to some other members of the team. "The rotter! He's made us lose the game!"

"Oh, dash it, there's no proof, you know," said Church uncomfortably.

"No proof!" echoed Fullwood. "Think of it! If he hadn't made such a mess of things while he was in the field, the Grammarians wouldn't have scored more than ninety, or a hundred. And if he had played his usual game he would have knocked up twenty, at least. That would have given us a handsome win. I tell you, he's lost the game for us."

And this could not be denied. Without any question, Handforth's dismal failure had brought about this defeat. As a result there were not many fellows in the Remove who felt kindly disposed towards him. They were, indeed, infuriated. They were after his blood. But by this time Handforth had gone.

Miserable, wretched and conscience-stricken, he had got into his Austin Seven, and he had driven away. He could not face the others. During the week, his troubles had been imaginary. But now they were very real!

When the eleven got back to St. Frank's there was a proper sensation. All those fellows who hadn't gone to watch the game were aghast when they heard the news. Handforth had let the side down! For some mysterious reason Castleton hadn't turned up, and Handforth had offered to play. And he had done this on purpose to ruin the game!



That was the story that swept round the Houses. Indeed, there was such a hubbub about it that a full Remove meeting was held in the Ancient House common-room.

One of the most surprising features of the whole affair was that Castleton had not been found. Nobody had seen him, and he certainly wasn't in the school. Yet, extraordinary enough, his bicycle had been found out in the Triangle, just where he had left it! This seemed to indicate that he had never started off for Bannington at all. Where, therefore, was he?

Not that Castleton was the centre of discussion on this sensational evening. Handforth filled the bill. He was the sole attraction. Everybody was talking about him, and everybody was making wild accusations.

"Look here, you fellows," said Nipper, at last. "Personally, I don't believe that Handforth would play such a rotten trick."

"Rats! He let us down on purpose!"

"Of course he did!"

"Anybody with an ounce of sense can see it!"

"Thanks!" said Nipper. "Perhaps I haven't got an ounce of sense. Anyhow, I know old Handy pretty well. He's been in a bad temper for some days past, and he's as awkward as a mule. But he's not dishonourable. He wouldn't be cad enough to miss catches, and get himself out for a duck, on purpose."

"But what about the evidence?" argued Fullwood. "I don't want to think these rotten things against Handforth. In fact, I can hardly believe them. But, hang it, you saw the game, Nipper. What did it look like to you?"

"It looked as though Handforth threw the game away," replied Nipper. "But you can't always judge by appearances. I suggest that we have Handforth in here, and we put it to him straight from the shoulder."

"He'll only deny it!" sneered Hubbard.

"If he's guilty, he'll admit it, and glory in it," said Nipper. "He's just in that mood. But if he assures us, on his honour, that he played rottenly without any unsporting intention, I shall take his word."

"By Jove, so will I!" said Fullwood. "That's a ripping idea of yours, Nipper!"

So Edward Oswald Handforth, much to his surprise and consternation, was dragged out of the seclusion of Study D—where he had gone to wallow in his own misery. He was escorted to the common-room, and there he found a crowd of stern-faced fellows.

"Cad!"

"Traitor!"

"Yah, you rotter!"

Nipper spun round.

"I say, stop that!" he said earnestly.

"Don't condemn the chap before he's been found guilty!"

The voices died down, and Handforth looked round him in bewilderment.

"What's all this?" he asked, aghast. "What do you mean, Nipper? What am I accused of?"

But before Nipper could speak, the door burst open, and a wild figure came rushing in.



## CHAPTER 22.

### The Trial!

CASTLETON!"

A shout went up from dozens of excited throats. Alan Castleton was the fellow who had just rushed in, and a few seconds later he was followed by Teddy Long. Castleton was dishevelled, dusty and inflamed; his face was red with concentrated fury, and his eyes were blazing.

"I want to find the chap who locked me in!" he panted passionately. "Where is he? By glory, I'll smash him—"

"Steady!" said Nipper, pushing forward. "Cool yourself, Castleton!"

"Where is he, I say?" shouted Castleton hoarsely. "The cad! The hound! The dirty—"

"Cheese it!" said Reggie Pitt, shaking Castleton's arm. "This won't do any good, you ass! What's the matter? Where have you been all the afternoon? Why didn't you turn up for the match?"

"Why didn't I turn up?" shouted Castleton. "Because I was locked up in the box-room!"

"What!"

"It's a fact, said Teddy Long eagerly. "I found him, you know! None of you fellows could do it, but I did. I found him!"

"Let's get to the bottom of this," said Nipper briskly. "You first, Castleton. What's happened?"

"I can tell you in a few words," said Castleton, controlling himself with difficulty. "I went up to that box-room in this House as you told me, Nipper. But while I was looking round for that bat, somebody closed the door on me, and locked it!"

"Great Scott!"

"I mean to say, how utterly poisonous!"

"Locked me in!" went on Castleton fiercely. "I hammered and yelled, but it made no difference. And I've been a prisoner up there until two minutes ago—"

"I found him!" chimed in Teddy Long triumphantly. "I—I happened to go up through one of the other box-rooms—"

"Nosing about, as usual, eh?" broke in Nipper curtly.

"Oh, I say—"

"That's enough from you, Long!" went on Nipper. "I suppose he heard your yells, Castleton, and let you out, eh?"

"Yes!" said the West House junior. "I nearly went mad up there—in that darkness! What about the match? How did you get on?"

"We lost," said Fullwood bluntly. "Handforth played in your place, and—"

"Handforth!"



It was not merely Alan Castleton who spoke, but almost everybody. The very mention of Handforth's name had brought the same idea into every mind.

Handforth! It was he who had taken Castleton's place—he who had played so rottenly! All eyes were turned upon the leader of Study D. And Handforth stood there, pale and trembling.

"Handforth!" said Nipper sharply. "Do you know anything about this?"

"About what?"

"Did you lock Castleton in that box-room?"

It was a direct question, and there was a hushed silence. Only for a second did Handforth hesitate. Then a defiant gleam came into his eyes, and he unconsciously squared his shoulders.

"Yes!" he said boldly.

"What!" went up a general shout.

"So you did it, eh?" panted Castleton, and clenched his fists. "You cad. I'm going to fight you, Handforth!"

"A fight—a fight!"

"Hurrah!"

"Keep quiet, you idiots!" shouted Nipper. "There's going to be no fight!"

"I tell you——" began Castleton.

"This is too serious!" said Nipper. "It's a Form affair. Handforth has admitted his guilt in front of us all, and the Form has got to deal with him. You needn't worry, Castleton. We shall see that he is adequately punished."

Handforth listened to everything in a kind of daze. On certain celebrated occasions he had taken part in affairs such as this. But one of the known cads had been the guilty party. A fellow such as Bernard Forrest, who had been expelled. Worms like Gulliver or Bell—

"Well, Handforth, what have you got to say?"

Nipper's voice seemed to come vaguely, and Handforth started.

"Nothing!" he muttered. "I've told you that I locked him in. Isn't that enough?"

"Hardly," said Nipper. "Why did you do it?"

"Because I was a fool," said Handforth bitterly; "because I was a jealous, crazy lunatic!"

They listened in astonishment. Here was a different tone!

"I acted on a sudden impulse," said Handforth, in a low voice. "I heard Castleton going upstairs, and I followed him. Then I slammed the door, and locked him in. He'd taken my place in the eleven, and I was wild. Unreasonably wild, I suppose—but, anyhow, I did it. What's the good of making a lot of talk about it? I'm not trying to excuse myself, am I?"

"Yes, and you did it so that you could mess up the game!" said De Valerie hotly.

"What!" shouted Handforth.

"Oh, don't try to be so innocent!" said Val. "Isn't it as clear as daylight? You locked Castleton up, and then you hurried to Bannington. You got your place in the

team, and you missed all the catches you could, and you returned the ball into the bowler's hand for a duck!"

A roar went up from everybody. The case against Handforth was blacker than ever. The knowledge that he had imprisoned Castleton was a piece of vital evidence.

"I don't believe it!" shouted Church desperately. "Handy wouldn't play a filthy trick like that!"

Handforth himself was staring round him in wonder—in horror.

"You—you don't think that, do you?" he panted, as he turned to Nipper. "You don't think that I locked that door on Castleton so that I could ruin the game? You don't think I'm capable of a hound's trick like that?"

Nipper looked him straight in the eye.

"Personally, I don't," he said quietly.

"But there are other fellows here, Handforth, who do. And you can't blame them, either. Now, look here! I want to ask you a straight question."

"What do you mean?" muttered Handforth.

"When you offered to play for the eleven at Bannington, did you mean to play honestly, with every intention of going in to win?" asked Nipper.

"Yes," said Handforth steadily. "Of course I did."

"Well, that's good enough for me," said Nipper, turning round to the others. "I believe him."

But, judging by the uproar that immediately followed, there were still a large number of fellows who didn't!



## CHAPTER 23.

### The Punishment!

EVERYBODY was speaking at once, except Handforth. He stood back, his lips compressed, his

eyes downcast. There was nothing very defiant about him now.

"It's all rot!" Hubbard was shouting, above the din. "If Handforth didn't play rotten deliberately, how can he account for his showing?"

"Yes, yes! That's one for him to answer!"

"Make him speak!"

Handforth raised his eyes and stared round.

"There's no need for anybody to make me speak," he said thickly. "I'll tell you why I played a rotten game. I was worried about Castleton."

"Oh! A likely story!"

"Tell us something else, you rotter!"

"Don't you believe me?" roared Handforth. "I tell you, I was sorry about Castleton. It wasn't till I got to Bannington that I realised what a cad I had been."

"Oh! You realised that?" sneered Gore-Pearce.



"Haven't we had enough of this?" asked Nipper grimly. "For goodness' sake, you fellows, be sensible! It's clear enough now. Handforth played so rottenly because he was conscience-stricken."

"I believe it!" nodded Reggie Pitt. "Now I can understand why he was looking so worried, so miserable. Dash it, you chaps, you saw him, too. He wasn't gloating over the business, was he? Anybody with half an eye could see that he was abstracted."

"He was conscience-stricken," repeated Nipper. "He knew that he had done a caddish act, and, after all, it was like him to regret it. And so he missed those catches, and made a mess of the whole game generally."

The Form had cooled down somewhat, and Nipper proceeded.

"Of course, we've got to do something," he said. "We can't let the matter rest here. Handforth played a particularly dirty trick on Castleton, and, although he's said he's sorry for it, that doesn't wipe it out. He's got to be punished."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's make him run the gauntlet!"

"We'll do it properly!" shouted Nipper. "We'll put it to the vote, and he'll be punished accordingly."

Taking the vote was a long, confused business. Everybody wanted some different form of punishment, and everybody spoke at once. In the end, however, the verdict was given. The vote, indeed, was practically solid. The Remove decided that Edward Oswald Handforth should be made to run the gauntlet, and then he was to be sent to Coventry. His existence was to be ignored by every fellow in the Remove.

And so the downfall of Handforth was complete.

A brief week earlier he had been one of the "heads" of the Form. He had been one of the most popular fellows in the Junior School. Now he was scorned and despised. He was jeered at by the cads. He was less than the dust.

The ordeal of running the gauntlet was always a grim sort of business.

On this particular occasion the Form went into it with deadly gravity. Between lines of juniors, all of them armed with knotted handkerchiefs, Handforth was compelled to run. On he stumbled, and showers of blows were rained upon him.

Bewildered, blinded, dazed, he ran on between those lines. It seemed endless. It was a nightmare. And, accompanying the blows, were jeers and shouts of derision.

When at last Handforth found himself free, he was out in the Triangle, under the stars. He was sore in every limb. He could hardly see straight. He was dazed, stunned, and he was not far from exhaustion. Yet during the whole of that ordeal not a single sound had escaped his lips. Not a cry had he uttered.

Now, out in the cool evening, he was slowly recovering. But his bodily hurts

were as nothing compared to the deep hurt that was within him.

His good name had gone. He was an outcast—scorned and despised. It was this thought which caused Handforth more agony than all his physical hurts.

The Remove itself went on as usual, and the excitement gradually died down.

Handforth had been punished. The thing was over, and he was in Coventry. Anybody found speaking to him would be unmercifully ragged. From that minute onwards the leader of Study D was an outcast—shunned by the Form!

His popularity was a thing of the past. Now he was nothing but an object of derision—a fellow to be ignored.

And now, when it was too late, Handforth could see his own faults! That was the irony of the whole situation. He knew at last that he was to blame. He could see everything with crystal clarity now. If only he hadn't acted the fool, all might have been well with him.

Yet this mood of his did not last for long.

Long before that memorable evening was over, Handforth was arrogant again. He was steeling himself. The Remove had rejected him—had thrown him out. Very well! He would show the Remove that he could get on alone! What did he care? Hang them all!

But this new arrogance of Handforth's was a very theatrical business. In his heart he knew well enough that it was put on. He was miserable, unutterably wretched, but he tried to fool himself into believing that he didn't care. It was all very pitiful—all tragic.

The mighty had fallen, and was as nothing.

That night, when Handforth went to bed, he found Church and McClure in the process of shifting their beds to another dormitory. They realised that, as Handy was in Coventry, it would be better for all concerned if they went somewhere else. Handforth himself had been expecting something of the sort, but now that it had come to pass it gave him a jolt; it pained him. For it reminded him only too vividly that he was now a mere nonentity in the Remove, that he was shunned by all his Form-mates.

Ah, well, he told himself bitterly, it was only what he deserved!

Then in the next breath he vowed that he didn't care a jot! He had often wanted to have a dormitory to himself and now was the chance. He didn't care about the Remove at all. He could get along by himself quite well, thank you!

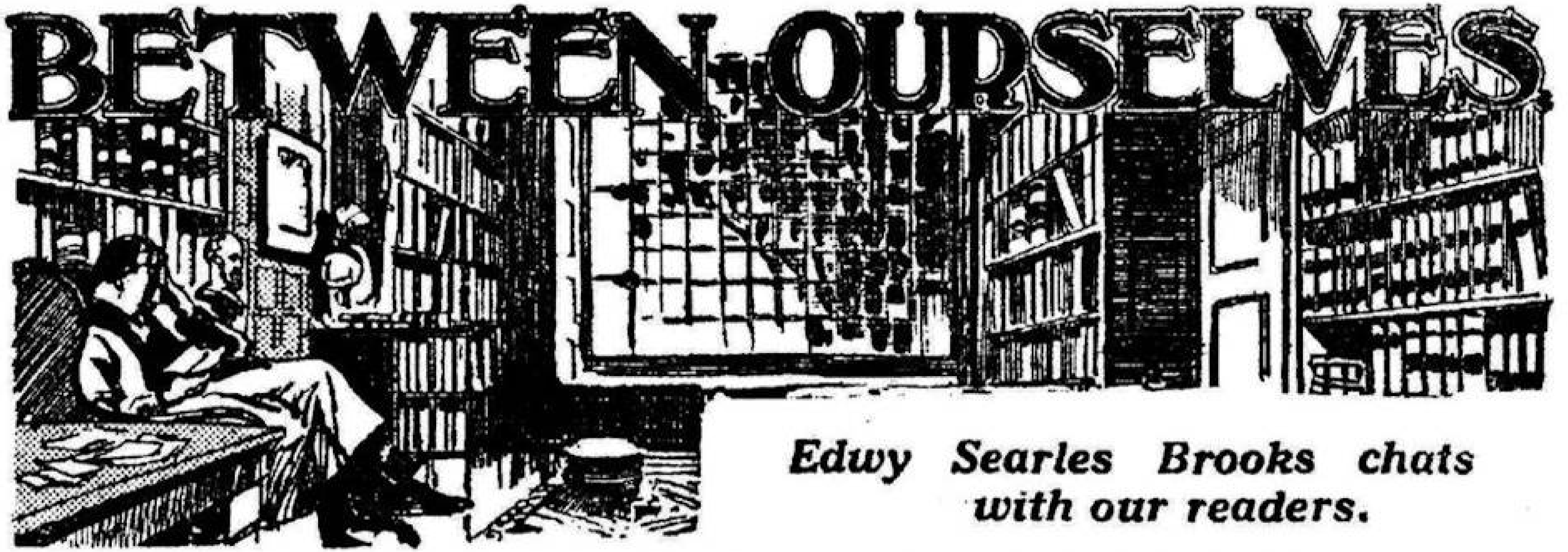
Poor old Handy was in torment. His hour of downfall had come.

Would he be strong enough to win back his good name?

THE END.

(The next yarn in this grand series is entitled, "Handforth's New Chum!" Look out for it next Wednesday, and if you haven't given your newsagent a regular order for the "N.L.L." do so now!)





**Edwy Searles Brooks chats  
with our readers.**

**Y**OU put the truth very nicely—Douglas Axe\* (Belton)—when you state your conviction that I am indeed desirous of “obtaining a closer and more intimate association” between my readers and myself, for to arrive at that happy state of affairs is the main object of these columns. And thanks for your helpful suggestions for possible use in future St. Frank’s yarns.

Of course you may become “one of my writers”—Dorothy M. Lawrence\* (Tasmania)—and I only hope you’ll write me every week, especially as you write so sensibly and in such a beautiful fist. And please go on thinking that in writing to me you are writing to “a distant chum,” because that’s exactly the truth. I shall look forward to receiving your photo, as promised. No, I do not think you “a sticky beak” for asking my age. But I think I’ll leave you to judge it from my exchange photograph when you get it. I shall always remember this sentence in your letter: “I have passed all my books on, and all tell me that they have never read any book as good as yours.” Yes, I shall always remember that, just because it proves what a true little loyalist you are. Yes, Dorothy, I’m delighted to tell you that I have countless girl correspondents, and I value their letters equally with those from boys and adults.

The first number of “The Nelson Lee Library”—Joe Bigley (Dublin)—was published under date June 12th, 1915, and the title was—“The Mystery of Limehouse Reach.” I’m so glad to know you’ve “spent many happy hours with the boys of St. Frank’s.” Yes, a “stickyback” photo of yourself will do—as long as the back’s not too sticky. Besides, you can always send me on a better picture of yourself afterwards if you feel you want to equalise the bargain.

Hallo, old-timer—James E. Tweed\* (Peak Crossing, Queensland)—I’m jolly pleased to hear from you. So you’ve read the Old Paper from No. 51, Old Series, and you “would not be without them now for anything,” eh? Well, that’s fine hearing, and

no mistake! And I should say your record wants a bit of beating. You’ve been staunch to Our Paper for nearly twelve years—for No. 51 was published under Date May 27th, 1916—and still you hope that I shall continue writing the St. Frank’s stories for “a good many more years.” I hope so, too, Jimmy, old man.

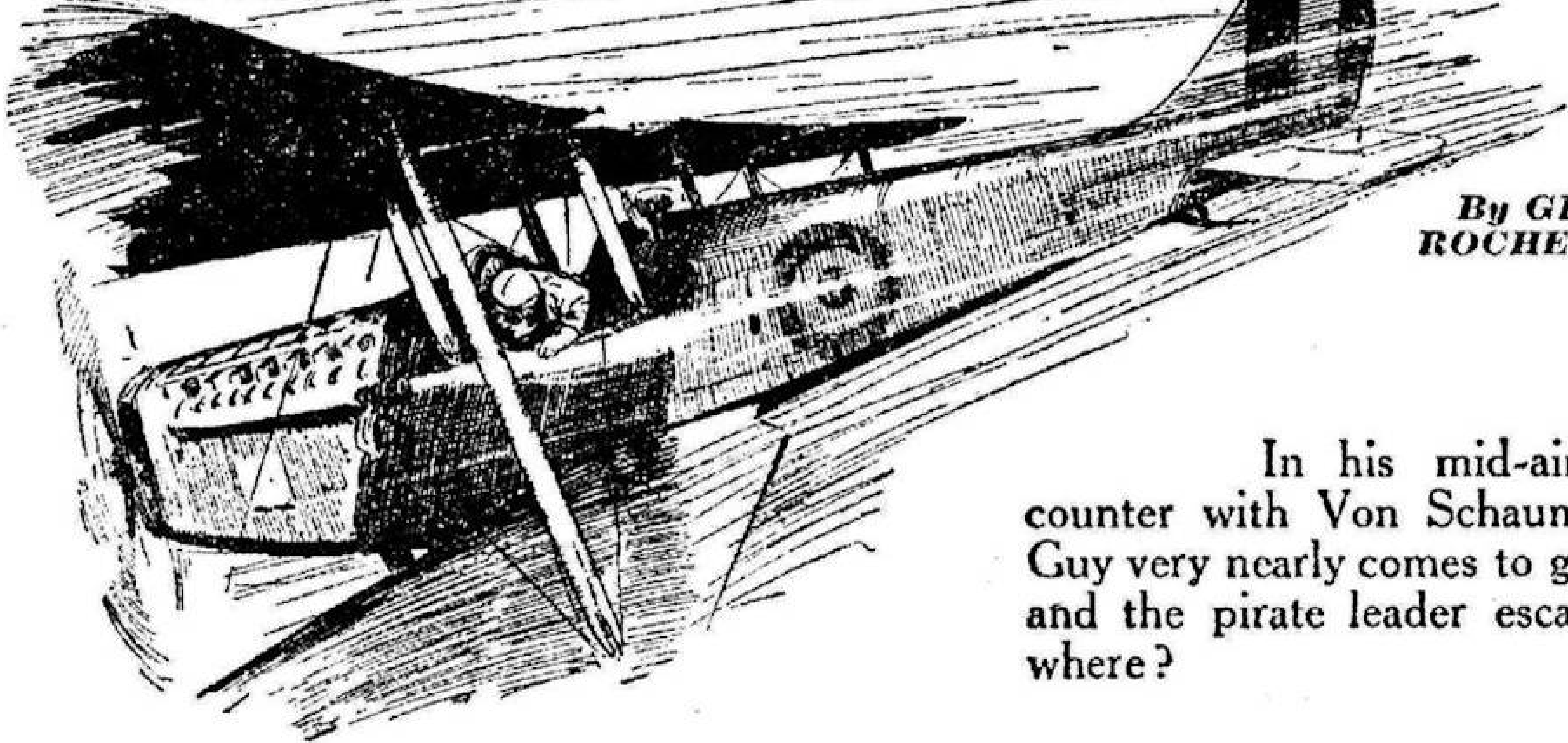
Very good of you—E. A. Mittelholzer\*\* (New Amsterdam, British Guiana)—to send me that sketch of Kaieteur and so much useful information about British Guiana, wrapped up in such a nice form. And if I can visualise a stirring St. Frank’s holiday series in your Colony, I will certainly entertain it—especially if there are other indications (I’ve already had many) that such a setting would be popular. I cannot, of course, visit every country I write about, and when readers like you—E. A. M.—shovel in first-hand information regarding the countries in which you reside, it is very, very acceptable.

I’ll tell you—F. Sollom (Stoke-on-Trent)—why the two Application Forms which are necessary for joining the St. Frank’s League won’t do unless they are both of the same date. As there is no entry fee of any kind (to cover the cost of enrolment) it is necessary that a little service, for the good of the Old Paper, should take its place. So all League joiners are expected to lay out an extra twopence, not only to get the necessary duplicate Application Form, but also for the express purpose of introducing the copy from which it is taken to a prospective new reader. You don’t *secure* the new reader—Our Paper *itself* is looked to to do that. And, if your enthusiasm has reached the point of wanting to join the League, it must surely also be strong enough for you to *want* to render the whole concern this little service



*Missing Death by a Hair's-breadth!*

# THE AIR PATROL!



By GEO. E.  
ROCHESTER

In his mid-air encounter with Von Schaumberg, Guy very nearly comes to grief—and the pirate leader escapes—where?

## 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 Van Schaumberg, on his part, has vowed vengeance against Guy for killing one of his confederates. Guy obtains a roving commission, and, discovering the pirates' headquarters, succeeds in capturing Von Schaumberg. The ranger takes his

prisoner to Vladmir, a small whaling station, and leaves the pirate leader in the cells in charge of a man named Stefansen. When Guy returns to Vladmir, he finds that Stefansen has been murdered and that Von Schaumberg has been released by Vorzetzen, the pirate leader's chief lieutenant. They take refuge in an out-of-the-way place named Zedrich, and there Von Schaumberg tells his companion that soon he will "strike in a manner which will startle the world!" Later the air pirate leader is preparing a seaplane in readiness for flying away when he hears a faint drone in the distance. Is it Guy coming along with the rangers in pursuit of Von Schaumberg?

(Now read on.)

## The Unseen Enemy!

**W**ITH an oath, Von Schaumberg sprang for the door of the hut. It crashed open beneath his hand, and in two strides he crossed the floor to the sleeping Vorzetzen.

"Wake up, man!" he roared, shaking his lieutenant savagely. "Wake up!"

Vorzetzen stirred into instant wakefulness. He sat up and, with one glance at his chief's face, he scrambled to his feet.

"What's happened—what's wrong?" he demanded.

"The worst's happened — maybe!" shouted Von Schaumberg. "Machines are coming up from south'ards!"

Vorzetzen leapt for the peg where his flying kit was hanging.

"It can't be the rangers!" he snapped.

"I hope it is!" snarled Von Schaum-

berg. "I hope it's that mad fool, Howard—alone!"

The next instant he and Vorzetzen were running towards the hangar. The drone of the oncoming machines was plainly audible now, but they were not visible in the grey light of the breaking dawn.

"There's more than one!" panted Vorzetzen. "They may be our machines from the base!"

"We'll let the machine down the runway, anyhow, and keep under the cockpit tarpaulin covers," replied Von Schaumberg. "Be ready to take off when I give the word. I'll risk anything to get that dog, Howard."

Reaching the hangar they leapt for the fuselage; Vorzetzen scrambling into the forward cockpit; Von Schaumberg sprawling his bulk into the rear one.



"Ready?" he snapped.

"Yes."

He leant downwards and unhitched the winch rope. Slowly the seaplane began to move forward down the runway, emerging from the hangar like some black, sinister bird of prey.

Almost without a sound it slid down the runway and glided across the still waters of the creek, till it gradually lost way and lay motionless. Crouched in their cockpits, the two men pulled the tarpaulin covers across, and the black seaplane lay on the water as though deserted.

The roar of the approaching machines was very loud now. Then out of the mists of early morning they came, flying low at a terrific speed.

"Three of them!" muttered Von Schaumberg, peering out from below his tarpaulin. "And not mine, confound them!"

At five hundred feet the three single-seater scouts roared over the lone hangar, banked, and throttled down their engines for a landing on the creek.

Von Schaumberg's hand crept to his flying coat pocket and slid upwards, an automatic in its grip. Vorzetzen's fingers were on the self-starter, his other hand hovering over the throttle.

Down, down, glided the scouts, their pilots peering over cockpit sides at the silent seaplane resting below them on the water. Then the first one landed on the creek, and the pilot gave it the throttle for a burst, which brought it surging in towards the pirate plane. Von Schaumberg, squinting from beneath the tarpaulin, which was raised but an inch, held his breath. The barrel of his squat automatic was resting on the cockpit edge.

The pilot of the scout kicked on rudder, which brought him swinging in alongside. As his machine lost way he pushed up his goggles and turned in his seat towards the pirate seaplane.

Wild triumph leapt into Von Schaumberg's eyes.

"It's Howard!" he muttered, and his finger pressed steadily on the trigger of his gun!

### The Take-Off!

**G**UY caught the faint movement of the tarpaulin beneath which Von Schaumberg was crouched. He jerked forward in his seat, his fingers yanking open the throttle.

Bang!

Von Schaumberg's automatic barked viciously, and a thin wisp of smoke drifted

slowly upwards from the barrel mouth. The bullet whined between Guy's head and the leather head-rest at the back of the cockpit.

Bang!

Von Schaumberg fired again, but the sound of the shot was drowned in the shattering roar of the ranger's engine, as it picked up and took the scout surging ahead.

Thrusting aside the tarpaulin, Von Schaumberg leapt to his feet. The automatic clattered unheeded to the floor of the cockpit as he swung savagely on his Lewis gun.

"Take off, Vorzetzen!" he screamed. "Take off, durn you!"

Rat-tat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat-tat!

The Lewis gun, swinging on its well-greased mounting, was belching blood-red flame and tracer bullets. The pirate leader could not fire at Guy, for his own starboard wings, struts and flying-wires were between him and the ranger's machine. So, shouting and screaming at Vorzetzen to take off, he directed his fire at the two remaining scouts, which had, by now, landed on the water.

Then the sharp staccato rattle of the gun was lost in the thunder of the engine as Vorzetzen switched on and jerked open the throttle. As the black pirate seaplane commenced to skim across the waters of the creek, Vorzetzen kicked on sharp rudder. The seaplane swerved with a jerk, which sent its lower starboard plane dipping wildly in the waters of the creek. But the movement had served to alter its course away from where Guy was swinging, so as to bring his synchronised gun to bear on the pirate seaplane.

Vorzetzen pulled on his control stick. The pirate seaplane rose a foot into the air, then struck the water heavily. Again Vorzetzen pulled on the stick. His eyes were grim, his face set and rigid. He knew he had not a moment to spare in that take-off.

Behind him, Guy was already swinging on his tail. One of the other scouts was burning furiously. A burst of magnesium bullets from Von Schaumberg's Lewis gun had whanged through its petrol tank. The pilot was overboard, swimming to the remaining scout, whose pilot was lying huddled across the controls.

Only one of the three pursuers was now in action—and that was Guy. If Vorzetzen feared any man in the air, he feared that ranger. He knew that it was the very suddenness, the savage viciousness of Von Schaumberg's unexpected attack, which had brought them through safely so far.



He kept the control stick back. The engine was thundering at full revolutions. Then the waters of the creek dropped away from beneath him and the pirate plane was in the air. Back—back—Vorzetzen kept the control stick, climbing as steeply as he dared. A thousand feet above him hung the heavy, pall-like cloud-bank. If he could make that, he would be safe.

He ventured a quick glance downwards. The ranger's machine was taking the air, coming up after him at a speed as great as his own!

### Into the Clouds!

“**C**OME on—come on, you fool!” Von Schaumberg was almost mad in that moment—mad with a maniacal frenzy. He shouted, shaking a great fist at the pursuing machine. He was winning through. He'd shown them he wasn't a beaten man yet. But it was Howard he wanted—Howard, who had brought disaster to him.

His screams and curses were lost in the thunder of the engines as the machines went up in that terrific climb.

Guy's hand closed on the trigger of his synchronised gun. Above the roar of his powerful rotary engine sounded the rattle of the whirling cartridges, and hot flame licked back almost to the cockpit windshield.

Von Schaumberg slewed round his gun till it was pointing dead over his tail. He braced himself against the gun mounting, and his huge hand curled round the spade-grip of the gun in a vice-like clutch.

Rat-tat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat-tat!

Vorzetzen turned quickly in his cockpit as the bursts from the Lewis gun sounded faintly in his ears. Then he was on his feet, holding the control stick as best he could as he leant backwards, shouting wildly:

“Stop it—you durned fool! Stop it!”

He had seen the danger that was not apparent to the half-crazed Von Schaumberg. The bullets from the Lewis gun were whipping within inches of the rudder controls of the pirate machine, as Von Schaumberg aimed at the scout coming up on his tail.

But Von Schaumberg paid no heed. It is doubtful if he heard. With thick lips asnarl in his bearded face, he pumped one ammunition drum empty, then, with hysterical haste, he whipped it off, groping in the rack for a full one.

Vorzetzen saw his opportunity and took it. He flattened out, then banked wildly, climbing on a corkscrew turn.

Guy was overhauling the pirate quickly now. Bullets from his synchronised gun ripped upwards through the fuselage of the machine above him. But Vorzetzen, fine pilot that he was, twisted and turned at a speed made only possible by the powerful engine with which the pirate plane was fitted. And always he crept higher and higher. Five hundred feet were registered on the altimeter—six hundred—six hundred and fifty.

The cloud-bank overhead was very close now. If only he could reach it.

Rat-tat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat-tat!

Von Schaumberg had fixed a new ammunition drum and was firing again, swinging his gun on its mounting as Vorzetzen went upwards on that corkscrew climb.

Once more Vorzetzen turned in his seat. He saw the ranger hanging grimly on, very close now. A burst of bullets from the synchronised gun of the scout tore through the fabric of his cockpit, and he felt a sudden numbing pain in his leg.

He knew then that he would never make the cloud-bank. The ranger was too close. He watched—watched—his head turned, his goggled eyes fixed on the pursuing machine.

Then suddenly he kicked his rudder bar straight, whipped forward the control, and, as the machine dived, he kicked on rudder again, bringing it round with a jerk, which sent him sagging against the cockpit side.

He roared past Guy's machine, and the boy's gun was useless then. For the synchronised gun would only fire over the nose of the machine. Von Schaumberg saw his chance. He had a vision of the ranger snapping forward the control stick for a dive, then the Lewis gun roared into life.

The range was too short to register a miss. A burst of tracer magnesium bullets whanged into Guy's petrol tank, and raked the scout from propeller boss to rudder controls.

Vorzetzen pulled hard on his control stick and went upwards in a zoom. Back—back—he kept the stick till he was at the top of the loop. Then, whipping the stick across, he rolled level in a perfect Immelman turn.

Von Schaumberg released his gun, and it swung wildly on its mounting. He whirled on Vorzetzen, who was peering downwards from the forward cockpit.

“We've got him—got the dog!” he roared triumphantly.

Then he laughed aloud. For Guy's machine was spinning seawards, enveloped



in flames and shrouded in thick, black, swirling smoke!

Vorzetzen turned to his controls again. A thin, wraith-like wisp of cloud floated past his lower planes. He pulled gently on the control stick. The nose of the pirate seaplane rose.

Then slowly the machine merged with, and was swallowed up in, the heavy bank of clouds.

### In An Ice-cold Sea!

**G**UY leapt to his feet in the flaming cockpit as his machine took the downward plunge. He was momentarily protected from the flames by the thick leather of his flying kit.

Sprawling himself on to the fuselage behind the cockpit, he crouched for the fractional part of a second. And, in that instant of time, he was thankful indeed that Major Boyd had insisted upon parachute harness being attached by all pilots under his command.

The engine, dashboard and cockpit were by now enveloped in a roaring holocaust of flame, which licked at him hungrily. Then, with one glance at the grey waters rushing up to meet him, the ranger leapt far outboards.

He turned a complete somersault in the air, then plunged downwards like a stone. His finger groped for, and crooked in the rip-cord of the parachute. He tugged, and, as the silken fabric opened out above him, he felt the lift of the harness straps.

Above him was the spinning, flaming mass of the scout. There was little wind to take the parachute and carry it away

from the course of the burning machine. Guy pulled on the shrouds of his parachute with gloved hand, spilling the wind out of the envelope. His fall was accelerated and, when he released the pressure and looked up, he saw the flaming seaplane was being carried, of its own volition, away from the parachute.



Down, down, dropped Guy, and when he was a few feet from the water he pulled hard on the strap, releasing the harness of the parachute.

The water was very close, less than a hundred feet now. The ranger waited, his finger on the harness release strap. He did not want to plunge into the sea attached to the parachute, for he knew only too well the peril of the big silken fabric settling on the water at the spot where he would come up.

At twenty feet he pulled hard on the



strap, releasing the harness. The fabric wilted as it lost his weight, and, closing up, drifted quietly down to the sea. Guy fell feet first into the water. Down and down he went, paralysed in every nerve by the sudden immersion in the icy-cold water.

His lungs were almost bursting when he rose to the surface. Yards away lay the white silken fabric of the parachute. A cloud of mingled smoke and steam showed where the ruins of the seaplane lay, a charred and still burning mass on the water.

Drawing great gulping breaths into his tortured lungs, Guy trod water whilst he struggled to divest himself of his heavy flying-kit. Already the bitter cold was beginning to strike through to his very bones.

He slipped out of his flying-coat and struck out for the shore, half a mile away. But he knew he could never make it in that icy-cold sea, handicapped as he was with heavy, saturated clothing. He struggled on gamely, almost mechanically. One thought was uppermost in his mind. He must not stop, however great the temptation. He must keep going—must keep the blood circulating in his already freezing body.

His legs began to feel curiously heavy; prelude to the fatal numbness which would mean the end. He tried to see the land through his splashed goggles, but the attempt was hopeless. He found himself thinking in a curiously detached way of Von Schaumberg. He had triumphed in the end then, had Von Schaumberg. Ah, well, they'd get him yet, would the rangers. His power was broken, and that was the main thing.

The ranger was about all in. It was more than an effort now to keep his limbs moving. There was a roaring in his ears, and he seemed to be swimming on and on through impenetrable blackness.

The roaring increased till it thundered in his ears. This was the end then.

He bumped against something—something hard and solid. Strangely, the roaring died away and there impinged on his hearing a voice, so faint, so very far away.

"Steady, Howard! I've got you!"

Ass! It was that ass Henderson, who had accompanied him and Major Boyd on the rounding up of Von Schaumberg at Zedrich.

"Coming, Howard—coming!"

There he was again. What the dickens did he mean by it? How could he be coming when he was way back somewhere in the creek?

Then strong hands gripped Guy by the collar of his tunic.

### A Great Tradition!

**S** PRAWLED on the float of Henderson's machine, Guy looked up into the anxious face of Henderson.

"How the thump did you get here?" he demanded.

"I brought the old bus along when I saw you coming down," replied Henderson. "But come on, man, you've got to get those things off!"

"Never mind that!" said Guy doggedly. "What happened? I thought I saw you in flames on the creek before I took off?"

"So you did. I swam across to Major Boyd's bus. This is it."

"And where's the major?"

"I got him ashore," replied Henderson, his face grave. "He's badly hit."

"Well"—Guy rose groggily to his feet and clutched at one of the bracing rods of the undercarriage for support—"it's Von Schaumberg's turn to laugh. But it's all in the luck of the game!"

"Yes."—Henderson nodded. "But I'm sorry, old man, that I couldn't get off in time to lend you a hand. The whole dashed strafe was over before I got the major ashore, and there wasn't room in the cockpit for both of us."

"Don't you worry about that!" replied Guy. "I'm jolly thankful you were on the spot to fish me out of the water. Let's get ashore. The major's badly hit, you say?"

"Yes, I've put him in a hut, which apparently those pirates have used as living quarters whilst they've been here. You'll have to stay with him whilst I hop off, pick up the Eagle, and bring back an ambulance 'plane."

"I'll go!" volunteered Guy.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," retorted Henderson. "My hat, man, it'll take hours for your kit to dry. You'll have to wrap yourself in a blanket and hug the stove!"

"Yes, like a blessed old woman!" replied Guy. "I ought to be a great success in the rôle!"

But there was no bitterness in his voice. Von Schaumberg had shot him down in flames, but, as Guy had said, it was all in the luck of the game, and he felt no increased animosity towards Von Schaumberg for that.

For such is the tradition of Britain's fighting airmen. Who will ever forget that day over the battlefields of France when the Allies' finest flying ace, Captain



Ball, encountered the pick of Germany's fighting pilots, Baron Richtofen?

They left their respective squadrons and went forward to do battle alone, like two gladiators of old.

And, whilst their squadrons watched, those two great aces fought out their duel high above the battlefield. For thirty minutes they dived, side-slipped and rolled, and neither had registered a fatal hit.

Then it was that Captain Ball's gun jammed, and Baron Richtofen ran out of cartridges. It seemed as though they both realised that the fight was ended.

Circling widely they came back into line. Wing-tip to wing-tip they flew, and each pilot gravely saluted the other. Then, banking, they went earthwards towards their respective aerodromes.

Captain Ball, of immortal memory. There came an evening in France when he flew into the heart of a golden sunset never to return. But the tradition he did so much to found will never die.

Clambering up to the cockpit, with Guy braced against the undercarriage, Henderson gave the scout the throttle and surged shorewards.

As the floats touched the bank Guy leapt ashore, and, leaving Henderson to moor the machine, ran towards the hut where the wounded major lay.

### Toll of the Air!

"IS that you, Howard?"

Major Boyd, lying on the low camp-bed against the wall, weakly turned his head towards Guy, as the boy entered the hut.

"Yes, sir," replied Guy, crossing the floor and bending over the wounded man. "I'm sorry you've been pipped, sir."

He knew the words sounded futile, but there seemed so little else he could say. His heart sank as he gazed at the drawn and bloodless face of the major, for he knew then that the man was indeed sorely wounded.

"Tell me, Howard"—the voice was very faint—"how did the fight go? Did—did he get away?"

"Yes, sir."

Briefly Guy sketched what had happened, and Major Boyd nodded. A faint smile played round his bloodless lips.

"His turn, lad!" he whispered. "But—we will get him yet!"

Henderson came striding into the hut.

"Look here, Howard," he said gruffly, "get those wet clothes off, you ass."

Then, crossing the floor to where the major lay, he said gently:

"I'm going now, sir. I'll be as quick as I can, and I'll be back before night-fall."

He groped on the blanket of the bed for the major's hand, pressed it, then turned sharp about with a husky:

"Good-bye, sir!"

Guy avoided his gaze, for he knew the tragedy in Henderson's eyes in that moment.

"Look after him, Howard, old man!"

"Yes."

That was all. The next minute Henderson was running towards his machine. There came a shattering roar as he switched on his engine, then it died slowly away as he skimmed across the water and, taking the air in a long upward glide, thundered towards the south.

Slowly the day wore on. Guy never stirred from the major's bedside, except to replenish the tin of cold water from which he continually bathed the fevered brow.

The wounded man tossed and turned in delirium, speaking now of the war days in France, now of his boy at school in distant England.

It was when the hut was darkening and the shades of night were creeping in, that the delirium left him. His eyes flickered open, and he lay staring upwards at the low timber ceiling for a few moments, as though collecting his thoughts.

Then weakly he turned his head.

"Still here, Howard?" he whispered.

"Yes, sir," replied Guy, and leant forward to rearrange the hard pillow.

"Howard—pencil and paper—in my tunic pocket!"

Guy took a pencil and notebook from the major's pocket, and put them into the man's shaking hands.

"Lift me up, lad."

Slipping his arm round the wounded man's shoulders, Guy raised him to a sitting posture. Then, slowly, laboriously, in the semi-darkness, Major Boyd wrote. The task was completed at length, and, weakly tearing the written page from his notebook, he handed it to Guy.

"For my boy!" he said haltingly. "You will see—he get's it, lad?"

"I will, sir," replied the ranger, striving desperately to hide the quiver in his voice.

Gently he lowered the major to the pillow, and placed the treasured message in his pocket-book, where it would be safe till he could deliver it in person.

Major Boyd lay quite still for a few

(Continued on page 44.)



# HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

## ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 96.

<b>SECTION A</b>	<b>READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.</b> 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.
<b>SECTION B</b>	<b>MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.</b> 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.
<b>SECTION C</b>	<b>NEW READER'S DECLARATION.</b> 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 ½d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

### A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.

### 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.

## When the Summer Comes.

**E**VERYBODY is preparing for the summer season, and quite right, too. Edwy Searles Brooks is mighty keen on the summer game, as on most sports. He looks every inch of him a cricketer. Look out for some excellent yarns on the summer game.

Talking about cricket, I have just opened a letter from an enthusiast of the Midlands, who has a thriving cricket club in tow. He was told he would make nothing of the business in his part, but he seems to have socked this cold-water merchant one, and the crier-down changed his opinion. The budget of the club is enclosed in his very interesting letter. The committee and their friends and sympathisers sold scent cards, and netted enough to buy all equipment and etceteras. Not a bad wheeze.

## A Stout Fellow.

Why worry about being fat? I feel certain that a letter from a Nelson Leeite, asking how he is to get slim, was inspired by some ass of a critic who made uncalled-for comments on my correspondent's waist-line. You know how it is. The fellow who is plump and jolly suddenly meets a pal who says he ought to do something about his size. Prior to that unfortunate meeting, the chubby chap was happy as the day was long.

Fat individuals have a big pull. They get the lion's share of what good temper is going. They can laugh with the best. In a measure their cheery temperament has helped them to put on weight. It is the mean-minded worrier—a fellow of the Pycraft type at St. Frank's—who gets meagre in his flesh coverings. Seriously, it does not matter being fat.

There are people who will hoot out silly, obvious things. They see a thin man, and they rudely call him a bag of bones; if they meet a fat one, they urge him to go on a very plain diet for reduction purposes. Such commentators are very common indeed, and should be squelched or advised to go and boil their stupid heads—that or a regimen of coke.

## A Livestock Hobbyist.

Jack Scott, of Shrewsbury, tells me he has been dotting on the N.L.L. for years. Inci-

dentally he mentions his pet hobby, which is keeping animals, from dogs to tortoises. He had a beautiful silver carp which flourished for five years, and then died of old age after well-spent days.

By the way, I have several letters containing questions concerning keeping an aquarium from correspondents who have found the fish peter out, unlike the case of the above-mentioned silver beauty. This is probably because the water did not contain growing weed, or for the reason that a trickle of fresh soft water was not introduced into the tank. There must be more or less natural conditions.

The reader in Salop has an Airedale—he is very fond of dogs, the same as most of us—and he keeps rabbits and guinea-pigs, and these prosper like one o'clock on daily green-stuff, a nibble of hay, bran occasionally, and, as a special treat, bread and milk.

## A Life on the Ocean Waves.

A question that might have been a poser comes from Southampton. The writer says that he is on top at school, and for long past he has had a notion of the ocean. But his mother is dead against his going to sea. What

(Continued overleaf.)

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**OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW!**

(Continued from previous page.)

is he to do about it? Shall he take the job on land which is offered, or stick out for the Merchant Service? He points out that he does not want to disappoint his mother. The answer to his query lies in that last remark. No doubt it is a grand thing to have an ambition, and to stick to it like glue. But let's suppose there is a duty to be done that runs right counter to this ambition? A fellow's place is where he can carry on to the best advantage for others as well as self. He can ask the umpire, or a thousand umpires, what course he shall take, but he knows the real reply all the time. What a thundering crowd of pet ambitions every manjack of us has to chuck overboard! It's all in the game.

**A Pageant of Empire.**

Those of you who are interested in acting will like to hear of a topping little playlet, "A PAGEANT OF EMPIRE," with a stirring song, which can be obtained from Samuel French, Ltd., 25, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W., price one shilling per copy, postage one penny.

There are parts for sixteen to twenty-four characters, and no elaborate scenery is needed. It is especially suitable for acting on Empire Day, but it can be played at any other time as well.

**CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.**

Harry Gibson, 88, Donore Terrace, S.C. Road, Dolphin's Barn, Dublin, wishes to communicate with readers in India, Palestine and South Africa.

Maurice Lewis, 87, Underwood Street, London, E.1, wishes to correspond with Jewish readers in the neighbourhood of Esplanade Avenue, Montreal.

F. Lewis, 190, Palmierston Road, Woodston, Peterborough, wants to hear from readers overseas, especially stamp collectors.

**"THE AIR PATROL!"**

(Continued from page 41.)

moments. When he spoke again his voice was stronger.

"I'm going now, lad—my last landing—on the greatest aerodrome of all!"

His hand groped outwards on the rough blanket. Guy took it in a firm clasp.

"Good-bye, lad." The halting voice was stronger now. "You have done well—so well—the right breed."

The words trailed away.

In the silence which followed there came, from far to the southwards, the faint drone of powerful aeroplane engines.

Guy rose slowly to his feet. He guessed it was the ambulance plane, but it was too late. Major Boyd was dead.

The ranger opened the door of the hut and stared out into the night sky. The machine was coming up at a terrific rate. Then, dimly, he made out her navigation lights on the wing-tips.

Crossing to the hangar, Guy found a full tin of petrol and a supply of waste. Carrying them down to the shore of the creek, he soaked the waste with petrol and threw a match into it.

Guided by the ruddy glow of the flaming waste, the pilot of the big, white Vickers Vimy ambulance plane throttled down and landed far out on the dark waters.

Giving his machine the throttle, he ran in towards the bank. Henderson was the first to leap ashore. He gripped Guy's arm, peering at the ranger in the darkness. And he knew, then, by the boy's face, that they were too late.

(Another long exciting instalment next week, boys!)

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