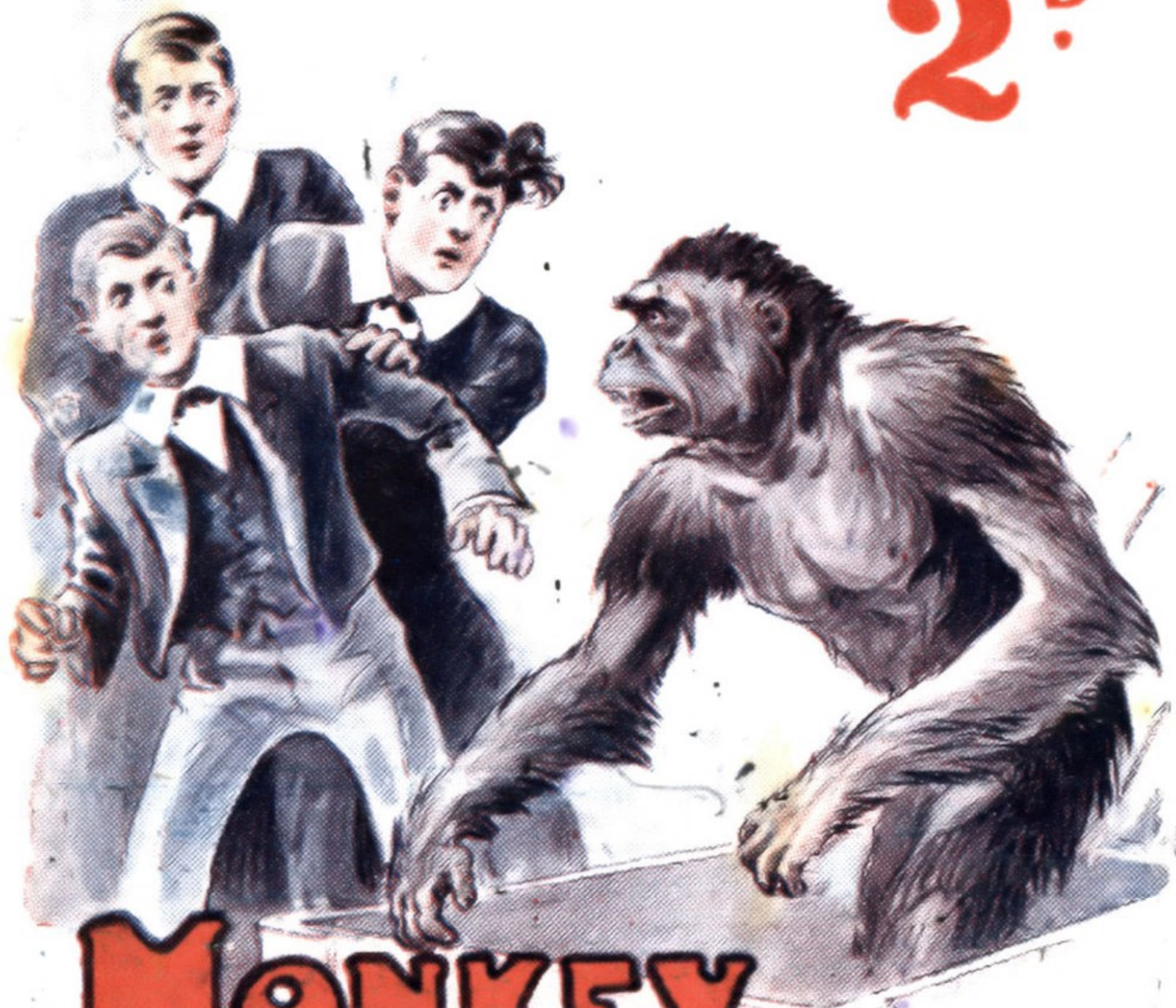


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MONKEY BUSINESS AT ST. FRANK'S!

A grand long complete yarn of schoolboy fun and adventure, featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 125.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

September 22nd, 1928.



Mr. Pycraft took a flying leap. It was his intention to clutch at the stonework in the centre of the fountain but, unfortunately for him, he misjudged the distance. The result was disastrous. With a terrific splash he fell into the pool itself ; and the surrounding juniors roared with laughter.

A Gorilla Visits St. Frank's!

Excitement, Japes and Fun!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

(Author of the St. Frank's stories now appearing in "The Popular," every Tuesday.)

Rivalry between the Remove at St. Frank's and the Fourth Form at the River House School has opened afresh. Both Nipper and Hal Brewster think that their respective Forms are entitled to be called the "top dog," and they set out to prove it. Japes are the order of the day. You'll all enjoy every chapter of this lively school yarn.—Ed.

CHAPTER 1.

Twenty-five Pounds Reward!

"TWENTY-FIVE quid!" said Hal Brewster, with a whistle.

"Eh?"

"How much?"

"Twenty-five quid!"

Dave Ascott and Georgie Glynn regarded their leader in awe, and Ascott shook his head.

"There isn't so much money in all the world!" he said dreamily.

The leaders of the Commoners at the River House School were standing in the quad, near the main entrance. It was a cool September evening, and there were a number of other River House Fourth-Formers standing about in groups. It would be time for calling-over in another ten or fifteen minutes.

"Well, what about this twenty-five quid?" asked Glynn curiously. "Any chance of us touching a bit?"

"I don't see why not," replied Hal, with a grin. "If it wasn't so late this evening, we might organise a hunt of our own."

"A hunt?" said Ascott politely.

"Yes."

"What for—the twenty-five quid?"

"In a way," replied Brewster. "You see, a gorilla has escaped——"

"My only hat! A which?"

"A gorilla!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Ascott. "You don't mean to say that it's roaming about loose over the countryside?"

Kingswood and Norton and Driscoll, and one or two other juniors, came round, all interested. Hal Brewster was holding an evening newspaper, and his eyes were gleaming with sudden interest.

"What's this about a gorilla?" asked Littlewood, of Study No. 8. "Are you spoofing, Brewster?"

"No, of course not," replied the Junior skipper. "It's here, plain enough, in this newspaper."

"Where did you get it from?" asked Mann.

"I found it on the hall table," replied Hal. "I believe Wellborne, or one of those other Honourables, brought it in. Wanted to see the result of the four-thirty, I suppose. Anyhow, it's the late evening edition, and this piece of news is in the Stop Press."

They gathered round with more interest than ever.

"Let's hear the details," said Lang briskly.

"There's nothing much," said Brewster. "It appears that a gorilla escaped from that circus in Bannington. You know the one—we've seen the bills about. Well, this gorilla escaped during the afternoon, and now it's missing."

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Yes, it's got loose," went on Brewster. "The circus proprietor is offering twenty-five quid reward for its return, alive. They're getting up search parties, and the police are on the job, too."

"We'd better keep our windows closed to-night!" said Reeves nervously.

"Ass!"

"Oh, I don't know!" protested Reeves. "Gorillas are pretty awful animals, you know. And they can climb like the dickens, too. We should look pretty funny, shouldn't we, if we found the giddy thing in our dormitory in the middle of the night!"

Hal Brewster laughed.

"There's not one chance in a thousand, you chump!" he said lightly. "And as for us earning that twenty-five quid reward, it's a myth. I expect the gorilla will have been captured by now, anyhow. You know how the newspapers like to make a song about trifles."

"Is it a dangerous animal?" asked Pringle.

"It doesn't say," replied Brewster. "It's just a young gorilla, and it's got away from the circus. There aren't any other details."

He handed the newspaper to some of the other fellows, and he changed the subject.

"We've got to do something about St. Frank's," he said thoughtfully. "The term has only just started, and, so far, it's a case of honours even. But we're going to show Nipper and his crowd that we can beat them hollow at japes."

"It's all very well to talk," growled Ascott. "But what about a wheeze? We haven't thought of one yet."

"And to-morrow's a half-holiday, too!" said Glynn.

As Hal Brewster had said, the term had only just commenced, and there was a keen revival of the old rivalry between the juniors of St. Frank's and the Fourth Form at the River House School. Brewster didn't know it, but his rivals were getting rather busy at that precise moment.

At any rate, there were some mysterious movements behind a hedge that overlooked the school buildings. Nipper himself was crouching there, and the redoubtable Edward Oswald Handforth was in evidence, too. Church and McClure and a few others were also present.

Yet it was unlikely that they were contemplating a raid, for the party, after all, was a small one, and Brewster & Co. were in force in the quad. None of the River House fellows had the faintest idea that an enemy party was so near at hand.

"Look here," said Kingswood, after he had been reading the newspaper. "I don't see why we couldn't get up a gorilla hunt, you chaps. We could slip out after calling-over—"

"Imposs!" interrupted Brewster. "We can't break bounds, you ass!"

"But there's that twenty-five quid—"

"It's no good being tempted by an offer like that," interrupted Hal, shaking his head. "My dear ass, if the Head found out he would sack us. No, we mustn't even think of—"

"Hallo!" broke in Ascott. "Who the dickens is this?"

There was a sudden movement amongst the juniors who were gathered about the gateway. They leapt in all directions, and at the same moment Brewster & Co. heard the humming exhaust of a motor-cycle. And as they stared towards the gateway the machine itself appeared.

It came swerving into the quad, and all the River House fellows immediately recognised the cool, self-possessed figure of Vivian Travers in the saddle. Travers, of the St. Frank's Remove, was a keen and daring motor-cyclist.

He proved it now.

Opening up the throttle after he had entered the quad, he went swinging round in a wide circle, and the River House fellows dodged in all directions. With supreme ease, Travers avoided them, picking his way with uncanny precision.

"Hi!" roared Brewster. "This isn't a race-track, you St. Frank's fathead!"

"Stop it, Travers!"

"Look out, you idiot!"

"Hi! Mind where you're going!"

Vivian Travers chuckled. He opened the throttle still more, and the engine roared in response. Then, with a sudden swing of the handlebars, Travers spun round, the back wheel skidding wildly. There was a smother of dust and smoke, and Brewster & Co. stared in alarm.

"Great Scott! He's over!"

Travers was sprawling on the ground, and his motor-cycle was lying on its side, the back wheel spinning and the engine roaring.

"He's hurt!"

With a sort of despairing effort, Travers managed to wriggle round and switch off the engine. Immediately the roar died away, and Travers sank back.

"Oh, the ass!" said Brewster anxiously. "He asked for trouble—and now he's got it!"

"Quick! Let's help him up!"

"He came an awful cropper!" said Ascott breathlessly. "He must have been dotty!"

They all gathered round the fallen motorcyclist in alarm, and Travers was gently lifted to his feet. He looked dazed and bewildered, and he passed a hand wearily over his brow.

"It's all right!" he muttered. "What—what happened? For the love of Samson! I—I don't seem to remember—"

"Take it easily, old man!" said Brewster gently. "You're a bit dazed. And you ought to think yourself jolly lucky that you're not badly injured!"



CHAPTER 2.

A Present from Nipper!

HANDFORTH grinned. "By George!" he said wonderingly. "The ass has done it, you know! Skidded

like the dickens, and come an awful cropper! It's a wonder he didn't hurt himself!"

"Perhaps he has," said Nipper. "He told us he was going to skid over, but he needn't have done it so realistically! But it's just like Travers!"

From behind the hedge the St. Frank's juniors could see everything that was happening, and, true to the prearranged plan, every one of the River House juniors had run across to the spot where Travers had come his cropper. Not a soul was looking in the direction of this hedge.

To be exact, Travers' "accident" had been in accordance with a set plan. Travers was merely a decoy. But even his own school-fellows had never believed that he would take such unnecessary risks. Certainly, Brewster & Co. did not suspect that Travers had skidded purposely.

"Now then, Nick—now's your chance!" said Nipper briskly. "So-long, old man—and good luck!"

"It's a beastly shame we can't be there, to see how it works!" said Handforth regretfully. "But I bet it'll be a scream!"

Nicodemus Trotwood, of the West House, was cool and smiling. He was a very innocent-looking junior, was Nicodemus, but he was deceptive. For, in reality, he was "hot stuff."

"I'll tell you all about it afterwards," he said cheerfully. "But you can safely leave it to me—and I'll make these River House bounders squirm before I've done with 'em!"

There was no time for any further conversation. Trotwood slipped through a con-

venient gap in the hedge, and ran lightly across the intervening space. The other St. Frank's fellows had the gratification of seeing him dodge into a window, and vanish.

"Good!" murmured Nipper. "He hasn't been seen by a soul!"

"Thanks to Travers!" said Church, with a grin.

In ordinary circumstances, it would have been well nigh impossible for Trotwood, or any other intruder, to get into the River House School like that. But Travers was doing his part well, and Hal Brewster and all his merry men were gathered round the intruder.

Unfortunately for them, he was the wrong intruder!

Travers allowed a full minute to elapse, and by that time he was convinced that the trick had been accomplished. He allowed the dazed expression to die out of his eyes, and he grinned in that cool way of his.

"Well, well!" he said genially. "So that's that!"

"Eh?" said Hal Brewster, with a suspicious note in his voice. "What do you mean, Travers?"

"Oh, nothing, dear old fellow!"

"You seem to have recovered remarkably quickly!" said Hal.

"Merely my extraordinary powers of recuperation," said Travers coolly. "Being a St. Frank's fellow, I am naturally hardy and strong—"

"Rats!" interrupted several of the River House fellows.

"And now, if you don't mind, I will remount my steed, and give you a further exhibition of my astounding ability," said Travers. "Although making no claim to be a trick rider, I am nevertheless capable of numerous stunts—"

"Look here, you spoofing St. Frank's rotter!" interrupted Hal Brewster darkly.

"What's the idea of all this?"

"The idea, dear old fellow?"

"Yes, blow you!"

"Well, the fact is—"

"I believe you skidded over on purpose!" said Brewster, with deeper suspicion than ever. "You were only pretending to be dazed! Do you deny it?"

"As a matter of fact, I don't," grinned Travers.

"Why, you—you—"

"Now, now!" said Vivian Travers, wagging a solemn forefinger at the River House captain. "Don't get excited, Brewster, dear old fellow. It doesn't improve your looks. At the best of times you are not very easy to gaze upon; but when you get excited, it becomes a positive hardship to look at you."

Hal Brewster breathed hard. This audacious St. Frank's junior had made a deliberate raid on the River House School—singlehanded! It was altogether too thick. Brewster and a number of others gathered round more closely—more menacingly.

"There's something behind this, you chaps!" said Brewster. "Travers didn't just come here to stage a fake accident."

"Well, well!" murmured Travers. "What ideas we do get, to be sure! As a matter of fact, Brewster, dear old fellow, I have brought you a present from Nipper."

"Oh, you have, have you?"

"Quite a nice little present!" nodded Travers. "I am, in a way, a special ambassador, and my mission is one of considerable importance."

"Blow your mission!" said Brewster. "What's this present you talk about?"

"Ah, yes!" said Travers, fumbling in his pocket. "Now, Brewster, I want you to realise that this present is exceptionally effective. You may not like it at first, but—"

While he was speaking, he had casually thrown a leg over his motor-cycle, which, by this time, had been picked up. Now, with a sudden movement, Travers shoved down the kick-starter.

Zurrrrrh!

The engine roared on the instant, and a number of juniors backed hastily away.

"Look out!" yelled Ascott. "Mind what you're doing, you St. Frank's ass!"

It was all over in a flash.

Travers produced an object from his pocket which looked exactly like a revolver. Before Brewster could dodge he found the revolver pointing straight into his face.

"This is Nipper's present!" sang out Travers, pulling the trigger.

"Here, what the——" gasped Brewster.

Splash!

A long, thin line of blackness squirted out from the revolver barrel. It spread itself over Hal Brewster's face in a smother of black liquid and spray. In a second his whole appearance was changed.

"Don't worry!" grinned Travers. "It'll wash off!"

The surrounding River House juniors were so surprised that they could hardly take any action for the moment. When they did recover themselves, it was too late! For Vivian Travers was in the saddle, and he had slipped in the clutch. He was gliding off, and the fellows were dodging out of his way.

"Stop him!" hooted Brewster wildly. "You—you rotter! Look what he's done, you chaps! Stop him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Travers derisively.

There was a wild rush towards him as he swung round. A great wave of indignation had swept through the crowd. This solitary St. Frank's fellow had had the nerve to squirt ink into their captain's face—and now he was trying to get away! It was the limit in nerve!

Recklessly the Commoners dashed at Travers, but, with an exhibition of uncanny skill, Travers made circles round them. He swerved giddily, spinning round and avoiding all the clutching hands. Moreover, he made those River House fellows dodge for their lives. Then, with a final chuckle, he opened

up the throttle, and roared off through the gateway.

The chagrined Commoners heard an echo of laughter mingled with the noise of the motor-cycle's exhaust.

Then the lone raider had gone.



CHAPTER 3.

Nicodemus on the Job!

HAL BREWSTER spluttered furiously.

"Didn't you stop him?" he shouted.

"You fatheads! You asses! Why the dickens didn't you grab him?"

"He was too jolly quick for us!" gasped Ascott. "He nearly ran half a dozen of us down, too!"

"Look what he's done to me!" roared Brewster.

"Yes: we can see!" nodded Kingswood. "You look an awful sight!"

"I'm smothered!" hooted Brewster.

"With blue-black ink!" said Pringle indignantly.

"And it's a present from Nipper!" added Glynn.

Hal Brewster fairly danced with rage.

"The nerve!" he panted, as he wiped his inky face with his handkerchief, and only made his appearance worse. "I never saw anything like it! Just one St. Frank's chap—here, amongst the lot of us! He squirts ink into my face, and then gets away! It's—it's outrageous!"

"I should think it is!" said Ascott fiercely.

"It's—it's the worst thing that's happened to us yet!" went on Brewster, with a gulp of dismay and fury. "There might be some excuse for us if a whole crowd came along, and raided us. But Travers alone! One chap by himself! Oh, my only sainted aunt! St. Frank's will yell its head off over this!"

Nipper and Handforth and the other St. Frank's juniors, who were watching from behind the hedge, were inclined to burst into a roar of loud laughter—just to show Brewster & Co. that they certainly would yell their heads off. But they resisted the temptation. It would be most unwise to let the River House fellows know that there was anything else on the programme.

Clang-clang!

"There goes the bell for calling-over!" said Glynn gruffly. "We've got to go indoors now, anyhow. You'd better get yourself washed, Hal. You look terrible!"

"I feel worse!" said Brewster thickly.

Even after he had cleaned himself, and had donned a fresh shirt and collar, he was still boiling. After calling-over, he and Ascott and Glynn went to Study No. 1, and a few other fellows crowded in, too. They

were all talking excitedly and heatedly about the recent raid.

"You'll have to do something now, Brewster!" Kingswood was saying. "Hang it, we can't let these St. Frank's fellows walk over us like this! It's getting too thick for words!"

"Leave it to me!" growled Brewster. "I'll think of something!"

"We'll all think!" said Kingswood. "Two heads are better than one—and ten heads are better than two. If we all concentrate, we might be able to think of some stunt."

Hal Brewster cooled down after a while.

"We shall never think while we're in this state of mind," he said. "We'd better do our prep, and then we'll hold a meeting afterwards."

"Yes, it'll be better to settle our minds," agreed Norton, nodding. "Come on, you chaps. Let's get prep done."

It was a sensible suggestion, and all the visitors crowded out of the study. Brewster and Glynn and Ascott were left alone.

"When you come to think of it, Hal, that chap, Travers, is a caution!" said Ascott, with a grin. "I mean, fancy coming into the quad like that, and squirting you with ink—"

"Can't you forget about the ink?" growled Brewster, glaring.

"Well, I mean—"

"It was a challenge!" said Brewster darkly. "And, by Jove, I'm going to take it up! To-morrow's a half-holiday, and those St. Frank's fellows will wish they hadn't started this giddy feud! We'll get our own back—treblefold!"

He walked across to the wireless set, and switched it on. The sweet strains of chamber music filled Study No. 1 with its melodious echoes.

"Oh, cut that off!" said Glynn appealingly. "It's awful!"

"You don't appreciate good music," said Brewster, frowning.

"It's like a lot of cats squalling!" said Glynn.

Perhaps there was something wrong with the composition, but Glynn's description was, if anything, rather near the mark. The music may have been very highbrow, but it was undoubtedly difficult to listen to. It had been quite all right at first, but now it had changed its character, and had become strenuous.

Brewster glanced at his watch.

"It's all right—this spasm is just over," he said. "We want to hear the news."

"Oh, blow the news!" said Ascott wearily. "Let's do our prep."

But he and Glynn knew that there would be no peace for fifteen minutes, at least. Hal Brewster was a "radio fan." His set was a good one, with a powerful loud speaker. Hal made a hobby of his wireless, and he was always adding new gadgets, and proclaiming that he had vastly improved the reception. Ascott and Glynn had never detected any real difference. Sometimes,

however, they felt that it was worse than at other times.

"Don't keep on messing it about!" said Ascott, as Brewster fingered the controls. "That's the worst of you, Hal! You're never satisfied! As soon as you get the giddy thing right, you muck it up."

"Rats!" said Brewster. "I'm improving the tone."

It scarcely sounded like it, judging from the screeches and howls that proceeded from the loud speaker. However, after a moment or two, these disturbances ceased, and the announcer's voice came clearly and distinctly from the big loud speaker.

"This is London calling," said the B.B.C. gentleman, over the ether. "Here is a summary of to-day's weather—"

"Same old stuff!" sighed Ascott. "What the dickens do we want to know about to-day's weather? Haven't we been able to see for ourselves what it was like?"

"Shut up, you asses!" roared Brewster.

He was always having this trouble. Whilst he appreciated the wireless, Ascott and Glynn were frankly bored by it; and they were always interrupting.

For the moment, Vivian Travers' descent upon the River House was forgotten. But if these juniors had considered Travers' action daring, what would they have said of Nicodemus Trotwood's game? For, at that precise moment, Nick was crouching under their very table!

He was in a precarious position—and he knew it.

But, if the worst came to the worst, he would face the music cheerfully; and he was hoping that he would be able to work his "stunt" before he was caught. Nicodemus was a cheerful junior, and he was an optimist, too. So far, he had escaped detection; and he saw no reason why he should be discovered.

Trotwood had been busy in Study No. 1.

While all the fellows were at calling-over, he had hastily rigged up one or two wires, tucking them under the carpet, and taking the leads to a point under the table. And now, at his hand, there was a little switch. Hal Brewster hadn't the faintest idea that his precious wireless set had been interfered with. Certainly, there was nothing in the tone of the instrument to suggest this.

"And the matter is still in debate," the announcer was saying, in reference to some political matter. "We will now turn to a subject that will doubtless interest every public school in the kingdom."

"Hallo!" said Brewster. "What's this, I wonder?"

"Oh, some rot, as usual!" said Glynn.

"It may not be generally known that a feud is now in progress between two very famous schools in Sussex," continued the announcer. "At the moment, the battle is inclined to languish, but there is every reason to believe that it will flare up very shortly. The two schools involved are St. Frank's College and the River House School."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Ascott and Glynn, in one voice.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" breathed Hal Brewster.

They all stared wonderingly at the loud speaker, startled by this really astonishing statement.



CHAPTER 4.

Straight from the Shoulder!

THERE was every reason for Brewster & Co.'s amazement.

They had never believed that their rivalry with St. Frank's would be mentioned like this, on the wireless. In fact, they could hardly believe their ears. Yet how could they doubt their ears? The announcer was speaking, and there could obviously be no doubt about it.

Hal Brewster looked at his dimly glowing valves, and he was tempted to touch one of the controls; but he checked himself. He did not want to miss a single word of this surprising item of news.

But if the River House fellows had only known it, they were being fooled in a very simple way.

Nicodemus Trotwood, under the table, had merely touched his little switch. By that action, he had cut off the aerial, making it impossible for the set to receive the wireless signals that were in the ether. The valves were still glowing, and the controls were set, so there was nothing to show Brewster that anything had been done.

And the announcer's voice came out of the loud speaker, just the same as before. Uncannily enough, the tone was almost identical—and if, indeed, there was some slight difference, the juniors were not likely to take much notice of it.

Nick Trotwood was doing amazingly well.

As any of the St. Frank's fellows would have told, Nick was a very clever ventriloquist, and he was now throwing his voice from under the table, and into the mouth of the loud speaker. It was an exceedingly brilliant exhibition of his art, and it was all the more praiseworthy because he had got the announcer's voice "to a T."

His eyes were sparkling merrily as he crouched under the table. Now that he had switched the aerial off, he could make any statement that he liked! And Nick liked something very unusual in the way of announcements!

"The latest news from Bellton is not very exciting," continued the voice. "Bellton, as our listeners may know, is a small village in Sussex, not far from the town of Bannington. The famous St. Frank's College is situated just outside Bellton, and the River House School is in the same neighbourhood. It will perhaps be necessary to mention that

the River House School is a comparatively small and insignificant institution."

"What's that?" said Ascott blankly.

"Shut up!" hissed Brewster, his face red with excitement. "Don't interrupt! We shall miss the next bit if you do!"

"But—but he said——"

"Never mind what he said!" panted Brewster. "Dry up!"

Nicodemus Trotwood obligingly waited until the little argument was over. In this respect, he was far more considerate than the average wireless announcer.

"It will perhaps be interesting to all our listeners to hear a few facts concerning these two schools," continued the supposed announcer, from the loud speaker. "St. Frank's is a magnificent college, with five Houses, and the Remove Form at this school is renowned for its daring, its originality, and its general braininess."

"Well I'm dashed!" said Glynn breathlessly.

"Under the leadership of a very able skipper, named Dick Hamilton—but more commonly known to his friends as Nipper—the Remove Form at St. Frank's is a very vital force," pursued the announcer smoothly. "And supported by such stalwarts as Vivian Travers and Edward Oswald Handforth and Reggie Pitt, the St. Frank's Remove is forging well ahead in this keen rivalry with the River House School."

"Forging ahead, eh?" said Brewster thickly. "Why, of all the idiotic——"

"Shurrup!"

"Dry up, Hal!"

"The River House School, as some of our listeners may know, cannot be compared to St. Frank's," continued the loud speaker. "Indeed, the less said about this miserable place, the better. If one is to be absolutely fair, it cannot be described as a school at all—but really as an apology for one. That is, of course, as compared to St. Frank's."

Hal Brewster nearly boiled over.

"Well, of all the——" he began.

"An apology for a school!" breathed Georgie Glynn indignantly.

"Oh, my only aunt!" said Ascott.

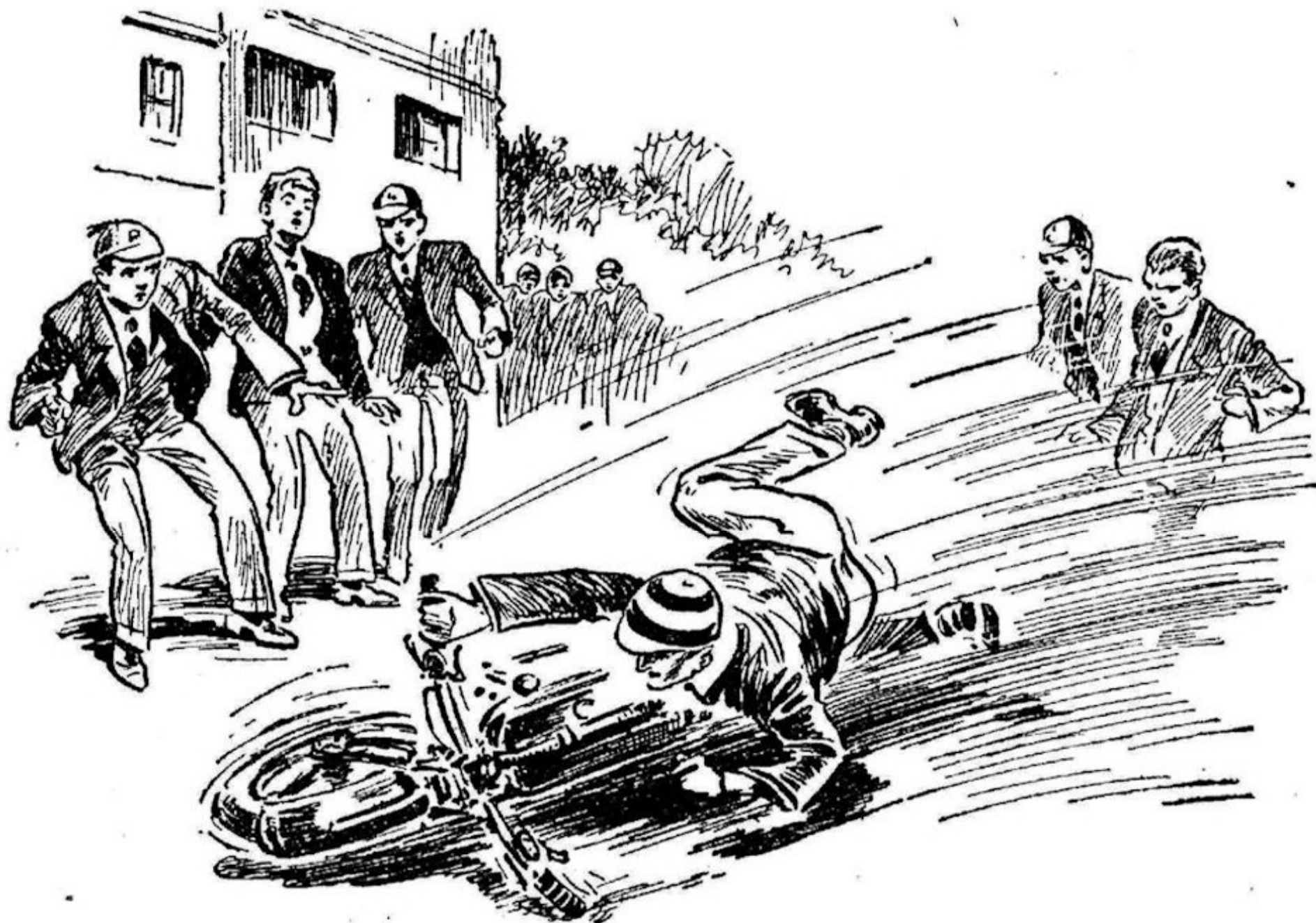
Again Nick Trotwood obligingly waited.

"Of course, there can be only one result of this feud between the two schools," he went on, after the three juniors had checked themselves. "Naturally, St. Frank's will come out on top. The Fourth Form at the River House School is under the leadership of a paltry youngster named Hal Brewster

"A paltry youngster!" gurgled Brewster.

"— And the whole Fourth Form is, without the slightest doubt, a set of mugs, without a decent idea amongst the lot of them," said the loud speaker cheerfully. "We do not, of course, like to make these statements, but truth is truth. We feel that our listeners would much prefer to hear a really true account of——"

"But it's all lies!" gasped Glynn indignantly.



The motor bike skidded wildly. There was a smother of dust, and Travers sprawled on the ground. "Great Scott! He's over!" yelled Brewster & Co., in alarm.

"Listen!" hissed Brewster. "He hasn't finished yet!"

"In a nutshell, it may be said that the Fourth Form at the River House School consists of duds and duffers!" declared the alleged announcer. "There is not one fellow among the whole crowd who can be described as an ordinary British boy. From Hal Brewster downwards, they are all half-witted. In fact, to be painfully blunt, Brewster & Co. are simpletons and fatheads—to use a typical schoolboy term. Thus it will be seen that the River House School can never hope to reach the high standing of St. Frank's. Nipper and his merry men will undoubtedly win this race for supremacy, and they will win it easily. We extend our official sympathies to those hopeless chumps at the River House, who, in their feeble way, believe that they can work a jape against St. Frank's. Poor idiots! They might just as well try to fly to the moon!"

Brewster & Co. were quite dazed by this time. Their faces were red, their eyes were gleaming, and they were seething inwardly.

"And now, to turn to other topics," said the loud speaker. "At Manchester to-day—"

Click!

Trotwood heard it just in time. He ceased speaking abruptly, and he had judged well. For Hal Brewster had switched the set off, and it would have been most embarrassing if the loud speaker had continued its good work.

But Nick Trotwood had successfully accomplished his mission, and now he was grinning to himself in the gloom under the study table.



CHAPTER 5.

Spoofed!

"IT'S an outrage!" shouted Hal Brewster furiously.

"We'll write to the B.B.C. about it!" roared Ascott.

"Yes, rather!" yelled Glynn. "And we'll get the whole Form to back us up, too! We'll send them a long protest—"

"Fatheads! Mugs! Duffers!" said Brewster hoarsely. "Did you hear, you chaps? That announcer called us every name—"

"Of course we heard!" said Glynn excitedly. "It must be a plot! Those St. Frank's chaps must have bribed the announcer—"

"Rats!" said Brewster. "The B.B.C. wouldn't sanction anything like that! In fact, I can't understand how they ever allowed the announcer to say such things over the wireless! It's—it's too awful for words!"

"They ought to be prosecuted for libel!" said Glynn excitedly.

"Don't be potty!" retorted Brewster. "A libel is a written statement. When a damaging thing is spoken, it's slander."

"Well, they ought to be prosecuted for slander, then!"

"We'll write them a stiff letter, anyhow!" said Brewster hotly. "I've never heard such drivel in all my life! He said that the River House School is an insignificant place. He called me a half-wit!"

"He called us *all* half-wits!" roared Ascott.

"And said that we don't stand an earthly chance against St. Frank's!" went on Brewster, bubbling over like a volcano. "I—I—I— My hat! I can't think of the words I want!" he added helplessly. "The whole thing's an outrage!"

"Let's go and hear what the other fellows have to say!" put in Glynn quickly. "They've got a wireless set in Study No. 5. It's a dud thing belonging to Driscoll, but I believe it works a bit. Perhaps they've been listening in, too."

"Yes, and there's another set in Study No. 11," said Brewster. "Come on!"

They pelted out of the room, and, as it happened, they met Hadley and Commerford and Grant, the chums of Study No. 11, out in the passage. They weren't looking at all excited.

"I say, you chaps!" panted Brewster. "Were you listening in just now?"

"Yes," said Hadley, in surprise. "My hat! What's the matter with you fellows? What are you so excited about?"

"You heard what the announcer said, didn't you?" roared Ascott.

"Yes, of course."

"And aren't you wild about it?" hooted Brewster.

"What on earth should we be wild about?" asked Commerford, in amazement. "It was only the usual stuff. Weather, political news, and—"

"You're mad!" said Ascott breathlessly. "You haven't been listening at all! Didn't you hear what the announcer said about St. Frank's and our place?"

By this time a number of other Fourth-Formers had collected round, attracted by the excited shouts. Amongst them were Driscoll and Buller and Pringle, of Study No. 5.

"Here, what's it all about?" asked Driscoll, pushing his way forward. "My set's on now, and we've been listening for the last twenty minutes. We haven't heard anything about St. Frank's."

"Haven't heard anything?" echoed Brewster & Co., in one voice.

"Of course we haven't," put in Pringle. "What rot! The B.B.C. wouldn't spout any news about us, you chumps!"

Hal Brewster passed a hand over his brow.

"But—but we heard it!" he ejaculated. "My wireless— But wait a minute!" he added quickly. "What station have you been getting?"

"London, of course," said Driscoll.

"We were listening to London, too!" said

Ascott. "Well, I've never known such a rummy thing!"

"But what did you hear?" demanded a dozen juniors.

"Why, the announcer said that there was a feud between St. Frank's and the River House!" panted Glynn. "He said that Nipper & Co. are full of ideas, and that we're a lot of half-wits and duffers—"

"What!" roared the crowd.

"It's a fact!" said Brewster, in bewilderment. "We heard every word—and I'll swear to that announcer's voice! I can't understand—"

"There's been some trickery somewhere!" put in Kingswood, of Study No. 2. "You fellows have been spoofed."

"Spoofed!"

"There can't be any other explanation," said Kingswood. "These chaps didn't hear anything like that on their sets, so it stands to reason—"

"Wait a minute!" panted Hal. "I'm going to have another look at my set! By jingo! If anybody has been monkeying about—"

He broke off, aghast. He couldn't possibly understand how any trickery had been performed, but, in face of what these fellows were saying, it was positive that something was decidedly wrong somewhere.

Brewster & Co. ran into Study No. 1; and then, before they could reach the wireless set, they pulled up short. They were attracted by a large, square piece of cardboard which was propped up in the centre of the table.

"Look at that!" gurgled Brewster.

The others were looking. Daubed on the piece of cardboard were the fatal words:

"Dished again! Poor half-wits!—Nipper."

Hal Brewster reeled back.

"My only Uncle Jehosophat!" he breathed. "Then—then it was a jape!"

"Oh, corks!" said Glynn feebly.

"A jape!" repeated Ascott, in a whisper. "But—but how the dickens did they work it?"

Hal Brewster recovered his coolness. Now that the thing was explained, he was no longer excited. His resentment against the B.B.C. evaporated. That great corporation was now exonerated.

"I don't know how they did it, but it was jolly clever!" said Brewster tensely. "By Jove! What a wheeze! And we were sucked in, you chaps! We believed every word! Oh, my goodness! We shall never hear the last of this!"

"Oh, but it couldn't have been done!" protested Glynn. "We heard the same announcer speaking! And you didn't touch the set, Hal! I can't understand—"

"Look at this!" roared Brewster.

He pulled a wire up from beneath the carpet, and he found a switch attached to the end.

"There you are!" he ejaculated. "I can't imagine how it was done, but there's been

some monkey business here! They must have switched us through, somehow. Those rotters were probably outside, speaking into a telephone arrangement, and the voice came out through our loud speaker."

"But—but how?" asked Ascott. "This switch was under the table!"

Brewster started.

"Ye gods!" he breathed. "So it was! That seems to prove that one of those St. Frank's fellows was under our table all the time!"

They nearly knocked the table over in their frantic efforts to gaze beneath it. But now the space was empty. The trickster had decamped.

Nicodemus Trotwood, in fact, had taken advantage of the opportunity to make himself scarce. He had crept out of the study window, and had intended to dodge across the quad to the safety of the neighbouring hedge.

But Fate had been against him.

For while Brewster & Co. were still staring in mystification at the switch, a commotion sounded out in the corridor.

"Hi, Brewster!" came a yell. "We've got him! We've grabbed the rotter!"

Brewster went flying out of Study No. 1, with Glynn and Ascott after him. And there, in the passage, they found a crowd of grim-looking juniors, tightly holding on to Nicodemus Trotwood, of St. Frank's.



CHAPTER 6.

Dished Again!

NICK TROTWOOD grinned.

"Hard lines, Brewster!" he said coolly.

"You were properly

diddled, weren't you?"

Hal Brewster pushed his way through the crowd, and he stared ominously at the St. Frank's Removite.

"So it was you, was it?" he said in a grim voice.

"Yes, please, teacher!" said Nick meekly.

"You—you silly fathead!"

"Cheese it!" grinned Nick. "You've colared me, and now I suppose you're going to put me through the mill. All right, my sons. I don't care! You can't kill me, and the whole of St. Frank's will be yelling at the joke later on this evening. You'll be able to hear our cackling quite clearly if you listen, at the windows!"

"You won't be able to cackle for a month—after we've finished with you!" said Ascott fiercely.

"But the others will cackle!" replied Trotwood, with perfect composure. "Well, why don't you start the slaughter? Go ahead! I'm a fatalist!"

His very coolness only seemed to make matters worse. Nick looked such a simpleton, too. His eyes were innocent, and his face

was altogether guileless. Yet no fellow had a more deceptive appearance than the elder of the Trotwood twins. Cornelius Trotwood, who looked exactly like his brother, actually was a simpleton.

"Well, you've got to thank me for this capture, you fellows," said the Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne. "I was coming across the quad with Carstairs and Coates when I spotted the beggar. Vernon and Beesley came along, and we grabbed him."

"Which only proves, Wellborne, that you can be useful sometimes," replied Brewster. "We've got to make an example of this raider."

"Mind you don't lose me!" said Nick Trotwood calmly. "I'm only one against a big crowd, but I might get away even yet!"

"Don't you believe it!" said Brewster. "Hold him tightly, you fellows!"

"No need to tell us that!" said Kingswood. "We're doing it already!"

"That's twice we've been japed in one evening!" said Littlewood bitterly. "You'll have to pull up your socks, Brewster! First of all, Travers comes along and chucks ink in your face, and now this ass has spoofed you."

Hal Brewster grunted.

"Why remind me?" he retorted. "Do you think I don't know it? But, by Jove, I'm going to make him sit up! Bring him along to the Common-room. We shall be quiet there, without any danger of interference."

"Hear, hear!"

"What about tar and feathers?" suggested Pringle thoughtfully.

"Too good for him!" replied Ascott.

"We're going to use boiling oil!"

They pushed the luckless Nick Trotwood before them down the dimly-lit corridor. At the end there was an outer door, which led into the quad. The Common-room door was just to the left, nearly at the end of the passage.

The River House fellows had nearly reached their objective when a bombshell descended upon them.

"What is all this noise?" demanded a rasping, unpleasant voice from behind them, in the gloom. "Halt!"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Brewster. "Old Wragg!"

This was an unexpected complication. Mr. Bernard Wragg was one of the under-masters at the River House School—in fact, the master of the Fourth Form. He was about as popular as a rainstorm during a cricket match.

"Stand at attention—every one of you!" commanded Mr. Wragg sourly. "I simply won't have all this noise in the passages! It is disgraceful. No, do not turn round, Brewster! Stand at attention, or I will give you a hundred lines!"

Hal Brewster gritted his teeth. He knew that it would be fatal to goad Mr. Wragg when he was in one of these unpleasant moods. The whole incident was unexpected, for it was very unusual for the Form-master

to sally out from his own lair at this hour of the evening. And, of course, it was just the luck of things that he should arrive on the scene while they were giving their attention to the St. Frank's raider.

"You!" came Mr. Wragg's voice. "Who are you, sir? What are you doing in this school?"

Trotwood turned round, and looked down the passage.

"I'm a St. Frank's chap, sir!" he said meekly.

"I know well enough that you are a St. Frank's boy!" snapped Mr. Wragg. "And I need no telling that you are not here by invitation. Go, sir! Leave these premises!"

"Yes, sir—gladly!" said Nick, with a grin at the helpless juniors surrounding him.

"There is a door at the end of this passage!" said Mr. Wragg tartly. "Go at once, boy, and do not let me see you here again!"

"Yes, sir—thank you, sir," said Nick.

He walked coolly and easily to the outer door, and Brewster & Co. could have slaughtered him on the spot for his deliberate "nerve." He reached the door, opened it, passed out, and closed the door after him.

Brewster & Co. remained at attention, waiting for further orders from the interfering Mr. Wragg. As no orders came, Brewster looked round, and found the crowd of juniors all standing at attention. Down the corridor, in the gloom, there was no figure.

"Can we dismiss, sir?" asked Brewster.

But there was no reply.

"He's gone!" said Hal, in bewilderment. "Well, I'm blessed! I—I don't seem to remember— But how could he have got away?" he added blankly. "He wouldn't have gone into one of our studies—"

"Look!" breathed Ascott dazedly.

Right down the passage, at the far end, the juniors caught a glimpse of Mr. Wragg himself, strolling down another corridor, in conversation with the headmaster. It was as clear as daylight that Mr. Wragg had never been in this passage at all!

"The—the place must be bewitched!" ejaculated Kingswood. "Wragg was here—"

"He wasn't!" yelled Brewster suddenly. "Quick! After that St. Frank's chap! Catch him! He's dished us!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Don't you remember?" roared Brewster wrathfully. "Great Scott! I'd forgotten all about it until this minute! That chap, Trotwood, is a ventriloquist!"

"My only hat!"

"But—but he couldn't—"

"He did!" yelled Brewster. "He must have thrown his voice behind us all, and we thought that old Wragg was speaking! And this accounts for that wireless mystery, too! I expect Trotwood was hidden under our table, and he threw his voice into the loud speaker!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Kingswood. "That's three times we've been diddled this evening!"



CHAPTER 7.

River House Ructions I

IT was useless, of course, to make any search for Nick Trotwood.

By the time the juniors got outside, the raider had vanished. He had disappeared into the heavy dusk of the September evening. Brewster & Co. soon gave up the search, and went indoors to the Common-room. They were not only exasperated, but they were furious. The calm way in which Nicodemus had got away left them breathless. They had simply allowed him to go—and had seen him walk out through the doorway without lifting a finger to stop him!

"Why couldn't some of you chaps have remembered that Trotwood is a ventriloquist?" asked Ascott gruffly. "You've all got rotten memories!"

"What about yours?" demanded Littlewood.

"Oh, it's no good growling at one another," put in Hal Brewster. "We've been nicely spoofed, and now we've got to have our revenge. To-morrow's a half-holiday, and—"

"It's no good being a half-holiday, unless we've got some good ideas!" said Commerford gloomily. "And, as far as I can see, there isn't a ghost of a jape in sight. These St. Frank's asses are having everything their own way."

Hal Brewster pursed his lips.

"Give me a chance!" he said. "I'll soon think of something—"

"That's what you keep saying!" grumbled Driscoll. "Promises are no good, Brewster. We want to see some action!"

In the meantime, Nicodemus Trotwood had arrived back at St. Frank's, and he found a crowd of fellows awaiting him in the Ancient House lobby. Handforth & Co. were there, and Nipper, and Archie Glen-thorne, and Travers, and quite a number of others.

"Well, did it work?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"Tell us what happened, Nick!" said Handforth. "Did you wangle it all right?"

Nick chuckled.

"It went off like a dream!" he replied. "Brewster & Co. were spoofed up to the eyes!"

He went into details, describing how the chums of Study No. 1 had swallowed every thing that the loud speaker had apparently given forth.

And the St. Frank's juniors shrieked with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Brewster!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you managed to get away safely, too!" said Nipper, clapping Nick on the back. "Good man!"

"But they collared me!" explained Trotwood. "Before I could get away, they grabbed me, and——"

"What!" shouted Handforth. "But why didn't they tear you to bits?"

"Well, that seemed to be the general idea," admitted Nick. "But Mr. Wragg seemed to butt in."

"How do you mean—he 'seemed' to butt in?" asked Nipper curiously.

"Well, those bounders were leading me to their Common-room, so that they could perform the execution with due ceremony, when Mr. Wragg seemed to order them to halt," explained Trotwood coolly. "Then he seemed to give me the order of the boot. So, of course, I obeyed instructions, and passed out into the cold, murky night."

"But why did old Wragg only 'seem' to do these things?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Because old Wragg wasn't really there!" chuckled Nick. "You see, I know his voice pretty well, and so I tried a bit more ventriloquism, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good for you, Trotwood!" grinned Nipper. "You spoofed them again, did you?"

"Up to the eyes!" said Nick modestly.

There were further shrieks of merriment when Nick went into full details regarding the final trick he had played upon the River House juniors.

"Well, you chaps, this is the end of a perfect evening!" said Nipper genially. "I rather think we've shown Brewster & Co. that we're the top dogs. We shall be justified in doing a little crowing."

"Yes, rather!"

"Good gad!" said Archie Glenthorne mildly. "I may be wrong, laddies, but it seems to be that there's something wrong somewhere. I mean, dogs don't actually crow, do they? Even top dogs——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I got a bit mixed, Archie!" chuckled Nipper. "But never mind. As long as we keep on the alert, after this, we shall remain cock of the walk. But, by Jove, we shall need to be wide awake. Brewster will move heaven and earth to get his own back!"

"We're not afraid of him!" said Handforth calmly. "Those River House chaps can't work any japes on us. We're too smart for 'em!"

"By the way," said Nipper, turning to Trotwood. "I suppose you saw nothing of the gorilla on your way back from the River House School?"

Nicodemus grinned.

"Not a sign of it!" he replied. "I don't believe there is a gorilla, anyhow. It's only a yarn——"

"No, it isn't!" put in Nipper. "I was talking to Browne, of the Fifth, not long ago. He's just come from Bannington, and he says that there's a rare lot of excitement over there. All the people have got the wind up, and they're barricading their windows and doors!"

"My hat!" said Church. "It's not so serious as that, is it?"

"Well, this gorilla seems to be a ferocious beggar," said Nipper. "Browne half hinted that the Head might restrict bounds to-morrow. Not that there's much fear of the gorilla coming anywhere near St. Frank's. He was last seen on the further side of Bannington, near the Helmford Road."

"Oh, well, we needn't worry," said Handforth. "He's bound to be captured before to-morrow afternoon."

"If he isn't, and if there's no restriction of bounds, we might get up a hunt," said Nipper thoughtfully. "Twenty-five quid, my sons, is twenty-five quid. Lots of people are out for that reward."

"If the gorilla isn't found by to-morrow, the offer might be raised," said Tommy Watson. "They'll probably be promising fifty pounds reward."

The juniors broke up, and Nicodemus was escorted back to his own House by Reggie Pitt and a few other West House stalwarts. There was much chuckling throughout the Junior quarters that evening. Without question, Brewster & Co. had been japed very successfully.

At the River House School a full meeting of the Fourth Form was gathered in the Common-room. Hal Brewster was quite indifferent to the storm of criticism that was showered on him.

"If you can't think of some jape, Brewster, you'll have to resign from the captaincy!" said Kingswood, in a truculent way. "A skipper's no good unless he leads!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's time we had another skipper!" said Mann.

"By gad, so it is!" ejaculated Chapman sourly. "What do you say, Wellborne, old man?"

"We ought to have had a new skipper terms and terms ago," replied Wellborne, with a sneer.

All the Honourables were naturally opposed to Hal Brewster. But Hal ignored their jeers.

"Listen to me, you fellows!" he said grimly, addressing the whole Form. "I've been thinking——"

"Marvellous!" yawned Delaney.

"What did you think with?" asked Gadsby, in mock surprise.

"All you Honourables had better clear out," said Brewster tartly. "We Commoners can handle this affair without your help!"

"Thanks!" drawled Wellborne. "We wouldn't help, even if you asked us to!"

"I've been thinking!" repeated Brewster. "And I've got a wheeze—to be worked to-morrow afternoon!"

"Good man!" said Driscoll briskly. "Let's have it!"

Hal Brewster gave an outline of the scheme that was in his mind. As he proceeded, he received suggestions from numerous other fellows, and, gradually, the expressions of the Fourth-Formers changed.

They began to lose their fed-up looks; they smiled, and then, soon afterwards, they chuckled.

Finally, they roared with merriment.

Hal Brewster's prestige was restored—and that night the Commoners went to bed with the happy presentiment that the morrow would be a day of disaster for their St. Frank's rivals!



CHAPTER 8.

The Plotters!

THE September afternoon was fine and sunny, and, although autumn was now making its mark on the countryside, Bellton Wood was looking almost at its best.

Behind the hedge, near the end of the lane, a crowd of juniors were collected round a large wooden box. The lid was hinged, and it stood open, revealing the contents. In the background, the wood was silent and shadowy.

"Well, that's that!" said Hal Brewster, with satisfaction.

The others chuckled.

"I hope they'll be pleased when they open the box!" grinned Ascott.

They looked within. The box contained a number of oddly shaped wooden logs; and pinned to the top log was a card, bearing the words:

"It's our turn this time—Hal Brewster."

The skipper of the River House Juniors closed the lid, and he prepared to fasten the iron clasps.

"Of course, we may have to wait for an hour or two," he said thoughtfully. "That's the only fly in the ointment, my sons. It's no good acting until a solitary St. Frank's chap comes down the lane—"

"Listen!" interrupted Glynn excitedly.

They all held their breaths.

On the afternoon air there came a queer, bird-like call. It was the cry of a curlew, and Brewster, who was the leader of the Curlew Patrol, gave an ejaculation of satisfaction.

"That's the signal!" he said briskly. "Good egg! We weren't expecting success for a long time yet!"

All the River House juniors—at least the Commoners—were Boy Scouts, and they instantly recognised that faraway cry. It was from a Scout who was stationed some distance up the lane, and it meant that a St. Frank's junior was coming along, alone.

Action was now the order of the minute.

Brewster & Co. hurriedly left the vicinity of the box, and they halted, at length, near the stile. There was a footpath here, which led through the wood. It was generally used by the River House fellows when they came to the village.

Ascott peeped cautiously round the hedge.

"Here he comes!" he murmured. "Better get ready, you fellows!"

"Who is he?" asked Brewster.

"That baronet chap—Sir Jimmy Potts!" said Ascott.

"He'll do fine!" said Brewster.

They all retreated some little distance up the path, and then, after waiting for a little time, they commenced talking. And they talked loudly.

Jimmy Potts, striding down Bellton Lane, heard those voices, and he checked. An expression of mild alarm came into his eyes.

"River House bounders!" he murmured.

He was alone, and he could well understand that Brewster & Co. were approaching the stile, from the footpath. He and they would arrive at the same spot together, and Jimmy needed no telling—at least, so he thought—that his position would be unenviable if the meeting actually took place.

"I rather think," he murmured, "that this is a case where discretion is the better part of valour. I don't see any reason why I should be ducked in the ditch!"

He knew the feeling that was in existence at present. Any solitary junior, belonging to the rival school, was pounced upon and "put through the mill." So, whenever a fellow went out by himself, he was generally on the alert.

Jimmy Potts was no exception.

He dodged quickly behind the hedge and crouched there. It was his intention to remain in hiding until the River House crowd had passed out of sight. Then it would be safe for him to emerge. Of course, he had done exactly what Brewster & Co. had desired him to do!

The River House fellows reached the stile, and they were talking animatedly.

"My dear chaps, it'll be the finest thing imaginable!" Hal Brewster was saying. "Think of it—a whacking great six-valve wireless set for the common-room!"

"We'll knock spots off those St. Frank's fatheads!" said Ascott boisterously.

"Rather!" agreed Brewster. "We've often talked about it, haven't we? We've often suggested the idea of the whole Form contributing and buying a really big set."

"The box is ready, isn't it?" asked Kingswood eagerly.

"Ready and waiting!" replied Brewster. "We've got our Scouts' hand-truck, too, so we shall easily be able to take the box home."

"We shall have to keep our eyes open for those giddy St. Frank's chaps, though!" said Ascott cautiously.

"Oh, we needn't worry," replied Brewster. "There are plenty of us. You see, the great thing about a big wireless set for the common-room is that it'll be public property, in a way of speaking. Lots better than small sets in one or two studies. It's a thing that the whole Form can enjoy—"

Jimmy Potts, who had heard practically the whole conversation, now found it impossible to understand anything further. For the River House fellows had passed out of earshot. They were continuing their way

down the lane, still talking animatedly and rather excitedly.

"My only Sunday topper!" murmured Jimmy, taking a deep breath.

He waited until the crowd had passed round a bend in the lane. Then, instead of continuing his way to the village, he broke through the hedge and ran back towards St. Frank's as fast as he could go. A River House scout, watching closely from a high tree-branch, grinned gleefully to himself.

"Good!" he muttered. "He's taken the bait! He's swallowed it whole—hook, line and sinker."

That particular junior had never uttered a truer word! For Jimmy Potts rushed into the Triangle at St. Frank's, and he quickly gathered a crowd of Removites round him. Handforth was demanding to know what it was all about, when Nipper arrived on the scene.

"Steady, Jimmy, old son!" he said. "Don't get so excited. What's it all about?"

"I heard it quite by accident," said Jimmy breathlessly. "I hadn't the faintest idea that I should get hold of anything important."

He explained how he had hidden behind the hedge in order to let the River House fellows go by, and then he went into details concerning what he had overheard.

"They've bought a whacking great wireless set for their Common-room!" he explained tensely. "Everybody in the Fourth has contributed, according to what I heard. The set must have arrived at the station, and they've gone down to collect the box. They're bringing it back on a Scouts' truck."

Handforth was inclined to be indignant.

"Well, what the dickens does it matter?" he demanded. "Blow their wireless set! What's the idea of getting so jolly excited?"

But Nipper's eyes were gleaming.

"My dear old ass, don't you realise the possibilities?" he said. "Jimmy's right! Here's our chance to make a raid!"

"My only hat!"

"You—you mean, raid the wireless set?"

"Why not?" said Nipper. "Brewster himself said that it would be practically public property. And we could do with a super-set in our Common-room, couldn't we?"

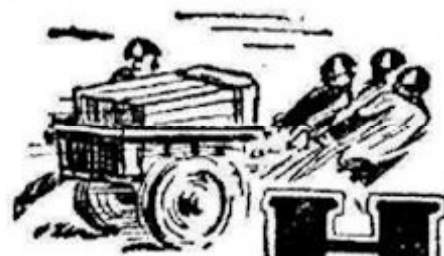
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Call the chaps together—and we'll go down in force!" said Nipper briskly. "It'll be a fair raid, and we shall do those River House bounders in the eye once again!"

But this time appearances were deceptive!

CHAPTER 9.

Nipper Nibbles the Bait!



H

AL BREWSTER grinned widely.

"Well, everything seems to have gone according to

schedule," he said with satisfaction. "We've only got to get the box on to the truck, and

then wheel it into the road, and the St. Frank's chaps will think that we have just come from the station."

"Nothing easier!" chuckled Ascott.

"They'll be in pretty strong force, so we shall have every excuse for bunking and leaving the spoils in their hands," continued Brewster. "But, of course, we shall have to put up a pretty stiff fight to begin with."

Kingswood made a wry face.

"Then it's not going to be all honey!" he remarked. "Those fatheads might lay into us like the very dickens! And I expect we shall be hopelessly outnumbered. A jape's a jape, but I don't see why we should get black eyes and thick ears——"

"No need for that, my son!" interrupted Brewster. "We'll just pretend to scrap at first, and then we'll bolt. Of course, they'll feel all the more pleased, and they'll call us a set of weaklings. Then they'll carry the booty off, and they'll get the surprise of their lives when they find that they've only collared a lot of old logs of wood!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The River House juniors had got back to their rendezvous, and they now prepared to get busy on the next move in the game. A Scouts' hand-truck was pulled from amongst the bushes and placed close alongside the heavy wooden case. Just then Driscoll came running up.

"Better look sharp!" he panted. "I believe those bounders are coming down the lane already! They mustn't see us taking this box out of the wood, or they'll smell a rat!"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Brewster briskly. "My hat! They haven't lost much time!"

He hastily fastened the iron clasps, and the lid was tightly secured.

"We were going to put ropes round it, but there isn't time now!" said Glynn hurriedly. "Not that it matters. It's labelled and everything."

The box certainly looked as though it had come by railway. It was addressed to Hal Brewster, at the River House School, and there were big placards stuck over it—"With Care"—"This Side Up"—"Do Not Crush"—and similar legends.

"Wait a tick!" panted Brewster. "We'd better shove one or two nails in. It'll look all the more realistic, you know. The clasps aren't sufficient. Besides, it might jerk open before they get the thing to St. Frank's."

They had brought hammer and nails, and it only took them a few moments to drive a few of the latter in. Naturally, the box had been brought to this spot empty, and plenty of rough logs had been found in the wood.

"Whew! She's heavy!" gurgled Ascott, as he helped with the lifting.

"All the better!" grinned Hal. "They'll think it's a tremendously valuable prize."

The box was soon on the truck, and then the latter was pushed through the gap in the hedge, and the danger was now over. The St. Frank's fellows could come along as

soon as they pleased. In fact, the sooner the better.

There were about a dozen River House fellows, all told, and half of them commenced pulling and pushing the truck, whilst the others marched along, fore and aft, as a kind of bodyguard.

Brewster & Co. came along the lane briskly, and it wasn't until they turned the bend that they beheld an immense crowd of St. Frank's juniors bearing down upon them. Nipper and Handforth and Reggie Pitt were in the lead, and there must have been a couple of dozen others. They gave a yell of triumph when they beheld the enemy.

"River House rotters!"

"Down on 'em!"

"Hurrah!"

Brewster & Co. came to a sudden halt, apparently confused and startled.

"Quick, you fellows!" roared Brewster at the top of his voice. "They're too many for us! We can't risk a scrap!"

"But what are we going to do?" asked Ascott in alarm.

"Bolt!" yelled Brewster. "Bring that truck round—and look lively! Come on—all of you!"

The truck was swung round, and then, helter-skelter, the whole River House contingent took to their heels. With a perfect roar of miscellaneous war-cries, the St. Frank's battalion gave chase.

"Come on—come on!" urged Brewster anxiously.

"They're gaining!" exclaimed Kingswood. "Quicker, you chaps—quicker!"

If Nipper & Co. had had any doubts, they were dispelled now. For Brewster and his merry men seemed to be in the last throes of consternation and dismay. They were running like hares, dragging the truck along with them. But, of course, the whole thing was hopeless from the very start. The Saints were not hampered by any truck, and so they were easily able to overtake their rivals. Foot by foot, they gained, and at last Brewster decided that the time had come to show fight.

"We can't do it!" he roared. "Stop, you chaps! We've got to fight it out!"

"They mustn't get this box!" yelled Kingswood frantically.

"Great Scott, no!"

"Don't let 'em get our wireless set!"

The breathless Commoners turned at bay, and Hal Brewster ran forward towards the oncoming Removites, his face red, his eyes aglow with alarm.

"Pax!" he shouted desperately.

"Pax be blowed!" roared Handforth. "This is a raid!"

"Yes, rather!" sang out Nipper. "Sorry, Brewster, but——"

"Oh, I say, cheese it!" interrupted Brewster. "You can't raid this box, you chaps! It's ours!"

"Just collected from the station, eh?" grinned Fullwood. "If it's all the same to you, my sons, we'll take charge of it!"

Brewster worked up a very realistic indignation.

"You—you burglars!" he shouted furiously. "This box is ours! You can't come along and bone it like this!"

"Watch us!" grinned Handforth.

"But—but it's not tuck!" hooted Brewster. "It's not fair to raid anything else but tuck——"

"Rot!" broke in Handforth. "All's fair in love and war, my lad! We know what your game is, and we know that that box contains a big wireless set for your Common-room! Well, we're going to have it in our Common-room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're dished again, Brewster!" said Nipper cheerily. "Are you going to give in sensibly, or will you show fight? Don't forget that we're in strong force——"

"Blow you!" yelled Brewster. "We're not going to knuckle under like this! What do you say, you chaps?" he demanded, whirling round upon his followers.

"No fear!" they shouted. "River House for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with St. Frank's!"

Brewster & Co. formed themselves into a square, clenched their fists, and prepared for the onslaught. From first to last, the thing had been done with remarkable realism.

Little did the St. Frank's crowd guess that their River House rivals had come prepared for all this, and that they were actually anxious for that important-looking packing-case to be raided!



CHAPTER 10.

To the Victors, the Spoils!

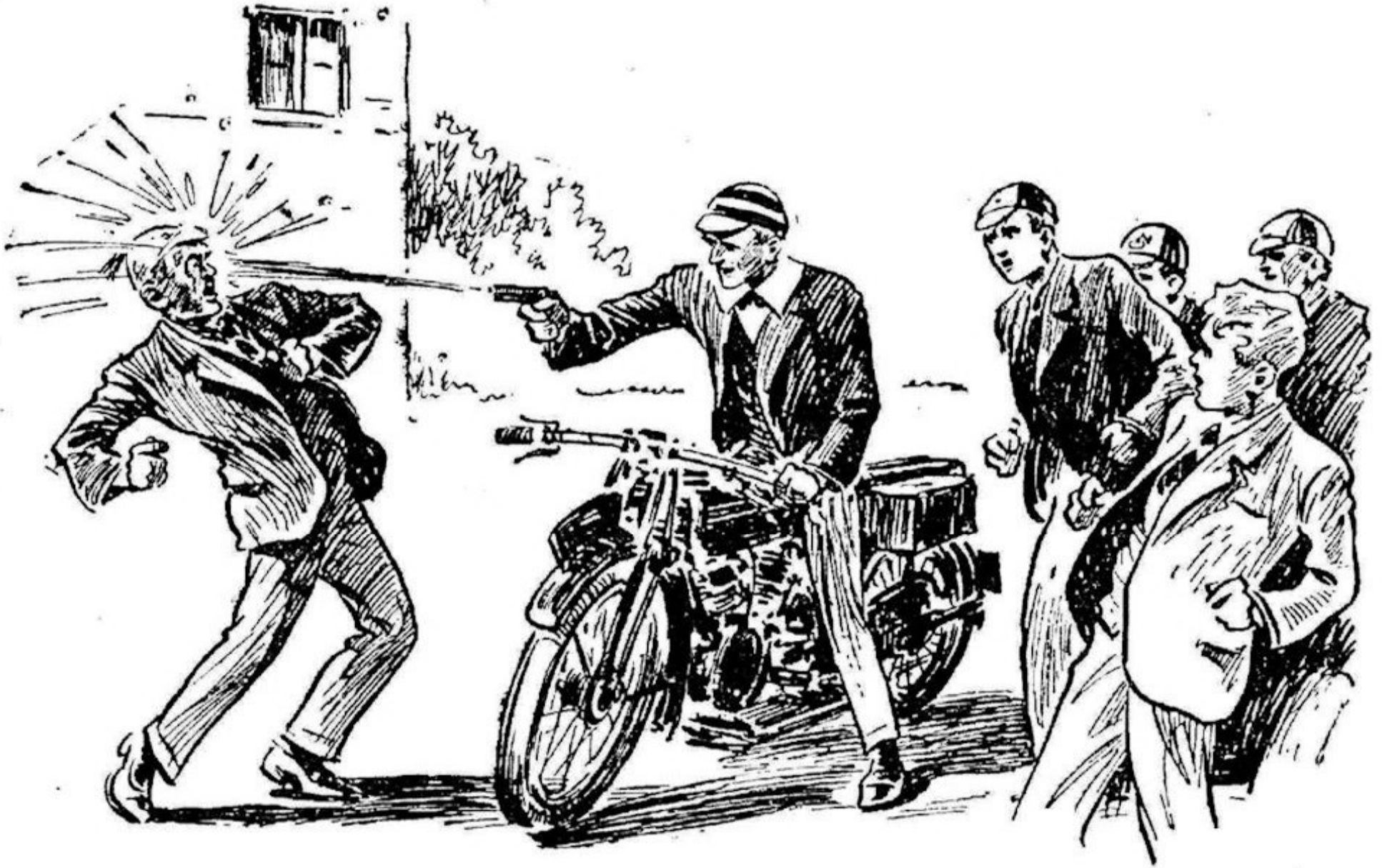
"G OOD gad! A spot of bother, what?"

Archie Glenthorne, of the Ancient House, turned the bend in

the lane, and his monocle dropped out of his eye. He had known nothing of the excitement, and he came upon the scene at the crucial moment. The St. Frank's juniors had just flung themselves with all their might into the battle. And Brewster & Co. were fighting desperately.

"What ho!" said Archie, rolling up his sleeves. "In other words, on the ball! Odds scraps and battles! This is where Archie leaps into the good old front line! St. Frank's for ever, and all that sort of rot!"

As a rule, Archie avoided any kind of a fight, since it was liable to make a mess of his immaculate clothing. But just lately there had been so many scraps with the River House fellows that he had grown accustomed to them. He felt that it was his duty to back up his Form-fellows whenever a "mill" developed.



"This is Nipper's present!" said Travers. He pulled the trigger of the small pistol he held, and a long thin line of blackness squirted out and spread itself over Hal Brewster's face.

And this one in the lane appeared to be an outsize in scraps.

Archie hurled himself forward, and entered into the spirit of the battle with tremendous gusto. Not that his help was needed. Already Brewster & Co. were showing signs of weakening.

"Stand firm, you chaps!" gasped Brewster. "We're not beaten yet! We mustn't let these chaps get that box!"

"Never!" panted Ascott. "After all the trouble we've taken—"

"It's as good as ours already, my lad!" said Handforth enthusiastically, as he biffed Ascott in the ribs, and then landed a beauty on Kingswood's nose. "Come on! What's the matter with you fatheads? Why don't you fight?"

"One more rush—and we'll have them on the run!" roared Nipper. "Come on—all together!"

"Hurrah!"

"Absolutely!"

"Now then—let it go!"

Even if it had been a genuine scrap, Brewster & Co. would have stood no chance. But, as it was, they decided that this was the moment for retreat. After all, there was no sense in getting themselves battered and bruised just for the sake of a jape. They had carried the affair on sufficiently to give the enemy the impression that there was no spoof about all this.

"It's no good, you chaps!" panted Hal Brewster. "We can't do it! They've beaten us! We'd better bunk!"

"It's the only thing!" gurgled Driscoll.

"Bunk!" howled Ascott, in realistic dismay. "But—but what about our box?"

"We shall have to leave it!" replied Brewster.

"Oh, my goodness!"

The River House fellows retreated. They did not wait for another rush by the St. Frank's fellows. They bolted down the lane, and came to a halt after they had reached a respectable distance. Then they turned, and shook their fists at their rivals.

"Yah! Rotters!"

"Raiders!"

"That's our box, you St. Frank's burglars!"

Nipper & Co., who had gathered round the prize, yelled with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Brewster!" grinned Nipper. "This is one of your unlucky days, my son! In fact, you've had two unlucky days in succession!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All right—you wait!" hooted Brewster furiously. "You've only whacked us this time because you're a stronger force."

"Well, it was your own fault!" shouted Handforth. "If you will go about collecting wireless sets on trucks, you ought to provide a stronger escort. Why didn't you bring the whole Fourth with you? Then you might have stood some chance of whacking us. Not much chance, of course," he added cheerfully. "In fact, not one chance in a giddy million!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hal Brewster shook both his fists at the raiders.

"We'll have our revenge for this!" he said threateningly.

"Splendid!" said Nipper. "If you want your wireless set again, just come along to St. Frank's and take it from the Ancient House Common-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course," said Nipper, "it may need a bit of taking, but you never know your luck."

"All right—crow away!" shouted Brewster. "You think you're jolly clever, but we'll get our own back one of these days."

"We'll think of you while we're listening to the wireless this evening!" sang out Fullwood gaily. "Thanks very much for the set, you chaps. It's just what we needed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a lot of robbers!" said Kingswood angrily.

"Here, steady!" protested Nipper. "A raid is a raid, and we are perfectly justified in seizing this box."

"Yes, of course you are," admitted Brewster. "Dry up, Kingswood, you ass!"

"What the dickens——" began Kingswood.

"We'll do the same to the Saints one day!" went on Brewster. "If they can raid our property like this, it gives us leave to raid theirs. And, by jingo, we'll get our own back with interest!"

"Hear, hear!" roared all the other River House fellows.

The St. Frank's juniors howled with merriment. Brewster & Co., still shaking their fists, retired, and vanished from sight. Brewster considered that the comedy had gone far enough. There might be an anticlimax if they kept it up much longer. As it was, they had cleared off at the correct moment. Everything was perfectly natural.

"Well, we're not doing so badly on the whole!" chuckled Nipper, as he inspected the prize. "Come along, you fellows. Let's take this straight up to the school, and into the Common-room. We'll unpack it there, and fix it up straight away."

"Good egg!"

"Wait a minute!" said Reggie Pitt politely. "There's just one little point that needs to be settled. Where do we come in?"

"Eh?" said Handforth.

"Where," said Reggie, "do we come in? It's a fat lot of good to us West House fellows to have a wireless set fixed up in the Ancient House Common-room, isn't it? Don't we get a share of this loot?"

Nipper grinned.

"My dear chap, we can't cut a wireless set in two, can we?" he asked. "But as the Remove is divided between two Houses we'd better settle the thing in the easiest way."

"There's nothing like a perfect understanding," nodded Reggie.

"Well, I suggest that the Ancient House has the set this term, and the West House next term," said Nipper. "Then we can keep it up like that—turn and turn about. Are you West House fellows satisfied?"

"It doesn't matter whether they're satisfied or not! We've got the wireless set!" said Handforth aggressively. "Besides, there aren't more than half a dozen West House chaps amongst us. I don't see why they should have the giddy thing at all! If they want to listen to the wireless, they can come to our Common-room!"

"Hear, hear!" chimed in the other Ancient House juniors.

"That's all very well——" began Jack Grey.

"Cheese it, my sons," grinned Nipper. "We don't want to squabble over the plunder, do we? And it isn't a very wise policy to stand here, arguing. Brewster & Co. might get some reinforcements, and swoop down on us again. So the sooner we get to St. Frank's the better!"

"Yes, there's something in that!" admitted Handforth, glancing down the lane.

Without any further ado, the truck was seized, and conveyed in triumph to St. Frank's.

In all probability, there would be no further squabbling about the contents of this packing-case when once its character was disclosed!



CHAPTER 11.

Not What They Expected!

"HERE we are!" said Handforth briskly.

They were in the Ancient House Common-room, and the big packing-case was set down on the floor, and the juniors who had been carrying it stood back and wiped their heated brows. Other juniors were crowding in, anxious to join in the triumph. They wanted to see what kind of a radio set it was.

Even those fellows who had always professed a contempt for wireless were now eager. It made rather a difference when they remembered that this set was a prize of war. It had cost them nothing, and it was to be public property. And Brewster & Co. had been dished. So there was every reason for general satisfaction.

"Buck up and open it!" said Harry Gresham briskly.

"Yes: let's get some crowbars, or something!" put in De Valerie.

"Rats! There's no need for that!" said Nipper. "The box is only secured by these iron clasps—— Just a minute, though," he added. "There are nails as well."

"Oh, they'll soon come out!" said Handforth impatiently. "Never knew such a fuss over opening a giddy box! Leave it to me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If it's all the same to you, Handy, dear old fellow, we want to have a look at this wireless set," said Travers smoothly. "And if we leave it to you the whole afternoon will be wasted in arguments."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you silly ass!" roared Handforth. "If you're asking for a punch on the nose, Vivian Travers——"

"I'm not!" said Travers promptly. "Make no mistake, Handy—I'm not! I never ask for things like that."

It did not take the juniors long to unfasten the iron clasps, and then somebody brought a poker, and prepared to use it on the lid, with the idea of forcing the nails out.

"Go easy!" said Nipper. "This is a good case, and there's no need to smash it up. If we use a little care——"

"What's the matter?" asked Tommy Watson, as Nipper paused.

A rather startled expression had come into the Remove skipper's face. He was staring at the big packing-case in wonder—and suspicion. All in a flash his previous cheeriness had gone.

"My only hat!" he breathed. "I wonder——"

He broke off again, rather breathless.

"What are you wonderin' about, dear old boy?" asked Tregellis-West.

"My sons, we've been spoofed!" said Nipper steadily.

"What?"

"Spoofed!"

"But—but——"

"We've been spoofed!" repeated Nipper deliberately. "There's no wireless set in this box."

"How the dickens do you know that, before the box has been opened?" asked Handforth tartly. "You may have good eyes, Nipper, but I'm dashed if you can see through solid wood!"

"I may not be able to see through solid wood, but I know jolly well that wireless sets don't move about of their own accord!" retorted Nipper grimly. "Just now this box quivered—it fairly shook! And nobody was touching it!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"It's a jape!" continued Nipper. "And now I come to think of it, it *was* a bit rash for Brewster & Co. to take delivery of this box themselves, wasn't it? They were asking for it to be raided. If they had only had it sent by the railway wagon, there would have been no risk at all!"

"For the love of Samson!" murmured Travers.

"Look—look!"

Nobody was taking any notice of Nipper now. All eyes were directed towards the big packing-case. Most of the fellows had been disinclined to credit Nipper's statement; but they were disinclined no longer. For the box was positively quivering, and now there came the sound of heavy thuds from within.

"We didn't notice anything before, because the box had always been on the move!" said Nipper. "Of course, there's a River House chap inside. Well, he's asking for trouble!"

"And we'll give him some!" said Handforth indignantly. "Of all the nerve! Diddling us out of our wireless set!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear old fellows, forgive me for butting in, but don't you think that another explanation is possible?" asked Travers smoothly. "Don't you think it's far more probable that this box contains a St. Frank's inhabitant?"

"Great Scott!" said Nipper. "I expect you've hit it, Travers!"

"A Removite, no doubt," nodded Travers. "A solitary unfortunate, grabbed by Brewster & Co., and——"

"We'll soon see!" interrupted Nipper briskly.

But then, before anybody could attempt to force open the lid, there came a number of heavy, devastating thuds from within the big packing-case. The lid actually bulged and bent, and then one corner of it split open.

"Here, steady!" gasped Fullwood. "You'll only hurt yourself, you ass! We're going to open this lid——"

Crash!

With a final splintering of wood, the lid flew open and shot back with such force that two or three fellows in the rear were nearly hit. They only just dodged back in the nick of time.

"Look!" screamed Duncan.

Half rising out of the packing-case was a hairy, grotesque figure. All those Removites stood spellbound, rooted to the floor in amazement and alarm.

This was no unfortunate St. Frank's junior! The thing was an animal—a brown, hunched, hairy creature, with long arms, and with a hideous face!

"The gorilla!" gasped Handforth frantically.

Until that moment, all the juniors had forgotten about the gorilla that had escaped from the circus in Bannington. And here it was—here, in this box!

The creature had risen now, and it was standing there, gripping the edge of the woodwork, looking round with beady, gleaming eyes. The teeth were bared—great, ugly fangs. The animal was terrifying in aspect.

Just for one fleeting second Nipper had a suspicion that it was a jape, after all. This was only a River House fellow, dressed up—just a wheeze, to scare the St. Frank's boys. But then, in another flash, Nipper knew that this theory was untenable.

No human being could disguise himself so cleverly as this! It was a real gorilla—the genuine article! The great, long arms—the huge head, with its enormous ears, and with those horrible fangs——

At that moment the gorilla opened its mouth and uttered a screaming, gurgling cry. It was a bloodcurdling cry, and the last shred of doubt fled.

Comedy had turned to drama—and the Common-room was now a place of deadly danger!



CHAPTER 12.

Monkey Business!

THE spell only lasted for a few seconds. Then the juniors started backing away—frantically, madly. Panic-stricken, they nearly fell over themselves in their anxiety to get as far as possible from this unwelcome visitor.

Most of the fellows were still bewildered and scared. They were not able to think clearly. Nipper, perhaps, was the only one to keep a perfectly clear head.

"Easy, you chaps—easy!" he said earnestly. "There's danger here—and if we get into a panic one of us might get killed! Don't let the brute know that we're afraid of it!"

"We're not afraid of it!" said Handforth, automatically pushing up his sleeves.

Nipper seized Handforth's arm, and dragged him back.

"Don't start any of your rot, Handy!" he said tensely. "And we needn't fool ourselves. We *are* afraid! This gorilla is dangerous. It could kill one of us at a blow, if it liked. We've got to go easy—and we've got to—"

"Look out!" yelled Hubbard wildly. The gorilla was rising higher out of the box, and it was evidently his intention to emerge.

"Quick!" shouted Nipper. "Come on, you chaps! The only chance we've got is to shut that lid down again—and bottle him up!"

There was a sudden rush. Handforth and Travers and Nipper and two or three other valiants made a plucky attempt to imprison the dangerous-looking monster. But before they could swing the lid down the gorilla uttered another screaming cry, and leapt a clear six feet into the air. He landed with a thud on the floorboards, and swung round, his long arms reaching out menacingly.

"Good gad!" gurgled Archie, backing away.

"Quick—the door!" panted somebody.

Those juniors nearest the door tried to get at the handle. A sort of panic took place over on that side of the room, and it seemed ages before the door was opened. Then there was such a rush to get out that the fellows jammed themselves in the doorway.

"Steady—steady!" shouted Nipper. "You're only making things worse, you idiots! Take it calmly!"

But if the juniors were scared, so was the gorilla.

This, indeed, was the only gratifying feature of the startling situation. Without question, the brute could easily have killed any one of those boys if he had made a sudden rush. But his journey in the box, and his confusion at finding himself surrounded by these youngsters, probably had the effect of frightening him a great deal.

He slowly turned round, his fangs still showing, his eyes glittering evilly.

"Don't move, any of you!" said Nipper tensely. "Don't run! If you do, he'll probably make a rush, and grab you! For goodness' sake, keep calm!"

"Why not make a sudden dash at him?" suggested Handforth breathlessly. "If three or four of us grab him from behind—"

"No good, Handy!" interrupted Nipper. "He's got the strength of ten of us. If we attacked him, he'd do awful damage. As long as he keeps peaceful, let's—"

Nipper broke off. The gorilla, with a sudden rush, leapt on one of the tables. There was a wild scramble amongst the juniors. Then, with a bound that was astonishing in its agility, the animal jumped to the top of a bookcase, clawed his way upwards, and finally crouched upon one of the cross-timbers that ran along the ceiling. These were of polished oak, and were distinctly ornamental to the Common-room.

"Thank goodness!" said Nipper, with relief. "Can't you see, you chaps? He's more frightened than we are! Anyhow, we're safe for the time being!"

"Help—help!" yelled Hubbard, at the top of his voice.

"Keep quiet, you idiot!" roared Handforth. "What's the good of howling for help?"

"Perhaps somebody will come with a gun!" gasped Hubbard. "The brute ought to be shot! He'll—he'll kill somebody—"

"All of you had better get out into the passage!" said Nipper evenly. "Don't rush—take it calmly. Handy! Travers! Help me to close these windows, will you?"

"Any old thing," said Travers coolly. "But what's the idea?" asked Handforth, with his usual obstinacy.

"Luckily, we haven't come to any harm—and there's no reason why we should," replied Nipper. "We'll close these windows, and then go out and lock the door. The beggar will be bottled up in the Common-room, then. Afterwards we can telephone to Bannington, and collect the twenty-five quid reward!"

"Great Scott!"

"We'd forgotten about the reward!"

"My only hat!"

Nipper's calmness was spreading. In less than a minute the windows were closed; all the fellows were outside, in the passage, and the door was locked.

"My goodness!" breathed Gresham. "I thought he was going to get one of us!"

Some of the juniors, further along the passage, were talking excitedly; they were preparing to rush out into the lobby, and to tell everybody else about this startling affair.

"Hold on, there!" sang out Nipper. "Let's keep this to ourselves for the moment. There'll only be a terrific sensation if we don't. And some of the domestics might go into hysterics!"

"I'm blessed if I can understand it!" said Reggie Pitt, scratching his head. "It's a mystery! I can't believe that Brewster &

Co. would deliberately play such a horrible trick on us!"

"That's what I've been thinking!" said Fullwood. "Yet these River House bounders did play a jape, didn't they? They must have known that there was no wireless set in that box!"

"Of course they knew it!" replied Nipper. "They must have seen Jimmy Potts coming down the lane, and they shouted all those things about the wireless set just to spoof him."

"The tricky bounders!" said Potts indignantly.

"Then they must have shoved that gorilla in the box!" said Fullwood angrily. "What a dirty trick! I thought better of Brewster—"

"Oh, cheese it!" broke in Nipper. "How do you suppose they got the gorilla in the box? Of course they didn't do it!"

"Then how—"

"This isn't a time for answering riddles!" said Nipper impatiently. "I expect the explanation is quite simple. Those River House bounders probably left the box behind a hedge somewhere, and while they were gone the gorilla came along, got in the box, and closed the lid. Then he must have found himself imprisoned. Anyhow, I don't believe that Brewster & Co. knew the truth!"

This, as a matter of fact, was astonishingly near the actual truth.

For while Hal Brewster and his companions had been fooling Jimmy Potts, the gorilla had discovered the box, after wandering aimlessly out of the wood. Perhaps he had felt that the box would provide him with a good resting-place. At all events, he had quickly heaved the logs out, throwing them into a fern-smothered ditch, and then he had climbed inside, closing the lid on the top of him. Later, Brewster & Co. had nailed the box down without taking another look inside.

Now, the gorilla was a prisoner in the Common-room, and it wouldn't take long for Nipper to telephone to Bannington, and to get somebody from the circus to come along and capture the creature. That would mean a nice little reward of twenty-five pounds. In fact, the situation was not without its humorous side. For the River House fellows had unwittingly captured the gorilla, and had handed the prize to their rivals!



CHAPTER 13.

Getting Exciting!

RASH-crash!

"What was that?" gasped Harry Gresham.

All eyes were turned upon the Common-room door. A sudden splintering of glass had sounded, and a complete silence had followed.

"We'd better look!" said Handforth excitedly.

Nipper hurried to the Common-room door, turned the key, and opened the door an inch or two. He looked in cautiously, but could see no sign of the prisoner. He opened the door wider.

"Go easy!" said Tommy Watson. "He might be waiting—"

"Great Scott!" said Nipper blankly.

He flung the door wide open, and rushed into the room. The others, after a moment's hesitation, followed.

The gorilla had vanished!

One of the windows was smashed, and it was obvious that the creature had broken out, and was now at large again! This was a totally unexpected development. Even Nipper had not imagined that the brute would escape like that.

"There he goes!" shouted one of the juniors.

They rushed to the window, and they were just in time to see the lumbering form of the gorilla leap through one of the open windows of the School House. The Common-room, on this side, overlooked the junior wing of the School House, and by craning the watchers could see Big Arch. The gorilla had entered a window close by.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Handforth. "He's gone into the lab!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"What shall we do now?"

"Keep cool—that's what we've got to do!" replied Nipper grimly. "This affair is getting serious, my sons! That beastly gorilla will have the whole school in a panic before long, and there's no telling what harm he will do. He's got to be captured—and quickly!"

"Well, whoever captures him, the twenty-five quid will be ours!" argued Handforth. "We brought him to St. Frank's, and—"

"Never mind about the twenty-five quid now!" said Nipper. "If we ever do touch that money, we shall have to thank Brewster & Co. It was very decent of them to capture the thing and then hand it over to us."

"Decent!" said Hubbard excitedly. "It was an awful thing to do!"

"They didn't do it intentionally," said Reggie Pitt. "I'll bet Brewster & Co. knew nothing about the gorilla. Still, we shall hear all the facts later on. The main thing, at the moment, is to get that brute, and to lock him up somewhere where he can't do any damage."

"We'd better warn the school, too!" said McClure.

"Ass!" snorted Handforth.

"But, Handy—"

"If the masters get to know anything about this, we shall all be ordered indoors!" said Handforth. "Then we shan't be able to take any part in the capture! The best thing is to buzz to the laboratory, lock the gorilla inside, and then barricade the doors and windows!"

"Yes, that's possible," said Nipper. "Nobody seems to have seen the beast yet."



The juniors, looking through the laboratory window, gasped in horror. For the gorilla had reached out both his enormous arms and, lifting Professor Tucker from the floor, had whirled him high into the air!

Everything's quiet outside. My hat! What a game!"

The more nervous juniors amongst the crowd decided that they would have nothing to do with the hunt. Gorillas were all very well in the Zoo, when they were behind bars, but it was rather too much of a good thing to have one of the creatures wandering about St. Frank's. There was a rush upstairs, where the fellows locked themselves in their bedrooms and went to the windows to watch developments.

But the more determined juniors, such as Nipper and Handforth and Travers and Pitt, rushed to their studies, armed themselves with cricket stumps, and then sallied out on the hunt.

As Nipper remarked, as they went towards the School House, the sooner the gorilla was captured the better. There was no time to go about warning the rest of the school.

In the meantime, some rather curious events were taking place in the laboratory.

As it happened, the sole occupant of the lab was Professor Sylvester Tucker, the absent-minded science master. Professor Tucker had really shut himself away in order to make some adjustments to his powerful telescope. Astronomy was the professor's hobby, and nothing else really mattered in his life.

Having arrived in the laboratory, the professor had forgotten what he had come for. Now he was slowly pacing up and down, completely lost in thought. An idea had occurred to him—a theory concerning a certain constellation of stars that he had been concentrating upon of late.

It was an exciting theory—a startling, stupendous theory.

At least, it was to the professor. Any ordinary individual would no doubt have been unmoved by such a problem. But Professor Tucker was almost overwhelmed by the possibilities.

"I am convinced," he said, coming to a halt and removing his spectacles, "that these stars are a positive menace to the solar system. And if my calculations are correct, there will be a devastating collision two hundred million years from now."

This was indeed a staggering thought.

"Yes, a collision!" said the professor firmly. "And there can be no doubt in such a cataclysm the solar system will be completely wiped out. Good heavens! What a catastrophe!"

Exactly why Professor Tucker should be so startled was a bit of a puzzle. Certainly, he would never live for two hundred million years to witness this disaster, and any

average individual would doubtless have received the news with stoicism and calmness.

"I do not believe for a moment that the collision will occur prior to that date," continued the professor, absent-mindedly laying his glasses on one of the benches and walking away in deep thought. "I shall have to make very careful calculations— Dear me! What is this?"

He was passing one of the windows, and a shadow had fallen across him. Glancing up, he beheld a figure in the window. It was



The juniors, looking through the laboratory window, and, lifting Professor Tucker

very blurry, for, without his glasses, the professor was more or less helpless. He could only see things through a kind of mist.

"Go away!" he said severely. "How dare you come here, interrupting me?"

He took it for granted that one of the

Loys had attempted to climb in through the window. Actually, the gorilla was skulking there—on the window-sill—eyeing Professor Tucker with calculating earnestness.

The professor felt for his glasses, imagining that he had left them on his forehead, as was his usual custom. But they were not there.

"Good gracious!" he said testily. "Who has had my spectacles? This is most annoying! As for you, sir," he added, turning to the window, "I will not be interrupted.



For the gorilla had reached out both his enormous arms and had whirled him high into the air!

"Leave me in peace!"

The gorilla was apparently satisfied that Professor Tucker was not dangerous. He gave a leap and landed on the floor. Then he stepped sideways, still eyeing the professor with that steady, baleful glare.

"How dare you!" said the science master angrily. "Did I not tell you to go, boy?"

Possibly the gorilla recognised that Professor Tucker was in no way afraid of him. At all events he moved cautiously aside, maintaining his stare. If the professor had bolted he might easily have attacked him.

"Who are you?" demanded the professor impatiently. "Where are my glasses? Can you see my glasses anywhere, boy? If so, give them to me at once!"

The gorilla did not deign to make any reply.

"I shall get angry with you!" said the professor warmly. "What do you mean by ignoring me like this? Who are you, young man? Let me have your name!"

The gorilla opened his mouth, bared his fangs, and uttered that horrifying screaming cry of his.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the professor, with a start. "What in the world— How dare you?" he said hotly. "You young rascal! What do you mean by making those outrageous noises?"

He advanced upon the blur and reached out a hand. It was his intention to seize this boy by the scruff of his neck and to thrust him out of the laboratory.

But the gorilla dodged and avoided that grip. He was still uncertain regarding this strange human being who expressed no fear of him.

And at that moment a crowd of juniors arrived at the open window.



CHAPTER 14.

Rough on the Professor!

"WELL, well!" murmured Vivian Travers.

He and the other fellows had half-expected to find the laboratory empty, except for the unwelcome intruder. They were astonished to find, therefore, Professor Tucker engaged in a heated, if one-sided, conversation with that savage-looking gorilla.

"Great Scott!" said Handforth blankly.

Some of the other fellows had gone to a window further along, and these were gazing into the laboratory, too. They hesitated to enter, lest they should cause the gorilla to make a sudden attack.

"I am growing tired of this nonsense!" said the professor testily. "Good gracious, boy, do you not realise that I am in the middle of a most intricate problem? How dare you come here, interrupting me in this way? I order you to go!"

before their eyes. But the gorilla only gave his victim a heave, and sent him crashing on to a bench near by. The professor was bumped, but he was scarcely hurt. Then the intruder leapt across the laboratory in a couple of bounds, and took refuge on another bench, at the far end of the big apartment. There were some bottles handy, and he picked one up, and tossed it on to the floor.

Crash!

The bottle broke, and a mass of whitish vapour arose as the chemical spread over the lino.

"Look here, you chaps, we've got to get the professor out of this!" said Nipper urgently. "Are you game?"

"Yes!" panted two or three of the others.

"Then come on!"

The juniors leapt into the laboratory, and rushed across to the bench. Fortunately, they took no notice of the professor's protests, but they whirled him over towards the window, half expecting the gorilla to attack them at any second. No attack came, and they succeeded in getting the professor out, and then they rushed him across the Triangle towards the Ancient House.

"It's all right, sir!" said Nipper quickly. "You're safe now!"

"This is an outrage!" said the unfortunate professor. "I shall have you severely punished!"

"You don't understand, sir!" interrupted Nipper. "There's a big gorilla in the laboratory, and it was this brute that grabbed you!"

"A—a gorilla!" ejaculated the professor, in amazement.

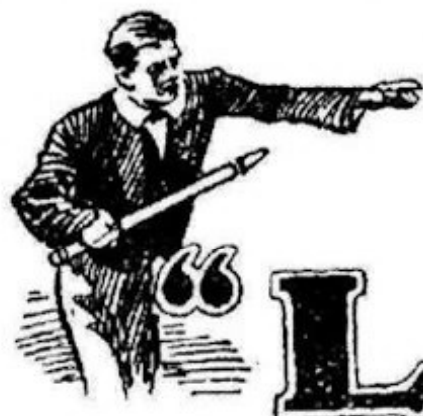
"Yes, sir!"

"Ridiculous!" said the professor, as he found himself on his feet. "Preposterous! How dare you tell me such a fantastic story! You know very well that gorillas do not walk about openly, entering laboratories!"

It was hopeless to argue with him. So they left him on the Ancient House steps, and rushed back towards the laboratory. The next thing was to bottle the gorilla up, and keep him a prisoner.

But they were too late.

Even as they rushed across the Triangle, a brown form appeared at one of the windows, and took a flying leap into the open!



CHAPTER 15.

More Excitement!

LOOK out!"

"He's escaped again!"

The Removites halted, gripping their

cricket-stumps grimly. But there was really no need for them to worry, for the startled animal was making for Big Arch, his idea

evidently being to get away from all this noise and commotion.

No doubt the gorilla had been in captivity all his life, and his recent freedom had wearied him. He was now bewildered and scared. Indeed, the creature was more to be pitied than anything else. Obviously, in his present state, he was not likely to attack anybody unless he himself was goaded.

The main idea of the Removites was to capture the brute as quickly as possible. They felt responsible, since they had brought him into the school. The fact that they had done so all unconsciously made little difference. But for them St. Frank's would never have seen this alarming visitor.

"What are we going to do now?" asked Handforth blankly.

"Follow him!" replied Nipper. "And, if possible, we'll keep him in the open. It would be simply awful if he got into the Head's house. Come on—and let's go carefully!"

By this time the gorilla had vanished into the gloom of Big Arch. But, as it happened, Cuthbert Chambers and Bryant of the Fifth were coming through into the Triangle from the opposite direction. They didn't see the gorilla until they were actually within the shadow of Big Arch.

"My dear chap, you can leave it to me!" Chambers was saying, in his pompous way. "When I make a promise I— Hallo! What the— By glory! What's that?"

He and Bryant came to a halt, petrified.

"It's an animal!" gasped Bryant. "A—monkey of some kind! Great Scott! It's the gorilla!"

"Help!" breathed Chambers.

With one accord, they turned and ran. Nobody could really blame them. For in the shadow of Big Arch the menacing, crouching figure of the gorilla, with his enormous arms and his hideous countenance, might well have scared the stoutest heart.

But the sudden movements of Chambers and Bryant scared the gorilla, too. He gave a leap into the air, bolted back, and then ran across, with a lumbering trot, towards the Modern House.

"Here he comes!" shouted Handforth. "Let's head him off!"

"Look here!" said Nipper quickly. "Some of you fellows dash round to the bicycle shed. There's a big crate there, standing at the back."

"Yes, but what—"

"Some chap's new jigger was sent in it the other day," went on Nipper. "Bring it here—into the Triangle. Then we'll try to drive the gorilla into it. It's a strong crate, and he'll never get free once we have him inside."

"But—"

"Don't argue!" yelled Nipper. "It might be too late soon!"

Gresham and Fullwood and two or three others dashed off. Just then Bob Christine and Roddy Yorke and one or two others appeared in the Modern House doorway.

"What's all the excitement out here?" asked Bob Christine curiously. "What's the matter with you chaps?"

He and the other Fourth-Formers stared at the Removites in wonder. Nipper & Co. were looking flushed and excited and anxious. There was no apparent cause for their consternation.

"Go back!" yelled Reggie Pitt. "Look out, you asses! To your right—your right!"

"What the——" began Bob.

Then he dried up. He had just caught sight of the gorilla, advancing over the stone balustrade, near the steps. Naturally, Bob Christine and the other Fourth-Formers were staggered. It wasn't usual to stroll out of doors and to find a dangerous-looking monster like this in the Triangle.

"Don't let him get indoors!" shouted Nipper. "Get in, you chaps, and slam the doors!"

"And close all the windows!" shouted somebody else.

Bob Christine took a leap backwards, and the others followed his example. The next moment, the heavy doors of the Modern House were slammed to, and the gorilla, startled by the crash, leapt sideways, and

took a stand almost in the middle of the Triangle. He remained there, turning slowly round, watching the juniors, bewildered by all this noise and commotion.

"Poor beggar!" said Nipper. "He's frightened out of his life!"

"Yes, but he's dangerous!" said Watson breathlessly. "If he attacks any of us—Hi! Look out! He's coming!"

There was a rush. The gorilla had only made a small move, but the juniors nearly fell over themselves in backing away.

Things seemed to be at a deadlock for the moment.

The gorilla made no further move, and nobody quite knew what to do. During these tense moments loud voices could be heard from behind the Modern House door.

Mr. Horace Pycraft, in fact, was making himself unpleasant.

The ill-tempered master of the Fourth was in a hurry. He had decided to go to the village; and he was exasperated when he arrived in the lobby to find the doors closed, and a small group of Fourth-Formers standing there, apparently guarding the door.

"What is all this?" demanded Mr. Pycraft testily. "Why have you closed this door, Christine? Open it at once!"

ACTION!



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

"Cannot!" retorted Mr. Pycraft. "Indeed! And why not?"

"There's danger outside, sir——"

"What ridiculous nonsense!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft, pushing the juniors aside, and preparing to open the door. "I do not approve of these—ahem!—practical jokes!"

"It's not a joke, sir!" shouted Yorke. "There's a gorilla out there!"

"A what?"

"A gorilla!"

"How dare you say such absurd things, Yorke!" demanded Mr. Pycraft angrily. "Take two hundred lines for impertinence!"

"But it's true, sir!"

"If you repeat that assertion, Yorke, I will take you to my study and cane you!" threatened Mr. Pycraft. "A gorilla, indeed! Rubbish, boy—rubbish!"

"But we saw it, sir——"

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Pycraft, breathing hard. "Will you open these doors, or not? This is sheer, calculated insolence!"

"All right, sir—go out if you want to!" said Bob Christine grimly. "But you'll be sorry for it! Haven't you heard that a gorilla escaped from the circus——"

"Yes, and it was reported, this morning, that the animal had been captured!" said Mr. Pycraft tartly. "So you cannot deceive me with these nonsensical statements. No doubt some of the other boys are playing a—er—joke upon you. But I refuse to be involved in any such nonsense!"

Mr. Pycraft roughly pushed Christine out of the way, grasped the door, and swung it open. Then he strode out on to the steps.

Slam!

The heavy door closed behind him, and he heard the bolts shot. Christine & Co. were taking no chance. After all, Mr. Pycraft had asked for this, and he deserved everything that he was likely to get.

"How dare you?" shouted the Form-master angrily. "What do you mean, Christine, by slamming this door——"

Then he broke off. He had just caught sight of the gorilla, and his heart gave a wild leap. Mr. Horace Pycraft was not a man of iron nerve. He was, on the contrary, weedy and cowardly, and when he saw that gorilla his blood seemed to turn to water.

There it stood, not ten yards from him, slowly turning, eyeing the juniors—and now eyeing him. Its fangs were bared, and its eyes were glittering with evil purpose. At the first glance, Mr. Pycraft could see that this was no junior, dressed up. It was the real thing!

CHAPTER 16.

Mr. Pycraft Cools Down!



H

ELP!" screamed Mr. Horace Pycraft wildly. "Help—help!"

"Keep cool, sir!"

shouted Nipper. "He won't harm you unless you go for him. We're waiting for a crate to come, so that we can drive him into it——"

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft, leaping clean over the stone balustrade, and landing on the gravel of the Triangle.

He bolted, and it was the worst thing he could have done. For the gorilla, finding something unusual in this action, immediately gave a series of leaps, and went careering off in pursuit.

"Look out, sir—he's after you!" yelled Handforth.

"Save me!" babbled Mr. Pycraft.

"I'm fed up with this!" said Handforth, with a sudden determination in his voice. "The only thing to do is to grab that gorilla, and punch him in the eye! That'll subdue him!"

"Keep back, you ass!" urged Nipper.

Handforth, reckless as ever, was exasperated by the unnecessary delay. At least, it seemed unnecessary to him. However, Church and McClure seized their leader, and clung on to him like limpets.

"Cheese it, Handy!" gasped Church. "You'll only get killed!"

"Lemme go!" shouted Handforth angrily.

"Not likely!" said Mac. "Hang on, Churchy!"

By this time a number of other fellows had seized Handforth, too.

"Easy, dear old fellow," said Travers. "We're rather fond of you, and we don't want to see you torn limb from limb!"

"Lemme go!" hooted Handforth.

He struggled wildly, and he was hurled to the ground, and held there by a pile of juniors.

In the meantime, Mr. Pycraft had become aware of the fact that the gorilla was after him. He was panic-stricken—and nearly crazy with fright. Perhaps he realised that this was entirely his own fault; for, if he had taken notice of Bob Christine, he would not have come out into the Triangle at all.

"Help—help!" he bleated, in a feeble voice.

He gave a quick glance over his shoulder, and he nearly had heart-failure on the spot. The gorilla was just behind him, reaching out one of his long, hairy arms.

"Save me!" shrieked the Form-master.

He gave a mad leap sideways, and then made a rush at the fountain. It occurred to him that he might find safety by climbing the stonework. But in his haste he made a miscalculation.

With one leap, he reached the edge of the fountain-pool, and then he tried to throw himself upwards, so that he could grasp the stonework in the centre. Unhappily he overbalanced, and fell with a terrific splash in the centre of the pool.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In spite of the dramatic nature of the situation, the crowd of juniors could not help yelling with laughter.

There was something very funny in Mr. Pycraft diving face downwards into the pool.

The Form-master vanished amid a smother of foam and splashes.

Perhaps it was just as well for him that he had made this error. For the sudden tumult of water caused the gorilla to back away, and then he gave a series of sidelong leaps, until he reached the wall of the West House. He crouched there, at bay.

"What on earth are we going to do?" asked Nipper, frowning. "The poor brute is getting frightened out of its life. Yet we daren't go too near, because he might attack one of us."

By this time Mr. Pycraft's screams and shouts had attracted widespread attention. Prefects were running out, and Mr. Beverley Stokes, of the West House, appeared on the scene. Mr. Barnaby Goole, of the East House, sallied forth also. Nipper looked rather anxiously for Nelson Lee. Unfortunately, the latter was out with the Head at that particular hour.

"What on earth is the matter out here?" asked Mr. Stokes sharply.

"It's the gorilla, sir!" said Pitt, running up. "There he is—against the wall!"

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Barry Stokes, staring.

He took one look at the gorilla, and then his attention was attracted by Mr. Pycraft, who was now sitting up in the fountain-pool. Several prefects ran to Mr. Pycraft's aid, and they helped him out of the water.

"Guns—guns!" said the frightened Form-master. "Why can't you get guns, and shoot the monster? Shoot it, I say! It nearly killed me!"

"Easy, sir—easy!" said Morrow. "The gorilla doesn't seem to be dangerous. He hasn't attacked anybody yet."

"Just what I was thinking," remarked Fenton, the school captain. "These juniors have kept their heads better than some people!" he added pointedly. "And if we all keep calm, there's no reason why—"

He broke off, for at that moment a couple of the headmaster's grooms appeared on the scene. Both of them were carrying shot-guns. But they had not come in answer to Mr. Pycraft's appeal.

These men had heard about the gorilla some little time earlier—for the news had spread rapidly throughout the school. One of the other masters—Mr. Stockdale, of the Modern House—had sent a messenger for men with guns, and now they had arrived.

"By jingo! That's better!" said Jack Grey, with a sigh of relief. "We're safer now!"

Most of the other fellows agreed. There was something cheering in the sight of those guns. There was no longer any danger. A couple of rounds, and the dangerous brute would be put out of action.

"Where is he, sir?" asked one of the grooms, as he came running up to Mr. Stockdale.

"Over there!" said the Housemaster, pointing. "I am glad that you have come. There is a great deal of excitement here, and danger, too, probably."

The Triangle was packed. Removites and Fourth-Formers and Fifth-Formers had come crowding out; they were all standing round in a wide semi-circle. The gorilla, in the meantime, was keeping his place against the West House wall. He was eyeing the crowd cautiously, and he did not look particularly dangerous. In fact, the larger the crowd, the more the gorilla crouched back.

Just at that moment, when the men were about to raise their guns to their shoulders, Willy Handforth arrived on the scene.

The cheery young leader of the Third Form had been out with Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon. But he had heard a few rumours, and he had come running back. Willy, after one glance at the scene, darted forward.

"Go easy, there!" he shouted. "There's no need to shoot—yet!"

"Here!" said one of the grooms. "Get out of the way, young gent! You're in the line of fire!"

"And I mean to be!" said Willy grimly, as he faced the two men with the guns. "What's the idea of this? That gorilla is valuable! He belongs to a circus in Bannington!"

"He might kill some o' these young gents!" replied one of the men. "We've got to shoot him, and make sure—"

"Shoot him be blowed!" interrupted Willy indignantly. "The trouble is none of you know how to treat animals! I don't believe he's dangerous. There's no need to be scared because he looks ugly!"

And Willy, to the consternation of everybody, turned on his heel and walked straight up to the West House wall, where the gorilla was crouching!



CHAPTER 17.

Willy Does the Trick.

HANDFORTH MINOR!" shouted Mr. Stockdale, in alarm. "Stand back, you young rascal!"

"Yes, come back, you young idiot!" roared Handforth. "Hi, Willy! You mustn't—"

But it was too late. Willy had reached the gorilla's side, and he was now grinning cheerfully into the brute's face. There was something extraordinarily cool about the Third-Former's action. He hadn't hesitated for a second; he hadn't displayed the slightest fear. He walked up to the gorilla as though he had known it for years.

"Come along, old fellow—come along!" he said soothingly. "They've scared you, haven't they? But it's all right—you're safe enough!"

Perhaps there was something in Willy's voice—some quality which the animal understood. At all events, he made no attempt to attack the fag. He simply remained motion-



Hal Brewster and his two chums stared in dismay at the piece of cardboard propped up on the table, for written upon it were the words: "Dished again! Poor old half-wits! Nipper."

less, fixing his gaze upon Willy in a steadfast way.

"Come along, old fellow!" said Willy, gently seizing the gorilla's arm. "We're not going to hurt you. We're pals, aren't we? Anyhow, if we're not, we soon will be."

Everybody watched, fascinated.

This was a most unexpected development. Nobody had had time to stop Willy, and it would now have been a fatal mistake to make a sudden rush. So the only thing was to stand quite still, and look on—hoping for the best.

The gorilla was quite capable of killing Willy with practically one blow. Yet it was impossible to shoot the animal, especially with a shotgun, for Willy was too close.

Surprisingly enough, the fag remained unharmed.

Most of the juniors knew that he had a "way" with him where animals were concerned. It was almost uncanny. Willy had several pets, and he could make them do exactly as he pleased. They understood him in the most astonishing fashion.

As Handforth major had often said, it was just a gift—about the only gift that Willy possessed!

"That's better, isn't it?" said Willy cheerily. "Don't take any notice of those fatheads, my lad! We're pals, and we'll just ignore them, see? And as for shooting you, the idea is dotty! You're as harmless as a kitten!"

The gorilla looked at him inquiringly, and almost with softness in its eyes. The frightened look had gone, and the fangs were no longer bared.

Willy had seen something which the others had missed.

The gorilla was nearly worn out from exhaustion—and, on the top of that, it was frightened. Badly frightened. The crowds of juniors, pressing round him and following him about, had scared him severely. Apparently he knew, instinctively, that Willy was a friend.

There was nothing of bravado in the fag's behaviour, however; he was unconscious of doing anything noteworthy. Willy took it all as a matter of course. He understood animals, and he was never nervous of them. A savage dog, unapproachable by the majority of people, could be easily won over by the cheery leader of the Third. He had demonstrated this many times.

Willy knew, too, that gorillas are not the savage creatures that they are generally supposed to be. In actual fact, gorillas are generally timid, peace-loving creatures. Even in their wildest state, in the virgin forest, they will seldom attack human beings.

This particular gorilla had probably never seen a forest; the chances were that he had been born in captivity, and a kindly word acted like magic.

"Come along!" said Willy, giving the hairy arm a tug.

The gorilla moved a step or two, as docile as a puppy, but he paused and gazed uncertainly at the big semi-circle of watchers. Willy nodded.

"They're putting the wind up you, are they?" he said gruffly. "I thought so! Well, we'll soon alter that!"

He looked up, and found Mr. Stokes comparatively near.

"You might clear the Triangle, sir," he said earnestly. "He's all right, you know—only a bit windy. He'll be better if there aren't so many chaps looking on."

"Upon my soul!" said Mr. Stokes. "You had better leave him, Handforth minor. He might attack you—"

"Don't you believe it, sir," broke in Willy. "He's as friendly as you like."

"There is a crate here, which some of the boys have brought," said Mr. Stokes. "If you could induce the gorilla to enter it—"

"He won't need much inducing, sir," said Willy. "But I'm afraid he won't move until the crowd has dispersed. The poor beggar is too frightened. These chaps didn't know how to treat him."

Mr. Stokes turned, realising that Willy had the matter well in hand.

"All you boys must get out of sight," he said quickly. "Go indoors—or into the squares. At any rate, get out of the Triangle, and make as little noise as you can."

"But my minor will get hurt, sir!" protested Handforth.

"I think not," said Mr. Stokes quietly.

Very unwillingly the crowds dispersed. They went into the West Square and the East Square and through Big Arch into Inner Court. Others went through the main gates, and into the lane. Anywhere, in fact, so long as they became invisible.

Then, at last, when the Triangle was clear, Willy grinned at his strange companion.

"That's better, old man, isn't it?" he said in a kindly voice. "Now we'll see what can be done? I won't let them hurt you."

Astonishingly enough, the hairy, ferocious-looking brute now accompanied Willy without hesitation. It was really a remarkable sight—this fag strolling across the Triangle, arm in arm with the ungainly, fearsome-looking gorilla.

"It's a bit of a dirty trick, shoving you in' this crate, but I suppose it'll do for the time being," said Willy critically. "Anyhow, it's strong enough."

The gorilla walked right into the crate, and then Willy closed the end, and secured a number of ropes that had been placed ready. He had done the whole thing with consummate ease.

"Great Scott!" breathed Nipper, who was watching from behind one of the buttresses. "Willy's done it! The gorilla's in the crate!"

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"That kid's a wonder!"

From all sides the juniors and seniors came out, for it was clear that there was now no danger.

"Hurrah!"

"Well done, Willy!"

Excited shouts were ringing out, and many of the fellows were cheering, too. Willy ran forward, raising both his hands.

"Dry up!" he shouted urgently.

"You've done wonders, Willy!" said Fullwood enthusiastically.

"Never mind what I've done!" roared Willy. "Why can't you asses be quiet? Do you want to scare him again? If he gets really desperate, he'll soon smash this crate! He's harmless enough as long as he's treated properly. And he doesn't like a lot of noise."

Fortunately a diversion occurred at that moment.

A light motor-van drove in through the gateway, and a few shouts went up when it was seen that a big empty cage was loaded on the van.

NEXT WEDNESDAY!



Seated beside the driver was a tall, lean individual, rather flashily attired. He was wearing an anxious expression—but his eyes lighted up with relief and pleasure when he caught sight of the crate standing there in the Triangle.

"By gum, Jack, they've got him!" he said gladly.

"Looks like it, sir," said the driver.

The tall man jumped down, and he ran across the Triangle until he reached the crate. He was looking more relieved than ever after he had given the gorilla a brief inspection.

"It's all right, sir—there's nothing wrong with him," said Willy calmly.

"A bit tired, and scared," nodded the tall man. "Well, thank goodness he's been found. I've had a rare nightmare since yesterday, one way and another."

Mr. Stokes and Mr. Stockdale and two or three of the prefects approached the stranger.

"Does this animal belong to you?" asked Mr. Stokes briefly.

"It does, sir!" said the other. "My name's Wentworth — proprietor of Wentworth's Circus."

"Then I'm very glad you've come, Mr. Wentworth," said the Housemaster. "And I can assure you that we shall be very pleased if you will take this gorilla off the premises."

"You won't be as pleased as I shall be, sir!" said Mr. Wentworth heartily.

"MY ONLY SAINTED AUNT!"

Poor Brewster!

He and the other Fourth-Formers at the River House School have been "done in the eye" properly, and Nipper and his cheery supporters are crowing loud and long.

But is Brewster beaten?

He is not!

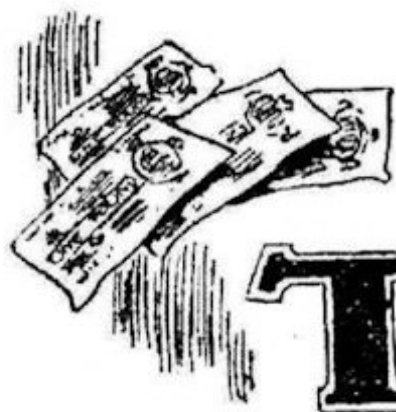
Brewster is a determined sort of chap, and he means to get his own back on the St. Frank's Removites "or bust in the attempt." And next week he thinks of an idea; a stunning, amazing, marvellous, winner-all-the-way, mirth-making idea which has Nipper & Co. groggy immediately and completely!

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CHAPTER 18.

The Reward!

THE circus proprietor and the van driver, assisted by one or two of the St. Frank's masters, had no difficulty in transferring the gorilla from the crate to the strong cage on the van. After the door of the cage was bolted and locked there was a general feeling of satisfaction.

"You're all right now, Kruger, boy," said Mr. Wentworth contentedly. "You've had your run, and you've cost me a pretty penny, too! Still, I'm glad to get you back again."

The gorilla sat hunched inside the cage, quite docile.

"Well, it's a very rummy thing," said Mr. Wentworth, as he turned to Mr. Stokes and the others. "I've never known Kruger to do anything like this before. He's a nervous sort of animal, and he doesn't usually like excitement. I can't understand what made him come into this school."

"How did you know he was here, Mr. Wentworth?" asked Nipper.

"Heard it down in the village," replied the circus proprietor. "I've been going all over the countryside, chasing here, there, and everywhere. Somebody in the village told me that the gorilla was here at the school, so I came along at once."

"We are very glad to see you here," remarked Mr. Stokes dryly.

"And we can explain how the gorilla got into the school," said Nipper. "We brought him in."

"The deuce you did!" ejaculated Mr. Stokes, staring.

"Not intentionally, sir," said Nipper. "You see, there was a bit of a jape on, and we collared a big packing case from—well, from somebody."

"We'll let it go at that," murmured Mr. Stokes.

"And I can only think that the box must have been standing in the wood, or behind a hedge," suggested Nipper. "Perhaps the gorilla got in without Brew— I mean, perhaps the gorilla got in without the other chaps knowing anything about it. They must have shut him in, and nailed the lid down, without having a suspicion of what they had done."

"That's very likely," said Mr. Wentworth. "Kruger has always had a fancy for getting into boxes and things. It's one of his favourite dodges. In fact, he does a trick, in the ring with a box. Crawls into it, and closes the lid down on himself, and then waits until he's told to come out."

"Well, of course, that explains it," said Mr. Stokes. "The poor brute found this box, and went through his usual performance. I don't think it would be advisable to make any very close inquiries," he added dryly. "I am quite satisfied that the gorilla was brought into the school unintentionally."

"And how did you manage to get him into that crate?" asked Mr. Wentworth curiously.

"This youngster did it—entirely alone," said Mr. Stokes, indicating Willy.

"Oh, cheese it, sir," growled Willy. "I was hoping you wouldn't say anything about it."

"Then you were hoping in vain, young man," said Mr. Stokes. "Upon my word! I've never seen anything like it! Crowds of boys were attempting to catch the gorilla, Mr. Wentworth, and we were, indeed, on the point of shooting the animal."

"That would have been bad," said the circus proprietor. "Not that I wasn't half expecting it. The police told me, plainly, that the animal would be shot on sight."

"But this youngster walked up to him, made friends, and induced him to go into the crate," smiled Mr. Stokes. "I wish you had been here to see it."

Mr. Wentworth looked at Willy with genuine interest.

"And how did you do it, young 'un?" he asked.

"If it's all the same to you, sir, I'd rather not discuss the matter," replied Willy. "There was nothing in it at all—absolutely nothing. I could see that the poor thing was tired and frightened, and so I spoke to him kindly. How else would you speak to animals? I'm blessed if I can understand what all the fuss is about!"

And Willy thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked off, thoroughly annoyed.

Mr. Stokes chuckled.

"He's a very matter-of-fact youngster," he explained, to the circus proprietor. "And he has a wonderful way with animals. I'd like to know if he was in any real danger."

Mr. Wentworth glanced at the gorilla.

"Well, now that he's safely locked away in that cage I might as well be perfectly frank," he said. "When Kruger is tired and irritated he's likely to be a bit dangerous. You surprise me when you tell me that that youngster handled him so easily."

"I think that Handforth minor has surprised us all!" put in Mr. Stockdale, with relief. "The boy's behaviour was simply remarkable. And the strangest thing about it all was that he did it in the most unconscious way. I am convinced that he had no idea of any danger."

"Well, there's the matter of this reward," said Mr. Wentworth, pulling out a big bundle of currency notes. "I've got the gorilla back, and I want to pay over the twenty-five pounds reward. Cheap at the price, too! I never dreamed that I should get the old fellow back alive."

"The reward, eh?" said Reggie Pitt briskly. "This is where we come in, sir!"

"Yes, rather!" chorused a number of other Removites.

Mr. Stokes chuckled.

"I think I'll leave you in the hands of these boys, Mr. Wentworth," he said. "They certainly did all the capturing, and I suppose they are entitled to the reward."

"Well, I only want to give it to the ones who earned it," said the circus proprietor.

Mr. Stokes and the other masters walked away, and in a very short time order was restored in the Triangle. Nipper & Co. gathered round Mr. Wentworth, and they were looking pleased and happy.

"Well, it's our reward, you chaps," said Nipper. "We brought the gorilla into the school, and we can claim the twenty-five quid."

"But who am I to give it to?" asked Mr. Wentworth, puzzled.

"I'm the Form captain, sir, so you can leave it in my charge," replied Nipper promptly.

"By George!" grinned Handforth. "This is one in the eye for Brewster & Co.! They

captured the giddy gorilla, strictly speaking—but we grab the reward!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We thought we were raiding a wireless set—and we've really raided twenty-five quid!" said Nipper, with a chuckle. "That's right, sir—you can hand it to me. It'll be quite safe."

Mr. Wentworth placed the bundle of notes in Nipper's hand.

"Yes—quite safe," he agreed dryly. "Safe for about half an hour, eh? I know what boys are, when they get hold of some money. Well, it's none of my business. I've got my gorilla, and you've got the reward. So we're all satisfied, eh?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

Shortly afterwards the van drove out of the Triangle, and the whole incident was over. Fortunately, nobody had been hurt, and the damage in the laboratory was only trivial.

Mr. Horace Pycraft had vanished. As a matter of fact, he was in bed, wrapped in blankets. He was not likely to suffer anything worse than a slight cold as a result of his ducking, however. As for Professor Tucker, he had probably forgotten the whole incident by this time; he was back again in his problems.

And so Mr. Beverley Stokes and the other masters, after a short consultation, decided to let the whole matter drop. When all was said and done, the Remove had captured the gorilla in the first instance, and so the Remove was entitled to the reward.



CHAPTER 19.

Not a Bad Day's Work!

CHUBBY HEATH was red with indignation. "It's all rot!" he protested. "You're crazy, Willy! You're off your silly rocker!"

Willy Handforth glared.

"Say that again!" he said threateningly.

Chubby gulped.

"Well, it's not fair!" he amended. "If you're not off your rocker, you must be up the pole!"

"You silly ass!" roared Willy. "You're making it worse!"

"I can't help it!" said Chubby Heath. "That reward is yours, Willy, and you ought to jolly well claim it!"

"Of course you ought!" said Juicy Lemon excitedly.

"Twenty-five quid!" said Owen minor in a frantic voice. "Twenty-five quid, you know! And those fat-headed Remove chaps have got it! It's really ours!"

"Yours?" repeated Willy, staring.

"Not—not exactly ours," said Owen minor. "Still, it's yours, Willy!"

"I don't choose to claim it!" replied Willy coldly. "And as you fellows don't

come into the picture at all, the thing's settled. Understand?" he added aggressively. "Settled!"

The fags were nearly besides themselves.

They were gathered in a corner of the Triangle, and they had been holding an indignation meeting. It struck them that the whole thing was wrong. Willy had really captured the gorilla, and yet the Remove had grabbed the reward! It was, to put it mildly, outrageous.

"I'm blessed if I can understand you!" said Juicy Lemon mournfully. "Only this morning, Willy, you were complaining that you were nearly broke!"

"Yes, and you were talking of touching your major for five bob!" said Chubby.

"That's quite true," he agreed. "What about it?"

"Now you've got a chance of getting quids, and you won't even look at it!" protested Chubby.

"Of course I won't!" said Willy. "What I did was nothing. Do you think I'm going to claim money just because I said a few soft words to a giddy gorilla?"

"That's not the point——"

"Yes, it is!" said Willy. "I don't make pals with animals because I want money for it! I don't like the idea of the thing!" he added obstinately. "So you can all dry up!"

"Well, it's not fair!" said Owen minor bitterly. "It's not fair to us! We were expecting a feed——"

"Then you can expect!" broke in Willy. "Of all the nerve! I should like to know what you fellows have done?"

"Well, you see——"

"I see a crowd of asses!" said Willy tartly. "If you chaps had given a hand with the capture, I should have claimed part of the reward as the Third's share. But the Third did nothing."

"You're the captain of the Third!" argued Chubby Heath.

"And, as captain of the Third, I refuse to take any money for being pally with that gorilla!" retorted Willy. "And if any more of you chaps talk to me on the subject again, I shall get busy with my fists!"

The Third gave it up.

At precisely this same moment, half the Remove was gathered round the Ancient House steps. They were crowding round Nipper, and they were all looking excited and eager. It was nearly tea-time, and the juniors had visions of a luxurious spread. With so much money, they could have something extra special in the way of feeds.

"Twenty-five quid will go a long way," said Handforth with satisfaction. "Even if we divide it equally throughout the whole Remove, we shall have over ten bob each——"

"But the whole Remove didn't help in the capture," said Jimmy Potts, grinning. "In fact, lots of fellows have been out all the afternoon, and don't even know anything about it."

"The money ought to be shared amongst all the chaps who raided Brewster & Co.,"

said Reggie Pitt firmly. "That's the only fair way to divide it."

Nipper chuckled.

"Well, we don't want to have any quarrelling over the giddy spoils," he said. "Besides, what about Willy?"

"Willy?" repeated Handforth, with a start.

"Yes," nodded Nipper. "Where does he come in?"

"By George! I'd forgotten Willy!" said Edward Oswald. "But now I come to think of it, he ought to have a bit, eh? After all, he persuaded the gorilla to go into that crate."

"Exactly!" said Nipper, with another chuckle. "It was Willy, in fact, who really made the capture."

"Let's give him a fiver," suggested somebody.

"We'll be fair about it," said Nipper thoughtfully. "Strictly speaking, Brewster & Co. ought to have the reward——"

"Rats!"

"Cheese it, Nipper!"

"But as we raided that box the reward is ours!" proceeded Nipper calmly.

"That's better!"

"We brought the gorilla to St. Frank's, and, if you look at it like that, we can rightfully claim the reward," continued Nipper. "But, after all, it was Willy who did the final deed. So I'm going to suggest that we should go halves."

"And I second the proposal," said Handforth heartily. "Fourteen quid each!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your mental arithmetic is rotten, Handy," said Nipper. "I suppose you mean twelve pound ten each?"

"Eh?" said Handforth, colouring. "Oh, well! What's the difference?"

Some of the Remove fellows looked disappointed, but they could not very well grumble. It was certainly a fact that Willy had figured very largely in the capture.

"Come on, then—we'll get it over," said Nipper.

He counted out half the money, and walked across the Triangle to the spot where Willy & Co. were standing. Some of the other Remove fellows walked over, too.

"Just a minute, Willy," said Nipper. "Here's some money for you."

"Money!" shouted the fags in one voice.

"Half the reward," said Nipper.

"Hurrah!"

"There you are, Willy!" yelled Chubby Heath. "These Remove chaps have done the decent thing! It isn't even necessary for you to claim the tin!"

Willy shook his head.

"If you're giving me this money because I induced that gorilla to go into the crate, I'm not taking it!" he said bluntly.

"But my dear young ass——"

"I'm not taking it!" said Willy firmly.

"It's a present from the Remove, then," smiled Nipper. "I think I understand your point of view, my son, and I entirely approve. But surely you're not going to refuse if the

Remove chooses to treat the Third to a feed, are you?"

Willy looked doubtful for a moment, then he grinned.

"Well, if you put it like that, it's different," he said cheerfully. "The Remove won the reward for capturing the gorilla—but the Remove is going to invite the Third to a big feed, eh?"

"That's it!" nodded Nipper.

"Good man!" said Willy, taking the money. "We won't bother you to buy our supplies, so we'll take the cash."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Remove!"

"Three cheers for Nipper!"

"Dry up, you young asses!" grinned Nipper. "I don't want any of your cheers!"

So everybody was pleased. At least, the Remove and the Third were pleased; the Fourth felt decidedly out of it. But, then, the Fourth had done absolutely nothing, so they could not presume to make the slightest claim.

Tea that evening promised to be a feed of feeds—thanks, in the main, to Hal Brewster & Co.!



CHAPTER 20.

Too Awful for Words!

DO you think it'll be safe?" asked Glynn dubiously.

"As safe as houses!" said Hal

Brewster.

About a dozen River House juniors paused outside the main gateway of St. Frank's. It was just about tea-time, and they had decided to come along to St. Frank's to do a little "crowing." The victory was theirs, and they thought it would be just as well to let Nipper & Co. know that they were fully aware of their triumph.

"They might scrag us if we go in," said Kingswood.

"Too many of us," replied Brewster. "Besides, we can have our handkerchiefs in our hands."

"Do you think they'll recognise them as white flags?" asked Ascott.

"If I know anything about your handkerchiefs, I doubt it!" replied Hal Brewster, with conviction.

"You silly ass——"

"Still, we can have a try!" grinned Brewster. "And my handkerchief is pretty clean, anyhow."

They couldn't resist the temptation of going in and blandly inquiring how their rivals had enjoyed the wireless programme that afternoon. In the opinion of Brewster & Co., the result would be well worth the risk.

It might have struck the St. Frank's fellows as remarkable that the River House juniors had heard nothing of the surprising

events that had taken place that afternoon. Yet it was not remarkable at all.

After the scrap in the lane, Brewster & Co. had gone back to the River House School, and they had been playing football. Now that the game was over, they were free to come along and make sarcastic inquiries. As they had come over the fields, and along the towing path, they had met nobody from the village; they hadn't even encountered a St. Frank's fellow. So they arrived at the old school totally oblivious of the gorilla episode.

"I suppose we'd better go straight into the Ancient House, eh?" suggested Glynn, as they walked across the Triangle. "There's nobody about, and it would be rather good to barge into Nipper's study——"

"Hold on!" said Brewster. "Here's somebody!"

The tall, lean figure of William Napoleon Browne emerged from the Ancient House. The Fifth Form skipper eyed the visitors with grave misgiving.

"Brothers, brothers, what is this I see?" he exclaimed, pained. "Let me urge you to beat a rapid retreat. The coast may be clear at the moment, but I can assure you that the enemy battalions are comparatively near at hand——"

"Cheese it, Browne!" grinned Brewster. "Can't you see that we're here under the white flag?"

And the River House fellows waved their handkerchiefs.

"I am thankful for the reminder, Brother Brewster," said Browne gracefully. "You will pardon my error, but, for the moment, I had a suspicion that you had come from a funeral."

"A funeral?" ejaculated Ascott, staring.

"These various pieces of black crêpe," explained Browne, indicating the handkerchiefs.

"You funny, lanky chump!" said Brewster, grinning in spite of himself. "We've come here to have a laugh at Nipper & Co.'s expense."

"Indeed?" said Browne, with interest. "I rather thought that Nipper & Co. were inclined to laugh at yours! However, we are all liable to make these little blunders."

"Of course, you haven't heard about the jape we played," said Kingswood, with a chuckle. "But we're going to Nipper's study now——"

"I am afraid that such a quest will be hopeless," interrupted Browne. "I have it on the best authority that Study C is now bleak and bare. There are no cheery cries of 'Pass the sardines,' or 'Chuck us the muffins.' However, if you venture into the Common-room, I have no doubt that you will be more successful. The clans have gathered, and I fear, alas, that there will be an appalling epidemic of indigestion later on."

Browne nodded in a kindly way to the visitors, and passed on.

"He's a funny sort of ass, but we know where to find the bounders now, anyhow,"

said Brewster. "Come along—we'll go to the Common-room."

"And don't forget to show your handkerchiefs!" said Ascott, turning to the others.

They invaded the Ancient House, and within a few moments they arrived at the Common-room. They strode straight in. Every River House fellow held his handkerchief in front of him.

"Pax!" said Brewster briskly, as he entered. "Respect the white flag, you chaps!"

"Welcome, old scouts!" said Nipper, as a yell of laughter went up from all the other Removites. "My dear chaps, you couldn't have come at a better moment. You can stand there and watch the lions feed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No larks, now!" said Kingswood cautiously. "You won't jump on us, will you?"

"As skipper of the Remove, I give you my word that you are perfectly safe," replied Nipper genially. "You came here under the white flag—and that stands good with us."

Brewster & Co. looked about them with wonder—and with keen disappointment. Everybody was smiling; everybody was happy. There wasn't the slightest sign of indignation or discontent.

"Well, my hat!" said Brewster. "You fellows seem to be having a pretty good time! Has somebody come into a fortune?"

"Not exactly," replied Nipper. "We're just having a feed, that's all."

The River House fellows looked at the good things that were rapidly being demolished on every hand. By all appearances, this was a feast of feasts.

"What's the idea, then?" asked Ascott.

Nipper rose to his feet.

"I suggest, all you fellows, that we should drink Brewster's health!" he said boisterously.

"He, as the donor of this feast—"

"The which?" broke in Brewster, staring.

"The donor."

"What the dickens do you mean—the donor?"

"Well, my dear old son, you supplied the cash for this spread, didn't you?" asked Nipper blandly.

"I?"

"Yes, of course."

"What on earth—"

"But perhaps you don't know the details?" said Nipper, with excessive politeness. "Did you, by any chance, leave that packing-case in the wood this afternoon, Brewster?"

Hal Brewster grinned.

"We came about that packing-case!" he said. "What did you think of the wireless set?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the other River House fellows.

But, somehow, the laugh seemed to go flat.

"You haven't answered my question," said Nipper. "Did you leave that big packing-case in the wood—alone?"

"Well, yes," replied Brewster, after thinking for a moment. "It was alone for five or ten minutes. But what about it?"

"Nothing much—except that the escaped gorilla got into that packing-case," said Nipper, with a grin.

"What?"

"Honest Injun!" said Nipper, nodding.

"That—that gorilla got—" Brewster paused, his mouth agape. "But—but we filled it full of logs!" he burst out.

"I don't know what you filled it with, but when we opened it, it was full of gorilla!" chuckled Reggie Pitt. "The beggar must have got in while your backs were turned, and then you carelessly nailed him down!"

"My only Aunt Martha!" breathed Hal Brewster, reeling.

"Of course, we had a bit of a dance with the merchant, but in the end we collared him," explained Nipper. "Willy, of the Third, helped, but that's only a detail. You'll be very pleased to hear, Brewster, that we collared the twenty-five quid reward."

"The reward!" yelled the River House fellows in strangled voices.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And this is the result!" added Nipper, waving his hand towards the spread.

"But—but it's ours!" roared Brewster, turning red. "If that gorilla got into our box, we—"

"Exactly," murmured Nipper. "But, don't you see, we raided the box—and as we really made the capture, the reward became ours. It was very decent of you, Brewster to work that jape. We're having a high old time, thanks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try again!" grinned Handforth. "You thought you had us on toast—and we've got you on toast! It was your jape, but we've got the laugh over you!"

And the Remove laughed—loudly, and at great length.

Hal Brewster gave his companions a sickly look, and then all the River House juniors crawled away. When full realisation dawned upon them, they could have gnashed their teeth with helpless rage.

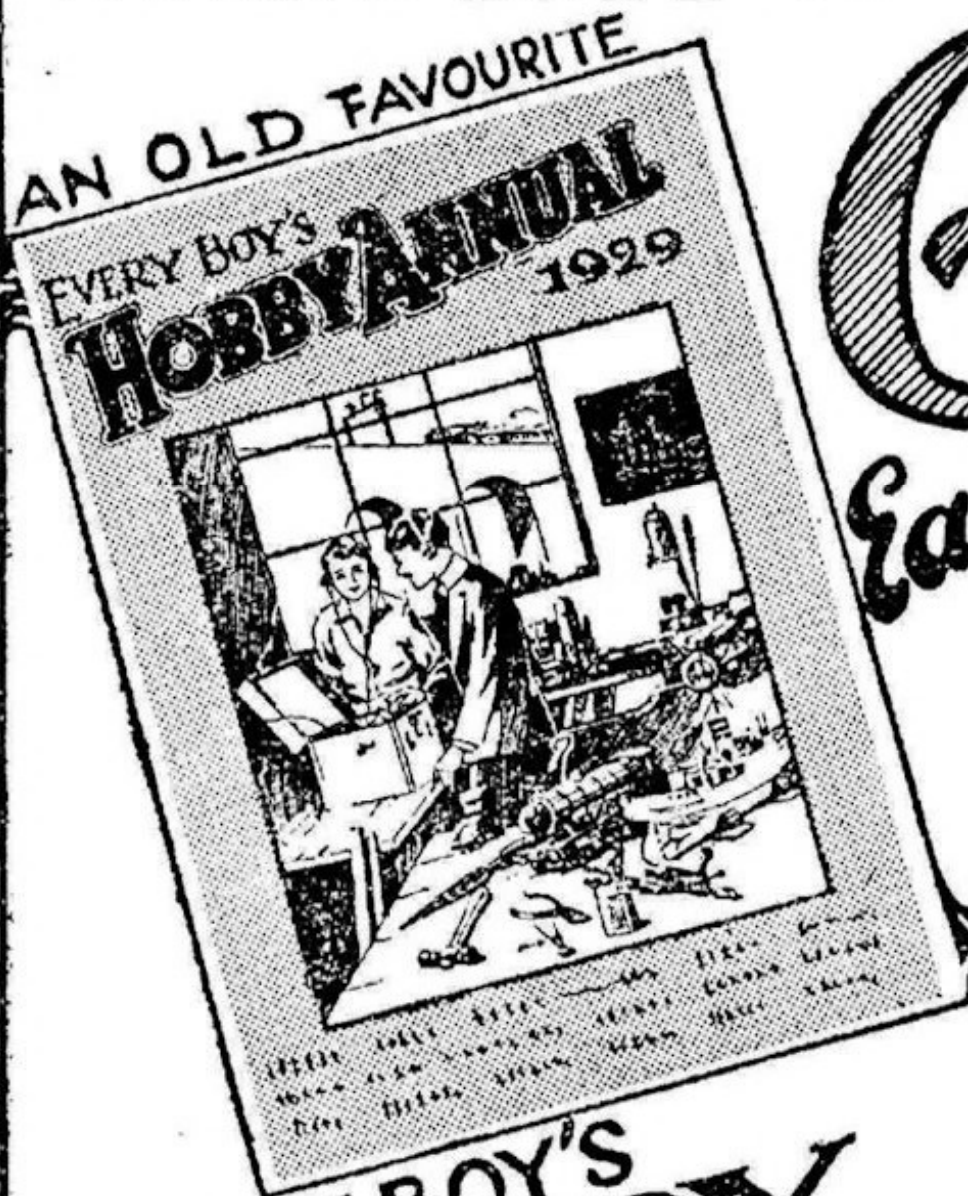
Once again they had been "done brown." They had actually captured that gorilla, but the St. Frank's fellows had bagged the reward!

It was a bitter pill to swallow—and it only served to intensify the rivalry between the two schools.

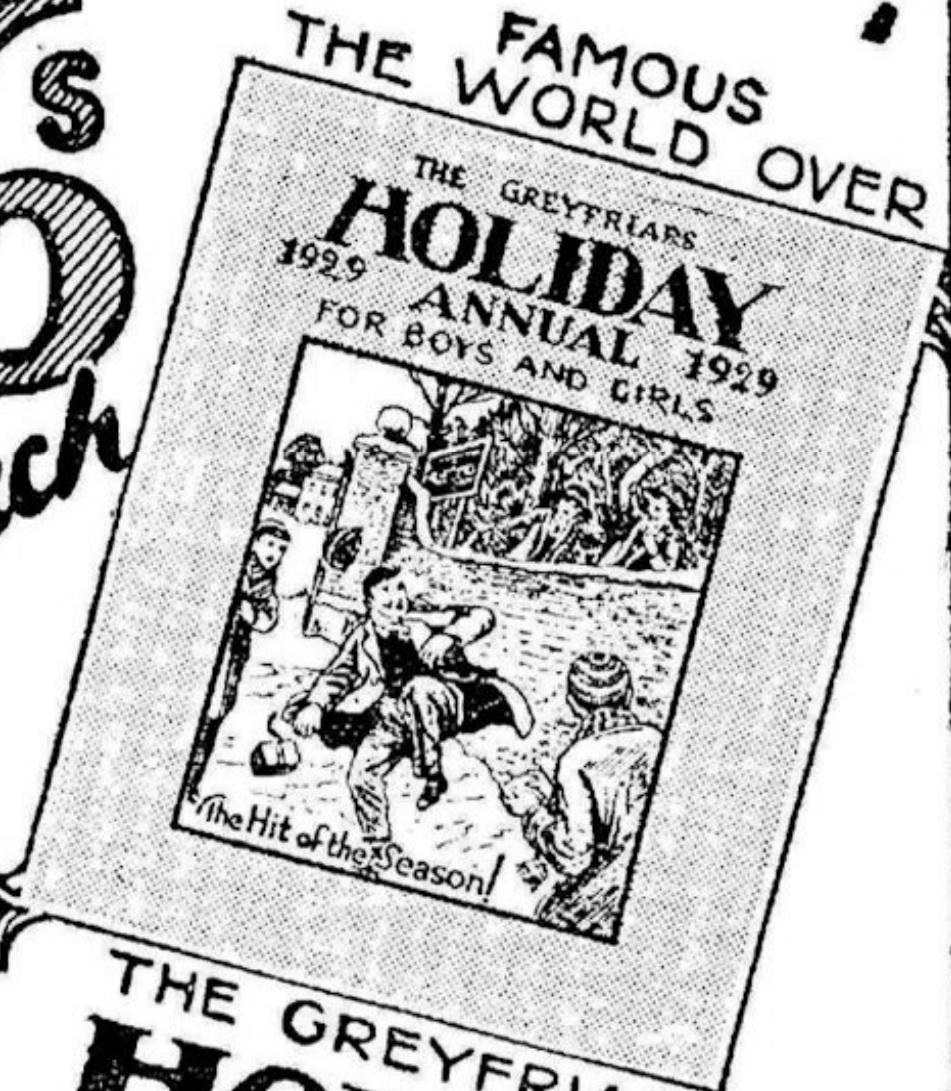
THE END.

(Nipper & Co. have certainly scored a great triumph this week; but wait until next. Brewster & Co. won't take this setback lying down, you can bet, and soon they'll be after the St. Frank's fellows' blood. Amazing—and amusing!—things happen at St. Frank's, as you will see for yourselves when you read next Wednesday's grand, long, complete yarn, which is entitled, "My Only Sainted Aunt!")

THE PICK OF THE MARKET!



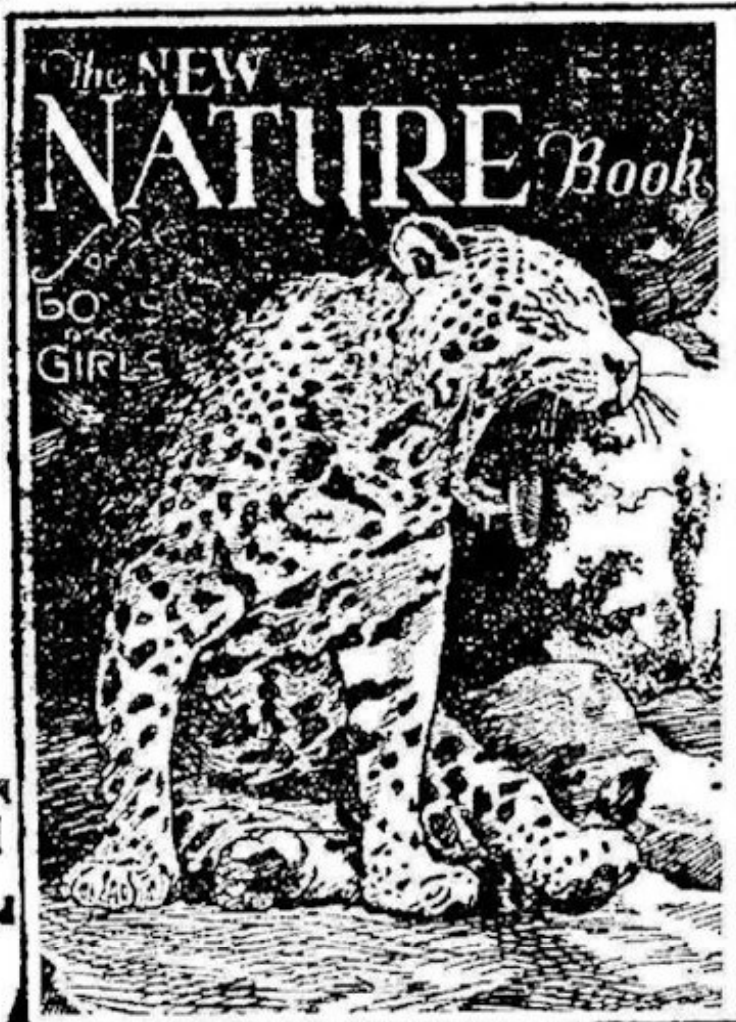
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BETWEEN OURSELVES!

OUR AUTHOR CHATS WITH OUR READERS

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed: EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON. E.C.A.



SYDNEY OLDHAM

YOU mention the subject of long or short series—Ronald C. Beecham (Toronto). Which do you, yourself, like the better? Here is a subject which lots of readers can mention in their letters to me. The more I know of your wants, the better chance I have of pleasing you.

* * *

I'm sorry you've forgotten that story—Reg. T. Staples (Walworth)—in which the word "had" appears consecutively so many times. I have never heard it myself, but you tell me that plenty of readers are sure to know it. If so, I would like one of them to write to me, giving the yarn. I always enjoy your letters, Reg., old man; they are very refreshing and brainily worded. I shall really have to think about producing a story, as you suggest, with Nipper taking the leading part. No, not a story, but a whole series. I wonder how the majority of readers would like it? A whole series, with Nipper right bang in the front?

* * *

I'm not quite sure about that "How Much Do You Know About St. Frank's" idea—James Campbell (Edinburgh). The Editor will probably start a feature of this sort if a sufficient number of you readers express a desire to have it. There are five Houses at St. Frank's—Ancient House, Modern House, West House, East House, and School House. The latter is not a boarding House, as you probably know.

* * *

Just a word to all you boys and girls (bless your hearts!) who are sending me regular weekly letters. I'd like to make it clear that I can't refer to you by name in these columns every week. It really depends upon the subject matter of your letters. Naturally, they are all interesting to me, but I can only deal on this page with subjects which are likely to tickle the interest of the majority. But, if you escape mention here, you're bound to get a letter from me through the post every now and again. By "every now and again" I mean once in a while—or, as you will probably call it, once in a blue moon!

I appreciate your well-meant criticism—"R. L." (Holloway)—but you must remember that my job is to write the kind of stuff that is best liked by the majority of our readers. And, really, I don't think many others will agree with you that Willy Handforth and Edward Oswald Handforth should be dropped out of the stories. You don't actually say this, but you imply it. Curiously enough, Vivian Travers—whom you dislike so much—is very popular with the majority of readers. But not being a super-man, I cannot please everybody.

* * *

You seem to be another reader who does not like old Handy, Rose Colman (Canonbury). Now, I wonder if *all* our readers think that there is too much of Handforth in the stories? This is a point which I should very much like to be settled.

* * *

Handforth's birthday—Harry Bodison (Birkenhead)—is April 18th.

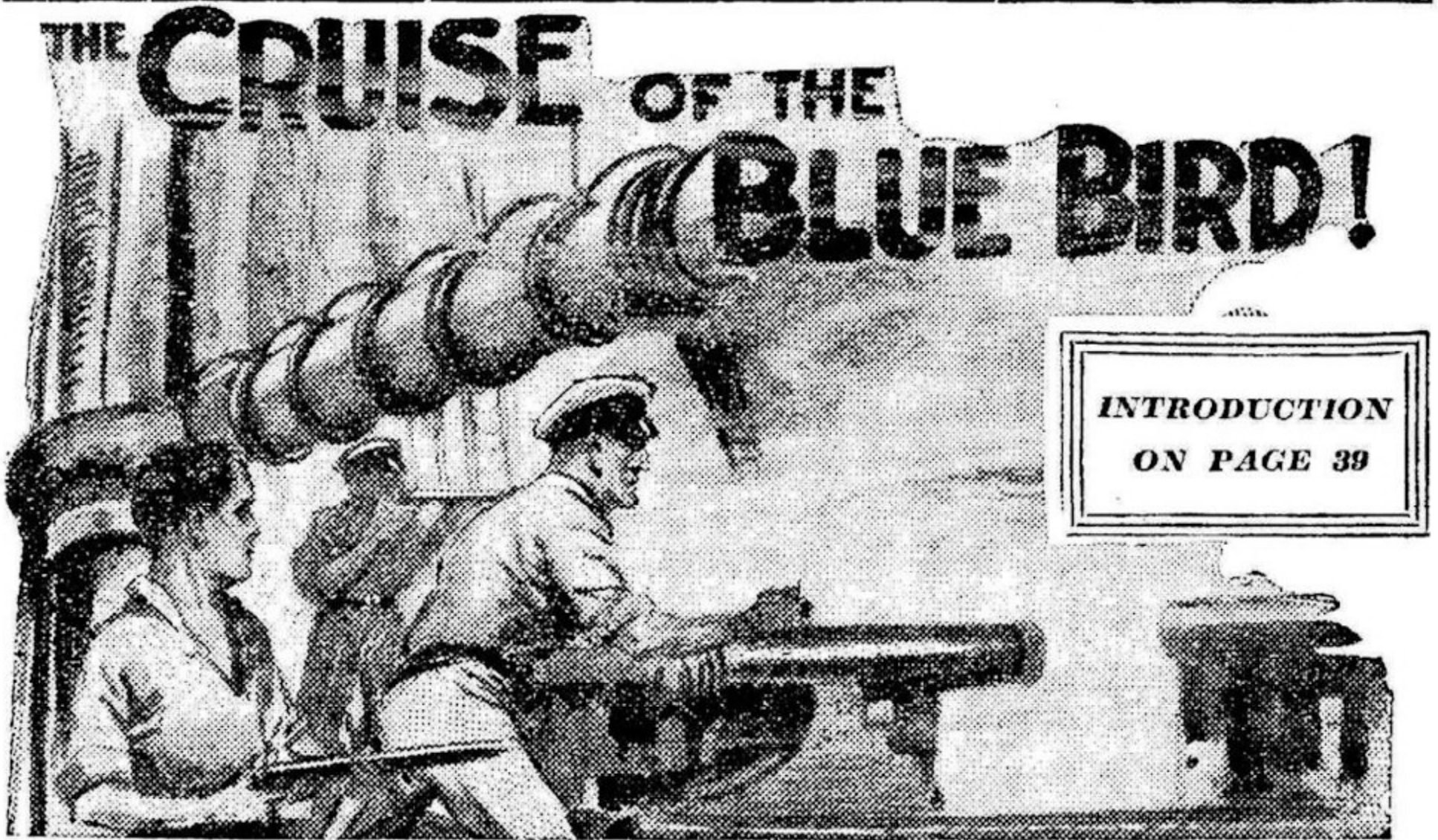
* * *

You can have that snap taken as soon as you like—Stanley Thompson (Southampton). Send it along to me, and I will, in return, send you an autographed photo of myself. And this applies to everybody else, of course. The more readers' photos I can collect, the better I shall like it. My albums are filling up very nicely.

* * *

Go ahead—John Butcher (Chadwell Heath). Correspond with me as regularly as you like, although you mustn't be down-hearted if it is a bit one-sided. But you know I shall always be pleased to get your letters, and you can ask as many questions as you like concerning St. Frank's and its occupants.

IF IT'S THRILLS YOU WANT, THIS IS THE YARN TO SUIT YOU!



By COUTTS BRISBANE

Already Jack and Ned have experienced many exciting and perilous adventures during their cruise through Southern Seas, but this week they encounter what must surely be the most exciting and perilous of all. For they find themselves trapped on the lava-strewn side of an erupting volcano!

Salvage!

THE boat raced back to the encampment. It seemed but a minute or two before she had taken aboard the remainder of the men. Jack, roused from sleep, tumbled aboard, greeting Trotter and Coombes with astonishment. Then the boat set out once more, turned the point—and saw the Blue Bird plugging her way through the gate of the lagoon.

For the convicts had seen the cutter disappear, and guessed that another attack was coming. They had made haste to fly.

Outside a heavy sea was still running. Pitching heavily, the Blue Bird forged out of the gateway.

"Pull!" roared Manby, but already he knew that the chance of success was gone.

To shoot straight and board the schooner was comparatively easy in the smooth lagoon, but exceedingly difficult when boat and ship were tossing in a heavy sea.

None the less, he opened fire. Ned and Jack and Trotter, with a borrowed rifle, blazed away also, though with no visible effect. The boat gained, however, the men pulling furiously.

"Keep at it! Spurt! We'll get 'em yet!"

The rifles cracked. There came a reply from the schooner. Several men, lying flat on the deck, fired from the stern just as the boat rose on a wave. There was a thud and a ripping sound at the bows, water came streaming in. Once again luck was with the convicts. A bullet had torn along one of the bow strakes, gashing an opening a couple of feet in length through which the sea poured.

Coombes stripped off his jacket and tried to stop the leak, but the plank gave to the pressure.

"No go, sir!" he shouted. "We can't do it. And there's a squall coming!"

Reluctantly Manby had to admit that it was useless to continue the pursuit. A heavy shower of rain swirled down upon them, blotting out the schooner; the wind howled furiously. There wasn't a moment to be lost. Watching his opportunity, he gave an order; the boat was pulled round between seas and, driven by the blast of the squall, tossed back through the opening of the lagoon, and was rowed back to camp with half her crew bailing to keep her afloat.

They beached her and got ashore. Depression succeeded the momentary exhilaration of the chase.

"I thought my luck had changed, that I had made a fortune," said Manby bitterly. "And there it goes! My ship, a load of first-class shell, and a safe full of pearls that would have set us up for life, all gone. And poor Sinclair is a prisoner of those scoundrels, doomed to die as soon as they have no further use for him. If only I could save him, I'd willingly sacrifice the ship and the pearls, but the chances are those fellows will lose the ship and themselves out there amongst the reefs."

"But we've got a chance yet, dad," put in Jack. "Mr. Sinclair will try to save the ship. He has the chart you made of the passage through the reefs. There's quite a lot of clear water before they get to the worst part. Maybe he'll wait about, tacking to and fro till this blow is over. And if we can't go after them in the boat, what about getting the 'plane up? The motors won't be badly damaged if we get it up quickly, will they, Mr. Trotter?"

"No. And the petrol tanks are strong. They should hold out. But I don't quite see how we're to get the 'bus up without lighters and hoisting tackle," replied Trotter gloomily.

"You don't, eh?" shouted Captain Manby, suddenly recovering himself. "Then, young fellow-me-lad, you've still got a bit to learn from an old hand. It can be done. We've got the tide to help us. There's a twelve-foot rise here, and we can do a good deal wi' that. Timo, take all the men who are fit. Cut down trees. Cork trees—any light wood—enough for two big rafts, savee? Cut plenty creepers for lashing. You boys scoot up to the French huts and see if there are any barrels, or kegs, or cordage. Take Ah Moy, fetch anything that's likely to be handy down to the beach. Jump to it. Trotter and Coombes, come along with me in the dinghy and we'll investigate the 'plane. A job of real work'll do you good, my boys."

"That's more like your old form, sir," replied Trotter, with a grin. "Here's for it."

Everybody was suddenly busy. Timo led the men into the bush beyond the spot where they had camped. The axes rang on trunks. Captain Manby and the airmen got the dinghy into the water and pulled away. Jack and Ned and Ah Moy went off at a

trot through the bush and presently reached the French huts.

The doors stood open. The two smaller huts proved to be empty of anything useful. They had been used merely as sleeping places, and contained nothing but piles of dried grass, dirty blankets, and an ancient smell. But the larger hut, which had been the eating and living-room, contained a quantity of things that had evidently been salvaged from the wreck of the ill-starred convict ship.

There were half a dozen good-sized barrels that had once held the wine rations of the ship's crew, a good deal of rope of various thicknesses, several blocks, bolts and cleats that had been part of the vessel's rigging, a grating or two, and a few light spars.

"Shlip breakce up. Thlem fella bling piecee," murmured Ah Moy. "Allee goodce. Bling alongee beach. Rollee balell down. Me walkee piecee stlick."

He picked up a couple of the spars and staggered off with them while the boys rolled a barrel apiece after him. They returned for others, and in the course of half an hour had all the stuff piled just above high-water mark.

Captain Manby and the airmen, returning from the inspection of the 'plane, came ashore and looked the pile over.

"Capital!" exclaimed Manby. "We'll find a use for all this. Things aren't so bad as they-might have been. Those fellows were in too much hurry. They sunk the 'plane in about five fathoms, and I think we'll be able to get her up fairly easily. Ah Moy, put good plugs in those barrels instead of the bungs. See that they fit well. Then come back to camp and cook fish. You boys come aboard and we'll leave you to catch 'em."

The work progressed at a great rate. The men hardly stopped to eat, for they all understood that the chance of regaining the ship hung on the speed with which they got the 'plane into working order again.

Trotter climbed a tall tree and returned to report that the schooner was hove to some three miles away, and that the weather was moderating.

"But that volcano of yours seems to be waking up," he added. "We saw a bit of smoke from it as we came along this morning, but there seems to be a lot more now."

WHAT'S ALREADY HAPPENED:

CAPTAIN MANBY is skipper of the schooner *Blue Bird*, which is bound for the Malea atolls, in the Southern Pacific. He is accompanied by his son

JACK MANBY, and his nephew

NED SUTTON, two adventure-loving boys.

From a native Captain Manby has learned that in these atolls is an uncharted island—supposed to be practically inaccessible—the lagoon of which is full of pearl shell. The captain is successful in finding this unknown island; and to his surprise discovers that it is inhabited by a number of French castaways. At first they are friendly, but later, when Captain Manby

finds out what they really are—ship-wrecked convicts—their attitude changes and they capture the *Blue Bird* and its valuable cargo. The convicts man the schooner and she starts to sail out of the lagoon. The captain decides to give chase in a cutter. In addition to the majority of his crew, he is accompanied by two airmen named Trotter and Coombes, who have arrived on the scene and whose sea-plane has been sunk in the lagoon. "Row!" yells Manby excitedly. "If we can get her before she reaches the open sea, we have a chance yet. Row!"

(Now read on.)

I hope we're not going to have an eruption."

"Oh, blow the volcano!" snapped Captain Manby. "Give an eye to the lashings of those rafts. They must be strong and we mustn't miss this afternoon's ebb. Jump to it."

They jumped, for the old Navy training made them swift and handy. As the light logs were rolled down to the water they were bound together with tough creepers and made thoroughly secure with a final lashing of rope. In an incredibly short time, two rafts floated by the shore.

"Now those spars will come in handy to rig sheers. We secure the rafts about eight feet apart, rig the sheers over the gap between, secure the 'plane, hoist her as far as we can at low tide, then, at flood, tow the raft and the 'plane suspended to it to a bank where she'll be left high and dry at the next low tide. And then we shan't be long repairing her floats, I hope."

"No, sir. If only those brutes didn't damage the propeller or the fuel tanks, we shan't be long getting after them," replied Trotter. "Will you have these crosspieces secured about here, sir?"

"Yes." Manby lent a hand, his Kanakas jumping about like monkeys to obey him. Then the sheers were rigged, the tackle put in place, and the double raft was shoved off and slowly rowed up the lagoon with the dinghy towing it.

The big shark cruised past, turned and accompanied them.

"Better discourage that brute. The men will have to do a bit of diving to secure the tackle," said Trotter.

Jack had brought his rifle. Waiting a chance when the shark came close, he let drive and scored its hide with a bullet. Away it went, disappearing at speed, and was seen no more that day.

The tide was now ebbing fast, and it needed a good deal of careful manœuvering to bring the raft exactly over the sunken 'plane, which was clearly visible through the clear water, though the light was failing. The cutter's grapnel and a heavy chunk of rock anchored it in place, then over went Big Timo and a couple of other men, after they had been carefully instructed how to fasten the ropes.

They had to dive several times, but at last the 'plane was secured, and all hands heaved on the tackle. The 'plane lifted from the bottom. Supported by the water, she wasn't an unmanageable weight, and the combined strength of the crew hoisted her some way.

"Vast heaving! That'll do, I think," said Manby at last. "This tackle won't stand a greater strain. Now we stand by and wait for the tide to turn. Over yonder is a good bank of sand. We'll try to get her there."

Slowly the tide began to make. It gathered strength, running up the lagoon in long ripples and bringing in a multitude of fish. The anchors were got in, and slowly the

raft moved towards the sandbank, impelled by the oars and guided by the dinghy.

The sun set, darkness came, but Manby provided a number of torches, and by this light the raft, with its dependant burden, was finally brought to the sandbank. There, as the 'plane grounded, the raft was cast off.

"She'll lie here sweetly enough. Now for an eyeful of sleep," said Manby. "We need it. And by next ebb we'll have your bird safe, or I'm a Dutchman."

They paddled back to camp, weary, but well satisfied with their work, while high above them gleamed an intermittent light from the top of the hill. No one had noticed it before. Manby blinked at it and shook his head doubtfully.

"If there's an eruption, I hope it waits till after we've settled this business," he muttered. "If that blamed volcano was to start now it would upset our applecart entirely."

Then they all slept.

The Eruption!

WITH the first peep of dawn, Manby, with the airmen and a half-dozen of the hands, made back to the sandbank, carrying with them the barrels that Ah Moy had plugged. As they had expected, they found the 'plane sitting securely upon the sand in a couple of feet of water. They made fast the barrels to the floats which, holed in several places, were at present useless, and as the tide rose these proved sufficient to float the machine, which was towed to the shore.

"We should be able to get these repaired by the early afternoon," said Trotter, after inspecting the damage done to the floats by the convicts' axes. "If those brutes had only thought of smashing the propeller they would have fixed us. As it is, we'll be able to get after them before they're so very much older."

"And what will you do then, Mr. Trotter?" asked Ned. "You haven't any bombs."

"And if we had, sonny, we shouldn't want to blow your ship to rags with 'em. No. I don't seem to have had time to talk since we arrived in this hectic island, but I have something in the way of a surprise for those blamed pirates. After that little turn up on Graden it occurred to me that a spray of bullets is worth a lot of moral suasion, so, finding a nippy cruiser commanded by a chappie I happened to know, at Boru, I borrowed a Lewis gun and some ammunition of him. I've been carrying it in ballast, but it can be fitted up pronto. I don't think the Blue Bird's decks will be quite healthy when we get busy with it."

"Have you seen her this morning, sir?" asked Coombes.

"No. She may be out of sight by now." Captain Manby turned to his son and Ned. "There's nothing for you two to do in the meanwhile. Go up that hillside a bit and see if you can locate the ship."

"Yes, sir. Come on, Ned," replied Jack, and the two promptly trotted off into the bush.

"What's the fearful hurry?" asked Ned.

"In a minute he'll remember about the volcano, and tell us not to go far up. Let's be out of hearing," replied Jack, and set the pace.

Surely enough. Captain Manby's voice came booming after them a few seconds later, but the words were indistinguishable.

"But why should we go far up?" asked Ned.

"I want to have a look at the place where that smoke and the glare came from last night. If we don't go now it isn't likely

A speck of white showed against the dark blue of the sea to the south, perhaps a dozen miles away.

"There she is! There's the Blue Bird!" cried Jack. "Trotter will find her easily enough."

"Yes. But I've been thinking—what will he do when he does?" asked Ned. "Suppose he and Coombes shoot down all convicts on deck. D'you think one of them can go aboard? I don't see how they can take the ship, and it won't do us any good if she goes on to one of those reefs."

"Oh, dad is going along with them, and perhaps there'll be room for one of us," said Jack. "It'll be easy enough. Shoot the



Jack and Ned clawed at the surface of the rock and hung on, blinded by smoke and dust, deafened by the uproar, while loose earth and large chunks of rock hurtled past them.

we'll have another chance. And it isn't really very far. The hill is only a few hundred feet high. We'll have to go half-way to the top to be able to see any distance."

This was true enough, for on this side the lower slope of the hill was covered with scrub high enough to obscure the view. They climbed through it, and presently came out on clear ground not far from the cave where Papa Benoist had killed the sailor Pascal.

Here they halted and stared seaward. From that elevation they could see the reefs near the island, with many others stretching away into the distance to northwards—a regular maze amidst which it seemed almost impossible for a ship to pick her way.

deck clear, then run alongside, and then dad'll get aboard and put the helm over and e'll back after making fast the latches. And don't forget that Mr. Sinclair will be there. They won't dare to kill him when they see the plane coming. Most likely they'll get in a funk and try to get him to plead for them. They'll say it was all Benoist's fault, and that he was the one who instigated all the plot."

"Perhaps. But it seems to me that getting aboard is going to be the difficulty. But we'll wait and see. Let's go down. It's rather smoky up here."

The wind had veered about several points, and now the plume of smoke above the peak—a good deal heavier than it had been

before—had veered with it. The smoke was drifting down the hillside, pungent, stifling, hot, like air from the mouth of a furnace.

As the pair paused, looking up at the top of the cone, they could see a gleam of fire reddening the underside of the mushroom of smoke that hung above it. Suddenly the whole hill trembled violently. Stones, dislodged from above, came rattling down.

"We must get down!" cried Ned. "Come on. It's going to erupt, and—"

Another violent tremor. The ground heaved as though it had been thrust up from below; deep rumblings sounded, then with a terrific grinding roar part of the hill slithered away, to pile itself crashing upon the brushwood below.

The boys were thrown down. They clawed at the surface of the rock, hung on, blinded by smoke and dust, deafened by the uproar, while loose earth and large chunks of rock hurtled past them. But that a projecting crag a little above sheltered them, they would inevitably have been carried down and buried beneath the debris.

For perhaps half a minute the downfall continued, then the landslide ceased, the dust and smoke were swirled away by a blast of colder air rushing up the hillside. Rubbing the dust from their eyes, the boys were able to see how narrowly they had escaped death.

Only a few yards below where they lay the whole side of the hill had fallen away, leaving a sheer face of rock exposed, and completely cutting off their retreat on that side. Above and to the right the fall had stripped away all the grass-bound soil that had accumulated in the course of centuries, leaving only a smooth, steeply-tilted surface across which they could not hope to climb. Only to the left—the side where the hill dropped precipitously into the sea—did a long ledge, running along the brink of a hundred-foot rock wall, offer a negotiable path.

"That's the way we'll have to go!" said Ned hoarsely, trying to clear his throat of dust. "And we'd better be quick. The ground is trembling like—like—"

"Like a boiler that's going to blow up!" put in Jack. "And look up there! It's fire running out—it's lava!"

A red hole had appeared in the side of

the cone close to the top, and from it a fiery worm began to snake a way down the right side of the hill. It was a vent-hole. Perhaps it would suffice to relieve the pressure inside. If it did not, the whole top of the hill would most probably be blown off, or perhaps the island and all those on it would be blown sky-high.

Swiftly the lava stream ran down the declivities, reached the bit of bush that fringed the base of the hill not very far from the place where Jack and Ned had undergone their ordeal upon the reef, and crawled through it towards the beach, while the brushwood flared furiously.

But the boys hadn't waited to see this. Death was very close to them. Another earthquake would most likely strip the remainder of the soil from the rocks and

hurl them helplessly to destruction. There was only one possible way of escape. They took it.

Crawling on hands and knees they reached the ledge and sidled along it, the sheer precipice on the one hand, a mass of debris on the other, which a tremor might at any moment precipitate to the rocks beneath, carrying them with it.

For two breathless minutes it was touch and go, then they came out upon a broader platform that ended in a sort of bracket upon the cliff face, and there they had perforce to stop. Above them was the unscalable rock slope; below them

a hundred feet of cliff dropping to hard coral with never a ledge or crevice to break its surface.

"We're done for!" said Jack despairingly. "Unless dad can do something we'll stick here till we're shaken off or the lava bursts out above and frizzles us."

"Rot! Never say die!" cried Ned, and stripping off his jacket began to wave it to and fro in the faint hope that someone below might see it between the drifting clouds of black smoke that swirled about them.

(The two plucky British boys are certainly in a ghastly position. They can't possibly get off the volcano, and any minute it's likely to burst into eruption! Will they be rescued in time? Next week's intensely exciting instalment of this magnificent serial will tell you.)



JACK MANBY



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.

No Need to be Alarmed.

AN enthusiastic reader up at Bolton says he is afraid pretty well all the world has been discovered by this time. He need not worry. Of course, it depends a bit on what is meant by discovery. As a matter of plain, unvarnished fact, there are vast tracts of the world which, to all intents and purposes, are undiscoverable. You may say you know where they are, and that they are there. The same with the valuable tea-kettle which went swinging down into the depths of the sea. My Bolton chum should glance at a map of, say, South America. It will be an eye-opener to him.

Just let him follow the frontiers of Brazil, the old-time empire which stretches from the waters of the Atlantic right across the Continent as far as the vertebra of mountains cutting off Chile. There is a gaudy fringe of Latin civilisation down the coast. There is Rio de Janeiro, and there is Bahia, but the Brazilian Empire did not go far inland except in name, any more than does the present republic. The Amazon country includes an immense terra incognita of swamp and jungle, and there the Nature kingdom holds sway. There are wide waterways down which no boat could sail. The forest is supreme; there is a barrier of dense vegetation hiding the danger marshes which are the home of the most gorgeous flowers—and of poisonous gases which mean death to any adventurer.

Too Facetious by Half.

One can easily sympathise with the reader who is plagued to death by a would-be witty pal. He is no pal in the ordinary sense. He makes game of everything, and one likes a dash of seriousness at times. But there it is. There are those who like to strut round in the cheap rig of sarcasm and satire. They are conceited asses at best. The world is not rolling on entirely for their benefit. The experimenter with this absurd form of humour becomes a prize bore. A little wit is a jolly fine thing, but who wants it every hour of the day? Not I, for one!

He Wants to be a Cook.

There is a good bit of business doing amongst my correspondents in the culinary line. I have many letters from aspirants inquiring how they may become chefs, otherwise chief cooks at hotels.

Actually the best way to graduate for such a position as a chef is to get taken on at an hotel or restaurant and learn the practical part. You have to know the lower grades, i.e., how to wash plates and dishes, before you can suitably fill them.

Then lessons in the elements of cookery are good as an extra aid; although, of course, there are a lot of fellows could never in their lives be cooks. One knows the inefficiency of some freaks who claim to be cooks—at camping parties. I have been there, and had some of that fantastic mosh called a stew which is like nothing on earth. It's enough to make the real cook writhe or break down and weep salt tears—but he mustn't cry in the soup, as has happened!—to see the treatment good victualling material receives at the hands of the inexperienced. We know the stew with hard lumps which, if fired out of a gun, would penetrate a wall of granite.

But enough. The camp cook who fozzles his job generally gets his deserts. The right chastisement is that he should eat his own wicked concoctions. That would bring the facts home to him. But there is more room for good cooks in the world than ever.

This Musical Business.

Looking through my letter bag I find several requests for assistance in the formation of bands. I applaud this movement towards the waves of beautiful harmony. Naturally, some bands are bad, but there is always some music lover to love even a bad orchestra. It is a question of degree.

The gramophone with a dyspeptic squeak, or the piano which has keys which give forth that uneven wood-chopping sound if you hit them hard enough, but which otherwise are dumb as the harp on Tara's walls, all have

(Continued on page 44.)

OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW!

Continued from page 43.

their uses. And, seriously, there is not enough music study. Some enthusiasts give up the hobby through lack of encouragement. But the fellow who can knock off a lively air is always wanted.

The Hidden Trouble.

Of course, it's as old as the hills and the stars and other long-established institutions, this business of the worry that preys on you. It can't be forgotten, and the more one tries to dismiss it, the more it's there, so to speak. But that's because, as with the tooth that has its notice to quit and does not quit, the job has not been grappled with. If it is a case of some bad, unhappy bit of work one has done, well, the only thing is jolly well to go back and set matters right. If it is a pal who has been wronged, you can't leave him wronged.

A correspondent whose letter set this paragraph going, says he is bothered over a dirty trick he played a "chum." But he has done nothing to put things right! His duty is plain as paint: he can straighten out the tangle by apologising. Hard cheese, this apology business. Quite so. So is it hard to have one's feelings hurt and one's pride stamped in the mud.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

T. MacDonagh, 9, Palmerston Road, Rathmines, Dublin, S.W.1, wants issues of the "N.L.L." published in the summer of 1926 dealing with Australian Test matches.

Leslie Clark, La Weda, Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, wishes to hear from readers in Brisbane, also from stamp collectors in British West Indies.

S. Waite, B.M./S.N.S 3, London, W.C.1, would like to obtain No. 1 old series "N.L.L." Also No. 112.

Maurice Marichal, 19, Severn Terrace, Worcester, has "N.L.L." new and old series for sale.

George Rudge, 26, High Street, Stonehouse, Plymouth, wants to hear from readers in Plymouth who are interested in his library.

B. C. Homewood, 65, Wall End Road, London, E.6, wishes to correspond with stamp collectors; he has sheets of stamps. Also wishes to hear from readers in Australia, Canada, France and Ireland.

Joe Prag, 470, Main Street, Belgravia, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers keen on photography and stamps.

C. Newson and Alan F. White, 22, Trevelyan Street, Wayville, near Adelaide, South Australia, wish to hear from readers anywhere interested in pigeon-racing, sports, stamps, wireless and photography; also from Peter Young, Govan, Glasgow. All letters promptly answered.

R. A. Perry, 25, Hazel Street, Aylestone Road, Leicester, wants to hear from a reader in his district, aged about 19, keen on cycling and walking. He will reply promptly to all letters.

Miss Aileen McDonald, Waite Street, Featherston, Wairarapa, New Zealand, wishes to hear from girl readers only in England, Scotland and America; ages 16-18.

Miss Joan Walker, 80, Hazelbank Road, Catford, London, S.E.6, wishes to hear from girl readers only.

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