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**“FOR  
HE’S A JOLLY  
GOOD FELLOW!”**

A dramatic leap to escape! This is only one of the many exciting incidents contained in the stunning long complete school yarn inside, featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 136.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

December 8th. 1928.





At sight of the police-station the man struggled desperately. Lashing out with one of his feet, he caught Handforth a nasty kick on the shin, causing that junior to gasp with pain. "Let me go!" panted the man harshly.



Full of Thrills and Dramatic Situations!

A Yarn that Grips!

# "FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW!"



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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

*Nipper and Handforth and the other stalwarts of the Junior School at St. Frank's have suffered much at the hands of Simon Kenmore. Now that the Sixth-Former shows signs of mending his ways, however, they are quite willing to let bygones be bygones, as they show in no uncertain way by helping Kenmore to clear his name of the false accusation against him. There's tons of enjoyment in this powerful yarn, so start reading it now, chums.—Ed.*

## CHAPTER 1.

### An Old Acquaintance!

THE man turned wearily as he heard the sound of a motorcar, some distance back along the dark road. A moment later the twin headlights came into view round a bend, and the man halted, waiting.

He was only just outside Bannington, on the Caistowe road, and the December evening was cold and windy—and very dark. The car came along at a smart pace, and after a moment's hesitation the stranger stood out into the centre of the road, and held up a grubby hand.

In the gleam of the approaching headlights he was revealed as a shabby, down-at-heel individual. His weak chin was covered by a three days' stubble, and his eyes were shifty and unpleasant.

He stood ready to jump back, in case the car failed to slow up, but there was no need for any such precaution. He heard the change in the engine's note, as the driver released his foot from the throttle; he heard the sudden application of the brakes. The car drew to a standstill, stopping, with slightly-throbbing engine, near at hand.

"Hallo, there!" came a hail. "What's the matter?"

"Give us a lift, guv'nor!" said the man eagerly. "Going to Caistowe, ain't you? Be a sport, and give us a lift!"

"By George!" said the driver, in a strangled kind of voice.

But he uttered the exclamation in an undertone, and the whistling of the wind prevented the footsore stranger from hearing it. And Edward Oswald Handforth, of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, stared through his windscreen at the man.

The car was an Austin Seven, and in the confined rear seats Church and McClure were comfortably squashed. The front seat next to Handforth contained only a small parcel—Handy evidently considering that the parcel deserved better treatment than either of his loyal chums. To be exact, however, the Study D trio had had a little tiff in Bannington, and, at the moment, they were not on speaking terms.

Church and McClure wanted to get back to St. Frank's, but Handforth insisted upon



going along to Bannington Grange, which was only a few yards further ahead, half hidden by trees. The Grange was to be the new home of the Blue Crusaders Football Club—a kind of headquarters for them—and Handforth understood that Mr. Ulysses Piecombe, the manager, was at present pottering about the Grange, consulting with an electrical engineer, or some other such potentate.

The Blue Crusaders were to re-play a Cup Tie on the Wednesday afternoon—it was Monday evening now—and Handforth was scheduled to keep goal for the celebrated Blues. Fatty Fowkes, the regular goalie, was in a rather unfortunate predicament at the moment. He was hiding from the police, and he could not publicly appear.

"Got room, gov'nor, ain't you?" asked the shabby man eagerly.

"Eh?" said Handforth, with a start.

"Yes, rather! Plenty of room in here!"

"You ass!" muttered Church. "What are you talking about? We're not going to Caistowe!"

"Who said we're not?" demanded Handforth tartly. "If I want to go to Caistowe, I'll go to Caistowe—and you can boil yourself, Walter Church!"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Church, shrugging his shoulders. "You can go to Halifax, for all I care!"

"Or Timbuctoo!" muttered McClure, in a fed-up tone.

"Idiots!" hissed Handforth, half turning his head. "Don't you recognise this blighter?"

His chums peered forward, but they could not see very distinctly, owing to the rain-spotted windscreen. There had been a shower just as they had been leaving Bannington, and even now there was a slight drizzle.

Handforth had all the advantage of the situation. He was comparatively in the dark, tucked away inside the little Austin Seven, which had its hood and side curtains in position. The man in the road, on the other hand, was fully exposed to the full glare of the headlamps. Handforth could see his ugly face, his stubbly chin, his shifty eyes.

And he recognised him.

This man was the fellow who had been drunk in Helmford, the previous week. Handforth remembered the incident very vividly. He had kept goal for the Blue Crusaders in the Cup-tie against Helmford Town, and, coming home, he had given a lift to Walter Kenmore—the elder brother of Simon Kenmore, the missing Sixth-Former. Walter, who had become quite popular with the juniors at St. Frank's, was staying at the old school, in the hope of clearing up the mystery of his brother.

Handforth had every reason to remember that incident of the previous Wednesday evening. This man—who now stood out in the glare of Austin's headlamps—had been drunk. He had reeled out into the road, and Handforth had hit him, knocking him

unconscious. While Handy and his chums had been fetching a doctor, Walter Kenmore had watched over the injured man.

But when the juniors had returned, they had found Kenmore himself unconscious, stretched out on the road. The man had recovered in the meantime, had struggled with Kenmore, and had knocked him out. After that the fellow had bolted.

And here he was—utterly unconscious of the fact that this was the same car that had knocked him down the previous Wednesday! He had been drunk at the time, and when Handforth & Co. had looked at him he had been unconscious. So, naturally enough, they were perfect strangers to him now, since he had never set eyes on them. But they, on the other hand, had seen him clearly enough, and Handforth did not fail to recognise him.

"It's all right, then, gov'nor?" said the man, as he opened the near-side door. "You don't mind givin' a poor feller a lift, do you?"

"That's all right!" said Handforth, in a curiously grim voice. "Hop in! You want to go to Caistowe, eh?"

"Yes, gov'nor, if it ain't troublin' you too much," said the man, as he climbed painfully in. "Gosh! There's a nail in one o' my shoes, and I'm fair crippled."

"That's all right!" said Handforth. "Shut the door after you!"

The man slammed the door, and Handforth engaged his gears. A moment later they were bowling off again—but instead of stopping at Bannington Grange, Handforth drove straight on towards Caistowe.

And in Handforth's eyes there was a determined light!



## CHAPTER 2.

### Handy's Little Scheme!

**T**HE Austin purred along smoothly, slowing down here and there owing to slight patches of mist.

Handforth was silent, and Church and McClure, in the rear, were trying to puzzle out what their leader was up to. Even supposing this was the drunken man of the previous Wednesday evening, what was the good of taking him to Caistowe?

"He's dotty!" muttered Church into Mac's ear.

"That's nothing new!" said McClure bitterly. "We've known it for terms. What's the idea of dragging us into Caistowe like this—just to oblige this rascally tramp!"

"There's never any telling what Handy will do!" murmured Church.

But Handforth had a curious idea of his own—and he was determined to put it into practice.

He considered that this man should be prosecuted for assaulting Mr. Kenmore.



Therefore, in giving him this lift to Caistowe, he was determined to drive straight to the police station, so that he could give the man in charge. Any ordinary fellow would never have thought of this extraordinary scheme, but Handforth was different from anybody else. It was usual for him to get the most wild ideas.

And, as he had always fancied himself as an amateur detective, he came to the conclusion that this was an excellent opportunity for him to reveal his astuteness. This man—this tramp—had asked him for a lift. Very well, he would give him a lift!

He would drive right into Caistowe, and then, upon arrival, he would give himself the pleasure of handing the rascal over to the police. Unfortunately, Handforth, without saying anything to his chums, assumed that they could read the weird and wonderful workings of his own mind.

Caistowe was soon reached, for it was only two or three miles from Bannington, and the streets were nearly deserted, owing to the uncongenial character of the evening. During the summer months, of course, Caistowe was alive with visitors, but in the winter-time the little sea-port was very quiet.

Handforth pulled up with a jerk outside the police-station, which was quite near the front. The wind-swept esplanade was close at hand, and the thunder of the surf could be heard, the tide being at the flood.

"Here we are!" said Handforth briskly.

He opened the door, jumped out, and ran round the car. Then he opened the near-side door, and placed a hand on the stranger's shoulder.

"'Ere!" ejaculated the man, startled.

"Now we've got you, my beauty!" said Handforth triumphantly. "You thought we were strangers, didn't you? But you're the rotter who attacked Mr. Kenmore last week, in Helmsford—"

He was interrupted by a strangled ejaculation from Sam Pointer—for this was the individual's name. He was staring at Handforth dazedly, with a light of fright leaping into his eyes.

"Thought you were just asking an ordinary motorist for a lift, eh?" went on Handforth. "That's where you're wrong, my beauty! This is the police station, and you're going straight inside! Come on—out of my car!"

He gave the man a tug, and a moment later Sam Pointer was on the pavement, with Handforth grappling fiercely with him. Church and McClure, completely bewildered, and bottled up in the back of the little Austin, scrambled hard to get out. They did not know what all this meant.

"Quick!" came a gasp from Handforth. "Churchy! Mac! Lend a hand, you fat heads!"

"We can't get out!" gasped Church frantically.

The Austin Seven is recognised as one of the most remarkable little cars ever devised; but, except in the very latest models, it is a bit of a conjure to get out from the confined rear seats, especially when one is in a hurry and when one is hampered by a companion.

Sam Pointer gave one scared look at the blue lamps outside the police station; he also noticed that the street was deserted, and that the door of the police station was closed.

"You young fool!" he snarled. "What's your game? I don't know what you're talking about! I ain't been in Helmsford in all my life!"

"Don't tell lies!" retorted Handforth hotly. "You're the man who was drunk—Hi! What the— Oh, so that's the game, is it?"

Pointer was lashing out with one of his feet, and Handforth received a nasty kick on the left shin.

"You cur!" shouted the junior fiercely. "That's the game you played on Mr. Kenmore! You kicked him on the head, and knocked him unconscious!"

"Let me go!" panted the man harshly.

He was fighting desperately, but he was not fighting in the manner that Handforth was familiar with. He did not use his fists, but his boots. He was kicking wildly, and Edward Oswald was not prepared for this sort of attack.

Handforth came round with his right, and if that blow had gone home Mr.

Sam Pointer would have dropped quietly out of the tussle. But the man dodged in the nick of time, and at the same second he brought his knee up and caught Handforth below the belt.

"Ugh!" grunted the junior, in agony.

He doubled up, and Pointer swung his elbow round and delivered a brutal thrust on the side of Handforth's head, toppling him completely over.

"You rotter!" shouted Church hotly.

He had just got out, and he flung himself at the man. But Pointer was desperate now. He kicked at Church, and floored the unfortunate junior at the first thrust; and before McClure could get out of the car and join the fight, the fellow had bolted. He streaked away into the darkness, limping painfully, but making good progress.

"After him!" groaned Handforth, as he tried to sit up.

"He's gone!" panted Mac, as, at last, he got out of the car. "It's no good now, Handy! We've lost him!"

"Oh, you hopeless idiots!" said Handforth witheringly. "Just as we had him here, too—right at the police station! What's the good of relying upon you fatheads?"

"Well, I like that!" protested Church. "We didn't know that you had pulled up outside the police station! And we didn't know what your game was! Until you

**YOU WILL  
LEARN SOMETHING  
TO YOUR ADVANTAGE  
IF YOU TURN TO  
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grabbed the fellow, we didn't even know that you meant to collar him!"

"Haven't you got any brains?" demanded Handforth tartly.

"We haven't got brains like yours—thank goodness!" retorted McClure. "How the dickens could we suspect that you would try such a dotty wheeze? If you wanted us to grab the man, why didn't you tell us earlier? Then we could have held him in the car while you yelled for the police to come out!"

"By George!" said Handforth blankly. "I never thought of that!"



## CHAPTER 3.

### Nothing Doing!

AM POINTER had completely vanished when Handforth had sufficiently recovered to look up and down the damp, misty front.

"He can't have gone far!" he said grimly. "We'll tell the police, and then they'll get on his track. Didn't you recognise him, you chaps? He's the fellow who kicked Mr. Kenmore in the head, last Wednesday, at Helmford!"

"Yes, we could see that when it was too late!" agreed Church. "Oh, let him go! You're dotty, Handy! You can't charge the man, even if you do find him."

"Can't charge him?" repeated Handforth, staring. "Didn't he assault Mr. Kenmore?"

"Yes, but that was last Wednesday."

"What difference does that make?"

"Every difference!" said Church. "You can't take a man into a police station and charge him with an assault that took place nearly a week ago! Besides, it's Mr. Kenmore's job to make a charge, not ours! I don't suppose the police would listen to us, in any case."

"Of course they wouldn't!" agreed McClure. "Where's the evidence? How are the police to know that we haven't made a mistake? And you can bet your boots that the man will deny all knowledge of the Helmford affair."

But Handforth would not listen to these very reasonable arguments.

"We've got to find the rotter!" he said gruffly. "And the first thing to do is to tell the police— Good egg! Here's a constable now! We'll get him on the job!"

The door of the police station had opened, and a uniformed figure had just emerged, with a glistening cape over his shoulders. It was this cape, in fact, which prevented Handforth from noticing that the officer was a sergeant. Which was, in a way, an unfortunate thing.

"Hey, just a minute, constable!" said Handforth briskly.

The sergeant glared.

"Talking to me, young man?" he demanded sternly.

"Yes, I am!" retorted Handforth. "This is a fine kind of police station, I must say! I bring you a prisoner, and we have a struggle outside your giddy front door, and you don't even take any notice! The fellow's got away now. What do you think you policemen are here for?"

"That's about enough!" said the sergeant curtly. "We don't want none of your games here, young man! St. Frank's boys, aren't you? Well, you'd best get back to school—before you get yourselves into trouble."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "You've got to find that prisoner——"

"I'm Sergeant Williams," interrupted the officer. "So not so much of your 'constable,' my lad! And what's all this about a prisoner? Trying to fool me, or what?"

"No, I'm not trying to fool you!" said Handforth. "I brought you a prisoner, but he kicked out at us, and now he has escaped. It's up to you to collar him."

"Now, now!" said the sergeant sternly. "None of these games, young gents! You can't play tricks like this on the Force!"

"It's not a trick!" roared Handforth.

"Go along with you!" said Sergeant Williams, his voice very cold. "There's no prisoner here, and, by what I can see, there never has been one. You'll get yourselves into trouble, my lads, if you play games like this."

"But I tell you it's not a game!" protested Handforth indignantly. "This man assaulted a friend of ours last Wednesday, in Helmford——"

"Oh, he did, did he?" said the sergeant grimly. "In Helmford, eh? Then why don't you go to the Helmford police? By gum! You'd better not try these tricks on me!"

"How many more times have I got to tell you that it's not a trick!" ejaculated Handforth frantically. "We brought this man here——"

"This your car?" broke in the sergeant sternly.

"Yes."

"Where's your licence?" asked the officer suspiciously. "You ain't old enough to hold a motor-car licence! Huh! You'll find yourself in trouble——"

"No, I shan't!" broke in Handforth impatiently. "I've got a special licence, so you've drawn a blank!"

"Let's have a look at it."

"But—but——"

"And what do you mean by leaving your engine running?" went on Sergeant Williams officiously. "Don't you know that you mustn't leave a car, unattended, with the engine running?"

"But it's not unattended!" roared Handforth. "I'm here!"

"You're not in the car!" insisted the sergeant. "Better stop that engine straight away."

Church nipped back, and turned off the switch. In the meantime, the sergeant was holding out his hand for Handforth's licence.

"Come on—let's see it!" he said authoritatively.



Handforth was nearly inarticulate. Here was this fatheaded sergeant asking to see his licence—and that prisoner was escaping all the time!

Church and McClure were in a bit of a stew. It would be quite like their leader to announce that he had left his licence in his other suit. However, after a frantic search, during which even Handforth himself began to get nervous, he finally found the licence mixed up with a lot of odds and ends in his trousers pocket.

Sergeant Williams inspected it, found it in perfect order, and seemed disappointed.

"Yes, it's all right!" he admitted grudgingly. "But don't leave your engine running again, young man! If you do, you might find yourself in trouble!"

Handforth breathed hard.

"That's about the tenth time you've told me that I shall find myself in trouble!" he said, exasperated. "What about going after that prisoner?"

The sergeant pulled on his gloves.

"We've had about enough of this, young gent!" he said sourly. "You'd best get into your car and drive off home."

"I'm blowed if I will!" retorted Handforth. "Where's the inspector? I'm going inside—"

"Better not!" advised the sergeant. "The inspector's out, anyhow, and there's only the station officer in the charge-room. So if you go into the station you'll soon be sent about your business. You can play all the tricks you like at school, but don't try them on here!"

And, with a stern nod, Sergeant Williams strolled off. Handforth gave his chums a hopeless look, and they tried valiantly to conceal their satisfaction.

"Oh, well, it can't be helped, Handy!" said Church, as he opened the door of the Austin Seven. "We'd better do as the sergeant says, and get back to St. Frank's. We shall be late for calling over, even as it is."

And Handforth, much to his disgust, was compelled to admit himself beaten.



## CHAPTER 4.

### A Clue ! }

TWO minutes later the chums of Study D were back in the Austin Seven, and Handforth switched

on the headlights, preparatory to driving off. As he did so a figure came into sight, and the three juniors uttered simultaneous exclamations of recognition.

The figure they saw was overcoated, but this could not conceal the fact that the man's legs were somewhat bowed. He was stocky and muscular, with an unhandsome, rugged countenance.

"By George!" said Handforth. "It's Ben!"

"Ben Gillingham—of the Blues!" nodded Church.

Handforth got out of the car again.

"Hallo, Ben!" he greeted boisterously.

"What are you doing in Caistowe?"

Ben Gillingham, the right back of the Blue Crusaders, came up, grinning.

"I thought it was you youngsters!" he said cheerily. "Weren't you scrapping with

somebody three or four minutes ago?"

"Yes!" said Handforth. "Did you see it?"

"I was a good way off, but I just managed to see a bit of it," replied Ben Gillingham. "What was the idea? I saw somebody running away, and he dodged off like a streak of lightning."

"Did you see where he went to?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Yes," replied Ben. "He went into the Fisherman's Rest."

"A clue!" ejaculated Handforth. "Come on,

you chaps! We'll buzz to the Fisherman's Rest and drag that rotter out!"

"Better not!" advised the footballer. "I don't know much about Caistowe, but I have an idea that the Fisherman's Rest is a questionable sort of place. If you go barging into it you'll stir up a hornets' nest. There are some pretty tough customers in the place, I believe."

"He's right, Handy!" said Church. "Everybody knows that the Fisherman's Rest is a low-down sort of pub."

"Then they oughtn't to give it such a peaceful sort of name!" said Handforth unreasonably. "Where's that sergeant? We'll tell him, and make him go in—"

"What's the trouble, though?" asked Ben Gillingham curiously. "Has somebody been robbing you, or what?"

"You remember the Cup-tie last Wednesday, at Helmford?" asked Handforth.

"Well, I ought to, seeing that I played in it!" grinned Ben.

"Well, on the way home we took Mr. Kenmore with us—"

"Kenmore?" repeated Ben, frowning. "But young Kenmore is dead—or supposed to be! It's all because of him that poor Fatty Fowkes is hiding from the police—"



"Yes, I know," interrupted Handy. "But this Mr. Kenmore isn't the same one. He's an elder brother—and quite a decent chap, too. Very different from Kenmore of the Sixth."

"I see!" nodded Ben Gillingham. "I remember, now, something of the sort. And you were giving him a lift from Helmford?"

"Exactly!" nodded Handforth. "And as we were coming out of the town we biffed into a drunken man. While we were going for a doctor, this rotter attacked Mr. Kenmore, and knocked him out."

"He wasn't hurt much, then."

"Hardly hurt at all!" said Handforth. "Well, as we were coming along from Bannington, the beggar stepped into the road and stopped my car—and asked for a lift. The nerve of it, you know!"

"He didn't know it was the same car!" chuckled Ben.

"Of course he didn't—and I gave him a lift, and brought him to the police station," went on Handforth. "My idea was to give him in charge—"

He broke off as Ben Gillingham burst into a roar of laughter.

"Have I said something funny?" he asked tartly.

"You bet you have!" grinned Ben. "By gosh! You can't do a thing like that, Handforth! You can't give a man in charge for an assault that took place the previous week—especially as Mr. Kenmore isn't here himself. You don't suppose the police would believe you, do you? Where's your evidence? How can you prove it?"

"But he's the same man!" protested Handforth.

"That doesn't make any difference," replied Ben. "The police wouldn't believe you—and they couldn't arrest the man on such flimsy evidence."

"Do you call my word flimsy evidence?" asked Handforth, glaring.

"Ahem! I'm only mentioning what the police would say!" said Ben soothingly. "You take my advice and get back to school. You'll only start a brawl if you go to that low-down inn. Better drop it altogether."

"That's what we've been telling him, Ben," said Church. "If he doesn't, he'll be in an awful mess."

"How do you make that out?" asked Handforth.

"Well, how do you know that this man wouldn't bring a counter-charge?" said Church. "He might say that you were driving carelessly, and that you knocked him down. There's no evidence—now—that he was drunk. If you can bring a charge against him for assaulting Kenmore, it's just as possible for him to bring a charge against you for reckless driving, and for knocking him down."

"But I wasn't driving recklessly!" denied Handforth.

"Of course you weren't, old man—but this rotter is liable to be a liar," explained Church. "So it'll be better, from every

point of view, to let the whole affair slide."

"Oh, all right!" growled Handforth reluctantly. "It's a giddy frost, but I suppose I'd better let you have your own way. Can we give you a lift, Ben?"

"Don't think so," said Ben Gillingham, shaking his head. "Thanks all the same, but I'm just on my way to catch the train to Bannington. You're going back to St. Frank's, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's in a different direction," said Ben. "So long! See you on Wednesday, I expect."

"Rather!" said Handforth promptly. "I'm playing in goal for the Blues."

"Good man!" nodded Ben. "It's a pity we can't have poor old Fatty—but I don't suppose he'll be kept a prisoner for much longer. I hope not, anyway—he's getting fed up."

A minute later the three juniors parted from Ben Gillingham, and they climbed back into their Austin Seven, and started off for St. Frank's. And if Handforth was disappointed, Church and McClure were filled with untold relief.



## CHAPTER 5.

### More Trouble!

**B**LOW these patches of mist!" said Handforth grumpily.

He slowed down, for it was very difficult

to see properly. Now and then the little Austin would run into a flimsy, illusive patch of white mist, which hung across the road in swirling masses, like will-'o-the-wisps.

"No need to hurry too much," said Church. "It's past calling-over, anyhow, and we shall get lines for being late. Might as well be hung for sheep as lambs"

"It's not worth risking going into the ditch, at any rate," said McClure.

Handforth sniffed.

"That's as **much** as to say that I can't drive, eh?" he said tartly. "I don't care about mists!"

And he trod on the accelerator, making the little Austin leap forward. Luckily the road was clear just ahead, and they bowled along in safety.

That meeting with Ben Gillingham had caused them to think of Fatty Fowkes, the unfortunate Blues' goalie. The St. Frank's juniors had had a great deal to do with Fatty of late. And it was all connected up with the mystery which surrounded Simon Kenmore's disappearance.

It was known that Kenmore, of the Sixth, had had a quarrel with Fatty Fowkes a week or two earlier. The big goalie, indeed, had knocked Kenmore into the River Stowe—incensed by a suggestion of Kenmore's that





When it was too late Handforth, driving the Austin Seven realised that there was a pond straight ahead. Swoosh! With a terrific splash of water, the Austin Seven containing Handforth & Co., leaped towards the centre of the pond.

he—Fatty—should accept a bribe, and let his side down.

Later Simon Kenmore had been missing, and the police believed that he was dead—drowned. And a warrant had been issued for Fatty Fowkes' arrest in connection with the affair.

But Fatty, knowing full well that he was innocent, had gone into hiding. He had been urged to do so by his fellow players, and by the St. Frank's juniors.

Lionel Corcoran, of the Fourth, was, incidentally, the sole owner of the Blue Crusaders Club, and he had been helping Fatty all along the line. And the mystery of Simon Kenmore remained as baffling as ever. Nobody knew where he had got to, or why he was remaining absent for so long.

Until he turned up Fatty Fowkes would not be released from his predicament. Nipper and Handforth and Corcoran, and most of the other fellows, were convinced that Kenmore was still alive. They had seen him—just for a moment, in a fog—after his supposed death. This proved to them beyond question that Fatty Fowkes had done him no harm. Kenmore was remaining "disappeared" for some purpose of his own.

And Walter Kenmore was now at St. Frank's.

The fellows rather liked Walter. He was about twenty-six, and he seemed to be made of very different stuff to his younger brother. The headmaster had sanctioned him living in the East House, in the same quarters as Simon Kenmore had occupied

And nobody—with the sole exception of Guy Sinclair, of the Sixth—guessed that Simon Kenmore and Walter Kenmore were one and the same! The rascally prefect had taken Sinclair into his confidence, but all the rest of the school had no suspicion.

Simon Kenmore was acting very cleverly. His disguise was perfect. He had a very excellent reason for remaining "hidden." For Kenmore himself was in fear of the police! Little did Handforth suspect that Sam Pointer, the rascal he had just encountered, was very closely connected with the whole mystery!

Kenmore, realising the necessity for remaining "dead," and having nowhere else to go, had returned to St. Frank's in the guise of his own imaginary brother! What was more, he was making a big success of this masquerade.

In his new identity he was striving to be more restrained—more gentlemanly. He had been acting his part so thoroughly—so consistently—that he was beginning to like his character of Walter better than his own character of Simon. For Kenmore was finding that popularity was congenial. Hitherto he had been thoroughly hated by every junior in the school.

Quite by chance, the previous week, an action of his had been misunderstood. Entirely for his own ends he had allowed some Ancient House fellows to escape from the East House when they had been there on a jape after lights-out. Kenmore had saved them from Mr. Barnby Goolc, the Housemaster of the East House. But he had



only saved them because he had been anxious about his own skin. The juniors were led to believe that he had acted solely for their benefit; and, to Kenmore's great surprise, he had found himself extremely popular.

Everybody was saying that "Walter" Kenmore was miles better than Simon! And Kenmore was beginning to like this new experience. Juniors would come up to him and offer to run errands; they would doff their caps and give him a friendly greeting. Somehow, it all seemed very pleasant to him.

"Go easy, Handforth!" said Church, breaking into Handforth's thoughts as he bent over the wheel, peering into the mist and darkness. "It's pretty thick here!"

"I know the road!" replied Handforth. "I've been thinking about old Fatty, you know. What's going to happen if Kenmore doesn't show up again? His brother doesn't seem to be going much——"

"Never mind about Kenmore now!" put in Church. "You'd better give all your attention to the driving."

"A good motorist," retorted Handforth, "drives automatically."

They had just reached the top of a stiff rise, and the Austin was surging forward on the level ground again. Just ahead there was an extra thick patch of mist.

"Easy, Handy!" urged McClure. "There's a bend just here——"

"A bend?" repeated Handforth, staring forward. "Rats! That's at the top of the next rise."

"No, it isn't!" shouted Mac, in alarm. "It's here! You've got to turn sharp to the left—— Hi! Look out!"

At the last second Handforth realised that he was going too fast. The bend *was* here—and right ahead lay a pond!

Handforth & Co. knew all about it a second later, for they plunged straight in!

## CHAPTER 6.

### Handforth's Unlucky Evening!



WOOSH!

With a terrific splashing of water, the Austin Seven leaped clean towards the centre of the pond.

Owing to the mist, Handforth had mistaken the surface of the pond for the wet surface of the road! He had made up his mind that the bend was at the next hill, and when he realised the truth it was too late to swerve.

The pond lay at the side of the road, just on the bend, and it was unprotected by any railing. It was one of those ponds where cattle go down to drink—for there was a farm close at hand, now hidden by the mist.

"We're in!" gurgled Church frantically.

With a sudden lurching and swaying the

Austin came to a halt—right in the very centre of the pond!

"Great Scott!" said Handforth, in dismay.

He had both his feet hard down—the clutch being out and the brake being on. Not that the application of the brake was much good here, in the middle of the pond. The engine gave a feeble kind of quiver, spluttered once or twice, then abruptly stopped. Water came gushing in tremendous cascades through the floor boards—or, to be more exact, through the pedal slots in the metal-work, since there are no actual floor boards in an Austin Seven. Another great cascade came up between the two front seats, through the back axle oiler hole. Handforth found his ankles being covered, for the water was creeping up rapidly.

"We're sinking," he ejaculated in a gasping voice. "Here!—We'd better get out of this, you chaps!"

"Oh, you hopeless chump!" groaned McClure. "We tried to warn you, but you wouldn't take any notice! We're marooned now—right in the middle of this rotten pond!"

"My car will be ruined!" said Handforth dismally. "She'll never run again after being drowned like this!"

"Never mind about your car!" snapped Church. "We'd better be careful that we're not drowned!"

The Austin was lurching to starboard, the near side wheels sinking into the soft mud at the bottom of the pond. She listed more and more, and was in imminent danger of overturning.

Church managed to get the near side door open, and he fell through rather than scrambled out. The next moment he went headfirst into the pond, and the car gave a jolt in the other direction, pitching Handforth headlong.

McClure got out somehow, and three minutes later the hapless chums of Study D were on the road. But in scrambling out—in ploughing their way through the pond—they had got themselves smothered from head to foot in thick mud.

"This is what comes of motoring with a maniac!" said McClure bitterly. "My goodness! I'm in a shocking mess!"

"Let's run!" said Church. "If we hang about here like this we shall get pneumonia, or something! The only thing is to keep moving—so that we shan't get cold."

"Cold!" said McClure, with chattering teeth. "I'm frozen already!"

Handforth was gazing disconsolately into the murk, where, in the centre of the pond, he could just distinguish a vague lump. It was the hood of his precious Austin, and the rest of the car was under water.

"We can't go yet!" he said fiercely. "We've got to get my car out!"

"Idiot!" roared Church. "We can't do a job like that! It'll need horses—or another car, with a tow-rope! There's a garage in Bellton, isn't there?"

"By George, yes!" said Handforth. "It hasn't been there long—because Bellton is



years behind the times. But, thank goodness, there's a garage now! We'll stop there on the way home."

Even Handforth realised the impossibility of retrieving the car. A moment later he and his chums were running hard along the road, and before they reached Bellton their circulations had revived, and they were feeling warmed.

There was a small garage at the end of the village, near the station, and the proprietor was startled when he saw the muddy apparitions run into his yard. But as soon as he understood that Handforth was one of them, and that Handforth's Austin Seven was in a pond on the Caistowe road, he readily undertook the task of towing the car out.

"Leave it to me, young gent!" he said briskly. "I'll take the old Ford along at once, and fetch your little 'bus home. I'll put her right again by to-morrow. I don't s'pose she'll have come to much harm, unless you've cracked the cylinder head."

"Oh, my hat!" said Handforth.

"That's not likely, though," added the garage proprietor. "Water in the carburettor and the magneto is about the only trouble. I'll try and have her ready by to-morrow evening, and I'll bring her up myself."

And Handforth had to be satisfied with this. Church and McClure privately thought that the garage man would be a miracle-worker if he delivered the car, in running condition again, by the following evening.

The three juniors ran on, and by the time they got into the Triangle of St. Frank's they were half-dry. The mud was caking over them, and their faces were scarcely recognisable.

"If we can only dodge in on the quiet, we might escape notice!" said Church. "We don't want a prefect or a master to see us!"

"Why not?" asked Handforth. "The thing was an accident, wasn't it?"

"Well, I suppose it was, but we don't want the Head to drop on you, Handy," said Church. "He might forbid you to drive a car again. You know what these masters are."

"My hat, I hadn't thought of that!" said Handforth, with a start.

Before they could reach the Ancient House, however, they were spotted by a big crowd of Removites, who were just coming out of the gymnasium, and a moment later the unhappy chums of Study D were surrounded.



## CHAPTER 7

### Keeping It Dark!

**N**IPPER, the captain of the Remove, was in the forefront, and he stared at Handforth & Co. in amazement.

"What's happened?" he asked. "What have you chaps been doing?"

Before Handforth could reply, a yell went up from some of the other Removites.

"It's those rotten Fourth-Formers!" shouted somebody. "Handforth & Co. have been japed. Corky and his pals have rolled them in the mud!"

"Great Scott!"

"Down with the Fourth!"

There was an uproar. Japes were commonplace nowadays. Since Lionel Corcoran had entered the East House section of the Fourth Form, there had been some very lively times. For "Corky" had revived the spirits of the East House juniors, and they were now becoming a force that had to be reckoned with. Indeed, the Fourth Form, as a whole, was going all out to eclipse the Remove.

"How did they do it, Handy?" asked Fullwood eagerly. "We'll slaughter them for this!"

"Yes, rather!"

At that moment Corcoran and Armstrong and Griffith came out of the East House, in order to find out what all the noise was about. There was an immediate rush, and the three Fourth-Formers were grabbed, hauled down the East House steps, and half the breath was knocked out of them.

"Here, I say!" protested Corcoran. "Steady, you asses! Pax!"

"Pax be blowed!" yelled De Valerie. "You've japed some of our fellows—"

"Chuck it!" bellowed Handforth, charging up. "Corky & Co. didn't do this!"

"What!"

"It was an accident!" shouted Handforth. "We ran into a ditch, in the mist."

"Ran into a ditch!" echoed Nipper.

"Well, not a ditch, exactly—a pond!" said Handforth. "It's a lucky thing we weren't drowned."

He explained, with much attention to detail, that the mishap was in no way the result of careless driving. And then Church and McClure, with considerable relish, proceeded to point out that if Handforth had taken their warning the corner would have been negotiated in safety.

"Good old Handy!" chuckled Nipper. "By what I can hear, it serves you right!"

"But it doesn't serve us right!" said Church complainingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth dragged his chums aside, whilst the juniors yelled with laughter.

"Rats to 'em!" he said gruffly. "And you're a fine pair, aren't you, to tell fibs like that!"

"It wasn't a fib!" protested McClure. "You know jolly well that we tried to warn you—"

"Well, never mind!" interrupted Handforth. "Look here! I've just thought of something. Before long, some of these inquisitive fatheads will be asking us what we were doing in Caistowe."

"That's quite likely," said Church.

"Well, if they ask you, don't tell them!" warned Handforth. "I'm going to keep it dark about that tramp chap we picked up."



If we say anything about it to the fellows, they'll only laugh at us."

"Laugh at you, you mean!" said McClure pointedly.

Handforth waved a muddy arm.

"They'll laugh at us!" he insisted. "So we'd better keep mum about the whole affair. See?"

Church and McClure did see, and they were of opinion that this was the most sensible course. They were rather surprised, indeed, that the suggestion had come from Handforth. If they had hinted that it would be better to keep quiet, Handforth would promptly have told them to go and eat coke.

But they could easily understand why Edward Oswald was so anxious for secrecy on the subject. The rank and file of the juniors would undoubtedly howl with laughter if they got wind of that adventure. Handforth picking up a tramp and giving him a lift to Caistowe, so that he could hand him over to the police! In a way, it was certainly funny. Even Handforth was beginning to realise it now.

"You fellows had better get indoors, and change into some respectable togs," said Nipper, as he joined the chums of Study D. "If a master sees you like this, he'll start asking questions."

"Yes, we'll go!" said Handforth, nodding.

At that moment, he caught sight of Mr. Kenmore. There was a slight resemblance to the Simon Kenmore that St. Frank's had known so well. Nobody thought anything of this, since "Walter" Kenmore was the brother of the bullying Simon. Walter, however, was taller; by reason of the fact that Kenmore had increased the height of his heels, and his very clothing added an illusory effect. Walter, too, wore a moustache and big glasses, and his front top teeth were very prominent. On the top of all this, his character seemed entirely different. It not only seemed different, but it was different. For Kenmore had been holding himself in check ever since he had commenced this masquerade; and he was now acting decently in most things, because he found that it paid him better.

"What on earth have you youngsters been up to?" he asked, staring at the muddy three. "Is this a new game, or what?"

Kenmore was intent on passing by, for he made a practice of associating with the juniors as little as possible, just to be on the safe side. But the sight of those three juniors brought him to an involuntary stop.

"We've been having the very dickens of a time!" said Handforth impulsively. "You remember that chap in Helmford, Mr. Kenmore? You know, the drunken one——"

Handforth paused, as Church nudged him in the side.

"Eh?" he went on, turning. "What's that for, Churchy? Oh!"

"Let's get indoors, and change!" hissed Church.

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth hastily.

"What were you going to say?" asked Kenmore. "There's such a din going on that I didn't catch——"

"It doesn't matter," broke in Handforth. "Nothing important. Come on, my sons!"

He dragged his chums away, and they were grinning.

"And you're the chap who asked us to keep mum!" said McClure dryly. "Another two words, Handy, and you would have told Mr. Kenmore all about it."

Handforth only grunted. Neither he nor his chums guessed that that piece of information about Sam Pointer was the crucial clue that Kenmore most required to get him out of his troubles!



## CHAPTER 8.

### Sam Pointer's Fear!

**M**R. SAM POINTER looked somewhat bleakly across the public bar in the Fisherman's Rest.

He was sitting at a little table in a quiet corner, well away from the swing doors. And by this time he had ceased to watch those doors with fearful expectancy.

An hour had elapsed since he had got away from Handforth & Co., and during this hour Mr. Pointer had been drinking very heavily. The landlord, indeed, had been rather surprised to find that this down-at-heel stranger had a plentiful supply of silver.

But although Mr. Pointer's immediate fear was allayed, he was nevertheless in a very scared condition. There was a hunted look in his eyes, and when a policeman had looked into the bar, ten minutes earlier, Mr. Pointer's face had become almost ashen.

There was reason enough for his condition of fear.

It was he who had accepted an eight-pound cheque from Simon Kenmore, four or five weeks earlier, in settlement of a gambling debt. It was he who had altered the "eight" to "eighty." Mr. Pointer had cashed that altered cheque, and he had cleared out of Bannington without further delay. And Kenmore was held responsible for the forgery. Kenmore, indeed, was suspected of being the actual forger, and it was for this reason that he preferred to remain "dead."

Until the previous week, Mr. Pointer had believed himself to be perfectly safe. He had had a very hectic time recently, spending his ill-gotten money. A good deal of it had gone on racecourses—backing horses lavishly, and losing. For Mr. Sam Pointer was a race-track loafer, who, as a general rule, went about with lean pockets, cadging here and cadging there.

On the previous Wednesday, however, he had encountered "Walter" Kenmore. For Kenmore, on finding this man, had not revealed his true identity. He had pretended to be his own brother, and he had told Sam



# COMING NEXT WEEK—EZRA QUIRKE!

Ezra Quirke!

The boy magician! Sinister, mysterious, amazing!

St. Frank's has known this remarkable character before and many were the extraordinary things that happened during his sojourn at the famous school.

For a long time, however, nothing has been heard of him; but now he is to make his reappearance—a Quirke as weird and as mysterious as ever!



Reggie Pitt unexpectedly finds himself the owner of a castle—Raithmere Castle. For years this once picturesque pile has been empty and deserted; it has been allowed to go almost to ruin. And stories have gone the rounds that the castle is haunted! Quirke himself is afraid to enter the place, for fear that the unknown Presence will strike.

Edwy Searles Brooks has written many brilliant mystery series, but surely none to surpass the one starting next week. Look out for "The Return of Ezra Quirke!" in next Wednesday's issue of the

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Pointer, straight out, that he intended taking immediate action. Pointer, in desperation, had kicked Kenmore in the head, and had bolted. Since then he had been in mortal fear.

He believed that Kenmore's "brother" was putting the police on his track. He had not dared to go anywhere by train, or even by motor-bus. For days he had skulked in lodgings in Helmford—new lodgings that he had hurriedly obtained.

He had thought of ways and means of getting away. He had ideas of going to London, but he was frightened to do so, believing that the London police would be informed of that forgery, and that a look-out would be kept for him.

So, at last, he had walked from Helmford to Bannington. But he had skirted Bannington, passing along in the dark, and, footsore, he had not thought that he would encounter any danger by asking a passing motorist for a lift.

Handforth's unexpected action had consequently given him a fresh shock, and had renewed all his fears.

"Anything wrong, mate?" asked a cheery voice near him.

He started, looked round, and found a stoutish, red-faced individual sitting down at the same table in the alcove. The newcomer was a greasy-clothed man, and he seemed anxious to get into conversation.

"No, there's nothing wrong—leastways,

nothing that you can do to help!" replied Pointer gruffly, and rather thickly. "I'm fed up, that's all! Fed up to the blinkin' eyes!"

"You look it!" said the other, nodding.

"Off a ship, ain't you?" asked Pointer, with a dull look at the other.

"You've hit it, matey!" said the man. "Slade's my name—Joe Slade. Fireman aboard the *Narcissus*," he added, with a jerk of his thumb over his shoulder, vaguely indicating the harbour.

"Sailin' boat?" asked Pointer.

"Lummy! You ain't 'arf 'ad a few, ain't you?" said Slade. "Fust time I've 'eard of a fireman aboard a windjammer! No, you idiot! The *Narcissus* is a tramp steamer. She's sailin' on Wednesday—bound for Spain."

"Wish I was goin'!" said Sam Pointer enviously. "Gosh! I'd give somethink to get out o' the country! I tell you, I'm fed up with bein' 'ere! 'Specially in this rotten weather! Too cold fer my likin'!"

"You look scared, mate!" said Joe Slade curiously. "Proper scared, you do!"

"Well, I ain't scared!" said Pointer fiercely. "You can mind your own business!"

"That's all right, old sport!" said Slade cheerily. "'Ave a drink with me. We don't need to quarrel."

He had already guessed that Mr. Pointer was in fear of the police. The man's hunted



look was sufficient. Slade had knocked about the world a good bit, and he wasn't exactly a fool, either.

"Got any money?" he asked casually.

"Yes, a bit," said Pointer, turning upon his companion with a sudden eager light in his eyes. "Look 'ere! I'll tell you somethin', old pal! I tramped to Caistowe—and I thought, maybe, that I'd get a berth on some ship. Fed up with bein' here, in the winter-time, I am. I suppose there ain't any chance o' me gettin' signed on aboard this tramp steamer you've spoke of?"

"Not a chance in the world, mate!" replied Joe Slade promptly. "We don't want any new 'ands, as far as I know. And the skipper is a bit of a 'ard nut. Won't take men unless they've got good papers. If a bloke comes up with a bad discharge, he don't stand no sort o' chance with our Old Man!"

"But I ain't never bin to sea!" said Pointer.

"Which makes it all the wuss!" nodded Joe Slade.

He leaned forward, then, and lowered his voice.

"Still," he added, "if you've got a bit o' cash, I dare say somethink might be wangled!"



## CHAPTER 9.

### The Bargain!

**W**HAT do you mean—somethin' might be wangled?" asked Sam Pointer, staring. "All depends if you've got any money!" said the ship's fireman.

"Well, I ain't—not much!" replied Pointer. "Nor more than a few quid, leastways."

"Five quid?" asked Joe Slade.

"Maybe."

"If you've got five quid, I can pull it off for you!" declared Slade eagerly. "Look 'ere, mate, no swank about this 'ere. For five quid, I'll smuggle you aboard the old tub, an' nobody won't know any different! You'll be in Spain afore you know what's 'appened."

Sam Pointer had a feverish look in his eyes.

"Spain!" he muttered. "'Ot country, ain't it?"

"Not too 'ot!" replied Slade cautiously.

"You ain't callin' at any other port before you get to Spain, I suppose—at Plymouth, or any place like that?"

"Lummy, no! We don't touch no British port after leavin' Caistowe."

There was a silence for some minutes, and when it was broken Sam Pointer spoke in a voice that was charged with suspicion.

"You ain't tryin' to play no tricky game on me, I s'pose?" he asked fiercely.

"Matey, I wouldn't trick you for no money!" said Joe Slade. "Show us the fiver—that's all I want you to do! Just show us it! Safe enough in 'ere," he added, with a cautious look round. "And you can easily 'oller for 'elp if I start any monkey business—which I shan't!"

Pointer hesitated for a moment, and then he fumbled in his pockets, and at length he produced a crumpled bundle of Treasury notes. Joe Slade did not trouble to count them—he could see that there were more than five.

"Good enough for me!" he said. "Stow 'em away, matey—stow 'em away! This 'ere thing is 'as good as done. The skipper and most of the officers are ashore, and they won't come aboard until Wednesday mornin'. I'll shove you down in one o' the store-rooms somewhere, an' you'll be safe enough there. You can pay me arter we've sailed. Fair enough, ain't it?"

"When are you goin' to take me aboard—Wednesday?"

"No, mate, to-night!" replied Slade. "No sense in waitin' till Wednesday. It'll be safer to-night—an' easier. I can give you a good doss, an' keep you supplied in grub till arter we've sailed."

Mr. Slade had his eye on the money. He was determined that Sam Pointer should not go out of his sight. If he waited until Wednesday, it was quite on the cards that Pointer would be broke by the time he came on board—even if he succeeded in stowing himself away safely.

"Grub?" repeated Sam. "I'll be all right for grub—until after we've sailed?"

"Yes!"

"What about later on?" asked Pointer. "Don't I get any grub when we've left port?"

"You'll get the same grub as the rest of the crew," replied the fireman. "You don't expect to be took to Spain as a stowaway all the voyage, do yer?"

"What's goin' to 'appen, then, if I'm found?"

"Oh, you'll be found by Thursday mornin', at latest," replied the fireman. "In fact, you'll 'ave to be found. I can't take no risk like that. I dessay you'll 'ave a bit of a row with one o' the officers, but it won't amount to much."

"But what'll 'appen to me?" asked Sam tremulously. "They won't lock me up, will they?"

"Lummy, ain't you a innercent?" asked Mr. Slade. "'Course they won't lock you up! They'll just shove you to work—scrubbin' decks, or somethink. Then, when we reach port—an' that'll be Spain—they'll probably shove you ashore."

"They won't bring me back to England?"

"Not likely!" said Slade. "Why, the old Narcissus may not come back to England for a year or two. Ain't I told you she's a tramp? We don't know what cargo we'll pick up arter we've discharged the stuff we've got aboard now."



In his own mind Slade had half an idea that Sam Pointer would be landed at the Spanish port, and handed over to the British consul. For Slade was pretty certain that Pointer was wanted by the police—and rather badly wanted, too. Still, it wasn't his business, and if he could pick up an easy fiver, why shouldn't he? Naturally, when the stowaway was found he—Slade—would know nothing about it.

Sam Pointer was silent for some time, and Slade became impatient.

"Well?" he asked. "Can't you make up your mind?"

"Not yet!" muttered the other. "Let me think it over. I ain't so sure yet."

Sam Pointer had never been to sea in his life—and he did not relish the prospect. Still, it provided him with a way out. And he did not see what else could be done. He feared that the police were after him, and he knew, too, that the sentence for forgery would be severe.

By taking this chance—by allowing himself to be smuggled on board the tramp steamer—there wasn't so much to be afraid of. He hated the idea of hard work, but he was between the devil and the deep sea; and the deep sea certainly appealed to him most.

"I'll do it!" he said suddenly, as he bent forward, and looked at Slade with feverish eyes. "I'll give you a fiver, mate, if you'll get me safely aboard."

"Done!"

"But, mind you, I ain't payin' until we've got well out of port!" said Pointer cunningly. "You don't get no money until Thursday, at least—until we're so far out that they can't put me ashore agin. That's understood, ain't it?"

"It's a bargain!" said the fireman, as he extended his hand. "I've seen your money, mate, and that's good enough for me. If this 'ere thing don't come out right, you needn't pay me. Fair enough, ain't it?"

And Sam Pointer was compelled to admit that it was perfectly fair.

calm, with scarcely a breath of wind. There was every prospect of a glorious afternoon for the big game at the Stronghold—the Blue Crusaders' enclosure in Bannington.

"I'm just going over to see Corky," said Nipper. "Would you like to come?"

"You bet I'll come!" replied Handforth promptly. "I want to see Corky about the game, too. I'm going to keep goal for the Blues."

"Well, that's the latest information," agreed Nipper. "Fatty Fowkes is still in hiding, and I don't think he'll be available. Poor old Fatty!"

Handforth nodded.

"Hard cheese!" he agreed. "Of course, I just love playing for the Blues in goal—but half of my enjoyment is spoilt because I know that Fatty is perfectly fit. He could play for the Blues if it wasn't for that rotter, Kenmore. Why doesn't he show up?"

"Well, we haven't time to discuss Kenmore now!" said Nipper briskly. "We know he isn't dead, and we know he's in hiding somewhere—for some reason of his own. But we shall have to let it go at that for the moment. Football is the most important subject to-day."

"All the same, it's getting a bit thick!" protested Handforth. "The days keep going by, and nothing fresh crops up. Poor old Fatty remains in hiding, and it looks as though he'll never be able to show himself in the open again. As for Kenmore, I believe he's bolted out of the country, or something."

Handforth wasn't the only fellow who was beginning to get really worried. The whole thing was hanging on indefinitely, it seemed; and the worst of it was, there was no ghost of a chance that the situation would be altered. There was no line of inquiry that could be pursued. Ever since Simon Kenmore had vanished he had left no real trace.

However, as Nipper had said, nothing could be done this morning. There was the big Cup-tie at the Stronghold, and a good many of the St. Frank's fellows were keenly interested—mainly because Handforth of the Remove was booked to keep goal for the famous Blues.

And then, of course, Lionel Corcoran of the Fourth was the owner of the Blue Crusaders Club, and Tich Harborough, the new fellow in the Remove, was the Blues celebrated schoolboy winger. So nowadays St. Frank's felt that it had a very active interest in this renowned professional club.

In the lobby Nipper and Handforth found Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson. They were waiting for their leader.

"Shan't be a minute!" said Handforth. "I want to pop to the study for something."

"All right," nodded Nipper. "We'll go on."

The chums of Study C crossed the Triangle, and entered the East House. They did so quite boldly, for they had come on a legitimate mission—to wit, the discussion of football. House rows, in such circumstances, were definitely off.

## CHAPTER 10.

### A Little Misunderstanding!



**T**HE door of Study C, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's, burst open, and Edward Oswald Handforth strode in.

"Just the chap I want to see!" he said, as he caught sight of Nipper.

"Well, you can see me," said Nipper, who was stoking up the fire. "There's no charge, old man. Gaze, and take your fill."

"Ass!" said Handforth. "What about this afternoon's Cup-tie at the Stronghold?"

It was Wednesday morning, and breakfast was just over. The day was clear and



The three Removites reached Study No. 12 without meeting anybody, and Nipper tapped briskly on the door. As there was no answer, Nipper opened the door and entered.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "What's the matter in here?"

The study was thick with smoke, and it was empty of human occupants. The fire was burning sluggishly in the grate, and most of the smoke, instead of going up the chimney, was coming out into the room.

"Somebody's been having a lark, perhaps?" suggested Tommy Watson. They went over to the fireplace. Nipper bent down, and was in the act of looking up the chimney when a yell came from the passage outside.

"Great Scott! Corky's study's on fire!" sang out the voice of Freeman, of Study No. 16.

A moment later Freeman and Dallas and Steele looked into the doorway, and when they caught sight of the visitors their expressions changed.

"Remove rotters!" yelled Dallas. "Rescue the Fourth!"

In a flash, Kemp and Conroy, of Study No. 17, were on the scene, and they were soon joined by Turner and Page and Harron.

"You bounders!" shouted Kemp. "What have you been doing to Corky's chimney?"

"Nothing, you silly fatheads!" retorted Nipper. "We've only just got here. We found this chimney smoking——"

"Tell that to the Marines!" shouted Page. "You've been messing about with that fireplace, you japing rotters! On them, the Fourth!"

"Down with the Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

"Begad!" gasped Sir Montie. "Really, dear old boys——"

"Run!" urged Nipper. "Come on, you fellows!"

It was essentially a case where discretion was the better part of valour. These Fourth-Formers were excited; they had taken it for granted that Nipper & Co. had been deliberately "monkeying" with the fireplace, and they were too excited to listen to any explanations. Unless Nipper & Co. cleared out quickly, they would be handled with great severity. Far better to go—and then explain out in the Triangle, where violence would not be so easy.

With a quick movement Nipper tipped up the study table, and about four of the Fourth-Formers went tumbling over. In the confusion Tregellis-West and Watson reached the door—which was now unguarded, for all the Fourth-Formers had rushed into the room.

In a flash they were out, and Nipper rushed after them. They tore down the corridor, and went flying through into the lobby.

And the Fourth-Formers, excited and indignant, streaked after them in full cry!



## CHAPTER 11.

By Sheer Chance!

**S**

IMON KENMORE, entering the East House, was looking thoughtful and worried.

He had reason to be worried, too. He was getting anxious about his position at St. Frank's. In his character of "Walter," he was not a scholar at the old school; he was only there by invitation of the headmaster. And even the kindly old Dr. Stafford would begin to wonder at this prolonged stay. He might also begin to suspect that everything was not as it should be, for Kenmore, for very obvious reasons, had avoided all contact with the Head.

Kenmore was aware of a rush of feet as he reached the top of the East House steps. The next second three juniors came flying out like hares in flight from a greyhound.

"Look out!" shouted Kenmore frantically. Crash!

His yell of warning was too late. Nipper, who was coming first, caught him fairly in the middle, and Kenmore went staggering backwards down the steps, with Nipper tumbling over, practically on the top of him.

Thud!

Kenmore hit the ground violently, and Nipper half rolled over him. And in that split second Nipper saw something that positively gave him a jolt. For it really seemed to him that "Walter's" prominent front teeth shifted up and down for a flash, as though they were loose! But it was only a flash, and then Nipper picked himself up, gasping.

The shouts of the Fourth-Formers were just behind him, and he ran like the wind. Tregellis-West and Watson had already streaked across the Triangle.

Kenmore sat up, and as he half got to his feet the Fourth-Formers came streaming out, and he was bowled over again.

"You confounded young idiots!" snarled Kenmore, in his old tone. "What the thunder——"

He pulled himself up, gasping, but fortunately none of the excited Fourth-Formers had heard him. They had got halfway across the Triangle, and now they found themselves facing a big crowd of Removites—a rather bigger crowd than themselves. They pulled up short, breathing hard.

"What's the idea of this?" demanded Handforth, who had come out with Church and McClure. "Were you fellows bolting from these silly Fourth-Formers?"

"Yes, we were!" gasped Tommy Watson.

"Then I'm surprised at you!" said Handforth sternly. "I'm particularly surprised at





"Run, you two fellows!" urged Nipper to his two chums. It certainly was a case where discretion was the better part of valour. With a quick movement Nipper tripped up the study table; about four of the attacking Fourth-Formers went tumbling over, and in the resulting confusion Tregellis-West and Watson made good their escape.

you, Nipper! You're not scared of these chumps, are you?"

"I'm not feeling in any mood to be slaughtered this morning, Handy!" said Nipper, breathing hard. "These Fourth-Formers were preparing to wipe us out of existence."

"It's lucky for you that you escaped!" panted Turner. "What do you mean by coming into our House and messing about with the chimneys?"

Nipper walked over. He was quite safe now, for there were one or two prefects hovering about in the offing and the Fourth-Formers were not likely to start any hostilities.

"You fellows are too jolly hasty!" said Nipper, with some feeling. "What do you mean by trying to jump on us like that?"

"You've been playing a jape on us—" began Page.

"Rats!" interrupted Nipper. "We came over to see Corky about this afternoon's Blues' match. We found that study fire smoking, and we were trying to cure it."

"What!" ejaculated Clifton. "Do you mean to say that you weren't playing a jape?"

"Of course we weren't, you fatheads!" snapped Watson.

"Honour bright?"

"Yes, honour bright!" said Nipper. "You wouldn't let us explain in there, and we didn't want to be left at the mercy of you maniacs in your own House. Out here we can explain—in safety."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Turner. "They weren't japing us at all, you chaps!"

"And by the look of things you've half killed Mr. Kenmore," said Handforth, with a sniff. "You bowled him over in the most terrific way. You biffed him from the top of the steps to the bottom."

"Yes, I know!" said Nipper, looking round. "There wasn't time to dodge."

"Begad! I hope we haven't hurt him—I do, really!" said Sir Montie, with concern. "Mr. Kenmore is a visitor here, and it would be frightfully bad form to hurt a man like that."

"Well, if he isn't hurt, he must be made of indiarubber!" said Reggie Pitt of the West House.

"We shall have to go and apologise," said Handforth. "Kenmore's brother is a pretty good sort, and we don't want him to get a bad impression of us."

"Wait a minute!" said Nipper slowly. "Let's dust ourselves down first."

In the meantime, Kenmore had succeeded in picking himself up, and when he looked round he found that all the juniors had streamed across the Triangle. His first impulse was to rush after them, as in the old days, and he longed for a cane.

But he remembered himself in time. As "Walter" he had no authority, and he was forced to acknowledge that he could do nothing by way of punishing the culprits. So, considerably muddled, and gnashing his teeth, he went indoors.

And it was of those very teeth of Kenmore's that Nipper was now thinking.



When he had knocked Kenmore down he had seen an extraordinary thing; but in the next instant he had forgotten it, owing to the rush of the enemy. But now Nipper recalled that fleeting glimpse, and he was puzzled.

Then suddenly Nipper caught his breath in; and, although he was good at controlling his emotions, his eyes opened perceptibly wider, and they gleamed with excitement!



## CHAPTER 12.

### A Glimpse of the Truth!

"GREAT Scott!" muttered Nipper breathlessly.

He had come to the conclusion that Mr.

Kenmore must have false teeth. Nipper knew that he had not made a mistake; he had seen the teeth move up and down, and this, of course, would have been impossible had they been real.

There was nothing peculiar in Mr. Kenmore having false teeth. But why should any sane man have prominent false teeth? Natural prominent teeth could not be helped—but false ones! It was fantastic.

Nipper's brain was working very rapidly. It occurred to him that Kenmore's brother might have had an accident at some time, and his upper teeth had been knocked out. Or perhaps they had decayed owing to some illness, or through neglect. All that was very possible; but why should the man have his false teeth made in the same way as his own? Why should he not have seized that opportunity to improve his appearance?

"You're smothered, Nipper!" said somebody. "Here, let me give you a dust down."

The "somebody" was Handforth, and he proceeded to rub Nipper down. This treatment consisted mainly in bashing Nipper in the back, thumping him in the chest, knocking him from side to side, and driving half the breath out of him. In the course of this procedure there was a glimpse of something falling from Nipper's clothing, and then a tinkle sounded on the gravel.

"Hallo! Glasses!" said Handforth, staring. "What are you doing with these on you, Nipper, you ass?"

Nipper looked down, and then picked up a pair of horn-rimmed pince-nez. They were quite intact, and for a moment he was puzzled.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "They're not mine. I've never carried any glasses about with me—By Jove! They must be Mr. Kenmore's!"

"Then what are you doing with them?"

"Nothing, only I suppose I must have knocked them off when I collided," said Nipper. "I'd better take them back to him."

He took the glasses, and looked at them abstractedly. There was a portion of a

broken chain attached, and it was clear enough that they had got mixed up in Nipper's clothing during the general scramble. They had only fallen out when Handforth had proceeded with his dusting down.

Without waiting for anything further, Nipper left the others and walked hurriedly towards the East House. Lionel Corcoran and Armstrong and Griffiths were just coming out, and they were grinning—having heard rumours of the recent incident.

"You fellows have been getting into trouble, haven't you?" asked Corky.

Nipper sternly placed Kenmore's glasses on his nose, and now gazed severely at the leader of the East House juniors.

"It is a great pity, Corcoran, that you cannot keep your appointments!" he said, in an icy voice. "If you had been in our study at the correct hour, there would have been no—er—misunderstanding!"

Corcoran yelled with laughter.

"Old Piccan to the life!" he grinned. "How the dickens do you do it, Nipper?"

Nipper, in a humorous moment, had imitated the precise manner and voice of Mr. Ulysses Piecombe, the manager of the Blue Crusaders. And in doing so he made a staggering discovery! However, he did not reveal his feelings.

"Shan't be long, Corky," he said lightly. "I'll be out again soon. I'm just going to give these glasses back to Mr. Kenmore."

He passed into the East House before Corcoran & Co. could question him, and now Nipper was looking positively startled.

For he had made another discovery.

On setting those glasses across his nose he had found them to be plain! One would naturally expect pince-nez to be of some use. Eye-glasses are generally used because of defective eyesight, and for defective eyesight one needs lenses.

Yet the glass here was plain—perfectly and absolutely clear glass, non-magnifying, and no better than window-glass!

Why?

What could it mean? Why should Mr. Kenmore use glasses at all? Obviously he did not need them, and it hinted at once that he only wore them for the sake of effect. And what effect? Was it possible that they were part of a disguise?

Now that this train of thought had been started in Nipper's mind, the most overwhelming possibilities suggested themselves. Those false teeth. Were they part of a disguise, too?

False prominent teeth, and pince-nez that were valueless for all else but effect!

"Ye gods and little fishes!" muttered Nipper, taking a deep breath. "This is getting a bit steep!"

He did not hesitate. He went straight to the Sixth Form passage, and he went to Kenmore's study—the study that had always been used by Simon Kenmore, the prefect. He tapped on the door.



"Who's that?" came an irritable voice.

Nipper jumped. It was Simon Kenmore's voice! The same unpleasant tone—the same irritable snappiness.

"It's all right, Mr. Kenmore!" said Nipper. "I think you've lost your glasses, and I've brought them back. Can I come in?"

A smothered exclamation sounded.

"Yes, of course!" came the voice. "Thanks, young 'un!"

Nipper had opened the door, and he was just inside the study. "Walter" Kenmore was standing on the hearthrug, with a duster in his hand. And his voice, now, was changed—it was less like Simon's.

"I'm really awfully sorry, Mr. Kenmore!" said Nipper apologetically. "I'm the chap who bowled you over, but I really didn't see you."

"It was like your confounded nerve!" said Kenmore, with a glare. "Where are those glasses? I can't see a confounded thing without them!"

Nipper handed them over, and he did not turn a hair. Yet he knew that a deliberate lie had been uttered. For the wearer of those glasses could see just as well without them as with them.

Nipper found himself looking at "Walter" with a keen, scrutinising gaze. Yet he did it in such a careless way that Kenmore was quite unaware of it.



### CHAPTER 13.

#### The Truth About Kenmore!

**N**IPPER was puzzled—more puzzled than he had been for many a day.

Looking at Kenmore, he could see only a slight resemblance to the Sixth-Former who was missing from St. Frank's. This Kenmore was different—obviously different. He was older, his facial expression was changed; his nose was a trifle wider, his mouth bigger. He was taller, too.

"Let me help to wipe you down, Mr. Kenmore," said Nipper earnestly. "You don't know how sorry I am that I knocked you down like that. I'm really awfully sorry, sir."

Kenmore, who was beginning to get cooled down, grunted in a mollified way.

"That's all right!" he said gruffly. "No need to make a song about it. I'm glad these glasses aren't smashed," he added, as he examined them.

"The chain's broken, though," said Nipper, as he proceeded to dust Kenmore's back.

"That's nothing!" said the other. "It can easily be repaired."

"You're taking it very nicely, sir," said Nipper gratefully. "Lots of men would have reported me to the Housemaster, or something unpleasant like that. Turn round, if you don't mind, sir. By Jove! There's quite a nasty smudge on your cheek."

Before Kenmore could protest, Nipper was bending close, and he was wiping industriously at Kenmore's left cheek with a handkerchief. He pretended to be giving all his attention to that smudge, but, actually, he was looking very keenly—very searchingly—at "Walter's" moustache.

Until now, Nipper had taken this moustache for granted—as had everybody else. Indeed, until this moment he had never had an opportunity of examining it minutely at close quarters. Even now Nipper had only gained the opportunity because he had forced it.

And, with suspicions deep in his mind, and looking at that moustache so closely, he could tell that it was not natural! It was false!

Teeth—glasses—moustache! All false!

There wasn't a shadow of doubt about it. The one discovery had led to the other, quite logically. And Kenmore himself knew nothing of Nipper's real intention.

"That'll do—that'll do!" said the disguised prefect in an impatient voice. "You needn't make such a fuss over me, you young ass! I dare say it was an accident, and I'll overlook it this time. But in future you'd better be more careful when you come flying out of the House."

"I will, sir," said Nipper penitently.

A minute later he went out of the study, and as he strode down the passage there was a blaze in his eyes. The truth had been revealed to him—in a sudden flood of dazzling light. He wondered, with a feeling of incredulity, why he had not guessed the truth earlier. Yet, without a clue, such a thing had been very difficult; and there had been no reason for anybody to suspect that Walter Kenmore was not the genuine article.

"Well, what happened?" asked Corcoran, as Nipper came out into the Triangle. "Did Kenmore's brother cart you off to the Housemaster?"

"No," said Nipper. "He took it quite nicely."

"The man's a sport!" said Handforth. "I've always said so. Miles better than his beastly brother."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Nipper involuntarily.

"What's the matter?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Nothing."

"But you're looking—funny!" said Handforth. "I believe you're keeping something back!"



Nipper turned to Lionel Corcoran.

"Look here, Corky, can we go to your study?" he asked bluntly.

"My dear chap, it's yours!" replied Corky. "I'll guarantee you a safe conduct right into the heart of the enemy's country. But you'd better remember that it's nearly time for lessons——"

"Never mind about lessons!" broke in Nipper. "There's something more important on hand. You'd better come, too, Handy, and you, Tich!"

They wondered what it could mean. When they entered Study No. 12, in the East House, there were ten of them—Corcoran, Armstrong and Griffith, the owners of the study, Nipper & Co., Handforth & Co., and Tich Harborough. They were looking puzzled.

"What's the mystery?" demanded Handforth impatiently. "Why have you dragged us in here, Nipper? Choke it up, my son!"

"I've made a discovery," said Nipper. "And before I tell you what it is I'd better warn you to keep quiet. We don't want this thing spread over the school just yet."

"Which thing?" asked Corky, staring.

"I'm going to give you all a big surprise!" said Nipper. "So you'd better take notice of this warning in advance. Don't be too surprised—or, at least, don't make a lot of noise when you hear about it."

Nipper was making them all very curious, and they gazed at him in wonder. But they could easily understand that the surprise was to be a big one, for it was very seldom that Nipper allowed such excitement to gleam in his eyes.

"Out with it!" said Armstrong aggressively. "We're not kids! We can stand anything!"

"Well—Simon Kenmore himself is at St. Frank's!" said Nipper.

"What!"

It was a general yell, from all the nine juniors, and Nipper held up his hand.

"I told you to take it quietly!" he urged. "For goodness' sake don't shout——"

"But you're mad!" interrupted Handforth excitedly. "Kenmore is here—at St. Frank's?"

"Yes."

"Simon Kenmore—the prefect?" asked Tommy Watson.

"He's here—and he's been here all the time!" replied Nipper.

"Begad! Kindly be less frightfully ridic., old boy!" protested Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "That's sheer rot—it is, really."

"Of course it's rot!" said Handforth. "What the dickens do you mean, Nipper? If Kenmore had been here all the time, we should have seen him! But we've only seen his brother!"

"And in seeing his brother, you have seen Kenmore!" said Nipper steadily.

"Why talk in riddles, old man?" asked Corky, in a plaintive voice.

"There's no riddle about it—now!" said Nipper. "Simon Kenmore and Walter Kenmore are one and the same!"



## CHAPTER 14.

### Nipper Explains!

FOR a moment there was a tense silence. Then Handforth burst into a roar of derisive laughter, and it was soon echoed by the others.

"You're off your rocker, old man!" said Armstrong kindly, as he patted Nipper on the back. "How long is it since you suffered from these delusions?"

Nipper was in no way surprised.

"Yes, it seems thick, doesn't it?" he asked. "Rummily enough, though, it happens to be the truth."

"Come off it!" grunted Handforth. "If you think this is funny, Nipper, you've made a bloomer! It's only silly!"

"Crazy!" agreed Griffith. "Do you think we don't know our own pet Kenmore? What's the idea? Kenmore is a rotter—a bully—and we should know him a mile off. Mr. Kenmore, his brother, is totally different. He's taller, and——"

"If you look at Mr. Kenmore's heels, you'll find that they are unusually high!" interrupted Nipper. "Also, he's wearing a very high collar, which adds to the effect."

"But all this is sheer nonsense!" protested Tommy Watson excitedly. "Dash it, Nipper, it isn't usual for you to make blunders, but this time you've made a ghastly mistake. What about Mr. Kenmore's prominent teeth? They're no more like Kenmore's than mine are like Mary Pickford's!"

"Those prominent teeth?" said Nipper. "They're false!"

"False!" gasped nine voices.

"It was the teeth that baffled me all along!" nodded Nipper. "I never dreamed that any man should have prominent *false* teeth. Don't you understand? They've had the effect of altering his whole facial appearance. With those teeth in his mouth, his nose becomes wider, his mouth bigger, even his cheeks are fuller. That's why he seems to resemble Kenmore slightly, but only in a family sort of style."

"Great Caesar!" ejaculated Corcoran slowly. "I wonder!"

"Why wonder?" asked Handforth, with a snort. "Nipper's crazy! I've never heard of such a ridiculous suggestion——"

"Wait a minute!" put in Nipper. "By the time I've told you everything, perhaps you'll be a bit more convinced. You remember how I found Mr. Kenmore's glasses in my clothes?"

"What about them?"

"I put those glasses on, didn't I, Corky?" asked Nipper.

"Yes, and you pretended to be old Piecan," nodded Corcoran. "What about it?"

"Don't you think it's rather peculiar that those glasses should be plain?" asked Nipper. "They're not lenses at all, but just plain



glass. They're not needed as an assistance to defective eyesight. And who would wear plain window-glass in pince-nez unless it was just for the sake of effect?"

"You mean that those glasses are really plain?" asked Handforth.

"Yes, and while I was brushing Mr. Kenmore down, I had a good look at his moustache," said Nipper. "It's false!"

"What rot!" broke out Armstrong. "Any idiot can tell a false moustache at the first glance."

"A stage 'prop,' perhaps," agreed Nipper. "But this false moustache of Mr. Kenmore's is a carefully prepared one. And it can be done, you know, if you take enough time

over it. Anyhow, I had a look at that moustache from close quarters, and there's no shadow of doubt about it. It's false."

"Phew whistled Corky. "This is getting rather hot! But how do you know that his teeth are false, too?"

"Because, when I bowled him over, I saw his teeth moving up and down!" said Nipper tensely. "Real teeth don't move up and down, do they?"

"But — but — but —"

"Look here!" said Nipper, bending forward. "Don't be so dashed sceptical, you fellows! I'm telling you the truth. There's no guesswork about this, because I've proved it all! Just try, as hard as you can, to visualise Mr. Kenmore without his glasses, without his moustache, and with ordinary teeth. Try it, and see what it leads to!"

The juniors screwed up their faces in their efforts to obey these instructions. And, rather to their surprise, they found it fairly easy. In their minds they removed Mr. Kenmore's moustache, they gave him ordinary teeth, and they saw him without those horn-rimmed pince-nez.

"By George!" said Handforth. "He certainly is more like old Kenmore than I had believed."

"He is Kenmore!" said Armstrong huskily. "Great Scott! Can't you see it, you chaps? Besides, isn't it clear enough? If that moustache is false, and the glasses no good, it proves that there's something fishy about it all."

"But—but what does it mean?" asked Handforth blankly. "Why, in the name of all that's rummy, should Kenmore come back to St. Frank's pretending to be an elder brother?"

"That's one of the things I don't know, and it's one of the things that I'm going to know!" replied Nipper. "In fact, the whole mystery can be explained at once. We've only got to beard Kenmore in his study, and tell him that we know his secret."

"My only hat!"

"Begad!"

"You mean—go there now?"

"Yes!" replied Nipper. "What's the good of delaying? We've spotted this thing, and

we'd better put an end to Kenmore's masquerade immediately. It's the crux of the whole situation."

"The which?" asked Handforth.

"We've been up against a blank wall for days—weeks!" said Nipper grimly. "We couldn't imagine where Kenmore had got to, and why he had disappeared. We couldn't understand why his brother had come to St. Frank's. But now it's all clear! Kenmore disappeared so completely because he didn't really disappear at all."

"That's a bit Irish!" said Corky.

"Well, you know what I mean," went on Nipper. "Nobody could trace where Kenmore had gone because he was right under our noses all the time. Only we didn't know that it was him; we were

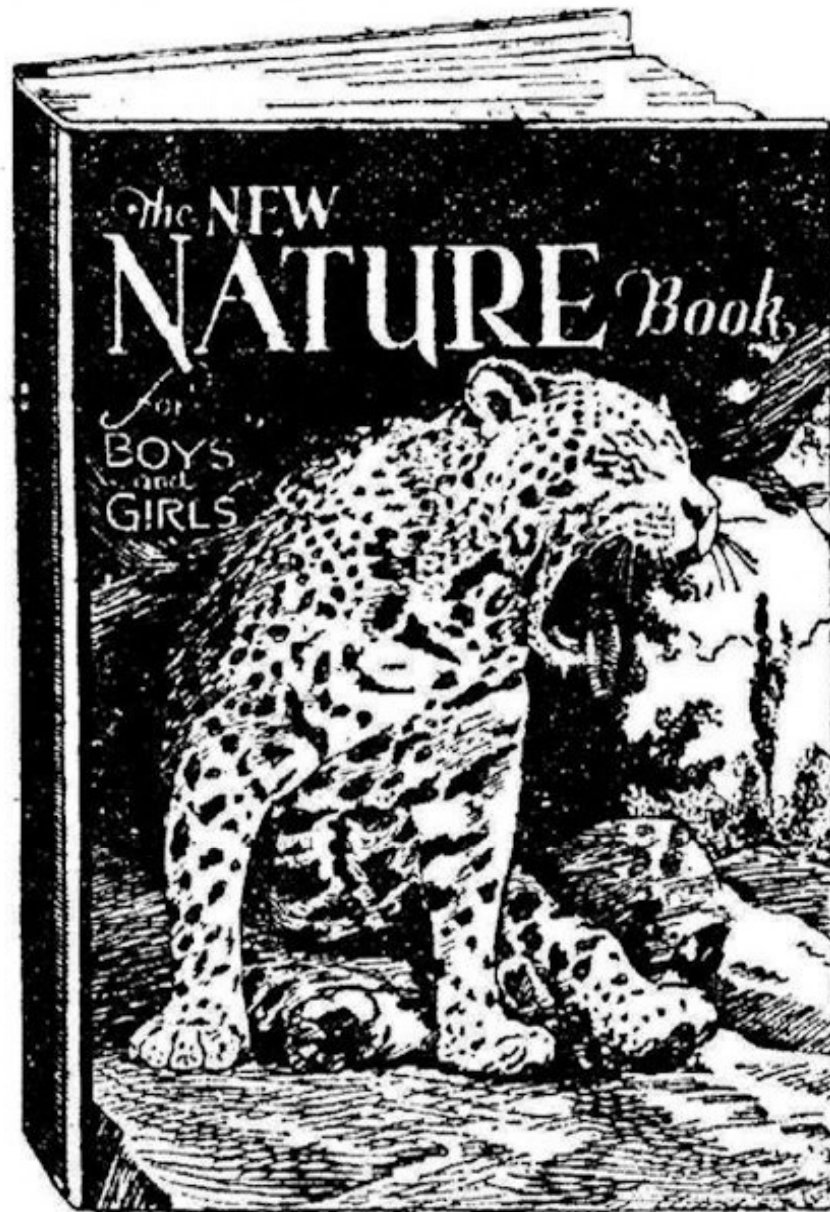
completely fooled. And you can't get away from it that Kenmore's been jolly brainy. But why he should pretend to be his own brother is a mystery."

Now that the juniors had got over their first surprise, they were beginning to think more clearly, and gradually they were becoming convinced that Nipper's theory was right. They could now see Simon Kenmore behind that clever disguise.

Lionel Corcoran suddenly gave a start, and became red in the face.

"The rotter!" he ejaculated, as a great thought flooded into his mind. "The—the tricky, miserable rotter! What's his game? What does he mean by allowing Fatty Fowkes to be under suspicion all this time?"

### Look Inside This Wonder Book—



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Leaving the Austin Seven half submerged in the pond, Handforth & Co. scrambled out, and in doing so smothered themselves from head to foot in thick mud. "This is what comes of motoring with a maniac!" said McClure bitterly.





"By George, yes!" shouted Handforth. "That's another thing, isn't it? Poor old Fatty has been in hiding for weeks! And Kenmore knows it, and he's been living on here at St. Frank's——"

"It's a crime!" said Corcoran hotly. "Fatty is wanted by the police because they think that Kenmore is dead, and that Fatty had something to do with the tragedy. Yet Kenmore is at St. Frank's all the time, knowing full well that Fatty is in hiding."

There were many exclamations of anger. "Well, we'll soon settle it!" said Nipper. "If you fellows are ready, we'll go to Kenmore's study at once, and face him with it. We'll put an end to this deception, so that Fatty Fowkes can be freed, so that he can play in this afternoon's Cup-tie!"



## CHAPTER 15.

### Exposed!

LIONEL CORCORAN started.

"Yes!" he said breathlessly. "That's an idea, too! By

Jove! Won't old Fatty be mad with joy if he can only play in the Cup-tie this afternoon?"

"He's going to play!" declared Nipper. "We know the truth about Kenmore now, and if he won't be reasonable we'll go to the police. It's not a question of sneaking, or anything like that, it's an absolutely necessary step. Fatty Fowkes is under suspicion, and we've got to clear him. And the only way to make the police tear up their warrant is to show them that Kenmore is alive and well. There can't be anything against Fatty then."

"By George, you're right!" said Handforth. "Good old Fatty! I was looking forward to this afternoon's game, but I'd rather that Fatty kept goal! It's his job, and I'm only a deputy, anyhow."

"Spoken like a sportsman!" said Corky warmly. "You're a good chap, Handforth!"

"Rot!" snorted Handforth. "Let's go and see Kenmore!"

They left the study, and a few Fourth-Formers who saw them wondered what was in the wind. It was clear, anyhow, that House rows were off for the time being. The Removites and the Fourth-Formers were acting in unison for once. But although one or two fellows made inquiries, they got no satisfaction.

Indeed, soon after Nipper and the nine other juniors entered Simon Kenmore's study, the bell rang for lessons, and the rank and file of the fellows had no opportunity of pressing their inquiries.

Kenmore had practically recovered himself by the time the ten juniors arrived. They tapped on the door, and then marched in

without waiting to be invited. This was no time for standing upon ceremony. Once in, Handforth turned, and locked the door on the inside.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked "Walter" Kenmore, with a catch in his voice.

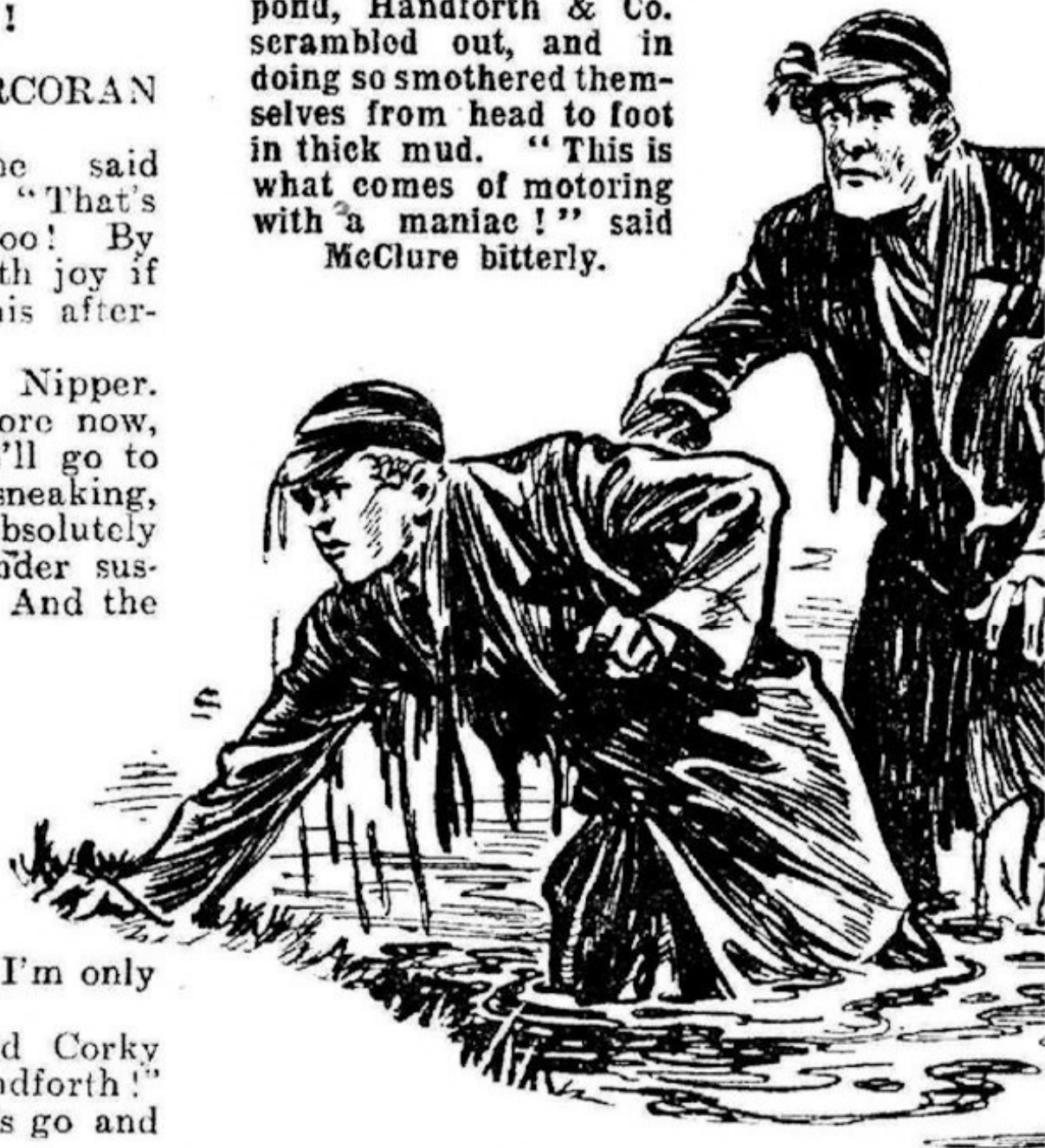
"We think it's necessary to have a little quiet talk with you, Mr. Kenmore!" said Nipper grimly. "And, as there's no need to beat about the bush, we might as well tell you at once that you're bowled out."

Kenmore, who was now on his feet, swayed slightly.

"Bowled out!" he said hoarsely. "I—I don't know what you mean!"

"Yes, you do—Simon Kenmore!" said Nipper.

Leaving the Austin Seven half submerged in the pond, Handforth & Co. scrambled out, and in doing so smothered themselves from head to foot in thick mud. "This is what comes of motoring with a maniac!" said McClure bitterly.



"You're mad!" snarled Kenmore, a light of panic leaping into his eyes. "What do you mean by calling me 'Simon Kenmore'? My name's Walter. I'm Simon's brother!"

His pince-nez fell from his nose, and he groped shakily for them.

"Don't trouble!" said Corcoran. "You can see just as well without those window-panes, Kenmore."

Kenmore must have known that the game was up, but he was desperate. He thought that violence might be of some use.

"Get out of here!" he shouted furiously. "You—you infernal young fools! What do you think your game is? This is my study, and I'm here as a guest——"



"Steady, Kenmore!" interrupted Nipper. "We're the only fellows in the whole of St. Frank's who know the truth about you. If you want to give it away, you can go ahead! But we're perfectly willing to keep it dark until we've heard your explanation."

"There's no explanation!" panted Kenmore. "You've made a mistake, I tell you!"

His very panic—his ashen face—gave him away. So, even if some of these juniors had not been previously convinced, they shed their last doubts now.

"Why not take it calmly?" asked Nipper, in a hard voice. "Your eyeglasses are unnecessary, Kenmore, your moustache is false, and those prominent teeth are false.



We know these things, so what's the good of keeping up the pretence?"

Kenmore opened his mouth to speak, but no words came. He was staggered—stupefied. Where, indeed, was the sense of continuing his denials? These juniors knew everything!

"It was a good dodge—about the teeth!" said Nipper. "I don't think we should ever have spotted you, Kenmore, if it hadn't been for that mishap."

"Mishap?" said Kenmore dully.

"When I bowled you over," nodded Nipper. "I saw your teeth moving up and down—and then I discovered that your glasses were duds."

Kenmore was cooled down by the very shock of this denouement.

"Well?" he snarled, backing away like a caged animal. "I suppose it's no good denying it. I *am* disguised. What about it? It's my business, and—"

"But it's our business, too," interrupted Corcoran. "You mustn't forget, Kenmore, that I'm the owner of the Blue Crusaders Club, and Fatty Fowkes is a member of my team."

Kenmore was silent; he could think of nothing to say.

"How did you wangle the teeth?" asked Nipper curiously.

Kenmore waved an impatient hand.

"There's nothing in that!" he said hoarsely. "During the summer holidays my own front teeth were knocked out—in an accident. I didn't like to tell anybody, but when I came back to St. Frank's this term I had false teeth."

"And it was easy enough to have another set made, eh?" nodded Nipper. "A prominent set? Very clever, Kenmore."

"Was it?" said the prefect bitterly. "What good has it been? You've spotted me, haven't you?"

"And we're disappointed, too!" said Handforth bluntly. "In this new character of yours, Kenmore, you're a better chap than you were in your own self."

Nipper nodded.

"That's true enough!" he said quietly. "Since you came back to St. Frank's in this disguise, Kenmore, you've been very different. You've acted decently from start to finish—and you've made yourself quite popular with most of the fellows. Don't you think it's better to be like that?"

Kenmore grunted.

"Leave me alone!" he muttered.

His brain was so confused that he hardly knew how to think. He had, indeed, been telling himself of late that he liked his new character better than his old. It had been rather good to have the juniors respecting him instead of hating him, and more or less subconsciously, he had been striving to live up to this new character that he had created.

"We all feel that there's something wrong," went on Nipper earnestly. "You're in some big trouble, Kenmore. If you weren't, you wouldn't be practising this deception. And we'd like to rally round, and help you out."

"Oh, would we?" said Handforth, staring.

"Yes, we would!" insisted Nipper. "It's a very serious thing, Handy—as you ought to realise. We're willing to listen to your explanation, Kenmore, and to help you if you're worthy of any help."

"You can't do anything!" said Kenmore harshly. "I don't want your help, anyhow. What do you propose to do? Are you going to give me away?"

"First of all, we'll give you a chance to reveal your identity to the police!" said



Nipper. "And you've got to do it at once, Kenmore. Fatty Fowkes is still in hiding, but a word from you will give him back his full liberty. There's a big Cup-tie on this afternoon, and Fowkes must play in that game."

Kenmore looked more panic-stricken than ever.

"But he can't!" he panted. "I'm not going to say anything to the police! I won't—I won't!"

"You'll have to!" said Corcoran fiercely. "Poor old Fatty has been in hiding too long."

"I tell you I can't do anything!" groaned Kenmore. "You don't understand—and I can't explain! But I'm not going to tell the police that I'm really alive."

He stared defiantly at the juniors, and they, for their part, returned his looks with expressions of grim relentlessness.

This was a crisis—and they all knew it.



## CHAPTER 16.

### Kenmore's Story!

LIONEL CORCORAN moved towards the door.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said briskly.

"Where—where are you going?" demanded Kenmore, breathing hard.

"To the police!"

"No!" gasped Kenmore. "You mustn't do that—"

"I'm going to the police!" insisted Corky. "The other fellows needn't come unless they like. But *I'm* going. Fatty Fowkes must be released from his false position at once, and the only way to do it is to tell the police that you are alive—and here."

"And you can bet that he'll still be here when the police come to verify your information!" said Nipper, nodding. "We'll all stay in this study, Corky. We'll keep our eyes on Kenmore, so that he has no chance of getting away and disappearing again!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Handforth. "That's a good wheeze! We won't let him out of our sight after this!"

Kenmore, as pale as a sheet, seemed to be fighting for breath.

"Stop!" he said hoarsely, as Corky half turned the key in the lock.

Corcoran turned, and he gazed at Kenmore with steady eyes.

"Well?" he said.

"Don't go!" panted Kenmore. "I—I'll tell you everything!"

It was the surrender, and Lionel Corcoran moved away from the door. Kenmore had fallen back into a chair, and his eyes were filled with anguish and fear. The juniors were distributed all over the study, some sitting in chairs, others standing, and one or two sitting on the table.

"It's the best thing you can do, Kenmore," said Nipper quietly. "Surely you must see that if you refuse to speak we've got to speak. And, as I said before, if you are in really serious trouble there's more than a chance that we shall be able to help you."

Kenmore made no comment. Here was an amazing situation. These juniors—whom he had always despised—suggesting that they should help him out of his dire trouble!

Everybody had forgotten about morning lessons, and the juniors were not likely to be disturbed here in this prefect's study. Even if the masters of the Remove and Fourth searched for the missing fellows, it was improbable that they would think of looking in "Mr." Kenmore's study.

"Well?" said Handforth impatiently. "We're waiting, you know."

"Give him time, old man!" murmured Church.

Kenmore looked up.

"Oh, what's the good of fooling about?" he said harshly. "I daren't go to the police! There's the truth of it—in a nutshell! I daren't tell the police where I am because, if I do, I shall be arrested myself."

"Begad!"

"My only aunt!"

"If this is true, Kenmore—"

"Of course it's true!" broke in Kenmore, leaping to his feet, and glaring round at all the juniors. "You've trapped me, and it's no good denying it. I know well enough that if I tell the police that I'm alive and well Fowkes will be free to come out of hiding. But, in saving Fowkes, I shall bring ruin upon myself. Can't you understand why it is that I've hung back?"

"If that's the case, of course we can understand," said Corcoran. "At the same time, Kenmore, we're more interested in Fowkes than we are in you. I don't want to rub it in, or anything like that, but Fowkes has been victimised by you—"

"I know it!" groaned Kenmore. "But if you were in my position, what would you do? My parents are abroad—big game hunting. They know nothing of all this! Supposing they discover, when they come home, that I've been expelled from the school—arrested for forgery—and sent to prison? Fowkes isn't in any danger; the police haven't any real evidence against him. And he's being well looked after by the other Crusaders, and by you juniors. Do you think I don't guess what's been going on? But with me it's different. If I reveal

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my true identity to the police, I shall be ruined. Utterly ruined!"

"That's all very well," said Nipper. "But this thing can't go on indefinitely——"

"I don't want it to!" panted Kenmore. "As soon as I can find a certain man, I shall be in a position to reveal myself. It may not be long—only a few more days. It all depends——"

"But, you rotter, if you've committed a forgery, you deserve to go to quod!" broke in Handforth indignantly.

"That's just the point!" said Kenmore, his voice shaky and tremulous. "I haven't committed any forgery. I'm not guilty at all!"

"If you're not guilty, why do you fear the police?" asked Corcoran.

"I'll tell you!" replied Kenmore feverishly. "Some weeks ago I—I had some money on a horse, and I won."

"Well, there's nothing criminal in that," said Nipper. "Betting isn't a crime—although it may be a folly."

"Yes, it's a folly right enough!" said Kenmore bitterly. "I've learned that—at last!"

The juniors all stared at him in wonder. These were surprising words from Simon Kenmore!

"On that same day I had been gambling—playing billiards and cards!" continued the prefect. "Well, I lost—about ten quid. I lost this money to a man named Pointer. A miserable racecourse loafer. Well, I wanted to clear that debt, so I gave him an eight-pound cheque and some loose cash. Matt Page, the big Eamington bookie, had paid me my winnings by cheque. Eight pounds. I never dreamed that that cur, Sam Pointer, would monkey with it."

"He altered the amount, you mean?" asked Nipper shrewdly. "An eight-pound cheque is an easy one to alter."

"He made it into eighty!" said Kenmore. "He cashed it the very next day and cleared out."

"Phew!"

"I knew nothing about it until nearly a fortnight afterwards," went on Kenmore dully. "Then Matt Page came to me and demanded seventy-two pounds—or else he would tell the police."

"By George!" said Handforth staring. "That was awkward!"

"I was bowled over!" said Kenmore. "I told Page that I wasn't guilty, but he wouldn't believe me. Don't you see, I had endorsed that cheque, and Page thought I had made the alterations. I told him that I had given the cheque to Pointer, but he laughed at me. He said that if I didn't have the money by Saturday he would tell the police."

"Bluff!" said Corcoran bluntly.

"It may have been bluff—or it may not!" said Kenmore, giving Corcoran a sharp look. "But I couldn't take the risk. It was a pretty big sum, and Page spoke as though he meant it. Well, I tried all I could to get the money. I made all sorts of bets with

chaps here. Then I tried to get round Fowkes, so that he would lose one of the League games——"

"You rotter!" said Handforth hotly.

"I know it!" groaned Kenmore. "But I was desperate—and Fowkes knocked me in the river. I dare say I deserved it. Anyhow, he wouldn't listen to me, and then, when the Blues won that match, I was done. I daren't come back to St. Frank's because I was afraid that Page would arrive with the police. So I disappeared—and then, afterwards, I thought of the idea of coming back here in the character of my own brother. I had to go somewhere, and it seemed to me the safest dodge."

"And you left poor Fatty Fowkes in the lurch all the time," said Nipper gruffly. "Well, in a way, you were in a dickens of a mess, Kenmore. And you're still in it. But if we go to Page, and tell him everything, he might be agreeable to keeping it secret."

"He won't!" said Kenmore. "I know he won't!"

And he leaned forward over the table, and buried his face in his hands.



## CHAPTER 17.

### Handforth Knows Something!

**N**IPPER glanced round at all the other fellows.

"Buck up, Kenmore!" he said,

going round the table and putting a hand on Kenmore's shoulder. "I dare say you've had a very rough time of it. Do you swear, on your honour that you didn't really forge that cheque?"

Kenmore looked up, his face was haggard.

"On my honour!" he panted. "I didn't do it! But Page thinks I did, and he won't believe——"

"That's not the point," said Nipper. "We're satisfied that you are the victim of this fellow, Pointer. Supposing we can find this money, Kenmore? And supposing we take it to Page, and pay him?"

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie. "That's rather a bright idea, Nipper, boy!"

Kenmore was looking dazed.

"You!" he repeated incredulously. "You—you mean that you'll find this money for me?"

"Yes," said Nipper. "There are plenty of fellows who will contribute. It's to save Fatty Fowkes, don't forget—and to save you, too."

Kenmore was looking dazed.

"But—but I can't!" he said huskily. "I can't let you do anything like this!"

"But it will solve the whole difficulty!" put in Corcoran. "There's a deadlock. Pointer has disappeared, and there seems precious little chance of bringing him to



book. That means that Page, the bookie, will always believe you guilty——”

“And he'll still believe me guilty even after the money is paid!” said Kenmore. “I know it doesn't matter much what Page thinks, but I'd like to clear my name with him. He thinks I'm a forger, and I want to prove to him that I'm not. The only way to do that is to get hold of Sam Pointer.”

“But you can't get hold of him,” said Nipper. “He's cleared out——”

“He's still somewhere about!” interrupted Kenmore tensely. “Only last Wednesday I spotted him. It was in Helmford, and I was just too late.”

“How do you mean—you were too late?”

“Handforth, here, knows all about it,” said Kenmore. “I was coming back from Helmford in his car. There was a drunken man, and he got in the way, and he was knocked over.”

“Yes,” said Corky, nodding. “We heard all about it.”

“Well, while Handforth and the other juniors were fetching a doctor, Pointer came to himself,” said Kenmore. “I saw that he was Sam Pointer at the first, and I was full of triumph. I meant to drag him straight to Bannington and make him confess to Page, but the brute kicked me in the head and belted. When I went to his lodgings he had gone. I haven't seen him since, and I haven't been able to get the track of him.”

For some moments Handforth had been making curious explosive sounds, and now he burst out into a roar.

“Is that the chap?” he shouted. “Was that fellow Pointer—the man who forged the cheque?”

“Yes.”

“Then I know where he is!” roared Handforth. “At least, I knew on Monday. And I should have told you, Kenmore, only these silly idiots stopped me from saying anything!”

“Well, I like that!” said Church indignantly. “It was your idea for us to keep mum——”

“What *are* you talking about?” asked Nipper. “Monday? What happened on Monday?”

“We didn't say anything about it!” exclaimed Handforth excitedly. “We thought that you chaps would laugh at us. But on the Caistowe road this fellow, Pointer, asked us for a lift.”

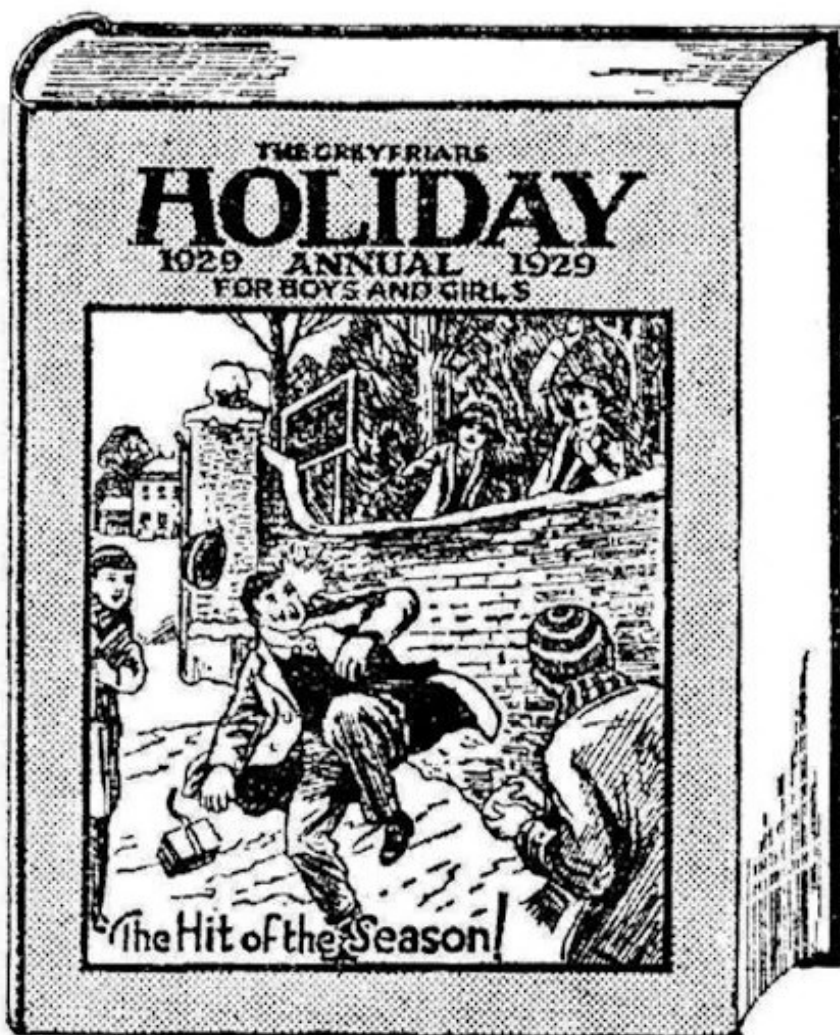
“Good heavens!” said Kenmore. “Are you sure it was the same man?”

“It was the man we knocked down in Helmford, anyhow!” replied Handforth. “And you say that his name is Sam Pointer—so he must be the same man. He didn't know who we were, of course, and I gave him a lift into Caistowe—and drove him to the police station.”

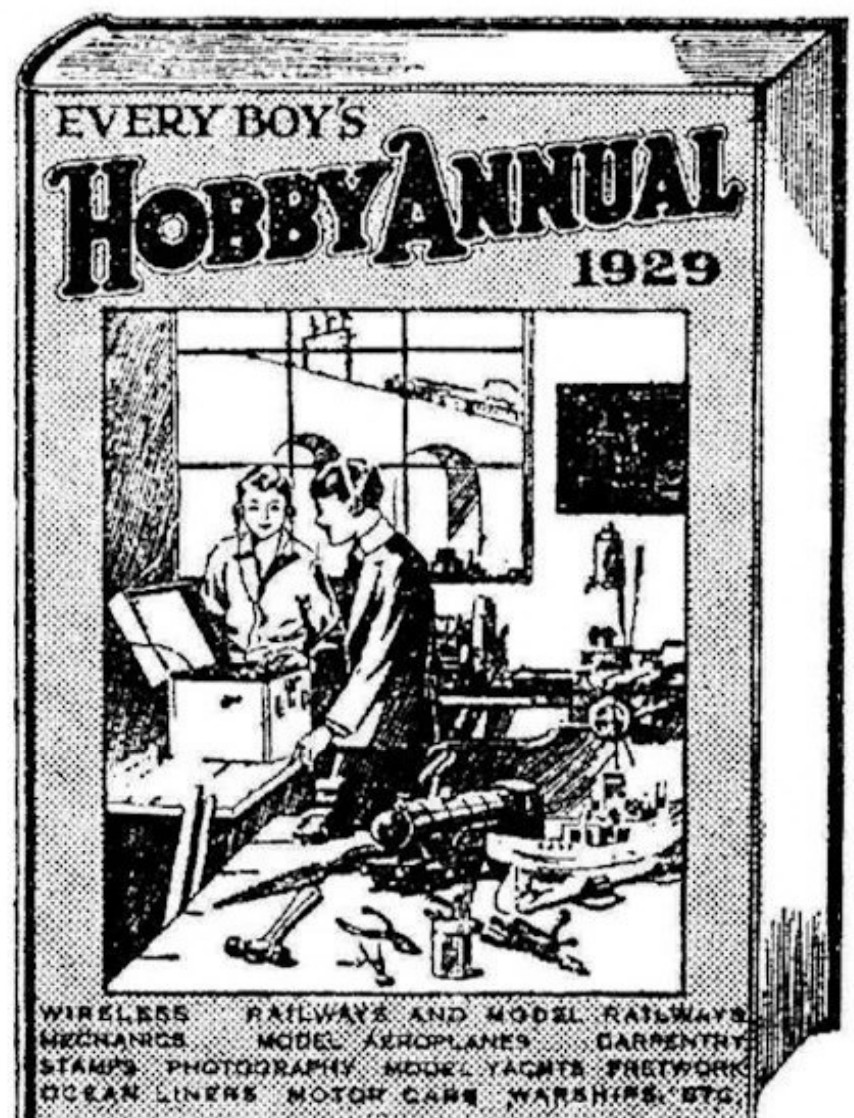
“That's just the thing you would do!” said Nipper dryly.

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"I wanted to give him in charge for assaulting Kenmore!" said Handforth. "But he fought like a demon outside the police station and bolted. Then we met Ben Gillingham, and he laughed at the whole thing and told us not to bother. Said that we hadn't any proof, and that the police would only turn us away."

"Well, Ben was probably right there," said Corcoran. "And we don't seem to have got much further. If the man bolted——"

"He went into the Fisherman's Rest!" put in Church. "I dare say they'll know something at that pub. In fact, the man might still be there."

Kenmore was on his feet, his eyes gleaming.

"If only we can find Pointer then the whole trouble will be over!" he said tensely. "Don't you see that? The man is only a whimpering cur. He hasn't the pluck of a mouse. When he fights he only kicks. If I can drag him to Matt Page he'll confess. And Matt Page will be convinced, and he won't threaten me any longer. After that I can come back to St. Frank's, and Fatty Fowkes will be freed——"

"Come on!" said Nipper briskly. "We'll go right away!"

"Go?" said Kenmore, staring. "Go where?"

"To Caistowe—to make inquiries at the Fisherman's Rest!"

"Good egg!" said Handforth.

They were all eager to help Kenmore—for they felt that he was the victim of a rogue. True, it was his own folly which had caused the whole ugly predicament, but it was very apparent that Simon Kenmore was a very different fellow now. This experience had taught him a grim, unforgettable lesson.

"Well, I suppose we might as well do it," said Corcoran, with a grin. "We shall be missed from our class-rooms, I dare say, but the circumstances are a bit unusual."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Armstrong, with a start. "I'd forgotten all about morning lessons! I suppose it's time we went along!"

"Lessons started over ten minutes ago!" said Nipper. "We might as well miss 'em altogether now! We shall be able to steal out before we're searched for."

Ordinarily, the juniors would have thought twice before deliberately missing class, but, at the moment, lessons seemed of no importance whatever. They went hurrying out of the study, Kenmore in their midst, and the latter was thoroughly bewildered.

The shock of the disclosure had unnerved him, and he feared the worst. Thus it was a staggering surprise for him to find that these juniors were prepared to go all out to help him in his dire trouble. They were even ready to contribute the necessary money—so that Matt Page would be satisfied.

But it would be far better if they could capture Sam Pointer, for there was no knowing how the bookmaker would take the suggestion. He might refuse to accept the money; he might be vindictive, and would

afterwards prosecute Kenmore as well. The only really safe course was to find Sam Pointer, the real culprit.

So the ten juniors sped off to Caistowe with Kenmore. They all went on bicycles. Handforth had been keen on using his Austin Seven—which was in fit condition again—but the others pointed out that the engine might be heard as he started off.

They arrived in Caistowe hot and breathless, and they made a bee-line for the Fisherman's Rest.



## CHAPTER 18.

## Too Late!

AS it happened, the landlord of the Fisherman's Rest was lounging outside his front door, placidly smoking and gazing across at the calm sea. It wasn't opening time yet, and there was no business doing.

The man looked at the crowd of juniors very curiously as they jumped from their bicycles near by, and then came hurrying across to him.

"We're not open yet, young gents," he said, removing his pipe. "Still, if you want some hot coffee, or ginger-beer——"

"Are you the landlord of this place?" asked Nipper quickly.

"Yes, Mr. Bob Smith," nodded the landlord. "That's me. Is there anything wrong?"

"We thought you might be able to give us some information," said Nipper. "On Monday evening there was a man named Sam Pointer in your house. He came in during the evening——"

"Yes, I know him!" said the landlord. "Shifty-eyed little chap—ugly customer. I don't suppose I would have took much notice of him, only there's been such a lot of talk about him this morning——"

"Talk about him—this morning?" interrupted Kenmore, pushing forward. "Where is he? That's what we want to know!"

"Well, that's an easy one to answer," replied Mr. Bob Smith. "There he is—out yonder!"

And he pointed towards the placid sea with the stem of his pipe.

"Where?" asked half a dozen voices.

"Can't you see that old tub?" said the landlord. "She's the Narcissus—tramp steamer; he's aboard."

"Then—then we're too late!" gasped Kenmore.

"Too late to get hold of the feller, if you want him," replied Mr. Smith. "The Narcissus sailed a couple of hours ago. You ought to have come earlier."

There was a tense silence. Kenmore and all his companions stared out beyond Caistowe Harbour, towards the open



Channel. There, clearly enough, was a clumsy-looking tramp steamer with a single funnel, from which dense clouds of smoke were pouring. The vessel was just making out into the open sea.

"I'm afraid it's all up, you chaps!" said Corky quietly. "What a shame! Only a matter of two hours!"

"If I had spoken on Monday evening, everything would have been all right!" said Handforth bitterly. "We could have come back and collared Pointer—"

"It's no good saying that!" interrupted Nipper. "What we've got to do is to deal with this present situation." He turned to the landlord again. "How do you know that this man is on board that ship?" he asked.

"Well, I didn't know it until after she had sailed," admitted the landlord. "The fact is, he's a stowaway."

"Great Scott!"

"A stowaway!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Everybody's been talking about him round here this morning," grinned Mr. Smith. "Reg'lar joke, it's been. Naturally, nothin' was said until after the boat had cleared port, in case the officers got to hear."

"Where is the ship bound for?" asked Kenmore huskily.

"Spain, I think."

"And after that?"

"Now you've asked me something!" said Mr. Smith. "She's a tramp, you understand. Picks up cargoes where she can. Like as not she'll shift off to the Argentine after she's left Spain, and then she might get into the Pacific, and work her way home round by Australia. Might be a year—two years—before she gets to a British port again."

"That's cheerful," said Church.

"But how do you know that this man, Pointer, is aboard as a stowaway?" asked Nipper keenly. "It may be only a yarn."

"It's not a yarn," said the landlord, shaking his head. "Pointer fixed it up on Monday, I understand, with one of the *Narcissus*' firemen."

"That's likely enough!" said Nipper, nodding. "Pointer was scared out of his wits on Monday night. He was only thinking of clearing off somewhere. I suppose he went on board—was smuggled on board—on Monday night?"

"That's right," said Mr. Smith, nodding. "As I've told you, I didn't know anything about it until this morning. After the ship sailed, two or three of the local fishermen came in, and they was joking about it. Of course, they hear all the talk that goes on along the docks, and they got hold of the yarn."

"Isn't it a rummy thing that it wasn't kept secret?" asked Handforth.

"Why should it be kept secret?" said the landlord, staring. "They wouldn't say nothin' to spoil the poor feller's chances. Not they! It wasn't their business, anyhow. But after the ship sailed there was no need

to keep quiet any longer. Good luck to him, I say!"

"He happens to be a forger!" said Kenmore fiercely.

Mr. Smith started.

"Gosh!" he ejaculated. "I didn't think he was as bad as that! I reckoned it was just some family trouble or something! Well, he's gone now, and you young gents won't be able to get at him."

And Mr. Smith, with a nod, went indoors.

The juniors collected in a group on the esplanade, and Kenmore was looking haggard and hopeless.

"We're done now!" he said dully. "And to think that he's out there—on that ship!" he added, looking across to sea. "Within sight—and yet we can't touch him!"

"What about the wireless?" asked Handforth eagerly. "Couldn't we get in touch with the ship by wireless?"

"My dear chap, that's impossible," said Nipper. "The man's a stowaway, and he'll be found very soon, anyhow. But the captain wouldn't put into port on purpose to land a stowaway. If Pointer was a murderer, badly wanted by the police, it would be a different matter."

"Then we're absolutely done?" asked Sir Montie.

"Not necessarily," replied Nipper, with a keen look. "Everything hinges on the fact that Pointer is a stowaway—and not a regular member of the crew."

"What do you mean?" asked Kenmore, staring.

"Well, if Pointer had signed on, the skipper wouldn't allow him to leave the ship," said Nipper. "He'd be a member of the crew, and the captain wouldn't release him. But he's a stowaway, and that makes all the difference."

"Explain yourself, ass!" said Corky crisply.

"Well, if we can only get to the ship, and tell the skipper that he's got a stowaway aboard, we shall do the trick," replied Nipper. "The captain will be only too glad to have the man put ashore. He doesn't want an extra hand—especially a fellow without any papers. What we've got to do is to get out to the *Narcissus*, and bring Sam Pointer back with us. As I've just said, the skipper will be only too glad to get rid of the beggar."

"Forgive me for being blunt, old man, but you're out of your mind!" said Corky. "How do you propose that we can overtake this steamer? She's three or four miles out, and—"

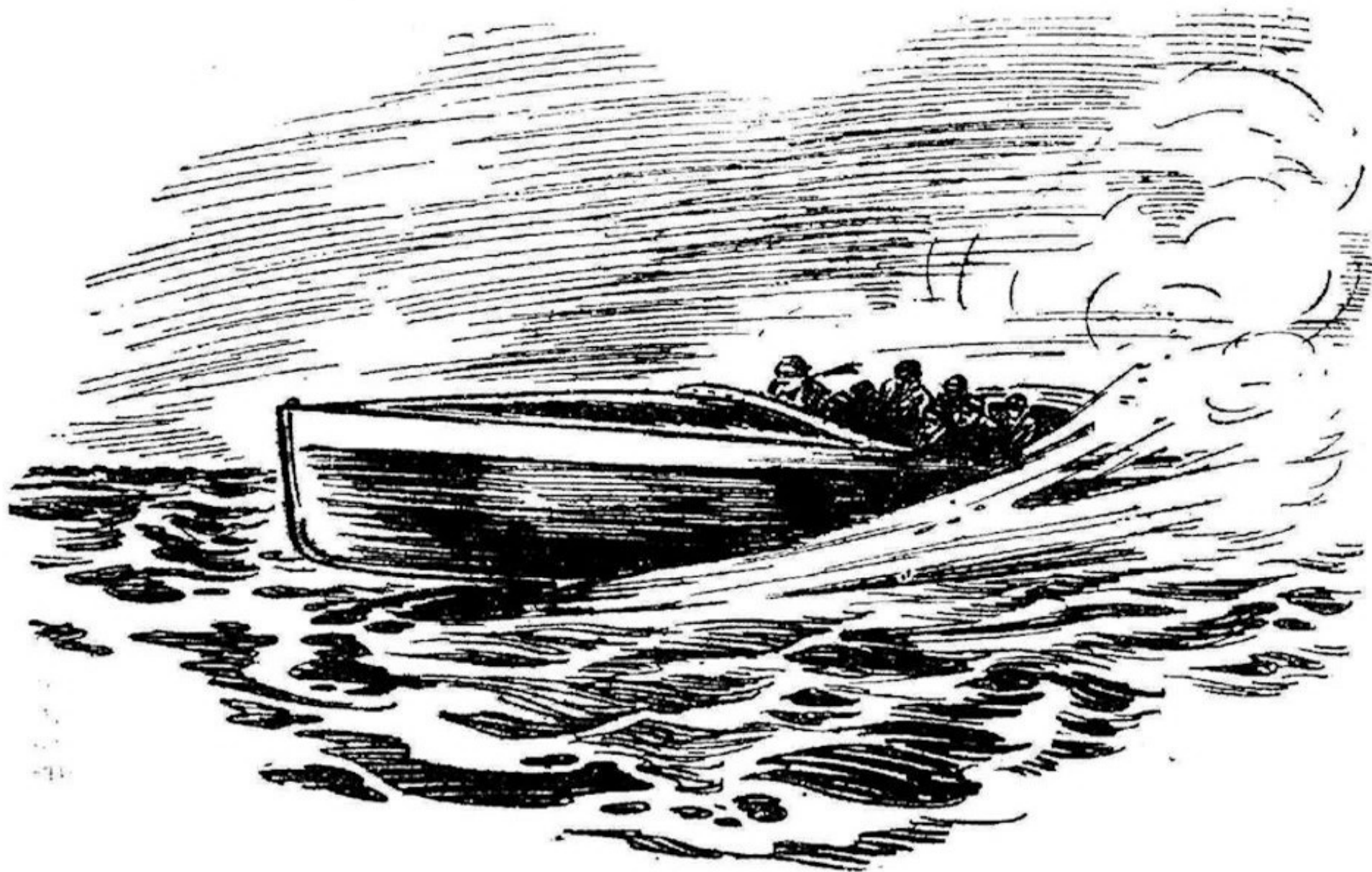
"There's a sportsman here, in Caistowe, named Mr. Fielding," interrupted Nipper calmly. "I don't think you've heard of him, Corky, or you, either, Tich."

Both these juniors were comparatively new at St. Frank's, and they shook their heads.

"Never heard of him," said Lionel Corcoran.

"But we have!" ejaculated Handforth. "By George! He's the very man! He's





Mr. Fielding touched the throttle control, and a minute later the motor-boat was roaring across the water at a terrific rate. The breath was nearly knocked out of the juniors, and they clung on anywhere they could.

got some of the fastest motor-boats on the South Coast—and he's a brick, too! Kenmore, my son, don't look so worried! We're going to get Sam Pointer after all—and then everything will be all serene!"

"Wait!" gasped Church, clutching at Nipper's arm. "Look out there! What's that coming across the bay?"

"A motor-boat!" yelled two or three of the others.

They went tearing along, convinced that the man in that motor-boat was Mr. Fielding himself. It was certainly probable, for the craft was a very powerful racer, gleaming white in the wintry sunshine, and with a long wake of creamy foam in her rear. There weren't many people who could own a magnificent motor-boat like that, and Mr. Fielding was the only man in Caistowe who could do so.

Sure enough, as the craft drew nearer to the quay, the juniors recognised the trim, alert figure at the wheel.

"Hi!" bellowed Handforth. "Mr. Fielding! Mr. Fielding! It's him, you chaps! I say, what luck! Here he is, with a boat all ready!"

It was, indeed, an extraordinary stroke of good fortune.

Mr. Fielding was quite alone in the big motor-boat, and he was smiling good-naturedly as he waved a reply to the shouts. Two or three minutes later the boat came gliding against the quay.

"What's all the excitement, boys?" hailed Mr. Fielding.

"We want to speak to you, sir, urgently!" sang out Nipper.

"Care to come for a run?" invited Mr. Fielding, with a chuckle. "I'm just giving this boat a trial, and if you've got the time——"

## CHAPTER 19.

### At Last!

**S**IMON KENMORE had a feverish light in his eyes.

"Mr. Fielding!" he muttered. "Isn't

he the man who backed Tom Burton, of the Remove, to swim the Channel before the summer holidays?"

"Yes," said Nipper. "He's a great friend of ours, and he's a man of action, too. Tons of money, and he spends lots of it on sporting motor-boats. If only he's at home, we shall be in luck!"

"He's got to be at home!" said Handforth grimly. "We mustn't think of anything else! By George! In one of his motor-boats we can overtake that tramp steamer within half an hour! And with Mr. Fielding with us it'll be a lot easier. The skipper is sure to take more notice of a man like Mr. Fielding."

"I was thinking of the same thing," nodded Nipper. "Come on! We'll buzz along to Mr. Fielding's house now."



"Hurrah!"

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

There was tremendous excitement as the juniors climbed down from the quay and dropped into the commodious, comfortable cockpit of the motor craft. Nipper and Kenmore were the last two to go, and Nipper was looking at Kenmore keenly.

"You'll have to tell him—everything!" he said.

"Of course," said Kenmore promptly. "I can't expect him to help me unless I'm frank with him. Leave it to me, Hamilton. I'll tell him."

Nipper could not help being struck by the difference in Kenmore's manner. There was no longer any need for him to act a part, yet he was very different from his old self.

"Now, what's it all about?" asked Mr. Fielding, as the last two dropped into the cockpit.

"We were just going up to your house, sir, on the chance of finding you at home," said Nipper. "But it's ten times as good for you to be here, with a motor-boat all ready. We want you to do us a favour."

"Well, I expected something of the sort," said Mr. Fielding, with a chuckle.

"It's rather a big favour, sir."

"Go ahead!" nodded the rich sportsman. "You want to be taken somewhere, I suppose, in a hurry? Well, I'm agreeable; in fact, I shall welcome some definite objective. I'm only just cruising about this morning, putting a new engine through her tests. Haven't been able to have much sport lately, owing to the rough weather."

Kenmore took a deep breath.

"These juniors are helping me, sir," he said quietly. "What we want you to do is to overtake that tramp steamer out there!"

He pointed out to sea, and Mr. Fielding looked.

"That's easy enough," he said. "Less than half an hour's run. What's wrong? One of your boys run away to sea, or something?"

Kenmore did not beat about the bush. As quickly as possible, he explained the full situation, and Mr. Fielding listened intently, allowing the motor-boat, meanwhile, to glide out towards the harbour mouth. The engine was nearly throttled down completely, so that the noise of it was insignificant.

"I see—I see!" Mr. Fielding said at last. "So this fellow, Pointer, or whatever his name is, has been smuggled aboard the tramp steamer as a stowaway? And you want to get him into your hands, so that you can take him to the bookmaker and make him confess?"

"That's it, sir," said Kenmore quietly. "I've been a fool over the whole affair, and—"

"Well, there's no need for recriminations," said Mr. Fielding. "I can understand the position, and I'll certainly do all I can to

help you. I might as well say that I'm very interested in football, as well as motor-boating. I shall be over at the Cup-tie in Bannington this afternoon, and I should very much like to see Fowkes playing in his usual place in goal."

"Then you'll do it, sir?" ejaculated Handforth breathlessly. "Give him a cheer, you chaps!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Mr. Fielding!"

"Rats!" grinned Mr. Fielding. "Don't be such young asses!"

**NEXT WEDNESDAY!**



He touched the throttle control, and a minute later the motor-boat roared across the water at a terrific pace. The breath was nearly knocked out of the passengers, and they clung on anywhere, fascinated by the very speed. This was an extra treat, this exhilarating motor-boat ride.

It was almost uncanny how quickly the Narcissus was overtaken. She, of course, was only travelling at a modest few knots per hour; whereas the motor-boat went shooting along at the speed of a high-powered motor-car.

As the juniors drew nearer they could see that the tramp was a clumsy-looking craft, with rust-streaked sides. She was wallowing along, her engines thumping steadily. It was some little time before she took any notice of Mr. Fielding's signals, but at last her engines were reversed, and



then stopped altogether. The motor-boat drew gingerly alongside, and an accommodation ladder was lowered.

"Some of you boys had better stay in the boat here," said Mr. Fielding crisply. "I'll go aboard with Nipper and this other young gentlemen. A few of you can come, if you like."

So, after the motor-boat had been made fast, only Mr. Fielding and Nipper and Kenmore, and one or two of the juniors, went up the ladder.

Very soon the party stood on the deck, facing a squarely-built individual with a



## CHAPTER 20.

## Quick Work!

CAPTAIN WELLS looked incredulous.

"A stowaway?" he repeated. "Aboard my ship? I think you must have made a mistake, sir! As far as I know, there's no stowaway aboard here!"

"We know for a fact that the man was in Caistowe on Monday evening, and there is quite a lot of talk going on now to the effect that he was smuggled on your ship," put in Nipper. "Perhaps it's only fair to tell you that this chap is wanted rather badly."

"By the police?" asked the captain shortly.

"Not yet, but he will be," said Kenmore. "He committed a forgery, and he's been afraid of the police for weeks. We'll tell you the whole story if you like, but——"

"No need for that!" broke in the captain gruffly. "I'll have a search made at once. I don't want any stowaways aboard my craft! Gosh! You fellows will have saved me a lot of trouble if this fellow turns out to be aboard! Just a minute, Mr. Rorke."

An officer came up, and the captain gave him some brisk orders. In the meantime, several of the deck hands were hanging about, looking a trifle scared. Probably they knew all about Sam Pointer's presence below.

There was only a brief wait before Mr. Rorke re-appeared, looking angry.

"Discovered anything?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir, he's aboard," said the officer. "Infernal vermin! I've just heard that he's skulking down below in one of the store-rooms. They're fetching him up now."

"Then you were right, sir," the captain said, turning to Mr. Fielding. "Thanks for coming along and taking the fellow off. I don't want him here, I can assure you. Stowaways are only a nuisance, at the best. Not often we get 'em aboard this old tub, though."

Kenmore's eyes were glistening.

"Cheer up, Kenmore!" murmured Nipper. "It won't be long now. Sam Pointer won't be able to escape this time, and we'll take him straight away to Bannington and make him face that bookmaker. I can see the end of your troubles in sight."

Kenmore gave a kind of gulp.

"I—I can't believe it!" he muttered. "I've been so worried lately that I've begun to think I shall never be clear again."

A minute later Sam Pointer was forced on deck, in the grip of another officer. He was a miserable-looking specimen indeed. He was grimy, his clothing was rumpled and dirty, and his face, through the patches of dirt, showed pale

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leathery face. He was frowning with impatience.

"Am I addressing the captain of this boat?" asked Mr. Fielding.

"You are!" said the leathery-faced man. "I'm the captain. Wells is my name."

"And mine is Fielding," said Mr. Fielding. "Very pleased to meet you, Captain Wells. I dare say you've seen something of me while you've been in Caistowe Harbour, eh?"

"I believe I have, sir," said Captain Wells. "What's wrong? What's the idea of chasing after me in this way?"

"It's perfectly simple," said Mr. Fielding. "You have a stowaway on board, and we want to relieve you of his presence. We have merely come to take him back, and I rather think you will be grateful for the service."



"It ain't true!" he was wailing. "I ain't done nothin' wrong!"

Simon Kenmore ran forward, his face suddenly flushed.

"You scoundrel!" he said thickly, as he faced Sam Pointer. "I've got you at last! You can't escape this time!"

The man gave a wail of terror, and in desperation he suddenly wrenched himself free, ran like a rabbit to the rail, and leapt overboard.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Kenmore.

Splash!

The sound of Pointer's body striking the water came loudly, and everybody rushed to the rail and stared down. In all probability Pointer had hardly realised what he was doing when he made that plunge. Panic-stricken, he had simply become temporarily bereft of his wits.

It was evident, at all events, that he had no desire to die. For, almost as soon as he got to the surface, he struggled frantically, plunging about in the water.

"Help!" he screamed. "I can't swim! Help! Help!"

A hail came from Lionel Corcoran.

"All right, up there!" he sang out. "We've got him!"

Corky was standing in the stern of the powerful motor-craft, and he had just whirled a lifebelt through the air. It fell accurately, and Sam Pointer grabbed it. There was a rope attached to the belt, and the wretched man was quickly dragged towards the waiting motor-boat.

"That's all right, then," said Mr. Fielding, as he turned to the captain. "I don't think we need delay you any longer, Captain Wells. Thanks very much. Sorry to have given you any trouble."

The skipper of the *Narcissus* shrugged his shoulders.

"I reckon it's up to me to thank you, sir," he replied. "Stowaways ain't any good aboard any craft, and I'm thunderin' glad to get rid of this one. You're welcome to him!"

When Mr. Fielding and Kenmore and the others got down into the motor-boat they found Sam Pointer crouching in the corner of the cockpit, covered with blankets. Practically all the life had been knocked out of him. Not only was he scared by his narrow escape, but he had hurt himself in that fall—for he had struck the water nearly flat.

"He's all right, sir," said Corky cheerfully. "We've wrapped him up well, and he's only frightened. What are we going to do now?"

"We're going back to Caistowe," replied Mr. Fielding. "Some of you boys had better carry the man through into the little cabin. You'll find a rig-out there—an old one of mine. Make this fellow change his clothes, and perhaps you'd better give him a dose of brandy, too. You'll find some inside."

So, as the motor craft sped back towards Caistowe, Sam Pointer was taken into the tiny cabin: here he was forced to remove his clothing, and he was dressed in dry things.

He was sullen and vindictive, but he had sense enough to know that if he resisted he would be subjected to force. And, in a way, he was resigned to his fate now. He must have known that there was no hope of escape for him.

When Caistowe was reached, Mr. Fielding left the St. Frank's fellows in the motor-boat. He advised them not to come ashore until he was ready, and he, in the meantime, hurried home and brought back one of his powerful motor-cars.

"I'm going to help you right through," he declared. "I'm going to take this man to Bannington for you—right into Mr. Page's office. There's no need to take any more risks."

All the juniors were excited, and Kenmore was so joyful that he was nearly speechless.

The end of his troubles was within sight—and it seemed too good to be true.



## CHAPTER 21.

### The Confession!

"HERE we are!" said Handforth eagerly.

Bannington High Street had been reached, and it was fairly busy at this hour of the morning.

People standing near by stared in wonder as the doors of the big seven-seater saloon opened, and emitted at least a dozen people. For all the juniors had piled in—the majority of them at the back, with Sam Pointer held securely in their midst.

They went across the pavement in a kind of human flood, and Pointer was whisked through a pair of double doors, and then up some stairs. Kenmore and Nipper had gone in advance, and Mr. Fielding had remained in the car. His part in the affair was over.

There was one little change in the party. During that ride from Caistowe Simon Kenmore had become himself.

It had been an easy matter for him to remove that false moustache, and as he had carried his own false teeth in his pocket he removed those hateful prominent ones and substituted the others. The change in him was remarkable; in a flash he became himself. It was no longer necessary for him to masquerade as his own mythical brother.

It was he who led the way into Mr. Matthew Page's big office on the first floor of the building.

Mr. Page was a turf commission agent on a large scale, and he had an extensive business. There were many clerks in the outer office, and they looked up in astonishment at the invasion.

"We want to see Mr. Page!" said Kenmore grimly.

"If you'll give me your name, sir—" began one of the clerks.

"Never mind about my name!" said Kenmore. "Is Mr. Page in his office?"



"I believe so, but——"

"That's all right, then!" said Kenmore. "Come on, you fellows! In with him!"

In spite of the protests from the clerks they swept through the outer office and charged into a doorway on the other side which was marked "Private." And there, within, seated at a big desk, was Matt Page himself.

But he did not remain seated for long. He was soon on his feet, looking in anger and amazement at the crowd of juniors. His eyes glinted with a new kind of fire as he recognised Simon Kenmore.

"What d'you think you're having a game at?" he demanded furiously. "Get out of this office—all of you!"

"Not just yet, Mr. Page!" said Handforth, with a glare. "We've brought you this prisoner—and we're going to have this whole thing squared up before we leave!"

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Page, turning to Kenmore. "You're in this, aren't you? You've condescended to show up again, eh?"

"When you first accused me of forging that cheque, Mr. Page, I told you that I didn't do it!" said Kenmore steadily. "I'm telling you the same thing again now. Here's the man who forged it."

He pointed to the prisoner, and Mr. Page began to understand what it was all about.

"It's a lie—a lie!" screamed Sam Pointer frantically. "I ain't done nothin', guv'nor! I ain't forged no cheque! I don't know what the young gent means! He must 'ave mistook me for somebody else!"

"I gave him that eight-pound cheque," insisted Kenmore. "I never dreamed that he would be crook enough to alter the figure. I knew nothing about it until you came to me that night in the Wheatsheaf, Mr. Page. You've been accusing me of the thing all the time, but I didn't do it. Pointer is guilty—not me!"

Matt Page pursed his lips, and then he suddenly opened a drawer and took out a slip of paper. It was the fateful cheque.

He strode across and thrust it under Sam Pointer's nose.

"Look at this!" he said sternly. "This cheque was given to you, according to what Mr. Kenmore tells me. Did you alter it from eight pounds to eighty pounds?"

"No, I didn't!" shouted Pointer. "It's a lie. Don't take any notice, guv'nor! I tell you, it's a lie!"

"Well, we can soon prove it!" said Matt Page. "This cheque has already been in the hands of the police, and there is a fingerprint on it here—very clearly defined."

Everybody looked, wondering.

"It has been established that this fingerprint was not made by any of the bank clerks," continued Mr. Page relentlessly. "Bring this man over to the desk, boys. We'll take his finger-prints, and then we shall know——"

"Hold him!" shouted somebody.

For Sam Pointer had tried to break free. He was soon subdued, however, and he stood there, panting heavily.

"You've got me, ain't you?" he snarled.

"Well, what are you goin' to do now, eh?"

"You admit it, then?" said Mr. Page.

"What's the good of doin' anything else?" snapped Pointer. "You've got me beat, ain't you? Yes, I did it—and I dessey I was a fool. But I didn't realise——"

"That's enough!" interrupted the bookmaker contemptuously. "It'll probably interest you to know that I was only fooling you about that fingerprint. Still, it served the purpose—you have confessed. And now you can clear out!"

Pointer stared blankly.

"Clear out?" he said, in a hoarse whisper. "Why, ain't—ain't you goin' to give me over to the cops?"

"You can get out!" repeated Mr. Page, pointing to the door. "I'm not going to prosecute you."

"Guv'nor, you're a sport!" gasped Pointer breathlessly. "Why, gosh, I never expected nothin' like this! Thank you, guv'nor! You're a real gent!"

Several of the juniors tried to grab Pointer as he prepared to leave, but Matt Page waved them back.

"Let him go!" he said. "We're not interested in him any longer."

"But he forged that cheque!" said Handforth hotly. "And you've been accusing Kenmore——"

"I shan't accuse Mr. Kenmore any longer!" said the bookmaker. "As for this man, I don't choose to prosecute—I don't like to invite publicity. Let him go."

And Sam Pointer was allowed to sneak out. As soon as he got through the doorway he bolted like a rabbit—in case Mr. Matt Page should change his mind!



## CHAPTER 22.

### All Serene!

**M**R. MATT PAGE turned to Kenmore, and held out his hand.

"I apologise, Mr. Kenmore," he said earnestly. "I think you will admit, however, that there was some justification for my suspicion. But I owe you this apology, and I now give it freely. I hope you will not be too resentful."

Kenmore took the bookmaker's hand gladly.

"I'm not resentful!" he said, in a husky voice. "I'm only too glad to have the whole wretched affair cleared up."

"Were you really going to give Kenmore to the police?" asked Nipper.

"I was!" said the bookmaker, with a sudden hard look in his eyes. "I thought he was guilty—I thought it was just a yarn of his to put the blame on to somebody else, and I knew that he could afford to pay. I've been robbed too often by people who can afford to pay. They're the worst kind. As



for that fellow who just skulked out, he might as well go. I shall never get my money back from him, and it wouldn't give me any satisfaction to prosecute him."

They could readily understand why Mr. Page desired to have the matter dropped.

He had made a mistake, and he knew it. Sam Pointer had confessed to the forgery, and therefore it was impossible for Page to threaten Kenmore with police action. And by prosecuting Pointer the bookie would receive nothing but publicity—of an unwelcome kind.

"Well, that's that!" said Corcoran cheerily. "Kenmore, everything's all serene now."

"Rather!" put in Handforth.

A couple of minutes later they were all outside in the street, and Mr. Fielding smiled contentedly when he heard the result.

"Well, I'm glad to have been of some little help," he said. "So they let the man go, eh?"

"Yes, sir," said Kenmore. "I expect he'll go back to his old racecourse games. Not that I care. I've finished with that sort of thing for good now."

"I'm glad to hear you say it," remarked Mr. Fielding quietly. "It only leads to trouble, young 'un—nothing else."

He turned to the juniors.

"As for you boys, I rather think I'd better pay a visit to your headmaster some time this morning," he said dryly. "I'll explain to him a few of the details, and give him a

hint that it would be inadvisable to punish you, eh?"

"Oh, that's jolly sporting of you, sir!" said Nipper. "But please don't mention anything about Kenmore."

"I'll be very tactful," said Mr. Fielding. "At the same time, I'm rather interested to know what kind of story Kenmore will tell."

The prefect was looking thoughtful.

"I hardly know yet, sir," he said awkwardly. "But I don't think it will be very hard. I'll tell the Head that I stayed away for personal reasons. If I get into trouble over it, I shall have to take my gruel—that's all. Naturally, I shan't give any explanation, and I shall have to chance my luck."

He turned to Nipper and Corcoran and the rest.

"Thanks, young 'uns, for all you've done," he went on in a low voice. "In the past I've been a bit of a beast to you, I dare say. You'll find me different in future. During these past few weeks I've found out a few things."

They said very little to him, for they were feeling quite uncomfortable. As for Kenmore, he inwardly told himself that these juniors were well worth being friendly with. In the old days he had been all wrong. He had had a very severe lesson—and it had gone right home.

Matt Page's statement that he *would* have prosecuted had given Kenmore a big shock. He realised the extreme narrowness of his

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escape. Indeed, but for the chance discovery of his real identity by Nipper & Co. that morning, there would have been no hope for him. Sam Pointer would have got clean away, and then the real truth could never have come out.

It was this which made Kenmore tell himself that he would finish with bookmakers, and with betting and gambling. Such "pleasures" had brought him nothing but trouble and worry.

During his sojourn at St. Frank's in the character of "Walter Kenmore" he had lived decently; he had got on friendly terms with the very juniors he had formerly hated. And Simon Kenmore liked the new order of things better than the old.

He was rather surprised by his discoveries—and yet they weren't surprising in the least. He was merely finding out that there was much greater happiness in living decently and honestly than by living constantly in fear of being "found out." Where, after all, was the pleasure in doing things that were forbidden by the school regulations? He had always called people fools because they had been afraid to "go the pace." Now he had discovered, with something of a shock, that it was those who went the pace who were the fools.

They all returned to Caistowe. There the juniors bade Mr. Fielding good-bye, and he very good-naturedly went off to have a little chat with Dr. Stafford. Nobody doubted that the result would be anything but satisfactory.

Having recovered their bicycles, the juniors now prepared to take their next action.

"No need to go back to St. Frank's," said Nipper crisply. "Morning lessons are over, anyhow, and we might as well miss dinner altogether. There's the big match this afternoon—and we've got to think of poor old Fatty Fowkes!"

"He's as good as free now!" said Corky gladly. "In fact, he is free. We're going to him straight away, and we'll tell him the good news. From this minute onwards Fatty can resume his old place amongst the Blue Crusaders, and he won't be in any fear of arrest."

Kenmore turned impulsively to the juniors.

"Look here, you fellows," he said, flushing. "You were just saying that you're not going back to St. Frank's for dinner."

"That's right," said Nipper. "There's no time. We've got to go to Bannington to see about Fatty."

"Well, that won't take very long," said Kenmore awkwardly. "You only have to tell him that everything is all serene, and things will be put right. How about coming to the Wheatsheaf with me, and having a swell dinner at my expense?"

"The Wheatsheaf?" said half a dozen voices.

"I—I mean the Japanese Café!" said Kenmore hastily. "I won't go to the Wheatsheaf any more—I've finished with that place. I—I'd like you fellows to have a feed at my expense, you know. My treat. Just to—to sort of celebrate the occasion."

"That's jolly decent of you, Kenmore," said Nipper. "Of course we'll accept—and gladly. Thanks, old man."

"Good old Kenmore!" chorused the others.

Simon Kenmore flushed more deeply than ever. It was still a novel experience for him to hear such expressions of goodwill.

And, later, the extraordinary spectacle of Simon Kenmore, the ex-bully and rotter of the Sixth, sitting at the head of a table, entertaining a crowd of juniors, was witnessed in the Japanese Café. A jolly and happy affair it was, too. The fellows toasted Kenmore again and again, and ended up by lustily singing that famous old song, "For he's a jolly good fellow!"

Everybody was supremely happy because all this mystery was over—and because the celebrated Fatty Fowkes, of the Blue Crusaders, was now released from his unhappy predicament.

As Handforth truthfully remarked, everything in the garden was lovely.

And Christmas was coming—with all its promise of good cheer and jollity!

THE END.

(*Ezra Quirke's coming next week, chums! Look out for the first yarn of this grand new series entitled, "The Return of Ezra Quirke!"*)

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E. S. BROOKS

# 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 SCHOOL STORY LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*



GEORGE HUNNABLE

**Y**OUR resolve—Winifred P. Cull (Hythe)—to continue with the Old Paper after you have left school is one that gives me great pleasure. I always like to think that we can keep our readers indefinitely—and not lose them after they have reached years of discretion. You put the idea so nicely in your letter, Winnie, that I feel I must quote your words for the benefit of those readers—a good many, I'm afraid—whose schooldays are nearly over, and who may feel that it will be beneath their new dignity to carry on with the St. Frank's yarns as of yore.

Here are Miss Winifred Cull's words: "I leave school at the end of this year, so the N.L.L. will be a link between me and schooldays, and help me to keep in touch with school affairs and atmosphere. I think anyone who drops the Old Paper because he or she thinks 'I'm too old for it,' is a silly ass! Or, perhaps, more to be pitied than blamed. In my opinion, the Old Paper is of even more value to non-school chaps and girls, because it's a link between them and something they've left behind, and it helps to keep them young at heart. And that's a great thing, isn't it?"

This week, George Hunnable, your imposing dial, including your bandmaster's cap, adorns the top of our page. In case you're not a bandmaster, I'm only anticipating by a short time, because I expect you soon will be. With regard to Professor Zingrave, and the League of the Green Triangle (the Circle of Terror is the same thing, you know, under another name), you will probably be interested to know that I am planning a series of yarns even now, with old Zingrave well to the fore. But in case I get into trouble with the Editor for letting the cat out of the bag too soon, I won't say any more just yet. So look out for another reply on this subject within a week or two.

That portrait of you—Reg. T. Staples (Walworth)—won't do at all. I can see your cap, and I can see the Old Paper, and I can just see your legs. But that's not good enough. I want to see *you*. I expect the readers want to, too. So let's have a proper

studio photograph. And don't ever stop writing me your weekly letters, or I shall lose one of my best tonics.

If you want to get rid of that model racing yacht—W. E. White (Plymouth)—you had better join the St. Frank's League, and get the Chief Officer to put a free advert. in for you. Joining the League is as easy as eating a doughnut, and it costs about the same. You buy an extra copy of any issue that contains the League Forms, get somebody else to sign the extra form, fill in the other yourself, and send them both to the C.O. And before you know where you are, you'll have your Membership Certificate and Badge—and all the privileges that the League offers.

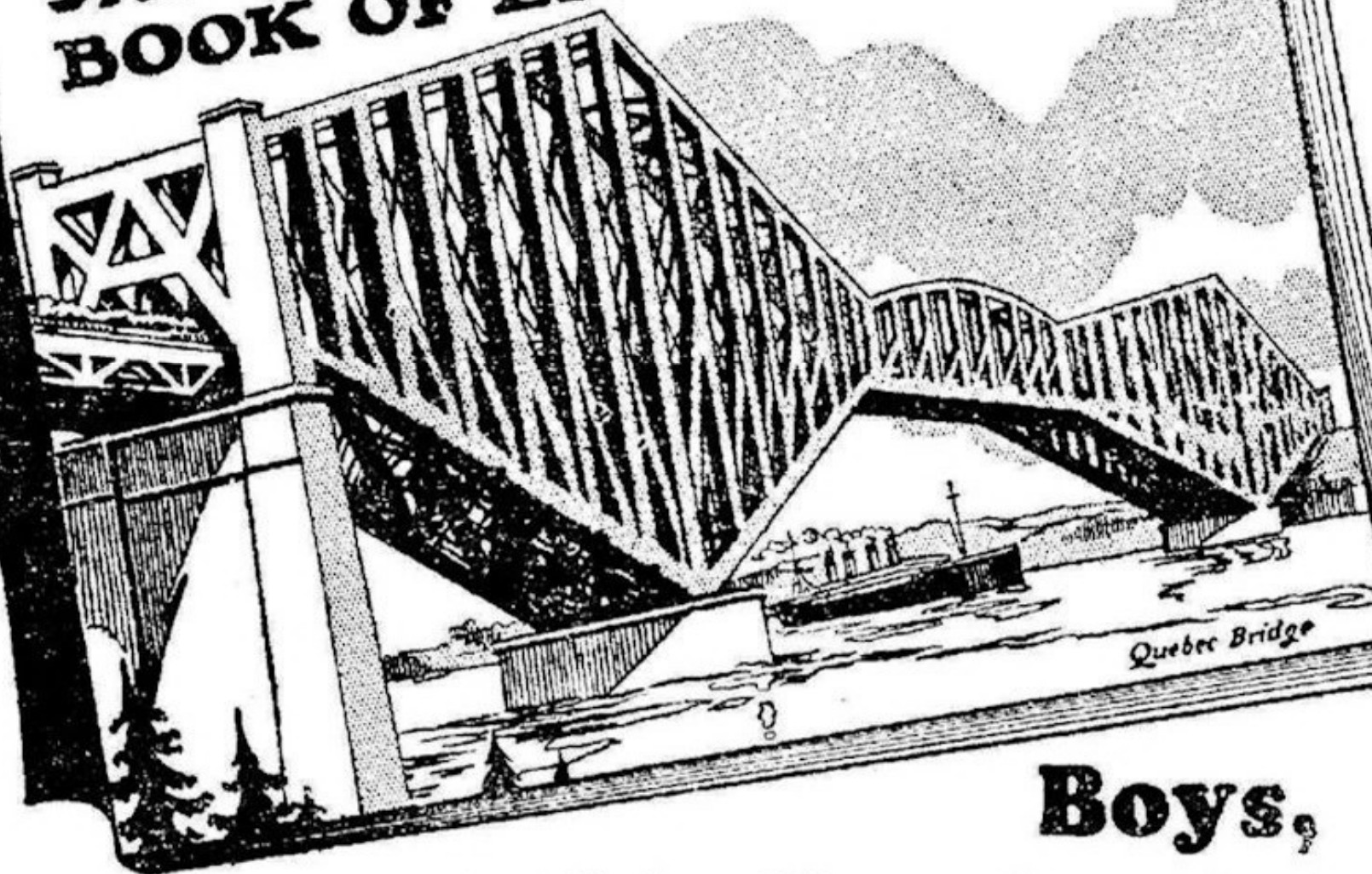
Here are the titles of the Old Series stories you want—Thomas W. Porter (Cradley Heath): 36, The Mystery Man of Lhasa; 131, The Hold-Up of the 8.15 Mail; 199, The Breaking Point; 206, Expelled from St. Frank's; 226, The Mystery of Reed's Wharf; 313, The Golden Image; 314, The Demon Cricketer; 363, The Fiends of Fu Chow; 426, A Three Thousand Mile Race; 496, The Twins' Terrible Tangle; 500, The Schoolboys' Pantomime.

I hope you have an enormous number of friends—Winnie Lee (Dagenham)—because the more you have the more good work you'll do amongst them. You say that every week you give the Old Paper to one of your friends, and that afterwards they get it for themselves. That's the stuff to give 'em! Stout work of that kind is the real goods.

The reply I have given to Winnie Lee, of Dagenham—L. Withams (Chelmsford)—applies exactly the same to you, word for word. Hope you've got lots of pals.



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# What's Wrong with the Rovers?



*Already two directors of Northmouth Rovers have disappeared in mysterious circumstances. Now Edward Colton, another director, finds himself the victim of a vicious attack on his life!*

## Crooked!

**N**IPPER was determined on two things. He was going to do his best, and he was going to keep an eye on Grogan!

The band was marching off; a terrific roar greeted the home team in their red-and-black striped jerseys. The Rovers, going out, received rather more than the polite applause accorded to visitors, because they happened to be a famous club, a club that had made football history.

Midbury was out after the championship, and it struck Nipper, as he stuck pluckily to their elusive centre-forward, that they stood a mighty good chance, and regarded this match with Northmouth as one of their stepping-stones.

The crowd was roaring with excitement. Then came a gasp of amazement as they saw that the visitors' young centre-half had beaten their star, that the ball was travelling swiftly to Sims, who dodged the man tackling him and centred to Dick Ridley, who hit the post with a crashing shot.

It was hard luck for the Rovers.

Nipper was feeling quite perky now, and though Midbury's star forward was the more experienced and cleverer player, the lad managed to hamper him badly.

"Come on, the City!"

The home supporters were growing impatient. Rutherton was playing at the top of his form, and with the first half well advanced Dave Williams had scarcely had a

dangerous shot to deal with, whilst on the other hand, Dick Ridley and Sims had gone uncomfortably close.

The excitement was intense. Nipper was lost in the game, and he could think of nothing but thwarting that star forward, who was beginning to show signs of temper. He forgot to watch Grogan. He was racing along neck and neck with the opposing centre-forward, intent upon dispossessing him of the ball, when a burly form crashed into his back, and he was flung forward on to the turf. Half-dazed as he was, however, Nipper instinctively ducked his head—just as a heavy boot flashed past it, missing him by an inch!

Pheep!

Nipper lay on the grass, his breath coming in panting, painful gasps. The referee's whistle was shrilling out!

As though through a mist, Nipper saw the referee come hurrying up to Grogan. From what seemed a long distance came the excited shouts of the crowd, and a lot of jeering from a section of the spectators who evidently thought that the Rovers' left-back had intended to foul their centre-forward and had got the wrong man.

"Grogan!" said the ref sharply. "What do you mean by a reckless charge like that?"

The burly back was a little pale as he stammered out a reply.

"I—I rather lost my head. I was rushing to help Parr, but somehow got into collision with him."



"Well, don't you come into collision that way again," said the man with the whistle grimly, as he beckoned to the Rovers' trainer. "If I have any more rough play from you I shall send you off the field."

The surly-looking Coles and an ambulance man came hurrying up.

"I'm all right!" panted Nipper feebly. He tried to stagger to his feet, only to fall back into the arms of the bald-headed veteran back, and the ground seemed to be heaving up and down in a most disconcerting fashion.

Then, without any ceremony, Coles took his arms, and the ambulance man his feet, and they were bearing him from the playing pitch. They laid him down just outside the touch-line, and Nipper lay back, his breath coming a little less painfully now. He had fallen heavily, however, and every bone in his body ached.

"Has your back gone barmy?" asked the ambulance man.

"He's too keen; that's the trouble with Grogan," growled the trainer. "He never intended to foul anyone, least of all one of his own side, but in a crisis he's apt to lose his head and butt in like a bull."

"Oh!" said the ambulance man doubtfully. Nipper lay blinking up at the sky with the roar of an excited crowd ringing in his ears, and the plop, plop, plop of the ball coming faintly to him.

"Pure accident!" said the trainer. Crumbs, what a whopper! Nipper was thinking of the remark he had heard the manager make: "You fix it with Grogan; the quicker he's crocked and out of the way the better!"

Well, he had got something to tell Nelson Lee. The C.I.D. man had blurted out their true identity, and developments had been swift. In the haze that surrounded them one thing stood out very clearly. Quite indisputably Minter, Coles and Grogan did not want a detective in the team, and thinking

of that foot that had only just missed his head, it struck Nipper very forcibly that Grogan would prefer him under the turf than upon it.

Nelson Lee was quite right; Northmouth looked like being a very unhealthy place.

Within a few hours of the man from the Yard blurring out the secret of their identity his life had been in peril on the football field. There was something wrong with the Rovers all right!

"GOAL!"

That great shout caused Nipper to sit up; his absence from the field had put the Rovers out of their stride. He had judged from the enthusiasm of the crowd that they were being hard pressed, and now Midbury City's star centre-forward had got through and scored.

Nipper heaved himself to his feet.

"I'm going back!" he said bluntly.

The trainer caught him by the arm.

"Don't be a fool! It will be half-time in ten minutes."

But Nipper shook off the hand on his arm, and stepped rather groggily over the white line.

A football crowd is always ready to applaud pluck, and quite a roar of applause greeted the youngster as he walked towards the referee, fighting hard to overcome his dizziness, and telling himself fiercely that he would soon be all right.

Badly shaken from his heavy fall, he was not a lot of use; but he certainly hampered that flying centre-half, and encouraged his own team. The whistle sounded for half-time with the score at one goal to nil in Midbury's favour.

In the dressing-room the trainer fussed round Nipper, but the youngster was feeling almost himself again.

"I'm all right," said Nipper; "but I think when Grogan's playing everyone ought to wear crash helmets and padded togs, just in case of accidents!"

The burly back was crimson, and several

#### WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

*NELSON LEE, the world-famous detective, and his assistant, NIPPER, are in Northmouth, where they are investigating the mysterious disappearance of James Ridley, ex-chairman of Northmouth Rovers. Nipper, who is known as Nick Parr, plays for the Rovers as an amateur; Nelson Lee has taken the name of Mr. Nelson. Eventually, Lee fears that James Ridley has been kidnapped, and he suspects that Bert Barter and Mr. Minter, centre-half and manager of the Rovers respectively, are implicated in the affair. He is also much puzzled by the movements of both*

*DICK RIDLEY, nephew of James Ridley and International centre-forward of the Rovers, and*

*STEPHEN LANGTON, the new chairman, who, owing to his aerial activities, is known as the "Bat." A new sensation is caused by the disappearance of another Rovers' director named Mark Mayhew. Detective-inspector Stone, of Scotland Yard, is called in, and he unwittingly reveals the real identities of Nelson Lee and Nipper. Following this revelation, Minter arranges that Grogan, the Rovers' left-back, shall crock Nipper during the match against Midbury City—Nipper is playing at centre-half, having deposed Barter from that position. The lad overhears the plot, however, and determines to be on his guard during the game.*

(Now read on.)



men laughed. Then an attendant came up to Nipper.

"Mr. Colton would like to see you outside for a moment," he said, and Nipper, sucking his slice of lemon, followed him out into the corridor, followed by the curious gazes of his colleagues.

### The Bat!

**T**HE little director was pacing impatiently up and down. There was both fear and excitement in his bulging eyes.

"This is a bad business, young man," he said in a low voice, as Nipper joined him. "I had a telephone message from Nelson Lee

because I arranged for you to play for the Rovers, and this is going to mean more trouble for me."

Nipper could not quite see that. It looked as though the men responsible for the disappearance of James Ridley and Mark Mayhew were already keen enough on getting hold of the frightened little director, but that flukey shot of his—when he had wounded Bert Barter—had given them the impression that he was constantly on his guard, that he went about armed, and that he was a crack shot and fired without any warning. But before Nipper could explain that, the players were coming out into the passage, and he hurried to join them.



"Help!" came a cry. Nipper dashed forward into the fog, and saw Edward Colton, the North-mouth Rovers' director, struggling desperately with two shadowy figures.

saying that some blundering idiot had revealed your identity. Apparently the man was with him at the Harbour Hotel, and had told him what had happened. Your chief said you would be on your guard, but as my niece was coming over to the match I resolved to come with her to warn you. That charge of Grogan's was no accident!"

"Oh, I know that!" said Nipper. "But I got so keen on the game that I forgot to watch him. Did the chief give you any message?"

"He said the man from Scotland Yard might be useful."

Nipper grinned.

"He hasn't done me much good so far!"

"And I'm greatly worried," said the prosperous ship-owner. "They will know that I am responsible for calling in Nelson Lee

Dick Ridley glanced after the director, who had turned to make his way back to his seat in the stand.

"Had the old boy any loving message for me?" he asked.

"No message, loving or otherwise," replied Nipper carelessly, as they walked along the corridor. "I say, Grogan, don't help me again, will you?"

Several players laughed, but the Welsh goalie, who brought up the rear, was looking very troubled. He could not help but think that the Scotland Yard man's startling revelation had something to do with the attack on the youngster who was showing such good form.

The fog which had been threatening in the first half, had increased during the

(Continued on page 42.)



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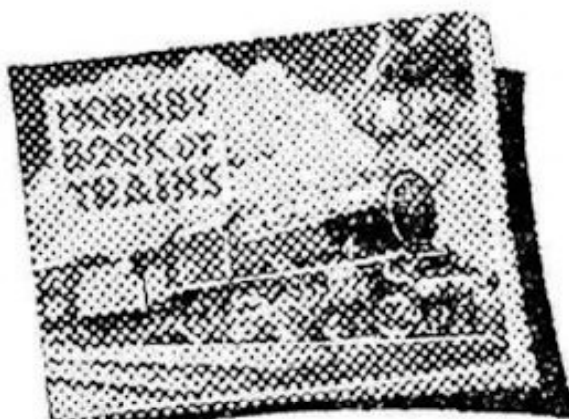
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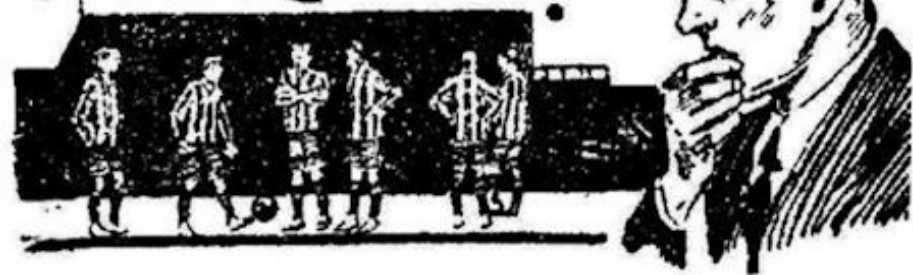
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# What's Wrong with the Rovers?



(Continued from page 40.)

interval, and it was only just possible to see from goal to goal. The referee was consulting the linesmen.

"Get on with it, gov'nor!" shouted a loud-voiced man. "They can see all right!"

Apparently the referee came to the same conclusion, for he walked to the centre, blew his whistle, and the game was resumed.

Nipper, who was tough and in the pink of condition, had recovered from the effects of that heavy charge in the back. He signalled it by running in front of Midbury's star centre-forward, robbing him of the ball, and sending it in a long, swift pass to Dick Ridley. Out it went to Sims, back to the young Amateur International, who dashed in between two hesitating backs and crashed the leather into the net.

The Rovers had equalised, and the crowd was not pleased about it.

"Now then, the City!"

The home team attacked strongly, but Nipper spoilt their tactics. He was constantly in the way, and though Grogan was playing badly, Rutherton and Dave Williams were at the top of their form. Players moved ghost-like out of the gloom, and spectators at one end of the ground could not see what was happening at the other.

Pheeeep!

The referee stopped the game, and again consulted the linesmen. Dick Ridley and the City's captain were called up.

"Wash-out!" said the left-half to Nipper, and he proved to be correct, for the referee abandoned the game.

Dave joined Nipper as they were making for the stand in the rapidly failing light.

"Land of my fathers! We shall have an awful journey home!" he said. "Yes, look you, indeed we shall, and I do not like it I tell you!"

"What I like about you is your absolute cheerfulness," said Nipper, with a grin. "A giddy ray of sunshine from among the dark clouds!"

"It's nasty near Northmouth in a fog, and indeed if we escape an accident, we shall be very late," continued Dave gloomily.

"Oh, well, we're getting off half an hour early, and we don't work to-morrow, and, any old how, we've got to do it!" said the lad.

"It's all very well for a detect——"

"Shut up!" said Nipper sharply.

In the dressing everyone got a move on. Several experienced players knew well enough what a long journey in a fog meant,

and the driver of the 'bus looked anything but happy as he drove out into the murky streets of Midbury. It was very thick in Corporation Street. The lights from the shops left a blind patch in the centre of the road, and trams with clanging gongs loomed up startlingly. Mr. Minter was all on the jump, but half-way up the hill from the town everyone gave a sigh of relief, for they were rising above the fog, and it was comparatively clear.

They stopped for tea at the hotel where they had had lunch, and darkness had fallen when they resumed their journey. There were occasional fog patches, but it was not until they were within five miles of Northmouth that they struck it really badly, and then a sheer blanket of mist swallowed them up, and the brakes were going on hard.

The blurred headlights of a car loomed up behind them.

"Look out!"

Nipper, sitting at the back of the bus, had opened the door and shouted a warning, and the car pulled up within a foot or two of the back of the bus. For a second he had a glimpse of the strained face of Clarice Colton. With her was her uncle, Edward Colton.

Then the bus was groping forward, and the car was following it.

Bump!

"Hold tight!" shouted someone.

The footballers were flung together, the brakes of the car following behind screamed protestingly as it was pulled up.

The bus was tilted over. Nipper was one of the first out, and he saw that the bus had left the road and was upon the desolate stretch of heath above Northmouth.

"Now we've got a job to keep us warm!" said Dick Ridley. "We shall have to——" He broke off, and listened intently. "There's a 'plane lost up there, and he's coming lower."

The young International seemed strangely excited. Nipper could only just hear the sound of an engine.

"It's the Bat!" said Dick, half under his breath, and then in almost a scream he cried: "Shout!"

Even as Nipper joined in the shout, and heard a startled cry from the girl behind them, he wondered how young Ridley knew it was Stephen Langton in the air. But even as that thought struck him, he instinctively ducked his head, as a great 'plane, with an almost silent engine, came dropping out of the fog, swooping down upon the bus-load of footballers!

## What Happened in the Fog!

AS the big 'plane came dropping out of the fog, swooping down upon the stranded bus, it seemed that a terrible accident was inevitable. Nipper, standing rooted to the spot, felt a great admiration for the pilot, for whether he had seen the lights of the bus, or been warned by the startled shout that had arisen, he



kept his head. A falling 'plane is capable of little manœuvring, but the pilot of the 'plane with the almost silent engine swerved cleverly away to the left.

"Land of my fathers!" murmured Dave Williams, standing beside the youngster. "I thought we were for it!"

The party of footballers had scattered all over the place. Nipper saw the great 'plane hit the road in front of the blurred headlights of the stranded bus, bounce upward, and then come to rest on the heath on the other side.

There was no crash, no dreaded explosion and sheet of flame. A man with a cool brain and steady hand had made that forced landing as calmly and as cleverly as though in a well-lighted aerodrome.

Nipper went dashing across the road. Was Dick Ridley right? Was the pilot Stephen Langton, the chairman of the Rovers, the man known to the players as "The Bat"?

"Stop!"

A blurred figure in front of him called out sharply as he almost collided with a man in a long leather coat and airman's helmet. He recognised the voice at once.

Dick Ridley had been right. It was Stephen Langton who had made a clever forced landing in the fog. As he came to a halt, the airman's keen, hawk-like eyes spotted two other men approaching, and he called upon them to stop.

"No one is to go near that 'plane," he called in a sharp, commanding voice. "It's quite all right, and I don't need help, but I've got a leaky petrol tank, and I don't

want anyone fussing around." He turned and peered through the fog at the youngster. "Oh, it's you, Mr. Parr—or I suppose, according to your friend from the Yard, I ought to call you Nipper?"

"I hope you won't," replied the youngster calmly. "I don't want it shrieked about.

"Just as you like!" replied the Bat carelessly. "I suppose it's your bus stranded there. What's happened?"

"We left the road in the fog," explained Nipper. "Our match at Midbury had to be abandoned on account of fog."

"Umph!" granted Langton. "It's clear enough six hundred feet up, but it's like looking down on to a blanket. I came down to take my bearings, and found your bus a bit too close to be pleasant. I just want to get a sense of direction, and I shall be all right."

"What!" gasped Nipper. "You're going up again in this?"

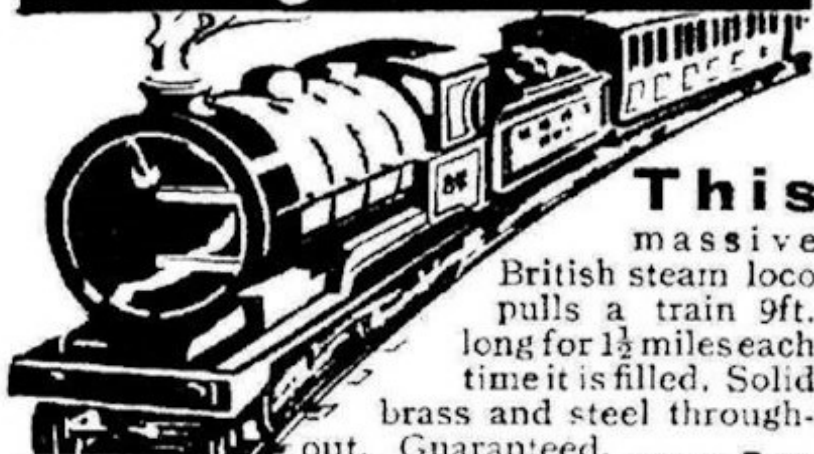
The chairman of the Rovers shrugged his shoulders as he replied.

"I've taken off and landed in a worse fog than this. But coming in from the sea, I didn't realise it was so thick on land, and lost my bearings. It's a little bit jarring when you don't know whether you are coming down on top of the Town Hall, but I wasn't far out in my guess."

He struck a match and lit a cigarette with a hand as steady as a rock, and Nipper glanced at him admiringly. Langton was rather puzzling his chief and himself, but

(Continued on page 44.)

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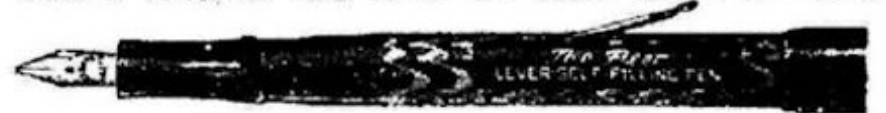


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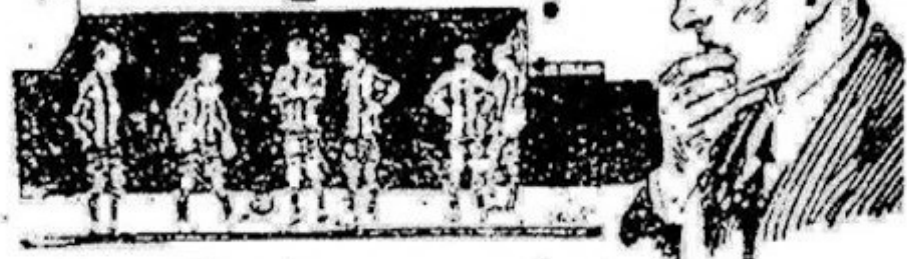
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# What's Wrong with the Rovers?



(Continued from previous page.)

undoubtedly the man had pluck, and lived up to his nickname."

Mr. Minter, the manager, came hurrying up through the fog.

"Shall I ask Grogan and Ridley to guard your plane?" he asked hastily.

Nipper was watching the man in the thick leather clothing, and he saw his sudden frown.

"Not the least need," he said shortly. "I'll give you a hand in getting your bus on to the road, and then I'll be off. I know where I am now."

"Hallo!" said Nipper. "Here's a chap who seems to be able to see his way in the fog pretty well."

A car was approaching from the direction of Northmouth. They could see blurred headlights and hear the engine, and then someone was shouting, for the driver might be sportsman enough to help haul the stranded bus on to the road.

Brakes went on with a squeak.

"Cowley!" said Nipper, with a grin. Then, as they moved forward to the car, the grin vanished abruptly.

His deduction from the peculiar squeak of the brakes was correct. The car was a Cowley. And seated at the wheel was Bert Barter, the centre-half whose place he had taken in the match against Midbury that afternoon!

And if Nipper was surprised at meeting Barter, the burly, ginger-haired footballer was clearly astounded at the sight of him and the other members of the team. Minter hurried up to the newcomer and said something in a low voice, and then Barter got out of the car with a nervous little laugh.

"If this doesn't beat everything," said the centre-half. "Some of us were wondering where you'd got to, Mr. Minter, and, thinking I might be a bit of use, I thought I'd come along and try to find you. Ditched, eh? And have you crashed, Mr. Langton?"

"Forced landing; got lost in the fog," replied the airman shortly. "You'd better tow the bus out now that you're here."

The driver quickly produced a length of rope.

"Now look you, be careful," said the gloomy Welsh goalie. "If anything goes

wrong you may be wrecked in front of us, and indeed, we might have to spend the night here!"

The other players laughed at him. Langton seemed naturally to assume command, and the players got ready to hang on to the spokes of wheels. Nipper, however, did not help. He was too dazed.

He did not for a moment believe Bert Barter's account for his presence upon that lonely heath above Northmouth. No man in his senses would have taken a car out that night if he could have helped it. Nipper had recognised the car as that which he and Nelson Lee had seen in the drive of Colton's house on the night when the director had been attacked; the car with the detached speedometer which Nelson Lee had identified in the parking place on the Rovers' ground, and which he had learnt belonged to Minter!

"Heave!" commanded Langton, and Barter's engine revved loudly in low gear. The lighted bus lurched forward, and then Nipper felt a light touch on his arm.

"I can't see uncle anywhere," said Clarice Colton, a little anxiously. "I'm afraid he's—"

"Help!" came a loud shout in the fog.

Edward Colton was his client, and dazed as he was by the strange happenings of this exciting evening, Nipper's first instinct was to dash to his aid, even though he might be hopelessly outnumbered, and had no knowledge of how many of the football team he could rely upon for assistance.

But he had that shout to guide him, and he used strategy.

"Quick! This way, boys, close in!"

His shout suggested that he had a number of companions close upon his heels. Nipper saw three shadowy figures struggling in the fog, and then two of them broke away and ran. The lad dashed up and almost fell over the falling director, but pulled up just in time.

"What's up?" he asked, as he steadied the falling man, and he saw that the director's eyes were bulging with fear!

*(Already two directors of Northmouth Rovers have disappeared; now follows an attack on another director. What's the mystery of all these amazing events? Who is behind the plot against the Rovers' directorate? Look out for more startling developments in next week's gripping instalment, lads. And—don't forget Ezra Quirke is coming back next Wednesday, too!)*