

NELSON LEE

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ARCHIE'S AWFUL AUNT!

A screamingly funny extra-long complete school yarn featuring the famous Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 31.

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Another Extra-Long Complete St. Frank's Yarn!

Archie's Awful Aunt!

Archie Glenthorne's
in the doldrums,
suffering one
long series of dis-
asters.

You'll be in your
element, enjoying
one long series of
laughs!

by
EDWY
SEARLES' BROOKS.



CHAPTER 1.

The Slacker!

ARCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK
GLENTHORNE looked comfortable.

He not only looked comfortable, but he was comfortable. The factors which contributed to his ease were many and varied. In the first place, it was a warm, sunny August afternoon; in the second place, he reclined at full length in a luxurious hammock.

Added to these incidentals was the fact that the hammock was slung between two trees overlooking Little Side at St. Frank's. And whilst Archie Glenthorne languidly reclined in the shade, he was gratified by the sight of the Junior footballers at practice under the sweltering sun. Their heat and moil made Archie, by comparison, feel all the cooler.

It was so hot this afternoon, in fact, that the elegant Removite had even gone to the length of bribing Dicky Jones, of the Third, to sit by the hammock and alternately swing it and operate a large fan. At intervals another fag—also bribed—would come up with iced lemonades from the school shop.

"Not quite so violent, old pippin," murmured Archie, as he languidly opened his eyes. "How do you suppose I can watch the priceless old practice if you jerk me about like this?"

"Sorry!" grinned Dicky. "I was just watching Handy make that save. Nipper's in real earnest this term, isn't he? He's making those chaps work like the very dickens."

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Archie, nodding. "I mean to say, if a team is to be whipped into shape, and so forth and so on, the jolly old skipper needs to be as hard-hearted as anything. The only way is to keep them at it. No room for slackers in the team, if you gather my meaning."

"Well, you ought to know all about it," nodded Dicky. "You've reduced slacking to a fine art, Archie."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "In fact, absolutely. I mean, in this weather, what else? What about that next dashed lemonade? Where's that blighter of a Dexter? The old tonsils are positively rattling! It seems to me that the next gullet washer is indicated."

Dicky Jones grinned—not at Archie's words, but by reason of the fact that a long, lanky individual had just hove into sight round the trees. He was a middle-aged gentleman in baggy flannel trousers and an old Norfolk jacket. A soft tweed hat, quite shapeless, sat on the back of his head. A straggly moustache adorned his upper lip, and a briar pipe was jutting at right angles out of his mouth.

"Pal of yours coming along, Archie," murmured Dicky warningly. "Better pull yourself together, you know."

Archie turned his head, caught one glimpse of the newcomer, and shuddered.

"Good gad!" he breathed feebly.

Mr. Alington Wilkes, the Housemaster of the Ancient House, always had this effect upon Archie. The man himself was all right

Tell All Your Chums—They'll be Interested!



—Archie was ready to vote him one of the best—but his clothing gave the elegant Removite a pain. Archie was rather fastidious on the subject of clothing.

“Well, well,” said Mr. Wilkes gently.

He stood looking at Archie in a ruminative way. His eyes, behind their spectacles, were rather reproachful. The dandy of the Remove steeled himself and looked at Mr. Wilkes bravely.

“Very well, thanks, old dear!” he replied. “Just taking the good old ease, you know. Watching the dashed footer practice. I must say the lads are energetic. Hardly the weather for smiting the good old leather sphere, what?”

“Sports captains must not allow themselves to be influenced by the weather conditions, Glenthorne,” replied Mr. Wilkes. “Heat or no heat, the football season starts in earnest next week, and we must be prepared.”

“Oh, rather, sir! Be prepared, what? Nothing like it!”

“How is it that you are not practising with the others?” asked Mr. Wilkes curiously. “Anything wrong, old man? Are you lame? Or ill?”

“Just lazy, sir,” said Dicky Jones gratuitously.

“Odds slanders and cheek!” protested Archie. “You dashed young blighter! Well, I mean— That is to say—” He paused, realising the futility of doing justice to the situation in Mr. Wilkes’ presence. “I’ll have a word with you later, you frightful young fright!”

“Well, I won’t presume to interfere,” said Mr. Wilkes, smiling. “Your own Form captain knows his own men better than I do, and I leave all such things to him. But it’s a pity to see such a strong, strapping youngster idling his time away in this lamentable manner. You’ll have to pull yourself together, Glenthorne.”

He nodded cheerfully, and walked on. It was just Mr. Wilkes’ way. He had been quite pleasant and friendly; but he had allowed Archie to see that he held strong views on slacking. Archie was desolated. All his comfort had gone. The sunshine was not so bright, and the hammock was not so comfortable.

“I say, what a dashed rotten blow!” he said bleakly. “I mean, Wilkey might have left this until later. I hate upsetting the old scarecrow!”

Archie, like most of the other Removites, had a very great affection for his Housemaster—and even greater respect. Mr. Wilkes was a Man. He didn’t look it, but he was, in the terms of the Remove, “a giddy marvel.” He had hunted big game, dived for pearls, climbed Mount Everest, wintered in the Arctic, and during the war he had been an Ace of the Royal Air Force; he was a brilliant cricketer, a demon golfer, a first-class boxer, and he could swim like a fish. A man like this was bound to be popular—especially as these accomplishments were accompanied by a friendly, easy-going disposition. Everybody was confidently expecting that he would turn out to be a brilliant footballer. Nobody knew it for a fact at the moment, because nobody had had the nerve to ask him. And Mr. Wilkes was one of those men who never talked of his own abilities. The fellows had had to learn of their new Housemaster’s attainments by degrees.

“Oh, well!” said Archie, a minute’s thought having exhausted him. “Why worry? It’s too dashed hot. “Where’s that frightful lemonade carrier? Dicky, old cherub, kindly dash off and do a certain amount of tickling up.”

“If there’s any tickling up to be done, it won’t be done by me,” said Dicky Jones, with conviction. “Old Wilkey let you have it strong; but I hate to think of what these girls will do when they see you!”

“Girls!” ejaculated Archie, starting up as though he had been stung by a wasp.

THERE were at least a dozen girls. They had looked in on the way from their own school—Moor View—to the village.

Vera Wilkes, in fact, had invited them to come and have a look at the football practice.

Vera was Mr. Alington Wilkes' daughter—a very charming girl. As St. Frank's was so close, she was only a day girl at the Moor View School; she boarded in the Ancient House with her parents. St. Frank's counted itself fortunate, indeed, to have such a resident.

Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley and the rest had taken an instant liking to Vera, more particularly since she had turned out to be a coming tennis champion. She had already knocked spots off everybody at Moor View; and at hockey she promised to be just as brilliant. Like father, like daughter.

"Just a minute, you girls," said Irene, her eyes twinkling mischievously. "There's something in a hammock over here. What a chance! Look at the bulge!"

"Better go easy!" murmured Vera. "It might be one of the prefects."

"Who cares?" laughed Doris. "Anybody got a long pin?"

"Or a master," went on Vera. "Hadn't we better see first, just to make sure?"

"Anybody who lolls about in a hammock right next to a playing-field, with a game going on, deserves to be gingered up!" said Irene firmly. "Besides, isn't it obvious who's in that hammock?"

"You don't mean Archie?" said Marjorie Temple uncomfortably.

"Who else?" retorted Irene. "The giddy slacker!"

Marjorie's mouth became more firm. She was rather partial to Archie; she understood him better than anybody else; and she knew that he wasn't half the lazy slacker he was popularly supposed to be.

"Leave this to me," she said earnestly.

She ran up to the hammock, and took one look. She caught her breath in sharply—and grimly. Dicky Jones, being a wise youth, had made himself scarce. He didn't mind any amount of ructions with his own kind, but he barred girls.

"Archie!" said Marjorie in a low, quivering voice. "Get out of this! You slacker—you lazy wretch. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Archie sat up in dismay.

"Oh, I say, old girl!" he protested. "Good gad! You don't absolutely mean—"

"Why aren't you practising?" demanded Marjorie angrily.

"Well, the fact is——"

"You're not injured, are you?"

"Injured? Oh, absolutely!" said Archie. "I see what you mean! You mean, am I

injured? To tell you the truth, no. But this heat——"

"The other fellows are practising in the heat, and the football season is nearly on us," interrupted Marjorie. "You're just as strong, just as capable as Ted Handforth, or Reggie Pitt, or Nipper. Yet you lounge here like—like an Indian prince surrounded by his slaves!"

Archie looked at her desperately. Twinges of conscience had been pricking him ever since his "slaves" had fixed up the hammock for him, but he had successfully cast them out of his mind. Mr. Wilkes had given them a fresh lease of life, and now Marjorie was turning those prickings into stabs.

"Oh, I say!" he panted. "You see, I—I— Odds quandaries and dilemmas! I mean, what can a chappie say? But footer, on an afternoon like this, is absolutely imposs. I mean, out of the ques."

"Oh, it's impossible, is it?" said Marjorie hotly. "It's out of the question, is it? Here, girls! Lend me a hand, will you?"

"As many as you like!" said Doris briskly.

"All together!" cried Marjorie.

"Hi! Help!" howled Archie, as the girls enthusiastically seized the hammock. "Whoa! S.O.S.! What the——"

The hammock rose high into the air, and Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne toppled out and hit the ground with a thud. His monocle went in one direction, his magazine in another.

"Down with it!" said Marjorie enthusiastically.

The girls made no bones about it. They were strong, and they ripped down the hammock with speed and efficiency. Before Archie could even attempt to scramble to his feet, he was seized by many slim hands, bundled headlong into the hammock, and the ends were pulled together. He vanished amid the folds like a rolled-up dummy, gasping and spluttering.

"Now on to the field with him!" commanded Marjorie. "My hat! We'll show him! We'll teach him to slack at the very beginning of the football season!"

The practice game came to a sudden stop as the Moor View girls invaded the field. They ran on, laughing and shouting, dragging the unfortunate Archie with them. Not that Archie was visible. He was still enfolded within the meshes of the hammock.

"There!" panted Marjorie at last. "Nipper, here's something for you!"

"Awfully nice of you, Marjorie, but is this quite the time for making me presents?" asked the junior captain politely.

"This is a special sort of present," explained Marjorie. "I want you to grab this—this ornament and do your best to make it into something useful. I know it's a tall order, but you never know what you can do till you try."

CHAPTER 2.

Marjorie's Ultimatum!

NIPPER grinned. "But what is it?" he asked, as the folds of the hammock fell back and Archie Glenthorne was revealed. "That's what I'm trying to puzzle out. What is it?"

"My dear fellow, haven't you met this creature before?" inquired Vivian Travers smoothly. "Let me introduce you. The Human Slug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good gad!" gasped Archie, struggling to his feet. "I mean to say—the Human Slug, what? Travers, you frightful chunk of fungus—"

"Well, well!" said Travers in mock astonishment. "It's Archie!"

"You knew dashed well it was me!" protested Archie warmly. "And these—these —" He broke off, eyeing the girls helplessly.

"Better go easy, Archie," advised Nipper. "Remember, they're weak, defenceless maidens."

"Weak!" panted Archie. "Defenceless! Good gad!"

He wanted to say a lot more, but his brain failed to function. He was dishevelled and untidy—a condition which, in itself, horrified him. Added to this calamity was the humiliation. It was bad enough to be shamed by his own schoolfellows; but for these girls to take on the job was too frightful for words. Marjorie in particular. The look of scorn in Marjorie's eyes made him go dithery at the knees.

"Really, old girl, you don't understand!" he babbled. "I—I wasn't asked to join in the good old practice. I mean, a chappie doesn't like to shove himself forward, what?"

Marjorie's eyes softened.

"Oh!" she said slowly. "Why wasn't Archie asked, Nipper?"

"My dear girl, a fellow who wants to play footer needs no asking," he replied. "My chief trouble this week has been turning down the enthusiastic volunteers. Half the Remove wants to get into the team."

"And Archie didn't even volunteer?" asked Marjorie, her eyes hardening again.

"This is not the age of miracles," replied Nipper firmly.

"Supposing he had volunteered?"

"In that case I should have given him his chance—I should have played him," replied Nipper. "Archie's a useful man when he likes. But how often does he like? And I've no use for a man unless he is keen."

"Then Archie's got to be keen," said Marjorie determinedly.

"If he's keen of his own free will, all well and good," replied Nipper. "But forcing a chap to play football is no earthly use. Sorry, Marjorie, but I can't do anything with this ass until he fills himself with gun-

powder or something—or until somebody does it for him. Life's too short!"

"How about our new pro?" suggested Handforth, grinning.

"New which?" asked Marjorie.

"Didn't you know?" said Nipper. "We've got a live headmaster now, you know—my respected guv'nor."

"Mr. Lee is the goods!" nodded Marjorie.

"Well, he's decided that St. Frank's shall have a professional footballer as coach this season," explained Nipper. "No less a person than Walter Freeman, who did such wonderful things for Aston Villa before he retired from the game."

"When is Mr. Freeman coming?" asked Marjorie, her eyes gleaming.

"To-morrow, I think," replied Nipper.

"But we shan't see much of him—not at first, anyway. The seniors are bound to claim his main attention to kick off with."

MARJORIE TEMPLE felt very strongly on the matter of Archie.

She had humiliated Archie deliberately, hoping that it would do him good. He needed a jolt badly. To find him lazing in a hammock while the rest of the chaps were at practice filled the girl with indignation. And she was all the more hard-hearted because she really liked him tremendously. She wanted the other fellows to know what he could do.

She knew he could do it if he wanted to. It was his awful slackness which upset her so much. He just didn't care. Rather than exert himself he languidly potted along as a mere spectator. And Marjorie had no use for spectators. Keen as mustard on games herself, she naturally wanted to see her boy chum keen, too.

"I'm really frightfully sorry, old girl," said Archie humbly.

He had tidied himself up a bit, and he and Marjorie were walking off Little Side together. Archie's chief anxiety now was to escape—so that he could hide his head in shame, and change his clothes. But it wasn't easy to get away. He couldn't very well dash off and leave Marjorie flat.

"It's no good being sorry, Archie, unless you change your ways," said the girl bitterly. "Why can't you buck up? For goodness' sake don't think that I'm lecturing you—I'd hate myself if I did anything like that. But it makes my blood boil when I hear the other chaps laughing at you and calling you a—a human slug!"

Archie winced.

"That was a frightfully hot one!" he said sadly.

"They wouldn't call you such things if you pulled up your socks," retorted Marjorie.

Archie glanced down at his feet with a start.

"Good gad! I didn't notice— Oh, I see what you mean!" he ejaculated with relief. "You mean, pull up my socks? Not absolutely, but so to speak?"

"You've got to play football this term!"

declared Marjorie. "I like you, Archie—I like you a lot——"

"Oh, I say!"

"But unless you promise to practice hard and keep on practising, I won't speak to you again."

"Oh, I say!"

"I mean it!" insisted the girl. "I'm fed up with your awful slacking, Archie, and it's time you turned over a new leaf. Until you're actually in the Junior XI, I shan't come to tea with you, or ask you to come to tea with me, or—or anything!"

Archie gazed at her bleakly.

"Oh, but look here," he protested. "I mean, dash it——"

"I won't!" said Marjorie. "And that's all I've got to say."

She nodded coldly, turned aside, and walked off. Archie opened his mouth to speak, but words wouldn't come. As for running after her and begging her not to be so dashed hard-hearted, the thing couldn't be done. A fellow had to draw the line somewhere.

"Odds disasters and tragedies!" he moaned, in utter misery.

He walked indoors like a fellow in a daze. Tottering down the Junior passage, he reached his study, staggered in, and jammed the electric-bell push. When Phipps found him, a few minutes later, he was reclining on the easiest lounge, a glassy stare in his eyes. Phipps gave Archie one look and so far forgot himself as to start visibly.

"You rang, Master Archie?" said the valet, in a cold, ominous voice.

"Eh? Oh, Phipps!" ejaculated Archie, coming to life. "Good old Phipps! Absolutely! Phipps, old tulip, I need you! Absolutely need you! Phipps, I've got the bird!"

"I gathered that something had happened, sir," replied Phipps icily.

"Good gad! You're not going to get into one of those moods, are you, Phipps?" asked Archie desperately. "It's bad enough for the chappies to laugh at me, and for Marjorie to hand me the air, but I shall absolutely fade away if you turn me down, too, Phipps! Dash it, you blighter, have a heart!"

Phipps was Archie Glenthorne's rock of strength; whenever he was in a fix he turned to Phipps, and, as a rule, Phipps rose to the occasion with brilliance and efficiency. It was impossible to put Phipps out of countenance, or to provide him with a problem which he could not solve.

There were occasions, however, when Phipps turned against his young master. Then, indeed, were the skies grey. Only recently Archie had not only bought some heliotrope neckties—adorned by a yellow splash—but he had insisted upon wearing them, and Phipps, for a solid week, had done his utmost to resemble a joint of frozen mutton. Only the ultimate destruction of the ties had restored him to his usual equanimity.

"Your appearance, Master Archie, is—scarcely becoming," said Phipps pointedly.

"Wait!" urged Archie. "Wait until you hear what happened."

He poured out his tale of woe, and Phipps, as he listened, relaxed.

"So you see, old scream, it wasn't absolutely the fault of the young master," concluded Archie. "These dashed girls—priceless young things, bless 'em!—absolutely gave me no chance. Wrapped me in the good old hammock, and spilled me on the footer field."

"In these circumstances, Master Archie, your appearance can be forgiven," said Phipps generously. "But the sooner we get upstairs, the better. A complete change is essential."

"Before we go upstairs, laddie, let's decide what's to be done," urged Archie despairingly. "I mean, what about it? Here's this dear girl—a priceless peach in every way, if you know what I mean—here she is, giving me the bird like anything! Absolutely refuses to speak to me again until I play football."

"I imagine that Miss Marjorie must have been very angry, sir," said Phipps.

"Angry?" repeated Archie scornfully. "Good gad, and man alive! Vesuvius, in full eruption, is a dashed firework compared with Marjorie when she's diving off the deep end! Do you realise, Phipps, that she has absolutely refused to sip the good old brew in this study until I'm actually in the Eleven?"

"Far worse than I thought, sir!"

"It's ghastly. Phipps—it's absolutely mouldy round the edges," wailed Archie. "Even practising won't be enough. There'll be absolutely nothing doing until I'm in the Eleven. In other words, life has lost its zip."

"By what you tell me, Master Archie, there can be no doubt that the young lady is in earnest," said Phipps, after a moment's thought. "I take it that you desire me to suggest some solution to this problem?"

"Absolutely!"

"Then, as far as I can see, there is only one thing to be done," replied Phipps.

"Odds hopes and dreams! Then there is a solution?" said Archie eagerly. "Phipps, old genius, I knew you'd think of something. Some dashed ingenious wheeze to bring the damsel round, as it were. Go ahead, laddie! Spill it! Let the young master absorb the words of wisdom."

"It is quite simple, sir," said Phipps. "You must take football up seriously, and you must practice hard, and you must earn a place for yourself in the Eleven."

Archie's expression changed. A gaunt, haggard look came over his face; his monocle dropped out of his eye. The dread words chilled him to the marrow.

"Practice?" he repeated feebly. "Oh, I see! You mean, practice?"

"Football, sir," said Phipps, nodding.

"But, you dashed, fright, I knew that was a way out all the time," said Archie, with some spirit. "I want you to think of some other way——"

"There is no other way, sir," interrupted Phipps. "Miss Marjorie is determined—and when a young lady is determined it is of little use for people like ourselves to protest. If you are to retain Miss Marjorie's friendship, you must play football!"

Archie sank wearily back among the cushions.

"Oh, well, of course, there's nothing more to be said, then," he murmured gloomily. "Football it's got to be! But I can tell you candidly, old wash-out, that I'm disappointed in you. When it gets to the good old crucial point, you conk out on all dashed cylinders."

out the new professional, who had just arrived. He was surrounded by a crowd of Removites and Fourth-Formers, who were naturally anxious to give him the "once over."

Walter Freeman was a smallish man with a genial smile. He had had ten years in First Division football, and had played for England on several occasions. A man with this record—an International—was certain of a big welcome at St. Frank's.

"Don't you believe it, boys," he said, when the juniors expressed their fear that he would not have much time for them. "It's you



The girls seized the hammock, pushed—and Archie Glenthorne toppled out of it and hit the ground with a thud.

CHAPTER 3.

One Dashed Thing After Another!

LIFF, for Archie Glenthorne, resolved itself into a nightmare of strenuous activity from that hour on.

The next morning Phipps called him at the preposterous hour of 5.30, and sent him off on a five-mile trot. Archie, who obeyed Phipps in most things, staggered off, accompanied by his valet, who rode on a bicycle. It was torture for the first two miles, but by the time he returned he was mildly astonished to find that he felt fit.

"Dashed rummy, Phipps, old thing, but the young master is positively braced," he declared as Phipps rubbed him down. "The good old bones ache slightly, but they no longer rattle."

"Two or three days of this, sir, and you'll be in the pink of condition."

Later on in the day Marjorie came over to St. Frank's with Vera Wilkes, and sought

youngsters who'll see most of me. The First Eleven is in better shape, and I've generally found, too, that the seniors don't take so kindly to coaching."

"They think they know everything already, eh?" chuckled Nipper. "Well, you won't find Fenton like that. Fenton's the First Eleven skipper, and he's as keen as a razor. He'll want you to take several of his men in hand."

"Well, I'm here to earn my salary," replied Wally Freeman. "You youngsters will have as much of my time as the others."

"When do we start?" asked Nipper practically.

"To-day—now!" replied the professional. "Your headmaster is a caution! I've met some schoolmasters in my time, but he's the most go-ahead man I've ever come across. He wants this football season to be the most successful that St. Frank's has ever had."

"And it will be, too!" declared Nipper with conviction. "Don't forget, Mr. Freeman,

that our Head is different. None of your hide-bound schoolmasters. He's Mr. Nelson Lee, and now that he's in control he's putting some of his own ideas into operation. St. Frank's is a live school."

The girls managed to break into this discussion, and Marjorie and Vera even succeeded in taking Mr. Freeman aside.

"We want you to do us a favour," said Marjorie sweetly, after Vera had introduced herself and her chum.

"A favour?" repeated the pro, eyeing them cautiously. "Now, look here, young ladies, be careful! I know that lots of girls are taking up football nowadays, but if you're expecting me to give you any coaching you'll be disappointed. I may be old-fashioned, but I don't approve of it. Football isn't a girls' game. Never has been, and never will be."

Marjorie smiled.

"Don't worry," she replied. "We only want to talk to you about Archie."

"Archie? One of the boys here?"

"Archie Glenthorne," nodded Marjorie. "You'll know him at once, because he wears a monocle, and he talks like one of these stage dudes. When you first meet him you'll think he's an awful duffer, but he's not."

"Friend of yours, eh?" asked the pro, pursing his lips.

"Well, yes," admitted Marjorie. "He's a terrible slacker, but if he's prodded a bit he'll do wonders. I want you to give him special attention, and force him to do a lot of training and practising so that he can play for the School."

Wally Freeman smiled.

"A pretty tall order," he said amusedly. "But the trouble is, I'm not here to do personal favours—much as I'd like to. Slackers are of no earthly use on the football field, and no amount of prodding will make them into footballers. The only fellows who are successful are those who want to play."

"Archie will want to play after he has got used to it," said Marjorie. "Please promise us, anyhow, that you'll ginger him up."

"I'll do that much," said the professional.

WHEN he became acquainted with Archie Glenthorne he jumped to the conclusion that those two girls were off their heads. Later on he mentally apologised to them. For he found that Archie was a dark horse. His languor was more apparent than real; his slackness was only skin-deep. When it came down to brass tacks, Archie could be as energetic as the best of 'em. What was more to the point, Archie himself was now eager and anxious to be up and doing.

After about three days of it Archie made a remarkable discovery. He liked this exercise business. He had been tortured at first, and his relaxed muscles had protested strongly. Every hour of training had been an hour of misery. But now he was enjoying it—he was looking forward to the cross-country runs, and to the practice on Little

Side. He came in from these excursions with a healthy flush and with a hearty appetite.

"I've got to admit, Phipps, old horse, that there's something in this dashed football stuff after all," he said genially. "I mean to say, it makes a chappie feel somewhat priceless. The old muscles are getting more and more like whipcord every day."

"Have you seen the young lady recently, sir?"

"Not a glimpse!" replied Archie, becoming overcast. "I can't help thinking, old blossom, that the damsel is avoiding me. I mean to say, a foul and ghastly thought, what? Absolutely avoiding the young master, Phipps!"

"It may only be temporary, sir."

"Let us hope so," said Archie. "I mean to say, only this morning I caught sight of her in the middle distance and I'm pretty sure that she caught sight of me. But the dear girl vanished into the void. Streaked off like the dickens, Phipps. What's a chappie to do?" he added plaintively. "I'm trying my hardest."

"I imagine that Miss Marjorie is waiting until you have done something noteworthy," said Phipps wisely. "Perhaps you will soon have a chance in a game, Master Archie."

"Oh, rather!" said the elegant junior, his eyes gleaming. "I was talking to Nipper to-day, and the old thing absolutely hinted that I might be wanted on Wednesday to play for the Remove against the Fourth."

"Splendid, sir! If you do well in that game, you'll probably be selected to play for your House," said Phipps. "And later on you might even play for the School. By the way, sir, there is a letter for you."

"Good egg! Not to say, what-ho!" exclaimed Archie, nodding. "Shekels from the pater, Phipps. A tenner, at least. We need new footer boots, shorts, jerseys, and so forth. Kindly open the dashed missive, Phipps."

He sat down contentedly, and Phipps opened the letter.

"There is no money here, sir," reported the valet gently.

"No money? Rubbish, Phipps!" said Archie. "What priceless drivel! Look inside the envelope—"

"The letter is not from Colonel Glenthorne, sir."

"What? Not from Colonel Glenthorne?" repeated Archie, startled. "Good gad! I get your meaning, Phipps. The letter, you mean, is not from the pater? Then who's it from?"

"I fancy it is from your Aunt Cristabel, sir," said Phipps.

Archie leapt out of his chair.

"Aunt Cristabel!" he croaked. "Odds frights and calamities! Give the dashed thing to me, Phipps! Whenever Aunt Cristabel writes to me, it means trouble. A dear old soul, Phipps, but rather inclined to run off the mark at times."

He started reading the letter and a hollow moan escaped him.

"Phipps!" he said hoarsely. "Assistance, dash you! Aunt Cristabel is absolutely coming to St. Frank's!"

"There is no need for alarm, sir."

"To-morrow, Phipps!" moaned Archie. "Can't something be done? What about it, you blighter? Send some télégrams! Do anything you like, but prevent Aunt Cristabel from coming!"

"As far as I can remember, sir, your Aunt Cristabel is a kindly, gentle soul," said Phipps firmly.

"That's just it—she's too kindly and gentle, Phipps!" retorted Archie. "Aunt Cristabel is the one who used to dandle me on her knee. Good gad! Imagine it, Phipps. Try to think of the young master being dandled!"

"I would prefer to forget it, sir," said Phipps coldly.

"Perhaps it's just as well," said Archie. "But there you are, old scream. Strangely enough, Aunt Cristabel regards me as her favourite nephew. And when she comes to St. Frank's she hovers round like a guardian angel. A delightful soul, but one who positively makes me go all hot and bothered."

"You fear that she will disturb your present activities, sir?"

"Disturb them?" repeated Archie, rising to his feet, and pacing restlessly up and down. "Kindly hand me a dictionary, Phipps! I require all sorts of words that I can't think of! Aunt Cristabel will not merely disturb the young master's football career, but shove the kybosh on it with no uncertain hand. There is no other person in the world, Phipps, so adept at throwing a spanner into the works!"

"I am convinced that you are unduly pessimistic, sir."

"Then the sooner you unconvince yourself, the better, dash you," said Archie coldly. "D'you think I don't know my Aunt Cristabel? If I were a sporty chap, Phipps, I'd bet you a level fiver that she brings me a pair of bed-socks! She's one of those gentle ladies who looks like a chapter out of the dim ages of the past. She'll probably regard football as a fiendish type of modern warfare."

CHAPTER 4.

Archie's Dilemma!

PHIPPS came into Study E with that noiselessness for which he was famed. One moment he was not there, the next moment he was. Archie Glenthorne, who was resting on the lounge, gazing into nothingness, knew nothing of the valet's presence until he heard a discreet cough.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated, with a start. "What a fright you gave me, Phipps! You're always materialising out of the thin air, dash you."

It was the next day, and lessons were over. Rather to Nipper's surprise, Archie had called off practice that afternoon; but as he had been so assiduous of late, the Junior skipper made no objection. Perhaps it would be all the better for Archie to ease down a bit. Over-training was worse than under-training.

"Miss Harrington-Douglas is here, sir," said Phipps gently.

Archie stared.

"And who, may I ask, is Miss Harrington-Douglas?" he said. "I wish you wouldn't come here— Good gad! I see what you mean, Phipps! Miss Cristabel Harrington-Douglas, what? Dash it, I'd forgotten the lady's name."

He pulled himself together. Aunt Cristabel had always been "Aunt Cristabel" to him. Fortunately, he was ready for the ordeal; he had dressed himself with unusual elegance, and was a credit to Phipps from tip to toe.

"Well?" he went on. "What about it, Phipps? Why don't you show the old dear in?"

"At the moment, sir, she is with your Housemaster, Mr. Wilkes," replied Phipps. "Mr. Wilkes met her when her car pulled up, and I believe he has taken her indoors to introduce her to Mrs. Wilkes."

Archie groaned.

"More suspense, laddie," he said dismally. "And perhaps old Wilkey will give the dashed game away. About my playing footer, you know. What a frightful thought!"

He sighed despondently. His one great hope was that he would be able to get rid of Aunt Cristabel after an hour or so. There really wasn't any need for her to know about his football at all. Why disturb the dear soul? He would be very chatty with her, break bread and so forth, and then see her off again. She wouldn't want to remain later than six o'clock.

He was still thinking deeply when Aunt Cristabel sailed in.

"My dear Archie," she said, beaming. "My dear, dear boy! How glad I am to see you! And how well you are looking!"

He sprang to his feet with so much alacrity that the good lady was somewhat startled. Such energy was not usual in him. Aunt Cristabel was a frail-looking, middle-aged lady with a very gentle expression. Although an "old maid," she had a very motherly way.

It was this motherliness of which Archie was so afraid. He had always been a slacker, but never a molly-codde, and the way in which Aunt Cristabel made intimate inquiries on such subjects as bed-socks and underclothing gave him a pain. On one famous occasion she had even advised him to wear a chest-protector.

"Well, I'm hoping to be here for several days," she announced, as she settled herself on the lounge and patted Archie on the knee. "Isn't that splendid, dear boy? Mr. Wilkes

has very kindly arranged— Is something the matter, Archie?"

Archie had made a queer noise in his throat, as though somebody had tried to strangle him.

"Absolutely not!" he said faintly. "I—I was just thinking how priceless it will be for you to be here, Aunt Cristabel. What-ho! It'll give you a chance to see the end of the cricket season, and the beginning of the footer, as it were. Couldn't have come at a better time, what? A somewhat important week, I mean."

A frown crossed the good lady's gentle face.

"I am looking forward very interestedly to seeing the cricket match," she replied. "Cricket is a very nice game—although, of course, it is not without its dangers. I do wish they would use a soft ball."

Archie nearly choked again.

"Do you play cricket, Archie?" demanded Aunt Cristabel suddenly.

"Not with a soft ball," replied Archie, with an effort. "That is to say, not at all. At least, very little."

"I am glad to hear it," said the lady. "One can so easily get hurt with such a nasty hard ball being used. I am glad, too, that you are not one of these football maniacs. I am sorry to use such a strong expression, but there is no other. Boys who can be so abandoned—so insane—as to play that awful game are little better than hooligans. I am astonished that a fine school like St. Frank's should permit football to be played."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie feebly. "But, of course, we have Soccer at St. Frank's, dear old thing. I mean, Soccer isn't half so dashed violent as Rugger—"

"Football is football, and it doesn't matter what peculiar name it is called by," broke in Aunt Cristabel coldly. "I do not understand these strange terms. You must always keep away from such games, my dear Archie."

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Indeed, I should not even like to think of your witnessing them."

"Well, you see, the fact is——"

"And now we will talk about your health," said his aunt, regarding him closely. "I am glad to see that you are looking very robust."

"Oh, rather! Football, you see, is a priceless——"

"We have finished with football!" interrupted Aunt Cristabel firmly. "The fact that you don't play it is sufficiently gratifying. I would prefer not to mention that terrible game again."

"But, dash it, look here——"

Archie despaired of telling her the dread news. Every time he tried to trot it out, she changed the subject. Then Phipps brought tea in, and the situation was relieved. By the time the meal was over, Archie and his aunt were perfectly happy. The fatal subject had been forgotten. But only temporarily. At the back of Archie's mind was the horrifying thought that his aunt was to remain at St. Frank's for three or four days.

AFTER tea he took her outside to show her how St. Frank's had risen from the ashes of the almost-forgotten fire.

Miss Harrington-Douglas hadn't been to St. Frank's since the rebuilding, and she was greatly interested.

It was unfortunate that they should run full-tilt into a group of Removites who had just come off Little Side. They were in their footer togs, and they were showing many signs of hard practice.

"Scandalous!" murmured Aunt Cristabel, with some heat.

Nipper and Handforth and K. K. were in the fore-front, and they politely raised their hats. Archie, feeling it was up to him to introduce the juniors to his aunt, valiantly did the honours, his heart fluttering somewhat during the process.

"You couldn't have come at a better time, Miss Harrington-Douglas," said Nipper enthusiastically. "You'll be able to see two important cricket matches this week—and if you stay until Saturday, you'll see the opening of the footer season. The First Eleven is playing Redcliffe, and the Junior Eleven has a match against Bannington Grammar School."

"I shall make a point of leaving before Saturday," said Miss Cristabel promptly.

"Oh, you mustn't do that!" put in Handforth. "Don't you want to see Archie on the field? I don't think he'll be selected for the Junior Eleven, but there's a House match, too, and if he keeps up his present form he's certain to play."

Archie groaned. His frantic signals to Handforth had been completely ignored.

"Archie?" repeated Aunt Cristabel, with a start. "What is this I hear? Are you telling me that Archie is playing?"

"Why, yes, ma'am," replied Handforth, in surprise.

"Playing?" breathed the lady. "Do you mean that he is playing—football?"

"What of it?" asked Handforth, staring. "Football isn't wicked, ma'am! You speak as though Archie were going to play half-penny nap!"

Aunt Cristabel turned upon her nephew with a pivot-like movement. All the gentleness had gone out of her face. Her expression was one of mild horror.

"Archie!" she said, in a suppressed voice. "Is this true? Have you taken up this—this dreadful game?"

"Good gad! I—I—— Well, you see——"

"You wretched boy!" thundered his aunt. "I've heard enough! I can well understand that you were afraid to tell me. I am grievously shocked, and I shall make it my business to see your Housemaster about this."

"Oh, cheese it, ma'am," said Nipper earnestly. "Archie didn't want to play footer this season, but we've more or less forced him into it. And it's all for his own good. He's coming along splendidly. Football's the finest game under the sun—for the winter."

"Football is a rough, cruel, dangerous orgy!" snapped Aunt Cristabel angrily. "I refuse to let my nephew play."

"Dash it all, Aunt Cristabel, have a heart!" urged Archie. "I mean, be yourself. That is to say, why not give the good old game a chance? As man to man, have you ever seen a game of football?"

"Never! And never shall I see one!"

"Isn't that unfair, dear old thing?" asked Archie anxiously. "I mean, for example, you wouldn't run a girl down because you disliked the colour of her silk stockings, would you?"

"I certainly should!" retorted Aunt Cristabel.

"Eh?"

"I disapprove of silk stockings, young man!"

"Oh, well, perhaps that's wide of the good old mark," said Archie hastily. "But what about justice? What about a spot of tolerance, old dear? Try before you buy, what? I mean, why not come along to Little Side and have a taster? Watch the good old stalwarts absolutely on the job?"

"That's a good idea!" said Nipper, nodding. "The Fourth-Formers are in the middle of a practice game, and it's a good chance. Be a sport, Miss Harrington-Douglas! It's only fair to have a look at the game, isn't it?"

"Looking at the game would only add to my rooted convictions regarding its hooliganism," said Aunt Cristabel. "I have no desire to see a number of unfortunate boys grievously injuring themselves on the field of—er—battle."

The juniors burst out laughing.

"That only proves what wrong ideas you've got, ma'am," said Nipper. "Give Archie a chance! We'll take you to Little Side, and if you don't like the game we'll bring you

away again within a couple of minutes. How's that?"

Miss Cristabel hesitated.

"I see enough of this appalling game when I visit the cinema," she said, shuddering. "Not once, but a dozen times, have I been compelled to leave the building in disgust—and the cinema is one of my favourite recreations. Men come upon the screen dressed like warriors in armour—chest pads, helmets, and goodness knows what else! They hurl themselves at one another with the fearful abandonment of cannibal savages. Do you want me to see boys doing the same thing?"

Nipper took a deep breath.

"You're talking about American football," he said.

"Is there a difference?"

"Of course there is," replied Nipper.

"Come along and see for yourself, Aunt Cristabel!" urged Archie gently.

SOMEHOW, they managed to persuade her to visit Little Side—serenely confident that five minutes by the ropes would convert her. It was extremely unfortunate that Boots and Christine should both attempt to head the ball at the same moment—and at the very moment, moreover, that Miss Cristabel arrived.

Crack!

The sound of their heads coming together was plainly audible. Somebody blew the whistle—Trotwood of the Remove was the referee—and Boots and Christine collapsed on the turf.

"Good gad!" breathed Archie in a hollow voice.

Boots and Christine were surrounded by a mob of other players and spectators, and after a moment they were dragged off the field. The collision had been a particularly violent one, and both juniors were still half dazed. The whistle blew, and the game continued.

"And this," said Miss Cristabel, with compressed lips, "is not a rough game!"

Her voice, as Archie said afterwards, was like a blast from the Arctic. It seemed to freeze the marrow in his bones.

"They both tried to head the ball together, ma'am," said Nipper quickly. "Things like that don't often happen—"

He broke off as Aunt Cristabel closed her eyes in silent horror. The goalie had just made a desperate dive in order to save a certain goal. He misjudged his distance, slithered, and one of the opposing forwards accidentally kicked him in the leg. The goalie rolled over, moaning.

Again the whistle blew, and again the game was stopped.

"Disgusting!" panted Aunt Cristabel. "Disgraceful! I knew it all the time! A rough, dangerous exhibition of ruffianism! I never want to see football again—and I don't want to hear another word on the subject!"

With gleaming eyes, she turned on her heel, and strode off.

"And that," breathed Archie Glenthorne, "is that!"

CHAPTER 5.

Worse Than Ever!

IT was a pity that Miss Cristabel Harrington-Douglas went off so hurriedly, and it was a pity that she should have witnessed such an unusual series of mishaps. Had she remained for two minutes longer she would have seen Boots and Christine running on the field again, as well and as energetic as ever; she would have seen the goalie pick himself up, give himself a shake, and growl to all and sundry that there was nothing the matter with him.

"Young man, you will come with me," said Miss Cristabel sternly.

She had grasped Archie by the arm, and, like a lamb to the slaughter, she led him indoors. Nipper and Handforth—and K.K., had tried their hardest to explain the unhappy incidents away, but she had refused to listen. As the boys themselves had said, seeing was believing.

"Now, Archie, I am going to talk to you very seriously," said the lady, when they reached his study. "It was your own wish that I should see that game, and I saw! I saw more than enough!"

"Just one of those frightful twists of fate that are always cropping up in this life," said Archie bitterly. "I mean, you could see ten games right through, and there wouldn't be a single chappie hurt. You go to Little Side for two minutes, and you see three dashed casualties. I mean, it's tragic!"

"You are quite right," agreed his aunt. "It certainly is tragic! As I have always said, football is a brutal game. What is more, Archie, I forbid you to play it. I want you to understand that thoroughly. I absolutely forbid you to play it!"

"But, look here, old thing—"

"You heard what I said, Archie?"

"Oh, rather! The good old ears are fully extended," said Archie. "But I do wish you'd listen, Aunt Cristabel. I've promised to—"

"Never mind what you have promised! I insist that you shall give up football at once!" said his aunt. "Mercifully, I have arrived in time—before they have broken your legs or cracked your skull."

Archie prayed for patience. Aunt Cristabel was a frightfully good old soul, but she really was trying. He was in an awful fix, too. He was really getting a liking for football now, and he wanted to keep on playing. Then there was Marjorie. If he obeyed his aunt, and threw up footer, good old Marjorie would get the huff. Worse than that, she would cut him dead. She would never speak to him again.

The fighting blood of the Glenthornes surged up within him. He pulled himself together. Dash it, he wasn't going to let



At the unearthly hour of 5.30 a.m. Phipps dragged Archie Glenthorpe out of bed and made him stagger forth on a five-mile trot.

his Aunt Cristabel rule him like this! She wasn't even a Glenthorpe! Who was she to forbid him to play? Just one of his mother's sisters. It wasn't likely that he was going to let her ride rough-shod over him.

"Aunt Cristabel," he said firmly, "I am frightfully sorry, but I'm going to play football this term."

"Archie, you're not!"

"In this, old dear, I'm as firm as a rock," went on Archie, jamming his monocle into his eye and surveying her with stern determination. "Gibraltar, I may say, is a chunk of blanc-mange compared with me at this moment! Kindly remember that, dear old scream. I am playing football this term, whether you approve or disapprove. I hate to oppose you, but there's absolutely nothing else for it."

"Archie!" ejaculated Aunt Cristabel, aghast.

"A bit of a shock, what?" said Archie, drawing himself up. "But Archibald can be dashed strong when he likes, let me tell you! It's not defiance or disrespect, old dear, but right is right. It's about time somebody removed this bee from your bonnet. Footer is a great game and I'm all for it."

"Archie!" gasped his aunt again.

"I'm for it one hundred per cent—and then some!" continued Archie firmly. "Whoopee! Not to say, and how! Pick the bones out of that, auntie! I'm blowed if I'm going to let you diddle me out of Marjorie's friendship!"

"Marjorie?" asked Aunt Cristabel with a start. "Who's Marjorie?"

"It doesn't matter," replied Archie, mentally kicking himself for bringing the girl's name into the argument. "As a matter of fact, she's one of my chums, and if I don't play football she'll give me the gate, not to say the bird."

"Give you the bird?" repeated his aunt, bewildered.

"One of those frightful American expressions," explained Archie hastily. "That's the worst of these dashed films!"

Aunt Cristabel sat up very straight.

"So you are defying me, and you are playing football, merely because some stupid girl has urged you to do so," she said coldly. "Now I begin to understand! My poor boy, you are the victim of a designing young minx!"

"Here, I say!" protested Archie, with spirit. "Isn't that a bit blue round the

edges? I mean to say, minx? Stupid! Before you leave St. Frank's, Aunt Cristabel, I'll introduce you to Marjorie, and you'll know how jolly wrong you are. In any case, you're absolutely off the rails. I like football. I'll admit that Marjorie egged me on, and all that, but now that I've been egged on I've come out of my shell. I regard football as a perfectly priceless game."

Aunt Cristabel did not appear to be listening. She sat there with her mouth set in a straight line. To her credit, it must be recorded that she had Archie's well-being at heart. She loved her nephew, and she felt, in this crisis, that it was her duty to do something drastic.

"I am sorry that you are so wilful, dear boy," she said gently. "Well, if you are so set upon football, I will say no more."

"I say! That's frightfully sporting——"

"Wait!" broke in his aunt coldly. "I have always regarded you, Archie, as an exceptional boy. You are different from others. You like your comforts, your luxuries; you don't care for the usual rough-and-tumbles—the scrimmages which other schoolboys thrive upon."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I'm all for the quiet life."

"You mean, you have been until now," said Aunt Cristabel. "But since you have made up your mind to play football it is apparent that you no longer desire that quiet life. This being so, you will naturally wish to dispense with the services of your valet!"

Archie jumped into the air as though he had been stung by a bee.

"Odds thunderbolts and earthquakes!" he gasped. "Dispense with old Phipps? Good gad! What a ghastly thought!"

"Really?" said his aunt calmly. "You seem quite perturbed, Archie. But since you have adopted this new mode of life, you will soon learn to fend for yourself and to do without Phipps."

"Have a heart, old dear——"

"Before I leave St. Frank's I shall see your headmaster and place the facts before him," continued Aunt Cristabel. "I believe there is some working arrangement by which Phipps valets for you in his spare time? He is really the headmaster's butler. From now onwards he will devote the whole of his time to his other task."

"But he isn't!" said Archie frantically. "That frightful arrangement was too dashed unsatisfactory. Phipps is my valet and nothing else now. There's a new butler in the Head's house."

"Worse and worse!" said his aunt. "It is disgraceful that a boy should have a man constantly at his beck and call. I shall take Phipps away, Archie."

"But you have no authority——"

"I am your aunt!" broke in the lady angrily. "If I want to take Phipps away, I shall take Phipps away. Your father, I am certain, will entirely approve of my action, and will give it his support."

Archie groaned. The shock of this catastrophe had left him speechless.

"If, however, you decide to drop this absurd football playing, I shall naturally leave Phipps here," continued his aunt, rising to her feet. "And there, Archie, we will leave the subject. Think it over very carefully."

THE more Archie thought it over, the greater became his despair. His aunt's ultimatum had taken every ounce of stuffing out of him. He had fairly thrilled at the thought of defying her. Never had he imagined that she would retaliate so drastically. He rang for Phipps, and Phipps found him glassy-eyed.

"What's to be done, old genius?" he asked, after he had explained the situation. "The old grey matter refuses to wobble, Phipps. Kindly dash forward with all sorts of suggestions."

"I am afraid the situation is serious, sir," said Phipps, shaking his head.

"Serious? It's murky to the extreme."

"Your aunt's threat to remove me from your service must be taken in earnest," continued Phipps. "For you must remember, Master Archie, that your father has always been more or less opposed to the arrangement."

"Yes, dash it, but he hasn't forbidden it, dash you!"

"Colonel Glenthorne is a kindly man, and he has indulged you, sir," said Phipps. "But you can be quite sure that when your aunt uses her influence——"

"Why not use plain English, you blighter?" groaned Archie dismally. "What you mean to say is that Aunt Cristabel will get her way, what? She'll jaw the good old pater, and you'll get hoofed out. What am I going to do without you, Phipps? Think, old cherub! Shove yourself into top gear and open up the throttle!"

"There are two alternatives, sir," said Phipps. "If you play football you lose me; if you don't play football you lose Miss Marjorie."

"Two people I absolutely can't do without!" exclaimed Archie frantically. "Odds fixes and puzzles! What can we do, laddie? This is the worst dashed fix the young master has ever been in! I mean to say, the skies are grey in both directions! Whichever course I choose, I'm sunk!"

"Unless——"

"Unless what?" asked Archie, as Phipps paused. "Good gad, Phipps, you don't mean to say that you've thought of something!"

"There is the possibility of a compromise, sir."

"A which?"

"A compromise, sir," said Phipps calmly.

"And what, blight you, is that?" asked Archie. "Is this the moment, Phipps, for talking in riddles?"

"I am merely trying to convey, sir, that the employment of a little strategy might satisfy both your aunt and Miss Marjorie," explained Phipps. "In that way you would

tide over this trying period until the good lady departs from St. Frank's."

Hope glowed in Archie's eyes.

"Proceed, old lad!" he said tensely. "Strategy! That's the dashed stuff to give them! You were always a bit of a cough-drop when it came to strategy, weren't you?"

Phipps, calm and imperturbable, trotted out his plan, and the young master discovered that life, after all, was worth living.

CHAPTER 6.

Archie, the Invalid!

THE next morning Archie came out of his dormitory with a serene smile on his face, and with a gleam in his eyes.

He was immaculate, as usual. The crease in his trousers was a joy; the set of his tie was perfection; the gloss of his shoes was something to marvel at.

"What-ho! Greetings, and all that sort of thing!" he said cheerily, as he ran into Nipper and a few others. "How goes it, old stalwarts?"

"What's happened, Archie?" asked Nipper, looking at him closely.

"Nothing—yet," replied Archie. "That is to say, what? Why should you assume, dear old chappie, that something has happened?"

"I rather thought that you were in trouble with your Aunt Cristabel," replied Nipper. "We went out for early practice this morning, but we decided it was better not to give you a call."

"Dashed considerate of you, old bean!"

"After what happened yesterday, we thought it safer," put in Handforth, with a grin. "We didn't want your giddy aunt to come along and lam into us for encouraging her poor helpless little nephew to play such a rough game as footer. Oh, these aunts! There's never any telling what they'll do."

"Have you wangled her in any way?" asked Nipper curiously.

"Not yet, laddie—but I have hopes."

"You'll be a marvel if you get out of this fix," continued Nipper. "Poor old Archie! Marjorie will cut you dead if you drop football, won't she?"

"Dead isn't the word," replied Archie, with a shudder. "If I drop football my existence ceases as far as she is concerned. In her life I shall be just about as important as a brace-button."

Nipper grinned sympathetically.

"Poor old Archie! As bad as that, is it?"

"Absolutely, old dear," said Archie gravely. "And if I don't drop football, I lose Phipps!"

And he told them of his aunt's ultimatum.

"Phew! That's hard lines!" said Handforth. "What the dickens are you going to do about it? You'd be lost without Phipps, of course. How would you get dressed in the morning? How would you clean out your

study? Who would restore the gloss to your toppers after the chaps had knocked them off?"

"Kindly refrain from sending cold shivers up and down the old spine," said Archie, squirming. "Phipps has the matter in hand. And I can assure you that when Phipps has a thing in hand, that thing is as good as done! Absolutely!"

He nodded and walked on, leaving the other juniors chuckling. It was apparent to them that Phipps, as usual, had come to the rescue.

Crash! Thud! Bang!

Ominous sounds proceeded from the direction of the stairs, and Nipper and Handforth and the others pulled up short and glanced round with startled expressions.

"What the dickens was that?" asked McClure.

"Help! S.O.S.!" came a long, moaning wail from the stairs.

"At a rough guess, I should say that Archie has fallen downstairs," said Handforth.

They dashed along the corridor, reached the head of the stairs, and gazed down. Sure enough, Archie Glenthorne had met with disaster. He sprawled in the lobby, at the foot of the stairs. He was lying quite still, one leg twisted beneath him, one arm doubled. He was moaning softly. Kirby Keeble Parkington had just run in from the Triangle with Deeks and Goffin. Thus two parties of helpers converged upon Archie at the same moment.

"Hurt much, old man?" asked K.K. concernedly.

Archie slowly opened his eyes.

"Kindly fetch the good old coffin," he murmured. "I doubt if I shall live another two minutes."

"I was afraid of it," said K.K. "The poor ass has broken his neck!"

Archie sat up in dismay.

"What priceless rot!" he protested. "It's my dashed ankle— Oh! Whooo! Good gad! Not that ankle, dash you, but the other one!"

"It's lucky you're not hurt more, Archie," said Nipper, as he helped. "By the sound of it, you fell downstairs from top to bottom. Sure there are no bones broken?"

"It's my dashed ankle," groaned Archie feebly.

"What about your footer?" put in Handforth. "How do you suppose you're going to keep up your footer if you've got a sprained ankle? It might be weeks before you can walk again—or even months!"

K.K. gave him an appreciative look.

"It's so nice to have such a comforting soul round you when you're in pain," he said sarcastically. "Handy, sweetheart, if you can't do any better than that why not freeze up?"

"Look here, you Red-Hot ass—"

"I say! Laddies—laddies!" came an appeal from Archie. "Wouldn't it be a somewhat juicy idea to cease this wrangling

over my tortured body, and to carry me to the good old study?"

"Come on—all together!" said Nipper briskly. "I think I understand, Archie."

Archie started.

"Eh?" he gasped. "You don't absolutely mean——"

"Never mind," said Nipper. "Don't worry, old man."

Archie was carried gently to Study E, and by the time Phipps arrived he had been made as comfortable as possible on the lounge. Nipper, who had felt that supposedly sprained ankle, had a pretty good idea of the general scheme; but he said nothing to the others. They all cleared off, leaving Archie and Phipps alone.

"Good!" said Archie, after the door had closed. "I don't know whether you were in the offing or not, Phipps, but I do trust that you heard the young master's howls for help. Personally, I thought they were quite ripe."

"I heard all, sir," replied Phipps calmly. "The thuds were particularly effective. You utilised the hammer, I take it? I trust, Master Archie, that you made quite sure that you were alone?"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, sitting up. "Bo good enough, Phipps, to make the young master presentable. Falling downstairs, after all, is a frightfully strenuous business. And let me tell you that I did fall downstairs. In my efforts to make the dashed thing realistic, I tripped and came an awful cropper."

"But you did not actually hurt yourself, sir?"

"Nothing to speak of," replied Archie serenely. "And now, laddie, we have the situation well in hand, what? Aunt Cristabel will be pleased, and I can safely promise her that I won't play; and dear old Marjorie, bless her eyelashes, will lavish her sympathy upon me, and won't even hear of my attempting to play the good old footer."

"I think we can safely say, Master Archie, that everything will be all right," declared Phipps. "Before the end of the week your aunt will have gone, and the chief danger will be over."

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Archie. "You mean the danger of losing you, old cheese?"

As soon as she trickles away I can make a rapid recovery, and Marjorie will be pleased, and the sun will once again shine. I might inform you, Phipps, that some of the chappies are distinctly 'on.' Nipper, I'm certain, has twigged."

"Which is just as well, perhaps," said Phipps. "You can be quite sure that the young gentlemen will do all in their power to help you."

IT wasn't all honey for Archie, as he soon found.

A sprained ankle is bad enough at the best of times; but a spoof sprain is even worse. One does not suffer the pain, but one is certainly hard put to it to keep the thing up. Archie, rather to his dismay, found that his troubles were only just starting. He had had an idea that after Phipps had swathed his ankle in bandages he would be able to hobble about and carry on as usual. It was rather necessary for him to be out and about, for he wanted to trot along and see Marjorie as soon as possible. But Phipps was firm.

"It will be inadvisable, sir, for you to walk without crutches—or, at least, sticks," said the valet. "You do not wish to make any blunder, as you might conceivably do if you were merely called upon to limp."

"But, dash it, I could keep it up!" protested Archie.

"For a time, yes," agreed Phipps. "But it is so easy to forget a pain that is not really there, sir. And do not overlook the fact that Miss Marjorie is a shrewd, quick-witted young lady."

"Oh, rather! You can't fool Marjorie!" declared Archie stoutly. "At least, it isn't easy. I hope we shall be able to, though. Dash it all, Phipps, I'm wondering, don't you know. Absolutely wondering."

"Indeed, sir?"

"In fact, Phipps, I'm uneasy."

"On what score, sir?"

"Well, is this quite playing the game?" asked Archie anxiously. "I mean, on Marjorie? I'm game to spoof anybody, of course, but I shall feel frightfully mean when the dear girl sympathises with me."

"Don't let that point worry you," Master Archie," said Phipps. "A word of explanation to Miss Marjorie, afterwards, will be sufficient. It is too risky to explain to her now; you must wait until your aunt has gone."

So Archie, much to his consternation, was compelled to hobble in to breakfast with his left foot swathed in bandages, and using the crutches which Phipps had thoughtfully provided.

Other unexpected considerations arose, too. First of all, Mr. Crowell made close inquiries when Archie seated himself at the Remove table. Archie was glad when some of the other fellows came to his rescue. He hated the thought that he might be called upon to tell some whoppers.

IF YOU'RE AT THE SEASIDE

keep your copy of the NELSON LEE prominently displayed. Representatives of the Old Paper are visiting all the principal seaside resorts, and if they see that you are a reader you will

RECEIVE A SPLENDID FREE GIFT!

"It's nothing much, sir," said Handforth. "Archie only fell downstairs."

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Crowell tartly. "Many of you boys, I know, are accustomed to falling downstairs. I sometimes believe that you do it deliberately."

Archie, who was sipping his coffee, nearly choked himself.

"He sprained his ankle a bit, sir," went on Handforth.

"By the look of him, one might imagine that he had broken his entire leg," said the Form-master. "Crutches, indeed! Glenthorne, have you reported to the doctor?"

"No, sir," said Archie hastily. "Absolutely not. You see, Phipps rallied round with lotions and bandages and things, and put in a spot of good work."

"Phipps, however, is not a doctor," said Mr. Crowell. "After breakfast, Glenthorne, I will refer to this subject again."

And breakfast, for Archie, was ruined. Fortunately, Mr. Crowell referred the matter to the Housemaster, and left it there. So it was Mr. Wilkes who carried on. He came upon Archie as the latter was hobbling down the corridor away from the dining hall.

"This is unfortunate, old man," said Mr. Wilkes. "I understand that you haven't reported to the doctor?"

"Dash it, sir, a chappie doesn't like to make a fuss over nothing," said Archie, speaking the literal truth. "What, I mean, is a sprain? Phipps has done everything necessary."

"Nevertheless, I think you should go into the sanatorium," said Mr. Wilkes. "I'm awfully sorry about this, old chap. I was looking forward to seeing you play in the next House match. Rough luck, Archie!"

"Not so rough as it seems, sir, perhaps," said Archie vaguely. "I mean, the old spat-holder might recover quite suddenly, you know. Phipps thinks so, anyway. It wouldn't surprise me in the least to find his words come true as soon as that awful aunt of mine—I mean, as soon as Aunt Cristabel staggers home."

Mr. Wilkes looked at him hard.

"I see," he said slowly. "So you really don't want to go into the sanatorium, Archie? You don't even want to report to the doctor? Oh, well, perhaps you are right. What is there in a trifling sprain?"

Mr. Wilkes nodded, chuckled, and walked away.

"Good gad!" breathed Archie. "I believe the blighter suspects!"

But Archie was comforted, all the same. Mr. Wilkes was a sportsman.

AFTER morning lessons Archie was anxious to take a walk abroad. He didn't actually want to go to the Moor View School—that would have been too obvious—but if he hovered about in the lane, he might come across Marjorie "accidentally."

"No, sir, you cannot go out on crutches," said Phipps firmly.

"Then what am I to do, dash you?" asked Archie. "You say I mustn't appear without crutches, and now you say—"

"I have a bath-chair ready, Master Archie," interrupted Phipps.

"Good gad! A—which?"

"A bath-chair, sir," repeated Phipps imperturbably. "It will look so much better—particularly if you happen to come across the young lady."

"I say, what a frightfully brainy idea," said Archie. "Phipps, laddie, kindly go to the top of the class! I mean, riding forth in a bath-chair, what? I must say it sounds pretty succulent. And you, I take it, will wangle the good old contrivance?"

Phipps shook his head; there was a limit.

"Perhaps I was at fault, sir, in describing the vehicle as a bath-chair," he said. "It is really one of those wheeled chairs which is operated by the patient himself."

"Not so good," said Archie coldly. "In fact, distinctly dud."

"You do not want to give the impression, sir, that you are an invalid," explained Phipps. "A sprained ankle does not necessarily render one ill. I consider that it would be better, from every point of view, for you to operate your own chair. Please remember, Master Archie, that you still desire Miss Marjorie to know that you are active and energetic."

"Odds brainwaves and wheezes! That's quite right, old bean," said Archie. "The dear girl might smell a rat, so to speak, if I put it on too thick, what? Dash it, Phipps, you're always right! Absolutely always!"

And so Archie sallied forth, ten minutes later, in his wheeled chair. It was of that type which has hand-rims round the wheels; and Archie found, to his relief, that it could be propelled quite easily.

He was soon surrounded by a crowd in the Triangle. Removites swarmed round him, offering their sympathy. Buster Boots & Co., of the Fourth, came over and added their own condolences. Then Aunt Cristabel appeared.

Archie groaned. He hadn't seen her this morning yet, and he had dreaded the meeting. He guessed that the good lady would be very perturbed about his "injury," and that she would want to hover over him like a ministering angel. He dreaded the meeting more than ever now. The thought of a touching scene before these juniors made him shudder. Valiantly he braced himself for the ordeal.

Aunt Cristabel bustled up. Archie looked at her, and then closed his eyes in horror. It was going to be worse than he had expected. For Aunt Cristabel had come complete with a hot-water bottle—one of the rubber variety!

"My poor dear boy, I am terribly sorry to hear of your awful accident. Mr. Wilkes

told me that you had been injured, but he advised me not to disturb you until after lessons. You're a brave little boy to attend lessons at all. How is your poor ankle? There, you must have this hot-water bottle on your chest."

Carefully Aunt Cristabel deposited it on Archie's stomach, while a titter of laughter arose from the watching juniors.

"Really, old dear, is this necessary?" gurgled Archie, turning as red as a beetroot. "I mean to say, it's summer and all that sort of thing——"

"No. You must not touch it!" broke in Aunt Cristabel, as Archie made to remove the offending hot-water bottle. "A serious injury like yours undermines the constitution, and this will save you from catching cold. And now you must let me wheel you around for a little while. My poor boy, how did you come to hurt yourself——"

And Aunt Cristabel rambled on, the while she pushed Archie round the Triangle, followed by the juniors who were thoroughly enjoying the situation. The only one who didn't enjoy it was Archie himself.

To him the whole affair was like some hideous nightmare. However, a slight relief came when, after a few minutes, the Removites and Fourth-Formers made themselves scarce. At first their chipping had passed unheeded by Archie's aunt. She was too concerned over her "poor little nephew's

injury." Then, as though becoming aware of their presence for the first time, she bestowed a baleful glare upon the juniors, whereat they beat a hasty retreat. Archie breathed a sigh of relief. The worst was over now, he reflected. Unhappily, the worst wasn't over—but that comes later.

"I cannot help thinking that your injury was an act of Providence," remarked Aunt Cristabel, as she continued wheeling Archie round the school buildings. "It is a punishment to you, Archie, for your wilfulness. I hope you understand what I mean. Football is now impossible—notwithstanding your absurd determination."

Archie sighed.

"It seems, dear old thing, that you're going to get your way," he said sadly.

"I sympathise with you in your trouble, but I am nevertheless glad that you have been brought to your senses," said Miss Cristabel. "We must see how your ankle goes on. If it gets worse, I shall make arrangements to stay here over next week."

"Wha-a-at?" gurgled Archie. "I—I mean, that's awfully priceless of you, auntie! But, dash it, you needn't put yourself out like that. I am sure the good old ankle will cause no real trouble, and you can be absolutely certain that I shan't play football while my foot is in a sling."

"You will not play it afterwards, either," said Aunt Cristabel firmly. "I think I have



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know of a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

A SLIGHT MISTAKE!

At an evening party a new game was suggested. The guests were each to make the most hideous grimaces possible, and the prize was to be awarded to the ugliest effort. After a long scrutiny the judge decided that a lady seated in the corner away from the others was the winner.

"But I'm not playing!" she replied indignantly.

(*J. Cowperthwaite, 76, Polwarth Terrace, Edinburgh, has been awarded a handsome watch.*)

TRUTH WILL OUT!

Teacher: "When I stand on my head my head goes into it."

Class (in unison): "Yes, sir."

Teacher: "Then tell me why it doesn't rush into my feet when I'm standing up?"

Class (in unison): "Because your feet ain't empty, sir."

(*W. Blower, 27, The Green, Dormanston Redcar, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

TOO DEAR!

Scot: "How much do ye charge for the ferry?"

Ferryman: "A halfpenny, sir."

Scot: "But hae ye no excursions?"

(*G. Hiam, 5, Auckland Avenue, Newland, Hull, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

THE EXPLANATION!

Foreman: "Look at that man over there: he's carrying two poles at a time, and you're only carrying one."

Pat: "Sure, he must be too lazy to go twice."

(*H. Cliffe, 670, West Mount, Linthwaite, Nr. Huddersfield, has been awarded a penknife.*)

A RISE IN LIFE!

John: "So you worked your way up from the bottom?"

Joe: "Yes. I started as a bootblack and now I'm a hairdresser."

(*M. Bercovity, 4583, Parke Avenue, Montreal, Canada, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

made you understand my views on that subject, and they are views, let me add, which will never be altered."

A few minutes later the good lady decided that Archie had had sufficient fresh air—if he stayed out any longer in his present weak condition he would be sure to contract all sorts of illnesses—and she wheeled him towards the Ancient House steps. Archie, who wanted to go down the lane to see if he could catch a glimpse of Marjorie, protested strongly, but it was in vain.

"You're going to your study now, Archie," Aunt Cristabel told him. "I have a surprise for you!"

Archie merely groaned. The prospect of a surprise did not appeal to him. Coming from his aunt, he could guess that the surprise was not a pleasant one. So Archie was taken to Study E. Having seen that her nephew was comfortable, Miss Harrington-Douglas moved towards the door.

"I shall only be away a few minutes, Archie," she said, beaming at him brightly from beneath her big white bonnet. "I'm going to prepare that surprise for you I mentioned."

Outside she met Phipps. Grabbing that startled worthy by the arm, she hastily issued some orders. As he listened, Phipps' usually expressionless face became very expressive of extreme horror. He attempted to protest, but the good lady cut him short.

"I have spoken—obey my orders!" she snapped, and fixed him with a frigid stare.

Phipps was ready to agree that Aunt Cristabel had spoken; and he wilted under her glance. He tottered away. He returned about ten minutes later with a big bowl of some steaming liquid and a large wooden spoon. Entering Study E, he found Archie reclining limply in his bath-chair; hovering over him was Aunt Cristabel.

"You have done as I told you?" she snapped when Phipps entered. "Good! Archie is looking quite weak, and he needs something to strengthen him up. A dose of gruel is what the poor little boy wants!"

Phipps placed the bowl of gruel on the table. Aunt Cristabel took the spoon and dipped it into the liquid.

"Now open your mouth like a good little boy!" she ordered.

Archie opened his mouth to protest—and his aunt seized her opportunity. Into his mouth popped the spoon; down his throat gurgled a large dose of gruel.

"Grooooooh!" spluttered Archie, and then gave another howl as Aunt Cristabel, grabbing his nose, forced open his mouth again and gave him another dose.

Archie spluttered, yelled and protested, but in vain. His aunt was a forceful woman, and she would not be denied. Archie's yells only succeeded in bringing a crowd of Removites to the door of his study, who, after taking

FASHION NOTE !

Jimmy: "What is extravagance, father?"

Father: "Extravagance, my boy, is wearing a tie when you have got a beard."

(W. Jeffery, 9, Constitution Hill, Gravesend, has been awarded a penknife.)

A LONG JOB!

Golfer: "I'll stay here till I hit that ball."

Caddie: "Then you'll have to get another caddie. I'm on holiday next week."

(J. Clark, 57, Elibank Road, Eltham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

HOW ?

Mathematical Professor (after lecture): "Are there any questions?"

Student: "Yes, sir. How do you calculate the horse-power of a donkey engine?"

(A. Thompson, 34, Alt Street, Off Beaumont Street, Liverpool, has been awarded a penknife.)

JUST LUCK !

Irate Golfer (as ball passes close to his head): "Why the dickens don't you shout 'Fore' when you're going to hit the ball?"

Novice: "How did I know I was going to hit it? I'm not a prophet."

(J. Crook, 20, Pilling Street, Norden, near Rochdale, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



TOO GOOD TO WASTE !

While a Scotsman was waiting to be served in a chemist's shop, he accidentally spilt some iodine on his hand. He immediately rushed out of the shop.

"It's all right, Mac, you won't have to pay for it!" shouted the assistant.

"It's not that—I'm going home to cut my finger!" replied the Scotsman over his shoulder.

(J. Kessel, 617, Pretorius Street, Pretoria, South Africa, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A BAD CROP !

Farmer (to neighbour): "This drought gets worse. I have to bend down to see my corn."

Neighbour: "That's nowt. The sparrows have to kneel to eat mine."

(G. Goodwin, 103, Queensgate, Beverley, York shire, has been awarded a penknife.)

ALL HE WAS WORTH !

Hardhead: "That's a fine dog you've got there, old chap. Is he for sale?"

Softhead: "Yes, I'll take three pounds for him."

Hardhead: "Is he intelligent?"

Softhead: "I should say so. He knows nearly as much as I do."

Hardhead: "Is that so? Then I'll give you fourpence for him."

(E. Lane, 51, High Street, Heytesbury, Wilts, has been awarded a penknife.)

in the scene, howled with unsympathetic laughter at this fresh discomfiture of the aristocratic junior.

Finally, Aunt Cristabel was satisfied that her poor little injured nephew had had sufficient medicine, and she then took her departure, leaving a groaning Archie lying convulsively in the bath-chair.

AN hour later Archie had recovered sufficiently to wheel himself out of the school gates and down the lane towards the Moor View School. A complete recovery was effected when he saw Marjorie in the distance.

"Archie!" she cried, running up. "What ever has happened? Why are you in this chair, like—like a cripple?"

Irene and Doris and two or three others were with her, and they all gathered round, interested. Doris, in fact, was looking at Archie very searchingly. She had a shrewd idea that this was a wangle.

"It's nothing much, old girl," said Archie carelessly. "But when a chappie falls downstairs, you know, he's liable to strain a few of the good old sinews."

He indicated his bandaged foot, and Marjorie looked at him sympathetically.

"What a shame!" she said, with deep regret. "This means that you won't be able to play football, doesn't it? Just when you were getting on so nicely, too!"

Archie looked at her eagerly.

"About that threat of yours, dear old thing," he said. "I mean, cutting me dead and all that if I don't get into the Eleven. I take it that this ankle affair washes that all out, what?"

"Of course," replied the girl. "I'm not so unreasonable as all that, Archie! Until you're well again you can't possibly practice. Supposing one or two of us come to tea with you this evening?"

"I say, that's rather a brain-wave!" said Archie, beaming. "Rather, old girl! I'll tell Phipps to ring out the joy-bells—and, incidentally, to lay in a good old stock of eclairs and fancy buns and things. I'm feeling considerably braced."

His spirits soared. Everything was going fine. Marjorie, the dear thing, was completely satisfied. This brain-wave of Phipps' had solved the entire problem.

But Archie was reckoning without Handforth!

CHAPTER 7.

Giving Archie a Hand!

IF there was one person in the whole of St. Frank's who was likely to ruin Archie's little bluff, that one person was Edward Oswald Handforth. Handforth was a perfect genius for turning up when he wasn't wanted.

This morning he was out with Church and McClure in his new Morris Minor saloon.

Until now he had been the proud owner of an Austin Seven tourer, but his Aunt Constance—who had presented him with that faithful little car—had heard sundry rumours concerning worn tyres and brake-linings and other signs of wear and tear. Rather than spend money on the car, which was really in perfect condition, she had instructed her agents to take it in and to replace it with a Morris Minor.

Handforth was delighted with his new "bus," which was a standard saloon in blue fabric. He had only had it a few days, and he was now on his way up to the Moor View School to show it to Irene. She had already admired it, and had been for a ride in it, but this wasn't enough for Handforth.

"You'll make her fed up!" growled Church, who was sitting in front. "Anybody might think she'd never seen a Morris Minor before!"

"She's only seen this one three times!" retorted Handforth.

"But they're all the same," said Church. "The roads are full of Morris Minors nowadays. You can hardly go round a corner without one scuttling at you like a rabbit. Let's get back to the school."

"We're going to Moor View," said Handforth firmly.

He trod on the throttle, and sailed past the St. Frank's gateway at thirty.

"It's a pity you couldn't let us out, anyhow," put in McClure, from the back, and speaking bitterly. "You may be in love with Irene, but we're not."

"What's that?" roared Handforth.

"You heard what I said."

"Why, you—you—"

Handforth realised that this was no occasion for words. He swung round, and his fist looked businesslike. There was one great advantage of a small car like this—one could so easily reach the rear passengers. Only in the nick of time did McClure dodge; and then only because he was so accustomed to Handforth's playful little ways.

"Here, chuck it!" gasped Church. "Look to your driving, you fathead! There's this bend, and— Hi! Look out!"

Handforth turned round in alarm. Just round the bend there was a wheeled-chair in the very middle of the road. Sundry feminine shrieks sounded as the little car bore straight down upon the chair. And Archie Glenthorne, who was sitting in it, was galvanised into action. There wasn't any real need for him to jump, because Handforth never lost control of the car, and would have skimmed past quite safely. But Archie wasn't sure of this—and Archie was a firm believer in safety first.

There was no time to wheel the chair out of the way. There was only time to jump. And Archie jumped. His leap, as he sprang out of the chair, was worthy of a hare at the top of its form. It was really beautiful to watch. He landed on the grass beside the road.

If the chair had remained still, Handforth could have got past. But it didn't remain still. In leaping out Archie had sent the thing running backwards. Handy did his best, but he wasn't a magician.

Crash!

The Morris Minor's bumper took the chair in its stride, and sent it rocketing forward, splintered and smashed.

"You frightful fright!" gasped Archie, running after the little car and forgetting all about his bandaged foot. "Dash you, Handy, you might have killed me!"

"You silly ass!" retorted Handforth, charging out of the car and rushing round to the front. "There was plenty of room for me to pass. What do you mean by leaping out like that? Thank goodness no damage has been done!" he added, with relief.

"No damage?" hooted Archie. "You—you blighting blighter! What do you call this?"

He pointed to the wreckage of the wheeled-chair, but Handforth only sniffed. He was far more concerned about his bumper. In any case, further discussion on the subject was ruled out by the intervention of Marjorie Temple. Archie was about to say something else to Handforth when he caught sight of her out of the corner of his eye.

He spun half-round, his jaw sagging, his monocle dropping out of his eye. He had seen Marjorie angry before, but he had never seen her quite like this. Her face was pale with indignation, and her eyes were blazing.

"Archie!" she burst out. "You—you fraud!"

"Good gad! I—I——"

"Your ankle isn't hurt at all!" went on the girl scornfully. "No, don't try to excuse yourself!" she added, as he tried to interrupt. "I think I can understand. Oh, I'm disgusted with you!"

"Odds tragedies and disasters!" gasped Archie. "Kindly listen, old girl! You don't understand——"

"I understand everything!" broke in Marjorie. "The way you ran just now proves that your ankle isn't hurt. All this—this tomfoolery was done to deceive me! It's just a contemptible trick of yours to evade footer practice!"

"A trick, absolutely—but not contemptible," urged Archie. "The fact is, dear old thing, I——"

"I won't listen!" cried the girl, stamping her foot. "You're a slacker, Archie!"

"Oh, I say, look here——"

"I won't speak to you again, Archie!" went on Marjorie, her manner becoming cold and distant. "There's a practice game to-morrow, and Nipper told me that you were selected to play in it. If you don't play in that match, I'll never speak to you again!"

"But let me explain——"

"Never!" insisted Marjorie, tossing her head. "I mean it, Archie! I'm downright ashamed of you!"

She walked off with her chin high, and

the other girls went with her. Archie gave a dismal groan and collapsed. He sank down on the grass, so utterly miserable that Handforth & Co. were affected.

"Chuck it, Archie!" growled Edward Oswald. "No need to take it to heart. These girls never mean what they say."

"Marjorie means it," said Archie sadly. "And it's all your fault, dash you!"

"Rot!" said Handforth, with spirit. "It wasn't my fault that you spoofed her, was it? And there wasn't any need for you to jump out of that chair either. But what's the good of crying over spilt milk?"

"You don't understand," wailed Archie. "Where's Phipps? Kindly rally round and find Phipps! I've got to—— Good gad!"

There was horror in his voice. Aunt Cristabel was coming up the lane, and there was something in her stride which boded ill for Archie.

"You need not try to explain, young man," she said frigidly. "Fortunately, I saw what happened while I was crossing from the golf links. You wretched boy, Archie! There is nothing the matter with your ankle at all!"

Archie felt desperate.

"Absolutely not," he declared warmly. "I only pretended there was because of you, Aunt Cristabel."

"Because of me?" repeated the lady, scandalised.

"Absolutely! I had to do something to put Marjorie off, and now she has given me the bird!" said Archie bitterly. "I'm going to play in that practice game to-morrow, Aunt Cristabel, and that's that! Dash it, if I don't Marjorie will never speak to me again!"

"If you do, you will lose Phipps," retorted Aunt Cristabel promptly.

WHEN Archie got back to St. Frank's he poured his tale of woe into Phipps' ear. And Phipps, for once, was stumped.

"I'm not blaming you, old lad, but what's to be done now?" asked Archie, in despair. "The thing has become too awful for words. I mean, there's no leeway or anything. It's definite. If I don't play in that match to-morrow I lose Marjorie, and if I do play in it, I lose you. Frightful as it may appear, Phipps, I have a poisonous idea that I'm going to lose you."

"I was afraid so, sir," said Phipps steadily.

"Dash it, a chappie can't let a girl down like that," said Archie. "I don't know how I shall get on without you, Phipps, but Marjorie's friendship—— You know what I mean, old owl. Without you, life will be hollow and empty. But I'm going to play in that match to-morrow, and dash the consequences. Before I do anything else, Phipps, I've got to square myself with Marjorie."

And Archie marched straight out, strode

into Study C, and was glad to find Nipper there.

"About that priceless practice game, old skipper," he said. "Wasn't my name down on the jolly old list?"

"It was," said Nipper, "but it's been rubbed off. Your ankle, you know——"

"Dash my ankle!" interrupted Archie. "Kindly produce the good old pencil and shove my name back. I'm reporting fit, laddie."

"You're down to play inside-right for the Blues and Reds against the Greens and Yellows," said Nipper. "But think what you're doing, Archie. We know exactly how you stand—we're not all blind and deaf. If you play in this match you're going to infuriate your aunt, and she'll take Phipps away from you."

Archie was resigned.

"And if I don't play in it Marjorie will never speak to me again," he replied. "You wouldn't have me consider Phipps before a lady, would you? We Glenthornes don't do things like that, dash you! Much as I hate the idea of losing Phipps, the old decision is taken. I am playing!"

"Good man!" said Nipper heartily. "I'll put your name back. Archie, old son, you're true blue!"

"Never," said Archie, "have truer words been spoken. For when you say I am true blue, old thought-reader, you've absolutely konked the nail on the napper."

And he staggered out.

"GOOD old Archie!" said Nipper softly, after the door had closed.

"Bit of a chump, if you ask me," commented Tommy Watson. "I've always found that the best thing to do with aunts is to knuckle under to 'em. If you don't, you only get it in the neck. As for Marjorie Temple, she's like the rest of the girls. She doesn't mean what she says, anyhow."

"This time I think you're wrong," said Nipper slowly. "I've got an idea that Marjorie does mean it. She's been fearfully bucked at the thought of Archie going in for footer this term. Archie hasn't explained the position to her, and I don't suppose she would listen to him if he tried. There's something

rather fine in old Archie's decision, you know."

"Fine?" asked Tregellis-West.

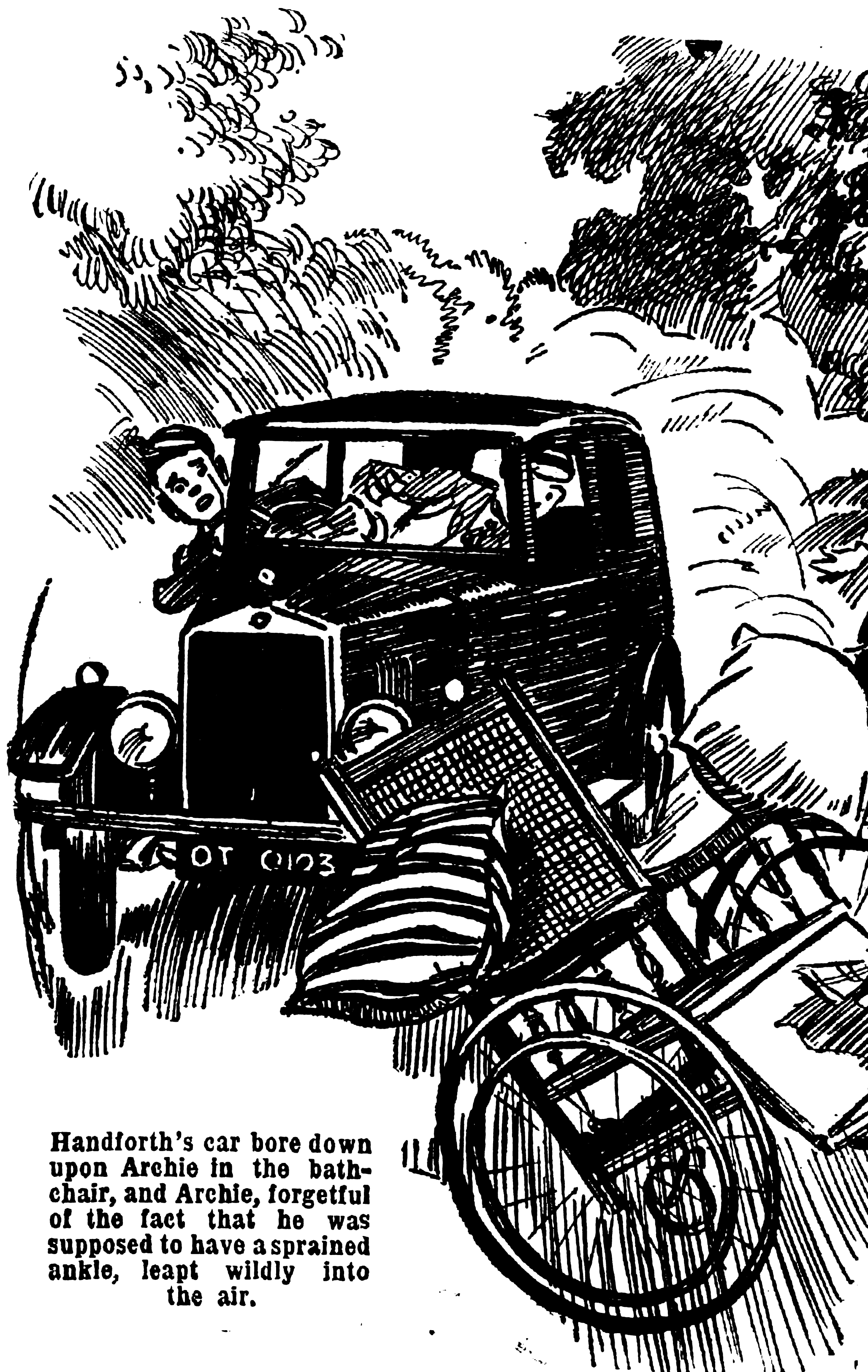
"Well, don't you think so?" said Nipper. "Rather than risk losing Marjorie's friendship, he's prepared to do without Phipps—and we all know how he relies on Phipps for everything. Personally, I think he's a brick. What's more, we're going to help him."

"Help Archie?" said Watson. "How?"

"That's funny," exclaimed Handforth, coming in with K.K. and Reggie Pitt. "We've just come to talk to you about helping Archie. Anything fresh happened?"

Nipper told them.

"Good old scout!" said K.K., grinning. "Archie's gilt-edged! We've simply got to help him now. He wants to play, and good



Handforth's car bore down upon Archie in the bath-chair, and Archie, forgetful of the fact that he was supposed to have a sprained ankle, leapt wildly into the air.

luck to him! Whatever we think of, it's got to include Archie being in one of the teams."

"Rather!" agreed Nipper. "And that means, in a nutshell, that we must concentrate our attention upon Aunt Cristabel. The whole thing's simple. All we've got to do is to make her change her views on football. Then she'll see Archie play, cheer like the dickens, give him her blessing, and peacefully return to her own lair, wherever that happens to be."

"Is that what you call simple?" asked Handforth, with a sniff.

"What we've got to do is simple, but the doing of it won't be," admitted Nipper. "I mean, it's easy in theory, but it'll probably be dashed hard in practice."

"I can't imagine anything harder," said K.K. "After the way she went on the other day—when she saw those Fourth-Formers stretched out—wild horses won't make her see reason."

"Never mind wild horses," said Handforth. "We're not wild horses, are we? We're the ones who've got to shift her. She says she'll never go near a football ground again, and shudders at the very mention of Little Side. So what are we going to do?"

Nipper frowned.

"There are times," he said, "when a chap shows his sense in admitting himself beaten. This job is beyond us, you fellows. I'm not saying that we can't help Archie—but we can't help him by ourselves."

"What the dickens do you mean?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"As far as Aunt Cristabel's concerned, we're a bunch of hooligans," said Nipper. "We're footballers prejudiced in favour of the game—and that gives us about as much standing with her as a side of beef at a vegetarian dinner. She simply wouldn't listen to us. We could argue until we lost our voices, and she'd still be of the same mind. What we've got to do is to find a spokesman who has a standing."

"And who's that going to be?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Old Wilkey."

"Eh?"

"Mr. Alington Wilkes, our respected Housemaster," said Nipper calmly.

The juniors looked at one another wonderingly, then they looked at Nipper. A twinkle appeared in K.K.'s eyes, and he thoughtfully rubbed his fingers through his red hair.

"And I've sometimes said that this chap is a duffer!" he exclaimed admiringly. "Holy cats! It's the wheeze!"

"But I don't see what old Wilkey can do," objected Handforth.

"Old Wilkey is a sport—and that's the most important thing of all," said Nipper. "He's Aunt Cristabel's host—and that's the next important thing. If she won't listen to him, she won't listen to anyone."

"And there's Vera, too!" put in K.K. eagerly. "She'll help!"

"Come on!" said Nipper, making for the door.



"Where are we going?" asked Handforth.
 "No time like the present," said Nipper.
 "We'll put this thing before old Wilkey straight away, and if he doesn't turn up trumps you can call me the wall-eyed son of a rabbit!"

CHAPTER 8.

Mainly About Football!

MR. ALINGTON WILKES gently stroked his untidy moustache as he listened to the tale which Nipper unfolded. Handforth and K.K. and the other juniors stood round in a circle, eager and expectant.

"So you see, sir, Archie's in a bit of a mess," concluded Nipper. "His aunt is in earnest, and if he plays in that match—and he swears he wants to—he'll lose Phipps."

"Would that be a very serious loss?" asked Mr. Wilkes dryly.

"It would to Archie, sir," replied Nipper. "Without his valet, he'd pine away to a shadow. Archie's one of the best, but he's a helpless beggar. It seems a pity that he should be penalised just when he's bucking up and showing some spirit."

"Glenthorne must be very staunch to this young lady," said Mr. Wilkes, his eyes twinkling. "I admire him for it. He values her friendship more than the services of his valet, eh? Well, what do you want me to do? You mustn't think that I'm a magician. In any case, it's not my affair, and it would hardly be right for me to butt in—"

"We don't want you to butt in, sir," interrupted Nipper. "That's just the point. You're the one man who can do the thing naturally, without Aunt Cristabel guessing that it's a wheeze."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Wilkes, interested. "Look here, you young asses, you're not going to drag me into this stunt. Miss Harrington-Douglas is my guest."

"Which is just the point, sir," agreed Nipper. "I don't want you to think we're cheeky, or anything like that, but couldn't you have a private word with Mrs. Wilkes and your daughter, sir? Aunt Cristabel will be with you for tea, won't she?"

"I hope so—and for dinner as well."

"Tea ought to be enough, sir," said Nipper. "What about confining the conversation to football—throughout the whole meal? Never mind whether Aunt Cristabel tries to change the subject or not; one of you can easily bring it back. If you can only get her to understand that football is a fine, clean game, she'll be more tolerant."

Mr. Wilkes laughed outright.

"I can see some possibilities," he said dryly.

"She'll listen to you, sir, being our House-master, whereas she wouldn't pay any attention to us," urged Nipper. "If you'll only think this over—"

"It doesn't need any thinking over," interrupted Mr. Wilkes. "I can spot a good wheeze when I hear one. You can clear off,

the whole crowd of you, and leave this to me. I'm going to enjoy tea to-day."

"Thanks awfully, sir!" chorused the juniors.

AUNT CRISTABEL sailed into Mrs. Wilkes' drawing-room, beaming. She was conscious of the fact that she was looking her best, and although her dress was so old-fashioned that it reached down to her ankles, she certainly did look charming in a neat, prim way.

"I hope I am not late, dear Mrs. Wilkes," she said, as she sat down.

"Not at all; we haven't started yet," replied the hostess.

The drawing-room was very pleasant. It looked out upon the secluded cloisters; the windows were wide open and the sunshine of the late August afternoon streamed in. One or two wasps hovered busily round the sugar bowl.

Vera was looking her best in a white tennis frock, and her mother was all in white, too. Mrs. Wilkes was surprisingly young-looking, and it was difficult to realise that she was indeed the mother of Vera.

"We've been playing tennis most of the afternoon," she remarked, as she prepared to pour out the tea. "It's been dreadfully hot, too. Mrs. Stokes had bad luck, I'm afraid."

"Cheese it, mum," said Vera. "You know jolly well that you can make rings round Mrs. Stokes. She's pretty good at tennis, but you're marvellous. Hallo, here's daddy."

Mr. Wilkes came in, mopping his brow. In that charming apartment he looked strangely incongruous in his baggy flannel trousers and shabby Norfolk jacket. Not that his wife minded. She had long since ceased to lecture him on the subject of his careless attire.

"Phew! Anybody might think it was mid-summer," he said. "I pity those poor boys to-morrow afternoon when they're at football."

Aunt Cristabel winced.

"Football isn't much more strenuous than tennis, Jack," said Mrs. Wilkes.

"Isn't it?" retorted Mr. Wilkes, who, in his family circle, always answered to the name of "Jack." "You haven't played football, May, so you don't know. Sets of tennis are not very long, and you're always having rests. But ninety minutes of gruelling football is a vastly different thing."

"There's a rest at half-time, daddy," said Vera.

"Yes, a brief one," admitted Mr. Wilkes. "But even forty-five minutes continually on the go in this heat is a tall order. Still, the football season is nearly on us, and the boys must practise. A great game, Miss Harrington-Douglas."

"I am sorry, but I don't agree with you," said Aunt Cristabel coldly.

"Which merely proves that you don't know the game."

"Indeed! I rather think I do," retorted

the lady. "I saw quite enough of it a day or two ago, when I was persuaded by some of your boys to visit Small Side, or whatever it is called. It was ghastly! Within two minutes, three of those poor boys were so badly hurt that they had to be carried off the ground."

"This is news to me," said Mr. Wilkes. "Any serious injuries on the football field—and they are rare—must be reported to the Housemaster without delay. And I have heard nothing. You must have seen a minor knock or two, Miss Harrington-Douglas."

"If what I saw were minor knocks, I thank Heaven I did not witness any real mishap!" said Aunt Cristabel fervently. "I have seen this game on the films, too, and I have been more than horrified—"

"But you mustn't take any notice of the films," protested Vera. "American football is so different from the English game."

"The boy who cannot interest himself in cricket or in football is not worth his salt," said Mr. Wilkes before Aunt Cristabel could get in a word. "Hard knocks never did a boy any harm. Knocks that you, Miss Harrington-Douglas, would regard with horror, the average human schoolboy will pass off with a cheery grin. And all the better for him, too. I'm not one of these men who believes in molly-coddling."

"The boys would be far better employed in reading books of history, or science, or some other subject which will help them in their lessons," said Aunt Cristabel tartly.

"Don't you believe it, my dear lady," said Mr. Wilkes. "I'll guarantee that if a hundred boys were picked out and treated as you suggest, they would soon be stagnant.

'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy'—an old saying, but a true one. After a hard day of lessons, an hour or two out in the open, splashing about on a muddy football field, getting a few cracks and bruises—why, it's a positive restorative."

Aunt Cristabel sipped her tea and refrained from making any comment.

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"What is the difference between Rugger and Soccer, Jack?" asked Mrs. Wilkes, as her daughter gave her a slight wink—evidently a cue.

"Well, they're quite different games," explained Mr. Wilkes. "Personally, I am in favour of the Association game. It gives the boys more chance. In Rugger, the rank and file seldom get a look in. The stars of the Rugger team get all the fat. But in Soccer every boy on the field has an equal chance of distinguishing himself."

"An equal chance of getting himself killed, you mean," said Aunt Cristabel.

Mr. Wilkes laughed.

"I wish I could show you a record of the thousands of games which were played at our Public Schools last season, Miss Harrington-Douglas," he said. "I'll guarantee that not one single, solitary boy was really seriously hurt. Of course, those records would show innumerable cases of sprained ankles and dislocated joints, and so forth, but cases of

any permanent injury are rare. Most of these boys recover within a few days—and, in the main, they are all the better for their experience. It teaches them to suffer bravely, and to make light of pain."

"I still think that football is a brutal, barbarous sport," said Miss Cristabel firmly. "Vera, do you mind passing me the muffins?"

Mr. Wilkes began to realise that the boys had given him a hard task.

"Take a look at this, Miss Harrington-Douglas," he said, producing a diagram of a football field. "No, it won't bite you. That section near the goal on either side is the penalty area. Now, there are eleven players a-side, and they are disposed in such a way that each player has his own particular job to do. If he fails in that job, something goes wrong. A well-trained football team works like a machine. As soon as a part of that machine fails, the whole of it is affected."

And Mr. Wilkes, waxing enthusiastic, went into further details. Aunt Cristabel was soon bewildered with references to half-backs and inside-rights and centre-forwards and other—to her—incomprehensible terms.

"To-morrow's game ought to be particularly interesting," said the Housemaster, with conviction. "I am referring, now, to the Junior game. It is from the juniors that we must look for budding talent. This game will not be a regular match, but purely a practice affair—two teams of highly-energetic and eager boys fighting for their places in the regular elevens."

"Fighting is right," said Miss Cristabel promptly.

"You must see that game, Miss Harrington-Douglas," continued Mr. Wilkes. "In fact, I hope to have the pleasure of personally conducting you to the pavilion."

"I am sorry, but I could not even think of it," said Miss Cristabel coldly.

"We shall be there, too," said Mrs. Wilkes. "Vera and I wouldn't miss it for worlds."

"I can only say that I am shocked," said the guest.

Mr. Wilkes tried another tack.

"Look here, Miss Harrington-Douglas, supposing we make a little compact?" he suggested. "I'm a keen believer in football, and you detest the game. Well, I'm perfectly willing to stand or fall by to-morrow's practice match. If you'll agree to witness it—from the first blow of the whistle to the final kick—and you are then still of the same mind, I'll give in."

"And how, pray, do you propose to give in?" asked Aunt Cristabel.

"I will use all the influence I possess in urging the headmaster to abolish the game from this school," replied Mr. Wilkes calmly—fully confident that he was on the safe side. "So you see, Miss Harrington-Douglas, your presence at that match will be crucial."

"I will attend!" replied Aunt Cristabel. "Most certainly I will attend! What is more, Mr. Wilkes, I will keep you to your promise. I regard this hour as my greatest triumph. For I shall certainly loathe this game with every fibre of my being, and you will just as certainly be compelled to put your promise into practice. My one hope is that football will be abolished in all our schools."

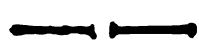
Mr. Wilkes chuckled.

"In order to understand this game thoroughly, my dear lady, you must know the rules," he said smoothly. "Now, let me just explain. These dots indicate the positions of the players. The first five are forwards; then come the three half-backs; then the two backs, and finally the goalkeeper. Each player has his own position to keep, and his own particular job to do."

And Mr. Wilkes, lucidly and enthusiastically, gave Aunt Cristabel a full description of the game. She was irritated at first, and Mr. Wilkes could see it. But he was a persevering man. His fund of patience was inexhaustible.

Such was his eloquence that before long Aunt Cristabel was closely following his remarks, and slowly but surely she began to understand that the players in a game of football had certain definite aims in view. Until now she had always thought that the players merely kicked the ball at random. As soon as she saw the possibilities her interest was awakened.

Before that memorable meal was over Aunt Cristabel was actually looking forward with keen interest to the morrow's game—telling herself that this interest was due to the fact that she would triumph over Mr. Wilkes. But the sparkle in her eyes, as she followed the Housemaster's words, told a different story!



CHAPTER 9.

Playing the Game!

"EVERYTHING all serene, Phipps?" asked Archie Glenthorne gaily.

"Your appearance, if I may say so, Master Archie, is exceedingly businesslike," replied Phipps. "One cannot, of course, looked dressed in football attire, but such clothing at least sets off one's figure to advantage—or disadvantage, as the case may be."

"Odds hints and suggestions!" ejaculated Archie. "I trust, old bean, that I come within the former category? I hope the good old knees are not too knobbly? Or the dashed elbows too aggressive?"

"It has always been a gratification to me, sir, that your figure is very passable," said Phipps graciously. "Without undue flattery, Master Archie, I think I can safely say that no other figure on the football field to-day will excel yours."

"Dash it, Phipps, you're making the young master blush," said Archie. "Shall we trickle? I have a faint idea that the lads are waiting."

It was really more than a faint idea. Sundry yells for Archie were resounding out in the corridor. He sallied forth in all the splendour of his red-and-blue-striped jersey and dark blue shorts. As the afternoon was

With a whiz Archie banged the ball into the net, and Aunt Cristabel, watching, was so excited that she leapt up and brought her gamp down on Edgar Fenton's head with a thud.



warm, there was no need for overcoats or mufflers.

"Buck up, Archie — you're keeping us all waiting!" said Nipper briskly.

They all sallied out. A considerable crowd had gathered round the ropes at Little Side, for this practice game was attracting more attention than an average House match. Football was just starting, and ninety per cent of the St. Frank's boys were as keen as mustard. There was no senior match today, and even Fifth-Formers and Sixth-Formers were in the pavilion. Edgar Fenton himself was there. The school captain wanted to keep his eye on the junior talent. Age was no bar at St. Frank's, and if a fellow was good enough he would be selected to play for the school.

Aunt Cristabel was there, too, safely ensconced between Mrs. Wilkes and Vera. Mr. Wilkes was close at hand, ready to push her back into her seat by force, if necessary, should she attempt to leave. She had undertaken to see this game right through, and she was going to do it!

"THIS is splendid, Archie!" said Marjorie Temple enthusiastically.

"Dash it, old girl, didn't you expect to see me slithering on to the good old field of battle?" asked Archie. "Kindly note that I am playing inside-right —"

"You'll hear me cheering when you score your first goal," said Marjorie.

"Have a heart, old thing!" protested Archie. "I mean, you mustn't take things for granted like that. Goals aren't so dashed easy to score, you know."

"After what happened yesterday, I was afraid you wouldn't turn out," continued the girl. "Yet, all the time, I knew that you would. You've got to play the game of your life, Archie—because, if you do well, you'll be given your House cap."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I don't approve of caps, on principle—a chappie is never really dressed unless he is wearing a topper—but I dare say it would be a bit frightful to play this dashed game in a topper."

The whistle sounded a preliminary blast, and Archie jumped.

"Well, good luck, Archie," said Marjorie. "And if you do score a goal in this game, I'll give you a kiss when you come off!"

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie, flushing to the roots of his hair. "I mean to say, that's a promise, what? Something to work for, as it were!"

He could not think of anything else to say, so he dashed on to the field. There was a determined gleam in his eye. From the very first he had intended to play the game of his life, but that promise of Marjorie's clinched it.

Browne of the Fifth was referee, and he was already getting the players into position. Nipper had won the toss, and the sides had lined up. The winning of the toss really meant nothing, however; there was practically no wind, and the sun was broadside.

In the pavilion, Aunt Cristabel received a shock.

"Surely—surely that is Archie out there?" she said in a startled voice. "Can I be mistaken? Mr. Wilkes!"

Mr. Wilkes looked round inquiringly.

"That boy in the inside-right position of

the Blue and Red team," said Miss Cristabel, pointing. "Is he my nephew?"

"He certainly is," replied Mr. Wilkes, inwardly smiling at the accuracy of the lady's knowledge of the players' places.

"But you didn't tell me that Archie would be playing to-day!"

"I knew that you would find it out for yourself," smiled Mr. Wilkes.

"This is alarming!" said Archie's aunt. "The wilful boy! I distinctly told him that he must not play! I even threatened him——" She broke off, her lips compressed. "Yes, to be sure," she added, as though to herself. "He shall pay dearly for this defiance! Phipps leaves to-day!"

"They're off!" cried Vera suddenly.

"Eh? Really, I——" Miss Cristabel stared out over the field. "Oh, you mean that they have started? Dear me! So they have! Ah, the ball has just been passed out to the boy on the left outside."

"Outside-left," murmured Vera hastily.

"Of course," said Aunt Cristabel. "But I don't quite understand why he is running—— Oh, what a splendid kick! Why doesn't some other boy get there? That might have been a goal!"

"One of the opposing backs got there first," explained Vera. "Here comes the ball now, right up the field. Look! Your nephew's running for it!"

"Upon my soul! So he is!"

Archie was having a race with one of the Green and Yellow half-backs, and he just

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managed to win. Swerving, he took the ball in his stride and raced down the field, dribbling the ball with perfect control.

"Shoot, Archie!" went up a yell.

Archie shot, and K.K. Parkington, in the Green and Yellow goal, was compelled to leap bodily sideways in order to save. He only just managed to tip the speeding leather over the bar.

"Well done. Archie! Jolly good shot!"

"Remarkable—quite remarkable!" panted Miss Cristabel, highly flustered. "I declare, I am getting quite excited! That was really a splendid effort of Archie's. The dear boy nearly got a wicket!"

"A goal," whispered Vera.

"I do get so mixed up with cricket," said Archie's aunt apologetically. "A goal, of course. Wickets are those things, with three stumps, aren't they?"

Mr. Wilkes chuckled to himself. If Aunt Cristabel was excited now, what would she be when the game really got going? The lady was half-converted already.

THE football was of the highest order for a junior match. The coaching of Wally Freeman was already revealing its effect. Boys who had previously been disposed to leave their right places and run all over the field now kept their positions well. Each team was playing with machine-like precision. Nipper, in the centre-forward position of the Blues and Reds, led his men brilliantly. The whole forwards line was attacking continuously. Reggie Pitt, on the other side, was just as energetic, and it wasn't long before Edward Oswald Handforth was called upon to put in some valiant work. The Greens and Yellows were pressing, and twice Handforth made magnificent saves—much to the joy of Miss Cristabel.

"Wonderful—wonderful!" she cried. "Who is that boy in goal? He is playing a splendid game!"

"Chap named Handforth," replied Vera. "He's the regular goalie for the Junior Eleven, and— Oh, look! Come on, Pitt! Shoot—shoot!"

Aunt Cristabel leapt up in her seat.

"Shoot!" she shouted wildly. "Oh, you foolish boy— Ah!"

Reggie Pitt had shot—a low, stinging drive. Handforth flung himself full-length on the ground, but he was a second too late. The leather ripped into the net.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Goal!" fairly shrieked Miss Cristabel, sinking back into her seat. "Dear me! I declare, I'm quite hot! Dear Mr. Wilkes, you really must forgive me."

"There's nothing to forgive," smiled Mr. Wilkes. "I was shouting just as much as you were. That was a splendid goal just now."

"A masterly effort!" declared Aunt Cristabel firmly. "Did you notice how that player tricked the back? At the moment before he took his shot he came to a dead

stop, swerved aside, and then took his kick. Beautiful—beautiful!"

Mr. Wilkes grinned, although he took care that the lady did not see his face.

The Blues and Reds were galvanised into tremendous activity now. They were the better side on paper, and they were looked upon as certain winners. But the Greens and Yellows, containing many of K.K. Parkington's chums, who were all good players, proved themselves to be the hottest of hot stuff.

The game went on with redoubled energy—a clean, healthy, virile match. Every player was doing his utmost, and there wasn't a sign of ill-feeling. Aunt Cristabel was beginning to understand that football, when properly played, was indeed an exhilarating business.

The equaliser came just before half-time, and it was Nipper who scored; but Archie Glenthore played a part in the scoring of that goal. He accepted a pass from the outside-left—a swinging pass which came soaring right across the field. In a flash Archie was on the ball, and seeing that Nipper was better placed he deftly tapped it forward. At the same second one of the opposing backs was on him, and over he went. But Nipper was through—had shot. K.K.'s best efforts were useless. It was a goal.

"Hurrah!"

"Well done, the Blues and Reds!"

"Another goal!" cried Aunt Cristabel. "That's one each, isn't it? I'm ever so glad that— But look! Archie is hurt! Oh, poor Archie!"

She tried to leave her seat, and a tragic note had come into her voice. Archie had collided rather heavily with the back, and was stretched full-length on the turf. Mr. Wilkes, smiling serenely, caught Aunt Cristabel's arm.

"It's nothing!" he said. "Didn't I tell you that these boys could take a hard knock or two without any ill effects?"

"But poor Archie is badly hurt!" cried his aunt.

"Is he?" said Mr. Wilkes dryly. "I don't think so, Miss Harrington-Douglas. "He's up again now, and running to his place."

"Gracious me, so he is!"

Half-time came soon afterwards, and Archie, who had only been winded, was glad of the rest. By the time the teams had changed over, and the re-start was made, he had completely recovered. And he still remembered that promise of Marjorie's. He had cause to remember it—for she had renewed it during the interval.

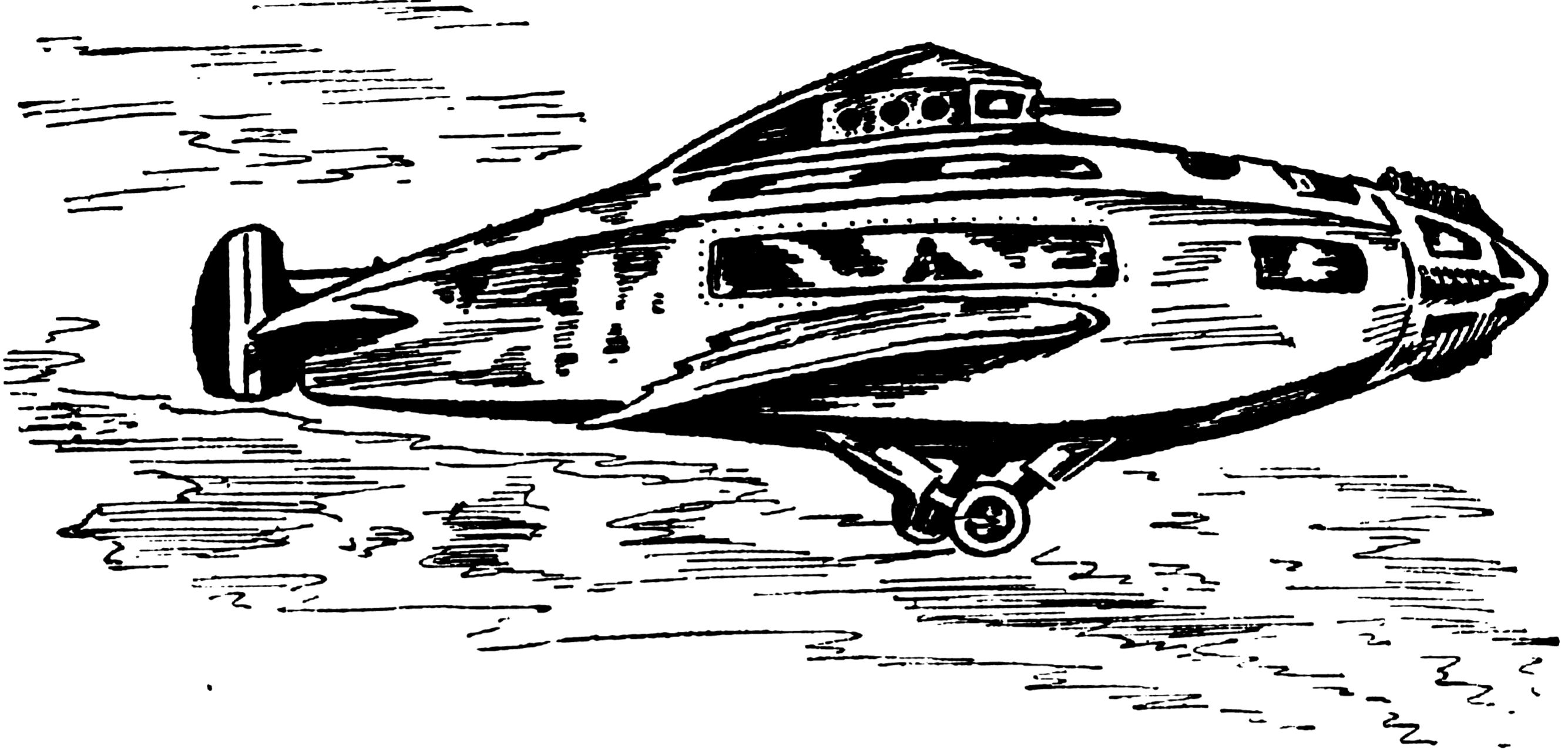
"Let's see you score this half, Archie," said Travers cheerfully.

"Laddie, watch me!" replied Archie. "If I don't score I don't get that— Well, never mind, dash you!"

His chance came twenty minutes later. The game had been hot and fast, each side striving for supremacy, forgetful of the summer-like heat. There had been a throw-

(Concluded on page 44.)

THE INVISIBLE



Blind!

“THE Invisible World—at last!”
Leaning back in the driving seat of his amazing air-cruiser, “The Meteor,” Mark Whitaker, astronomer and inventor, sighed happily. His keen face shone with delight as he turned to where I towered beside him, staring through the huge triplex window in dumb astonishment.

Truly, my life these last few days had been a succession of brain-whirling thrills since I had agreed to follow my friend on this wild expedition. From earth we had come, he and I, flung through thousands of miles of space by his new light-engines; battling through perils such as no men had ever encountered before—to this strange, silent world lying beneath us.

“The Invisible World,” Mark called it jubilantly, and only he, of all the scientists on earth, had believed in its existence. Now he had found it.

The stillness was intense. We could see no signs of life below—no birds, no animals, nothing. Not even a breath of wind broke the hush or rippled the placid, violet sea. The new world brooded in uncanny silence.

Everywhere we looked there seemed an atmosphere of ugliness and decay. From the narrow strip of foreshore a vast violet plain stretched away into the dim distance, covered with jungles of stunted, dark red trees and split by jagged pinnacles of rock that rose into the air, stark and grotesque. None of the jungle trees was more than four feet in height,

and all were warped and twisted into such cruel, nightmarish shapes that we wrenched our eyes away instinctively. We could well imagine all sorts of unthinkable horrors living in the depths of that evil forest.

But the grimmest sight of all was the colossal mountain range that I had noticed at first, and which filled the whole horizon of the Invisible World—a mighty upheaval of

snarling crags and sheer, bottomless chasms. Through the soft violet haze that covered sea and jungle in this lonely land, the gigantic mountains

shone with a fierce, hateful crimson.

For the life of me, I could not keep my eyes away. I had a ghastly feeling that all that vast mass of stone was *alive*, and seething with mad rage at our invasion.

I said nothing to Mark, however, in case he thought I had wind-up. Instead, I looked at him in awe—this slim, small figure with the high forehead and dark, inscrutable eyes. He alone had built this wonderful craft and guided it unerringly to its goal. And, although I’m big enough and powerful

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(Author of the "Night Hawk" series.)

enough to have picked him up with one hand, somehow he made me feel about two inches high beside him!

With a touch of the helm and a pull of his control lever he sent the Meteor skimming across the sea, a few feet above the tiny waves, and finally landed on the shingly beach, light as a feather. After days of voyaging through emptiness, we had touched solid land once more!

Was I glad? I was. I had been cooped up in the Meteor long enough, and was aching to stretch my muscles—a swim and a short walk at least. Besides, although Mark did not show it, we were both crazy with excitement to explore.

Throwing open the sliding door of the machine, I let down the steel ladder on to the beach and leapt forth gaily—in my usual bull-headed style, I'm afraid. I heard a sharp, warning shout from Mark, still busy at the engines, but he was just too late to save me. Things went with a bang the moment I stepped into the open air.

I remember taking a jump from the ladder to the ground, and the next I knew I was flying headlong through the air, arms outstretched, legs flailing madly. For something like fifteen yards I dived as though from a springboard, then the soft beach rose up to meet me, and knocked every ounce of breath from my body at one blow.

My gosh! The next few minutes were sheer agony and terror for me. My head hit the ground a frightful smack, something snapped—and instantly I was in darkness blacker than the most awful night.

Everything disappeared—shore, jungle, flaming mountains, and the Meteor went out in a blink; a seering pain like a knife-thrust darted through my eyes into my brain.

Blind as a bat, I staggered to my feet, plunging about helplessly. I felt myself leave the ground in another sickening dive, and came down with a worse crash than ever.

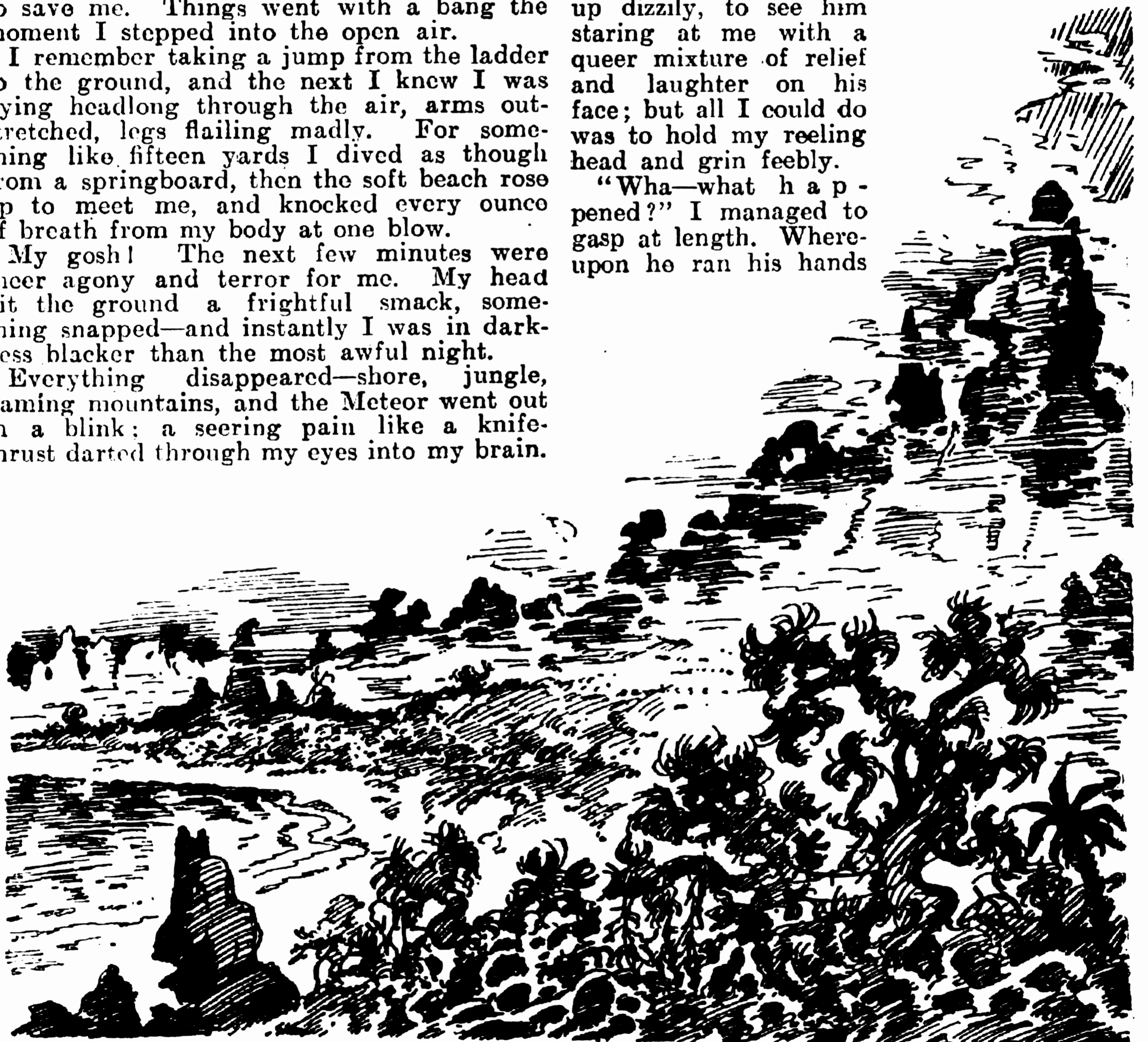
As though from a distance, I could hear Mark calling me to keep still. But, dash it—I picked myself up—another lurch, and another jarring fall. I felt a pair of arms close round my thighs, Rugger fashion, and Mark's weight fell across my legs. His voice yelled in my ear:

"Tom! Lie still, you bullock; you'll kill yourself!"

Somehow the frenzy in his words made me pull myself together. I kept quiet, aching, sore, and breathless, my eyes burning terribly, and presently I felt him get up and run away. He was back in a minute, fitting something round my head. And the moment he did so—my sight returned!

After a while I sat up dizzily, to see him staring at me with a queer mixture of relief and laughter on his face; but all I could do was to hold my reeling head and grin feebly.

"Wha—what happened?" I managed to gasp at length. Whereupon he ran his hands



swiftly over my body and whistled softly when he found that no bones were broken.

"You darned great elephant!" he snorted. "You must be as hard as iron! Why, you've been throwing yourself around the scenery like a prize acrobat!"

"But how—what——" I mumbled. "I only stepped off the ladder——"

"I know. I saw you doing it, and shouted!" he cried. "You chump! The density of this Invisible World is about ten times lighter than that of the Earth, and for every natural step you take up here you'll cover ten times your ordinary stride. That first jump you made threw you half-way up the beach, and every time you plunged about you were rising six feet in the air!"

"But—but I went blind, too!" I stammered, dabbing at my eyes, which were protected now by the thick blue goggles we had both worn ever since we dived into the atmosphere of this fantastic world.

"No, you didn't!" snapped Mark impatiently. "But you might have done. The first fall knocked your goggles off—that's why you could see nothing. Don't you remember, we didn't see this land at all until we put them on—up there?" He jerked his hand towards the distant sky. "That's why I invented them."

Sitting back on his heels, he explained with solemn emphasis.

"I've told you this is the Invisible World!" he said quietly. "No one on earth believes in it, because no one can see it. Yet the reason is simple. Ever heard of ultra-violet light?"

Startled, I raised my eyebrows.

"Of course. What——"

"Well, that's the answer. The natural sunlight in this Invisible World is composed of ultra-violet light only—not a mixture of colours like our own sunlight, such as you see through a glass prism."

He tapped me sharply on the knee.

"Now, our naked human eyes can't detect ultra-violet light—or any object that is bathed in ultra-violet light either—unless we wear special goggles. These goggles of ours are made of rock crystal; and, my son"—his voice grew hard and impressive—"if you leave them off, or lose them, you'll be sunk. Because, apart from not seeing a single thing, the sunlight up here will burn your unprotected eyes out in ten minutes!"

Like Indians on the warpath, we crawled back to the Meteor. Reaching the foot of the ladder, Mark incautiously forgot his own warning, and rose to his feet in the ordinary way. He shot into the air as though from a spring, and only by clutching desperately at the edge of the door did he save himself from a bad fall.

When he recovered his breath, we both laughed like hyenas. But it was going to take us some time to get used to the new state of affairs—and walking about the ground in a series of ten-yard leaps!

The Jungle Fiends!

BACK in the Meteor, I started to cook some grub, while Mark took a header into his weird charts and diaries. In spite of my heavy croppers, I felt marvellously strong and fit, and presently a new sensation dawned on me, as though a warm electric current were running vigorously through all my muscles. Mighty pleasant it was, too—there must be something good in the Invisible World air, I thought; and then I remembered hearing that natural violet-ray is the best tonic in the world.

Lost in a reverie as I watched the coffee brewing, I was startled to hear Mark jump suddenly to his feet and dive towards a locker above his bunk. Taking a pair of field-glasses with blue lenses, such as we were wearing in our goggles, he strode across to the door and looked intently into the jungle. The expression on his white face when he turned again brought me to his side in a flash.

"Mark! What's the matter?"

Without a word, he handed me the glasses and pointed with a trembling finger.

"People! Human beings; and—and other things!"

I swung up the glasses like lightning, sweeping the tangled "bush." From the height of the Meteor's deck I could see right across the expanse of tiny trees, and within a second I found what had sent him groggy.

"Gr-great Scott!"

Almost directly in front of our landing-place, but a good mile inside the jungle, was one of the bare, rocky patches we had seen first—evidently the result of some ancient volcanic explosion. It was a larger patch than most—about sixty feet square—and as I looked, all of it seemed to move and sway in a horrible dance.

Focusing the glasses exactly, I stared harder, and my backbone tingled unpleasantly. It was not the ground itself that was moving, but the creatures on it. Scores and scores of hideous dull green apes, with long, hairy limbs and squat, distorted bodies!

I call them apes, because that is the only earth-animal I can liken them to; but they were broader, taller, and too diabolical for words. Also, they had but one eye apiece, deeply set in the centre of their sunken heads, from which blazed a luminous yellow glow.

In and out of the strewn rocks and spikes of stone they weaved, throwing their green limbs about in transports of delight, while presently to our ears came the gobbling, guttural sound of their cries. They poured on to the rocky platform, the vanguard squatting down, and looked cagerly behind them, to where others moved in from the forest.

What I saw then made my head reel.

In front of the second party of apes, hemmed in and prodded brutally through the trees, came a wretched body of human beings, men and women screaming and begging in vain for mercy.



"Berserk with rage and loathing, I leapt in among the ape horde—smashing, hammering, kicking with all my might."

They were a pigmy race, clad in tattered flowing gowns. The tallest of them was less than two feet high, and they were as wild and as unkempt as any savages from the depths of Africa. But they were human beings of some kind, there was no doubt of that. And their fate was obvious. They were being herded on to this grisly stone table to make a feast for these green-haired fiends.

During a long minute, in which our limbs refused to act, Mark and I stared at the coming horror. The humans had been thrown carelessly into a heap, and the apes ringed them round, chuckling and slobbering at each other, their sabre-toothed jaws dripping with saliva. Every sinew in my body was quivering to snap into action, futile though I knew it was, when, out of the jungle on all sides, rose another cry, long-drawn, bestial, triumphant. The little trees swayed and creaked as heavy bodies crashed through, and into the ring dashed another horde of apes, single-eyed, hairy-limbed, but blazing orange in colour!

The effect on the green devils was terrific.

In one movement their human captives were gathered inside a hollow square, and then began the most repulsive fight that ever sickened an onlooker.

Smash! The two parties came together, shattering the silence of the jungle with awful yells, screeches, and wails. The creatures fought tooth and nail, rending their opponents to the tune of blood-curdling howls, biting, and braining each other with rocks and stones.

Up and down the platform the battle swayed in a whirl of green and orange, the poor little human beggars being swept about like straws as the defending ring gave or held. The sight of their tiny, fear-crazed faces and puny bodies sent me suddenly mad. Why I did it, I don't know—although Mark said afterwards it was the sort of asinine thing he expected of me—but, heedless of his hoarse roar of alarm, I jumped savagely out on to the beach, determined somehow to rescue those pigmy men and women from the vile ghouls.

Our turret gun did not occur to me: in any case, it would have been useless, for all three

parties were hopelessly entangled now. My first jump threw me heavily to earth, but I scrambled up and jumped forward again, this time landing on my feet. With a snort of joy, I flung myself into my stride, and went leaping waist-high through the red jungle, covering twelve yards and more at a stretch, falling often, but getting faster as I became used to the wild, ground-devouring boulders.

Sometimes I jumped on a tree, breaking it down as I would a bush back home, tearing myself free, and plunging onwards to where the shrieks and wails grew louder and clearer. The tough, metallic leaves tore at my legs, but my leather flying-suit saved me from harm, and only once did I stop. Within a few yards of the fight, it dawned on me that I was unarmed—not so much as a gun or spanner in my pockets.

Whirling round, I grabbed a small tree and snapped it like a sapling. It made a fine, stout club, nearly three inches thick! And, with that in my fist, and an icy fury in my heart, I burst in on the fighting devils like a landslide.

The yell with which the fight had started was nothing to the one which ripped out when I butted in. As I vaulted over the last few trees, laughing like a maniac and clean Berserk with rage and loathing, the apes stopped fighting and gave back in amazement. Before they could recover, I had cleaned up four of them with as many swipes of my club, and was right in the middle of the captives.

After that—I was busy!

Sinking their hatred in a common cause, green apes and orange banded together and came at me like yelling fiends. The biggest only reached to my waist, but their long, snaky arms made up for lack of height, and they swarmed round, tearing, rending, biting, trying to pull me down and mangle me.

My hat, what a fight it was! I can always hit pretty hard, but now, with that curious electrical tingle strengthening my muscles, and the desperate corner I was in lending a frenzied snap to my blows, I smashed, hammered, and kicked away with all my might.

Either the apes were frailer than they looked, or else—as Mark told me later—my strength had multiplied many, many times in the atmosphere of the Invisible World,

but every time my club landed an ape went down for good. Their darting arms snapped like firewood when I hit them, their heads caved in and backs broke before the blows I rained on them as fast as I could.

Backed against a rock, with the little humans huddling against me, I managed to keep the beasts at bay. Those I missed with the club I punched in the face or kicked, and the result was the same. Yet still they came on until I was gasping for wind, and my arm was growing tired.

Their unwinking, yellow eyes never left my face, my head was swimming with their vile breath. How much longer I could have lasted I do not know, but at that moment, through the forest, came Mark, a gun in each hand and a third in his belt. He was a sight for sore eyes to me!

The apes tumbled to him as soon as I did, and their rear rank, facing round immediately, leapt for him, screaming and raving. Over the heads of the brutes in front of me I saw his hands burst into flame, and the onrush melted as though caught by a blaze of shell-fire.

They were heavy Colts he carried, and the atmosphere had the same effect on the hitting power of those bullets as it did on my muscles. The reports of the shots rang out with deafening force, and each leaden pill smashed its way through four or five of the closely packed bodies in its path. A full volley blew the nearest apes into rags.

That stopped 'em all right, and before they could rally I charged again, scattering them like chaff, while Mark reloaded and let drive once more, good and hearty. He came running up to me across the piles of dead.

"You big stiff—" he began indignantly, but I snatched a gun and dried him up. He was my boss in the laboratory, etc., but he couldn't teach me anything about rough-housing.

"Rats! Get these poor little blighters to the ship!" I yelled. "I'll bring up the rear. Go on—leg it!"

He obeyed like the stout troop he was. Waving his arms, he shepherded the frightened pigmies into the forest, while I, with my hefty club and loaded gun, waited for a fresh onslaught by the green and orange demons.

I hadn't long to wait. As soon as they saw their hard-won prey vanishing they came for me, snarling softly, their long fangs glistening. Quickly I backed into the path Mark had taken, which was a good move, for whereas the apes had to break through the little trees to get at me, I could reach over and swat them as they came. Some of them must have broken through ahead, for I heard Mark's gun roar twice. But the rest wanted me.

I hit them off again and again until my arm faltered, at which one of them ducked under my guard and sprang for my throat, his talons tearing long, deep scratches in my leather jacket. Forced to drop my club, I

WHEN YOU'RE AT THE SEASIDE

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picked him up fiercely and hurled his body in the faces of his friends, smashed up a rush with my revolver, and began using the butt for a club. When they tried to surround me, I saved myself by a huge leap over their heads.

So I retreated to the beach, fighting every step, leaving twisted, silent figures in my wake, over which leapt others, eager to share the same fate.

On the edge of the jungle I broke free for a moment, long enough to take a quick glance back at the Meteor. To my relief, Mark had brought the pigmies safely to the ladder—twenty of 'em at least—and was chucking them into the cabin like so many dolls.

Facing front again, I noticed that right across the skyline the vast mountains had broken into a glittering crimson, as though made of red-hot metal, and a queer, bright light sparkled from the highest peak. I had no time to see more, though, for just then the apes rushed me again.

One of them, bursting through the undergrowth, hurled a stone that hit me just above the eyes. I felt a grim trickle down my face, but, worse than that, I went cold all over at the narrow escape. My one great fear all through had been that by some unlucky blow I should lose my precious goggles, and thus finish, blind and powerless, in the hands of these screaming ogres.

Another stone buzzed at me, and, luckily, I caught it and heaved it back. It missed the leading ape by inches, but stove in the skull of the next; and then I bolted helter-skelter for the ship.

To my amazement, a cloud of oily vapour had appeared since my last glimpse of the beach, and the Meteor was half hidden in its dense, heavy wreaths. As the fumes swirled near me, I caught a vile whiff of them, and nearly choked.

This was a new attack!

Mountains of Fear!

CROWDING on all speed, I jumped high through the vapour, and gasped to see Mark, red with anger and alarm, coughing as though he would burst, while he tried feebly to push the last few pigmies up the ladder.

They, poor beggars, were in an even worse funk now than when the apes had captured them. They were twittering frantically among themselves, and scrambling up the ladder as fast as they could go, encouraged by their friends already inside.

Next instant I saw the reason for their fear. A fresh gush of vapour sprang up almost beneath them. Mark gave a terrible cough and sank to his knees, and as for the pigmies, they just tumbled off the ladder and stayed where they fell—dead without a struggle!

It took me ten seconds to pick Mark up

and sling him bodily through the cabin door, follow him myself, and close the steel door. A trickle of the vapour must have leaked inside, for two of the pigmies lay dead beside the instrument-board, but the others had huddled beneath the bunks, where they were safe for the moment.

The gas did not affect me badly, beyond making me choke and sneeze, and soon Mark, too, began to recover, for he staggered to the medicine chest and got busy with thymol solutions and an emetic. For my part, I clambered into the gun-turret, looking for trouble.

For the first time I saw plainly what was causing the vapour. Across the jungle, from the direction of the glowing mountains, great, thick rings of smoke were spinning towards us, dissolving at length into clouds. So there *were* people dwelling up there—and they were hostile!

Again that curious twinkle from the high peak caught my eye. Was it some sort of weapon flashing there? I looked regretfully at our own sturdy gun, but the range would be too great even in the lighter density of this twilight world of terror.

However—and my eyes narrowed vindictively—I could do some good with our gun. And I did! On the edge of the beach, advancing towards us in a green and orange mob, came the apes, hundreds of them now—reinforced, I suppose, from all over the jungle.

Slipping a shell into the gun, I depressed the muzzle and fired point-blank into the mass. The stunning roar of that little projectile made even the stout Meteor shiver; but when I saw the damage it had done, I nearly swooned!

In the centre of the attackers an enormous crater yawned, and surrounding it on all sides lay dead and dying apes, while others crawled away dazedly, dragging shattered limbs behind them. Those who had escaped, after one bemused look, turned and bolted back into the jungle for dear life.

For some time the swaying of the little red trees marked their frantic retreat; and after that silence fell once more. Mark had recovered, and was watching the mountains through his glasses, but presently, as the gas attack grew worse, he slid into the driving-seat without a word, and the engines purred softly into life.

Softly and quietly we sped away, across the smooth violet sea, until that awful beach and jungle had vanished in the mists and only the fiery mountains shone through.

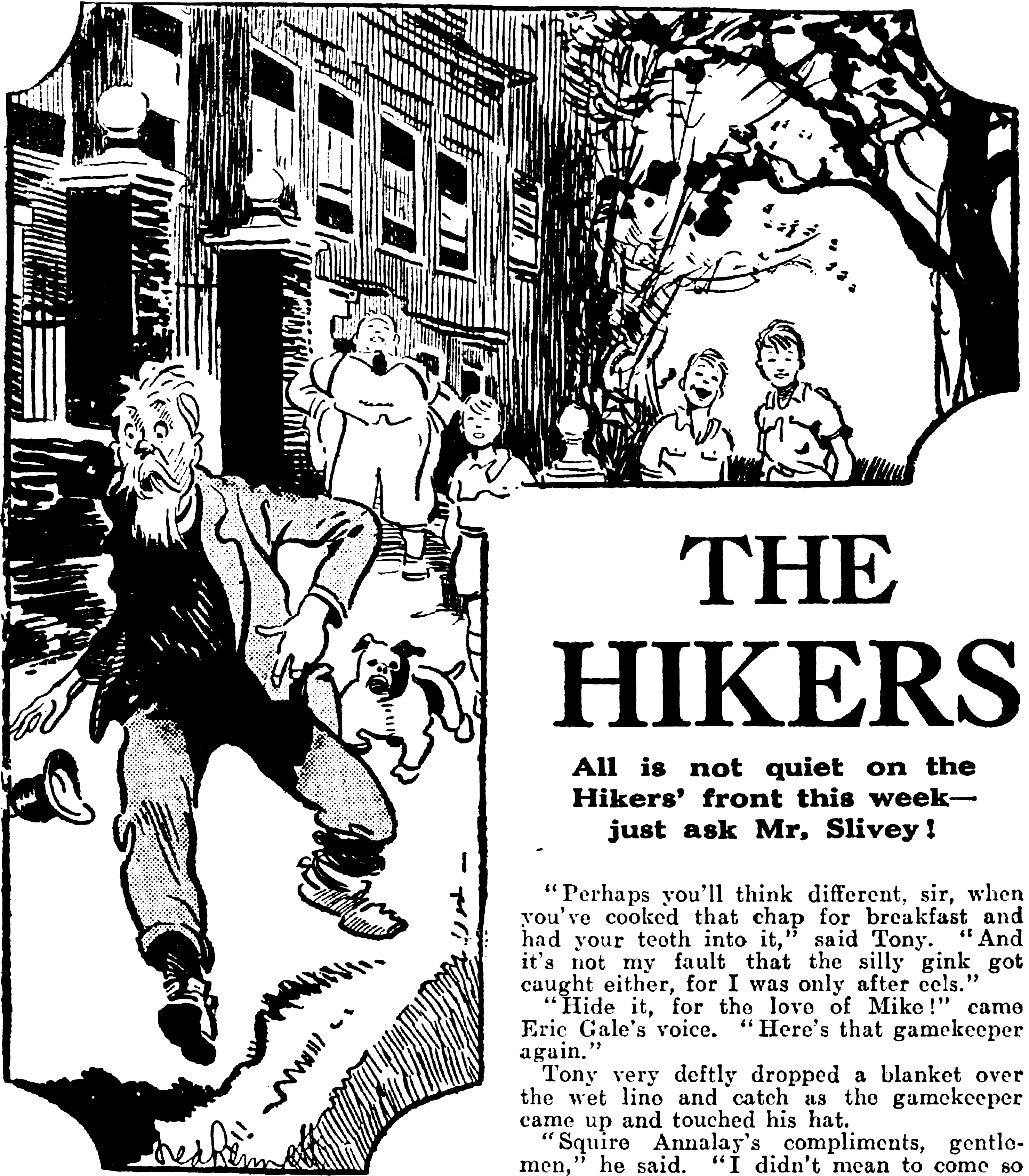
So ended our first adventure in the Invisible World. We knew now that enemies, strong and powerful, lived there, watching our every move, ready for battle.

We were ready, too!

THE END.

(More amazing, more thrilling—next week's story in this grand series will make you sit up and gasp, chums! Take a note of the title: "Gods of Lebanon!")

Our Three Cheery Chums In Another Breezy Adventure!



Mr. Slivey Tries Again!

IF Bloop snored and sang snatches of song in his sleep it did not disturb the slumbers of Tony Ridgers. Tony was up before the lark to pull his night line out of the old mill-pool. On the hooks were two fat eels and one very handsome trout.

Bloop, who was getting ready for a swim, shook his head reproachfully at the trout.

"You're a ghastly poacher, Tony," he said. "When your dad retires as head gamekeeper from my father's estates I don't think we can give you his job."

THE HIKERS

**All is not quiet on the
Hikers' front this week—
just ask Mr. Slivey!**

"Perhaps you'll think different, sir, when you've cooked that chap for breakfast and had your teeth into it," said Tony. "And it's not my fault that the silly gink got caught either, for I was only after eels."

"Hide it, for the love of Mike!" came Eric Gale's voice. "Here's that gamekeeper again."

Tony very deftly dropped a blanket over the wet line and catch as the gamekeeper came up and touched his hat.

"Squire Annalay's compliments, gentlemen," he said. "I didn't mean to come so soon, but I guessed you'd be awake. The squire would like Mr. Tarrants and his two friends to lunch with him at two o'clock. I'm going 'ome to bed now, but I'll send a man down to see as nobody interferes with the camp while you're away. That's Annalay 'All, where you can just see the chimney-pots above the trees."

"Right-o!" said Bloop, whose real name was Eustace Giles Trevor Radlett Tarrants. "We'll be there!"

Tony sat down suddenly, for the eels were squirming under the blanket, and he did not want the keeper to notice it. Bloop heaved a sigh when, after another salute, the gamekeeper turned away.

"This is too ghastly, chaps. I've never heard of the old boy, but I expect he knows my dad, and now we've got to suffer for it."

"Then why did you accept the silly invitation?" Eric demanded.

"To keep the 'keeper out of the way before he saw the tail of that poached trout sticking out from under the blanket," answered Bloop. "Old Annalay may be as rabid against poaching as my guv'nor is, and have wanted to shoot Tony at dawn."

The three boys were on a go-as-you-please hike, and they had pitched camp by a ruined mill in the neighbourhood of a beautiful spot known as Little Firkett. They sky-larked in the cool mill-pool for twenty minutes, rubbed themselves down and dressed. Eric and Tony had brought a bottle of milk from the nearby farm, and over breakfast they discussed Mr. Slivey and his friend Slimmy, two rascals with whom the Hikers had had trouble the previous day.

"If they were after loot or revenge, or both, they didn't get much change out of you, Bloop," grinned Eric. "I'm jolly sorry we missed most of the fun. After that dosing I fancy they'll pack up and let us alone."

When everything was snug they got afloat their hired boat and rowed upstream to the village. The long morning passed quickly enough, and when they sculled down to the camp they found the youth the gamekeeper had promised to send, already on duty.

"If an ancient-looking old thief with grey whiskers comes nosing round, hoof him into the river," was Bloop's parting advice to the guard. "His name's Slivey, and he's a thorough rascal."

The clear morning air had made the chimneys of Annalay Hall appear to be much closer than they really were. It was a fine old house standing in a well-timbered park with a lake, and a footman answered their ring and bowed them in.

The squire, short, red-faced and grey-haired, was waiting in the hall to greet them. He looked at them in turn, and then extended his hand to Bloop.

"No mistaking Trevor Tarrants' boy, though I've not set eyes on Sir Trevor for years," he said. "I saw in the newspapers he's back in England for a long spell, so I'm driving over to see him and invite myself to stay a week."

Bloop introduced Eric Gale and Tony Ridgers.

"Glad to meet you, boys," said the squire. "We'll have a bit of lunch in about twenty minutes. Come in here and help yourselves if there's anything you fancy. I've a telephone call to make."

Bloop and his chums went into a big, cool dining-room with wide bow-windows overlooking the park.

"A jolly old boy, by the look of him," said Eric. "Who says bottled cyder to wash the dust out? I feel as thirsty as an eel in a bag of ashes."

Eric uncorked three of the bottles that were cooling in a silver ice pail.

"M-yum! The very goods!" he said, smacking his lips. "That's what I call a first-rate cooler. Like it, Tony?"

"A lot better than I like that, chum," answered Tony, and nodded in the direction of the windows. "What's the game now?"

Through the windows they saw Mr. Slivey limping towards the house. He was wearing an old and mossy tall hat, and leaning heavily on a stick. The bell rang, and then, through the half-closed door, they heard the visitor's voice.

"I want to see the magistrate about a summons," he said. "None of your silly summonses for a bash on the nose or a thump on the ear, young feller, but assault and attempted murder."

Bloop emptied his glass and yawned.

"The squire's busy," said the footman. "You'd better come back about three."

"Not if there's any law and justice in England, I don't!" said Mr. Slivey. "I want that summons served on the murderous villain afore he has time to 'op it. How would you like to be riddled with bullets and go in fear of your life, and 'ave to wait till three o'clock?"

"What's this, what's this?" asked the squire's gruff voice. "What does the fellow want?"

"I wants a summons agen' a young chap named Trevor something Tarrants for shooting at me with a revolver larst night with intent to murder me, sir," said Mr. Slivey, speaking for himself. "Look at this 'ere bullet 'ole in me 'at."

Tony and Eric exchanged glances, and Bloop gave another yawn. Lazy Bloop was a quick thinker, and he understood Mr. Slivey's latest idea in a flash. The cunning old rogue did not intend to proceed with the charge, for once he had recovered from his fright he must have known that the revolver was only a dummy, and that the magistrates would dismiss the case. He also knew that Sir Trevor would not wish his son to appear in a police-court, and would be willing to pay Slivey a useful sum of money to have the summons withdrawn.

"So a Mr. Trevor Tarrants fired a revolver at you, did he?" said the squire. "You want me to issue a summons, eh? You'd better come and swear a declaration. Have you a witness?"

"I 'ave, an' all—only he ain't in a fit state to witness nothink yet, pore feller!" replied Mr. Slivey, gaining confidence. "He was fired at, too, and he's been moanin' and shiverin' all night in mortal terror, a nervous wreck, but I'll fetch him into the witness-box when he's wanted. What about this 'ere bullet 'ole in me 'at for a witness?"

Bloop opened the dining-room door and stepped out, and at the sight of him Mr. Slivey almost staggered.

"Clear out of it, Slivey," Bloop said. "This blackmail business won't wash, and

there'll be no cash. I certainly did shoot at him, sir," he added to the squire, "but only with a dummy revolver and blank cartridges. I found him skulking at the back of our tent on his hands and knees. He thought we were all asleep, and he'd sneaked up with his blackguardly pal to rob us."

Mr. Slivey was backing towards the open door.

"Bruff!" roared the squire. "Here, boy, here! Scat him!"

Bruff, who had been snoring on a distant mat, awoke and came. He was a bulldog, rather ancient and very fat, but he looked ferocious enough to tackle and eat a tiger.

"You black-aided pig, I'll 'ave yer yet!" yelled Mr. Slivey, with a ferocious glare at Bloop.

Bruff might have remained strictly neutral but for the fact that Mr. Slivey, in his rage, flung his mossy old hat and walking-stick at the dog. That roused the dog to a fine old rage. He went after Mr. Slivey as fast as his bow-legs and shortness of breath would let him travel, and without any vestige of a limp Mr. Slivey fled down the carriage drive with the bulldog in hot pursuit.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the amused Hikers. "Go it, Slivey! Go it, Bruff!"

The squire put his hands to his sides and laughed, too, and even the footman, who had one of those wooden faces usually noticed on footmen when on duty, grinned and uttered a few hollow chuckles.

"It's rather a pity you didn't shoot the blackguard, Trevor," said the squire, as Bruff gave up the chase and stood panting. "Remind me to telephone to the police after lunch. I'll have that chap and his pal shifted out of the neighbourhood in quick time."

"That certainly won't do the neighbourhood much harm, sir," said Bloop, "but I've got a sneaking admiration for old Slivey. He tries all the time, and he doesn't seem to know when he's beaten."

"He'll know he's beaten if I tackle him, lads," said the squire. "I've been sitting on the bench for thirty years, and I know how to handle rogues and vagabonds of that stamp."

They had an excellent lunch. They enjoyed the lunch, and they liked the squire, but they did not want to stay there all day. Then, to the great relief of the boys, unexpected visitors arrived, and the boys took their leave.

"Poor old Slivey!" grinned Bloop, as they hiked back to camp. "He's a goer, but he's shockingly unlucky. If he'd hit on any other magistrate except the squire, who by a pure fluke happens to be a friend of the gov'nor, he'd have got his summons."

"Perhaps he'll try another magistrate," said Tony.

"Not round here, for it won't come off, and he knows it. If the squire didn't forget to 'phone the police, he's been warned off before this. I'm rather sorry, for it was only Slivey who made this silly hikin' stunt

bearable. What an ass I was to come at all! What a long-eared ass!"

"Why are you always grouching about it?" said Eric. "If you don't like it you can always clear out."

"The Tarrants, dear lad, as you ought to know, never clear out till they're thrown out," said Bloop. "I've started on this giddy walking tour, and I'll go on to the bitter end."

"You'd better clear out now, anyhow, sir!" cried Tony. "Look! They're back!"

They saw the youth who had been left in charge of their camp bolting down the mill lane waving a blanket round his head, and wheeling about the tent was a dark, buzzing cloud.

The Hikers had already had one painful encounter with a large horde of bees who had nested in the old mill. Very obviously the bees had returned and were in possession of the camp.

"The next parish for me," said Bloop, and legged it. "I'm a mover."

Wet and Sticky!

SOON after dawn next morning Eric Gale pulled the boat up on the owner's landing-stage, left it there, and went to meet his two chums. They had been driven from home all afternoon on the previous day, for the bees had stayed round the camp until nearly sunset.

After that, though they liked the camping ground and hardly hoped to find a better one, they had decided to move on, for the bees were getting a nuisance.

"Let's hang on to the river as long as we can," said Eric, when Bloop and Tony appeared with the dunnage. "A swim before breakfast is the best fun of the day."

"Anywhere you like," said Bloop, "but you might let a poor chap get his proper rest. I absolutely hate getting up in the middle of the night."

They parked on the roadside for breakfast, where there was a stretch of grass, and very soon their old acquaintance, Mr. Slivey, came along. His rascally pal, Slimmy, was pushing the grindery and tinkering gadget, and beside them walked a youthful constable who was escorting them out of the village.

"Good-morning!" said the boys politely.

"Good-morning!" said the constable.

Slimmy said nothing, nor did Mr. Slivey at the moment, but when they had passed he turned back and glared at Bloop, who was lazily stirring his tea.

"You think you're a smart 'un," he said. "You've 'ad the best o' me so far, I allows that, but I'll get yer! We'll meet again sooner than you think, and I'll get yer!"

"Here, come along, you!" ordered the policeman, turning. "Come out of it!"

The boys gave Mr. Slivey a military salute, and he went off growling and muttering.

"I don't think he likes any of us much, but he doesn't seem to like you a little bit, Bloop," said Eric.

Tony's aim was magnificent—and Mr. Slivey's face was lost to view in a mush of tomato pulp.



It was a ramshackle, covered-in van, with patched tyres and a rattle-jack engine, and it was being driven very slowly by a man in his shirt-sleeves: it's owner, Mr. Abner Stoops, the bill poster from Bickerthorpe. Mr. Stoops was a little snub-nosed man with eyebrows like a pair of blacking-brushes, and a huge thirst. He was also Mr. Slivey's first cousin, but Bloop did not know that.

As Bloop raised his hand, Mr. Stoops pulled up his collection of scrap iron, canvas and rubber.

"If you wanted cyder, I could tell you lots of places, but milk ain't much in my line since I was a kid," he said. "I dessay they'd let you 'ave a drop at Cherrygate Farm."

"Where's that?"

"Campin', ain't you?" said Mr. Stoops, ignoring the question. "That must be nice and 'ealthy. Oh, about that 'ere milk. Funny thing, but I seems to know your face. Your name don't 'appen to be Coshier, does it?"

"It does not happen to be Coshier," said Bloop, "and if you don't know where I can buy a pint of milk, buzz your ironmongery out of the way, and I'll ask somebody else."

"Right, Abner!" cried a voice.

The van moved forward its own length, revealing the unexpected vision of Mr. Slivey standing in it, with a dirty bucket in his hand. While Bloop and the driver had been discussing milk and other things, the knife-grinder had been busy stirring scraps of torn paper, bits of hay and straw and any other rubbish into a pail of stale and sticky paste. Howling with glee and triumph, he

(Continued on page 43.)

The road wound away from the river, and the Hikers wanted to get off the road before the day's traffic started snorting past. At last they sighted the river again, and seeing some home-grown tomatoes displayed for sale in a cottage window, Eric Gale went in to buy some.

"There's a lane down to the river about a mile farther on, chaps," he said. "We'll try it. Shove these things in the cart, Tony, only don't squeeze 'em. They're real good 'uns, but they're getting a bit ripe and squashy."

They found the lane. Then Bloop, who hated condensed milk, decided that they'd better have some fresh milk before they got off the main road, for then there would be little chance of obtaining any unless they discovered a farm.

"Then you scout for it," said Eric, "and we'll push down here and find a pitch."

"It doesn't look too easy," said Bloop. "There doesn't seem to be a house or a native of these savage wilds within miles. Hallo! There's a rotten old tin trunk on wheels rattling in our direction.

if You're Not Reading This Serial You're Missing A Treat!

Knights of the Road!



**A Romance
of Olden
Times.**

**By
DAVID
GOODWIN.**

**Dark Deeds at
Duncansby!**

“**M**Y nephew is delicate,” said Vane, “but, of course, you will know what to do.”

“Oh, quite!”

“As to the fees now,” said Vane.

The two men eyed each other in silence for a moment.

“The fees?” Callard coughed. “There are two classes of fees at Duncansby, Mr. Forrester. I think we understand each other? There are some boys—a good many—who, for many reasons, their guardians or parents do not wish to have charge of. Many boys are better at school than at home, and not too near their homes. The diet of a school, the discipline, the restraint, are better for them—you understand me? Such boys as these have the benefits of board and tuition at a cost of twenty-five guineas a year.”

“The board must be excellent,” said Vane dryly, “judging by the healthy, well-fed pupils I saw downstairs.”

“So they’ve been peeping out, have they?” muttered Callard. “I’ll flog the hides off them for that! Well, sir,” he added aloud with another smirk, “there is not a great deal of profit to be made out of twenty-five guineas a year. But their parents often cannot afford more, and the boys—their affection for Duncansby School is touching! I have many of these boys who have not been out of the school for eight or twelve years.”

Telling how two scoundrels plot the death of an innocent boy.

“Touching, indeed!” said Vane with a sneer. “But as to the second class of fees?”

“Ah,” said the schoolmaster, his cruel

mouth tightening at the corners, “they are much higher. There are some boys who do not remain with me quite so long—who are not expected to, you understand. They are delicate perhaps—although they may not look so—and they are apt to sicken and die.”

“I see,” said Vane. “I am glad to have had this talk with you.”

“Such boys,” continued Callard, his eyes fixed on Vane’s, “are a risk. It lowers the reputation of the school’s health, you perceive, if the boys die here. So, in the case of boys who are likely to die—you understand?—we charge twenty guineas a term. And to recompense us for the disadvantage of a boy dying here we ask a deposit of one hundred guineas, which we return if the boys leave us in good health. That is the second class of fees. There are higher ones in special cases.”

“Hum!” said Vane. “And do you often return the hundred guineas? Do these boys frequently leave you in good health?”

“Extraordinarily enough,” said the schoolmaster, smiling, “we have never yet repaid the hundred guineas.”

“Indeed?” said Vane, returning the schoolmaster’s gaze.

“Alas! such is the sad fact. We have always been obliged to retain it. That proves

how wise we are in insisting on the deposit. The sum barely recompenses us."

"Ah!" said Vane in a low voice. "But surely in the case of a strong, healthy boy, under the second class of fees—is such a sad event likely to happen?"

"It is a most extraordinary fact," said the schoolmaster, "but, in spite—in spite, I say—of the good food, the light tasks, the—er—kindness, the tender care when sick, the boy somehow does not recover! He quits this wicked world for a better, brighter sphere. Ah, well, who shall say that he is the loser?"

"Certainly you are not the loser," said Vane grimly. "One hundred guineas is a sufficient salve to console you for the passing of a bright young life under your roof."

"One hundred guineas?" said Callard, in a voice of mild surprise. "It is not much. Why, it might happen that thousands of guineas and thousands of acres hang on the question. The boy might be an heir, or have the chance of becoming an heir. What a curious thing it would be if he was!"

"Curious, indeed!" muttered Vane.

There was a longer silence this time, and the men looked at each other.

"Mr. Forrester," said Callard softly, "I have explained the difference between the two fees. Which do you wish to pay?"

Vane unbuttoned his coat slowly and drew from it a roll of notes. He glanced under his eyebrows at Callard, and then counted out the value at twenty guineas, and then a hundred.

"Twenty for the term, one hundred for the deposit—in case of death," he said. "I choose the higher class of fee, Mr. Callard."

The schoolmaster counted the notes over carefully, and put them in his pocket-book. Then he wrote out a receipt for the twenty guineas and handed it to Vane.

"An acknowledgment of the term's fees," he said softly. "It is not our custom to give a receipt for the hundred guineas. Our clients usually prefer that there shall be no record of that. You may trust us absolutely. For the sake of our reputation, we make no mistakes."

"My only fear," said Vane, speaking very low, "is that you may return me the hundred guineas."

"Have no fear of that," replied the schoolmaster, blinking his red eyelids. "You will never see your hundred guineas again."

Vane Forrester turned to leave. He checked himself at the door and came back.

"My time is precious," he said.

"Mine also," replied Callard, bowing.

"Here," said Vane, looking at him keenly, "is another fifty guineas. It is to recompense you should you have the misfortune to lose your new pupil within a few days—say a week."

A thin, cruel smile hovered round the schoolmaster's face. He took the notes and bowed.

"I shall earn this fifty guineas!" he said softly.

Vane Forrester left the room, and a few minutes later his chaise-wheels ground on the gravel outside, and bore him swiftly away into the night—alone!

The Pride That Needed Breaking!

AS Vane's chaise-wheels rolled away into the night, Stephen Callard paced up and down the warm study, smiling a thin, sour smile. Then he crossed over and rang the bell.

Soon there were quick footsteps on the stairs, and Callard took down from its nail on the wall a heavy, knotted "tawse"—a thong of leather and cord. A moment later came a feeble knock at the door, and a starved-looking boy appeared.

"Come here!" said Callard in a rasping voice. The hollow-eyed youth obeyed, shaking in his shoes. "Thirty seconds!" said the schoolmaster, in tones like the grating of a file, as he pointed to the clock. "Haven't I told you, you little rat, that I only allow you fifteen seconds for answering my bell from downstairs? Haven't I tried to beat it into you time after time—eh?"

"Please, sir," said the boy piteously, "I ran as fast as I could. I couldn't come any quicker."

"We'll see about that!" said Callard, and, gripping the boy by the collar, he slashed him savagely half a dozen times with the tawse, making the boy's wasted body twist and squirm in his grip. Then he flung the boy from him. "Let that be a lesson to you, you idle little laggard! Now go down, and send the new boy up to me!"

The victim, still writhing, hurried out of the room, and soon reappeared with Ralph Forrester behind him.

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

DICK FORRESTER learns upon the death of his father that all the vast estates and fortune, with the exception of a hundred guineas, have passed into the hands of his rascally uncle,

VANE FORRESTER. The latter refuses to give the boy his money, and, appointing himself guardian, states his intention of sending Dick and his brother,

RALPH FORRESTER, to Duncansby School—a notorious place in the north of England, from which, once they arrive there, they are not likely to leave. Travelling north by coach, Vane and the two boys are held up by

DICK TURPIN, the famous highwayman. Dick joins forces with Turpin, and, after bidding Ralph to be of stout heart and promising to fetch him soon, the two ride away. They have many stirring adventures together until Dick leaves his companion and rides north to see how his brother is faring. In the meantime, Vane and Ralph have reached Duncansby School. It is a dreary, desolate place on the wild moorlands. Leaving Ralph in an ante-room, Vane interviews Mr. Stephen Callard, the headmaster, a cunning, cruel, scoundrelly man.

(Now read on.)

"Away with you!" said Callard to the boy he had thrashed. "Come in, Forrester, and shut the door very quietly behind you. Mark me, very quietly!"

Ralph hardly understood what he had to face. The order surprised him. He shut the door quietly enough, and turned to the schoolmaster in silence. Callard eyed him from top to toe for a few moments.

"I am your master," he said slowly. "Do you understand what that means?"

"My schoolmaster?" said Ralph in some wonder, looking the man up and down.

"Yes," said Callard, with an unpleasant smile. "I see you understand. Your schoolmaster. Your uncle has left you to receive the blessings of an education under my charge. Hem! Do you realise how grateful you should be?"

Ralph certainly was grateful, but not at the prospects of an education under Stephen Callard's care. It was because he was released from Vane Forrester's society. But he said nothing.

"I think," said the schoolmaster, biting the words off sharp as they fell from his thin lips, "you hardly realise your good fortune. Envious indeed is the life of a pupil at Duncansby School! The best of tuition, the most luxurious of comforts, excellent, wholesome food, and the soft lodging! Ah, me, to be a boy again!"

He fixed Ralph with a menacing eye.

"But make no mistake," continued Callard. "For all these good things I expect gratitude and cheerfulness in return. I will have a spirit of thankfulness and happy content in every boy under my roof, if I have to flog it into him as long as I can stand over his body! The boy who doesn't grumble over his food and his lodging is left alone, but the boy who does will rue it! Do you mark me, sirrah?"

"I understand you," said Ralph quietly.

A black look came over the schoolmaster's face, and he took a step forward.

"You have forgotten something. I require my pupils to call me 'sir.' Do you know that?"

Ralph lifted his eyebrows. This had not occurred to him. He hardly comprehended that this bullying plebeian could be set above him as a man of learning and authority. Why, he looked like a stableman, rather better dressed. But Ralph had never seen a stableman with such cruel eyes. It was evident that he was in the man's power, however, so he said simply:

"Yes, sir!"

"That is better," murmured Callard. "I shall teach you a thing or two before I have done with you. You look delicate. Do you ever fall ill?"

"I have a few colds, and once or twice I've been somewhat unwell, sir," replied Ralph.

"Boys are apt to fall ill in order to shirk their duties," said Callard slowly. "When they do, it must be whipped out of them. Remember that. And now to business. Did you bring any luggage?"

"I brought a travelling-bag, sir, and a valise."

"Go and fetch them."

They were more than Ralph could carry, but he went down and dragged them upstairs somehow. There was nobody to do it for him, so he had the good sense to be as quick as possible in doing it himself.

Callard's eyes brightened as he saw the prosperous-looking bags, and, taking the keys from Ralph, he opened them.

"Ah!" he said. "A very pretty outfit! But my pupils use the things I provide. Take these."

He opened a cupboard, and taking out a dirty, half-worn hair-brush, a cake of coarse soap, and a nightshirt made of stuff that looked like sacking, he threw them across to Ralph.

"Now go!" he said. "Off with you, and join your happy companions in the Common-room. Tell the boy who brought you up to come to me."

Ralph flushed as the filthy things were thrown at him; he let them lie where they were and left the room. Fortunately for him the schoolmaster was too engrossed in Ralph's luggage to notice. Ralph went downstairs, his heart sinking at what he had heard, and gave the starved-looking boy Callard's message.

"Send Master Alexander here," said the schoolmaster, still bending over Ralph's valise. "Egad! Two dozen fine cambric handkerchiefs and a pair of ivory brushes! Not bad—not at all bad!"

He flung everything worth keeping from the new boy's luggage into his private cupboard, and he was gloating over his find when a stout, evil-looking youth of about sixteen entered.

"Ah, Alick, my dear boy!" said his father affectionately—for the stout youth was his son. "I want to see you about this new boy, Forrester."

"Is that his luggage?" said the youth, strolling up with his hands in his pockets. He had the same vicious eyes as his father, deep sunk above his flabby cheeks. "My eye, we'll make a little profit out of him! I can have that riding-whip with the ivory handle, can't I? I want something with a sting in it to keep those brats in order."

"Take it, my dear boy," said his father. And he watched his son with tears of pride as Alexander tried the whip gently on his own palm, and then made it whistle through the air.

"It's a stinger!" said Alexander joyfully. "Won't I give it 'em! Won't it make their little hides smart! I'm going down to try it on young Smith minor! He's due for a wopping. He is getting above himself."

"Wait a minute, Alick—wait a minute," said his father. "Business before pleasure. I was telling you about this new boy. I can see by the look of him he has a proud stomach."

"We'll soon break that!" said his son. "Let me have him in the spare-room for an hour. Where is he?"

"Never mind for the present. You'll have all the amusement you want out of him later. But a good deal depends on this, Alick. He's a delicate-looking boy—just the kind that falls ill and gives trouble. We've got to harden him, Alick."

The villainous pair looked at each other and winked.

"He won't sleep in the dormitory," said Callard. "He's to have No. 7 bed-room. I want him kept to himself. It would be sad if he caught cold, so just to toughen his constitution you can go and throw a few cupfuls of water over his bed. Don't leave him any light."

"I twig," said Alick, grinning.

His father came a step nearer to him, and placed a clawlike hand on his shoulder.

"I want you to pay him special attention, Alick," said Callard in a low voice. "There is a deposit to be earned. He's one of those boys who are—not wanted! Do you understand me?"

Alexander nodded.

"Start on him at once," said Callard. "You can show him round to-night, and that pride of his will give you a good excuse. He isn't too respectful."

"Leave that to me!" said Alick, with a leer. "I'll go down now and make a start on him."

The precious pair exchanged another glance full of meaning, then the excellent Alexander made his way downstairs.

The Summons!

WHEN Ralph left the schoolmaster he wandered down to the room into which he and Vane had first been shown. He sat there on the solitary chair, thinking over what he had seen and heard.

"The place looks like a prison," he said to himself, "and if that fellow who calls him-

self the headmaster isn't a rascal, there never was one. He was trying to scare me. Well, we shall see."

The hungry-looking boy came in furtively, and stood looking at Ralph. His eyes were hollow, and the sallow skin stretched tightly over his cheekbones.

"What's your name?" he said in a cracked, quavering voice that had yet a touch of pity in it.

"Ralph Forrester. What's yours?"

"They call me Ben Garret. I live in one, you know."

"You don't look as if you get much of the good feeding Callard talked about," said Ralph.

"Good feeding!" echoed the other, with a dreary laugh. "There's not much of that at Duncansby. Ho, ho!"

There was something about the boy's mirthless laugh that chilled Ralph's blood. He felt as if he were talking to an old man in the shape of a boy—a man who had lived a life of suffering.

"What's this wheal across your face?" asked Ralph.

"Old Callard gave it me. But I haven't had a proper belting for two days. My people haven't paid for me for years, so I do the dirty work. You'll have to do a lot of it, too. We all do."

"Dirty work!" said Ralph. "What do you mean? I'm sent here to be taught."

"I've heard a good many say that," said Garret, with the same trembling laugh. "You'll think better of it when they start on you. But you've got to come to the Common-room now. I've been sent to fetch you. Have your people any money?"

"My father had," said Ralph shortly. "My uncle has it now. He brought me here."

"Did he?" muttered the boy. "Then Heaven help you! Come along, or we shall both get a belting!"

(More dramatic chapters of David Goodwin's gripping serial next week, chums—order your copy of the NELSON LEE now.)

THE HIKERS

(Continued from page 39.)

shot the contents of the bucket over Eustace Giles Trevor Radlett Tarrants, Esquire, in a sticky torrent.

"Gotcher!" he yelled. "Ooray! 'Op it, 'Abner!"

Tony Ridgers would have burlled a brick at Mr. Slivey, but he couldn't find a brick. His hand fell on the tomatoes, and he tore the bag open. Dashing after the car, he took aim with the largest, ripest and juiciest—and Tony was a magnificent shot.

Mr. Slivey's grinning face was lost to view in a mush of tomato pulp, and he tumbled back into the van, which was now clattering down the road at a rate that threatened to shake it to pieces. In the road a horrid spectre with bits of green, blue and yellow

paper, straws and wisps of hay sticking all over it, was dancing about, coughing and snorting.

That was Bloop.

"Where the—oooh—where the—grooh—where's the river?" he spluttered.

He cleared one eye sufficiently to see the gleaming river, and bolted for it. Tony and Eric gazed after him, and then fell into each other's arms, hysterical with laughter.

"Let's go and find him, Tony," grinned Eric. "If a farmer sees him looking like that he'll think poor old Bloop is a wild bagoolicum escaped from a menagerie, and chase him with a shot-gun!"

THE END.

(The Hikers at the top of their form next week—in a breezy yarn which will keep you chuckling from the word "go!")

ARCHIE'S AWFUL AUNT!

(Continued from page 29.)

in, and one of the opposing half-backs had mis-kicked. The ball unexpectedly swerved out to Archie Glenthorpe—and he proved himself to be an opportunist. Like a hare he swung sideways, trapped the ball, and spun round? The opposing backs were misplaced. There was only the goalie to beat.

"Shoot, Archie!" went up a yell.

Archie shot.

Slam!

The ball soared away, swerved cunningly, and hissed under the cross-bar, just out of K.K.'s reach.

A mighty roar went up.

"Goal!"

"It was Archie!" shrieked Aunt Cristabel, leaping up in her seat, and she was so excited that she brought the umbrella she was carrying crashing down on the head of Edgar Fenton, who happened to be sitting in front of her. "Archie, my dear boy! Oh, what a splendid effort!"

If Mr. Wilkes needed any proof that she was converted, he got it now. For the rest of the game she was far more noisy and excitable than any of the juniors. And she breathed a long, happy sigh of relief when the final whistle blew, leaving the score unaltered.

"It was Archie who scored the winning goal!" she said triumphantly. "Mr. Wilkes, let me go! I refuse to be held back any longer!"

She trotted across the field like a two-year-old, and having found Archie, she seized him by the shoulders and implanted an enthusiastic kiss on his lips. But in this salute she was rather late, for Marjorie Temple had got there first.

A RCHIE'S troubles were over.

He had completely squared himself with his girl chum, and Aunt Cristabel was converted. She left St. Frank's serenely happy, pledged to the task—as faithfully promised to Mr. Wilkes—of singing the praises of football wherever she went. Mr. Wilkes felt that he had done a good day's work.

But it was really Archie who had scored—in more senses than one.

THE END.

("The Fags' Union!" is the title of next Wednesday's corking complete school yarn featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's. Also look out for a magnificent detective-thriller story introducing Nelson Lee and the Night Hawk, entitled: "Rays of Death!" Don't miss these two wonderful yarns, chums!)

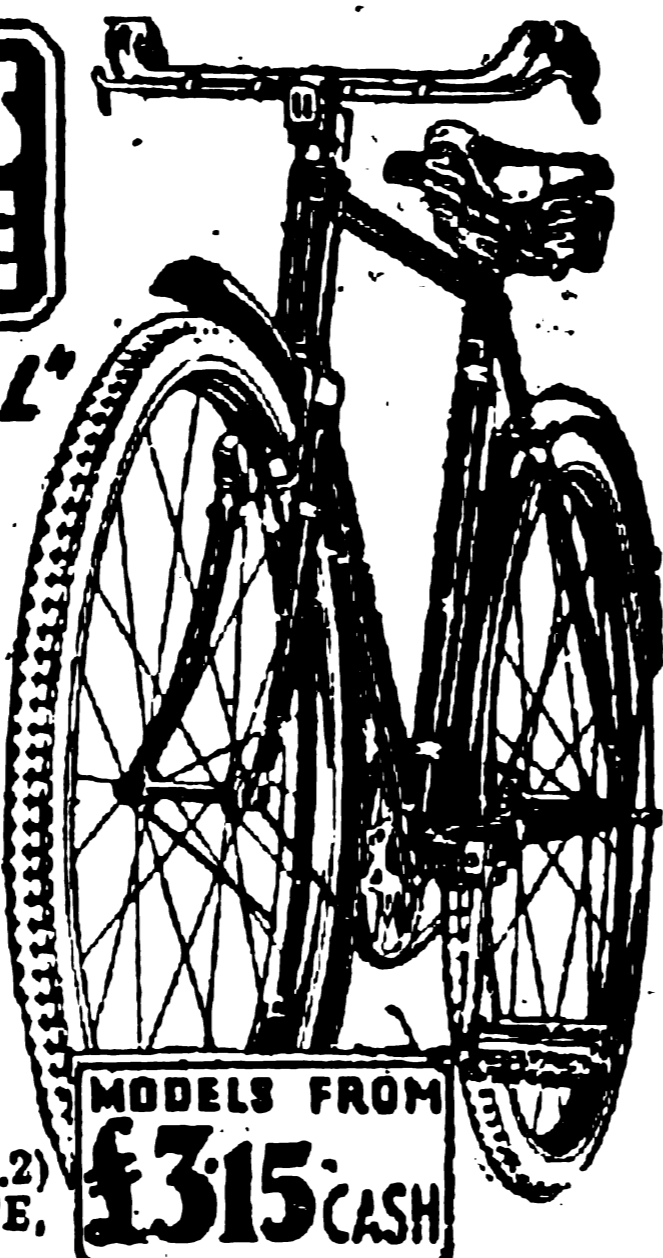
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