

NELSON LEE

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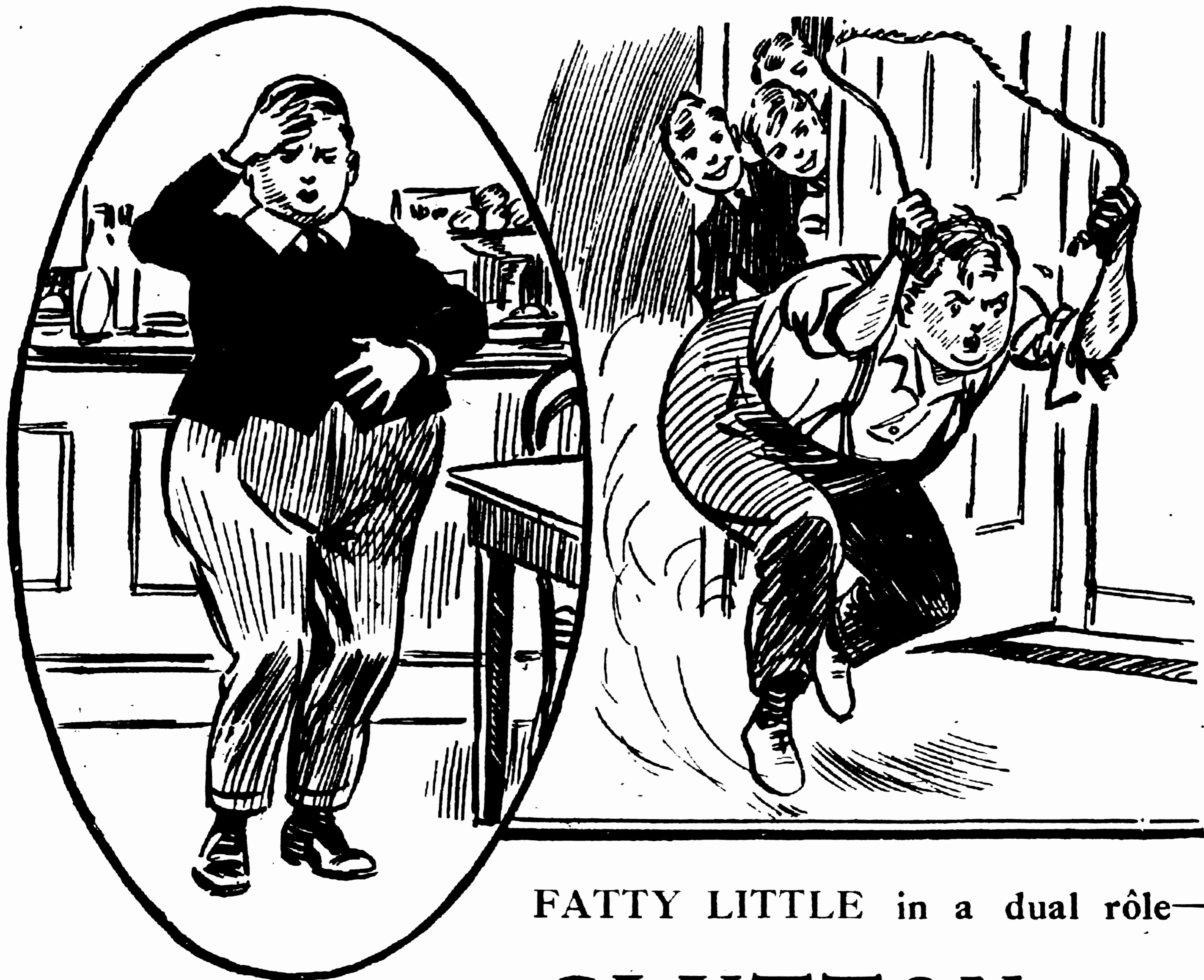
A
SAVING
SNACK!

Chest out—boomp!—a goal saved! Something new in goalkeepers—that's Fatty Little of St. Frank's. An uproariously funny school yarn, complete in this issue.

New Series No. 37.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

October 4th, 1930.



FATTY LITTLE in a dual rôle—

GLUTTON and

CHAPTER 1.

Not up to the Mark!

JAMES RODWAY LITTLE—otherwise known as “Fatty”—of the Remove Form at St. Frank’s, lumbered wearily along the Junior passage in the West House, turned into Study P, and sank into the easy-chair with a low groan.

“I’m not well!” he said plaintively.

The lean junior with the hollow eyes and projecting ears who was sitting at the table looked up from his books and passed a thin hand to his thick masses of sandy, curly hair. He gazed at Fatty, but apparently he didn’t see him.

“I’m not well, Nick,” repeated Fatty.

“Two hundred and fifty-six ought to be the answer, but it isn’t,” muttered the other. “Therefore, something is wrong. Very bothering!”

“You might have the decency to sympathise with a chap,” complained Fatty Little, with another groan. “I’m feeling ill. I don’t exactly know what’s wrong, but I’ve got a headache, and I keep getting flashes in front of my eyes.”

“Yes, it is very, very bothering,” said the other junior sadly.

“Can’t you answer me?” roared Fatty, glaring. “What’s up with you, Nick?”

“My dear fellow, it’s quite impossible,” said the lean one.

“What’s impossible?”

“When you tell me to be quick I can only answer that these problems are decidedly tricky, and quickness is all against a successful result,” said the junior at the table. “There is great truth in the old adage: ‘More haste, less speed.’ I can see that I have been too hurried over this sum.”

“Blow your sums!” growled Fatty. “I thought you were Nick—and you’re only Corny! I live with you chaps day in and day out, and I’m blowed if I can ever tell which of you is which!”

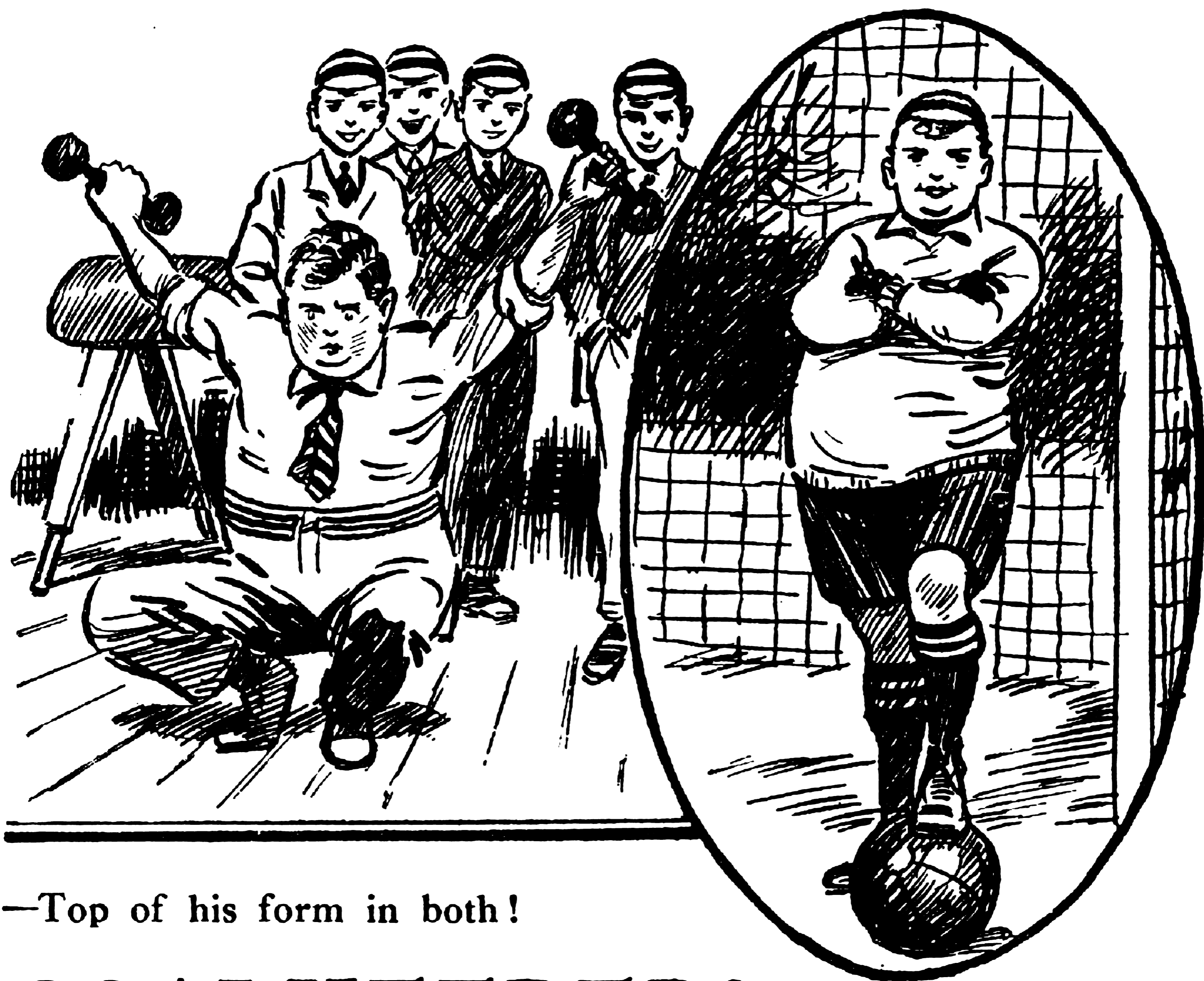
“Yes, that’s just the trouble,” said Cornelius Trotwood mildly.

“Eh?”

“I’ve had quite a hitch over this problem, and—”

“I didn’t say ‘hitch,’ I said ‘which’—but it’s no good telling you,” interrupted Fatty Little hastily. “Can’t you do something about that rotten deafness of yours, Corny? It strikes me it’s getting worse.”

A Feast Of Fun From Start To Finish!



—Top of his form in both!

GOALKEEPER!

"I shall do nothing of the sort," said Corny indignantly. "I'm surprised at you, Fatty Little, for advising me to curse!"

"I didn't do anything of the sort!" gasped Fatty. "I said you're getting worse—but what's the use?"

He gave it up. Talking to Corny Trotwood was a strenuous occupation, and Fatty was not feeling up to it at the moment. The trouble with these Trotwood twins was that they were exactly alike in features and figure, but totally different in every other respect.

Corny was a very mild youth. He was not only mild, but simple and innocent, and it was the easiest thing in the world to pull his leg. Nicodemus, on the other hand, belied his looks. Nick was actually a keen, quick-witted youngster, every bit as enterprising as such fellows as Reggie Pitt and Vivian Travers.

"I am afraid, Fatty, that you don't look well," remarked Corny, in a reflective voice, as he studied his companion. "Dear me! You are quite pasty."

"Just noticed it?" asked Fatty sarcastically. "Haven't I been telling you ever since

I came in that I'm feeling rotten? I feel shaky all over, and my head's buzzing like a saw."

"Your head is doing what?" asked Corny.

"Buzzing like a saw!" roared Fatty. "And you're making it worse!"

"My dear fellow, you needn't shout at me—I'm not so deaf as all that," protested Corny mildly. "I'm sorry to hear that your head is feeling so raw. I assume that somebody has been punching it?"

"Oh, leave me alone!" said Fatty, in a tired voice.

The door opened and Nicodemus bustled in. He gave Fatty a sharp look, shut the door, and walked across to the easy-chair.

"You're worse!" he said accusingly.

"You'd be worse, too, if you had to yell your lungs out at that deaf ass at the table!" said Fatty wearily. "He's nearly exhausted me!"

"If you were in fit condition a little shouting wouldn't exhaust you," replied Nick. "You've been getting worse for days, Fatty. You're not actually ill, but you're out of condition—you're seedy."

"I don't know what's the matter with me," groaned the fat junior. "When I wake up in the morning I'm thick-headed and dull."

"That's not your illness—that's natural," said Nick kindly.

"Ass! My tongue's all coated," went on Fatty. "I've no appetite for breakfast, and I go through the day without any interest. I've tried hard to put myself right, but the more I try the worse I feel."

Nick snorted.

"And no wonder!" he said tartly. "Your method of curing yourself is to loll about all day in the tuckshop, eating between meals until your tummy is so full that you can't even button your waistcoat. That's not the way to get well."

"Whenever I've felt seedy before, a course of eating has always put me right," said Fatty stoutly. "A chap can't live without food."

Nick was really concerned about Fatty Little. As a member of Study P, Nick felt more or less responsible for Fatty's health. Nick was the leader of the study, and it was a reflection upon himself that Fatty should be unfit.

Fatty was eating far too much, and exercising far too little. That was the long and the short of the trouble.

"Well, there's only one thing for it, Fatty—you'll have to report to the matron," said Nicodemus sternly. "I was hoping that you'd be better this evening, so that you could avoid it. But you're worse."

"I can't understand it," groaned Fatty. "I've only eaten six of Mother Hake's pies since tea-time."

"Six!" ejaculated Nick, aghast. "Those big ones?"

"They not very big."

"Rats! One of those pies is enough for any ordinary chap," said Nick indignantly. "You glutton! You're feeling ill, and all you can do is to make things worse by gorging yourself with stodgy pies. You'd better see the doctor instead of the matron."

"Not likely!" said Fatty, in alarm.

"But, my dear fat ass—"

"No doctors for me—or matrons, either!" interrupted Fatty. "Dr. Brett would bung me in the sanatorium straight away, and perhaps keep me there for a fortnight."

"You need to be kept there for a fortnight."

"On a starvation diet!" yelled Fatty.

"Exactly!" nodded Trotwood major. "The more starvation, the better."

"Here, draw it mild!"

"You crawl about from place to place with no more energy than an expiring snail," continued Nick. "And why? All because you're out of condition! Unless you pull yourself up sharply, you'll come to a sticky end. Goodness only knows what diseases you've got already."

"Diseases?" asked Fatty, horrified.

"Look at yourself!" roared Nick. "Get up and look at that horrible reflection of yours in the mirror!"

"I've looked!" moaned the fat junior. "Once is enough."

"Aren't you going to do something to put yourself in shape?" asked Nick. "It's no good sitting there and moaning. I'd better call the doctor, in any case."

"I don't want the doctor!" protested Fatty. "You know jolly well that he'll keep me in the sanny and starve me. Leave me alone, and I'll soon get well."

Cornelius gave a mild cough.

"I hope you don't mind, but would you finish your argument outside?" he asked gently. "I cannot possibly deal with this problem—"

"Never mind that problem," interrupted Nick. "What about Fatty's problem? He needs the doctor, but he won't realise it."

"Really?" asked Cornelius, who generally understood his own brother. "I quite agree, Nick. He does need the doctor. He's looking very groggy."

"Reggie Pitt's got some good stuff, Fatty," said Nick. "I think his mater sent it to him—a sort of bucking-up medicine."

"Fetch him, then!" pleaded Fatty, falling back in his chair.

"Dear me! He's worse!" said Corny, with concern. "Perhaps I had better fetch him, Nick."

"Yes, you go, Corny!" begged Fatty. "Be a good sport, and bring him here as quickly as you can."

Corny nodded and hurried out. It wasn't his fault that he had been misunderstood. He hadn't even heard that reference to Reggie Pitt. He took it for granted that he was required to fetch the doctor.

He considered that the step was being taken none too soon. Fatty Little looked very queer. But then, most people look queer when they are bilious.

"Whither away, sweetheart?" asked a cheery voice.

Cornelius faintly heard the hail as he was scooting past the Ancient House on his way to the sanny, where Dr. Brett, at this hour, was bound to be on duty. Kirby Keeble Parkington, the leader of the Red-Hots, was on the Ancient House steps.

"I beg your pardon?" said Corny. "Did you speak?"

"I did—I called you sweetheart," replied K. K.

"It's not his heart—it's his tummy, I'm afraid."

"Eh?"

"I'm going for the doctor for Fatty," explained Cornelius. "He's very bad."

"Fatty doesn't need a doctor," declared K. K. "What he needs is a ten-mile walk. And if his people would only stop his pocket-money, so that he couldn't be Mrs. Hake's best customer, he'd do better still. I've watched him lately, and every day he's getting more and more like a freak."

"More than a week," said Corny, shaking his head. "He's been getting like this for at least a month."

"Oh, my hat!" said Parkington, with a snort. "I thought I was talking to Nick—and it's Corny!"

He went indoors, and Corny proceeded on his way. He found the doctor just emerging from the sanatorium, and explained to him at once.

"Young Little?" repeated Dr. Brett, with a grunt. "I'm not a bit surprised. What's the matter with him now? Pains in his inner man? He ought to be more careful, considering his size."

"He's had too many, sir," said Corny.

"Eh? Too many what?"

"Too many pies, sir."

"All right—all right," said the doctor hastily. "It's a pity I can't do something with your ears, Trotwood. But I'm afraid you're a hopeless case."

"I hope he isn't, sir. Some of your medicine——"

"I said you're a hopeless case—not Little!" interrupted the doctor. "Come along! The less conversation I have with you the better."

CHAPTER 2.

Saved From the Doctor!

REGGIE PITT, the cheery leader of the West House juniors, opened the door of Study P and looked in.

"Glad you're here, Nick," he said briskly. "You are Nick, I suppose?"

"Yes," grinned Nicodemus.

"I shall want you for practice—— Hallo! What's the matter with Fatty?" asked Reggie. "I've seen him looking wonky at times, but never as wonky as this."

"Results of gluttony," said Nick bluntly.

"Oh, I say!" moaned Fatty. "Draw it mild, Nick! I haven't eaten any more than usual to-day."

"That's saying nothing," retorted Nick. "Your usual daily amount is enough to feed a giddy regiment! Well, where's that tonic, Reggie?"

"Which tonic?"

"Didn't Corny come and ask you for some of that special elixir that your mater sent you?"

"I haven't seen Corny this evening," replied Pitt.

"That's funny," frowned Nicodemus. "He went out of here—— By the way, have you just come from your own study?"

"Yes."

"H'm! Corny would have gone straight there—so this proves that he must have misunderstood," said Nick thoughtfully. "What were we talking about just before Reggie Pitt's medicine cropped up, Fatty? Corny's a masterpiece for getting hold of the wrong end of the stick."

"We were talking about my illness," moaned Fatty. "And that's as far as we got."

Nick suddenly looked startled.

"We were jawing about the doctor," he said. "Fatty, old man, you're sunk! That

ass of a Corny has gone to fetch the doctor!"

For an invalid, Fatty Little leapt up with surprising agility.

"I won't see him!" he gasped. "I don't want the doctor! I'm not as ill as all that! The doctor will report to the beaks, and I shall be kept in the sanny for the rest of the term. And they half starve you in there!"

"All right—I'll see what I can do," said Nick, and he left the study.

It was certain that Corny had gone for the doctor. He had unquestionably left Study P to fetch somebody, and as he hadn't even approached Reggie Pitt, the doctor was the only other person he could have gone to.

Nick ran across K. K. in the Triangle.

"Dead yet?" roared Parkington.

"Don't yell, you ass—I'm not Corny!"

"You chaps ought to be labelled," said K. K., with a snort. "Why the dickens can't you wear a red band round your arm, or something?"

"Much more fun without it," grinned Nick. "But what did you mean just now by asking me if I'm dead yet?"

"Not you—Fatty Little. Corny told me ——"

"Oh, you've seen Corny, then?"

"Yes, he's gone for the doctor, and I nearly exhausted myself—— Hi! What the dickens ——"

He broke off, for Nicodemus Trotwood was pelting away towards Big Arch. There was no time to be lost. Nick had heard voices from Inner Court, and he guessed the rest. Dr. Brett and Corny were just coming away from the sanatorium, and the doctor was shouting loudly. If Nick wanted to save Fatty, he would have to be smart.

"Cheese it, Fatty!" he shouted loudly, going to the nearest hedge, and apparently addressing the unseen Fatty Little on the other side. "What about your prep.? You've done enough of that exercising for this evening."

"Nearly finished!" came Fatty Little's voice from the other side.

"Feeling fit now?"

"Fine!" came Fatty's boisterous assurance.

"Good man! Buzz round by the other gate, and I'll join you."

"Right-ho!"

Dr. Brett, approaching, hadn't the faintest suspicion of the truth. He really believed that Nick had been shouting to Fatty Little, and that Fatty Little had been answering back. And Fatty did not seem to be particularly unwell.

But the doctor overlooked the significant fact that Nicodemus was a remarkably clever ventriloquist. His cleverness did not lie so much in his ventriloquism, but in his masterly mimicry. Throwing his voice was skilful enough, but imitating the voices of other people was doubly skilful.

Nick made a hobby of it. He would spend hours at practice—going off into the woods so that he could be entirely alone. He would memorise the vocal mannerisms and characteristics of all sorts of people, and practice them

until he attained perfection. He could mimic Mr. Pycraft and Handforth and Archie Glen-thorne and Mr. Wilkes and many others with amazing fidelity.

"Well, well!" said Dr. Brett, pausing. "I'm afraid you've exaggerated the case, young man. Little isn't very unwell."

"I say, Nick!" came a yell through the dusk, from the other side of the hedge. "This was a jolly good idea of yours, you know. Fancy that chump of a Corny going for the doctor! I'm all serene now."

"Well, you shove off, and I'll tell the doctor," said Nick. "As it happens, he's coming along now. But don't you think you'd better let him look you over?"

"Not likely!" Fatty appeared to say. "Doctors are queer beggars, and he might find something wrong with me, after all."

"Shut up, you ass!" warned Nick. "He'll hear you!"

He walked coolly up to Dr. Brett and Corny.

"Your brother tells me that Little is unwell—but, according to all I can hear, he must have made a mistake," said the doctor dryly.

"You mustn't take any notice of this chump, sir," said Nick. "I expect he heard somebody saying something about tummy pains, and he buzzed off for you. Fatty has been eating too much, but if you're going to see him on that score, you'll have a job for life. You wouldn't have time for anything else!"

Dr. Brett chuckled.

"He is not really ill, then?" he asked.

"Ill, sir?" scoffed Nick. "Did he sound like it just now?"

"He certainly did not," agreed the doctor. "Well, I'll be getting back. My time's valuable."

He nodded to the twins, and faded away into the dusk. Nick seized his brother firmly by the arm, and led him away.

"I confess," said Corny mildly, "that I don't quite understand what this means. Did you tell the doctor not to come, Nick? If so, I think it is very heartless of you. Poor Fatty is——"

"We can deal with Fatty ourselves," interrupted Nick grimly. "I'm the leader of Study P, and Study P is going to take Fatty in hand! We don't want any C3 merchants in our Co."

Corny only vaguely understood, but he nodded.

"We've let Fatty have too much rope," continued his brother. "The time has come for a halt. If he goes on like this, he'll soon need a bath-chair. But he's fit enough really, and if he only used his energy, he'll surprise the natives."

They passed on, and K. K. Parkington, who was still hanging about, frowned thoughtfully. He had heard Nick's words, and they intrigued him. Fatty Little was an Old-Timer—and all Old-Timers, so far as K. K. was concerned, were fair game.

Two figures suddenly appeared from the shrubbery, and they resolved themselves

into Harvey Deeks and Clement Goffin—K. K.'s special chums. Their leader had evidently been waiting for them.

"All serene?" he asked, as they came up.

"Yes, we managed it," said Deeks, displaying a parcel. "We didn't get twigged, although we nearly ran into old Goole, of the East House, on the way back. Still, we got the fodder."

"Never mind that now," said K. K. "We can leave the feed until later. There's a chance of working something on the Old-Timers. Fatty Little, of the West House, is groggy."

"I'm nearly sobbing with sympathy for him!" said Goffin sarcastically.

"There's no reason why we shouldn't have a bit of fun at his expense," continued K. K.

"Never mind that West House porpoise," said Deeks eagerly. "There's a queer old chap down in the village—a sort of hawker, with a caravan and patent medicines and stuff. He's a fortune-teller as a side-line, I believe. Sixpence a time, and he'll guarantee your health for fifty years, sort of thing. We thought——"

"It doesn't matter what you thought, darling," interrupted K. K. dreamily. "Tell me more of this strange merchant. I am vastly interested."

IT was still comparatively early in the evening, and when K. K. Parkington strolled innocently into the West House some ten minutes later he found plenty of juniors about. Most of them regarded him with suspicion.

"You've got a nerve, haven't you, you Ancient House bounder?" asked Singleton. "What's the idea of walking in like this—all alone, too?"

"I am fearless," replied K. K. coolly. "As Daniel went into the lions' den, so I walk boldly into the monkey-house."

"You cheeky Red-Hot idiot——"

"All joking aside, though, I've come here to see Reggie Pitt."

"Joking be blowed!" roared Singleton. "Hi, you chaps! This red-headed blighter says he's in the monkey-house!"

"Rats! You can't touch me—I've got my fingers crossed!" said Parkington blandly, as he held up his hand. "You surely wouldn't molest an innocent visitor?"

"Don't call this place the monkey-house, then," said Castleton grimly.

"Yes, it might be safer to keep my thoughts to myself," agreed K. K. "Well, where's your worthy skipper?"

They went along to the Common Room, and Parkington was secretly gratified to observe that Fatty Little was present. Nick Trotwood had brought him along in case Dr. Brett took a fancy to look into Study P.

"And how's the patient?" asked K. K. kindly. "I heard rumours that poor Fatty was on his last legs."

"It's not his legs—it's his tummy!" explained Dick Goodwin, grinning.

"Has he seen the doctor?"

"For goodness' sake dry up about the doctor!" put in Fatty Little. "If you fat-heads keep jawing so much, the beaks will get to know. I tell you I'm all right! I'm horribly ill, of course, but I don't want any doctors."

K.K. strolled over and looked at him with concern.

"But this is shocking," he said gravely. "My poor old Fatty! I'm distressed. I never expected anything half as bad as this."

"I think a good feed might do me good," said Fatty, with an effort. "I've generally found that grub——"

"Grub is good enough, but you want something else," interrupted K. K. "It's all nonsense to say that you won't see the doctor. A chap in your condition ought to see a doctor. There's no telling what will happen to you if you don't."

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Fatty.

"I don't want to say that you won't last the night, but you look so bad that I'm pretty doubtful," continued K. K., shaking his head.

"What's the objection to having yourself examined?"

"He'll be shoved in the sanny—and kept there," grunted Nick. "I'm not so sure that it wouldn't be a good idea, after all. I've saved him from it once, but he won't listen to reason, and——"

"My dear chap, he's right," interrupted Parkington stoutly. "These school doctors are no good. We all do everything we can to avoid 'em. But what's to prevent Fatty consulting an outside man—a man who wouldn't report to the beaks?"

"There isn't such a man—or I'd go to him," said Fatty dismally. "Dr. Brett's the only one for miles—and I don't want to go to Bannington. Besides, what about the fee? These doctors charge you six-and-eightpence for their advice!"

"You're thinking of lawyers, old man," said Nick kindly.



Fatty felt a pang of alarm as the professor produced an instrument, with earphones attached, and applied it to his chest.

"Well, doctors are nearly as bad," moaned Fatty.

"A point—a distinct point," said K. K., with a thoughtful frown. "And, of course, there's no guarantee that a Bannington doctor wouldn't ring up the Head, and report that a human wreck, looking vaguely like a schoolboy, had come to consult him. No; I'm afraid it wouldn't do."

He shook his head again, and there was such a dubious expression on his face that Fatty felt quite alarmed.

"Do I look really bad, then?" he asked.

"You do," replied K. K. "You see, I'm better able to judge. These other fellows are constantly with you, but I only see you occasionally. Unless you do see a doctor at once I wouldn't like to say what might happen. In fact, unless you're careful you won't be able to go to the doctor. The doctor will have to be brought to you."

"And even then he might be too late," said Pitt sadly.

Fatty gave a gurgling groan and went a shade paler.

"There's nothing I can do, of course," said K. K. regretfully. "I came here to talk about the footer, Pitt. That game last Saturday was— Wait a minute, though," he added, as though a thought had suddenly occurred to him. "By Jove! The very fellow!"

"Who's the very fellow?"

"Look here, there's a chap down in the village or, rather, just outside the village," said K.K. eagerly. "A sort of travelling medicine man. Not exactly a doctor, and not exactly a herbalist. One of those merchants with a caravan and heaps of old-fashioned remedies. Why shouldn't Fatty consult him?"

"Rats! A quack like that couldn't do any good," said Nick.

"It's easy enough to call these chaps quacks, but unless there was something in them, they couldn't carry on," declared Parkington. "They come to the villages year after year and they have their regular patients. This old chap gives consultations at a bob a time—there's a big notice outside his caravan."

"A bob a time!" said Fatty, pricking up his ears.

"So I understand," replied K. K. "I haven't actually seen him myself, but some of the chaps in our House have. One of the village kids went to him with an awful jaw-ache, and came out grinning all over his face. I understand he's quite a marvel."

"I wouldn't mind risking a bob," said Fatty, struggling to his feet. "Why not? He couldn't do me any harm—and he might do me lots of good. I can sneak down at once—and risk being spotted."

"I only just mentioned him, of course," said K. K. "Please yourself, Fatty. But he's cheap—and if he can cure the villagers, he can cure you."

And K. K., nodding to everybody in general, strolled out, and went back to the Ancient House. He had sown the seed.

CHAPTER 3.

Consulting the "Quack"!

FATTY LITTLE was as good as his word.

He managed to muster up sufficient energy to get down to the village.

Nick Trotwood had thought about accompanying him at first, but on second thoughts he decided it was better to let Fatty go alone. As Nick knew well enough, there wasn't much wrong with Fatty Little. Merely an acute attack of "grubitis."

It was a lowering sort of evening, with heavy clouds overhead. There was a chill

wind, too, and Fatty had to walk smartly in order to keep warm.

He found the healer without difficulty, for that gentleman's pitch was situated in the meadow just before the village was reached. He not only had a caravan, but a tent, too. There was a big sign over it, and in the dusk Fatty could easily read the words: "Professor Marcus, the Marvellous Remedy Man. All Ills Speedily Cured. Consultations—One Shilling. Now Open."

Fatty was not particularly impressed. He had seen such quacks as this in side-shows, at circuses, and he was inclined to think that he was a fake. Still, you could never tell, and a bob wasn't much.

He approached the tent gingerly, and pulled at the flap.

"Come in, sir—come in!" said a wheezy, eager voice.

A figure appeared, and Fatty eyed it dubiously. The man was shabby and bent-shouldered; yet, at the same time, he looked impressive. His hair was long and flowing, his beard was venerable, and his eyes, behind their big spectacles, gleamed intelligently.

"Are you Professor Marcus?" asked Fatty hesitatingly.

"At your service, young sir—at your service," wheezed the professor, who sounded as if a dose of his own cough medicine wouldn't do him any particular harm. "Step right in, sir! One shilling, if you please, young gentleman!"

"Not likely!" said Fatty. "I don't pay in advance!"

"As you wish, young sir," said the professor, plainly disappointed. "Kindly take the patient's chair. But wait! On second thoughts, perhaps you had better stand."

The chair was certainly rocky; but Fatty, after gingerly lowering himself into it, felt more or less secure. The professor took a seat on the other side of a low Oriental table. A dim lamp was burning, and the whole atmosphere was impressive. There was a reek of herbs and chemicals, intermixed with stale incense.

"Your tongue, sir," said the professor briskly.

He suddenly flashed an electric torch into Fatty's face, and Fatty, after a start, opened his mouth and displayed a length of tongue which took the professor by surprise. At all events, he started violently, as if he had been stung.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated.

"Is—is it bad?" asked Fatty anxiously.

"My poor boy!" said the professor, horrified. "Let me feel your pulse."

He felt it, and shuddered.

"And did you actually walk here?" he asked, in amazement.

"Of course I did!" snorted Fatty. "Did you think somebody carried me?"

"No, I didn't think that," replied the professor. "I doubt if there is any living man who possesses the necessary strength for such a task. But I thought perhaps that you were conveyed in some vehicular manner. That

you walked is a proof of your indomitable will and courage."

"It was a bit of an ordeal," admitted Fatty. "I couldn't have got here if I hadn't had plenty of determination."

"Quite so," said the professor. "Open you waistcoat."

"Do which?" asked Fatty, startled.

"You heard me!"

Fatty opened his waistcoat, and felt another pang of alarm as the old fellow produced a fearsome-looking instrument with wireless earphones attached. At least, they looked like wireless earphones. He applied the business end of the affair to Fatty's chest.

"Breathe deeply—and slowly," he commanded.

Fatty obeyed.

"Wait!" said Professor Marcus suddenly. "We will allow the thunderstorm to pass over before proceeding."

"Thunderstorm?" gasped Fatty. "I heard nothing!"

"Great goodness! Then it must have been your chest!" ejaculated the professor, more horrified than ever. "Let me listen again! Why, yes! This is serious! Breathe more slowly this time."

He listened intently, nodding meanwhile.

"Wheezia Nocturnus in a very severe form," he murmured gravely. "And there is a distinct sign of Thicketitis of the Liver."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Fatty, aghast.

The professor removed his instrument, and applied it to Fatty's forehead. He listened intently, grunting so ominously that Fatty feared the worst.

"Is—is there anything wrong with my head?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Wrong?" echoed the professor. "My poor boy! Is there anything right? I can already detect marked indications of Wateritis Vaucuo of the Cerebellum."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"Yes, very marked indications," said the professor gravely. "How you manage to keep on living is beyond my comprehension. Now we will come to the most important part of your anatomy. Hold still, young man! So!"

He applied his weird instrument of torture to that region of Fatty's person which was normally beneath the third waistcoat button. He listened in with fascinated interest for some moments.

"A large degree of atmospheric accumulation," he remarked grimly. "Castro Fodderitis is indicated here—to say nothing of Exaggerato Vomitaglia. Yes, without doubt, the Exaggerato Vomitaglia is extensive. H'm! I am wondering whether an immediate operation is necessary, or whether this condition can be rectified by other means."

"Here, chuck it!" gasped Fatty. "I'm not going to let you operate on me! I'm nearly dying, but——"

"Tush! Nonsense!" broke in the professor impatiently. "Nearly dying? An absurd idea! If I take you in hand at once, and treat you in accordance with your symptoms,

there is no reason why you should not live for at least another six months."

"Six months?" babbled Fatty, in dismay.

"And if you last out this six months, the cure may be permanent," continued the professor, removing his instrument, and eyeing Fatty with thoughtful disfavour. "Yes, a bad case—an exaggerated example of what follows upon over-eating and under-exercising."

"You're not going to cut down my grub, I suppose?" asked Fatty indignantly.

The professor ignored him. He reached out a lean hand, and felt Fatty's muscles. He nodded to himself continuously.

"Taking all in all, and condensing my conclusions into brief language, I must tell you, young man, that your condition is serious, but not necessarily fatal," said the professor, at length. "Putting it into a nutshell, you've got to pull yourself up or you'll be a goncr."

Fatty hardly heard. He was dazed and bewildered by his numerous ills. He had heard of a few diseases, but he hadn't heard of one of those the professor said he had.

Which was not at all surprising, since Professor Marcus himself had never heard of them. Little did Fatty dream that a number of figures were crouching round outside the tent, listening with heroically-suppressed laughter to the voice of the professor. Still less did Fatty guess that the "professor" was none other than Baines, of the Remove!

CHAPTER 4.

Exercise for Fatty!

CONWAY BAINES, of Study N, was by way of being a bit of a genius as an actor. The Remove regarded him as a distinct acquisition, the fact that he was a Red-Hot, and a supporter of Kirby Keeble Parkington, counting for nothing against his unique talent. It was said that he was every bit as clever as Stevens of the Fifth or Cyril Graham of the River House School.

It was a fact that Baines could fool nearly anybody with his clever impersonations. What Baines lacked was initiative. He was brilliant if he had somebody to guide him.

It was K. K. who guided Baines. K. K. knew his man and got the best out of him. It had been easy enough to get the real Professor Marcus aside, to slip a ten-shilling note into his ready palm, and to request him to spend a genial half-hour at the George Tavern—leaving his tent in possession of the Red-Hots in the meantime.

Fatty, as K. K. had schemed, had approached the "professor," and although Baines had laid it on very thickly, Fatty was still without suspicion. The fact that Professor Marcus was a "travelling healer" made all the difference. Fatty had been expecting something out of the ordinary from such a man.

Baines was so suave and emphatic that it was difficult to discredit anything he said.

The instrument with which he had "examined" Fatty was really nothing more or less than a wireless earphone attachment, with a few odd bicycle parts tied to the other end of the flex. But in the gloom the contraption looked very impressive.

Fatty was feeling scared and nervous.

"What—what have I got to do about it?" he asked plaintively. "I mean, how can you cure me of this Wateritis Vaccuo and the Tamnyitis Exaggero?"

"I cannot cure you at all," replied the professor promptly.

"Eh? But I thought——"

"I can, however, give you advice—advice that will enable you to cure yourself," said Baines. "Whether you will take this advice is, of course, a matter over which I have no control. But I warn you——"

"All right," said Fatty hastily. "I've had enough warnings. I'm going to peg

out unless I pull my socks up, eh? Well, look here, Professor Titus, or whatever your name is, what about grub? Have I got to give up grub?"

"Not at all," replied Baines.

"Not—not any grub at all?"

"Well, very little," said Baines. "If you act in accordance with my instructions you will greatly improve your condition, and all danger will be avoided. But you must strictly adhere to everything I tell you."

"Rather! I'll do anything you say," declared Fatty.

He was enormously relieved. Anything that affected his food supply was vital. K. K. had realised, from the first, that this jape would fall to pieces if Fatty was advised to go on starvation diet. For Fatty simply wouldn't do it. But there was other ways in which to work the wheeze.

"Food," said the professor, "is essential. Therefore, my advice to you is that you should continue your present diet."

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"Thank goodness!"

"But—and, my young friend, this is a very big 'but'—you must take more exercise," said Baines sternly. "If you are to become fit, you must lengthen your walks. I understand that they are restricted at the present to perambulations between the school and the school shop."

"I come to the village sometimes," said Fatty defensively.

"Do you play football?"

"No."

"Golf?"

"No."

"Cricket?"

"Of course not, at this time of the year."

"In short, you play no games at all?"

"The chaps say I'm too fat."

"And the chaps are right," said the professor sternly. "You are too fat—much too fat."

"Oh, I say!"

"You are elephantine," continued the professor accusingly. "It is natural, perhaps, that you should be oversized, since Nature has fashioned you thus. But there is no need for you to add to Nature's work by continuing your present mode of life."

"But what can I do?" asked Fatty anxiously.

"In my endeavours to advise you, my words must be harsh," replied Baines. "I would remind you that you have already had one bob's worth. If you wish to receive my further advice a second bob will become due."

"Oh, go the whole hog, and give me three bobs' worth!" said Fatty recklessly.

"Now we're talking business," said the professor, brightening up. "For three bob I'll give you so much advice that it'll be a case of kill or cure. Now then, young sir, attend to these details. Memorise them."

"Go ahead."

"Firstly, you must get up at six a.m. every morning and go straight down to your study—I assume you have a study of your own?"

"Not my own—I share it with two other chaps."

"We will leave them out, since this enterprise will take place before breakfast, and they will not be affected," said the professor. "Immediately upon getting down, you must carry all the furniture out of your study, take it to the end of the passage, and then carry it back again. And you must do all this carrying on an empty stomach."

"But—but I can't carry all that furniture on my tummy!" ejaculated Fatty, aghast.

"You misunderstand me," said the professor gravely. "You need not necessarily carry the furniture *on* your stomach. For all I care, you can carry it on your back, or even on your head. Preferably on your head. Polished furniture is apt to soil, and a soft spot will be good for it."

"But what about eating?" asked Fatty, so startled that he hadn't soaked in the mean-

ing of the professor's last remarks. "When do I feed?"

"That is just the point I am coming to," said Baines. "You are to do all this carrying on an empty stomach—that is to say, without eating. In this way you will get a healthy appetite for breakfast."

"I'm blessed if I can see much sense in it," said Fatty, frankly disappointed. "It's a dotty idea, carrying pieces of furniture to the end of the passage and back. It won't do it any good."

"I don't suppose it will, but it will do you good," retorted the professor. "This exercise is not so objectless as you imagine. I can assure you, young gentleman, that furniture carrying is well calculated to remove a lot of unnecessary weight."

"Oh, all right, if you say so!"

"After breakfast, you have, I believe, certain liberty before lessons," continued Baines. "You must fill this interval by walking up and down stairs. Lots of stairs. The more stairs, the better. Is there at St. Frank's a big tower of any kind?"

"Three of 'em—the School House tower's the biggest."

"That's the fellow!" said the professor promptly. "You must walk up and down the steps of the School House tower at least twenty times—or until the bell rings for lessons."

"I shall be too weak to do any lessons after that!" complained Fatty.

"After a few days you will grow to like it," said Baines. "Now, immediately lessons are over, you must roll a barrel round the school buildings for half an hour."

"A barrel?" gasped Fatty.

"A large barrel—one nearly as big as yourself," said the Oracle. "It ought not to be difficult to obtain such a thing. Now, mark this. The barrel must be half-filled with tin cans. You may wear gloves if you wish, but you must push this barrel round the school for the full half-hour."

"My only sainted aunt!"

"This exercise has never been known to fail," declared Baines stoutly. "It is even better than furniture-removing and walking up and down stairs."

"But why the tin cans?" asked Fatty. "They'll only make an awful noise!"

"Precisely!" snapped the professor. "They will make an awful noise. I wonder if it is any good my trying to explain to you that the effect upon the ear-drums—that is, your ear-drums—is all part of the treatment? The ear-drums of others, perhaps, will suffer. But what does that matter so long as you benefit?"

"Well, thanks awfully," said Fatty dubiously. "I'll see what I can do——"

"Wait!" broke in Baines. "After dinner you must take half an hour's rest, and then stand on your head five minutes. You can do this against any handy wall, and if it would be more comfortable for you, with a cushion under your head. The object of this

is to restore your internal organs to their correct positions—all of them having sagged.”

“Sagged!” gasped Fatty.

“My dear young sir, your heart is nearly a foot out of place, and your liver is where your kidneys should be, and vice versa,” said the professor. “Standing upon your head is the only method of restoring these organs to their correct positions. A second half-hour of the barrel-rolling after tea will complete the course. But this second half-hour must be slightly different. Instead of rolling the barrel by hand, you are to stand upon the barrel and propel it with your feet.”

“But I shall fall off!”

“Undoubtedly you will fall off, until you become adept,” agreed Baines. “The object of this exercise is for you to fall off,” he added thoughtfully, while K. K. and the others outside nearly convulsed themselves. “The more you fall off, the better. I always call it my patent falling exercise. Afterwards, when you have become expert, the treatment will be just as beneficial, since it will teach you the art of balance and poise.”

Fatty was none too pleased.

“I shall look such an awful ass, carrying furniture about the place and rolling barrels all over the school,” he objected. “Can’t you cut out that barrel bit?”

“Cut it out?” asked Baines with scorn. “My dear boy, that is the most important part of the whole treatment! Obey my orders to the letter and you may recover your full health and strength. Indeed, I will go so far as to guarantee that you *will* do so. But take warning. Neglect any one of these exercises, even for one day, and the end may be swift. You haven’t come to me a moment too soon.”

And so impressive were the professor’s words that Fatty quaked and shuddered. He paid his three shillings, staggered out of the tent, and lumbered back to St. Frank’s like one in the throes of a horrible nightmare.

“Con, old man, you’re a genius!” said Kirby Keeble Parkington admiringly.

“Rats! It was as easy as shelling peas,” said Conway Baines. “Spoofing that fat Old-Timer was just kid’s play. And you ought to have heard the way I fooled him—and the way he swallowed it.”

“We did hear,” grinned K.K.. “I must say you laid it on a bit thick, sweetheart. Do you really think he’ll do all those dotty things?”

“I know he will!” said Baines confidently.

“What a lark to-morrow!” chuckled Deeks.

“And, I say, what a joke on the Old-Timers. This’ll be another one up for the Red-Hots. Imagine old Fatty rolling a barrel round the Triangle!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I don’t say he’ll keep it up,” said Baines. “The other chaps will jump to something by the end of the first day, I expect; but we shall have our fun, so everything’s all serene.”

And the Red-Hots returned to the school, gleeful and triumphant.

CHAPTER 5.

More Advice!

WHEN Fatty Little arrived in Study P he was already looking better. He had been thinking things out on the way up, and the walk, no doubt, had done him good. His biliousness was less acute.

Study P in the West House had originally been Study K. But four extra Junior studies had been added to the Ancient House, and the lettering there now went as far as N. These four studies were occupied by the twelve Red-Hots. In the West House accordingly all the Junior studies had been re-lettered, and now went right down to Z, and there were two spare ones used as box-rooms.

The Trotwood twins were reading when Fatty rolled in. Nick looked up interestedly. He had been doing a bit of thinking.

“You’re back, then,” he remarked. “Did you see the marvellous faith-healer?”

“Faith-healer be blowed!” retorted Fatty, as he sank into a chair. “I’ve got to do all sorts of awful things to get well. Faith won’t do me much good!”

“Well, let’s hear how you got on,” said Nick.

Fatty gave a full account of his interview with the remarkable Professor Marcus. And as Nick listened his expression became somewhat grim. Corny didn’t trouble to listen at all—he wouldn’t have heard much, anyhow.

“So, you see, unless I do all these things I’m liable to peg out,” said Fatty dismally. “I dare say the professor is right, although these exercises of his seem so dotty. What an ass I shall look pushing barrels round the Triangle!”

“Only one barrel,” said Nick, his eyes twinkling.

“What do you think of the professor’s advice?”

“I think it’s sound—I think it’s corking!” replied Nick promptly. “You can take my word for it, Fatty, that you’ve had a good three bobs’ worth. As the old chap told you, you only went to him in the nick of time. I agree with him. Carry out his instructions and you’ll soon be a new chap. There’ll be no risk of that sudden collapse.”

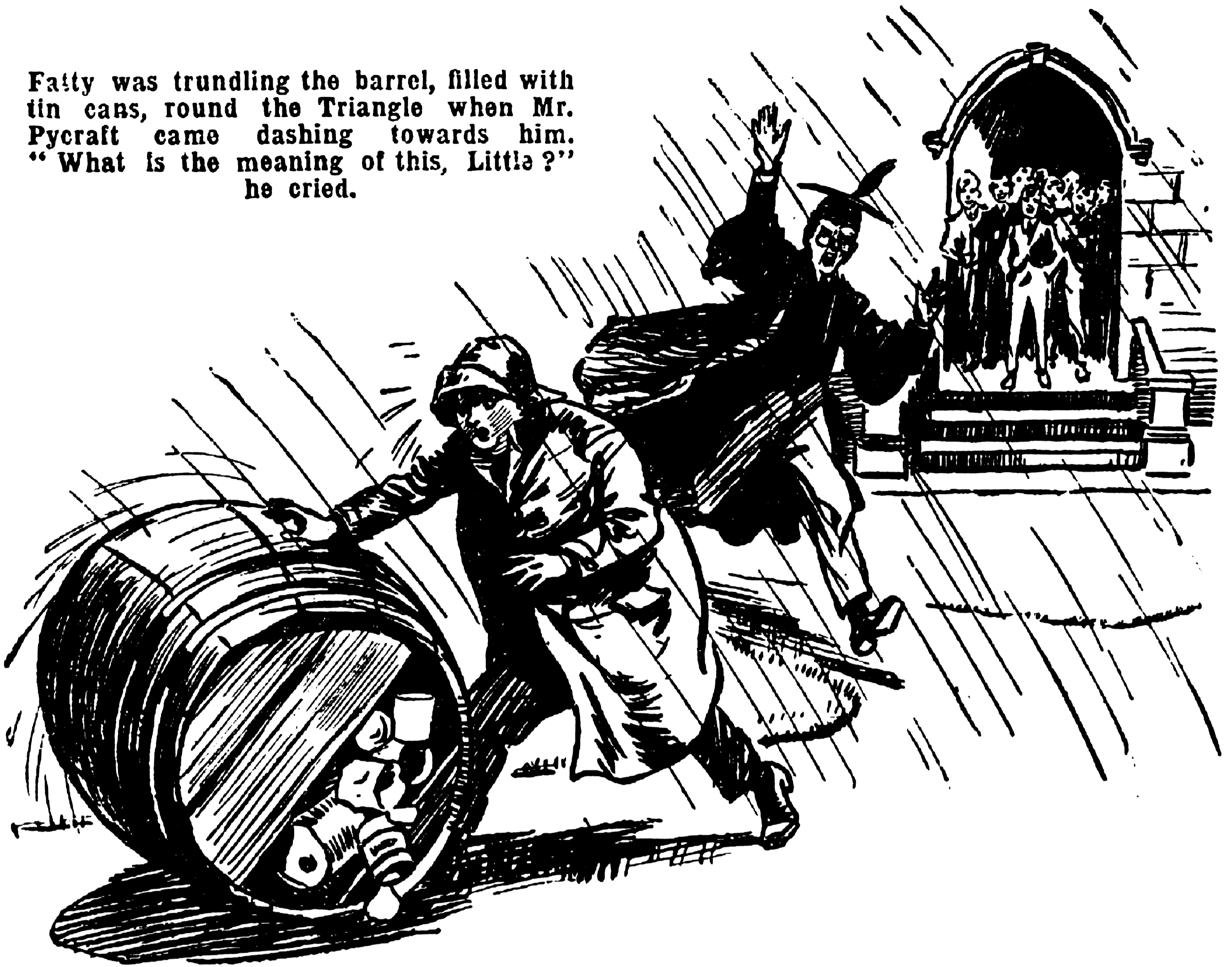
“What sudden collapse?” asked Fatty with a start.

“My dear fellow, surely you realise that Professor Marcus was warning you of a collapse?” said Nick. “Corny and I don’t want to get some other chap into this study. Besides, funerals are such dismal things.”

“Oh, crumbs!” breathed Fatty. “I—I’ll stick to those exercises like glue!”

Nicodemus nodded his approval of this decision, and strolled out of the study. He

Fatty was trundling the barrel, filled with tin cans, round the Triangle when Mr. Pycraft came dashing towards him. "What is the meaning of this, Little?" he cried.



went across to the Ancient House, went to the end of the Remove passage and presented himself in Study K.

Kirby Keeble Parkington and five other Red-Hots were there, and they were all looking flushed and breathless. Nick had heard peals of laughter as he had approached.

"Thanks, K.K.," he said coolly.

"Eh? Thanks for what?"

"Jolly decent of you to do Fatty such a good turn," proceeded Trotwood major, who was far more wide-awake than he looked. "It was just what he needed—a jolt like that. It'll do him all the good in the world."

The Red-Hots regarded him blankly.

"What—what the dickens are you talking about?" asked K.K. with an effort.

"Come off it!" grinned Nick. "It was you who told Fatty about that giddy healer, and all you fellows were cackling like hyenas just now. Two of you have still got overcoats on, and there's a trace of grease-paint on Baines' face still. I'm not so dense, you know."

"Who is this chap—Sexton Blake?" asked Deeks indignantly.

"Merely a case of putting two and two together," went on Nicodemus. "And the easiest case on record, too. Thanks awfully, K.K., for what you've done."

"You are thanking me?" asked Parkington in amazement.

"Of course."

"But we meant it as a jape!"

"A jape on Fatty, and therefore a jape on the Old-Timers, eh?" asked Nick. "Well, I'm willing to keep mum. For Fatty's sake I'll let you have your jape. It'll do him good. He wouldn't dream of taking up any ordinary kind of exercise—I've tried him often enough. But you chaps have worked it. Let's all keep mum, and just see what happens to-morrow. Thanks again!"

He strolled out, leaving the Red-Hots gaping. It was a sad disappointment to learn that this foolish-looking but cute youth had jumped to the truth so easily. But it was encouraging to know that he was on their side.

Out in the passage Nick ran across Edward Oswald Handforth, the famous leader of Study D.

"Hallo, I want a word with you," said Handforth. "What's this I hear about Fatty being half-dead?"

"If you've heard that, you've heard wrong," replied Nick. "Fatty's no more half-dead than you are. He's just a bit bilious, and he's suffering from an over-dose of slackness. But all that's going to be corrected soon."

"Rats! You'll never make that fat porpoise active!"

"No?" said Nick coolly. "Wait and see!"

He went on his way, more determined than ever to carry on the good work. Handforth's opinion of Fatty Little was typical of all. The Ancient House fellows in particular held a very poor opinion of James Rodway Little.

It was agreed that he was too fat to be of any use to anybody.

Nick Trotwood felt that the honour of Study P was at stake. It was high time that Fatty did something to establish himself as a worthy Removite. And Nick, who believed in following up a good idea, no matter from what source that idea emanated, decided, then and there, to improve upon it.

Baines' spoof exercises were good in their way, and it wouldn't do Fatty any harm to practice them—for once. But Nick could see that they wouldn't last. After one such exhibition Fatty would be laughed out of ever repeating it.

But this wheeze of getting the stout junior to obey the behest of a supposed authority was well worth copying. And Nick had it in his own power to egg Fatty on to something more useful in the way of exercise. In fact, Nick could see that his opportunity had arrived; Fatty was in the right mood. To strike now would be to strike while the iron was hot.

Back in Study P, he found Fatty half asleep in the chair, exhausted by his mental and physical exercise, and still looking a bit greenish. But on the whole he was feeling better.

"We've got twenty minutes yet," said Nick casually, as he looked at his watch. "Let's switch the wireless on."

"I'll bet there's nothing good!" growled Fatty. "Some beastly chamber music, or a symphony concert, or something. Or a talk. Those talks are awful!"

"I don't suppose there'll be one at this time of the evening," said Nick hopefully.

He switched on, and took care to twiddle the knob so that he was off the wave-length before the switch went down. It was now "between stations," and only a few atmospherics sounded from the loud-speaker, accompanied by a slight battery crackle.

"They seem to be off for the moment," said Nick carelessly.

It was a rule in Study P that the dial should be left untouched, so that the set could be switched on and off with ease. It was rather a tricky set to tune in, and it was Nick who had made this arrangement. Consequently, Fatty hadn't the faintest suspicion that his leg was about to be pulled.

Nick sat down on the other side of the room and picked up a book. Almost immediately a voice sounded from the loud-speaker.

"This is London Regional," it said, in the precise tones of the announcer. "Sir Horace Hucklebury, the eminent health specialist, is with us, and he will now give his talk on the Evils of Over-Stoutness. Sir Horace Hucklebury."

"Hallo!" said Nick, lowering his book. "That's funny, Fatty."

"Oh, is it?" growled Fatty Little. "Cut the giddy thing off! It was bad enough listening to Professor Marcus, but I'm not compelled to listen to this wireless chump!"

"But it might be interesting," said Nick. "There's no telling——"

"In dealing with over-stoutness, I realise I am on a rather delicate subject," said the loud-speaker in a full-toned, hearty voice. "Many of my listeners are no doubt sensitive on this subject; but I can assure them that my talk will, if they take heed, benefit them enormously."

The way Nicodemus did it was clever. For, of course, there was no such person as Sir Horace Hucklebury, and no such talk over the wireless. Having safely put the set "between stations," so that no real signals could be received, Nick was indulging in his ventriloquism. He was throwing his voice into the loud-speaker.

The illusion was perfect. He had been particularly cute in breaking off his own voice, and making it appear that the loud-speaker had interrupted him.

"Over-stoutness is, in the majority of cases, an unnatural condition," said the imaginary Sir Horace. "We are, after all, all built on the same mould. And those of us who become excessive in weight have only ourselves to thank for this unfortunate condition. I say unfortunate because stoutness, if left unchecked, may result in disaster."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Fatty, thoroughly scared at this unexpected confirmation of Professor Marcus' warning.

Who could doubt the word of a famous health specialist like Sir Horace Hucklebury? The fact that Fatty had never heard of him made no difference. Fatty took him for granted. He wouldn't be broadcasting from London unless he was a recognised authority.

"The difficulty with over-stoutness is that once a person gets into this condition, he is virtually incapable of getting back to the normal," said the loud-speaker. "Indeed, to attempt any such thing is risky. For stout people generally remain stout. When they become thin it is the result of a grave illness, and they are left weak and may become permanent invalids. Dieting, too, is hazardous. Stout people should beware of dieting. Let them continue their normal food rations."

"My word! This man's got sense!" said Fatty admiringly.

"It is in other directions that the over-stout must look for relief," continued the radio. "My listeners may have observed that fat people, as a rule, are sluggish, indolent, and averse to exercise of any kind."

Nick pointed accusingly at Fatty, and Fatty winced.

"There are exceptions, of course," continued the mythical Sir Horace, whilst Nick leaned back in his chair, apparently intent upon listening, his lips giving no indication. "Quite a number of fat men are famous for their activities, and such men are those who realise the value of exercising. Think, for example, of Will Fowkes, the world-renowned goalkeeper of the Blue Crusaders Football Club. Fowkes is one of the biggest men imaginable—yet one of the most active!"

"My only topper! He's right!" murmured Fatty.

"I am saying this to illustrate my point," continued the loud-speaker. "The average fat man is lazy and incapable of any brisk activity. He is like a great fat cat, content to roll himself up and idle his life away in useless sloth. Will Fowkes is just as fat, but his life is full to the brim with zip. I hope my listeners see what I mean. It is not necessary that stout people should be lazy people. They can be just as energetic as the less stout people."

"This man's jolly good!" said Nick, in his ordinary voice.

"Good!" breathed Fatty. "He's a marvel! I'll do as he says! I will become active! I'm not going to be one of those idle, indolent—er—slugs! I'll show the chaps——"

"It is natural for fat people to eat, drink and be merry," broke in the imaginary Sir Horace Hucklebury. "Why should they not be athletic, too? It is only a matter of will power, determination and training. Particularly training. Energy of mind breeds energy of body. I will guarantee that the fattest of my listeners, no matter how many stones he weighs, will become vastly energetic if he only obeys my simple rules."

"I hope he gives 'em!" muttered Fatty eagerly.

"Exercising, first and foremost, is essential," continued the loud-speaker. "It doesn't matter what type of exercise this is so long as it gains the necessary end. Perhaps it is better that stout people should not indulge in the usual forms of exercise—such as drilling, skipping and the more ordinary forms of bodily training. The further they can get away from that, the better."

"Just what old Marcus said!" gasped Fatty.

"Any form of activity will serve," said the voice. "The simpler, the better. Such an absurd thing as climbing over a gate and climbing back again is good. If this climbing is done twenty times better still. It seems pointless, but it is not. This sort of thing, however, is not sufficient. It is useful, but is doomed to failure unless some further step is taken."

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Fatty. "What does he mean?"

"The would-be athletic stout person must concentrate upon at least one sport in addition to these miscellaneous training stunts," declared "Sir Horace." "Again I will quote Will Fowkes as an example. He concentrates upon football. Any sport will do—golf, tennis, hockey, football. As long as the subject sticks hard and fast to his own particular sport, so he will progress. Football is particularly beneficial. But all stout men are not inclined to football, neither have they the opportunities for playing. Golf, as an all-the-year-round game, may be better. But those who can take up football, let them do so!"

"Football!" said Fatty Little tensely.

"If any of my stout listeners decide to follow my advice they must stick to it," con-

cluded the loud-speaker. "It is risky to commence and then fall away. I would not like to answer for the consequences if any stout man started the treatment and then dropped it suddenly. Far better for him to have remained the sluggard he was. Once he begins he must keep on, and almost before he knows it he will be full of energy. With these words of warning I will conclude. Good-night, everybody—good-night!"

Nick crossed the study and switched off the set. He was rather breathless after his long talk, but he gave no sign of it.

"Rather rummy that we should just hit upon a talk like that this evening," he remarked casually. "If you ask me, Fatty, Sir Horace is a brainy chap."

Fatty, as Nick well knew, had swallowed the bait, the hook, the line and the sinker as well.

"Football!" he said dreamily. "Wouldn't it be topping if I could only become like Fatty Fowkes, of the Blue Crusaders?"

"You could, too—if you only made up your mind," said Nick, with conviction.

"I will! I'll do it!" vowed Fatty, the urge strong upon him. "Nick, old man, will you help me?"

"Like a shot! Anything you say, old man."

"I want to go into training, just as Sir Horace said," continued Fatty. "If Will Fowkes can do it, so can I! I don't care how many barrels I push round the Triangle, or how many steps I walk up and down, or how many gates I climb over."

"That's the spirit!" said Nick cheerfully. "You take old Fatty Fowkes as a pattern, and you can't go wrong. But it'll need some determination, old son."

"Try me!"

"Good! And let's give the other chaps a surprise, eh?" said Nick. "They'll only think you're fooling when they see you push barrels about, but we can keep your other training to ourselves. And when you're really fit we'll spring you on the Remove, and make Nipper give you a chance in a big game."

"I'm on!" said Fatty Little breathlessly. "From this minute onwards I'm going to live a new life! And, thank goodness, I don't have to cut any of my grub!" he added fervently.

CHAPTER 6.

On the Job!

"EXTRAORDINARY!" said Mr. Horace Pycraft in amazement.

The ill-tempered master of the Fourth was taking his before-breakfast stroll. The morning was sunny, and the air was crisp. Mr. Pycraft was standing at the open end of the West Square, and he was gazing at the heavy wooden gate which led the way on to Little Side.

Mr. Pycraft had been first attracted by the sight of Fatty Little, of the Remove,

climbing over this gate. This in itself was remarkable, for the gate was never locked. But when Fatty calmly proceeded to climb back again as soon as he had got on the other side Mr. Pycraft stood still and took notice.

"Is the boy mad?" he asked, appealing to the thin air.

Scarcely any fellows were down yet, for the rising bell had only just rung. But there was Fatty Little, climbing over that gate and climbing back again. To any casual on-looker the antics certainly seemed to be insane.

But Fatty, in his new-born enthusiasm, was steadfastly carrying out Nick Trotwood's hint—under the sublime impression that it was Sir Horace Hucklebury's hint. Fatty had already shifted the furniture out of Study P three times, and had shifted it back again. And he was really feeling very exhausted and horribly hungry. But his mind was made up, and he was grim with determination. He thought it a good opportunity to try the gate-climbing stunt.

"Upon my word and soul!" cried Mr. Pycraft in alarm. "The boy is demented! Six times he has climbed over that gate, only to climb back. What on earth shall I do? The asylum authorities should be informed!"

He hesitated. Mr. Pycraft was a timid man. He was afraid that Fatty would turn upon him. The boy couldn't be doing it as a lark, for no other boys were present, and he certainly wasn't enjoying it. His movements were becoming more and more laborious, and he was puffing like an ancient engine.

The gate, too, was beginning to show signs of the strain. Strong as it was, it had its limitations, and it couldn't stand too much of this sort of thing from Fatty Little. It was adding its voice to Fatty's, creaking and protesting loudly.

Mr. Pycraft walked nearer, and Fatty spotted him for the first time. He was rather glad, for he was provided with some excuse for stopping.

"Morning, sir," he puffed, doffing his cap.

"Er—good-morning, Little!" said Mr. Pycraft, somewhat reassured, and walking nearer. "May I ask what you are doing?"

"Leaning against this gate, sir."

"Don't be an idiot, Little," said Mr. Pycraft sourly. "I can see that you are leaning against the gate. But what were you doing a few moments ago?"

"Climbing the gate, sir!"

"You impertinent young rascal!" shouted Mr. Pycraft.

"Well, you asked me, sir," said Fatty defensively.

"You know perfectly well what I asked you," retorted Mr. Pycraft. "You were climbing this gate again and again—like some crazy boy. Why were you doing it? What was your object in indulging in so futile a procedure?"

"Object, sir?" said Fatty, breathing hard. "I was only climbing over, and then climbing back again. You saw me, sir. I didn't know

you were looking, or I might not have done it."

"You appear sane," said Mr. Pycraft coldly. "I can only conclude that you have got over your imbecility. If you can give me any sensible reason why you should repeatedly climb that gate I shall be obliged."

"Well, it's a new exercise, sir," said Fatty defiantly. "It may seem silly to you, but one of the greatest authorities on health told me to do it."

"Indeed!"

"Well, he didn't exactly tell me, but I heard it over the wireless last night," said Fatty. "Sir Horace Hucklebury, sir."

"I've never heard of him," said Mr. Pycraft suspiciously. "And it is very peculiar that I didn't hear this talk last night—for I was listening-in most of the evening. What station was it on?"

"London, sir."

"Very strange—very strange indeed," said the Form-master. "Don't let me see you doing it again, Little. I won't have you damaging the school property in this way. You've nearly torn this gate off its hinges!"

He stalked away, and Fatty gave a grunt of disgust. What was the use? The very first time he tried Sir Horace's patent exercising he was told off—and by Pieface, too! Well, he didn't care. He would try it on another gate later on.

AFTER breakfast Mr. Pycraft received another shock—and so did the juniors.

The promise of the early morning was not fulfilled, and during breakfast clouds had rolled up, and now rain was falling. Mr. Pycraft, preparing to dash across from the East House to the School House, was startled to see Fatty Little out in the Triangle. Crowds of fellows in the doorways of the various Houses were watching, too.

Fatty, attired in a voluminous mackintosh and a sou'-wester, was industriously rolling a huge barrel along one of the paved paths of the Triangle. The barrel evidently contained a lot of old empty cans, for it was creating an appalling din.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Pycraft. "The boy is mad!"

He dashed over at full speed, for Mr. Pycraft dearly loved a sensation—and he loved interfering even better. Fatty was rolling away energetically.

"What—what is the meaning of this, Little?"

"Hallo! You again, sir!" exclaimed Fatty, pausing in his efforts and looking at Mr. Pycraft with disfavour. "I'm not damaging any of the school property this time. And I'm not breaking any rules, either."

"What is in that barrel, Little?" demanded the Form-master.

"Only a lot of old empty cans, sir."

"Empty cans!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "What is this—a practical joke? Has somebody dared you to make a fool of yourself in this way?"

"I'm exercising, sir," said Fatty rebelliously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Shouts of laughter sounded from the crowds of fellows in the various doorways, for Fatty's method of taking exercise was comic. K. K. & Co. were particularly amused. They had been half afraid that Nick Trotwood would spoil their game.

"Oh!" said Mr. Pycraft grimly. "So you are exercising, are you? Not content with climbing gates, you must make an idiot of yourself by rolling barrels about the school premises. I am beginning to think that you are mad, Little!"

"Sorry, sir, but I've got to do half an hour of this, and I can't wait," said Fatty. "You don't mind if I go, do you, sir?"

He proceeded to roll the barrel with greater vigour than ever, and further laughter went up. Mr. Pycraft looked round helplessly. His eyes lit up when he beheld Mr. Alington Wilkes, of the Ancient House, emerging from West Arch.

"Ah! Mr. Wilkes!" shouted the Form-master. "One moment, sir!"

Old Wilkey came over. As usual, he was dressed in his baggy flannel trousers, and shabby Norfolk jacket. It was seldom that Mr. Wilkes was seen in a gown. Yet, without any of the trimmings which help to dignify a schoolmaster, he gained far more respect from the schoolboys than most masters at St. Frank's. Mr. Wilkes was a sportsman; he was a brilliant athlete, in spite of his appearance.

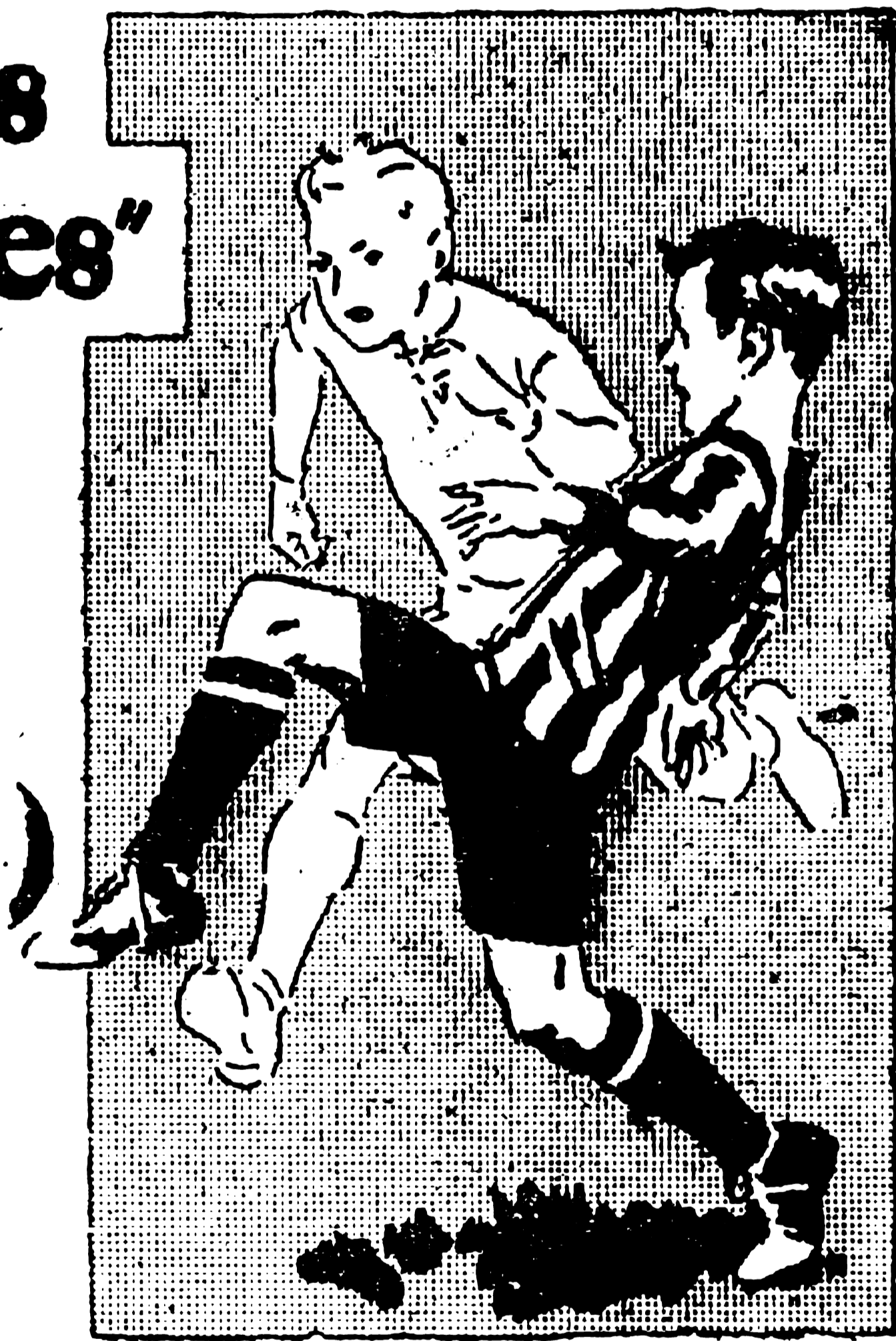
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E.K. 44

"Morning, Mr. Pycraft!" he said, as he walked up. "Anything wrong? You look excited—"

"That boy! Look at him!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft. "He is either mad or I am! He tells me he is exercising!"

"I imagine he is right," said Mr. Wilkes dryly. "It must be a most strenuous exercise to push that huge barrel about."

"I wish you would speak to him," urged Mr. Pycraft. "He is one of your boys, and I consider that it is your duty—"

"Whoa! We don't want to go into any arguments about duty, Pycraft," interrupted Mr. Wilkes. "Besides, he isn't one of my boys. Little belongs to the West House. However, I'll speak to him if you want me to."

Fatty was coming round again, and the two masters went across to meet him.

"Well, what have we here?" asked Mr. Wilkes genially. "You seem to be having a rattling good time, Fatty, old man—with emphasis, I think, on the rattling. What are you doing—trying to scare the birds?"

"A new form of exercise, sir," puffed Fatty.

"You see?" asked Mr. Pycraft sourly. "The boy's off his head!"

"What exactly is going to happen to you, Little, if you don't do this?" asked the Housemaster, his eyes twinkling. "I don't want you to give your friends away, and you needn't mention any names. But I take

it that you've been ordered to do this stunt under penalty of being—"

"I haven't been ordered at all, sir," interrupted Fatty. "You're all wrong. The chaps didn't know anything about it until I started."

"They knew all about it then, though," commented Mr. Wilkes, nodding. "At a rough guess, I should think they could hear you in Bannington."

"It's Professor Marcus' idea, sir," explained Fatty. "You see, I'm going in for physical training and exercising. Rolling barrels is one of the courses. I'm going to make myself fit, sir," he added firmly. "I may be fat, but I'm not lazy!"

"Good man!" grinned Mr. Wilkes. "Take those empty cans out of your barrel, and you can roll it to your heart's content."

"But the empty cans are part of the training, sir," said Fatty, in alarm. "Professor Marcus told me that if I didn't have the cans in the barrel the effect wouldn't be half so striking."

"And he was right," declared Mr. Wilkes. "Those cans make it far too striking. And who is this Professor Marcus, anyhow? A most interesting fellow, I should imagine."

"He's gone now, sir—but he was in the village last night," explained Fatty. "A sort of healer chap, and—"

"I've heard enough," interrupted Mr. Wilkes hastily. "Any man who can start you exercising, Fatty, is a marvel. But I



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.

INSIDE INFORMATION!

Teacher: "Now, Tommy, supposing I lent your father five pounds on the understanding that he paid me back ten shilling a month. How much would he owe me at the end of six months?"

Tommy: "Five pounds."

Teacher: "Tommy, you do not know your arithmetic."

Tommy: "And you don't know my father!"
(*B. Haynes, 1, Railway Cottage, Sydenham, Port Elizabeth, S. Africa, has been awarded a handsome watch.*)

WELL HIT!

Two actors were boasting as to their popularity on the stage.

"When I first acted Romeo," said the first

man, "I received enough flower to set up a florist's shop."

"Oh, that's nothing," remarked the second man. "When I played Romeo the audience presented me with a house."

"A house?" echoed the first actor disbelievingly.

"Yes, a house," said the first man, "but a brick at a time."

(*E. M. Lum, 79, Heaton Road, Paddock, Huddersfield, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

CHATTY!

He was a particularly raw recruit and the drill sergeant was getting very fed up. At last he lost his patience.

"Didn't you hear 'About turn'?" he bellowed.

"No," answered the recruit. "What about 'im'?"

(*T. Cope, 10, Stromness Road, Southend-On-Sea, has been awarded a penknife.*)

"TALES!"

1st Golfer: "You know, it was really a toss-up whether I came here to play golf or went to business this morning."

2nd Golfer: "So it was with me, old man. In fact, I had to toss up fourteen times before I came to a decision."

(*J. Harby, 71, Baggrave Street, Leicester, has been awarded a penknife.*)

really thinks he was pulling your leg when he advised you to half fill the barrel with old tin cans. Go ahead! We'll forget the cans for this morning, but after this you must use something less noisy."

"All right, sir, but I'm not sure that it'll have the same effect," said Fatty dubiously.

"It'll have just the same effect on you, but the rest of us will be spared," said Old Wilkey, as he took Mr. Pycraft's arm and led him away. "You see, Pycraft? The boy is to be commended."

Mr. Pycraft's lips were compressed in a thin line.

"Your methods are extraordinary, Mr. Wilkes," he said acidly. "It is not for me to criticise them——"

"Then don't do it, old boy!"

"But I certainly do think that you are far too familiar with these boys—far too easy-going," said Mr. Pycraft. "What is the good of merely prohibiting the tin cans? You should have stopped this barrel-rolling nonsense altogether!"

"And discourage this youngster at the very outset of his training?" retorted Mr. Wilkes. "Not on your life, Pycraft! Somebody has been pulling Fatty's leg, but the less inquiries we make, the better. Whoever the somebody is, he has at least got the boy on the go. Let him roll barrels if he wants to!"

"This morning I found him climbing a gate—the same gate—over and over again!"

"Let him climb gates, too," said Mr. Wilkes

genially. "He's too fat, too out of condition altogether. Good luck to his spoofers!"

HOWEVER, it was ridicule which killed Fatty Little's novel methods of exercising. As K. K. had foreseen, that sort of thing was all right for once, but it couldn't go on.

Fatty was chipped so much about his barrel-rolling that he hadn't the nerve to start it again; and when a crowd of juniors found him laboriously puffing up and down the School House tower, they laughed at him even more. They howled when they found him doing his gate-climbing stunt.

And Fatty, after that first day, became despondent. Professor Marcus' exercises weren't panning out so well, after all. He was sublimely unconscious of the fact that a storm had already burst in the Ancient House.

K. K. & Co., in fact, had accidentally "let on" that Fatty had been spoofed. They, the Red-Hots, had used Fatty as a victim. Handforth punched K. K. in the eye, K. K. punched Handforth back, and a free fight had started. Nobody knew exactly whether the Red-Hots or the Old-Timers had won—not that it really mattered.

Fatty, in the West House, knew nothing. But he felt unhappy.

"What's the good, Nick?" he asked plaintively. "I've been following out the

SCOTCH !

A Dundee cinema proprietor went to London to get some ideas. He saw a notice outside one cinema which announced that all persons over eighty would be allowed a free seat.

"Just the thing," he told himself. Back to Dundee he went, and placed a notice outside his own theatre which read :

"All persons over eighty years of age will be admitted free if accompanied by their parents."

(M. Robinson, 30, Hanford Avenue, Orrell Park, Liverpool, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

DOUBTFUL.

"I don't know whether to use this testimonial or not," mused the boss.

"What's the matter with it ?" demanded the advertising manager.

"Well," explained the boss, "the man writes, 'I used to have three bald spots on the top of my head, but since using a bottle of your hair restorer I have only one.'"

(G. Buckley, 18, Christie Street, Stockport, has been awarded a penknife.)

COOL !

Conductor : "Hi, Bill! The old 'bus is running backwards."

Driver : "I can't stop 'er! The brakes 'ave gone!"

Conductor : "'Arf a mo'. I'll change the destination boards!"



(T. Highton, 27, Beaconsfield Road, Southport, has been awarded a penknife.)

POOR PAPA !

Teacher : "Are you quite sure that your father did not do these sums for you, Willie ?"

Willie : "Yes, teacher, quite sure. He did have a try, but he got into such a muddle that grandfather had to do them all over again."

(A. Williams, 18, Andrews Road, Llandaff, nr. Cardiff, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

WHY ?

The man came to his landlord with a complaint.

"The roof of my fowl-house is out of repair," he said, "and the rain comes in. It has drowned all my hens."

"Well," retorted the landlord, "why don't you keep ducks ?"

(L. McGrath, 6, St. Lelia Street, Limerick, has been awarded a penknife.)

OWN BACK !

Landlady : "The young man on the fifth floor seems to have a large correspondence."

Postman : "Yes, ma'am. I quarrelled with him once, and now he addresses himself a postcard each day so that I have to climb five flights of stairs to deliver it!"

(H. Widdop, 230, Whitehead Road, Primrose Hill, Huddersfield, has been awarded a penknife.)

professor's instructions, but the chaps think I'm mad!"

"Let 'em think!" said Nicodemus Trotwood. "In any case, the professor's advice was only general. You needn't stick too closely——"

"But I do need!" broke in Fatty. "He warned me, you know!"

"You've got to concentrate on Sir Horace Hucklebury," said Nick firmly. "He's a better man than this Professor Marcus, anyhow. Football, Fatty! You've started on the right path now, and I'll keep you going. To-morrow you must concentrate on football."

"Do you think I'll ever become a second Will Fowkes?"

"Why not?" said Nick enthusiastically. "Where's there's a will there's a way!"

CHAPTER 7.

Fatty Flattens a Football!

BEFORE a couple of days had passed Fatty's craze for exercising was almost forgotten, though two or three fellows sometimes chipped him when he was exercising in the study or gym.

Nick Trotwood enlisted the aid of Wally Freeman, the St. Frank's coach. Wally had most of his time occupied with the football teams, but he found an odd half-hour here and there to devote to Fatty.

At first the pro. had not been very sanguine, but after two or three days he was a surprised man. Fatty was progressing fine, thanks mainly to Nick's help. During this early period, when Fatty frequently lost courage, Nick was there to remind him sternly of Professor Marcus' warning. It never failed to bring Fatty back to the job with a jolt. Nick was always telling him, too, that Sir Horace Hucklebury was the man to follow.

By the end of the fourth day Fatty had come on astonishingly. And the most remarkable thing of all was that he began to like it. Aching muscles, jarred nerves, shortness of wind—all these things had helped to sap his determination at first. Again and again, during that early training, he had been on the point of collapse. But he had stuck it, with that dread warning to spur him on.

Now he was discovering that his muscles weren't so useless, after all. The aches were going. A surprising springiness was developing in his legs and arms. His bulk didn't seem half so cumbersome as hitherto.

And by the time a full week had elapsed he felt a new fellow altogether. He could hardly believe it himself. His appetite, always good, was even better. Most chaps, in order to train, would have found it necessary to cut down their diet; but Fatty, as usual, seemed to thrive on heavy foods. Wally Freeman was frankly astounded.

"Well, there's certainly a big change in your young friend, Nick," he remarked

dryly. "He's getting on so well that he's practically good enough to play in a House match."

"You haven't said anything to Nipper or the rest?" asked Nick.

"Not a word—although they've got eyes in their heads, and they could see if they wanted to," replied the coach. "But nobody takes any notice of young Fatty."

"They'll take notice soon," declared Nick. "I'm going to spring Fatty on the eleven as a surprise."

Trotwood was as careful with his pupil as a boxing manager is with a boxer. And as Fatty's flabbiness decreased, and his hardiness increased, Nick grew more and more satisfied. By the end of the eighth day Fatty had become as hard as nails.

"Isn't it about time I went to Nipper?" he asked eagerly. "He's the skipper, and it's up to him to give me a chance in a House game."

"Leave it to me," replied Nick. "I'm looking after you, Fatty, and you won't be disappointed. I'll sound Nipper directly after lessons. There's a practice game on to-day, and if you don't play in it I'll give you permission to call me a Dutchman."

"Good egg!" said Fatty, with delight.

"And we'll give the natives the surprise of their lives," grinned Nick.

BUT when he "sounded" Nipper that afternoon all he got was a yell of laughter from the crowd in general.

Nick had chosen his moment well. He and Fatty marched across from the West House just as Nipper and Handforth and Travers and a crowd of others came out of the Ancient House. They were ready for the field, and Nipper was carrying a football under his arm.

"Got your teams fixed, Nipper?" asked Nick briskly.

"Not yet," replied the Junior skipper. "We're going to have a kick about first, and——"

"Then what about Fatty?" asked Nick. "He's been training pretty hard, and if you'll let him keep goal for one of the sides——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep goal!" yelled Handforth scornfully. "That fat porpoise! Why, you chump, he's no good! He couldn't keep goal if it was no bigger than a hen-coop! A goalie must be nippy and active!"

"Fatty may not look nippy and active, but he is," said Nick. "I've kept him as a surprise, and now I'm springing him on you. Allow me to present Fatty Fowkes the Second! Give him a chance in a real game, and he'll surprise you."

Nipper laughingly shook his head.

"Sorry, old man—nothing doing," he said. "Ready, you chaps?"

"But look here!" burst out Fatty. "It's only fair to give me a chance——"

"Leave this to me," said Nick grimly. "Nipper, old man, you've always been fair and square. Wouldn't it be sporting to give

Fatty his chance? Try him for five minutes. Shove him in goal and take a few pot-shots. If he doesn't give a good showing——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Junior footballers simply refused to believe that Nick was serious, and they laughed harder than ever. Nipper was open-minded enough, but he took football earnestly. And although he was ready enough to give any fellow a fair chance, he saw no reason why he should waste his time and the time of his fellow footballers.

"No, Nick, it can't be done," he said, shaking his head.

"Five minutes!" urged Nicodemus. "Dash you, three minutes!"

"Why should I put Fatty in goal for three minutes and hold up the practice?" argued Nipper. "It'll mean a lot more than three minutes, too, because there'll be so much cackling and yelling that all my men will be put off their game. We're going on Little Side for football, Nick—not for a joke."

"But Fatty isn't a joke!" roared Nick, exasperated.

He may not be to you, old man; but he is a pain in the neck to us," put in Handforth.

"What talkie did you borrow that from?" asked Nick tartly. "It's all very well being funny, but you might give a chap a square deal! Fatty isn't the same nowadays. He's changed."

"I'm afraid I can't see much difference," said Nipper, as he eyed Fatty's ample figure. "If he wants to take up football let him report to me to-morrow morning for practice, and I'll see what can be done. We can't waste time on him now."

"But he has been practising!" roared Nick.

"Not with the rest of the fellows," replied Nipper. "He's never reported to me. And if you call rolling barrels round the Triangle practice——"

"That was over a week ago," broke in Nick impatiently. "I've been training Fatty, and I give you my word he's as fit as a fiddle!"

"I'll take your word, old scout; but I'm afraid I can't take your man," said Nipper gently. "Come on, you fellows!"

And the footballers marched off, grinning more widely than ever.

"The—the rotters!" panted Fatty dismally.

"Never mind!" said Nick, with a grim note in his voice. "I hadn't reckoned on this, Fatty; but we'll have our own way in the end. You see the result of slacking for so long? Nobody takes you seriously! I don't altogether blame Nipper for not giving you a chance. He thinks I'm trying to pull his leg."

"But—but what can I do?"

"Come indoors with me and change into footer togs," replied Trotwood briskly. "It's a good thing we ordered those outsize shorts and shirt and jersey. At least, Fatty, you'll go on the field looking the part."

They came on to the field within five minutes after a very rapid change. The teams hadn't yet been finally selected, and the practice game was not under way. A loud burst of laughter went up when Fatty was spotted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at Fatty in his fancy-dress costume!"

"Where's the carnival?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nick Trotwood strode amongst the yelling footballers.

"Look here, I'm fed up!" he said wrathfully. "Fatty's a footballer! Fatty is as hard as iron now, and he's as nimble as a monkey! Are you going to give him a chance in this practice game or not?"

"Not!" said Nipper promptly.

"And I thought you were a chap who prided himself on his fairness!" said Nick bitterly.

"How can Nipper do that when he's dark?" asked Travers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nick, old son, there's no need to get excited," said Nipper. "My job as Junior skipper isn't all honey. Bring him along some other time, when there isn't a crowd waiting. Then I'll try him. That's fair enough."

"Can't I have just one kick?" demanded Fatty, exasperated.

"Oh, give him one—to get rid of him," said Handforth. "Goalkeeper, indeed! Huh!"

The disdain in his voice was so intense that Fatty lost his head. Even now he couldn't quite realise that these Junior footballers continued to regard him as a comic character. He had always been one—and now that he was dressed in footer togs he looked more comic than ever.

He made a frantic rush at the ball, mistimed his stride, and, instead of kicking it, he trod on it. The way in which he turned a half-somersault was remarkable. He overbalanced, staggered, and sat down on the ball with terrific force.

A minor explosion followed, and the footballers howled with laughter.

"Good thing that's only a practice ball!" said Nipper. "So that's how Fatty plays, is it? The first thing he does is to sit on the ball and burst it! Take him away, Nick, and let's get along along with the real game."

So the unfortunate Fatty retired, laughed off the field.

CHAPTER 8.

A Spot of Ventriloquism!

CORNELIUS TROTWOOD looked wonderingly at his brother as the latter strode into Study P and planted himself on the corner of the table. Fatty Little trailed in after him, dejected and gloomy.

"Is anything wrong, my dear brother?" asked Corny mildly.

"Everything's wrong!" growled Nick. "Here I've been training Fatty morning, noon, and night—yes, and got him as fit as Will Fowkes himself—and nobody will look at him! Isn't that enough to make anybody cross?"

"Yes, I think you are," said Corny. "In fact, you are so hoarse that I hardly caught a word—"

"I didn't say hoarse!" roared Nick. "I said cross!"

"But surely you are not cross with me?"

"Oh, go away and sink into a trance!" pleaded Nick. "You're a good chap, Corny, but you exhaust me. How can I think while you're about?"

"I think that is most uncalled-for," said Corny, hurt. "There is no reason why you should call me a lout."

"I didn't call you a lout!" shrieked Nick. "But I jolly well will if you don't clear off! Let me think."

"But I don't want a drink!" protested Corny. "Or did you tell me not to blink? You're so excited that I can't understand you!"

Nick breathed hard, seized Corny by the shoulders, and gently propelled him out of the study. He was worried enough already, without having Corny further to exasperate him.

"Buzz off, old man," he said grimly. "Go to the Common-room! Go to the library! Go to the swimming baths! Go anywhere you like—but go!"

He closed the door before Corny could reply, and Fatty grunted.

"It's a bit thick, turning on Corny like that," said the fat junior. "It wasn't his fault, Nick. We're done—after all my training, too! What's the good of it, when Nipper won't even look at me?"

"He'll look at you—and give you a chance, too," declared Nick. "Do you think I'm going to let that Ancient House fathhead have his own way? You're good enough to keep goal for the school, and you'll do it, too! By Jove! That's an idea!"

A gleam came into his eye.

"Cheese it!" said Fatty. "If I play for the school next season it'll be a miracle! I can't hope to get anything better than a House game."

"That's all I expected you to get," interrupted Nick. "But what about to-morrow? The Grammarians are coming over, aren't they? Well, you're going to keep goal for the Junior Eleven! Nipper's asked for this—and he'll get it!"

"You're mad!" said Fatty. "I can't get into a big game like that!"

"Can't you? Wait, and see what happens!"

"But Nipper would never dream of—"

"It doesn't matter what he dreams of," interrupted Nick. "Listen to me, Fatty! I've got an idea. Although I say it myself, it's a good idea. Open up your ears, old man, and soak in the following!"



Fatty made a rush at the ball, mistimed his stride and trod on it. He overbalanced, and sat down on the ball with terrific force. "Ha, ha, ha!" howled the juniors.

WHEN Fatty walked into the Ancient House Common-room, later in the evening, he was greeted by a chorus of chuckles.

"Cheese it!" he said tartly. "I've come here to find Nipper! Where is he?"

"Over in that corner, reading," said Handforth, grinning. "But you needn't think you'll get him to put you in a Hcuse team—"

"Nipper's the skipper—not you," inter-

rupted Fatty stiffly. "I thought you Ancient House fellows were sportsmen!"

"You silly fat grampus!" snorted Handforth. "We're ready to give anybody a chance—within reason! But you don't think that you can play football, do you? And it's like your nerve to talk about keeping goal!"

"I could keep goal as well as you!" retorted Fatty, with spirit.

"As well as me?" gasped Handforth.

"Perhaps you'd like to keep goal to-morrow against the Grammarians?" he added, with heavy sarcasm.

Fatty disdained the question, and walked across to where Nipper was sitting. Nick Trotwood was already in the Common-room, intently watching a game of chess which was in progress between Vivian Travers and Harry Gresham.

Fatty gave him a casual glance, and caught the merest suspicion of a flicker of Nick's left eyelid. If he had not been watching for it, he would not have seen it.

"Just a minute, Nipper," said Fatty, turning briskly to the Junior skipper. "I want to talk to you. What about giving me a chance?"

"Hold on, old son—shan't be a minute," said Nipper. "I'm just finishing this article. Jolly good one, too. It's an argument on the respective merits of Soccer and Rugger."

"I suppose the ass says that Rugger is better?" asked Fatty.

Nipper made no reply; he was reading.

"Well, what about it?" went on Fatty, his manner becoming slightly excited. "When do I get a game, Nipper?"

"Well, I've been thinking things over," replied Nipper, without looking up. "I've decided to give you a game, Fatty, and you can keep goal for St. Frank's against the Grammarians to-morrow."

"Thanks awfully!" gasped Fatty, overjoyed.

Nipper looked up with a startled expression in his eyes—and well might he, for he had heard those words, in his own voice, but he had no recollection of saying them.

Nick Trotwood, on the other side of the room, was watching the chess game more intently than ever. But it was actually he who had spoken those words. It was about the cleverest ventriloquial feat he had yet performed. Not only had he copied Nipper's voice perfectly, but every fellow in the room was prepared to swear that Nipper himself had uttered them.

Nick had chosen his moment cleverly. It was lucky in the extreme that Nipper should



be reading—for it gave Trotwood his opportunity.

The effect upon the room in general was electric.

Travers and Gresham stopped their game and stared across the room. They had heard those words only subconsciously, but they forgot the game in a flash. Handforth dropped a picture puzzle he was looking at as though it had bitten him; Church and McClure ceased their operations upon Church's acetyline bicycle lamp, and their jaws sagged. Everybody, in fact, turned their eyes upon Nipper in amazement.

"Did you hear that, you chaps?" asked Handforth blankly. "Nipper just said that he's going to play Fatty in to-morrow's game."

"Hard luck on you, Handy, dear old fellow," said Travers.

"Hard luck on me!" roared Handforth. "What about its being hard luck on the school?"

"If Fatty keeps goal, the Grammarians will win hands down—and they're expecting to be slaughtered," put in Bernard Forrest, with a grin. "I was speaking to one of the Grammar School chaps yesterday, and he offered me a bet on the game. Said that he was willing to back St. Frank's. Naturally, I didn't take him on."

"Blow you and your bets!" shouted Handforth. "I want to know——"

"What's all the excitement about?" broke in Nipper wonderingly.

"The chaps are naturally a bit surprised, old man," said Fatty Little, grinning. "They didn't expect you to give 'em a shock like that. It's most awfully decent of you, and I'm tremendously grateful."

"That's all right," said Nipper, although his jaw seemed to drop. "I believe you'll be more successful in a big game than a small one, Fatty—— Eh? Why, what on earth—— Was that me talking just now?"

Everybody stared. There had been the faintest change in Nipper's voice, but so faint that nobody had any inkling of the truth. There had been a curious effect, too, of his voice coming without his lips moving, something like the effect produced by a talking picture which is badly synchronised.

"That's what I was looking for—a big game," said Fatty eagerly.

Nick Trotwood came running over.

"I say, Nipper, this is topping of you," he said with gratitude. "I thought you didn't mean what you said on Little Side. You won't regret this to-morrow. Fatty will maintain the honour of the eleven."

"What are you talking about?" asked Nipper impatiently. "Fatty isn't going to play in to-morrow's game!"

"But you just said he was!" ejaculated Trotwood, staring.

"I didn't!"

"You didn't?" gasped Fatty. "Why, you—you turncoat! You distinctly told me——"

Didn't he tell me that I could play in to-morrow's game, you chaps?" He appealed to the room in general.

"He certainly did," asserted Travers. "I don't know what possessed him, but I heard him with my own ears."

"We all heard him," declared Handforth darkly. "And I want to know what it means. I'm the Junior Eleven goalie——"

"Dry up!" shouted Nipper, or so it seemed. "Fatty's going to play, and there's an end of it! That's my final word!"

"Good enough!" said Nick heartily, as he slapped Nipper on the back—Nipper, meanwhile, gasping for breath and spluttering incoherently. "Thanks, old man! Fatty will do you proud! Come on, Fatty!"

He seized the fat junior's arm, and they marched out of the Common-room together. Nick ostentatiously banged the door, but he did it in such a way that he left it slightly open. A quick glance told him that the passage was empty.

"Clear off—quick!" he whispered. "I'll stay here a bit and listen."

Within the Common-room a fresh storm had broken.

"Are you mad, Nipper?" Handforth was yelling. "What did you say that for to Nick just now! Why did you tell him that Fatty's going to play?"

"But—but I didn't!" gasped Nipper, bewildered.

"You did—we heard you!" shouted Handforth.

"And you can't go back on your word now," said Travers. "A skipper's word is his bond. It wouldn't be fair, either."

"I can't understand it," muttered Nipper, passing a hand over his brow. "Has somebody hypnotised me? I heard myself saying those things, but I don't remember saying 'em. Of course Fatty can't play!"

"That's better," said Handforth, with relief.

Nipper knew of Trotwood's ventriloquial powers and there was always the danger that he would jump to the truth. It was for this very reason that Nick had remained outside. Apparently he had gone, and if he wasn't in the room nobody could possibly suspect him of getting up to his tricks.

"Why do you say one thing one minute and another the next?" asked Parkington wonderingly. "You can't deny it, Nipper—we all heard you. Hang it; if Handy isn't playing, I want to keep goal. Fatty's no goalie!"

"I should think not," said Deeks. "Fatty's untried, and it's a cert that he would make a hash of things."

Nipper waved his hands.

"Let me think!" he pleaded.

It was Nick's chance.

"You can all go to the dickens!" Nipper appeared to say, a second later. "What I've said I'll stick to. Fatty plays!"

"What!" went up a general roar.

Nipper looked round blankly.

"Eh?" he gasped. "Did—did I speak just now?"

"Did he speak?" bellowed Handforth. "I believe the ass is going dotty. You just said that Fatty is to play to-morrow."

"I couldn't have done!" protested Nipper. "Or, if I did, I must have been day-dreaming!"

"Day - dreaming or not, you said it."

"And I stick to it!" came Nipper's voice crisply.

"Oh, he's helpless!" groaned Gresham. "Almost in the same breath he contradicts himself. He doesn't know his own mind. But whatever he says can't alter the fact that he did promise Fatty."

Nipper was bewildered. As Nick was no longer in the room it didn't enter the junior skipper's head to suspect what had really happened. He could only conclude that he had been absent-minded. And now the situation developed as Nick Trotwood had hoped, as, indeed, he had counted upon.

"Well, I can't understand it, but if I said it, I said it," remarked Nipper, frowning. "I've never broken my word yet, and I won't break it now. I promised Fatty, and the promise stands."

Nick caught his breath in triumph.

"But you can change your mind, can't you?" asked Handforth excitedly. "You silly chump! You can't play Fatty to-morrow. You know we whacked the Grammarians on their own ground, and that——"

"Yes, I know it," interrupted Nipper, still worried. "That's the very reason why there's nothing much to yell about. Even Fatty can keep goal against the Grammarians. They're hopeless this season. We shall win."

"Don't you believe it," said K.K. "Handy made some glorious saves over at

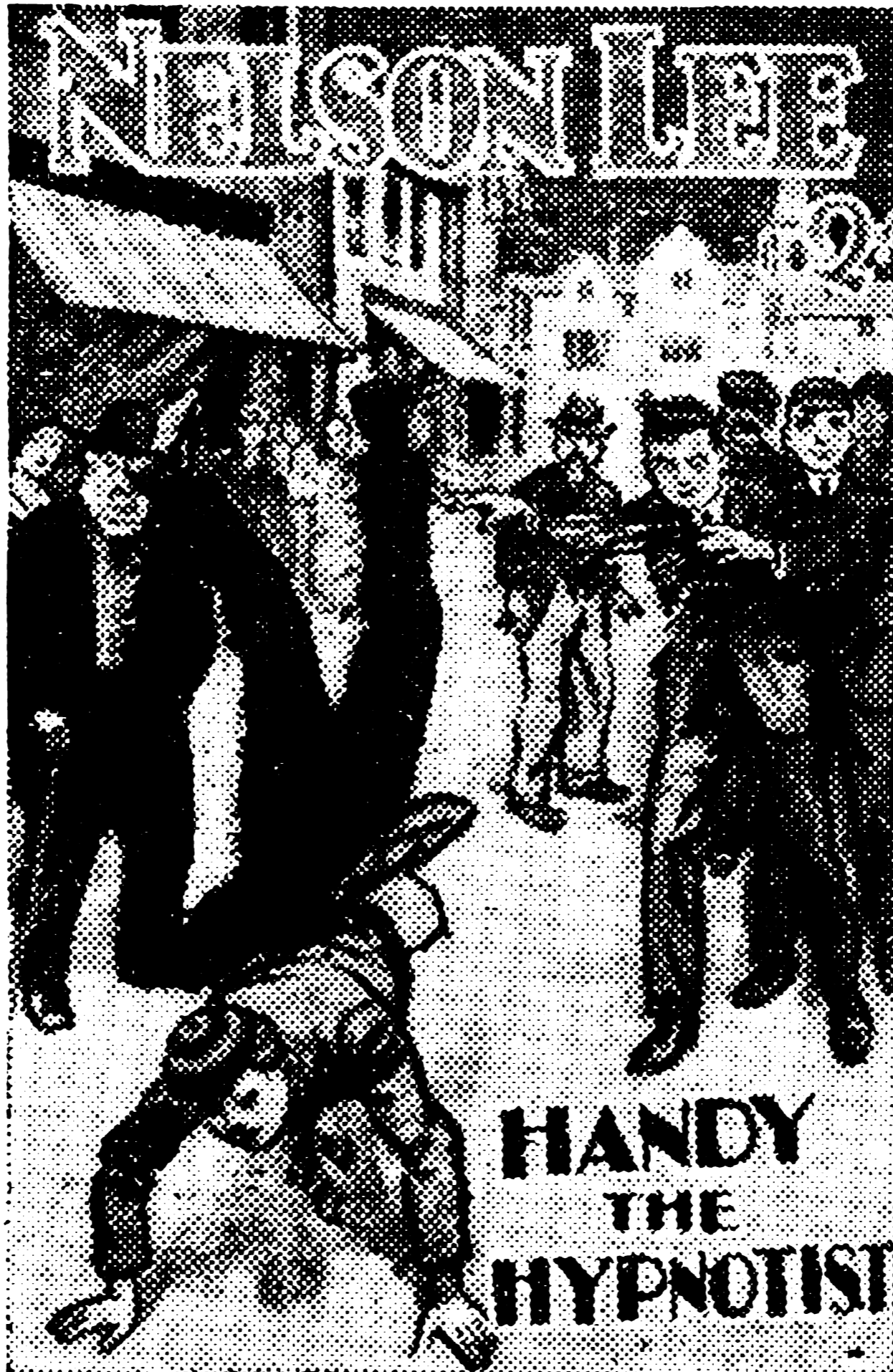
the Grammar School, and he'd do the same to-morrow. But we can't rely on Fatty. He'll let the Grammarians through and throw the game away. You've got to tell Fatty he can't play."

"Yes, you've got to!" shouted the others. And that, of course, was just what Nick wanted, for Nipper was goaded.

"I've got to, have I?" he asked grimly. "Kindly remember that I'm not taking orders from anybody. If I told Fatty that he could play—and you all seem to think I did, although I'm blowed if I can remember it — I'll stick to my guns. That's the finish, Fatty plays!"

And Nick Trotwood stole away with joy in his heart.

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a shot. A quid each all round, eh?"

"Even money?" said Gore-Pearce. "Good enough!"

"But shall we really lose?" asked Gulliver.

"Lose! With Fatty in goal?" grinned Forrest. "Why, it's a shame to take the money. These Grammar School chaps will have a fit when they hear that we're ready to back their own team to win, and they'll fall for it."

CHAPTER 9.

A Little Flutter!

"LOOKS good to me," said Forrest, grinning.

"You don't think we can make any cash on the deal, do you?" asked Gore-Pearce.

They were lounging in the lobby, with Gulliver and Bell.

"It'll be dead easy," declared Bernard Forrest coolly.

"Townrow and Smith and Braby, of the Grammar School, are always ready for a flutter. I'll get through to them on the 'phone. They'll take our bets like

"You're a tricky bounder, Forrest," said Gore-Pearce enviously. "Isn't it a bit of a dirty trick, making these bets? The Grammarians don't know that Fatty will be goal."

"If they did know we couldn't make the bets," retorted Forrest. "Hang it, there's no dirty trick in taking advantage of the situation. It's simply a case of getting a tip straight out of the stable."

Townrow and Smith and Braby, of the Bannington Grammar School, were indeed startled when Forrest rang them up and made his proposition. They knew well enough that their own footballers were expecting a defeat; so it was strange that these St. Frank's "blades" should be rash enough to risk their money.

The bets were made, and Townrow and Smith and Braby congratulated themselves—until they arrived at St. Frank's on the following afternoon, and then they understood.

Everybody was talking on the one absorbing subject. Nipper was fed-up with the whole thing, and simply refused to discuss it again. He was still puzzled. But he was sticking to his word—or his supposed word. Fatty Little was officially in the team as goalkeeper.

"Simply throwing the game away, of course," remarked Singleton, of the West House, in the hearing of the Grammarian sports. "With Fatty playing, it's a cert that the Grammarians will win. They've only got to get within twenty yards of the goal and they'll score every time they kick."

"Here, half a minute!" said Braby excitedly. "What's that you fellows are saying? I thought you Saints were going to wipe up our team?"

"We were," replied the Hon. Douglas sadly. "But our junior skipper has gone soft in the head, or he has got water on the brain. Anyhow, he's decided to play an absolute wash-out in goal. Fatty Little, to be exact."

Braby and the others were aghast.

"Fatty!" yelled Townrow. "Fatty in goal! Why, he'll give us the game!"

"Of course he will, but you needn't look so startled about it," said Singleton. "You ought to be pleased."

Townrow and Smith and Braby were looking so "pleased" that they gnashed their teeth. They found Forrest and his grinning pals, and asked them what the dickens they meant.

"It's a filthy trick!" said Townrow warmly. "When you made those bets with us you knew about Fatty, didn't you?"

"Of course we did," replied Forrest coolly. "Fatty's going to win us those bets. He'll present you with this game, my sons. Surely you don't want to back out of those bets?"

"Oh, we'll stick to them!" said Townrow disgustedly. "But I must say you're a lot of tricky blighters!"

They wandered off, and it was quite by chance that they came across Nick Trotwood and Wally Freeman chatting together in West Arch. The three Grammarians came up from the rear, and the arch served to amplify the voices of the pair who talked within it.

"Win?" the professional was saying. "You needn't worry at all, Trotwood. I know how Little has come on. I'm glad it has been kept dark, because it'll give everybody a surprise—and a pleasant surprise. He'll keep goal admirably."

"Well, you ought to know, Mr. Freeman," said Nick.

"I do know," replied Wally Freeman. "I'm the coach, and it's my business to know. Fatty is going to spring a big surprise this afternoon, and I'll eat my hat if the Grammarians win."

Townrow wheeled his two chums away, and they got out of sight without Nick or the coach knowing of their recent proximity.

"Did you hear that?" asked Townrow excitedly.

"Yes, but what does it mean?" said Smith.

"Fatty's a dark horse—that's what it means!" put in Braby, grinning. "Our bets are safe, you chaps! It's Forrest and his pals who've been spoofed—not us! Fatty must have been training on the quiet. Freeman knows what he's talking about—he's an ex-International, and the official coach. We can rely on his word."

"Let's find those sportsmen!" said Townrow briskly.

They came upon Forrest & Co. round the ropes of Little Side. There were crowds round the enclosure. Everybody was interested in this game—if only to see what a mess Fatty would make of his goalkeeping.

"Stopping to see the game?" asked Forrest genially.

"Might as well," said Townrow, with a shrug. "As for those bets, I'm satisfied with them, after all. Fatty looks capable enough, though he's certainly oversized. But Fatty or no Fatty we shall lose."

"Optimist!" said Forrest, chuckling.

"We're all optimists," said Townrow. "And to prove it we'll treble those bets, if you like. Three quid each. What do you say?"

"I say that you're mad," retorted Forrest. "But I'm on!"

"Same here," grinned the others.

And the bets were trebled on the spot.

Suddenly there was a cheer as the teams took the field, which quickly changed to a roar of laughter when it was seen that Fatty Little was carrying a pile of tuck.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at him!" cried Handforth, disdainfully, bitter at losing his place to a raw recruit. "It's as much as he can do to waddle over to the goal! And does he expect to play and gorge that tuck at the same time? What's going to happen when he has to make a save?"

"He'll probably get to the spot half a minute after the ball's in the net," said Baines. "Fatty's too cumbersome—too slow."

"That doesn't always apply," said Deeks. "Don't forget Fowkes, of the Blue Crusaders. He's one of the best goalies in the First Division of the English League."

"Fowkes is always in training, but Fatty does nothing else but eat—and he's even going to gorge when he's playing in a match," said Handforth. "There's no comparison. He'll make a hopeless fool of himself, and Nipper will get chucked out of the captaincy over this. You mark my words!"

Browne, as he gave his whistle a warning blast. "I regret that Fatty is more interested in the tuck he has brought on the field than he is in the game. He might, at least, have reserved his gorging until he has done his worst."

"He says he needs a bit of extra grub to put him in tip-top form," said Gresham, with a snort. "I protested with him a minute ago, but he wouldn't take any notice. He just went on wolfing."

"It is difficult to prevent an ass from nibbling," commented Browne. "The ass is by nature a nibbler. Well, are we all lined up?"

The Grammarian sent in a low, swerving shot from the penalty spot, and Fatty dived full length and punched the ball round the post.



CHAPTER 10.

Surprising the School.

BROWNE, of the Fifth, was referee. He was a popular referee, too. His decisions were always scrupulously fair, and delivered with such geniality that he kept the players in the best of humours.

"I must confess," said Browne, "that my customary optimism is at a low ebb. Much as I would like to record a win, I fear that I shall be obliged to place a black mark against the St. Frank's Junior Eleven on this sad day"

"Don't rub it in!" said Travers. "What's that whistle of yours for, Browne? We're all ready."

"With the exception of the Giant Sloth within the St. Frank's goalposts," corrected

Splendid! Let the fun begin! On with the show!"

The Grammarians had won the toss, and they had the breeze with them. Nipper, playing centre-forward for the Saints, kicked off, and it was soon seen that the home team was not up to standard.

The inclusion of Fatty in the XI. had a moral effect upon the others. They all felt that they were going to be beaten, and they did not even try. Nipper started a brilliant movement, but it was frittered away.

The ball, instead of travelling down into the Grammarian half, was jumped upon by one of the visiting halves, and it came soaring down on the wind. One of the Grammarian forwards trapped it, ran on, and a roar went up. Within the first minute the Grammarians were on the attack.

McClure ran across and attempted to rob the forward, but he was a second too late. The fellow got through. Groans went up from the St. Frank's crowd, and excited cheers from the Grammar School supporters.

"Shoot, Mouldy!"

"Go it, man!"

"Now's your chance, Mouldy!"

Moulden, of the Grammar School, cut in and sent in a shot which would have tested Handforth in his best form. Fatty Little was standing stock-still, as though mesmerised. The sudden call upon him for action had evidently taken him by surprise. In one hand he held a meat patty, and his cheeks were bulging.

The crowd groaned afresh. What a goalie!

And then the miracle happened. The ball left Moulden's foot, and came tearing goalwards. Not until then did Fatty move, and with one jump he leapt a clear two yards—sideways. Nobody in the school had believed him capable of such speed.

The ball struck him fairly in the middle of his jersey, and rebounded with a mighty thud, nearly dropping in mid-field. And Fatty, with a rueful rub of his middle, went on eating.

"Great Scott!"

"Fatty saved!"

"With his tummy, too!" roared Handforth.

"That wasn't a save at all—it was a fluke!

The fat ass didn't even know what he was doing!"

"Didn't he?" yelled Trotwood. "He moved quickly enough, anyhow! He was in the right place to stop the ball getting in, wasn't he?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "Good gad! The dear old lad absolutely rose to the occasion. I mean to say, he was there when he was wanted. On the jolly old spot."

"He'll never do it again," said Hubbard.

Nick Trotwood was the only fellow out of all those spectators who knew that Fatty had really tried. Everybody else regarded it as a fluke—an accident. But that save had the effect of waking the Saints up.

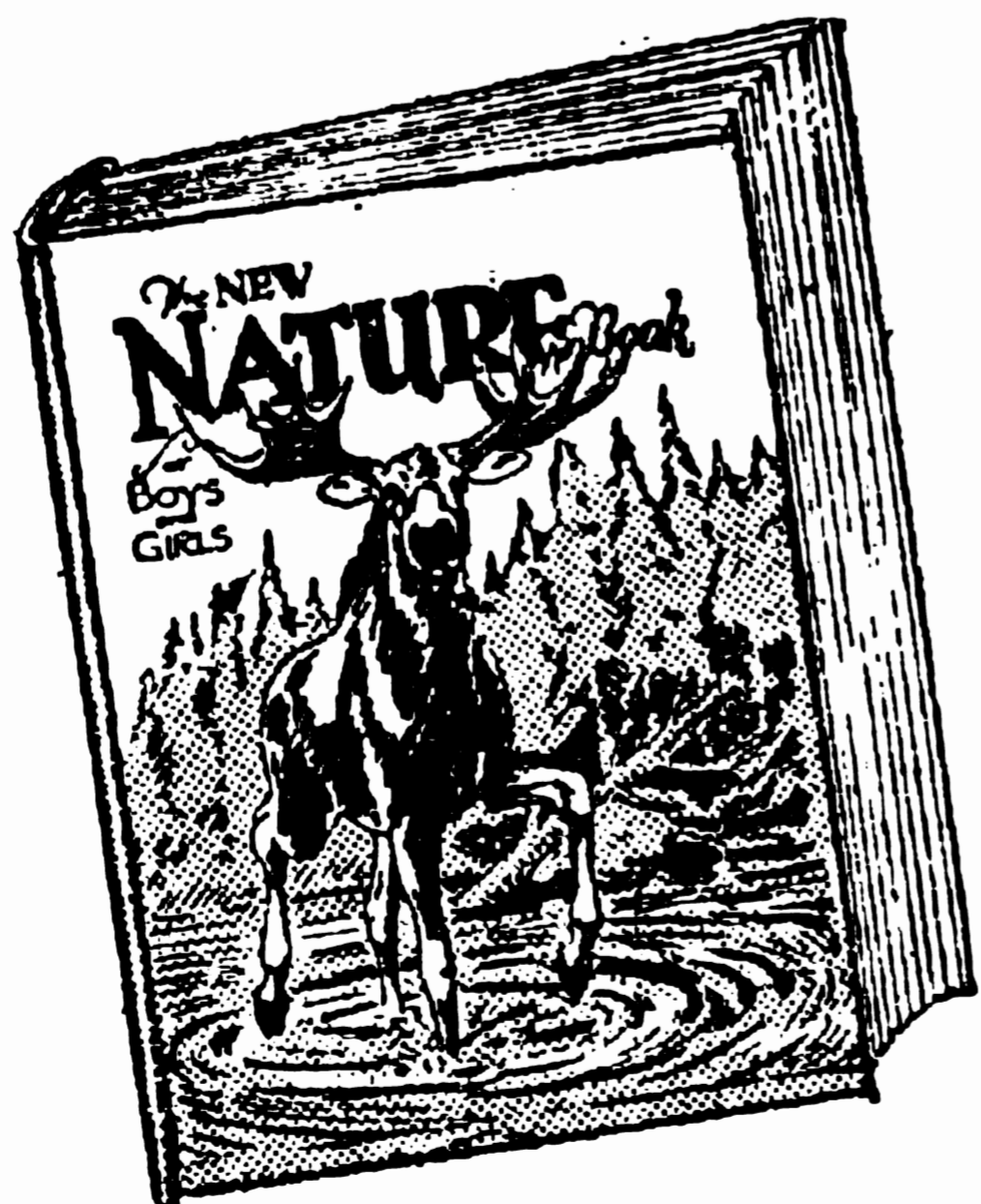
Reggie Pitt, on the wing, received the ball from K. K., who was playing at centre-half. It was a well-placed pass, and beautifully timed. Reggie was on it in a flash, and he treated the crowd to one of his lightning runs up the touchline.

At the right moment he centred, and Nipper, running between the Grammarian backs, who were beaten by the speed of the attack, had an open goal in front of him. And when Nipper had a chance like that he seldom wasted it.

Slam!

The leather left his foot like a rocket, and crashed into the back of the net before the Grammarian goalie could realise what had happened.

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"Goal!"

"That's number one," grinned Townrow, with a glance at Forrest.

Forrest was looking startled.

"Rats!" he said. "That's nothing. Wait until your forwards get busy. They'll put that ball past Fatty half a dozen times before the game ends!"

"I'm beginning to have faith in Fatty," said Townrow cheerfully. "I expect he'll give us another sample of his skill in a minute."

But it was nearly a quarter of an hour before the Grammarian forwards broke through again. They were weak, and the Saints, encouraged by that goal, pressed hard. It was as much as the visitors could do to pack their goal and maintain their defence. There was no time for attack.

Then, owing to a slip of K. K.'s, a pass went to the wrong man, and this man sent out a long sweeping pass right across the field to his outside-left.

The winger was absolutely unmarked, and the move took the St. Frank's defence by surprise. It was one of those quick opportunities which sometimes come in a game—but which are seldom seized. It altered the whole complexion of the game. In a moment the Grammarians were attacking.

The outside man rushed down the wing, sent a shot across the goal-mouth which could easily have been converted if the inside men had raised their heads. Fatty was active enough now. With an agility which startled the spectators, he seemed to be in every part of the goal-mouth at once.

The ball came back from the other side, kicked in by the inside-right, and Fatty dived at it. It looked a winner all the way.

"Oh, well saved, Fatty!"

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Look!"

Fatty was performing wonders. Rolling over and over like a huge football himself, he cleared a tangle of Grammarians, and slung the ball well beyond the penalty area. Moulden was there, however, and he took a first-time kick on the spot.

"Oh!" yelled the crowd, startled.

It looked another winner, but Fatty was on his feet again, and with a mighty punch he cleared. Yet, one second earlier, it had seemed impossible that he could be ready. Only his remarkable agility had saved the situation.

But it was only saved for the moment. Before the crowd could find its breath disaster followed. McClure, dashing up to clear, kicked the ball awkwardly, and it slewed round and struck Parkington's outflung hand.

"Hands!" yelled the Grammarians. "Penalty—penalty!"

Browne blew his whistle.

"Place the ball on the spot," he ordered.

In the tenseness of the situation the spectators forgot to cheer Fatty for his recent valiant efforts. A goal was coming now for sure. The Grammarian centre-forward was to take the kick.

Fatty Little was watching with eager eyes. He caught the flicker of the Grammarian's eyes as he glanced from one side of the goal to the other. And it seemed to Fatty that he was trying to feint. While pretending to shoot into one corner, he would shoot into the other.

The Grammarian took a run at the ball, and—thud!—he sent in a low, swerving shot for the bottom left-hand corner of the goal. But ere the ball left the spot, Fatty had leaped for that side. He went full length and punched the ball round the post with his fist.

There was a roar of applause from the on-lookers.

"Oh, well saved!"

"Good old Fatty!"

"The chap's brilliant!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Fatty!"

There was a vast difference now! The Removites and Fourth-Formers were shouting themselves hoarse. During these few minutes Fatty had proved beyond all question that that first save had been no fluke. He was making a brilliant show.

"Jiggered if I can understand it!" gasped Handforth, looking dazed. "By George! I don't believe I could have done any better myself!"

"Nothing like modesty, old man," grinned Nick Trotwood. "Fatty saved two certain goals then. And you chaps have been growling at Nipper ever since last night for playing him!"

"We've got to apologise to Nipper!" said Deeks handsomely. "Nipper knew what he was doing last night!"

"Did he?" breathed Nick, under his breath. "I hardly think so!"

BERNARD FORREST and his pals became more and more depressed as the game proceeded. Fatty's unexpected form ruined all their plans. And Townrow and Smith and Braby were in high good humour.

At half-time the Grammarians hadn't even scored—and St. Frank's were two up. After another twenty minutes play, both Tregellis-West and Pitt had scored for the Saints. Four—nil! And the Saints were "all over" the Grammarians. They had got going now, and were playing brilliantly.

"Might as well settle up now, what?" asked Townrow pleasantly.

"Yes, it's all over bar shouting," grunted Forrest. "Well, we were wrong—and we deserve to whack out three quid each for our idiocy."

Only twice in the second half did the
(Continued on page 36.)

THE VENGEANCE TRAIL!

In search of his father's slayer, Peter Graham at last comes upon the man who can give him information, only to find him—stabbed!

A Dockside "Dust-Up"!

"TEN cents—twenty cents—forty cents!"

Peter Graham, tossing the three nickel coins up carelessly, caught them in his big, hard paw. In English money they were worth nearly two shillings, and they were all he had in the world. He sighed ruefully.

On a battered post, at the mouth of an alley in the roughest part of San Francisco's water-front, he sat and stared at the shipping in the bay with wistful eyes. The brilliant Californian day was drawing to a close, and the air was full of shrill and raucous voices—American, Chinese, dago—all the hotch-potch of nationalities that lived in the dockland slums of the great Western seaport.

As he sat there more than one pair of narrowed, furtive eyes sized him up expertly. He was obviously a stranger and an Englishman, and strange Englishmen are fair game in that "tough" quarter. But a certain something in Peter's rugged face and lithe, hefty figure kept him safe—until dark, at least. The San Franciscan thug is a pretty bad proposition with gun, blackjack or knife, but he likes his victims small and weak. Also he likes them well-dressed and prosperous.

And Peter Graham looked anything but that. He had sold his jacket two days ago in order to buy grub, and all he wore now was a pair of old shoes, a tattered shirt and stained grey flannel bags. The fact that the bags were held up by an Old Boys' tie of St. Frank's School in England meant nothing to the hard cases of California. All they saw was a burly youngster, too shabby to be worth their while, and big enough



and quick enough to scrap like a wild cat in the event of any rough stuff. So they "passed him up."

Meanwhile Peter sat musing on the shipping, for he had to wait until darkness fell, anyway. He was hungry, and he had just enough money for two very cheap meals.

After that—

A truculent voice twanged suddenly in his ear.

"Hey!"

He turned his head leisurely. Standing beside him was a youth of about his own age and weight, a youth whose face looked as though it had been roughly shaped with a blunt axe first and decorated afterwards with about a million freckles. He had fiery, humorous eyes of the peculiar green that usually goes with flaming red hair. And when Peter looked at him he flourished a set of big knuckles suggestively.

"Hey, you! Git off'n that post!"

Peter looked him up and down.

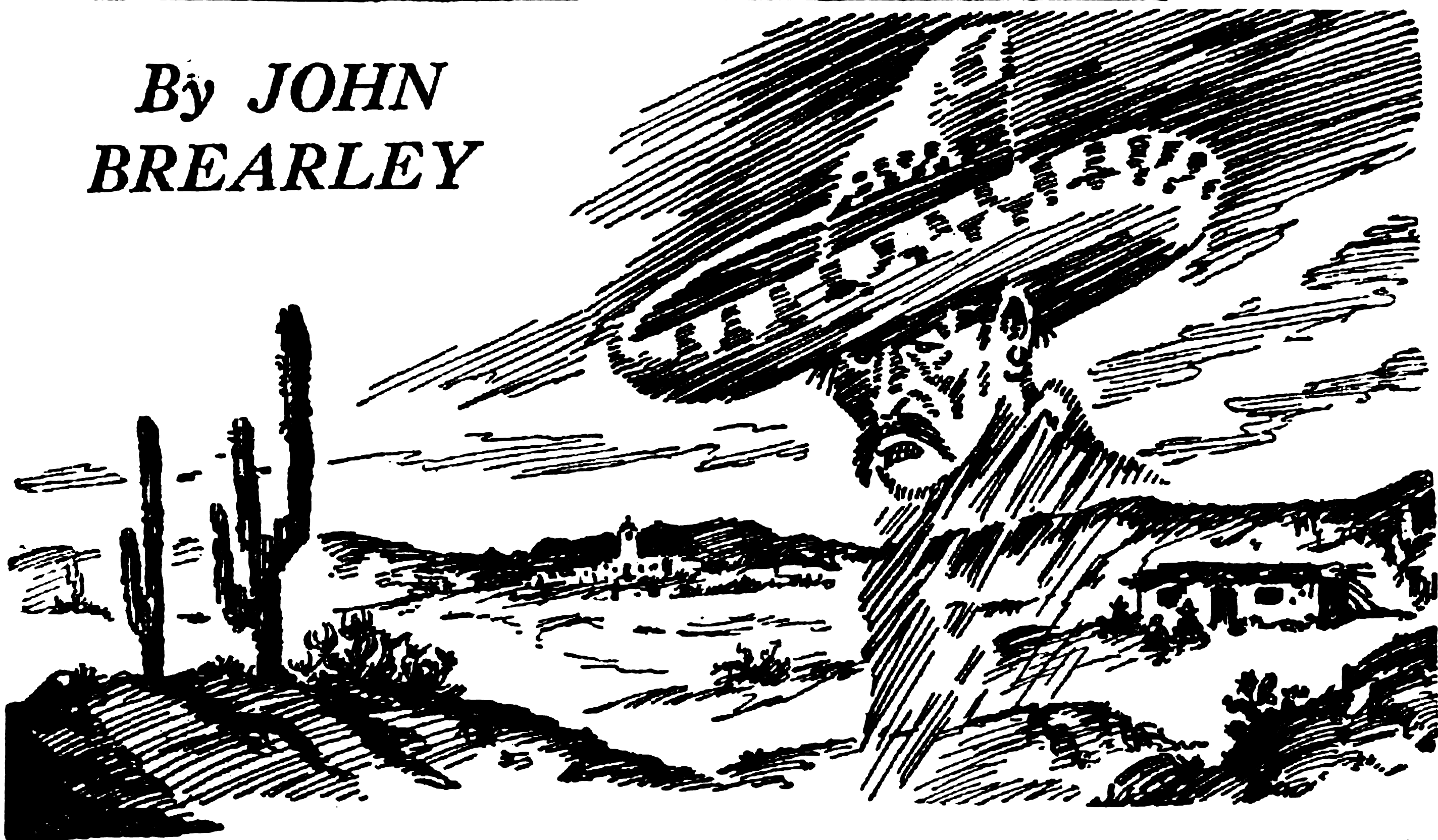
"Any particular reason?" he drawled,

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IN SAN FRANCISCO!

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By JOHN
BREARLEY



'Sure, Percy. The pertik'ler reason is—because I'm a-tellin' yuh!'

"I see. Any other reason?" smiled Peter gently.

The newcomer stiffened ominously.

"I wants tuh sit down!" he observed in a quiet, hard voice.

Peter's long leg shot out like a flash, and caught the red-head behind the knees.

"Then sit down!" he murmured, and slid off the post ready for war.

The other rose to his feet slowly, green eyes dancing. He crouched like a panther about to spring, and grinned.

"Thanks, buddy!" he chortled, almost affectionately. "Oh, boy, I've been longing fer a scrap all day. Whoopce!"

With a wild, gleeful yell he leapt in madly. So swift was his rush that Peter mistimed it badly, and took a terrific drive on the chest and a right-cross to the ear before he pulled himself together and steadied his man with a straight left. A wild and whirling sixty seconds followed, during which the fight raged all over the water-front, and the two hefty youngsters slammed into each other with might and main.

It was a gay scrap. Scarcely had the first three or four wallops landed when out of the alleys and the quayside hustled a hard-boiled but eager crowd, to whom fighting was as the breath of life. An approving murmur went up when Peter, side-stepping and ducking prettily, knocked the grin off the American's face with an upper-cut and nearly downed him with a full right, only to be knocked down himself the next moment.

There was no clinching or stalling—just full-blooded, joyous slogging, with both boys fighting under full blast. Peter soon found

that he was by far the better boxer; but his cheery opponent was as quick as a lynx and as hard as a pine-knot, caring nothing for punishment. The crowd grew thicker as other wharf-rats and local roughs joined in, and so far from stopping the battle, a big Irish policeman lounged in the shelter of some cotton bales and looked on approvingly.

"Sure, 'tis an iligant foight!" he murmured to himself, swinging his club in excitement. "That's a beaut'! Go it, both soides!"

Up and down the contest swayed, punctuated by the harsh cries of the crowd, the clean smack of hearty hitting, and the running commentary from Peter's excitable opponent. He himself was fighting in silent, grim amusement, boxing neatly for openings, then jumping in to hit with all the power of sinewy arms and shoulders. The red-head, on the other hand, weaved and scrambled about like a fighting terrier, shooting over all sorts of queer blows, round-arms, chops and swings, and talking gaily all the while in breathless gasps.

"Hold that—missed! Ow, gee, that was a biff! Got yuh—ah, got me! This is—whoop—zam—a dandy scrap—wow!"

Smack! A right hook knocked him flat. He was up again in a second, just in time to rub his snub nose straight into a gorgeous upper-cut and close Peter's eye with a wicked counter. A storming charge sent the English lad across the ground, boxing coolly on the retreat, and just as the American gathered himself for a punch to end the battle, he dived beneath the flailing arms, stabbed one, two, three to the body and was clear.

Now he came in himself in a strong, driving attack that threw the red-head splutter-

ing, gasping and wriggling round the quay, striving in vain to get his freckled face out of the way of those granite fists flung in from all angles.

Peter suddenly found himself on top. The American was as full of fight as a bear-cat, and his battered lips still writhed in a gallant grin. But his speed was failing, and although he tried desperately to hurl himself past Peter's arms in an effort to snatch a knock-out, it was plainly a losing fight. A beautiful straight left, quick and deadly as a wasp sting, darted continuously through his guard, snapping his head back and beating him off every time, and as he fell away a stiff right-hand jolt tore into his body, shaking him from head to toe.

Gradually he fell back, fighting doggedly under the hail of punches that were tearing his defence to shreds. The cheery words had died away into a succession of defiant grunts, and a curious, strained pallor was spreading over his bruised face. Quick to size matters up, the crowd broke into a storm of jeering. 'Frisco toughs have no sympathy to waste on the under dog, and besides, the fight had been too clean for their liking.

"Aw, g'wan! Fight, yuh quitter!"

"Use yore feet, yuh simp!"

"Kick his block off!"

Deaf to all this advice, the American plunged in giddily for a final effort. Blows thudded into his body like drum-beats; he swayed dazedly, eyes fixed and glazed. Somehow a wild blow landed on Peter's jaw, shaking him backwards, and, seeing this, his opponent leapt in with both hands. A white streak, starting from Peter's hip, socked between his eyes, seeming to transfix him. He hung for a second, head back, arms beating the air. Then Peter's right came up, over and down, crashed into his jaw and knocked him to the stones in a heap.

The Scarred Mexican!

SLOWLY and stupidly red-head began to struggle up, then he collapsed. Peter saw that the fight was over, and the crowd saw it, too. Another twanging chorus of abuse rang out immediately, and one thug, stepping into the ring, stirred the fallen fighter with a brutal toe.

At that Peter saw red. Covering the distance in a single stride, with all his strength he drove his fist clean into the man's vicious face, whirled him aloft in both arms and slung him across the dock. There was a yell, a curse and a splash; a snarl from the toughs.

In a second matters looked ugly, for the crowd meant mischief—and so did Peter. The pleasant light had faded from his eyes, leaving them cold and hostile as he straddled the body of his late opponent, hands ready.

A blustering voice broke the tension.

"Now, then—now, then! No rough stuff! Bate it, ye divils!"

And through the crowd came the Irish "cop," shoved the scowling thugs aside with a pair of mighty shoulders and batting them with his club if they were slow to move. One, a dark-faced Italian, was fool enough to go for his knife, and, like a sword-stroke, the club slashed across his wrist, breaking it cleanly. After that the sturdy weapon rose and fell until a space was cleared.

Bunched in a knot, the slit-eyed crew glared spitefully, screwing up their courage for a rush. The experienced cop, reading the signs, took a last hearty swing at a bullet head and plucked forth his whistle resignedly.

"Ye're a lot of scuts!" he boomed, more in sorrow than in anger. "Here, Oi've let ye watch a gr-r-rand foight between two gr-r-rand bhoys and ye ain't satisfoid. Now, bate it, before I blow for hilp and pinch ivery wan of ye!"

They went. The cop, with a friendly nod to the boys, strolled after them. Peter was left staring indignantly across the quay.

"Thanky!"

A voice from the ground made him look down to see the American sitting up, nursing his jaw. Quickly he went on his knees, staring with anxious eyes at the badly cut face.

"Are you all right, old son?"

A painful smile broke across the other's swollen lips as he nodded.

"Awright?" he repeated. "Shore. Thar ain't nuthin' I like better than bein' kicked by ten mules, hit by a skyscraper and run over by a train. Shore I'm awright. Don't I look it?"

"Not by a mile!" chuckled Peter. "Can you walk? Come on, then—with you!"

Passing an arm round the lad's shoulder, he dragged him to his feet and sat him down on the post that had caused all the trouble. The American grinned his thanks, but almost at once his eyes closed wearily and he fell forward in a half-faint. Something in his appearance made Peter grab him and look at him closely. For the first time he saw that the youngster was even shabbier than himself, clad in a drill shirt and thin brown dungarees only. He ran his hands lightly over the American's pockets, listening for the chink of coin, and heard none. He whistled softly and nodded.

"When did you eat last, old chap?" he asked quietly.

The other flared up.

"Eat? Say, mind your own—aw, I ain't eaten fer two days!" he finished weakly as he saw the look in Peter's eyes. "Now, look heah—"

Without a word the English lad hauled him off the post and began hustling him along the quay, deaf to his feeble protests. A hundred yards away, in a dirty back street, was an eating-house where the food was coarse, but fairly good—and cheap. The place was crowded with seamen, dockers—and others—at their evening meal, but through the haze of tobacco smoke

Peter spotted a corner table where one man sat alone—a dark-eyed Mexican whose slouch hat partly shadowed a livid knife-scar running from temple to olive cheek. Dragging his late opponent along, he sat him down on a wooden chair, drew up another for himself, and fell to studying the soiled bill of fare. He studied it with greatest care—particularly the prices. He had to.

A shirt-sleeved waiter drifted up, shooting a knowing glance at the damaged faces before him, but chewing his gum in silence, for inquisitive folk get hurt on 'Frisco's water-front.

"Four fried eggs, two strong coffees and doughnuts!" ordered Peter, sighing with relief. He had just enough to pay for the two meals.

"White wings, two in the dark and sinkers!" interpreted the waiter, and in five minutes the food was planked down on the same table before them. The American looked up awkwardly.

"Say, I—I'm broke——" he began. Peter lifted the cruet in a threatening fist.

"Eat!" he commanded, and wired in with gusto, trying not to notice the ravenous way his guest attacked the food.

The fact that the meal had taken his last cent didn't worry him in the least. He wished he could have afforded more, though, for both lads could have eaten three times as much. However, he carried on placidly until at last his companion flicked an empty plate across the table and leaned back with a sigh.

"Thanky!" he said briefly. "Say, what's yore name?"

"Peter Graham!"

"Yore an ace, Pete. Mine's Potter—Red Potter to me frien's. Say, I'm real sorry I picked that scrap with yuh!"

Peter smiled.

"That's all right, Red—I enjoyed it!"

"Sorry fer meself, I mean," persisted Red, patting his face tenderly. "Gee, you're a scrapper, feller. A hitter from Swatville on the Slosh. Shake!"

Over the remains of the meal the two youngsters shook. Red's eyes crinkled in a grin.

"You're English, ain't yuh?" he asked suddenly, and when Peter nodded he gave a humorous sigh of woe. "An' I always thought English guys was soft! Gee! How long yuh been in 'Frisco, pardner?"

"'Bout three hours!" drawled Peter. "Tramped in this afternoon!"

He thought for a moment, then looked up quickly.

"I suppose you live here, Red? Whereabout is a place called Shendy Street—No. 16?"

It may have been imagination, but at the words he could have sworn the scarred Mexican across the table gave a violent start. Darting a sidelong glance at him, Peter had a glimpse of two beady eyes staring fiercely beneath the floppy hat-brim. They switched away the second they met

his, and a thick cloud of cigarette smoke drifted across the man's face, hiding it.

A tiny frown gathered on Peter's brow, but before he could say any more the cheerful Red shook his fiery locks.

"Say, I don't live in 'Frisco; no, sir! I'm from Texas; been a cowpuncher since I was twelve, and drifted to this range in search of fun—like a chump! Let's ask the guy at the counter!"

"Right!" Peter rose with a last lightning glare at the Mexican, who was smoking with half-closed eyes straight before him. The two friends strolled across the room.

But, arrived at the counter, for some reason Peter looked behind him swiftly. He was just in time to see the Mexican go lounging gracefully through the swing doors.

"Shendy Street?" drawled the waiter. "Sure, it's four blocks east o' heah. 'Turn left outa heah and take the fo'th on yore right."

"What sort of place is it?" asked Peter softly.

The man looked at him curiously; but just then a customer bellowed, and he turned away. As he went, however, he flung one word over his shoulder:

"Bad!"

Peter grunted and went out.

Knifed!

OUTSIDE on the dark side-walk Peter swung round on his new chum, smiling a queer little smile.

"Doing anything, Red?" he asked.

The other shoved a hand through his shock head and grinned widely.

"Waal, I gotta put my million-dollar car in the garage and go and see my bank manager. Otherwise I ain't doin' nuthin'."

Peter laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Like to come with me? There may be some—fun!"

"Will I? You betcha boots!"

Together the tall couple swung on their heels and strode through the squalid, hot streets, between lofty tenements where voices babbled in foreign tongues and vague figures glided out of dark alleys and doors. The old slums of 'Frisco, filled with a cosmopolitan horde, are just as bad as those of New York, and it was a safe bet that every passer-by there, American or foreigners, carried a knife or gun—and wouldn't hesitate to use it.

The effect of the food on Red Potter was most noticeable. He had all the cowboy's typical bowlegged strut and slight stoop, but his strength had returned, and he kept step vigorously with the Englishman's long stride. With a childlike innocence he told his new pard all about himself in his slow Texan drawl, yet after the courteous way of the West, never so much as hinted that Peter should return the compliment. And the taciturn English boy didn't—not for a time, anyway.

They had no trouble in finding Shendy Street; but one glance was enough to tell them that the waiter was right. It looked

bad! The houses on either side were in a terrible state, most of them windowless, and the darkness of the side-walk was rendered more so by the fact that most of the street lamps were shattered. Red still talked gaily, but Peter had grown silent and watchful.

No. 16 was a ramshackle tenement like the rest, standing at the corner of a twisting alley. A broken front door, hanging by one hinge, yawned wide open, and stepping into the dirty hallway beyond was like plunging into a black cave. Up some rickety stairs Peter went softly, Red following, until he reached a landing, where, by the aid of a match, he consulted a crumpled paper.

"Room 18 I want, Red! Kim on!"

Up some more stairs, the street noises growing fainter, the darkness even more intense. The gloom and the musty smell of neglect everywhere lent a mysteriously sinister tang to the place, and Peter's eyes had narrowed somewhat when he stopped at last in front of a door whereon was a crude "18" painted in white numerals.

He rapped softly; no answer. Again louder, and only an echo came back. Gently his fist closed round the handle, and, turning it, he found to his surprise that the door was unlocked.

They stole inside. The place was as dark as a vault. Yet someone or something was there. They could hear an odd gulping sound, very, very faint, and the tiny rustle of garments.

Peter's voice came sharp.

"Anyone at home?"

For answer came a strangled moan from the darkness, spurring him into activity. He jumped forward, a match flaring in his hand.

On the floor at his feet lay a man, grunting with pain, and clawing feebly at the floor. A trail of blood led to the door. A knife hilt, jammed between his shoulder blades, glinted in the wavering light.

The Trail Begins!

"GOSH!"

For a moment both lads stood rigid, paralysed by the sight there in that dark, lonely room. Peter was the first to move, leaping over the dying man into the room, striking another match as he did so. By its light he shot a searching glance round, sighing with relief to find the room empty. On a bare table, stuck in the neck of a bottle, was a candle-end. He lit it quickly.

"Stand by the door, Red!" he whispered. "If anyone comes, knock him cold!"

Next instant he was down on his knees, with a pallid face pillowed in his lap. The wounded man was a foreigner, with black matted hair and pale lips, and presently he opened two dull eyes that stared vaguely upwards. A spasm of pain and fear contorted his sallow features as he saw Peter bending over him. His body trembled violently.

"Santa Maria——"

"Hush!" breathed Peter hastily. "Lie still. We're friends!"

At the sound of his voice the glazing eyes searched his face, plainly lit by the candle flame.

"Ha! You—are—Ingleez? You are——"

Peter's arms tightened round the man's body.

"I am Peter Graham!" he said simply. A look of joy lighted the pallid face on his lap, and he had to restrain the man from struggling up.

"Gracias a Dios! You 'ave come! There—is time! I am Pedro Gomez. I expect you—long time!"

"Couldn't get here quicker!" jerked Peter. "Red!" he hissed. "Doctor—quick!"

A clawlike hand clutched his arm.

"No, there—is not time for that. I die. An' for you, Ingleez boy—zere is danger!"

"I know," whispered Peter. "Did you see who knifed you, Pedro?"

The man nodded weakly.

"I see! It was Juan of ze Scar!"

"Phew! Man with a scarred check?" asked Peter quickly.

"Si. You know heem, zen?"

"I've seen him!" Peter's eyes hardened. The man in the eating house! "How long ago, Pedro?"

"Five minut'—ten. You no catch heem," he said urgently as Peter stiffened to rise. "He eez gone. He think I am kill. I 'ear him ron away. He will be gone now. Listen!"

Peter bent closer. The man's voice was dying away in gasps—it was plain he was dying fast.

"Yes?"

"You gotta my letter? I glad you come. I tell you now who keel your father, and vere you find ze man. You keel—yes? Promise?"

"I promise!" Peter's whisper was like a knife-edge as he hugged the man tight.

"Zon listen. I breeng you 'ere for see if you can be trust'. You go from 'ere—long way. Right down in Mexico—to Zareda City. You find Manuel Garcia—beeg man. He tak' your father into mountains—keel him—steal his minc. He fin' out zat I write you; fin' where I am hiding; sen' Juan of ze Scar to knife me!"

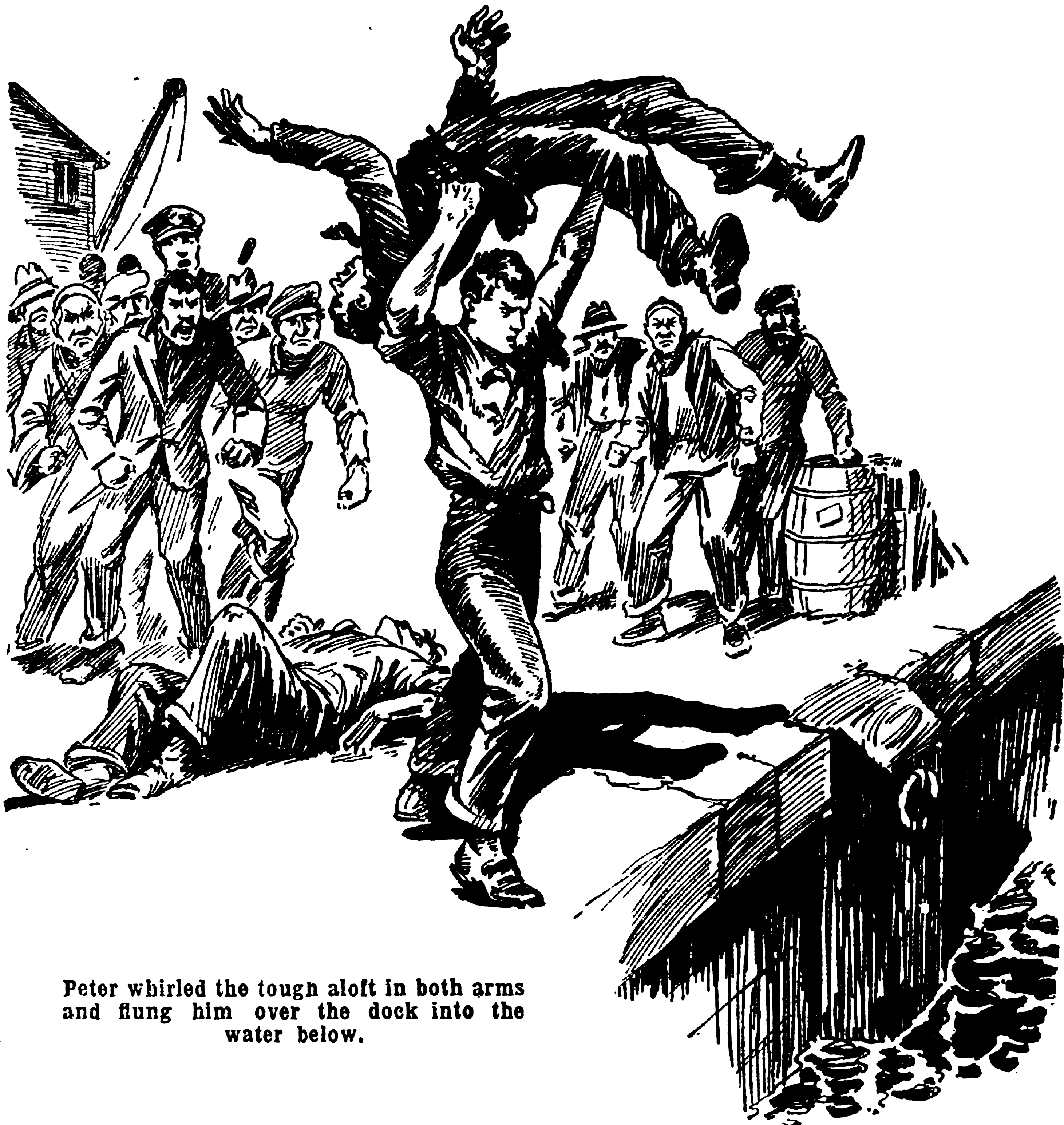
"Manuel Garcia—Zareda City, Mexico!" repeated Peter icily. "I'll find him, Pedro!"

"Saints be praised! You 'ave money? No? Zere is twent' dollars in my coat over zere. Take it. You father—kind man to me; you good Ingleez boy. I—ah, hold me, hold me; everzing grow—dark!"

Peter felt a last tremor shoot through the Mexican's body, saw a trickle of red foam stain the white lips. The wild eyes rolled to his in a last appeal, and as he nodded the man smiled and sagged backwards.

Pedro Gomez was gone. But Peter Graham, come from England on a mission of revenge, had been just in time!

"Dead, Pete?"



Peter whirled the tough aloft in both arms and flung him over the dock into the water below.

It was Red's hushed voice from the door. In the silence of the room, lit by the flickering candle, the two youngsters stared at each other. Peter's face was as hard as marble and his eyes blazed.

"Yes. Como in!"

Red stole across the room.

"What's doin', pard? Kin I do anythin'?"

Very tenderly Peter laid the dead man down and closed the door. Next he walked to the table and sat on the edge, staring at Red's worried face. It was the Texan who broke the silence at last.

"He sent fer yuh, didn't you? I couldn't help hearin' some words, Pete!"

Peter smiled bitterly.

"Yes, he sent for me. I've come all the way from England to find him, mostly on foot. Now he's dead!"

"Gee!"

"I'll tell you the yarn, Red. My dad came out to the States four years ago; drifted into Mexico on a mining stunt. The last I heard was he'd struck it rich, and after that he—disappeared. They searched for him thoroughly, but never found a trace.

"Just about a month ago I received a letter from this poor chap. My dad had done him a pretty good turn once, and he wanted to repay it. I suppose dad must have mentioned my name and school at some time; anyway, this letter reached me. He said he could tell me who killed dad, and he gave me this address!"

"Yeah!"

"I dropped everything and came across on my own. Worked my passage to New York; been on the road ever since, begging rides and tramping. I guessed Pedro was living in hiding, so when I reached 'Frisco this afternoon I reckoned I'd wait until

dark before looking him up. Then I met you—and Juan of the Scar!" he finished quietly.

"Juan of the who?" asked Red. "Not that greaser——"

"Yes!" nodded Peter. "The fellow who sat at our table. Gosh, what ghastly luck! I thought he jumped when I asked you where 16, Shendy Street was—fool that I was to open my mouth in public. Seing that I was English, and, I suppose, knowing Pedro was hiding here, he must have hurried straight along, knifed the poor chap and got clear just before we arrived."

"The ornery polecat!" snorted Red fiercely. "And who's the other greaser—Manuel Garcia?"

Peter's hand clenched slowly.

"The man who—killed my dad!" he answered in a soft, chill voice. "He lives in Zareda City. I'm going to find him!"

"Are yuh? And what then?"

"Kill him!"

Another silence fell. Then:

"I'll be trailin' after yuh, Pete!" snapped Red suddenly.

Peter smiled slightly.

"Don't be a chump, Red. I've landed you in a mess now, anyway, and——"

"Ferget it!" Red's answer came short and sharp. "Yore my pard. It's yuh and me. Gee, haven't you licked me fair and spent yore last cent on me? Aw!" He snorted as Peter looked up in surprise. "Think I didn't feel yuh pat my pockets to find ef I was broke? Think I didn't see yuh pickin' out the best grub you could afford for us both? 'Sides, I heard yuh tell this pore hombre yuh was broke!"

"Oh, rats! Look here——"

"Look nuthin'. Say, how you goin' to Mexico, anyway?"

"I—I don't know yet!" muttered Peter. "Tramp, I reckon."

"Yeah?" answered Red derisively. "Tramp another thousand five hundred miles—that's how far it is. Shore I know Zareda. Yuh've only gotta walk through the Californian Mountains, across the

Arizona Desert, into New Mexico and Texas, and then into the Mexican sierras. Shore, it's plumb easy—a nice afternoon sa'nter!"

"I'm going, anyway!" gritted Peter. "Listen, Red! I'm going to get that Manuel Garcia if I have to walk to Australia. And when I get him——"

"Shore! We'll swamp him like a landslide. Yuh couldn't shake me off with a gun, Pete. I know fifty ways o' getting along the road where yuh'd be lost!"

For a moment he stood in thought, then punched Peter in the ribs.

"This is what we'll do, pard. We'll take Pedro's twenty dollars fer food. Then we'll catch the midnight train outa 'Frisco into the mountains. Fares? Yuh tire me! We ain't payin' no fares—we're jumpin' the train like dyed-in-the-wool hoboos!"

"Oh! And what about Pedro?"

Red shook his head.

"We'll have tuh leave him, Pete. Can't be helped—we'd be right in trouble and waste precious time a-plenty. But we'll 'phone the police before leavin' town."

It took Peter five hard minutes to make up his mind, for leaving the Mexican there seemed terrible. Then a voice echoed in his brain, hard, insistent:

"You keel Manuel Garcia? Promiso?"

He knelt swiftly, his English reserve broken.

"Yes, I'll kill him, Pedro!" he whispered fiercely. "We must leave you, old chap; but you know it's for the best. I'll find him—and when I do you'll be revenged. And so will dad!"

Without another word he joined Red at the door, and side by side the new partners stole through the darkness into the roaring 'Frisco streets.

The long trail, across 1,400 miles of mountain range and desert, had started. Vengeance waited at the other end!

(Great series, ch, chums? Follow Peter and Red along Vengeance Trail. Thrills galore in next Wednesday's yarn.)

GLUTTON AND GOALKEEPER!

(Continued from page 29)

Grammarians break through—and each time they came up against a cast-iron defence which took the heart out of them. Even when the St. Frank's backs made mistakes, the goalie didn't.

It was Fatty's chance—and he made the most of it.

He brought off two splendid saves in that second half, thus removing the last possible shadow of doubt.

"Well done, Fatty!" panted Nipper, as he ran up as soon as the whistle blew. "Five times we got the ball into their net, but you didn't let it go past you once! Good man!"

"You're not sorry you played me, then?" asked Fatty, beaming.

"Sorry! I wasn't dreaming last night, after all," replied Nipper.

"That was Nick," said Fatty, with a grin. "He was only throwing his voice, and he made you give me my place——"

"Idiot!" yelled Nipper, aghast. "Fat-head!"

"Here, I say——"

"I'm talking about myself—not you," said Nipper. "What a dolt I was not to think of it last night! I knew I hadn't said those things! But, my Jove, I'm glad that Nick made me say them! I was a pig-headed ass, and I'm sorry, Fatty. You've justified Nick's trick, and you've covered yourself with glory."

"Never mind glory," said Fatty happily. "What about a good feed?"

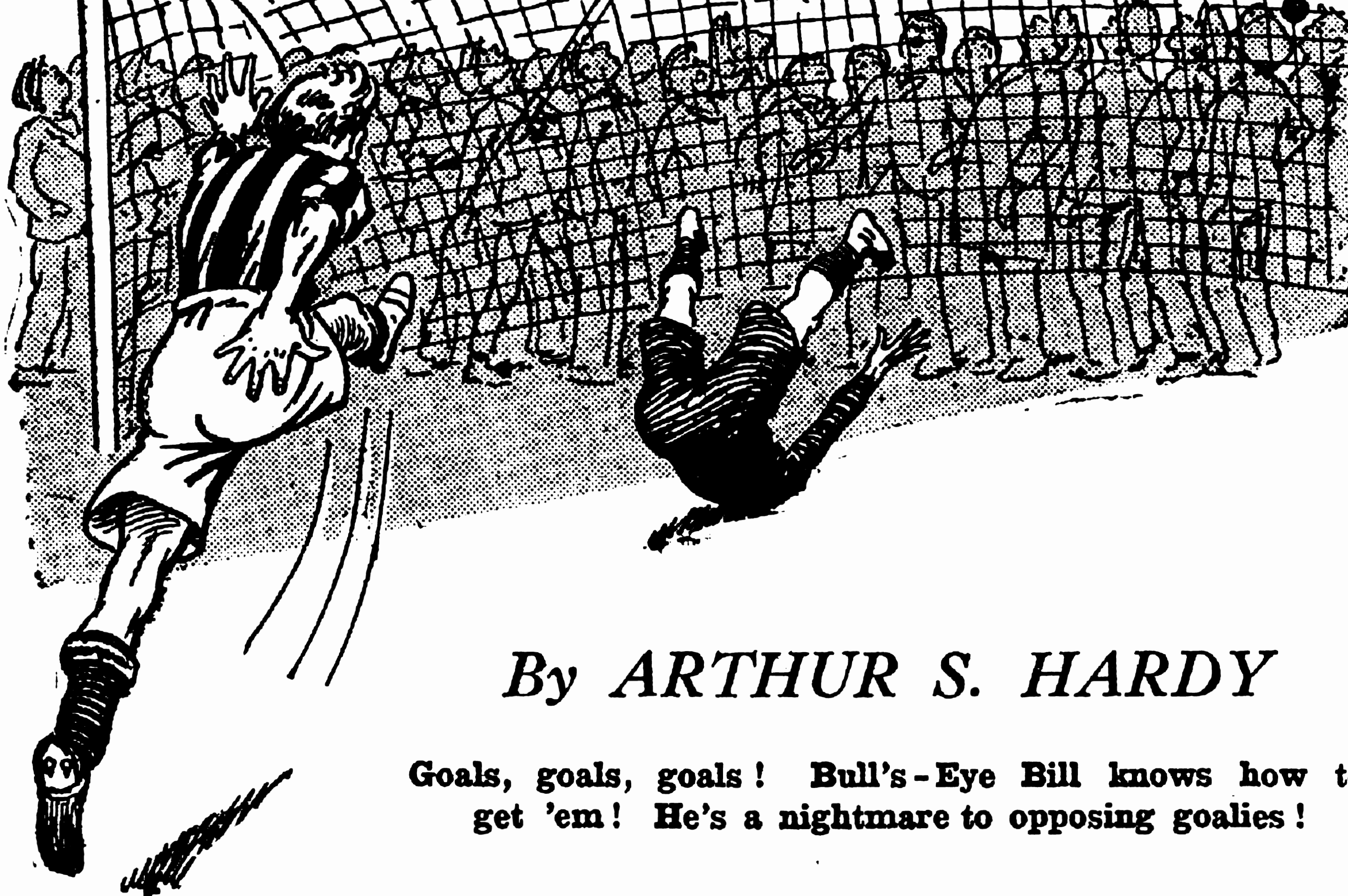
THE END.

(Another St. Frank's yarn next week, chums, "Handforth the Hypnotist!" Extra-long and extra-funny!)

Breezy Complete Yarn Of Cup-Tie Footer!

BULL'S-EYE BILL

ROUTES THE ROVERS!



By **ARTHUR S. HARDY**

Goals, goals, goals! Bull's-Eye Bill knows how to get 'em! He's a nightmare to opposing goalies!

A Bullseye for Bulls-Eye!

IT was a cold, damp and misty morning, but Bull's-Eye Bill didn't mind. He finished putting on his football things and the red, white and blue football boots which Gipsy Dick had made and dived down the steps of the caravan to the Flats.

Gipsy Dick had told Bull's-Eye that the boots had magic in them, and the first time Bull's-Eye had worn them he had scored eight goals against the Wasps, though he hadn't put the boots on until the second half.

Dropping the football he carried, Bull's-Eye dribbled it through the mist towards a goal that loomed up on the Spiders' pitch, and once again he had that odd feeling that he was treading on air. He seemed to bounce along without effort. With his heart leaping, Bull's-Eye shot on the run from twenty-five yards out, the goal looking quite small in the mist. And as he stopped to watch the effect of the shot he saw the ball streak like lightning to the back of the net and roll up it. He hadn't taken any particular aim, and yet the ball had gone as true as a die to the target.

Bull's-Eye fetched the ball, dribbled to the

other end of the field and shot again from just inside the goal-area, and once more the ball streaked into the net.

Bull's-Eye stared down at his tri-colour boots in awe. Gipsy Dick had made them, Gipsy Dick had said there was magic in them, and Gipsy Dick, the man of mystery, as he sometimes called himself, with a big, broad grin, was right. Now, Bull's-Eye had always been a clever little footballer, the best goal-scorer the Spiders had ever had without Gipsy Dick's boots—but with them— Bull's-Eye held his breath at the prospects offered of scoring goals.

As he came in sight of Dick's many-coloured caravan, he saw two big, broad-shouldered men standing there, one of whom was knocking loudly at the door.

As Gipsy Dick, looking very sleepy, opened the door of the van, Bull's-Eye recognised the two men; the shorter and fatter of the two was Crab, the fishmonger, his late employer; the taller and burlier, a giant of a man, with fists like legs of mutton, was his stepfather, One-Punch Pete, the acknowledged biggest hooligan outside gaol.

"I dunno where Bull's-Eye is," Bill heard

Gipsy Dick say. "He's gone out. No, here he is—bin practising."

The two men turned round, and as Crab caught sight of Bull's-Eye he screwed his sour face into the nearest approach to a kindly expression he could manage, which wasn't any sweeter than a lemon at that.

"Bull's-Eye," he said, an artful light shining in his cunning eyes, "I sacked you because you got my delivery bike crumpled up and spoiled several pounds' worth of fish, but I've made up my mind to take you back again. So you'll resume work at my shop at eight o'clock at the old wages, fifteen bob a week. So get out of those football things and come along."

Gipsy Dick filled a pipe, sat on the steps of the caravan, and listened with a grin. Bull's-Eye was a lad of spirit. What would he answer to that?

"An'," said One-Punch Pete, grinning horribly and holding out his great right hand, "I'm gonner forgive yer, too, Bull's-Eye and take yer 'ome again, so shake."

Bull's-Eye answered from a safe distance. "You're both mighty considerate all of a sudden. Where's the catch in it?"

Crab gulped, but controlled himself, his mean eyes like gimlets.

"Bull's-Eye," he said, "I don't mind telling you, everybody in the town is talking about your scoring eight goals against the Wasps. It'll do me a bit o' good to 'ave you back again as errand-boy. And listen! I'll give you a rise—I'll pay you twenty bob a week."

Bull's-Eye Bill laughed.

"I wouldn't come back for twenty pounds a week," he cried, "and if I did I'd tell all your customers that the fish you advertise as best fish is bought after all the other fish-mongers in the town have had first pick, and that your bloaters are wind-dried stale herrings and not proper smoked. You sell third-grade fish at first-grade prices and half the time the customers don't get the fish they select. I'll——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Crab laughed hollowly. "You always liked your little joke, Bull's-Eye. I like a funny errand-boy. I'll give you twenty-five bob a week and no overtime."

"Not me!" cried Bull's-Eye, remembering the many injustices he had suffered at Crab's hands. "You don't hook me, again, Crab. Go and give your dry fish a drink."

Gipsy Dick's grin broadened. Bull's-Eye had not disappointed him.

Now One-Punch breezed in, rolling up his sleeves and showing the biggest pair of forearms Dick had ever seen.

"You've had enough rope loafing around the Flats playin' football and livin' with a greasy-'aired gipsy!" he barked. "You'll take Mr. Crab's offer and you'll come 'ome and live with me again and 'and over a quid of your wages every Saturday reg'lar."

"I'm through with that, Pete," answered Bull's-Eye. "You drove me away from home, and I'm not going back any more."

One-Punch Pete rushed and Bull's-Eye dodged.

"Can you manage, Bull's-Eye?" called out Gipsy Dick.

"Yes!" cried Bull's-Eye, as he ducked under Pete's swinging right arm, turned and dodged again.

Down the Flats he raced, with One-Punch Pete in hot pursuit, and for a big man Pete could run. Bull's-Eye saw through their little game. Crab hoped to increase his trade in bad fish by using him as an advertisement, and to fire him the moment he thought fit. Also, One-Punch Pete was feeling the pinch, not being able to spend Bull's-Eye's weekly wages. But if they thought they could make him go back their heads must be addled.

In the breathless race that followed Bull's-Eye began to realise that Pete might get the better of it.

It was a frightful thought. If Pete once got hold of him he would punch the life out of him with his leg-of-mutton fists and not think twice about it, either.

Bull's-Eye began to feel desperate. But suddenly he remembered those shooting boots. Bull's-Eye Bill, always on the target!

They had arrived in front of the caravan. Gipsy Dick was still sitting on the steps watching, unmoved. Crab had his cupped hands to his mouth and was bawling:

"That's right. Grab 'im! You've got 'im, and when you punch 'im give 'im an extra 'ard punch for me."

Bull's-Eye suddenly let the football drop, dribbled it a little way, turned and took a first-time shot at One-Punch Pete. The ball crashed on to Pete's chin like a bullet, laid him out flat on his back, and swerving sideways caught Crab a rap on the side of the dome which sent him over in a backwards somersault.

Then Gipsy Dick grabbed Bull's-Eye and pulled him into the caravan.

"That's enough exercise for one morning, Bull's-Eye," he cried. "Come and have your breakfast."

One-Punch Pete and Crab the fishmonger sagged badly at the knees as they staggered off the Flats. And just as they were leaving the piece of waste land, Buttercup, Gipsy Dick's yellow horse, stalked by with its ribs sticking out and its Roman nose hanging down.

Crab's eyes glistened wickedly.

"Here, Pete," he whispered hoarsely. "That's Gipsy Dick's horse, isn't it?"

"Yus," mumbled One-Punch Pete, hardly able to move his swollen jaws.

"Ah!" said Crab. "The beast is starved. I'll get Gipsy Dick sent to gaol for cruelty and then we can grab the boy."

Rout of the Rovers!

BULL'S-EYE BILL'S great chum, Chip Rogers, breezed on to the Flats soon after breakfast and he brought news.

"Bull's-Eye," he said excitedly, "you know Mudbank United have gotter play Crabapple Rovers in the first round of the Town Cup on the Mudbank ground. Well,

though Ginger Hackem's nothing to do with the club, Crabapple have hooked him in to play for 'em, and Ginger told the Mudbank secretary the other night that if Mudbank didn't let Crabapple win he'd burn their pavilion down."

"Ginger Hackem's a rotten egg," said Bull's-Eye indignantly, "and the Rovers never were a sporting team. Why, when I used to play for Mudbank C team they——"

"You're still a member, ain't yer, Bull's-Eye?"

"Yes; they made me honorary life member because I scored so many goals."

Chip Rogers laughed.

"That settles it, then. They elected me last committee meeting, and as so many of the 'A' team have got the funks, they've asked me to play; and now that you've got those magic shooting boots, Bull's-Eye,

creaking caravan along the road to Mudbank, the man in uniform kept pace, watching the movements of the horse with the whiskers round its hoofs, with a vacant stare.

As Gipsy Dick was a pal of Bull's-Eye Bill's, he was allowed to drive the caravan into the Mudbank ground.

By the time the Crabapple team arrived the ground was packed. When the teams turned out, Crabapple Rovers in red shirts, and Mudbank United in blue, the moment



Bull's-Eye took a first-time shot, and the ball crashed on to Pete's chin and then rebounded into Crab's face.

you've gotter play. We'll show Ginger Hackem!"

"P'r'aps they won't want me," said Bull's-Eye.

"Won't they? I'm going right over to see the sec. now."

Chip Rogers hurried off at a run, took a tram to the Mudbank ground and back, brought the secretary home with him, and arranged then and there that Bull's-Eye should play for the United against Crabapple Rovers in the Town Cup-tie.

On the day of the match Gipsy Dick and Bull's-Eye set off in the caravan early in the morning, and as they passed by Crab's shop Crab caught hold of a man in uniform and pointed the yellow horse out to him.

"See for yourself," he cried. "I'm a member of the sacciety and I'm gonner gaol that man."

As Buttercup hauled the swaying and

the crowd caught sight of Bull's-Eye Bill's red, blue and white football boots they began to cheer. But there was another player who sported red, blue and white boots—Ginger Hackem had got them.

"Bull's-Eye Bill's not the only guy who can wear three-coloured boots," said Ginger, as he walked to the middle of the field. "I've called his bluff. He won't score any goals to-day. The boys are gonner mark him, and if he don't simmer down they'll crock him. I've scared the whole crowd of Mudbank softies. There'll be only one goal-scorer in this game, and he's me."

When the Mudbank captain pulled out a half-a-crown to toss with, Ginger Hackem pushed his hand down and spun a coin of his own.

"Heads!" he called as it came down, and when the Mudbank captain picked it up he saw that it had a head on both sides, but

for the sake of peace he refrained from starting an argument with Ginger Hackem.

Grinning from ear to ear, Ginger Hackem chose the end from which a gale was blowing, and the Mudbank crowd groaned.

The Rovers stopped the United's opening rush, and with the gale behind them tore down the field, Ginger Hackem snapping up the ball and shooting from ten yards out. The ball flashed straight at the Mudbank goalkeeper, but he looked scared, perhaps because of Ginger's threats, and hardly lifted a finger as the ball went by into the net. The Rovers were a goal up inside a minute.

"Tri-coloured boots!" jeered Ginger Hackem. "I tell yer, Bull's-Eye Bill will be off the map before this game's over."

The United seemed all at sea; their backs tackled half-heartedly, their goalkeeper was scared, the referee ignored some bad cases of tripping and handling, and it looked as if Crabapple Rovers would cake-walk the tie. Bull's-Eye Bill had not seen the ball, and Chip had scarcely touched it. But all the same they were the only two who played with any heart.

Chip raced up to Bull's-Eye.

"Bill," he gasped, "if we don't score soon we'll be smashed! We've gotter get a goal!"

"If I can get the ball I'll soon score," answered Bull's-Eye.

Plunging desperately into the game Chip Rogers managed to hook the ball away from Ginger Hackem just as Ginger was going to shoot. Dribbling down the field and dodging the red shirts, he sent a peach of a pass to Bull's-Eye's feet, and Bull's-Eye raced for goal. He didn't wait for the full-back's rushing tackle, but placing absolute faith in Gipsy Dick's magic boots he shot at long range hard into the wind.

The Mudbank crowd had never seen such a shot. It cut through the wind like a cannon-ball. Although he saw it coming the goalkeeper could not raise his hands quickly enough, and the ball, flashing by his groping fingers, hit him smack in the bread-basket, felling him like a log. The ball rebounded back into play and Bull's-Eye rushed up and shot it clean through the netting, and it soared right above the heads of the crowd on the packed bank.

That goal of Bull's-Eye's was a demoraliser. It took Crabapple's red-faced trainer ten minutes to straighten out the crumpled goalkeeper who, even when he did carry on, walked up and down his goal with wobbly knees.

No more goals were scored before half-time, but the moment the teams crossed over and the Mudbank United had the wind at their backs, it was all up with Crabapple Rovers.

Bull's-Eye found that if he shot from his own half the wind would carry the ball into the mouth of the Crabapple goal like a bullet. And Crabapple's six-foot goalkeeper was so scared whenever he saw the flash of Bull's-Eye's red, white and blue boots

that he just shut his eyes and let the ball go by. Even his own supporters were giving him the bird at the finish, and most of them had left the ground when Mudbank won by ten goals to one.

The boys arrived back at the Flats, tired and happy, at half-past six. Chip Rogers had just gone home and Gipsy Dick was carrying a nosebag out for his yellow horse, when the formidable figure of Sergeant Puffin, of the town police, loomed up in the gathering mist.

"Good-evening, sergeant," said Gipsy Dick cheerily.

"Good-evening for me, bad hevening for you, Gipsy," said the sergeant, whipping a blue paper out of his belt and handing it to Dick. "But dooty is dooty."

"What's this?" cried Gipsy, staring at the blue paper.

"A summons."

Gipsy Dick whistled and pulled at his lank hair.

"So it is," he cried, "and I've never been summoned in my life."

"Granted on the application of Crab, the fishmonger, member of the prevention society, for cruelty to a 'orse."

"Rot!" snorted Gipsy Dick. "There isn't a better-fed horse than Buttercup in all England!"

Sergeant Puffin made a dart at the yellow horse, which, however, pranced away from him and showed its teeth.

"I have been instructed to take the horse to the station, Gipsy," he cried. "The police veterinary surgeon will examine it there, and if it's condition's as bad as they believe they're gonner shoot it."

"If they touch a hair of that horse," said Gipsy Dick angrily, "I'll shoot them. Buttercup would never allow anybody to take him away from me. If he's gotter go, the only way's to hitch him to my caravan and we'll all go."

Sergeant Puffin had not bargained on that and argued, but being convinced at last, he told Gipsy Dick to hitch the horse to the van. With Gipsy driving, Bull's-Eye Bill sitting disconsolately on the back step, and Sergeant Puffin stalking proudly at Buttercup's nose, they made their way through the town and past the gates of the station yard.

And there, after the police vet had examined Buttercup, the horse was stabled and a door padlocked on it, while Gipsy Dick and Bull's-Eye Bill curled up in the caravan, waiting for the morning.

"And you needn't worry, Bull's-Eye," said Gipsy Dick, as he stretched himself out to sleep. "Buttercup's always been over-fed and under-worked, and not the contrary, and I can prove it. It looks like as if we were under arrest, but as soon as the beak has heard the case we'll go back to the Flats and freedom."

(Bull's-Eye Bill scores another winner next week—watch out for this breezy footer yarn.)

Another Enthralling Instalment Of Our Adventure Serial!

Knights of the Road!



(For opening chapters see page 42.)

**A Romance
of Olden
Times.**

**By
DAVID
GOODWIN.**

**Dick Forrester, highwayman, and his brother Ralph arrive at St. Anstell's College
—with the King's Riders hot on their heels!**

Saving the School Plate!

THEY put up for the night in a wayside village, making themselves comfortable at an inn which Dick decided was safe enough for the purpose, and early next day were on the road again. Ralph was in good fettle once more, and, indeed, the hard riding made him fitter than ever.

The nag Dick had bought for him at Ulchester was a good one, and they covered more ground than they expected.

On the second night they bivouacked in the woods, for Dick said it was unwise to sleep at an inn within a day's ride of the school; and they lit a fire, and fared well in the open.

Many a hint and many a trick with the fists did Dick, who had been at school before, show his brother on the journey.

They used their horses easily next day, for Dick did not wish to arrive at the school before dark, and the night was well advanced before the great walls and spires of St. Anstell's College, set on its commanding knoll, overlooking the forests around, came darkly into view against the sky.

"A grand old place," said Dick. "It is late, but the Doctor and Housemasters will not have retired to rest yet. Why, beshrew me, there seems to be a deal of life there to-night. here are many windows lighted,

as I can see, though 'tis half a mile away yet."

"And there are others lighting," said Ralph, as a dozen more windows suddenly illuminated, "and lights moving in the grounds—lanthorns, of course. What can it mean, so late o' the night?"

"Some young rascal is out poaching when he should be asleep, doubtless," chuckled Dick. "Perhaps a dozen of them, and the alarm has been raised. I have joined many such a game from Rugby. Trelawney will warm their jackets when they are caught!"

"There's something in the wind, that's sure," said Ralph. "Halt, Dick! What's yonder?" he added in a whisper. "Something moving this way!"

"Draw back here, among the trees!" said Dick, in an undertone. "'Tis no St. Anstell boy's frolic, but something weightier. I heard an oath, and the thwack of a stick."

They sat their horses in dead silence, hidden among the trees. They were not travelling the high road, but a byway through the woods, and it was the more strange that a cart should be approaching with several dark figures beside it, as they could plainly see by the light of the waning moon.

"Send that beast along, ye fools!" said a hoarse voice, with a couple of oaths; and a shower of savage blows rained on the

horse, which staggered along with a load behind it that it could hardly drag. "Wallop him, the sluggard! Put the point of your knife in him, Ike!"

"I'll fill that hound of a smith with shot for failin' us with the other horse!" cried another voice savagely. "This totterin' old screw can't drag it. There's the whole school aflight behind us! There'll be mounted men enter us in two shakes!"

"An' us left wi' this!" cried the man, who was belabouring the horse. "I can hear 'em behind now. Tip the stuff down a pit an' hook it, boys! I ain't for swingin'!"

"Have a care," whispered Dick. "Look to your pistol, Ralph! There's work here. These knaves have something in that cart they've no business with, and it's from the school!"

"Pink me if I see how we're to act as constables!" whispered Ralph. "What sort of figure would you cut at the assizes, Dick?"

"Assizes!" said Dick contemptuously. "Pish! It's the stuff from the school. We'll fight the knaves for it. They're a plaguey lot to tackle, but we'll manage it with quick shooting."

The squabble broke out afresh as the night-hawks came abreast the boys' hiding-place.

"I'm with Ike!" swore another man. "The job's gone wrong, an' I don't want my neck stretched for nothin'. Let's leave it, an' cut our sticks!"

"Leave a cartload that'll set us up for life?" cried the leader. "Ye frightened fools, I'll put a knife in the first man that turns tail! Another two hundred yards to the Crake Woods, where we can hide the stuff, an' ourselves, too, if need be!"

"Joe's right!" said three or four voices. "Another five minutes, an' we're rich for life!"

"Are you i' faith?" said Dick Forrester coolly, as he twitched Black Satan from his hiding-place right before the cart's path and clapped his pistol to the leader's head.

"I'm glad to meet a man who's rich for life! Look you, friends—dead men have no use for riches!"

"The Riders!" shrieked the thieves, as Ralph clapped spurs to his horse and rode to his brother's side.

There was a moment's startled pause.

Four of the knaves look to their heels and dived like rabbits into the dark wood, panic-stricken.

"Hold there!" roared the leader, frantic with rage. "Here are no Kin's men but only a brace of road-scourers! Came back, ye fools!"

Two of the men rallied at the cry, and returned, whipping out their knives.

The first was knocked senseless by the butt of Dick's pistol, whercon the second fled like the wind; the fourth man and the leader both springing at Ralph. There was a flash and a bang from Dick's weapon as the steel was raised to strike. The big leader fell, with a choking cry, right under the feet of his comrade, who tripped, sprawling and howling like a scalded cat, rolled himself away into the undergrowth, and bolted.

Dick dismounted and flung the tarpaulin off the cart, showing a load of piled-up household valuables and trophies that glittered in the moonlight.

"Here's fat booty! 'Tis the famous old plate from St. Anstell's!" cried Dick, lifting a splendid silver dish. "I was beginning to misdoubt what sort of a reception we should have at St. Anstell's, but this should be enough to pass us through the school gates, at least!"

They busied themselves turning loose the broken-down pony and fixing up a rough harness for Ralph's horse, which they hitched to the cart, and with Dick on Black Satan as escort they pushed on to St. Anstell's.

The hue-and-cry was out, and, as usual, the searchers were swarming in every direction but the right one, so that the booty and its escort passed right through the great gates into the quadrangle before it was even noticed.

"Ho, there!" cried Dick. "Make way for the plate and Silver of St. Anstell's, coming home in its own coach. Rally round, all you night birds! Oyez, oyez, oyez!"

A mighty shout went up.

The King's Riders!

THE boys of St. Anstell's, swarming out of the dormitories unchecked in the general confusion, raised a cheer that woke the night, and flocked round

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. Travelling 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, Ralph has reached Duncansby School, a dreary, desolate place on the wild moorlands. Unknown to him, Vane has arranged with the headmaster that the boy shall "not live long." Ralph escapes, but is recaptured, and is being flogged, when Dick, his brother, comes to his rescue. He takes Ralph away from the school, and they travel south to St. Anstell's College, where Dick intends that his brother shall finish his education.

(Now read on.)

the cart with its gleaming burden. Ralph, bursting with pride, drove in, sitting on the top of a thousand guineas' worth of wrought silverware, pistol in his right hand and the reins in his left, while Black Satan and his young rider curveted alongside.

"Where did you find it? Who are you?" cried a hundred voices.

"The Knights of the Silver Fleece!" said Dick, laughing. "And I'd go bail this is the first new boy that ever rode to St. Anstell's on a load of plate! Where's Dr. Trelawney?"

hustled off to the dormitories by the prefects, Dick installed Black Satan comfortably in the stables and went up with his brother to the doctor's sumptuous library on the first floor of the private wing.

"We must keep things quiet for the present," whispered Dick, as they went upstairs. "Remember, you are Ralph Fernhall—not Forrester."

Ralph nodded. In those days, landed gentlemen were often known by the name of their estates; so, though disguised, he did not feel he was under false colours.

"Here's fat booty!" cried Dick, lifting a silver dish. "'Tis the famous old plate from St. Anstell's!"



"What is this? The plate brought back!" cried Dr. Trelawney himself, a fine-looking, upright man of magnificent stature, who, for once, was too eager about his cherished treasures to check the disorder among the boys.

"Dr. Trelawney, I think?" said Dick, bowing. "We found some runagate rogues carrying your silver away through the woods, sir, and after a little bickering, in which we shot one of them, we took possession and brought it back."

"Good gracious! A most merciful preservation!" cried the doctor. "Gentlemen, I am enormously indebted to you. Nothing can repay the service you have done me. Will you enter my study and honour me with your acquaintance? Bless my soul! What a providential thing!"

Dick and Ralph, of course, agreed readily; and as soon as they could get through the crowd of delighted boys, who were swiftly

The fine old dominie could hardly express his thanks when he had heard Dick's tale.

"Is there nothing I can do in return for this great service?" he said.

"We look for no return," said Dick. "But, in truth, we were on our way to you when we fell in with yonder thieves. This youngster, who fought so pluckily, I would introduce to you as my ward—Ralph Fernhall. It was my hope, with your consent, to place him with you as a pupil at St. Anstell's."

"I shall be delighted to receive a young gentleman of such distinction!" said the doctor heartily. "He cannot fail to do our ancient house credit. And you are his guardian?" he added, looking at Dick shrewdly.

Dick bowed.

"We are related, besides," said Dick; "and I think I may say that our lineage is beyond question. But there are delicate family matters involved, with which I should be

sorry to trouble a gentleman of your perception. I have lately taken Ralph Fernhall from a school in the north. He was placed there by a guardian who has now no more control over him."

"I see. And what may I call you, sir?"

"Dick Fernhall, if it pleases you," said Dick, with another bow. "And as I may be irregular in my visits, I should be glad to pay to your purser the year's fees in advance."

"Ahem!" said Dr. Trelawney. "I am, as a rule, very strict in inquiries as to new pupils and their antecedents. But I can refuse nothing to the recoverers of the St. Anstell silver, and I think the school has no right to question. Truly, sir, I am honoured to receive Master Ralph Fernhall as a pupil."

Dick was about to express his thanks, when there came a loud knock at the door, and an agitated footman appeared.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said hurriedly; "but they would take no refusal. The King's men are here in search of a highwayman, and begged to see you at once."

"Show them in!" said Dr. Trelawney.

(Stirring events happen in the next exciting instalment of this grand serial—don't miss it.)

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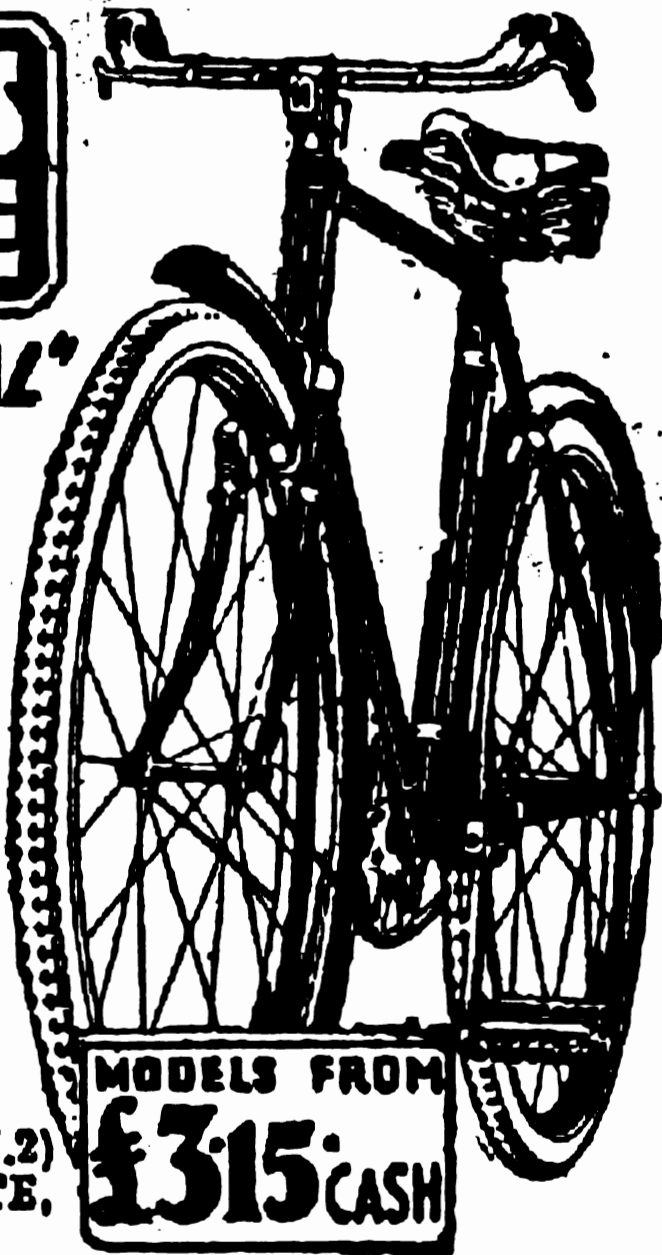
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