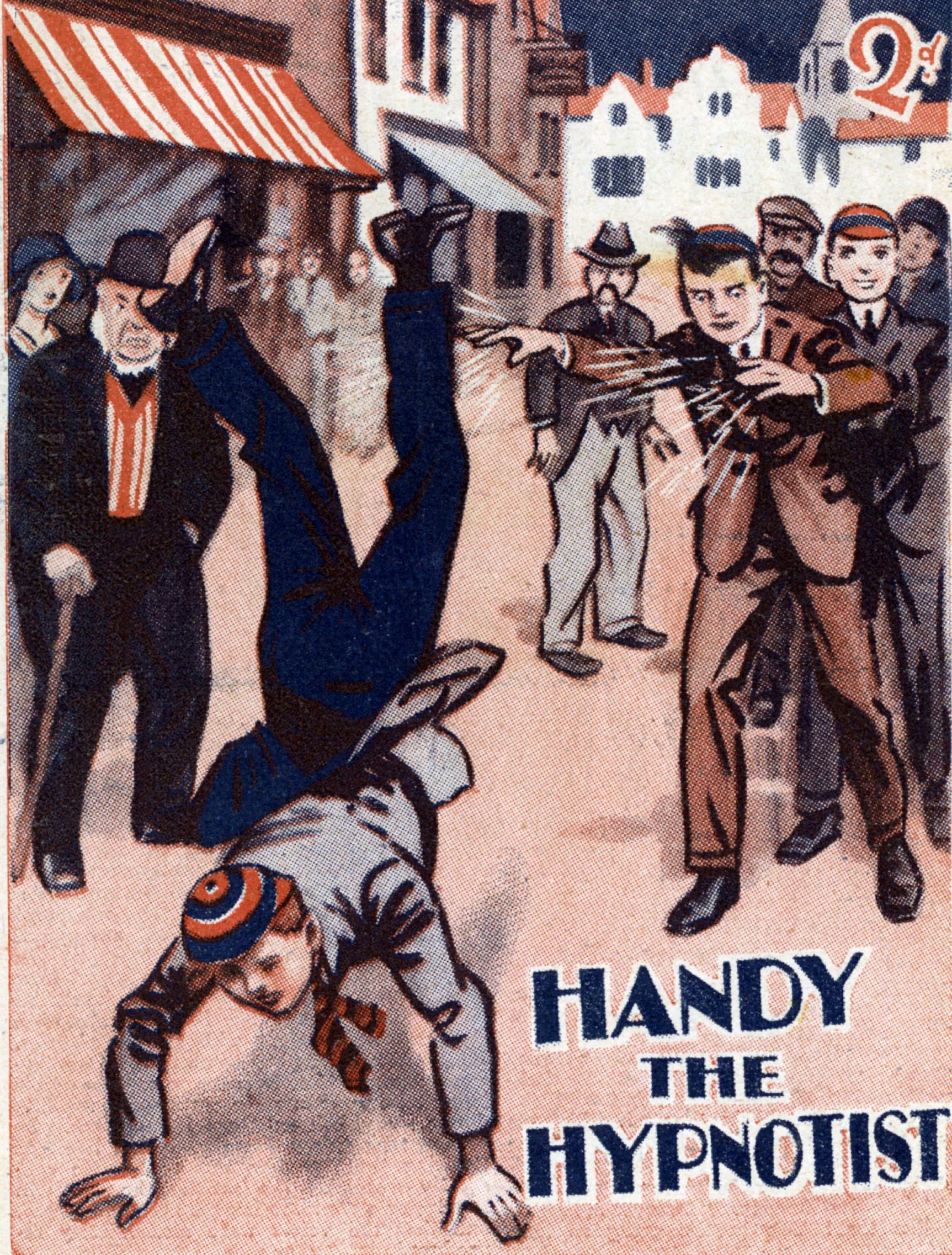


NELSON LEE

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HANDY THE HYPNOTIST

E. O. Handforth "does his stuff"—an amusing incident from this week's extra-long, extra-funny school yarn, featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 38

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

October 11th, 1930.

Line Up Here For Lots Of Laughs!

HANDFORTH, *the* HYPNOTIST!

Long
Complete
Yarn of
St. Frank's
by
EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS



CHAPTER 1.

At The Talkies!

"THE cad!" said Handforth fiercely. "By George! If I could get a smack at him——"

"Chuck it!" muttered Church, grabbing for Handforth's knee in the darkness. "You're making a disturbance!"

But Edward Oswald Handforth had his gaze glued to the screen; his hands gripped the sides of his seat, and he was held fascinated.

"Why doesn't somebody come and help her?" he asked fiercely. "I mean, a ripping gal like that! The brute's going to hurt her!"

"Idiot!" hissed McClure. "It's only a picture!"

"Eh? Oh, yes!" said Handforth, with a start. "My only hat! I'd forgotten where I was for the minute. These giddy talking

pictures are so real that you get carried away."

Church nodded.

"A couple of attendants are watching you pretty closely—and you will get carried away unless you're careful," he whispered

darkly. "You'll get carried away and chucked outside on your neck!"

"Confound it!" came an irate growl from the rear. "Can't you boys be quiet?"

Handforth subsided. He was always a difficult fellow to sit with in the pictures. He and his chums had come to the Bannington Palladium this afternoon to see one of the latest talking pictures—a particularly thrilling drama. And Edward Oswald Handforth, who always took things literally, had a habit of thinking that the film was real. He constantly overlooked the fact that the figures in the drama were mere images upon the screen, and that the voices were mechanically reproduced.

The film dealt with hypnotism, and a daring criminal was using these sinister powers to further his evil ends. It was all done very plausibly, and the most hardened of picture-goers sat in his seat enthralled.

The World's Greatest Scream: That's—



Handforth, being extremely susceptible to feminine charms, had fallen in love with the heroine on the spot, and his feelings against the criminal were almost murderous. He was still in a kind of daze when the picture was over and he found himself out in the Bannington High Street with his chums.

"By George!" he said breathlessly. "What's the time?"

"If we hurry, we shall get back nicely in time for tea," replied Church pointedly.

"I wasn't thinking about tea," said Handforth. "Why not go back and see that picture again? I'd like to know how that chap does his giddy hypnotising! He's a rotter, of course, but that hypnotism stuff is marvellous!"

"Ass! It's only in the film!" said McClure. "The actor who took the part couldn't really hypnotise people!"

"I'll bet he could!" said Handforth, with conviction. "He's got the right sort of eyes. I've read about hypnotism in books!"

"Well, don't look at me like that!" protested the Scottish junior. "You're making me feel funny—and people are staring, too!"

Handforth looked excited.

"Making you feel funny?" he repeated.

"My only sainted aunt! Perhaps I've got hypnotic power. I've often thought I had, you know. And I've learnt some tips from this picture, too. I dare say, with a little training, I could hypnotise people the same as that man did!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Church wearily.

"I shouldn't use my power for evil, of course," went on Handforth.

"But think of the japes we could work off on the Red-Hots! Imagine my hypnotising K. K., and making him do dotty things!"

"That's as far as it'll get—imagining it," said McClure practically. "Why, you big ass, you

couldn't hypnotise a frog!"

"Who's talking about frogs?" asked Handforth tartly. "I don't want to hypnotise a frog. What would be the sense of hypnotising a frog, anyhow? You might make it jump backwards, but that wouldn't be much fun."

His chums seized him firmly by the arms and led him away. He was quite capable of going straight back to the Palladium, and sitting through the whole picture again. He was perfectly at liberty to do this for all Church and McClure cared—but they were counting upon driving back to St. Frank's in his Morris Minor. There wasn't a bus for another hour, and they didn't want to walk.

They were both vaguely uneasy. Their leader was apt to get these wild and woolly ideas into his head at any moment, and once Handforth got an idea into his head, it was most difficult to drive it out. There was no

telling where this present mania would end.

"Let me try it on you again, Mac," said Handforth suddenly.

"If I ma's you feel

HYPNOTISING THE HEAD!
Handforth hopes for the best—and suffers the worst!

funny once, I might make you feel funny again. All you've got to do is to let your mind become an absolute blank."

"You mean something like yours?"

"Mine isn't a blank, you fathead!" said Handforth impatiently.

"Sorry! I thought it was."

"My mind has got to control yours," explained Handforth. "Therefore you've got to relax, and think of nothing!"

"Then I'll think of you!"

"That's it—concentrate on me," said Handforth. "Eh? Nothing of the sort, you fathead! Didn't I tell you to think of nothing?"

"Well, it amounts to the same thing," said Mac, in a tired voice. "Go ahead! For goodness' sake don't stand here arguing. If you must hypnotise me, hypnotise me and get it over."

Church caught on. This was one of those occasions when it was far better to give Handforth his head. Otherwise he was liable to punch both of them on the spot. Humouring him was one of their daily tasks. McClure didn't actually like being hypnotised in public, but it was certainly better than the alternative. The main thing was to get Handforth to the garage where his car was parked.

"I'll tell you what," said Church brilliantly. "Put the 'fluence on him, Handy, and order him to go straight to the car. If he does it, it'll prove that you've got the hypnotic eye."

"By George! That's a good idea!" agreed Handforth, overlooking the fact that McClure had heard this precious arrangement, and that both of his chums were conspiring to get him to the garage.

"Make it speedy, then," said McClure, looking straight into Handforth's eyes. "Go ahead! My mind's a blank—I'm thinking of nothing. Shove the 'fluence on, and put me under. If you're any sort of hypnotist at all, you ought to do it in about ten seconds."

"It might take me longer the first time," replied Handforth cautiously.

He suddenly glared into McClure's face, and several passers-by looked on in astonishment. Church felt very uncomfortable about it. However, it didn't last long. McClure gradually became vacuous, as though he had fallen into a trance.

"Great Scott!" breathed Handforth. "I've done it!"

"He certainly does look a bit vacant," said Church, staring. "Just like that girl in the film."

"You silly ass! That girl was a corker!" said Handforth. "She wasn't vacant-looking. I'm going to get her photograph—"

"I mean, when she was hypnotised," explained Church patiently.

"Oh, I see! That's different."

"Are we arguing about that film actress, or are you hypnotising Mac?" asked Church, breathing hard. "How do you expect to keep him 'under' if you allow your mind to drift to girls? Tell him what to do!"

"By George, yes!" said Handforth, with a start, and concentrated on McClure again.

Perhaps he felt, in his heart, that he wouldn't really be any good as a hypnotist; and for this reason he wasn't giving it the whole-hearted attention he might have done. But now, when he looked at Mac, he experienced a mild shock. His Scottish chum was extraordinarily fixed in expression. He was staring straight at Handforth with his facial muscles tense and rigid.

"Great pip!" gasped Handforth. "What's up with you, Mac?"

McClure made no reply; his face retained the same fixed expression.

"You idiot!" hissed Church. "You've hypnotised him!"

"What!" gurgled Handforth. "Why, I hardly put any 'fluence on at all, and I didn't even wave my hands in front of his face. This—this is marvellous! Mac, can you hear me speaking to you?"

"Yes," came McClure's reply, in a toneless voice.

"Can you understand what I'm saying?"

"Yes."

"Then turn round three times with your eyes closed, and see if you can punch Churchy on the nose!"

"Yes," said McClure mechanically.

"Hi, you ass! That's not what we arranged!" gasped Church, in alarm. "You know jolly well—"

"You keep out of it!" ordered Handforth. "I'm doing the hypnotising, and I'll do the ordering! By George! He's doing it!"

McClure was. Strictly obedient, he closed his eyes, turned slowly round three times, and punched a perfectly innocent passer-by on the side of the head. It is always difficult to aim straight after turning round three times with one's eyes closed. Mac thought he was clever at it, but he wasn't.

"You—you impertinent young rascal!" ejaculated the passer-by, who was a thin, unpleasant-looking gentleman. "How dare you? What do you mean by— Is anything wrong with the boy?" he added, startled. "Is he ill?"

"It's all right, sir—I've only hypnotised him," explained Handforth hastily. "Sorry he biffed you just now. It wasn't meant for you at all."

"I should hope not," said the stranger, with suspicion. "Hypnotism, indeed! Rubbish! You schoolboys are getting too cheeky nowadays!"

He walked on, rubbing his ear, and Church nudged his leader.

"That's what happens when you tell Mac to do such potty things!" he whispered. "You know what we arranged. Tell him to walk to the garage."

Church was alarmed. There was no knowing what weird and wonderful ideas Handforth might think of.

"All right," said Handy, with reluctance. "I'll tell him to go to the garage, then." He concentrated his fifty-horse power glare upon McClure. "Can you hear me?" he asked impressively.

"Yes."

"Then turn your cap back to front, take your coat off, put it on inside out, and then walk to the garage," said Handforth triumphantly.

McClure nearly gave the whole show away. There was a limit. In the nick of time he pulled himself up and commenced obeying—much to Church's astonishment. But Mac knew what would happen if he gave the show away now. There would be a perfectly frightful scene in the middle of the High Street.

Bravely he turned his coat inside out, twisted his cap back to front, and walked on his hands towards the garage.

CHAPTER 2.

Handy's Latest!

FORTUNATELY, the good people of Bannington took little or no notice of McClure as he walked along in his remarkable condition. These St. Frank's juniors were always getting up to something silly, anyhow. Boys would be boys.

"I'll tell you what," said Church suddenly.

"Don't bother—I'm concentrating on him!" breathed Handforth.

"Real hypnotists don't always tell their subjects what to do—they will them!" said Church. "Why not try it on Mac? It would be a better test."

"What are you getting at?"

"Well, when we get to the car, concentrate on him harder than ever, and will him to lift the bonnet, for example, and tickle the carburetter," explained Church, talking loudly enough for Mac to hear. "I mean, don't tell him what to do—only think it."

"It's a good idea," said Handforth promptly. "As a matter of fact, I thought of it myself, only I was too busy to mention it. But don't talk so loudly, you chump—he'll hear us."

"Rats! He's under the 'fluence—he can't hear anything except what you tell him."

"By George! I'd forgotten that!" said Handforth, thrilled.

They reached the garage, McClure now walking normally on his feet, and found the Morris Minor saloon standing ready. Handforth swung Mac round, stared into his face, and concentrated.

"Understand?" he asked, after a few moments.

"Yes," said McClure monotonously.

He hesitated for a moment, groped his way round the car like a blind man, and lifted the bonnet. Handforth watched him in dismay.

"That's funny!" he said. "I changed my mind about tickling the carburetter."

"What!" gasped Church.

"Yes, I willed him to open the off-side door and turn the petrol-tap off—and the silly ass is tickling the carburetter!" said Edward Oswald indignantly. "How do you account for that?"

"Easily," said the resourceful Church. "You'd been thinking of the first order, and your thoughts were transferred to Mac so powerfully that the second order couldn't get through. But don't you think we've had enough of this demonstration?" he added anxiously. "Let's be getting home."

"I suppose you're right," said Handforth, nodding. "Well, it's a huge success, anyhow. All right, Mac; it's over."

McClure remained "under."

"You've got to get him out of the trance," said Church. "The only way is to make passes with your hands—like the hypnotist did in the picture. That'll fetch him out in no time."

Handforth made the necessary passes, and the result was magical. Mac started, blinked as though he had just awakened, and looked round in well-assumed amazement.

"Where am I?" he asked, in a dazed voice. "Who's been fooling about with my coat—and my hat? I—I don't understand! What's happened?"

Handforth was satisfied.

"You've been hypnotised, old man," he explained gently. "I hypnotised you. I always thought I had hypnotic powers, and now I know it. By George! What larks we can have on the Red-hots! We mustn't breathe a word of this to anybody else."

"We won't," said McClure, with conviction.

"We'll keep it to ourselves—and I'll use my power in secret," continued Handforth excitedly. "You chaps must promise to keep mum."

He abruptly swung round and made some passes in front of Church's face. Mac grinned. He was rather glad that Church was having his turn. But Church, who didn't know what to expect, half thought of being an obstinate patient. However, it would only delay matters more, so he quickly succumbed.

"Walter Church, you're hypnotised," said Handforth, in a deep, solemn voice.

"Yes," said Church tonelessly.

"You see?" grinned Handforth, with a flash at Mac. "This is what I did to you. Marvellous, isn't it?"

"Wonderful!" said Mac.

"Get into this car, Walter Church, sit in the driving-seat, and start the engine," said Handy, conveniently forgetting that "willing" was the better method. "That's right! Sit there, drive this car out of the garage, and take the road for Bellton. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Church obediently.

He climbed into the driving seat, and McClure looked startled. He dragged at Handforth's arm and pulled him aside.

"You hopeless ass! You can't do that!" he hissed. "You know jolly well that Churchy can't drive!"

"That's all right," said Handforth. "I'm going to sit beside him and will him to control the car in the right way. A thing like that is nothing for a real hypnotist."

"But you're not a real hypnotist!" roared McClure, in alarm. "At least, you're not

practised enough yet. He might run us into the pavement. And what about a licence? He hasn't got one!"

"When I'm giving a hypnotic demonstration I can't be bothered with silly things like licences," replied Handforth coldly. "If Church drives this car as I've ordered, it'll prove—and prove conclusively—that I'm simply bunged up with 'fluence, and that my mind is controlling his. It's a test."

"I'll walk home," said McClure hastily.

"No, you jolly well won't!" snapped Handforth. "Get in the back!"

He pushed Mac into the rear, then sat in the seat next to the driver, and closed the door. Remarkably enough, Church had already pressed the electric starter. The engine was purring smoothly. Church's foot was on the clutch, and he had engaged low gear.

Then came the test. Handforth bent over, and stared hard into Church's face. Church took this as an indication that he was being willed. At all events he gently slipped the clutch in, accelerated, and the car slowly glided off.

"Marvellous!" breathed Handforth. "Just what I willed him to do!"

The car got into the road safely, swung round, and was soon purring at a sedate pace towards Bellton. McClure was beginning to feel happier, but he was startled, too. He hadn't deemed it possible that Church could drive like this. Then he remembered something, and he understood.

One day, when Handforth had been away, he and Church had taken out the little Morris, and had driven it round the lanes near St. Frank's. Fortunately, they had come to no harm, and neither had the Minor. That bit of practice now served Church in good stead, particularly as Handforth had known nothing about it, and really thought that neither of his chums could drive. This demonstration of his "powers" therefore was, in his opinion, absolutely conclusive.

"That'll do," he said, after about a mile. "Alla-bazooka!"

He made some mystic signs in front of Church's face, and was foolish enough to do this just when the car was going round a corner. Only by skilful application of the brake did Church avoid going into the ditch. The car lurched violently, mounted the grass border, and came to a standstill.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth excitedly. "That proves it, doesn't it? The instant I took off the 'fluence he nearly drove us into the ditch! The ass can't drive at all, really. I was driving; he was only the instrument of my will."

"You ought to be on the stage, Handy," said McClure enthusiastically.

Church was looking dazed.

"What am I doing in this seat?" he asked.

"It's all right—you've driven us out of Bannington," explained Handforth. "Just another example of my tremendous hypnotic power. Get out of that seat, and let me come. We're going home—and we'll surprise the chaps!"

"I hope we shall have tea first?" asked Mac.

"Blow tea!" replied Handforth, who was bubbling with impatience. "We've got to get up a jape against the Red-Hots, or the Fourth. This power of mine is too good to waste."

"But it won't get any less if you wait a bit," said Church. "In fact, a cup of tea and some grub will make the 'fluence even more powerful."

But it didn't work. Handforth cared nothing about tea.

"Don't forget, not a word to a soul!" he warned as they started off. "Nobody must know that I'm a hypnotist. Promise me that you'll keep it under your hat?"

Church and McClure promised with both alacrity and emphasis.

NIPPER, who was standing on the Ancient House steps, chatting with Archie Glenthorne and Vivian Travers and Kirby Keeble Parkington, had a thoughtful look on his face.

"I wonder what Handy has got up his sleeve?" he said. "Didn't you notice him as he drove past just now? His face was flushed, and there's no mistaking that gleam in his eye."

"Need we bother ourselves with the ass?" asked Travers. "Handy's a good chap, but he tires me. I think we'd better get indoors before he shows up again."

"Absolutely," agreed Archie. "I mean, if the blighter has got one of his dashed new ideas, the farther away we get the better."

Before they could make a move, Handforth came running round full pelt, and he dashed up the steps, with Church and McClure close behind him.

"Well, well," said Travers kindly. "What is it this time, Handy, dear old fellow? Great Samson! What are you looking at me like that for?"

Handforth was glaring at Travers, and making mysterious passes with his hands. Oddly enough, Travers didn't seem to feel the 'fluence.

"What's the idea of all this?" asked Nipper, grinning.

"The fathead isn't concentrating," said Handforth. "I'm hypnotising him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear old fellow, why didn't you say so before?" asked Travers. "You can't expect me to go into a trance unless you warn me."

He obligingly went into a trance.

"You're spoofing," said Handforth suspiciously. "That was too sudden to be real!"

"My master's voice," murmured Travers dreamily. "What wouldst, master?"

"Cheese it, Travers," said Parkington. "You're only encouraging the silly lunatic. Who told him he could hypnotise people?"

Handforth gave a violent start.

"Hypnotise people?" he repeated, aghast. He swung on his chums. "You rotters!"

You've been talking—after I told you not to!"

"Oh, take him away and bury him," said Church wearily.

Handforth was so excited, and his mind was so flustered, that only then did he realise that it was he himself who had given the show away. He pulled himself together with an effort and tried to calm down.

"Well, it doesn't matter," he said, brightening up. "I don't suppose I could have kept it to myself for long. But the fact is, I've got hypnotic power."

"Ha, ha, ha!"



Intent upon hypnotising Boots, Handforth stepped backwards—and tripped over into the fountain with a loud splash!

A few other Removites had gathered round by now, and a roar of laughter went up.

"All right, you can cackle!" snorted Handforth. "Ask Church! Ask Mac! I'm only sorry that this red-headed ass of a K. K. is here! I meant to hypnotise him as my first victim."

"Go ahead," said K. K. obligingly. "You can try it on me if you like."

"I'm blessed if I don't, too—later on," said Handforth. "That's a bargain, K. K., and don't you try to get out of it! Just to show you chaps how I can hypnotise people, though, I think I'd better start on somebody in the Fourth."

"A bit risky," said Travers, shaking his head. "If you start something in the Fourth, the Fourth will finish it."

"What is it all about, anyhow?" asked Nipper. "Who told Handy that he could hypnotise people? Where did he get this rummy idea?"

"We've been to the pictures," explained Church, with a sigh. "There was a wicked hypnotist in the play, and, after we came out, Handy thought he could do the same, so he tried it on Mac."

"So he's a wicked hypnotist, is he?" asked Travers, with interest.

"Not wicked, you fathead!" roared Handforth. "I'm only going to use my hypnotism for fun!"

"It's a good idea, too," put in K. K. "We ought to get a lot of fun out of it."

"But wait a minute," said Nipper. "What happened to Mac when you hypnotised him?"

Handforth explained. He went into details. His listeners, after the first few words, fully realised that Handforth's chums had been engaged in the

gentle art of pulling their leader's leg. The fact that he had allowed it to be pulled was a direct encouragement for them to carry on the good work.

"It sounds amazing," said Nipper gravely. "Why, I can see all sorts of possibilities. If you can hypnotise these two chaps, you can hypnotise anybody."

"Of course!"

"Think of what you can do with such power," continued Nipper in an awed voice. "A prefect gives you a hundred lines, and all you do is to hypnotise him into forgetting it! That ought to come in pretty useful!"

"By George! I hadn't thought of that!" said Handforth eagerly.

"But what's going to happen if a prefect gives you a six-hander?" asked Travers. "In a case like that, you'd better hypnotise yourself into thinking that you haven't had it. It's so easy!"

"Masters, too—anybody," said Nipper. "But to begin with, Handy, I think you'd better confine yourself to some of the chaps."

"I mean to," said Handforth. "You'll be absolutely staggered when you see what I can do. It's uncanny! I just put the 'fluence on, and they'll do anything I tell 'em."

"Well, Buster Boots has just come out of the Modern House—and alone, too," said Travers casually. "What about it, Handy? We're waiting to see the demonstration. There's your victim now."

CHAPTER 3.

Hard Lines on Handy!

JOHAN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS, of the Fourth, suspected that something was "on" as soon as he noticed the big clump of Removites on the other side of the Triangle. But when Handforth came across to him alone, Boots was reassured. There was something strange about Handforth. He walked with a purposeful stride, and there was an expression of concentration on his rugged face. Boots was so struck by it that he halted, staring.

"This, dear old fellow, is going to be funny," murmured Travers. "I can feel it in my bones. My funny-bone is particularly tickled. Handy said that he was going to use his hypnotism for fun, didn't he?"

"Only I don't think it'll quite work out in the way he means," grinned Nipper.

Handforth and Boots met nearly in the centre of the Triangle, only a few paces from the fountain. By this time Boots was more intrigued than ever. For Handforth was uttering no word, but making strange passes with his hands.

"You needn't show them to me like that," said Boots. "I can see they need a wash."

"Shut up!" commanded Handforth thickly. "I'm hypnotising you!"

"Eh?"

"Let your mind become a blank!"

"Oh, I see!" said Boots obligingly. "So that's the wheeze? I'm not sure that I shall be a suitable subject, but I'll do my best, Handy."

He was beginning to understand. He returned Handforth's gaze, and for some moments they stood in the middle of the Triangle, glaring at one another like a couple of escaped lunatics. Handforth, meanwhile, continued his mystic passes, and Boots grew tired of looking at the Removite's hands. Slowly, Boots succumbed. He didn't want to "go under" too quickly, or Handforth might suspect. His face became expressionless, his eyes fixed.

"My only hat! I've done it again!" murmured Handforth. "Buster Boots, you're under the 'fluence! Can you hear me?"

"I can hear you," replied Boots, edging forward as though drawn by some irresistible influence.

"Then do as I tell you!" said Handforth impressively.

He backed away—exactly as Boots had intended. Boots knew something that Handforth didn't. About three yards behind Edward Oswald, in a direct line, was the fountain pool. Handforth was far too busy with his 'fluence to remember a small detail like that. But the spectators knew what was coming, and they held their breath.

"I will obey," said Boots, still walking on. "I feel all goosey."

Handforth continued to step backwards. He was under the impression that he was now drawing Boots after him—a very simple case of self-hypnotism. It was Boots who was forcing the pace, but Handforth thought exactly the opposite. Instead of retreating, he now stepped back of his own desire. He waved his hands through the air, as though drawing Buster on by invisible strings.

"You are under my spell," he said tensely. "You are compelled to do everything I tell you. Understand?"

"Yes," replied Boots.

He was afraid that Handforth would give him some orders before he reached the fountain—and then it might be difficult to trick him into backing any farther.

"You are to go straight over to Parkington——"

"I cannot!" broke in Boots huskily. "There is some power drawing me on. I feel that I must keep on and on until the big splash comes! And I feel that it is coming very soon!"

"Concentrate, you ass!" said Handforth impatiently. "I thought you were properly under the 'fluence——"

The big splash came.

Handforth broke off his orders with a fiendish yell, for at that moment his heels caught against the low stone parapet of the pool. In a flash he knew what it was, but he was too late to save himself. He tripped beautifully, and the way he sat down in the pool was the funniest thing the juniors had seen for weeks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Handy!"

"He'll need some 'fluence to hypnotise himself into believing that he hasn't been soaked!" observed Travers dryly.

Boots looked coldly at the Removites.

"I suppose the idea was to get me to fall into this pool?" he asked.

"Not at all, old man," said Nipper. "We had an idea that Handy would find a spot of trouble. Well done, Buster!"

Handforth was sitting up in the pool, gasping and spluttering. The water was about three feet deep, so his head was just projecting. Dense masses of sodden dead leaves drifted sluggishly round his chin.

"You—you silly fathead!" he gasped. "Why didn't you tell me this was just behind me?"

"How could I?" asked Boots. "I was under the 'fluence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why didn't you yell at me?" roared Handforth, appealing to the crowd. "You must have seen me backing into the pool!"

"We were so fascinated by your exhibition of hypnotism, old man, that we were held spellbound," said Travers. "Rather a pity it's ended like this."

Buster Boots grunted.

"You hopeless ass!" he said, looking at Handforth. "You don't think you've hypnotised me, do you? I was only spoofing you—and I deliberately made you back into the fountain pool!"

"What!" gurgled Handforth.

He grabbed two big handfuls of the dead leaves, leapt out of the pool and ran after Boots, leaving a wet trail in his rear. Boots, yelling with laughter, dashed for the nearest cover, which happened to be the East House.

"Good gracious!" gasped a startled voice.

Mr. Horace Pycraft, the master of the Fourth Form, who was just passing through the lobby, saw something flash past him. He had a vague idea that it was a boy, but he couldn't be sure. It was a sort of human meteorite; one second it was there, and the next second it wasn't.

Mr. Pycraft dashed out quickly, suspecting that something unusual was going on. It was. Handforth had just reached the East House steps, and he let out a spluttering roar as he beheld the figure in the East House doorway. He was far too excited to discriminate; and in running, too, some of his wet hair had fallen across his eyes, half-blinding him. He saw a figure in the East House doorway, and that was good enough.

Slosh!

A huge handful of dead leaves hurtled through the air and struck Mr. Pycraft in the face with a horrid wet, squelching sound. The mass obliterated Mr. Pycraft's features completely.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Church dizzily.

"Quick! We'd better rescue him!" urged Mac. "If only we can do it before Picface recovers, we might save him!"

The other juniors faded away like mist before the early sun. They disappeared in every direction, deeming that it would be safer to be well out of sight by the time Mr. Pycraft recovered his vision. But Church and McClure were loyal. They spent half their lives dragging Handforth out of tight corners, and their action, now, was more or less mechanical. Handforth was in trouble—so Handforth had to be dragged out of it.

"Now, you rotter!" he was roaring. "We'll see who'll laugh last!"

He had another handful of dead leaves; he swept his wet hair back with one hand and took aim with the other. Then he became as though turned to stone. For the first time he could see clearly, and his eyes

bulged. It wasn't Buster Boots on the East House steps. It was most decidedly Mr. Horace Pycraft. The Form-master was making weird and awful sounds; he was clawing dead leaves from his face, and he was dancing up and down like a Dervish.

"Ugh-ugh-pah!" he spluttered wildly. "Phoo! Good heavens! Who—who—Phoo! Upon my word! This is dreadful!"

At last he managed to get rid of the evil-smelling mess, and he found himself staring at Handforth. And if Handforth had deliberately planned to provide evidence against himself, he could not have done better. For there he stood, one hand outflung, full of dead leaves, ready to throw.

"Handforth!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft furiously.

"Quick—bolt!" gasped Church, rushing up.

"Not likely!" said Handforth, breathing hard. "I didn't mean to chuck those dead leaves at old Picface, and I've got to apologise! In any case, it's too late."

Mr. Pycraft dashed down the steps, his collar and tie still festooned with dead leaves.

"Handforth!" he shouted. "How dare you? What is the meaning of this? How dare you assault me in this outrageous fashion?"

"Sorry, sir," said Handforth gruffly. "I didn't know it was you!"

"You didn't know!"

"I thought you were—you were— Well, it doesn't matter, sir," said Handforth. "I thought you were somebody else."

"If you imagine that this feeble excuse absolves you, you are quite wrong," panted Mr. Pycraft furiously. "Whether you mistook me for somebody else or not makes no difference. How dare you go about the school, throwing filth into people's faces? You will come with me, Handforth!"

"But I'm wet, sir!" protested Edward Oswald.

"And so am I!" hooted the Form-master.

"You're only half-wet, sir—I'm soaked," argued the big junior. "I fell into the fountain pool—at least, I was as good as pushed into it. Just when I was hypnotising the boulder properly, too!"

"I don't know what you are talking about, and I am not interested!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "All I know is that you are coming with me."

He seized Handforth by the scruff of the neck.

"But look here, sir, I'm sorry," said Handforth earnestly. "I didn't mean it for you at all, sir. Dash it, it was an accident—"

"Come with me, Handforth!" commanded Mr. Pycraft harshly.

"Oh, all right, have your own way," said Edward Oswald. "But you can't say that I haven't apologised. How the dickens was I to know that you'd come charging out at full speed? I mistook you for one of the chaps."

"He did really, sir," urged Church.

"It was an accident, sir," said McClure.

"You two boys will either go, or I will report you for punishment with this—this wretched object!" declared Mr. Pycraft. "I am in no mood for further nonsense! Come, Handforth!"

He marched his victim straight into the Ancient House, and took him to Mr. Wilkes' study. The Housemaster was in, and he looked up in some surprise when the pair entered.

"Hallo, hallo!" he observed. "What's all this?"

Mr. Alington Wilkes was an unusual sort of Housemaster. His voice was exceedingly mild, his manner milder. He was tall, lean, and loose-jointed. An untidy, straggly moustache clung to his upper lip, and he gazed out upon the world through horn-rimmed spectacles. His invariable attire was an old Norfolk jacket and very baggy flannel trousers.

But although Mr. Wilkes looked very much of a freak, he was loved by his boys. He

was a sportsman. He was on the friendliest possible terms with everybody, and at every kind of sport he was brilliant. Football, cricket, golf—he could play every game with amazing dexterity.

"This—this boy!" panted Mr. Pycraft thickly. "I have brought him to you, Mr. Wilkes, for punishment. He is guilty of an outrageous assault upon myself!"

"That sounds bad," said Mr. Wilkes, eyeing the pair. "Handy, old son, what have you got to say about this? What do you mean by assaulting Mr. Pycraft?"

"I didn't, sir!" protested Handforth. "At least, I only——"

"Silence!" roared the Form-master. "I came out of the East House, Mr. Wilkes, and this young hooligan flung a mass of wet, dead leaves into my face! Look at my condition!"

"I should have thought, Mr. Pycraft, that a bath and a change would have been immediately advisable," said Mr. Wilkes mildly. "You are liable to contract pneumonia. And



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why subject this boy to a similar risk? He is soaked through, by the look of him—and I really don't think he is doing my carpet any good."

"I felt that it was my duty to bring him to you at once!" stormed Mr. Pycraft.

"But look here, sir, be fair!" protested Handforth. "I apologised, didn't I? I told you it was an accident. I explained that I took you for one of the chaps."

"I see—I see!" said Mr. Wilkes. "It appears, then, that this boy mistook you for one of his own kind, Mr. Pycraft? I don't want to inquire too closely into matters, but it seems to me that some practical-joking genius pushed Handy into the fountain pool, and that he naturally desired revenge. He made a little mistake."

"Are you trying to excuse the boy?" gasped Mr. Pycraft.

"Not at all," replied the Housemaster. "He ought to be more careful—and, in any case, I don't allow my boys to fling dead leaves at other boys. Handforth, I shall have to punish you for this," he added regretfully.

"Yes, sir."

"I'm afraid I shall have to give you a six-hander."

"Thank you, sir."

"Don't be a young ass! You don't thank me at all," said Mr. Wilkes, picking up his cane. "And I can assure you that this will hurt me far more than it hurts you."

Mr. Pycraft stood by, his eyes gleaming with vindictive satisfaction. Mr. Wilkes, who prided himself that he seldom found it necessary to use his cane, swished the instrument suggestively.

"Let's get it over," he said reluctantly. "Out with your fist, old man!"

Swish! Swish!

The six-hander was delivered, and although Mr. Wilkes appeared to put plenty of beef into those swipes, Handforth hardly felt them.

"That'll do," he said at length. "Satisfied, Mr. Pycraft?"

"I think the boy should be further punished," said Mr. Pycraft coldly.

Mr. Wilkes didn't. On the evidence it was clear that Handforth had merely made a mistake. And, furthermore, he had apologised.

"I fancy that we'll leave matters as they are," said Old Wilkey gently. "Better buck up and change, Mr. Pycraft. Handy, you dash upstairs and get into dry things, too."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Handforth gratefully.

"That's all right," nodded Mr. Wilkes. "Buzz off!"

And Handforth was ready to swear that Mr. Alington Wilkes winked at him.

CHAPTER 4.

Try, Try Again!

TEA failed to soothe Handforth's outraged feelings; it also failed to reduce his enthusiasm for hypnotism.

After a quick change he was none the worse for his ducking. When he came

down to Study D he found that Church and McClure had got tea ready. They tactfully refrained from making any reference to the recent catastrophe. But Handforth himself was not so particular.

"I'll get even!" he said resentfully.

"Get even with whom?" asked Church. "It's not like you to bear a grudge, Handy? Why not forget it?"

"I'll get even with Pieface!" frowned Handforth. "And I'm not vindictive, either!"

"Well, you know, you did make a mess of his face!" said Mac gently. "And it's not wise to get even with masters. It's a one-sided game, old man. Too risky. You'll only get it in the neck again."

"I've a good mind to hypnotise him!" said Handforth darkly.

"In that case, you will get it in the neck!" said Mac.

"Old Wilkey was a sport—an absolute brick!" continued Handforth. "Pretended to give me a hot swishing, and hardly touched me. And that ass of a Pieface didn't even guess!"

"Then what are you growling about?"

"The fact that Wilkey let me off lightly doesn't make Pieface's action any the better, does it?" retorted Handforth. "And now that I've got this power of hypnotism, I don't see why I shouldn't put the 'fluence on him! There's Boots, too. Wait until I get the 'fluence on him!"

"You tried it once, and it didn't work," pointed out Church.

"That's because I didn't concentrate enough," replied Handforth impatiently. "The rotter deliberately made me back into that pool, and before I've finished I'll get my own back. Just you wait!"

Tea proceeded in a strained sort of way.

"It seems to me," said Church, after a while, "that this hypnotism isn't panning out very well, Handy. So far, you've only got a ducking and a swishing out of it. Why not drop it altogether?"

"Drop it?" said Handforth scornfully. "Why, you ass, I haven't started yet! I haven't—"

The door opened, and in looked Willy. Handforth stopped abruptly. His minor always had the effect of pulling him up short. Edward Oswald never knew how to take Willy.

"Sorry to butt in, Ted," said the cheery Third-Former. "Just a little matter of five bob. Urgently needed. The sooner you whack out, the sooner I'll clear off."

Handforth slowly rose to his feet.

"Come inside!" he said ominously. "So you want five bob, do you? Look at me straight in the eye. Concentrate upon me!"

"Well, it's a bit thick, but I'll have a shot," said Willy gravely. "But you can't expect me to look at your face for long, old man. What's the idea?"

"I'm going to hypnotise you!"

"Good egg! This is going to be topping," said Willy solemnly. "I've heard rumours

that you can hypnotise people, Ted. Whack out that five bob, and you can hypnotise me as much as you like."

Handforth was so eager to try his "fluence" on his minor that he produced two half-crowns on the spot. He passed them over without a thought. The main thing was to get down to the hypnotism.

"Good man!" said Willy. "Now, what do we do? I'm supposed to make my mind a blank, aren't I?"

"Never mind what I've got to do!" interrupted Handforth. "Your mind's always a blank, anyhow. Just stand there and relax."

Willy stood there and relaxed. He was very obliging. When Handforth stared balefully into his face he didn't even blink; and when a pair of large hands were waved about in front of his eyes, he still took it calmly. Indeed, his own expression became vacant.

"There you are—he's off!" whispered Handforth tensely.

"Marvellous!" said Church, with a wink at Mac. "But how are you going to prove he's off, Handy?"

"I'll prove it right enough!" breathed Handforth. "I'm going to make him give me that five bob back. I'll show you what hypnotism can do!"

"Shut up! He'll hear you!" said McClure.

"No fear! He's well under the 'fluence," said Handforth, contemplating his subject with intense satisfaction. "He can't hear a word we're saying!"

"Well, let's see you get that five bob back," said Church sceptically.

Both he and Church would be ready enough to admit that Handforth's powers of hypnotism were genuine if he performed this miracle. Once Willy got five bob out of his major, it remained "got."

"Now then, Willy, my lad! Listen to me!" said Handforth, in a tense, strained voice. "Can you hear me?"

"Yes," came Willy's voice, toneless and mechanical.

"Give me that five shillings back!"

"Yes, Ted," said Willy.

Church and McClure nearly fainted as Willy fumbled in his pocket, produced the two half-crowns, and meekly handed them back. In fact, there was such an expression of absolute vacuity in his face that Handforth's chums were nearly convinced.

"By George!" said Handforth gloatingly.

He was startled—although he wouldn't have admitted it. The thing had worked! With a few deft passes, he removed the 'fluence. Willy started, blinked, and looked round dizzily.

"Hallo! Where am I?" he asked. "Why, what the— Oh, yes, I remember! You hypnotised me, didn't you, Ted? You don't mean to say that it really happened?"

"You bet it happened," said Handforth, grinning. "If I can hypnotise you, my son, I can hypnotise anybody. You can clear off now!"

"Right-ho!" said Willy, moving towards the door. "But I'd like to know what you

did to me while I was 'under,' all the same. Thanks for the five bob, Ted. The next time I need— Hallo! What the dickens did I do with that money?"

He fumbled blankly in his pockets, and Handforth roared with laughter.

"Why, you young chump, I hypnotised you into giving me that five bob back!" he said triumphantly.

"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Willy. "Then you must be a real hypnotist, Ted! Well, of all the swindles! Come on—five bob!"

"You can have it now," said Handforth readily.

"Good man!" said Willy, pocketing the two half-crowns. "That's the five bob I originally came for. What about the five bob you hypnotised out of me?"

"Eh?"

"I want that back, too," said Willy impatiently. "Don't be an ass, Ted! You can't hypnotise money out of me like that and stick to it! Dash it, you're not going to use your power dishonestly, are you? Five bob!"

"Oh, well, it's worth five bob to get rid of you!" said Handforth, handing over another five shillings. "I suppose you're right, too. I don't want to dish you."

"I should hope not!" said Willy indignantly. "Well, so long!"

He strolled out, and Church and McClure gazed after him with open admiration. The cool, slick way in which he had confused his major was the acme of brilliance.

"Well?" asked Handforth proudly. "What do you think of my hypnotism now?"

"Not bad—but Willy's is better!" said Church.

"Better? Why, you ass, he can't hypnotise people!"

"He hypnotised ten bob out of you, anyhow!" said Church, with a roar of laughter. "You hopeless ass, your minor's done you! He's diddled you beautifully. I suspected something when he handed that five bob over so meekly!"

"Diddled me?" gasped Handforth. "But—but—"

"He got that five bob out of you twice, that's all," said McClure, grinning. "And if that isn't hypnotism, what is? You count your money, and you'll find that you're ten bob short!"

Handforth was still confused. He might not have been ordinarily, but he was so full of his hypnotism that other matters were insignificant.

"I can't bother with money now!" he said impatiently. "I dare say Willy was a bit tricky, but you can't alter the fact that I hypnotised him. Did he, or did he not, give me that five bob back when I ordered him to?"

"Well, yes."

"Then that proves that I hypnotised him!" declared Handforth. "Come on! I'm going outside. I'm going to hypnotise somebody else!"

His chums gave it up. They could see that it would be a waste of breath to attempt to explain. He would never believe that Willy had calmly handed that money back, under the pretence of being hypnotised, so that he could wangle a double amount immediately afterwards. Willy was nothing if not an opportunist.

EVERYBODY seemed to be ready enough to fall under Handforth's 'fluence. After all, he was asking for his leg to be pulled, and the other juniors could not resist the temptation.

When Handforth met Kirby Keeble Parkington in the West Square, he only gave K. K. one straight look and the leader of the Red-Hots succumbed. He swayed slightly on

Mistaking the figure on the steps for Boots, Handforth let fly. Mr. Pycraft stopped the mass of dirty wet leaves with his face!



his heels and a dreamy look came into his eyes.

"I hear soft tinkling bells," he murmured blissfully.

"You can't hear any bells—that's only the 'fluence," said Handforth, making passes with his hands. "My only hat! I'm getting more and more expert at this job! K. K., you're under my spell!"

"I am under your spell," repeated K. K. evenly.

A crowd of other fellows gathered round interestedly, and Handforth did some rapid thinking. He had failed with Boots, but he had succeeded with Willy. Unfortunately, nobody else but Church and McClure had seen that demonstration. Here was his chance to show the chaps that his hypnotic powers were genuine.

"You are a bloodhound, K. K.," he said impressively. "Do you understand?"

"Yes!"

"What are you, then?"

"A bloodhound," said K. K. promptly.

"Then why are you standing on your hind legs?" asked Handforth. "Down, Pedro! Good dog! Trot round this square and bite somebody! Speak, Pedro!"

"Bow-wow!" barked Kirby Keeble Parkington obediently.

And, to the amazement of the crowd, the

red-headed junior went down on all-fours and gave a very fair imitation of a bloodhound on the trail.

CHAPTER 5.

EGGING HIM ON!

"**H**A, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter went up; incredulous laughter, for the most part. The Old-Timers were astounded as well as amused. The Red-Hots were indignant. What on earth was K. K. doing, acting the fool like this?

"Chuck it, K. K.!" said Deeks wrathfully. "Don't be an ass!"

"Woof-woof!" barked Parkington, making a dash at Deeks' legs and setting his teeth into Deeks' calf.

"Hi! What the— Chuck it!" howled Deeks wildly. "Call him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shouldn't interfere!" said Handforth coldly. "K. K. can't help it—he's only obeying orders. He thinks he's a bloodhound, and he'll keep on thinking it until I remove the 'fluence. Here, Pedro! To heel, boy!"

K. K. pranced round for a moment or two, and then trotted obediently to Handforth's heels. It was at this moment that he caught sight of Vera Wilkes looking out of one of the Ancient House windows. If Parkington was spoofing, he didn't show it. He must have steeled himself bravely; for he rubbed himself against Handforth's leg, then gravely sat up on his haunches, and lolled out his tongue.

"My only hat!" breathed Goffin, aghast.

Why Parkington should make himself so ridiculous—and in front of Vera, too—was startling. Vera was K. K.'s special weakness. Japing Handforth was all very well, but it struck K. K.'s chums that K. K. himself was the fellow who was getting all the ridicule.

"This is going too far!" muttered Deeks, into Goffin's ear. "We'd better tell Handy that he's only being fooled."

"No fear!" replied Goffin. "K. K. wouldn't do a thing like this unless he's got something at the back of it. He'll slaughter us if we interfere."

So K. K.'s chums stood by, anxious and impatient.

Handforth not unnaturally believed that his demonstration was an unqualified success. It was inconceivable that any fellow would wilfully make himself look so ridiculous. This was a genuine case of hypnotism. Handforth began to feel sorry for his victim.

"Good boy—good dog!" he said, bending down and wagging his hands in front of K. K.'s face. "You're not Pedro any longer. You're Mr. Pycraft. Understand? You're not Pedro, and you're not Parkington. You're Mr. Pycraft!"

K. K. rose to his feet with a snort which was so exactly like Mr. Pycraft's that the crowd, which had now increased, was freshly astonished.

"Oh!" said K. K., in the unpopular Form-master's voice. "So there is another disturbance? What are you boys doing here? Disperse at once!"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "Look here, you ass—"

"How dare you, Handforth?" thundered Parkington. "Upon my soul! How dare you call me an ass in that insulting fashion? I shall report you to your Housemaster for insolence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But look here, sir— I mean, look here, Parkington, you idiot—"

"I shall certainly report you to your Housemaster!" fumed K. K. "You are a disgrace, Handforth! Your clothes are more untidy than ever! Your collar is dirty, your hands are like those of a sweep, and your face— This is your face, I assume?" he went on,

pointing accusingly at Handforth's rugged visage. "Good heavens! What a disaster! What an appalling catastrophe! This isn't a face at all, Handforth—it's an accident!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You leave my face alone!" roared Handforth wrathfully.

"Cheese it!" urged Church. "You can't blame Parkington. He's under the 'fluence, and he thinks he's Pieface!"

"By George! I'd forgotten!" gasped Handforth, making some more swift passes. "That's enough of that! You're not Mr. Pycraft any longer! You're—you're Archie Glenthorne!"

"Good gad!" said K. K.

His manner changed in a flash. He took on a languid air, and gravely jammed a half-crown into his eye in lieu of a monocle.

"Dash it all, Handy, old trout, this is a bit thick, you know!" he said protestingly. "A chappie who appears in public in those frightfully baggy trousers ought to be barred. I mean to say, you're a frightful sight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth breathed hard. His choice was again unhappy, for the laughs were being directed against him, as before. He hardened his heart.

"You're not Archie Glenthorne at all!" he said tartly, applying some more 'fluence. "You're my minor's monkey, Marmaduke. Climb up to that window, and be quick about it!"

K. K. gave a wild leap, and a moment later he was swarming up the ivy with an agility which was not unlike that of a monkey. He reached the sill of a dormitory window, and sat there triumphantly scratching himself.

"Come down, K. K., you ass!" shouted Deeks. "If a master or a prefect sees you there he'll drop on you like a ton of bricks!"

Parkington's only reply was a chattering noise very similar to Marmaduke's, and he showed his teeth realistically.

"All right, Marmy—you can come down," said Handforth generously.

K. K. nimbly swarmed down, raced round the square, and then made a dash at Handforth. Edward Oswald tried to dodge, but he was too late. K. K. leapt upon him like a ton of bricks, and they both went crashing to the hard ground.

"What the— Oh, help!" groaned Handforth, struggling up. "What the dickens did you do that for, you idiot?"

"He thinks he's Marmy, and he tried to jump on your shoulder," explained Church.

"Great pip!" gurgled Handforth blankly. He waved his hands again, and made queer noises. "All right—that's finished!" he said desperately. "This demonstration's gone far enough. You're K. K. again. And take your silly foot out of my waistcoat, blow you!"

Kirby Keeble Parkington swayed dizzily as he got to his feet.

"What's been happening?" he asked wonderingly.

"Nothing much—Handy's been giving us a demonstration of his hypnotism, dear old

fellow," explained Travers. "I must say it was a remarkable performance. Handy is the finest hypnotist I've ever seen!"

"Too wonderful for words," said Nipper, nodding.

The crowd dispersed, chuckling hugely—leaving Edward Oswald Handforth sublimely ignorant of the real truth.

"WHAT made you do it, K. K.?" asked Deeks indignantly.

"Do what, sweetheart?"

"Act the giddy ox in front of all those Old-Timers," said Harvey Deeks. "Spoofing Handforth is all very well, but it was you who went through the hoop. You ought to have seen Vera's face when she saw you pretending to be a dog!"

K. K. winced.

"Don't remind me of it, darling," he said sadly. "In a great cause we must be brave and we must learn to control our inward emotions. When I caught sight of Vera I wanted to chuck the whole game up and tell Handy that he was a chump. But I steeled myself."

"Why?" asked Goffin.

"If a definite object is aimed at, the aimer must be unflinching," replied Parkington vaguely. "It won't take me long to get my own back on Handy, and then the Old-Timers will know exactly why I led him on out in the Square. Just a means to an end, sweetheart. And it isn't over yet. Handy will need a little further spoofing before the great moment arrives."

"My hat! You've got a wheeze on!" said Deeks breathlessly.

"I rather think I have," murmured Parkington, in a dreamy voice. "And if the laugh isn't turned against our tame hypnotist you can call me a vegetable marrow."

He moved towards the door, and his chums eyed him admiringly.

"Where are you going now?" asked Deeks.

"There's a little matter to arrange with Buster Boots," replied K. K. calmly.

"But Boots is in the Fourth."

"I believe he is—and therefore one of our natural enemies," said Parkington. "But for once we will enlist a Fourth-Former under our banner. Boots can be of service here, and I fancy he will be only too willing to help. The Old-Timers are our common foe, and so we are justified."

IN the Common Room there was a good deal of talk. A few of the juniors were more than half convinced that Handforth was a genuine hypnotist. Hubbard and Long and a number of others were arguing heatedly.

"Dash it all, he must be able to hypnotise people!" Hubbard was saying. "I couldn't believe it at first, but a chap like K. K. wouldn't purposely make an ass of himself, would he?"

"Rot!" said Harry Gresham. "It was all spoof. Handy couldn't hypnotise a black beetle."

"Oh, couldn't he?" snorted Handforth, striding over. "I don't know what's the matter with you chaps! You saw the whole thing out in the West Square, didn't you? You can't even believe you own eyes, it seems!"

"K. K. must have been pulling your leg, Handy," said De Valerie.

"Then what about Willy?" retorted Handforth. "Willy came into my study and got five bob out of me. What did I do? I hypnotised him, and got it back!"

"Phew! There must be something in it, then!" said Jimmy Potts, impressed.

"Of course there's something in it!" snorted Handforth, deeming it unnecessary to go into further details regarding that financial episode with Willy. "I can hypnotise anybody! I don't care who he is! I've proved it now, I should hope!"

"I'd like to see another demonstration before I'm convinced," said Travers.

"I could hypnotise old Wilkey! Even the Head himself!" continued Handforth confidently. "I've got the proper strength of the 'fluence now. Would anybody care to have a shot?"

Nobody seemed to care.

"It's a bit thick of you chaps," said Parkington, strolling forward. "Hang it, you all saw what happened to me, didn't you? I've heard what I did, and I'm feeling pretty wild about it. Still, it was my own fault; I shouldn't have given Handy the chance. But when you say that he isn't a hypnotist, you're talking drivel."

"You admit that you were under the 'fluence?" asked Potts, staring.

"Is it necessary for me to admit it?" said K. K. "You saw what happened, old dear. Fancy me barking like a dog, and pretending to be old Pycraft, and all that! You don't suppose I would have done those things of my own free will, do you—and with Vera looking on, too? Handy's a marvel!"

"There you are!" said Handforth calmly.

"But if there's still any doubt about it, why not have another test?" went on K. K. "There's no need for any of our chaps to be victimised, though. We could very easily make a jape of this—on the Fourth, for example."

"That's it," said Handforth eagerly. "Why shouldn't I hypnotise Christine or Armstrong or one of those chaps?"

"What's the matter with Buster Boots?"

"Yes, Boots would do," admitted Handforth slowly, recollecting the fountain incident.

"Your first attempt on Boots wasn't much of a success," continued K. K. "I rather think it's up to you, Handy, to put Boots under. You don't want him to go about the school crowing that you can't hypnotise him. He's the very man!"

"My only sainted aunt! You're right!" said Handforth breathlessly. "Boots is the chap! Where is he? Let's go over—"

"Hold on! Why go over?" asked K. K. "Let somebody bring Boots here. I don't see why we should run after him. He's the victim, and he ought to do the running."

"Good egg," said Handforth, his eyes gleaming. "Churchy, dash across to the Modern House and tell Boots I want him."

"And do you think he'll come?" asked Church sarcastically. "If I go into the Modern House and say that, I shall be booted out on my neck."

"That wouldn't matter."

"It wouldn't to you—but it would to me," said Church coldly. "What's the matter with the telephone? Why not ring Boots up and hypnotise him over the 'phone? That ought to test your powers!" he added cheerfully. "If you can shove the 'fluence over the wires, you'll be a bit of a marvel!"

"By Jove! It's not a bad idea," said K. K., grinning. "Why not try it, Handy?"

"I'll not only try it, but I'll do it!" replied Handforth, striding purposefully towards the telephone-box.

CHAPTER 6.

The Big Test!

BEFORE Handforth could reach the telephone-box—all the St. Frank's Common Rooms had their own 'phones—K. K. Parkington pulled him up.

"Hold on, Handy!" he said smoothly. "Don't be in too much of a hurry. Before you get Boots over, don't you think we'd better decided what to do with him?"

"I'll do the deciding," replied Handforth.

"You haven't got him here yet," sniffed Forrest. "You're crazy to think that you can hypnotise him over the 'phone. How can you look into his eyes?"

"H'm! It might be a bit awkward," admitted Handforth dubiously.

"My dear chap, your voice will be sufficient," said K. K. earnestly. "And don't forget that the whole force of your personality will sizzle over the wires. Boots will get an electric shock, I expect. As soon as you shove the 'fluence on, sweetheart, the receiver will start sparking in his ear."

"Well, we'll see," said Handforth, opening the door.

"But what about the wheeze?" asked K. K. "After you've hypnotised him, Handy, you ought to make him do something particularly daring—something that he couldn't possibly do if he was in his right senses. Barking like a dog, and standing on his head, are too easy. It ought to be something absolutely big!"

Handforth nodded thoughtfully.

"I've got an idea," said Deeks, grinning. "What about hypnotising him into going to Pycraft's study?"

"Promising—distinctly promising," commented K. K. "That's it! Make him go to Pycraft's study, and pour ink and gum over Pycraft's head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By George! That's the wheeze!" said Handforth enthusiastically.



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know 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.

PROOF OF THE DEED!

"Mother," said little Ronnie, coming down to lunch, "the mirror is missing from the bathroom."

The parent looked hard at her child.

"Oh!" she said. "Then how did you know that your face was clean?"

"I looked at the towel," was the reply.

C. Osborne, 167, Greenvale Road, Eltham Park, S.E.9, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

OVERDONE!

Editor: "You have made your hero too hot-headed, I'm afraid."

Author: "How do you mean?"

Editor: "Well, he has a lantern jaw to begin

with. Again, his whole face lit up. Later his cheeks flamed and he gave a burning glance. Then, blazing with wrath and boiling with rage, he administered a scorching rebuke."

(F. Sinclair, 17, Poplars Avenue, Willesden Green, N.W.10, has been awarded a penknife.)

A LONG JOB!

Farmer Jones: "I hardly knew you. This is the third time this year you've had your whiskers cut off."

Farmer Brown: "Yes; the wife be stuffing the sofa."

(H. O'Reilly, 15, Bigginswood Road, Norbury, S.W.16, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

AHEM!

Draper: "This is all pure wool, madam."

Lady: "But why is it marked cotton?"

Draper: "Oh—er—that is to deceive the moths, madam."

(B. Samuel, Springfield Gardens, Taffs Well, Nr. Cardiff, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

SOME BLOW!

Jinks: "Did the cyclone damage your house very much?"

Binks: "I don't know—I haven't found it yet."

(W. Heslop, Mosspestral, Green head, Via Carlisle, has been awarded a penknife.)

"You've got a telescope, Handy—that one you won in a competition," continued K. K. "From one of our windows you could look into Pycraft's study, and see how things were going. How's that?"

"Too thick," said Gresham bluntly. "Dash it, if Boots did that to Pycraft, he would be sacked."

There were other murmurs of agreement.

"That's the very point!" argued K. K. "We all know that ordinarily Boots wouldn't dare to pour ink and gum over Picface's head. But if he's hypnotised he'll do it without even knowing it. In other words, this has got to be a test."

"I think I see," said Nipper, grinning.

"A real test," declared Parkington. "If Boots fails to pour ink and gum over Picface's head, it'll prove that Handy's hypnotism is a wash-out. It needs something drastic like this to make absolutely sure."

Nipper and Travers and a few others chuckled. It was fairly clear to them that K. K. was working this up so that the laugh would be against Handforth—when Boots failed to carry out the drastic order. It was a bit "nervy" of these Red-Hots, but, after all, Handy needed a jolt.

Edward Oswald himself was so keen on the demonstration that Boots' possible fate didn't even strike him, or he might have hesitated. K. K., in his wisdom, had counted upon this. Once Handy was fairly started on a thing, he needed a good bit of stopping.

Boots was the ideal victim—since Boots was the one fellow who had failed to take the 'fluence. Handforth felt that it was up to him to try again and show that he could succeed. A hulking great ass like Buster Boots wasn't going to get the better of him!

He went into the telephone-box with a determined light in his eyes. He got through to the Modern House quickly. St. Frank's had its own Private Exchange, and school calls were a penny each—if they had been free the Exchange operator would never have had a moment's rest. Boots was at the 'phone within a few moments.

"I want you, Buster," said Handforth deliberately.

"Then you can't have me," replied Boots. "Who do you think you are—the Head? I'm not coming at your orders, Handy, you ass! Go and boil yourself!"

Handforth concentrated. He glared into the transmitter and he tensed his frame. He became rigid with the exertion. And over the wires came a gasping sound of consternation.

"Buster Boots!" said Handforth in a low, quivering voice. "I want you to come over here at once—straight into the Ancient House Common Room."

"Yes," came the reply.

"You will come immediately," commanded Handforth.

"I will come immediately," said Boots monotonously.

Click!

THAT COOKED HIS GOOSE!

Rastus was charged with chicken stealing, but was not well up in the procedure of the court. The judge demanded his name.

"Rastus Johnson, yo' honar," answered the negro promptly.

"Are you the defendant?"

"No, suh! I'se got a lawyer for the defendin'. I'se de gen'a'man dat stole dem chickens."

(E. Harris, 56, Wells Road, Cotterdown, Bristol, has been awarded a penknife.)

ON THE TARGET.

Distracted Mother: "David, you mustn't shoot at Tommy's stomach with that bow and arrow."

David: "But we are playing William Tell, and Tommy has eaten the apple."

(F. Wise, 163, St. John's Road, Walthamstow, E.17, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A CLEAN SWEEP!

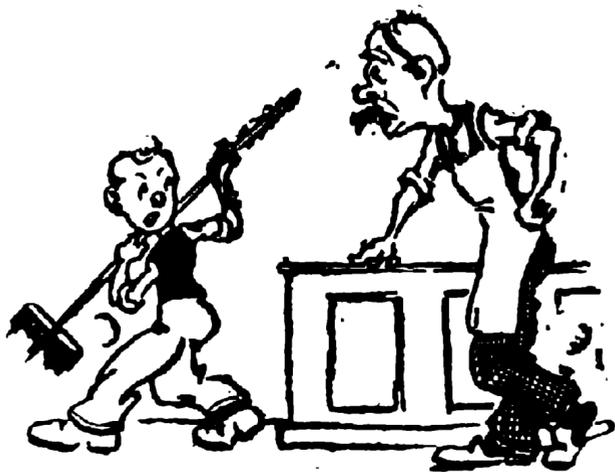
Shopkeeper: "Have you swept the shop out, Bert?"

Bert: "No, sir."

Shopkeeper: "Well, what have you done?"

Bert: "Swept the dust out, sir."

(L. Thomas, Ward 5, Children's Hospital, Lady Wood Road, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



TO BE EXPECTED!

Diner: "This sauce tastes like furniture polish."

Waiter: "Quite right, sir. You ordered cabinet pudding."

(L. Whitworth, "Hambleton," Coronation Road, Cleveleys, has been awarded a penknife.)

A GOOD EXAMPLE.

Teacher: "Heat swells things. Can anybody give me an example?"

Willie: "Please, miss, summer holidays last six weeks and Christmas holidays last two weeks."

(R. Flitcroft, 22, Hawker Avenue, Bolton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

PERSONAL!

"Mummy," asked the little girl, "why are you putting stuff on your lips?"

"Because they are cracked, dear."

"Is that why daddy puts stuff on his head every morning?"

(B. Oberman, 89, Montpelier Road, Brighton—a penknife.)

VERSATILE!

Uncle: "Well, Billy, how are you getting on at school?"

Billy: "Oh, very well indeed. I am centre forward in football and right back in lessons."

(R. Birks, Dearne Valley S.C., Bolton-on-Deerne—a penknife.)

The receiver was hung up at the other end, and Handforth relaxed. He was inwardly glowing with triumph. He reeled out of the box, breathing hard.

"Phew! That was hot work!" he panted.

"Is he coming?" went up a general shout.

"He'll be here within a minute," replied Handforth promptly. "My 'fluence is so great than I can even hypnotise people over the 'phone."

Sure enough, Buster Boots walked into the Common Room less than a minute later. He was looking bewildered and puzzled.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he said as he shut the door. "No larks, mind! I came over here for something, and I'm blessed if I can remember what it was. Something seemed to urge me over, and now that I'm here I've forgotten."

"The 'fluence is waning a bit," murmured K. K.

"'Fluence?" repeated Boots sharply, catching the word. "By Jupiter! You don't mean to say that— Yes, I remember now! Handforth rang me up, didn't he?"

Handforth planted himself in front of the burly Fourth-Former.

"Look at me!" he commanded ominously. "Look straight into my eyes."

KIRBY KEEBLE PARKINGTON had made fairly elaborate preparations.

The Old-Timers thought that the game was merely to get a laugh over Handforth when Boots failed to carry out the Remove hypnotist's drastic orders. But K. K.'s plot was deeper than this.

In talking things over with Buster, earlier, he had learned that Mr. Horace Pycraft was away this evening. The Form-master's study, therefore, was empty. It had not taken long for a quick-witted fellow like K. K. to think up a red-hot wheeze. Baines—one of K. K.'s crowd—was probably the cleverest amateur actor in the Junior School; and Baines, at this very moment, was calmly sitting in Mr. Pycraft's study, at Mr. Pycraft's desk, busily writing.

The light was on, and the blind was conveniently up. K. K. knew that Handforth's precious telescope was an unreliable medium. Even with its aid, the interior of Mr. Pycraft's study would remain vague. Baines had made up with remarkable cleverness; he looked astonishingly like Mr. Pycraft himself. He would not have survived a close examination in a strong light, but seated at that desk, in the soft glow, he more than passed muster.

K. K. believed in doing things thoroughly. It wasn't half good enough tamely to show Handforth up as a failure; far better to make it appear that he was a huge success, and then let him down with a wallop. A great jape on the Old-Timers! And the joke was, the Old-Timers didn't even realise it.

They would get the wind up when they saw Boots actually entering Mr. Pycraft's study, and pouring ink and gum over Mr. Pycraft's head. It wouldn't come out until later that the whole thing was a spoof, and the laugh

against Handforth would be loud and long. To make matters infinitely better, the Red-Hots would get a big laugh against the other Old-Timers, too.

"**Y**OU thoroughly understand?" asked Handforth impressively.

"I thoroughly understand," said Boots in a toneless voice.

He had "gone under" within a minute. An intense glare from Handforth, a few passes with the hands, and Boots had succumbed.

"Then tell me what you have to do," said Handforth.

"I am to go straight into the East House," said Boots in that same expressionless voice. "I am to go to Mr. Pycraft's study, and, before he can order me out, I have to pick up his inkpots and empty them over his head. Then I must do the same with his gum-pot."

"And after that?"

"After that, if I have the chance, I am to take his coal-scuttle and tip it upside down on the top of him," said Boots. "All this I understand."

"Then go—obey!" commanded Handforth, pointing impressively.

"I go!" muttered Boots, wheeling round mechanically.

Even now some of the juniors—the more credulous ones—had an idea that Handforth's hypnotism was genuine. All this jiggery-pokery was certainly convincing. The rest, however, were certain that Boots would merely get outside and return to his own House. He passed out of the Common-room, and Handforth, after his great exertions, felt breathless.

"He's going to do it!" he said excitedly.

"Then the best thing we can do is to get upstairs!" urged K. K. "We can see into Pycraft's room from some of the upper windows. Come on, you chaps! This ought to be worth watching."

"Ought it?" grinned Nipper. "I wonder if there'll be anything to see?"

THERE is an old saying of Burns' that "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley." Unknown to K. K. Parkington, his scheme was "gang agley"—very much so.

The whole trouble arose because he had been misinformed. Mr. Pycraft wasn't away for the evening, but only for an hour. And it was just like him to return at the most awkward moment of all. To make matters worse, he had slipped into the East House by the back door, and none of K. K.'s watching lieutenants knew of it, so they couldn't even give the alarm.

Mr. Pycraft entered his study, and then came to a dead halt. He experienced a shock. As far as he could see, he was sitting at his desk, writing! Mr. Pycraft, who was an abstemious man, wondered if he was in his right senses.

"Who is that?" asked a tart voice. "Go away! Don't come bothering me now!"

Baines—unfortunate youth—was playing his part as per arrangement. His imitation of Mr. Pycraft's voice was remarkably accurate—so accurate that Mr. Pycraft himself had a shock.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the startled Form-master.

Conway Baines seemed to freeze in his chair. He felt paralysed. He was even incapable of looking round. He had naturally assumed that the intruder was Buster Boots. But there was no mistaking that acid voice.

Baines' first impulse was to make one wild leap for the window and escape. Unfortunately, the window was closed, and he knew that he would never be able to do it. Mr. Pycraft strode forward and swung Baines round by the shoulder.

"Good gracious me!" said the Form-master. He was amazed. At such close quarters he could see the grease-paint and the make-up. "What is the meaning of this?" he demanded furiously. "How—how dare you enter my study in this fashion and sit at my desk? Who are you?"

Baines could see that it was all up.

"Baines, sir," he replied resignedly. "Awfully sorry, sir—only a bit of a joke. I didn't mean to be impertinent, sir."

"A joke!" repeated Mr. Pycraft with fury. "You didn't mean to be impertinent! And yet you come here disguised as—as a hideous-looking freak?"

"I'm made up to look like you, sir," protested Baines.

"What!" roared Mr. Pycraft. "Why, you—you insolent—"

"Anything wrong in here, sir?" asked a voice.

"Yes, Sinclair, there is!" shouted Mr. Pycraft, turning to the prefect in the doorway. "This boy has had the impertinence to seat himself at my desk disguised as myself! He tells me that he is Baines."

"Ancient House fellow, sir," nodded Sinclair, interested.

"Then take him away, Sinclair, and see that he is suitably punished," said Mr. Pycraft harshly. "Don't say anything about it to the others—the less such nonsense is talked about, the better."

"I'd better hand him over to his House-master, hadn't I, sir?"

"He deserves to be thoroughly thrashed," retorted Mr. Pycraft hastily; "but as he seems to have done no damage, and it is, after all, only a foolish escapade, a prefect's caning will be sufficient. Let Fenton deal with him."

"Right you are, sir," said Sinclair. "Come on, you young sweep!"

He seized Baines by the shoulder and marched him off. Conway Baines was filled with wild alarm. It was impossible to explain things to the prefect, and he could not even escape so that he could give a warning to K. K. The whole situation, in fact, began to look decidedly mouldy.

And Mr. Horace Pycraft sat at his desk—sublimely unconscious of what was coming to him!

CHAPTER 7.

In the Neck!

JOHN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS grinned to himself as he crossed the dark Triangle. This jape was going to be a corker. Baines had donned some specially old clothes so that the "christening" would have no disastrous results. Boots felt he was going to enjoy his part in the business. It was particularly gratifying to know that large numbers of Old-Timers would be observing the effects from their own windows.

At first Buster had been deeply suspicious. K. K. Parkington, after all, was a rival, and when K. K. had proposed the wheeze Boots had had an idea that he, himself, was to be the victim. But when Baines was brought in, and the whole thing was explained, Buster appreciated its humour. This was a joke against the Old-Timers—particularly against Handforth; and pulling Handforth's leg was always an entertaining pastime.

Boots reached Mr. Pycraft's study, hesitated a moment, and glanced up and down. The passage was empty. He knocked.

"Come in!" said a sharp, acid voice.

Boots started.

"My only hat!" he muttered. "That chap's positively uncanny!"

The voice was exactly like Mr. Horace Pycraft's—not a very surprising circumstance considering that it was Mr. Pycraft.

Boots went in. One glance told him that the blind was fully raised, and curtains drawn apart. And Mr. Pycraft sat at his desk, the shaded light so concentrated upon the desk itself that the master was slightly in shadow. It was just as the plotters had arranged. Fate was not kind to Mr. Pycraft.

"Well? What do you want?" asked Mr. Pycraft impatiently. "Who is it? Come forward, young man! How do you expect me to see you?"

Boots grinned, and then checked himself. He suddenly remembered that Handforth was watching through a telescope, and that he—Boots—was still supposed to be under the 'fluence. Might as well do the thing thoroughly.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Pycraft testily. "What is it? Oh, it's you, Boots? Why do you come bothering me at this hour of the evening?"

Boots made no reply. Mechanically he reached forward, and seized the big glass pot of blue-black ink. There was something so horribly deliberate in his action that Mr. Pycraft gazed at him in blank astonishment.

"Boots!" he ejaculated. "How dare you interfere—"

Splash!

In that same deliberate way, Boots committed the crime. He overturned the ink-pot so that the entire contents poured in a splashing cascade upon the top of Mr. Pycraft's semi-bald head. And as the Form-master was expecting no such catastrophe, he took it like a lamb.

Boots nearly grinned again, and his admiration for Baines increased. The fellow was a positive genius when it came to acting! His make-up was jolly good, too, Pycraft to the life!

OVER in the Ancient House Edward Oswald Handforth was fairly panting with triumph, and making passes with his hands to maintain the 'fluence on Boots. He was at one of the upstairs windows with Church and McClure, K. K., Travers, and a number of other fellows, were squashed in other windows. They could all see into that lighted room of the East House.

"My only giddy aunt!" gurgled Handforth. "Old Buster's done it!"

Church was looking alarmed.

"My hat! I can't understand it!" he muttered. "Boots has done it! He'll get the sack for this!"

Handforth started.

"By George! I hadn't thought of that!" he said in dismay. "And I suppose I'm really responsible."

"Rats!" put in McClure. "How can you be responsible? There's something behind this that I can't understand. Why should Boots go along—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Handforth. "What do you mean, I'm not responsible? Didn't I put Boots under the 'fluence?"

"'Fluence be jiggered!" snapped Mac. "You were being spoofed, Handy."

"K. K.'s at the bottom of it somehow," added Church darkly.

"What's that?" asked Parkington, strolling along from one of the other windows. "What am I at the bottom of? Congratters, Handy, sweetheart! This hypnotism of yours is corking! You seem to have proved your skill this time. Poor old Pycraft is wallowing in his own ink!"

"Well, I hope that Buster won't get into too much trouble!" said Handforth anxiously. "I was so keen about hypnotising him that I'd forgotten everything else."

"It was K. K.'s idea to pour ink over Pycraft, anyhow," said Church suspiciously.

"So it was, darling—so it was," agreed K. K. "I accept full responsibility, and if there's any trouble with Pycraft, I'll take the blame. Can I say anything more handsome than that? But I have an idea—"

He was interrupted by a sudden commotion along the passage. Yells of consternation came from Deeks and Goffin and Haddocks and Jepson and other Red-Hots. They came surging towards K. K. with a wild-looking figure in their midst.

"It's Baines!" Deeks was gasping. "Hi, K. K.! Something's side-slipped! Here's Baines!"

Parkington felt suddenly faint. One glance assured him that the newcomer cer-

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tainly was Cenway Baines. He turned his head, and across the Triangle he could dimly see Buster Boots carrying on the good work. Buster was coolly and enthusiastically forcing Mr. Pycraft's head down upon his desk, and he was pouring red ink over it. K. K. closed his eyes to shut out the horrid sight.

"May the saints preserve us on a dirty night like this!" he murmured tragically. "Baines—oh, Baines!—what have you done, honey? Why this thusness? Why are you here when you should be over there?"

"I couldn't help it!" panted Baines desperately. "Pycraft came in and twigged me! Sinclair wouldn't let me go, and I've been trying to get at you——"

"Enough!" interrupted K. K. mournfully. "Sweethearts, the balloon will go up in about five minutes! It's really Pycraft over there—and poor old Boots is up to his neck in the ox-tail. The only thing is, he doesn't know it!"

BUT it wasn't long before Boots did know it.

He was rather exasperated with Baines. It was all very well to do the thing thoroughly, but why go to such extreme lengths as this? There was no need for the idiot to yell at the top of his voice. The whole idea of the jape was to get it done quietly and expeditiously. No need to attract the East House people. It was only for the benefit of the Ancient House juniors, anyhow.

"Cheese it!" protested Boots hastily, as he flooded Mr. Pycraft's head with the red ink. "Not so much noise, blow you!"

"Help!" screamed the Form-master. "You young scoundrel! Have you gone mad, Boots? You—you infernal young hooligan! Help! How dare you lay hands on me like this?"

He struggled wildly, and Boots grunted.

"Why the dickens can't you take it quietly?" he hissed, reaching for the enormous gum-pot.

"I won't take it quietly!" roared Mr. Pycraft furiously. "I refuse to take it quietly! Never in my life have I been so—Ugh! Ugh! Grrrrrrrrrrh!"

He had lifted his face very conveniently, and a flood of gum poured over it, a good deal swamping into his mouth.

"That's closed your throttle, anyhow!" grinned Boots.

Mr. Pycraft leapt up in desperation. He was convinced that this boy was mad—stark, raving mad! There was no telling what he would do next. Perhaps he would even reach for the dagger-like paper-knife. Mr. Pycraft, terrified, was given added strength.

"Help! Help!" he bellowed wildly. "Kenmore! Payne! Sinclair! Help!"

Buster Boots was staggered this time. In fact, he began to get an inkling of the truth. That frantic voice, so charged with terror, was too genuine. Baines, for all his cleverness, had his limitations. Besides, Baines wouldn't have kicked up all this

din. Certainly, he wouldn't have howled for prefects.

"Great Scott!" babbled Boots dazedly.

He made a dash at Mr. Pycraft, grabbed him by the shoulders, and stared into his face. There wasn't much of Mr. Pycraft's face left to see. It was streaked with red ink and black ink, and gum was oozing down the cheeks in slowly-rolling blobs.

Boots made certain. He grabbed at Mr. Pycraft's left whisker, and pulled hard. The only result was a fiendish howl. The whisker remained intact.

Boots staggered away, the whole room whirling in front of his eyes. It was really Pycraft. Buster wanted the floor to yawn open and swallow him up. Floors, unfortunately, do not possess such accommodating qualities. He remained where he was.

Before he could collect his bewildered thoughts, or seek to escape, the door burst open and Sinclair and Kenmore, of the Sixth, strode in. One of them switched on the extra light.

"What on earth——" began Sinclair. "Oh, I say, sir! You look an awful sight! What's happened?"

"Seize him!" panted Mr. Pycraft, pointing a quivering finger at Boots. "Seize him, and hold him! The boy's mad—raving mad!"

"But—but I didn't know!" gasped Boots frantically. "Honestly, sir! I'm not mad. I thought that you were—were somebody else!"

"Better say as little as possible, kid!" grunted Kenmore.

The two prefects were by no means displeased at this sensational incident. In fact, when they looked at Mr. Pycraft, they could hardly conceal their satisfaction. On many an occasion they had longed to empty ink-pots over Mr. Pycraft's head; but they had never dared to do it. It was gratifying to discover that a junior boy had plucked up the necessary courage. They were firm with Boots, but they were kindly.

"Take it calmly, kid!" said Sinclair, shaking his head.

"Bring—bring that boy to the headmaster!" hooted Mr. Pycraft, recovering his full courage now that the two prefects were here. "Come! Follow me!"

"You can't go to the Head like that, sir!" protested Kenmore.

"Can't I?" yelled the master. "We will see, Kenmore! How dare you argue with me? The headmaster shall see precisely what this boy has done!"

"But, sir——" began Boots feebly.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Pycraft.

The procession started. Mr. Pycraft went first; and Armstrong, Griffith, Freeman and Turner and crowds of other Fourth-Formers lined the passage and lobby in an awed audience. They had heard the commotion, and they had scented excitement. Mr. Pycraft stalked past them, breathing hard, and it was rather a wonder that fire and

smoke did not issue from his nostrils. His face, streaked with black and red, was fantastic. Blobs of gum dropped to the floor as he passed. In the rear came Buster Boots, firmly held in the grasp of the two prefects. He was like a martyr being led to the stake.

Slowly Buster was realising the truth—or what he thought to be the truth. It was he who had been spoofed, and Kirby Keeble Parkington was responsible. K. K. had tricked him into committing this assault upon Mr. Pycraft, his own Form-master! It was an outrageous trick. Boots' alarm was tempered by a fierce and burning rage. This would probably mean the sack, but even the prospect of being expelled was trivial compared with his burning desire to get his hands on K. K. Parkington.

"What a fool!" muttered Boots bitterly. "I might have known it! I might have guessed those beastly Removites were spoofing me. And I fell into the trap like a half-witted infant!"

He suddenly realised that they had arrived at the headmaster's study. He found himself marshalled in front of the Head's desk. There sat Mr. Nelson Lee, the famous schoolmaster-detective. St. Frank's had been a better place since Nelson Lee had taken control of the reins.

Excitedly, furiously, Mr. Pycraft related the dread details, and as the Head listened, his face became more and more grave.

"So I demand that this boy shall be expelled!" concluded Mr. Pycraft, nearly fighting for his breath. "Never in my whole career have I been so grossly assaulted! It is your duty, sir—"

"You forget yourself, Mr. Pycraft," interrupted Nelson Lee quietly. "It is quite unnecessary for you to remind me of my duty. You may be sure that this boy will be punished in a fitting manner. It is only fair that he should be allowed to give his own explanation."

"There is no explanation!" shouted Mr. Pycraft hotly. "How can there be an explanation? I tell you he deliberately entered my study, seized my ink-pots—"

"Quite so, Mr. Pycraft. I fully understand," put in Nelson Lee. "I am glad that you came to me in this distressing condition—for I have been able to see the effects of this assault with my own eyes. But I do suggest that you should now get into a bath as quickly as possible. Now, Boots, what have you to say?"

Mr. Pycraft refused to take the hint. He stood his ground.

"I can only say, sir, that it was a mistake," said Boots quietly.

"Indeed?" said the Head. "In what way?"

"I thought Mr. Pycraft was somebody else, sir."

"Rank nonsense!" shouted Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "How could the boy think I was somebody else? I was sitting in my own study, at my own desk. Is the boy mad? Surely he could see me?"

"I could see you, sir, but I thought you were somebody else," repeated Boots stubbornly. "It—it was all a joke, sir. I can't tell you how sorry I am that I treated you as I did. I really thought you were one of the chaps made up to look like you."

Mr. Pycraft turned to Nelson Lee with frantic incredulity.

"Do you hear him?" he ejaculated. "Did you ever hear anything more ridiculous?"

"It might not be as ridiculous as you imagine, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head. "It is quite possible that the boy was labouring under a misapprehension. I cannot, indeed, conceive that he would have assaulted you deliberately. In any case, the whole matter must be inquired into further."

"You're a monkey—climb up that ivy!" ordered Handforth the Hypnotist—and to everybody's astonishment, K. K. Parkington obeyed.



"And the boy will be expelled?" asked Mr. Pycraft vindictively.

"His punishment will depend upon the result of the inquiry," replied Nelson Lee. "Boots' record is good, and I should be sorry,

indeed, to blight his entire career by sending him away in disgrace. Boots, you will go to the Punishment Room in your own House, and you will remain there until you are further required."

"Yes, sir! Thanks awfully, sir!" said Boots gratefully.

CHAPTER 8.

The Optimist!

KIRBY KEEBLE PARKINGTON was about the only cool fellow in the big crowd of Removites which had dashed out into the Triangle.

As soon as the true position was known, the juniors had had a vague hope of saving Boots; but by the time they got out of doors they found that Boots had already been marched off to the Head.

Fourth-Formers came crowding over from the East House and Modern House, and for a brief spell it seemed that there would be a clash. It was Nipper who took command of the situation.

"Calm down, everybody!" he shouted. "There's no earthly sense in our having a scrap out here! That wouldn't help Boots."

"Boots wouldn't be in trouble if you idiots hadn't played that low-down trick on him!" shouted Timothy Armstrong, of the East House. "Even now I can't understand just what happened. Boots must have been dotty to assault Pycraft!"

"Boots thought it was Baines in disguise!" shouted Deeks.

"Something went wrong," explained Baines. "Pieface came back, and I was hoofed out. When Boots arrived he mistook——"

"Wait a minute!" bellowed Handforth, above the din. "You're all wrong! Boots wasn't to blame at all—he didn't even know that he was pouring ink over Pycraft's head! It was all my doing. I'd hypnotised him."

"What?" yelled Armstrong.

"It's a fact!" said Handforth excitedly.

"Rats!" yelled Bray. "You couldn't hypnotise anybody to save your life!"

"When you fellows have finished this slanging match, perhaps I shall be allowed to get in a word?" asked K. K. "If anybody's to blame, it's me. I planned the whole game. I arranged with Boots to do the 'assaulting,' but we naturally thought that Baines would be the victim. That's where the mistake came in. It was just a wheeze to spoof Handforth."

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Handforth.

"Sorry, old man, but facts are facts, and this is no time for beating about the bush," said Parkington crisply. "Do you think we would have let Boots carry on with that stunt if we had dreamed that Pycraft himself was home? Do you think we would have let him walk into the lions' den?"

"Well, we thought it was a bit thick," said Bob Christine gruffly.



"Poor old Buster is liable to be sacked for a thing like that—or publicly flogged, at the very least," continued K. K. "What do you take me for? Do you think I'll leave him to his fate? It was my wheeze, and I'll pay the piper."

"That's jolly sporting of you, K. K.," said Christine warmly.

"Sporting be hanged!" retorted Parkington, with a snort. "For goodness' sake don't make a fuss over nothing! It's my job to go to the Head, and explain that Boots wasn't to blame in any way. If I'm flogged, I'm flogged—and it wouldn't be the first time. I dare say I shall get over it."

"Good old K. K.!"

"It's the only thing to be done!"

Enthusiastic shouts went up. Kirby Keeble Parkington was a sportsman, and he was ready to do the right thing. In the midst of all the excitement Buster Boots, on his way to the Punishment Room, came charging up.

"Where's that blighter, K. K.?" he panted thickly.

"Here I am, sweetheart," said Parkington.

"You rotter! You tricky bounder!" gasped Boots, thrusting one of his fists under K. K.'s nose. "See that? Put up your hands!"

He was thirsting for gore, and if the other fellows had not held him back he would have attacked on the instant.

"Cheese it, Buster!" said Nipper. "The whole thing was a mistake!"

Matters were explained, and Boots simmered down.

"Oh, so that's how it was?" he said at length. "So you didn't deliberately lead me up the garden, K. K.? Naturally, I thought it was Baines when I went into Pycraft's study——"

"Of course you did," said Parkington. "Well, the only consolation we've got is that Pieface received the full dose. What a pity we didn't see him!"

"We did!" grinned Armstrong. "The sight was worth quids!"

"Well, I'm going straight to the Head now," continued K. K. "I'll guarantee that Boots will be let off. As for me, you can trust me to do the necessary chin-wagging—and I don't think I shall come off second-best."

"This is decent of you, K. K.," said Boots warmly.

It was at this moment that Handforth came to life. For some moments he had been deep in thought, and everybody else had forgotten him. His excitement had gone, and he was now deadly calm. Church and McClure were eyeing him uneasily—for when Handforth was deadly calm trouble was brewing.

"Hold on, everybody!" he said grimly, and his tone of voice commanded attention. "You're all wrong!" he went on. "Why should Boots be punished? Why should K. K. calmly walk to the slaughter? There's no need for anybody to get punished. This thing can be settled as easily as winking."

"Can it?" asked K. K. "How?"

"I'll go to the Head myself!" replied Handforth calmly.

"That ought to settle it," nodded Parkington. "You'll just about put the tin hat on the whole affair, and the entire Romove will get it in the neck!"

"By the time I've finished with the Head, he won't even know that Pieface met with any trouble!" said Handforth confidently. "All I've got to do is to hypnotise him."

"What!"

"Hypnotise him!" repeated Handforth firmly.

There was an absolute silence for a moment. The fellows couldn't quite realise that Edward Oswald was in earnest. When they did realise it they broke out into one long yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Handy!"

"There's nothing to laugh at, you cackling idiots!" roared Handforth. "I got Boots into this mess, although I didn't know, of course, that K. K. was muddling things up with a lot of silly trickery. Once I've hypnotised the Head, he'll forget all about Pycraft and Boots, too. I'll make his mind a blank on the whole subject!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what about Pycraft?" asked K. K. politely.

"Eh?"

"His mind won't be a blank, old dear."

"Then I shall have to hypnotise Pycraft, too," said Handforth coolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My poor, deluded ass!" said K. K. kindly. "Haven't you yet realised that you couldn't hypnotise a half-dead white rat? I don't know how it is, but your eye doesn't possess the necessary zip."

"Rot!" retorted Handforth. "I hypnotised you, didn't I?"

"Ahem! Perhaps we'd better not go into that——"

"And I could have hypnotised Boots, too, if you asses hadn't interfered," went on Handforth stubbornly. "Anyhow, the only way out of this muddle is for me to go straight to the Head and hypnotise him."

The more the juniors laughed, the more determined Handforth became. He still laboured under the delusion that he could get people under his "spell."

"We can't let him go, you chaps," said Church desperately.

"Can't let me go?" snapped Handforth. "Who's going to stop me?"

"I will!" said K. K.

"You?" scoffed Handforth.

"Little me—and I dare say the rest will join in without much goading," said Parkington. "My dear fathead, if you go to the Head and attempt to hypnotise him, you'll get yourself sacked. You mustn't go about hypnotising headmasters!"

"Better hold him!" suggested McClure anxiously. "You know what he is—he'll make a sudden dash or something."

K. K. and Nipper, and one or two others, made a move towards Handforth, and

Edward Oswald could see that they meant business. He meant business, too, and, as the odds were all against him, it was up to him to act first.

"You can't stop me!" he roared defiantly.

Crash!

His right landed in K. K.'s face, and the red-headed junior staggered back, yelling.

At the same moment Handforth's left caught Nipper in the chest. Then he charged, and forced his way through the crowd.

"Stop him!" went up a yell.

But Handforth had already won free, and in a few seconds he was racing at top speed through Big Arch and across Inner Court.

"Stop him!" shouted Nipper. "He'll make things ten times worse!"

Inner Court was strictly out of bounds for juniors—unless, of course, they had definite business—but they took no notice of this now. Church and McClure and Nipper and Travers and several others sped after Handforth.

Edward Oswald, determined to put his fantastic idea into execution, managed to beat his pursuers by a short head. They got to the Head's door just as he had vanished inside; and, anxious though they were, they couldn't very well charge into the Head's hall and drag Handforth out by force.

Handforth, meanwhile, was taking no chances. He marched straight to Nelson Lee's study,

CHAPTER 9.

Hypnotising the Head!

NELSON LEE was seated at his desk, writing, and he looked up in surprise as Handforth charged in. Juniors didn't usually enter his study in this fashion.

Handforth himself was perfectly calm. His heart was beating more rapidly than usual, perhaps, but he had himself well under control. He had decided that it would have been fatal to ask for an interview. As he was going to hypnotise the Head, anyhow, his abrupt manner of entry didn't matter.

"Well, Handforth, this is an unexpected visit," said Nelson Lee, laying his pen down rather grimly. "I don't remember having sent for you."

"You didn't send for me, sir."

"I thought not," nodded the Head. "Perhaps you'll be good enough to explain just why you are here? I believe in being friendly with you all, and, if it comes to that, we have had some very free-and-easy times together. But there is a certain decorum to be maintained—"

He broke off. Handforth was acting in a very peculiar way; so peculiar that Nelson Lee wondered if the boy was in his right senses. He was so astonished that he forgot what he was about to say.

The leader of Study D had advanced to the other side of the desk, and he was now leaning across it, staring straight into the headmaster's face. It was a direct and fixed stare; and at the same time Handforth was making mysterious passes with his hands.

"Look at me!" he commanded impressively.

"I am looking," said Lee very grimly.

"Concentrate!"

"It is asking a lot, but I'll do my best," replied the Head. "Concentrating upon your face, Handforth, calls for much courage and fortitude. When, by the way, did you last wash yourself?"

Handforth glared harder than ever. Things weren't going right. It was perfectly ridicu-

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lous for a subject—and a headmaster at that—to make facetious remarks about his face while the 'fluence was being administered.

"Don't look at my face, sir—look into my eyes!" he hissed. "Stare straight into them. And make your mind an absolute blank. Do you understand? Your mind has got to become a part of mine!"

"An absolute blank," nodded Lee dryly. "But don't you think we've had enough of this tomfoolery, young man? I'd like to join in this little game of yours, but, really, my time is valuable."

It was fortunate that the Head should know Edward Oswald inside out, as it were. Any other headmaster might not have been so tolerant over an absurd scene of this kind. But Nelson Lee had had Handforth under his care on holiday adventures, and even at detective work, and he knew Handforth's little peculiarities.

"Look here, sir, this is a bit thick!" protested Handforth indignantly. "How do you think I can hypnotise you if you don't concentrate?"

"Hypnotise me?" said Lee. "Oh! Is that the idea?"

"Look at me straight in the eye!" ordered Handforth impressively. "Now, sir—just let yourself go! Forget everything while I put the 'fluence on. By the time I've finished with you, you'll have forgotten this interview altogether."

Nelson Lee returned Handforth's steadfast gaze, and for the moment the junior had his way. A dreamy look came into Lee's eyes, but this wasn't because of any hypnotic power of Handforth's. The Head was merely thinking and awaiting developments.

"By George! He's under!" came a tense murmur from Handforth. "Mr. Lee, can you hear me?"

"I can," replied Lee, nodding.

"Then listen!" said Handforth, bending nearer. "From this moment you will completely forget that old Pieface—I mean Mr. Pycraft—was smothered in ink and gum by Boots. You'll even forget that Boots was brought to you for punishment."

"And why should I forget this?" asked Lee.

"Because Boots didn't do it!" retorted Handforth. "At least, he did, but it was my fault. I hypnotised him and told him to do it, but K. K. butted in, and got up a jape against me. And it was Baines who pretended to be Mr. Pycraft."

"I see! A very pretty tangle."

"Eh?"

"In other words, Mr. Pycraft was assaulted by accident?"

"Yes; but I don't see why you should bother about that," said Handforth impatiently. "You won't remember anything of this afterwards—when I bring you out of the 'fluence—so we're wasting time. All you've got to do, sir, is to forget the whole affair."

"I understand," said Lee grimly.

"Mr. Pycraft won't remember anything, either, because I'm going to hypnotise him

next," continued Handforth. "Now! Forget!"

Handforth, in order to make assurance doubly sure, half climbed over the desk until his face was within a foot of the Head's. Then suddenly Nelson Lee concentrated his own gaze. They stared into one another's eyes fixedly.

Handforth was startled. Nelson Lee's gaze was disturbing. It bored right into Handforth's being. It was a case of the hypnotist being hypnotised. Nelson Lee made no claims to having any such power; but his will was so much stronger than the boy's that Edward Oswald was soon in difficulties. He felt himself growing hot; he wanted to shift his gaze but couldn't; he remained perfectly still, like a statue.

"Well, Handforth?" asked Lee suddenly.

The Head's voice broke the spell. In that second Handforth ceased to be a hypnotist, and became an awkward, self-conscious school-boy. He backed away hastily, red as a beet-root, filled with dismay.

"Didn't—didn't I hypnotise you, sir?" he gasped feebly.

"I'm afraid you didn't," replied Nelson Lee, with a chuckle. "Don't look so distressed, Handforth. I'm not angry with you for coming here, since I am quite convinced that you did so in an effort to save Boots from a punishment he doesn't deserve. But it's a good thing I know you so well."

"I—I didn't mean to be impertinent, sir!" stammered Handforth awkwardly.

"Of course you didn't," agreed Nelson Lee. "But in attempting to hypnotise me, my boy, you displayed an extraordinary audacity—an audacity, indeed, which could only come from an impossible optimist."

"And—and aren't you going to punish me, sir?" asked Handforth breathlessly. "When—when you looked into my eyes just now, I felt all wonky at the knees! I knew I'd failed then. But Boots isn't to blame for what happened, sir. It wouldn't be fair to—"

Tap-tap!

An imperious knock sounded on the door, and it opened to admit Mr. Horace Pycraft and Kirby Keeble Parkington.

CHAPTER 10.

Sauce for the Gander!

"VERY opportune, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head pleasantly. "I am glad you have come; it has saved me the trouble of telephoning for you."

"I found this boy outside your door, Mr. Lee, and he tells me that he can exonerate Boots—which, on the face of it, is ridiculous," said Mr. Pycraft, with heat. "Boots deliberately attacked me, and nothing that this boy can say can alter that fact."

"It appears, Mr. Pycraft, that you were the victim of a practical joke," said Nelson Lee quietly. "I am not excusing the boys for playing such a joke, and they must be

punished. But, at least, there was no deliberate assault upon you."

Mr. Pycraft rocked on his heels.

"No assault upon me!" he expostulated. "But—but—good heavens!—you saw me, sir! You saw the dreadful condition I was in!"

"I did," replied Lee. "Yet Boots thought you were somebody else."

Mr. Pycraft snorted disbelievingly.

"It was like this, sir," said K. K. eagerly. "You were out, and some of us were getting up a jape. One of our fellows disguised himself as you—"

"And I hypnotised Boots, and Boots was supposed to go to your study and pour ink over your head," put in Handforth. "Not your head, really, but the chap who was disguised as you."

Mr. Pycraft gave a violent start.

"Oh!" he said flatly.

"Have you thought of something, Mr. Pycraft?" asked Nelson Lee, who could see that the Form-master was disturbed.

"Er—yes—er—I believe I have!" stammered Mr. Pycraft reluctantly. "Certainly I have. Upon my word! Of course! Until these boys told their story, I did not connect the two incidents."

"Yes?" prompted Lee.

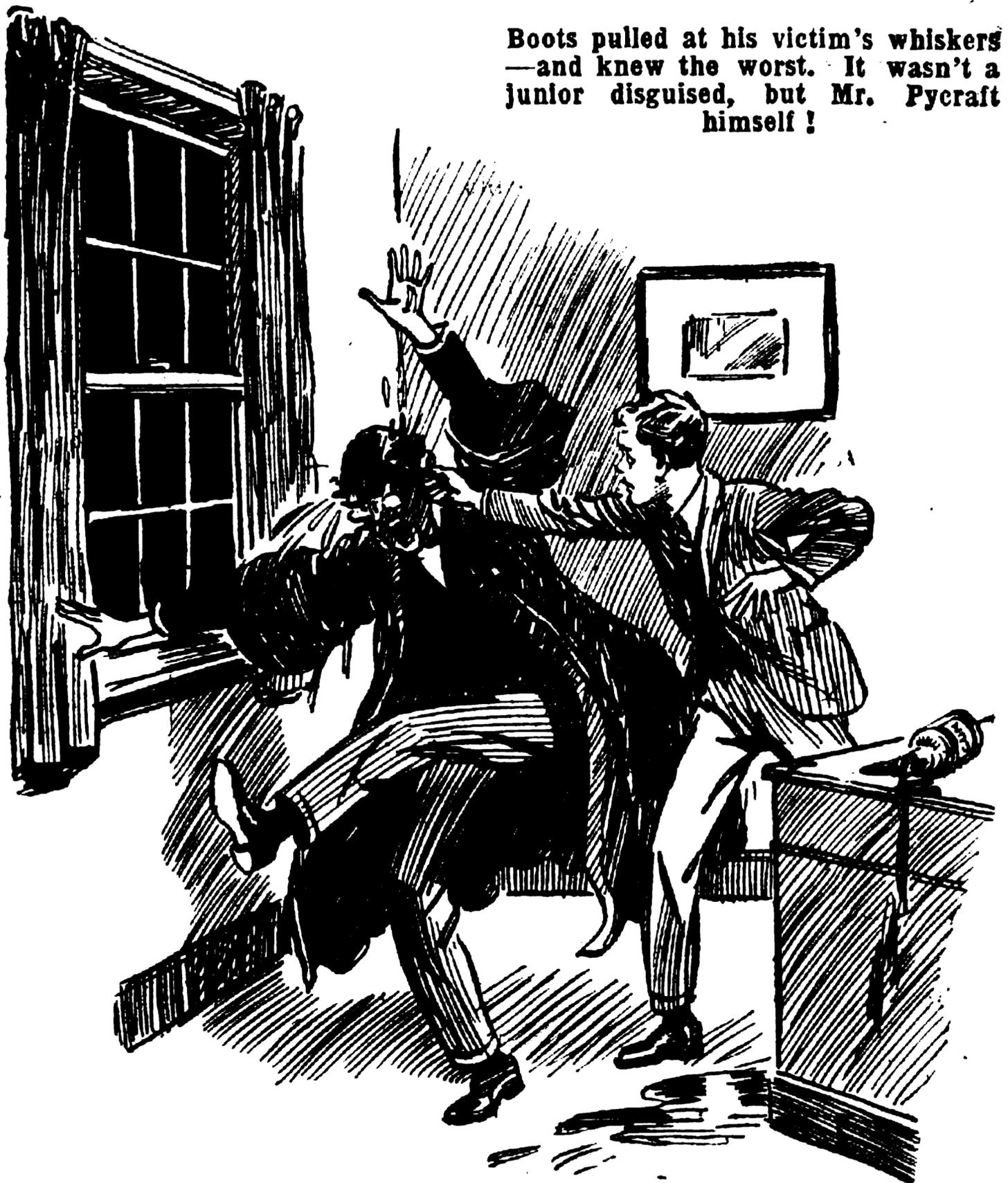
"When I got back this evening, I found an Ancient House boy sitting at my desk," explained Mr. Pycraft, more reluctantly than ever. "He was, in fact, wearing a sort of make-up—and he even had the impertinence to tell me that he was disguised as myself."

"There you are, sir!" said K. K. coolly. "Boots thought that you were Bai— That you were this chap in the disguise. Didn't you say to somebody, sir, that you wouldn't get back until late?"

"What if I did?" retorted Mr. Pycraft impatiently.

"It has an important bearing, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head gently. "Did you, in fact, return at an earlier hour than you originally intended?"

Boots pulled at his victim's whiskers—and knew the worst. It wasn't a junior disguised, but Mr. Pycraft himself!



"Yes, I did," said Mr. Pycraft gruffly. "But why you should listen to these paltry explanations is beyond me, sir! Nothing can alter the fact that I was grossly assaulted! Boots should be expelled—"

"Surely not, Mr. Pycraft," interrupted Lee. "You are the last man, I should think, who would show his boys a vindictive spirit."

"Is he?" murmured Handforth.

He intended that comment to be under his breath, but everybody heard it. Mr. Pycraft turned red, and K. K. inwardly groaned. Fortunately, Nelson Lee affected to hear nothing whatever.

"Boots certainly assaulted you," he said, "but he just as certainly thought that you were one of his own schoolfellows. That puts an entirely different complexion on the matter, Mr. Pycraft. Boots, in fact, can be exonerated entirely. These two boys, here, have confessed."

"Really, sir, without wishing to be vindictive, as you so pointedly hint, I think that Boots should be made to suffer for his—his carelessness," said Mr. Pycraft. "Is the boy crazy? Is he blind? Couldn't he see me? I cannot credit for one moment that he really mistook me for somebody else."

"But he did, sir," urged K. K. "The idea was mine, and I take all the blame," he added, turning to Nelson Lee. "You needn't punish Handforth, sir. The jape was really against him, and he was the victim."

"I rather think I was the victim," said Mr. Pycraft sourly.

"I'm afraid you were, sir—but that was unrehearsed," admitted K. K.

"Well, we need not go into this matter any further," said the headmaster, rising to his feet and reaching for his cane. "I shall have to punish you two boys for having the impertinence to perpetrate a practical joke involving the unauthorised entry of Mr. Pycraft's study, and the destructive use of ink and gum."

"But Handy didn't know——" began K. K.

"I shall punish you, Parkington, for being the instigator," said Nelson Lee, "and I shall punish you, Handforth, for allowing your supposed victim to proceed to the East House on such an outrageous mission."

"And can we tell Boots that everything is all serene for him, sir?"

"You need not trouble," replied the Head. "I will have a prefect go to the Punishment Room and release him."

The next few minutes were painful. Kjrby Keeble Parkington, as the chief culprit, received a hot six-hander. He took it smilingly. Handforth was lucky to get off with a four-hander.

"Now you can both go," said Nelson Lee. "After this last failure of yours, Handforth, I hope you are convinced that your hypnotism is more imaginary than real."

"I couldn't hypnotise you, of course, sir," admitted Handforth. "I was an ass to try. But some of the other chaps——"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned K. K. "And we got up this jape, sir, so that we could open his eyes! He's still as blind as a bat—even now!"

They went out after bidding the Head a respectful good-night; and Nelson Lee turned to Mr. Pycraft with twinkling eyes.

"It was the best way to deal with it, Mr. Pycraft," he said. "In the circumstances, a public flogging would have been most undesirable—particularly as it would have made your own unfortunate part in the affair more generally public. I hope you are satisfied."

Mr. Pycraft wasn't—but he didn't dare to say so.

"THE Head's a brick!" said Parkington enthusiastically.

"Rather!"

"Just a swishing each, and the whole thing's over," continued K.K. "If you ask me, it was worth it—and you ought to have seen Pycraft's face when he knew that nobody was going to be expelled!"

A number of Removites and Fourth-Formers were crowding round the two juniors who had just emerged from the Head's house. They had listened breathlessly whilst K. K. explained the happenings.

"And Boots is let off?" asked Bob Christine.

"He's free by this time," said Handforth. "But look here, you bounders! The Head may be satisfied, but I'm not!" he added darkly. "So you beastly Red-Hots were trying to make a chump out of me?"

"Not at all," replied K. K. "We were only trying to show you that you are a chump."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's cured Handy of one thing, thank goodness!" said Church fervently. "He jolly well knows that he's no hypnotist."

"Do I?" roared Handforth.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Who says I'm not a hypnotist?" snorted Edward Oswald. "I'll admit I failed to hypnotise the Head——"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Nipper. "You're not telling us, Handy, that you tried to put the 'fluence on the gov'nor?"

"I thought I'd done it, too," said Handforth sadly. "He took it beautifully—went under like a bird. But the artful bounder was only playing me up—so that he could get at the truth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I can still hypnotise people, all the same!" roared Handforth. "And if you don't believe it, I'll jolly soon give you a demonstration! Anybody whose will is weaker than mine is bound to succumb."

"There's no such person living," said K. K. promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the middle of the laughter, Church suddenly had an inspiration.

"Wait a minute, you chaps," he said tensely. "Who knows but what Handy may be right? Perhaps there is something in this hypnotism, after all."

"Here, you ass——" began Mac.

"He's the only one who's tried," went on Church. "I'm going to have a shot at it myself—and then we shall know. If Handforth can hypnotise people, so can I!"

He struck an attitude, and waved his arms at the crowd.

"Alla-bazooka!" he said impressively. "I'm going to hypnotise the lot of you, and I'll make you do everything I say!"

"My only hat!" said Handforth, staring.

"Look at me!" commanded Church, whilst the crowd of juniors grinned appreciatively. "Stare into my eyes! Now then—concentrate!" He made a few more passes. "That ought to put you properly under. Can you understand me?"

"Yes!" chorused the crowd.

"You are all subject to my will!" said Church, his voice throbbing. "You are all under the 'fluence. Seize Handforth and hold him! Do you understand?"

The crowd understood—perfectly.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, thoroughly startled. "I never thought that you had the hypnotic eye, Churchy! I'm blessed if you haven't hypnotised the giddy lot!"

"Seize him and hold him!" repeated Church.

"Seize him and hold him!" chanted the subjects.

It wasn't until then that Handforth jumped to the truth. There was a rush at him, and he was grabbed. The fellows stood stock still, staring at Church for further orders. By this time they had thoroughly cottoned on to the wheeze.

"Lift him up slowly, and then drop him to the ground," commanded Church.

Handforth was whirled aloft.

"You—you spoofing rotters!" he yelled. "You're not hypnotised at all!"

"We're hypnotised just as much as you hypnotised me," grinned K. K. "Churchy is just as successful as you were."

"By George! I'll—I'll——"

Bump!

Handforth was dropped so suddenly that all the breath was knocked out of him.

"Again!" commanded the hypnotist. "Obey my orders! Lift him up, and give him another bump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The japers found it difficult to contain their laughter, and they bumped Handforth to the accompaniment of a regular uproar. He was bumped, in fact, until he ached.

"That'll do!" said Church above the din. "Now you've got to forget everything

that's happened. Do you understand? Alla-bazooka!"

He made some more passes, and the demonstration was over.

"You—you rotter, Churchy!" gasped Handforth. "What the dickens do you mean by all this?"

"You're not blaming me, I hope?" said Church in astonishment. "I didn't lay a finger on you. For two pins I'll put you under the 'fluence, too!"

"All right—I'll get even with you all!" panted Edward Oswald. "Churchy isn't so much to blame as you fellows are. It was you who bumped me!"

"Bumped you?" said K. K. blankly. "When?"

"Just now, you ass!"

"Did we bump him?" asked Parkington, appealing to the crowd.

The crowd, having been instructed by Church to forget the whole incident, scoffed at the very idea. And from that minute onwards, Handforth never once again referred to the subject of hypnotism. He was cured!

THE END.

(Next week's long complete St. Frank's yarn is entitled "K.K. K-nabs the Kudos." Full of laughs from the first chapter. One of E. S. Brooks' best.)

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BULL'S-EYE



Gipsy Dick in Court.

IT was a dull, cold morning. Mr. Fineum, the presiding magistrate, had arrived in court eighteen minutes late for the first time on record. A cold draught searched the court from all corners, and the magistrate shivered.

"Sergeant Puffin," he complained, "this is the most deadly police-court I have ever known. Why can't we have the radiators? Turn on the heat."

Sergeant Puffin set his fingers on the heating apparatus, scorched the flesh and shook them vigorously.

"The 'eat is hon, sir," he announced definitely, whereat the magistrate gave him a withering look.

"Next case," he said testily.

"Gipsy Dick," droned the clerk of the court; "case of cruelty to a horse."

"Your turn, Gipsy," said a red-faced police-officer, showing Gipsy Dick into the dock. After Gipsy Dick slid Bull's-Eye Bill, Gipsy Dick's young goal-shooting football pal. The sergeant would have stopped Bull's-Eye, but Dick quietly insisted.

"My pal always comes with me," he said.

"Stop that wrangling," said the magistrate. "Silence in the dock. Gipsy Dick, you are—er—accused of systematically ill-treating and

starving a horse, a—er—yellow horse——"

"Name of Buttercup, your honour," informed Gipsy Dick, dangling his hat over the side of the dock and smiling cheerfully.

The magistrate fixed him with a glassy eye.

"The summons was issued, I see, after information had been given to an inspector of the society by—er—Mr. Crab, the fishmonger, a worthy fellow townsman."

"Sells bad fish, sir," said Gipsy Dick. "Once I bought a lobster of Mr. Crab, and the moment I pierced the shell it exploded

**BULL'S-EYE BILL'S
SCORING GOALS**

—THIS

as if it was full of dynamite. People thought it was the drains, and——"

"Silence! Call Mr. Crab!"

Crab the fishmonger slid into the witness box furtively. Instantly there was applause in the body of the court, and a voice shouted:

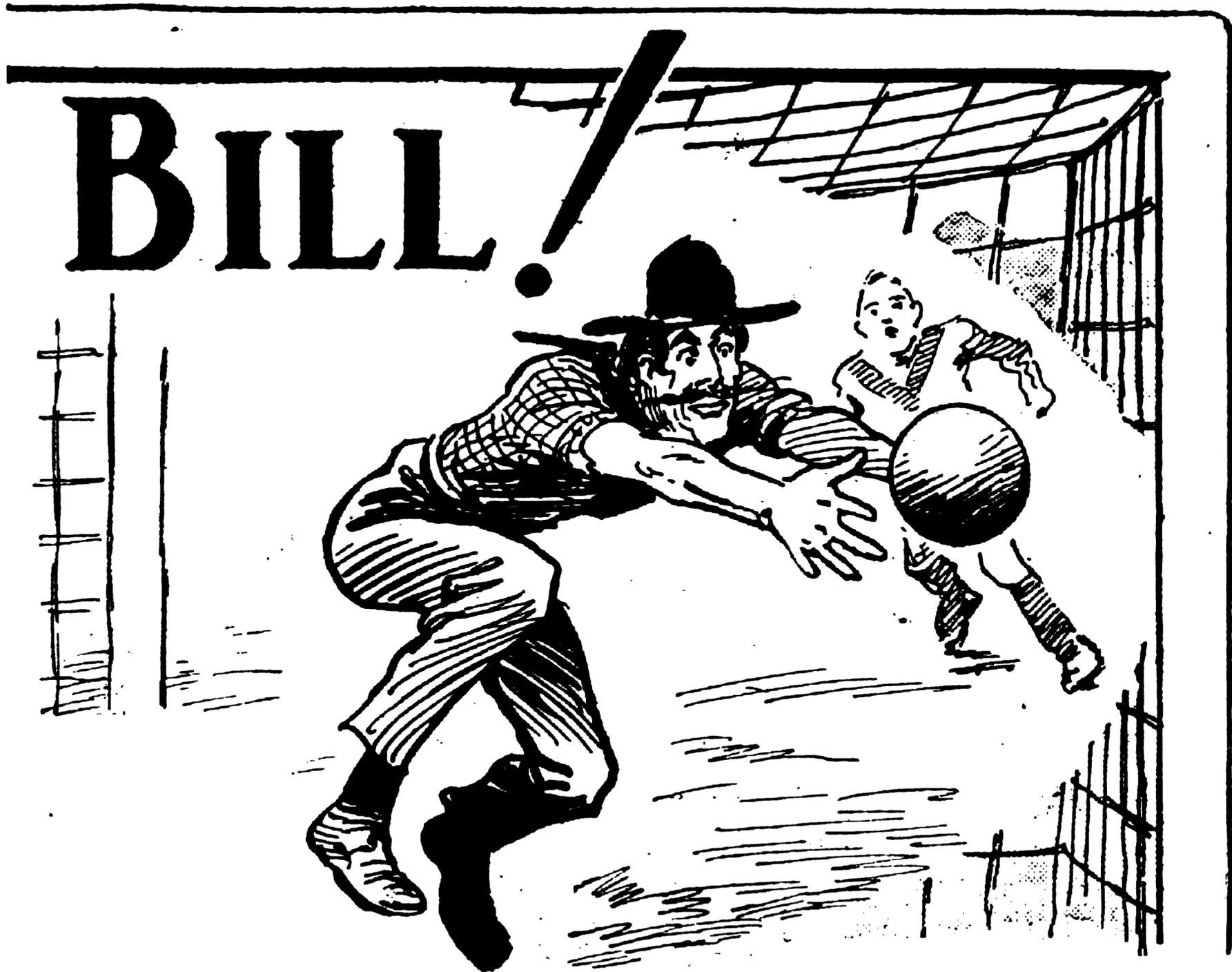
"Good old Crab! Give it 'im, Crab! Now we've got 'im, Crab!"

The magistrate fixed his glasses.

"Who is that?" he demanded.

"One-Punch Pete," said Gipsy Dick from the dock. "Bull's-Eye Bill's stepfather, and

Because He Sold Bad Fish!



if you're anything of a magistrate you ought to give him six months."

The magistrate looked at Mr. Crab with an encouraging smile. Mr. Fineum prided himself on always securing convictions. It was his business in life to secure convictions, and he was already making up his mind what penalties he should inflict upon Gipsy Dick.

"You gave information to an officer of the Animals' Protection Society, I understand. You saw this yellow horse?"

"I did, sir. The worst case ever I saw,

year-old and had never got over it. When he pulled off his peaked cap, his sandy hair stuck up like bristles on a brush.

"Mr. Crab drew your attention to this—er—yellow horse," said the magistrate. "You saw it?"

"Yes, sir. Pulling a caravan through the town on the way to Mudbank for the Town Cup-tie with Crabapple United."

"The—er—horse was pulling a caravan to Mudbank? That is some distance on a hilly road. Did the—er—horse looked starved, or exhibit signs of cruel usage?"

"Its ribs stuck outer mile, sir. It 'ad whispers round its hoofs and a stump for a tail. It 'as a Roman nose and a patchy coat."

"Yes, yes—but could it pull the caravan?"

"Faster than I could keep up with it, sir. Late that night I saw it again as it came back through the town on the way to the Flats, and it was going faster than ever. 'Eading for 'ome, as you might say—"

"As I certainly should not say!" admonished the magistrate, who prided himself on sounding his aspirates. "The horse, then, returned to the Flats, still pulling the caravan, evidence of cruelty itself in view of the starved condition. Were there any passengers?"

WEEK

**GIPSY DICK'S
STOPPING 'EM!**

your washup. I've 'ad my eye on that 'orse for days. It's a livin' skeleton. Its ribs stick outer mile. It was downright cruelty to work 'im."

Crab the fishmonger, exaggerating wildly, drew such a pathetic picture of the starving horse that cries of "shame!" rang through the court. The magistrate put on his severest expression and called upon the officer of the protection society to give evidence. He was a funny-looking man with an expression that suggested he had been frightened as a one-

"Three, sir; Gipsy Dick, Bull's-Eye Bill and 'Chip' Rogers, his pal."

The magistrate's lips curled a sneer.

"Bull's-Eye Bill!" he cried. "And who is he?"

Bull's-Eye advanced to the front of the dock and held up his hand.

"Here I am, sir!" he cried.

"But you are not concerned in this."

"Yes, I am, sir. I've come to prove that Gipsy Dick's horse is the best-fed horse in England. An' I uster work for Crab, the fishmonger, your washup, and I can prove he sells bad fish."

The magistrate faced the witness box.

"There were three passengers—what then?"

"The horse literally galloped on to the Flats, sir, and then Sergeant Puffin delivered 'is warrant and brought the horse to the police-station," said the society's officer.

The magistrate banged his desk.

"Sergeant Puffin!" he cried.

The police sergeant entered the witness box, took the oath, stuck his helmet on the ledge of the box, and winked at Gipsy Dick.

"On the night of the 31st," he began, "I was walkin'—"

"Give evidence of arrest!" snapped the magistrate.

"I took the summons down to the Flats, your worship. I saw Gipsy Dick un'arness 'is 'orse and give it some 'ay to heat."

"He gave it some what?"

"'Ay to heat, sir; 'ay—what 'orses heat, sir."

"Oh! Ah! Yes, I see. He gave the horse some hay to eat."

The sergeant stuck to his point.

"Begging your worship's pardon—'ay to heat, sir."

"And did it eat it?"

"No, sir."

"Ah, I see! Too far gone."

"No, sir, too fed up. That 'orse—"

"But this is a case of alleged cruelty to a yellow horse. You say you brought the horse to the police-station. Could it walk—it had gone a long distance, remember?"

"Gipsy Dick said it wouldn't go unless it was harnessed to the 'van, sir, and so he limbered it up, sir, and I brought in 'van and all."

"It did not collapse?"

"No, sir."

The magistrate began to look exasperated. The case was not going as it ought.

"Call the police veterinary surgeon," he cried; and then, as the vet. leapt into the witness box: "Did you find the horse in a state of collapse?"

"No, your honour. It certainly looked in sad condition, but on examining its mouth I found it to be a three-year-old, sir. Tests showed it to be well nourished and strong."

The bewildered magistrate turned in perplexity to the dock.

"Perhaps—er—Mr.—er—Gipsy Dick," he cried, "you can explain—"

Gipsy pulled at his long moustaches, tugged at his lank hair, gave his broad-brimmed felt hat a twirl, and leaned on the dock-rail.

Bad Fish!

"AS the vet. said just now, sir," he cried, "Buttercup is a three-year-old. I bought him as a yearling at the Newmarket sales, and if he hadn't been such a funny-looking freak he might have run in this year's Derby."

"This is no place for jesting," said the magistrate, "and if you are not careful I shall commit you for contempt of court."

"I called him Buttercup, sir, because he's yellow," went on Gipsy Dick. "He's got two Derby winners in his pedigree—"

"Ah, now I've got you! Name the Derby winners."

"Sansavino and Spion Cop; Buttercup was sold as the Peppermint foal, sir."

With a grin of delight the magistrate reached for a turf guide. Now he would corner Gipsy Dick. His fingers rustled the pages, stopped, and he stared; he looked blank and put the book away again.

"There certainly was a yellow foal, by Peppermint, sold at the Newmarket yearling sales," he muttered. For a moment the beak was undecided. Then: "Do you use the horse cruelly?"

"I'd sooner go without grub myself, sir. That horse is like a chum, sir; like Bull's-Eye Bill here—a pal—and if I whistle him he'll come to me even outer gaol."

The case had got out of hand. Mr. Fineum realised that there was no case. And yet he hated to let Gipsy Dick go.

"I think I should like to see that horse," he murmured.

"Shall I call him, sir? He's out in the police yard."

In a fatal moment of disbelief the magistrate gave the required permission.

"Why, yes," he cried. "Whistle him—and let me see the miracle."

In a flash Gipsy Dick had thrust two fingers in his mouth. The whistle he shrilled nearly lifted off the roof of the court. It was followed by loud shouts from the police out in the yard, the ring of iron-shod hoofs, the battering of doors.

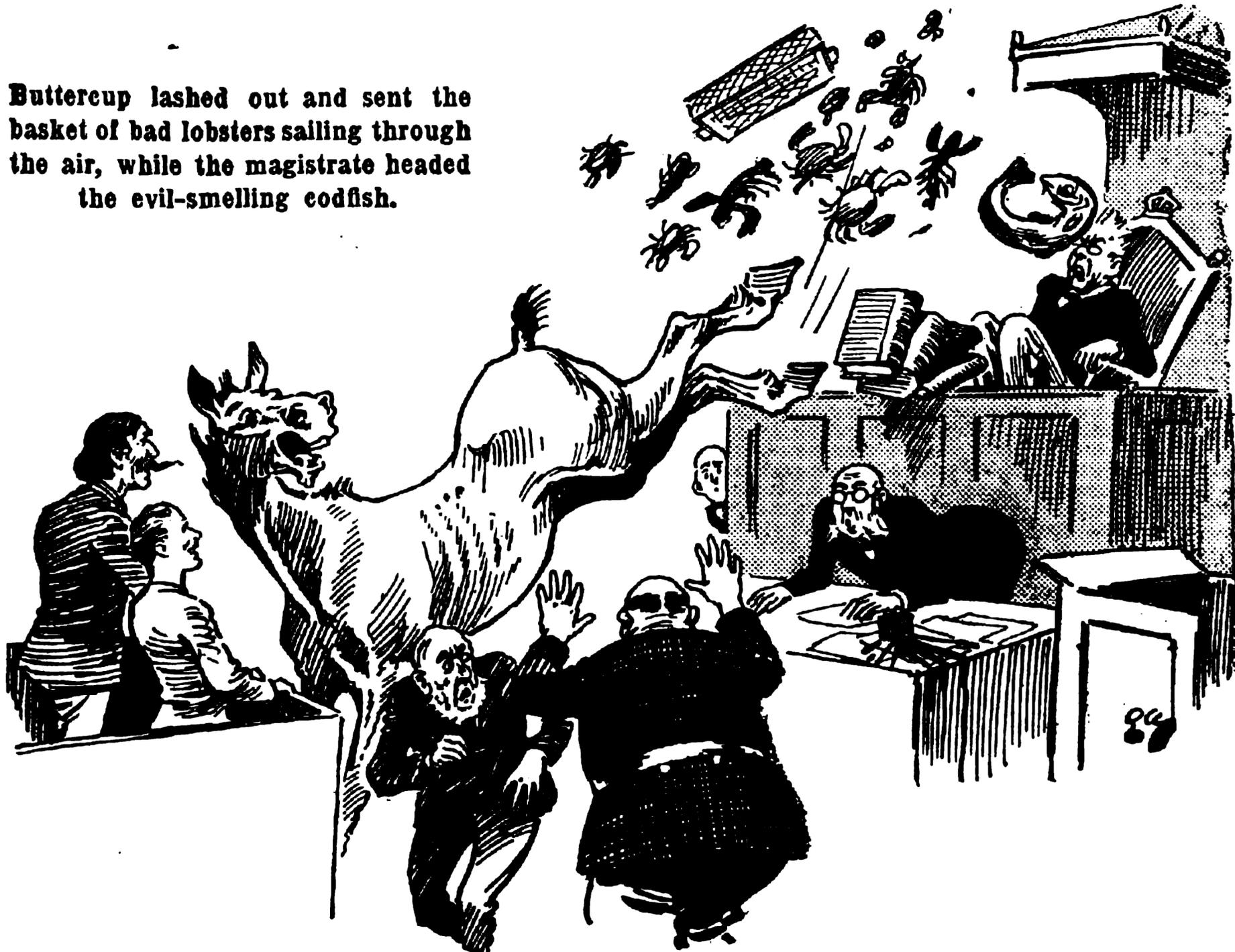
A burly policeman who guarded the entrance to the court was seen to spread his arms out wide as a ghostly yellow shape appeared, and the next moment go crashing down as Buttercup sped by.

Again Gipsy Dick whistled to let his beloved horse know where he was. One look and Buttercup threw up his heels, driving his hoofs into the breadbasket of a bobby who tried to stop him.

Then he scattered Sergeant Puffin and leapt into the well of the court, clearing it in a flash. Finally, sidling up to the dock, he set his muzzle on the ledge for Gipsy Dick to stroke.

"Here he is, your honour," said Dick. "Did you see how spry he is? If his ribs

Buttercup lashed out and sent the basket of bad lobsters sailing through the air, while the magistrate headed the evil-smelling codfish.



'do stick out a bit he can't help it, and if you were to see him gallop you'd be surprised."

The magistrate eyed the beast with strong disfavour.

"I have seen more than enough of him," he cried testily. "Take him out of court. The case is dismissed."

Gipsy Dick did not budge.

"Just one moment, your worship," he cried. "Since Crab the fishmonger has charged me with ill-using Buttercup, out of spite, I thought it only fair to send an inspector round to his shop. And if my nose doesn't deceive me there's an exhibit coming into court."

Gipsy Dick's nose did not deceive him. Two men threaded their way into the well of the court, bringing with them a wire basket loaded with lobsters and crabs. Another man carried, dangling on a piece of string, a curled-up cod, tied head and tail together.

"What is this?" demanded the magistrate as the public oozed towards the exits.

"Bad fish, your worship," said the inspector. "Acting on information, I paid a visit to Mr. Crab's shop. The lobsters and crabs were exposed for sale. They are unfit for human food, sir. The cod was marked tenpence a pound the whole fish. I seized it and brought it here."

The magistrate choked. Sergeant Puffin, holding his nose, staggered towards the door.

"I have outside," said the inspector,

"exhibit C—a basket full of winkles. If you were to put those winkles down, sir, they would walk."

Gipsy Dick had left the dock with Bull's-Eye Bill and joined Buttercup in the well of the court. The enraged Mr. Crab, seeing the grin on Gipsy Dick's face, edged towards the yellow horse.

His anticipated revenge had missed fire. But here was the horse. Swiftly Crab pulled his tiepin out of his tie and jabbed it into Buttercup's flank.

The result was disastrous. Turning round, Buttercup lashed out with his hind legs. His hoofs, catching the basket of shellfish, hurled it to the roof of the court, whence the lobsters and the crabs tumbled down on the magistrate's desk, into dock and witness-box, giving out an indescribable odour. Then, with a second, kick, Buttercup flung the cod out of the inspector's hands slap at the magistrate, who stopped it with his face.

"Easy does it, Buttercup," said Gipsy Dick, trying to soothe the horse and leading it towards the door of the court.

Disengaging himself from the entanglement of the unsavoury codfish, the magistrate glared at Mr. Crab.

"Crab," he said, "I saw you use that pin. You ought to be fined for cruelty yourself. Inspector, confiscate the bad fish. And I think you had better contribute five pounds to the poor box, Crab. I adjourn the court until the air is cleared."

"Ginger" Loses His Ginger!

IN the yard of the police-station, which immediately adjoined the court, Gipsy Dick harnessed Buttercup to the caravan.

Round it gathered a group of grinning policemen who were about to report for duty. One of them had made free with Gipsy Dick's store of home-made toffee and was handing blue packets around to his colleagues.

"You were lucky, Dick," said the bobby, "and you won't mind us taking a few of your sweets."

"Not at all, boys," said Dick, "but don't take the blue packets because——"

It was too late. Every bobby in the yard had started munching toffee, and just then a police inspector came along to examine equipment. They lined up and numbered off, but all Bull's-Eye Bill and Dick heard was:

"Er—Ger—Wer—H'm—Ar—Mer!"

"What's the matter with yer?" bawled the inspector. "Open your mouths and let's have the numbers properly." He saw the sergeant undo a piece of blue paper and slip a piece of toffee into his mouth. Now the inspector, too, had taken some of Gipsy Dick's extra-special toffee in blue paper, and he thought he would himself try a piece. Slipping it into his mouth, he started to chew.

Then he said:

"As you were! N'mb'r!"

The policemen's jaws moved, but only just. They gurgled strange sounds. So did the sergeant. So did the inspector.

Truncheons, dry-battery bull's-eyes, notebooks, pencils, whistles and the like were shown, but no coherent sound came from either officers or men.

Gipsy Dick drove his caravan out into the street, and as a cheering crowd gathered round, intending to escort him in triumph back to the Flats, the line of policemen marched by on duty bent, each man with arms swinging, eyes fixed straight ahead—and jaws set tight!

"Bul's-Eye," whispered Dick, as he urged Buttercup on, "that toffee will stick their jaws down for a month; it's the special sort I always keep back for chaps I don't like—chaps like Ginger Hackem and old Crab!"

Their journey through the town to the Flats was a triumph, a crowd of a hundred or more cheering them all the way.

When the crowd had dispersed Gipsy Dick turned Buttercup loose for a graze and then cocked dinner. They had just finished their meal, and Gipsy Dick was smoking lazily on the steps of his caravan, when a team of boys trooped on to the middle pitch on the Flats and set up goalposts and nets there, and marked out the field.

They were small boys, all about thirteen or fourteen years of age, some younger. A crowd of other youngsters, wearing yellow-and-black rosettes, gathered outside the touchline.

Then Bull-Eye's pal, Chip Rogers, arrived.

"It's a rotten shame!" he said, after the usual greetings.

"What's a rotten shame, Chip?"

"These kids from Portland College have gotted match on with the Town School. And Ginger Hackem's got up the Town School team. He uster go to school there till they fired him. He's bringing along a team of old boys, and there isn't one of 'em younger than eighteen. And what's worse he's bringing Sockem, the old pro., who coaches the Town boys, to keep goal. The Town'll not only lick the college kids by about thirty goals to none, but they'll lame half of 'em before the match is over. Crikey! Look, here they come!"

Bull's-Eye Bill could see Ginger Hackem and a crowd of burly-looking toughs, carrying bags and a football, hurrying across the Flats.

"Chip," said Bull's-Eye, "I uster belong to Portland College. And if Ginger Hackem can play Sockem for the Town School, Gipsy can keep goal for Portland. Gipsy's a good goalkeeper. Wait."

Bull's-Eye raced up to the Portland College master, told him how things were, introduced Gipsy Dick, then rushed to the caravan to change.

When Ginger Hackem and his toughs, all six feet, twelve stone louts, lined up for the game, there was Gipsy Dick in the Portland goal, and Bull's-Eye, wearing his famous blue, red and white football boots, waiting to play for the college.

"Haw, let 'em!" Ginger Hackem jeered, reckoning that his side would win in a cake-walk.

The Portland boys thought so, too—and quaked. For the first ten minutes of the one-sided match Ginger Hackem and his toughs tore through the schoolboys' defence and shot at goal often enough to have won a ten-goals' lead. But they reckoned without Gipsy Dick, who wore his usual clothes, leggings, and broad-brimmed hat. Dick saved every shot brilliantly.

Then, the first time the college broke away, Bull's-Eye slammed the ball into the net. Two minutes later he scored a second goal with a shot Sockem did not see. Then he gave a pass to a tiny kid who scored with a fast grounder.

At the start of the second half he laid out Ginger Hackem, who, in trying to handle a flying shot from Bull's-Eye's right foot, stopped it with his solar plexus instead.

Ginger took no further interest in the game. He went home groaning and holding his tummy. The college boys beat the Town School louts by fifteen goals to nil. Bull's-Eye Bill scored twelve of them. And in the college goal, Gipsy Dick, having no work to do, made some of his wonderful toffee, and, after the match, invited the college boys to tuck in.

"Three cheers for Bull's-Eye and Gipsy Dick!" they yelled.

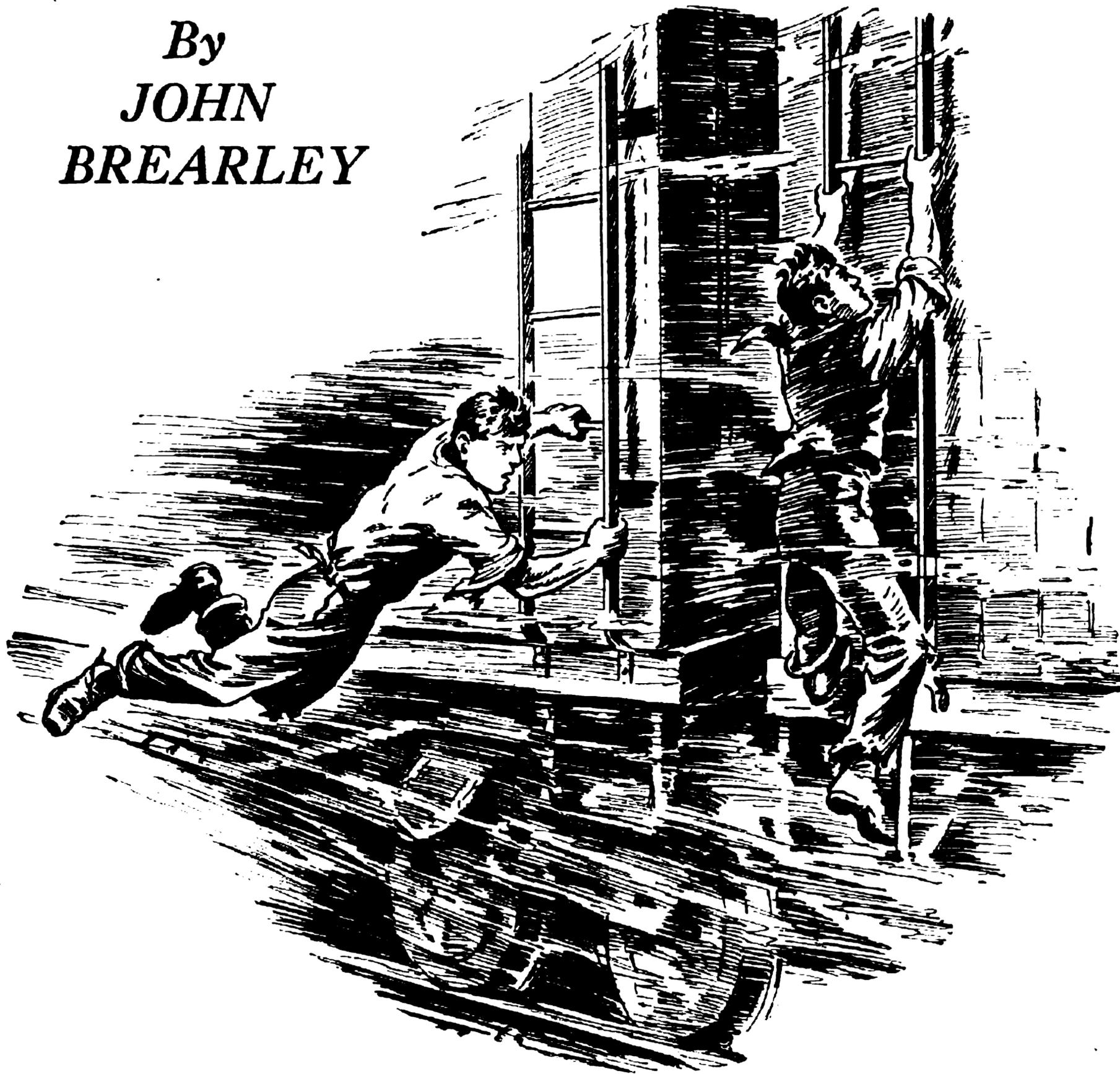
The cheers were given lustily.

(Bull's-Eye Bill's in great form again next week, and he's scoring more goals than ever!)

Travel With Peter And Red Along The—

VENGEANCE TRAIL!

By
**JOHN
BREARLEY**



Good-bye to 'Frisco!

"IS—is it O. K., Red?"

Red Potter, lean and rangy, with cow-puncher written all over him, despite his tattered dungarees, grinned widely and ruffled his fiery shock-head as Peter Graham, his new-found English chum, slid from the darkness of the San Francisco slum, and gripped his arm anxiously.

"O. K.? Shore!" he whispered. "I 'phoned the cops. Told 'em at the station they'd find a dead man in 15, Shendy Street. Told 'em his moniker was Pedro Gomez and that he'd been stabbed by a scar-faced Greaser who'd already made tracks outa town!"

"Oh! Did they say anything?"

Red chuckled again.

"They shorely did. Plenty. Wanted me to step right along and explain some more!"

"And then?"

"I told 'em to go chase themselves!" chortled Red cheerily. "An' left 'em plumb flat. It's O.K., all right!"

By the light of a feeble corner lamp, he caught the grim expression on the English boy's rugged face, and punched him softly in the ribs.

"Now, looky heah, Pete!" he said, in his slow Texan drawl. "Pull yoreself together. We gotta vamoose. The cops'll be trying to trace that 'phone call soon, and we've shore got to burn the landscape some!"

Peter nodded slowly.

"I know, Red. But—but some—how the thought

Another Smashing Adventure:

TRICKING THE TRAIN-BANDITS!

of my coming all the way from England just to find that poor beggar stabbed in the back up there in that ghastly dark room, has got my goat. Thank goodness I was in time, though!"

A rough hand landed on his shoulder.

"That's so. But forgit it now, Peter. Yuh've got all the information yuh want, and it's up to yuh now to git revenge for Gomez as well as for yore dad. Yuh and me, pard, is goin' all the way to Zareda City in li'l ole Mexico, find this Manuel Garcia scut that killed yore pop, and then —"

There was no need to finish; the icy look in Peter's grey eyes was enough. Red had seen the same awful look before in the eyes of certain men in his own great State; men who wore two guns low down on their thighs, and whose gloveless hands seldom strayed from the worn ivory butts projecting from open holsters. He knew what that look meant!

Through narrowed lids, he studied Peter's face and nodded thoughtfully, guessing his feelings. All the way from St. Frank's School in England the English lad had come, tramping across America to San Francisco in search of the one man who could tell him who had killed his father.

That man was dead now; stabbed a few minutes before Peter had found him. But he had lived long enough to gasp out the precious information. Manuel Garcia of Zareda City it was who had lured Francis Graham into the Mexican mountains and killed him for the sake of his silver mine. And to Zareda City—or beyond—1,500 weary miles away, Peter Graham was going—on a Vengeance Trail!

In the gloom of the slum, noisy with shrill foreign voices echoing from its ramshackle tenements, he wheeled and grabbed the Texan youth tensely by the arm.

"Now listen, Red; I'm going alone. The Mexican who killed Gomez must know who I am, for he saw us in that eating house an hour ago. I'll bet he's well on his way South now and he'll tell Garcia. Garcia will be on the watch for me if I get to Mexico, and if he catches me he'll kill me as he did—dad. And if you're with me he'll kill you, too. So——"

Red's answer came low and swift.

"Now—yuh listen! Yuh big English stiff, if yuh talk like this ag'in, I'll shore spraddle you all over the scenery. I know yuh've licked me once to-day—look at my face—but say, this time I'll jest eat yuh!" he threatened heatedly. "Didn't I pick a fight with yuh on the Waterfront to-day out o' pure orneriness? And after yuh'd knocked me cold, didn't yuh spend yore last few cents on grub for us both—with me starvin'? I told yuh then that yuh couldn't shake me off with a gun!"

Changing his tone, he laid a persuasive hand on Peter's arm.

"Aw, Peter, lay off. I'm in on this, too. I know yore sort—you'll go bull-headed to

Mexico or anywhere else to get Manuel Garcia. But yuh don't know nuthin' of the country yuh gotta cross—the desert, the mountains, the cowlands an' all them. I do. Yore my pard and I'm a-coming!"

He stepped back a pace, one big fist clenched and ready.

"Now say the word. Do we vamoose outa this city pronto and board the night train through the mountains—together; or do yuh want tuh start another massacre right now?"

For a moment Peter stared at him, his face set and troubled. Then slowly a sunny grin broke over his face and he held out his hand.

"All right, then, blow you, come! And if you get your silly neck wrung, don't blame me!"

"Whoopee!" triumphed Red. "And now we'll hike. Let's go!"

Seizing Peter's arm gaily, he thrust him ahead, and in a few seconds the hefty couple were swallowed up in San Francisco's slumland.

Hoboes!

"PHEW! Some grind!"

It was four hours later—four hours spent in ducking quickly and quietly out of 'Frisco and the Bay. By the aid of a "lift," which the cheerful Red had begged from a passing lorry, they had covered nearly twenty miles at a sound speed, and after that had come a long, steady march upwards into the high dark foothills of the great Coastal Range of mountains, bordering the Californian coast.

Far below and behind them now twinkled the lights of the teeming city. But up in the hills, as the two youngsters dropped at last into some bushes beside the dim railway track, all was still and dark; cold, too, for the mountain-nights in the Golden State are frosty!

At Peter's gasp of relief, Red grinned widely.

"Yuh bet!" he agreed. "But we're on velvet now. This is the best spot fer jumpin' the train I know, and we're right on time. She'll be a long, heavy freight-train, see; she'll only be travelling slow up this grade, Pete, and we'll board her on the run. 'S'easy!"

Peering eagerly down the long hillside, he stared for some time, and at last threw out his arm.

"An' dog-gone it, thar she is!" he carolled.

Following his finger, Peter looked down to see a long red stream, like a fiery caterpillar, crawling steadily across the valley below from the direction of the city lights. He chuckled with satisfaction. Things were going very smoothly now, and he was more thankful than ever that fortune had thrown him in with the cheerful, sturdy American crouching at his side.

Before leaving 'Frisco, they had spent a goodly portion of their slender funds—the twenty dollars bequeathed to them by the

dying Mexican—in food and drink, and Red had the remainder tucked away in an old money-belt next his skin. Their feet were firmly planted on Vengeance Trail now, and to the English boy, the idea of boarding a train at midnight as it climbed through the hills, and riding it into the great Sierras, sent a thrill through his heart.

It was not a case of cheating the railroad, as it would have been in England, he knew. In America, thousands of tramps—"hoboes" as they are called—travel "free" daily,



Peter and Red leapt down from the freight wagon—right on top of the two train-bandits!

and each train carries a special crew of tough fighting men to deal with them. If the hobo can hide himself among the goods-wagons, he gets his ride. If he is discovered, he gets thrown off on his neck. It is an even chance either way; but Peter was ready to try it.

Suddenly Red threw up his nose and sniffed, as a hound tests the wind.

"Smoke!" he whispered. "Thar's a fire some'eres!"

"Is there?" Peter leapt to his feet. "Then I'm for it. I'm perished!"

For answer, Red's hand gripped his ankle firmly.

"Wait, yuh antelope!" he cautioned softly; and as Peter stiffened with surprise, he explained. "Pete, yuh ain't in England now. These hills is plumb wild—an' it's

late! We gotta step light. I reckons now thar may be others waitin' tuh jump this train heah besides ourselves, 'cos its a good spot. And they mayn't be respectable fellers like us. Savvy!"

Peter thrilled again. But before he could reply, Red was off through the bushes, silent as a snake, and without a word, he dropped full length and crawled after him.

Over a cut-out bank they went, farther up the grade, the fumes of wood-smoke growing stronger until, as abruptly as he had started, Red stopped dead; so dead that Peter rammed his nose against his chum's hobnails and grunted. A low fierce hiss froze him to silence. Crawling forward, he peered ahead.

It was a strange sight he saw. Down in a little hollow, huddled round a glowing fire, were the indistinct forms of four men, clad in the dirty garments of the typical

American tramp. On the fire, in an old canned-beef tin, a Mulligan stew bubbled fragrantly; and from time to time, each man reached out and dipped a smaller tin into it, swallowing the hot food with the aid of long iron dippers. The firelight, gleaming in the hollow, threw their faces into relief. And a tough, unshaven picture they made against that background of lonely hills.

"Hoboes!" whispered Red. "Bad hombres, too!"

He began softly to ooze back, but Peter, eager for a closer view, crawled forward, although all idea of claiming a share of the

comfort had vanished the second he saw those faces round the fire. He felt Red's warning hand close round his arm, but it was too late. His own descended on a loose piece of earth, and next instant a little run of dirt and stones went clinking into the hollow.

"Wow!" growled Red. "That's torn it!"

At the first rustle of stones above their heads, the hoboes scattered out of the firelight like so many cats. One moment they were there; the next they were not. And out of the darkness snarled a voice:

"Stick 'em up, yuh on th' bank. I've got yuh covered!"

Peter crouched instantly for a spring. But the more experienced Red rose resignedly to his feet, and stood against the skyline with his arms raised until the voice spoke again.

"Come on down!"

"Git goin', Peter; we're sunk!" grunted Red; and slid calmly down the bank and into the firelight.

The moment the boys were there, back from the gloom prowled the four men. They were thin fellows with vicious rat-like faces; all save the leader, a burly tough whose mouth wore a triumphant leer, and whose grimy fist was clamped round the butt of a big Colts forty-five. For a long second he studied the captives in silence. Then his arm shot out and the gun muzzle was rammed into Red's stomach.

"Who are yuh? Talk quick or——"

Red's eyes, half-closed, glinted dangerously. But his voice was soft and tranquil as he drawled:

"Who d'yuh think we are? Dooks in disguise, yuh big stiff? We're waitin' fer the train—like yuh!"

"Yeah??" The big man's voice grated. "Whatcha crawlin' roun' the hills for, then?"

"Smelt yore fire. Came to share it!" answered Red, grinning.

The other snorted.

"We ain't sharin' fire to-night, buddy!" Then suddenly, into the silence, came the rumble of the oncoming train nearing the foot of the hill. The gun pressed harder against Red's body. "Got any dough?"

"Shore!" giped the Texan. "Plenty. We're millionaires on tramp! Don't we look it?"

A swift spiteful slash sent him staggering.

"That's fer backchat!" rasped the hobo hatefully. "An' yuh ain't goin' by this train, buddy; there's enough of us a'ready. Now shell out what ye've got; and ef yuh do it quick, mebbo I won't blow yore heads plumb off and leave yuh here! See!"

The rumble of the train had grown now to a hard snorting rattle as the sturdy locomotive, towing its heavy string of wagons, lumbered up the steep incline. She was but a few hundred yards away, and coming on steadily.

Out of the corner of his eye, Peter saw a gash appear on Red's face where the blow had landed; and just as he had done earlier

that day on the 'Frisco waterfront, Peter snapped into action, so swift that he caught the hoboes flatfooted.

His right shot out and crashed to the point of the gunman's bristly jaw. Down went the man like a log, and a scream of pain ripped out as he lurched into the fire. Before the others could move, the tall youngster was among them, lashing to right and left.

A kick landed on his thigh, and his blood ran cold as a razor blade swished towards his face. Ducking frantically, he grabbed the piping tin of stew and jammed it into a furious, distorted face, kicked the legs from beneath the man with the razor and whipped round—to see Red gaily belting the fourth tramp over the head with an iron dipper.

And at that moment, with a roar and a clank, the great train snorted up the grade and into view. Red's voice rose to a yell:

"Beat it, Pete!"

The next few moments were a whirl of action, noise and awful peril. Blindly Peter raced after his chum to the railroad, the locomotive thundered past and a succession of high, blank freight-wagons loomed above his head, each with a small steel ladder clamped to its side.

He saw Red spring high and grasp one; then he, too, jumped for the next. As though a giant hand had seized him, he was whisked off the ground, and next instant, gasping for breath and deafened by the noise, he was being whirled away into the black darkness.

He had boarded the 'Frisco night train!

A Startling Discovery!

FOR what seemed an eternity, he hung there blindly. The train, tilting over the crown of the hill now, began to gather speed, and the back-rush of air, growing stronger, plucked at his clothes, threatening every second to hurl him to destruction.

Where Red was he had no idea. Save for the glimmering steel ladder to which he clung like a fly, he could see nothing, while all he could hear was the whistle of the wind and the roar of the wheels churning a few feet beneath him.

Pulling himself together, he turned his face down-wind and began hauling himself up the side of the swaying truck hand over hand until he reached the top. To his heartfelt relief, he found he had boarded an open car, and swinging himself over the edge, he took a chance, let go all holds and dropped heavily into the dark interior.

Something soft hit him in the back; he pitched forward and fell sprawling across some well-filled bales. The moment he landed, two strong arms reached out and hugged him close.

"Is it yuh, Pete?" It was Red, and his voice was shaky. "Glory be, I tho't yuh'd gone under the wheels!"

"I'm all right!" gasped Peter with a

breathless chuckle. "But what about those hoboes, Red?"

"They missed it; they was plumb flattened out. Oh, Pete!" Red gave an admiring gurgle. "You're some scrapper, kid. Say, yuh landed among them roughnecks quicker'n a rattle snake and heavier than a grizzly-b'ar!"

"Rats. Are we all right here? I'm sleepy!"

"No, sir!" snorted Red decisively. "We're not. I ain't travellin' through no mountains in an open carriage. It's too cold fer one thing; and fer another, as soon as dawn breaks, the train crew'll come along the tops and find us!"

"What'll we do, then?"

"Yuh stay heah. I'm crawlin' along the trucks till I find a closed one with no emergency entrances, and then we'll be all right!"

"Go steady, man!"

"Yuh bet!"

It was impossible to see in the intense blackness, but Peter felt his chum rise and next he heard him scrambling up the side of the truck to the open roof. Faintly against the starlit sky he saw Red poise himself on the swaying edge for a perilous spring to the next wagon. But that leap was never made. For, above the noise of the train, a sharp, biting challenge rang out:

"Jump for it, hobo! I've got yuh covered. Hit the grit, you clam!"

Looking up, Red had a second's glimpse of a man crouching right before him on the coach-roof ahead,

and in a flash he threw himself backwards.

"Go to blazes!" he howled.

A spurt of fire cut the darkness like a knife. In a heap, he landed back at Peter's feet, diving for a far corner. Before either lad could move again, over the top of the truck came the burly figure of a train-guard, jumping into the darkness with the reckless bravery of his profession.

"Got yuh!"

Within a second, the interior of the truck was full of flying fists, limbs and boots. Missing Red in his wild descent, the guard dropped squarely on top of Peter, and unaware that he had two tramps to tackle, grappled with him fiercely.

The ensuing fight was sharp, short and savage. Startled and hurt, Peter gave a snort of rage and began fighting like a wild-cat, punching, heaving and wrestling as he was rolled over among the bales. Even so, sturdy scrapper though he was, he hadn't an earthly against a heavier, stronger and more experienced man-handler. A hand closed swiftly round his throat, his head was forced backwards and the guard's gun-hand rose ominously for a finishing-stroke. Then

over the bales came Red Potter, all legs and arms, twitched the gun from the man's hand more by instinct than anything, and whanged it down on his bullet head.

Crack!

Peter, half choked and exhausted, suddenly felt his opponent's full weight sag down on him. With all his strength he pushed upwards. The unconscious guard toppled over; a match flared in the gloom. The battle was ended.

In the feeble light, the two friends studied each other anxiously.

"All right, Pete?"

A slow grin dawned on Peter's face.

"Fine!" he gasped derisively, feeling his throat. "I'm glad I came with you, Red."

But for once, Red was not in chaffing mood. By the aid of another match, he was examining his victim. He sighed with relief.

"He's all right, I guess!" he whispered. "But I hit him hard!"

Pulling the man out flat, they examined him again. His coat had fallen open, exposing his shirt, and as Red stared, the match-light glittered on something pinned to the shirt.

It was a small metal badge; and with a sharp gasp, the Texan bent closer. The expression on his face when he looked up gave Peter a shock.

"What is it, Red?"

A low troubled whistle was the reply.

"We've done it this time, Peter. This ain't no ornery train-guard. He's a United States marshal!"

"Yes?" Peter laughed coolly. "And what does that mean?"

"It means this, yuh English maverick," said Red solemnly. "That some'eres aboard this cussed freight-train there's a shipment of gold hidden. That's what it means!"

"But—but the United States always send gold in a special car attached to a passenger-train, don't they?" objected Peter wonderingly.

"Not always." Red shook his head. "Fact is, there's been a reg'lar gang holdin' up passenger-trains in California this last month, so mebbe the Government have stuck a bullion-car among these freight-wagons fer safety. It's been done before. Anyway"—he snapped vigorously, nodding at the fallen guard—"there's something plenty valuable on this train or this guy wouldn't be here! An' Pete, I'm beginning to wonder why that gang o' hoboes back in the hills were so darn keen to keep us from ridin'—"

His words were choked off as Peter's hand closed over his mouth.

"Quiet!" hissed the English lad. "Look up!"

On the edge of the truck, a vague figure had appeared, gathering itself for a leap.

AT GRIPS WITH GREASERS!

But Peter and Red prove themselves slippery customers, too!

See next week's yarn.

A Wild Journey!

"T HET yuh, Al?"

At the hoarse cautious whisper, Red threw off Peter's hand. He knew the man could not see him, and accustomed to danger from birth, he acted with a typical cowboy's quickness.

"Yep!" he answered quickly and calmly, dropping his voice a tone lower. "Step down!"

There came the soft thud of feet. The man, whoever he was, was in the truck. They could hear him groping about.

"Say, where are yuh? Did Mike, Jim and Elmer get aboard, too? Strike a light, can't yuh?"

"No, t'ain't safe!" answered Red gruffly. "We're all aboard. Mike's here; t'others are behind!"

A contented grunt came in reply and the man moved nearer, cursing as he stumbled over the prostrate guard and fell against Red's outstretched arm.

"Thar yuh be. So yuh got this interferin' coyote, didja?" he growled. "I saw him fire at yuh. I was just behind, coming to find yuh myself, and was goin' to ditch him when he jumped on yuh!"

"We got him!" agreed Red coolly, warning Peter to keep still. "What's doin'?"

"Gee, it's easy!" chuckled the newcomer. "Listen; everything's right. This yer train stops at the tank in Lone Wolf Gulch for water, like we reckoned; and Tucson and Arizona'll be waitin' there, ready for action. Soon as it stops they'll attend to the engineer and fireman; we and the other boys've got tuh crawl along and sec to the gold!"

For all his nerve, Red gave a slight gasp. Recovering in a second, however, he chanced a question.

"Found whar it is?"

"Shore!" laughed the other from the darkness. "It's hid in a safe behind packing-crates in the last car but one. That's the tip I got straight from 'Frisco. Now that yuh've laid out this hombre, there's only one more guard and he's sitting in the hoodle-truck with a sawed-off shot-gun across his knees. But we'll get him before he can blink; and then—whoopee!"

"Yeah; whoopee!" drawled Red; and stepping forward silently he swung the train-guard's gun with all his strength. There was a sharp crack, a moan and a heavy thud. Red struck another match.

"Nice bird, ain't he?" he said critically, as he and Peter stared at the hard-bitten, brutal face at their feet. "Pete, we've struck a real outfit of train-robbers; and so far we're on top. Now we gotta act quick and warn the engineer!"

"Whatever you say!" jerked Peter. Red jumped on a bale and began scrambling up without another word. Peter followed on his heels. And, as they reached the top and struggled for breath against the biting wind—the train began to slacken speed!

"Gosh! We must be near the Gulch a-

ready!" came Red's horrified voice. "Hurry, fer the love of Mike!"

Next instant, he had jumped ahead. Then began a night-mare journey. Along the tops of the freight-cars they clawed their way—against time. Bumping and jostling, the line of cars behind the engine rocked violently as the brakes were gradually applied, and the train slowed down. Sometimes Peter was in the air, jumping from wagon to wagon; at others a hideous lurch flung him to one side, where he saved himself from death only by the strength of his powerful arms.

Across closed roofs, down into open trucks, lacerating their legs on the unseen contents, the two lads crawled. Some of the cars had steel runways on their tops, and these were easy, but others were almost smooth. Hands bleeding and clothes torn, the two boys fought onwards, for now, high and menacing in the starlight, loomed the tree-clad walls of a deep ravine; Lone Wolf Gulch, the first water-station on the long mountain railway from 'Frisco.

Peering ahead for one brief second, Peter saw they still had another truck to cross before they reached the coal-tender and the engine. Red leapt across the couplings, swung himself aboard; Peter landed in his tracks. Before he could recover his balance properly, the great train slid to a grinding halt beside an enormous iron tank, and the shock threw him flat on his face. The rattle and roar of the locomotive died away; the thundering echoes in the gulch ceased. An uncanny silence fell.

Soon they heard the firemen busy with the water-hose; heard the driver jump leisurely from the footplate. Then, almost beneath the truck on which the two youngsters lay, voices rapped out stridently:

"Hands up!"

Peter's heart leapt. Tucson and Arizona, the two bandits stationed in the gulch!

Peering cautiously down, he saw by the glow from the driving-cab, the engineer and fireman standing stiff as statues, hands raised. Stealing towards them came two masked men, guns in hand.

Even as he looked, one of the guns roared twice into the air: a signal to the rest of the gang, who should have been ready.

But they weren't. Instead, as though moved by a single spring, Red and Peter gave one wild whoop, hurtled recklessly through the air and landed with a crash full on the shoulders of the robbers.

Bedlam broke out in Lone Wolf Gulch then and there! To Peter, in the next few hectic minutes, the whole world seemed to explode. Shots roared; a hot flame singed his face. The man he held twisted out of his grasp and staggered up, and then everything dissolved in a red mist through which he plunged, fighting like a demon.

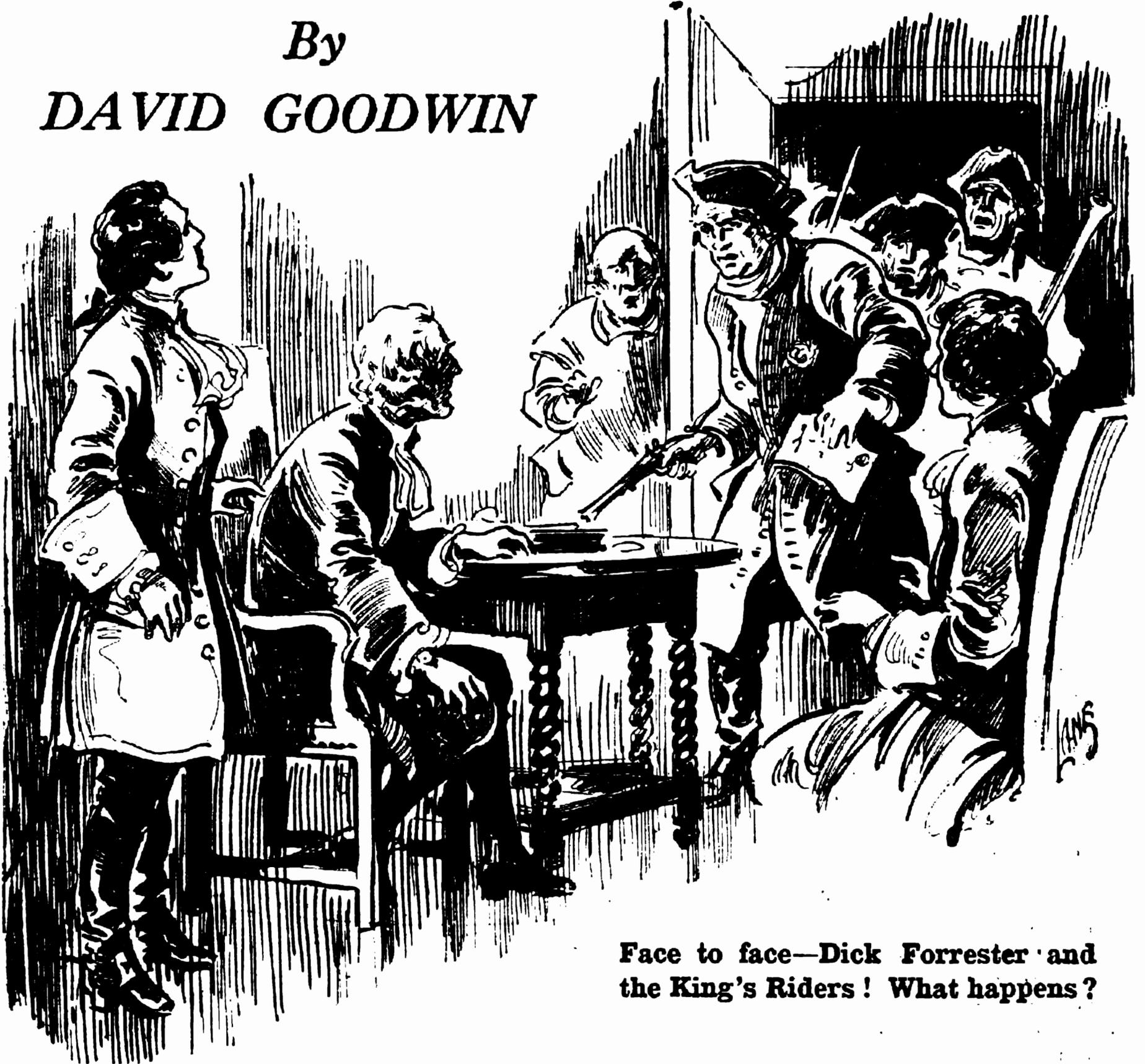
There in the lonely sinister ravine, lit by the red furnace-glow, he went berserk. Men seemed everywhere. An upturned jaw

A Stirring Serial Of The "Good Old Days!"

Knights of the Road!

By

DAVID GOODWIN



Face to face—Dick Forrester and the King's Riders! What happens?

A Close Call!

THE door swung wide, and in marched a sergeant of the King's Riders, with four of his men. Ralph gave one glance at them and his brother, and then stood as if turned to stone.

It was a breathless moment. Silence fell on the room, and the officers of the law, mud-spattered, faced Dr. Trelawney. Their horses could be heard champing in the courtyard below. Plainly, there was no retreat. The four men were armed, and Black Satan was in the stables, unsaddled.

Ralph stood with set lips. The doctor was astonished, a frown fast gathering on his brow. Dick stood a little behind with a slight smile upon his face, watching events.

"I must beg pardon, sir, for this intrusion," said the sergeant of the King's Riders, saluting, "but the matter is so urgent

that I must not delay making your help to guard the king's peace. The noted highwayman, Richard Forrester, is in the vicinity."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dr. Trelawney.

"He rode out from Ulchester two days ago," continued the sergeant, "and is known to have passed this way. Hearing there had been a robbery here, I came at the gallop to see if it might not be his work, and seeking news of him. He has been traced near to this very house."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the doctor. "Why, no doubt it was he who is at the bottom of the robbery. Proceed, sergeant, with your orders. You may speak before this gentleman, Mr. Fernhall, who already knows something of the matter."

The sergeant saluted again, and glanced at Dick and his brother. "So far, he had taken little notice of the guests.

"I warrant you, sir," said the sergeant grimly, pulling a stamped paper from his breast, "I will soon lay hands on the rogue. I will read you his description, which I am bidden to lay before all those concerned in the matter."

He opened the document, and began to read in a loud voice:

"Be it known to his Majesty's lieges, touching the notorious highway robber, Richard Forrester, that all loyal subjects may aid in compassing his capture, whereby he may be brought to his well-deserved end—the gallows. The reward offered upon his head is hereby increased to two hundred and fifty guineas, and when last seen he was apparelled as set forth here beneath:

"Coat of rich buff cloth, handsomely cut, and frogged with scarlet; vest of fine silk, fine laco neckcloth, white buckskin gauntlets, and breeches of the same; well-made hussar boots, reaching to the thigh, and a pearl-grey riding-cloak of the best fashion."

As the sergeant read, loudly and slowly, Ralph felt his blood chill in his body. He saw the doctor's eyes turn upon Dick, with a strange expression, and rest upon each item of his clothing as the sergeant read it out.

"Rides a tall black horse," continued the sergeant, "and is free with his money. In appearance youthful, but tall and strong. Brown hair, blue eyes, and beardless."

"That, sir, is the description. You will observe it gives the rogue no chance of hiding his identity, and, with your aid, I shall very soon have him by the hip!" said the sergeant, pocketing his paper and looking round him.

Before anybody could say a word, Dick stepped forward.

"Egad, Master Sergeant," he said, laughing, "you are a dangerous fellow to turn loose with such a description as that! I trust no harmless gentleman will suffer your attentions by it. You might have been describing myself and my clothes to a hair."

The sergeant looked at Dick, and as his eye travelled over him he stared in astonishment. Dr. Trelawney was silent.

Dick laughed heartily.

"It will be well for me to change my dress in quick time, lest some zealous citizen seeks to win two hundred and fifty guineas by knocking me on the head! What a chance the robbers of your silver lost, doctor!"

"Why, sergeant," cried the doctor, his brow clearing at the recollection, for Dick's speech had set his mind at rest, "this gentleman will be able to tell you much of the robbery, for the silver has all been restored to me by his skill and courage. He met the robbers on the way, worsted them, and brought back the spoils, for which I am eternally indebted to him."

"Indeed, sir!" The sergeant turned to Dick. "Then you must have met with the very rogue himself! It was ill-luck for him that he met a gentleman of such courage. 'Tis not everyone who would blithely attack armed thieves and spoil them of their ill-gotten gains. Did you see the knaves closely? For it seemed that Forrester had other rogues with him. Indeed, he could hardly compass such a feat alone."

"It was too dark to see much of them," said Dick. "But if it interests you, you will find one of the knaves dead at the place where we met them; and another stunned, unless their comrades have carried them away."

"Then Dick Forrester is dead?" cried the sergeant.

Dick laughed so long and heartily, that the others gaped at him.

"I doubt it, sergeant!" he said. "And you make a blunder, let me tell you, in supposing the silver robbery was his work. The men we encountered were, of course, common burglars and drawlatches. A mounted highwayman, such as this Forrester, would not stoop to housebreaking. By what I have heard of the knights of the road, they fly at higher game than that."

"Nay, sir," said the sergeant, hitching his sword aside importantly. "Had you captured as many of the rogues as I have, you would think less highly of them. I assure you, sir, I took one once with nothing in my hand but a walking-cane, though he had two pistols and a slung blunderbuss."

"You must indeed be a terror and a scourge to the road-riders," said Dick. "Yet

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 is rescued by his brother, who takes him to St. Anstell's College. On the way there they save the school's silver from robbers. While they are interviewing the headmaster, the latter is informed that the King's Riders wish to see him concerning Dick Forrester, the notorious highwayman. "Show them in!" says the Head.

(Now read on.)

I think it could hardly have been Richard Forrester that we met, for he and his men would hardly have fled from one youth and a boy, by what I have heard."

"Pooh, sir! A coward and rascal I know him to be!" cried the sergeant with a swaggering air. "There is little true courage in these knaves, sir, such as we can show who wear the king's coat. I warrant I take him with mighty little trouble if ever I come across him. He trembles at my name, sir—Sergeant Bumper, of the Riders, begad!"

"Ah," said Dick, "'tis well for him he does not know such a firebrand is on his track. You are sure you will know him when you meet with him?"

He eyed the big, swaggering, thick-necked Rider with a gentle smile.

"Know him, sir?" laughed the sergeant. "Ay, and a sorry day 'twill be for him! You remarked that his description fitted you. Have no fear. I see a dozen points of difference. You are a much finer figure of a man than this knave Forrester."

The sergeant led his men out of the room, and soon his hoarse voice was heard in the courtyard, ordering them to mount. The horses rattled away into the night, and Dr. Trelawney was left alone with the boys.

"Gadzooks! I wonder there are any highwaymen left in the country," murmured Dick, "with such a bloodhound to run them down."

"Mayhap," said Dr. Trelawney with a smile, "if words would catch them, they would soon be all in gaol. He may indeed capture Richard Forrester, but I do not think it likely, for I have no great opinion of yonder sergeant. He is a braggart, and I have heard, too, fond of extorting money from poor folk, who dare not refuse him. Now this Richard Forrester is doubtless a most dangerous blade, and he deserves the gibbet, to which he is sure to come, yet I have heard he is of gentle blood, and spares the poor man's purse to rob the rich."

"I believe you have been truly informed, sir," said Dick. "I have heard the same of him myself."

"It is strange," said the doctor, looking at him thoughtfully, "that the description should fit you so exactly. In fact, at the time it startled me, I confess."

"Little wonder, sir," said Dick; "yet you will perceive that brown hair and blue eyes are not uncommon, and that with those, any clean-shaven man, dressed in the present fashion, would very well fit the description, too."

"You are right, sir," rejoined the doctor heartily. "And now I trust you will honour me by staying to supper, and lodging here for the night."

"For the supper I am very willing," said Dick, "though after it I must ride on. Do I take it, then, that my young ward, Ralph, is installed as a pupil in your school?"

"Most certainly," said the doctor warmly, "and as I see he is weary with his ride, he shall sup at once and retire to rest. In the morning I will place him in his Form and dormitory."

The Feast!

"HI, Ralph lad! Come here, and give me the news."

Ralph, wandering by himself among the fir-plantations some way behind St. Anstell's School, saw the well-knit form of his brother sitting on Black Satan, a few yards away.

"I've been hanging round on the chance of finding you, this hour or more," said the young highwayman as Ralph came up. "'Twill be well for me to keep out of Dr. Trelawney's way, lest I make trouble for you. How are they using you?"

"Pretty well, thanks," replied Ralph, patting Black Satan's neck. "A change for the better, after Ducansby, I warrant you. I'm in the Second Form, I've had three fights, won two of them, and been mighty near flogged and expelled."

"A very pretty record for four days," said Dick, shaking his head. "I can see my young brother is blossoming into a rare credit to St. Anstell's. What was the little matter of the flogging and expulsion about, if one might ask?"

"Oh, I started a fox-hunt—they're a lively set of fellows here, if you give 'em a lead—the fox ran to earth in the mathematics master's room, and hit his breeches! And you—what sport, Dick? How do the roads yield about here?"

"Very fair," said the young highwayman. "I met Turpin at the cross-roads; he's gone south. I stopped a gambling-sharp on the York road and eased him of his winnings, half of which I gave back to the pigeon the knave had plucked. The other half I kept, as a warning to the pigeon to avoid hawks."

"I wish I'd been there!"

"No, no, lad! You stay here, and gain all the education you can. I've use for you presently. I'll come and see you pretty often. Are your schoolmates to be trusted?"

"True as steel, most of them, I think," said Ralph. "The masters are good fellows, too, save old Borley, who is always caning me when he gets an excuse—since the fox-hunt."

"A little flogging is good for young ribs like you," grinned Dick. "But see," he added more seriously, "I'm not going to have you ill-treated, youngster. The man who trys it will have to reckon with me—and these." He tapped the butts of his silver-mounted pistols. "And now I must be jogging, Ralph. How are you off for pocket-money? Funds low, eh? Here's five guineas, old son."

Away cantered the young highwayman, with a wave of his hand. Ralph watched him out of sight with envious eyes, pocketed the five gold coins, and scuttled back to the school.

"Here, Morton—Conyers—Vance!" he cried to his cronies, as the First and Second Form boys crowded round him in the long class-room, "I'm in funds, and we'll have the biggest blow-out on record! Everybody's welcome! Loosen your belts, lads!"

(Exciting developments in next Wednesday's absorbing instalment of this grand serial.)

VENGEANCE TRAIL!

(Continued from page 40.)

loomed up, he hit it mightily and it vanished. There were more shots and a scream of pain, and someone else grabbed him and they rolled over with Peter ripping out steam-hammer punches.

Suddenly, in the midst of the turmoil, he heard Red shouting in his ear:

"Stick it, Pete. I'm with yuh!"

A tremendous wallop in the face made his senses reel, but he hung on grimly. Something swished past his head, finishing with a dull thud. A tremor ran through the body of the man in his arms, making him writhe and stiffen desperately. Came the thump of another blow, and this time the bandit collapsed in a heap. Peter Graham pitched helplessly across the limp body. Everything went dark—

He sat up after a long blank interval and blinked owlshly around. By the light of two lanterns, a little group of men, with the grinning Red in their midst, were surveying him gravely; while at their feet lay the still forms of two others.

The sight of these it was that enabled Peter to collect his scattered wits. He staggered to his feet.

"Oh. We—we captured the bandits, then?" he muttered.

A man who carried a sturdy shot-gun

in one hand, stepped forward, gripping Peter's shoulder.

"Listen, son; yuh dropped out o' the clouds on tuh the heads of two o' the worst bad-men in California. One of 'em's got a busted jaw, t'other yuh've bashed so's his own mother won't know him. And after yore pard had hit him twice with a gun barrel, yuh went tuh sleep on him. Ye-es!" he drawled quietly. "On the whole, I reckon yuh've captured the bandits, as you say. Shake!"

One by one, the men grabbed Peter's hand. Then it was that the wily Red struck in.

"Say, we're on tramp!" he suggested.

"Kin we ride in the train now, O. K.?"

"Kin yuh ride!" bellowed the train guard.

"Boy, yuh kin drive the darn thing if yuh wants to. Get aboard!"

Ten minutes later the train got under weigh; went roaring out of the dark ravine and deeper into the mountains.

But Peter didn't know it. With Red by his side, he was deep down in fathomless slumber amid the straw of a closed and empty box-car. And his dreams, as he rolled along Vengeance Trail, were of Mexico—and Manuel Garcia.

THE END.

(Peter and Red are hot on the trail in next week's yarn, lads. Full of excitement and thrills.)

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