

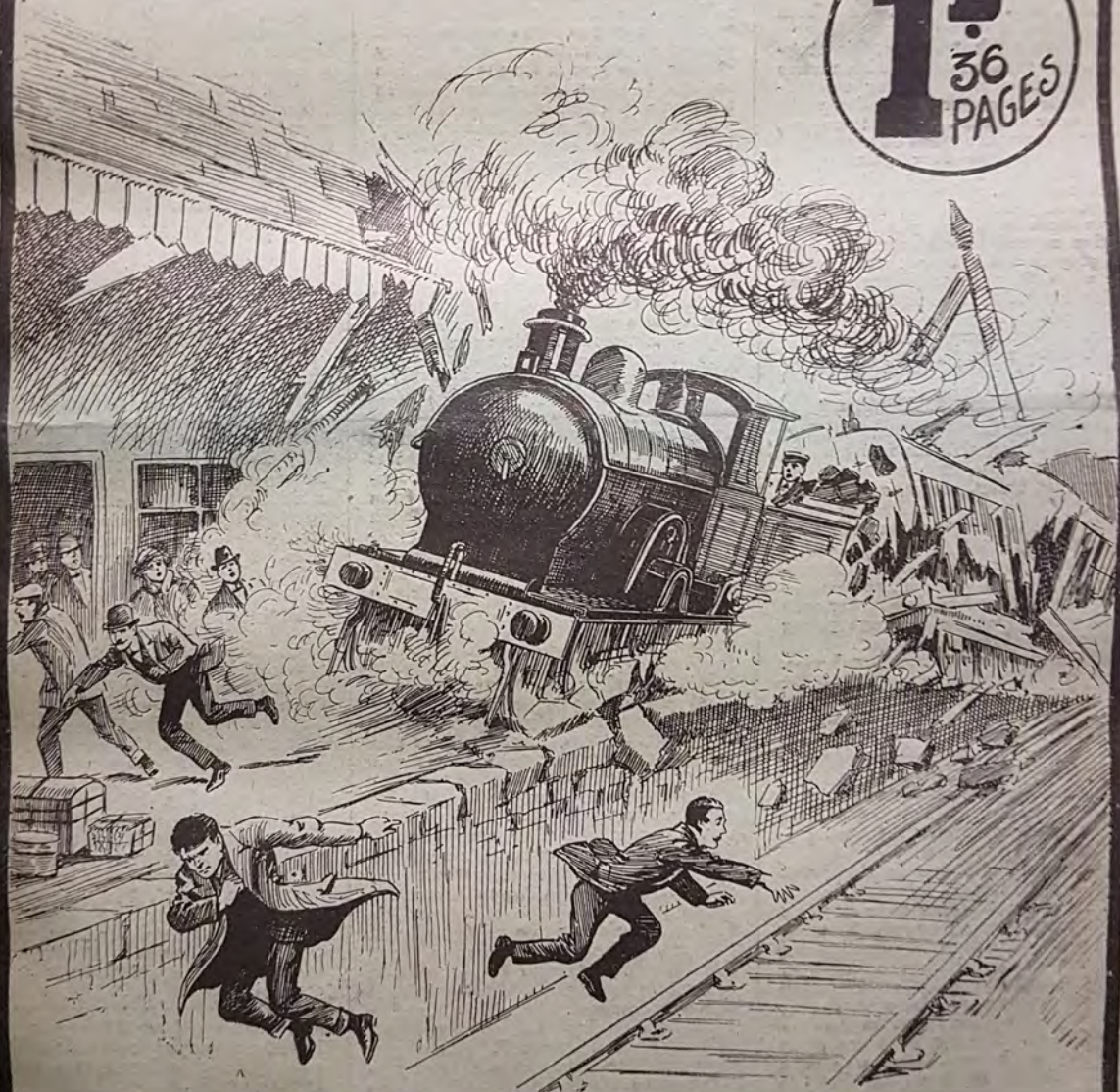
BOXING, DETECTIVE, SCHOOL, RAILWAY. EVERY TYPE OF INTERESTING STORY TO BE FOUND INSIDE.

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The Dreadnought

Week Ending Jan. 18th 1913

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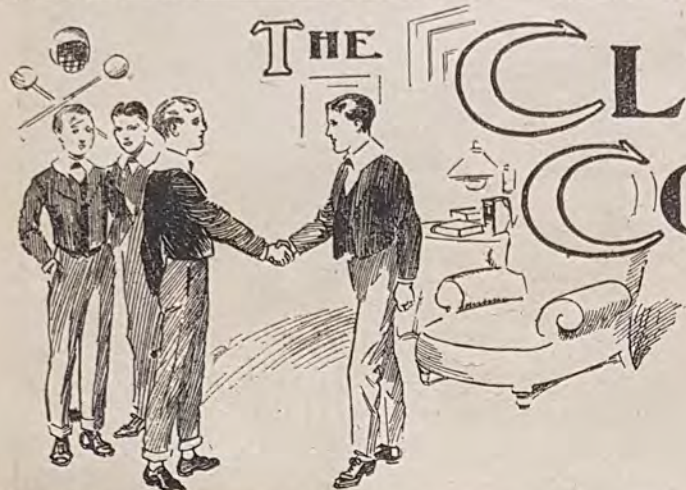


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THIS WEEK'S STORY: THE FOURTH-FORM VOTE-CATCHERS.

A Startling Announcement.

"Hallo! What's on?" Pankhurst, of the Fourth, asked the question as he came out of the Fourth Form-room at Cliveden College, and observed the crowd of juniors gathered before the school notice-board in the hall.

The crowd was large, and was growing larger every moment. The fellows were craning over one another's shoulders to read, so it was evident that there was an announcement of unusual interest posted on the board.

"Something a bit unusual," said Price, Pankhurst's inseparable chum. "Let's go and have a look, anyway."

"Come on," said Pankhurst with a slight wrinkle appearing on his brow. "I shouldn't wonder if it's something about the election, with those kids in No. 4 at the bottom of it."

Pankhurst and Price pushed their way towards the notice-board. It was not easy to get near, through the crowd, but Pankhurst and Price went at it shoulder to shoulder, and by a judicious and forcible use of the elbows, cleared a way. There were indignant protests on all sides, but that did not trouble the serenity of Pankhurst and Price.

Arrived before the notice-board, the chums of the Fourth had a good view of the announcement which had excited so much interest amongst the juniors.

"I thought so," growled Pankhurst, reading the signatures at the bottom of the notice first. "Dick Neville, Micky Flynn, and Lincoln G. Poindexter! I knew those kids were up to something."

"It's about the election, too," said Price.

"Yes; listen to what the cheeky young wasters have to say!"

Pankhurst read through the notice with frowning brows. It was worded as follows:

"NOTICE!

"To All Whom It May Concern!

"Carrington, the late captain of the Fourth Form Football Club, having honoured the Shell by removing into it,

the post of captain of the F.F.F.C. is now vacant.

"An election will be held as usual to fill the vacant post, and the members of the F.F.F.C. have agreed that the said election shall take place on Saturday afternoon next.

"We, the undersigned, having the true interests of the Fourth Form, and the grand old game of football at heart, desire that a captain shall be elected who can be relied upon to carry on all the great traditions of the Fourth Form at Cliveden.

"For this reason Richard Neville, Esq., of No. 4 Study, has kindly come forward, in response to very pressing invitations, as a candidate for the post.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth Form are invited to vote for Richard Neville, Esq., and reform. They are advised to be careful how they give their votes to a certain sandy-mopped individual who has had the unparalleled cheek to come forward as a candidate.

"A meeting of the electors will be held in the Fourth Form-room at 6.30, when the claims of the People's Candidate will be explained to the enlightened electorate. Signed,

"DICK NEVILLE,

"MICKY FLYNN,

"LINCOLN G. POINDEXTER."

"My hat!" said Price. "What cheek! Fancy Dick Neville having the cheek to put up for football captain! I knew he was a cheeky kid, but I hardly thought he'd go as far as that!"

"Oh, he was bound to," grinned Pankhurst. "When I put in my name, it was certain that No. 4 Study wouldn't let it be a walk-over for me."

"Of course, he's got no chance."

"Absolutely none."

"He'll only make himself look an ass."

"A perfectly awful ass."

These remarks were made in loud tones, for the benefit of the juniors standing round. Pankhurst had put in his name as candidate for the vacant post, and, till now, no rival had appeared in the field. As every member

of the Fourth Form Football Club was allowed a vote at the election, and the football club included nearly all the Fourth, the question was one of general interest to the Fourth.

"A meeting of electors, eh?" said Pankhurst, with a sniff. "Nonsense! Will go, of course."

"Won't they?" said Jeffrey, of the Fourth. "Not half! I'm going."

"So am I."

"And I!" "And I!" "And I!"

"What rot!" said Pankhurst. "Dick Neville simply hasn't an earthly. Perhaps one may as well hear what he's got to say. We'll go, Price, and see fair play. Perhaps we ought to be on the scene, to keep him in order."

"Right!" said Price.

And the two walked away together, leaving the crowd of juniors still milling and discussing the notice on the board. It was generally agreed that the election would have been a walk-over for Pankhurst with any rival but Dick Neville. Dick was the only fellow in the Fourth who had a chance of wresting the captaincy from Pankhurst, and he had a good chance. He was as popular in the Form as a rival, and was considered to be quite as good a footballer, if not a bit better.

The fact that these two especial candidates had come forward gave the matter an additional interest in the eyes of the juniors. For there was long-standing rivalry between No. 4 Study and No. 10. Dick Neville, Micky Flynn, and Lincoln G. Poindexter of Chicago—known as the Combine—regarded themselves as the heads of the Fourth—a claim which was considered quite inadmissible by Pankhurst and Price, who had aspirations in the direction themselves. The feud between No. 4 and No. 10 added to the liveliness of life in the Fourth Form at Cliveden.

There was a wrinkle on Pankhurst's brow as he walked away with Price. "I might have expected this," he remarked. "In fact, I did expect it. I wouldn't say so before those kids. Price old man, but, as a matter of

THIS ISSUE IS GOOD: NEXT WEEK'S IS RIPPING [ED.]

fact, Dick Neville has quite as much chance of becoming captain as I have."

"Quite as much," said Price. "We shall have to do a lot of electioneering to carry the election," went on Pankhurst. "It's going to be hard work, but we've got to do it. If Neville got in, we should have no end of crowing from No. 4."

"No end," agreed Price. "And the first business is to get our backers together, and break up their meeting," said Pankhurst. "We'll make a fearful row and stop them from speaking, and make the whole thing a frost generally. That's the first move."

"Righto!" said Price.

A Stormy Meeting.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth Form Football Club!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I rise to address you—"

"Hear, hear!"

"On an important subject—"

"Hear, hear!"

The room was crowded. The meeting was a greater success, so far, than the chums of No. 4 Study had anticipated. Dick Neville, Micky Flynn, and Lincoln G. Poindexter, stood together on the raised dais, before which nearly the whole of the Fourth Form at Cliveden were assembled.

The Combine were in high spirits. Dick Neville, a fair-haired, well-built lad; Micky Flynn, a merry-faced Irish boy; and Lincoln G. Poindexter, a slim, keen, intelligent fellow from the States, were the Combine, and a splendid trio they made.

The notice put on the board in the hall had had complete effect. The Combine had hoped to draw about half the Form to the meeting—their own friends and sympathisers mainly—but they had, in fact, attracted nearly the whole. This meant that Pankhurst's supporters had come to hear what Dick had to say for himself, and such of them as had an open mind on the subject might be won over—so the Combine hoped.

Poindexter was a little uneasy as he saw Pankhurst and Price surrounded by their friends in a group. The two red-haired youths were looking very amiable and innocent, it is true, but the keen American scented mischief.

"On an important subject," said Dick Neville, looking round. "No less a subject than the impending election."

"Hear, hear!"

"And now I offer myself as candidate. I don't want to brag—"

"Turned over a new leaf?" inquired Pankhurst, in a friendly tone, as of one who simply wanted information.

"I don't want to brag," he went on firmly, "but common-sense and common truthfulness compel me to admit that I should make a better captain for the Fourth than any red-haired freak in Cliveden."

"Order!"

"No personalities!"

"I withdraw the expression," said Dick gracefully. "You all know to whom I refer, and that's enough. And—that's all I've got to say."

"Quite enough, too," remarked Price.

Lincoln G. Poindexter stepped forward.

"I guess I want to propose Dick Neville for the post of captain," he exclaimed, in his drawing voice. "I

can recommend him. He's the real white article, all wool, and a yard wide. I guess I know what I'm talking about, gentlemen. If you don't elect him, I guess you'll be a silly lot."

"Polite," said Price.

"I want to ask the speaker a question," exclaimed Pankhurst, pushing forward.

The American looked at him.

"You can fire away, Panky."

"Will you answer it?"

"Yes; if it's one I can answer."

"Oh, you can answer it all right! Does your candidate approve of tinned beef as an article of diet for footballers?"

A howl of laughter followed the question.

It was really a most ridiculous question, but any allusion to tinned beef was understood as a dig at the youth from Chicago, it being well known at Cliveden that Poindexter's "popper" had made his "pile" in the canning trade.

"Look here," exclaimed Poindexter wrathfully, "if you can't talk sense—"

"I demand an answer to my question," said Pankhurst. "You needn't try to wriggle out of it, Puntbuster! Does your candidate approve—"

"Ha, ha! Good old Tinned Beef!" howled the electorate.

"Does your candidate approve—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that interrupter will kindly come up here," shouted Poindexter, "I shall be very pleased to knock him into the middle of next week."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good old Tinned Beef!"

"I demand silence while I—"

"Yah!"

"I—"

"Yah! Who's going to vote for the Tinned Beef candidate?"

"Sure, and and it's fair play we want!" exclaimed Micky Flynn. "This is our meeting, you spalpeens, and if you can't keep quiet, just get outside."

"The blessed room doesn't belong to you!" retorted Pankhurst. "We've as much right here as you have, or rather more, as we represent the Form."

"You? You represent a budding lunatic asylum."

"Get out!" shouted Poindexter. "You've come here to interrupt. If you don't shut up or get out, you will be warned."

"My hat!" exclaimed Pankhurst. "Listen to the voice of authority! He thinks he's back in the tinned-beef factory, giving his orders about potting the horses."

The juniors yelled with laughter.

The trio on the dais consulted. Pankhurst and his friends were as numerous, at least, as the backers of Dick Neville, and it was impossible to put them out without a free fight. But to hold the meeting with them in the room was evidently quite as impossible.

"It's got to be did, I guess," declared Poindexter. "I say, kids, we're going to shove out that gang of roughs. Come on, shoulder to shoulder!"

"Bravo!"

"Rats!"

"Down with the Tinned-Beef candidate!"

The Combine made a rush at Pankhurst and Price. The group of Pankhurstites were driven towards the door; but they rallied, and a general melee ensued.

Dick Neville got Pankhurst's head in chancery, and Price, in return, paid the

same polite attention to Micky Flynn. Lincoln G. Poindexter, who was a good man with his fists, hit out right and left, and the Neville party backed him up strongly.

The interrupters were driven towards the door again. It looked as if they would be hurled pell-mell into the passage. But Pankhurst, tearing himself loose from Dick, shouted to his followers, and rallied them in the doorway, and there a desperate struggle took place. Although it was, in the main, a good-humoured tussle, a good many hard knocks were given and received. There was nothing "soft" about the juniors of Cliveden.

"Sock it into them!" shouted Poindexter. "Knock 'em down."

"Yah! Down with Dick Neville and Tinned Beef!" shouted Pankhurst.

But, with a great effort, the Combine and their party hurled the interrupters forth. At the same moment a furious prefect, attracted by the terrific noise, came along the passage with a cane, and the hurled-forth juniors went bumping into him.

"Look out!" exclaimed Price.

"It's Grahame!"

"You young rascals!" shouted Grahame, who had the reputation of being the worst-tempered prefect at Cliveden. "I'll teach you to make that fearful row! You little beasts!"

And he lashed right and left with the cane.

Pankhurst got a cut across the calves that made him jump, and Lincoln Poindexter received the next. Dick Neville and Price also came in for a share.

"Here, steady on with that cane!" shouted Dick. "Keep off the grass, Grahame, or you will get hurt!"

That remark from a junior was quite enough to give Grahame's anger the finishing touch. He turned upon Dick, lashing savagely.

"I guess that's going to stop," said Poindexter. And he took a sudden hold of the prefect's collar, and jerked him away.

Grahame swung round on him, but Pankhurst put out his foot, and the senior sprawled over it, and went with a crash to the floor.

That was enough for the Cliveden juniors. Their dreaded enemy was down, and in a second the combatants, forgetting their enmity, were swarming over him.

"Pax, you kids!" shouted Poindexter. "Pax, old Panky! Let's look after this terror."

"Right-ho!" grinned Pankhurst.

"Sit on him!"

The juniors did sit on him.

They pinned the unfortunate prefect down by sheer weight, and Grahame puffed and gasped under them like a grampus.

"Get off his head, kids," said Neville; "we mustn't quite suffocate him. Grahame, old dear, how dare you come into the Fourth Form-room in such a bad temper!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Don't you know that the Fourth Form room is sacred territory?" demanded Dick severely. "Can you, a prefect, be so ignorant of one of the most important rules of the college?"

Grahame gurgled something indistinctly.

"Grahame, I insist upon a direct answer—yes or no? Were you aware that it is strictly forbidden for a Sixth-Former, or any other unimportant person, to set foot in the Fourth Form room without humbly asking permission?"



(Continued.)

"You—you young hound! I'll—"
 "That is no answer. You are evidently intentionally guilty of disrespect towards the most important Form in Cliveden College. You are sentenced to die the death."

"You—you—you— Let me get up, or I'll be the death of you!"

"Gentlemen of the Fourth Form, it is our painful duty to give a lesson to Grahame of the Sixth," said Dick Neville. "We are sorry, but we must not neglect our duty towards the Upper Forms."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young hound—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grahame must, therefore, be taught to respect the privileges of the Fourth. Pankhurst, old chap, hand over that inkpot. I have known a gentle trickle of ink down a fellow's back to have a wonderful effect on him. I am going to try it on Grahame."

Grahame wriggled spasmodically.

"You dare! You villains! You young villains!"

"Buck up with that inkpot, Panky!"

"Here you are, Neville."

Dick took the inkpot. Whether he intended to carry out his playful threat or not the prefect did not know; but he knew Dick Neville had nerve enough for anything. He struggled violently, and jolted Dick, with the result that half the contents of the inkpot jerked

out and splashed over the face of the prostrate senior.

Grahame gave a fendish yell.

"Ow! O-O-O-Oh! Yow—ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That was clumsy of you, Grahame. Hold him, kids!"

"We've got him!" panted Micky Flynn. "Sure, the beast struggles like a wild elephant."

"Keep still, Grahame! It is my painful duty as captain of the Fourth—"

"Rats! Rats! More rats!"

"Did you say 'rats' to me, Pankhurst?"

"Yes, I said 'rats' to you. And I say 'rats' again," said Pankhurst, with emphasis.

"Are you looking for a thick ear?"

"Yes, if you can give me one."

"I'll jolly soon do that!"

"Come on and do it, then!"

The rivals were locked in fast embrace the next moment. Grahame made a desperate effort, and this time he was able to get loose. He sprang up and rushed to the door.

"He's going!" yelled Poindexter.

Dick and Pankhurst separated at once, remembering themselves; but Grahame was gone. He streaked down the passage as the juniors rushed to the door.

"My hat!" gasped Dick. "We had better go, too, kids, before he comes back with reinforcements. I'm afraid we forgot that the rotter was a prefect."

The advice was too good to be neglected.

The meeting was abandoned; the fight postponed. The Fourth-Formers decamped with haste, and the room was left empty.

But Grahame did not return. The ridiculous side of the matter occurred

to him, and he shrank from allowing his Form-fellows to know how he had been handled by a set of juniors. He allowed the matter to drop rather than cut a ridiculous figure in the eyes of the Sixth—much to the relief of the Fourth-Formers.

Pankhurst Has a Plan.

Pankhurst and Price sat in No. 1 Study a couple of evenings after the uproarious meeting in the Form-room, busy with pencil and paper.

There was a thoughtful frown upon the manly brow of Pankhurst, and Price wore a worried look.

They were making calculations. The election-day was drawing near, and both parties had been canvassing for votes, and it was pretty certain that the election would be a close thing.

Pankhurst looked up from his paper and caught Price's eye as the latter sat chewing the stump of his pencil.

"Well, how do you work it out?" he asked.

"I feel certain of sixteen," said Price.

Pankhurst nodded.

"Just the figure I make it. There are sixteen we can count on for certain; most of them have already promised their votes. But I know for a fact that eighteen have promised Dick Neville."

Price made a long face.

"That's bad."

"Oh, that's not conclusive, by a long chalk!" said Pankhurst confidently.

"I think we shall pull it off yet."

"I don't see how. Have you got an idea?"

"Yes, and a jolly good, ripper one."

Price looked puzzled.

"Well, I don't see it," he remarked.

"There are thirty-eight members of the Fourth Form Football Club, and they have got one vote each. Sixteen are solid for you, and eighteen for Neville. That leaves two, besides the two candidates themselves. The other two, even if they voted for you, would only make a tie in the voting."

"That's so."

"But, as a matter of fact," went on Price, "they're more likely to vote for Neville. They're King and Medway, and King is a greedy beast, and would vote for anyone who stood him a feed on election day."

But Medway—

"He won't vote for you, Panky, because you said some rude thing about his concertina," said Price, shaking his head. "You know he used to come into No. 11 when it was empty and practice, and you know we had to drive him out."

Pankhurst nodded gloomily.

"Yes. If I had foreseen this election, I might have put up with a beastly concertina," he remarked. "He's never played it to Neville. Neville won't have hurt his feelings. Do you know, Price, I actually heard the Yankee saying to Medway yesterday that he liked music, and the concertina more than any other instrument?"

"The double-dyed prevaricator!" "I'm afraid we must count in King and Medway on the tinned beef sale," said Pankhurst regretfully. "I've been King three times this week, but I won't definitely promise, and I know for a fact that Poindexter has been standing him things in the tuckshop four or five times. There's no telling



BRIBERY IN THE TUCKSHOP! King Enjoys a feed at Poindexter's expense.

"The Man of Many Disguises," another Story of Sexton Blake versus Plummer, starts next week.

how he'll vote—according to the last feed, I expect."

"Very likely. That will make twenty against your sixteen, if they both vote for Neville," said Price, with a shake of his head, and at the best it can only be a tie, and then the captain of the school will give a casting vote."

"Didn't I tell you I had an idea?" grinned Pankhurst. "A really new, ripping, gilt-edged, copper-bottomed idea, that will knock the opposing party into the middle of next week."

"Blessed if I can guess what it is!" said Price.

"Listen to me, then, while I explain. There are thirty-eight members of the Fourth Form Football Club; but these members do not include the whole of the Fourth Form. The Form itself numbers forty-three kids."

"I know that," said Price; "but the odd five are no good, as only members of the Form Football Club are allowed to vote for the club captain."

Pankhurst grinned the grin of superior sagacity.

"My dear chap, you don't catch on. Suppose these five members of the honourable Fourth Form, who do not at present belong to the club, were to join?"

Price started.

"But they won't."

"Why won't they?"

"Why, for lots of reasons. Hill and Simpson are two lazy wasters, who don't believe in playing football at all. Hobbs is too poor to pay his subscription. Gatty and Greene are two indoor hobbyists, and don't take any interest in the game, or in anything but stamps and photography."

"I know all that, kid; but though they won't join the club of their own accord, I think it very likely that they might be persuaded to."

"How are you going to persuade them?"

"Look here! Suppose there were any fellows too stupid or too lazy to play such a grand game as football, wouldn't it be a kindly action to yank them into a football club, somehow or other?"

"Of course it would."

"Even if one had to pay their subscriptions oneself?"

"My hat!"

"You see the wheeze? Hobbs is too poor to pay his whack, but he'd tumble over himself to get into the club if a friend paid it for him. The other four would be glad enough to be in the club, if only for the look of the thing; but as they don't play they regard it as a waste of money, and they haven't much tin. They would come in fast enough if they could get in on the nod—if it were put delicately, of course."

"Very likely."

"If I turn on my persuasive eloquence and pay the subscriptions, they'll join right enough," said Pankhurst confidently. "And when they've joined, they have votes like the rest. They would be bound to vote for me, out of common decency. Of course, I shouldn't ask them to. I should ride the high horse, and work off the high-minded, disinterested, good little Georgie wheeze. I should beg of them to vote as a matter of duty, and not to consider me at all. But if they didn't consider me they would be howling rotters all the same, and I fancy I could count upon them."

"It's a splendid wheeze, Panky, but—but—"

"But what? Don't you think it will work?"



MORE BRIBERY! Neville and Flynn visit the musician to praise and listen to his concertina-playing.

"Yes; but—but wouldn't it come under the head of—of bribery?"

Pankhurst nodded thoughtfully.

"I've thought about that," he replied. "Of course, I couldn't touch anything that had the least suspicion of bribery about it."

"Of course not," agreed Price solemnly.

"But this isn't, you see. It's a meritorious action to pay the football subscriptions for a chap who is hard up; and if I can make a new player of a chap who doesn't play now, it will be a jolly big feather in my cap."

"That's true enough."

"So the question comes to this. Am I to avoid doing a good work because I should benefit by it?" said Pankhurst.

"Well, that's a jolly good way of putting it," said Price. "Besides, those bounders in No. 4 are pretty certain to be up to some game, if we are not."

"That's certain. I intend always to play the game, but it's no good neglecting chances. I really think the wheeze is all right. And now let's go and see about getting it in working order. We shall have to keep it awfully dark, so that the tinned beef party won't smell a rat."

"What-ho!" said Price.

And Pankhurst and Price left the study on business.

Electioneering.

"Eighteen!" said Poindexter, running his eye over a list of names on a paper in his hand, as he stood with his chums in the quadrangle. "We've got other promises, kids."

"Good!" said Micky Flynn. "Sure, and Pankhurst can't possibly get more

than that, if all the rest of the club vote for him."

Dick Neville looked thoughtful.

"But if he got the two others, and tied, it would be rotten," he remarked. "According to custom here, Trevalyan, the captain of Cliveden, would give the casting vote to decide the question, and whichever one he decided for it would be unsatisfactory. And, as a matter of fact, as there isn't much to choose between Panky and me, he would probably decide in favour of Panky, because he's been a term longer at Cliveden than I have."

"That would be rotten!" Poindexter remarked. "We must make sure of King and Medway, kids. I know how to do it; and though it means a lot of suffering, it can be done."

"As for King, he'll vote for me, if he's filled up with free tommy," said Dick thoughtfully. "That sounds like bribery, but I know for a fact that Pankhurst has been feeding him. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

"Exactly! That's my idea. I've got heaps of tin, and I'll take King to the tuckshop and feed him up to the chin," said Poindexter. "If I keep it going till he can't cram in another cream-puff, I believe I shall get his promise."

"That's right. But what about Medway? He can't be fed into voting."

"No; but there's another way. You know that horrible concertina of his?"

Dick shuddered.

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, he fell out with Pankhurst over that at one time, so that's a point in our favour. He used to practise in the study next to Panky's, when it was empty, I hear, and he nearly got slain."

"Serve him right."

Do not miss this really splendid treat—Order in advance and avoid possible disappointment.



(Continued.)

"True enough, I guess; but we mustn't say so—not till after he's voted, at all events," grinned Poindexter. "I've thought of a way of getting round the beast. You know he's quarrelled with his study-mates, because they won't stand the concertina. He can't find anybody in the Form to stand it. He's in search of a kindred spirit—someone with a soul for music of that sort. If he found 'em, he'd love 'em."

"And kill 'em," said Dick, "with his concertina."

"Yes, perhaps, if he were given rope enough. But the election is on Saturday, and this is Thursday. You wouldn't have to bear it long."

"I! What do you mean?"

"I mean that while I'm feeding up King at the tuckshop, you two have got to ask Medway to come and give you a selection on the concertina in No. 4 Study," said Poindexter coolly.

"Never—oh, never!"

"Sure, and we can't," pleaded Micky Flynn. "Ask anything else, Punt-pusher, darlint—"

"Nothing else will do," said Poindexter firmly. "I'm running this thing to help you, Dick, and you've got to help yourself. Let Medway torture you for an hour, and he's on your side through thick and thin. After all, it's not much to stand."

"Isn't it? You stand it, then, while I feed up King."

"Oh, that's rot, I guess! It's my idea, and I ought to be allowed to work it out as I think best. Fair's fair."

"I say, I've forgotten something! I must be off!" murmured Micky Flynn.

Poindexter caught him by the arm and stopped him.

"No, you mustn't," he said coolly.

"But it's important."

"It won't wash, kid; it's too thin," said Poindexter, shaking his head.

"You're not going to get out of it like that. I tell you the election depends upon it. If we get King and Medway, Pankhurst is done brown. It's worth it."

Dick sighed.

"I—I suppose so," he murmured.

"But it's hard—hard! I'm so young to die! Never mind, I'll stick it. Come on, Micky; let's get it over."

"But, I say—"

"Nuff said. Let's get the awful experience over!"

Poindexter grinned as Dick and Micky marched off in search of Medway, looking as if they were going to execution.

"I guess we shall pull off this election," murmured the cute youth from Chicago. "Now to find King, and feed him up to the promising point."

He soon found King; he knew where to look for him. The bright youth was hanging round the tuckshop, as usual. The shop was kept, within the walls of Cliveden, by Dame Bunter, the wife of the school porter. King was the greediest and most impetuous boy in Cliveden. He looked up eagerly as the American strolled into the tuckshop, and knocked on the counter for Dame Bunter.

"Hallo, Poindexter!" he said affably. "Nice tarts, ain't they?"

"Have some?" asked Poindexter hospitably.

"You going to treat?"

"Yes, if you like. Take as many as you want."

King needed no second invitation. He wired into the tarts with a will that showed what an aching void he had to fill. Poindexter watched him curiously. The youth from Chicago had plenty of pocket-money, and he laid a half-sovereign on the counter for Dame Bunter to change.

"Like 'em?" he asked.

"Rather!" said King, with his mouth full.

"Have some more? By the way, King, how are you going to vote on Saturday?"

"Haven't decided," said King, starting on a fresh pile of tarts.

"Try these cheese-cakes. Those puffs are nice, too. By the way, King—don't spare the cheese-cakes—you know what ripping cakes you get at the village tuckshop?"

"Yes, rather!"

King was on the cheese-cakes now.

"Would you like to come down there, after the election, and have some? I'm thinking of taking a few fellows down for a feed, and I should like you to come."

"Thanks, awfully! I'll come, with pleasure," said King cordially.

"That is to say, if we win the election," said Poindexter casually. "Otherwise, I sha'n't feel cheerful enough for a feed."

"Oh!" said King.

"Try some of those cream-puffs; you'll like them. I say, King, I wish you'd give me your promise to vote for Dick Neville on Saturday."

"I'm thinking about it."

"Have some ginger-pop. It will be a ripping feed after the election, if we win; and I know you would enjoy it. As a matter of fact, I think the election depends upon your vote now, as I'm sure of Medway."

"Are you sure of him?"

"Well, nearly. Anyway, your vote will make us safe. What do you say?"

"You'll have the feed if you win, you say?"

"Yes, if Neville gets in as captain."

"I like Neville," said King. "I was thinking of voting for him all along. Can I have some of those jam-tarts?"

"As many as you like, old chap. I'm paying, Mrs. Bunter. You promise, then, King?"

"Ye-es."

"I can count on your vote for Neville—honour bright?"

"Honour bright."

"Thanks! I'll put it down." Poindexter wrote King's name down in his pocket-book. "Keep it up, kid; it's all down to my account. Take what you like."

It was a chance King was not slow to avail himself of. He was feeding in the most perfect state of enjoyment as Poindexter walked out of the tuckshop, with a satisfied smile upon his face.

"Phew!" muttered Poindexter. "I don't know whether that amounts to bribery and corruption; but that chap will vote on his tummy, anyway, and there's no other way of getting at him. He's a pig, but his vote will count with the rest. If those two chaps are as successful with Medway, I guess we're all hunky. I'll go and see. No, on second thoughts, I won't. The concertina may still be going."

And the youth from Chicago strolled away towards the football-field.

"A Musical Martyrdom."

Squeak!—whoooo—squeak!

Dick Neville stopped short, and groaned.

"He's at it!"

Weird and wonderful sounds proceeding from No. 3 Study as the members of the Combine drew near it in their search for Medway.

"It's the Sandish concertina!"

Dick. "He's at it. I wonder the chaps stand it. But we're in the now. Come on!"

"Sure, and the thing ought to be smashed!"

"So ought the player; but we've to stick it out," said Dick gloomily.

Mustering up all their gloomy charms of the Fourth entered the study, a fat youth with a red face, was sitting on a corner of a table working away at a cheap concertina.

"I say, Medway—" began Dick.

The musician made him a sign to be silent. His eyes had a far-away look, and he was grinding away for all his worth.

"I say," said Dick. "Enough is it important?"

"Don't interrupt me," said Medway.

"I'm practising on my concertina, you know, and those beasts I shall study with will be in soon, and they shall have to chuck it."

"Don't they like it?" asked Dick innocently.

"They're jealous," explained Medway.

"Ah, that accounts for it! I never heard the 'Washington' played like that before," said Dick.

"It isn't the 'Washington' but it's the 'Fest March' from 'The Hanser'!" snapped Medway.

Dick blushed.

"Sorry. I—I didn't recognise the moment. Now I come to think it, of course, it is the—the—as you I want to ask you a favour, old man."

Medway looked at him suspiciously.

"What is it, Neville?"

"Will you come into our study and play something?" asked Dick.

often felt inclined to ask you—to that beastly concertina!" he said under his breath.

Medway, who did not hear the part of the sentence, looked up with a pleased expression.

"You want me to come and play you?"

"Yes, if you'll be so kind," said Dick earnestly. "We can stand it—I mean we should like it awfully."

"Sure, and we've come specially to ask you," said Micky, truthfully enough.

"You'll come, Medway, won't you?"

"Certainly," said Medway, slipping off the table. "I should have to do it here in a few minutes. I'm going to find there's at least two fellows in the Fourth who know how to appreciate good music. I never thought you'd ask it, or I'd have offered."

"That's very kind of you, Medway. It's generous."

"Oh, I like to find appreciative listeners," said Medway graciously.

"Come along!"

"It's a great gift," said Dick. "They walked along to No. 4. How do you manage it, Medway? There are very few people play the concertina like you do."

"It's born in you," explained Medway. "Some fellows can play."

THE CLIVEN COMBINE

(Continued from previous page.)

some can't. That's it. A true musician is born, not made. Practice does a lot, though. I shouldn't be what I am now without a lot of practice."

"I suppose not," said Dick. "Here we are. I wish you had understood before how much we appreciated music, Medway. What lovely times we might have had—that is, if you were willing to take the trouble to play for us."

"No trouble at all. Now, what would you like? I can do the 'Lohengrin' prelude, you know. That's a ripping piece."

"Let's have that," said Dick, who had often heard it played by bands, and thought it might be endurable, even on Medway's concertina.

"Here you are, then!" Medway started. Weird were the sounds that proceeded from the German concertina. Dick and Micky listened with exemplary patience, but they failed to notice anything bearing the faintest resemblance to that great composition of Wagner's.

"I say, it takes you a long time to tune up!" Micky remarked.

Medway gave him a withering glance.

"I'm not tuning up," he said. "I'm playing."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!"

"Well, you are an ass, Micky!" said Dick reprovingly, as Medway started again. "I should think you know more about music than that. Anybody with half an ear could tell that Medway was playing the—the 'Lohengrin' prelude now."

Medway glared. "I'm not!" he snapped. "I've finished that. This is Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song.'"

"Oh!"

Micky broke into a chuckle. Dick glared at him. Medway was eyeing them both doubtfully. It is probable that he began to see through them at that moment. However, he did not often find willing victims, so he went on playing.

He gave them a wide selection—of music he had learned and music he had not learned. Both the juniors were musical, but that concertina was too terrible for words, and Medway's playing was more terrible than the concertina.

Fellows came and looked in curiously at the study door, and fled again with their fingers to their ears. Neighbours in near studies rapped on the walls, and shouted out expressions far from polite.

But Medway went grinding on, remorseless as the car of Juggernaut.

The school clock chimed out. The entertainment had lasted an hour. It seemed like a year to the unhappy canvassers for votes.

"I say, you're getting tired, Meddy!" said Dick, with the perspiration standing in beads on his brow. "We—we mustn't be selfish. We won't tire you out."

"Oh, I'm all right!" said Medway. "But you ought to have a rest."

"I don't want a rest, thanks! I'll give you a selection from Tschai-kowsky now."

"Oh, don't—I mean, I'm sure you're fagged."

"Do you want me to play, or don't you?"

"Oh, yes, of course; but—but—"

"Oh, I say, sure, and I forgot that appointment with Jeffreys!" gasped Micky, as the concertina started again. "I must catch him!"

And Micky incontinently bolted out of the study.

Medway went on. Whether he supposed that he was playing a tune or not, Dick Neville could not quite make out. Dick could discover nothing resembling one. It was a fearful, deafening din from a squeaky, toneless instrument of torture; and as Medway ground on, Dick began to feel that he would go light-headed if it didn't stop.

"Now I'll give you some more Wagner," said Medway.

Dick put up his hands involuntarily. "Oh, don't—don't!" he moaned.

"Eh—what?"

"I mean I'm sure you're tired, and—and I want to speak to Poindexter. I must be off now—I really must!"

Medway rose, and put his concertina under his arm, and bestowed a withering look upon the candidate for the captaincy of the Fourth Form.

"I'm going," he said. "You rotten humbug! You've got about as much ear for music as an owl. You don't know music from mathematics. Pankhurst is a fool about it, but not such a fool as you are, Dick Neville! By the way, I'm going to vote for Pankhurst. Good-bye!"

The musician marched off, and Dick sank gasping into a chair. A few minutes later Micky Flynn and Poindexter looked into the study.

"Well, how did it work?" asked Poindexter.

Dick groaned.

"It nearly worked me into my grave," he said; "and—and he's going to vote for Pankhurst."

"Ha, ha! Never mind. I've got King's promise, so we shall be nineteen to seventeen on Saturday, even if Medway votes with the enemy. We're safe!"

Startling News—The Combine Rises to the Occasion.

"I can't understand it!" said Dick Neville the following evening.

His American chum looked at him.

"Can't understand what?" asked Poindexter.

"Pankhurst and Price are going about looking as if they were certain of victory to-morrow!" said Dick, with a puzzled brow. "They seem to feel absolutely confident, and yet it's known to all the Form that I have nineteen backers, and Pankhurst has only seventeen."

"I've noticed that myself, and can't quite catch on to it," Poindexter said, with a nod. "It looks as if they had a secret card up their sleeve. Yet I don't see how that can possibly be the case, for we've canvassed the whole of the Form, and we know perfectly well how the voting is going to-morrow afternoon. It seems to be a foregone conclusion that you will be captain of the club, yet Pankhurst—"

"Yet Pankhurst is swaggering about as if he were already captain."

"Exactly! I can't catch on."

The door of No. 4 study opened suddenly, and Micky Flynn came bolting in. He came in with such a rush that he dashed right into the table, and sent it flying, and, reeling back from the shock, fell upon Poindexter's lap.

"Arrah!" he gasped. "The basties!"

Dick ran to the door, thinking for the moment that Pankhurst and Price were on the warpath; but the passage was empty. He closed the door, and turned towards Micky.

"What's the matter, you wild Irishman?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean by bolting into the room like that?"

Micky gasped for breath.

"Sure, and it's a discovery I've made! I know why Panky has been swaggering about. We've been taken in. We're done—done—done!"

Poindexter grasped him by the shoulder, and shook him.

"Explain, you pesky ass!" he exclaimed. "How are we done?"

"I've just found out. Look here. You know there were five members of the Fourth Form who didn't belong to the football club?"

"Yes—Hill, Simpson, Hobbs, Gatty, and Greene," said Dick, running over the names.

"That's the lot. Well, they've joined."

"What?"

"They've been in to Mr. Raikes, our respected Form-master, and paid in their subscriptions, and to-night they're full-blown members of the football club, and they vote to-morrow."

Poindexter jumped up.

"We shall have to see those merchants at once!" he exclaimed.

"This is a bit sudden, but there's still time for electioneering."

"Too late!"

"What do you mean?"

"As soon as I found out what the spalpeens had done, I smelled a rat. I said to meself that it was some hanky-panky, and so it was, begorra! The five rotters have all promised to vote for Panky!"

"What?" howled Dick and Poindexter together.

"It's a beastly fact," said Micky. "I have it from their own mouths; and, between you and me, I believe Panky has paid their subscriptions, though they didn't let on. They've joined mighty suddenly, and it's suspicious that they've all promised Panky their support."

"Waal, my Sunday tile!" ejaculated Poindexter. "I guess that's real smart."

"Sure, and it's a mean trick!"

"It's a jolly smart one, and there's no denying that we might have worked it if we had thought of it," said Dick candidly. "No good calling Panky names—he's done us."

"Has he?" exclaimed Poindexter, with a gleam in his eyes. "Perhaps not."

"I'm afraid he has. He has twenty-two votes now to our nineteen. We're diddled and done!"

Poindexter's square, determined chin seemed to grow squarer.

"We're not done," he said, with emphasis. "The Combine is not going to be done in by a rotten firm like Pankhurst and Price. Not much. We're going to settle with those five members. Of course, it wouldn't be cricket to keep an ordinary voter away from the poll; but those five chaps who have been dragged in at the last moment to swamp us—well, I guess all's fair in war, gents. We're going to deal with that quintette, I guess."

Dick's eyes flashed as he caught the American's meaning.

"Can it be fixed?"

(Continued on page 33.)

NEXT WEEK'S NUMBER IS CRAMMED WITH GOOD THINGS

CLIVEDEN COMBINE.

(Continued from page 11.)

"It's going to be fixed, I guess," said the American coolly. "The Combine has got to come out on top, and that's the only way."

"Sure, and it's an illigant plan intirely!" exclaimed Micky, whose English always became more Irish when he was excited. "We'll give the bastes the kybosh somehow, darlings!"

Poindexter knitted his brows thoughtfully. He did some hard thinking, and the chums, who had learned to rely upon the American's cute intelligence, watched him in silence. If there was a way, Lincoln G. Poindexter was pretty certain to find it.

"I've got it!" exclaimed Poindexter suddenly. "The election is at three, in the Fourth Form-room. It won't take very long, and when it's once over, the result is safe; nobody can kick afterwards. Besides, Pankhurst and Price are not the fellows to whine if they're licked at their own game. If we can keep these five away for half an hour we're safe. You know the box-room on the top floor, which is hardly ever used now? Chaps might be locked up there, and nobody would hear them if they yelled their loudest for hours, on a Saturday afternoon, when the studies are empty. That's the wheeze."

"But, begorra, how?"

"We've got to manage it. We'll take some of our fellows into the game—some we can rely on—and before the election comes off those five outsiders will get bunked into the box-room. I've no doubt that we shall be able to get some of them there with a yarn; but if not, we'll carry them off by force. We can do it, for Pankhurst certainly won't be on the look-out for anything of that kind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's the last card," said Poindexter, "but I calculate it will prove a trump. You're going to be captain of the Fourth Form Football Club, Dick, I guess."

The Election, and How it Went.

"Order!"

"Silence!"

The hands of the clock in the Fourth Form class-room were pointing to nearly three o'clock. The room was crowded with juniors, talking excitedly. There was a ceaseless buzz in the room, and Pankhurst called for order in vain. "Gentlemen of the Fourth Form, it is time for the election!" exclaimed Pankhurst.

"Hear, hear!"

"We are all met together—"

"No, we're not!" shouted a voice.

"Neville isn't here."

"Nor Poindexter! Nor Flynn!"

"That's their look-out!" said Pankhurst. "Every member of the Fourth Form Football Club knew perfectly well that the election was for three o'clock, and if they're not here to vote, they can stay away."

"I say, some of our men aren't here yet!" whispered Price. "I can't see Gatty or Greene—no, nor any of the new members of the club."

"The asses!" growled Pankhurst. "I told 'em plainly to be early. But they'll come in when the school clock strikes. They can't fail to hear that."

"Hallo, here are the Combine!"

Poindexter came in with Dick and Micky. The three members of the Combine were looking extremely dusty and dishevelled. Dick's collar hung by one end, Poindexter's jacket was torn, and Micky had a stream of red running from the corner of his mouth. Pankhurst stared at the Combine curiously.

"Hallo, been in the wars?" he asked.

"Just a little rough and tumble," said Dick cheerfully. "We're all right."

"And on time, I guess," said Poindexter.

"You're in time, Pointplunger!" said Pankhurst. "Here's the rest!"

Several of Dick's backers followed the Combine into the room. The whole of the Fourth Form Football Club's original membership were there, but the five latest recruits were still absent. Dick Neville closed the door.

"Here, hold on!" said Pankhurst, looking rather uneasy. "There's some more to come!"

Boom!

It was the clock in the school tower striking. Two more strokes followed.

"Three o'clock!" exclaimed Dick. "The election begins now, whether we're all here or not!"

"But I say—" began Pankhurst.

"Why, you were saying so yourself just now!" exclaimed Jeffreys. "Let us get along."

"Start! Start!" howled the juniors. "The asses have forgotten all about it, I suppose," Pankhurst muttered to Price; "or else they didn't notice the time. We'll have the voting for Neville first, and hang it out as much as we can, and I expect they'll turn up."

Price nodded assent. Both were feeling uneasy, but it was impossible to go and look for the absentees now.

Poindexter stood up to propose his esteemed friend, Richard Neville, for captain of the Fourth Form Football Club, and Micky Flynn seconded. There was a cheer from their partisans.

Then Price proposed Pankhurst, and Medway seconded.

"Hands up for Pankhurst!" sang out a voice.

"No, no; Neville first!" exclaimed Pankhurst hastily.

Dick grinned. "He knew that his rival wanted to gain time, to give the rest of his supporters time to turn up. Dick did not mind."

"I guess we'll take the poll first, if you like," said Poindexter. "Hands up for Neville!"

"Hands up for the Tinned Beef candidate!" yelled a Pankhurst backer.

There was a loud laugh, but plenty of hands went up for Dick. Two Fifth Form boys, who had kindly consented to act as tellers, counted the hands, and compared notes to make sure.

"Nineteen!" was the announcement. A ringing cheer for Dick Neville followed. Then there was a call for hands up for Pankhurst. Pankhurst's face was a study.

There was still no sign of the five members. Where could they possibly be? Price, at a look from Pankhurst, rose and called for a pause.

"Some of the members of the club are delayed in coming," said Price.

"Will the opposite side consent to waiting a few minutes?"

"Certainly," said Dick. "We'll give you five minutes."

"Thanks," said Pankhurst. "I can't think where they are. Gatty may have gone out with his camera; but the others—Price, old chap, run and look in their studies!"

Price left the room. Every eye

watched the clock. The Combine gained a confident air, and Pankhurst smiled at Pankhurst. The Combine was puzzled and annoyed. The suspicion that Dick knew of this most mysterious occurrence he could not make out.

Price was back on the list in the five minutes. He came in.

"Haven't you seen them?"

"No. They're not in the gym, and I can't see them in the gym."

"I can't make it out. They're willing to postpone the election."

"Rats!" said the Combine voice.

"Well, go ahead," said Price, resignedly.

"Hands up for Pankhurst!" sang out the tellers.

There was little need for any but it was done as a matter of course. The result was, of course, before it was announced.

"Pankhurst, seventeen!"

Pankhurst's face was a study. He broke into a chuckle, and the members of the victorious Combine lowered suit. So did some of the lower.

"Neville, nineteen; Pankhurst, seventeen. Dick Neville is elected captain of the Fourth Form Football Club."

"Hurrah!"

The room rang with the cheer. "Hurrah for Neville!"

"Hurrah!"

Dick stood up to acknowledge the applause. "Gentlemen of the Fourth Form, I am proud of the honour you have done me (Hear, hear!). I shall always level best to deserve it, and I am a captain worthy of your confidence. (Hear, hear!) I am an esteemed friend, Pankhurst, and I hope he will shake hands with me. I hope there's no ill-will on either side. (Tremendous cheering.)"

Pankhurst came forward. He was not the fellow to bear malice, and when his "best-laid scheme" was astray. He took Dick's hand and shook it.

"I congratulate you, Neville," exclaimed. "May your shadow grow whiskers! Can I say more? And there was a cheer for Pankhurst."

The meeting broke up. The Combine went down the passage arm-in-arm, and new captain of the Fourth Form in the middle. Pankhurst hurried after and tapped Dick on the shoulder.

"You've done us," he exclaimed, "and now tell us where those five are! I expect you know."

Dick solemnly handed him a card.

Pankhurst stared at it.

"If you look in the disused room on the top floor," said Dick, "you may find them. They may be out turning a hair. You may find misled voters. They will probably say that they were carried there, and I shouldn't wonder."

way, look!"

Pankhurst's feelings were too much for words. He grinned a sickly grin, and departed. The Combine walked down the passage, cackling like geese.

"Ha, ha, ha! We've done 'em brown!"

"Sure, and they're beaten wide!"

"I guess that the Combine is above their weight," opined Lincoln G. Poindexter. And Dick and Price agreed with him.

(Another tale of Cliveden.)