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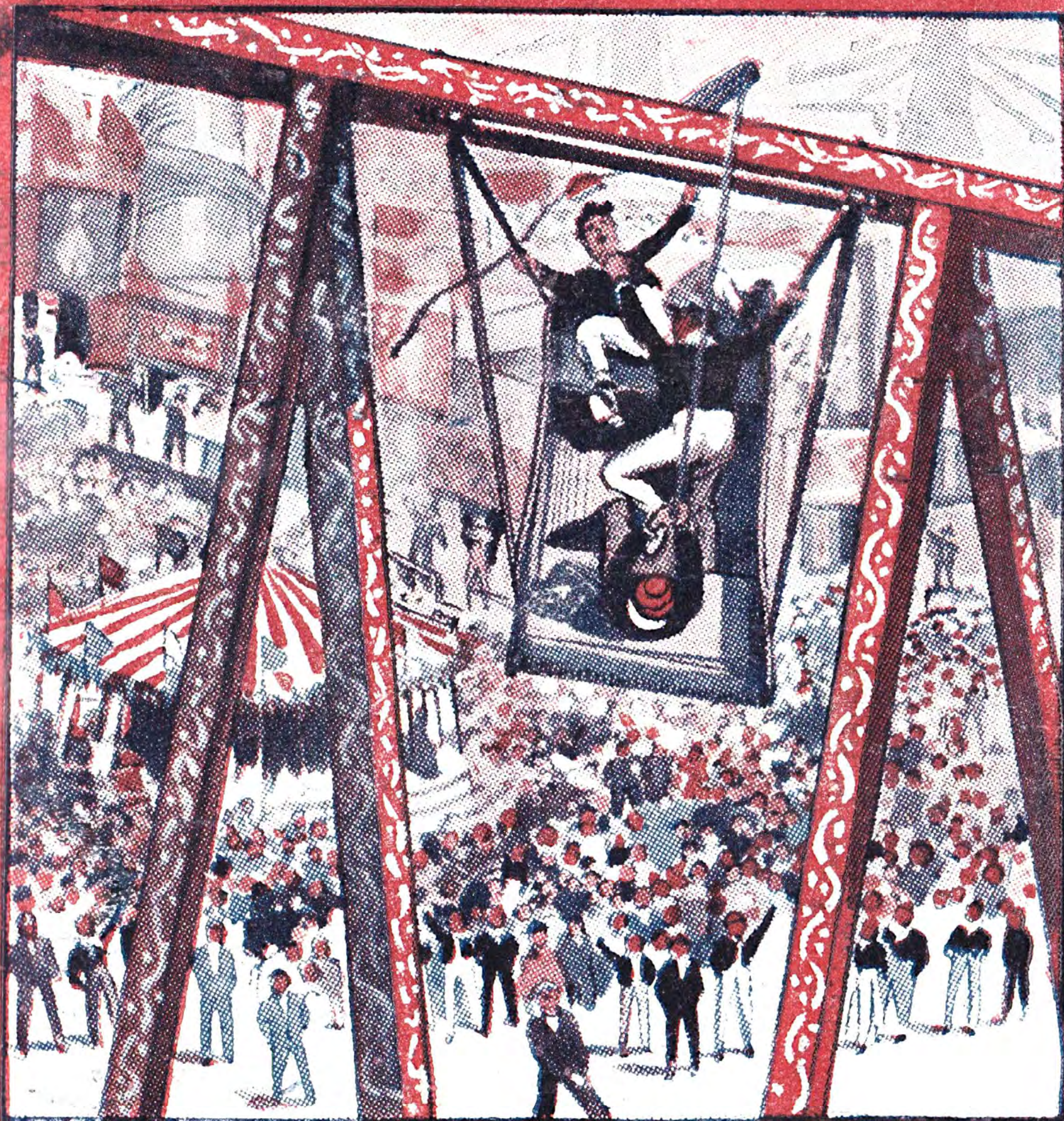
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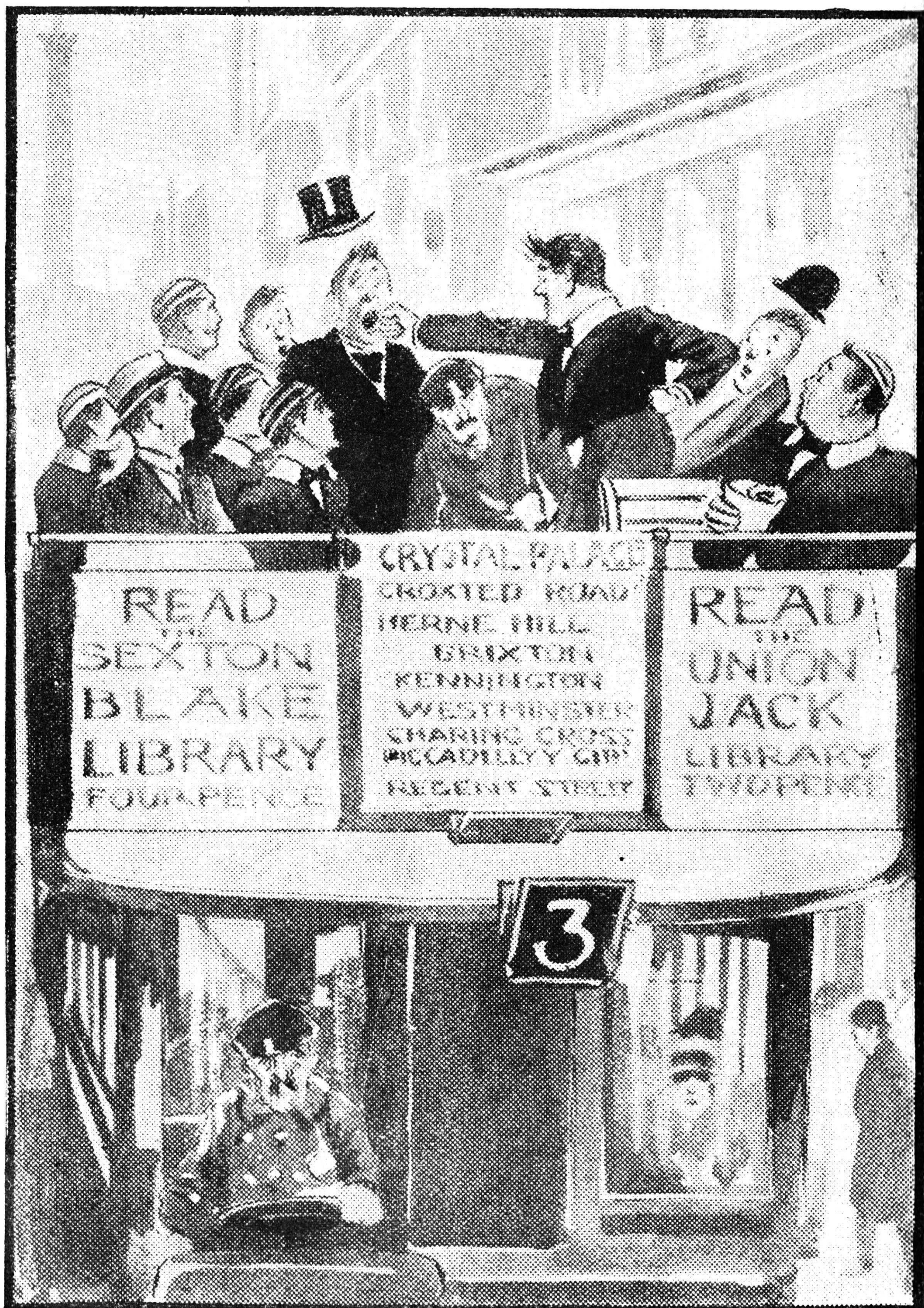
No. 359

EVERY WEDNESDAY

April 22, 1922



THE FUN OF THE FAIR!
A LAUGHABLE STORY OF FUN & ADVENTURE



Handforth's fist shot out, but the conductor dodged, and the blow fell upon an old gentleman sitting behind.

THE FUN OF THE FAIR

A LAUGHABLE STORY OF FUN
AND ADVENTURE.



An amusing story of the adventures of the famous St. Frank's Juniors, and how they spent Easter Monday at the Crystal Palace. Introduces NIPPER & CO., HANDFORTH & CO., ARCHIE, and many other well-known characters. By the Author of "The New Page Boy," "The Fooling of Archie," "The Mystery of Handforth's Pater," and many other Stirring Tales.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGH-
OUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I. EASTER MONDAY.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH sat up in bed and stretched himself. "Ripping morning!" he said, yawning. "The sun's shining like the very dickens! Jolly good! Looks like being a first-class Bank Holiday!"

I sat up, too.

"And we haven't any particular plans," I said. "Never mind—we can always find plenty to do in London. By the way, have you arranged to meet Church and McClure somewhere?"

"They're coming straight here—and they ought to be on hand soon after breakfast," replied Handforth. "The fatheads should have been here yesterday, really, but you know what they are!"

I hopped out of bed quickly, and commenced to dress. The sun was, indeed, shining with almost summer-like brilliance. It was Easter Monday, and the April day promised to be hot and fine.

It was quite early yet—only a little after eight—but it seemed a pity to stay in bed any longer. We were not at St. Frank's, but under the hospitable roof of Sir Edward Handforth, in the West End of London.

We had been staying there two or three days—ever since the dramatic affair when Sir Edward had been kidnapped by his financial enemies. That plot had been frustrated—mainly by Nelson Lee. But the one and only Archie Glenthorne and Sir Montie Tregellis-West and one or two other fellows



had lent valuable assistance. It was all over now, of course, but Sir Edward was still enormously grateful. And he had pressed us to remain until the Easter holidays were over. That's why there were six of us staying with Handforth's people—or five, to be more exact, for Handforth himself was really at home.

In addition to Sir Montie Tregellis-West and myself, there were three more—the Hon. Douglas Singleton, John Willard, and Archie Glenthorne. And we had spent quite an enjoyable time in the Handforth home.

"We can't afford to waste weather like this!" I said. "And we've got to do something extra special to-day, Handy."

"Hampstead Heath?" suggested Handforth.

"Oh, I don't know—a bit stale, isn't it?" asked Singleton. "We can think of something better than that, I'll bet."

There were three of us in the bedroom, and we were all dressing. As soon as I had completed my toilet, I passed out into the corridor, and went into the next apartment. This was another bedroom, and it contained a solitary sleeper—no less a person than Archie Glenthorne himself. The other fellows were in a room a bit further on.

Archie was sleeping peacefully. He looked happy and perfectly content as he lay there in bed, with his mouth open, and a kind of dreamy smile on his face. But I had no compunction. I seized him by the shoulder, and shook him.

"Wake up, old son!" I said briskly.

"Hallo! Hallo!" murmured Archie, opening his eyes. "I mean to say, so there you are, what? Morning, and all that! Considerable consignments of sunshine bursting through the old curtains."

"Yes, rather!" I said. "It's a ripping morning, Archie! Buck up and get dressed—we'll go out for a walk before breakfast, and find an appetite!"

Archie sat up, looking rather dismayed.

"Dash it all!" he protested. "Rather too steep, what? I mean, going out for walks before breakfast! Somewhat inclined to exhaust the old frame, and all that sort of rot! I'm frightfully afraid, old tulip, that there is distinctly nothing doing."

"Rats!" I said. "You've got to come. If you don't buck up and get dressed, we'll come in and shove your clothes on!"

"That would be frightful!" said Archie. "I mean to say, dashed undignified, and all the rest of it. A chappie can't allow things of that sort. Absolutely not! Kindly warble the time, Nipper."

"The time?" I said. "Why, it's about ten past eight!"

"Gadzooks!"

"A bit late, eh—"

"I mean to say, absolutely not!" said Archie. "Most fearfully early, old top! Quite ridic., in fact. I had a feeling, don't you know, that several hours of the old

dreamless were missing. Kindly retire, and return to the old bedside by about half-past ten."

"Not a bit like it, Archie," I said firmly. "You're getting up now!"

"But, dash it all, quite imposs.!" said Archie. "That is to say, absolutely out of the ques., old sportsman. It simply can't be done. I mean to say, it's asking too much of a chappie. Anything else, dear lad, but not that!"

"It's Bank Holiday!"

"Absolutely!"

"And a glorious day!"

"Absolutely twice!"

"And we're going to have some good times!"

"Absolutely, as it were, with large knobs affixed!" said Archie. "I agree with the whole argument, old fruit. But the old tissues require further rest. They positively call for it, don't you know. Going? Trickling away? Thanks awfully—"

"Better not be too quick about it!" I grinned. "I'm not going, Archie."

"How dashed frightful!"

"You've got to get up—no slacking allowed," I said crisply. "And you'd better turn out before Handforth comes in—he wouldn't think anything of grabbing the water-jug, and emptying it over your head."

Archie shivered.

"Dear lad, you make me go all hot and flustered!" he exclaimed. "I mean to say, a chap wouldn't do that kind of thing to a guest, would he?"

"Handy would do anything," I replied.

"Now then, are you going to get up, or shall I lend you a hand?"

Archie sighed.

"Talking about that reminds me of Phipps!" he said sadly. "Good old Phipps—the priceless chappie who gets busy on anything you want! A fearfully brainy cove and a perfect treasure for getting a first-class crease down a pair of trousers! I miss Phipps deucedly. I don't know how I'm getting on without him!"

"I dare say you'll survive until we get back to St. Frank's," I said. "And what about Phipps? Haven't you got any feelings, Archie? Don't you want the poor chap to have a well-earned rest?"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "Absolutely, old boy! So, under the cires., we'll dismiss Phipps, and proceed to deal with the forty old winks!"

"No, we won't!" I said. "You're getting out now!"

"Quite imposs.," said Archie firmly. "I might even say that—Great Scott! How bally rotten! Dear lad, I beseech you! Kindly replace the old Witneys! This, to be exact, is most putrid!"

I yanked the bedclothes back, and Archie lay there in his silken pyjamas, helpless, and looking rather comic.

"Up you come!" I said. "You'll find the special suit of clothes all laid out ready for

you on the side-table. It's a pity Phipps isn't here, to lend you a hand. But I dare say you'll manage by yourself."

I passed out of the room, taking the blankets with me, as a precautionary measure. And Archie, with a heavy sigh, proceeded to get dressed.

The previous night he had laid out a particularly nice fancy serge suit—one that Phipps liked, too. And anything that Phipps approved of was, of course, just the thing.

But the suit appeared to have disappeared.

It was not where Archie had placed it, and, strange to relate, his other clothing was nowhere to be found—for he had several spare suits with him. But there, upon the side-table, lay a most extraordinary assortment of wearing apparel.

"Gadzooks!" exclaimed Archie blankly. "What is this? What, I repeat, is this? Do the old optics deceive me, or can it be true?"

He picked up one of the garments gingerly. It was a jacket—but quite an extra special one. It was of an extremely loud check, and almost over every inch of it there were pearl buttons—dozens and hundreds of them!

"My sainted aunt!" observed Archie faintly. "This is what a chappie might call the limit! What shocking taste! What truly appalling clothing! It is utterly impossible for me to wear such stuff!"

He picked up the waistcoat, and this was decorated in the same way as the jacket. There were trousers, too—trousers with pearlies all down the sides. The bottoms of the trousers widened out into bell-like shapes.

"This, as it were, is priceless!" murmured Archie. "I mean to say, quite ghastly, and all that sort of rot! Something has got to be done—something must be accomplished quite rapidly!"

And Archie went to the door and called for help.

He had hardly uttered the first cry when Handforth and I dodged out of the next bedroom, and the other juniors followed. We looked at Archie inquiringly, with quite innocent expressions.

"Anything wrong?" I asked.

"I mean to say, absolutely!" said Archie. "Dear lads, I need you! I am simply in the most frightful kind of a mess, don't you know! The fact is, something fearful has happened."

"What's the trouble?" asked Handforth, striding into Archie's room. "Hope you're not put out at all, Archie? I shouldn't like a guest in the pater's house to be upset over anything!"

"Oh, rather not!" said Archie. "That would be appalling. Upset, what? Hardly, dear old bean! But, don't you see, the jolly old clothing department has gone sort of loony! Kindly observe!"

Archie indicated the terrible suit with one sweep of his hand.

Handforth gazed at it in admiration.

"I say, that's gorgeous!" he said enthusiastically.

"I mean to say, what!" exclaimed Archie. "Gorgeous? Dash it all, hardly! To be quite frank, I, personally, thought that the thing was what one might describe as being perfectly foul!"

"Foul!" I put in. "Why, my dear Archie, it's lovely! Just look at all those buttons! Did you ever see anything so sweet?"

"The very latest fashion, too!" said Singleton.

"Begad!" ejaculated Sir Montie Tregellis-West, gazing at the suit in a horrified kind of way. "Really, dear fellows, this is going rather too far—it is, really! That suit——"

"You ass!" I said quickly. "It's a special one for to-day—Archie will look ripping in it! Suits like that are all the fashion on Bank Holidays—in some parts of London. Pearlies, bell-bottom trousers, and everything! It must have cost an enormous sum."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I can see it, old top! The thing is absolutely marvellous! But, don't you see, it's hardly the thing for me, what? Not quite the fashion, as it were. Decidedly off, in fact!"

"Nonsense!" said Handforth. "It'll suit you down to the ground!"

"Of course it will, Archie!" I said. "Just try it on!"

Archie shuddered.

"Absolutely not!" he declared firmly.

"My dear old lads, it couldn't be done—I mean to say, it's asking too much of a chappie! The very idea is enough to make me feel pipped for a week!"

"Now, look here, Archie!" I said, grasping the trousers. "You've got to be reasonable——"

"I mean to say——"

"It's no good trying to get out of it, because it won't work," I proceeded. "This suit was obtained especially for you, and we're simply bubbling with eagerness to see how you look in it. Are you going to get dressed?"

Archie gazed at me fixedly.

"Decidedly not!" he replied. "That is to say, absolutely not! Laddie, there is nothing doing! Finally and positively nix! The scheme does not appeal to the good old senses. Kindly desist!"

"Well, you've got one chance!" I said grimly. "Either you get into this suit of your own accord, or we'll dress you by force. Now, Archie, it's up to you. What's it going to be—force or otherwise?"

Archie looked somewhat blank.

"Dash it all!" he remarked. "I mean to say, deucedly undig., what? A chappie hardly expects this kind of stuff under the good old hospitable roof, as it were. Rather, so to speak, off the mark, and so forth!"

"Rot!" said Handforth. "You can't say that there's a lack of hospitality in this

house, Archie! It's sheer bunkum to make out that this suit is undignified. You haven't got any idea how you'll look when you're dressed up!"

"Well, don't you know, I've got a suspicion!" said Archie, with a horrified glance at the suit. "I shall look, dear old lads, like one of those frightful bounders who go to the Derby on a bally old barrow!"

I grinned.

"Well, we're wasting time," I said briskly. "What's it to be, Archie? Are you going to dress, or stay in bed all day?"

"A sound scheme!" said Archie promptly. "The latter, dear old tulip—absolutely! Every time, in fact! The old feathers and the linen for me!"

Archie dived back into bed, with immense relief upon his features. But it was only momentary. The juniors fell upon him, dragged him out, and without any further argument commenced dressing him. He was pulled about from side to side, and was quite helpless.

"This is ghastly—I mean to say, dashed awful!" panted Archie, as he was hauled about. "Mercy, and that sort of stuff! Kindly observe, old tulips, that the bally white flag is hoisted! Positively flying in the breeze!"

"You surrender?" demanded Handforth.

"Absolutely!"

"And you'll get dressed?"

Archie shuddered.

"The old alternative doesn't seem to exist!" he said miserably. "It appears, darlings, that the frightful thing must be done! Pray retire and allow me to robe! Later on I shall require a bevy of doctors and half a dozen ambulances! The old tissues will never stand the ordeal!"

"We're not retiring!" said Handforth. "We'll remain here and see that you get dressed properly, Archie. Buck up! No larks, mind, or we won't have pity on you next time!"

Archie groaned, and proceeded to dress himself. He groaned at intervals throughout the undertaking. And he took particular care not to approach the mirror.

"One glance, my dear chappies, and it would be all up!" he explained feebly. "That is to say, fits and convulsions, and so forth! Kindly remove the old mirror into the offing!"

The mirror was not removed, and Archie turned his back to it—only to find himself looking at his reflection in the pier glass of the wardrobe. He groaned again and retreated. Then he managed to complete his toilet. We stood around, grinning hugely.

Archie looked a perfect scream.

He was, of course, a knut of knuts—a replica of the very latest fashion plate. In many respects, he was far more elegant and dandified than Sir Montie himself. For the latter always wore Etons, and Etons were always somewhat restricted. Archie burst

forth in lounge suits of various hues—fancy socks and silken ties.

And for him to be attired in the garb of a coster was too ludicrous for words. He stood there in the middle of us, and we clung to one another, howling. It was a sight for sore eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Archie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, Archie. We simply must take your photograph!"

"I mean to say!" exclaimed Archie indignantly. "Hardly sporting, what? The old cackle appears to be somewhat misplaced! That is to say, I fail to appreciate the bally joke! Absolutely! I feel dashed deuced!"

"Really, dear old boys, it is certainly a bit too thick!" protested Sir Montie. "It is, really! I entirely disapprove of this jape! Please take it for granted that I shall have nothin' more to do with it!"

"Considerable quantities of gratitude, old bean!" said Archie. "Frightfully decent of you to shove out the old sympathy! A kind of fellow feeling, what?"

Archie fancied that the ordeal was over, but he was mistaken. Handforth and Willard and Singleton seized him, and hauled him out on the landing. Archie fairly gasped with horror when he realised that he was to be taken downstairs. He collapsed. He fell upon his knees, and gazed at his captors.

"Yards of the old beseeching stuff!" he pleaded painfully. "Several tons of supplication! Cartloads of appeals for mercy! In other words, my dear old sportsmen, be good enough to ring down the curtain! This ghastly affair has, as it were, gone far enough. Absolutely! Be pals, don't you know! Be sports! Bended knees, and all that kind of rot!"

I grinned.

"Well, perhaps so," I chuckled. "It would be a dirty trick, you chaps, to go any further. But doesn't Archie look simply great in that suit?"

"Rather!" said Handforth. "I want to take him down and show him to mater and pater! They'll die of laughing."

Archie looked hopeful.

"I mean to say, murder, what?" he asked. "Killing the old mater and pater! Somewhat severe, as it were! I might even say——"

"Look out!" said Singleton. "There's somebody coming!"

Archie gazed round wildly.

"Severe gales!" he gasped. "In other words, the wind is perfectly up!"

And Archie, without giving us a chance, dived head first for his own doorway. He crashed into Handforth, and the latter went over with a thud, and Singleton fell on the top of him. There was a moment of confusion.

With a yelp of relief, Archie dived into

his bedroom, slammed the door and turned the key. Handforth, with a roar, charged at the door, and hammered upon it thunderously.

"Unlock this door!" he roared.

"Quite impos.!" gasped Archie, from the other side. "I mean to say, absolutely not! I'm feeling somewhat used! Positively crumpling! Pray retire, and allow me to restore the old tissues!"

"It's all right, Archie!" I called. "Unlock the door—we won't interfere with you any more. The joke's over, and we'll bring in your proper clothes. You can rely on us to smother Handy!"

"Why, you—you——" began Handforth.

"Peace, my son!" I said. "We've seen Archie as the coster, and that ought to be enough. It would be a dirty trick to carry it any further. Besides, it's nearly breakfast time, and we shall be late."

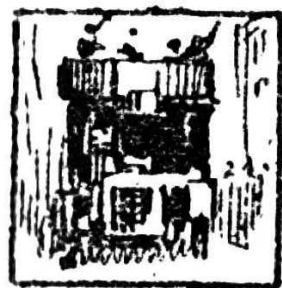
And so Archie was allowed to dress in his usual elegant attire. And when we went downstairs, we found that not only Church and McClure had arrived, but Reginald Pitt, Jack Grey, and Fatty Little into the bargain.

There were now twelve of us—a round dozen—for Tommy Watson showed up a few minutes later. We had arranged for the little party, because we meant to thoroughly enjoy ourselves on this Bank Holiday.

To be exact, we were going on the spree!

CHAPTER II.

ON PLEASURE BENT.



BREAKFAST was a great success.

Handforth's father and mother were as genial as could be—particularly Sir Edward. He whacked out a handsome tip for Handy, which the latter

was evidently expecting. The leader of Study D was always well supplied with cash, for his father was a most generous man. In fact, father and son were very much alike. They were both blunt, somewhat tactless, and very likeable. And Handy, being in his own house, naturally took it upon himself to be the leader.

"Now the question is, what's to be done?" he asked briskly, as soon as breakfast was over. "It's only about ten, and we've got the whole day before us—a ripping, sunshiny day, too. What's the programme?"

"What about a picnic?" suggested Fatty.

"Picnic? Where?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter where!" said the fat junior. "We can pack three or four big hampers, and buzz off into the local park, or a common, or somewhere like that. The main thing is the grub——"

"Always talking about grub!" interrupted Handforth. "Rats! Picnics are off! We can

get plenty to eat without carting grub about in hampers!"

"Besides, we can always have picnics at St. Frank's," said Tommy Watson. "Now that we're in London we want to do something different. I suggest a trip to Hampstead Heath."

"That's what I said!" exclaimed Handy. "A good idea, too! But these fatheads don't want it! There's all sorts of things on Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday. Rather third rate, of course, but what's it matter? We ain't proud!"

"Absolutely not!" agreed Archie. "But don't you think the scheme is somewhat strenuous? Allow me to trot forth a suggestion. There is a perfectly priceless old garden hovering about the rear of us. Cosy nooks and what not! The sun is quite ripping, and the air dashed balmy! Why not spend the good old morning lounging about, as it were? Taking the good old sun cure?"

"You're like the air—dashed barmy!" said Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean to say, what?" said Archie. "Rather terse, as it were!"

"And, after spending the morning asleep, I suppose you'd like an easy afternoon?" asked Handforth sarcastically. "A visit to the pictures, say, where you could doze off to your heart's content? How does that suit you, Archie?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Down to the old ground!"

"Well, it doesn't suit us," said Handforth. "This is a Bank Holiday, and we're not going to waste it! Any other brilliant suggestions?"

"What about the Zoo?" asked Pitt.

"That's not so bad," said Handforth. "We could leave Archie in the monkey house while we went round!"

"We might not be able to pick him out when we came back!" grinned Pitt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This, as it were, is positively beyond the old pale!" said Archie firmly. "I mean to say, dash it all! Insults rolling out in the most frightful way. I am game for the good old joke, absolutely! But——"

"Don't take any notice of 'em, Archie," I put in. "And we sha'n't go to the Zoo, anyhow. We've all been there before, and it's too crowded on a Bank Holiday. We want something different—something more exciting."

"What about the Tower of London?" asked Watson.

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"There's a fat lot of excitement at the Tower, isn't there?" snorted Handforth. "We don't want to go sight-seeing! Blessed if I can think of anything good, unless we turn up at a big football match this afternoon——"

"I'll tell you what," I interrupted. "We'll go to the Crystal Palace."

The juniors looked at me.

"But there's nothing on there," said Church.

"Of course there is," I said. "Side-shows, and round-about and cokernut-shies, and everything, twice as good as Hampstead Heath. Bands playing, and ripping grounds to walk in, and enjoyments of all kinds. We can spend a fine day there. Who votes for the Palace?"

Everybody agreed, even including Handforth.

"As a matter of fact, I've already thought of going to the Crystal Palace," he said. "I was just about to suggest it when you took the words out of my mouth. Well, the best thing we can do is to start off at once."

"What about a hamper?" asked Fatty Little eagerly.

"Rats! We can get plenty of tuck when we arrive!"

"But we must have something on the journey——"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Handforth. "You gorger! You glutton! I've a good mind to make you starve for the rest of the day. Anyhow, you're not taking any grub. I suppose we'd better go by train?"

"No fear," I said. "We can easily pop to Oxford Circus from here, and jump on a No. 3 'bus. That'll take us right to the doors of the Crystal Palace. Come on, my sons! No need to delay!"

And so, about a quarter of an hour later we went off. The twelve of us made a happy, cheerful crowd, and Archie Glen-thorne was quite content to be with us. If he had known of the strenuous times which lay ahead he might have been less serene.

Fatty Little, of course, had his pockets stuffed. In some strange manner he had managed to get hold of a large quantity of sandwiches. And we had hardly got on the motor-'bus at Oxford Circus before he commenced operations.

Fortunately, the 'bus had been nearly empty when it arrived, coming from Camden Town. And we had scrambled on board first, and we secured the front six double seats, and settled down.

It was a most enjoyable day, with the sun shining warmly, and with the whole populace in the best of humours. The real holiday spirit was abroad, and the weather, no doubt, was partly responsible for this.

Handforth, of course, found it impossible to sit still and enjoy the ride. He was compelled to engage in an argument with Church and McClure. And the 'bus went along with people glancing up at it from all sides.

"Dry up, Handy," said Pitt. "You're making us conspicuous. Everybody's staring! They'll be taking us for a collection

of freaks next, especially if you stand up and exhibit yourself!"

Handforth turned round and glared.

"Are you calling me a freak?" he demanded sharply.

"I didn't exactly say so, but you seem to know all about it!" replied Pitt. "Why can't you sit down, and—look out, you ase!"

Handforth's cap was whisked by the breeze, for he was standing right in the front. He made a wild grab at his head, but he was too late. The next second his cap was sailing away through the air, and it fell to earth in the middle of the road, some distance behind.

"Stop!" howled Handforth. "Pull up, you fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth's shout was evidently addressed to the driver. The motor-'bus failed to pull up. It had just left the foot of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, and was now proceeding down Whitehall. As usual, the 'buses generally progress at a smart speed down this wide, imposing thoroughfare.

Handforth dashed to the rear of the 'bus, incidentally knocking off one gentleman's bowler, and nearly ramming another gentleman's pipe down his throat. But Handforth reached the bell signal, and commenced to thump upon it for all he was worth. He seemed to imagine that this was necessary.

The 'bus slowed up at once, veering towards the curb. And the conductor came running up the stairs, somewhat red with indignation. He glared at Handforth hotly.

"What's the meaning of this 'ere?" he demanded. "Think the blinkin' bell is a punch-ball or what? Lorst your cap, eh? That ain't no reason why you should b'have like an inmate of Colney Hatch!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter!" snorted Handforth. "Another word from you, my lad, and I'll dot you one on the nose!"

"Oh, you will?" snapped the conductor.

"Yes, I will," bawled Handforth. "Take that!"

Biff!

Handforth's fist shot out, but the conductor was a pretty smart chap, and he saw the blow coming. He dodged like lightning, and Handforth's fist thudded squarely into the whiskers of an old gentleman who was sitting in the rear seat. The old gentleman gave a gasping howl, and staggered up.

"What the—— How the——"

"Great pip! Sorry, sir!" gasped Handforth. "Quite an accident, you know. This—this fatheaded conductor made me wild!"

Before the old chap could say anything else, Handforth slithered down the stairs of the now stationary 'bus, and dashed off after his cap. It still lay in the road, and was in imminent peril of being run over by other 'buses which were following.

Pitt and Watson and I jumped up and made handsome apologies on behalf of Handforth to the old gentleman with the whiskers. He wasn't hurt much, for Handforth's punch had been at the end of its reach, so to speak, by the time it arrived. And the old fellow was easily mollified.

In the meantime Handforth recovered his cap all right.

The conductor fumed on the step, waiting. The driver, however, didn't see the fun of it, and without waiting for the signal, he started off. Handforth, running up, saw the 'bus shooting away from him.

"Hi! Pull up!" he roared. "Wait for me!"

"Oh, boil yer 'ead!" growled the conductor irritably.

He turned inside to collect some fares, and Handforth, ran with all his speed. Just at first he managed to keep pace, but then the distance between him and the 'bus grew, and he was left behind.

The spectacle was quite a comic one, to judge by the expressions on the faces of pedestrians. Handy, chasing a 'bus and shouting at the top of his voice, was certainly rather amusing.

"I say, this is a bit too thick!" said Church. "Ring the bell, somebody."

Pitt obliged, and the 'bus again pulled up. Handforth, panting and hot, seized the brass rail and hauled himself on board. The conductor eyed him with extreme disfavour, and jerked the bell for the vehicle to proceed.

"'Avin' a fine game, ain't yer?" said the conductor sarcastically. "I suppose you think we can take the 'ole day gittin' to the Pallis?"

"You—you babbling lunatic!" gasped Handforth. "Why the dickens couldn't you wait? I've a dashed good mind to report you. I've paid my fare, and I'm jolly well not going to run behind! Anybody's liable to have his cap blown off!"

"Come on, Handy—no more arguing!" called Church, from the top.

Handforth stormed up the stairs, went to the front of the 'bus, and sat down. He saw that we were all grinning hugely.

"Fine joke, wasn't it?" he demanded sourly.

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I mean to say, somewhat priceless, and all that! The old brow appears to be overheated! Several pints of the the good old persp! The fact is, old cucumber, you've been——"

"I know what I've been doing!" said Handforth. "If this is what you call an enjoyable Bank Holiday, I don't! I've a good mind to jolly well leave you, and go off somewhere else!"

To Handforth's chagrin, this terrible threat appeared to have no effect. We showed no signs of concern; but, on the contrary, merely grinned. We had been expecting some kind of trouble with Hand-

forth. The great Edward Oswald could never venture abroad without stirring up strife in one direction or another.

But, having crossed over Westminster Bridge, all went well for a period. We passed through Kennington, and then on towards Brixton. Here Fatty's supply of tuck ran out, and he suggested that we should sacrifice the rest of our fares, and get off. Fatty had spotted a restaurant.

We soon made it quite clear to him that he was very much offside, and that he wouldn't touch another morsel of food until we arrived at the Crystal Palace. Fatty was filled with dismay.

"Great onions!" he exclaimed. "I sha'n't be able to do it, you know! I—I didn't know it was such a terrific way! How do you expect me to last out? I'm starving—I haven't had a morsel to eat since——"

"About two minutes ago!" put in Jack Grey. "It wouldn't be a bad idea to starve you for the rest of the day, Fatty. This gorging business is a bit too thick. What you need is a little hardship!"

Fatty groaned, and mumbled something to the effect that he was sinking rapidly. And then we came to Brixton, and looked about us with interest. There had been much to see all along the rout.

The same holiday spirit pervaded all the suburbs, and it was impossible to feel unhappy. The 'bus filled up to its fullest capacity at Brixton, for other people were keen upon visiting the Crystal Palace, too.

And all went well for a short time. We proceeded up Effra Road, turning into Dulwich Road, and skirting Brockwell Park, until we arrived at Herne Hill. Here the 'bus came to a stop once more.

Looking over the side, I noticed a crowd of boys grouped about, looking up and down somewhat anxiously. One of them held a football. They were of the working class, and looked a cheerful, good-natured crowd.

Some of them spotted us, and looked up. And Handforth, who was gazing down at them gave a sniff.

"Footballers!" he said disdainfully. "I don't think!"

"No need to speak so loud, Handy!" muttered Church.

One of the working-class boys pointed up with a derisive finger.

"Hi, Jim!" he yelled. "Look! The chimpanzee's escaped!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You asked for it, Handy, and you've got it," I grinned.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I mean to say, one insult deserves another, what? At the same time, the cheery old lads below were dashed personal! A chimpanzee! Decidedly fearful, if you know what I mean!"

Handforth jumped up.

"Am I going to stand this?" he bellowed.

"Steady on, Handy——" began McClure.

"Leggo my coat!" roared Handforth. "I'm going to smash that chap who called me a chimpanzee! My only hat! This is where something happens!"

Handforth dashed to the back of the bus, and scooted down the stairs so rapidly that he failed to notice the conductor mounting. They collided with a crash, and the conductor nearly fell over backwards. But before he could do anything, or say anything, Handforth had squeezed past, and was on the pavement.

Without even considering the odds, he dashed in amongst the grinning boys there, and glared round.

"Who called me a chimpanzee?" he demanded fiercely.

"Bill must 'ave made a bloomer!" said one of the boys. "He didn't mean to insult a harmless animal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth nearly choked.

"Now you've asked for it!" he thundered. "By George! Put up your hands, you rotters! I'm going to smash you all to pulp!"

The next second Handforth charged, and he succeeded in delivering half a dozen hefty punches before the footballers seized him and held him down. By this time the bus was just starting off. I jumped to my feet.

"Oh, the hopeless ass," I grimed. "We can't leave him here, you know. Come on, you chaps, we'll rescue the fathead, and go on by the next bus!"

And we all streamed off as quickly as possible, Archie being hustled between Pitt and Willard.

"Dash it all!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, frightful exertion, and so forth! Kindly cease the old back-jabbing business!"

But Archie was fairly pushed off the bus, and the conductor heaved a sigh of relief as the vehicle moved away.

"Worse than a cartload o' blinkin' monkeys!" He growled. "Good riddance!"

Handforth had vanished by the time we collected on the scene. He had disappeared beneath the crowd of excited and yelling London boys. To be exact, he was lying full length on the pavement, with his captors sitting over practically every inch of him. He was vanquished.

And then we arrived.

"Billo!" yelled one of the youngsters. "Here's a whole blessed crowd of blokes comin' for us!"

"It's all right, my sons, keep your hair on!" I shouted. "We're not spoiling for a fight, although we're quite willing to oblige if you feel that way. But it's holiday time, and we don't want any rows!"

"Well, your pal shouldn't go for us!" said one of the boys. "Who are you, anyway? Come from some swell school, I s'pose?"

"Well, yes," I said. "We're from St. Frank's College."

"St. Frank's!" said the boy. "That's down in the country, ain't it?"

"In Sussex."

"Thought it was down there somewhere," exclaimed the other. "My name's Harry Billings, and I'm the head chap in the ex-seventh in our school."

"Good!" I said. "Pleased to meet you, old chap. Shake."

We shook hands, and the other boys looked on, grinning. Harry Billings was a big, bony fellow with a freckled face and fair hair.

"I don't s'pose you'll be so chummy when you knows we come from a London County Council School," he said. "You chaps from these 'ere big pot places are generally too blooming snobbish to take notice of the likes of us! We're from the Yorkston Road School, down Dulwich way."

"It doesn't matter to me where you come from," I said. "Some chaps may be snobbish, but we're not."

"Not at all, dear fellows!" said Sir Montie. "Delighted to meet you—I am, really. But don't you think it would be as well to let Handforth get up? The dear chap is in a frightful position!"

"Handforth?" said Billings.

"Yes, begad!" said Montie. "The fellow on the ground, you know!"

Billings turned.

"Stow it, you chaps!" he said. "Let that feller get up!"

The other boys released Handforth at once. Billings was evidently the leader, notwithstanding the fact that he was rather common. Quite a few of the other Council schoolboys were apparently gentlemanly and refined, and compared very favourably with the St. Frank's juniors. But Harry Billings was the boss of the show.

Handforth struggled to his feet, dusty and hot.

"Now for it!" he gasped. "You—you—"

"Hold on, Handy!" I put in. "These chaps were only having a bit of fun. There's no need to kick up a dust."

Handforth stared blankly.

"Ain't you going to help me to smash 'em up?" he howled.

"Of course not," I said. "Why should we smash 'em up? They're just as much entitled to have a bit of fun as we are. Make it pax, and forget all about scrapping for to-day."

"They called me a chimpanzee!" said Handforth fiercely.

Harry Billings grinned.

"That was Bill Stevens!" he said. "Bill allus was a funny bloke. Hi, Bill, you'd best apologise!"

One of the boys turned red.

"Not likely!" he said. "It was only a bit of fun!"

"Good! That's settled!" I said briskly. "Well, look here, we seemed to be causing a bit of a commotion amongst the natives. We shall have to be getting off now, Billings. Jolly pleased to have met you."

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie. "Frightfully priceless in fact. I mean to say, deucedly interesting, and all that, to hobnob with the jolly old masses! Mixing with the populace, so to speak!"

"Crikey!" said Billings. "This bloke speaks posh, don't he?"

They stared at Archie, and Archie adjusted his monocle and beamed.

"What-ho!" he said. "That is to say, what-ho! Taking the good old view, what? I gather, old onions, that you'll know Archie the next time. I mean to say, dashed embarrassing, and what not!"

"It's all right—Archie's quite harmless!" I grinned. "He was brought up like this, and couldn't help it. He's a kind of elaborated edition of the one and only Sir Montie."

"An' who's 'e?" asked one of the Council schoolboys.

"Allow me to present Sir Montie Tregellis-West!" I said.

The Council boys stared.

"Garn!" said Billings. "What are you gettin' at? That chap ain't no sir! It's only men what 'ave titles!"

"Begad!" exclaimed Sir Montie.

"All the same, this chap is a baronet—but he's just about as snobbish as a 'bus-driver!" I said easily. "Montie doesn't care who a chap is as long as he's decent. Thank goodness we're all a bit like that. If you had any idea otherwise, put it out of your head!"

"Blowed if I ain't surprised!" said Billings. "What do you think of it, mates? Swell blokes from a public school, an' they're as decent as any of our chaps! I allus thought these fellers were as stuck up as posts!"

"Haven't we discussed the subject long enough?" asked Pitt cheerfully. "And we don't want to detain you, my sons. Just going to play football, I suppose?" he added, indicating the leather under Billings's arm.

The latter looked up rather crestfallen.

"We was!" he said. "But we ain't now!"

"Why not?"

"The other team ain't turned up," said Billings. "A set of bloomin' rotters—that's what they are! Promised to give us a game this morning, and we got here all ready, and now there's nothing doing."

"Something detained the other team, I suppose?" asked Church.

"Well, it ain't what you might call a team!" said one of the Council schoolboys. "Just a kind of made up lot. Being Bank Holiday, we thought we'd have a game over



Bang! There was a sharp, loud explosion. Fatty Little had come down fairly and squarely upon the football.

in the park!" he added, with a nod of his head towards the green spaces. "They're chaps from the Kenton Road School, down the other way. We were going to whack 'em hollow!"

"Yus, and they knew it!" said Billings. "That's why they didn't turn up! Sent a blamed little kid round here to tell us it was off! Fine sportsmen, ain't they? And now we're done out of our game!"

I looked round at the St. Frank's fellows.

"What about it?" I asked cheerfully.

"Are you game?"

"Anything you like!" said Pitt. "We've got the whole day before us, and we're out for a spree, anyhow. What do you other chaps say?"

"You mean play a game of football with this crowd?" asked Church. "I don't mind. It ought to be jolly good, in fact."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's fine!" I said briskly. "We'll take 'em on!"

Harry Billings looked at me with excited interest.

"What's this?" he asked. "You'll play a game with us?"

"Certainly, old son," I said. "Only too pleased to!"

"Hooray!" yelled Billings. "It's on! Now, that's what I call real sportin'! Good for you, mate! We'll jolly well give you your money's worth!"

CHAPTER III.

SOMETHING LIKE A GAME—BUT NOT MUCH!



HARRY BILLINGS was genuinely delighted, and all his followers were frankly astonished that we should suggest such a thing as a game. They had apparently looked upon us as a set of

stuck-up bounders who wouldn't even condescend to speak to them.

And, finding that the opposite was the case, their surprise was all the more delightful.

As for Pitt and Grey, and the rest of our party, they entered into the spirit of the thing with gusto. As Pitt had said, we were out for a spree, and were ready for anything that came along. And this idea of a football match struck me as being just the very thing necessary.

The Council schoolboys probably thought that they would lick us to fits—and we were rather bucked at the thought of showing them what we could do. Handforth was the only fellow who disapproved. Before anything else, he wanted to punch a few noses—just to prove that he was a power in the land. But nose-punching was distinctly off, and we advised Handforth to forget his little grievance. And so, in a body, we moved off and soon entered Brockwell Park. We experienced something of a difficulty in finding a suitable pitch for the match, for practically all the grassland was already occupied.

However, after clearing off a lot of children, we succeeded. There were no goalposts, but the Council schoolboys made light of this defect. They provided their own goalposts by piling up bundles of clothing.

"Dashed interesting!" observed Archie, as he eyed the proceedings. "I mean to say, I shall be most deucedly keen to watch this bally old game! I understand that the scheme is to push the jolly old ball past the chappie who's guarding the clothing department?"

"Exactly!" I grinned. "You've got it, Archie."

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie. "The old bean is pretty sharp on things like this, don't you know! The chappies just grab the balloon thing, and stagger along at the great old double. Then they push—"

"Half a minute!" I interrupted. "You mustn't handle the ball, Archie. Only the goalkeeper is allowed to do that."

"I mean to say, that's deucedly awk.!" said Archie. "No handling, what? Then how do the old sportsmen wangle it? I mean to say, the ball's got to be shoved through somehow!"

"It's kicked, you ass!" I said. "In Rugby, of course, the rules are quite different. But this is Soccer."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Which?"

"Soccer!"

"I fail to grasp the old trend!" said Archie. "I mean to say, Soccer, what? Sounds dashed peculiar, old tulip! The fact is, I'm frightfully ig. on these matters. Sorrow, and all that, but there you are! A chappie can't know everything!"

"Soccer is merely a way of describing Association football," I said. "By Jove! I've got an idea!"

"A bally old brain wave, what?"

"Exactly!"

"A considerable quantity of notions, and all that?"

"Yes. I'm going to play you as centre-forward in the eleven!" I explained. "There are twelve of us, so I'll stand down and give you the place."

Archie's monocle dropped.

"That's frightfully priceless of you!" he said. "I mean to say, large supplies of self-sacrifice, and so forth! But, dear old lad, as it were, there is decidedly the reverse of anything doing! Absolutely! Kindly carry on! I'll stand by and assist with sundry samples of the good old encouragement!"

"No, you won't!" I said firmly. "You're going to play centre-forward, Archie. It'll be good experience for you, and—"

"But, really!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, really. Absolutely ridie! Positively piffle-ish, if you grasp the old meaning. The fact is, it can't be done! It absolutely can't be accomplished! Dash it all. I don't know the bally rules of the old game!"

"That's all the better!" I chuckled. "You're going to play!"

"What's that?" asked Pitt, coming up. "Archie's going to play?"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie.

"Yes, he is!" I insisted. "There's no getting out of it!"

The other juniors soon heard of the idea, and they grinned with delight. The very thought of Archie playing football was ludicrous. And it was certainly calculated to make the game funny.

I took Harry Billings and two or three of the Council schoolboys aside, and explained.

"This is only a scratch game, after all," I said. "We might as well make it as entertaining as possible. Archie—the chap with the eyeglass—knows as much about football as a baby in a pram! We're going to play him as centre-forward, just for a bit of sport!"

Billings grinned.

"I've got you!" he said. "Right-ho! It don't matter to us! We're going to wipe you up, anyhow, and this'll make it easier!"

"Will it?" murmured Pitt, into Jack Grey's ear. "I rather fancy that we shall romp home, even with Archie in the team. Why, we ought to score about a dozen goals against these chaps. We can easily afford to have Archie in the forward line."

This, of course, was strictly true. Pitt, alone, was capable of scoring all the necessary goals. He was a most astounding footballer, and had played in professional games, covering himself with glory. And with Watson and Handforth and Montie and Grey with us, too—all members of the St. Frank's Junior Eleven—we looked like getting the best of things.

"Now, we might as well do the thing properly," I said. "What about a referee?"

"Don't want no ref.!" said Billings.

"Oh, yes, we do!" I said. "I'll take on the job, if you like—as I'm not playing. Is that all right?"

"Good enough for me!" said Billings.

"But, look here! Look, as it were, absolutely here!" put in Archie desperately. "It can't be done, dear old cucumber! You don't seem to realise how perfectly ghastly the whole thing is! I might even say that the very prospect is not only insane, but absolutely senile!"

"Off with your jacket, Archie!" I said briskly. "Be a sport, you know!"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie promptly. "A sport, what? That, as you might say, has done it! Positively ripped it! I mean to say, if I back out, you will look on me as a boulder, and what not?"

"Of course!"

"But if I play, I shall be a sport—one of the lads?"

"Exactly!" I said. "You won't disappoint us, will you, Archie?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "That is, absolutely not. I'll plunge into the bally game with several tons of enthusiasm! But kindly observe that there will be a large amount of the most dashed errors! I mean to say, mistakes! I shall simply stagger about like a what-do-you-call-it out of water!"

"We'll chance that, Archie!" I grinned.

"Now then—line up!"

The fellows entered into the game with keen enjoyment.

The very fact that it was such a "rag-time" affair only made it the more interesting. A real game of football would not have attracted the fellows much on an occasion of this sort, for they were out for a jolly time. And football of the right kind could be indulged in at St. Frank's.

The two teams lined up, and large numbers of spectators had strolled up from other quarters of the Park, and were standing round. They could see that this was to be something a little out of the common.

As a rule there was nothing but a rough-and-ready kick-about proceeding in this section of the Park, indulged in by perhaps half-a-dozen boys. But here there were twenty-two players complete, and a referee to rule the game.

Certainly, the conditions were not ideal. The ground, for example, was not marked, and I should have to rely solely on my judgment in awarding a penalty, or when it

came to a matter of deciding where the touch-line existed.

However, these were details, and really made the thing more attractive. Furthermore, I had no whistle, and one was not procurable. But this was easily remedied. The two forefingers of my right hand provided an excellent substitute.

I put them to my mouth, and gave a shrill blast.

The game had started. The Council schoolboys kicked off—not because they had lost any toss, but because Billings was the first one to get to the ball. He was playing centre-forward for the Londoners.

The St. Frank's team was composed as follows—Handforth; Church, Willard; Watson, McClure, Fatty Little; Pitt, Grey, Archie, Tregellis-West, Singleton. The forward line, with the single exception of Archie, was considerably hot stuff and capable of doing great things.

I wasn't so sure about the half-backs. Tommy Watson and McClure were decent players, but Fatty Little was a very problematical starter. It was almost a certainty that he would peter out early in the game. Fatty was built for comfort rather than speed.

"'Ere y'are!" roared Billings. "Comin' over! Billo, Sam!"

He gave the ball a hefty kick, with the intention of passing it to the outside-right. But Billings was not precisely a crack shot, and the ball whizzed away at an angle, and caught Fatty Little in the middle of his waistcoat.

"Ow-ooooouch!" howled Fatty. "Great frying pancakes!"

He sat down abruptly, and looked dismayed. The next moment several of our opponents charged over him in a clump, and gained possession of the ball. The fact that I had blown my whistle was quite ignored.

Fatty looked a wreck by the time he scrambled up. He was in his shirt-sleeves—we all were—and he gazed at several tears with some consternation.

"I—I need something to buck me up!" he panted. "I say, Nipper, I'm going to buzz off for some grub——"

"Fathead!" I shouted. "Get up!"

I had no time to attend to Fatty's wants. The Council schoolboys were surging round the St. Frank's goal. About four forwards were all trying to kick at once, and the half-backs were hovering near.

Handforth stood between his imaginary posts grinning hugely. He was such an expert goalkeeper that these efforts amused him. He gazed across to me as I ran up.

"Lend a hand, ref.!" he said. "I'm whacked!"

This, of course, was meant to be taken as sarcasm. But the next second the leather whizzed out from among the crowd of Council schoolboys, bounced at Handforth's feet, and disappeared between his legs.

"Goal!" roared the Londoners delightedly.

"You are whacked, Handy!" I said grimly. "You ass! This is what comes of being too confident!"

"Great pip!" gasped Handforth, staring round. "That—that wasn't a goal, you know! The rotter was off-side—"

But I pointed to the centre of the field, and the teams lined up again. Our opponents were hugging themselves with delight. They didn't seem to realise that the goal had been scored by a pure fluke. Handforth wasn't likely to let any more shots like that go through.

It must not be supposed, of course, that our opponents were giving a typical exhibition of L.C.C. School football. This was not the case. The regular teams of the Council schools are exceedingly smart, and capable of giving a fine exhibition of the great game.

Billings and Co. were not members of such teams. They were simply a crowd of healthy youngsters who were out for a bit of sport on Bank Holiday. The only science of football they knew was to run for the leather and kick it. They were not at all particular about keeping their positions on the field. Indeed, it is very doubtful whether some of them remembered whether they were forwards or half-backs. But, for all that, they were a decent, cheery crowd.

"That's one up to us," said Billings, as they stood ready. "We're goin' to get half-a-dozen more yet, an' don't you forget it."

I got my hand ready.

"Wait, dear old lad," said Archie. "I mean to say, kindly refrain from blowing the old blast. Absolutely. The position, so to speak, is rotten. Somewhat over-ripe, as it were."

"What's the trouble, Archie?"

"I think, dear old fruit, that things would be frightfully better if I gathered together round the old ropes, and so forth. Things are fearfully diff. A bally old button has become somewhat strained on its moorings, don't you know. Disasters in the offing, what? Fearful catastrophies pending, and so forth."

"That's all right, Archie," I grinned. "You won't come undone."

I blew my whistle, and the game restarted. Archie was left staring at me rather blankly, but he was soon hustled away by the energetic footballers. He suddenly decided that there was no hope, and so he entered into the game with gusto.

He dashed away, leaping over the ground in a series of bounds, his monocle flying at the end of its cord. And, more by luck than anything else, the leather came his way.

"Kindly clear the path, old lads!" he exclaimed. "This, as it were, is where things happen. Zing! A bally old goal, what?"

Archie apparently intended to score at once. He ran at the ball and gave a terrific kick—which, incidentally, was directed towards the touch line, and miles away from the goal. But Archie didn't notice that.

It ought to have been an excellent kick, but it wasn't. His flying foot missed the ball by about three inches, and Archie nearly turned a double somersault. He came to earth and bounced—owing to the fact that he sat fairly and squarely on the leather.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Archie!"

The genial ass rolled over, and sat up.

"I mean to say, what!" he gasped. "Who, as it were, did that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peals of the old cackle, and what not," said Archie. "Something, don't you know, went wrong. I might even say that this game is perfectly ghastly. The bally old air balloon moved, or something. That is—Great, as it were, Scott!"

Archie stared blankly as two or three opponents surged down upon him, dribbled the ball away, and left him still prone. The fact that one of the Council school boys had trodden on his chest upset Archie considerably. He staggered to his feet, breathing hard.

"Liberties, and all that!" he gasped. "I mean to say, the whole thing is dashed horrid. Absolutely. A chappie staggers along, hurls himself mightily into another chappie, and there you are. Pray observe the old ticker cable."

He fingered his watch chain ruefully. It was a solid gold one, and it was smothered with dust and bits of turf. But it was otherwise unhurt. Archie's glorious waistcoat was a sight to look at.

"This, dear old lads, is where I retire!" he declared firmly. "The old mind is absolutely made up. We must proceed to port, don't you know, for extensive repairs. Large chunks of damage have been sustained."

No one took any notice of Archie, for he was on a blank piece of ground, all by himself. The game had gone swinging up the field towards the Londoners' goal. And Pitt and Grey thought that it would be just as well to equalise and bring matters on level terms.

The way they went up the field was simply glorious to watch.

They adopted short passing tactics, and transferred the ball from one to another with such skill and precision that their opponents had no chance whatever. Finally, Pitt sent over a pass which Jack Grey trapped, and then, with one stinging drive, sent the leather hurtling past the somewhat dazed goalkeeper.

"Goal!" roared the St. Frank's fellows.

"Oh, good shot, lad!"

Many of the spectators shouted, too. One old gentleman was quite excited, and he was waving his stick, and giving advice the whole time. He evidently knew something about class football, for he beamed all over as he had watched the masterly efforts of Pitt and Grey.

Again the teams lined up, and again Archie found it impossible to back out.

Twice he had tried to slip off the field, but on each occasion he had been stopped by the juniors, and hustled back.

"A nice kind of centre-forward!" said McClure sternly. "Why, you ought to be doing all the scoring, Archie!"

"Absolutely," said Archie feebly. "Oh, rather! But don't you see, I'm most frightfully puzzled, and all that. Deucedly confusing, if you know what I mean. I gather that the old ball has got to be shoved down the bally field, and then pushed between the piles of tailoring?"

"That's it," grinned McClure.

"But, dear old tomato, the thing's impos." said Archie. "I mean to say, there's a chappie barrin' the old way. Scarcely fair, what? It doesn't give anybody a chance, you know!"

"We can't play without goalkeepers, you fathead!" said McClure.

"Oh, rather not," agreed Archie. "The chappies who push the ball about."

"Of course not, you duffer!" said McClure. "The chaps who push the ball about are the forwards. The goalkeeper has got to protect his citadel."

"Guard the old gates, as it were?" asked Archie.

Before McClure could say anything else, the game was in progress. This time Archie determined to show that was learning. He was a good trier, and there was no doubt about it, that when he liked he could show quite an excellent burst of energy.

One of the Council schoolboys had tried a long shot, which Handforth easily gathered up, and threw back into play. McClure headed the ball neatly, intending the pass for Singleton. But Archie dashed up, and grabbed the ball as it bounced.

"Now to stagger the old populace," he murmured firmly. "Absolutely."

He didn't realise the staggering process had already been accomplished. A perfect roar went up from all the footballers. A roar of indignation from the Council schoolboys, and a roar of laughter from the St. Frank's chaps.

"Hands!"

"Drop it, you fathead!"

I blew the whistle with difficulty, for in the middle of a laugh it wouldn't work properly. The footballers stood still, watching Archie with indignant interest and amusement. It all depended which side they were on.

"Pull up, you fathead!" roared Tommy Watson.

But Archie rushed on, clasping the ball for dear life. He had seen Handforth pick it up, and he saw no reason why he shouldn't do the same thing. It was evidently all in the game.

And he pelted on towards the goal like a racer. He quite overlooked the fact that he was rushing towards his own goal. But this, of course, was just a detail. Archie wasn't at all particular.

He arrived, found Handforth glaring at

him, and then he pulled up, and threw the ball with all his strength past the goalkeeper.

"Goal, what?" he said breathlessly. "Cheers, and all that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie turned round and grabbed at his monocle, and jammed it into his eye.

"I mean to say, why the old cackle?" he asked. "I've just scored, don't you know. Fairly pushed the old thing past—"

"Oh, you hopeless ass!" roared Handforth. "Don't you know you're not allowed to handle the ball?"

"But, darling, I distinctly saw you doing so—"

"I'm the goalie!" bawled Handforth.

"Absolutely. But, I mean, that is to say—"

"And, on the top of all that, you go and shove the ball into your own net!" howled Handforth. "A jolly fine lot of footballers, ain't you?"

"Distinctly and absolutely not!" said Archie. "I admit, dear old sportsman, that I'm most putrid at the game. But the old net, what? I mean to say, the optical department fails to observe the bally thing—"

"There isn't a net, really you chump!" said Handforth. "That's only a way of speaking. The best thing you can do is to clear off the field. You're messing up the whole game!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I'm fearfully afraid that such is the case, laddie. But the dear old top with the whistling digits has shoved the old foot down. I'm in the most deuced state of worry."

I came up, chuckling.

"All right, Archie—I think you can buzz off now," I grinned. "We'll take pity on you, and play with only ten men. I think we shall manage, at a pinch."

Archie stared at me hopefully.

"Pray allow me to grasp the idea," he said. "Am I, as it were, allowed to skate into the background?"

"Yes, old son—you can leave it to us," I said.

"Several cartloads of the heartiest!" exclaimed Archie fervently. "I mean to say, laddie, furlongs of thanks, and all that! Poles and Perches and roods, in fact. Toodleoo, dear old beans. Pray carry on with the bloodthirsty conflict."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie limped away, wiping his brow with a silk handkerchief. Football, in his opinion, was a perfectly ridiculous pastime. Even after he had taken the trouble to score a goal, he had not even received a word of thanks.

"Bally disheartening!" he murmured. "I mean to say, it sort of gives a chappie the pip!"

With Archie off the field, the game settled down into something more like a real thing. Fatty Little was like a porpoise floundering about, and he was just about as useful as Archie had been.

When the ball did happen to come his way, he either missed it, or barged into three or four players, and caused complete confusion. Fatty himself had not gone over once yet. He was like a rock in a stormy sea.

But the goals were piled up in rapid succession. The St. Frank's forwards were as keen as mustard now. Pitt and Grey and Montie and Singleton dominated the game, and time after time they swept down the field, passing one to the other with all the signs and skill of which they knew.

Just because this was a comic game, they saw no reason why they shouldn't do their best. Within four minutes Sir Montie scored two goals. Pitt added another immediately after kick-off. And then Grey sailed in and contributed a fourth. This made the score five—two.

"Crikey!" panted Billings, as the teams lined up again. "Bloomin' 'ot stuff, ain't you? I never thought as you could play like this! Still we'll get even soon, I'll bet!"

The Council schoolboys certainly tried their hardest to manage it. They put terrific dash into their play. They swept down the field in a clump, and after one or two such attempts, literally barged into Handforth, and sent him, with the leather between the imaginary posts.

Strictly speaking, I oughtn't to have allowed the goal, for at least two of the opposing forwards handled during the course of that rush. But it didn't matter much, and it added to the interest.

Again the teams kicked off. The juniors were now showing signs of tiredness. It was rather hot, and the perspiration was flowing freely. Billings managed to get the ball, and sent out a pass to the wing.

But Fatty Little was there, and he seized his chance. He trapped the leather, gazed round, and raised his foot to kick the ball across to McClure. But just then one of the Londoners rushed up, and charged into Fatty.

The Council schoolboy fell over backwards with a thud, and Fatty remained immovable.

"Ass!" he said. "What are you trying to do?"

"Crums!" gasped the other. "You ain't 'arf a lump, mate!"

Fatty kicked at the ball carelessly, and the force of his thrust completely upset his balance. Like Archie, he missed the leather altogether, and sat down with enough force to cause a miniature earthquake.

Bang!

There was a sharp, loud explosion. Fatty Little sat there, looking rather dazed.

"Great frying pans!" he panted. "What—what the beef gravy was that?"

"Ha, ha, Ha!"

There was no need to ask what had happened. Fatty had come down fairly and squarely upon the football. And no self-respecting football could be expected to stand such a test as that.

It had burst.

And the game, automatically, was over.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FUN OF THE FAIR.



"H A, HA, HA!"
The sight of Fatty Little sitting there was altogether too funny for most of the fellows. They simply howled with merriment. Fatty didn't quite

realise what had happened at first, and he looked round wonderingly.

"Great bloaters!" he exclaimed. "What's the noise about?"

Harry Billings rushed up, red and indignant.

"You great fat idjit!" he roared. "You've busted the blooming ball!"

"That's about settled it, I fancy," I said, grinning. "We can't very well proceed with a football in that condition. And it's quite beyond repair. I suppose the best thing we can do is to call the game off."

"But what about my football?" demanded Billings. "We ain't got another one, either! Just when we was winning, too—"

"Winning!" roared Handforth indignantly. "Why, you babbling ass! You were five goals down! In another ten minutes we should have wiped you up—"

"Peace, my children," I said calmly. "Arguing about it won't make it better. We'll call the game square, and that'll save all jawing. By the way, Billings, what's the damage?"

"Damage?" said the Council schoolboy. "What for?"

"Why, the ball—"

"Oh, shut it," said Billings. "I don't need no money for that, mate. A football's always liable to go off, especially if a ten weight falls on it all of a sudden. I ain't takin' none o' your money."

I thought it better not to pursue the subject, and as it was impossible to continue the game, we wiped our heated faces and donned our jackets and caps. Archie, by this time, was looking practically himself. He had spent a considerable time in brushing his clothing and making himself tidy.

"I mean to say finished?" he asked. "Surely not, dear old beans? I had an idea that the bally old game would go on for hours, don't you know. What's the idea? What, as it were, is the old scheme?"

"Fatty's messed the whole thing up, and so we're dished!" growled Handforth. "It was a fatheaded idea to get him to play—"

"How the dickens was I to know the ball was underneath me?" demanded Fatty Little warmly. "A pretty rotten football, too! After all, I only sat on the thing!"

"I reckon you'd flatten a blinkin' cannon-ball!" said Billings. "Crums! You ain't 'arf a size, matey! Blowed if I can under-

stand what they feed you on! I suppose you chaps'll be going now?"

"Yes," I said. "Thanks for the game, and I'm sorry about that football——"

"Don't mention it!" said Billings. "Accidents will happen. Jolly pleased to have met you, mates!"

After a little delay we succeeded in parting with our late opponents, and then we proceeded to continue our journey. By a piece of luck we scrambled on a No. 3 bus which came up and discharged half its passengers.

And so, once more, we were bound for the Crystal Palace.

We arrived in due course, and outside the imposing structure we collected in a body discussing matters. Then I noticed that Fatty Little was quietly edging off, and doing it in an unobtrusive manner.

"Hallo! Where's Fatty sneaking away to?" I said. "Fatty! Hi, you ass!"

Fatty Little looked round guiltily, and came back.

"I—I was just thinking about a little grub——" he began.

"Well, continue thinking about it!" said Handforth. "You glutton! Can't you wait until we all feed?"

"But I'm starving!" protested Fatty weakly. "I can't stand it any longer, you know! It's awful, you chaps! I—I just spotted some shops, and I wanted to have a little snack——"

"We shall all be having a feed soon," I interrupted. "There are plenty of grub places inside the Palace, Fatty. Lyons' cafes, you know. I think the best thing we can do is to start the afternoon with a feed."

"Oh, rather," agreed Fatty eagerly. "There's nothing like laying a solid base when you've got a long spell before you. I've had practically nothing to eat all day long——"

"Oh, nothing!" agreed Handforth sarcastically. "Nothing, that is, except ten slices of bacon for breakfast and half a dozen eggs, and a couple of loaves, and two hundred sandwiches coming along!"

"You silly ass!" snorted Fatty. "I didn't have half that! You know jolly well I only had three eggs——"

"Don't argue about it," interrupted Pitt. "As a matter of fact, we're all hungry, so we can do with a feed. Let's come inside!"

"Right-ho! Lead the way, old son!"

We all paid our money, and went through the turnstiles and into the body of the immense glass and steel structure. The whole place was considerably crowded. But this, of course, was all the better. You can't enjoy yourself much in a place of this kind if it is nearly empty.

We were not particularly interested in the interior of the building. We were far more concerned regarding the interior of ourselves. And with practically no delay we

entered one of the big cafes, and commandeered three tables. We were rather lucky in getting them next to one another.

The feed was a great success. Fatty Little fairly broke all records. He indulged in poached eggs on toast, Welsh rabbit, sardines, bread and butter, and literally went through the whole menu. The waitress who served us was looking somewhat fagged out and tired by the time Fatty's wants were supplied.

Pitt suggested that if we decided to sit there all day, Fatty would keep on eating.

"He orders one lot of grub, and it's gone in about two ticks!" explained Pitt. "Then, by the time the next lot comes, he's got his appetite back in full strength. That'll keep going on until closing time! The only way is to drag him off by force!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Buck up, Fatty! We're going!"

"Wait a tick," said Fatty Little, in alarm. "Be reasonable, you know! I've only had a snack so far, and I've ordered some sandwiches to shove in my giddy pocket! I shall need 'em in half an hour!"

"By absolutely Jove!" said Archie, adjusting his monocle and gazing at Fatty in wonder. "I mean to say, somewhat capacious, and all that sort of rot! Reminds a chappie of the genial lad in the baily old fairy tale! Only Fatty seems to shove it all down into a genuine supply department! Positively amazing. Absolutely! And yet the dear old fruit doesn't seem to expand! No sign of splits in the waistcoat section!"

"My dear Archie, it's a mystery we've never been able to solve!" said Pitt. "It's no good you trying your hand at the game now—we gave it up ages ago. Strictly speaking, Fatty ought to be included in a menagerie of freaks!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "A most rapid cove! Eggs and toast and Welsh rabbit en masse, so to speak. And then—zing! A chappie looks away, and looks back, and the old mountains of fodder have done the disappearing act!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We all got up, having paid the bill, passed out. Fatty lingered behind, still gazing at the menu.

"Half a minute, you chaps!" he pleaded. "There's something here I haven't tried. I didn't notice it before—— Hi! Leggo, Handy!"

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to starve you for a month as a lesson!" growled Handforth. "How the dickens St. Frank's keeps going, I don't know! With you to feed every day it's enough to make the whole show go broke!"

Fatty was only dragged away by force, and after that we made all speed to the great terraces which overlooked the extensive grounds. Here was every sign of life and gaiety and fun.

In the distance, half-hidden by the trees,

there were roundabouts and swings and all sorts of other attractions where money can be spent with astonishing ease. We set off towards the lure.

"Hallo! 'This way to the maze!'" exclaimed Pitt, indicating a board. "We shall have to pay a visit there! With luck, we might lose Fatty inside!"

"You—you rotter!" said Fatty indignantly.

"We'd never have a stroke of fortune like that!" said Handforth. "Still, it would probably do Fatty good. He'd chase himself about until he got as thin as a pale! I vote we take him there at once!"

"I wouldn't jolly well go!" said Fatty Little warmly.

However, the threat was not put into execution, and presently we found ourselves down in a hollow where the fair was situated. There were several gigantic roundabouts, side shows in plenty, a number of cocoanut-shies, and swings. A little distance away we could see a huge kind of aerial contrivance, with boats which swung outwards at an acute angle when the thing was going round. Maxim's Flying Boats was the name of it, I believe.

"Well, what's to be done first?" asked Pitt. "Might as well try this roundabout, eh? Looks a pretty good one—and it's just stopped. Come on!"

Archie regarded the roundabout doubtfully through his monocle.

"I mean to say, really?" he asked. "It seems to me, dear old laddies, that danger lurks abroad, and what not! Frightfully risky, and all that! Balancing skill required in large chunks!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "There's nothing in it!"

"Dash it all!" exclaimed Archie. "What I mean is, dash it all! The scheme is absolutely sound, but it requires consideration, what? Fearsome looking monsters, and all that!"

I grinned. This particular roundabout was one of that type where the passengers required to sit astride or upon extraordinary looking creatures representing dragons and weird birds, and other impossible creations. They were all gaudily painted, and Archie's description was quite apt.

"It's easy enough to keep your balance, Archie," I said. "Come on!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "That is, onward to the old doom! But I must remark, old tulips, that the whole bally thing is dashed unwise. I mean to say, luncheon,

don't you know! Somewhat calculated to stir things up!"

We took no notice of Archie, but climbed on to the roundabout, and took our seats. Handforth blundered on, and nearly smashed up the particular dragon that he chose. The whole thing shivered and shook. Fatty Little hesitated before climbing on board.

Possibly he was thinking of stealing away for some more grub. But Pitt and Grey seized him, and forced him on to the platform. The whole roundabout sagged ominously.

"Endangering the populace, what!" observed Archie.

"Look here, I don't want to come on this beastly thing!" exclaimed Fatty. "These blessed roundabouts always make me feel sick! I'm jolly well off——"

"Stand clear, ladies and gents!" bawled one of the attendants. "Just going! Any more? Threepence, the cheapest ride in Hengland! Walk up!"

The engine in the centre gave a warning toot.

"Now then, young gents—comin' on or not?" asking the attendant, looking at Fatty. "Take y' seats, please!"

Fatty hesitated.

"I'm blowed if I'm going!" he said. "It's all right for you chaps, but—— Hi! Great kippers! What the—— Wow! Stop!"

The roundabout had commenced turning, gradually at first. Fatty was still on the platform, unseated. And the peculiar monsters were moving up and down in the most awkward fashion. Fatty was holding on to his own dragon desperately when it started going upwards, and he lost his grip. And he stood there, with one leg high in the air, balancing himself precariously. Something was bound to happen. Something did.

The roundabout gathered speed, and Fatty, with a wild howl, lost his balance. He crashed to the platform steps on his back, swirled round, and then gracefully slithered off on his back. He arrived in a tangled heap in the dust, and the roundabout continued serenely on its course, and on an even keel. There had been a slight list while Fatty was on it.

"My—my only hat!" panted Fatty, sitting up. "Oh, you rotters! Great doughnuts! I'm dying! I need something to buck me up—grub! The only thing that'll save me is a good feed!"

He scrambled to his feet and glared at the rest of the juniors, who were now whizzing round at a good speed, and grinning with an atrocious lack of sympathy. Most of the fellows quite enjoyed it.

Archie Glenthorne, however, according to his own words, was having a perfectly foul time. This kind of thing was absolutely new to him. He had never been on a roundabout in all his life.

(Continued on page 25.)

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

THE BAD BOY AS A CONJUROR !

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

No. 22

THE JOURNAL OF THE REMOVE OF ST. FRANK'S
Edited by Nipper.

April 22.
1922.

A 'LITTLE'
Easter Egg

from 'St. Frank's'
to Our Readers.





YOU never saw such a muss in your life as thare has bin in our house the last few days! P'raps I can ride a horse in a circus ring, but I've abandoned the attempt to be a magishun.

It don't pan out like I expected. It looks esy wen he's a doin' of it, but wen you come to try it yourself, you're disappointed. The night after pa took me to Herman's sho I thought I'd have a sho myself.

Lotty Sears and two other girls wos in to spend the evenin' with my sisters. I went to cook's pantry and hooked a duzzun eggs.

There was a young man cum with Lotty Sears, a reg'lar swell from Nu York, you never see! I got the eggs an' then I wanted a hat like Herman used, so I took his'n off the hat-rack in the hall—it was a shiny bever hat, the latest thing in hats.

I smashed the eggs up in the hat, an' then I got a little table in the back parlor an' fixed my things, so I could play I was a wizzard, an' then I sez:

"Folks, won't you come to my exbishun? I'm a conjuror. Entranse sixpence."

They all laffed, an' cum in; the yung swell he give me sixpence for the hull crowd. I took up the hat an' shook it, an' said:

"Ladys and gentlemen, this is the egg trick."

They looked in an' see the eggs all in a jelly. The feller he didn't kno it was his hat, an' my sisters they didn't think at first, so they smiled like enny thing.

"Now you see it," sez I.

"Yes," sez they.

"Now you don't," sez I.

Then I shook 'em an' did wot the wizzard did, but the plagy eggs wouldn't come together again. I had to give it up.

The swell he laffed fit to kill, but wen I said I was sorry his hat was in such a sticky mess, wot

would he ware home, he got serius mighty quick; his face got about three foot long, and he looked as if he'd like to eat me.

Bess clered me out of the room. Sue said she'd tell my father, an' so it goes—a innocent little boy can't do the lese thing without he's scolded and banded round. Offen an' offen have I wished I was a injy-rubber boy.

The next day I thought I'd have a sho out to the stable. I put my prices down to a penny. All the boys cum in.

I had mamma's gold watch—I got it out of her buro drawer wen she was eating dinner—an' cook's mortar-an'-pestle that she pounds almonds an' crowkets in. I sed:

"Will enny lady lend me her gold watch?" like I herd Herman ask, an' Johnny, as he agreed, 'cause I let him in for nothin', he said:

"I'll lend you mine," an' he gives me over mamma's watch, wot I'd put in his pocket for that purpose; so I pounded it all up.

It was awful hard to smash—on the crystel, that broke esy. I had to take a stone at last. I said:

"You see the watch is all banded up?"

They hollared "Yes."

I took it an' held it behind my back a minit, an' then I let 'em see the watch game. I was awful scared wen I saw it was just the same an' wouldn't go back nice like it was.

The boys were scared, too, so we hid it in the manger, so the folks would think that Prince—that's our horse—had got it out of the buro drawer an' chewed it up.

"You ain't swollered the sword!" yelled little Bill Brown.

I said I hadn't got a sword to swoller.

"Won't a jackknife do as well?" asked Bob Smith.

I said I'd try. Then he opened his big jack-knife, and lent it to me.

I tried to swoller it, but I choked perfectly dreadful—the blood came out of my mouth—so Bill he hollered:

"Give it up! You ain't no conjuror worth a fig!"

All the boys said I'd given 'em away—I





must pay back their money. So I did, an' my tongue hurt awful—swelled up like enny thing. I was as mad as a hornet 'cause they talked so; so I went into the house.

Mamma asked me what was the matter with my mouth. I said I guessed it was the beetroot we had fer dinner.

I didn't feel very good the rest of the afternoon. My tongue hurt like fury. I felt

kind of sorry, too, about mamma's watch.

Wen we was at tea, an' I dippin' my cake in my tea, 'cause my tongue was sore, in comes Sam, rite in the dinin'-room—he's our man—with cook an' Betsy, he a holding up the watch. Every one of the folks looked at it, then looked at me. Wot made 'em?

"I found it in the manger," gasped Sam, giving it to mamma.

"Mamma," sez I, "I do believe Prince must a got it out of yore buro an' chewed it up like that. Lemme look," sez I, "an' see if I can see the prints o' his teeth into the case."

"Oh, my son, my son, my son," says mamma, "don't you remember the story of your namesake, little Georgie Washington, an' his hatchet?" An', lookin' at the watch agane, she burst into teres an' retreated from the room.

"How came you with it?" asked my father, so sturnly that I began to shake.

But let me drop the curtin on the haroing scene, as they say in stories. I will not pollute thy pages, my dere diry, with what happened next.

Suffishunt be it to remark that for the following week my one grate thought was, "Oh, how I wish I was a Edison, so I could get out a patent for makin' injy-rubber little boys!"

Wen I gro up an' have a family I don't mean to punsh 'em for wot they didn't mean to do. Such unjustness is enough to make a boy pack up his nite-shirt, an' his tooth-brush, an' run away an' live with Injuns. Why don't they go an' buy another watch? There's plenty down in Mr. Goldsmith's jurely store, stid of making such a fuss about that.

At last they've got somethin' else to think of 'sides little Georgie bean such a dreadful bad child. They're as pleasant and good-natured as a basket o' chips.

Montague de Jones' old aunt over in Ireland has died an' left him five thousand pounds. I'm sure I don't kno wot it's pounds of—mebbe it's pounds of money, which would be a awful lot, wouldn't it?

He and Lily is goin' to get married now. Pa says he allers did think Montague was a nice feller—only too young to marry.

So it's all made up. I'm goin' to try to be a real good boy till after the wedding, 'cause Lil she took me in her room an' talked to me with teres in her eyes, an' gave me a gold dollar to keep, an' asked me wouldn't I try an' not do enny mischief, 'cause everyboddy was in such a hurry, so much to do, an' she wanted the affare to go off without any aksidents.

Lil's a good girl. I like her best. I'm goin' to try to pleze her, so's I can go an' live with her

wen she's got a home of her own. She sez I may. She'll have a little room on purpose for me, with a buzz saw, an' a keg o' nails, an' a set of tools.

I guess I won't tell Montague she bleached her hair to make it that gold colour with tar sope—it used to be as black as cole.

Oh, Goody! Ain't I glad—such lots o' cake. Little Johnny's folks ain't got a wedding like our folks has! I crowed over him to-day, you bet.

I've been so busy that I haven't writ in my diry for awful long time. I guess folks find out their little brothers can be useful when they're asked pleasantly.

My legs is that tired when I go to bed, runnin' for spools of thread, silk, cotton, needles, patterns, raisins, citron, post offisis, notes to Mr. De Jones, an' so forth, I wish I could take them off like old Billy Giles does his, at nite.

To-morrow is the grate day wen the wedding will take place. I must go to bed at onst, so's to be up urly.

It is all over at last. I got up bright and urly. They were to be married in church at eleven o'clock. Cook an' everyboddy was too busy to get breakfast. She said:

"Get yourself some bread and butter; I've got lots to attend to."

I didn't kno boys had to eat bread and butter wen they're sisters got married.

I went in where they had a grate long table set, all flowers an' cake, salad, oysters, you don't kno. As I stood up I was able to eat 'bout twiest as much as if I'd set down.

Noboddy was in there. I spilled a decanter on the table-cloth. Such a stain, such a owder of sherry! I got out as quick as I could so's they'd think Betty tipped it over.

Betty she said "Come be dressed," so I was dressed, an' had a buttonhole boquet, a hankerchief stuck out of my brest pocket, an' shiny shoes.

"Sit down," sez she; "kepe still, so you won't spoil your clothes."

I sat down a little while, then I slipped out the back door an' went over to Johnny's to play a spell to pass away the time.

So Johnny said, "There's a nice big mud puddle where we can sail our boats," an' he pushed me in, which surely wasn't my fault.

Wen I got home the whole company had to wait while I was dressed in my ole clothes, an' mamma cryin' 'bout the table-cloth, purtendin' she was cryin' 'cause her daughter was goin' away, and papa whispering he would "tend to me wen all was over."

I tell you Lil looked nice wen she come down-stares in her white satin, her chekes as red as roses, a grate white vail all over her.

Sue looked pretty, too. She was a bridesmade. Mr. De Jones seemed as if he couldn't believe it was Ocktober, he was so warm an' uncomfortable; he stepped on Lil's trane an' tore it, so they had to pin it up in the hall. He wondered where his hat was wen it was on his head, an' he burst four pares of white



kids trying to get them on, he was in such a hurry.

So I pinned Aunt Betsey's red silk handkerchief on to his cote behind, an' noboddy found it out till he was walking up the ile. All the people began to laugh a little, an' the doct'or jerked it off.

So he thought he wanted to tell him something, an' he stopped and looked back, while Lil didn't kno an' went ahead. So the folks giggled out loud, an' he got as red as a piny.

That embarrassed him so that wen the minister asked him for the ring he dropped it, an' it rolled along and went down in the register, an' Sue had to tak off one of hern.

By that time he didn't kno one from another, he was that confused, an' he went to walk out o' church with Aunt Betsey.

Lil says I shant come to live with her, to pay for that.

I don't care. I'm going to tell my brother Montagu about those letters of hers I found in her lower buro drawer from that other feller what used to come here last winter that give 'em back to her because she was such a flirt. I'm goin' to tell him how she pads her shoulder-blades an' what a temper she's got.

We all went into the dining-room wen we got home. I guess there were napkins spred over where I spilt the sherry. I like to burst, there were so many kinds of weddin cake.

"Now, little Georgie, mak a speech," someboddy said.

An' this is wot I said :

"Good luck to my sister wots gone an' got married. May her little boys never get there ears boxed, nor there hare pulled, nor there legs run off, like her little brother has."

They had to hurry to get to the trane; Bess she threwed her slipper after the carriage. everyboddy said good-by; so they didn't miss me, an' I improved the opportunity to have another big feed.

Wen mamma came to look for me I was under the table, cfful, cfful sick.

Then she called Betty to carry me upstairs an' put me to bed, an' side and side like her heart would break, an' said :

"Oh, Georgie, Georgie, what will you be up to nex?"

So I answered her :

"I'd be up to bed nex," which was the truth.



THE "DO IT NOW" FIEND!

By REGINALD PITT.

THERE are some fellows who have a most unfortunate habit of putting things off. For example, you want one of the chaps to lend you a French dictionary, and you buzz into his study and put the matter to him. He agrees at once—says that nothing gives him greater pleasure.

Unfortunately, he can't find it, and remarks that he'll bring it round in five minutes. Of course, he never arrives. He's forgotten it, or he's allowed the matter to slide. The fact is, he doesn't care. He's one of those bounders who lets things rip as a natural course.

On the other hand, there's another type of fellow who's exactly the opposite. He might very well be described as the "do it now" fiend. He can't wait. He thinks of a thing, and it's got to be done on the spot.

The "do it now" fiend is, in a way, a fright-



ful nuisance. He's a sort of public danger who ought to be smothered. Only the other day I happened to be talking with Jack Grey and Holroyd—the latter being a College House chap. He's one of 'em. One of the "do it now" fiends, I mean.

Jack suggested that it wouldn't be a bad idea to re-enamel his bicycle, as it was looking a bit shabby. Holroyd at once remembered that his own bike was rusty and dilapidated. He hailed the suggestion as a good one, and declared that he'd do the thing at once. No sense in delaying.

We patiently pointed out that the time was not suitable. The bicycles, for example, were muddy. A high wind was blowing, and if Holroyd put the enamel on in the shed, the draught would smother it with dust, and ruin all his work. But the "do it now" fiend brushed these objections aside.

Off he went at full speed to the village, got his enamel, and commenced operations at once. It was a half-holiday, and by tea-time the bike was enamelled. By tea-time, also, the wind had increased, and the bicycle shed was filled with the smell of enamel, parts of Holroyd's bicycle, and thousands of particles of dust. And the next morning the enamel was dry—but ruined. This just shows what comes of

(Continued on column 2 page 24.)

SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS.

Being a series of humorous stories about scholars of various schools throughout the country.



Cleanliness.

In their exercises, boys often make statements which, on the face of them, are the expression of some precept or teaching emanating from home — not from school. In the

following extract—taken from a lad's essay on "Cleanliness"—the teaching of the mother does as plainly appear as if she herself had guided the child's pen.

"We should always keep ourselves clean in case of axident in the street. If you was run over, and you hurt your leg badly, you would be undrest by the doctor, and you would be disgraced all down the street if you was unclean. If you was to fall over and cut your hand, the 1st thing is to wash your hand well, and get all the bits of dirt out. It will then heel quick."

* * *

A Budding Phil May.

I am sometimes quite startled when I see signs of genius in a lad—signs which plainly indicate that the possibilities before him are almost unlimited. I recall one boy now who could draw little pictures and caricatures with surprising rapidity and cleverness. He was, in a word, a budding Phil May or Tom Brown.

On one occasion, the boy made a surreptitious sketch on a bit of paper during an examination in arithmetic. He had passed the drawing to a chum behind, and it was this lad's laugh which led to my finding the matter out. I ordered the drawing to be brought out to me.

It was done in pen and ink, and represented a burglar making a precipitate escape through a window; whilst a servant-girl, in her night-dress and with a candle in her hand, was spying at him behind a door!

From the servant-girl's mouth was issuing the letters—L O I C U.

I could not help smiling as I looked at

the sketch; and I said to the young artist:

"Very good, my lad. But what do these five letters mean?"

"Why," he replied, "*Hello! I see you!* The servant is a frightnin' of him, sir."

"Ha! ha!" I laughed; "Well, my lad, now buckle down to your arithmetic; your drawing will take care of itself."

* * *

A Youthful Poem.

As is well known, prose composition is one of the subjects taught in our elementary schools. Metrical composition is not taught; though, considering the number of foolish faddists there have been on Boards and other educational authorities, one would scarcely be surprised to find verse among the list of subjects to be crammed into the little one's heads.

Now and then, however, scholars do, on their own initiative, indulge in "writing poetry," as they call it. These juvenile efforts are sometimes amusing. I herewith give a specimen written by a boy of twelve:

King Harold fought with might and main;
He fought but twice, and never again;
He taught his men to fight the foe,
That when they'd won the battle they
might know
That Harold was their King.

His treacherous brother was named Tostig,
Who fought him at the battle of Stamford
Bridge;
But, alas, this treacherous brother was
slain,
And there on the grass he was lain;
And Harold was the people's King.

When Harold heard the words, he knew,
That William had landed with his crew;
He hurried to the South, leaving no
wastings,
And there he was slain at the battle of
Hastings;
So William was the people's King.



THE PROBLEMS OF TRACKETT GRIM

*The Amazing and Staggering Adventures
of the World's greatest Criminal Detec-
tive and his Boy Assistant, Splinter.*

By EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH.

THE CASE OF THE PINCHED PAINTING.

A Baffling Mystery.

TRACKETT GRIM looked up sharply as the door of his consulting-room opened with a crash. It was morning, and the sun was shining through the window of the celebrated criminal-detective's chambers in Baker's Inn Road.

"Mr. Grim—Mr. Grim!" gasped a husky voice. "I've come to you for help!"

"Oh, have you?" said Trackett Grim curtly.

He turned, threw his book on criminology aside, and glared at the visitor. The latter was a man attired in rough old tweeds, with down-at-heel boots, a tremendous bow in his soft collar, and hair that was long and tangled and sadly needed acquaintanceship with a comb. Over his ordinary clothes he wore a ragged coat of drab cotton stuff, daubed with all colours of paint. Altogether, he looked a disreputable specimen, with his scrubby chin included.

"Yes, Mr. Grim, I want your help!" he said huskily.

"I am sorry—try next door!" said Trackett Grim, in cold tones. "It is one of my practices never to assist beggars. I can see at a glance that you are a tramp, and badly in need of a wash——"

"You are mistaken, Mr. Grim!" cried the other, striking on attitude, and placing one hand upon his chest. "My name is Mr. Dauber Lott, and I am the great painter of Chelsea!"

Trackett Grim sprang to his feet.

"Just my little joke, Mr. Lott!" he said hastily. "Quite so! I am perfectly willing to extend any help that may be required. Kindly sit down, Mr. Lott, and make yourself at home. I gather that you left your studio in a great hurry?"

"How—how can you know that?" gasped Mr. Dauber Lott.

Trackett Grim waved his hand.

"A simple deduction, my dear sir," he said. "You did not even pause to change your smock! Neither did you use your Gillette this morning."

"Wonderful!" said the famous painter. "Your cleverness, Mr. Grim, is astounding. But to business! I have come to you because my masterpiece has disappeared. It has vanished utterly!"

Off to Chelsea!

"Your masterpiece?" repeated Trackett Grim. "Exactly. I understood you to say that you are a painter, Mr. Lott? Leaving your trouble for the moment, would you care to accept a commission for me? The bedroom and the dining-room badly need redecorating——"

"I am a painter of pictures, Mr. Grim!" said Mr. Lott indignantly.

"Pictures!" repeated Trackett Grim. "Oh, I understand! An artist? Forgive me, Mr. Lott—a natural mistake. And your masterpiece has vanished? Kindly relate the circumstances of this extraordinary affair."

"The masterpiece is my life's work," said Mr. Dauber Lott. "It is a magnificent production, and has taken me years to complete—a glorious painting representing the fall of a factory chimney!"

"A striking subject!" commented Trackett Grim.

"I chose that subject in order to obtain the effect of swift action," said Mr. Lott. "This great painting was to have been hung in the Academy—the great Royal Academy! I left it in my studio last night, and this morning it had gone. There was no trace of any burglars or anything!"

"Come!" cried Trackett Grim dramatically. "We will go to Chelsea!"

The Clue of the Dustman's Coat!

After a long, weary ride, in Trackett Grim's racing-car, Chelsea was reached. The character of the place could not be mistaken. The very atmosphere was charged with the heavy scent of oil colours and Chelsea buns. Practically every house was a studio, and every shop displayed mountains of buns. Chelsea is famous for buns and artists.

Passing along the streets were long-haired be-mocked men, with long bows and baggy trousers. It seemed that no other persons but artists lived in the district. Trackett Grim felt like a foreigner in a strange land.

And at last the car pulled up in front of Mr. Dauber Lott's studio. This was a magnificent bungalow, and the pair entered at once. Over half the room was entirely of glass, and the place was as light as day inside, and consisted of one large studio, with a cooking-stove up one corner, and a bed in the other. Hanging from a line were various articles of washing. From their drab condition, Trackett Grim deduced that Mr Dauber Lott had performed the work himself.

All round the walls there were oil paintings—and the floor was littered with empty paint tubes, and scraps of canvas.

"The masterpiece was lying against the wall," said Mr. Lott. "It was there last night when I went to bed, but it had vanished by the morning. And yet I was here all the time!"

"What callers did you have before you were up?" asked Trackett Grim.

"One—the dustman," replied Mr. Dauber Lott. "He always comes on Thursdays and clears up for me, thus increasing his pay by twopence."

Trackett Grim glanced round the studio, and wondered how it must have looked

before the dustman visited it. The detective imagined that a dozen dustmen were required to finish the job.

"Very well, Mr. Lott, I will investigate," said Trackett Grim briskly. "Wait here! Within an hour I shall return with your masterpiece."

"You have a clue?" cried the painter, joyfully.

"I am never without one," said Trackett Grim. "If you try to suggest that I can't find clues, I'll biff you on the nose! Wait here until I return!"

Trackett Grim hurried off. And just outside Splinter was waiting — Splinter, his faithful young assistant. They walked along and saw a dustman turned out of a public-house, using the back of his hand as a serviette.

"Ah!" said Trackett Grim dramatically. "The evidence!"

A Disappointment!

He pointed with a quivering finger to the dustman's coat. And there, clearly visible, was a spot of green paint. It was a direct clue. And, then and there Trackett Grim and Splinter shadowed the dustman, sustaining themselves at intervals by the purchase and consumption of Chelsea buns.

The dustman was with a cart, and Trackett Grim and Splinter were obliged to follow this from house to house. But, at last, the dustcart was full, and off it went to the great refuse heap somewhere behind the Town Hall.

The dust cart was tipped up, and all the rubbish shot out. Instantly, Trackett Grim darted forward and seized a square piece of canvas about a foot long by eighteen inches wide. Trackett Grim took one glance at it, and then snorted with disgust.

"We have failed, Splinter!" he said curtly. "Bah!"

For he could see at a glance that this



Altogether he looked a disreputable specimen, with his scrubby chin included.

canvas was merely an odd piece upon which Mr. Dauber Lott had wiped his brushes. However, Trackett Grim placed it in his pocket, and searched the rest of the dust heap. There was no sign of the great masterpiece. And the dustman had now gone, so it was impossible to question him.

"There is only one thing to be done," said Trackett Grim. "We will return to the studio, Splinter. Mr. Dauber Lott will be able to tell us the exact colours he used—and we shall be able to compare them with the smudges on this scrap of canvas, and then use the latter as a guide. Come!"

Joy!

The great painter met them just inside the door. The air was heavy with the odour of frying kippers, and it was clear that Mr. Dauber Lott was partaking of luncheon. He nearly swallowed a bone in his excitement.

"You have succeeded, Mr. Grim!" he asked feverishly.

"No—I have failed!" was Trackett Grim's bitter reply. "But there is just a chance, Mr. Lott. If you will show me the colours you used by glancing at this odd scrap of waste canvas——"

Mr. Dauber Lott snatched it from the detective's hand with a wild whoop.

"Great pip!" he gasped. "This is the masterpiece!"

"The masterpiece?" panted Trackett Grim blankly, and just catching Splinter as he fainted. "Ah, yes, of course! Just a little joke of mine, Mr. Lott! I knew it all the time."

"As a reward, I will present you with half a dozen of these other masterpieces," said Mr. Dauber Lott generously. "Tut, tut! It is nothing."

"Thank you," said Trackett Grim. "But I must decline, Mr. Lott. Kindly leave them here until next Thursday—when the dustman will call for them. It was he who made a mistake on this occasion, and took your masterpiece for a piece of rubbish!"

"Rubbish!" shouted Dauber Lott. "Why, my dear sir, I shall be hung in the Academy this year."

Trackett Grim departed, firmly convinced that Mr. Dauber Lott ought to be hung somewhere else!

THE "DO IT NOW" FIEND.

(Continued from page 20.)

"doing it now"—when the time doesn't happen to be appropriate.

Of course, I believe in the principle myself. There's really nothing like "doing it now." Applied sensibly, the scheme is absolutely O.K. The fellow who does things on the spot does them. They don't get put off, and forgotten. But when it becomes a mania, it's a very different matter.

There's another "do it now" fiend in the Ancient House—Lincoln, of Study J. Doyle and Armstrong and Griffith have a fearful lot of trouble with him. He thinks of things, and does them on the spot. No matter what happens to be proceeding in the study, Lincoln gets busy.

Last week he thought it would be a ripping wheeze to buy a portable gramophone. He couldn't wait. The thing had to be accomplished on the instant. Off he went to Bannington, bought the blessed thing, and brought it back. He'd seen it in the second-hand shop a few days earlier.

Having no patience, the "do it now" fiend promptly got the gramophone going. It didn't matter to him whether his study mates were in the middle of prep. or not. As a matter of fact, they were. And, afterwards, Lincoln was rather upset as he picked up the remains. They were ultimately used to light the fire with.

Then, again, the same complaint sometimes affects a prefect, or a master. Mr. Pagett, of the Fifth, is one of them. He gives a chap a hundred lines. Mr. Pagett isn't content with those lines being turned in the next morning. They've got to be done at once. If it's a half-holiday, and there's an important cricket match on—well, that's a mere trifle. The unhappy culprit has got to do the lines, and let cricket rip. Mr. Pagett demands that things shall be done on the instant.

Another member of the tribe is Wilson, of the Sixth. He's a prefect, of course. He wants a message taken across to the College House. That message will do in an hour, or any old time. But Wilson demands that it shall be done at once. He collars hold of a fag, and sends him off. Sometimes the fag is in the middle of tea. What does the "do it now" fiend care? If the thing was important, it would be a different thing. "Doing it now" is a first-class principle, always providing that the time is suitable for "doing it now." But it becomes positively fiendish when a fellow upsets the whole routine of life in order to get something done which really needn't be done at all.

Upon the whole, the week has been fairly quiet, with an absence of storms in the Form-room. Just a gentle breeze now and again. Mr. Crowell has had very little to grumble about—and we have been somewhat bored.

NEXT WEEK!

**ANOTHER AMAZING
TRACKETT GRIM THRILLER**

(Continued from page 16.)

He clung to the monster upon which he sat with a certain show of confidence at first. Then the speed increased. And as it increased, the monster shot up and down in the most disconcerting fashion.

Archie was nearly jerked off his seat. He fell forward, clasped the dragon round the neck, and clung on for dear life.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "I mean to say, great dashed Scott! This is frightful! Ghastly sensations below the old belt, don't you know! I believe, dear laddies, that disasters are in the old offing!"

The speed grew even greater, and Archie slithered round slightly, and seemed in fearful peril of falling off. And just then a somewhat untidy-looking gentleman arrived on the scene, and gave Archie a hitch up.

"Fares, please!" he said briskly.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "Thanks awfully, old bean! Gratitude in chunks for the timely hitch! Thanks, don't you know, frightfully awfully! Fares—what! Absolutely!"

"Frippence!" said the collector, holding out a hand.

"Every time, old lad!" panted Archie. "But the fact is, a chappie has only got two hands, if you grasp my meaning. Two bally old flippers—what! I mean to say, I could do with free—that is, three! And it's quite imposs. to jazz down into the old cash-container!"

"None o' them tricks, my lad!" said the collector. "Tryin' to work it—eh? Frippence, or you gits chucked off!"

"Really, old lad, I seriously think the chucking-off business will happen in any case," said Archie. "I'm slipping, dear one positively casting the old moorings! Archie, in fact, is coming adrift!"

"All right, I'll pay his fare!" shouted Pitt, from the next seat.

The man grunted, passed on, and collected sixpence from Reginald Pitt. The roundabout, in the meantime, was shooting round at tremendous speed. It was not one of those slow, old-fashioned affairs that can be ridden with impunity. It was something of a speed merchant.

Archie gazed round desperately. This was certainly more than he had bargained for. Again he slipped, and this time he parted company from the dragon altogether. But he continued to cling to a brass rail like a leech. And there he hung for dear life, flapping out like a flag in the breeze.

"This, laddie, is the end!" he murmured sadly. "Urgent howls for help, S.O.S., and what not! This is absolutely the time when I need old Phipps to rally round. But Phipps is—What-ho! What-ho! Application of the old brakes! Sixteen varieties of relief!"

The roundabout, in fact, was slowing down. And Archie, as soon as he felt safe, released his hold. He was somewhat too

previous, for he had his back to the outer edge. The momentum, which was still fairly great, caused him to shoot outwards with tremendous speed.

He landed fairly and squarely in the middle of a crowd of smiling young ladies. He sat up, dazed, confused, and bewildered, to find himself fairly surrounded with muslins and silks, and other feminine dainties. The girls shrieked with merriment at Archie's comic expression of dismay.

"Great sainted aunts!" ejaculated Archie faintly. "I mean to say—what! That is, I—er— To be precise, I—I— Assistance required! Confusion, as it were, reigns!"

Red as a beetroot, Archie scrambled to his feet and raised his hat. At least, he put his hand to his head with that intention. But his hat had rolled off, and was some distance away. This only added to his confusion.

"Pray accept the bally apologies!" he said desperately. "Quite an accident, old tulip— Gadzooks! I—I mean— That is, dear ones! I should say, darlings! Great Scott! This is quite ghastly! Kindly pardon the confusion stuff! Ah, this is priceless! Gather round, laddies, and lend me your support! Archie is in the bally old throes!"

Tommy Watson and Montie and I, and several other fellows, joined Archie, and we dusted him down, recovered his hat, placed it on his head, and led him away. The girls watched us, and giggled with amusement.

"I'm surprised at you, Archie!" said Pitt reproachfully.

"I mean to say, what?" asked Archie meekly. "I don't quite grasp—"

"Trying to get off with the girls like that!" went on Pitt. "We shall have to look after you in future! And you're not merely content with one, but you want half-a-dozen round you!"

"What! That is to say, what?" exclaimed Archie. "I—I mean— Oh, dash it all! Look here, don't you know! Dash it all! I mean to remark, somewhat awful, and all that! My dear old tin of fruit! The girls, what? Not at all, laddie! Not, as it were, at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll forgive you this time, Archie, but you'll have to be more careful," grinned Pitt. "Now what about sampling the swings?"

Archie cast a hunted look about him, and began to sneak off.

"Hallo! Where away, Archie?" I sang out.

"Absolutely!" gasped Archie. "I—I mean, oh, rather! Just—just—er—taking the old look round, don't you know! I mean to say, the swings, old cucumber! Hardly in my line, you see. I might even mention that I'm feeling dashed hot and dashed bothered! All over alike, and what not!"

I grinned.

"All right, Archie—we'll spare you!" I

said. "If some of the chaps like to go on the swings—let 'em go. You can stand by and look on."

Archie sighed with immense relief.

"A few dozen portions of gratitude, old bean!" he observed gratefully. "I mean to say, thanks in abundance, and all that! The old tissues are just about fagged, if you grasp my meaning. Positively sagging at the joints, and all that sort of thing. The life is deucedly strenuous!"

Archie had sampled the roundabout, but the very thought of going on the swings was sufficient. He backed away to a safe distance, and stood watching. One or two of the other fellows were with him—the Hon. Douglas Singleton, Sir Montie Tregellis-West, and Tommy Watson, and Willard. They were not hankering after the thrills of the big swings.

But Edward Oswald Handforth stalked forward with keen anticipation. For some minutes he had been watching the swings with contemptuous gaze. He would show this crowd how to swing properly!

CHAPTER V.

HANDFORTH AND CO. FALL OUT!



CHURCH looked at McClure, and McClure winked. Then they both strolled casually away. They were not at all averse from indulging in a swing, but they did not exactly fancy having Hand-

forth with them. They had a fairly strong inkling that Edward Oswald would cause trouble.

But they were not to escape.

Handforth turned after a few yards, talking.

"Now, the three of us can get in one of these together," he remarked. "Of course, you'll be a blessed nuisance——"

"Talking to me, mate?" asked a gentleman by Handforth's side.

Handforth started. He found himself staring at the gentleman who had spoken, and who was wearing a bowler hat on the back of his head and a cheap cigar in his mouth.

"Eh? What?" said Handforth blankly.

"Oh, sorry! I—I thought I was talking to my chums! The rotters! They've backed out of it—but they needn't think I'm putting up with any rot like that!"

Handforth stormed back, and let out a yell which attracted notice from all sides. Church and McClure came to a halt.

"Hi! Come here, you rotters!" bellowed Handforth.

"Better go!" whispered Church. "The fathead's making everybody stare! He ought to know better."

They joined their leader, and Handforth looked ferocious.

"Trying to sneak off, eh?" he said fiercely. "You—you slackers! Afraid to go on a swing——"

"Who's afraid?" demanded McClure. "Don't be an ass, Handy! Church and I thought about going up in one together, you know——"

"Oh, did you?" interrupted Handforth. "Well, you'd better think again! You're coming up with me!"

"But there's not room for three in one of those boats!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Rot! You chaps are going to pull the ropes and swing us up, and I'm going to sit in the middle! I'm not going to jolly well let you get out of it like this. Come on!"

Church and McClure agreed. They didn't want Handforth to start a fearful row in the middle of the fair grounds. And refusal on their part would certainly lead to such a disaster.

The other juniors collected in a group and looked on. I couldn't help chuckling.

"This is where we're going to see something funny, my children!" I said. "Rub your eyes, and watch closely. The one-and-only Handforth is about to provide us with some cheap amusement. It ought to be better than a pantomime."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I mean to say, these things are most frightfully screaming, and all that, when a chappie views them from afar. You gather the old trend? But when a chappie is on the job himself. Well, don't you know, it's different. Absolutely diff., in fact."

One of the swings had just become vacant, and Handforth and Co. marched up, and climbed on to the platform which led straight into the swinging boat. The man in charge grinned as the three juniors got in.

"Now, then, you chaps squat down and pull away at the ropes!" said Handforth. "If you don't do as you're told at once, I'll jolly well pitch you out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's right, sonny!" grinned a spectator. "Don't let them there pals o' yours do any slackin'. Go it!"

Church and McClure turned red.

"Simply making a public exhibition of ourselves!" muttered Church.

"What?" snapped Handforth.

"Nothing!"

His chums commenced pulling at the ropes, and the swing commenced moving backwards and forward. Handforth held on to the iron uprights, and seemed quite oblivious of the fact that large numbers of holiday-makers had paused to look on. They somehow had an idea that something was going to happen.

The swing rose higher and higher, and when Church and McClure thought that they were going nicely, they ceased their efforts.

Handforth suddenly became aware of this, and looked at them contemptuously.

"What's the idea?" he demanded.

"Eh? The idea of what?"

"Why, slowing down——"

"We're going high enough, aren't we?" asked McClure. "These things aren't particularly safe, you know, and your position can't be called secure, Handy. We don't want to see you pitched out, you know——"

"Rot!" said Handforth sourly. "The fact is, you're funky! You daren't go up any higher!"

"Oh, daren't we?" roared Church.

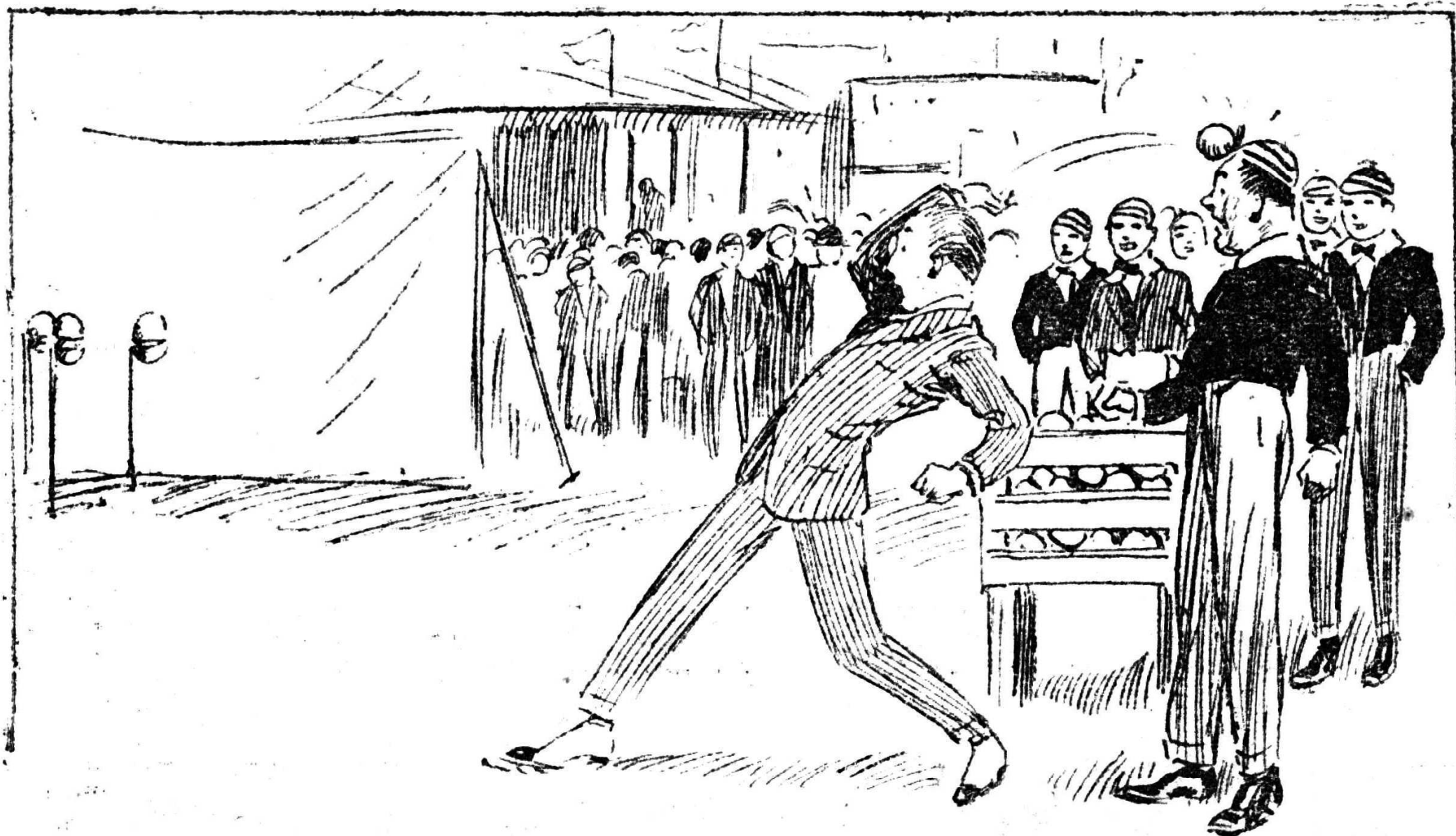
"No, you daren't!"

Church glared across at McClure, and the

He and Church worked away, and the boat swung even higher. At the top of its swing, the boat nearly assumed an inverted position, and seemed in danger of going round in a complete circle. Handforth clung on for dear life. Church and McClure were slightly "windy," but they wouldn't have admitted it for worlds.

"Great!" gasped Handforth. "That's the stuff! Just—just what I wanted, you know! About enough, eh? I—I—— Great pip! Look out, you fatheads!"

Handforth was being lifted right out of the boat at certain periods of the downward and upward swing. He was compelled to clutch at the iron supports with



Archie took his throw. Unfortunately, the ball slipped from his fingers, and descended with an ominous crack upon Handforth's head.

latter nodded. Then they began pulling as hard as they could possibly pull. They used all their strength and energy. They didn't quite care for such high swinging, but Handforth had cast aspersions upon their courage, and now they determined to put the wind up him.

The swing rose higher and higher—it was shooting up and down with terrific velocity. The crowds looked on, enjoying it all. Some of the elderly people shook their heads doubtfully, but the younger ones had no qualms.

"That's better!" said Handforth, clutching to the supports. "Now we're moving a bit! I thought you'd be all right if I bucked you up."

"We've hardly started yet!" panted McClure.

all his strength. And Church and McClure still pulled away.

"How do you like it, Handy?" panted Church grimly.

"Fine!" breathed Handforth. "We—we'd better slow down now——"

"Not likely!" said Church. "We're only half up yet!"

Handforth gulped. The man below, in charge, applied the rough-and-ready brake at times, in order to stop the boat's headlong career. But Church and McClure carried on strenuously, and as fast as the boat was slowed down they made it swing higher and higher.

"Poor old Handy!" grinned Pitt. "He asked for it!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I mean to say, the dear chappie positively requested the stuff, what? And, as it were, he's

receiving it. The old walnut is positively obtaining it in considerable chunks!"

"Begad!" said Sir Montie. "It looks frightfully dangerous, dear old boys."

"Not a bit of it!" I grinned. "As long as Handy keeps hold he's safe enough—and I don't think he's ass enough to release the grip."

"The old clutching hand, and all that!" observed Archie.

Handforth, to tell the truth, was not troubled by nervousness—he was probably the most reckless fellow within the Crystal Palace grounds. He never considered any kind of odds, and was capable of rushing bald-headed into the most desperate danger. Handforth was, as a matter of fact, suffering from certain internal spasms.

The violent swinging had not affected Church and McClure much, because they were seated. But Handforth was standing up, assuming all sorts of queer attitudes. His one desire at the moment was to feel solid earth beneath his feet. But it was almost impossible for him to tell his chums to desist. Pride would not allow it.

"This is fine!" said Church, hauling away on the rope. "Something like a swing, eh? Put some beef into it, McClure!"

"Rather," said McClure. "Tally-ho! Up she goes!"

Handforth capitulated.

"I—I think we've had enough!" he gasped. "Better slow down now!"

"Not likely!" said Church. "You asked us to jolly well buzz, and we're buzzing! We could go a lot higher if that rotter with the plank didn't keep on——"

"Slow down!" bawled Handforth desperately.

Church and McClure pulled harder than ever.

"You—you rotters!" snorted Handforth. "I—I'm feeling ill! If you don't slow down at once I'll jolly well kick you out of the boat! Trying to murder me—that's what you're doing! If I peg out over this you'll have my death on your heads! And you'll have to pay the giddy funeral expenses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth's words were audible to all and a yell of laughter went up. Church and McClure grinned, and manfully proceeded with the good work. For months and months—for terms—they had been waiting for an opportunity to get the aggressive Edward Oswald on toast. He was fairly on it now. He was at their mercy. Until they chose to slacken their efforts, Handforth was helpless. And they could easily afford to risk the consequences.

"Go it, Churchy!" said McClure.

"Rather!" said Church. "Now, just one big effort——"

(Continued on next page.)

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(Continued from page 28.)

"If—if you pull any higher I'll—I'll pulverise you!" howled Handforth. "If you think I'm standing any of your rot you've made a bloomer— Yarooooh! Look out! Hi! What the— Whoa!"

Handforth had turned slightly, and one hand came away from the iron support. He swung round, nearly fell out of the boat backwards and slithered to the bottom on his back. Both Church and McClure automatically ceased pulling, filled with momentary alarm.

"You—you fathead!" gasped Church. "I thought you'd gone, Handy!"

Handforth sat up and clenched his fists.

"You rotters!" he roared. "I'll— Yarooooh!"

Handforth was unwise in sitting up at that moment. The boat was just nearing the top of its swing, and as Handforth sat up the momentum nearly caused him to turn a complete somersault into space. McClure was in danger of being carried over, too. He clutched at Handforth and saved them both.

"Steady on!" he gasped desperately.

Incidentally, McClure jabbed his fist into Handy's right eye. This, of course, was quite accidental and excusable under the circumstances. But Handforth was not in the mood to excuse anything.

"You—you clumsy fathead!" he roared. "I'm blinded!"

Biff!

Even in that awkward position Handforth managed to bring his fist round. It caught McClure under the chin and the unfortunate junior gave one despairing howl and toppled over backwards.

He was still clutching on to the boat, and although he swung outwards, he did not lose his grip. Handforth grabbed him by the slack of the trousers and hung on with all his strength.

"You clumsy lunatic!" he said faintly. "You nearly went that time!"

"Hang on tight, for goodness sake!" gasped Church.

Church was doing his utmost to bring the swing to a standstill, and he was ably assisted in this noble work by the gentleman below, who operated the plank-brake with signal effect.

The swing grew lower and lower, and a gasp of relief went up from the crowd. Handforth and Co., of course, had been providing the thrill of the fair. Indeed, so great was the interest that the whole incident was later reported in one of the evening papers, headed "Rag by public schoolboys at Crystal Palace." Handforth was immensely proud of that paragraph when he saw it.

"The reckless ass!" I snapped. "Thank goodness that swing's slowing down. I was expecting the idiots to break their necks every minute! There ought to be a law

passed, forbidding Handforth to appear publicly!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie, adjusting his monocle. "I mean to say, deucedly fearful risks, and what not! The dear chappies positively made my dashed blood run cold, don't you know! Trickle down the old spine and so forth!"

"Handforth's capable of anything!" growled Tommy Watson.

"He'll come a cropper yet!" declared Pitt. "He'll— My hat! He's come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swing was nearly at a standstill, and Handforth, very red in the face, got to his feet, still clutching at McClure. Church came over to assist—for, even stationary, the swing was some distance from the ground.

"Just like you, Handy!" said Church. "I thought—"

"Who told you to interfere, Walter Church?" bellowed Handforth, turning and releasing his hold on McClure. "I'll jolly well punch— Hallo! What the— Well, I'm jiggered! Of all the asses!"

McClure descended to the ground with a thud and a howl. He had desperately attempted to save himself, but it couldn't be managed. Handforth saw him sprawling in the grass and then turned to Church.

"That was your fault!" he roared.

"My fault!" said Church indignantly.

"Why, you silly cuckoo—"

"Take that!" snapped Handforth grimly. Biff!

Church took it. He received it fairly and squarely on the nose and he staggered wildly in the unstable swing and toppled over the side. But Handforth did not escape. Church's clutching hand grasped him desperately and he followed his chum into space. They sprawled on the grass in a tangled heap—just as McClure was getting up. McClure crashed to earth again, with Handforth's boot in his chest.

And there they lay, gasping and groaning, in a mangled up heap of arms and legs.

And the crowd, finding that all danger was past, laughed uproariously. The only fellows who couldn't see the point of the joke were Handforth and Co.

In more ways than one the famous chums of Study D had fallen out!

CHAPTER VI

THE KNOTS AMONG THE NUTS!



HANDFORTH dusted himself down fiercely.

"I'm jolly well going to make you suffer for this, my sons!" he declared. "Making a public exhibition of me like that—"

"Oh, be reasonable, for goodness sake!" snapped Church. "It was you who made the exhibition, Handy! Why, it was touch

and go whether we were killed or not. You're too jolly dangerous to be on a swing!"

Handforth glared.

"Didn't you pull the boat up too high?" he roared.

"Didn't you tell us to?" retorted Church promptly.

"No, I didn't."

"You did!"

"I mean to say, quarrels and all that kind of thing, what?" put in Archie. "Dashed bad form, old lads. Upsetting the old harmony, if you know what I mean. Absolutely. Kindly remove the scowls and frowns and what not."

"Good for you, Archie!" said Pitt. "Now then, Handy—dry up! The affair's over, and we're going to try our luck at the cocoanut shies. But you'd better not join in, or you'll brain half the population!"

Handforth snorted.

"Oh, shall I?" he roared. "We'll jolly soon see about that. I'm going to slosh down a cocoanut with every ball—you chaps can go and collect 'em. Just wait till I get started."

Reginald Pitt was satisfied. He had successfully changed the subject, and Handforth forgot about the swings and his quarrel with Church and McClure. So, in a body, we moved off to the "bally old nut department," as Archie put it.

"Hold on, you chaps," I said. "Before any of us start, I thought we ought to give Archie a chance. I've got an idea that he'll do great things at this game. Now then, Archie—off you go!"

Archie looked rather helpless.

"But, dash it all!" he protested. "I mean to say, dash it all. Scarcely dig., if you know what I mean. Hardly the stuff for us, what? Don't you think laddie, that we ought to give the old nuts the go-by?"

"Rats!" said Pitt. "There's no question of dignity about it. We've come here for the fun of the fair and we're going to get it!"

In the meantime I had purchased four of the wooden balls which are used—chiefly unsuccessfully—to knock the cocoanuts out of their sockets. As a general rule the nuts are fixed in fairly tightly, and it requires a direct hit to dislodge one of them.

"Now then, Archie—grab hold!" I said briskly.

"Oh, rather," said Archie, taking one of the wooden balls. "Absolutely. This, I presume, is where I start the old biz, what? I mean to say, dashed exciting. Kindly gather round and shield me from the populace. I'm most deucedly flustered, don't you know."

We gathered round, and Archie prepared himself. Not only the St. Frank's fellows were grinning, but nearly everybody else. Archie went to work thoroughly. He handed his cane to Watson, his hat to Church, and then squared his shoulders. He carefully adjusted his monocle, and grasped the wooden ball firmly, and flung out his hand.

"Kindly observe," he said. "The idea, as it were, is to trickle the old ball down, and remove a palm-fruit, what? Dislodge it from its old place, and so forth. Absolutely."

Archie took his throw. At least, he intended doing so. Unfortunately, the ball slipped out of his fingers as he flung his hand up, and it descended with a loud crack upon the top of Handforth's head.

"Yaroo!" howled Handforth wildly.

Archie shaded his eyes, and gazed into the distance.

"I mean to say, somewhat swift!" he gasped. "That, dear old chappies, is most frightfully queer. The bally old ball has vanished. Simply slithered off into oblivion. I just raised the old flipper, and—zing! The disappearing act! Dashed extraordinary!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Archie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quantities of ribald laughter," said Archie. "What, dear old tins of fruit, is the joke? I mean to say, not particularly funny, what? The wooden sphere has bally well legged it—"

"You ass, Archie," grinned Church. "It dropped out of your hand backwards—and caught poor old Handy a frightful crack."

Archie turned, his monocle dropping.

"Great absolutely Scott!" he ejaculated blankly. "That is to say, by jove, and all that sort of rot. So that's it, eh? That, so to speak, is it? Frightfully peculiar. Frightfully extraord. I didn't feel the dashed thing slip—"

"But I felt it hit me!" roared Handforth. "You clumsy fathead. You slab-sided son of a lunatic—"

"Well, dash it!" put in Archie. "I mean to say. Decidedly terse, what? Slab-sided son of a lunatic, don't you know. Somewhat rough on the Pater. Severe on the dear old buffer, if you grasp the trend."

"You ought to be chained up," snapped Handforth, rubbing his head.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "Absolutely. Chained up what? Shoved in the old place where a chappie gets peace and quietness. That, I should think, would be the most deucedly ripping. Quite priceless, in fact. Be good enough to lead me away to the solitude department. At the same time, old tulip, I'm most dashed sorry. Large expressions of regret and sorrow and what not. Kindly accept the handsome old apology, darling."

Handforth glared.

"All right," he growled. "But don't do it again."

Archie took another ball, and struck the same attitude. This time he held the wooden ball more securely, threw his arm up, and then hurled the ball with all his strength. By a piece of sheer luck—something like a miracle—it struck the ground, rebounded, and toppled one of the cocoanuts off its perch.

"Good for you, Archie!"

"Ripping shot!"

"Absolutely," agreed Archie, beaming. "I mean to say, it's deucedly easy. A chappie only needs to throw the old chunk of wood, and there you are. There, in fact, you absolutely are. The old palm fruit dislodged, and all that. A sound sport, laddies—absolutely. What about it? What about another shot? Anything doing?"

"Here you are, Archie," I grinned.

Archie took another ball and hurled it. This time the missile rose up in the air at an acute angle, and vanished far beyond the confines of the cocoanut shy. Archie gazed after it rather blankly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean to say, rather swift, that one," he observed. "Not, in fact, a success. Kindly shove across another marble——"

"I reckon you've had enough, young gent," put in the owner of the shy. "I don't want to lose none 'o them balls. And, anyways, you'll get me into trouble if you starts chuckin' 'em abaht like they was made for playin' this 'ere lorn tennis."

"What?" said Archie frigidly. "That is to say, what? What? Gadzooks! The man has wounded me! Cast the old slight, don't you know. This, dear chappies, has got to be settled——"

"I'll settle!" said Handforth, pushing forward. "You're holding up the whole giddy fair, Archie. Lemme get there—I'll soon show you how it ought to be done. Messing about like this!"

Handforth had purchased half-a-dozen of the wooden missiles, and he stood well forward, and then turned to us.

"Just hold yourselves ready," he said carelessly. "That chap at the bottom will be chucking up the cocoanuts soon, and you'd better collar 'em."

"Which cocoanuts?" asked Pitt.

"The ones I knock off, of course!"

Pitt said nothing; he grinned widely.

"Fathead!" snorted Handforth. "You'll see!"

"We shall," chuckled Pitt. "But we sha'n't see any cocoanuts."

Handforth apparently thought that the whole thing was as easy as shelling peas. He didn't even wait to take aim. He threw the balls with terrific force, one after the other in quick succession. And he seemed to have an idea that all the cocoanuts were placed in the extreme corner, where the attendant was seeking refuge.

The poor chap, in fact, was bombarded. He gave one howl, and dived beneath the canvas.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Plop! Bang! Flop! Crash!

The balls thudded against the canvas, the uprights, and everywhere, in fact, except the cocoanuts. Not one of the missiles went within a couple of yards of the cocoanuts. And the attendant went rushing round, and appeared at the other side.

"Hi, guv'nor!" he bawled. "Wasser blinkin' game? Tryin' to brain me, that's

And there lay the huddled-up figure of a man. On the instant I knew that something was wrong.



what that kid's doin'! The blooming young hidiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth gazed down the shy blankly.

"Great pip!" he said. "I—I didn't knock any off!"

"You nearly knocked the attendant's head off," said Tommy Watson. "I reckon we'd better leave this spot, you chaps, it's getting too warm."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "I'm having another try."

He went up to the owner, where dozens of the balls were lying in a kind of gaudily painted crate. Handforth planked down a sixpence.

"Not likely, young shaver," said the proprietor. "You best clear off! I've had enough of this 'ere! Wodjer take this shy for? A shootin' gallery, or what? I ain't done a bob's worth o' bizness since you youngsters come up!"

"Ain't you goin' to serve me?" roared Handforth.

"No, I ain't!"

"All right, I'll serve myself——"

But Handforth was not allowed to. We gathered round him, and then dragged him off by sheer force. And while a number of the fellows were attending to him, Pitt and I and Willard and Singleton had a few shies. We weren't particularly successful, but we bagged half-a-dozen cocoanuts altogether, and then came away with our spoils.

"I reckon we'd better go somewhere else," I said. "On the flying boats, for instance. Even that's a bit risky, because Handforth's bound to fall out—and that would finish him for good."

"Let's take him in the maze and lose him," suggested Pitt.

"Fathead!" snapped Handforth. "I'm going back to that cocoanut shy."

"No, you're not——"

"I tell you I am!" roared Handforth. "I'm going to punch that proprietor on the nose! And after that I'm going to knock you think I'm going to be whacked by—"

"Dry up, Handy," I put in. "It's no good making a fuss—your aim doesn't seem down every coconut there is. Huh! Do to be in good form to-day. Let's try the maze. Oh, by the way. What's become of Fatty? We were going to lose him in the the maze."

We looked round, but could see no sign of Fatty Little. All the other members of our party were present. But Fatty was not conspicuous, and he was quite large enough to see, even in a crowd.

"I missed him ten minutes ago—before we went to the shy," said Grey. "I'll bet he's dashed off somewhere for some grub. The greedy ass! He could have whacked into these cocoanuts to his heart's content."

"Don't worry," I said. "He'll have plenty of room for half-a-dozen cocoanuts, or so. He'll polish them off in no time."

I looked round keenly, and a little anxiously. We didn't want a member of our party to become separated from the rest. And then, happening to gaze upon a grassy bank, some little way off, I broke into a grin.

"Take a look you chaps," I said. "Sweet, isn't it?"

"There was Fatty Little, squatting on the grass, fairly surrounded by an array of

bags. Standing close handy there were a couple of big ginger-beer bottles. The fat junior had evidently been obtaining supplies, and now he was enjoying a little snack, and keeping his eye on us at the same time.

"Come on, we'll soon put a stop to that little game!" said Pitt firmly.

"Absolutely," agreedly Archie. "Frightfully bad form, you know. I mean to say, undig., and all that, to sit in the view of the whole bally populace, feeding out of paper bags. Somewhat near the limit."

We moved off towards the grassy bank, and advanced upon Fatty Little in a kind of solid formation. He saw I was coming, but made no attempt to rise. It was noticeable, however, that he put on a burst of speed with his jaws. The sandwiches and cakes vanished with lightning rapidity.

"Hallo, you chaps," he mumbled, as we collected round him. "Have some?"

"No, thanks," I said. "We're not hungry yet. You glutton—"

"Hallo! Coconuts!" interrupted Fatty, his eyes lighting up. "You bagged a few, then? Good! I can just do with one of them to munch as we go along. Must have something to keep me going, you know!"

We stared at him amazedly.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Pitt. "He's more mysterious than all the conjurors of

(Continued on next page.)

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(Continued from page 32.)

the country put together! There's not a man living who could make things disappear as miraculously as Fatty can! He'd earn a fortune on the halls!"

"Well, we're not going to wait while he gorges all that lot down!" said Handforth. "We'd better buck up and have a look at that maze! After all, we might be able to lose Fatty there!"

"It'll be amazing, if we do!" said Pitt.

"Gadzooks!" gasped Archie. "I mean to say!"

Pitt fled, chuckling. And we all made our way in the direction of the maze. We little realised what our visit to that spot was to lead to!

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHINEE.



"TAME!" said Handforth disgustedly.

This was his candid opinion of the maze, and, after the excitements of the roundabouts and coconut-shies and the swings, it certainly did seem somewhat mild. It was very poorly patronised, too. We seemed to be about the only people in the place. This may have been a delusion, for one never knows exactly how many people there are in a maze, owing to the cunning twists and turns and false corners.

"Don't be in such a hurry, Handy," said Church. "We've hardly got in the blessed place yet. And I thought we had to pay? I saw a board somewhere saying that entrance fee was threepence or sixpence."

It was rather puzzling. We had come upon the maze somewhere at the rear, and had not troubled to go round to the front entrance. Finding an opening quite handy, we marched in, and Handforth had pronounced his verdict within a few seconds.

We went round several turnings, and I warned the other fellows to keep within sight, so that we could remain in a body. If once separated, there would be no telling when we should join forces again. And Fatty Little was watched with particular care. He was always liable to sneak off after more grub.

I was leading the way, and after going round another turning I broke into a grin. There, just in front, was a paybox, with a turnstile and an attendant. Handforth uttered a snort as he caught sight of it.

"I thought there was a catch somewhere!" he said. "Look here, I'm fed-up with this! What's the good of paying money to lose yourself?"

"We're going in, and there's an end of it!" I said. "Now, then, line up, my sons! I'll pay the exes!"

We all filed through the turnstile, and then found ourselves within the maze proper. There were two pathways leading off to right or left, and it did not matter particularly which way we took.

"Follow me," said Handforth, pushing forward. "These blessed things are dead easy! You only need to keep your wits about you and you can't make a bloomer! Trust to me, you chaps, and we'll be out of this within two minutes!"

We all followed Handforth, although we had not the slightest hope that he would be able to lead us directly through the maze and out at the other end. Handforth always had a tremendous amount of confidence.

We continued along the curving path, and then suddenly Handforth let out a derisive cackle.

"The giddy thing's a swindle!" he said scornfully. "Why, look here! We've got to the exit already! I knew you were chucking your money away, Nipper."

We all came to a halt, and could see a turnstile ahead, which Handforth fondly imagined to be the exit. I grinned as I glanced at the attendant.

"Try again, Handy!" I said. "This is the place we just came from! You've led us back to the entrance."

Handforth glared.

"Fathead!" he snapped. "We've just come away from it! How the dickens can this be the entrance when it's somewhere behind us? We've been walking away from it all the time——"

"And coming round in a circle," grinned Pitt. "This is the right-hand path, Handy. I think you'd better let Nipper take the leadership; he'll show us the best way."

"Don't be too sure," I said. "These things are tricky."

We turned back, and, by making close observations, I detected a turning which would not lead us back on our own tracks. And we went on, getting deeper and deeper into the maze, twisting and turning and doubling back on our own tracks until all chance of making a direct exit was impossible.

And yet, try as we would, we could not possibly reach the centre. We knew that it lay somewhere close by, and every fresh attempt seemed certain of success—until we tried it. Then we either found ourselves back at the same old spot, or still further away.

"Oh, rats!" said Handforth, pulling up and wiping his brow. "A jolly fine mess you've got us into now! We shall probably have to stick in this place until the attendants come and clear us out the last thing to-night."

"What!" gasped Fatty Little. "But we shall be dead by then! Great pancakes! I'm nearly starving already! All this exercise has given me a terrific appetite!"

"Oh, we shall get out after walking a few more miles!" said Pitt cheerfully.

"A few more miles, laddie," said Archie in dismay. "I mean to say, that's frightfully fearful! Dash it all! Miles, what? The old bones are aching in the most deuced manner already. The tissues can't stand it, old lad! Kindly give several large howls for assistance!"

"Rats!" I said. "We're not going to call for the attendants. We've got into this maze, and we've got to get out of it——"

"Hallo!" said Grey. "There's somebody coming. Let's follow these people——"

"Not likely!" put in Handforth. "They'll lead us further astray than ever! If you'll leave it to me, there won't be any mistake."

We didn't think much of the idea, and allowed the other people to pass, and then continued our own efforts. We only came across one or two couples here and there, for the maze did not seem to be attracting the public.

And just as we were turning a corner three people came towards us who attracted my attention more than any of the others. The rest of the fellows were too intent upon their own troubles to pay any attention.

These three strangers were Chinese, by the look of them. They were smartly dressed, and quite Western in every aspect excepting their colour. Two were Chinamen of a somewhat coarse type. Their smart clothing could not disguise the fact.

The third was a mere boy—also Chinese—dressed in a tweed Norfolk suit and cap. Somehow, he seemed to be rather dazed, and there was a dreamy, dull look in his eyes as he passed me. He was tightly held by one of his companions, and they hurried on. I looked after them and frowned.

"That seems to be queer!" I remarked.

"What does?" asked Handforth. "Those foreigners? The best thing we can do is to follow them! By the way they're walking they seem to know their way about."

Again Handforth's advice was disregarded, and we turned another bend. And there, against one of the thick set hedges of the maze, lay the huddled up figure of a man. On the instant I knew something was wrong.

This stranger had evidently not collapsed from exhaustion. The day was by no means over-hot, and many parts of the maze were quite shady. I hurried forward at a run.

"I say, you chaps!" I shouted. "Quick! Lend a hand!"

Somehow I was not very astonished when I saw that this stranger was Chinese, also. But he was refined-looking and attired in a well-cut suit, which was evidently the work of a West End tailor. His velour hat lay in the dust a few feet away. And I noticed at once that the Chinaman had an ugly bruise on his forehead.

"Great Scott!" said Pitt quickly, "What's wrong?"

"Blessed if I can understand anything in

this place!" growled Handforth. "All we can see is Chinamen—everywhere! I expect this chap's spoofing all the time! Trying to work a confidence trick or something!"

"Don't be an idiot!" I snapped. "He's been badly hurt!"

The most necessary thing at the moment was some water, but that, of course, was unobtainable. I raised the Chinaman's head on to my knee, and waved my cap swiftly up and down in front of his face, causing a draught. After a moment or two he opened his eyes, and looked at me dazedly.

"How did it happen?" I asked quietly.

The Chinaman seemed more dreary than ever. Then he pulled himself together and a live intelligence dawned in his eyes.

"The boy!" he whispered. "Have you seen him?"

"We saw a Chinese boy being taken away by two men of your own nationality, not two minutes ago," I replied. "But tell me what has happened——"

"No, no!" interrupted the Oriental quickly. "It does not matter about myself! Fetch the boy! Get him away from these men! Hurry as quickly as you can, it is a matter of the greatest importance!"

"Have they kidnapped him?" put in Pitt.

"Yes, that is the word!" said the Chinaman. "They have kidnapped him! But you are wasting time! Bring him back!"

"I jumped up and looked round quickly.

"Handy, stay here with one or two of the chaps, and look after this gentleman," I said. "Pitt, Grey, Singleton! Follow me like the wind! We've got to get out before those Chinamen, even if we have to break through every hedge!"

There was no loss of time, although slight confusion reigned for a moment or two. Most of the fellows wanted to come with me, but Handforth kept Church and McClure and Fatty Little and Archie with him. The rest of us hurried off, trying to find the exit. This was more difficult than it seemed.

I had not waited to ask the Chinaman many questions, for questions seemed unnecessary. He was obviously a well-educated gentleman of his own country, and the urgency of his tone had told me that delay might be fatal.

And I remembered the dazed look in the Chinese boy's eyes. His captors had obviously drugged him in some way, so that he would not make a demonstration. And the very cunning nature of the plan was striking.

The two Chinamen had followed their victims into the maze, and had then made their attack. Hurrying out, they had only to negotiate one or two twists and corners and they were comparatively safe. Nobody would stop them, and pursuit was almost impossible. For the Chinese gentleman who had been attacked could never have gone in chase singlehanded.

It was very galling to be hastening through the pathways of this maze, knowing that the kidnappers had a good start. And there was always the uncertainty that we might not be able to find the exit.

After twisting and turning in vain for for some minutes I made up my mind to bring matters to a head. We were quite near the centre. I could tell that without any difficulty, for we had been hovering in this vicinity for quite a long time. Without compunction I broke through one of the hedges, and all the other juniors followed. Then I broke through another hedge.

And, more by luck than anything else, we found ourselves in the centre, and an attendant was hurrying up to us with a very red face, and with decided trouble in his glare.

"Now then, now then!" he shouted angrily. "That's not allowed, my lads! Smashing through the hedges like that——"

"Sorry, can't stop!" I said. "Oh, wait a minute!"

"Yes, you'd best wait, too!" said the man warmly.

"You don't understand," I broke in. "There's a man been attacked in one of the pathways over there!" I added, pointing vaguely. "If you shout, you'll probably get an answer quickly enough. The man's a Chinese, and he was knocked over, and a boy was kidnapped. We're going after him. You'd better take some water to the injured man as fast as you can."

Without waiting for the attendant to reply we hurried out. For, from the centre of the maze there was a direct pathway to the exit, and within a minute or two we found ourselves out on the open grassland.

There were numbers of people walking about in the sunshine, or sprawling in the grass. And, only a short distance away, a police-constable was contemplatively gazing up into one of the trees. I ran to him quickly.

"Have you seen a couple of Chinamen and a boy?" I asked swiftly.

The constable turned to me and frowned.

"I don't want any o' your tricks now, my lad!" he said sternly. "There's a young varmint up in this 'ere tree. When he comes down I'm going to give his ear a good twisting——"

"Never mind the tree!" I interrupted. "Have you seen those Chinamen?"

The constable seemed to realise that the matter was important.

"Chinamen?" he repeated. "Two of 'em, with a boy?"

"Yes!"

"Not three minutes ago!" said the constable. "They went down there, along that path, down towards the Penge entrance, I reckon. But what's the game, young man?"

Without troubling to satisfy the constable's curiosity, we went off at the double along the path he had indicated.

And we had only covered about half the distance to the exit when I caught sight of the three figures in the distance ahead. The two Chinamen were still leading the boy between them. And one of them glanced behind.

"Come on!" I said grimly. "This is where the trouble starts!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESCUE OF THE CHING!



THE Chinamen jumped to the conclusion that we were on their track.

As we approached they broke into a swift run, dragging the boy with them. They were hoping to get out into the road before we could overtake them. I had no doubt at all that a motor-car was waiting in readiness. And if once they reached that all hope of rescuing the Chinese boy was over.

"Buck up!" I panted. "Put a spurt on, you chaps."

We fairly flew down the slope, the holiday-makers pausing on every hand and staring after us. I don't suppose they were particularly astonished to see a number of schoolboys racing along. Their attention was chiefly attracted by the hurrying Chinese, and by the fact that we were chasing them.

And we were overtaking our quarry in the most satisfactory manner. Judging the distance, I knew that we should be able to do the thing with fifty or sixty yards to spare.

The fellows with me—Pitt, Grey, Tommy Watson and one or two more—were pelting along at top speed. And we were just wondering what the climax was to be when the two Chinamen turned abruptly and faced us.

We fairly swarmed round them and pulled up, panting.

"What do you want?" demanded one of the men, in excellent English. "Why you chasing us? I call police——"

"That's just what I'm going to do!" I put in grimly. "You took that boy away from a gentleman in the maze, and we've come to get him out of your hands. You'd better surrender him without any trouble."

Even as I said this I realised that I might be in the wrong. We didn't know any of the facts, and it was just on the cards that these men had more right to the boy than the Chinaman in the maze. But the probabilities were all against such a thing, and I felt justified in adopting the attitude.

The two Chinese looked at me viciously. "The boy ours!" said the one who had first spoken. "He come with us. You no interfere, or we——"

At that moment a policeman came strolling over towards us, filled with the natural curiosity that is common to his tribe. And the two Chinamen suddenly lost heart,

Without warning they turned on their heels and ran, leaving the boy with us.

"Look after him!" I shouted.

Pitt took the Chinese boy and held him. I dashed on, accompanied by Watson and Grey, and we hurried through the exit. We were just in time to see the two Chinamen leap into a closed motor-car. It drove off swiftly, and disappeared under the railway bridge in the direction of Penge.

"There you are!" I said grimly. "It was all fixed, you see. They had that car waiting, so that they could take the kid off. We just came along in time to put a stop to the whole game."

"Yes, but what's it all about?" asked Watson bluntly. "I'm blessed if I can understand it! All this messing about with Chinamen!"

"I expect we shall understand as soon as that chap in the maze is able to speak properly," I replied. "Well, those Chinks have gone. No chance of collaring 'em now. We'd better go back."

We returned, and had just a little difficulty in getting re-admitted without paying. But we succeeded in the end, and found Pitt and Sir Montie sitting on a seat with the Chinese boy between them. The curious onlookers had passed on their way—after finding that there was nothing exciting to look at.

"How is he?" I asked.

"We can't get anything out of him," replied Pitt. "We've asked him all sorts of questions, but he simply looks at us in a sappy kind of way, and doesn't say a thing. Either he doesn't understand English, or he's dotty!"

"Nonsense!" I said, looking at the Chinese boy closely. "He's been drugged."

"What!"

"Can't you see it?" I asked. "Not with opium, or anything like that—but he doesn't know where he is. He's still able to walk, but the poor chap is fairly fuddled. The open air will soon put him right—the effect is bound to wear off. We'd better lead him back to the maze."

The Chinese boy was quite willing to come. We only had to give him a jerk, and he rose and accompanied us without any objections. And as we walked I could see that he was slowly recovering.

He was quite small, and not bad looking, judged from a Chinese standpoint. He was evidently well-bred, and there was nothing of the heathen Chinese about him. In every aspect, except the colour of his skin, he was just the same as any ordinary English boy. His hair was closely cut, and well brushed.

"Are you sure he's Chinese?" asked Watson. "He looks more like a Jap to me. Where's his pigtail?"

"My dear chap, Chinaman don't wear pig-tails nowadays," I replied. "That custom is dying out—even in China itself. This kid looks refined and well educated. There's a

mystery about this whole affair that rather attracts me. I sha'n't be satisfied until I know the truth."

We walked on, accommodating our pace to that of the Chinese boy. The dull expression had now left his eyes, and now and again he looked puzzled. I refrained from questioning him until he was in better possession of his real senses. And he was the first to speak.

"You savee me?" he asked abruptly.

"Eh? Oh! Save you?" I said. "Yes, my son. We saved you from those two hefty-looking countrymen of yours. The man who was knocked down in the maze asked us to follow you out."

"Him velly goodee man," said the Chinese boy. "Me velly glateful for savee me. Much oblige. Plentee much t'ankee you!"

"Oh, the kid speaks English, then!" said Watson. "Sounds a bit queer, but we can understand what he means. How the dickens did you get into such a mess, Chinky? Who were those men who bunked off with you?"

The Chinese boy shook his head.

"No savvy," he said. "Ching no understand!"

"Ching?" I repeated. "Is that your name?"

"T'ankee you, yes," said the boy. "Yung Ching. My namee."

"Well, we're getting on," I said. "Did we do right in getting you away from those men?"

"Plentee muchee!" said Yung Ching.

Before we could put any more questions we heard a hail, and saw Handforth and Co. bearing down upon us. They arrived in a clump, and we halted. Handforth was looking pleased with himself.

"Oh, so you've got him!" he said. "Good! We've brought that chap outside, and he's practically himself now—just a bit dizzy, but that's all. He's a big pot at the Chinese Embassy, I think."

"Oh, he's been telling you things, then?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Handforth. "His name's Tsen Wang, he says, and he's terrifically worried about that kid."

"We'll soon relieve his mind," I said. "Where is he?"

"Coming on now, with Archie and the others."

Handforth looked at the Chinese boy closely.

"Queer-looking young bounder!" he went on. "These Chinese always look rummy, don't they? Of course, he can't understand a word I'm saying—"

"Me savvy velly much!" said Yung Ching softly.

"Eh?" gasped Handforth.

"Speakee Engleesh heapee plentee good!"

"Oh, can you?" said Handforth. "Is that what you call plentee good? What's the

idea of shoving all those 'c's' on the end of your words?"

"Me talkee Engleesh likee taught!" said Yung Ching calmly. "Heap goodee, I t'ink. Me plentee glateful!"

"Don't question the chap now!" I put in. "He hasn't quite recovered from the drug he was forced to take. We shall probably never learn the truth about it, but that can't be helped."

We walked on, and Handforth displayed great interest in the Chinese boy. He kept putting questions all the time, but for the most part Yung Ching merely shook his head. And then we came upon Tsen Wang approaching us with Archie Glenthorne and the other juniors. The Chinese gentleman was now looking almost himself, and his hat concealed the ugly bruise on his high forehead.

"Ah, my boys, I cannot express to you my gratitude!" he exclaimed, as we allowed Yung Ching to pass into his care. "Those scoundrels would have got clean away with my charge if you had not helped me so well."

"I don't want to be inquisitive, sir, but I'd just like to know what the trouble was about," I said. "Those men ought to be punished for a thing like that——"

"Ah, I'm afraid that will be impossible," said the Chinaman. "My name is Tsen Wang, and you will always find me at the Chinese Embassy, in London. I have only recently returned from China after a visit, and I've brought Yung Ching over with me. After these holidays he will go to school—where, I trust, he will be in safe keeping. But I am afraid."

"Of those two men?"

"Not of those men, but of the organisation they are sent by," said the Chinese attache gravely. "There is great peril, and if I had known of it I would never have brought the boy out in public to-day."

"Well, if there's anything that I can do, I'm quite ready," I said. "I understand that you don't want the police to know anything about the affair?"

The Chinaman shook his head.

"It is not that," he replied. "The police can know—but what can they do? I am afraid they would be helpless against the danger which threatens Yung Ching. I only pray that he will be safe at school."

"What school is he going to, sir?" asked Pitt, with interest.

"Holtdene College, in Kent," replied Tsen Wang.

"I've heard of it," said Pitt. "A pretty big place, I believe, but right out of the St. Frank's district."

"It's rather a pity that Yung Ching isn't coming to St. Frank's, sir," I said. "Mr. Nelson Lee is the Housemaster there—and he's one of the best detectives in England; in fact, the best. Yung Ching would be safe enough at St. Frank's."

The Chinese attache looked thoughtful.

"Thank you—thank you," he said quietly.

"I will remember."

And within a few minutes he took his departure, Yung Ching going quietly with him. And we continued our round of enjoyment. But I couldn't help thinking of that queer little Chinese boy.

As it happened, we were to see a great deal more of him in the future. For Yung Ching was destined to come to St. Frank's—in the Remove.

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(Now read on.)

CHAPTER I.

The Finding of Diggles.

AT about half-past nine on the following morning, Wooden Jerry, having cleared away the things from the dining-hall tables, had just retired to his small pantry, when Foster Moore burst in upon him.

The schoolmaster carefully closed the door ere he asked in an almost gasping voice:

"Have—have you heard what has happened?"

"I've heard nowt!" replied Jerry, stolidly. "Is the school afire—or what?"

"Enough of that!" said Moore, sternly.

"I've warned you more than once about addressing me impudently! I won't have it!"

"You axed me if I'd heard the news, and I give ye a plain answer, Mister Moore. I ain't afraid o' you, so don't think it! If you don't like the way I talks to you——"

"Silence!" interrupted Foster Moore. "I've no time or inclination to bandy words with you just now. Maybe you will not be so impudent when you heard what my news is. Listen to me!"

"I'm a-listenin'. What is it?"

"Diggles has been found—dead!"

"Dead—eh?"

"Yes—murdered!"

"Oh, lor!" gasped Wooden Jerry, suddenly going pale, and trembling like an aspen. "Here's more trouble! Why did I ever mix myself up in the business? Where—where have they found the—the body?"

"Down by the chalk-pits. The inspector has just been to see me with the news. The body was covered up with branches and rubbish."

"Well, I didn't do it!" cried Jerry.

"Nobody says you did," replied Foster Moore, sternly. "You know nothing about Diggles—nothing! And when the police question you, as they will, you will tell them so. You understand?"

Foster Moore rose and walked slowly to the door. Without looking round, he added:

"I ought to tell you that a knife was found near the dead man, and it resembles one I've seen in your possession. I don't want to swear anything against you, but I will do so if you are not careful."

With this direct threat Foster Moore left the room, and Wooden Jerry, with a choking feeling in his throat, staggered to a chair, and, sinking into it, quaked with terror and impotent fury.

Moore's news was quite true. Diggles had been discovered, murdered by a ruthless hand.

The discovery had been made early in the morning by a man going to work. He had found the ex-gardener lying in a chalk-pit, near the lime-kiln long to be remembered by Tom Tartar.

Several wounds had been inflicted, and more than one would alone have proved fatal. A knife, presumably the weapon with which the wounds had been inflicted, was picked up close by.

This knife was a long, straight-bladed pocket one, a very dangerous weapon in the hands of a strong man.

News of the ghastly affair had been communicated to Foster Moore at an early hour, but the boys did not hear of it until noon.

It came upon Tom like a thunderclap, and after dinner he and Sam Smith sauntered out on to the high road, discussing the affair in awed tones.

"Hallo, there's Noddy!" said Sam, suddenly.

Tom looked up, and saw Noddy Berrill's head above the hedge. Noddy looked very white and anxious.

(Continued on page 39.)

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(Continued from page 38.)

"Of course, you've heard the news?" he said.

"Oh, yes," replied Tom. "Horrible, isn't it?"

"It comes of keeping bad company."

"You mean Posh Powner's company?" said Sam.

"Yes," replied Noddy. "I haven't been to work this morning. In fact, nobody has. It was one of our men who discovered him. I've been spending an hour with Ralph."

"Has he heard of it?" asked Tom.

"Not as you and I have," replied Noddy.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, he heard of it in his sleep—dreamt it."

"Who did he dream about?" asked Tom.

"Why, his father, of course," replied Noddy, "and I don't think his dream is far out. Diggles and Powner were last seen together, and they had for some time been pals."

"Why, then, should Powner kill him?"

"Because he was afraid that Diggles would betray him," said Noddy. "To my mind it is clear enough. By the way," went on Noddy, after a brief silence, "I saw Wooden Jerry on the way to Peddleton Minor this morning. He passed Powner's cottage."

"What time was that?" asked Sam.

"About half-past ten," replied Noddy. "And I can guess what he was going for."

"What was that?"

"Drink. They won't serve him in the village. Mr. Moore has been to the inn, asking them not to do so."

"Very kind and thoughtful of him," said

Tom. "That accounts for Jerry not being visible during dinner."

"I wonder Mr. Moore doesn't give Jerry the sack," said Noddy.

"I don't," replied Tom. "He doesn't give it because Jerry would not take it. And——"

Tom stopped as murmuring of voices in the village fell upon his ears.

"What's that?" asked Sam.

Noddy Berrill turned his face in the direction of the village, craning his neck for a moment or two. The voices increased in volume.

"It's Jerry!" he cried. "He's coming along the road like the champion running against time. There are about a dozen people after him."

Tom and Sam leaped nimbly over the hedge, and saw that it was indeed Wooden Jerry approaching.

He was hatless, and pounding along as if for his life, with a small dog yelping close to his heels.

Behind him were half a dozen men, calling on him to stop.

"What's up, I wonder? He looks half wild."

They stood about midway in the road, and Wooden Jerry came tearing up, with his eyes fixed ahead.

Suddenly he caught sight of Tom, and, swerving off towards the hedge, fell down.

"I didn't do it!" he yelled. "We were friends, old pals. I didn't do it!"

"Get up," said Tom. "What are you talking about?"

But Wooden Jerry was now up again, and,

bursting through the fence, ran across the cricket-ground like a greyhound.

Tom, Sam, and Noddy Berrill followed him, so did the little dog; but the villagers who had been pursuing Jerry did not venture to intrude.

"Stop!" cried Tom. "What's the matter with you?" Jerry uttered a sort of Indian war yell, and dashed right through a group of boys who were too amazed at the spectacle to get out of his way.

Jonah Worrey and Necker were of the party, and both were thrown to the ground.

Confounding him, they sprang up again and gave chase.

The other boys got out of Jerry's way, for a heavy man, running at full speed, makes a dangerous battering-ram. He made straight for the garden wall.

Just as he reached it, the little dog which had been following, fastened on his calf. With a scream of terror he fairly sprang to the top of the wall—it was not a very high one—and bounded over.

A moment after he disappeared a crash was heard, and the boys swarmed up the wall to see what was the matter.

Jerry had plunged right down into the middle of a cucumber-frame.

He had also managed to upset a hive of bees, and the merry little stingers were swarming about his head.

No cry escaped him immediately after his fall, the shock was too great.

But all the terror that could be expressed by his countenance was there, patent to the eye.

"You've done it now, Jerry," said Sam, who was one of the first up the wall.

"I didn't do it!" gasped Jerry. "It wasn't me, it was——"

"What is all this rioting about?" demanded a deep voice.

Foster Moore—pale, and with set lips—was on the spot.

From an upper window he had noted Jerry's return, and came upon the ground just in time to prevent further revelations.

"Boys," he cried, "get down from the wall."

The boys had to obey, and as nothing could be seen or heard from the other side, they wandered off, laughing over Jerry's disaster.

Foster Moore laid hold of Jerry, whose face and head were stung all over, and pulled him out of the ruined frame.

"Come away," hissed the schoolmaster. "What mad game have you been up to now?"

"I wanted a drop o' drink," said Jerry sulkily, "and I went to Peddleton Minor for it."

"Why did you go there?" asked Foster Moore, pushing him before him.

"Because you've stopped my drink here."

"And why did I stop it? Because you've such a confounded tongue."

"I can't help that," said Wooden Jerry defiantly. "Drink's got to be got from somewhere. Can you do without it?"

Foster Moore did not answer him, but continued to assist him forward until they were at a safe place out of earshot.

"Now," he said, "tell me how you came to have all those people after you?"

"What people?" asked Jerry.

"Don't prevaricate with me," said Foster Moore threateningly.

"They were talking of the murder," said Jerry, "and I was going by at the time."

"Talking of it—where?"

"In the village. Everybody's up about it. Sir Claude's come back, and he was at the inn, where the body is—so's the police. And the people were saying that they thought Powner did it, and I said he didn't."

"Why did you say that?" demanded Foster Moore.

"Because I don't think he did."

"What are a fool's thoughts worth?"

"Not much, Mister Moore, but they're right sometimes. I've got *my* idea about that murder, and I don't think I shall have to change it. Look here, sir!"

"Well?" said Foster Moore, eyeing him ferociously.

"If you stop my drink in the village, you must allow me some at home."

"I'll talk of that in a moment. You haven't told me why they chased you."

"Well, I said it was most likely some of the boys who did it, and then they came for me."

Foster Moore laughed in his hard way.

"You fool!" he said. "That tongue of yours will get you into serious trouble unless you curb it. Come into my study, I want to talk to you over this Diggles affair."

CHAPTER LI.

Foster Moore Resents Being Questioned

THE commotion in the little village was very great. Diggles, who had been of very little account in life, became in death a subject of vast importance.

They had lain him in a shed attached to the inn, and a policeman kept guard over the door.

Sir Claude Freshley, who had only returned from London a few hours before, had been to see the body, and was now awaiting in the inn parlour the arrival of a detective from the county town.

The detective duly arrived and at once commenced his investigations. He discovered little of importance, however, for recently the weather had been very fine, and, although there were signs of a struggle near the spot where Diggles had been found, the hard ground showed no footprints clear or deep enough to afford a clue.

The knife, of course, was something, but it was not much.

"There's a dozen or more like it hereabouts," remarked the landlord of the inn. "You see, sir, last autumn we had a Cheap Jack here who was selling such things, and there was quite a run on that sort of knife."

Sir Claude's carriage was outside the inn, and, having heard all there was to be told, he was about to depart when he saw Foster Moore approaching.

(Continued on page iii of Cover.)

(Continued from page 40.)

He was walking slowly along, swinging a cane, and with his eyes on the ground. He came right on, and almost up to the carriage before he raised his eyes.

On seeing Sir Claude, a startled look sprung into his face. He would have passed on, but the baronet stopped him.

"Mr. Moore, I think?" he said.

Foster Moore bowed.

"I presume you have heard of the murder?" said the baronet. "Are you in a position to give any information concerning the unhappy man?"

"I—what have I do with him?" replied Foster Moore harshly. "With all due deference to your position, Sir Claude, I consider the question an impertinent one."

The clear blue eyes of Sir Claude looked him through and through.

"A simple question, Mr. Moore," he said, "has unduly excited you."

"I am not excited," returned Foster Moore violently. "I don't know anything about the man. I was never associated with him in any way. I—I—don't know why—I should be —"

Sir Claude turned away abruptly.

"Home," he said to the coachman. And, stepping into his carriage, was driven away, leaving Foster Moore standing before the inn, wiping his damp brow.

Close beside him stood a quietly-dressed man, whose keen grey eyes had been watching the other's every movement.

"Nice gentleman, Sir Claude," he remarked civilly. "But inclined to be prying, eh?"

"He had no right to question me about a man I don't know," replied Foster Moore.

"To be sure he hadn't," said the stranger soothingly. "That's why I said he was inclined to be a trifle prying. So you didn't know the unfortunate man Diggles, sir?"

Foster Moore did not immediately answer him. He had suddenly realised that he was talking to this stranger on matters that bordered on dangerous ground.

"May I ask who you are, sir?" he said abruptly.

"Certainly!" answered the other. "My name is Clark. I happened to hear of this terrible affair, so stepped in to make a few inquiries."

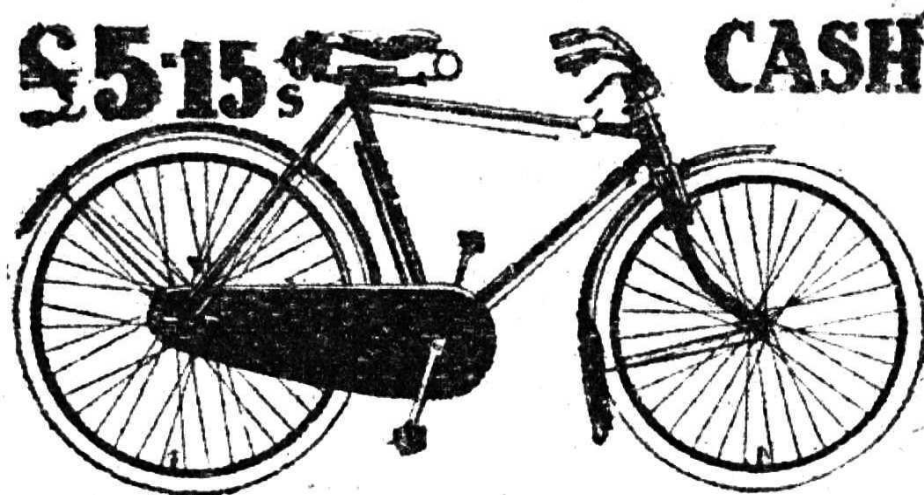
"It's no use inquiring of me," said Moore shortly, and turning away, he entered the inn.

"Brandy—neat!" he said to the landlord; and, on being served with the liquid, swallowed it at a gulp.

"Give me another," he said. "I'm afraid I have caught a chill."

He gulped down his second glass of brandy and then a third. After which he left the inn by the back way and, with eyes on the ground, returned to the school.

(To be continued.)



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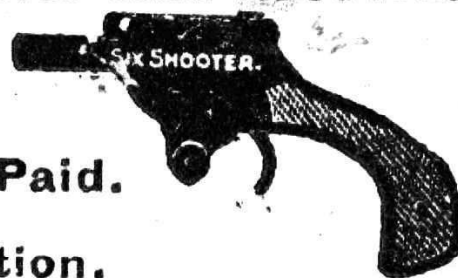
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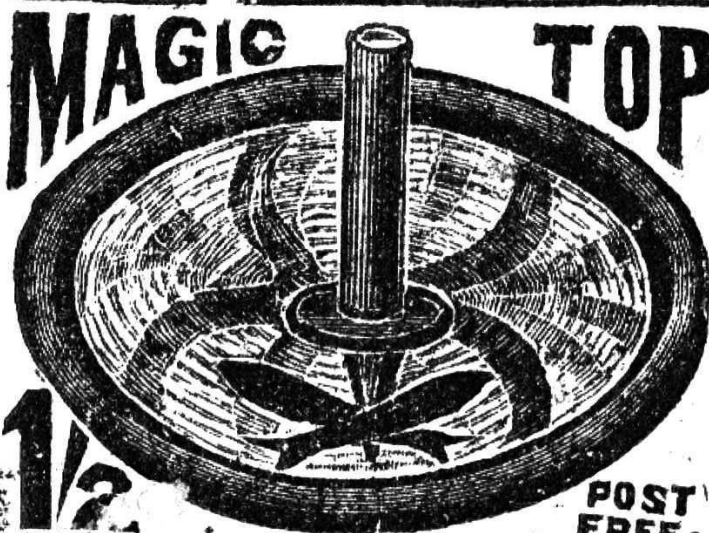
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