

"REBELLION AT ST. FRANK'S!"

Amazing long complete
school yarn inside.

NELSON-LEE

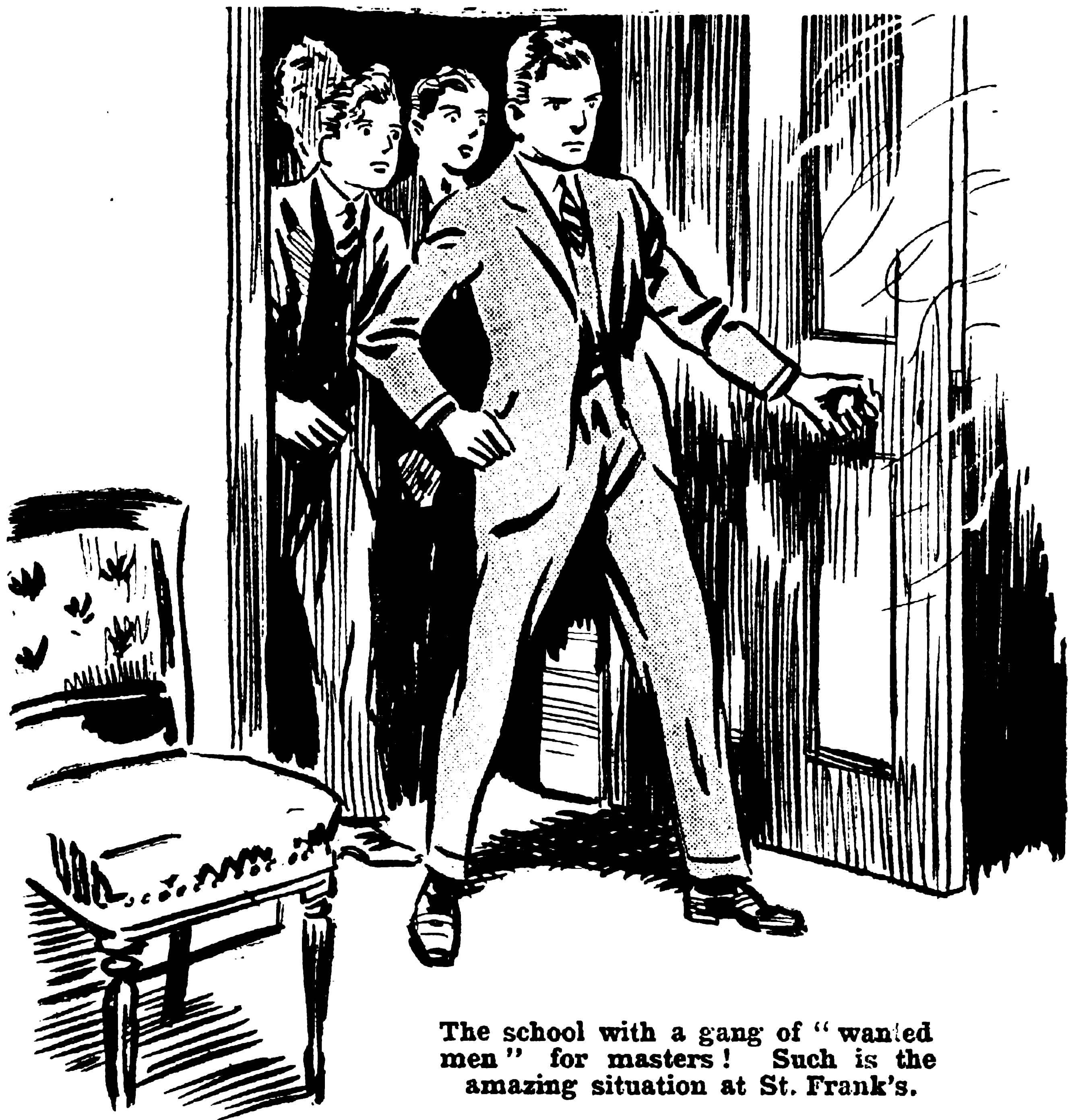
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"INKREDIBLE!"

Hurrah, Lads! Here's an Amazing New Barring-out Series!

REBELLION AT



The school with a gang of "wanted men" for masters! Such is the amazing situation at St. Frank's.

CHAPTER 1.

The School Without Masters!

"SILENCE!"

"The Head's coming!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep order, there, you kids!"

Big Hall at St. Frank's was crowded, and the prefects were nearly in despair. In spite of all their threats and warnings, the stately old hall echoed and re-echoed with a perfect babble of noise. Even the news that the Head was entering failed to quell the tumult.

Not that this was very surprising, for the figure which strutted upon the platform was that of Mr. Horace Pycraft, the woody, ill-

natured master of the Fourth Form. With his own boys he had less influence than a prefect; with the rest of the school he had no influence at all. Mr. Pycraft was not the type of man who commanded respect.

Ordinarily, he was tolerated or ignored, as the case might be. But matters were not ordinary now. Mr. Pycraft, by the merest fluke, had been elevated to the post of acting headmaster--and St. Frank's thought the joke a good one.

"Silence!"

"Bow-wow!"

The Third and the Fourth were openly hilarious; the Remove was aggressive; the Fifth and Sixth tried to appear indifferent.

Thrills and Excitement for the Chums of St. Frank's.

ST. FRANK'S!

By
**EDWY SEARLES
BROOKS.**



Mr. Pycraft held up his hand, and there was silence—not because he commanded respect, but because the school was curious to know what he would have to say.

"I am addressing you this morning because I have some news for you," said Mr. Pycraft complacently. "There is no need for me to remind you of the unhappy events of last evening. You all know how our masters attended a big function in Bannington, and how they partook of a dinner which was, to say the least, indigestible."

Mr. Pycraft paused, smiling smugly at his own wit—or what he considered wit.

"At the moment all our masters, from Mr. Alington Wilkes down to Mr. Suncliffe, are in hospital," continued Mr. Pycraft. "They are suffering from ptomaine poisoning. That fact has been definitely established; but I am glad to inform you that the hospital

authorities are in no way perturbed. It will be a week or two, perhaps, before our masters return, but none is in danger."

"Good egg!"

"Is that official, sir?"

"Let's hope they all get well sooner than the hospital people expect."

"Rather!"

Mr. Pycraft frowned. The interruptions were not to his liking.

"You will kindly refrain from commenting whilst I am speaking," he said severely. "It was very fortunate indeed that I did not attend that big dinner last night—for I am now capable of taking command of the school."

The school entirely disagreed. Not only was Mr. Pycraft incapable of taking command of the school, but it was a most regrettable circumstance that he had not

attended the dinner. St. Frank's would have cheerfully borne the news that Mr. Pycraft had been taken ill. The Fourth, in fact, had been longing for months that he would be taken ill. So it was unlucky in the extreme that he should be the one master to escape. But, as John Busterfield Boots remarked to his fellow Fourth-Formers, that was just the way of things.

"You will also be glad to know," continued Mr. Pycraft, "that Sir John Brent himself is coming to St. Frank's this morning, and he will then make definite arrangements regarding the conduct of the school during this—er—poisoning epidemic. Needless to say, I am in complete command, and you must regard me as your headmaster."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A titter went round Big Hall, and Mr. Pycraft compressed his thin lips. He would have been wise to ignore that titter; but his head was very much swelled just now, and he did not notice the danger signs.

"Silence!" he shouted angrily. "How dare you? Fenton! Morrow! Reynolds!" he went on, turning and glaring at several prefects. "Find out the names of those boys who laughed, and let me know them. I will see that they are flogged!"

"Booh!"

A regular series of catcalls and booing and groans followed this pronouncement, and Mr. Pycraft fairly quivered. He was startled, indeed, to find that the boys were so little impressed with his new dignity.

But it was really Mr. Pycraft's own fault. The previous evening, whilst the masters had been attending that fateful dinner, Nipper, the Remove captain, had performed a singularly brave act. The Shingle Head Lighthouse being out of commission, Nipper had "borrowed" a light aeroplane belonging to Gore-Pearce's elder brother, and had flown through the darkness to warn a coasting steamer of its danger. After returning, and landing successfully, the machine had been overturned by a gust of wind—and Aubrey Gore-Pearce had kicked up an awful fuss. He had quite overlooked the fact that Nipper's bravery had probably saved the lives of many.

Mr. Pycraft, always ready to vent his spite against Nipper, had taken advantage of his new position, and had flogged Nipper. The school, in consequence, was more than contemptuous of him—it was definitely antagonistic. In fact, St. Frank's had gone to bed seething with latent rebellion. If Pycraft was going to start those games—well, he wouldn't last long!

"Every boy here will understand that I am not prepared to overlook any insolence!" thundered Mr. Pycraft. "I am in complete command of this school—and any boy who displeases me must answer to me direct!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Who made that insulting noise?" roared Mr. Pycraft furiously.

"Bow-wow!"

It was really difficult to say who made it this time, for it was chorused by scores of fellows in the Third, Fourth, and Remove.

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated Mr. Pycraft, startled.

He hardly knew what to say—or what to do.

"G O. it, Nick!" murmured Fatty Little of the West House.

Nicodemus Trotwood, who stood beside him—and who shared Study B with his brother Cornelius, and with Fatty—quietly grinned. Before coming into Big Hall, Nick and Fatty had tentatively discussed the possibilities of doing a little ventriloquising. Nick Trotwood was a past-master in the art of throwing his voice. He was quite a genius at it, in fact. He could not only throw his voice with uncanny success, but he possessed the knack of imitating other people's voices to perfection. Nick was a brilliant ventriloquist—but an even more brilliant mimic. And this was an opportunity too good to be missed. He gently cleared his throat.

"I think," said Mr. Pycraft suddenly, "that this occasion calls for some special celebration."

The school wondered what was coming, and Mr. Pycraft stood on the platform, his jaw gaping. He was very startled. He had heard his own voice, but, so far as he knew, he had not spoken.

"Really, I—I—" he began, and paused, feeling foolish.

The school still waited.

"Not, of course, that this unfortunate disaster to our masters is an occasion for rejoicing," Mr. Pycraft seemed to say. "However, as I am quite incapable of conducting the school, and as it is useless to expect that I shall keep order, perhaps to-day had better be a whole holiday."

This time the school was not only astonished, but dumbfounded. The juniors were the first to give voice.

"Hurrah!"

"A whole holiday!"

"Preface isn't such a chump, after all!"

"And he admits he's incapable!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Pycraft danced about on the platform as though it had suddenly become red-hot.

"Silence!" he hooted wildly. "How dare you? Silence, everybody! What do you mean by making this—this impertinent demonstration!"

He was breathing hard. He had heard himself make that preposterous utterance—and yet he knew perfectly well that he had not spoken. Fatty Little joyfully nudged Nick Trotwood, and Nick, glancing sideways, winked. They waited for the next opportunity.

"There—there is something wrong!" panted Mr. Pycraft hoarsely. "I did not say anything just now. Certainly I did not tell you that you could have a whole holiday."

"Oh!"

It was an exclamation of half surprise, half a groan.

"I—er—cannot understand what happened," continued Mr. Pycraft, confused. "Far from being incapable of controlling this school, I will tell you that I intend to control it sternly. I have always felt that there has been far too much leniency and laxity. That is over! Now that I am in command, every boy who transgresses the school rules will be punished with the utmost severity. I am your headmaster! Do not forget that! Dismiss!"

And Mr. Pycraft glared at the school defiantly. But this was not good enough. Nick Trotwood hastened to improve the occasion.

"No, do not dismiss!" came another bellow from Mr. Pycraft. "Stay where you are! I haven't finished."

The school stayed.

"Really, I—I— This is extraordinary!" panted Mr. Pycraft, wondering what was the matter with him.

"You will see that I am a mass of nerves," he appeared to continue, before he could recover his own voice. "The fact is, I'm fed up with you silly young fatheads. Flogging won't do you much good, so the next chap who interrupts will get a biff in the eye."

The school was so startled that it was silent. The juniors stared blankly, and the seniors, with the dignity of St. Frank's to consider, were deeply pained. That any master should thus address the school was tragic.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Pycraft. "I—I cannot understand—"

He broke off, unable to find words, and Nick Trotwood obligingly continued.

"I cannot understand why you put up with me at all!" Mr. Pycraft appeared to say. "Who am I, anyhow? A mouldy worm of a Form-master, with a big, fat, swelled head. I may be a great man in my own opinion, but I'll bet I'm a pain in the neck to you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Pieface! He must have gone dotty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Order!" bellowed Mr. Pycraft frantically. "Why don't you prefects keep order? This—this is appalling!"

Fenton, of the Sixth, stared at him.

"I don't know how you can expect us to keep order, sir, while you say things like that!" he said coldly. "The sooner you dismiss the school the better."

"But I didn't say those things!" howled Mr. Pycraft.

"If you didn't, sir, who did?"

"I don't know!" gasped the temporary Head. "Good gracious, this is staggering!"

The figure he cut was undignified in the extreme. The school, knowing nothing about Nick Trotwood's ventriloquism, had an idea that Mr. Pycraft had gone slightly off his

rocker. Only Nick and Fatty Little were "in the know," and they kept it dark.

"Dismiss!" babbled Mr. Pycraft, in despair. "No, don't dismiss!" came an addition from Nick. "Eh? What did I say just then? Good gracious! What a fool I am!"

It was done so cleverly that the assembled school could tell no difference between Mr. Pycraft's own voice and the false one. The result was bewildering. Mr. Pycraft himself, perhaps, was the most staggered person in all that big gathering. He wanted to escape—he wanted to get away by himself, so that he could recover his composure.

"Dismiss!" he shouted again—more frantically than ever.

"No, don't dismiss!" added Nick, in a bellow.

It was for all the world as though Mr. Pycraft did not know his own mind. To the school, it seemed that he was repeatedly contradicting himself. Even the Removites, who knew of Nick Trotwood's astonishing ventriloquial powers, guessed nothing.

"Poor old Pieface!"

"He's as mad as a March hare!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Pycraft leapt to the edge of the platform, his face livid.

"Fenton! Morrow! Biggleswade! Good-child!" he hooted. "Do you call yourselves prefects? I have dismissed the school from this hall. Why don't you see that my orders are obeyed?"

"But you countermanded them, sir!" protested Morrow.

"Nothing of the sort!" howled Mr. Pycraft. "I hope you will understand me now—Dismiss!"

He fairly bellowed the word, and paused for breath. That pause gave Nick his next opportunity.

"Wait!" came an addition from Mr. Pycraft, in exactly the same bellowing voice. "I have changed my mind! Stay where you are!"

The prefects gazed at one another helplessly. Mr. Pycraft, with a sound that was something between a howl and a squeal, staggered to the back of the platform. He was shaking in every limb. He knew that he had made a dreadful exhibition of himself—and on his very first morning as acting headmaster!

"Oh, let's get out!"

"Pieface is off his rocker, anyhow!"

The school did not dismiss in the ordinary way. It crowded out of Big Hall in hopeless confusion, the juniors in particular shouting and laughing at the top of their voices. The prefects were helpless. Indeed, after one look at the excited mob they made no attempt to keep order. They knew their limitations.

"Well," said Morrow, breathing hard, "I don't think much of Pycraft's beginning."

"Beginning?" repeated Fenton. "In my opinion, this is his finish!"

CHAPTER 2.

Good News!

"HA, ha, ha!"
 "Good old Nicky!"

The Junior School was chuckling from end to end. It was nearly time for morning lessons, and the cat had slipped out of the bag. The fellows now understood Mr. Pycraft's extraordinary behaviour—and Nicodemus Trotwood became the hero of the hour.

Even the seniors got to hear of the joke, and, far from frowning upon it, they grinned in sympathy. Prefects affected to be deaf, but in the privacy of their own studies they laughed unrestrainedly. Which is a clear enough indication of Mr. Horace Pycraft's standing.

Now that the truth was known, the fellows decided that the day had started well. There was keen feeling between the Old-Timers and the Red-Hots in the Remove. The Old-Timers were openly claiming a victory—since Nick Trotwood was an Old-Timer. So Kirby Keeble Parkington and his Red-Hot brigade put their heads together in an effort to go one better. Ragging Pycraft had suddenly become the latest craze.

In the privacy of his own study—or, rather, the Head's study—Mr. Pycraft was attempting to recover his composure.

Even though the window was closed, and he was separated from the Triangle by all the expanse of Inner Court, he could hear the echoes of laughter. And he knew that that laughter was directed at himself. He fumed. He boiled. He raved. But he could arrive at no explanation of the extraordinary incidents in Big Hall.

What had possessed him? How could he have uttered such words without even knowing it? He was certain that he had not spoken—and yet the words, in his own voice, had sounded. Mr. Pycraft, after long deliberation, could only conclude that he had been suffering from a brain storm, occasioned by his unexpected load of responsibility.

Fortunately, he was not allowed to think very deeply on the subject—or he might possibly have jumped to the truth. A powerful limousine glided through the Triangle, watched by crowds of curious fellows. It slid through Big Arch, purred across Inner Court and came to a standstill. A minute later Sir John Brent, Bart., Chairman of the St. Frank's Board of Governors, was shaking hands with Mr. Pycraft.

"I am glad you have come, sir—intensely glad," said Mr. Pycraft fervently.

Sir John looked at him hard.

"You appear agitated, Mr. Pycraft," he said bluntly. "You are trembling."

"I—er—have had an exceedingly disturbing night, Sir John."

"No doubt," agreed the other. "If you wish to be relieved of your responsibilities, Mr. Pycraft, I will make the necessary arrangements."

"No, no! Not at all!" said Mr. Pycraft, pulling himself together. "I am more than content to hold the reins over this trying period. However, without a staff, I fear that my own efforts will be——"

"Of course—of course!" interrupted Sir John. "That is the reason I have made this flying visit, Mr. Pycraft. I have come to inform you that I have already made arrangements for the appointment of a temporary skeleton staff. I may say that I had arranged to go abroad on very important business to-day—and I shall still go abroad; but, of course, it was necessary to attend to this other matter first. All the other Governors are on the Riviera, or in Spain or Italy. They can afford to winter in sunny climes," he added dryly. "But I, being a business man, must necessarily keep my nose to the grindstone."

"Quite so—quite so," murmured Mr. Pycraft.

"What I have to tell you, Mr. Pycraft, is this," continued Sir John. "I have arranged a meeting at the Hotel Fitzroy, in London, with the scholastic staff of the new Halford Grammar School. I can assure you that I had to work fast, and it was only by persistent effort that I fixed this thing up."

"I am afraid I do not understand, sir."

"You will in a minute," said Sir John. "The Halford Grammar School is quite a new institution—somewhere in Kent, I believe. It was to have opened last week, but the local authorities made some objections, at the last moment, with regard to the drainage. I do not quite know the details, but I do know that all the masters are cooling their heels—and will cool their heels for another month. They have been appointed, they are ready to commence their duties, but this hitch over the drainage has left them idle."

"How many masters are there, sir?"

"Ten," said Sir John. "Quite sufficient for our temporary needs. I had a conference with the Grammar School authorities late last night, and arranged this matter. I am to meet the ten masters at the Fitzroy Hotel at midday—so you will see that I have no time to waste here. I will acquaint these masters with the situation, and they will come down to St. Frank's without any delay. You may expect them, indeed, this evening. So it will only be necessary for you to carry on throughout to-day, Mr. Pycraft, and then you will have adequate help."

"I am glad," said Mr. Pycraft fervently. "This is indeed splendid news."

"Considering that we have had such short notice, we are very lucky," continued Sir John. "It might have been necessary to send all the boys home and close the school—and that would have been most unfortunate. As it is, we can carry on. I am relying upon you, Mr. Pycraft, to keep the flag flying."

Mr. Pycraft smirked.

"You will not rely in vain, Sir John," he said, eyeing his visitor through narrowed lids. "I understand that I am to remain in control until our full staff returns to duty?"



The juniors watched the arrival of their new masters with interest. They looked a genial lot—certainly they didn't look the crooks they actually were!

These temporary masters will take their—er—instructions from me?"

"I think so, Mr. Pycraft," said Sir John, eyeing the Form-master thoughtfully. "I realise, of course, that you have never had such a load of responsibility; but it is on occasions like this that men are tested. If you prove yourself capable of the task—as I hope you will—you may be quite sure that the Governors will recognise your good services in a substantial way."

"Really, my dear sir, I was not suggesting—"

"Perhaps not, Mr. Pycraft, but it is a point which has to be considered," said Sir

John dryly. "Not only will you receive a financial recognition, but if you acquit yourself satisfactorily there is more than a chance that you will be elevated to a Housemastership in the near future. Mr. Goole has more than once hinted that he would welcome an early retirement."

It was more than a hint, and Mr. Pycraft beamed joyously. For years he had been dreaming of a Housemastership; but he had never thought it possible that such a dream would come true. He had been a Form-master for more years than he cared to remember, and his hopes of advancement had gradually dwindled. Now, owing to this strange situation, he had his big chance.

CHAPTER 3.

The Men in the Fitzroy Lobby!

SIR JOHN BRENT glanced at his watch and closed it with a snap.

"Well, gentlemen, I think we have decided all the points that are really essential," he said briskly. "I must be leaving practically at once. I had intended catching the midday air liner for Paris; but that has already gone. I shall have to catch the late afternoon 'plane."

The gentlemen in question, ten in number, were a quiet, earnest-looking lot. Six of the Halford Grammar School masters were quite young men; the other four were middle-aged. It was to these latter whom Sir John chiefly spoke. They were to become the temporary Housemasters at St. Frank's, and their responsibilities would be proportionately greater.

The conference broke up. Sir John had given all the necessary details, he had explained the position in full, and the Halford masters had expressed their willingness to step into the breach and help St. Frank's out.

Sir John strolled out into the spacious, luxurious hotel lobby with Mr. John Wetherell and Mr. Walter Ross, the two senior Halford masters. The others broke into groups, and stood discussing their new plans.

"I think I am indebted to you, Mr. Wetherell, for the valiant way in which you and your colleagues have come to the rescue," Sir John was saying, as he offered Mr. Wetherell a cigar. "I can quite see that it was you who gathered the flock, so to speak."

Mr. Wetherell laughed. He was to be the senior Housemaster at Halford, and at St. Frank's he would take temporary charge of the Ancient House. He was a kindly-looking, elderly man with a big, grizzled moustache.

"I think you know exactly what the arrangements are, Mr. Wetherell," continued Sir John. "It will be quite easy for you and your colleagues to reach St. Frank's. There is an excellent train from Victoria at five-thirty-nine—unless, of course, you prefer to go by an earlier train."

"Some of us could go earlier, but I think we shall decide upon the five-thirty-nine," said Mr. Wetherell. "It would be better for us all to go together."

"Oh, much better!" agreed Sir John. "You will take the five-thirty-nine, then, and change at Bannington Junction. You will find a local train awaiting, and Bellton is only one station away. You will find the school quite a short walk from Bellton Station."

"Will anybody meet us?" asked Mr. Ross. "By Jove, you know, this is quite an adventure, Wetherell! Going down to a school we have never seen—to boys we know nothing of."

"We are not even acquainted with Mr. Pycraft, the temporary headmaster," smiled Mr. Wetherell. "However, I dare say we shall soon get acquainted, and it will be a pity if we cannot carry on satisfactorily until

the normal St. Frank's staff is fit for duty. Oh, by the way, Sir John! Didn't you say something about a letter of introduction?"

Sir John Brent started.

"Upon my soul, I had nearly forgotten it!" he said, feeling in his pocket. "Yes, here it is, Mr. Wetherell. Upon arrival at St. Frank's, perhaps you will be good enough to present this letter to Mr. Pycraft? It gives details of all your names and your various qualifications. It will be for Mr. Pycraft to introduce you to your separate Houses and Forms, and for you to shake down in your new quarters."

Sir John and the two schoolmasters were so intent upon their chatty conversation that they did not even notice two well-dressed men who were sitting idly on one of the comfortable lounges near by. This conversation was in no way private, and the three men had not lowered their voices. The strangers on the lounge could not help overhearing every word.

At first they had appeared bored—and one of them was still paying little or no attention. But the other had changed during the past few minutes. An intent look had come into his eyes, and although he did not appear to be listening deliberately, he was doing so with all his ears.

"Well, good-bye, Mr. Wetherell—and good luck," said Sir John, as he shook hands. "I really must be going now. I cannot afford to miss that afternoon 'plane. My business in Paris is of vital importance. I am extraordinarily glad that we have come to this arrangement, for I can now go abroad comfortably. I may have to go on to Berlin and even Vienna after my Paris visit, and I am glad to feel free from any worry concerning St. Frank's."

"Please be quite certain, Sir John, that we shall conduct the school satisfactorily until your own staff returns to duty," said Mr. Wetherell. "This strange trouble at Halford is annoying, but it will be at least a month before the school can be opened. So we might just as well spend this month at St. Frank's as anywhere else. And it will be nice for your masters to know, when they come out of hospital, that they can take a week or a fortnight's rest so that they can fully recuperate. We will stay the full month; you can take that as definite."

"And I am very grateful," said Sir John.

Once again he shook hands, then departed. The Halford masters hovered about for a while, chatting, and then they, too, drifted out of the Fitzroy.

"IT looks good to me, Dicky," said one of the men on the lounge.

"Eh? What looks good?"

"Didn't you hear what those fellows were talking about just now?" said the first man.

"Not being exactly deaf, I - did," said Dicky. "Something to do with that affair at St. Frank's, isn't it? A bunch of new schoolmasters going down to take charge. I confess I was singularly bored. And if you

can tell me, Mike, how it sounds good, I shall be obliged."

Both men were gentlemanly in appearance. Nobody in that superbly appointed lobby could have guessed that they were Mike Satella and "Dicky" Bliss, two of the cleverest and most slippery confidence men known to Scotland Yard. Share-pushing—that is to say, the selling of worthless shares to unsuspecting victims—was one of their chief aims in life. Mike Satella, indeed, had made such a good thing of the "con" game that he was known to his intimates as Millionaire Mike.

"Let's got upstairs, Dicky, old man," said Mike smoothly.

They went up in the big lift, and in room No. 204, after the door had been closed, Mike Satella allowed himself to relax. He lost his appearance of amiable indifference, and became keen, alert, active. His first move was to go to the telephone.

"What's the idea, Mike?" asked Bliss, staring.

"I don't believe in explaining things twice," said Millionaire Mike. "Wait until all the boys are here—and then I'll spill it. But I can tell you this, Dicky—with a little wangling, we're on to something good."

Mike Satella was a middle-aged man of prosperous appearance; slightly stout, clean-shaven, aristocratic in bearing, and with a jovial, ruddy face. His eyes twinkled, and he looked for all the world like a well-to-do country squire. Dicky Bliss was of a different type; tall, lean, but every bit as amiable-looking as his leader.

During the next half-hour or so other gentlemen wandered into that private apartment in the Fitzroy Hotel. At length, there were ten of them—every man a crook. A precious little gang, this. Gentleman crooks all—confidence tricksters—share pushers—men who practised their precarious calling in Europe's most luxurious hotels.

"Anything doing, Mike?" asked one of them hopefully.

Mike Satella nodded.

"Now, look here, boys, I've got a proposition," he said crisply. "Things are getting too hot for us in London—Scotland Yard are on us, and some of us are likely to be arrested any day. I can suggest a double chance for us—a chance to fool the Yard, and a chance to clean up in a big way."

"Sounds too good to be true, old boy," murmured one of the con men.

"Think so?" laughed Mike. "Well, listen to this."

And briefly, concisely, he told them of what he and Dicky Bliss had overheard in the lobby. By the time he had finished, they

were looking astonished. They regarded him blankly.

"But how does this affect us?" asked one man.

"It affects us very materially, Sam," replied Millionaire Mike. "You may have noticed that there are ten of us. Ten honest-looking men. And I will point out that there are ten of those Halford schoolmasters going down to St. Frank's. You saw the reports in the morning papers, didn't you? St. Frank's is in a bit of a fix because its masters ate a squiffy dinner somewhere."

"Yes, I know that," said the man called Sam. "Great Scott! You're not suggesting, Mike, that we should go down to St. Frank's?"

"Tell me of a better place," retorted Mike. "A big public school—tucked away down in the country. Do you think the Yard men would look for us there? Not on your life!"

"A kind of country holiday, eh?" drawled one of the others.

"And a comfortable, peaceful holiday, too," replied Mike. "If we couldn't manage a schoolful of boys, it's a pity. And, after all, there wouldn't be much work for us to do—the prefects are there. Hang it, I'm a public

school man myself, and I ought to know."

"That was a good many years back, Mike," said Bliss, nodding.

"More than I care to remember," added the bluff, ruddy-complexioned Mike. "Still, conditions are very much the same nowadays, and we can all pass very successfully as schoolmasters."

"But what of these Halford men?" asked Bliss sceptically.

"Easy!" returned his Chief. "If we can't 'con' those fool masters, you can call me a buzzard. And when we get down to St. Frank's, we shall only need to get this man, Pycraft, under our thumb, and the rest will be easy."

"What do you mean—'the rest'?" asked Sam. "I thought you were suggesting this St. Frank's stunt just to get a bit of a holiday on the cheap?"

"Oh, no, Sam," said Millionaire Mike. "Didn't I tell you that this game would be a double chance? You're wondering how we can clean up, eh? Hasn't it occurred to you that a big school like St. Frank's contains millionaires' sons—peers' sons?"

"Yes, but these boys haven't any money of their own," objected Dicky Bliss.

"Who said they had?" smiled Satella. "But we shall be on terms of intimacy with these boys—we shall be in constant contact with them. We can make ourselves pleasant—we can become friendly. Don't you see

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what a chance we shall have of getting hold of the real dope? As schoolmasters, we shall be able to wangle our way into the homes of some of these boys. Several of us, at least, will click. We'll work up to the big coup—we'll take it easily and smoothly, and in the end we'll wangle big sales of our shares. And then, on a given day, we can make our get-away. Boys, it's an opportunity we can't afford to miss."

And such was Millionaire Mike's eloquence, such was his personality, that the "boys" were convinced that he was right.

CHAPTER 4.

Putting It Over!

"WELL, I'm glad you've come, Padbury," said Mr. Wetherell, not without irony. "We thought you were going to miss the train."

Mr. Padbury, a cheery-faced young man, rather out of breath, smiled.

"Over ten minutes yet," he said. "It's these buses. Not so much the buses, though, as the traffic. I gave myself three quarters of an hour to get from Cricklewood, but that bus crawled along like a snail."

"Well, you're here, so it doesn't matter," said Mr. Ross.

The Halford masters were standing in a group at Victoria Station. Mr. Padbury was the last to arrive. As previously arranged, they were catching the 5.39, and as yet it was only just 5.30.

"The train's waiting, so we might as well get in," said Mr. Wetherell.

They moved towards the barrier, Mr. Wetherell carrying a handful of tickets. He was in charge of the party. But before they could get to the barrier a big, genial-looking man came up as though he had been hurrying tremendously.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but are you the Halford masters?" he asked. "Is there a Mr. Wetherell here?"



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"Why, yes," said Mr. Wetherell. "We're the Halford masters. My name is Wetherell."

"I'm glad I got you in time," said the stranger. "I inquired at the Fitzroy, but nobody knew how I could get in touch with you. Then I remembered that you were going down to St. Frank's by this train——"

"May I ask who you are, sir?" put in Mr. Wetherell.

"My name is Winthrop, and I am Sir John Brent's private secretary," said the other. "Sir John has gone to Paris, or he would have communicated with you personally."

"My dear sir, if you have anything to tell us you had better hurry," said Mr. Wetherell anxiously. "There is not a great deal of time before the train goes——"

"I know that, for I am intent upon catching the 5.39 myself," interrupted the plausible Mr. Winthrop. "In a word, gentlemen, there is no need for you to go to St. Frank's, as arranged with Sir John."

"No need!" went up a chorus.

"Sir John wishes me to express his regret, but it seems that two of the other St. Frank's Governors made plans previous to Sir John's—and quite unknown to him," continued Mike Satella—for, of course, this smooth-tongued stranger was the genial Mike. "You see, St. Frank's is already supplied with a temporary staff. A most unfortunate mix-up—but, in the circumstances, I am sure you will understand how it occurred."

The supposed private secretary was so smooth, so plausible—and, moreover, so thoroughly acquainted with the whole facts—that the Halford masters never suspected that there was any trick in this. They were surprised, even startled, but they were not suspicious.

"Sir John could not, of course, dismiss the gentlemen who had already been engaged," continued Mike regretfully. "And as it is entirely needless for you gentlemen to go down, I am happy, indeed, that I have arrived here in time to save you a useless journey. On behalf of Sir John I offer you sincere apologies for the trouble you have already been put to."

"Well, it's a bit thick," said Mr. Padbury frankly.

"I will admit, my dear young sir, that it is most unfortunate," said Mike. "Of course, the St. Frank's Governors have no desire that you should suffer in any way owing to this unexpected contretemps. You were engaged for a period of one month, were you not? Sir John, therefore, wishes me to pay you that month's salary at once, in cash."

"But, my dear sir," protested Mr. Wetherell, "that would be hardly fair——"

"Perfectly fair, Mr. Wetherell," said Mike.

He brought out his wallet, and counted out numbers of fivers—genuine ones—and pushed them into Mr. Wetherell's protesting hand. He did everything so smoothly and efficiently that none could doubt his genuineness. But then, Mike Satella was a prince amongst confidence men, and his smooth tongue and his

charm of manner were his chief assets—his stock-in-trade.

"Between you and me, gentlemen," laughed Mike, "this is a very lucky circumstance for you. You can now have a comfortable month's holiday."

"I'm not grumbling," grinned Mr. Padbury, and the others were looking well pleased, too.

"Oh, there is the letter of introduction, Mr. Wetherell," said Mike. "You won't need that now, of course. May I have it? Sir John would like to keep it for reference. St. Frank's is a big school, as you know, and sometimes there are vacancies."

Mr. Wetherell raised no objections. St. Frank's was a much better school than Halford, and it was good to know that Sir John wanted to keep those particulars for reference.

A minute later "Mr. Winthrop" shook hands all round, dashed off, and got through the barrier just in time. The Halford masters drifted out of Victoria; some took taxis, and others went by bus. So far as they were concerned, St. Frank's did not exist. They were intent upon having a quiet month's holiday.

The first move in Mike Satella's big game of bluff had been overcome without a hitch.

"IT was easy, boys," said Millionaire Mike, his face wreathed in jovial smiles.

Passing down the train, he had entered a compartment which already contained nine men. The train was gliding smoothly out of the big station.

"You're a caution, Mike," said Dicky Bliss admiringly. "But how do we know that those fool schoolmasters won't talk?"

"Who are they going to talk to?" retorted Mike. "There's not one chance in a thousand that they'll come anywhere near St. Frank's during the next two or three weeks. They might learn from the papers that St. Frank's has got some temporary masters—but no names will be printed. And that yarn exactly tallies with the yarn I told Wetherell."

"That's true," said one of the others.

"The Halford authorities won't make any inquiries—and it doesn't matter if they do," continued Mike. "Sir John Brent is in Paris, and after that he's going on to Berlin and Vienna. And what do those masters care? They've got their money, and they'll forget the whole thing. The main thing now is to get our names—to memorise them—and to know precisely what our qualifications are."

"Have we got to teach these darned school-boys?" asked somebody.

"Teaching them will be easy," put in Bliss. "It's only a matter of routine, and if we make one or two blunders to start with, who cares? The boys will expect us to make blunders, being new to our surroundings."

"True enough, Dicky," said Millionaire Mike. "Now for this letter of introduction."

A very important point, boys. Without this letter, we should have been properly in the cart—for there's more than a chance that Brent telephoned to the school and gave the names. We can't be too careful."

With deft fingers, and a skill which was the result of long practice, Satella opened that letter which was addressed to Mr. Horace Pycraft. He opened it so cunningly that it could easily be resealed and no trace would be left.

"What does it say?" asked Bliss, after Mike had been reading for some time.

"The letter itself is nothing—a mere formal word or two to introduce the new masters," replied Mike. "Wetherell seems to be the senior master of the lot, and he is to take charge of the Ancient House."

"So you'll be Wetherell?" asked Bliss.

"From this minute onwards my name is Mr. John Wetherell, M.A.," said Mike crisply. "Don't forget, boys. Don't call me Mike—and don't be familiar. If any of you want to speak to me, call me Wetherell."

"But, hang it, there's plenty of time——"

"That's just it—there's no time at all," interrupted the leader, his sharp voice belying his genial looks. "One slip at St. Frank's might be fatal. We've got to spend this whole train journey in rehearsing our new parts."

He turned to Dicky Bliss.

"You will become Mr. Walter Ross, the Housemaster of the West House," he said. "You, Vaizey, will become Mr. Manning, the Housemaster of the Modern House. You, Spink, will be Mr. Ferris, the Housemaster of the East House. They're the most important posts of all."

The three men repeated their new names and memorised them. And then Millionaire Mike gave his attention to the younger members of the gang.

"It doesn't matter much what you call yourselves," he said. "Perhaps Sam Pope had better be Mr. Padbury—a fairly easy change. Don't forget, Sam—you're Mr. Padbury from now on."

Sam Pope grinned.

"Anything to please you, chief," he said lightly.

"Cut that out!" snapped Satella. "Confound you, Padbury, what did I just tell you? My name is Wetherell. Do you understand? My name, Padbury, is Wetherell!"

"Sorry, Mr. Wetherell," said Sam sheepishly.

The rest were impressed. They soon had their new identities. A man named Jalby became Mr. Jackson—another example of an easy change. The remaining four were not so smooth. Purkiss became Mr. Bullock, Lennox became Mr. Campbell, Pike became Mr. Kent, and Sugden became Mr. Nunn.

"As for our appointments, we shall have to leave that to this man Pycraft," said Millionaire Mike. "At least, that applies to the Form-masters. The Housemasters, it seems, are already appointed. Brent, in this

letter, has named certain men for certain Houses."

During the rest of the journey the crooks worked hard. Their leader gave them no respite. Continuously, as the train roared along, they repeated their new names, and thoroughly memorised their supposed qualifications.

By the time the journey was ended, each man was letter-perfect in his part. He was familiar with his new name, he knew exactly what his accomplishments were, and he even knew what previous positions he had held. If Mr. Horace Pycraft cared to make any cross-examination of his new masters, it was not likely that he would trip any of them up.

The stage was set, and a strange drama was about to begin.

CHAPTER 5.

Mr. Pycraft is Unlucky!

"HERE they are!"

"Good egg!"

"What do they look like?"

A crowd of Removites were standing in the Ancient House doorway, peering out into the dark Triangle. It was past calling-over, and the St. Frank's prefects were taking a well-earned rest. They had had a hard day, but, on the whole, the school had behaved itself well. Precious little work had been done, but it was sufficient for those in authority to know that there had been no serious disorders.

And now the temporary staff had arrived. Several hours earlier Mr. Pycraft had informed the prefects that the new masters were coming down by the 5.39 from Victoria.

They came through the gateway and marched into the Triangle with brisk strides. The man in front was big, heavily-built, jovial-looking. They all carried suitcases; they were all well dressed.

Coming opposite the Ancient House, Millionaire Mike paused.

"Well, you've been expecting us, I suppose?" he asked genially.

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Welcome to St. Frank's, sir!"

"Thanks," said the impostor. "We'll do our best to fill the breach until your own masters get well, eh? How do we find Mr. Pycraft?"

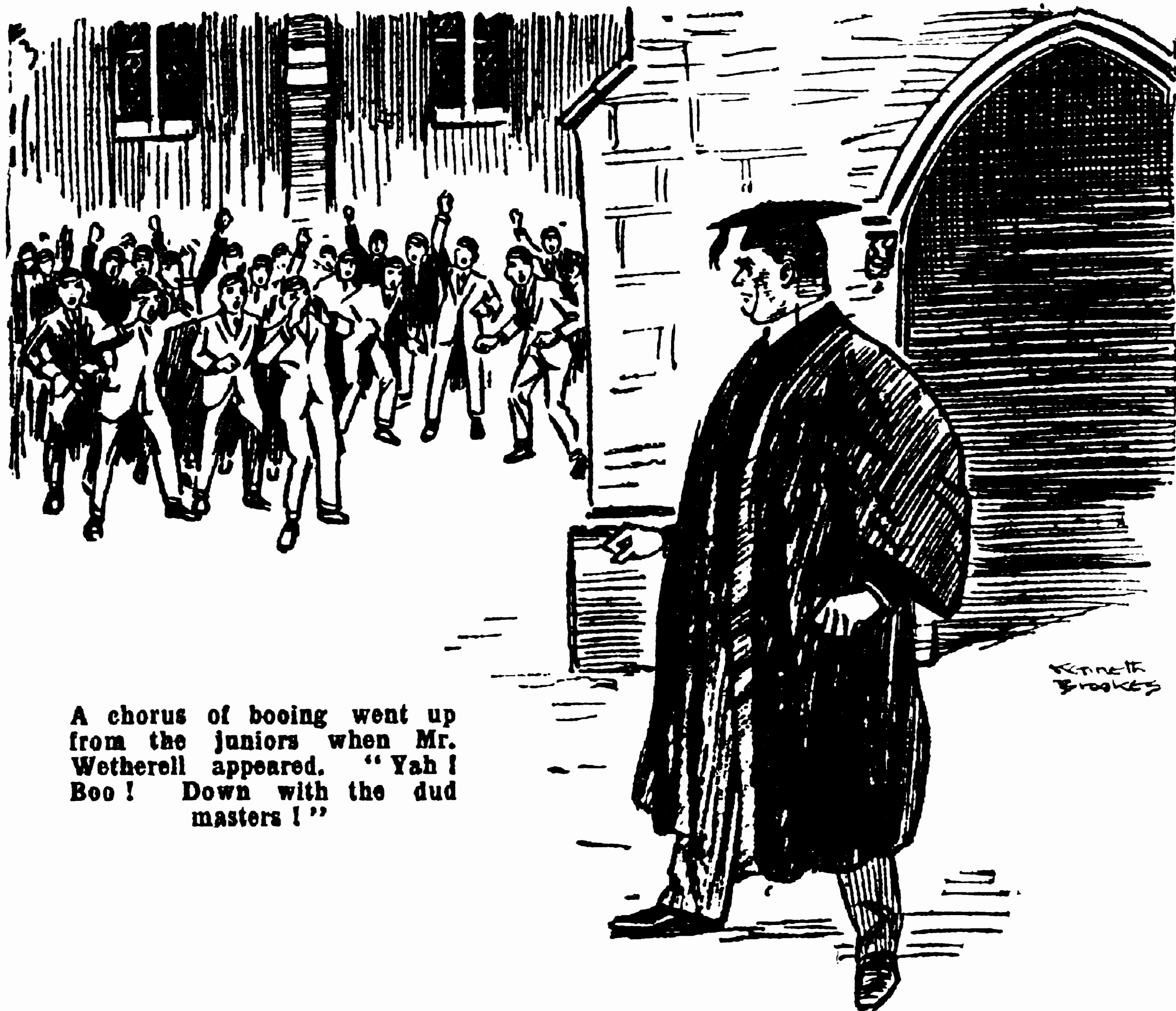
"Straight through the Big Arch, sir, and you can't miss the Head's house," said Handforth. "I'll show you, if you like!"

"What's your name, young man?" asked Mike kindly.

"Handforth, sir—Ancient House."

"So this is the Ancient House?" said Millionaire Mike. "Splendid! You'll be under my charge then, Handforth. I am Mr. Wetherell, and the Ancient House is to be my own particular nest."

The fellows liked Mr. Wetherell at once. He seemed to be a regular sport. This first



A chorus of booing went up from the juniors when Mr. Wetherell appeared. "Yah! Boo! Down with the dud masters!"

glimpse of him was very satisfactory. The other masters looked the right sort, too.

The new arrivals were provided with quite a big escort. Removites and Fourth-Formers and fags crowded round, and eagerly showed them the way across Inner Court to the Head's house.

Mr. Pycraft himself was standing on the doorstep, waiting. He had heard the sounds of the approaching throng.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pycraft, annoyed. "How dare you boys come here? You know perfectly well that Inner Court is out of bounds!"

"Just showing the new masters to your door, sir," said Handforth.

"I fancy the gentlemen would have found my door without any assistance from you boys," replied Mr. Pycraft acidly. "You will go at once—all of you! And don't let this occur again!"

The boys retired.

"Miserable old sinner!" growled Travers. "There's no pleasing him!"

"Well, thank goodness, we shall have these other masters now," said Handforth.

"What's that fat chap's name—Wetherell? Ho seems to be a nice old boy, and he's going to be our Housemaster, too."

"We shall be all right," said Nipper. "They seem a decent lot of fellows."

The first impression which the confidence men had made was good. The impression that they made upon Mr. Horace Pycraft was even more complete. He was cordiality itself, combined with an air of tremendous self-importance. Mr. Pycraft wanted to show these temporary masters that he was the Head.

It took Satella and Bliss—the more experienced members of the gang—about ten minutes to get "wise" to Mr. Pycraft. They soon discovered that he was a wind-bag, a bluffer, a boaster, a nonentity. And great was their relief. Getting Pycraft under their thumb would be child's play.

The supposed Mr. Wetherell made the introductions after Pycraft had read Sir John Brent's letter. There were all sorts of pleasantries, and everything was going swimmingly.

"And now, gentlemen, I trust you will honour me with your presence at dinner," said Mr. Pycraft, beaming. "The formalities have been dispensed with, and, of course, you will not commence your duties until to-morrow."

Mr. Pycraft was fooled up to the eyes. Not that he could be blamed, for a much cleverer man might have been fooled in the same way. The smooth-tongued Mike Satella was a past-master in the art of the

confidence trick. On top of this, he was a man with strong, dominating personality.

DINNER was a great success.

Mr. Pycraft had made very great preparations. He believed in "doing the grand." He was the Head, and these new masters of his should have no cause to complain of their welcome. He had even thrown open the headmaster's cellar, and wine had been flowing fairly freely.

Mr. Pycraft himself had indulged to an extent which inwardly alarmed him. He was by nature an abstemious man, but on special occasions he was liable to go the pace somewhat. And it is such men as these who are quickly bowled over. Satella saw to it that Mr. Pycraft's glass was kept nicely full.

Mr. Pycraft became merrier and merrier, and he was enjoying himself as he had seldom enjoyed himself before. The new masters from Halford Grammar School positively fawned upon him, paid him compliments, and he thrived on it.

And as the hour grew later, so Mr. Pycraft grew more and more to like his new masters. They were really splendid fellows! He was only sorry that they were here temporarily; he would have liked this regime to continue for good.

Dinner over, Mr. Pycraft brought out cigars, and a general move was made for the Head's library. Again Mr. Pycraft extended himself. He gave the impression that the library was his very own, that the house was his very own, and that he was the lord of all he surveyed. He played the heavy host perfectly.

He revelled in it. It pleased his vanity. Little did he realise that he was playing right into the hands of these men who had come here to get him under their thumb!

As there were to be no duties this evening, the suggestion of a game of bridge seemed quite a friendly overture, and Mr. Pycraft fell in with the idea whole-heartedly. He liked bridge—he fancied that he could play the game like a master. Actually, he was a mere novice. He had often indulged in a rubber with some of the normal St. Frank's masters—playing for threepence a hundred, just to give the game an interest.

He found himself sitting at a table with Mr. Wetherell, Mr. Ross, and Mr. Manning, and the game was soon going in full swing. Mr. Pycraft had not thought it necessary to inquire as to the stakes. He was in a reckless mood, anyhow. The other masters were either reading the papers or chatting or playing billiards in the next room. They were having an enjoyable time.

Of course, it was unusual for a new staff to dine at the Head's table, and to indulge in games afterwards. But the dining had been Mr. Pycraft's own idea—and Mike Satella had immediately taken advantage of the situation.

But there was an object in this—a cunning, scheming object. Mike knew exactly the type of man he had to deal with, and he was playing with Mr. Pycraft as a cat plays with

a mouse. And all the time he was bluff, genial, and bubbling with good-humour.

The boys—particularly the prefects—rather wondered why the new masters did not come to their own Houses at supper-time. It had been expected that Mr. Pycraft would bring them round and introduce them. But evidently Mr. Pycraft was leaving this ceremony until the morning.

After several games of bridge, Mike suggested poker.

"Rather a gamble, I'm afraid," Mike apologised, "but there's a lot of fun in poker, and more skill than you might imagine. Played much poker, Mr. Pycraft?"

"Er—not much!" said Mr. Pycraft. "In fact, I—er—rather think that you had better leave me out, gentlemen! And as it is getting rather late, perhaps you will let me show you to your Houses——"

"Oh, come!" protested Dicky Bliss. "We don't want to break up yet, sir. You don't know how pleased we are to be here—especially under your command. I'm really afraid that we shall be sorry to leave St. Frank's when our month is up."

"And I shall be sorry to lose you, believe me," said Mr. Pycraft. "A splendid set of fellows! I'm quite certain that we shall get on famously together. Eh? Oh, well, just a short game, then! What are these things?"

"Chips—counters," said Mike with a smile. "We don't keep a score with poker, you know, Mr. Pycraft, so we use these counters. Instead of money, you understand."

"Ah, yes, to be sure!" beamed Mr. Pycraft. "I am relieved to learn that this—er—exciting gamble is not to be for money!"

The others laughed.

"Oh, just a bit on to make it a game!" said Mr. Ross, alias Dicky Bliss. "These counters stand for so much money. We can settle up afterwards."

"Oh, I see, I see!" nodded Mr. Pycraft. "Very well."

"Of course, if you would prefer not to play for money——" began Mike.

"Good gracious, no!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft recklessly. "I should hope I am a sportsman! Whatever you say, gentlemen, is agreeable to me."

THE "little" game of poker lasted for well over an hour and a half, and then, by way of a change, somebody suggested pontoon. Now Mr. Pycraft had vaguely heard of pontoon, but he had never become acquainted with the game. He only knew that it was an out-and-out gamble, comparable with that cheerful pastime, crown and anchor.

"I really think, gentlemen, that we had better go to bed," said Mr. Pycraft, after a hectic spell of pontoon. "This—er—game does not appeal to me. Have I been winning or losing?"

"Losing a bit, I'm afraid," said Mike gently.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter!" said Mr. Pycraft, rising to his feet and glancing at the clock. "Good gracious! Past midnight! This is terrible, gentlemen! I am afraid I am very much to blame for this—since I am headmaster, and in authority. We mustn't do this sort of thing again."

"We don't expect to, sir," said one of the younger men. "But we reckoned on a bust-up on the first night, what?"

"We mustn't let anybody know," said Mr. Pycraft, smiling sheepishly.

"H'm! Rather more than I thought, sir," said Millionaire Mike, glancing up with a smile. "These IOU's of yours come to a goodish bit."

Mr. Pycraft waved an airy hand.

"Tell me the amount," he said cheerfully. "I always settle up my debts on the spot."

He had been signing IOU's automatically—as "Mr. Wetherell" had explained that it was easier to give IOU's than to bring out cash during the course of the game. So these IOU's had been passing to and fro—a favourite dodge with card-sharpers. If the others did it, Mr. Pycraft saw no reason why he should not follow suit; and he had not troubled to take any account of the amounts.

"I don't think you can settle up to-night, Mr. Pycraft," said Mike, shaking his head. "Mr. Ross and Mr. Ferris and myself appear to be the principal winners, and we hold your IOU's between us for the sum of five hundred and two pounds, ten shillings."

Mr. Pycraft reeled.

"Five—five hundred pounds?" he ejaculated in a voice that sounded like the croak of a bull-frog.

"You've been deucedly unlucky, sir," said Mr. Ferris feelingly.

"But—but it is absurd—it's ridiculous!" protested Mr. Pycraft, in wild alarm. "Five hundred pounds! Why, good gracious me, I've never lost five hundred pence before in all my life! There must be some mistake!"

The supposed Mr. Wetherell looked pained.

"Really, Mr. Pycraft, I hope you do not intend to repudiate your gambling debts," he said reproachfully. "I think we are all gentlemen here, are we not?"

He looked round, and Mr. Pycraft looked round, too. Mr. Pycraft's eyes bulged. Mr. Campbell was handing three five-pound notes to Mr. Bullock; Mr. Nunn was receiving a thirty-five pound cheque from Mr. Jackson; and sheaves of pound-notes and ten-shilling notes were passing to and fro all over the room.

"Good heavens!" bleated Mr. Pycraft. "But, really, five hundred pounds! I cannot afford—I mean, I cannot settle such an amount off-hand."

"Who's suggesting any such thing, Mr. Pycraft?" laughed Mike gaily. "We don't want you to pay these IOU's in cash, even. We shall have further opportunities for play during the month, and you can easily win the money back. These IOU's are good enough for us. We can trust you, I should hope!"

"Why, of course!" said the others, as though amused.

A wave of intense relief surged through Mr. Horace Pycraft. The knowledge that he could win those IOU's back was comforting. He began to see that it was only a game—that those slips of paper were not really of any great importance.

That, at least, is what he thought. It would not be long before he found that those slips of paper were of very great importance indeed!

CHAPTER 6.

Something Wrong Somewhere!

NEXT morning, Mr. Horace Pycraft awoke with a head which felt rather like a chunk of lead with a loose centre. Every time he moved it, something jolted agonisingly. This was bad enough, but a recollection of the previous night's happenings was worse. He vividly remembered those IOU's.

"Good heavens! What a fool I was!" muttered Mr. Pycraft, in agony. "I cannot conceive what possessed me! This is terrible—terrible!"

He was immensely relieved, on going round the school, to find that everything was proceeding smoothly. When he met Mr. Wetherell and Mr. Ross and Mr. Ferris and the others, they greeted him cheerfully and respectfully. They reported that everything was going fine. Not a word was mentioned of the previous night's episode.

The various Housemasters had made themselves thoroughly comfortable in their new quarters. They had not waited for Mr. Pycraft. They had introduced themselves to their own particular prefects, and to many of the boys. They had made themselves agreeable to all, and the general verdict was that they were "all serene." None of the boys, of course, had heard a whisper of what had happened in the Head's house over night.

"They seem all right," said Travers after he had met one or two of the new masters. "Our own man seems a bit of a sport. Who have we got for a Form-master?"

"That young chap named Padbury, I think," said Nipper. "I'm wondering if he's all right."

"What do you mean—'all right'?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Oh, nothing! Perhaps I'd better not say what I really meant," replied Nipper, walking off.

As a matter of fact, he had noticed that Mr. Padbury—alias Sam Pope—was very heavy-eyed this morning. Not many of the other fellows, however, were as observant as Nipper and Mr. Padbury was passed as O.K. The comments which went round the school were wholly favourable.

Mr. Pycraft, sensing this, was duly relieved. From now onwards, perhaps, things would go smoothly. After all, he was still the Head, and by the time this period ended he would have covered himself with glory. He

would have conducted the school successfully, and the Governors would not only reward him suitably, but would mark him down for swift promotion.

Millionaire Mike had managed to get a word with most of his men at various times during the early morning.

"Everything is going fine," he said to them. "Keep it up, boys! We've got Pycraft where we want him, and the rest will be easy. If we get through to-day without any hitch, we're on velvet. But to-day is important. Pycraft has accepted us, and the boys have accepted us. But the boys are a sight keener than Pycraft. They won't be so easily fooled. We don't know the first thing about school routine, but we mustn't let the kids know it."

It sounded all right, but in practice it was just the opposite. These impostors believed that they could bluff their way through their duties without exciting any comment, but they were wrong.

As far as the Remove was concerned, Mr. Padbury was their own particular "game." They had meant to rag Mr. Padbury during morning lessons. But they didn't rag him; they were too surprised to rag him.

It so happened that Mr. Padbury was the one weak spot in Millionaire Mike's organisation. And it was just the purest chance that had led Mr. Padbury to be appointed to the Remove. To Mike, the Remove meant no more than the Fourth—or the Third, or any other Form. He certainly did not know that the Remove contained the keenest, the liveliest and the most mischievous spirits in the school.

Mr. Padbury was very genial and very good-humoured when he commenced his duties in the Form-room. He talked a lot about Halford Grammar School, explaining that the place wasn't open yet, and adding that the routine at St. Frank's was probably very different from the routine at his previous school, about which he was noticeably vague.

But what the Remove soon learned was that Mr. Padbury knew absolutely nothing about school routine. What was more, he knew absolutely nothing about the subjects he was supposed to teach.

He tried hard to "put it over," and many of the boys were deceived. But fellows like Nipper, Vivian Travers, Kirby Keeble Parkington, Fullwood, and Reggie Pitt were not bluffed. They soon found out that Mr. Padbury was trying his hardest to muddle through without arousing comment. He knew less than Teddy Long.

And the Remove was so occupied in wondering what kind of a Form-master this was that there was no ragging. In addition, Mr. Padbury had made himself so thoroughly agreeable that it seemed unfair to rag him, in any case. He wasn't like a Form-master at all. He was free and easy, he was chatty, and he did not seem to care a hang about work.

The Remove did practically nothing that morning, and Mr. Padbury allowed the

fellows to speak openly, to cross the Form-room at random, and to violate every rule of the school. And the fact that emerged most clearly was that Mr. Padbury did not know that any rules were being violated. His previous school must have been a very queer place indeed!

"There's something rummy about it!" said Nipper when lessons were over. "That chap has never taken charge of a class in his life before this morning!"

"But, dash it, he's a schoolmaster!" protested Tommy Watson.

"He may call himself one, but this is his first taste of schoolmastering, I'll swear!" declared Nipper. "It's more than rummy—it's thundering queer!"

Buster Boots, of the Fourth, came running up with Bob Christine and one or two others.

"I say!" burst out Boots. "What was your Form-master like?"

"Like nothing on earth!" said Handforth, grinning. "Pally enough, but he was as ignorant of school rules as a Zulu!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Boots. "Our man—Mr. Jackson—was practically as bad. We had to tell him what to do!"

It wasn't long before some Third-Formers came along, and excitedly declared that their own master, Mr. Kent, was a hopeless duffer. And the same yarn came from the Fifth and Sixth. All the masters, it seemed, were as friendly as they could possibly be, but their ignorance of the usual Public school regulations was abysmal.

"But what's the idea?" asked Handforth blankly. "Why did the Governors send us down a crowd of duds?"

"Who cares?" drawled Vivian Travers. "The duffer they are, dear old fellow, the better. I can see that we're going to have a high old time for the next two or three weeks."

"There's that, of course," admitted Handforth. "But it's squiffy, all the same."

THERE was another surprise when afternoon lessons commenced.

"Well, boys, what's on the programme for this afternoon?" asked Mr. Padbury as he sat at his desk and rubbed his hands together. "Don't forget I'm a newcomer here, and I don't know the ropes yet. Just carry on in the usual way. Understand?"

The Remove understood thoroughly, and it carried on in a most unusual way. Not that Mr. Padbury seemed to mind. First lesson was a farce.

The surprise came when Mr. Padbury started smoking behind the cover of his desk top—and when he turned on Teddy Long in a fury when that inquisitive youth ventured from his seat to peep round.

"What do you think you're doing?" he demanded, closing his desk with a slam. "Trying to spy on me, you young rat?"

The change in him was astonishing. Perhaps he was annoyed at being bowled out. Teddy Long stood transfixed.



The excited rebels grabbed hold of Mr. Pycraft and all the other masters, rushed them to the gates and flung them into the roadway.

"Well?" barked Mr. Padbury. "You heard what I said, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir," gasped Teddy. "I—I was looking to see if the fire wants some coal on."

"You're a young liar," said Mr. Padbury, rising to his feet. "Come here!"

"Please, sir, I—"

"Come here!" roared Mr. Padbury.

The Remove watched in wonder, and Teddy Long approached cautiously.

"I'll teach you to spy on me!" said Mr. Padbury vindictively. "Your eyes are too thundering sharp. They need plugging up. Stand just where you are!"

Mr. Padbury dipped his pen in the red ink-well, took aim, and splashed at Teddy Long's face. It was such an extraordinary proceeding that a complete hush fell over the Remove.

"Here, I say, sir!" babbled Teddy. "You've ruined my collar! And—and my face——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Padbury, highly amused. "Stand still, kid! That wasn't a success. We've got to try again."

Splash! Splash!

He took a great delight in splashing red ink all over Teddy's face. The more Teddy

gaped and squirmed, the louder Mr. Padbury laughed. And the Remove grew more and more indignant. The fellows were no longer amused.

"I say, sir, that sort of thing isn't done at St. Frank's!" burst out Handforth warmly.

"It's not the thing to splash ink into a fellow's face!"

Mr. Padbury turned on him.

"Who told you to interfere, Monkey-face?" he asked. "Come out here! I'll decorate your face, too."

Fortunately for Handforth, the door opened at that moment, and the portly, dignified figure of Mr. Wetherell appeared. Millionaire Mike, in fact, was making a round, just to see that everything was going on all right. He came in time to see Mr. Padbury splash another penful of ink into Teddy Long's face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the man. "That was a bull's-eye that time!"

Millionaire Mike nearly forgot himself. He strode forward, his face black with anger. He could smell the cigarette smoke in the air. He nearly shouted "Sam!" but checked himself in time.

"Mr. Padbury!" he thundered. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Eh? Oh, hallo, Mi— Oh, hallo, Mr. Wetherell," said Mr. Padbury. "Just giving this young kid a lesson."

"You infernal fool!" snapped Mike. "Get out of here!"

"But, I say, old man—"

"Get out of here!" thundered his leader. "Come to my study later, and I'll deal with you then."

He looked so dangerous that Sam fairly slunk out of the room. And the Remove gave one long gasp. Mr. Padbury's behaviour had been extraordinary enough; but Mr. Wetherell's was even more so. For a Housemaster to address a colleague in that fashion—and for the colleague to submit to it—was almost beyond belief.

The Remove was also impressed in another way; it could detect the leadership of this newcomer. They felt a thrill run through them. This man had a strong personality, and as he turned upon the Form there was not a murmur.

"Now, we will get on with the lesson," he said smoothly. "You, young man, will go out and wash yourself."

Teddy Long bolted, and the Remove got back to work. But that incident had made rather an unpleasant impression upon the boys. There was certainly something very, very queer about these masters!

CHAPTER 7.

Straight From the Shoulder!

THE false Mr. Wetherell felt satisfied after he had regarded the Remove for some moments. No great harm had been done.

The Remove eyed Mr. Wetherell with caution. His outburst had opened their eyes. Until then, they had believed him incapable of such violence. He was such a kindly, jovial, fatherly sort of man.

The Remove, in fact, had experienced a bit of a shock. That glimpse of Millionaire Mike's real character had come upon the boys like a bombshell. They sensed at once that he was not the kind of man they had taken him for, after all.

And it wasn't long before the Remove discovered that Mr. Wetherell himself knew precious little about the way things should go. He took charge of the Form, but he was careful enough to let the Form have its head.

After a while, Vivian Travers stood up and extended his hand.

"Well, young man?" asked Mr. Wetherell.

"Please, sir, I'm a bit puzzled about this question—it's a problem, really—which Mr. Padbury gave us before you came in."

"Well?"

"I was wondering if you'd let me look at Mr. Padbury's paper, sir—it's on your desk," said Travers coolly.



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; "Holiday Annuals," "Nature Annuals," pocket wallets, and penknives are also offered as prizes. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

FULL MARKS!

Schoolmaster (explaining common fractions): "If I take a potato, cut it in half, then in quarters, and then in halves again, what shall I have?"

Small Boy: "Chips, sir."

(B. Oliver, 98, The Chase, Nottingham, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

EXPLICIT.

The man had been given a two-foot rule to measure an iron plate. After being away some considerable time, he returned.

"Now, Bill," asked the plater, "what is the size of it?"

"Well," replied Bill, "it is the length of your rule, and two thumbs over plus this brick,

and the breadth of my arm bar a finger."

(H. Packham, 6, Horsham Road, Crawley, Sussex, has been awarded a "Holiday Annual.")

HE COULDN'T HELP IT.

Bobbie: "Dad, is it true that Red Indians travel single file?"

Father: "Well, I've only seen one, my boy—and he did!"

(T. Vaughan, Beechenden, Castle Road, Weybridge, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

BOTTLED UP.

Chemist (mixing poison): "Boy, fetch me a blue bottle."

New Errand-boy (after a short search): "I can't find a blue-bottle, sir. Will an ordinary fly do?"

(K. Parkinson, 201, Middlewood Road, Hillsboro', Sheffield, has been awarded a "Nature Annual.")

INCOMPLETE.

Billy was home after his first day at school.

"Well, Billy," asked his fond mother, "what did they teach you?"

"Not much," replied small Billy. "I've got to go again to-morrow."

(T. Carroll, William Street, Listowel, Co. Kerry, Ireland, has been awarded a penknife.)

"You'd better come and find it," said Millionaire Mike. "I don't know which paper you mean."

To the Remove's amazement, Travers calmly walked down to the master's desk, selected a paper, and nodded.

"This is the one, sir," he said, smiling. "It gives the answer on this paper, you see, sir. May I keep it?"

"Go ahead!"

The Remove inwardly gasped. This was staggering. Mr. Wetherell's suspicions had not been aroused by Travers' cool request. Travers, in his own way, would have made a good confidence trickster if he had set himself to it. To ask a master for the written answer to a given problem was unheard of. And for the master to let him have it proved clearly enough that the master had utterly no knowledge of the conduct of a school.

"Well I'm jiggered!" breathed Handforth, as Travers sat down. "What do you think of that?"

The Remove was still further startled when the hour for dismissal came. There had only been about ten minutes to go when Mr. Wetherell had taken charge. He did not even desire to look at the Form's work. As soon as he heard the clock striking, he rose to his feet.

"This is your usual time for dismissal, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," chorused the Remove.

"All right, you can all go," said Mr. Wetherell.

The fellows crowded out. There was no collection of books, no tidying up, no hint of the proper routine.

"I thought I'd test him, you chaps," said Travers, outside. "The man knows less than Padbury! These masters are a set of absolute duds!"

"They're not masters at all," said Nipper perplexedly. "That's the rummy part of it! I don't believe they've ever seen the inside of a school since their own schooldays."

Seniors and juniors, comparing notes freely, all came to the same conclusion. At the end of the first day's work, it was as obvious as daylight that the new staff was utterly raw. The school wasn't so much indignant as bewildered. Yet, somehow, the fellows felt that the whole tone of St. Frank's was being lowered by the admission of these bluffers. St. Frank's, in fact, was not so easily fooled as Millionaire Mike and his gang believed.

In the privacy of the Housemaster's study, Millionaire Mike gave Sam Pope a severe dressing down.

"If there's any more smoking during lessons, I'll send you back to London," he said finally. "You confounded fool, Sam! Can't you leave your smoking until your off-hours? Do you want the school talking?"

"What are you calling me 'Sam' for?" asked the other sourly. "Didn't you tell me that my name is Padbury?"

BOW-WOW.

Teacher (reading Johnny's essay on a dog): "This composition is the same as your brother's, word for word."

Johnny: "Well, teacher, it was the same dog."

(*R. Davis, c/o Mr. L. Davis, P.O. Box 5933, Johannesburg, S. Africa, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

A GOOD EXCUSE.

Teacher (to tardy pupil): "Why are you late?"

Jimmy: "Well, a sign down the road——"

Teacher: "What has a sign got to do with your being late?"

Jimmy: "The sign said, 'School ahead—go slow!' and I did."

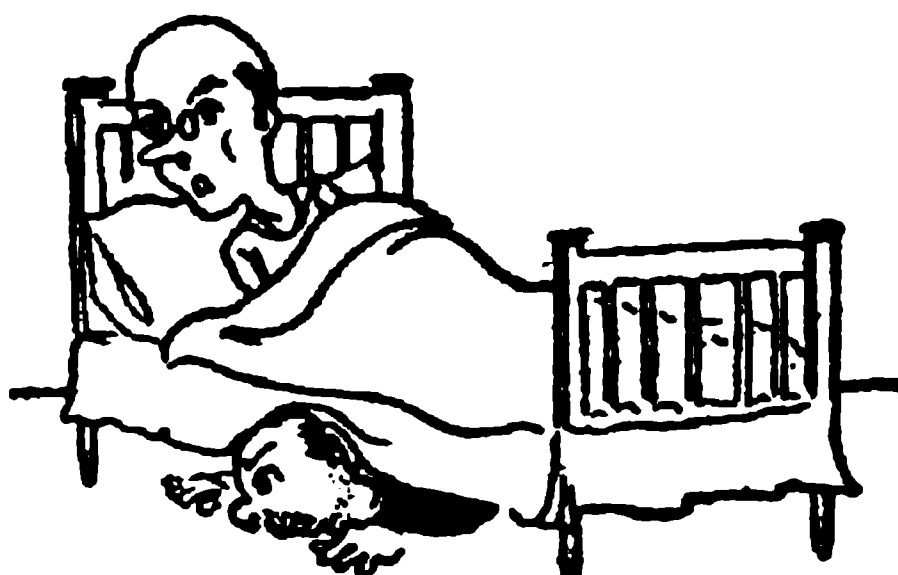
(*Richard Bonsteel, Lansdowne, Ontario, Canada, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

EXTRAORDINARY.

Mistress: "Jane, how is the gas-fire that I had installed in the servants' quarters last month going?"

Jano: "These new inventions are great, mum. I lighted it when it came and it hasn't gone out since!"

(*G. Horsfield, 190, King Street, Dukinfield, Cheshire, has been awarded a penknife.*)



DENSE.

Bright Lad: "The people of London are noted for their stupidity."

Teacher: "Wherever did you get that information?"

Bright Lad: "From this book, teacher. It says that the population of London is very dense."

(*R. Speirs, Bunfoot, Fairlie, Ayrshire, has been awarded a "Nature Annual."*)

FORCE OF HABIT.

Mr. Smith: "I think our new neighbour must be a clerk."

Mrs. Smith: "Why?"

Mr. Smith: "I saw him working in his garden to-day, and every time he stopped digging he tried to put the spade behind his ear."

(*Miss Jean Aitken, Carlyle Street, Mosgiel, Otago, New Zealand, has been awarded a "Nature Annual."*)

VERY STRANGE.

Absent-minded professor (hearing noise under bed): "Is there anybody under the bed?"

Burglar: "No, sir."

Professor: "I could have sworn I heard a noise."

(*E. Mortlock, 94, Goldsmith Avenue, Manor Park, E.12, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

"See here, young man," said Millionaire Mike, seizing him firmly by the arm. "You'd better not cause any trouble. This game of ours is a big one, and we don't want it spoilt before we can get it going properly. Understand? We've got to go easy with these boys. I believe they're suspecting something already—and it won't help matters if you smoke in school hours. Masters don't do that sort of thing."

DURING the evening, matters became worse.

At tea, of course, the fellows had excitedly discussed the news of the day, and after tea was over everybody was wondering if these strange masters would commit any further faux pas. But the masters were not to be seen. The prefects, to their disgust, found an enormous amount of work piled on them. Tasks that were usually undertaken by Form-masters and Housemasters were given to the prefects.

At about mid-evening, when Fenton went into the Masters' Common-room in the Ancient House, he experienced a shock. He had gone there to inquire about calling-over. The Form-masters always undertook this work, and it was past the hour of calling-over already. Yet nothing had been done. The whole routine of the school was going to pieces.

To Fenton's amazement, he found Mr. Wetherell, Mr. Padbury, Mr. Jackson and Mr. Bullock sitting at a table, near the fire, playing cards. This, in itself, was not so startling. But there were piles of money on the table, the air was blue with smoke, and the masters were evidently having a high old time. Millionaire Mike himself had apparently changed his views—or as these were off-hours (or what he considered to be off-hours) he had relaxed.

"Excuse me, Mr. Wetherell," said Fenton quietly.

"Who told you to come here?" demanded the Housemaster, that genial look fading from his face, and being replaced by a hard frown. "I understood that this was a private apartment?"

"Well, yes, so it is, sir——"

"Then what the deuce do you mean by walking into it without knocking?"

"I did knock, sir," said Fenton, with a touch of contempt. "But you were all so intent upon your game that I suppose you didn't hear me. I'm sorry I interrupted, sir."

"That's all right," said Mr. Wetherell, his smile returning. "What is it you want, anyhow?"

"Well, it's past time for calling-over, sir—and the Form-masters usually attend to those duties," said the school captain. "I was wondering——"

"Just a minute, young man!" interrupted Millionaire Mike. "I thought I made it quite clear to you that the prefects were to carry on? You're a prefect, aren't you? You're the head prefect?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then what's the idea of coming to me? Can't you attend to the roll-call?" asked Mr. Wetherell. "Go and see about it—and don't bother me again!"

Fenton went, fuming. Out in the lobby, he happened to come across Mr. Pycraft, and Mr. Pycraft was looking angry and impatient.

"Ah, Fenton! What is the meaning of this?" said Mr. Pycraft. "What about roll-call? Isn't something being done?"

"Don't ask me, sir," replied Fenton bitterly. "Our new masters are about as useful as a set of Egyptian mummies. If I were you, sir, I'd go along to the Masters' Common-room and have a look there."

And Fenton walked off, fed up. Mr. Pycraft strode into the Masters' Common-room. He was staggered at the scene that confronted him.

"May I ask, gentlemen, exactly what this means?" demanded Mr. Pycraft in an icy voice.

He had drawn himself up to his full height, and he was quite certain that he looked dignified. As headmaster, it was his place to be stern and severe. Yet, for the life of him, he could not help shrivelling slightly when he found that Millionaire Mike's eyes were on him; and there was something about Millionaire Mike's eyes which sent little shivers down Mr. Pycraft's back.

"Just a minute, you fellows," said Satella gently. "Mr. Pycraft, I believe, wants to know something. How can we oblige you, Mr. Pycraft?"

The temporary Head was angered by his colleague's tone.

"I want you to understand, Mr. Wetherell, that this sort of thing is—er—deplorable!" he said angrily. "It is entirely your own concern if you play cards in your off-duty hours. But these Form-masters are wanted elsewhere. You will kindly break up this game immediately!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Wetherell, getting to his feet. "Is that a suggestion, or an order?"

"It is an order!" retorted Mr. Pycraft curtly.

"Thanks! It's just as well to know."

The three men still sat at the table, awaiting developments. Millionaire Mike was standing. This was the very moment for which he had been awaiting. This card game was a deliberate plant, staged for the very purpose of bringing Mr. Pycraft on the scene.

"Well, why don't you do as I say?" demanded the Head hotly. "You young men! Get back to your jobs at once! As headmaster of this school, I cannot possibly allow——"

"Easy—easy!" interrupted Millionaire Mike, thrusting his hands into his ample trousers pockets and strolling across the room. "You may be the headmaster, Mr. Pycraft, but I want you to understand that I am the man who is running this school."

"What!" gasped Mr. Pycraft, backing away. "Really, sir! This—this is nothing short of impertinence!"

"Not at all," said Satella. "I am merely stating a fact."

"Your presumption, Mr. Wetherell, is beyond all bounds of decency," fumed Mr. Pycraft, swinging round to the table. "Now, you young men! You are Form-masters, you understand? I am your Head! Get out of here before I thoroughly lose my temper! Attend to your duties immediately!"

Millionaire Mike turned to the table, too.

"Sit just where you are, boys," he said easily.

The "boys" sat just where they were.

"Is—is this defiance?" panted Mr. Pycraft, with a peculiar sensation that the floor had become slippery.

"If you don't like the way we're running the school, Mr. Pycraft, you can complain to the Governors," said Millionaire Mike.

"And I certainly shall complain!" roared Mr. Pycraft. "But, good gracious me! Sir John Brent is abroad—and the other Governors are abroad!"

"You astonish me!" murmured Mike. "Now, isn't that awkward?"

"But you must not imagine that they are beyond my reach!" continued Mr. Pycraft stormily. "I must tell you frankly, Mr. Wetherell, that I do not countenance this outrageous behaviour. I shall get into communication with the Governors at the first possible moment."

"Go ahead! Do just as you please," said Mr. Wetherell, with an airy wave of his hand. "Perhaps the Governors might like to see those interesting I O U's of yours, which some of us hold?"

This time the floor seemed positively to lurch, and Mr. Pycraft clutched at the air for support.

"My—my I O U's!" he panted dizzily.

"I hate mentioning them—I had hoped that you would be reasonable," said Millionaire Mike. "But if you prefer to be nasty, Mr. Pycraft, there are other people who can be nasty. If you do not interfere with us, we will not mention those trifling slips of paper. It is entirely up to you."

Mr. Horace Pycraft crumpled. He knew, in that second, that he was under the thumbs of these men. If those I O U's came to the notice of the Governors, he would be required, on the instant, to hand in his resignation. And, what was more, he would be black-balled by every other school in the country. He would never get another appointment.

If he had been a strong man, he would have shown it then. But Mr. Pycraft—as Satella had known from the first—was a weakling.

"Really, you—you mustn't do anything of that sort!" panted the temporary Head, fairly clutching at Mike's arm. "I—I will settle those I O U's, Mr. Wetherell! For Heaven's sake, keep that episode entirely to yourselves!"

"Certainly—if you are reasonable," said Millionaire Mike agreeably.

"Perhaps—perhaps we had better leave this matter for some other time," said Mr. Pycraft feebly. "The prefects can attend to the roll-call. Certainly! Why should they not attend to the roll-call, indeed?"

He staggered out of the room, his dignity and his importance things of the past. Definitely, he had placed himself under Mike Satella's thumb.

CHAPTER 8.

A Little Dinner Party!

LATER in the evening, Millionaire Mike paid a visit to Mr. Pycraft's study. He dropped in casually, and found Mr. Pycraft sitting at his desk, looking haggard and worn. Mr. Pycraft was feeling that his conduct of the school was far from satisfactory. Yet he had not the acumen to guess that he was being made the victim of a cunningly-conceived plot. He accepted these men as real schoolmasters, and he thought that their tactics were innocent of any nefarious motive.

"I am glad that you have come, Mr. Wetherell," he said, looking up. "I want to speak to you about—er—last night's unfortunate affair. I was under a misapprehension when I played in those games."

"Sorry, old man, but it's too late now," said Millionaire Mike.

"I am not attempting to repudiate my debts," Mr. Pycraft hastened to say. "But you will kindly let me have those I O U's? I think you can trust me, as a man of honour, to—"

"Of course we can trust you, Mr. Pycraft," interrupted the other easily. "But we're hanging on to those I O U's, if you don't mind."

And he gave Mr. Pycraft such a straight look that the temporary Head had not the courage to pursue the subject.

"I've been thinking," continued Mike. "We ought to get into closer touch with some of the boys, Mr. Pycraft. What I want you to do is this: you will invite some of them—half a dozen, say—to dinner tomorrow evening. We want to be sociable. You will invite me to dinner, too,—and Mr. Ross, and Mr. Manning, and Mr. Ferris. The four Housemasters, yourself, and half a dozen boys. Just a friendly dinner party, you understand."

Mr. Pycraft did not understand, and he was astonished.

"But why?" he asked, staring. "This—this is a most unusual suggestion, Mr. Wetherell."

"I am an unusual man, Mr. Pycraft."

"I believe you! Yet I cannot understand—"

"My dear man, I'm only suggesting that we should be sociable with the boys," interrupted Mike. "You know these boys better than I do. I want you to choose a very

special half-dozen—the sons of millionaires, peers, and so forth. The sons of rich men generally. I think you know them, don't you?"

Now, Mr. Horace Pycraft was very much of a snob, and this suggestion began to appeal to him. He was always ready to toady to the sons of rich men, and he fooled himself into thinking that he saw Mr. Wetherell's idea.

"Well, perhaps it is a good plan," he said slowly. "I, too, am in favour of being on friendly terms with the boys. Yes, Mr. Wetherell, I will attend to this matter."

SO the next morning the invitations were sent round, and there was a good deal of astonishment in the Remove—for it was the Remove which was most affected. Archie Glen-thorne, Jimmy Potts, Claude Gore-Pearce, the young Duke of Somerton, and the Hon. Douglas Singleton were invited. Hulbert and Drake, of the Fifth—both sons of millionaires—were also included, and so was Vandyke, of the Fourth. There were to be eight of these schoolboy guests.

"But what's the idea?" asked Handforth wonderingly. "Why wasn't I invited? If there's going to be a dinner, what about me?"

"It's a mystery," said Church, shaking his head. "Why they left you out is a real staggerer. Unless, of course, they want to keep their glassware intact!"

"Idiot!" said Handforth, frowning.

The invitations, of course, had come direct from Mr. Pycraft, and it was such an extraordinary thing for Mr. Pycraft to do that the fellows were sceptical. How was it that Mr. Pycraft had suddenly become so hospitable and friendly? Dinner with the Head was a really remarkable honour.

"It's not so puzzling," said Nipper, with a touch of contempt. "You'll notice that fellows like you and I, Handy, were left out. Gore-Pearce and Singleton and Archie are included."

"What do you mean?" asked Travers.

"Merely that the lucky chaps are either the sons of aristocrats or the sons of millionaires," replied Nipper shrewdly. "Hasn't old Pieface always been a snob?"

It seemed to be the obvious explanation. Yet in reality it was Mike Satella's first move in his cunning game. He wanted to get fully



acquainted with the boys who had rich parents—parents who might become the gang's victims. Mike was still thinking of his worthless shares. He wanted to find a market for them. Once he and his colleagues were thoroughly "in" with those influential families, the rest ought to be easy. His main idea was to gain the confidence of all these boys. He also desired to get as much information out of them as possible, and the one way to gain information was to make them talk.

"SIT down, boys! Make yourselves thoroughly at home," said Mr. Pycraft genially. "I—er—wish to mention that this dinner party is entirely Mr. Wetherell's idea. He is a sociable man, and he believes in intimacy between boys and masters. He has quite

Mr. Wetherell seized hold of Handforth by the scruff of the neck and began to flog him. A roar of indignation went up from the assembled school.



won me round to his own way of thinking, and I hope we shall all have a thoroughly good time."

"Thanks awfully, sir," chorused the guests.

Old Pycraft wasn't such a rotter, after all. And Mr. Wetherell, kindly, beaming, and friendly, was more like an uncle than a schoolmaster. It was noticed that Mr. Wetherell did most of the talking. Pycraft was ostensibly the host, but none of the guests could fail to see that Wetherell was No. 1.

The dinner was a complete success.

The boys themselves had the time of their lives. They had expected a formal party, all starch and stiffness; in reality the new masters were jollity itself. They were really the nicest masters, socially, the fellows had ever encountered. And at such a time as this it was convenient to forget their scholastic shortcomings.

If the boys thought the party a success, so did the men. Millionaire Mike and his confederates were past-masters in the art of pumping, and the information they obtained from Gore-Pearce and Somerton and Archie Glen-thorne and the others was highly satisfactory.

Long before the dessert arrived, the fake masters knew as much about the homes and families of their guests as the guests knew themselves. They knew precisely what businesses the parents were engaged in, what establishments they maintained and further information of a similar useful character. And it had all been obtained by casual, conversation, which gave the boys no chance to suspect a hidden motive.

The party was rather bigger than Mike had originally planned, for Mr. Padbury and Mr. Jackson, of the Remove and Fourth respectively, were included. Perhaps Mike felt that it was expedient to keep Sam Pope under his own eye.

Sam was frankly bored, and he was glad enough when the dinner was over. When he wasn't working, his idea of pleasure centred round cards. Before joining this clique of con. men, in fact, he had earned a precarious living on transatlantic liners as a card-sharper.

"So your people are down in Cornwall at present?" said Mr. Padbury, alias Sam, as he chatted with the Hon. Douglas Singleton after the meal. "Is Cornwall your county?"

"Oh, no!" said the Hon. Douglas. "My people have two or three estates, dotted all over the place."

Sam pricked up his ears. He decided he'd like to have a long chat with Singleton.

"Pity we can't slip out of this place and enjoy ourselves," he said casually. "Nothing I'd like better than a game of bridge."

"That ought to be easy enough, sir," said the Hon. Douglas. "I could round up a couple of fellows, and we could soon make a table."

"Good man," said Sam eagerly. "But you're not in my House, are you?"

"No, sir—I'm a West House chap," said Singleton. "But that doesn't make any difference."

And when the dinner-party broke up, and the masters went off to their various Houses—entirely pleased with the result of the

dinner—Mr. Padbury linked his arm with Singleton's and took him into the Ancient House.

"This is strictly on the q.t., remember," said Sam genially. "Just a little party of our own, see? You round up two other fellows, and I'll poke the fire and get the cards out."

"There's our prep, sir——"

"Prep be hanged!" said Mr. Padbury promptly. "I'll make that all right in the morning. Don't worry your head about prep. Go and fetch those chaps."

The Hon. Douglas was only too willing. He wasn't a bad fellow, but he was a consistent slacker. With far more money than was good for him, he was always ready to find an outlet for the spending of it; and he had no scruples with regard to card-playing.

However, this wasn't to be an ordinary card-party, and he doubted very much whether Mr. Padbury would agree to play for money. He put it to Vivian Travers, whom he met in the Remove passage.

"Bridge?" said Travers. "With Padbury? Frightfully sorry, but there's nothing doing. I've been to one of these masters' bridge parties before! Besides, there's prep. And I only play bridge for sixpence a hundred. Playing for fun is not fun at all."

"Padbury says he'll excuse prep."

"Oh, he does, by Samson!" ejaculated Travers. "Then I'm on!"

It happened that Claude Gore-Pearce came along just then, and rather than go to the trouble of finding another fellow, Singleton invited Claude. He didn't care a lot about Claude, but he was a good player.

"I'll make a fourth, if it means getting out of prep," said Gore-Pearce willingly. "Even bridge for fun is better than prep."

They trooped along to Mr. Padbury's study.

"Good business!" said Mr. Padbury. "Now, kids, don't forget that dinner with the Head—everything free and easy. I want you to be just the same here. Forget that I'm your Form-master, and have a good old time."

"That'll suit us, sir," said Travers politely.

But it was not so easy to forget that Mr. Padbury was a Form-master, and the party, so far, was a little strained. The cards were ready, and there was a big box of cigarettes on the table, too. Mr. Padbury waved his hand invitingly towards the box.

"Any of you smoke?" he asked, as he shuffled the cards.

"Er—no, sir!" said Gore-Pearce awkwardly.

"You can tell that to the Marines, my son," said Mr. Padbury, grinning. "When I was at school, I smoked—but not in front of Form-masters."

"Exactly, sir," said Travers with perfect coolness.

"But I've already told you to forget that I'm a Form-master," said Sam Pope, in-



"Chumley for Short"

"You going to Greyfriars," said Bunter, "and talking like a bargee?"

"You keep your 'ead shut, or I'll bust your 'at over it!" said the new boy. "I'd like to see you do it!" exclaimed Bunter. "I'd——"

Crash!

"Yoop!"

Bunter had asked for it! And he was not likely to forget Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley in a hurry. He's the new boy for Greyfriars and as unique a new boy as Greyfriars ever had. The adventures of this one-time tinker's assistant at a Public School make a sparkling yarn you'll thoroughly enjoy. Make sure you read it in this week's issue of

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dicating the box again. "Don't be a crowd of young asses! Help yourselves! And if it's all the same to you, we'll have a little flutter on this game. Can't play for love."

Within ten minutes the party was thoroughly pally. Then Gore-Pearce had a brain-wave.

"Would you mind if some of our pals came in to watch the game, sir?" he suggested. "Forrest and Gulliver and Bell and De Valerie."

Mr. Padbury looked up sharply, forgetting the game for a moment. He was thinking.

"Yes, all right," he said, nodding. "Bring 'em along."

Those names were the right names. Forrest and De Valerie, at least, were the sons of big pots—rich people—and as Gulliver and Bell were their pals, it was likely enough that they were the sons of big pots, too.

They came in dubiously at first, but when they found that smoking was permitted, and that there was money on the game, they decided that Mr. Padbury was the right kind of Form-master.

After that the party proceeded with greater gusto than ever. Another master—Mr. Jackson, alias Jalby—came in and joined in the game. The air became blue with smoke, and the two crooks, who could have "skinned" those schoolboys wholesale, took good care to lose—and to lose with a smile.

Everything was working very, very nicely.

CHAPTER 9.

Down With the Duds!

FENTON, of the Sixth, collared Handforth in the lobby at bed-time.

"Do you know what's happened to Travers and Gore-Pearce and Forrest and two or three others?" he asked. "I can't find them anywhere."

"Well, don't ask me," said Handforth tartly. "I'm not interested in Forrest and that gang."

This was hardly true, for Handforth, like many other Removites, had been wondering what could have happened to those particular fellows. They had not appeared at supper-time, and they were still missing.

Fenton was looking tired and fed-up. He and the other prefects, left with all the work to do, had had a hard evening. The dinner-party at Mr. Pycraft's table had given the prefects more work than ever.

"Well, whether you're interested or not, look round for them," said Fenton. "I dare say you know their ways better than I do. Hang it, it's past bed-time, and the whole discipline of the school is going to pot."

The head prefect walked off to inquire into a fearful din which was going on upstairs. Handforth found Teddy Long by his side.

"I can tell you where Forrest and those other chaps are," said Teddy, grinning.

"I'm not surprised," snorted Handforth. "You know everything, don't you?"

"Well, I happened to be passing Mr. Padbury's study, and I heard their voices," said Long, speaking in a whisper. "I say, I believe there's something going on in there! I believe they're playing cards."

"In Padbury's study?" scoffed Handforth. "Don't be a young idiot!"

He raised his foot suggestively, and Teddy Long bolted. All the same, Handforth went to the Form-master's study, and nearly had a fit when he reached for the door knob. Many voices were floating out, laughter was general, and there was even the chink of money.

Handforth tried the door, and found it locked. He thumped on the panels.

"All right!" came a shout. "Don't break the door down!"

The key turned, and Mr. Padbury appeared. Looking over his shoulder, Handforth saw the haze of smoke and the cards and the players.

"Another guest?" said Mr. Padbury genially. "Come in."

"He's not one of us, sir!" said Forrest in alarm.

Handforth was almost speechless.

"I say, sir!" he burst out at last. "This isn't playing the game, you know! You shouldn't keep these chaps here after bed-time. How can any discipline be maintained —,"

"Keep your hair on, kid!" said Mr. Padbury calmly. "How was I to know it was their bed-time? Can't we have a little friendly party without trouble? I believe in being free and easy with my boys. If you don't want to come in and join us, you can cut off."

He closed the door, and Handforth dashed upstairs, boiling like an overheated geyser.

"Hi, you chaps!" he bawled excitedly. "Come out here! I've got something to tell you!"

The Removites, in various stages of undress, crowded out of their dormitories. Fenton came along, too, justly angered.

"What's all this noise?" he asked wearily. "Haven't I got enough work without you kids——"

"But you don't understand!" roared Handforth. "Padbury's got those chaps—Forrest and Gore-Pearce and the others—in his study. They're smoking and playing cards. We're not going to stand these dud masters any longer! They're neglecting their duties, and palling up with the rotters."

"I'll look into it," said Fenton grimly.

He hurried down while the Removites excitedly discussed the situation. Fenton made no bones about it. He not only demanded entry into Mr. Padbury's study, but he entered. He took one look at the party.

"All you boys get up to bed—at once!" he ordered.

"We'll go when Mr. Padbury tells us!" retorted Forrest insolently.

"Mr. Padbury is new to this school, and he evidently doesn't understand the ropes yet," said Fenton, ignoring Mr. Padbury completely. "I'm your head prefect, and

when I tell you to go to bed, you'll go. Make it lively."

There was something so coldly determined in Fenton's manner that the boys were at a loss. Sam Pope wisely did the right thing.

"Better call it an evening, kids," he said. "If your head prefect wants you to go, you'll have to go. Sorry I forgot the time, Fenton," he added. "Don't make a fuss over nothing. Only a little friendly party."

"Perhaps it has been too friendly, sir," said Fenton bitterly.

The juniors, squirming, were compelled to go. Fenton went straight along to Mr. Wetherell's study and reported. His voice shook with indignation as he did so. Mr. Wetherell smiled.

"Come, come! It's nothing," he said genially. "If we Halford masters are more free and easy than your old masters, it is because we are more alive to the times. You mustn't be so old-fashioned!"

But Millionaire Mike went straight along to Mr. Padbury's study, and his expression had changed when he closed the door.

"What the heck have you been up to now, Sam?" he asked harshly.

"Getting on with the job, that's all," retorted Sam.

And Sam, to prove how successful he had been, told his chief an extraordinary amount of information concerning Bernard Forrest's people. He had been concentrating on Forrest ever since that young rascal had entered the study.

"That boy's a cinch!" concluded Sam eagerly. "His people are millionaires. I've already been invited down to their country seat—and if you get in with him, you'll be invited, too. What the deuce does it matter if the rank and file give us the cold shoulder? We're sitting pretty, aren't we?"

Millionaire Mike patted Sam on the shoulder.

"Sorry, old man—I didn't understand," he said. "You've been on the right line. But I really think we'd better go easy on this card-playing stuff. Smoking, too. We don't want to violate the traditions of this place too much. Be as friendly as you like with the boys we're after—but go easy!"

THE storm soon passed. There was a lot of talk by Handforth and a few others, but it came to nothing. One definite result, however, was that Mr. Padbury was scorned by all the decent fellows, and admired by the rotters.

In a different way, Mr. Wetherell came in for censure. Fenton had told him of that party, but apparently Mr. Wetherell had taken no action. And the prefects and the seniors in general felt a contempt for their Housemaster. He was genial and he was breezy—but they had begun to see through him.

Mr. Jackson, of the Fourth, copied Sam Pope's example and got in friendly touch with such juniors as Merrell and Marriott and Armstrong, and that set. Mr. Bullock, of the Fifth, very quickly discovered that Grayson and Shaw were the leaders of the "sporty" element in his Form. Mr. Campbell, of the Sixth, used the same tactics with Kenmore and Sinclair and their kindred spirits.

And the Housemasters not only winked at these proceedings, but encouraged them—under Mike's guidance. The con-men, in short, were proceeding along the course they had chosen.

They were getting "in" with the element which was most likely to be profitable to them.

By the evening of the next day—after more glaring blunders in the class-rooms—the whole situation became more or less defined. Millionaire Mike and his gang were getting along famously with their dupes. The other boys, seniors and juniors, were ignored.

This really meant that the school was divided into two camps already—the rotters, who regarded these masters as a heaven-sent blessing; and the decent fellows who looked upon them with contempt.

"And we've got to stick these dud masters for three weeks or a month—until our own masters come back!" roared Handforth. "I say, let's make a demonstration!" he added excitedly. "Let's show 'em what we think! Why should they have everything their own way?"

Another Bumper Story-Programme NEXT WEEK!

"UP, THE REBELS!"

By E. S. Brooks.

The barring-out at St. Frank's in full swing. "No Surrender!" is the cry of the rebels—and Millionaire Mike and his crook-masters are just as determined to bring Nipper & Co. to heel. Don't miss reading this full-of-action yarn, lads.

"HOVERING DOOM!"

By John Brearley.

The Night Hawk has sworn to exterminate the Destroyers—and in his own ruthless way he carries out that vow, aided by Nelson Lee. This magnificent yarn is a succession of thrills from the first chapter.

"The Valley of Hot Springs!"

By Ladbroke Black.

More rousing chapters of a yarn which gets more and more exciting each week.

Order Your Copy In Advance, Lads.

"Steady on, Handy!" urged Nipper. "We're not ready for any action yet. We're not even justified in starting trouble——"

But Edward Oswald Handforth was not in the mood for listening to wise counsel. It was characteristic of him to get a wild and woolly idea, and to rush it into effect. He yelled for supporters now—and got many.

In the Triangle, crowds of Fourth-Formers and fags caught the fever and joined in. Within ten minutes a noisy demonstration was in progress.

"Yah! Down with the duds!"

"We want real masters—not fakes!"

"Hurrah!"

Millionaire Mike, coming out of the Head's house, heard the din in the distance, and he was startled. He had just been congratulating himself that everything was going smoothly. It had never occurred to him that the rank and file would cut up rusty.

He ran across Inner Court, burst through Big Arch, and found the Triangle a seething mass of excited boys.

"Silence!" he shouted. "What is the meaning of this disorder?"

"Yah! Grab him!"

"Down with the dud masters!"

"Booh-booh!"

CHAPTER 10.

Rebellion!

IN that moment, the crooks had good cause to remember the old adage: "The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley." They had come to St. Frank's with a definite objective; they had only just started their early preparations. Well, there was only one thing to do—quell the storm properly, severely. This was no time for half-measures.

Within five minutes Assembly Bell was clanging, and prefects, hurriedly instructed, were going about marshalling the boys. The prefects did not like their job. They were almost as ready to rebel as the juniors. But their long association with school routine was deeply ingrained, and they battled hard to maintain law and order. The school itself, too, was accustomed to strict discipline. When the bell rang, the fellows instinctively obeyed.

So within fifteen minutes Big Hall was packed to suffocation. The noise was terrific, and the prefects tried in vain to keep order. It was only too clear that the rebellious faction was in an ugly mood.

A hush fell, however, as the portly, dignified figure of Mr. Wetherell appeared on the platform, with Mr. Pycraft in his rear, looking singularly futile.

"There seems to have been a hostile demonstration," said Millionaire Mike, speaking smoothly. "Now, that is all wrong! We want you boys to feel that we are your friends——"

"Yah! Clear out of here!"

Millionaire Mike realised that matters were getting serious. He held up his hand, and his personality was so strong, his will-power so intense, that for the moment he restored order.

"It is the headmaster's duty, perhaps, to punish the ringleaders of this rebellious demonstration," he said, in a hard voice, "but I have heard insulting remarks from at least three boys belonging to my own House. I am justified, therefore, in dealing with them personally."

The school waited, wondering what was coming.

"You, Handforth; you, Parkington; you, Hamilton—will step forward!" continued Mr. Wetherell, pointing to those three boys. "A minute ago you were inciting your school-fellows to revolt. Come up on this platform!"

Nipper and Handforth and Parkington left their places, and went on the platform.

"I am sorry that you three boys should have misbehaved yourselves so seriously," said Mr. Wetherell sternly as he eyed the trio. "My only course is to make an example of you, here and now!"

"You'd better not flog us, sir!" said Handforth recklessly. "The school won't stand it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Keep it up, you chaps!" roared Handforth. "Down with the duds!"

Millionaire Mike forgot himself. He brought his hand round with brutal force, and struck Handforth on the side of the face. It was such a violent blow that Handforth went sprawling.

"Now, perhaps, you will be more respectful!" snarled Mr. Wetherell, fairly quivering. "Stand up! You, my young friend, will be flogged more severely than the others!"

Another roar of indignation went up, which only served to make Millionaire Mike more angry.

He seized a cane from the platform table, grabbed Handforth by the scruff of the neck, and commenced lashing at Handforth's legs with brutal ferocity.

"Stop, you rotter!"

"Let Handforth alone!"

"I say, you chaps, what about it?" bawled Buster Boots, running forward. "Are we going to see Handy treated like this? Come on! Down with these outsiders!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a wild rush towards the platform and Mike Satella got the shock of his life. He had expected that this flogging would so impress the school that the excitement would die down. But it had precisely the opposite effect.

The first rush consisted mainly of Removites. Millionaire Mike was seized, Mr.

(Continued on page 44.)

Into the night sailed the glider—wings of destruction. Above, unseen, hovered the Night Hawk—

WINGS of

CHAPTER 1.

"Monsieur" Smiles—and Whimpers!

"FAMOUS DETECTIVE
DISAPPEARS
"IS NELSON LEE DEAD?
"ASSISTANT'S
ANXIETY."

THE little hunchback foreigner, strolling across the wide, smooth lawn at Murdorn Tower, Sussex, smiled as he read the headlines in his morning paper, and stroked his fleshy beak of a nose complacently. He smiled still more when he had finished the 'story' beneath the headlines. His huge, black-fringed head, far too big for his stunted body, nodded several times in placid self-congratulation.

Nelson Lee, the celebrated detective, had vanished. And, so the paper said, Lee's assistant, Mr. Nipper, was beside himself with anxiety.

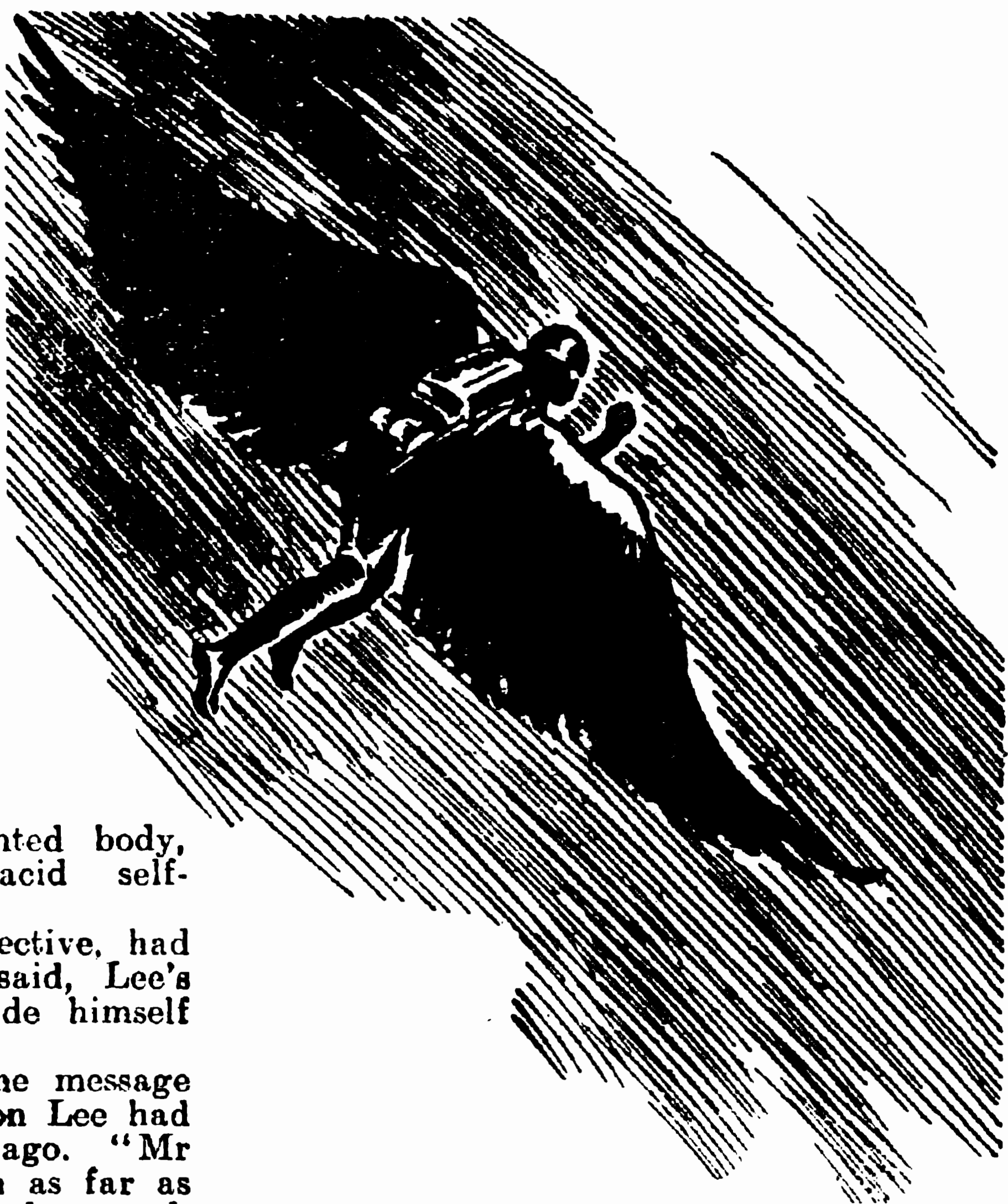
In answer to an urgent 'phone message from some unknown caller, Nelson Lee had left St. Frank's School two days ago. "Mr Nipper" had travelled with him as far as London, and there the two had parted. Since then the well-known criminologist had not been heard of.

According to Mr. Nipper, his master had left no definite word as to his destination beyond saying that he was called to a case "somewhere in the Midlands." From then onwards, he had vanished into thin air, leaving no clue as to his whereabouts. And now that two clear days had passed, Mr. Nipper strongly suspected that his master was the victim of foul play!

Thus the "Daily Tribune"; and "Monsieur" as the hunchback was known, the chief of the Council of Seven, and leader of the Society of Destroyers in Britain, purred happily.

"So Mr. Nipper suspects foul play, huh?" he mused. "That is very sad for Mr. Nipper. Perhaps I shall seek him out one day and tell him where his master is! But not yet—not yet, huh?"

His beady eyes dwelt reflectively on the massive old castle before him, perched on a cliff four hundred feet above the English Channel. Monsieur knew quite well what had happened to Nelson Lee!



The hunchback's thoughts flew back to the stirring events of the night before last, when Nelson Lee had cleverly gained admittance to a meeting of the Council of Seven, here in Murdorn Tower. The detective had come disguised in the hooded domino belonging to Sir Rudolph Gotchen, Number Three in the council; and only by a bold surprise-stroke on Monsieur's part had he been unmasked.

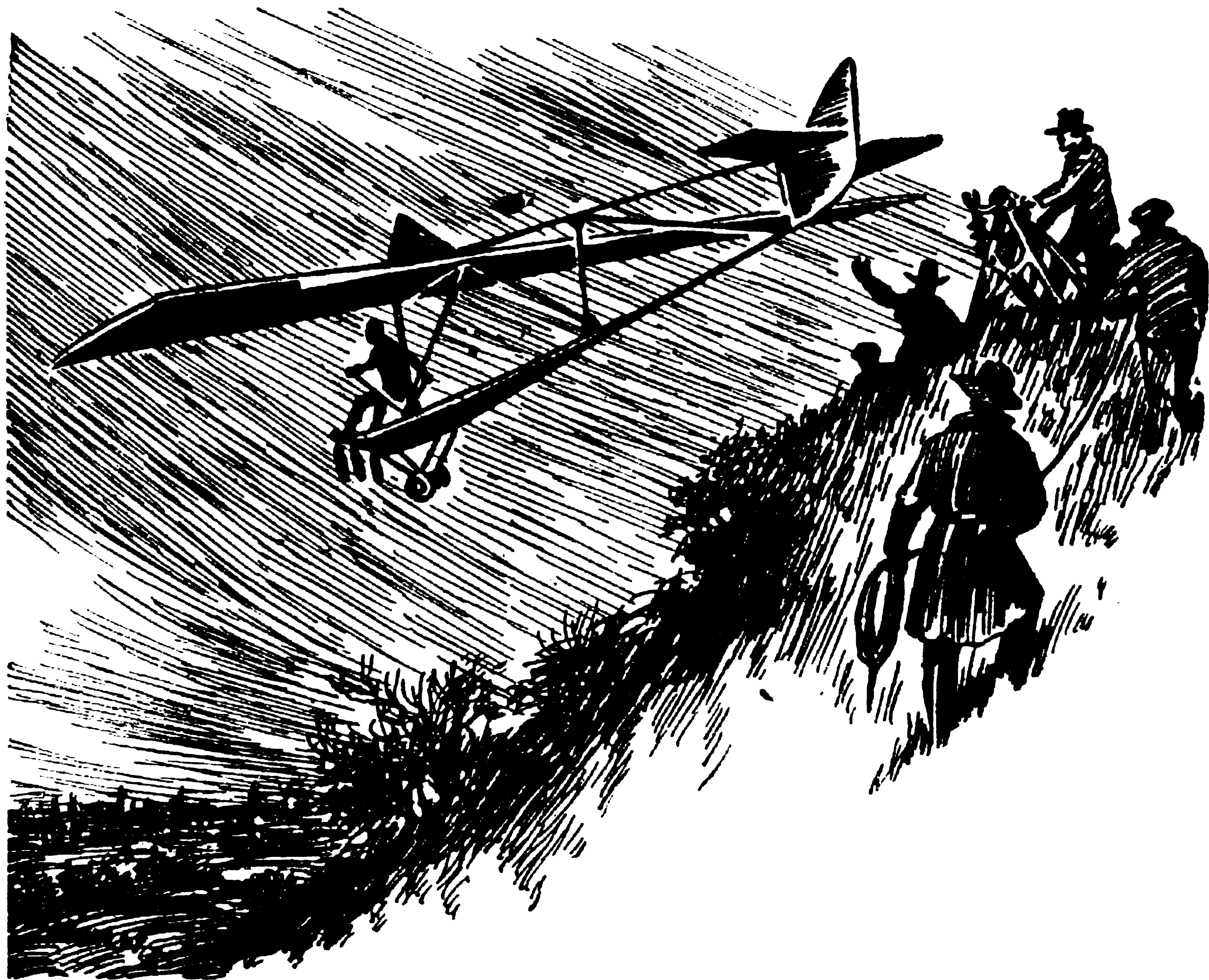
The discovery had been a fierce shock to the council. In fact, as Monsieur admitted to himself, they had all lost their heads slightly and become rash. But all had ended well.

One of the council, Number Five, a scar-faced Pole, had suggested death by torture as a punishment for the unmasked spy, and Nelson Lee, evidently terrified at such a dread fate, had committed suicide. From a window in the topmost turret of Murdorn Tower he had hurled himself into space, diving swiftly through the night to a hideous end amid the boiling sea and the rocks far below.

—The Grim Battle Continues in Thrilling Style!

VENGEANCE!

By JOHN BREARLEY



It had been a satisfactory finish to a grim situation after all, from the council's point of view. As Lord Murdorn, the weak and criminal owner of the Tower, had sobbed, no one ever came out of the rock-trap into which Lee had fallen.

Also, and better still, the council were satisfied Nelson Lee had carried their secrets with him to the grave. Naponi, the Italian dope-smuggler of Soho, who had been the first member of the council to recognise Lee, had called him a "Lone Wolf"—one who kept his discoveries and cases to himself until it was time to call in Scotland Yard for the final clear-up.

From what Monsieur had just read in the morning paper, it was certain Naponi had been correct. Nelson Lee was a private detective. If Mr. Nipper, his own assistant, did not know what he was doing, and even thought his master had gone to the Midlands instead of to the Sussex coast, then surely

outsiders such as Scotland Yard must also be in the dark. Monsieur's swarthy face was serene and confident as he paced the Murdorn lawn that morning.

The winter morning was fresh, and surprisingly sunny; he was the guest—some would have said the master—in a fine old English castle, whose owner was completely under his thumb. And best of all, he was head of the Society of Destroyers!

The headquarters of that vast organisation of blackmailers and "racketeers" were in Chicago. Throughout the States, the society, most powerful of all the gangs there, had spread its evil tentacles over every trade and business. Factories, foundries, even mighty railroads and shipping lines, had to acknowledge its sway. Every month millions of dollars in "graft" were paid over to the Destroyers, while the police of U.S.A. stood helpless.

The only satisfaction the firms received for their money was—freedom from attack. It was ransom; blackmail; "racketeering," as they called it over there.

If the monthly sum was not forthcoming from any firm, the society issued no warning. They swooped forthwith on factory, shops or warehouses with fire, dynamite and lead. Great plants, costing millions, had been destroyed, trains packed with passengers derailed, big officials shot and freight steamers wrecked.

It had been war to the hilt; and the racketeers had won. The Destroyers ruled. American trade had knuckled down to gang-rule—for the present at least.

Then, flushed with success, the Destroyers had extended their field to Europe.

Their opening campaign was always the same. First came an outbreak of cruel fires that destroyed some of the greatest works in the country, while paid agitators stirred up trouble.

That was the groundwork. And after that came the widespread ultimatum to other big firms: "Pay—or suffer likewise!" Germany, France, and Italy were already in the toils of the Destroyers. Now it was Great Britain's turn!

And Monsieur, who had been put in charge of operations in England, chuckled to think how well they were going. Nelson Lee, the one danger to the gang so far, had been speedily removed; the groundwork had already been laid.

Four enormous firms had been picked out to suffer: the Harton shipyard, Raekburn cotton-mills, the Northpool steel foundry, and the dye-works at Milton. They had all gone up in flames.

Scotland Yard were baffled, other firms up and down Britain were living in terror lest their plant should be the next victim and their employees thrown out of work, looking for trouble, lending willing ears to the Destroyers' agitators. A serious riot had broken out at Raekpool, another had nearly occurred in Milton. Everything was ready for the wholesale blackmail of British commerce—"Pay or suffer likewise!"

A golden harvest was in prospect!

A soft footfall on the grass behind him made Monsieur turn swiftly. He greeted Lord Murdorn, his lieutenant and Number Two on the Council, with his usual fixed, urbane smile, although his beady eyes gleamed contemptuously to note the haggardness in his lordship's face. Lord Murdorn was a crook to the finger-tips, but he was also a first-class coward. He had not yet recovered from the shock of Nelson Lee's appearance two nights back.

"You—you seem happy with life this morning, Monsieur," he mumbled, smiling in an attempt to appear at ease. His leader nodded.

"Why not, huh?" He linked his arm in Murdorn's and resumed his stroll across the lawn. "We make progress, my friend, eh? To-morrow we start our leetle collections. To-morrow I will send our good Number Six,

Roger Thurlow, to see Sir James Wright, of the Anglo-American Shipping Company. I have been thinking it out, and it is that splendid and wealthy firm who shall have the honour of being our first clients. I have not yet decided quite what we shall demand—we will talk of that later."

Lord Murdorn reflected. The A-A Shipping Company, as it was called, was the greatest of the freight and passenger lines running from London to New York. They could pay well—and if they did not, their docks at Woolwich, their sheds, and ships would be destroyed. Also, Roger Thurlow, the ex-M.P. member of the Council of Seven, was just the suave, ruthless type to deal with a resolute magnate like Sir James Wright.

"Splendid, Monsieur!" agreed the peer. "I think——"

But Monsieur was not interested in his thoughts. He had stopped, and was frowning at the lawn on which they were walking.

No trees overhung it; the clear, pale winter sun, almost directly overhead, flooded it with light. Yet, from somewhere above them, a shadow had glided across the velvety turf, and now covered the two men where they stood.

Studying its clear-cut shape, Monsieur's frown deepened. There was something uncanny about its rigid immobility; something menacing, terrifying. He saw just two great black wings, outstretched as though a giant bird of prey was hovering above its victims.

But when he looked up fearfully into the sky he saw—nothing! And a moment later, staring down at the grass again, he found the shadow of the hawk had gone, swiftly, silently as it had appeared.

A vague terror clutched at his heart. Without another word or look, he turned and scuttled for the shelter of Murdorn Tower, nor did he stop till he reached his own suite of rooms.

Even then he still was in the grip of that nameless, mysterious panic. And one thought churned in his brain over and over again: Had he imagined it, or had he really heard, out of a clear bright sky, a laugh, loud, long, and terrible, at the moment the Hawk's wings had vanished?

It was a riddle he could not answer.

CHAPTER 2.

At "Lascar Sam's"—Shadwell!

POSSIBLY Monsieur's panic would have been greater still could he have looked into a famous theatrical costumier's shop in Wardour Street, later that day.

For Nelson Lee was far from dead. Thanks to his mystic ally, Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk scientist, who had caught him as he dived from Murdorn Tower, the detective was very much alive.

The newspaper story, dictated almost word for word by Nelson Lee himself to Jerry Hammond, an old reporter friend in Fleet Street, had been a ruse to lull the Destroyers

into security. They had seen him fall from the turret window. The paper now told them he had gone down to Murdorn Tower without saying a word to anyone. Officially, Nelson Lee was "missing, feared dead." In reality, he was already deep in a plan for the downfall of Monsieur and his racketeers.

The identification of the Council of Seven had been the first step; the next was to get some idea of the extent of the gang and its minor members. Scotland Yard had been busy searching dozens of criminal haunts and dives in the country for traces of the incendiaries and agitators of the society without success. Nelson Lee intended to do likewise in the few they had missed, and hoped for better luck.

As for the Destroyers' further plots, there was little fear of their succeeding, for in the Night Hawk's laboratory at Hampstead, Snub Hawkins sat at Thurston Kyle's amazing radio cabinet, and almost every word uttered at Murdorn Tower was faithfully reported. Where the Night Hawk himself was, Lee did not exactly know, but guessed that he, also, was working on his own grim lines, and would be very near whenever action called.

Nipper, too, did not look exactly "beside himself with anxiety" as he watched his master at work before a big, many-mirrored dressing-table. The detective was clad in the shabby blue reefer jacket, thick jersey, and trousers of a seaman; and under the skilful play of his hands, his lean, clever face was changing rapidly. He turned to the boy at last with a bibulous leer.

"Ow's that, matey? All shipshape?"

And Nipper grinned cheerfully.

"Ay, ay, sir! Fine, guv'nor!"

That evening a burly, unshaven deck-hand, battered cap askew and hands deep in pockets, rolled tipsily into a Shadwell eating-house. It was a dingy place on the fringe of a cobbled wharf, and quite empty save for an almond-eyed youth behind the counter, who gave the newcomer one expert glance before relapsing again into the stolid indifference of his race.

Muttering a genial but cryptic watchword, the seaman lurched to the counter, asked for some ship's tobacco, and gave a slow look round to make sure the restaurant was deserted. Satisfied, he leaned farther over the board. A moment later the Chinese boy lost his woodenness and was whispering sibilantly in his own tongue through a speaking-tube behind him.

Turning at last, he nodded; and then the deck-hand, flipping him a coin, lurched through a curtained doorway that led down some narrow stone steps and into a wide cellar.

For a moment he stood in the entrance, blinking owlishly around. Curious eyes studied him through the smoke eddies, some as bleared and as stupid as his own, others alert and furtive.

The examination was over in a second. No one knew the man; no one wanted to. Drunken sailors were plentiful enough at

Lascar Sam's "restaurant"—with hidden saloon and opium-joint underneath for privileged customers—and this one was not sufficiently drunk yet to be plucked.

The cellar was lighted by a single big lantern, which cast garish hues over the motley crew seated round small wooden tables. Across one end of the room was drawn a thick curtain of faded plush, blocking off a narrow passage that led to the opium-den beyond. Lascar Sam himself, a stout Eurasian, with a skin like a yellow toad, leaned impassively over a broad, stained counter, running the length of one wall.

With an amiable cheer, the mariner steered an unsteady path towards him through the little tables, and gave the password again. Not by the slightest sign did the Lascar give any hint that he knew who his visitor was.

Under his mask-like countenance, however, he was wondering hard why Nelson Lee was here, and which of his "clients" the great detective was after. At the same time, whatever the game was, he knew better than to give it away.

A C.I.D. officer, butting into "Sam's place" in search of someone, might have had a very different welcome, for the Lascar had a nose like a hound for the police. But Nelson Lee was different.

Having twice saved Lascar Sam's life—once on a murder charge in which he had been wrongly accused, and again in a knifing "rough-house"—the detective was free to come and go there as he pleased. The only thing Sam hoped, uneasily, was that Nelson Lee's coming to-night did not mean trouble on the premises, for some peculiar new visitors had taken to using the den lately—visitors with plenty of money, too.

The Lascar's glance flickered doubtfully to where Nelson Lee was now sprawled across a table; then he looked up again in haste when footsteps clacked on the stairs, and three of the new customers he had been thinking of strode in.

The newcomers made a tough-looking trio as, without a single glance to right or left, they walked briskly across the room to a solitary table set beside the plush curtain. Two of them, hard, tall men, flinty of eye and lean-jawed, were plainly Americans, from their block-toed shoes to wide felt hats. The third, who led the way, was a smaller man, lithe and slim, with a knife-scar puckering his pale foreign face from cheek-bone to chin.

Their entrance made a little stir among the patrons of Lascar Sam's; and even the stolid Sam was smiling obsequiously as he hurried across to their table with drinks.

He waited until each man had swallowed down a drink and the leader had tossed him a note. When he shuffled back to his bar once more he noticed, with a quick frown, that the drunken sailor had gone.

But Nelson Lee was not far away. He had waited only for one good look at the three newcomers, then he had waved an aimless

good-night to the company and tottered out up the stairs. The moment he was in the restaurant above, however, he snapped something to the Chinese boy and slipped swiftly through a second door.

Once more he was on stone steps leading down to a room; but this time it was a room full of shadowy bunks, on which lay dark supine figures; and the air was heavy and drugged.

Gliding past the sleepers with the decision of one who knew his way, he came at length to the passage connecting the opium den with the saloon, and, on cautious feet, crept along it until only the plush curtain at the end separated him from the scarred foreigner and the two Americans. There he froze as into stone, straining his ears to listen.

His luck was in at last. Lascar Sam's was the fourth place he had been in to-night, keeping his eyes open, exchanging a brief word here and there that might have put him on the trail of someone connected with the Destroyers.

In all the dens so far he had drawn blank—the rank and file of the society seemed able to hide themselves in the underworld as deftly as their leaders had prior to the affair at Murdorn Tower; and had he failed at Sam's he had intended giving up the search in dockland as hopeless, and trying Soho or Notting Hill. But now, at last, he had struck the trail.

The moment the scarred foreigner on the other side of the curtain had walked in to Sam's saloon, Nelson Lee had recognised the man as the Pole who had been the first to suggest torturing him three nights ago.

The man was Number Five on the Council of Seven. His companions, too, might have come straight from the East Side of Chicago, or Clinton Street, New York; gangsters of the most vicious type. Nelson Lee pressed closer to the curtain, trying his hardest to catch snatches of their conversation above the hoarse murmur of the other patrons of the saloon.

And there his luck, having flattered him, deserted him completely. In his few strides through the opium-joint, he had failed to notice the Chinese pipe-attendant, and the boy in the restaurant upstairs had neglected to warn the man of the detective's coming.

Now, knife in hand and smouldering slit-eyes fixed on the unsuspecting Nelson Lee's back, the Chinaman prowled down the passage, soft as a shadow, to deal with the supposed spy.

Instinct only, at the very last second, warned Nelson Lee of his danger. Engrossed as he was in his task, he nevertheless caught the faint rustle of linen garments and whirled like a silent cobra to meet his foe.

Grabbing the down-sweeping knife even as its point tore his coat, he stabbed a short jab to the Chinaman's throat, stifling the man's cry of warning into a gasping rattle. Then one, two, three, his fist ripped in and out, and his assailant sank limply against the wall, the detective catching him as he fell.

Tensely he waited, hand on gun, watching the heavy curtain lest any alarm had been given. But no sounds had penetrated; the low mutter of talk still went on undisturbed. So noiselessly picking up the unconscious Chinaman, he carried him back into the opium-den and tossed him into a vacant bunk. Then he slipped quickly up the stairs, back into the restaurant and out into the drizzling Shadwell Street once more.

He would have liked to stay, but he dared not do so now. His promising adventure had come to a speedy end; the narrow escape made him bite his lips. If the alarm had been given, even though he had achieved a get-away, the discoveries he had made would have been fruitless. For once the scarred Pole and his companions knew a spy had been lurking in Lascar Sam's, they, like the rest of the crooks there, would promptly find some other rendezvous.

Now, at least, he knew where some of the Destroyers and one of the Council foregathered. He would have to trust to Lascar Sam's shrewdness to put two and two together and square things with the pipe-attendant when the latter recovered. Meanwhile the sooner he got away from Shadwell now, the better.

"Might have been worse on the whole!" he mused as he boarded a west-bound train en route for Thurston Kyle's house.

Then his right fist clenched softly when he thought of the scar-faced Pole. Of all the Council of Seven, he had an extra-special account to settle with "Number Five"!

Suggestions for torture were things Nelson Lee did not lightly forgive!

CHAPTER 3.

The Destroyers' First Ultimatum!

"YOU—you infernal villain! You blackmailing hound!"

In his palatial office in the Anglo-American Shipping Company's great building, Sir James Wright, the managing director, fell back in his chair and glared at his smiling visitor with eyes that threatened to leave his head.

Never in all his career had Sir James listened to such a preposterous, insolent demand before. His usually stern, controlled face flushed red with fury, and he bit his firm lips in an effort to keep them from quivering.

"I take it this is not a joke? You are not mad?" he inquired of his visitor, after a long struggle. "You have tricked your way into my office, Mr. Roger Thurlow, on a plea of urgent business. Now you make this—this preposterous demand of forty thousand pounds per month—for what, may I ask?"

"You'll find my business quite urgent enough if you do not agree!" smiled Roger Thurlow, ex-M.P. and ex-convict, smoothly. "There is no joke, Sir James. I have told



Intent upon listening to the conversation on the other side of the curtain, the disguised Nelson Lee did not see the Chinaman, knife in hand, preparing to pounce upon him from behind.

you bluntly that I represent the Society of Destroyers. For a man with your interests in America, you should know what the Destroyers stand for!"

"By gad, sir, I know your vile gang of racketeers well! I have heard too much of your destruction and blackmailing in the States. But, great heavens, you shall not do the same here in England—to us. I shall call in the police this instant!"

His hand flashed to the bell-push on his desk. But Thurlow only smiled again and lifted an imperative finger.

"Wait!"

Struck by the steely warning in his voice, Sir James hesitated. Roger Thurlow's eyes, openly mocking him from beneath half-closed lids, shifted significantly to the window at the managing director's back, and he jerked his head towards it.

"Look out there, Sir James!"

In quick suspicion, the shipping magnate turned, surveying the scene outside sharply. It was a familiar and fascinating sight.

From where he sat he could see the A-A Company's enormous wharf, bordered by acres of cavernous sheds filled with bales. The T.S.S. Atlantic Pride, one of the largest of the company's cargo-boats, was un-

loading at the quay; armies of men were swarming up and down her gangways, in and out of the holds; tall derricks were swinging loads of merchandise on to the wharf, where other gangs of men fell upon them.

Behind the store-sheds, four vast warehouses frowned down on the stir and bustle; all the intricate workings of a great and prosperous shipping firm lay under the managing director's eyes. But he could see nothing wrong, as yet.

He wheeled again fiercely.

"Well?"

Roger Thurlow shrugged.

"A busy sight, Sir James—worth a lot of money—earning you a lot more. It would be a pity to—lose it, would it not?"

"Ah!" Sir James caught the grim hint. "You mean——"

"I mean, Sir James, just what I say!" Thurlow leaned forward, his suave manner merging into something ugly and menacing. "The Society of Destroyers demand forty thousand pounds from your company—monthly. If you defy us those sheds, warehouses, everything, will be reduced to—nothing!"

Sir James Wright stared at the man aghast. He had no thought of pressing the

bell now; something must be done; some way out of this awful danger must be found. He was too clever a man, too shrewd to imagine that Thurlow was bluffing. American 'racketeering' had arrived.

Thurlow went on, softer still.

"You have a great ship on the sea at this moment, I believe, Sir James? Your finest boat, the *Atlantio Queen*—somewhere between Ireland and the mouth of the Channel? That, too, will suffer. And not only its valuable cargo, but its passengers—if you prove obstinate!"

"You curs!" The magnate panted. "What have we ever done to you?"

"Why, nothing!" drawled Thurlow in mocking surprise. "As I say, you mean nothing to us. Your firm is to be merely one of hundreds contributing to our society through the channels we shall indicate. It is time you fat business-men of Britain were relieved of some of your wealth—and we propose doing it as we are doing elsewhere!"

With slightly-trembling fingers, Sir James tugged at his grey moustache. Fantastic though this—this modern highway-robbery seemed, this brazen demand, he was in a cleft stick and he knew it.

Proof of how strong the Destroyers knew themselves to be was evident from the cool manner in which Roger Thurlow, their agent, had walked into the shipping magnate's office and laid down their command. Sir James could not shut his eyes to the fact that there *had* been four colossal factories burnt recently and an organised "Fire Gang," as the papers called it, had committed the outrages. Even if he had this insolent villain arrested now, could the police save his precious property outside?

But—forty thousand pounds a month! And every other big firm in the country to suffer likewise. A sudden blaze of defiance flared in Sir James' eyes. His teeth were bared in a stubborn snarl.

"I'll see you to——"

"Hands off that bell!"

As though by magic, a flat gun appeared in Thurlow's hand. Sir James fell back, breathing hard, helpless.

"That's better!" jeered the Destroyer. "Don't get gay with me. What's it to be, Sir James? Forty thousand a month or—war? Which?"

But he had overplayed his hand. It is never wise to threaten men of Sir James' type with guns.

In ice-cold rage, hands gripping the desk till the knuckles gleamed, the magnate rose slowly to his feet.

"It's to be war, you gutter-scum!" he said quietly and distinctly. "I can't press this bell now because you'll be coward enough to shoot. But you'll have to leave this office some time, and before you're one yard outside in the street, I will call the police. And I'll have the rest of your vile pack hounded down, too. Now go to blazes!"

Thurlow's pale eyes glittered venomously.

"You'll call the police, eh! Well, try and prove anything against me, that's all. And

while you're doing it, kiss good-bye to your wharf yonder!"

He, too, rose.

"We'll give your firm till two o'clock this afternoon to decide!" he spat. "If you agree, ask the B.B.C. to broadcast the fact to all stations—we shall be listening-in. In the meanwhile, as far as calling the police goes when I leave this office—take that!"

The gun he held rose and fell in a swift chopping movement. It exploded with a faint swish. But, instead of a streak of fire, a spurt of chemical gas hit Sir James squarely between the eyes, covering his face with a stifling grey cloud.

There was a tiny gasp, a muffled croak. Then, without a sound, the managing director of the A-A. Shipping Company crumpled across his desk and lay still.

Smiling quietly to himself, Number Six on the Council of Seven pocketed his gun and departed.

CHAPTER 4.

A Double-Edged Plot!

THAT afternoon Roger Thurlow was shown into Murdorn Tower, Sussex, where a dignified butler escorted him to the narrow upper turret in which Monsieur, Lord Murdorn's "guest" had his "workshop."

To the servants of the castle, Monsieur was a Rumanian astronomer, using the high tower as a base for special "observations." There was little sign of a giant telescope, astral charts or any other apparatus appertaining to the star-gazing profession, however, in the stone chamber to which Thurlow was admitted.

Instead, it looked for all the world like the wireless-cabin of a big liner. It was, in fact, the central communication-station of the Destroyers in Britain, from which Monsieur could issue his directions and keep in touch with other branches of the society across the Atlantic and the English Channel. He did so by means of a special wave-length.

The little hunchback was sitting like some squat spider in its web as Thurlow came in, and Lord Murdorn, pale and worried as usual, stood gazing absently out of the window down to the grey sea far below.

He turned at Thurlow's entry. Both men fired the same question together.

"Well?"

Number Six shook his head.

"Nothing doing, chief. Wright told me to go to blazes and threatened me with arrest. I stopped him and came away!"

"Tell me what happened, Number Six!"

Monsieur listened in silence to the messenger's hasty report, fondling his beaked nose thoughtfully and nodding when Thurlow had finished.

"As I thought!" he purred. "You British are an obstinate race—very! The good Sir James must be taught a lesson, huh? Fortunately, I never anticipated that our first stroke would be a success, so I have made

preparations. We must prove our power still more before we can enjoy our harvest, huh? Well, we shall—we shall!”

“Got your plans ready, Monsieur?” inquired Thurlow respectfully.

“All ready, Number Six. To-night we shall show Sir James—and the rest of Britain, too—that we must not be trifled with. We can disregard the time limit you gave him, huh? He will not agree, I think?”

“I know!” rapped Thurlow emphatically.

“Very well, then. To-night we shall attack the A-A wharf, the sheds, and the steamer lying alongside. The Atlantic Queen, at present leaving Queenstown, will be sunk!”

Lord Murdorn winced, but Thurlow nodded keenly.

“There’ll be plenty of guards on the lookout to-night at the A-A wharf, Monsieur, I’ll wager!” he warned.

“Doubtless. But we shall attack by air.”

“By air? But won’t they hear an aeroplane coming, chief?”

“I said by air—not aeroplane, Number Six. By air-glider, to be precise. I have Cyrus Henricks, one of America’s finest gliding experts, waiting for orders now!”

“Oh!”

“He will take off from Parliament Hill, Hampstead, shortly before midnight in his glider. That hill will give him sufficient altitude, he says, to glide silently across London. Also there will be few people about there at that hour, huh?”

“Fine, chief!”

“His machine will carry three of our special explosives, which he will drop on the wharf, the sheds, and the steamer. That, I think, will settle the London part of our task, huh?”

“And the Atlantic Queen, Monsieur?”

“Councillor Feenhy, Number Seven, will attend to her with his men. Our yacht is moored in the Bristol Channel. Feenhy will get aboard this afternoon, and weigh anchor at dusk. He should encounter and sink the Atlantic Queen about two a.m. to-morrow morning!”

“But, chief,” said Thurlow doubtfully, “I warned Sir James Wright that we’d attack the boat. Supposing he radios a warning to her?”

“He has done so already!” smiled Monsieur placidly. “While you were motoring down from London, I picked up his wireless warning to the ship.”

“Well, that’s bad, isn’t it?”

“On the contrary, it is good, Number Six. The ship’s captain, having received one such message, will not be surprised at another. And he will get it! For to-night I shall wireless him again to alter his course and run for France—in the name of the firm. Thus, instead of Feenhy having to meet the ship at the entrance to the Channel, where other boats may be within call, he will meet her farther south, where there will be plenty or room—plenty of room for action!”

His confederates stared at him admiringly.



Roger Thurlow, emissary of the Destroyers, levelled his pistol and fired. A cloud of pungent gas struck the other man in the face, and he collapsed with a gurgling grunt.

"By Jove, Monsieur, you think of everything!" gasped Thurlow.

"I think so—I think so!" The leader of the Destroyers purred at the compliment. "By to-morrow morning, Sir James will be regretting his obstinacy, huh? Our society, my friends, will strike—and we shall strike hard!"

He turned to his wireless transmitter and laughed harshly. The laugh was picked up, the same as every other word he had uttered, by Thurston Kyle's microphones, hidden in the ivy on the turret roof above his head!

"THE poor fools!"

Taking off his earphones, the Night Hawk laughed with stinging contempt. He faced Nelson Lee and Nipper and Snub Hawkins, his young assistant, with gleaming eyes.

"The poor, contemptible braggarts!" he went on, almost to himself. "So a gliding expert is to blow up the A-A wharf, is he? And a yacht-load of scum will set out to-night from the Bristol Channel to wreck a fine steamer, and possibly send innocent passengers to their death. No, my pitiful Destroyers, I think not!"

Nelson Lee studied his ally musingly. The words uttered in Murdorn Tower were still ringing in his ears; he had every detail of Monsieur's smashing, two-fold attack clearly fixed in his mind.

It would, of course, have been a simple matter for him to call in Scotland Yard now; to have a squad of police lurking on Parliament Hill to-night to capture Hendricks, the famous American glider; to have others waiting to trap Monsieur's yacht and Feenhy, the Irish outlaw and member of the Council of Seven in charge of the raid.

But to do so would also mean the ending of his alliance with the powerful wizard at present pacing up and down the magnificent laboratory in which he was sitting!

Thurston Kyle, with his great wings, his brain, and his stupendous scientific inventions, considered himself above the law and its petty restrictions. It was typical of his superb arrogance that he did so; but perhaps he was right. Certainly his ruthless methods of fighting crime made him an irresistible force on the side of right and order.

The detective dismissed his thoughts with a shrug. His face took on a keen smile.

"I presume, Kyle, that, like Monsieur, you have your plans ready for to-night?"

"Everything. You must leave all this entirely to me, old friend; the two points of attack are too far apart even for you to cover by 'plane. But"—his voice deepened—"I, with my wings, will do so!"

He threw himself into a chair, a herculean figure in his silken robe.

"First, I shall deal with the glider. That, at least, will never reach the city. I shall allow Hendricks to take off from Parliament Hill and tackle him in my own element. After that, the Channel, to deal with those vile pirates."

"Just a moment!" A thought had occurred to Nelson Lee. "How about Monsieur's false wireless message to lure the boat farther out to sea again?"

"That message will not be sent!" snapped the Night Hawk. "I shall dispatch one of my electric guns to deal with his wireless. The neighbourhood around Murdorn Tower is very lonely. My men will be able to ease their car into a dark field close at hand, and swamp Monsieur's message completely with an electric wave!"

Nelson Lee nodded. He had seen the Night Hawk's "guns" in action that night the Master of the World had made his dread attack on London, and the electric screen from the guns had rolled back the late Professor Fabian's Ice and Fire Rays.

As Kyle said, one such apparatus could deal with wireless waves completely.

Smiling at Nipper's forlorn look, the detective rose from his chair.

"Well, it is in your hands, Kyle! Nipper and I are spectators only this time!"

The Night Hawk broke into one of his rare, kindly laughs, and clapped Nelson Lee's assistant on the back.

"Never mind, my boy! And you, Lee, did splendid work last night in picking up the tracks of the Destroyers' underlings in London. It is my turn now!"

He held out his strong hand to Nelson Lee.

"Let us get this attack finished with, and then—the Destroyers must be destroyed!" He laughed sharply. "And some of them will meet their deserts to-night!"

CHAPTER 5.

A Glider Falls!

HAMPSTEAD HEATH, greatest and wildest of London's open spaces, lay shrouded in darkness.

Faintly, from some far-off steeple, came the sound of chimes borne on the wind. Twelve distinct strokes—midnight. The six men crouching on the grassy slope of Parliament Hill, that towered darkly in the middle of the Heath, rose and gathered silently round the dark, bird-like glider that lay in the shelter of a tree, a mere framework of struts and stout canvas.

Their leader checked the time by the luminous dial of his wrist-watch.

"O.K., fellers! Let's go!"

Rapidly they pushed the machine to the top of the hill, glancing instinctively at the lights of London, twinkling far away beneath them. One of the men chuckled tensely.

The glider was of the latest type, made in Germany, the home of the new gliding science. It was an engine-less craft, silent, and nearly as swift as a 'plane in the hands of an expert. And Hendricks, the slim American, buckling himself into the exposed seat below and just in front of the glider's single wing, was an expert.

On the nose of the 'plane, just where a propeller would have been on a more powerful aircraft, hung a special rack, containing three twelve-inch cylinders of high explosive.

Hendricks buckled the last strap, set his feet on the rudder-bar, and eased the joystick over tenderly.

"I'm ready!"

The men divided into two parties, three of them doubling to the tail of the glider and hanging on with all their weight, while the other two hooked up the powerful catapult "launching-gear" and stood by. There was a moment's silence; then:

"Right!"

Twan-ng!

With a vibrant whine, the catapult gear sprang, snapping the glider strongly into the air. Smoothly and sweetly it took off from the hillside without another sound, rose abruptly, and in a flash was lost in the darkness, heading towards those distant city lights.

Across the Heath it flew, straight at first, until the initial impetus had worn off. For a moment it hesitated, and, in charge of a novice, would have crashed. But Hendricks, gently working his controls, had the 'plane well in hand.

He began to circle, rocking and swooping, searching for the air currents from the hills that would bear the light craft up bravely. With the terrible bombs almost at his feet, he put the whole of his delicate art in his flying, "feeling" a zigzag way through the night.

Experience told. Within a few seconds the glider had sloped into a vertical air current that boosted it higher and higher into the sky till Parliament Hill was a thousand feet below. Then, with a little grunt of satisfaction, the pilot straightened out, settled himself closer in his seat, and began riding down wind for London, with the Essex marshes as his final destination.

But other wings were aloft in the darkness; others more powerful, more supple—faster! Out of the night above the glider, flashing down at breathless speed, came vengeance in Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, flying-helmet closed, eyes hard and alert behind his goggles.

Fast as the wind itself he streaked below the glider, hand outstretched, and, checking only for an instant, seized with iron-nerved accuracy one of the slim bombs hanging from the rack. Another second, and, like a whirlwind, he had flickered away from the frail craft and wheeled above it.

And now he came to the attack in deadly earnest, wings rippling, gun poised above his shoulder. In a hissing dive he crashed on to the glider's wing-tip, landing heavily with a full kick of his muscular legs. It was his favourite assault. And his gun cracked—once!

As though hit by a shell, the glider's smooth flight ended there and then in a hideous, uncontrolled spin. It swerved and tottered. Hendricks, held in by his straps, slumped heavily across the controls.

Like a wounded gull the 'plane lurched away, at the mercy now of the air currents it had conquered so proudly a moment before. Away across the Heath it wavered, sinking lower, lower. The Night Hawk, cruising above, watched it until, in a last stagger, it cleared the tree-tops and hurtled directly for a dimly-glimmering pond.

The end came swiftly. A murderous flash split the night; an ear-splitting explosion bellowed across the Heath. Amid fountains of leaping water, earth, and gravel, Hendricks and his glider, that were to have brought destruction to the A-A wharf, struck the bank of the pond and disappeared.

High above the disaster, alone in the cool air, the Night Hawk circled triumphantly, laughing.

Part of his task was over; the second was to follow. Wheeling, he soared aloft, mounting to the low clouds in giant drives of his wings.

London fell behind him. The little towns and dark fields of Surrey, Hampshire, and Dorset were left in the rear as he headed south and west, smiling in the teeth of the wind. Then the Channel breeze met him, and he shot out across the dark waters of Lyme Bay.

Throughout his flight, in one firm hand he held the bomb he had snatched from the Destroyers' glider. He had a use for that shattering missile!

— — —

CHAPTER 6.

"Monsieur" Takes a Trick!

MEANWHILE, events were stirring at Murdorn Tower.

Just about the same time as Hendricks plunged to death in the darkness of Hampstead Heath, Monsieur, the hunchback leader of the Destroyers, was wrestling with his wireless in the stone turret he occupied. His swarthy face was distorted with dismay and frantic impatience.

Something was wrong; but what, he could not say. He had rapidly checked and overhauled every part of the set and every instrument; had found everything correct. Yet the wireless wave was drowned; his transmitter, too, seemed dead.

And time was flying! Somewhere off Land's End the Destroyers' prey, the Atlantic Queen, was ploughing a safe way home to England instead of turning aside towards the Ushant Light, off the coast of France—to which point the racketeers' yacht was racing, armed with the choicest crew of thugs that could be recruited in Britain and led by Feenhy, the ex-Irish gunman. Monsieur raved and tore at his black hair.

Again and again he wrestled with his instruments in a vain endeavour to wireless the fake message to the Atlantic Queen that would lure her from her course. And again and again, expert though he was, he recoiled, baffled—by what, he did not know.

At the height of his impotent rage, the door of the turret burst open. He spun round, white-faced and panting. Before the newcomer could speak, the hunchback burst into a torrent of wild words.

"Something is wrong—something is wrong!" he raved. "The wireless! Don't stand gaping there, dolt of a fool! Something is wrong!"

Lord Murdorn lurched in and closed the door behind him.

"Something else is wrong!" he gulped. "Something not far from here; in a field—two men—and a car!"

His leader gripped him.

"What is it? Compose yourself, Number Two! Where have you been?"

"I've been for a walk; my nerves—I couldn't settle down!" muttered the other miserably. "I—I went through my small paddock—down the lane. I saw a car just inside a field-gate; two men in it and the driver. They didn't see me!"

"Yes, yes!"

"They had—a queer affair in the car—like an enormous battery. There was a funnel thing on top—pointing this way, a faint blue glow shone from it. I heard a noise, too—like an electric dynamo——"

"What?"

Monsieur's eyes blazed with evil light, and he shot an involuntary glance at his wireless. Batteries—electric dynamos—a funnel pointed towards the Tower by mysterious men lurking in a field! What did it mean?

All his life he had studied electromagnetics. Could these men be causing the trouble? He straightened up suddenly.

"Can you lead me to these men, huh?"

"Y-yes!"

In a tigerish leap, the hunchback hurled himself at a table-drawer; Lord Murdorn caught the gleam of an automatic.

"Lead on. And quickly!" snapped Monsieur.

Harshly the hunchback Destroyer drove his trembling accomplice before him, out into the drive, through paddocks and into a muddy lane. The two prowled along almost on tip-toe, invisible ghosts in the gloom. At last Lord Murdorn stopped dead; a shaky hand fastened on Monsieur's wrist.

"There—through that gate! You can hear the dynamo now!"

Monsieur tensed himself, his face fiendish. Above the sweep of the wind and the murmur of the distant sea, his sharp ears caught a soft purr. He edged farther along towards the dim, open gate of the field; and saw, under the bulk of a bare elm, a soft luminous light dimly outlining a bell-mouthed funnel.

"Stay here!" he whispered; and Lord Murdorn huddled into the hedge, closing his

Down swooped the Night Hawk on to the Destroyers' yacht. With unerring aim he threw the bomb. Next moment there came a terrific explosion——!



eyes in terror. The hunchback vanished from his side.

A moment later, dull but clear, come three thudding reports—the hollow plops of a silenced automatic. Monsieur reappeared. He was gloating with triumph.

"Come; it is finished. Now you must help!"

Half-leading, half-dragging his limp companion, the hunchback returned hastily to the gate and into the field towards the car.

Lord Murdorn gazed half-fascinatedly at the tall steel canister clamped to a platform in the tonneau. Then he recoiled, moaning and covering his eyes at sight of the three silent men, huddled together at the foot of the "gun."

"You—you devil——"

"Hush! Listen! Get on that driving-seat and take the car through the castle grounds by the back drive, and out on to the edge of the cliff. Point the car towards the sea, leave the engine running and jump for your life. It is simple; you understand, huh?"

Gasping with terror, Lord Murdorn climbed heavily into the car. Some relief came to him when he switched on the engine, for it was a Rolls-Royce and made scarcely a sound. But his hands were shaking pitifully as he turned the car slowly through the gate and down the lane towards his castle.

Behind him, Monsieur watched the grim cargo disappearing to its last resting-place. Then, chuckling to himself, he shuffled after it. For the moment he had no thought as to why or how the electric gun had come to attack Murdorn Tower. All he wanted was to get back to his turret and his wireless once more.

Ten minutes later, on board the Atlantic Queen, ploughing along just off Lands End, the wireless officer dashed along the wet deck with a message for his skipper. Captain Robins, on the bridge, scanned the words swiftly and pursed his lips.

But the directions were terse and clear—in the name of the firm. Shrugging resignedly, he turned and snapped an order to his navigator.

Amid clanging bells and a flurry of foam, the Atlantic Queen turned away from England like a lovely stag—straight into the jaws of the hunter.

Her saviour, the swift-flying Night Hawk, was still over a hundred miles away!

CHAPTER 7.

Vengeance From the Skies!

THE Night Hawk frowned. He was flying down-Channel, piercing the wind off the Atlantic; the rough Cornish coast was away to his right, the broad sweep of the ocean before him.

Through his night glasses, as he flew, he searched the sea carefully. Earlier that day, he and Nelson Lee had charted the course of the Atlantic Queen from Ireland to Southampton Water, and, allowing for the encounter with the glider and his flight across southern England, he should have met the ship just off the Lizard.

He was on time now to the minute. But, of the splendid boat there was no sign.

Lips compressed, the Night Hawk left the waves and spiralled aloft, searching over a bigger area with his glasses. The end of his quest came suddenly.

Clear and fierce, a lightning jet of flame

stabbed the darkness, away down in the south. The crisp, whip-like smack of a quick-firing gun rushed up to his ears, tearing from him a low growl of rage.

"Cra-ack! And then another!"

Cold fear gnawing at his heart, the Night Hawk hurtled into action, whizzing through the dark sky like a meteor, driving his huge wings to their fullest powers.

Arms outstretched to shield his face, he swooped to the rescue of liner and passengers. Two brilliant rows of lights down on the shadowy sea showed him where the Atlantic Queen was crowding on all speed for safety; another jet of flame from a dark blur five hundred yards astern betrayed the position of her pursuer, the Destroyers' yacht.

The Night Hawk's fury vanished then in a burst of exultant laughter—his battle-cry! Faster, harder, his wings slashed the air, the sea leapt to meet him as he swooped down upon the yacht.

Behind a gun shield on the small fo'c'sle, three men crouched round the quick-firer, sighting for a vital spot on the Atlantic Queen that would cripple her. On the deck, armed with clubs and revolvers, a bunch of wolfish fighting-men were waiting for the time when they would pounce upon their prey. Their leader, Michael Feenhy, Number Seven on the Council, stood on the bridge, staring ahead with bitter, excited eyes.

With a wild cry, the Night Hawk struck!

He came across the plunging yacht in a blaze of speed, his right arm, holding the captured bomb, rose and fell. Down whizzed the slender tube of explosive with unerring aim, cleared the yacht's foremast by inches only, and crashed, in an eruption of scarlet flame and riotous thunder, squarely among the gunners. A gaping hole appeared in the yacht. She began to sink. . . .

Five minutes later nothing remained to be seen of her. Ship and crew had vanished beneath the waves. And the Atlantic Queen continued serenely on her way, while the Night Hawk, smiling triumphantly, flew gracefully homewards.

NOT all the spoils of victory had gone to Thurston Kyle that night, however.

Arriving home, he learned from Nelson Lee what had happened at Murdorn Tower. For Lee, of course, had heard everything over the Night Hawk's radio; Monsieur and Lord Murdorn had discussed their triumph gloatingly! And great was the Night Hawk's rage.

"What happens to murderers in this country, Lee?" he asked icily of the detective.

"They are hanged."

"Then Monsieur and Lord Murdorn, too, shall hang!" he snapped harshly.

THE END.

(Don't miss reading next week's thrilling yarn in this amazing series, lads. Make a note of the title: "Hovering Doom!")

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The VALLEY of HOT SPRINGS



The Boss Bunks.

ERIC, remembering the tough-looking men he had seen skulking outside, was ready to agree with Danny. Yes, there would be trouble soon, and plenty of it. Meanwhile, Professor Denning was still rambling on.

"Can't you do something to stop the professor?" Danny wanted to know. "It ain't no use flapping your jaw in the middle of a fight."

The youngster only grinned and shrugged his shoulders. His uncle had got the bit between his teeth, and nothing could stop him.

"Eric the Red describes how he discovered the Valley of Hot Springs," the pro-

fessor was saying. "This is his story, gentlemen, which I have translated from the narwhal horn:

"In the year of our Lord, one thousand four hundred and six, with the coming of the spring, I set out to search the mountains of ice that lie like a wall behind our town of Dronvik, which is set upon the western shore of Groneland and beyond the West Bygd to the north of that bay where the Great Island is. I sailed up the fiord, the mouth of which lies some twenty miles north of Dronvik. At the end of the day, the wind being fair, I came to its farthest limit.

There landing, I took what provisions I had left and made my way up a long valley, not more than forty paces in width at its widest

**The key to the treasure solved;
Eric and his uncle start for the
Valley of Hot Springs.**

part, which is cut between the glaciers. Here there is grass and low shrub, and the air is filled with a hot mist that rises from the stream.

"Two days' march brought me to its end, where not two men could stand abreast and where the walls of the ice mountains rise three thousand feet or more on either side."

The professor paused to tap the paper.

"You will have the goodness to understand, gentlemen, that this is a free translation. For the sake of the clarity of the narrative, I have interpolated certain sentences here and there. We will proceed.

"Here the hot stream which waters the valley comes down from the mountains, and because of its heat leaves a grey stain upon the ice, as high as the eye can see, and this stream falls in steps, none higher than a man's waist, so that with labour one can climb it as a ladder. I followed the stream upwards and across a vast plateau, and on the fourth day, when my food was near spent, I came to the Valley of Hot Springs. It is set in a circle of ice, some thirty miles in circumference. It can only be entered by the long tunnel through which the stream finds its way out.

"The valley is very green and pleasant, and it owes its luxuriance to some five hundred hot water springs which spout throughout the year. Here live some five thousand people in stone houses, ruled by one they call the Angekok or Wizard. Him they all obey, for he alone knows the secret by which the hot water springs are made to spout. They speak the language of the Skrellings."

The professor jerked his glasses on to his forehead and glared at his supposed audience.

"The Skrellings, gentlemen, may be loosely called the Esquimos of the coast. Eric the Red goes on:

"Here I found the metal which is heavier than lead and harder than iron. Here, too, much gold. For two months I tarried there.

"The people of the valley were well disposed to me at the first, but the Angekok, who looked on me with little favour, stirred them up with dark sayings and prophecies,

so that my life was in jeopardy. He foretold the destruction of the valley at the coming of the fair strangers, and because I showed no haste to be gone he caused the springs to cease spouting, declaring to the people that this was the work of my witchery. The ice began to settle upon the valley, and the ground shook and trembled, and the people were greatly terrified."

"I will omit, gentlemen, the description of his hurried departure from the valley. He returned in safety to Dronvik and informed his compatriots of the wonderful valley he had discovered. The four winter months were spent in making preparations for an expedition to the valley. During those days of darkness the Skrellings from the West Bygd came in great numbers to the Norse settlement, driven there, they said, by famine. Towards the end of the winter Eric the Red recognised among these fugitives the Angekok from the Valley of Hot Springs. He made the discovery too late. The Skrellings suddenly turned upon the Norsemen, and except for certain women who were carried off, every man, woman and child was destroyed."

Again the professor paused impressively.

"That, gentlemen, explains what, until these runes passed into my possession, was one of the world's great mysteries. We now know how the Norse civilisation, which had been established in Greenland for over four hundred years, was completely wiped out."

"Can't something be done about it, Mr. Eric?" Danny whispered hoarsely to the youngster beside him. "Looks to me as if he's got his second wind."

"From that universal desolation, gentlemen," the professor continued, "Eric the Red managed to escape, to die a miserable death among the icebergs. Here are his last words:

"On the horn I have written the saga of my discovery of the valley, and of the cruel ruin that beset certain of our settlements beyond West Bygd. And the narwhal I set upon the ore, so that he who reads may know of the strange metal that lies in the Valley of Hot Springs. And should he chance to be moved to follow the quest, let

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

ERIC DENNING, a cheery, adventure-loving youngster, lives with his uncle,

PROFESSOR DENNING. The professor, absent-minded and interested in nothing save his studies, is expecting a visit from John Peters, an Arctic explorer who has discovered a narwhal's horn, on which is written in Runic writing the key to tremendous treasure, in Greenland. The horn arrives, but not Peters. For Peters is dead—murdered by one of a gang of scoundrels, the leader of which is

BOSS MAUNSELL. Maunsell is after the narwhal's horn, and he and his gang have surrounded the cottage, in the heart of the Chiltern Hills, in which Eric and his uncle live. By a ruse Boss Maunsell gets in, but

DANNY, the professor's man-of-all-work and an ex-pugilist, soon disposes of him by knocking him out. At this juncture Professor Denning comes out of his study very excitedly, and announces that he has deciphered the writing on the narwhal's horn. While he is reading it out, Danny tells Eric that they will have to think out some plan of action or the men outside will start trouble.

(Now read on.)

him take men with him and exact vengeance upon the people of the valley for the evil they have done, and let him beware of the Angokok.' "

As the professor uttered the last words, from downstairs there came a click. Before Eric could reach the banisters Danny had vaulted over them into the hall below. But he was too late. The front door stood open, and the man who had been lying there had vanished. Boss Maunsell, having recovered consciousness from the blow dealt him by Danny, had made his escape.

The Attack!

WHAT is the meaning of this?" the professor exclaimed, turning on his nephew and looking like a man who had just woken from sleep.

As briefly as he could Eric explained the situation. Fortunately there was no need for many words. The professor fastened upon the fact that a gang of men were outside bent on getting possession of the narwhal's horn. His red beard stiffened and his eyes blazed.

"The impudent scoundrels! Ring up the police instantly. We'll have them all arrested."

"No go, uncle," replied the boy. "They've cut the wires. They weren't taking any risks. There's over a dozen of them out there."

The professor turned swiftly to the nearest window. As his massive head appeared above the sill there was a crash of glass, and a bullet embedded itself in the wall opposite. Eric caught his uncle round the waist and dragged him back. Already he had formed a plan for getting them out of what was clearly a very unpleasant situation.

Against such numbers they could not hope to hold the cottage for long. Help must be got, and as the telephone was broken, somebody must get out of the cottage and carry the news to the police.

"I'll go and fetch the police, uncle," said the youngster quickly. "Here are two revolvers. Danny found them on that man. If you'll cover me I can slip out of the scullery and escape into the woods. Once I'm there, they won't get me."

The house was already resounding with the gang's efforts to force the front door. Danny had shoved a stout oak chest against it, and was now running round the windows of the ground floor to see whether they were safely shuttered. Telling him what he intended to do, Eric led the way to the scullery.

From behind the fence at the far end of the moonlit yard a man's head and shoulders appeared. To his astonishment, Eric saw his uncle raise the revolver he was holding with an air of carelessness and fire. The man vanished from behind the fence.

"Winged him!" the professor exclaimed with a grin of satisfaction. "Now is your time, Eric, my boy."

In a flash the youngster had slithered through the window and was racing across the yard. From the shadow of a little shed where Danny kept his gardening tools, two men leapt at him. From behind him he heard a succession of shots interrupted by his uncle's booming voice:

"You—and you!"

Both men dropped, and wondering at his uncle's unsuspected gift of marksmanship, Eric flung himself at the fence. Another moment and he was in the road.

Ziz-zagging among the trees, he came out at last on the road which led downhill to the village of Chalcombe. He was just about to break into a run when he heard the sound of an approaching motor-bike. The next instant he saw, with a feeling of intense relief, the uniformed figure of a policeman astride the machine.

"Why, Mr. Denning, whatever is the matter? I was just coming with an urgent message for your uncle. There's a bloke been fished out of the Thames with a knife wound in his back. Everything had been taken off him except a bit of paper in his waistcoat pocket. That had got your uncle's address on it in pencil. The police want to know if he'll come along and try and identify the man."

"If the police want my uncle they'll have to get him out of his house first!" Eric exclaimed grimly, and then went on to describe the situation.

The constable was dumbfounded for a moment. Then he turned his machine.

"Come on," he said shortly.

Seated on the carrier and clinging to the constable's back, Eric was swept in little over a minute down into the village. There the sergeant in charge got busy on the telephone. The nearest big town was five miles away. It took all of half an hour before a lorry arrived with a posse of armed police.

When at last they reached the open space in front of the cottage it was to find a silence like death. The car and the lorry in which the gang had arrived were still there, but there was no sign of any human being. As Eric, with terror in his heart, ran towards the cottage he saw that the front door had been burst open and that every window on the ground floor had been shattered. He stood for a moment amidst the scene of wreckage and confusion in the entrance hall.

"Danny!" he called. "Danny!"

"Easy, guv'nor. The last round's over, and by the look of it, we've got the verdict. The lad's back!"

Danny's voice came to him from somewhere above. He looked up to see that, at the bend of the staircase, just outside the professor's study door, a barricade had been erected of overturned tables and chairs. From behind these defences his uncle, still clutching a revolver, appeared with Danny at his side. At the same moment the police entered the house, and for the next ten minutes an exasperated inspector was trying

to corner the professor and get down some account of what had happened.

"They haven't got the narwhal's horn, and that's all that matters. No, I haven't the slightest idea who they were, and I'm not in a position to give you any names and addresses. They must have heard you coming and decamped. If you want any finger-prints, what is left of my house is entirely at your disposal. All I ask is to be left quietly alone in my study."

But that satisfaction was to be denied the professor. Lying in the mortuary in the East End of London was the body of the man picked out of the river. And three hours later, when the summer dawn had already broken, Professor Denning had identified him as John Peters, the Arctic explorer, his friend and former pupil.

Danny is Unlucky.

THE Post Office engineers had already mended the cut telephone wire, a glazier from the village had repaired the broken glass, and Danny, who could turn his hands to most jobs, having restored order in the house, had not only mended the front door but given it a coat of paint, when Eric received an astonishing message. It was his uncle's voice at the other end of the telephone, and its boom had a very disturbing effect upon the microphone.

"We leave by the eight o'clock train for Dundee!" he announced. "I have chartered a barque, and we shall sail for Greenland and the Valley of Hot Springs. Danny is to pack such things as I shall require. You will bring the narwhal's horn with you, and for goodness sake see you don't damage it. I'm staying at the Greatland Hotel, and will meet you there."

And then he rang off. Eric, greatly excited, grabbed Danny, and there followed a hectic period of packing.

It was half-past six when they arrived in London. At ten minutes to seven they pulled up in front of the Greatlands Hotel. Before they had time to alight the figure of the professor streaked across the pavement.

"There you are at last. I thought you were never coming. Drive to the Chancery Lane Safe Deposit, driver."

Dropping into his seat he glanced with glowing eyes at the narwhal's horn.

"Going to put that away where it will be safe, Eric. It's already cost one man his life. Poor Peters!"

In a short while the taxi pulled up in front of the Safe Deposit. Lifting the horn with some difficulty, the professor staggered with it up a flight of stone steps and disappeared into the building beyond. Eric's thoughts were tumultuous. He was glowing with excitement at the prospect of the treasure-hunting expedition which would shortly be starting. The youngster's racing thoughts

were interrupted by Danny touching his knee.

"Don't look round quick, Mr. Eric, but just take a glimpse out of the window on your right. See that bloke standing there by the lamp-post?"

Without turning his head, Eric looked in the direction indicated. The opposite pavement was crowded, but from out of the sea of faces one stood clear and distinct. It was a man with a long intelligent face, close-set eyes and matted grey hair.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Eric," said Danny. "I'll slip out and get behind him if I can."

Eric recognised the fellow on the opposite pavement as the man who had come to the cottage the previous night—the leader of the gang. The youngster thought of how John Peters had been done to death by this same gang because of that narwhal's horn. He felt a cold clutch at his heart.

And then his whole attention became concentrated upon Danny's movements. The old pugilist had stepped out of the cab and had vanished down Chancery Lane. Still without turning his head, the boy watched the opposite pavement. Now he could see Danny moving unconcernedly towards the lamp-post against which the leader of the gang was leaning.

Then suddenly something happened. A man with a handkerchief round his neck barged into Danny, sending him into the roadway. At the same time a car drove up, from which Danny only escaped being run down by springing back on the pavement. Before he could recover himself the car had vanished and with it the leader of the gang.

"Where's Danny? What's the idiot playing at?"

The professor had returned and was looking round impatiently for his body servant. A very crestfallen Danny stepped back into the taxi.

"What have you been doing?" the professor demanded.

"Nothing, guv'nor; just having a little toddle round."

The professor snorted.

"This is no time for frivolity," he said severely. "We stand on the threshold of one of the most remarkable investigations with which the world has ever been faced. We are even now beginning our journey to the Valley of Hot Springs which Eric the Red speaks of in his record."

He put his hand into his pocket and drew out a crumpled sheet of foolscap.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I thought I had mislaid my notes. Had I done so, I would have had to return to the Safe Deposit and made another transcript of those runes."

He replaced the notes in his pocket. Eric thought it a good moment to ask just what they were going to do.

(Continued on next page.)

The Valley of Hot Springs!

(Continued from previous page)

"I've chartered a barque," explained the professor. "She is lying at Dundee. To-morrow we get our stores and kit aboard—the day after we sail. In less than a month I hope, with the very careful directions given us by Eric the Red, to have reached our objective. We shall be able to spend a month there, and return before the winter sets in. If not, we shall remain for the winter in the Valley of Hot Springs."

The Fight on the Train.

TO Eric it all seemed like a dream from which he would presently awake. After dinner in the station restaurant they took their seats in the Scotch express. The professor stretched himself full length on the seat of a first-class compartment. The train was already under way when Danny opened the sliding door. In his hands was a rug and a pillow.

"I got these at the station, gov'nor. You may as well be comfortable."

He placed the pillow under the professor's head and spent some moments in adjusting the rug. Then he retired from the compartment.

Too excited to speak, Eric tried to read a paper. The professor was snoring peacefully. Presently the youngster put down the paper and then he, too, closed his eyes and fell asleep.

He was roused by the sounds of a furious struggle of men wrestling as if for their lives. He opened his eyes to find that the compartment was in profound darkness. The train was roaring and rattling through a long tunnel. Eric fumbled in his pocket and found a box of matches. As he struck one he heard a cry. The next moment the draught from the door had blown the match out. All the boy had seen were two men, one of whom he had recognised as his uncle by his beard, locked in one another's arms and fighting desperately. With a whoop of excitement, Eric flung himself forward to join in the melee.

(Another rousing instalment of this grand serial next Wednesday, lads. Full of excitement and thrills.)

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Rebellion At St. Frank's!

(Continued from page 27.)

Pycraft was seized, and one or two of the other masters were seized. They were bowled over, grabbed by eager hands, and whirled towards the nearest exit. Big Hall soon became the scene of a fierce scrap. Hand-forth, finding himself released, joined in the thick of it. Nipper and Parkington were equally active.

Millionaire Mike, with half his clothes torn off, was hurtled to the gates and flung out into the road. Several junior boots assisted him in his exit.

"Hurrah!"

"He's out—and he'll stay out!"

Mr. Pycraft followed—for the school was furious with Mr. Pycraft. It was he who had engaged these masters, and he was so much of a weakling that he was letting them have the run of the place. He was bundled out as unceremoniously as the supposed Mr. Wetherell. Others followed.

Crowds of wildly excited fellows went tearing through the school, rounding up the rest of the dud masters. Mr. Padbury and Mr. Jackson and Mr. Bullock, found at a card game in the Masters' Common-room, were the victims of a rush. They were bowled over, grabbed, and frog-marched to the gates.

It was the same all over the school. Every one of the impostors was seized and booted out. The school was doing this thing thoroughly. The fact that it was pouring with rain made no difference. The fellows were so excited that they did not even notice the rain. But the victims did—particularly when they went rolling headlong into the mud.

The last man was pitched out, and the gates were clanged to with a heavy thud.

"Hurrah!"

"Bar them out—and keep them out!"

It was the most lightning-like barring-out on record—the most dramatic. There had been no preparation, no planning and scheming in advance. Within half an hour rebellion was rife at St. Frank's!

THE END.

(Stirring times at St. Frank's next week, lads. Read all about the barring-out in a sensational yarn entitled: "Up, The Rebels!")

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