

The GLORIOUS "FIFTH" at ST. FRANK'S!

*Nipper and his cheery schoolboy chums celebrate Guy Fawkes Day with a bang.
Special explosively-funny long complete story inside.*

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FIREWORK BLUES!

New Series No. 94.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

November 7th, 1931.

Fireworks, fun and frolic on the 'Fifth' at St. Frank's.

HANDFORTH THE GUY!

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS



CHAPTER 1.

Handforth Turns Blue!

SIZZZZZZ—bang!

Mr. Crowell, the master of the Remove Form at St. Frank's, leapt about eighteen inches into the air as the cannon-cracker exploded immediately in his rear. His mortar-board went in one direction, his books in another.

"You should compete for the high jump, sir," said William Napoleon Browne approvingly. "You will take it as a compliment, I am sure, sir, when I assure you that your performance irresistibly reminded me of a mountain goat leaping from crag to crag——"

"How dare you, Browne?" snapped Mr. Crowell, breathing hard. "It's a pity you haven't the thoughtfulness to pick up my books for me."

He retrieved his books and his mortar-

Lively long complete Guy Fawkes yarn that goes with a bang.

board, and he attempted to retrieve his dignity. It was nearly time for lessons, and the passages of the School House were crowded with boys.

"The Fifth of November!" said Mr. Crowell acidly. "An absurd celebration! It ought to be prohibited by Act of Parliament!"

"But you will surely remember, sir, that the celebrated Brother Fawkes attempted to blow up Parliament on this

should be wasting our time in this perfectly useless argument. Be good enough to go to your Form-room."

He strode off, bounced into the Remove Form-room, and glared. He was aware that he was a minute late, and he hated unpunctuality. The Remove, taking advantage of his non-arrival, was enjoying itself.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Crowell.

Every junior remained as though



day, some hundreds of years ago," said the lanky Fifth Form skipper, without a trace of a smile. "It is no exaggeration to state, in fact, that Brother Fawkes was a bright lad with sound ideas."

"I do not regard the subject, Browne, as one for levity," retorted Mr. Crowell, more acid than ever.

"No doubt you are right, sir," agreed Browne meekly. "But you will at least admit that Brother Fawkes was a public benefactor. How, otherwise, should we have had Guy Fawkes Day?"

"We would be a lot better without it," said Mr. Crowell gruffly. "In any case, Browne, I utterly fail to see why we

stricken, and a brooding silence fell. The Removites knew that tone of voice only too well! And it was the Fifth of November—and detention of any kind would be little short of a calamity.

With dignity, Mr. Crowell closed the door, and walked towards his desk. Then: Bang!

Mr. Crowell's dignity vanished. The cracker went off like a miniature bomb, and the Form-master again gave a very fair imitation of a mountain goat leaping from crag to crag. Church and McClure had distinctly warned Handforth not to light the fuse of that cracker; but Handforth was a reckless fellow.

"Who—who did that?" gasped Mr. Crowell, spinning round. "This is outrageous! Good heavens! For days past we have had nothing but these wretched fireworks, exploding in all sorts of odd corners—until one's nerves are shattered to shreds! And now you have the audacity to use the—the things in the class-room!"

He adjusted his glasses, and inspected the Form with such intensity that his eyes were like gimlets. All the boys were standing in their places. They looked harmless enough. Edward Oswald Handforth, with three cannon-crackers in his hand, wondered how on earth he could get rid of them.

"Who lighted that firework?" demanded Mr. Crowell ominously.

There was dead silence.

"I am waiting," snapped the Form-master.

"Well, you see, sir——" began Handforth.

"Was it you, Handforth?"

"Well, I was saying, sir——"

"Answer me!"

"Well, dash it, sir, give a chap a chance," protested the burly leader of Study D. "We didn't think you'd be here so soon—— I mean, I was going to throw that cracker out of the window, but then you came in——"

"That will do, Handforth," said Mr. Crowell coldly. "You are responsible for the firework. Very well! You will write me two hundred lines. Come out here."

"Eh?" gasped Handforth, in dismay.

"Don't say 'Eh?' like that!" barked Mr. Crowell. "You heard what I said, Handforth. Come out here."

"But—but——"

With a handful of cannon-crackers, Handforth was at a disadvantage. He glanced appealingly at the juniors on either side of him, but they seemed to be unaware of his existence.

"I am still waiting, Handforth," said Mr. Crowell silkily—and when his voice assumed that silky quality he was as nearly like a high-explosive bomb as a human being can be.

"Yes, sir," gasped Handforth.

With creditable deftness, he jerked open the lid of his desk, and threw the cannon-crackers within. But something peculiar happened. Handforth felt a slight resistance, and there was a scraping noise, immediately followed by a flash.

"Hallo! What the—— Whoa!" yelled Handforth in alarm.

He jerked the lid of his desk right back. There was a puff, then a dense cloud of blue smoke gushed out, enveloping Handforth. He backed away hastily, and a

gasp of amazement went up. Handforth's face was a bright blue; he looked as if he had dipped his head in a bowl of ink.

"Grooooooh!" spluttered Handy, and bent forward over his desk again to investigate. At that moment there was a sizzling noise, and red fire and green fire spouted forth. Combined with the blue smoke, the effect was really artistic.

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" gurgled Handforth helplessly.

Crack-crack! Bang! Swoosh! Bang!

With a fiendish yell, Handforth leapt back. Jumping crackers were leaping out of his desk to the accompaniment of the coloured fire. Then, to make matters worse, those cannon-crackers of his went off. The noise was like that of a miniature air raid.

Mr. Crowell stood transfixed with horror and fury. The rest of the Form stood transfixed with dismay. Every boy was still standing in his place, ready to sit down when Mr. Crowell gave the word. Mr. Crowell was a stickler for such discipline. He always made the boys sit down in unison, and he made the boys open their desks in unison. He had something of a military mind.

"This—this is outrageous!" panted Mr. Crowell, finding his voice. "How dare you, Handforth? And, good gracious, look at your face, boy! Never in my life have I experienced anything quite so—so—he sought for a word—"so outrageous!" he concluded, giving it best.

"But, look here, sir——" began Handforth.

"Silence!"

"That's all very well, sir——"

"Come here, Handforth!"

Edward Oswald, looking very blue, flustered and excited, went forward.

"You don't understand——" he began.

"I understand, Handforth, that, not content with letting off fireworks under my feet, you must convert your desk into a—a miniature Crystal Palace! Pah! Phoo! Look at this smoke! How do you suppose we can work in this poisonous atmosphere?"

The coloured fire was dying down, and the crackles and explosions had ceased. Clouds of dense, pungent smoke floated lazily in the atmosphere of the Form-room.

"But listen, sir——"

Handforth was frantic, but Mr. Crowell would not allow him to proceed.

"Enough!" he snapped. "Handforth, you will be detained this evening from six p.m. until eight-thirty."

Handforth reeled.

"But—but it's Guy Fawkes Night, sir," he yelped. "We're having a bonfire—and—and fireworks, and—and——"

"As a punishment for this outrage you will be detained," roared Mr. Crowell. "Not another word! There will be no fireworks for you this evening, Handforth! You have had enough! Now go and wash your face, and return here as quickly as you can."

"But it's not fair, sir——"

"Silence!" thundered the Form-master, pointing with a quivering finger. "Go!" Handforth, sick with dismay, went.

CHAPTER 2.

Class-room Ructions!

IT was distinctly rough on Handforth. He had been guilty of letting off that isolated cannon-cracker; but the Great Desk Mystery baffled him. He had not put any fireworks in his desk—other than those cannon-crackers—and even if he had done so he would not have been rash enough to let them go off.

Unfortunately, Mr. Crowell refused to listen; he took it for granted that Handforth, in his enthusiasm, had played a joke. And Mr. Crowell was determined that Handforth should pay.

"Attention!" commanded the Form-master. "Sit down—everybody!"

Everybody sat down.

"If there are any more exhibitions of—er—fireworks, I shall be compelled to detain the whole Form," continued Mr. Crowell darkly. "Fireworks are all right in their proper place; but the Form-room is not the proper place. We are here to work. Pouf! This smoke is positively disgusting!"

"Hadn't we better have a window open, sir?" suggested Nipper, the Form captain.

"We will have a window open, Hamilton, when I decide that it shall be opened," retorted Mr. Crowell, who was in his most irritable mood. "Be good enough to hold your tongue!"

Nipper sighed and said no more.

"Now, perhaps, we shall be able to get on with some work," said Mr. Crowell, as he sat down at his desk. "To-day is not a public holiday, as many of you boys seem to imagine, but an ordinary working day."

The Form glowered rebelliously. Why Mr. Crowell should regard the Fifth of November as an ordinary working day eluded their comprehension. For the next five minutes the Form-master delivered a long lecture on the folly of letting off

fireworks at the wrong time and in the wrong place. He snorted, he shouted, and he threatened. The Removites listened patiently. Mr. Crowell had concluded his lecture when Handforth, now looking his normal self, entered the class-room. The burly junior went to his desk, followed by a glare from the master.

"Please, sir——" began Handforth meekly.

"Another word from you, Handforth, and I shall report you for a flogging," snapped Mr. Crowell. "My patience is not inexhaustible."

"But my desk is in an awful state, sir," protested Handforth recklessly. "Why don't you listen, sir? I don't know anything about those fireworks. Some silly ass has been having a game with my desk——"

"Handforth, you are an obstinate, wilful boy," said the Form-master hotly. "It seems that nothing short of a flogging will silence you. I don't want to hear another word. Do you understand? Not another word!"

Handforth, warned by that ominous tone, and by the ferocious glares of his immediate neighbours, relapsed into silence.

"Now!" said Mr. Crowell, giving a sharp rap with his pointer. "Now, perhaps, we can begin our work. Everybody will open his desk. Smartly, now! All together!"

It was one of his little idiosyncrasies that this ceremony should be performed with machine-like precision. The boys all jerked their desk lids open at the same second. The next move was to take out their books. But that next move was put out of gear this morning.

Sizzzzzzh! Swooooosh! Sizzzzzzh!

Every desk in the room behaved in the same way. Every desk momentarily resisted as it was opened, then came bursts of smoke and little flashes of fire—to be immediately followed by ruddy glares.

"Hi! What the——"

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Odds fire and flames!"

All the boys leapt to their feet in consternation. They jerked the lids of their desks back. Red fire was blazing forth from every desk—to be immediately joined by blue fire and green fire. The whole Form-room glowed and flickered with the dazzling display. Dense clouds of pungent smoke rose towards the ceiling.

"Good—good heavens!" stammered Mr. Crowell, his glasses dropping of his nose in his amazement.

He was helpless. Pandemonium reigned. Never had there been such a scene in the Remove Form-room.

Bang-bang-bang! Bang-bang-bang!

Jumping crackers were leaping out of every desk, exploding and leaping in all directions. It was like concentrated machine-gun fire. The juniors—many of them with faces that were a vivid red, blue or green hue—were leaping and running in all directions, colliding with one another, yelling, gasping, spluttering.

"This—this is the most outrageous —"

Mr. Crowell did not get any further. A great puff of smoke went into his throat, and he swallowed some of it. He reeled, coughing violently. Somebody dashed to the door, and flung it open. Others leapt for the windows, and opened them, too. Meanwhile, the various coloured fires continued their gay display, and the jumping crackers still banged and jumped.

The boys did not wait for any orders. They crowded out of the Form-room and reeled along the corridor; they reached the open, their eyes smarting, their throats parched. Masters were opening doors of the other Form-rooms, and were looking out; prefects were dashing here and there. The work of the entire school was at a standstill. The corridors were becoming filled with the acrid smoke.

"What on earth is happening?" shouted Mr. Pagett, of the Fifth.

"Fireworks—in my Form-room!" gurgled Mr. Crowell, as he dashed past.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Suncliffe, of the Third, suddenly appearing. "Is—is the school on fire?"

"No, sir, it isn't!" barked Mr. Crowell. "It's nothing! Please go back to your own boys! I can deal with mine!"

When he got outside he found all his boys gathered about the School House steps. They were yelling excitedly, and coughing in between whiles.

"Just a minute, sir, before you round on us," exclaimed Nipper, running up. "I'm Form captain, and I can tell you at once, sir, that none of us knows anything about this business."

"That's right, sir," put in Handforth excitedly. "Don't you see? Every desk was just the same as mine! Only mine went off unexpectedly—because I opened my lid before you gave the order. I'm no more to blame than the other chaps, sir."

"And, by Samson, we're not to blame, either," said Vivian Travers. "We didn't shove any fireworks in our own desks."

"Not likely, sir," spluttered Reggie Pitt

Mr. Crowell was forced to take notice of the earnest, excited boys. He could plainly see that they were as mystified as himself—and, indeed, as indignant.

"Somebody has japed us, sir," said Nipper darkly. "An elaborate jape—on a gigantic scale. All our desks were monkeyed with."

"That will do," said Mr. Crowell, forcing himself to be calm. "I am beginning to realise, Hamilton, that what you say is right. All your desks were—er—monkeyed with, but by whom?"

"By George! Wouldn't we like to know, sir!" declared Handforth aggressively.

"In the circumstances, Handforth, I will retract your sentence," said the Form-master, almost grudgingly. "You will not be detained this evening."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Handforth, with relief.

"I shall inquire into this disgraceful affair later," continued Mr. Crowell. "I am satisfied that none of you boys is guilty. Upon my word! What a morning!"

The Removites, now that they knew there was to be no punishment, rather enjoyed themselves. Any delay in lessons was to be welcomed. Many of the juniors, with their brightly-coloured faces, presented remarkable sights, and there was much laughter and chatter—until Mr. Crowell silenced it with a thunderous command.

"Form into a double column," went on the Form-master sharply. "You will all go to the bath-rooms and wash yourselves. I will accompany you. Then we will return to the Form-room. Biggleswade tells me that there is no danger of fire, and the room is now practically clear of smoke. No, don't hurry, there! Take it calmly. March!"

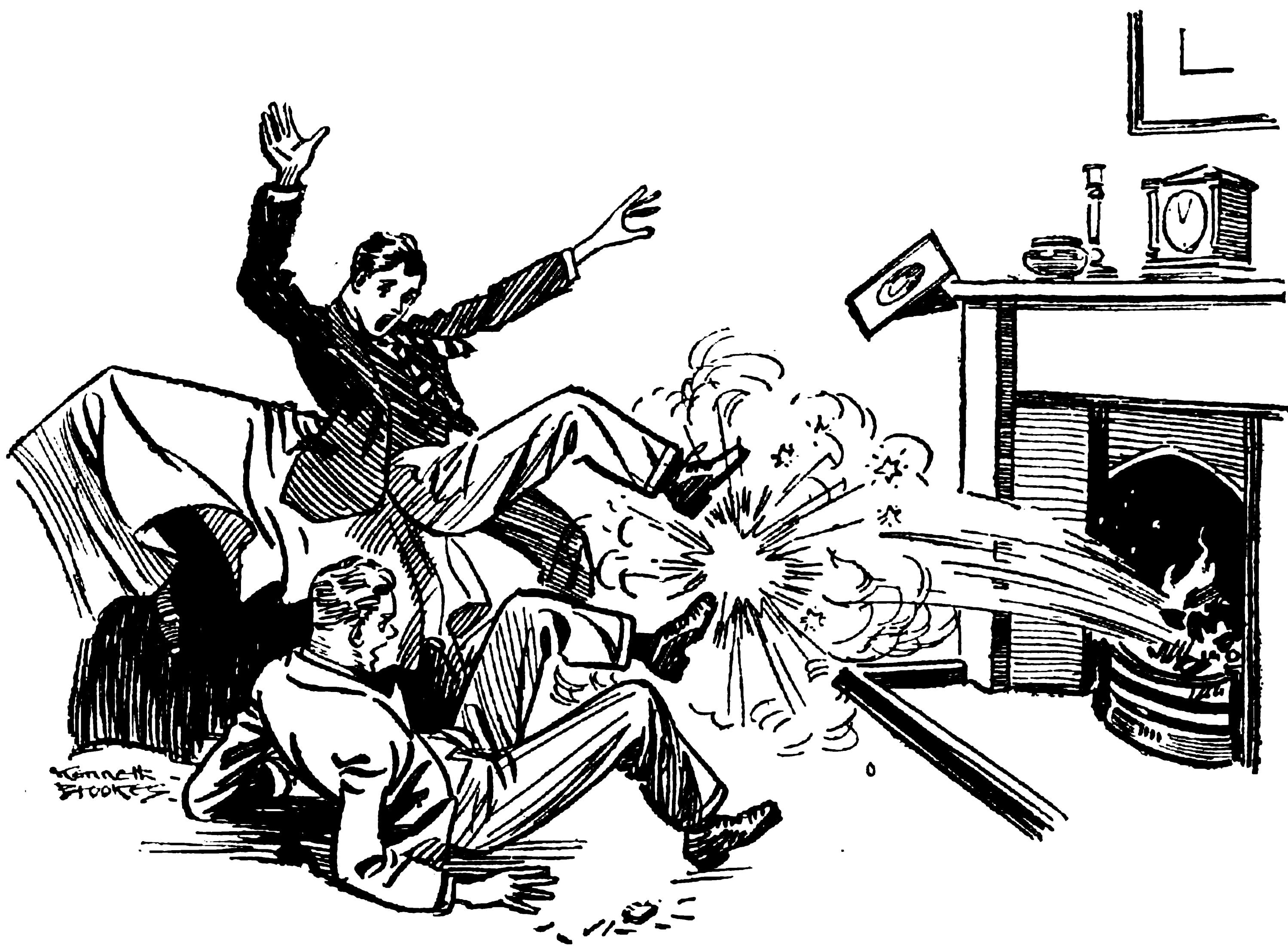
In an orderly double column the Removites marched to the bath-rooms, where, under Mr. Crowell's eagle eye, they all hastily washed. Then they returned to the class-room. Silence reigned in that apartment. Smoke hung about still, but it was clearing rapidly through the open windows and door. The boys went to their desks eagerly—wonderingly. They wanted to know how the jape had been worked.

They soon found out.

CHAPTER 3.

Fighting the Fourth!

EACH desk contained a square tin box—of the sort which is used for packing fancy biscuits—and each tin was filled with the blackened remains of the red, blue and green flares.



The firework hissed out of the fire and landed at the feet of Tregellis-West and Nipper, causing those startled juniors to sit down violently.

Nipper, examining his own desk, also found beside the tin box a half-burned match. And, finding it, he was easily able to guess how the jape had been worked. Obviously the match—which was not of the safety variety—had been ingeniously fixed so that it came into contact with the iron rod at the side of the desk when the lid was raised, causing the match to flame and ignite the fuse of one of the coloured flares.

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Nipper with a whistle, and related his discoveries to one or two juniors who were standing round him.

"And the other fireworks were automatically lit from the first one," nodded Reggie Pitt. "By Jove! Brainy! The jumping crackers were just scattered loose in the tin box, I expect, and they soon got going. These boxes haven't any lids, so the crackers were free to jump out."

"But it must have cost quids!" said Handforth, staring. "Who the dickens would spend money like that to play a jape on us? And look at the work! Somebody must have been busy here for hours—"

"Not necessarily," interrupted Nipper. "All the boxes were prepared in advance,

and they only had to be shoved in the desks, and the matches fixed. That wouldn't take long. Well, whoever did this, did it thoroughly, and cautiously, too. These tin boxes prevented the fire from doing any real damage."

It was quite true. Everybody's books had been pushed into a corner, with folded newspapers protecting them. The japers, at least, had been thoughtful enough to think of that.

"Funny!" said Nipper, frowning.

"What's funny?"

"Our books being protected like this."

"I don't know about its being funny," said Travers. "The fellows who worked the dodge were only anxious that no damage should be done."

"That's why it's funny," said Nipper bluntly.

The air was still full of the heavy odour of burnt gunpowder. The boys did not mind it particularly, but Mr. Crowell "poufed" and "paah-ed" and made other noises of disgust with much vehemence.

"I shall inquire into this disgraceful affair later on," he said curtly. "Never mind clearing away the mess now, boys. Take your books out; we will begin work."

Mr. Crowell was very cautious when he opened his own desk. He half expected another firework display, but the japers had evidently been scared of extending the joke to the Form-master himself.

Not a great deal of work was done until the interval. Mr. Crowell had thought of cancelling the interval for this morning; but he was anxious to get out and obtain a breath of fresh air. In any case, the boys weren't to blame. They were glad enough to be free for a brief spell—so that they could discuss the extraordinary affair.

"It's no good blinking at it, you chaps," said Nipper briskly, when they were outside. "Some funny bounders have japed us soundly. What are we going to do about it?"

"Get our own back, of course," said Handforth promptly.

"Before we get our own back, we've got to find out who did the job," said Travers. "You must admit it was very cleverly done. And who is there clever—except the Remove?"

"Well, of course, that's the point," grinned Nipper. "Still, Corky, of the Fourth, has been getting rather daring of late. He's been egging the Fourth on to jape us, too. It wouldn't surprise me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a chorus of laughter from the School House steps. The Removites, turning, saw Lionel Corcoran, Buster Boots, Bob Christine, Armstrong, Griffith, and a crowd of other Fourth-Formers. They were yelling over some joke. It was significant.

"I don't notice anything funny," said Nipper pointedly.

"We do," said Corky blandly. "We notice lots of funny things! All you Remove chaps, for instance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We hear you've been having a private firework display in your Form-room," said Boots.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the rotters!" snorted Handforth, excitement blazing in his eyes. "That's good enough, you chaps! It was the Fourth! Come on! Down with the Fourth!"

"Hear, hear!"

Even Nipper did not attempt to stop the rush. Let the consequences be what they may, it was vital that the Fourth should be put in its place. It was Nipper in fact, who led the attack.

"Back up, Remove!" he yelled. "It'll only take two ticks! We'll wipe 'em right up!"

"Hurrah!"

Dismay overspread the features of the Fourth-Formers. Corcoran, who had suddenly lost his grin, ran forward.

"Steady, you fatheads!" he roared. "We don't know——"

Further conversation was difficult. Nipper's fist had thudded into his chest, and at the same moment somebody flung an arm round his neck, and pulled him over backwards. All round, on every side, other Removites were grappling with other Fourth-Formers.

In less than ten seconds the Triangle became the scene of a hectic free fight. Remove and Fourth battled grimly.

And so great was the indignation of the Remove that their rivals had absolutely no chance. They were bowled over, swept to the ground, jumped on, sat on, and generally squashed.

It was one of the quickest scraps on record, and Corky & Co. had a dim, vague impression that tornado had hit them.

"Here, I say, chuck this!"

It was Biggleswade, of the Sixth. Biggy was a prefect—a genial enough fellow, but he knew his duty.

"You silly young fatheads!" he growled, rushing in amongst the combatants. "Take fifty lines each, all round! What do you think this is—a battlefield?"

He was nearly bowled over himself in the excitement, but fortunately Fenton and Morrow and one or two other prefects arrived on the scene, and there was a scurry and scamper of feet. Fourth-Formers went in one direction, Removites in another.

"You—you crazy idiots!" panted Corcoran, glaring at the Removites. "What was the idea? There was no harm in laughing, was there?"

"Rats! You fixed up those fireworks in our desks," said Handforth, dabbing his nose. "You can't fool us——"

"But we didn't!" yelled Corky.

"What!"

"We didn't know anything about your rotten fireworks—until we heard them going off!"

Nipper grabbed the Fourth Form skipper by the arm.

"Say that again," he exclaimed feebly. "Are you telling me, Corky, that you Fourth-Formers didn't wangle that jape?"

"I was going to tell you before the rumpus, but you wouldn't let me," growled Corcoran. "We were only laughing because you Removites had been japed by somebody. We don't know who did it."

CHAPTER 4.

Handforth Makes Inquiries!

NIPPER took a deep breath. "Sorry, Corky!" he said briefly. "That's all right, old man—only don't be so jolly sudden next time," said Lionel Corcoran gruffly. "Give a fellow a chance to explain."

There was no further opportunity of talking then, for Removites and Fourth-Formers alike found it necessary to dash indoors to fix odds and ends of sticking-plaster here and there. A few noses required attention, too. They only just succeeded in scrambling back into the Form-rooms in time for the next lesson.

And the mystery of the unofficial firework display remained a mystery.

"It might have been those cads of Study A—Forrest and his pals," said Handforth, immediately after the Remove was released from morning lessons. "They've got plenty of money, and——"

"Not a chance," interrupted Nipper.

"Why not?"

"Do you think those rotters would have cared twopence if our books had been damaged?" asked Nipper.

"By George! I'd forgotten that!"

"The jape was done by somebody who wanted it to remain—well, a harmless jape," said Nipper. "Very particular care was taken that no damage was done. It doesn't matter which way you look at it, you fellows, there were brains behind the job."

"Well, it wasn't the Fourth, and I don't think the Fifth Form chaps would play a trick like that," said Travers thoughtfully. "Of course, there's old Napoleon Browne. He's a bit of a lad—and on Guy Fawkes Day he might let himself go."

As it happened, Browne himself hove in sight at that moment, and the Removites bore down upon him.

"I trust there is nothing sinister in this converging manœuvre?" asked Browne anxiously. "Remember, brothers——"

"We want to ask you a straight question, Browne," said Handforth, looking at the Fifth Form skipper hard. "Do you know anything about that firework affair in our Form-room this morning?"

"I know that it came as a very welcome diversion, Brother Handy," replied Browne. "Brother Pagett, who is not a man with the best of tempers, was rather putting it across us. Then came the cannonade, to say nothing of clouds of vapour not unlike poison-gas. Brother Pagett was so thoroughly upset that we had him eating out of our hands for the rest of the morning."

"We're not interested in Pagett," said Handforth impatiently. "What we want to know is this—did you Fifth Form fellows work that jape on us?"

"Alas, no," sighed Browne. "I will confess it was well worthy of the Fifth—since it was brainy—but I can assure you that we took no part in the momentous event."

"H'm! The Fifth didn't do it, and the Fourth didn't do it—so who did do it?" asked Handforth. "It couldn't have been the Sixth——"

"You have omitted any reference to the Third," said Browne. "Is that wise, Brother Handy?"

"The Third?" repeated Handforth, staring. "You're not suggesting that those silly fags——"

"It is distinctly unwise, brother, to speak thus of the Third Form stalwarts," said Browne. "And you must remember that Brother Willy is far from lacking in brains. With no disrespect to your sisters, it had often occurred to me that the distribution of brains in the Handforth family is lamentably unequal. Here we have Brother William with massive quantities—with the rest of the field, if I may use a racing term, nowhere. No, brothers, I am sorry, but we men of the Fifth know nothing of your firework frolic."

And Browne, with a nod, passed on, leaving the Removites grinning.

"Was he telling me that I haven't any brains?" asked Handforth suspiciously.

"Leave it, old man," murmured Church. "He was pretty right about your minor, though. Willy's a coughdrop! How do we know that he didn't work the jape? He's capable of anything!"

"By George!" said Handforth darkly.

He strode off in search of his minor. In the Ancient House lobby, Handforth came across Wilson of the Sixth.

"Seen my minor, Wilson?" asked the burly Removite.

"Not since early this morning," replied the prefect. "He was coming out of the Remove Form-room——"

"What!" yelled Handforth excitedly.

He dashed off, leaving Wilson staring. Finally, after a hectic search, Handforth ran his minor to earth in the paddock. Willy was curiously employed. Lightning, his pet greyhound, was trotting sedately up and down with Septimus the Squirrel perched airily on his back. It spoke volumes for Willy's patience in training that two such natural enemies should be close friends.

"Oh, so there you are!" growled Handforth, as he came up. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Just the fellow I wanted to see," said Willy crisply. "Good man, Ted! There's a little matter——"

"Just a mo'!" interrupted Handforth. "I've heard that you were seen coming out of the Remove Form-room this morning—before lessons. What were you doing in there?"

Willy scratched his head and screwed up his eyes.

"Now, let me see," he murmured. "What was I doing in there?"

"You — you tricky young blighter," roared Handforth, glaring. "So you worked that giddy jape, did you?"

"Oh, that!" said Willy, grinning. "Now as brother to brother, I'll tell you everything I know, Ted."

"You'd better!"

"But before I begin, there's a little matter of five bob to be settled," continued Willy calmly.

"Eh?"

"I tried to get hold of you before breakfast, but you dodged," said the Third Form skipper. "Five bob, Ted. Don't make a fuss, or refuse. I'm practically stony, and I know for a fact that you've got over a quid. Whack out, old man! Five of the best!"

"You — you young bounder," gasped Handforth, backing away. "I'm blowed if I'll give you five bob!"

"All right—I shan't tell you what I know about that affair in your Form-room."

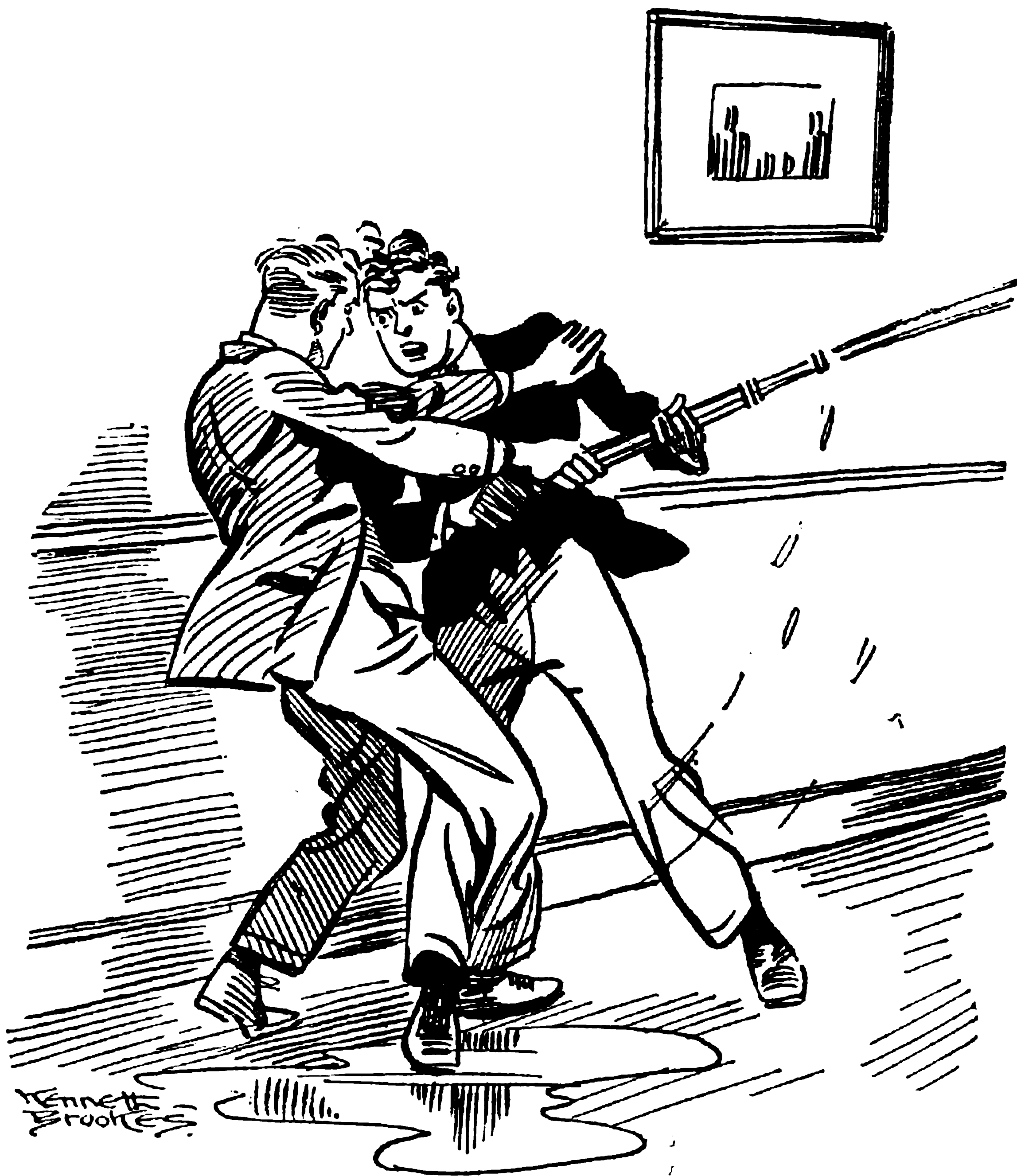
"You—you——"

"Don't make those gurglings and gasping noises in front of my pets," said Willy coldly. "You're setting them a bad example. Five bob, Ted!"

And Willy held out a hand which his major gazed upon in disgust.

"When did you wash your hands last—Easter Monday?" asked Edward Oswald sourly. "All right, blow you! Here's your rotten five bob."

He knew, from past experience, that it was utterly hopeless to get away from Willy unless he "dubbed up." In this particular instance, however, Handforth had another reason. Willy took the money and pocketed it.



Within the space of a few moments Handforth performed marvels with the hose. He knocked down juniors like ninepins, and finally succeeded in hitting Mr. Pycraft in the back of the neck.

"Now," said his major, "you keep your promise, my lad. Tell me what you know about that firework jape."

"Certainly," said Willy blandly. "I know nothing."

"What do you mean—you know nothing?"

"Nothing," said Willy. "Nix. N-i-x-nix!"

"But not three minutes ago you told me——"
 "I promised to tell you everything I knew about that jape in your Form-room—and I've told you," retorted Willy. "I knows nothing about the giddy business."
 "It's a pity you couldn't wait for us," said Church, with a sniff. "Mac and I ought to have gone with you."
 "Oh?" asked Handforth. "And why?"

"To protect you, of course," said McClure. "I'll bet your minor wangled that five bob out of you."

Handforth turned red.

"If it wasn't the Third, or the Fourth, or the Fifth—who was it?" he asked hastily, changing the subject. "Somebody japed us, and it couldn't have been anybody in the school."

"It must have been somebody outside the school, then," said Church brightly.

"By George! You're right!"

"You Study D chaps baffle us with your super intelligence!" remarked Nipper sarcastically. "You—you thick-headed chumps! I could have told you long ago that the jape was worked by some-

body outside the school! Has it ever occurred to you that Hal Brewster might be the japer?"

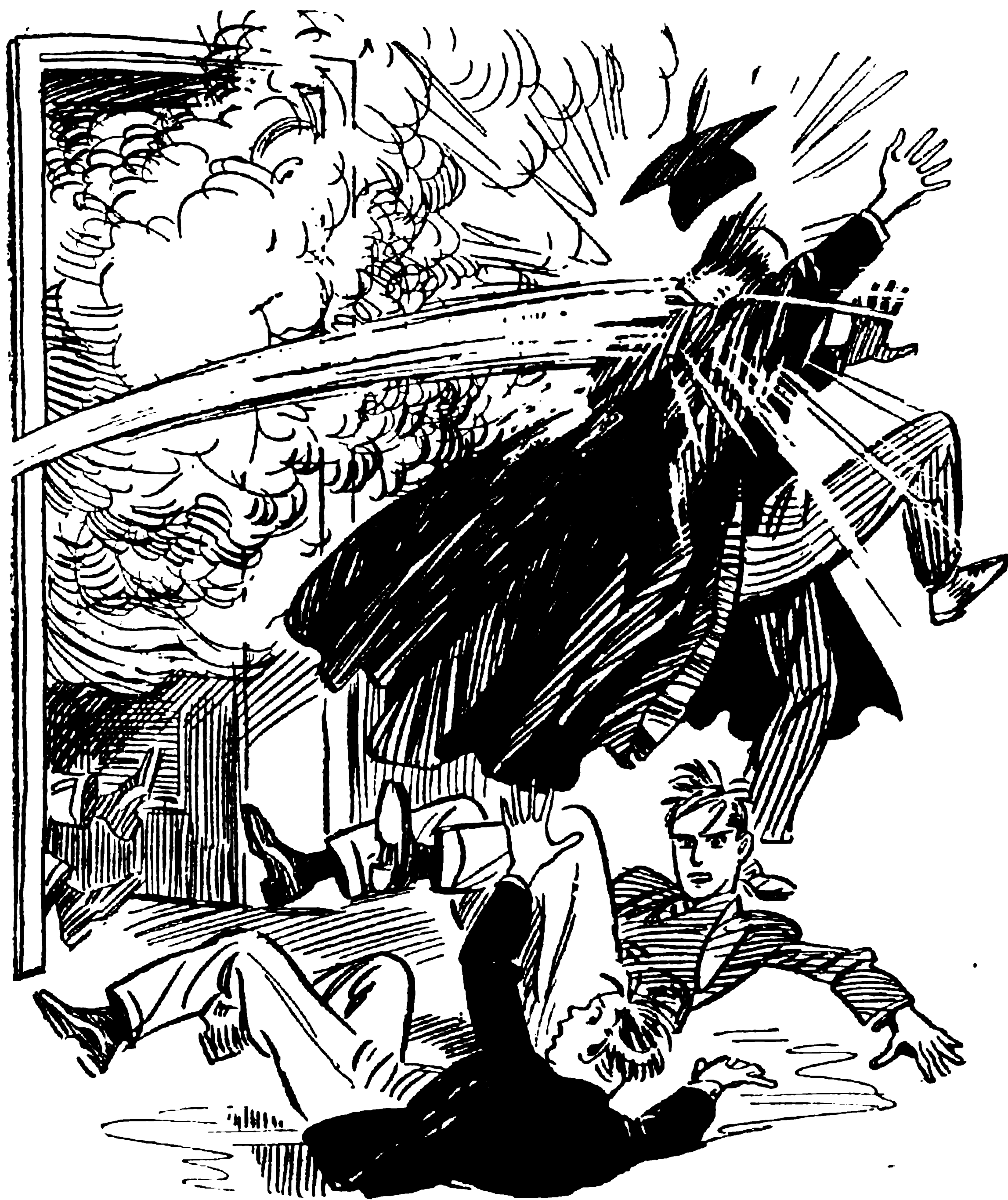
Handforth started.

"Brewster & Co. were over here yesterday evening, weren't they?" he asked breathlessly.

"They were."

"And—and they were saying that they would jape us to-day," went on Handforth. "By George! But—but how—I mean, when did they do it? We saw them off the premises last night—in fact, we practically chucked them off——"

"And it was after that that they said they'd get their own back," nodded Nipper. "They could have done it easily enough. They had all night. We've broken bounds after lights-out before now—to play japes."



know nothing. What more do you want? Don't be so dense, Ted!"

"By George! If you're telling me a whopper——"

"Rats! I don't tell whoppers."

"Wilson said he saw you going into the Remove Form-room——"

"I dodged in there because old Suncliffe was looking for me," explained Willy. "I only hid behind the door for a minute. Why make mystery out of nothing?"

Handforth drifted away dismally.

CHAPTER 5.

Fire "Fireworks"!

"It wasn't the Third," grunted Handforth, when he met Nipper and a crowd of Removites in the Ancient House lobby. "Willy swears he

It was inevitable that Hal Brewster and his cheery chums of the River House School should be under suspicion. There was a keen rivalry between St. Frank's and the River House.

"Those River House bounders are cackling like hyenas, I expect," said Nipper. "Well, as soon as lessons are over this afternoon, we'll run over there. What's more, we'll wipe Brewster and his crowd out of existence."

Nipper went off to Study C with his two chums, Tregellis-West and Watson. He wanted to think out the details of the coming raid. It would have to be short work, as the Removites had a pretty elaborate programme of their own for the evening. There was every indication that the weather would remain fine, and everybody was in the highest of spirits—everybody, that is, except the various House-masters and others in authority. They were going round the school, making sure that the fire-fighting apparatus was in perfect order.

"Brrrh! It's jolly cold in here," said Nipper, as he and his chums entered their study. "What's the matter with the radiator?"

"Out of order, or something," said Tommy Watson. "It's dead cold. Perhaps we'd better light the fire. It's laid all ready."

Nipper put a match to it, and the paper and firewood blazed merrily.

"Begad! A cheery fire makes all the difference, old fellow," said Sir Montie. "Radiators are all very well, but there's nothing like a real fire. There isn't, really."

Zzzzzzz! Swish! Bang!

Something shot out of the fire, buzzing like an angry hornet. It fell at Tregellis-West's feet, and emitted golden sparks in a picturesque shower.

"Here, I say— What the— Look out!" yelled Montie.

Ba-a-a-ng!

The explosion was like that of a miniature shell. It went off right at Montie's feet. He leapt wildly through the air, crashed against the table, stumbled, and sat down violently. Nipper, very startled, jumped backwards and, tripping, also came a cropper. Watson, still standing by the radiator, watched in comical amazement.

"Begad!" gurgled Montie. "We've been blown up!"

"Fireworks!" gasped Nipper. "Oh, my only sainted aunt! Look at the fire—"

Various coloured flares were blazing merrily. Another cannon-cracker went off with a terrific report in the fender. Three

or four squibs leapt at the juniors, hissing menacingly.

"It's the fire!" yelled Watson. "Great Scott! Do something with it, you chaps! The fire!"

He placed particular emphasis upon the word "fire"—in fact, he shouted it at the top of his voice. By now Study C was not unlike the Form-room, earlier in the morning. The place was choking with smoke; minor explosions were occurring all round the fender, and jumping-crackers were leaping madly about, going off in a series of angry reports.

Out in the passage Teddy Long happened to be stealing out of Study D. He knew that Handforth & Co. were not in occupation—or he would not have been there. He had been having a glance in the cupboard—hoping that he would be able to bag a cake, or something similarly edible. But, like Mother Hubbard's poor dog, he had found the cupboard bare.

Then he heard that frantic yell from Study C, and for a moment he stood as though rooted to the spot.

"Fire!" he panted, in a scared voice.

He dashed to the study door, opened it, and a choking mass of smoke surged into his face. Through the smoke he could see a livid, lurid glare. He hadn't the least idea that the study was occupied.

"Crumbs!" shrieked Teddy, backing out and staggering down the passage. "Fire! The school's on fire!"

Teddy Long was not renowned for his courage. There wasn't a fellow in the Remove, either, who was so likely to get into a panic. He lost his head completely.

"Fire—fire!" he screamed. "Help! Help! The school's on fire!"

He ran blindly into a group of Removites in the lobby.

"Fire!" he yelled. "Quick! Sound the alarm!"

He was so panic-stricken that the other juniors were convinced. They caught the fever, too. In less than ten seconds they were dashing about shouting "Fire!" at the top of their voices. Somebody ran to the alarm-bell.

Clang-clang-clang!

Everybody knew the dread sound of that bell—but as a rule it was only used for fire practice.

"Fire!"

The alarm was spreading, and more fellows were taking up the dread cry. Seniors dashed about, wildly excited. By now dense clouds of smoke came rolling down the Remove passage.

"Great guns! The school's on fire!" shouted Handforth frantically. "The Ancient House, too! And—and it's in

our passage! Quick, you chaps! Don't forget your fire-drill! Out with the hoses!"

CHAPTER 6.

Handforth—and a Hose!

"**P**HEW! That's better!" gasped Nipper. "Leave that window wide open, Tommy. Better prop the door open, too."

"Begad! I'm choked, dear old boy," said Sir Montie hoarsely.

The chums of Study C had been grappling with the situation, and they now had it well in hand. The person who had laid the fire, ingeniously introducing fireworks amongst the ingredients, had not only included squibs and cannon-crackers and coloured flares, but smoke-bombs, too. The smoke was so thick in the apartment that the three juniors could scarcely see one another. The smoke rolled out of the window and out of the doorway in massive, dense billows.

Owing to the successive explosions and other noises associated with the "out-break," Nipper and his chums had not even heard the fire-alarm bell; nor did they know anything of the frantic shouts which were echoing and re-echoing throughout the school. Of all the people at St. Frank's, they were the only ones who did not know that there was a fire! Which was not without its funny side; since Study C was supposed to be the scene of the fire!

"We shall probably get into trouble over this," said Nipper, his voice thick and muffled owing to the handkerchief he was holding over his mouth. "Funny thing a prefect hasn't been along already. No good our saying that we didn't know anything about the fireworks; we'll be blamed just the same."

"Crumbs! Think we shall be detained?" asked Watson anxiously.

"Who did it?" growled Nipper. "That's what's puzzling me! How could Brewster— But why not?" he went on thoughtfully. "If Brewster & Co. could get into the Form-room, they could get into this study. By Jove! They did the thing thoroughly, didn't they?"

A sudden thought occurred to him, and he fought his way through the smoke to the radiator. Bending down, he examined the turncock, which was near the floor. He found that it was turned off completely.

"No wonder this radiator was cold!" he grunted. "The japers reckoned on our coming in and lighting the fire. We shall have a big account to settle, you chaps!"

HANDFORTH, struggling with a long hose-pipe, had his hand ready on the nozzle.

"Go ahead!" he shouted. "Turn her on! We'll soon have this giddy fire out!"

He had been one of the first to get into action. Assisted by Church, McClure, Gresham and others, he had seized the hose in the Remove passage. Somebody stood at the main supply cock and turned it on. The hose writhed as though it had suddenly come to life.

Outside in the Triangle the rest of the boys were giving a magnificent exhibition of self-possession. From the West House, the East House and the Modern House, the boys came trooping out, all in perfect order.

"Fire!"

The cry had been taken up in every House, and prefects, without hesitation, had dashed about performing their duties. The whole school was assembling in the Triangle.

But Handforth, who always liked to be first, was determined that he, and he alone, should extinguish the fire. He dashed through the smoke near Study D, and the hose writhed more violently than ever. With a sudden jerk, Handforth turned the cock at the nozzle; a terrific stream of water shot out.

"Steady, now—steady!" yelled Handforth. "We'll show 'em what we can do!"

Swoosh—swish!

Nipper, coming to the door of Study C to tell Handforth and the others that there was nothing to be alarmed about, received the full force of the jet in his chest.

Handforth had just switched the nozzle round so that the water played into the smoke-filled study. A jet of water from a fire-hose is not unlike the kick of a mule. Nipper practically turned a complete back somersault, and he swallowed about two quarts of water.

"Begad! What the——" began Tregellis-West, appearing out of the smoke.

Swish!

He got directly into the line of fire, and he went over like a ninepin, drenched to the skin. Handforth moved the nozzle slightly, and the stream of water shot clean across the room, swished through the open window and drenched a group of seniors which was just dashing up to the window of Study C with another hose.

"Hi! Look out!" howled Tommy Watson wildly. "Chuck it, you idiots! Who's fooling about with that hose? You're ruining our study!"

"Eh?" gurgled Handforth, hearing the voice vaguely above the roar of the water.

Watson dashed for the door, the jet caught him under the chin, and over he went. By this time Church and McClure were beginning to realise that the conflagration wasn't so serious as Teddy Long had made the school believe.

"Turn off the water!" roared Church, cupping his hands and yelling to the other juniors down the passage. "There's somebody in the study already! Nipper and some other chaps! For goodness' sake, Handy, go easy with that hose! You're doing terrific damage."

"Damage?" gurgled Handforth. "You silly ass! I'm putting out the fire!"

"But there isn't any fire," yelled Mac, forcing his way forward. "I believe it was a false alarm!"

He wrestled with Handforth, the nozzle

shot round, and everybody in the passage was drenched. Biggleswade of the Sixth, forcing his way through the press, received approximately two hundred and fifty gallons on the middle button of his waistcoat; and the way in which Biggleswade slithered backwards, carried on the crest of that jet, was worth walking five miles to see.

Drenched, blinded, smothered, he was literally swept off his feet and carried backwards. He sat down violently, and the jet, passing over his head, caught Mr. Pycraft of the Fourth fairly in the neck. The unpopular Form-master shot forward and tried to butt the wall like a goat.

The amount of damage Handforth had accomplished with that hose was astonishing. Fortunately, somebody turned off the main supply at that moment, and the



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fierce jet dwindled away. Chaos was complete.

The floor of the Remove passage was swilling with water; Study C looked as though a cyclone had hit it. Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson and other fellows were more like drowned rats than school-boys.

"Well, I did it!" said Handforth triumphantly.

"Yes, you've done enough!" roared Nipper. "You idiot! You've messed up our study! You've ruined everything!"

"But—but I put the fire out!" yelled Handforth.

"You—you blockhead!" shrieked Nipper. "There wasn't any fire."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Why the dickens couldn't you make a few inquiries first?" bellowed Nipper, exasperated. "It was only a jape! Somebody had put fireworks in our grate and they went off."

"Great Scott!" gurgled Handforth blankly. "And—and I thought—— It was Teddy Long's fault!" he went on indignantly. "He dashed about yelling 'Fire!' and somebody rang the alarm-bell, and—and——"

"And you all flew into a panic!" finished Nipper. "Well, I pity the school if a real fire ever breaks out!"

It was an unkind remark; and unjust. For the school had behaved splendidly. Handforth was about the only fellow who had made a mess of things—and that, perhaps, wasn't at all surprising!

CHAPTER 7.

Long Feels Small!

IT was not long before the truth became known. There had been a false alarm. All the boys of the other Houses were quietly told to dismiss and return to their normal activities.

They returned—grumbling heatedly. In the Ancient House there was an immediate inquiry. Mr. Alington Wilkes, mild and gentle, inspected the soaked Junior passage and the disordered study.

Seniors and Third-Formers were told to go about their own business; only the Remove boys immediately concerned were "on the carpet."

"It is unfortunate that there should have been a—er—misunderstanding," said Old Wilkey, in his quiet way. "Fireworks, no doubt, were responsible for the false alarm."

"Yes, sir," said Nipper. "Fireworks in this study."

"Before I continue with this inquiry, you boys will go upstairs and change," said Mr. Wilkes. "There's no reason why you should catch colds."

They went, and during the process of changing Handforth heard a few things concerning himself which rather astonished him.

"But how was I to know?" he protested indignantly. "Somebody yelled 'Fire!' and I grabbed the hose. I saw all the smoke, and——"

"And instead of finding out if the study was really alight, you proceeded to drench us," grunted Nipper. "That was a fine thing to do! But what's the good of talking? You were born an ass, Handy, you always have been an ass, and you always will be an ass!"

"Look here——"

"And since it follows that you can't help being an ass, we'll forgive you," said Nipper kindly. "But I doubt if Old Wilkey will take the same view. If you're not detained for the whole evening I shall be surprised."

"Detained," yelled Handforth, in alarm. "But it's Guy Fawkes night."

"That's why you'll be detained—as a punishment."

"Oh, lor'!"

"It's quite on the cards that you'll be flogged."

"Flogged!"

"And if the Head gets to know anything about it, it might mean expulsion."

"What!"

"Probably both," said Nipper, with relish. Handforth, who did not realise that his leg was being pulled, was very startled and perturbed.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wilkes, having heard the details, was facing the quailing Teddy Long.

"In the circumstances, Long, I shall not deal severely with you," said the Housemaster gently. "You saw smoke and you saw fire, so you gave the alarm. But before you disorganise the school again, young man, I should advise you to make more certain of your facts. Sounding the alarm is very creditable—when an alarm is necessary. I am very much afraid you'll have to write me five hundred lines as a punishment for being foolish."

"Yes, sir," muttered Teddy miserably.

"We won't make it a hard impot," continued Mr. Wilkes. "You can take this line: 'Only fools fly into a panic!' and you can write it five hundred times. It might do you good, Long."

Teddy Long crawled away, fondly imagining that the affair was over. But

it wasn't—for him. There were certain angry Removites who were only waiting for Mr. Wilkes to return to his own quarters. There was a very severe bumping in store for Teddy Long.

"Now, what about this alleged fire?" asked Mr. Wilkes, when Nipper & Co. and Handforth and the others came downstairs in dry clothing. "Foolish as Long was, there was at least some reason for his panic. I understand you were letting off fireworks in your study, Nipper?"

"Fireworks were going off, sir—but I didn't let them off," said Nipper.

"A little accident, perhaps?" suggested Old Wilkey gently.

"Yes, sir."

"You were lighting one firework, and others became ignited—yes?"

"It wasn't that at all, sir," said Nipper. "Somebody had turned off our radiator, and had thoughtfully included some fireworks in the grate—amongst the paper and wood and coals. We lit the fire in the ordinary way—and then the trouble started."

Mr. Wilkes nodded.

"And whom do you suspect?" he asked. "I'm not suggesting that you should—er—sneak. I'm merely curious. Do you think that this practical joke was perpetrated by some of your Form-fellows?"

"No, sir—it wasn't done by anybody in the Remove," replied Nipper promptly. "You heard about that jape in the Form-room? Well, we believe that this was all part and parcel of the same wheeze. And I don't think anybody in the school is responsible."

"Somebody outside, eh?" asked Old Wilkey, his eyes twinkling.

"Yes, by George! And we'll slaughter those fatheaded River House chaps, too!" burst out Handforth.

"Ahem! So you have some definite suspicions?"

"Eh? I—I didn't mean—— Sorry, sir," gasped Handforth. "Did I say anything?"

"Did you?" murmured Old Wilkey dryly. "Perhaps not, Handforth. Let's forget it. Well, as none of you boys seem to be guilty of breaking the school regulations, I shall let the matter drop. I'll send some of the servants to clear up this study."

And Mr. Wilkes, chuckling inwardly, took his departure.

"Good Old Wilkey!" murmured Nipper warmly. "He's a brick!"

"He jolly well knows we suspect Brewster & Co., too," said Church. "Just like Handy to blurt it out."

"I—I didn't mean——" began Handforth.

"Never mind," said Nipper crisply. "The affair is over, thank goodness—and it's nearly dinner-time. My sons, we're preparing a nice little rod in pickle for Brewster and the River House! First the Form-room—now Study C! Those River House chaps did the job thoroughly, didn't they?"

"Not half so thoroughly as we'll do our own job, dear old fellow," said Vivian Travers. "The honour of the Remove is at stake! Are we going to let these River House chaps crow over us?"

"Never!" went up a roar.

"Well spoken," grinned Travers. "Down with the River House!"

"We'd better discuss this matter here and now," said Nipper briskly. "Brains are needed! We've got to get something hot."

"Come into my study," invited Travers hospitably. "You chaps can't use your own study until it's cleared out."

They crowded into Study H, which was one of the most comfortable apartments in the Remove passage. The only trouble, as Jimmy Potts and Skeets Rossiter had frequently pointed out to Travers, was that the heavy plush curtains were too sombre, and excluded a good deal of light from the study. Travers had supplied those curtains, and, personally, he thought they were first-class.

Even Travers did not notice that the curtains were pulled a little farther across the windows than usual. He only noticed the gloom in the study. Instinctively, he turned the electric-light switch—and then remarkable things began to happen.

CHAPTER 8.

Light Entertainment!

"HALLO!" said Vivian Travers, in surprise. "There's no light."

The pressing of the switch had had no result. At least, not for the moment.

"Never mind the electric light," said Nipper, who was anxious to get down to the business in hand. "We don't need it. Pull those silly curtains aside, somebody. We shall be able to see all right."

Somebody pulled the "silly curtains" aside, much to Travers' regret. It was one of his fads that the curtains should be treated with respect, and not bunched up on either side of the window, so that their beauty could not be seen.

He only gave a casual glance at the electrolier, which hung from the centre

Travers had pressed the switch, but the electric light did not operate. Instead a number of fireworks began to hiss and bang with picturesque effect.



of the ceiling. It was one of those imposing electroliers, with a large, artistic circular silk shade.

"Now, about Brewster——" began Nipper.

Zizzzzzz!

It was an ominous hissing, spluttering noise.

"What's that?" gasped Jimmy Potts, jumping.

Instinctively, he stared round at the fireplace—but the fire was burning evenly.

"Look!" yelled Handforth.

The others needed no bidding. Without warning, a catherine-wheel had commenced revolving in the centre of the electrolier.

It was hissing like an angry rattlesnake, and sparks were flying in a picturesque circle.

"For the love of Samson!" yelled Travers. "What the dickens—— Who the—— How the——"

Zizz! Swish! Bang!

The firework display in the electrolier was developing merrily. Not only catherine-wheels were shooting round, but cannon-crackers were exploding with devastating effect. The juniors backed away, staring dazedly.

"It's—it's getting a nightmare," gasped Nipper. "Wherever we go, what-

ever we do, we accidentally set fireworks going!"

"Brewster again!" roared Handforth.

"Unless Travers——" Nipper gave Travers a hard look. "Do you know anything about this, Travers? he demanded. "You've a pretty hefty reputation as a practical joker."

"Chuck it," protested Travers. "You don't think I'd fool about like this with my own study, do you? I don't know a thing! Never more surprised in my life!"

"Turn off the switch," gasped Skeets.

"That's no good—the damage has been done now," said Nipper. "I say, what the dickens can we do? We'll have a prefect here in half a tick! Who's got a rug, or something? We've got to smother this display!"

It was easier said than done. The display refused to be smothered. It continued merrily—noisily—alarmingly.

But it was soon over. The catherine-wheels quickly fizzled out, and the cannon-crackers and the squibs ceased exploding. Only dense, choking smoke and a few feeble sizzles remained when Biggleswade of the Sixth barged through the doorway.

"At it again, are you?" he demanded

wrathfully. "Great Scott! It's a wonder there wasn't a second fire-alarm! What the dickens do you kids think you're doing?"

"Go easy, Biggy——" began Nipper.

"Go easy be hanged!" roared Biggleswade, thoroughly exasperated. "We prefects have done nothing but dash all over the school ever since we got up! Guy Fawkes Day is all very well, but——"

"Now, Biggy, be sensible," urged Nipper. "You're a good chap, and we all like you. Don't spoil yourself."

Biggleswade, who was notoriously easy-going, grunted.

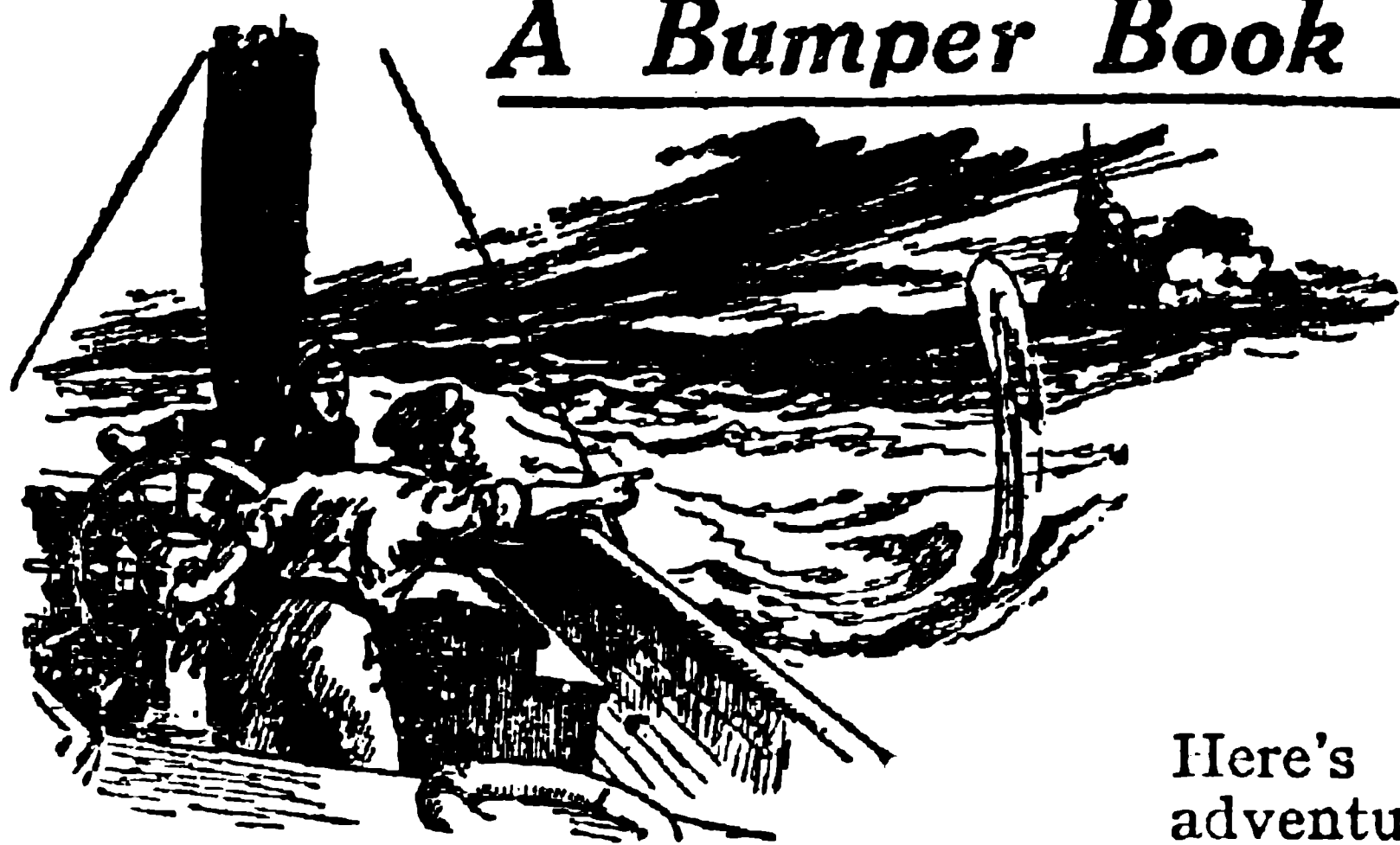
"It's no good," he said darkly. "You're not going to get round me like that! You've been letting fireworks off in this study—and you know jolly well that it's strictly against the rules."

"Biggy, I wouldn't tell you a lie," said Travers solemnly. "This is my study, and I don't know a thing about these fireworks. Potts doesn't know anything, either—nor does Rossiter. We've been japed."

"Oh!" said Biggleswade.

"Just as Nipper was japed in Study C—just as the whole Remove was japed in the Form-room," continued Travers. "It's all part and parcel of the same wheeze.

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Be a good chap, Biggy, and trickle away. We're just as furious as you are—and you can leave it to us to hang, draw and quarter the culprits."

"Who are the culprits?" asked Biggleswade suspiciously.

"Some chaps quite outside your jurisdiction—thank goodness," said Nipper.

"Outside my what?"

"Your authority," explained Nipper kindly. "Sorry I used such a long word; I'd forgotten that you Sixth-Formers are a bit weak on English. By the time a man gets into the Sixth he's taking things easily, and he's forgotten almost everything he ever learned."

"Now, don't get cheeky," said Biggleswade gruffly. "So this practical joke was worked by somebody outside my—er—my what-do-you-call-it. My jurisdiction," he added triumphantly.

"Brewster—of the River House," said Handforth, breathing hard. "We're getting a bit sick of it, Biggy. Everywhere we go, we find fireworks."

Biggleswade retired, satisfied. And Nipper, gazing up at the smouldering, blackened remains beneath the silken shade of the electrolier, whistled with admiration.

"Brainy," he said, shaking his head. "The more we look into this affair, the brainier it becomes! Just look at the cunning of this particular dodge."

"Blessed if I can understand how it happened," said Travers. "We only turned the switch—and I don't see how that could have set off any fireworks."

He soon found out, however. The dodge, just like the others, was delightfully simple. The japers had merely removed the light bulb, and had slipped an ordinary adapter into the socket; the wire from the adapter led to a very commonplace electric toaster. The toaster was securely tied to the ornamental work of the electrolier.

"See how it worked?" asked Nipper, with grudging admiration. "Two catherine-wheels on each side of the toaster—squibs and crackers fixed at the top."

"But—but even now I don't see——" began Handforth.

"You know what these electric toasters are," continued Nipper. "When you switch on, the element gets red-hot, so that the bread can be toasted. Well, it was child's play. The firework fuses were merely shoved close to the cold element. When we switched on, the element became red-hot, and the fuses caught alight. That's when we heard the first sizzle. After that the catherine-wheels

started going round, and—and—there you are!"

"My only sainted aunt!" said Handforth, staring.

It was certainly an ingenious device. And, as the juniors could see, the whole contraption could have been fitted into the electrolier within the space of a minute or two. The toaster, of course, had been prepared at leisure, earlier.

"I can't quite believe it, you know," said Nipper thoughtfully. "Brewster's a smart chap—but he has excelled himself to-day. It—it makes us feel so small! Why couldn't we think of dodges like this?"

"We'll make those River House chaps sit up——" began Handforth, and then he paused.

Boom-boom!

Vaguely, the sounds of dull explosions came to the ears of the juniors. They all stared at one another. Something was happening farther down the passage!

Nipper took a deep, deep breath.

"If fireworks can go off in Study C and Study H—why can't they go off in other studies?" he asked. "Come on, you chaps! This needs investigating!"

CHAPTER 9.

Forty Winks—and Fits!

ARCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK GLENTHORNE, the genial ass of the Remove, was the victim this time.

Strolling into Study E, that haven of rest which was even more luxurious than Study H, he was cheered by the warmth of the fire and the general air of comfort.

"What-ho!" murmured Archie.

He drifted across to the lounge, and placed a couple of cushions in position.

"A brief relaxation of the old bones is indicated," he murmured contentedly. "I mean to say, what with all this dashed excitement buzzing about the place, a chappie needs forty winks!"

He dropped gracefully upon the soft cushions of the lounge.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three violent explosions took place beneath Archie Glenthorpe, and the way in which he leapt off the lounge was an eye-opener. Marmaduke himself could not have displayed greater agility—Marmaduke being Willy Handforth's pet monkey.

"Odds fits and shocks!" yelled Archie, quivering from head to foot. "Help! Phipps! S.O.S.! Good gad, and so forth! Phipps! Where are you, dash

you? The young master is howling for help!"

He gazed fascinatedly at the smoke which was rolling out from beneath the low lounge. Then the door burst open, and Nipper, Handforth, Travers and the other fellows burst in.

"What's happening in here?" asked Nipper sharply.

"Explosions, dash it!" bleated Archie. "I thought I was absolutely blown up! Look! The frightful place is on fire!"

"Lend a hand, you chaps!" said Nipper crisply.

They grabbed hold of the heavy article of furniture and turned it up. The explanation was simple. Three giant caps had been placed on the floor, each on a tin-lid, so that the carpet should not be damaged. There were three blocks of wood lying loose, too.

"See what happened?" asked Nipper, pointing. "Those percussion caps were placed in position—they're sort of miniature fog-signals, the same as they use on the railway. The blocks of wood were fixed on the top of the caps, the other ends of the blocks resting against the springs of the lounge. There was quite enough pressure to keep them in position. But as soon as somebody sat on the lounge, the sudden depression of the springs did the trick."

Travers scratched his head.

"Marvellous!" he commented. "That's all I can say, dear old fellows. And look at the care the bounders took! I mean, putting those tin-lids on the floor so that the carpet shouldn't be scorched."

"Yes, it's funny," said Nipper, frowning.

"What do you mean—'funny'?" asked Handforth.

"So it is funny," insisted Nipper. "Look here, you chaps, this is getting too thick for words! We shall be afraid to touch anything soon—for fear of fireworks going off!"

"Well, well," murmured Travers, in his whimsical way. "At least, dear old fellows, you must admit that we're having a perfectly ripping Fifth!"

FARTHER down the passage, in Study A, Bernard Forrest selected a cigarette from the ornamental box on the table. Forrest was a reckless, daring youth; he had often boasted about that box of cigarettes on his table. It was ostensibly a box of pen-nibs, india-rubber bands, paper fasteners, and so forth—but these were contained in an upper tray. The cigarettes were beneath.

"Not going to smoke now, are you?" asked Bell. "Dinner in ten minutes."

"I always enjoy a puff before dinner," replied Bernard Forrest coolly.

But he did not enjoy this one. He lit the cigarette, threw himself into an easy chair, and puffed luxuriously.

Everything was all right for about ten seconds; then the end of Forrest's cigarette went off with a soft report. Something else happened, too. Simultaneous with the explosion came a concentrated spray of black powder. Gulliver and Bell, startled by the report, saw Forrest's head enveloped in the smother of blackness.

Forrest himself had leapt to his feet with a fiendish yell.

When Nipper & Co. and the others burst in, a moment later, attracted by the explosion, they found Forrest converted into a sort of mottled nigger. His face was as black as ink—except for the narrow space round his eyes. His collar, and the upper part of his suit, had suffered similarly.

"Sorry," said Nipper. "We thought there had been an accident."

"You fool!" snarled Forrest. "Don't you call this an accident?"

"What happened?" grinned Handforth.

"I—I don't know," said Forrest. "Pouf! Pah! I'm half choked! I—I lit a cigarette, and the rotten thing burst in my face."

"Serve you right," said Handforth promptly. "You shouldn't light cigarettes! Why can't you wait until you've left school? It's against the rules, anyhow, to smoke cigarettes!"

"You—you—you—— Does that make any difference?" grated Forrest, nearly beside himself. "Somebody's been playing tricks with my cigs!"

"By Jove!" said Nipper keenly.

He wasn't sorry for Forrest. In fact, he rather approved of the jape. But, when all was said and done, it was a jape against a St. Frank's Removite—and it had been performed by an outsider.

"More tricks," said Nipper, as he went across to the cigarette-box, and lifted out the false tray. "H'm! They look all right." He took one out, examined it, and then threw it into the fire. There was a brief pause, a sudden burst, and a dense cloud of blackness surged out into the study.

"Here, steady!" yelled Bell, leaping aside. "You silly idiot! You've smothered me!"

"Sorry—I wanted to make sure," said Nipper coolly. "You chaps have been japed—the same as the rest of us. When Brewster & Co. paid their visit to the

(Continued on page 24.)

Gee whizzzzzz! Special uproarious fireworks number.



HANDFORTH'S Weekly.

No. 29. Vol. 2.

EDITORIAL STAFF.

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Chief Sub-Editor E. O. Handforth
Literary Editor E. O. Handforth
Art Editor E. O. Handforth
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November 7th, 1931.

SQUIBS!

By

The Editor

PIE-FACE IN THE WARS!

By X.Y.Z.

THE Fifth of November—the only day in the year when Mr. Pycraft daren't go into the village. He was nearly burnt once before in mistake for a guy.

I like Guy Fawkes Day. Apart from the fun you can have with fires and fireworks, it always seems to me like a dress rehearsal for Christmas. Only just over six weeks to Christmas now. The village youths in Bellton are carting guys round and singing carols at the same time. In these days of business competition, everybody must give value for money.

The worst part of Guy Fawkes Day is the enormous amount of money that goes up in smoke. Every time I explode a cannon I think sadly of the tuck I could have bought with the money.

My minor, Willy, is a strange kid. I shall never forget last Guy Fawkes Day, when he dashed full pelt into a blazing fire in order to rescue a toad caught in the firewood. Men have received medals for things not so plucky as that.

The toad, incidentally, afterwards found a resting-place in Chubby Heath's bed. Willy always makes the most use of everything.

By the way, I have a special notice here: Will Josh Cuttle, Esq., kindly give the Remove any old clothes he happens to possess, as they wish to make a guy of him?

We have a large box of fireworks in our study. If my WEEKLY doesn't appear as usual next week, you will know that Church and McClure have been careless with the matches.

E. O. HANDFORTH.

I AM not putting my name at the head of this little episode, as I am not altogether anxious for Mr. Pycraft to find out to whom he is obliged for the name of "Pie-Face." But I have it on excellent authority that these events occurred just as I relate them.

Mr. Pycraft was walking home through the village street at Bellton when a hand shot out of a dark doorway, and a jumping-cracker fell at Mr. Pycraft's feet. Immediately there came a scurrying of feet, and a village youth vanished like a shot.

Mr. Pycraft had no leisure to notice this. The jumping-cracker set up an intensive barrage on the spot, and the horrified master hopped vainly this way and that way, trying to elude the persistent firework. The firework won after a bitter struggle. It jumped into Mr. Pycraft's trouser-leg.

With a terrified expression on his face, the East House master leaned against a lamp-post. Immediately there was a violent explosion as a large "cannon" went off beneath him. When he regained consciousness he staggered towards St. Frank's. He saw something glowing in the gutter, and being a highly inquisitive gentleman, bent down to see what it was: another firework!

The explosion caused him to turn a double-somersault and land flat upon the pavement. When he sat up, he noticed a village youth coming towards him.

"Please, sir," said this youth, "will you give me a penny to buy some fireworks?"

Mr. Pycraft looked at the youth for two minutes, and there was a noise in his ears like the roar of a mighty sea. He turned and said:

(That will do; that will do! This is a respectable paper!—E. O. H.)

URGENT NOTICE,

Timothy Tucker has obtained a supply of gunpowder, and intends to make his own fireworks. Will his friends and relations please prepare themselves for the worst? A bed in the School Sanatorium is being kept vacant pending the explosion.

GUY FAWKES DAY

Fags' procession—programme.

WE have received information from the fags that a grand procession is contemplated to-morrow, Thursday, at dusk. The route is via the Triangle to the playing fields; thence round the back of the East and Modern Houses to the Triangle again. Spectators are warned that it will be better to see the procession near the start, as the fireworks won't last the whole distance.

The procession is headed by half a dozen fags with SPARKLERS. The sparklers are supplied by the Bellton Stores, Bellton, at the price of one penny per packet of six sparklers. No fewer than six whole packets have been lavished upon the first part of this display.

Next comes a fag with a TORCH, from which the fireworks will be lighted. Then follows the SQUIB BRIGADE. The squibs will be thrown among the spectators, so that a certain liveliness is bound to occur in this part of the procession.

C. HEATH, ESQUIRE, Trumpeter in Ordinary to the Royal Brigade of Fags, will now be seen with his Scouts Bugle. This will be a signal that immediately behind him are the GUYS. We are given to understand by Mr. W. Handforth that the guys may possibly not be recognised by the crowd. We therefore have pleasure in giving the following hints of what to notice.

The guy of HORACE PYCRAFT, ESQ., has on a pair of brown shoes which were found in the dustbin. Moreover a battered mortar-board adorns its head, and it should be easily recognised.

FATTY LITTLE will be known by his immense acreage—it will take three fags to carry him.

FARMER HOLT is not very like the original, as he is dressed entirely in one of Archie Glenthorne's discarded suits. But the guy will be chewing a straw, like the original Holt, and may therefore be picked out with keen eyes.

The artistic creation known as CHARLIE'S AUNT has been built by Willy Handforth's followers in some articles of apparel donated by Mrs. Poulter, the matron. Last on the list comes HANDFORTH MAJOR, which is clad in a goal-keeping jersey, white cricket flannels and football boots. It may be recognised by the fine rich colouring of red on its proboscis. Needless to say this work of art is the masterpiece of the guy's affectionate brother.

The RAG-TAG-AND-BOBTAIL of the fags will bring up the rear, with such sundry fireworks as their pocket-money permits. These fireworks, ranging from squibs to crash-bangs, will be flung indiscriminately at the crowd, and spectators are advised to back away a bit.

Arrangements have been made to protect the guys during the free fight which is certain to take place on the playing fields, and, if the guys emerge from the ordeal in good condition, they will be ceremoniously burnt at the Third Form bonfire at about 8.30 p.m. Everybody welcome.

We are informed that a collecting-box will be sent round to the spectators in aid of the funds.

Roll up! Roll up! Roll up!



ADVERTISEMENTS

BY ORDER OF THE HEADMASTER. No fireworks may be exploded or fires lighted within a distance of one hundred yards of the School Buildings. Disregard of this instruction will be severely dealt with.—E. FENTON, Captain.

GUY FAWKES DAY. For the convenience of the young gentlemen of St.

Frank's, the Bannington Hospital has arranged for its motor ambulance to be in waiting at Bellton Lane, near the school, from seven to nine-thirty.

REMOVE JUNIOR desires to make a guy of Mr. Goole. If that gentleman is willing to "sit for his portrait," will he please wear a flower in his buttonhole at dinner to-day, when the Remove Junior will disclose his name.

FREDDIE
The story

CECIL

O N Guy P
And
like some
Have I a qu
Go out and

Young Freddie
He scooted
Next morning
There came a
Of Freddie's

Freddie's dad
And flung it
In strode the
Said Freddie's
"I won't!"

"I've come to
About your
I want to ask
You give him
Mayor,
"To startle

Said Freddie
row?"
The Mayor
You'll give the
He's blown the
Reduced the

"He's broken
The High
He dropped
Inside the co
Which has

"He looked
And blew
It vanished
The College
By now a

"The Garage
He blew it
The factory
Was last seen
At thirty

"The Librarian
The Cinema
Are all reduced
The Council
What you

Then pa loo
And this
"My boy, I
"If ever this
I'll send you

UNCLE JIMMY'S CORNER

Conducted by that fatheaded chump, **SIR JAMES POTTS.**

A FEW brief replies to begin with.
FATTY LITTLE wants to know how to make a Swiss Roll. Push him down a mountain, Fatty.

JACK GREY has been insulted by another fellow, but doesn't want to fight him. What shall he do? Throw mashed potatoes at him, of course. A soft answer turneth away wrath.

Having got that off our chest, we will now consider the true and touching story of

CATHERINE WHEEL
 (1731-58).

You've all seen a catherine wheel in action, haven't you? But I bet you fourteen shillings you don't know how that popular firework first originated. I thought not. Lend me an ear (two, if you can spare them), and I'll tell you all about it.

Mr. Wheel was a poor firework-maker living in the Hartz Mountains. He had many troubles, including a wooden leg, tonsillitis, and a daughter named Catherine, and his trade went from bad to worse, and then from worse to worser. It was on the point of going from worser to worst when Mr. Wheel sat down on an egg-box and burst into tears.

"Ach, mein papa!" said his daughter in Spanish. "What is the matter?"

"We're broke!" wailed her father. "Fireworks don't pay. The people have become tired of squibs and crackers, and

want a new invention. How can I invent anything new? You must have brains for that."

"Caramba! Help! Buenos Aires!" sighed Catherine.

"Go into the storehouse and tie all those fireworks into a parcel," commanded her father. "We'll emigrate to America and sell them for tooth-picks!"

So Catherine beetled off into the storehouse, and tied up the fireworks as commanded by papa. Unfortunately, she failed to notice that she had included herself in the parcel, so to speak, and when she staggered out into the open air, she was tied good and proper to ten thousand squibs.

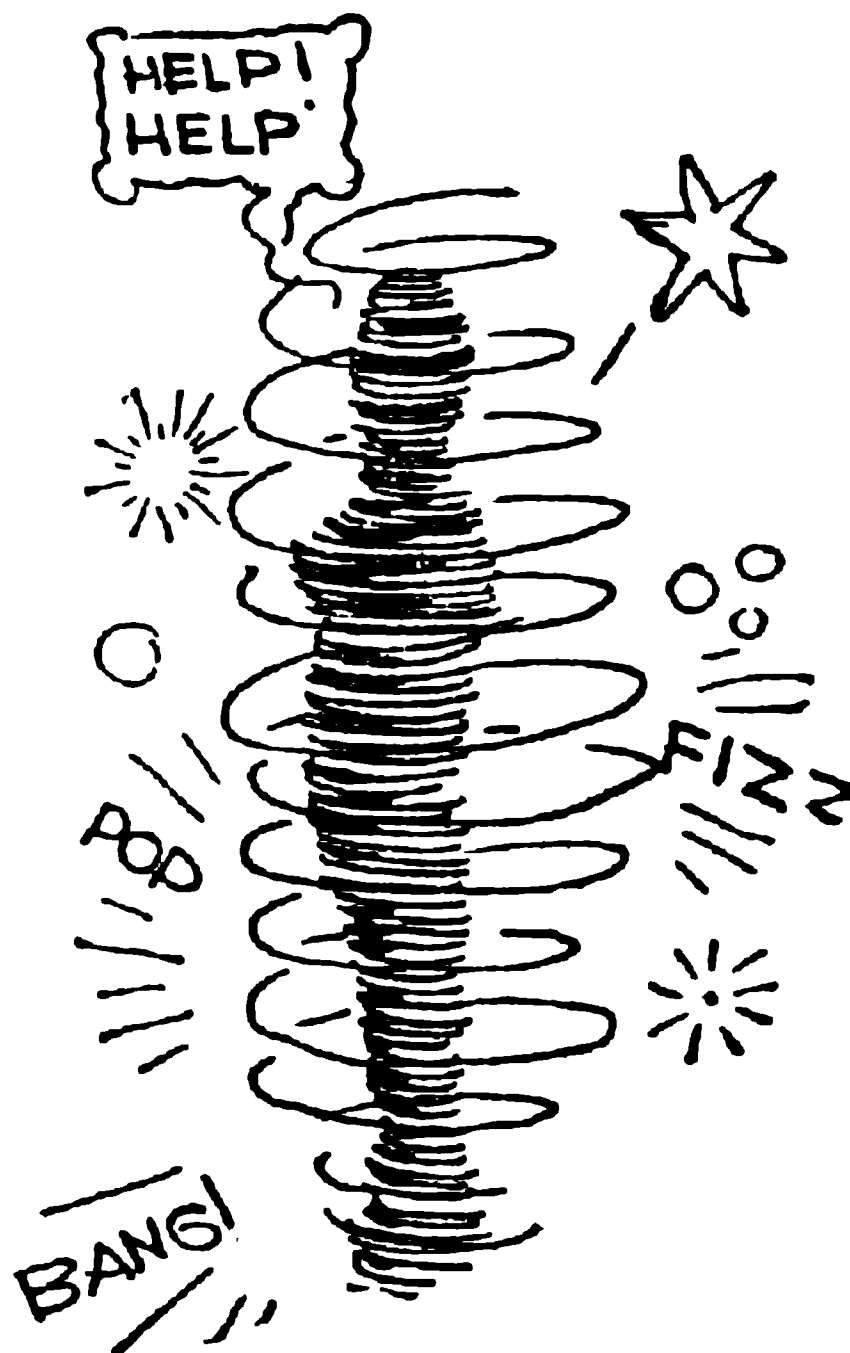
Being clumsy—like our respected Editor—she fell on the fire. The fireworks immediately began exploding, and Catherine, tied to them with two miles of best rope, found herself spinning round and round.

She shrieked for help, but papa was far too exhausted with laughing to lend her any aid. Round

and round and round went Catherine, the sparks flying from her in a pretty circle, which immediately put an idea into papa's head.

"Idea!" he yelled. "I will make a new firework which shall spin round like that, and I will call it the Catherine Wheel after my daughter. Whoopee! It will make my fortune!"

And it did!



Revolutions caused the evolution of a catherine wheel.

NIPPER'S NOVEL STUNT!

A LL Removites are invited to the **REMOVE FIREWORK CELEBRATIONS** at Half Mile Meadow to-morrow night. The whole Form has pooled funds in order to stage a celebration which will knock the Fourth display into a cocked hat. Special set-piece depicting a house on fire will be let off at 9 p.m. All kinds of fireworks by the hundred will be set going. **FOUR BARRELS OF TAR** are ready for the bonfire.

In addition to this, Nipper & Co. will present the most novel stunt of the term. Arrangements have been made with Moor View School to communicate with St. Frank's by means of coloured rockets. A complete code has been drawn out by

Nipper and the Moor View Girls. The different colours mean various words, according to how they are sent up.

At 8.30 p.m. St. Frank's will send the first message to Moor View by coloured rockets. The girls will see the rockets burst, read the message, and will reply with rockets from their own firework celebration. A complete copy of the code will be given to every spectator, so that everybody may understand the messages which are being exchanged.

The headmaster, Mr. Nelson Lee, is interested in this experiment, and has informed us that he will be present in person during the evening. The whole arrangements are under the control of Nipper and Handforth.

Plenty of accommodation for everybody. Give the mouldy Fourth's show a miss, and roll up to the first exhibition of Rocket Wireless in the world.

REWORKS

kind father

ALERIE.

orning, Freddie's

at a pile of dibs,

"My son, you'd

Yes, here is one.

me squibs."

ot hesitate;

he road.

y after eight,

upon the gate

bode.

ched the door

wide.

eatured Mayor.

"Take a chair."

ayor replied.

a grave complaint

on.

r, how dare

orks," cried the

one?"

Why, what's the

, "I trust

scoundrel beans!

to smithereens—

to dust!

the windows in

and the town;

g's worth of shocks

illar-box,

come down!

the post-office

stars.

loud report.

County Court

ing Mars.

the Swimming Baths

street;

bbem's Soaps

gh our telescopes

nd feet!

Chemist's Shop,

Zoo

ishes, so

ld like to know

to do."

nly at his son,

he said:

very plain,

again,

ght to bed!"

HANDFORTH THE GUY!

(Continued from page 20.)

school last night they did the job thoroughly."

"The cigarettes were all right this morning," said Forrest. "At least, I took one out of the box, and there was nothing wrong with it. I believe they've been changed during the last half-hour."

"That's impossible," objected Church. "Brewster couldn't have been in the school during the past half-hour—or any of the other River House chaps, either."

"Funny!" said Nipper, pursing his lips.

"You're making me tired, you with your 'funny'!" said Handforth irritably. "What is there funny about it? Couldn't Brewster have tipped Tubbs, the page-boy, to change the cigarettes?"

"Tubbs is loyal to us—he wouldn't have accepted any bribe," replied Nipper promptly.

It was a complete mystery. It could not be investigated then, however, as the bell for dinner was ringing. So all the Removites trooped into the dining-hall—Forrest following after a hasty wash and change.

The fellows half expected fireworks to go off under the dining-table, or under their chairs. They even had dark suspicions of the pudding when it came on the table. Nothing out of the common happened, however, and dinner passed off uneventfully.

Nipper came to a decision during the meal. As soon as he and his chums were dismissed, he made a bee-line for the telephone-box in the Junior Common-room.

"What are you going to do?" asked Handforth.

"I'm going to ring up Brewster," replied Nipper grimly.

But he didn't.

CHAPTER 10.

A Common-room Commotion!

THERE was a good deal of excitement when the word went round that Nipper was ringing up Hal Brewster of the River House. In all probability there would be some "fireworks" over the 'phone!

"Just a minute, dear old fellow," said Travers, opening the door of the telephone-box before Nipper had lifted off the receiver. "Is this wise?"

"How do you mean?"

"Sort of giving Brewster a warning, isn't it?"

"We want to be absolutely certain that the River House chaps are responsible for the jape," said Nipper.

"But aren't we certain?" asked Travers, in surprise.

"Practically—but there's no definite proof," replied Nipper slowly. "We don't want to make any blunders, Travers. I shall be able to tell, by Brewster's tone, whether he and his chums worked this jape. If it comes to the point, I'll ask him straight out. He won't fib about it—he'll either evade the question or admit the truth. As I say, we want to be sure."

"Oh, all right; if you think so," said Travers, closing the door.

Nipper lifted the receiver from the hook. There was a faint little "twang," as of a spring or a piece of elastic, but he took no notice. He was getting ready to give the operator the number.

He thought he heard something sizzle at his feet, and he glanced down into the dense gloom at the bottom of the telephone-box.

"What the——" he began, startled.

For he thought he detected a faint spark or two—and he was quite certain that he could smell something burning. Something sulphurous—gunpowdery!

"Here, I say——"

Bang! Ba-a-a-a-ang!

In that confined space, with the door securely closed, the explosions were like bursting bombs. If the fellows in the Common-room were startled, Nipper was flabbergasted.

He dropped the telephone receiver as though it had become red hot, and crashed backwards against the door. The door flew open, and Nipper fell out in a heap. A cannon-cracker followed him, having just exploded. Dense smoke rolled out into the Common-room.

"Again!" yelled Nipper, rising to his feet, and jumping to the truth. "Oh, my hat! They're everywhere! No matter where we go, fireworks start exploding!"

"Great Scott!"

"More of Brewster's giddy work!"

"Down with the River House!"

"Hear, hear!"

The fellows gathered round excitedly. The brief firework display was over. Fortunately, no prefects came along to make inquiries.

"But—but how was it worked?" asked Handforth blankly. "What did you do, Nipper?"

"Nothing—except lift off the receiver!"

"But fireworks can't be set going by a telephone, you ass!"

"You wouldn't think they could be set going by pressing an electric-light switch

—but they were set going!" retorted Nipper gruffly. "Haven't we been discovering, all along, that the chaps who played the jape are clever?"

"Let's have a look," said Fullwood, plunging into the smoky box.

They soon found out how the stunt had been worked. On the floor of the telephone-box stood a square tin. A string led from it to the hook of the telephone instrument—the hook on which the receiver hung. There was a piece of elastic, too. When the hook was released, the elastic acted as a spring, and the string to the box was given a sharp jerk.

Upon investigation a portion of an automatic gaslighter was discovered—one of those automatic lighters which are made in the form of a pistol. It was the trigger which had been attached to the string. Thus, the trigger had been released, and a spark had played upon a little train of explosive, setting it off. The explosive had in turn ignited the fuses of the cannon-crackers. Very ingenious—very effective—and surprisingly simple.

"It's—it's bewildering," said Nipper, passing a hand over his brow. "Everywhere we go we find these things! But who's doing it? Surely somebody must have used this telephone earlier in the morning? So how could Brewster & Co. have prepared all these traps last night after lights-out? I tell you, my sons, there's something funny about all this."

"Funny?" roared Handforth. "Didn't I tick you off for saying——"

"Go and eat coke!" interrupted Nipper. "I can say what I like—without asking your permission, fathead!"

He used the instrument again, and he got into communication with the exchange without any trouble. When Nipper was put through to the River House School he was informed that Hal Brewster and all the other prominent "Commoners"—as Brewster's chums were called—were out somewhere. Nobody seemed to know where they were, or what they were doing.

"There you are," said Nipper significantly, as he told the eager Removites. "Isn't that fishy? They're out somewhere—they're doing something secret! My sons, this calls for immediate attention—and, what's more, immediate retaliation. These River House chaps have sprung the jape of the term on us. Are we going to lie down calmly and——"

"No!" went up a roar.

"Not likely!" yelled Handforth excitedly. "I say! Let's dash off for the River House now!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on, Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

Everybody was wildly excited—until Nipper, bawling at the top of his voice, restored them to their senses.

"My poor, pitiful idiots!" said the Remove skipper. "Don't you hear that bell? What's old Crowell going to do if we fail to turn up for afternoon lessons?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It'll mean detention for the whole of the evening—and then what will become of our bonfire and our special firework display?" went on Nipper. "Pull yourselves together! We've got to be particularly careful in Form this afternoon, too."

"Rather," said Travers. "Thank goodness we come out fairly early. Plenty of time for us to run over to the River House before tea. At least we can have the satisfaction of slaughtering Brewster and his pals. Later on, at our leisure, we'll think up a return jape."

So they all crowded into the Remove Form-room in a state of suppressed excitement. Everybody in the Lower School was inclined to resent lessons to-day. It was a pity the school authorities could not show a bit of sense—and set the Fifth of November aside as a whole holiday.

"They might just as well," growled Handforth. "We don't do any work, anyhow."

This River House jape was getting on the nerves of the Removites. Their own programme for the evening was an elaborate one; but they were beginning to fear that it might be seriously interfered with. Unless Brewster & Co. were promptly and decisively squashed they might become daring enough for any stunt.

"Shush, you chaps," warned Nipper suddenly. "Here comes old Crowsfeet!"

Mr. Crowell swept into the Form-room with his usual briskness. He nodded approvingly. He was glad to see all the boys standing at attention in their places. He went to his desk, adjusted his pince-nez, and regarded the Form intently.

"You may sit down," he said graciously. The Remove sat down—and the world seemed to come to an end!

CHAPTER 11.

The Remove Vows Revenge!

BANG—bang—bang—bang—bang!

As the Remove sat down the reports sounded like the rapid explosions of a quick-fire gun.

"Good heavens!" yelled Mr. Crowell, jumping nearly a foot into the air.

The juniors were almost startled out of their wits. Their nerves were already strained, and these violent explosions, happening right beneath their desk-seats, jarred them tremendously.

"What—what happened?" gasped Handforth, bewildered.

"Oh, my hat!"

"More explosives!"

Smoke was drifting up from beneath the seats, and all the boys were on their feet now. The confusion was complete. The orderliness which was usually so perfect in the Remove Form-room was conspicuous by its absence.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell, so angry that he was breathless. "This—this is outrageous! It is intolerable! How dare you? After what happened this morning you have the audacity——"

"Hold on, sir," interrupted Nipper. "We don't know anything about this."

Mr. Crowell gulped for breath.

"Silence!" he commanded. "Everybody stand upright at attention! Remain in your places! Now, Hamilton! What was that you said?"

"We're as mystified as you are, sir," said Nipper. "Somebody's been japing us again."

"By George!" said Handforth, his eyes gleaming. "This room has been empty ever since morning lessons. Yes, and the River House chaps were away, weren't they? But I'm dashed if I can understand how they could get into our Form-room without being spotted——"

"Don't be ridiculous, Handforth," broke in Mr. Crowell. "This wretched practical joke must have been played by somebody in the school. But what happened?"

"We'll soon tell you, sir," said Nipper.

He gingerly lifted the seat which was attached to his own desk. All the seats were hinged, with strong iron supports. The tricksters had merely placed some of those giant "caps"—or miniature fog-signals—between the iron supports and the wooden seats. Thus, when the boys had sat down, the sudden pressure had caused the explosions.

"This is amazing," said Mr. Crowell as he examined one of the burnt-out caps. "Are we to have no peace at all to-day? You can sit down now, and I hope we shall have no further disturbances."

The Removites could not help smiling as Mr. Crowell prepared to sit down at his desk. He carefully examined his own chair, he moved it gingerly, and when he touched his books on the desk he did so with a cautious hand.

The boys themselves, when opening their

desks, were careful; they were prepared for more surprises; but none came.

"Who did it—that's what I want to know," murmured Nipper, knitting his brows. "Those caps were fixed in position while we were having dinner, of course."

"Nothing easier," whispered Tommy Watson. "Brewster and his crowd could have walked in as calmly as you like—and who would have stopped them? Who was there to stop them? The School House is always deserted at dinner-time, anyhow."

"It's the daring of the thing which makes me squirm," said Nipper. "To think that those River House bounders should have the nerve! By Jove! You can't help admiring 'em."

"Wait until I get my fists near some of their faces!" muttered Handforth darkly. "I'll show you how I admire 'em!"

"Somebody is talking," said Mr. Crowell looking up sharply.

The murmurs of conversation ceased. Nobody dare risk detention on this day of all days.

The Remove had clubbed together; every fellow had given as much as he could afford. Some had only contributed a shilling or two, but others—like Archie Glenthorne and Travers and Singleton and Pippington—had generously whacked out notes. Some had even contributed fivers. A very respectable sum had been raised.

With this money a large supply of fireworks had been purchased—a great box of them. The Removites, prior to a strictly official display, were determined to have plenty of fun of their own. There would be a great bonfire in the paddock—a Remove bonfire—and the juniors were looking forward to a high old time with their own fireworks.

Somehow, fireworks which they let off themselves were ten times more enjoyable than fireworks which were let off officially. The greatest joy came, not from viewing the display, but from handling the squibs and cannon-crackers and Roman candles and rockets with their own fingers.

A breath of relief went up when Mr. Crowell announced the dismissal. He was not a bad old stick, really, and normally he would have detained one or two boys for inattention, talking and so forth. He had been unusually patient to-day—and he had also developed a certain amount of deafness and blindness.

But the Removites, as they streamed out into the Triangle, were not thinking of fireworks. Their one aim, at the present moment, was to exact vengeance upon Hal Brewster & Co. of the River House.



Bang, bang! Thunderously the fireworks exploded, and Nipper fell out of the telephone box in a heap, pursued by a cannon-cracker.

Tubbs, the Ancient House page-boy, came running up to Nipper.

"Can't talk to you now, Tubby, old son," said Nipper quickly. "I'm busy. Come to me later——"

"But you're wanted, Master Nipper."

"Oh, rats! Who wants me?"

"It's a telephone message," explained Tubbs. "Master Brewster of the River House——"

"What!" yelled Nipper. "Why the dickens didn't you tell me? Where? Common-room 'phone? Right!"

He dashed off, others streaming behind him. So Hal Brewster was having the cool nerve to ring up his victims!

Nipper was careful this time. Although the telephone-box stood open, and the receiver was off its hook, he stepped gingerly. But he need not have worried; there was no fresh trap set for him.

"Hallo!" he sang out. "Who's that?"

"Cheerio, Nipper, old son!" came the familiar voice of Hal Brewster. "How goes it? Having plenty of excitement?"

There was a chuckle in his voice, and Nipper forced himself to speak calmly.

"No particular excitement—yet," he replied carelessly. "What do you want to speak to me about, Hal?"

"Oh, nothing in particular," replied the leader of the River House juniors. "I was just wondering how you are getting on in that dump you call a school. We seem to have heard a few explosions over here——"

He was interrupted by yells of laughter from other River House boys who were round the telephone.

"Oh, you heard some explosions, did you?" asked Nipper. "You don't happen to know anything about them, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Brewster.

"What are you laughing at, you funny River House lunatic?" roared Nipper.

"Thoughts!" grinned Hal Brewster. "Is Handy there? I don't think he is, Nipper. Somehow, I believe we've got him—but we'll return him to you soon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

More yells of laughter sounded over the wire, and Nipper, glancing round, saw Handforth in the Common-room. He could not quite "get" the reason for the River House boys' amusement.

"Having you on toast, you poor Saints," came Brewster's voice. "You'll know what we mean later on. So-long! And don't forget—we'll let you have Handy back."

More shouts of laughter, and then the telephone became dead. Nipper hung up, frowning.

"My sons, they've got something else up their sleeves," he said darkly, as he emerged from the telephone-box. "Come on! There's not a minute to lose! We're going straight over there—and we'll make hay of the bounders."

A minute later the St. Frank's Remove, almost in its entirety, was hurrying off across the playing fields towards the towing-path—*en route* for the rival school.

CHAPTER 12.

Guy, Guy, Guy!

"GUY, guy, guy!"

It was a chant which rose over the peaceful meadows near the River Stowe.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Yells of laughter sounded, too. A crowd of boys appeared in sight, on the towing-path. In the lead was the sturdy, cheery figure of Hal Brewster, with his frank face, his merry eyes, and his untidy hair. Walking side by side with him were George Glynn and Dave Ascott, his chums of Study No. 1. These three were the leaders of the *Commoners*. All the boys in this crowd, in fact, were *Commoners*.

There were two factions at the River House School. All the decent fellows were banded together under the label of "*Commoners*." The others called themselves the *Honourables*. They were the rotters of the school, led by that redoubtable young scamp, the Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne. The *Commoners* all belonged to Mr. Marshall's House; the *Honourables* were confined to Mr. Wragg's House.

There wasn't much rivalry between the two Houses at the River House School, because the *Commoners* always considered that the *Honourables* were not worth bothering about. So if Hal Brewster & Co. wanted to "put over" a jape or a rag they invariably turned towards St. Frank's.

It was rather a curious procession, this. Brewster & Co. led the way, immediately behind them came Kingswood, Norton and Robinson, of Study No. 2, and they were hauling on the ropes of a Scouts' truck. Pushing the truck from the rear were Littlewood and Mann and Palmer, of Study No. 8. Then came Lang and Mason and Reeves, of Study No. 4, with Driscoll

and Buller and Pringle, of Study No. 5, just behind.

On one side of the procession strode Hadley and Commerford and Grant, of Study No. 11, and on the other side Haines and Knight and Lacey, of Study No. 12. These six young gentlemen were making the air hideous by supplying an alleged tune on combs, over which paper had been placed.

Another very important River House junior was Cyril Graham. He didn't look important, for he was small, even delicate-looking. But Graham was responsible for the work of art which rode sedately in the Scouts' truck.

In a word, a guy—and what a guy! There are guys and guys, but the guy which was being trundled along in that truck was too funny for words.

The whole thing was very elaborate. There was a little table fixed on the truck, and a chair, too. The guy was seated on the chair, apparently writing. It was complete in every detail—the shoes, the socks, the suit, the collar and tie, the St. Frank's cap—everything. The proportions were exact. And the most remarkable feature of all was that the guy bore an extraordinary resemblance to Edward Oswald Handforth.

The River House boys had not been content with a mere mask. A false head had been moulded, with hair complete—this latter a wig which looked exactly like Handforth's untidy hair, even to the stray lock which escaped from the front of his cap. The face was certainly a caricature—no human face could be quite so ugly. Otherwise, it was Handforth to the life, with a fixed, inane sort of grin. Graham, who was the son of a famous actor, was a pastmaster in the art of make-up. He had excelled himself with this guy of Handforth. Even the burliness of the figure, and the attitude in which it was sitting, was irresistibly reminiscent of the great Edward Oswald.

To complete the whole picture a banner had been slung across the top of the truck, well above the guy. On the banner were emblazoned the words "*HANDFORTH'S WEAKLY*." Pinned all round the edge were various copies of Handforth's famous rag.

"We couldn't have thought of a better stunt, you chaps," Hal Brewster was saying contentedly. "Old Handy at his editorial desk! Considering the piffle he writes in that weekly of his, he deserves to be guyed. Isn't that a fact?"

"Rather!" grinned the others.

"All we've got to do is to take this giddy truck to the top of the slope above the playing fields, and then let it go," continued Hal. "It ought to run right down past Little Side. Then we can all yell together, attract the notice of the Saints, and——"

"Hallo!" interrupted Glynn, in a startled voice. "We don't need to attract their attention. Great Scott! Look there! The whole giddy Remove!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Brewster, staring.

It was something of a shock. Rounding a clump of willows, they had come within sight of their rivals. Not merely a group of Removites, but a throng. And there was something about the appearance of Nipper and his chums which made Hal Brewster's heart beat more rapidly. The Removites looked grim—determined. They were apparently out for trouble.

"Better bolt, hadn't we?" gasped Kingswood.

"Not likely," said Brewster. "We're not scared of these St. Frank's chaps, are we? If we run now they'll jeer like the dickens."

The Commoners were in an awkward position. If they continued onwards they would certainly be involved in a hectic scrap; if they ran, they would be objects of derision. Hal was certainly taken by surprise. He had never expected any such battalion as this.

"You shouldn't have telephoned," muttered Grant, running up. "We told you it was silly."

"Rats! There must be something else behind this," said Hal shrewdly. "Look at 'em! They're positively ferocious! Never mind—we'll stick to our guns! Come on! Put on a bold front."

The River House boys marched on. By this time their rivals had had a good look at the guy, and all sorts of shouts were going up.

"Great Scott! It's Handy!" shouted Nipper. "Now I understand what Brewster meant when he telephoned! He said that Handy was over at the River House, and that we could have him back later!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a marvellous guy!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Just like Handy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth glared round, his face the colour of a boiled beetroot.

"Are you laughing at me?" he roared.

"Were you saying that that rotten guy looks like me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Removites, in spite of themselves, yelled more heartily than ever.

CHAPTER 13.

A Bashing for Brewster & Co.!

"**B**Y GEORGE!" said Handforth thickly. "Look at that—'Handforth's Weekly'! They've had the beastly nerve to make a guy of me—sitting at my editorial desk!"

"Take it calmly, old man——" began Church.

"Calmly?" howled Handforth. "Would you be calm if you were guyed? Huh! The ignorant asses! They don't even know how to spell 'Weekly'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think they spelt it that way on purpose," murmured McClure. "It's part of the joke, Handy."

"If you call this a joke, you're mad!" hooted Handforth, looking round wildly. "Hi, you chaps! What are you laughing at? I'm insulted! The Remove's insulted! St. Frank's is insulted!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's right, you fellows," yelled Nipper. "The guy's good, but that doesn't count. These lopsided River House bounders have had the nerve to guy one of our chaps. Come on! Slaughter 'em! And don't forget what they did this morning! Revenge!"

"Hear, hear!"

"On the ball, Remove!"

Without asking any questions, without further delay, the Remove hurled itself upon its rivals in a determined rush. It was an ideal place for the scrap, for it was nicely isolated from the school. No fear of prefects or masters butting in.

Crash!

The truck with the guy aboard went over sideways, and the guy and the table and the chair toppled out. Fortunately that precious guy dropped into a shallow ditch, and it was protected by the overturned truck.

The fight was developing rapidly. Nipper had selected Hal Brewster, and the pair were going at it hammer and tongs. Handforth, with rare enthusiasm, was taking on Glynn and Ascott. The air was filled with the sounds of punching, gasps and yells. Scuffling and scampering, the fighters swayed to and fro.

"We'll teach you to come to our school and shove fireworks all over the place!" roared Handforth. "Take that, you rotter!"

Thud!

George Glynn took it, and he reeled back, his interest in the fight considerably reduced.

The battle ebbed and flowed. Some of the Removites were getting the worst of it, and reinforcements dashed to their aid. In other places the River House boys were already down; they were being sat on, and their faces rubbed in the mud.

Taking it all in all, it was the biggest scrap in the history of the rival schools. Brewster & Co. tried again and again to speak, but they were not given the chance. The Saints were upon them like a pack of wolves, punching, getting heads into Chancery, pulling the

Commoners over bodily, bumping them, sitting on their heads and similar pleasantries.

The result, of course, was inevitable.

Nipper & Co. won—and they won handsomely. This was only to be expected, for the St. Frank's boys were in much greater force than the River House juniors. Brewster & Co., in fact, had put up a magnificent resistance, and to the very last ditch they fought valiantly.

Now, however, they were all down—squashed, battered, with every scrap of fight knocked out of them. They were tattered, torn and scarred. Black eyes were developing here and there, noses were swollen, ears were thick, teeth were more or less loosened.

Not that the Saints had come off scatheless. Many of them were suffering from thick ears, swollen noses and black eyes, too. But they didn't care. They were triumphant. The enemy was not only vanquished, but adequately punished. It would be many a long day before Hal Brewster & Co. got over this colossal licking.

"The next time you come to St. Frank's with your funny ideas, my son, remember what happened to-day!" said Nipper aggressively, as he sat astride Hal Brewster's chest.

"Here, I say, chuck it!" gasped Hal. "Leggo my feet, somebody! Get off my tummy, Montie! I can hardly breathe!"

"You don't breathe from your tummy,

dear boy," said Tregellis-West. "You'd better ask Nipper to get off your chest."

"I'll get off when I've finished," said Nipper. "You boulder! I'm not denying that your stunts were clever, but——"

"Stunts?" croaked Hal Brewster. "What stunts?"

"You know what stunts!"

"No, I don't!" gasped Hal. "We've done nothing—except make that guy of old Handy. You rotters! We thought you'd appreciate it! You're always laughing at him so much that we thought——"

"Hold on! What about those fireworks?" demanded Nipper.

"What fireworks?"

"Little innocent!" grunted Tommy Watson, who was sitting on Hal Brewster's legs. "Don't you be spoofed, Nipper. He's pretending to know nothing about those fireworks."

"Own up, Hal," said Nipper. "Didn't you fix up a lot of traps in our desks in the Form-room? Didn't you shove more fireworks in my study fire—and fireworks in Travers' electrolier? Didn't you fake up that gadget in the telephone-box?"

"Here, wait a bit!" yelled Brewster frantically. "I don't know what you're talking about! Hi, Commoners! Do you hear what this fathead is saying? He's accusing us of playing tricks at St. Frank's."

"He's mad!" came a general chorus from the Commoners.

Nipper looked at Hal Brewster sharply.



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

DRY EVIDENCE.

Betty: "How did mamma find out you didn't take a bath?"

Billy: "I forgot to wet the soap."

(B. Patterson, 153, Brand Street, Glasgow, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

THE NAUGHTY NINETIES.

Mother (to father, in 1990): "You'll really have to speak to Johnny. He's been flying backwards and forwards across the Atlantic all afternoon, and he simply won't go to China for that rice I need for to-morrow's dinner."

(E. Millinger, 2, Cartland Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A RECORD TALKER.

Having listened to a talkative man for some time, the listener asked:

"Have you been vaccinated?"

"Yes."

"I thought so—and you must have been vaccinated with a gramophone needle!"

(B. Wisbey, 349, South Avenue, Southchurch, Southend, has been awarded a penknife.)

SARCASM.

Golfer: "Have you any idea of the time, caddie?"

Overloaded caddie: "Ha! Now I know what you forgot to give me to carry. It was a grandfather's clock."

(C. Parker, 19, McKenzie Street, Melbourne, Australia, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

WRECKED.

Jones: "I've had this car for years and never had a wreck."

Smith: "You mean you've had this wreck for years and never had a car."

(J. Lambert, 157, Hainton Avenue, Grimsby, Lincs., has been awarded a penknife.)

POOR PA.

Tommy: "I've broken a window, pa."

Pa: "Well, don't cry; here's half-a-crown. But whose window was it?"

Tommy: "Yours."

(T. Hiscock, 200, Shirley Road, Southampton has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Don't you know anything about those fireworks?"

"We didn't fix them up, if that's what you think," retorted Hal. "We heard some rumours—somebody told us you'd been having lots of explosions and things—but that's all we know. We didn't work those japes."

"Wha-a-at!" gurgled Handforth dazedly. "Of course we didn't!" growled Brewster. "My only hat! And you chaps mopped us up because you thought— You rotters! You fatheads! Why the dickens didn't you make certain?"

"Look here, Hal, no larks," said Nipper earnestly. "Is this honour bright? Don't you really know anything about those fireworks?"

"Not a thing—honour bright!" replied Hal Brewster. "Honour bright—honest Injun—anything you like! You're off the rails, my son! You're barking up the wrong tree! The only jape we've played is to prepare that guy of old Handy!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Nipper, taking a deep breath.

CHAPTER 14.

Handy Loses His Head!

NIPPER was looking dazed. "It wasn't the Fourth—it wasn't anybody at St. Frank's at all—and it wasn't you River House chaps," he said dully. "Then who was it? Who *could*

it have been? Dash it, there's nobody else!"

In his bewilderment at this revelation Nipper had risen from Hal Brewster's chest. The other St. Frank's juniors rose, too. The River House boys were all released.

"What do you make of it, dear old fellows?" asked Travers, looking round for his necktie, which had vanished. "Don't you think that we owe these poor chaps an apology? I mean, we rather made mincemeat of them, didn't we? And they're not guilty at all!"

"They're guilty of making that guy!" said Handforth, glaring.

"Nothing guilty about that," said Travers. "They deserve a prize for that guy!"

"You silly ass——"

"We're sorry, Brewster," said Nipper earnestly. "After you'd rung up we were absolutely certain that you and your pals were responsible for all those firework displays. We seem to have made a mess of things."

Hal Brewster was righteously indignant.

"If you think you can put things right by gabbling an apology, you're mistaken!" he said warmly.

"But, my dear chap——"

"I'm not your dear chap!" roared Brewster. "If we accept your apologies it means that we can't get our own back. And we're going to get our own back, you rotters! So you can take your giddy apologies and boil them in oil!"

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

Johnny had received a super-nosh watch for a birthday present, and proudly he put it on and went for a walk. But alas! After an hour or so he returned in tears.

"Whatever's the matter?" inquired his mother. "You surely haven't broken your new watch?"

"No," sobbed Johnny. "I've been out all morning and no one has asked me the time."

(*P. Bomford, Cowsden Hall, Worcester, has been awarded a penknife.*)

WELL PROVIDED.

It was the usual sort of holiday train—slow but sure. The passengers grew more and more impatient. When the train made one more halt at a station, two youthful heads appeared at adjacent windows and a voice exclaimed sarcastically:

"Come on, Fred. Let's get out and pick some flowers."

"Put your head in!" said the harassed guard. "There ain't no flowers here."

"There will be," was the cheerful answer. "I've got a packet of seeds in my pocket."

(*J. Leggett, 14, Harcourt Road, Bristol, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)



HEAR, HEAR!

Old Gent: "Your father is entirely bald, isn't he, Jimmy?"

Jimmy: "Yes, sir. I'm the only heir he has left."
(*T. Bassett, The Cottage, Scraftoft, Nr. Leicester, has been awarded a penknife.*)

MISLEADING.

Watchman: "Didn't you see that notice, 'Road closed'?"

Cyclist (who has fallen into hole in road): "Yes—and I found it wide open."

(*C. McKay, 35, Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

VERY AFFECTIONATE.

Prospective Buyer: "Is the dog affectionate?"

Dealer: "I should say he is. I have sold him four times and every time he comes right back to me."

(*C. Flavell, 86, Summer Lane, Lower Gornal, Nr. Dudley, has been awarded a penknife.*)

TIME NOT WASTED.

Plumber: "Well, here I am. How's things?"

Cheerful Householder (two feet deep in water): "Not so bad. While I've been waiting for you I've taught young Clarence to swim."

(*T. McNairney, 40, Ure Street, Govan, Glasgow, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

"Hear, hear!" roared the other Commoners. "Down with St. Frank's!"

Handforth clenched his fists.

"So you want some more?" he demanded aggressively.

"Oh, rats!" snorted Hal. "We'll jolly well have our revenge, and we'll have it soon, too! You can't wipe us up like this and then think you can smooth it over with soft words!"

They went off in a body muttering all sorts of threats. They put their Scouts' truck to rights, dumped the guy into it, and were about to clear off when Handforth barged in.

"I want that guy!" he shouted aggressively. "You're not going to show that beastly thing all over the place!"

There was another brief but hectic fight. Handforth leapt into the truck, and he and the guy became mixed up. Finally Handforth was seized and hurled back amongst the other Removites, and Hal Brewster & Co., breathing hard, marched off.

"We can't altogether blame 'em," said Nipper. "We did sock into them, didn't we? And they didn't deserve it."

"Of course they deserved it!" snorted Church. "You seem to have forgotten that guy——"

"Oh, bother the guy!" growled Nipper. "Who the dickens could have worked those japes? Didn't I tell you from the first that it was funny? I thought it was brainier than anything Brewster & Co. could have done."

"It's a mystery, and it looks like remaining a mystery," said Jimmy Potts. "If old Napoleon Browne hadn't sworn that he knew nothing, I should have suspected him. Who else is there?"

"I wish I could get to the bottom of it," said Nipper fervently.

Meanwhile, Hal Brewster and his chums were cooling off. But this did not alter their decision. They would get their own back, and they wouldn't waste any time either!

"To-night!" said Hal fiercely. "We'll show 'em!"

"But we can't do anything to-night," protested Ascott. "What about our bonfire and fireworks?"

"Bonfires and fireworks aren't so important as squaring things with the Saints," interrupted Hal firmly. "We can have our bonfire and fireworks afterwards. Come on—let's hurry! We'll get back, clean ourselves up, and then we'll think."

At that moment he was startled by a pitiful groan which came from the huddled figure in the truck. Hal was walking alongside, and he jumped violently. The huddled figure was half on its face, one arm grotesquely extended, and one leg bent and twisted under the other.

"I say," ejaculated Brewster in a startled voice, "did—did you hear——"

The groan came again—louder this time, and unmistakably the voice was Handforth's. All the River House boys halted, and they stared in horror at their precious guy. It

looked like Handforth, they knew, but for the thing to start groaning——

"Help!" came Handforth's voice. "Rally round, Remove!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Hal.

He remembered Handforth's attack just as they had been starting off. The others remembered, too. Clearly a little mistake had been made. The real Handforth and the fake had got mixed! The Commoners had left their guy behind, and they were trundling Handforth along in the truck! And Handforth, during the scuffle and the excitement, must have been hurt.

"Better lend a hand, you chaps," said Brewster quickly.

He placed a hand on the still form in the truck, and a wild yelp sounded.

"Don't!" came Handforth's voice. "You—you rotters! Lemme alone! What are you going to do with me? Hi! Rescue, Remove! These beastly Commoners have grabbed me!"

"Keep your hair on!" said Brewster, with a grin. "There's been a little bloomer, that's all. You and your guy are so much alike that we couldn't tell the difference."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Commoners were relieved to hear the strength of Handforth's voice. He couldn't be so badly hurt after all.

Some of them gathered round the truck, and they seized the figure, preparing to lift it off.

"Keep your hands off me!" hooted Handforth's voice. "By George! If you think——"

"Chuck it! We're not going to hurt you," said Hal.

With a heave he and the others got the figure off the truck. They were startled and uneasy to feel how stiff and rigid the figure was. Not at all like the real Handforth. It was lighter, too, and——

"I say," muttered Hal, with a gulp, "I don't believe——"

"Go easy with me," said the guy. "Mind what you're doing, you fatheads!"

"Crumbs!" muttered Glynn. "I—I thought it was the guy for a minute—it feels so stiff and false. Yet that was Handy's voice all right. I say, Handy, chuck it! Relax a bit."

And then, as they were lowering the figure to the ground, the head fell off and rolled away.

"Oh!" gasped half a dozen horrified voices.

The River House boys jumped back in startled fright. They could not believe the evidence of their eyes and ears. It had been Handforth talking, and—and——

"Now look what you've done!" said the head clearly and distinctly in Handforth's familiar voice.

It was horribly uncanny, and some of the River House boys turned pale.

"It's—it's talking—the head!" gurgled Robinson. "Oh, my only sainted aunt!"

"This is what comes of messing about with a chap," said the guy's head in scornful



River House boys and Saints met in a smashing battle. It was the most glorious scrap in the history of the rival schools.

tones. "How do you suppose I can carry on like this? Don't stand there staring! Can't you fix my head on properly?"

"It is the guy—and it's talking!" babbled Glynn. "Here, let's get away! This—this is uncanny!"

Hal Brewster suddenly gulped. An idea had come to him. His common-sense absolutely refused to believe that the head of the guy could really be talking. And a possible explanation had occurred to Hal.

"Quick, you chaps!" he said urgently. "That clump of bushes! Dash round and —"

"Not this time, my beauties!" laughed a voice from behind the bushes. "So-long! Sorry if I gave you a scare! Mind you put poor old Handy together again. If you don't he might start talking again!"

"Trotwood!" yelled Brewster wrathfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nicodemus Trotwood, the clever ventriloquist of the St. Frank's Remove, dodged out from behind the bushes and ran off. He was yelling with laughter.

And Brewster & Co. laughed, too—they laughed with relief. Just for a moment they had had the scare of their lives. The way in which Nick had thrown his voice,

imitating Handforth's voice, filled them with admiration.

The Removites, when Nick told them all about it, were not particularly amused. It was a good jape, of course, but they were worried.

What could be the explanation of the great mystery? Who was really responsible for all those firework japes?

CHAPTER 15.

The Living Guy!

CRACKLE-CRACKLE-CRACKLE!

The great bonfire in the paddock at St. Frank's blazed merrily, sending its licking flames upwards into the darkness of the November evening. Round about the fire, grateful for its warmth, numerous figures flitted to and fro. Some were feeding the fire, some were lighting stray fireworks.

There were all sorts of larks. Fellows were throwing squibs and jumping crackers. The Remove, in fact, was thoroughly enjoying itself. This was their own special free and easy "do" before the official display came on.

Not far from the hedge stood a great trestle, and on this the fireworks were being made ready—giant rockets, Roman candles, Jack-in-the-boxes, miniature set-pieces, and so on.

"Good old Fifth!" yelled somebody.

"Hurrah!"

"We're going to have a high old time!"

"Rather!"

Nipper was the only fellow, perhaps, who was not wholeheartedly enjoying himself. Perhaps he felt his responsibility. As captain of the Remove, he was puzzled—even worried—about the mystery of the firework japes. Who was the author, or authors? How had all those clever little dodges been engineered? Yes, and engineered so astutely that nobody in the Remove had seen a single suspicious circumstance.

"Oh, bother!" grunted Nipper. "Why think about it now?"

"Talking to me?" asked Handforth, who was striding past.

"No; it's all right, Handy," replied Nipper. "Whoa! Who's chucking crackers at my feet? I say, steady, you chumps!"

He danced wildly, laughing. Handforth, passing on, was lost in the gloom for a moment. Half a dozen figures materialised from the black background. They suddenly surrounded Handforth, a muffler was pulled over Edward Oswald's mouth, and strong arms gripped him.

"Good enough!" murmured a voice. "We've got him! Careful, now! Drag him back!"

Hal Brewster & Co. were on the warpath!

"Couldn't have been neater!" chuckled Kingswood. "Well done, Hal, old man! We've got him beautifully!"

Handforth was struggling and gasping, but he was helpless in the hands of so many captors. Swiftly, and with businesslike efficiency, he was dumped into the Scouts' truck which Brewster & Co. had silently brought up in the darkness. The table and chair were fixed to that truck as before, but the guy was now missing.

Handforth—in the flesh—was substituted!

He was tied tightly, and then the muffler was whipped from his mouth.

"All together—shove!" hissed Hal.

The River House boys shoved, and the truck with Handforth on it lumbered forward with a rush into the full glare of the firelight.

"Guy, guy, guy!" yelled the River House juniors in one voice. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, what the——"

Nipper turned and saw the truck. The other juniors saw it, too, and there was a rush. They had all recognised the voices of their rivals, and the appearance of the truck proved that Brewster & Co. were in the vicinity.

"Hi! Help!" yelled Handforth. "Let me go, you chaps! Those silly rotters are calling me a guy!"

One of the Removites, having heard of Trotty's exploit, gave a yell of laughter.

"Jolly good!" he shouted. "Good old Trotty! Handforth's voice to the life!"

"Well, I'm jiggered! So it is!" yelled somebody else. "Quick, you chaps! On the fire with this guy!"

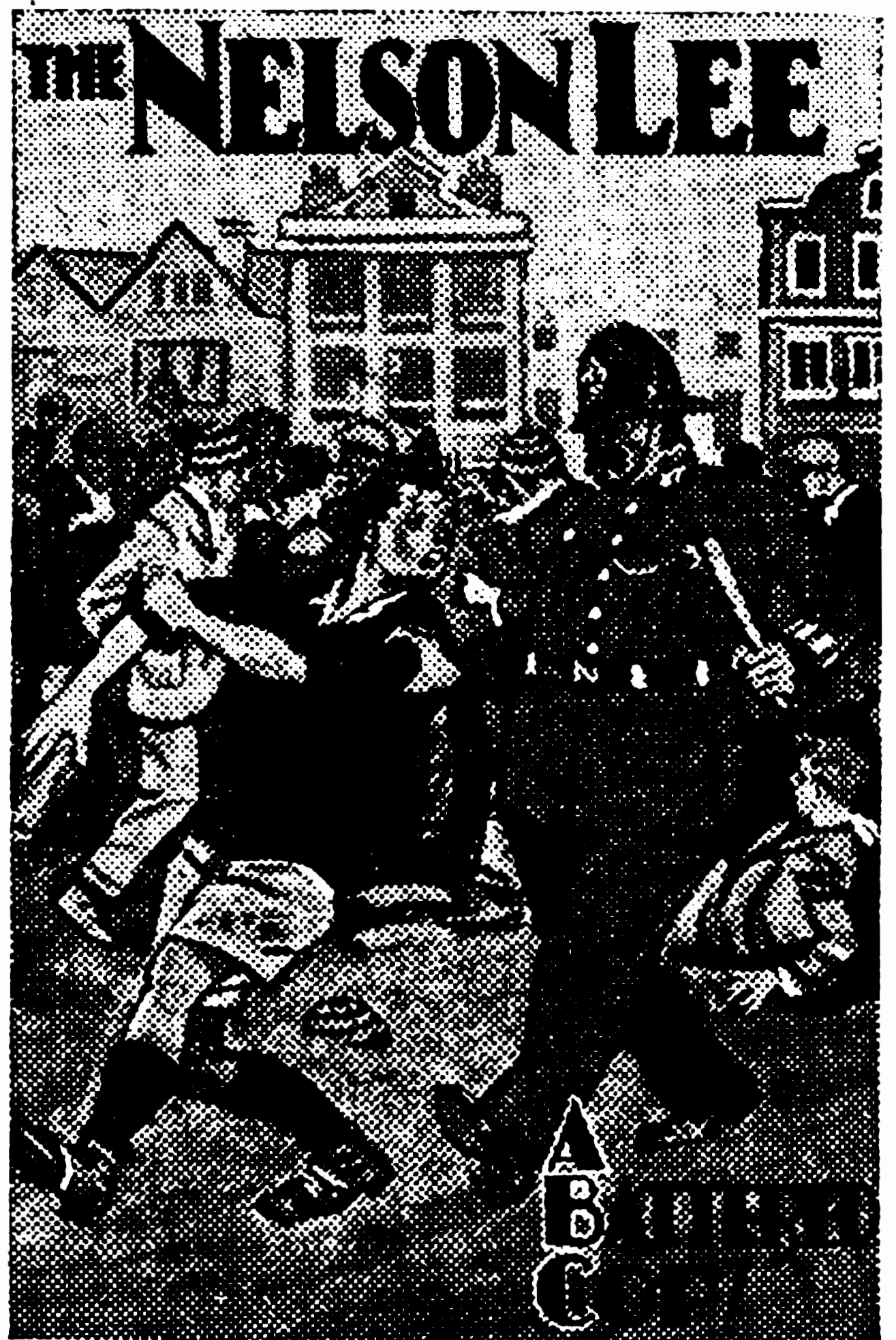
Handforth was horrified.

"Wait!" he hooted. "You silly idiots! I'm not a guy!"

Nipper quickly winked to the others, and they, in the firelight, saw that this was really Handforth in the flesh. But they had seen Nipper's wink, too.

"Well done, Trotty!" said Nipper loudly. "When you make this guy speak it almost looks human!"

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fatheads!" howled Handforth. "I am human! I'm not that guy! I'm me!"

"Marvellous!" said Travers admiringly. "Personally, I think Brewster & Co. are rather unfair. No fellow on earth could be as ugly as this!"

"You—you——" began Handforth.

"Go it," invited Travers. "Keep it up, Trotty! You know, the guy does look like Handy. Where is Handy, by the way? He ought to be interested in this exhibition. I say, what a frightful dial! Quite inhuman, of course! But what else can you expect in a guy?"

"Come on—let's chuck him on the fire!" suggested Jimmy Potts boisterously. "All together!"

"Good idea!" chuckled Reggie Pitt. "That face gives me a pain, you know!"

"Stop!" shrieked Handforth wildly. "I shall burn if you chuck me on the fire. I'm not a guy, blow you!"

"Wait a minute, you fellows," said Nipper loudly. "Let's have a closer look. Well, I'm jiggered! I don't believe it is a guy after all!"

"Must be," said Travers, shaking his head. "Anybody can see it's a guy."

"Of course!" chorused the others.

"Now that I look at it closely, I believe it's alive," continued Nipper solemnly.

"ST. FRANK'S IN DISGRACE!"

By E. S. BROOKS.

E. O. Handforth arrested for fighting!

War declared between the Chums of St. Frank's and the Bannington boys!

The town becomes a battleground; the police are forced to take a hand. No wonder St. Frank's is in disgrace.

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"Actually alive, you chaps! Yes, and it's Handy, too!"

"Well, well!" said Travers in mock amazement. "Handy in the flesh! Well, of course, we can't be blamed for mistaking him for a guy, can we? It's his own fault for having such a dial!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The truck, which had been pushed nearer to the fire, was dragged back. And the tremendous outburst of laughter convinced even Handforth—who was notoriously slow in seeing the point of a joke—that he had been deliberately spoofed.

Church and McClure quickly released him, and with clenched fists he dashed about, his main idea being to fight everybody within sight.

"You rotters!" he shouted. "You funny idiots! You'd call me a guy, would you? You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And then in the midst of the laughter a note of dismay sounded.

"Oh, rats!" yelled somebody. "Rain! I felt two or three spots just then!"

"By Jove, he's right!" sang out Nipper, looking up. "It's rain right enough."

Even as he spoke the rain came pouring down in torrents.

CHAPTER 16.

Spoofed Again!

HISS-HISS!

Down came the drenching rain. It was unexpected, too, for the glass was high, and everybody had predicted that the evening would be perfectly dry and fine. Yet here was the rain coming down like cats and dogs. It hissed into the fire, it beat upon the juniors. It was almost tropical in its intensity.

"Quick—rush indoors!" yelled Nipper. "It may be only a shower. It's too fierce to last long."

"What about the fireworks?" gasped somebody. "They'll get drenched."

"It's all right—we're covering them up with the tarpaulin that we brought out in case of accidents," sang out De Valerie. "No time to carry them all indoors. They'll be safe enough."

It was a great disappointment. Turning up their coat collars, thoroughly disgusted with this unfriendly trick of the weather, the boys ran helter-skelter for shelter. They dashed through the gateway from the paddock and into the West Square. It only took them a moment or two to dive into the rear entrance of the Ancient House, others dashing into the rear entrance of the West House.

"Phew! That was a rush!" said Nipper breathlessly, as he stood in the porch.

"We haven't got very wet," said Tommy Watson.

"Hallo!" sang out Handforth suddenly. "That's funny! It's not raining at all now! By George, that was a pretty sharp shower, wasn't it?"

"I noticed something funny, too," said Fullwood, speaking quickly. "By the time we reached the paddock gate the rain had stopped. We seemed to run right out of it—just when it was at its fiercest."

"Look!" bellowed Handforth. "The stars!"

The juniors came crowding out of the two Houses, and when they stared upwards into the sky they found the stars twinkling peacefully. It was a keen, sharp, frosty evening. That rain shower was more mysterious than ever.

"What's the matter with you kids?" asked Biggleswade, pushing his way out of the

Ancient House. "Let me get by, fatheads! Hallo! You're wet!"

"It's been raining," said Church.

"Raining? When?"

"Two minutes ago—in the paddock."

"You're dreaming," said the prefect, staring. "Anyhow, if it was raining in the paddock, it wasn't raining here. Two minutes ago I was standing outside with Reynolds of the West House. And we were only saying what a fine evening it was. We heard you kids yelling——"

"I say, chaps," gasped Nipper in a hollow voice, "we've been spoofed again!"

"What!"

"Fooled—japed—diddled!" yelled Nipper. "Don't you understand? There couldn't have been any rain!"

"You're off your rocker!" gasped Handforth. "It was coming down in torrents——"

"Water was—but not rain!" interrupted Nipper quickly. "Don't you see? Those—those ingenious bounders must have rigged up some hose-pipes—and that rain was artificial! It was done deliberately to send us scuttling indoors!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Brewster & Co.!"

"Who else?" snapped Nipper. "Of course it was Brewster & Co.! We heard them in the darkness not five minutes ago. Besides, they grabbed Handy, didn't they? Come on!"

A dark suspicion had come into his mind. Like the wind he ran back towards the paddock, the other Removites streaming after him shouting excitedly. When they arrived at the fire they found it blazing as merrily as ever. The grass was wet, but there was no further rain. Nipper had dashed straight to the spot where the big supply of fireworks had been left.

"I knew it!" he ejaculated dismally.

The tarpaulin was on the ground—the fireworks had gone!

"Raided!" groaned Nipper. "And we fell into the trap like a crowd of infants! All our fireworks bagged!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

There was a wild commotion, and there was much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

"Of course, it was a perfectly fair raid," said Nipper, "and I don't think we were so much to blame, either. I've never known rain that felt so much like real rain!"

Discoveries were quickly made. In the darkness, some distance from the fire, in three directions, hosepipes were found. They were connected to the school hydrants. The nozzle of each hose was fitted with a "rose" similar to those which are used on watering-cans. The ends of the hosepipes were propped in specially designed wooden crooks, which were fixed into the ground. The hosepipes pointed upwards, so that the "rain," soaring up for some distance, descended over a wide area like genuine rain. This "stunt" was just as brainy as all those other stunts

which had happened on this day of surprises. "Well, it's no good crying over spilt milk," said Nipper philosophically. "We shall have to be satisfied with the official display. Rotten, of course, but without any fireworks——"

"I say—look!" hissed Handforth, suddenly grabbing Nipper's arm.

"Eh? What the——"

"Look at those shadows over there against the hedge," muttered Handforth. "Don't you see? There are some chaps there! Those River House japers haven't gone yet!"

"By Jove, I believe you're right!" shouted Nipper. "Up, Remove! Come on—all together! Charge!"

— —

CHAPTER 17.

A Surprise for St. Frank's!

HAL BREWSTER & Co., in point of fact, had been taken unawares.

The sudden return of the Removites found them more or less trapped. They had rushed towards the hedge, hoping to break through; but that hedge was of the thick-set variety, and nothing short of an army tank could have got through it in a single charge. So the River House boys had crouched down, hoping to get away by stealth.

When the Removites charged, Brewster & Co. had no chance. They made a wild dash for the nearest opening, but they were too late. They were hemmed in a corner of the paddock.

"Here, I say! Whoa!" panted Brewster. "Steady, you chaps——"

He said no more, for Nipper and Watson and Tregellis-West, hurled themselves upon him. Handforth was dashing enthusiastically at Norton and Kingswood and Robinson. The River House contingent was a comparatively small one—not more than a dozen at the most. As a result they were wiped up in about two minutes.

It was a hectic fight while it lasted, but the raiders hadn't an earthly chance. Having been soundly bumped until nearly all the breath was knocked out of their bodies, they were dragged to their feet very much dishevelled and disordered.

"Now, you funny merchants," said Nipper breathlessly, "we'll trouble you for our supply of fireworks."

Hal Brewster gulped; Ascott and Glynn babbled incoherently; the others were incapable of saying anything.

"You—you dangerous maniacs!" shouted Brewster at last. "You crazy idiots! Why didn't you give us a chance to speak?"

"Never mind about speaking," said Nipper. "Where are our fireworks?"

"We haven't got them!" shrieked Brewster.

"Here, come off it——"

"You disbelieving chump, we didn't take your silly fireworks!"

"Wha-a-at!"

It was a long-drawn-out ejaculation of dismay from the Saints.

"But—but we thought——" began Nipper.

"You're always thinking!" roared Brewster. "You jumped on us before because you thought we'd done something. Now you jump on us again. You're too dangerous to be let lose on a peace-loving community!"

"But—but that rain?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Listen to this—and listen carefully," interrupted Brewster in a hard voice. "We only came here for one purpose, and that was to grab you, Handy, and tie you in our Scouts' truck as a guy. We did that, and we were satisfied."

"I wasn't satisfied!" retorted Handforth, glaring.

"We were just going away, Nipper, when that rain started," went on Brewster, transferring his attention to the captain of the Remove. "Well, you chaps buzzed off like the wind, and we couldn't understand it. You see, it wasn't raining where we were standing."

"By Jove!" said Nipper, taking a deep breath.

"And I don't mind admitting we saw something," went on Brewster deliberately.

"What did you see?"

"Find out!"

"Look here, you silly River House chump——"

"You were japed—yes—but we're not guilty," continued Brewster. "What's more, we're not going to tell you who is guilty. If you're so jolly clever, you can find it out for yourselves!"

"Yes, and when we're in stronger force we'll wipe up the ground with you!" said Kingswood darkly, as he dabbed a bruised nose. "You rotters! You——"

"I say, you fellows, we're awfully sorry, really," said Nipper earnestly. "You can't blame us for jumping to a wrong conclusion. I mean, you were on the spot, and——"

"He's right, you chaps," said Brewster with a feeble grin. "This time it really was a misunderstanding. We'll call it pax."

"Good man!" said Nipper heartily, as he clapped Hal Brewster on the back. "But look here, Hal. Do you honestly mean to stand there and say that you saw somebody bag our fireworks?"

"We did," grinned Brewster.

"Why didn't you do something to stop them?" demanded Handforth excitedly.

"We wouldn't have dared," said Brewster, awed.

"Do—do you mean that it was somebody you couldn't fight?"

"Yes, rather!"

"St. Frank's chaps?" asked Travers incredulously. "Seniors?"

"Nobody connected with St. Frank's at all," replied Hal, shaking his head. "But I tell you honestly that we couldn't lay a finger on them. Quite out of the question. That

sort of thing isn't done. It's against all the rules. But, by Jove, we chaps take off our hats to those japers!"

"You're talking in riddles!" growled Handforth, exasperated. "Why the dickens can't you——"

"Look!" said Nipper, his voice suddenly sharpened by an awful suspicion. "Oh, my only Uncle Jeosopha! Look over there!"

A powerful Roman candle was in operation some distance away up Bellton Lane. It was one of the best of its kind, sending forth great masses of coloured lights, and then, as a conclusion, a great shower of sizzling things which made queer noises not unlike the cuckoo.

"For the love of Samson," said Travers, his eyes opening wide, "that's one of our special 'Cuckoo' Roman candles! Don't you remember we picked them out of the list? They cost three bob each, too! We bought half a dozen as a novelty——"

"But—but look again!" said Nipper. "Those fireworks are going off in the Moor View meadow. The girls are having a spree."

"With our fireworks!" breathed Handforth. "But—but——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Brewster & Co.

"The girls!" said Nipper, the whole devastating truth coming to him with the shock of a thunderclap. "Irene & Co.! It was the girls who rigged up those hose-pipes—the girls who bagged our fireworks! Oh, my hat!"

"We saw 'em," said Brewster contentedly. "They didn't see us, of course, but you can bet we were surprised. Never saw anything nippier in my life. Smart? Smart isn't the word! You'll quite agree that we couldn't touch them," he added, grinning. "Quite against the rules to fight with girls, you know. Besides, we were jolly glad to see your fireworks being bagged!"

But Nipper wasn't listening.

"What did I tell you, Handy?" he asked in a sad, small voice. "Didn't I say from the very first that there was something funny about the whole business?"



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"Funny?" repeated Handforth, with a start.

"Yes, rather! Funny that the japers should have been thoughtful enough to protect our books in the Form-room desks," said Nipper. "Funny that Archie's carpet should have been protected by tin-lids."

A wild howl of dismay went up.

"You—you mean that the girls worked all those japes to-day?" gurgled Handforth.

"Of course they did—and that explains everything," said Nipper. "What a chump I was not to think of it before! There isn't a boy in existence who would have been so careful to do no damage! Only girls are thoughtful like that!"

CHAPTER 18.

The Jape of the Term!

NIPPER was angry with himself. He had had that clue in his hands all day, but never once had he guessed the true solution.

"The whole mystery is explained, you chaps," he said sorrowfully. "We wondered how Brewster & Co. could have got into the school, didn't we? But now that we know the girls did the trick—why, it's easy! Don't forget that Vera Wilkes *lives* at St. Frank's, and the girls had a holiday to-day!"

"By George! And now I come to think of it, Old Wilkey was a bit easy with us, wasn't he?" asked Handforth. "I'll bet he guessed the truth—and that's why he wasn't keen on an inquiry!"

"Old Wilkey's a sport," said Nipper. "But about the girls. Vera could have got the keys without any trouble. She admitted Irene and Doris and the others, and they set all those giddy traps in the Form-room. Don't you understand? Vera could have placed those special 'caps' under our Form-room, she could have nipped into the Common-room and fixed up that gadget in the telephone-box."

"Yes, by Samson, and while we were at lessons she and some of the other girls could have faked up that affair in my study," said Travers. "Forrest's cigarettes, too, and those rummy things under Archie Glen-thorne's couch. With Vera in the plot it was as easy as falling off a form."

"And we never suspected," said Reggie Pitt, with a sigh. "But how could we? How could we possibly believe that girls could be so brainy? I'll bet my sister was one of the ringleaders!"

"When girls really get going there's no telling what they'll do," said Nipper. "They've put it across us properly to-day, you chaps. Let's take it in a sporting spirit. Let's show them that we appreciate a good jape when we see one. Come on!"

"Where are we going?" went up a shout.

"To the Moor View meadow," retorted Nipper crisply.

They went, and Brewster & Co. trailed on behind, although they made up their minds to keep well in the background. They were not exactly looking their best.

The Removites entered the Moor View meadow in a great crowd, and they found Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, Marjorie Temple, Vera Wilkes, Phyllis Palmer, Betty Barlowe and all the other Moor View girls gathered round a great roaring bonfire. Roman candles were going off merrily; rockets were being prepared. Coloured fires were blazing in fine style.

"Hallo, you chaps!" sang out Irene gaily. "Come on! Everybody welcome!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other girls fairly shrieked with merriment.

"I do hope you're enjoying *our* fireworks," said Nipper politely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've twigged, then?" cried Mary Summers, running up. "I say, you chaps, we do feel a bit mean about it. But a jape's a jape, isn't it?"

"We take off our caps to you," said Nipper promptly. "You've licked us—you've whacked us!"

Irene chuckled.

"Well, we felt that it was up to us to do something a bit special," she said modestly. "You see, Miss Bond, our headmistress, sprang a little bombshell a week ago. She forbade us to buy any fireworks. Said they were too dangerous, if you please!"

"Sheer rot, of course," put in Doris indignantly.

"Fireworks are not for girls," continued Irene, with a sniff. "There would be a politely-conducted display with special men to handle the fireworks, but we girls were strictly prohibited from buying any fireworks with our own money."

"So you bagged ours?" asked Nipper, grinning.

"Well, it was the only thing to be done," explained Irene, her eyes twinkling. "That's why we worked that 'rain' jape. You see, Ted had been talking pretty freely, and we knew all your plans."

"Just like the chump!" said Church in disgust.

"You silly fathead!" roared Handforth. "How the dickens was I to know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Naturally, we did buy a few fireworks—strictly on the q.t.," added Irene demurely. "We had to have some to manufacture those little gadgets of ours. I hope you found them all right?" she added politely.

"We found them," said Nipper, with a nod. "Thanks awfully! We had a high old time to-day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps you will remember, too, a little incident which took place last week," went on Irene, her voice hardening. "Ted here

(Concluded on page 44.)

The Editor would like to hear from all his readers—write to-day.



NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HEAR, hear, Margaret Mattersby (Glasgow). I quite agree with you that "the NELSON LEE LIBRARY is the best paper any boy or girl could get." With regard to the number of boys at St. Frank's, I can only say that it is a very big Public school, on a par with Eton or Harrow. Mr. Brooks, in writing his stories, never has occasion to bring in all the boys; so I cannot tell you the exact number. As you say, our author "keeps his pages alive"; he has the power of "bringing mere names from the pages until they seem real characters." I agree with you in this, and I am sure you will agree with me that Mr. Brooks has quite enough to do in handling those St. Frank's boys he has already "brought to life," without having to deal with the rank and file. It is enthusiasts like you who can do so much good in bringing the Old Paper to the notice of non-readers, who do not at present realise what they are missing.

* * *

The St. Frank's colours, Lily Ive (Deptford), are red and blue, and the colours of the Moor View School are magenta and green.

* * *

The series of St. Frank's stories dealing with the boys' adventures in India appeared in 1928, "St. Margaret's" (Cowes)—Nos. 118 to 123, 1st New Series, dated August 4th to September 8th of that year. The other series you ask about, starting with Handforth's barring-out, commenced in No. 82, 1st New Series, November 26th, 1927, and ran to No. 89, January 14th, 1928.

* * *

A good description of Nipper will appear in this Talk, Kenneth R. Humphreys (Hucknall), in due course.

Glad to hear, George Wilfred Lawson (Leicester) that you have been reading the Old Paper since 1920, and that you will always continue to do so. Eleven years, not out! That's the stuff to give 'em!

* * *

You can buy hair dye at any chemist's, "H. E. B." (Luton), and it doesn't cost pounds, either. But if I had red hair like you, I'd be proud of it, and should not want to change it for something commonplace. Both Buster Boots and Kirby Keeble Parkington have red hair, and boast about it.

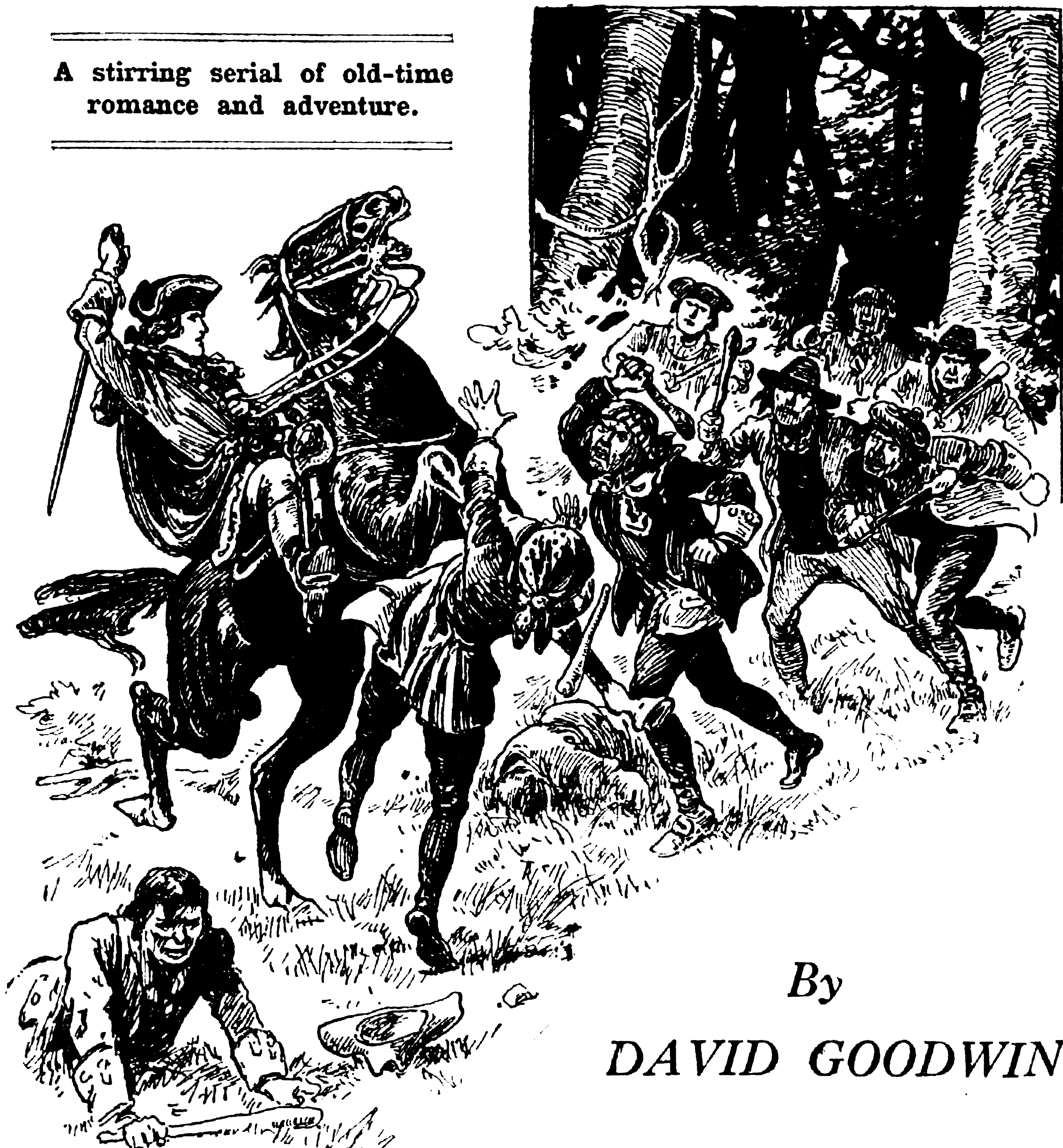
* * *

Here are three more brief pen-sketches of well-known Sixth-Formers: **WALTER REYNOLDS**.—A chemistry fiend. At most times of the day he is to be found in the lab., making the most dangerous experiments. He is a prefect, but he dislikes his duties, as they keep him away from his experiments. Even sports come second with him, although he is pretty good at sports, too. It is generally believed in the school that one day he will end up by blowing himself to fragments. **GUY SINCLAIR**.—A dandified senior with a taste for flashiness. Mean and vindictive by nature, with an exaggerated superciliousness of manner. Hated by the fags, whom he bullies. Curiously enough, he is excellent at most sports, and a really brilliant cricketer. For this latter quality alone he enjoys a considerable popularity. **LESLIE STANHOPE**.—A studious fellow is Stanhope. He writes remarkably good poems and essays, and is generally regarded as one of England's coming literary giants. He is the editor of "The Senior School Magazine," and is something of a highbrow.

With pistol and sword Dick Forrester fights his enemies!

Outlawed!

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By

DAVID GOODWIN

Crossed Swords!

QUICKLY the sheriff snatched at his pistol. But Dick was quicker. Before the man could withdraw it the young outlaw dealt him a buffet that knocked him out of the saddle.

The sheriff landed on his back. Dick, springing down from Satan's back, gave his worship's horse a cut with his hand that sent it flying at a gallop over the moor with the pistol still in the holster.

Then Dick turned and faced the sheriff, who had now scrambled angrily to his feet.

"You villain!" roared the sheriff. "You knave and traitor, you have played me false!"

"I beg your pardon," said Dick, standing coolly by Satan's side, "I have fulfilled my engagement to the letter. I promised to bring you to deal with Dick Forrester, and here he is."

"What do you mean, rascal?" cried the sheriff. "Where is he? Who are you?"

"Richard Forrester, at your service!" said Dick, bowing.

His worship gasped in amazement. "Otherwise called Galloping Dick!" added the young highwayman blandly.

"Ha, you scoundrel! Then I have you at last!"

"Is it so?" said Dick innocently. "Faith, perhaps you are right. I had thought it was the other way about."

The sheriff looked uneasy. He saw his horse, cantering over the moor, a mere speck in the distance. The pistol from his belt was gone, and the other was being carried away by the vanishing horse. The lieutenant and his troopers were many miles behind.

"So you have played me this trick—shaken off my men, and brought me here alone, thinking to go free!" cried the sheriff furiously, advancing upon Dick.

"Not altogether," replied the highwayman. "I have dealt with sheriffs and their men before, and I do not think my neck has been much in danger this day, save only when I first entered the room at the farm. You might have had me then. But the reason I brought this about was that I feared for the safety of some friends of mine."

"Friends of yours?" bawled the sheriff. "Who are they?"

"Even a highwayman may have friends," said Dick coolly. "Possibly, if you were suddenly stripped of your riches and position, you would find you had less than I. But I refer now to the worthy Bullfords, whom I fear might suffer for their kindness to me."

"Ay, I'll see to that!" cried the sheriff, stamping his foot. "They sheltered an outlaw from the King's justice, and dear shall they pay for it!"

"We will see," retorted Dick. "There is a matter to settle between us. Two minutes ago it was my painful necessity to knock you off your horse. It was more to my taste than shooting you, which was the only other way. But I am here to give you full satisfaction for the blow. Draw, Master Sheriff, and on guard!"

Their blades crossed.

"Blood and hounds!" raged his worship. "You scum of the roads! Be you gentleman or tinker, I'll lay you on the heather and cheat the gallows of their due!"

"If your sword is as doughty as your

tongue, I have made a bad bargain," replied Dick coolly, parrying with the slightest turn of his wrist a ferocious thrust the sheriff made at him. "It would be poor fun had I brought you here with so much trouble, to be pinked through the ribs by you at the end of it."

"'Twill be your fate, whether or not!" cried the sheriff. "My only grief is that, having killed you with a clean sword, I cannot, for my own honour, hang your body on a gibbet afterwards!"

"I will endeavour to keep your sword clean, since you so admire it!" murmured Dick.

Sweeny Attacks Again!

THE sheriff was not lacking in courage, and he had some good measure of skill with his weapon. If his temper drove him to rough words, it must be owned he had been sorely set back by the cool wit and resource of the young highwayman, and his pride was galled to the quick.

He made a furious onslaught on Dick, and was surprised to find how near he came to killing his man, yet failing somehow to do it. Dick made an attack in return, and again took the defensive. Then it was that the sheriff perceived that his cool young adversary was only playing with him.

Good swordsman as he was, his worship found himself no more than a mouse in the hands of a cat before Dick's lightning rapier. The sheriff showed no fear, but his set face told that he saw his fate before him. He expected to hear sneers and taunts from the young highwayman, but Dick said no word.

One last desperate attack the sheriff made. There was a twist, a flash, and his worship's sword flew into the air and fell tinkling upon the stones a dozen yards away.

The two men stood face to face, looking into each other's eyes; neither made a sound. The sheriff's face was pale, but he did not speak. The point of Dick's sword was at his breast. His worship's lips moved silently as if in prayer. Dick spoke first.

"You are a gentleman after all," he said.

"Do not mock me," muttered his worship hoarsely. "Make an end quickly!"

"I was about to remark," said Dick, still keeping his point at the sheriff's breast, "that I knew it upon our first meeting. Had

HOW THE STORY BEGAN

DICK FORRESTER, formerly a young highwayman, has been deprived of his estate and fortune by the trickery of

HECTOR FORRESTER. This is only the beginning of Dick's troubles, for he next falls foul of

CAPTAIN SWEENEY, the notorious leader of a gang of footpads, and is also wanted by the King's Riders for assisting his former comrade of the road

RICHARD TURPIN, the famous highwayman, to escape capture. Dick is forced to become an outlaw, and he and Turpin ride off together. They are pursued by Riders, but make their escape after a fierce fight. Turpin goes off on a mission, arranging to meet Dick three days later. After two unsuccessful attempts on his life by Sweeney, Dick takes refuge at a farmhouse. A sheriff and three men arrive on the scene. Dick, unrecognised, offers to help them capture himself! By strategy he leads the sheriff, alone, to a moor, and there reveals his identity.

(Now read on)

I not, I should not have arranged this affair. Your life is mine. I give it you on one condition."

"What do you mean?" asked the sheriff.

"If you agree," continued Dick, "you are at liberty to hang me whenever you may take me. It is your duty. But I require a safeguard for my good friends the Bullfords of Ryestack. Give me your word of honour that you will bring no harm upon them for the part they have taken in this matter, and I put up my sword."

The sheriff stared at him in amazement.

"No harm shall come to the Bullfords," he said at last, his voice low and hoarse. "I give my word."

"And touching your men—the lieutenant and the two troopers?"

"I answer for them, too."

Dick lowered his point, bowed, and stood back. Then he held out his hand, which the sheriff grasped.

"I will now take my leave of you," said Dick, "for yonder come the lieutenant and his two troopers over the hill, and they have met and caught your runaway horse."

"If I catch you I must hang you yet," said his worship.

"It is your plain duty—if you catch me," replied Dick, smiling. "So far you have but ridden alongside Black Satan. You have yet to see him in front of you. I beg of you, observe."

And as the troopers and the lieutenant came up Dick swung himself on to Black Satan's back, and with a wave of his hat, shot away at full gallop across the moor.

Dick pulled up at a hostelry in the woods, and made good cheer for himself and Satan. Whilst there he bought a strong carthorse from the landlord and presented it to an old cottar who was grieving for the loss of his own, which had been his sole livelihood. Dick rode on with the gratified man's blessings ringing in his ears.

"With all the guineas of the highways dropping before the muzzle of my pistol," thought Dick to himself, "it were strange if I could not spare half of them to those in need. And now for a search through the forest for Turpin."

Long and wide did Dick ride, but it was a fruitless search indeed, for he could get no news of his comrade. When dusk began to fall he was six miles beyond Ulchester, and, feeling disheartened, he came out from the broad high road that leads through the woods to Hensleydale.

"If I do not get news of him soon, I shall ride south again and take a purse from Hector Forrester at Fernhall itself," mused Dick. "'Tis strange that Turpin—Egad! What is that behind the trees?"

The young outlaw's hand flew to his pistol-butt in a moment, for Dick was no longer to be caught napping, and what he saw aroused his suspicions. An instant later there was a shot from the wood, a bullet

snicked his ear, and six or seven dark forms rushed out upon him.

"Cut him down!" cried a voice that Dick knew too well.

Sweeny's men had laid an ambush for him, and the footpad leader himself gave the order. Dick fired in the direction of the voice, and an oath of rage answered him. Swiftly he emptied the second barrel into one of the others and wheeled smart round, bringing Black Satan on to his haunches.

"Let out at 'em, Satan!" cried Dick.

His second pistol flashed twice as the men rushed at him, and two of them bit the dust, to rise no more. Black Satan's forelegs lashed out, scattering them.

Dick withdrew his sword, and its whirling blade kept the rascals at bay for some seconds. One big, fat rascal made a determined rush, but the young highwayman pinked him in such a manner that he ran away down the road, howling like a gored bull-pup.

"The bridle! Get hold of the bridle!" shouted Sweeny's voice from the background. "Rouse yourself, ye sluggards! Hang it, if I were not crippled I would have had the whelp down before this!"

The check was only momentary. The assailants were so many that they swarmed round in spite of Satan's lashing hoofs and Dick's own sword thrusts. To charge through the men was impossible at such close quarters—one or other would have caught hold of the bridle, which would be disastrous.

"Here come the others!" cried Sweeny. "Now, lads, are you going to let this one cub defy a dozen of you? Up, and take him!"

A shrill whistle sounded through the wood, and up came five or six more of Sweeny's men, who joined in the fray. So completely was Dick cornered that he could not hold out against so many, and despite his swift rapier and Satan's hoofs and teeth he saw he had little chance.

The Mystery Rescuer!

AT that moment a cry of warning arose, and the sound of many hoofs rang down the road. Round the corner came a tall man on horseback with a dozen mounted serving-men behind him. No sooner had he set eyes on the affray than he set spurs to his horse and dashed forward.

"What, one against a mob?" he cried in ringing tones. "Forward, boys, and scatter the villains!"

A medley of yells arose as the stalwart horsemen charged into Sweeny's men, laying about them lustily with swords, whips, staves, and anything they had to hand. Dick, freed from his assailants, joined them with a cheer, and soon the footpad gang was scattered in all directions.

The tall man rallied his servitors behind him again and turned to Dick.

"I trust you are unhurt, sir?" he said pleasantly.

"Thanks to you," said Dick, "for the knaves were pressing me mighty close when you came to the rescue. I am eternally your debtor, sir."

"Good!" said the tall man, who was of some fifty years of age, richly dressed, and of handsome features and bearing. "Could we do otherwise, seeing a single youth make so gallant a stand against so many? But who may the knaves be?" he added, looking down at one of Sweeny's men who lay lifeless on the road. "I took them for a sheriff's posse, but they seem strangely ill-clad for that."

Dick began to wonder who this stately-looking stranger was who had no scruple about charging through what he supposed to be a sheriff's posse. So for the moment he said nothing concerning Sweeny, but waited.

"I see you have shot three of them," said the stranger with a keen glance at Dick. "My felicitations to you, sir—a good riddance. You, I perceive, have been daring enough for the good cause to be marked out as dangerous. I will say no more—'twere indiscreet to wag the tongue too freely here on the high road, but you may count on these men as on myself. I am honoured to meet you."

"Od's pilikins!" thought Dick. "Whom have I fallen in with? Is this some man of fashion who recognises me and has a taste for highwaymen's society? If not, what does it mean?"

"Have you far to ride, sir?" said the stranger.

"Far or near is all one to me," replied Dick. "I have no house these days that opens to me."

"By this misfortune that came upon you, and in which it was my good luck to give you aid, I need not ask if you are one that love the good old days—that you are of those who hope for better times?"

"Ay, you say truly!" laughed Dick. "I hope for better times; that is my trade, and I have done little else this long while. Yet the times do not mend."

"The day is coming, sir—the day is coming!" cried the stranger. "Soon we who are loyal and true shall see it and strike a good blow for the right. I saw by your swordsmanship and bearing that you were no sour Whigamore. But my tongue runs away with me; this is no place for such matters. Since you say you are riding free, I pray you do me the honour to be my guest this night, and as long as you will favour me by staying. I am Lord Durisdeer of Tolleshunt."

Dick bowed.

"You cover me with obligations," he said, "in saving my life and bidding me to your hospitality. But before I join you under

your roof it is but fair to tell you my name. I am Dick Forrester, and I own," he added, laughing, "that 'tis not every man who cares to risk opening his doors to me."

"Say no more!" cried Lord Durisdeer. "I welcome you the more gladly. Dick Forrester? Ay, surely I must know the name. But let us leave matters till we are housed and our knees under the oak; I will keep you in the open no longer. Believe me, under my roof all have the good cause at heart."

"Now what the plague is the good cause?" thought Dick, as they rode on together at the head of the stalwart horsemen. "However, burn me if I care. If my Lord Durisdeer is so blithe to welcome me, owing him my life, it would be poor manners to refuse him. All causes are alike to Galloping Dick. On then, and let us see."

The rode along, chatting pleasantly, till they entered a spacious park. Through a long avenue of cedars they passed to a noble old house, half castle and half manor house, with wide lawns, oriel windows, and a high, old ivy-grown tower at one end with a lofty turret. It reminded Dick of his own lost Fernhall. Though scarce so large, it was yet a house of which any prince might be proud. Yet Dick saw signs that, lordly as it was, it had an air of having fallen on worse days than it had known in times past.

The great doors were thrown wide by serving-men within as Durisdeer and Dick rode up. But Dick had explained to his host what manner of horse Satan was, and my lord, much interested, rode round with him to the stables, and watched while Dick tended his steed's wants. Moreover, Dick took care that Satan was in a stable where he could most easily be reached in a hurry, and this, too, Durisdeer noticed and approved.

"You do well," he said. "I, too, keep my favourite horse where I may be speedily on his back if need be, for who knows in these days— But let us go in."

More puzzled than ever, Dick entered the house with his host.

"Tolleshunt is bare to-day, compared with its former beauty," said Durisdeer. And truly the great hall and lofty rooms, though well-appointed and deep in comfort, did not hold the rich treasures of goldsmith's work and sumptuousness that so good a house generally showed. "But what would you? Our treasures have perforce gone into the melting-pot. The cause needs every guinea that can be given by those who are loyal to it. Here comes my daughter Phyllis."

Dick had not seen so well-favoured a girl for many a day. She was not more than seventeen, pretty, with chestnut hair and splendid hazel eyes. Lord Durisdeer told of the adventure, and the girl looked at Dick with flushed cheeks, noting his alert bearing and cool, ready eye.

(Continued on next page.)

OUTLAWED!

(Continued from previous page.)

"Well done!" she said enthusiastically. Bare Tolleshunt Towers might be of gold candlesticks, but never did Dick sit down to a better feast nor a merrier one. But the key to the puzzle was kept to the last, when the board was cleared and the wine and fruit were left. Then Lord Durisdeer rose, and, passing his goblet over the crystal finger-bowl with a sweep, cried: "To the King over the water."

In a flash Dick understood. His rescuer was one of those still loyal to the house of Stuart—a Jacobite, who, undismayed by the failure and defeat of the year '15, still hoped to place the exiled prince upon the throne of England, and was ready to risk fortune, title and life so that he might strike a blow for him whom the Whigs called the Pretender.

Lord Durisdeer had imagined Dick was beset by those who wished his removal, and who would hang him for treason, supposing Dick to be a Jacobite like himself. Durisdeer's daughter echoed the toast with flashing eyes.

"Was Dick a Jacobite? He had never given the matter a thought. But he had eaten of the salt of Tolleshunt, and Lord Durisdeer's enemies were his. He leaped to his feet.

"King James!" he cried, and drained his goblet to the dregs. "An exiled prince may count on a ruined man!"

(Many stirring adventures await Dick Forrester in the near future—rely on your highwayman pal for plenty of thrills in next week's rousing instalment.)

HANDFORTH THE GUY!

(Continued from page 38.)

scoffingly declared that girls were no good at japes!"

"By George, so I did!" ejaculated Handforth, startled.

"And a good many of you other boys supported him," said Mary, with a sniff. "You dared us, in fact, to jape you. Well, we've done it! Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly," said Nipper in a thin voice. "We give you best, girls. You've won all along the line!"

"Spoken like a man!" laughed Irene. "Well, there's no ill-feeling, is there? It was all in fun, you know."

"Ill-feeling!" echoed Handforth boisterously. "I should think not! Jolly good luck to you! It's been the jape of the term!"

"Thanks! Now, how about joining in our fireworks display?" asked Irene sweetly. "If you behave like good boys you can stand round and watch."

"Ha, ha, -ha!"

And now that the little mystery was explained and everybody was in a thoroughly good humour, the Glorious Fifth was celebrated in right royal style. It didn't matter now whose fireworks they were. They looked pretty good, anyway!

THE END.

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