

"Ah, Crannis!"
 Matt nearly fell into the tray of burning oil!
 Advancing down on him from the door of the laboratory was the tall figure of the Dean, accompanied by a well-dressed stranger.
 "This is Crannis, our science master, Sir Claude!" Dr Granite was saying. "Crannis, I'd like you to meet one of our governors. This is Sir Claude Pootle, head of Carbox Chemicals. A man of science, too, eh, Sir Claude?"
 Sir Claude had a large white moustache and clear blue eyes.
 "Running an experiment I see, Mister Crannis!" he said cheerfully. "Smells a lot better

than it looks, eh, what!"
 Matt's brain turned over like lightning and the answer came up with almost superhuman speed.
 "Saponification of animal fats, sir!" he announced.
 "Blogg's process, you'll remember. I propose to make the boys manufacture soap this afternoon!"
 "Capital!" Sir Claude beamed. "But don't you use concentrated acid? We've a new process at the plant now-days. Just you tip in some concentrated nitric acid. It'll precipitate your higher fatty acids and simplify the whole process."

I'll say it will, thought Matt. It'll precipitate my fish and chips, too. Why don't they remove themselves and leave a chap in peace? Crikey, how I'm going to scoff that grub!
 The thought was short-lived. Dr Granite was obviously anxious to be off. He glanced uneasily at his watch and mentioned that lunch would be getting cold.
 "Ah, the scientist forgets such things as food and drink!" Sir Claude laughed. "Especially when he's got an important experiment, eh, Crannis? Here, let me give you a hand!"
 And, before poor Matt could lift a finger in protest, Sir Claude snatched up a bottle of acid.

work on poor old Matt. By the time he regained his room, he was ravenous. He knew he had to eat. Had to eat or bust!
 Fish and chips or peas and faggots! No matter which, it had to be good, solid food that would quiet his raging interior. The fried fish shop! He remembered how he had passed it fourteen days before. He remembered the lovely smell, the bustling, sizzling sound. He must go there—even if Dr Granite and a forest of frozen upper lips stood in his way.
 There was a fire escape at the end of the attic corridor. Matt pulled on a very old mackintosh and a cloth cap. Just as he was going out, his eyes fell on the thick tome—"Lives of Men of Principle." He remembered the secret box he had constructed in the massive tome. On impulse he grabbed the "Lives" and tucked it under his arm.
 Matt opened the window and climbed out on to the fire escape. Clinging to the shadows, he crept down the metal stairway and reached ground level.

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"About a cupful, I'd say!" he said cheerfully.
 He proceeded to pour the concentrated acid into the boiling oil. There was a tremendous hiss, and a cloud of acrid-smelling smoke shot towards the roof.
 "Fine!" Sir Claude commented. "Now just leave it for a few minutes, Crannis, then filter it off. You'll find you've got what you want—and a great deal quicker. Well, Dean, don't hang about. I'm hungry—what have we for lunch today?"
 The two men walked rapidly out of the laboratory. Matt grasped the chip basket and lifted it out of the fat.
 Huddling in the bottom of it was a mass of blackened chips and some things that looked like cinders and were probably the cod cutlets.
 The concentrated acid had done its job well. Matt's orgy of fish and chips was a thing of the past! He was too heart-broken even to go and hunt up some of the slops they called food in the dining hall.

Silently he managed to reach the postern gate and slid out into the world beyond St Michael's.
 Behind him, on the cool night air, a young voice was singing the "Beagling Song" and the stirring notes made Matt feel ashamed of himself!
 Soon he reached the built-up part of the town, and by sticking to the back streets, he managed to reach the area of the fish and chip shop without appearing in the light of a lamp.
 At last he smelt the fragrant odour of the most delectable of foods—and he had a sudden attack of cold feet!
 Dr Granite had not been at supper. Was he lying in wait for Matt? Was this chip shop no more than a well-baited trap?

Double Trouble.

OBVIOUSLY Matt's attempts to indulge in contraband cooking would lead to trouble. For another fortnight he managed to hold himself in check.
 He carried out his duties as a master without any trouble. His cricket team played their first match of the season—and won! Once again everything looked swell.
 But Matt's luck changed on the evening when the school cook served fish and chips, or at least, an apology for fish and chips!
 The fish hadn't even been dipped in batter. It was tasteless and pallid. The chips—well! Whoever had cut them had put a sort of permanent wave on each of them. They tasted like plastic door-stops!
 But although the meal was a mockery of the real thing, it was enough to start the demon at

supper. Was he lying in wait for Matt? Was this chip shop no more than a well-baited trap?
 Matt had to take a chance! At that moment he would have done ten years in the Foreign Legion for a newspaper full of chips! He took a deep breath and plunged forward.
 Pulling up his coat collar and tugging the peak of his cap, Matt joined the queue at the counter. There were five people in front of him and by the time it was his turn he was frantic with hunger.
 "What's it to be, guv?" the chap behind the counter asked.
 Matt wiped his tongue round his lips. "Four pieces of cod," he said. "And—five bobs' worth of chips!"
 He watched the man fish around in the smoking oil for the fish. Nice big pieces they were, too, with lots of knobbly bits of batter. And the chips looked a dream.
 The portions were duly wrapped and passed over to him.

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