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THREE HALFPENCE.

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A Disgrace To His Form!

By Owen Conquest.



TEDDY CATCHES A TARTAR!

Squeezing his hands together, and trying hard to keep back his tears, the hapless Teddy passed down the row of grinning faces. The fags fairly chortled. "That's what he wanted!" grinned Wegg. "He wouldn't be happy till he got it!" chuckled Pipkin. "Now he's got it!" There was no pity for the sneak of the Third!

The 1st Chapter.

Run Down.

"Something's up!" remarked Jimmy Silver, pausing, egg-spoon in hand, at the tea-table in the end study.

"Sounds like a blessed riot!" remarked Lovell.

There was a sound of running feet in the Fourth Form passage outside, and a roar of distant voices towards the staircase.

"Coming here!" said Raby, as the thudding footsteps approached the door of the end study.

Crash!
The study door was hurled suddenly open.

A diminutive fag, panting for breath, burst into the end study at top speed. He came with a slam

against the tea-table, unable to stop himself in time.

"Oh!" roared Newcome, as he dropped his teacup.

The cup was nearly full of tea, and the tea was hot. It dropped on Newcome's knees. Newcome's roar could have been heard at the end of the passage.

"Teddy!" exclaimed Lovell, starting up.

It was Lovell minor of the Third Form who had burst into the study so suddenly.

"They—they're after me!" panted Teddy.

"You silly young ass!" roared Newcome. "Look what you've done! Why, I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Newcome. He mopped the knees of his trousers

with his handkerchief, spluttering with wrath. But for the fact that Teddy was Lovell's young brother, Newcome would have attended to him before he attended to the trousers, with dire results to Teddy.

"I'm sorry!" panted Lovell minor. "They're after me—oh dear!"

"Who are after you?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"The Third!" gasped Teddy. Jimmy's question did not really need an answer; it was answered by the appearance of the pursuers at the door.

First and foremost came Wegg of the Third, raging. Behind him appeared Grant and Stacey, Pipkin and Wyatt, and a crowd more of the Classical Third.

"Here he is!" roared Wegg.

"Have him out!"

"Yah!"

"Now, then," shouted Jimmy Silver, "outside there! What the thump do you fags want here?"

"We want that young sneak!" roared Wegg.

"Outside!"

"Rats!"

Jimmy Silver strode in the way as the wrathful fags began to invade the study. Teddy Lovell backed behind the table. Newcome went on mopping his trousers. Newcome certainly did not care if the fags captured the runaway and lynched him. His knees were rather scalded.

But Raby and Arthur Edward Lovell backed up Jimmy Silver. Wegg & Co. receded into the doorway and passage again. But they did

not go further. It was evident that they were in deadly earnest. Their earnestness was proved by the fact that they had invaded the Fourth Form quarters—dangerous territory for fags on the war-path.

"Shove him out, then!" shouted Wegg.

"Have him out!"

"Yah!"

"Now, what's all the trouble about?" asked Jimmy Silver pacifically. "Do you want Lovell minor to come to tea?"

"To—to—to tea!" stuttered Wegg. "No fear! We want to scalp him!"

"To lynch him!" howled Pipkin. "To make an example of him!" shrieked Grant. "Shove him out! Hand him over! He's sneaked! We're going to rag him!"



A DISGRACE TO HIS FORM!

(Continued from previous page.)

"You're jolly well not!" growled Arthur Edward Lovell. "Clear off, or we'll come out to you!"

"Yah!"

"Funk!" roared Wegg. "Hiding in a Fourth Form study! Funk!"

Teddy Lovell quivered.

With seven or eight infuriated fags after him, it was no wonder the new boy in the Third had taken to his heels. But the taunt struck him, all the same. He clenched his fists and glared at Wegg.

"Now, order!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're having tea, and we didn't ask for company. Buzz off, like good little fags!"

"Hand that sneak out, then!"

"Oh, Lovell minor's staying to tea!" said Jimmy Silver affably. "Ain't you, Teddy?"

"Ye-e-es, if you like!" quavered Teddy.

"Yah!" roared the Third.

"Sneak!"

"You young rotters!" shouted Lovell. "How dare you call my brother a sneak?"

"Because he is one!" retorted Wegg independently. "He was sneaking to the Head the other day, and to Mr. Bohun, and now he's been sneaking to the prefects! Yah!"

"It's not true!" snapped Lovell.

Wegg pointed an accusing and somewhat grubby forefinger at Lovell minor across the study.

"Ask him!" he answered.

"It's not true, is it, Teddy?" asked Lovell, with a sinking of the heart.

Teddy grunted.

"Oh, dash it all!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily. "Anyhow, we can't have fags kicking up a shindy in our quarters. Clear off!"

"We're not going without that sneak!"

"Clear off, I tell you!"

"Will you hand him over?"

"No!"

"Then we'll jolly well take him! Come on, chaps!" bellowed Wegg.

And James Wegg valorously led a rush into the end study—in the teeth, as it were, of the Fistical Four of the Fourth. And for the next minute or two there was pandemonium in that celebrated apartment.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Sneak of the Third.

"Collar him!"

Crash!

"Yah!"

"Kick them out!"

"Rescue, Fourth!"

"Yah! Oh, my hat! Ow!"

There were eight of the fags, and only four of the Fourth—but the Fistical Four were mighty men with their hands!

Wegg & Co. had taken on a large order, and they found the execution thereof a difficult matter.

Teddy Lovell seemed too breathless and dazed to take part in the conflict. He stood looking on, breathing in great gasps. Fourth and Third were mixed up in a wild and whirling combat.

But the alarm was general all along the Fourth Form passage now, and juniors were swarming along to the end study.

Mornington was the first to arrive, and then Erroll, and then Rawson and Van Ryn and Pons and Conroy and Higgs and Oswald—and they did not stop to ask what the matter was.

It was sufficient for them to know that the Third had invaded the passage sacred to the Fourth Form!

They piled in without stopping for words.

With the odds heavily against them now, Wegg & Co. did not have the ghost of a chance.

They were smitten hip and thigh, knocked right and left, and hurled out of the study.

One after another the yelling fags bumped in the passage.

But there the fags' troubles did not end. The Fourth-Formers were warm-

ing to their work. They collared the fags and rushed them along the passage—some by their necks, some by their ankles.

With a rush and a roar the invaders went whirling towards the stairs, amid yells of laughter from the Fourth.

Teddy Lovell came near sharing their fate. Flynn of the Fourth collared him in the study, and dragged him towards the door, taking him for one of the enemy. Lovell rushed to intervene.

"Let him go, Flynn, you ass!" he shouted.

"Sure, I'm booting him out!"

"Yaroo!" roared Teddy.

"You ass, it's my minor! Let him go!" Lovell grasped Flynn, and dragged him off the roaring Teddy.

"You silly chump—"

"It's all right, Flynn!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Lovell minor's a visitor!"

"Oh bedad!" said Flynn.

"You wild Irish idiot!" yelled Teddy.

"Shut up, Teddy!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Sure, it's a nice visitor ye've got," said Flynn. "Faith, and I think I'd better boot him!"

Jimmy Silver led Flynn gently to the door, and pushed him out. He closed the door after him. There was still a whirling scene going on at the stairhead, where breathless and furious fags were being rolled down.

In the end study the Fistical Four remained alone with their visitor. They were rather dusty and breathless.

"Now we'd better get on with the tea!" gasped Raby.

"Precious little left!" grunted Jimmy Silver, surveying the teatable ruefully. "There's the eggs on the floor—"

"Trampled on!" growled Raby.

"Nice for the carpet."

"And the jam's in the fender."

"And the teapot in the armchair! Oh, my hat!"

"Keep smiling!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Nothing's so bad that it mightn't be worse!"

"Br-r-r!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. set the study to rights, as well as they could. The remains of the tea supplies were rescued, as far as possible. The eggs, certainly, were too far gone for rescue, and Jimmy, after a careful inspection of the jam, decided that there were too many cinders in it for it to be edible. Still, there was bread and there was margarine, and there was a tin of sardines. It was possible to keep smiling—with an effort.

"Sit down, Teddy!" said Jimmy Silver, with great politeness. "I hope you like sardines."

"Not much!" said Teddy.

"Oh!"

"I can make them do," said Teddy. "Don't be a little pig, Teddy!"

growled Arthur Edward Lovell.

Teddy stared at him.

Arthur Edward had not addressed him in that manner before. Arthur Edward had hitherto erred on the side

of excessive patience and forbearance with his spoiled younger brother.

"All serene—all serene!" said Jimmy Silver hastily. "Besides, there's a cake. Luckily, that was in the cupboard! I'll get it out!"

Teddy Lovell sat down to tea, and found that he could get on very well with the sardines. It transpired that he had not yet had his tea, and that he was hungry.

"Now, what's all this new trouble about, Teddy?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell, after a long and gloomy pause.

Teddy grunted.

"Those cads—" he began.

"What cads?"

"The Third!" snapped Lovell minor.

"Don't be a young fool!" said Lovell gruffly. "They're not cads; and if you've been sneaking they were quite right to rag you! I wouldn't have interfered if you hadn't been my brother, and I oughtn't to have done it, anyhow."

Teddy scowled.

"Ahem! Try the cake, Teddy?" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"So you've been sneaking?" resumed Lovell.

"I told Bulkeley!" answered Teddy sullenly.

"What did you tell him?"

"Those cads were jeering at me," said the fag passionately. "I'm not going to stand it. They hustled me in the Form-room, because I told the Head the other day about what—"

"You shouldn't have gone to the Head."

"Rot!"

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed to swallow something with difficulty.

"I'm not going to be persecuted," said Teddy indignantly. "I don't like those rotters. They make fun of me. They chip me because I asked the matron for a hot-water bottle one night. They call me spooney."

"You shouldn't be a spooney, then."

"They call me a sneak, too."

"Well, you are a sneak!"

Teddy jumped up, with a flushed face.

"If that's how you're going to talk I'll get out!" he exclaimed.

"Get out if you like! I dare say Wegg & Co. are waiting on the stairs," said Lovell caustically.

Lovell minor was heading for the door, but he stopped. He had forgotten the hostile fags for the moment.

"Easy does it, Lovell, old man!" said Jimmy Silver soothingly.

"Teddy's new to Rookwood, and he's not used to our ways yet."

"I don't want to get used to them, either!" said Teddy bitterly. "I don't want to stay here. I hate the place!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled his brother.

"Father said you'd look after me here," said Teddy.

"I have looked after you. I've stopped you smoking cigarettes in Peele's study, anyway!" said Lovell grimly.

Teddy's eyes glittered.

"Yes, you beast! The last time I went there they kicked me out, because you'd been punching them."

"Good! Every time they speak to you I'm going to punch them!" said Lovell, with a nod. "I'll stop that kind of thing, at any rate!"

"You meddling beast!" said Teddy.

"Ahem! Won't you try the cake,

Teddy, old top?" asked Jimmy Silver, with elaborate affability.

"No, I won't! Hang your cake!"

"Oh! Ahem!"

"I don't want you to look after me, Arthur, if it comes to that," went on Lovell minor. "You just let me alone, that's all. I can look after myself all right, and I don't want your opinion—see?"

"Is that why you bolted in here when the fags got after you for sneaking?" grunted Lovell.

Teddy breathed hard. In point of fact, his independent words did not quite fit in with his proceedings. He had rushed to his brother's study as the only possible refuge.

"And what are you going to do now?" continued Lovell. "You've got to face them sooner or later."

"I'll go to the Head."

"More sneaking!"

"Do you think I'm going to be chased about and ragged just as they like?" howled Teddy shrilly.

"Stop sneaking, and they'll let you alone!"

"Mind your own business!"

With that, Master Edwin opened the door, stamped out into the passage, and slammed the door after him with a terrific slam.

"The fags will get him now!" remarked Raby.

"Let them!" said Lovell morosely. "I dare say a ragging will do him good. I'm fed up with the little rotter!"

"Ahem!"

"He doesn't know Rookwood ways yet, you know," murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, I know what you think of him!" said Lovell bitterly. "When he came here I was making you fellows fed up with the fuss I made about him. I—I even told you, Jimmy, that your young cousin in the Third wasn't good enough for him to make friends with. Why, young Algy Silver's worth fifty of him! I can see I was a silly fool."

"I thought you'd see that in time," remarked Jimmy Silver, rather drily.

"Well, I can see it now, and I'm not going to worry about him any more. Let him go to the dickens his own way!" snapped Lovell. "I'm fed up!"

And with that the subject dropped.

A few minutes later, however, Arthur Edward Lovell left the end study. And although Arthur Edward had stated that he was fed up with his minor, his chums knew well enough that he was going to see how Teddy was getting on. Arthur Edward's bark was a good deal worse than his bite.

The 3rd Chapter. Warned Off!

"There's the little beast!" murmured Wegg.

It was the hour of the evening preparation for the Third Form at Rookwood. The Third were all in their places, with the exception of Lovell minor, when Mr. Bohun came in. And Lovell minor entered the Form-room at the heels of the master.

Since the shindy in the end study the Third had seen nothing of the new fag. Lovell minor had kept very carefully out of the sight of his Form-fellows. But the wrath of the Third had not abated; indeed, it seemed, like wine, to improve with keeping.

"Sneaking" was barred in the Third, and the fags intended to impress that fact upon Teddy Lovell's mind by the most drastic measures—the more drastic the better, in the opinion of Wegg & Co.

Teddy certainly did not understand the enormity of his offence. At home, as a spoiled and petted child, he was accustomed to running to somebody with a tale of woe, if anything failed to meet with his lordly approval. Both his parents were very fond of him, and extremely indulgent to him; and for that reason, probably, they were a good deal happier at home when Teddy was at Rookwood. The boy's wilful and exacting selfishness was the work of their over-indulgent affection, and they found the result worry enough.

Teddy, spoiled pet as he was, was an incessant trouble at home. But the unfortunate fag, suddenly shifted into entirely new surroundings, could not change his ways as suddenly. It had not even occurred to him as yet to change them.

That his Form was against him he was only too well aware; but he was very far from considering that the fault was on his side. Older fellows might have made allowances for the very obvious faults of Teddy's home training; but the fags of the Third were not much given to reflection.

They saw in Teddy a spoiled, selfish, consequential little ass, with

most unpleasant ways, and they were not likely to go easy with him.

In the presence of Mr. Bohun the fags could make no open demonstration; but the looks they gave Teddy were a promise of what was to come after prep.

The outcast of the Third had avoided them till prep, and now he had come in at the Form-master's heels; but after prep Mr. Bohun would not be there to protect him.

Teddy replied with a sullen scowl to the dark looks he received, and took his place in the Form in silence.

But prep did not begin at once. There was a surprise in store for the Rookwood Third.

Mr. Bohun glanced over his Form, coughed, and addressed them.

"H'h, h'm! My boys, I have received a complaint from Lovell minor and—"

"Sneaking again!" murmured Wegg.

There was a hiss among the fags.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Bohun sharply. "I have received a complaint from Lovell minor that he has been subjected to persecution, and that violence has been offered him. I desire to impress upon you all, very seriously, that the new boy is not to be molested in any way. Lovell minor is under the impression that what you call a ragging is in contempt."

"You bet!" murmured Wegg.

"Did you speak, Wegg?"

"N-n-no, sir!" gasped Wegg.

"Very well. Kindly remember, my boys, that I shall keep observation upon you, and that if there is any molestation of the new boy it will be very severely punished. That is all. We will now proceed."

And prep proceeded.

The feelings of the Third Form were too deep for words, if words had been possible just then.

What Mr. Bohun thought of Lovell minor and his complaints they did not know, but they knew that Mr. Bohun was not a gentleman to be trifled with.

The projected ragging of the sneak faded away into the limbo of the things that were not to be.

Lovell minor caught the looks that were turned upon him, and grinned.

Mr. Bohun meant what he said. Whatever his reflections were, he had his duty to do, and he could not allow "raggings" for whatever reason.

Lovell minor felt that he was secure at last.

Indeed, he regarded his invoking the Form-master's protection as something in the nature of a master-stroke.

Prep went on quietly.

When that infliction was over, Mr. Bohun quitted the Form-room, leaving the fags to their own devices.

The Third generally used their Form-room as a Common-room. They had the right of access to the junior Common-room, but in that apartment they were very much overborne by the Fourth and the Shell. In their own quarters they were monarchs of all they surveyed.

After the Form-master's departure the Third gathered in a crowd, noisily and angrily discussing the situation.

Lovell minor, happy in his new sense of security, was putting his books away in quite a cheerful frame of mind.

"The awful sneak!" said Wegg, in measured tones. "Actually getting old Bohun to jaw us!"

"Worm!" said Silver. "Better let him alone, though. Old Bohun means bisney."

Wegg set his teeth.

"After his sneaking!" he said.

"Well, it's no good looking for trouble with a giddy Form-master. Let the sneak alone. He's not worth touching, anyhow."

"I suppose a chap could pull his nose!" said Wegg. "That isn't molesting him, is it? Old Bohun said molesting."

"Well, pulling a sneak's nose ain't molesting," said Grant, with an air of deep consideration. "Anybody got a dictionary?"

"Good!" exclaimed Wegg. "We'll jolly soon see. Here, don't let that cad get out till we know."

Teddy Lovell was making for the door. Stacey and Pipkin ran to it, and put their backs to it.

"Let me open that door!" bawled Teddy.

"You can open it," said Stacey grinning. "We ain't molesting you."

"I can't open it while you're standing against it."

"That's your look-out. We can stand against our own Form-room door, if we like, I suppose?"

"Let me pass!"

"We're not stopping you!"

"Get a dick, somebody!" said Wegg.

Teddy Lovell seized the door-handle and dragged at it. Stacey and Pipkin kept the back of their heels planted against the door firmly. It did not move. Lovell minor gave them a glare of passionate anger.

"Let me open the door!" he hissed.

"We're not stopping you. Open it."

"How can I when you've got your feet against it?" shrieked Teddy.

"Is that a riddle?" asked Stacey politely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotters!" panted Teddy.

He clenched his fists.

"Punch away!" said Stacey, thrusting out his nose invitingly.

"We ain't going to molest you. You hit first, though. Go it! You hit first, and we'll see."

Lovell minor controlled his wrath. If he punched Stacey's nose it was not much use complaining that he had been molested.

The strictest Form-master could hardly take the view that a fellow whose nose was punched was not justified in punching back.

And Stacey was almost quivering with the yearning to punch back, so long as he had received a punch which would put him in the right.

There was not the slightest doubt that if Teddy placed himself out of court by hitting first, he would go through the most painful experiences immediately afterwards.

Teddy tugged at the door again. Two or three more grinning fags joined Stacey and Pipkin at the door.

It did not open. There was no chance of that. And, meanwhile, Wegg, with intense seriousness, was consulting the dictionary as to the precise meaning of "molest."

"Molecular—"

"That's not it."

"I'm getting to it. Molecule—"

"Blow molecule!"

"Moleskin—molest— Here it is. Molest! Listen, you chaps," said Wegg. "Here's molest."

"Read it out."

"Shut up a minute, then."

And Wegg read out solemnly:

"Molest—to trouble, disturb, or annoy. From Latin molestus, troublesome."

"Blow the Latin! We don't want that."

"Trouble, disturb, or annoy," said Wegg, closing the dictionary with a snap. "Nothing there about pulling a fellow's nose."

"Nothing at all," agreed Grant.

"I say, though, it annoys a fellow to pull his nose, doesn't it?" asked Silver II thoughtfully.

"Suppose it does," said Wegg.

"Well, wouldn't that come to the same thing?"

"I don't see it!" said Wegg decidedly. "We're not to molest the cad! That means, trouble, disturb, or annoy him. But if it meant anything about pulling a chap's nose, it would say so. 'Frinstance, 'spose it said 'Molest—pulling a chap's nose! That would be quite plain. But if it means it, why doesn't it say it?"

"And it doesn't!" said Wyatt.

"No, it doesn't! Besides, there's different kinds of annoyance," went on Wegg, with great acumen. "If you annoy another chap by molesting him, that's molesting. But if you annoy him another way—'frinstance, old Bohun annoys us by bothering us with evening prep, doesn't he?"

"Yes, rather!"

"But he wouldn't call that molesting us, would he?"

"Nunno!"

"Then the Head disturbs, troubles, and annoys us when he jaws us—but that's not molesting. The Head wouldn't dream of molesting anybody—but he disturbs, troubles, and annoys jolly nearly everybody, one way or another."

"Right on the wicket!" said Grant. "You ought to be a lawyer, Wegg!"

"I can think a thing out," said Wegg modestly. "Annoying a chap is molesting him, when it's molesting, but when it isn't, you know, it isn't! That's how I make it out. Pulling a chap's nose isn't molesting him, any more than making him do Caesar in the evening when he'd rather be in the gym."

"Right as rain!"

"And I'm jolly well going to pull his nose!" said Wegg. "Keep that dick handy, in case he sneaks to Bohun, and we have to explain."

"I say, old Bohun knows what's in the dick."

"Yes, but it's just as well to have it in black and white, in case he's forgotten," said Wegg sagely.

Wegg crossed over to the door, where Teddy was fuming.

Lovell minor met him with a glare of defiance.

"I'm not going to molest you," said Wegg scornfully. "I'm just going to pull your nose—like that!"

"Yoooooch!"

Wegg made a sudden grasp at Teddy's nose, and enclosed it with his finger and thumb, in a grip that was like a vice.

Lovell minor gave a muffled howl of anguish.

"Go it, Wegg!" yelled the Third, in great delight.

"Grooogh! Led do by dose! Oooooooh!"

But Wegg did not let go. He compressed his grip harder, keeping Teddy at arm's length. Wegg was a much bigger fellow than Teddy, and he easily avoided his savage kicking and clutching, as he gripped his nose. Teddy Lovell struggled and roared wildly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Stacey & Co. had left the door to gather round and watch, yelling with laughter.

The form-room door suddenly opened.

Perhaps, after his warning to the fags, Mr. Bohun had deemed it judicious to stroll back in that direction and ascertain that his instructions were being observed. Anyhow, there he was.

"I—I haven't molested him, sir!" stammered Wegg.

"What? I saw you pulling his nose—"

"That—that wasn't molesting him, sir! I—"

"Nonsense! Hold out your hand!"

"Oh dear!"

Swish!

"Now the other hand, Wegg!"

"But the dictionary says— Ow— ow—"

"The other hand—at once!"

Swish!

"You may place this cane on the desk, Grant. I trust I shall not have occasion to use it again."

Mr. Bohun strode from the Form-room. Teddy Lovell, with a defiant grin at the fags, followed him out.

James Wegg stood wringing his hands. He was hurt. The fags surrounded him in a sympathetic group.

"Rotten!" said Grant. "Unjust! He didn't even let you say—"

"Wow-wow!"

"Didn't even let you explain—"

"Oh dear! My hands!"

He doesn't seem to know the definition of molest," said Pipkin warmly. "Ignorant, you know."

"In a Form-master, too! My hat!"

"Sheer ignorance!"

"Wow-wow-ow!" said Wegg, as he rubbed his hands. "Yow-ow-ow! Oh dear! Oh, crikey! Yooooop!"

The Third Form were full of sympathy. But the unfortunate Wegg,

Third went on, in loud and indignant tones:

"The fellow's a sneaking cad—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And we can't rag him for it, because he sneaks to the Form-master every time, and we get licked—"

"Shame!"

"He's a disgrace to the Third-Form!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Instead of licking us for ragging him, old Bohun ought to ask the Head to turn him out of Rookwood!"

"Bravo!"

"But he won't! Now, are we going to have that uppish young cad turning up his nose and putting on airs and graces, and sneaking—"

"No fear!"

"Well, something's got to be done, then," said Wegg. "I suggest sending the beastly little prig to Coventry! He's a disgrace to the Form, and he's barred by the Form from this minute on! Agreed?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You bet!"

"Bravo!"

There was no doubt that the Third Form agreed. Moderns as well as Classics were there, and they were unanimous. In all the Third Form of Rookwood there was no dissentient voice.

"Then he's going to be sent to Coventry!" said Wegg. "Not a fellow in the Form is to speak to him!"

"Not a syllable!" said Tunstall, the Modern.

he was looking more cheerful than for some days past. Mr. Bohun's intervention had had its result, and Teddy was relieved from persecution at the hands of his Form-fellows. He found it a great relief, and he was rather inclined to look upon it as a victory. Lovell came up to his minor as he spotted him standing near the fountain.

"Hallo!" he said gruffly.

"Hallo!" grunted Teddy.

"How are you getting on in the Third?"

"Much better," said Lovell minor, with a defiant look. "Mr. Bohun won't let them touch me."

"I've just heard them talking," said the Fourth-Former. "They're going to send you to Coventry for sneaking!"

"Eh—what's that?"

"I mean, nobody in the Third is going to speak to you again."

"I don't care!"

"You'll find it rather unpleasant when it begins."

"Rats! I don't want them to speak to me! I don't want you to either if it comes to that!" retorted Master Teddy independently.

"Teddy, old man," said Lovell earnestly. "It's not too late to put yourself right with your Form. Own up that you've done wrong—"

"I haven't done wrong!"

"You've sneaked—"

"I've had their caddish tricks stopped!" said Teddy viciously. "I'll go straight to Mr. Bohun if they worry me again! And, look here, Arthur, I want you to stop interfering with me! It was your fault that I've had to break with Peele and Gower and Lattrey in the Fourth!"

"If it was a fault, it's mine," agreed Lovell.

"Well, I want you to mind your own business!" said Teddy savagely.

"That is my business!"

"You meddling ass!" exclaimed Lovell minor. "I tell you I won't stand it! What business is it of yours if I smoke?"

"Lots!" answered Lovell quietly.

"Father asked me to look after you here. I can't prevent you from being a sneak, I suppose, and a spooney; but I can keep you from being a blackguard, and I'm going to! And, look here, Teddy, a lot of the Third know about your smoking in Peele's study. Suppose they took a leaf out of your book, and sneaked to the Form-master about it? How would you like that?"

Teddy started. That consideration had apparently not entered into his mind.

"They—they wouldn't!" he exclaimed.

"Why shouldn't they sneak if you do?" said Lovell bitterly. "Do you want it all on one side? Not that they will. They're inky little ruffians, but they're not mean enough to give a fellow away. That ought to be a lesson to you."

"Oh, rot!" said Teddy, rather uneasily, however.

"Look here, Teddy, it's not too late. Go to Wegg—he's a bit of an ass, but he's not a bad fellow, really—tell him you're sorry you sneaked, and you won't do it again, and ask them all to look over it. Then stop putting on airs and graces, and acting like a spoiled baby. Then you'll get on all right in the Third. I— Do you hear me, Teddy?" shouted Lovell.

Teddy had turned his back on his brother, and was walking away.

He certainly heard, but equally certainly he did not intend to heed.

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed hard as he looked after him. He was strongly tempted to rush after the cheeky fag, take him by the shoulders, and give him the shaking of his life. Never had Arthur Edward felt so keenly desirous of shaking Teddy.

But he restrained his wrath.

He walked gloomily away, with his hands driven deep in his pockets. He had done all he could, and it was useless. Lovell minor had to take his chance.

"The 6th Chapter. Sent to Coventry!"

"Pass the salt, Grant!"

Teddy Lovell made that request at the Third Form table in the dining-room. From the Fourth table Arthur Edward Lovell was looking across rather anxiously at the fags.

Grant seemed deaf.

He went on sedately eating his dinner, as if Master Edwin Lovell had not spoken.

Teddy stared at him.

"Will you pass the salt?" he asked, more loudly.

Still Grant did not heed. His face was expressionless as he negotiated a dumpling with his fork.

"Pass the salt, Pipkin, will you?"



"CAVE!" Teddy's nose was in Wegg's iron grip, and Teddy was dancing with rage and anguish, when the Third Form-master strode in. "Cave!" gasped Pipkin. "What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Bohun sternly.

like Rachel of old, mourned and could not be comforted.

The 5th Chapter. Down on Teddy!

"Hallo! What's on now?"

It was the following morning, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were sauntering in the quad after lessons. As they came by the archway that led into Little Quad, the buzz of many voices reached their ears.

There was a crowd under the arch. "The cheery Third!" remarked Newcome. "Up to some mischief, by the look of them."

The Fistical Four slowed down to glance at the fags in passing. It was evidently a meeting of the Third, and a very excited meeting. And they wondered if it had something to do with Lovell minor.

Wegg of the Third was addressing the fags, amid a good many interruptions. His look was fiery.

"It's got to be settled!" he was saying.

"Hear, hear!"

"He ought to be lynched!" exclaimed Pipkin.

"The sneak!"

"Go it, Wegg!"

Lovell flushed red. He had no further doubt whom the indignant fags were referring to. Jimmy Silver made a movement to walk on, but Lovell remained where he was, so his chums, exchanging a glance, remained with him. Wegg of the

"What?"

"Oh, no, sir!" exclaimed Grant eagerly. "The dictionary—"

"Grant! Fetch me the cane from my desk!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Grant fetched the cane, and Mr. Bohun swished it in the air. Wegg's inward doubts intensified.

"Hold out your hand, Wegg!"

"Wha-a-at for, sir?"

"I am going to cane you for molesting Lovell minor after my very clear warning to you, Wegg."

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Who will meet Dempsey?

A chat about the respective chances of Joe Beckett and Georges Carpentier in their great fight for the Championship.

I expect most readers of the Boys' FRIEND have been following with keen interest the recent performances of the big men in the boxing world, more particularly so when there seems every prospect of England once again producing a legitimate opponent to contest the World's Heavy-weight Championship with Jack Dempsey, the present holder.

It is exactly twenty years ago—in 1899, to be precise—since the title passed from an Englishman's hands, when the Cornishman, Bob Fitzsimmons, went down to defeat in eleven rounds before the all-conquering Jim Jeffries at Coney Island, New York.

From that date the world's heavy-weight crown has found a home in America, and the British race have almost despaired of producing a man worthy enough to contend the world's fistic supremacy with America's best.

Upon Jim Jeffries' retirement (May 15th, 1905) the title automatically passed to Marvin Hart, who was considered the "next best." Tommy Burns, by birth a French Canadian, but generally considered as an American, came along, and relieved Hart of the title, giving him a trouncing in twenty rounds at Los Angeles on February 23rd, 1916. Burns went from victory to victory, touring America, Australia, England, and France, beating all the champions of note, but met his Waterloo at Ruscutter Bay, Sydney, on

December 26th, 1908, when Jack Johnson, the famous negro, handed out a terrific lacing in fourteen rounds, the police intervening to save Burns further punishment.

Johnson's defeat by Jess Willard, the giant cowboy, must be fresh in the minds of most; and, although the title passed from the black race to the white, it still remained in an American's hands.

It must be put down to record that Jess Willard was the luckiest of all champions, considering the small amount of serious boxing he was called upon to do before being dragged from his farm to use his mountain of flesh and muscle against a very much dissipated negro.

Willard, with the full knowledge of his real worth, carefully side-stepped all and sundry, and devoted his time to picking up easy money in exhibition bouts and music-hall work.

Twenty-five thousand pounds, win, lose, or draw, was the sum that eventually lured him from semi-retirement to risk his title with Jack Dempsey, and it is well-known how the big cowboy went down to crushing defeat in this his first championship battle since he annexed the crown from Johnson four years previously.

Jack Dempsey is the new champion, and, it must be confessed, a worthy title-holder. Weighing just over thirteen stone, he is full of fire and

energy. He is reputed to be the hardest hitter in the world at the present time, and there is a certain element of truth in this, as witness the tremendous bombardment Willard was subjected to when he was battered all over the ring, and almost knocked out in the first round, despite his advantage of three or four stone in weight.

It is to dethrone this new champion, and incidentally bring the title back to England, the mother of boxing, that we are searching anxiously to find an Englishman fit and worthy enough to contest for this premier honour.

We have pinned our faith to so many in the past, only to have our hopes dashed ruthlessly to the ground. Gunner Moir, Iron Hague, Frank Goddard, and Bombardier Wells have all flattered only to deceive, the latter more so than the others put together.

Billy Wells has once again announced his intention to return to the ring to further try his fortunes; in fact, he is already fixed up for a series of contests; but Billy has disappointed us on so many occasions that we are compelled to look further afield for a man worthy enough to represent this country in International matches.

One man has emerged triumphantly from the ruck of British heavy-weights, and it is to Joe Beckett that we are now pinning our faith for the future. He is undisputedly the best all-round man we have had for years, being the possessor of the necessary qualifications that are essential to championship contenders. Beckett scales about thirteen stone seven pounds, and is full of grit, determination, and aggressive energy, which, coupled with an abundance of confidence and boxing skill, should carry him right to the highest rung of the ladder of fame.

He is the best heavy-weight boxer in Great Britain at the present time, having jumped into prominence in a

few short months by virtue of his great victories over Bombardier Wells, Frank Goddard, and the clever American, Eddie McGoorty.

He has one obstacle to surmount before meeting Jack Dempsey for the World's Championship, a meeting that Mr. C. B. Cochran, the famous promoter, is endeavouring to bring about in London early next year for a mammoth purse of £35,000. That obstacle takes the form of Georges Carpentier, the pre-

STANLEY HOOPER,



The famous Fly-weight Boxer, who has written this article specially for THE BOYS' FRIEND.

sent holder of the European Championship, who has in the past defeated all the British heavy-weights of note, including our ex-champion, Billy Wells, who twice fell before the wonderful Frenchman.

At the time of writing Beckett and Carpentier are matched for the heavy-weight championship of Europe, to take place on December 3rd at the Holborn Stadium, London, the winner of this fight to do battle with the great Dempsey.

Will Beckett survive this great ordeal; or, on the other hand, are we to be once again disappointed, as

we have been so many times in the past?

Personally, I think not, and will endeavour to outline to Boys' FRIEND readers why we may pin our faith to Joe Beckett to avenge the many defeats of British heavy-weight boxers in the past.

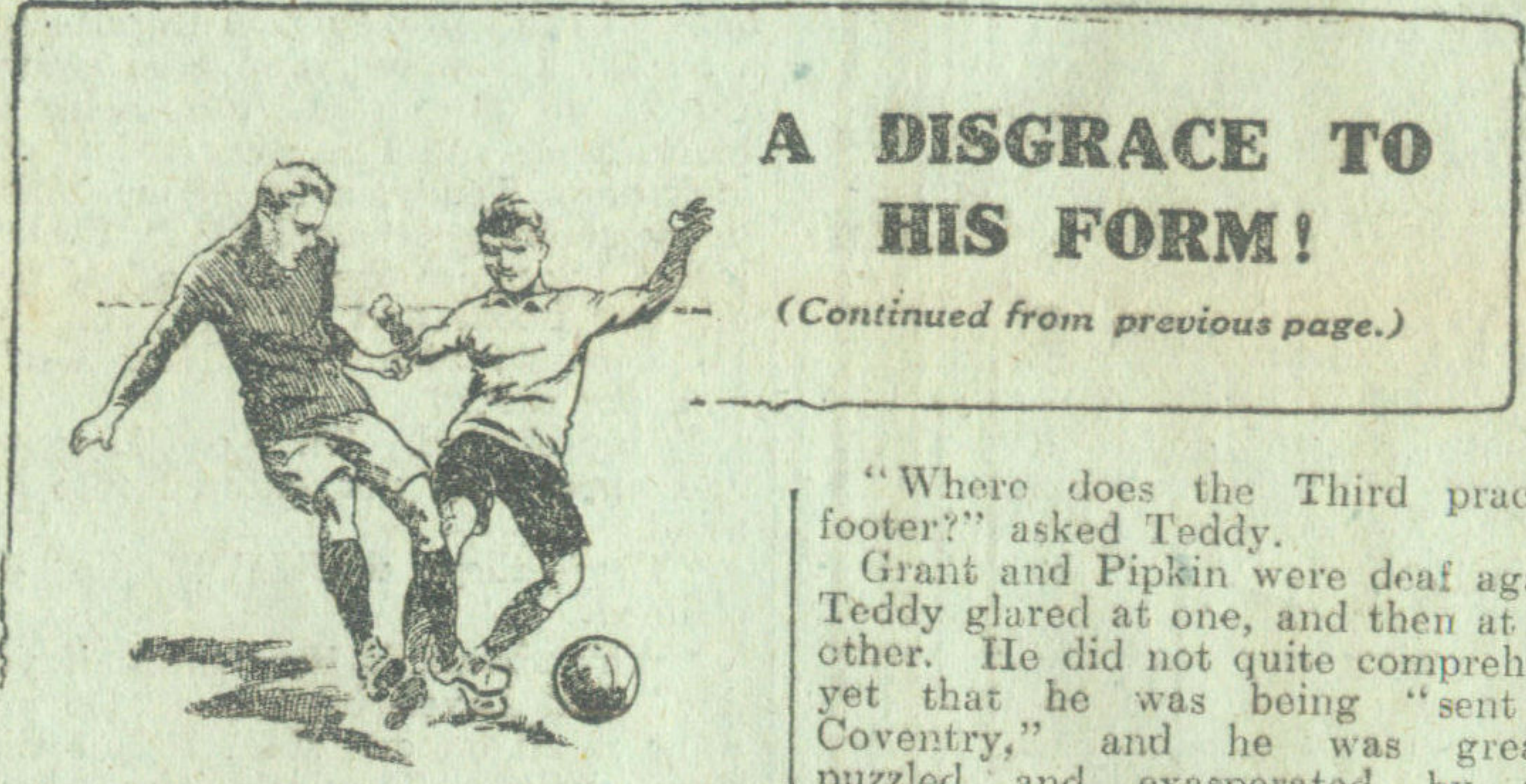
In the first place, Carpentier has served with the French Army throughout the recent great war. A very patriotic proceeding, you will all agree, but one that may very probably have cost the Frenchman very dearly, inasmuch as a long term of service with the Colours tends to rob an athlete of skill, suppleness of muscle (an essential quality to the boxer), and staying power. In fact, to put it mildly, Army service is usually of great detriment to the boxer, especially where boxing practice is not permissible or possible.

Carpentier has had very little boxing practice during the war, and therefore it is conceivable—I might say, more than probable—that as a boxing champion he has deteriorated considerably.

Waiving all this on one side, in my opinion, the Carpentier of pre-war abilities would have been extended to his utmost, and probably defeated, by the Joe Beckett of to-day.

We have good reason to believe that Beckett is a real champion in every sense of the word, and, taking everything into consideration, plus the stone advantage in weight that our champion will have over the Frenchman, I see little reason to doubt that Beckett—barring accidents—will triumph over Carpentier, and will be England's representative in a match with Jack Dempsey for the World's Heavy-weight Championship in the near future.

Stanley Hooper



A DISGRACE TO HIS FORM!

(Continued from previous page.)

"Where does the Third practise footer?" asked Teddy.

Grant and Pipkin were deaf again. Teddy glared at one, and then at the other. He did not quite comprehend yet that he was being "sent to Coventry," and he was greatly puzzled and exasperated by this peculiar development. Hitherto, though the Third had certainly been "down" on him, he had received a more or less civil reply to any observation it had pleased him to make.

"I asked you a question, Grant!" he breathed at last.

Grant looked with interest at his pudding. He did not seem aware that a sullen voice was speaking at his side.

"I'm going to begin footer," said Teddy, with rather a quiver in his lip.

"This is a jolly good pudding for once, Wegg," said Grant.

"Yes, for once!" agreed Wegg. "I'll have another helping, Pipkin," said Teddy.

The pudding was near Pipkin, and under ordinary circumstances he would have helped Teddy at once. Now he made no movement.

"Do you hear me, Pipkin?" Stony silence!

"You rotter, give me some pudding!" said Teddy, in a fierce whisper.

"Dear me, there is a great deal of chattering going on at this table," said Mr. Bohun. "Kindly talk a little less, my boys!"

"I want some more pudding, sir," said Teddy, in a loud voice.

Mr. Bohun looked along the table. "You may help yourself, Lovell minor."

"I can't reach it, sir."

"Well, ask one of the other boys to help you, then. Don't be silly!"

"I've asked Pipkin, and he won't," growled Teddy.

"Bless my soul! Pipkin, have you refused to help Lovell minor?"

"I haven't said a word to him, sir," answered Pipkin.

"Lovell minor, you seem much too ready to make complaints," said Mr. Bohun. "Pipkin, help Lovell minor to the pudding."

"Yes, sir." Pipkin helped Lovell minor—a re-

markably small helping. Teddy disposed of it in a couple of minutes.

"Give me some more," he muttered.

Pipkin remained unconscious. Teddy, with a furious look, rose to his feet and reached across the table at the pudding, and dragged it towards him.

"Lovell minor!" rapped out Mr. Bohun. "How dare you sprawl across the table in that manner? Sit down at once!"

"I want some more pudding, sir!"

"Sit down!" exclaimed Mr. Bohun angrily. "Have you no manners? Have you no sense of propriety? Sit down at once! Leave the pudding there! You do not require more than two helpings."

"But I haven't—"

"Silence! Sit down this instant!"

Lovell minor looked rebellious, but he sat down, relinquishing the pudding, almost choking with wrath. He was beginning to understand now how matters stood. He was feeling, and looking, rebellious; but he did not venture to disobey Mr. Bohun. Teddy had learned by this time that Form-masters had to be obeyed.

The sulky fag was consumed with anger and chagrin till dinner was over, and the juniors were dismissed.

The Third-Formers were grinning as they came out.

The sentence passed upon the sneak of the Third was beginning to take effect, and the fags were rather enjoying it; it was a good deal like a new game to them.

It was all the more interesting as a game, because Lovell minor's sulky and furious looks showed how much effect it had on him. If he had taken it quietly, and with an air of indifference, the fags might have tired of the game, but Lovell minor's looks were an entertainment in themselves.

In the passage, Teddy Lovell came up to Wegg & Co. with a black scowl on his brow.

"So you're not going to speak to me—what?" he demanded.

Wegg & Co. stared at him blankly without replying. A brick wall could hardly have been more expressionless and discouraging than that stare. Teddy clenched his fists in helpless rage.

"You hear me, Wegg, you rotter!"

"Teddy!" called out Lovell, as he came out of the dining-room with Jimmy Silver & Co.

Teddy Lovell did not hear his major.

"Can't you answer, Wegg?" he said between his teeth, his voice trembling with passionate anger.

Apparently Wegg couldn't. At all events he didn't.

"Come on, you chaps!" said Grant. "Tain't raining! Let's punt a ball about before lessons, and shake down those blessed dumplings."

"Right-ho!" said Wegg.

Biff!

Teddy's temper failed him as Wegg turned to follow Grant, as if completely unconscious of Lovell minor's existence. And Teddy's clenched fist smote James Wegg fairly on the nose.

Wegg spoke then. He couldn't help it. What he said was:

"Yarooop!"

"Teddy, you young ass!" shouted Lovell.

"Let him answer, then!" growled Teddy.

"Lovell minor!" Unfortunately for Teddy, Mr. Bohun was coming out of the dining-room at that moment.

"Boy, how dare you?"

"I—I—"

"You have complained to me of being ill-treated by boys in your Form!" exclaimed Mr. Bohun. "Yet I see you strike one of your Form-fellows entirely without provocation."

"It wasn't! He—he—!" stammered Teddy.

"I saw the whole occurrence," exclaimed Mr. Bohun. "Wegg was not even looking at you when you struck him."

"He wouldn't answer me," muttered Teddy sullenly.

"What? You dare to say that you struck Wegg because he did not answer you?" exclaimed Mr. Bohun in amazement. "Follow me to my study at once, Lovell minor. I shall punish you most severely. Come!"

"I—I—"

"Silence! Follow me at once!"

Mr. Bohun strode away, and Lovell minor, after an instant's hesitation, followed at his heels.

The fags looked at one another with delighted grins.

Wegg was rubbing his nose, but he was grinning, too.

"Oh, what larks!" murmured Grant ecstatically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags crept along the passage, to listen as near to Mr. Bohun's door as they could venture. There was a sound of swishing from the study, mingled with suppressed howls from Lovell minor.

"He's getting it!" chuckled Wegg.

"Good old Bohun! He's going it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's a Bohun and a blessing this time!" chortled Stacey, and the fags chortled gleefully.

Lovell of the Fourth stood near the big doorway with a clouded brow.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome went out into the quad.

Teddy came out of Mr. Bohun's study at last.

His face was pale, and there were heavy, unshed tears in his eyes. He started, as he saw the crowd of fags in the passage.

They did not speak. They lined up, for the hapless outcast to pass between two rows of grinning faces.

They expected him to scowl and glare; but the unfortunate Teddy was past scowling and glaring at that moment. He was only thinking of the ache in his palms.

Squeezing his hands together, and trying hard to keep back his tears, Teddy Lovell limped away, leaving the fags chortling in his rear.

"That's what he wanted!" grinned Wegg.

"He wouldn't be happy till he got it!" chortled Pipkin. "He's got it!"

"But he don't look happy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Teddy Lovell limped on, and his major joined him near the door.

Lovell's face was very kind and tender.

"Poor old chap!" he said softly. "You've had it hard, Teddy?"

"Oh! Ow!" muttered Teddy.

"The beast! Oh, the rotter! He'd no right to cane me! I wish I'd kicked his shins now!"

"Teddy, old chap—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Teddy.

And he went on, leaving Arthur Edward apparently attempting to gulp something down.

Lovell's look was very sombre as he joined his comrades in the quadrangle.

"How's Teddy?" asked Jimmy Silver, with as much sympathy as he could muster for friendship's sake.

"Teddy? Oh, I don't know, never mind him," muttered Lovell.

"Let's go and punt a footer, I'm fed up with him."

"Right-ho!"

And the subject of Teddy was dropped.

But Arthur Edward Lovell, fed up as he was, remained thoughtful while he was punting the footer with his chums. He was thinking of Teddy, and wondering whether he would ever get on better at Rookwood, and whether he could help him to get on better.

It he could, Arthur Edward Lovell's loyal affection would not be wanting, though in his heart he could not help acknowledging that the fags were right, and that Lovell minor was a disgrace to his Form.

THE END.

(Another long, complete story dealing with Teddy Lovell will appear in next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND, entitled "Barred by the Third!")

because the duke had a way of telling the horse to throw him off. The whistle was a signal understood by the intelligent brute to mean the time was come for him to buck and fight his hardest.

But the signal did not come, and the horse stood still.

"Get along, boy," said Steve, slapping Diabolo's glossy neck. The well-trained horse went along as ordered, and the crowd parted. Many were the grins that were exchanged by the spectators. The animal's manners were perfect. When on the broad grass verge at the side of the road, Steve set him off at a trot, and his action was flawless. The trot became a canter, and when at length he turned the beast, a quarter of a mile out of the town, he set him at a swift gallop, and thundered back to the crowd and the duke at Diabolo's top speed.

"What a gem!" he cried, his eyes dancing, as he dismounted and handed the horse back to Larchester. "I'd give anything I could earn in years for him!"

"Well, you've no need to give so much, old chap," laughed the duke. "The horse is yours!"

"But—but," stammered Steve, "I—surely I haven't earned him?"

"You've ridden him. I said I'd give him to the man who could, and five hundred dollars to boot!" said Larchester. "And I'm glad you have got him, too! I wanted an Englishman to have him. You've shown you're not afraid; you're a rider, anyone can see, and I know you'll be kind to him."

"Oh, shucks!" shouted the crowd protestingly. "What a swizzle! Any old guy could ride him!"

"Like to try?" asked the duke, turning to a man who was shouting loudly.

"Sure!" said the cowboy.

The next moment the young fellow was measuring his length on the ground. He got up again, dusting himself, and looking remarkably foolish.

"Anybody else?" asked Larchester.

But nobody else offered. Furthermore, as there were no really jealous ones there, Steve became the centre of their hearty congratulations, and was patted on the back until he choked.

"So-long, old chap!" said the Duke of Larchester, holding out a hand. "I go east on the evening train; but I'll maybe come back here after a while, and look at that horse. Be good to him, and he'll be good to you."

"And say," spoke up another man, a middle-aged fellow with a grizzly moustache, "if ever you want a change, just you come up to the ranch the duke has just left, and I'll give you a job. I can see you're a rider. If ever you care to be a puncher on the Double-Horseshoe Ranch, ask for me—Jake Collinson."

Steve's eyes gleamed. He had heard about the Double-Horseshoe Ranch. Only the best riders, the most reckless men obtainable, were ever employed there.

"I'd like to," he said, "but—well, I'll see if I can't persuade my father to let me."

"Good lad! A feller's no worse for stickin' to his old dad," said the foreman of the Double-Horseshoe.

"And ye'll have one friend there if ye start with us," said the young Canadian. "Ye've sort of taken the fancy of this crowd, and seven of us is Double-Horseshoe men. My name's Billy Steele."

"Thank you all," said Steve, and mounted his new horse proudly. More revolver-shots were fired—a salute to the lad who had won the horse they all coveted.

"Guess if ye've got far to go I'd not mind ridin' your pony out to your home," said Billy Steele. "I sure do want to cultivate your acquaintance."

The 3rd Chapter.

John Emberton's Story.

"My gracious! What a horse!" cried John Emberton, eyeing the beast his son dismounted from late that same night. "Where did you get that? Steal it?" He laughed.

"No, sir!" spoke up Billy Steele, also dismounting from Steve's quiet little pony. "I can testify that he won it fair and square, an' the man he won it from was 'most as pleased to lose it as Steve was to win it."

Steve introduced his new Canadian friend.

"And this is my dad. He's a prospector, you know."

"Pleased to meet you, sir!" said Steele, scraping his foot on the ground, for there was something about John Emberton that made most people call him "sir" and be-

have respectfully to him. John Emberton was a man of well past forty, clean-shaven, with a clever, refined face, and a look of mental as well as physical hardness about him. He and his son were alike in build and feature, and both looked very British.

"Glad to meet any of Steve's friends," he said. "You'll be hungry. I've got supper ready."

He waved towards a bell-tent, outside of which a camp-fire was burning. Steve off-saddled Diabolo, took off the bridle, and fixed hobbles to him. Steele did the same with the pony, and the two horses—already very good friends—went off in search of feed. The young fellows followed the elder Emberton into the tent, where a meal was already cooked in the frying-pan.

Fifteen minutes later both youngsters had eaten their fill, and Steele took out a bag of Bull Durham and a paper and proceeded to roll himself a cigarette. John Emberton lit his pipe, while Steve, who did not smoke then, sat back on a blanket and looked out through the tent opening, watching Diabolo, who was happily grazing the tender herbage that carpeted the little valley in which the Emberton camp was pitched, right in the heart of the Foxtail Mountains.

"Been high old times down at Big Horn," said Billy Steele at length. "Been sendin' a duke home, an' we sent him off in style. That horse was his."

"What will you do with a beast like that?" said John Emberton, eyeing his son through the smoke.

Steve started and flushed.

"I—I've been offered a job as cow-puncher on the Double-Horseshoe," he said. "After I'd won the horse I showed the foreman that I could throw a rope, too. I learned a lot those two years you left me behind in Wyoming with your friend Mr. Martin, the rancher there."

"So you want to leave me?" asked his father. "You're sick of prospecting?"

"I never did care much for it," said Steve. "It might be all right if we could do it on our own account and strike a big gold-mine. But I don't like this knocking about the country, prospecting for copper and silver, for a syndicate in Chicago. There's nothing in it."

"And you want to work on the Double-Horseshoe?" said the prospector. He turned to Billy Steele.

"What sort of a man is your boss?"

"Oh, we don't see much of him; he's blind!" said Steele. "Jake Collinson, the foreman, is our boss really."

John Emberton started a little.

"Blind?"

"Yep. He had some disease of the eyes about two years ago. Ain't been able to see since. His eyes are awful to look at now. They make me shiver sometimes."

There was silence for a long while. The prospector seemed to be lost in thought. But all the time he was eyeing his son very closely.

"But do you like your boss?" he asked at length.

"Not much. Got too bad a temper," said Steele. "If he could see and was able to boss us more I'd quit."

"H'm! And so Steve wants to work there? Well, I think you might give it a trial, boy."

"Oh, I say, dad!" exclaimed Steve, springing to his feet delightedly. "That's decent of you. But won't you be lonesome without me?"

"No more than I was before you started travelling about with me," said John Emberton. "But when I say you can work for the Double-Horseshoe, I mean, really, you'll have to work for yourself and me. It wasn't until Steele told me that Basnett was blind—"

"How d'you know the boss' name?" asked Steele.

John Emberton shrugged his shoulders.

"I have known him for seventeen years," he said quietly. "He has been the owner of the Double-Horseshoe for fourteen. I like you, Steele, and I think you're going to be a good friend to Steve. That's why I'm going to tell you a secret, something I've never even told Steve before."

"Whatever ye choose to tell me will be kept quiet," promised Billy Steele simply. "I'm only a roughneck, but I'm Canadian and honest."

"Well, then," said John Emberton, "I'll tell you what I know about Simon Basnett and the Double-Horseshoe Ranch."

He lit his pipe again.

"Seventeen years ago," he continued, "the owner of the Double-Horseshoe Ranch was my uncle—an Englishman, like myself. He was then an old man, and he sent to England for me. So I came out,

bringing Steve, there, who was then a baby of two, and his mother with me. Almost the first thing I discovered was that Basnett, then foreman, had been running things far too much his own way before I arrived."

"I certainly did hear as the place was once owned by a man named Browning," chimed in Billy Steele.

"My mother's brother," said John Emberton. "Well, I found out that Basnett was hoping to be left the ranch when my uncle should die."

Jasper Browning was very infirm—cancer. When I came out the old man at once seemed to like me, and one day he said he intended leaving the Double-Horseshoe to me if I showed that I was fit to look after it. For two years I worked hard, and Basnett grew to hate me. He tried many times to blacken me in my uncle's eyes. And one day a man was shot—a Mexican. Whoever shot the man, it was done in fair fight; but Basnett persuaded my uncle to believe that I'd done it. My uncle, who hated the taking of human life, was angry. He quarrelled with me. I left the ranch, after he had shown me a will he had made in favour of Basnett. Some months after I got away I received a letter from my uncle, bidding me return to him. I went, to find Jasper Browning dying."

The narrator paused and relit his pipe.

"My uncle," he resumed, "was almost too far gone to speak, but he told me a strange story. The will he had made in favour of Simon Basnett had been stolen. He had, however, made another, a later one, naming me his heir. I was to have all the big ranch. Most of the land would be mine, all the stock, all the buildings. He had hidden this second will, which made the first invalid. He had not wished to have a second one stolen."

"But he was very sick, and simply could not remember where he had cached the document. He knew he had written it, but couldn't remember anything else. I wanted him to write still another, and he began, but died before he could finish it."

"Tough luck!" said Billy Steele. "You went to law about it?"

"What would have been the use? As soon as my uncle died the first will mysteriously came to light, and Basnett claimed the ranch. I had nothing but my uncle's word, and few people believed that he had been sane when speaking to me. I got nothing."

"So for fourteen years Basnett has been doing you out of your rights!" cried Steve excitedly. "The ranch is yours, dad!"

"Ours," corrected John Emberton, smiling. "Ours by rights; ours actually, I hope, before we've finished. That's why I want you to go to work on the Double-Horseshoe. Listen!"

Steve Emberton and Billy Steele leaned forward over their knees, drinking in every word the prospector said. Billy's cigarette, neglected in his interest in the story, went out.

"For fourteen years," John Emberton continued, "I have been wandering up and down this country as a prospector, and that work has been Steve's and my living; but I've never missed a chance to work here in Montana, because here I'm prospecting for something else besides ore. Who knows? There might have been some man I should meet accidentally who could put me on the track of that missing will; for there is such a will yet. It is in existence; something always seems to tell me that. I'm ready almost to swear to it. Basnett never believed there was one, and thinks himself secure in his ownership of the Double-Horseshoe. I'm sure he never even went to the trouble to look for it. It's hidden in some out-of-the-way place, where nobody would ever dream of looking. It's four years since I was 'round these parts before, when Steve was staying down in Wyoming; but the last time I scoured every inch of the ground about the ranch. Nay, one night I even did a small burglary act—broke into the house, and searched there, however, without result."

"So, Steve, lad, that's why I'm willing that you should go to work for Basnett, and do your best to earn your pay, but also do your utmost to find that will."

"Rather!" cried Steve, his eyes gleaming.

"The fact that Basnett is now blind should help you," said John Emberton. "He'll not see in you any likeness to me. By the way, though, there's your name. That must be changed. Call yourself Harris."

"But," objected Steve, "I told the foreman it was Emberton."

"We'll soon put that right," chimed in Billy Steele. "Jake won't be goin' back to the ranch till to-morrow

afternoon. I'll ride back to Big Horn an' tell him not to blab Steve's true name to the boss. Jake's white, and will help. He ain't any too fond of Basnett himself. And if there's anybody else knows Steve's name, I'll tell him, too, that it's Harris."

"That'll help. Emberton isn't a common name in Montana," said the prospector. "Thanks, Billy, lad. I see you're going to be a good friend to Steve."

"Somehow," said Steele, "I don't think we'll be enemies. Steve's white; he looks it. I guess I'm real glad I rode out here with him this evening. Shake, Steve!"

Cow-puncher and Britisher shook hands heartily, and that hand-grip was the beginning of a real, true, loyal friendship, which was soon to be tried by fire and flood, by hardship, the hatred of enemies, intrigue, and close calls with death. It is good to be such friends as Steve Emberton and Billy Steele were going to be.

The 4th Chapter.

Joe's Vow.

Steve's eyes were rather moist, and his father's face was a trifle sad, when the Embertons said good-bye one following morning, after breakfast. For many years now these two had wandered together, the very best of friends, over the map of Canada and the United States, looking for various metals, employed by the Union Mining Company, of Chicago. The elder Emberton was very sorry at parting with his only son, as was Steve at separating from his father, elated though he was at the same time at the prospect of donning "chaps" and spurs and high-heeled boots, and of becoming a free rider of the ranges.

John Emberton had not stinted his son for money as Steve and Billy Steele rode down the mountain-side. In Steve's wallet rested one hundred dollars, with which he was to buy an outfit at Big Horn. He did not need a saddle; he already had two, the one handed over to him by the cow-boy Duke of Larchester along with Diabolo, and the one on his little pony, which Billy Steele was riding.

After some hours of easy riding, they found that Big Horn had quietened down considerably. Most of the participators in yesterday's revelries had gone back to their work. The Duke of Larchester had departed to take up his seat in the British House of Lords and his position as lord over one of the stateliest estates in England. Only a few men were about town, but these few included all the Double-Horseshoe personnel.

Jake Collinson was found and taken apart by Billy Steele. Billy told the genial foreman of the Double-Horseshoe that Steve wished to be known by the name of Harris. Without asking questions, Collinson agreed to remember this.

"Be ready to ride out with us at three o'clock," he said. "These boys have had too much holiday as it is."

The Double-Horseshoe "boys" looked sadder and quieter than they had the previous afternoon, it must be admitted. Dissipation cannot go on for ever. Most of them were "broke," although that was not what was troubling them most. A certain "headiness" was their complaint.

Steve spent an hour, whilst the horses rested, in buying his outfit. He had a splendid revolver and belt already, but he bought another pistol and holster, and strapped this on along with the old one. He secured a pair of bearskin "chaps" and silver spurs. When he donned these, he looked as merry a young cow-puncher as the best of them, and his brown face and straight far-gazing eyes of grey told everybody that, although may-be a Britisher, he was no tenderfoot, "just out," and preening himself in cow-boy rig-out.

Another, and very necessary purchase was a lariat, which he secured cheap. It was four-stranded rawhide, and was strong enough to drag an elephant off its feet.

He was twirling this above his head in circles, to try the feel of it, when a figure lurched up to him.

"Aha!" said the man, who was Jose Pascales, the Mexican, "so the little boy has become a lover of the vaquero's art. Bueno, senior! It is a pretty puncher it looks in its brave clothes."

Steve shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"Tired after last night's dance?" he asked, with a grin.

The Mexican's sallow face went darker with rage. He fingered his knife, but Steve did not appear to notice him. "Take care!" he hissed. "I like a you not, senior."

"Which doesn't interest me a bit," said Steve, still twirling.

"Carramba! You taunt me, is it!" snarled the Mexican. "Then pay for it, senior!"

A shot rang out, making Steve jump slightly, so unexpected was it. But it was not Jose who fired. Jose had no great love for firearms as a means of fighting. He preferred the knife; it was quieter, and, in his hands, more effective. He had pulled his knife out from his sash, no doubt with the intention of using it. The shot had been fired by Billy Steele, who had come out of a store just at the moment. The bullet struck the board sidewalk, an inch from Jose's boot.

Three more followed it, each grazing the Mexican's boot. Billy Steele was a dead shot, and could place a bullet to a hair's-breadth. But Billy was mischievous. He had no wish to harm the Mexican, though some men might have thought little of sending a bullet through the brain of a man who attempted to use a knife in an enemy's back.

Jose remembered the previous evening, and did not stay any longer. He began to run again, and Billy sent more shots after his feet. But when the Canadian's gun was empty, the greaser's courage returned. He stopped running, and halted in the middle of the road, shaking the fist which held the knife. A torrent of vile language, mostly Spanish, poured from his lips.

Billy Steele laughed, and pouted his gun. "He's an ornery cuss," he said; "but he's Basnett's pet, an' so we have to put up with him. Still, he's in line for his own funeral if he don't let up a bit with that knife."

"Then he works on the Double-Horseshoe?" said Steve.

"He sure does—or, I should say, lives there. Not much work that he does, let me coax you. He ain't pular, and Jake's wanted to fire him lots o' times; but the boss won't have him sacked. He's—Gosh!"

Something hit the wooden wall of the store, not six inches from Steve's head, with a dull "chug!" It stuck there in the timber, quivering. It was a knife.

(Another grand instalment of this great new serial next week! Tell your chums about it. They should begin reading it at once.)

FRANK RICHARDS' RIVAL.
(Concluded from page 464.)

"Frank Richards wrote that rubbish!"

"Then Frank Richards is the winner."

"Sorry, Chunky, old man!" said Frank.

"What awful rot!" shouted Chunky Todgers indignantly. "Why, you—you said in the paper—look here, you're not going to get out of it now, Mr. Penrose! I'm going to have that ten dollars! Why, I—I—I—"

Chunky choked with indignation. "All serene, Chunky! You shall have it!" said Frank Richards soothingly. "You don't mind handing the prize to Todgers, Mr. Penrose? I give up my claim to it!"

"Money down!" said Todgers. Mr. Penrose laughed, and then Richards, having "put it in writing," the good-natured gentleman handed Chunky Todgers a ten-dollar bill. As a matter of fact, the "cheque" mentioned in the "Thompson Press" was only an editorial flourish, as Mr. Penrose did not possess a bank-account. Chunky was somewhat comforted by the ten-dollar bill, but he was still wounded in his literary susceptibilities.

He marched haughtily out of the office with his precious manuscript.

"Now, I'd like to have a few words with you, Richards," said Mr. Penrose, "as it turns out that you wrote this yarn—really stunning, by the way. I want to see about some further work. Sit down."

Ten minutes later Frank Richards & Co. came out of Mr. Penrose's office in a very satisfied mood. Chunky rejoined them outside.

"Penrose has asked you to write some more stuff, Richards?"

"Yes."

"Then I tell you what. I'll write it for you, as you've treated me so decently about the prize."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Richards & Co. And they rode off to Cedar Creek in a state of great hilarity—leaving Chunky wondering where the joke came in.

THE END.

(Another grand complete story of the Chums of the School in the Backwoods next Monday.)



FRANK . . RICHARDS' RIVAL!

A Grand, Complete Story of
FRANK RICHARDS & Co.,
the Chums of the
School in the Backwoods.

BY . . .
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The 1st Chapter. Chunky's Latest.

"Splendid!"
It was Chunky Todgers' voice, in tones of enthusiasm, and Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc stopped, as they heard it.
"Oh, splendid!" repeated Chunky Todgers. "The real goods!"
Chunky was in the school-room at Cedar Creek.

It was after morning lessons, and the school-room was deserted by all save the fat Chunky. He was sitting close by the log fire that blazed at one end of the big room, with an exercise-book open on his knees, and a stump of pencil in his fat fingers, and quite a rapt look upon his plump features.

Bob and Beauclerc looked in at the open doorway. They were looking for their chum, Frank Richards, who had disappeared after lessons, and was not to be found.

"Splendid!" went on Chunky Todgers, blissfully ignorant of the two grinning faces looking at him from the doorway. "If this doesn't work the raffle, I guess it will be funny!" Some! Why, it's splendid!"
"What on earth is he up to?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

Bob shook his head.
"Give it up! He can't be putting on all that steam over exercises, I guess. It wouldn't be like Chunky."
"Ha-ha! No."
"Chunky!" shouted Bob.
Todgers looked up with a start.
"Eh? What? Well?"
"Seen Frank Richards?"
"Eh? No. Bother Frank Richards! Don't interrupt!"
"What are you up to?" demanded Bob. "What's splendid?"
"Oh, you run away and play!" answered Chunky Todgers. "You don't understand literary work, Bob Lawless."

Bob jumped.
"Literary work!" he yelled.
"Yep!"
"Oh great gophers!"
Bob strode across to the fire, Beauclerc following him. They were rather interested in literary work—by Chunky Todgers! Chunky's exercise-book was thickly scrawled, his literary work was evidently going at a great rate. So far as quantity went, it was all right, though possibly the quality was quite another matter.

"Let's look, old scout!" grinned Bob. "This is rather a new stunt for you!"

Todgers hesitated.
"Look here, you won't bag it?" he asked.

"Bag it?" repeated Bob.
"Yep! If you're not going in for the competition I'll show it to you."
"Never even heard of the competition," yawned Bob Lawless. "What is it, and what's it about?"

"Oh, you don't hear anything!" said Chunky Todgers scornfully. "Don't you read the 'Thompson Press'—Mr. Penrose's paper?"

"Nope."
"Well, it's in that. The editor—old Penrose, you know—is offering a prize for a story—ten dollars!" said Chunky, his eyes glistening. "Ten dollars isn't much, of course, but it will come in handy. I'm going to get a new sled with it."

"You're going to get the prize, then?" asked Beauclerc.

"Correct!"

"I don't quite see how you can know that in advance," said Beauclerc, rather perplexed.

"It's practically a sure thing," explained Chunky. "You see, old Penrose offers the prize for the best story dealing with Canadian backwoods life. He undertakes quite plainly to shell out the prize to the best stuff sent in to his office. Mine's the best stuff—"

"Oh, I—I see!"
"How do you know that?" grinned Bob Lawless.

Chunky smiled serenely.
"I've got the literary gift!" he explained.

"Phew!"
"There are fellows who are born authors," said Chunky condescendingly. "I happen to be that kind. I'm not bragging of it. It just happens, you know. Just as it happens that you're born rather a duffer. Lawless—"

"What?" ejaculated Bob.
"No offence, you know. I was merely giving that as an illustration."
"You'd better find some other illustration, if you don't want your fat nose punched, Chunky!" grunted Bob.

"So you're writing a story?" said Vere Beauclerc, smiling.

"Sure! I don't mind letting you fellows see it, if you're not going in for the prize."

mounted his gallant steed, and galloped at full speed through the forest. Terrific darkness wrapped him on all sides—

"Did he break his neck?" asked Bob.

"Eh? No."
"Lucky he was the hero of a story, then," chuckled Bob. "Any other galoot that rode full speed in a forest in the dark would have come an awful cropper!"

"Oh, you're a silly jay, Bob Lawless! You're not romantic," said Chunky scornfully. "You don't know what literary work is. Common-place considerations don't matter in literary work. Let's get on. 'The terrific darkness wrapped him on all sides. Suddenly there was a cry for help, and Cholondeley de Vere saw a beauteous maiden—'"
"How did he see her?"



THE BUDDING AUTHOR! "I'll read some of my story out," said Chunky modestly, as the chums stood by with smiling faces. "Listen! 'The shades of night were falling fast—'" "Is that original?" asked Bob Lawless.

"That's all right; we're not. Let's see the literary work," said Bob Lawless. "It must be a regular sockdologer, I guess, if you did it!"
"I'll read some out!" said Chunky modestly. "Listen!"

"Heave ahead!"
Chunky blinked at the scrawl in the exercise-book, and started. Bob and Vere Beauclerc listened, with smiling faces. They had never suspected Chunky Todgers of being a literary genius before. They did not suspect him of it now, as a matter of fact.

"The shades of night were falling fast," began Chunky, in a most impressive tone.

"Is that original?" asked Bob.

"Oh, sure!"
"I guess some American chap has written that already."

"Oh, rot!" answered Chunky. "Let me get on. 'The shades of night were falling fast, when Cholondeley de Vere—'"

"Chumley de whatter?"
"Cholondeley de Vere. I believe in having a good name for a hero. None of your Smiths and Browns for me!" said Chunky loftily.

"Or Todgerses?" grinned Bob.
"Oh, do listen, and don't chin-wag! 'The shades of night were falling fast, when Cholondeley de Vere

"With his eyes, of course, fat-head!"

"But he couldn't use his eyes in the dark, especially if it was terrifically dark, as you said it was."

Chunky Todgers snorted.
"Of all the silly jays," he said, "you cap the stack, and no mistake! This is literary. Don't you understand? Literary!"

"Does literary mean that it's not supposed to have any sense in it?"
"Snort!"

"Just you listen!" said Chunky.
"The beauteous maiden was struggling in the grasp of a dozen painted, ferocious Redskin braves—"

"She must have been rather a hefty young lady to take a dozen Injuns to hold her!"

"Snort!"
"Come on, Cherub! We've got to find Franky," said Bob. "Chunky, old man, I guess you won't get that gorgeous yarn into the 'Press' unless you pay for it at advertisement rates."

"Listen to this bit!"
But Bob Lawless did not stay to listen to that bit. He left the school-room with Beauclerc, leaving Chunky

Todgers to pursue his literary work undisturbed, and Cholondeley de Vere to rush to the rescue of that ill-used beauteous maiden.

The 2nd Chapter.

Frank Richards, too!

"Franky!"
"What the dickens—"
Frank Richards' chums had found him at last.

Frank was seated on a stack of logs near the stables, and he had a book on his knee, and a sheaf of paper spread on the book; and he was busy with a pencil. An open copy of the "Thompson Press" lay on the logs near him.

He glanced up as his chums arrived.
"Hallo, you chaps!"
"What on earth are you up to?" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "Exercises?"

"Oh, no. Look at that paper."
Frank indicated the Thompson paper, and went on scribbling. Bob picked up Mr. Penrose's enterprising periodical. That sheet, of which Mr. Penrose was editor, proprietor, printer, and publisher, was more than half-filled with advertisements. But there were editorial notes and literary contributions, mainly the work of Mr. Penrose.

"MacGahan's Whisky" stared from the front page in huge type; the back page recommended the reader to drop in at Macnab's Dance Hall for a real good time. Mr. Chop's Chinese laundry was inside; with Gunten's Store, the Thompson Valley Emporium; and "The Red Dog for a Razzle!"

There were horses for sale, and dogs, and even parrots. There was a matrimonial column; and wherever the column required filling to the bottom, there was poetry.

There was news—local news: Four Kings had been taken up by the sheriff for going on a "bender"; and a horse had been stolen from the Thompson Valley Ranch; the post-

it, enough, in fact, to fill all the space in the Thompson Press that Mr. Penrose was unable to fill with advertisements that week.

"So that's the game, is it?" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "You're putting in for the ten dollars, Franky?"

Frank Richards laughed.
"You've got a rival," said Beauclerc, laughing.

"I dare say I've got a good many."
"But there's one here—Chunky's on the same stunt!" chuckled Bob. Frank Richards laughed.

"Let him go ahead," he answered. "Best man's going to win!"

"But I say, ten dollars isn't much for ten thousand words, is it?" asked Bob. "That will jolly nearly half fill the paper. Looks to me as if old Penrose is looking for a big bargain."

"Oh, never mind the money," said Frank. "That doesn't matter. I like scribbling, and it would be rather ripping to put a yarn into the 'Thompson Press'—if I could. I—I don't know whether I can do it well enough, but after all, there can't be many chaps in the valley who can write. It isn't as if the competition was held in Montreal or Quebec, or New Westminster."

"I guess you'll have earned that ten dollars, if you get it!"

"Well, I want to earn it!"
"I guess you can do it, if it comes to that—haven't I often told you that your stuff was good," said Bob. "You've read me lots—"

"And you've generally fallen asleep."
"Well, that doesn't mean that the stuff wasn't good," said Bob cautiously. "I always said it was good. You go ahead, Franky, and rope in the ten dollars. Can I help you?"

Frank Richards laughed.

"I'm afraid not, old chap."
"Well, perhaps I oughtn't to, as Chunky has been reading me his story," said Bob. "Chunky's is a regular sockdologer. What's the name of your hero?"

"Jones."
"Oh, good; that's all right. There's more Joneses than Cholondeley de Veres in the backwoods, I guess. But you'd better chuck it now, Franky. You must be getting cold feet sitting there."

"Buzz off, old chap."
"Ain't you getting cold?"
"Yes, but it doesn't matter. Buzz off!"

Bob Lawless shook his head.
"We were looking for you to come skating," he said. "Let the literary work wait. You can always scribble, and you can't always skate!"

"Fathead! I—"
"Take his other arm, Cherub."
"Look here—" roared Frank Richards.

"My dear old boss, literary geniuses have to be looked after," said Bob. "You'll catch a cold as well as a ten dollar prize—and the cold's more certain than the prize. Kim on!"

"I say—"
"This way, old boss!"

Bob Lawless jerked his chum off the logs, and started off with him at a run. Frank Richards stuffed his manuscript into his pocket. There was no resisting the exuberant Bob. Besides, Bob was quite right—it was too cold for literary work out of doors, though the schoolboy author had been too deep in his subject to think of that.

Probably skating was better than amateur authorship, for Frank Richards on that frosty day. He certainly felt better when he came glowing in to dinner. At dinner in the lumber school, Chunky Todgers wore a sweet and satisfied smile, which indicated that the proceedings of Cholondeley de Vere were going on quite to his satisfaction.

Chunky brought his sheaf of paper into the dining-room with him, and at intervals during the meal he made a dab at it with his pencil, on his knee, not allowing even dinner to stop the inspirations that flashed into his fat but powerful brain.

Miss Meadows, who was at the head of the table, observed Chunky's peculiar motions for some time, and at last called to him. Chunky, with his mouth full, was pencilling away at a great rate on his knee—both his jaws and his brain very busy at the same time.

"Todgers!"

"Chunky started."
"Grooh! Yes, Miss Meadows," he gasped. Speech was a little difficult, with his mouth rather overloaded.

"What are you doing?"
"Oooouch—eating my dinner, ma'am."

"You should not be greedy, Todgers. You have too much in your

TEN DOLLAR PRIZE."
There was a good deal more of



FRANK RICHARDS' RIVAL!

(Continued from the previous page.)

mouth," said Miss Meadows severely. "You are also scribbling, I think." Chunky made an effort, and disposed of his cargo. Then he gasped out an explanation. "Only my literary work, ma'am," Miss Meadows stared. "Your what?" she ejaculated. "Literary work, ma'am. I'm writing a story for the 'Thompson Press,'" said Chunky Todgers modestly. "Bless my soul!" "Shall I read you out some of it, ma'am?" "You need not trouble, Todgers." "No trouble at all, ma'am," said Chunky eagerly. "I'll read it out with pleasure. The shades of night were falling fast—" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Silence! Todgers, put that away at once, and kindly do not bring it into the dining-room again!" "Oh! It's—it's really splendid, you know, ma'am, though I say so. M-m-may I read you the bit about Cholmondeley de Vere killing the Redskins—he gripped them in his red, ruthless hand, and—" "Nonsense!" "Springing like a lion from his gallant charger, he—" "Put that nonsense away at once, Todgers!" "Oh, my eye!" murmured Chunky. His valuable literary work was put away. After dinner Chunky came out with Frank Richards & Co., looking very serious. "What do you think of that?" he asked. "I always had rather a respect for Miss Meadows, but really—never hear such rot? Schoolmistress, you know, and doesn't know really good literary stuff when she hears it!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "You can cackle, if you like," said Chunky Todgers loftily. "You wait till you see my story in the 'Thompson Press,' and old Penrose coming along to beg me to do some more for him, owing to the insistent demands of his readers." "How long will that be?" inquired Algernon Beauclerc. "Not in our lifetime!" chuckled Bob Lawless. "Are you going to attend the inquest, Chunky?" "Eh? What inquest?" "On Mr. Penrose, after he's read your story!" "You silly ass!" roared Chunky Todgers. Frank Richards & Co. walked away chuckling, and Chunky Todgers returned to the school-room fire—to proceed with the thrilling description of Cholmondeley de Vere's adventures in the Canadian backwoods.

**The 3rd Chapter.
Literary Rivals.**

"Hallo, Richards!" "Hallo, Chunky!"

It was a couple of days later, and the shades of night were falling fast, as Chunky would have said, when two horsemen, coming from different directions, stopped outside Mr. Penrose's office in Main Street at Thompson.

They were Chunky Todgers and Frank Richards, and each of them had a little roll in his hand, recognizable as manuscript.

Chunky Todgers blinked suspiciously at Frank's little roll. "What's that?" he asked. "Story!" answered Frank. "Well, you must be an ass!" commented Todgers. "What's that?" asked Frank, indicating Chunky's roll. "My splendid story of backwoods life." "Ha, ha, ha!" Frank Richards tethered his horse, and walked into the office, where Mr. Penrose was setting type by lamp-light. Chunky Todgers followed him in.

Mr. Penrose nodded to them, without leaving off his occupation. "I've brought my story, Mr. Penrose," explained Frank. "Same here!" said Todgers. "Good!" said Mr. Penrose. "Chuck them on the bench, along with the others. That heap, that's right."

"Oh! You've got a good many already!" remarked Frank. Mr. Penrose grinned. "I guess every galoot in the Thompson Valley calculates he can write a story," he answered. "Dozens! I guess I've let myself in for something this journey. Wasn't expecting school-kids to mosey in with manuscript! But chuck it there. The more the merrier." Frank and Chunky added their rolls to the pile. "I say, Mr. Penrose," began Todgers. "Well?" "Could you let me have the ten dollars now?" "Hay?" "It will come to the same thing, you know. Look here, I'll read my story to you, if you like." "See that door?" said Mr. Penrose. "Eh? Yes." "Get on the other side of it, will you?" "Oh!" said Chunky Todgers. Mr. Penrose was left to set type in peace. The two schoolboys mounted in the street. "Silly jay, isn't he?" said Chunky. "I could jolly well tell him that there isn't any galoot in the Thompson Valley able to write a story, excepting one." "Thank you, Chunky!" said Frank Richards gravely. "Eh? What are you thanking me for?" "You're so flattering!" "Why, you jay, I mean me, not you!" exclaimed Chunky. "You can't write, old chap. You'll never be able to." Frank Richards laughed and trotted away for the Lawless Ranch. Chunky Todgers trotted off on his fat pony, looking quite satisfied. He would rather have had the money down; but he felt that there was little doubt as to who would capture the ten dollars. If Mr. Penrose had any literary taste at all, he could not fail to be struck by the adventures of Cholmondeley de Vere. Chunky felt convinced of that.

Frank Richards rode homeward in a far less confident mood. He had had a story accepted by a New Westminster magazine before, and that was the only literary success he had scored at that stage of his career. But he had a good deal of manuscript in his room at the Lawless Ranch. He spent a great deal of his leisure time in "scribbling," as his cousin Bob called it. Bob was a great admirer of Frank Richards' literary productions, and he often asked Frank to read them to him, though it cannot be denied that Bob sometimes fell asleep on such occasions.

Frank at least had the saving gift of common-sense, and he wrote of what he knew and understood, and did not pen weird romances of knights in armour, and Saracens, or terrific sea-fights. Chunky Todgers had with great difficulty restrained himself from making Cholmondeley de Vere a knight in shining armour. He felt that mere backwoods did not give him full scope for his genius. Frank believed that his work was good—considering his youth, at least; but he had little expectation that it would "bag" a prize. He lacked the lofty confidence of Todgers, but he hoped for the best.

The next day, when they met at Cedar Creek School, Chunky honoured Frank Richards with a friendly and compassionate smile. "After all, I need the dollars more than you do, Franky," he remarked. "What dollars?" asked Frank. "The prize, you know. So it's all right. Still, I'm sorry I'm cutting you out." "But you haven't cut me out yet, old chap," answered Frank, with a smile. "I guess the result's pretty sure. I say, what did you call your yarn?" "Jones' Clearing," answered Frank. Chunky Todgers sniffed. "Not romantic enough," he said patronisingly. "Mine's called 'The Gallant Sir Cholmondeley.'" "Oh, my hat! Isn't that rather rich for a backwoods story?" "Penrose oughtn't to have made it a backwoods story," said Todgers discontentedly. "It doesn't give a chap scope. I'd rather have made Sir Cholmondeley charging the Saracens, you know; much better than mopping up Red Indians. But the condition was that it should be a

backwoods story: I say, how many Redskins does your Jones man kill?" "Ha, ha! None at all." "Sir Cholmondeley kills about three thousand," said Chunky. "Blood flowed like water, you know." "Groogh!" said Bob Lawless. "He's the outcast son of an old family, you know," said Chunky. "His father, the marquis, exiled him because he wouldn't marry the Lady Gloxiana. A few titles give a story a tone, I think." Vere Beauclerc smiled. His cousin, Algernon Beauclerc, looked puzzled. "You call the chap Sir Cholmondeley?" he asked. "Yep." "And he's the son of a marquis?" "Correct." "Why wasn't he called Lord Cholmondeley, then?" asked Algernon. "Eh? Ought he to be?" asked Todgers. "Well, that's the rule." "Oh gum!" said Chunky Todgers. "I never thought of that." "Ha, ha, ha!" "Still, I dare say Penrose doesn't know," said Chunky, taking comfort. "He can't be well up in titles." Frank Richards & Co. chuckled. "After all, that's only a minor point," said Chunky loftily. "The story's a corker—full of romance, you know. The beautiful damsel whom Sir Cholmondeley rescued from the Redskins turned out to be the real Lady Gloxiana, who was changed at birth by a gipsy. There's a really splendid bit describing how Sir Cholmondeley rides up the trail through the timber, when he comes home to De Vere Castle." "The trail through the timber—at De Vere Castle!" murmured Vere Beauclerc. "Oh, my hat!" "Isn't that all right?" demanded Chunky. "Well, in England the road wouldn't be called a trail, and the park, or whatever it was, wouldn't be called the timber," said Beauclerc, laughing. "Oh!" said Chunky. "Wouldn't it? Still, I dare say Penrose won't know." "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless. "You're depending on Penrose not knowing a lot of things." "Then, when the old marquis meets his long-lost son," continued Chunky, "he says to him: 'Cholmondeley, I have missed thee sorely, and, by my halidom, I guess I'm right glad to see thee. How's that?'" Frank Richards & Co. yelled. The combination of "guessing" with a "halidom" struck them as funny. "What on earth is a halidom?" asked Algernon. "Blessed if I know!" said Chunky. "Something that old noblemen swear by, you know. Doesn't your popper swear by his halidom?" "He doesn't swear at all," grinned the Honourable Algernon, "and I don't believe he's got a halidom." "Ha, ha, ha!" "A bit out of date, I think!" chuckled Frank Richards. "Is it? Never mind! I don't suppose Penrose will know." Mr. Penrose was evidently expected not to know quite a large number of things by the hopeful Chunky. And Chunky looked forward with undiminished confidence to the next issue of the "Thompson Press," fully expecting to see "The Gallant Sir Cholmondeley" disporting himself therein.

**The 4th Chapter.
The Prize-winner!**

"Great gophers!" Bob Lawless uttered that ejaculation one evening the following week in tones of great astonishment. The "Thompson Press" was out that day, and on their return from school Bob and Frank had found it at the ranch. Bob Lawless at once opened it to see the result of the literary competition, hoping to see Frank's name as the winner. Then he howled. "Well, Bob?" asked Frank Richards. "You're not the winner, Franky." Frank smiled faintly. "I hardly expected to be, Bob. It was fun writing the story, and that's good enough. But who's the winner—anybody we know?" "Chunky Todgers!" roared Bob. "Wha-a-at!" "Look here! The winner of the 'Thompson Press' Literary Competition is Master Joseph Todgers, of Cedar Creek School, whose successful story will appear in the 'Press' next week. A cheque for ten dollars will be sent to Master Todgers immediately." "My only hat!"

"Penrose must be potty!" exclaimed Bob. "He must have gone once too often to the Red Dog, anyhow, before he looked at the manuscripts. We know that Chunky's stuff was awful rot!" Frank smiled. He had hardly expected success, so his disappointment was not great; but his surprise was very great indeed at Chunky Todgers' success. Mr. Penrose was known to have a very great devotion to the cup that cheers and also inebriates, and queer misprints had sometimes appeared in the "Press" as a result. But certainly it looked as if the editor-printer-publisher must have paid unusual devotions to the fire-water at the Red Dog before selecting Joe Todgers as the winner of the literary competition. "It's the tanglefoot!" said Bob, with conviction. "Only the tanglefoot could account for it." "Never mind. We must congratulate Chunky!" said Frank, laughing. And the next morning, when they arrived at Cedar Creek School, the chums looked for Chunky Todgers to congratulate him. Chunky evidently knew the glad tidings already. His fat chin was unusually elevated, and he looked as if he were walking on air. He had received a good many congratulations already, and some friendly advice how to spend the ten dollars, and he smiled in a lofty way as he received congratulations from Frank Richards & Co. "Thanks, dear boys!" he said. "Of course, I knew it must turn out like that. Nobody else really had a chance. Not many literary geniuses in the Thompson Valley, you know." "None at all, I reckon!" remarked Tom Lawrence. Chunky sniffed. "Mr. Penrose knows good stuff when he sees it," he said. "That man's got a lot of sense—real hoss-sense, you know. Of course, any fool could have picked out my story as the best of the bunch. Still, I don't mind admitting now that I wondered whether Penrose would be sober enough to pick out the right one. I saw him yesterday, and he was rather glorious. But it's all right. The prize comes to the right place. Sorry for you, old Franky! But you really couldn't expect anything, could you? You can't write, you know." Chunky Todgers seemed walking on air as he went into the school-room that morning with the Cedar Creek fellows. His schoolfellows were pleased at his success, but they could not help being astonished. The general opinion certainly was that Mr. Penrose must have been to the Red Dog before he looked over the manuscripts. Only Chunky Todgers scouted that suggestion. After morning lessons Chunky Todgers led out his fat little pony. He was too impatient to wait for the "cheque." He intended to ride over to Thompson and see about that ten dollars. "Whither bound, Chunky?" called out Bob Lawless. "Just dropping in at my editor's," replied Chunky carelessly. "Oh!" "I dare say I shall have to talk business with him," said Chunky, with quite the air of a sought-after literary man who found fame and fortune rather a bore. "He'll want to bag me for regular contributions, of course. I may do a serial for him. If I consent, I shall insist upon having full scope—no restrictions as to subject and all that. I shall be civil, of course, but firm—quite firm. You fellows like to come?" "Well, I was thinking of calling in for my manuscript, as it's not a success," said Frank Richards. "May come in useful." Chunky Todgers smiled. "Not likely to be much use, I guess," he remarked. "Poor old Franky! You can't write, you know! Later on, when I get time, I'll give you some tips about writing—from my experience, you know!" "Oh, my hat!" "Let's go," said Bob. "Trot out the gees. I want to ask Mr. Penrose how many gallons he shifted before he decided on Chunky for the prize!" "Ha, ha, ha!" Snort from Chunky Todgers. "Come on!" he said. "I'll stand you some maple-sugar at Gunten's store out of my ten dollars!" Chunky was evidently keen to have witnesses to his triumph. And there was no doubt that he was going to assume a very lofty manner towards his "editor," and to be very stand-offish about future contributions. His fat face was wreathed in smiles as he rode up the Thompson trail with Frank Richards & Co.

"I guess I've got a lot of ideas in my head," he confided to the chums en route. "I'm going to do a naval story next—big battles at sea, you know." "Why, you jay, you've never even seen the sea!" howled Bob Lawless. "That doesn't matter to a chap with a real literary gift!" answered Chunky scornfully. "You'll see if you watch out." The Cedar Creek party arrived at the office of the "Thompson Press." They found it closed and locked up; Mr. Penrose was having his dinner at the Occidental Hotel. But the newspaper man came along presently, and greeted them in his breezy way, and let them into the office. "Glad to see you, sonnies," said Mr. Penrose, "especially you, young Todgers! I'm going to ask you to do me another story." Chunky grinned triumphantly at his comrades. "How you did it," continued Mr. Penrose, "beats me! I guess I never knew you had it in you." "Oh, I was always a literary chap!" said Chunky modestly. "Sort of gift, you know. It just flowed from my pen." "Can I have my manuscript, Mr. Penrose?" asked Frank Richards. "I guess so. You'll find it among that lot," answered Mr. Penrose, with a nod towards the bench, which was littered with manuscripts. Mr. Penrose's office was not exactly the tidiest building in Thompson—perhaps on account of that gentleman's devotion to the potent tanglefoot. Frank looked over the crumpled manuscripts. His own story was not there; but, to his surprise, he found a scrawled manuscript, headed "Gallant Sir Cholmondeley." "Hallo! This is your stuff, Todgers," he said. "Not in type yet, then?" asked Chunky, as he took the manuscript. "Eh," said Mr. Penrose—"what's that?" "My yarn," said Chunky. "I guess not. The winning story is here. I was going to set it up to-day," said Mr. Penrose. "Write your name on the manuscript next time, Todgers. It's the safest way. Here's the winning story." "But—but," stammered Chunky, "I—I only sent in one story, and—and this is it—" "Gallant Sir Cholmondeley." "That rot!" said Mr. Penrose. "I just glanced at that—the silly rot! Is that yours? I guess I can't have made a mistake in the names. The winning story is called 'Jones' Clearing.'" "What?" yelled Chunky Todgers. "What?" gasped Frank Richards. And Bob Lawless roared. "Ha, ha, ha!"

**The 5th Chapter.
Not Chunky!**

Mr. Penrose stared at the Cedar Creek fellows. He picked up a manuscript that was lying beside his "case," and Frank Richards recognised his own hand on it. "Is that the winner?" exclaimed Frank. "That's it—the only good story among all that lot," said Mr. Penrose. "What rot!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers, bewildered and wrathful. "Why, you said as plain as possible in the paper to-day that I was the winner." "Isn't this yours?" "That tosh!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers, with deep contempt. "Certainly not! This is my story—" "Gallant Sir Cholmondeley!" "I guess you can take that away and bury it!" said Mr. Penrose cheerfully. "I suppose the names got mixed somehow. All your own fault, for not writing your name and address on the manuscript." "I'll remember next time," said Frank Richards, with a smile. "You see, I had a thumping lot of stuff to go through—more than I ever expected," explained Mr. Penrose. "And I was in rather a hurry. I'd been kept by an—ahem!—important engagement—" "At the Red Dog!" murmured Bob Lawless. It was pretty clear that the mistake in the names was not wholly due to the fact that the youthful authors had forgotten to write their names on the manuscripts. The fire-water was partly to blame. Chunky Todgers' face was a study. "Then—then—then I haven't won the prize?" he stuttered. Mr. Penrose shook his head. "Whoever wrote this story has won the prize," he answered.

(Concluded on page 462.)