

THE ALL-SCHOOL-STORY PAPER!

The Penny **1½^D**
Popular

Week Ending
March 15th, 1919.

No. 8.
New Series.

Three Complete Stories of—
HARRY WHARTON & CO.—JIMMY SILVER & CO.—TOM MERRY & CO.



KICKED OUT! (AN EXCITING SCENE IN THE MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN THIS ISSUE)



EDUCATING THE BOUNDER!

A Splendid Long, Complete Tale, dealing with the Early Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Nothing for Bunter!

"I SAY, Smithy—"
Billy Bunter entered Vernon-Smith's study at Greyfriars.

The Bounder was sitting by the window, gazing moodily in the direction of the playing-fields.

He made no reply to Bunter's remark.

"I say, Smithy, old fellow—"

But "Smithy, old fellow" did not answer. Bunter coughed.

"Excuse me bothering you, Smithy," he said, "but—er—the fact is I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

No reply.

"If you would advance me a loan I should be—"

The Owl of the Remove paused as he heard footsteps in the passage.

Next moment, Trotter, the page, appeared in the doorway.

"Master Vernon-Smith!" he said.

The Bounder looked round, and glared sullenly at the pageboy.

"Well?" he growled.

"Package for you, sir."

"Oh!" Vernon-Smith rose. "Where is it?"
"The carrier has just brought it, sir. It's in the 'all," replied Trotter. "Shall I bring it up?"

"No," said Vernon-Smith hastily.

He glanced round the room.

It was deserted save for himself and Billy Bunter.

The fat junior was leaning against the table, looking extremely thoughtful.

He was beginning to think that his chances of raising a loan from the Bounder were extremely poor.

He kept his eyes fixed on the carpet whilst Trotter was speaking, and Vernon-Smith imagined that he was taking no notice of the matter.

But he did not know William George Bunter.

"Shall I take it to the dormitory, sir?" asked Trotter, who was on the look-out for a tip.

He knew that Vernon-Smith was plentifully supplied with cash, and that a shilling to him was no more than a penny to anybody else in the Lower Fourth.

"No," said Vernon-Smith. "Take it upstairs—to the top box-room."

Trotter grinned intelligently.

He knew that this meant that there was something in the package that Vernon-Smith did not want his Form-fellows to see, and he guessed that it was a feed, which the new boy meant to keep to himself.

But that was no business of Trotter's.

"Certainly, sir!" he said.

"And here's a shilling for you."

"Thanky, sir!"

Trotter pocketed the shilling and disappeared.

Vernon-Smith glanced uneasily at Billy Bunter.

But the fat junior was staring out of the window, as if intensely interested in the pigeons in the quad.

The Bounder quitted the room.

Then Billy Bunter looked round.

His fat face was quite excited, and his round eyes glistened under his spectacles.

"The rotter!" he muttered. "That's a feed, of course, and he wasn't going to ask anybody—not even me! He might have asked me—he knows I've got a good appetite, and that I don't get enough to eat in my study. Lemme see; we don't have tea in

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 8.

No. 1 till six, and it's turned five now. Plenty of time for a feed before tea."

And Billy Bunter followed cautiously on the track of Vernon-Smith.

Trotter had carried the package up to the box-room and left it there when Vernon-Smith arrived, and Billy Bunter was not far behind him.

Bunter peeped in at the doorway of the box-room, and caught sight of a large package, which looked like a box, wrapped up in layers of brown paper.

Then the door closed, and the view was shut off.

The fat junior stood blinking in the passage.

He heard a sound of cord being cut, and paper unrolled crumpling, as he applied his ear to the keyhole.

"The beast!" murmured Bunter. "It's a feed, of course."

He hesitated.

If he entered the box-room, the chances were that the Bounder would kick him out.

How was he to obtain a share of the feed? He might call up aid from the Remove—but if the feed should be only a small one, there would not be enough for a crowd.

The fat junior opened the door at last, and blinked in.

The Bounder was unpacking the box.

He did not hear Bunter for the moment. From the box he was taking a half dozen bottles, each carefully packed in straw.

Bunter imagined them to contain ginger-beer or some kind of currant wine, and paid them little attention; though he had certainly not seen currant wine in bottles of that shape before.

What caught his eye chiefly was a large cake, which Vernon-Smith had laid aside, and several paper bags of dried fruits.

Bunter's mouth watered.

The feed was not large, but it was certainly an expensive one.

The fat junior closed the door, and Vernon-Smith heard the sound of it, and looked round with a start and a scowl.

The Owl of the Remove made a friendly gesture.

"It's all right, Smithy—"

"You young cad! So you're spying!"

"You see—"

"Get out!"

"I—I thought I might be able to help you unpack," said Bunter.

"Outside!"

"I—I want to help you if possible. You might want some cooking done; I'm a regular dab at cooking," pleaded Billy Bunter.

"Will you get out?"

"Those muscatels look ripping!"

Vernon-Smith jumped up.

"I'll kick you out if you don't go!" he exclaimed angrily.

Bunter blinked at him warily.

"Look here, do you want a lot of the Remove to raid you here?" he exclaimed desperately. "If—if you let me into the feed, I'll keep it dark."

"I can lock the door, I suppose."

"Look here—"

Vernon-Smith strode towards him. Billy Bunter dodged among the empty boxes and trunks with which the room was lumbered.

"I—I say, Smith, don't be a cad, you know. I—I say I'm awfully hungry. I—"

"Take that!"

"Yarrah!"

"Get out!"

"Yowp!"

Bunter dodged desperately, and trampled on the row of bottles.

They rolled over among his feet, and Bunter blinked at them as he sat down.

"Champagne!" he gasped.

"Get out!" roared Smith furiously.

He kicked savagely at the fat junior.

Bunter roared and rolled and scrambled, and squirmed out of the doorway.

Vernon-Smith gave him a last kick that started him down the stairs, and then slammed the box-room door, and turned the key.

Bunter rolled down five or six of the narrow steps before he saved himself by clutching at the banisters.

When he righted himself at last, he sat on the stairs, and gasped for breath.

"Groc-ooo-oo-oh! I'll make the beast sit up for that! Yow! Ow!"

And when the fat junior's breath returned a little, he rose, and staggered down the rest of the stairs.

He heard a tell-tale "pop" in the box-room as he went.

Vernon-Smith had opened one of the champagne bottles.

The Owl of the Remove ran out into the Close.

Harry Wharton & Co. were going down to the cricket-field, looking very fit and clean in their white flannels, with their bats under their arms.

"I say, you fellows!" exclaimed Bunter, dashing after them.

The chums of the Remove walked on, apparently not hearing him.

The Owl of the Remove increased his pace, his fat little legs going like clockwork.

"I—I say, you fellows! I—" he gasped, clutching at Bob Cherry's arm.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that you, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry shook his off.

"Good-bye!" he said blandly.

"Oh, really, you fellows! Look here, Vernon-Smith—"

"Oh, never mind the verdant Smith-bird now!" said Nugent. "We're going to play footer. We've got the match with St. Jim's coming on."

"Well, if you like to let the chap get drunk—"

Wharton stopped dead.

"What's that?" he exclaimed sharply.

"I—I thought I ought to tell you," said Bunter. "The beast kicked me out of the box-room, because—because I remonstrated with him, and pointed out the error of his ways!"

"Don't lie, Billy. Have you anything to say or not?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Buzz off, then!"

"Oh, really, you know, he kicked me out, and—and he was drinking champagne when I left him—honour bright, you know."

Harry Wharton grasped the fat junior by the shoulder with a grip that was unconsciously so hard that Bunter squeaked.

"Now, then, Bunter, is that the truth?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Is it the truth?" roared Harry.

"Ow! Yes! I'm sincerely sorry that you should doubt my word. Yow!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Wharton abruptly.

And the juniors followed without a word.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Champagne is taken Externally.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. reached the door of the upper box-room.

The room was somewhat isolated, and was therefore frequently used

for secret feeds, and for meetings which the juniors wanted to keep "dark," in discussing the politics of the Lower School.

Wharton turned the handle of the door, but it was fast.

He knocked. There was a sound within of gurgling, as of liquor pouring into a glass.

That was enough to confirm Billy Bunter's information.

There was no reply to the knock, and Wharton knocked again.

"Open this door!" he called out. "Go and hang yourself!" came the reply, in Vernon-Smith's voice.

Harry controlled his temper with difficulty.

"Smith," he called out, "open the door! If that's simply a feed you've got there, I give you my word that you sha'n't be interfered with, or the stuff touched."

"Oh, really, Wharton!" came Bunter's piping voice from the stairs behind.

"Shut up, Billy!"

"But really—"

"Kick that porpoise downstairs!" said Bob Cherry.

And a wild howl from Bunter showed that someone had literally obeyed the command.

There was a bump further down.

Harry Wharton did not join in the general chuckle. He was too excited and exasperated to have anything like a sense of humour just then.

Vernon-Smith had reached the limit before. He had well passed it now.

Wharton struck the door savagely with his clenched hand.

"You heard me, Smith?"

"Yes."

"What have you got to say?"

"Nothing."

"Will you open this door?"

"No."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Stand back, you fellows!" he said curtly.

The landing was small, and the juniors had to crowd back down the box-room stairs.

Harry picked up a long, heavy piece of wood that was lying in the passage.

He jammed the end fiercely upon the lock of the box-room door with all the force of his powerful arms.

The lock creaked ominously.

Crash, crash, crash!

Again and again he struck fiercely at the lock, and it was slowly but steadily yielding to the attack.

The blows rang along the passage below, and the juniors listened uneasily, lest the noise should bring a prefect upon the scene.

It was not many minutes before Wingate came along the passage, and looked up the box-room stairs, with a dark brow.

"What's all this confounded row here?" he demanded angrily.

Wharton glanced down at him.

"I'm keeping order in the Remove, Wingate," he said quietly. "It's my business, as Form captain, and it's more necessary now than ever."

Wingate understood.

"Someone's locked in that room?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"Vernon-Smith."

"Is he up to his tricks again?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Don't make more noise than you can help." And the captain of Greyfriars walked away.

The juniors breathed more freely.

It was quite clear by this time that the education of Vernon-Smith would not be interfered with by the school authorities, either masters or prefects.

Crash, crash, crash!

The lock of the box-room door groaned.

There was a sound of shuffling inside, and Wharton guessed that Vernon-Smith was dragging a heavy box to shove against the door inside.

He crashed the heavy piece of wood harder than ever upon the lock.

Crash-ash!

The lock was broken at last, and the door flew open.

Wharton strode into the room.

Vernon-Smith gasped with rage.

"Mind your own business!" he said thickly. "Get out! I shall do as I like!"

"You cad!"

The Bouncer snatched up one of the champagne bottles and swung it in the air by the neck, his furious gaze fixed upon Wharton.

"If you come near me I'll brain you!" he muttered.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Put down that bottle!" he said.

"Hang you!"

"Put that bottle down!"

"Pah!"

Wharton strode forward.

"Look out!" exclaimed Nugent, for Vernon-Smith's look was desperate.

But Harry would not have stopped then if it had been a loaded firearm in the hand of the Bouncer.

He strode straight at the new junior, his hands clenched.

"Take that, then!" shrieked Vernon-Smith. And he brought the bottle down, straight for Wharton's head.

If that savage blow had reached its aim Wharton would have been stunned, if not more seriously injured; but it did not.

Then Hazeldene picked up a bottle of champagne, skillfully knocked the neck off, and turned the streaming, bursting liquor upon the Bouncer.

There was a wild gasp from Vernon-Smith as the champagne streamed and fizzed all over his face and head.

He gasped and struggled and yelled spasmodically, but the juniors did not let him go.

"Shove the rest over his togs!" said Russell.

"What ho!"

Bottle after bottle of the precious liquid was broken, and the Bouncer drenched from head to heel.

He was soaked to the skin with champagne, and feeling as uncomfortable as it was possible to feel when the juniors had finished.

Then he was released.

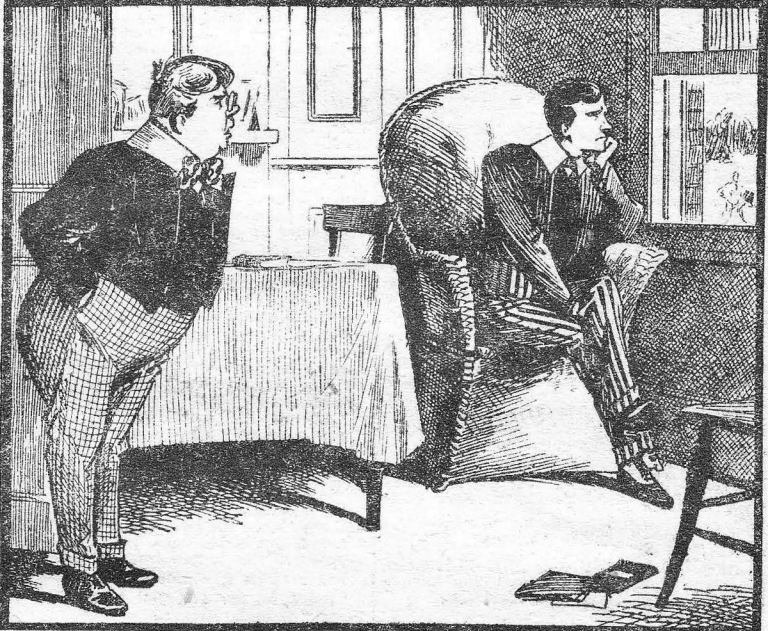
He staggered to his feet, breathless, gasping, speechless with rage.

Harry Wharton looked into the box, but there was nothing more of a harmful nature.

With the feed he had nothing to do.

But Bunter apparently considered that he had something to do with it.

He was bolting cake as fast as he could.



BUNTER IN QUEST OF A LOAN!

The captain of Greyfriars Remove was too much in every way for the sullen, weedy Bouncer.

His eye was on the young rascal.

He sprang upon him in time, knocking aside the bottle as it descended, and it crashed into the grate and broke.

Then Wharton's grip was on the Bouncer. Vernon-Smith was hurled to the floor with a thud, the concussion upon the hard planks knocking all the breath out of his body.

He lay gasping, unable to rise, and it was fortunate for him, for Wharton stood with clenched fists, ready to knock him down again.

The Removites crowded round him with dark looks.

His cowardly and savage intention was as bad as the action.

For a terrible moment the juniors had pictured Wharton stretched on the floor, stunned and bleeding.

"Rag him!" said Bob Cherry savagely.

"Put him through it; there's nothing else to be done," said Tom Brown. "He wants a lesson, if anybody ever did."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Give him his champagne," he said. "It's got to be got rid of, and he's not going to drink it. Drench him with it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!"

Vernon-Smith gasped, and would have scrambled up then; but five or six pairs of hands grasped him, and held him down.

Bob Cherry seized the fat junior by the collar and jerked him out of the room.

Bunter gave a choking yell and stuttered wildly. The jerk had lodged a lump of cake in his throat.

"Ugh!" gasped Bunter. "Groo-oo-gerr-rooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo! Jerrear? Leg-g-go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter collapsed on the landing, coughing and spluttering.

The juniors crowded out of the box-room after him, Wharton last.

Harry fixed a stern look on the Bouncer before he followed his comrades.

"I won't ask you if you're ashamed of yourself," he said contemptuously; "you're too thick a hide for that. I suppose. But I want to point out that the sooner you drop into decent ways the better it will be for you. What you've had so far is nothing to what you'll get if we find you drinking intoxicating liquor again."

The Bouncer did not reply, and Wharton went out and joined his comrades going downstairs.

Billy Bunter was complaining loudly.

"I say, you fellows, he ought to be ragged, you know, for being such a beastly black-guard! And how can you rag a chap better than by collaring his grub?"

"Shut up, Billy!"

"But I'm hungry—"

"You don't want any of that chap's tommy!" said Wharton angrily.
 "What rot! Of course I do!"
 "Well, you won't have any, then! Get out, or—"
 Bunter got out. Wharton was not in a mood to be trifled with just then.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Bath for the Bounder.

VERNON-SMITH was left alone in the box-room.

He was in an unenviable state, both in body and in mind.

His clothes were sticking to him, and his hair was matted with drying champagne, his collar was sticking to his neck, and he was aching all over.

He did not feel comfortable.

He waited, gritting his teeth, till after the juniors were gone, and then he went downstairs in search of a bath-room.

He met Loder, the prefect, in the Remove passage. Loder stared at him in blank amazement.

The soaked clothes, the dust that was clinging to them, the generally dishevelled, flushed condition of the Bounder, would have attracted attention anywhere.

"What on earth have you been doing?" demanded Loder.

The Bounder looked at him sullenly.

"Nothing."

"How did you get into that state?"

"I've been ragged, if you want to know." Loder grinned.

"Then the sooner you get yourself clean the better," he said. "You'd be a disgrace to any respectable dust-heap in that state. Who's been ragging you?"

"The Remove," said Vernon-Smith sullenly.

"What for?"

"Because they're a set of cads, I suppose."

"Some more of your tricks, I suppose," said Loder. "By the way, I hear that you keep smokes in your study—awfully bad thing for juniors. Smoking is very bad—spoils the wind, and makes you generally unfit. As a prefect, it's my duty to confiscate all the smokes you have. I did so the other day, but I hear you have been smoking since then."

"I've none now," said Vernon-Smith, with a momentary feeling of satisfaction at being able to disappoint the bully of the Sixth.

"How's that?" said Loder. "I heard Temple saying that you were seen smoking at your study window only a short while ago."

"The rotters have destroyed all my smokes!"

"Oh! Well, that was silly—I mean, scrye you right. But I expect you have a few left, hidden away somewhere—eh?"

"No."

"If you like to hand them over," said Loder persuasively, "I'll say no more about the matter."

The Bounder sneered.

"Do you think I don't know that you smoked those you took from me the day I came here?" he exclaimed. "Pah! Don't talk to me about your duty as a prefect! You can't pull the wool over my eyes, I can tell you!"

An extremely ugly look came over Loder's face.

It was quite true that he smoked, and that was the way he had "destroyed" the cigars and cheroots he had taken from the Bounder, but it was very injudicious of the Bounder to tell him so plainly that he knew it.

"You are a very sharp youngster," said Loder, with a sneer. "You haven't learned to hold your tongue yet; but I dare say you will learn. I don't believe you. I am certain that you have plenty of smokes hidden somewhere. However, never mind that—unless I find you out. At present I'm going to see that you're cleaned. You're going about in a disgusting state, and I'm going to see to it—as a prefect."

Vernon-Smith eyed him warily.

"You let me alone!" he exclaimed. "I shall appeal to the Head."

"You won't have the chance!" exclaimed Loder. "Carne, old man, lend me a hand here, will you? This brat is kicking over the traces again."

Carne, who had been listening to the dialogue with a grin, willingly came to the aid of his fellow-bully.

The two seniors grasped the Bounder, who began to struggle; but they whisked him into

the bath-room he had been approaching, in the twinkling of an eye.

Loder closed the door.

"Fill the bath, Carne, old man," he said, keeping a tight grip upon the Bounder.

"What-ho!" grinned Carne. "Warm or cold?"

"Cold, my son!"

Carne turned on the cold water tap and jammed in the plug. The bath began to fill.

Vernon-Smith eyed the two bullies with great apprehension now. He was helpless, of course, in the hands of the two powerful seniors.

Loder was a prefect, too, and had authority for punishing him, if not for bullying him; but the Bounder had made himself so generally obnoxious that it was not likely that anyone would care if he were bullied.

His appeal to the Head might come after he had been ragged; but it would not do him much good then.

The bath was soon two-thirds full of water, and Loder signed to Carne to turn off the tap.

"Now, then, Smith, what about those smokes?"

"I haven't any."

The Bounder was telling the truth; but it was certain that he would have made the denial in any case, so Loder could hardly be blamed for not believing him.

"Very well," said Loder, with a grin. "You're in a disgusting state, and we're going to bath you."

"Leggo!"

"In with him!"

Splash!

The Bounder went into the bath, clothes and all. He gave a gasping yell as he soused into the cold water, but the water flowing over his head cut it short.

He came up panting and choking.

"You—you cads! Let me go!" he spluttered.

"Where are the smokes?"

"I haven't any!" yelled the Bounder.

"And I wouldn't tell you if I had!"

"Then it's my duty to wash you," said Loder.

"You sound!"

"Nice language to a prefect! Turn the tap on him!"

"Ha, ha! All right!"

The Bounder made a furious effort to scramble out of the bath.

But Loder held him there, and he was ducked under again and again.

He was almost fainting with exhaustion and rage when the two bullies allowed him to scramble out of the bath, looking and feeling very much like a half-drowned rat.

Loder shook a warning finger at him.

"Don't let me find you in a dirty state again," he said.

And he strode out of the bath-room, followed by Carne.

The Bounder followed, dripping.

He wanted to get to the dormitory to get a change of clothes and a towel; he had had enough of bathing.

"Good heavens! What is the matter with that boy?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, catching sight of the Bounder as he emerged from the bath-room.

Loder coloured a little.

"I found him in a disgusting state, sir, and thought it best to clean him," he said; "as he did not take off his clothes, he had his wash with them on. He was in a most outrageous state, covered with dust, and soaked with some kind of liquor."

"Ah! Very good!"

In the case of any other boy, Mr. Quelch would have investigated the matter very closely, and the two bullies would probably have been made to feel sorry for themselves.

In the case of the Bounder it was different. He could expect no sympathy.

"You had better go and change your clothes," said the Remove-master. "You will do me a hundred lines for being in such a disgraceful condition!"

And he walked away.

The Bounder crawled to the dormitory, feeling dimly that perhaps it would be as well, if not to turn over a new leaf, to alter his conduct to the extent of securing greater comfort for himself at Greyfriars by kicking over the traces less frequently.

And when that thought entered into his mind it showed that the real education of the Bounder had commenced.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Great News for Bunter.

THE Removees came in to tea hungry and cheerful.
 Harry Wharton came into Study No. 3, and knocked over a chair, which fell to the floor with a thud that made Billy Bunter jump.

Bunter was ensconced in the armchair, as usual, and he had fallen asleep while waiting for the juniors to come in.

He started up and rubbed his eyes and adjusted his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Why haven't you got the fire lighted?" demanded Nugent indignantly.

"Oh, really—"

"You slacker! If you don't play footer, you might make yourself useful. Shove some wood into the grate, Inky, while I open the sardines."

"I'll cut down to the tuckshop and get in some grub, if you like, while you chaps are making the fire," suggested Bunter.

"Cut away," said Harry.

"Hand over the tin."

"What tin?"

"The tin to pay for the things, of course!"

"Oh, I haven't any tin to give you!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Isn't your postal-order come, Billy?" demanded Nugent, with a serious look.

The fat junior shook his head.

"No, Nugent, I'm sincerely sorry it hasn't. There must have been some delay in the post. I'm thinking of writing to the Postmaster-General about it."

"Yes, I should. That would be bound to bring the postal-order—I don't think! Get and fill the kettle!"

"But about the grub—"

"There's the bread and cheese and cake, my son, and four eggs, and they're going to be enough."

"But—"

"Bunter's been in the study," said Harry. "I don't suppose there's anything left."

Nugent chuckled as he produced a key from his pocket.

"I locked them up," he remarked. "It's all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Fill the kettle!"

"I'm hungry."

"Well, you're at liberty to contribute anything you like to the feed," said Nugent. "If you're standing treat, I'll have a cold chicken. If you're not, shut up!"

Bunter went sulkily to fill the kettle.

Nugent unlocked the cupboard, and spread out the frugal repast upon the table.

Inky and Harry between them succeeded in getting the fire going, and the kettle was jammed on to boil.

Bob Cherry looked into the study, with a grin upon his rugged, ruddy face.

"Got a big feed going?" he asked.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No," he said. "It's one of the lean years here. But you're welcome. We can make it go round, and will with pleasure."

"The pleasurefulness will be terrific, my worthy chum!" purred the Nabob of Bhanipur, looking up with a crimson face from the fire.

"That's all right," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Come in, Marky!"

And the two juniors from Study No. 13 entered, each with a bundle under his arm.

"Good!" exclaimed Nugent.

Bob and Mark unfastened the parcels, and rolled out cakes and jam-tarts galore, with a packet of ham and several sausage-rolls.

"Corn in Egypt!" ejaculated Wharton.

"The cornfulness is terrific!"

Billy Bunter eyed the supplies with glistening eyes.

"I say, you fellows, this is really decent of you!" he remarked. "I suppose you knew that I was hungry?"

"Ha, ha! I never even remembered that you existed, Bunt!" said Bob Cherry, with his usual candour. "Thought I'd come and have tea with you, Harry, and join forces—see?"

"Jolly good idea!"

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "But who have you been robbing?"

"Oh, I can't tell you, or Bunter will be off to get a lot like this!" said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"If he knew that I never gave Mrs. Mumble a penny for this lot—"

"What?" ejaculated Bunter.

"He'd think she was dotty, and he'd buzz off like anything to get some of the good things while there was a chance."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Nugent. "You

don't mean to say that Mrs. Mimble is giving grub away like that? What's the matter?"

"Nothing! Perhaps she wants to get rid of her stock," said Bob, with a wink to the chums that Bunter was too short-sighted to see. "Anyway, look at this lot. It didn't cost me a shilling—nor a penny, for that matter. If Bunter—"

"She must be off her rocker!" said Bunter breathlessly.

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"She looked much the same as usual."

"I've often suspected that Mrs. Mimble drinks," said Billy Bunter confidentially.

"I say, you fellows, if she's intoxicated and giving things away, now's the time to get a really first-class feed."

"You young rotter!"

"Well, Cherry's got some, and he's set the example. Why don't you call Cherry a rotter?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"Shut up!"

"I shan't shut up! Let's all go down to the tuckshop and get a lot of grub while it's going!" exclaimed Billy Bunter excitedly.

"If—"

"Oh, you can go!" said Bob Cherry. "I've got enough here."

"Quite enough!" said Nugent.

"Well, that's all very well," said Billy Bunter, between bites at a jam-tart he had already annexed. "But the more the merrier, you know. I—I say, you fellows, if I run down to the tuckshop now, you—you won't begin till I get back, will you?"

There was a roar of laughter at that.

"But I say, you know, you fellows—"

Wharton lifted the teapot upon the table.

"Ready?" he said.

"But it's a chance we oughtn't to miss," said Bunter, starting on a second tart. "We could get in a supply of tinned things, you know—bloaters-paste and salmon and lobster, that would keep—as well as cake and tarts and jam-puffs for eating now."

"Rats!"

"I think you must be off your rocker, Wharton! Look here, will you lend me your cricket-bag to take down to the tuckshop?"

"Yes, if you like," said Harry, laughing.

"I—I say, Cherry, it's not a j-joke, is it? You really got those things from Mrs. Mimble's shop?" exclaimed the Owl of the Remove.

"Of course I did, ass!"

"And you didn't pay for them?"

"Not a cent."

"Or owe Mrs. Mimble the money?"

"Not a farthing."

"Didn't she ask you to pay for them?"

"No."

"Wasn't it even mentioned between you?"

"Not a word about it."

"How—how did you work it?" gasped Bunter, almost overwhelmed by the good news, and his eyes dancing behind his spectacles at the thought of unlimited feeds.

"I just walked into the shop and selected what I wanted," said Bob.

"Just picked out the things—eh?"

"That's it."

"And carried them away?"

"Yes."

"And—and she never asked you to pay, or reckoned that you owed her for them?" exclaimed Bunter, with bated breath.

"Not a whisper of anything of the sort."

"She must be dotty!"

"She looked the same as usual."

"My—my hat! I'm jolly well going down to the tuckshop!" gasped Bunter. "I'll take your bag, Wharton, and—and a couple of these tarts to eat on the way. I feel that I need a snack. I shall have plenty to eat coming back. I—I say, you fellows, this is simply ripping!"

And the fat junior, with tarts in one hand and Wharton's cricket-bag in the other, rushed out of the study, and they heard him pattering away down the stairs.

The chums of the Remove chuckled softly, and settled down to tea, much more at their ease without the fat junior.

Bob Cherry grinned in a reflective sort of way as he stirred his tea.

"Curious thing that Bunter shouldn't guess that Linley paid for these things!" he remarked, looking round.

The juniors roared.

"What a curious idea for him to get into his head, that Mrs. Mimble is giving her stock-in-trade away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bob Cherry grinned, and started on the ham.

Needless to say Billy Bunter received the surprise of his life when he reached the tuckshop and learned that the chums of the Remove had been pulling his leg.

He returned to the study wrathful and indignant.

But Bunter's rage only amused the Removeites, and they laughed heartily over the fat junior's discomfiture.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Imposition.

"SMITH!"

Vernon-Smith stopped. He was passing the door of Mr. Quelch's study when the Form-master called to him.

Two or three juniors who were in the passage stopped, too, very much interested in what was to pass between the Bounder and his Form-master.

"Yes, sir," said Vernon-Smith sulkily.

"Have you done your lines?"

Vernon-Smith started. As a matter of fact, he had wholly forgotten the circumstance that lines had been imposed.

"Well, Smith?" said Mr. Quelch, as the junior did not reply.

"No, sir," said Vernon-Smith at last.

"Indeed! Why not?"

"I forgot, sir."

The juniors in the passage almost held

"Listen, first. We've stopped some of your blackguardly tricks; we'll stop them again if your fool enough to start them. Mind, disrespect to a Form-master is worse than your smoking and your other idiocies. You've got to get those lines done and take them to Mr. Quelch!"

"I won't, though!"

"Then the Remove will see to it."

"Hang you!" broke out Vernon-Smith savagely. "Why can't you mind your own business? What does it matter to you whether I do the lines or not?"

"Nothing at all, as far as that goes."

"Then let me alone."

"It's a question of treating our Form-master with decency."

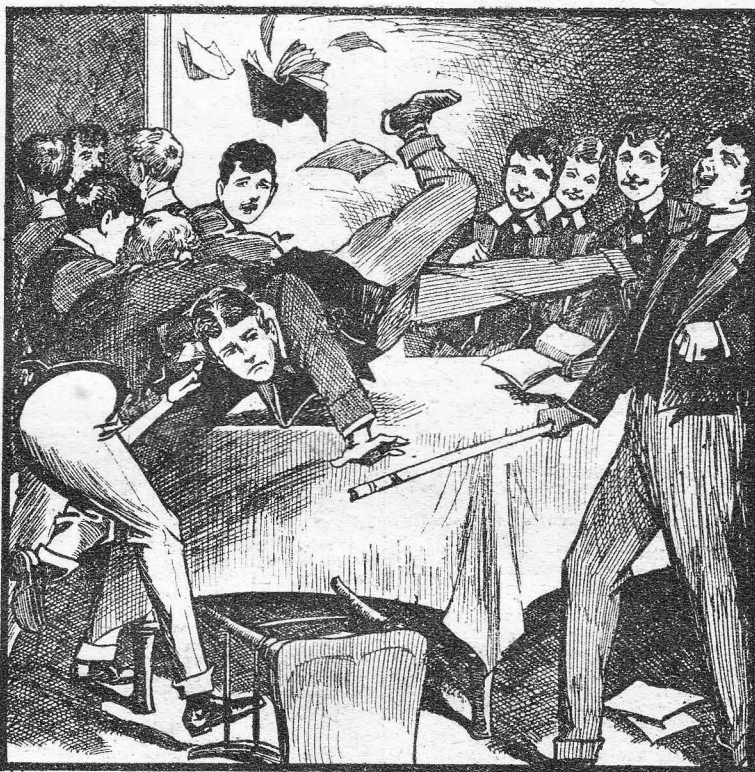
"I suppose Mr. Quelch can look after himself without you to look after him," said the Bounder with a sneer.

"I shan't argue that out with you."

"Well, I won't do the lines!" said Vernon-Smith as Harry released him; and he walked away with a sneer on his lips.

Harry looked after him for a moment, and then went into the Common-room.

He called to his chums, and a crowd of



THE REMOVITES TAKE THE BOUNDER IN HAND!

their breath. There was not a fellow in the Remove who would have dreamed of saying that to Mr. Quelch—at all events, without ample regrets for the omission.

The Remove-master's brows darkened.

"You forgot them, Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Your imposition is doubled. I shall expect it before bedtime."

The Bounder did not reply, but a very sullen look came over his face.

Mr. Quelch closed his study door. The Bounder went slowly on his way. Harry Wharton tapped him on the shoulder, and Vernon-Smith looked round sullenly.

"You are not intending to do those lines?" said Wharton.

"No."

"You had better."

"I shall not!"

"You had better," repeated Wharton.

"Have you forgotten what you were told only last evening?" His grasp tightened upon the Bounder's shoulder as Vernon-Smith tried to move away. "Listen to me, please!"

"Let me go!"

other fellows gathered round, attracted by the scent of trouble in the air, as it were.

"What's up?" asked Tom Brown.

"Smith refuses to do the lines Quelch set him."

"Here, hang it, call him by his double-barreled name!" interposed Smith minor of the Remove indignantly; and there was a grin.

"Well, Vernon-Smith, then," said Wharton, smiling a little. "Vernon-Smith refuses to do his impot. You know what that means. He'll appeal to the Head when Quelch goes for him, and then he'll get off scot-free, after checking our Form-master before us all. Quelch can't do anything. It's the Head who should act, and doesn't. Can't or won't, whichever it is. Are we going to see our Form-master cheeked in public by that cad?"

"Not much!"

"The not-muchfulness is terrific!"

"We agreed that he was to be brought to his senses," said Mark Linley. "That is a more important matter than any others we've settled for him."

"That's so."
 "Marky's right!" said Bob Cherry. "Only we shall have to be careful to keep this dark from Mr. Quelch. We don't want to do anything that looks like sucking up to a master. Good-little-George in the story-book was a beast."

"Quite so! For goodness' sake don't let's do anything like the good little hero of a good little story-book!" exclaimed Tom Brown in alarm.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Goodness knows I don't want to be a prig!" he said. "But the cad goes too far. He checks Quelch before the lot of us, and Quelch can't do anything, because the head doesn't back him up. Only a worm would take advantage like that. But Vernon-Smith is an utter worm!"

"The wormfulness of the esteemed rotter is great!"

"He's got to have his lesson!" said Nugent decidedly. "He's got to write the lines, and take 'em to Mr. Quelch!"

"You're all agreed on that?"

"Yes, all!" said a score of voices.

"Good! Then we may as well get it over."

Vernon-Smith had gone to his study, and a crowd of Removites followed him there. Skinner was at work in the study, and the Bounder was sitting moodily in the armchair. He was not smoking now; that solace was gone.

Skinner jumped up as the Removites crowded in.

"What's the row?" he demanded. "I haven't asked you chaps to tea, and if you've come to help me with my prep, there are too many of you."

"We haven't, Skinny. We've come to help Smithy do his lines."

Vernon-Smith scowled.

"I'm not going to do them!" he said.

"You mistake, kid," said Bob Cherry blandly; "you are! Shut the door, kids!"

The door was closed.

Vernon-Smith made a rapid step towards it, but a crowd of juniors in the way barred his path. He was pushed back to the table. "Give him some foolscap, Skinner, old man!"

"Here you are!"

"Sit down, Vernon-Smith."

"I won't!"

"Take your pen."

"I won't!"

"No time for argument," said Bob Cherry; and his powerful grasp crushed the Bounder into a chair. "Now give him a pen."

And the pen was placed in the Bounder's hand.

He hurled it savagely to the floor.

"I won't write a line!" he said.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

No Complaints.

HARRY WHARTON came forward as the Bounder threw the pen to the floor.

He picked it up quietly, but with his lips compressed.

The Bounder looked uneasy for a moment as he caught the expression upon Harry's face.

"Better write, Smith," said Harry coldly.

"I will not!"

"You've got to take that impot to Mr. Quelch at bedtime. Mind, we're in earnest. If you don't write out a hundred lines we'll rag you till you do!"

"You can do as you like; I won't write!"

"For the last time."

"Hang you!"

"That's enough, then. You're going to be licked, until you agree to write," said Harry quietly. "So that you sha'n't have any unfair play to complain of, you're welcome to fight instead of being licked if you like. Will you fight me?"

"No, I won't!"

"Or Nugent—he's not so big as you are?"

"No, I tell you!"

"Very well. You've got the cricket-stump, Bob?"

"What ho!"

"Shove him across the table!"

The Bounder made a wild leap for the door. But many hands were upon him.

Many hands, it is said, make light work; they certainly made short work of the weedy Bounder.

He was whirled to the table, facing it, and forced into a bending position, his nose very nearly in the inkpot.

The grasp of a dozen strong hands held him there.

"Now lay on with the stump," said Harry

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 8.

Wharton. "When the cad's tired of cricket practice, perhaps he'll write the impot."

"Let me go!"

"Lay it on!"

Bob Cherry twirled the stump in the air, and brought it down upon the person of Vernon-Smith.

The blow was not a hard one, but it elicited a fendish yell from the Bounder.

"Lay it off—till he caves in!"

"Right you are!"

And the punishment, facetiously known among the juniors as cricket practice, continued, the lashes growing harder each time. Vernon-Smith struggled and howled.

The noise rang along the Remove passage, and, as was to be expected, attracted the notice of a prefect at last.

Courtney came along the passage; but when he observed that the dim came from Study No. 9 he judiciously turned and walked away again.

He knew that the Remove had taken the education of the Bounder in hand, and he was not in the least disposed to interfere with them.

The cricket-stump made rapid play.

The Bounder yelled and struggled, but he soon learned that that made no difference, and his struggles ceased at last.

"Leave off!" he gasped. "You hounds! Leave off!"

"Are you going to write the impot?"

"Ye-es!"

"Let him go, you chaps!"

The Bounder was released.

Aching all over from his castigation, and with a face full of evil spite, he sank into his chair.

Wharton placed the pen in his hand.

"It's a hundred lines you have to do," he remarked.

The Bounder nodded sullenly.

He began to write. He had had enough of the "cricket practice," and he knew that he would get more unless he obeyed orders.

His pen moved slowly over the paper.

The Removites stood round the table, watching him as he worked. His pen moved on slowly but steadily. As he had the work to do, he wanted to get it over as quickly as possible.

It was a long task, and many of the juniors walked away before it was half over. But Harry Wharton & Co. remained to the end.

The Bounder was very weary before the last line was written. But it was written at last, and then he threw down the pen.

"There it is!" he said savagely.

"Very good!" said Wharton. "Now you'll take it to Mr. Quelch."

A refusal was on the Bounder's lips, but he did not dare to utter it. He blotted the last page, and gathered up the impot.

"We'll see you deliver it," said Harry.

"Hang you!"

"Enough of that! As we've started on the job, we'll teach you better manners while your education's going on. Better language in future. Mind, the next time you use an expression of that sort you'll get it straight from the shoulder."

Vernon-Smith was on the point of replying, "Hang you!" once more; but the look in Harry Wharton's eye restrained him.

He sullenly left the study with the imposition in his hand. The Famous Four followed him to the door of Mr. Quelch's room.

Vernon-Smith tapped and entered.

The Remove-master was at his table, and he laid down his pen as the Bounder of Greyfriars came in.

"Ah, it is you, Smith!" he said. "Have you done the lines?"

"Yes, sir," said the Bounder sullenly.

He was aware that four juniors were waiting just outside the door, which was ajar, and that they could hear every word he uttered.

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch.

His face did not betray what he thought; that he was surprised at the submission shown by the Bounder in writing out the lines.

He took the imposition, and frowned a little as he glanced at it.

"This is very badly and hastily written," he said. "Never mind. You may go."

"I wouldn't have written it, but—"

"What?"

"I've been assaulted by the fellows in the Lower Fourth," said Vernon-Smith savagely.

"They held me down over a table and thrashed me with a stump."

Outside the study the juniors stared at one another.

"The cad!" breathed Bob Cherry. "Sneaking to Quelch!"

"The worm!"

"The beast!"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips, but he

did not speak. If any trouble came of his process of "educating" the Bounder, he was willing to face it.

Mr. Quelch elevated his eyebrows, and looked at the Bounder with a peculiar expression.

"Indeed, Smith?"

"They ought to be punished, sir!"

"Why did they thrash you?"

"Because I wasn't going to write out the impot," said Vernon-Smith recklessly. "I shouldn't have done it!"

"Indeed! Then they seem to have a better sense of discipline than you have, Smith, and I shall certainly not have them punished."

"They ought to be flogged!"

"Kindly leave my study!"

"Are you going to punish those cads?" demanded Vernon-Smith, his voice trembling with passion.

"That is not the tone to take with me, Smith. The boys will not be punished. You will be punished, however, if you do not curb your insolence. Leave my study!"

"Then I'll appeal to the Head!" said Vernon-Smith between his teeth. "I'll show you whether I'm to be treated like this! My father could buy up this school if he chose, and not miss the money!"

"Leave my study!"

"Then I'll go to the Head!"

Mr. Quelch rose from his seat, and Vernon-Smith dodged out of the study just in time.

The Remove-master's brow was black as he resumed his seat. Mr. Quelch was not often at a loss; but in view of the Head's peculiar attitude in the matter, he was at a loss how to deal with the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith hurried out of the study fairly into the arms of the Famous Four. They grasped him and dragged him away.

"Leave me alone!" panted Vernon-Smith.

"You're not going to the Head," said Wharton quietly.

"I shall do as I choose!"

"Haven't you learned yet that you can't? Come up to the study."

"Pah!"

"Yank him along!"

"Hold on! I—I'll go!" stammered Vernon-Smith.

He was learning his lesson quickly now.

With the four sturdy juniors round him, he tramped upstairs. He was taken into Study No. 1, and told to sit down.

"I'm not going to stop here!" he exclaimed.

"You're going to stop here while we do our prep," said Harry.

"But—but—"

"We're not going to lose sight of you till bed-time."

"I won't!"

"You will!"

And Vernon-Smith, after a glance at Harry's set face, decided that he would.

He sat sullenly in the chair, and hardly moved while the chums of the Lower Fourth did their evening preparation; and when it was over he was allowed to leave the study, but in their company.

Not for a moment did Vernon-Smith escape the eyes of one or another of them till bed-time came for the Remove.

Then he was marched upstairs in the crowd of juniors, and went with them into the Remove dormitory.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder is Sorry.

VERNON-SMITH sullenly undressed himself with the rest of the Form.

Loder, the prefect, saw the Lower Fourth to the dormitory, and retired with a remark to the effect that if they weren't all in bed when he returned in ten minutes they would hear from him and wish they hadn't.

When the prefect was gone Harry Wharton turned to Vernon-Smith.

"I've a word to say to you before we go to bed," he exclaimed. "You seem to be able to get out of floggings, but you can't get out of a Form licking, and that's what you'll get if you go to the Head!"

"I—I don't want to go, as far as—as that goes," said Vernon-Smith, hesitating a little. "I—I was wild when I spoke to Quelch, that's all."

"Very good! Mind you don't go, and all's well. The other matter I've got to mention is this: You checked Mr. Quelch when you took in your lines. You've got to apologise to him to-morrow morning before all the Form in the Form-room."

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is great!"

The Bounder's face was convulsed with rage.

"I won't! I won't!" he shrieked.

"You will!"

"Who's to make me, hang you?"

"The Remove," said Harry. "You'll promise to-night to do it, and we'll rag you until you promise. If you break your word in the morning we'll make you run the gauntlet of the whole Form. I suppose you know what that means? You'd better think it over and come to your senses. You've got the Remove up against you, and we mean business."

"Business, rather!" said Bob Cherry.

"Think it over, Smithy."

"I sha'n't apologise to Mr. Quelch!"

"We will see."

The juniors turned in, with the exception of Vernon-Smith. He did not continue undressing, but laced up his boots again.

Loder came into the dormitory. He stared at the dressed Bounder with an angry scowl.

"Why aren't you in bed?" he exclaimed sharply. "Are you trying to waste my time, you young scoundrel?"

"I'm not going to bed!"

"What?"

"These cads are going to rag me after lights out!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "I'm not going to stay in this dormitory!"

"Get into bed!"

"That's your look-out. My business is to see that you go to bed," said the prefect.

"Get into bed at once!"

And, by way of emphasising his orders, he cuffed the Bounder right and left. Vernon-Smith yelled, and began to drag off his clothes.

"There!" exclaimed the prefect breathlessly.

"Now jump in!"

The time for kicking the shins of a prefect had passed with Vernon-Smith.

He had realised by this time that the prefects ruled by the strong hand as much as by the rules of the school, and that he had no chance against a big fellow of seventeen.

He dragged off his clothes and tumbled into bed.

"Mind, if you get out of that bed again I'll warn you!" said Loder. "I'll bring a cane with me if I have to see you again!"

And he extinguished the lights and went out.

There was silence in the Remove dormitory. It lasted for five minutes, good time for the prefect to get back to his own quarters, whence he was not likely to emerge again to interfere with the Lower Fourth if he could help it.

Then several of the Removites sat up in bed.

"Vernon-Smith!" called out Harry Wharton.

There was no reply.

"Smith!"

Still silence.

The obstinate Bounder did not open his lips.

Wharton sprang out of bed, and lighted a bicycle lantern. Several more juniors rose, and candle-ends were lighted, shedding a dim illumination through the long, lofty dormitory.

A dozen juniors gathered round the Bounder's bed. Bob Cherry had a cricket-stump in his hand.

"Get up!" said Wharton.

The Bounder sat up in bed.

"Get out of bed, Smith!"

The Bounder got out.

The juniors looked a little surprised. This was wonderfully docile for the Bounder.

But Vernon-Smith was coming to his senses at last. What was the use of resisting the order to get out of bed, when he knew that he would be dragged out by force if he refused?

"Now, then," said Harry Wharton. "you understand what you've got to do. You've got to apologise to Mr. Quelch in the Form-room, before all of us, to-morrow morning at first lesson."

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"Will you do it?"

"No!"

The Removites looked grimly at the recalcitrant Bounder.

"I ask you for your own good," said Harry Wharton. "It doesn't matter to me whether you promise now, or whether we rag you till you agree."

"I won't do it," said the Bounder thickly.

"Form up, you chaps!" said Harry concisely. "Double row, and each of you take a pillow, or a belt, or something."

"Right you are!"

The Bounder watched the Removites with deep uneasiness.

"What are you going to do?" he broke out at last.

Wharton glanced at him.

"You're going to run the gauntlet," he said. "Each chap will take a swipe at you as you pass. When you get to the end you'll run again, unless you make the promise I've asked of you."

"Hang you, I won't!"

"Very well, you'll take the consequences."

The double row of Removites was soon formed.

Every fellow had a stuffed stocking, or a cricket-belt, or a pillow in his hands, and the looks of the Remove showed that they meant to use the weapons.

The Bounder stood with set lips and white face.

"Ready!" called out Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton waved his hand.

"Smith, start!"

"I won't!"

"Collar him!"

Hands grasped the struggling Bounder on all sides, and he was pushed to the end of the row, and whirled into it.

Then the blows began to fall.

Fellows craned over to get a swipe at the Bounder, and the blows were heavy, too. The Bounder staggered forward.

A rain of blows fell upon him.

"Run, you beggar—run!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The Bounder realised that it was better to run than to stand still under a shower of blows.

He ran!

Faster and faster he ran, and faster and faster fell the blows from both sides as he ran, and he staggered out at the end of the double row of grinning juniors, bruised, breathless, almost exhausted.

He sank upon the floor, a gasping heap.

He was left for a few minutes to recover his breath. Then Harry Wharton lent him a hand to rise, and he sank upon a bed.

Wharton's face was relentless.

"Are you going to apologise to Mr. Quelch in the morning," he said grimly, "or are you going through that again?"

"I—I—I'll apologise."

It was the total surrender of the Bounder. He crawled back to bed, aching in every limb.

"I say, you fellows, better make him run again," said Billy Bunter. "I didn't get a fair swipe at him at all, you know. Bob Cherry was in the way."

"Shut up, Bunter."

"But I say—"

"Shut up, and go to bed!"

The Remove turned in, with many a chuckle over the exciting episode of running the gauntlet. It had been a rough punishment for the Bounder, but there was little doubt that it had done him good.

It was a long time before Vernon-Smith slept. The whole Remove was barred in slumber while the Bounder lay awake, his eyes burning into the darkness.

When the rising-bell went in the morning many curious glances were turned upon the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Some of the fellows grinned as he turned promptly out of bed before the bell had ceased to ring.

But Harry Wharton did not even glance at him. He would not appear to triumph over a defeated enemy in the remotest degree.

Vernon-Smith was down as early as the others, and he looked very quiet and subdued as he took his place at the breakfast-table.

But it was when the Remove went into the class-room that the juniors watched him with the keenest interest.

Would he keep his word? There was little doubt of it.

Harry Wharton & Co. had shown that they were in deadly earnest, and Vernon-Smith had learned, too, that complaints to the "powers that be" could not save him from punishment at the hands of his Form-fellows.

It was a bitter pill for him to swallow, but he swallowed it.

As Mr. Quelch took his place at his desk every eye was turned upon the Bounder, and the new junior rose to his feet, his face scarlet.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him.

"If you please, sir—" faltered Vernon-Smith.

"Well?"

"I—I wish to speak to—to—"

"You may go on."

"I—I want to apologise to you, sir, for— for my—my impertinence yesterday evening, sir," stammered the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch was not easily surprised, but he almost jumped as he listened to the unexpected apology of the Bounder.

"Indeed, Smith," he exclaimed at last. "that is very right and proper of you, and I am glad—very glad—that you have shown this much of proper feeling."

"I—I am sorry, sir."

"That is enough, Smith. Your apology is accepted, and I hope that this new spirit you have shown will continue," said Mr. Quelch genially.

And the morning's lessons commenced, and it was noticeable that the Bounder was much more attentive than ever before, and that there was not the faintest trace or suspicion of impertinence in his manner to the Form-master.

The Remove grinned as they poured out of the class-room after lessons. Wharton did not join in the general grin, however; he tapped the Bounder on the arm.

"You've done the decent thing, Vernon-Smith," he said, with an effort to infuse some cordiality into his voice. "Keep it up, and you'll find plenty of friends here."

The Bounder did not reply, but his face was a little less sullen than usual as he turned away.

Whether Mr. Quelch ever suspected the pressure that had been brought to bear upon the Bounder the juniors did not know. At all events, his position was much easier since Harry Wharton & Co. had undertaken the education of Vernon-Smith.

THE END.

Next Friday's
Grand Long,
Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton
& Co. is entitled

**BUNTER,
THE LINE
MERCHANT!**

By FRANK RICHARDS.

... Please ...
order your copy
of the PENNY
POPULAR in
... advance! ...



NO SURRENDER!

A Grand Long, Complete Story, dealing with the Early Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co.

By OWEN CONQUEST.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Jimmy Silver's Manifesto.

"**H**A, ha, ha!"
 "Awful nerve!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Mr. Manders, the science master at Rookwood School, came rustling out into the quadrangle, with a dark frown upon his brow.

The roars of laughter from the quad had an irritating effect upon Mr. Manders. He was in a very bad temper that morning.

It was close on time for first lesson, but the bell had not yet gone, and most of the Rookwood fellows were in the quad.

They were gathered in a grinning crowd round one of the old beeches, upon which a sheet of cardboard was pinned.

Upon the card words were daubed in large letters with a brush; and this it was, apparently, that caused the merriment among the fellows.

Mr. Manders frowned at the crowd. Affairs at Rookwood that morning were in an unprecedented state, and Mr. Manders, who was acting as headmaster in the absence of Dr. Chisholm, was far from feeling humorous.

But the Rookwood fellows were too interested in the notice on the tree to observe the approach of the headmaster pro tem.

"Awful cheek!" said Tommy Dodd of the Fourth, the chief and leader of the juniors on the Modern side at Rookwood. "I wonder what Manders will say when he spots this? Hallo, here he comes!"

The crowd of fellows, Classics and Moderns, made way for Mr. Manders as he swept up.

"What is that?" snapped Mr. Manders. "Do not remove it; let me see it first!"

Mr. Manders stopped in front of the notice pinned on the beech-tree, and adjusted his glasses and blinked at it.

The Rookwood fellows looked on in silence. They wondered what effect that notice would have upon Mr. Manders.

They exchanged silent looks of enjoyment as they observed Mr. Manders' complexion changing to a purple hue. For this is what the notice said:

"FORT DE TUCKSHOP!"

"WHEREAS, during the absence of the Head, and the lamentable illness of the Classical masters owing to influenza, Mr. Manders of the Modern Side has been appointed temporary headmaster of Rookwood.

"And WHEREAS the said Mr. Manders has refused to recognize the rites and privileges of the Classical Side

"By appointing a Modern prefect to take charge of the Fourth Form, which the same prefect Knowles is a Bully and a Beast, and not to be stood by Classical fellows at any Price.

"Be it noted that we, the undersigned members of the Fourth Form, refuse absolutely to have anything to do with Knowles, or any other Modern Beast, and have therefore proclaimed a Barring-Out, and are Prepared to hold our Entrenched Position in the Tuckshop against all comers. As witness the Licking we gave the Modern Beasts when they tried to get us out yesterday, and we hope Sergeant Kettle has recovered from the Cold water.

"TAKE NOTICE that we mean Business, and will not surrender until the said Mr. Manders gives in to our conditions, which are the following: No Lickings; General Amnesty all Round; and a Classical Prefect to take the Fourth until the Form-master

comes back. These conditions are a siney qua non. And until then we shall Hold out in the Fort de Tuckshop, and are redly to give any Modern cads the kybosh if they try to get us out!

"RULE BRITANNIA!"

"DOWN WITH THE MODERNS!"

(Signed) "JIMMY SILVER,
 "ARTHUR LOVELL,"

Here followed, in all sorts of sprawling "fists," the signatures of the Classical members of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Mr. Manders read that notice through from end to end, his face growing more and more purple till he seemed upon the verge of a fit of apoplexy.

"Infamous!" Mr. Manders gasped at last. "This—this insolence is unexampled! So this—this infamous insult to your headmaster is the cause of the laughter I heard—which I was surprised and shocked to hear. This is no matter for laughter! Every boy present will take a hundred lines."

Mr. Manders gave vent to a sound that would, had he not have been a master, be likened unto a snort.

"Go to your class-rooms at once!" he said harshly. "You should know better than to find food for mirth in the insolence and audacity of your schoolfellows. I shall expect your impositions this evening. Go!"

The Rookwood fellows cleared off to their Form-rooms.

They went with glum and angry faces.

Even the Modern fellows, who were prepared to back up "Old Manders" because he was a Modern master, were exasperated by his injustice.

Mr. Manders was going the right way to cause the revolt of the Fourth to spread to the other Forms at Rookwood.

Mr. Manders glared after the retreating juniors, then rustled away towards the tuckshop.

The school shop, on the ground floor of the old tower, was shut and silent.

From an upper window a Union Jack fluttered in the breeze.

"Boys!" shouted Mr. Manders.

In a moment the faces of Jimmy Silver, Raby, Lovell, and Newcome appeared at the window.

After them came the rest of the rebels till the window was crammed with grinning faces.

Jimmy Silver saluted the master respectfully.

"Good-morning, sir!" he said cheerfully. "Nice morning!"

"Will you go to your class-room at once?" roared Mr. Manders.

"Do you agree to the terms, sir?"

"No!" shouted Mr. Manders.

"Then there's nothing more to be said, sir! Good-morning!"

The faces disappeared from the windows.

"Silver!" roared Mr. Manders.

No reply.

"Lovell! Raby! Newcome! Jones!" shouted the master.

But there was no answer.

Mr. Manders gritted his teeth and clenched his thin hands, and strode away, and swept away towards the School House.

Another day had dawned upon the barring-out at Rookwood, and the rebels were still going strong.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. An Attack in Force.

JIMMY SILVER & Co. were very cheerful that morning.

It was the second day of the barring-out, and they were still holding the fort.

The successes of the previous day had encouraged them immensely, and they passed a night in their entrenchments, as they called the tuckshop, without disturbance.

While the rest of Rookwood, Moderns, and Classics, were grinding away at Latin, or geography, or "stinks," Jimmy Silver & Co. continued a late breakfast, for which the supplies were ample.

All the stores of the tuckshop, of which there were plenty, were at their disposal; and Sergeant Kettle, their owner, was booked for a heavy loss.

The pastries had already disappeared, and most of the jam and preserves had followed, but of the provisions there was ample to last for several weeks at least.

"We can hold out for the rest of the term, if necessary," said Jimmy Silver. "At least, till the Head comes back. And he's not likely to come back yet. When he does, he'll see justice done. The Head is an old sport!"

"Anyway, here we are, and here we're going to stay!" said Raby. "Those Modern kids wouldn't have the nerve for it. We've proved that the Classics are the top side at Rookwood, and that's something!"

"Hooray!"

Jimmy Silver's confidence was unbounded; but some of the rebels were wondering very thoughtfully what Mr. Manders would do next.

From the upper windows the juniors kept a watch upon the quadrangle, looking out for the next move of the enemy.

It was pretty certain that the morning would not pass without some fresh attempt on the part of Mr. Manders.

"What the dickens are they up to?" muttered Jimmy Silver, as the school sergeant brought the hose out into view, and proceeded to attach it to the hydrant. "There isn't a fire anywhere!"

Lovell whistled.

"That's for us!" he said.

"My hat!"

"Shut the windows!" said Raby.

The windows were slammed down. Sergeant Kettle went on with his preparations.

Mr. Manders came out to watch him, followed by Knowles and Catesby and Frampton, three prefects of the Modern side.

The three Sixth-Formers were looking very determined.

They were evidently the attacking force.

Jimmy Silver & Co. noted with satisfaction that none of the Classical prefects had joined the enemy.

As a matter of fact, they had refused to have a hand in the matter, much to the wrath of Mr. Manders.

Through the closed windows Jimmy Silver & Co. watched, very much on the alert.

Having finished with the hose, Sergeant Kettle proceeded to fetch a heavy axe from the wood-shed. Jimmy Silver whistled softly.

"Oh, the spookers!" he muttered.

The design evidently was to burst in the door of the tuckshop.

The enemy had tried that before, but had been driven off by pails of icy water from the upper windows.

Sergeant Kettle advanced to the attack again.

The windows being closed, he reached the door in safety, and the axe swung up.

Crash! Crash! Crash!
 "He's got to be shifted," said Jimmy Silver resolutely, "Open the window, Lovell!"
 "But the hose—"
 "Blow the hose!"
 The attack was for the first time really dangerous to the defenders of the tuckshop.

The door rattled and cracked under the sergeant's heavy blows, and, strong as it was, it was not likely to withstand that assault for long.

Knowles and Catesby and Frampton were ready to rush in after the sergeant as soon as the door was down.

Mack, the porter, stood with his hand on the nozzle of the hose, ready to turn a torrent of water on the defenders if they opened the windows.

But there was nothing else to be done. Jimmy Silver caught up a bucket of water, of which several were placed in readiness, and approached the window. Lovell opened it quickly.

The sergeant, who was just below, belaboured the door. Mack had his eye on the window; the hose was ready.

But Jimmy did not falter. He leaned out with the bucket over the sill.

Swoosh! Swish! Whizzzzz!
 The bucket dropped from Jimmy Silver's hands, as a torrent smote him in the face, and hurled him back into the room.

"Gerrooogh!"
 "Ow!" roared Lovell, as he caught a jet of water with his neck, and he jumped back from the window, landing on Flynn's foot, and there was a wild yell from Flynn.

The juniors scuttled back from the window, into which the water was whizzing in a torrent, splashing on the opposite wall.

Jimmy Silver was extended on the floor, drenched to the skin, and dizzy from the shock.

Crash! Crash! Crash!
 The blows of the axe rang out on the door.

Jimmy Silver's bucket had just missed the sergeant, and rolled away on the ground, and the old soldier was plying his blows on the door with terrific energy.

Crash! Crash! Bang!
 Lovell seized a bucket, and made a desperate dash to the window; but the stream from the hose forced him back, and his bucket of water went under the chin, and fairly hurled him flying.

And there was a howl from the juniors who received its contents.

"You silly ass! Trying to drown us?"
 "Chuck it, you fathead!"

"Grooogh!" groaned Lovell, as he crawled away from the window. "Yow! I'm wet! Ow!"

Splash, splash, went the water on the wall, and the door was swimming with it.

Crash, crash, sounded the axe below, wielded by the stalwart sergeant, and the door shook and groaned.

"All U P!" mumbled Jones minor.
 "Rats! We're not done yet!" said Jimmy Silver, between his teeth. "Shut up!"

Jimmy Silver faced the torrent again, and succeeded in closing the window.

Then the grinning porter shut off the stream of water.

Unhindered, the sergeant plied his crashing blows on the shop door.

Knowles and Catesby and Frampton stood grinning, waiting for the moment when the door should be down.

They had stout ashplants in their hands, and were quite ready for the fray.

There was consternation in the garrison. Only one fellow there did not think that the game was up.

That was Jimmy Silver.
 The chief of the Fistical Four was not beaten yet.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Second Line of Defence.

JIMMY SILVER rubbed the water out of his eyes, and thought hard.

His chums looked to him for orders. They thought the game was up, but they were ready to follow their leader.

Crash! Crash! Crash!
 A deep groan came from the door below. Evidently the stout oak would not hold out much longer.

"We can't keep them out of the shop," said Silver at last. "But we're not beaten yet. We can hold the staircase!"

"My hat!" murmured Lovell.
 "Buck up!" rapped out Silver. "No time to waste! He'll be through in a few

minutes now. Get the grub up here as fast as you can!"

The Fistical Four rushed down the stairs into the shop below, and all the garrison followed them.

Not a moment was lost. The juniors collared the shop supplies on all sides, and rushed up the narrow, winding stairs with them in both hands.

They rushed up again, as if haste lent them wings, and in a few minutes a considerable portion of Sergeant Kettle's stock was transferred to the upper floor.

There was no time to take all. The sergeant's blows were resounding on the door, and a great splinter had come out next to the lock.

A couple of minutes more would see the door down.

Jimmy Silver gave the word to retreat. "Upstairs, all of you!"

The rebels, loaded with a last supply of tuck, rushed for the stairs.

The breathless sergeant stood panting; while Knowles & Co., gripping their ashplants, rushed into the tuckshop.

They found it empty.
 "They're upstairs!" exclaimed Knowles.

Full of confidence, the Modern prefect bounded up the shadowy stairway, and gave a yell as he ran full tilt upon the barricade.

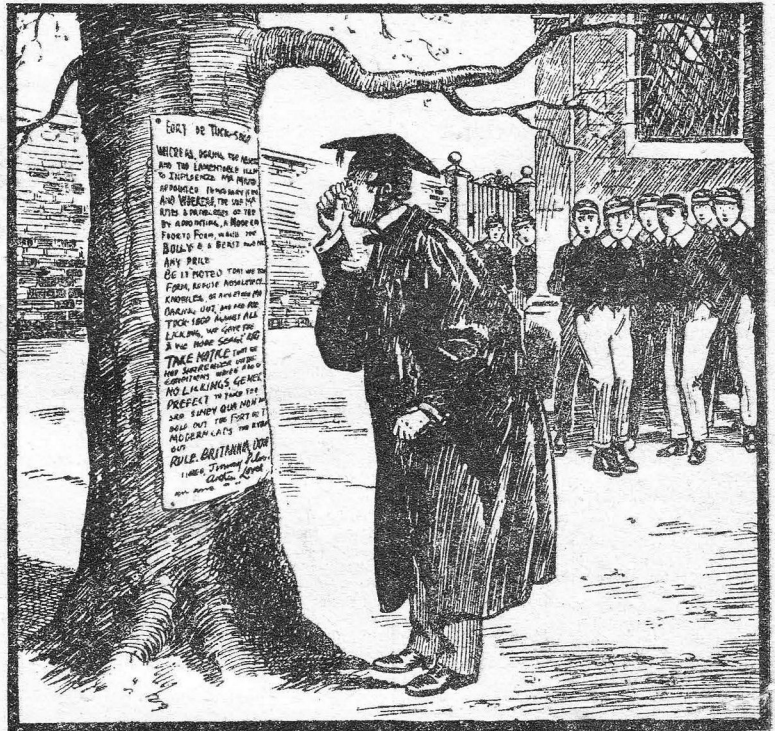
"Yow! Oh! My hat! Yah!"
 "Oh, crumbs!" gasped Catesby, as Knowles staggered back against him. "What the thunder—"

"My heye!" murmured the sergeant below. "The young rips! My heye!"

Jimmy Silver's cheerful face appeared above the barricade.

The jammed furniture filled a space of six or seven feet on the stairway, and he was quite out of reach.

"Hallo!" said Silver coolly. "No admittance this way!"
 "Remove those things, you young hound!" thundered Knowles.



MR. MANDERS READS THE REBELS' MANIFESTO!

Only the Fistical Four remained to cover the retreat.

Jimmy Silver dragged a table out of the parlour behind the shop, and the four juniors bore it half-way up the stairs.

The building had been of old the ancient clock-tower of Rookwood, and the staircase was built of stone, and wound up spirally.

A better position for defence could not have been wished for.

At the turn of the staircase the juniors planted the table, jamming it between the walls crosswise.

They scrambled over it, leaving it firmly wedged in.

Then from the upper room they dragged chairs and a bed, piling them on the barricade, and jamming the articles one into another, with a reckless disregard for the damage they did to them.

It was no time to consider trifles like that. "That's better!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"They won't get past that in a hurry!"
 "No fear! Hark! The door's down!"
 Crash!

The door of the tuckshop, fairly shattered by the sergeant's doughty blows, had given way at last.

What remained of the door swung open on the hinges.

The sergeant threw down the axe, and gasped.
 "Ere you are, sir!"
 "Come on!" shouted Knowles.

"Bow-wow!"
 The enraged prefect made a "lick" at the junior with the ash-plant across the barricade.

But his blow was a couple of feet short. Jimmy Silver grinned at him serenely.

"Try again, Knowles!"
 "You—you—you—" stuttered Knowles.

"Why do you not bring them out?" came Mr. Manders' squeaky voice from the quad.

"Bring the young rascals out at once, Knowles!"

"Take us out at once, Knowles, old scout!" chuckled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Come on, Knowles!"
 "Fire!" commanded Jimmy Silver.

A dozen pea-shooters were turned on the prefects in the narrow stairway, and they yelled as the stinging missiles smote them.

Knowles grabbed furiously at the barricade to drag it away.

But the furniture was jammed in at the turning of the staircase, and there was no moving it.

Indeed, if Knowles had succeeded in dragging that stack of furniture down the narrow staircase he would have been considerably hurt.

Fortunately, he did not succeed. The pea-shooters above whizzed away merrily.

The sergeant retreated, and Catesby and Frampton backed away from the hot fire.

Knowles dragged savagely at the barricade, till a cushion, hurled from above, caught him on his prominent nose and sent him rolling down.

He picked himself up, muttering remarks that weren't in the least suitable for tender ears like Jimmy Silver's, and limped out of range into the shop.

"What is the matter?" fumed Mr. Manders. "Why do you not bring them out, Knowles?"

"I can't!" roared the prefect, forgetting the respect due to his master in his fury. "Can't you see they're barricaded there?"

"Knowles! That is not the way to speak to me!"

"Well, see for yourself!" growled Knowles, rubbing his nose.

Mr. Manders rustled through the shop and mounted one step.

He had just time to see for himself, but no more.

For a volley of peas from the garrison above smote him on his furious face, and he gave a sharp yelp, like a dog trodden on, and beat a hasty retreat.

From the victorious garrison came a triumphant yell.

"Hurrah!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Night Attack.

NIGHT fell upon Rookwood. But not till they were quite sleepy did the rebels wrap themselves up in their blankets and fall asleep.

The Fistical Four had arranged to take watches in turn.

As Jimmy Silver remarked, Mr. Manders was quite beast enough to try to surprise them with a night attack.

As leaders of the barring-out, it fell to the four chums to mount guard.

The other fellows said cheerfully that they would chance it, and as they were pretty certain to fall asleep on guard, the four leaders took on the job with good grace.

Newcome took the second watch at midnight.

He settled himself down by the barricade with a blanket to watch.

He was very sleepy, but he manfully resisted the insidious attacks of Morpheus for a long time.

Still manfully resisting, and as determined as ever to keep awake, Newcome dozed off.

The old school was still and silent, save for the rustling of the elms in the quad in the night breeze.

One o'clock sounded out dully through the night, but Newcome did not hear it.

He was deep in slumber by that time.

Neither did he hear a cautious step in the tuckshop below, nor a cautious footstep on the stairs, nor a whispering voice, which he would have recognised had he been awake as Knowles.

"All serene!" whispered Knowles. "The little beasts are all asleep!"

"Shush!" murmured Catesby.

"Get on!" murmured the sergeant.

"Blessed if I 'art like this. But get on!"

And Knowles, with infinite caution, started to creep over the barricade.

After him came Catesby and the sergeant. After them came Frampton.

The barricade creaked, and creaked again, but Newcome did not hear.

"Got 'em this time!" murmured Catesby.

"Keep your boot out of my eye, please, Knowles!"

"Blow your eye!" growled Knowles.

He had just knocked his head on a protruding chair-leg, and he was not in a good temper.

"Oh, buck up!" said Frampton. "You'll wake the young beasts!"

Knowles was almost over the barricade now. In the deep shadows he leaned his hand upon a dark object close to the upturned bedstead—the last obstacle he had to pass.

Unfortunately for the surprise attack, the dark object happened to be the head of George

Newcome, whom Knowles did not perceive in the gloom.

Newcome started out of his slumber with a jump and a yell as he felt that sudden grasp on his head.

"Yow-ow!" Wharrer marrer? What— Oh, my hat!"

Newcome jumped up, and came into violent contact with Knowles, who was just scrambling off the barricade.

Newcome let out a yell that would have awakened the Seven Sleepers:

"Back up!"

There were sleepy exclamations from the startled garrison.

Jimmy Silver was on his feet in a second, throwing aside the blankets.

Newcome, with great courage, had flung himself on Knowles, and brought him to the floor, and was struggling with him.

Over the barricades, careless now of the noise they made, came the sergeant and the other two prefects.

"Back up!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"My hat! What is it? Who—"

"Come on!"

"Pile in!"

Jimmy Silver rushed to the defence.

He had grasped his broom, and he smote Frampton as he came clambering over with a mighty smite, and Frampton disappeared on the lower side of the barricade.

But the next instant Jimmy Silver was struggling in the sergeant's powerful grasp.

Sergeant Kettle and Knowles and Catesby were on the right side of the barricade at last. Frampton was groaning on the lower steps.

"Help!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Rescue!"

Knowles flung Newcome aside, and leaped up, grasping his ashplant.

"Stand back, you young fools!" he shouted.

"We've got you now, and you'd better take it quietly!"

"Don't want to 'urt you, you know," said the sergeant. "But you're took now, and you may as well take it quiet!"

But the juniors declined to take it quiet. They piled in.

And for many minutes no sound was to be heard but the dull thud as well-aimed blows found their billets, and the ungrateful yell of the owner of the billet.

"No surrender!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Hurrah! Ow! My nose!"

"Go it! Yow!"

"Oh, crumbs! Pile in!"

Cricket-stumps crashed against the ashplants, and the prefects began to receive as good as they handed out.

Juniors who were knocked down jumped up again, and came on gallantly.

Crash!

The sergeant went down, with three or four juniors clinging to him, as Jimmy Silver hooked his leg from under him.

The juniors swarmed over him and kept him down.

"Pin him!" panted Silver.

He made a leap for his famous broom.

Knowles and Frampton and Catesby were at close quarters with the juniors; the sergeant was struggling in vain to rise.

Jimmy Silver charged with his broom as if it had been a lance, and caught Knowles under the chin.

The prefect went down as if he had been shot.

Then the broom caught Frampton on the side of the head, and he went down with a terrific yell.

"Back up!"

"Down with 'em!"

Four or five fellows were piling on Catesby, and he was dragged down.

"Pin 'em!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Yow! Lemme gerrup!"

"Oh dear! Gerroff my neck!"

But the rebels were getting the upper hand now, and they were wild with excitement.

They simply swarmed over the surprise party.

Half a dozen of them sat on the sergeant, and he struggled in vain.

Three or four pairs of hands now were

grasping each of the prefects and holding them down.

"Got the cads!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"Hold the rotters tight! Knowles first! Chuck him downstairs!"

"Hurrah!"

Knowles, with four juniors grasping his four limbs, resisted in vain.

He was whirled to the stairs, and sent thumping over the barricade.

He sprawled upon the furniture, and Jimmy Silver swiped at him with a cricket-stump till he scrambled out of reach on the lower stairs.

There was hardly an inch of Knowles without a bump on it by the time he got clear.

"Catesby next—"

"Chuck him out!"

Catesby yelled and struggled, but his yells were unheeded and his struggles were unavailing. Five or six juniors dragged him to the stairs, and bundled him bodily over the barricade.

"Your turn, Frampy!"

"Ow!" roared Frampton. "Yow! Leggo! I'll go quietly, you young villains!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the rebels did not trust Frampton loose.

They whirled him away, and pitched him over the barricade, and the prefect felt more dead than alive by the time he joined his comrades below.

"Now the sergeant!"

Sergeant Kettle, like a wise man, had given in as he saw that there was no chance of victory. He had ceased to struggle.

"Chuck him over!"

"Old on, young gents!" said the sergeant.

"Old on, Master Silver! I'll go! Don't be 'ard on a man for doin' his dooty!"

"Give us your word to go quietly, sergeant!" said Jimmy Silver, who had some compunction about pitching the old soldier after the prefects.

"Yes, Master Silver!"

"Let him go!"

The rebels somewhat reluctantly released the sergeant.

Kettle staggered to his feet, and scrambling down over the barricade, he limped away after the prefects.

From below the voice of Mr. Manders could be heard, more squeaky than ever in his anger and disappointment.

"What does this mean, Knowles?" he said.

"They chucked us out!" snapped Knowles.

"And I've jolly well had enough of this dashed business, I can tell you! I'm dashed well going back to my dashed bed!"

And Knowles, too furious to care a rap for Mr. Manders at that moment, stamped away into the darkness of the quad, leaving Mr. Manders stuttering with rage.

In the room above, now that the excitement was over, there was a sound of groans.

There was not one of the garrison who hadn't conspicuous scars of warfare to show.

Jimmy Silver had a black eye, and there were at least a dozen more distributed among the garrison.

But from the window of Fort de Tuckshop the Union Jack was still fluttering in the breeze.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

All's Well That Ends Well.

EARLY in the afternoon there was a call from Raby, who was on the watch at the window:

"Here comes Bootles!"

The rebels crowded to the window.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, pale from his recent illness, was approaching the tuckshop.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked a little dismayed. Mr. Bootles was their own Form-master, and a Classical master.

He had been confined to the sanatorium by influenza, and they had not expected him out so soon.

Mr. Bootles stopped outside the shop, and waved his hand to the juniors.

Jimmy Silver opened the window.

"Good-morning, sir!" he said respectfully.

(Continued on page 16.)

A Magnificent Long,
Complete Tale of
Jimmy Silver & Co.
in next Friday's
issue of the PENNY
POPULAR, entitled

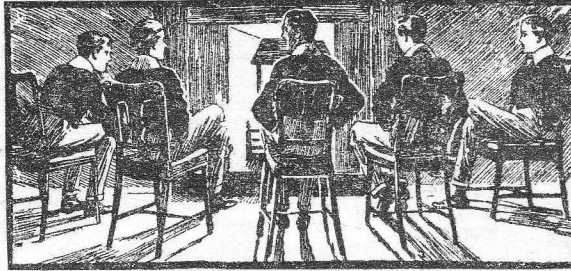
THE KIDNAPPED GUESTS!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

To avoid
disappointment you
must order your
copy of the
PENNY POPULAR
in advance.

Knox's Disappointment!

A Grand Long,
Complete Story of
Tom Merry & Co.,
the Chums of
St. Jim's.



By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Supporting the Empire!

THE question is—
"Whether we can raise the tin,"
said Blake thoughtfully.

"Certainly not, deah boy. The question is—
"Whether we can dodge the prefects," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, in a tone of mild remonstrance, "I am surprised at you. That is not the question at all. The question is—

"Whether we can get our prep finished in time," said Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy extracted his eyeglass from the pocket of his elegant waistcoat, and jammed it into his eye.

Having lodged it there to his satisfaction, he surveyed the juniors gathered in Tom Merry's study majestically.

There were seven fellows there in all—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell, and Blake and Herries and D'Arcy and Digby, of the Fourth Form.

They were debating the question—whatever it was—very earnestly.

Blake was going through his pockets, and counting the various coins.

Herries was examining a bad shilling with intent gaze, as if by the intensity of his stare he could turn it from a bad one into a good one.

All the juniors were looking very serious, as became fellows who had a difficult problem to solve, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, standing in an elegant attitude by the mantelpiece, was laying down the law.

It was rather a favourite practice of D'Arcy's, laying down the law; but his majestic opinions sometimes fell upon unheeding ears.

It was said of old that Wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man disregards it; and the same applies to the studies of junior schoolboys.

"The question," resumed D'Arcy, "is—
"To be, or not to be? that is the question," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "I know that, because I've read it in Shakespeare. To be, or not to be? that is the question—whether 'tis good or bad for my digestion?"

"Pway don't be funnay now, Lowthah, at a serious moment!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "It is not a question of money. You are quite wrong there, Blake. It is not a question of money at all."

"How are we to get in if we can't pay for admission?" demanded Blake.

"That's all right. It's not a question of money. I've got lots of money."

"Now you're talking!" said Lowther. "Why couldn't you say that at first? Gentlemen, it's Gussy's treat; and after Gussy has come to the rescue in this noble manner it's up to us to risk the prefects and blow the prep."

"Hear, hear!"
"Weally, Lowthah, I wish you would let me finish!"

"Life's too short!" said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Gentlemen, now that the question is settled—"

"But it isn't settled!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I insist upon speakin'. It is not a question of money. It is not a question of the prefects. We can dodge prefects—we've done it before, and can do it again!"

"Hear, hear!"
"We've done them before, and can do them again," agreed Lowther. "Good! Now the question's settled!"

"Likewise, it is not a question of pwp. We can mug up enough to get through to-morrow mornin' in class, and anyway, it only means a wov, and we've been in wovs before."

"Bow-wow!" said Lowther. "So we have!"
"The question is—"

"Settled!"
"The question is one of form."

"Eh?" said five voices all at once.
"The question is one of form!" pursued Arthur Augustus victoriously.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Blake. "Here's Gussy getting on the high horse again, and he won't get off in time for us to start for Wayland. I know him."

"It's a question of form, deah boys!"
"Which Form?" asked Lowther. "Fourth, Fifth, or Shell?"

"I don't mean that kind of form, you ass!"
"Oh!" said Lowther, appearing to comprehend all of a sudden. "I understand. You mean about the seats at the Wayland Empire. That's all right, Gussy. We sha'n't have to sit on forms there as we do here. We shall have good seats in the stalls."

"I am not alluding to that kind of form, eithah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "It is a question of good or bad form!"

Blake took out his watch.

"I suggest that we give Gussy two minutes to talk, and then get on and do as much of our prep as we can before it's time to start for Wayland," he said.

"Agreed!"

"I wufuse to talk for two minutes—I mean, for only two minutes. I have some very important remarks to make. The question weally is, whethah is's good form to go to the Wayland Empire without permish?"

"Go hon!"

"In the first place, the Wayland Empire is a music-hall. I know that music-halls have greatly improved in modern times, but I have some doubt whethah the Head would allow us to go to a music-hall."

"That's why we're not going to worry the Head about it at all," explained Blake. "I believe in being considerate towards a chap, even if he's a headmaster. We're not going to bother him. I refuse to bother him! I won't allow you to bother him!"

"Certainly not!" said Tom Merry. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy. Chap can't help being a headmaster, and you must admit that Dr. Holmes is a very good specimen—a very good specimen indeed. He's a brick! I disapprove strongly of worrying him about this. I sha'n't mention the matter to him, for one."

"You are delibewately misunderstandin' me, you wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus, breathing hot through his aristocratic nose.

"I think it pwb that the Head would not approve of our goin'. The question is, whethah it would be good form to go to a place that the Head might disapprove of. I want to go as much as you do, but I decline to be guilty of bad form."

"Nawfully deep question to decide," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. "I'll tell you what, Gussy. You shall stand the seats, as you're rolling in money, and we'll go without you, and you can spend the evening thinking whether it's good form or not. You can let us know what you've decided when we get back."

"Hear, hear!" said the other fellows heartily.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little tighter into his eye, and bestowed a withering look upon the hilarious juniors.

"I wogard you as asses. You will get into some twouble if I'm not there to look aftah you. Besides, I want to go. Only I want to have it settled whethah it would be good form to go to a place the Head mightn't approve of. Suppose we ask Kildare for passes out, and tell him we're goin' to the Wayland Empire?"

"And that we're not going to do any prep because we've got other engagements!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Time's up!" said Blake, putting his watch into his pocket. "You've had your innings, Gussy. Now let's grind for half an hour till calling-over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, Gussy," said Tom Merry, laughing. "The Wayland Empire is a decent place; it's not a low music-hall, but a place where a chap can go and take his father. If it wasn't a decent place, nobody here would want to go. But masters and prefects sometimes don't understand things, and they have objections to chaps going out in the evening, and they are awfully obstinate about preparation being done. Least said soonest mended, so we'll go, and trust to luck for the good form."

"Hear, hear!"
"I'll tell you what," said Lowther. "I'll put it to Mr. Lathom, if you like. I'll ask him his opinion in a general sort of way without mentioning that we're thinking of going, and see if he approves of the Empire. How's that?"

"Out!" said Digby.

"Well, that would be all wight," said D'Arcy doubtfully. "But how are you goin' to mention it without lettin' on?"

"Leave that to me!" said Lowther airily. "You're not the only chap in the school gifted with tact and judgment, old man. Follow me!"

"Vewy well, I agree to that!"
Arthur Augustus followed Lowther downstairs with a rather puzzled brow.

The other juniors followed them, grinning.

They were pretty certain that the humorist of the Shell was still pulling Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic leg, and that he had no intention of giving the Fourth Form-master any hint of the intended excursion.

Mr. Lathom was chatting with Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, in the Hall, and Lowther waited till Mr. Railton went into his study.

Then he approached the Fourth Form-master very meekly and respectfully.

Mr. Lathom blinked at him genially over his glasses.

Mr. Lathom was always genial and good-tempered and absent-minded, and all the School House fellows agreed—not in Mr. Lathom's hearing, of course—that Lathom was a good little ass.

"Hear, hear!" said the other fellows heartily.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little tighter into his eye, and bestowed a withering look upon the hilarious juniors.

"I wogard you as asses. You will get into some twouble if I'm not there to look aftah you. Besides, I want to go. Only I want to have it settled whethah it would be good form to go to a place the Head mightn't approve of. Suppose we ask Kildare for passes out, and tell him we're goin' to the Wayland Empire?"

"And that we're not going to do any prep because we've got other engagements!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Time's up!" said Blake, putting his watch into his pocket. "You've had your innings, Gussy. Now let's grind for half an hour till calling-over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, Gussy," said Tom Merry, laughing. "The Wayland Empire is a decent place; it's not a low music-hall, but a place where a chap can go and take his father. If it wasn't a decent place, nobody here would want to go. But masters and prefects sometimes don't understand things, and they have objections to chaps going out in the evening, and they are awfully obstinate about preparation being done. Least said soonest mended, so we'll go, and trust to luck for the good form."

"Hear, hear!"
"I'll tell you what," said Lowther. "I'll put it to Mr. Lathom, if you like. I'll ask him his opinion in a general sort of way without mentioning that we're thinking of going, and see if he approves of the Empire. How's that?"

"Out!" said Digby.

"Well, that would be all wight," said D'Arcy doubtfully. "But how are you goin' to mention it without lettin' on?"

"Leave that to me!" said Lowther airily. "You're not the only chap in the school gifted with tact and judgment, old man. Follow me!"

"Vewy well, I agree to that!"
Arthur Augustus followed Lowther downstairs with a rather puzzled brow.

The other juniors followed them, grinning.

They were pretty certain that the humorist of the Shell was still pulling Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic leg, and that he had no intention of giving the Fourth Form-master any hint of the intended excursion.

Mr. Lathom was chatting with Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, in the Hall, and Lowther waited till Mr. Railton went into his study.

Then he approached the Fourth Form-master very meekly and respectfully.

Mr. Lathom blinked at him genially over his glasses.

Mr. Lathom was always genial and good-tempered and absent-minded, and all the School House fellows agreed—not in Mr. Lathom's hearing, of course—that Lathom was a good little ass.

"Well, Lowther, what can I do for you?" said the Fourth Form-master good-naturedly, seeing that the Shell fellow wished to speak to him.

"If you please, sir, we've been having a little discussion, and I want to ask your advice, sir," said Monty Lowther meekly.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 8.

"Certainly, my boy—certainly!" said Mr. Lathom.

"We've been talking about the Empire, sir," pursued Lowther blandly—"whether it's not a Briton's duty to put all other considerations aside and support the Empire."

"Most decidedly!" said Mr. Lathom, who was a great Imperialist, and who, it was rumoured at St. Jim's, had opened champagne in his study on the celebrated day when the news of the relief of Mafeking arrived, and who had a dreadful headache the next day. "Under all circumstances, my dear boy, it is the duty of every true-born Briton to support the Empire."

"Thank you very much, sir! I was sure you would agree with me," said Lowther.

"I am glad to see that you juniors discuss such interesting and instructive questions," said Mr. Lathom—"very pleased indeed!"

And the little Form-master walked away with a very genial nod.

Monty Lowther turned to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Satisfied?" he asked.

The juniors grinned, but Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded Monty Lowther with a glance of the utmost severity.

"You uttah wottah, Lowthah! You have been pullin' Mr. Lathom's leg. He thought it was the Bwitish Empire you were alludin' to, not the Wayland Empire."

"Go hon!" murmured Tom Merry.

Lowther shook his head.

"I've got Mr. Lathom's assurance that it's our duty to support the Empire," he said.

"That's quite good enough for me. If you know better than your Form-master—"

"But Mr. Lathom meant—"

"I know what he said. Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Monty Lowther, looking round. "Gussy agreed to leave it to the decision of Mr. Lathom, and Mr. Lathom has counselled us to support the Empire under any circumstances, and to put any other considerations aside."

"Hear, hear!" said the juniors.

"Therefore it is our duty to dodge the prefects and leave over the prep—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And support the Empire," said Lowther. "This is where Gussy shuts up."

"But weally, Lowthah—"

"Stick to your bargain, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "It's up to a D'Arcy to stick to his word, you know."

"But I—"

"Now we'll go and do as much prep as we can," said Jack Blake.

And Arthur Augustus gave in.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Arthur Augustus is Too Cautious.

DIRECTLY after caling-over the juniors prepared to leave the school.

They would be able to see the "first house" at the Empire, getting there a little late, and leaving before it was quite over in order to be back at St. Jim's for bed-time.

"Keep it awfly dark, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I fancy Knox of the Sixth has a wotten eye on us, for some reason. I have been vewy tactful with him, but some of you fellows might let the cat out of the bag, you know."

Jack Blake grunted.

"I suppose you've been doing that already!" he growled.

"Weally, Blake, I have been doin' nothin' of the sort. Knox happened to see me hwingin' my coat down from the dorm, that's all."

"What did you let him see you for?" roared Blake.

"I weally fail to see how I was to pvevent it. But I hoodwinked him all wight," the swell of St. Jim's said, with a chuckle. "He asked me if I was goin' out—"

"And did you tell him?" demanded Digby sulphurously.

"Certainly not! I told him that it was wude to inquire into anothon fellow's affairs," said D'Arcy. "He gave me fifty lines, the beast! However, I think my remark put him in his place, don't you?" Blake groaned.

"Put him on the watch, more likely, you ass! Knox is always looking for a chance to catch us, and now you've given him one."

"Wats!"

"Knox'll come nosing along to the study presently to see if we've gone out," grunted Digby, "and he'll find us out."

"We shall have to wisk it, deah boys. Are you weady?"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 8.

"Yes," growled Blake. "We're meeting the Shell chaps in the quad. Slip out of the House one by one, and don't let anybody see you."

"Wight-ho!"

The juniors descended the stairs one at a time, and slipped out of the School House.

The dusk was deep on the old quadrangle of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus was the last to leave the House, and he slipped out with such elaborate precautions that five or six fellows at least spotted him as he went.

"Hallo, Gussy!" called out Kangaroo, of the Shell. "Going out?"

D'Arcy turned on the School House steps, and made a sign of great caution to the Cornstalk junior.

"Hush, deah boy!"

Kangaroo stared at him.

"What is there to hush about?" he asked. "I'm goin' out without a pass, and doing it vewy secwetly," the swell of St. Jim's explained.

"Oh, you look as if you are!" said Kangaroo. "Knox was watching you from the Common-room as you came down. You'd better come in and start afresh."

"Oh, wats!"

And Arthur Augustus disappeared.

Knox, the prefect, came down the passage. He glanced out into the quadrangle, and then looked at the Australian junior.

"Did D'Arcy go out into the quad just now, Noble?" the prefect asked.

"D'Arcy?" repeated Kangaroo.

"Yes. Did you see him?"

"See him?" said Kangaroo.

Knox knitted his brows.

"Did you see D'Arcy go out?" he demanded.

"Out?" said the Cornstalk reflectively.

Knox gritted his teeth.

He had old grudges to pay off against the chums of the School House, but there was evidently no information to be gained from Kangaroo.

The prefect went out into the quad.

Kangaroo looked out after him, and gave a low, shrill whistle.

Knox turned back angrily.

"Who are you whistling to?" he demanded.

"Whistling!" said Kangaroo.

"Take fifty lines!" shouted Knox.

"Lines!" repeated Kangaroo, with imper- turbable calmness.

Knox strode away in the dusk, and Kangaroo chuckled.

He had given a signal to the truant juniors, and that was all he could do.

The chums of Study No. 6 had just joined Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther by the school wall when they heard that whistle through the dusk from the direction of the House.

Blake, who was just mounting the wall with the assistance of the slanting trunk of an old oak-tree, dropped to the ground again.

"That's Kangy's toot," he said. "It means danger."

"I'm afraid Knox is on the watch, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "However, we're goin' all the same. Buck up before he gets here."

"Ass!" said Tom Merry politely. "We don't want to be caught out. You fellows lie low, and I'll put Knox off the track."

"Bettah leave it to me, Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

"Shurrup!" Tom Merry looked away towards the lighted front of the School House with an anxious brow. He caught sight of a moving figure. "You chaps buzz off," he whispered. "We can't chuck it up now, Knox or no Knox. You chaps get off to Wayland, and I'll follow you later. I've got an idea for putting Knox off the scent. Book a seat for me, and keep it for me, at the Empire."

"But you—" began Lowther.

"Buzz off! I'm leader!"

"But weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Here comes Knox, you ass! If he catches us we can't go! Buzz off!"

Tom Merry dashed back into the quad-rangle.

Knox evidently knew which part of the school wall to make for; he had climbed out by means of the slanting oak more than once himself, as a matter of fact—though that was a dead secret.

"I can see you there!" called out Knox. "Stop!"

"Buck up!" murmured Blake. "Leave it to Tommy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Blake shoved D'Arcy up the wall without waiting for him to finish.

D'Arcy's silk hat rolled over into the road, and the swell of St. Jim's followed it.

There was the sound of a dreadful crunch. "Oh, my toppah!"

"Quiet!"

"I have busted my toppah—"

"Shut up, you fathead—"

"But I shall have to go back for anothon toppah—"

Blake grasped Arthur Augustus' arm, and dragged him away, and the juniors ran down the road.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Out of Bounds.

CRASH!

"Ow!" roared Knox.

Bump!

Tom Merry had rushed back under the elm-trees in such a hurry that he dashed right into Knox, and the prefect reeled back and fell, and the Shell fellow sprawled over him.

But for that timely accident the little party for the Wayland Empire would certainly have been spotted in getting over the wall.

Tom Merry was sprawling on the prefect, and seemed in no hurry to rise.

He grasped Knox, and jammed him down on the ground, apparently under the impression that he was getting hold of a much less august person than a prefect of the Sixth.

"I've got you, Figgins!" he yelled. "You New House bouncer! I've got you!"

"Groot!" gasped Knox. "Ow! Gerroff!"

"Got you this time, Figgins—"

"I'm not Figgins!" yelled Knox. "I'm not a junior, you young villain! I'm Knox!"

"Oh, don't be funny, Figgy, old boy!" said Tom Merry. "I can't see you in the dark, but I know jolly well that you're Figgins! And—"

"Leggo!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, sitting astride of his enemy's chest, and pinning him down by sheer weight. "Not till you own up that the School House is cock-house of St. Jim's!"

"Gerrup!"

"Not just yet, Figgy! I'm quite comfy, thanks!"

Knox made a terrific effort to throw off the junior.

But Tom Merry had the advantage, and he kept it.

He persisted, too, in thinking that it was Figgins of the New House he was sitting on.

As he had said, he could not see him in the dark, so the mistake was natural.

"You young scoundrel!" said Knox sulphurously. "I'll report you to the Housemaster for assaulting a prefect! I'll hammer you! I'll cane you! I'll smash you! I'll have you gaoled for a term! I'll—"

"What a flow of eloquence you're getting, Figgins!" said Tom Merry admiringly.

"Blessed if I knew you could roll it out like that! Go on!"

"I'll—I'll smash you!" gasped Knox. "I'll—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll throttle you!" roared Knox.

"Go hon!"

"Will you let me get up?" shrieked Knox. "I tell you I'm a prefect, and you know it jolly well, Tom Merry, you young villain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox struggled furiously.

Although the Sixth-Former was not athletic, and Tom Merry was the best athlete in the Lower School, probably his age and size would have told in a stand-up tussle.

But Knox was down, and his enemy was sitting on him, and that made all the difference.

The prefect struggled frantically, but he could not throw him off.

He gasped, and panted under the firm weight of the junior.

"You young hound!" he spluttered, choking with rage. "I'll be the death of you! You know perfectly well that I'm Knox of the Sixth!"

"Keep it up!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Will you let me get up?" screamed Knox. Tom Merry grinned in the darkness.

His friends were safe enough away by that time, and he could afford to discover his mistake, and realise that the fellow he was sitting on was not Figgins of the Fourth.

"I say, is it really you, Knox?" he asked.

"You know it is!" yelled Knox.

"You're sure you're not Figgins?" said Tom Merry, in a tone of hesitating doubt.

"You—you—you—"

"Are you sure you're not Figgins?" asked Tom Merry calmly.

"Yes!" spluttered Knox.
 "Then I'm sorry, Knox, old man!" said the Shell fellow. "I'm willing to overlook the whole occurrence, if you are."
 "You—you villain! I'll have you flogged!"
 "Will you?" said Tom Merry. "You're going to have me punished for biffing you over and sitting on you?"
 "Yes!" screamed the furious Knox.
 "You're going to make it as bad for me as possible?"
 "You'll see that I am, you young hound!"
 "Then there's no hurry for me to get up!" said Tom cheerfully. "If it's to be as bad as possible, anyway, I may as well earn it! What do you think, Knox?"
 "I—I—I—"
 Knox made another desperate effort. He sank back, gasping and exhausted.
 Tom Merry was not to be shifted until he chose.

"Suppose we agree to make it pax?" said Tom, in a voice as gentle as that of a cooing dove. "I'm willing to let bygones be bygones, if you are."
 "I'll smash you!"
 "Then I'm afraid I shall have to continue thinking that you are Figgins, and keep you here till you're in a better temper."

"I—I—I—"
 "Better not wriggle like that, Figgins. You'll get my knee in your ribs if you do. There! What did I tell you?"
 "Ow, ow!"
 "Better make it pax," suggested Tom Merry.

Knox panted with rage. It was miles beneath his dignity as a prefect to dream of making it "pax" with a mere junior.

But he was quite helpless, and he had a natural disinclination to call for help and be discovered in such a ridiculous position.

"I—I'll let you off, Merry!" he stammered.
 "It's pax?"
 "Yes!" panted the prefect between his teeth.

"Good enough!"
 Tom Merry jumped up.
 Knox leaped to his feet, and although he had made it pax he made a wild grope after his assailant.

But Tom Merry did not wait for that grope. He had disappeared under the darkness of the trees.

Knox ground his teeth, and stumbled on towards the school wall, but he found no one there.

"Merry! Where are you?"
 There was no reply.
 "Merry!"
 Knox set his teeth, and strode away towards the School House.

He entered the House, and found Mr. Linton in the hall.
 Mr. Linton was master of the Shell—Tom Merry's Form.

"I have to report one of the Shell for breaking bounds, sir," said Knox.
 "Indeed!" said Mr. Linton. "Who is it?"
 "Merry, sir!"

"He was at calling-over," said Mr. Linton.
 "He has gone out since, sir, and is out of bounds now!" said Knox.

"Very good! I will make a note of it," said the master of the Shell.
 And he went into his study.

Five minutes later there was a tap at Mr. Linton's door.
 "Come in!" said the Shell master.

Tom Merry entered.
 Mr. Linton gazed at him blankly.
 Tom Merry advanced to the Form-master's table and laid a sheaf of impot paper thereon.

"My lines, sir!" he said.
 "Your—your lines?" stammered Mr. Linton.
 "Yes, sir!" said Tom Merry in a tone of mild surprise. "Don't you remember, sir, you gave me lines this afternoon in class?"

"Yes, yes!" said Mr. Linton. "But—but I have just heard from Knox that you were out of bounds, Merry!"

Tom Merry looked astonished.
 "Out of bounds, sir!" he ejaculated.

"Certainly! I have made a note of it!" said the Shell master, frowning, and erasing the note in his pocket-book.

"But I'm here, sir!" said Tom Merry innocently.

"Yes, as I can see," said Mr. Linton tartly. "I have eyes! I suppose Knox was mistaken. Have you been outside the school walls since calling-over, Merry?"

"Certainly not, sir!"
 "Where have you been?"
 "I was in the quad, sir," said Tom Merry,

with perfect truth. "Then I was in my study. Then I remembered I'd forgotten to bring my lines to you, sir, so I brought them!"

"And you have not been out of bounds?"

"No, sir!"
 "Knox had been mistaken, then," said Mr. Linton. "Very well, Merry, you may leave your lines. You may go!"

"Yes, sir!"
 And Tom Merry went.

In the passage he paused to smile, and then quietly walked out into the quadrangle.

He took his cap from under his jacket and put it on his head, and scudded away for the school wall.

He was over the wall in a twinkling, and he chuckled as he dropped into the road.

He had certainly not been out of bounds before, but he was now; but of that fact Mr. Linton remained in cheerful ignorance.

hoarse voice again. "Now, then, sharp's the word!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

He knew that he had fallen into the hands of a gang of footpads.

He stood quite still in the grasp of the ruffians, to throw them off their guard; and then, with a sudden and unlooked-for wrench, he tore himself away from the hands that were grasping him and sprang away.

There was a yell from the owner of the hoarse voice.

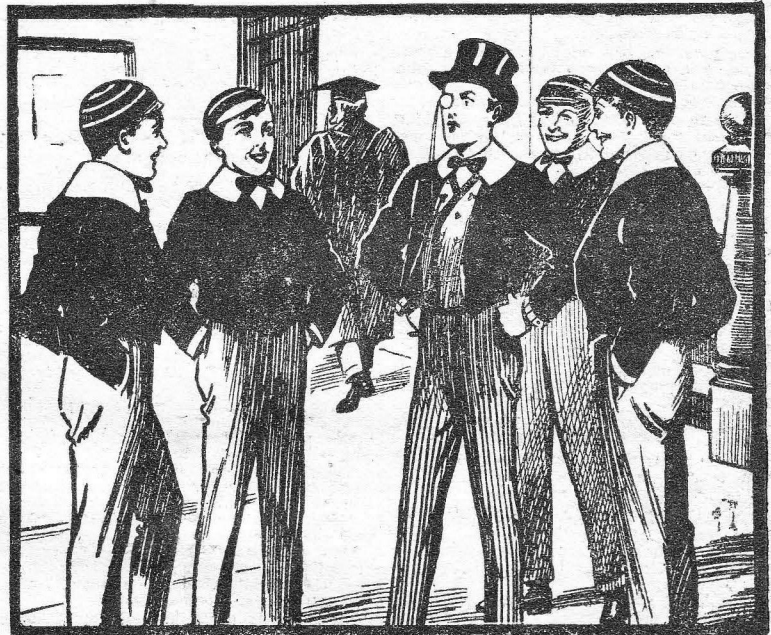
"Collar 'im!"

Tom Merry dashed down the footpath towards the Wayland Road.

If he could get over the stile into the road he would be safe.

But the three ruffians were tearing on his track, muttering savage oaths as they ran.

Tom Merry ran on desperately.
 Whizz!



D'ARCY IN AN INDIGNANT MOOD!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
 The Bantam!

TOM MERRY took the short cut to Wayland market-town, sprinting by the shadowy path over the meadows, and then through the wood.

It was possible that he would be able to overtake his friends before they reached Wayland, and he kept up at a steady trot.

He left the fields behind, and came along the footpath through the wood at a steady run.

He kept on; and suddenly, as he caught sight of several dark forms ahead of him under the shadows of the trees, he called out cheerfully:

"Hold on, kids! Here I am!"
 The dark figures stopped.

Tom Merry ran on, nothing doubting that he had overtaken the party from St. Jim's.

A hand came from the darkness and grasped his shoulder, and then he realised his mistake.

He struggled to break away from the grasp upon his shoulder; but it tightened, and another hand fastened on him.

"Show a light 'ere, Cracker!" said a hoarse voice.

A match scratched out, and the light fell on Tom Merry's face.

For a moment he caught a glimpse of three rough figures, with rough, grimy, stubby faces, and then the match went out.

"Let me go!" said Tom Merry quietly, though his heart was beating hard.

There was a hoarse chuckle.

"Not quite so fast, young gentleman! Keep a 'and on 'im, Jem!"

"I've got 'im!"

"Let me go!"
 "Not till you've 'anded out your tucker and your loose change, my covey!" said the

A heavy cudgel flew by his head, and crashed into the bushes.

If it had struck him, he would have fallen stunned to the ground.

"Stop, you young 'ound!"

Tom dashed on.

The stile was in sight now, and beyond it the glimmer of a road lamp.

One minute more!

He dashed on desperately; and at that moment his foot caught in a trailing root, and he stumbled and fell heavily to the ground.

Bump!
 The foremost of his pursuers stumbled over him and fell.

There was a shout.

"I've got 'im!"

"Old him, Ginger!"

"Wotto!" said Ginger savagely, between his teeth, as he grasped the fallen junior, and planted a heavy knee on him. "The young 'ound! I'll make him smart for this! Gimme your stick, Jem!"

"Ere you are, Ginger!"

A shudder ran through Tom Merry. He seemed to feel already the heavy cudgel crashing down upon him in the darkness.

He made a desperate effort to tear himself loose, but the heavy knee was grinding into his back, and he could not move.

"Help! Help!" shouted the junior wildly.

"I'll 'elp yer!" muttered Ginger. "I'll 'elp yer, me covey! You won't make that 'ere row long! I'll 'elp yer!"

"Help!"
 "Hallo, there!"

It was a voice from the road.
 A figure in an overcoat had paused by the

file, and was looking into the footpath. Ginger, already grasping the cudgel, paused with an oath.

The man in the overcoat vaulted over the stile in a twinkling, and the next moment he was on the scene.

Tom Merry felt the heavy knee go from his back, and he heard a thud and a deep grunt as Ginger rolled in the grass.

A hand grasped him; and, too confused and bewildered to know quite what was happening, he was whisked over the stile into the road.

He staggered, gasping, against a tree.

There was a chorus of oaths from the trio of ruffians on the footpath, and they came clambering over the stile.

The high-road was lonely, and they were evidently not inclined to relinquish their prey.

"Hold my coat!" muttered Tom Merry's rescuer.

The overcoat was thrown to him, and he caught it mechanically.

The man who had helped him was a small fellow—not much taller than the boy himself—and his clean-shaven face looked very youthful in the glimmer of the lamp.

He had a square jaw, and little, twinkling eyes, and there was a grin on his face now as he stood and waited for the three ruffians to come up.

"I—I say," gasped Tom Merry, "better cut—there's three of them!"

"You watch me!" said the little man.

He put up his hands as the three ruffians came rushing down upon him.

Tom Merry watched him, breathless.

It passed like a dream—he had no time even to go to the aid of his rescuer.

The little man seemed to move on springs.

He met the towering ruffian Ginger with an upper-cut that might have been delivered by a sledge-hammer, to judge by the force of it, and Ginger went down into the road with a crash.

The other two ruffians started back, startled; and Tom Merry's rescuer took the offensive, prancing up to them, and hitting out.

Blif! Blif!

Crash! Bump!

Jem and Cracker were in the dust beside their leader, and the little man danced round them in a state of great excitement, calling on them to get up and have some more.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "It must be a blessed prize-fighter!"

The footpads did not seem inclined to have any more. Cracker crawled away into the ditch, and his comrade Jem wriggled into the darkness and disappeared.

Ginger did not move.

He lay in the road, with one hand clasping his damaged jaw, groaning.

"They don't want any more!" grinned Tom Merry. "Thank you very much for helping me, sir. You're a jolly hard hitter!"

The stranger grinned.

"Going to Wayland?" he asked.

"Yes."

"So am I. I will walk with you, in case these coves should give you any more trouble. You shouldn't be in the wood alone after dark, kid!"

"I know that—now!" said Tom Merry.

And he walked by the side of his new acquaintance, leaving the unfortunate Ginger still lying in the dust, groaning and muttering threats of vengeance.

"I'm much obliged to you, sir," Tom Merry said as they went down the road. "Blest if I should have thought you could handle those chaps like that!"

The other chuckled.

"Keeps my hand in," he said. "That was nothing to me, sonny. But you'd better go home another way."

"There'll be a party of us going home," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to meet some chaps at the Wayland Empire, you see. They started first."

"Oh, you're going to the Wayland Empire, are you?" said the stranger.

"Yes—the first house," said Tom. "It's twice nightly, you know."

The other chuckled again.

"Yes, I know," he said. "I ought to know. That's where I'm going myself. I'm there every night for both houses!"

"You must be jolly fond of the place!" said Tom Merry in surprise.

Another chuckle.

"There's a good turn there, though," said Tom Merry. "I don't know that I care

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 8.

about the singing and the trick cycling very much; but there's a good boxing turn."

"Good!" said his new acquaintance, with great interest. "Have you seen it yet?"

"No, not yet; but I've heard about it, and I want to see Tiny Tim, the Bantam," said Tom Merry. "You've seen him?"

"Lots of times!" said the young man cheerfully. "He's a terror! He could have handled those coves just the same as I did."

"You handled them well enough," said Tom Merry, with a laugh.

"Ere we are at the Wayland Empire!" said the other, as they entered the lighted street. "Good-night, kid, and glad I happened along!"

"Didn't you say you were coming in?" asked Tom.

"Not at the front entrance, though," said his new friend, with another of his chuckles. "My way's to the stage-door."

"You belong to the company?" asked Tom breathlessly.

"Just a few! You see, I'm the Bantam!"

"My hat!"

And the Bantam chuckled again and went his way; and Tom Merry entered the brilliantly-lighted vestibule of the Wayland Empire.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

At the Empire.

"HERE you are, Tommy!" Monty Lowther was waiting in the vestibule for his chum.

"I've missed a turn waiting for you!" he said. "We've got the seats all right—all in a row in the stalls. Stalls are cheap here—a shilling a time. Where did you pick up all that dust?"

"I had a scrap coming here," said Tom Merry. "Let's get in."

They made their way into the auditorium. The third "turn" was about to commence when they joined the rest of the party from St. Jim's in the stalls.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Tom Merry.

"So you got here all wight, deah boy? You got wid of Knox?"

"Yes," said Tom, laughing. "But I got some more knocks coming—worse than the Knox at St. Jim's."

"Been in a row?" asked Blake. "Grammar cads?"

"No. Footpads."

"Bai Jove! I remarked to you, Blake, that there would be some twouble if I didn't look ahtay you. I considah—"

"It's all right," said Tom, in answer to his chums' anxious looks. "I was set on by three ruffians on the footpath. I oughtn't to have come that way, really. But a chap chipped in and did them brown. Who do you think it was?"

"St. Jim's chap?" asked Manners.

"No fear! The Bantam!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Tiny Tim, who's done a boxing turn here," said Tom Merry. "You should have seen the way he knocked them out! He's got an upper-cut that's a real daisy! I should like to have the gloves on with him. We'll give him plenty of hands when he does his turn here—what?"

"Yaas, wathah! It was wippin' of him!"

"Silence!" said the audience. And the chums of St. Jim's ceased to talk as the next turn started.

It was Miss Belle Bouncer, soprano, and she described with powerful lungs how she wanted to return from a far-off shore and a distant strand to the green and grassy moor in the loved home-land.

Miss Bouncer, having heroically struggled up to her top-note, and almost reached it, the audience clapped and cheered, the St. Jim's juniors joining in heartily.

"Twick cyclists next," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, consulting the programme. "I am wathah cuwious to see them. They are stunnin' in the pictures on the posters, you know! I was thinkin' that I could do it myself."

The trick cyclists were very good.

There were two of them, and they rode machines forwards and backwards, and made them stand still, and dance to the band, and they rode them upside-down, and they crawled through under the bars while whirling round on the machines, and altogether astonished the unsophisticated natives of Wayland with their dexterity.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy kept his eyeglass upon them all the time, watching them eagerly.

The thought was evidently working in the mighty brain of the swell of St. Jim's that he could play that trick.

"Bai Jove! It's wippin'!" said D'Arcy, when the trick cyclists finally rode off the stage, with their feet in the air, and working the pedals with their hands. "I wathah think I could do it, though. I'll show you fellows in the quad to-morrow."

"Better make your will first!" grunted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Hallo, here's Curll!" said Blake. "He's going to sing 'Flanagan.'"

Monty Lowther uttered an exclamation.

"Curll! By Jove!"

"Seen him before?" asked Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"I should jolly well say so! Do you remember once I wanted to go on the stage?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"Yaas; and you wan away fwm school with a musical comedy company," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "I did not approve of that pwoceedin' at all, Lowthah."

"Well, that chap Curll was a member of the company," said Monty Lowther. "He was a tenor, and he drank like a fish and sang like a rook. He undertook to teach me musical comedy bizney, and I dare say he would have done it if the Head hadn't made me come back to school. He's on the halls now, it seems. I believe that's supposed to be a come-down in his profession. You get more money and less kudos. We'll go round and see Curll after the performance. He will be glad to see an old friend, especially if we fill him up with beer."

"Won't be any time," said Manners. "We shall have to miss the last turn, anyway, to get home to St. Jim's in time for bed."

"We'll miss the last two, and see old Curll first," said Lowther.

"Shurrup! He's starting."

Mr. Curll was a tenor—the programme said so—but he sang so flat that, as Monty Lowther remarked, he would have been more accurately described as a fiver.

But, as the song was a comic one, that did not matter.

Mr. Curll would rather have sung about aching hearts and Cupid's darts, and forests dark, and hark! the lark.

But the public preferred Flanagan's Sunday trousers for a subject, and so Mr. Curll had to sacrifice art to utility, as so many great artists have had to do.

And certainly Mr. Curll had a very good reception when he described how Flanagan had to send cheques to his tailor because his tailor sent him checks.

And the folk in all the houses stared at Flanagan's new trousers.

"Vewy funny!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Though I weally don't approve of makin' fun of a fellow's twousahs. That is a serious subject."

"Now for the boxers!" said Tom Merry.

And the audience were all very keen.

It was clear from their looks that the boxing turn was the great draw of the evening's entertainment at the Empire.

When the curtain went up again, and the stage was disclosed with a roped ring and two men in scanty attire and boxing-gloves, there was a cheer.

The Bantam—Tom Merry's kind rescuer—was there, and the Limehouse Slogger—a much bigger man, with a very determined-looking jaw.

Tiny Tim, who was not much bigger than one of the juniors, though he was twenty-five years old, looked like a mass of muscle and sinew.

He stripped well, and the juniors looked at him admiringly.

Strength and pluck appealed to them.

"This is going to be a jolly good turn!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And it was.

In the first round it was evident that the boxing-match was not a put-up affair, and that both the boxers were really trying.

Mr. Bowkoe, the manager of the Wayland Empire, was keeping time himself, resplendent in evening-clothes and a gorgeous shirt-front, in which blazed a gigantic diamond.

The Slogger was a good man, but, bigger as he was, he did not seem to be quite up to the form of the Bantam.

He was evidently trying his hardest to get the better of his wiry, nimble little adversary. But Tiny Tim was too quick for him.

There was an angry gleam in the Slogger's eyes as the rounds went on.

The well-padded gloves prevented much damage from being done, but a good deal of punishment was given and taken, and the audience cheered every resounding "blif!"

There were eight rounds, and at the end

the Slogger was very groggy, and could hardly keep his feet.

The Bantam was loudly cheered.

He ducked his head to the audience gracefully, and, catching Tom Merry's eyes in the stalls, nodded to him cheerfully, thereby conferring great honour and distinction upon the St. Jim's junior.

The boxers retired amid a round of cheering, and then Monty Lowther rose.

"I'm going round," he said.

"The next turn is a contawito, and she's singin' 'Come and Kiss Me, Honey,'" said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, you can go and kiss her, Honey. I'm going to see Mr. Curll."

"Weally, Lowthab—"

"Yes, let's go round!" said Tom Merry. "I'd like to see the Bantam off the stage. He's a jolly good little chap! If they'll let us behind, let's go."

"Very well, deah boys."

And the St. Jim's juniors left the auditorium.

An attendant in a gold-laced cap, upon the information that Lowther was an old friend of Mr. Curll's, and upon receipt of a tip of half-a-crown from Arthur Augustus, took a message to the immortal renderer of "Flanagan's Sunday Trousers."

He returned in a few minutes with a civil invitation to the juniors to follow him, and they followed him willingly, and were duly introduced into the gentleman's dressing-room behind the scenes.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Behind the Scenes.

MR. CURLL greeted Monty Lowther very affectionately.

He shook hands with Lowther, and with all his friends in turn, in the most cordial way in the world; and so did Tiny Tim, the Bantam.

The accommodation for artistes at the Wayland Empire was not extensive, and all the gentlemen shared a single dressing-room.

It was a big room with whitewashed walls, and furniture of the barest description.

The Brothers Bung, who performed comic duets and tumbling feats on the stage, and still greater feats with pots of porter off it, were there, smoking pipes and refreshing themselves after their labours.

Tiny Tim had changed into his ordinary clothes, which were of a cut that made Arthur Augustus secretly shudder, and decidedly loud in design.

But the boxer was good-nature itself, and very cheery to the juniors.

Mr. Curll was inclined to be despondent.

He apologised for his surroundings, and hinted that this was not in the least what he had been accustomed to.

Indeed, as Lowther afterwards remarked, Mr. Curll was one of those gentlemen who dreamt that they had dwelt in marble halls.

"On the halls at last, Master Lowther," said Mr. Curll, with a shake of the head. "Had to come to it, in the long run. Everybody's doing it. Irving would have come on the halls at last if he had lived. The legit. is played out in this country."

"The what?"

"The legit.," said Mr. Curll. "The legitimate drama, you know."

"Oh!"

"The halls have cut the drama out everywhere," said Mr. Curll sadly. "If Shakespeare had lived in these days he would have been asked to condense 'Hamlet' into a lively sketch to last twenty minutes. There's no room for the legit. That's why you find me on the halls, Master Lowther. You wouldn't have thought of it, would you, when you used to see me playing to crowded houses, and the whole house rising to it?"

Lowther didn't remember having seen that touching spectacle, but he was too polite to say so.

"But you're making a big success in this line, Mr. Curll," he said.

Mr. Curll looked despondent.

"To such base uses may we come!" he sighed. "Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay, may stop a hole to keep the draught away," as Shakespeare puts it. And an operatic tenor who has seen duchesses—yes, sir, duchesses—weep when he sang 'La Donna e Mobile' has come out in a check suit to sing 'Flanagan's Sunday Trousers.'"

"Too bad!" said Lowther sympathetically.

"But they liked it, didn't they?" said Mr. Curll.

Lowther grinned.

Although Mr. Curll appeared to be very

much ashamed of having come down to the halls, he was very keen for the admiration of the audience he affected to despise, and inordinately proud of every "hand" that his performance received.

"Liked it?" said Lowther. "I should say so! You simply knocked them!"

Mr. Curll shook hands with him again.

"They rose to it, didn't they?" said he eagerly.

"I should think they did!" said Lowther.

"Even this kind of thing can be done well," said Mr. Curll. "I do it well; that makes all the difference. Boy!"

The shabby urchin in attendance upon these gentlemen of genius put his shock head in at the door.

"Another of the same!" said Mr. Curll.

This mysterious direction was apparently understood by the urchin, for he grinned and darted off.

He returned in a few minutes with a dirty tray, upon which were a glass containing rum, a jug of hot water, and a slice of lemon, and sugar.

"I suppose you young gentlemen don't indulge?" said Mr. Curll.

"Thanks, no!" said Tom Merry.

"You don't need it," said Mr. Curll. "Keep off the drink, my boys, that's my advice to you; and I know. Never touch it!"

Mr. Curll touched it himself as he spoke. Evidently he was not the kind of person who follows his own wise counsel.

The rum-and-water brought a new flush to Mr. Curll's cheeks and a sparkle to his eyes.

"You should have seen me in 'Rigoletto' in the old Karl Tulip Company!" he said.

"We used to knock them. I did! You never saw me play the Duke, did you?"

"Nevah!" said D'Arcy.

"They were the days!" said Mr. Curll pathetically. "Every night a new triumph, young gentlemen—crowded houses cheering till you'd have thought the roof would come down! And now—"

Mr. Curll slid off his chair, and Lowther caught him and set him upon it again.

The tenor was getting very hazy now.

He blinked at Monty Lowther, and, apparently taking him for some manager with whom he had had an altercation in those glorious days, he said:

"No, sir! Certainly not, sir! I decline to sing without an accompaniment, sir! I am surprised that you should suggest it, sir! If your pianist is drunk, sir, it reflects upon your management, and I finally and absolutely refuse to sing without an accompaniment."

"Bai Jove! I believe he's gettin' squiffy!" said Arthur Augustus, looking distressed.

"Go hon!" murmured Lowther.

"Blighted ambitions!" murmured Mr. Curll. "If I do take a drop every now and then, sir, what of it? I repeat, what of it?"

"Here, it's time you travelled," said the Bantam, taking Mr. Curll by the arm and lifting him quite easily from his chair, though Mr. Curll, like most tenors, was a good weight. "I'm going to see you 'ome.'"

Mr. Curll passed an arm affectionately round the Bantam's neck.

"Speak to me, Thora," he urged.

"My 'at!" said Tiny Tim. "If the manager sees you like that—"

"I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls," said Mr. Curll dreamily.

"You'll dream you've got the push if Mr. Bowkoe comes in," said the Bantam. "You'd better come and put your 'ead under the pump if you're going to sing in the second 'ouse. Kim on! You young gents goin' our way?"

"Yaas, wathah! We'll help you with poor Mr. Curll," said D'Arcy.

And the Bantam plotted poor Mr. Curll out of the stage-door into the street, the juniors going with them.

Mr. Curll's lodging was a short way from the Empire, and the Bantam shared the same "digs." It was evidently not the first time that the good-natured boxer had seen Mr. Curll safe home when he had had too many of "the same."

"Will he be all wight?" asked D'Arcy, rather anxiously.

The Bantam grinned.

"Oh, he's always like this!" he said. "He'll put his 'ead in cold water, and come round in time for the second 'ouse. Good-evening, young gents, and glad to have met you."

"Good-evening, sir!" said Tom Merry, shaking hands with the boxer. "Good-bye, Mr. Curll!"

"Farewell!" said Mr. Curll. "Fare thee

well, and if for ever, still for ever, fare thee well. Even though unforgetting, never 'gainst thee can my heart rebel."

"Bai Jove!"

"Addio, mia bella Napoli," went on Mr. Curll, shaking hands with the Bantam under the impression that he was shaking hands with Monty Lowther. "My kind young friend, adieu! I wish you could have seen me in 'Rigoletto,' in the old Karl Tulip Company. Adieu—or, rather, au revoir! I'm coming to see you!"

"Pway do!" said Arthur Augustus politely. "We shall be delighted to see you at St. Jim's, Mistah Curll!"

"Good egg!" said Monty Lowther. "Come over to-morrow afternoon. It's a half-holiday, and we'll have tea in the study. You will come, Mr. Tim?"

"Suttin'ly," said the Bantam, "if you young gentlemen like."

"Pway do!"

"Delighted!" said Blake.

"Ripping!" said Manners.

"My kind young friends, adieu!" said Mr. Curll, still shaking the Bantam's hand as the juniors went down the street. "Good-bye, if ever fondest prayer—"

"You come in!" said the Bantam. "Adieu, adieu, my native shore fades o'er the waters blue!" said Mr. Curll.

"When you've done shakin' my 'and, p'raps you'll come in," said Tiny Tim, growing impatient.

"Another of the same, Billy!" murmured Mr. Curll.

The Bantam forcibly released his hand from Mr. Curll's affectionate grasp, and dragged his unfortunate friend into the house.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Not Quite a Success.

"JOLLY near bed-time!" said Blake, as the juniors, having dropped over the school wall, stood under the shadows of the old elms, in the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

"I twust Knox is not lookin' out for us!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "He may be waitin' at the door to question us as we go in."

"This way!" said Tom Merry.

"That is the way to the New House, deah boy."

"I know it is, fathead!"

"I decline to be called a fathead, Tom Mewwy; and I do not see any use in goin' to the New House when it is nearly time to go to bed in the School House."

"That's because you're what you decline to be called!"

Blake grasped D'Arcy's arm, and led him on towards the New House.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were talking in the hall when the juniors entered.

School House and New House at St. Jim's—or the junior portions, at all events—were deadly rivals—and Figgins & Co. looked warlike at the sight of the new-comers.

But Tom Merry held up his hand in sign of pax.

"What are the kids doing out of your House at this time of night?" demanded Figgins. "Come over here to look for a set of thick ears?"

"Weally, Figgay—"

"No," said Tom Merry, laughing; "we want you to walk over the quad with us, that's all."

"What on earth for?" asked Kerr.

"Is it a feed?" demanded Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of the New House. "I'll come with pleasure. It's rather late for a feed, but we can buck up, and—"

"It isn't a feed, Fatty!"

"Oh," said Fatty Wynn, his interest in the matter diminishing at once. "What the dickens do you want us to walk across the quad for?"

"To see us home."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Figgins. "What do you want us to see you home for?"

"We couldn't go home in the dark," explained Blake. "Knox is looking for us. He has an idea that we've been out of bounds, because we haven't been in the School House for the last hour or two. See?"

"Oh, I see! And if we walk over with you—"

"It will look as if we're coming back from a little party in the New House," explained Tom Merry. "Of course, as a matter of fact, we have been out of bounds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If we're asked any questions we shall have to own up, of course; but if we can keep appearances, it may be all right. Will you come?"

"Like a bird!" said Figgins.

And the School House fellows and their good-natured rivals and deadly enemies walked across the Close in company.

"Bai Jove, there is Knox all right!" said Arthur Augustus, as they came in sight of the open lighted door of the School House.

Knox the prefect was standing there, talking to Langton of the Sixth, and keeping one eye on the dusky quadrangle. The juniors began to talk loudly as they neared the House, so that the two prefects should hear them.

"Thanks awfully, Figgys!" said Tom Merry. "We've passed a very pleasant evening!"

Which was strictly true.

"Not at all!" said Figgins. "We'll return your visit as soon as you like!"

"Yaas, wathah, we've had a wippin' time!" said Arthur Augustus, entering into the little scheme as soon as he understood it.

"Come in and have some ginger-beer in my study," said Blake hospitably. "There's time to get back before the doors are locked."

"Thanks!" said Fatty Wynn. "We will!"

And the juniors, in the most innocent manner in the world, walked into the House. Knox eyed them suspiciously and doubtfully.

He had known that they were out of the School House, because he had looked for them; but if they had been visiting Figgins in the New House there was no fault to be found with them.

"Where have you kids been?" he demanded sharply.

"Us!" said Figgins. "We've been in our House!"

"We've just come from there, Knoxy!" said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Have you been in the New House all the time?" demanded Knox, biting his lip with vexation.

"All which time?" asked Tom Merry.

"All the time you've been out of your own House!" said Knox angrily. "I've already reported you to your Form-master for being out of bounds, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry grinned; he knew that.

"Oh, let them alone, Knox!" said the good-natured Langton. "They're only coming back from the other House; you heard what they were saying."

"I believe they've been out of bounds," said Knox.

The juniors went on to the stairs.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was in the passage, and Knox called to him. Kildare was never "down" on Tom Merry & Co. without reason, and it pleased Knox to make him take official note of their delinquency.

"Kildare," he called, "those juniors have been out of bounds for hours."

"Have you, kids?" asked Kildare, looking round towards the juniors, who had to stop as the captain of St. Jim's called to them.

"Where have you just come from?"

"From the New House," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, all right; cut off!"

"They're lying!" said Knox. "I know perfectly well that they've been out of bounds!"

"We're not lying!" said Tom Merry, flushing. "And you're a rotten—ahem!—you're quite wrong, Knox!"

"You have really just come from the New House?" asked Kildare.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Have you been out of bounds at all?"

"Ahem!"

"H'm!"

"Oh," said Kildare, "you have, then?"

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact, we have," admitted Tom Merry cheerfully. "We've just come from the New House, as I said; but before that—ahem!"

"I told you so!" sneered Knox. "They were lying!"

"Weally, Knox, you wottah—"

"They were not lying," said Kildare sharply; "and you have no right to say so, Knox. They have just come from the New House, and that was what I asked them. As soon as I asked if they had been out of bounds, Tom Merry admitted it. I don't see what you always want to be down on those kids for, Knox. The way you question them is enough to make them tell lies, if they were inclined that way."

"So you are going to let them off for breaking bounds after call-over!" said Knox savagely.

"Nothing of the sort. I don't suppose they've been doing any harm, but they'll take a hundred lines each for going out of bounds. You hear me, kids?"

"Yes, Kildare!"

"And you'll do them to-morrow afternoon!" said Kildare.

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, Kildare, we're expecting friends to-morrow afternoon," said Tom Merry meekly. "Could we leave the lines till to-morrow evening?"

"Yes, if you like," said the good-natured skipper. "Only don't let this occur again."

"You are a bwick, Kildare, deah boy!"

The juniors went up the stairs, and Knox looked at Kildare with a bitter expression.

"So that's how you keep the juniors in order, is it, Kildare?" snarled Knox.

"Yes," said Kildare; "and I don't want any advice from you." And he turned his back upon the surly prefect.

"I'd have licked the young rascals all round!" said Knox savagely to Langton.

"I dare say you would!" said Langton. "But they'd have been none the better for it. You were always a bit of a bully, Knox!"

And Langton walked away, leaving Knox biting his lip.

"Where's the ginger-beer?" said Fatty Wynn, as the juniors crowded into Study No. 6. "What a beast Knox is! Sorry you've got lines!"

Blake handed out the ginger-beer from the study cupboard.

There was a step in the passage, and Knox looked in. The bully of the Sixth could never let well or ill alone.

"You New House boys clear out!" he growled. "It's time you were in your own House!"

Pop!

Kerr was opening ginger-beer, and somehow or other—perhaps by accident—the cork shot through the doorway. There was a yell from Knox as he caught it under the chin.

"Ow! You young villain—"

"Awfully sorry!" said Kerr, as the ginger-beer bubbled and foamed into the glass.

"You did that on purpose!" roared Knox, striding into the study. "I'll thrash you till—"

"No, you won't!" said Kerr coolly. "You're not a New House prefect, Knox, and you can't touch us. Hands off!"

Kerr grasped the ginger-beer bottle in a businesslike way, and Knox started back in spite of himself.

"Yaas, wathah, Knox!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "You are exceedin' your authority in intervievin' with fellows of the othah House—"

"Oh, let him come on!" said Figgins. "I'm quite interested to see whether Knox's napper is as hard as this ginger-beer bottle."

Knox glared at the juniors for a moment, and then strode out of the study.

"Poor old Knox!" sighed Tom Merry. "Always running up against something. Gentlemen, here's to us, and long may we live!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the young rascals drank their own health in ginger-beer with much satisfaction, and then Tom Merry & Co. saw Figgins and Kerr and Wynn off at the School House door; and the New House juniors called out a very cheery good-night to Knox as they departed.

THE END.

(Another splendid complete tale of the Chums of St. Jim's next Friday, entitled "Schoolboy and Gentleman Boxer." By Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance.)

NO SURRENDER!

(Continued from page 10.)

Mr. Bootles coughed.

"I should not have left the sanatorium until to-morrow," he said. "But I have been—er—apprised of these extraordinary proceedings. I have received a letter from Dr. Chisholm. He has been informed of this—er—extraordinary outbreak. He is very distressed—what, what! His health does not permit him to return immediately to Rookwood—"

"Sorry, sir!" said Silver. "When the Head comes back he will see justice done, sir."

"You need not have the—ahem!—slightest doubt of that," said Mr. Bootles, somewhat gruffly. "Meanwhile, this nonsense must cease. The Head informs me that he has received a report from Mr. Manders, and—ahem!—certain information from Bulkeley, which—ahem!—which causes him, upon the whole, to place the Classical side of Rookwood under my charge until he returns."

"Oh!"

"Mr. Manders will exercise authority solely upon the Modern side until the return of Dr. Chisholm," resumed Mr. Bootles. "As for this amazing outbreak, it will be left over for inquiry until the Head returns. Then he will inquire into the matter personally. Meanwhile, he has directed that no punishments shall be inflicted, reserving the whole matter in his own hands."

"Good egg!" said Jimmy Silver. "I—I mean very good, sir! Of course, sir, if you hadn't been ill there wouldn't have been any trouble." Jimmy Silver was not unacquainted with the soft answer that turneth away wrath. "We're jolly glad you're well, sir! Of course, we wouldn't dream—ahem!—of backing up against our own masters!"

"Never!" said Lovell solemnly.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Bootles. "You will come out of that place at once! Ahem! The damage you have done will have to be paid for. Sergeant Kettle must be indemnified."

"We'll raise a fund to square him, sir," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "We meant to do that all along. We're coming out at once, sir." Jimmy Silver looked round at his followers and raised his hand. "Three cheers for Mr. Bootles!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Mr. Bootles walked away smiling.

It was very gratifying to the Classical master to end with a word to the rebellion Mr. Manders had striven in vain to quell.

Quite cheerfully Jimmy Silver & Co. poured out of Port de Tuckshop.

That evening there was a tremendous celebration in the end study.

Mr. Bootles was not yet well enough to resume his place in the Form-room, and he had appointed Bulkeley to take charge of the Fourth.

So everything in the garden, as Jimmy Silver said, was lovely.

"It will be all serene when the Head comes back," said Jimmy Silver confidently to the crowd of celebrators in the end study. "Bootles knows that Manders was a cad, and he'll speak up for us, and Bulkeley has said a word for us already. We shall get on rippingly with old Bulkeley. It's been a giddy success, though I'm not really sorry it's over, now I come to think of it. Might have ended worse. But we've beaten the Modern cads and—"

"Hurrah!"

"And if ever the Modern rotters try any of their games on this side we'll beat 'em again!"

"Bravo!"

Tremendous cheers. The cheers were so tremendous, in fact, that the voice of a prefect was heard along the passage conveying the information that if there wasn't a little less row he would come along with a cane.

And the rebels of Rookwood, lately so truculent, decided to make a little less row. The barring-out was over, and law and order once more reigned on the Classical side of Rookwood.

THE END.