

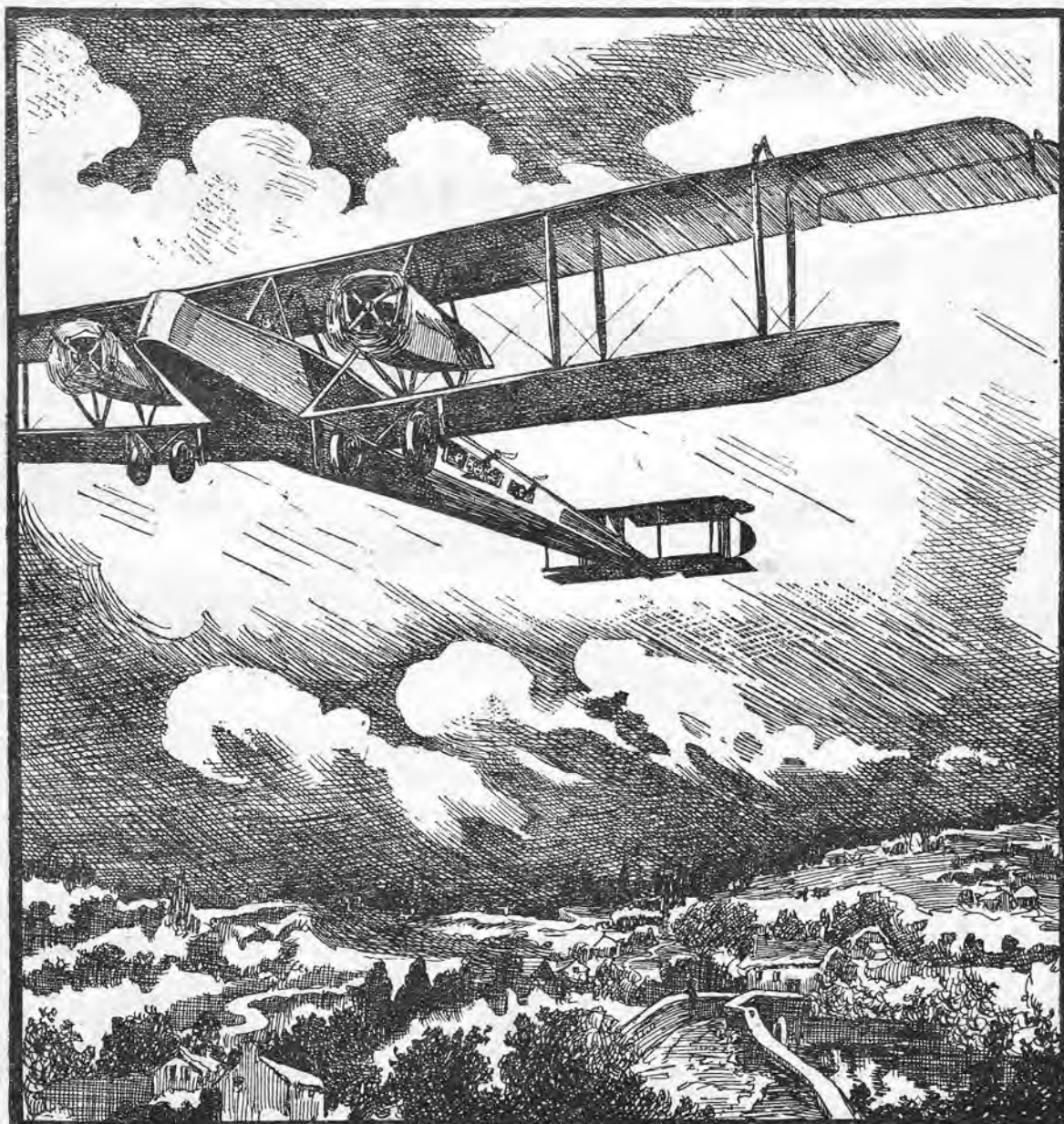
THREE NEW COMPLETE SCHOOL TALES!

The Penny **1½^d** Popular

Week Ending
June 21st, 1919.

No. 22.
New Series.

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



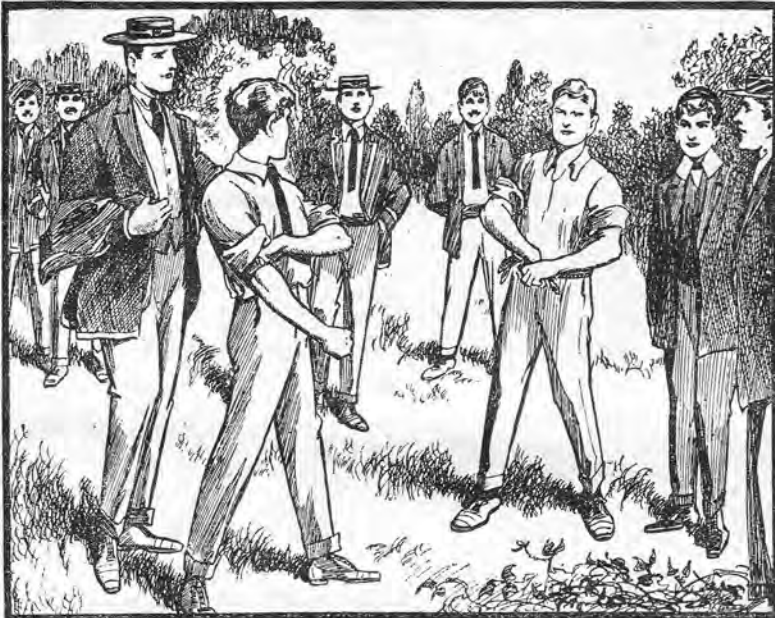
HARRY WHARTON & Co. IN A HANDLEY-PAGE

(An Exciting Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of Greyfriars in this issue.)

HAMPSHIRE HEROES!

A Splendid New Story, dealing with the Adventures of HARRY WHARTON & Co., at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Within a ring formed by the Greyfriars Juniors and the boys of Hampshire, the two Bobs faced each other.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Not According to Programme!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's a letter for you, Harry!"

The Famous Five had just come in from cricket practice when Bob Cherry spotted the letter on the table in Study No. 1.

"A remittance, p'raps!" said Nugent. "Remittances always come at the wrong time. We're all hush, and we're just starting on a merry tour, and fivers start rolling in! Now, if we were all stony broke, nothing would turn up."

"It's not a remittance," said Wharton, laughing. "The postmark's Southsea. Who on earth do I know at Southsea?"

"Some charming mermaid of the deep?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Dry up, Bob, you ass! Now, who can this be from?"

"I suggestfully propose that you ripfully tear open the esteemed envelope!" said Hurree Singh.

"Good wheeze, that!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Why don't you think of these things, Wharton?"

Harry smiled, and opened the envelope. Frank Nugent promptly held his hands in position to catch the remittance as it fluttered out.

But no remittance came.

"Nothing doing this journey!" said Wharton. "It's a letter only—and it's from Bob Weston, the Hampshire skipper."

"What's he got to say for himself?" said Nugent. "Hope the Hampshire fellows aren't crooked, or something!"

Harry Wharton read the letter aloud: "Dear Wharton,—We are awfully bucked to know that your fellows are coming down from Greyfriars to meet a representative Hampshire team.

"I've got my eleven all ready, and the

cricket-match will commence to-morrow afternoon at two.

"We have decided to hold the sports at a small place near the New Forest. The nearest station is Marchwood, and anyone will direct you to the local cricket-ground.

"I shall not turn up till late. But don't wait for me. Go right ahead with the match. Please remember me to all the Greyfriars fellows.

"Sincerely yours,
"BOB WESTON."

The Famous Five exchanged curious glances when Wharton finished reading the letter.

"This is jolly curious," said Wharton. "I understood the sports were to be held at Southsea—at a place called the Governors' Green."

"Same here," said Bob Cherry. "I thought we were going to play the cricket match before a terrific crowd of Pompey people—Tars and Tommies, you know."

"Instead of which," said Johnny Bull, "the match is going to be played on some tinpot village-green close to the New Forest—far from the madding crowd!"

"It's very queer," said Nugent. "Why should Bob Weston want to alter the existing arrangement?"

"Give it up," said Wharton. "It's a giddy puzzle to me!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had been instructed to proceed to Southsea, where they would be met by the Hampshire team.

Why the venue of the sports had been suddenly changed from Southsea to the New Forest was a mystery.

"Why not wire to Bob Weston for confirmation?" suggested Nugent.

"No time," said Wharton. "We're starting on the tour in an hour, and Weston will explain matters when we see him, I expect. Meanwhile, let's buck up and get ready. Are all the cricket-bags packed?"

Nugent nodded.

"They're outside the pavilion," he said. "Good!"

There was a tap on the door of Study No. 1.

"Come in, chump!" sang out Bob Cherry. The "chump" proved to be Wingate of the Sixth, who was to take charge of the touring-party.

Bob Cherry flushed crimson. "Sorry, Wingate, old man! I—I thought it—"

"That's all right!" said Wingate good-humouredly. "Are you kids ready for Southsea?"

"Southsea's off!" said Harry Wharton.

"What?"

"I've just had a letter from the Hampshire skipper!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

And he handed the note to Wingate.

"So it's the New Forest instead of Southsea—what?" said Wingate. "Well, that's all right. I prefer the Forest myself. It's a ripping part!"

"But—but don't you think there's something fishy about that letter, Wingate?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Not a bit of it! The explanation probably is that the Hampshire fellows were unable to obtain the use of the ground at Southsea. So they had to look round for another place to hold the sports, and they hit on this one. That seems pretty clear."

"You don't think the letter's a hoax?" said Wharton.

"Great Scott, no! Why should it be? The postmark's Southsea, and there's no reason to suppose the handwriting isn't Weston's. And who would want to play a jape on us, anyway?"

"That's what I was wondering."

"Well, don't be a young ass!" said Wingate, rather sharply. "That letter's genuine enough. Buck up and get ready, and meet me at the school-gates in half an hour."

"All serene, Wingate!"

At the appointed time, the juniors trooped down to the gates.

"These cricket-bags seem jolly light," said Johnny Bull, who was carrying a couple. "I suppose all the tackle's inside!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"They'll feel heavy enough by the time you get to the station," he said.

Quite a number of fellows turned out to see the Removites off. Even Harold Skinner, the cad of the Remove, turned out to speed the tourists on their way.

"Jolly good luck, you fellows!" he chuckled. "Ha, ha, ha!"

What on earth's the matter with Skinner?" exclaimed Nugent, in astonishment.

"The poor old chap can't control his facial muscles!" said Bob Cherry. "Hark at him!"

Skinner was laughing uproariously.

Had the Famous Five and their friends stopped to consider the matter, they might have realised that the cad of the Remove had something up his sleeve.

It was a very merry party that boarded the train at Friarale.

The Famous Five looked fit enough to tackle not only Hampshire, but the entire South of England.

And Mark Linley, Squiff, Tom Brown, Micky Desmond, Monty Newland, Bolsover major, and Piet Delarey all looked in the pink of condition.

"We've a long, long way to go," said Squiff. "Strikes me we shall arrive rather late for the match."

"No," said Wingate. "There's a non-stop train from Waterloo to Southampton. Then we change on to a local line, and we should arrive on the ground with several minutes to spare."

The train soon reached the capital; and then, after making a desperate attack upon some railway-sandwiches at the Waterloo buffet, the party boarded the Southampton express.

"It's full steam ahead now!" said Bob Cherry, with great satisfaction. "Thank goodness this isn't the South Eastern and Smasher line, where you can gather bunches of flowers while the train's in progress!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The train sped on through the Surrey pine-woods.

It flashed through Woking, and shortly afterwards the juniors caught a flying glimpse of Farnborough—the home of the Flying Corps.

Then on through the smiling meadows of Hampshire, through Basingstoke, and Winchester and Eastleigh, till a jarring of brakes heralded Southampton.

It took only a few minutes, as Wingate had predicted, to reach the little station of Marchwood, on the outskirts of the New Forest.

The country around was beautiful in the extreme; but there was one point—a very important point, too—which Wingate had left out of his calculations.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, as the party halted in the roadway, "I've overlooked one thing!"

"What's that, Wingate?"

"The question of accommodation. I haven't settled where we're going to sleep."

"Oh!"

"Rooms had been booked for us at the Queen's Hotel, Southsea," explained Wingate. "Of course, we can't possibly take them if the sports are going to be held in this out-of-the-way place. And there ain't any hotels hereabouts. I don't quite know what we can do."

"We shall have to beg, borrow, or steal a couple of caravans," said Tom Brown. "Ripping weather for that sort of thing!"

Wingate looked worried.

"We shall certainly have to do something," he said. "However, that problem must stand over until after the cricket-match. Wonder where the Hampshire fellows are going to sleep, by the way?"

"Give it up!" said Harry Wharton. "It seems jolly curious altogether!"

Wingate hailed a stolid-looking rustic who was plodding along the road.

"Can you direct us to the nearest cricket-ground, please?" he asked.

"Cricket-ground, sur? Oh, ah! 'E be about six moile away."

"What!"

"You goes straight on, zur, down this 'ere road, an' turns to the right when you comes to the Pig an' Whistle. Then you turns to the right agen when you comes to the Dog

an' Pheasant, an' you keeps straight on, past the Coursin' 'Ound, an' the cricket-ground lies on your left. It be about six moile, as the crow flies."

"Oh, my hat!"

The Greyfriars juniors chuckled at their quaint instructions.

"Much obliged!" said Wingate.

The rustic plodded on his way, and the tourists plodded on theirs.

A six-mile tramp was not quite what they had expected.

They were already beginning to feel rather fatigued with travelling; and this, as Bob Cherry observed, fairly put the golden helmet on it.

The Greyfriars juniors were very dusty and perspiring as they came on to the ground.

A team of fellows were already at practice. Harry Wharton stopped short in amazement.

"Why, great Scott, surely this isn't the Hampshire Eleven?" he exclaimed.

"Why shouldn't it be?" said Squiff.

"But—but they're no bigger than Second Form fags!"

"Talk about Lilliputians!" said Bob Cherry.

"Why, I've carried pigmies like that in my waistcoat pocket before now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was certainly something very astonishing in the size and build of the cricketers.

The biggest fellow among them would scarcely have come up to Harry Wharton's shoulder.

"Why, we shall simply wipe up the earth with these funny little freaks!" said Bolsover major.

Harry Wharton & Co. dumped their cricket-bags down in the pavilion—which was little more than a barn—and made ready for the fray.

Bob Cherry wrenched open one of the cricket-bags, and uttered an exclamation of surprise and dismay.

"Mum-mum-my hat!"

"Anything wrong, Bob?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I should jolly well say so! Look here!"

The juniors crowded round the open cricket-bag.

Bob Cherry fished out the articles it contained, and there was a general gasp.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"What the merry dickens—"

For the bats and pads and gloves that Bob Cherry brought out were not the Remove's property at all!

They were very tiny—a cricket-set on a midget scale.

The bats were of the sort used by small children in public parks. And the pads might have admirably suited the pupils at a kindergarten.

"This is a trick!" said Wingate sternly.

"Yes, rather!"

"No wonder the bags felt light!" growled Johnny Bull. "I couldn't make it out."

"What's to be done?" said Squiff. "We're fairly stranded now!"

A diminutive boy with a freckled face approached the pavilion.

"Is this the Hampshire team?" asked Wingate, indicating the pigmies at practice.

The freckled youth shook his head.

"We're Marchwood Juniors," he said.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Do you mean to say you haven't a fixture with Greyfriars this afternoon?" said Wingate.

"Not that I know of, sir. We're supposed to be playing a New Forest team at twilight."

"Great Scott!"

"What's more, we've never heard of Greyfriars," said the boy.

"Then this is a jape!" said Wingate.

"There can be no further doubt about that. We've come to the wrong place. That letter you had, Wharton, wasn't from Weston at all. We've been fairly spoofed!"

The juniors looked at each other blankly.

They had travelled over a hundred miles to the glades of the New Forest, only to find that they had come on a fool's errand!

"It's too thick!" said Nugent indignantly.

"I should like five minutes with the cad who organised this little jape! I'd jolly well—"

Frank Nugent stopped short, with a gasp of astonishment.

His young brother—Dickie Nugent of the Second—came speeding into view on a bicycle.

The cyclist swerved through the entrance to the cricket-ground, and flashed across the intervening stretch of grass to the pavilion in

front of which he dismounted, pumping for breath.

"Dickie, you young bouncer!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "What does this mean?"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Race Against Time!

DICKY NUGENT turned a flushed and excited face to the Greyfriars cricketers.

"I've got news for you fellows!" he jerked out.

Wingate regarded the speaker grimly.

"Have you permission to be absent from Greyfriars, young Nugent?"

"No."

"You mean to say you've played the truant?"

"That's what it amounts to, I suppose," said Dicky Nugent. "But I couldn't sit tight at Greyfriars and do nothing. As soon as I got wind of Skinner's shady scheme, I hurried down to Hampshire."

"Skinner's scheme!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

Dicky Nugent nodded breathlessly.

"I found out, through that spying beast Sammy Bunter, that Skinner had faked a letter, telling you to come to the New Forest instead of Southsea. And it was Skinner who swopped all your cricket things for this toy set. Sammy Bunter heard him swanking to Stott about it."

"My hat! The thumping cad!" said Wingate.

"I asked old Twigg if I could come down to Hampshire," continued Dicky Nugent, "and he refused. So I took French leave. Don't glare at me like that, Frank. It was the only way. I hurried down to Southsea, and saw that you hadn't turned up there, so I knew Skinner's shady trick had been successful."

"And how did you get here?" exclaimed Wingate.

"Hired a bike from Pompey, and rode like the very dickens!" said the fag. "Bob Weston and the others are waiting for you on the Governors' Green, at Southsea. They've arranged for the match to start at three."

"Three!" gasped Wingate. "Why, it's quarter-past two now! We shall never get there!"

"Bob Weston said he couldn't start the match any later," explained Dicky Nugent, "because the light would be too bad at the finish. You'll have to get from here to Southsea by three, if you can possibly manage it."

"Don't be absurd!" said Wingate. "We're six miles from the nearest railway-station, to begin with."

"Can't we dig up a car from somewhere?" asked Tom Brown.

Wingate shook his head.

"It is hopeless," he said.

The tourists were certainly up against it.

Thanks to Skinner's scheme, they were stranded miles away from anywhere, with no hope of getting to Southsea in time for the cricket-match.

"The match will have to be postponed till to-morrow, that's all!" said Wingate at length.

"One moment!" said Monty Newland.

Monty's eyes were sparkling, and he could not conceal his excitement.

"Well, Newland?"

"There's an Air Force squadron stationed only half a mile from here!" he said quickly.

"Well?"

"And there's a Handley-Page pilot named Jones—Ivor Jones—who's an old boy of Greyfriars."

"My hat!"

"If we scoot over to the squadron," said Newland, "there's just a chance that Jones will be there. He'll remember us, and he might, if we put it to him very nicely, give us a trip in the Handley-Page as far as Gosport, where there's a decent landing-ground. We're practically at Southsea then. It only means crossing by a ferry."

"Good!"

"A ripping idea, Monty, old scout!" said Bob Cherry.

And he thumped Monty Newland's back with such heartiness that the Jewish junior gave a howl.

Bidding farewell to the pigmies, the Greyfriars party, led by Monty Newland, headed for the Air Force squadron.

They sighted it at length—a number of enormous hangars and scores of white tents.

A corporal was on guard at the camp entrance.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 22.

"Is Lieutenant Ivor Jones still stationed here?" asked Monty Newland.

The corporal nodded.

"He's a captain now," he said.

"We should like to see him, if possible."

"Is it urgent?" asked the corporal.

"Yes! Every minute's precious!"

"In that case I'll send my man over to the officers' mess. Captain Jones will be along in a jiffy."

And the corporal of the guard despatched one of his mechanics hot-foot to the mess.

Captain Ivor Jones appeared in a few moments.

He was in his flying kit, and he nodded cheerfully to the Greyfriars fellows, many of whom he immediately recognised.

"Anything I can do for you?" he asked, shaking hands with Wingate.

The captain of Greyfriars nodded.

"I know it sounds awful cheek," he said, "but we should like to be taken to Gosport in a Handley-Page at once."

Captain Jones smiled.

"Is it a life and death matter?" he asked.

"Hardly," said Wingate. "We've got to be in Southsea by three for a cricket-match."

"In that case I'll see what can be done. I don't suppose the squadron-commander will be averse to my making a trip in a Handley-Page to Gosport. It's a very short flight. I'll go along and get his sanction to take a dozen passengers on board."

And Captain Jones disappeared.

When he returned, a few moments later, he explained that the squadron-commander had no objection to the trip being undertaken.

"But you travel at your own risk," he added. "Understand that."

"We shall feel perfectly safe with an old Greyfriars fellow," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

"This way, then!"

And the young captain conducted the party to the massive Handley-Page, which was being put in readiness by a group of mechanics.

"My hat! Won't it be prime?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"The experience will be one which we shall cherishfully remember all our bornly days!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hop in!" said Captain Jones.

The juniors went on board, where chairs had been provided. The engine hummed and throbbed, and then:

"Now we're off!" exclaimed Dicky Nugent exultantly.

The huge machine soared into space.

Looking downwards, the juniors were charmed and awed at the view.

The New Forest lay beneath them like a garden in fairyland.

Small streams glistened and sparkled in the sunlight, and the dwellings had the appearance of dolls'-houses.

It was a glorious scene, a scene which thrilled even the usually unemotional Wingate.

There was only one drawback to the flight. It was not long enough!

The tourists would cheerfully have continued the flight until further notice, but for the fact that the boys of Hampshire were awaiting them.

Captain Jones landed at Gosport; and the juniors, scrambling out of the machine, thanked their Good Samaritan, and made hurried tracks for the ferry-boat.

"I don't quite know what to do about you, young Nugent," said Wingate. "You really ought to be sent back to Greyfriars."

"Put off the evil day as long as you can, Wingate!" implored the fag. "I shall get it in the neck, in any case, so there's no reason why I shouldn't have a good run for my money."

"Something in that," said Wingate, laughing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" boomed the dulcet tones of Bob Cherry. "Boat's in, you fellows!"

"What's more," said Harry Wharton, "she's just going to start!"

"Run for it!" said Wingate.

And the tourists pelted down the High Street of Gosport.

"Hurry up, there!" shouted one of the boatmen.

The juniors hastened on board.

When the bell sounded for the boat to start there were still two fellows left behind on the quay.

They were Bolsover major and Piet Delarey.

"Jump for it!" shouted Bob Cherry.

Bolsover major took the leap, and he

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landed on the deck; but in doing so he gave his ankle a sharp wrench.

Though not an actual sprain, it was enough to keep Bolsover out of the cricket-match.

Delarey fared worse.

The ferry-boat was gathering speed when he sprang, and his leap took him far short of his objective.

With a splash Delarey landed in the swirling waters of Portsmouth Harbour.

Fortunately, he could swim.

"Never mind me!" he shouted to the anxious Friars looking on from the boat. "I'll come over to Southsea later!"

And then Delarey swam ashore—to the amusement of the crowd on the quay—and squelched away to the nearest hotel.

"What beastly luck!" said Harry Wharton. "Bolsover's crocked, and Delarey won't be over for some time. He'll have to wait hours in Gosport while his togs are being dried."

"We shall be a man short for the match," said Johnny Bull.

"Exactly! What are we going to do about it?"

Dicky Nugent chipped in.

"Won't I be of any use?" he asked. "You!"

"Yes, I'm not a Jack Hobbs, but I think I could manage to keep my end up."

"Hear, hear!" said Frank Nugent. "Give the young rascal a chance, Harry, for his cheek!"

"Oh, all right!" said Wharton, laughing.

The juniors landed at the jetty near the harbour station and boarded a tramcar to Southsea.

A few moments later the Friars arrived at the Governors' Green, an open stretch of ground close to the Garrison Church.

Some of the juniors had played on this green before.

They had met the boys of Hampshire in a football-match, which, after a hard-fought game, had resulted in a draw.

Bob Weston came forward with outstretched hand.

"Welcome, little strangers!" he said. "Thought you were never coming!"

"We've been japed, as young Nugent has probably told you," said Harry Wharton, as he shook hands. "A fellow called Skinner caused us to go wandering in the New Forest. We'll settle Skinner's bash when we get back to Greyfriars. Meanwhile, we'll settle yours!"

"Perhaps!" laughed Bob Weston. "By the way, there are two old friends of yours here. Step forward, you fellows!"

And then, to the surprise of the Friars, Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd, the respective leaders of the Classical and Modern side at Rookwood, came to the fore.

"What are you fellows doing here?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Playing for Hampshire, of course!"

"But—but it isn't allowed—"

"Why not? Rookwood's in Hampshire, isn't it?"

"Oh!"

"And therefore we're entitled to turn out for our merry county!"

"I—I suppose so," said Bob.

The voice of the Hampshire skipper broke in upon the conversation.

"Time we made a start," he said. "Hallo! What made you bring all these funny little toys along?"

Harry Wharton flushed as he hauled forth the midget cricket outfit.

"This was part and parcel of Skinner's jape," he said. "Have you fellows any bats and things you could lend us?"

Weston nodded.

"We can fix you up," he said.

"Good!"

Harry Wharton spun the coin, and Weston, winning the toss, decided to bat first.

The next moment the great cricket-match, which Harold Skinner had hoped to postpone indefinitely, had begun.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Game for the Gods!

HAMPSHIRE boys are cricketers to the core.

Other counties produce fine runners, strong swimmers, and keen footballers.

But Hampshire—the very cradle of cricket—teaches her sons to excel in the grand summer game.

Quite a crowd had collected inside the iron railings which skirted the Garrison Ground.

There were sailors and soldiers and civilians.

Bob Weston and Jimmy Silver, as they stepped out to open the innings for Hampshire, received a rousing cheer.

The game opened briskly—much too briskly for Jimmy Silver's liking.

Hurree Singh was bowling, and his first ball spread-eagled the Rookwood junior's wicket.

Jimmy Silver strolled disconsolately back to the marquee which had been erected to serve as a pavilion. He was thinking, with the poet:

"Thou wast not made to play, infernal ball!"

But Kennedy, who followed on, performed yeoman service for Hampshire.

He and Weston made merry at the expense of the Greyfriars juniors.

The score leapt up in rapid style.

Harry Wharton & Co. had visited Lancashire, and they had visited Kent, but they knew that they were up against a much sterner proposition this time.

Fifty runs were on the board when Kennedy was caught in the slips by Squiff.

"That's put the kybosh on this merry partnership, anyway!" said Bob Cherry. "Who is this coming forth now? Tommy Dodd, unless my aged eyes deceive me. Play up, Inky! Make his middle-stump loop the loop, there's a good fellow!"

But Tommy Dodd did not share the fate of his schoolfellow.

He batted with skill and vigour, and he and Weston took the score to 90 before Tommy Dodd got out.

Dicky Nugent was the cause of Tommy's downfall.

The fag was given a difficult catch, high up.

But he got his right hand to it, and there was a cheer from the crowd as the ball was seen to repose safely in his palm.

"Well held, Dicky!" said Frank Nugent heartily.

Dicky Nugent grinned.

"It takes a Second-Former to show you how these things are done!" he said.

"Well, you've justified your inclusion in the team, anyway," said Harry Wharton.

And Wingate, from the umpire's stool, added:

"Bravo, kid!"

Hampshire rather went to pieces after this. Hurree Singh's bowling, backed up as it was by brilliant fielding, caused a collapse.

Nevertheless, the home side put together 140 in their first innings—a very creditable display.

"And now, who says tea?" inquired Squiff.

"Tea!" chorused the juniors, in unison.

And the Greyfriars party went along to the Queen's Hotel for much-needed refreshment.

They had not had a meal since their terrible tussle with the railway sandwiches at Waterloo.

The spectators were treated to some lively cricket on the resumption.

The Friars went in, and batted with great spirit.

So persistent was the Hampshire attack, however, and so smart was the fielding—even to the verge of being uncanny—that Harry Wharton & Co.'s first innings yielded only 70.

Of this total, the highest score was a dashing 25 by Mark Linley.

Hampshire followed on; and again Weston and Kennedy got together and made the fur fly.

But the afternoon was ebbing away, and Weston—a very wise skipper—realised that it would be good policy to declare the innings closed, thus giving the Friars a sporting chance of winning the game.

Shortly afterwards, Weston actually declared; and Harry Wharton & Co. were faced with the task of scoring 120 runs.

They started well.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, hitting out in great style, evoked many cheers from the crowd.

"We shall pull it off yet," said Squiff, looking on from the marquee entrance.

But even as Squiff spoke Bob Cherry's wicket fell.

A collapse followed.

Mark Linley failed to repeat his earlier performance; and Tom Brown, Monty Newland, and Micky Desmond compiled two runs between them.

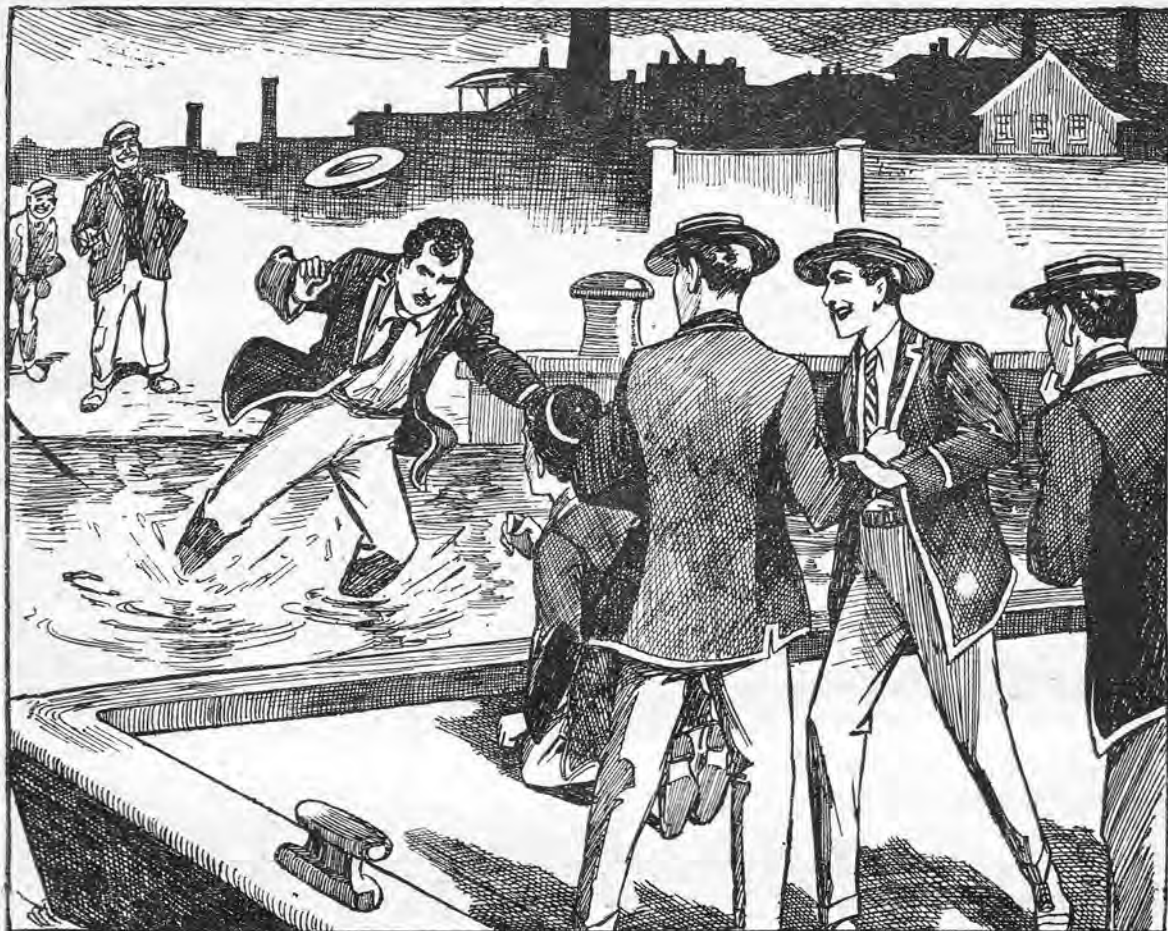
It now looked as if Hampshire would win, and win handsomely.

It fell to Frank Nugent to stop the rot.

Nugent was by no means the Remove's best batsman; but when at the top of his form he was irresistible.

And he was at the top of his form now.

"Franky's going all out," said Bob Cherry



With a splash, Delaray landed in the swirling waters of Portsmouth Harbour.

delightedly. "He may pull the game round yet."

Harry Wharton looked doubtful. "He's got no one to stay with him," he said. "There goes Johnny Bull's wicket!"

Hurree Singh followed on. The nabob shone more as a bowler than a batsman, and although he stayed in a long time with Nugent, he only scraped together seven runs.

The hundred was reached at length. When the last wicket but one fell, the Remove needed twenty runs to give them the victory.

It seemed a hopeless task, for two reasons. Firstly, only another ten minutes remained for play; and secondly, the last man in was Dicky Nugent of the Second!

"It would be too much to expect a fag to hold his own against this sort of bowling," said Wharton. "The poor kid's bound to come a cropper."

"That's so," agreed Bob Cherry. "We're booked for a licking, Harry, old man."

Dicky Nugent went in to join his brother. Frank smiled encouragement at him across the pitch.

Dicky looked a comic little figure in Piet Delaray's flannels, which were several sizes too big for him.

But he took the game quite seriously; and the Hampshire bowlers failed to shift him. Weston whispered a few words of advice to Kennedy, who was bowling.

"Give him some slow ones," he said. "He's bound to scoop 'em up in the air."

Kennedy nodded. But Dicky Nugent, who quite understood that a trap was being prepared for him, was careful to keep the ball down.

He left all the hitting to his major, and contented himself with stopping each ball dead.

The onlookers marvelled that a mere fag

should keep the Hampshire eleven at bay, so to speak.

Dicky Nugent was given a variety of tempting balls; but he never yielded to the temptation to hit out.

And meanwhile, his brother Frank was adding to the score.

The last over of the match was about to be bowled.

There was no hope of a Greyfriars victory. Time did not permit of that.

The most the Friars could hope for was to make a draw of it.

If only Dicky Nugent could keep his end up!

Kennedy, of Hampshire, prepared to bowl. He came down, as Dicky Nugent said afterwards, like a wolf on the fold.

But the fag doggedly stood his ground.

He—a mere kid in the Second—was all that stood between Hampshire and victory.

The last ball of the match was bowled just as the neighbouring clocks chimed seven.

It was a swift and deadly ball, and Dicky Nugent had all his work cut out to deal with it.

But he succeeded.

His bat met the oncoming leather, and then the umpires came forward.

The match was over.

Thanks to the determined exhibition of Dicky Nugent, the Greyfriars Remove had drawn with one of the finest junior cricket elevens in the country!

"Jolly well played, kid!" said Wingate to Dicky Nugent, as the two brothers came off.

"Rats!" said Dicky. "I didn't do anything more than keep my end up."

"That was just what we wanted."

"Well, I sha'n't mind getting licked when I get back to Greyfriars," said the fag. "I'm having my money's worth."

"That kid saved the game for you," said Bob Weston to Harry Wharton.

Wharton nodded.

"I realise that," he said.

And a ringing cheer from the crowd showed that they realised it, too.

"What's the next move?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"No more sports to-day," said Wingate.

"The swimming races come off to-morrow."

"Then we'd better go and practise paddling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's a concert on the Clarence Pier," said Johnny Bull. "Shall we toddle in that direction?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Here's Delaray! Had a good time, old scout?"

The African junior grunted.

"I've been spending a happy afternoon by the fire, watching my togs dry," he said.

"I've never been so near suicide in my life. How did the match go?"

"We drew," said Wharton. "Nugent minor saved us from a licking."

"My hat! And what's the programme now?"

"Concert on the pier," said Johnny Bull. "Pack up your troubles, and come along!"

"All serene," said Delaray.

The concert proved to be a particularly good one. And it was a very weary but cheery procession of juniors that walked back across Southsea Common late that evening to the Queen's Hotel.

The day had been an eventful one.

A journey to the New Forest; a trip in a Handley-Page machine; an exciting cricket-match with the boys of Hampshire; and a first-class concert to wind up with.

"We seem to be seeing life," said Bob Cherry. "This is the grandest tour of the lot, so far!"

And from the rest of the juniors, as they trooped gaily up to bed, came the answering echo:

"Hear, hear!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Through Storm and Tempest!

"MY hat! What a sea!" Bob Cherry stood at his bedroom window early next morning, and gazed across Southsea Common at the heavy rollers which dashed upon the beach.

"Is it stormy?" yawned Harry Wharton, from his bed.

"Stormy isn't the word for it!" said Bob. "I was thinking of taking an early morning dip, too!"

"The swimming races will be knocked on the head," said Nugent.

"Afraid so," said Bob Cherry. "It would take a Webb or a Burgess to swim in a sea like this!"

Shortly afterwards the Removites trooped down to breakfast.

Dicky Nugent, still playing the role of the happy truant, joined them.

"Too rough for the swimming sports, kids," said Wingate. "We shall have to hold the running races to-day instead."

"Looks like it," said Wharton.

But a few moments later a note was delivered at the hotel.

It was addressed to Harry Wharton, and ran as follows:

"Dear Wharton,—I think we ought to stick to our original programme, and hold the swimming sports to-day—don't you?"

"We shall have a rough passage, I know; but Hampshire fellows don't funk a heavy sea, and I'm pretty certain Greyfriars fellows don't!"

"We'll meet you at the South Parade Pier at ten."

"Yours sincerely,
"BOB WESTON."

Wharton grinned, and handed the letter to Wingate.

"That amounts to a challenge," he said. "We simply can't back out. If the sea isn't too rough for Weston & Co., then it's not too rough for us!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

Wingate looked dubious.

"The silly ass is asking for trouble, to want to swim in such a sea!" he said. "Still, we'll give him his head. To back out would look too much like showing the white feather."

At ten o'clock, therefore, the Greyfriars fellows, with the wind beating full in their faces, proceeded along the Esplanade to the South Parade Pier.

The bathing-machines were not being used, and, although the weather was hot, not a single swimmer was to be seen.

Stormy seas were not usual at Southsea. The Isle of Wight sheltered it a good deal.

But this was an exception.

The waves curled and leaped against the supports of the pier, and their angry hiss seemed to convey a warning to the would-be competitors.

"Top of the morning!" sang out Bob Weston, who, with his towel slung over his shoulder, stood close to the pier with his colleagues.

"Do you think it's altogether wise to swim under these conditions?" asked Wingate.

"Why not? I've swum in heavier seas than this."

"Very well."

The juniors chartered a row of bathing-machines, and a few moments later they lined up on the beach in their costumes.

The first race was a short one—only thirty yards.

But the distance seemed ten times as long to the swimmers, as they ploughed their way through the lashing, foaming waves.

It was a close race; and the verdict went to a plump youth named Pryor—one of the best swimmers on the Hampshire side.

Harry Wharton finished second, and Mark Linley third; so Greyfriars were not entirely out of the picture.

The next few races also went to Hampshire.

The chief reason for this was that Harry Wharton and some of his chums refrained from competing.

They were holding themselves in readiness for the biggest event of all—a long-distance swim to the end of the pier and back.

There had been hardly any spectators at the start; but when the big race was about

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to commence, the beach was thronged with people.

Swimming the length of the pier and back was no easy matter in a calm sea; and in a sea of this description it was a Spartan achievement.

"Are you ready?" asked Wingate, as the competitors lined up.

"Ready, ay, ready!" said Bob Cherry.

"Go!"

The swimmers plunged to their task.

There were twelve of them altogether—six from Hampshire and six from Greyfriars.

Progress was difficult—almost impossible.

The tide was coming in, and the swimmers had the disheartening experience of being swept back at every few strokes they took.

Jimmy Silver led at the outset.

The Rookwood junior was a fine all-round sportsman, and swimming was only one of his many accomplishments.

But he did not enjoy his lead for long.

By the time the end of the pier was reached quite half a dozen fellows, who found the going too difficult, were picked up by boats; and Jimmy Silver was one of them.

It needed iron fortitude to make progress in that seething tornado of waves.

The return journey to the shore was less difficult.

Weston led, and Bob Cherry sped along behind him. The rest seemed to be nowhere.

Everything pointed to an exciting finish.

Although Weston was leading, he was more than a trifle exhausted.

Bob Cherry, on the other hand, was going strong.

The wind blew in great gusts, and the waters were churned to angry foam. But Bob saw that the end was in sight.

If he could only overtake Weston—

"Come along, kid!" came Wingate's voice from the shore. "Put your beef into it!"

Bob Cherry gained rapidly upon Weston. It looked as if he would easily overhaul him.

But the Hampshire boy was not steering a straight course. He swam in zig-zag fashion, from one side to the other, and Bob Cherry could not get past without a collision in the water.

The Greyfriars fellow began to get annoyed.

Was Weston deliberately "crossing"?

Was he willfully impeding Bob's progress.

It looked very much like it.

"Swim straight!" blurted out Bob, at length.

But Weston still continued his zig-zag career.

The beach was very near now.

Bob Cherry made several attempts to overhaul Weston; but on each occasion the Hampshire fellow—either by accident or design—got in the way.

Bob felt like barging into him—but he could not very well make a scene before the spectators.

A moment later, panting and victorious, Weston emerged on to the shingle.

He had beaten Bob Cherry by a few yards.

The Hampshire fellows cheered him, of course.

But there was a hush among the Greyfriars juniors. They saw that Bob Cherry was angry.

Few fellows possessed such a sunny disposition as Bob Cherry. But there were times when Bob fairly let himself go. And this was one of them.

When he stepped out of the water, he confronted Weston with blazing eyes.

"Call that playing the game?" he flashed.

"You deliberately prevented me from winning!"

Weston flushed crimson.

"You—you really think that?" he exclaimed.

"Of course! I had you beaten all ends up, and, knowing that, you swam in such a way that it was impossible for me to get past you. I always thought that Hampshire fellows were sportsmen. I know different now!"

It was Weston's turn to get angry.

"After that," he said, "there's nothing for it but to fight!"

"I'm quite game," said Bob Cherry. "When and where you like. Might as well have it out here and now."

Wingate strode forward.

The captain of Greyfriars had overheard the conversation, and he was sorry that things should have come to such a pass.

"Look here, you kids," he said gravely, "you can't scrap here. I know you're pining to get at each other's throats, but it will have to wait. A fight on the beach, in bathing-costumes, would appeal to the crowd, I dare say; but it doesn't appeal to me. You can settle your grievance later!"

The two Bobs—Cherry and Weston—ex-

changed bitter glances, and went to their bathing-machines.

"Cheer up, Bob, old scout!" said Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry towelled himself with fierce energy.

"That fellow Weston's a rank outsider!" he exclaimed. "I should have won the race but for him. Did you see what he did?"

Wharton nodded.

"It might not have been deliberate, though," he said, in an attempt to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Rats! I feel quite mad about this, Harry. And I'll make the boulder look pretty blue by the time I've finished with him!"

"You're going to fight?"

"Yes."

"Well, you were due to meet Weston in the boxing contest."

Bob Cherry grunted.

"It will be more like a prize-fight," he said. "You're determined to fight him?"

"Of course!"

Wharton sighed.

When Bob Cherry was like this, he was impervious to argument. When the juniors were dressed, Wingate used all the tact at his disposal to bring about a reconciliation.

But he was unsuccessful.

Bob Cherry felt that Weston had played it low.

Weston, on the other hand, resented the suggestion that he had been guilty of unsportsmanlike behaviour.

"I sha'n't be happy until we've had it out," said Bob Cherry. "It's very decent of you to try to put things right, Wingate; but only a scrap can do that."

"Where do you propose to fight?"

"Leave that to me," said Bob Weston. "I know a quiet little meadow just below Portedown Hill."

"Is it far?"

"Barely an hour's tram-ride."

"Well, since you seem determined to wipe each other off the face of the earth," said Wingate, "we'll go along there."

Shortly afterwards the party boarded a tram-car, and went speeding away northwards.

No casual observer would have guessed, from their appearance, that a stern fight was shortly to take place.

The fellows looked as if they were proceeding to a picnic.

But their thoughts were not in harmony with their outward appearance.

For in that Hampshire valley which they were approaching one of the fiercest fights on record was about to take place!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Peace with Honour.

"ARE you ready, you two?" asked Wingate.

Bob Cherry and Weston nodded.

"Go ahead, then!"

And there, in that silent meadow, within a ring formed by the Greyfriars juniors and the boys of Hampshire, the two Bobs faced each other.

This was to be no well-ordered contest, split up into rounds. It was to be a fight to a finish with bare fists.

The spectators said little.

The Greyfriars fellows wanted Bob Cherry to win, of course; and the Hampshire boys were backing Weston.

But both parties felt sorry that there had been a rift in the lute.

Bob Cherry was the first to attack.

His anger was fiercer than Weston's. He felt convinced that his opponent had won the swimming race by unfair means, and he determined to teach Weston a lesson.

Bob Cherry could fight like a tiger when he was roused.

Nobody in the Greyfriars Remove—not even Harry Wharton or Dick Russell—could hold a candle to Bob in the ring.

The Greyfriars juniors expected to see Weston go all to pieces at an early stage of the fight.

But the Hampshire boy was sturdy, and immensely plucky.

Bob Cherry's knuckles crashed against his jaw, but he did not yield an inch of ground.

It was to be a long and stubborn fight. Everybody saw that now.

Bob Cherry had the upper hand, but a decisive knock-out blow would be necessary to defeat Weston; and the latter's guard was so good that the knock-out was not likely to come yet.

By the end of ten minutes the faces of the combatants presented a very battered appearance.

Weston's right eye had retired from active

service, and Bob Cherry's nose was swelling visibly.

Wingate grew uneasy.

"I ought not to have allowed this," he kept telling himself. "If it gets too bad, I shall have to chip in."

Bob Cherry launched a furious attack upon his opponent.

Weston stepped smartly to one side, and the Greyfriars fellow, his fists meeting with no resistance, toppled forward, and fell.

Had Weston wished, he could have dashed in with a straight left as Bob Cherry was in the act of falling.

But the Hampshire fellow dropped his hands, and stood aside until Bob Cherry was on his feet again.

"He can't be such a rotten sportsman to do that," murmured Frank Nugent.

And the other members of the Famous Five agreed.

On the resumption of the fight there was a good deal of give and take.

Weston got in a number of powerful blows, which would have felled a less sturdy fellow than Bob Cherry.

Bob, on the other hand, left his mark on Weston's face more than once.

After five minutes' hammer-and-tong fighting the two combatants were forced to take a breather.

The pace had become too hot for both of them.

Wingate stepped forward.

"Stop!" he exclaimed. "I forbid any further fighting. Quite enough damage has been done already."

The words stung Bob Cherry into action. He rushed towards Weston, and Wingate swung him back.

"I'm going on!" muttered Bob thickly.

"Oh, no, you're not! You've knocked each other about sufficiently."

"Let them finish it off, Wingate!" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

"What's the sense in fagging right up here and leaving the affair unsettled?" growled Bolsover major.

"Look at their faces—" began Wingate.

"Well, they're bound to get some hard knocks. This isn't a kid-glove exhibition."

Wingate hesitated.

"Let's finish it!" urged Weston. "There won't be five minutes to go."

Whether Weston thought that in that interval he would knock Bob Cherry out, or vice versa, was uncertain.

But Wingate, noting the earnest appeal in the eyes of the Hampshire boy, gave in.

"Only five minutes more, mind!" he said. Weston nodded.

The fight was resumed with great dash and spirit.

Weston struck the first blow; but he struck no more.

For Bob Cherry, summoning all his strength, dashed in, and planted his left and right in quick succession beneath his opponent's jaw.

Weston went down like a log.

He struggled to his feet again, but not before Wingate had counted him out.

"Cherry wins!" said the Greyfriars captain simply.

Bob Cherry picked up his coat, put it on, and turned abruptly away.

"Aren't you going to shake hands with Weston?" asked Kennedy.

It was not in Bob's nature to bear malice, but he hesitated now.

"You're a bit of an ass, you know," continued Kennedy. "You seem to have the idea that Weston fouled you. He always swims in a zig-zag fashion, like he did then. It's a bad habit, and it's landed him into trouble more than once. But as for deliberately fouling you—why, Weston's far too decent a sportsman to play a trick of that sort."

Bob Cherry looked Kennedy squarely in the face.

"You mean to say that Weston couldn't help swimming as he did?"

"Of course he couldn't! That funny over-arm stroke of his always causes him to swerve from one side to the other. Bob Weston's not the sort of fellow who would deliberately foul."

"But I shouted to him—"

"Yes; but all the shouting in the world can't alter a fellow's style. Do you still think that Bob Weston played it low?"

"No, I don't!" said Bob Cherry; adding, as he turned to his recent antagonist: "I've been a priceless ass!"

"So have I," said Weston, as he took Bob Cherry's outstretched hand. "We ought not to have scrapped. But—but it hurt a bit when you said Hampshire fellows weren't sportsmen."

"I take that back," said Bob Cherry at once. "I ought to have known better than to say such a thing."

The breach was healed now.

Bob Cherry was never likely to jump to such hasty conclusions again, so far as Weston was concerned.

Traces of the recent combat were plainly visible on the faces of the two Bobs, but they did not seem to mind.

"Of course, that counts as a Greyfriars victory," said Weston.

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry.

"But it does! You've proved yourself the better man. There's no need to have a glove-fight after this. The result would be just the same."

So the Friars were fairly level with their opponents in the matter of points.

The cricket-match had been drawn, Hampshire had won the long-distance swimming race, and Greyfriars the fistic encounter.

Next day the running races took place on the United Services Recreation-ground at Portsmouth.

There were eight events in all.

Harry Wharton & Co. bagged four, and Hampshire four.

The biggest event was the Marathon Race, which, after a stern struggle, went to Jimmy Silver of Rookwood.

The last day of the tour was spent in visiting the places of interest in Portsmouth and the surrounding district.

The grand old harbour was a source of considerable fascination.

Harry Wharton & Co. were rowed out to the Victory, and they went all over the historic craft.

The old Victoria Pier and the Charles Dickens' Museum came in for a good deal of attention. But the titbit of the day was a picnic on the summit of Portsdown Hill.

Several luncheon-baskets were packed with good things, and Harry Wharton & Co., together with their Hampshire friends, set out in great spirits.

"This is prime!" said Bob Cherry, as the

contents of the baskets were spread out on the cool grass. "I can almost forgive you for putting my nose out of joint yesterday, Weston!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a treat to be able to gorge to our hearts' content!" murmured Bolsover major. "I've been in training for a whole blessed week—half a kipper a day, and all that sort of thing!"

"Well, you haven't trained in vain!" said Wingate, laughing. "I think Greyfriars has given a very good account of itself in the sports."

"Hear, hear!" said Kennedy.

"It's been a topping time, anyway!" said Tommy Dodd. "I don't relish the idea of going back to Rookwood and swotting at mouldy Greek!"

Jimmy Silver groaned.

"Don't dwell on it, old chap!" he said. "Let us eat, drink, and be merry—for tomorrow we go back!"

The feast progressed merrily.

There was no lack of good things, and the youthful sportsmen did full justice to them.

The scene from the top of Portsdown Hill was a magnificent one.

Most of the juniors were more interested in the cream-buns than in the scenery; but those who had an eye for Nature's charms enjoyed the view immensely.

Far below them lay the thriving seaport and the glistening waters of the Solent; and away to the north lay the pleasant pastures of Hampshire—a county which has few rivals for beauty of scenery.

Everyone was genuinely sorry that the tour had drawn to a close.

Bob Weston only bade farewell to the Greyfriars juniors on their distinct promise to visit Southsea again, later in the year, for the purpose of playing a footer-match on the Governors' Green. To this Harry Wharton & Co. readily consented.

It was a very contented party of juniors that travelled back to Greyfriars after the sports.

The Removites considered, and rightly, that they had deserved well of their country.

Lancashire and Kent had proved formidable opponents in the past; but Hampshire had proved an even tougher proposition. To have shared the spoils with them was a tremendous achievement on the part of Harry Wharton & Co.

There was only one dismal person in the railway-carriage on the way back.

That was Dicky Nugent.

Dicky had thoroughly enjoyed himself. But he realised that his innings was over now, and that he must pay the penalty of playing truant.

The fag expected either a terrific swishing or a gating.

But he got neither.

Wingate made it his business to acquaint Dr. Locke with details of the important part Dicky Nugent had played in the proceedings—firstly, in warning the tourists that a plot was on foot against them; and, secondly, in saving the Friars from defeat in the cricket-match.

In view of these facts, Dicky Nugent was let down lightly.

The Head administered two hundred lines, to be written out on the next half-holiday; and there the matter ended.

Skinner of the Remove, however, got off less lightly.

Harry Wharton & Co. could not overlook the trick he had played.

A trial by jury took place in the Remove dormitory that evening, and Harold Skinner was sentenced to run the gauntlet.

"Line up, you fellows!" rapped out Harry Wharton.

The Removites lined up in two rows. Every fellow was armed with a pillow, a bolster, or a knotted towel.

"Now," said Wharton, giving Skinner a sudden push, "run!"

Skinner started to run between the lines under a perfect deluge of blows.

By the time he reached the end he was snarling all over.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" he groaned.

Skinner crawled towards his bed, bitterly lamenting his ill-timed jape.

For a long, long time he lay writhing in his bed, glaring into the gloom.

As for Harry Wharton & Co., they were soon in the arms of Morpheus, dreaming of the many exciting adventures which had befallen them since they set out to compete, in the world of sport, with the Hampshire Heroes!

THE END.

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JIMMY SILVER'S RETURN!

A New Long, Complete Story
of JIMMY SILVER & Co., the
Chums of Rookwood.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Fight at the Ring.

"SILVER!"
The exclamation was accompanied by a gasp of surprise from the four juniors who sat in seats near the ring-side at the Ring, in Blackfriars Road, London.

And good reason could be found for the surprise.

Raby, Newcome, and Lovell of the Classical House at Rookwood, and Tommy Dodd, leader of the Modern House juniors, were the four juniors concerned.

Days had elapsed since Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Classical Fourth, had run away from school to avoid a flogging before the assembled school for an act of brutality which had been falsely laid at his door by Mr. Brooks, a Coombe farmer.

Raby, Newcome, and Lovell, accompanied by Tommy Dodd, had set out to find the runaway junior, and, after a day's search in the great city of London, had been driven by the rain into the Ring at Blackfriars.

And there, the first person they saw enter the ring was their chum, Jimmy Silver!

The four juniors simply gasped in surprise. "It's Jimmy!" hooted Raby excitedly.

Raby & Co. jumped up on their seats, shouting Silver's name at the top of their voices.

Loud dissentient voices bade them sit down, for the gloves had already been fixed, and the fight was about to commence.

But Raby & Co. were far too excited to listen to any such thing.

Jimmy Silver, standing under the glaring lights above the ring, heard his name, and jauntily waved his gloved hand.

The act only served to make the Rookwoodites more excited than ever.

"You—you Jimmy!" shouted Newcome. "You—you—"

Surprise checked Newcome's utterance, and he could not find words to fit the occasion.

But the people behind had come to the end of their patience—they did not understand the emotion which possessed the four juniors from Rookwood.

Many hands grasped them, and bore them to their seats.

"Leggo!" howled Raby. "I tell you that's our Jimmy!"

"Yes, rather—we've found him!" said Lovell excitedly.

"You'll find something else if you don't keep quiet!" said a burly man darkly.

Raby & Co. looked at one another as they re-arranged their collars and ties. They had not been too gently handled by the sport-loving crowd.

"Better wait until the fight's over!" murmured Tommy Dodd.

"Yes—and we'll bump the ass until he's raw!" whispered Newcome. "The giddy spoofer!"

"I'll jolly—"

But Tommy Dodd was interrupted by the bell which announced that the first round was to begin.

All eyes became centred on the two white figures in the ring, and silence reigned supreme as the boxers shook hands.

Jimmy Silver's face bore a look of confidence. He realised his great advantage over his opponent in that he had seen him fight, of himself, never having been seen in the ring before, nothing was known of his capabilities.

His opponent, whose name was Tide, looked equally as confident as he stared at the slim form of the Rookwood junior. Perhaps he felt that he had an easy fight before him.

But any such thoughts, he may have had

were rudely shaken in the first minute of the bout.

For Jimmy Silver, having touched hands, lashed out with a straight left that stopped very suddenly on Tide's jaw. The professional boxer slipped, but recovered himself quickly.

In their seats, Raby & Co. chuckled. "One to Rookwood!" said Tommy Dodd enthusiastically.

"Hear, hear!" assented his companions quickly.

Again and again Jimmy Silver hit out, but his leads were parried skilfully. Tide, all the smiles of confidence gone, settled down in real earnest. The first round ended amidst roars of applause from the crowd of spectators—roars in which the encouraging voices of the Rookwoodites were hopelessly drowned.

When the bell rang again, Jimmy Silver leapt nimbly from his corner, and the fight proceeded. Again Jimmy Silver got home with his left, but he received such a lightning right, that the scales were balanced.

All through that round it was a case of give and take.

Not once did they clinch or hold, and by the time the referee closed the round, both combatants wanted a rest.

Raby waited until the cheering had somewhat subsided before he allowed a roar of encouragement to go ringing through the hall.

"Stick it, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver looked towards his chums, and smiled confidently. The third round found the combatants as fit and fresh as when they had first started. Harry Kemp, the man who had befriended Jimmy Silver when the junior had accepted the ringside challenge, looked at his protégé, and nodded satisfactorily.

"He's a go-er!" he murmured to a man near by.

Jimmy Silver certainly did not let Kemp down.

In the middle of the third round, Silver saw an opening in his opponent's guard, and his right went through like a streak of lightning, to find its mark on Tide's jaw.

Tide staggered for a moment, then slipped heavily to the boards of the ring. Silver, like the true sportsman he was, stepped across to the farther side of the ring, and waited for Tide to rise.

Five—six—seven!

Tide sat up, and blinked round. The referee would have called "Out!" the next second, but Tide got up, and staggered towards Silver.

Raby & Co. sat breathless with excitement, and eyes nearly dropping from their heads as they saw Tide in this plight.

"Jimmy's won!" shouted Raby excitedly.

But he was a trifle too hasty.

With all the cunning of the ring in his favour, Tide literally fell on Jimmy Silver, and the Rookwood junior could do nothing.

The bell rang, and it undoubtedly came at an opportune moment for Tide.

Into the corners again, and the seconds waved their towels frantically. Jimmy Silver did not need this attention so much as did Tide, but all the same he was glad of the little rest.

Again the bell rang, and Tide came up considerably the better for the attentions of his seconds.

He smiled at Jimmy Silver, and the Rookwood junior smiled back.

The next moment they were "at it" hammer and tongs again. It was Tide who found an opening this time, and he sent Jimmy Silver to the boards with a left swing which took the junior clean off his feet.

The referee began to count, in a slow, monotonous voice.

"One—two—three—"

Still Jimmy Silver did not move.

"Four—five—six—"

Raby & Co. looked uneasily at one another, and the silence was such that could be felt.

"Classics for ever!" shouted Newcome frantically. "Jimmy—"

Jimmy Silver moved as the well-known voice appealed to his dull senses, and stumbled to his feet as the referee called "Eight!"

He could hardly see Tide now—dazed by the suddenness of the blow. Again the encouraging voices of his chums reached him.

"Rookwood—Jimmy— Give him a Classical one!" hooted Raby.

To the credit of Tide, be it noted, he did not attack Jimmy before he reached his feet. True, Silver had done the same for him, but Tide would have been well within the rules of the game if he had gone for the junior as soon as he was off his knees. Ding!

The ringing of the bell was greeted by the frantic cheers of the enthusiastic spectators. Seldom before had they seen such splendid sportsmanship in the famous hall.

Kemp leaned over his charge, and whispered encouragingly in his ear.

"Another right—like the first one—and you'll win!" he said.

Jimmy Silver smiled wanly.

A punch such as he had received wanted some getting over.

The bell rang again, and he walked quickly towards Tide, upon whose face again appeared a smile of confidence.

Jimmy Silver was more careful this time, and Tide found it more difficult to get his powerful left home.

Silver felt himself weakening, and for the moment his heart fell.

"Jimmy—your right!"

Tommy Dodd howled the advice out, and there was a general grin from the spectators. Advice from a schoolboy—even if they did know the new boxer—appealed to them as funny.

But Jimmy Silver had received that incentive he most needed.

Watching his opportunity, he feinted with his right, again with his left, and lashed out with all the force at his command with the right.

It would have been a good man who could have stopped that lightning stroke. Tide caught the glove full on the point of the chin, and, flinging his arms above his head, he collapsed like a house of cards.

The referee started to count out the seconds, but everybody in that hall knew that Tide would not get up within the ten seconds.

He lay, as if asleep, on the boards, and Jimmy Silver, leaning heavily on the ropes, watching him through eyes smarting from the perspiration that ran from his forehead.

"Nine—ten— Out!"

Jimmy Silver had won!

A deafening roar of cheering, both for victor and vanquished, shook the rafters of the famous hall as Jimmy Silver ran quickly forward and lifted Tide to his corner.

"Well tried, old top!" whispered Silver, patting his beaten rival on the back with his gloved hand.

Tide looked up dazedly and smiled.

"Good 'un—what!" he said.

Jimmy Silver nodded, and walked quickly away.

In their seats Raby & Co. were thumping each others' backs in sheer exuberance of spirits. Rookwood had come well through the contest indeed!

"Wait till we get the old ass!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "Did you see that right? It went like this!"

And Tommy Dodd, to demonstrate his views, lashed out with his right. Unfortunately, Lovell stooped to pick up his hat from under the seat, and Tommy Dodd's fist caught him on the shoulder.

"Ow! You—you—Ow!" roared Lovell. "What did you do that for?"

Tommy Dodd sucked his knuckles.

"Ow! What did you want to get in the way for, fathead?" he demanded angrily. "I was hitting empty air!"

"First time I've heard my shoulder called empty air!" hooted Lovell. "I'll—"

"If you two want to fight, try the ring!" And the two excited juniors turned round to see an attendant in uniform standing by their seats. They very wisely decided to remain where they were—quiet.

"I suppose old Jimmy will come along as soon as he's dressed?" said Raby. "He knows we're here all right!"

"Yes, rather. He heard us, never fear. I reckon he'd have lost if he hadn't heard the good old call!" observed Newcome.

Which was extremely likely. Jimmy Silver had been in pitiable plight until the voices of his chums reached his ears.

Five minutes later, and two more boxers were taking to the ring, but there was no sign of Jimmy Silver. The juniors looked at one another uneasily.

"I suppose he hasn't bunked again, has he?" queried Raby, in a whisper.

"Just what I was thinking," admitted Tommy Dodd quietly. "I think we'd better go and see what's happened to him."

The others acquiesced, and the four juniors left their seats and made their way to the back of the ring.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Gone Away!

"I SAY—"
Tommy Dodd called out to a man who was striding quickly towards the dressing-rooms. The man stopped impatiently.

"Well? I'm busy!"
"Sorry! Have you seen Jimmy Silver—chap who won the first fight?" asked Dodd hastily.

"No," said the other shortly. "He dressed and went off."

"Oh!"
Tommy Dodd and the three Classical juniors uttered that exclamation in dismay.

"What on earth are we going to do now?" asked Raby.

The others shook their heads.
"We'd better ask the man at the door," said Lovell.

The four juniors hurried away to the main entrance to the Ring, and went up to the attendant who stood there.

"Have you seen anything of the chap who won the first fight?" asked Tommy Dodd at once.

The attendant looked closely at the juniors.
"Well, and if I did?" he asked calmly. Dodd stamped his foot impatiently.

"He's a chum of ours; we want to find him," he explained hastily.

The attendant smiled sarcastically.
"He'll have a lot of chums to-night," he said, with a sneer that made the four juniors long to bump him. "With the nice purse he won—oh, yes, he'll have many chums to-night!"

"You—you—"
Tommy Dodd broke off helplessly. He was not to know that Jimmy Silver had lavishly tipped him before giving instructions to the effect that if four-boys asked for him, not to say where he went.

The attendant walked into the hall, smiling. Tommy Dodd & Co. stood outside, looking at each other in dismay.

"What can we do now?" asked Raby impatiently. "The silly—rotten—senseless—idiotic—maniac!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Lovell. "That won't help us find him."

"It had left off raining, for which the juniors were duly thankful. But the night was drawing on, and before many hours had passed London would be asleep."

If anything was to be done that night, it would have to be done quickly.

But the attendant came to their rescue, although he did not know it. While they were looking at one another, dismayed and nonplussed, the juniors had not moved from the doorway of the hall.

The attendant was talking to the box-office man, and his loud voice reached the juniors as they stood.

"Gone to Euston," he was saying. "Give me a handsome tip to keep my mouth shut if the young gents came and asked silly questions. I put 'em off the scent all right, Bert."

"Bert" joined in the laughter which followed this announcement, and Tommy Dodd could not resist the temptation of letting the attendant know they had found out what they wanted to know.

He strode quickly to the box-office, and tapped the man on the shoulder.

"Thanks very much for the information—which you have kept so well," said Dodd cheerfully. "We're much obliged; we'll tell him what a fine and reliable chap you are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby & Co.

And, followed by the hoarse commands of the attendant for them to go back, Tommy Dodd & Co. ran out into the street and boarded a passing taxi.

They waved their hats at the outraged attendant, and Raby fondly blew kisses of farewell.

"Good-bye, duckie!" he shouted cheerfully. "How nicely you put us off the scent!"

They did not hear the man's reply, but it probably was not worth hearing, in any case.

The Rookwoodites leant back in their taxi as it bounded northwards across the river.

"We'll have the bouncer this time," said Tommy Dodd confidently. "And when we do catch him, I vote we give him a jolly hard bumping for playing us that trick!"

"What-ho!" assented Lovell emphatically. "Fancy old Jimmy being a deep old scoundrel like that. I'm afraid our Jimmy will come to a bad end!"

He finished up with a sigh, shaking his head morosely.

"Fathead!" said Raby witheringly. "Of course, the dummy thinks we are after him—the Head sent us, and all that twaddle. I'd have bunked myself."

"You would, of course!" said Lovell sarcastically.

"Look here—"
"Shut up!" roared Newcome, so loudly that the driver turned his head to see if they wanted him. "Can't you leave all that until we get back to Rookwood?"

"Well, he shouldn't—"
"If Lovell hadn't—"

Tommy Dodd and Newcome, exasperated, grasped the two juniors, and bumped their heads together with a crack.

"Ow!"
"Yooooow!"

"There, perhaps you'll shut now!" said Newcome, leaning back in his seat with the air of one who has done his duty, and done it well.

"You—oh, you've busted my head against his rotten block of wood!" howled Lovell.

"Wood! Yours is cast-iron, you dummy! And I'll—"

But Tommy Dodd and Newcome had had enough. They sprang at the enraged juniors, and sat on them.

"Now perhaps we'll have peace until we reach Euston!" said Tommy Dodd.

And Newcome nodded cheerfully.

Lovell and Raby struggled desperately for a few moments, but the evening was hot, and they soon gave in, and contented themselves with personal remarks concerning they that sat upon them.

But Newcome and Tommy Dodd merely chuckled.

Euston was reached without further trouble, and the exasperated two were allowed to alight. They straightened their collars and jackets whilst Tommy Dodd was settling with the cabman, and then their attention was called to the all-important business of finding Jimmy Silver.

Euston Station is a very big affair, and the juniors found it no mean task to push their way amongst the jostling crowds. But of Jimmy Silver there was no trace.

"Let's part, and meet later at the booking-office," suggested Raby. "We shall never find him this way!"

Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"That would be all right if we knew London," he said. "But if we get separated, goodness knows when we shall meet again!"

Besides, Jimmy might be in one of the trains," put in Lovell.

"Exactly! And before we could get together the train would be gone!"

"H'm!"
The juniors were at a loss—they knew not what to do.

"Better look in all the trains," said Tommy: "that is, if we can pass the platform-collector."

"Platform-attendant, you mean, ass!" said Raby, with the confidence of superior knowledge. "Who ever heard of a platform-collector? I suppose you think somebody goes hanging round picking up platforms like they would butterflies?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Look here—"

"Ticket-examiner is what you both mean," interrupted Lovell, with a chuckle. "Let's try, any old how!"

They found they could get on to the platforms if they secured a ticket from automatic machines placed near the platform barriers for that purpose.

Tommy Dodd obtained four tickets from the machine, and the juniors, not without a curious stare from the ticket-examiner, were allowed to go on to the platform.

A long train was standing there, bearing boards which announced its destination as Glasgow. But the juniors were more interested in finding Jimmy Silver than where the train was bound for.

They went the whole length of the train, but there was no sign of the runaway junior, and they walked slowly down towards the barrier again.

"The giddy idiot!" snapped Raby. "If he only knew how much trouble he is putting us to, he'd come along like a meek little lamb and give himself up!"

"Yes, I can see him doing that, old scout!" chuckled Newcome.

"Better try another train, and—"
Tommy Dodd's voice was drowned in the shrill shriek of the engine-whistle, and, looking quickly round, the juniors saw that the train was signalled out.

Almost immediately the guard blew his whistle, and over the crowd of people on the platform the juniors saw the green flag waving.

Despite the pressing matter on hand, the Rookwoodites could not resist the temptation to stand still and watch the magnificent train pulled out of the station by its great engine.

And as the train moved there appeared at a window far up the train a head, adorned with a cap bearing a badge unmistakably Rookwood's famous crest!

Newcome gave a howl of warning.

"Jimmy! He's on the train!"
And without waiting to see if his companions heard, he made a dash for the nearest door, flung it open, and leaped into the corridor of the train.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Rookwood—and all Serene!

"STAND back!"
The porters on Euston Station shouted the warning as the four juniors struggled into the train, which was quickly gaining speed.

But Raby & Co., if they heard, paid no heed.

Jimmy Silver was on the train, and that was enough for them!

They stood in the corridor, panting for breath.

"Are you sure it was Silver?" asked Tommy Dodd excitedly.

"Certain! I'd know his face anywhere!" said Newcome. "Come on! We can get along the corridor!"

And the four excited juniors hurried along the corridor, and peered into every compartment.

It was not until they reached the very end compartment that they found Silver. The corridor of his carriage was on the other side to that which had been near the platform, which accounted for their missing him before.

But they had found Silver at last!
"Jimmy! You old, spoofer!"

"Jimmy, old scout!"
And the delighted juniors literally flung themselves at Jimmy Silver, overwhelming him in sheer gladness of heart.

The other passengers in the compartment stared at the five in amazement, but ventured no protest at the noise they made.

It was fully five minutes before Jimmy Silver could speak. A lump in his throat made speech impossible until then.

"I'm—I'm—I'm jolly glad to see you chaps, of course," he stammered. "But how did you get on the track?"

Newcome chuckled.

"The attendant you lavishly tipped was so pleased with putting us off the scent, he told his chum in the box-office," he explained. "We heard—that's all!"

"The ass!"

"Jolly fine chap, that attendant!" said Tommy Dodd warmly. "Where would you have been if it hadn't been that?"

"Home," said Silver laconically. "I—I—I was going to tell the pater, you see, and—"

"And now you're coming back to Rookwood!" said Dodd firmly.

"Yes, rather!" said the others emphatically.

Jimmy Silver flushed, and his eyes blazed angrily.

"And face a flogging for nothing?" he said hotly. "Not this child! I'm off to see the pater—"

"When you've been to Rookwood!" reiterated Tommy Dodd. "My dear ass! There's five of us in for it now!"

Jimmy Silver stared.

"Do you mean to say—"

"We do—we do!" he barked, my infant, to fetch you back. And now we are all for it!"

"Then the Head—he didn't send you?"

"Not he! We came on our little own. And I'm mighty glad we did. It's worth a flogging to have seen the way you put the boxer-chap on the boards for the count!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Only I wish it was Farmer Brooks instead of little Tide!" murmured Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha! He'd be a bit over my weight," said Silver. "I—"

"Tickets, please!"

"Oh!"

The juniors looked at one another in dismay. They had forgotten all about the necessity of having tickets when travelling on the railway.

The inspector poked his head into the compartment, clippers in hand.

"Tickets, gentlemen, please!"

"Ahem! You see—"

"It's like this—"

"Tickets, please!"

"We—we haven't got tickets!" said Tommy Dodd desperately.

"Oh! Trying to do the company, eh?"

"Nunno! Not at all! You see—"

"We didn't know we were coming by this train, inspector. We only came to look for a chap, and—and we found him, you see."

The inspector shook his clippers impatiently. "Then where do you want to go to?" he demanded.

"Eh? Where do we want to go to, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver chuckled, and pulled a five-pound note from his pocket.

"Four to Rookwood—I mean, Coombe—I mean, Crewe!" he said. "These chaps came after me; it's all right!"

The inspector took the money, and mumbling something about it not being all right, made out four tickets to Crewe, and handed them, with the change, to Silver.

"Better look after them a bit better, sir," he said warningly.

And he proceeded on his way.

"You hear that, you chaps?" said Jimmy Silver, with a chuckle. "Even the inspector-chap can see you want me to look after you! So—"

"My hat! You ungrateful chump!" said Tommy Dodd indignantly. "Here have we been chasing you to look after you—and getting a flogging for doing it—and you tell us that you can look after us!"

"Us! The check!" snorted Raby.

"Any old how, I'm not coming back to Rookwood!" said Silver emphatically.

"You are, my son—you are!" said Tommy Dodd. "We haven't let you pay for our tickets for nothing!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather not!"

"I'm not—"

"You are—so shut up!"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, bump the silly ass!" said Newcome impatiently.

And Jimmy Silver was carried into the corridor, and bumped—hard.

"Ow! Yoooww! Shurrup, you fatheads—"

"Ow! I'll come—Ow!" hooted Silver.

"There!" panted Tommy Dodd.

Heads were poked out of the compartments to look at the extraordinary scene. Passengers do not often see a junior bumped, so there was reason for their curiosity.

Jimmy Silver sat up, and glared wrathfully at the grinning juniors.

"You silly dummies!" he growled.

"Want some more—we're just proving to the inspector-chap that it's you that wants looking after!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Better fetch him back, and let him see with his own eyes!" said Newcome thoughtfully.

"Ow! You'd better not!" said Silver; and rose hastily to his feet.

"Then, as the bobbies say—are you coming quietly?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"Ow! Yes, if you like. But—but wait until I get back to Rookwood, Tommy Dodd! I'll have the gloves on with you, and teach you to rag a Classical chap!"

"I shall want notice of that!" said Dodd coolly.

"Eh—what for?"

"To put a couple of coal-buckets in the gloves!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "I'm not taking you on—I'd sooner tackle Tide!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver's good-humour quickly returned. He was glad enough to see the juniors again—one hardly appreciates one's friends until they are absent.

The five juniors had a right royal time of it, stopping the night at Crewe, and proceeding to Rookwood in the morning. But as they approached the famous old school, some of their light-heartedness left them.

It was no joke to have to look forward to a public flogging, and that would be the least punishment they would get. The fact of their having fetched Jimmy Silver back would make matters a little easier, but not very much.

Just enough to save them from expulsion, as Newcome remarked.

They arrived at the school during afternoon lessons, and made their way straight to Dr. Chisholm's study.

It was almost a relief to hear the Head's kindly tones bid them enter.

Dr. Chisholm was sitting at his desk, poring over the papers that lay there. Newspapers were very conspicuous, and the juniors did not need to be told to know that the papers contained advertisements seeking their whereabouts.

"Ahem!" said Tommy Dodd nervously.

The Head looked up.

"Dodd, Raby, Newcome! And—and Silver!" he gasped. "Goodness gracious! Dear me, I am glad to see—ahem! What does all this mean?"

"We've come back, sir!" said Jimmy Silver meekly. "Ahem! You see, sir—"

"I see you have—now perhaps you'll explain!" said the Head icily.

"It's like this, sir—" began Lovell.

"Pray let Silver explain, Lovell!" said the Head coldly.

"I—I—I think I'd better, if you don't mind, sir!" said Tommy Dodd nervously. "I took the others, sir, and—"

"He didn't, sir—"

"Silence! Go on, Dodd!"

Tommy Dodd, somehow or other, managed to explain to the Head what had happened, and although he was nervous at first, his eyes glowed as he recounted the fight between Tide and Jimmy Silver.

Even the Head's eyes twinkled proudly as he heard of the Rookwoodite's victory, and when the juniors had finished, there was little of the sternness in his eyes that had been there when the runaway juniors had entered the study.

The juniors waited for him to speak when Tommy Dodd had finished.

"You were very wrong to take the strong action you did," said the Head sternly. "You behaved outrageously, Silver, and set a very bad example to your friends. For that, of course, there is only one adequate punishment—"

"Oh!"

"And the others, by running from the school, there is also but one punishment. Expulsion—"

"Oh, sir—"

"Expulsion would have undoubtedly followed but for the fact that Mr. Brooks has been here, Silver!"

"I didn't want him to plead for me, sir!" said Jimmy Silver resentfully.

"Nobody said he came to plead, Silver. He came, in fact, to say that his son admits having been kicked by the horse, and not by you."

"Oh, the—the—"

"Apparently, Lester Brooks was possessed by a desire to wreak petty vengeance on you for the noble way in which you protected the horse at his own expense that was the cause of your running away. He became very nervous when his father told him you had gone, and blurted out the truth—but not before these headstrong juniors had followed your example, and gone after you."

"Oh!"

"So, although you are cleared of the accusation of brutality, there is no excuse for your having behaved so disgracefully."

"I should have been flogged, sir—I was falsely accused."

"That is only half an excuse, Silver. For so flagrantly breaking the rules, I shall severely cane all of you, and there the matter ends. Hold out your hand, Silver!"

Jimmy Silver held out his hand, knowing that the punishment was justifiable. But he almost laughed at the light taps he received. Clearly the Head was sympathetic!

The other four juniors duly received six "pats" with the cane, and were then allowed to depart.

Outside the study, they turned and looked at one another.

"He's top-hole!" said Jimmy Silver. "But fancy Lester Brooks—Brrrr!"

He broke off with a growl, and, arm-in-arm, the five juniors careered down the passage to their own study. Tommy Dodd went with them, for the simple reason that Raby and Newcome were on either side of him.

And that night there was held such a feed as Rookwood had never seen before. All the juniors were invited. Moderns as well as Classics, to the feed which celebrated not only the return of the juniors, but of Jimmy Silver's fight in London.

It was with the purse thus won that the feed was given, and even Peele, Gower, and Lattrey felt a glow of pride as Tommy Dodd, amidst hearty cheers, recounted their adventures.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Baggy Brags.

"YES," said Baggy Trimble, with a fat smirk, "I've often been complimented on my courage. Lion-like, some people have called it."

"Really truly truthful people?" asked Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Of course! I am not in the habit of associating with untruthful people, let me tell you!"

"Mellish, dear boy, have you ever had an unsolicited testimonial equal to that before?" drawled Ralph Reckness Cardew.

A score or so of the Shell and Fourth were congregated in the junior Common-room after prep one evening, and Baggy had been holding forth on the subject of pluck. It was not a topic upon which the views of Baggy were likely to be valuable; but the fellows present were mostly in an idle mood, and they had listened.

Percy Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth, who shared a study with Baggy, looked up from his game of draughts.

"What rot's Baggy giving you?" he asked. "He infers that you are a perfectly truthful person," replied Cardew.

"Rats! Er—I mean to say, I suppose I'm as truthful as anyone else," said Mellish sulkily.

"Rats! You're not!" retorted Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I considah that that is coin' wathah far!" remonstrated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I cannot say that I myself should considah Mellish an entiahly vewacious person. But I would not hurt his feelin's by sayin' so!"

"You haven't said so, have you?" chuckled Digby.

"Certainly not! Bai Jove, I should be rowway if I were so howwibly wude as some of you fellows are!"

"I was under the impression that I was talking," said Baggy, with a heavy attempt at sarcasm.

"An' my noble kinsman was under the impression that he was bein' kind an' polite to Mellish, by gad!" said Cardew. "Lots of wrong impressions about it. It's a wonder where they all come from!"

"There's this lion's-den stunt, now," went on Baggy. "The general notion is that it takes no end of pluck!"

"So it does!" growled Herries.

"Well, perhaps it does. All I have to say is that I've done it, and thought nothing of it."

And Baggy struck a noble and commanding attitude, arms akimbo, chin up, and ugly little snub-nose elevated even farther than Nature had already elevated it for him.

"Oh, you 'Ananias'!" cried Digby. "You mean to tell us that you've been into a den of lions like—"

"Daniel, the gentleman's name was, I think," put in Cardew. "Not Daniel Lambert—he would hardly have come out alive—too temptin' for the lions."

"Fathead! I wasn't talking about any old back numbers!" said Digby. "There's some thing in the evening paper to-night about a lion-tamer. That was what set Baggy gassing!"

"Excuse me, Digby, but I never gas," Baggy

said, with all the dignity he could put on. Baggy had been listened to almost patiently for five minutes, on and off; and this was so unusual a circumstance that he felt quite important.

"Gassing and goring are all you're good for!" growled Herries.

"I dare go into a cage full of lions, and that's more than you can say, Herries!" snorted Baggy.

"It's not more than I could say—if I were as big a liar as you are. I don't happen to be—that's all!"

"You may think I'm lying—"

"Oh no, dear boy!" interrupted Cardew.

"There you are, you fellows! Cardew believes me!" cried Baggy triumphantly.

"Do I, by gad?" returned Cardew.

"You say you didn't think I was lying, anyway."

"An' I don't think so, my pippin—I dashed well know you are!"

"Hallo! What is it Cardew knows?" inquired Tom Merry, the skipper of the Shell, entering at that moment with Manners and Talbot.

"Speaking generally, everything, Tommy!" answered Lowther blandly. "There is really no limit to Cardew's opinion of his own knowingness. He is like the late Professor Jowett—what he does not know is not knowledge!"

"Baggy was telling us how he went into a cage of lions," said Roylance, grinning.

"Several cages of lions," amended Dick Julian, also grinning.

"Stuffed lions," said Kerruish.

"Nothing of the sort!" snapped Baggy.

"No; it was Baggy who was stuffed!" said Dig.

"Weally, I considah that it is wathah widic to pursue this discussion!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Evevybody knows vewy well that Twimble is a w'etched funk as well as an abominable liah!"

"Well, I like that!" snorted Baggy.

"It's all right, then," said Tom Merry.

"I'm sure no one else objects to it. On the whole, it appears to me a fair summing-up of your more prominent virtues, Trimble."

Levison and Clive came in together just then.

"Heard the news?" asked Levison.

"We've been hearin' some, Ernest, dear boy," replied Cardew.

"What—about the menagerie?"

"Somethin' in that line. How, Baggy—"

"Baggy's pretty nearly a whole menagerie in 'himself," said Levison. "But I mean about—"

"You have a very impolite way of breakin' in upon the speeches of your elders an' superiors, Ernest. We were hearing about the intrepid Baggy's performances as a lion-tamer."

"Oh! Well, he'll have a chance to show us what he can do in that line the day after to-morrow, for there's a menagerie coming to Rylcombe."

"I don't think much of menageries," remarked Talbot. "A lot of poor, mangy brutes kept in captivity, and in utter misery all the time, to judge from the look of them."

"Still, this one will give Baggy the chance he is yearning for to establish a reputation for bravery," said Lowther.

Baggy did not look at all comfortable. "I don't believe that yarn about a menagerie," he said, shifting from one foot to another, while his face went the colour of mottled soap.

"If you mean to make out that I'm lying—" began Levison fiercely.

"Nunno! Everybody knows you don't do that—at least, not since you've reformed—I mean—Yaroooooooh! Wharrer doing, Levison? Lemme be!"

And Baggy lumbered out of Levison's way, dodging clumsily behind Tom Merry to avoid a second slap of the head.

Levison pursued. He hated any reference to his reform, and Baggy was somewhere about the last fellow from whom he could stand that kind of thing.

Baggy made a heavy rush for the door. It opened the second before he reached it; and he barged hard into the magnificent George Alfred Grundy.

"Yooop! Here, I say, do you know whom you're running into, you fat idiot?" rapped out the mighty one.

"Tain't my fault, Grundy—really it ain't! It's Levison!" burred Baggy.

"Bullyin' again, Levison?" snorted Grundy. "I shall have to put my foot down on this!"

"Give notice first, Grundy, please!" said Cardew politely.

"Notice, you silly ass! What for?"

"So that there shall be room, dear old top. When the majestic hoof of the one and only Grundy descends—"

"Idiot! I can't make out a bit why they didn't extend the muzzling order to chaps like you, Cardew!" hooted Grundy.

Baggy slipped past Wilkins and Gunn, who were behind Grundy. But he did not get clear away. Kangaroo, Dane, and Glyn stopped him at a call from Lowther.

"Don't let Baggy go!" cried the humorist of the Shell. "He was just beginning to be interesting!"

"Here, I say, Noble, old fellow, you can't stop me, you know!" pleaded Baggy.

"Can't I, Baggy? Now, I rather thought I could. My mistake, no doubt!"

"Yaroooop! Lemme be, you cads!" Kangaroo & Co. hustled Baggy back into the Common-room.

"It's a queer taste for anyone, wanting Baggy," said Glyn. "But as you happen to have it, Lowther, here he is!"

"I can hardly say that I want Baggy," replied Lowther. "But he was disappearing at an inopportune moment, while we were discussing his deeds of daring-do, past and future. I will not say present, for at the moment, it must be allowed, the porpoise looks anything but derring-doin'."

"Let me introduce you, dear boys, to Baggybus, the lion-tamer!" said Cardew, with a wave of his hand.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Queer Wager.

"WHAT?" asked Noble.

"Baggy, the—er—whichever?"

said Dane.

"You should say Baggy the Betwitcher," replied Cardew gravely.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 22.

at the moment we are not talkin' of the well-known effect of Baggy's irresistible fascinations upon the fair sex. That is quite another story, as Mr. Kipping says.

"Baggy looks like a lion-tamer, doesn't he?" said Glyn. "Why, he'd do a bunk from a white mouse, if it showed its teeth!"

"Nevertheless, a lion-tamer Baggy is. We have it on his own authority, an' who would ask more than that?" returned Cardew.

"Look here, I didn't say I tame the things!" protested Baggy. "I only said I'd been in a cage with them."

"I have it! Baggy refers to his past life at the Zoo. But the monkey-house there is hardly near enough to the lions' quarters to justify—"

"I never was at the Zoo, Lowther, and you know jolly well I wasn't!"

"I don't know anything of the sort, porpoise. But I should counsel you to keep away, for if the authorities there once laid hands on you it would need quite a lot of affidavits and things to convince them that you were in some sort a schoolboy, and not the missing link."

"There's nothing in going into the lions' cage at one of those menageries," said Grundy. "The things are as tame as any giddy poodle!"

"Mine weren't!" said Baggy. "They were horribly fierce!"

Baggy was lying. He knew it, though he was not always aware when he was lying, for he had a talent for self-deception. And everyone else knew it. But it suited Cardew and Lowther and a few more to egg him on.

"Rats!" snapped Grundy. "See here, we all know that Trimble's trying to kid us. But there wouldn't be much in his brag even if it were true. I'd go into one of those blessed cages like a shot. It's safe enough."

"There isn't much danger, certainly," sneered Racke. "But, all the same, I don't a bit believe you'd risk it, Grundy. In fact, I'll bet you a fiver to a quid that you don't!"

"I never bet, you sweep!" hooted Grundy. "But I'll show you jolly soon if I had a chance!"

"You have!" said Crooke, with a malicious grin.

"What do you mean? There's no wild beast show about."

"There's one coming," said Clive. "Toby, the page, told Levison and me. He's just got back from Ryleombe, and he says the posters were up there. It's to be along on Saturday."

"And it's at Wayland to-morrow," added Levison.

"That's Grundy's chance," said Racke. "More people to witness his display of reckless courage there, y'know."

For a moment Grundy's jaw dropped. But he quickly recovered his balance. Whatever George Alfred Grundy might be—and he was unquestionably several kinds of an ass—there was no fellow at St. Jim's with a stouter heart than his, and perhaps none who could more easily be urged on to reckless folly to prove the stoutness of his heart.

"I'll do it!" he snorted. "I don't say whether it shall be at Wayland or at Ryleombe. That's my affair, I consider. But I'll do it!"

"An' take my bet?" asked Racke. "No!" roared Grundy. "You know that I never bet!"

"Baggy will take it, Racke," said Cardew. "The fat cad never has any chink!" returned Racke contemptuously.

"Oh, let's stop all this rot!" Tom Merry said, rather uneasily. "The thing's dead off, you know."

"Are you really afraid the dear Baggybus will be led into danger by his excess of temerity, Thomas?" gibed Cardew.

"No, ass. Everybody knows Baggy wouldn't take the risk."

"I jolly well would, and I jolly well will, if Racke likes to bet with me!" said Baggy. He hardly knew why he said it. With a menagerie so near, it was certainly not worth while to put up a brag of that sort. But Baggy was as foolish as he was fat, and Racke's readiness to bet a fiver made his mouth water, although he knew that he had not the slightest chance of winning the money.

Racke looked at him sneeringly.

"What's the dashed use of bettin' with you?" he said. "You'll bet fast enough; but payin' up is another pair of boots!"

"May I make a suggestion?" asked Cardew.

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Racke and Baggy both looked at him suspiciously.

"Racke wagers five quid that Baggy won't go into the lions' cage—see? Baggy can't cover the cash, an', of course, he's dashed certain to lose!"

"Oh, am I?" snorted Baggy.

"So Racke's fiver is safe enough," went on Cardew. "But if it's to be a bet there must be something put against it—that's only reason. So I propose that the wager stand like this: If Baggybus does the trick between now and Sunday next, he takes the fiver. If he fails to do it, he takes—"

"You mean pays," put in Clive.

"I do not, Sidney. Takes, not pays—takes twelve whacks in the proper position with a cricket-stump, administered by Racke or anyone else named by him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The terms of that proposed wager tickled those who heard.

"I'm on!" said Racke.

"And, of course, Baggy is," Monty Lowther said.

"I—I—"

Baggy stumbled and boggled. He was not so sure that he was on; but he was tempted. His mouth watered at the thought of all the grub five pounds would buy; and, though at the back of his mind was the certainty that he could never win that five pounds, in the front of it was the feeling that such a chance must not be allowed to slip.

"He knows he hasn't a dog's chance!" jeered Racke.

"It's the chance of a giddy lifetime!" said Levison.

"Are you on?" asked Racke eagerly.

"No, thanks! I don't bet and I don't brag," replied Levison.

Racke's eyes gleamed. There was a distinct vein of cruelty in the hair to Messrs. Racke & Hacke's war profits. He would enjoy giving Baggy those dozen whacks. But he would simply have revelled in giving Levison major them.

"Baggy's on," said Roylance.

"I—I— Look here, is it honest injun?"

"As far as I'm concerned, by gad!" Racke said.

"Go it, Baggy!" said Manners. "Five pounds to be gained and practically nothing to risk!"

"What's a dozen whacks with a cricket-stump?" Kerruish chimed in.

"Nothing at all—when it's another chap that's getting them!" said Julian.

"Oh, it's all silly rot!" snapped Tom Merry.

"We know Baggy would jolly well die with fright if he had to go in among the lions; and he hasn't the pluck to pay if he lost the wager."

"Do you think nobody's got any pluck but you?" snarled Baggy.

"I'm not talking about what I've got, but about what you haven't!"

"I should take him on, Baggy," said Mellish.

"I will—"

"Bravo, Baggy!" roared Kangaroo.

"On these terms—"

"But the terms have already been settled," said Lumley-Lumley.

"No, they haven't. I haven't agreed yet, so they can't be."

"Well, what are your terms?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! That's what we want to know, deah boy!"

"If Mellish will stand in—"

"In the lions' cage?" broke in Lowther.

"I think I can see Mellish doing it!"

"No, I don't mean that. I mean, that if I win Mellish shall have a quid all to himself, and if I lose he takes the twelve whacks!"

"Nothing doing, you fat fool!" snorted Mellish. "You're certain to lose!"

"Nothin' doin'!" said Racke. "Even if Mellish was on, I shouldn't be!"

"I— Look here, you chaps, it's a fair offer, ain't it?" asked Baggy, almost pathetically.

"No end fair," answered Talbot, smiling.

"It means that Mellish would get the dozen licks; and I really see nothing against that."

"I do, though!" snarled Mellish.

"In that, sweet youth, you are in a minority of one," said Lowther.

"Racke isn't on, so it's no go," Clive said sadly.

"It sounds as if all you bounders would like to see me getting whaled by Racke," whined Mellish.

"Quite correct!" said Blake.

"By Racke, or by anybody," added Wilkins.

Mellish scowled. He knew how unpopular he was, but he was thin-skinned enough for it to hurt.

"It's no go," said Manners.

"Will no one come forward to take upon himself Baggy's stripes in the event of failure?" asked Cardew.

No one replied.

"Then I will do it myself!"

Everybody stared at Cardew.

There were times when St. Jim's suspected Ralph Reckness Cardew of being more than half-mad, but never had he seemed so mad as then.

"You utter ass!" said Clive.

"He's gassin'. Cardew's always gassin'!" sneered Crooke.

"My word is my bond," Cardew said coolly. And that was true enough. He held by even his most foolish promises.

"My hat! Racke ought to be on," said Digby. "Wouldn't he just love knocking the dust out of Cardew's bags?"

"Allow me to remark, old top, that I do not allow my bags to harbour dust," Cardew said, looking down at his nicely creased and thoroughly brushed trousers.

"You don't mean it, by gad, Cardew?" said Racke, with an evil gleam in his eyes.

"I mean it."

"You will take twelve whacks from me with a cricket-stump?"

"Unless you are satisfied that Baggy has complied with the terms of the wager—that's it," Cardew finished for him.

Of all there, only one noted that what Cardew said was not exactly the same thing as his first suggestion. That one was Levison. His was quite the most subtle mind among those present.

Kerr, of the New House, might have smelt a rat. But Kerr was not there.

"There's some catch in it—I'm sure there's some dashed catch," said Racke slowly.

"You can't bring Baggy up to the scratch, Ralph," Clive said.

"Can't I? We'll see about that. There is such a thing as the power of the will over the lower animals, y'know."

"I'm not a lower animal, you silly ass!" howled Baggy.

"It could be done," said Grundy thoughtfully. "I could do it myself, if I cared to try. But I don't believe Cardew's a hypnotist, whatever he may say."

"You are, of course?" Kangaroo asked blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't see what you silly asses are cackling about!" hooted Grundy. "Of course I'm a hypnotist! Didn't I prove it? I haven't gone on with it, because there's no encouragement here for real talent. But I know jolly well I could hypnotise Baggy, and make him do anything I chose. All the same, I don't a bit believe Cardew can do it."

"I say, Cardew, when a chap's hypnotised, does he know what he's doing?" inquired Baggy doubtfully.

"Not a bit of it. His mind's a blank. But that won't be any dashed change for you, Baggybus."

"You can't hypnotise Baggy, you chump!" said Tom Merry.

"I did not say that I meant to. All I undertake to do is to satisfy Racke that Baggy has gone into the lions' cage. It's no bizney of Racke's how I get him there. An' I don't want Racke's cash; that can go to the Wayland Cottage Hospital."

"Here, I say, you know!" protested Baggy.

"When you get it!" sneered Racke.

"I mean to get it. What will satisfy you?"

"Secin' him do it—nothin' short of that."

"An' no giddy dressin' up as Baggy, an' doin' it yourself!" put in Crooke.

Cardew's face never changed as he answered:

"Do I look as if I could take in even Baggy by dressin' up as Baggy?—Look on this an' then on that!"

He pointed to his own good-looking, clear-cut face, and then to the podgy, sallow, ill-favoured countenance of Baggy, as unlike it as any face could well be. Every feature was different. No make-up could turn Ralph Reckness Cardew into an even tolerable imitation of Bagley Trimble, it seemed.

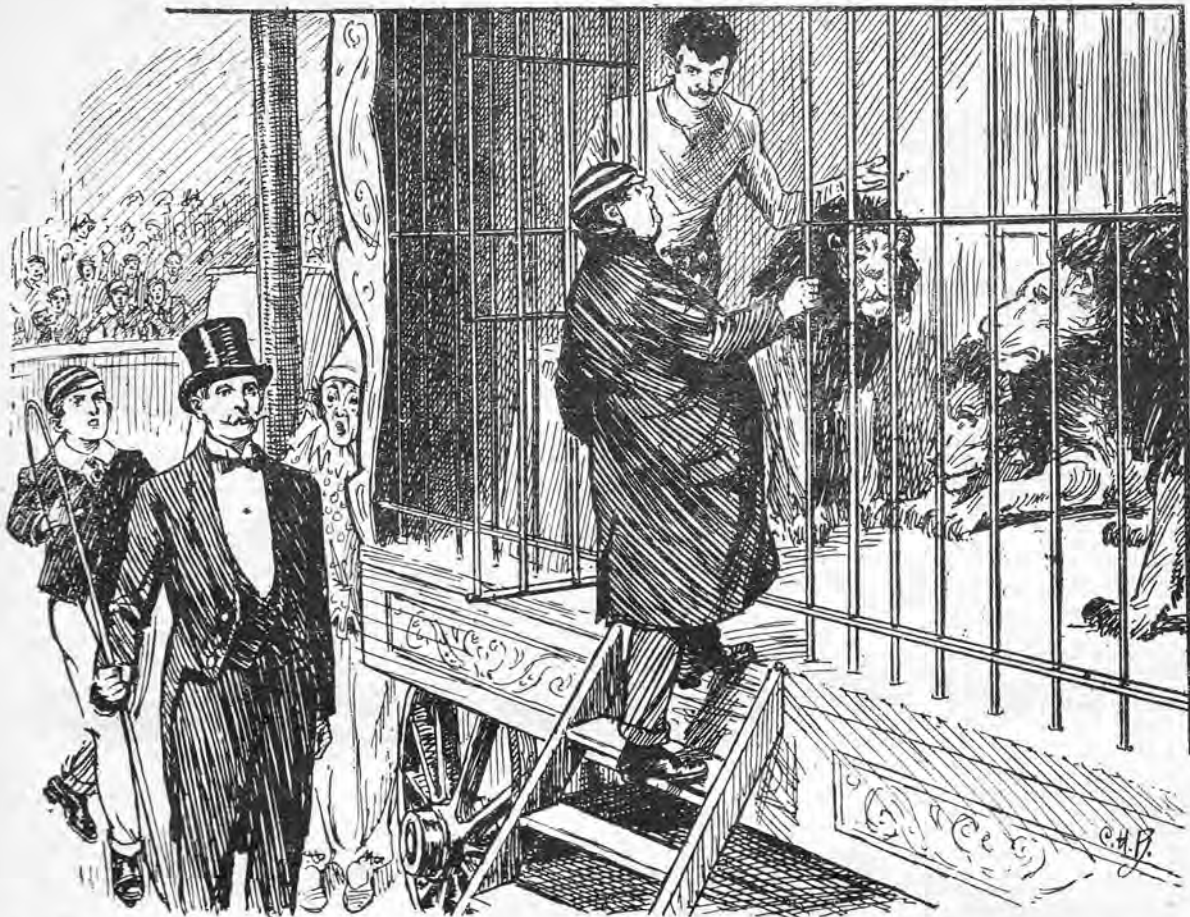
"He's dashed well welcome to take me in that way, if he can," said Racke.

"It's a bet, then?"

"It's a bet, by gad, an' I shall win it!"

"Did you ever hear of the gentleman who speculated in the future of hen-fruit?" asked Cardew.

"Bedtime, you kids!" said Kildare, skipper of St. Jim's, putting his head into the common-room.



Baggy Trimble seemed to those watching to be fairly hustled into the cage. They expected him to struggle at the critical moment, but he showed no fear.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Disappointment of Grundy.

"SILLY ass!" said George Wilkins. "You can't do it, and we jolly well won't stand by and see you try!"

"Not likely!" agreed William Cuthbert Gunn.

"Who are you calling a silly ass, George Wilkins?" boomed Grundy.

"You, of course! There's no other silly ass here, is there?"

Grundy, Gunn, and Wilkins were cycling to Wayland across the moor after classes on the Friday, and Grundy had just announced his intention of carrying out his brag of the evening before.

"I said I was going to do it, and I'll do it," he said obstinately. "You two ought to know, if no one else does, that I'm a fellow of my word."

"Nobody took any notice of you," Gunn replied. "You're always bragging. They've forgotten all about it by this time."

"What? Nobody take any notice of me—me? Don't you believe it! I shall never hear the last of it if I don't put it through."

"Well, if you are going to do it, why don't you wait till to-morrow at Rylcombe?" asked Wilkins, who would have preferred the venture postponed.

"Cardew says Baggy's going to do it there. I know very well he won't come up to the scratch. But I'm not going to be a blessed side-show. They will all be watching to see whether Cardew can win that bet for Baggy, and what I do won't really be noticed."

"Don't you believe it!" said Wilkins, winking at Gunn. "This will be the way of it. Cardew will do all he knows to bring Baggy up to the scratch. But he won't do it—he can't—nobody could! Then you step in and do what Baggy has failed in. Thunders of applause—everybody roaring, 'Bravo, Grundy!' loudly enough to lift the canvas. How's that strike you?"

It struck Grundy quite favourably for the

moment. Anything that meant the limelight for George Alfred was likely to strike George Alfred in that way. And the picture that Wilkins had conjured up was really an enticing one.

But there was a drawback. Cardew had a way of putting things through when he started in on them. Suppose he really did get Baggy to go in among the lions?

That would discount Grundy's heroism frightfully.

What credit would there be in doing what a fat funk like Baggy Trimble had done? All the gilt would be off the gingerbread if Baggy were allowed to show Grundy the way.

"Hallo!" called a voice behind them, and the three turned to see quite a small crowd pedalling in their wake.

The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners—were there, with Talbot and Gore, Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn, Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby, Roylance, and Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, of the New House.

It was Jack Blake who had shouted.

"Coming to the menagerie?" called back Gunn.

"Rather!" replied Roylance cheerily. "Don't you say a word to them about what I'm going to do!" Grundy warned his chums.

"You're not going to do it," said Wilkins. "I am! Make no mistake about that. But you're not to say a blessed word. I want it to be a complete surprise to those chaps."

Wilkins and Gunn looked at one another in perplexity. It was plain to them that their great chief meant to run that risk. Neither Wilkins nor Gunn was a funk, but neither would for any money have encountered the danger that Grundy was quite cheerfully prepared to run.

"They'll stop the silly ass when it comes to the pinch," whispered Gunn to Wilkins.

"What's that you say, George Wilkins?" rapped out Grundy.

But at that moment the rest drew up, and Grundy did not learn what it was Wilkins had said.

No one referred to Grundy's brag, but there was a lot of discussion as to the queer wager made by Cardew on Baggy's behalf.

"He'll never bring it off!" said Tom Merry.

"It doesn't look possible," admitted Talbot. "And yet, has it ever occurred to you, Tom, that Cardew has rather a way of his own about achieving the impossible—or what seems impossible—when he sets out to do it?"

"The only way he could do this would be by personating Baggy," Blake remarked. "And that simply can't be done. We should twig in half a jiffy that is wasn't our beloved Baggy."

"It wouldn't win the bet, either," Kangaroo said.

"I don't see that," rejoined Manners. "If Racke was satisfied that it was Baggy, then Cardew would win."

"But Racke's jolly keen when he has a bet on. He wouldn't easily be satisfied," said Tom.

"Still, you'll agree that if he was the bet would have been won?" Manners persisted.

"What do you say, Figgy?" Tom asked.

"According to what I can make out, that would do the trick. But it can't be done that way," said George Figgins positively. "Why, even old Kerr couldn't make-up as to persuade us it was Baggy!"

"I'll bet Kerr could!" Fatty said.

Fatty's faith in Kerr was most complete. But Kerr said nothing.

"It won't be done that way," said Digby. "And I can't see any other way. Baggy wouldn't risk anything to win a fiver for the Cottage Hospital, even if he'd risk all that to win a fiver to gorge on."

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather not!"

"I do believe that Cardew is twustin' to

puttin' the 'fluence on Baggy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"If you'll believe that you'll believe anything!" growled Herries.

"Aren't those fellows coming along?" inquired Roylance.

"What, Levison & Co.? Oh, they've gone ahead, with Durrance!" replied Dane.

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry.

The menagerie had taken up quarters in a field on the outskirts of the moor. The field was thronged with people from the town and the villages near.

There were side-shows of various kinds, and there was something in the way of a circus performance. But the wild beasts were the chief attraction.

The small crowd of St. Jim's juniors made their way at once to the entrance of the big marquee.

"Look here, you fellows, I'm not going to wander round with all this lot!" said Grundy to Wilkins and Gunn. "We shall look like a blessed Band of Hope being taken out for a treat! Come this way!"

It was never any use to argue with Grundy, and Wilkins and Gunn followed him obediently.

The cages of the animals were ranged in a kind of ante-room to the circus tent, and the juniors wandered round and looked at them first. But there was not much in that. There were a number of monkeys, a dejected-looking tiger, a mangy brown bear, some hyenas, a wolf, and a few other animals; but no lions were on view.

"It's a beastly fraud if they haven't got any lions!" said Grundy discontentedly.

"I don't believe they have!" replied Wilkins. "Tell you what, old chap—let's cut this! There's no fun in it. I'd a heap sooner go to the picture-show. I'll stand the tickets if you'll come."

Grundy looked at him loftily.

"That's a dodge to put me off it, Wilky!" he snorted. "But you don't have me that way, I can tell you! I expect they are keeping the lions back for the performance inside."

"It's just going to begin," said Gunn. "Let's go in."

The crowd was now trooping through the inner entrance, and seats were filling rapidly.

"There's Levison!" said Wilkins.

"Where?" asked Grundy.

"Looking into the big monkey-cage. Baggy's got lost, and Levison's searching for him in the likeliest place."

"I don't see Clive and Cardew," Grundy said.

"Do you want them?" asked Gunn.

"I don't want Cardew to go and queer my pitch to-day. I shall jump up directly they ask for volunteers to go into the lion's cage."

"Perhaps they won't ask," said Wilkins hopelessly.

"Then I shall offer myself!" said Grundy.

It was plain that no ordinary circumstances would be allowed to stand in the way of the great George Alfred's determination.

The three went to seats some distance from those occupied by the majority of the St. Jim's fellows. But almost at once they saw that Cardew and Clive were within a few yards of them, and in a minute or two the pair were joined by Levison and Durrance.

Some clown business and gymnastic and equestrian turns preceded the lion-taming act. It was not first-class stuff, but it was not so inferior that the spectators got no change out of it.

Then a cage was wheeled on, followed by a big fellow in tights, who sported a tremendous moustache, and carried a riding-whip and a poker. A brazier was set down near the cage.

Cardew's lip curled.

"If that merchant can't keep the beasts in order without a red-hot poker he isn't fit for his job, by gad!" he remarked.

"He only has it for emergencies," said Levison.

"There shouldn't be emergencies!" answered Cardew.

"It's just as much to impress the crowd," Durrance said.

"I say, Grundy," said Wilkins, a few yards away. "I s., old man, it looks jolly fishy that chap's wanting a red-hot poker, you know!"

"Tain't red-hot!" replied Grundy.

Wilkins and Gunn were both pale and nervous, but Grundy showed no sign of fright. "I've seen all this sort of thing before," he said. "There's no real danger in it. I

reckon. I never saw any accident. The animals are too cowed for that."

"But accidents do happen sometimes," argued Gunn. "I say, Grundy, old chap, chuck it!"

"Rats! Nothing on earth is jolly well going to make me chuck it! When I've made up my mind—well, I've made up my mind, and that's all there is to it."

While Grundy was speaking the boards which had hidden the interior of the cage were taken away, and the lions were revealed.

There were three of them, and they were pretty good specimens—much better than any of the beasts in the other cages.

The trainer went through the usual performance, interesting enough to those who believed the animals still capable of reverting at a moment's notice to their original savage state, and these formed the bulk of the crowd. They were right, too; lions, however long kept in captivity, however apparently perfectly tamed, are never quite safe.

"Is it far enough away, Ralph?" asked Levison of Cardew.

"I think so, dear boy. But I could tell better if I saw one of our fellows in the middle."

Now the ringmaster came forward and asked for volunteers to go into the cage.

"On behalf of the management, I offer a sovereign to anyone who will enter with Long Louis, the Lion-tamer!" he said pompously. "I do not pretend that such an enterprise is wholly without danger; but I assure you all that in this menagerie every possible precaution is taken against untoward happenings. You will observe that the attendant is now heating a poker. It is not likely that this will be called into use; but—Do I understand that you wish to enter, young sir?"

Grundy had leaped into the ring from the lowermost range of seats.

"I'll do it!" he said grandly. "I don't want your quid, of course; but that can go to the Cottage Hospital. I—"

"Grundy, you silly ass!" roared Tom Merry. "Come back, Grundy, you idiot!" snapped Talbot.

"Grundy, old man, don't!" pleaded Wilkins. Gunn, white to the lips, found it impossible to add his voice to the voices lifted in protest.

Grundy paid no heed to any of them.

"I'm ready to go in at once!" he said.

"Grundy!"

The St. Jim's fellows started when they heard the voice that spoke now.

They had had no idea that Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was in the place. He had, in fact, only just entered, and had been about to take his seat when Grundy leaped into the ring.

"Look sharp! That's one of our masters!" said Grundy to the man with the long whip.

"Really, sir, I'm not sure!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass! I've said I would go in, and I'm not going to be chipped by everybody for failing. Hurry up with the poker, you chap! No, never mind it; we sha'n't need that. It's only for show."

The ringmaster stood dubious. One of the lions got up, yawned, lashed with its tail, and emitted a deep roar. That roar thrilled and terrified many who heard; but if it thrilled the heroic Grundy, it certainly did not terrify him.

"Grundy! I will not have this! You must not, I tell you!" came the voice of Mr. Linton, raised in agonised appeal.

Grundy paid no heed.

"You idiot!" yelled Tom Merry. "Come out of that!"

But Grundy walked right up to the cage, and would have entered it but that Long Louis barred his way.

Mr. Linton was quite desperate. He hated making a public spectacle of himself; but he saw that he could not stop Grundy from outside the ring.

He flopped over on to the sawdust, just as Louis moved aside, apparently meaning to let Grundy enter.

Mr. Linton came down on hands and knees, and a shriek of half-hysterical laughter went up from the crowd.

He hardly noticed it. He was even more convinced of Grundy's deadly danger if he entered that cage than were Wilkins and Gunn, and they were nervous enough.

"It don't do, sir," said the ringmaster to Grundy. "There will be heap big trouble if we let you go in!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" pleaded Grundy. "I can face the music afterwards all right. I—"

But at this moment the hand of Mr. Linton fell upon his collar.

It was of no use to think of resisting further. Physical force against a master was out of the question, and without physical force Mr. Linton would not let go.

Grundy was marched off, crestfallen and angry. He could not understand why, amidst the derisive cheers, there were some that did not sound derisive.

But that was not surprising. It was a silly thing that Grundy had wanted to do; but at least it showed his pluck. And, however big a fool the St. Jim's juniors might think Grundy, they appreciated that quality.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Cardew's Scheme.

"YOU think you can work it, Ralph?" said Ernest Levison.

"Sure of it, old gun! At that distance and in that light, you can't properly distinguish faces. Any of us would know old Grundy's figure much farther away; we might recognise his face, but we couldn't tell whether it was a real face or a mask!"

And as he spoke Cardew drew quickly from behind his back something that made Levison and Clive and Durrance gasp in surprise.

The four were in Study No. 9 together on the morning after the expedition to Wayland. It was not often that Levison & Co. took anyone else into their secrets; but when they did Durrance was usually the added fourth partner. He and Cardew were not only cousins, but also really good pals; and both Clive and Levison liked and trusted Durrance.

None of the four guessed that a fifth person was learning their secret now.

The thing that Cardew displayed was a mask.

But masks are common enough. The gasp of surprise was due to the fact that that mask was almost an exact replica of Baggy Trimble's podgy, unwholesome face.

"There you are!" said Cardew. "I picked it up in the Christmas hols, an' I felt sure that the thing would come in handy some time or other."

"It's Baggy to the life!" said Durrance.

"So it is," agreed Clive. "Look at the fat blubber cheeks and the ugly snubly nose!"

"It's very like him," Levison said. "I could point out some differences; but there's nothing that will matter from so far away. I feel sure now that you can take in Racke, and the rest of them, too. But I don't like it a bit, Ralph, old man!"

Levison spoke with more feeling than he usually showed.

Clive and Durrance looked at him. In their interest in Cardew's scheme they had almost forgotten the danger of it. They had been thinking of the score over Racke and others, and had thought little, if at all, of what must be done before the score was complete.

"It is a beastly risk, Ralph!" said Durrance.

"Rot, cousin George! There's nothing in it!"

"There is," Clive said. "And if I knew how to choke you off, I would. But I know there's no doing that."

"Same here!" added Levison. "I wish I could think of a dodge to do it."

"An' have the dear Racke administer to me a dozen of the best with a cricket-stump?" returned Cardew, flushing. "By gad, I'd sooner be fairly clawed up by a lion than stand that!"

He meant it, too. Arguments were useless against such a feeling as that. Cardew's pride was concerned—the pride he felt in carrying out whatever he undertook to do, and still more the pride that would have made his endurance of that ordeal at the hands of the loathed and despised Racke unspeakably degrading to him.

"Your figure isn't very like Baggy's, Ralph!" said Durrance.

"No, old top! If it were, an' I could find no other way of gettin' rid of some of it, I'd sell myself to a soap factory an' have the lot done in. But a figure such as Baggy's can be reproduced by the aid of cushions an' things. Not a bad notion to be padded, either, in case the lions get playin' the goat, so to speak."

"Don't talk such rot, Ralph!" said Durrance sharply, and Clive's face lengthened. But Levison showed no sign that the half-sardonic suggestion had affected him.

"Where are you off to?" he asked, a few minutes later.

"Goin' to Rylcombe, dear boy. There are a few arrangements which must be made there."

"I'll come along."

"Thanks—do!"

"We'll all come!" said Clive.
"No, Sidney dear. It is for you an' cousin George to keep watch an' ward over Baggy, an' make sure that sheer funk does not send him to the sanatorium before the great event of this afternoon!"

"Doesn't Baggy know how the thing's to be worked?" Clive asked.

"He hasn't the faintest glimmerin' of the truth. Could Baggy ever be brought to believe that I could look like him? He does not credit the existence in all the world of anythin' else so perfectly lovely as Baggy Trimble."

"But what does he imagine is to be done?" inquired Durrance.

"Can I read a mind so great as Baggy's? I can only guess that he leans to the hypnotic theory. He has asked me once or twice whether I am quite sure that when a fellow is hypnotised he does not know what he is doing. Baggy wants that fiver, an' he believes that to win it he must go into the cage; but he knows dashed well that he won't go into the cage if he knows he's goin' in—sounds mixed, but you tumble to what I mean—an' he's trustin' me to send him there unknownin' an' unfearin'. Even so, he may try to back out. That is why I want him watched."

"We'll look after the fat worm!" said Clive.

"I thank you, sweet Sidney! For anythin' that does not require special intelligence I am always sure that I can depend upon you an' cousin George. For your limitations I do not blame you. Let us wend, Ernest!"

All four went down to the quad. As they passed out of the study, Mellish lifted the tablecloth. As soon as the coast was clear he came out and slunk away.

Cardew and Levison got their bikes, and the other two stood a moment looking after them.

"He's a queer chap," said Clive slowly. "Don't you wonder sometimes why you like him so much?"

"Sometimes," admitted Durrance. "But not very often. Because, you see, when he says what would be beastly rude things if another fellow says them, he does it as if he was patting you on the back. It's almost like having to translate things out of another language. But if you're like me, you always feel sure that he's stand by you at a pinch better than most fellows who are heaps and heaps more serious."

"There isn't anything Levison wouldn't do for Cardew," said Clive.

It did not sound like an answer to what Durrance had said; and yet, in some sort, it was so. Clive had recognised in Durrance's expression of his feelings about Cardew what he himself had felt without being able to put it into words; and it had occurred to him that Levison also felt like that. And Levison was harder, keener, less given to warm feelings than either of them.

Certainly there were very few things that Ernest Levison would not have done for Ralph Reckness Cardew. Clive had had no notion what was in Levison's mind; but if he could have heard what the former black sheep of the Fourth said to Cardew as they rode to Ryelombe he would have been less surprised than most.

"Ralph, I've been thinking," began Levison abruptly.

"Yaas, old gun. You're always doin' it. An' you can think—not like most of the bouncers here, who only think they think."

"Oh, don't rot! Look here, you've got to win that bet!"

"Yaas, Baggy will be horribly cast down if I don't, by gad! For, of course, I can't really hand the fiver over to the Cottage Hospital. I took on this for Baggy—"

"Not much, you didn't!"

"Oh, but I did, as far as the money is concerned! Otherwise—"

"That's what licks me. What did you do it for? Talk about being on a dashed good hiding to nothing! This is worse. If you lose—well, I'm hanged if I know how you're going to stand it at all! You'd be sick of your life if you had to let Racke lay into you with a cricket-stump before a crowd of the fellows; yet, losing, you'd have to go through with that, because you've given your word. If you win, what do you get?"

"I score over Racke, dear boy!"

"Not such a mighty score, either. He won't miss a fiver, though he's a mean sweep."

"Well, Ernest, if you want to get right down to bed-rock, I'm dashed if I know why I did it!"

"And I'm dashed if I know why you do half the things you do!"

"Same here, dear boy! But never mind—I'm not goin' to fall in this!"

"You're not, I'll see to that! But there's only one way to make it quite safe that you don't."

"An' that is?"

"Oh, I know you'll kick at it. But it's the right way. If you disguise yourself as Baggy that cad will smell a rat. You've got to convince him, mind—that's the condition you've accepted. He doesn't think you can make yourself look like Baggy, but there's the doubt in his mind. The only way to drive out that doubt is to be in sight all the time the supposed Baggy's going through his great heroic action."

Cardew stared at his chum.

"But I shall be in sight," he replied. "They will think it's Baggy; but it will be me."

"N.g.! You've to be in sight as yourself."

"But that's clean imposs, old gun! That would simply rot up the whole show."

"Not at all!"

"But how—"

"They will think it's Baggy; but it will be me," said Levison, quoting Cardew's own words.

"By gad! You don't mean to say—"

"That's nothing. You'd do as much for me, like a shot!"

"Yaas, I suppose so. But you wouldn't be such a dashed silly ass as to let me in for doin' it!"

"I really don't think I should," replied Levison frankly. "But that's no odds. The thing is that we've to carry this through, and that you may take all the risk and yet lose if you do it your way."

"You don't funk goin' into the cage, I know, Ernest; but do you quite fancy the thought of doin' it?"

"I'm not keen, that's a fact. No, I don't think I funk it. But it seems to me so completely silly. How do you feel about it?"

Cardew's eyes gleamed.

"Well, y'know, it may sound like swank; but I don't think it is—honest Injun, I don't! I rather cotton to the notion. Life's so dashed dull at times; anythin' that puts a bite into it is welcome!"

"You don't want a lion's bite to make life glad and bright, do you?"

"Not exactly. But if there's any question of that, it makes your takin' on my job more entirely dead off than ever. Can't be did, Ernest, old top!"

"I felt sure you'd say that when I first suggested it," Levison replied quietly. "But I'll let you turn it over in your mind. I'm not saying that I'd sooner be chewed up by a lion than have you whacked by that cad; but if you do lose, we shall all feel that we've been horribly let down—Clive and Durrance, as well as I—and we shall all hate it!"

"Thanks, old man!" said Cardew very quietly.

There was silence for a minute or two after that. Then Levison asked:

"What arrangements are you making?"

"I'm goin' to metamorphose myself into Baggybus at a cottage quite near the field where the menagerie has pitched. Up to close upon the time when the lion-cage turn is due both Baggy an' I ought to be more or less on show, to disarm suspicion. A little before that we must both do the disappearin' stunt. Someone will have to look after Baggy, an' see that he doesn't give the game away—he will know just what the game is by that time. Givin' it away after won't matter; I don't consider that I'm bound to convince Racke or anyone for ever an' ever—only at the time."

"That's the weak spot—I've seen it all along," said Levison. "If you nuzzle they will smell a rat at once. Do you know what I thought of?"

"No, dear boy. I can read the thoughts of the ingenuous Sidney or the simple cousin George, but not yours."

"I thought of sending you a bogus wire that would call you away, so that you couldn't put this thing through."

"An' you would have put it through for me?" asked Cardew, with a curious look.

"Yes. But I was afraid that you would never forgive me for it."

"Not sure that I ever should have done, old bean! The rifle simply can't be worked that way."

"I suppose not. No, I've given up that notion."

"Here we are!" said Cardew, as they reached the outskirts of the village. And they jumped from their bikes.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mellish's Dodge.

"WHY in the world didn't you tell me this before?" snapped Racke.

"Well, I like that!" retorted Percy Mellish. "I've only just found out, and it was trouble enough to find out, too, I can tell you!"

"First I've heard of its being any trouble to you to put your ear to a keyhole, Mellish!" sneered Crooke.

"There's the risk, anyway," answered Mellish discontentedly. "And it wasn't a keyhole, either—no chance that way. I hid under the table in No. 9, and heard every word the schemers said."

"It's all up with their dashed game now!" said Racke exultantly. "As long as I know it's not Baggy I can't be convinced, an' Cardew loses. My hat! Sha'n't I enjoy takin' it out of his bags! I owe him a good many scores, but I think this will pay for them all! He'll never be able to hold up his head again at St. Jim's after it!"

"Counting your chickens a bit before they're hatched, aren't you, Aubrey?" asked Crooke, with a leer.

"I don't see that. I've fairly got him in the hollow of my hand now!"

"Seems to me a bit tame," returned Crooke. "After all, even if you can persuade the other fellows that you knew all the time, it was Cardew, he'll get the credit for bein' willin' to take the risk. They cheered that ass Grundy like mad just because he was willin'. An' if Cardew really goes into the cage it will take a lot of discount off anythin' you can do to him afterwards."

Racke bit his lip. He had not seen it quite that way, but he saw it now.

"What would you do? he asked.

"If I were in your shoes, old top, I should try to wangle it so that the whole thing was a dashed fiasco! I wouldn't be satisfied with anythin' short of that."

"It could be done, too," said Mellish. "It's only getting Cardew out of the way, and the whole thing falls through. Baggy won't buck up and do it—there's no giddy fear of that!"

"Oh, Baggy!" sneered Racke. "I'm not thinkin' about Baggy. He'd no more take the risk than you would, Mellish."

"Or than you would, come to that!"

"Well, I shouldn't, an' I think any fellow who would must be more than half potty!" Racke said.

"How would you get Cardew out of the way, Mellish?" demanded Crooke.

"I could wangle something. But I'm not doing all this for love, mind that!"

"It will save Aubrey a fiver—"

"It jolly well won't!" interrupted Racke.

"There's no question of my losin' a fiver. I simply can't lose now that I know what the scheme is."

"But you wouldn't have known that except for me," said Mellish.

"I admit it. I'll stand you a couple of quid for that."

"Don't be so beastly mean, Racke! Look here, if I get Cardew right out of the way this afternoon, will you make it a tenner?"

Mellish's greenish eyes fairly gleamed with cupidity.

Racke hesitated. But a tenner really meant very little to him. He would never miss it. And he would almost have sold his soul for a complete score over Cardew. It was, however, an open question whether the soul of Racke was worth anything like as much as ten pounds.

"Are you on?" asked Mellish eagerly.

"Be a man or a mouse, Aubrey!" said Crooke.

"I'm on!" said Racke. "What's your scheme?"

Mellish poured it out at once.

"By gad, it's good!" said Racke. "It seems to me absolutely watertight. You're sure you can get this chap to play his part?"

"Yes. I knew the fellow round our way at home. He's a sporty sort. He hasn't been at Wayland long."

"You've got some dashed low pals, Mellish!" sneered Crooke.

"Yes. There's you, for one!" retorted the sneak of the Fourth.

"I'm no pal of yours!"

"Glad to hear it. That's one low one the less, anyway."

Crooke glared at Mellish for a moment, and then burst into a laugh.

"It's no odds," he said. "I don't pretend—"

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to be pl. I leave that to my beloved cousin, Reginald Talbot!"

"You'd better get off at once, Mellish!" said Racke. "You may have to cut dinner, but you'll have that made up to you all right."

"I'm going to," replied Mellish. "I want a fiver on account, Racke!"

"Rats!"

"I don't stir without it! And you needn't be afraid I shall back out when I've got it. There's another fiver to come, and I want that too."

"Here you are!" said Racke reluctantly. And Mellish's fingers, trembling with excitement, clutched a crisp and rustling fiver.

He went off at once, and within five minutes was on the road to Wayland.

It was an hour and a half later when word came to Cardew that he was wanted in the quad.

He and his chums were just thinking of making a start for Rylcombe, having heard that most of the juniors—including Racke and Crooke—proposed to visit the early afternoon show of the combined circus and menagerie.

Levison went down with Cardew. They found a man of forty or so, decently dressed, and looking what he actually was—an hotel servant. He had a smug, clean-shaven face, and his eyes were set too close together; but there was nothing marked about him to cause suspicion.

"You want to see me, I understand?" said Cardew.

"If you are Mr. Cardew—yes, sir. I have had news for you."

"What is it?"

"Lord Reckness has met with an accident, and lies in a very critical state at the Wayland Arms."

"Thanks!" replied Cardew coolly. He handed the fellow a couple of half-crowns.

The man turned. It seemed to Levison that he was glad to get away at once, without further questioning.

"Look here, Ralph, do you think that message is straight?" asked Levison bluntly.

"I don't see how it can well be otherwise, dear boy. My grandfather was coming down this way some time before long, as you know. There's nothin' impos in his havin' come, an' got damaged somehow. An' it's rather difficult to see how anyone could have faked the biznez—or why they should have faked it, for that matter."

"I can see why," Levison said.

"You are too suspicious, old top. The enemy know nothin'."

"Don't you be too sure of that! All the same, I don't see what you can do but go, as things are. And if you're going by train you'd better be off at once."

"The Baggy gadget must be left till the later performance," Cardew replied. "Yaas, I'd better hop off, though I'm not sure that I shall gain anything by takin' the train. Might almost as well bike it."

"Better, on the whole," Levison said. "Then, if it is a swindle, you can slip back pretty quickly."

Cardew got out his bike, and Levison went with him to the gates.

On the way they met Racke and Crooke.

"Hallo, Cardew!" said Racke. "Goin' over in good time?"

"Matter of fact, I'm off to Wayland!" answered Cardew. "But it's no odds; my presence isn't absolutely necessary. An' Baggy hasn't made up his mind yet whether he will play the hero at the first or second show, I understand."

"Oh, but he has!" said Racke sharply. "I've seen him about that. It's to be the first show, an' everyone's goin' along to see it then. Pity you must miss it. But, as you say, it isn't really necessary you should be there."

Cardew would not show what he felt. But he felt rather taken aback. It was impossible to cut Baggy right out of it. On the face of things it was for Baggy to say when he would do the deed by which the wager must be won.

So Cardew shrugged his shoulders and walked on. At the gates he hesitated a moment, as if meaning to say something to Levison. But he went without saying it.

"Now, I wonder what he means to do?" Levison muttered to himself. "But never mind; I know what I mean to do, and that's good enough for me!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Lost and Won!

THERE was a crowd of St. Jim's fellows for the first show of the day at Rylcombe.

Durrance and Clive were half-relieved, half-worried by Cardew's absence.

But Levison seemed quietly confident. He had not told either of the others what he meant to do. He had not even told Baggy. But he had made that hero safe by setting him down to a large supply of provender at the cottage where the change was to be made.

And now, unobserved by anyone but his chums, Levison slipped out.

"It's no go, is it, Ernest?" asked Clive as he went.

"Oh, I think it will come off! I'm going to see if I can bring Baggy up to the scratch myself," replied Levison. "No; I don't want you chaps to come. Much better you should stay here."

And he slipped away.

Perhaps his heart beat a little faster as he thought of the risk he had to run, but there was no funk in him.

Levison would never have made such a wager as that on his own account. Probably he would not have embarked upon what he was embarking upon now for anyone but Cardew.

He was not out for glory. If he had his way the other fellows would never know what he had done.

"I say, you know, Levison, 'tain't fair if Cardew don't turn up!" whined Baggy, with his mouth full of jam-tart. "He promised he'd do it, and I let him take it on. I never thought he'd funk it like this. I haven't told anybody a word about it, but I jolly well shall! I'm not going to be done out of a fiver like this, I can tell you!"

"No need for you to be done out of it!" retorted Levison sharply. "In fact, I'm going to see that you're not. I've come along to fetch you!"

"Me! What for?" Baggy almost shrieked.

"To go into the lions' cage, of course!"

"What! Do you think I'm going to take on Cardew's job for him? Jolly likely—I don't think!"

"You fat, funky fool! I'd shove you there and boost you in, only I know there'd be a ghastly row about it! Come out of the way! Cardew's been called to Wayland by an accident to his grandfather; but someone's got to go through it as you, and I shall have to."

"And he produced the mask."

"That thing! What's that for?" inquired Baggy, staring at it.

"To make me look like you."

"But that ain't like me! Why, it's—"

His speech was cut short by the slamming of the door. To make things quite safe, Levison turned the key in the lock, and thrust it into his pocket.

He had whipped the mask off again, and concealed it under his raincoat, which also partially hid his unwonted obesity.

He reached the big tent without encountering anyone he knew, and made his way to the cheapest seats, where none of the St. Jim's fellows had gone.

The lion-taming turn had just begun. According to Levison's reckoning, there was no chance that Cardew would get there in time, even if the message he had had was a bogus one, and he discovered at once that it was so.

But Levison, well as he knew Cardew, had hardly reckoned on the speed with which that resourceful youth could act in emergencies.

At that moment Cardew was travelling towards Rylcombe in a motor-car, at a pace of well over thirty miles an hour.

Levison had put on his mask before taking his seat. It was not a very difficult matter to remain unobserved among the village lads in the cheap seats; their eyes were all directed upon the centre.

Again, as at Wayland the day before, the ringmaster made his offer of a sovereign to anyone who would go into the lions' cage, and at once Levison, his raincoat doffed, slipped under the rope and dropped to the sawdust.

At almost the same moment, from the other side, Grundy bounded into the ring.

"My hat! It's Baggy!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bravo, Baggy!" roared many voices.

Behind the mask, the countenance of Levison was working.

That ass Grundy would spoil everything! He would see the mask, and he had not the sense to freeze on quickly to a hint.

Levison hurried. He had reached the cage while Grundy was still some yards away.

"I'm ready!" he said. "Quick!"

"Look at Baggy! Hanged if he isn't eager!" exclaimed Manners.

Baggy—as all supposed—seemed to those watching to be fairly hustled in.

They expected him to struggle at the critical moment, to hang back, to shriek with fear. But he did nothing of the sort.

He was in, with Long Louis. The door was shut. He stood there a few seconds.

Then the door opened, and the obese figure stepped down.

"Bravo, Baggy!"

"Why, it ain't Baggy at all!" roared George Alfred Grundy, seizing Levison in a strong grip. "It's some boulder in a giddy mask! I'll have it off!"

"It's Cardew!" howled Racke, standing up and waving frantically. "Pull the mask off, Grundy!"

"Rot! That can't be Cardew!" yelled Tom Merry.

Levison was resisting Grundy's efforts to pull off the mask.

"Stop it, you utter idiot!" he hissed. "It's me—Levison! Leave me alone, or you'll be having Racke score over us! You've done enough harm already."

Grundy stopped. He was not too keen on Levison & Co., but he detested Racke.

"It's Cardew, or I lose my bet!" shouted Racke.

"Then you lose it, old top!" said a cool voice behind him.

And he turned, to see Ralph Reckness Cardew!

Cardew had failed by less than five minutes to get back in time; but he had saved his wager.

"I don't! That wasn't Baggy!" hooted Racke.

"You do, though. We all heard you yell that you'd lost your bet if it wasn't Cardew," said Tom Merry.

And many voices were raised in agreement.

Interest in the ring was dead off now, as far as the St. Jim's juniors were concerned. They had swarmed up over the seats, and had clustered round Racke and Cardew. Levison had disappeared, and Grundy, forgetting all about his own design in the excitement, had joined the rest.

"It isn't straight!" spluttered Racke. "The bet was that I'd got to be convinced that it was Baggy, an' I never was, by gad! I knew that there was a plant, an'—"

"Talkin' about bein' straight," put in Cardew, "how did you know it was a plant? An' do you know anythin' at all, by any chance, about a message that took me over to Wayland, an' cost me the hire of a motor in the attempt to get back in time? Know anythin' about that, eh, Racke?"

"How should I know anythin'?" answered Racke. But his face had gone a very queer colour, and all there guessed that he was at the bottom of any trick that had been attempted.

At this moment Baggy joined the crowd. Levison had slipped back to the cottage, but had told Baggy no more than that the thing had been done.

It was difficult for Baggy Trimble to look imposing; but he was doing his best to look both imposing and heroic then.

"You fellows never thought I'd do it," he said, puffing out his fat cheeks. "You know better now, I hope!"

"Why, you awful Ananias!" thundered Grundy. "It wasn't you at all!"

"I say, though, Grundy, who was it? Could you see?" asked Digby.

"It was Levison. He didn't want me to tell; but it can't matter now," replied Grundy.

"Levison?"

"Who'd have thought it?"

"I should," said Cardew quietly. "You fellows don't know Levison as I do. He offered to do it for me, but I never meant he should. I'm not sorry now, though, as it's turned out."

"Where is the boulder?" inquired Lowther. But Levison was not seen till they were all back at St. Jim's.

Racke paid up, and the foul trick he and Mellish had engineered was never fully exposed, though a good many of the Shell and Fourth had some notion of what it was. As for Baggy, for weeks afterwards "Bravo, Baggy!" greeted him wherever he went, and he was asked hundreds of times when he was leaving to take on a lion-taming job.

THE END.