

THE PAPER FOR EVERY BRITISH SCHOOLBOY!

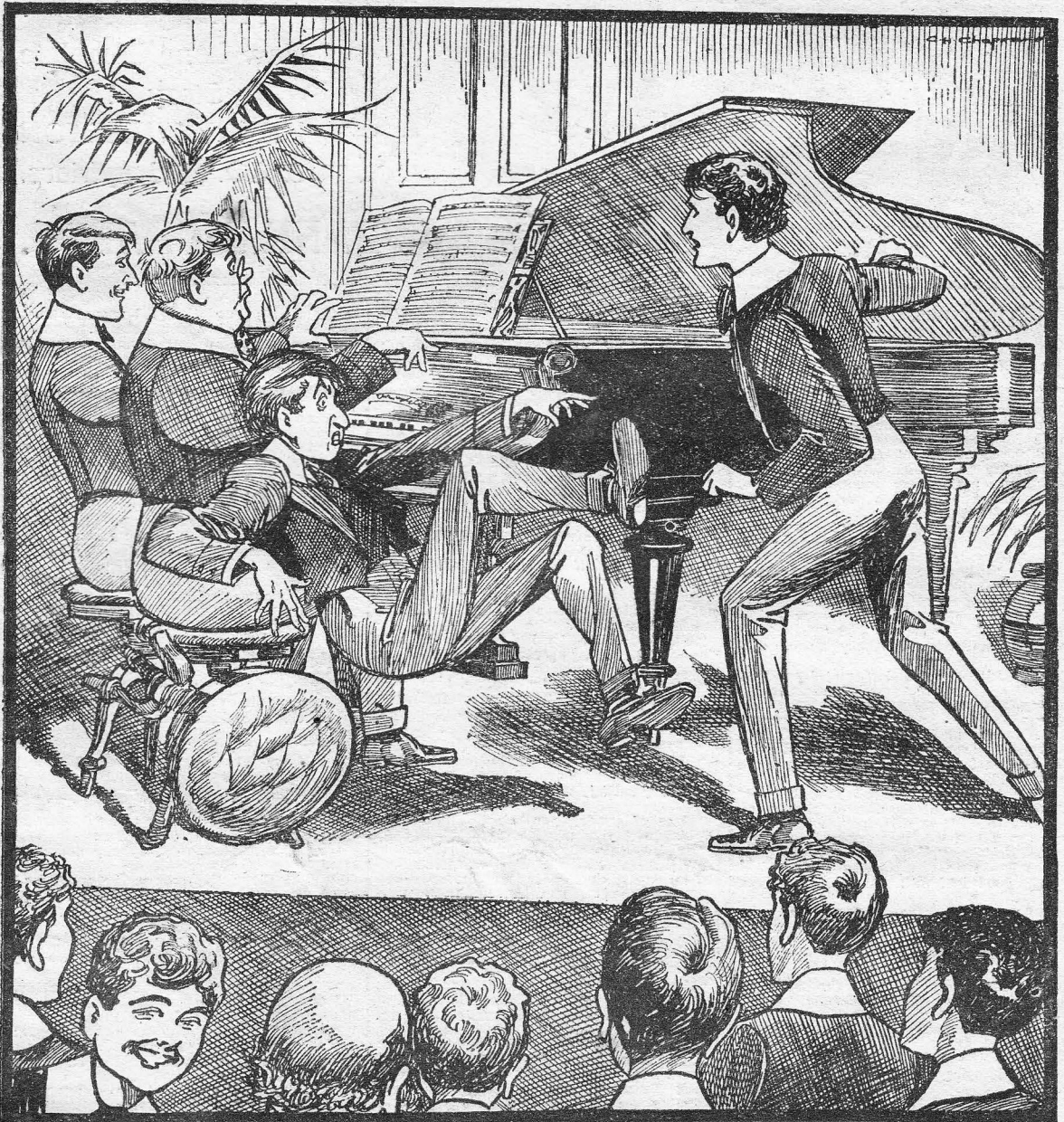
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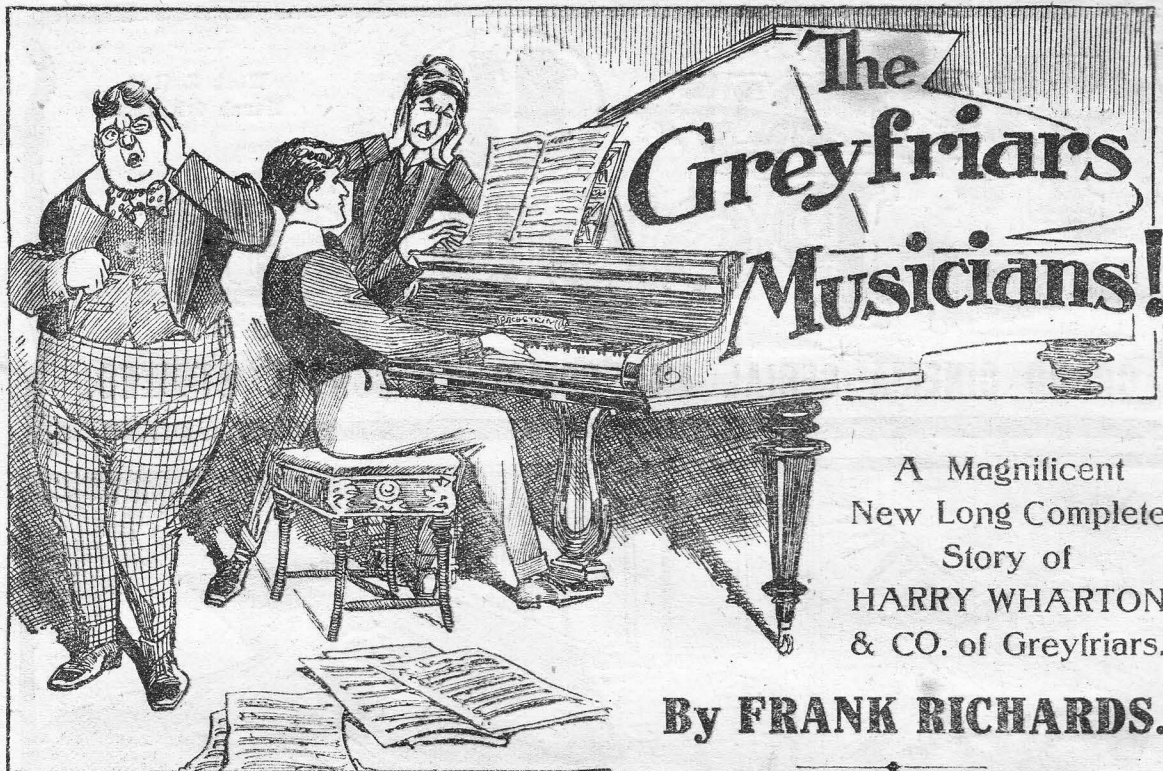
20 PAGES.

GRAND CINEMA SERIAL AND COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES.



THE TRIO ENDS IN TROUBLE!

(An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



A Magnificent
New Long Complete
Story of
HARRY WHARTON
& CO. of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The New Composition.

"I SAY, old man!"
No answer.
"This symphony of mine, you know—"

"Bust your symphony!"

Claude Hoskins, the musical genius, and James Hobson, skipper of the Shell, were seated in Study No. 5. Hobson was vainly endeavouring to get on with his prep, but Hoskins was poring over a music score, and making frequent attempts to arouse his study-mate's interest in it.

"This latest composition of mine is a wonderfully moving thing!" he continued eagerly.
"Yes," remarked Hobson, in a hopeless tone of voice; "it'll move me out of here in a minute!"

"The opening chord in itself is an absolute inspiration," went on Hoskins, ignoring Hobson's impatient gesture. "And the way it works up farther on is simply a stroke of genius!"

"For goodness' sake shut up about your rotten symphony!" exclaimed Hobson irritably. "I've got my beastly prep to do, and you sit there burbling like a silly ass!"
"Don't you call my composition a rotten symphony!" expostulated Hoskins sharply.
"For all you know it might absolutely move the world!"

"Humph! We've heard all that before!" retorted Hobson contemptuously. "About all it's likely to do is to move people to tears!"
"You're a fathead, that's what you are!" snapped Hoskins. "You don't know any more about music than that blessed table!"

"Jolly good job, too! I might have been an idiot like you!"
"You couldn't have composed a symphony—"

"Go and eat coke!"
"I was going to play the first movement to you—"

Hobson rose from his chair threateningly.
"Look here," he exclaimed fiercely, "if you don't shut your blessed rat-trap and let me get on with my prep I'll jolly-well mop up the floor with you!"

"Mop up the floor with me!" shouted Hoskins, jumping up. "Why, you fathead—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry's familiar greeting broke in at this point as he and the rest of the Famous Five of the Remove entered the study.

Harry Wharton & Co. were not frequent visitors to the Shell quarters, but they had come to see Hobson about a footer-match.

"What's all the row about?" inquired the captain of the Remove, glancing from one to the other of the angry occupants of Study No. 5.

"Why, that silly fathead—"

"That idiot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who are you calling a fathead?"

"And who are you calling an idiot?"

Hoskins and Hobson glared at each other in their wrath, while the Famous Five grinned.

"We're no nearer the cause of the giddy trouble now!" said Johnny Bull.

"What's it all about?" asked Frank Nugent.

"The rattfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous pair is terrific!" interposed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Who's ludicrous?" yelled Hobson and Hoskins together, swinging round upon the dusky junior.

"What d'ye mean by coming here with your bloomin' Indian lingo?" cried Hobson.

"Steady on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"We came up here to see you about a footer-match, not to listen—"

"Well, that fathead keeps on burbling about a rotten piece of music!" shouted Hobson, pointing angrily at the musical genius.

"Piece of music, you chump!" retorted Hoskins witheringly. "It's a symphony!"

"By Jove! Is there a concertina part in it?" cried Johnny Bull, who considered himself an expert on that instrument.

"Of course not, you idiot! It isn't a symphony for a German band!" snapped Hoskins sarcastically.

"Oh, crumbs! For goodness' sake help me chuck him out, you fellows!" roared Hobson desperately, making a dash at Hoskins.

"You double-barrelled lunatic!" bellowed the musical genius, as Hobson in his wild rush knocked the score of music from his study-mate's hands.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A dozen or more sheets of music-paper, covered with tiny, champed notes, went flying in all directions, two or three of them fluttering dangerously close to the bars of the fireplace, in which a roaring fire was burning.

With an exclamation of alarm, Hoskins

retrieved them, and then fell upon his knees to gather up the remaining sheets.

Hobson passed his hand wearily across his forehead.

"How would you like a prize chump like that in your studies?" he asked, turning to the Famous Five. "You never know when he's going to break out like this, and when he does he's enough to drive anyone off his blessed rocker!"

Hoskins had now gathered up all his sheets of music, and was engaged in putting them in their correct order again.

"If you fellows would care to hear my symphony, I shall be only too pleased to play it through to you if you'll come along to the music-room," said Hoskins, looking past Hobson to the Famous Five.

"Afraid it can't be done just now," replied Harry Wharton quickly.

"It won't take more than five-and-twenty minutes," declared the musical genius persuasively.

"Is that all?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

"Yes, that's all."

"Nothing doing just now, old son!" chimed in Johnny Bull. "Besides, a symphony without a concertina part isn't worth listening to!"

"Now, what about the footer-match?" asked Harry Wharton, turning to Hobson as that worthy was about to make another attack on the musical genius.

For a moment Hoskins glared hopelessly at the juniors as they gathered round Hobson, and then, with a grunt, strode quickly from the study with the new symphony under his arm.

Straight along the passage he went, and was half-way down the stairs when a familiar voice fell upon his ears.

"I say, old chap!"

Hoskins swung round sharply and beheld the fat form of Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove.

"What d'ye want?" he snapped irritably. His temper had been sorely ruffled, first by Hobson and then the Famous Five.

Billy Bunter was not dismayed, however; he had a pretty thick skin, and could put up with a great deal when he had an object to achieve.

"Wharton and his crowd been upsetting you, old man?" he asked sympathetically.

"What d'you mean?" barked Hoskins. "And how did you know anything about it, anyway?"

"Well, you see, they're always upsettin' me, and I saw 'em going along to your study, so I guessed what would happen," replied Billy Bunter. "They always get on the nerves of the brainy fellows—"

"Why, you fat chump!"
"They don't know any more about music than a doormouse," continued the Owl, ignoring the interruption, "and, what's more, they don't recognise a genius when they see one."

Bunter uttered the last part of the remark in the tone of one who was fully aware of the ability of the fellow he was speaking to; and Hoskins' expression softened somewhat.

"Of course, everybody hasn't got a gift for music," remarked Hoskins more amiably; "but the least fellows might do is to try and get some appreciation for the art."

"That's just what I think myself," said Billy Bunter quickly. "I don't profess to know anything about music. I only wish I did."

An expression of something like eagerness flashed into the eyes of the musical genius; perhaps Bunter was really trying to rouse in himself some understanding of the art of music.

"Well, just to see how far you can appreciate good music," said Hoskins, "come along to the music-room with me and hear the first movement of my new symphony."

The fat junior had known all along what was coming, but he had not allowed himself to be drawn out to such an extent for nothing.

"I'd be only too pleased to, old fellow," replied the Owl of the Remove glibly; "but—er—the fact is I've got something on my mind, and I couldn't possibly concentrate my attention properly under those circumstances."

"Oh!"
Hoskins looked at Bunter searchingly. It wasn't like him to be so reluctant to express his troubles in words.

"It's all right, Hosky," went on Bunter familiarly. "It isn't anything very serious; but, you see, I couldn't enter into the bizney properly, being occupied with something else."

"What's the trouble?" asked Hoskins, with quite genuine concern. "Perhaps I could do something for you."

The musical genius had forgotten all about the harsh treatment of Hobson and the Famous Five, and was now feeling quite amiable.

"Of course, if you wanted to you could set my mind at rest at once," continued Billy Bunter. "The fact is, I'm absolutely stony. I haven't got a blessed ha'penny, and not a bit of grub for tea!"

It was out at last. The Owl had been working up to this point ever since he met Hoskins.

"Well, if half-a-crown's any use, I shall be glad to oblige," replied Hoskins. "I can't do more at present, because I'm pretty nearly out of funds myself."

"Thanks very much, old chap," answered Billy Bunter.

He had hoped it would be more. But he was prepared to be satisfied.

Hoskins handed over the half-crown, and the fat junior turned to go.

"I say," exclaimed the musical genius quickly, "you can come and hear my symphony now; you haven't got anything on your mind now you've got some cash."

Billy Bunter turned back with an inward groan. He had thought that he might get away before Hoskins thought of the symphony again, but he was very much mistaken.

Hoskins had only given him the half-crown because he wanted him to go up to the music-room and hear the new composition.

"Come on, Bunter!" he urged cheerfully. "There's just time to play it through before tea."

Billy Bunter followed Hoskins up the stairs like a sheep being led to the slaughter.

He and many other juniors at Greyfriars had been compelled to listen to compositions by Hoskins in the past, and, judging by the expression on the Owl's face as he followed the musical genius, the remembrance of these past experiences was decidedly unpleasant.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Hoskins briskly, as he threw open the door of the music-room and stood back for Billy Bunter to pass in before him. And the Owl looked and felt like a prisoner being introduced to his cell.

"This is the most staggering thing I've ever done in my life," went on Hoskins, chattering as he opened the piano. And that was Bunter's feeling about his own action when

he pondered on the manner in which he had been let in for this, all for the sake of half-a-crown.

He stood by with a mournful face as Hoskins opened the copy and prepared to commence playing.

"Now, listen to this opening chord!" said Hoskins enthusiastically.

Crash!
Billy Bunter started violently.
"By Jove! That's splendid!" he exclaimed. But there was no sincerity in his tone.

"I thought you'd like that!" shouted Hoskins, as he rattled off in a perfect fury of runs.

Billy Bunter's real feeling was that he had never heard such a noise in his life, though he watched the musical genius with a certain sense of admiration at the wonderful speed at which his hands raced over the keys.

If Hoskins had ceased playing after about two minutes, the Owl of the Remove would have been prepared to congratulate him on his composition; but after five minutes had passed, and then ten, he began to feel a trifle bewildered. The feeling increased quickly as the symphony continued, and at last he passed his hand wearily over his forehead and looked round for a chair.

"My hat!" he murmured half-audibly. "All this for half-a-crown!"

For a few moments longer Hoskins continued, and then the playing ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

"What do you think of it?" cried Hoskins, swinging round on the fat junior.

"Er—well—er—I should think that a fellow would have to hear it a few times before he could understand it properly," stammered Bunter.

"That's just it!" exclaimed Hoskins. "These things want a good deal of understanding, but I shall be glad to play it over again—"

"Oh, don't trouble!" interrupted Bunter quickly, realising that he had made a great mistake. "And the fact is, you know, I haven't got time to stay any longer."

"But it isn't teatime yet!" said Hoskins disappointedly.

"No, but I've just remembered that I've got something very important to do before tea, and I must be going," continued Bunter, edging towards the door. "I'll hear the rest of it another time, if you don't mind."

"Oh, all right, if you must go," answered Hoskins.

And the next instant Billy Bunter had disappeared, with a firm conviction that he had thoroughly earned the half-crown which Hoskins had lent him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Fresh Tactics.

DURING the remainder of that day Hoskins made strenuous endeavours to obtain further listeners for his new composition, but he met with no success. Each of the juniors in turn made some excuse. Either they had no time, or they knew so little about music that it was worse than useless for him to waste the time in playing it to them.

"You might come along and hear the first movement, old man!" Hoskins remarked to Hobson later that evening.

"Bust you and your blessed symphony as well!" snapped Hobson, who believed in speaking plainly.

"You're an ass!" cried Hoskins angrily. "Why, even Bunter tries to work up some appreciation, although he knows nothing about music."

"Well, I don't care, you chump!" growled Hobson. "Let him listen to it if he likes. He can have my share as well! You're enough to drive a fellow potty when you get one of these blessed musical turns!"

Hoskins was about to make a fitting reply to this outburst when his study-mate gathered up his papers and stalked out of the room indignantly.

The musical genius sighed when he was left to himself. It was evident that his new composition, like all the previous ones, was not going to find many admirers at Greyfriars.

For some time Hoskins sat meditating on the state of things, and the lack of appreciation among his schoolfellows. And then a brilliant idea struck him.

Why not educate fellows in the art of music, and thus win appreciation in that way?

The more Hoskins pondered over this idea the more it appealed to him. Why shouldn't he take pupils?

After all, there were people who had won fame and fortune as teachers, and for nothing else. He might do the same.

He rose from his chair feeling lighter of heart than he had done since the symphony was finished. He felt convinced that he was going to do great things with this new scheme.

He left the study resolved to commence his new campaign without delay. And practically the first fellow he saw in the passage was Alonzo Todd.

Now, Alonzo, though one of the very best fellows at Greyfriars, was decidedly simple in some respects. He could be easily led, provided nobody tried to lead him into trouble or anything low-down. Furthermore, he was always most careful not to hurt anyone's feelings.

"I say, Alonzo! I'd like to have a word with you."

Alonzo turned in surprise as Hoskins called to him.

"Ah, my dear Hoskins, what can I do for you?" asked Alonzo.

"Well, you know," said Hoskins genially, getting straight to the point, "the fellows don't seem to realise that I've composed a great work."

Alonzo began to look a little uneasy. He feared that a request was coming that he should go and hear the symphony.

"I've come to the conclusion," went on Hoskins, "that the only way to get chaps to understand what music really is will be to educate them up to it."

"Of course," answered Alonzo readily, "a fellow must thoroughly understand a subject before he can presume to give judgment on an advanced example of what that subject stands for."

"Quite so!"

"How do you propose to educate the fellows to an appreciation of your work?" asked Alonzo, with genuine interest.

"My idea is to give music-lessons free, gratis, and for nothing," replied Hoskins promptly.

"Really, that is most magnanimous on your part!" replied Alonzo admiringly.

"It is, really, you know," agreed Hoskins, "because the time I spend like that would enable me to compose something that might become famous all over the world."

"Yes, that certainly is so," responded Alonzo, feeling that Hoskins' self-sacrifice was very considerable.

"Now, I feel certain that you would make a splendid pupil," continued Hoskins, "and I think that in a very short time you would be more than repaid for the trouble you may take. Will you let me give you lessons on the piano?"

"I am sure, my dear Hoskins, that it is very generous of you," declared Alonzo Todd gratefully, "but I really have no ear for music at all."

"No, that's just it," said Hoskins quickly; "but you'd soon cultivate it, and I'm sure you'd make a jolly good player in no time."

Alonzo could see that he was going to disappoint Hoskins badly if he refused, and he could not think of doing that.

"Very well," he answered, "I'll become a pupil, and I trust that you will exercise great patience with me."

"That'll be all right," declared Hoskins delightedly. "I'll fix up with you about the lessons as soon as I have settled up about some more pupils."

Then he left Alonzo and went on his way rejoicing. He had made a good start, and was more than pleased.

"Ah, Bunter!"

"Sorry, old man, but I haven't got time now," answered the Owl of the Remove, as Hoskins greeted him.

He feared that the musical genius was about to invite him to another private performance of the symphony, and he felt he could not stand it.

"I say, half a jiffy! I only want to speak to you for a minute!" cried Hoskins.

Billy Bunter looked very suspicious, but he advanced towards the musician.

"It strikes me that you'd make a jolly good pianist if you were trained," said Hoskins, placing one hand on Bunter's shoulder. "You've enjoyed my symphony so much."

Had Hoskins known Bunter's real feelings about the symphony, his manner might not have been quite so cordial.

"Oh, yes," agreed the Owl of the Remove sharply; "I know a good thing when I hear it."

"Exactly! That's why I think you'd make a good pianist," declared Hoskins. "How about letting me give you some lessons on the piano?"

Billy Bunter stared in astonishment. He seemed unable at first to grasp Hoskins' meaning.

"Give me lessons!" he repeated.

"Yes, I'll give you lessons for nothing if you'll become a pupil!" exclaimed Hoskins eagerly. "What about it?"

Bunter's first impulse was to refuse firmly and definitely. Then the thought crept into his mind that by becoming a pupil of Hoskins he might be able to obtain from him unlimited loans, and loans meant tuck. That consideration decided the Owl of the Remove. "All right," he said, "I'll be a pupil. You said for nothing, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, rather!" agreed Hoskins pleasantly.

"All right!" Bunter made up his mind on the spot, however, that he was not going to allow his lessons to be made opportunities for Hoskins to inflict new compositions on him.

"I'll let you know when you can have your first lesson," said the musical genius as he hurried off in search of new victims.

As he entered the Remove corridor he suddenly thought of Fisher T. Fish. He had doubts about the American junior, but, he argued to himself, there was no harm in trying. Accordingly, he strode along to Fish's study. As luck would have it, Fish was alone. "I guess I ain't got time to listen to that sympathy!" exclaimed the American junior as Hoskins entered.

"I've just looked in to ask if you'd like to have lessons on the piano for nothing," replied Hoskins.

He emphasised the last two words, for he knew that Fisher Tarleton Fish was always on the look-out for something for nothing. It was the result of his strong business instincts.

"I calculate you'd find me all-fired slow in that direction!" replied Fish, who was not at all keen on the idea.

"But you might have the makings of a great musician in you, old chap," argued Hoskins; "and there's lots of money to be made by a good pianist!"

That point certainly seemed to make an impression on the junior from New York.

"If you put it like that, I guess you've got me interested," he remarked.

"Well, if you've never tried your hand at music, you don't know whether it's in you or not," said Hoskins, following up the argument.

"I guess there's a good lot of music in me," declared Fish, "because none's come out yet!"

"There you are, then; I'm prepared to take you on as a pupil for nothing," repeated Hoskins. "And, after a bit, as soon as my pupils get on, I shall have a students' concert in the village, and give 'em all a chance on the programme."

"How many more guys have you got?" asked Fish.

"Oh, I've got two or three more!" answered Hoskins casually.

He did not mention that Billy Bunter was one of them, for he thought it highly probable that the American junior would firmly refuse to take it on in such circumstances.

"You see, if you get on all right with it," continued the musical genius, "I shall put you down on the programme at the students' concert, and you'll probably get ever so many more engagements through it."

Fisher Tarleton Fish was decidedly impressed by this last argument. There certainly might be money in it. He had tried dozens of ways of making money in the past, but so far without much success. He did not mind a little work if there was money at the end of it.

"I guess I'm on, Hosky, old fellow!" he said. "I'm ready for the first lesson right now!"

"I can't start yet," said Hoskins, "because I've got to fix up the other fellows, but I'll let you know soon."

"Good for you!" exclaimed Fish. "I calculate that I'll make the other fellows sit up and take notice of my piano-playing!"

"I reckon you will, too!" said Hoskins encouragingly, as he took his departure.

His next visit was to Study No. 1, and for the first time he drew blank. Harry Wharton & Co. were entirely unsympathetic. They assured Hoskins that they had no musical tendencies and were never likely to develop any. They told him so definitely that he could see that argument would be useless.

"All I can say is that you're a set of fat-heads to throw away a chance like this!" declared Hoskins, moving towards the door. "You'll regret it some day!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" In the end Hoskins secured five pupils, viz., THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 59.

Alonzo Todd, Billy Bunter, Fisher Tarleton Fish, Mark Linley, and Dennis Carr.

He tried his hardest to induce some more fellows to enter into the scheme; but it was useless. So he set about the task of arranging the lessons and the times, etc.

That done, all was ready for the launching of his great plan.

"This is going to be a big thing," he remarked to Hobson in the study that evening.

"Hump! It'll be a big thing if it keeps you quiet!" was his studymate's brief comment.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Lessons Begin.

"I SAY, you chaps, have you noticed that Carr and Linley have gone into this music-teaching stunt?"

Johnny Bull burst into Study No. 1 with this question a few days later. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh were seated round the table, discussing the next number of the "Greyfriars' Herald."

"Are you trying to pull our legs?" asked Bob Cherry, turning round, with a grin.

"It's a fact!"

"One of Bunter's?"

"No, chump! I've just come past the music-room, and Hoskins was shouting one, two, three, four at the top of his voice," said Johnny Bull excitedly. "And just then the door opened, and I saw that Carr was on the music-stool and Linley was looking on."

"My hat!"

Dennis Carr, who had recently returned to Greyfriars after trying experiences in London, was the last fellow they would have expected would be lead into such a scheme as this latest one of Hoskins.

"Wonder what his game is," said Frank Nugent; "there must be something in it."

"Yes; and old Marky, too," added Johnny Bull.

"Oh, well, he's in it because Carr is!" replied Harry Wharton.

Which was correct, the two being great chums.

"The surprisefulness of the ludicrous pair is terrific!" put in Hurree Singh.

"Rather!"

"They're in it for the fun of the thing; that's my opinion!" said Bob Cherry, with a tone of finality.

"That's about it!"

"Good luck to 'em!"

"I expect there is a good bit of fun to be got out of it," smiled Harry Wharton.

"Humph! A fellow must have a pretty strong sense of humour, I should say!" growled Johnny Bull.

Meanwhile, the lessons were going on apace in the music-room. Hoskins had been considerably surprised himself when he had managed to secure Dennis Carr and Mark Linley as pupils, and he was working his hardest to make good players of them.

There was one outstanding point about Claude Hoskins. Whether his ideas were practicable or not, he always threw himself into them heart and soul, and he was sparing no pains to get his pupils on.

Every moment of his spare time was employed in giving music-lessons, and he was working like a nigger.

Dennis Carr was making remarkable progress, and, whatever reason may have prompted him and Linley to take up music, they certainly appeared to be tackling the subject seriously.

Billy Bunter, Alonzo Todd, and Fisher T. Fish were decidedly difficult pupils. In the case of Bunter especially, it was the hardest part of the task to keep him to it.

Over and over again he jumped up from the piano impatient and irritable.

"I can't stand this beastly rubbish!" he exclaimed angrily. "It's enough to drive a fellow potty!"

"But you're getting on very well, considering," argued Hoskins hopefully; "you can't expect to do it all at once!"

"I've had enough of it, anyway!" snapped the Owl of the Remove. And he stalked from the room.

His shortage of cash soon took him back again, however. Hoskins was the only fellow at Greyfriars who was prepared to lend him any money at this period, and he only did so on condition that the lessons were continued.

This happened three or four times, but in the end Billy Bunter was still a pupil.

Whatever music there was in Fisher T. Fish must have been a very long way in, for Hoskins had the greatest difficulty in drawing any out. The musical genius of the Shell

kept him at it, however, and put in extra time with him. Fish certainly did stick to it, for he still had visions of wealth at the end of his labours.

Alonzo Todd was quicker than either Fish or Bunter. He had the quality of perseverance, and worked hard, with the result that he soon began to get on.

Weeks went by, and the lessons still continued, much to the surprise of the rest of the juniors of the Remove. They had expected the whole business to fizzle out in the course of a few days, but they had been very much mistaken.

At length Hoskins felt that he could safely make arrangements for his students' concert in the village, so he proposed to devote a Wednesday half-holiday, when there was no football, to the task of trying over the various items for the programme.

Hoskins decided to invite a specially select company to this trial performance, and when the time came there was quite a crowd of Removites in the music-room; in fact, the place was packed out.

The Famous Five were present, together with Vernon-Smith, Tom Brown, Peter Todd, and Tom Dutton, who was there because Peter Todd was there, and declared he would not hear a sound; Dick Rake, Morgan, and Russell. In addition there were, of course, the pupils themselves and Hoskins.

"Buck up, Hosky! On the ball!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Give us a solo, Bunter!"

These and many similar exclamations were hurled forth directly the door was closed.

"Wait a minute, fatheads!" shouted Hoskins, who was bustling about in a state of great excitement.

"You'd better do your item first, Toddy," he added, turning to Alonzo.

"Good old Toddy! On the ball!"

"Silence!" roared Hoskins. "The next chump who interrupts will be chucked out!"

"Who by?"

"Cheeky rotter—"

"Steady on, chaps!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Give 'em a chance!"

Alonzo Todd seated himself at the piano, and commenced his solo, which was an arrangement of "Killarney," with variations. A whistling accompaniment was provided by the audience, much to Hoskins' annoyance; but the juniors were decidedly impressed by Alonzo's performance, in spite of the fact that some of the variations were so very much varied that the melody was entirely lost at times.

"Bravo, Lonzy!"

"Encore! Encore!"

There was much clapping and stamping of feet when Alonzo Todd had finished his solo.

"Jolly good performance, I call that!" declared Dick Russell.

"Hear, hear!"

"Encore!"

Alonzo had to oblige again, and gave a touching rendering of "Annie Laurie," the only interruption occurring when Bunter's elbow slipped off the side of the piano on to the keys.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old porpoise!"

"S-s-sh!"

Alonzo's encore finished with further clapping and stamping, and Billy Bunter was called forward to give his pianoforte arrangement of "Under the Mistletoe Bough!"

"My hat!"

"Gee-whiz!"

"Bunter playing the piano!"

"Shut your rat-traps, fatheads!" snapped Billy Bunter.

"What a blessed cheek—"

"Collar the bounder!"

"Silence! Silence!" yelled Hoskins. "Don't go and mess up the business!"

"Leave the porpoise alone!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Let's hear his blessed solo!"

Whether Bunter was nervous on account of the audience, or whatever may have been the reason, he played particularly badly. Hoskins declared that he was worse this afternoon than he had been when he had only had two or three lessons.

"Stick it, fathead!"

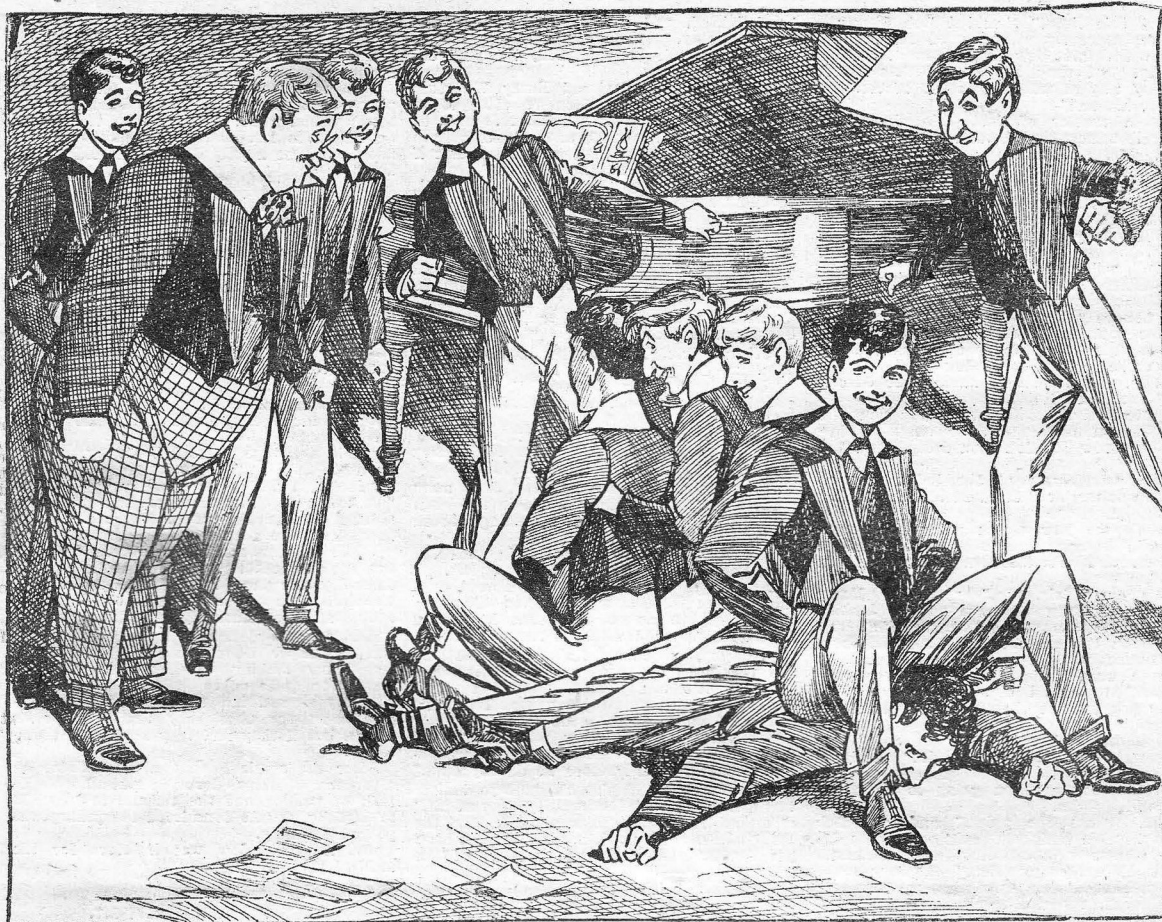
"Give it socks!"

Several times the Owl of the Remove nearly broke down completely, and each time the audience yelled encouragement.

At last he reached the last two lines to which the words of the title are set, but a new rendering was given by the Removites.

"Oh, what a miserable row!"

"Oh, what a miserable row!" they roared to Bunter's accompaniment.



A dozen pairs of hands seized the musical genius, and, with a final crash as he tried to grasp the piano, he was hurried off the stool. "Hi! Gerroff! Lemme go!" "You artful bounder!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Where that key?" (See this page.)

The Owl was furious, and looked as though he would like to attack the whole crowd, but he wisely refrained. Hoskins, too, was very angry, partly with the audience, but more particularly with the fat junior. He mentally decided that "Under the Mistletoe Bough" would have to be left out of the programme.

"I guess we're going to hear some great music now!" exclaimed Bob Cherry as Fisher T. Fish took the music-stool.

"I calculate that I'm not having any interruptions from you guys!" retorted Fish sharply.

"Cut the cackle!"

"Get on with the washin'!"

Fisher T. Fish did very little better than Billy Bunter had done, and Hoskins regretfully came to the conclusion that he would not be able to include him in the programme as a soloist.

Dennis Carr and Mark Linley gave no trial performance. Dennis had remarked to Linley that if the others opened the concert with their items, they themselves would not have to perform, as the place would be in an uproar by that time.

"I'm going to do my new symphony at the concert," announced Hoskins, "so you fellows had better hear it now."

"No jolly fear!"

"Not for me!"

"I'm off!"

There was an immediate rush for the door. Then a roar of amazement and consternation rang out.

"It's locked!"

"And the blessed key's gone!"

Hoskins had anticipated this rush, and had locked it some time previously and removed the key.

"Where's the key, fathead?" shouted Dick Russell.

But Hoskins pretended to be engrossed in getting the copy of his symphony ready, and before the astounded Removites realised what was happening, the performance of the new composition had commenced.

"My hat! This is awful!"

"The giddy limit!"

The music-room was in a state of perfect pandemonium a moment later, but Hoskins paid no heed to it, and rattled away at the piano.

"Where's that key, you rotter?" roared Bob Cherry.

"What a shocking row!"

"If we don't get out of here soon I shall kill somebody!" groaned Vernon-Smith.

The Removites grew more furious every second, and the noise of their angry voices became an uproar, to which the musical genius provided an ear-splitting accompaniment on the piano.

"Bump the idiot!" yelled Peter Todd.

"Scrag him!"

"Are you going to stop that row and give us the key of the door?" shouted Harry Wharton. "Or are you going to be bumped?"

"There's a beautiful passage just here," was Hoskins' only reply, as he played on at a terrific rate.

"There's a beautiful passage outside, too!" yelled Bob Cherry. "And you'll get thrown into it when we get that door open!"

"Yank him off the blessed stool!" cried Tom Brown. "We've had enough of this!"

A dozen pairs of hands seized the musical genius, and, with a final crash as he tried to grasp the piano, he was hurled off the stool.

"Hi! Gerroff! Lemme go!"

"You artful bounder!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Where's that key?"

"Leggo, you rotters! I—I'm ch-ch-ch—"

"You can go on ch-ch-ch-ch!" shouted Peter Todd.

"I'm ch-choking! Oy! Grrrr!"

Hoskins was now lying flat on the floor, making vain attempts to struggle free of his assailants.

"Are you going to give up that key?" demanded Harry Wharton severely.

"Lemmegetup! You're breaking my back!"

"Tell us where the key is, then!"

Hoskins' struggles had now been brought to an end, for Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Peter Todd, and Dick Russell were sitting on him, and practically only his head was visible.

Even Dennis Carr and Mark Linley had joined in an attack on the musical genius, for while they appreciated him as a teacher of the piano, they could not stand his compositions.

"Where's that blessed key, you fathead?" demanded Carr impatiently.

"Let me get up, and I'll give it to you!" gasped Hoskins.

"Honour bright?"

"Honour bright!"

The Removites released the musical genius, and he struggled to his feet, looking a perfect wreck. His collar was crumpled and torn, and his clothes gave the appearance of having been rolled into the road.

"You lunatics!" he yelled fiercely.

"Shut your rat-trap, and hand over the key!"

The key was produced from under the open lid of the piano, and Harry Wharton promptly opened the door of the music-room.

"Thank goodness!"

"What a relief!"

These and similar remarks were made as the Removites jostled through into the corridor.

"Enough to kill a black man!" growled Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Missing Score.

"COME in, fatheads!" Harry Wharton & Co. entered Study No. 5 in the Shell passage in response to Hobson's call.

"Oh, it's you, is it!" he added, looking up from his book. "I thought it was some of those blessed pupils of that musical idiot."

"Not this time!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "They've pretty well worried the life out of me the last few days," said Hobson wearily. "I shall kill one of 'em before long by way of warning to the others."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As a matter of fact, it's about this musical business that we've come to see you," put in Harry Wharton.

He then went on to describe to Hobson what had occurred in the music-room that afternoon, and in spite of himself the skipper of the Shell could not help smiling.

"What do you want me to do, then?" he asked.

"Well, we've just heard a part of that new composition," went on Harry Wharton, "and it's absolutely chronic!"

"I believe you," remarked Hobson.

"The point is," chimed in Frank Nugent, "he can't possibly do it at this student's concert he reckons he's going to give."

"Why, that's all he's having the concert for!" exclaimed Hobson.

"Quite likely," said Johnny Bull; "but, for the sake of the school, we can't let him kick up a row like he's been doing this afternoon."

"The noisefulness of the ludicrous symphony was terrific!" declared Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't see how you're going to prevent it," said Hobson. "He's going to give the concert, and it's his own affair what he does."

"It's our affair, too," remarked Harry Wharton. "We can't have people thinking that we're harbouring a tame lunatic here."

"What's it matter to us?" asked Hobson unconcernedly.

"In a way, it doesn't matter to us personally," responded Harry Wharton, "but surely you can see that it makes the school look ridiculous."

"Humph! Pr'aps it does!"

"There's no doubt about it!" declared Johnny Bull.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" said Hobson.

"That's just the point," answered Bob Cherry. "We want you to help us think out some wheeze for preventing the performance of his blessed composition."

"I'm hanged if I know what we can do!"

"Anyway, try and think out something," urged Harry Wharton. "We'll talk it over and drop in and see you to-morrow."

"All right!" agreed Hobson. "I'll see what I can do!"

"Good egg! We'll dish the boulder somehow!"

"Rather!"

"So-long, old son!"

"Good-night!"

Harry Wharton & Co. left Hobson to himself again, and returned to Study No. 1 to discuss the matter among themselves.

For over an hour they discussed various plans, but by bed-time they had thought of no satisfactory scheme.

The next morning brought the solution to the problem. It lay in a letter which Harry Wharton received from a friend of his uncle who was staying in Courtfield.

"I say, you fellows, the very thing!" exclaimed Harry Wharton immediately he had perused the letter.

"What very thing?" inquired Bob Cherry, with a puzzled frown.

"Come into the study, and I'll tell you!" said Harry Wharton, leading the way.

"Oh, I know what he means!" said Johnny Bull. "It's that Hoskins bizney!"

"Yes, that's it," said Wharton, as they entered the study. "This letter's from a Mr. Robinson, an old friend of my uncle, and he's a musician and composer."

"Well, how does that help us?" asked Frank Nugent perplexedly.

"I'll tell you," replied Harry Wharton. "A wheeze flashed into my mind directly I read his letter."

"Well, if it solves the problem of how to stop that boulder with his blessed symphony it'll be a jolly good job!" declared Bob Cherry.

"Rather!" assented Johnny Bull.

"My idea is to borrow the symphony from his drawer one day when he's out, and send it over to Mr. Robinson and ask him to alter it here and there, very carefully," explained Harry Wharton.

"But he'll kick up an awful shindy," remarked Frank Nugent.

"That won't matter," continued Harry Wharton. "We'll put it back in his drawer just before the concert, and, of course, he'll

be delighted, and take it with him on the night to play."

"He'll see it's been altered, though," objected Bob Cherry.

"No he won't!" declared Harry Wharton. "I shall ask Mr. Robinson to alter it so carefully that it won't be noticeable even to him on a casual glance; and he won't have time to give it more than a casual glance if he's just starting for the concert."

"That won't stop him from playing it, though," argued Frank Nugent.

"Won't it?" said Harry Wharton, with a laugh. "He'll do the first few lines, all right, because they won't be altered; but directly he comes to the altered part he'll dash up in a fearful state and refuse to play any more of it."

"I think you're right, old son," agreed Bob Cherry, with a broad grin.

"It's a jolly cute wheeze," remarked Johnny Bull. "What say you, Enky?"

"I think the cuteness of the esteemed and ludicrous wheeze is terrific!" declared Hurree Singh.

"Rather!" laughed Frank Nugent.

"Then that settles it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Let's go and tell Hobson!"

Accordingly, the Famous Five once more made their way to Study No. 5 in the Shell passage, and were fortunate in finding Hobson alone.

The captain of the Shell fell in with the idea, and considered it a very good plan. It was arranged that the Famous Five should take it from the drawer themselves when they were ready to do so, and that he should have nothing to do with the removal of it.

"You see," explained Hobson, "I shall be the very first one he'll ask about it when he finds it's disappeared, and if I don't touch it I can truthfully say that I haven't had anything to do with the bizney."

"Quite so," agreed Harry Wharton. "We'll wait and see whether he makes the arrangement about the hall before we do anything."

"Of course. If he doesn't get the hall it won't matter about the beastly thing at all," remarked Hobson. "He's gone to see the Vicar of Friar-dale now, to ask if he can have the Parish Hall, and the proceeds of the affair, if any—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If any," repeated Hobson, "are to go to some fund for the poor of the village."

"Old Hosky's jolly decent like that," remarked Frank Nugent. "He doesn't want to collar all the funds for himself."

"Oh, no; Hosky is all right!" exclaimed Hobson, with a flash of spirit, which showed that he had real affection for the musical genius. "But when he gets one of these new compositions on the board he goes potty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five left Hobson when they had agreed upon the line of action to take, and sauntered down to the quad. They were pleased with their plan, and discussed it eagerly.

"My hat! There he comes!"

Harry Wharton and the rest looked quickly towards the gates as Frank Nugent made that exclamation, and they saw Claude Hoskins hurrying towards them. From the joyful expression on his face he had had a satisfactory interview with the vicar.

"It's all right, you fellows!" shouted the musical genius when he was a few yards from the Famous Five. "I'm going to have the hall!"

"What are you going to do with it when you get it?" asked Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to have my students' concert, of course!" declared Hoskins.

"Is it going to be open to the public?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Rather!" exclaimed Hoskins. "I'm not going to have tickets printed, though; it'll cost too much. The vicar's going to have a few bills taken off a graph, and have them put up in the village."

"What about the tickets?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, I'm going to write those out myself!" replied Hoskins.

"My hat! What a job!"

"No worse than doing three hundred lines!" retorted Hoskins.

"Hump! Well, that's one way of looking at it!"

"When's it to be?" asked Frank Nugent.

"A week to-day—Friday," replied the musical genius.

"Right-ho! We shall all want tickets," said Harry Wharton. "How much?"

"Sixpence each!"

"Good!"

Hoskins hurried into the school then to acquaint Hobson with the good news.

"We shall have to get that blessed symphony to-morrow," said Harry Wharton when Hoskins had gone. "We'll take it over to Courtfield to Mr. Robinson to-morrow afternoon. It'll be a jolly decent bike ride if it's fine."

"All serene!"

Everything worked satisfactorily, and the Famous Five "borrowed" the copy of Hoskins' new composition the next morning.

Mr. Robinson promised to do as Harry Wharton requested him.

"You see," explained the junior captain, "old Hoskins is all right really, and he can play the piano jolly well, but he thinks he can compose, and that's where he makes a mistake. His blessed compositions are enough to drive anyone potty."

"This symphony, as he calls it, certainly looks rather terrible," remarked Mr. Robinson with a smile as he glanced at Hoskins' manuscript.

"It is, too," put in Bob Cherry. "You ought to hear it!"

"The idea is," went on Harry Wharton, "we must stop him from playing it at this student's concert, because it'll make Greyfriars look like a bome for incurables!"

While this conversation was taking place in Courtfield Hoskins was putting his pupils through their paces in the music-room. They were all more or less tired of the business; Billy Bunter considerably more than less.

Hoskins was determined, however. There was no escape. Dennis Carr and Mark Linley were now making excellent progress, and seemed to quite enjoy their lessons. A particularly shrewd individual might have supposed at times that they had some close secret, but if they had they kept it to themselves.

After the music lessons on that Saturday afternoon Hoskins devoted himself to the task of writing out the tickets, and he did so joyfully, for he considered everything was going splendidly.

But a great blow was in store for the musical genius.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hoskins' Search.

IT was after tea that Hoskins first missed the score of his new composition. He went to the drawer for the MS. with the idea of going over it carefully yet again, but it was not where he had left it.

Hobson was sitting by the fire reading, and he braced himself for the outburst which he knew would come in a moment.

The musical genius frantically turned over the papers and books in the drawer, but, of course, could not find the symphony.

"I say, old man, have you seen anything of my composition?" he exclaimed suddenly.

"No; but I've heard something of it!" growled Hobson.

"What have you heard?" demanded Hoskins quickly, misunderstanding the Shell captain's meaning.

"Why, I've heard you talking about the rotten thing for weeks past!" retorted Hobson.

"It's disappeared!" cried the musical genius in alarm. "Do you know where it is?"

"How should I know?" asked Hobson irritably. "D'you think I've boned it for my own use?"

"Wouldn't be much use to you personally," replied Hoskins, "but you could sell it."

"Could I?" sneered Hobson. "Who d'you think would buy that blessed rot?"

"Humph! Shows what a lot you know about music to call a work like that rot!" snorted Hoskins, as he still feverishly turned over the contents of the drawer.

"Brrrr! Shut up, for goodness' sake!" snapped Hobson.

"I believe you've destroyed it because you're jealous of the reception it was going to get!" went on the musical genius suspiciously; and he was now getting into a state of great agitation as it seemed that the new composition had completely disappeared.

"You thumping idiot!" cried Hobson. "D'you think I should trouble myself about its blessed reception. I tell you I haven't touched it, and I wouldn't be seen dead with it!"

Hoskins looked despairingly around the study in every possible and impossible place, and turned over the things in the cupboard

in the hope of finding some trace of the great work. But it was hopeless.

"Oh crumbs! To think that all my labour should end in this!" he moaned almost tearfully.

"It'll end in something worse than that if you don't stop burbling when I'm trying to read!" exclaimed Hobson impatiently.

"Well, you might help me to find it!" groaned Hoskins.

"I don't know where to look for the rotten thing!" cried Hobson, in exasperation.

"I'll go and see if anyone else knows anything about it," said Hoskins, hurrying from the study.

Hobson smiled to himself when the musical genius had taken his departure, and wondered what would happen when Harry Wharton & Co. were tackled.

Hoskins first made a round of his music-pupils, thinking that perhaps one of them had borrowed the score for the purpose of trying over the symphony on his own. But he was soon disillusioned on this point. The remarks about the new composition, even by his own pupils, were decidedly uncomplimentary.

"I guess I don't know anything about that there symphony," declared Fisher T. Fish very definitely. "And I might as well tell you right now that I don't want to know anything about it!"

"All right, you fathead!" snapped Hoskins. "If you don't know anything about it you needn't be offensive!"

"My name's Fisher T. Fish," declared the American junior. "And a Fish always speaks out plain, I calculate!"

"Yes, I've noticed that when I've been passing the fish-shop!" retorted Hoskins; and with that parting shot he hastened on.

As inquiry after inquiry brought no news of the missing MS. the musical genius gradually became more agitated; in fact, he became absolutely frantic.

"What the dickens shall I do?" he muttered, running his hand through his long, untidy hair. "I ought to have kept the thing under lock and key!"

"Hallo, Hosky, old fellow! What's up?" The Musical genius swung round and beheld the Famous Five.

"My symphony's disappeared!" groaned Hoskins. "Some rotter must have stolen it!" "Never!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Who'd you think'd steal a thing like that?"

"Anybody might, for the money they could make out of it!" replied Hoskins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at, chumps?"

"The idea of anybody pinching that new composition! It's no more use than a sore throat to anybody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you lunatics—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you chaps!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, walking on; and the rest of the Famous Five promptly followed him.

"D'you fellows know anything about it?" called Hoskins.

But he received no reply, and the chums disappeared from sight.

Hoskins wandered about disconsolately for some time, trying to pick up some information, but he was unsuccessful.

"I wonder if those rotters do know anything about it?" he muttered to himself suddenly. "By Jove, it's quite possible!"

With the idea of tackling the Famous Five further upon the subject, he betook himself to Study No. 1. The room was empty.

"I'm hanged if I won't have a look round for it!" he murmured. "I'm justified, considering what a great loss it is to me; and it's up to me to find it somehow, if only for the sake of the concert."

It was obvious that Hoskins' idea about performing it at the concert was a very different one to that shared by the Famous Five and Hobson.

The next moment Hoskins had started to search Study No. 1 through and through, and he did so without interruption. But after about half-an-hour's work in wading through the drawers of the table and in the cupboard he had to retire convinced that his composition was not in that room.

"The only thing to do is to try and write it again," he said wearily to Hobson. "But I don't suppose it'll be much good, for a flash of inspiration like that only comes to a fellow about once in a life-time!"

"Thank goodness!" growled Hobson.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Concert.

AS the musical genius had supposed, his efforts to re-write the symphony were without success, and as the concert drew nearer he sank farther and farther in despair, instead of getting more excited at the prospect of winning fame and esteem as a teacher of music.

He still continued his search and inquiries in the meantime, until he called forth the wrath of practically every member of the Lower School.

Then, at last the day of the concert arrived. The nearness of the great event did give him something else to think about for a few hours, and during the interval between morning and afternoon classes he interviewed his performers and gave them final instructions.

Hoskins had been obliged to arrange for one or two fellows to sing, for it had been pointed out to him by Hobson that the only items he had were piano-solos, and that he could not possibly run those one after the other without a break.

So Dick Russell and Donald Ogilvy, who both considered themselves very good songsters, promised to give solos, and Wibley consented to give a few impersonations.

Directly after tea the juniors began to get ready for the concert. The bath-room was crowded with juniors washing and polishing themselves up for the occasion.

The concert was timed to start at seven o'clock, and by six a large party of Greyfriars juniors was making for the village, and, as was usual in such cases, they were first upon the scene.

A crowd of Removites occupied the first two rows of seats in the front, and a still larger crowd filled up rows of seats at the back of the hall.

Dennis Carr and Mark Linley walked into the village with the Famous Five, but Hoskins was keeping an eye on Billy Bunter, Alonzo Todd, and Fisher T. Fish, for he did not feel at all sure that, at the last moment, one or all of them would not back out.

He was all ready to start out when he had occasion to go to the drawer of the table in the study.

"My hat!" he gasped delightedly, and almost commenced to dance a Highland fling. For the first thing that he saw as he pulled out the drawer was the score of his missing symphony "Where the dickens has this—"

"I guess we're going to be late if you're not pretty slick!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish.

"All right, I'm coming!" cried Hoskins joyfully. "My new composition's come back again, and I shall be able to play it to-night!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Billy Bunter dimly.

Hoskins just hastily glanced at the first page of the music, and then placed the MS. carefully in his pocket, and the four musicians set out for Friardale, one of them, at any rate, happier than he had been for days past.

The Parish Hall was crowded when they arrived. The villagers had turned up in full force, as they always did when the Greyfriars boys were going to give a performance, no matter what it was. The fact of the matter was that they generally got a great deal of fun out of such occasions if nothing else, and they were not going to miss such an opportunity as the present one.

There was much noisy chattering and great excitement on the part of the Greyfriars juniors in the audience, and a cheer went up as the Vicar of Friardale stepped upon the platform to make a few appropriate remarks before the concert commenced.

There was further cheering when he concluded his little speech, and then Alonzo Todd marched on to the platform to open the entertainment with his pianoforte-solo, "Killarney," with variations.

"Bravo, Lonzy! That's the stuff to give 'em!"

"On the ball, Toddy!"

There was great excitement among the Removites, which Alonzo Todd gracefully acknowledged with a bow.

Silence fell upon the assembly as the well-known air rang out, and there were whispers of appreciation among the juniors at the remarkable progress Alonzo had made with his musical studies.

A few members of the audience, who knew a little more about music than the rest, smiled to one another as the variations came along, for it was then that Alonzo began to get out of his depth, so to speak. But at

this point, in order to keep the melody well to the fore, the Greyfriars portion of the audience whistled the tune.

However, Alonzo finished up in great style, and received the applause which he richly deserved.

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly good, Toddy!"

"Give us another!"

These and many similar exclamations were heard above the noise of the clapping and stamping.

"Encore, Toddy!"

"Encore!"

A couple of minutes were taken up with the applause, and then the vicar stepped upon the platform and announced that no encores could be allowed in the first part of the programme, but that Master Dick Russell would oblige with a song.

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on, Dicky!"

Dick Russell obliged very satisfactorily, and was heartily appreciated.

Next to appear upon the platform was Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old porpoise!"

Billy Bunter, who certainly did not suffer from stage-fright, glared down at the front row.

"You shut your blessed rat-trap, Bulstrode!" he exclaimed. "You couldn't play the piano if you tried for years!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One for Bunter!"

The audience roared with laughter at Billy Bunter's quick retort, and Bulstrode looked decidedly uncomfortable, and mentally promised the Owl a good hiding after the show was over.

"Let it rip, Bunter!" came in a shout from the rear of the hall.

"All right! Wait a minute, chump!" exclaimed the fat junior.

At which the audience again shrieked with laughter, and remarked to each other what a remarkable boy Billy Bunter was.

Then the Owl of the Remove commenced his simple rendering of "Under the Mistletoe Bough," to which the Removites added appropriate words, as they had done on the day of the trial performance.

Billy Bunter looked round and glared at the juniors as the voices broke out, but he did not succeed in quelling the delighted crowd. He was afraid that the interruption would lower the appreciation of his own particular performance. As a matter of fact, however, it increased the audience's delight.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A perfect thunder of applause broke out when Billy Bunter rose from the stool and advanced to the front of the platform to bow.

He was so delighted with his reception that he remained there bowing until Hoskins called him off from the side.

"Good-bye-ee-ee!" yelled the Removites.

"Good old Bunter!"

Hoskins then appeared upon the platform and announced that he was going to play his latest and greatest composition, and hoped it would give the audience much pleasure.

"Look out for squalls now!" whispered Harry Wharton to his chums.

"Now we're in for it!" shouted a voice at the back of the hall.

The musical genius ignored this doubtful exclamation, and eagerly prepared the copy of his new symphony.

Crash!

The first chord rang out with startling suddenness, and ejaculations were heard in all parts of the hall.

"Gee-whizz!"

"My hat!"

"What a funny row!"

The first chord was soon forgotten, however, in the medley of sound which followed. Hoskins swept backwards and forwards, his whole body swaying as his hands raced over the keys.

The members of the audience stared at one another in bewilderment, and then a most amazing thing happened. Hoskins ceased playing as suddenly as he had commenced, and started up wildly from the music-stool. "My great composition has been altered!" he shouted. And, snatching up the score from the piano, he dashed off the platform, muttering as he went.

For a moment there was silence throughout the hall, for this remarkable incident had struck the audience spellbound; though Harry Wharton & Co. and Hobson, who were in the front row, were smiling.

Then the juniors at the back remembered their part, and loud applause broke out.

"Hard luck, Hosky, old man!"

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly good, Hosky!"

These exclamations were accompanied by vigorous clapping of hands and stamping of feet, in which the rest of the audience gradually joined.

Hoskins, however, did not appear to acknowledge the applause, and, as a matter of fact, he had only played about four lines of the composition when he had come to the first alteration.

While the people were applauding he was tearing his hair behind the scenes, and raving to those around him that his great symphony had been tampered with.

"Just fancy anyone mucking anybody's work about like this!" he exclaimed. "Why, the rotter who did it ought to be hung!"

"Well, it can't be helped now, old fellow!" said Dennis Carr. "Someone else must go on the platform. Hark at the people kicking up a row!"

Hoskins seemed to hear the applause for the first time, and he at once recognised, in spite of his trouble, that the concert must be kept going, for the people had paid for their tickets.

"We'll have the piano trio next," he said. "Bunter, Toddy, and Fish, where are you?" "Here we are!" replied Alonzo Todd, stepping forward. "Come along, my dear Bunter!"

"Oh, bust the trio!" snapped Billy Bunter. "I'm sick of this rotten business!"

"I guess we're going to do that trio!" remarked Fisher T. Fish, stepping forward. "I've got the music right here, and I calculate we're going to start right in on the thing right away!"

Fisher T. Fish thereupon walked on to the platform, and Bunter and Alonzo were obliged to follow.

When all three seated themselves at the piano in a row a deafening roar of applause broke out. A piano trio was a most unusual event, and with three such performers the prospect caused great excitement.

"My hat!"

"Three of 'em!"

"Go it, Fishy! Stick it, Bunter!"

"Good old Lonzy!"

The Greyfriars juniors in the audience nearly yelled themselves hoarse. The three performers, however, ignored the outburst, and the trio commenced. But it was apparent to all a moment later that they had not commenced properly together, and Fish ceased playing.

"I guess we're all out!" he exclaimed. "Start off again, you guys!"

"I'm not a guy, you fathead!" declared Billy Bunter quite audibly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One—two—three—" counted Alonzo, and this time they started off together. Bunter, however, was particularly weak with his part, and it was plain that they would never reach the end of the piece together.

He seemed to be doing his best, though, for he kept his eyes glued to the music. Alonzo was very persevering, and was quite the best player of the three, though Fisher T. Fish considered himself quite a good performer, judging by the self-satisfied smile on his face as he played.

Billy Bunter grew more agitated as the trio went on, and unconsciously spread himself out more and more, much to Alonzo's discomfort. The fat junior kept edging farther and farther towards Alonzo, on his right, until the catastrophe occurred.

Alonzo was so engrossed in his part of the performance that he did not realise how near to the edge of his stool he was sitting, and when Billy Bunter gave an extra little push in his eagerness and excitement to play a somewhat tricky passage, Alonzo was shoved a little too far.

"Oh—er!"

With a startled cry, Alonzo Todd slipped from the edge of his stool, his hands crashing loudly upon the keys in his effort to save himself.

Hoskins, who had been watching from the side of the platform, rushed on as Alonzo fell. Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hard luck, Lonzy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience roared and shrieked with laughter at this unrehearsed effect, and Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish looked about them in confusion and dismay.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 59.

"You really are most clumsy, my dear Bunter!" exclaimed Alonzo, as Hoskins assisted him to his feet.

"You clumsy great porpoise!" roared Hoskins. "You've busted up the trio!"

"Oh, crumbs! What a scream!" yelled Bob Cherry.

The audience was thoroughly aroused, and shrieks of laughter echoed through the hall in addition to the vigorous clapping and stamping.

Hoskins was almost at his wits' end. The concert seemed to be proving a complete farce. Then Dennis Carr stepped up to him, and the musical genius observed, with a gasp of amazement, that he had a violin in his hand.

"I shall be able to give a couple of violin solos if you will play the accompaniments, Hosky," he said quietly.

"B-b-but—"

"There's no time for butting," interrupted Dennis; "here's the music!"

Mechanically Hoskins took the copy held out to him and strolled on to the platform. Dennis Carr followed him, and a great shout of astonishment went up from the Greyfriars juniors, for nobody at the school had been aware that Carr could play the violin.

"Good old Dennis!"

"Bravo, Carr!"

Dennis Carr seemed quite unconcerned by the outburst of cheering and applause, and as Hoskins played the opening bars of the solo he raised his violin to his chin.

Complete silence settled over the audience, and everyone listened with rapt attention, for it was at once evident that Carr was an accomplished violinist. His solo was the event of the evening from a musical point of view, and the applause which broke out when he had finished was absolutely deafening.

"Hurrah!"

"Great!"

"Encore! Encore!"

Dennis Carr walked on to the platform again and bowed, with a pleasant smile, and the roar became greater still. Time after time he acknowledged the cheers, and in the end had to play again.

He had kept his secret well, Mark Linley being the only fellow who knew all about it, and it delighted him more than it did Carr to see his great chum receiving such an ovation.

Hoskins was the first to congratulate the violinist personally.

"Absolutely ripping, old chap!" he exclaimed. "You've saved the situation! How can I thank you!"

"Say nothing about it; that's the best way!" smiled Dennis.

When the concert ended the Greyfriars juniors surged round the Remove violinist and plied him with questions.

Dennis Carr had a very retiring way with him, however, and passed off their exclamations of admiration with a shrug.

"Good job my uncle sent the violin," was all he said, with a smile. "I wrote and asked him to send it direct to the hall, and he's come up to the scratch."

Hoskins' concert was remembered for many a day, and it was voted by the village folk and all Greyfriars as the event of the season.

The musical genius never discovered what happened to the composition for nearly a week, or who had altered it. He has given up composing for the time being, to the great satisfaction of Hobson and the rest of the Lower School at Greyfriars.

THE END.

THE COACH.

QUITE a crowd of juniors had gathered round the old gateway of St. Jim's. Tom Merry, who was there with Manners and Lowther, looked round the gathering crowd.

"What do you chaps want?" he demanded. Blake grinned.

"Same as you, I expect," he replied. "We're waiting for the coach!"

"Bai Jove! I've been lookin' for you fellahs, you know!"

An elegant junior came down to the gateway also.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form. He jammed his monocle into his right eye and regarded the crowded juniors in the gateway with some surprise.

"What are you waitin' heah for?"

"The coach!"

"What coach?"

"The new coach!"

"Bai Jove, that will be wippin'!"

D'Arcy was just going to Abbotsford to see the first eleven play, and Tom Merry & Co. were going, too, or, at least, D'Arcy was under the impression they were. Gussy always hated railway trains, and the mention of a new coach put him in the best of humours.

"The one for the match—eh?" remarked Gussy.

"Of course! What else do you think we should have one for?" asked Manners.

"Well, I should have preferred a motah-car certainly, but I wogard it as a good ideah!" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "When does it awvive?"

"Coming along at once!"

"Well, I should be vewy pleased to dwive the coach for you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

"This kind of coach can't be driven," explained Tom Merry. "It may be led, but not driven!"

"Will it be a four-in-hand?" asked Gussy, puzzled.

"Ha, ha, ha! There won't be any horses!"

"Bai Jove! Is it a motah, then?"

"No, ass!"

"Then how shall we get along?" demanded D'Arcy.

"We don't know till we see it," said Lowther, misunderstanding what Gussy meant.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to compwehend you, Lowthah! I wogard you as an ass! I wogard all these othah fellahs as asses! I cinsidah—"

"There was a shout from Durrance in the roadway.

"Here he comes!"

An ancient vehicle, drawn by an equally ancient-looking horse, was rumbling towards St. Jim's.

It was the station hack from Rylcombe.

Inside was a passenger—an athletic-looking fellow, with black hair and a firm expression. But D'Arcy's eyes were fixed on the old cab.

"Bai Jove! Is this the coach, deah boys?" he asked, in mild astonishment.

"Yes, rather!"

"You uttah asses! What a wotten thing!"

"Eh?"

"This is the mouldy old station cab from Wylcombe!" howled the swell of St. Jim's wrathfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Monty Lowther. "The coach is inside!"

"But—but—but how can the coach be inside the cab, deah boy?" ejaculated D'Arcy, in astonishment. "It's not a toy coach!"

"Of course not, ass; it's full size, six feet long, or said it was!"

The cab had halted, and the young man got out, and nodded cheerfully to the juniors.

"Is this St. Jim's?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" answered Tom Merry. "Are you the new coach?"

"Exactly!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nearly collapsed. "The new coach! You must be wavin' mad, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh, I forgot to say it was a cricket coach!" said Tom Merry blandly.

"A cwicket coach! Oh, of all the feahful asses! I've nearly lost that twain to Abbotsford!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus tore away, with six minutes in which to get to the station.

THE END.

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Our Grand New Serial, dealing with the Adventures of a Young Acrobat who Rose to Fame and Fortune as a Cinema Star.

By STANTON HOPE.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Micky Denver, an orphan lad, is an acrobat in Beauman's Gigantic Circus. One night, in Liverpool, he is accused unjustly by the bullying proprietor of having stolen a gold watch. The evidence is black against him, and Micky is arrested, but escapes to the river-front and stows away on a tramp-steamer. In New York Harbour Micky escapes through an open port and swims ashore. Ashore he meets a slim, red-headed American, Alec P. Figg, who is also anxious to get out West. With him Micky "jumps" the "Chicago Flyer," and by stages they beat their way to Kansas City. Figg, known as Smart Alec, is one of the most expert cracksmen on the continent, and he attempts to crack the hotel safe. Micky frustrates him, and makes the rest of his way to Los

Angeles alone. Once in the city he loses no time in trying to get taken on at the cinema studios, but without success. One day he visits Santa Monica, on the coast, and there he rescues Mary Maidstone from the surf. In consequence, Micky is given a job as assistant to Buddy Gaylord, the property-man, in the great K. N. Broadworth's Cinema Company. One day the company goes "on location" in the San Gabriel foothills to film a scene. Among the supers employed is Monkey White, a former accomplice of Smart Alec. As Micky is handing out some "props," he hears a bearded super called Jed Tomson address another. With a violent start, Micky swings round, for the voice is the voice of Alec P. Figg, the cracksmen!

(Now read on.)

An Unforeseen Cinema Thrill.

MICKY gazed after the retreating figure of the super with puzzled eyes. That the disreputable man with the rough growth of beard could be Alec P. Figg, the cracksmen, he could scarcely credit despite the similarity in voice.

On the other hand, a limp in walking and a bent back could easily be simulated by anyone anxious to conceal his identity, and Micky was sorry that the slouch-hat entirely concealed the man's hair from view.

He had noticed, however, that the rough beard of the super was of a light colour which had suggested hair of the "ginger" tint possessed by the crook, Smart Alec.

He remembered the story the crook had told him in the hotel at Kansas City of the New York robbery, and of Figg's threat should he ever come face to face again with Ginger White—or Monkey White, as the cinema people called him—the accomplice who had double-crossed him.

But Micky's thoughts were rudely broken into by the voice of Jeff Romery, the chief director.

"If you've finished handing out those props, kid," he shouted, "come over here and bring that dog of yours!"

With Chappie bounding along at his heels, Micky ran across to the camera where Jeff was standing.

"Now, before I rehearse this scene," said Romery, "I'm going to tell you exactly what I require. I want you to go out with this gang of toughs, who are supposed to be beating it from the sheriffs. Chappie will be held by one of my assistants outside the limit—that is, the focus of the cameras—and when you are running the dog will be released. When Chappie rushes at you pretend to beat him off with this loaded cane, and then fall to the ground as though grappling with him."

Jeff Romery then got all the actors and supers around him, and, mounting a portable staning, he explained to them clearly and patiently what he required of them.

Floyd Unwin and his gang of supers, including Micky, took up their position some distance to the right-front of the cameras. Then Jeff put his megaphone to his lips.

"Action!" he roared.

Immediately actors and supers began running towards a clump of boulders which had been indicated by Romery, every now and then turning to loose off a round or two of blank ammunition at their pursuers, the sheriff's officers.

Among these pursuers, in the character of the sheriff's daughter, was Miss Maidstone, the girl whose life Micky had so pluckily saved at Santa Monica.

"That's the stuff, boys!" bellowed Jeff through his megaphone. "Put some life into it! Remember you're a bunch of bad men and if you're caught it means a stretch in

the pen for every goldurned man-jack o' you! Now loose that dog, Turner! Keep running, Micky! Ah, the dog's at your heels! Beat him off! Beat him off! That's dandy! All right; that'll do boys. We'll try the close-up now!"

The director then grouped the gang of "thieves" who had survived the fight before the levelled revolvers of the sheriff's men.

"Now keep your hands up above your heads," he ordered them, "and register viciously at the liberty taken with him."

Chappie, who was spoiling the effect by affectionately pawing at Micky, the "desperate ruffian" he had just been helping to capture, was removed forthwith, snarling viciously at the liberty taken with him.

As the "close-up" was rehearsed, Jeff Romery, from the raised platform, interposed with snappy remarks of praise and disapproval, including a considerable amount of caustic advice to some of the supers.

"Come, put some brains into your work, boys!" he called. "Look as you would if you saw the prospect of wearing striped suits in Sing-Sing for the next few years! Ah, that's fine, Monkey! That expression of yours would sure make any police guys glad they'd got you covered! Good boy, Jed! Those gasps do you credit! Get out o' it, you in the check pants! I saw you smile! I've got no time to waste with mutts like you! See you get killed when the scene's 'shot.' I don't want you back again for the 'close-up.' Get some hate into your face, Micky; you look more as though you were expecting ten dollars instead o' ten years!"

And so the astute director rehearsed the talent at his disposal until even he confessed himself satisfied with the result.

Again the actors took up their positions in the open for the actual filming of the pictures. When all was ready and they were in action under the supervision of the assistant-director, Jeff Romery turned to the cameramen.

"Shoot!" he said.

At once the soft clicking as the handles of the machines were revolved announced the actual filming of the last scene for the new Broadworth production was proceeding.

Romery almost regretted his decision to allow Chappie to take part in the scene, but he had no cause to worry. The little dog acted his part to the life, for no sooner did the assistant-director release him than he made straight for Micky at top-speed.

When his young master began to beat him off, Chappie came to the conclusion that this was a splendid new game got up for his benefit, with the result that he sprang again and again at Micky, barking lustily the while.

When the lad rolled on the ground the little mongrel darted in again, snapping away playfully with his teeth, but without being

in the least spiteful, although he seemed so very much in earnest.

It was a thrilling scene indeed, that fight between the bad men and the sheriff's officers among the rocks and clumps of cactus of that "location" in the San Gabriel foothills.

Two or three score of supers alone were taking part in it, and they entered into their work with zest. From their six-shooters they blazed off blank to their hearts' content, while a few simulated casualties by falling to the ground and lying still, or else squinting about in the most heartrending manner.

Micky thoroughly enjoyed every moment of the acting, and put plenty of "hate" into his work in the final "close-up."

When the filming was finished most of the supers threw themselves on the ground for a quiet smoke while they awaited the welcome announcement that lunch was ready.

A small field-kitchen had been brought out in the cars, and an appetising odour of baking beans proceeded from its direction. Kennedy N. Broadworth was a great believer in good meals for his employees, whether at the studios or on "location."

In less than ten minutes cheery shouts from the cooks caused a general stampede, and actors and supers, including the "slain," most of whom had been content to rest where they had fallen, quickly ranged themselves at the trestle-tables which had been set up.

As he ran along with Chappie at his side, Micky happened to notice one man still lying on the ground by a cactus-bush, and, thinking that the fellow was asleep, good-naturedly went out of his way to rouse him.

As he approached he recognised the form as that of Monkey White, and for a moment he hesitated, as he had no desire to have anything at all to do with the man.

But something curious in the man's position on the ground made him overcome his natural repugnance, and he went forward and grasped the other's shoulder.

The subconscious fear which had sought expression in his mind at once became defined as freezing horror.

Monkey White was not sleeping. He was lying very still with a bullet through him!

On the Trail of Jed Tomson!

MICKY stepped back from the body of Monkey White with a low exclamation of horror. There was no shadow of doubt in Micky's mind that the man was dead, nor as to whose hand had killed him.

The lad gazed across to where the cinema folk were ranged in a cheery party round the light trestle tables. They had noticed nothing, for the body of the fallen man was concealed from their view by the cactus-bushes.

In spite of the disquieting effect of his

startling find, Micky lost no time in deciding what to do. He ran lightly across to the small table where Mary Maidstone, Floyd Unwin, and Jeff Romery were sitting, and requested to speak to the director privately.

It was clear that Jeff imagined the lad had come to see him about something amiss with the "props," of which he had charge; but he excused himself, and accompanied Micky to a spot a few yards away from the others.

No sooner were they out of earshot of the rest of the company than Micky burst his bombshell.

"Mr. Romery," he cried, "one of the supers has been killed!"

"Killed! Why, what the smoke d'you mean?"

"Come with me, sir!" panted Micky. "I didn't want to scare everybody, so I came straight to you. It's that chap, Monkey White!"

"Monkey White! I know the one you mean. Where is he?"

"Behind there!"

Micky indicated the clump of cactus, and the cinema director promptly sprinted across the intervening stretch of ground to confirm the startling news he had heard.

As Micky came up behind him Jeff gave a low whistle, and dropped on his knees by the side of Monkey White.

"He's been shot below the right shoulder, Micky," he said; "but he's not dead."

The director always carried field dressings in his pocket in case of accidents on "location," and he quickly and deftly bound up the wound of the unconscious man.

When he had finished his grey eyes regarded the English lad narrowly.

"See here, kid," he said. "I guess this was an accident. A packet o' live cartridges must have been among that blank you handed out!"

"No, there wasn't, sir!" said Micky vehemently. "The assistant director checked every packet after me. Monkey White was shot deliberately!"

"Jumping mackinaws! What makes you think that?"

"There was a chap among the supers I think I recognised for a crook, who had a grudge against White," said Micky. "I mean the one who had a rough beard and walked with a limp, and who signed himself Jed Tomson."

In a few short sentences he put Romery in possession of the facts about his meeting the cracksmen, Smart Alec, in New York, and of his adventures with him while beating his way across the continent.

When Micky had finished his brief narration the director looked greatly perturbed.

"Say, this is real serious," he said. "It sure looks as though Jed Tomson and Alec Figg may be one and the same person. We'll hike along to the rest o' the company now, and see if this Tomson is still around, and if he is I'll keep him under close observation until the police take the matter in hand. You stay here, and I'll send someone across to help you get White in one of the automobiles."

Romery strode across to the dining-tables and glanced round. It did not take him ten seconds to discover that Jed Tomson was missing. Then he gave a few whispered orders to one of his assistants about removing White to hospital.

A suspicion that something was seriously wrong soon got about, and eager questions began to be asked. At once the director held up his hand for silence.

"Boys," he said, as a hush fell on the gathering, "a man has been shot. It may have been an accident or it may have been something worse. If any o' you saw anything suspicious during the filming o' the scene in the open I'd like to hear about it."

Romery paused for a second, but the only response were blank looks of amazement.

"Waal, the matter'll be in the hands o' the sheriff just as soon as I can get a car across with someone to the nearest telephone. Meanwhile, there's one more question I want to ask. Have any o' you seen the man Jed Tomson since the filming o' the scene?"

The supers glanced from one to another, and a loud buzz of conversation broke out; but no one had seen the man from the time when they had set off for their sham fight for the pictures.

Jeff Romery wasted no more time. He called for Floyd Unwin, and rapped out a few sharp orders.

"You're a good horseman, Unwin," he said, "so take three or four of the boys, and go

over in a car to Old Man Cole's place across that hill, and get him to let you have some horses. Then see if you can't round up this Jed Tomson; he can't have gone far."

Whilst Unwin was selecting his men, Jeff set the rest of the supers to the task of scouring the country round about for some signs of the missing man. Afterwards he gave the drivers of the cars strict orders that they were to take nobody back to town without his permission or until the arrival of the police.

Whilst these matters were being settled Monkey White was placed in one of the automobiles in the charge of the assistant-director, and when Jeff had given his instructions this car proceeded at full speed for Los Angeles.

A few moments later the director himself and Micky climbed into another car. The only other person Jeff allowed to accompany him was the young cinema star, Mary Maidstone, who was, naturally, very upset by the unfortunate occurrence.

Romery knew of a private residence between the "location" and Cinema City which was connected by phone with Los Angeles, and for this house he bade the chauffeur drive with all speed.

Raising a cloud of yellow dust, the big motor-car passed along the uneven road, and in less than fifteen minutes the journey was accomplished.

Jeff Romery immediately sprang out. "Take Miss Maidstone to her home, Micky," he said, "and then come back here and pick me up."

As the car gathered speed again Micky settled into a gloomy and thoughtful silence. Although he believed the man was a crook, he was sorry for Monkey White; but he was also cast down on his own account.

He would have to give his evidence in court for a certainty, he mused, and he could not do that without there coming to light the manner in which he had smuggled himself into the United States. The result, he foresaw, would be deportation, and afterwards probable capture by the British police for the robbery he had been so unjustly accused of committing at the circus in Liverpool.

In all probability, moreover, Figg, if arrested and put on trial, would revenge himself by revealing what he had heard concerning the lad's reason for leaving the Old Country; and Micky, who knew nothing about the tedious processes of extradition, fully believed he would then be taken in charge by the police of the United States and sent to England under escort.

Micky had told Figg his story in confidence when he had not suspected the identity of the crook; and now, as can easily be imagined, he was heartily sorry for ever having mentioned a word about it.

Mary Maidstone noticed the preoccupation of the lad, and put it down to the same unfortunate occurrence as had depressed her own usually buoyant spirits. Accordingly, she overcame her own feelings sufficiently to attempt a bright conversation, with the idea of cheering him up a bit, and succeeded to a degree in taking Micky out of himself.

Micky bade his friend, Mary Maidstone, good-bye at the star's own beautiful house on the outskirts of Los Angeles, and then the car turned and raced back to pick up Jeff Romery.

The director was waiting by the roadside, having got his telephone message through to the police; and when he had taken his seat the automobile continued its journey back to "location."

Micky took the opportunity during the ride to inform the kindly director his fears concerning himself and to ask Jeff's advice.

"If the question arises, Micky," said Romery, "make a clean breast o' the way you got into this country; but if you didn't commit a robbery at home I don't see no call for you to mention that. O' course, I grant it might be awkward if Figg were arrested and came out with it. Anyway, kid, you kin be sure that Mr. Broadworth and I and your other friends with the outfit will stand by you. Come round to my apartments to-night, and we'll have another chat when we know whether this Jed Tomson is rounded up or not. Buddy Gaylord will tell you how to find the place."

Grateful indeed was Micky to thus find a friend in his troubles, and he thanked Jeff earnestly for his kindness, and decided to avail himself of the director's invitation for the evening.

Hardly had they arrived back on "location" when a small two-seater dashed up bearing a couple of sheriff's officers.

From them Jeff and Micky learned that a posse of experienced trackers were coming out on horseback to get on Jed Tomson's trail, and they "opined" that it would be only a matter of a few hours before the man was caught. Moreover, they brought word that the cinema director and the English lad were to report as soon as possible at the headquarters in Los Angeles.

Jeff left orders with the drivers of the cars that they were to place themselves under the orders of the police, and only to return to Cinema City with the company when permission was granted to do so.

In little over an hour from the time of leaving "location," Micky had finished narrating his suspicions that Alec P. Figg, the cracksmen, was the cause of the shooting of Monkey White, to the guardians of the law in Los Angeles, and had received permission to return home.

Greatly to his surprise, his revelation that he had deserted a British ship in New York harbour had not created the impression he had expected with the officer who took down his deposition, and for some reason known only to the police nothing was said to him about the matter.

Although Micky knew it not, the news that Smart Alec was in their city did not surprise the authorities in the very least, for the good reason that they had been aware of the fact for some time.

Smart Alec's extraordinary ingenuity had kept him out of gaol during his career of crime, but nevertheless he was recognised by the police of the whole continent as a prince of crooks-upon whom a vigilant eye had to be kept. All they lacked, as a rule, for the purpose of bringing him to book was sufficient evidence to convict.

When, therefore, Alec P. Figg, in the course of his peregrinations casually dropped into the principal city of Southern California, a trunk telephone call from the sheriff's office at a small place up the line of the Santa Fe railroad, announced the probability of his coming to town.

Within half an hour of his arrival detectives had shadowed him to a small lodging-house, but that was the end of the trail, as far as they were concerned. By some slick means the astute crook had managed to throw them off the scent, and the police had heard nothing more of him until Micky had stated his suspicions that Smart Alec was concerned in the shooting affair during the cinema scene in the San Gabriel foothills.

Late in the afternoon Micky left the court with Jeff Romery, who had pledged his word that the lad should appear again when called upon. Straightway the two drove back to Cinema City—Jeff to report to Mr. Broadworth, and Micky to receive and check the "props" when they were brought back from "location."

Up to the time of their leaving the court no news had come through concerning the missing man, Jed Tomson, whose disappearance could not have been more mysterious and complete had he vanished entirely into thin air.

Chappie Performs a Few "Twicks!"

JEFFERY J. ROMERY'S apartments were in a building devoted entirely to self-contained flats of the most expensive and up-to-date variety.

Electricity was the keynote of the place. The elevators were driven by electricity, the cooking was done by electricity, a score of labour-saving devices for sweeping the rooms down to peeling the potatoes were worked by electricity; there were electric radiators in each room for heating the place, when necessary, and, of course, the most modern telephone system was installed in the place.

The telephones, in addition to their normal use, could be utilised with a special attachment for listening to the various theatrical performances and concerts in Los Angeles, and often Romery, with a party of bachelor pals, would spend an evening lying back in comfortable armchairs, listening to the stage actors or concert singers performing miles away.

Although a staff of servants were kept for the entire building, Jeff was chiefly "done for" by Rastus, an aged, white-haired dorkie, who had been a retainer in the Tennessee home of the Romerys longer, anyway, than Jeff himself could remember.

On the evening of that eventful day on which Monkey White had been shot Jeff was loling in an armchair in his "den" in all the luxury befitting a man earning ten thousand dollars a year. Opposite him sat



Rather to Chappie's disgust he was again put through his paces. "Waw-waw! Haw, haw, haw!" Reggie, Jeff, and Micky swung round in alarm at the terrible outburst. It came from Rastus, the old negro. (See page 12.)

Reginald Clarence Eton, the famous English dude of Filmland, wearing that exquisite raiment without which he had never been seen neither in public nor in private life.

The two cinema men were talking "shop," and discussing the events of the day, but they broke off their conversation as Rastus poked his black face in at the door and announced the arrival of Micky.

Jeff at once rose to greet his guest.

"Come right in, Micky!" he said cheerily. "Did you bring along Chappie, as I told you to do this afternoon?"

The question of the film director was answered by Chappie himself calmly trotting into the room. Chappie was a favourite with all the studio people who had witnessed his dive into the surf at Santa Monica, and the kindly Southerner had a particularly warm spot in his heart for the little mongrel dog whose intelligence and pluck surpassed that of most thoroughbreds with pedigrees twenty times the length of their own well-fed bodies.

After giving the little dog a friendly pat on the head, Jeff waved a hand in the direction of the English dude.

"No need to give you a knock-down to my other visitor, Micky," he said. "You've met Reggie before."

"Rather!" said Micky. "We've had several yarns together about the Old Country. He's English, too, you know."

"And pwould of it, deah boy," murmured the film dude, daintily flicking his cigarette-end into the lacquer tray at his elbow. "We Bwitishers, y'know, Jeffy, have to hang together to keep our wickets up among you American wascals."

Romery laughed merrily, and asked Micky to help himself to some "grape-juice," that sickly, non-alcoholic beverage so popular in the United States.

Meanwhile Chappie, who had only been allowed to come by his young master on the distinct understanding he was to curl up in a corner and sleep quietly throughout the visit, found himself a comfortable bed on a bearskin rug, and promptly proceeded to dream of chasing rats down a hill.

Jeff's genial welcome and the presence of

Reggie Eton, for whom the lad had conceived a great liking, soon put Micky quite at his ease.

"Permit me to present you with a cigawette, deah boy," murmured Reggie, extending a beautiful gold case containing an assortment of superior brands all marked with the crest of his ancient family.

"No, thanks," said Micky. "I'm a non-smoker, you know."

"Weally, you are a most extraordinary person, Micky," murmured the famous dude languidly. "Howevah, evewybody to his own taste—what!"

"The kid wants to become a cinema stunt artist," said Jeff Romery, "and I guess he's kinder skeered that smoking wouldn't help to improve his nerves. I don't blame him, for I reckon the habit doesn't do anyone any good."

Jeff rather belied his words by producing a long, black cigar from his vest pocket and sticking it in his mouth at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Jeff's cigars were notorious for being the most vicious ever seen out West, and when he lighted this particular specimen the atmosphere of the room speedily transformed itself into a dense blue haze of obnoxious fumes.

"I heah that you and your wipping little dog, Chappie acted for the films to-day, Micky," said Reggie Eton, "so you've got your foot on the bottom wung of the cinema ladder. Y'know a dog's a decided asset to a studio, especially if it can perform any decent twicks."

"Waal, Chappie kin do stunts," said Romery, patting the little mongrel who was lying at his feet affectionately. "Didn't you tell me so, Micky?"

"You bet he can!" said Micky enthusiastically. "I named him after Charlie Chaplin partly on account of the stunts he could do."

"You should have told Chaplin about his namesake," laughed Jeff. "He'd have been tickled to death, I know!"

"Make him do some twicks now, deah boy," suggested Reggie. "I suppose he can sit up and beg—what!"

Micky, who had been brought up in a

circus and had his own ideas of performing animals, smiled disdainfully at the dude's conception of a trick.

As though suddenly bitten by one of his own dream rats, Chappie sprang up and darted to his young master.

Micky rose from his seat and snapped his fingers.

"Up, Chappie!"

The little dog rose upright on his hind legs.

"Walk, Chappie!"

Had the little terrier started speaking the American language, the cinema director and the film dude could not have been more astonished.

Chappie ran a few steps in imitation of his great namesake's waggie-walk, and took a sudden turn round the leg of a table with his right hind foot off the floor.

Jeff Romery and Reggie Eton burst into shrieks of laughter.

"Bai Jove!" gasped the dude, wiping the tears from his eyes with an immaculate silk handkerchief. "Weally, that's the funniest twick I've evah seen!"

"Ha, ha, ha, that's skookum!" howled the Southerner. "Didn't you exhibit that trick when you went to tea with Mrs. Chaplin, Micky?"

"No," answered Micky; "but Mrs. Chaplin asked me to go again when she and her husband had returned from their visit to the East, and I shall introduce Chappie then."

"By gum, you must!" cried Jeff. "D'you know, kid, I reckon you've got a small fortune in that little dog. I dare say Chaplin would be glad to make use of him in one of his productions, and pay well for the privilege, too. If we went in for comedies in the Broadworth outfit, I'd sign you a contract to-morrow for his services!"

Whilst all this conversation between the human beings was going on, Chappie was getting fed up. He wanted his usual lump of sugar, and cocked his eye at Micky as much as to say, "Hi, what's the matter, master? Don't you think I did the trick all right?"

Chappie, he it said, had been trained by kindness—the only real way of teaching any

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animal tricks—and Micky never failed to reward his little four-footed chum for work well performed.

As soon as he understood the requirements Jeff touched the button of an electric bell, and in a few seconds Rastus appeared.

"Bring in a basin of loaf sugar, Rastus!" he ordered.

Too well trained to comment on the unusual request, Rastus hobbled off and soon brought back a large bowlful, and Chappie had the satisfaction of catching two of the biggest pieces which could be found of his favourite sweetmeat.

"That is weally a pwopah twick, y'know, deah boy!" said Reggie Eton. "Oblige me with a repetition of it!"

Rather to Chappie's disgust he was again put through his paces, and this time he circled the table-leg in an even more Chapin-like manner than before.

"Waw-waw! Haw, haw, haw!"

Reggie, Jeff, and Micky swung round in alarm at the terrible outburst. By the door they saw Rastus, the old negro, nearly doubled completely up, his dusky face split from ear to ear with a laugh that showed every bit of gold in every tooth in his head.

"Waw, haw, haw! Waal, waal, I neber did! Dat's de cleberest and most laughablest stunt I done gone eber see in all my born days, Massa Jeff! Haw, haw, haw!"

At last Rastus regained sufficient strength to totter from the room, but for about ten minutes Jeff and his two guests could hear the "Haw, haw, haws" of the old darkie resounding throughout the flat.

When Chappie had been put through the whole repertoire of his tricks a pause occurred in the conversation of the three cinema people. Each was thinking of the shooting of the super, Monkey White, and to prevent the talk from turning on the subject which he knew Micky was worried about, Jeff tactfully introduced another topic.

"Perhaps you haven't heard, Micky," he

said, "that the filming of our new Broadworth production, 'The Mysterious Pearl,' commences in the course of a day or two. It'll be a great photo-play, with plenty o' thrills. Floyd Unwin will have a dandy chance in a number of daring stunts, and we are using some o' the animals from our menagerie for the picture. I guess I'll be able to fit you into some o' the 'mob stuff' at times."

Micky was glad enough to have even the opportunity of working with the crowd of supers, and he thanked the director heartily for his consideration.

"I noticed you were putting your heart into your work to-day, kid," said Jeff, "so I'll keep my eye on you. You mustn't mind, though, if I hand you the straight talk at times."

"I'm only too anxious to be told, Mr. Romery," said Micky.

"I know you are, kid; and it's your kind I want. I've got no use for the ginks who only think about their pay cheques."

From Buddy Gaylord Micky had heard a good deal about the chief director of the Broadworth company.

Jeff had the eye of an eagle and the memory of a kaku bird. When handling a mob for the pictures nothing seemed to miss his notice. He could detect the least thing amiss among a thousand extras, and woe betide the optimistic super who played the fool thinking he would not be seen.

On the other hand a man who had any real talent and ambition in him was lucky to work under Romery, for the director spared no pains to teach all he knew of the exacting requirements of film-acting to such a one.

It was with considerable elation, therefore, that Micky heard the praise from his lips, and he mentally resolved to deserve all Jeff's kindly encouragement.

A ring on the telephone bell sounded. Jeff went across to the 'phone and took up the receiver.

"Hallo! Yep, this is Romery speaking. What's that?"

As the director listened, Micky gazed at him apprehensively. He knew instinctively that the message concerned the shooting affair of the afternoon.

"What had happened? Had the man, Jed Tomson, been captured? If so, would he prove to be Alec P. Figg, the crook? Was Monkey White still alive? These questions ran in dizzy procession through his brain.

Micky was quite prepared to state what he knew of Smart Alec, even though the cracksman in revenge revealed his knowledge of the alleged theft in the circus at Liverpool. But the lad shrank from the thought of being shipped home as an undesirable alien—as a thief who had fled from the justice of his native land.

For some moments Jeff Romery listened intently at the telephone. Then, with a crisp "Good-bye," he hung up the receiver.

"Any news of that wascal, Tomson, deah boy?" asked Reggie.

"No," said Jeff; "but the authorities have given me other momentous news. Firstly, I have been informed that Monkey White is still alive, although in a very critical condition. Secondly, the cracksman, Smart Alec, was arrested on suspicion an hour ago in an opium den run by a Chinaman called Li Chang Foo in Los Angeles. To-morrow morning, Micky, you and I are to go down town and see if we can identify Smart Alec as the super, Jed Tomson, who was out on 'location' with us to-day."

ANOTHER LONG INSTALMENT
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STORY OF THE CINEMA WILL
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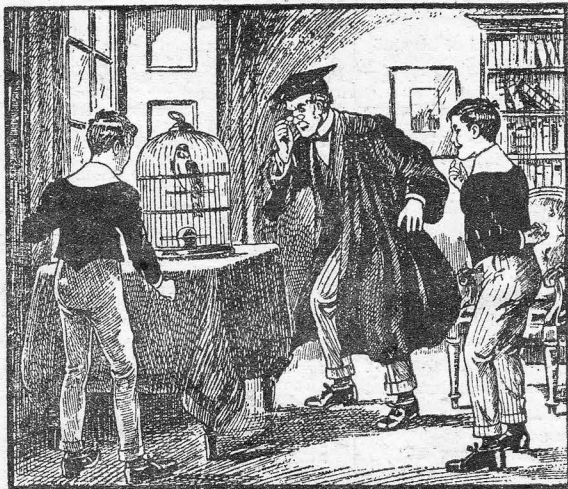
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

An Amazing Mystery.

JIMMY SILVER jumped. Jimmy had come along to Study No. 5 to call for Van Ryn, the new boy in the Fourth, to take him down to the football.

There was a conversation going on in the study, and though the door was closed the voices came quite distinctly to Jimmy's ears as he stopped.

And this is what Jimmy Silver heard, with great amazement:

"Help yourself to the smokes, Towny, dear boy!"

"Thanks! Got a match?"

"Here you are."

"Rippin' fags, these!"

"Oh, toppin'!"

Jimmy Silver simply blinked. The voices were the voices of Townsend and Topham, the Nuts of the Fourth. Such talk between the two Nuts was not surprising in itself—Jimmy knew their little ways. But it was going on in Van Ryn's study, and Van Ryn was not in the least nutty, and, moreover, he was on the worst of terms with Townsend & Co. The Nuts of Rookwood had fallen foul of the South African junior on his first arrival, and they were down on him with a very heavy down.

"Well, my hat!" Jimmy Silver ejaculated. It looked as if Van Ryn had made it up with his foes in the Form, and adopted their nutty manners and customs with a vengeance. If the latter was the case, Jimmy Silver intended to speak a word in season—an emphatic word. He rapped sharply at the door, and turned the handle.

But the door did not open. It was locked on the inside.

"Van Ryn!" called out Jimmy sharply. The conversation in the study ceased suddenly at the first knock.

"Hallo!" called out the cheery voice of the new junior.

"Let me in, you young ass!"

"Certainly!"

The key turned, and the door opened. Jimmy Silver strode into the study. The sturdy South African greeted him with a smile. He had been on the best of terms with the captain of the Fourth from the day he came.

"Time for the footer?" he asked. "All serene!"

Jimmy Silver stared round the study. Townsend and Topham were not visible. Neither, to Jimmy's surprise, was there any aroma of cigarette-smoke in the room.

"What the thunder—" began the astonished Jimmy.

"Anything the matter?"

"Look here, Van Ryn," said Jimmy directly. "I heard Towny, and Toppo talking here! Where are they?"

"Blest if I know!"

"What was the door locked for?"

"I've been studying."

"And you sported your oak because you were studying?"

"Yes."

"No smoking going on?"

"Smoking! Certainly not! I don't smoke!"

"Well, I hope you're not such a silly ass,"

said Jimmy Silver. "But I heard what was said. I couldn't help it, as I had just stopped at your door. I thought you were a straight chap, Van Ryn. But I tell you I know that Townsend and Topham are here, and you say you don't know where they are."

Van Ryn nodded calmly.

"I don't know where they are," he replied.

"I haven't seen either of them since lessons."

Jimmy gave him a grim look.

"That'll do," he said. "It's no business of mine, of course. I thought you were straight, and I made a mistake. So long!"

Jimmy Silver turned to the door.

"Hold on!" said the new junior quietly.

"You think that Townsend and Topham are in this study at this minute—"

"I know they are—hiding somewhere."

Van Ryn smiled.

"Well, look for them," he said. "If you find them I'll eat them!"

"What the dickens do you mean?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver angrily. "Do you think I was dreaming I heard voices?"

"If they're in this study, you can use my head for a footer," said Van Ryn coolly.

"You're calling me a liar, you know. Put it to the proof."

"I'll jolly soon do that!" growled Jimmy Silver.

He dragged up the table-cover and looked under the table, naturally supposing that the smokers had dodged there out of sight. But there was nothing under the table. He looked behind the armchair, but the space behind the armchair was vacant. He pitched aside the screen in the corner, but there was nothing behind the screen. He looked into the study cupboard, though certainly there was no room there for two juniors to hide. The study cupboard was drawn blank.

Van Ryn watched him with a smile and a merry gleam in his eyes.

Jimmy gave up the search at last, thoroughly bewildered.

"Where are they?" he ejaculated.

"You said they were in this study."

"I heard them talking here!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Well, find them."

"They—they must have got out somehow."

Jimmy looked from the window, but it was evident that Towny and Toppo had not negotiated a thirty-foot drop. He even looked up the chimney, but there was no room in the chimney for Townsend and Topham.

Jimmy Silver looked bewildered.

"Well?" grinned Van Ryn.

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Jimmy Silver, rubbing his nose in amazement. "Unless I was dreaming. I heard their voices here. I—I couldn't have supposed that they came from this study if they didn't. But they're not here. How did they get out?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you Dutch image?"

"I'm waiting for you to find them!"

THE JOKER OF ROOKWOOD!

A MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

chuckled Van Ryn. "I told you they weren't here. Are we going down to the footer?"

"Yeess, I suppose so."

"Well, I'm ready."

Van Ryn followed the captain of the Fourth from the study. Jimmy was in a state of utter amazement. Unless his ears had deceived him, he had heard Townsend and Topham talking in the study. Van Ryn's assertion that they were not there he had regarded as a palpable whopper. Yet they were not there.

As the two juniors left the School House they sighted three elegant juniors chatting in the quadrangle. They were Smythe of the Shell, and Townsend and Topham of the Fourth. Jimmy stared at them.

"Hallo, here they are!" smiled Van Ryn.

"Not in my study, you see."

"Well, my hat!"

Jimmy strode up to the three Nuts.

"Were you in Van Ryn's study ten minutes ago, Towny?" he asked.

Townsend sniffed.

"I'm not on speakin' terms with the cad," he said. "I'm hardly likely to go into his study."

"Or you, Topham?"

"No!" snapped Topham. "I sha'n't be goin' there unless it's to punch his nose. What are you drivin' at?"

It was evident that Townsend and Topham, though not always truthful youths, were speaking the truth on this occasion. Jimmy Silver did not explain. He walked on after Van Ryn, leaving Towny & Co. staring.

"Satisfied?" asked Van Ryn, as Jimmy joined him.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Yes, I'm sorry I doubted your word; but—"

—but I could have sworn— Dash it all, I must have been dreaming! It's jolly queer! Blessed if I can understand it! Let's get to the footer!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Beaumont is Wrathful.

WHEREFORE that worried brow, O King?"

Arthur Edward Lovell asked

that question. The Fistical Four

were at tea in the end study, after the footer

practice. Lovell and Raby and Newcome

were ruddy and cheery, but Jimmy Silver,

usually the cheeriest of the four, was plunged

into deep thought.

"Anything wrong?" asked Raby. "You've

been looking like a boiled owl for a long time,

Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"It's awfully queer!" he said.

"Are you alluding to your face?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Jimmy peevishly.

"I tell you it's jolly queer! I'm not

the sort of chap to imagine things, am I?"

His chums stared at him.

"Well, that depends," said Lovell. "You

imagine you're better at taking penalty-kicks

than I am, Jimmy. Pure imagination!"

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"Fathead! Look here, listen to me, and give me your opinion!"

"Fire away, my son! Pass the jam first!"

"And the pickles!"

"Listen to me, you frabjous asses, and dash the jam and the pickles!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Keep your wool on, dear boy! Go ahead; we're hanging on your words!"

Jimmy Silver related the peculiar incident in Van Ryn's study. Lovell and Raby and Newcome listened in astonishment at first, and then with broad grins.

"Well, what do you think of that?" asked Jimmy.

"I think you're a bit off your rocker, old chap!" said Lovell judiciously. "Does it run in your family, do you know?"

"Fathead!" roared Jimmy.

"It's a sure sign when a chap hears voices!" grinned Raby. "Poor old Jimmy! But I must say I've seen it coming on for some time!"

"Ass!"

"Next time the study's in funds we'll get you a strait-waistcoat, Jimmy," said Newcome comfortingly. "Rely on your old pals!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver glared at his old pals. "You howling asses! This is a serious matter! I tell you I heard Towy and Topy talking in Van Ryn's study as plain as I hear you now. But they weren't there!"

"If they weren't there, they weren't there," said Lovell. "That's a dead cert, like anything in Euclid. Ergo—that's Latin—you imagined it! I suppose it's old age coming on suddenly!"

"Unless you're trying to pull our leg," said Raby. "But if this is one of your little jokes, I'm blessed if I see the point!"

"It isn't, fathead! It makes me feel jolly uncomfortable!" said Jimmy. "They weren't there, right enough, and I as good as called Dutchy a liar over it. But I heard their voices!"

"You've been drinking too much ginger beer, Jimmy!"

"Br-r-r!" growled Jimmy Silver.

And the subject dropped, though the three juniors eyed their study leader very curiously. Jimmy Silver, cool and clear-headed as he was, was the last fellow in the world to be afflicted by strange fancies. The door of the end study opened suddenly, and Higgs of the Fourth rushed in excitedly.

The Fistical Four jumped up. Higgs was the bully of the Fourth, though he had mended his ways very much since he had chummed with the new junior, Van Ryn. But Higgs was not on the warpath this time.

"Come on, you fellows!" he shouted.

"What's on?"

Higgs chuckled gleefully.

"Beaumont, you know—Beaumont of the Sixth! Ha, ha, ha! He's in an awful wax—"

"Well, I'm jolly well not going to leave my tea to see Beaumont in a wax!" grunted Lovell. "I've seen the cad in a wax often enough!"

"He can't get into his study!" shouted Higgs.

"Well, let him stay out!"

"Fathead! I tell you, it's awful fun! Knowles of the Sixth has locked himself in Beaumont's study, and won't let him in!"

"Gammot!"

"Honest Injun!" yelled Higgs. "I came to tell you chaps! Come on!"

Higgs rushed out of the study in great excitement.

"What rot!" said Lovell. "He's pulling our legs! Knowles wouldn't play a silly trick like that!"

"My hat! I'd like to see Beaumont and Knowles punching one another!" ejaculated Raby. "A pair of rotten bullies—"

"Let's go and see, anyway," said Jimmy.

The Fistical Four hurried out of the study. They found a number of the Fourth-Form fellows hurrying the same way, to the Sixth-Form passage. The exciting news had spread.

There was already a crowd on the spot when Jimmy Silver & Co. arrived. Beaumont, the bully of the Sixth, the most unpopular prefect on the Classical side, was thumping at his study door. The door was evidently locked. Beaumont's face was red with rage.

He thumped and hammered furiously. The passage was crowded with fellows. Van Ryn and Tubby Muffin and Oswald and Flynn were leaning in a row on the wall opposite the door. Beaumont was hammering at, grinning gleefully. Van Ryn, new as he was to Rookwood, had felt the heavy hand of the Classical bully, and he was evidently enjoying Beau-

mont's curious predicament. The prefect was not enjoying it, to judge by appearances.

"Open this door, you rotter!" shouted Beaumont.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth came out of his study and pushed through the grinning crowd.

"Beaumont, what on earth are you up to?" he exclaimed.

Beaumont turned round a red and furious face.

"That idiot Knowles has locked himself in my study, and won't let me in!" he shouted.

"Knowles?"

"Yes, Knowles!"

"What an awful cheek—a Modern cad!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

Bulkeley looked astounded.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "As if a prefect would play such a silly trick!"

"I tell you 's here!" howled Beaumont. "He's been talking to me through the keyhole! Lots of fellows heard him!"

"That's right enough," said Jobson of the Fifth. "I heard him!"

"He must be out of his senses, then, to play such a trick!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "Let me speak to him!"

Beaumont drew aside, panting, and Bulkeley knocked sharply on the door.

"Knowles! Are you there. Knowles?"

"What-ho! Here I am!" came a sharp, unpleasant voice, with a slight nasal sound—the well-known tones of Knowles, the Modern prefect.

"What are you doing in Beaumont's study?"

"Scoffing his tea."

Bulkeley jumped.

Such a reply from a cheeky fag would not have been surprising, but from a prefect of the Sixth Form it was simply astounding.

"Knowles, are you mad?" exclaimed Bulkeley. "What have you locked Beaumont out for?"

"Oh, I like to hear him ramp!"

"Open the door at once!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Knowles—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Bulkeley gasped.

"He must be out of his senses!" he exclaimed.

"I'm going into my study!" howled Beaumont. "My tea's getting cold, and that Modern cad is scoffing it, too! I just went out for a minute to speak to Neville, and that rotter must have slipped in! Fancy a prefect japing like a fag! Why, I'll hammer him till he yells, I tell you! Open this door, Knowles, you Modern cad!"

"Rats!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Where is Knowles?

JIMMY SILVER & CO. looked on, highly amused, but greatly astonished. The Classical chums did not like Knowles, the Modern prefect. He was a bully, and he was a rotter generally, according to the juniors. But with all Knowles' faults, they would never have expected him to play a trick like this, like a cheeky fag of the Third Form. He might have been expected to have some sense of the dignity of the Sixth Form.

Beaumont was astounded, too, but he was still more enraged. Prefect or no prefect, Knowles was locking him out of his study and scoffing his tea, and Beaumont intended to take summary vengeance as soon as he could get at him.

He hammered on the door with growing fury.

"Better chuck that!" said Bulkeley at last. "You'll have the masters coming up here, Beaumont!"

"I don't care! Do you think I'm going to be locked out of my study?" shrieked Beaumont.

"Knowles must be mad!"

"I'll hammer it out of him if he is! Open this door, you Modern cad!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Somebody get me something to smash in the door!" roared Beaumont. "Silver—Lovell—Jones, get me a form or something!"

"What-ho!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

There was a rush to obey Beaumont's excited command. The smashing in of a Sixth Form study was quite a delightful prospect to the juniors, and there wasn't a junior present who wouldn't have given a week's pocket-money to see the two unpopular seniors hammering one another.

The Fistical Four came rushing back along the passage, dragging a form with a terrific clatter.

"Here you are, Beaumont!"

Bulkeley interposed.

"Beaumont, you can't smash in the door!"

"Can't I?" roared Beaumont. "Do you think I'm going to be kept out all the evening, then? I've got my work to do!"

"Blest if I understand it!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "But you'd better get a Modern master here, and he'll order Knowles to open the door."

"Oh, rats!"

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The heavy form crashed on the lock, and the door groaned and creaked.

"Look out, here comes Bootles!" called out Flynn of the Fourth.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, came rustling along the corridor, with a very angry face.

"What is this uproar?" he exclaimed. "Beaumont, I am surprised that you allow this? Beaumont, are you out of your senses? What are you doing?"

"Knowles is keeping me out of my study!" gasped Beaumont. "He's locked me out! He's scoffing my grub!"

"Nonsense!"

"It's true, sir!" said Bulkeley.

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Bootles rapped sharply on the door.

"Knowles! Are you there, Knowles?" The crowd in the passage listened breathlessly. They wondered whether Knowles would venture to reply to Mr. Bootles as he had replied to Bulkeley. But there was no answer from the study.

Mr. Bootles rapped again.

"Knowles! Knowles!"

No reply.

"You must be mistaken. Knowles is not there!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "It is quite inconceivable that a prefect would play such a trick!"

"I tell you he spoke to us."

"What—what! Nonsense! He cannot be there! Knowles, if you are there I command you to reply!"

Silence.

"You see, he is not there," said Mr. Bootles severely. "Doubtless you locked the door yourself, Beaumont."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Probably you have the key in your pocket at this moment."

"I—"

"Doubtless this is sheer absent-mindedness on your part, Beaumont."

"But—but Knowles is in there, sir!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "He was answering us through the keyhole."

"Then why does he not answer now?" snapped Mr. Bootles. "You are mistaken. I am sure that a prefect would not play such a trick. Look in your pockets for the key, Beaumont."

Beaumont spluttered.

"If you please, sir," said Van Ryn of the Fourth, "there's a key lying on the floor."

He pushed it forward with his foot. Jimmy Silver gave him a quick glance. He had an idea that Van Ryn's foot had been on that key concealing it until that moment. But Van Ryn's face was quite innocent.

Mr. Bootles blinked at the key over his glasses.

"Is that your doorkey, Beaumont?"

"It—it it looks like it, sir!" stammered Beaumont, utterly taken aback.

"Try it in the door at once!"

Beaumont, like a fellow in a dream, stooped and picked up the key. He inserted it in the lock, and it turned. It was evidently the key belonging to the door. But how had Knowles locked himself in the study while the key was on the floor outside?

Beaumont threw the door open.

He stared into the study.

It was empty!

"Where on earth is Knowles?" ejaculated Bulkeley.

"Hiding somewhere!" exclaimed Beaumont furiously.

He rushed into the study, followed by half a dozen fellows. Their impression was that the practical joker was hiding to avoid meeting Mr. Bootles' wrathful eyes.

But a few minutes' search was quite enough to prove that there was no one in the study, excepting the searchers themselves.

"I told you Knowles was not here!" snapped Mr. Bootles.

"But—but somebody was there!" gasped Bulkeley.

"Nonsense! The study must have been locked from the outside, or the key could not have been outside."



Suddenly the Sixth-Former gave a jump. From the box beneath him there came a sudden, savage growl of a dog. The senior rose hastily and stared at the box. Gr-r-r-r! "What the dickens!" exclaimed Beaumont in amazement. (See page 16.)

Beaumont blinked round the study.
"He—he must have got out of the window!" he stammered.

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Bootles rustled away, frowning.

"All the same, Knowles was here, and he must have cleared off by the window," said Beaumont between his teeth.

"He hasn't touched your grub," remarked Bulkeley.

"No; I suppose that was only his rot." Beaumont stared at the tea-table. Nothing had been disturbed there. "He must have bolted by the window when he heard Bootles. Fancy a prefect playing such a fool-trick! I'll jolly well go over and talk to him about this!"

"But how on earth did the key get outside?"

"Might have shoved it under the door."

"There isn't room."

"The cad may have a key that fits, then. I'll jolly well teach him not to play tricks in my study!" snarled Beaumont.

And the Classical prefect, leaving his tea untouched, strode away, and hurried over to Mr. Manders' House to see Knowles. He came back in about ten minutes, looking rather dusty and rumped. Evidently there had been a warm argument on the Modern side.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Persecution of Mr. Bootles.

MR. BOOTLES was cross that morning.

As a rule, the Fourth Form-master was a kind and good-tempered little gentleman. But there were

times when he was cross, and this was one of them.

Some thoughtless youth had played a trick on Mr. Bootles that morning. When he sat at his high desk at the beginning of lessons, Mr. Bootles had reposed on his stool for about the millionth part of a second, and then leaped up with a yell that would have done credit to a Hun. There was a bent pin on his stool, and Mr. Bootles had found it.

It was not surprising that Mr. Bootles was annoyed. The trick was a foolish and dangerous one, and was probably the work of Higgs. But the culprit did not own up, and the whole class was sentenced to an hour's detention.

And Mr. Bootles' temper had suffered so much that he was rattly all the morning, and, indeed, seemed to have changed characters with Mr. Manders of the Modern side. The Modern juniors were quite glad to get out of the Form-room; but the unfortunate Classics had to stand Mr. Bootles all the morning. And towards third lesson he was beginning to have a wearing effect on them.

"Blow the silly ass who played that silly trick!" Jimmy Silver muttered wrathfully. "Bootles won't get over it for hours!"

"Silver!"

"Yes-es, sir?"

"You were speaking to Van Ryn?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Take a hundred lines, Van Ryn! You will take a hundred lines also, Van Ryn!"

"Van Ryn didn't speak, sir!" said Jimmy meekly.

"Silence!"

"But I didn't speak, sir!" protested Van Ryn.

"Take two hundred lines, Van Ryn!" Mr. Bootles evidently was not in a reasonable mood.

"Right on the warpath, by gad!" grinned Mornington.

Mr. Bootles' ears seemed as sharp as needles that morning.

"Take a hundred lines for talking in class, Mornington!"

"Oh, by gad!" grunted Mornington.

There was no more talking in class. Mr. Bootles was in a dangerous mood, and had to be treated tactfully. But there was an interruption before last morning lesson was over. The big Form-room windows were wide open, to admit the fresh morning air. Mr. Bootles' voice was droning away when a strange voice was suddenly heard, apparently calling in from the quadrangle:

"Rags an' bones! Bottles an' jars!"

The juniors simply spun round towards the window, and Mr. Bootles ceased speaking suddenly, and blinked in the same direction.

"Hany ole rags an' bones?" went on the same sing-song voice. "Rags an' bones! Bottles an' jars!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

The juniors grinned.

It was the first time in their experience that an itinerant merchant in rags and bones had called to ply his calling in the quadrangle of Rookwood School.

"Hany ole rags an' bones?"

Mr. Bootles strode to the window angrily.

"Go away!" he exclaimed. "How dare you come here? Go back to the back door, if you have any business here!"

The Form-master came back to the class,

quite supposing that the interruption was at an end. But it wasn't. Just as he began droning again that sing-song voice floated in at the window:

"Rags an' bones! Bottles an' jars! Hany ole rags an' bones!"

There was a chuckle from the Fourth. The Classical juniors were tickled by the persistence of the rag-merchant, and they welcomed the interruption to the lesson in the thundery atmosphere of the Form-room.

Mr. Bootles did not welcome it. He breathed hard through his nose.

Once more—he strode, rustling, to the window, and stared out angrily into the quad. "Will you go away?" he shouted.

"Keep yer wool on, guv'nor!"

Mr. Bootles blinked to and fro from the window. The rag-merchant was not to be seen, though his voice sounded quite close.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"Hany ole rags an' bones, guv'nor?"

"Certainly not!"

"I'll give you a shillin' for that there gownd."

"What—what!" gasped Mr. Bootles, purple with indignation. Mr. Bootles' gown had seen service, but certainly it was worth a good deal more than a shilling.

"Hany ole rags an' bones?"

"Where is the insolent knave?" exclaimed the exasperated Mr. Bootles. "I cannot see him! Where are you, man? How dare you hide behind that tree and call out your offensive remarks?"

"Eighteenpence for the gownd, guv'nor."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Classical Fourth.

Mr. Bootles spun round from the window.

"Silence! Silence immediately! There is no occasion for merriment in the absurd insolence of that intrusive person! Silence!"

"Hany ole rags an' bones!"

"Goodness gracious, this is unendurable!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. And he rushed from the Form-room to interview the rag-merchant personally outside.

"My hat! What larks!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "That ragman is a boon and a blessing. But what's he doing it for?"

"I wonder!" grinned Van Ryn.

The Classics rushed to the window.

Mr. Bootles came whisking out into the quadrangle, with the evident intention of making some emphatic remarks to the persistent merchant.

But, to his amazement, the merchant had disappeared.

Certainly, there was no sign of him to be discovered anywhere near the windows of the Fourth Form-room. He was not hiding behind the big tree opposite the window. He was not to be seen anywhere.

Mr. Bootles, breathing hard, came back to the Form-room. The juniors hurriedly resumed their places before he arrived.

With a heightened colour, Mr. Bootles resumed the lesson. But barely had he started, when the sing-song voice floated in at the windows again:

"Hany ole rags an' bones! Tuppence for that gownd, guv'nor!"

"Dear me!"

"And tuppence fur yer face, guv'nor!"

"Bless my soul! What—what insolence! I—I—I— Mr. Bootles fairly leaped to the window. "Ruffian! Rascal! If you do not immediately go, I will come forth and—personally chastise you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am aware," roared Mr. Bootles from the window, "that you are hiding behind that tree, you insolent knave!"

There was no reply, and Mr. Bootles, with a snort, slammed the window hard, and returned to the class, who made heroic efforts to become grave.

"Silver, you are laughing!"

"I, sir?"

"Were you not laughing, Silver?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines!"

"The same hundred lines you gave me before, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver innocently.

Rap!

"Yaroo!" yelled Jimmy.

Mr. Bootles was in no humour for witticisms. His pointer came down on Jimmy's knuckles.

"I will keep order in this class!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "Van Ryn, you were laughing. There is no cause for laughter, Van Ryn; neither is the Form-room the proper place for unseemly merriment! Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

"Wow-wow!"

"Silence!"

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The lesson was resumed in a high-explosive atmosphere. But Mr. Bottles was hardly going again when the voice of the rag-merchant was heard, and this time it came from the door.

"Hany ole rags an' bones! Rags, bones, bottles, an' jars!"

Mr. Bootles stood thunderstruck.

"The—impertinent rascal has actually entered the house!" he ejaculated.

He ran to the door with whisking gown. "Rags an' bones!"

Mr. Bootles flung the door open, and rushed into the corridor without, gripping his pointer. If he had discovered the rag-merchant there that gentleman would certainly have felt the weight of the pointer.

But the passage was empty!

Mr. Bootles blinked along it in amazement.

Surely the man had not had time to flee along the corridor and dodge round the corner? Yet he was not there!

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

He closed the door, and came back to the class in great amazement. Hardly had he turned his back on the door when the sing-song voice was heard there!

"Rags, bones, bottles, an' jars!"

Round whisked Mr. Bootles like a spinning-top, and he hurled himself at the door. It flew open, and he rushed out into an empty corridor.

"Rascal!" roared Mr. Bootles. "How dare you! How dare you! How dare you, I say, enter these premises and play these tricks! I will have you flogged! I—I mean locked up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Bootles spun round again.

"Boys, the class is dismissed! Kindly search the passages for that disreputable and insolent rascal, and bring him to me. You are permitted to use force."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" chorused the Classical Fourth.

And they rushed out pell-mell, in great delight to hunt for the rag-merchant. But, to their astonishment, they did not find him. Not a corner was left unexplored. But nowhere within the walls of Rookwood was a rag-and-bone merchant to be found!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Very Mysterious.

"FAG!"—Beaumont of the Sixth called out from his study doorway. And the answer to his call was a scurrying of feet in various directions.

Nobody was anxious to fag for Beaumont. "Fag!" roared Beaumont.

The bully of the Sixth came down the passage, with a frowning brow and his ashplant under his arm.

As ill-luck would have it, Jimmy Silver and Van Ryn were just coming downstairs. The prefect spotted them before they could dodge.

"Fag wanted!" he exclaimed. "Buzz off to my study both of you."

Jimmy looked rebellious.

"Just going out to the footer, Beaumont," he demurred. "Flynn's your fag. Find Flynn."

"Puzzle, find Flynn!" grinned Van Ryn. Patrick O'Donovan Flynn had heard Beaumont's dulcet tones, and he was already at a safe distance.

"Don't give me any of your cheek," said Beaumont. "Get to my study at once!"

The ashplant slid down into his hand.

"Anything to oblige, dear boy," said Jimmy Silver, as there was no help for it.

"Come on, Dutchy!"

The two juniors walked in front of Beaumont to his study. The prefect did not intend to give them a chance of dodging round a corner.

Beaumont's study was in a dishevelled state. Apparently some merry ragger had been there, for the cinders were over the carpet, the ink was spilt on the table, and books and papers were strewn about the floor. Some junior, upon whom Beaumont's ashplant had fallen, had "got his own back" in this peculiar manner.

"I dare say you young scoundrels did this if the truth were known," said the Sixth-Former, with a scowl.

"Not guilty, my lord!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Never thought of it, by gum!"

"Well, clear it up and make the study look tidy, and lay the table for tea, and look sharp about it!"

"Are we bound to do all that, Silver?" asked Van Ryn rebelliously. Fagging at

school was a new experience for the South African junior.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"It's all in the game," he said. "When you're in the Sixth, you'll be able to play the Hun like Beaumont. Won't he, Beaumont?"

"Hold your tongue, and get to work!" scowled Beaumont.

"But what about footer?" said Van Ryn.

"You've got a lot to learn here, you young Hottentot," said Beaumont angrily. "That will teach you to do as a prefect tells you, without jawing." And he gripped Van Ryn's ear, and twisted it.

The new junior gave a yell.

"Yow! Leggo, you rotter!"

"Now pile in," said Beaumont, "and no more jaw!"

The South African junior clenched his hands hard, and measured the senior with his eye. Jimmy caught his arm.

"Cheese it, Dutchy! You mustn't hammer a prefect against the rules of the school. Pile in! Can't be helped. Keep smiling!"

Beaumont sat on a chest under the window, ashplant in hand, to see that the fags did their work. Jimmy and Van Ryn busied themselves about the study. Suddenly the Sixth-Former gave a jump. From the box beneath him there came the sudden, savage, growl of a dog.

The senior rose hastily and stared at the box.

Gr-r-r!

"What the dickens!" exclaimed Beaumont, in amazement.

"My hat! Do you keep a dog in the study, Beaumont?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Beastly to keep him shut up in a box like that!"

"There can't be a dog in that box!" exclaimed Beaumont. "It's locked!"

Gr-r-r!

"Sounds like one!" grinned Jimmy.

Bow-wow-wow!

"My only hat!" yelled Beaumont. "Some young rotter has put the beast in there! My Sunday clobber's in that box!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "I'm sorry for your Sunday clobber!"

"Shut up, you young villain! I dare say you did it!" shouted Beaumont.

"Not guilty, your Majesty!" chuckled Jimmy, dodging round the table as Beaumont made a lash at him with the ashplant. "But it's a ripping idea—ripping!"

Beaumont tore at the lid of the box. As a dog was growling inside it, he naturally concluded that he must have left it, inadvertently unlocked. But the lid was locked.

"Locked!" stuttered Beaumont.

Gr-r-r! Bow-wow! Br-r-r-r!

The prefect thrust a key into the lock and threw up the lid.

The big chest was almost full of clothes. Beaumont of the Sixth was a dandy, and his wardrobe was extensive. A neatly-folded evening-coat lay at the top. Beaumont lifted it and looked under it.

He dropped the coat and jumped back.

"Some beast has shoved a dog under my clothes there!" he hissed. "I'll skin him! I'll smash him! I'll—"

Gr-r-r!

Beaumont flung himself at the box and dragged the clothes out, with the ashplant all ready to lash as soon as he saw the hidden dog. Van Ryn touched Jimmy's arm, and pointed to the door. Jimmy nodded.

While Beaumont was busy with the box the two juniors tiptoed out of the study and vanished.

The prefect tore out article after article, but the sweet, canine voice was no longer heard.

He stopped at last.

It was evident that there was no animal, canine or otherwise, among the clothes in the chest.

"My only hat!" stuttered Beaumont. "I—I couldn't have fancied it! Those fags heard it, too! Silver, you heard—"

Beaumont became aware that the fags were no longer in the study. He rushed furiously to the door.

"Silver! Van Ryn!"

There was a patter of feet in the distance, and that was all. The fags were gone. Beaumont rushed to the window. Out in the quadrangle Jimmy Silver and Dick Van Ryn came in sight, sauntering cheerily. Beaumont waved a furious fist at them.

"Silver! Come here!"

Jimmy Silver looked round and kissed his hand to the enraged prefect. Van Ryn raised his cap politely. Then they strolled on.

Beaumont panted.

He knew that the young rascals would be in cover before he could get along the passage and out of the door of the School House.

It was not exactly dignified for a prefect of the Sixth to scramble through a window. But Beaumont was too furious to think about his dignity. He scrambled out, dropped in the quadrangle, and started to do the juniors at a run.

"Look out!" yelled Van Ryn.
"My aunt! I didn't know old Beaumont was an acrobat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.
"Run for it!"

The bully of the Sixth was bearing down on them at top speed. Jimmy and Van Ryn ran for it, speeding across to the Modern side.

Owing to Beaumont's late troubles with Knowles, they hoped that he would not pursue them into Mr. Manders' House. But Beaumont came on savagely, his coat-tails flying.

"Dodge in!" gasped Jimmy. "Tommy Dodd'll let us into his study."

The fleeing juniors dodged in, and unfortunately dodged right into Mr. Manders, the Modern master, who was just coming out.

"Oh! Ah! Op-p-p!" gasped Mr. Manders. The lean, angular gentleman staggered back from the impact. Jimmy and Van Ryn reeled, too. Beaumont came to a sudden halt, and burst into a chuckle.

He strolled away, more than content to leave the fags in the hands of Mr. Manders. That sharp-tempered gentleman was not likely to have much mercy on two juniors who had "biffed" him in that reckless manner.

The Modern master straightened up, gasping for breath.

"Boys! Silver! Rascals! How dare you!" he stuttered.

"Sorry, sir! Quite an accident!"

"Awfully sorry, sir!"

"Follow me to my study!" gasped Mr. Manders.

The two Classics had escaped Beaumont, but they had escaped out of the frying-pan into the fire. In great dismay they followed Mr. Manders to his study.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
A Wonderful Parrot.**

MR. MANDERS selected his stoutest cane, gasping the while. He was winded. Strictly speaking, Mr. Manders had no authority to cane Classical juniors, who did not belong to his division at all; but he was assuming the right for the occasion. And it was plain that argument on the subject would not be of any use.

Jimmy Silver and Van Ryn stood waiting while Mr. Manders pumped for breath. Van Ryn's eyes wandered round the study, and rested upon the parrot in the cage before the window. The parrot was cackling, and blinking at the juniors, with evil eyes, quite as if he understood and enjoyed their position.

Mr. Manders' parrot was very like its owner in temper. It delighted in bestowing sharp pecks upon anything that came within its reach—unsuspicious fingers that offered him sugar often received a savage pinch—and there were a dozen Modern fellows who had sworn solemn vows to wring Polly's neck at the first convenient opportunity.

Van Ryn's merry eyes glimmered as he looked at the parrot.

"You young rascals!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"I shall impress upon your minds that you must not—"

"Cut it short, cocky!"

Mr. Manders jumped almost clear of the floor.

"Wha-at! Who spoke?" he stuttered.
"Keep your wool on, cocky!"

The Modern master blinked at the parrot. Jimmy Silver stared at the bird blankly.

He knew that the Modern master spent hours in trying to teach that ill-favoured fowl to talk, but Polly had never got further than "Good-morning!" and "Polly wants sugar!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Manders.
"Bless your boots!" came from the parrot.

"Dear me! Polly—it—it is the parrot! Bless my soul!"

"Cackle, cackle, cackle!" from Polly.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Manders, laying down the cane and approaching the parrot's cage.

"This is extraordinary! My trouble has not been expended in vain. The parrot has learned quite suddenly to talk. This is very satisfactory!"

"Oh, what a face!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Where did you dig up those features, Mandy?"

"G-g-goodness gracious!"

"Oh, what a chivvy! Cackle, cackle! What a benighted chivvy! Ha, ha!"

The expression on Mr. Manders' face was extraordinary. It was satisfactory to find his parrot talking with such facility. But Polly's remarks in themselves could not be considered flattering.

"Polly!" gasped Mr. Manders.
"Oh, cheese it, old scout!"

"Goodness gracious!"

"What a voice! Laugh at him!" came from the cackling parrot. "What a funny old ile!"

Mr. Manders stuttered.

"I saw you, Mandy!" pursued the astonishing bird. "Who goes down to Coombe and ogles the milliner? Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed Jimmy Silver involuntarily.

Mr. Manders spun round, his face crimson.

"Silence! Someone has been teaching the bird to say those dreadful things!" he gasped.

"Knowles"—Knowles was passing the door, and he stopped—"Knowles, are you aware of any—any junior having been in my study, teaching my parrot to—repeat atrocious expressions?"

"No, sir," said Knowles in astonishment.

"He has learned atrocious expressions from someone!" exclaimed Mr. Manders.

"I didn't know he could talk at all, sir," said Knowles.

"Nonsense. Knowles—nonsense! A very intelligent bird—very. But—but he shall not be taught such vile expressions. I shall inquire very strictly—"

"Cackle, cackle! Polly wants sugar!" said the parrot.

"No harm in that, sir," said Knowles, "is there?"

"N-no; but he was saying something—something—something quite different—personal references of the most unpleasant kind. Strange to say, he has stopped it now," said Mr. Manders. "It is—is extraordinary! A few minutes ago he was speaking with astonishing facility, and—repeating vulgar expressions. It is very strange that he should have ceased so suddenly."

Knowles looked at the master's reddened face, wondering whether Mr. Manders had been drinking. Knowles' opinion was that

the parrot was a stupid beast, who would never learn more than "Polly wants sugar."

"It is extraordinary," said Mr. Manders, breathing very hard. He picked up his cane as his glance fell on the juniors. "Ah! I—"

"Draw it mild, Mandy-pandy!"

Knowles jumped as that voice came from the parrot's cage, and Mr. Manders spun round again.

"My hat!" ejaculated Knowles.

"You—you hear him yourself now, Knowles?"

"Hallo, Knowles! What a face! Got a smoke about you, Knowles?"

Knowles' face was a study.

"Some—some young villain has been teaching him that!" he gasped.

"Poor old Manders! What a face! What a phiz! Why don't they put Manders in the Zoo? Ha, ha!"

"Silence!" gasped Mr. Manders.
"Oh, go and chop chips, funny face!"

"Bless my soul! L—l—I—"

"What a voice! Oh, what larks!" came from Polly. "I say, Mandy, old scout, kiss me and call me Albert. Who ogles the milliner—what!"

"My word!" murmured Knowles.

"There is no foundation whatever, I—I need hardly say, for—the insinuation implied in that—that speech!" stuttered Mr. Manders.

"Some depraved young scoundrel has taught my parrot those words—"

"Oh, of course, sir!" said Knowles, with a suppressed grin.

"Polly! Silence! Silence! Good heavens, what is he saying now?" stuttered Mr. Manders hastily, with a gesture to the juniors.

"Go at once—do you hear? Go!"

Jimmy Silver and Van Ryn were only too glad to go. Knowles stepped discreetly out of the study. Mr. Manders blinked at the parrot, and mopped his perspiring brow.

Someone must have taught the parrot those dreadful sayings—someone—some fellow in his own House evidently. But who? Mr. Manders stared helplessly at the bird. Strange to say, Polly did not make a single further remark after the juniors were gone.

"Well, that beats it!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, as the two juniors hurried out of Mr. Manders' House. "Fancy that silly parrot talking like that! Some of the Modern kids have been teaching him, I suppose. Letting poor old Manders' secrets out, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly lucky for us, too!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Mandy didn't want us to hear any more."

"Jolly lucky, wasn't it?" agreed Van Ryn.

And the two Classics went down to the football in high good humour.

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Mysterious Voices.**

"**H**ALLO, what's the row?" asked Jimmy Silver, as he came into the Common-room that evening.

"The blessed place is haunted, I believe!" growled Townsend. "I thought I'd sat on a dog. I heard it yelp distinctly. And—and—"

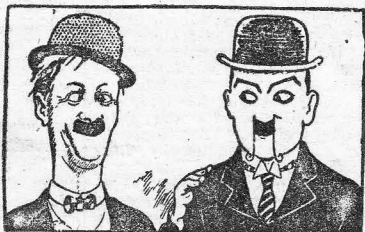
"And there was no dog there," remarked Van Ryn. "Wonderful!"

"Jolly queer," said Topham. "I could have sworn I heard a dog yelp when Towny sat down!"

Townsend sat down in the armchair again, looking puzzled and disturbed. Jimmy Silver looked puzzled, too.

There had certainly been several queer happenings at Rookwood during the past two

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or three days—happenings that could hardly be accounted for. Jimmy Silver had been thinking about the matter a good deal.

Townsend and Topham, with one eye on Van Ryn, began a pleasant conversation on the subject of South Africa. Topsy and Topy had found by experience that Van Ryn was a hard hitter, and they no longer thought of ragging the new junior, but they were still as much down on him as ever.

Now they were holding an agreeable debate concerning Van Ryn's native land, for the South African to hear, Townsend averring that Boers were cannibals, and Topham suggesting referring the question to Van Ryn, as a fellow who ought to know. Some of the Classics expected to see Van Ryn break out, but the new junior only smiled. Topsy and Topy's pleasant little talk was interrupted however.

"Oh, you're a silly idiot, Towy!"
"Oh, am I?" said Townsend, staring at his cum.

"What?" "You silly ass—"
"Eh, what's that?" asked Topham. "I didn't speak."

"Don't you tell whoppers!" growled Townsend. "I'll jolly well punch your silly head if you open your silly mouth again."

"What!" yelled Topham.

"I—I— Townsend stared about him in bewilderment. "I didn't say that—"

"You cheeky ass!" exclaimed Topham. "Don't tell lies! I'd like to see you punching my head, you tailor's dummy!"

"I—I didn't! You're a funk, Topham!"

"Look here, do you want a thick ear?" shouted the astonished Topham.

"I—I didn't say anything of the kind! I—I—"

"Are you off your rocker?" demanded Topham. "First you say a thing, and then you say you didn't say it!"

"I didn't! I—I never—"

"Oh, shut up! You're a rotten funk yourself!"

"Well, you two chaps are gettin' remarkably polite to one another; I must say," remarked Smythe of the Shell.

"I didn't say that!" howled Topham.

"Somebody else— Don't you shove your oar in, Smythe, or I'll dot your silly nose!"

"Oh, will you, by gad!" exclaimed Adolphus Smythe wrathfully. "I'll soon show you who will get his nose dotted!"

"Here, hands off!" shouted Topham, as the indignant Adolphus rushed at him. "I didn't speak! I never— Yaroooh!"

Adolphus was not a fighting man as a rule, but Topham was a very easy opponent. Adolphus bowled him over at the first rush.

Topham blinked up at him from the hearth-rug.

"Groo! Oh, my hat! I tell you I never said—"

"If you want a jolly good lickin', get up an' have it!" said Smythe.

"I tell you I never said—"

"Oh, rats!"

Van Ryn strolled out of the Common-room, leaving Smythe and Townsend and Topham engaged in a heated argument. Jimmy Silver cast a very peculiar look after the South African junior.

"Come on, you chaps!" he said to his cum.

"Hallo, what's on?" yawned Lovell.

"Follow your Uncle James, and don't jaw!"

"Oh, rats! All right!"

The Fistical Four strolled out of the Common-room.

Van Ryn was on the stairs, and Jimmy Silver & Co. followed him up. The South African junior went into his study, and the four followed him.

"What the thunder have we come here for?" demanded Raby.

"To lay the ghost!" said Jimmy Silver.

"What the merry dickens—" began Lovell.

"Shut the door," said Jimmy.

"Hallo, what's the game?" asked Van Ryn.

"You are!" said Jimmy Silver coolly.

"You're going to get the bumping of your life, my son, for spoofing the end study. Collar the cheeky bounder!"

Van Ryn backed round the table. But Jimmy Silver's followers, for once, did not obey the order of their leader. They stared at him blankly instead.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver Solves the Mystery.

JIMMY, you ass—"

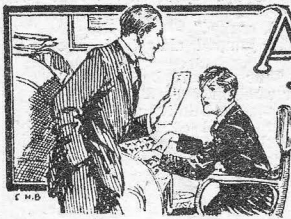
"Jimmy, you fathead—"

"What are you driving at?"

"A little off your rocker, perhaps?"

(Continued on page 19, column 3.)

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 59.



A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS PLEASED TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS. Address: EDITOR, THE "PENNY POPULAR," THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

FOOTBALL AND CRICKET REPORTING.

A correspondent, who is evidently keen on journalism, asks me to say something about the business of chronicling the great summer and winter games. Undoubtedly the life of a cricket or football reporter is interesting, but it is far more crammed with hard work than most people realise. The fellow who follows this profession has to be right up to things, and to know the history of the game he is dealing with, also the records of the champions. One week he is at Cardiff, the next up North, and he must invest his account of the match with all the freshness and vim possible.

Life on the staff of a journal which makes a speciality of sport is different from anything else. The other papers have their sporting departments, but that is a small affair, and ordinarily they rely on the help of the purely sporting sheet to see them through. The athletic periodical may be thought limited, but though its scope does not include what seem to be the big happenings, the men engaged in this part of the world's work are devoting their lives to the best.

The big public takes a keen interest in pastimes, because they are apt to show human nature at an acceptable angle. The heart and soul of sport are instinct with fair play. If the business of life were always conducted on the same principles as those which rule in the world of sport we should be getting along ever so much faster. The point may be questioned by folks whose views are as narrow as those of the old lady of Harrow who went out driving in a barrow, but it really is so. The brilliant men who are occupied in reporting the big events in the football world and the other spheres of sport are seldom known, but their work is waited for and read by millions.

SEEING EVERYTHING.

You know how it is at a crowded stadium or match-ground. You are not certain as to some point, the next man who is straining forward has a guess at it; but the fact is any number of people in the packed mass of spectators does not know. But the reporter in his little look-out does know. He has the real facts, sure enough, and has jotted down oddments of the game in shorthand even as the most critical moments of the game are passing.

The reporter is the crow's-nest man. Just get a glimpse of him some time in his Tribby hat and his easy suit, and the glasses slung across his shoulder. He is the arbiter in a measure. He has been following matches for years. Not a thing escapes his vigilant eye. And he is fair.

"Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice."

That is his way. To my thinking, the editorial sanctum is among the really interesting sights of the world. Men come in with news. There are the routine individuals seeing to the "flimsies," for copy has often to be manifolded—that is, the skeleton reports. The descriptive men write for the paper alone, and work up what they know happened from the bare outlines supplied by their colleagues on the spot.

I remember a man who understood boxing better than anybody. He was a cheery, simple-minded fellow, and he did not know much concerning anything else, but the Noble Art he did understand, and whenever there was a big fight on he had to be there.

There was the French correspondent, too—a man who lived most of his time in Paris. He used to go to Russia every winter to see what they were doing there, but that was before the days of the bad Bolshevik. That French correspondent was a bit of a mystery.

His hobby was dogs, though he had not much time for hobbies, as may be imagined. His duty was to watch and write of the new sporting developments across the Channel, and these developments were many. He had a little summer bungalow at Chantilly, close to the forest, where the lilies of the valley grow in such profusion; also another place at Enghien, though his headquarters were in Paris, in a wide street rather like Piccadilly.

By the way, he spoke more languages than any man I ever met. He could chat in Italian, be nettled in Spanish, talk French and English, of course, and argu in Russian. Quite a polyglot champion!

ROWING AND BILLIARDS.

There was a tall, silent chap who looked after the rowing. You saw him on the Press boat at the University Boat Race in March. He attended Henley, and knew to a hair-line all about the sport. Sporting journalists have to be out and about. For weeks Fleet Street may not see them. Just as it is true of the general journalist that he is a many-sided man—he would soon cease to be a journalist otherwise—so may the same thing be said of the sporting chronicler. He is always moving about the world. His journeyings may seem to be limited, but the world of men is never that.

Take the billiard historian. The public wants to know what is happening at the big matches where such marvellous address is shown. Billiards, played properly, calls for such depth of knowledge, such rare insight, such coolness and head work generally, as would fit anyone for statesmanship or the many subtleties of science. Have you noticed how many fellows who have to think take to the game? It is so. The work of the cue, the care required keeps their brain active, and is yet restful. But the sporting side of recording journalism is worth noting. It shows character and grit.

"MR. CHAPLIN."

You are all reading Mr. Stanton Hope's fine serial. I am sure the adventures of Mick and Chappie thrill you. There were certain touches concerning Mick's first introduction to the world of cinema which shewed what real life was in true-spirited fashion. It would have been easy to have rushed Mick into a meeting with Mr. Charlie Chaplin, but these things do happen. There had to be contributory circumstances, so to speak.

Thousands of folks, as the author says, are trying to become famous artists of the films, but the difficulties are immense. So Mick was fated to find. To my thinking, the arrival of the quiet-spoken stranger was just among the possibilities. You saw Charlie Chaplin, too, just as he is, and you understand also the utter impossibility of any celebrity receiving every visitor offhand. If he did that he would have no time for anything else. And this glimpse of the world-famous film comedian will be found true to life.

Your Editor

CENSORED!

A Short Story of St. Jim's.

TWANG, twang! Twang, twang, twang!
Little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, paused on his way along the Shell passage, and listened a moment to the merry twang of a banjo which proceeded from one of the junior studies—the one that was occupied by Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell.

Twang, twang! Twang, twang!
Mr. Lathom smiled. He was a benevolent little gentleman, and ruled his somewhat unruly Form with a lenient hand.

"Practising for the junior concert, doubtless," he murmured.

For the news that Tom Merry's junior concert party was contemplating a performance in the near future, had already reached the master's Common-room.

Twang! Twang!
Mr. Lathom, still smiling, was about to pass on his way down the passage, when a fresh, boyish voice suddenly lifted itself in song, the banjo thrumming and twanging the accompaniment.

Mr. Lathom paused again to listen, and as he listened the benevolent smile suddenly faded from his face, and gave place to an expression that was almost terrific.

"G-good gracious!" gasped Mr. Lathom. "What-what terrible language! I never in all my life—"

The voice sang on, to the twanging of the banjo, and Mr. Lathom involuntarily put his hands to his ears.

"Good heavens!"
The little master simply sprang to the door of the study from which the song emanated. He wrenched at the handle, but the door did not budge. It was locked upon the inside.

"Boy!" shouted Mr. Lathom, hammering upon the door with his fists. "Wretched boy! Cease—cease immediately!"

Twang, Twang! Thrum, thrum!
"Bless my soul! Cease at once, boy!" shrieked Mr. Lathom.

This time the banjo stopped.
"Buzz off!" shouted a voice—the voice of Monty Lowther of the Shell. "Can't you hear I'm practising? Clear off, you ass!"

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Lathom, in his most terrible tones. "Lowther! Open this door at once! It is I—Mr. Lathom!"

"My hat!"
It was a muttered exclamation from inside the study. Then a key was turned in the lock, and the door was opened by Lowther, banjo in hand.

"Of course, I didn't know it was you, sir!" said Lowther apologetically.

"Boy! Lowther!" stuttered Mr. Lathom, while the junior regarded his flustered appearance with no little surprise. "Whatever is the meaning of this disgraceful language?"

Monty Lowther's eyes opened wide.
"Disgraceful language, sir?"

"Yes, sir!" thundered Mr. Lathom. "I heard you singing—the most dreadful language! I could not believe—"

"Is anything wrong, Lathom?"
Mr. Lathom swung round to see Mr. Linton, the stern-faced Form-master of the Shell, who had happened along the passage.

Both masters missed the momentary gleam of humour that came into Monty Lowther's eyes, to be succeeded instantly by an extremely demure expression.

Monty Lowther was above all things a humorist, and it was evident that there was something in the present situation, serious as it appeared to be, that appealed to his lively sense of humour.

"Wrong, Linton! I'm afraid there is—something very wrong! I am glad you have come, Linton! This depraved boy was singing as I came along the passage—"

Mr. Lathom almost choked.

Mr. Linton's eyebrows went up.
"Do you mean Lowther here was singing, Lathom?" he inquired, in a puzzled voice, eyeing the junior keenly.

"Yes, sir! Singing a song which consisted, as far as I could hear, of a stream of bad language!" burst out Mr. Lathom. "I could not have believed it if I had not heard it with my own ears! I was surprised and shocked beyond measure! Lowther—"

Mr. Linton's glance became very stern.

"As Lowther is in my Form, I should be glad if you would allow me to go into this matter, Lathom!" he said crisply. "At present I do not quite understand."

"Quite so, Linton. And no wonder!" cried Mr. Lathom. "I shall be glad if you will take the matter up! To hear a St. Jim's junior— Oh, it was shocking, disgusting!"

"Mr. Linton made an impatient gesture. He knew the humorist of the Shell better than his colleague, and he felt that there was something at the bottom of this peculiar matter. Monty Lowther's demure expression told him that much.

"Now, Lowther," he said sternly "what explanation have you? You have heard what Mr. Lathom says."

"Yes, sir; but I—I don't quite understand," murmured Monty Lowther. "I was just strumming on the banjo, and singing a song—"

"Wretched boy! But what a song!" burst out Mr. Lathom. "I was shocked—"

"Excuse me a moment, Lathom," said Mr. Linton drily, cutting short his colleague. "Let me get to the bottom of this. I order you to repeat the words of the song you were singing, Lowther!"

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir!" said Monty Lowther, readily.

Mr. Lathom held up his hand.
"Stop!" he said solemnly. "I must leave you to deal with this matter in your own way, Linton. I decline, absolutely, to listen again to the words of that—er—terrible song!"

Mr. Linton looked exasperated. Then he laid his hand upon his colleague's shoulder.

"I think it would be better if you were present, if you don't mind, Lathom," he said.

"If you will come in a moment, sir, I will just sing the song over to you," said Monty Lowther quietly. "I think you will find it's—its really a mistake, sir."

Mr. Lathom made a hopeless gesture.
"Very well, if you insist, Linton."

The two masters entered the study, and Monty Lowther closed the door, and politely offered them chairs—which they did not accept.

Then he grasped his banjo, and proceeded to sing, in a not unmelodious voice. And this is the song he sang:

"Oh, Hel—oh, Hel—
Oh, Helen, please be mine!
Your feet—your feet—
Your features are divine!
I swear, I swear,
I swear I will be true!
Oh, dam—oh, dam—
Oh, damsel, I love you!"

Monty ceased singing, and the banjo ceased twanging. The faces of the masters were a study—"as good as a play!" as Monty said afterwards to his delighted chums.

There was a prolonged pause.
"It's—it's the latest song, to a new fox-trot tune, sir!" ventured Lowther, at last, warily. "Do—do you like it, sir?"

Mr. Lathom, utterly taken aback, blinked through his spectacles, first at Lowther and then at Mr. Linton. He said nothing.

Mr. Linton eyed the humorous Lowther fixedly, and then, to that junior's relief, his stern face relaxed into a smile.

"I—I thought it would be just the thing for our concert, sir," Lowther ventured. "I was just—just practising it, you know. It's all the rage in London now, sir."

Mr. Linton, still eyeing him, coughed.
"Ahem! That is quite possible, Lowther. I think I understand now. But what may be 'all the rage,' as you put it, in London, is not necessarily suitable for a junior concert, Lowther."

"Yes, sir—I mean, no, sir!" said Monty. "You will delete that item from your programme, Lowther!"

"Yes, sir!"
"Ahem! If you are satisfied, Mr. Lathom—"

Mr. Lathom nodded, like a man in a dream.
"Quite—oh, quite!" he murmured. "I—I am sorry, Lowther, that—that—"

"I do not think an apology to Lowther is at all necessary, Lathom!" said Mr. Linton drily, still eyeing Lowther. "Your mistake was a perfectly natural one under the circumstances. Do not forget that I forbid you to sing that song at your concert, Lowther!"

"No, sir!" said Lowther.
The two masters left the study, and Lowther collapsed in the nearest chair.

"Censored, by gum!" he chuckled breathlessly. "But oh, what a joke! Ha, ha, ha!"

THE END.

THE JOKER OF ROOKWOOD!

(Continued from page 18.)

suggested Van Ryn. "You know you've been hearing voices and things—"

"Yes, I know I've been hearing voices," said Jimmy Silver grinning; "and I've found out where the voices come from, too!"

"Look here, what are you getting at?" roared Lovell. "If you're not talking out of the back of your neck—"

"Shush, and listen to your Uncle James!" said Jimmy Silver chidingly. "There's been too many jolly mysterious things happening lately, and your Uncle James has put two and two together. First of all, the day before yesterday I heard voices in this study—Towny and Topsy's voices—and they weren't here."

"Oh, you were dreaming!" said Lovell, while Van Ryn grinned.

"Then Beaumont heard Knowles' voice in his study, and Knowles wasn't there," said Jimmy.

"Wasn't he there?" said Raby.

"No, he wasn't. Then Bootles heard a rag-and-bone man hooting in at the window, and when we hunted for a rag-and-bone merchant, there wasn't one to be found."

"Well, he had cleared off!"
"Then there was a dog in a locked box in Beaumont's study, and Beaumont didn't find it—it wasn't there. Then Mr. Manders' parrot began to talk in a wonderful way—never talked like it before—and he said things that made old Manders anxious to get us out of hearing, and saved us a licking."

"Well, that was jolly lucky!"
"Yes, wasn't it? Then Towny hears a dog yelp when he sits down, and thinks he's sat on a dog—which wasn't there! Then Towny and Topsy begin to slang one another, and each of them declares that he never said what he said. But your Uncle James has worked it out. Rookwood isn't haunted, and there is such a thing in existence as a ventriloquist, and that's what's the matter."

"A—ventriloquist!" ejaculated Lovell.
Jimmy Silver nodded calmly.

"Yes; that's the only way of accounting for it."

"My hat! I shouldn't wonder," said Raby thoughtfully. "Blessed if there's any other way of accounting for it. But who's the chap? We should jolly well know if there was a tricky beast like that at Rookwood!"

"That's what I'm coming to," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "There certainly wasn't a ventriloquist at Rookwood before Van Ryn came."

Van Ryn laughed.
Jimmy Silver pointed an accusing finger at him.

"You're a funny beggar," he remarked. "You've been pulling our leg. You were studying, you told me, when I heard those voices in your study. I rather think you were studying to reproduce Towny and Topsy's voices—what! You have been on the spot every time these weird voices have been heard. You're the giddy Polonius behind the curtain, and you're bowled out!"

"Bowled out, by gum!" said Lovell. "Pulling the leg of the end study, too! Collar him!"

"Leggo!" roared Van Ryn, as the Fistical Four seized him. "I own up. I—I was only a joke. I—Yah! Yoop! Yarooop!"

Bump, bump, bump!
"Yow-ow-woop!"

"Give him another!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "He's a funny merchant, but he mustn't be too funny with the end study!"

Bump!
"And another to show our appreciation of the joke!"

Bump!
"Leggo!" roared Van Ryn. "I own up, you silly asses! Chuck it!"

"Give him another for his cheek and another for his neck—"

"Ha, ha!"
Bump, bump!

Justice having been done—overdone, as it seemed to the unfortunate victim—the Fistical Four released Van Ryn. The South African junior sat on the floor and gasped.

"You frabjous chumps!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silver! What is this? What—what!" It was Mr. Bootles' staccato voice at the door.

(Continued on next page.)

"Silver, I am surprised—shocked! What—what!"
 Jimmy Silver spun round.
 "Only—a joke, sir!" he gasped. "Only—
 Why—what—where—where's Booties?"
 gasped Jimmy Silver.
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Van Ryn.
 Then Jimmy Silver understood.
 "You japing bounder! Was that you
 again? Collar him!"

Van Ryn caught up a cricket-bat.
 "Chuck it! Pax!"
 "That's all very well—"
 "Of course it is!" said Van Ryn, laughing.
 "Pax, you dufers! I've pulled your silly
 legs, and you've bumped me, so we're quits!
 Chuck it!"
 And the Fistical Four, on consideration,
 chucked it.
 "So the bounder's a giddy ventriloquist,"

said Lovell. "I say, what larks we can have
 with the Moderns before they find out!"
 "Hear, hear!" said the Co. all together.
 And that happy prospect quite reconciled
 the Fistical Four to the Joker of Rookwood.
 THE END.
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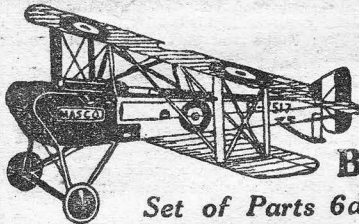
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