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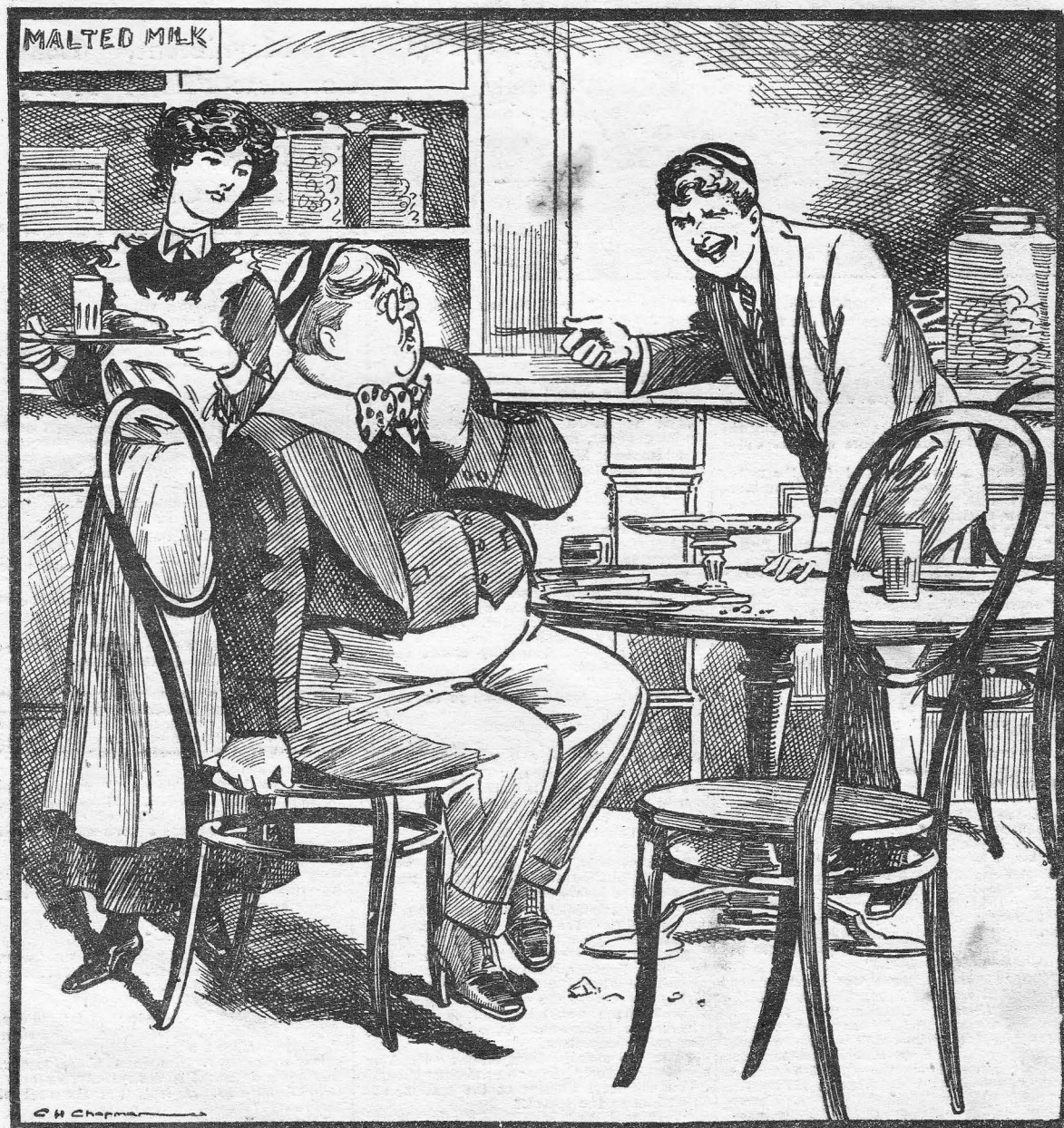
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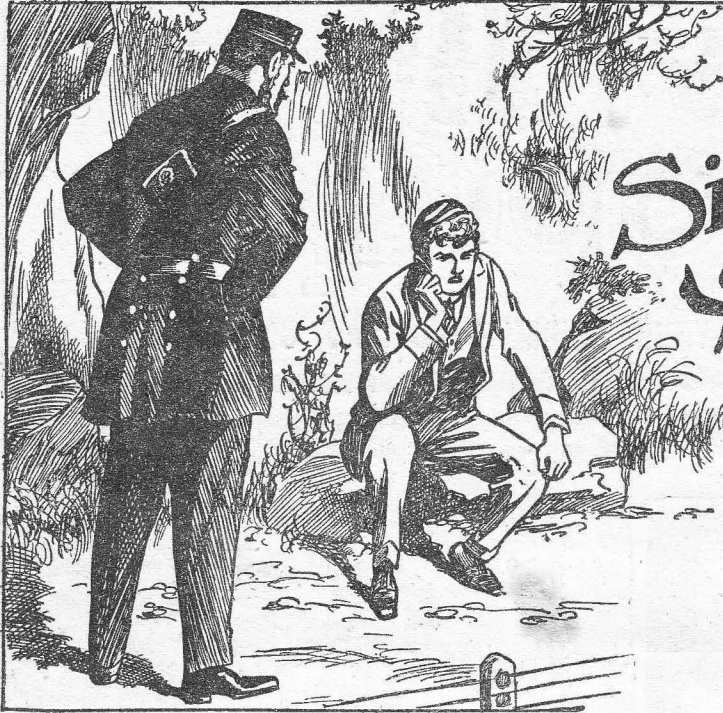
20 PAGES

MAKE THIS PAPER YOUR SUMMER HOLIDAY COMPANION!



THE SILENT SCHOOLBOY THREATENS BUNTER WITH A FORK!
(See this week's Grand School Story "THE SILENT SCHOOLBOY!")

THE FIRST OF OUR SPLENDID COMPLETE SCHOOL TALES.



The Silent Schoolboy!

A Magnificent, Long
Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. at
Greyfriars, introducing
Dick Chester.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter's Generous Offer!

WHARTON! Quelchy wants you!" Skinner of the Remove hailed the captain of the Remove from the doorway of Study No. 1. The Famous Five were within, garbed in their flannels.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the Remove had a cricket fixture with the Upper Fourth.

And now, a few moments before the match was due to commence, came the lean-faced Skinner with his unwelcome message.

"Blow Quelchy!" growled Wharton.

"Bless Quelchy!" said Bob Cherry.

"Bother Quelchy!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Skinner gave a chuckle.

"I should advise you to buck up, Wharton," he said. "Quelchy doesn't look in a very good humour. And the longer you keep him waiting, the more strokes you're likely to get!"

"Strokes!" echoed Wharton, looking puzzled.

"Yes. Quelchy's got his cane on his desk, ready for action."

"My hat!"

"And he's pacing up and down in his study like a caged lion!" added Skinner impressively.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Rough luck, Harry," said Bob Cherry. "Looks as if you're in for a warm time. What's it all about, d'you think?"

"Haven't the foggiest notion," said the captain of the Remove.

"You haven't been indulging in any little flutters, I suppose?" said Skinner.

Wharton glared, and Frank Nugent handled a cushion.

"Thought you might have been smoking, or playing nap for penny points," continued Skinner. "Everybody knows that you fellows aren't quite the Puritans you pretend to be. I believe—Yarooooh!"

What Skinner believed was never known, for at that moment Frank Nugent sent the cushion whizzing through the air. It travelled through the doorway and into the passage, and Skinner—owing to circumstances over which he had no control—accompanied it. He alighted on the linoleum with a bump which shook every bone in his body.

"Exit Skinner!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Now, what about Quelchy's message, Harry?"

"I suppose I'd better go!" grunted Wharton.

"Take this," said Johnny Bull, handing his chum an exercise-book.

"What on earth for?"

"To barricade your bags. If Quelchy's in such a towering rage as Skinner makes out, it won't be a case of handers. You'll have to get over a chair."

"Ass!" growled Wharton.

And he hurled the exercise-book at its obliging owner, and strode out of the study.

A moment later Wharton realised that Skinner had been indulging in the pleasant pastime of leg-pulling.

For Mr. Quelch looked quite the reverse of angry. He was smiling, and there was no sign of a cane on his desk.

"Ah! Come in, Wharton," he said. "I sent for you in order to ask a favour of you."

The captain of the Remove groaned inwardly. He would almost have preferred a licking, for he could guess what was coming.

When Mr. Quelch sent for Wharton on a half-holiday, and said that he desired to ask a favour of him, it usually meant that a new boy was coming.

"I suppose," reflected Wharton, "that Quelchy wants me to go down to the station and meet him."

His supposition proved correct.

"A new boy named Chester is arriving by the train which reaches Friarale at two-thirty," said Mr. Quelch. "He is coming into the Remove, and it is only fitting that he should be met by one of his future Form-fellows. I take it you are not otherwise engaged this afternoon, Wharton?"

"I was going to play cricket, sir."

"In that case," said Mr. Quelch, with a smile, "I shall save you a lot of running about in the blazing sun."

The Remove-master spoke as if he were making Wharton a great concession.

Not being an athlete himself, Mr. Quelch could not understand anybody being keen on such a tiresome game as cricket, especially at a time when the thermometer registered eighty degrees in the shade. He concluded that Wharton would be glad to escape an afternoon's leather-chasing, and his manner was quite benevolent.

"You are excused from cricket this afternoon, my boy," he said magnanimously. "You will meet Chester at the station, and bring him to the school."

"Very well, sir."

"And—er—might I ask you to be good enough to provide the new boy with some refreshment—either here, or at one of the

establishments in the village? That is the usual procedure, I believe?"

"Very well, sir," said Wharton, again, conscious of the fact that his exchequer consisted of the princely sum of fourpence-halfpenny.

Mr. Quelch noted the expression of consternation on the junior's face.

"Of course, Wharton," he added, "it is quite optional whether you entertain Chester or not. I have no right to expect you to entertain him, and I should not dream of ordering you to do so. I leave it to you entirely. Is that clear?"

"Quite clear, sir," said Wharton.

And he went back to Study No. 1.

"Licked?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"No."

"Well, you seem jolly cut up about something," remarked Nugent.

"I am!" growled Wharton. "No cricket for this child this afternoon."

"What!"

"Quelchy wants me to go to the station and meet a new kid—name of Chester."

"My hat!"

"And, what's more, he wants me to entertain him—to treat him to a feed, mark you—and my worldly wealth consists of fourpence-halfpenny! I shouldn't be able to buy enough grub with that to entertain a small sparrow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter!" growled the captain of the Remove. "I was looking forward to a decent game of cricket this afternoon, and Quelchy's gone and put the lid on it!"

"Shame!" said Johnny Bull.

"The shamefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "But you must grudgingly bear it, my esteemed chum!"

"Br-r-r!"

"I say, you fellows—"

A fat face, adorned by a pair of spectacles, appeared in the doorway. And the Famous Five exclaimed in unison:

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Oh, really!" protested the fat junior, blinking at Harry Wharton & Co. "I've come to do you fellows a favour—to do Wharton a favour, anyway. I'm an unselfish sort of chap, you know. I'm always bearing other fellows' burdens. In fact, I'm the soul of generosity!"

"My hat!"

"I understand that you've been detailed to go and meet the new kid, Wharton," continued Bunter.

"That's so!" growled the captain of the Remove.

"Well, I'll go in your place."

"Eh?"

"I know you're simply dying for a game of cricket, and you sha'n't be disappointed. And while you're wiping up the ground with Temple & Co., I'll go and meet the new kid."

The Famous Five stared at the fat junior in amazement. They were not accustomed to receiving generous offers from such a quarter.

"You're rotting, Bunter!" said Wharton sharply.

"I'm not. I'm quite willing to go and meet this kid Chester—"

"How did you know his name was Chester?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Ahem! I—I happened to hear—"

"You've been listening at the keyhole, you fat worm!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"Never mind!" said Wharton. "We'll overlook that, if Bunter really means what he says."

"I do mean it," said the fat junior. "I'll go and meet the new merchant—"

"You'll have to entertain him," said Nugent, with a grin.

"I don't mind that in the least. I'll take him along to the bunshop, and stand him a jolly good feed."

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Is it a go, Wharton?" asked Billy Bunter. The captain of the Remove hesitated.

"I shall have to get Quelch's permission for you to go in my place," he said.

"Buck up, then!"

Harry Wharton paid a further visit to Mr. Quelch's study.

"Well, Wharton?" said the Form-master.

"Would you mind very much, sir, if Bunter went to the station in my place, to meet the new boy?"

Mr. Quelch frowned slightly.

"You do not desire to carry out my wishes, Wharton?" he said.

"Ahem! The fact is, there's an important cricket-match on, sir."

"Very well, Wharton. But I am not best pleased at the thought of Bunter going to greet the new boy. It is a pity you could not have found a more desirable substitute."

"I think Bunter will manage it all right, sir," said Wharton. "And he seems keen to go. Of course, sir, if you really prefer that I should go to meet the new boy—"

"No, no!" said Mr. Quelch. "If you are anxious to play cricket in this sweltering heat, by all means do so. And tell Bunter that he had better hurry. The train will be in a quarter of an hour."

Thus it came about that Billy Bunter, and not Harry Wharton, went to the station to meet the new boy.

The fat junior had an axe to grind, of course. Instead of entertaining the new boy, he intended that the boot should be on the other foot, and that the new boy should do all the entertaining.

And as he rolled along the dusty road which led to the station, Billy Bunter told himself that his exertions would be crowned by a magnificent feed—at the new boy's expense.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Arrival—and a Departure!

"GOOD-BYE, my boy! And remember that I look to you to make a success of your school career!"

"I'll do my best, dad."

"I know you will, Richard. The life at Greyfriars may seem hard to you at first, accustomed as you are to home comforts and to an indulgent tutor. But you will soon adapt yourself to the new order of things. And this five-pound note may make things easier for you."

"Thanks awfully, dad!"

This conversation took place between Richard Chester senior and Richard Chester junior. The son—a good-looking, curly-headed fellow of fifteen—leaned from the window of a railway-carriage, and the father—a somewhat stern-featured man—stood on the platform.

There were shouts of "Stand back, please!" and then the guard waved his flag.

Mr. Chester said good-bye for the second time, and the parting pressure of his hand was so acute that Dick Chester winced.

Then the train rumbled out of the London terminus.

Dick Chester made himself comfortable in one of the corner seats of the first-class compartment, which he had to himself.

He was looking forward very keenly to Greyfriars. For months past he had urged

his father to dispense with a tutor and to send him to a public school, and at last Mr. Chester had yielded.

His father had said that the new life might seem hard to him at first. But Dick Chester didn't mind that. He was quite ready to fight his own battles and to overcome any obstacles which might be planted in his path. And he felt quite cheerful as the train rushed on through the south-eastern suburbs of London, emerging at length into the charming scenery of Kent.

After a time Dick Chester rose to his feet and glanced out of the window.

The train had gathered speed, and the compartment swayed from side to side.

"Wish the beastly thing would ease up a bit!" murmured Dick Chester.

He was by no means of a nervous disposition, but there was just one thing that he had a positive-horror of, and that was a railway accident. He had manned a rowing-boat in a terribly rough sea without a trace of fear; he had had passenger flights by aeroplane, and he had simply revelled in them; he had on numerous occasions risked life and limb by recklessly riding a motorcycle. But, curiously enough, he always felt apprehensive in a railway train. As a boy he had been an eye-witness of a terrible calamity on the iron way, and all the grim details had been impressed upon his mind ever since.

The train was simply leaping along now like a live thing. And Dick Chester was not the only passenger who grew alarmed.

Faces appeared at the carriage windows, and a nervous old lady in the next compartment was threatening to pull the communication-cord and remonstrate with the guard for allowing the train to go at such a speed, when there was a sudden jarring of brakes, and Dick Chester was bodily hurled from one side of the carriage to the other.

Shouts of alarm were heard, and all was chaos and confusion.

It seemed to Dick Chester that a terrible collision had occurred.

What had really happened was that the engine and the carriage next to it—in which Dick Chester was travelling—had jumped the metals.

But for the promptness of the engine-driver in applying the brakes a serious accident might have ensued.

As it was there were no casualties. But the nervous old lady had fainted from shock.

When the confusion had subsided the guard made a tour of the carriages, to see that everybody was safe.

"A narrow squeak, sir!" he said when he came to Dick Chester. "We shall be held up for half an hour or so until things are adjusted."

Dick Chester said nothing. He was white as a sheet, and trembling in every limb.

"Are you all right, sir?" asked the guard. The boy nodded, without speaking. He tried to say something, but no word would come.

The guard assisted him to alight from the carriage, and Dick Chester seated himself at the foot of the railway embankment. He was dazed and stunned, and practically oblivious to what was going on around him.

All the passengers had alighted from the train by this time. Some were laughing; others were chafing at the mishap and at the delay which it had entailed.

In due course the engine and the front coach were righted, and the guard's voice exclaimed:

"Take your seats, please!"

Dick Chester clambered back into his compartment like a fellow in a dream. He was utterly unnerved and bewildered by what had happened.

The train continued its journey at a greatly reduced speed.

Courtfield Junction was the next stopping-place.

"Change 'ere for Friardale!" shouted a porter.

Dick Chester felt better now. The colour had returned to his cheeks. He was ashamed of his own weakness. He stepped down on to the platform and beckoned to one of the porters.

"See that my luggage goes through to Friardale."

That was what Dick Chester had intended to say. But he could not say it. To his horror he found that he was tongue-tied—literally dumb!

The porter blinked at him in astonishment.

"Did you want me, sir?" he asked.

Dick Chester nodded. And he was obliged to convey to the porter, by means of gestures, what he wanted.

"Poor kid!" muttered the railway servant

as he moved away towards the luggage-van. "Bin dumb from 'is birth, I should say."

Dick Chester was appalled at the discovery he had made. But he consoled himself with the reflection that he would soon recover the power of speech. He remembered to have read of cases similar to his own—cases of people who had been bereft of speech by sudden shocks, and who had regained it again shortly afterwards. He fervently hoped that he would regain his own before reaching Greyfriars. Otherwise all sorts of awkward situations might arise.

It was not a long run from Courtfield to Friardale.

As the train rumbled to a standstill Dick Chester caught sight of a plump youth in Etons standing on the platform, apparently waiting for somebody. And when Dick alighted from the train the plump youth rolled up to him.

"Are you the new kid—Chester?" inquired Billy Bunter.

Dick nodded.

"The beastly train's half an hour late!" growled the fat junior. "And I've been hanging about on this platform, getting more and more peckish every blessed minute! Got any luggage?"

Dick Chester nodded again.

"Why can't you speak?" said Billy Bunter. "It's bad form to keep nodding, you know! There was no reply."

"You're shy, I suppose," said the Owl of the Remove. "You feel nervous at coming to a big school like Greyfriars—what!"

No answer.

"Or p'raps you're like me—feeling too hungry and miserable to do much jawing," Bunter went on. "I'll tell the porter to have your luggage sent up to the school, and then we'll go along to the bunshop."

The new boy seemed to fall in with this suggestion, for he nodded again.

Billy Bunter gave the necessary instructions to the porter, and then he linked his arm in that of his companion, and led him away to the bunshop.

"It's always been the custom for a new kid to stand a feed to the fellows who turn up to meet him at the station. In your case you're lucky. You've only got to stand treat to one."

Bunter did not add that he could consume at one sitting as much as three or four ordinary fellows.

Dick Chester uttered no word on the way to the bunshop. His silence was fast becoming exasperating.

"What on earth's the matter with you?" said Bunter irritably. "Are you ill?"

The new book shook his head.

"Then why the thump don't you say something?"

"M-m-m-m-m!" mumbled Dick Chester.

That was the nearest he could get to speech.

"Well, you're about the rummiest freak I've ever struck!" gasped Billy Bunter. "You haven't said a single word since you arrived. Blessed if I can make it out!"

But Dick Chester's silence had its advantages. Bunter was able to order exactly what he liked. And he kept the waitress busy.

"What would you like, sir?" inquired the girl, turning to Dick Chester as soon as she had attended to Bunter.

The new boy promptly went through a series of motions, which amazed Billy Bunter and alarmed the waitress.

After raising an imaginary cup to his lips, Dick Chester picked up a fork, and levelled it at Bunter's chest.

"Hi! Wharrer you up to?" gasped the fat junior, jumping up from the table.

Dick Chester saw that the waitress could not make head or tail of his requirements, so he produced a peffil from his pocket, and scribbled on the back of the menu:

"Toast and tea, please!"

The waitress understood. And there was a sympathetic expression on her face as she turned away. She concluded—like the railway-porter at Courtfield Junction—that Dick Chester had been dumb from birth.

As for Billy Bunter, he was so astonished that he almost forgot to eat.

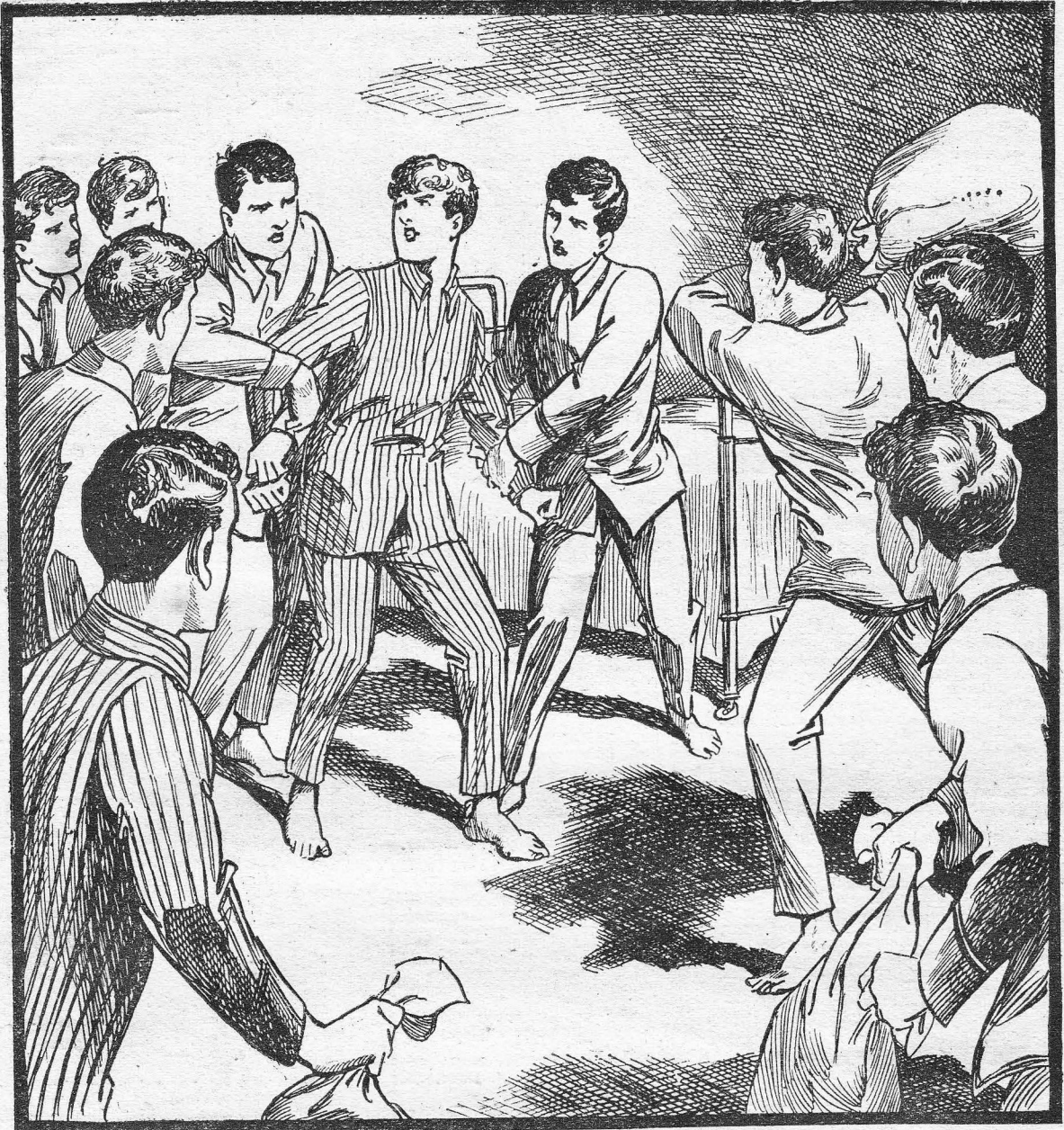
"My only aunt!" he ejaculated. "Why couldn't you have told the girl what you wanted, instead of writing it down?"

There was no reply.

Billy Bunter resumed his seat, and commenced operations on a dish of pastries. And all the time he kept a wary eye on Dick Chester. He had begun to suspect that the new boy was insane.

As the meal proceeded, Bunter's suspicion ripened into conviction.

For Dick Chester preserved his uncanny



"We'll make him run the gauntlet once down the line!" said Wharton. Dick Chester's face went white as the juniors armed themselves with weapons. He prayed that he could speak to them; and the next moment his prayer was answered. "You cads—you cowardly cads!" he burst out. His speech had been restored to him. (See page 7.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The Language of the Dumb!

"**N**OW, Chester," said Mr. Quelch, as the new boy followed him into his study. "I will trouble you for an explanation of your amazing conduct!"

Dick Chester was still silent. But there was an expression of helplessness and misery on his face which caused Mr. Quelch to adopt a kinder tone.

"Come, Chester! It is possible that you suffer from an impediment in your speech, and are afraid to say anything, lest you should be ridiculed. If my supposition is correct, I can assure you that you need not hesitate to speak. No well-bred boy would dream of laughing at you, or mocking you—and I should not think of doing so myself."

Dick Chester said nothing. "Am I correct in assuming that you have an impediment in your speech?" asked Mr. Quelch.

The new boy shook his head. "Then why do you remain silent?" demanded Mr. Quelch, fast losing his

patience. "Is this deliberate impertinence on your part?"

Dick Chester again shook his head, more vigorously than before.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "You behave as if you have been dumb from birth. But that cannot be the case, or you would not have come to Greyfriars. Why cannot you speak, boy? Surely the English language is intelligible to you?"

Dick Chester nodded.

"Then why do you not say something? Why do you stand there mute, as if you are tongue-tied?"

No answer.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"Come with me, Chester!" he commanded. "I will take you before Doctor Locke. You will scarcely venture to remain silent in his presence!"

The new boy accompanied Mr. Quelch to the Head's study.

Dr. Locke, who was poring over a volume of classic lore, did not look best pleased at the interruption.

"What is it, Quelch?" he asked impatiently.

"This is the new boy—Chester," explained the Remove-master. "He has only recently arrived, and his behaviour is extraordinary! He will reply to no questions—he will make no observations. I cannot get a word out of him!"

"Bless my soul!"

"I think, sir, that if you question him he will scarcely dare to preserve his amazing silence."

The Head nodded, and turned to the new boy.

"Tell me, Chester," he said, "what is the meaning of your extraordinary conduct?"

Dick Chester stood respectfully to attention, but he vouchsafed no reply.

"Did you hear my question?" thundered the Head.

The new boy nodded.

"Then answer me!"

Silence.

The Head looked grim.

"I think I can account for this boy's attitude, Quelch," he said. "He has evidently been sent to Greyfriars under protest. He

collected in the Common-room, in a state of great wrath and excitement.

"We know now why the new bounder won't speak!" said Vernon-Smith. "It's his idea of a joke. He thinks it great fun to try and spoof the school!"

"The Head says he'll cure him in the morning," said Peter Todd. "But I think it's up to us to cure him to-night!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll bump the rotter!"

"We'll toss him in a blanket!"

"We'll make him speak somehow!"

The juniors were furious. They didn't mind a joke, but they considered that Dick Chester had gone altogether too far. His silence was exasperating—maddening. And the Removites were determined to take steps to cure him of that silence. A sound bumping, they reflected, or a blanket-tossing, or some other painful experience, would soon restore Dick Chester's speech.

"Where's the bounder now?" inquired Squiff.

"He's hidden himself away somewhere, you bet!" said Bolsover major savagely. "But we shall see him in the dorm. And then we'll put a stop to his little game."

"Yes, rather!"

Dick Chester was looking pale and overwrought when he arrived in the Remove dormitory, half an hour later. He was worried by several things, and by the loss of his speech most of all. He had not uttered a single word since the shock he had received in the railway-train; and he was beginning to despair of ever recovering the power of speech.

It was terrible to be misjudged and misunderstood, and was unable to say a word in his own defence.

The new boy decided, as he entered the dormitory that the only thing to be done was to write down his explanation on paper. He had refrained, so far, from taking this step. But it was the only way.

But before Dick Chester could produce notebook and pencil, a crowd of juniors came surging towards him.

"Now, you cad," said Vernon-Smith grimly, "we're going to put you through the hoop!"

"Collar him!" roared Bolsover major.

"One moment, you fellows!" said Harry Wharton, intervening. "We'll give him one more chance to speak. And if he doesn't take it he'll know what to expect. Now, Chester!"

The uproar subsided, and everybody waited for the new boy to speak. But no word came.

"He's still sticking it out!" said Dennis Carr, at length.

"Well, we shall have to cure him, that's all," said Bob Cherry. "We'll show him that it's no use trying to hold out against the Form."

"What's it to be, Wharton?" asked Squiff. "A blanket-tossing?"

"No," said the captain of the Remove. "We'll make him run the gauntlet—just once between the lines. And if that doesn't make him chuck this tommy-rot, nothing will! Line up, you fellows!"

The juniors armed themselves with pillows and bolsters and knotted towels. Bolsover major was searching for a more formidable weapon of attack.

And Dick Chester, with white face and clenched hands, stood looking on at these preparations, whilst Bulstrode and Tom Brown each gripped one of his arms.

Fierce anger flamed up in the new boy's breast. He wanted to speak—he wanted to tell these fellows what he thought of them. He prayed passionately that the power of speech might be restored to him.

And the next moment his prayer was answered!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Dick Chester Explains!

"YOU ends—you cowardly cads!" Dick Chester had spoken at last. He had grown red in the face, he had stuttered frantically—and his speech had been restored to him!

And he now made up for his long silence by pouring forth a torrent of angry words.

Bulstrode and Tom Brown were so amazed that they released the new boy as if he had suddenly become red-hot.

As for the rest of the fellows, they desisted from their operations, and stared at Dick Chester in stupefied astonishment.

For a couple of minutes the new boy con-

tinued to lash them with his tongue. And then he threw himself on to the nearest bed, and burst into a fit of sobbing.

The first fellow to find his voice was Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, he's mad! I knew all along that he was potty! I——"

"Dry up!" said Mark Linley.

And in an instant he was at Dick Chester's side. "What's wrong, kid?" he asked quietly, placing his hand consolingly upon the shoulder of the sobbing junior.

The new boy made no reply. But after a time the fit of hysterical sobbing passed, and he exclaimed fervently:

"Thank Heaven!"

"Why do you say that?" asked Mark Linley.

And the juniors hung on Dick Chester's reply.

The new boy raised his pale face to that of the Lancashire lad.

"Because my speech has been restored," he answered.

"My only aunt!" exclaimed Dennis Carr, in startled tones. "Do you mean to say, Chester, that you actually lost your speech?"

"Yes."

"But your pater declared that you hadn't!" protested Harry Wharton. "He sent the Head a telegram——"

"It was since I left home that I lost my speech," explained Dick Chester. And there could be no doubting the sincerity of his statement. Even Bolsover major realised that he was speaking the truth.

"But—but how on earth did you come to lose your speech, kid?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I—I can't tell you! You'd think I was a funk——"

"We should think nothing of the sort!" said Bob warmly. "The way you stood up to Bolsover and trounced him is proof that you're not a funk!"

"Tell us all about it, Chester," said Vernon-Smith. "And if any cad starts sneering I'll punch his head!"

The new boy hesitated a moment, whilst the eyes of his Form-fellows were fixed eagerly upon him. And then he told his story.

"I've got a positive dread of railway smashes," he explained. "I've had it ever since I was a small kid, and I've never been able to shake it off. The average fellow, when he travels by train, doesn't worry a jot. The possibility of an accident doesn't occur to him, and if it did he wouldn't let it trouble him overmuch. But it's different with me. I get awfully nervy about such things."

"Do you mean to say you've been in a train smash to-day?" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Not a smash exactly. But the engine happened to jump the metals, and so did the carriage I was in."

"My hat!"

"I was thrown from one end of the carriage to the other, and the shock of it fairly stunned me. When the guard came along and asked me if I was all right I couldn't answer. And I've not been able to speak a word since—until just now!"

"Poor kid!" said Mark Linley softly. "And we thought you were being silent on purpose—that you were playing some deep game or other."

"And the Head thought so, too—and so did Quelch," said Dennis Carr. "They'll have to be told the facts right away."

"Yes, rather!"

The pillows and bolsters and towels were returned to their allotted places, and a party of rather shamed juniors crowded round the bed on which Dick Chester was sitting, and asked his forgiveness.

"It's all right, you fellows," said the new boy. He was smiling now. "It was all a misunderstanding on your part."

"Why on earth didn't you explain the facts in writing?" said Wharton.

"I was afraid you'd think me an awful weakling, to let a slight railway accident upset me like that!"

"What rot!" said Johnny Bull. "We haven't all got cast-iron nerves. Every fellow has a weakness of some sort. Personally, I've always got a horror of being knocked down by Coker's motor-bike!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At this juncture Wingate of the Sixth came into the dormitory to extinguish the lights.

The captain of Greyfriars frowned when he saw everybody out of bed, and he very promptly inquired the reason.

Harry Wharton then explained everything to the astonished Wingate. And the Sixth-Former, as soon as he had recovered from his

amazement, hurried away to explain matters to Mr. Quelch, who in turn acquainted the Head with full details of Dick Chester's unenviable experiences.

Now that the new boy's tongue was loosed he proved a very interesting and entertaining fellow. And Harry Wharton & Co. were looking forward to enjoying his friendship at Greyfriars.

But they were destined to disappointment.

Next day, the Head arranged for a celebrated nerve-specialist to come down to the school and examine Dick Chester. And, greatly to the junior's disgust, the eminent man prescribed six months' complete rest for him.

"You are suffering," he said, "from neurasthenia. Not acutely, but it may become acute unless you lead a perfectly quiet life for six months or so."

"I can do that by staying here, sir," said Dick Chester.

But the specialist thought otherwise.

The Head communicated with Mr. Chester, and arrangements were made for Dick to return home.

But before he went he was invited to attend a magnificent repast in Study No. 1.

There were other guests, too. But Dick Chester occupied the place of honour. And his schoolfellows did their utmost to make amends for their former treatment of him. They could hardly be blamed, of course, for acting as they had done; but they meant to show Dick Chester how much they regretted the unfortunate misunderstanding, and how sorry they were to lose him.

"That specialist Johnny who ordered you away," said Bob Cherry, "deserves to be boiled in oil!"

"Hear, hear!" said Harry Wharton. "It's an awful shame that you've got to go, Chester!"

"But still, it will not be a case of out of sightfulness, out of mindfulness!" said Hurrey Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Absence makes the esteemed heart grow as fond as two in the bush, as your English proverb has it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Inky's got a bit mixed," said Nugent. "But you can see what he means. We don't want to lose you, but it's no use kicking against specialists and parents and head-masters!"

"Not a bit!" said Dick Chester. "Let's hope I shall get a reprieve, that's all, and be allowed to come back to Greyfriars long before the six months are up."

Harry Wharton & Co. hoped so, too.

And it was with genuine regret that they parted company with Dick Chester, who had caused such a sensation at Greyfriars by appearing—unwillingly enough—in the role of the Silent Schoolboy!

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled: "WIBLEY'S WINNING WAY" by Frank Richards. Order your copy EARLY!)

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NUGGET WEEKLY

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 78.

ANOTHER INSTALMENT OF OUR GREAT NEW CINEMA SERIAL!



By NAT FAIRBANKS.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Dick Tulliver, to escape being apprenticed to Wibbleswick & Co., a firm of drapers, by his uncle, makes his way to the country town of Dorminster. There he comes across the Western Super-Film Company, who are located in a ruined manor house, known as Wildfell Grange, which is reputed to be haunted. By a piece of luck, Dick is able to be of service to Mr. Halibut, the producer. Through the good offices of a friend named Harry Trent, who is working for the company, Dick is taken on in place of Archie Deen, the star actor, who has mysteriously disappeared. He is introduced to an actor-friend of Trent's named Biglow. Later, Dick has the misfortune to make a dangerous enemy of a hunchback dwarf, named Bernard Grimshaw.

One day Dick discovers a secret passage leading from Grimshaw's room and out into the grounds by the lake. He has reasons to believe that it is frequently used by the dwarf. A strike takes place among the actors, and in despair Mr. Halibut sends Dick and Harry with an urgent message to Colonel Allingham, a patron of the company. Whilst Dick is in the colonel's house, Mr. Halibut's car is stolen, and Harry with it. After making inquiries, Dick is able to get on the track of the car, and finally runs to earth his chum, in the cellars of a ruined farm.

(Now read on.)

The New Chums.

DICK TULLIVER wasted no time in loosening the bonds that encircled Harry.

"Good old Dick!" mumbled Harry, in a faint voice. "I might have known you'd soon track me down. The scoundrels! Have they gone?"

"I think so. What's more, they have left the car here. At least, there was no sound of them starting it up. My word, Harry! I'm awfully relieved to find things are no worse. They might have been, you know."

Harry Trent nodded.

"They caught me properly by surprise," he said, as, assisted by Dick, he slowly got to his feet and stretched his cramped limbs. "I heard you kicking up that row on Colonel Allingham's knocker, and just as I had made up my mind to join you, three men suddenly came through the gate and stepped up to the car. One of them, in quite a gentlemanly voice, asked me if I could oblige him with the time. Not suspecting anything, I took out my watch. When I looked up I found a revolver an inch away from my nose. I said nothing, and they said nothing. The man holding the revolver stood over me, while the other two men got into the car. Then he with the revolver climbed in beside me, and indicated that I was to set her going. What could I do, but obey? Off we went until we reached this place. They conducted me down to these cellars, and without giving me an explanation—indeed, they never spoke a word the whole time—they trussed me up. Apart from binding me, I can't say they did me any injury. Still, if you hadn't found me, I should have probably starved to death."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 78.

"Would you recognise them again?" asked Dick.

"No. Their faces were completely hidden. Now you know what's happened to me, Dick, let's have your adventures."

Dick accordingly related them. "By the way," he concluded, "did you notice if they carried a bag of any sort? I understand they collared most of the colonel's plate."

Harry had not observed any bag. "Still they may have had one," he said. "I had no chance of taking in any details. The whole affair was too sudden. I tell you what, Dick," he added hotly, "I sha'n't rest until I've run those chaps to earth!"

"Don't blame you," said Dick sympathetically. "I only wish I had been able to follow them to see in which direction they went. I suppose the first thing to do will be to inform the police."

"Yes, after we've seen the colonel," returned Harry. "Then there's old Halibut. We must get back to Wildfell Grange as soon as possible. I bet he's tearing his hair out by this time. Look here, Dick, you can drive the car; can't you?"

"After a fashion," said Dick. "Then the best thing you can do is to drop me at the colonel's house, and then get along back as quickly as you can."

But, alas! for their plans. The car was there, right enough, but a car with all its tyres punctured is not much use. In other words, the three men before departing had slit each tyre with some sharp instrument, and there they hung on the wheels, all soft and flabby.

"And that's that!" murmured Harry ruefully. "What's to be done now, Dick?"

"You go along to the colonel's place," said Dick promptly, "and I'll return to the Grange the best way I can."

"On foot! Why, my dear chap, it'll take you hours!"

"I dare say I can get a lift of some sort," said Dick hopefully. "It's just turned eight. I'll walk back as far as Nodstead with you, and see if there's a bike for hire anywhere."

So back to Nodstead they went, and at the High Street they parted company, Harry going back to Grandcourt Lodge, and leaving Dick to seek some form of conveyance which would take him to Wildfell Grange.

The village of Nodstead, however, proved barren of bikes, traps, dogcarts, or, in fact, anything that went on wheels. It was market day at the neighbouring county town, and the inhabitants required their vehicles for the purpose of going there. There was not even a perambulator to be hired.

Dick pursued his investigations until he reached the outskirts of the village, and found himself gazing at a placid stream that meandered away toward the hills that could be seen in the distance.

"A boat would be better than nothing," he reflected. "This stream is probably a tributary of the River Swift. It's bound to take me somewhere near the Grange."

But there was no boat in sight.

Stay! What was that wooden-looking affair he could see under a clump of willow trees over yonder? A bathing-hut! No; by Jove, it was a small house-boat! Even as he looked, a rowing-boat appeared round the

bend of the river and made straight for the spot where the house-boat was moored.

"Perhaps they may be able to assist me," thought Dick.

It was a faint hope, but Dick had had enough of wandering about. He was not only very tired, but very hungry, too. If they were decent people they might offer him a cup of tea, or, failing that, he could indulge in a much-needed rest under the inviting shadows of the trees growing by the water's edge.

The path leading towards the house-boat crossed a small meadow which sloped away down to a hedge, beyond which the river, glistening in the sun like a mirror, could be seen between the poplars fringing its banks.

As Dick got nearer he saw not only the top of the house-boat, but also the top of a bell-tent. It was a camping party. In between the trees fitted some figures clad in white, and the closer he got the stronger grew a familiar odour.

It was the smell of fried bacon! If Dick was hungry before—he was absolutely ravenous now.

He strolled up to the bell-tent and discovered a fellow about his own age bending over an oil-stove, on the top of which stood a frying-pan, and in the frying-pan reposed half a dozen rashers of bacon and three eggs.

Something seemed to have gone wrong with the stove, judging by the reckless way the fellow was striking matches, holding them to the wick, and then, as they burnt out, throwing them away, and striking others.

"Good-morning!" said Dick pleasantly. "Won't it work?"

There was no verbal reply to this remark, but the fellow's next action spoke volumes. He lifted up the frying-pan, and, taking a flying kick, sent the stove hurtling into the adjacent bushes.

"That's settled that!" he said, turning a flushed face to Dick.

He was a young gentleman, with straw-coloured hair, and a large, pointed nose. He was lanky, with very bony elbows and wrists, and his knees seemed inclined to shakiness. He gazed at Dick for a brief moment, and then apparently Dick's appearance meeting with his approval, his features melted into a faint grin.

"I say, are you any good at lighting fires?" he asked.

"I'm an expert at the job!" returned Dick solemnly.

"Oh, well, if you wouldn't mind helping me—"

Before he could complete the sentence, Dick had started to collect twigs and other odds and ends suitable for the purpose.

"He can't want to eat all that himself," thought Dick, as he gazed on the contents of the frying-pan. "If I light his fire, out of common decency, he'll have to invite me to breakfast."

"You haven't two bricks, I suppose?" asked Dick.

After some hunting about, a couple of bricks were unearthed. Placing them about six inches apart, Dick threw the twigs and things in between, and in a very short space of time he had the beginnings of quite a promising fire.

"You know how to cook as well, I dare

say?" said the other, watching Dick with every sign of approval.

"I should say so!" replied Dick. "And eat, too!" he added to himself.

"Then would you complete your frightful kindness by finishing off the bacon and eggs?"

"I'm in luck!" thought Dick, giving the frying-pan a scientific shake.

He had just placed it on the fire when suddenly, close at hand, voices arose. Two fellows, each bearing a number of small parcels, staggered into the clearing and dumped the lot on the ground.

"What, breakfast not ready yet, Plum!" exclaimed the foremost of the newcomers, in a tone of great annoyance. "What have you been doing? Here, who's this?"

"This," of course, referred to Dick.

The person addressed as Plum hesitated a second before replying.

"He's an expert fire-layer and cook," he mumbled. "I hope you don't mind, Faulkner?"

"It's totally against orders!" returned the other sharply. "How do you know he isn't a spy?"

"I bet you didn't ask him to give the password!" chimed in Faulkner's companion.

This being all Greek to Dick, he allowed his attention to wander from his culinary duties for one brief second to take stock of these fellows. "Public school boys out for a holiday," he summed them up. A glance at the cap Faulkner wore further convinced him he was right in his surmise. He recognised the colours as those belonging to Fallowsdale College. During his last year at school he had played cricket and football against them.

"I found your chum having a couple of short, sharp rounds with an oil-stove," said Dick. "And as the oil-stove was winning, I barged in and helped him."

"And if he hadn't, you chaps wouldn't have got any breakfast!" grunted Plum. "Look at that bacon; look at those eggs! Absolutely done to a turn! You remember what happened yesterday, Templeton, don't you?"

To judge by Templeton's face, he remembered too well; so also apparently did Faulkner.

"The stuff certainly looks more like eggs and bacon than it did under your treatment," confessed Faulkner. He looked at Dick keenly. "Do you belong to these parts?" he asked.

"Oh, no," replied Dick; "I've got stranded here. I want to get back to a place called Wildfell Grange—"

"What!" ejaculated the others, and the word pronounced in unison produced the effect of a pistol-shot.

The Expeditionary Force.

"**W**ILDFELL GRANGE!" repeated Dick, and then added the query: "Why not?"

"Oh, of course, there's no reason—" began Faulkner.

"No reason at all why you shouldn't—" cut in Templeton.

"Still, it's jolly strange!" blurted Plum. Dick looked at the bacon and eggs that were rapidly cooling in the morning air. Faulkner's eyes took the same direction.

"I vote we start on these and talk afterwards," he said gravely. "Put on the kettle, Plum, for the tea. Will you join us?" he added to Dick.

"Thanks!" said Dick. "That is, if you can spare it!"

"Oh, we've heaps of grub," returned Faulkner. "Our commissariat department's in full working order. Templeton and I have just bought a ton of tinned stuff. Then there are the iron rations, besides."

Dick rather opened his eyes at these military terms, but he made no comment for the moment. He was really too hungry to bother about explanations of the why and wherefore of this "camp," and devoted all his attention to the liberal portion of egg and bacon that Faulkner dished out to him. But as he ate he quietly took stock of his companions. Faulkner was evidently the leader. He was a tall, good-looking lad, built on athletic lines, and with a quick, decisive manner about him that betokened boundless energy. Templeton, on the other hand, seemed to be of a languid disposition. Dick couldn't imagine him hurrying over anything. Plum, who was the youngest of the trio, was afflicted with tremendous volubility, and when he talked, he had the habit of coming very close to you, and thrusting his long nose almost in your face.

It was after the first cup of tea had been poured out, and Plum's chattering comments on this, that, and the other had for the

moment come to an end, that Faulkner started to unbosom himself.

"It's like this," he began. "We are here on active service." He paused, seeing Dick's puzzled expression. "But perhaps I'd better explain fully."

Dick nodded his head, as much as to say: "Perhaps you had."

"We all belong to Fallowsdale College," said Plum eagerly, butting in, "and—"

"Hold your tongue, Plum! Templeton, if the 'cook's mate' shows any further sign of insubordination, have the kindness to bonnet him."

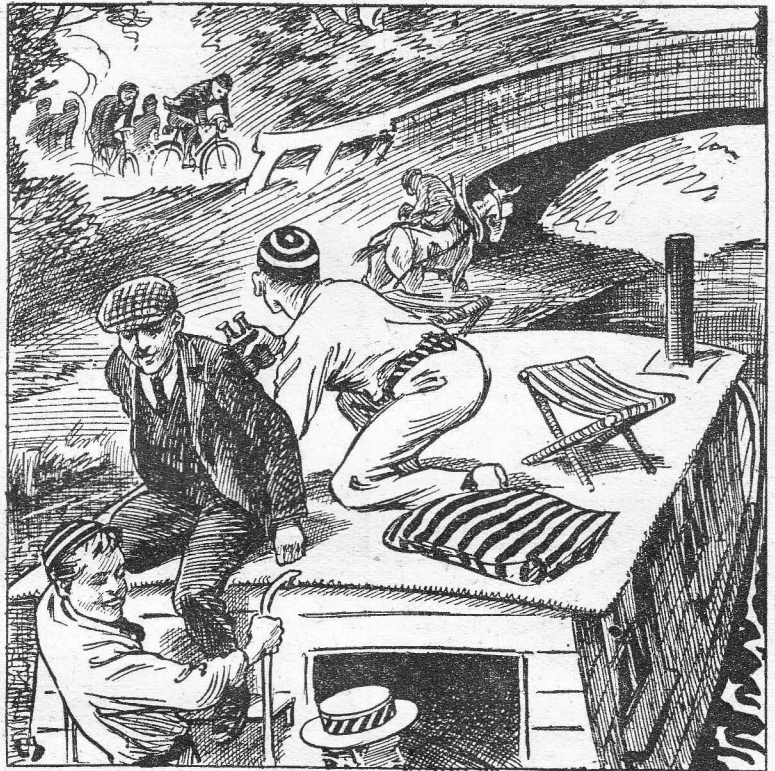
"Well," resumed Faulkner, after a pause to allow of the 'cook's mate's' subsidence, "we're out on active service to investigate this Wildfell Grange. For a long time past we've heard all sorts of queer stories about the show, and as our school's closed down for

person Sattlebee some sort of sentry you've posted?"

"Some sort of sentry is right," grumbled Faulkner. "Yes, he's been on duty since six."

"Then I didn't see him," said Dick.

"Go off, Plum, and rout him out," said Faulkner. "You see," he went on, "this is not the only expedition making for the Grange. By the way, we may as well know your name. Dick Tulliver? Thanks! Well, Tulliver, as I say, we're not the only expedition on active service. A chap named Blosgen from our school, and one of the biggest outsiders you ever met, is conducting a gang of followers on the same quest as us. Blosgen and I are deadly rivals—always have been—and he's sworn, so I hear, to find out all about the Grange before we do. Luckily, we slipped away without him knowing we'd gone, and so we've got a day's start of him. It's war to the knife between us, and, that



There was a loud tinkling of cycle-bells, and the crew of the Gaffsy saw a party of cyclists rapidly approaching down the road. "Men," announced Faulkner, "the enemy approaches! Down into the cabin, all of you! They mustn't spot us!"

a fortnight, we thought we'd spend the time in taking a trip to the Grange, and finding out how much truth there is in the wild yarns we've been told. You say you're going there?"

"Yes," said Dick. "I want to get there as quickly as I can."

"So do we," chimed in Plum. "In fact—"

He was unable to say more, for Templeton, in obedience to orders, pulled his straw hat over his eyes.

Plum once more subsided.

"As I was about to say," went on Faulkner, "we want to get there as soon as possible. I take it that you know the way?"

"Oh, yes," said Dick. "The quickest route would be by water, but I don't know how your house-boat will be of any assistance. You can't go very fast in that."

"That's all you know!" retorted Faulkner. "The Expedition has hired a horse and man—"

"And a dog," grunted Templeton. "Don't forget the dog, Faulkner."

"I'm not likely to," said Faulkner grimly.

"Oh, I see," cried Dick. "You have the means of being towed along."

"Exactly! By the way, Plum, you'd better go and relieve old Sattlebee. His time's up. Did he challenge you?" said Faulkner, turning to Dick.

"Challenge me!" echoed Dick. "Is this

being so, I am running this expedition on strictly military lines."

Faulkner rambled on in this style for some time. He was far too absorbed in his own affairs to show the slightest curiosity about Dick, and as Dick was not particularly anxious to disclose his connection with Wildfell Grange, he was quite content to listen while Faulkner talked.

Presently Plum returned, leading by the arm none other than the elderly patriarch who early that morning had supplied Dick with the information concerning the whereabouts of the missing motor. Behind them slunk the wretched-looking dog.

"I have arrested Private Sattlebee," announced Plum. "I found him asleep at his post. Did I do right?"

"Perfectly right," said Faulkner sternly.

"I suppose you know, Private Sattlebee, you've infringed the rules of the service?"

"Yes, Maester Faulkner," mumbled the patriarch very contritely.

"And according to military law you ought to be led out at once, placed with your back against a wall, blindfolded, and shot?"

"And serve you jolly well right, too!" said Templeton severely. "Such fellows as you can only be dealt with by martial law."

"And has he coom wi' you, sir?"

"Who's come?"

"Why, Marshal Law, as you called him just now."

"Hang it, Sattlebee," returned Templeton angrily. "Don't you try and be a greater fool than you are!"

"Noa, sir. I'm always contented wi' my place."

It was wonderful what a sly look old Sattlebee had in his eyes sometimes. Whatever he tried to be, he certainly looked a greater fool than he was. But Dick reckoned anyone would be most woefully deceived if they took him for a greater fool than he looked.

"There, there, that'll do!" snapped Faulkner. "Private Sattlebee, I shall put you on fatigue duty at once. We're going to strike the camp this very minute. Pack everything into the house-boat, and get the horse ready to tow us down the river."

At this moment Plum gave vent to an agonised yell.

"Look at that wretched dog!" he cried. "He's collared the knuckle of ham!"

The expedition immediately scattered amongst the trees in a vain endeavour to catch Sattlebee's dog. A well-directed shot with a meat tin from Dick brought the marauding career of the animal to an abrupt conclusion. He dropped the knuckle of ham, not much the worse for its adventure, and sat down on his haunches and barked defiance at all and sundry.

"That dog's a professed thief, mark my words!" puffed Plum. "The wretched cur!"

"Which, begging your pardon, Snap's as pure-bred a mongrel as ever you saw in your life," retorted old Sattlebee, standing up boldly for the animal.

"Silence in the ranks!" ordered Faulkner. With some difficulty the rank and file—otherwise Sattlebee—was induced to start his fatigue duty. The others set to as well, and merrily the work proceeded. By half-past nine everything was ready to be taken on board.

A procession was formed. It marched to the house-boat in the following order:

Faulkner, with knapsack on shoulders, a pair of field-glasses, and a wicker basket.

Plum, with a saucepan, articles of crockery, and pockets bulging with a miscellaneous collection of tins of cocoa, potted meat, and sardines.

Last of all Templeton and Dick, struggling under the weight of the tent, which, folded up and rolled round a pole, was, with a couple of macintoshes, no slight burden.

The only person not doing anything appeared to be Private Sattlebee. But though he didn't use his hands, his tongue went pretty freely, and he had a word to say on everything. Indeed, most of the time Sattlebee sat on the most comfortable place he could find on the bank, and looked on so cheerfully that Faulkner, who was beginning to lose his temper, asked whether he couldn't discover something to do.

"I shall have plenty to do, never fear," returned Sattlebee, bringing out a dirty clay pipe. "The old 'oss'll want a bit of managing. I'm not going to tire myself now, and not be able to use my strength when I want it. Recollect, you young gents'll be all comfortable aboard whilst me and Snap'll be trudging along that there tow-path."

"Oh, all right!" snapped Faulkner. Everything was eventually stowed on board. The horse, after some difficulty, was induced to start, and the house-boat was soon gliding along at a steady three miles an hour.

Back to the Scene of Action.

THE Gaddy, for so was the house-boat named, pursued her course for some miles without encountering any difficulties. The sluggish river wound in and out, now running parallel with the high road, and now slipping under a bridge to allow the road to pass over, and meeting it again half a mile farther away. This sort of thing was continued without much variation.

"You're sure we're going in the right direction?" said Faulkner every now and then to Dick.

"Oh, yes," he assured him. "We ought to reach the village by dinner-time."

"Tell us what you know about the old Grange," said Plum. "Sattlebee's told us some hair-raising yarns, and swears the place absolutely swarms with ghosts."

"It's empty, of course?" inquired Templeton.

"I expect so," replied Dick guardedly. Indeed, he fully expected to find it so when he got there. By this time Colonel Allingham had most probably got into communica-

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 78.

tion with Mr. Halibut, and had announced his intention of refusing to allow the company to take up their quarters elsewhere. If the members of the company displayed the same spirit of revolt that they had shown last night, they would have packed up their belongings, and quitted the Grange. Consequently, the house would certainly, for the time being, at any rate, be empty.

"And that being so," thought Dick, "Harry and I will have to find some place to sleep in. All the likely beds in the village will be collared hours ago. I wonder if these fellows would let us share their tent with them. I must try and wangle it."

"I've heard curious tales about the Grange as well," said Dick. "I won't say they're all true, but the fact remains the place has a very bad reputation. I wonder you didn't bring a bigger 'army' with you."

Faulkner muttered something about the fellows funking it.

"Your force is far too small," said Dick,



The next moment the boy lifted up the frying-pan, and, taking a flying kick, sent the stove hurtling into the adjacent bushes. "That's settled that!" he muttered.

shaking his head gravely. "I'm wondering if I could beat up a few recruits. I don't want to dictate to you in any way, but you see I know something of the dangers you'll encounter, and you don't."

"True," murmured Templeton, with a rather anxious look in the direction of his chief.

The gallant Faulkner appeared to be turning things over in his mind. The smallness of his "army" had been the drawback all through, but the idea of enlisting outsiders didn't attract him very much. Still, it depended a good deal who the outsiders were. This chap Dick Tulliver, for instance, would be a distinct acquisition.

"How about you?" he asked Dick. "Would you care to join the 'F.E.F.'?"

"F.E.F.?" questioned Dick.

"That's our name—Fallowdale Expeditionary Force, you know!"

"Oh, I see," returned Dick, smothering a chuckle with difficulty. "Yes, I might take up a temporary commission. I've got a friend as well who might be induced to join. He's a head taller than I am—wouldn't O'Flaherty just love this?" he added to himself—"I've half a mind to 'drop him a line.'"

Faulkner produced a note-book.

"I'll add your name to the roll," he said.

He was proceeding to do so, when a loud tinkling of cycle-bells rang out. At that moment they were approaching one of the bridges that carried the road across the river. Down this road they espied a party of cyclists approaching.

Faulkner whipped out his field-glasses and took a rapid survey.

"Men," he announced, in solemn tones, "the enemy approaches. Down into the cabin, all of you. They mustn't spot us!"

Everyone dived below in a most undignified fashion.

"It's Blogson and his party!" breathed Faulkner.

"You mean the rival expedition?" said Dick.

Faulkner nodded.

"They've caught us up!" ejaculated Templeton. "Phew! Here's a go!"

"There's one thing," muttered Faulkner. "Not knowing we're on board the Gaddy, they won't suspect anything."

"Unless they spotted our caps," said Plum. He glanced out of the cabin-window—they had passed under the bridge by this time—and looked towards the road. "Anyway, they haven't stopped. I can see them scooting along for all they're worth. One, two, three—By Jingo! There seems to be a dozen of them!"

Faulkner, with the promptitude of all great military men, immediately held a council of war.

In a brief speech he outlined the necessity for extreme caution. They were outnumbered, he said, but then so was Henry the Fifth at Agincourt. After all, numbers were not everything in warfare; brains would always defeat brute force coupled with ignorance, and as they had the former qualification, and Blogson relied entirely upon the latter, there was no reason to despond.

"Still, if you can prevail upon your friend to join up, so much the better," he added to Dick.

The danger for the moment being past, the members of the F.E.F. once more went up on deck.

"Look!" said Dick, indicating a spot on their left. "Can you see part of a roof and two square chimney-stacks?"

"Yes, I see them."

"Well, that's Wildfell Grange. What do you propose doing now? Blogson and his lot will have reached the village by this time. You're not keen on meeting him yet awhile, I suppose?"

"Oh, no. I want to take them by surprise."

"I thought so. Then if I may make a suggestion, I should advise you to pitch your camp somewhere in those backwaters. Get old Sattlebee to stop at once. When the tow-ropes are attached, we'll hitch it on to the dinghy, and a couple of us will pull the Gaddy to a convenient camping-ground."

Everyone voted this an excellent suggestion.

Accordingly loud yells were raised to Sattlebee to stop. Sattlebee being at the present moment fast asleep on the back of the horse, the Gaddy was towed nearly a quarter of a mile out of her proposed course. Eventually, however, Sattlebee was seen to poke up his head and give vent to a hoarse "Hoy!" thereby signifying that their shouts had at length penetrated his hearing.

The Gaddy slowly drifted across to the tow-path.

Accompanied by Plum, Dick got into the dinghy, and, after attaching the tow-rope, they bent to their oars and slowly pulled the Gaddy in the direction of the backwaters.

These backwaters intersected the marshy land by innumerable channels, forming a multitude of islands of various sizes. When the river was low and the sun hot, the beds of many of these islands were sufficiently dry to allow them to be crossed at the expense of muddy feet. But the wider channels were nearly always impassable. A greenish-black slimy mud, into which a stone pitched with moderate force instantly sank, covered them—a mud of a glutinous character, which the winter floods scarcely sufficed to disturb.

But there was one island standing out of the water considerably higher than the rest, thickly covered with trees and undergrowth, and it was here that the Gaddy eventually came to rest.

"How will this suit you?" asked Dick.

"Couldn't be better," said Faulkner.

"Finest bit of cover we could possibly find!"

"Prime!" ejaculated Templeton.

"A 1!" exclaimed Plum.

"Right you are!" said Dick. "And now

(Continued on page 17.)

LONG ODDS!

A Grand Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Cutts' Precious Schemie.

TOM MERRY, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, and captain of the junior school, strolled out into the playing-fields with a book on a hot summer afternoon. He had some poetry to learn for Mr. Linton, and he was looking for a quiet spot where he was not likely to be disturbed.

He walked towards a group of stately oaks in the corner of the playing-field near the cricket pavilion. Round the bases of these noble trees were wooden seats. Tom Merry was just about to take a seat beneath the largest of the oaks, when he paused as another idea struck him. Two minutes later he was perched snugly in the fork of two stout branches, twenty feet from the ground. The leafy foliage screened him from view from the ground.

"Saug enough here," he remarked to himself, with satisfaction, opening "The Golden Treasury." "Now for this blessed poetry."

For ten minutes he was undisturbed. Then the sound of voices drifted up from below. "It's safe enough!" Tom Merry heard the words distinctly. "Merry can't possibly win; it's an absolute cert!"

"Then you've given long odds, Gerald, old man?"

There was an unpleasant chuckle. "Long odds! Rather! I can afford to, old man. I tell you it's a cert!"

Tom Merry peered down through the leafy screen that surrounded him. Two St. Jim's fellows had strolled up and seated themselves beneath the very tree in which he was perched. Tom recognised them at once. They were Gerald Cutts of the Fifth and his crony, St. Leger.

Tom Merry hesitated. His first thought was to shout down and tell them to buzz off, as he wanted to learn his poetry. But, having heard their first words, he hesitated. He did not want to be an eavesdropper, but as their conversation appeared to concern him very closely, he thought he might as well hear some more.

Gerald Cutts was one of the "fast set" at St. Jim's, and more than a little of the blackguard. St. Leger, though less daring, was of the same kidney.

"Several of the fellows in the Shell—Crooke, and Racke, and Clampe—fancied Merry's chances in the competition, so I offered to take their bets. I laid 'em ten to one." And Cutts chuckled his unpleasant chuckle.

"Ten to one!" exclaimed St. Leger. "Yes, ten to one—in half-quids! You see, dear boy, I happened to know that young Stubbs—the fellow they used to call the Chicken before he was warned out of the ring for foul fighting—was knocking about down here. I got him to enter, under the name of Hawkins. He looks quite a kid, but he's an old hand at the game—a regular young tough! And if Merry gets as far as the final, Stubbs'll be there to knock him out!"

"But—but supposing, by some chance, Merry knocks him out instead?" said St. Leger.

"That's all right, dear boy; he won't!" said Cutts, with a reckless laugh. "Stubbs is a regular young tough, I tell you; and, besides, he knows a trick that'll make all safe. He's done it before. Merry will think he's been kicked by a mule when he goes down. I tell you it's easy money."

St. Leger looked at Cutts with a sort of uneasy admiration. Rascal as he was, he was not quite such a reckless rascal as Cutts, and he could scarcely think with composure of the idea of a schoolfellow—and a junior at that—being so roughly handled in the ring by a ruffianly young prizefighter. And Cutts' veiled hint of foul play made him still more uneasy.

"I—I don't like it much, Cutts," he said. "Suppose—"

"Suppose nothing!" said Cutts. "My dear chap, it can't go wrong. I shall net a fiver

at least. And I'm jolly hard up at present, I can tell you. Banks has pretty nearly cleaned me out lately."

Banks was a rascally bookmaker who haunted the neighbourhood of St. Jim's.

"But—but if you should happen to lose—"

"I sha'n't lose!" laughed Cutts. "If I did, I should have a deuce of a job to find the money. I should do it somehow. I've done it before. But I sha'n't lose this time—I've fixed that all right."

"Well, I don't like it," said St. Leger, gazing round in a half-frightened manner. "Let's get in. I don't like talking about it."

"Oh, rats!" laughed Cutts. "You're losing your nerve, old boy! But come on, we'll get in now."

The two rascally seniors rose and walked towards the school.

Tom Merry took a deep breath. "The—the awful villain!" he murmured. He saw the whole plot quite clearly.

On Saturday there was a gymnastic display and boxing competition in Rycombe in aid of the funds of the local hospital. The junior boxing competition was open to any local boxer under the age of seventeen, and Tom Merry, who was the best junior boxer at St. Jim's, had entered. The Head had approved, and had even encouraged his boys to enter, his sympathies having been enlisted in advance by the hospital authorities. Jack Blake of the Fourth, and Figgins of the New House, and several others had entered, but Tom Merry had high hopes of winning.

And now that blackguard Cutts, finding that some of the shady members of the Shell Form were willing to bet on their champion, had "made a book" on the competition. By getting the ruffianly young professional "Chicken" Stubbs to enter, Cutts considered he had made the issue quite safe. And then his hint of foul play, if other means failed! Tom Merry shivered a little. Then he set his teeth.

"We'll see, Mr. Blacksheep Cutts!" he muttered, as he slid down the tree, all thoughts of the poetry he was learning driven out of his head. "We'll see! Forewarned is forearmed! But I guess the odds are against me all right!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Tom's Great Fight.

TOM MERRY kept his own counsel. He said nothing of the ugly plot he had discovered to his friends, Manners and Lowther, with whom he shared Study No. 10 in the Shell Form passage. But after dinner on Saturday, when he was preparing to go down to Rycombe for the competition, he looked very grave.

Monty Lowther looked at him curiously.

"What's up, Tommy?"

"Nothing, old man. I feel as fit as a fiddle!"

"Well, keep your pecker up," said Lowther. "You're our champion in the show, you know. All the fellows in the Form think you're going to win."

"I know."

"Some of 'em have been fools enough to bet on it, even," said Manners. "Crooke and his lot, I mean. Blessed if I know what the cads want to bet at all for. There'd be a fine row if the Head knew."

"There would," said Tom, with a faint smile. "Blessed if I want to win their dirty money for them—but I don't want to lose, either."

"No fear!"

"All the same, Crooke & Co. got long odds against me!"

"How do you know?" asked Manners and Lowther, in astonishment.

"Well, I do know. The betting's long odds against me, so everybody doesn't think I'm going to win, evidently."

"Rats! Of course you'll win!"

"I hope so," said Tom, with a smile. The chums went down to the village with a crowd of St. Jim's fellows, and the competition began.

Tom Merry did well. Never, his delighted supporters declared, had he been known to box better. He got through three matches of three rounds each, which brought him into the final. But it was noticed that he boxed grimly, without the sunny smile which usually lit up his pleasant face. Perhaps he was thinking of the long odds against him!

Jack Blake and George Figgins were drawn against each other in the first round. After a spirited three-round contest Jack Blake gained the verdict over the New House champion by a narrow margin of points. In the next match Blake was defeated by Grimes the local grocer's boy who was in turn knocked out in one round by one Jim Hawkins, a burly youth whom nobody seemed to know.

Hawkins and Tom Merry were therefore to meet in the final match, which was limited to six rounds.

Tom Merry took careful note of Hawkins, who was a sullen-looking youth of a lowering, almost criminal, type of countenance. He knew how to box, too—that was obvious. The local referee had accepted his age as one month under seventeen, especially as his declaration was backed up by Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form at St. Jim's, who carelessly admitted that he used to know Hawkins, and could vouch for his age.

The crowd of St. Jim's boys and masters and villagers watched the final contest breathlessly. In the middle of the front row of seats Tom Merry noted Cutts and St. Leger—the latter obviously nervous and ill at ease, Cutts with a sardonic smile playing round his mouth.

"On my right Tom Merry! On my left Jim Hawkins!"

Thus the referee. Then:

"Time!"

Tom Merry, pale and determined, opened cautiously. He knew that Hawkins would try to knock him out early in the fight. If he couldn't do that he would employ a foul—but in what way Tom did not know. So he was all on the defensive.

Hawkins forced the fighting from the first. He drove Tom round the ring, showering blows at him, but he did not penetrate the junior's defence. Neither did he expose himself to the risk of a heavy counter—he was too experienced a boxer for that.

Tom had hard work to defend himself. At the same time, he gave the rascally Stubbs the impression that he was a weaker boxer than was actually the case—which was just what Tom wished to do!

The first round ended without much damage on either side.

At the call of "Time!" both sprang into the ring again, and Tom started his defensive tactics again. An evil smile played round Hawkins' mouth, and Tom took it for a danger-signal. And it was!

Suddenly Hawkins redoubled his attack. Like a whirlwind he showered blows upon Tom, who gave ground and used every art of defence. For almost a minute he kept it up, and then Hawkins saw his chance. He sprang in, and lashed savagely at the junior. Tom ducked desperately, and half-parried the blow. But such was the force of it that, landing upon his ear, it knocked him flying across the ring.

Tom lay there bleeding and half-stunned. Hawkins sprang towards him like a tiger, but the referee motioned him back, and began to count:

"Six—seven—eight—"

Tom Merry suddenly realised that he must make an effort now or never. Hawkins' foul trick was quite clear to him now—that crashing blow, half-parried, but still almost stunning in its effect, had enlightened him. The young ruffian's gloves were loaded!

"Nine—"

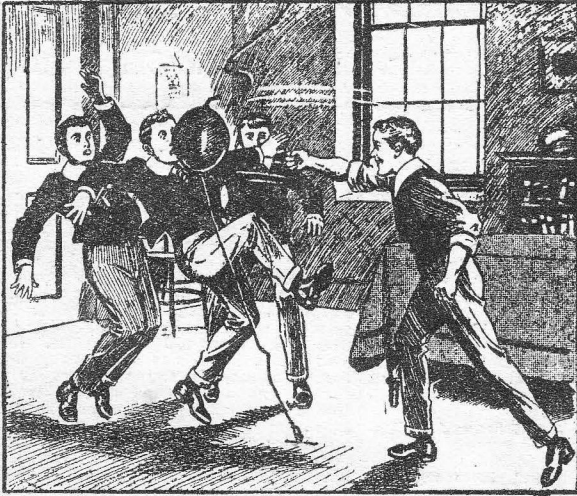
Tom Merry bunched his muscles for the spring.

Before the referee had time for the next word, Tom Merry was on his feet, amidst a

(Continued on page 17.)

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 78.

OUR THIRD GRAND COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE!



GETTING READY FOR BULLY HIGGS!

JIMMY SILVER'S TRIUMPH!

A SPLENDID, LONG COMPLETE STORY OF THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. In Training!

BIFF, Bash! Bump! Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, was busy when Lovell and Raby and Newcome came into the study.

The punching-ball was suspended midway between ceiling and floor, and Jimmy Silver, in his shirtsleeves, was pounding at it with terrific energy.

Jimmy was in great form.

At every "biff" it looked as if the punch-ball would be torn away from the hook, either in the floor or the ceiling. He did not pause as his chums looked in at the open doorway.

"I say, Jimmy—" began Lovell.

Biff!

"There's news," said Raby.

Bash!

"Mornington's coming back," said Newcome. Crash!

"Do you hear fathead?" demanded Lovell. "That cad Mornington's coming back. I've just heard it from Topham. He's coming this afternoon, too."

Biff!

"What do you think of this one with the left?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, blow!"

"Suppose that punch-ball were Bully Higgs!" said Jimmy. "And suppose I got in the left like this—"

Crash!

Jimmy Silver got in the blow with terrific vim, and with the effect of tearing the punch-ball away from its fastenings.

There was a roar from Lovell & Co. as the detached ball smashed upon them. Lovell caught it with his nose, and staggered back, throwing out his hands wildly, and his elbow caught Raby under the chin, and the back of his hand on the other side smote Newcome fairly in the eye.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Yaroop!"

"Oh, you ass! My nose—"

"My eye! Yoooh!"

"Ha, ha! You shouldn't stand in the way, you duffers! You never know where a punch-ball's going!" said Jimmy Silver chidingly.

"What do you chaps think of that one with the left? Suppose Higgs got it fairly on the chivvy—"

The Co. did not tell Jimmy Silver what they thought of his straight left. They rushed into the study, and hurled themselves upon him.

"Here, I say, hold on! Leggo! Wharrer you at? Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver descended on the study carpet with a concussion that caused the dust to rise.

The yell that rose from Jimmy Silver could have been heard at the end of the passage.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 78.

"Yah! You silly asses! What the thunder—"

"Look at my nose!" roared Lovell. "Give him another!"

"Look at my eye!" shrieked Newcome.

Bump! Bump!

Jimmy Silver struggled desperately in the grasp of his incensed chums. Accidents would happen, and could not be helped; and that accident had appeared quite comical to Jimmy Silver until the wrathful Co. collared him.

"Leggo! I'll give you my left that I'm keeping for Higgs!" he yelled.

"Give him another!"

Jimmy Silver hit out. Lovell caught the left with his chest, and sat down. Then Raby caught the right, and sat down, too. Newcome was pitched over them, and Jimmy Silver made a jump for the grate, and collared the poker. Three wrathful juniors jumped up, and rushed at him, and jumped back again just in time from the brandished poker.

"Keep off, you asses!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "What are you going for an old pal for, you chumps?"

"Look at my nose—"

"Well, it is a picture," agreed Jimmy Silver. "I dare say Higgs' nose will be like that when I've done with him. You ought to be glad."

"Glad!" hooted Lovell. "Put that poker down!"

"Not till you make it pax," grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Look at my eye—"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Newcome! Higgs' eye is going to be worse than that."

"You—you fathead!"

"Blessed if it's worth a chap's while to stand up for his study," said Jimmy Silver indignantly. "Here am I training like a Trojan, to get into form and lick Higgs, and that's the way you back me up!"

"You dangerous ass—"

"Here's a new fellow come to Rookwood, too big for any chap in the Fourth to tackle, and starting as a bully and an all-round beast," pursued Jimmy Silver. "I'm cultivating a straight left for his special benefit. You ought to back me up like pals. Blow your silly nose!"

"Groogh! You lunatic—"

Lovell dabbed his nose. It was very red. For the moment he was quite incapable of appreciating the beauties of the Jimmy Silver left, even if that left was destined to knock out the bully of the Fourth.

"Now help me fix up that punch-ball again," said Jimmy Silver.

"You fix it up again, and we'll brain you!" said Raby, in concentrated tones. "You can play the giddy ox in the gym."

Jimmy Silver snorted.

"Look here, do you want me to lick Higgs, or don't you?"

"I'd rather he licked you at the present

moment, you chump!" growled Newcome.

"I'd give a bob to lick you, you ass!"

"Keep smiling," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Think of the state I shall be in after I've licked Higgs."

The argument was not without its effect upon the Co. If Jimmy Silver did succeed in licking the redoubtable Higgs, there was no doubt that he would be in a very parlous condition when he had finished.

"Do you think you can do it?" said Lovell.

"I'm going to try. Somebody's got to put the beast in his place, and the fellows all say it's up to me, as captain of the Fourth."

"Well, so it is."

"Quite right."

"Well, then, back a fellow up, instead of grousing because you happen to get a thick nose," said Jimmy Silver warmly. "I mayn't have any nose left at all when I'm through with Higgs."

"Very likely!" grinned Raby.

"If you chaps were really keen about it, you'd back me up no end. Suppose you stand up to my left, Raby, and see how it goes—"

"Yes—I don't think!" said Raby.

"Lemme try it on you, Lovell."

"I'll try the tongs on you, if you do!"

"And that's what you call backing a fellow up," grunted Jimmy Silver. "I've been cultivating that left for a week, and I've got to try it on somebody. I don't want to tackle Higgs and get licked again. Whom shall I try it on—that's the question?"

"Mornington's coming back this afternoon," said Lovell. "We came here to tell you. I thought the cad had left Rookwood for good. Try it on him when he comes. It will do him good."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Mornington couldn't stand up to me for two seconds. And I can lick any chap in the Fourth excepting Higgs."

"Try Smythe of the Shell."

"Pooh! It would nearly kill him!" sniffed Jimmy Silver. "Look here, I've got to put it to the test before I tackle Higgs. What about having a row with a senior?"

"Eh?"

"Not the Sixth, of course; I couldn't whop a Sixth-Former—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But a chap in the Fifth," said Jimmy Silver seriously. "If I could lick a Fifth-Form chap, I can take it that I'm able to lick Higgs."

"Why, you ass—" exclaimed Lovell.

"There's Bailey—he's a bit too tough, perhaps. What about Bingham?"

"Bingham could eat you, you ass!"

"I don't know. Bingham walloped young Muffin with a cricket-stump yesterday because he burnt his toast. He fags the kids who'll let him. It ought to be stopped, oughtn't it? Well, I'm going to stop it, and practise my left on Bingham!"

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell. "I tell you—"

Jimmy Silver slipped on his jacket. "Come on!" he said briskly.

"Where?"

"To look for Bingham."

"You thumping ass—"

"Bow-wow!"

Jimmy Silver left the study, and headed for the Fifth-Form passage, and his chums, in dismay, followed him.

Jimmy Silver was evidently in deadly earnest, and the Co. were prepared to back him up—to the extent of carrying him away when Bingham of the Fifth had done with him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Put to the Test.

HIGGS of the Fourth was in the passage, and he scowled at the Fistical Four as he passed.

Higgs was on the worst of terms with the Classical Co.

Being a tremendously big and powerful fellow, as big and nearly as old as most fellows in the Shell, Higgs had matters very much his own way in the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver had tackled him on his first day at Rookwood, and had been hopelessly licked. And as Jimmy was the most redoubtable fighting-man in the Lower School, Higgs was cock-of-the-walk afterwards.

But the bully of the Fourth did not have matters all his own way. The Fistical Four stood together in that. When Higgs became too unpleasant they were accustomed to tackling him in concert, and ragging him till he saw reason. So Higgs was far from being monarch of all he surveyed, much to his indignation and wrath.

Having established the fact that he could lick any fellow in the Form, he had expected to reign supreme. He was prepared to tackle any member of the Fistical Four, and "whop" him without mercy. But the four together handled even the burly Higgs with ease, and checked his Hunnish proclivities to a very great extent.

But that position of affairs did not satisfy Jimmy Silver.

The whole Form looked to him to put Higgs in his place, and Jimmy felt that it was up to him to do it.

For a long time now the captain of the Fourth had been training specially for the purpose of "taking on" the burly Higgs once more.

Once the bully of the Form had been licked in a fair fight, matters would be very much more peaceful and comfortable all round.

But it was a tremendous task, and Jimmy knew it. He had heaps of pluck, but he was not nearly so big nor so strong as the overgrown Higgs, and he had to make up for the deficiency by training and science.

"I hear you're going into training?" Higgs remarked, with a sneer, as the Fistical Four came along.

Jimmy nodded cheerily.

"Yes, that's so."

"Thinking of tackling me—what?"

"Exactly!"

"Well, I'm ready to lick you any time you like," said Higgs, "and I may as well begin now. Put 'em up!"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Not quite ready yet," he said calmly.

"I'll let you know the date of your licking. You're not in a hurry, I suppose?"

"I'm jolly well going to knock some of the cheek out of you!" said Higgs, in his most bullying tone.

Jimmy backed away a pace.

"I'll give you the date, if you like," he said amicably. "Next Wednesday, if that will suit you."

"Next Wednesday, or any time you like!" jeered Higgs. "But I'll give you a thump ear now to go on with!"

"Hands off, you silly ass!" growled Lovell.

Higgs was advancing, with his big fists up. But the Fistical Four did not stand on ceremony with Higgs. They collared him together, and bumped him on the floor.

They went on their way, leaving the bully of the Fourth sprawling.

Jimmy Silver led the way cheerily to the Fifth Form passage.

Outside Bingham's study door he paused, and his chums attempted to reason with him once more; but they reasoned in vain.

Jimmy had thought the matter out.

Bingham was a senior of the Fifth, and a

powerful fellow. By the kind of stand he could make against Bingham, Jimmy expected to judge his form in the coming encounter with Higgs. Even the burly Higgs was no match for the Fifth-Former.

Jimmy was in the pink of condition, and extremely pleased with his left. He hoped to give a good account of himself with Bingham, and, once his mind was made up, wild horses could not have stopped him.

He thumped at the door, and threw it open. Bingham of the Fifth was in his study, and Muffin of the Fourth was also there.

Muffin was on his knees, making toast at the fire. The Fistical Four frowned at the sight. For the Fifth to fag the Fourth was an unparalleled "cheek," and only timid fellows like Muffin would have endured it for a moment.

There was a smell of burning in the study, and Bingham was assisting Muffin in the art of making toast with the business end of a cricket-stump.

"You clumsy, silly young ass!" Bingham was remarking, as the door opened. "Don't you know how to make toast?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"What are you making that row for, you fat beast?"

"Yow! That stump hurts! Yow!"

"Stop that!" said Jimmy Silver authoritatively.

The Fifth-Former swung round. "What do you fags want here?" he snapped. "Get out of my study!"

The Fistical Four came right in. Lovell, at a sign from Jimmy Silver, closed the door. Bingham stared at them.

"What's the little game?" he demanded.

"You're the little game," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "You've been fagging the Fourth, Bingham!"

"You cheeky young ass—"

"It's got to stop!"

"Got to?"

"Yes!"

"And who's going to stop it?" grinned the Fifth-Former.

"I am!"

"And how are you going to stop it, you cheeky, scrubby, inky little beast?"

"I'm going to lick you!" said Jimmy cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Put that toast in the fire, Muffin!" said the captain of the Fourth.

"But—but—" stammered Tubby Muffin.

"Bingham—"

"Never mind Bingham!" said Jimmy.

"I'm looking after Bingham! Get out, and take that toast with you!"

Lovell took Tubby Muffin by the ear, and led him to the door. Muffin had no choice about going.

Bingham jumped forward. Jimmy Silver jumped in his way.

"Take the toast, Muffin!"

Lovell shoved the toast into Muffin's grubby hands, and pushed him out of the study, slamming the door after him.

Bingham had no chance to interfere. He was already struggling with Jimmy Silver.

The Fifth-Former was a head taller than Jimmy, and in a struggle even the hardy and athletic captain of the Fourth did not have much chance; but his chums promptly piled in, and dragged Bingham off.

"That isn't the game!" said Jimmy, a little breathlessly. "If you're looking for a fight, I'm your man! No bear-hugs, please!"

"Why, I—I—I'll smash you!" spluttered the Fifth-Former, crimson with rage. "I'll smash you into smithereens!"

"Go ahead!"

The enraged senior went ahead at once. He rushed on Jimmy Silver, hitting out with both fists.

Jimmy had to give ground before the heavy rush; but his hands were up, and he guarded well.

The Fifth-Former drove him right round the study table, without, however, getting a single blow home upon his face.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome stood with their backs to the door, looking on with breathless interest.

"You little beast!" gasped Bingham, pausing from sheer want of breath.

"Go it, Jimmy!" sang out the Co. "He's got bellows to mend."

Jimmy "went it."

He made a sudden onslaught as the senior paused breathlessly, and Bingham, much to his astonishment, found himself driven back.

Jimmy's right caught him under the chin,

and he staggered. He hurled himself forward furiously, and then the famous "left" came into play. It seemed to Bingham of the Fifth that a mule's hind leg had struck him. With a terrific crash, the Fifth-Former went down on his back.

"Bravo!" roared Lovell.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver stood panting a little, waiting for his formidable adversary to rise. But Bingham was not in a hurry to rise. He lay on the carpet, gasping, and blinking dazedly at Jimmy Silver. His chin felt as if it were no longer there. He seemed unable to realise at first that he had been knocked down by a Fourth-Former.

"Groogh!" he gasped, at last. "Ow, ow! Why, you cheeky little beast—"

"Get up and have some more," chortled Raby. "This is what comes of fagging the Fourth!"

Bingham sat up dazedly.

"You little rotter, I don't fight with kids in the Fourth!" he spluttered. "I'll jolly well lick you with a cricket-stump for your confounded cheek!"

He scrambled up at last, and plunged at the cricket-stump. Jimmy backed to the door.

"If you've had enough I'll go," he said. "Mind, no more fagging the Fourth after this. The end study doesn't allow it."

"Get out!" roared Bingham.

He flourished the stump, and the Fistical Four got out. They did not want to argue with the stump at close quarters. Lovell slammed the door with terrific force, to show the whole of the Fifth Form at Rookwood how much the end study cared for them generally.

And, in a gleeful mood, the Fistical Four went in to tea in the end study. Matters were looking up for that famous study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Return of Mornington.

MORNINGTON stepped from a big motor-car at the gates of Rookwood. And there was a rush of Townsend, Topham, Peele, and Gower to meet him. The Nuts of Rookwood had not forgotten Mornington, and they were glad to welcome him back to the school. Mornington shook hands with them.

"Jolly glad you're back!" said Townsend.

"I've had a holiday," said Mornington, as he sauntered across the quadrangle with his dear pals. "But I decided to come back to Rookwood. My guardian wanted me to, and he's not a bad sort. I decided to come."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Topham.

"I've got to report to Bootles," said Mornington. "I'll join you in the study when I've finished with him."

"Right you are! We'll have tea ready."

Mornington tapped at the door of Mr. Bootles' study, the master of the Fourth, and entered.

Mr. Bootles laid down his book.

"Ah! You have returned, Mornington," he said.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Bootles shook hands with the junior.

"I hope, Mornington, that you have come back to Rookwood with good resolutions," he said.

"I shall be more careful than I was, sir," said Mornington.

"I am glad to hear you say so. Let me see. You will share Peele's study. I believe Peele is a friend of yours?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well! You may go. I trust there will be no more of the unpleasantness that marked your career here on a previous occasion. You have my best wishes, Mornington."

"Thank you, sir!"

Mornington left the study. His manner to Mr. Bootles had been very respectful, and the Form-master felt relieved. Mornington seemed to have changed considerably, and for the better, and Mr. Bootles was very glad to see it. Mornington had given him trouble enough.

Outside in the passage a bitter sneer crossed Mornington's lips as he walked away.

He had certainly changed. He had learned that he could not have matters all his own way at Rookwood. That there were fellows there who did not care twopence for his wealth, and that so far as the masters were

concerned he was simply a junior schoolboy who was expected to toe the line with the rest. Mornington was no fool, and he had learned his lesson. But the change was only outward; at heart he was still the insolent, overbearing, purse-proud "bouncer" who had put up the backs of the Rookwood Fourth.

There was a chorus of welcome as he entered Peele's study.

"There was a handsome spread on the table, and Townsend and Topham were in the study with Peele and Gower. Higgs, who also shared the study, was not present, and the Nuts were glad of it. They did not pull well with the truculent Higgs.

"Welcome home, dear boy!" said Townsend. "How did you get on with Bootles?" Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I've had a lecture," he said.

"You didn't cheek him?" asked Topham.

"No fear. I've learned some things," said Mornington coolly. "I know now what I can do, and what I can't do. I'm goin' to have exactly the same kind of time as I did before, but I'm goin' to be more careful about it. What's the good of checkin' a Form-master and gettin' licked?"

"No good at all," said Peele. "But you didn't seem quite to see it before."

"I can see it now. Is Jimmy Silver still cock of the walk in the Fourth?"

"No jolly fear!" said Townsend. "There's a new chap here—chap named Higgs—a regular prize-fightin' beast! He's licked Silver!" Mornington's eyes gleamed.

"My hat! That's good news!"

"Still up against that crowd—what?" asked Peele, with a grin.

"More than ever. I'm goin' to have a try for captain of the Fourth!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

"Not much in your line," said Topham. "You'd have to grind at cricket."

"I'm goin' to grind at cricket, and beat Jimmy Silver at his own game!"

"Ahem!"

"You think I can't do it?"

"Ahem!"

"Well, you'll see," said Mornington. "I've got some surprises in store for the Fourth, I can tell you. That's one of them."

"Well, we'd all like to see Jimmy Silver downed," said Gower. "A chap can't smoke a cigarette in peace, or have a little game of banker."

"What's this fellow Higgs like?" asked Mornington as he sat at the tea-table assiduously looked after by the devoted Nuts.

"A rotten, beastly bully!" growled Peele. "He shares this study, too! You'll have to be rather civil to him."

"If he's up against Jimmy Silver he's on our side."

"Ye-es; but he's a regular beast, you know. He expects a fellow to fag for him in his own study. I shouldn't wonder if he wants to fag you."

Mornington's eyes gleamed.

The door was thrown open, and Higgs of the Fourth came in. The tea-party exchanged uneasy glances.

"Hallo! Tea ready?" said Higgs. "Well, I'm ready, too! Make room for a chap!"

Peele & Co. had hoped to be free of Higgs while the little party was on. But they did not venture to dispute the lordly will of the Form bully.

"Haven't you got a chair for a fellow?" granted Higgs. "Didn't expect me to tea-what? Hallo! You're Mornington, I suppose?"

"I'm Mornington."

"A big pot—what?"

"Yes."

"Well, you won't put on any airs in this study," said Higgs. "You'll make my toast at tea-time same as the others—see!"

"I shall do nothin' of the sort!"

"You won't, by gum! Give me that chair, to begin with!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"You can have my chair, Higgs," said Peele. Higgs snorted.

"I didn't ask you for your chair. I asked this cheeky young cad for his chair. Now, then, up you get, Mornington!"

Mornington did not move.

"Did you hear me?" roared Higgs.

"Yes."

"Are you getting up?"

"No."

"Then here goes!" grinned Higgs, and he grasped the back of the chair and swung it away, and Mornington went with a crash to the floor.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 78.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Turned Out.

THE tea-party in Peele's study were all on their feet now—with the exception of Mornington. Mornington was on his back. Higgs looked down at him with a grin. Mornington's face was thunderous as he sprawled on the study carpet.

"Up you get," continued Higgs. "No slacking in this study!"

Mornington picked himself up with his lips hard set, and his eyes glittering. Higgs took the chair he had vacated, and sat in it at the table.

"Now, then, where's the toast?" said Higgs. "You can make me some toast, Mornington. It will teach you to know your place in this study. Now, sharp's the word!"

Mornington sprang to the fender. Higgs, under the impression that he was in a hurry to make the toast, chuckled. But it was not toast that Mornington was thinking of.

He clutched up the tongs from the fender, and whirled round on Higgs.

"Here, look out!" yelled Peele.

Right at the bully of the Fourth the enraged Mornington rushed, with the heavy tongs brandished over his head. The Nuts watched him in terror.

Higgs' chuckle died away.

"Put those tongs down!" he roared. "Oh, my hat! Jiminy!"

Higgs dodged out of the chair just in time as the tongs came down. If the blow had reached him, he would have been stunned. The tongs crashed on the chair, and split it. Higgs' face was pale as he backed away.

"You mad young idiot!" he gasped.

"Morny!" gasped Topham.

"Hold on, old chap—"

"Stop it!" yelled Higgs. For Mornington, unheeding his alarmed pals, was still making for him with the tongs. Higgs dodged round the table, and the tongs came down with a crash among the crockery.

"Put those tongs down!" shrieked Higgs. "I'll smash you!"

Crash!

The tongs swept the clock from the mantelpiece as a third blow missed.

Higgs was dodging wildly about the study now. The rage and fury in Mornington's face startled and terrified him. The Nuts crowded back out of the way, still more terrified than Higgs. The heavy weapon reached Higgs at the fourth swipe, catching him across the shoulders. The burly Fourth-Former reeled to the floor, and crashed down on his hands and knees.

Mornington was upon him the next second. He grasped Higgs by the collar with his left hand, and whirled him over, and brandished the tongs over his terrified face, Higgs put his hands before his eyes involuntarily.

"Don't!" he shrieked. "Don't!"

"You hound!" said Mornington.

"Don't, you fool! Do you want to brain me?"

"I'd brain you as soon as look at you," said Mornington, between his teeth. "Lie there, you hound! I'll smash you if you move!"

Higgs did not move. He dared not.

"Morny, old man—"

said Townsend feebly.

"Bring a cricket-stump here, Peele!"

"I—I say—"

"Do as I tell you!"

Peele obeyed.

"Now thrash that hound till he can't yelp!" said Mornington savagely. "I'll see that he doesn't resist. If he moves a finger, his skull goes!"

"I—I say—chuck it!" stuttered Higgs. "I—I'll make it pax! I—I— Look here, you wild beast—"

"Let's make it pax, Morny," said Peele, with very lively fears of what would result afterwards if he carried out Mornington's instructions.

Mornington paused. His fury was passing, and he was calming down. He tossed the tongs into the grate with a crash.

"Pax, then," he said. "But understand, Higgs, that if there's any more of your rot in this study, you'll get hurt!"

He sat down at the table breathing hard. Higgs rose slowly to his feet.

He had been terrified to his very soul by Mornington's outbreak of savage temper. But his terror had passed now, and rage had taken its place. He had made it "pax," which ought to have been sacred. But Higgs was too enraged to think of that. The dangerous tongs were in the grate now, and Mornington

was weaponless. Higgs advanced on him furiously.

"You blessed wild beast!" he snarled. "I'll give you something for your temper! I'll teach you!"

"You've made it pax, Higgs," said Peele. Smack! The back of Higgs' heavy hand hurled Peele out of the way. Then he sprang upon Mornington, and grasped him.

Mornington's teeth came together hard. As he was swept out of his chair, he caught the teapot from the table. The teapot crashed on Higgs' head, and smashed there, and Higgs reeled back with a fearful yell. He was not prepared for desperate measures like that.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Peele.

Higgs staggered back, his hands to his head. His head was cut, and tea drenched his hair and face. He blinked dazedly at Mornington. The latter had caught up a jug, ready to repeat the blow.

"My—my—my hat!" stuttered Higgs. "You rotten hooligan, you—you ought to be in a reformatory!"

"Do you want any more?" asked Mornington, between his teeth. "Lay your paws on me again, if you dare!"

Higgs clenched his hands hard. But it was only too evident that if he made an attack, the heavy jug would smash on his head. Higgs' head was hard, but not quite hard enough to stand that.

He dabbed his forehead with his handkerchief.

"You rotten wild beast!" he gasped.

Mornington laughed.

"I'm not quite big enough to lick you," he said, "but you'll keep your paws to yourself in this study. No bullying here. Now get out!"

"What!"

"Get out, or I'll start on you with this jug!"

"I'm going to have tea!" roared Higgs.

"You're not going to have tea here! You're going to get out of this study, if you don't want your thick skull cracked!"

Mornington advanced as he spoke, and Higgs read savage determination in his face. He backed to the door.

"Look here—"

The door slammed on him.

Higgs did not reopen it. He was fed up with Mornington.

Mornington returned to the tea-table. The Nuts of Rookwood looked at him, half in admiration, half in disgust.

"There won't be any more fagging or bullying in this study," said Mornington. "Why didn't you fellows handle the brute like that?"

"Well, we don't want to be sent to a reformatory for cracking a fellow's skull," said Gower tartly. "You may like to chance that, I don't."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd rather chance that than be bullied in my own study!"

"Well, Higgs will give us a rest now," said Townsend. "Blessed if the brute wasn't fairly cowed. But he'll have his knife into you, Morny."

Mornington shook his head.

"That's all right! I'm going to make friends with Higgs now I've taught him a lesson," he said coolly. "I had to begin that way."

"By gad, he won't feel very friendly to you, after that lick on the head."

"Oh, he'll come round! If he can lick Jimmy Silver, he's the kind of chap I want to pal with," said Mornington. "I'm going to be captain of the Fourth before the term's out, and Higgs is going to help me."

"Hear, hear!" said Peele & Co., though they doubted it.

The tea-party finished without any interruption from Higgs. And after tea the young rascals gathered round the table to play nap and smoke cigarettes. Evidently Mornington had not changed.

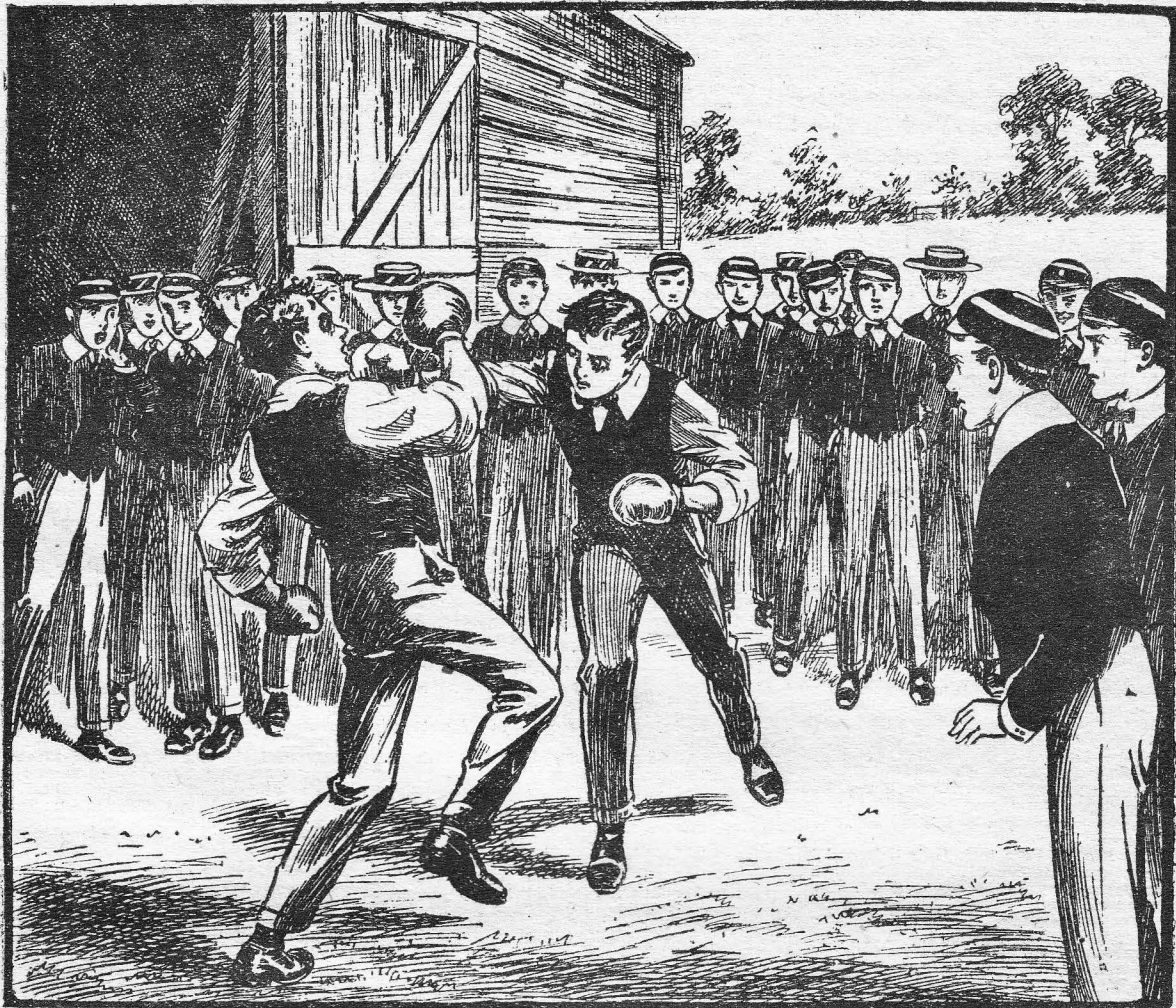
THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mornington's Little Game.

JIMMY SILVER looked rather curiously at Mornington when he encountered him in the dormitory that evening.

Mornington had been on the worst of terms with the captain of the Fourth. But Jimmy was quite prepared to let bygones be bygones. So long as Mornington behaved himself now, Jimmy did not want to rake up old troubles.

He had heard of the "row" in Mornington's study, and all the Fourth had stared at the big bump on Higgs' head. The bully



Higgs made a hot attack, and "petered out" as before; but when Jimmy closed in on him he met with a surprise. Higgs' heavy right came crashing on his chin and the captain of the Fourth went to the ground with a heavy bump. (See Chapter 6).

of the Fourth certainly did not deserve to be gently handled, but few were found to approve of Mornington's wild beast tactics.

Whether approved or disapproved, those tactics had had their desired effect. The Fourth Form bully let Mornington severely alone. Mornington certainly had risked expulsion from the school, and perhaps a term in a reformatory. But Higgs did not wish to risk having his skull cracked, whatever might happen to Mornington afterwards. He feared Mornington's savage temper far more than Mornington feared his big fists.

Jimmy Silver nodded pleasantly enough to Mornington in the dormitory. Mornington returned his nod.

"Here you are again!" said Jimmy cheerily. "I hope you'll like Rookwood a bit better this time, Mornington."

"Thanks!" said Mornington. "I intend to get on a bit better this time."

"I hear you're going to be captain of the Fourth this term!" grinned Lovell. The boast had already made its rounds in the Fourth.

Mornington nodded.

"Exactly!" he said.

"Well, you are a funny ass!" commented Lovell.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came in to see lights out, and his eyes fell on Alfred Higgs at once. His brows contracted.

"What's the matter with your head, Higgs?" he exclaimed. "Your forehead's cut. How did you get that bruise?"

There was a hush in the dormitory. The fact that Higgs had been bullying would not have saved Mornington from condign punishment, if the incident of the teapot broken on Higgs' head had transpired.

"I got a knock, Bulkeley," said Higgs surlily. With all his faults the bully of the Fourth was not a sneak.

"It must have been a pretty hard knock," said Bulkeley.

"Yes; but it's all right."

Bulkeley gave him a sharp look, but he said no more and lights were put out, and the captain of Rookwood left the dormitory. The general opinion of the Fourth was that on the morrow Higgs would "smash" Mornington.

But when the Fourth turned out in the morning the bully of the Fourth took no notice of Mornington.

Still more surprising, after lessons they were seen walking together in the quadrangle.

And when tea-time came round, Higgs joined the festive board in the study in quite good humour.

Peele and Gower could not understand it. But they were glad to see their truculent study-mate in such a subdued humour.

Mornington appeared to have quite forgotten his trouble with Higgs. He was quite civil and friendly with him. But the savage temper was there, all ready to break out again if provoked, and Higgs knew it. There was no more bullying or hectoring in the study, and Peele and Gower felt the relief very keenly. But the bully of the Fourth found that friendship with Mornington was quite worth while. Higgs was not wealthy, while Mornington had much more money than was good for him. The study was a land of plenty now that Mornington had come, and tea there was like unto the most prosperous spread of the most prosperous times in any other study. And for that combination of reasons Higgs of the Fourth found it expedient to be on pally terms with Mornington.

Mornington's announced intention of ousting Jimmy Silver from the captaincy of the Fourth excited a good deal of curiosity. Most of the fellows laughed at the idea. The only fellow who had a chance of competing with Jimmy was Tommy Dodd, of the Modern side. Mornington was one of the most unpopular fellows in the Lower School. As for Jimmy Silver, he simply shrugged his shoulders and dismissed Mornington and his boasts from his mind.

By fair means Mornington certainly never could accomplish his object; and as for foul play, though he was none too good for it, Jimmy did not see what he could do. Mornington's party in the Fourth consisted, so far, only of the Nuts and Higgs. And a captain of the Rookwood Fourth had to be, before everything else, great at games. Mornington's cricket was a joke. But it was soon discovered that there was a change in that respect. Mornington began to be assiduous at the nets, and even in a few days he showed quality as a cricketer.

Jimmy Silver looked on the change with an approving eye. He would gladly have rendered Mornington assistance in his new ambition to become a cricketer. But Mornington's dislike was too bitter to be overcome. He had not forgotten a single one of his "rubs" with Jimmy during his former stay at Rookwood.

On Saturday afternoon he dropped into the end study when the Fistical Four were about to go down to the cricket.

"You're playing the Moderns this afternoon?" he remarked.

"That's so," assented Jimmy.

"My friend Higgs would like a place in the team."

"Your friend Higgs can go and eat coke!" said Jimmy tersely.

"You mean you won't play him?"

"Of course I won't! He's no good at cricket!"

"Quite as good as Oswald or Jones minor, I think!"

"You're welcome to think so," yawned Jimmy Silver. "But it's what I think that matters, as I happen to be cricket captain. You're not skipper yet, you know."

"Cheeky ass!" growled Lovell.

"If you refuse to do Higgs justice, I shall advise him to give you a hiding," said Mornington.

"Oh, that's the little game, is it?" said Jimmy disdainfully. "That's why you've palled with Higgs, after nearly cracking his silly skull with a teapot."

"As a matter of fact, I've a message for you from Higgs. Where will you meet him?"

"Next Wednesday, behind the barn near Coombe," said Jimmy Silver. "It's going to be a real scrap, and we can't have it in the gym—the prefects would interfere."

"You will meet him to-day."

"Buzz off!"

"I shall advise Higgs to tweak your nose in the quad, if you funk it," said Mornington.

"Like that?" asked Jimmy Silver affably, taking Mornington's somewhat prominent nose between finger and thumb.

"Grough!"

Tweak!

"Is that how you mean?" asked Jimmy calmly, while his chums roared with laughter. "Yoow-ow! Led go by dose!" stammered Mornington. "Yooow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington dragged his nose away. It was crimson. He shook his fist savagely at Jimmy Silver, and strode out of the study, leaving the Fistical Four howling with laughter.

"Jolly lucky I'm in training for Higgs," grinned Jimmy Silver. "Now that cad's come back I shall have trouble with the beast every day. Mornington's going to use him to give this study the kybosh, if he can. Come on!"

The Fistical Four took their bats and left the study. They found Higgs of the Fourth in the passage, with Mornington & Co. Higgs barred the way.

"You're not going to play cricket just yet, Jimmy Silver!" he exclaimed. "You're going to settle with me first!"

"Certainly!" said Jimmy. "Where will you have it?"

Without waiting for a reply, he jammed his bat against Higgs' broad chest, and the bully of the Fourth backed away with a howl.

Three more bats prodded him energetically, and Higgs fairly fled.

The Fistical Four smiled and went on their way. And the match with the Moderns was played without any interruption from Alfred Higgs.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Great Fight.

WEDNESDAY was a great day in the Lower School at Rookwood.

The great fight between Jimmy Silver and Higgs of the Fourth was coming off that afternoon, and it created immense interest in the Lower Forms.

Jimmy had tackled Higgs before, and had been hopelessly outclassed. But he had been in steady training for weeks since then. He was not over-confident, but he hoped to be victorious, and he had the best wishes of most of the Fourth.

Higgs was brimming with confidence, and Mornington & Co. backed him up heartily.

After dinner the Fistical Four strolled out of the School House in a careless sort of way. It was important to keep the matter from the knowledge of the powers.

Most of the fistical encounters of the Rookwooders were fought out in the gym with the gloves on. But this special fight was to be a record in the way of fights. It was understood that it was to be a fight to a finish, and interruptions from prefects or masters were not desired.

Outside the gates of Rookwood Jimmy Silver & Co. were joined by a crowd of friends and sympathisers. Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern side were conspicuous among them. Tommy Dodd's sympathies were all with Jimmy Silver on this occasion. Moderns as well as Classical's yearned to see the bully of the Form taken down a peg, and put in his proper place. Tommy Dodd

had tried it valiantly himself, but he had tried in vain. And Tommy was almost prepared to admit that the Classical's were "top side" of Rookwood, if Jimmy Silver succeeded in licking the bully of the Fourth.

Oswald and Jones minor, Flynn and Rawson and Dickinson minor, and a crowd of other Classical's joined the crowd. It was easy to see how feeling ran in the Fourth.

When Higgs left Rookwood he was accompanied by Mornington, Peele, and the rest of the Nuts, and Smythe & Co. of the Shell—all the old enemies of the Fistical Four. But they were not a dozen all told. There were thirty or forty fellows with Jimmy Silver when he arrived at the rendezvous.

The old barn near Coombe lay well back from the road, and there was a stretch of level ground behind it. Several large trees shut it off from view. It was quite an ideal spot for the peculiar purpose of the Rookwooders.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were first on the ground. Lovell opened his bag, and produced the gloves, a sponge, and a basin. The basin was filled at the pond, and all was ready for the fray.

"Here they come!" said Oswald, as the burly form of Higgs was seen crossing the field, accompanied by Mornington & Co.

Jimmy sedately peeled off his jacket, and rolled back his shirt-sleeves. Higgs grinned at him as he came up. Not the slightest doubt did Higgs entertain of the result.

"Ready to be smashed?" he asked politely.

"Quite ready, thanks!" said Jimmy Silver. "Two to one on Higgs, in quids!" sang out Adolphus Smythe. "Now, then, you sportin' fags, play up!"

"I'll give you two to one on the hoko if you don't shut up!" growled Lovell. "None of your rotten blackguardism here!"

"I'll take you, Smythe!" said Leggett of the Fourth.

"Money down!" said Adolphus, with a supercilious look at Leggett.

The Modern junior produced a currency note, and Mornington held the stakes. Jimmy Silver observed the proceedings with a frown, but he did not interfere. As a matter of fact, Leggett's proceeding was encouraging. Leggett of the Fourth was an extremely keen and acute youth, and his backing Jimmy Silver was a good omen, though Jimmy was greatly inclined to kick him for doing so.

Lovell was Jimmy's second, and Mornington acted for the bully of the Fourth. There was a grim smile on Mornington's face. It was evident that he fully believed that the captain of the Fourth would be hopelessly knocked out. It was the first step in his campaign for "downing" Jimmy Silver.

"I'll keep time," remarked Peele, taking out his gold watch.

"No, you won't!" said Lovell promptly. "We'll have a neutral to keep time."

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Bow-wow! Tommy Dodd will do it."

"I'm your man!" said Tommy Dodd at once, and Jimmy Silver nodded assent.

Tommy Dodd could be relied on for the fairest of fair play.

"You agree to Dobby, Higgs?"

"I don't care twopence!" said Higgs.

"Right, then!"

Tommy Dodd took out his watch.

"Seconds out of the ring!" he said impressively. "Now, shake hands, you two. Time!"

Higgs grinned as he shook hands with Jimmy Silver. Then the mill started.

Round the field of combat the Rookwood juniors formed a ring that was growing thicker every minute as more fellows arrived from the school. And there was a buzz of encouraging shouts to the captain of the Fourth.

"Go it, Jimmy!"

Higgs began with a bull-like rush, which he fully expected would sweep Jimmy Silver away like chaff before the wind. Jimmy was not heavy enough to stop the weight, and he gave ground, backing nimbly, followed up by Higgs with lunging fists. They went right round the ring, amid loud laughter from Higgs' party. But Jimmy did not turn a hair. He was guarding like clockwork, and not a single of Higgs' heavy drives reached him.

Higgs paused at last, almost out of breath. Then Jimmy came on, and the breathless Alfred was being hammered prettily when Tommy Dodd called "Time!"

Jimmy joined Lovell in his corner.

"He's got bellows to mend!" said Lovell jubilantly. "The thundering asses were keep-

ing it up in the study last night—smoking like furnaces, you know! Higgs' wind is no good to-day."

Jimmy nodded.

"If he doesn't knock me out in the first two or three rounds, I think I've got him," he remarked.

"Stall him off, you know."

"You bet!"

"Time!"

Jimmy entered the ring again, and Higgs recommenced his bull-like tactics. This time Jimmy Silver did not give ground. He side-stepped quickly as the rush came, and before Higgs knew what was happening Jimmy's right came crashing on the side of his head. Higgs spun sideways, and crashed to the ground.

There was a roar:

"Well hit!"

Tommy Dodd grinned, and counted.

"One, two, three, four—"

Higgs was up again, looking dazed and furious. He came for Jimmy Silver again, but he was not rushing. The rush had been taken out of him.

Hammer-and-tongs they went now, and Jimmy began to receive some punishment. But he kept his bulky adversary well at arm's-length, and gave as good as he received.

"Time!"

Lovell sponged Jimmy Silver's heated face as Jimmy rested on Raby's knee. The captain of the Fourth was breathing hard, but he was as sound as a bell. On the other side of the ring Higgs was breathing in gulps.

"Get closer to him, and pound him!" was Mornington's advice to his principal. "If you let him stall you off, he'll tire you out and win!"

Higgs glared at his second.

"Do you think you know more about it than I do?" he snorted. "He won't stand up for another round; I can tell you that!"

"Time!"

Higgs toed the line angrily and savagely. He was hurt, and he was angry, and his second's remarks had irritated him. He resolved to finish Jimmy Silver in that round with a whirlwind attack.

The whirlwind attack came, but it did not finish Jimmy Silver.

With all the skill at his command, Jimmy kept his burly enemy off, giving ground where necessary, and side-stepping briskly to escape being cornered. Higgs followed him up fast, breathing jerkily, till he had fairly bumped himself to a stop. Then came a lightning attack from the captain of the Fourth, and Higgs reeled and staggered blindly under a shower of blows.

The call of "Time!" came very fortunately for Higgs. He was reeling as he sank on his second's knee in the corner.

"You haven't given him the left, Jimmy," murmured Lovell, as he fanned his principal.

Jimmy smiled.

"I'm keeping that in reserve!"

"How do you feel, old man?"

"As if I'd been under a lawn-mover!" grinned Jimmy. "But I'm good for a dozen rounds yet!"

The fourth round commenced, and was fought through, then the fifth, with much less energy on Higgs' part. The burly Fourth-Former had bellows to mend now with a vengeance, and he no longer rushed.

Both the combatants were showing signs of wear and tear, in spite of the gloves. Jimmy Silver's nose had a very bulbous look, and his left eye persisted in winking. Higgs had one eye closed.

"Time!"

The crowd was in a buzz when the fifth round closed. Jimmy had stood up to his burly enemy for five rounds, and certainly had had no more punishment than Higgs.

With delighted anticipation, the juniors realised that Jimmy had a chance, after all, and a good chance.

"Time!"

There were eager eyes watching the combatants as they closed in the sixth round.

Higgs made a hot attack, and "petered out," as before; but when Jimmy closed in on him he met with a surprise. Higgs' heavy right came crashing on his jaw, followed by his left, which caught Jimmy under the chin.

Higgs was winded, but not so winded as he had made out, and Jimmy had been taken in. The captain of the Fourth went to the ground with a heavy bump.

"Bravo!" yelled Mornington, in great delight.

Jimmy Silver lay gasping, and Tommy Dodd counted steadily.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—"

Jimmy was up at "eight." Higgs rushed down on him; but Jimmy, with herculean efforts, stalled him off until "Time!" was called. His head was reeling, his eyes swimming, and he took blow after blow, hardly able to guard; but somehow he lived through the round by sheer pluck and determination. But he was at his last gasp when Tommy Dodd called "Time!" and he sank on Lovell's knee.

Lovell sponged his face, his own face showing only too plainly his anxiety. Jimmy gave him a feeble grin.

"Bad business!" he gasped.

"You'll lick him yet," said Lovell hopefully. But his look was not so hopeful as his words.

But a minute's rest had a wonderful effect on Jimmy Silver. At the call of "Time!" he stepped up again quite steadily, if not briskly. Higgs lunged forward, grinning. He had had a momentary doubt; but it was gone now. He was quite convinced that Jimmy Silver would not survive the seventh round.

But he did. He devoted himself to defence, and, by sheer skill and determination, he held his own, while his strength came back. He was feeling better at the end of the round than at the beginning.

"Eighth round, bedad!" said Flynn. "Sure, Jimmy's stickin' to him, and he's a broth av a boy! Go it, Jimmy!"

Hammer-and-tongs again! Rookwood junior "scraps" seldom lasted into eight rounds. It was a historic fight. Higgs was attacking again, but in that round came Jimmy's famous left, which he had practised on the punch-ball and Bingham of the Fifth.

It came on the point of Higgs' jaw with a terrific force, and Higgs' feet seemed torn from the ground as he received it.

"Hoora!" yelled Lovell.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—"

Higgs staggered up. According to the rules of the ring, Jimmy would have been justified in knocking him out; but he did not. Higgs could not have stood up against a fag of the Second Form at that moment. Jimmy let him alone till the call of "Time!"

"Ass!" said Lovell, at the end of the round. Jimmy grinned.

"Time!"

Higgs came up to the scratch, but he was evidently "done." He was staggering as he faced Jimmy Silver. The fighting was all on one side now. The Rookwood crowd buzzed with excitement.

Higgs of the Fourth—the bully of the Lower School—was on his last legs! Jimmy Silver was winning—winning hands down!

Ninth round, and last. It was pretty plain that Higgs would not last into a tenth. Only dogged determination kept him on his feet now. Jimmy Silver was very nearly spent, but he was fit for another two rounds at least.

The gloves came home again and again upon Alfred Higgs as he fought savagely and wildly, and at last he went down—under the Silver "left," which he could not stop. He lay groaning on the grass.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—out!" said Tommy Dodd; and he closed his watch with a snap.

Higgs sat up dazedly. Mornington gave him a scowl, and turned his back and strode savagely away. His champion had been licked; it was a triumph, instead of a downfall for Jimmy Silver.

"Lend me a hand, somebody!" gasped Higgs. "I—I—oh!"

It was Raby who lent him a hand; his own second was gone. Leggett grinned, and hurried after Mornington to claim his stakes. The rest of the fellows were cheering loudly. Higgs blinked at Jimmy Silver. He had put up a dogged fight, and he could not stand up without assistance.

"You've licked me—me!" he stuttered.

Jimmy grinned cheerily.

"You licked me once," he said. "Give us your fist on it!"

He held out his hand.

Higgs hesitated for a moment; then, with a feeble grin, he shook hands with the captain of the Fourth.

Both the combatants of that great fight required considerable attention before they could venture to show themselves at Rookwood, and both of them felt the effects of it for some time to come. But in the Fourth Form, Classical and Modern alike, there was great rejoicing over Jimmy Silver's Triumph.

THE END.

Long Odds!

(Continued from page 11.)

roar of applause. Hawkins lunged at him, but Tom, with reeling head, staved him off somehow till the end of the round.

When time was called again, Tom came up, looking grimmer than ever. Hawkins stepped up to finish him off, when he got the surprise of his life! Thud, thwack, smack! Tom was upon him, putting every ounce of his strength into a whirlwind attack! Hawkins staggered, tried to duck, and Tom got in a terrific upper-cut before he could recover himself.

Hawkins went to the floor with a crash!

Amidst a hubbub of voices, the referee began to count, but Hawkins never moved.

That upper-cut, with every ounce of Tom's falling strength behind it, had done its work too well. Hawkins was counted out, and Tom Merry was declared the winner.

His seconds were picking Hawkins up, when Tom Merry stepped forward, and wrenched off one of the man's gloves.

"Look there!" he exclaimed.

Beneath the glove Hawkins' hand was bound with bandages, into which small lead weights were sewn!

The referee stared aghast, as a roar arose. "Foul play! Foul play!"

"Foul play it is!" exclaimed the referee indignantly, as Tom Merry turned on his heel and left the ring. "That fellow Hawkins must never be allowed to box again!"

Back at St. Jim's, with a handsome silver cup in his possession, as the winner of the boxing-contest, Tom Merry told his two chums the whole story.

"The odds were against me," he concluded—"long odds! But I determined to win in spite of them, or bust! I jolly nearly got knocked out, too!"

"Cutts ought to be kicked out of the school!" said Manners furiously.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, he ought really, of course, but I can't sneak about him. But I'm going to see that he pays up what he owes to Crooke & Co.—it must be about fifty pounds!"

"Phew!"

"And then I'm going to Crooke & Co. to make them send the whole of their winnings to the hospital!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Tommy!"

And Tom Merry kept his word. And that was how, as the result of Tom Merry's plucky fight against long odds, the local hospital benefited to the amount of fifty pounds from "Five anonymous donors!"

THE END.

(Another grand story of the chums of St. Jim's next week.)

The Mystery Makers!

(Continued from page 10.)

I'm going to leave you for an hour or so. I'm going into the village to make what you military people call a reconnaissance. First of all, I want to see if anything's happening at the Grange; but I can also keep a sharp look-out for your friend Blogson and his army!"

Faulkner was quite agreeable to this. "We sha'n't move from here until you return," he announced.

Dick quickly rowed out into the main stream, and within ten minutes had reached the landing-stage which ran down from where Rollock, the boat-builder, had his premises. Passing through the yard, Dick climbed a short flight of steps which led to the small High Street which divided the village of Mogsleigh into two parts.

Mogsleigh was quite an ideal spot, with its little church, green, pond, and old bridge with its massive buttresses. There was also the White Lion, one of those comfortable-looking inns seen nowhere out of England, covered all over with ivy, which in itself always gives a house a warm, cosy appearance.

The White Lion was usually deserted in the middle of the day, but at the present moment Dick discovered quite a small crowd gathered outside—there was a small crowd inside as well, but both crowds came from the same source—Wildfell Grange. In other words, the entire strength of the Western Super-Film Company were assembled here. Their belongings as well, as the pile of bags and numerous parcels scattered about the side walk testified.

As Dick approached loud cheers broke out. They weren't cheering him, but an individual who was addressing them from the bar-parlour window.

It was Bernard Grimshaw, the dwarf!

"We must stick together," Dick heard him say, when the cheering had subsided. "Black-legs must not be tolerated on any account. Certain members of the company have tried to curry favour with the man Halibut. I mention no names at present; but I warn them that your strike-committee have their eyes on them. Let them beware, comrades!"

Further loud cheering on the part of the "comrades."

"Oh!" thought Dick. "That's a hit at Harry Trent, Biglow, and myself! There's going to be trouble here!"

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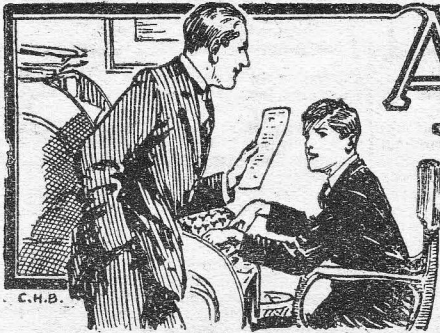
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a story well worth following with the closest of attention as it unfolds week by week, a tale of absorbing human interest and exciting adventure that never flags for one moment.

A splendid story of the popular chums of Rookwood School entitled

"TROUBLE FOR JIMMY!"

By Owen Conquest,

will also be included in the good things for next week. It is full of rollicking incidents woven together in a masterly fashion. And I strongly advise all those of my chums who admire these Jimmy Silver yarns not to miss this grand school tale.

HUMOUR.

Some fellows have a peculiar sense of humour. They imagine that by misleading others they are being funny. They will stoop to the very meanest and shabbiest devices to gain their point. For instance, they will advertise in someone else's name, so that third parties are put to a great deal of trouble and expense. Not alone third parties, but many others as well—fourth and fifth, and so on. I suppose the squalid-minded trickster hiding in the dark is satisfied, but his satisfaction is as paltry as he is himself.

RETURNING A MANUSCRIPT.

This is always hard. Nobody likes to send back a story which, however bad, represents a lot of earnest work. But there is no help for it. You can follow the rejected yarn on its travels, a sad, despondent affair, until it drops through the letter-flap of the writer.

Still, there it is. The sportsman takes a return as part of the game—which it is—and tries again.

GOOD ACTIONS.

Some individuals deery doing work for nothing. In a village there is always someone to mock at the fine chaps who put in good service without thought of pecuniary reward. After all, we do not sum up life in pounds, shillings, and pence. The best in the world has nothing to do with these tokens.

"Ringers and singers,
Are little home-bringers,"

runs the old country cynicism, meaning that the bell-ringers and the others who help gain nothing. But they would be sadly missed if they were not there. I heard a scoffer the other day talking in this strain, and then he told me how he had "diddled"—I employ his term—a certain company in whose debt he was. "It was easy enough," he said. "Nobody was about." That is all very fine; but he was there, he knew what he was doing, and should have looked more strictly after himself.

THE BEE SWARM.

A fellow I know keeps bees, and really he is very handy with them; but over and over again he has been in danger of losing a big family party of the useful insects in the way of a swarm. The expeditionary party leaves the old hive and hooks itself on to a window of a neighbouring house—generally choosing the most inconvenient place, of course. The bee-keeper has to requisition a ladder, slip a gauze veil over his head and shoulders, and bring the runaways back to the new hive he has all ready for them. He often gets stung, but, as he says, it is only a tickle. Bees do not hurt him. On the other hand, wasps do. Their sting is quite a different thing, as he knows to his cost. He said some very hard things about wasps, and told me how he destroyed their nests by fire. The wasp may have his good points, but, all said and done, he is a prate. The wasp will save himself trouble in the honey-getting line, and pillage the bees who have done all the work. It is a shabby business altogether. A home-coming bee laden with good honey will meet a hefty wasp and be held up in good old highwayman fashion. The wasp kills the bee and comes in for the loot.

IN THE WOOD.

If you want to see Nature at her best at this season of the year you should go for a ramble in a wood. At the edge of the sylvan wilderness the foxglove stands in grand array, its dark green leaves helping to set forth the crimson and white blossoms. There, too, you will find the exquisite meadowsweet, one of the finest flowers in the big garden which is never cultivated. It selects a place where the ground is always

oozy and encouraging to moss, for the stream runs here. A fat toad hops out of the growth and looks at the intruder, and then dives back into the sanctuary to make all sure. In the depths of the wood there is a strange silence in the heyday of summer. The wrack of past winter is almost concealed, and in occasional patches of sunlight amidst the oaks and beeches you find the gay orchids peering through the green.

ALWAYS WANTED.

The right story is always wanted. What is the right one? There have been doubts on this point since the far-away times when authors wrote their themes on slabs of stone. But what is welcome is freshness of view. Repeating what has been written before seldom pays. The book that "gets there" contains something which has been written from the heart, something that strikes a new note and sends the reader on his way glad that he read the story or article. Every editor worth his salt—and every editor is surely worth that, to say nothing of the mustard—jumps at the bright and the new.

THE SIMPLE TRUTH.

Money cannot do everything, though many mistaken folks insist that it can. It would be a poor lookout for the world if it were so, and much to the discredit of humanity, for we all know that the rich man gets bored and fed-up. Money will leave anybody in the lurch, and show him that it is merely an extra. These remarks are connected with a letter to hand from a fellow who tells me that he thought he would be happy enough when fortune came. He has discovered his mistake. Before he inherited a large slice of wealth he was a genial, happy-go-lucky wight without a care. He dressed so oddly that his friends laughed at him, but he did not mind, and he enjoyed life, and was popular wherever he went. It did not matter a straw that his ancient bowler hat went flip-flap when he raised it, that his trousers bagged, and his coat was worn at the seams. He worked hard—for others—and the world wagged well. Now he is in the grip of the tailors. He has to dress up to his new position, and he feels oppressed by the tyranny of it all. Of course he might surrender his riches, but he cannot do that very well, since others have to be considered. But it only shows that money does not make a man, even if a man makes money.

AN AVARICIOUS READER.

It always seems to me that the new reader must concede something. I receive many complaints about the difficulty the new reader experiences as regards getting to know all about the characters. This is hardly fair. A long story series is augmented in interest by reason of the yarns which have gone before, but each tale stands by itself as well. I know I might put in each number containing a story of a certain group of characters a little biography of each, explaining all about them, why they are and what they are. There could be something about their sisters and their cousins and their aunts as well, but it would all take up a rare lot of space. But the new reader is an out-and-out good fellow, and I intend to do my best for him.



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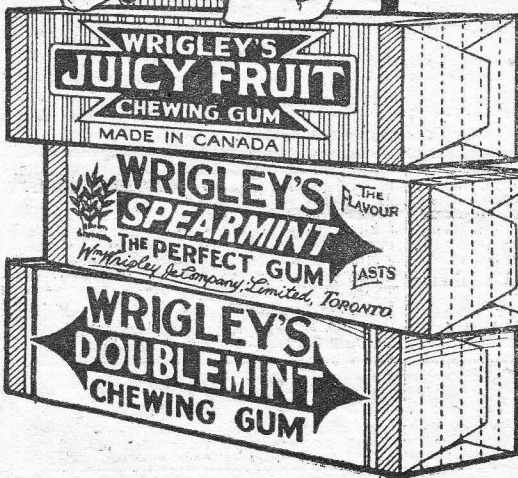
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