THE GREYFRIARS'

HOLIDAY ANNUAL

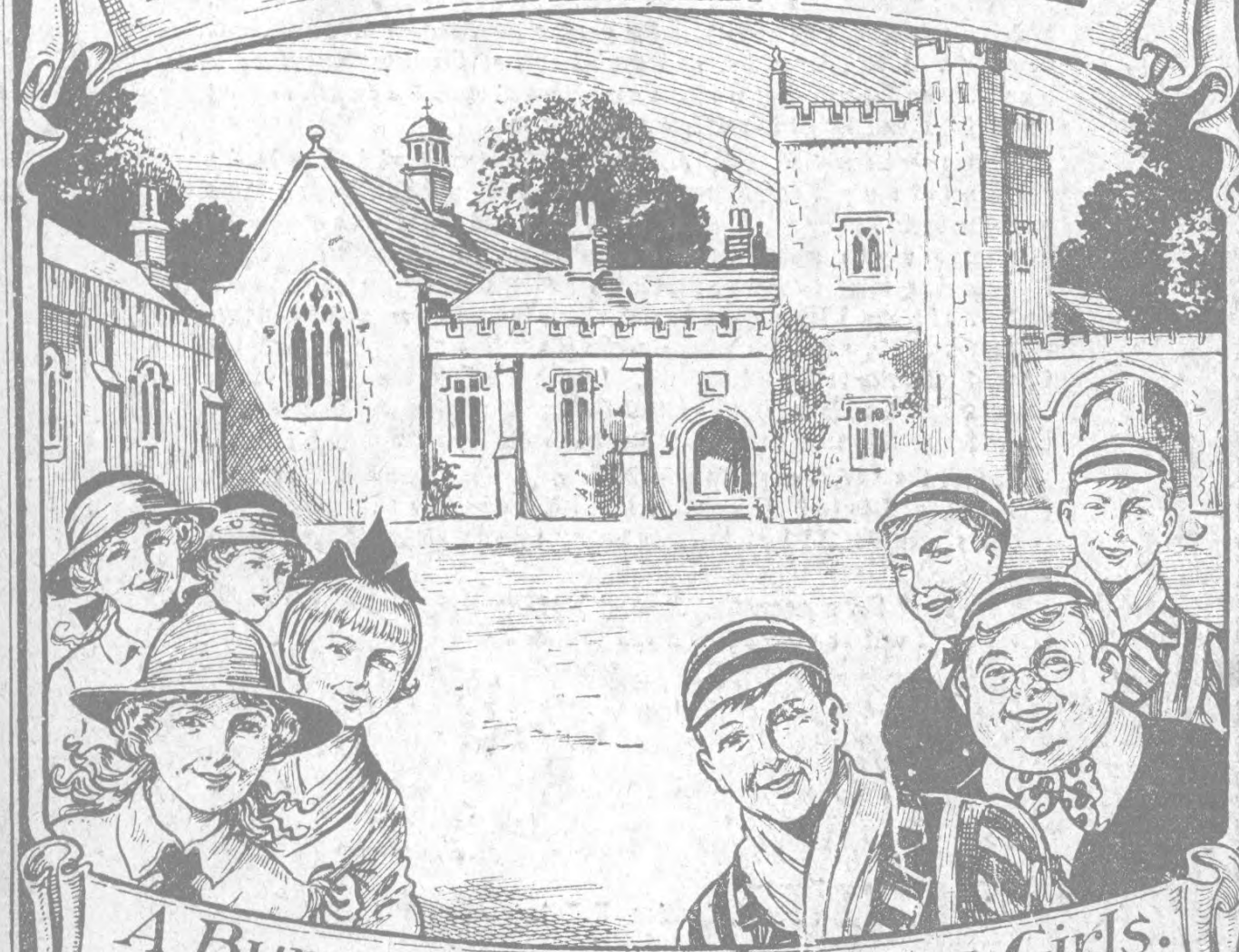
1921 1921

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Frontispiece

THE SIGNAL

The GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1921



A Bumper Book for Boys & Girls.
Packed with Stories - Articles & Pictures ~

This Book
Belongs to -

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

The second volume of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL is placed before my readers with the certainty of success.

The last volume was "sold out" almost as soon as it was completed, and the subsequent demand was far greater than it was found possible to supply. I feel, therefore, that the success of the present volume is assured from the outset, and I have concentrated upon the task of making its contents worthy of the widest appreciation.

I know that our HOLIDAY ANNUAL fills a very special place in the affections of my girl and boy chums all over the world. It gives them just that sort of information about the schools and the various characters which they want; and to those of an older growth the book also has a big appeal, coming to them as a cheery reminder of happy hours in the past. As before, I have given stories of the three famous schools, Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood; while the fiction also includes stirring tales of adventure on land and sea. I have added to the history of the schools, and the biographical part of the book is calculated to stimulate the widespread interest our famous school characters have already created.

Among the varied contents will be found topical sketches, humorous dialogues, and fun of all sorts. I think it may fairly be said that the stories crystallise the best there is in my famous series of Companion Papers.

If the verdict of my countless thousands of boy and girl chums endorses this view it will be counted as a full reward by

Your Editor.

The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

My Tour of Greyfriars!

A Short Complete Narrative Describing a Visit to Greyfriars School. By

Your Editor.

I

THE first thing that struck me on my arrival at the famous Kentish school was a bunch of keys.

I deftly caught the keys—with my nose, and then, blinking in the direction of the lodge, I beheld a grumpy-looking old man, with a suspicious-looking bottle protruding from his pocket.

Before I could get a word in edgeways, he started letting off steam.

"Wot I says is this 'ere—you buzz off! We don't want your sort 'anging around 'ere!"

"Excuse me," I said, with such politeness as I could muster, "are you the Headmaster?"

"'Eadmaster be blowed! I'm the keeper of this 'ere gate! Which my name is William Gosling, as ever was!"

'Oh!"

The gate-porter wagged a reproving finger at me.

"You get out!" he said. "'Awkers ain't allowed 'ere!"

"My good man——"

"I'll 'good man' yer! Shunt!"

"I refuse to shunt! I have every right——"

"Take yerself off!"

I smiled at the indignant Gosling.

"You are unaware of my identity," I said. "How do you know I am not the Prince of Wales?"

Gosling gave a gasp. He looked me carefully up and down, and an awe-struck expression came over his crusty countenance.

"Sir!" he exclaimed. "You—you don't mean to say——"

"How do you know," I repeated sternly, "that I am not the Prince of Wales, paying an unofficial visit to Greyfriars School?"

"My heye!" gasped Gosling. And he subjected me to a further scrutiny.

"Come to think of it, you're jest like the pictures of the Prince wot appear in 'The Daily Reflection.' Oh, 'elp! Wot

I deftly caught the keys—with my nose!

'ave I done? I've a-pelted Royalty with a bunch o' keys!"

"I regard you as a very vulgar and ill-mannered person!" I said severely. "Pray let me pass!"

The gate-porter—who was quite convinced by this time that I was no other than the Prince of Wales, fairly grovelled at my feet.

"Yessir! Certingly, sir! Wot I says is this 'ere—I was jest 'aving a little joke when I threw them keys——"

"Get up, fellow!" I said, inserting my boot into Gosling's ribs. "Direct me at once to the Headmaster's study!"

Like a man in a dream, Gosling obeyed.

"You—you won't tell the 'Ead 'ow I greeted yer?" he pleaded.

"No," I said curtly.

"Thank you kindly, sir! You're one of the best!"

And then H.R.H. the Editor passed on to the Head's study.

I had never before met Dr. Locke. I found him to be a benevolent, kindly old gentleman—just as my friend and colleague Frank Richards has so often described him.

"You have come to look over the school, my dear sir?" he said.

"With your permission, Dr. Locke."

"That is readily granted. Unfortunately, the boys are at lessons, and I cannot obtain a guide to accompany you. I would do so myself, but I am extremely busy——"

"I quite understand, Dr. Locke. I shall have no difficulty in finding my way about."

So saying, I thanked the Head for his permission to view the school, and went out into the Close.

Everything was just as I had pictured it in my mind's eye.

The gate-porter fairly grovelled at my feet

There was the celebrated fountain, in which rascals like Billy Bunter were ducked daily. There was the tempting little tuckshop under the elms—also patronised by Bunter, whether he was in funds or not.

An air of peacefulness hung over the place. Everybody was at lessons.

I decided to run the risk of causing annoyance to Mr. Quelch, and stepped along to the Remove Form-room.

The door was slightly ajar; and as I paused, in the act of entering, the following dialogue floated out to me.

"You were talking, Bunter!"

"Nunno, sir!"

"I distinctly saw your lips frame an articulation!"

"You—you must be imagining these things, sir! You're suffering from mental delusions, and——"

"Bunter!"

"Beyond asking Skinner the time, and telling him that Shakespeare was a silly ass, I didn't say a single word, sir!"

Laughter from the class. An explosive snort from Mr. Quelch.

"Stand out Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Stand out at once!"

A shuffling of footsteps; and then—

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

"Mum-mum-my hand, sir?"

"Yes, immediately!"

At this painful juncture I made my presence known.

"Ahem!"

Mr. Quelch spun round at the sound of my cough. His gimlet eyes seemed to pierce me through and through.

"Who—who are you?" he demanded.

There was a buzz when I explained my identity.

I found Dr. Locke to be a benevolent, kindly old gentleman

"My hat! It's the Editor of the Companion Papers!"

"By Jove!"

Mr. Quelch shook hands with a smile.

"I am very pleased to meet you, sir," he said. "Might I ask what is the object of your visit? Do you intend to take over from Mr. Frank Richards the writing of the Greyfriars stories?"

I replied in the negative.

"I don't profess to be able to handle schoolboy situations so skilfully as Frank Richards" I said.

Billy Bunter, seeing that Mr. Quelch was engrossed in conversation, slipped back into his seat. It was neatly done, and Mr. Quelch did not notice the movement—or, at any rate, he pretended not to.

"It is a half-holiday this afternoon," said the Form-master, "and you will see more of these boys anon. But do not let them worry you with too many questions."

I smiled at the class, and caught Bob Cherry's eye.

"They are not likely to give me any trouble, Mr. Quelch," I said.

And then, nodding to the class in general, and to Mr. Quelch in particular, I made my way to the Fifth Form-room.

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

When I entered, I discovered Horace Coker, the most backward pupil in the class, endeavouring to recite a portion of English poetry.

Unfortunately, Coker's brain was muddled—as usual—and he had hopelessly mixed up "The Wreck of the Hesperus" with "Mary's Little Lamb."

He declaimed the following novel passage:

"It was the schooner Hesperus,
Its fleece was white as snow;
And the skipper had taken his little daughter
That lamb was sure to go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

An uncontrollable ripple of merriment burst from the class.

Mr. Prout, with a face like a beetroot, and with his eyes nearly bulging out of his head, sat at the desk and surveyed Coker more in anger than in sorrow—very much more, in fact.

"Coker, you are a dolt! You are an imbecile, sir! You are fast driving me to distraction! I——"

At this point Mr. Prout caught sight of me, and he at once demanded to know my identity, as Mr. Quelch had done.

I explained that I was Editor of the Holiday Annual and the companion papers.

Mr. Prout beamed.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance, my dear sir!" he said. "You have dropped in for a little chat?"

"Yes," I said, beginning to wish that I hadn't.

"That's splendid!" said Mr. Prout. "You have doubtless heard of me before?"

"Only through the stories of Greyfriars School that I publish weekly," I said.

"Have you not heard my name mentioned as an intrepid hunter of big game?"

I shook my head.

"Indeed! You cannot be a very well-read man, in spite of the fact that your are an Editor! I have built up a great reputation as a hunter of squirrels, rats, and other big game. When I was in the Rocky Mountains in eighteen eighty-eight——"

"Oh, help!"

"Did you speak?" exclaimed Mr. Prout sharply.

"I merely made a noise in my throat. Pray proceed, Mr. Prout!"

"When I was in the Rockies—— Blundell! You were laughing!"

"No, sir," said Blundell. "Certainly not, sir!"

"But you were!"

"No, sir," repeated Blundell. "I was merely making a grimace, sir."

"And why, pray?"

"I—I can't help feeling sorry for the poor rats and squirrels, sir!"

"Ha, ha. ha!"

There was loud laughter, as the Court reporters say.

Mr. Prout did not laugh. He frowned ponderously.

"You will take a hundred lines, Blundell!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The master of the Fifth turned to me.

"My class is inclined to get out of hand. I sometimes wish there was no law against the free and unrestrained use of firearms in this country. I should not shoot to kill, of course; but I should certainly wing some of the biggest offenders——"

There was renewed laughter. The idea of Mr. Prout making free use of his Winchester repeater was grimly humorous.

"It so happens," continued Mr. Prout, "that I have brought my rifle into the Form-room with me——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The Fifth shivered in nervous apprehension. The Winchester repeater was standing behind the master's desk, and had therefore remained unnoticed.

Mr. Prout took up the weapon, caressing it lovingly.

"At the risk of neglecting my duties for a few moments, my dear sir, I will now proceed to demonstrate my sureness of aim."

I experienced a cold sensation in the region of my spine.

"Sir!" I protested. "It is not seemly——"

Ignoring me, Mr. Prout strode to the window, the lower part of which he pushed up.

"You see that drooping twig on the withered branch of yonder elm?" he said.

I nodded.

"Very well. I will sever it from the branch with a single shot."

Mr. Prout's eyes were gleaming with an unholy fascination. He worshipped his rifle. Once it was in his grasp, he was oblivious of everything save the desire to shoot.

"It so happens," continued Mr. Prout, "that I have brought my rifle into the Form-room with me——"

I caught the would-be marksman by the arm.

"Are you aware, sir," I said, "that the Head is crossing the Close at this moment?"

"Don't be absurd, my dear sir! Dr. Locke will not go within a dozen yards of that withered branch! Now, watch me!"

So saying, Mr. Prout rested his repeater on the window-sill. It was supposed to be levelled at the withered branch of the elm. To my startled mind, however, it seemed to be pointing direct at the Head!

The Fifth were all agog with excitement now. They craned forward eagerly to witness the developments.

Mr. Prout bent forward, rested his flabby cheek against the butt of the rifle, and then pressed the trigger.

There was an empty click.

"Bless my soul!" muttered the marksman. "I have overlooked one trifling detail. The rifle is not loaded!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The class fairly rocked with laughter.

Mr. Prout frowned, and hurriedly made good the omission.

By the time he levelled the repeater again, the Head had made substantial progress, and he seemed to me to be in the line of fire.

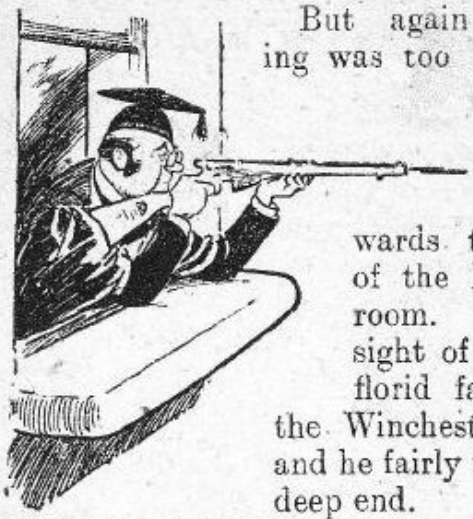
With an exclamation of horror, I snatched at Mr. Prout's arm. But I was too late!

Crack! Then a sharp report, followed by an acrobatic performance on the part of the Head, who seemed to be giving a faithful imitation of the latest variety of Jazz.

The bullet had gone clean through the top of the worthy gentleman's mortar-board.

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Prout. "Whatever can be the matter with Dr. Locke?"

"You—you nearly added him to your casualty list of rats and squirrels!" I exclaimed. "Step back at once, before the Head spots you!"



But again my warning was too late.

The Head, with anger in his face, turned towards the window of the Fifth Form-room. He caught sight of Mr. Prout's florid face, and of the Winchester repeater, and he fairly went off the deep end.

"Mr. Prout! What does this mean? Have you suddenly taken leave of your senses?"

"I—I——" stuttered Mr. Prout.

"You had the temerity, sir—the outrageous audacity—to discharge a loaded firearm at me!" rumbled the Head. "I have repeatedly told you to keep that dangerous weapon under control. This is the last straw! I am afraid I have no alternative, Mr. Prout, but to request you to tender your resignation——"

I saw that things were taking an ugly turn for poor Mr. Prout—who, after all, is quite harmless; so I spoke up for him.

"I am to blame for this regrettable occurrence, Dr. Locke. I contracted a wager with Mr. Prout to the effect that he would not succeed in hitting a certain twig on a branch of one of the elms. I have won my wager, but it has been at the expense of a serious risk to yourself. This incident is entirely the result of my own folly.

"Really," said Dr. Locke, "I should have thought that a man of your years would not have stooped to suggest such a feat of horseplay——"

"I beg to express my profuse apologies, sir."

"In that case," said the Head, who had simmered down by this time, "I will say no more about the matter."

With which he stooped to recover his mortar-board, and continued his interrupted stroll.

Mr. Prout turned to me with an expression of genuine gratitude on his countenance.

"Thank you," he said, in a low tone. "You have, by your intervention, saved me from an untoward fate."

"Don't mention it," I replied. "I should advise you, Mr. Prout, to keep your Winchester repeater under lock and key in future. You may, as you remark, have done great things in the Rocky Mountains in eighteen eighty-eight, but since that far-off period your hand has lost much of its cunning."

There was a sharp report, followed by an acrobatic performance on the part of the Head!

So saying, I turned on my heel, and quitted the Form-room.

II

AFTER wandering through a maze of corridors, and seeing all that there was to be seen, I heard a noise as of a menagerie of wild beasts being suddenly let loose.

"What on earth——" I began.

And then I remembered that lessons were over for the day, and that it was a half-holiday at Greyfriars. Happy voices boomed along the corridors.

As I stood listening my thoughts turning to my own schooldays, I became aware of a squeaky voice at my elbow.

"I say, Mr. Editor!"

Turning, I confronted Billy Bunter.

"I'm so glad you took it into your head to come to Greyfriars," said the fat junior. "We mean to have a great celebration in your honour after the footer match this afternoon."

"We mean to have a great celebration in your honour," said Bunter. "I'm in charge of the catering arrangements"

"Indeed!"

"Yes. It's going to be a gorgeous bust-up—positively gorgeous! I'm in charge of the catering arrangements."

"Really!"

"Of course," continued Billy Bunter eagerly, "you won't object to giving me a hand, Mr. Editor?"

"In what way?"

"Ahem! In providing the funds for the purchase of the grub."

I stared at the fat junior in astonishment.

"There will be rather a lot to buy," he went on. "A dozen veal-and-ham pies, a couple of cold chickens, a score of doughnuts, and a couple of hundred mixed pastries, to say nothing of the ginger-pop. The whole lot will run into about a fiver. I'll have it in currency notes, please."

Billy Bunter blinked at me expectantly. He blinked in vain.

"You young scoundrel!" I exclaimed.

"Eh?"

"You will have to think of something better than that before you persuade me to part with five pounds."

"Oh, really, you know, I was only going to borrow it for a few hours. I'm expecting a postal-order by the afternoon post——"

"A postal-order for five pounds?" I said sarcastically.

"Ahem! I—I mean a money-order."

"You can't pull the wool over my eyes, Bunter. I've read of your little games in my papers, and I've got you weighed up."

"Look here——"

"Nothing doing!" I said curtly.

And I passed out into the Close, leaving Billy Bunter staring after me in speechless wrath.

The Close seemed to be deserted. I marvelled at this, because only a few moments before the various classes had been dismissed.

"Where is everybody?" I murmured.

It was not until I reached the open space behind the chapel that the riddle was solved.

On this familiar fighting-ground, practically the whole of the Remove had assembled.

"What's going on?" I inquired.

Harry Wharton explained.

"It's a scrap," he said. "Bolsover major called Squiff a foolish ass, and Squiff called Bolsover an asinine fool. This is the result. Bolsover challenged Squiff to a fight behind the chapel."

"Will you referee, Mr. Editor?" urged Bob Cherry.

I hesitated.

"I'm not sure that I ought to aid and abet——"

"Yes, do referee!" chorused a dozen Removites.

So I gave in, and advanced into the human circle, in the centre of which Bolsover major and Squiff faced each other.

I could not help drawing a contrast between the pair. Bolsover major was big and beefy and burly, and his lower jaw stuck out prominently.

Squiff, on the other hand, was fairly slim, and it looked as if Bolsover would make mincemeat of him. Still, it isn't always size and weight that counts in boxing.

"Are you ready, you two?" I asked, taking out my watch.

Squiff and Bolsover nodded.

"Very well, then. Time!"

A perfect babel of voices arose.

"Go it, Bolsover!"

"Mop him up, Squiff!"

"On the ball!"

Squiff had a bad time in the first round. I experienced a strong temptation to call "Time!" before the three minutes had expired but I fought it down, and meanwhile Squiff took plenty of punishment.

Bolsover's sledgehammer fists did great execution. Squiff's defence was faulty, and when Bolsover broke through his guard—which he did pretty frequently—it was as much as the Australian junior could do to keep his feet. But he showed heaps of pluck, and there was still plenty of fight left in him when the round ended.

Bolsover major walked to his corner, muttering savagely.

"I'll prove that I'm no asinine fool! My hat! Fancy being cheeked by a whippersnapper like that! I'll knock him into the middle of next week!"

And I must confess that I considered Bolsover quite capable of carrying out his threat.

Squiff had bellows to mend, and I didn't envy his chances. I don't think the other fellows did, either. The prevailing impression seemed to be that Bolsover major would carry the day.

"Buck up, Squiff!" said Bob Cherry. "Keep pegging away!"

Squiff nodded grimly, and in the second round he showed to better advantage.

However, it was not difficult to see that Bolsover major held the upper hand; and I began to feel rather sorry for Squiff. He was fighting gamely and pluckily; but he seemed to be no match for the bully of the Remove.

My sympathy for Squiff grew as the fight advanced.

I felt like taking Bolsover by the scruff of the neck, and making him frog's-march from the scene of the conflict. He must have known Squiff was not up to his weight, yet he continued to force the fighting.

In the fourth round things got altogether too bad.

Squiff recoiled from a smashing right-hander, and before he had recovered from the effects of it he got another—straight between the eyes. He measured his length on the ground, and the partisans of Bolsover gave a shout.

"Hurrah!"

"Bolsover wins!"

It was not difficult to see that Bolsover major held the upper hand!

I had begun to count; but by the time I reached five, Squiff was on his feet again, fighting like a tiger. Even so, I knew that this was his dying effort. He could not last another round against his powerful adversary.

I felt that I would do anything for Squiff at this juncture—anything to save him from the disgrace of defeat. Of course, it would not be disgrace really; but Bolsover's cronies would think it so.

At the end of the round, whilst Bob Cherry was nursing the damaged Squiff, my opportunity came. Billy Bunter had rolled on the scene. I beckoned to the fat junior, and drew him aside.

"You're going to help me buy the grub, after all?" he said eagerly.

"No," I said. "But would you like to earn five bob all for yourself?"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes glittered behind his spectacles.

"I'm on!" he said. "What do you want me to do?"

"I understand you're a ventriloquist?"

"That's so."

"Well, I want you to turn your ventriloquial tap on, for Bolsover major's benefit, soon after the next round starts. I want you to cause the fight to come to an untimely end."

So saying, I slipped a couple of half-crowns into Bunter's fat palm.

"That's soon done," he said. "Leave it to me."

The fifth round began. Bolsover was still the attacking force; Squiff was pale and shaken, holding on by sheer force of will.

Bolsover's lower jaw protruded more prominently than ever. He knew that he had his opponent at his mercy, and he meant to polish him off with all speed.

"Now's your chance, Bolsover!" chortled Skinner.

The faces of Harry Wharton and Co. were gloomy. Squiff was their chum, and they did not want to see him go under. But it was becoming more and more apparent that he was at the end of his tether.

And then, just as Bolsover was preparing to launch his final attack, a voice, sudden, sharp, and incisive, exclaimed:

"Bolsover! How dare you bully a boy smaller than yourself?"

It was the voice—or it seemed to be the voice—of Mr. Quelch.

There was a startled gasp from Bolsover, and from the majority of the spectators.

"I—I——" faltered the bully of the Remove.

"Do you hear me, Bolsover! Answer my question!"

Blosover blinked round dazedly.

"Where—where are you, sir?"

"Never mind about my exact locality at the moment. Suffice it to say that I have

seen and heard all that has passed. You are nothing more or less than a young hooligan, Bolsover! Such scenes of violence are not to be tolerated. You will follow me at once to my study!"

And there was a rustle, as of a master's gown. Bolsover pulled on his coat like a fellow in a dream.

He couldn't understand it at all. And he had no notion that Billy Bunter had been responsible for the voice, because the fat junior took care to keep well in the background.

The rest of the fellows looked rather startled, too.

"Where on earth was Quelchy?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Give it up," said Harry Wharton. "But that was his voice, right enough. It's a wonder he didn't drop on us as well."

"Hard luck, Bolsover, old chap!" said Skinner. "Just as you were about to deliver the knock-out, too!"

Bolsover glanced towards the panting Squiff.

"There's still time!" he muttered.

"I should advise you to go along to Quelchy's study," said Harry Wharton. "Quelchy doesn't like to be kept waiting."

So Bolsover, with a black scowl, slunk away; and Squiff was spared the knock-out if nothing else.

What happened in Mr. Quelch's study I cannot say. I expect Bolsover major was idiot enough to betray to his Form-master the fact that he had been fighting; in which case, he probably received a licking.

But I have no sympathy to waste upon Percy Bolsover. I agree with my friend, Frank Richards, that the bully of the Remove is emphatically not a nice person to know!

III.

HALF-AN-HOUR later, Squiff had removed as many traces of the combat as possible, and was in football garb

"I'm Coker, you know! Everybody knows Coker!"

"There is a match this afternoon, is there not?" I asked.

"Yes," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "We're playing the Fifth."

"Then you're asking for trouble! Why, the Fifth must be far above your weight!"

"They certainly are," chuckled Bob. "But we shall romp home with the giddy spoils, right enough."

"You are very confident."

"I've got reason to be. Coker's playing for the Fifth. And when Coker plays, it's always as good as a couple of goals to us in advance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is Coker such an ass as all that?" I asked incredulously.

"You'll soon see!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Would you like to referee the match, Mr. Editor?"

"I seem to be refereeing everything to-day," I said. "Still, if there's going to be a first-class comedian on the football field, I don't mind in the least."

At that moment, Coker himself strolled up, in a football jersey wrought in divers colours, and with an expression of pleasant anticipation on his rather rugged face.

"Jolly pleased to meet you, Mr. Editor!" he said. "I didn't have a chance to introduce myself to you in the Form-room. I'm Coker, you know. Everybody knows Coker!"

"Sole surviving son of the late Baron Furnace!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker shook an admonishing forefinger at the chums of the Remove.

"Dry up!" he growled. "You'll be laughing on the other side of your chivvies soon, when the Fifth have mopped up the ground with you!"

"Rats!"

"Of course," said Coker, turning to me, "we don't usually have matches with the fags, but it's necessary to give them an object-lesson now and then."

"An object-lesson on scoring goals for the wrong side?" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When is this hand-to-hand warfare to commence?" I inquired.

"Now!" said Squiff promptly. "This way!"

And we all adjourned to the football ground.

When I blew the whistle for the teams to line up, I was struck by the disparity between the rival forces.

The Remove looked sturdy and vigorous enough; but they were as pigmies by comparison with the team captained by Blundell.

"I'm afraid you've bitten off more than you can chew," I remarked to Wharton. But the latter merely smiled. He seemed to have his own ideas about the possibility of beating the Fifth.

The ball was soon set in motion, and an enthusiastic crowd round the touchline bellowed their encouragement.

"Come along, Fifth!"

"Go it, Remove!"

The Fifth attacked furiously. Blundell, with only the goalie to beat, looked a certain scorer; but at the crucial moment Coker came charging up.

"Hallo!" I murmured. "Things are going to happen now!"

They did!

Coker performed two feats of valour: (a) he charged Blundell off the ball; and (b) He took a flying kick, and ballooned the ball high over the crossbar. Blundell regained his equilibrium, and glared at Coker.

"You dummy!" he spluttered. "You Champion idiot!"

It was Coker's turn to glare.

"I don't understand you, George Blundell!" he said loftily. "Fancy slanging a fellow who jolly nearly scored!"

"What!" hooted Blundell. "Do you imagine the goal is situated somewhere in the clouds?"

"I know this much," said Coker. "The ball would have been in that net if only you had given me a free hand."

"I'll give you a boot, in a minute!" growled Blundell.

"Look here——"

"Br-r-r!"

The game was resumed, and once again the Fifth attacked. Again, however, a brilliant movement was utterly spoilt by the well-meaning but clumsy Horace, who got in the way just as the ball was whizzing at top speed towards the yawning net.

Very little had been seen of the Remove forwards, so far. They were too helplessly doubled up with laughter to do much in the way of attacking.

However, they pulled themselves together, and Vernon-Smith raced away with the ball. When within shooting distance, he swung the leather across to Harry Wharton, who scored with a fine first-time effort.

"Goal!"

"First blood to the Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

Vernon-Smith raced away with the ball—and then swung the leather across to Harry Wharton

After that early reverse, everything went wrong—for the Fifth. They struggled hard to get on terms, but Coker generally managed to nullify their efforts. To see Coker playing, one would imagine that he had been bribed by Harry Wharton & Co. to assist the Remove. Every performance of his was a glaring example of misdirected energy.

At half-time the Remove lead by a solitary goal.

Blundell of the Fifth advanced towards me with a harassed expression on his face.

"If we were to put Coker out of the way, Mr. Editor," he said, "they'd bring in a verdict of justifiable homicide, wouldn't they?"

"I shouldn't try it on, if I were you," I replied, laughing.

"Coker's the limit and the last straw rolled into one!"

"I quite agree. I suggest you communicate with the authorities at Hanwell."

"That wouldn't be much use. He'd make the present inmates pottier than ever!"

Blundell moved off. But he did not go near Coker. He could not trust himself in the vicinity of the great Horace. Had he not kept a firm restraint upon himself, I am convinced that the ground would have been strewn with little pieces of Coker.

Early in the second half, the Fifth managed to score.

Coker was engaged in tying up his bootlace at the time, so he could not butt in.

"That's better!" murmured Blundell. "I only hope that Coker's bootlace continues to come undone every five minutes or so!"

But the hope did not materialise. Coker was very wide-awake after that. He followed on the heels of his Form-fellows like Mary's little lamb.

The scores remained level until five minutes from time; and then Harry Wharton & Co. applied strong pressure.

The Fifth Form backs set up a sound defence. They did not mean the Remove to get through. They reflected that a drawn game would be far better than a defeat.

In the last minute of all, Frank Nugent shot hard for goal.

The goalie got his fist to the ball, and it came whizzing out again, to alight at the foot of Coker.

And what did Coker do? Did he immediately boot it to the other end of the field? Not a bit of it! He booted it, certainly, but in the wrong direction.

And what did Coker do? Did he immediately kick the ball to the other end of the field? Not a bit of it! He kicked the ball in the wrong direction——

The ball travelled into the net, and the Remove had won, thanks to Coker!

I was so convulsed with merriment that it was with difficulty that I sounded the final whistle.

After that, there was no holding Blundell and his companions in misfortune.

They made a bee-line for Coker, and promptly proceeded to roll him in the mud.

"Gug-gug-gug!" gurgled the hapless Horace. "Give over, you rotters!"

The Fifth-formers seemed in no hurry to desist. They rolled Coker in the mud with such thoroughness that after a time it was difficult to tell which was mud and which was Coker!

"Poor old Coker!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "He's always putting his foot in it, and now he's putting his whole carcass in it—or, rather, the others are doing it for him! What price the human mud-pie?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Weird and gutteral sounds came from Coker; but we did not linger to listen to them all. I was informed that a bumper spread had been prepared in No. 1 Study, and the victorious Remove eleven escorted me to that famous apartment.

What a glorious repast it was! And how the faces of the feasters glowed in the ruddy light!

Although I am no longer a boy, I still possess a boy's appetite, and I did full justice to the good things that were set before me.

Mid-way through the celebration, Billy Bunter loomed on the near horizon.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Say on, old barrel!" remarked Johnny Bull. "But you'll oblige us by finishing your remarks in the passage!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

It was not a polite request. It was a howl.

"Look here, I want a whack——"

"Anything to oblige!" said Bob Cherry, picking up a cricket-stump.

"Where will you have it, my fat porpoise?"

"Really, Cherry——" began Billy Bunter.

"Come on," said Bob Cherry grimly. "Name a spot. I can start at once, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked round the crowded study.

Quite apart from the menace of Bob Cherry's stump, he saw that Frank Nugent held a cushion ready to throw, and that Johnny Bull poised a good-sized loaf in his capable hand.

The fat junior backed towards the doorway in alarm. There was such a doleful expression on his face that I could not help feeling sorry for him.

"Oh, let him stay!" I said.

"All serene," said Bob Cherry. "But only on condition that he has his grub either on the mat or in the coal-scuttle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So Billy Bunter stayed; and his infinite capacity for stowing away the maximum amount of tuck in the minimum amount of time was never so ably demonstrated as at that feed.

The window-sill had to serve both as a table and a chair for the fat junior; but Bunter didn't seem to mind in the least. He would cheerfully have consumed his portion on the carpet.

It was a merry meal. Tales were told; experiences were exchanged; and jests cracked and spurted like the logs on the study fire.

At length, I consulted my watch.

"Time I was on the move," I remarked.

There was a chorus of expostulation.

"Don't go yet, Mr. Editor!"

"Needs must when the devil drives," I said.

"Who's the devil, ?" inquired Bob Cherry with a merry laugh.

"The printers of the companion papers!" I said, with a chuckle. "They want me to get ahead with next week's numbers of the companion papers."

"Well, if you must go, you must," said Harry Wharton. "Far be it from us to keep you from the path of duty. But before you go, would you mind signing your name in my autograph-book?"

"And mine?"

"Likewise mine?"

"To say nothing of mine?"

Nearly every fellow in the study seemed to possess an autograph-book. They were all set before me, and I duly inscribed my signature in all of them.

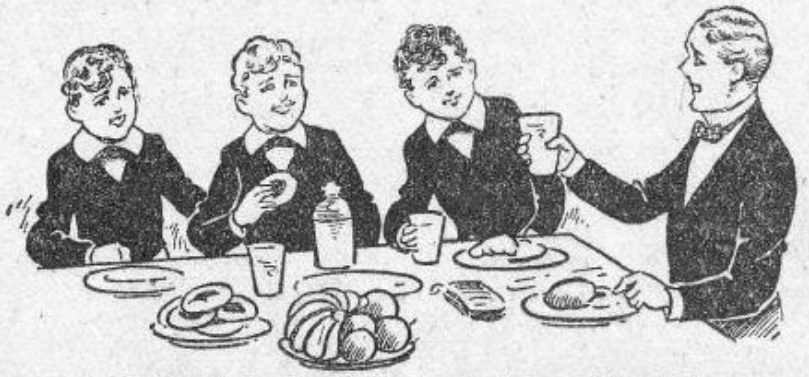
—And the ball travelled into the net, and the Remove had won, thanks to Coker!

Some books were big, some small, some fat and some thin; but I scribbled away, and one by one the pile melted away.

Even Billy Bunter produced a grubby-looking scrap-book, in which he requested me to sign my name. He also pressed me to give my address—probably with the object of soliciting a loan at some future period. Needless to say there was nothing doing, as I have heard of William George Bunter's promises to pay back his debts when that famous postal-order turns up. There are too many side-whiskers on that postal-order!

The signatures were finished at last; and I bade farewell to Harry Wharton & Co. in the dusky Close.

And thus happily ended my tour of Greyfriars.

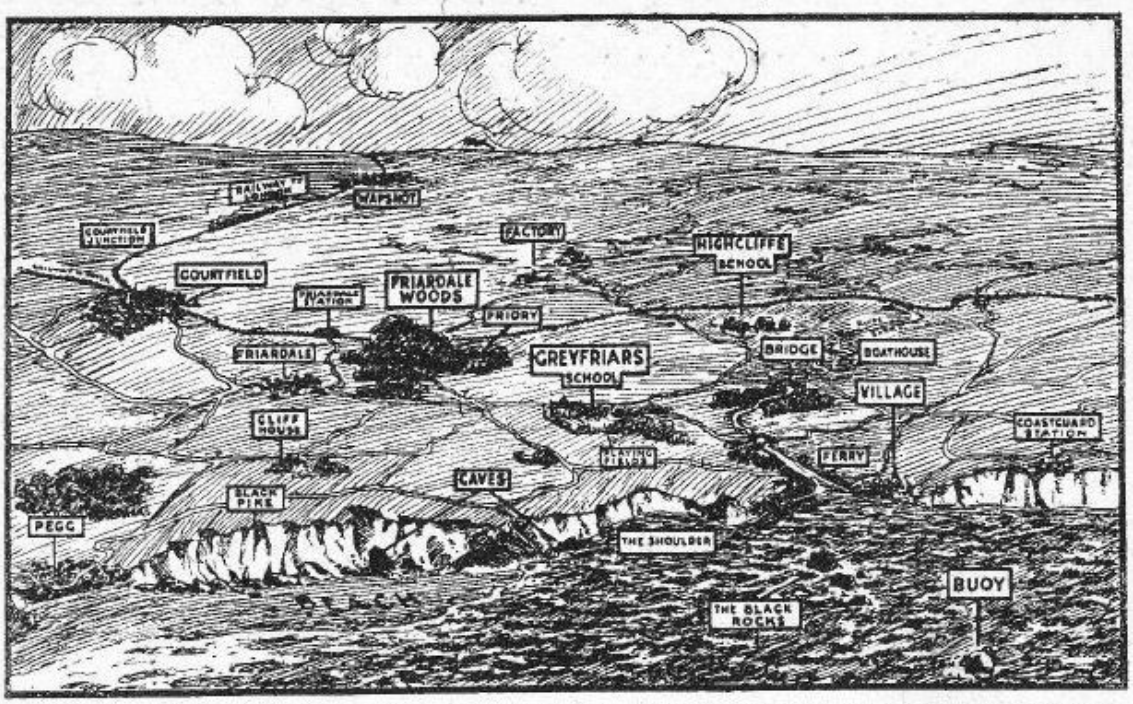


And thus happily ended my tour of Greyfriars School!

THE END

WHO'S WHO AT GREYFRIARS

Some Useful Information Concerning the School, Its Scholars and Staff. Compiled by Frank Richards.



A GENERAL VIEW OF THE COUNTRY AROUND GREYFRIARS SCHOOL

[A brief extract from Mr. Quelch's "History of Greyfriars." Founded by the Ancient Order of the Grey Friars, A.D. 1472]

Pleasantly situated near the south coast of Kent, the Monastery of Greyfriars ranked among the finest of the day.

Through Henry VIII.'s Order of the "Closing of the Monasteries," this fine building was shut down. The Monks, or Friars hid themselves for a time in the crypt, and lived in the vaults between the Priory and the Chapel. These were in a good state of repair in those days.

But somebody, for a large reward offered by the King, betrayed the monks, and brought them up before Henry, who told the Friars they would be allowed to go free if they revealed the whereabouts of the far-famed Grey Friars' treasure. But the brave old Friars would not say a word, so the King had them all executed. Henry afterwards organised many search parties, but the Friars had hidden the treasure securely. To this day it has not been found.

For many years after that the monastery was allowed to go to decay.

In 1551, Edward VI. restored it, and opened it as a school for poor, but studious boys, whose parents could not afford to have them educated.

This prospered slowly until the reign of Charles II., when a newly erected wing and two-thirds of the original building were burnt to the ground.

Fifty years later a good college was built for gentlemen's sons.

In 1716, Greyfriars, as it now stands, was started on the career it has achieved to-day.

The only reminders we have of olden days are now in complete ruin.

There is the wonderful old Priory, with its vaults and subterranean tunnel; leading to the Crypt, beneath the ruined Chapel in the Cloisters.

East of the Cloisters there is the curious, old, ivy-covered tower, surrounded by a mass of fallen pillars of masonry. This, and the shady grass-covered land around, is all that is left of the famous old Monastery of the first Grey Friars.

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL, FRIARDALE, KENT. Telephone No.: Courtfield 106

HEADMASTER:
The Rev. HERBERT HENRY LOCKE, D.D.

THE MASTERS:
5th Form: PAUL PONTIFEX PROUT.
Shell: HORACE MANFRED HACKER.
Upper Fourth Form: ALGERNON CAPPER.

DR. LOCKE

Remove: HORACE HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH.
3rd Form: EUSEBIUS TWIGG.
2nd Form: BERNARD MORRISON TWIGG.
French: HENRI CHARPENTIER.
German: HERR OTTO GANS.
Maths.: LAWRENCE LASCELLES.

THE 6TH FORM.
FORM-MASTER: DR. LOCKE.

WINGATE, GEORGE BERNARD.—Head Prefect and Captain of Greyfriars.
BENSON, HOWARD.
CARNE, ARTHUR WOODHEAD.
COKER, REGINALD (minor).
DOONE, ARTHUR (major).
FAULKNER, LAWRENCE.—Prefect.
WYNNE, PATRICK.—Prefect.
HAMMERSLEY, VINCENT.—Prefect.
LODER, GERALD ASSHETON.—Prefect.
NORTH, TOM.—Prefect.
REYNOLDS, MALCOLM.
TREMAINE, CHARLES.—Prefect.
WALKER, JAMES.

THE 5TH FORM.
FORM-MASTER: PAUL PONTIFEX PROUT, M.A.

	Studies.		Studies.
BLUNDELL, GEORGE, Captain of the Fifth	No. 1	HILTON, CEDRIC	No. 6
BLAND, BERTRAM	No. 1	POTTER, GEORGE	No. 4
COKER, HORACE JAMES (major)	No. 4	PRICE, STEPHEN	No. 5
FITZGERALD, TERRENCE	No. 2	SMITH, EDWARD WILLIAM (major)	No. 2
GREENE, WILLIAM FREDERICK	No. 4	TOMLINSON, THOMAS	No. 6
		WAVERY, FRANK	No. 3

SHELL-FORM.
FORM-MASTER: HORACE MANFRED HACKER.

	Studies.		Studies.
HOBSON, JAMES, Captain of the Form	No. 5	LANGE, ARNOLD LAWRENCE	No. 6
CARR, ALBERT	No. 1	MILES, SAMUEL	No. 1
CHOWNE, CHOLMONDELEY	No. 2	RAYNER, NEIL	No. 3
CHURCHILL, LUKE	No. 2	ROBINSON, JACK	No. 4
HOSKINS, CLAUDE	No. 5	STEWART, EDWARD	No. 3
JACKSON, PHILBERT	No. 4		

UPPER FOURTH FORM
FORM-MASTER: ALGERNON CAPPER, M.A.

	Studies.		Studies.
TEMPLE, CECIL REGINALD, Captain of the Form	No. 2	FRY, EDWARD	No. 2
ANGEL, AUBREY	No. 6	KENNEY, PAUL	No. 6
DABNEY, WILLIAM WALTER	No. 2	MACDOUGALL, RONALD	No. 4
DOONE, PERCY (minor)	No. 7	MURPHY, SHAMUS	No. 5
PHIPPS, CHARLES	No. 8	SCOTT, JAMES KENETH	No. 5
FITZGERALD, PATRICK	No. 4	TOMLINSON, TEDDY EDWIN	No. 5
		TURNER, MAURICE	No. 3

MR. PROUT

The Remove, or Lower Fourth, will be found on page 17.

THIRD FORM

FORM-MASTER: EUSEBIUS TWIGG, B.A., B.Sc.

BOLSOVER, HUBERT (minor).
BOLTER, OLIVER.
CONRAD, LEONARD.
LUNN, HAROLD.
O'ROURKE, TOM.
PAGET, PERCIVAL SPENCER.
TUBB, GEORGE.
SIMPSON, JOHN.
WINGATE, JACK (minor).

SECOND FORM

FORM-MASTER: BERNARD MORRISON TWIGG, B.A.

BUNTER, SAMUEL TUCKLESS (minor).
CASTLE, THOMAS.
GATTY, GEORGE ADALBERT.
HOP HI (minor).
MARSDEN, ERIC.
MYERS, EDWIN.
NUGENT, RICHARD (minor).
PETTIFER, JAMES.
SMITH, HARRY (tertius).
SPRING, CONRAD ARTHUR
SYLVESTER, RODERICK.
TODD, ERNEST.
TATTON, ROWLAND.

LIST OF THE "FIGHTING" REMOVE (ON POINTS)

1st Robert Cherry.
2nd Harry Wharton and Mark Linley.
3rd Richard Russell and Peter Todd.
4th Tom Redwing.
5th Johnny Bull.
6th Herbert Vernon-Smith.
7th S. Q. I. Field.
8th Tom Brown.
9th George Bulstrode.
10th Frank Nugent.
11th Richard Penfold.
12th Piet Delarey.
13th Monty Newland.
14th Percy Bolsover.
15th Hurree Singh.
16th Donald Ogilvy.
17th Richard Rake.
18th Micky Desmond.
19th Richard Hillary.
20th Tom Dutton.
21st David Morgan and William Wibley.
22nd Oliver Kipps and Lord Mauleverer.
23rd Sidney James Snoop.
24th Peter Hazeldene and Sir Jimmy Vivian.
25th Robert Fortescue Smith (minor).
26th Anthony Treluce.
27th Harold Skinner.
28th Herbert Trevor and Fisher T. Fish.
29th William Stott and Napoleon Dupont.
30th Wun Lung, William George Bunter, A. Todd.

SCHOOL ROUTINE

Rising Bell	Winter, 7.30 a.m. Summer, 6.30.
Chapel	Winter, 8 a.m. Summer, 7.15.
Breakfast	Winter, 8.30 a.m. Summer, 7.45.
Morning School	9 a.m. to 12 noon.
Dinner	1 p.m.
Afternoon School ..	(With the exception of Wednesday and Saturday, 2 to 4.
Recreation	4 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.
Tea in Studies ..	(Any time between) 4 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.
Tea in Hall	5.30 p.m.
Calling Over	7.15 p.m.
Evening Preparation	7.30 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Recreation	Juniors, 8 to 8.45 p.m. Seniors, 8 to 9.30 p.m.
Bed Time	Juniors, 8.45 p.m. Seniors, 9.45 p.m.
Lights Out	Juniors, 9 p.m. Seniors, 10 p.m.

Masters and Prefects are asked to see that all Lights are out by 10.30 p.m.

Passes out of Gates are given on application to, and at the discretion of, any master or prefect.

THE REMOVE FORM, OR LOWER FOURTH

FORM-MASTER: MR. HORACE HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH, M.A.

BUNTER MINOR

ALONZO TODD

FRANK COURTENAY

DICK PENFOLD

S. Q. I. FIELD

FRANK NUGENT

Name.	Age.	Height.	Weight.	Study.
	Y. M.	Ft. Ins.	St. lbs.	No.
Wharton, Harry (Capt.)	15 4	5 5	7 12	1
Brown, Tom	15 2½	5 3½	7 9	2
Bolsover, Percy	16 2	5 5½	9 4	10
Bull, Johnny	15 3	5 2	9 4	14
Bulstrode, George ..	15 9	5 4	8 1	2
Bunter, William George	15 1	4 9	14 12½	7
Cherry, Robert	15 2	5 4½	8 3	13
Delarey, Piet	14 10	5 3	7 10	12
Desmond, Micky ..	14 11	5 0	7 5	6
Dupont, Napoleon ..	15 0	4 11	7 0	10
Dutton, Tom	15 4	5 2	8 1	7
Field (Squiff), S.Q.I. ..	15 3	5 4	8 0	14
Fish, Fisher T.	15 4	5 1	7 4	14
Hazeldene, Peter ..	15 1	5 1½	7 3	2
Hillary, Richard ..	15 4	5 3	8 1	5
Kipps, Oliver	14 11	5 0	7 2	5
Linley, Mark	15 7	5 5	8 2	13
Mauleverer, Herbert ..	15 3	5 1½	6 12	12
Morgan, David	14 10	4 11	6 13	6
Newland, Monty ..	14 3½	5 2	7 12	9
Nugent, Frank	14 10	5 2½	7 7	1
Ogilvy, Donald Robert	15 0	5 5	7 12	3
Penfold, Richard ..	15 1½	5 3	8 0	9
Rake, Richard	14 11	5 4½	7 8	6
Redwing, Tom	15 8	5 5	8 12	4
Russell, Richard ..	14 11	5 4½	7 10	3
Singh, Hurree Jamset Ram	14 11	5 3	7 5	13
Skinner, Harold	15 6	5 4½	7 3	11
Smith (Minor), Robert	14 8	5 1½	7 0	8
Snoop, Sidney James..	15 5	5 3	7 13	11
Stott, William	15 7	5 4½	8 4	11
Todd, Alonzo Theophilus	15 0	5 4½	6 10	7
Todd, Peter	15 10	5 6½	7 13	7
Treluce, Anthony ..	15 8	5 3	7 12	9
Trevor, Herbert	14 11	4 11	7 3	9
Vernon-Smith, Herbert	15 10	5 5	8 1	4
Vivian, Jimmy	14 4	4 11	7 0	12
Wibley, William Ernest	15 3	5 0	7 12	6
Wun Lung	14 3	4 5½	6 0	13

PERCY BOLSOVER

HARRY WHARTON

HORACE COKER

ROBERT OGILVY

LORD MAULEVERER

WUN LUNG

HURREE SINGH

BOB CHERRY

BILLY BUNTER

Billy Bunter's Butler!

A Splendid Long Complete Tale of School Life and Adventure.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Illustrated by C. H. CHAPMAN.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Bunter the Beneficent

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter, of the Remove, made that remark as he rolled out of the school-house at Greyfriars. Five juniors were seated in a row on the stone balustrade outside, sunning themselves and chatting cheerily. But as Billy Bunter appeared the cheery chat ceased suddenly, and there was a chorus of five voices:

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

Bunter did not "buzz" off. He had not come there to buzz off. He had come there to talk to the Famous Five of the Remove. And he proceeded to talk.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Don't!" said Harry Wharton, holding up his hand.

"Eh! Don't what?"

"Don't say anything! Just roll away."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"What price rolling Bunter down the steps?" asked Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "I believe he would bounce. Do you think you would bounce, Bunter?"

"Look here, you ass——"

"Let's try!" said Bob, getting off the balustrade.

Billy Bunter backed away a pace or two. He never quite knew how to take Bob Cherry; and certainly he did not want Bob to roll him down the steps to ascertain whether he would bounce.

"I say, don't play the goat, you know," urged Bunter, blinking at the sturdy Bob warily through his big spectacles. "I've come here to tell you fellows something——"

"Can't you go and tell somebody else?" inquired Frank Nugent.

"I want to do you fellows a favour!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm going to do you a service," said Bunter blinking at the Famous Five with a great deal of dignity.

Bob Cherry sat down again. He seemed quite overcome by William George Bunter's statement.

"Fan me, somebody!" he murmured.

"I say you fellows, do be serious," urged Bunter. "It's a half-holiday to-day, and you fellows have been discussing what to do

with it. I happened to hear you as I came along. Well, I've got a suggestion to make. Let's all go to Chunkley's."

"What on earth is Chunkley's?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Chunkley's in Courtfield!" explained Bunter.

"Never heard of it."

Bunter sniffed.

"You fellows never hear of anything!" he said scornfully. "You'd never know what's going on right under your noses, if I didn't tell you. Chunkley's is the new big stores in Courtfield. They flooded the place with circulars when they opened. They supply everything, like the big stores in London—everything from mixed biscuits to motor-cars. They've got a tea lounge——"

"A which?"

"A tea lounge," said Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his spectacles. "Coker, of the Fifth, has fed there, and he says it's topping. So does Vernon-Smith; he's spent a lot of tin there, and he says it's no end good. Now, my idea is to patronise Chunkley's this afternoon. I'll take all you fellows, and stand you a spread in the tea lounge."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "You will?"

"Little me!" said Bunter loftily.

The Famous Five of the Remove stared at Bunter. This generous offer from William George was surprising, to say the least. William George had a wonderful scent for spreads, and a wonderful gift for securing himself a share therein; but he was not wont to stand spreads for others. The spirit, perhaps, was willing, but the financial resources were weak.

"Well, my word!" said Bob Cherry. "Do mine ears hear aright, or are they deceiving me in my old age? Sing it over again to us, Bunter."

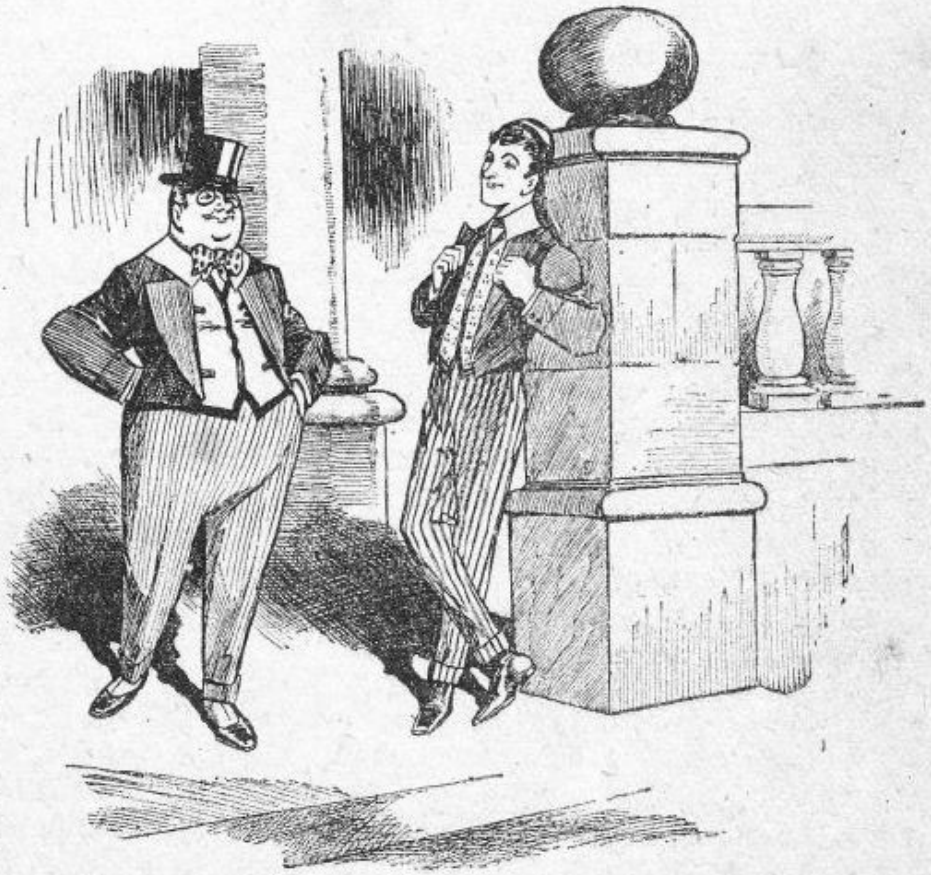
"I'm going to stand you all a tip-top spread in the tea lounge at Chunkley's Stores!" assured Bunter.

Frank Nugent began to quote:

"Do I sleep, do I dream?
Do I wonder and doubt?
Are things what they seem?
Or is visions about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, don't talk rot!" exclaimed Bunter. "If we're going to Chunkley's, the sooner the better. I'm getting hungry already. It's nearly two hours since dinner, and I've had nothing but a few sausage-rolls, and a cake, and a bag of jam-tarts and some nuts; and we've got to walk to Courtfield, unless one of you fellows like to telephone for a taxi. You can get taxies from Chunkley's, they supply everything, you know. As I'm going to stand the feed perhaps one of you fellows could stand a taxi to Courtfield."



Bunter was unusually "nutty" in his looks. His collar was quite clean, his clothes were brushed, and there was a shiny silk topper on his head. He gave Smithy a lofty look. (See page 21)

"The perhapsfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, I don't think you fellows ought to be mean, when I'm going to be so jolly generous," urged Bunter. "It isn't every chap at Greyfriars who would take five fellows to tea at an expensive place like Chunkley's, I can tell you. But I don't mind. I always was an open-handed chap."

"Open-mouthed, at least," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"The fact is, Bunter, we were thinking of trotting down to the cliffs this afternoon," remarked Harry Wharton.

"If that's the way you thank a chap for asking you to tea, Wharton——"

"Ahem! You see——"

"Here I've wasted a half-holiday, thinking of you chaps," said Bunter indignantly. "Lord Mauleverer wanted me to go home with him in his car for the afternoon, but I refused on your account. Wingate of the Sixth asked me to tea, and I said 'No, I am sticking to my old pals.' And no——"

"Ahem!"

Wharton hesitated.

Billy Bunter was blinking at him more in sorrow than in anger, as it were, and the captain of the Remove felt a little remorseful.

After all, if William George Bunter wanted to play up for once and think of something else than his own capacious inside, it was a new departure on the part of William George which deserved to be encouraged

Wharton glanced at his comrades.

"I'll leave it to you fellows," he said. "It's very decent of Bunter, if you come to that."

"Hold on a minute," said Johnny Bull, who was rather a cautious fellow. "Chunkley's, from Bunter's account, is a jolly expensive place."

"Awfully expensive!" said Bunter impressively. "They supply everything tip-top and charge accordingly. You can hire a full-blown family butler there, if you like, guaranteed the real article, same as used in the best families."

"Oh, my hat! What I mean is, can you stand the bill?" asked Johnny Bull. "To be quite candid, my dear porpoise, if we want to stand ourselves a feed, we can do it at a cheaper place than Chunkley's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave the cautious Johnny an indignant blink.

"I call that suspicious, Bull," he said.

"Bow-wow!" retorted Johnny Bull. "I'm asking for information."

Bunter slapped his pocket with a boastful air. There was a clinking and a jingling from the pocket. To judge by the sound, the Owl of the Remove was unusually well supplied with coin of the realm.

"My hat! Have you been burgling a bank?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"That's not all," said Bunter airily. "I've got some notes in my pocket."

"Where did you pick up the key of the Head's safe?" inquired Bob.

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Look here——"

"All serene, my fat tulip!" said Bob, laughing. "We'll come. If you're going to do a decent thing for once we won't stop you."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'd rather like to sample Chunkley's, too," said Bob, slipping off the balustrade once more. "Come on, you fellows; pull up your socks and follow Bunter!"

"Righto!"

Billy Bunter smiled a fat smile of satisfaction.

To judge by his expression he was as pleased at the Famous Five's acceptance of his invitation to a spread as he would have been by a similar invitation extended to himself.

Which was rather curious, for William George Bunter was not famous for parting with good things if he could help it.

"Ready!" said Nugent.

"Better dress a bit for the occasion," suggested Bunter. "Chunkley's is an awfully swanky place, and they expect fellows to be well dressed in their tea lounge!"

"My hat! Do you want us to sport our toppers?" grunted Johnny Bull

"Well, I think it would look better.'

"What rot!"

"Well, Bunter's the founder of the feast," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Let's play up; it won't take us a few minutes."

"You may as well change your collar, Bob," said Bunter, with a critical blink at Robert Cherry.

"What's the matter with my collar?"

"The question is, what isn't the matter with it?" grinned Bunter. "Dash it all, we're going to a swanky place for a tip-top spread! It's up to a chap to sport a clean collar!"

Bob Cherry opened his lips to reply, but he closed them again. The Famous Five went into the house to polish themselves a little for the great occasion. Billy Bunter rolled after them, still with the fat smile of satisfaction upon his plump face. William George Bunter, at least, was going to enjoy himself that afternoon.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Bunter's Party

"WHAT a merry nut!"

Vernon-Smith of the Remove was lounging outside the schoolhouse when Billy Bunter emerged again. The Bounder of Greyfriars looked at him with great admiration.

Bunter was unusually "nutty" in his looks.

His collar was quite clean, his clothes were brushed, and there was a shining silk topper on his head.

He gave Smithy a lofty look.

"Wherefore this thusness, old top?" inquired Vernon-Smith. "Are you doing this just to dazzle Greyfriars?"

"I'm taking a few friends to tea at Chunkley's—in the tea lounge," said Bunter carelessly. "You can come, if you like, Smithy. I'm standing treat all round."

"Great Scott! You are?"

"Why not?" demanded Bunter warmly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here we are!" came the powerful voice of Bob Cherry, as the Famous Five came out in clean collars, nicely brushed Etons, and silk toppers complete. "Will we do, Bunty?"

Bunter glanced round at them.

"That's better," he said. "You look quite respectable for once, Bob Cherry."

"Why, you cheeky ass——"

"You might put your tie straight, though.'

"What's the matter with my tie?"

"It only looks as if you'd been trying to hang yourself!" answered Bunter blandly. "Still, if you prefer it like that——"

Bob Cherry gave his tie a jerk. He was beginning to repent now that he had accepted Bunter's extraordinary invitation.

"Is this a game?" inquired Vernon-Smith. "I suppose Bunter isn't really standing a terrific spread?"

"He is—he are!" replied Wharton, with a laugh. "The age of miracles is not past."

"If you call that grateful, Wharton——!" began Bunter.

"Ahem!"

"Let's get going," said Bob Cherry, rather gruffly.

"You coming, Smithy?" asked Bunter, hospitably. "The more the merrier, you know."

"Oh, I'll come," said Smithy, evidently greatly astonished. "This is an occasion worthy to be marked with a giddy white stone. Wait a tick while I cut in for my topper. I won't disgrace you with a cap, old scout."

"Right you are! Follow us on," said Bunter.

Smithy disappeared into the house, and Bunter and his flock started for the gates at an easy walk. Squiff of the Remove was in the gateway, talking with Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. Fishy was trying to sell Squiff a pocket-knife, and Squiff was trying not to purchase it. Squiff had really the more difficult task of the two; for Fishy was a determined business man, and he firmly declined to take no for an answer. Squiff turned to the Famous Five as they came along, greatly relieved by the interruption.

"Hallo! You fellows going to a giddy fashionable function?" he inquired, with a glance at the handsome array of shining toppers.

"I guess you can't do better than take this off my hands, Squiff," Fisher T. Fish went on.

"I've said no nineteen times!" grunted the Australian junior.

"Then say yep for the twentieth," suggested Fisher T. Fish.

"Rats!"

"I really calculate——"

"It's Bunter's treat," said Harry Wharton, interrupting Fishy. "He's taking us out to tea."

"Great pip!"

"You like to come, Squiff?" asked Bunter. "I'd be glad. We're going to sample the tea lounge at Chunkley's new stores in Courtfield."

"My hat! You must be rolling in tin if you're taking nearly half the Remove to that swell show!" ejaculated Squiff.

Bunter slapped his pocket, and there was a musical jingle.

"Come with us!" he said.

"Oh, all right! Thanks."

"I guess I don't mind coming," said Fisher T. Fish, without waiting for the trifling formality of an invitation. Perhaps he saw the possibility of selling the pocket-knife to somebody during tea at Chunkley's. Fishy had bought that pocket-knife for eighteenpence from an impecunious fag; and he was very anxious to sell it for five shillings.

"You can come, Fishy!"

"I guess I'm your antelope," said Fisher T. Fish, promptly.

The juniors regarded Bunter with wonder.

As a rule Bunter was as hard up as any fellow at Greyfriars; his remittances, when they came, usually found their way at once to the tuck-shop.

He was a renowned fisher for invitations; but now he was issuing invitations himself in the most reckless manner. The bill at Chunkley's was likely to be a very steep one, at this rate; but Bunter did not seem to give it a thought.

"Toppers are de rigueur," said Bob Cherry, gravely. "If you're joining this merry party, you must travel in for your toppers."

"Oh, all right."

Fishy and Squiff started for the schoolhouse as Vernon-Smith arrived at the gates. Smithy was wearing a topper, and also a rather perplexed expression.

"I'm all ready!" he said. "I was going to sport my Sunday hat in honour of the occasion, but I can't find it. Some cheeky ass has borrowed my Sunday topper."

"Let's start!" said Bunter hastily.

The Bounder gave him a suspicious look.

"Hallo! Where did you get that hat, Bunter?" he exclaimed. "That's a jolly good hat—for you! Why, you fat fraud——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "It's Smithy's Sunday topper!"

"I say, you fellows—look here, Smithy, I suppose you don't mind lending a hat to a fellow who's taking you to a tip-top tea at a swanky place——"

"I've a jolly good mind——"

"Order!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "The founder of the feast is entitled to borrow a hat. I'm jolly glad he didn't select mine."

"I looked at your Sunday topper, Cherry, but it wasn't any good," remarked Bunter, calmly. "I could hardly be seen out in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you fat rotter——"

"Order!" grinned the Bounder. "Let's get off. If you damage my topper, Bunter, I shall damage your features. That's a tip!"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Here they are!" said Wharton, as Squiff and Fisher T. Fish came racing down from the schoolhouse in shining hats. "Come on!"

With Billy Bunter in the lead, the party of juniors started from the school gates, up the long, white road to Courtfield.

Billy Bunter was evidently feeling very proud of himself, and he walked with what could only be described as a strut.

But Billy Bunter was entitled to strut. He was taking eight fellows—all with good appetites—to tea, at the most expensive place in the town. A little "swank" was pardonable under the circumstances.

There was an occasional clink from Bunter as he walked. The metallic supplies in his pocket made themselves heard. From Bunter's manner, it might have been supposed that his pocket was full of sovereigns; but that could hardly be the case. If it was only silver in that bulging, clinking pocket, he must have been in possession of a goodly sum; and he had declared that he had notes, too. Apparently Bunter had come in for a windfall, and was going to get rid of it

lavishly. Once upon a time, it was known, Bunter had been in funds, on an occasion when his father had been fortunate on the Stock Exchange. It looked as if Bunter senior had scored once more in that weird market where men buy what they cannot pay for, and sell what they do not possess, and make fortunes thereby—varied with an occasional bankruptcy.

William George Bunter seemed to be walking on air, as he led his merry men into the old High Street of Courtfield.

They halted at Chunkley's.

Chunkley's was a new building, of huge dimensions. Chunkley's was the last word in modern, up-to-date efficiency. Chunkley—whoever Chunkley was—had seen that there was room for such an establishment in Courtfield, and the great stores had risen like a mushroom—but a very substantial mushroom.

There were great blocks of buildings; there were endless departments, innumerable smiling shopwalkers, and battalions of charming young ladies, ready to supply everybody with everything that he did or did not desire. If you wanted a car, you telephoned to Chunkley's, and the car was snorting outside almost as soon as you had hung up the receiver. If you wanted extra gentlemen for a dance, you rang up Chunkley's, and at the hour appointed the extra gentlemen arrived, graceful and debonair, in beautiful evening clothes. If you required a staid, old-fashioned butler to give the house a tone, Chunkley's supplied you with a butler who looked as if he had passed his whole life in ducal mansions, and the said butler was supplied by the hour, the day, or the week. Chunkley's only asked you to pay liberally for its efficient services—the bills at Chunkley's were on as grand a scale as everything else.

Billy Bunter glanced round at the party. "That's better," he said. "You look quite respectable for once, Bob Cherry. Just shove your tie straight; it looks as if you've been trying to hang yourself!"

(See page 21)

Some of the Greyfriars fellows who had patronised the famous tea lounge at Chunkley's had declared that everything was topping there, but that the charges made a fellow wonder whether he was in a Swiss hotel. But William George Bunter led his flock into Chunkley's, as if the place belonged to him. They invaded the tea lounge—quite a nice tea lounge, with views from the windows, and nice little tables, and palms in pots, and an orchestra half hidden by big

palms at one end. The orchestra was discoursing the mysterious sounds which, in tea lounges, pass for music, as the Greyfriars party came in.

"Well, this looks all right!" murmured Squiff.

"Quite a decent show, what?" said Bunter, carelessly.

"Oh, rather."

"Topping!" said Bob.

"The topfulness is really terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Here's a table that will do for us, you fellows," said Bunter.

And the Greyfriars party sat down.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Something Like a Spread

HARRY WHARTON AND Co. enjoyed the "spread" at Chunkley's.

Billy Bunter did the honours in style. There was plenty of everything, and the juniors did full justice to all that was provided.

"Don't spare the grub, you fellows!" said Billy Bunter hospitably. "Just you pile in. Follow my example."

Bunter's guests did their best to follow his example; though they could not follow it to its full extent. They did not share the marvellous stowage capacity of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter certainly distinguished himself.

The delicacies provided in the tea lounge were exceedingly nice, if not very solid; and a hungry fellow could get through a very large quantity of them. The quantity Bunter travelled through was enormous. The other fellows did well.

Once or twice there was a pause; although it really was not their business, the juniors could not help thinking of the terrific bill Bunter was piling up for himself.

Squiff, after a glance at the "carte," ascertained that the jolly little cakes which were disappearing by dozens were a shilling each, and that the stuffed dates were sixpence. And the stuffed dates were vanishing by the score.

Squiff gently pointed out the fact to the founder of the feast. But Bunter only smiled genially.

"Pile in!" was his reply.

"Well, if you can stand it——" said Squiff.

"My dear chap, this is my spread, and there's no limit," said Billy Bunter. "All I want is to see my guests enjoy themselves."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry.

And when the juniors slacked down, Billy Bunter urged them to renewed efforts, still setting a noble example.

Certainly the Greyfriars crowd enjoyed that spread.

It beat hollow any feed in No. 1 Study at Greyfriars; it excelled, by far, any spread at the school in the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

Billy Bunter, who had bagged feeds in every study in the Remove for whole terms, seemed bent on compensating his victims at one fell swoop as it were.

But the best of things come to an end and there came a time when even Chunkley's most tasty delicacies failed to tempt the juniors.

Even William George Bunter stopped at last.

He leaned back in his chair, with a very fat and happy and shiny face, and blinked at his guests.

"That's what I call something like!" he remarked.

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry, cordially. "You've really done us remarkably well, Bunty."

"The donefulness is terrific!" concurred the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Our esteemed and ridiculous thanks are due to the excellent Bunter."

"Hear, hear!"

"About time we were moving," remarked Vernon-Smith, as Billy Bunter made no motion to rise. The waitress was hovering round the table, as a hint that after the feast came the reckoning.

"Eh? Oh, yes!" said Bunter.

A slightly thoughtful look came over the fat face of the Owl of the Remove.

"You fellows ready to march?" he murmured.

"Yes, kid."

"Ask the waitress for the bill, will you Wharton?"

"Certainly."

Harry Wharton proffered that request to the young lady in attendance, and the bill was laid before them.

The amount of it made Wharton start.

The items were numberless; and the total amount was twelve pounds ten shillings and sixpence.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, glancing at it over Wharton's arm. "I thought it was piling up!"

"Well, Bunter was warned," grinned Squiff. "I suppose he knows what he's about."

"I hope so," murmured Wharton. "Here you are, Bunter."

He passed the bill across the table to Bunter.

That fat youth was not looking quite so happy and contented now. In fact, a very uncertain expression was creeping over his face.

"How much?" he asked, blinking at the paper through his big glasses.

"Twelve pounds ten and six."

"Oh!"

Wharton frowned a little. The suspicion was dawning in his mind that the Greyfriars fellows had, after all, been "done" once more by the astute Owl of the Remove.

Bunter made no motion to produce the cash.

The waitress had retired to a little distance, and was in conversation with another young lady; but her weather eye, as it were, was on the table where the schoolboys sat.

Billy Bunter cast one blink towards the exit.

But the exit was at a good distance, and it was necessary to circumnavigate a dozen tables to get there. There was no escape that way for the spoofer.

"Well, Bunter?" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Well, old chap," said Bunter, with feeble affability.

"Hadn't you better settle the bill?"

"Oh, yes!"

"They'll be wanting the table," suggested Nugent.

"Let 'em want," said Bunter. "We can keep the table as long as we like, I suppose."

"Well, it's time we were off."

"Oh, hurry, old chap!"

Other fellows, as well as Harry Wharton, began to feel—and to look—suspicious.

"Look here," said Bob Cherry abruptly. "Settle the bill and let's get out, Bunter."

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Well?" said Harry Wharton grimly.

"I—I'm afraid I haven't enough—quite enough—to meet this little bill," stammered Bunter. "I—I suppose you fellows could lend me a pound or two temporarily."

"I suppose so. How much are you short?"

"Lemme see—ahem! I'd better tell you what I can put up, and you fellows can put up the rest—only as a loan, of course. You're my guests," said Bunter, with dignity. "I hope I'm not the kind of fellow to stick his guests into paying for their tea. Only the bill is rather steep, and I haven't enough in my pockets."

"That's all right."

"I'll settle to-morrow, of course. I'm expecting a postal order——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'm expecting a postal order to-morrow."

"A—a—a—postal order!" said Wharton dazedly.

The Greyfriars party looked at Billy Bunter as if they could eat him. They had not run up a bill of twelve pounds ten shillings and sixpence in order to hear about Bunter's postal order—which he was always expecting, but which somehow never arrived.

"From a titled relation of mine," explained Bunter.

"Look here——"

"Your money will be quite safe, Wharton," said Bunter. "That postal order ought really to have arrived to-day. There's been some delay owing to these Labour troubles, I suppose. This industrial unrest, you know."

"Bunter!"

"But it will come along to-morrow, and then I'll square the small sum I require now."

"How much can you put up towards the

bill ?" asked Harry Wharton very quietly.

Billy Bunter hesitated. He seemed loth to reply, but a reply had to be made at last, and he spoke.

"Sixpence!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Pay Up!

"SIXPENCE!"

The word was repeated round the tea-table in various tones. That William George Bunter could not meet the expenses he had incurred was pretty clear by that time; but that he should name the handsome sum of sixpence as his intended contribution to the bill rather took away the breath of the juniors—well as they knew their William George.

"Sixpence!" said Wharton blankly.

"A—a—a tanner!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "Oh, you fat rascal!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You fat fraud!"

"Is that your way of thanking a chap who stood you that splendid feed, Bob Cherry?"

"It seems that we've stood ourselves the feed!" grinned the Bounder. "Bunty pays a tanner, and the rest of us find the trifling sum of twelve pounds ten shillings. We ought to have known."

"The thoughtfulness is great," murmured Hurree Singh, "but the rascalfulness of the esteemed spoofing Bunter is terrific."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Sixpence!" said Harry Wharton again. "You've spoofed us into running up a terrific bill, you fat bounder, and now you offer sixpence towards it! Where is the twelve pound ten to come from?"

"You fellows can lend me some tin, I suppose? I'm squaring up to-morrow out of my postal order."

"A postal order for over twelve pounds?"

"Ahem! I—in—in fact, I'm expecting several postal orders," said Bunter, "from—from some of my wealthy relations."

"The fat spoofer has got the tin about him," growled Johnny Bull. "He was rattling it in his pocket all the way to Courtfield."

A faint grin appeared for a moment on Bunter's fat face.

"You see——" he began.

"Yes, rather," explained Wharton sharply. "You're not spoofing us like this, Bunter. Turn out your pockets—the one with the cash in it."

"There's only a tanner."

"Then what were you jingling?"

"I—I may have some old keys in my pocket.——"

"K-k-keys!"

"Yes. I don't mind showing them, if you want to see them," said Bunter.

He turned out the bulging, jingling pocket

Vernon-Smith gave Billy Bunter a suspicious look. "Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get that hat, Bunter? It's a jolly good one for you. Why, you fat fraud, it's my Sunday topper!"

(See page 22)

before the staring eyes of his guests. The only coin of the realm that was disclosed was a solitary sixpence. But there were five or six old keys, a number of buttons, several screws, and a number of marbles. The juniors fairly blinked at that collection which had jingled merrily in Bunter's pocket, and given them the impression that the Owl of the Remove was quite rolling in money.

"Spoofed!" muttered Bob.

"You awful rogue!" gasped Wharton. "You planned this—you jingled that rubbish just to take us in——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Didn't you?" howled Johnny Bull.

"I must say you fellows are suspicious," said Bunter. "I call it low. I don't like to say it, but really, it's rather low."

"Why, you—you——"

"Shush!" murmured Frank Nugent. "We don't want a shindy here. People are beginning to stare."

Bunter grinned again.

The argument proceeding at the schoolboys' table had already drawn some glances from the other guests in Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge.

It was evident, too, that the waitress was interested, though she was out of hearing as yet. Two other waitresses had joined the young lady. All three were gazing towards the Greyfriars party.

The young lady had been willing to trust a party of well-dressed public schoolboys; but only as far as she could see them, so to speak. There was no possibility of the party getting out of Chunkley's Tea Lounge without the account being settled.

A "scene" in the tea lounge, under a hundred curious eyes, made the juniors shudder to contemplate it. Only Billy Bunter, perhaps, could have faced it with equanimity. Bunter would have faced worse things for such a spread as he had just enjoyed.

The juniors suppressed their feelings.

"The awful beast said he had notes, too," muttered Squiff.

"I hope you don't think I was speaking untruthfully, Field!" said Bunter loftily.

"What! You've got some notes?"

"Certainly. I said I had."

"Oh, good," said Wharton, in great relief. "Produce them, then. If this is only a silly joke, all right. Turn out the notes."

"They won't be much use here," said Bunter "They're not banknotes, you know."

"Currency notes are all right, if you've got enough, ass."

"But they're not currency notes."

"Eh! What the thump notes are they, then, if they're not banknotes or currency notes?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Ahem! You—you see——"

"Produce them, anyhow," hissed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, all right."

Billy Bunter dived a fat hand into another pocket, and produced a number of crumpled pieces of paper. The juniors stared at them.

"There's the notes," said Bunter.

"What—what——"

"Old letters!" said Nugent.

"Notes from my father," said Bunter. "You can call them letters if you like. It comes to the same thing."

"You—you—you said——"

"I said they were notes. So they are notes. I never said they were banknotes, did I?" said Bunter in an injured tone. "I do think it's rather rotten of you chaps to put words into a fellow's mouth like that."

"You gave us the impression——"

"I said notes. If you choose to get a wrong impression, that's your own look out. I'm not answerable for you fellows being stupid."

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"This really serves us right," he said. "We ought to have known Bunter better. He's planned this, and spoofed us all along the line; and it's really our own fault. We shall have to pay the bill, and take it out of Bunter's hide afterwards."

"I say, you fellows——"

"We can raise it among us, I suppose," said Bob Cherry. "But—but—but the funds don't run to a feed like this. I'm blessed if I know how we shall stand it. I've only got half-a-crown."

"Whacks all round, as much as every fellow can stand," said Wharton, with a worried look.

Fisher T. Fish rose to his feet. There was a very determined expression on Fishy's bony face.

During the spread Fishy had been making surreptitious attempts to sell his pocket-knife to one member of the party after another. He had not succeeded, though the price had come down to four shillings, which was only twice its value. Fishy was feeling discontented, and his look showed that he did not intend to be "stuck" for a "whack" in paying for the glorious spread at Chunkley's.

"I guess this lets me out," he remarked. "About time I noseyed on, I reckon."

"Hold on, Fishy——"

"I guess it's time to vamoose the ranch, Wharton."

"But the bill isn't paid."

"That's Bunter's bizney."

"You know Bunter can't pay. We've got to raise the money among ourselves somehow——"

Fisher T. Fish shook his head very decidedly.

"Nope!" he answered. "I came here as a guest; and guests don't pay for their refreshments in Noo Yark, where I was raised. I reckon this lets me out. Ta-ta."

And Fisher T. Fish reached for his hat and walked off, leaving Harry Wharton and Co. to deal with the situation as best they could, without his assistance.

The waitress hovered a little nearer the table. She was aware by this time that there was a hitch in the proceedings somewhere; and the departure of one guest at a hurried walk was a suspicious circumstance. She stood prepared to bar the way to the next, if there was a next. Guests could not pile up a heavy bill in Chunkley's Tea Lounge and then steal off one by one.

But there was no other departure. The rest of the party "played up" loyally together; there was only one Fisher T. Fish at Greyfriars.

"Cash up all round," said Harry Wharton. "Get a move on; we shall be asked for the money soon. My hat! We'll give Bunter the ragging of his life for getting us into this scrape."

"If that's your thanks, Wharton——"

"Shut up!" hissed the captain of the Remove. "Now then, you chaps, how much can you stand? I've got a quid."

"I have three esteemed quids, my excellent Wharton," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Half-a-crown!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"Twopence!" mumbled Nugent.

"Oh, dear!"

"Bunter, you villain——"

"Bunter, you fat Hun——"

"If you fellows are going to call me names, after standing you the biggest feed of the term ——" began Bunter warmly.

"Shut up! Hack his shins, Squiff—you're nearest."

"Good egg!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, with a sudden yell that woke the echoes of Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge.

"Oh, my hat! Shut up!"

"Oh, dear!"

Every eye in the Tea Lounge was fixed upon the Greyfriars table as if glued there. The juniors were crimson.

Billy Bunter was not specially concerned for appearances. He had the advantage of the rest of the party there.

"Oh, wait till we get you home to Greyfriars!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Shurrup!"

"I've got a fiver," said Vernon-Smith. "Lucky I joined up—what? I think we shall get through all right."

The required sum was made up at last, Smith and Hurree Singh being the largest contributors. The other fellows handed in all they had; it was the most they could do.

Wharton, with a very pink face, signed to the waitress, and the cash was handed over with the bill. The waitress with a haughty expression marched off to the desk with it.

"Come on, now," muttered Wharton.

"Wait a minute," said Bunter.

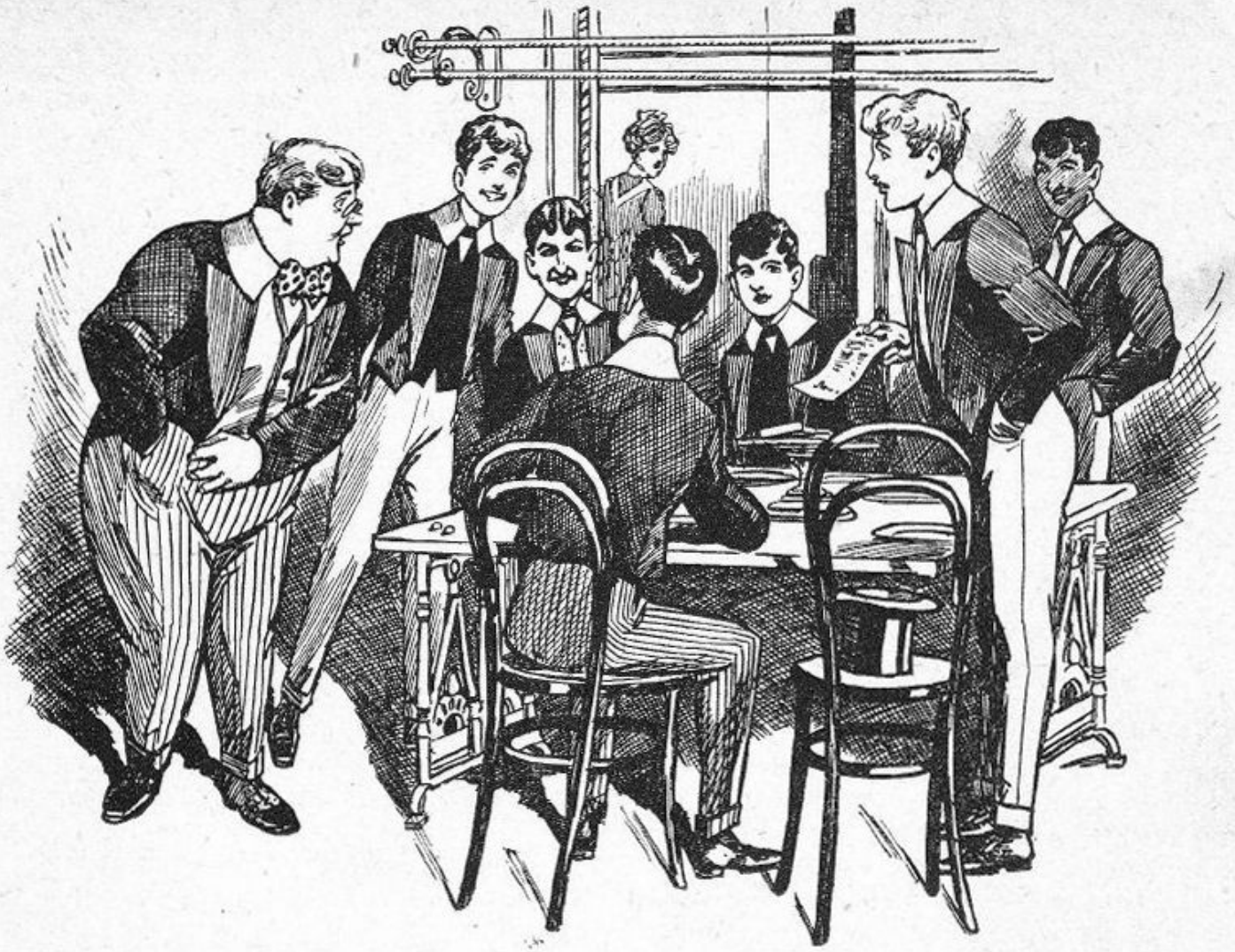
"What for you, fat villain?"

"I want my receipt."

"Your receipt!" stuttered Bob.

"Yes, certainly."

"Let him have the receipt," said the Bounder. "He owes us twelve pound ten, and we're going to rag him every day till he pays up."



"Spoofed!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "You awful rogue!" gasped Harry Wharton. "You invited us to this spread, and all you've got to foot the bill is—sixpence!" (See page 27)

"Every day of his life, then," growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

The waitress brought the receipt on a plate, and Billy Bunter pocketed it. The immediate results of his game of spoof were likely to be painful to William George Bunter; but that receipt was a valuable asset, all the same. On future occasions Bunter would be able to let that little paper be seen by apparent accident, and fellows would know that he had "fed" at Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge to the tune of twelve pounds ten shillings and sixpence. It was probable that Billy Bunter would make use of that receipt for purposes of swank, till it was worn to shreds and patches.

"Now come," muttered Wharton.

"Better leave half a crown for the young lady, Wharton," said Billy Bunter reprovingly. "She's waited on us a lot. As I've stood the feed I think you might stand the tip."

"Why, you—you——" Wharton almost exploded.

"Tips" were expressly forbidden by several large notices in the tea lounge, nevertheless, there seemed to be an expectant air about the young lady. Vernon-Smith found half a crown in his pocket, and laid it on the table, and the juniors marched off. Something suspiciously resembling a sniff was heard behind them as they went. Probably the young lady had anticipated more than half a crown as the fee for a twelve pound ten repast.

Harry Wharton and Co. marched out of Chunkley's Stores in a frame of mind that was

almost Hunnish. But Billy Bunter did not march out with them. He slid off quietly and disappeared among the huge departments of Chunkley's. The Greyfriars party started home without him. Probably the Owl of the Remove considered it judicious to let his "guests" cool down a little before he saw them again.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Pleasant Prospects for Bunter!

"BUNTER in yet?"

That question was being asked by half a dozen fellows as the hour of calling-over drew near at Greyfriars School.

The fat junior had not turned up yet.

Vengeance waited for him at Greyfriars, and Billy Bunter doubtless was perfectly well aware of it. It was close on call-over, and he had not put in an appearance.

Seven juniors were exceedingly anxious to see him.

Of the merry party at Chunkley's only one member was taking the affair cheerfully and smilingly. That one was Fisher T. Fish of New York. Fishy even saw something humorous in it. As he airily explained, he was far too "spry" to be "stuck" by Bunter or any other guy; he had scoffed a good share of the great spread, and wasn't a penny the worse. Fishy was, in fact, greatly tickled by the wrathful looks of the Famous Five, and inclined to admire the "cuteness" of Bunter's "stunt."

"I guess you guys were fairly roped in," Fisher T. Fish remarked as he found seven wrathful youths waiting for Bunter in the big doorway. "You look a bit mad about it. Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull glared at him.

"What are you chortling about?" he demanded gruffly.

"Waal, it's funny," urged Fisher T. Fish. "You can't deny that it's funny. You galoots were real done. I guess Bunter wouldn't have put the cinch on me in that way. No, sir; not on a galoot who was raised in Noo Yark. We cut our eye-teeth too early in Noo Yark."

"You came—the same as we did."

"But I guess I slid out of the paying stunt."

"Somebody had to pay."

"I guess that was Bunter's game. They could have called a bobby, and given him in charge, you know," said Fisher T. Fish coolly. "I reckon I should have smole! You galoots are too soft! Ha, ha, ha!"

In the circumstances Fisher T. Fish's merriment was ill-timed. The exasperated juniors showed their sense of that by collaring the hilarious Fishy, and sitting him down on the floor with a heavy bump. Fishy's unmusical chortle changed suddenly to a fiendish yell.

"Yoooop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Why don't you laugh?" chortled Bob Cherry. "Isn't that funny? You've got such a sense of humour, you know."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Give him another," said Squiff.

Fisher T. Fish hurriedly scrambled out of reach. He did not want another, and for the moment at least his merriment was suppressed. He shook a bony fist at the Famous Five and retreated.

"Call-over, you fellows!" shouted Peter Todd down the passage. "What are you waiting for?"

"Bunter! We're going to slaughter him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's another funny ass! Bump him!"

Peter Todd promptly fled into Hall, chuckling as he went The story of Bunter's spoof had spread, and most of the Remove fellows seemed to find something amusing in it; though all agreed that William George Bunter ought to be punished by something lingering with boiling oil in it.

"Better cut off," said Harry Wharton, at last. "We don't want to be late for call-over. Quelchy's taking the roll."

And the wrathful seven headed for Hall.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was taking call-over. At the last moment a fat and breathless figure wedged into Hall, and answered to the name of Bunter.

William George had put off his return till the latest possible moment. But he could not

venture to cut call-over, and here he was. Seven fiery glances were turned upon him as he joined the ranks of the Remove. Bunter gave Wharton a feeble and propitiatory smile after answering to his name.

"I say, Harry, old chap," he murmured.

"I'll give you Harry, old chap, presently!" muttered the captain of the Remove.

"Bob, old scout——"

"B-r-r-r-r!"

"I—I hope you fellows enjoyed the spread at Chunkley's!"

"I hope you'll enjoy what you're going to get presently!" answered Johnny Bull.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Silence!" called out Wingate of the Sixth.

There was silence in the Remove; but the glances that were cast upon Bunter spoke more eloquently than words.

Billy Bunter wore a worried look.

Now that he had fairly digested that terrific feed, it was possible that he was beginning to repent. But repentance of that kind was not likely to serve the Owl of the Remove. There was only one way of making his peace with the aggrieved juniors, and that was by handing over the sum of twelve pounds ten shillings. And Bunter's last sixpence had been expended at Chunkley's, in his contribution towards the payment for the spread. Evidently there were squalls ahead for Bunter.

The moment the signal to dismiss was given Billy Bunter scuttled out of hall. His only hope was to keep out of reach, and stave off the evil hour. Perhaps he hoped that the wrathful Removeites would not let the sun go down on their wrath. If so, he was likely to be disappointed.

"After him!" muttered Bob Cherry, hastily. "The bounder's mizzling!"

"Don't let him get away!"

"After him!"

There was a rush of the Removites. Mr. Quelch's cold, clear voice rang out sharply.

"Wharton. Cherry! Kindly do not rush out of Hall in that disorderly way. Return to your places at once, and walk out in an orderly manner."

"Oh, dear!"

Mr. Quelch's command was law. William George Bunter had to be suffered to escape! He was not in sight when Harry Wharton and Co. emerged from Hall at last.

"Anybody seen Bunter?"

That question was being asked up and down the House during the next half hour, by seven furious juniors.

But nobody had seen Bunter.

The fat junior was understudying Brer Fox, and "lying low"—very low, indeed.

The juniors had to go to their studies for prep., and after prep. the Famous Five looked in at No. 7. Bunter shared No. 7 with Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, and should have been there at work. But he wasn't there.

"Seen that fat villain, Peter?" asked Harry Wharton, as the juniors looked in.

Peter chuckled.

"No; he hasn't turned up yet."

"Hasn't he done his prep.?"

"Apparently not."

"Oh, the fat rotter!"

Harry Wharton and Co withdrew. Bunter was evidently abandoning prep. for that evening, chancing his luck with his form-master in the morning. He was still adhering to his policy of putting off the evil hour.

"Never mind—we'll catch him at dorm!" said Bob Cherry.

There was an hour beyond which the elusive Owl could not put it off. He had to turn up in the Remove dormitory, with the rest of the form, at half-past nine. The avengers gave up hope of seeing him until then, but their wrath did not spoil by keeping. In fact, it seemed like wine to improve with age.

By the time the Remove were shepherded off to their dormitory, they were quite prepared to hang, draw, and quarter Bunter.

Wingate of the Sixth was in charge of the Remove that night. He noted that one was absent from the dorm. when the Remove marched in.

"Bunter's not here," said the Greyfriars captain. "Where is that fat rascal?"

"I—I—I'm here, Wingate!" gasped Bunter from behind him.

"Roll in!" snapped Wingate.

Billy Bunter rolled in from the corridor. He cast nervous blinks towards Harry

Wharton and Co; but they avoided looking at him. What they had to say to Bunter was not to be said in the presence of the head perfect of Greyfriars.

"I—I say, you fellows!" mumbled Bunter.

"Turn in, sharp!" said Wingate.

When the Remove had turned in, Wingate extinguished the light, and retired from the dormitory. Then seven juniors sat up in bed, as if moved by the same spring.

"Now, Bunter!"

"Have him out!"

"Scalp him!"

"Slaughter him!"

Harry Wharton struck a match and lighted a candle-end. Bob Cherry strode towards Bunter's bed.

"Now, Bunter, you rascal!"

Snore!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, he's asleep! I'll wake him—hand me that water-jug, Franky——"

"Yaroooh!"

"Hallo, he's awake after all! Turn out, Bunter!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows——"

"Turn out!"

"I—I'm asleep—I—I mean—yaroooooh!

Bob Cherry grasped the bedclothes, and there was a loud bump, and a yell, as William George Bunter landed on the floor in a tangle of sheets and blankets.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

In the Hands of the Amalekites

"BEAST!"

That was William George's remark, as he sat up in the tangled bedclothes. He made it with emphasis.

Seven avenging figures in pyjamas surrounded the fat junior, as he sat and gasped.

"Now, you fat toad!" said Squiff.

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

"Gerrup!"

"I—I can't get up!" gasped Bunter. "My back's broken——"

"What?"

"I mean my neck—that is to say, my leg. Broken in the spinal column of the knee," gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Most of the Remove fellows were sitting up in bed to watch the scene with grinning faces. Skinner had lighted a candle, and two or three fellows followed his example. The Remove apparently looked upon the ragging of Bunter as an entertainment.

Bunter didn't. He was in a state of great alarm.

"I—I say, you fellows," he stuttered. "Lift me back into bed carefully, will you? My arm's broken in two places."

"It was your leg a minute ago," said Bob.

"My arm as well as my leg, Cherry—both are busted in several places. I think you had better call a doctor. I'm in fearful agony."

And Bunter gave a deep groan.

"Lift him up carefully," said Bob Cherry.

"Look here, he's only spoofing, as usual," grunted Johnny Bull. "You're not ass enough to believe him, I suppose."

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Of course not, ass," said Bob Cherry. "But lift him up, all the same. He's asked to be lifted up."

"Oh, all right."

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull lifted Bunter—Hurree Singh lending a helping hand. Bunter's weight was not easy to negotiate. The fat junior breathed with relief. He was under the impression that he was to be lifted back into bed, on account of his broken limbs. But he wasn't. Having raised him to the level of the bed the juniors stopped.

"Put me in," said Bunter, in a faint voice. "Careful, now. I'm suffering awfully. You needn't trouble about calling a doctor, if you put me in the bed very carefully. Now—yoooop!"

Bunter gave a yell as he was suddenly lowered, not into the bed, but upon the floor again. He smote the floor hard.

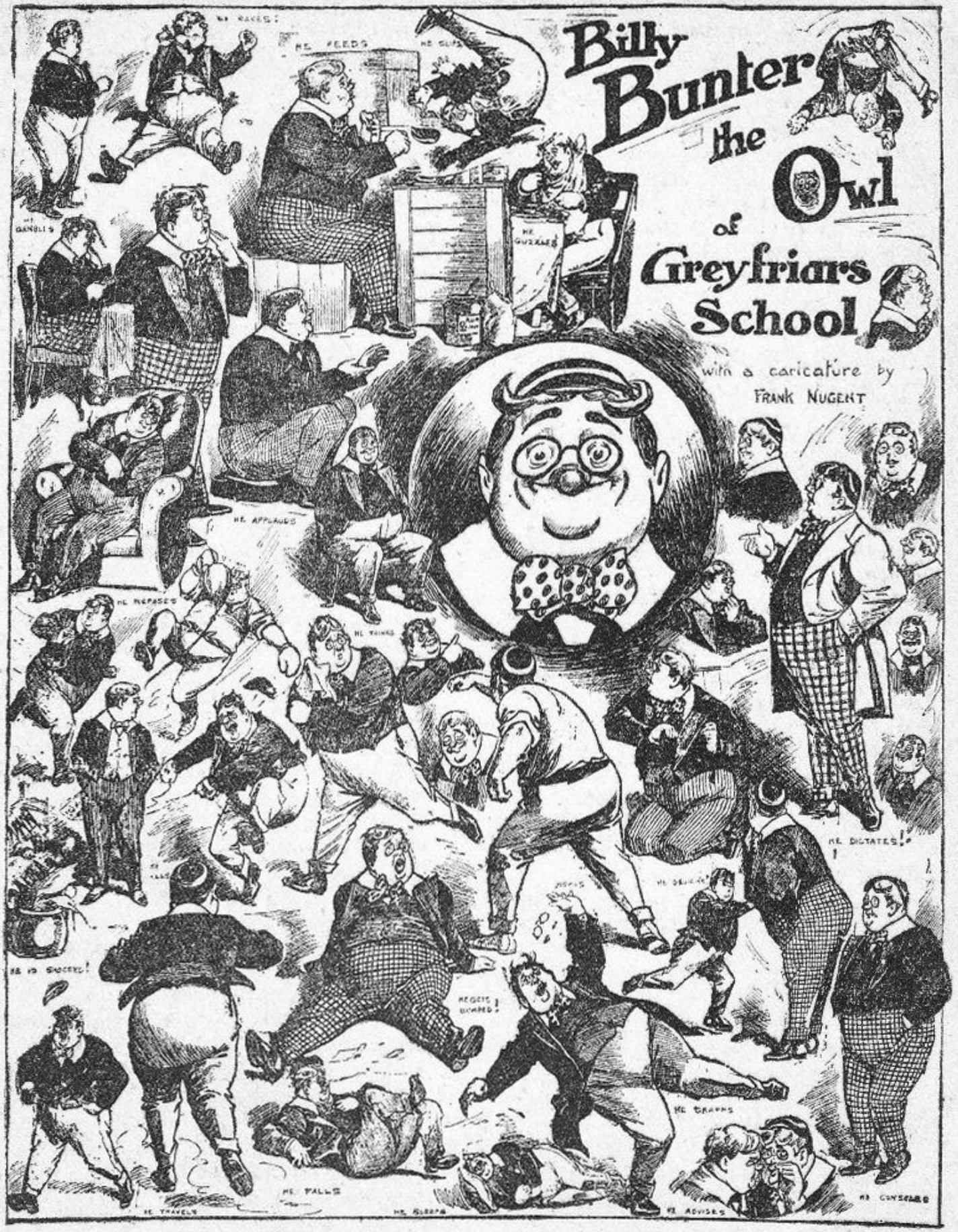
"Oh, crumbs! Oh, yarooooh! Beasts! Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner. "Any more legs broken, Bunter?"

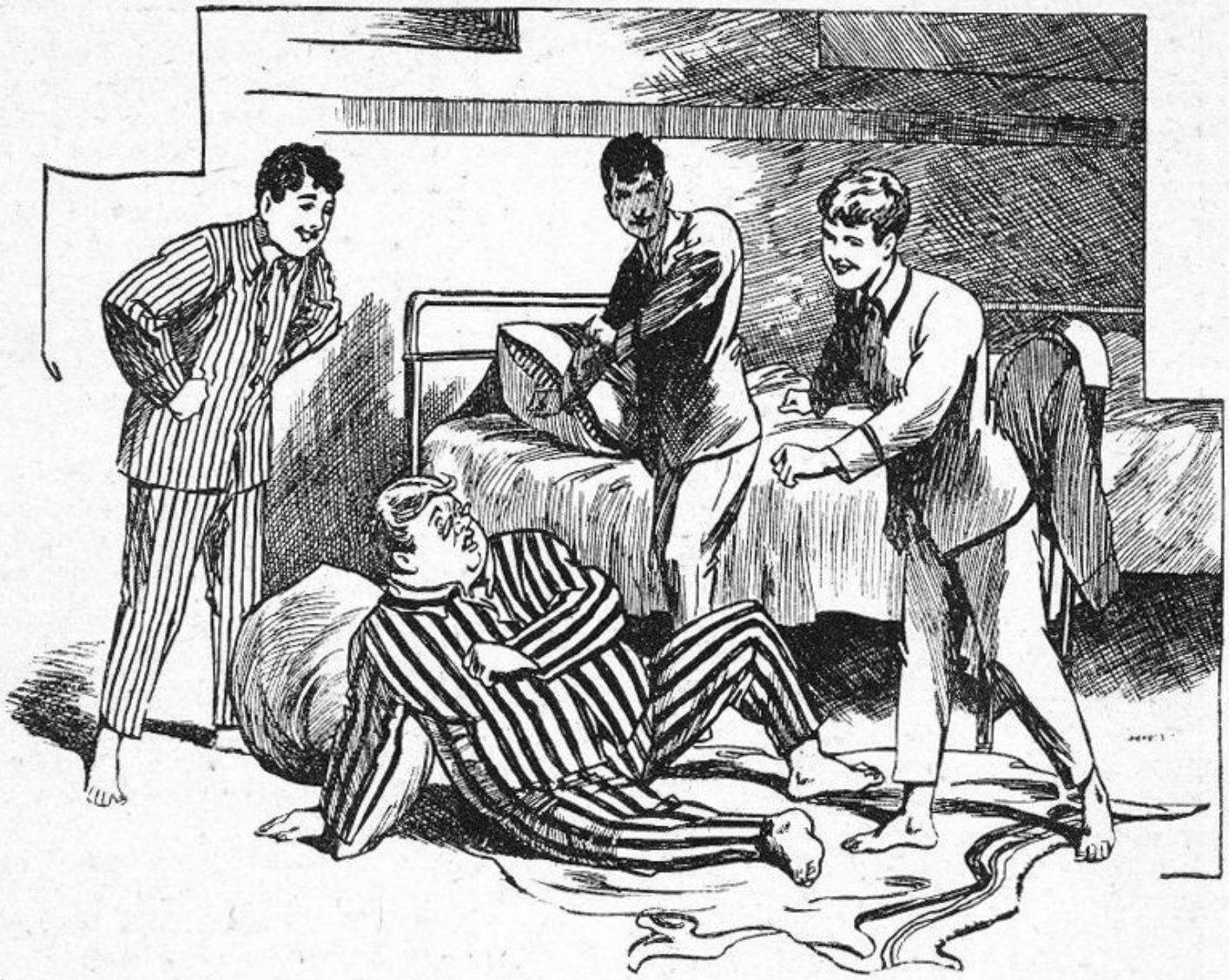
"Yow-wow-wow!"

"How are you going to get up, old fat top?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow! I c-c-can't! My back's broken now. Broken in three places. Oh, dear! Wow!"



WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER IN THIRTY-NINE POSES



Billy Bunter gave a yell as he was suddenly lowered, not into the bed, but upon the dormitory floor. He smote the hard boards with a crash! (See page 32)

"Still broken?" said Bob. "All serene; we'll lift you up again as carefully as before. Lay hold, you chaps."

"Yah! Gerraway!"

Billy Bunter bounded to his feet, without waiting to be lifted. For a fellow whose back was broken, he displayed remarkable activity.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He can get up, after all!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, let's go to bed," mumbled Bunter. "I—I shall miss my sleep, you know. I—I don't want any larks at this time of night. I—I say, you fellows, after the spread I stood you to-day at Chunkley's——"

"Shut up, Bunter! Are you going to pay for that spread?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, certainly!"

"Pony up, then!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I—I'm going to settle up to-morrow," said Bunter, in an injured tone. "It's nothing to me—only twelve pound ten. Nothing at all to a wealthy fellow like me. I'm expecting a postal order——"

"You spoofing porpoise——"

"Several postal orders—a lot, in fact. I—I'm going to write to some of my titled relations——"

"Oh, collar him!" exclaimed Johnny Bull impatiently.

"Yah! Hands off, you beasts!" Billy Bunter dodged round his bed. "I—I say, you

fellows, I—I mean business, honest Injun. I—I really meant to be standing you fellows a feed. I'm really expecting a postal order—I mean a lot of postal orders——"

"You're going through it," said Johnny Bull grimly. "You bilked us into spending twelve pounds ten shillings on a feed, and you bagged the lion's share of it, as usual. You took us all to Chunkley's intending to spoof us; you ordered things right and left, while you had only a tanner in your pocket——"

"And some old keys!" grinned Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it's rather mean to make this fuss about a temporary loan, Bull; merely temporary——"

"It will be all the better for you if it's temporary," remarked Vernon-Smith. "You're going to have a ragging every day till you pony up."

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Every day regularly, beginning now," said Harry Wharton sternly. "You've passed the limit, Bunter. You've spoofed us, and told awful whoppers, and cleared us all out of cash. All for the sake of guzzling a spread you couldn't afford. Are you ready to be ragged?"

"Nunno! I—I'd rather leave it over till—till—till next term, if you fellows don't mind. I—I'm really thinking of you, you know. You're losing your sleep."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the Removites. Bunter's consideration for the fellows who were losing their sleep was quite touching, in the circumstances.

"In fact, I'd rather let the whole matter drop now," said Bunter, blinking at the indignant seven. "I stood you a splendid feed. There was a slight misunderstanding about payment. But that's nothing to row about. Misunderstandings will occur. I really prefer to let the whole matter drop."

"Collar him!"

"Yaroooh!"

Seven juniors rushed round the bed after Bunter, and Bunter made a wild scramble across the bed just in time. Never had the fat junior shown so much activity.

"Stop him!"

"After him!"

Bunter scrambled across Peter Todd's bed to escape. There was a wild howl from Toddy as he caught Bunter's elbow with his eye. Bunter rolled off on the other side.

But the Philistines were close on the track. Bunter rolled under the next bed, which happened to be Tom Brown's, and stayed there. Seven faces were bent down, and seven ferocious glares were turned under the bed

"Come out!"

"Roll out, you fat frog!"

"Anybody got a cricket stump?"

"Yank him out!"

"I—I say, you fellows," spluttered Bunter, "d-d-don't you think this has gone far enough? I—I can take a joke with anybody—he, he, he!—but I really think this joke has gone far enough."

"Roll out!"

"If you're going to make a rotten fuss over a paltry twelve pound ten, I'll settle up to-morrow, honour bright!" groaned Bunter.

"Your honour isn't very bright," remarked Squiff, "it's badly in need of some polishing."

"Have him out!"

"To-morrow," howled Bunter, squirming, as Bob reached under the bed for him, "Give a fellow a chance. I'll really have the cash to-morrow, on the word of—of a Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Only gas!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'll get a water-jug and swamp him out."

"Good egg!"

"Yaroooh! I say, Harry, old chap—Wharton dear boy—give a chap a chance. I—I'll hand you the tin after morning lessons to-morrow. I will, honest Injun."

"Give him a chance!" chuckled Skinner. "It will be interesting to hear what whoppers he will tell when the time comes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Honest Injun!" howled Bunter. "Can't you give a fellow a chance! I put it to you as captain of the Form, Wharton."

Harry Wharton hesitated. He did not believe a word that Bunter uttered, as a matter of course; but, after all, even Bunter was entitled to be given a chance.

"What do you fellows say?" asked Wharton. "After all, we can begin ragging

the fat swindler to-morrow, if he doesn't pay up."

"Give him a chance," said Peter Todd, "Bunter may get a postal order from his uncle the marquis, or a cheque from his grandfather the duke. Or his pater may send down the family butler with a sack of banknotes for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, be sports, you know," urged Bunter, from under the bed, "play the game, you know. I'm settling up to-morrow, and—and, if you like, I'll take you along to Chunkley's Tea Lounge for another spread. I can't say fairer than that, can I?"

"Oh, roll into bed, and give us a rest," growled Bob Cherry. "We'll give you till after lessons to-morrow. Then, if you don't shell out, you will get scalped bald-headed."

And the seven avengers went back to bed, leaving Bunter to his own devices. Bunter crawled out, and blinked round him very nervously, and bolted into bed like a rabbit into his burrow. His fat voice was heard again in a few minutes.

"I—I say, Harry——"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Good-night, old boy."

"Good-night, you fat rascal!"

"I hope you'll sleep well, dear old chap."

"I hope you will!" answered Wharton. "You need a good night's rest, to go through what's going to happen to you to-morrow."

"I—I hope you fellows don't bear me any malice."

"Not at all," said Bob Cherry. "We're only going to rag you every day till you square."

"Oh, dear!"

Bunter decided to go to sleep. Evidently the hearts of the spoofed juniors were not to be softened by "soft sawder." Bunter, fortunately, was a good sleeper. Otherwise the alarming prospect for the morrow might have kept him awake till dawn crept in at the dormitory windows. But, as it was, Bunter slept quite soundly, and dreamt that he was at Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge, enjoying that tremendous feed over again—and a sweet smile played over his face during his balmy slumbers.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

No Cash

HARRY WHARTON and Co. left the Owl of the Remove severely alone on the morrow.

Bunter was being given his chance; for what it was worth. If he succeeded in raising the sum of twelve pounds ten shillings by the time lessons were over, it was "all clear" for him. It did not seem likely that it would be all clear, however; for Bunter would have had considerable difficulty in raising the sum of twelve pence.

He had gained time, that was all. Perhaps he hoped that the wrath of the "bilked" juniors would die away with time. Perhaps he depended on his sagacity to elude the punishment when it fell due again. At all events the postponement was so much to the good.

But it was not a happy day to Billy Bunter. He did an unusual amount of thinking that day. He looked so thoughtful in the form-room that Mr. Quelch supposed he was really giving some attention to his lessons for once.

But when Bunter was called upon to construe, he made so lamentable an exhibition, that Mr. Quelch's pointer was called into play. And for some minutes the Remove master was quite eloquent to Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove bore it with what fortitude he could. Even Mr. Quelch's sharp tongue, even his pointer, did not worry Bunter so much as the alarming prospect of what was to happen after lessons. For the twelve pound ten was as far off as ever. At dinner, Bunter turned a very pathetic look upon Harry Wharton; which the captain of the Remove did not heed in the least. Pathos, however, did not affect Bunter's appetite; he proved quite as good a trencherman as usual. When the juniors came out of the dining-room, Bunter joined the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows," he began.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! have they come?" asked Bob Cherry.

"They—what?"

"That cargo of postal orders!" said Bob, genially.

"N-n-n-no."

"Not the cheque from your uncle, the earl?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Or the esteemed remittance from the grandfatherly duke?" inquired the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm going to settle up!"

"You'd better!" assented Wharton.

"The betterfulness is terrific!"

"But there may be some—some delay."

"That will be unlucky for you," remarked Bob Cherry. "I'm taking a fives bat to the dorm. to-night. Better put on your thickest pyjamas, Bunty."

And the Famous Five walked away, leaving William George Bunter in a dolorous mood.

The alternative lay between the twelve pounds ten and the fives bat. The odds seemed to be on the fives bat.

In class that afternoon Bunter was more thoughtful than ever, but it was not his lessons that occupied his thoughts.

After lessons, when the Remove came out, seven juniors surrounded William George Bunter before he had time to escape.

"Well?" said seven voices at once.

Bunter blinked at them uneasily.

"Time's up!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"The—the post isn't in it!" murmured Bunter. "I—I'm expecting my—my remittances by the next post, you fellows."

"Still keeping that up?" grunted Squiff.

"If you can't take my word, Field——"

"Your word! Oh, crumbs!"

"I've written to my pater," said Bunter, with dignity. "I've pointed out to him that I must have twelve pound ten to-day. As my pater's rolling in money——"

"Bow-wow!"

"He's bound to send it. You see," said Bunter confidentially, "my pater's been doing them brown on the Stock Exchange lately. He's been a bull."

"A which?"

"A bull!"

"Your pater's been a bull!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Exactly."

"If he's anything like his son, I should think he was an ass, if he's any kind of animal at all! How could he be a bull, you fathead?"

"It's a Stock Exchange expression," said Bunter. "It means, he's been buying to buck up the market."

"Oh, that's a bull, is it?"

"Yes. I think he had bad luck when he was a bear."

"My hat! Has he been a bear, too?"

"Of course he has!"

"That accounts for your manners, I suppose!" remarked Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Inherited, what?"

"You silly ass! A bear is a chap who sells to lower prices. Sometimes he's a stag," said Bunter.

"Great Scott! There seems to be a whole Zoological Gardens in the Bunter family! Is he ever a tiger or a lion?"

"No, you ass!"

"Well, suppose he has been a bull, will that make you able to hand out the twelve pounds ten shillings you owe us?"

"I—I hope so. You see, the pater has been skinning them. When you're a bull, you buy up no end of shares, and the price rises. The public think it's a good thing," explained Bunter, with an air of great knowledge. "They rush in to buy; price goes higher. Then you sell off and slide out. You make a lot of profit that way."

"Rather a risky game, I should think," said Bob Cherry. "Suppose the police got after him?"

"You silly ass!" shrieked Bunter. "It's not against the law. It's called operating."

"My hat! There must be something amiss with the law, then. But to come back to business, where's the twelve pound ten?"

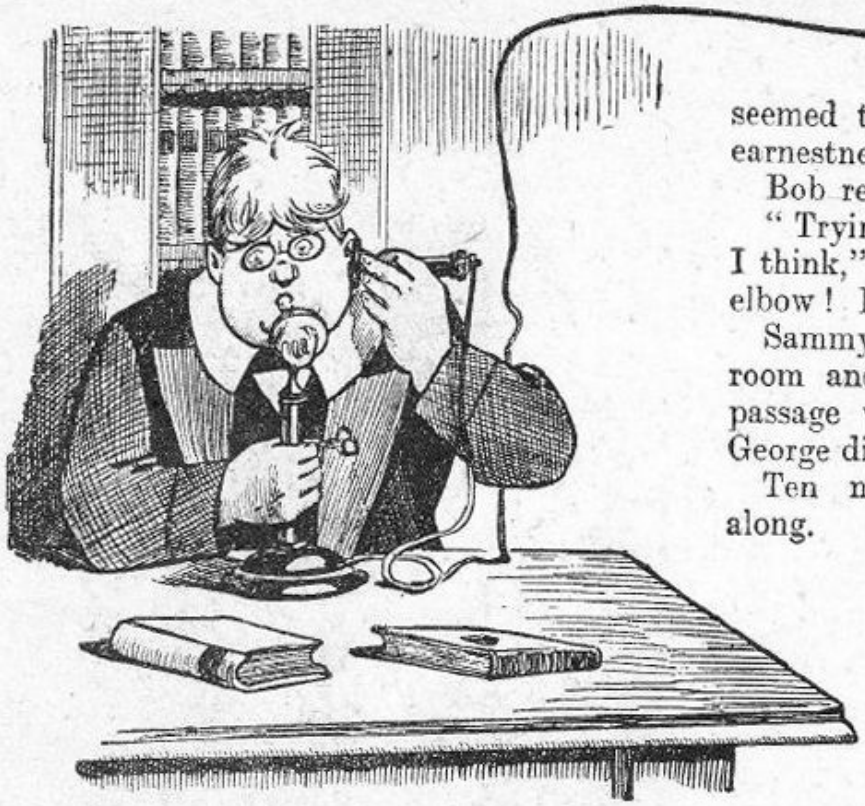
"I—I'm expecting it by the next post."

"We'll give you till the post comes in, then," said Harry Wharton; "and we'll keep an eye on you. You won't dodge us this time!"

"No fear!" said Bob emphatically.

Billy Bunter rolled away disconsolately into the quad.

He was not feeling happy. Whatever "operations" Bunter senior might have been conducting on the Stock Exchange,



"I had your letter, Billy," went on the fat voice. "The amount you have asked for is a large one. I shall not send you a cheque, as you might have some difficulty in cashing it!"

his hopeful son did not expect to see any of the results in the form of cash.

He expected twelve pounds ten shillings from his father about as much as he expected it from the man in the moon, and he felt that he was getting very near the end of his tether.

But that alarming situation made his fat brain work with unusual activity. It was only too clear that something had to be done. Bunter was doing some hard thinking as he strolled under the elms in the quad.

Harry Wharton and Co. were also strolling in the quadrangle. They did not mean to lose sight of their William George this time.

Bunter blinked at them morosely, and started for the schoolhouse at last. The Famous Five sauntered on his track.

Bunter rolled into the house and disappeared into the Second Form-room. Bob Cherry glanced in at the door, and found him deep in talk with his minor, Sammy Bunter of the Second.

Sammy was grinning, but William George seemed to be explaining himself with great earnestness.

Bob rejoined his comrades in the passage.

"Trying to squeeze a loan out of Sammy, I think," he remarked. "More power to his elbow! Lucky for him if he does!"

Sammy Bunter came out of the form-room and passed the Famous Five in the passage with a grin on his face. William George did not appear.

Ten minutes later Vernon-Smith came along.

"Post's in," he said.

"Anything for Bunter?"

"No,"

"Come on!" said Harry.

And the juniors marched into the form-room, where Billy Bunter greeted them with an uneasy blink.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

At the Eleventh Hour

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Post's in!" said Wharton curtly.

"Oh, good! I'll go and see whether there's a letter——"

"Smithy's been. There isn't!"

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter was edging towards the door, but Bob Cherry's sturdy form was in the way. There was no escape for the Owl of the Remove.

"Here begins the first lesson," remarked Johnny Bull. "Put Bunter across a desk. Old Twigg's left his cane here. That will do. Are you ready, Bunter?"

"I say, you fellows," murmured Bunter, with a longing blink at the door.

"Are you ready?" thundered Johnny Bull.

"Nunno! I—I say as—as my pater hasn't written, I—I expect he will telephone ——"

"Rats!"

"There may be some delay as it's a trunk call," mumbled Bunter. "Just you

fellows wait till my dear pater telephones ——"

"Is he going to send you twelve pound ten by telephone?" grinned Bob.

"The—the fact is——"

Redwing of the Remove looked in.

"You fellows seen Bunter, somebody saw him coming this way? Oh, here he is! Bunter, you're wanted."

"He's wanted here," growled Bob.

"Wingate's sent for him," answered Redwing. "He's been called up on the telephone in the prefect's room."

"Oh!"

It was a general exclamation of surprise. For once, amazing as it was, it seemed that Billy Bunter had been telling the truth."

"On the telephone!" repeated Wharton.

"Yes. it's his father," said Redwing. "Wingate took the call, and he was going to cut off when the johnny said he was Bunter's father. So Wingate sent me to call Bunter."

"I'd better go," said Bunter.

"We'll come with you."

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Get a move on. We're coming."

It was quite a little army that marched into the prefects' room. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, was there, and he raised his eyebrows at the sight of the invasion.

"Your father's called you up on this 'phone Bunter," said Wingate rather gruffly. "I suppose he mistook the number. Still, you can take the call."

"Ye-e-es, Wingate."

The captain of Greyfriars quitted the room, and Bunter went to the telephone. Harry Wharton and Co. went with him. There was a second receiver to the instrument, and Vernon-Smith picked it up and put it to his ear. The Bounder intended to know whether it really was Bunter's father at the other end of the wire. He had his suspicions.

"Hallo!" began Bunter. "Is that you, father?"

"Yes. Is that you, Billy?"

Vernon-Smith started. The voice that came through was a fat voice, not unlike Billy Bunter's own, and it really seemed as if it were Bunter's father at the other end of the telephone!

"Yes, dad."

Vernon-Smith started. The voice that came through was a fat voice not unlike Bunter's own, and it really looked as if it was Bunter senior at the other end.

"I had your letter, Billy," went on the fat voice. "The amount you have asked for is a large one."

"Oh!"

"I shall not send you a cheque as you might have some difficulty in cashing it."

"Oh!" murmured Vernon-Smith, in great surprise.

"I will send you the money on Saturday, William."

"T-t-thank you, father."

"I will send it down by hand, William. The butler will bring it."

"Yes, father."

"That is all, William. Good-bye."

" G-g-good-bye, father."

Bunter put up his receiver, and Vernon-Smith put up the other. Smithy fairly blinked at Bunter.

" Well, my hat ! " he ejaculated.

" What's it all about ? " asked Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter elevated his fat little nose haughtily.

" Smithy can tell you," he said. " You mightn't take my word."

" Go it, Smithy."

" Bunter's pater says he is sending the butler with the money on Saturday as Bunty mightn't be able to get a cheque cashed," said the Bounder.

" Great Scott ! "

" Gammon ! "

" Well, that's what he said," answered the Bounder. " I don't pretend to understand it. I suppose Bunter's father wouldn't enter into a game of spoof with Billy. But——"

" I say, you fellows, I've told you often enough about Bunter Court and the pater's butler," said Bunter, in an injured tone.

" But we never believed a word of it," said Nugent.

" That's suspicious, Nugent. Suspiciousness is low," said Bunter crushingly. " I suppose you'll believe in Pilkingham when you see him."

" Pi-pip-Pilkingham ! "

" That's the butler's name," said Bunter loftily. " He was with a duke before he came to us. The pater offered him higher wages."

" Oh, my hat ! "

Loder of the Sixth came into the prefects' room. He gave the group of juniors a grim look.

" This isn't a meeting-place for fags," he remarked. " Clear out."

The Removites cleared out. Billy Bunter was strutting now, just as he had strutted on the way to Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge. He felt that the storm was averted.

In the passage Harry Wharton and Co. looked at Bunter, and looked at one another.

" Well, this is a go ! " said Bob Cherry. " I—I suppose if the money is coming on Saturday we can let that fat bounder off ? "

" I—I suppose so," assented Wharton.

" He ought to be boiled in oil, but if the tin is going to be paid he can go."

" But is it going to be paid ? " said the Bounder.

" Well, if the merry family butler is bringing it down by hand on Saturday——"

" But is he ? " persisted Smithy.

" Well Bunter's pater said so."

" Was it Bunter's pater on the 'phone at all, though ? " said Vernon-Smith. " Bunter's such a spoofer——"

" Phew ! Bunter, you awful rascal——"

" I say, you fellows, I don't think you ought to be suspicious beasts like Smithy. You wait till Saturday, and I shall settle up this trifling amount," said Bunter loftily. " It's rather sickening for a fellow like me to be bothered for a trifle like this. I must say I'm rather ashamed of you fellows."

" Wha-a-at ! "

" If you want to keep my friendship," said Bunter calmly, " you'll have to be a little less mean in money matters. That's all. Don't let me hear any more about it, and perhaps I can overlook your rather rotten attitude in the matter."

And Bunter rolled away, with his fat little nose in the air. He left the chums of the Remove speechless.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Doubting Thomases !

" It's the biggest one yet ! " said Skinner of the Remove, after due reflection.

Harold Skinner was referring to the statement that the family butler belonging to the Bunter mansion was coming down to Greyfriars on Saturday, with hard cash for William George.

As Skinner put it, the " whoppers " Bunter had often told might have excited the envy of a Prussian. But this was the biggest. This one, according to Skinner, took the whole cake.

Most of the Remove fellows agreed with Skinner.

Bunter Court, and the wealth appertaining thereto, had been heard of a great deal in the Greyfriars Remove, and indeed in other Forms. But nobody seemed to have seen Bunter Court : and the wealth, if it existed,

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A GENERAL VIEW OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL, KENT

remained there, and very little of it travelled as far as Greyfriars School. The Bunter family butler, who preferred Mr. Bunter's service to that of his former ducal employer, had also been heard of. But, like Bunter Court and the Bunter riches, he had never been seen.

Skinner's opinion was that he never would be seen. Only Bunter's eye had beheld him, according to Skinner; and even Bunter had only beheld him with his mind's eye.

Harry Wharton and Co. hardly knew what to believe. If it was really Mr. Bunter who had telephoned, it seemed that the yarn must be true; but Smithy's doubts were shared to some extent by the Co..

Little circumstances came to light during the next day which rather confirmed Smithy's doubts.

For instance, Ogilvy of the Remove had seen Sammy Bunter sneaking out of Mr. Quelch's study, just after Billy had received that call. Mr. Quelch was out of gates at the time. The question arose, had Sammy been using Mr. Quelch's telephone, in the service of his major? It was quite possible that the fat fag, seated at Mr. Quelch's instrument, had rung up the prefects' room number, and that, so far from its being a "trunk" call, the call had come from the Remove master's study.

Sammy, questioned on the subject, had nothing to say. He only seemed surprised by the question. But Sammy's veracity was known to be on a par with Billy's; neither of the fat juniors bore the most remote resemblance to the late lamented George Washington.

Moreover, Peter Todd was a witness to a little scene in No. 7 Study, Sammy of the Second presented himself there, demanding a "two-bob bit" which had been promised him by his major. Bunter major was not in a position to liquidate that liability; his efforts to borrow a trifling couple of shillings from Peter were fruitless. The fat fag was finally satisfied with the gift of Bunter's pocket-knife in lieu of the two shillings. And when Peter inquired of Billy Bunter as to the grounds of Sammy's demand for cash payment, Billy's replies were very vague and unsatisfactory.

From all of which Skinner astutely deduced the theory that it was Sammy who had 'phoned to Billy, in his parent's name; that he had done it from Mr. Quelch's study on Mr. Quelch's telephone, and that Billy had promised him a loan of two shillings for the service.

Which theory fitted in so well with Bunter's duplicity, that the least suspicious member of the Famous Five was inclined to believe that Harold Skinner had hit the right nail on the head.

Possibly Bunter had expected the whole affair to die away by Saturday. Schoolboys have short memories; and Harry Wharton and Co. were not the fellows to nurse an injury for long, even with a good cause.

Bob Cherry observed that, after all, they had had the big spread at Chunkley's, and if they had to pay for it themselves, well, anyhow, they had had it. That, doubtless, was the humour in which the fat junior wished to see the fellows he had so ruthlessly spoofed.

But Skinner's discoveries and deductions, exasperated Bunter's victims afresh. If the whole scene in the prefects' room was another sample of Bunter's incurable duplicity, they felt that the Owl of the Remove was still more severely in need of a lesson than they had supposed. It was, as Harry Wharton remarked, bad enough to be spoofed and swindled, without having their leg pulled in addition.

Bunter, taxed upon the subject, could only refer the indignant and suspicious juniors to Saturday. On Saturday afternoon, according to the Owl, the Bunter butler would arrive in all his glory. That ought to silence the most captious of critics.

"You're spoofing again!" said Harry Wharton, shaking a warning finger at him. "As Skinner says this is simply the biggest whopper you've ever told. You think it will all blow over by Saturday."

"That's it!" agreed Johnny Bull. "But it won't!"

"No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with great emphasis. "It is time that the esteemed and lying Bunter was given a ridiculous lesson."

Bunter blinked uneasily at the chums of the Remove. He had his own reasons for not feeling easy in his mind.

"I sold the pocket-knife to young Tubb, of the Third, for one-and-six," said Sammy Bunter. "That leaves you owing me sixpence!" (See page 44)

"I say, you fellows——"

"Well, are you going to own up!" asked Frank Nugent.

"Of course, I've told you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," said Bunter. "That's my way! If you fellows were as truthful as I am, you'd do."

"Great pip!"

"But really, I think it's time you let this trifling matter drop," urged Bunter. "If there's any delay in the money coming——"

"He's owning up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Collar him."

"I'm not!" howled Bunter, jumping back in alarm. "The tin is coming to-morrow afternoon—our butler's bringing it. I've said so."

"Sticking to that?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Certainly! But—but suppose the butler has a railway accident coming here—that won't be my fault, will it?" said Bunter, almost pleadingly.

"It will be your misfortune, not your fault," answered Wharton. "You'd better hope that he won't! If he doesn't arrive, there will be a mangled porpoise lying about Greyfriars afterwards."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You may as well own up, you fat bounder," said Vernon-Smith impatiently. "There isn't any butler and there isn't any tin, and your pater never 'phoned at all; and you're only trying to gain time for your swindle to blow over."

"Well, what are you keeping it up like this for, I'd like to know?" mumbled Bunter, with a very injured look. "It was Wednesday

we had the spread at Chunkley's, and here you are still jawing about it on Friday evening. I'm sick of the subject!"

"He's admitted it!"

"I haven't!" howled Bunter. "It—it's all right. You wait till to-morrow afternoon, when Walsingham arrives."

"Walsingham? Who's Walsingham?"

"Our butler," said Bunter, with a touch of his old manner, in spite of his uneasiness.

"His name was Pilkingham yesterday!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"W-w-w-was it?" stammered Bunter.

William George had never laid to heart the sage maxim that a certain class of person should have a good memory.

"You said so!" grunted Johnny.

"D-d-did I? I—I made a slight mistake. Pilkingham was our old butler—the one we had before we had Walsingham," stammered Bunter.

"Can't he pile it on?" said Skinner, who was listening admiringly to this little heart-to-heart talk in the common-room. "They can say what they like about the Kaiser, but he's a fool to Bunter when it comes to real, downright lying!"

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"Well, you've got till to-morrow, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "It's pretty plain that you're lying, but you're going to have your chance. Though why you can't own up now beats me."

"May as well take your medicine and get it over!" suggested Squiff.

But Bunter did not see that. He had no desire to take his "medicine" at all, and the longer the painful operation was put off, the better he was pleased. Indeed, as he was promised a ragging daily until his debt was liquidated, every day gained was so much clear gain.

Bunter rolled away rather dismally to an arm-chair, where he sat with a very thoughtful cast of countenance. Probably he was trying to devise some new "stunt" which would save his worthless skin when the family butler failed to put in an appearance on the morrow. He was the recipient of many grinning glances that evening. Many of the Removites were looking forward with expectation to Saturday afternoon, not at all expecting to see the stately butler of the Bunter mansion, but wondering by what terrific "crammer" Bunter would endeavour to account for his non-arrival.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Bunter Sees Light!

BILLY BUNTER wore quite a worried look on Saturday morning.

The unhappy state of affairs was really beginning to tell upon the Owl of the Remove.

The Chunkley's affair had not blown over—far from it. Bunter's series of "whoppers" and pretences had, in fact, helped to keep it alive. On Saturday morning seven juniors of the Remove were as keen as ever on being indemnified to the tune of twelve pounds ten shillings, or on taking the equivalent value of that sum out of Bunter's "hide." It was easy enough for Billy Bunter to devise some astounding yarn to account for the butler's non-appearance, but the problem of saving his "hide" remained unsolved. At morning lessons on Saturday there was a deep wrinkle in Bunter's fat brow. He was finding the way of the transgressor very thorny indeed, and the time was getting very close now.

After breakfast he joined the Famous Five in the quad with an almost beseeching expression on his fat face.

"I say, you fellows——" he began.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Has the merry old butler died overnight?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Bad for you if he has, my pippin!"

"Nunno! But—but——"

"Go it!" grinned Bob. "Gather round, you fellows, and receive an object lesson in the exploits of Ananias!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I—I was going to say, I—I remember now that Packington has rheumatism! He—he—he may not be able to travel to-day on account of it!" stammered Bunter.

"Packington!" yelled Bob.

"Ye-es, our old butler, you know!"

There was a yell of laughter from the

Removites. Bunter's hapless memory had played him false again.

"So his name's Packington now?" gasped Nugent.

"Eh? His name always was Packington—I—I—I mean, Walsington!" stuttered Bunter "T-t-that is, Packingham!"

"Try again!" grinned Bob.

"I—I say, you fellows, do be serious!"

"That butler chap changes his name like a giddy German spy!" chuckled Bob. "Now, is he Pilkingham, Walsingham, or Packington? We're not particular, but we'd like to know what to call your butler, if any."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean Walsingham!" gasped Bunter.

"I see! When you say Packington, you really mean Walsingham?"

"Ye-es, exactly!"

"And when you say Walsingham, you mean Pilkingham?" suggested Bob Cherry gravely.

"I—I—I——"

"You're sure you don't mean Smith, or Jones, or Robinson?"

"Nunno!"

"Oh, good! So it seems that Pilkingham-Walsingham-Packington has the rheumatics, and may not be able to travel to-day. I dare say he finds travelling rather difficult with that thundering lot of names to carry about! You'd better send him a wire, Bunter."

"W-w-w-why?"

"Telling him not to have rheumatism till to-morrow, because if it prevents him from travelling to-day, you're going to have a jolly good licking with a fives bat!"

"B-b-but he can't help having rheumatism, can he?" stuttered Bunter.

"No more than you can help having a licking with a fives bat if he doesn't show up this afternoon!"

"I—I say, he's coming all right! But—but as the poor old chap really suffers from lumbago——"

"As well as rheumatism?"

"I—I mean rheumatism! I—I wonder what made me say lumbago?"

"You forget the whoppers you've told when you're making up new ones!" explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's rather hard on the old fellow to travel with lum—rheumatism, isn't it? Suppose—suppose he doesn't come till Monday?"

"Then he'll be two days late to see you licked."

And the Famous Five walked away chuckling.

"Beasts!" ejaculated Bunter, dolorously, as they went. And the fat sinner of Greyfriars heaved a sigh.

"He, he, he!"

Bunter blinked round as he heard that unmusical cachinnation. His hopeful young brother Sammy grinned at him.

"What are you cackling at, you fat little beast?" was William George's brotherly greeting.

"You've fairly landed yourself this time," grinned Sammy Bunter. "I thought it was a rotten yarn at the time. You might have guessed that the fellows would be keen to see the butler man."

Bunter groaned.

"I—I thought it would all blow over by Saturday," he mumbled, "I never thought they'd be keeping it up like this. Mean, I call it. P-p-perhaps I overdid it a bit at Chunkley's the other day. I—I thought I might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, you know. Who'd ever have thought of the beasts keeping it up like this? A paltry twelve pound ten——"

"You owe me sixpence."

"Rats!"

"You jolly well do!" persisted Sammy. "I sold the pocket-knife to young Tubb of the Third for one-and-six. That leaves you owing me sixpence."

"Go and eat coke!"

"P'r'aps you can let me have it out of what the butler is bringing you this afternoon!" jeered Sammy.

"Oh, dear!"

"You're fairly landed!" grinned the fat fag. "I wouldn't be in your shoes for something, Billy."

"Oh, dry up!"

"What are you going to do when the butler doesn't turn up?" giggled Sammy, apparently deriving only entertainment from his major's unhappy predicament.

Bunter gave another groan. That was the problem he was trying to think out, without success.

"He, he, he! You'd better hire one at Chunkley's!" cackled Sammy. "They let 'em out by the hour, you know."

And the fat fag rolled away in a state of uproarious merriment.

Bunter blinked after him.

There was a curious expression on his fat face. Sammy had made his suggestion ironically; but to Billy Bunter's troubled mind it came as a plank to a drowning man. The Owl of the Remove drew a deep, deep breath.

"Chunkley's! My hat!"

A few minutes later Billy Bunter astonished the Famous Five. He rolled up to them as they were chatting in the gateway, and fixed a very dignified blink on them.

"You fellows have doubted my word!" he said accusingly.

"We have!" agreed Bob Cherry. "We have! Guilty, my lord!"

"I hope you'll have the decency to apologise when Blessington comes this afternoon."

"Blessington!" roared Bob.

"I—I mean Pilkington. That is to say, Walsingham. You fellows don't believe that Walsingham is coming."

"P'r'aps you young gents know where Master Bunter is," said Gosling, who regarded the portly visitor with great admiration.

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"Of course we don't, you fat duffer," said Harry Wharton.

"Very well!" said Bunter, with great dignity. "I'll make you an offer. When you're proved to be in the wrong, you'll have to admit that you owe me an apology."

"When!" grinned Bob.

"The whenfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Very well! When he comes you'll see with your own eyes. Seeing is believing, isn't it? You've doubted my word in public, and held me up to ridicule," said Bunter, with an air more of sorrow than of anger. "You're bound to make it up to me. I owe you some paltry sum—twelve or thirteen pounds ——"

"Twelve pounds ten shillings!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You can't expect me to remember these trifles exactly. Walsingham is bringing me the money to pay you."

"Bow-wow!"

"But under the circumstances I shall refuse to do so. You have doubted my word, and it's up to you to make recompense. When you're proved to be in the wrong, you can call it square. I put it to you as sportsmen," added Bunter loftily.

The Co. stared at Bunter.

It really looked as if the heir of Bunter Court believed in the existence of the ducal butler—vague as he seemed to be on the subject of the gentleman's name.

"What is he getting at now?" said Bob

Cherry, rubbing his nose. "Some more spoof, I suppose. Of course, we shall never get the money out of Bunter in any case. If he's really been telling the truth all this time, I suppose we can let him off the raggings."

"If!" grinned Nugent.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I think we can agree, Bunter," he said. "If the family butler really turns up this afternoon, we'll let you off. Mind he does."

"Ha, ha! Mind he does!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "If he doesn't, Bunter, you will want a new hide for to-morrow."

"Our butler," said Bunter, calmly, "will be here about three o'clock. Perhaps a little later——"

"Perhaps a lot later!" chuckled Bob.

"The latefulness will probably be terrific," remarked Hurree Singh, with a shake of his dusky head. "But better late than neverfully. The odds are on the neverfulness."

"Say half-past three—not later," said Bunter. "I trust you will apologise for these low suspicions when you see him. I hope you will behave yourselves rather decently, too."

"What?"

"You see, Walsingham is a decent old fellow—trained in a ducal family, and accustomed to aristocratic surroundings in our mansion. I hope there will be no vulgar horseplay in his presence. He would fail to understand it."

"Why, you — you ——" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"That will do!" interrupted Bunter, and with a lordly wave of a fat and rather grubby hand, he rolled away.

"My only hat! Is—is—is there really a Bunter mansion, and a Bunter butler," stuttered Bob, "or is that fat idiot only keeping up his spoof till the last possible moment?"

"You've hit it!" answered the Bounder.

And on consideration the Co. agreed that it was so. But they could not help, now, envisaging the bare possibility that Bunter—William George Bunter—had broken his lifelong record by telling the truth.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Great Expectations!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER was not seen again till dinner-time. Apparently he took a walk out of gates. Indeed, Hazeldene of the Remove noticed him plodding on the Courtfield road. But he turned up at dinner, and he turned up smiling. The afternoon seemed to have no terrors for William George, after all.

Which was curious, for there was no doubt that a record ragging was waiting for the Owl of the Remove. All the Form agreed that what Bunter wanted was a really thorough ragging, to teach him the difference between truth and untruth and between "meum" and "tuum." Seven juniors, at least, were determined that Bunter should get what the whole Form agreed that he wanted.

The incensed seven had let the sun go down upon their wrath several times, and it was unabated—indeed, it was increased by the fat junior's incessant shuffling and spoofing. When the ragging came it was probable that Bunter would be sorry that he hadn't taken it in a milder form at once.

Yet Bunter did not seem uneasy.

Whatever trepidation he had had seemed to have disappeared. He was smiling and contented at the dinner-table, and ate with a remarkably good appetite.

Many curious glances were turned upon him. His placid contentment was a puzzle. Harry Wharton and Co. really began to doubt whether, after all, they had not been too hard on Bunter for once. Suppose he really had been telling the truth all along——

It was rather an uncomfortable reflection. If the stately Walsingham arrived, it placed the Famous Five in a very unenviable position. Bunter, assuredly, was entitled to compensation for the ridicule and contumely that had been heaped on his statements—if Walsingham did appear. The seven swindled juniors agreed that in that case it would be only fair to call the matter square, and put up with the loss of their money. That was the least compensation they could make.

Bunter's manner was so assured, as he strutted out of the dining-room after dinner,

that even Skinner began to have his doubts. Skinner talked it over with his chums, Snoop and Stott.

"You can never tell!" Skinner remarked sagely. "I know old Bunter had money once—some swindle on the Stock Exchange, you know. Billy had fivers at that time."

"But he was soon hard up again!" said Snoop.

"And he's been hard up ever since!" remarked Stott.

"True, O king!" said Skinner. "But what's happened once might happen again."

"Something in that!" agreed Snoop.

"There's always fortunes being made and lost in stocks and shares. Old Bunter may have bagged somebody's money this time, instead of somebody bagging his."

"It's possible."

"And if he's made money, he's just the kind of fat old goat to set up a mansion, and a ducal butler, and so forth—to last till the next time he goes bust!" said Skinner. "These new-rich blighters do, you know. Like the munition millionaires, you know, who are buying up Park Lane out of their war-profits. Just look at Bunter now! He doesn't look like a chap who's expecting the ragging of his life to-day, does he?"

Snoop and Stott looked at Bunter. Certainly the fat junior didn't look as if he were expecting trouble. He was strutting in the quad with his fat little nose in the air, as if at peace with himself and the universe generally.

"Blessed if I don't think there's something in it," decided Skinner. "I can see that Wharton has his doubts now. Those silly asses have agreed to let Bunter off his debt if the butler turns up."

"Well, they owe him that, after the way they've run the chap down," said Snoop. "I thought all the time they were rather hard on old Bunter."

"Just what I thought," said Skinner. "We know Bunter has his faults. We all have. But I don't believe in jumping on a chap when he's down. Billy is a good sort, in his way."

"He's got his good points."

"Just what I've always said, Snoop."

"Blessed if I've ever heard you," said Stott, in astonishment. Stott was rather slower of comprehension than Sidney James Snoop.

"If you're going to join in running Bunter down, Stott, you needn't do it to us," said Skinner virtuously. "I don't see why a chap shouldn't be civil to Bunter. He's not at all a bad chap—in his way."

"In his way!" agreed Snoop.

"Oh!" ejaculated Stott, comprehending at last. "You mean you really think he's got money now——"

"That's a rotten way of putting it, Stott; I must say I'm rather surpised at you. Let's go and speak to Bunter," said Skinner. "A civil word is never thrown away"

"Let's!" said Snoop.

And the three worthy young gentlemen bore down upon Billy Bunter. That fat youth blinked at them through his big spectacles with some suspicion. Harold Skinner slapped him on the shoulder in a very friendly way.

"Yow-ow!" ejaculated Bunter. "Don't you punch me, Skinner——"

"My dear chap, as if I'd punch you!" said Skinner reproachfully. "Just greeting you, that's all. Let me see anybody punch you."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

He understood.

Skinner and Co. were feeling the effects of the family butler, in advance, as it were.

At that thought Billy Bunter drew himself up. Like the young lady at the tea-party, he "swelled wisibly."

"I was just thinking you might like a ginger-pop after your dinner, Bunter," said Skinner, with great affability.

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Bunter loftily.

"Trot along then, old scout."

Billy Bunter trotted along cheerfully to the tuck-shop. His footsteps were always easily led in that direction. Fisher T. Fish came scudding across the quad, and he joined the little party.

"Hallo, Bunty!" said Fisher T. Fish amiably. "I say, that was a stunning spread you stood us the other day at Chunkley's. I've been going to ask you ever since to tea in my study—something rather special—if you'd care to come."

"Like a bird!" said Bunter promptly.

Skinner and Co. glared at Fishy. Evidently

that transatlantic young gentleman was of the same opinion as themselves, and "guessed" that there might be something in the Bunter butler after all. Skinner and Co. were by no means pleased by the presence of this rival for the crumbs that were going to fall from the rich man's table. But Fisher T. Fish was not to be daunted by glares.

Fishy accompanied the little party into the school shop; and after Skinner had "stood" the ginger-pop, Fisher had the pleasure of standing Bunter tarts. It gave Fishy a pain to part with the money; but he felt that it was well expended—a sprat to catch a whale, as it were. Billy Bunter was beginning to prosper, and the Bunter butler had not yet appeared. It was probable that when he actually did put in an appearance, the new popularity of William George would grow.

Harry Wharton and Co. were in the quad, and they had observed the little scene. The Famous Five exchanged glances.

"Skinner believes in the merry old butler!" murmured Bob Cherry. "And Skinner's very keen."

"Too keen!" said Wharton.

"Fishy believes in him, too—and Fishy is spry, I guess," grinned Bob. "I shall begin to believe in Pilkingham-Walsingham-Packington-Blessington myself soon, at any rate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five had not quite reached that point; but certainly their doubts were shaken; and they were very curious indeed to see what would happen that afternoon.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Bunter's Butler

"HE'S come!"

"What!"

"Not really!"

"My hat!"

"Bunter's butler! Great pip!"

There were suppressed exclamations from a score or more of the Greyfriars juniors

The great expectations had been realised.

He had come!

"He," of course, was that stately gentleman, the family butler of the Bunter mansion; at all events, there seemed to be hardly any doubt about it now.

For "he" was there!

Vernon-Smith was the first to spot him. The station hack from Friardale had rolled in at the gates, and stopped at the porter's lodge. The solitary passenger within had descended, and was seen in talk with Gosling, the porter. So far, that was all. But in a few minutes, scores of eyes were upon the new arrival, from various directions and various distances.

For if ever there was a family butler who could not possibly be mistaken for anything but a butler this was the man!

He was a portly gentleman; and it is, of course, well known that the genuine brand of butlers is portly in figure. He was not too portly: just portly enough to give him an appearance of weight and dignity.

His garb was becoming and quite tasteful and quiet; just what might have been expected in a butler of ducal training. The Bunter livery—if there was a Bunter livery—might have been pictured as something rather loud and flamboyant—something rather in keeping with Bunter's manners and customs. But the butler had evidently profited by his training in a ducal household, and Mr. Bunter, perhaps, had profited by it at second hand. At all events the portly gentleman had a quiet, staid, and dignified appearance; and at the first glance it could be seen that he would have been an ornament to any nobleman's hall. Gosling was plainly impressed.

He was quite respectful to the portly gentleman, whose clean-cut, clean-shaven countenance contrasted rather strongly with the rugged aspect of Mr. Gosling.

"It's real!" murmured Bob Cherry, and there was a chuckle from the juniors under the elms.

"The realfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But is it an esteemed Bunterful butler?"

"Well, he's a butler right enough!" said Johnny Bull. "Anybody could tell he was a butler a mile off."

"Yes, rather."

"And he's inquiring for somebody—must be for Bunter."

Harry Wharton was puzzled.

If such a manservant had arrived on account of Lord Mauleverer, or Temple of the Fourth, there would have been nothing surprising in it. But on account of Billy Bunter!

That was the astonishing thing!

Judging by the portly gentleman's looks, he emanated from a first-class establishment; his mere aspect told of a huge servants' hall, in which he reigned supreme over the smaller fry; it suggested gigantic accumulations of family plate, over which he kept watch and ward.

Assuredly such an imposing gentleman could not have come from a suburban villa: such a dwelling as that in which the Bunters were suspected of living and moving and having their being.

The portly gentleman was a sort of living proof of the genuine existence of Bunter Court and the glories thereof.

"He can't be for Bunter!" said Frank Nugent, at last. "Most likely it's old Mauly's butler, turned up by chance."

"Most likely," agreed Bob, rather doubtfully however.

"Let's ask him," suggested Squiff.

"Ahem!"

"No harm in asking," said Vernon-Smith. "A cat may look at a king, and a Lower Fourth chap can talk to a butler. I'm going to ask him. If he's for Bunter, we'll take him in. He's asking Gossy about something."

"Oh, all right."

Harry Wharton and Co. bore down on the porter's lodge. The stately gentleman saluted them slightly, distantly, but respectfully. His manners were quite in keeping with his looks, his clothes, and his portliness.

"Inquiring for somebody?" asked Vernon-Smith, who was blessed with rather more "cheek" than the other fellows. "Perhaps we can be of assistance to you."

"You are very kind, sir!" said the stately gentleman, in a rich voice that seemed to tell a tale of excessive bins, crammed with bottles of old port. "I was inquiring for Master William."

"Bunter?"

"Yes, I should have said Master Bunter, sir. But I am accustomed to speaking of him as Master William. Perhaps I should mention," added the stately gentleman, with dignity, "that I am Mr. Bunter's butler. My name is Parkinson."

It was proof positive.

True, the gentleman's name, apparently, was Parkinson; not Pilkingham, Walsingham, Packington, or Blessington. Billy Bunter certainly had a remarkable vagueness on that point. But here was the man! Whatever his name was or wasn't, here he was!

"P'raps you young gents know where Master Bunter is," said Gosling, who was regarding the portly visitor with great admiration.

Tubb's excited entrance interrupted the little party. He collided with Billy Bunter's stool, and a portion of dough-nut went the wrong way as the fat junior rolled over. (See page 50)

"P'r'aps you'd care to step in a minute, Mr. Parkinson, an' sit down."

Mr. Parkinson inclined his head slightly in acknowledgment.

"Thank you very much," he said. "But I think I had better see Master William at once."

Mr. Parkinson's manner to Gosling was very civil; but it marked the distinction between the position of a butler and that of a porter. At the same time his attitude towards the juniors was one of respectful deference, showing that he realised also the difference between his own position and theirs. Mr. Parkinson was evidently that rarest of birds, a man-servant who exactly knew his place.

"Come with us, Mr. Parkinson," said Vernon-Smith. "We know where Bunter is. We'll take you to him at once."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

"Not at all. This way!"

Mr. Parkinson inclined his head again, and followed the Bounder. Harry Wharton and Co. accompanied them, in a state of great astonishment. And the whole party proceeded in search of Master William.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

The Perfect Parkinson!

TUBB, of the Third, burst in to the tuck-shop in a state of great excitement. In Mrs. Mimble's little shop William George Bunter was perched on a high stool at the counter, with several very civil fellows round him. Skinner and Co. were there, and Fisher T. Fish. Smith minor was urging Bunter to "try the dough nuts." Bunter did not need much urging. Smith minor, evidently, had joined the ranks of those who believed that Bunter was probably going to be in great funds. Already Billy Bunter's manner was lofty and patronising to his new admirers. That only confirmed their new faith. A really wealthy fellow, as Skinner remarked to his pals, was entitled to swank a little. Besides, Bunter was such a good fellow, that a chap could put up with a little "side" from him. It was surprising how many good qualities Harold Skinner had already discovered in the Owl of the Remove. Tubb's excited entrance interrupted the little party. He collided with Bunter's stool, and a portion of dough-nut went the wrong way, and the fat junior spluttered.

"You young ass, Tubb!" exclaimed Skinner warmly. "What do you mean by bumping into Bunter?"

"Cheeky little beast!" said Snoop indignantly.

"Grooh-hooh-hoop!" came from William George.

"I say!" gasped Tubb.

"Shut up!"

"Get out!"

"You're bothering Bunter!" exclaimed Skinner, with great indignation.

"Grooh-hoooooop!"

"I say, he's come!" shrieked Tubb, dodging Skinner.

"Eh! Who's come?"

"Bunter's butler."

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter gave a jump. He coughed away the dough nut hastily. Skinner and Co. exchanged glances. They had begun to believe it, and they were "buttering up" Bunter in case it was true! Evidently Harold Skinner had been wise in taking time by the forelock. Lots of fellows would be very civil to Bunter after the event. But dear old Bunter would remember that Skinner had been pally before the butler came.

"The—the butler!" murmured Snoop. "Oh, my hat! I—I say, Billy, old scout, you'll want a ginger-pop after those dough nuts."

"I don't mind," said Bunter.

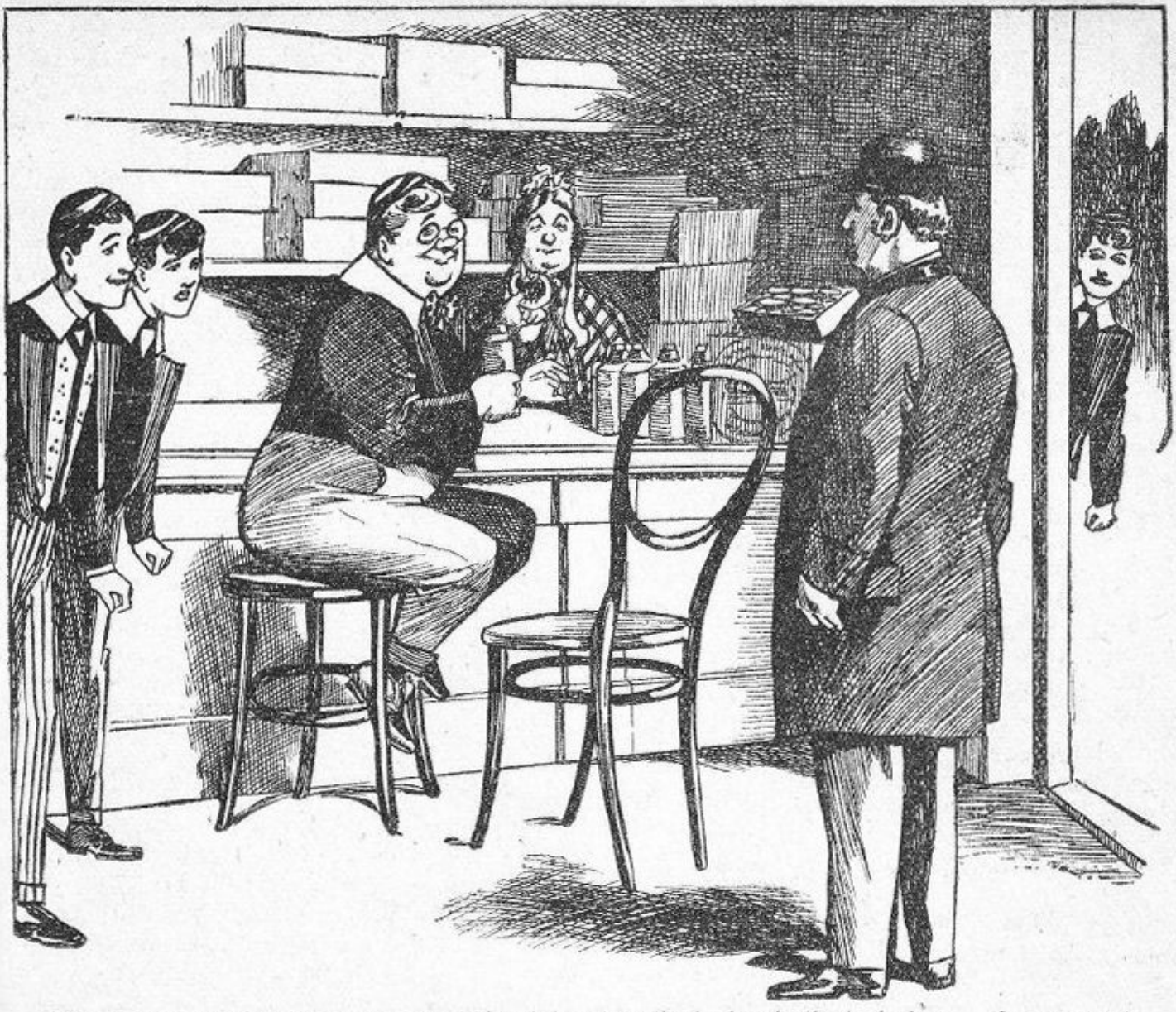
"He's coming!" said Tubb. "Smithy's bringing him here, Bunter."

"All right."

"Ain't you going to speak to him?" demanded Tubb, rather puzzled by Bunter's calmness. "I say, he looks a regular nob."

Bunter gave the Third Former a lofty blink.

"I'm certainly not going to disturb myself on account of a dashed man-servant," he said haughtily. "I'm surprised at you, Tubb. Pilkington can come here."



The dialogue was listened to with breathless interest by the juniors in the tuck-shop. (See page 52)

"His name's Parkinson," said Tubb, with a stare. "I heard him tell Smithy his name was Parkinson."

"I mean Parkinson."

Tubb joined Paget of the Third, in the doorway. Paget was regarding the oncoming juniors, and the butler, with a critical eye. Paget, of the Third, was a highly connected youth, and counted earls and marquises among his relations; and he was much looked up to in the Third on account of his knowledge of the aristocracy, and their manners and customs. Tubb looked to Paget for an expert opinion on the Bunter butler.

Paget was pleased to approve.

"So that's Bunter's butler, is it, Tubby?"

"That's him," said Tubb, eagerly and unungrammatically. "What do you think of him, old kid?"

"Quite decent!" said Paget.

"Think so?"

"The genuine article," said the youthful connoisseur. "I'm rather surprised. I shouldn't have expected the Bunter gang to run a butler like that."

"As good as yours at home?" asked Tubb, much impressed.

Paget smiled.

"Not exactly, but quite near it," he said. "Bunter's pater can't be such an awful outsider as Bunter. His butler proves it."

Paget's word on such subjects was law in the Third. The Bunter butler was the genuine article, on the word of an expert in such things. It followed that the Bunter mansion was a real mansion, and that the Bunter wealth was not the myth the juniors had always supposed it was. And within a quarter of an hour Sammy Bunter of the Second Form was surprised to find that he had friends in the Third, of whose existence he had never dreamed before. Tubb and Co. were on the way to finding the same shining qualities in Sammy Bunter that Skinner and Co. had already discovered in his major, Billy.

Meanwhile Harry Wharton and his comrades escorted the portly Parkinson into the school shop.

There he was eyed with much admiration.

Bunter was busy with ginger-pop. Parkinson coughed respectfully to attract his attention; but Bunter was not in any hurry to bestow his lordly attention on a dashed man-servant. He finished his ginger-pop calmly.

"Bunty!" began Vernon-Smith.

"Mr. Parkinson's arrived, Billy," said Squiff.

Bunter glanced round loftily through his big glasses.

"Oh! You're here, Parkinson," he said carelessly.

"Yes, Master William!"

"You're late, Parkinson," said Bunter severely.

"I regret it very much, Master William. The 'ack from the station was a little slow."

"The ''ack' gave the finishing touch, as it were, to Parkinson. Evidently he was too well-trained a man-servant to presume to put in his aspirates. Plainly, he was the genuine, old-fashioned family retainer, who had no idea of putting himself, even in speech, on a level with the quality.

"Oh, never mind," said Bunter. "But you've kept me waiting, all the same, Parkinson."

"I am very sorry, Master William."

"Oh, all right! How did you leave the pater?"

"Your 'onoured father is very well, Master William. 'E 'opes I shall be able to tell 'im that you are the same, sir."

"Oh, that's all right. I never get enough to eat here, but otherwise, I'm fairish," said Bunter. "How's the mater?"

"Your respected mother is still in the south of France, Master William."

"Ye-e-es—I forgot. Is Bessie at home?"

"Miss Bessie is still at school, sir."

"How is the pater's new car turnin' out?" inquired Bunter, with an air of interest.

"Your respected father was not quite satisfied with the new car, Master William. He is changing it for a Rolls-Royce."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "I advised him to have a Rolls-Royce in the first place. You heard me, Parkinson?"

"I remember perfectly, Master William."

This dialogue was listened to with breathless attention in the tuck-shop. Mrs. Mimble was gazing at Mr. Parkinson across her little counter as if her eyes were glued to his portly figure. The good lady was beginning to regret that she had not allowed Master William to run up the little account he was always so keen to run up. Where Mr. Parkinson came from there was evidently plenty of cash.

"Well, I'll speak to you presently, Parkinson," said Bunter, in a very offhand way. "You'd better wait in my study."

"Yes, Master William."

"Perhaps one of you fellows would show Parkinson the way to my study," said Bunter, glancing at Skinner and Co.

"Certainly, old top!" said Skinner, with alacrity.

"Thanks. Go along with Skinner, Parkinson, and wait for me."

"Yes, Master William."

"You can put the pater's letter in my desk: I'll look at it presently. Here's the key."

"Yes, Master William."

"Lock the desk. I don't want banknotes left about."

"Yes, Master William."

Bunter's butler took the key, and followed Skinner from the tuck-shop. Bunter glanced, in the midst of an admiring silence, at a stand of jam tarts close at hand.

"I think I'll try a tart," he remarked. He

ran his fat hands through his pockets. "My hat! I'm out of cash——"

"Please take the tarts, Master Bunter," murmured Mrs. Mimble. "I shall be very pleased to put it down to the account."

Bunter helped himself. With his mouth full of jam tart, the Owl of the Remove blinked loftily at Harry Wharton and Co.

"Perhaps you believe me now," he said, with a curl of the lip.

"Well, seeing is believing!" remarked Bob Cherry. "It beats me hollow! You must have been telling the truth lots of times, when we thought you were only buntering."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sniffed.

The Famous Five quitted the tuck-shop very much perplexed. Billy Bunter had evidently been much wronged: much that the juniors had set down as mere "gas" seemed now to be founded in fact. The portly Parkinson exuded an atmosphere of wealth and importance.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "it beats me!"

"Hollow!" agreed Wharton.

"Bunter can't be such an Ananias as we've always supposed——"

"I—I suppose not."

"It's dashed queer," said Vernon-Smith ruminatingly. "I was prepared for some spoof or other; but that man Parkinson is the genuine article."

"Oh, quite!"

"Bunter might have been rogue enough to hire some fellow to come here and spoof us. But he couldn't hire a thoroughly respectable man like that."

"Impossible."

"Truth is stranger than fiction," grinned Squiff. "Anyhow, Bunter scores. We agreed to let the twelve pound ten drop if the butler showed up. Now it seems that he could pay the money if he liked."

"Well, of course, we didn't believe in the merry butler. But—I suppose a bargain's a bargain."

"I suppose so."

Wharton rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"It beats me," he said. "I can't quite believe it yet. But—there's the giddy butler. It beats me hollow!"

"The beatfulness is terrific."

Billy Bunter came out of the tuck-shop. He bestowed a lofty blink on the Famous Five, and rolled on to the schoolhouse—to see Parkinson in his study. And while Bunter was shut up in No. 7 Study with Parkinson, there was endless and amazed discussion in the Lower School of Greyfriars—and the sole subject of discussion was Bunter's butler!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Bunter in all His Glory

THERE was quite a gathering in the Remove passage during the following half-hour.

The curiosity on the subject of Bunter's butler was intense.

He was shut up in No. 7 with Bunter, and fellows who passed the door heard a murmur of voices within.

That was all.

Doubtless Bunter was asking his butler questions about home and the family, and Parkinson was imparting information.

At the end of the passage, and up and down the passage, in little knots, Removites had collected, as well as a good many fellows of other forms.

Fellows who had not yet seen Bunter's butler wanted to catch sight of him as he went.

He was naturally an object of great interest. He was the living substantiation of the Owl's many yarns; and as several fellows remarked, if the butler was genuine why shouldn't the rest be genuine?

And the butler looked as genuine as a butler could possibly look. There was general agreement upon that.

Harry Wharton was not in the crowd in the passage, perhaps the captain of the Remove did not consider so much curiosity consistent with his dignity. But some of his chums were there, and nearly all the rest of the Remove. Skinner and Co., of course, were much in evidence. So was Fisher T. Fish. Fishy had a deep and truly republican admiration for such an institution as a genuine, old-fashioned, respectful man-servant. Such critters, as he sorrowfully acknowledged, were not to be had in "Noo Yark." And

Bunter's butler was not merely a common or garden butler, so to speak, he was the very last word in butlers.

There was a breathless hush in the Remove passage when Bunter's door-handle was heard to move at last.

"He's coming!" murmured Skinner.

The door of No. 7 Study opened.

Parkinson, staid, sedate, loftily humble as became his position, stepped forth into the passage.

All eyes were upon him.

The fat figure of Billy Bunter was framed in the study doorway. He glanced carelessly at the juniors along the passage, and grinned a little.

"Parkinson!"

"Yes, Master William."

"You'll remember all I've told you?"

"Yes, Master William."

"Don't forget to tell the pater I want him to write to the Head, and ask for an exeat for me. I want specially to try the new Rolls-Royce."

"I will remember, Master William."

"And give that envelope to the pater. Tell him I'm much obliged, but I sha'n't need the money after all."

"Yes, Master William."

"That's all. You can go, Parkinson."

"Good-bye, Master William."

"Oh, good-bye, Parkinson," said Bunter carelessly.

Bunter's butler trod down the passage with a dignified portliness. The juniors made way for him, affecting to be engaged in conversation with one another, or in looking out of the windows. As a matter of fact, their attention—scarcely disguised—was concentrated upon the portly Parkinson.

Parkinson did not seem aware of it.

He descended the stairs, and stood aside respectfully on the landing as he met Mr. Quelch coming up.

The Remove Master glanced at him as he descended the lower stairs. He glanced again as Parkinson disappeared into the lower hall, and called to Harold Skinner, who was craning his head over the upper banisters, catching a final glimpse of Parkinson and his atmosphere of wealth and distinction.

"Skinner!"

"Yes, sir," said Skinner.

"Who is that?" asked Mr. Quelch. "I have not seen the man here before."

"Oh, that's Bunter's butler, sir."

"What?"

"I mean Bunter's father's butler, sir! He's been down with a message to Bunter from his pater."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, indeed, sir," said Skinner officiously. "An old servant in the Bunter family, sir. He's known Bunter since he was a little kid so high. He told me so, sir. Spoke of him almost with tears in his eyes, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Very touching, sir, the attachment of a faithful old family servant," said Skinner.

"Very," said Mr. Quelch drily.

Mr. Quelch stepped to the window at the end of the passage, and glanced down.

The man from Chunkley's handed an envelope to Mr. Quelch. (See page 61)

The portly Parkinson dawned upon him again, sedately going his way towards the porter's lodge.

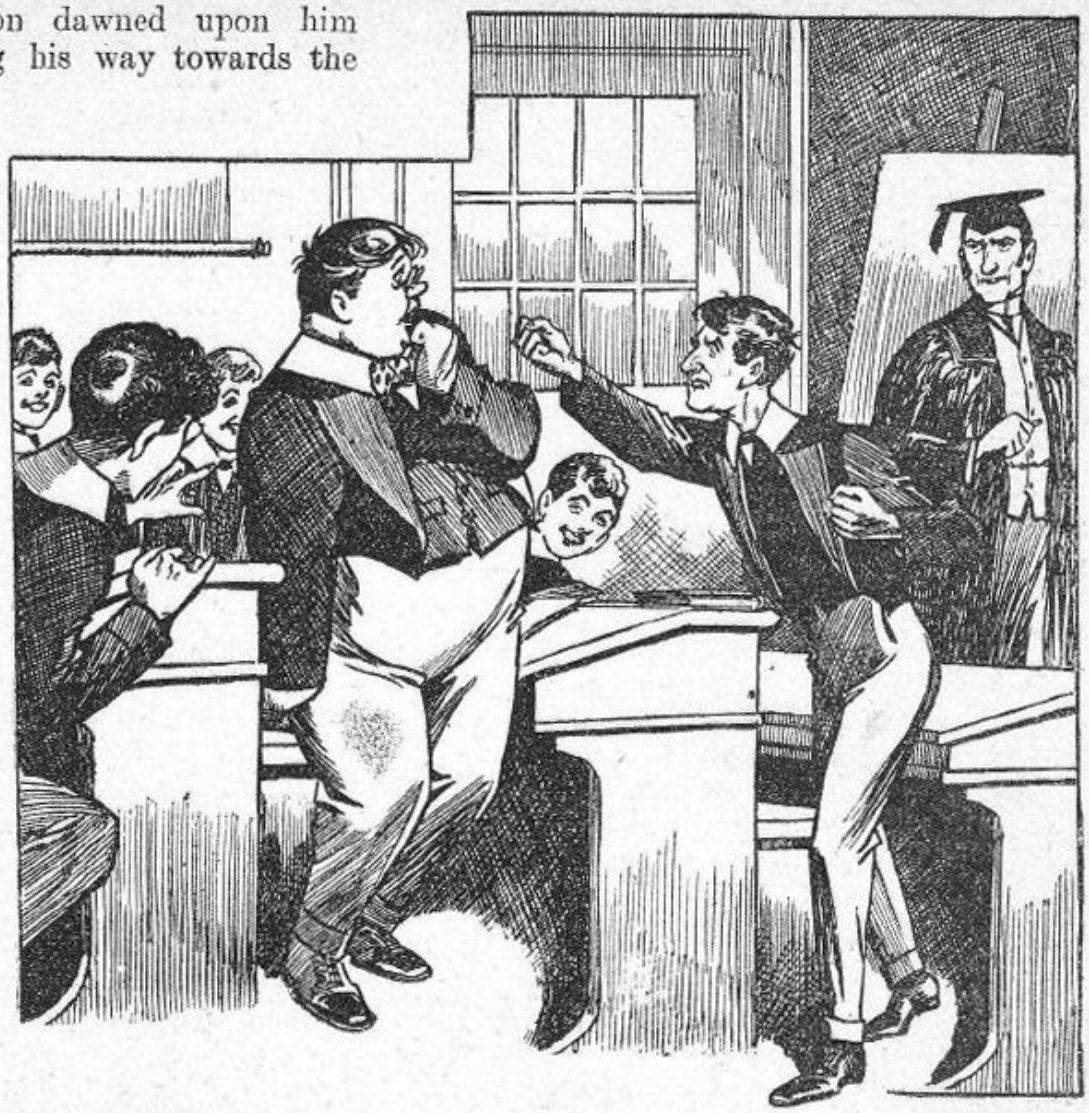
Mr. Quelch looked at him hard, and then turned away from the window and went his way. Some of the juniors glanced at their Form-master, wondering whether he was greatly impressed by the Bunter butler. But Mr. Quelch's face was as impassive as usual, and gave no sign.

There were admiring eyes upon Parkinson as he stepped into the station cab, of which Gosling officiously closed the door for him. The hack rolled away with the portly gentleman.

Greyfriars had seen the last of him.

Bunter's butler had come and gone! But the atmosphere of wealth and distinction which he had brought with him, lingered, and it cast a sort of halo about the head of William George Bunter.

And that day the Owl of the Remove carried his fat little nose very high in the passages and the common-room.



Fisher T. Fish jumped up, forgetful of where he was, and brandished a bony fist under Billy Bunter's fat nose. (See page 62)

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

Dark Doubts!

THE next day was Sunday, and almost for the first time in his fat career at Greyfriars School, Billy Bunter found himself in request for "Sunday walks."

As a rule, fellows did not seem to yearn for Bunter's society, indoors or out.

But there was a change.

Harry Wharton and Co. certainly did not seem to yearn for his fascinating society any more than of old. But there were plenty of fellows who did. If Bunter went for a "walk" with any fellow, he displayed a marvellous knowledge of all the places of refreshment within a radius of two miles of Greyfriars, and a dogged persistence in inducing his companion to drop into as many of them as possible, and a wonderful skill in contriving that the other fellow somehow should foot the bill incurred. This did not make fellows eager to take a walk with Billy Bunter.

But on this especial Sunday Bunter had no lack of comrades. Skinner had bagged him first for a Sunday walk, and Snoop and Stott came with Skinner as his friends, and also because they found much gratification

in the charming society of "old Bunter." Billy Bunter was now "old Bunter" to quite a number of fellows, who had been wont heretofore to refer to him as that "pig Bunter," or "that fat bounder Bunter," or "that porpoise, Bunter." No longer was William George, in their eyes, a pig or a fat bounder, or a porpoise. Far from it. He was now "old Bunter," and "Billy, old bean." It was the portly Parkinson that had wrought the difference.

Fisher T. Smith, and Smith minor, and several other fellows, joined Bunter's little crowd, as they started on their walk. And Bunter, as he passed the Famous Five in the quad, gave them a scornful blink. Bunter was a fellow of some consequence now, and he wanted the Co. to understand it. Moreover, Bunter had money in his pocket. Skinner had lent him ten shillings—ten sprats, as it were, which were to catch twenty whales or so. Snoop had found five shillings for a loan to "old Bunter," and Stott had lavished half a crown on "Billy, old bean." Even Fisher T. Fish, though it gave him a pain, felt that he couldn't do less, and with many inward pangs he had pressed William George to accept a loan of two and six.

Visits to the Bunter mansion, where they would be waited on by the Bunter butler, floated before the eyes of those mercenary young gentlemen. They thought, too, of extensive feeds in Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge at Courtfield. They had seen Bunter's receipt—indubitably a receipt for the sum of twelve pounds ten shillings and sixpence. And they had heard a new version of the affair from Billy Bunter. According to this new version, Bunter actually had stood that feed and paid for it on the nail—witness the receipt.

As Fisher T. Fish had been present, and knew the circumstances, he could not be expected to swallow that version; but he held his peace. Skinner and Co. professed, at least, to believe it.

Anyhow, it was assured that Bunter could afford to stand such feeds, if he liked; a fellow whose father had a butler like Parkinson evidently had a horn of plenty at home, upon which to draw.

"Bunty's getting quite popular!" Bob Cherry remarked, as the Owl of the Remove rolled out of gates with his crowd.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Looks like it!" he assented. "There must be some money about somewhere; at least, those fellows think there is."

"They've been lending him money."

"Then they must think he's got plenty."

"The thinkfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "but the factfulness may be a boot on the other leg."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter came in from his walk looking very fat and shiny. He had utilised his knowledge of the places of refreshment that were open on Sunday, and he had done himself very well at the expense of his admirers. His borrowed cash was still safe in his pocket.

The next day William George Bunter was in high feather.

He was still the admired centre of Skinner and Co.'s society; though he had not seemed, as yet, to see Skinner's hints as to the advisability of paying a visit to Chunkley's Tea Lounge.

But on Tuesday it was to be observed that William George Bunter seemed a little troubled.

He received a letter that day, which the inquisitive Skinner had noticed bore the local postmark of Courtfield, with "Chunkley's Stores" printed on the flap of the envelope.

"Been shopping at Chunkley's, what?" asked Skinner, affably, as Bunter took the letter from the rack.

"Eh! Oh, no!"

"That's from Chunkley's, isn't it?"

"Nunno!"

"Their name's on the envelope."

"Oh! Eh? Yes, certainly! It—it's about a motor-bike I'm thinking of buying there!" stammered Bunter.

"Phew!" murmured Skinner.

Bunter only glanced at the letter, and put it hastily in his pocket, and walked away. Apparently he did not mean to communicate any details about Chunkley's epistle on the subject of motor-bikes.

But, afterwards, he wore a worried look.

He had been in high feather until the receipt

of that letter from Chunkley's Stores, but it really looked as if that letter had dashed his spirits, somehow.

He brightened up a little at tea-time, when Skinner asked him to tea in his study.

"Nothing very special, you know," said Skinner. "I can't afford what you can afford, Bunter; I'm not rich like you, old chap. But a nice little spread, and a few of your own friends. You'll come?"

"Like a bird!" said Bunter.

And he came.

It was quite a nice tea in Skinner's study, and Skinner and Snoop and Stott vied with one another in making Bunter feel at home. Bunter made himself quite at home, and he cleared the table of the good things at a great rate.

Then his thoughtful look returned.

"I say, you fellows——" he began, interrupting Snoop, who was talking.

"Yes, old chap?" said Skinner. "Dry up, Snoopey; Bunter's speaking!"

"Sorry!" murmured Snoop. "Go on, Bunter."

"The fact is——" he said.

"Yes, old bean?"

"You know my father sent his butler down the other day?"

"Yes, rather."

"He sent me a couple of tenners," said Bunter.

"My hat!"

"Like an ass," said Bunter, "I sent them back—I wasn't specially in need of the money. I forgot that I owed a little bill. Now, as the matter stands, I'm hard up for six guineas."

"Phew!"

Skinner and Co. looked very oddly at Bunter.

"Why not write to your pater?" asked Stott.

"As it happens, he's run over to the south of France to see the mater."

"Oh!"

"So temporarily, of course, I shall be short of money. I'm expecting a postal order."

"Wha-a-at?"

"From a titled relation. But there's been some delay in the post."

"Oh!"

"I happen to want six guineas in a hurry," said Bunter. "Can you fellows suggest anything?"

The fellows looked at one another.

"I've got it!" exclaimed Skinner, suddenly.

"Got the six guineas?" asked Bunter, with great eagerness. "Skinner, old chap, I'm awfully obliged!"

"Nunno! Not the six guineas! I've got the idea; write to Parkinson!"

Bunter jumped.

"Pi-pip-pip-Parkinson!" he stammered.

"Yes; your butler, you know. Your pater must have left him plenty of dibs to carry on, while he's away. Write to him."

"Oh!"

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Snoop heartily. "Parkinson will play up, of course. He's no end attached to you, Bunter."

"I—I—I don't exactly care to ask a servant for a loan," faltered Bunter. "I—I was thinking you fellows might—might lend me the money."

"Like a shot," said Skinner blandly, "only we're not rolling in it, Bunty. I'm down to my last tanner."

Snoop and Stott nodded in agreement. Apparently they had lent Billy Bunter all the cash they deemed it advisable to lend him, on "spec." And they were growing a little suspicious, too. Bunter's butler was great and impressive, in fact, distinguished. But it was certain that, since his visit, Bunter had been as impecunious as before—whether Bunter had sent back two tenners or not, it was certain that he was none the richer for the butler's visit.

Bunter looked rather discouraged.

"It isn't much," he remarked; "only six guineas. You—you see, a fellow in my position doesn't like being dunned."

"Oh! A bill from Chunkley's?" asked Skinner.

"Nunno! Just a bill!"

"Well, sorry we can't do anything. I'll tell you what—I'll lend you a stamp to write to Parkinson."

Billy Bunter did not accept that offer. He cast a last glance over the table, and as there was nothing left to eat, he drifted disconso-

lately out of the study. Skinner and Co. exchanged rather queer glances when he was gone.

"It looks——" murmured Skinner.

"It does!" said Snoop.

"If we've been spoofed again——"

"After all, he's a fearful spoofer——"

"But the butler——"

"Ten bob!" murmured Skinner. "I've lent him ten bob! If he's spoofed us—if he borrowed that dashed butler from somewhere——"

"Oh!"

"I—wonder——"

The loyal and admiring attachment of Bunter's new friends seemed to be breaking down

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Light at Last!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's the merry trouble?"

Bob Cherry slapped Bunter on the shoulder, as the Remove were going in to classes on Wednesday morning. Billy Bunter was looking worried and downcast, as if most of the troubles of the universe had descended upon his podgy shoulders and found a permanent lodgment there. Hence the exuberant Bob's hearty greeting

"Ow! Don't bust my shoulder, you ass!" growled Bunter. "I—I say, Bob, old chap——"

"Sorry—stony!" answered Bob Cherry promptly; apparently regarding "Bob, old chap" as a preliminary to a demand for cash.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" grunted the Owl of the Remove

"But what's the row?" asked Bob good-naturedly. "You've been looking awfully down, Bunty. Seems to me you're a jolly lucky bargee, You've wriggled out of paying twelve pounds ten you owed among seven fellows. You've had seven narrow escapes of being scalped. Isn't that good enough?"

Bunter grunted.

Benefits received never lingered long in Billy Bunter's mind. He had succeeded, in the end, of clearing himself of the liability the visit to Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge had brought upon him. The rash agreement of the juniors to forgive the debt if the Bunter butler showed up, saw him clear. It had been founded upon an utter disbelief in the existence of Mr. Parkinson, certainly; but the chums of the Remove were fellows of their word; they felt that they had been caught, but they held to what they had agreed. Bunter ought really to have been very contented. But he was looking anything but contented.

On wriggling out of one scrape he had wriggled into another, as he usually did when he exercised his fatuous cunning. And the last state of William George Bunter was worse than his first. He had owed money to Remove fellows, who would have taken it out in "raggings" as a last resort. Now he owed money to much more business-like people, who assuredly wouldn't take it out in raggings, or in anything but hard cash.

Hence the worried looks of Bunter.

"Bob, old fellow——" he recommenced.

"I've mentioned that I'm stony," grinned Bob Cherry.

"We've always been pals——"

"Have we?" ejaculated Bob, in astonishment. "This is the first I've heard of it."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Come on, you fellows; you'll be late," called out Harry Wharton.

"I—I—I say, Bob, could you lend me six guineas?" gasped Bunter.

Bob Cherry jumped.

"Six which?" he exclaimed.

"Six guineas."

"My only hat! Sixty thousand just as soon," said Bob, with a chuckle. "My dear old porpoise, guineas don't grow in my study."

"You might raise it among the fellows," suggested Bunter. "It's only temporary, of course. I've been disappointed about a postal order——"

"Ha, ha, ha! The same old postal order?"

"Nunno—another one. I—I'm rather in want of six guineas; in fact, I owe a little bill——"

"Yes—twelve pound ten!" assented Bob.

"I don't mean that. I mean a real bill, and—and I've got to pay it. I—I say, you might stand by a chap."

"If you run up bills for six guineas a time, old scout, you'd better write to your pater. Or write to Parkinson," suggested Bob, with a chortle. "That devoted old retainer would stand you all his life-long savings, I'm sure—he's so attached to Master William."

Leaving Bunter to make the most of his advice, Bob Cherry followed his chums into the form-room. Billy Bunter rolled in after them with a dismal face.

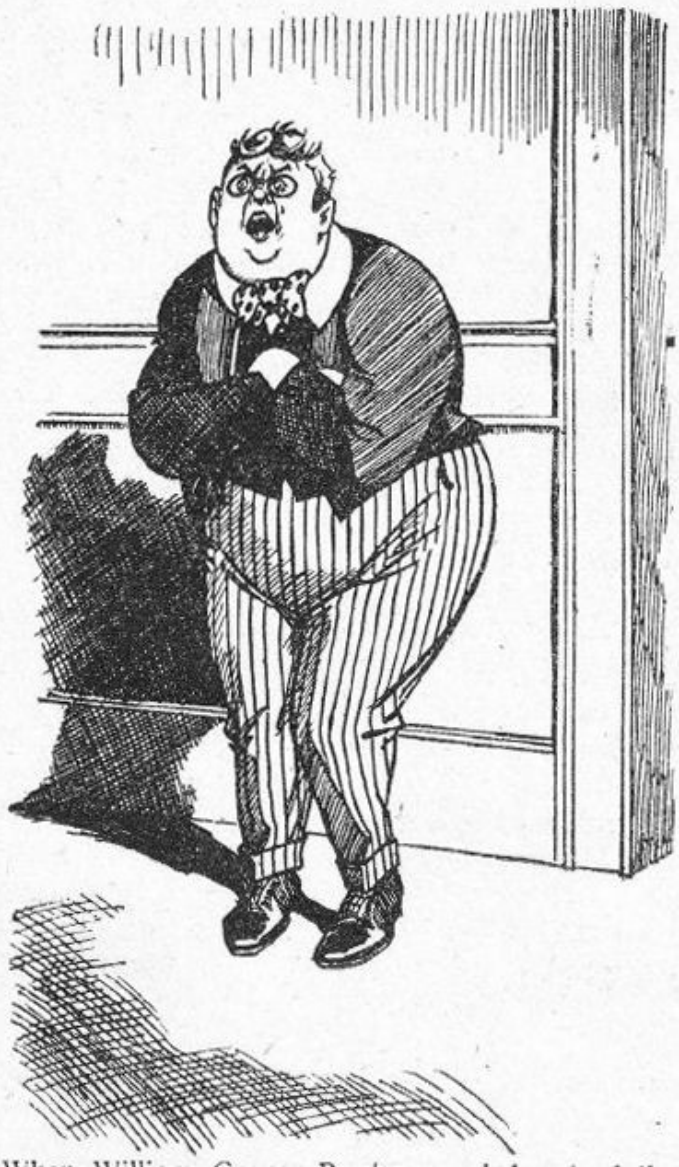
There were grinning glances for Bunter in the Remove that morning.

That the fat junior was in financial troubles again was well known by this time. Skinner and Co. gave him black looks.

Nothing had come of their attentions to Bunter, except desperate attempts on Bunter's part to borrow six guineas of them.

What he wanted that particular sum for he did not disclose, but it was clear that he wanted it badly.

Skinner and Co. were more than suspicious now. Bunter had spent, by this time, the small sums he had extracted from them in the way of loans; and there were no more sums, large or small, to be extracted. His statement that he couldn't write to his father for a tip because that gentleman was at his villa on the Riviera received no confirmation from Sammy of the Second. Questioned by the suspicious Skinner, Bunter minor proved to know nothing of his father's being abroad—or even of the existence of a villa at Cannes. And Bunter persistently declined to take Skinner's advice to write to Parkinson.



When William George Bunter crawled out of the Form-room, after lessons, he was looking as if he found life on this troublesome planet scarcely worth living! (See page 62)

It was dawning upon Skinner and Co. that they had wasted time—and cash—on Bunter, for nothing—and Fisher T. Fish especially was in a state bordering on anguish. Fisher T. Fish had parted with half a crown—but if it had been half a million dollars, it could scarcely have given Fishy a more acute pain to think of it. The thought that that half-crown had been thrown away on a fellow harder up than himself made Fisher T. Fish feel that there were some wrongs that could only be wiped out in blood.

Billy Bunter sat in his place with a gloomy brow, heedless of grins and of black looks alike. Sometimes his glance wandered to the door, and then his expression was quite apprehensive.

Plainly he was in dread of something; that was clear to all the Remove, though they could not guess what it was.

Mr. Quelch found Bunter more inattentive than ever at lessons. His pointer came into play once or twice; but even the pointer failed to fix Bunter's attention on his work. Weightier matters were occupying his fat mind.

In the middle of morning lessons there was a tap at the door of the form-room, and Trotter, the House page, looked in. Mr. Quelch gave him an irritated glance. He disliked interruptions in classes.

"What is it, Trotter?" he snapped.

BUNTER'S AILMENTS

By The Greyfriars Rhymester

We found him lying in the Close,
A porpoise, fat and sleek;
And as we crowded up to him,
He gave a piercing shriek.

"Oh, dear! Oh, crumbs! Oh, help! Yaroooooh!
I'm swiftly dying, boys!"
"Well, die away!" growled Johnny Bull.
"But do it with less noise!"

"What ails you, Bunty?" Cherry cried.
"Is Quelchy on your track?"
Said Bunter, "Shooting, stabbing pains
Are torturing my back!

"My head is going round and round,
My eyes are growing dim;
I feel as if I'd fallen from
The top trapeze in gym.

"I've broken both my legs, I think,
And twenty bones, at least!
How dare you cackle at me, Todd,
You horrid, heartless beast?

"My number's up, and very soon
You'll find me cold and still.
Wharton, upon your blotting-pad
I've written out my Will.

"To Cherry I have left my knife
(The one I pinched last May
From Bulstrode, when I found that he
Had gone out for the day!).

"To you, Wun Lung, I've left my bike,
So thank your lucky stars!
(The whole machine was Wharton's once,
Except the handle-bars!)

"My purse, containing half-a-crown,
I'm leaving to my minor.
He calls me stingy, but, my hat!
What action could be finer?

"Good-bye, you chaps; I'm going West!
Farewell, my comrades true!
With panting breath and feeble voice,
I bid you all adieu!"

"One moment, please!" Bob Cherry cried.
He then produced a pin.
Said Bunter, "What's the little game?"
"I'm going to stick it in!"

Then Bunter gave a fiendish yell;
He promptly rose and fled—
A very smart performance for
A fellow nearly dead!

"Genelman to see Master Bunter, sir."

"What! Nonsense! No one can see Bunter during classes! Tell the man so——"

"I've told him, sir, but he won't go."

"What?"

"He says he's instructed to wait for the money, sir."

"Bless my soul! Bunter!"

"Ow! Ye-e-es, sir," stammered Billy Bunter.

"Have you been incurring some debt which you have failed to pay, Bunter?" exclaimed the Remove master in a terrifying voice.

"Nunno! I—I mean, yes, sir! That is to say, n-n-no!" stammered Bunter.

"Where does the man come from, Trotter?"

"Chunkley's Stores in Courtfield, sir."

"Has he the account with him?"

"Yessir; and which he says he's to wait for the money, and hutherwise to go to the 'Ead, sir."

"Bring the man here."

"Yessir."

Trotter quitted the form-room, and Mr. Quelch breathed hard, fixing a look upon William George Bunter which almost pierced like a gimlet. The juniors sat breathless. Nobody wanted to catch Mr. Quelch's eye just then; the form-master was plainly in a very exasperated mood.

"So, Bunter, you have incurred a debt at a very expensive establishment, reckless of your inability to liquidate it!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, dear!"

"For how much is this debt, Bunter?"

"Sis-sis-sis-sis-six guineas, sir."

"Upon my word! You have run into debt to the amount of six pounds six shillings; you, a junior boy in the Lower Fourth Form! And you cannot pay the amount?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"Have you no regard, Bunter, for the reputation, and good name of the school you belong to!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Nunno—I—I mean, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, certainly."

"Then what do you mean, Bunter, by incurring a debt you cannot pay? Had you any intention of paying it?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I hoped something would turn up—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I was expecting a postal order——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a sudden, involuntary, but irresistible yell from the Removites."

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "This is not a laughing matter. Bunter, what have you purchased at Chunkley's Stores to the value of six guineas?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

"What! You deny the transaction?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Then, what do you mean?"

"I—I—hired something, sir," groaned Bunter, dismally.

"Oh! Very well! The article can be returned, then."

"It's gone back already, sir."

"What! For how long did you use it?"

"Only for a couple of hours, sir."

"What! Do you mean to say Chunkley's are charging you six guineas for the hire of an article for two hours? This is an imposition—probably a matter to be laid before the profiteering tribunal. I must see into this. What was it you hired of Chunkley's Stores?"

Bunter did not answer.

"Do you hear me, Bunter? Answer me at once."

Billy Bunter blinked at the floor, and then at the ceiling, as if seeking inspiration. He found none, however; and then he blinked at the Remove master, still without replying

Trotter's tap was heard at the door again, and it opened to admit a well-fed-looking commissionaire with "CHUNKLEY'S" in gold letters on his cap Mr. Quelch turned a gimlet glance upon him.

"You have an account for Master Bunter from Chunkley's Stores?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir!"

"Kindly hand it to me."

The man from Chunkley's handed an envelope to Mr. Quelch. All eyes in the room were upon Mr. Quelch as he opened it, and took out the bill. He glanced at it, and his eyes seemed to bulge from his head. In a voice that seemed like the rumble of thunder to the unfortunate Owl, Mr. Quelch read out the bill from Chunkley's aloud. And the Remove, as they listened, wondered a little whether they were dreaming.

CHUNKLEY'S STORES, COURTFIELD.

To Hire of one First-Class Family Butler	£5	5	0
To Expenses of above, including Hack from the Stores to Greyfriars School, and from Greyfriars School back to the Stores	£1	1	0
Total	£6	6	0

As our terms are strictly cash, an immediate settlement will oblige.

A pin might have been heard to fall in the Remove form-room of Greyfriars when Mr. Quelch had finished reading out that extraordinary invoice. The Remove sat dumb; and Mr. Quelch, having read out the bill, seemed to be deprived of the power of further speech. Billy Bunter was blinking longingly at the floor, wishing fervently that it would open and swallow him up.

Mr. Quelch found his voice at last.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

At the same time the Remove found their voices, too, and a wild yell rang through the form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter's butler!"

"Hired at Chunkley's!"

"Spoofed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

But for once Mr. Quelch called in vain for silence. The junior's roared and yelled, and howled. The discovery was too much for them, and even the awful voice of their form-master passed unheeded.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Bunter—good old spoofer!"

"The butler from Chunkley's—ha, ha, ha!"

"So attached to Master William—at five guineas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish jumped up, forgetful of where he was, and brandished a bony fist under Bunter's fat nose.

"You fat clam!" he cried. "You spoofing mugwump! Pulling me leg—the leg of a galoot who was raised in Noo Yark! Gimme my half-crown!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove master made a clutch at his cane. Then there was order at last. The Removites wiped their eyes.

"Silence! Fish, go back to your place—how dare you leave your place, sir? Skinner, if you throw that volume at Bunter, I shall cane you severely. Bunter, stand out before the class."

There was a suppressed chortle in the class as the woebegone Owl of the Remove rolled dismally out. Mr. Quelch eyed him wrathfully.

"So, Bunter, you—you—incredible as it seems—you hired the—the man—the man-servant—who came here the other day—you hired him, in order to play off a miserable, pretentious deceit upon your schoolfellows."

"Oh, dear!"

"This bill," thundered Mr. Quelch, "must be paid! I shall pay it, Bunter, and immediately forward the account to your father."

"Ow!"

"With a full explanation of the circumstances——"

"Oh! Oh, dear!"

"And you, Bunter, will be given a lesson severe enough to keep you from such absurd and pretentious pranks in the future."

"Oh, lor'!"

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

Bunter in Disgrace

LET us draw a veil, as a novelist would say, over the scene that followed.

It was a painful scene—to Bunter, at least! It was very painful indeed.

Mr. Quelch had said that he would administer a severe lesson. He was as good as his word. He felt that he had a stern duty to do, and he did it well. The hapless Owl of the Remove was of the opinion that he did it too well. He would have been satisfied with a much less conscientious form-master.

When William George Bunter crawled out of the form-room after lessons, he was looking as if he found life on this troublesome planet scarcely worth living.

And then he had to face Skinner and company. Those young gentlemen had quite lost

sight of the sterling qualities they had lately discovered in Bunter. They seemed now to be yearning, not for his fascinating society, but for his blood,

Fortunately for William Bunter, Harry Wharton and Co. came to the rescue, and Skinner and his comrades were driven off, howling.

Billy Bunter blinked dismally at his rescuers.

He seemed dispirited.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he mumbled.

"All serene now, Bunty," said Bob Cherry laughing.

"And don't worry about the twelve-pound ten," chuckled the Bounder. "We ought to make you pay up, as there wasn't a merry Bunter butler after all; but I think you've earned it."

"I—I say——"

"And you're not going to be ragged," said Harry Wharton reassuringly. "You deserve it—but Quelchy has given you beans. We'll let it go at that."

"Yes, but I—I say——"

"Well?"

"I—I say, you fellows, my pater will kick up no end of a shindy if that bill goes to him. Perhaps you'd like to lend me the money——"

"Eh?"

"It will get me out of an awful scrape! All you've got to do is to lend me the money—only lend it to me, you know, and I'll pay you back."

"Oh!"

"Of course, I'll let you have it back again! You see, I'm expecting a postal order——"

"Another postal order for six pound six?"

"I mean a lot of postal orders, Cherry. When I've heard from all my titled relations, there will be more than six mouldy pounds, you know, so I shall pay you back with interest!"

"Just hark at the fat dummy!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"If you haven't the cash in hand, you could sell something——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Your bike, for instance, Wharton——"

"Mum-mum-my bike!" stuttered Wharton dazedly.

"Yes, I think you fellows ought to be willing to do me a good turn, after the splendid feed I stood you at Chunkley's——"

"What?"

"And look here," said Bunter, in a burst of generosity, "you see me through this, and I'll take you home with me for the holidays. To Bunter Court, you know."

"Bub-bub-Bunter Court?"

"Yes—where you'll be waited on by our butler, you know—"

"Your bib-bib-butler!" babbled Bob Cherry.

"That's it—you'll like it, you know—it will be a chance for you to see high life. What do you fellows say?"

Harry Wharton and Co. did not say anything. They simply stared at William George Bunter; and then they fell upon him, and seized him, and bumped him on the floor of the passage. Then they walked away leaving Billy Bunter roaring.

And from William George, at least, no more was heard at Greyfriars of Bunter's Butler!

THE GREATEST FIGHT IN THE HISTORY OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL

BY ROBERT CHERRY

EDITOR'S NOTE.—*As so many readers of the school stories of Greyfriars have written for particulars of the greatest fight which has ever taken place at Greyfriars School—a bout which would compare with the famous Williams v. Tom Brown fight at Rugby, or the "Slogger" Sawyer v. Simms affair at St. Jim's—we commissioned Robert Cherry to search for details. The search entailed an exchange of something like twenty letters with old boys, and the point is still unsettled. Still, if the Pryor-Ransom set-to is not actually the greatest fight Greyfriars has witnessed, it certainly is one of the greatest.* —ED. HOLIDAY ANNUAL.]

EXACTLY what was at the root of the trouble between Jack Pryor and Stanley Ransom, it is almost impossible to say now, for the trouble, whatever it was, happened in the Christmas term of 1875.

As far as I have been able to discover, it seems that it was simply a case of two Sixth-Formers, who were thrown together a lot in prefect duties and on the playing-field, being unable to hit it off. There is ample proof that Jack Pryor and Stanley Ransom were not even on speaking terms for the better part of the term, and matters appear to have been nearly as bad as that for a couple of years when the unpleasant affair was brought to a startling head.

Jack Pryor, in the course of his duties as prefect, saw Stanley Ransom leaving the school long after lock-up one night, and waited for his return.

As appears to have been Pryor's way, he bluntly accused the other senior of breaking bounds. Ransom's answer is not known, but no doubt it was a galling one, and a blow was struck.

No one knows who struck it, but the news suddenly flashed through the school, that Pryor and Ransom were to fight. There was a tremendous amount of excitement when it was learnt that the fight would take place on the last day of the term, within an hour of the departure of the stage-coach—there was no railway serving Friardale in those days.

Everybody understood the reason for the postponement, because both Pryor and Ransom were leaving that term, and they wanted to take good " reports " home to their people, a decent enough motive, which most of the fellows appreciated. But the wait was very trying, and it is a wonder that the secret was kept for over a month, for Pryor and Ransom both went into strict training, and often watched each other at work in the meadow adjoining the school.

Then, early one morning, within a few days of Christmas, all Greyfriars made its way to a certain clearing in Friardale Wood.

Both principals were already there with their seconds, but it was too dark for faces to be seen. A real roped-in square was rigged up, and everyone waited breathlessly for daylight.

Presently Stanley Ransom sprang over the ropes, and, with a ringing laugh, threw off his jacket.

" If it's light enough for your man," he sang out to Pryor's seconds, " it's light enough for me ! "

Pryor didn't answer, but he vaulted the ropes instantly, and, just as the first grey streaks of daylight found their way through the trees, the two stood up to one another, scaling to within a few pounds of each other's weight.

Some plumped for Pryor, because of his better shoulders and arms ; others expected Ransom to win, on account of his finer legs and wonderfully developed muscles ; but there seems to have been very little really to choose in the two fellows.

" Time ! " was given in an excited voice, and Ransom sprang in, with Pryor on his way to meet him. Ransom lashed out with a left-hand drive, but Pryor was not as hot-headed as a good many appear to have thought him, for he swept the blow aside, and jabbed hard to the body.

He connected, but Ransom made amends. He uppercut his man with a terrific right, then fought him right across the ring, until he was almost upon the ropes.

Once Pryor did actually touch the ropes, and it appears to have roused him to a wonderful extent. Ransom had been carrying everything before him for the last few seconds, and perhaps he was over-confident. All the spectators agreed that he might have paved the way to victory at that point in the great fight, if he had not been in such a hurry.

As it was, Ransom threw caution to the winds in a reckless attempt to finish out of hand, using both weapons with all his strength, and with only one thought behind them—to hand over the k.-o.

Pryor must have used his head wonderfully, for he seems to have drawn his opponent into a trap. Up to the moment Pryor's back touched the ropes there was only one man in it ; then Pryor shot forward.

He, too, had a reckless strain in his temperament, and Ransom's left to the face seems to have been passed unnoticed by Jack. He was in and under the other fellow's guard, and his left streaked for the face. Almost at the same instant Jack's right swept up in a semi-circle, and there was never a doubt about connection being made.

The upper-cut landed full on the point of Ransom's jaw, and he was flung back a couple of yards. He swayed a little, then dropped to his knees, and an excited voice called " Time !"

There were cheers and counter-cheers, and everybody talked at once without troubling to listen. It had been an amazing first round, and both principals had suffered punishment.

So equal were the exchanges in the opening half of the second round that there was scarcely a point to choose between the two, but the closing stages saw a great change.

Ransom was fortunate in being within distance with a heavy jab to the body, and Pryor's hands dropped. Ransom seized his

opportunity with lightning-like quickness, and he fought his man to the ropes again. One terrific left-hand drive from him would have finished most fights, but Jack Pryor was as hard as a rock, and round two finished as the first had, with an upper-cut from Jack's right, which levelled matters up again, and sent Ransom to the ground for the second time.

The excitement now threatened to get out of hand, for it reached such a pitch that, at this late date, it is impossible to get clear details of the next five sessions.

At the seventh meeting Ransom appears to have had it all his own way, sending Pryor down twice within a few seconds.

At the eighth encounter Pryor electrified the spectators and roused his partisans to enthusiasm by rushing it at the start, and fighting his man to a standstill.

The fight which Ransom seemed to have won in the seventh round now ran entirely in Pryor's favour, and the excitement which attended the ninth session can be imagined. So great was it that again there are no details to be obtained. From the ninth round to the fifteenth it was a case of terrific hitting on both sides, and it is certain that the sixteenth meeting must have found both principals a good deal the worse for wear.

But the knock-out came suddenly and sensationally. Ransom saw an opening, and sprang in. His splendid left streaked to the point of Pryor's jaw, and his right was back for the follow-up; but Jack Pryor must have been a giant as far as stamina was concerned. His favourite upper-cut came into play again—a blow which was very near his last one; but it was a terrific shot.

Ransom appears to have countered instinctively, and his right drive never looked like missing. It landed full on the point of the jaw, and Jack Pryor swayed.

Just for a second he kept his feet; then he toppled over gracefully, and fell flat on his face. Then someone shouted, an excited sort of yell:

"Look at Ransom!"

There was no need to shout, though, for everyone was looking. Ransom was leaning forward, a sleepy expression on his handsome, rugged face. Then he slipped down, and lay where he fell like a log. He, too, was down and out before Pryor had had time to take the count.

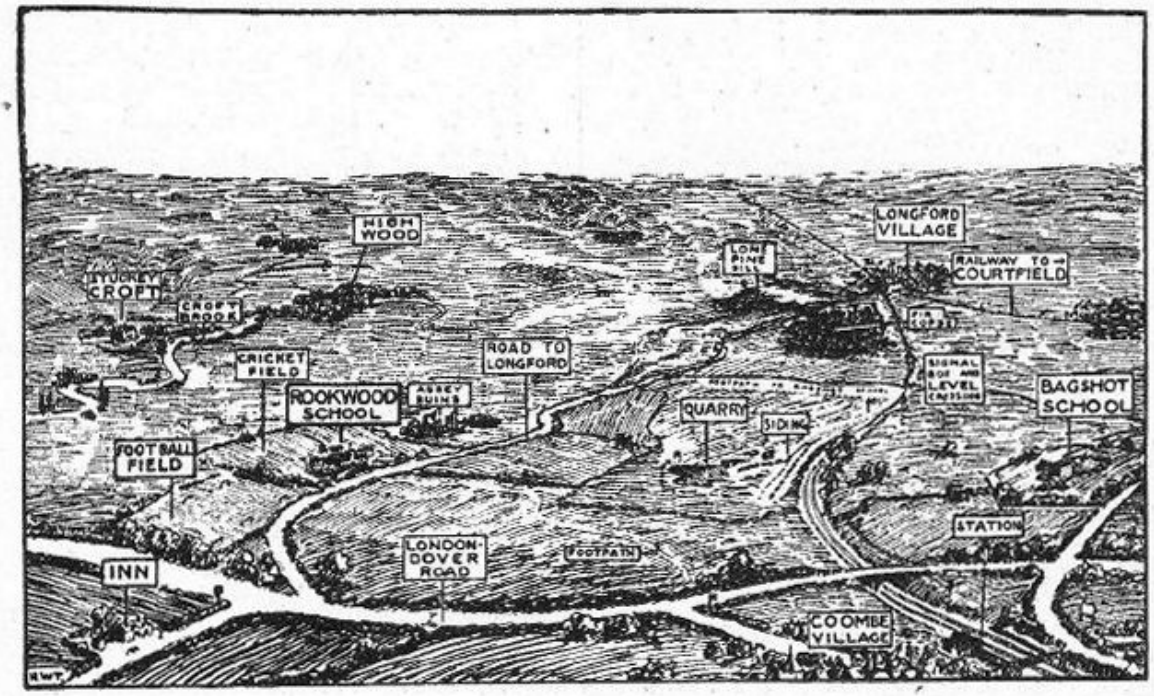
I have to thank Canon Harper, of Wayland, near St. Jim's College, for the bulk of the above details. It was he who refereed the fight, and, of course, his verdict was a draw.

It is Canon Harper, too, who supplied the two, perhaps, most interesting facts of all—the one, that Pryor and Ransom left Friardale, a couple of hours later, seated together on the front seat of the stage coach, and sharing the same rug; the other, that Jack Pryor had been quite within his rights in accusing Stanley Ransom of breaking bounds, but if he had made further inquiries he would have learnt that Ransom had a special permit from the Head to be outside the school.

In the face of that, it is pretty safe to say that there was no real cause for the fight, except that it was one of those things which had to happen, and, according to Canon Harper, the very best thing in the world that could have happened, for it turned two enemies into chums.

WHO'S WHO AT ROOKWOOD

Some Information Concerning the Famous School, Its Scholars, Staff, etc.
Compiled by Owen Conquest



A GENERAL VIEW OF THE COUNTRY AROUND ROOKWOOD SCHOOL, HAMPSHIRE

ROOKWOOD

Mr. BOOTLES

The origin of Rookwood dates back as far as 1117. It was, as far as can be traced, a Baron's Castle, snugly hidden by a belt of trees containing a tremendous rookery. Much of this wood has now been cut down, but a small part is left in Little Quad, called "The Rookery." There is still a connection between the ruined Abbey and the ancient Classical Side, which has played quite a part in some of the stories. The Modern House is only just twenty years old, and supplied with all the most modern fitments, including electric light and hot-water heating.

Dr. CHISHOLM

Headmaster - - - THE REV. HENRY CHISHOLM, D.D., M.A.

THE MASTERS:

6th Form: HERBERT MANDERS, M.A.
5th Form: EDWARD GREELY, B.A.
Shell: PERCY JASPER MOONEY, M.A.
4th Form: MR. BOOTLES, M.A.
3rd Form: FRANK BOHUN, M.A., B.Sc.
2nd Form: SAMUEL WIGGINS, B.A.
French: GUILLAUME MORCEAU.
German: ARTHUR FLINDERS, M.A.
Maths.: HAROLD BULL, B.A.

Telephone No. Latcham 122

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL STAFF ARE:

SERGT. BENJAMIN KETTLE—Proprietor of Tuck-shop.
JOHN MACK—Porter.
PETER TUPPER—Page boy.
MRS. MALONEY—House Dame.

THE SIXTH FORM AT ROOKWOOD

FORM-MASTER: HERBERT MANDERS, M.A.

(CLASSICAL)

BULKELEY, GEORGE.—Head Prefect, and Captain of the School.
CARTHEW, MARK AUCLAND.—Prefect.
DICKINSON, WALTER.—Prefect.
JONES, EDGAR (major).
LONSDALE, RALPH.—Prefect.
MERTON, CHARLES.
NEVILLE, LAWRENCE.—Prefect.

(MODERN)

KNOWLES, CECIL.—Prefect.
CATESBY, STEPHEN.—Prefect.
BRAYNE, KINGSLEY.
FRAMPTON, RONALD.—Prefect.
HOKE, TOM.—Prefect.
LEDBURY, JOSEPH.
LISTER, TIMOTHY.
MEDWAY, MICHAEL.
MYERS, MARTIN.
TRESHAM, HORACE.—Prefect.

THE FIFTH FORM

FORM-MASTER: EDWARD GREELY, B.A

(CLASSICAL)

HANSON, EDWARD.—Captain of the Form.
BROWN, HENRY (major).
DUFF, HARRY.
LUMSDEN, PHILIP.
JOBSON, TOBIAS.
MUGGINS, PAUL.
O'ROURKE, PHELIM.
TALBOYS, CECIL.

(MODERN)

DE MONTMORENCY, LAURIE.
EVANS, TOM (major).
FLOWERS, RODERICK.
WATERSON, JAMES.

THE SHELL FORM

FORM-MASTER: PERCY JASPER MOONEY, M.A.

(CLASSICAL)

CHESNEY, ALEC.
HOWARD, AUBREY.
GILBEY, ROBERT.
SEATON, MURREY.
SELWYN, JACK.
SMYTHE, ADOLPHUS MARMADUKE
TRACEY, ALLAN.
WAUGH, PAUL.

(MODERN)

BROOKE, WILLIAM.
FIELDING, EGBERT.
LANG, DUGALD.
MULBERRY, HUGH.
PERKINS, CHARLES.
PLUMMY, HAROLD HENRY.
SMITH, ARTHUR.

THE FOURTH FORM

FORM-MASTER : MAURICE BOOTLES, M.A.

Adolphus Smythe

Tubby Muffin

Kit Erroll

Algy Silver

Mark Carthew

George Bulkeley

Name.	Age.	Height.	Studies.
	Ys. Mths.	Ft. In.	No.
Classical.			
Silver, James	15 4	5 4	10
Conroy, Kit (The Cornstalk)	15 4	5 5	3
Dickinson, Sidney	15 0	5 1	1
Errol, Kit	15 4½	5 5	4
Evans, Peter (minor) ..	15 0	5 2½	1
Gower, Cuthbert	15 4	5 3	5
Grace, Edwin (Teddy, "Putty")	15 4	5 5	2
Higgs, Alfred	15 6	5 4½	2
Hooker, Ernest	15 2	5 4½	6
Jones, Sidney Herbert (minor)	15 3	5 2	12
Lattrey, Mark	15 7	5 5	5
Lovell, Arthur Edward ..	15 6	5 5	10
Mornington, Valentine ..	15 9	5 5½	4
Muffin, Reginald	15 0	5 0	2
Newcome, Arthur	15 3	5 2½	10
Oswald, Richard	15 4	5 4½	9
Pons, Charles	15 5	5 5	3
Peele, Cyril	15 4	5 3	5
Raby, George	15 7	5 4	10
Rawson, Tom	15 7	5 5½	9
Topham, Harold	15 4½	5 4	7
Townsend, Cecil	15 6	5 3½	7
Van Ryn, Richard	15 11	5 4	3
Modern.			
Cook, Tommy	15 2	5 3½	5
Cuffy, Clarence	15 5	5 5	1
Dodd, Tommy	15 4½	5 4	5
Doyle, Tommy	15 4	5 4½	5
Lacy, Walter	15 6	5 4½	2
Leggett, Albert	15 8	5 2	7
McCarthy, Richard	15 9	5 1	4
Towle, James Frederick ..	15 4	5 6	2
Wadsley, Robert	15 5	5 3½	4

Mark Lattrey

Tommy Dodd

Tommy Doyle

Jimmy Silver

Teddy Grace

Val Mornington

THE THIRD FORM

FORM-MASTER: FRANK BOHUN, M.A., B.Sc.

CLASSICAL

DE VERE, BERTIE.
GRANT, ERNEST.
HAMLEY.
HAWES, GERALD.
LUCAS.
PETERS.
PIPKIN.
SILVER, ALGERNON
STACEY.
SMITHSON, FRED.
WEGG, JAMES.
WYLIE, BERTRAND.
WYATT, TOM.
LOVELL, EDWARD.

MODERN

CROKER.
FORREST.
MUGG, PHILIP
PRINCE.
SLIMSON.
SYLVESTER, PAUL.
TUNSTALL, BERTIE.
WILKINSON, EVERARD.

THE SECOND FORM

FORM-MASTER: SAMUEL WIGGINS, B.A.

CLASSICAL

FISHER, HIRAM.
JONES, ARTHUR MONTGOMERY (minor).
MORNINGTON, II., HERBERT.
O'TOOLE.
ROBERTS.
SNOOKS, GEORGE.
SCOTT.
TRACEY (minor), FRANK.
VINCENT, ERNEST.

MODERN

BOOTE.
BROWN.
LAIRD.
LLEWELLYN.
MCNAB.
TAVERER.
WALKER.
WINGROVE.

FOOTBALL AND CRICKET ELEVENS AT ROOKWOOD

School Colours: Green and Purple

FIRST XI

SENIOR

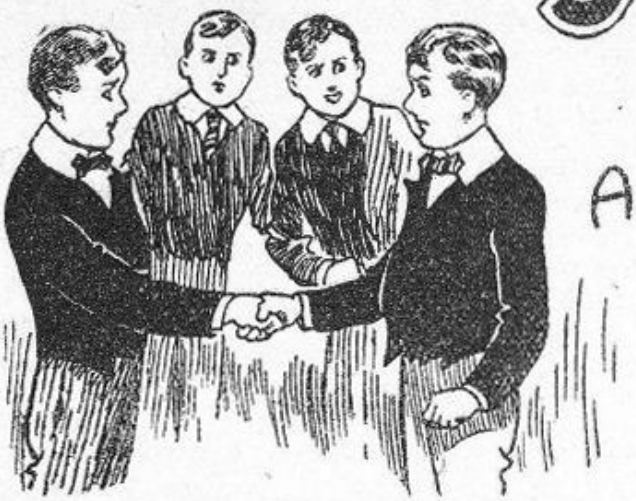
BULKELEY (captain).
HANSOM.
LUMSDEN.
JONES (major).
NEVILLE.
KNOWLES.
FRAMPTON.
CARTHEW.
CATESBY.
GRESHAM.
LONSDALE.

FIRST XI

JUNIOR

SILVER (captain)
LOVELL.
RABY.
NEWCOME.
OSWALD.
CONROY.
ERROL.
COOK.
DODD.
DOYLE.
MORNINGTON.

Jimmy Silver's Rival!



A Long Complete Story of Rookwood School

By Owen Conquest

With Illustrations by W. G. WAKEFIELD

THE FIRST CHAPTER

The Serenaders

"COME out!"

Bang!

"Get a move on!"

"Bang! bang!

"My only hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood School. "Is that a new game?"

Jimmy Silver and Co. were astonished.

The Fistical Four of the Fourth had strolled across the quadrangle from the Classic to the Modern side after lessons. They had nothing particular to do, and Lovell had suggested improving the shining hour by ragging the Moderns. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome agreed at once, they felt that a leisure hour could not be better spent.

But a surprise awaited them when they arrived at Mr. Manders' house. Outside that house, under the windows of the Fourth-form studies, two Modern juniors had taken up their stand. Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook were looking up at the window of the study they shared with Tommy Dodd. Doyle had a saucepan-lid in one hand and a pegtop in the other. He was banging the pegtop on the saucepan-lid with great vigour, apparently with the object of making as much noise as possible. In that object he was succeeding perfectly. Cook had provided himself with a tin can and a cricket-stump. With these musical instruments he was ably seconding the efforts of his chum.

Jimmy Silver and Co. stared at them. In their surprise they forgot all about their intention of ragging the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth.

Bang! bang! crash! clash! jingle!

"Come out!" shouted Cook.

"Show a leg there!" roared Doyle.

Bang! bang!

"What on earth is the name of that game?" demanded Jimmy Silver, in great mystification. "Are you trying to get Mr. Manders to come out with his cane?"

"You'll succeed!" remarked Lovell.

The two Tommies did not heed. They did not even look at the Classical chums. They continued to bang and shout.

Suddenly at the study window above there appeared an exasperated face. It was the face of Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth. He shook a fist at his two chums far below.

"Clear off!" he shouted.

"Come out!"

"I'm not coming out!"

Bang! bang!

"Will you shut up that row?" roared Tommy Dodd. "How is a chap to work with that shindy going on under his window?"

"Come out!"

"I can't come out!" shrieked Tommy

Dodd. "You know jolly well I'm working at German."

"It's unpatriotic to work at German—after lessons, anyhow," retorted Tommy Cook. "Come out!"

"Chuck up swotting, and come out," said Tommy Doyle.

"Rats! Clear off, or I'll buzz something down on your silly nappers."

Tommy Dodd retired from the window. Apparently he was resuming his work at German, which was a subject in the Modern curriculum at Rookwood; a subject the Modern juniors were not keen upon, and which the Classicals declared they wouldn't touch with a pair of tongs.

"Isn't he a bothersome baste intirely," exclaimed Tommy Doyle, in great wrath. "Here's a foine summer's afternoon, and we're ready to take him for a run, and he sticks indoors grinding at rotten German."

"We'll soon have him out," said Cook sagely. "He can't grind German with this serenade going on."

"Go it!"

Bang! bang! bang! The overture recommenced.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver with a whistle. "I didn't know Tommy Dodd had taken to swotting. But that's the way to cure him. A chap who could work with that going on would be a giddy marvel. But aren't you afraid of disturbing Manders?"

"Oh, blow Manders!" said Cook crossly. "Besides, he can't hear from his quarters."

"Must be jolly deaf if he doesn't," grinned Lovell.

"Bother him, anyway. Tommy Dodd's got to come out."

"What's the special reason?"

"He's got to keep in form for sports' day," explained Cook. "We're relying on Tommy Dodd to win the two-fifty for our side."

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"My dear chaps, you can save your trouble, then. Let Tommy Dodd swot at German as long as he likes. It won't make any difference. The Classical side is going to win the two-fifty."

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Raby warmly. "Why, I'm running in that!"

"And little me," smiled Jimmy.

"We've got a dozen men who could beat anything you could scare up in this mouldy house!" exclaimed Newcome. "Why, Mornington and Erroll and Rawson and Grace—lots, in fact. You Moderns won't have an earthly in that event."

"Or in any other, if you come to that," remarked Raby.

Cook and Doyle gave a simultaneous sniff. They were very far from sharing the Classical opinion as to the Modern chances of sports day.

"You've got one good man on your side," said Cook scornfully. "That's Jimmy Silver. I admit he's fairly good, though a Classical. But, of course, he's not a patch on our Tommy when Tommy's in form."

"Not the ghost of a patch," said Doyle. "Tommy Dodd is going to leave him standing. I don't suppose the spectators will notice that he has moved at all by the time Tommy romps home."

"You cheeky Modern asses!" roared Lovell. "I tell you——"

"Rats! Tommy's going to pull it off for our side, and we're going to see that he does it. And the crass ass," said Cook, in a greatly aggrieved tone, "the burbling chump must select this special time for going in for a mouldy German prize. His people want him to shine in German—so he says. Bless his soul! What's a German prize compared with winning the two-fifty and knocking you Classical dummies out?"

"Let him swot," said Jimmy Silver kindly. "He may bag the German prize, but he won't bag the two hundred and fifty yards. He couldn't."

"I tell you——"

"And I tell you——"

"'Nuff said!" exclaimed Doyle. "We're going to take Tommy for a run this afternoon. He's got to stop swotting, and we're going to serenade him till he does. Go it, Cooky, darling."

Bang! bang! crash! clatter! bang!

The unfortunate youth who was "swotting" in the study above found that swotting was

difficult under the circumstances. His crimson face reappeared at the window, and his clenched fist was shaken at his two devoted chums below.

"Will you ring off?" he roared.

"Not till you come out."

"I can't come out when I'm grinding German."

"If German interferes with business give up German," suggested Tommy Cook.

"You know jolly well——"

"We know jolly well that we're going to pace you as far as Coombe. Come out."

"I can't."

"Then here goes!"

Bang! bang! bang!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver and Co., greatly entertained, especially by the expression on the face at the study window.

"If you don't buzz off, I'll swamp ink over you!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "Mind, I mean that."

Bang! bang! bang!

Tommy Dodd disappeared from the window again.

"Stand from under!" grinned Lovell. "Doddy looked as if he meant business. I don't want any ink."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

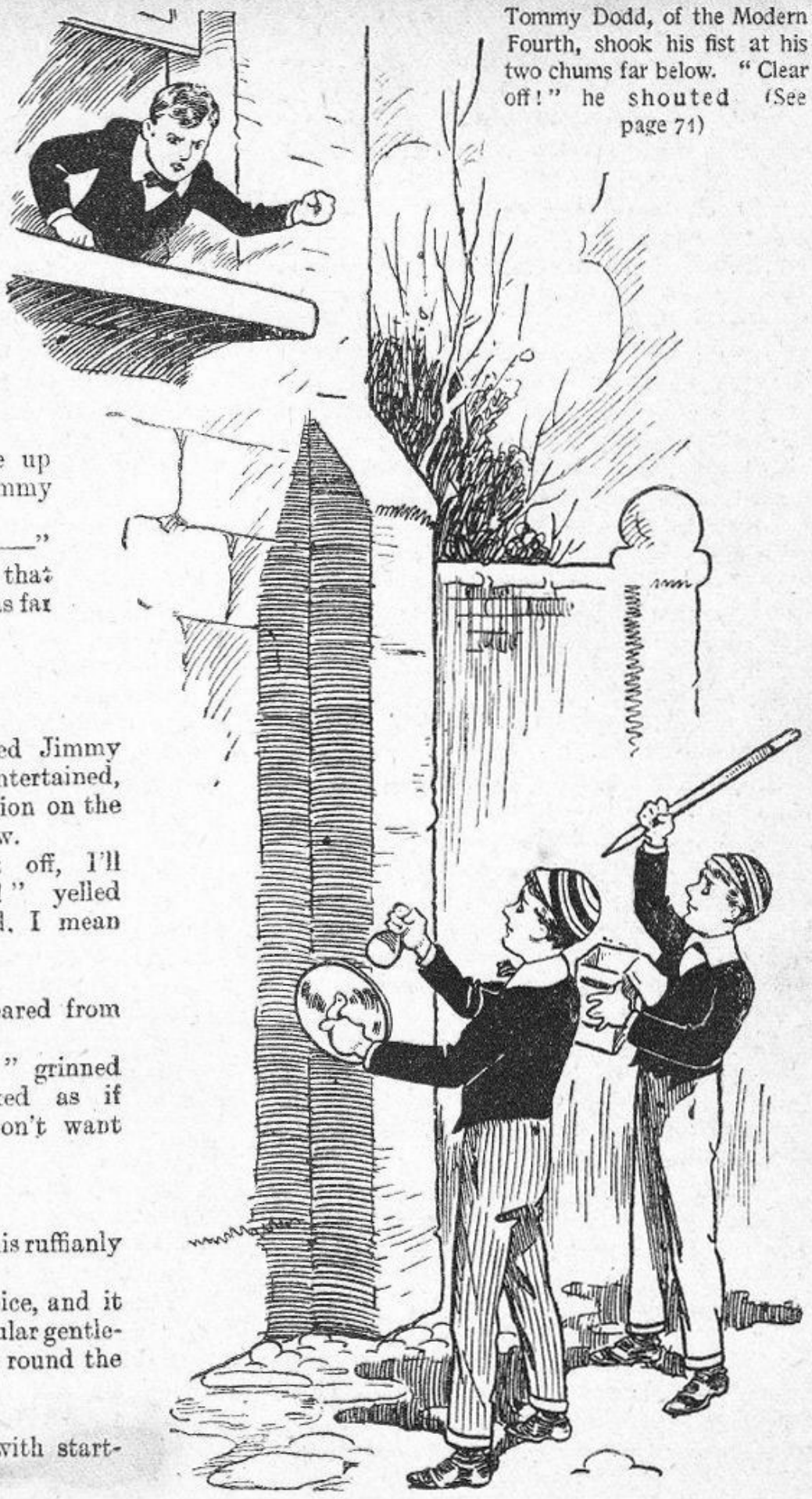
Bang! bang! bang!

"What is this noise—this ruffianly disturbance?"

It was a sharp, acid voice, and it proceeded from a tall, angular gentleman who came whisking round the corner of the house.

It was Mr. Manders.

The serenade ceased with startling suddenness.



Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, shook his fist at his two chums far below. "Clear off!" he shouted (See page 71)

Cook and Doyle bolted round the nearest corner like rabbits bolting for a burrow; and the Classical four bolted with them.

Mr. Manders arrived breathless on the spot, to find it vacant.

The juniors had vanished so suddenly that the science master of Rookwood had no chance of recognising them. He had only caught a vanishing glimpse of Eton jackets and running feet.

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Manders halted, and blinked round him over his glasses. "Disgraceful—who—what—yuurrrrrgggh!"

Swoosh!

From the study window above came a sudden swamping of ink.

Tommy Dodd had kept his word.

Unfortunately he was not aware that his tormentors had gone, and that Mr. Manders was standing in their place. He had not the faintest idea that the shower of ink was descending upon his house-master.

But Mr. Manders had.

He knew it only too well.

There was about a pint of ink, but to Mr. Manders it seemed as if gallons and gallons came swamping down on his devoted head.

"Yurrrrrgggghhh!"

Mr. Manders spluttered wildly. His spluttering was heard in the study above; and a grinning face looked out of the window. Tommy Dodd knew that he had caught somebody; he did not yet know whom he had caught. He grinned down in great glee.

"There, you noisy bounders! There, you silly asses! Oh, my only Aunt Jemima!"

Tommy Dodd broke off in horror, as he gazed down at the inky face that was upturned to him—the infuriated face of his house-master, streaming with ink!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Three is Trouble

"OH, my hat!"

From the friendly shelter of a beech trunk in the distance, Jimmy Silver was looking on. The other juniors were in cover, near at hand, also watching.

The sight of the ink swamping upon Mr. Manders almost petrified them.

"Tare an' 'ounds!" murmured Tommy Doyle. "Poor old Tommy's been and gone and done it now!"

"Manders!" murmured Cook, in horror. Manders! Manders' old napper swamped with ink! Oh, dear!"

"There'll be the dickens to pay now!"

"Poor old Tommy!"

Tommy Dodd's horror-stricken face disappeared from the window. Perhaps he nourished a faint hope that Mr. Manders did now know from which window the shower had descended.

For some moments the house-master stood gasping and gurgling. Then he whisked away.

Jimmy Silver and Co. looked at one another.

"What's going to happen now?" murmured Jimmy.

"Something—to Tommy Dodd!" said Lovell.

"Poor old Tommy!"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Cook. "It's all Tommy's fault. He ought to have come out when we told him. We told him plain enough! We made row enough to make any sensible chap come out. Didn't we, Doyle?"

"Sure we did!" mumbled Doyle.

"Now Manders will take it out of him——"

"Sure he will!"

"I—I suppose we'd better go in and own up!" mumbled Tommy Cook dejectedly. "We can't leave Tommy to stand it on his own. Come on, kid."

And the two Moderns almost limped away to Mr. Manders's house, to share the fate of their hapless chum.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver, "I always said these Modern bounders were silly asses! And they are!"

"They is!" agreed Lovell.

"We came over here to rag them!" remarked Jimmy reflectively. "I don't think they'll need much ragging after Manders has done with them. He looked annoyed."

"He felt annoyed, I think!" murmured Raby. "Slightly!"

"Just a few!" grinned Newcome.

"Poor old Tommy Dodd! Instead of ragging the silly duffers, we'll try to console them—what Manders leaves of them."

"Oh, rather!"

The Fistical Four remained waiting, in the offing, so to speak, for the reappearance of the Moderns. What was passing in Mr. Manders's study they did not know; but they thought they could guess. They realised that it must be a very painful scene.

"Here they come!" said Lovell, at last.

"What a picture!"

The three Tommies came out of Mr. Manders's house together, and they did indeed present a picture of woe and tribulation.

The three unhappy youths had their hands tucked under their arms, and seemed trying to fold themselves up like pocket-knives.

They were not speaking, but a series of breathless gasps escaped from them. Evidently the unhappy three had been "through it."

The Fistical Four approached sympathetically. All thoughts of ragging the Moderns were at an end. Jimmy Silver and Co. felt only sympathy for the sufferers.

"Had it bad?" asked Jimmy.

The three Tommies glared at him.

"Ow! ow! ow!" was their only reply.

"Hurt?" asked Lovell.

"You frabjous ass!" groaned Tommy Dodd. "Do you think I'm doing this for fun?"

"Well, I only asked——"

"Ass!"

"I'm really sorry——"

"Fathead!"

"Look here!"

"B-r-r-r! Go and eat coke!"

Classical sympathy did not seem to help the hapless Moderns much. Indeed, they were displaying a black ingratitude.

"Sure old Manders is an awful baste!" groaned Tommy Doyle. "He had Tommy Dodd in his study when we got there."

"Laying into him with a cane" mumbled Cook.

"But he did look a vision with his inky chivvy, though," said Doyle, with a faint grin. He found some slight solace in that reminiscence.

"Drenched," said Cook. "Soaked with it. Running down his collar and his neck. That's so much to the good, anyhow."

"Ow! wow!" said Dodd, rubbing his hands. "I've had six on each paw. The awful old Hun wouldn't believe it was an accident till Doyle and Cook came and owned up. Then he let me off with a round dozen. Goodness knows how long he'd have gone on if they hadn't blown in."

"And he took the rest out of us!" groaned Cook. "I thought p'r'aps he'd admire a chap coming in and owning up in a frank manly way. Masters do, in story-books. But not old Manders."

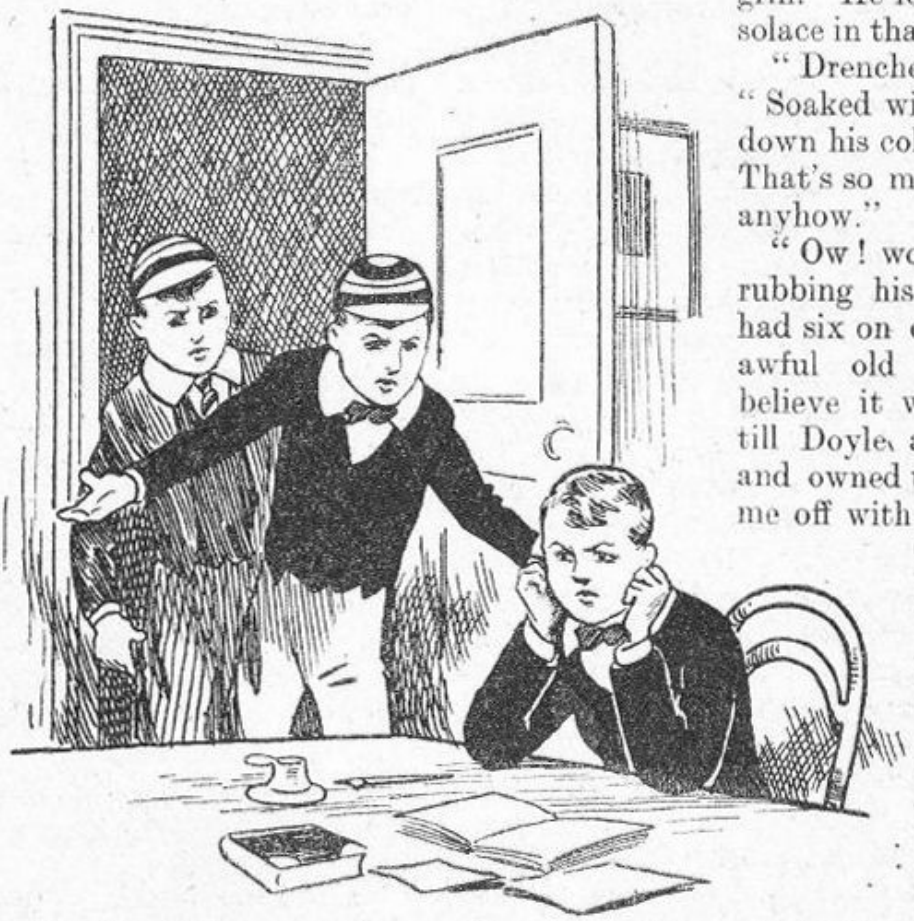
"No fear!" mumbled Doyle. "Not Manders. We explained that it was all our fault Tommy chucked the ink, and he simply laid into us with the cane."

"Oh, dear!"

"Ow-wow-wow!"

"Hard cheese," said Jimmy Silver. "We're no end sympathetic, we are, really. Keep smiling, you know."

"Keep smiling," murmured Tommy Dodd.



"Well, isn't it up to a chap to listen to what his pater says?" demanded Tommy Dodd. (See page 76)

"You silly chump, how is a chap to smile with six on each hand—six corkers. Go back to your asylum."

Three dispirited Modern youths started for the gates, almost limping. Mr. Manders had not spared the rod, and the three Tommies were likely to feel the effects for some time. Tommy Dodd's unpopular German studies were over for the present; but Doyle and Cook were not feeling inclined for the run they had planned. Even sports day, to which all the Rookwood fellows were looking forward, failed to interest them now.

"Well, I call them ungrateful bounders!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Not much good wasting time consoling them. Let's get out for a run, Jimmy. You've got to keep in form for the two-fifty yourself, though, of course, you'll beat the Moderns hands down."

"I hope so!" assented Jimmy.

"You'd better," said Arthur Edward darkly. "If you don't you'll get a study ragging that you won't forget in a hurry, I promise you that."

"Why, you ass——"

"Come on! Trot!"

And the Fistical Four trotted.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

A Run on the Road

"BOSH!"

"Now, look here, Tommy!"

"Rot!"

Tommy Dodd's remarks could not be called polite, but they were emphatic. There was no doubt about Tommy's emphasis.

It was a couple of days after the unhappy incident in which Mr. Manders had involuntarily taken a part. The three Tommies were in their study on the Modern side of Rookwood, and two or three other Modern juniors were lounging about the study—Towle, Lacy, and Wadsley of the Fourth. Tommy Dodd had a very obstinate expression on his face, and the other juniors all looked a little excited.

An argument was in progress.

It was half-holiday at Rookwood, and the opinion of Tommy Dodd's loyal chums and backers was that it was up to Tommy to spend that half-holiday on Shanks's pony, as Cook termed it. Dodd was of the opinion that it was up to him to spend it at German—or, at least, a good part of it. Tommy Dodd was far from being what the Rookwooders termed a "swot" or a "sap," but he was very keen on the German prize. He had his reasons for that, but his reasons did not seem good to his comrades.

"You'll make a rotten show at the sports at this rate," said Tommy Cook. "You know you will, Tommy."

"Rats!"

"The Classicals are bragging that they're going to bag everything."

"Let 'em brag."

"They will bag some of the events, anyhow," said Towle. "But if you take care, Tommy, you'll bag the two-fifty race."

"I'm going to bag it."

"Not if you stick indoors mugging up German."

Tommy Dodd gave an exasperated snort.

"Now, look here, you fellows," he said. "I've promised my pater to bag the German prize, if it can be done. I don't like Huns or their lingo any more than you do; but it's got to be done. We come to Rookwood to learn something, not merely to win races on sports day. Ever thought of that?"

"If Tommy's going to give us sermons——" began Lacy, more in sorrow than in anger.

"He's got that from his pater," said Cook with conviction. "I can hear his pater saying it."

"Well, isn't it up to a chap to listen to what his pater says?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, yes; I always believe in a chap giving his pater his head," answered Cook. "Let 'em say what they like, and listen respectfully. It's up to a fellow. Now, are you ready to come out?"

"What about the German then?"

"Oh, blow the German!"

"You frabjous ass," hooted Tommy Dodd. "What's the good of listening to what my pater says if I don't take any notice of it?"

"What's the good of asking me conundrums? There's no conundrums in the list

of events on sports day. I know we want to make a good show against the Classicals."

"I shall run all right——"

"Not if you don't keep fit."

"I'm keeping fit, ass. I can run you off your legs any day!"

"But you've not got to run me off my legs; you've got to run Jimmy Silver off his legs, and he's a goer."

"Oh, bother!"

"German!" said Tommy Doyle, with a sniff. "Is your pater a blessed pro-Hun, Tommy, that he's so keen on German?"

"Ass! What do we come on the Modern side at Rookwood for?" growled Tommy Dodd. "We come here to learn modern languages and science. If we don't do it, we might as well be on the Classical side, mugging up mouldy old Latin and Greek. This is the commercial side, isn't it? I'm not going to be a dashed tutor when I grow up—I'm going into the pater's business. And the pater's out to bag German trade, and I've got to be a good German scholar. I tell you the pater gave me a lecture last vac. on the subject, twenty minutes by the clock. I don't want another of the same next vac., I can tell you. Besides, he's promised me a canoe if I bag the German prize."

"Oh, now you're talking!" said Cook. "You never told us about the canoe. Still, you've got to make a good show at the sports, canoe or no canoe. Look here, I suppose it would not do if I bagged the German prize instead——"

"Eh?"

"Your pater would give me the canoe——"

"Ass!"

"I'd let you use it."

"Of all the silly chumps——" ejaculated Tommy Dodd.

"Well, we've wasted enough time talking entirely," said Doyle. "Are you ready to come out now?"

"I'm going to mug up German for two hours," said Tommy Dodd determinedly. "Mr. Flinders is giving me extra toot to help me through. It would be beastly ungrateful to have nothing to show up for it."

"What about the race?"

"Bother!"

"You know we're a small House compared with the Classicals," said Cook appealingly. "You know you're our best man, Tommy. We rely on you to get us a show. Come on!"

"I tell you I can beat any Classical at Rookwood. There's not one but Jimmy Silver who can touch me!"

"But he will touch you hard if you don't keep in form. Now come along; we're wasting time!"

"I'm not coming."

"Do you want us to serenade you again?"

"Rats!"

"Serenades are off," said Doyle. "There's too much Manders about for that. Give Tommy a hand if he can't move."

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here——" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Come on!"

Tommy Dodd's chums were tired of argument. They seized the hapless Tommy, and he was marched out of the study, vainly resisting. His voice was heard far and wide in wrathful accents as he went struggling down the stairs.

"Now then, what's that row?" called out Knowles of the Sixth from the lower passage.

And Tommy Dodd was silent. In silence, under the frown of the Modern prefect, he walked out into the quadrangle with his chums.

"Look here, you silly asses!" he said in a suppressed voice, as they came out into the summer sunshine.

"This way," said Cook. "You can mug up German afterwards, Tommy. Keep hold of his arms, you fellows!"

"What-ho!"

There was a group of Classical juniors in the gateway, and they grinned as Tommy Dodd was marched down by his loyal friends. Tommy's face betrayed a plentiful lack of appreciation for their loyalty.

"Oh, gad! What's this game?" asked Mornington. "Your champion runner waitin' to be carried?"

"He, he, he!" gurgled Tubby Muffin.

"Like us to fetch a stretcher?" chuckled Conroy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will want an ambulance, anyway,

after he has run against our lot next week!" remarked Grace.

"Oh, come on, Tommy!" growled Cook. "You Classical duffers can go and eat coke. Tommy will run your legs off!"

"Trot!" said Doyle. "Sure I'm going to time you to Coombe, Tommy."

"Oh, you silly chumps!" groaned Tommy Dodd.

He submitted to his fate. Evidently there was no argument possible with his determined supporters.

Mornington and his comrades looked after them smiling.

Valentine Mornington detached himself from the group at the gates.

"Race you to Coombe, Doddy!" he called out.

Tommy Dodd gave the dandy of the Fourth a look of supreme scorn.

"Race me?" he said. "You couldn't race Jimmy Silver!"

"I know—I know!" grinned Mornington. "But I'll race you, old top, just to show you that you may as well stay in bed on sports day. I'm in the two-fifty, you know, and I expect to come in second."

"You cheeky ass! If I don't leave you standing half-way to Coombe, you can use my head for a footer!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Done!"

"Good man!" said Cook with satisfaction. "Now then, I'll give you the signal. When I say go——"

"I'm ready, dear boys."

"Go!"

The two juniors started on the white high road. The Modern juniors followed them at a more moderate pace, in a mood of satisfaction. Morny was the second best runner on the Classical side, and this was good training for Tommy Dodd. And as the spirit of the contest entered into him, he forgot all about his neglected German studies, and put his "beef" into it.

"Keep 'em in sight!" said Cook.

But it was not easy to keep the two sprinters in sight. They vanished round a bend of the lane, going at great speed, Tommy Dodd leading. And the followers dropped into a trot.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Tommy Dodd Loses His Temper

JIMMY SILVER uttered an exclamation.

The Fistical Four were out of gates that afternoon, and they were sauntering along the Coombe Road, when the rapid patter of feet behind made them look round.

The Classical quartette stopped as they sighted Mornington and Tommy Dodd coming up the road.

Neither of the juniors was in running rig, but it was evidently a race. And Morny had drawn level with the Modern junior now.

There was a smile on Morny's handsome face as he ran, but Tommy Dodd was looking morose. He had fully expected to "walk away" from Mornington, and leave him covered with ridicule. But it was not happening. He had shot ahead at first, but Morny had pulled level, and was keeping level with scarcely an effort. It was borne in upon Tommy's mind that the dandy of the Fourth could have pulled ahead had he chosen.

That was a distinctly unpleasant discovery; for Morny was second to Jimmy Silver, whom Tommy hoped to beat on sports day.

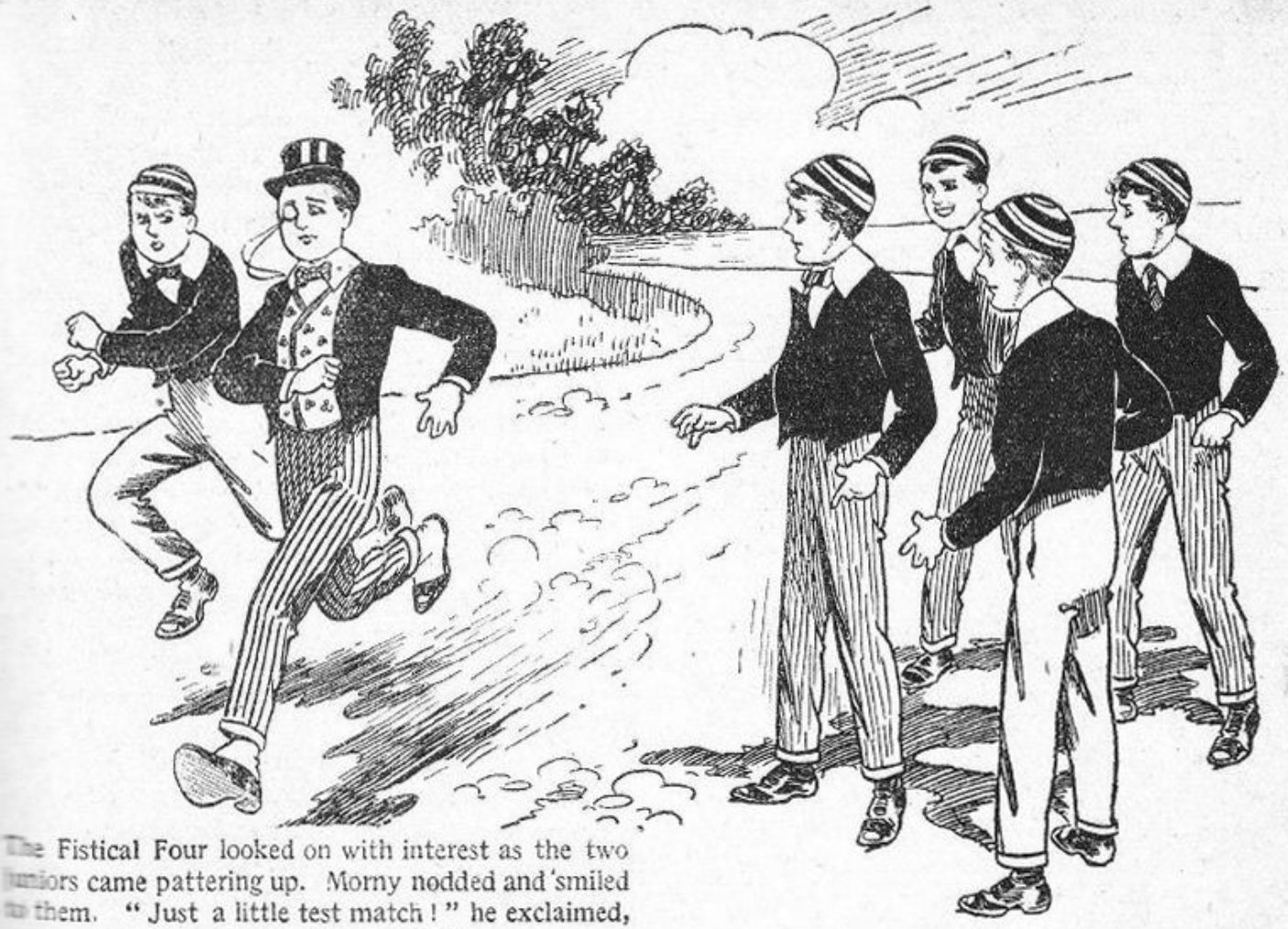
Tommy Dodd was a sportsman through and through, and he could take a beating as cheerfully as any fellow at Rookwood—as a rule. But he was in worried mood now, and somewhat to his own surprise, a feeling of bitterness was surging up in his breast. He had set out to accomplish two objects—to win the German prize to please his father; and to win the two hundred and fifty yards race to please his chums, and for the honour of his House. It looked rather the two objects were incompatible, as, indeed, his chums had told him from the first. Tommy was determined not to give up either; and the thought of a double defeat was bitter.

The Fistical Four looked on with interest as the two juniors came pattering up. Morny nodded and smiled to them.

"Just a little test match," he explained, in passing. "I'm doing Doddy a good turn—showin' him that he'd better save his time on sports day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd did not speak, but his teeth



The Fistical Four looked on with interest as the two juniors came pattering up. Morny nodded and smiled to them. "Just a little test match!" he exclaimed, in passing. (See page 78)

came together hard. He put on a spurt and shot ahead again.

Jimmy Silver glanced at him, and shook his head.

"Dodd's not in the best form," he remarked. "He's pumping himself out, and no mistake. He will have to run better than that at the sports."

"Looks a bit savage!" commented Raby.

"Join up!" grinned Lovel. "We'll trot into the village with them. Rather a joke on the Moderns if we all get ahead of their champion."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It seemed an excellent joke to the Classical chums, and they joined in at once. In a few minutes they were on a level with the runners.

Tommy Dodd glanced at them sourly.

"What the thunder are you fellows doing?" he gasped.

"Getting ahead!" grinned Lovell.

"Lead on, Macduff!" chuckled Newcome.

Tommy Dodd set his teeth hard, and made another effort. Again he shot ahead of his competitors; but the effort tired him, and, he slackened again—and then five juniors running lightly, passed him. Jimmy Silver forged ahead, next to him came Mornington, and then Lovell and Newcome. But George Raby, the least efficient of the crowd, was ahead of Tommy Dodd.

It was only too plain that Tommy was not in his old form. He had taken too much for granted, that was clear to him now.

The road was a straight run into Coombe village now; and far behind, Cook and Doyle and the other Moderns come into sight. Their looks were very peculiar as they sighted the race at a distance—with five Classical juniors running ahead of their champion.

Tommy Dodd was breathing hard.

Coombe was in sight ahead, and he was determined to beat the Classicals to the village—and they were beating him. With a

sustained effort he drew past Raby, and then past Newcome. He was running level with Arthur Edward Lovell now; but Jimmy Silver and Mornington were in advance—and they were not running their hardest.

Close on the village, Tommy Dodd shot ahead of Lovell, and reached Morny's side.

Another effort, and he was level with Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy glanced at him with a smile.

The rivalry at Rookwood between Modern and Classical was too keen for Jimmy not to enjoy the discomfiture of the Modern champion. He did not exert himself to win, but ran level with Tommy; Mornington, exerting himself now, close behind. The perspiration was running thickly down Tommy Dodd's face, and his clothes seemed to be sticking to him. His heart throbbed, and his head was in a buzz. But he stuck gamely to his guns, and for a moment he drew ahead of the captain of the Fourth.

Victory seemed to be within his grasp.

But a moment or two later he discovered that the humorous "Uncle James" of Rookwood was simply pulling his leg. Jimmy shot ahead suddenly, almost without effort, and Tommy was fairly left standing.

He slacked down, gasping.

Mornington passed him, laughing. Tommy Dodd gritted his teeth.

Outside Mrs. Wicks' tuck shop there was a big tree with a wooden bench round it, where the Rookwood juniors often gathered for lemonade and ginger-pop of summer days. Jimmy Silver and Mornington sat down on the bench; and they had had time to order ginger-beer by the time Tommy Dodd came panting up.

Tommy did not sit on the bench—he collapsed on it.

He sat there panting.

"Oh, gad!" murmured Mornington. "The Moderns have put up a merry champion this time, an' no mistake! Here, Doddy, take this. You need it."

He held out a glass of ginger-beer.

The Modern junior did not take it. He struck it angrily aside, and glass and ginger-pop went to the turf together.

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Mornington.

Jimmy Silver raised his eyebrows. He was surprised, and he was shocked, and he did not conceal the fact.

"Dash it all, Doddy——!" he exclaimed.

Tommy Dodd gave him a bitter look.

"You could have beaten me all the way!" he muttered, speaking with difficulty.

Jimmy nodded.

"What did you let me pull ahead for, then?"

Jimmy smiled.

"Only pulling your leg, old scout," he answered.

"You rotter!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Rotter!" panted Tommy Dodd. "That's what I called you!"

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet, and eyed Tommy Dodd grimly. His hands clenched, but he unclenched them again.

"That isn't quite sporting, is it, Doddy?" he asked quietly. "You're out of form, and you've been beaten. Take it like a sport."

"Like a sport, not like a Modern bounder," said Mornington, with a curl of the lip.

Tommy Dodd's eyes blazed. He was fagged out, and he was utterly out of sorts; and perhaps the anticipation of what his friends were going to say troubled his mind. He leaped from the seat, and advanced on Valentine Mornington with his fists clenched.

Jimmy Silver interposed just in time.

He caught Tommy Dodd by the arm, and dragged him back; or Mornington would certainly have gone down under a fierce blow.

Tommy Dodd turned on him savagely.

"Let go—you idiot, let me go——"

"Look here, Dodd——"

"Will you let me go?" shouted Dodd.

"No, I won't if you're going to act the goat!" exclaimed Jimmy, his own anger rising. "You——"

"Take that, then!"

And Tommy Dodd's fist flashed out in passionate anger. And as the crowd of Rookwood fellows came panting up Lovell and Co., and the Moderns behind them, they saw the unexpected sight of Jimmy Silver reeling backwards, to collapse on the turf; and Tommy Dodd standing over him with clenched fists and flashing eyes.

A GREAT OCCASION—SPORTS DAY AT ROOKWOOD SCHOOL

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Uncle James Surprises His Chums

JIMMY SILVER sat up dazedly.

There was a red mark on his cheek where the blow had fallen—hard. And the heavy fall had dazed him for a moment. He sat and gasped in the grass.

Tommy Dodd dropped his hands.

The moment the blow had been struck the junior's better nature asserted itself, and he was ashamed. Tommy Dodd would have given a great deal to recall that hasty blow. He was about to stoop and offer Jimmy Silver help to get on his feet, when the Rookwooders came up with a rush. Arthur Edward Lovell was the first to arrive; and his first proceeding was to brandish a formidable set of knuckles under Tommy Dodd's nose. Tommy jumped back just in time to escape contact.

"You Modern rotter!" bawled Lovell furiously.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

He scrambled to his feet.

"Modern cad!" howled Raby. "Just ratty because you're licked in a race. You worm!"

Tommy Dodd crimsoned.

The charge was, in fact, true, and Tommy Dodd's instant repentance of his hasty "rattiness" remained, naturally, his own secret. He was not at all disposed to own up to a fault, under the condemnation of the Classicals. His expression changed to dark sullenness.

"Mop him up, Jimmy!" panted Lovell. "Here, I'll hold your jacket! Give him a taste of his own medicine."

"Or leave him to me," said Mornington.

"You back out, Morny. Jimmy's going to lick the Modern cad!"

"A dozen Jimmies would be wanted for that!" snapped Tommy Dodd, all defiance at once.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his face where the blow had fallen. He seemed to hesitate.

Nobody had ever averred that the captain of the Rookwood Fourth was "backward in coming forward" in a fistical encounter. He was the chief of the "Fistical Four" of Rookwood; and that enterprising quartette was rather too much than too little famed for its fighting qualities. But now Jimmy jerked his jacket loose of Lovell's grasp: he seemed in no hurry to have it off and begin.

Lovell glared at him.

"You're going to mop him up, I suppose!" he exclaimed.

"All in good time, old chap."

"No time like the present. You're not going to let a Modern cad punch your nose in the open street without squashing him, are you?" howled Lovell.

Tommy Dodd looked rather curiously at Jimmy Silver, and then sat down quietly on the wooden bench. Cook and Doyle exchanged odd glances, and sat down with their leader. Although they did not conceal their disapproval of Dodd's hot-headed act, they were ready to back him up in a "row" with the Classicals, and a "scrap" with the Classical leader. But the scrap, apparently, was not coming off.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders with a rather sneering smile. Towle and Lacy and Wadsley looked on very uncomfortably.

"Well," said Lovell, at last, as Jimmy Silver did not stir, "when are you going to thrash that Modern cad? Take your time, of course."

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

He looked at Tommy Dodd; but the Modern junior avoided meeting his eyes now.

"I'm not going to fight with Dodd unless he wants me to," said Jimmy Silver, at last.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Jimmy!"

"What the thump——"

"You're going to let him thump your chivvy, and take it like a conchy!" shrieked Lovell.

Jimmy crimsoned.

"I think Dodd will say he's sorry for that, when he's cool," he answered. "If any fellow here thinks that I am funky, I'm ready to meet him in the gym, with or without gloves."

"Look here——"

"Jimmy——"

"You're not going to fight your own pals," howled Lovell. "You're going to lick that Modern worm."

"I'm going back."

"Jimmy, you thumping ass——"

"Rats!"

Jimmy Silver stepped back. Lovell glared at him, not in the least understanding the motives of his leader. Jimmy was rather a more thoughtful youth than the other fellows; but Arthur Edward Lovell was never in danger of having his brow "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." He did not understand, and he was wrathful.

"You won't lick him?" he shouted.

"No."

"Then I will!" roared Lovell. "If you won't stand up for the Classical side you can leave it to me."

Lovell made a fierce stride towards Tommy Dodd; but Jimmy Silver caught him by the arm.

"Hold on!"

"Look out, there's Bootles!" muttered Mornington.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, had just hove in sight in the village street. All excitement was dropped at once. Angry as Lovell was even he did not care for his Form-master to behold him "scrapping" in the open streets of Coombe.

The juniors capped their form-master respectfully as he came by.

Mr. Bootles acknowledged their salute graciously, and paused for a moment to speak.

"A pleasant afternoon, my boys," he said genially, "I see you are taking a little walk together this pleasant afternoon, what, what?"

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Jimmy.

Mr. Bootles smiled benignantly.

"I am very glad to see Modern and Classical juniors joining in a friendly walk on a pleasant afternoon," he said, "what, what? That is right, my dear boys. Keep your rivalry for the class-rooms and the playing-fields, and at other times—hem, hem—at other times enjoy the beauties of—er—Nature, in friendly and cordial companionship. What, what!"

And the worthy Mr. Bootles passed on.

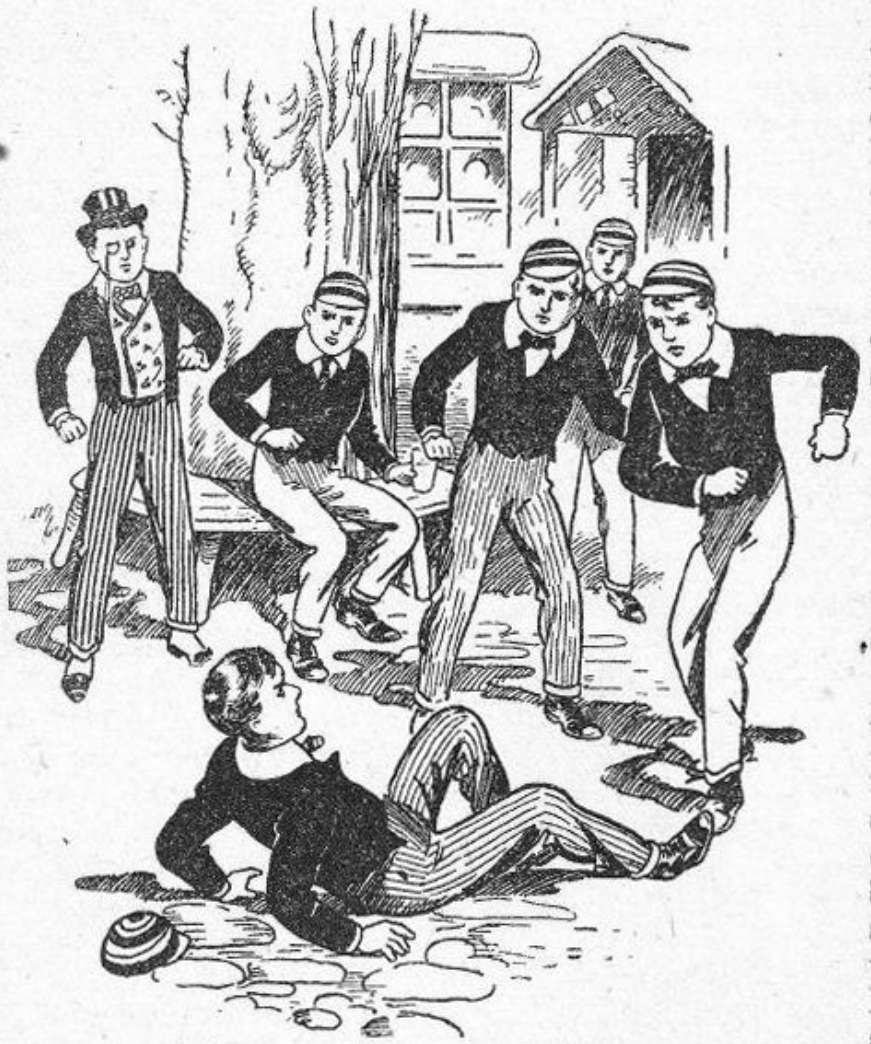
"Oh, my hat!" murmured Mornington.

Some of the juniors grinned; little Mr. Bootles' misapprehension struck them as comic. Jimmy Silver turned and started for Rookwood, holding Lovell by the arm. But Lovell had given up his hostile designs on Tommy Dodd's features, while Mr. Bootles hovered in the offing. Raby and Newcome and Mornington followed them.

The Moderns were left alone under the big tree.

"What's the matter with Silver?" remarked Towle, "I've never known him show the white feather before."

Tommy Dodd looked up with an unexpected scowl.



As the crowd of Rookwood fellows came panting up, Lovell and Co. and the Moderns behind them saw the unexpected sight of Jimmy Silver reeling backwards, to collapse on the turf. (See page 80)

"Don't be a silly ass, Towle!" he said.

"Eh?"

"Deaf?" grunted Tommy Dodd. "Silly ass! Don't be a silly ass! Understand now?"

"Look here, Dodd——" began Towle warmly.

"Silver did seem a bit funky, if you ask me," observed Cook.

"No good asking you—you're a duffer!" retorted Tommy Dod.

"Are you standing up for the Classical cad, after knocking him down?" demanded the astonished Towle.

"Oh, rats!"

"You oughtn't to have done that, Doddy," said Doyle gravely. "It isn't like a sportsman to lose his temper over losing a race."

Tommy Dodd's eyes flashed at him.

"Who's losing his temper?" he snapped.

"Well, you did, didn't you?"

"Bosh!"

"What did you punch Silver for, then?"

"Find out."

With that polished reply, Tommy Dodd detached himself from the bench, and walked away.

"Hallo! Tommy's got his rag out!" remarked Towle.

"Blessed if I understand him, or Silver either," growled Cook. "Let's have some ginger-pop. Looks to me as if we shall get licked in the two-fifty race after all. Dodd's no good unless he pulls himself together—and he don't seem to want to do that. I suppose the Classicals will score all along the line—as per usual!"

And having delivered himself of that pessimistic observation, Tommy Cook consoled himself with ginger-beer—an example which was followed by the rest of the Modern juniors.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

A Rift in the Lute

JIMMY SILVER and Co. walked home to Rookwood in a mood of great discomfort.

Jimmy's cheek still burned from Tommy Dodd's hasty blow; and, in spite of the calm temper upon which Uncle James of Rookwood prided himself, he wondered a little whether he had acted rightly in allowing such an injury to pass unavenged.

There was no doubt what his comrades thought on the subject.

Morny's face wore a sneering look; and Lovell and Raby and Newcome were grimly silent.

Hardly a word was spoken before they reached the gates of Rookwood. Erroll of the Fourth came up to join Mornington there. Before walking away with his chum Morny turned to Jimmy Silver.

"Is there goin' to be a fight?" he asked.

"No."

"Oh!" said Morny.

That was all he said; but his tone brought a hot flush to Jimmy Silver's cheeks.

"If you mean, Morny——" he began.

"Oh, I don't mean anythin'," yawned Mornington, "nothin' at all. Tommy Dodd punched you. You're actin' in a most forgivin' spirit. It does you credit. I hope the Classical chaps will all agree that it does. That's all."

He walked away with Erroll, and the Fistical Four went silently and uncomfortably into the schoolhouse.

"Better have tea, I suppose," said Lovell shortly.

Jimmy Silver nodded, and the chums of the Fourth repaired to the end study for tea.

Tea was a very silent meal.

Although his chums said nothing Jimmy Silver understood well enough their condemnation; and he spoke at last, when tea was nearly over.

"I think you chaps know me too well to think that I'm funky of a scrap with Tommy Dodd," he said, his colour deepening, and his lip curling disdainfully, "I like Dodd well enough, and I don't want to fight him. He acted like a fool, and I am sure that the next minute he was sorry for it. I've no doubt he will say so. We did pull his leg rather, and he lost his temper. Any fellow might do that. I don't want to damage him—and I won't knock the chap out when he's working for a stiff exam."

"Bother his exam.!" growled Lovell. "What's that got to do with the matter?"

"It's coming off soon, and he's slogging for it."

"No bizney of ours."

"No; but——"

"He should have thought of that before he punched a Classical fellow's head."

"I know he should; but he didn't! But I'm not going to dish him for his exam. because he lost his temper for a minute. And it would very likely come to that. He wants to put in every minute, and to keep fit if he's going to bag the German prize."

"And you're worrying about that, when you've still got his mark on your face?"

"Well, you see——"

"I don't see!" interrupted Lovell. "This is all very well for Good Little Georgie in a story-book. It won't do for Rookwood."

"It will have to do!" said Jimmy rather curtly.

"Little Georgie," said Lovell satirically, "loved fellows who punched his nose. If a fellow kicked him Little Georgie used to kiss and make friends. Shall we come over to Manders' house with you presently and see you kiss Tommy Dodd?"

"Don't be an ass!"

"It's you that's an ass. Nobody's ever accused this study of funk before," snapped Lovell.

"Do you mean——"

"Think the yarn won't be all over Rookwood by this time?" exclaimed Lovell scornfully. "I dare say you've got some potty idea of high morality in your silly napper; but the fellows won't understand all that. They'll only think you're afraid."

The door opened at that moment, and the fat face of Tubby Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, looked in.

Muffin was grinning.

"Is it true, Jimmy?" he exclaimed.

"Is what true, ass?" asked Jimmy Silver gruffly.

"The fellows are saying——"

"I don't want to know what they are saying."

"They're saying——"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"They're saying that a Modern bounder thrashed you in the street at Coombe——"

"Dry up, you fat duffer!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Leggett says you went down on your knees to him——"

"Leggett had better say it to me!"

"Peele says you ran away——"

"Will you clear off?"

"Gower says he's heard that you begged the Moderns to let you off, with tears in your eyes," persisted Tubby Muffin. "Is it true?"

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet.

His look was so dangerous that Reginald Muffin decided not to wait for confirmation, or otherwise, of the interesting news he had heard. He closed the study door quickly, and scudded down the passage. Jimmy sat down again, his chums looking at him expressively.

"You see!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, in a tone of patient argument.

"Oh, rats!"

"The yarn's round already, and it's growing. The Moderns will be cackling over this!" said Lovell bitterly. "But you don't care, of course. So long as that Modern cad gets through his putrid exam., the fellows can say we're cowards in this study and you don't care!"

Jimmy Silver rose again, and without replying quitted the end study. He was finding the society of his old pals somewhat jarring.

His face was clouded as he walked down the passage. There was a group of juniors by the window at the end of the passage, in warm discussion, Valentine Mornington among them. Tubby Muffin was speaking in an excited squeak as Jimmy came by.

"It's all true—he practically admitted it! Looked as guilty as anything! He dared not meet my eye, you know."

"What's that, you fat idiot?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver savagely.

Tubby Muffin spun round in alarm.

"Is—is that you, Jimmy? I—I didn't see you, old chap. I—I—I was just telling these fellows that I didn't believe a word of it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Morny saw it!" said Jones minor. "If Morny saw it—look here, Jimmy Silver, have you been letting the Moderns thrash you, and disgracing our side?"

Mornington broke in with a cynical grin:

"Silver has been exercisin' forbearance, an'

"I am very glad to see Moderns and Classicals joining in a friendly walk on a pleasant afternoon," said Mr. Bootles, smiling benignantly. (See page 82)

settin' us all a noble example," he said. "We can't do better than follow Silver's example. Next time a Modern kicks me I'm going to beg him to do it again. Can't do better than follow my leader."

"Shut up, Morny!" muttered Erroll hastily.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

There was a chortle among the Classical juniors, and all eyes were turned very curiously on the captain of the Fourth. Jimmy Silver came a step or two nearer Mornington, his eyes gleaming.

"I've refused to fight Tommy Dodd," he said. "I take it that you mean that I've shown the white feather, Mornington."

"Cap fit, cap wear!" suggested Mornington.

"Very well! I don't allow any fellow to call me a coward. What time will it suit you to meet me in the gym?"

"Any time you like, old bean," answered Mornington at once.

"Now, then!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I'm your man."

"Morny——" began Erroll, looking distressed.

"You're going to be my second, Erroll! Just come along, then," said Mornington, deliberately misunderstanding; and he took his chum's arm and followed Jimmy Silver.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

The Fight

"LOVELL!"

"Hop away, you fat toad!" said Lovell angrily.

Lovell and Co. were in the common-room when Tubby Muffin arrived breathless. The three chums were not looking happy. They could foresee any amount of "chipping" on the subject of Jimmy Silver's singular forbearance towards Tommy Dodd; and it irked them to think of it. They knew Jimmy too well to entertain any suspicion of "cold feet" in the matter. But they did not expect the other fellows to take their view. They felt that the reputation of the end study was at stake.

"I say, Lovell——"

"Kick that fat bounder out!" said Raby savagely.

Tubby Muffin retreated.

"But I say, I've come to tell you—Jimmy Silver's fighting——"

"Oh!" Arthur Edward Lovell's glum countenance brightened up wonderfully; "fighting Tommy Dodd?"

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Raby and Newcome, in a breath. "Where are they?"

"In the gym!" gasped Tubby. "But——"

"Come on, you chaps!"

"But he's not——"

Lovell and Co. did not stop to listen. They took it for granted that their chum was fighting Tommy Dodd, and they did not waste time hearing Tubby Muffin explain; they rushed off to the gym at once.

There was a crowd of juniors in a corner of the gym, and two fellows in their shirtsleeves with the gloves on.

"Here they are!" exclaimed Lovell joyously. "Why—what—it's not Dodd!"

"Time!" called out Smythe of the Shell, who was acting as time-keeper with a big gold watch in his hand.

Jimmy Silver and Mornington closed in strife.

Lovell and Co. joined the ring about the combatants, in a state of wonder and surprise.

"What the thump are they fighting about, Erroll?" exclaimed Lovell, catching Morny's chum by the sleeve. "I thought it was Dodd! What——"

"I'm afraid it's Morny's fault," answered Erroll, with a clouded brow.

"Oh! He's been chipping Jimmy?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Cheeky cad!" growled Lovell, rather unreasonably. "Go it, Jimmy! Give him beans!"

"Play up, Jimmy!" roared Newcome and Raby.

There was no doubt of the loyalty of the end study to its leader; in spite of the little misunderstanding among them. Lovell and Co. assumed the pally privilege of "slanging" their chum as much as they liked; but they were quite ready to resent anyone else slanging him. Their hearts were quite with Uncle James of Rookwood now.

"Go it, Jimmy!"

"Buck up, Morny!" shouted Townsend and Topham.

"Time!" said Smythe.

The combatants separated, both breathing hard.

Mornington was a tough antagonist, even for the chief of the Fistical Four, and both the adversaries had received some punishment in the round.

"But if he's fighting Morny, why couldn't he fight Dodd, who punched his silly head?" murmured Lovell to his chums.

Raby gave a shrug.

"Don't ask me! Jimmy was always a silly ass in some things."

"He'll lick Morny, anyhow," said Newcome, with satisfaction.

The end study had no doubts on that point. But the contest was not the foregone conclusion that they supposed. Round followed round, and Mornington was still holding his own. It was at the sixth round that Morny went heavily down, and was slow in coming up to the call of time.

In the seventh round, the dandy of the Fourth was evidently getting the worst of it; though he stood up gamely to his punishment.

Jimmy Silver's face was very grim.

He was the best-natured fellow at Rookwood; but he could be a hard hitter, and he

was hitting hard now. Morny's cynical taunts had stung him far more than Tommy Dodd's thoughtless and passionate blow; and perhaps he was more grimly bent on avenging the taunts, because he left the blow unavenged.

But the fight was a tough one, and Jimmy's face showed very plainly the signs of punishment, in spite of the gloves.

Mornington went down again, and Adolphus Smythe began to count, with his eyes on his big gold watch.

It was just then that a knot of Sixth-formers entered the gym, and they glanced at once towards the excited group in the corner. Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, came quickly towards the juniors.

Mornington staggered to his feet when Smythe of the Shell had counted nine.

"I'm ready!" he panted.

"Stop!"

It was Bulkeley's voice, as the Rookwood captain cuffed his way through the ring of excited juniors.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Bulkeley, sternly. "Stop at once! Mornington, if you raise your hand again, I shall report you to the Head."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, let him go on, Bulkeley," exclaimed Lovell. "He's only got one kick left in him."

"Disperse at once!" said Bulkeley, curtley. "Silver and Mornington, you will take five hundred lines each. If there is any more of this, you will hear from me. Now clear off."

The Rookwood captain's word was law.

The group of juniors broke up, disappointed. Lovell and Co. gathered round Jimmy Silver as he left the gym, breathing very hard.

"Good man!" whispered Lovell. "But why the thump couldn't you give all that to the Modern cad, instead of walloping a Classical? I don't understand."

"You wouldn't!" answered Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, rats! Come and bathe your eye."

Jimmy's eye needed bathing. When the Fistical Four gathered in the end study for prep., the captain of the Fourth was feeling far from comfortable. Lovell and Co. were more amicable now; they realised that any more "slanging" was out of place, while their chief was suffering from the effects of a hard tussle.

Prep. was nearly over, when the door of the end study opened, and Valentine Mornington's face looked in—damaged.

Mornington gave a cheery nod in reply to the grim looks the Fistical Four turned upon him.

"Feelin' bad, Silver?" he asked.

"Oh, rats!" grunted Jimmy.

"My dear old bean, I'm askin' in quite a friendly spirit," said Morny, cheerfully. "I'm feelin' aw'fully bad myself. I should have been done in a couple minutes more, if Bulkeley hadn't barged in. Erroll's been jawin' me. I've come to tell you I'm sorry; I never really thought you'd shown the white feather. Only my pretty way, you know."

And with that, and another cheery nod, Mornington walked away.

"Silly ass!" was Jimmy Silver's comment; but he smiled, in spite of himself.

"After all, it will stop the fellows chippin'," remarked Lovell. "They won't want to get a set of features like Morny's."

Arthur Edward was right; chipping on the Classical side was at an end. But there was a good deal of it yet to come from the heroes of the Modern side of Rookwood, as the end study was destined to discover.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Tommy Dodd Puts His Foot Down

"WE'LL, give 'em beans!"

"Sure we will!"

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were making those remarks as Tommy Dodd came into his study on the Modern side the following day.

Tommy Dodd frowned.

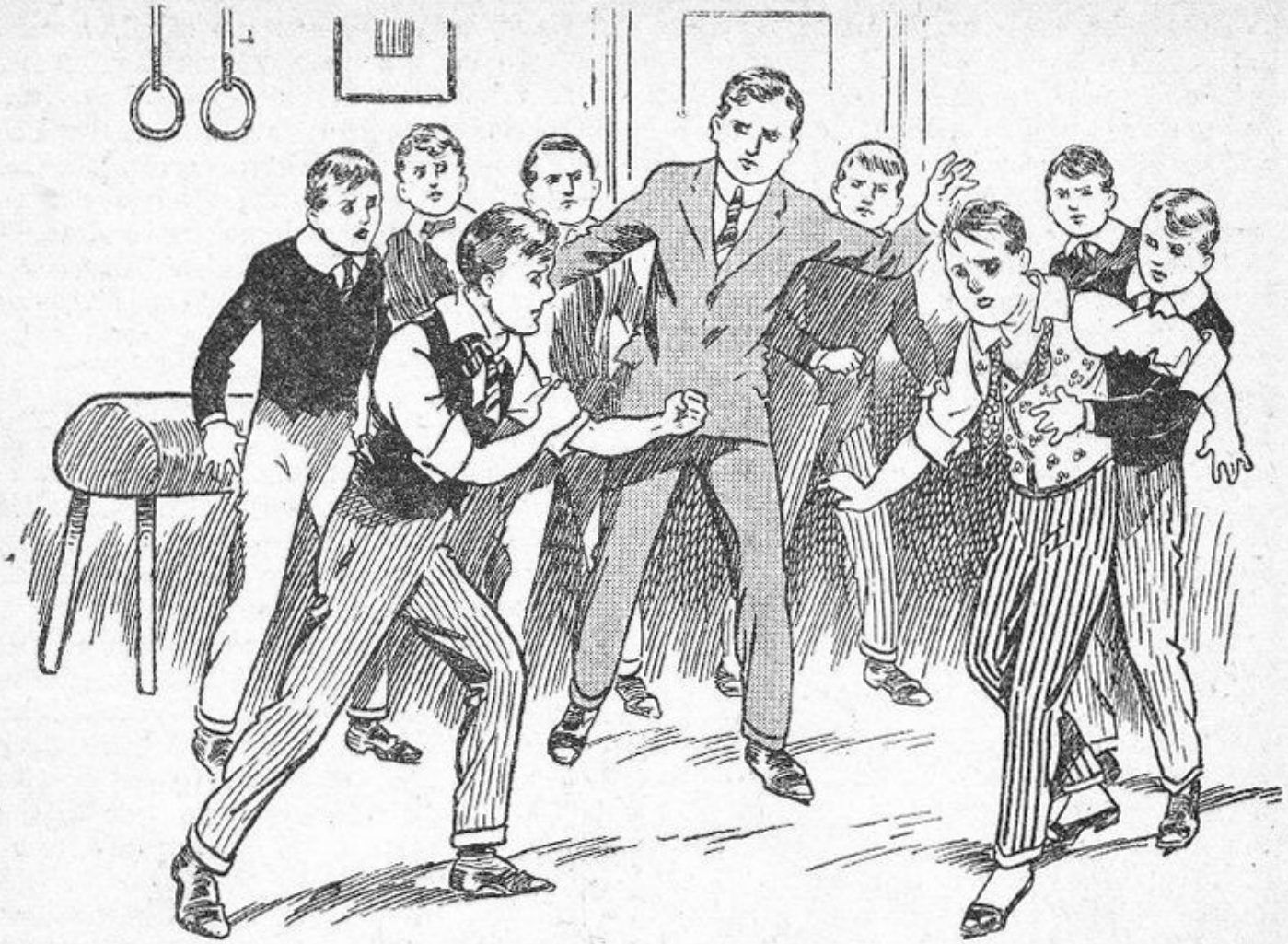
"You'll give whom beans?" he demanded. "What's the little game now?"

Cook and Doyle grinned.

"The Classicals!" explained Cook. "Towle's got an idea, it will make them sit up. You see, Silver having shown cold feet——"

"Don't be a silly ass!" said Tommy Dodd gruffly.

"Sure and it's mighty polite ye are," re-



"Stop!" It was Bulkeley's voice, as the Rookwood captain cuffed his way through the ring of excited juniors. (See page 87)

marked Doyle sarcastically. "Yer manners are improving."

"I mean what I say. If you're going to chip the Classicals about what happened in Coombe yesterday, you can chuck it. Jimmy Silver came out of that better than I did," said Tommy Dodd moodily.

His chums stared at him.

"He funked!" exclaimed Cook.

"He didn't, you ass. I'd have told him I was sorry, only that ass Lovell barged in," said Tommy Dodd, flushing, "I acted like a fool and a cad. I'm sorry I did, only I can't say so without the Classicals crowing. Let Jimmy Silver alone."

"We're going to chip them about it, I tell you. It's a regular catch," said Cook warmly. "If Silver hasn't got cold feet, why don't he ask you into the gym?"

"Do you think I want a scrap with Silver now, with a dashed exam. to worry about as well as the race coming off in a few days?"

"I suppose that wasn't why Silver held off?"

"I shouldn't wonder if it was. He's a good chap, and I dare say he knew I was nervy at the time, and acted the goat."

"Oh, rats! We're going to make the most of it," said Cook obstinately. "It's a chance to make the Classicals sing small. Towle's got an idea——"

"Bother Towle!"

"And we're going to back him up intirely," exclaimed Doyle.

"Oh, all right," Tommy Dodd closed the study door, and pushed back his cuffs with a warlike air, much to the surprise and alarm of his chums. "Now, which of you is coming on first?"

"You silly ass!" howled Cook. "Do you want to start scrapping with your own pals?"

Tommy Dodd nodded.

"Yes, if you're going to rag Silver about our row."

"Well, you silly spalpeen——"

"Are you going to chuck the idea, then?"

Cook gave a snort.

"We're not going to knock you out for the race, you ass. If you make a point of it, we'll let Silver alone."

"That's settled, then."

"But Towle——"

"Oh, blow Towle! I've just been with Flinders," said Tommy Dodd, changing the subject. "He thinks I've got a good chance for the German prize, and he's told me so."

"What about the race? You've not got much of a chance for that, judging by your show yesterday," said Cook discontentedly. "Nice for us, with the Classicals bagging everything. Conroy is sure of the long jump, and most of the fellows think that Pons will bag the high jump. That Dutch bounder Van Ryn will chuck the cricket-ball further than any Modern can see it. The Classicals are expecting——"

"Never mind what they're expecting," interrupted Tommy Dodd. "We've got to see that they're disappointed. I'm not in the form I thought I was. I suppose I've been sticking a bit too close to swotting. Couldn't be helped, I've got to bag the prize for German. But there's plenty of time for some training. You fellows coming for a run out?"

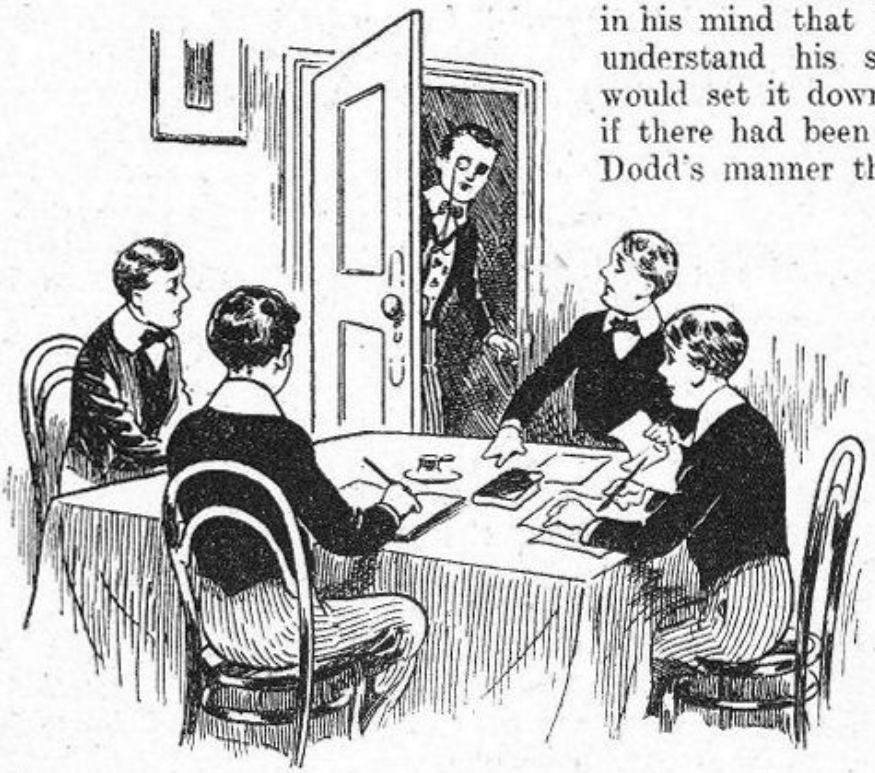
Cook and Doyle became amicable at once.

"Now you're talking," said Tommy Cook. "We're ready. No reason why you shouldn't beat Jimmy Silver if you stick to it."

And the three Tommies quitted Mr. Manders's house in a cheery mood. Tommy Dodd was aware now that he had overestimated his powers, and he was displaying a keenness which delighted his chums. To bag the German prize was a duty, to beat all Classical comers in the two hundred and fifty yards race was both a duty and a pleasure, and Tommy Dodd was determined to accomplish both objects if it was humanly possible to do so.

The Three Tommies passed the Fistical Four in the quadrangle, and there were rather dark looks exchanged between the rival juniors. Jimmy Silver's face was clouded as he glanced at Tommy Dodd.

The uncomfortable thought was in his mind that Dodd would not understand his self-control, and would set it down to "funk," and if there had been a sign of that in Dodd's manner there would probably have been a fight in the quad on the spot. Jimmy's serene temper was suffering a little, and he was growing more and more doubtful as to the wisdom of the course he had taken.



"Erroll's been jawing me," said Morny cheerfully, from the study door. "I've come to tell you I'm sorry. I never thought you had really shown the white feather, Silver." (See page 87)

But Tommy Dodd walked on without even looking at the captain of the Fourth, only defiant glances being exchanged between Cook and Doyle, and Lovell and Co.

The three Tommies disappeared out of gates. The chums of the Classical Fourth sauntered on, Jimmy in a thoughtful mood. He had several aches and pains about him, the results of his fight with Valentine Mornington, and they added, perhaps, to his

thoughtfulness. The Fistical Four were still near the gates when Towle came along with several other Modern juniors.

James Towle had a parcel in his hand, tied up in brown paper, apparently for the post. He grinned at the Classical juniors, and his companions chuckled, like fellows in possession of a good joke. Lovell gave an angry grunt

"Let's mop up that crowd!" he suggested.

But Towle and Co. went out of the gates rather hurriedly, and disappeared. Tubby Muffin was lounging in the gateway, and after the Moderns were gone he came rolling up to Jimmy Silver.

"What's Towle sending you, Jimmy?" he inquired.

"Eh? Is he sending me anything?"

"That parcel——"

"What parcel?"

"Didn't you notice Towle had a parcel? I saw the label on it as they passed, and it was addressed to you," said Tubby, eyeing the captain of the Fourth curiously.

Jimmy stared.

"Addressed to me! Why the thump should it be addressed to me?" he asked.

"That's what I was asking you. Queer that Towle should send you a parcel by post, ain't it?" said Tubby. "He could have handed it to you and saved the postage."

"Towle's a silly ass, and you're another, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver gruffly; and he walked away.

But he wondered a good deal what the incident meant. He was destined to discover after lessons that day. In the Fourth Form-room that afternoon, Moderns and Classicals were gathered together with Mr. Bootles—and the look of Towle, Lacy, Wadsley, and some other Moderns showed that they were still enjoying their little joke, whatever it was. But it was not till after classes were dismissed that Jimmy Silver and Co. learned what the Modern joke was.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Cold Feet!

"PARCEL for you, Jimmy!"

The Fistical Four were in the junior common-room, when Rawson came in with a parcel in his hand. It was a brown paper parcel, and looked very like the one seen in Towle's hand earlier in the day.

"Post's just in," explained Rawson. "I thought I'd bring it along to you."

"Thanks, old chap."

Jimmy Silver took the parcel in a perplexed mood.

He remembered Tubby Muffin's peculiar statement, and wondered whether this was Towle's parcel.

He cut the string, and opened the wrappings on the big table, and turned out the contents of the parcel.

"What the thump——" he ejaculated in astonishment.

There was a single article in the parcel.

It was an old, well-worn and frayed foot-warmer. Once upon a time it had been quite a useful article, covered with leather and padded with wool; but it had seen its best days, and had evidently been thrown aside as useless. Whoever had sent it to Jimmy Silver had apparently disinterred it from the recesses of a lumber-room.

Jimmy Silver stared at it blankly.

"What the dickens is it?" exclaimed Lovell.

"A dusty old rag—it's been a foot-warmer when it was anything," said Jimmy Silver.

"A foot-warmer!" howled Lovell.

"Looks like it."

"There's a card with it," said Raby.

Jimmy picked up the card. On the card was inscribed in Roman capitals:

A PRESENT FOR JIMMY SILVER.
WITH KIND REGARDS FROM THE
MODERN SIDE.

"He, he, he!" came from Tubby Muffin. "That's Towle's parcel. I saw it was addressed to Jimmy Silver."

"But what the thump has Towle sent me an old foot-warmer for?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in amazement.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver glanced at the grinning Classicals who had gathered round. The meaning of Towle's little present dawned upon the other fellows sooner than upon Jimmy.

"Well, where does the cackle come in?" demanded Jimmy.

"Can't you see?" muttered Lovell savagely.

"No, I can't!"

"None so blind as those who won't see," murmured Smythe of the Shell, and there was a chuckle.

"Well, what is it meant for, Smythe, as you seem to know all about it?" asked Jimmy, fixing his eyes upon the nut of the Shell, with an expression that made Adolphus step back a pace.

"It's plain enough," said Adolphus. "Foot-warmers are used for cold feet, I believe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver's face crimsoned.

"Cold feet!" He understood now.

"It's a Modern joke," said Newcome. "Cold feet! I suppose you'll go over to Manders' house and see Tommy Dodd now, Jimmy?"

"Or are you going to let the Moderns howl 'cold feet' at us?" demanded Lovell, breathless with fury.

Jimmy set his lips.

"We'll all come over and call on Dodd with you," said Higgs.

"I'm not going to call on Dodd," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "I don't believe Dodd has had a hand in this."

"Rats!"

"I'm going to call on Towle, though."

"How do you know it was Towle?" sneered Peele.

"Muffin saw him with the parcel."

"Yes, rather," giggled Tubby Muffin. "I knew it was some joke of the Modern bounders. He, he, he!"

"Well, Towle isn't so hefty as Tommy Dodd in a scrap," said Peele, shrugging his shoulders. "Better call on Towle, perhaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver made a stride towards Cyril Peele. The next moment the nut of the Fourth was struggling in his grasp.

"Let me alone, hang you!" howled Peele. "If you're looking for a scrap there's Tommy Dodd——"

"Yaas, that's so," chimed in Smythe of the Shell. "Let him alone."

"Look here, Jimmy——"

"Hands off!" exclaimed Gower.

Jimmy Silver did not heed. His powerful grasp forced Peele to his knees. Peele was a great nut, but he was no fighting man. Jimmy pinned him down with one hand, wriggling; and with the other he jammed the foot-warmer upon Peele's head. He jammed it well home, till Peele was covered down to the mouth, as if with a helmet.

"That's for you, Peele," said Jimmy. "Now I'm going over to see Towle."

Jimmy walked out of the common-room, followed by Lovell and Co. They were angry with their chum, but it was rather a dangerous business to look for trouble with the Moderns on the Modern side, and they would not let Jimmy go alone.

Cyril Peele struggled frantically with the foot-warmer. But it was not easy to displace. It was rather a small size for Peele's head, and it was jammed on tight. A crowd of juniors surrounded Peele, yelling with laughter, as he struggled with it.

"Lend me a hand, you silly cackling duffers!" howled Peele.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Ow! Groogh! Lemme a hand!" gasped Peele, wrenching furiously at the foot-warmer. "Oh, my hat! Yoop!"

He got it off at last disclosing a crimson face and ruffled, dusty hair.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornington. "You need a wash, Peele!"

"And a brush!" chuckled Conroy.

Peele hurled the foot-warmer across the room and strode out.

"Jimmy Silver's on the Modern side if you want him!" called out Mornington.

But Peele's footsteps did not lead him to Mr. Manders' house. Apparently he did not want Jimmy Silver.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

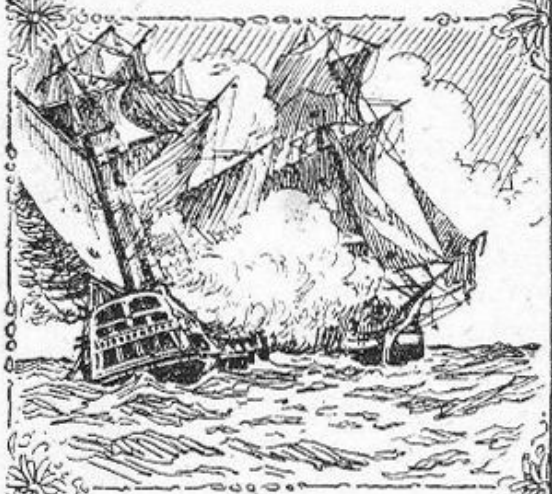
A Study "Rag"

JIMMY SILVER'S brow was dark as he walked into Mr. Manders' house, with Lovell and Co at his heels.

He was growing more and more uncertain as to whether he had taken the right course

Famous Fights for the Flag

The Ashantee War. The Battle of Elmina, on June 13th, 1873, when the Ashantees were repulsed with tremendous losses by a mixed force of British sailors and marines



The Battle of Trafalgar, on October 21st, 1805. A powder-monkey named Albert Huggett, at great risk of being jammed between his own ship and a French man-o'-war, dived to the rescue of a midshipman

in dealing with Tommy Dodd on that disagreeable occasion at Coombe. His pacifism had been cruelly misunderstood, and it had already caused trouble on the Classical side. But if Jimmy Silver had erred on the side of pacifism on that occasion, his looks showed that he did not mean to repeat the error on this occasion.

Without looking to see whether any of his friends had followed him, he mounted the staircase to the Modern Fourth-Form studies.

Leggett of the Fourth howled out "Classical cads" from the distance, but Jimmy took no notice of Leggett. Leggett was not his game.

He arrived at the door of James Towle's study.

Within that study were the sounds of a tea-party, and the sound of chuckling was mingled with the clinking of cups and saucers. Towle and his study-mates seemed to be in a merry mood. Doubtless they were enjoying their little joke on the Classicals, unaware that vengeance was at hand.

Jimmy Silver hurled the door open.

Towle, Lacy, and Wadsley jumped to their feet.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Towle. "What the thump——"

Jimmy strode in.

"You sent me a present, Towle!" he said.

"Oh!" ejaculated Towle.

As a matter of absolute fact Towle would have preferred that present to remain anonymous. It was sent with the kind regards of the Modern side, and Towle was not anxious to figure personally in the matter. But his little joke had evidently been brought home to him.

"Is that so, or isn't it?" demanded Jimmy.

"Well, suppose it is?" said Towle, feeling that he could not back out, but feeling far from comfortable at the same time.

"I've come here to show you how I appreciate it, that's all."

"Hear, hear!" growled Lovell, tramping in, followed by Raby and Newcome.

"You clear out of my study you Classical cads!" exclaimed Towle.

"Rescue!" yelled Lacy. "Classical cads! Rescue!"

There was a shout along the passage. Arthur Edward Lovell slammed the door, and turned the key in the lock.

"Who's got cold feet now?" he jeered.

"We're not afraid of you," hooted Towle. "Four to three ain't fair play, though."

"You keep at the door and see that nobody comes in, Lovell," said Jimmy Silver. "Are you ready, Towle?"

"Look here——"

"Are you ready, Lacy?" grinned Raby.

"And what about you, Wadsley?" chuckled Newcome.

Whether the three Moderns were ready or not it was time to begin. There was a rush of the three Classicals, and a terrific combat commenced in Towle's study.

Lovell stood with his back to the door and looked on. Fair play was a jewel, as Arthur Edward would have said; and he did not intervene. But his intervention was not necessary.

Towle and Co. were plucky enough, but they were not really equal to holding their own against three members of the Fistical Four.

In three minutes Towle and Co. were strewn on their study carpet, roaring.

Outside the study there was a commotion.

Moderns were gathering there from far and near, in great wrath and indignation at this lawless invasion of their quarters.

But the locked door stopped them. There was no rescue for the hapless modern jokers.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Towle. "I give in! Get up! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Let us in!" shouted Tommy Cook's wrathful voice outside.

"No admission for Moderns!" replied Lovell.

"Yah! Classical cads!"

"Modern fatheads! Rats!"

"Bust that door open!" shouted Cook.

"Bang, bang!"

"Let us in, Towle, can't you?"

"Ha, ha! He can't!" chuckled Lovell. "He would if he could—wouldn't you, Towle?"

"Yow-ow-ow!" was the unhappy Towle's reply.

"Sit on those two duffers!" said Jimmy Silver. "I'm dealing with Towle!"

"What-ho!"

Lacy and Wadsley were promptly sat upon by Raby and Newcome. Towle sat on the carpet and eyed Jimmy Silver apprehensively. He was already repenting of his humorous proclivities, and fervently wishing that he had left that old foot-warmer to repose in the lumber-room.

Jimmy took a jar of jam from the table. That jar of jam had been intended to grace the festive board in Towle's study. It was now designed for another purpose.

"Where will you have it, Towle?" inquired Jimmy Silver politely.

"Yow! Keep off, you beast!"

"Down your neck?"

"Yow-ow!"

"Well, are you sorry you sent me that little present?" inquired Jimmy, holding Towle's collar with an iron hand, while he raised the jar of jam over Towle's hapless head with the other.

"No!" gasped Towle, defiantly. "Cold feet! Yah!"

Bang! bang! came at the door.

Swoosh! The jam descended upon Towle's devoted head in a swamping mass; Towle gave a howl.

"Hand me the margarine," said Jimmy. "Towle isn't satisfied yet."

"Yah! Stoppit!"

"Are you sorry?"

"Yes!" wailed Towle, as the jam ran down over his eyes and ears, and down the back of his neck. "Oh! ah! ow! Yes!"

"Yah! Funk!" came a howl from the infuriated Moderns outside the study. "Stand up to him, Towle."

"Groogh!"

"Are you awfully sorry?" demanded Jimmy Silver, with the margarine poised over Towle's helpless head.

"Yow-ow! Yes!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Yes!" gasped Towle.

"Say so, then, for all the Moderns to hear."

"Buck up, Towle!" yelled the Moderns outside. But Towle was looking up at the margarine in horrified dread. The jam was enough for him.

"Ow! I—I—I—I'm awfully, fearfully sorry!" he babbled.

"Good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver tossed the margarine upon the table again. Towle sat dismally clawing at the jam in his hair.

"Oh, you Classical rotters!" gasped Cook outside. "Wait till we get hold of you."

"Cave!" came a howl along the passage. "Manders!"

The yelling and thumping at the door died away suddenly. In the dead silence that followed the scurrying of flying feet, the voice of Mr. Manders was heard.

"What is this noise—what is this disturbance? I will not allow——"

But there was no disturbance when Mr. Manders arrived on the scene. The disturbers of the peace had vanished into thin air. The Modern master gave a sniff, which was audible in Towle's study, and passed on.

Lovell chuckled softly.

"Good old Manders!" he murmured. "About time we slid, I think, before those rotters come back."

"Just about time!" smiled Jimmy Silver.

Lovell unlocked the door; the passage was clear. The Fistical Four promptly "slid"; and departed from Manders' house in peace. But they did not leave peace behind them.

Ten minutes later, there was a wrathful crowd in Towle's study—where the unhappy Towle was still clawing jam from his hair. And every member of the crowd had something to say to Towle, and what he had to say was not complimentary. Never had an unfortunate humorist repented so deeply and sincerely of his misplaced humour, as did James Towle of the Modern Fourth.

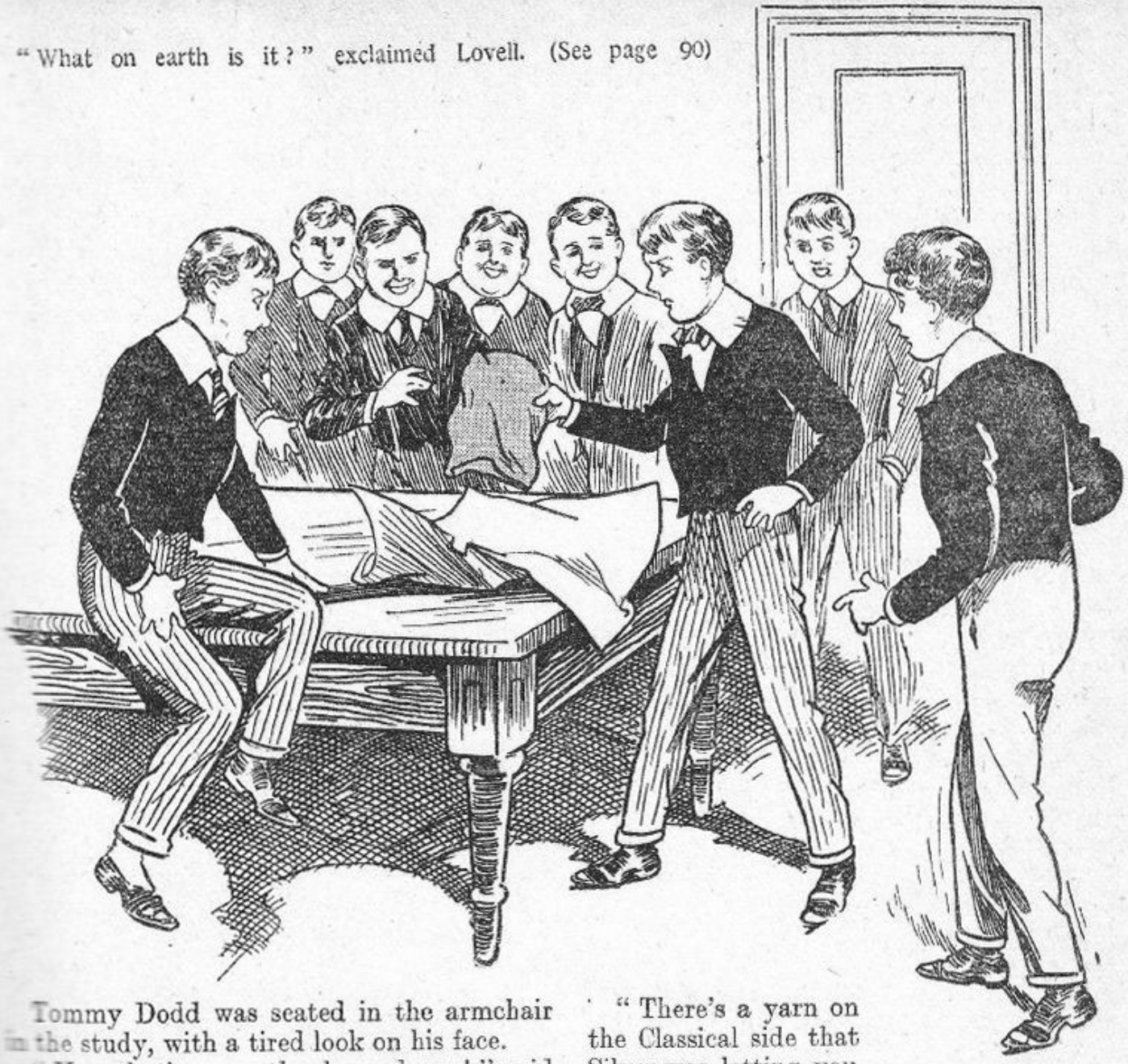
THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

The Right Thing!

"THANK goodness that's over!"

Tommy Cook made the remark in his study, about a week after the little scene in which the Fistical Four had figured on the Modern side. Tommy Cook was alluding to the German exam

"What on earth is it?" exclaimed Lovell. (See page 90)



Tommy Dodd was seated in the armchair in the study, with a tired look on his face.

"Yes, that's over, thank goodness!" said Tommy Doyle. "Howly Jerusalem smoke! but it's been a worry intirely. You'll be all right, Tommy—you're bound to be ahead."

"I hope so!" said Dodd, "I put all I knew into the dashed thing! I think I shall come out all right."

Cook and Doyle exchanged a glance.

"And now it's over——" began Cook.

"Now it's over——" murmured Doyle.

"Well, now it's over?" said Tommy Dodd, looking at his chums. "Are you thinking about the sports? I'm all right for that."

"About Jimmy Silver——"

"Well, what about Jimmy Silver?" asked Dodd, rather gruffly.

"There's a yarn on the Classical side that Silver was letting you off, because he wouldn't wallop you before the exam.," said Cook. "It's all rot, of course; they're saying that because they won't own up to cold feet. But now the exam.'s over——"

"I don't think it's all rot."

"What?"

"I thought something of the kind all along," said Tommy Dodd quietly. "Jimmy Silver's a good sort, and I ought to tell him I'm sorry for acting the goat as I did that day in Coombe."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Tommy! Look here, it's pretty clear that the Classicals will score over us at the sports, even if you pull off the two-fifty for our side. We want you to wind

up the term by licking Jimmy Silver. That will put the Classicals in their place."

"Hear, hear!" said Doyle heartily.

Doyle's "hear, hear!" was repeated by several other Modern juniors who were in the study. There was no doubt about the Modern opinion on the subject. Towle was the most emphatic. Towle had excellent reasons of his own for yearning to see Jimmy Silver licked by a Modern.

Tommy Dodd glanced quietly at the juniors.

He had his own thoughts on the subject; which probably were not in line with those of his comrades.

"Feeling fit, what?" asked Doyle. "That rotten exam. hasn't taken it out of you?"

"Oh, I'm fit enough!"

"Feel up to a scrap?"

"Quite."

"Good!" said Doyle heartily. "Then let's go along in a crowd and see the Classicals. Now the exam.'s over, Silver won't have any excuse for backing out; and if he does, we'll howl 'cold feet' at him, till he comes up to the scratch."

"Yes, rather!" said Towle, with great emphasis.

"You're coming, Tommy?"

"Say you'll come, old scout."

Tommy Dodd detached himself from the armchair. There was a rather peculiar expression on his face.

"Coming?" exclaimed Towle joyously.

"Oh, yes."

"They're in the gym now," said Lacy eagerly. "We'll catch the bounders before a crowd, and Silver will simply have to back up."

"The more the merrier," said Tommy Dodd. "I'd be glad to have all Rookwood looking on, if it comes to that."

"Bravo!"

"Good old Tommy!"

"That's our Thomas!" said Cook, in great admiration. "I knew you'd play up, old chap, and do the right thing."

"I'm going to do the right thing," said Tommy Dodd. "You needn't worry about that."

"Hurray!" cried the boys joyfully.

"Come on, you fellows."

The crowd marched out of the study with Tommy Dodd. As the news spread, more and more of the Modern juniors joined up, till it was quite a triumphal procession that marched into the gym.

Jimmy Silver and Co. were there, as well as a good many other Classical fellows. The entrance of the Modern procession drew general attention upon them.

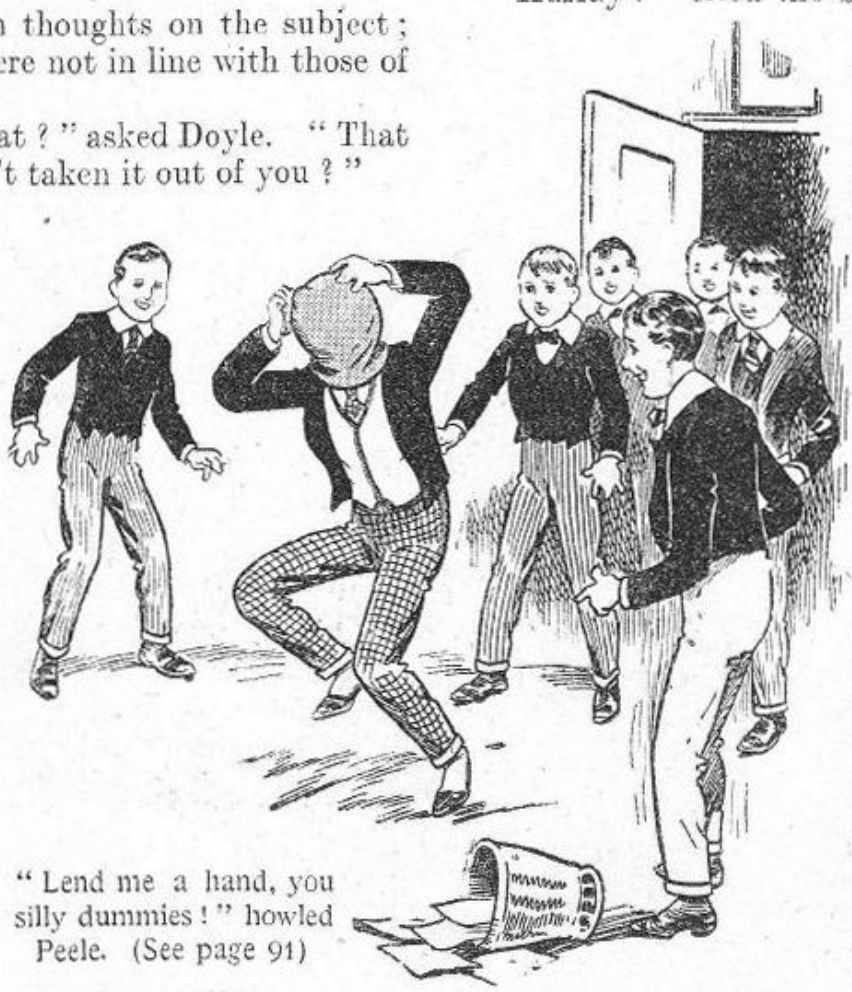
"Hallo! Moderns looking for trouble," remarked Lovell. "You're in for it now, Jimmy, whether you like it or not."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"If anybody's looking for trouble with me, he won't look without finding it," he answered. "I think I did right the other day in Coombe; but once is enough."

"Quite enough—in fact once is too much!" remarked Lovell.

There was a gathering of the Classical fellows round Jimmy Silver and Co. as the Modern crowd came up in battle array.



"Lend me a hand, you silly dummies!" howled Peele. (See page 91)

Tommy Dodd was at their head, with the other two Tommies on either side of him.

Dodd's face was grave and serious, contrasting with the hilarious looks of his comrades.

The whole Modern crowd was looking forward to a terrific combat, ending in the crushing defeat of the Classical champion; and they looked forward to it with glee. Winding up the term with the defeat of Jimmy Silver in open combat seemed the very best of ideas to the Moderns.

There was a pause, as the rival leaders of the Lower School of Rookwood came face to face.

Jimmy Silver stood with his hands in his pockets, quite unconcerned, though his brow was dark. If Tommy Dodd was looking for trouble, the Captain of the Fourth was more than ready to provide it.

"Go it, Tommy!" sang out Towle. "Tell the Classical bounder what we've come for."

"I'm going to."

"Bravo!"

"On the ball!"

"Jimmy Silver!" began the Modern leader, in very quiet tones.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver, shortly and sharply.

"Jimmy Silver, I punched you the other day at Coombe," he said. "I was in a rotten temper at the time. I'd been worried over working for my exam., and ragged no end by these silly asses, Doyle and Cook."

"Punch his nose and begin!" murmured Lovell restively. But Jimmy Silver did not heed that sage advice. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking steadily at Tommy Dodd.

Tommy's face was a little flushed.

"Oh!" ejaculated Doyle and Co., in unison. The Moderns looked at one another rather queerly.

This was not how they expected Tommy Dodd to begin. And their leader surprised them still more as he went on.

"The fact is, I was nervy, and you'd been pulling my leg, too," continued Tommy Dodd, in the same quiet tones. "I don't say that's an excuse for what I did, but there it is. I acted like a cad and a rotter, and I'd have begged your pardon afterwards, only—only I was ass enough to care about what silly asses might say if I did."

"Oh!" stuttered Jimmy Silver, quite taken by surprise.

Lovell's expression was extraordinary.

"I beg your pardon now," said Tommy Dodd. "I acted rotten, and you acted like a really decent chap. I'm sorry. I can't say more than that. There's my fist on it."

He held out his hand frankly.

"Tare an' 'ouns!" howled Tommy Doyle. "Is that what ye's brought us here for, Tommy ye spalpeen?"

"That's it!"

"You said you were going to do the right thing!" bawled Cook.

Tommy Dodd nodded.

Swoosh! The jam descended upon Towle's devoted head in a swamping mass. (See Page 94)

"This is the right thing," he answered. "And if Jimmy Silver chooses, I'll let him punch me as I punched him."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"I'll shake hands with you instead, old scout," he said.

And he did.

"Well, my only hat!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Tommy——"

"Jimmy——"

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd linked arms and walked out of the gym together. They left their comrades staring.

"My only hat!" repeated Arthur Edward Lovell, and then for a third time he ejaculated "My only hat!"

That was all that Lovell felt equal to saying. But the Moderns found a great deal more to say; though in the long run they came round to the view that Tommy Dodd had, after all, done the right thing.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

A Close Finish

SPORTS Day at Rookwood dawned clear and sunny.

It was a glorious day and a great occasion, an occasion upon which the Rookwooders were accustomed to "spreading" themselves.

Quite early in the day there were many arrivals—of fond and admiring parents, of sisters and cousins and aunts. Jimmy Silver's cousin Phyllis, of course, was there, and she brought with her her friends Marjorie and Clara, of Cliff House School, and Ethel Cleveland, who was escorted by an elegant young gentleman whose immaculate "clobber" revealed at once that he was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's. Pretty dresses and bright hats gave the old school an unaccustomed touch of colour, and crowds of Classical and Modern fellows were inspired to deeds of derring-do under the bright eyes of their sisters—and especially of other fellows' sisters!

That day Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd were seen a great deal together, evidently on the very best of terms; though they were keen rivals in more than one event.

The cloud had blown over, and the rivals of Rookwood were as pally as if they were not rivals at all. And Jimmy Silver was quite satisfied, now, that he had acted rightly on that hapless occasion in Coombe—and even Arthur Edward Lovell, whose brain worked a little slowly, had come to the conclusion that perhaps "Uncle James" had been right all along.

Space does not allow a full description of the events of that eventful day. Among the juniors the chief interest centred in the two hundred and fifty yards race, in which Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver were the principal figures. The Moderns had done fairly well in the events; but even the three Tommies could not deny that so far the palm lay with the Classicals. But Tommy Dodd was expected to win the two-fifty for Mr. Manders' house, while Jimmy Silver was equally expected to win it for the Classical side. There were plenty of other entrants; but it was known well enough that the victory lay between the two champions.

"You've simply got to pull it off, Tommy!" Cook said impressively to his leader. "How are you feeling now?"

"Fit as a fiddle," said Tommy Dodd, smiling.

"Not thinking about blessed German exams" inquired Cook, with a touch of sarcasm.

"No!" grinned Tommy Dodd.

"Don't remind Tommy of that!" interjected Doyle. "Tommy's got to put his beef into this. We've let you off scrapping with Jimmy Silver, you bounder, on condition that you pull it off. If you don't——"

"If you don't!" said Cook.

"Look out for squalls intirely."

"Yes, rather."

Tommy Dodd laughed.

"You fellows are running, too," he said. "If I don't pull it off it's up to you."

"Don't you be so funny!" said Tommy Cook. "If you don't pull it off, we'll give you such a study ragging that you won't have got over it by next term."

"Faith and we will!" said Tommy Doyle solemnly.

To which Tommy Todd replied flippantly:

"Bow-wow!"

Jimmy Silver was also receiving the last remarks of his chums before the runners lined up.

"We're relying on you to beat the Moderns, Jimmy," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "I'm going to do my best, but you're the man. You savvy?"

"Quite!" smiled Jimmy.

"We're going to make a clean sweep of them," said Lovell impressively. "To-day's got to prove that they simply can't touch us in anything. Got that?"

"I've got it!" assented Jimmy.

Under Cousin Phyllis's bright eyes, Arthur Edward Lovell felt that he could beat Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver himself. He meant to try, anyhow! (See page 100)

"That Modern bounder, Dodd, has been pulling up lately. I saw him running yesterday, and he's improved no end," remarked Raby. "But you've got to beat him, Jimmy."

"I shall beat him!" began Jimmy.

"Good!"

"If——"

"Bother your ifs! If what?"

"If I run faster than he does."

"Eh?"

"But if he runs faster than I do——"

"What?"

He will beat me!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Why, you—you silly ass!" hooted Lovell. "Is this a time to be funny? Is this a time——"

"Line up there, you kids!" called out Bulkeley, of the Sixth.

And Lovell's eloquence was suddenly cut off.

There were more than a dozen fellows drawn up for the two-fifty. They were not all hard runners, however; Adolphus Smythe had entered, in the hope of bagging glory for the Shell, and the general opinion was that Adolphus would finish on his hands and knees, if he finished at all. Adolphus

was an ambitious youth in his way; he had already failed at nearly every event, and he was apparently prepared to add one more failure to his glorious list. But the other fellows meant business, and though it was assured, or nearly so, that the result lay between the rival leaders of the Fourth, they were sure to be given a hard run for their money.

Lovell glanced round at a pretty face under a beautiful hat, and was greatly encouraged by a bright glance from Cousin Phyllis. Under Cousin Phyllis's bright eyes, Arthur Edward Lovell almost felt that he could beat Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver himself. He meant to try, anyhow.

The runners bent for the start, breathlessly awaiting the signal.

Crack!

In an instant the motionless forms sprang into life.

"They're off!"

"Buck up, Jimmy Silver!"

"Put it on, Tommy Dodd!"

Then there was a chuckle as the hapless Adolphus tailed off, cracking up hopelessly in the first twenty yards, and retiring from the scene to hide his blushes in ginger-pop.

But a dozen lightly-clad forms went flashing down the course.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, to the little crowd of young ladies in the midst of whom he had stationed himself. "They are wunnin' wathah well! Pewwaps not like we should wun at St. Jim's, but weally vewy well for Wookwood."

"Ass!" said a voice from somewhere, and D'Arcy of St. Jim's looked round in surprise; fortunately without spotting the speaker.

"Silver's ahead——"

"No! Dodd! Dodd! Doddy!" roared the Moderns.

"Morny's out——"

"And Lovell——"

Eyes were strained to watch the flashing figures. Jimmy Silver was leading, but Tommy Todd was close up. The rest of the field were almost nowhere. In the last fifty yards Jimmy Silver was going "all out," but a little figure crept closer and closer—and shot past him.

There was a roar.

"Dodd wins! Tommy Dodd!"

"Good old Tommy!"

"Manders House! Manders House!"

"Bravo!"

In the tumult of Modern triumph, Bulkeley's voice could hardly be heard announcing the result.

"First, Dodd; second, Silver——"

"Hurray!"

"Good old Tommy!"

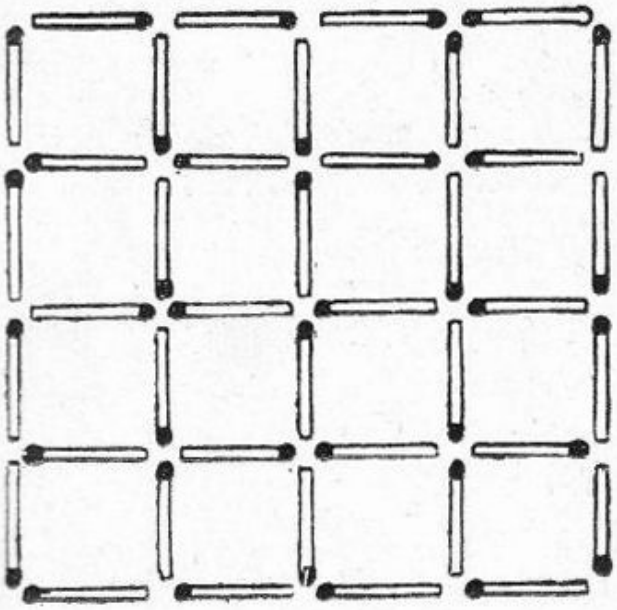
"Hurray!"

Tommy Dodd had, after all, scored a double triumph; for the German prize was duly "bagged" by "Thomas Dodd, IVth Form."

And no one congratulated him more heartily than "Uncle James of Rookwood."

FUN AMONGST THE MATCHES

Some Splendid Puzzles which can be Solved by the aid of Bryant & May's Matches



No. 1

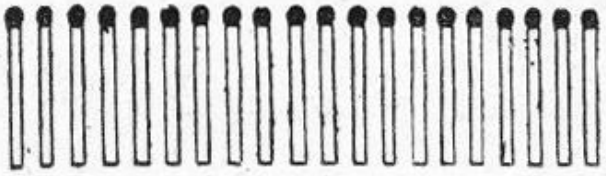
Remove sixteen matches so as to form two perfect squares of equal size

No. 2

How can you make two equal triangles and three diamond-shaped rooms with twelve matches?

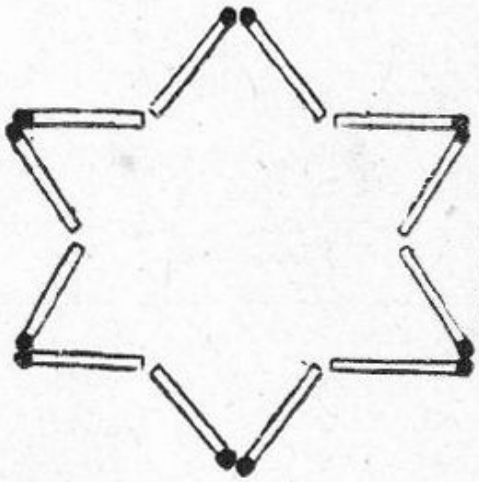
No. 3

Prove that half of 9 is either 4 or 6, and that half of 12 is 7



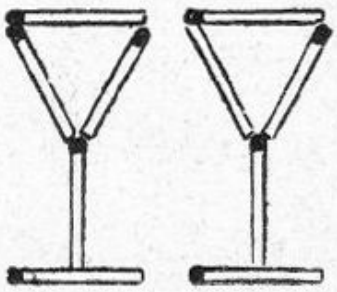
No. 4

With twenty matches make a word of ten letters without bending any of the matches



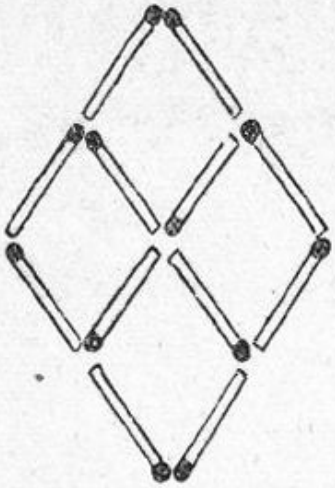
No. 5

Make out of this star three adjoining cubes by adding twelve more matches



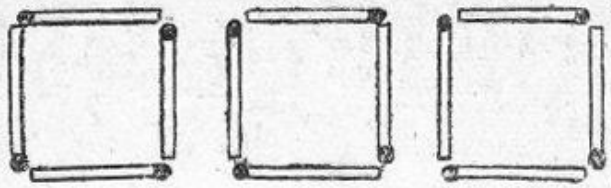
No. 6

Arrange ten matches to form a house instead of two wine glasses



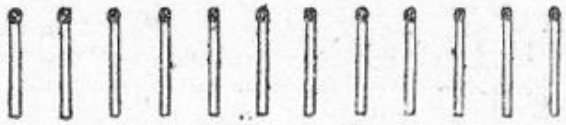
No. 7

Out of the matches contained in the above figures, construct six triangles.



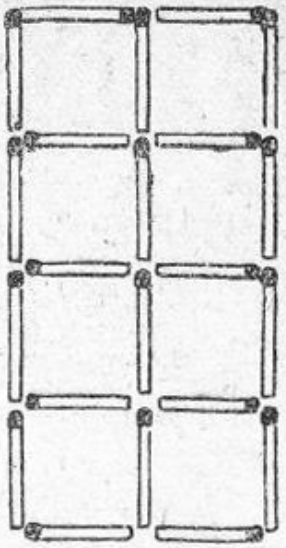
No. 8

Form with twelve matches three squares. Take away one, alter position of two, and leave only one.



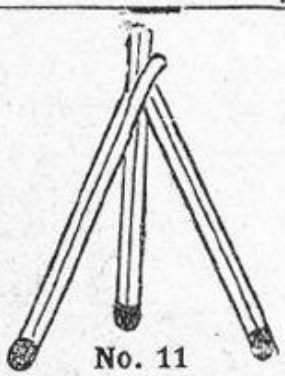
No. 10

What are matches made of ?



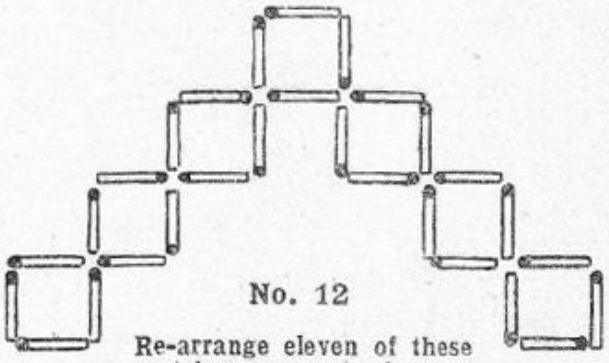
No. 9,

Arrange 22 matches in 8 squares. Take 6 away and leave 4 squares ; take 1 more away and construct 5 squares. Take 3 more away and construct 3 squares. Of the remaining 3 squares construct 4



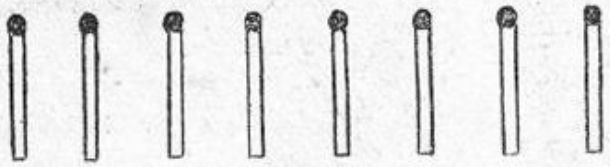
No. 11

Split the bottom of a match and insert the end of another, then lean a third against them to form a tripod, then with another match lift the lot.



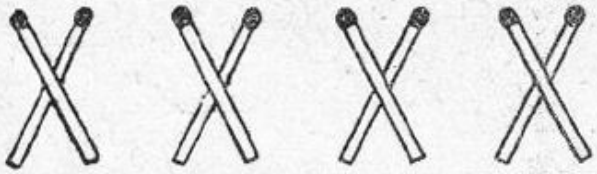
No. 12

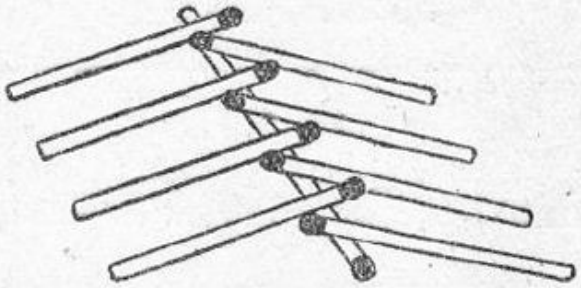
Re-arrange eleven of these matches so as to form a symmetrical figure consisting of ten perfect squares.



No. 13

By moving one match at a time in such a manner that it passes over two others, form four crosses thus :

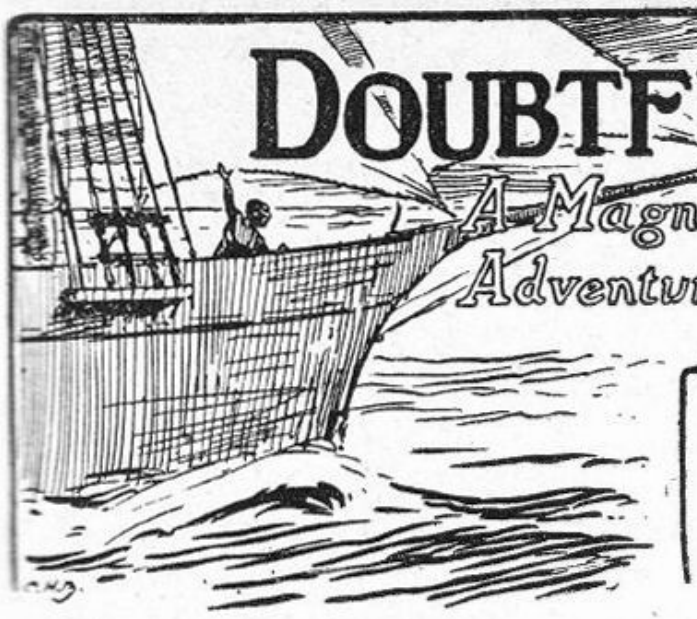




No. 14

Arrange nine matches as shown, then, with the addition of another match, lift the whole without displacing the matches.

THE KEYS TO ALL THESE PUZZLES WILL BE FOUND ON PAGE 359



DOUBTFUL ISLAND!

A Magnificent Story of Adventure in the South Seas

By Duncan Storm

THE FIRST CHAPTER

The Whale's Tooth

"Hi, Bud!" shouted an American sailor, who was lounging at a table outside one of the numerous cafés overlooking the wide expanse of Sydney Harbour. "Give us a 'Bulletin'!"

Harry Lytton turned. He had just one copy of his sheaf of "Sydney Bulletins" left, and he handed it to the sailor, whilst his brother George stood in the background, hoping that the sailor would be generous, as sailors often are. Then they would be certain of a supper as well as their bed.

The American sailor turned up trumps.

He took a long look at Harry, and was evidently pleased by the frank expression of the boy's face.

"Say, Bud," said he, "you are not one o' these Sydney wharf rats. You look more like a Johnny Bull gone astray from your moorings!"

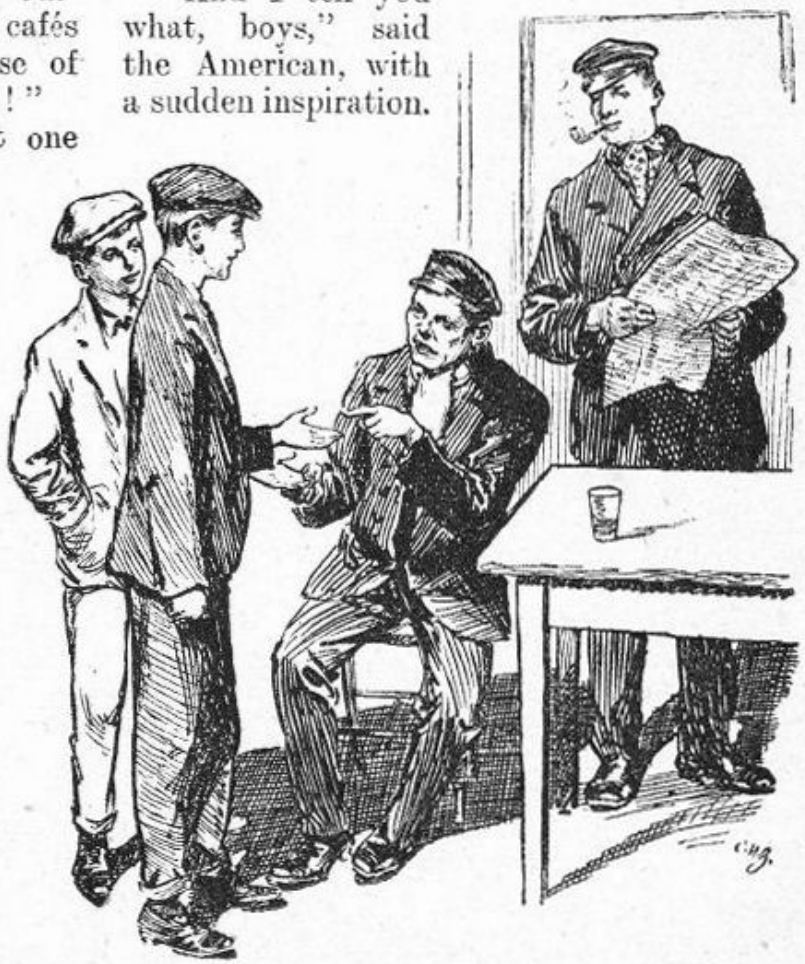
"We are English, sir," replied Harry. "We came out with dad a year ago. But dad died, and we've been selling papers since."

"Down on your luck, eh?" asked the sailor. "Never mind, Bud. Better days will come. Here's a dollar for your paper, and you can freeze to the change."

And he gave Harry a heavy American dollar that would fetch over four shillings at the money-changers' on the wharf.

Then he turned to a queer-looking sailor who sat at the same table smoking a queer, carved pipe, and gazing at the boys with strange, glassy eyes. This sailor was clean-shaven, his face was burned nearly black, and he reminded the boys of an Egyptian mummy they had seen in the Sydney Museum.

"And I tell you what, boys," said the American, with a sudden inspiration.



Ole Luk gazed at the boys' palms with his queer eyes for some time without saying a word. At last he spoke. (See page 104)

"As you are down on your luck, Ole Luk shall tell your fortunes. He's a real Finn, and, like all the Finns, he's a wizard and a warlock. I've seen him call up calms when the skipper has crossed him, and I've seen him call up gales when the first mate's started to haze him. First mates don't like gales—they give 'em too much work—an' the las' gale Luk called up blew our topmasts to t'other side o' Jericho. Come on, Luk," he added, "wake up from your dream, old chap. Come out of your trance!"

But Luk still gazed at the boys with those strange, glassy eyes.

"Leave him alone for a minute or two, boys," said the American. "He's away in one o' his pink dreams. Presently he'll come back to earth, and he'll tell you your fortunes. He can tell the future by the wind and by the stars, and by the cup and by the black ink pool in a man's hand. He's a right wizard, an' the finest harpooner out o' Nantucket. An' it takes a wizard to find the whales these days!"

The boys understood then that these two sailors were American whalemen belonging to the Star of Portland, the steam whaler that was refitting in Davis's Basin.

They gazed at Ole Luk with interested eyes, for he represented a class of sailor which is regarded by all the boys of Sydney with great reverence, for they are true adventurers of the sea, and their adventures and tales are many and wonderful.

Presently Ole Luk spoke.

"Gif me your hands, boys!" said he in a queer, mechanical sort of voice that sounded like a phonograph. "Left hands—for the right hand he is no good for der fortune. Der future is written in a man's lef' hand, und der past in his right hand, aindt it?"

The boys half-laughingly gave the Finn their hands. They did not believe in wizards and warlocks or in the reading of the future.

Ole Luk gazed at their palms with his queer eyes for some time without saying a word.

At last he spoke.

"Now dot vos strange!" said he. "Dere vos two fortune, one in each hand, und dey come quick, aindtit? Und dere is a mother away in England who wait her boy. She is very, very poor, und she is very, very sad because her husband, he is dead, und her boys dey are far away und dey can't get home!"

"We won't go home until we have made our fortunes!" replied Harry stoutly. "That is what we came to Australia for. Dad came for his health, and we came to help him get well by earning money!"

The Finn shook his grey head.

"Many men und boys dey have come to Australia, und dey haf not made deir fortune. But you two boys shall be rich beyond all avarice, und you are goot boys, und you shall take der money home to your lady mother, und she will be glad. But dere are many dangers. Der nigger man he is a good friend, but beware of der man who laugh all der time, und, mos' of all, beware of der man mit der eyes dat shine like black diamond. Und take dis, boys. I do not gif you money, but I gif you dat which will bring you safe through all de biggest hurricane dot blow. It vos der toot' o' de whale engraved mit magic runes, for I, Ole Luk, am der seventh son of der seventh son und a wizard. Und all my grandfather und great-grandfather, dey too were wizard!"

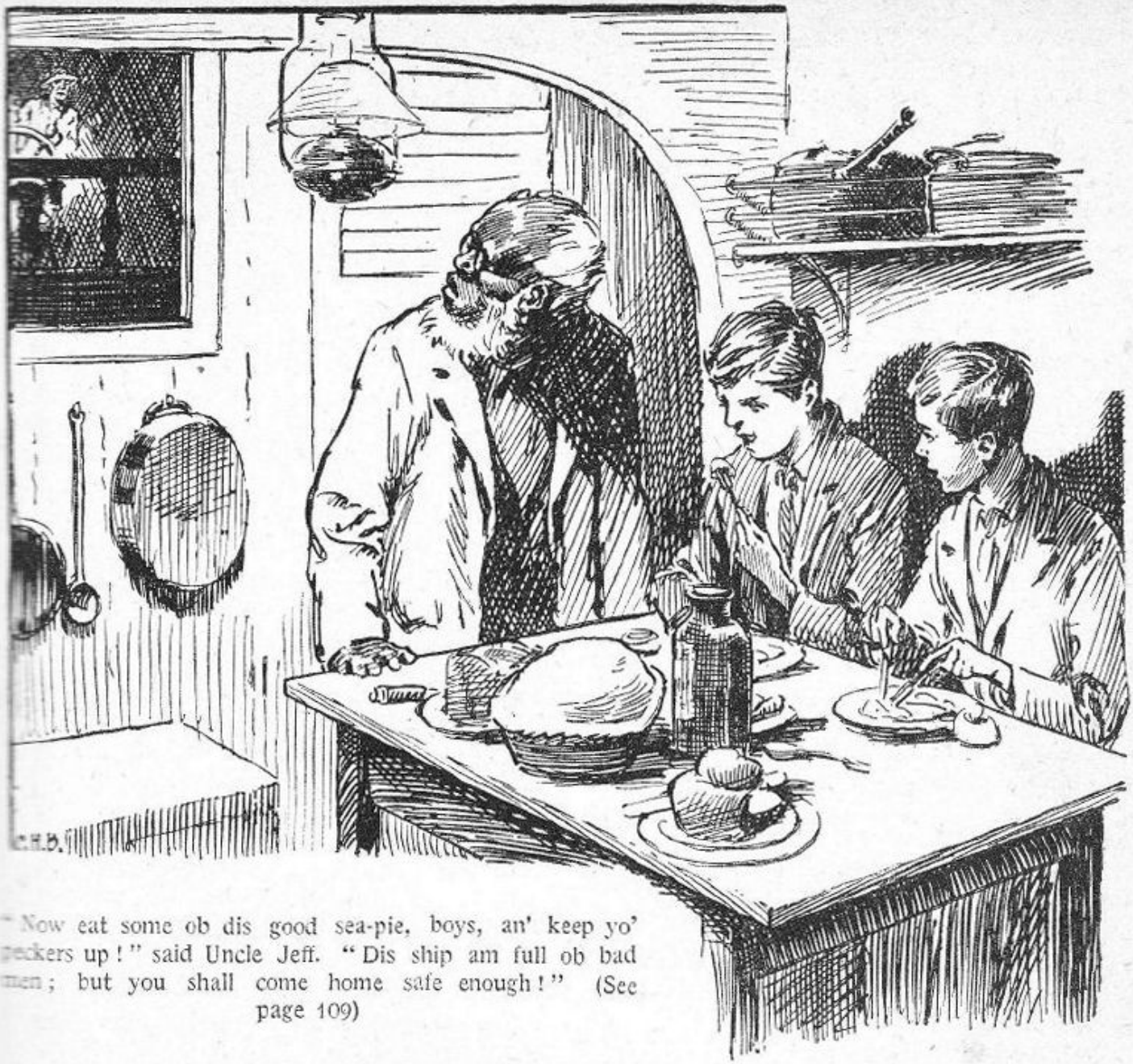
Harry took the whale's tooth and thanked the wizard politely. He had not expected to meet a real live wizard on the wharfs of Sydney. But he had learned by now that by the shores of Sydney Harbour you may meet many strange men.

A silence fell on the two sailors as a shadow passed across their table.

The man who passed glanced casually at the two boys, and half hesitated, as though he would speak to them. But he thought better of this and moved on, heading for the harbour-master's office.

Ole Luk turned his glassy eyes on the figure of the passing stranger. He was a tall, slender, but powerfully built man, neatly dressed in clean white duck and wearing a wide-brimmed Panama hat.

"Und dat vos der firs' man dat you beware of, boys!" said he. "You go mit him where he want you. But he is der same as der vicked uncle in der story of 'Aladdin.' You keep your eye on dat uncle. Now I go aboard!"



"Now eat some ob dis good sea-pie, boys, an' keep yo' peckers up!" said Uncle Jeff. "Dis ship am full ob bad men; but you shall come home safe enough!" (See page 109)

He rose from the table, and the American followed with a careless nod to the two boys.

"What do you think he meant, Harry?" asked George. "I know that fellow who passed us. It's Captain Ray Leeuwin, of the schooner Magellan Cloud, the one that lies out yonder."

And he pointed to a beautifully modelled little island schooner which rode at her moorings about a quarter of a mile from the wharf.

"I know him by sight," replied Harry. "I've seen him coming off from the schooner in shore boats. His crew of Kanakas never leave the schooner. There's four of them, all Kingsmill boys, and one old nigger cook, who looks like Uncle Tom out of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'?"

He pulled up with his hands in his pockets, and looked up at a shabby and wind-torn bill that was pasted up on a timber of the wharf.

The boys had often looked at this bill in the last fortnight. It was a police advertisement, offering a reward of £10 for the recovery of the body of a sailor called Myles Stanton who had mysteriously disappeared, and was supposed to have fallen into the harbour.

"Not much good advertising for that chap's body!" said Harry, "the sharks will have had him long ago, and——"

"Hi, you boys!"

Harry's remarks had been cut short by a harsh grating voice behind them.

They both turned, and found themselves facing none other than Captain Ray Leeuwin of the Magellan Cloud. It was the first time that they had had a really good look at this personage, of whom many queer tales were told along the water front.

He was a youngish man about thirty, and his yellow face bore something of a trace of Japanese blood. His eyes were narrow and turned at the corners obliquely, which enhanced this Oriental appearance. The boys noticed that the whites of the eyes were yellow, like those of a man who has had many bouts of fever, but the iris was nearly as dead black as the pupil which glittered like a black diamond.

Captain Leeuwin was scowling at the advertisement of the marks of the dead man—a crown and anchor tattooed on the wrist.

He put up the point of his neat cane, and ripped the half torn advertisement through.

"Dead men tell no tales" he muttered as though to himself; "and dead men in Sydney Harbour tell less than most. The sharks look to that!"

Then he turned smartly on the boys.

"You chaps on the beach?" he asked curtly.

"Yes, sir!" replied Harry and George in one breath.

"Age?" demanded Captain Leeuwin.

"Sixteen," responded Harry.

"Fifteen," added George on his own behalf.

"You were the two boys who brought that shore boat in from the Lorna Doone, in the squall yesterday?" added Captain Leeuwin.

"Yes, sir," replied the boys. "It's old Daddy Mercer's boat, but sometimes we do a job for him."

"Well, you can handle a boat all right!" replied Captain Ray Leeuwin, his strange black eyes gazing at the boys, as though he would read them through and through. Then, with a sudden tone of suspicion, he added, "What are you reading this police notice for?"

"Nothing!" replied Harry frankly and truthfully enough. "Everybody on the wharf has read it hundreds of times!" he added.

"Don't read police notices," snarled Captain Leeuwin. "They get you into more trouble than you get out of in a hurry! Want a job?" he added swiftly.

"Yes sir!" replied both the boys eagerly.

"Like to see the Islands—the Low Archipelago?" demanded Captain Leeuwin almost fiercely.

The hearts of the two boys bounded against their ribs with eagerness. They were sick of Sydney, which had no place for them. They were afraid of it's dusty streets and the hand-to-mouth life they led in these. And Captain Leeuwin was offering them a trip to the magic fairyland of the Paumotus, the great coral island archipelago and wonder-world of the South Seas.

"Please take us, sir!" urged Harry, turning almost pale, at the delightful notion of sailing away in that beautiful little schooner.

"Well, keep your mouths shut!" replied Ray Leeuwin. "I'm off on a quiet trip, and I don't want any waterside talk. Besides, you are both under age, and I can't ship you through the shipping office. You borrow a boat and get your dunnage and bring her off, to be alongside the Magellan Cloud at exactly eleven to night. And don't let anyone see you. I'll return the boat to the waterside!"

He turned away.

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Harry gratefully.

But Ray Leeuwin took no notice of the boys, and did not turn his head as he strode swiftly away and called a cab in which he drove off from the wharf.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

On Board the Magellan Cloud

The boys had little enough in the way of gear at the humble lodging which gave them shelter.

Their slatternly landlady was out somewhere up the town, and they knew that she would not be back till late, but they waited for her till ten. Then Harry put their week's money under the candlestick with a note to say that they had got a ship and were going off to sea. He knew that she would find the money all right.

They had only sixpence in their pockets

when they stole out into the dark street with all their belongings done up in a small piece of sacking.

At half-past ten they were on the waterside, and they did not take long in finding Daddy Mercer's boat in the shadows under the wharf.

Nobody noticed them taking it, for they often borrowed Daddy's boat to go fishing in at night's in order to eke out their scanty means, and Daddy Mercer, who was a good old chap, never refused them.

Away they rowed out into the darkness of the great harbour, heading for the Magellan Cloud. They knew well enough where to find her in that crowd of schooners, and, just as the city clocks were striking eleven, their boat bumped alongside.

Ray Leeuwin was evidently waiting them, for he looked over the bulwark and rolled down a little ladder, to which Harry made the boat fast and then climbed on deck, closely followed by George.

The sails were unstowed ready for hoisting, and the crew were already waiting with the anchor hove short.

"You are all we are waiting for. Get on to the anchor and break it out!" he snapped.

"But what about the boat, sir?" asked Harry.

"I'll tend to that," replied Ray Leeuwin calmly; and, unhitching the painter of the boat from the ladder, he coolly cast her adrift.

"But, sir!" began Harry in protest, as he saw this wanton act, "that's not our boat. It's Daddy Mercer's!"

The boat was drifting away rapidly down the harbour on the tide.

"They'll think we are drowned!" added Harry.

Ray Leeuwin turned fiercely on the boy, and Harry felt the cold muzzle of a small pistol pressed against the back of his ear.

"You are as good as dead if you don't get that anchor out in three minutes!" snarled Leeuwin.

The four Kingsmill Islanders looked on timidly at this scene. There was nothing to be done but to obey.

Harry and George went to the windlass, and the anchor was broken out. Then up went the foresail and jibs of the Magellan Cloud. Leeuwin went to the wheel, smoking, and, as sail was made, the Magellan Cloud beat the race down the great harbour towards the Heads, soon leaving that lonely drifting little boat of Daddy Mercer's far behind.

Soon the winking lights of the Heads let them by, and the Magellan Cloud began to dip and curtsey to the ocean swells.

"Go to the galley, you cubs!" snarled Ray Leeuwin from the wheel. "You are entitled to your grub, but you shall earn it. And mark you, I'm skipper aboard here, and what I say goes all the time. If you want to see home again, keep that in your mind, and never let it out. Now quit!"

And this was the introduction of Harry and George to that strangest of strange ships, the Magellan Cloud.

In the galley they found the old negro who looked so much like Uncle Tom.

He was wearing a big pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, and was reading a huge family Bible by the dim light of an oil lamp. But when he saw the boys standing at the galley door he laid the Bible aside.

"Captain says we are to have something to eat," said Harry.

"Bress my soul an' so you shall, young gemmen!" said the old nigger, jumping up and bustling into his little larder. "So long as Uncle Jeff hab got anyting to give you."

He brought out a huge joint of salt beef and a large plate of boiled carrots, and set these on a small table with a bottle of pickles that was the largest the boys had ever seen. Then he gave them a loaf of bread, and produced a big apple-pie, as though by a conjuring trick, from a little cupboard in the wall of the galley.

"Dar you are, young gemmen!" said he. "Eat hearty, an' gib der ship a good name. She need it," he added, in a lower tone, glancing uneasily through the window of the galley to the spot where Ray Leeuwin's sinister face was lighted by the lamp of the binnacle. "Dis am a mighty bad ship, boys!" he whispered. "But say no mo'. De grub am all right. Uncle Jeff see to that!"

And Uncle Jeff went back to his Bible and said no more.

The boys put him no questions. There was time enough before them to find out the

mystery of the Magellan Cloud, for there was a wide space of sea between them and the jewelled islands of the Paumotus.

And they were very hungry. So they fell to on the boiled beef and carrots and pickles, whilst Uncle Jeff gazed over his glasses at them with undisguised approval.

Then he showed them to a stuffy little cabin in the stern where they could sleep. And sleep they did, cradled in the rocking of the long-backed Pacific swells.

For a whole month the Magellan Cloud sailed eastward without raising a sight of land. The boys knew that they had passed to the south of the Friendly Islands, but Ray Leeuwin never spoke to them, save to give an order, and never spoke of the errand of the schooner.

Harry's job was to assist on deck and to steer the schooner at intervals, relieving another member of the crew whom they had not seen when they arrived on board. This was Ching, a Chinaman.

Ching never spoke, for he was dumb. The boys soon found this out when they spoke to him, for Ching only made a clicking noise in his throat by way of reply.

"You can't talk to that chap, and he can't talk to you!" snarled Ray Leeuwin. "He got talking too much once—in China—and they cut his tongue out for him. Now he's a useful man—sort of man I like—a man who holds what's left of his tongue and gives nothing away!"

And Ray Leeuwin had turned on his heel whilst Ching had grinned at the boys evilly. And this was the longest speech to which their captain treated them all over those two thousand five hundred miles of dreary blue sea.

The weather was glorious, the seas were sapphire blue, and the boys, although they did not like the cut of the jib either of the Magellan Cloud or her master, were happy enough, bathing themselves in the bright sunshine, and delighted to get away from the dusty city.

"Hang on! Here's another!" yelled Harry, as a second comber roared down on them, burying the stern of the little schooner in a mass of white foam. (See page 112)

Uncle Jeff fed them like fighting cocks, and they soon discovered that he knew as little of the ship as they did, having shipped only the day before they had. All Uncle Jeff could tell them was that Ray Leeuwin was a bad man — and this they suspected pretty well already.

But they were in the highest spirits, for soon they were to see the islands and their wonders.

Ching appeared to be a sailor, for he could take an observation both of the sun and the stars, and always looked to the navigation of the ship when Leeuwin was sleeping. And at nights he would show on deck, flitting round like a shadow, as though he were spying.

Uncle Jeff gave it as his opinion that Ching had been an officer in the Chinese navy, for he had heard of such a Chinese amongst the islands—a Chinee who had been broken for cowardice in the fight at the Yalu, between China and Japan, and who later on had turned pirate.

Uncle Jeff said that Ching was this man, and nothing would alter his opinion.

The four Kingsmill boys who were the crew came from the island of Apamama, in the Kingsmill or Gilbert Islands. Therefore they were British subjects. But they all went in fear of Ray Leeuwin and Ching. And Ching they specially hated, for he often hit them with the rattan cane that he always carried.

There came a day at last when they did sight land. It was a real low island, lying awash in the sea like a green emerald set on a sapphire.

The graceful coco-palms seemed to rise from the very sea itself, so low was the coral bank enclosing the lagoon, and the trees were wrapped in a golden mist from the surf which thundered on the white coral beaches which lay dazzling in the sun as the schooner drifted slowly by on a strong current.

Leeuwin seemed glad to see this low-lying atoll, for he unbent enough to tell the boys that it was one of the Duke of Gloucester or Four Crown Islands.

The boys gazed at the lovely island spell-bound. And Ray Leeuwin looked sideways at them with an evil smile in his glittering black eyes.

"You'll see enough coral islands before you've done with 'em, my lads!" said he. "And don't you think that we are going to land on this one. Our island is called Doubtful Island, and it's mighty doubtful if those who get there ever get away again!"

He said no more, and the boys watched the island as it seemed to drift astern of them and disappeared swiftly in a golden haze.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

A Strange Discovery

THE boys soon learned that this haze meant islands, and their look-out increased, for these low-lying atolls were swiftly raised from the sea.

They passed another two lovely islands that afternoon, one of which they heard was called "All in the Way," whilst the other was called "Right in the Road." They were now in a sea of swift currents, and such islands, whose wide, stretching reefs have gained this remote corner of the Pacific the name of the Dangerous Archipelago.

And Jeff, who knew something of these parts, told them that there was nigh a thousand miles of this sea, where the currents ran all ways, and no mariner ever knew exactly where he was.

"Dis am de ships' graveyard, young gemmen!" said he. "And it is der mos' dangerous an' mos' beautiful sea in der worl'. And it is full ob der worst men. We hab got some ob dem on board, specially dat Chinee. But eat some ob dis good sea-pie, boys, and keep yo' peckers up. You shall come home safe enough!"

But, two days after this, Uncle Jeff began to have his doubts as to whether any of them would see home again, for the barometer dropped with a suddenness that betokened a hurricane, and the blue all went out of sky and sea, leaving them livid.

Except for the swell, the sea was as calm as glass, and the Magellan Cloud rolled on it with a sickening monotony, the pitch bubbling out of the seams of her decks, and every block creaking as she rolled.

"From der look ob de sky dar am gwine to be a big harry-cane, young gemmen!" said Uncle Jeff when a coppery sunset had given place to night, "and dis am a bery bad sea in which to catch a harry-cane. But come you an' have yo' supper. It am no good gettin' drowned on an empty stomach, and dere's waffle cakes an' syrup, same as yo' likes 'em!"

The hurricane opened with heavy lightning, without thunder, which lit the night as bright as day, and showed them a ghostly island sliding away under their lee, its tall palms quivering as though in anticipation of the coming storm.

Then the great ragged clouds tore over the sky, blotting out the dim stars, and a low wailing started in the air, though it was so windless that a candle was burning naked on deck.

The few storm sails that were set in anticipation of the coming blow quivered and slatted now and then, and the boys saw that it was a tremendous sea current that was bearing them clear of the island. And they were very glad to see it wearing away astern, for they thought that under the circumstances they would sooner have its room than its company.

Then the candle puffed out under a fitful gust of wind, and a squall of rain came roaring over the sea. The tiny little storm sails filled with a bang, and the hot rain roared down on deck in a deluge that flooded the scuppers.

Then away they went before the storm, Ray Leeuwin and the Chink hanging to the wheel looking like a couple of evil spirits as they were lit by the lightning flashes.

The sea started to get up, and soon great hills of water were chasing the flying schooner. The boys took shelter in the little cabin aft, and busied themselves with cleaning the brass of the glass racks, for they had no mind to turn in. Harry had been warned that he might be wanted to help at the wheel. But it was evident that, just at this stage of the storm, Ray Leeuwin preferred to have Ching as his second hand at the wheel.

For a couple of hours the boys worked in the cabin, cleaning and polishing. They could hear the rising seas thundering along the sides of the little vessel as she raced through the storm, and their voices were nearly drowned in the howling of the wind in the rigging.

George had stepped into the little lazarette aft to get some fresh cotton waste for cleaning, when he suddenly came to a standstill.

"Help! Help!" cried a voice that sounded almost under his feet.

George called to Harry, who came out of the cabin.

"What is it?" he asked his brother.

George lifted his finger, with an awe-stricken look on his boyish face.

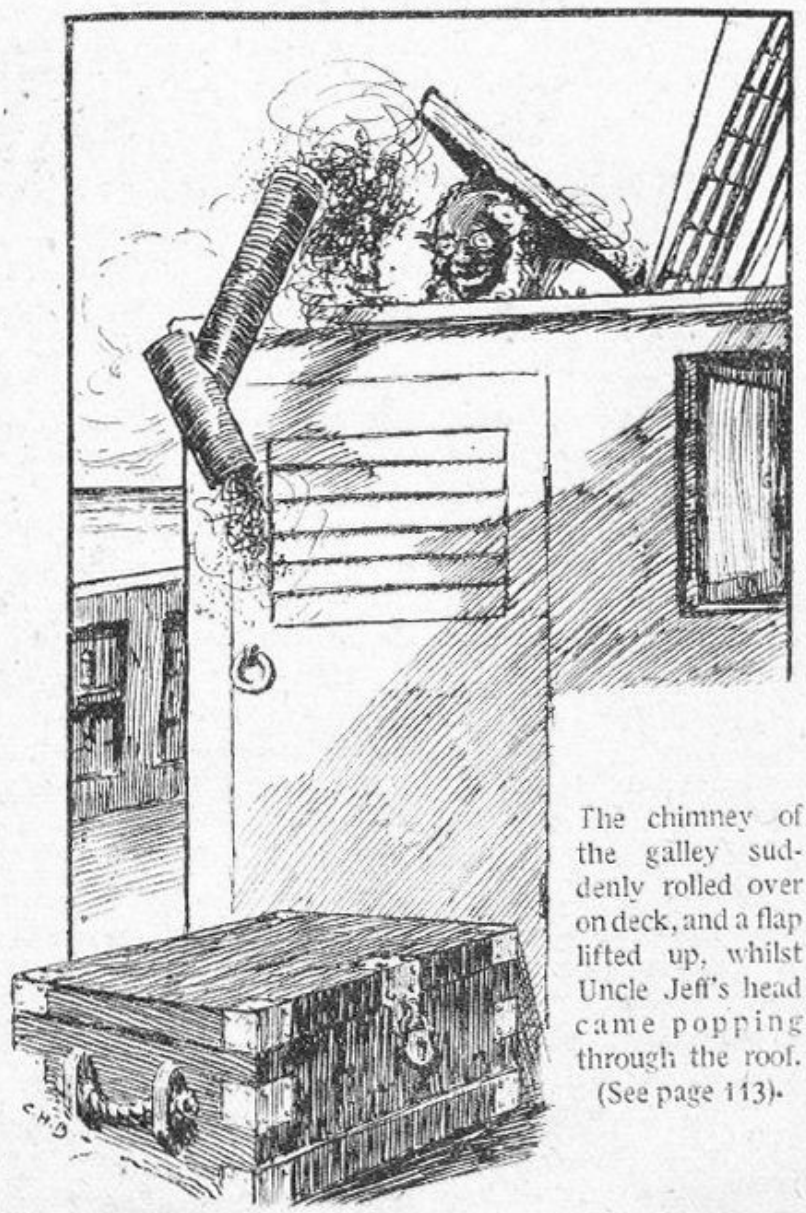
"Listen! I thought I heard someone calling just now!" he cried. Again the cry for help sounded, audible even above the howling voices of the storm outside.

The boys looked down at the floor of the lazarette. The sound certainly came from under their feet.

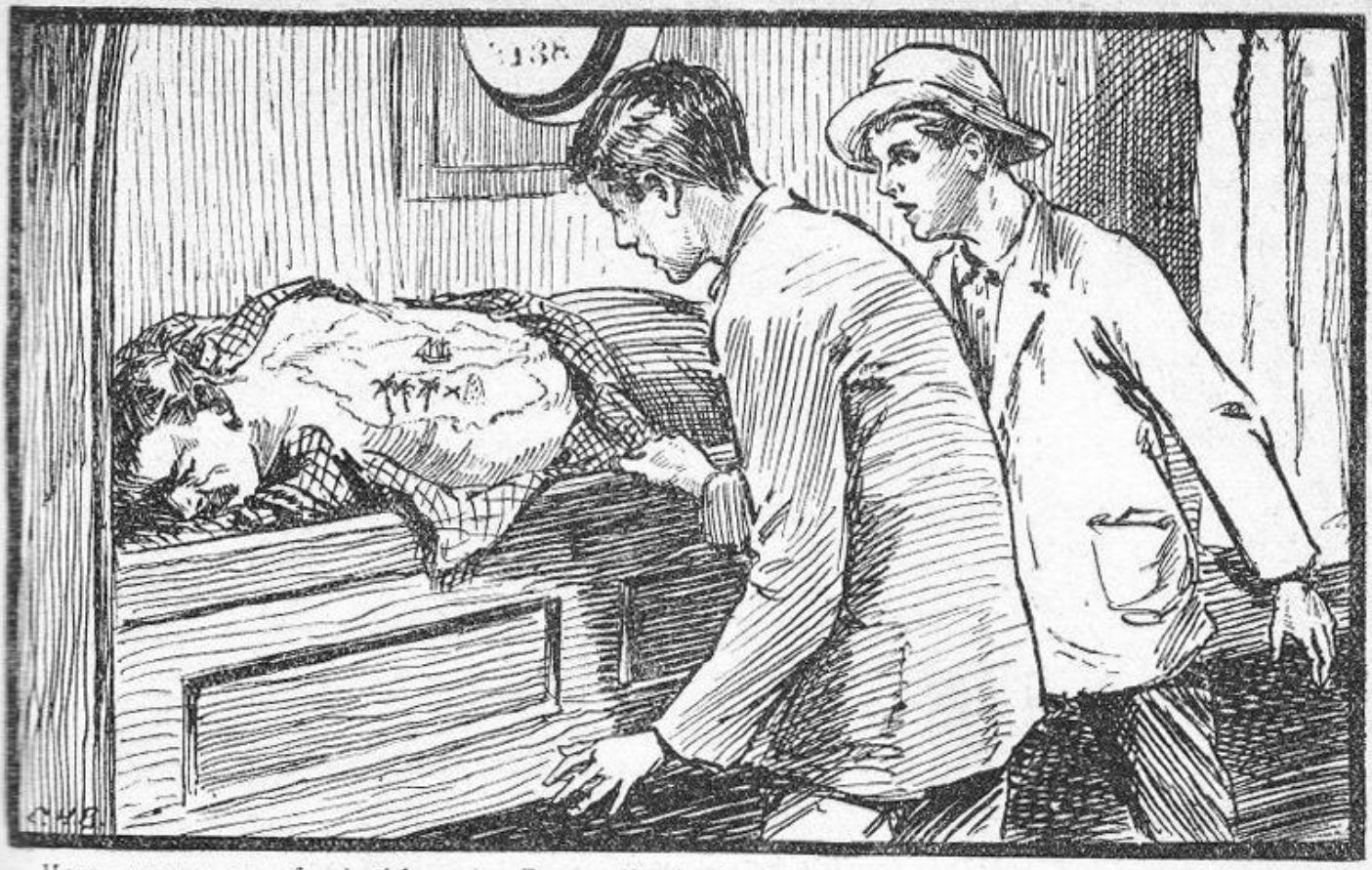
Harry stooped and pulled back a small length of carpet, and there, in the deck, was a teak-framed trap fitted with a sunk brass ring.

"Give us a hand to hoist this up, George!" said he.

The two boys, stooping, put their fingers in the ring and pulled together, lifting the trap. Down below they had a glimpse



The chimney of the galley suddenly rolled over on deck, and a flap lifted up, whilst Uncle Jeff's head came popping through the roof. (See page 113).



Harry gave a cry of astonishment. For on the back of Myles Stanton was tattooed in clear blue lines the perfect map of a large island. (See page 114)

of a dark hold filled with cases of wood, and now to their ears came plainly the call:

"Help, you chaps! Help!"

Then, suddenly, they were both taken by the scruff of the neck from behind and hurled right and left against the panelling with a heavy bang that nearly knocked the wind out of them.

"What are you doing here, you young ruffians!" demanded Ray Leeuwin, who stood behind them, his face absolutely convulsed with rage. "I'll teach you to get spying round my ship!"

"We were not spying!" replied Harry indignantly. "My brother heard a cry for help down below, and we naturally opened the trap to see what it was. And we heard the cry plainly when we opened the trap!" added Harry. "There is a stowaway down there amongst the cases. Maybe he is being crushed to death now that the schooner is pitching about so!"

Ray Leeuwin kicked down the trap hatch savagely.

"Get out of this!" he snarled. "I'll put you two on the wheel for a bit. You'll soon have the buck out of you. And don't you listen for any more stowaways, or I'll treat your ears as they treated Ching's tongue!"

And he kicked viciously at the boys with his heavy sea boots, at the same time drawing his pistol from his pocket.

"Out on deck with you!" he cried.

They climbed out on the reeling deck and staggered aft to the wheel.

The schooner was scudding almost under bare poles before the gale, for two out of three of her little storm trysails had been blown clean out of the weather ropes.

"Give the wheel to these kids!" cried Ray Leeuwin to Ching. "I want you below to have a look over the chart. You know this blessed labyrinth better than I do!"

Harry and George took the wheel, and he stood a few minutes watching them as they steered the flying Magellan Cloud before the hurricane.

The steering was tricky, but both the boys were excellent sailors, for they had learned their craft in Sydney Harbour, where the

gusts are strong and frequent. And there was little difficulty to them in steering this flying schooner.

Leeuwin gave a grunt and a nod of satisfaction when he saw how well the boys tackled the job, for his crew of four Kanakas were paralysed with fear and almost useless.

"I did right to ship a couple of white hands," he muttered to himself. "Come along, Ching!"

And away he went with his Chinese mate, staggering with the sickening lurches of the little vessel.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Victims of the Storm

THE boys were left quite alone to manage the schooner as, chased by the tremendous seas that were knocking up before the hurricane, she tore through the night.

Luckily the sea was running with the strong ocean current, so the great rollers were large and unconfused. But the boys knew well enough what it would be like if they should encounter one of the many cross currents of this restless ocean. Then the Magellan Cloud would have to fight for her life.

For two hours they clung to the wheel, soaked by the spray, and their faces stinging in the flying spindrift.

Ray Leeuwin was down below in the cabin, drinking with Ching and poring over the charts of these troubled seas. He seemed to have forgotten all about the boys, though two hours' trick at the helm in that weather was more than enough for the most experienced sailors.

And during this time the sea grew worse and worse, the huge rollers stiffening as they reared up like great sea hills behind the little craft.

Then of a sudden Harry gave a cry.

"Hang on, George!" he yelled. "We are pooped!"

Sure enough, with a rush and a roar, a great comber came roaring down in tons of foam close behind the Magellan Cloud, whose bow, even now, was rising to another wave.

Harry knew what it was. Here they had struck an eddy in the great ocean current, and the sea about them was whipping into a whirlpool of confused breakers.

But he had no time to tell his brother what was happening.

With a roar and a crash the sea tore on board, pouring over the poop and filling the waist till all they could see of the Magellan Cloud were her masts sticking out of the water.

For a few seconds the gallant little vessel seemed to lie still as though crushed by that burden of water on her decks. And the boys, gasping and panting from the blow of the sea, wondered to find themselves still clinging to the spokes of the wheel.

Then the sea roared off through the scuppers, whilst the schooner tore on through the white water smother left by the toppling of the breaker.

"Another!" yelled Harry, as a second comber roared down on them, burying the stern of the little schooner in a mass of white foam.

Harry and George, half stifled as they hung desperately to the wheel, saw the mass of water rush forward, and, as it poured over the break of the poop in a huge fall, Ray Leeuwin and Ching attempted to climb up to the poop. The two ruffians had been brought out from their carouse in the cabin by the thunder of the previous sea on deck, and, doubtless thinking that the exhausted boys had allowed the schooner to broach to, were hurrying to the wheel.

But the full force of the sea caught them on the steps, burying them breast deep and tearing their hands away from the side ropes of the ladder.

The boys heard a faint yell as the two figures were rolled over in the welter of white water and washed along the decks, banging with tremendous force against the foremast. Then the Magellan Cloud, with a huge roll, emptied the water off her deck over the low rail, and the boys saw those two grim figures, still supported by their oilskin coats, sliding past on the tormented sea.

They could do nothing for them. Doubtless that crashing blow against the foremast had stunned them both or killed them. Ray Leeuwin and his evil mate had gone to their

last account. And somehow it seemed to the boys that the Magellan Cloud, rid of these two evil souls, found a new lightness. No more seas overtook her, but she flew before the hurricane like a sea bird.

The boys could only keep her going. They were lost in the labyrinth of the Pacific, for they had no knowledge of navigation. They could expect no relief, for the Kanakas were shut in the fo'c's'le, half dead with fear, whilst Uncle Jeff was imprisoned in his galley against which the sea had washed a heavy chest of tools that held the door closed.

So to the wheel they clung all night, and when the first of the grey dawn broke over the wild sea, it seemed to them that the weather was moderating.

"Do you think you can manage her alone for a minute, George?" shouted Harry. "If so, I will rouse out the Kanakas and get them on the wheel. I am sure the poor chaps were as much afraid of Leeuwin as they were of the hurricane."

George nodded, and Harry staggered forward along the deck and called out the four Kingsmill boys, telling them that the captain and the mate were washed overboard and that they must come and steer.

Soon four very miserable figures crawled out of the swamped fo'c's'le. The four Kanakas were turned to ashy grey in place of their usual coppery-olive complexion, and they looked round the sea with anxious eyes.

"Get on the wheel, boys!" cried Harry. "There's nothing to be afraid of now."

Luleo, one of the boys who had more character and stuffing in him than the rest, looked round at the sky.

"Cappen Looey, 'im gone?" he asked.

"Yes, and the Chinee as well," replied Harry.

Luleo gave a great sigh of relief.

"Den gale him blow out," he said with decision. "Dat Chinee man him Jonah man. Him no luck man."

Then a bright thought struck Harry. He thrust his hand in his pocket and produced the engraved whale's tooth which the Finn sailor had given him, showing the natives the magic runes that were engraved thereon.

"We can't go to Davy Jones's locker with this on board, boys!" cried Harry. "It's big magic."

The faces of the natives brightened at the sight of the tooth. They knew what this charm was, for they had all sailed on whalers, and there a whale's tooth, engraved in this manner, was looked on as a certain charm against hurricanes. Indeed, at that moment any one of the four would have given a year's pay for that tooth.

Harry stuffed it in the pocket of Luleo's oilskin.

"There you are," said he. "You can have it between you. Then you can't come to any harm, and you'll keep the schooner going!"

The grey faces of the whole four brightened at once. Their fears fell away from them, and soon they were shouting and heaving on the wheel, meeting the veering of the schooner like a crowd of happy schoolboys.

The boys, hanging on to the pin-rail, watched them, and saw that they knew their job. Then a shout of laughter went up from them, for the chimney of the galley suddenly rolled over on deck and a flap lifted up, whilst Uncle Jeff's head came popping through the roof.

Uncle Jeff, finding himself in prison, had sawn a hole through the roof, and soon, climbing out of his cell, he crawled up on the roof and dropped down on to the heavy carpenter's chest.

The boys called to him, and they led the way to the cabin.

"Captain's gone, and the Chinee!" said Harry. "But come along, Uncle Jeff, there's a mystery aft here that we've got to look into at once."

"De Cappen gone?" demanded Uncle Jeff, rolling his eyes. "And dat Chinee, too?"

"They were washed overboard by that second sea that pooped us in the night," said Harry briefly, as he led the way into the cabin.

"Bress my soul!" exclaimed Uncle Jeff. "Den our bad luck he am gone. Dose were two Jonah men. Dey was wicked enough to sink any ship!"

Harry led the way to the lazarette and lifted the trap in the deck.

"Ahoy!" he cried.

"Help!" came the answer in a faint voice.

"Where are you?" asked Harry, whilst Uncle Jeff rolled his eyes in wonderment.

"Bress ma soul, it am a stowaway!" he exclaimed. "Now what chile would wan' to stowaway on Ray Leeuwin's ship?"

"I'm not a stowaway," gasped the faint voice from below. "I'm a prisoner, shut up in a box like a dog. I've been shut up here six weeks, and I'm dying."

"Quick!" gasped Harry. "An axe, crowbars, and a lamp!"

All were quickly forthcoming, and Harry, climbing down amongst the cases of trade in the hold, attacked a large square case from which the voice issued. It was a huge packing case, bored with air holes, and stoutly clamped with iron bands and rivets. In the top was a trap for the passage of food, which was secured by a stout lock.

Harry tore this open, and then started to saw away the lid of the case.

And, to their horror, lying in this awful den was a man—a white man—too far gone to move.

"You don't belong to that devil Leeuwin?" he asked feebly, as he looked up at the horror-stricken faces of the boys and the old negro peering into the case.

"Ray Leeuwin has gone overboard—him and his Chinee!" responded Harry. "Come, we'll break up the rest of the case, mate, and get you out of this. What is your name?'

"Myles Stanton!" whispered the man.

The boys looked at one another. So this was the sailor for whose body the police had been advertising in Sydney! Sure enough, on the man's emaciated wrist, in which the bones stuck out like the bones of a skeleton, they could see the tattoo marks set out by the police advertisement—a crown and an anchor.

"Why," exclaimed George, "you are the man whose body the police are advertising for in Sydney. There is a £10 reward for you, and you are supposed to be drowned in the harbour."

Just a glimmer of a smile played on the face of the exhausted man.

"It would be cheap at that, boys," said he. "My body is worth the right side of three million pounds, and that's why that scoundrel, Ray Leeuwin, shanghied me like this! It didn't matter to him if I was alive or dead. But my body was worth it alone!"

The boys lifted him gently, but so weak was the prisoner that he fainted as they carried him to Ray Leeuwin's bunk in the little state-room.

They spooned weak brandy and water between his lips, and Jeff went off to make some soup warm for him.

Then the boys washed their patient. He was conscious now, but too weak to speak. Yet he looked up at them gratefully as they washed him and made him comfortable.

And as they turned him over, cutting away the shirt from his back, Harry gave a cry of astonishment.

For on the back of Myles Stanton was tattoed in clear blue lines the perfect map of a large island enclosing a lagoon of some size. In the map figured a ship and three tall palm-trees, and a cairn of stones, close by which was tattoed a bright red cross.

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Harry. "Why, the poor chap is a walking atlas!"

And Myles Stanton smiled feebly at Harry's words.

He pointed to the brandy, and Harry spooned some more of the weak mixture through his shrunken lips.

"It's a map that I am, boys!" said he. "The map of the biggest treasure in the world—the treasure of Diego Valdez, the pirate, which he hid on Doubtful Island from his galleon the San Christoval. And it's share and share alike when we get it!"

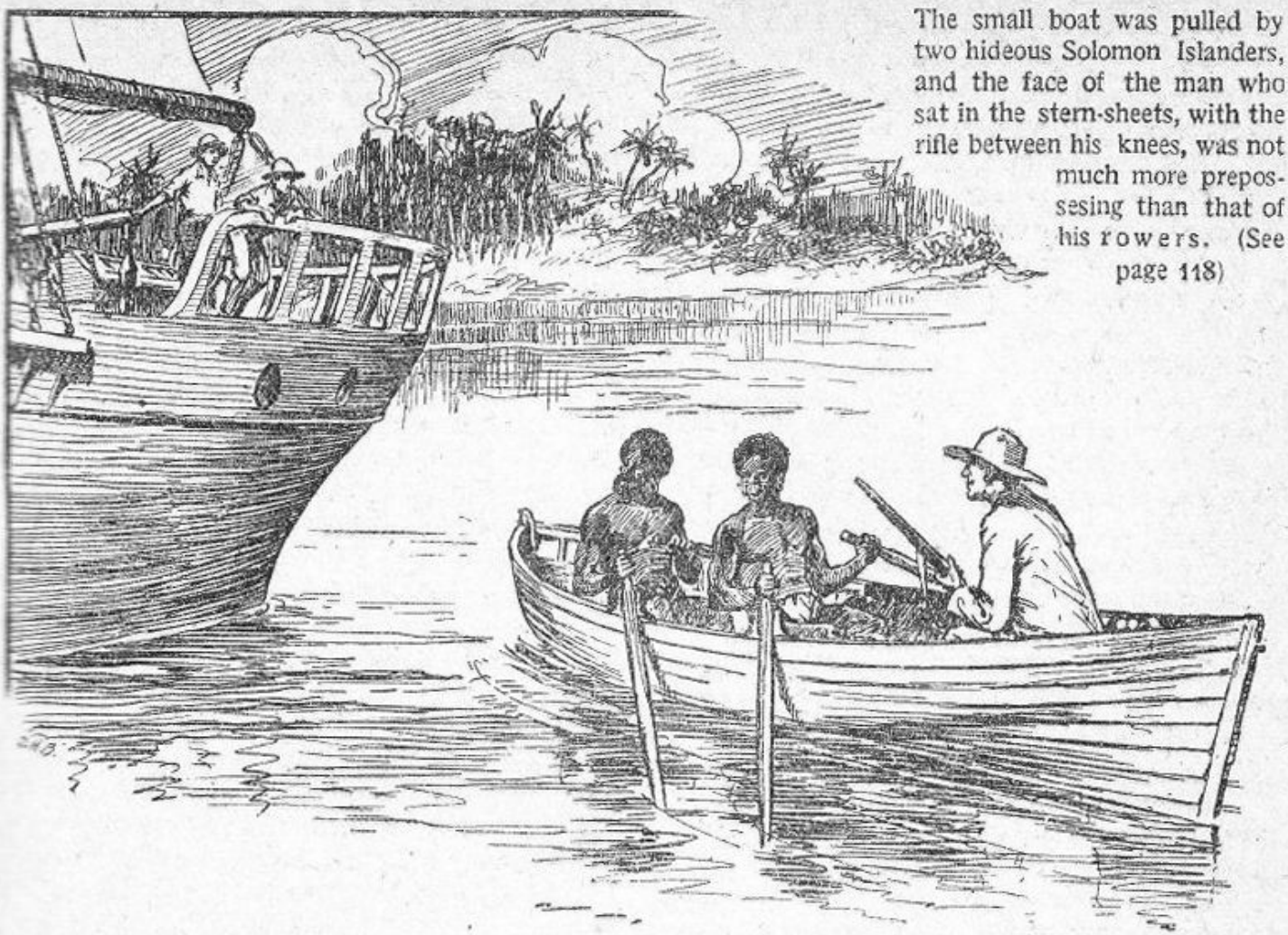
And Myles Stanton had no strength to tell them more.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Doubtful Island

For the next twenty-four hours the schooner flew before the storm, and the boys had a busy time nursing Myles Stanton, and taking their turns at the wheel to relieve the natives.

But the hurricane was blowing itself out, and, though the Magellan Cloud was badly knocked about, her hull was still tight.



The small boat was pulled by two hideous Solomon Islanders, and the face of the man who sat in the stern-sheets, with the rifle between his knees, was not much more prepossessing than that of his rowers. (See page 118)

In the noontide of the following day, the sky broke, showing a vivid streak of blue, and that night the wind went down with the sun, leaving only a great glassy swell under-running the sea.

Myles Stanton had told them his story. He related how, four years before, he had escaped from the schooner Golden Hope when her cargo of dried copra or coco kernel was afire. With three shipmates in the schooner's whaler he had reached a lonely and uninhabited atoll which they had called Doubtful Island.

Here they had lived for six months on cocoanuts and the shellfish which they had gathered amongst the rocks, and in their exploration of the island had stumbled on the treasure of Diego Valdez. The four shipwrecked sailors had agreed between them that they would come back for the treasure if they ever got away from the island, for well they knew the character of the few craft that used those lonely seas.

They were perfectly certain that if they revealed the existence of the treasure, they would have to pay three millions for a passage from the island, or it might well happen that those who found them would rob them of their find and leave them on the island.

One by one Myles Stanton's friends had died of the hardships of their life, leaving their shares of the treasure to him. And, before the last one died, he pricked the chart of the treasure on Myles' back so that it might not be lost.

Then Myles had been left alone on the island. And the loneliness of the place had sent him mad. For six months he had sat by the lagoon with the gulls screaming round his head. And he had got to thinking that the gulls were shouting at him and mocking him.

"I used to think they were mocking me, young gentlemen," said Myles, relating his story, "I used to think they were shouting, 'Hi, hi, Myles! You are going to die and we are going to eat you!' And, sometimes, I would manage to knock one over with a stone,

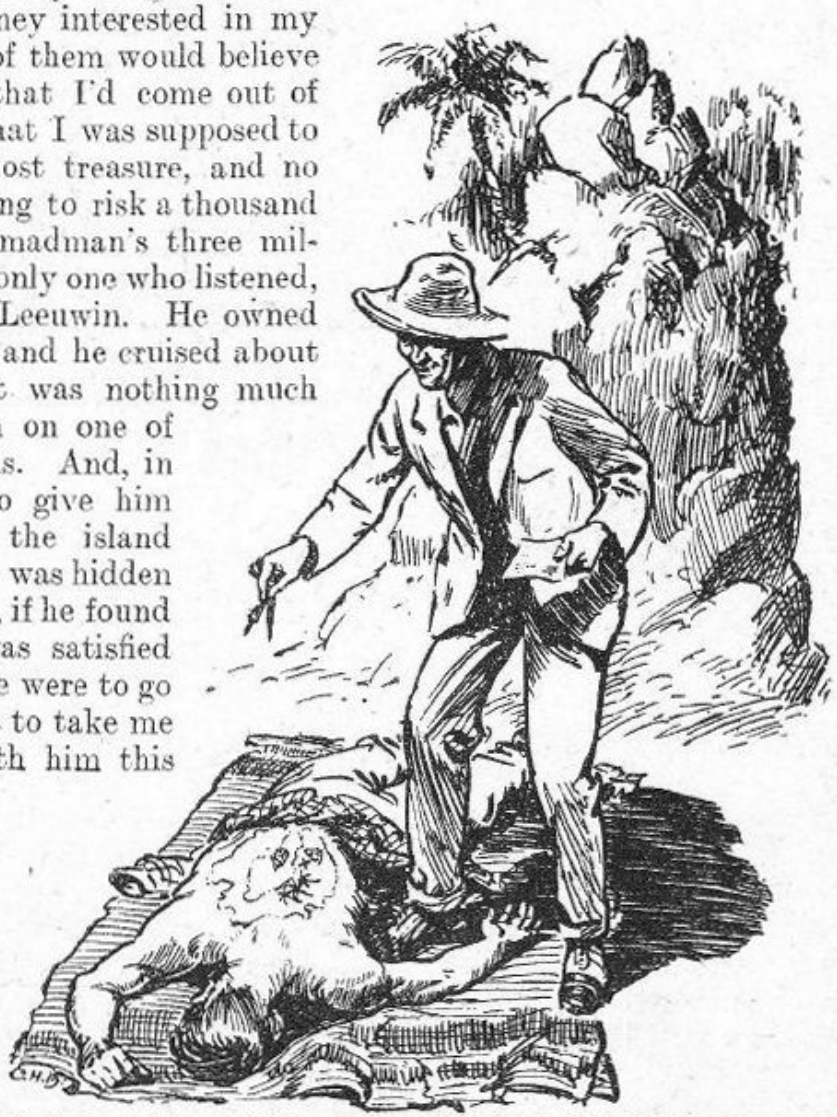
and I would eat him as a change from the lagoon clams. Then I went right mad, and the American warship that took me off found me sitting on the edge of the lagoon jibbering at the gulls. And I didn't come to my senses till I was put ashore at Sydney. And after that they kept me in the asylum for a long time, so that it was near a year before I was discharged as cured, though the doctors said that I must not think or jabber about the treasure, which they thought was my illusion. My nerves were all gone, you see, young gents," added Myles, "and when I thought of that treasure hidden on Doubtful Island and me a penniless man and thought to be loony, it used to excite me till all the blood ran to my head, and I was nearly loony indeed."

Myles Stanton sighed at this.

"Then I went to try and get some of the people in Sydney interested in my story. But none of them would believe me. They knew that I'd come out of the asylum, and that I was supposed to be crazy over a lost treasure, and no shipowner was going to risk a thousand pounds to get a madman's three millions. There was only one who listened, and that was Ray Leeuwin. He owned his own schooner, and he cruised about these seas, and it was nothing much to him to look in on one of the deserted islands. And, in proof, I agreed to give him the position of the island where the treasure was hidden for a start. Then, if he found the island, and was satisfied about my story, we were to go halves, and he was to take me as a passenger with him this trip. I know that he found the island all right, for he left his brother there to hold the claim if there should be any treasure on the island.

"Then he came back for me," added Myles bitterly. "And this is how he gave me my passage. Got me aboard quietly one night, gave me a cup of coffee that was hocussed with opium, and shut me up in the box where you found me.

"He wanted all the treasure to himself, you see, young gentlemen, and he had discovered that I had the chart of it printed on my back. And what did it matter to him whether he had me alive or dead? All that he wanted was that they should think in Sydney that the poor loony sailor had slipped over the edge of the wharf one night and had been drowned. And it was for the same reason that he shipped you, young gentlemen The scoundrel knew that you had no belongings who would ask questions after you. You were good enough to help him navigate the schooner to Doubtful Island, But he did not mean you to come back again alive. 'Dead men tell no tales' was Ray Leeuwin's motto, and now he will carry it out himself!"

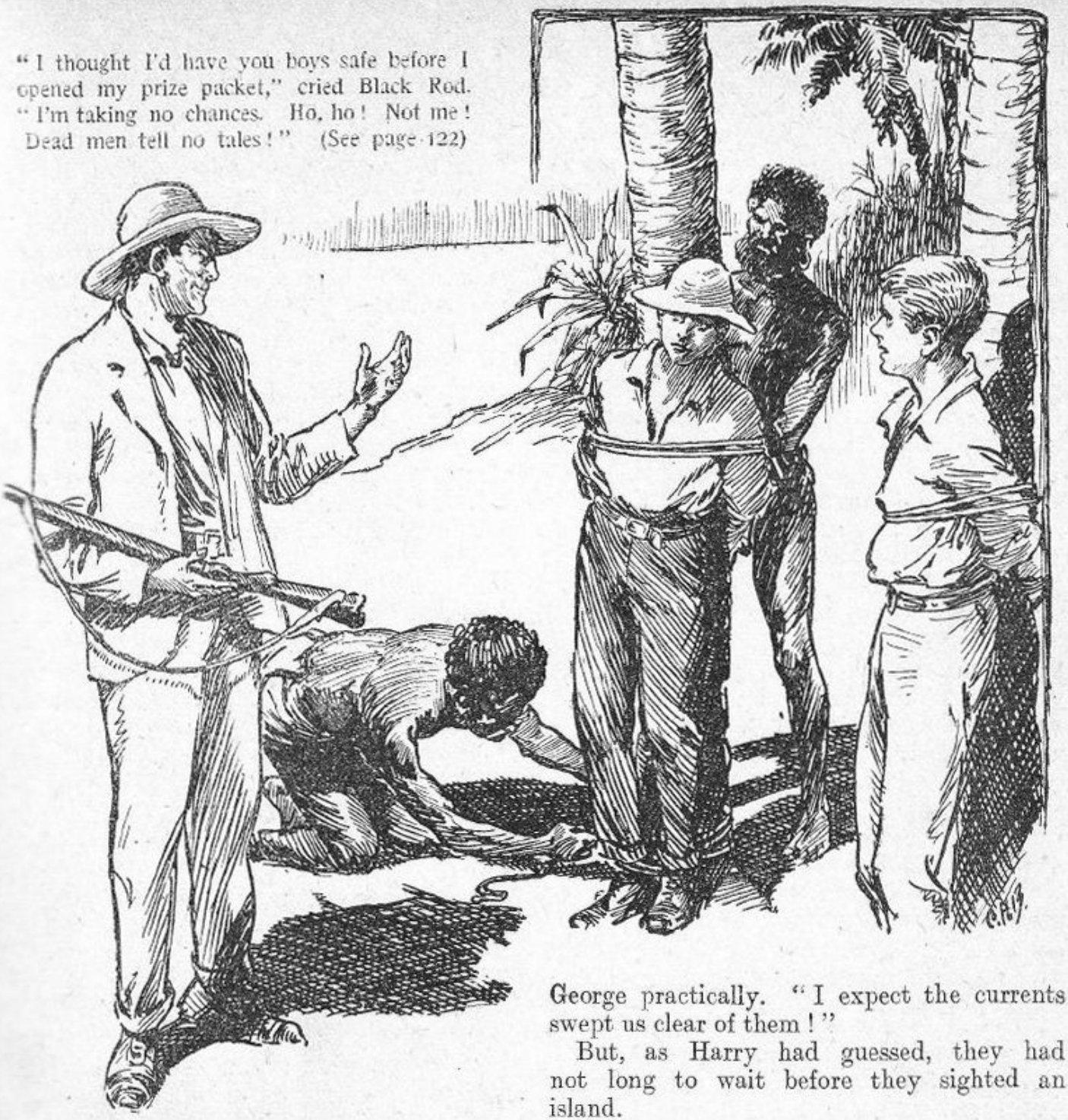


Rod Leeuwin carefully measured and studied the blue map on the back of the insensible Myles Stanton. (See page 120)

Such was Myles Stanton's story, and it hung together with all that they knew of the evil adventurer who had lured them aboard the Magellan Cloud.

They talked of it that night as they steered together. Sail had been made on the Magellan Cloud, and she was now forging steadily ahead under a star-spangled sky, the great smooth sea hills rolling her gently.

"I thought I'd have you boys safe before I opened my prize packet," cried Black Rod. "I'm taking no chances. Ho, ho! Not me! Dead men tell no tales!" (See page 122)



They were anxious and worried about their new friend.

"He seems very weak!" said Harry. "That brute Leeuwin has nearly killed him. I'm for putting in at the first lagoon we see. He'll do better on shore than in that stuffy cabin. And maybe," added Harry, "it won't be long before we sight an island. We must have passed fifty of them in the hurricane."

"Good job we didn't hit one!" replied George practically. "I expect the currents swept us clear of them!"

But, as Harry had guessed, they had not long to wait before they sighted an island.

Just as the sky was turning rose colour with the dawn, the native Luleo, who was on the look-out, gave a shout of "Land ho!"

There, about five miles distant and straight ahead, rose, from a mist of fine spray with which the breakers surrounded it, the palm tops of a small island.

The current was setting the Magellan Cloud straight for it, and soon the palms rose up above the horizon so that the boys could see their long shafts. They seemed to stand up

in the white surf that was beating on the outer reefs of the island like lines of soldiers.

As the sun rose clear of the night wrack, casting long shadows along the deck, the schooner drew up to the island, and now the boys could see the long white line of the coral beach gleaming like snow under the palms.

There was not much wind as they slowly drifted along this shore, the Magellan Cloud bowing and curtsying in the long-backed, sapphire-blue rollers that went racing inshore to crash into foam on that enchanted beach.

And, as they were watching this shore, which was but a mile distant, Myles Stanton came crawling out on deck, for he had heard the cry of "Land ho!"

The boys ran to him and supported him, for he was almost too weak to stand. Then George ran and got a deck-chair and laid him in it, covering him with blankets from the state-room.

The eyes of the sick man were shining with excitement.

To the boys the island looked exactly like any one of those fairylike islands which they had passed on their voyage. But it was not so to Myles Stanton.

"It's Doubtful Island, young gentlemen!" he stammered. "I know every tree of the place. The entrance to the lagoon is round the other side, beyond that point where the spouter shows. Tell the boys to carry me, chair and all, up to the fo'c's'le. I'll con the passage for you through the reefs. Luleo can stand by me to shout the orders!"

The natives carried him forward, and Luleo stood by the sick man, who could barely speak above a whisper, to shout his orders to the boys at the wheel.

Myles lay in the deck-chair looking out over the bows. He made the boys steer away out to sea, giving the spouting reef a wide berth. Then under his direction, Luleo shouting the directions all the time, the Magellan Cloud hauled her wind and headed in for that fairy-like shore.

To the boys it seemed as though they were steering the schooner straight to destruction, for around them white creaming reefs of jagged coral began to crop up through the water.

But a fresh catspaw of morning breeze blew true and fair as the schooner headed in to this dangerous shore.

She had plenty of steerage way, and she needed it, for it was starboard and port all the time as she twisted and turned in the narrow deep-water passage through the reefs.

Then amongst the palms two poles came into view, from which fluttered a red rag, the remnant of a strip of bunting. Between these there was an opening in the palms, and shooting through this the sails of the schooner emptied as she ran into a great glassy, calm lagoon, which lay like a sheet of mother-of-pearl under the morning sun.

This great sea pond, protected from the ocean by the low banks of coral rock and palms all round it, was about three miles long and a mile wide. The boys could see a rough shack or two ashore, made of palm thatching, which looked more like copra sheds than human habitations. But on the beach close by this they saw a small, white whaler hauled up, and as the schooner glided towards this, a man in white duck clothes, followed by two natives, made his appearance at the door of one of the shacks.

He shaded his eyes against the morning sun as he looked at the schooner. Then he dodged into the shack and came out again carrying a rifle, walking swiftly over the beach to the boat.

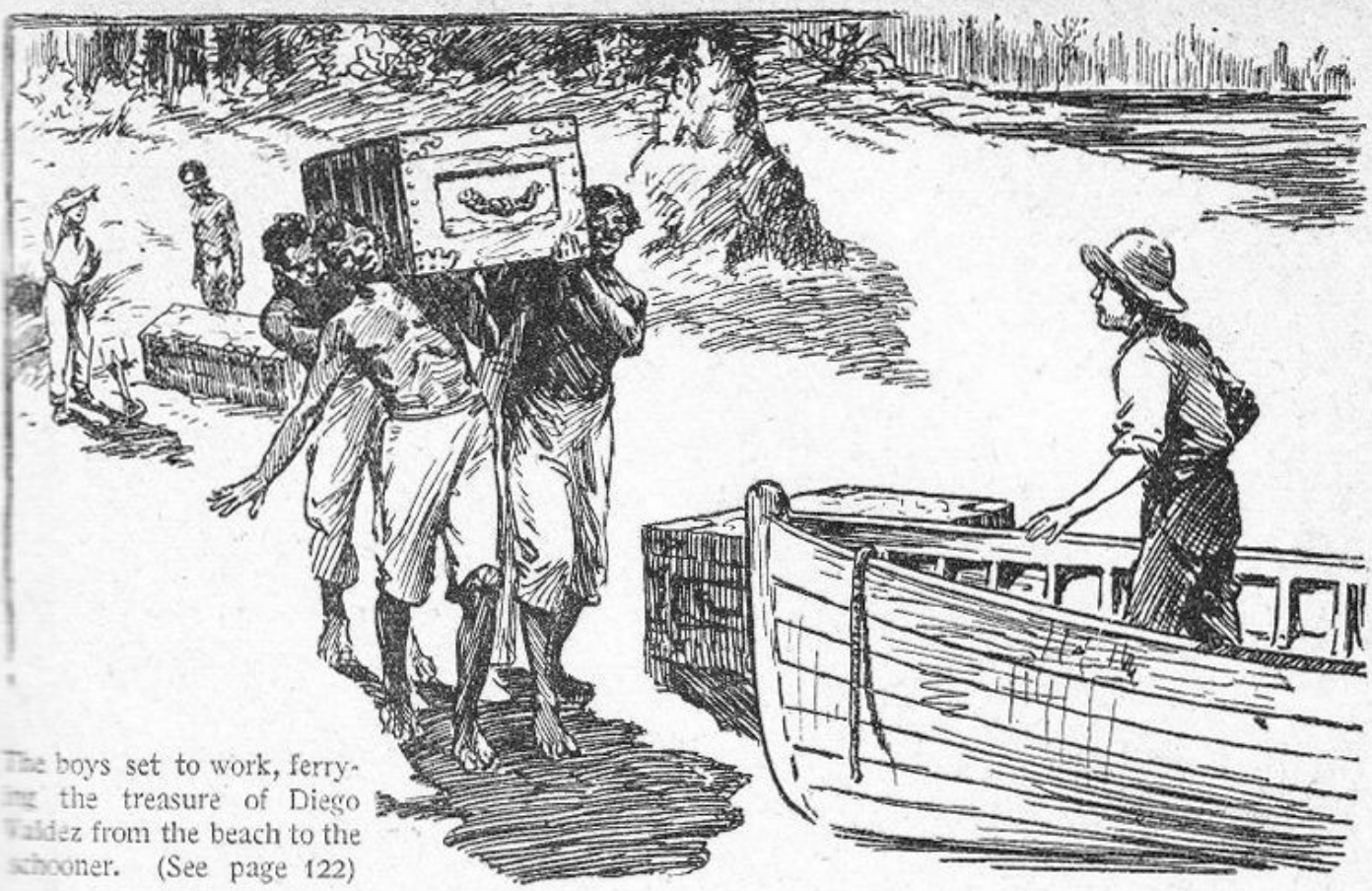
The sails were lowered, and the boys let go the anchor. Then they turned to Myles.

"Who will this chap, be Myles?" asked Harry. "Is it Leeuwin's brother?"

But Myles Stanton gave no answer, the strain of piloting the schooner into the lagoon had been too much for him, and he was insensible.

The boys dragged bedding out of the cabin and made up a bed on deck for him under the awning; then they laid him on it, and set one of the natives to fan him whilst they went to the rail to watch the boat that was rowing off to them.

It was pulled by two hideous Solomon Islanders, at whom their own native crew were looking askance and, as the boat drew near, the man who sat in the stern-sheets with the rifle between his knees became visible. And his face was not much more



The boys set to work, ferrying the treasure of Diego Valdez from the beach to the schooner. (See page 122)

prepossessing than that of his rowers. Harry's question was answered as the boat came alongside, and the evil face of the steersman looked up at the boys. He was the double of the dead Ray, save that a knife slash across his face had twisted his face into a smile that was perpetual.

But there was no smile in his evil, black eyes as he looked up at the boys.

"Where's my brother?" he asked, as he sprang lightly aboard. "My name is Rod Leeuwin—Black Rod they call me!"

Harry hesitated at breaking the bad news. The jet black eyes of Rod Leeuwin turned on the two boys coldly. He did not show the slightest grief at the news of his brother's death. Then they turned on Myles Stanton, who was lying white and insensible under the blankets on deck.

"You mean that you murdered my brother and the Chinee and slung them overside into the ditch, eh?" he demanded, the evil, twisted smile of his face deepening.

"I have told you the truth!" replied Harry proudly.

"Keep your temper, boy," answered Rod Leeuwin, tapping the barrel of his rifle meaningly. "I've got a cure for temper here. There's only one that's allowed a temper on Doubtful Island. That's me! Now, how did you find this island?" he added.

"We didn't find it," replied Harry. "It found us, and Mr. Stanton piloted us in. He is very ill, as you see, and it has been too much for him."

"So you have brought that loony with you!" sneered Rod. "He's the chap I want. Well, well! So Ray's gone," he added as though speaking to himself. "So much the better—the dog would have swindled me out of my share of the boodle if he had lived!"

And with this unbrotherly remark Rod Leeuwin strode across the deck to the sick man, his grinning face full of malevolence.

He turned the insensible man over with his rubber-shod foot roughly, then drawing his pocket-knife, he cut down the neck of Myles' shirt, laying the cloth aside so that he could see his back.

"That's the chap I want!" said he. "Sling him over into the boat, and I want you

youngsters, too. The rest can stay aboard and keep ship till I want 'em."

The boys hesitated, appalled by the brutality of this scoundrel. Ray Leeuwin had been bad enough. But this brother was a thousand times worse!

But, with a snarl, Rod Leeuwin swung his rifle forward and presented the muzzle at Harry's breast.

"Get that man into the boat!" he snarled. "Don't you know enough to take an order?"

"But the man is sick, sir!" protested Harry.

"You'll be twice as sick, my lad, if you don't jump to it!" snarled Leeuwin, his evil face still grinning, but convulsed with sudden anger. "I've got business to do that's got to be done quick. The tide sets out o' this lagoon at noon, and there's a British cruiser nosing around this part of the sea. So the Magellan Cloud sails at noon."

The boys called to the crew, and between them they lowered the insensible form of Myles Stanton into the whaler, where the two ruffianly looking Solomon Islanders were squatting and chattering in low tones.

These rolled their eyes at Rod Leeuwin and at his rifle as though they were deadly afraid of him, and at his bidding they pulled swiftly ashore.

Rod Leeuwin said nothing till the keel of the whaler grated on the coral.

Then he turned to the boys.

"Swing that walking map in the blankets!" said he. "The niggers can help you hoist him ashore."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The Hidden Treasure

THE boys twisted the ends of the blankets that were wrapped around Myles, making a sort of hammock of them. Then, assisted by the two natives, they carried the insensible man along the glaring coral sands, staggering under his weight.

Rod Leeuwin marched by their side, his rifle ready in the hollow of his arm. He had turned away from the thatched hut, and he led them for half a mile along the beach. Then he motioned to them to lower their burden.

"Drop him there, and turn him over on his face," said he briefly.

Harry's eyes blazed.

"Lay the poor chap out in this blazing sun, face down!" he exclaimed. "Not me, you brute! You'll kill him!"

For a moment there was murder in Leeuwin's smiling face.

He half lifted his rifle as Harry boldly faced him. But there was something in the boy's eye that seemed to hold him in check.

"Very well, young gentleman," he answered. "Since you are so squeamish, I'll do my work myself. I only want to consult the plan that is tatooed on this gentleman's back."

He muttered a few words in their native tongue to the two staring Solomon Islanders, who at once raced off along the sands full pelt for the huts.

Soon they came running back, shouldering picks and shovels.

It was plain, to judge by the way they moved, that Rod Leeuwin had his own way of getting obedience from his servants.

They came panting and breathless over the sands, gazing at their master like a couple of dogs, half cringing, half hoping for favourable notice.

But Rod Leeuwin did not look at them. He was smoking a cigarette, and, with a compass laid out on the sands, was measuring off a line from a half effaced cairn of piled coral rock.

He sat absorbed for a while, pencilling a lot of figures on a sheet of paper.

With his own hands he had turned the insensible Myles Stanton over on his face, leaving the poor fellow exposed to the glaring sun whilst he carefully measured and studied the blue map on his back, measuring distances with a pair of compasses.

At last he strode out on to the dry sands.

"Take shovels and dig there!" he ordered the boys. "Or——"

And he broke off and tapped his rifle significantly.

The two Solomon men also took shovels, and between them they opened a deep hole in the sand, whilst Leeuwin stood there watching them work.

see page 120

IT TOOK THE UNITED STRENGTH OF FIVE OF THEM TO LIFT THE SMALLEST OF THE CHESTS OUT OF THE TREASURE-HOLD!

The perspiration poured down the boys' faces, and they could feel their arms blistering in the sun. And their souls shrank within them as they wondered what was to be fate of their poor friend who lay there callously exposed to the biting rays of the tropic sun.

At last Harry straightened his back and faced Leeuwin.

"Look here!" said he boldly. "You can shoot if you like; but we are going on strike. We are not going to dig any more till you have put our pal in the shade, and have given him some water from that bottle!"

Rod Leeuwin hesitated. It was evident that he did not want Myles to live. At the same time, he did not want to have a charge of murder against him.

"All right!" he said grudgingly. "Move him to the shade of the palms. I don't want to kill him, but he's going to die, anyway!"

The boys shifted their friend to the shade, and forced some water between his lips. Then they went on digging, but without result.

Rod Leeuwin began to look anxious. The hole in the sands was full five feet deep. He took a shovel himself now, and started to make the sand fly.

But it was plain that hard work was not his line. Soon he was panting and puffing, and stood back from the hole, cursing the boys and the Solomon men for not digging faster.

But the words were still on his lips when he staggered back. The sand under his feet had given way, and he was standing nearly knee deep in the loose white coral dust.

Quick, all of you! Dig here!" he gasped eagerly, pointing to the spot where the subsidence had taken place, which was about three yards from the hole they had been digging.

The boys dug, and soon a rotten old plank, dried and bored by toredo worms, was lifted up; then another, and another.

"It's the treasure!" screamed Rod Leeuwin. "It's the treasure, and it's all mine now! Ray's gone—and it's all mine!"

With his eyes starting from his head, like the eyes of a maniac, he was grabbing in the sands now. There were golden coins mixed in it; great golden coins that bore the arms of Castille and Aragon. These were Spanish doubloons. And mixed with these were small English rose nobles, coins the shape of a half-sovereign but lighter, for they were the third of a guinea in value.

"Six and eight every time!" cried Leeuwin, dusting the sand from a handful of these olden coins. "Six and eight—a lawyer's fee!"

The boys looked at one another. Rod Leeuwin was plainly mad. He threw each of them one of the small coins of the date of Henry VIII. "There's your share," he mocked.

The boys let the coins lay where they fell. They were digging them out of the sand by the shovelful, the coins increasing in the sand as they dug down to the level where the canvas treasure sacks of Diego Valdez had mouldered away, releasing their golden load.

Then they came upon several huge chests of teak, bound with bronze, and with huge locks of chased bronze.

"That's the stuff!" screamed Leeuwin. "That's the real treasure. Rubies and pearls, and emeralds and sapphires. All mine! All mine!"

It took the united strength of five of them to lift the smallest of these chests out of the treasure hold. And, considering the hundreds of years during which it had been hidden away, the great chest was in wonderful preservation.

There was a huge key attached to the lock, and Leeuwin made them drag the chest up under the shade where its real owner lay still and silent, his face turned up to the whispering palms.

"This is the prize packet for me," snarled Rod Leeuwin, looking furtively round him like a dog with a bone.

Then his evil gaze fell upon the boys, and the furtive look in his eyes deepened.

Suddenly he grabbed his rifle and covered Harry. At the same moment he muttered a few words to the Islanders, who threw themselves on George, who, though he struggled desperately, was but as a child in their powerful grasp.

They bound George to the shaft of a coco palm; whilst Harry, with his hands up, looked straight into the barrel of that threatening rifle.

Then the three threw themselves on Harry,

and he, too, was bound hand and foot to a palm trunk with lashings of strong sinnet.

Leeuwin chuckled.

"I thought I'd have you chaps safe before I opened my prize packet," said he. "You settled Ray, but Rod's taking no chances. But before you die you shall see the treasure of Diego Valdez. Dead men tell no tales. Ho, ho! Dead men tell no tales!"

The ruffian thrust the bronze key into the lock, kneeling by the great chest. But, with all the force of his powerful, monkey-like hands, he could not turn it.

Then he spoke to one of the natives, who ran off and returned with a can of oil. With this and the feather of a sea bird Leeuwin oiled the locks and hasps and hinges carefully.

Then again he struggled with the key which turned and moved the tumblers of the lock with its powerful wards.

Then Leeuwin turned to the boys with a look of unspeakable cunning in his eyes.

"Look whilst you may!" he cried. "It is the treasure of Diego Valdez! The treasure—the treasure!"

His voice rose to a scream as he threw up the heavy lid with a jerk, revealing a shimmering mass of glittering jewels, that lay in the chest in greens and reds and brilliant flashes of white, like liquid fire.

But Leeuwin's scream of delight died away as the lid crashed back with the weight of a full hundredweight. His head drooped, and he fell forward, with his face over the dazzling load of gems.

The boys looked on amazed, and the two natives, with a yell of fear, took to their heels, and raced away along the beach.

Diego Valdez had had the last word. As that heavy lid had gone back with a crash, by a simple bit of wicked, old-fashioned mechanism, it had driven out at the side of the lock a sharp Toledo blade, which, unrusted beneath its secret polish, had driven straight through the black heart of Rod Leeuwin.

In his fever Myles Stanton moved and muttered uneasily. Then he rolled over.

"We've found it, boys! We've found it!" he muttered. "Share and share alike!"

Then he opened his eyes slowly, and winced as he saw the boys each bound to a tree.

"I was dreaming we'd found the treasure," he muttered.

"The treasure is found, Myles!" gasped Harry. "And that scoundrel Leeuwin is dead. Do you think you can crawl over here and loose my knife from my belt and cut me away from this tree?"

Myles pulled himself together, gazing with dazed eyes at the dead miscreant. Then slowly crawling on his hands and knees, he detached the clasp knife that hung at Harry's belt, cutting through the bonds that held the boy's hands to the tree.

"That's enough," said Harry, unwilling to overtax his strength. "I'll get myself and George free now."

With a few slashes of the knife he cut away the bonds about his legs; then he freed his brother.

Myles seemed to take no more notice of the box of shimmering jewels; he laid down again where he had crawled.

Then the boys, running to the shore, shouted to Uncle Jeff to send ashore the boat.

Uncle Jeff and the native crew had been wondering spectators of the scene ashore, and, when they heard Harry's voice shouting across the lagoon that Rod Leeuwin was dead, something like a cheer of relief went up from them.

In a few minutes they had the whaler of the Magellan Cloud in the water, and were racing for the beach as hard as they could row.

And it did not take them long to lift Myles tenderly and carry him down to the boat, by which he was swiftly ferried on board again, where a comfortable bed was made up for him on deck.

Then the boys and the natives set to work ferrying the treasure of Diego Valdez from the beach to the schooner.

For a moment or two they wondered how they were going to free that Toledo blade from the dead man. But as they closed the lid the fatal sword that was hidden in the mechanism of the box drew back like the tongue of a serpent.

Then covering Rod Leeuwin's body with branches, they proceeded with the removal of the treasure.

They took very good care not to try to

open any other of the huge cases and boxes that filled that treasure pit in the white sands of Doubtful Island. It was enough to get the load out to the ship and to hoist it on board.

They could get no help from the two Solomon Islanders in this work. These had seen the fatal stiletto work of the chest of Diego Valdez, and had declared that it was white man's magic which they could not touch. They hid themselves a mile up the beach amongst the coco palms, watching with furtive eyes the removal of the treasure.

It was past one o'clock, and the tide had turned in the lagoon when the boys learned the cause of the hurry of the dead Rod Leeuwin, for in the entrance of the lagoon there was a shrilling of a steam syren, and a moment later the grey hull of a small British cruiser came gliding round the corner of the lagoon entrance.

She dropped anchor close by the Magellan Cloud, and the boys hailed her for a surgeon.

And soon her duty steamboat came racing alongside, bringing a Navy lieutenant and the cruiser's surgeon, who at once attended to Myles.

"Look here!" said the lieutenant to the boys. "We've come here to arrest a fellow called Rod Leeuwin, part-owner of this very schooner, and we are looking to nab his brother Ray."

"You won't get Ray, sir," replied Harry. "He was washed overboard from this very schooner a few nights back in the hurricane; and as for Rod, there he lies under the palm-trees yonder on the beach."

And he told the astonished lieutenant of the marvellous death of the two evil brothers.

"Well, that'll save the hangman a job, anyway!" replied the lieutenant."

So it happened at sunset that night, after a burying party had been sent ashore to commit the body of Rod Leeuwin to the sands of Doubtful Island, H.M.S. Undine steamed out from the lagoon, bearing with her the boys and Myles and old Uncle Jeff, and the treasure of Diego Valdez.

The native crew were left with enough gold to set them up as rich men for the rest of their lives, and the Solomon Islanders were not forgotten, for they were awarded two large wooden boxes of real Navy plug tobacco, which counted far more to them than all the treasure of the Spanish pirate.

And, thanks to the surgeon's ministrations, Myles was up and about again before they sighted Sydney Heads, and with the boys he eagerly counted out two huge bags of gold—one for Uncle Jeff, and the other to buy Daddy Mercer a new boat.

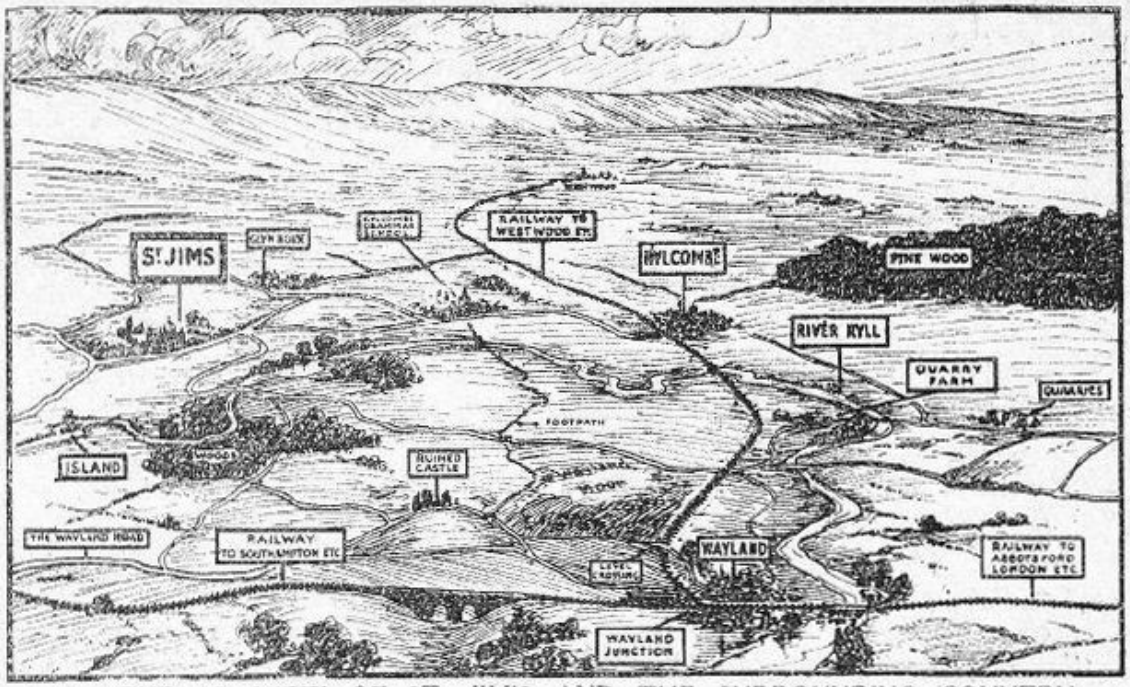
There was enough there to buy Daddy Mercer a whole fleet of new boats, for the boys were millionaires now, and they were going home to their mother heavy laden with treasure.

And before they sailed for England they searched the harbour for the Finn sailor. He was not to be found, and no one knew where his ship had gone.

"It's no good looking for a chap like that," said the waterman of whom they made inquiries. "But hurry up, if you're for the London River packet. There she is, with the Blue Peter atrip, and the tender's going off now. Good-bye, young gents, and a pleasant voyage home. Good-bye, Mr. Stanton," he added. "You're lookin' better than when you landed. Good-bye!"

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JIM'S

Some Useful Information Concerning the School, its Scholars and its Staff



A GENERAL VIEW OF ST. JIM'S AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY

ST. JAMES' COLLEGE.

This world-famed college is delightfully situated in the heart of Sussex, one mile from the pleasant little rustic village of Rylcome, through which the Ryll winds its charming course.

There are two houses at St. Jim's, School House and New House. The former under the charge of Mr. Railton and the latter Mr. Ratcliff.

Accommodation is provided for about three hundred scholars, two hundred was the original number which the School House contained, when the New House was added to board another one hundred scholars.

The New House is really only a boarding-house, for it was built to contain the dormitories, studies, and common rooms.

The New House juniors have to cross the Quad. to the School House for prayers, meals, classes, and calling over. The juniors below the 4th in the New House have to attend prep. in the class room with Mr. Selby from 7.0 to 8.0 every evening, while those above are allowed to stay in their own House and do the work in their studies.

Eric Kildare, the captain, has Monteith as second in command in the New House, and nine other prefects to maintain authority.

SCHOOL HOUSE:—Baker, Rushden, Langton, Knox, Darrell, Dudley.

NEW HOUSE:—Monteith, Grey, Webb.

Every branch of sport is indulged in by the boys, football and cricket being compulsory.

HEADMASTER:
RICHARD HOLMES, M.A., D.D.

THE MASTERS:

6th Form: VICTOR RAILTON, M.A.
5th Form: HORACE RATCLIFF, M.A.
Shell: LESLIE M. LINTON, M.A.
4th Form: PHILIP G. LATHOM, B.A.
3rd Form: HENRY SELBY, B.Sc.
2nd Form: PERCY CARRINGTON, M.A.
French: ADOLPHE LE BLANC MORNY.
German: OTTO GOTTFRIED SCNEIDER.
Maths.: Mr. CARRINGTON.

6TH FORM.
FORM MASTER: MR. VICTOR RAILTON, M.A.

SCHOOL HOUSE

KILDARE, ERIC—Captain of the School and Head Prefect.
BAKER, STANLEY—Prefect.
DARRELL, GEORGE BRUCE RICHARD—Prefect.
DUDLEY, EDWIN—Prefect.
JONES, HORACE ANSTRUTHER.
KNOX, GERALD—Prefect.
LANGTON, HERBERT OSWALD—Prefect.
MACGREGGOR, NIGEL.

6TH FORM—(*contd.*)

MULVANEY, PATRICK.
NORTH, JOHN.—Prefect.
RUSHDEN, PHILIP.—Prefect.

NEW HOUSE

GRAY, ALBERT THEODORE.—Prefect.
HALL, HAROLD.
MONTEITH, JAMES GARSTON.—Head Prefect.
WEBB, GEORGE GARNER.—Prefect.
WELLS, ARTHUR.

5TH FORM.

FORM-MASTER: MR. HORACE RATCLIFF, M.A.

SCHOOL HOUSE

CUTTS, GERALD.
GILMORE, PHILIP REVEL.
LEE, WILLIAM.
LEFEVRE, PHILIP.
PRYE, HERBERT.
SMITH, WILLIAM WADE (major).
ST. LEGER, ARTHUR UMPHREVILLE.

SHELL FORM & 4TH FORM (*See next page*).

3RD FORM.

FORM-MASTER: MR. HENRY SELBY, B.SC.

BUTT, BERTRAM.
D'ARCY, WALTER ADOLPHUS, The Hon. (minor).
FRAYNE, JOE.
GIBSON, STANLEY.
*HANKEY, SIDNEY.
HARVEY, RICHARD.
HOBBS, RAYMOND.
HOOLEY, PHELIM.
*JAMESON, ERNEST.
KENT, LANCELOT.
LEGGETT, GEORGE LUDOVIC.
LEVISON, FRANK (minor).
MANNERS, REGINALD (minor).
*PERKINS, CECIL.
PIGGOTT, REUBEN.
TRIMBLE, TEDDY.
WATSON, OLIVER.

*New House.

LIST OF THE SHELL AND FOURTH AS THEY RANK AS BOXERS (ON POINTS).

Tom Merry, best fighting junior in the Lower School	Leslie Owen
Reginald Talbot, Jack Blake	Koumi Rao
Harry Noble	Buck Finn
Dick Roylance	Wilkins
G. A. Grundy	Contarini
A. A. D'Arcy, George Figgins	Gibbons, Lawrence
Jerrold Lumley Lumley, George Durrance	French, Reilly
Dick Julian	Hammond Tompkins
Levison, Ernest	Walkeley, Mulvaney, Kerruish
Dick Redfern, Ralph Cardew	Macdonald, Smith minor
Clifton, Dane	Robinson, Skimpole
George Francis Kerr	Racke
Monty Lowther	Pratt
Sidney Clive	Bates
Bernard Glyn	Boulton
Harry Manners, Fatty Wynn, George Herries	Frere
George Gore	Lennox, Lorne
William Gunn, Robert Digby	Jimson, Digges
Dick Brooke	Thompson
	Wyatt, Jones
	Lucas, Clampe
	Crooke, Scrope
	Clarke, Chowle
	Mellish
	Trimble

FOOTBALL AND CRICKET ELEVENS AT ST. JIM'S

SENIOR FIRST XI.

Kildare (captain)
Macgreggor
Darrell
Rushden
Lefevre
Baker
Gray
Cutts
Langton
Monteith

JUNIOR FIRST XI.

Merry (captain)
D'Arcy
Blake
Lowther
Figgins
Talbot
Kerr
Redfern
Wynn
Levison
Noble

Colours: Red and White.

GERALD CROOKE

REGGIE MANNERS

LEVISON (major)

DR. HOLMES
(The Head)

THE FOURTH FORM

FORM-MASTER: MR. PHILIP G. LATHOM, M.A.

SCHOOL HOUSE.

Name.	Age.	Height.	Study.
	Yrs. Mths.	Ft. Ins.	No.
Bates, Harold	15 2	5 2	3
Blake, John	15 4	5 5	6
Brooke, Richard	15 3	5 3½	Day boy
Cardew, Ralph Reckness	15 7	5 4	9
Clive, Sidney	15 4	5 5	9
Contarini, Giacomo	15 6	5 2	7
D'Arcy, Arthur Augustus	15 3	5 4½	6
Digby, Robert Arthur	15 4	5 1	6
Durrance, George	15 3	5 5	1
Hammond, Harry	15 0	5 2	5
Herries, George	15 6	5 4	6
Julian, Dick	15 5	5 5	6
Jones, Edwin Alfred	14 11	5 1	10
Kerruish, Eric	14 10	5 3	5
Levison, Ernest	15 6	5 5	9
Lorne, Alan	15 0	5 0	8
Lumley, Lumley Jerrold	15 9	5 3	1
Macdonald, Bruce	14 10	5 5	3
Mellish, Percy	15 2	5 0	2
Mulvaney, Michael	15 3	5 2½	4
Reilly, Patrick	14 11	5 3	5
Roylance, Dick	14 9	5 0	7
Smith, Frank	15 3	5 5½	7
Tompkins, Clarence York	15 0	5 4½	4
Trimble, Bagley	15 2	4 11	2
Wyatt, Percy	15 4	5 5	8

NEW HOUSE.—FORM-MASTER: MR. PHILIP G. LATHOM, M.A.

Name.	Age.	Height.	Study.
	Yrs. Mths.	Ft. Ins.	No.
Chowle, Cyril	15 2	5 4	6
Clarke, Richard	14 10	5 3	2
Digges, Adolphus	14 9	5 3½	3
Figgins, George	15 3	5 7½	4
Kerr, George Francis	15 5	5 4½	4
Lawrence, Edgar	14 11	5 4½	5
Owen, Leslie	15 0	5 4½	5
Pratt, Percival	15 2	5 2½	3
Koumi, Rao	14 11	5 1½	1
Redfern, Richard Henry	15 4	5 5	5
Robinson, William	15 1	5 2½	2
Wynn, David Llewellyn	15 4½	5 2	4

LEVISON (minor)

GEORGE KERR

GEORGE HERRIES

MR. LATHOM

KOUMI RAO

MR. RATCLIFF

TOWSER
(Herries' Dog)

TOM MERRY

P.C. CRUMP

CLIFTON DANE

THE SHELL FORM

FORM-MASTER: MR. LESLIE M. LINTON, M.A.

DAME TAGGLES
(the old lady of the tuck shop)

MR. SELBY

BAGLEY TRIMBLE

Name.	Age.	Height.	Study.
	Yrs. Mths.	Ft. ins.	No.
Merry, Tom	16 0	5 5½	10
Boulton, Robert	15 4	5 2	8
Clampe, Leslie	15 7	5 4	3*
Crooke, George Gerald ..	15 9	5 5	7
Dane, Clifton	15 8	5 5	11
Finn, Buck	15 9	5 2½	4
French, Lancelot	15 3	5 1	1*
Frere, Harry	15 4	5 3½	2
Gibbons, Hugh	15 7	5 4½	5
Glyn, Bernard	15 6	5 5	11
Gore, George	15 10	5 5½	9
Grundy, George Alfred ..	15 11	5 6½	3
Gunn, William Cuthbert	15 5	5 4	3
Jimson, Frederick	15 6	5 4½	1*
Lowther, Montague ..	15 11	5 5½	10
Lennox, James	15 7	5 5	4
Lucas, Matthew	15 3	5 6½	2
Manners, Harry	16 0	5 5	10
Noble, Harry	15 10	5 7	11
Racke, Aubrey	15 9	5 4½	7
Scrope, Luke	15 10	5 3½	5
Skimpole, Herbert	15 5	5 3	9
Talbot, Reginald	16 1	5 5½	9
Thompson, Hubert ..	16 0	5 4	2*
Walkeley, Paul	15 5	5 4½	8
Wilkins, George	15 10	5 5	3

* New House.

RALPH CARDEW

DICK REDFERN

GEORGE FIGGINS

ALL GUSSY'S FAULT!

A Long, Complete School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Illustrated by R. J. Macdonald.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Gussy's Party!

"WEALLY, Blake——"

"Dry up!"

"I wefuse to dwy up. I considah——"

"Hallo, you fellows, ready?" asked the cheery voice of Tom Merry as he came out of the School-House with Manners and Lowther.

The Terrible Three of the Shell were in their oldest clothes, as were Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth, who were standing by a group of bicycles in the quad. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form, was in his usual elegant Etons. Arthur Augustus seemed to be engaged in a rather warm altercation with his comrades as the Terrible Three arrived on the scene.

"I am very nearly weady, Tom Mewwy," he answered. "I have simply to wun in for my toppah——"

"You've simply got to get on your jigger," said Jack Blake. "You don't want a topper for a bike ride."

"I pwesume, Blake, that I know the best whethah I want a toppah or not," said Arthur Augustus with dignity.

"My dear chap, you don't know anything. Now, are you getting on your jigger or do you want to be chucked on it?" inquired Blake.

"I should wefuse to be chucked on it, Blake. I appeal to you, Tom Mewwy——"

"What's the row?" asked Tom Merry, with a smile. "Tell your Uncle Thomas all about it."

"We are goin' ovah to St. Winifred's for the aftahnoon," said Arthur Augustus, "and I think——"

"Bosh!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Rats!"

"If you keep on intewwuptin' me with wibald remarks, Blake——"

"Get on your bike!" roared Blake.

"I wefuse to do anything of the sort at pwesent. As we have nevah been to St. Winifwed's befoah, I considah it necessary to keep up appeawances, as it is a wathah special occasion. You fellows can dwess as you like, but at least one membah of the party ought to look wespectable."

"What?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"I insist upon goin' in a toppah," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "I am accustomed to keepin' up appeawances for you fellows."

"Ass!" remarked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Fathead!" said Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"The silly ass wants to start on a fifteen-mile ride in a silly topper!" exclaimed Blake, in great exasperation. "I think we'd better lift him on his bike and tie his feet to the pedals."

"I should wefuse——"

"Well, it's Gussy's party," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's Gussy who had the invitation from Drake at St. Winifred's. We must give Gussy his head."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And if we give him his head, we can give him his hat," said Monty Lowther. "Shall I cut in and get it for you, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! You are vewy obligin', deah boy. It is in the hatbox in Study No. 6."

"Look here——" began Blake warmly.

Monty Lowther disappeared into the house.

"Oh, give him his head," said Manners. "We shall never get off at this rate, and it's a long, long way to St. Winifred's."

"Yaas, we are wastin' time while you are waggin' your chin, Blake," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I weally nevah knew such a fellow for talkin'."

"I never knew such a conceited ass," growled Blake.

"I'm not conceited in the least, deah boy, but I know my way about," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "We are callin' on the St. Winifwed's chaps for the first time, and we don't want them to suppose that St. Jim's fellows are all ill-dwessed wuffians. It is up to at least one membah of the partay to keep up wespectable appeawances. As you fellows are comin' as my fwiends I weally considah that you might sport your toppahs also."

"Catch me biking in a topper!" grunted Herries.

"Buck up, Lowther!" called out Tom Merry.

There was no reply from Monty Lowther. He had disappeared up the staircase to fetch the beautiful topper which reposed in the hatbox in Study No. 6. But something seemed to be delaying him in that celebrated apartment.

Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, came out of the School-House while Tom Merry and Co. were waiting for Lowther. Trimble, of the Fourth, joined the group of juniors, with an agreeable and ingratiating grin on his fat countenance.

"Starting for St. Winifred's?" he inquired.

"Yaas, Twimble."

Only Arthur Augustus took the trouble to reply to Trimble's inquiry. The fat Baggy was not "persona grata" with Tom Merry and Co. But Arthur Augustus's politeness never failed under any strain.

"Good! I'll come!" said Baggy.

"Ahem!"

"You won't!" remarked George Herries, who was a much plainer speaker than Arthur Augustus; painfully plain, at times, in fact.

"No fear!" observed Blake. "Roll away, Trimble."

But Trimble, of the Fourth, was not thin-skinned. He only gave Blake and Herries a lofty blink, and turned his attention to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Your party, isn't it, Gussy?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Drake, at St. Winifred's, asked you over, didn't he?"

"Yaas."

"And told you to bring your friends, what?"

"I weally do not see how you know so much about it, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "I do not wemembah confidin' the circumstances to you."

"I happened to hear——"

"Weally, Twimble——"

"As you're taking your friends," continued Twimble, "I don't mind coming. I can borrow a bike——"

"But you are not a fwiend of mine, Twimble."

"Now, look here, Gussy——"

"I should be vewy much obliged to you, Twimble, if you would not addwess me as Gussy. I am Gussy to my fwiends."

"Well, ain't I your old pal?" asked Trimble, more in sorrow than in anger. "I shouldn't have expected you to forget an old friendship like that, Gussy. Wait a minute, while I get a bike——"

"Bai Jove! I weally——"

"Where's that ass, Lowther?" exclaimed

Blake. "He's been gone long enough to collect all the toppers in the House. There's Figgins yelling at us from the gates."

"Here I am, old top."

Monty Lowther came out of the School-House, with a gleaming topper in his hand, and a grin on his face. Arthur Augustus received the topper with a cheery smile, and placed it on his noble head with great satisfaction.

"Pway take my cap in, Twimble——"

"Certainly, old chap. Wait for me, won't you?"

"I feah——"

"Come on!" growled Blake.

The juniors wheeled their machines away towards the gates, where Figgins and Co., of the New House, were waiting for them. Baggy Trimble stood with D'Arcy's cap in his hand, staring after them. Then he started in pursuit.

"I say, Gussy——"

"Pway do not wowwy, Twimble."

"But I'm coming!" howled Trimble.

Tom Merry and Co. wheeled their bikes out into the road unheeding. Even Arthur Augustus, polished as he was, did not feel equal to burdening himself with the obnoxious Baggy for the afternoon. Baggy Trimble rolled out of the gateway after them, with wrath in his fat face.

The juniors mounted in the road.

"Will you wait for me?" howled Trimble.

"Weally, you know——"

"Buzz off, you fat wasp!" snapped Herries.

"Look here, Gussy——"

Arthur Augustus paused, with one leg over his bike.

"I am vewy sowwy, Twimble," he said politely—as politely as the circumstances allowed. "But this is a wathah special occasion. As this is our first visit to St. Winifred's I wegard it as bein' necessary to be careful to keep up appeawances. So you see, it is quite imposs for you to be a membah of the partay."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' to cackle at in that wemark, deah boys. I am speakin' sewiously to Twimble."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Trimble.

"Bai Jove!"

"You silly, glass-eyed tailor's dummy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! If I had time, Twimble, I should certainly give you a feahful thwashin'," exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I wegard your wudeness as uttahly uncalled for, considerin' that I have been vewy careful not to wound your feelin's."

"You—you chump!"

"I wegard you with uttah contempt, Twimble."

And Arthur Augustus got on his bike, and pedalled after his comrades, who had already started. Baggy Trimble glared after him, and then his fat hand came up, with Gussy's cap in it, and the cap was hurled with deadly aim. It smote Gussy's topper from behind and sent it spinning over his eyes.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The topper rolled in the road, and D'Arcy just escaped riding on it. He jumped off his bike in breathless wrath.

"Bai Jove! I—I will stop to thwash that fat wottah aftah all!" he gasped, as he gathered up the dusty topper.

"Come on!" yelled Blake.

"I am goin' to thwash Twimble!"

But Baggy Trimble, very judiciously, had executed a strategic retreat after hurling the cap. He vanished across the quadrangle of St. Jim's as fast as his fat legs could carry him.

"Come back, Twimble!" shouted Arthur Augustus, wrathfully. "I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'. Come back, you wottah."

Baggy Trimble was not a bright youth; but he was too bright to heed that command. He melted into the distance.

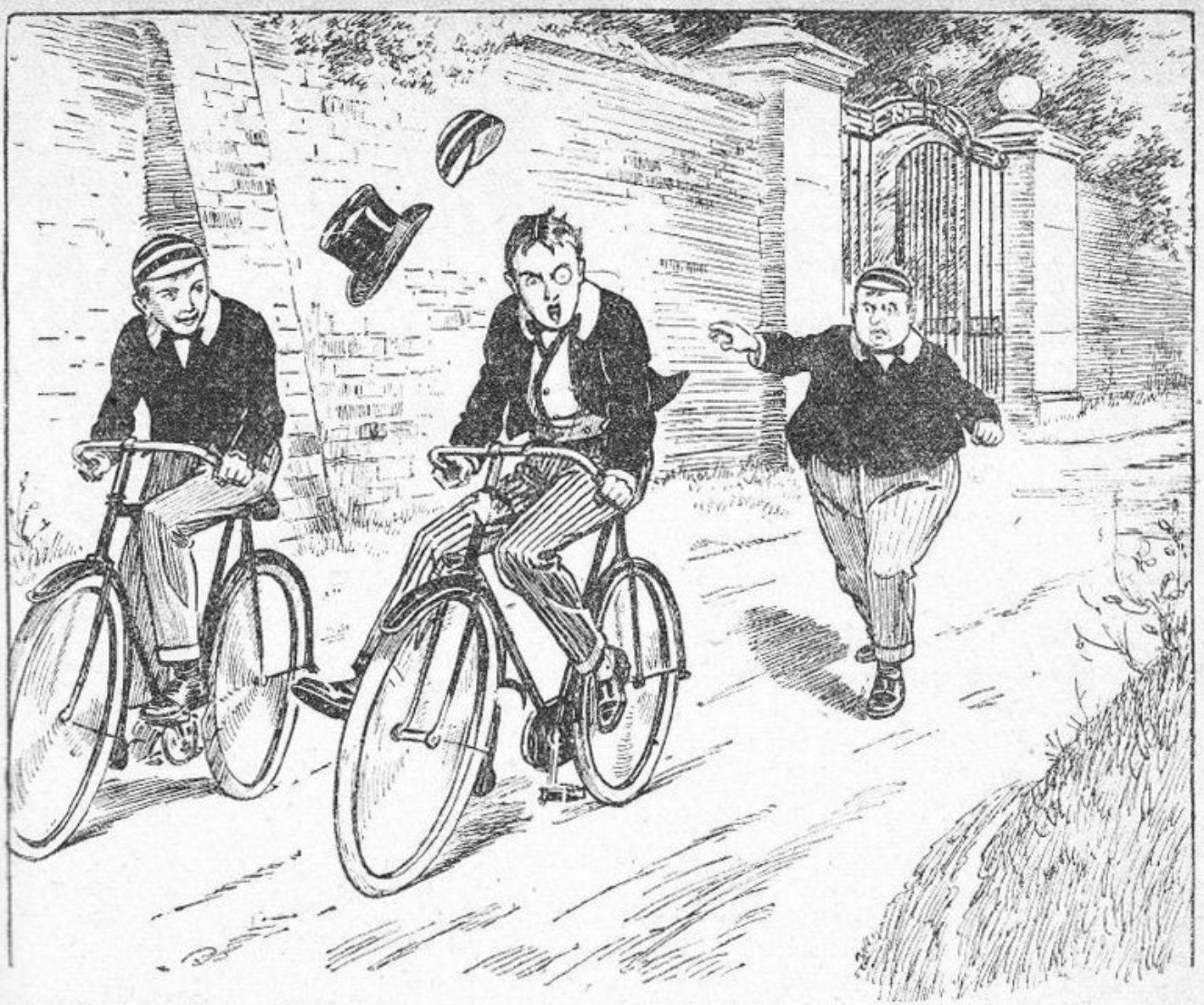
"Are you coming, Gussy?" yelled Blake.

"I am comin' when I have bwushed my hat, Blake."

"You'll be left behind, then, ass!"

"Wats!"

Tom Merry and Co. rode on; and Arthur Augustus, having brushed his beautiful hat with an equally beautiful cambric handkerchief, set it on his noble head, remounted his jigger, and pedalled after his comrades.



Baggy Trimble glared at the Swell of St. Jim's, and then his fat hand came up, with Gussy's cap in it, and the cap was hurled with deadly aim. It smote Gussy's topper from behind and sent it spinning.
(See page 130)

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Mysterious

TOM MERRY and Co. rode on cheerily by green lanes and dusty roads. They had a long ride before them, and they kept up a good speed. It was nearly fifteen miles from St. Jim's to the Chadway River.

It was quite a numerous party that Arthur Augustus was taking over to visit his friend Drake, of the Fourth Form of St. Winifred's. There were ten in all, and some of them wondered exactly what Drake would look like when Gussy dropped in to tea with his friends. Drake of St. Winifred's had asked Gussy to bike over and bring his friends to tea, but it was probable that he had not expected the swell of St. Jim's to turn up with nine friends. The noble Gussy could have made the party nineteen, or ninety, if he had liked, for the St. Jim's fellows were very curious to see the old ship upon which St. Winifred's made its home during the rebuilding of the school. A school on a ship was a novelty to them.

St. Jim's had recently received, and accepted, a challenge from the junior cricket club of St. Winifred's, and Tom Merry and Co. were rather curious to see the fellows they were to play with on the home ground in a week or two. Tom Merry had met Daubeny, the junior captain of St. Winifred's, and had not been much impressed by him; though he

had politely found a vacant date for the match.

The miles glided away under the whirling wheels at a great rate. As the party wheeled through the old High Street of Abbotsford, it struck Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that several passers-by glanced at them, and chiefly at his noble self, with unusual interest. A youth with a basket on his arm stopped on the edge of the pavement, stared directly at D'Arcy, and ejaculated:

"Oh, lor! What a chivvy!"

Arthur Augustus flushed pink.

He gave the impertinent youth a glance that ought to have withered him to ashes on the spot, but which failed in its effect. The youth with the basket was left grinning broadly.

Arthur Augustus looked round at his comrades as they wheeled out of the town upon the broad country road.

Nine faces wore nine cheerful grins.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Bai Jove!" he said. "What a vewy wude boy!"

"Horrid!" said Monty Lowther.

"I wegard it as bein' in the worst of taste for him to allude to your features in that wude way, Lowthah."

"Wha-a-at?"

"For a moment, I was undah the impwession that the young rascal was alludin' to me," said Arthur Augustus.

"So he was, you ass!"

"Wubbish! I twust there is nothin' about my chivvay to excite wemarks of a dewogatowy nature."

"Lots!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Heaps!" said Monty Lowther. "There's your eyeglass, and your nose, and your cheek—especially your cheek!"

"Wats! Bai Jove, it is gettin' wathah warm," said Arthur Augustus, changing the subject. "The perspiwation is actually wunnin' down my face."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I see nothin' to cackle at."

But the juniors chuckled as they rode on, rather to the perplexity of Arthur Augustus.

It was a pleasant afternoon in early summer, and not too warm. But Arthur Augustus undoubtedly felt the moisture trickling down his noble brow.

He would have been startled if he could have seen it as well as felt it; for the moisture was not, as he supposed, perspiration. It was in colour a brilliant red: and the most casual glance might have recognised it was produced by ink.

Streaks of crimson barred the noble countenance of the swell of St. Jim's, giving him a peculiar, zebra-like appearance.

If he could have seen it, he would have guessed why Monty Lowther had so obligingly offered to fetch his hat from the study; and why Monty had been delayed in fetching it.

The other fellows guessed easily enough, as they saw the streaks of red creeping down Gussy's countenance.

Under the lining inside the hat was a liberal supply of red ink: which, as it soaked through the lining, gradually flowed down in little oozy streams.

Blissfully unconscious of his remarkable aspect, Arthur Augustus rode on cheerily. His comrades could not help smiling when they glanced as him; in fact, the ride went on to an almost perpetual accompaniment of chortles.

"You fellows seem to be in a vewy mewwy mood this afternoon," Arthur Augustus remarked at last.

"You cheer us up!" explained Lowther. "Chap can't look at you without wanting to smile."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you intend that wemark in a dewogatowy sense, Lowthah——" began the swell of the Fourth warmly.

"Not at all, old top! Why, you have the same effect on the people we pass. Look at that chap in the waggon."

A market-cart was lumbering by, and the waggoner seemed half asleep on his seat—till Arthur Augustus dawned upon him.

Then he sat up and took notice, so to speak.

Indeed, he gave so sudden a start that he seemed likely to pitch off his seat upon the backs of his horses.

"Lor'l ummy!" ejaculated the waggoner,

staring at Arthur Augustus as if the aristocratic features of Lord Eastwood's son fascinated him.

D'Arcy glanced up at him.

"A blooming red Injin!" exclaimed the waggoner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What could that person possibly have meant, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus, as the juniors rode on.

"Ask me another!" said Blake.

"Was he alludin' to you, do you think?"

"Me!" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas!"

"You ass! Why should he take me for a Red Indian?" demanded Blake.

"Well, your mannahs, you know——"

"My what?"

"Mannahs, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I have wemarked more than once that you have the mannahs of a Wed Indian."

"You silly ass!" roared Blake.

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Hallo, there's a kid in a fit!" remarked Monty Lowther, jerking his head towards a farmer's lad who was leaning on a gate and staring into the road.

The farmer's lad had been busily and sedately chewing a straw till the bunch of cylists swept by. But as his eyes fell upon the swell of St. Jim's his mouth opened so wide that the straw fell out.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the farmer's boy.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus slowed down, but Herries caught his elbow, and rushed him on.

"Come on, old top," said Herries, "no time to stop and scrap with farmers boys."

"I was not goin' to scwap with him, Herries, I was simply goin' to ask him the weason of his uttah wudeness, and punch his nose."

"Leave his nose alone," said Digby, "we've got to get to the Benbow some time to-day."

"Yaas, but——"

"Besides, he couldn't help it," said Manners. "You ought to be used to producing that effect on people by now."

"Weally, Mannahs, if you mean to imply that there is anythin' in my features to excite wisibility——"

"There seems to be," grinned Figgins, of the New House. "Look at that giddy cyclist."

Arthur Augustus looked at the passing cyclist. The man looked at him, and gave a jump. Then he gave a yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cyclist nearly doubled over his handlebars with mirth as he rode on. Arthur Augustus looked over his shoulder at him, in utter perplexity. His noble countenance was a deep pink now with vexation; and on the pink the bars of crimson showed up quite nicely.

"I weally fail to undahstand this," exclaimed D'Arcy, "what is there in my face to make people gwin in this widiculous way?"

"Well, there's your nose!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Weally, you ass——"

"And your other features—all of them worth a guinea a box."

"You uttah ass——"

Arthur Augustus broke off, as a pedestrian, passing in the road, stopped to stare at him, and give a howl of laughter. It was really growing quite disconcerting. The swell of St. Jim's took his handkerchief out to wipe the perspiration from his face. He gave a jump as his eyes fell on the handkerchief after he had wiped his face. There were blotches of red on the cambric.

"Gweat Scott!" Arthur Augustus jammed on his brake and jumped down. "Oh, cwumbs! I am bleedin'."

"Come on!" roared Blake.

"Pway stop, deah boys——"

"Rats! Follow on!"

"I am bleedin' feahfully!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I have weceived some feahful injawy. I am goin' for a doctah."

He whirled his bike round and remounted. A mile back the cyclists had passed through a village, and Arthur Augustus started to return to it—at top speed. Tom Merry and Co. wheeled round in the road in dismay.

"Come on!" shouted Tom.

"I am goin' for a doctah!"

"There's nothing the matter with you, you ass!" yelled Blake.

Arthur Augustus jumped off his machine, and leaned it against a tree. He examined his only hat with a steadfast gaze, his comrades watching him with grinning faces. "I suppose my face is wed inkay!" he said at length. (See Page 135.)

But Arthur Augustus was already out of hearing.

"Oh, crumbs!" exclaimed Blake. "What thumping time shall we get to St. Winifred's! Lowther, you silly ass, what do you want to play your idiotic jokes on poor old Gussy for?"

"My dear chap, Gussy was born to have his leg pulled. I'm simply helping him to fulfil his mission in life."

"Fathead!"

"After him!" exclaimed Tom Merry excitedly.

And the nine juniors, strung out breathlessly along the road, pedalled furiously in pursuit of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

TOO Funny!

"STOP!"

"Hold on!"

"Chuck it!"

Tom Merry and Co. shouted as they rode; but Arthur Augustus did not heed. He did not suspect red ink; and he was convinced that he was bleeding profusely somewhere. In those circumstances evidently it was wise to see a doctor with the smallest possible delay; and Arthur Augustus was riding like the wind to seek a medical man. Tea at St. Winifred's could wait for so important a reason.

But his chums, naturally, were not so

alarmed as Gussy himself. They were feeling exasperation instead of alarm, as they chased back along the dusty road after the fleeing swell of St. Jim's.

"Come back!" howled Kerr.

"Stop!" raved Blake.

"You silly ass!"

"You frabjous chump——"

"You burbling jabberwock——"

But Gussy was deaf to the voices of the charmers. He pedalled on regardless.

Tom Merry drew ahead of his comrades, and gradually overhauled Arthur Augustus, fast as he rode. They were almost at the entrance of the village when the captain of the Shell came level.

"Stop!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Imposs! I am bleedin' to death——"

"You're not bleeding, you silly ass!" stuttered Tom. "It's only red ink, you burbling chump!"

"Wats!"

"What! I tell you——"

"Wubbish! How could wed ink get on my face? Pway keep cleah, Tom Mewwy—I want to see a doctah at once——"

"You don't need a doctor for red ink, chump! It was in your hat."

"Mum-mum-my hat!"

"Yes, ass."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus slackened at last. He began to understand. He whipped off the gleaming silk topper and looked into it.

Red ink was exuding all through the lining in the front of the hat; and even Gussy could doubt no longer.

"Wed ink——"

"Yes, you duffer!" gasped Blake, coming up breathlessly. "If you'd had the sense of a bunny rabbit, you'd have spotted it before."

"It's spotted you, anyhow, Gussy," remarked Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped off his machine, and leaned it against a tree. He examined his inky hat with a steadfast gaze, his comrades watching him with grinning faces.

"I suppose my face is wed inkay!" he said at length.

"Just a little!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Just a few!" murmured Lowther.

"I pwesume, Lowthah, that you placed that wed ink in my hat when you fetched it fwom the studay for me," said Arthur Augustus, with deadly calmness.

"Guilty, my lord!" murmured the humourist of the Shell.

"Vewy well! Pway hold my hat, Blake, while I give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'."

"My dear ass, there's no time for thrashing silly chumps now; we've got to get to St. Winny's to tea——"

"I am afraid we shall be late for tea in any case, Blake, as I have to get washed, and to get a new hat, befoah we can pwoceed."

"Well, a wash wouldn't do you any harm," agreed Blake. "You look as if you could do with one. But you'll have to manage with that hat. No time for shopping."

"I uttahly wefuse to pwoceed in this hat, Blake! It is all inkay."

"Can't be helped."

"Come on, old chap," urged Fatty Wynn. "I'm hungry already."

"You genewally are, Wynn; but I feah that that can make no diffewence now. The ink will have to be scwaped out of the hat, at least, befoah I can wear it again, and I wequiah a wash. Then I am goin' to thwash Lowthah."

"Why didn't I think of making my will before we started?" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Look here, Gussy——"

"Wats!"

"We can't hang about here——"

"Wot!"

Inky hat in hand Arthur Augustus marched off to a little wayside inn by the roadside. Evidently the swell of St. Jim's was not to be induced to proceed till he was newly swept and garnished, so to speak.

"Well, my word!" said Digby, as Gussy disappeared into the inn. "The silly ass will keep us an hour or two——"

"I'm hungry already!" said Fatty Wynn, with deep feeling.

However, Arthur Augustus did not take as long as Digby dismally prophesied, or anything like it; and he came out of the inn newly washed and clean as a new pin.

He gave the humorist of St. Jim's a lofty stare as he rejoined the party; but a little thing like a lofty stare did not disturb Monty Lowther to any great extent.

"I have had a feahful lot of twouble," said D'Arcy, "but I think all the ink has gone at last. I shall be able to pwoceed, when I have thwashed Lowthah——"

"Oh, for goodness' sake let's get on," said Fatty Wynne crossly. "I'm getting famished."

"But I wefuse——"

"Come along, Gussy!" interrupted Tom Merry. "You can settle with him later on."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the party.

And so the St. Jim's juniors rode onward again.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Cricket at St. Winifred's!

"THAT'S the Benbow!"

Tom Merry and Co. had wheeled through the village of Chade, and were following the road through the brown woods towards the river, when the topmasts of the old wooden warship rose into view over the trees. It was their first sight of the School on the River. Fore, main, and mizzen topmasts rose clear against the sunny sky in the distance.

"That's the old tub, as Daubeny called it," said Tom Merry. "I shall be glad to have a look at it."

"Yaas, wathah."

"There's a kid in the maintop remarked Kerr.

Diminished by the distance a figure could be discerned seated in the maintop of the Benbow—the figure of a fat youth in Etons, eating toffee. Then the trees shut out the masts from view.

There was a sound of voices ahead, but the playing-fields were as yet hidden by the trees.

"Cricket going on, I suppose," said Figgins.

"Good—we'll see what they're like, if it's a junior game," said Tom Merry. "I've never seen St. Winifred's play, but I've heard that their first eleven is good. I don't know about the juniors; that chap Daubeny seemed to think a good deal of it. But he's the skipper. Is your pal Drake in the junior eleven, Gussy?"

"I think not, deah boy."

"Isn't he a cricketer?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Well, he wouldn't be playing this afternoon as he's expecting visitors," observed Monty Lowther. "I wonder what he will think when he sees us. Did he expect you to bring an army, Gussy?"

"He asked me to bwing my fwiends. I am suah Dwake will not be lackin' in hospitality."

"I hope not!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "I'm jolly hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What's that they're shouting?" exclaimed Blake.

From the direction of the St. Winifred's cricket-ground by the river, still screened by the trees from the cyclists, there came an unmistakable yell.

"Butter-fingers!"

"Boooh!"

"Go home, Daubeny!"

"Boooh!"

The St. Jim's cyclists exchanged amused glances. Judging by those yells, the St. Winifred's crowd did not think much of their junior cricketers.

"Here they are!" exclaimed Tom.

The bunch of cyclists swept out of the wood at last on the open road to the river bank. The road skirted the playing-fields, and the St. Jim's fellows had a full view of the game.

It was a junior match that was going on.

St. Winifred's were playing the local team from Chade, which should not have been a matter of difficulty for them. But St. Winifred's evidently were in difficulties.

Chade were in, and Daubeny and Co. were in the field. Two batsmen were running as Tom Merry and Co. jumped off their machines to look on. The fieldsmen were panting after the ball, and seemed to be in a breathless state. Daubeny, the St. Winny's skipper, had evidently missed a catch; some of the crowd of onlookers were still "booing" him.

The St. Jim's fellows left their bikes along a fence and joined the crowd round the field of play. They were interested in St. Winifred's cricket, as Daubeny was soon to bring his team over to St. Jim's for a match. Only

Fatty Wynn cast his eyes towards the Benbow, and wondered whether tea was ready on board the school ship.

The ball went in to the wicket-keeper, but the batsmen were home. The field crossed over again, and a slim and elegant youth went on to bowl. There was a shout from some of the juniors round.

"Don't play the goat, Egan!"

Egan, the bowler, cast an angry glance round.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "They have a jolly queer way of encouraging their players here!"

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Well, that chap is a goat, and no mistake!" remarked Herries. "What do they give him the bowling for?"

Egan had sent down the ball clumsily enough, and the Chade batsman knocked it away easily. The batsmen were running again, while two or three of the field fagged after the ball.

Tom Merry chuckled.

If this was a fair specimen of St. Winifred's cricket Daubeny and Co. were not likely to give much trouble at St. Jim's.

"Hallo, you chaps!"

"Dwake, deah boy!"

A handsome junior in Etons joined the St. Jim's crowd and shook hands cordially with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was Jack Drake, of the St. Winifred's Fourth.

Arthur Augustus presented him to his chums, who rather took to the St. Winny's junior at once. He had an open, frank face and a cheery manner that were very engaging.

If Drake was surprised to see the numerous party Arthur Augustus had brought with him, he did not show it. He seemed very pleased to see the crowd from St. Jim's.

"Jolly glad to see you all!" he said. "Like to look at the cricket a bit before we go on board?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You'll find it amusin', at any rate," said Drake, with a grin. "Daubeny is the only man in the team who can play at all, and he's off colour. That's Egan who's bowlin', an awful ass at cricket! That idiot just muffing a catch is Torrence! The silly cuckoo who is panting yonder is Seeley! He's got no wind; I fancy he was smoking right up to the start of the match. The born dummy who's sittin' down is Chilcot!"

Tom Merry and Co. chuckled. Drake's description of the St. Winifred's cricketers rather tickled them.

"What do you think of the show?" asked Drake.

"Ahem!" murmured Tom.

He did not quite like to tell a St. Winifred's fellow what he really thought of the show.

The cricket was almost the last word in inefficiency; there were fag elevens at St. Jim's that could have walked all over Daubeny and Co. without exerting themselves very much.

"Rotten!" said Herries, who was rather a plain speaker. "Our Second Form could beat that lot."

"Weally, Hewwies!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Well, they could," grunted Herries. "I don't call that cricket; I call that fumbling!"

"Weally, you know——"

Drake laughed.

"Quite correct!" he said. "It's rotten fumbling! You can see what a lot of the fellows think of it."

Some of the St. Winny's fellows were voicing their opinions just then.

"Butter-fingers!"

"Go home!"

"Rotten!"

"Call that cricket!"

"Yah!"

Vernon Daubeny gave a furious look at the yelling juniors. These stern critics did not seem in a majority in the crowd, but they were a very emphatic minority.

"But what's the idea?" asked Tom Merry. "You could put better men than that in the field."

"Of course we could!" growled Drake. "But Daub's junior captain, and no end of a big gun, in his own estimation. He runs the show, and this is the way he runs it. A fellow has to suck up to Daub no end to squeeze into the eleven, and that isn't the

way to get good men. I used to be in the team, but since I'm out with Daub I'm left out of games; and it's the same with other chaps. But Daub has a majority behind him in the club. You see, he's got no end of tin and a terrific home that fellows like to be asked to, and so on. So far he's been able to keep the cricket in his own hands, and this is the merry result!"

Drake spoke in a good-humoured tone, but it was evident that he was inwardly rather sore on the subject.

"Chade are sixty for four wickets," he said. "They can keep in the rest of the day, if they like. Daub's lot can't touch them. It makes me tired. Let's go on the Benbow, shall we?"

"Righto!"

And Tom Merry and Co., turning their backs on the remarkable display of cricket, followed Drake to the old warship.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

On Board the Benbow

"WIPPIN', bai Jove!"

That was Arthur Augustus's comment on the old Benbow as Jack Drake showed the party round. Drake did the honours cheerfully, though once or twice he glanced towards the bank where the cricket was still in progress, and frowned.

Tom Merry and Co. were keenly interested in the Benbow, and in all they saw on the old ship. The fine old warship, which had once sailed the seas under Nelson's flag, was anchored in the Chadway, and a permanent gangway connected it with the shore. Where great guns had once looked out were now study windows; the old captain's cabin was the Head's study, and Form-rooms were partitioned off between decks. The Fourth-form quarters were aft on the main deck, and thither Drake led the way after a round had been made to see the sights.

"Here's my room," he said, stopping at No. 8 Study in the Fourth. "You here, Rodney?"

"Here I am," answered a cheery voice; and Dick Rodney of the Fourth turned to greet the visitors.

Drake introduced his chum, who had apparently been engaged in getting tea ready while Drake was on the cricket-ground. Tom Merry and Co. crowded round the doorway, but it was pretty evident that there was no accommodation for so numerous a party in No. 8 Study. The studies on board the Benbow were not palatial in their dimensions.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "We shall weally be crowdin' you out, old chap."

"Tea in the form-room," said Drake, with a smile. "We can have that to ourselves on a half-holiday. Toodles—where's Toodles?"

"Right here, dear old boy," answered a fat and wheezy voice as Tuckey Toodles came along the passage.

Tom Merry and Co. recognised the fat youth they had seen in the maintop. There was a smear of toffee about Toodles's ample mouth, it was all that remained of the toffee he had been busy upon when they had first sighted him.

Tuckey Toodles was effusively genial to the visitors. Probably he saw in their presence the prospect of a feed of unusual magnitude.

"Oh, here you are!" said Drake. "Make yourself useful, Tuckey. We're going to have tea in the form-room, you go round and bag the crocks. Easy enough while all the fellows are out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leave it to me," said Toodles.

He rolled away on his mission.

Drake led his numerous guests to the deck again, while Tuckey Toodles was busily engaged in raiding "crocks" from various studies, and Dick Rodney paid a visit to the ship's canteen for supplies. There was a slightly thoughtful expression on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble face as he stepped out on deck.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy!" he murmured. "Do you think there is wathah a cwowd of us, undah the circs?"

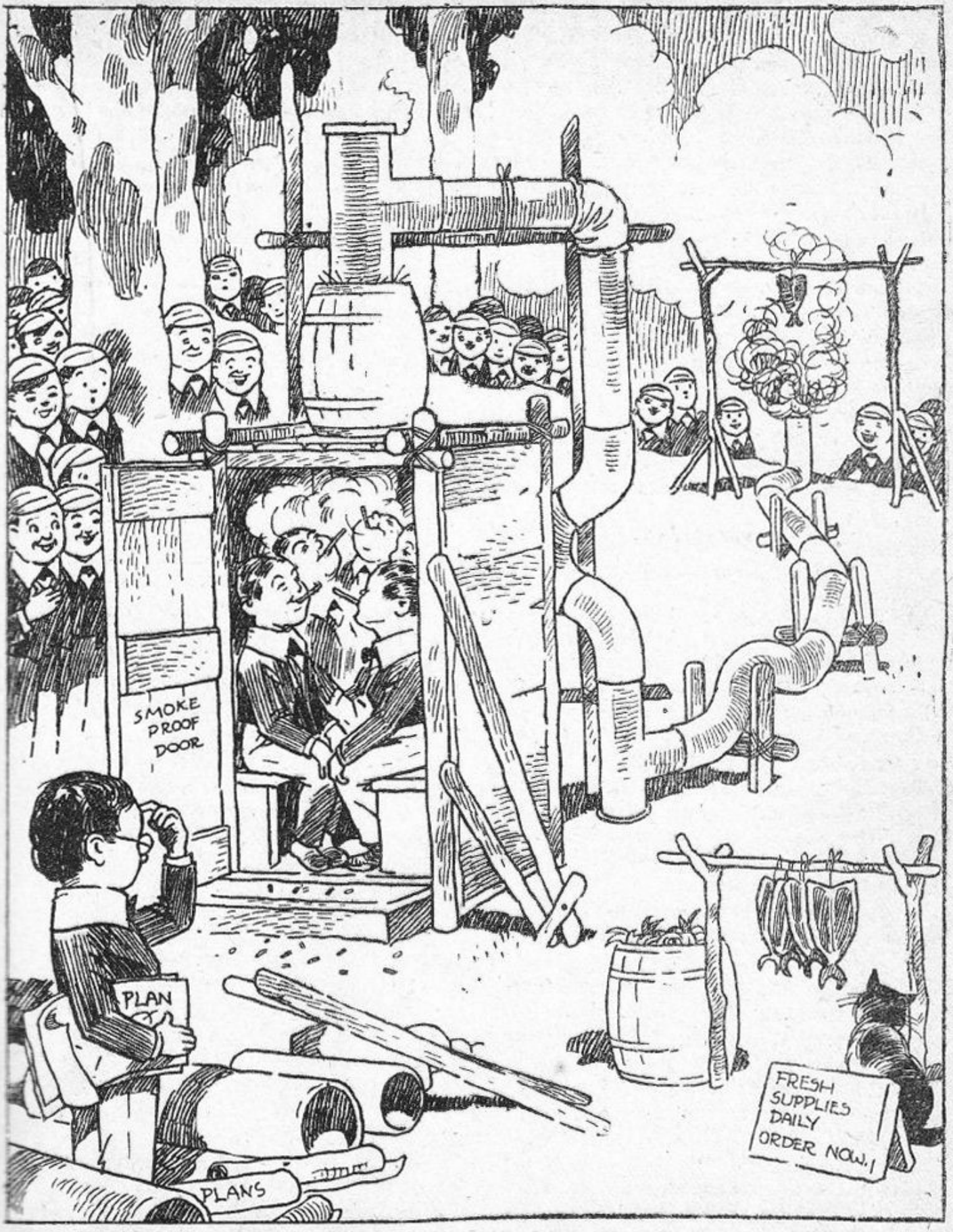
Tom Merry grinned.

"Has that only just occurred to you, old top?" he asked.

"I twust we are not puttin' these fellows out in any way."

"What a trustful disposition," murmured Monty Lowther.

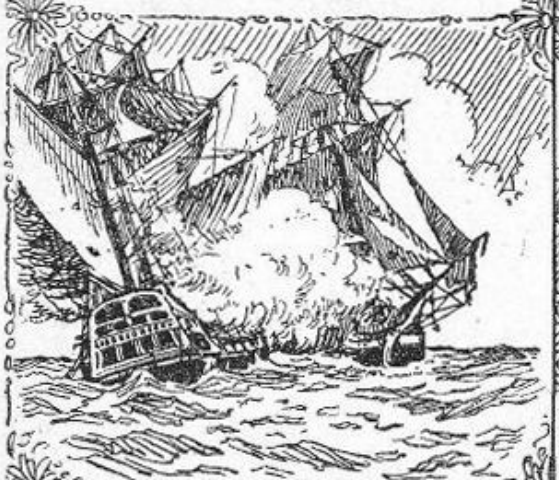
THE INVENTIONS OF SMITH, MINOR



SMITH MINOR'S NOVEL SCHEME FOR SMOKING A KIPPER!

Famous Fights for the Flag

The final of eleven assaults on Acre, when Mr. Midshipman Oastler held the breach with a handful of men against fearful odds. Napoleon's troops were beaten off and the siege raised on May 20th, 1799.



The Battle of Ferkeh in the Dongola Expedition on June 7th, 1896. The infantry, under the command of the late Lord Kitchener, stormed the village of Ferkeh, inflicting tremendous losses on the enemy.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Dear old Gus!" grinned Blake. "Always putting his silly foot in it."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Hallo, St. Winny's are batting now," remarked Manners, with a glance towards the cricket-ground in the distance.

"Then the other party must have declared," grinned Digby.

The juniors watched the cricket from the rail. Daubeny of the Shell was at the wicket, with Egan at the other end. Tom Merry and Co. were rather curious to see some batting; they had already formed their opinion of Daub and Co's bowling and fielding. Somewhat to their surprise Daubeny lived through an over, and scored a couple of runs. But when the field crossed over, and Egan had the bowling, there was a yell from the hostile section of the crowd as the stumps went down.

"Out!"

"What price ducks' eggs?"

"Go home, Egan!"

Torrence came on in Egan's place, and stopped a couple of balls. The third knocked his middle stump out.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh. He could not help it.

"Your skipper must be rather an ass to play men like that, Drake," he said. "Is that the team he's bringing over to St. Jim's next week?"

Drake stared.

"Is Daub playing your school?" he asked.

"Yes, he asked us for a match, and we fixed it up."

Drake whistled.

"I didn't know." He knitted his brows. "Yes, that is the team he will bring over; if he makes any changes they won't improve it much. They're awfully satisfied with themselves. It's sickenin', you know; it's simply guying St. Winny's, taking around a crew like that. I hope the fellows will get fed-up with it soon."

Tom Merry frowned a little, too.

He had fixed up the match willingly enough, but he did not quite relish the prospect of wasting a holiday on such cricket as this. However, the arrangement was made, and it was rather too late for such considerations.

The juniors were still watching a lamentable exhibition of falling wickets, when Tuckey Toodles arrived to summon them to tea in the Fourth-form room.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Daubeny Interrupts

JACK DRAKE and Rodney had probably been a little taken by surprise by the arrival of so numerous a party, but they had played up well. There was a handsome spread in the form-room, and several St. Winny's fellows were there to help—Estcourt, and Sawyer major, and Conway, and one or two more. Three or four study tables had been carried in, and put together, and they were covered by several tablecloths of different degrees of whiteness. Crocks were there in abundance in a remarkable variety of patterns, some of them cheap and some of them costly.

Tuckey Toodles had not been particular where he found them, and among the crocks there were cups and saucers of a very expensive kind that he had been borrowed from the study of the great Daub himself. However, the great Daub was busy on the cricket-ground; so he was not able to raise any objections.

Fatty Wynn's face beamed at the sight of the spread. He murmured to Kerr that the St. Winny's chaps knew how to "do" a fellow all right. And Fatty proceeded to do full justice to the feed, in which object he was ably seconded by Tucky Toodles.

It was quite a merry meal, and all the St. Jim's party were enjoying their visit to the old Benbow. Sawyer major was looking out of a window, and he turned round with a grin.

"Game's up!" he announced.

"They've finished early," remarked Tom Merry.

"All down for about a dozen, I expect," said Drake. "I wish you could scratch that match with Daubeny, Merry."

"Well, we couldn't very well," said Tom. "But why? They won't hurt us."

"It's rotten for a crowd like that to go

around guying St. Winny's. That was what I was thinking of."

Tom Merry smiled.

"I must say that crowd doesn't do your school credit, so far as cricket is concerned," he remarked. "Sack the lot would be a good idea."

"Daub's too firmly fixed for that," growled Drake. "I've tried that, but he's got a good backing, ass as he is. Well, it can't be helped."

And the subject was dropped.

But Tom Merry could see that it was still in Drake's mind, and that he was still feeling exasperated.

There was a trampling on the deck overhead, which announced that the cricketers were coming on board.

A little later there were footsteps in the passage, and the form-room door was thrown open.

Vernon Daubeny appeared in the doorway with an angry frown upon his face.

Tucky Toodles blinked at him in some alarm. He guessed that the great chief of the "Bucks" of St. Winifred's had missed his crocks.

Drake glanced at Daubeny coolly.

"How did it go?" he asked sarcastically.

But Daubeny had not come there to announce the result of the match.

"Some cad's been in my study!" he exclaimed angrily. "Every dashed thing has been taken away!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

The St. Jim's fellows regarded their plates with elaborate unconsciousness. It looked as if trouble was coming.

Probably his easy defeat at the hands of the Chade villagers, and the remarks of the hostile section among the St. Winny's juniors, had not improved Vernon Daubeny's temper.

Certainly he was looking very angry and savage now, and did not choose to take heed of the fact that strangers were present.

"Is that all?" asked Drake.

"You've got the things here!" exclaimed Daubeny.

"You ass, Toodles!" exclaimed Drake. "Why couldn't you let Daub's stuff alone? Still, it doesn't matter."

"Doesn't it?" shouted Daubeny. "How am I to have my tea, I'd like to know, with all my things gone?"

"You can trot in to school tea!" suggested Drake.

"Don't be a fool! Hand over my things at once!"

"Can't be done, old top! Can't you see we're busy?"

"Then I'll jolly well——" Daubeny broke off as he recognised Tom Merry at the table. "Hallo, is that you, Merry?"

"Yes, here I am," said Tom cheerfully, hoping that the recognition would tide over the trouble, and pour oil upon the troubled waters, as it were. "How do you do, Daubeny?"

"Better come along to my study," said Daubeny. "You don't want to feed with a gang of scrubby fags here."

Tom stared.

"I'm Drake's guest at the present moment," he answered curtly.

"Oh, if you prefer fags' company, please yourself," sneered Daubeny. "Toodles, take my things back to my study at once!"

"Oh, I say——" began Toodles.

"Sharp's the word, if you don't want your ear pulled!" snapped Daubeny.

Tucky Toodles gave Drake a dismayed look. This was a very disagreeable interruption to a pleasant gathering.

But Jack Drake was equal to the occasion.

He gave Rodney a glance and rose to his feet.

The two juniors strode towards Vernon Daubeny, and, heedless of his lofty stare, laid violent hands upon him.

"Outside, old top!" said Drake.

"You cheeky cad!" roared Daubeny. "Why, I—I—I'll—yarooh!"

In the grasp of the two Fourth-formers, Vernon Daubeny went whirling through the the doorway.

There was a bump as he landed outside.

Some of the juniors chuckled. Arthur Augustus's noble countenance was very serious however. He was shocked at Vernon Daubeny's distinct want of repose of manner.

The bump in the passage was followed by a loud yell. Daubeny seemed to be hurt.

"Going?" asked Drake.

"Ow! Ow! Wow! I'll—I'll——"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-woop!"

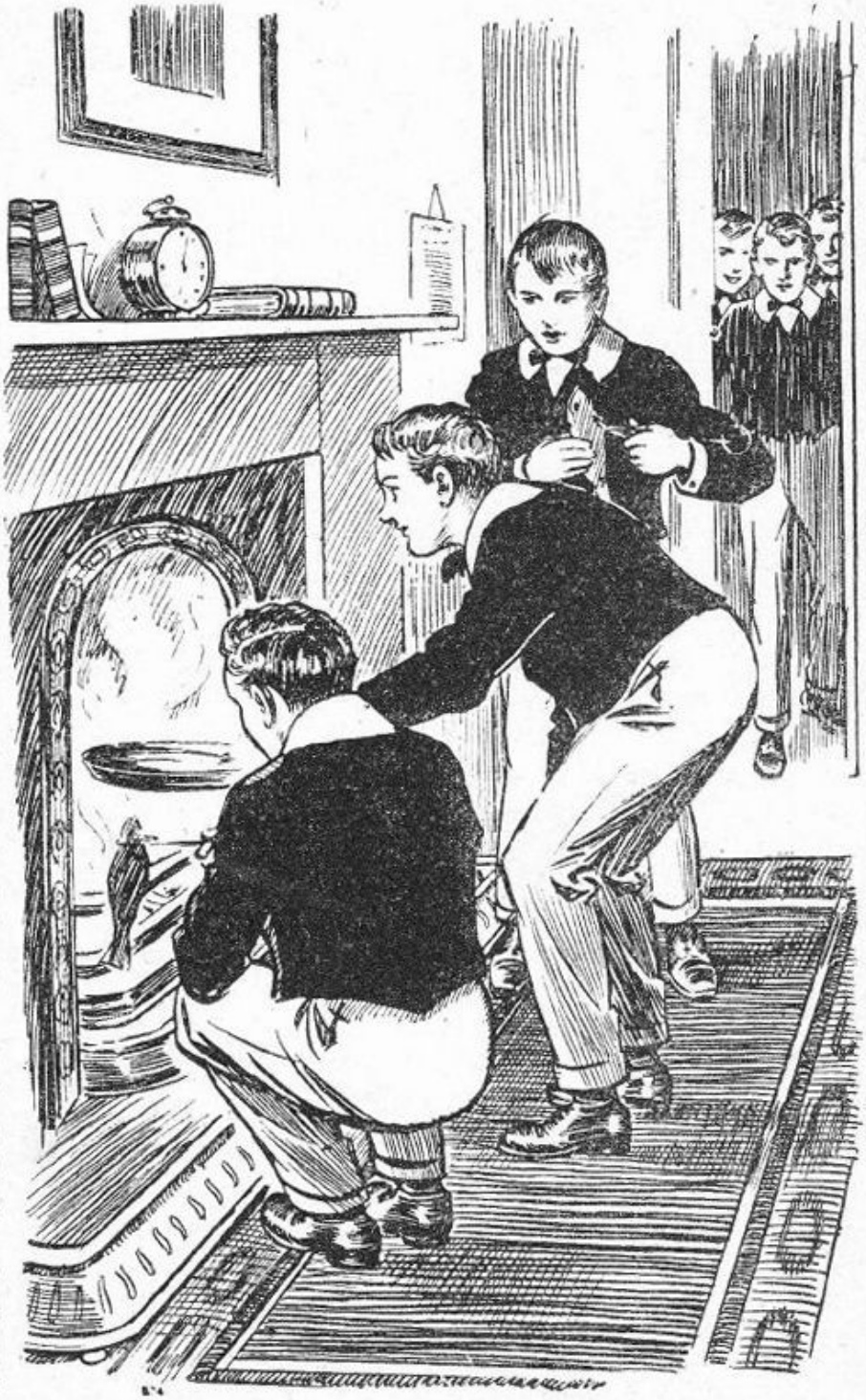
Drake and Rodney came back smiling into the Four-room and closed the door. It was not opened again. The "crocks" remained unclaimed; it was evident that Daubeny of the Shell had had enough. The agreeable tea-party finished without seeing him again.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Deserters.

THE sunset was red on the river when Tom Merry and Co. left the old Benbow, Drake and Rodney coming ashore with them. The St. Jim's party wheeled out their bikes for the ride home. They had enjoyed their visit to the school on the ship, and they liked most of the fellows they had met there—with the exception of Daubeny.

Towards Vernon Daubeny their feelings assuredly were neither of liking nor of admiration. Tom Merry already regretted that he had cheerfully, and rather thoughtlessly, taken up Vernon Daubeny's suggestion of a cricket match between the two schools, and he was puzzled that Daubeny should desire to come over to St. Jim's and collect a certain licking. But it was possible that the great Daub did not expect to be beaten. "Swank" appeared to be the lofty youth's chief characteristic, and he seemed to be satisfied with cricket as played by the Bucks of St. Winifred's.



Wally & Co. were too busily engaged to heed the three Shell fellows standing grinning in the doorway. "We're in time for supper, anyway!" murmured Monty Lowther. (See page 148)

"You're meeting Daub's lot next week," Drake said, as the juniors were bidding good-bye.

"Can't be helped, can it now?" said Tom Merry. "Why don't you fellows pile in somehow, and send over a good team?"

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "That's the weally wight and propah thing to do, deah boy."

"We'll try, anyhow," said Drake.

But he did not seem very hopeful.

Tom Merry and Co. rode away in the sunset on the long ride home to St. Jim's

"Wathah a jollay place, isn't it?" remarked Arthur Augustus. "If I weren't a St.

Jim's chap, I should weally like to be on the Benbow. But what vewy extwaordinaway cwicket!"

"It was really like Daubeny's cheek to challenge us, with a scratch crew like that, to play," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And Tommy was an ass to fix it up," said Blake. "You ought to have stopped him, Manners."

"Well, I didn't know——" said Manners.

"And I didn't know——" said Tom.

"Surprising the number of things Shell chaps don't know," remarked Blake, in a reflective sort of way. "This is what comes of having a Shell chap for junior skipper. I've always said——"

"Bow—wow!"

"I've always said that the Fourth——"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I quite agree with Blake. It is beneath our dig to meet a cwew like Daubeny's eleven."

"No doubt about that," grunted Herries. "Better leave the match to the Third Form eleven. Young Wally could beat them with his lot."

"Yaas. If I were skippah, Tom Mewwy——"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You can be skipper in the St. Winny's match, if you like, Gussy," he said. "I dare say you could beat them."

"Bai Jove! I should wefuse to be skippah, to meet a team like that," said Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "You can leave it to my young bwothah, if you like. Wally could handle them."

"Fact is, I'm standing out next week," said George Figgins. "I'm not going to waste a holiday on those slacking asses."

"Same here," said Fatty Wynn. "What's the good of my bowling to them, when Trimble and Skimpole could knock over their wickets?"

"Hear, hear!" said Kerr.

The three New House juniors were evidently of one opinion. And their opinion seemed to be largely shared by the School House fellows.

"Well, you won't want me, either, Tom," Monty Lowther remarked. "I think I'll go on a cinema crawl instead."

"Manners can take your place, Monty."

"No fear!" said Manners. "I'm going out with my camera. I'd give it up for a real match; not to play a set of duds."

"Just what I think," agreed Blake. "I'd rather go on the river myself."

"Yaas, wathah! We'll have a boat out," said Arthur Augustus. "A match like that is unworthy of our powahs, deah boys. I suggest goin' on the wivah instead. In fact, I shall insist upon it. In a case of doubt, deah boys, you can wely on me to point out the propah thing to do."

Tom Merry looked rather worried.

"Look here, you duffers!" he exclaimed. "St. Winny's are coming over next Wednesday to play us, and somebody's got to meet them. I was thinking of resigning the captaincy for the day——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins makes out that the New House can skipper an eleven," said Tom. "Well, Figgy can have his chance next Wednesday."

"Declined with thanks!" chortled Figgins.

"Well, you duffers think that Study No. 6 knows all about cricket," said Tom, addressing Blake and Co., "I'm willing to leave that match entirely to Study No. 6."

"No takers!" answered Blake. "Study No. 6 doesn't play that kind of cricket."

"Wathah not!"

"I wouldn't be found dead on the same cricket-field as Daubeny," grunted Herries. "Why, my dog Towser wouldn't muff a catch as he does."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" roared Tom Merry. "Somebody's got to play St. Winny's!"

"Pick out eleven of the biggest idiots at St. Jim's, and leave it to them," suggested Blake.

"Well, I've offered you the job," answered Tom.

"Why, you silly ass——"

"Bai Jove! If you are implyin' that I am an idiot, Tom Mewwy——"

"I'm not implying it; I'm stating the fact," retorted the captain of the Shell gruffly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Tommy can play the match all on his own," chuckled Monty Lowther. "After all,

St. Jim's could easily play them ten men short."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Daubeny and Co.'s ears certainly ought to have tingled just then.

Tom Merry was very thoughtful as he finished his ride home. It was pretty clear that if the match with St. Winifred's was to come off he would have to find a new team to play the visitors—his usual faithful followers simply refused to waste their time on it.

It was not to be wondered at, in the circumstances; but it was rather disconcerting to the junior cricket captain.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Gussy to the Rescue

"WALLY, you know——"

"What?"

"My young bwothah Wally," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was the day following Tom Merry and Co.'s visit to St. Winifred's on the river.

There was a discussion going on in No. 10 in the Shell—the apartment owned by the Terrible Three.

The subject of the discussion was the St. Winny's match.

And it was waxing warm.

Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were with the Terrible Three, as well as Kangaroo and Talbot of the Shell. Tom Merry was looking very restive.

The match with Daubeny's team was worrying him.

His faithful followers took the view that Tom, as skipper, and Manners, as secretary, were responsible for the fixture, and that what had happened was their look-out. They, themselves, weren't going to "play the goat" and call it cricket; that was how Blake put it, and his comrades agreed with him.

"You see, we don't like your Daub, anyway," said Blake. "He's a swanking cad, and he can't play cricket. We don't get whole holidays every day. Why should we waste one on that ass?"

"Don't call him my Daub," growled Tom Merry. "I don't like the fellow any more than you do."

"Then what did you fix up a match with him for?"

"Well, he wanted it——"

"That isn't a reason. You're too soft, Tommy!" said Blake, with a shake of his head. "I've always said that you're too soft. All the fellows have heard me."

"Yaas, wathah. I can beah witness that Blake is statin' the exact facts," said Arthur Augustus gravely. "I have often heard him wefer to Tom Mewwy as vewy soft indeed."

Tom Merry glared.

"You pair of asses——" he began.

"Bai Jove! If you allude to me as a paib of asses, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, dear boys, I fail to see any weason for mewwiment in Tom Mewwy's wude wemarks. I considah——"

"You fellows were quite glad to hear that a match was fixed up for the holiday," said Tom Merry, argumentatively.

"We thought it was a cricket match, not a goat's game," said Blake. "But dash it all, you can get recruits enough, leaving us out. You can't expect players like us to waste time on a set of born cuckoos like Daubeny and Co."

"Hardly!" said Kangaroo.

"Well, it would be a waste of time, from what I hear," remarked Talbot of the Shell, with a smile.

"Thou too, Brutus!" said Tom Merry, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Oh, I'll stick to you, if you want me," said Talbot, "After all, it will be rather a joke, I dare say."

"Wathah too much of a joke for me, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I pwefer to go on the wivah."

"Make up a fresh team," said Blake. "Easy enough. Leave it to the fags, for instance."

It was then that Arthur Agustus D'Arcy surprised his chums by his sudden reference to his hopeful young brother, Wally of the Third.

"Well, what about Wally?" demanded Tom Merry, crossly. "What the thump has young Wally to do with the matter?"

"I have an ideah, deah boys."

"Bosh!"

"If you do not wish to heah my ideah, Tom Mewwy——"

"My dear chap, ideas don't grow in Study No. 6," said Tom Merry. "But you can wag your chin if you like. Your remarks can't be much more fat-headed than Blake's, anyhow."

"Why, you ass——" began Blake.

"Pway allow me to make a wemark, Blake. I was suggestin' Wally, you fellows——"

"Bother Wally!" grunted Manners.

"I wefuse to bothah Wally. Wally is my minah ——"

"But what about him?" shrieked Tom Merry. "Come to the point!"

"I am comin' to the point as fast as I can, Tom Mewwy. It is wathah difficult to come to the point when a chap is constantly intewwupted by burblin' asses. I considah——"

"Sit on his head, somebody!"

"I wefuse to have my head sat upon. I was goin' to pwopound a wippin' stunt——"

"Bedtime at half-past nine," said Monty Lowther, gravely. "That only gives you another four hours to jaw, Gussy. Can you get it done in the time?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Call me when Gussy's done," said Manners, leaning back and closing his eyes. "I can do with a couple of hours' nap."

"I wegard that wemark as asinine, Mannahs. I am suggestin' a stunt to wescue us all fwom the widiculous posish we have been placed in by your egwegious fatheadedness, and Tom Mewwy's. My ideah is to leave the mattah to Wally. He can play St. Winny's with a team of fags of the Third Form."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Wally will wepwesent the juniah cwicket club on the occasion, so everythin' will be in ordah," said Arthur Augustus. "The young boundah will be very pleased to play for St. Jim's, and his dashed fags will be quite up to the weight of Daubeny and Co."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No doubt about that," said Tom. "I believe our Second Form could beat them; I know the Third could. They had hardly a man, that I saw, equal to Wally, or Reggie Manners, or young Levison."

"Yaas, wathah! We shall save our dignity in this way—we weally couldn't be seen on the cwicket gwound, you know, with such a feahful crew of fumblahs as Daubeny and Co."

"We don't want to risk losing the match, though," said Manners. "Daubeny would swank no end if he beat St. Jim's; and he would forget to mention that he'd played a scratch gang of fags here."

"No wisk at all, Mannahs."

"None!" said Tom. "The Third could beat St. Winny's. It's not such a rotten idea as one would expect from Gussy——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings——" said Lowther.

"I wefuse to be wegarded as a babe and sucklin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I wegard this as a vewy wippin' ideah, if young Wally will play up."

Tom Merry nodded with a cheery grin.

The noble Gussy often had great ideas, but they did not often meet with enthusiastic admiration from his comrades. But on the present occasion the whole company agreed that Gussy had hit the right nail on the head.

It was agreed that it was like Daubeny's cheek to challenge St. Jim's juniors to a cricket match, when his team was composed of hopeless "duds" who were not fit to play a fag eleven at the great game. To give him a fag team to meet was quite a proper retort to his "cheek."

Tom Merry was within his rights in putting any team he chose into the field; and certainly the Third Form of St. Jim's could put in a better eleven than the one the Co. had seen on the bank of the Chadway.

If Daubeny did not like it, he could "lump" it. That was how the St. Jim's juniors looked at the matter.

If Daubeny of St. Winifred's had been a more agreeable fellow perhaps Tom Merry would have hesitated. But what the juniors had seen of the great Daub on the Benbow had not pleased them at all.

There was no harm in taking down a swanking ass a peg or two; the two chums agreed on that.

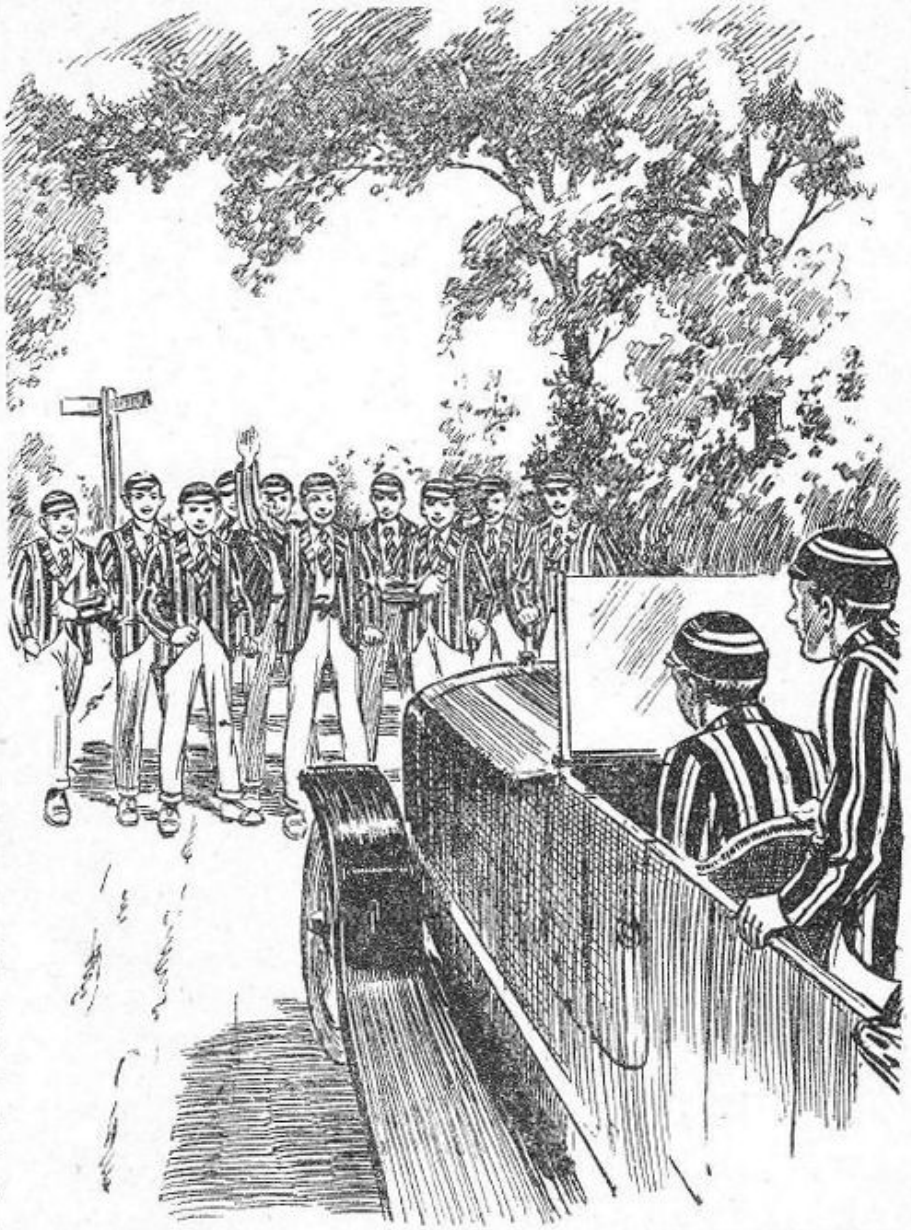
Besides, Daubeny would have no reasonable grounds for complaint; for the St. Jim's fag eleven certainly would beat him. Judging by what they had seen the previous day, the

chums of St. Jim's were quite assured that Wally and Co. could walk all over the St. Winny's cricketers.

There was a little discussion in Tom Merry's study, punctuated with many chortles; and it was agreed on all hands to adopt the ripping idea of the great Gussy.

A whole holiday, otherwise to be wasted on fumbling cricket, would be saved; and the lofty Daubeny would be put in his proper place; and whatever happened, the St. Winny's team would be sent defeated home. And so it was settled.

And, after tea, Tom Merry decided to approach D'Arcy minor on the subject. There was little doubt that Wally of the Third would jump at the chance of playing his fag team as representative of the school, and no doubt at all that the Third Form youths would back him up enthusiastically. It really was a simple and entertaining way out of a difficulty; and when Arthur Augustus remarked that, whatever the "posish" he could always be relied upon to point out the "wight and pwopah" thing to do, his comrades did not



In the middle of the lane stood a group of schoolboys in white cricketing flannels, and Vernon Daubeney uttered a surprised ejaculation as he recognised Jack Drake, and a crowd of the St. Winny's Fourth.
(See Page 160.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Wally and Co. at Home

THERE was a distinct odour of burning as Tom Merry opened the door of the Third-form room. There was also an odour of herrings. But the smell of burning was the stronger of the two. Evidently, as Monty Lowther remarked, a feast was toward in the halls of the Third.

Evening preparation was over, and Mr. Selby had left his Form to their own devices. And their present device was apparently supper in the Form-room. A fire, principally of sticks and cardboard, was blazing in the grate, and two or three amateur cooks were gathered round it. D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third—with a very red face and a perspiring brow, and a dab of soot upon his nose, was toasting a herring, impaled upon a toasting-fork. Manners minor had another herring, skilfully fixed upon a couple of pens. But Frank Levison was the happy possessor of a frying-pan, and in the pan reposed three fish, in more or less advanced stages of scorching. While Joe Frayne was making toast—an operation

which consisted of charring black patches upon thick slices of bread.

Wally and Co. were too busily engaged, to heed the three Shell fellows standing grinning in the doorway.

"We're in time for supper!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Those herrings look rather tempting, what?"

Tom Merry shuddered.

"Greasy little beggars!" said Manners. "They prefer this to supper in Hall."

"Better a burnt herring and contentment therewith," said Lowther.

D'Arcy minor looked round.

"Hallo, what do you bounders want?" he inquired disrespectfully. "If you've come to supper——"

"We haven't!" said Tom Merry, hastily. "I've come to have a word with you."

"Oh, we don't mind," said Wally, generously. "We've got a stack of herrings, and we can easily broil a few more. We got the lot cheap from Dame Taggles; she was glad to be rid of them, I think—they wouldn't have lasted over to-morrow. You can stay to supper."

"Yes, there's plenty," said Reggie Manners. "Some of them are a bit gamy, but they're really all right."

"Ahem!"

A supper on "gamy" herrings, considerably burnt in the process of cooking, was not enticing to the Shell fellows. They did not want to appear ungrateful. But they did not want that supper.

"Did you say you had something to jaw, Tom Merry?" asked Wally.

"Yes, kid."

"Not so much of your kid," said D'Arcy minor. "But you can go ahead. Are you looking for cricket recruits? If so, you've come to the right shop. There are some fellows here who could play the heads off the Shell."

"What-ho!" said Manners minor.

"You've hit it!" said Tom.

"Eh?"

"You've got it, kid."

"Oh! My only aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally, in astonishment. "You really want some men from the Third for cricket?"

"Yes."

"Good man!" said Wally, heartily.

There was a perceptible growth of geniality among the Third-formers. In spite of their persuasion that they could play cricket quite as well as anybody in the Lower School they had certainly not expected the junior captain to call upon their services. In that matter Tom Merry had never previously seen eye to eye with them.

"Now you're talking sense," said Levison minor.

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, Tom Merry does talk sense at times," remarked Wally. "He's not half such an ass as you might expect. How many men do you want, Tommy?"

"Eleven."

"Wha-a-at?"

"A whole team," said Tom.

Wally looked at him suspiciously.

"If you're pulling my leg——" he began.

"Not at all, kid. We want you kids——"

"Us what?"

"You chaps—we want you chaps to take over a match for us."

"You don't feel equal to it yourselves?" asked Levison minor.

"You young ass!" began Manners.

"Shush!" said Tom. "Yes, that's it—we don't feel equal to the match, for various reasons. It takes place next Wednesday, and we want you to put a Third-form team in the field, Wally. You'll captain the team, and you'll pick your men from the Third Form. How do you like the idea?"

"If you're spoofing——"

"Honest Injun!"

"Well, we wouldn't mind," said Wally, cautiously. "Who's the enemy?"

"St. Winifred's juniors."

"I didn't know you had a fixture with St. Winifred's."

"This is the first," explained Tom.

"And the last!" added Manners.

"St. Winifred's!" said Wally, thoughtfully. "I've heard about that show. They shifted the school to a barge, or something, while the old show was being rebuilt or something."

"An old warship," said Tom. "Daubeny and his team are coming over to play us

on Wednesday, and we want your team to meet them."

"Why don't you play them yourselves, if you've fixed up a match with them?" inquired Reggie Manners.

"Well, they're not up to our weight——"

"Then they're not up to ours."

"Ahem!"

"That's so," agreed Wally. "Still, we wouldn't mind taking the match over. Let's see—there isn't a match on for Wednesday, is there, Levison?"

"I think not," said Frank.

Tom Merry smiled. Third-form matches—even if one was "on"—were not matters of very great consequence, though nothing would have induced Wally and Co. to admit the fact.

"Well, as we've got a vacant date, we might see you through," said D'Arcy minor. "It's rather a queer idea, but you Shell fish are pretty queer anyhow. We'll beat St. Winifred's for you, with pleasure. What are you fellows going to do?"

"Oh, we shall be on the river, most likely. We'll stay in to meet Daubeny when he comes, and then clear off and leave him to you."

"I wouldn't mind putting you in my team, Tom Merry."

"Eh?"

"You're not half bad at cricket," said Wally patronisingly.

"You young ass—ahem! I mean, thanks; but I'd rather leave the match wholly in your hands. I can rely on you to whack St. Winifred's."

"Oh, that's all right! It's a jolly queer thing, passing a school match on to us like this. Whose idea was it?"

"Your major suggested it."

"Oh, Gussy! Bound to be a queer idea, then, if it was Gussy's. Never mind, we'll take it on, if you mean business."

"Honest Injun, I tell you!"

"Done!" said Wally.

Although Walter Adolphus D'Arcy was assuming an extremely nonchalant manner, it was easy to see that he was highly delighted.

Taking over a "school" match was a feather in the cap of the Third; there was no doubt about that. Wally could guess that Tom Merry had landed himself carelessly with a match with some fumbling team he did not care to waste a holiday upon; but that did not alter the fact that it was a junior "School" match, and a great opportunity for the fag eleven to distinguish itself.

After the match the Third-formers would be able to allude nonchalantly to "our match with St. Winny's juniors," and certainly they would never remember to mention the reasons why the match had been passed on to them.

In fact the faces of the fags were now shining even more with satisfaction than with herrings.

"It's a go!" said Levison minor.

"Rely on us," said Reggie Manners. "We'll see you through. We don't mind helping you out of a fix."

"Any time you're booked to meet a team above your weight, you can come to us," added Jameson.

"Thanks awfully!" said Tom Merry. "I'll remember. Then it's a go—you play St. Winifred's on Wednesday."

"It's a go! But look here," said Wally cautiously. "No creeping out at the last minute, or anything of that kind. If we take over the match we shall put in some extra practice between now and Wednesday. It's got to be understood that we play St. Winifred's, and that the match is ours, and that we don't give it up if you change your mind."

"Honour bright!" said Tom.

"Good! But it's just as well to have things settled. If you don't mind, we'll go and see Kildare about it, and you can tell him how it's fixed, as Head of the Games."

Tom Merry nodded, with a smile.

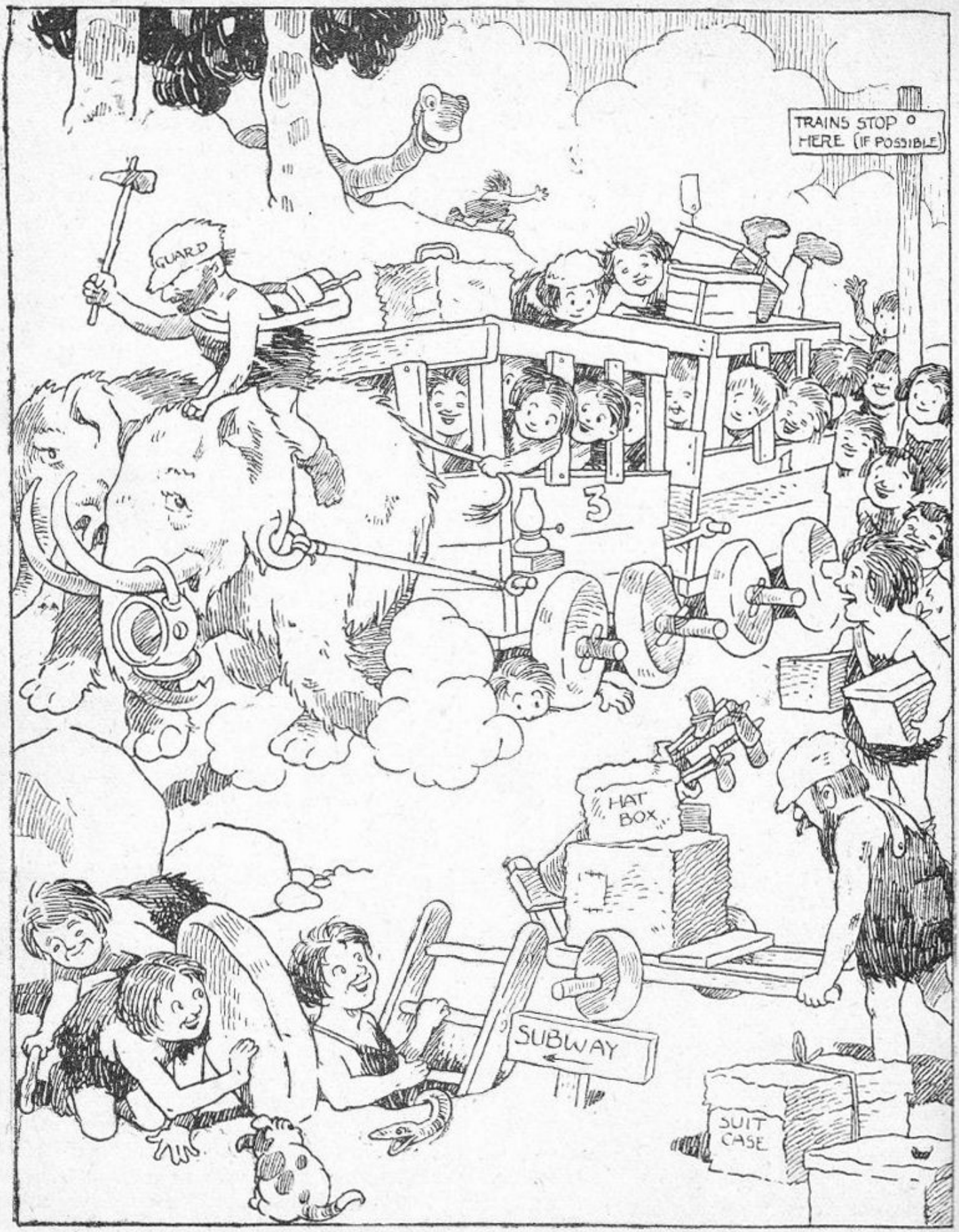
"I don't mind," he said.

"Then we'll go now," said Wally, jumping up.

"Come on, then."

Tom Merry and Manners left the form-room in company with the leader of the Third. The fags were left in a buzz of excited discussion. There was no doubt that the Third-formers were pleased at the prospect of representing St. Jim's in a School match.

GREYFRIARS IN PREHISTORIC TIMES



OFF FOR THE HOLIDAYS AT THE END OF THE TERM!

Tom Merry and Wally proceeded immediately to the Sixth-form passage, where Tom tapped at Kildare's door.

"Come in!" called out the pleasant voice of Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

The two juniors entered, Wally taking in with him a slight and agreeable scent of herrings.

Kildare was chatting in his study with Darrel of the Sixth, but he paused and cast an inquiring glance at his visitors.

"Well, what is it?" he asked. "Cut it short!"

Tom Merry explained how matters stood, and Kildare raised his eyebrows a little.

"It's a rather odd thing," he said. "Why don't you want to play the team you've arranged to meet?"

"We've seen them since, and they're a set of fumbling asses, Kildare. It would be a waste of time."

"Oh, but——"

"They're entitled to meet a St. Jim's team, and the Third will be a St. Jim's team," said Tom. "They can't grumble."

"I should think they'd be offended if they find that they're being palmed off with a fag eleven."

"Well, that's their look-out. They shouldn't have had the thumping cheek to send us a challenge, when they can't play cricket for toffee."

Kildare laughed.

"Well, it's your own bizney," he said. "What do you want me to do in the matter?"

"Wally wants you to take official cognizance, as Head of the Games, that the match is handed over to the Third," said Tom, with a grin. "He doesn't want to get ready for the match and risk its being taken out of his hands again."

"Oh, I see! I'll make a note of it. I suppose you've quite made up your mind about it?"

"Oh, quite!"

"It's understood, then, that the match belongs to the Third, whether you change your mind or not?" said Kildare.

"That's it."

"Right, then"

The two juniors left the study.

"All serene, old top!" said Wally, in the passage. "We'll beat St. Winny's for you. We'll take over the Greyfriars and Rookwood matches as well, if you like."

"I don't," said Tom, laughing.

And he returned to his quarters satisfied, while Wally cut off to the Third form room in a state of great elation.

And the next day Wally and Co. might have been seen—and, in fact, were seen—slogging at cricket practice on the fag ground with great assiduity. St. Winifred's might or might not be a team of fumbling slackers, but Wally, like a wise leader, was leaving nothing to chance. During the following days he kept his men at work with the rigour of a drill-sergeant, till some of his faithful followers began to wish that they had never heard of the St. Winifred's match.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Jack Drake thinks it out

JACK DRAKE of St. Winifred's came along the gangway from the shore to the Benbow, with a cricket bat under his arm and a frown on his handsome face. It was Tuesday, the day before the fixture St. Winifred's *v.* St. Jim's. Drake had been at cricket practice, and it was the morrow's cricket match that he was thinking of as he came back to the Benbow with a frowning brow.

That fixture worried Drake.

"Rotten" as Vernon Daubeny was in the position of junior cricket captain, he had a great deal of influence in many ways among the St. Winny's juniors, and shifting him from his position was not an easy task. A few more defeats perhaps would cause the fellows to grow "fed" with Daub, but in the meantime another defeat was to be gathered up at St. Jim's; and Jack Drake disliked that idea very much. He had thought over the matter a great deal, and discussed it with his chum, Rodney, and with Sawyer major, and Estcourt, and others of his friends, but it did not seem that anything was to be done.

But a determination was growing in Drake's mind that Daubeny should not be allowed to make St. Winny's look absurd on the St.

Jim's cricket ground. If he wouldn't play the game, and wouldn't make room for others to play it, he had to be dealt with. Drake had made up his mind on that point; the only question that remained was how to deal with the chief of the "Bucks."

That was the problem that corrugated Drake's brow as he came over the gangway, his bat under his arm.

Daubeny and Co. were lounging on the deck, and they grinned as the junior passed them.

The match was to take place on the morrow, and Daub, who was rolling in money, had ordered a big and expensive car to convey the eleven to St. Jim's. It was the great Daub's way to do things in style, so far as the expenditure of money went. But the great Daub did not think it necessary to put in any extra practice that day. No doubt he considered that his form was quite good enough.

Drake glanced at the grinning nuts of the Shell, and his frown deepened. He stopped to speak.

"Look here, Daub——" he began.

"Hallo, old top!" said Daubeny affably. "Been at the nets?"

"Yes. You fellows ought to have been there, too."

Daubeny shook his head with a smile.

"We don't need so much practice as you fags," he remarked.

"Oh, quite!" grinned Egan.

"Don't talk out of your hat!" growled Drake crossly. "You know I could play your heads off. How the club stands you is a mystery to me. Look here, Daubeny, are you taking over to St. Jim's the same crew that you played against Chade last week?"

"Practically."

"Chade wiped up the ground with you. Are you specially keen on getting a licking at St. Jim's?"

"We shall beat them all right, I think!"

"You know you can't!"

Daubeny shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't seem to care twopence for the name of the school," said Jack Drake bitterly. "You bag a fixture with a school like St. Jim's, and you take over there a crew of duds that the fags will snigger at."

"Which means that you want me to play you against St. Jim's!" remarked Daubeny, with a smile to his comrades. "Can't be done, Drake. You ain't quite up to School form."

"Hardly," assented Torrence.

"Not at all," observed Seeley, with a sage shake of the head. "It's only your conceit makes you think so, Drake."

The Fourth-former breathed hard.

"I don't ask you to put me in, Daub," he said, controlling his temper. "Put in a few fellows who can keep their end up. There's a good many to choose from in the Fourth, and a few in the Shell."

"My dear man, I've got all the best men in my team now."

"Oh, quite!"

"You know you haven't!" exclaimed Drake savagely. "You're a silly chump, but you're not such a born idiot as to think that."

"What I like about the Fourth," said Daubeny to his chums, "is their polished Chesterfieldian manner. It does them credit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake gave an impatient sniff and walked on, leaving the "Bucks" of St. Winifred's chuckling.

He went down to the Fourth-form quarters and entered No. 8 Study, where Dick Rodney was brewing coffee on a spirit-stove. Rodney looked up with a smile.

"Nearly ready," he remarked. "Anything up? You look waxy."

"I feel waxy," growled Drake, pitching his bat into a corner. "I've just been speaking to Daub."

"Oh, Daub!" said Rodney.

"The silly chump is bent on getting a licking at St. Jim's, and making St. Winny's look ridiculous."

"I don't think he cares much whether they are licked or not, old chap. Those silly asses brag that they don't work at cricket. They're after a day out chiefly; the cricket match is only an incident."

"It's rotten!"

"Can't be helped," said Rodney.

"Lovelace ought to interfere, as captain of St. Winny's. I suppose he will sooner or later."

"Well, the juniors have always been allowed to select their own skipper, and it can't be denied that Daub has a majority."

"Rotten slackers like himself!" growled Drake.

"Quite true; but I don't see what can be done."

"Well, something's going to be done," said Drake decidedly. "I met some of the Chade fellows this afternoon, and they were chipping me about the cricket. I'm quite fed up."

"Same here, but——"

"If Daub persists in playing the goat Daub's got to be stopped."

Rodney opened his eyes. "How?" he asked.

"I've got an idea."

"Good man!" said Rodney. "Let's have it over tea."

"Where's Tootles? I don't want him to hear; it would be all over the ship in ten minutes."

"He's gone to tea with Newson. Newson's had a remittance, and Tuckey has become his devoted chum—for this afternoon."

Jack Drake laughed.

"All the better! I'll tell you over tea, then. It's a rather drastic stunt."

The coffee was brewed, and the two chums sat down to tea. Jack Drake had closed the door carefully. Evidently secrecy was required, concerning his drastic stunt.

"Well," said Rodney, as he chipped his egg, "I'm listening—all ears, in fact. How is Daub going to be stopped?"

"There's a good eleven to be picked out of the Fourth Form, among our set," said Drake. "Us two, and Estcourt, Sawyer major, Rawlings, Norman, Conway—and some more—all good men."

"Daub won't pick one of them. They're not friends of his."

"A cricket captain oughtn't to pick his men out of his personal friends, whether they can play cricket or not."

"Better tell Daub that!" said Rodney, laughing. "I know it already, old fellow."

"I've told Daubeny often enough. Now, we could make up a good eleven, that would give St. Jim's a tussle for their money. Why shouldn't we do it?"

"Eh? Because Daub's eleven is the St. Winny's junior eleven, and plays for the school, of course."

"They're going over to St. Jim's to-morrow in a big car."

"Good old Daub! Always splashing his money about."

"Suppose they don't arrive there?" said Drake.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Suppose the car was held up——"

"Held up!" gasped Rodney.

"Yes; and that gang of slackers turned out of it——"

"My only hat!"

"Landed somewhere, ten miles from anywhere, so that they couldn't get a train to St. Jim's in time——"

"Phew!"

"And suppose we went on in the car——"

"Drake!"

"As the St. Winifred's eleven!" wound up Drake. "How does that strike you?"

Dick Rodney did not state how that struck him. He simply stared at his chum open-mouthed.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Back up!

DICK RODNEY found his voice at last.

"You're joking, I suppose?" he ejaculated, when he found it.

"I'm not joking," said Jack Drake determinedly. "I've thought it out, and I mean it, every word. Why shouldn't we do it?"

"I suppose there's about a thousand reasons why we shouldn't," said Dick Rodney. "There would be a terrific row about it."

"Who cares?"

"Daub and Co. would kick up no end of a shindy."

"Let them."

"How are we to stop the car?" asked Rodney, after a pause. The question showed that he was already entertaining Drake's amazing scheme.

"Easy enough. We know the road it must follow, as far as Kingsford at any rate. We can be ahead of it on the road and stop it. Once we get to close quarters, those

slackers won't put up much of a tussle. They'd be afraid of getting their beautiful clobber soiled!" said Drake, with a scornful sniff.

"Oh, we could handle them—a dozen of us," assented Rodney. "But——"

"But what?"

"If we bagged their car they'd get to a railway station, and come on, and get to St. Jim's later——"

"We'd take care they didn't! We'd give them a ten-mile walk to a railway station. After that they wouldn't feel very keen about a long journey and a cricket match. They'd get in on their hands and knees after tramping ten miles—that slacking lot."

"Well, ten miles is a bit of a tramp, even for chaps who aren't slackers," said Rodney, laughing. "It would knock out Daub and Co. right enough. Serve them jolly well right, for that matter. But——"

"Old scout, you're as full of buts as a billy-goat," said Drake. "I think it's a jolly good idea."

"The chauffeur might refuse to drive us, if Daub told him not to. He's Daub's man, you know."

"He would think over it, and withdraw his refusal, if we held his nose in a ditch for a bit."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Besides, we'll stand him a good tip. If you come to that I can drive a car easily enough: I've driven a car in the holidays at home. A detail like that won't stop us."

Dick Rodney rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

His chum's suggestion had taken away his breath at first; but the more he thought of it the better he liked it.

Daubeny and Co. were in need of a severe lesson, and this lesson, certainly, would be severe enough. And certainly the scheme was quite justifiable: the right men would get to St. Jim's for the cricket match, instead of the wrong men. A cricket captain who put every other consideration before cricket was not a captain to be treated with respect. And if the new team won the match at St. Jim's, that would be a justification in itself. Nothing succeeds like success.

In any case Drake had evidently made up his mind; and Rodney, as a loyal chum, had to back him up.

"Well, I'm on," he said, at last. "But Tom Merry will be expecting to see Daub at his school. He will be a bit surprised to find you cricket captain."

"We needn't explain it all at St. Jim's. Merry will simply think that changes have been made in the team. He knows how much they were needed, after seeing the play here last week."

"No doubt about that. In fact, I thought Merry was rather sorry he'd agreed to play Daub at all, after seeing his style."

"I noticed that; in fact, there's no mistake about it. Dash it all, if St. Jim's give up a whole holiday for the match, it's up to St. Winny's to send over a team worth meeting. Something's due to them."

"Quite so. We'll do it—if we can get the fellows to back us up."

"I think that will be all right. Every chap who can put up a good game is pretty sick at being left out of the eleven. Look here, we'll have a study meeting, and put it to them," said Drake. "You can go round asking the fellows quietly to step into this study after tea. We'll make up a list of the men we want—say a round dozen—and nobody else need be told a word till afterwards. It's got to be kept dark, of course. If Daub got a hint of it, we shouldn't catch him on the road."

"Ha, ha! I should think not."

There was an earnest discussion in No. 8 Study till tea was over. Then Dick Rodney quietly departed on his mission.

Later on every few minutes a fellow dropped into the study to the secret meeting.

The Fourth-formers were rather surprised to find a meeting in progress, as they dropped in; Rodney had given no explanation so far, save that Jack Drake had something of importance to communicate, which was to be kept strictly dark.

No. 8 Study was pretty well crowded when the last recruit arrived, in company with Rodney himself. It was a case of "standing room only," as Rodney remarked.

Drake closed the door, and locked it, to prevent possible interruptions. Then he faced the surprised and curious crowd of juniors.

"Well, what's the game?" inquired Sawyer major. "Is it a feed, or a Sinn Fein meeting, or a Gunpowder Plot?"

"It's a wheeze!" said Drake.

"Go it!"

"It's up against Daubeny!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Any fellow who doesn't care to back us up, can stand out," continued Drake. "But he will be expected to keep his head shut about what I'm going to say."

"That's understood," said Rawlings. "Pile in, old top."

Jack Drake proceeded to explain.

The meeting simply blinked at him.

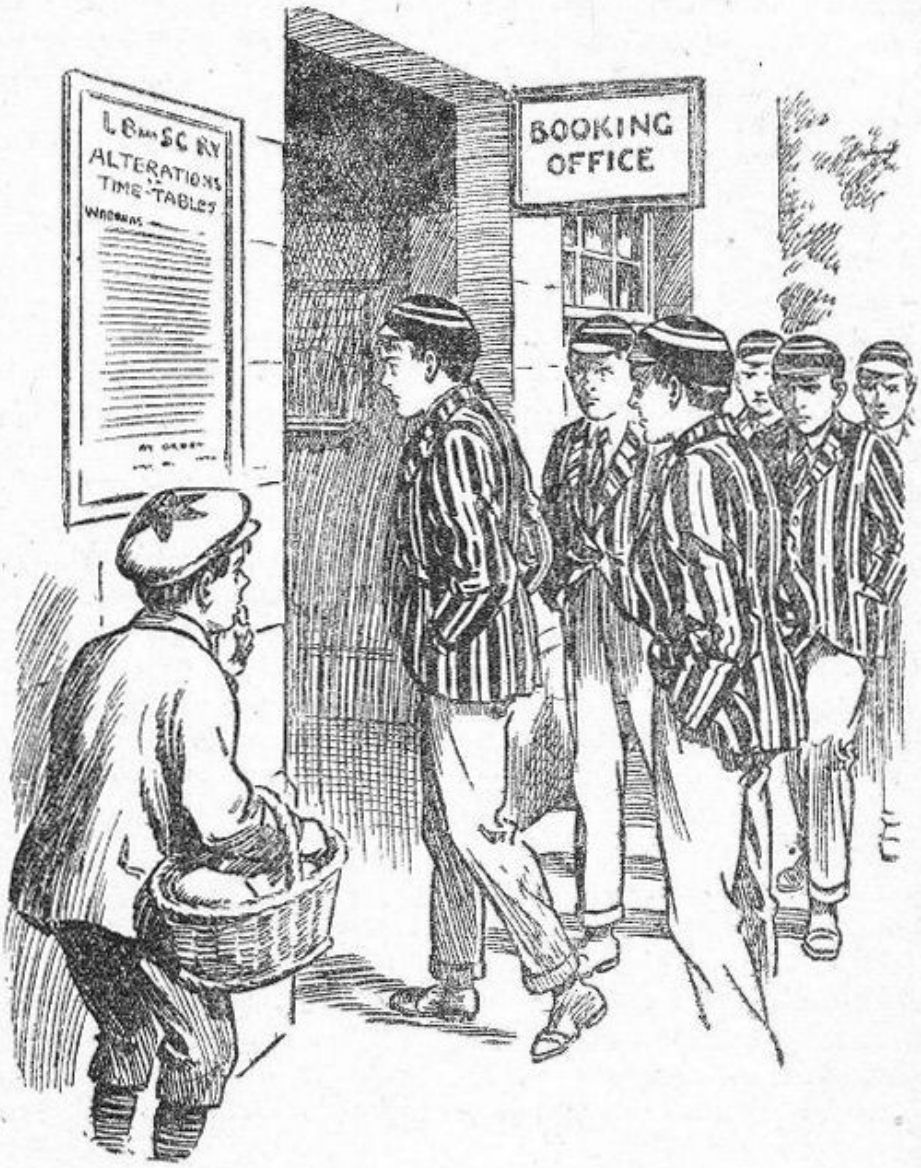
When he had finished they were still blinking. Nobody seemed to have anything to say, for the moment.

"Well, will you fellows back up?" demanded Drake. "I've picked you out because you're cricketers. You can give St. Jim's a good game; they're entitled to it."

"But—but what about Daub?" stuttered Norman.

"Nothing about Daub. Daub is dead in this act."

"It will be a lark!" grinned Sawyer major. "Fancy Daub's face afterwards! He will be chortled to death, if this comes off."



It was a dusty, disconsolate, weary crowd that limped at last into the railway station at Kingsford! (See page 163)

"It will come off, all right, if we take it in hand," said Drake. "The question is, will you fellows back up, and play the game for St. Winifred's?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Done, then!" said Drake, his eyes sparkling. "Better cut, now it's settled; we don't want Daub to smell a mouse. Mind, not a word outside this study."

"Not a giddy syllable!" grinned Sawyer major.

And so it was settled.

What Daubeny of the Shell would have thought, if he had known, was an interesting question. But Daub did not know, and was not likely to.

What Tom Merry would have thought, too, was a still more interesting question, considering the arrangement he had made with Wally and Co. of the Third—on the astute suggestion of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But Tom Merry did not know—yet!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Tom Merry is Satisfied!

"Bai Jove! The young boundahs are weally gettin' on!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in tones of lofty approval.

Cricket practice was going on, on the fag's ground at St. Jim's, at the very same moment that the meeting was being held in Jack Drake's study on board the Benbow fifteen miles away.

Wally and Co. were excelling themselves at the nets.

Tom Merry had kindly come along to see how the fags were shaping, with Lowther and Manners, Blake and Dig and Gussy. The heroes of the Third prided themselves upon knowing as much about the great game as their elders of the Fourth and the Shell; but they were not insensible to the honour of being watched at practice by the great men of the junior eleven. Which was proved by the fact that D'Arcy minor "slanged" Jameson for muffing a catch, at a great rate, as the distinguished onlookers arrived.

"Jolly good, for fags," commented Tom Merry. "Those slacking duffers from St. Winifred's won't have a look-in, that's pretty certain."

"Not an earthly," agreed Blake.

"Wathah not!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "It's weally not my wish to bwag at all, deah boys, but I think that in this case you will admit that I have pointed out the pwopah thing to do."

"Who said the age of miracles was past!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowther——"

"It was really a good idea," confessed Tom Merry, "what beats me is, how you came to think of it, Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I fancy Daubeny will be a bit edge-wise, when he finds that the team playing him is selected from the Third Form!" remarked Manners.

"Let him be as edge-wise as he likes," answered Tom Merry. "He had no right to challenge us. If he gets taken down for his cheek that's his own look-out. The Third will beat him; and what more can he want?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't believe in running risks with a cricket match," said Grundy of the Shell, joining the group of spectators. "You'll look a silly ass if the St. Winny's crowd beat this gang of fags, Tom Merry."

"They couldn't!"

"Quite imposs, Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I have seen the sillay asses at cwicket, and I hardly think they could beat you."

"What?"

"I am not surpwised that you are astonished, Gwunday; but it is weally a fact that some of the St. Winny's chaps play as wottenly as you do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy bestowed a wrathful glare upon the swell of St. Jim's. George Alfred Grundy's cricket was a standing joke; as Monty Lowther had humorously remarked, it was the funniest thing going, with the solitary exception of Grundy's footer. But George Alfred himself could not be expected to see that.

"Even Twimble of the Fourth could play them," went on Arthur Augustus innocently. "I do not believe that Daubeny's bowlahs could take even Twimble's wicket. I weally nevah saw such a fumblin' cwew. Bai Jove, suppose you ask Wally for a place in the team, Gwunday."

"Me in the fag team!" hooted Grundy.

"Yaas, wathah! You would have a chance of playin' for St. Jim's without doin' any harm!" explained Arthur Augustus.

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy, while the other fellow chuckled.

"Weally, Gwunday——"

Biff! Grundy of the Shell smote Arthur Augustus upon the hat, and strode away in wrath.

There was a howl from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yow! Bai Jove! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus struggled with his hat, and succeeded in extracting his head from it, and glared round furiously in search of Grundy of the Shell. But Grundy, fortunately for him, had vanished by that time. Possibly it was fortunate for Arthur Augustus also.

"Bai Jove! I shall give that wuffian a feahful thwashin' when I see him again!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Fancy any fellow bein' Hun enough to damage a fellows'

toppah, you know! I should think even the Kaisah would stop at that, bai Jove!"

Whereupon Monty Lowther proceeded to quote Shakespeare, with variations:

"Who steals my purse, steals trash,
But he who lays rough hands upon my topper——"

"Pway don't be a sillay ass, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus crossly. "You have got that quotation quite w'ong. There is nothin' at all in Shakespeare about silk toppahs. I am quite suah of that. Toppahs were not worn in Shakespeare's time. I see nothin' to cackle at in that wemark, you fellows. It is very odd that I cannot make a wemark without some sillay ass beginnin' to cackle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!"

"Stop that ball!" came a howl from the field.

Wally, at the wicket, had smitten a mighty smite. The round red ball whizzed over the boundary, and there was a sudden crash. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who stopped the ball, quite unintentionally, with his silk hat.

The hat flew in one direction, and the ball in another. Arthur Augustus, greatly astonished, gave a stagger and sat down in the grass.

"Bai Jove! Wha-a-at was that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well fielded!" shrieked Monty Lowther.

Levison minor came panting up to the ropes.

"Chuck in that ball!" he gasped.

"Oh, cwumbs! You young wuffian, you have wuined my hat!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Can't you chuck in that ball!" demanded Levinson minor, with a heartless disregard for the hat.

"I—I—I——"

Tom Merry laughed and picked up the ball, and returned it to the fag, who grinned and ran off with it. Arthur Augustus picked up his hat and regarded it with anguish. Grundy's thump had not improved it, and the crashing ball had finished what Grundy had begun.

"Look at it!" said Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! I have a gweat mind to go on the field and give Wally a feahful thwashin' on the spot! I wefuse to wemain heah any any longah. Bothah the fags and their sillay cwicket!"

And Arthur Augustus marched off, with his wrecked topper in his hand, and an expression on his noble face that was worthy of Niobe in her most pessimistic moments.

Tom Merry and Co. remained watching the fags for some time, and when they strolled back to the School-house, Tom was quite satisfied in his mind as to the prospects of the morrow. There was no doubt whatever that Wally and his men, fags as they were, could beat Daubeny and Co. hands down. That was a right and proper punishment for Daubeny's cheek in challenging the mighty men of the St. Jim's junior club—a licking at the hands of Third Form fags. It was making the punishment fit the crime, as it were. But there was a surprise—a great surprise—in store for Tom Merry in the morning, and his opinion of Gussy's great wheeze was likely to change very considerably when Jack Drake's team arrived in the place of Daubeny and Co.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

On the King's Highway

DAUBENY of the Shell came on the deck of the Benbow in the fresh summer morning with a very cheery expression on his face.

Daubeny was feeling very cheery that morning.

It was a whole holiday, and a glorious day. There was to be an agreeable run across country in a handsome and commodious car, and lunch and tea at St. Jim's. There was to be a cricket match thrown in, as it were.

But the cricket match was not the most important event of the day, in the estimation of the "Bucks" of St. Winnifred's. They made no secret of the fact that they did not "work" at cricket; that was just a pleasant and gentle pastime. If they won a match, they took the gifts that the gods sent them with complacency; if they lost—as they often did—they bore it with cheerful philosophy.

Certainly they didn't allow it to worry them or disturb their equanimity.

Daub was promising himself a pleasant day; and the added pleasure of seeing Jack Drake's face frowning disapproval when he started in the big car.

But in the latter expectation he was disappointed. Drake was not visible when Daub came on deck; neither was Rodney, and a good many more members of the St. Winny's Fourth were absent.

Tuckey Toodles was hanging rather disconsolately about the deck. Drake and Co. had gone off without bidding farewell to Tuckey Toodles, and without even mentioning to him that they were going. Tuckey was feeling neglected. He came up to Daubeny on the deck with his most ingratiating smile.

"Starting soon, old top?" he inquired.

"Yes, Fatty."

"I'll come in the car if you like."

"Thanks! I don't like."

"You've lots of room," urged Toodles. "I'll keep score for you at St. Jim's, if you like. I'll umpire for you. In fact, I'd like to be of use."

"You'd like to do me a favour?" asked Daubeny.

"Yes, old scout," exclaimed Tuckey eagerly. "Anything you like. Give it a name."

"Then jump into the river——"

"Eh?"

"And stay there."

And with that cordial remark Daubeny walked on with his friends to the gangway, leaving Toodles staring.

The big car had arrived, and was waiting on the road by the river bank. The "Bucks" walked ashore elegantly. A dapper chauffeur touched his cap to the great Daub.

"Pile in you chaps," yawned Daubeny.

The cricketers and their cricket bags piled in the car. Vernon Daubeny took a cigarette-case from his pocket; and then glanced towards the Benbow. On second thoughts he decided to put off his smoke till he was at a safer distance, and put back the case. Tuckey Toodles came rolling up in the car, still in the hope of attaching himself to Daub and Co. for the day, since the Fourth-Formers had eluded him.

"I say, Daub——"

"Where's Drake?" asked Daubeny, who was looking round in search of his rival in the Lower School.

Vernon Daubeny had fully expected to see Drake there, with his friends, and he was prepared to enjoy Drake's anger and chagrin. He was disappointed and annoyed.

"Drake!" grunted Toodles. "Oh, he's gone out—the whole lot of them have gone out. I think they went off just after brekker."

"Gone out for the day?"

"Playing cricket, I think," answered Toodles.

"Playing cricket!" said Torrence, from the car. "Whom the thump are they playing cricket with?"

"Well, they took their cricket things," said Toodles. "I saw Drake and Rodney getting them ready, and asked Drake what was on, and he told me to go and eat coke. Now they're gone, and the things are gone, so I suppose they're playing cricket somewhere."

"That's rather queer!" remarked Seeley.

"Oh, quite!" said Egan. "They've no right to fix up a match anywhere, if you come to that. They're nobody."

Daubeny frowned.

"Oh, they're playing some kids' team in the village, I expect," he remarked. "It don't matter to us. Let's get off."

Daubeny stepped into the big car.

"I say, Daub, if you'd like me——"

"Start!" said Daubeny.

"Daub, old chap—— I say, dear old boy——"

"Stand clear!"

The engine was humming. Daubeny closed the door of the car, and Tuckey Toodles jumped back as it began to move.

"I say, old chap——" he howled.

"Rats!"

The car glided on.

Tuckey Toodles ran alongside to keep pace for a few minutes, while he addressed some more remarks to Vernon Daubeny. But Daub was no longer an "old chap" or a "dear old boy." Far from it. Now that it was certain that he was not going to be one of the party, Master Toodles revealed his genuine opinion of the lordly "Bucks."

"Yah!" roared Toodles. "You going to play cricket! You couldn't play marbles! Yah!"

"Clear off, you cheeky little beast!" shouted Daubeny angrily.

"Yah! Who muffs catches?" yelled Toodles, still running alongside. "Who scores two duck's eggs in every match?"

"Get on, Jones!" snapped Daubeny to the chauffeur. The derisive yells of Tuckey Toodles did not seem to please Daubeny.

"Yessir."

The car was beginning to put on speed, but Tuckey Toodles put on a spurt, and remained in the offing, panting and derisive.

"Yah! Slackers!" he spluttered. "Cricket! Bosh! Peg-top is your game! You can't play cricket! I'll give you a quid for every run you score to-day, Daub. It won't cost me a sovereign. Yah!"

There was a sudden sound from Jones, the chauffeur, which sounded suspiciously like a chuckle.

"What are you crawling for, you fool?" snapped Daubeny.

The car was going fast now, and Tuckey Toodles was left behind—standing in the road in an exceedingly elegant attitude, with his fat thumb to his fat little nose, and his fingers extended. Daubeny's lofty countenance was very red; and Daub's temper—never very good—was exceedingly savage. Some of his comrades were grinning; which did not make Daub feel any more amiable.

"You silly fool! Why can't you get going?" he howled to the chauffeur, apparently with the idea of "taking it out" of that gentleman for the chuckle he had involuntarily emitted.

The man slowed down, and looked over his shoulder.

"What did you call me, sir?" he inquired

"I called you a fool!" snapped Daubeny.

The chauffeur looked at him.

"I don't allow whippersnappers to call me names, sir," he said, with great politeness. "I used to get that from my sergeant, but I'm not taking it from you. Understand?"

The custodian of the scent-box seemed to expect a reply; but Daubeny did not consider it judicious to make one. He sat down and grunted; and the chauffeur drove on in silence. Daubeny sat fuming. He had not started the day well. First there was Tuckey Toodles' derisive impertinence, and now he had had to accept "back-chat" from an individual whom he would have alluded to scornfully as a "bally chauffeur." It was really not gratifying to so great a man as Daubeny of the Shell. It was still less gratifying to observe that his comrades did not seem displeased at seeing him taken down a peg.

"Look out, Tom Mewwy, you are wumplin' my jacket!" remarked Arthur Augustus, in a tone of mild reproof. "Oh! You fearful ass!" groaned Tom Merry. (See page 167)

However, the great Daub recovered his equanimity as the car bowled on by long white roads and dusty lanes; and, safe out of sight of the Chadway and the Benbow, the "Bucks" opened their cigarette-cases and put on "smokes."

With an expensive gold-tipped cigarette between his lips, Daubeny of the Shell felt more at peace with the world. It was not a good preparative for a tough cricket match; but that was a detail that Daub did not care much about.

"Rippin' day!" yawned Torrence.

"Oh, quite!" said Egan. "You're not lookin' very cheery, Daub, old buck."

"What rot!" said Daubeny crossly. "Cheery as a lark!"

"Cheeky blighter, that chauffeur!" said Sceley, closing one eye at his companions.

"Hang the chauffeur!" growled Daub. "Hallo, we're through Kingsford. After this lane, it's a straight run to St. Jim's by the high road. I shall complain at the garage about their sendin' such a ruffian with the car. When you pay through the nose for a big car, you want a civil chauffeur. I'm dashed if I know what the dashed lower classes are comin' to, in these days. Hallo, if the silly ass isn't stoppin'."

The car slowed down.

Daubeny of the Shell stood up, and glared over the wind-screen at the driver.

"What are you stoppin' for?" he snapped.

"Look, and you'll see, sir!" was the chauffeur's reply.

Daubeny looked.

The car was following a rather narrow lane, deeply shaded by big trees on both sides. Kingsford was now a mile behind. In the middle of the lane stood a group of schoolboys in white cricketing flannels, and Vernon Daubeny uttered a surprised ejaculation as he recognised Jack Drake, and a crowd of the St. Winny's Fourth. Drake was holding up his hand as a signal for the car to stop; and as the crowd of juniors blocked the road, the chauffeur naturally slowed down, under the impression that there was something "up" on the road ahead.

"Drive on!" exclaimed Daubeny. "No need to stop for those kids!"

"I suppose there's something the matter ahead——"

"I don't suppose so."

"Then why are they stopping us?" grunted the chauffeur.

"Only a lark, I expect."

"I'd better ask them."

And the chauffeur prudently stopped.

The next moment the car was surrounded by the Fourth-formers of St. Winifred's.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Rough on Daub!

JACK DRAKE dragged the door open.

The Bucks were all on their feet now, in amazement. They had not expected to see Drake that day.

Daubeny glared at him.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"I am, old top," answered Drake, coolly, as he stepped into the car.

"Get out!" roared Daubeny.

"No fear!"

Rodney and Sawyer major wedged into the car after Drake. The Bucks viewed that proceeding with staring astonishment. They had not the faintest idea, so far, of what was intended.

"What's the matter, young gentlemen?" asked the chauffeur. "Is the road up?"

"Oh, no!"

"What have you stopped us for, then?"

"Just to talk to these chaps," answered Drake, cheerily. "It's all right, chauffeur. You just hold on."

"Look here, what's this game?" shouted Daubeny, angrily. "Do you think we're going to give you a lift to St. Jim's, Drake? You're jolly well mistaken, I can tell you!"

"No room here for your crowd," said Torrence, pacifically. "You can see that for yourself, Drake. Don't be a cad!"

"Get out!"

Drake shook his head.

"We're not getting out," he answered, coolly. "We're getting in. Squeeze up, you fellows."

"I order you to get out of my car!" yelled Daubeny, utterly enraged by that lawless invasion.

"You can order till you're black in the face," said Rodney. "Pile in, you fellows. If they don't make room sit on their knees."

"Do you mind if I sit on your head, Egan?" inquired Sawyer major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——"

"Get out!"

"What are you up to?"

There was a chorus of indignant expostulation from the Bucks of St. Winifred's. But they did not seek to expel the intruders by force. Jack Drake and Co. were rather too hefty, in the fistical line, for Daubeny and his nutty friends to think of that resource.

"Chauffeur!" howled Daubeny.

"Yessir?"

"Turn those young rascals out of the car!"

The chauffeur blinked at him.

"P'r'aps you wouldn't mind telling me, sir, 'ow I'm to turn out a dozen fellers?" he suggested.

"Turn them out at once!"

"I'm paid to drive this 'ere car!" answered the chauffeur stolidly. "I ain't paid to scrap with schoolboys, not that I knows on. I s'pose you can turn them out yourselves, if you don't like their company."

But that was exactly what the nuts of St. Winifred's couldn't do. Even if they had not been nervous for their noses, they would have been nervous for their clothes. As a matter of fact they were nervous for both.

The Fourth-formers swarmed into the big car, unresisted by the surprised and enraged Bucks; meeting with only angry expostulations, which did not deter them in the least.

Daubeny, as much surprised as enraged, glared at the grinning Fourth-formers, as they squeezed into seats. There was room for three or four; and the rest sat on the knees of the Bucks. Four or five cricket bags were thrown in, and the last junior in jammed the door shut. Daubeny clenched his fists.

"Will you tell me what this means, Drake?" he hissed.

"Certainly. We want a lift."

"You're not going to St. Jim's with us?"

"Not with you, that's a cert."

"Where do you want a lift to?" hissed Daubeny.

"Mark's Cross."

"You fool! That's a good ten miles out of our way, across the heath!"

"Exactly."

"We're not taking you there!" howled Daubeny, furiously. "We shall be late at St. Jim's!"

"You won't be late at St. Jim's," grinned Drake. "Now then, Daub, take it smiling, and tell your man to start."

Daubeny's reply was not in words. The elegant Daub was not a fighting-man, as a rule; but he was wound up to fighting-pitch now. He scrambled at Drake through a crowd of legs, and grappled with him fiercely.

"Back up, you fellows!" he shouted. "Pitch them out."

"It won't be us that's pitched out, if you fellows give any trouble," said Dick Rodney.

The Bucks were aware of that; and they sat tight. Daubeny was struggling with Drake, and he suddenly collapsed and disappeared among a sea of legs. Drake sat on his chest.

"I—I say, better give them a lift where they want to go," stammered Seeley. "After all, we can make up for lost time."

"Oh, quite!" gasped Egan.

"Groogh! Lemme gerrup!" spluttered Daubeny, wriggling furiously amid boots and dust at the bottom of the crowded car.

"You're all right there, for the present," said Drake cheerily. "Are you going to give your man directions?"

"Ow! Yow! No. Gerroff."

"Tread on his nose, Sawyer."

"Certainly."

"Yarooop! I—I'll do as you like!" wailed Daubeny. "Chauffeur! Where's that silly idiot? Jones, drive to Mark's Cross as quick as you can."

"Suttingly, sir!" grinned the chauffeur.

The chauffeur had watched the remarkable scene is astonishment; but he concluded that it was no business of his. He was paid to drive the car. He drove it.

The crammed car sped on its way, turning from the highroad, and following a rather bumpy road across the heath.

The car was too full to be comfortable; but the Fourth-formers did not seem to mind. All the grousing was on the part of the Bucks. They were very uncomfortably wedged and squeezed—especially Vernon Daubeny, who was still on the floor.

Never had Daub and Co. been so eager to reach their destination as they were during this remarkable drive.

The car glided on swiftly by the lonely road over the heath. It stopped at last, in the very heart of the wide expanse, where a stone cross marked the cross-roads. That was Mark's Cross, one of the most solitary spots in the county. The car drew up, and the chauffeur looked round.

"Here you are, sir!"

"Lemme gerrup, Drake, you beast!" said Daubeny sulphurously.

"Right you are! Open the door, Rodney."

Dick Rodney threw the door open.

Drake rose from his seat on Vernon Daubeny's chest, and grasped the junior captain of St. Winifred's by the collar. The next minute Vernon Daubeny found himself sitting in the grass by the roadside.

"Turn them out. Pitch out their bags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were wild yells of wrath and expostulation from the Bucks. But out they went.

In a few minutes Daubeny and Co. were in the road, and Jack Drake and his comrades in triumphant possession of the big car.

"Now, then, chauffeur!" said Drake.

"Oh, my eye!" said the chauffeur.

"We're taking over the car now. Those chaps are going to walk home."

"Oh, crikey!"

"We're not!" yelled Daubeny, beside himself with rage. "I—I—I'll go to the police—I'll—I'll——"

He made a furious rush at the car.

Drake and Rodney promptly collared him, as he mounted the step.

"Back up, you fellows!" yelled Daubeny.

But the fellows did not back up. The Bucks had had enough. Already they were in a dusty and dishevelled condition, and noses and eyes had received severe damages. They did not want any more.

"Yow-ow-ow! Rescue!"

But there was no rescue for the helpless chief of the Bucks. His red and breathless followers only rubbed their injuries and gasped.

"We're paying for the car from now on, old top," explained Jack Drake. "All you've got to do is to pass it on to us. We'll settle with you this evening on the Benbow. See?"

"I won't! I——"

"Tell the chauffeur to drive us on."

"I won't! Ow! wow!"

"Got the scissors, Sawyer?"

"Here you are."

"Cut his hair till he does as he's told."

"What-ho!"

Daubeny struggled frantically in the grasp of Drake and Rodney, as Sawyer major flourished the scissors. A beautiful lock of hair fell over his nose.

It was too much for Daubeny.

"Stop!" he howled.

"Are you handing over the car?" demanded Drake.

"Wow! Yes! Ow!"

"Tell the chauffeur, then."

"Oh, my eye!" said the chauffeur.

"I—I'm handing over the car to these chaps, Jones," gasped Daubeny. "It's all right, you idiot; they belong to my school. Drive them where they like. Leave my hair alone, Sawyer, you rotter. You're disfigurin' me! Oh, dear! Take the car, you rotters, I don't care! Leggo! Leave my hair alone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You understand, chauffeur?" asked Drake.

"Oh! Yessir!" stuttered the chauffeur.

"Drive back to the high road."

"Yessir."

Daubeny was dropped gently into the dust, and the car glided away. The Fourth-formers waved their hands in exuberant farewell to the dusty and disconsolate nuts as they were left behind. In a few minutes the car vanished in a cloud of dust.

Vernon Daubeny staggered to his feet

He wiped his dusty and perspiring brow, and gave utterance to a stream of remarks which it was fortunate for him that the Head of St. Winifred's could not hear.

"Oh, shut up, Daub," muttered Torrence.

"What's the good of swearin'? Don't be a blackguard."

Daubeny gritted his teeth.

"Look what they've done!" he hissed. "We're landed here—ten miles from anywhere! The bags to carry, too! What are we goin' to do?"

"Goodness knows!"

"I'll complain to the Head when we get back!" mumbled Egan.

"That won't help us now."

"Oh, dear, what are we goin' to do?"

"Hoof it," said Seeley. "Oh, my hat! What a rotten trick! We sha'n't be able to play St. Jim's to-day!"

Daubeny snorted.

"Play St. Jim's! We sha'n't be able to get there even, if we try, till late in the afternoon. No good goin'. Hang those cutters! I'll make Drake squirm for this somehow."

"At present we've got to do the squirming!" groaned Egan, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief.

"Does my hair look very bad, you fellows?"

"Bother your hair!"

"Look at my nose!"

"And my eye!"

"Ow! ow!"

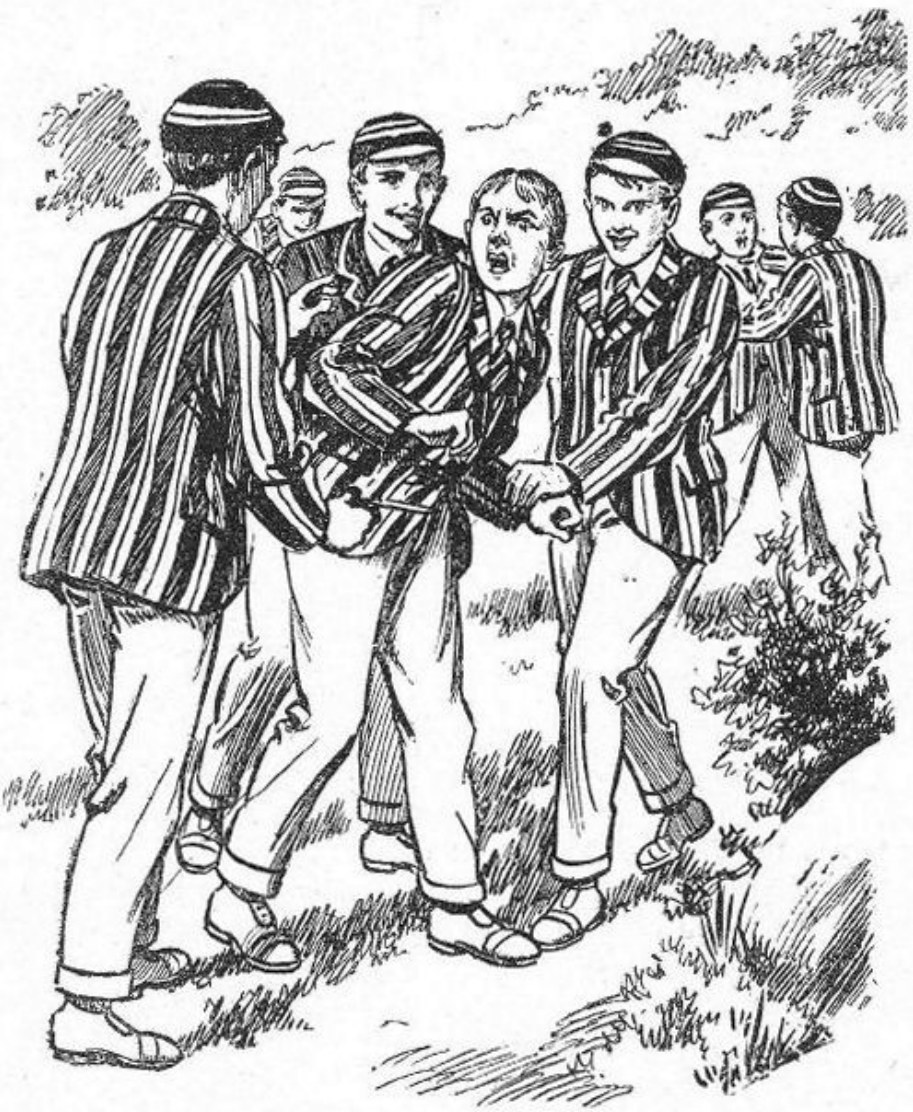
"We've got to walk ten miles," groaned Torrence. "We can get a train home to Chade from Kingsford. I suppose we'd better send a wire to St. Jim's, and let Master Tom Merry know——"

"Hang Tom Merry!" snarled Daubeny.

"Well, he'll be expectin' us——"

"I wish I'd never fixed up the match now. Drake's done this because he's wild at bein' left out of the eleven. I—I wonder how my hair will look."

"I suppose they're goin' off for a jaunt in the car," muttered Seeley. "They will pay for it, though. Oh, my hat! What a day out!"



Daubney struggled frantically in the grasp of Drake and Rodney as Sawyer major flourished the scissors. A beautiful lock of hair fell over his nose. It was too much for Daubeny. "Stop!" he howled. (See page 162)

In very disconsolate spirits the crowd of nutty youths—not looking very nutty now—started on their long tramp across the heath. After the first two or three miles they trudged and limped. It was a dusty, disconsolate, and weary crowd that limped at last into the railway station at Kingsford. Daubeny did not even trouble to ask whether there was a train in the direction of St. Jim's. It was too late now for a day's match, anyhow; and the weary Bucks were feeling inclined for anything

but a long journey and a cricket match to follow. What they wanted was to lie down and rest their weary limbs. And when a local train landed them at Chade they tramped the last mile to the Chadway, and crawled on board the Benbow—where their unexpected reappearance caused great surprise. From Kingsford Daubeny had sent a telegram to St. Jim's; a message that was short and not very sweet. That done, he dismissed the St. Jim's match from his weary mind. Tuckey Toodles was on the deck when the Bucks limped on board, and he blinked at Daubeny and Co. with wide-open eyes.

And when the story became known, instead of sympathy for the hapless Bucks, there was great merriment on the Benbow. Lovelace of the Sixth, to whom Daubeny gasped out his tale of woe, roared with laughter.

"They collared our car!" howled Daubeny indignantly.

"What did you let them for?" inquired the St. Winifred's captain.

And that was all he said. It was a question that was really rather difficult for the Bucks to answer. And even when Daubeny stretched his weary limbs on the elegant sofa in his study, he was not left at peace. The door opened, and Tuckey Toodles' grubby face grinned in.

"Sold again!" grinned Toodles.

"Get out!" moaned Daubeny.

"He, he, he! Sold again! Why did you let them bag the car? He, he, he!"

Daubeny reached feebly for a cushion.

"Yah! Funk!"

And with that Parthian shot Tuckey Toodles retired, and the cushion smote the door as it closed.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

A Startling Discovery

"RIPPIN' morning, deah boys!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, on the morning of the great day. The sun that shone on the ripples of the Chadway and the old masts of the Benbow, was shimmering down on the green quad at St. Jim's, and the wide playing-fields. Tom Merry and Co. turned out that morning in great spirits.

Whole holidays were few and far between; and the St. Jim's fellows meant to enjoy this one to the full. A good cricket match would have been welcome; but there were other resources. The St. Winny's match being left to the fags, the Terrible Three intended to have a boat out on the Ryll; and Blake and Co., of Study No. 6, were planning to have another boat. Figgins and Co., of the New House, were scheming a picnic on the island. Levison of the Fourth was going on a long cycle spin with Clive and Cardew. Baggy Trimble was thinking of joining them, and was seeking up and down St. Jim's for a bike to borrow—and seeking in vain. Every fellow had his plans for that glorious day—and Wally and Co. were probably the cheeriest of all. They were going to play, in the school colours, for the School; representing St. Jim's in the place of the junior eleven. That was more than enough to put the heroes of the Third into merry spirits.

Tom Merry and his chums had agreed that they ought to be present when Daubeny arrived. It was up to them to greet the visitors civilly, and present them to the team that was to play them. Whether Vernon Daubeny would have any fault to find with the arrangement Tom Merry did not know, and he cared little. What he knew was that he did not intend to waste a rare holiday playing a fumbling crew of slackers, in a farcical match which would probably end soon after lunch. He was quite sure about that.

If Daubeny did not like the arrangement he could lump it; that was how the junior captain of St. Jim's looked at it. Besides, as Tom had said, Vernon Daubeny was going to get a licking; and what more could he want or ask for?

"It's simply ripping on the river," Blake of the Fourth remarked. "On the whole, I'm not sorry we're giving cricket a miss for the day. If it had been a match worth while, of course——"

"Yaas, wathah! But it isn't, deah boy."

"Exactly! Adolphus has hit the nail on the head, with his usual tact and judgment!" observed Monty Lowther, solemnly.

"Weally, Lowthah, you are vewy well aware that my name is not Adolphus."

"My mistake. I mean Aubrey."

"It is not Aubwey eithah, you ass. Weally ——"

"I hear that the New House bounders are going picnicking," remarked George Herries thoughtfuliy.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Hewwies."

"Just so. My idea is, that we may as well raid the New House bounders, and make them sit up," said Herries.

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry. "We'll just hang on till the St. Winny's fellows come, and then we can clear, and leave them to the Third."

"Yaas, wathah."

"I believe they're coming in a car," said Tom. "Stumps are pitched at eleven, so they'll be here fairly early. Might take a spin along the road and meet the car; they are bound to come Abbotsford way."

"I will leave that to you, Tom Mewwy. I am goin' to give Wally some instructions weady for the game."

"When the blind lead the blind!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah."

"Go it!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "It may do Wally good. He may dot you on the nose, and that may do you good."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus marched off in search of his minor, to impart valuable instructions to that fortunate youth—instructions which were destined to be received by the fag with black ingratitude. The Terrible Three wheeled out their bicycles, to ride up the Abbotsford road, and meet the St. Winifred's car *en route*.

The three Shell fellows spun along cheerily in the bright summer morning. They were nearly at Abbotsford when a big car loomed up on the road, pretty well filled with juniors of St. Winifred's. Tom Merry recognised Jack Drake among the passengers as the car came buzzing on.

"Hallo, Drake's there!" he exclaimed. "That's the St. Winifred's car, I suppose."

"I don't see Daubeny!" remarked Manners.

"There's that chap Rodney!" said Lowther. "And some more of the fellows we saw last week at St. Winny's. This isn't Daubeny's lot."

"Followers, perhaps!"

"Then they're ahead of the leaders."

"Well, they're not Daub's lot," said Tom Merry. "May as well speak to them, and ask them whether Daubeny is on the road."

"Yes, rather!"

The Terrible Three dismounted as the car came humming up. They waved their hands to Drake, who called to the chauffeur. The car halted.

A dozen smiling faces looked down from the big car at the three cyclists standing by their machines in the road.

Even yet no suspicion of the truth dawned upon Tom Merry. This car-load was evidently not Daubeny's team; and he concluded that it was a party of St. Winifred's fellows who had come over to witness the match.

"Hallo, you chaps!" greeted Drake cheerily "Close on St. Jim's, what?"

"Only a few miles now," said Tom Merry. "Have you fellows come over to see the game?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Just a few!" grinned Sawyer major.

"All serene," said Tom, rather puzzled by the outburst of merriment among the Benbow fellows. "The more the merrier. But we came out to meet Daubeny on the road."

"Oh! Daub?"

"Yes. Is he behind you?"

"A jolly long way behind!" answered Jack Drake, with a smile.

"Well, it was arranged for stumps to be pitched at eleven," said Tom Merry. "Something happened to delay them?"

"Yes."

Drake glanced at his companions.

"The fact is, there's been a bit of a change in the programme," he explained. "You saw what Daub's cricket was like when you came over to the Benbow with Gussy——"

"Ahem! Yes."

"Not quite the kind of game to put up for St. Winifred's, you know," said Drake. "Daub didn't see it at first; but he sees it now. It's been explained to him."

"Fully!" said Rodney.

"And the long and the short of it is, that the team's been changed," said Drake. "Daub is staying out. We're the St. Winifred's eleven.

Tom Merry started.

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Little us!" smiled Drake.

"Oh, my only hat!"

"Makes no difference to you fellows, I suppose," said Drake. "We'll undertake to give you a better game than Daub's lot. You may rely on us for that."

"I—I—I didn't know——"

"We didn't know ourselves until last night. It was decided on quite suddenly; in fact, Daub didn't make up his mind to stand out until this morning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now here we are, ready for a good game," said Drake. "I say, is anything the matter?"

He stared at the St. Jim's trio.

The expressions on the faces of Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, were extremely peculiar.

Manners and Lowther exchanged a look. Tom Merry's eyes were fixed on Jack Drake. His glance roved from Drake to the other fellows in the car. What their cricket was like Tom did not know, as he had never seen them play. But a glance at them was sufficient to tell him that they were players of a kind very different from Daubeny's nutty team. Every fellow in the car was hefty enough; not one of them had the dainty and lackadaisical look of Daubeny or his followers. Tom recognised some of them as the fellows who had been gibing and hooting Daubeny's cricketers on Little Side at St. Winifred's the week before. Evidently there had been some sort of a revolution at St. Winifred's, and the cricket representation was now in the hands of the opposition.

How it had come about did not matter much; the important thing was that it had come about!

The team of fumblers, who were to be so gloriously licked by the fags of St. Jim's, were not coming!

This hefty crowd had come instead; and Wally and Co. were booked to meet them!

Tom Merry stood rooted to the ground, as the awfulness of the situation dawned upon him. He could not speak for a minute or two.

Drake looked puzzled.

"Anything the matter?" he repeated.

"Oh!" stuttered Tom. "Ah! I—I—I see! Then Daubeny isn't—isn't coming over?"

"No."

"And—and none of his men—the chaps we saw playing at your show?"

"None."

"And—and—oh, my only hat!"

"I don't quite see——" began Drake, in perplexity.

"Excuse me, I—I think I'll get off!" gasped Tom Merry. "Come on, you fellows. Put it on."

The Terrible Three jumped on their machines and pedalled off, grinding at the pedals as if they were on the racing-track. Jack Drake stared after them blankly.

"What the merry thump is the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Give it up," said Rodney.

"Well, drive on."

The car started again, and buzzed on for St. Jim's.

Meanwhile the Terrible Three were riding hard for the school, by short cuts and by-ways, heedless of mud and ruts. There was only one thought in Tom Merry's mind; to get back to St. Jim's before the St. Winifred's team arrived there, and alter the arrangements that had been made.

He could not throw away a cricket match, the first match played between the two schools. Wally must be persuaded somehow to give up his claim, and leave the match after all to the junior eleven; and the eleven must be called together before it scattered for the day by road and wood and river.

The car was rapid, but it had to follow the road, and the route by road was longer. By short cuts and bumpy bridle-paths the Terrible Three rode—and they rode as if for their lives.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Wally Declines to See Reason

"TOM MEWWY! Anythin' up?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was lounging elegantly by the old gateway of St. Jim's when three dusty and perspiring cyclists came tearing up.

"You shouldn't take chances with cricket matches," remarked the Captain of St. Jim's. (See Page 170)

The swell of St. Jim's jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye, and surveyed them in astonishment.

Three bikes went spinning unregarded against the gate, as the juniors jumped down. Tom Merry caught the swell of the Fourth by the shoulder.

"Gussy—you ass——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

Tom Merry panted for breath. He had done the miles from Abbotsford in record time.

"Gussy! Oh, you thundering chump——"

"Bai Jove!"

"You know that chap Drake at St. Winny's?" gasped Tom.

"Yaas, wathah; quite an old fwiend."

"Is he any good at cricket?"

"Wippin'."

"Up to St. Jim's form?"

"Quite."

"Suppose he captained a team from St Winny's, what would you think of Wally's chances of a win?"

"Wally wouldn't have any chances, deah boy."

"Oh!"

"You are wumplin' my jacket, Tom Mewwy!" remarked Arthur Augustus in a tone of mild reproof.

"You fearful ass!" groaned Tom Merry. "I've a jolly good mind to rumple your silly features! A pretty scrape you've landed us in, with your potty stunts!"

"Bai Jove! I fail to compwehend——"

"Ass!"

Tom Merry bumped the elegant Fourth-

Former against the gate, and ran on leaving Arthur Augustus gasping for breath in a state of complete bewilderment.

"Gweat Scott! What's the mattah? Mannahs—Lowthah—what's the mattah?" stuttered D'Arcy.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

With those emphatic but unenlightening replies, Manners and Lowthar followed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Those thwee fellows are fairly off their wockahs! I wondah if it is sunstwoke?"

Leaving Arthur Augustus to wonder, the Terrible Three ran towards the junior cricket ground. Wally and Co., of the Third, were already there, in high feather, and the stumps were pitched. Some of the fags were giving the pitch a final roll. D'Arcy minor greeted the Terrible Three with a cheery nod as they came breathlessly up.

"Hallo, old tops!" said Wally. "You seem in rather a hurry. St. Winny's in sight yet?"

"They'd better not be late," remarked Reggie Manners. "I don't fancy hanging about waiting for anybody."

"Oh, give them a chance!" said Levison minor generously.

"They're coming!" gasped Tom Merry. "They'll be here in ten minutes, I think, D'Arcy minor."

"Well, we're ready for 'em," said Wally. "Chuck that rolling, you kids; the pitch will do."

"Wally, I—I—I want——"

"You want me to give you a place in my eleven?" grinned Wally. "Can't be did! Number's full!"

"Couldn't play the Shell, anyway!" remarked Jameson.

"Not in a School match!" said Levison minor gravely.

And there was a chorus from the fags.

"I—I—I don't want you to play St. Winny's after all, Wally, old kid," gasped Tom Merry.

D'Arcy minor laughed.

"Is this your funny morning?" he inquired.

"There—there's been a change in the arrangements," explained Tom Merry, with a sinking heart, as he realised that Wally, smiling as he was, was as hard as nails under his smiles. Wally had his rights in the matter; Kildare of the Sixth was a witness to that. If Wally did not choose to yield up his rights, there was no telling what was to be done.

"A change—what?" said Wally calmly

"Yes. You see——"

"Not so far as we're concerned," said D'Arcy minor cheerfully. "We arranged to play St. Winny's, and we're going to play them. No change in that."

"I want you to give up the match, Wally."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally.

"What are you cackling at, you young ass?"

"Your little joke, old son."

"I'm not joking——"

"Yes, you are; you must be. You can't be asking me seriously to give up the match when we've been slogging for a week to get ready for it. If you were I should only tell you to go and eat coke."

"Look here, Wally——"

"The worst of you kids in the Shell," said Wally, "is that you don't know your own minds. I foresaw it—didn't I, you chaps?"

"You did!" said Manners minor.

"That's why I made you come to Kildare and make it official," said Wally. "Nothing doing now, Tom. Sorry; but there you are."

"Look here——" began Lowther hotly.

"Nothing doing!" repeated Wally obstinately.

"You young ass——" Manners began.

"You old ass!" retorted Wally independently.

"Listen to me, Wally," said Tom Merry patiently. "The thing isn't as we supposed. We thought—we were given to understand—that Daubeny of St. Winifred's was coming over, with a crew of silly fumblers that we saw playing at St. Winny's last week. You fags could have beaten the lot with an innings to spare. But it turns out that quite another team is coming—a really hefty team, up to our own weight. You see? You fags can't possibly play them."

"Oh, can't we?" exclaimed Reggie Manners warmly.

"No; it's impossible."

"We'll jolly well try, anyhow."

"You see, Wally, the case is altered," said Tom Merry almost pleadingly. "We gave you the match against Daubeny. But this is quite different. Drake and his men are a really good team. We must play them, or they will beat St. Jim's hollow."

"Oh, they won't beat us!" answered D'Arcy minor cheerily.

"You won't have the ghost of a chance against them, kid."

"Rats!"

"Now, Wally, be a sensible chap. I know we handed you the match; but it was under a misapprehension."

"Quite a mistake, you see!" said Lowther.

"I know I warned you that if I took the match on, I shouldn't allow you to change your mind," retorted Wally. "The Third are playing St. Winny's to-day. That's settled."

"I tell you——"

"So you handed us the match because you thought it wasn't any good," said Wally sarcastically. "Now you want to bag it again because you think it's going to be a good one. Do you call that cricket?"

"It—it isn't like that! You see, we can't let St. Jim's score a defeat—we can't put a licking in the school record——"

"Bow-wow! We'll beat St. Winny's all right."

"You can't!" roared Tom Merry.

"Bosh!"

"Look here, you cheeky young ass, you can get off the field!" exclaimed Monty Lowther impatiently. "Call the team together, Tom, and we'll clear these young ruffians off on their necks."

Wally's eyes sparkled.

"Will you?" he ejaculated. "Reggie, cut off and call Kildare. Head of the Games will see fair play."

Tom Merry made a hopeless gesture.

"You needn't call Kildare," he said. "A bargain's a bargain; and if you keep me to it, Wally——"

"What-ho!" said Wally emphatically.

"It means a sweeping licking for St. Jim's."

"That's only your conceit," said Wally calmly. "I've told you often enough that my team could lick yours, Tom Merry, if you'd fix up a match."

"You little ass!"

"Nuff said! Trot St. Winny's along when they arrive," said Wally. "We'll give 'em gyp. Don't you worry, old scout; we can beat any team that you could beat. Now, would you Shell fellows mind getting off our field? Only players in the field of play. Travel, will you?"

Tom Merry and Co. travelled.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

The Great Match

"WHAT a game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The junior cricket-ground was thronged.

Crowds of fellows who had intended to spend the whole holiday out of gates changed their mind, and came down to see the cricket match instead. The Third, of course, turned up as one man. But nearly everybody else was interested. The story of Gussy's great idea, and Tom Merry's disastrous adoption of it, made all St. Jim's chortle. Even fellows of the Fifth and the Sixth honoured the occasion by strolling along to look on. And they looked on with smiling faces.

All St. Jim's knew what had happened now; that Tom had expected a team of fumbling "duds," and had given the match over to the fags in consequence; and that, now that a hefty team had turned up instead of the expected fumblers, the fags held him to his bargain. There seemed to be really no sympathy at all for Tom Merry's hapless situation. The fellows only chuckled over it.

Naturally the junior eleven were all there to look on. Tom Merry nourished a faint hope that Wally's crowd might possibly beat the visitors, somehow or anyhow. It was a very faint hope, but he clung to it. It was all he had to cling to.

His handsome face was very pink as he stood by the ropes and watched the start. Every fellow who glanced at him smiled. Grundy of the Shell was there, loud and

eloquent. Grundy wanted to know if he hadn't warned Tom Merry of this very possibility; and Grundy was only silenced by being forcibly collared by the Terrible Three, and having his features severely rubbed in the grass.

"It's hard cheese, kid," said Kildare of the Sixth, as he passed Tom.

"Horrid!" said Tom dolefully. "You see, I never knew——"

"You shouldn't take chances with cricket matches," remarked the captain of St. Jim's.

"I know that—now."

"It was rather a potty idea, wasn't it?" said Darrel of the Sixth, with a smile.

"Awfully potty."

"What put it into your head, then?"

"That howling idiot Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

Kildare and Darrel walked on, laughing. Tom Merry watched the cricketers. Wally of the Third tossed with Drake for choice of innings, in an extremely dignified manner. Wally, at least, was taking the affair with portentous seriousness. So were his followers. There was nothing absurd in the situation, as far as the heroes of the Third could see. They had taken over the match; they were going to play it; and they were going to beat St. Winifred's. That was how the Third looked at it.

The Third batted first, and Drake and his merry men went into the field. Some of them were grinning.

Drake's expression was rather peculiar.

To bag this match, and keep St. Winifred's from scoring a defeat, he had taken most drastic measures with Daubeny and his men—for which there might be consequences when he returned to the Benbow. And the match he had bagged was—this! However, he was landed in it now; and certainly there was going to be a Benbow victory on the St. Jim's ground—for what that was worth under the circumstances.

It occurred to Drake that Daubeny probably would not have grudged him the match if he had known how matters stood. Certainly Daub's lofty dignity would have been greatly offended if he had found himself booked to play a gang of scrubby little fags. Daub's dignity had been saved—and Drake had saved it for him. This, undoubtedly, had not been Drake's object!

Wally and Levison minor went to the wickets, the rest of the Third Form batsmen standing in a group by the pavilion, and looking on with perfectly serious faces. To judge by their looks, and the looks of the two batsmen, they might have been playing for the county.

Drake glanced at the fag batsmen with a grin, and tossed the ball to Dick Rodney.

"Kill 'em quick, old scout!" he said.

"I'll try!" said Rodney, laughing. And he went on to bowl.

Dick Rodney was the champion junior bowler of the Benbow; though the great Daub had always firmly declined to recognise the fact. His comrades expected to see him send the fag batsmen home with a duck's egg a piece. But Wally and Co. were made of sterner material than that.

D'Arcy minor had the bowling, and he stood up to it manfully. To the surprise of St. Winifred's, and to the relief of St. Jim's, he lived through the over. There were no runs, but there was no wicket down, and that was something.

"Aftah all, Wally may pull thwough!" remarked Arthur Augustus hopefully.

The wish was father to the thought.

"Rats!" grunted Figgins.

"Bosh!" said Blake.

"Weally, deah boys, it is quite poss——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Look!" snorted Grundy of the Shell.

Drake had gone on to bowl the second over to Levison minor. Frank Levison was remarkably good for a fag bat; but he was nowhere near the form of the St. Winifred's bowler. His wicket went down at the second ball, and Levison minor tramped back to the pavilion with a rather rueful countenance.

"Call that batting?" inquired Jameson, as he came in.

"Try it yourself!" grunted Levison minor.

But it was not Jameson's turn yet. Reggie Manners was next man in. The last ball of the over proved fatal to the unfortunate Reggie; he was caught at point by Sawyer major.

Then Rodney was bowling again.

Famous Fights for the Flag

The Battle of Inkermann, on November 5th, 1854. The Coldstream Guards storming a Russian redoubt.

The Battle of Omdurman, on September 2nd, 1898. Colonel Martin, carrying only a stick, charged the 21st Lancers (320 strong) against two thousand Dervishes, who were concealed in a depression in the ground.

This time Wally's luck was out—and Wally followed it, as it were. He came back to the pavilion with a very red face.

"Man in!" he snapped.

Joe Frayne went in.

He came out after the next ball. Then came Jameson's turn. And Jameson came out blushing, and the St. Winny's fieldsmen cheered the hat trick.

Tom Merry suppressed a groan.

By that time it was easy to see that, whatever Daub and his men might have been like, Jack Drake's team were hot stuff, quite on a par with Tom Merry's own doughty eleven. Tom Merry's men, of course, could have walked all over the Third, and it was clear that that was precisely what Drake's men were going to do.

Even Wally was looking very thoughtful as he watched the batting from the pavilion.

Wally had food for thought now.

It came into his mind that he had overestimated the powers of the Third Form cricketers. But if Wally repented, repentance came too late, as it so often does.

The die was cast now; as Manners put it classically and sardonically: "*Jacta est alea!*"

The best men of the Third Form eleven were out, and not a run had been scored so far. There was general surprise when Hobbs of the Third broke his duck.

But he did it; and here and there a stray run was "sneaked" as the disastrous innings went on.

The innings ended early—remarkably early. The Third Form total was ten runs.

"A wicket a run!" said Tom Merry dispiritedly. "I suppose that was what we might have expected."

"Yaas, wathah!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

St. Winifred's decided to bat before lunch. There was plenty of time. Wally and Co. went into the field with faces that were more serious than ever—though it was now the outlook of overwhelming defeat that made them serious.

Some of the spectators strolled away, laughing; but a good many remained to watch the interesting match. Among them were Tom Merry and Co. As Figgins sarcastically remarked, he wanted to know exactly how many innings St. Jim's would be beaten by.

St. Winifred's were grinning hugely now, evidently looking upon the match as a first-class joke.

But Wally and Co. were not slain yet.

Levison minor was a wonderful bowler for his age, and it was he who took the first over, Wally imploring him, almost with tears in his eyes, to do his level best. Frank Levison went on determined to do or die. No doubt Drake, who started the batting, was careless, owing to the view he was taking of the whole affair.

He paid for his carelessness. Levison minor sent down a ball that curled round the careless bat, and there was a crash.

"How's that?" shrieked the Third Form of St. Jim's, with one view.

"Hurray!"

"Well bowled, young Levison!"

"Bravo, Franky!" roared Levison of the Fourth, brandishing his straw hat in great enthusiasm. "Well bowled! Oh, well bowled!"

Drake blushed as he walked off. He had certainly been careless, but that did not alter the fact that he had been bowled by a Third Form fag! He could have kicked himself as he walked back.

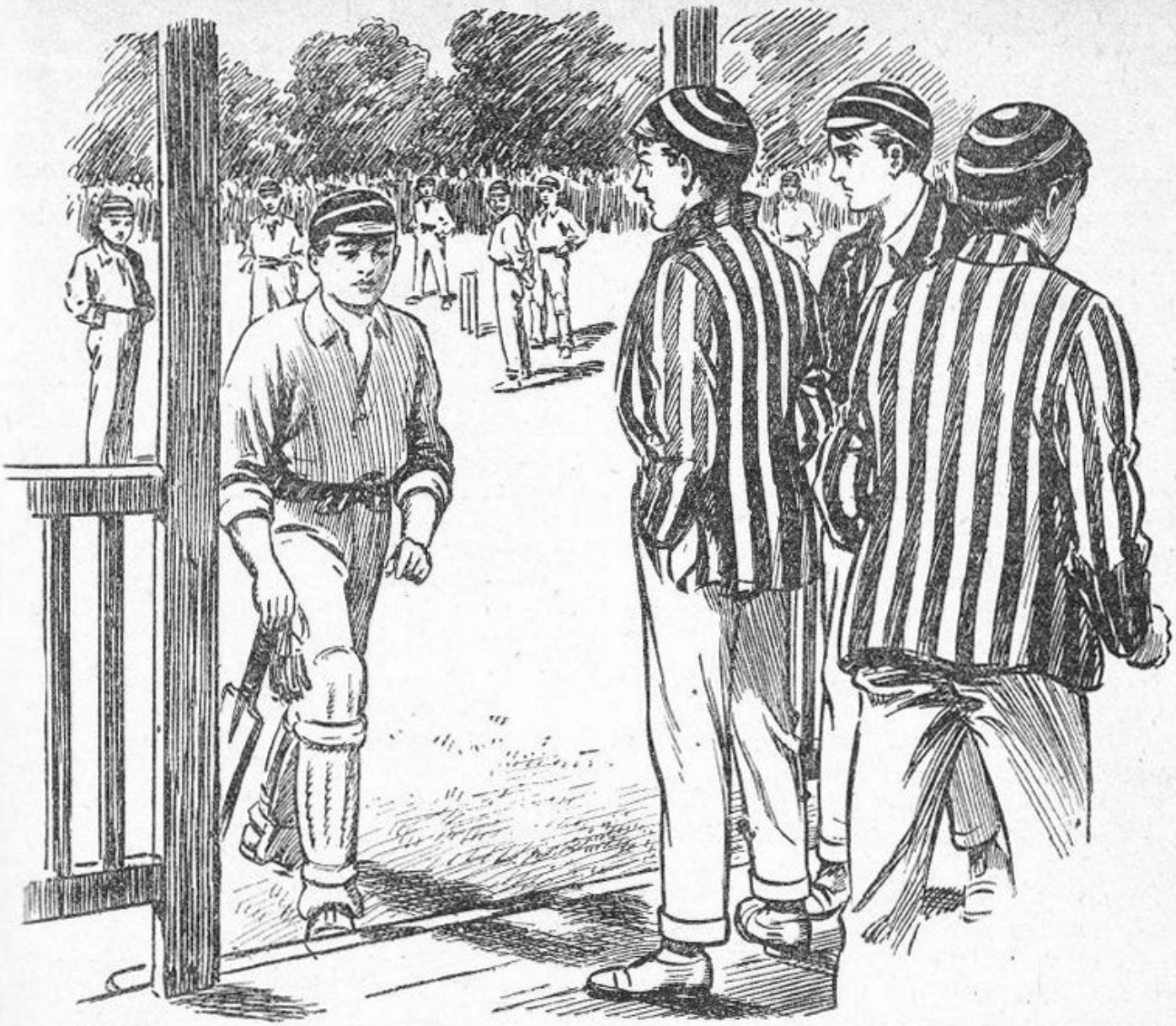
"Oh, Drake!" murmured Rodney, as he came in.

"Look out for that little blighter!" was Drake's answer; and Rodney nodded, and went out to join Sawyer major at the wickets.

The runs began now. But in bowling and fielding, the fags proved themselves more hefty than in batting against bowlers who were over their weight.

St. Winifred's did not sweep them off the face of the earth, as they had fully anticipated. Runs piled up, but wickets fell. Two good catches came to Wally in the field; another wicket fell to Frank Levison's bowling, and one to Manners minor.

Tom Merry's face brightened a little as he watched. It was not to be such a crushing defeat as had seemed probable at first. Wally



"Call that batting?" inquired Jameson, as Frank Levison came in. (See page 170)

and Co. were putting up a really good game, considering the weight against them.

It had been Jack Drake's intention to knock up a level hundred runs, and then declare, not expecting to be called upon to bat in a second innings. But the hundred, as it happened, did not materialise. St. Winifred's, to their surprise, were all down for sixty.

However, sixty to ten for the first innings was a very comfortable margin, and the St. Jim's men went smiling to lunch.

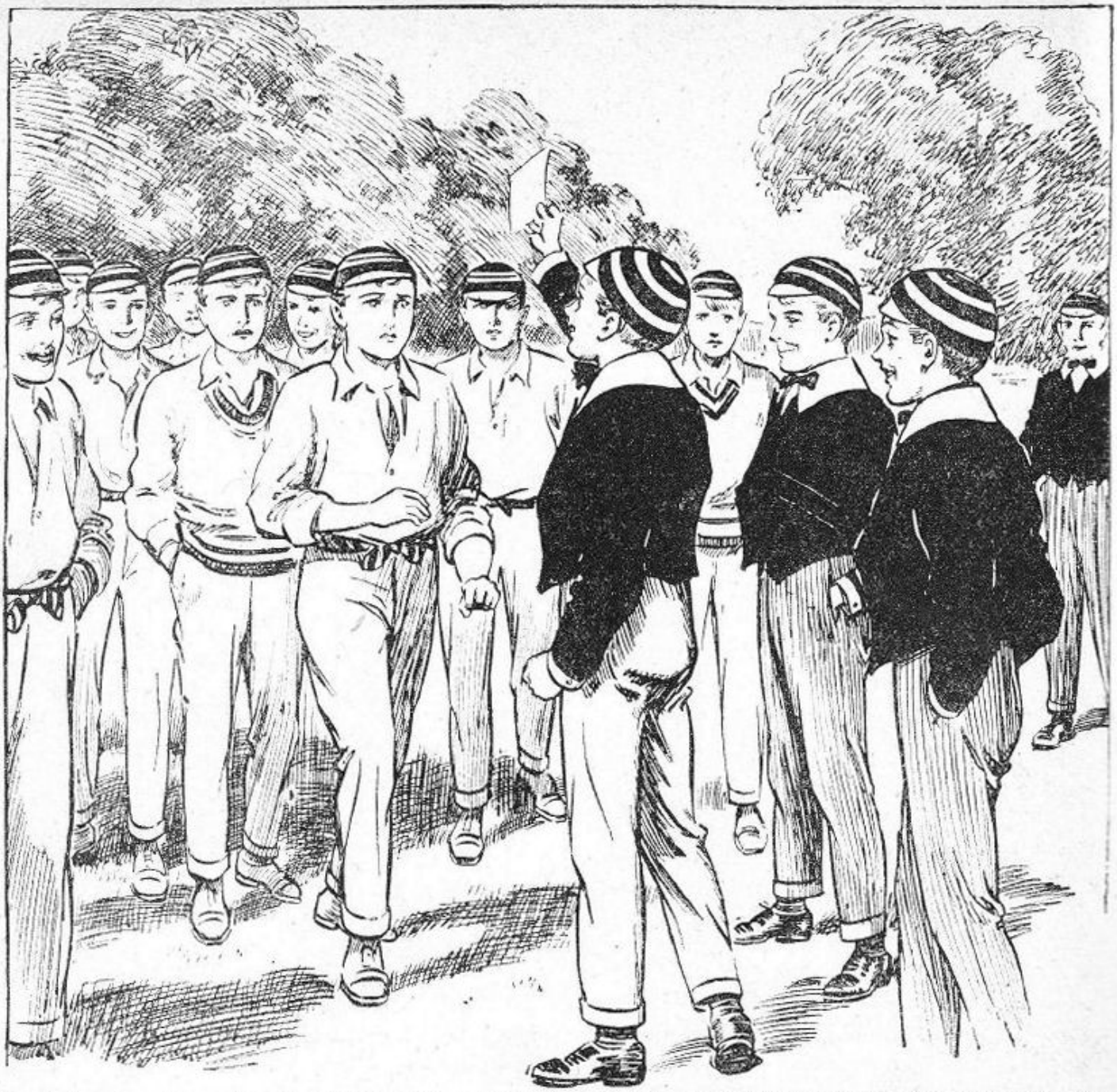
Tom Merry and Co. entertained the visitors to lunch, keeping up cheery countenances with an effort—rather a big effort.

Wally and Co. seemed fairly satisfied with themselves. They realised that they weren't going to win, but they considered that they were doing pretty well. So they were for that matter. It was quite certain that they could have walked over Daubeny's team. But a big defeat was to be scored for St. Jim's, all the same.

After lunch cricketers and spectators foregathered on the field again. Jack Drake smiled to Rodney as they went into the field.

"Anyway, we shall have a win to report at home," he remarked. "And we'll have a run round the country in Daub's car this afternoon, so the holiday won't be wasted."

And Rodney laughingly assented.



Drake's expression was extraordinary for a moment. "How did you know?" he gasped at last. Tom Merry answered with a laugh, and held up the telegram. (See page 176)

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

An Exchange of Telegrams

"WELL hit, Wally!"

"Bravo!"

There were no duck's eggs for D'Arcy minor in the St. Jim's second innings, at all events. Wally was on his mettle, and striding up to the odds in great style. He sent the ball travelling, and crossed and recrossed the pitch with Levison minor.

"They're tough little beggars, anyhow," Monty Lowther remarked. "They do St. Jim's credit—in a way."

"In a way," murmured Manners.

"What a way!" grunted Blake.

Wally was still batting when Levison minor was extinguished in the fourth over. Reggie, who took his place, played up well. Drake and Co. found that they had to exert themselves a little.

"Master Merry!"

Toby, the House page, came down with a telegram. Tom Merry glanced round.

"For me, kid?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry took the telegram and opened it. He stared as he read the message within.

"Sorry prevented coming to-day. Play you another time.—DAUBENY."

That was the message.

"Anything up?" asked Monty Lowther as Tom Merry stared at the telegram in bewilderment.

"It's from Daubeny of St. Winny's."

"Hallo! What's Daub got to say?"

"Look!"

A dozen fellows looked at the telegram and stared. Why Daubeny should telegraph that he couldn't come, and suggest a match on another date, when a St. Winifred's team had arrived, was a deep mystery.

"What the merry thump does it mean?" asked Tom Merry. "I—I suppose it's all straight, isn't it, this really is a team from St. Winny's?"

"Yaas, wathah! We know the chaps, don't we?" said Arthur Augustus. "But that telegwam is weally wathah puzzlin'."

"Any answer, sir?" inquired Toby. "Boy waiting, sir."

"Yes; wait a minute."

Tom Merry pencilled a reply on the back of the telegraph form.

"Daubeny Benbow Chade,—Drake's eleven playing here.—TOM MERRY."

And Toby trotted away with the reply.

In a perplexed mood Tom resumed watching the cricket. A suspicion was dawning in his mind now. It seemed a fantastic one, but he could not help thinking that there was something very suspicious in the circumstances. Was Drake's eleven, after all, the official junior eleven of St. Winifred's? Did Daubeny know they were there? If not——"

Daubeny's reply, at all events, would clear up the mystery, and Tom Merry waited rather anxiously for it.

Meanwhile the fag batting was going on. Wally of the Third was out at last, and, after his fall, the wickets went down faster. Thirty runs had piled up, but it was perfectly clear that the St. Winny's total would not be reached, and that St. Winny's would not have to bat again.

"All over bar groaning," was Lowther's remark.

"Yes, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dismally. "It has all turned out weally vewy unfortunately. Howevah, I twust it will be a lesson to Tom Mewwy not to wun wisks with a cwicket match again."

"The question is," said Blake ferociously, "what are we going to do to Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Boil him in oil!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"It's all Gussy's fault," said Blake. "As soon as the St. Winny's chaps are gone I suggest giving Gussy the ragging of his life."

"Bai Jove! I considah——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Look out for squalls, Gussy!" said Blake darkly.

"Wats!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I weally considah——"

"Hallo! There goes last man!"

Last man in was Hobbs. Hobbs stayed in just long enough for Dick Rodney to knock his middle stump out of the ground.

"All down for thirty!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Nice for St. Jim's! Nice for our cricket record!" groaned Blake. "Never mind, we'll take it out of Gussy."

"Weally, Blake——"

Toby came on the ground with a buff envelope in his hand.

"Master Merry——"

"Hallo! It's raining telegrams to-day!" said Manners. "What is it this time, Tommy?"

Tom Merry opened the telegram, and a crowd of fellows read it together. It was from Daubeny of St. Winifred's, and from its length it was evident that Daubeny had not counted the words, or recked in the least that there was an extra charge for every word over twelve.

"Tom Merry, St. Jim's, Rylcombe.—Drake has no right to play for St. Winifred's. He bagged our car and turned us out on the road. We didn't know he was coming to St. Jim's. The match does not count. Kick the rotters out.—DAUBENY."

"Oh, my only aunt Sempronia Ann!" yelled Blake. "They're not the St. Winny's team at all!"

"Bai Jove! What a stunt!"

"Not the St. Winny's eleven—just any old eleven!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's not a School match at all!"

"Phew!"

"Unofficial, at least!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Just a private little eleven that has come over to play our fags."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"This isn't the St. Winny's match," he said. "The St. Winny's match hasn't come off to-day—that's all! My hat! Who ever heard of such a trick? I—I can't blame Drake for being fed with Daubeny, and taking the match off his hands. But that doesn't alter the fact that he doesn't represent St. Winny's, and that this isn't the St. Winny's match at all!"

"Bagged their car, and turned them out!" chuckled Lowther. "Serve them jolly well right, if you come to that. But Drake seems to have overlooked that remarkably useful invention, the telegraph."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here they come!" grinned Blake. "We ought to congratulate them on beating our fags, and hope that they will come over to see the St. Winny's match—when it comes off."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tom Merry and Co. hurried to meet Jack Drake and his merry men as they came off the field.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

All's well that ends well

"CONGRATULATIONS, Drake!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake looked at Tom Merry and Co. with a rather perplexed smile.

"You're awfully good," he said. "We expected to win, of course, but I'm blessed if I expected you fellows to be so pleased about it."

"My dear chap, it was kind of you to spend a whole holiday coming over here to play our Third Form," answered Tom Merry genially. "Our Third is good stuff, for fags, you know; but they don't often get a chance of playing a visiting team on their own. I don't think we should have been good-natured enough to come over to your show and play your Third. This was really kind of you."

"Awf'ly kind, Dwake!"

"And I hope you'll come over when the St. Winifred's match comes off, Drake——"

"Eh?"

"It's postponed, you know——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"But it's coming off later," said Tom Merry calmly. "I should recommend Daubeny to put you in his team, Drake. Some of your men are pretty good, too, though of course you haven't had a fair chance of showing what you can do in a fag match like this. Still, I must say again that it was kind of you to give our Third a match."

"Yes, rather," chuckled Lowther.

"Vewy kind indeed," grinned Arthur Augustus. "Awf'ly, in fact!"

The St. Winifred's cricketers looked at them, and looked at one another.

"I—I don't quite understand," said Jack Drake slowly. "This is the St. Winifred's match."

"Not at all."

"What?"

"You see, the St. Winifred's match was booked with the St. Winny's juniors eleven," explained Tom Merry genially.

"But——"

"And the St. Winny's eleven, having been pitched out of their car and left on the road, the match is naturally postponed——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake's expression was extraordinary for a moment.

"How did you know?" he gasped at last.

Tom Merry held up the telegram, laughing.

"Oh!" gasped Drake.

"Sold again!" murmured Sawyer major. "Blessed if I thought of that!"

"But—but we're from St. Winifred's, you know," murmured Rodney.

"Are you the St. Winny's junior eleven?" grinned Lowther.

"No-o-no!"

"Then the official match is postponed, old top! You're some sort of a scratch eleven that's come over to play our Third, what?"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Drake.

"And it was awf'ly kind of you!" chortled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in great glee. "I am suah that my young bwothah feels highly honahed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tom Merry and Co. generously and pressingly repeated their invitation to Jack Drake to come over and see the St. Winifred's match—when it came off.

. . . . . .

Jack Drake and Co. departed, after an early tea, in Daubeny's big car, hardly knowing whether to feel satisfied or not with the way things had turned out on that eventful day. Certainly they had a sweeping victory to report on board the Benbow; but equally certainly that victory was only over the Third Form of St. Jim's, in a quite unofficial match. The official match was yet to come.

But whatever Drake and Co. thought, the St. Jim's fellows were feeling quite satisfied, especially Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The terrific ragging that had loomed over noble Gussy's head did not happen. Indeed, as the matter had turned out, Arthur Augustus claimed the credit for having propounded, after all, a really ripping wheeze; and he repeated his assurance to his chums that, in a case of doubt, they could always rely upon him to point out the "wight and pwopah" thing to do.

A couple of weeks later Daubeny and Co. came over to play the official match, and this time they came by train. And this time, also, Tom Merry did not call upon the services of the Third Form of St. Jim's.

Daubeny and Co. were comfortably beaten by an innings and fifty runs, but they seemed quite satisfied with themselves when they departed. Tom Merry and Co. were also satisfied, so, as rarely happens, everybody was satisfied. Which was quite a happy state of affairs.

THE END

"IT'S A LONG, LONG WAY TO——"

"How far does it say, Pat?"

"Ten miles."

"Arrah, then! Doing ut togither, it'll be foive moiles each between us."

FAMOUS FOOTBALLERS AND THEIR AUTOGRAPHS

Bob Whittingham

Horace Barnes.

Fanny Walden

Sydney C. Puddefoot

David McLean

E. Longworth

H. Halse

Danny Shea

Joe Mc Call

PLATE-SPINNING AND WALTZING

An Exciting Entertainment which any Boy or Girl can Perform

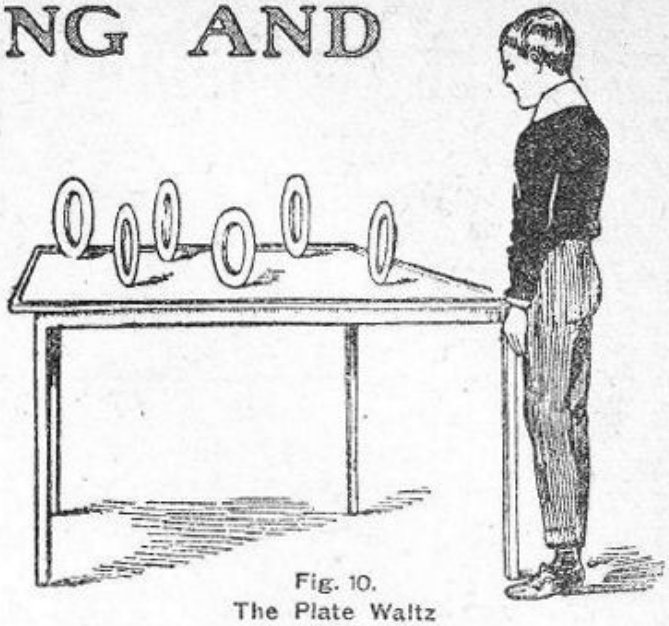


Fig. 10.
The Plate Waltz

FEW things are productive of such literally breathless interest as plate-spinning. In what a state of agonised anxiety your audience will be as they watch you imperturbably spinning a soup-plate on the end of a rod! How they will catch their breaths as they expect it to fall, and how surprised they will be when it keeps its position! Yet if you inform them that it is not so difficult as it looks, you will be stating

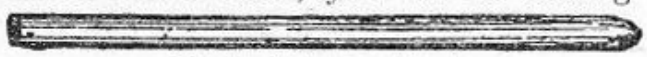


Fig. 1.—Spinning Wand

a fact, although the art is acquired only after considerable practice, and at the cost of several plates.

To minimise the breakage of crockery it will be as well to begin your experiments with a mattress laid upon the floor, or, failing this, with a good substantial eider-down. The first attempts will not then be accompanied by such mortality amongst the plates.

Procure a rod or wand upon which the plates are to be spun. A round stick, such as is used for short blinds in the bedrooms, about two feet long, is the most suitable for the purpose. Care should be taken to see that it is straight, and it must be well sand-papered in order to remove any roughness. (Fig. 1.)

Now reduce one end of the stick to a dull point, which must further be prepared by a rather strange process. Place this pointed end in your mouth, and moisten it until it is quite soft, and all the hardness of the wood has been removed. When properly softened the fibre of the wood will remain, whilst all the "starch"—if one may so call it—has disappeared. This preparation gives the stick a certain grip on the plate, which is indispensable for successful spinning.

Next take a soup-plate, as in Fig. 2, and make it revolve rapidly upon the dull end of the rod. To do this the following instructions and hints should be noted.

The rod should have a rapid and circular motion imparted to it by the wrist, so that it cuts the circle of about the same circumference as the soup-plate. The arm should be motionless, the whole movement being confined to the wrist. The beginner must not expect immediate success, but after considerable practice the knack of describing the circle with the end of the rod will be acquired.

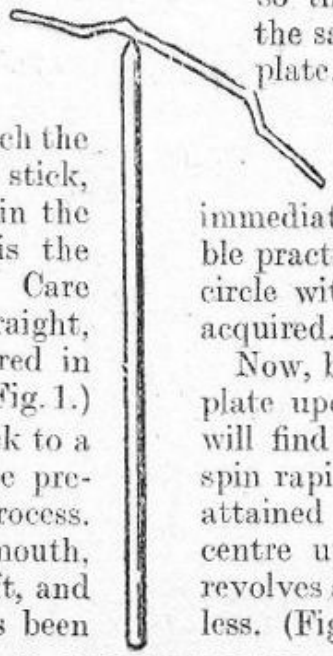


Fig. 2.—THE FIRST STAGE

Now, by making these circles with the plate upon the end of the wand you will find that the plate itself begins to spin rapidly, and at length, when it has attained a certain velocity, it finds its centre upon the point of the rod, and revolves so steadily as to appear motionless. (Fig. 3.) Practise spinning with the left hand as well as

with the right, for in many cases it is necessary to transfer the wand from one hand to the other. Probably you will find greater difficulty with the left hand, but perseverance is all that is required—perseverance and the mattress!

It is a great mistake to choose a light plate for spinning. The heavier it is the easier it will be to spin, and you will find that dishes (not necessarily round) will be the best spinners of all. Do not forget that very heavy dishes soon tire the wrist and make it too unsteady for successfully exhibiting other tricks.

So far the *modus operandi* with unprepared and ordinary plates has been described. It is quite as well that the learner should begin with these, as the greater difficulty in balancing and spinning will have taught

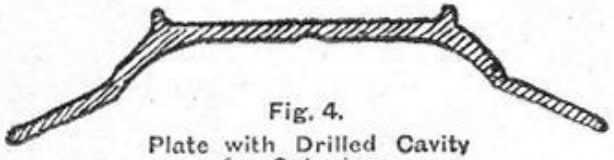


Fig. 4.
Plate with Drilled Cavity for Spinning

a lesson that will render him more at ease with the prepared plates.

Procure another wand, which need not be "softened." Sharpen one end into a point, not so dull as in the former case, but with a clearly defined apex.

PREPARED PLATES

As to the prepared plates. Take, for example, a thick soup-plate. From the centre of the bottom of this plate a small, shallow piece must be drilled away, as in Fig. 4, which represents a section of the article. Any china riveter will do this for you, and will, at your request, polish the cavity after it has been drilled. Explain the purpose for which you want it done, as that will ensure his making the hole in the dead centre.

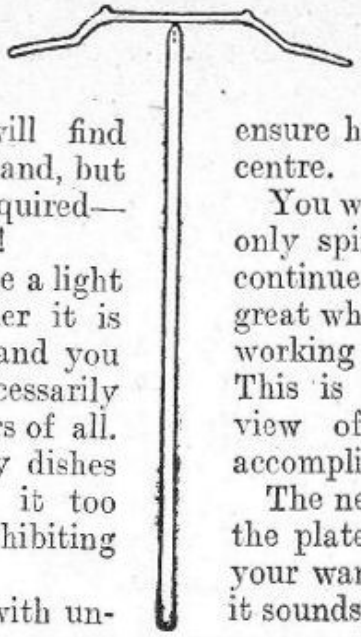


Fig. 3.—The Plate finding it's centre—second stage

You will now find that this plate not only spins much more easily, but will continue revolving upon the rod for a great while, even after you have ceased working the latter with your wrist. This is an important consideration in view of the balancing feats to be accomplished.

The next thing to practise is catchng the plates in mid-air upon the tip of your wand. This is not so difficult as it sounds, and should be easily learned. Toss the plate upwards, as you do so giving it a smart

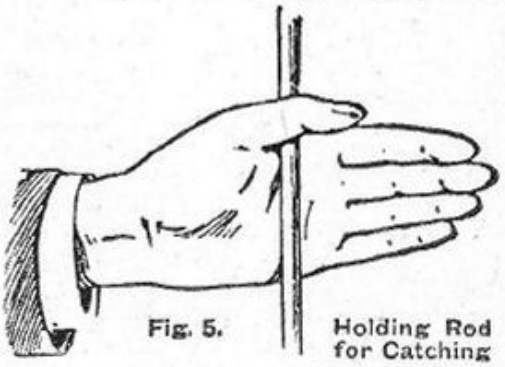


Fig. 5. Holding Rod for Catching

turn or twist to the right, so that it revolves rapidly upon its own centre while ascending.

Now bring the point of the rod under it, and as the plate reaches its highest point in the air it will turn over, and you have an opportunity to get the stick into the hole in the centre. The plate will then spin upon the point of the rod, and a few turns with the wrist will increase its speed, and keep it going steadily for a time.

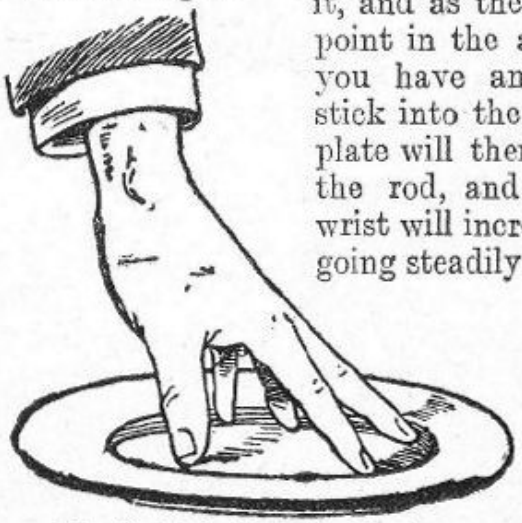


Fig. 6.—Plate Ready for Tossing

Having mastered the principle of catching the plates in the manner described, practise holding the rod and tossing the plate with the same hand.

Hold the stick near to the point and between the fingers and the thumb (Fig. 5), whilst the outspread fingers are in the bowl of the plate, as in Fig. 6. These are shown separately to give a clearer idea of the meaning. Toss the plate into the air, giving the wrist a smart turn to the right. Bring the rod into position, and catch the plate in the usual fashion.

FURTHER FEATS

Take a couple of rods, one in each hand, and send a plate spinning on the point of the right-hand rod. By giving a sharp upward jerk you will send the plate high into the air, and upon its descent you can catch it upon the end of the other rod. If the plate has been tossed very high, and is therefore likely to descend with some force, care must be taken when catching it not to shatter it into pieces. As soon as the plate touches the point of the wand, lower the latter some distance with the plate, and thus break the force with the impact—instead of breaking the plate.

This performance will prepare you for successfully achieving the following very effective show. Two persons are required for it, however, and must both be good spinners.

Let each performer take a plate and a rod. Then both should spin their plates, and throw them to each other, catching the plates upon their respective wands. The volley may then be returned in the same manner, increasing the speed each time until the plates fly from one to the other like tennis balls. The first attempts will probably result in a shower of broken crockery, but practice will obviate such palpable disadvantage, and after a time you will be able to complicate the exhibition by taking a rod and plate in each hand, thus having four plates flashing to and fro at the same time.

Fig. 7.—Plate-Spinning and Balancing

BALANCING

Having graduated as a master of spinning and catching the plates, the opportunity has arrived for attempting to balance the spinning dishes. This is largely a matter of knack, although a sure eye and a steady hand are indispensable.

Start a plate spinning on a rod, and pass it to the left hand. Do the same with the second plate, holding the rod likewise in the left hand, taking great care, of course, that the plates do not collide.

Now, with the right hand start off a third plate, and balance the rod upon your forehead or chin, having done which pass one of the rods back from the left to the right hand. This makes quite a pleasing exhibition, as can be seen by Fig. 7, and is well worth learning.

Presuming you are now facing the spectators, with the three plates spinning as in Fig. 7, the question naturally arises how to stop the plates in a graceful manner? There are several ways of doing this, but the following will be found the simplest.

Lower the rods in the two hands simultaneously until the plates can be grasped in the fingers. Then, with the plate and the rod still balanced upon your face, lay the two plates upon a convenient table, and, taking one of the rods, transfer the rod upon your chin to its point, and, thus balancing one upon the other, bring the plate to rest.

Suppose you have a plate spinning

upon a wand, balanced upon another, as in Fig. 8, practise the following method of dispensing with one of these rods.

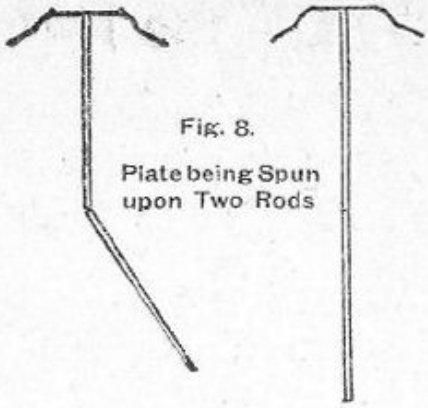


Fig. 8.
Plate being Spun upon Two Rods

By a sharp upward movement jerk the plate into the air from the point of rod No. 1. This will, of course, by relieving the stick of its burden, make it fall. You then catch the falling rod smartly with the other hand. But you must not forget during this time the plate which you have sent, still spinning, towards the ceiling. Upon its descent, catch it neatly upon the tip of wand No. 2, and the trick is completed.

Fig. 9.—Showing section of Table prepared for Plate-Waltzing

Such are the rudiments of the arts of spinning and balancing. Having acquired a thorough knowledge of the various exercises and feats described, the amateur spinner will have no difficulty in inventing new things for himself, and will be able to emulate the feats of professional jugglers. Much patience and long-suffering are necessary, but with a quick eye and a sure hand there is no reason why any person should not be able to provide a good plate-spinning entertainment.

PLATE-WALTZING

There is a kindred branch of the art which may be described here, and that is plate-waltzing. It is really nothing but an extension of the trick of spinning a coin upon the table, which everyone has done at some time or the other.

A perfectly level table is essential. To ensure this it is a good plan to have a smooth, unpolished board that can be laid upon a table and made perfectly level by adjusting small pieces of cardboard at the corners. Around the edge a slight border should be made, rounded to the surface of the board, as shown in Fig. 9. This will prevent the plates from dancing off the table and on to the floor.

Plates of any description and size, from the delicate tea-plate. Take a dinner-plate and stand it upon its edge on the table, with the bottom of its upper edge rested against the extended forefinger, as in Fig. 11. Describe a small circle with this finger rather quickly, and the plate will follow its motion. Continue passing the finger round and round, accelerating the motion with each revolution. The plate will then begin to revolve very quickly.

Fig. 11.—How to Set the Plate in Motion

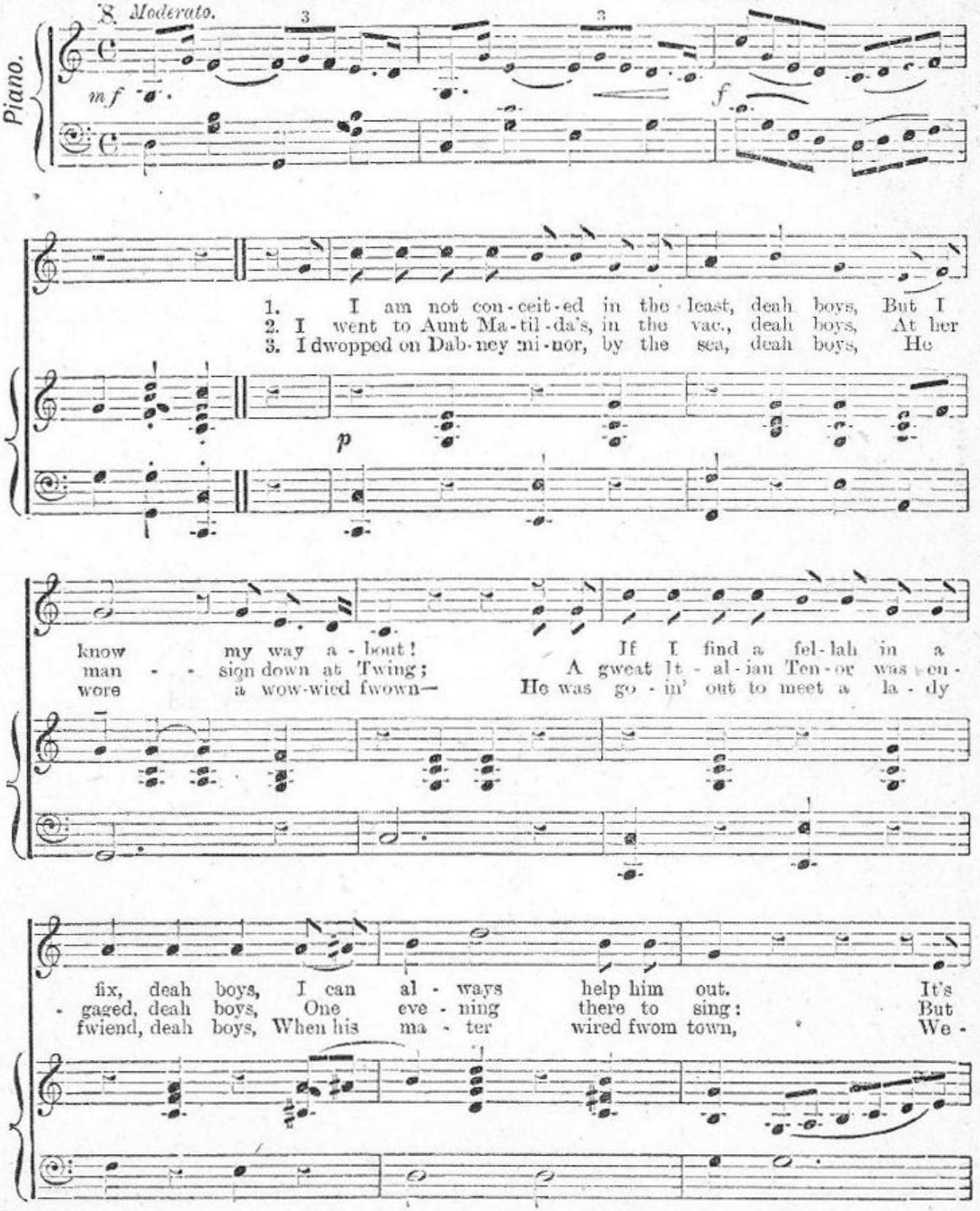
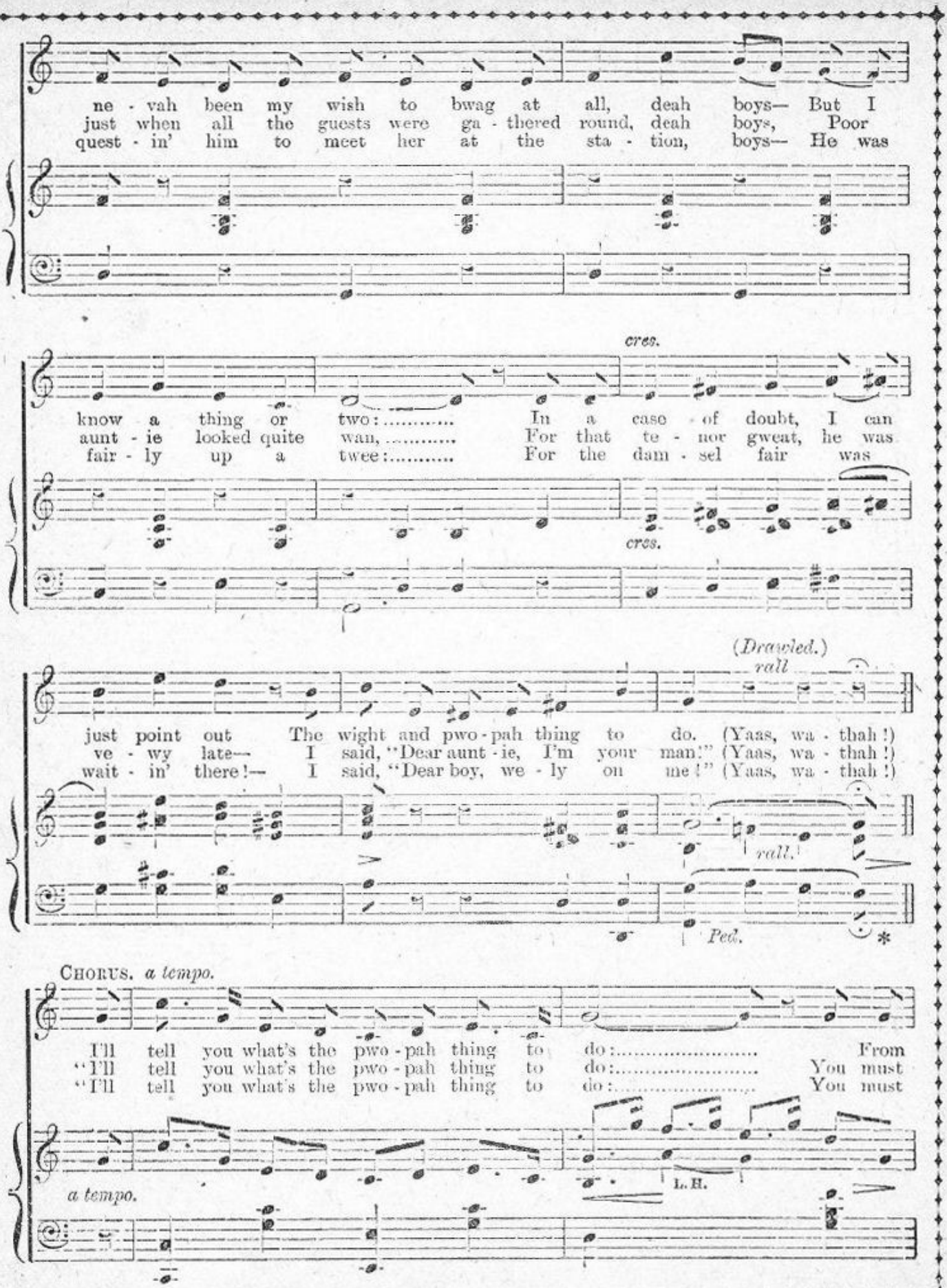
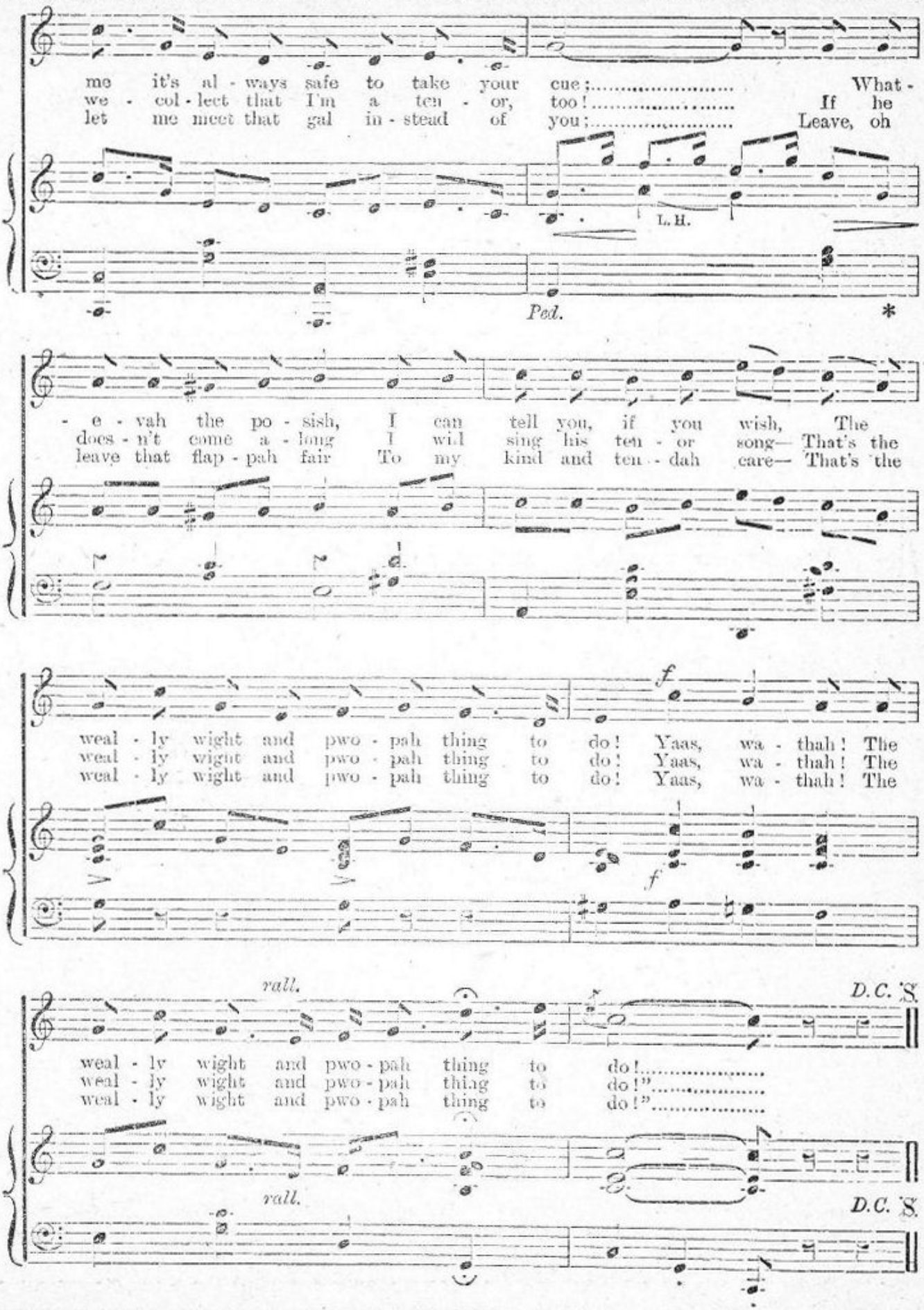
Whilst the plate is revolving and before the first signs of falling are apparent, touch the bottom of the plate fairly near the centre with the tip of your finger, moving this latter round in the direction followed by the plate.

This will have the effect of preventing the fall, and will send the plate dancing on with renewed vigour.

Large and heavy plates make the best dancers, and it will be necessary sometimes to use two fingers when preventing the fall, for the pressure must in all cases be firm and steady. An ordinary plate is better than a soup-plate, for not only is it more elegant, but its even poise renders the revolutions steadier.

The plates will keep admirable time to regular waltz music, and produce a pleasing effect.

I'll Tell you What's the Pwopah Thing to Do!

Words by MARTIN CLIFFORD. Music by OWEN DELL.

ne - vah been my wish to bwag at all, deah boys— But I
just when all the guests were ga - thered round, deah boys, Poor
quest - in' him to meet her at the sta - tion, boys— He was
cres.
know a thing or two:..... In a case - of doubt, I can
aunt - ie looked quite wan,..... For that te - nor gweat, he was
fair - ly up a twee:..... For the dam - sel fair was
cres.
(Drawled.)
rall
just point out The wight and pwo - pah thing to do. (Yaas, wa - thah!)
ve - wy late— I said, "Dear aunt - ie, I'm your man." (Yaas, wa - thah!)
wait - in' there!— I said, "Dear boy, we - ly on me!" (Yaas, wa - thah!)
rall.
Ped.
*
CHORUS. a tempo.
I'll tell you what's the pwo - pah thing to do:..... From
"I'll tell you what's the pwo - pah thing to do:..... You must
"I'll tell you what's the pwo - pah thing to do:..... You must
L.H.
a tempo.

me it's al - ways safe to take your cue;..... What -
we - col - lect that I'm a ten - or, too!..... If he
let me meet that gal in - stead of you;..... Leave, oh
L. H.
Ped.
*
- e - vah the po - sish, I can tell you, if you wish, The
does - n't come a - long I will sing his ten - or song— That's the
leave that flap - pah fair To my kind and ten - dah care— That's the
f
weal - ly wight and pwo - pah thing to do! Yaas, wa - thah! The
weal - ly wight and pwo - pah thing to do! Yaas, wa - thah! The
weal - ly wight and pwo - pah thing to do! Yaas, wa - thah! The
f
rall.
D.C. S.
weal - ly wight and pwo - pah thing to do!.....
weal - ly wight and pwo - pah thing to do!".....
weal - ly wight and pwo - pah thing to do!".....
rall.
D.C. S.

EVERY BRITISH BOY AND GIRL SHOULD ENDEAVOUR TO PERFORM ONE GOOD ACTION EACH DAY!

Winning His Name

A Thrilling Complete Story of 'Prentice Life in Old London

By MORTON PIKE

THE FIRST CHAPTER

What Simon Barbican Saw Through the Snowflakes

IT had been snowing all day. None of your feeble showers, with lulls and intervals between, but a good, old-fashioned, whirling, twisting, steady fall, the whole air full of it, and mighty dazzling to look upon.

As it went on hour after hour, folk out of doors became fewer, and at last disappeared altogether, as though the snow had buried them.

One waggon, two men on horseback, a homeless dog, and a woman with a basket, were the only signs of life that had crossed London Bridge from twelve o'clock at noon until ten minutes short of four, when the fall ceased as suddenly as it began.

Simon Barbican knew all about it, because he had scarcely moved his eyes from the window for five consecutive moments, to the detriment of work and the hindering of Master John Jewell's affairs.

Fortunately, the worthy goldsmith was occupied with weighty matters at the farthest end of the long, low room, and the weather keeping all customers indoors, his apprentice was free to thaw a peephole by the simple process of laying a hot penny on the bull's-eye pane, and gaze his fill at the wonderful world of white without.

Oh, great dreams had Simon Barbican that short winter day—delightful prospects of battles royal when the apprentices of the Bridge should meet the lads of St. Paul's and Dowgate Hill and the Flatcaps of Chepe!

The solemn clock on the wall opposite seemed to tick with provoking slowness, and Simon Barbican could hardly contain himself.

There was another cause for the suppressed excitement that filled him, and this came about shortly after half-past three, when the storm had suddenly increased in fury, as if it had made up its mind to obliterate London town altogether.

Three men had struggled out of the blinding whirl—three cloaked figures, with hats pulled down over their faces, and each showing a bulging mantle that told of swords beneath.

Ordinarily, Simon would have taken little note of them. All wayfarers would be cloaked on such a day, and most men carried weapons in these good old times. But instead of blundering past and disappearing on their way, all three set their backs against the opposite wall and stood like statues in the gathering dusk.

"Ho!" said Simon Barbican to himself. "What have we here? Are yonder rogues watching our house?"

He breathed on this peephole, rubbed the already congealing moisture from the glass with his broad thumb, and set an eye to it.

It was a very open, honest, shrewd grey eye, somewhat prominent, as denoting courage, and planted beneath a strong brow on which the brown curls clustered thickly.

The three men stood close together, and in a few minutes the snow had piled so thickly upon them that they were merged into the grey wall behind them, and might have passed for a buttress of sorts, so motionless were they.

Simon Barbican was about to speak to his master, being convinced that the newcomers had some evil designs upon the goldsmith's premises, when one of the men detached himself from the others, took two strides to the corner, gazed along the narrow street that traversed the bridge, and after a pause stepped back and resumed his position of silent sentinel.

"They expect somebody," muttered the apprentice. "We shall see what we shall see."

Twice, after a short interval of time, the manœuvre was repeated, and Simon was now of opinion that they waited to waylay some traveller, for they crowded nearer to the angle of the wall, and seemed to be listening.

The apprentice threw a glance at the stout oak cudgel that stood behind the little charcoal brazier, and his grey eyes twinkled.

Then the snow ceased to fall, and he could see more clearly.

"There's going to be rough work—perhaps murder!" thought Simon Barbican.

"Simon!"

"Yes, master."

"It grows dark apace," said the goldsmith. "You may light your lamp and cast another billet upon the fire. I shall descend again shortly. You are diligent, I trust, Simon?"

"Yes, master."

Master John Jewell closed an ebony casket, over whose contents he had pored for the last hour, and, jangling a huge bunch of keys, opened the door to the staircase and mounted to the upper rooms.

Simon made a wry face.

"If I light the lamps the rogues will see that they are observed," said he. "I wish that whoever comes would come quickly. My fingers are itching to crack a pate!"

He stole on tiptoe to the fire, flung a log into it, and was back again in an instant, inwardly praying that his master would be detained above.

You must remember that at that period London Bridge was practically a street of shops and houses, built on nineteen arches. It had a gateway at each end. There was a chapel upon it, a drawbridge in the centre, and some of the houses were several storeys in height.

Had you walked over the bridge you would not have known but that you were in an ordinary narrow thoroughfare, save that every now and then there occurred an open space, over whose parapets you could see the river. And the house of Master John Jewell, being at a corner, fronted partly to the roadway and partly to the first space as you crossed from the City end of the bridge.

Simon's window looked out upon the open, and he could see the dark cleft between the opposite houses where the roadway continued towards the village of Southwark.

The ancient gables might have been covered with swansdown a good six inches in depth, and every sill and every projecting beam, each crevice and hanging sign and slant of red-tiled roof—in short, every resting-place that a right-minded snowflake might be expected to take advantage of was powdered and stuffed, and generally muffed with the feathery mantle of white.

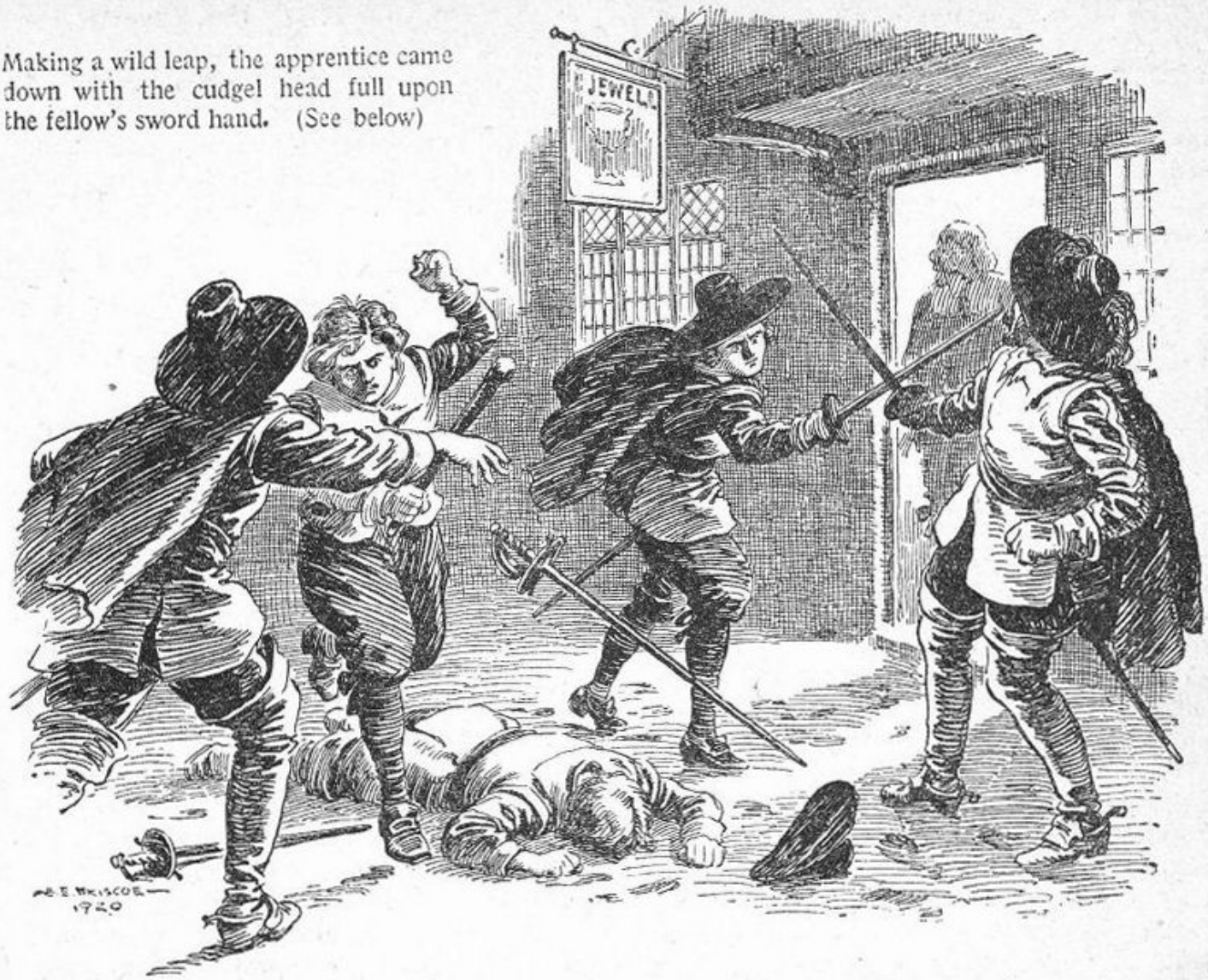
As the apprentice came back to his peephole, his hand went out to the cudgel in the corner, and his breathing quickened.

The three men had drawn their swords, and were crouching low.

Simon slid the chain from the massive door and set it noiselessly ajar.

"If this is fair play, three against three?" he said to himself, "'tis none of my business; if 'tis a robbery, I shall ring Bow Bells on their crowns to some purpose!"

He resumed his position at the window, having no mind to shiver in the icy blast that blew from the Thames, and he was watch-



Making a wild leap, the apprentice came down with the cudgel head full upon the fellow's sword hand. (See below)

ing like a terrier at a rat-hole, when a sound buffet fell upon his ruddy cheek, and Master John Jewell stood behind him.

"So this is what you call diligence, Simon Barbican!" said the goldsmith, with a short chuckle at the success of his stratagem.

"Yonder is what I call murder, master!" cried Simon, pointing through the window; and without another word he dodged beneath the still uplifted hand, flung the door wide open and darted into the snow.

"Good lack! Is the lad demented on a sudden?" ejaculated the worthy merchant; but a loud cry made him lift a blunderbuss from its pegs on the wall and hasten to the door.

A strange sight met his eyes. A slim lad, dressed all in black, was parrying the vicious thrusts of a burly ruffian, and using his sword in a mighty cunning fashion.

Two other scoundrels, turning at the sound of Simon Barbican's shout, were rushing upon the valiant apprentice, and Master John Jewell fell a-trembling at the spectacle of the unequal contest. So that it is a mercy the blunderbuss went not off and slew them all, else we had had no story to tell you.

"Help, help, neighbours all!" cried the goldsmith. "There is foul murder a-doing! The watch—the watch!"

"Never fear, master!" called out Simon cheerily. "I doubt not I can match the pair of them. Alsatian bullies, I warrant, and cowards, too. Ah, there's for thy nob, rogue!"

The other man, who had been a step behind his companion, made an involuntary grasp at his cloak to save him; but he reckoned without Simon Barbican's agility, and, with a leap like a wild-cat's, the apprentice came

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL IN PREHISTORIC TIMES

A WRESTLING MATCH IN THE SCHOOL GYM

down with the cudgel-head full upon the fellow's sword hand.

Doors began to open, and red lights poured on to the snow. Many voices clamoured for the watch with all the vehemence of indignant citizens, and the third ruffian gathered up his cloak.

"Beware, Silas!" cried he hoarsely. And suddenly abandoning his attack upon the young stranger, he bent his head and ran with all his might in the direction of the City.

Silas followed at top speed before the apprentice could prevent him, and there remained nothing of the fray but the trampled snow, the panting lad in black, and the prostrate figure of the third man Simon Barbican had stunned.

"Upon my life, we live in strange times!" said Master John Jewell, advancing into the open. "Hast killed the rogue, Simon?"

"'Twas no fault of mine if I have not, master. I hit him hard enough!" laughed the apprentice, stroking the head of his club tenderly, as one caresses a dog that has done well. "But who are you, young sir? You use your rapier very skilfully."

"Yet but for you they would have slain me," said the boy in black, holding forth his hand. "Thanks are poor things after so great a service, but they are all I can give you. Will you do me yet another kindness, and tell me where lives one Master John Jewell a goldsmith, upon the bridge, since 'tis him I seek?"

"Your business is with me, young sir?" said Master Jewell.

"It is," replied the boy; "and 'twere better transacted in any other spot but the street."

"Forgive me," said the goldsmith, putting his hand to his head. "I am a man of peace, and a brawl sends my wits all abroad. Let us within, young gentleman."

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Sealed Packet and its Bearer

MASTER JOHN JEWELL replaced his blunderbuss on its pegs, and led the way to the farther end of the long room, while Simon Barbican fastened the door with many locks and chains, as befitted a portal that led to such fabulous wealth as the goldsmith was reputed to conceal in his dwelling.

Master Jewell was a kindly-visaged man of well-nigh sixty years—white as to his hair, which he wore in the old Cavalier manner; white as to his pointed beard and moustache, which were also fashioned after the style with which Vandyke's portraits of King Charles have made us so familiar.

His cheeks were red, his dress of russet velvet, for he was a prominent member of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, and had dealings with some of the very highest in the land—nay, even with the very Monarch himself, unless rumour lied. So it was incumbent upon him that his ruffles should be of fine lace, his linen of the best, and his whole person proclaim to the world that Master John Jewell of London Bridge was one worthy to be entrusted with plate, and money, and gems, and confidences too.

In those days the goldsmiths were the bankers, and, consequently, very important folk.

"Come in—come in, young gentleman!" said Master Jewell. "I am at a loss to know what you can want of me, or who has sent me a message, since I am expecting none."

And he adjusted a pair of horn spectacles on his nose.

"Nevertheless, 'tis for you, sir," said the boy, throwing back his cloak, and fumbling in the breast of his doublet, which was of new black cloth.

He drew forth a square parcel in a wrapping of vellum, sealed in half a dozen places with great red patches of wax, and holding it under a copper lamp, which the apprentice had lit in the meantime, he read the superscription, in a cramped hand, of the kind known as "Gothic."

"To Master John Jewell, Goldsmith, Upon London Bridge."

The goldsmith took it, and looked over the top of his spectacles curiously.

"And who may you be?" he said.

"My name is Gilbert, sir."

"Gilbert what?"

"Nothing but Gilbert," replied the boy, colouring. "My life has been a mystery. I remember no father or mother; and now my

guardian is dead, but bidding me with his last words to seek you out and give this into your hands."

At this the goldsmith and his apprentice stared at the boy with undisguised astonishment, and the boy looked from one to the other, half shyly, yet without timidity, and his underlip quivered.

"Perhaps the packet will tell you more," he said.

"Ah, yes, the packet," exclaimed worthy Master Jewell, breaking the seals. "Do you draw nigh to the fire, and dry your shoes, young sir, the while I peruse. Simon, tell Mistress Jewell that a guest will share our evening meal."

And the good man seated himself at his table.

Simon Barbican, his face aglow with his recent exertion, and vastly interested in the whole affair, went up the steep, cupboard-like stair to the upper floor, where he delivered his message gleefully, for Simon liked company, and then returned, to find the young stranger kneeling before the merry blaze of the logs, and his master looking at him with a strange expression on his face, half-troubled, half-pityingly.

The boy turned his head at the apprentice's coming, and Simon thought he saw the glisten of a tear.

Gilbert rose to his feet, his eyes bent on the goldsmith.

"Why do you look at me so?" he said quickly. "Is there aught amiss, sir?"

"Everything is amiss, poor Gilbert," said John Jewell sadly. "You have been in great danger, and it is not yet past."

"Danger?" echoed the boy in surprise. "Anyone may be set upon by cutpurses!"

"Those were no ordinary rogues," said the goldsmith, his brow drawn into a deep frown. "'Twas these papers they wanted, and your young life with them!"

Mistress Jewell entered the room at that moment, and as she listened to the story was deeply sympathetic to Gilbert. It struck her as wonderful that the boy should have tramped from far away in Kent. She treated the stranger with deep respect. But Gilbert made light of his troubles.

"I am turned fifteen," he said, "and as strong as a horse."

Dame Jewell raised her hands.

"Why!" she cried. "If I but foot it as far as the Mall, to look at the great ladies and see the King's Majesty, I can scarce set toe to floor for a whole day after."

"Where learned you to handle the rapier, Master Gilbert?" asked the goldsmith, looking curiously at the hilt of a fine sword which the boy had stood in a corner of the chamber.

"The weapon was my unknown father's," replied Gilbert, "and he who taught me was an old soldier, named Gregory Firebrace, who would come to our part in the summer time, and stay two months, and even three, being a friend of my guardian."

The goldsmith took out his tablet and set the name down carefully.

"I should like to have speech with Gregory Firebrace," he said. "Know you not where he may be found?"

"Alas, no, sir! He came not at all last year; and Master Chantry shook his head when I spoke of him, and said he was not well pleased with Gregory, and that he would not come any more."

"You do not think him dead?" questioned the goldsmith.

"No, sir; but rather in some sad disgrace that Master Chantry could not bring his mind to forgive, though he was usually very tender to all men."

"Humph!" said John Jewell, glancing across the table at his wife. "We will try and find him one of these days."

And Master John Jewell held up a very impressive finger as he turned to the fire.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

How Gilbert Nameless Found very Comfortable Quarters

SIMON BARBICAN tried the front door of the stairs, re-lit the lamp, and gave the fire a kick with his square-toed shoe that startled it into great life of red and gold sparks.

"Now, Master Gilbert," he said, rubbing his hands, "I'll show you some vastly pretty things."

And as he spoke he touched a spring that

made a square of the brown panelling open like a cupboard.

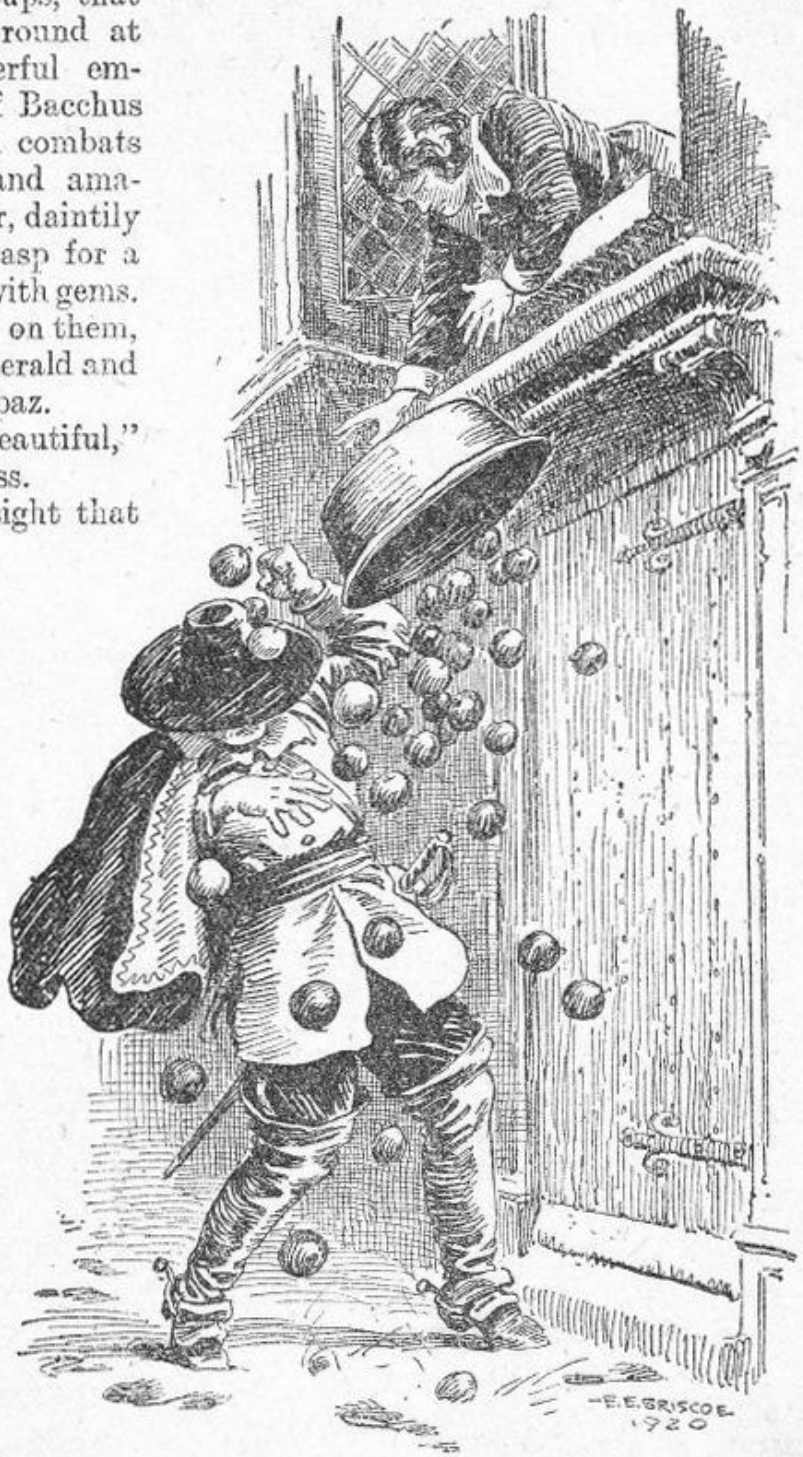
Within were silver flagons, with handles cunningly wrought in the shape of human figures; ewers and dishes, gilt and parcel-gilt; great loving-cups, that would be handed round at feasts, with wonderful embossings on them of Bacchus and old Silenus, and combats between centaurs and amazons. Here a mirror, daintily chased; there a clasp for a courtier's cloak, set with gems. The lamplight shone on them, and they flashed emerald and ruby and golden topaz.

"They are very beautiful," said Gilbert Nameless.

"And here is a sight that will please you even better," said Simon, with something of professional pride, as he opened another cupboard, and showed a case of rapiers, the hilts cut and graven with all manner of devices, and the blades damascened with Latin mottoes.

"What is that dull noise I hear?" asked Gilbert, listening.

"The rush of the tide through the arches," replied Simon. "Sometimes it shakes the house to the very chimney-pots; but one soon gets used to it. If you're a fisherman you can angle from the pantry and catch beauties. There are worse places than the old Bridge!"



The man sprang back, and the apples poured in a shower about his ears. (See page 195)

Gilbert, looking round the low, long chamber, half shop, half workroom, with its panelled walls, its benches and braziers, its cheery red curtains and warm fire, was quite of Simon's opinion already. And as Simon opened the outer door, with the object of raising the shutter-flap outside, the chill air made the wanderer feel something more than content with his unexpected quarters.

A man who had passed and repassed the house several times in the last hour—a cloaked man with a fiery moustache, on which the frost had congealed his breath—slunk back at the withdrawing of the bolts, and took up his position in the street end, whence he could see Simon Barbican's movements.

Simon scraped the snow out of the hinges and lifted the shutter, while Gilbert screwed the bolt on the inside.

The boy in black was rather clumsy, and Simon, holding the heavy flap upright, called his instructions from the darkness. The watcher below made frantic efforts to see into the room, listening all the while for the approach of any pedestrian.

At length Gilbert succeeded with his task, and Simon, stooping down, scooped up a handful of snow, pressed it into a hard ball, and, aiming at random, sent it whizzing into the street and over the bay, missing the watcher by a hair's breadth, as he flattened himself against the corner.

The door of the goldsmith's house closed with a dull bang. The bolts slid into their places, and the gabled front presented a black mass against the black sky, relieved only by a lighted window in one of the upper storeys.

"A plague on the jackanapes!" growled the cloaked man at the corner. "I have learned nothing after all, and taken a chill into the bargain! I would much like to meet that saucy 'prentice under the shadow of a dark wall one night. His chance shot nearly told!"

And, pulling his cloak about him, he glided across the open space, passed the goldsmith's dwelling, and vanished in the darkness.

The lads went back into the large room again, and drew two stools to the fire.

"Simon," said Gilbert, "you shall teach me to use your weapon, and I will show you all that Gregory Firebrace taught me. Hark! Did you hear that?"

Simon rose noiselessly to his feet, and held up his hand. Someone was tampering with the outer door!

"Stay where you are," whispered Simon. "I will be back in a few minutes."

He slipped his shoes off and stole upstairs, Gilbert remaining by the fire, with his eyes fixed on the door.

There was a strange, low sound, and, though the pendant bell did not ring, the spring swayed up and down, showing that there was pressure on the stout panels from without.

The apprentice gained the upper floor, crept past the sitting-room—where the goldsmith and his wife were talking earnestly over the contents of the mysterious package—and entered the kitchen.

A candle guttered on the table, with a thief in the wick, and Priscilla, the apple-cheeked maid, sat on a hard wooden chair, sound asleep, a huge earthenware bowl full of apples beside her, which she had been peeling against making the mincemeat for the approaching Christmas.

Simon did not wake her, but went to the window, which was immediately above the shop door.

It was a long window of leaded panes, and Simon opened the middle lattice inch by inch, and peeped down.

It was a very dark night, and there was a carved cornice above the doorway, but he could see something projecting beyond it against the snow—something that kept appearing and disappearing.

Someone was busy, but what they were about, and who they were, Simon had to discover.

He leaned as far as he could into the night, sending a little avalanche of snow from the sill on to the cornice, and presently a man stepped back and listened.

The apprentice saw that the projection had been the point of the man's sword under his cloak, and, as he stood there, looking towards the roadway, Simon was seized with a sudden idea.

At the first alarm the rogue—he must be a rogue, perforce, who behaved in such a way—would hurriedly make off, and they would be none the wiser. If he could drop anything upon him and stun him, there would be a chance to secure him straight away. So Simon slipped back into the kitchen and looked about him.

The first thing his eyes rested upon was the huge earthenware bowl of apples, and the apprentice's eyes danced with delight.

Without rousing the sleeping maid, he lifted it in his strong arms and rested it silently on the sill.

It was now necessary to creep out on the ledge, in order to come directly over the man; and, trembling, lest he should alarm him before he was in the position for the throw, Simon set his knee on the sill, and wormed himself forward inch by inch.

All would have been well but for the tired Priscilla. The cold wind fluttered the candle, and played directly upon her, and of a sudden she woke with a terrific sneeze.

So unexpected was the sound that Simon started, and, tipping the bowl, an apple rolled

away, and fell plump on the crown of the listener's beaver.

Simon gave a gasp of rage, and hurled the heavy missile. But the man sprang back and the apples poured in a shower about his ears, and the bowl crashed with a thud into the white drift, as he ran like a hare round the corner of the house.

Simon had exerted so much force that he lost his balance, grabbed wildly at the slippery edge, and hurtled over into space, while Priscilla screamed a thousand murders, and fires, and thieves, and fainted away, and the astonished goldsmith rushed into the kitchen.

"What, in Heaven's name, is happening, woman?" cried Master John Jewell, looking from the prostrate maid to the open window.

The reply came from without, and was in Simon's voice. The apprentice had landed in three feet of snow, that had drifted against the house front, and now stood craning his neck under the window, calling "Master!" in great excitement.

"Open the door, master! I have discovered something, and they may return!" said Simon, making a trumpet of his hands.

"Zounds, we are having fine times indeed," muttered the goldsmith, hastening downstairs, where he met Gilbert, armed with Simon's cudgel.

Between them they drew the bolts, and flung the door wide, Gilbert holding the lamp above his head, and John Jewell carefully presenting the muzzle of his blunderbuss against the darkness.

"Hist master!" said Simon Barbican, pointing to the outside of the great door. "What do you make of this?"

"This" was an auger sticking in the panel.

"Odds life!" cried the goldsmith. "Robbers! Nay, they would have tried the lock, and this is the door's very heart!"

"He was too quick for me, master, and fled towards the City," said Simon, brushing the snow from his blue breeches, and stamping his stockinged feet. "An I may get into my shoes, I will trace him by his footprints."

"Useless," murmured the goldsmith. "Moreover, I see an inkling of it all." And he looked at Gilbert. "'Tis part and parcel of your business, my young friend. Whoever made this hole, did it to pry into our household, and to find whether you are here or not."

Gilbert hung his head.

"Let me go, Master Jewell," he faltered. "I must not bring trouble to you by my presence."

"Listen to the innocent!" said worthy Master Jewell. "And where would you go, pray? Into the snow? No, Gilbert. You can more than earn your keep by helping Simon, and no one knows what a year may bring. Does the plan promise to please you?"

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Gilbert, unable to find words.

The worthy man stepped to the cupboard stairs, and, Simon, having collected such of the apples as he could pick out of the snow, and made all safe once more, carried his bowl up to the kitchen, where Priscilla was indulging in mild hysterics, and Mistress Jewell burning feathers.

"Simon," said Gilbert, when the apprentice returned, "who lives in the next house?"

"Eli Nethersole, who plies the same calling as my master, but with whom we have as little to do as needs be, since he is not reputed over honest in his dealings. But why do you ask?"

"Because just now, when I heard you drop into the snow, and the man ran past the windows, I thought a door closed, and the footfalls ceased."

Simon looked at him for a moment, thinking profoundly, and went to the table on which the goldsmith had placed the auger.

"Whew!" he whistled. "Look here!" And he pointed to initials cut in the wooden handle, "E. N." "What concern can Master Nethersole have in your affairs?"

"How can I tell?" replied Gilbert sadly. "All the world seems to know about myself."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

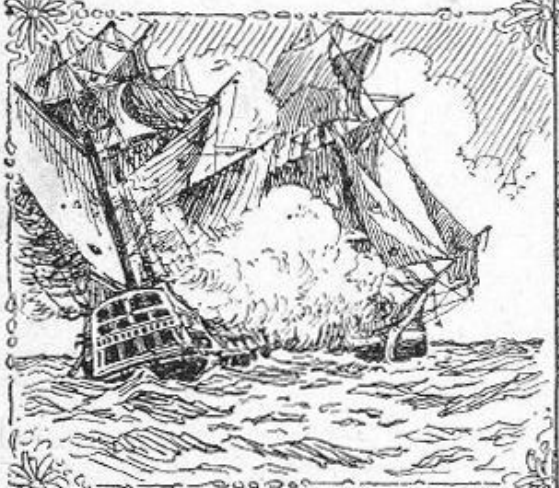
How Master Jewell Prepared for a Journey and Decided that Gilbert Nameless should go with Him

When Gilbert opened his eyes the next morning the sun was shining on the snow that had fallen overnight.

He sprang out of bed and, breathing on

Famous Fights for the Flag

The Zulu War, 1879. The defence of Rorke's Drift. Lieuts. Chard and Bromhead with 139 men (35 of whom were wounded) successfully defended the post against over four thousand Zulus.



The Bombardment of Alexandria, July 11th, 1882. Midshipman Cochrane, at the risk of being blown to pieces, picked up a live Egyptian shell and plunged it into a bucket of water, to extinguish the fuse.

the pane, rubbed a peephole and looked forth. The river was flowing grey and swollen with the melted snow, and was then uncrossed by any bridges but the one on which he stood.

"Ha, you are awake at last!" said Simon Barbican cheerily, putting his head into the room. "Master Jewell bade me let you lie as long as you liked. I have been up and doing these three hours.

"When you have dressed, breakfast is ready. I'll tell you what we've discovered afterwards," said Simon.

"Discovered?"

"Yes," and Simon lowered his voice, although there was no necessity, as the shop was empty. "You were right about the man last night."

"How?"

"That he went no farther than next door," said Simon. "The traces are distinct in the snow; and they are not those of Gideon Bilge, because his feet are the largest you ever saw in your life, and turn outwards like a turnspit's. Of course, I ought to tell you that Gideon Bilge is Eli Nethersole's apprentice, and the most sneaking, cunning dog that lives on the bridge."

As soon as Gilbert was dressed the two boys presented themselves at the breakfast table.

Very motherly was Dame Jewell, for her heart melted towards the friendless boy, and many were the questions with which she plied him, heaping his plate bountifully at the same time, until, the meal over, they rose to withdraw, and John Jewell called for his thick walking-shoes, bidding Priscilla to warm his mantle thoroughly.

"And where go you?" asked Dame Jewell.

"To the person you wot of, my dear. 'Twere well that this arrival of young Master Gilbert should be made known to those who may be of good to him. 'Tis too well spread abroad already among his enemies."

Simon Barbican paused in the doorway of the sitting-room and cleared his throat.

"Well, Simon, what is it?" said the goldsmith. "You have work enough in the polishing of the tankard for Master Pepys to last until I return, and Gilbert will keep you company."

"'Tis not that, master," said Simon. "I fear me that your honour has forgotten that the plate for Sir Rufus Pontifex was promised delivery to-day, and 'tis a long ride these winter times, with the light gone upon four o'clock and the road perilous at the best of seasons."

"A murrain on it!" cried Master John Jewell. "My mind must be wool-gathering, I think! Sir Rufus must indeed have the plate, for a promise is a promise—mark you that, my young friend! Priscilla, take thee back these shoes, and in their stead set down my great riding-boots and the cloak-furs that they be ready against my coming. Simon, we will to the strong-room and bring up the dishes, and Gilbert shall carry the lantern."

Master John Jewell drew out a great bunch of keys, and led the way to a door, which he opened, admitting them to another stair, which had several doors in its descent, each of which had to be duly unlocked before they reached the last door of all, that opened with a great master-key and a little master-key, one at either end of a steel bar.

Simon carried a horn-lantern, and Gilbert followed, very much interested.

"We are ten feet below the water now," said the goldsmith, as he placed his hand on the lock. "You can feel the tremble of the stream very plainly. Yet my vault is as dry as the roof of St. Paul's yonder."

The strong-room was a large vault of stone, filled with chests and shelves, and contained great value in the shape of plate and money, and the various articles sent there by the wealthy customers of Master Jewell.

"Ha, Gilbert," said the good-natured man, "there is stowed away in these cloths and dingy boxes enough gold to buy the bridge from one end to the other! Some day you shall see a portion of our treasures. But now hold the light higher, that we may select Sir Rufus's plate from the rest. When I have shown your package and its contents to a certain gentleman for his opinion, I shall place them here, where it will puzzle the cleverest rogues in London to come at them."

Simon Barbican, who had brought a basket with him, laid several heavy pieces of silver within it and returned to the stairs.

Master Jewell locked the vault carefully,

and, bringing up the rear, fastened the doors in turn, until at length they emerged on the landing of the house once more.

"Can you ride, Gilbert?" said he.

"Marry, sir, I can ride well, and never wanted for a horse in Kent yonder!" said Gilbert smiling.

"So be it," said the goldsmith. "Simon, bid Jasper Jenkins step in as usual, and order three stout beasts to be before the door without delay. Meanwhile, I fancy that the boots I had for Dominic Sly will not be over large for Gilbert."

Simon's eyes sparkled at the prospect of the ride, which always promised adventure, and while Dame Jewell produced various articles necessary to the journey the apprentice took his beloved cudgel and ran off upon his errand.

The boots fitted Gilbert to a hair. The good Dame muffled him in a huge woollen comforter, and found him a capital pair of gauntlets, and by the time Simon returned Gilbert and the goldsmith were swathed and wrapped like two polar bears, and waiting for him.

Sir Rufus Pontifex's plate, consisting of eight massive silver dishes, beautifully embossed, and several tankards, engraved with armorial bearings, were carefully placed in many coverings of soft leather and laid in stout saddle-bags.

Three brace of long pistols were loaded and primed, and Master John Jewell girt a rapier on his left hip, while Gilbert resumed his unknown father's sword.

As for Simon, he slipped the leather thong of his bludgeon over his wrist, and the maid Priscilla announced that the horses had arrived.

Jasper Jenkins, a quiet, clean-shaven man of forty, with shoulders, that were well nigh too broad for the front door, coughed gently to proclaim his presence, and the goldsmith bade his brother-in-law enter.

"Jasper Jenkins, 'tis a bitter cold morning, and you had better join us in this stirrup-cup of hot cordial that my dame has prepared with her own hands," said the goldsmith, with a smile of welcome. "Any news, Jasper?"

"Ay, and ill news, John," said the goldsmith's brother-in-law, holding the steaming goblet under his nose and inhaling the odour of spices.

"How? What is amiss?"

"Two Frenchmen are dead in Drury Lane, hard by the street of Long Acre, and 'tis said they had the plague," said Jasper Jenkins, swallowing a draught and looking hard at the goldsmith.

Master Jewell stayed his cup midway to his lips and grew very grave.

"Heaven grant the rumour be an idle one!" he said. "We want not that among us again!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

A Ride in the Days of King Charles II., and how our Travellers fared on the Way

VERY picturesque was the vista of old London Bridge on that frosty morning as they rode along the narrow way.

Tall houses lined the track on either side with a profusion of gables and jutting ledges and quaint doors.

It may have been coincidence that about the time our three travellers reached the top of Fish Street Hill, a man left the door of Eli Nethersole's shop and hurried at a quick pace towards the gate at the bridge end.

He looked up the hill, muttered something in French, and turned along a narrow street leading westward, quickening his steps to a run, and holding his cloak up in both hands that it should not impede his legs, which were encased in brown riding boots with heavy spurs.

It may have been a further coincidence that, some half-hour later, the same man, accompanied by two others, came on horseback through Cornhill, and turned along Bishopsgate in the direction taken by the goldsmith and his companions.

When they got out into the fields, the three men fell to staring at the snow, and slackened their pace as they examined the tracks.

A waggon had entered the City, another had left it, and the deep wheel-ruts crossed in several places. The out-going vehicle they found embedded not far away, and the first of the party hailed the disconsolate driver, who was standing thigh deep in a heavy drift,

Eli Nethersole thrust the candle into the opening, and tapped with his thin, crooked fingers.
(See page 212)

waiting for his mate, who had gone for assistance.

"Good-morrow, friend," said the rider. "Hast seen aught of three horsemen upon this road?"

"Call you it a road?" snapped the waggoner testily. "I'd as lief taken my wain over a ploughed field! And how I am to come to Hertford I know not! Yes, there went three riders by not long since, a plague upon them! For they would not stay to help me, saying they had business brooking no delay."

"And so have we," said his questioner, spurring on. "Come, Silas Double and Black Humphrey, we must overtake our birds and then keep them in sight until we have them in the net!"

From which remark, delivered over his shoulder, as he put his horse through the drifted snow, it will be seen that there was something more than coincidence in it all.

Now, as every Londoner knows, there are two roads forking at Shoreditch Church—one to the right, leading towards Hackney, the other passing on through Kingsland.

The three men, assuming that our travellers would take the former way, turned off to the right, and rode hard. Master Jewell and his escort kept straight on, intending to cross the Lea at Tottenham Ferry.

"Whither are we bound?" asked Gilbert, as they paused to adjust the saddlebags and tighten the girths of the goldsmith's horse.

"Sir Rufus Pontifex has a fine old mansion

beyond Loughton, which is on the borders of the Forest of Epping," said Simon.

They dismounted at the Ferry Boat Inn; and Gilbert was not sorry to stamp his feet and bring some life into them, for the air was keen as a razor, and they had been in the saddle several hours already.

In the corners of their holsters, and in sundry nooks of their apparel, Dame Jewell had bestowed cold viands and flasks of drinkables; but the odour of a smoking joint of beef filling the inn at the moment of their entrance, the goldsmith bade mine host lay knives for three.

"And what of the roads?" inquired Master John Jewell, with his mouth full. "Hast heard aught of robbery of late?"

"'Tis said the freebooters are over bold about Waltham, and in the neighbourhood of Epping Town," replied mine host; "but there has been nothing amiss hereabouts for some while, and we hope the rogues have gone farther into the woods."

"'Tis well!" said the goldsmith, with relief in his voice, as he eyed his wallets that bulged with their contents.

The horses rested, the reckoning paid, they mounted once more, and rode at a quick trot towards the little village of Walthamstow.

Near the cross-roads John Jewell pulled his steed to a walk, and bent his gaze upon a black spot ahead.

"Simon, is that a horseman under the elm trees?"

"'Tis so, master; still, we are three to one."

John Jewell knew the roads well, and the spectacle of a cloaked figure on a sorry nag caused him to make a sudden change in his direction.

Instead of proceeding towards the Woodford Road, which lay straight ahead, he jerked a warning with his elbow, and turned off to the left up Blackhorse Lane, a few yards before he reached the man.

"The snow will be heavy on the hill-top, master," ventured the apprentice, riding alongside him.

"No matter! I liked not the look of yonder fellow, Simon, and I doubt me if he may not be a scout, since none would elect to sit like a statue on such a bitter day." replied the goldsmith.

About the time that our three friends swung into the highway at Salsbury Hill, and took the road towards Chingford, the other three, by dint of hard riding, had reached the lane leading to Hale End, so that both parties were travelling in a parallel direction, with perhaps a mile of wood and waste between them.

Master John Jewell's spirits had risen considerably, since more than half the journey was now accomplished in safety, and when they had rested on the hill of the beautiful old church, and their horses' flanks ceased to heave he cried:

"Forward! We shall reach our journey's end in an hour, and come back the lighter."

"Now, an the choice had rested with me," whispered Simon Barbican, "I had not taken this road. But 'tis done now, and we can only hope that there are no rogues between this and Loughton, which is a wild stretch of forest land."

Gilbert, who had enjoyed the journey vastly, patted his holsters and smiled.

"Ay, well enough, if we were on the way back," said the apprentice; "but I am thinking of Sir Rufus Pontifex and his silver dishes."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth than his horse floundered, stumbled for a couple of yards, and came to a stand.

"Stay, master!" he called.

And the goldsmith reined in, as Simon jumped down into the snow, to find that one of his horse's hind shoes had wrenched off and twisted into the form of a letter "S," adhering firmly to the hoof by a couple of nails.

"The plague upon it!" muttered Simon Barbican.

"Call not upon the plague, Simon," said his master in a tone of reproof. "We may have that upon us sooner than we reck. There is a blacksmith in the village yonder, and he will repair the damage with all speed."

Simon tugged at the shoe, but it was some time before he could remove it; and when they reached the smithy they found a party of horsemen stamping their feet, while the smith roughed their steeds.

They were a merry crew, and John Jewell's

GILBERT'S DESPERATE RIDE TO LONDON

(*See page* 204)

brow cleared when he heard that they were travelling in the same direction; being, in fact, four gentlemen upon a visit to Sir Rufus Pontifex, and three farmers of Epping, who had joined company for safety in crossing the forest.

It was straightway agreed that our friends should go with them, and the blacksmith, in high good humour at so much unexpected custom, regaled them with stories of the robbers that haunted the woodland glades and impenetrable recesses.

"You will ride ten in your company, sir, and that is a goodly number," said the smith, driving home the last nail. "Still, I would show your pistols, for all that; and now the horse is ready, and I wish you all God-speed, and may you not fall in with Captain Quartermaine!"

"Hold, good fellow! Who may he be!" cried one of the gentlemen, pausing with his toe in the stirrup.

"The leader of the most daring band of them all, your honour!" said the smith, standing in the doorway, with his bare arms akimbo, and the ruddy glow from the forge flooding the snow at his feet. "He is a lean man, and hath a red moustache, and 'tis at High Beech, over the plain yonder, that they say he makes his lair."

"Zounds!" quoth the gentleman, getting astride, and drawing his cloak about him. "I have some acquaintance with Lauderdale and Buckingham, and when I return to London, I will make known the manners and customs of the neighbourhood. 'Tis great shame that such things are permitted!"

The little cavalcade moved off in the direction of the forest, Master John Jewell and his companions in the centre of them, and each man held a long pistol in his right hand, and kept sharp watch on every side.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The Ambush and its Consequences

CAPTAIN QUARTERMAINE ground his teeth, as he pointed across the open track beyond the wood, where our travellers were rapidly making their way.

The robber watched the glint of the afternoon sun on the pistol-barrels, and marked the heavier gait of the horses that carried the laden wallets.

"'Twas an opportunity in a hundred!" he said savagely. "What can have detained Firebrace and the rest? We must now wait until they return, which may be to-morrow, and the air cold enough to freeze brandy in a bottle! Come, lads! Let us to Wilder's Dell, and make a fire! Those idiots will seek us there, and find us in the sweetest of tempers!"

Quartermaine touched his horse with a spur, as the travellers disappeared in a belt of trees, and, followed by Silas Double and Black Humphrey, rode down the slope and struck into a beech wood.

"'Tis but an hour's journey to Sir Rufus Pontifex," said Black Humphrey, when they had ridden some little distance. "If they return to-night they have the choice of two roads."

"Both of which I shall watch as a cat watches a bird," replied Quartermaine. "I have a scheme that will pay us better than a few paltry platters and silver mugs. Besides, as you know, there will be a hundred guineas from my lord when the boy is dead!"

"And the scheme, captain?" said Silas Double, ducking his head to avoid a low branch.

"'Tis to hold the fat goldsmith to ransom, Silas. I warrant me Dame Jewell will part with a thousand pounds to save her apple-cheeked spouse from a red-hot ramrod. What think you?"

The two ruffians laughed heartily, and their laughter echoed through the frozen wood.

The next moment a curious, piping whistle came from some low ground beyond the trees.

"'Tis old Firebrace, a murrain on him!" said the captain. "Ho, there, Gregory, you ancient sinner! What, in the fiend's name, kept you from the tryst? A right rich booty passing under our very noses, and lost because you were not at the glade end!"

A very tall, lean man scrambled up through the frozen bushes, followed by four others, and approached the mounted party.

"The fault was not mine, captain," he said, in a deep voice that seemed to issue

from a throat of brass. "Your message came late, and bore two readings."

"How? The Green Glade—was that not enough?"

"Scarcely, since it hath two ends, and we lay at the other one, which we had but time to reach when the travellers rode by."

"Pest, and we not five hundred paces away!" said Quartermaine. "Well, 'tis done, and we must repair the loss when they return. Come all of you to Wilder's Dell, where we will light a fire, and I will unfold a fresh plan!"

They wound along a path of frozen snow, brushing through the bushes, all ablaze with scarlet holly-berries, and finally reached a deep, secluded hollow, where a pile of dead wood had been stacked under a white elm, and the ashes of a spent fire showed the place to be one of their secret haunts.

The afternoon sky was glowing with the peculiar pink flush so common to a winter landscape, and the gloom of the silent woods had deepened into a twilight dusk when they issued forth again, leaving the fire banked up, and the three horses tethered.

Gregory Firebrace looked more like a wolf than ever, and walked with a long, loping stride that increased the resemblance.

A few whispered words that had passed between Silas Double and the man with no thumbs had caught his ears as they sat by the fire, and Gregory Firebrace was boiling internally.

He regarded Quartermaine from beneath his shaggy eyebrows, and the huge hands, that he had thrust into his pockets for warmth, were tightly clenched.

"Halt, boys!" said the captain, as they came to a spot where two roads from London town joined into one.

. . . . . .

"The sun hath an angry fire in his eye," said Master John Jewell, gazing across the darkening woods. "We must push on, boys, for to stand benighted in this desolate waste is a thing not at all to my mind!"

The road was broad at that place, and they rode three abreast, Gilbert in the middle.

Master Jewell had duly received payment from Sir Rufus for the silver, which had charmed him mightily, and to Simon Barbican the goldsmith had entrusted the bag of money, arguing that should they fall in with thieves they would not trouble themselves to rob an apprentice when his master was by.

The bag reposed inside Simon's jacket, and the trio had come at a quick trot from Pontifex Park, the snow being less troublesome in that quarter.

"'Twill be dark as a vault, master, before we get to the smithy," said Simon Barbican; "but 'tis nigh upon full moon to-night."

"And if the worthy smith minds not, we will wait there for its rising," returned the goldsmith. "'Twere well now to draw our pistols, for a few yards ahead I see the trees very thick, and a likely spot for any rogues to lurk!"

They each pulled out a long, steel-mounted weapon, and, the better to keep up their courage, and also that it might help to scare any evildoer, the goldsmith began to converse in a loud voice.

"We have somewhat outdistanced the others of our party," he said boldly. "At the top of yonder hill we will draw rein and abide their coming."

Gilbert and Simon smiled at each other, for there was in truth no party at all, and, having reached the point where the roads forked, they took the right-hand way.

"They must have been gay days," continued the goldsmith, almost shouting, as an almost indescribable shiver went over him, for which he could not account. "They must have been brave times when Harry the Eighth came a-hunting here, and 'tis pity the chase isn't continued, for 'twould be fine sport!"

"The chase is continued, my good sir, but we hunt rich goldsmiths to-day instead of timid deer!" And the voice rang out like a trumpet. "Pull in, sirs, or I will not answer for anything that may happen!"

In the gathering dusk four figures suddenly rose out from the bushes, black against the disappearing rim of the blood-red sun, and four pistols covered the travellers. For an instant all three checked their steeds, but only for an instant.

"Ride for it! The rogues are afoot!"

All through that night the old soldier kept faithful ward. Passengers across the bridge quickened their steps as he raised a warning hand. (See page 224)

shouted John Jewell, clapping the spurs in. "Forget not what I said to you, Simon!"

And, firing his weapon point-blank into the group, the goldsmith galloped forward up the hill.

"Fool!" said the same voice; and another pistol-shot rang out.

Jewell's horse sank heavily on its knees, and flung its rider on to the frozen snow, and out leapt the four ruffians upon Gilbert and the apprentice.

Gilbert fired, and one of the men uttered a cry of pain; but Quartermaine seized Gilbert's rein, and, forcing the horse back upon its haunches, dropped his smoking weapon and drew out his sword.

"Fly, Simon—fly!" cried the prostrate goldsmith, as he struggled to his feet, only to be felled by a heavy blow, and pounced upon by two robbers.

"Ha, you young dog," said the man with the red moustache, "you escaped me last night, but to-day——"

He did not finish his sentence, for Gregory Firebrace smote him with a pistol-butt from behind, and Quartermaine dropped senseless.

"I thought so," muttered the old wolf, with a strange gleam in his eyes and a hasty glance about him. "Go, Master Gilbert, ride like the wind, and ask no questions! I will seek you! Quick, take the road yonder before the others come!"

And he struck the boy's horse over the croup.

Simon Barbican, who had ridden to Gilbert's aid and witnessed the action, lowered his terrible cudgel, seeing that the gaunt figure seemed to be bent on befriending the lad, and, as Gilbert's horse started away at a mad gallop, the bewildered apprentice followed him, ducking on to his holsters as the other gang fired a volley from the bank and jumped down into the road.

A loud cry came after the boys on the still air, and it was Silas Double who spoke.

"The horses, men!" he shouted. "We must follow them, if we ride all night!"

"Did you hear what the rogue said?" cried Simon, as he came abreast of Gilbert, both horses galloping neck and neck down the frozen road.

"Ay, that did I!" answered Gilbert, between his set teeth. "And more than that, the tall man who felled the leader was Gregory Firebrace, who taught me to use the sword. How comes he among these knaves, I wonder?"

Simon made no reply, having his own ideas on the subject; but, looking back under his arm, he saw several of the robbers streaming across the snow as hard as they could run, evidently to intercept them farther on.

A belt of dense woodland grew on the left of the road, and beyond it was a wide glade, dotted here and there with bushes.

They pulled in here, but the respite was short. Angry voices were heard. Simon was for riding on. There were repeated whistles. Simon knew that daylight would show their tracks, and that there were no more desperate men than the outlaws whose aim was to murder Gilbert.

Therefore the two lads pushed on, to stop on a sudden as a black form loomed up in the darkness.

Simon had started, but laughed the next moment, and pointed to the east.

"'Tis the moon rising," he said. And sure enough the great silver orb came rolling over the distant tree-tops, and poured a flood of brilliant radiance over the forest. "Now we can find a safe lair. Quick, Gilbert! Follow me closely, and we shall soon be in safety—of a sort," he added.

And Simon Barbican headed for a hill whose sides were clothed with dense undergrowth.

His eyes scanned the ground in search of footprints, but the snow was untrodden.

"No one has been this way," he said, "and, in truth, 'tis rough going for anything larger than a coney. See, below is the very spot we seek—a deep hollow, with the high banks all around it, and snug from the wind as it is from observation."

The next moment they stood with their horses in the centre of a dell, plunged in profound shadow.

Above their heads the rising moon showed a circle of stunted oaks and hornbeams, like sentinels on the bank-top, and across the level space at the bottom of the hollow lay a fallen tree, which time and decay had turned into touchwood.

"Good lack, Gilbert! We are in luck's way!" said the apprentice gaily. "Tie the horses to yonder bough, while I find my tinder-box, and we'll have a fire right soon!"

Gilbert jerked the rein over the crook of a bough.

"Someone is coming!" he whispered, pointing to the animals. "Look!"

"How do you know that?" said Simon, under his breath.

"By the mare's ears, and by the way she sniffs the wind. Are there any wolves in the wood, think you?"

Once there rang on the still air the snap of a twig; then the silence became greater than ever, until a strange thing happened.

They sprang round, for the voice had come from the other side of the dell.

"Master Gilbert, do not fire!" it said.

And the long, lean figure of Gregory Firebrace drew his right hand behind him and looked down on the ground.

"I know not that you should take my hand, Master Gilbert," said the old soldier. "I am a broken man, and an outcast these many months."

"I care not what you may be, you are ever my friend!" cried Gilbert, flushing. "No doubt you have a tale to tell, and so have I."

And the impetuous boy seized the old man's knotted paw, and grasped it warmly.

"Well, since you will have it so, Master Gilbert," he said gravely; "but first tell me how you came here, and who is your companion."

Simon took stock of the tall figure, while Gilbert made Gregory Firebrace acquainted, in as few words as possible, of the events of the last two days.

"Dead!" said Gregory Firebrace. "Master Chantry dead! Then you know now—he told you with his last breath who you are?"

"Nay, that he did not!" replied Gilbert, his lips trembling. "Master Jewell, who has so strangely befriended me, alone knows the secret."

"Not so!" said the old soldier, in a dull tone of rage. "There is yet another who hath good cause. And now I understand why the scoundrel Quartermaine wished to slay you awhile agone; and he it was who lay in wait for you on London Bridge. Oh, the rogue! The double rogue! But I will thwart him!"

Simon's eye kindled as he watched the old man's face. The wrath was genuine, and there was so much honesty in the scarred, war-worn visage that Simon's brow relaxed.

"Tell us, Master Firebrace," said he, "what are we to do?"

The old man's toothless mouth wrinkled into a smile.

"That is what I am here to tell you," he said, "if you will trust a broken man and an outlaw."

"I'll answer for that," exclaimed Gilbert. "But you are wounded! Your wrist is all a-bleeding!"

"A scratch, boy!"

The boys had now fished Dame Jewell's parcels out of their holsters, and unfolded quite a store of cooked meat, a pasty, and several slices of white bread, and the trio lost no time in breaking their fast.

Gregory Firebrace relapsed into silence, which he suddenly broke, looking at the nameless boy with a strange glitter in his eye.

"I knew your father, Master Gilbert," he said, in a voice that was something louder than a whisper. "This much may I tell you, and no more. He was the captain of my troop. I was his corporal; and the first milk that passed your lips was warmed in my helmet over just such a fire as this."

The eyes of the listening boys opened very wide at these words, and the old man smiled at his ancient memories.

"I it was," he went on, "who carried you in a corner of my mantle to good Parson Chantry; and you know how every year I came to stay with him, and taught you things that the parson could not. You have not forgotten my lessons, Master Gilbert?"

And he touched the rusty rapier at his side.

"I am getting old now, but in my day few have been better at feats of arms and the use of the sword," said Gregory Firebrace, "and when the wars were over, and the Lord-Protector held the reins, I gained a livelihood by teaching others how to defend themselves. My fame spread, and though I gained many broad pieces, still I made enemies, who were jealous of my skill.

"Many of the gay lords and gallant gentlemen who returned with King Charles at the Restoration became my pupils, and fortune seemed to smile upon me, until the rising of the Fifth Monarchy men under Venner, the mad cooper.

"On the day of their wild attempt, my cloak and beaver were stolen from the tavern where I was dining, and one of the foes wore it openly in their midst, to my speedy undoing."

The old soldier's brows knitted into a terrible frown as he spoke.

"I had been seen, they said, in Fetter Lane, arm-in-arm with Venner himself. I had fired upon a constable who had followed the rioters to their hiding-place on Hampstead Heath; and when the Life Guards cut them down in Wood Street I was again seen, inciting desperate resistance, escaping mysteriously when on the point of being captured, and leaving my cloak in their hands.

"They sent to arrest me, and 'twas only by the aid of a great lord—whom I will not name—that I got away."

"But surely, Gregory," exclaimed Gilbert, the hot colour rushing to his cheeks, "you are not a robber?"

The old man looked down and sighed deeply.

"No," he said, squaring his shoulders; "unless to snare a fat buck maketh a man such. I never laid hand on a gold piece in my life that belonged not to myself. But I have been forced to help those that are robbers—ay,

and cut-throats, too! And now you know the worst, Master Gilbert."

Gregory Firebrace rose from the tree-trunk.

"We have talked enough; it is time to act," he said gruffly. "I am going to discover in which of their hiding-places Master Jewell is to be found. I may be gone several hours. There is no telling. Keep, both of you, in the hollow until you hear the bark of a fox repeated thrice. That will be my signal."

They watched him scramble up the bank, and the next moment he had disappeared.

He paused on the bed of a rivulet, whose course wound like a serpent of ice through the wood, and a distant sound came to his ear.

"Horsemen on the road!" he said to himself. "'Twere well to gain sight of them before I go farther."

The clatter of hoofs grew louder, and four horsemen went across the glade.

"Quartermaine, Silas Double, Oliver, and the doctor!" murmured the old wolf in the beech-root. "Ho, ho! They are for London, and Master Jewell is in the Hill Hole!"

Gregory Firebrace lifted his face to the dark sky above him and laughed noiselessly, after a silent manner he had.

"'Tis wondrous well!" he thought, smiling. "Yet I marvel that Quartermaine should lodge him there and I abroad; for though 'tis the securest spot of all, 'tis the easiest to come to if you know the way. And I know the way! Ha, ha! Old Gregory Firebrace knows the way perhaps better than any man living!"

Several times he stopped, and while he felt the ground with one hand, he drew a long knife from his belt with the other.

It was evident that there was danger very near.

All at once he bent into a crouching position, with his knees up to his chin, and cowered under the snow-laden canopy of a large holly.

Two men stepped into view from the other side of the same bush, and stood looking down the slope. The old wolf could have touched the nearest of the pair had he but stretched forth one of his long paws.

"A plaguey cold night for the watch!" said one of the men, who carried a musket in the hollow of his arm.

"'Twould be hot enough if we slept, lad," said his companion, with a short laugh "There will be the mischief to pay as it is over this business, you mark my words! I think the captain has taken leave of his senses!"

"Black Humphrey swears that he wounded him," said the first man.

"Which is very little consolation to us, since he killed him not outright!" sneered the other.

"Well, Quartermaine says that there is a thousand pounds in the stroke, and has gone to get it."

Then silence fell again, and the old soldier rose to his feet, stiff with the intense cold.

"A narrow shave, by my word!" said he. "Had I been a stride further on, there would have been a fight for life! I must find out how many of the gang are within, and then 'twill be matter for the justices, though my own neck be in peril, as the rogue truly said!"

. . . . .

It was about three in the morning—the darkest and coldest of all hours and Gilbert was dozing, with his head sunk upon his knees. Simon Barbican suddenly shook him by the arm, and the nameless boy started, and suddenly grasped his sword.

A fox barked, not far away, three times.

"'Tis Master Firebrace, Gilbert!" whispered Simon. "Here he comes!"

And as they sprang out to meet him the old wolf came down the slope, and then fell a-laughing in his noiseless way.

"Didst think me lost or captured, lads?" said Gregory, holding his gigantic hands over the embers. "I have discovered the prisoner, and have counted his guard. There are eleven rascals in Hill Hole, and the captain is not expected to return till to-morrow night!"

"And what chance have we of releasing him?" asked Simon, smoothing his cudgel caressingly.

Their honours the justices must help us, and at daybreak we will set out for Pontifex Park. Sir Rufus is a man of action and courage. And now I will go to sleep!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

How Sir Rufus Pontifex took the matter in hand, and mustered his Merry Men for the storming of Hill Hole

IN the centre of Pontifex Park, whose moss-grown palings divided it from the forest, stood Pontifex Hall, and upon the steps of the terrace stood Sir Rufus Pontifex himself, just dismounted from his bay roadster.

A group of gallant gentlemen, all laughing heartily, and clapping their gloved hands to bring some warmth into them, had followed their host up the terrace, and eight steaming horses

At the first pass the old man's blade slid like a lightning flash through the shoulder of Crimson Cloak, who staggered backward.
(See page 230)

were slanting out their necks below, and champing their bits, and thinking, no doubt, of the cosy stables and the well-filled mangers

"Marry, 'twas a great ride!" cried Si

Rufus, a stout, ruddy man of fifty, in a green riding-cloak and silver spurs. "Within, lads—within! And if the dinner be not serving and the wine heated, we will hang our butler as a warning to the rest!"

There was no need to smite the broad door with his riding-whip, which the knight had raised for the purpose, for the aforesaid butler threw it wide, and, looking over his master's shoulder across the park, made a gesture with his hand.

"They are coming again, Sir Rufus," said the butler enigmatically—"the three of them!"

"The more the merrier!" cried the jovial knight. "Set three extra platters, and lay down extra claret; but don't stay between the fire and my divinity any longer, else will I roll thee in the snow, my fat retainer!"

The butler, used to his master's moods, stood aside, and whispered:

"'Tis not guests, Sir Rupert, but the old man who cured Green Apple of the distemper last spring, and who lives in the forest, and two lads with him. They would not say their business, though they have been here three times to-day."

Sir Rufus turned and saw Gregory Firebrace coming up the avenue with a long, lean stride, Gilbert and Simon on either hand.

"Bring them in. I will see them before we eat," said the knight.

"Your honour's pardon, Sir Rufus," said Gregory. "I crave a word with you, if I may out with it before these gentlemen!"

Sir Rufus was half out of his green coat, and turned to the door, his arms still in its sleeves.

"Roar away, old bull of Bashan!" said Sir Rufus. "Whose dog is dead?"

"None is dead, yet, your worship," said Gregory Firebrace; "but one you have some interest in is in peril. Master Jewell, after leaving your house last evening, fell into the hands of some desperate rogues, and is even now captive not two miles away."

Sir Rufus stamped with anger.

"These outrages are beyond endurance!" he cried. "Not only are my deer carried off under my very nose, but my visitors are kidnapped almost in sight of my park gates! The king shall hear of this!"

"Will your worship help Master Jewell?" broke in Gregory.

"Help him? Of course we will help him!" roared the knight. "Am I not a justice of the peace? Help him, quotha! Where is he? And how many are there?"

"There are eleven, and he is in a place to which I can conduct you, so that we may fall on them without their knowledge," replied the old man.

"I fear me you know too much of these fellows, my good man," said Sir Rufus, shaking his finger at the messenger. "No matter; you saved my favourite hound, and I am grateful. What's the best time to catch them?"

"After dark, Sir Rufus, about the sinking of the moon; they keep slack ward then."

"After dark be it. Eleven, you say? Gentlemen, we are eight of us, and can muster twenty stout fellows from the stables. What say you? Let us draw the corks first, and the badgers afterwards. Are you willing?"

The guests one and all raised a shout of glee, and, bidding Gregory and his two companions betake them to the kitchen, Sir Rufus Pontifex led the way into the famous dining-chamber.

. . . . . .

At nine of the clock the gentlemen rose, and set their wigs straight, removed their spurs, lest the jingle might betray them, muffled themselves in their cloaks, and took each man his pistols and his sword.

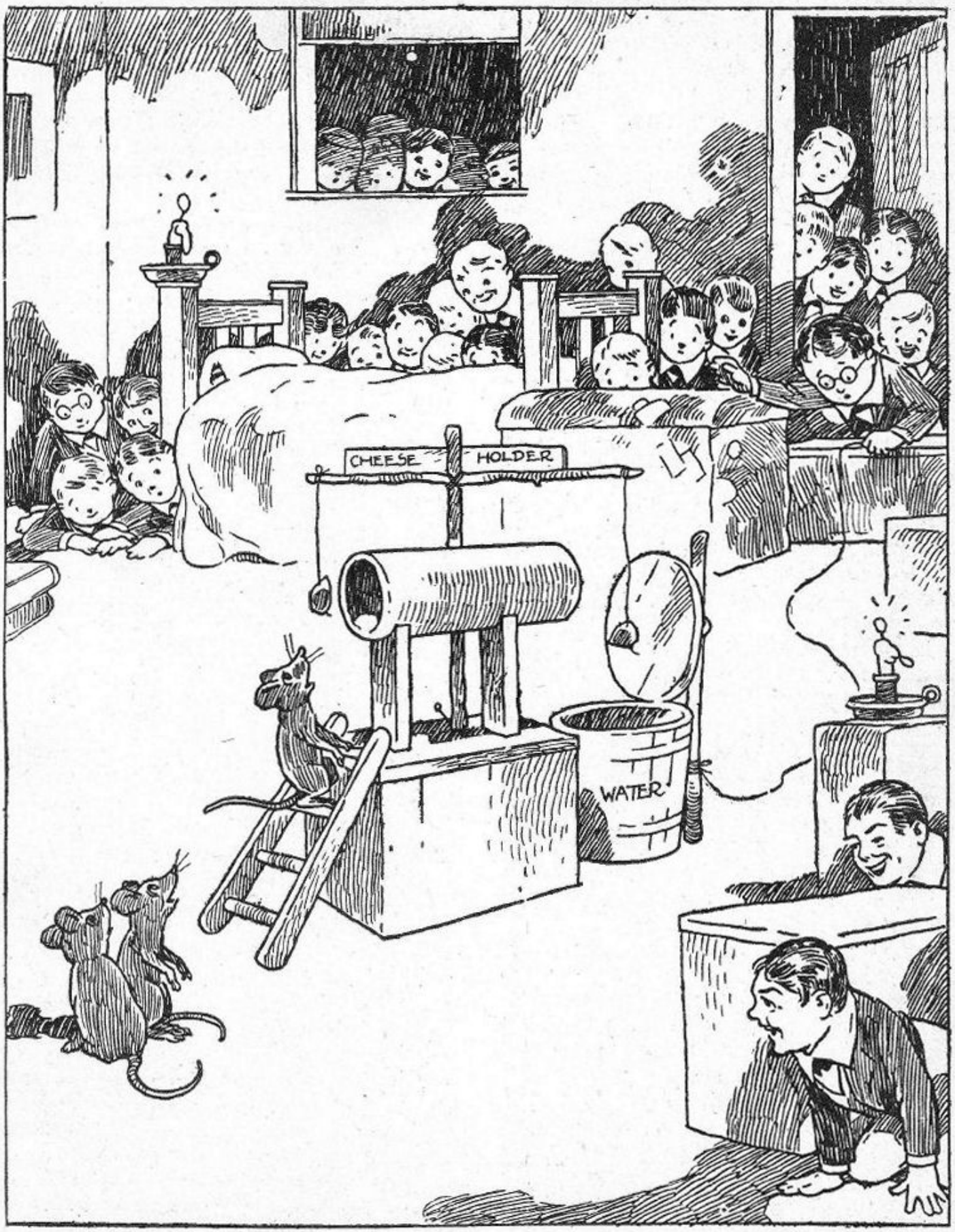
In a few minutes the party issued forth on to the terrace, and wound down the avenue.

Gregory Firebrace and the two lads went first, and after them came Sir Rufus Pontifex and the gentlemen, the stable-men bringing up the rear with a goodly supply of torches, and horn-lanterns unlighted, and a choice assortment of old guns, pitchforks, and every weapon they could lay their hands on.

The rawness in the keen wind that whistled through the trees of the avenue told Gregory that it would snow again before morning.

The moon was low down behind the silent woods, and the night was unusually dark.

"Hush, gentlemen, please!" said Gregory, stopping suddenly, when they had traversed nearly a mile of the way. "Heard you that?"



A PATENT SCHEME FOR CATCHING MICE IN DORMITORIES

A pistol-shot echoed in the distance in the pirection of Hill Hole.

"What can be happening?" said Sir Rufus, in a whisper.

"That is more than I can tell, sir," said the old wolf.

"Your pardon, old man!" said the gentleman whom Sir Rufus had addressed as Sir Harry. "Don't you think it were as well to explain what we must do? These woods are as dark as pitch, and we run as great a risk of shooting the trees or each other as of slaying the robbers."

Gregory Firebrace smiled in the darkness; but when he spoke his tone was perfectly respectful.

"Sir Harry Lovelock," he said, "you say well, and I will tell you what I know of Hill Hole, which is probably more than the robbers know themselves, for I have a way of getting into it that they never dreamed of."

The gentlemen crowded round him, and listened with great eagerness. They were warm with their walk and the wine they had drank, and were so full of courage and excitement that they began to finger their pistols a little dangerously for the safety of each other.

"About five hundred yards in a straight line," said Firebrace, pointing away in the blackness of the night, "there is a hill covered with fine beeches. The hill is steep on all sides but one, and round its base stretches a continuous circle of high holly-trees. They are so dense that no living creature would attempt to force his way through them. And in the centre of that natural wall, is Hill Hole. The hole is a dip in the hill, the dip itself large enough to hold fifty men with ease.

"Down the sloping bank, from the edge of the hollow to the shrubs at its foot, there are two paths, each wide enough for two men to walk abreast. A great holly-bough conceals these exits, and is removed and replaced by any passing in or out. At the top of the banks at the end of the paths, there stand two sentinels night and day, and, so artfully are the approaches concealed, that, once inside the holly-screen, they snap their finger at the whole world, and count themselves as secure as rats in the barn."

"Well, gentlemen," said Sir Rufus, "you hear what this good fellow has told us. Who is for the rabbit-hole and who is for the holly?"

The idea of crawling thirty feet under ground, upon hands and knees, somewhat cooled the ardour of these gay fellows. No one spoke.

"By your worship's leave," said Gregory Firebrace, again smiling in the darkness, "my two companions, myself, your honour, and three others, will suffice for the burrow."

"I am with you, Firebrace," said bold Sir Rufus.

The dull, red light of the fire in the outer hollow showed through the square entrance, and Simon could trace the outline of the stable, now empty of horses.

"Give me your hand," whispered Gregory Firebrace; "and remember that the slightest noise will undo us."

The old man thrust his legs through the hole and, with a rapier between his teeth, lowered himself to arm's length, and dropped without a noise.

Simon followed suit, and the moment after stood beside him, ankle-deep in a litter of dry fern.

It was then Gilbert's turn, and Sir Rufus Pontifex, with more agility, than his girth would seem to justify, scrambled down, and drew a prodigious sigh of relief.

"Hist!" murmured Gregory Firebrace. "Someone is speaking!"

Sir Rufus put up his hand to stay the serving-men, and all listened as if their lives depended upon it. They could not distinguish the words, but it was evident that the robbers round the fire outside were talking among themselves.

"Wait!" breathed Gregory Firebrace; and he slipped towards the opening.

He was back again in a moment, and what he had to tell was imparted in an almost voiceless whisper.

"There are five of them," he said, "and they are on the alert. I trust our friends below have not given the alarm. Let the men come down, and we will fall upon them!"

Two of the grooms accomplished the descent in safety, but while the third was yet hanging midway between the burrow and the floor of

the stable, a volley of pistols startled the echoes without, and the voice of Sir Harry Lovelock was heard exclaiming:

"Down with your arms, dogs! Resistance is useless!"

A fearful uproar arose from the fire, and as Gilbert and Simon Barbican sprang through the opening, they saw the five men leap for the bank-top.

"Yield, rogues—yield!" cried Simon Barbican, rushing in pursuit.

The robbers then turned, and, with dreadful oaths, plunged down the path out of sight.

A tremendous commotion was taking place now.

One piercing scream rose above it all, and Sir Harry's voice was heard exclaiming:

"I have you dead as a doornail, my friend!"

Simon Barbican, realising that the robbers must be trapped, followed no further than the bank-top; and old Gregory Firebrace, with a triumphant grin, checked himself as he reached the fire.

"We can well leave them to the others," he said. "Let us now look to Master Jewell!"

He turned, and ran back into the opening in the bank, after thrusting a torch into the fire.

The flambeau flared up, and the reflection of the earthen walls of the subterranean chambers showed the gigantic roots that protruded here and there.

The stable was empty; the storehouse he did not trouble about; but, seizing the rough wicket that secured the door of the sleeping apartment, he wrenched it open, locked though it was, and went in, Simon Barbican at his elbow.

"Empty!" said the old wolf, in a tone of surprise. "We have drawn blank."

Gregory Firebrace's jaw dropped, and he looked at Sir Rufus Pontifex.

"Search the place high and low!" he cried, lighting another torch, and examining every hole and corner, as Sir Harry's party poured into the hollow.

Hill Hole was empty; the goldsmith had gone!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

How various people returned to Old London Bridge, and Eli Nethersole rubbed his hands

It was early morning, and Gideon Bilge yawned prodigiously as he began to unbar Eli Nethersole's front door. Eli Nethersole followed the same calling as his neighbour, John Jewell, but with this difference—while the one was an honest man, the other was a rogue, and supplemented his income by usury.

Gideon Bilge gave vent to a terrific yawn, that well-nigh dislocated his jaw, and drew back the last remaining bolt. He started, and gave a cry, for, no sooner had he done this when the door was thrown violently open, sending him spinning back a yard or more, and a freshly shaven man darted in, closed the door behind him, and said no word until he had shot all the bolts once more in their places. Having done this, he turned partly round, and looked at Gideon.

Gideon was on the watch—as usual.

Quartermaine seemed amused by the impression he had created. He had placed his prisoner, the goldsmith, in a safe place, right in the heart of the Thieves' Quarter—that Alsatia he, the chief of the rogues, knew so well.

Quartermaine stamped upstairs and told Eli all.

"We reached Smithfield with the goldsmith two hours since," said the robber. "Now, let's see your work, Eli. 'Tis important that we make a clean sweep of John Jewell's strong-room before forty-eight hours have passed!"

Eli Nethersole lighted his candle, and led the way down a flight of well-worn oak steps into the vaults underneath the shop.

The first chamber into which they came was empty; but, unlocking the little door at the far end, Nethersole stooped his head, and the captain, following, found himself in a small inner chamber, where they could distinctly hear the murmuring of the tide.

"We are ten feet below the river," said the usurer, "and there is my handiwork."

He pointed to the wall. It was built of stone blocks, roughly cemented together, each block of considerable thickness, and a heavy

enough load for one man to carry. Five of these portions of the ancient masonry of the bridge had been prised from the wall by a heavy iron crowbar, and a yawning hollow showed where they had been.

Eli Nethersole thrust a candle into the opening, and tapped with his thin, crooked fingers.

"Brickwork, Quartermaine—brickwork!" he said. "It will take but little time to clear it out, and beyond that there is an inner casing of wood, which will not detain us long."

Quartermaine, his face showing symptoms of keen interest, took the candle from the usurer's hand, and examined the cavity minutely.

"There is one thing to be remembered," he said, speaking in a whisper. "The moment our chisels fall upon that inner panelling, the work must be pushed forward, and the thing done in a few hours. As yet, I do not see that Jewell's household can have a suspicion of our intent."

. . . . .

Meanwhile Sir Rufus Pontifex, Sir Harry Lovelock, the worthy saddler, and our hero were narrating the history of their night's exploit to Dame Jewell.

There was something very pathetic in the table duly laid for five, showing how confident the good dame had been that morning would produce the absent one. Her face was very white and drawn, and she listened, without seeming to hear, as Sir Rufus Pontifex did his best to reassure her in his earnest tones.

"'Tis a strange thing, madam," said Sir Rufus—"a mighty strange thing. But men do not disappear in our days. In the bad times it was so. But all that is changed with the return of his gracious Majesty. Sir Harry and I are going straight to Whitehall, and we will state such a case before the King as shall speedily restore your husband."

"You are very kind, gentlemen," said Dame Jewell, nervously twisting the corner of her snow-white pinner. "It passes my poor comprehension, for John had not an enemy in the world, and no man, whether it be on the bridge or in the City, or in the King's palace itself, was better thought of, or more deserved it."

She let her gaze rest on the stolid face of her brother, as if mutely appealing to him for assistance.

"You must be of good cheer, Barbara," said Master Jasper Jenkins. "As Sir Rufus says, a good citizen like John Jewell cannot be spirited away all in a moment, and I shall never rest until I have discovered him and brought the rogues to justice."

Dame Jewell's bosom began to heave like a tumultuous sea, and her mouth commencing to twitch in a manner that savoured of an unmistakable breakdown, Sir Rufus and Sir Harry bowed themselves out with all the haste they could, and rode away to seek justice, if any could be found in the land.

Jasper did his best to cheer up his sister.

Meanwhile Gilbert was reproaching himself for bringing trouble on the house, while Simon went to answer the door, for an old tinker with a tray of glittering wares was outside.

"Lord save us!" cried Simon. "It is Master Firebrace!"

The tinker chuckled. He knew his disguise was sure, and that he would not encounter such sharp eyes as Simon's.

"I wish to speak to Master Jenkins," he said, "and without attracting attention."

And Gregory Firebrace, looking down at himself, laughed after his noiseless fashion.

"My house is in Gracious Street," said the saddler. "I will take care that we have pot and pan to mend. If you learn anything, come thither, and should I be absent, say your say to my good wife. She and I are one."

"That is as it should be," said Gregory Firebrace, with a sigh. "To-morrow I may have news. Meanwhile I need not urge you to watch. And as for you, Master Gilbert, take my advice and keep well within doors. Remember you are in peril of your life. If you must go forth, let it be with Simon Barbican or Master Jenkins here."

The old tinker picked up his glittering bundle once more, and went slowly out.

He limped slowly along down a narrow winding street, of a sort we should call picturesque, but which must have been terribly uncomfortable and unhealthy to live in in the days of King Charles II.

It was ancient ground to Gregory Firebrace,

and to a great many people who, like the old soldier, were upon the border-line that separates respectability from rascality in various forms. The spot was also holy in the sense that the spot was a sanctuary for evil-doers.

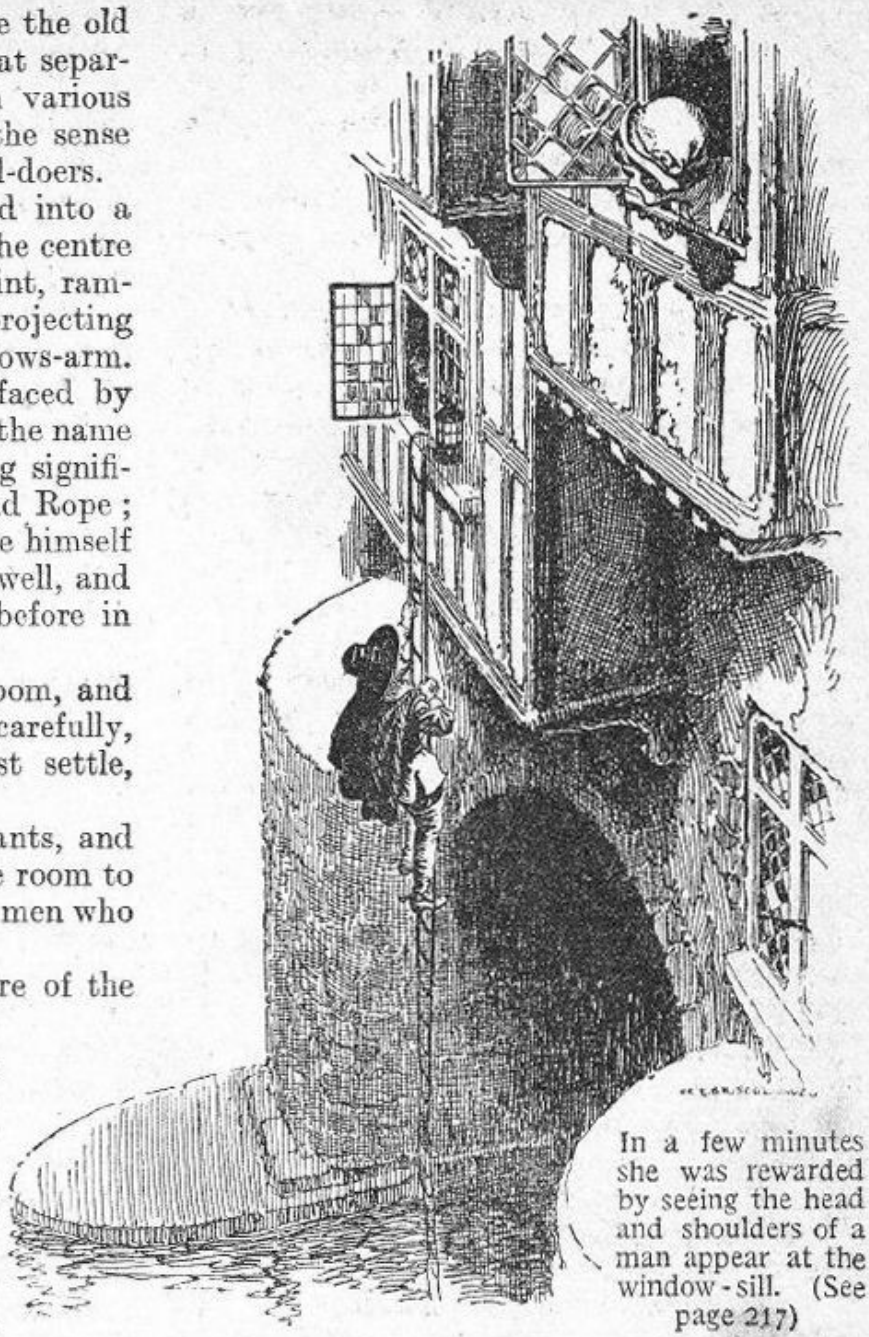
At the bottom the street widened into a little square, with a frozen pump in the centre of it, and at one corner with a quaint, rambling building with a signboard projecting from its front like a miniature gallows-arm. Upon the board, in letters half defaced by time and grime, one might have read the name of the tavern. There was something significant in it, being that of the Goat and Rope; but Gregory Firebrace did not trouble himself to cast an eye upon it. He knew it well, and had been there hundreds of times before in very different disguise.

Two steps led into the common-room, and the lame tinker negotiated them carefully, and, sitting down upon the nearest settle, called for a tankard of ale.

A slovenly drawer supplied his wants, and then returned to the other end of the room to look over the shoulders of a group of men who were playing tric-trac.

A bright fire burned in the centre of the room.

There were a score of folk within as many yards of him who would have answered any question Gregory Firebrace cared to put to them—folk he had helped in the days of his prosperity; men he had rescued from tight places and awkward situations. But if it once got breathed about that the old swordsman was in Alsatia, Quartermaine and his gang would find a ready means of discharging him.



In a few minutes she was rewarded by seeing the head and shoulders of a man appear at the window-sill. (See page 217)

When the gamesters had finished, and one or two of them had left the tavern, the landlord sauntered over to the place where Gregory Firebrace was seated, and looked at him curiously.

"You are a slow feeder, my friend," he said.

"I have fewer teeth than I once had, mine host," said the old man in a faint voice.

The door opened suddenly, and Captain Quartermaine entered, bringing in a cold blast of air with him, and a pile of snow on the sole of each boot. He went right through into the inner room, and spoke for some minutes with the landlord; then a dirty cloth was laid on a gate-legged table, which Gregory could see from where he sat. A steaming joint of beef was carried thither from the kitchen, and the captain and mine host seated themselves and ate ravenously.

"Tom," said the landlord, when they had devoured enough for three ordinary mortals, "a platter, a knife, and a flask of red canary."

These things were brought in by one of the drawers, a yellow-visaged man with a cut across the forehead. Gregory Firebrace had

THE SIGHTS OF GREYFRIARS

THE HEAD'S STUDY

A TERRIFYING sight is this
To every old offender,
Who, having erred and done amiss,
His sorrow comes to render.
The Head sits there, in solemn state,
To deal out retribution;
He lectures culprits who await
The pangs of execution!

I'd rather dream of marble halls
Than Dr. Locke's apartment,
Where victims have emitted squalls
And wondered what each smart meant!
I'd sooner be in some quaint hut,
Uncarpeted and muddy,
Than find myself securely shut
In Dr. Locke's grim study.!

I know that study like a book,
Its sights are most arresting;
In every corner, if you look,
A pliant cane is resting!
I see the bookcase, tall and grim,
Where much forgotten lore is
(Including Rudyard Kipling's "Kim"
And other curious stories!)

I do not love thee, dismal place!
Quite obvious is the reason;
I've often stood there in disgrace,
For breaking bounds, or treason.
In fact, when Dr. Locke's stern glance
Descends upon these verses
He'll send for me; so in advance
I'll crave his tender mercies!

been present during the fracas in which Tom had sustained the hurt.

The landlord carved off a portion of the juicy beef, placed a slice of bread beside it, filled a long-stemmed glass with the red wine, and rose from his seat. The drawer closed the door of the inner room, but Gregory Firebrace heard the jingle of the captain's spurs, and a moment after the sound of two men ascending the wooden staircase.

"Ho, ho!" muttered the lame tinker to himself. "For whom is that repast being conveyed to the upper rooms? Is it possible that I have lighted upon my man so soon?"

Firebrace left the inn and made an inspection. The roof communicated with other roofs, the attic windows were closely shuttered on the inside. It did not do to trust one's neighbours in such a locality, but as the tinker watched, one of the shutters was opened, and for a moment he saw Quartermaine's face looking down into the little square.

The snow continued, and still the attic window remained open. It was perhaps a quarter of an hour, to be particular, and then the shutter closed again, and the tinker came out of the mouth of the alleyway.

"So," said he, "there is someone up there whom they find it necessary to feed. I cannot think that it is Master Jewell, but that remains to be discovered. Now to get me a lodging in some house from whence I can gain the roofs, and carry my investigation further."

He paused a moment with his eyes half-closed, and then walked across the little square, and rapped on a door in the corner.

A thin, pale-faced woman unfastened the bolt, and peered at him. At the sight of his bundle she shook her head, and was closing the door again, when Gregory Firebrace put his foot against it, and said in a faint voice:

"Your pardon, madam, but I am but newly come into this place, and searching for a lodging. Any hole will do for me where I can lay my old bones out of reach of this snowstorm."

"My attic is empty," she said; "but it is a poor place in very truth."

"A poor place is well fitted for a poor man," said the tinker. And as he passed in he once more laughed that silent laugh of his.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

How my Lord Mountmarmaduke Showed that he had more than Common Interest in the Welfare of Master John Jewell

My Lord Mountmarmaduke, a fair young nobleman who played upon the lute to the Merry Monarch, got out of a coach at Temple Bar, and wrapped in a scarlet mantle, lined with costly fur, took his way into Alsatia.

It was growing dusk, and the narrow street, so full of pitfalls for the unwary, offered no obstruction to the courtier, who threaded them as quickly as if they had been the corridors of Whitehall. He pushed open the door of the Goat and Rope, as a man would who was perfectly acquainted with the place, ducked his head to avoid crushing the feathers in his hat, took the two steps as a matter of course, and, without looking right or left, went straight to the inner room. Captain Quartermaine was there alone, and the coming of my lord was evidently expected.

The captain arose, placed a leather-covered chair near the bright log-fire, and, motioning towards a bright array of flasks and bottles on the table, said :

"Will my lord be pleased to take anything ? "

"No, Quartermaine," said the nobleman, standing with his back to the blaze, and shaking the snow from his cloak. "I have little time to stay here, and we will to business. Have you spoken to our man yet ? "

"I have broached the subject as your lordship directed," said Quartermaine, "but with little success. The goldsmith is a man of experience, and not without courage, and I fear we are playing a very dangerous game."

"'Tis your own fault, Quartermaine. You had the chance to kill the boy, and you missed it. Again, over there in the forest, when fortune played directly into your hands, you missed it a second time. Now I am going to have a say in matters. Where is he ? "

"I will conduct your lordship to his room," said the captain. He took a key from his pocket and accompanied Mountmarmaduke up the stairs with a candle in each hand.

At the door of a room in the attic the captain stopped, placed one of the candles on the rickety floor, put the key in the lock, and went in. The candle cast a wavering light about the little apartment, which was bitterly cold, and, huddled up on the edge of the pallet bed, sat Master John Jewell, his chin in his hand, and an expression of deep thought on his face as he looked up.

"I have brought you a visitor, Master Jewell," said Quartermaine, putting candles on the table, and closing the door carefully. "Your imprisonment may cease in an hour an you wish it."

My Lord Mountmarmaduke's face had gone a trifle pale as he crossed the threshold, and now grew red as he felt the goldsmith's eyes upon him.

"I am sorry, sir," said the nobleman, speaking hurriedly, but gradually gaining his composure. "I am sorry to see you here, and regret the discomfort in which I find you. To cut a long story short, a certain youth has come to your house, bearing a certain packet of papers, which he lodged in your hands. You will have to decide on two things, Master Jewell—whether that boy dies, or whether you hand those papers to me. There is no other alternative, and I put it to you quite openly, with Captain Quartermaine as a witness."

"I shall not give you the papers, my Lord Mountmarmaduke," said John Jewell quietly; "and the boy is in the hands of those who will protect him. This outrage of keeping me in durance vile must cease ere many hours are passed. I doubt not even now my friends are taking such steps as shall free me by the morrow. The papers you cannot lay your hands upon, and if you kill me, my lawyer will find them in due course; and, though I am but a poor citizen, and not a great lord, nothing will save you from the common hangman."

Quartermaine drew Mountmarmaduke aside, and whispered earnestly in his ear. My lord's face, which had grown as white as marble, now resumed its colour, and he laughed a hard, unmusical laugh, and turned to the goldsmith with a sneer upon his lips.

Was it the wind that jarred the shutter, or was there someone on the roof outside ?

"You live on London Bridge, Master Jewell," said he, "and doubtless you have keys to your strong-room. Forgive me if my question seems somewhat impertinent, but are those keys to your pouch at the present moment?"

The goldsmith looked fixedly at him, and made no reply.

Was it the wind that shook the heavy shutter for the second time as the door closed? We shall see.

. . . . .

"Barbara," said Jasper Jenkins, his face very solemn, "I want to look into the strong-room."

"My good Jasper," said Dame Jewell, "I have already told you that I have not the keys. John always carries them on his person, and where he is now there they must be."

"I care not one groat about them," said Jasper Jenkins, in a very decided tone. "Look into that vault I must, for I have very grave suspicions."

"Lawks!" said Dame Jewell. "And what is the matter now?"

Jenkins was a long-headed man. He told his sister his suspicions.

"Eli Nethersole is up to no good," he said. "I want to inspect your vaults and find out what is being done next door."

It was an easy matter to find a locksmith. The saddler went out, to return with a burly man who stooped.

"An old friend of mine, Barbara," he said to his sister. "He can be trusted not only to keep our secret, but to force any lock in London town. Show us the doors, and Martin Horley shall take them one by one."

Martin Horley was a man with a merry eye, and a face well-nigh as black as a sweep's. He produced a bag full of keys and strange instruments in use by locksmiths, and followed Dame Jewell to a heavy oak panel in the wall of a sitting-room.

"This one I can open myself," she said, pressing on the right-hand bottom corner.

The panel swung back, and showed a dark opening.

"There is the first floor," said the good dame, "and I warrant me you will have your work cut out for you, Master Horley!"

"We shall see—we shall see!" said the locksmith cheerily. "Jasper, will you hold the candle for me?"

"That will I, Martin," said the saddler, laughing; "though 'tis few men can hold the candle to thee at this business."

The locksmith knelt down, scrutinised the door closely and its fastenings, and rattled his bag as a prisoner rattles his chains. In five minutes the door opened, and Martin Horley looked at Dame Jewell with a sly smile.

A flight of steps led them to another door, which gave Master Horley more trouble; but eventually that flew open under his magic touch, and three strides along a narrow passage brought them to a third obstacle. He placed a steel instrument in the lock, turned it one way and then the other, and shook his head dubiously.

"There is an hour's work here," said Martin Horley; "and I should like another candle."

It was about this time that Gideon Bilge came shambling along the bridge once more. His hands were thrust deep in his pockets, and he was whistling. At every few paces he looked over his shoulder, as though someone were following him, and he smiled maliciously the while. When he reached his master's door he paused, with his hand on the latch, and cast a cunning look at the corner where Simon Barbican was standing.

"If you stay there all night," said Gideon Bilge, chuckling to himself, "you will catch nothing—unless it is a cold."

And then, tapping with his knuckles, the door was opened from within, and the apprentice disappeared.

Simon waited some time, but the bridge was deserted. It was not a night when they would choose to be abroad who had no serious business. When his feet were so numb that he could scarcely feel them, Simon stole across to his master's house once more, and made his report to the saddler.

Master Horley had succeeded in forcing the third obstacle, and they were getting very near to the vault itself.

Now, the maid Priscilla, who was trembling with excitement at all this mystery and marvellous happening, found herself unable to keep still. If she sat down she had to get up

He thrust the packet into his breast, and stole away out of the strong room. (See page 243)

again. If she went into one room she forthwith walked aimlessly into another. And at last, for no reason at all, she opened one of the lattice windows and looked out.

It was a dark night, and the river was running strongly through the arch beneath the house. Blocks of ice swirled in the current, and grated one against the other, sometimes piling in a great heap against the stone piers, and, coming away suddenly with a mighty crash, went swirling away down stream.

The sound of the rushing water, which she could not see, exercised a strange fascination for Priscilla, and as she looked down she became aware that a lantern had been placed on the sill of one of the windows of Eli Nethersole's house. It was a dim affair at best, being a lantern of Charles the Second's period; but it was an unusual thing, and Priscilla's slow wits fell a-wondering why it had been placed there. Presently, out of the darkness of the bosom of the river, the sound of a whistle came up to the watching maid. The whistle was answered by another, as a hand raised the lantern, and swung it to and fro. Then she saw several hands protruded from the Nethersole window--hands that seemed to be dropping something into the river, and that something a rope ladder.

There was a grinding sound below, and the grate of a boat-hook against the masonry; then another whistle, and all was still.

"I wish Simon Barbican were here," said Priscilla to herself. "I should like to call him, but I do want to watch."

And so she watched, and in a few minutes was rewarded by seeing the head and shoulders of a man appear at the window-sill, and again those hands coming forth to help him in. He was followed by two others at short intervals. Another whistle went out into the night, and when the lantern had been withdrawn she heard the window close.

. . . . . .

"It was a good thought of yours that we should come by water, Eli," said Captain Quartermaine, rubbing his hands. "Is it possible that the folk next door suspect you?"

"I know not why they should," said Eli Nethersole, with his crackling laugh, "except that, under the circumstances, they might suspect anybody—even the King himself."

"Ha, ha, Eli!" said the captain. "If you knew what I know you would find more truth in those words than you think. It is not convenient for his gracious Majesty that neighbour Jewell should be discovered just now, and the search will not be very hot for him from Whitehall. Still, it was as well, as I said before, that we should enter by this way. How goes the work?"

"So well," said the usurer, "that we have but to take the panelling out, and John Jewell's strong-room is at our mercy."

"Then let us to work," said the robber. "I left our friend in safe keeping, and he had but cold comfort from my lord, I can assure you."

They went down into the usurer's shop, and proceeded at once into the vault. The hole in the wall had been increased to the height of a man, and was fully a yard in width. Fragments of brick and mortar covered the floor, and, by the light of their candles, the newcomers saw that the usurer had spoken truth. A screen of stout oak planks alone separated them from the object of their nefarious search.

"How long, Hugh?" said Quartermaine, turning to the man who had been helping Silas Double. "You are a carpenter by trade, and can best tell us how to proceed."

"I have looked very carefully, captain," said Long Hugh, "and this panelling is mighty strong. Nothing remains but to saw through it, and the saw must be well oiled, for it will make no little noise."

While Eli Nethersole went upstairs to search for oil, Long Hugh took up the usurer's auger with a view to testing the thickness of the panel, and, working dexterously, had soon bored a hole through the woodwork.

They waited breathlessly as he withdrew the instrument, and then the next moment clapped their hands on the guttering candles, and extinguished them simultaneously. A ray of light shone through the hole, and there were people in Master Jewell's strong room talking loudly.

"Ten thousand furies!" muttered Quartermaine, pulling Silas Double out of the way, and applying his eye to the orifice. The others crowded behind him, and held their breaths, and but for the intense darkness of the vault they would have seen that his face grew white as death.

"Not a word—not a sound!" he whispered hoarsely, as he turned to them, "There must be witchcraft here. John Jewell himself is in that room!"

Captain Quartermaine, baffled in all his plans, leaned heavily against the wall, with a strange feeling at his heart.

"Go back all of you," he whispered. "After this, no one knows what may happen. Make the best of your way to the tavern. I will stay here and listen apace." And, placing his ear to the augerhole, this is what he heard.

John Jewell stood in the centre of his strong-room, a candle in one hand and his left arm round Dame Barbara's waist; while Jasper Jenkins, the locksmith, and Simon Barbican, each holding a light, were peering in every cranny and crevice, and sounding upon the walls with the palms of their hands.

"Well, my friends," said the goldsmith, "'tis indeed a strange business, to say the truth. I hardly know whether I stand upon my head or my heels. The adventures of the past few days have crowded so thick and fast one upon the other, and the peril I have escaped was so very deadly, that my mind was in a whirl, and I realised little else but the Providence that has preserved me."

Dame Barbara was sobbing gently, and held very tightly to her good man, as though she was afraid he might be spirited away from her at any moment.

It so chanced that the rogues in the adjoining house had chosen a spot ill-suited to their purpose in one way, but very fortunate in another. Three great chests, piled one upon another, had their backs to the wall at the exact spot where they had made their excavation; consequently, though the saddler and Simon prodded and pounded every available inch of the panelling, they did not reach the spot which by its hollow sound would have revealed the whole business.

One touch on the place where the robber was listening greedily would have produced a hollow sound like a drum. But, by one of those strange chances, that was the only spot they did not test.

"I cannot help thinking," said the goldsmith, "that your fears are groundless. Everything here is as it should be; and though I believe our neighbour to be a bad man, I cannot think him guilty of such an act of treachery as you suggest, Jasper."

Jasper Jenkins looked at his brother-in-law steadily.

"All that I can say is that I heard the knocking," said the saddler. "It shook my very bed."

"And yet," said the goldsmith, "we find nothing."

"If you are a wise man, brother, you will visit this vault oftener than you have done in the past. I am still suspicious."

"That will I do," said the goldsmith.

And then, applying his eye in place of his ear to the auger-hole, the baffled robber saw the light withdraw from the vault, and the iron-bound door close noiselessly upon its well-oiled hinges.

Quartermaine stepped back into the vault, and nearly overturned Eli Nethersole, who had lingered behind the rest.

"Hang you for an old fool!" hissed the robber. "'Tis useless now he has taken the package away with him, and we may suspend operations for the next six months."

Eli Nethersole replied not a word, but his mind was working.

"Ah, you curse me, do you?" he muttered to himself. "Wait awhile, Quartermaine; wait awhile! The packet is little to me, but the gold and jewels are much, and with my own hands I will do the thing, and what I gain I will keep myself."

. . . . . .

In the meantime, on the other side of the stout old wall that divided the houses of the two goldsmiths, a merry party was assembled in John Jewell's cosy room.

"Well, well," said the goldsmith, "it has all ended happily, thanks to Firebrace!"

"We are thankful for your safe return," said Jasper Jenkins, setting down his glass. "'Tis a fortunate business, but I tell you, John, 'tis not over yet."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the sound of a great uproar came from the bridge without. Everyone half-rose from their chairs, and Simon Barbican flung open the window.

A mighty clamour was borne in upon the wind, and the well-known sound of steel upon steel, the clatter of iron-shod hoofs, the quick stamp of men's feet on the hard ground, and the muffled murmur of several speaking in hoarse voices, told them all that a fierce brawl was in progress under their very noses.

"Ha, rogues! Ho, villains!" rang out a strong voice. "Look to yourself, Sir Harry! There are two upon you!"

"If ever I heard Sir Rufus Pontifex," exclaimed Gregory Firebrace, "I hear him now, and in trouble of no common sort!"

Simon Barbican had not waited for his master's permission, but was out of the room and away downstairs at three leaps and a bound, Gilbert Nameless close on his heels and the saddler following.

Never had honest Simon unfastened those bolts and bars so quickly, and almost as soon as it has taken me to recount it, three figures sprang forth from the goldsmith's door with a loud shout.

Simon Barbican had snatched his formidable staff from its corner; Gilbert Nameless drew his rapier as he ran, while worthy Master Jasper Jenkins, unable in a hurry to find a more serviceable weapon, picked up a four-legged oaken stool, which in his brawny hands would have proved remarkably convincing to any disturber of the king's peace upon whose cranium it chanced to have lighted.

Two gentlemen on horseback, bareheaded and encumbered with heavy riding-cloaks, were hotly beset by five men.

Half-way down the bridge good Sir Rufus and his friend, Sir Harry Lovelock, returning from Whitehall, where they had been unable to see the king, had found themselves suddenly surrounded by five ruffians, evidently bent on plunder.

These were wild times. A century later,

when men journeyed from London to York, they felt it necessary to make their wills; and yet another century nearer to our own travellers were warned not to approach London in the dusk for fear of foot-pads and highwaymen.

In the good year 1664 you carried your life, indeed, in your own hands.

It had chanced that Quartermaine and his four confederates, their purses empty and disappointment rankling in their hearts, had met two horsemen midway between Nethersole's house and the gate at the other end of the bridge.

The hour was late. Good citizens were mostly abed, and when Quartermaine drew his rapier and slunk into the shadow of a house, his companions knew well what he meant and did likewise.

Sir Rufus and Sir Harry, talking loudly as they came, and suspecting nothing, were rudely awakened from their fancied security by rough hands laid upon their bridles and hoarse voices that cried:

"Your money or your lives!"

"I have little money upon me, dogs, and my life will keep a little longer, with your permission!" cried Sir Rufus.

And, both being good horsemen, they spurred themselves clear of the ruffians and had time to draw their own blades.

Quartermaine gave a peculiar whistle, which meant:

"Carry this thing through at all costs!"

And then began a running fight, the gentlemen being at such serious disadvantage on the slippery causeway; and both of them disdaining to cry for the watch, they set to it with a will to defend themselves, like the gallant gentlemen they were. But the night being dark, and the ruffians well-used to this sort of encounter, the knight and his companion found that they had undertaken no easy task.

Windows opened above them, night-capped heads gazed timidly forth, and women screamed shrilly; but none interfered, such things being of frequent occurrence in those good old days.

Sir Harry cut Long Hugh over the cheek, and Silas Double nearly passed out of the story as Sir Rufus ran him through the shoulder.

"Make for the first opening, Harry; we have no room here!" cried Sir Rufus.

And so, thrusting and parrying, smiting and spurring, they found themselves close to the goldsmith's door, and not sorry at the sudden reinforcement that burst out to their aid.

"Ten thousand curses!" muttered Quartermaine. "Draw off, lads; draw off! There is a fate in all this!"

And he started running like a hare to the Surrey side of the river.

There was one thing about Dick Quartermaine—he knew exactly when to leave off.

Fortunately for the desperadoes, Sir Harry Lovelock's horse suddenly took to rearing and plunging to the entrance of the narrow street, and by the time its rider had got him down on all fours, the rascals had gone. And deeming, not unnaturally, that they would take to the water in the boat that had brought them, our friends did not pursue.

"Thank you, good fellows," said Sir Rufus, dismounting. "It might have gone hardly with us had you not come when you did. Never have I experienced so determined an attack. I had almost began to think that one of their number had some personal animus against us, for he pressed me without ceasing."

"Would you know the rogues again, Sir Rufus?" said Simon, in a disappointed voice, regretting that his beloved cudgel had not had an opportunity for distinguishing itself.

"One does not recognise assailants on a night like this," growled Gregory Firebrace. "Yet can I tell you some at least of the rogues. Quartermaine and his gang they were, and I doubt not that, if they recognised you, they were anxious to pay off old scores, and avenge the discovery of Hill Hole."

"Now, a murrain on the fellow!" cried Sir Rufus as John Jewell appeared in the doorway with a lighted lamp. "If I can get at the King, that man shall be hanged!"

And then the worthy baronet, catching sight of the goldsmith, raised his hands in great surprise, and fell back a step.

"What! How now, John Jewell?" he cried.

"At your service, Sir Rufus," said the goldsmith, laughing in spite of himself. "I know your errand. You come to tell me that your search has been fruitless; but, thanks to Heaven, here am I to tell you that further search is unnecessary."

The worthy knight shook John Jewell warmly by the hand, whispering at the same time:

"I want a word with you!"

The goldsmith led him to the further end of the shop, and Sir Rufus's red face became very grave.

"Have you enemies at court, Master Jewell?" he said.

"I have one," said the goldsmith, with a half smile playing about his mouth. "Why do you ask, Sir Rufus? Have you reason for this question that you may tell me?"

"Answer me another first. Know you aught of Lord Mountmarmaduke?"

The goldsmith's eye glittered, and his brow drew down.

"That is the man, Sir Rufus."

"Ah, I thought as much! He stands between you and the King. Here have I been cooling my heels at Whitehall. Told first that his Majesty would see me, then that his Majesty was unwell, and again that his Majesty was not at Whitehall at all, but had gone to Hampton Court. Then I heard the King's voice, and raised my own. I have drank with him, danced with him, and, between ourselves, lent him more money than I could afford to do, and all to no purpose, though I know he heard me. And on top of that comes my Lord Mountmarmaduke, smiling that cynical smile of his, and playing with the curls of his yellow wig, and casting upon me such a look, that, by my word, it was all I could do to keep my sword off him!"

"Quick, Simon, the papers!" cried Gilbert. "I have them!" shouted Simon, drawing forth the precious packet. (See page 247)

"'I fear me, Sir Rufus Pontifex,' says he, 'that his Majesty has business of more importance than the welfare of an obscure goldsmith who has taken of late to meddling with matters that do not concern him!' Whereupon I made my lord a low bow, and asked him by what right he presumed to pass comment upon my business, and how he knew what that business was. He turned a little pale at this, and laid his hand upon his sword; but there was something in my eye that sent this cockscomb off upon his travels. Ah, I tell you, John Jewell, I have a terrible eye when I like!"

"You have a very warm heart, Sir Rufus," said the goldsmith, "and I thank you for all you have done on my behalf. Some day I shall stand equal with my Lord Mountmarmaduke, then the Court will have a very pretty

scandal to amuse it itself with; but of that I must not speak, even to Sir Rufus Pontifex. But, sir," continued the goldsmith, changing the subject, "will you not do me the honour—you and Sir Harry Lovelock—to come above stairs? We were even now at supper."

Gilbert, though he had modestly begged to stand excused, brought forth his lute, and finding it well in tune, sang so sweetly that all were enchanted.

. . . . . .

"Sir Harry," said John Jewell, in a meaning voice, "time will alone unravel the mystery that surrounds yonder lad. But you are near the mark when you say he would not disgrace the Court. And if all goes well he will one day go there—not as a singer, but in his own right. But for the present he must remain simple Gilbert Nameless"

Those were happy days for Gilbert. Despite the ravages of the Plague in the City, he and Simon found life pleasant as boys will, and it was their delight to go out into the country—into the beautiful district of Tottenham, where Dame Jenkins had friends.

Dainty Prue Jenkins, the saddler's daughter, played the lute, and there were happy times with merry laughter amidst the vales, though ever and anon Gilbert would wax thoughtful as he reflected on the mystery that surrounded his birth. Old Firebrace kept watch and ward, and for a period nothing was heard either of Lord Mountmarmaduke or of Quartermaine and his band. Gilbert was now apprenticed to John Jewell, and had the good opinion of everybody.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

How Everybody's Planswere Suddenly Altered by a very Terrible Happening

A JOVIAL man was Sir Rufus Pontifex, Baronet, and as he came riding down Gracious Street on his magnificent red roan it was like an additional ray of sunshine entering the City.

Sir Rufus cared nothing for the plague, although there were doleful signs of it on every side. Watchmen sat at the doors; fumigating fires were burning.

Sir Rufus, riding on to the pavement, smote the saddler's door with his riding-whip, and Jasper Jenkins greeted him with a smile.

"Good-morrow to you, Sir Rufus! Art not afraid of the pestilence?"

"Fiddlesticks!" cried the baronet, getting off his horse slowly; for he was a stout man and heavy. "The only thing that I am afraid of is that you have not enough cold ale to quench my raging thirst."

Jasper Jenkins led his visitor into a small room at the back of the shop, and when he had placed tankards upon the table, the baronet bade him be seated.

"'Tis some time since we have met, Jenkins," said he, "and we get no news save of deaths and burials nowadays. What of that young rascal, John Jewell's apprentice? Has he had any more adventures?"

"'Tis strange that you should ask of Gilbert," said the saddler gravely. "Gregory Firebrace and I were but now speaking of him. We have some news, and mighty curious news, too! Know you who the lad is, Sir Rufus?"

"The day is too hot for riddles, Jasper; but as likely cub as ever I saw. How do they call him in the pack?"

"If everyone had their rights, he should be Lord Mountmarmaduke," said the saddler, in a low voice.

The crimson of Rufus's face deepened in colour, and the worthy baronet gave vent to a long whistle.

"Gadzooks!" he cried. "I will take the lad to the Court myself!"

Sir Rufus was so full of the scheme, which grew upon him the more he thought of it, that he paced up and down, declaiming loudly; and a knock upon the door had to be repeated several times before they paid any attention to it.

At last the saddler lifted the latch and saw Simon Barbican and Gilbert Nameless himself, with so curious an expression upon their faces that the saddler instantly knew that something was amiss.

"Can we have a word with you without delay, Master Jenkins?" said Simon Barbican, who acted as spokesman. "We have strange news."

The saddler motioned them to enter and closed the door again, to the great disappointment of his apprentices, Dick, Tom and Harry.

Simon Barbican, his face scarlet and his chest heaving like a blacksmith's bellows, and bearing upon his person every trace of having run fast and far, plunged into a story so tangled and incoherent, by reason of his laboured breathing, that Gilbert had to come to the rescue half a dozen times.

Between them they at last unburdened themselves of some very remarkable information, which they had lighted upon by the merest chance.

Quartermaine, Double, Long Hugh and half a dozen other ruffians were to rifle John Jewell's house that night, and, murdering its inmates, were to convey all the silver and money they could find down the river by boat. They were to meet at Eli Nethersole's at ten o'clock, and the attempt was to be made at the first stroke of midnight.

"The first person to acquaint is my brother-in-law," said the saddler. "Since these good lads saw the party in the tavern issue forth, we cannot lay hands on them now. What say you, Sir Rufus? Will you with us to John Jewell's? We will go warily, lest we excite suspicion."

Along the bridge they went, and soon rounded the angle into the opening to gain the goldsmith's door.

Then it was that Jasper Jenkins raised his hands in horror and fell back a pace, and all the others did the same; for upon the door was the fatal red cross, and the words:

"Lord, have mercy upon us."

"My heavens!" exclaimed the saddler, pressing his left hand to his brow and staring, aghast.

"I cannot bid you welcome, friends," said a sorrowful voice from the window above the doorway, as John Jewell looked down upon them with a grave face. "My house is now a house of mourning. Our maid Priscilla, hath the pestilence."

"By my sword," muttered Gregory Firebrace, with a short laugh of triumph, "'tis an ill wind that blows nobody any good! Master Jewell could not have a better protection than yonder cross against Quartermaine and his band!"

A dead silence fell upon the party. Sir Rufus Pontifex had turned very pale. The old soldier, alone of the little band, recovered his presence of mind.

"Master Jewell," said Gregory Firebrace, in his strong voice, "this is a terrible thing that has befallen you; but, thank Heaven, you have friends outside! All that you need we will supply you with, if you will tie a cord to the basket and lower it from the window. You must have a watchman, too, and I will take that place upon myself."

"Thank you, good friend," said the goldsmith. "God's will be done. Neither my good wife nor myself have much fear, though the thing is here in the midst of us; and we have a good nurse for our poor maid. We have food in plenty, too; for, to say the truth, I realised long ago that this thing might befall us, and have laid in a good store of provisions."

Jasper Jenkins approached a little nearer to the door, and, putting his hands to his mouth, called up:

"There is yet something that you must hear, John, which is the business that brought us here to-day; and, lest it should reach listening ears, we will write you it down and pass it up to you."

Sir Rufus Pontifex drew out his tablets and set forth as briefly as possible the danger that menaced the goldsmith's dwelling.

They waited in silence until the goldsmith had read the message, and a faint smile came into his face as he looked down at them.

"I have little to fear, I think," he said, "with that warning upon the door. Even he you name would not be foolhardy enough to run so great a risk."

"So say I," growled Gregory Firebrace. "But, for all that, good watch shall be kept upon your dwelling."

On the principle that actions speak louder than words, they lost no time in doing what they had to do; and, Simon Barbican having procured a brazier from a neighbour's house, it was duly lighted before the goldsmith's door.

Gregory Firebrace seated himself with his back against the opposing archway, almost at the spot where Gilbert Nameless had been attacked at the commencement of our story, and he kept a sharp eye on Eli Nethersole's door as he puffed at his pipe.

All through that night the old soldier kept faithful ward, but the long hours passed without incident. Passengers across the bridge quickened their steps as he raised a warning hand and hurried by.

The brazier, which he fed from time to time, cast a lurid glow on the house-front.

Eli Nethersole sat up late, wrapped in profound thought, and very early in the morning he aroused his apprentice by going into his room, and sitting on the edge of his trucklebed.

"Gideon," said the usurer, "I am going to repose confidence in you. I am going to let you into a deep secret."

Gideon Bilge sat up, very tousled, and more repulsive than usual in his half-awakened condition.

"You may have seen," said the usurer, crossing his thin legs, and resting a bony elbow on his right knee—"you may have seen that I have spent much time of late in the vaults below."

Gideon, with an air of much innocence, disclaimed any knowledge of the circumstance, although on several occasions he had crept down without his shoes, and witnessed his master's strange proceedings, unknown to Nethersole.

"I have a great scheme, which will make me a rich man, Gideon. You shall be rewarded by some gold pieces!"

Gideon's eyes glittered.

"Gideon," said the usurer, "it will take two nights to carry Jewell's wealth out of the safes, and to lower it into a boat. Maybe there is work for a third night. Your brain is young, and your wits are sharp. How am I to keep the captain at arm's length until we have done the deed?"

Before the old man's words had passed from his cracked lips, Gideon Bilge had the situation at his finger's ends, and he so far forgot himself as to stretch forth his hand and grasp his master by the sleeve.

"I have it—I have it!" said the evil apprentice. "There is but one bolt that will bar any door in the kingdom, and not for three nights only, but for three weeks. The plague cross, master—the plague cross! We will have the pestilence in the house before noon! John Jewell hath the plague—why not we?"

. . . . . .

Shortly before noon a trusty man, sent by the saddler, arrived to relieve Gregory Firebrace.

He had not left his post long when Gideon Bilge, his face betraying great exultation and excitement, also turned his steps in the direction of the City, and when he came back he had something in the breast of his jacket, which he carried with great care, grinning from ear to ear as he shambled along towards the usurer's house. The moment he placed his hand upon the latch, Nethersole opened the door.

"I have it, master!" cried Gideon Bilge.

And, unbuttoning his jacket, he drew forth an ominous white placard, with the red cross and pious motto upon it, which was to be seen upon so many doors in that stricken city.

"Good lad!" said the usurer, taking it in his trembling hands, and examining it as though it were a thing of infinite value. "Yes, thou shalt have three pieces, Gideon. Did I say three pieces or two?"

"You said three pieces, master," said Gideon, thrusting his tongue in his cheek, and gazing into the fireplace, where their meagre meal was bubbling in an iron pot.

"We must not place it on the door until night has fallen," said Eli Nethersole. "But let the folk see it in the morning. They are none of them likely to inquire after my health."

"One thing you have forgotten, master," said Gideon. "They must not see anyone leave the house after the cross is once there, and we should buy food."

The old man's face fell at this announcement. The nearer he came to stealing his neighbour's wealth, the more reluctant did he feel to part with a shilling on his own account. But the apprentice's words were too true, and Gideon was again despatched again into the City to buy oatmeal and a little bacon, and sundry articles of diet that were as uninteresting as they were cheap.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

How Gideon Bilge had a little plan of his own, and proceeded to put it into practice with the aid of Long Hugh

"GILBERT," said Simon Barbican, "what do you say to a saunter through the streets, carrying our clubs with us? For myself I do not fear the infection, and would like to stretch my legs before bed-time."

"I am with you, Simon," said Gilbert. And away they went, keeping to the centre of the streets.

Their thoughts strayed back to the house on the bridge, and at the bottom of Ludgate Hill Simon, suddenly laying his hand on Gilbert's arm, drew him into a shadow of a wall, and said:

"Look yonder!"

. . .

Now it chanced when Gideon Bilge returned with the provisions, his loquacious tongue brought forth further disquietude to the heart of his master.

"Sir," said Gideon solemnly, "there is yet one thing more you have not thought of."

Fearing that he would have to put his hand in his pocket again, the usurer turned sharply on his apprentice.

"I have brought you a visitor, Master Jewell," said Quartermaine, putting the candles on the table.
(See page 215)

"It is this," said Gideon Bilge. "When we place the cross on the door, and folk see no watchman, they will speak to the authorities, who will send hither, and perhaps search the house, leaving a man in charge without. We must have a watchman of our own, master!"

"You speak truly, you cunning imp!" said Eli Nethersole.

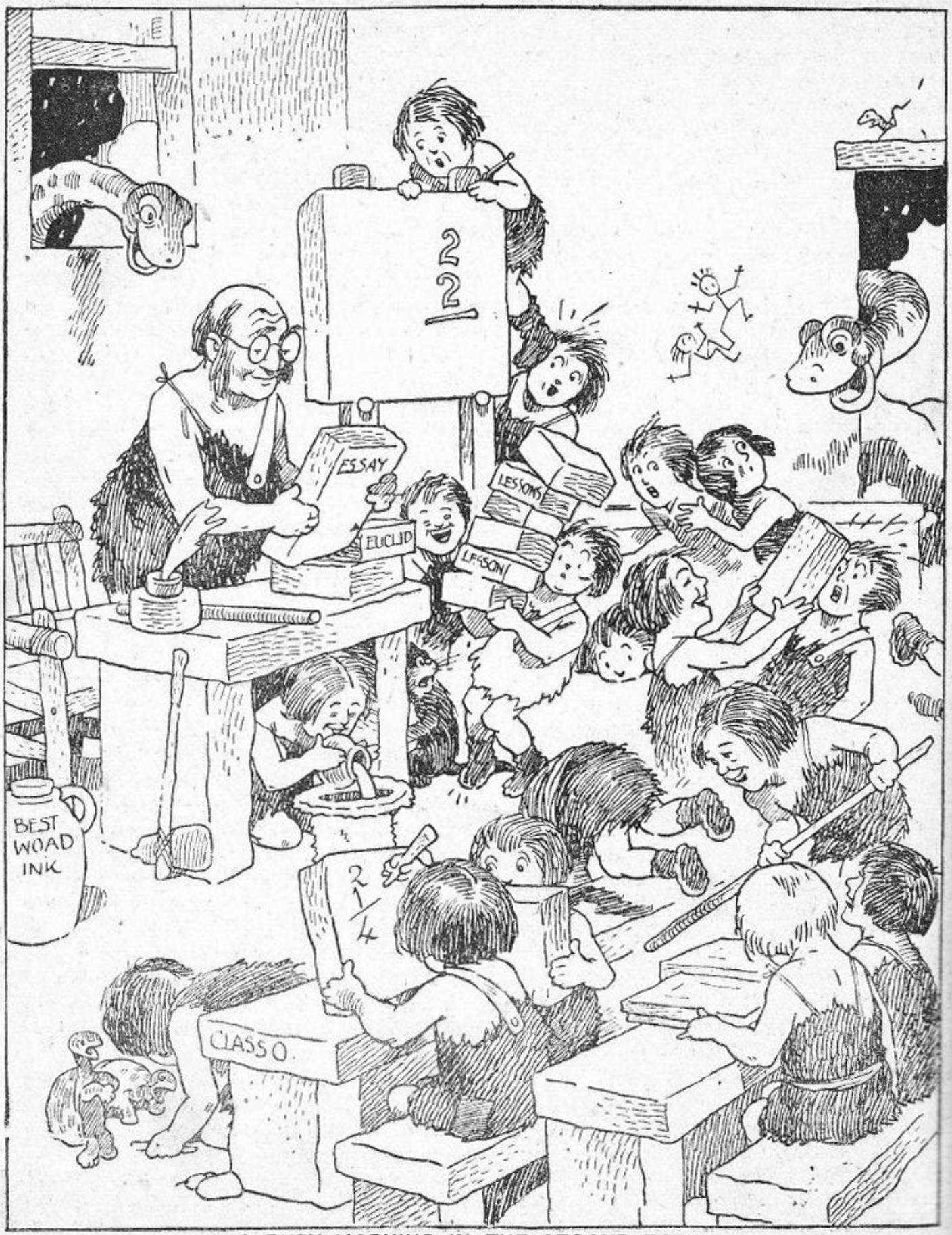
"I have thought of one, master," said Gideon. "Long Hugh has quarrelled with the captain, and for a few pieces would be glad enough to sit down before the fire to-night; and, muffled in a cloak, no one would recognise him."

Eli Nethersole's suspicious nature prompted him to regard his apprentice with keen distrust; and the glance he threw at him set Gideon Bilge a-thinking.

Nethersole weighed the matter carefully in his mind; and knowing that he could trust the bolts and bars on his door, and feeling that there was a great deal of truth in what the apprentice had suggested, at length said:

"Seek him out and bring him hither. While you are gone I will place the cross upon the door, that he shall find the house plague-stricken when he arrives; and you are nimble enough to

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL IN PREHISTORIC TIMES



A BUSY MORNING IN THE SECOND FORM

crawl along the coping of the bridge and enter through the window, so that he will suspect nothing."

Gideon's eyes twinkled; and he nodded approvingly at his master's scheme.

"Mind you," called the usurer, as he let Gideon out of the door, "you must not return until darkness has fallen!"

And Gideon, nodding, shambled off on his quest.

"The old curmudgeon!" he muttered to himself, squinting horribly, as he scowled. "He would doubt his own shadow!" And then he stopped suddenly, and smote himself upon his chest and laughed. His master's suspicion had suggested something to his evil mind. "Why not," thought Gideon Bilge—"why not, forsooth? Here's the gaining of a fortune to-night, and for my share I am to have three pieces of gold—and those grudgingly enough. If Long Hugh be the knave I think him, he and I will share the plunder between us, and Eli Nethersole may hang, as no doubt he ought to have done long ago!"

Gideon found the idea so keenly entertaining that he stopped every now and again and smote himself upon his chest, and buried his ugly face in his misshapen hands, lest anyone should hear the laughter he found it impossible to restrain. His face grinning with a cunning leer, and his fingers working convulsively, he shuffled by the Lud Gate to cross Fleet Ditch, which was spanned by a bridge at that spot; and it was the sight of him that prompted Simon Barbican to stay his course and point to his old enemy as Gideon quickened his steps into a shambling run.

"Where goes yonder rogue, I wonder?" said Simon Barbican. "Something delights him, and, when Gideon Bilge is pleased, it's a sign there's mischief on hand. How say you, Gilbert? Shall we follow him apace, and see on what errand he has been sent?"

"We will," replied Gilbert, in the same low voice. "I dislike the knave as greatly as you do, and I warrant me he is after no good!"

Simon Barbican took the lead, knowing every twisting and turning of the quarter for which the usurer's apprentice was making, and both lads grasped their cudgels as they entered the narrow streets in the neighbourhood of Shoe Lane, which even in those days was a second-rate neighbourhood and none too reputable.

Common prudence was on the point of bringing them to a halt, as the marked houses began to multiply to an alarming proportion, when Gideon Bilge suddenly disappeared down a flight of stone steps.

"Ah," said Simon Barbican, "I'll wager a groat he seeks somebody at Moll Fairlight's, which is a tavern frequented by persons who are but a shade better than the rogues of Alsatia, though I believe some honest folk, whose poverty compels them to live in this part, also use the house. Come this way, for it has two doors, and we will enter by the other one."

Diving down a narrow alley—not a little fearful lest they might meet a dead-cart and have to turn back—they found themselves in a very few moments before a long, low window, behind the bull's-eye panes of which shone the light of many candles. A bush hanging over the door proclaimed it to be a tavern, and Simon Barbican walked boldly up to it.

"You have never been in such a place Gilbert," he said, speaking over his shoulder. "You will see some curious folk; but you are not bound to speak to anybody."

They entered a very long room with a very low ceiling, the beams blackened by smoke and grime, and, seating themselves at a table near the door which chanced to be empty, Simon called for a tankard of ale, and scanned the apartment through his half-closed eyelids. Almost at the moment the ale was brought, the door at the far end opened, and Gideon Bilge crept in stealthily, looking to left and right of him to the little groups of men who sat talking and drinking and playing cards.

Simon Barbican pulled his hat over his eyes as Gideon approached down the centre of the room.

"Lean your head on your hand," he said to Gilbert. "We don't want the rogue to recognise us in this place, or we shall see nothing that there may be to be seen."

The usurer's apprentice, however, stopped half-way down the room, and bending forward whispered in the ear of a man who sat moodily

by himself with an empty flagon in front of him. They saw the man start, and place his hand on his sword, and the next moment point to a seat.

Then Gideon Bilge called for ale, and they fell a-talking, with their heads very close together.

Simon Barbican shook his head.

"I do not know the man," said he. "After all, perhaps, there is nothing to discover, but the adventure will while away an hour, after which we must return to Gracious Street."

Let us glide behind the high-backed settle on which Long Hugh was seated, and, straining our ears to the utmost capacity, listen to the wisdom of Gideon Bilge.

"Long Hugh," whispered the evil apprentice, "if I show you where you could steal a thousand pounds to-night, how much would you give me for my share?"

Long Hugh's eyes glittered, and he looked gravely at his companion. The question was so extraordinary that he doubted whether Gideon Bilge might not be jesting. But Gideon's face was intensely serious.

"I would go honest halves with you, lad," said Long Hugh, who, at that moment had not got a penny-piece in his pocket, and knew not for the life of him where to get another one.

"Give me your hand on it," said Gideon.

And when this was done, the usurer's apprentice unfolded a very pretty scheme, which raised the spirits and the heart of Long Hugh to fever-pitch.

In a low whisper, and glancing keenly about him with his squinting eyes, Gideon Bilge told the robber all he had heard from his master that night.

"I know it is true," he said, "for when Eli Nethersole was abroad in the City yesterday, I stole down into the cellar myself with a light and saw the hole, and well-nigh pushed the pannelling in John Jewell's vault, not knowing it had been sawn. The old dog had placed two hinges upon it, so that it opens into our cellar like a door. And there I saw chests, and coffers, and plate wrapped up in fine linen. In short, 'tis not a thousand pounds we shall gain, but nigher upon twenty thousand!"

"Gideon," said Long Hugh, in a hoarse whisper, "call for another draught! I have not the wherewithal to pay for it, and your news has set my nerves a-shaking. Ha, boy, now can I snap my fingers at Quartermaine and Silas Double, and the rest of them, and you shall snap yours at your old skinflint of a master. But have you thought how I am to get into the house? 'Tis bolted like a prison, as I have seen with mine own eyes."

"Never fear for that," replied Gideon. "All the fastenings are so well oiled that they open without sound, and I will find means to leave the door so that a touch of your hand will open it. The old man has provided sacks and a rope and pulley. He thinks only to get half the spoil away to-night, and to-morrow I am to have a boat under the bridge, into which we shall lower it all."

"You are forgetting something," said Long Hugh. "Do you know that Quartermaine and the others of the band meet at Nethersole's house to-night? Think you he will not recognise me in the watchman, though I masquerade in fifty disguises? No, Gideon; I have a better plan. The cross will keep them out, and you and I must have a boat, too. I will procure one, and pull down to the bridge; you will lower the rope ladder from your window, and by that means I will enter the house. Tell Nethersole you could not find me, and he must rest content."

Long Hugh's scheme appealed to the intelligence of Gideon Bilge, and he grinned his approval.

"I will tell Nethersole," said he, "that I have placed the boats in readiness. He knows that I can clamber up the bridge side as nimble as a monkey."

"Which interesting animal," said Long Hugh, "you strongly resemble."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

What the robber found on the usurer's door, and how Gregory Firebrace scented fire brewing at Moll Fairlight's

MEANWHILE, at the sign of the Goat and Rope in Alsatia, another band of cloaked and mysterious desperadoes were assembling.

The tryst for Nethersole's had been for ten

o'clock, but long before sunset the band dropped in by one's and two's, and sought the inner room of the tavern. Several of them brought bundles under their cloaks—coils of rope and pieces of sackcloth—destined to hold the goldsmith's treasures when secured.

Quartermaine and Silas Double were the first to arrive; Black Humphrey followed them; and seven others, whose names may be allowed to pass into oblivion, made up the sum total.

"'Tis a pity," said Silas, "that you quarrelled with Long Hugh, captain. He was a handy man and adventurous."

"He was an insolent rogue," said Quartermaine shortly, "and had you not prevented me, I would have slit his wizand for him."

"As you like—as you like," said little Silas, with a shrug of his shoulders. "But Long Hugh had a headpiece, for all that!"

When it was quite dark, they gathered up their bundles, placed them under their cloaks, saw that their weapons were in order, and filed out of the tavern, one at a time.

There was no need to seek any unfrequented way, for all the streets were silent and deserted in that year of plague. But several times they had to turn aside to avoid the death-cart; even they, hard-hearted ruffians as they were, went in mortal terror of the pestilence.

They were in ignorance of the fatality that had befallen the house of John Jewell, and the first intimation they had of it was the glow from the brazier that outlined the angle of the house and reflected on the opposite side of the open space.

Quartermaine looked at the ominous placard over the goldsmith's house with feelings of dread, but he rightly disbelieved the sign which Eli Nethersole had put up.

"The old rat has some scheme on," he muttered darkly.

He decided to take a boat at the nearest stairs and lie beneath the arch all night to wait developments.

. . . . . .

Gregory Firebrace was on the watch, and he had shadowed Gilbert as far as the tavern. The old soldier hoped that Quartermaine would appear, but for once Firebrace hoped in vain.

"I wonder what is in the wind now?" muttered Gregory Firebrace. "Shall I follow those rascals or wait awhile?"

Before he could make up his mind a sudden interruption decided the course he should take.

Gideon Bilge and Long Hugh had left the tavern scarcely five minutes when Simon and Gilbert rose to take their departure, Simon having deemed it were safer to stay where they were as he saw the eyes of a villainous-looking fellow riveted upon him.

"Mark you that man in the faded crimson coat, Gilbert," he muttered. "He has been watching us for some time, and he is now speaking to his neighbour, and pointing in our direction. When the next customer enters, we will go out as though nothing had happened; but the moment the door closes behind us, we should do well to set our best foot foremost until we have gained the Lud Gate at least."

"All right!" replied Gilbert. "I understand your meaning."

And the two lads gripped their cudgels, which they kept out of sight under the table.

Gregory Firebrace saw the man in the crimson cloak point to the two apprentices, and knew him to be a ruffler—which was the cant term for one who pretended to be an old soldier who had served in the Civil War. He saw also that a whisper passed round the company in his immediate vicinity, and that twenty suspicious glances were cast on the two boys.

Gregory Firebrace knew that there was about to be trouble, and loosened his long sword in its sheath. At that moment somebody came in by the door at Gilbert's elbow, and the two apprentices, rising simultaneously, left the tavern, to Gregory Firebrace's great relief.

The next moment, however, "crimson cloak" rose to his feet, as did three or four more, and, from the snatches of slang jargon, Firebrace knew that the apprentices were suspected of being spies.

"'Tis not the first time that I have acted as rearguard," thought Gregory Firebrace to himself. And, jumping to his feet, he strode down the centre of the room, to gain the outer door, and place himself between the two lads and

any pursuit that might be intended. As he passed "crimson cloak," either accidentally or with intention, he jostled him somewhat roughly, looked back over his shoulder, curled his moustache fiercely up, spurned the wooden floor loudly with his heels, and swung out into the dusk.

The instant he had disappeared, a perfect babel of voices rose inside the tavern.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

"Clubs to the rescue!"

As soon as the tavern-door had closed behind them, the two apprentices took to their heels and ran. The streets were so narrow and choked with garbage that at most their speed was but a jog-trot, and every now and then they had to leap a pile of offal that had collected in the centre of the roadway.

It was a very long lane that led from Moll Fairlight's door towards Fleet Ditch, and before they were half-way down it they heard the door bang to again, and knew that someone had come out of the tavern.

"We had better slacken, Gilbert," said Simon Barbican. "It will be easy now to slip into one of these alleys to right or left, whereas if we continue running the rogues will be after us straight away."

Accordingly they fell into a walk, looking back over their shoulders, and again the tavern-door opened, this time to pour forth a crowd of angry men, one of whom carried a torch, as they could see by the wavering light that filled the other end of the lane.

Against the light they also saw a tall figure walking swiftly towards them, and, though they did not know it, that figure was Gregory Firebrace. The old soldier disdained to run, but he had drawn his rapier and folded his cloak round his left arm, to prepare for eventualities.

"Slip in here," whispered Simon Barbican, pointing to a narrow passage.

And, Gilbert following him, they stole down the alley; and, as there were no lights there, they did not recognise Firebrace when he passed the end of it.

"Whoever that be," said Simon, in a low whisper, "those others mean to have his blood. I would not change places with that man for something. Mark you! They cross the end of the alley now!"

And for an instant the torchlight showed a mob of nearly a score of men with the glitter of arms in their midst, all pursuing in the same direction like a pack of wolves.

The thing was over in a moment, and the hoarse roar of the angry voices died away in the silence.

"If I remember rightly," said Simon Barbican, "this lane will bring us to the bank of the ditch. Come on, Gilbert! The whole air here breathes of the plague, and no one knows who may be lurking in these dark doorways and foul courts."

It was as Simon had said, and another moment had brought them out into the open space that bordered the little River Fleet, which was even in those days a black, polluted stream, and in our own time runs as an enclosed sewer beneath Farringdon Street.

It was growing rapidly dusk, and they paused as they issued from the alley, for not one hundred yards away was the glare of the torch, and a great shout rose up as the solitary figure turned to face his pursuers at the head of a wooden footbridge that crossed the stream.

Gregory Firebrace stood at bay, the moonlight glittering on his formidable weapon, which he flourished in a manner so skilful that it checked the mob for an instant, until those behind pushed the other ones forward, and the fight began in real earnest.

At the first pass, the old man's blade shot like a lightning-flash through the shoulder of "crimson cloak," who staggered backward; and it was Gregory Firebrace's well-known exclamation of triumph that betrayed his identity to the two lads, who watched the brawl from the shadow of the houses.

"Simon," cried Gilbert, "do you recognise that voice?"

"Ha, that I do!" said Simon Barbican. "'Tis worthy Gregory Firebrace, in sore need of aid; and, by the King's crown, he shall have it, too! Yonder tavern disgorges its guests, thanks to the plague closing such places at nine of the clock. Come! Let us see whether there be any good men and true among them!"

And, lifting his voice, Simon Barbican shouted, "Clubs to the rescue!" with all the strength of his powerful young lungs.

The cry was immediately answered by a dozen voices, and Simon Barbican laughed with joy.

"There are friends yonder, Gilbert," he said. "This way, lads! Upon the ruffians! A good citizen shall never be murdered while a London apprentice can raise a cudgel to his assistance!"

And, twirling a formidable staff, and followed by Gilbert, the King of Clubs bounded towards the footbridge, where they were pressing the old man very hard.

He had run two of his assailants through the body, and a third staggered away, holding his hand to his side; but there were nearly twenty of them, and in another minute Gregory Firebrace would have been overpowered and hurled into the black waters beneath.

Before that minute had elapsed, however, Gilbert and Simon and fourteen or fifteen lusty lads arrived at their topmost speed, and those of the ruffians who had been so anxious to push their front rank upon that terrible rapier now found it necessary to turn and defend themselves.

Cudgel-play, like quarterstaff, has gone out entirely; but it was fine, manly work, though it often resulted in broken heads and limbs in the bouts that were practised in Finsbury Fields and other apprentice haunts. A strong arm and a quick eye, and a faculty for leaping backwards and forwards, were essential to its proper manipulation, and it was a revelation to Gilbert to see Simon bounding back and forth, and felling his man at each blow he dealt.

Then, for one instant, Eli Nethersole saw two black figures, dimly shown by the horn lantern, clutching each other, and hurtling through space. (See page 234)

"Thanks, good lads!" cried the old soldier. "Down with the dogs!"

And he made his rapier circle viciously in front of him.

The other apprentices shouted their particular cries lustily.

"Come on, Candlewick! Come on, Bridge boys!"

And they did come on, with the speed of a cavalry charge, whooping and smiting with a will, for since the plague-time there had been little opportunity for the practice of their

favourite weapon. Scarcely three minutes had elapsed from Simon's first cry when the band of ruffians was fleeing for its several lives into its noisesome haunts, with the apprentices of Candlewick and Bridge Wards in hot pursuit.

Four men lay on the ground, two of them slain by Gregory Firebrace, the other pair having cracked heads which would require a good deal of mending, as was always the case when Simon Barbican smote in earnest.

"What means this?" said Gilbert to the old soldier, as he sheathed his rapier.

"Hush, boy! No questions in this place," said Gregory Firebrace, "or I might ask you one in return. It was your presence at Moll Fairlight's that brought all this about, but we will talk of this another time. Thanks, good friends," continued the old soldier to the throng of apprentices who had very quickly rifled the pockets of the fallen rogues, and were now laughing very merrily at the victory of club over steel.

"If you had not come to the rescue, I should have been a dead man now. I am only a poor one, as it stands, and have nothing but empty words with which to reward you."

"We want no reward, sir," said a sturdy apprentice. "We should think foul shame of ourselves if we did not rally to the call of the King of Clubs!"

And at the mention of Simon Barbican's nickname they raised a lusty cheer, which had the effect of bringing a mounted patrol to the mouth of Fleet Street; whereat the apprentices fled across the wooden bridge and sought their homes within the City, their laughter ringing on the air long after the last of them had disappeared.

"Let us go to Gracious Street," said the old soldier gravely, "and tell me how you came to be where I saw you to-night."

Their story was quickly told, and Gregory Firebrace was silent for some minutes, wiping his rapier blade on the flap of his coat before he sheathed it.

"'Tis strange!" he muttered at last, as they mounted Ludgate Hill. "You followed Nethersole's apprentice, and I had sought that tavern having Nethersole in my mind. I may be wrong, but I believe him to be at the bottom of a good deal of this business, directly or indirectly; and, although we have discovered nothing to-night, I shall not relax my vigilance."

"'Tis a pity," said Gilbert, "that you knew none of those men we despatched to-night."

"As for that," said the old soldier, "they are of little account, being but whipjacks, pads, and rufflers. They are no loss to the City, and it is a pity that the plague has not swept away more of such rogues. Now, here we are at St. Margaret's Church. I'll to Master Jewell's, to take up my watch. Get you both to Gracious Street and to bed, like good lads; and perhaps you had best say naught to Jasper Jenkins of the night's adventure, lest he forbid you forth again."

"I got but one smite at the ruffians!" said Gilbert regretfully.

"'Twas a good one, though, for I saw the man go down like a log!" laughed Simon. "I wish I could master the sword as quickly as you handle the cudgel!"

. . . . .

Gideon and Long Hugh were entirely ignorant of these events. Gideon shuffled off home, full of glee that he had outwitted Eli Nethersole. He was roundly abused by his master, who had repented now of his confidence, though he was far from reckoning that Gideon had been false in the business of Long Hugh's aid.

But, to make all sure, that night Eli drugged the lad's beer.

Long Hugh found Gideon sound as a church when he climbed into the house.

Nethersole, busy counting the sacks, heard the robber, and fled down the stairs with Long Hugh after him, knife in hand.

If ever a man was determined to sell his life dearly, that man was Eli Nethersole. His hand was upon the huge key of the front door, and, had he turned it, in another moment he would have been out upon the bridge, and this story of ours would have possibly had a very different ending.

But the greed of money was strong in the usurer's heart. Before his eyes flashed the gold and the gems, the silver-plate and the

jewel caskets, and he could not bring himself to abandon all these magnificent spoils to the ruffian, whose footsteps sounded louder and louder as he descended.

With an agility astonishing for a man of his years, the usurer darted below.

Long Hugh saw the door close, and the grim smile increased on his face. He held his lantern in front of it, looked carefully at the hinges, saw that it opened outwards into the shop, and, putting his lantern down, he lifted a heavy table, which he placed across the door.

"There, Master Nethersole, you can bide a little by yourself! I have you very safely, and I will return upstairs and see whether I can awake that ugly apprentice-boy of yours, whose help I shall want!"

Long Hugh shook and pummelled the limp form of Gideon Bilge without result. The drug had been very potent—even more so than the usurer had intended—and Gideon Bilge slept the sleep of the just.

Long Hugh, with a curse of irritation, gave it up as a bad job, and returned to the shop below, holding his knife securely in his right hand.

"The old weasel has got some fight left in him yet!" he muttered.

As he reached the foot of the staircase some folk passed along the bridge outside, and Long Hugh paused. The echo of their footsteps died away, and he advanced to the door which he had barricaded.

His hands were upon the table, and in another moment he would have lifted it away, when a sound on the landing above fell upon his ear.

"The fool wakes!" muttered Long Hugh.

But the footfalls that thudded upon the floor overhead were not the footfalls of the usurer's apprentice.

"Is the place haunted?" muttered the robber.

But the next instant a well-known voice broke the silence.

"Come, Black Humphrey," said the voice. "Gideon Bilge is sound asleep. Let us see whether his master has taken the pestilence. If not, the whole thing is a ruse, and Eli Nethersole shall suffer dearly for it!"

It was the voice of Silas Double which spake, and Long Hugh knew that Quartermaine's party had arrived.

"Ten thousand murrains!" muttered the baffled rascal. "I am foiled!"

He made a stride towards the cellar door, but a voice from the stairhead broke the stillness of the house, and, looking back, he saw Silas Double with his pistol raised, looking down at him as he stood in the moonlight.

"Whoever you be, stand where you are!" said Silas Double. "And now answer your name quickly!"

Long Hugh stirred neither hand nor foot. He glared up at the little man, showing his teeth, a picture of baffled villainy.

Black Humphrey approached Silas Double, and, following the direction of his pistol, looked down into the shop.

"Surely," said Black Humphrey, "yonder is Long Hugh!"

"You scoundrel!" cried Silas Double. "What do you here?"

"For the same purpose that brings you, Silas Double," retorted Long Hugh, drawing a pistol from his doubtlet.

Long Hugh raised his weapon with unexpected sharpness and fired full at the man on the stairhead.

Silas Double's cap dropped a yard away, showing the accuracy of Long Hugh's aim.

Silas Double pressed his trigger, and Long Hugh felt a sharp pain in the calf of his right leg. He drew a second pistol and fired at the staircase, the report mingling with that of Silas Double's, who had done the same.

Both men missed in their eagerness, and Long Hugh, having nothing now but his knife to trust to, glanced round for some means of escape.

The front door leading out of the shop was the nearest avenue to freedom, but the bolts and bars, and chains and locks were against his opening it in time. The only other means of escape was by the door that led into the vault, where he knew the usurer to be.

. . . . . .

Eli Nethersole, his heart in his mouth, had descended into the vault as fast as his lean shanks could carry him, down a moveable

THE SIGHTS OF GREYFRIARS

THE REMOVE DORMITORY

BOB CHERRY is the first to rise,
He dips his sponge in water,
Then Bunter's slumbering form espies
And rushes to the slaughter.
A sudden splash, and then a shout,
"Yow-ow! You rotter, Cherry!"
"Buck up!" cries Bob, "and tumble out!
You're lazy, Bunty, very!"

Such is our dormitory at morn,
When cold produces sneezes;
By night, it isn't so forlorn,
We get out plans and wheezes.
"Good-night!" old Wingate's often said,
Then dims the light and goes on,
Not knowing we have gone to bed
With all our merry clothes on!

When Wingate's gone, we tumble out
And, armed with stump and poker,
We march away, and put to rout
The tribe of Horace Coker.
Then back again we softly steal
And to our beds we scatter
As Quelchy's voice, in stern appeal
Cries, "Now, boys! What's the matter?"

And many a merry midnight feast
We've planned and undertaken,
With Billy Bunter shouting "Beast!
What price my eggs-and-bacon?"
Oh, yes, the dorm's a ripping spot
When rising-bell peals out, we're not
A bit inclined to leave it!

wooden stair of eight treads, from the floor of the shop to that of the cellar, and as the usurer set his foot on the stone pavement of the vault an idea came like lightning to his brain.

Seizing the ladder with the strength born of the desperateness of the situation, he carried it from its position and set it against another wall.

It was very dark and silent in the vault, and, with his eyes bent on the door through which he expected the ruffian to pursue him, Eli Nethersole knelt down and groped with his hand. His fingers at length came in contact with an iron ring, and after one or two attempts he wrenched open a large trapdoor in the floor.

It had two flaps, and opening the second one, he exposed a cavity five feet square, through which came the lapping of water against stone masonry.

The trapdoor was in the centre of the arch, and gave directly on to the rushing river underneath the bridge.

"Now, Long Hugh, you may come as soon as you like!" cackled the old man to himself as he stepped back and crouched down at the end of the cellar. "I only wish that Quartermaine and his band would follow you!"

As he muttered this amiable sentiment the pistol-shots in the house fell upon his ears, and the laughter died away from his lips.

"A murrain upon them, they are in the house! But we shall see what we shall see," said Nethersole.

The three reports boomed dully in the silence of the vault, and then the thing that Eli Nethersole most wished for came about on a sudden. The door in the side of the wall was flung violently open, and Long Hugh appeared, lantern in one hand, knife in the other, and behind him came Black Humphrey.

Thinking the stairs to be in their place, Long Hugh made a spring forward in the darkness as Black Humphrey's hand clutched the collar of his coat. Then for an instant Eli Nethersole in the vault beneath, and Silas Double at the door above, saw two black figures, dimly shown by the horn lantern, clutching each other, and hurtling through space.

Silas Double saved himself in the nick of time, and gazing below, marvelling what could have happened, heard a hoarse cry, followed by a tremendous splash far down beneath him, and felt the cool wind of the river waft up into his face.

Black Humphrey sank like a stone. Then he felt Long Hugh clinging to him. The two desperadoes were hauled into a boat by Quartermaine and his men, but there was no safety for long, since the current swung their frail craft on to the fluke of a huge anchor and stove in the boat's side.

Quartermaine and his followers received rough handling from the master of the vessel, but amidst all his troubles the robber chief congratulated himself on having wreaked vengeance on Long Hugh for the latter's treachery, since while in the boat Long Hugh had been thrown overboard.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

The Hand of Fate

When Long Hugh was flung into the river to meet his fate, the tide immediately carried him towards a group of barges moored some distance from the river bank, and when he recovered consciousness, it was to find himself entangled with a stout rope, which somehow he grasped with one hand.

His head swam, a thousand stars shot before his eyes, but by degrees as his senses returned, he pulled himself along the hawser until he could grasp the gunwale of the barge to which it belonged, and at length lay exhausted upon its deck.

He swooned several times, and half an hour must have elapsed before he found himself listening, with his head raised, to a great commotion on a tall ship anchored just by the barge. The wind was blowing in his direction, and he recognised Quartermaine's voice roaring and howling for mercy. Quartermaine at that moment was undergoing his well-merited punishment, and, mingled with the yells, came the thud of a rope's-end on his naked back. Then there followed a spell of silence, broken by the sound of laughter from the ship's forecastle, and Long Hugh ground his teeth with keen delight that Quartermaine should have at last met with some of his deserts.

Long Hugh struggled to his feet, and scrambled across two more barges, and then on to the deck of the big ship. But at this moment the ship's crew came tumbling out of the forecastle, and a cry of amazement burst from the throats of the honest seamen at the sight of Long Hugh's drenched condition, and the fresh scar on his forehead.

Long Hugh's mind was made up in a moment, and, speaking in a tone of great bitterness, he told his story.

"Never mind who I am," said the rogue, "save that I have suffered severely at the hands of yonder man, and was but a little while since knocked on the head and flung into the river by him. If you will come with me, I will tell you where to find another of these pirates, and it is not so far away, either."

"You will go with us?" said the captain.

"I will go with you," said Long Hugh. "Mark you the bridge yonder, and the fourth arch from the north shore. He is in the house of one Nethersole, a usurer, whom these pirates mean to rob. In his cellar you will find him, and if my story be not true, you may hang me on the morrow as high as St. Paul's yonder!"

The seamen whistled, and one of them went to the after-cabin to try the door.

It was ajar. Captain Quartermaine and his gang were gone!

"To the usurer's house, quick!" cried Long Hugh.

The captain shouted a few brief orders, and in a few minutes they were pulling towards the bridge.

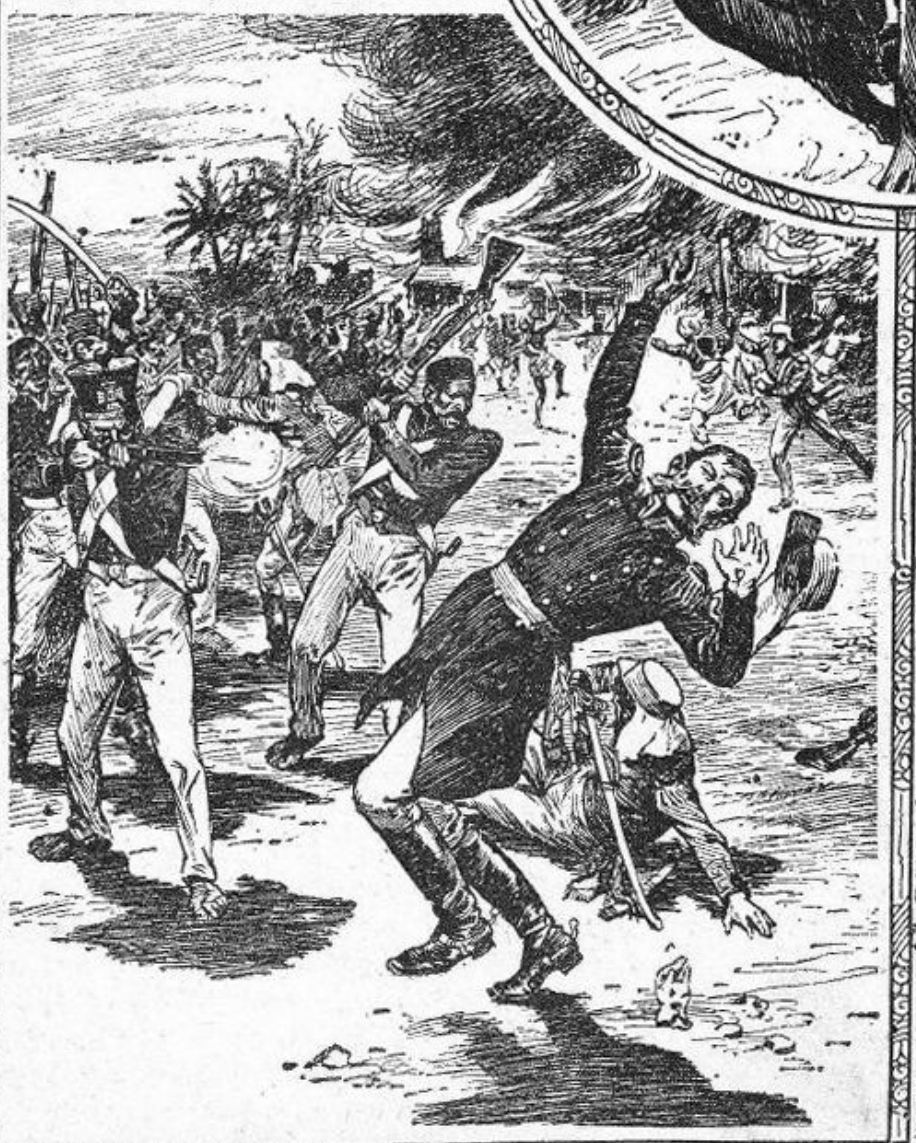
. . . . .

In the meantime, we left Silas Double gazing from the door in the wall through the blackness of the trap in the cellar floor, Eli Nethersole cowering at the other end of the vault, his keen eyes fixed on Double, whilst Gideon Bilge, upstairs on his truckle-bed, was still under the influence of his master's drug.

Silas Double gave a long whistle, intended as a signal to the boatload of ruffians whom he knew to be at the mouth of the arch; but his signal was unheeded, as already Quartermaine and his company were floating down on the

Famous Fights for the Flag

The Battle of Balaclava, October 25th, 1854. The Heavy Brigade, numbering about eight hundred officers and men, charged three thousand Russian Cavalry.



The Indian Mutiny, 1857. Colonel Finnis, of the 11th Native Infantry, stationed at Meerut, was shot down by the men of another regiment whilst he was bravely endeavouring to pacify the mutinous troops.

current to pick up the two men who had made so strange an appearance.

Hearing no response, Double ran back across the shop, up the staircase, and into Gideon's bedroom once more, where, in the moonlight, he saw the river below him, showing no trace of the boat. He deemed that, to avoid observation, they must be under the arch itself, and, descending the rope ladder cautiously until he came to the parapet of the bridge, Silas Double passed along under John Jewell's window to hail his companions. He stopped before he came to the angle of the goldsmith's house, seeing the light of the watch fire telling rosy against the moonlight; and it was well he did, for a sudden clatter of horses' hoofs fell upon his ears, and the voice of Gregory Firebrace.

"What have we here?" thought Silas Double, stretching himself at full length along the parapet, and pushing his short, snubby nose round the corner.

"How now?" muttered the robber. "Sir Rufus Pontifex and the boy Gilbert, booted and spurred and a-horseback, with valises on their saddle, as though for a journey! But it is never too old to learn, Silas, my boy, and we may learn something to-night if we listen long enough."

"Sir Rufus," exclaimed Gregory Firebrace, "what, in the name of Heaven, brings you here at such an hour?"

"Ha, ha!" replied Sir Rufus, laughing. "I come upon the business of our young friend Gilbert here, whom I am about to carry to the King; but first I wish a word with good John Jewell."

Gregory Firebrace picked up a handful of gravel, and flung it at the window above the doorway. There was no necessity for a second summons, John Jewell, ever a light sleeper, threw open the window, a fur night-robe about his shoulders, and looked down.

"Your pardon, Jewell, if I have disturbed your slumbers," said Sir Rufus, riding his horse underneath the window; "but a certain packet of papers that lies in your strong-room—I need them to particularise." And he jerked his thumb in the direction of Gilbert. "Tell me, my friend—are they all in order? Is there any loophole in point of law which my lord could advance against the rightful succession? If I speak a little vaguely, you will understand 'tis because I do not wish the neighbours to enter into our plans."

"I admit, Sir Rufus," said the goldsmith, "that your words mystify me; yet can I tell you that the papers are all in order, and the case on its merits is clear."

"That is just what I wanted to know, Jewell, neither more nor less," said Sir Rufus; smacking his thigh. "Jasper Jenkins and I have a little plan afoot, and I am about to carry Gilbert to sing before the King. Once let us interest Charles in the youngster, and I doubt not that we can find means to bring Gilbert to his own inheritance. If ever a man should remember the restoration with pleasure and gratitude, that man should be our Sovereign. You need not look so grave, friend John. I can take care of the lad, and bring him straight into the King's presence."

The goldsmith's face was very serious as the firelight played upon it.

"'Tis not that I am thinking, Sir Rufus," he said. "I would that you could take the packet with you; but that is impossible, since it lies in this plague-stricken house. Where is the Court now?"

"It has left Salisbury, where it is said that a groom has fallen sick of the pestilence, and should now be at Milton," said Sir Rufus. "It is a long ride, and hearing that my lord goes down there almost immediately, I have deemed it better that we set forth this very night. Mark you, your apprentice has his lute before him on the saddle, and his rapier on his thigh."

Now, Silas Double drank in these words greedily. He knew all about my lord Mountmarmaduke—for Silas Double was Quartermaine's most trusted lieutenant—and the rogue instantly saw that here was a great advantage for his master. He lay as flat as a herring on the narrow parapet, and never did man so regret that his pistol was empty. Gilbert, outlined against the watch-fire, presented a splendid mark, and Silas Double groaned internally as that thousand pounds which my lord had offered dangled before his nose, and he unable to secure it.

In the belief that Quartermaine and his

boatload of ruffians lurked beneath the bridge, awaiting his signal that all was clear in Nethersole's house, Silas Double set himself to communicate with the captain, and, working his way backwards with extreme caution, he came at last to the rope-ladder that hung from Gideon Bilge's window, grasping it securely, and descending until the surge of the tide washed over his spur leathers. And then he ventured to whistle softly. Although he repeated his signal several times, there was no response, and not knowing what to make of it, he clambered up again and got through the window into the apprentice's room.

Gideon Bilge began to turn restlessly on his truckle bed, and Silas Double shook him violently. At a loss to understand why the young rascal should slumber so soundly, Silas Double bent down and examined his face, and as Long Hugh had done, he, too, detected the pungent odour of the drug.

At this moment a low whistle came from the window, and Silas Double, turning round suddenly, found Quartermaine grasping the sill and looking in.

"I thought something had befallen you, captain," said Silas Double. "I have been to the bottom of the ladder and whistled myself hoarse at the risk of alarming old Firebrace, whose ears are as sharp as a weasel's."

"Things have befallen us which you shall hear anon, Silas," said Quartermaine, getting into the room. "Where is the usurer?"

"In the vault below, if he is anywhere in the house."

And in a few words Silas Double told him how he and Black Humphrey had pursued Long Hugh, and how his companion and the traitor had vanished through the trapdoor.

"That, too, I know all about," said Quartermaine shortly. His temper had not been improved by the flogging that still made his shoulders smart and his shirt stick to them. "Come up, men," he whispered.

And in a few minutes the rest of the gang scrambled in at the window, and Quartermaine took the candle that Silas Double had lighted.

"We have brought lanterns," he said, "well knowing that the old fox would rather go to bed in the dark than burn a farthing candle. At last," he continued, "the thing is in our grasp! We shall all of us be rich before the sun rises. Follow me!"

And, with a hasty step, he passed downstairs into the vault.

"Did you hear that?" said Silas Double, laying a warning hand on Quartermaine arm.

A loud splash came up from the river below. A rat had fallen, as the robbers had done, through the trapdoor.

They paused on the threshold, holding their lanterns at arm's-length; but the light only showed them the dangerous opening below, and the ladder reared against the wall a few yards off.

"Give me a hand, some of you," said Black Humphrey, shouldering his way up to the front. "I will get down and close that accursed pitfall, and put up the ladder again."

"Nethersole," said Quartermaine, in a loud whisper, "there is no need to hide, man. Come out of your corner!"

But there was no response.

Black Humphrey was lowered carefully down, and the two flaps dropped into their places with a dull boom. The ladder once more reared itself in its proper position, and Quartermaine was the first to descend. As a matter of common protection, though he expected no resistance from the feeble old usurer, he had drawn his sword, and, holding the lantern high, went forward, followed by his band. The vault was large and built of solid stone. It echoed to their tread, though they went softly, and the wavering lights of the lanterns made the darkness seem the more intense.

"We shall find him in the strong-room through the wall," said Quartermaine, with a short laugh. "Odds fish! I will spit him like a lark for his treachery, the cunning old dog, with his plague crosses and his double dealing! Here is the entrance, and he has opened the panelling."

He had his foot within the hole, when they saw him suddenly stoop, and Quarter-

maine's keen eyes travelled up the thin, shrunk shanks until they rested on the face of Eli Nethersole, who lay on his back, half in his own cellar and half in his neighbour's. I said his face, but what a face! It was no longer lean as a starving wolf, but puffed and swollen and livid green in the hollows, a trickle of hideous foam from the corners of the mouth, and a terrible purple patch extending in a semi-circle across the forehead.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Quartermaine, in a voice of horror. "He is dead of the plague! Back, for your lives—back! Let me get out!"

And, hurling his way through his terrified followers, he rushed for the ladder.

Bold men and bad as they were, the presence of the pestilence vanquished them bitterly, and they crowded into the shop like a lot of frightened sheep.

Quartermaine was making for the rope-ladder, when overhead he heard the tramping of feet and the voice of Long Hugh, crying:

"They are below! Do you not hear them?"

Casting all precaution to the winds, the baffled band unbarred the shop door, and, as the sailors reached the head of the staircase, they scuttled from the stricken house and fled like men possessed.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

Howour Friends Started upon a very Eventful Errand, and of Certain Happenings in a Certain Cellar

It was with mingled feelings that our friend Gilbert Nameless rode under the gateway of London Bridge side by side with his worthy patron, Sir Rufus Pontifex. He knew not exactly for what purpose he was being taken to the Court of the Merry Monarch, save that somewhere in the future there lurked a fine inheritance, and, what he valued more highly, a name that he could call his own.

For reasons best known to themselves, Sir Rufus and the saddler had not thought fit to tell the lad who he really was; but they had said enough to set his heart throbbing with keen expectation. Simon Barbican was in the secret, and Simon Barbican it was who suddenly stepped from the shadow of the wall and came to Gilbert's stirrup.

"I could not let you go, Master Gilbert," said the goldsmith's apprentice, "without bidding you another farewell!"

"Tut, Simon! You will see me again. And why 'Master' Gilbert, pray? To you, my dear friend, I shall always be the same."

"As you will," said Simon, colouring with pleasure and squeezing the hand that Gilbert stretched down to him. "'Tis something in this world to find that there is someone who is not going to change."

"I shall never do so, Simon," said Gilbert, "whatever is in store for me in the future; and if you say another word to that end, I shall feel tempted to smite you over that thick pate of yours!"

"An' you do, Gilbert Nameless," said Simon, with a sly grin, "I'll bring you out of your saddle with one blow!"

And he brandished his cudgel in mock anger.

"Now, you young dogs!" said Sir Rufus. "If you have finished your leave-taking, we will please get on our way."

And, touching his horse with the spur, the baronet set off down the silent street. Gilbert waved his hand as he followed him, and Simon Barbican, with very mingled emotions, placed his cudgel under his arm and returned to Gracious Street.

. . . . .

From the first old Firebrace had foiled and fooled Quartermaine, the man with whose fortunes the old soldier had at one time cast his lot.

Firebrace kept his watch and was fated to see a posse come up to Nethersole's door, enter, and then scud like rabbits as they found the usurer dead from the plague.

The sailors who had raided the house found Long Hugh there, and he, the worst of Quartermaine's gang, received short thrift from them. Long Hugh had guided the mariners to the house on the strength of a lying tale. The robber was too cunning for once. One of the sailors shot out his fist and Long Hugh disappeared through the window of the room into the black waters, to be seen no more.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Gilbert and the King

GILBERT was still far from being righted. As the heir to the title and estates of Mountmarmaduke, he had been menaced by his rascally kinsman, who had seized the property. But Sir Rufus Pontifex had the boy's cause at heart, and gained an audience of the Merry Monarch.

"Your Majesty," said the baronet, "I was journeying in these parts with a young friend of mine, and we turned aside to pay our court to you, sire; and I promise your Majesty, if you would have music to-night, my young friend will please you vastly."

So it came about that Gilbert, lute in hand, and accompanied by his jovial patron, went into the King's lodgings a little after sunset, finding much to interest him in the gay courtiers and the pretty ladies, in their silks and satins.

When darkness had fallen, another little band of travellers entered Oxford; and, having stabled their horses, and wiped away the dust of travel, one of their number sought out the Royal quarters, swaggering bravely along, with a cloak of amber velvet on his left shoulder, and a falling band of richest silk at his neck. The pages bowed before him, and my Lord Mountmarmaduke—for it was he—stepped swiftly forward, with all the assurance of a man who knows that he will receive a hearty welcome. When he reached a heavy curtain that fell over the doorway, a sound of music came to his ears. Someone was singing in so sweet a voice that my Lord Mountmarmaduke stopped to listen.

"What have we here?" said he to himself. "Some new French singing boy, I doubt not. By my sword, I have never heard a sweeter voice!"

And, remembering how much he owed to his own vocal powers, my lord's eyebrows contracted a little, as he laid his delicate little white hands on the curtain and pulled it aside.

Gilbert had just finished a ballad, that made the pretty ladies clap their hands with delight. And Charles himself, lying back in a large armchair, his legs crossed, applauded rapturously.

The singer sat upon a cushion in the centre of the room, his fingers straying over the strings of the instrument.

Mountmarmaduke stepped into the doorway, and stood there. His hands still grasped the curtain, and a flush came into his pale cheeks. Gilbert looked round, and their eyes met.

"Zounds!" muttered Mountmarmaduke, the colour fading away, and his cheeks going deathly pale. "What trick is this? This boy in the King's presence! Is it by chance, I wonder, or is there more behind it?"

And, turning upon his heel, my lord let the curtain fall across the doorway, and strode back into the corridor, clenching his fists until the nails entered into the flesh.

Down the carpeted stairs, past the scarlet-clad pages, went my Lord Mountmarmaduke.

The night was falling—a soft, cloudless, summer night, with bright stars twinkling over the old city of Oxford, with its myriad spires of solemn colleges, and the river gurgling away past the water-meadows. It was not far from the King's place to the hostelry of the Four Crowns, and midway between them my lord ran violently against two men, who rounded the corner of the narrow way. All three laid their hands on the hilts of their rapiers, as was the fashion in those days, and all three instantly removed them, recognising each other.

"Gadzooks, Quartermaine, we are well met!" said my lord. "And you too, Double! Follow me, but at a little distance."

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

How Gilbert Nameless found a very unexpected protector in the person of King Charles II.

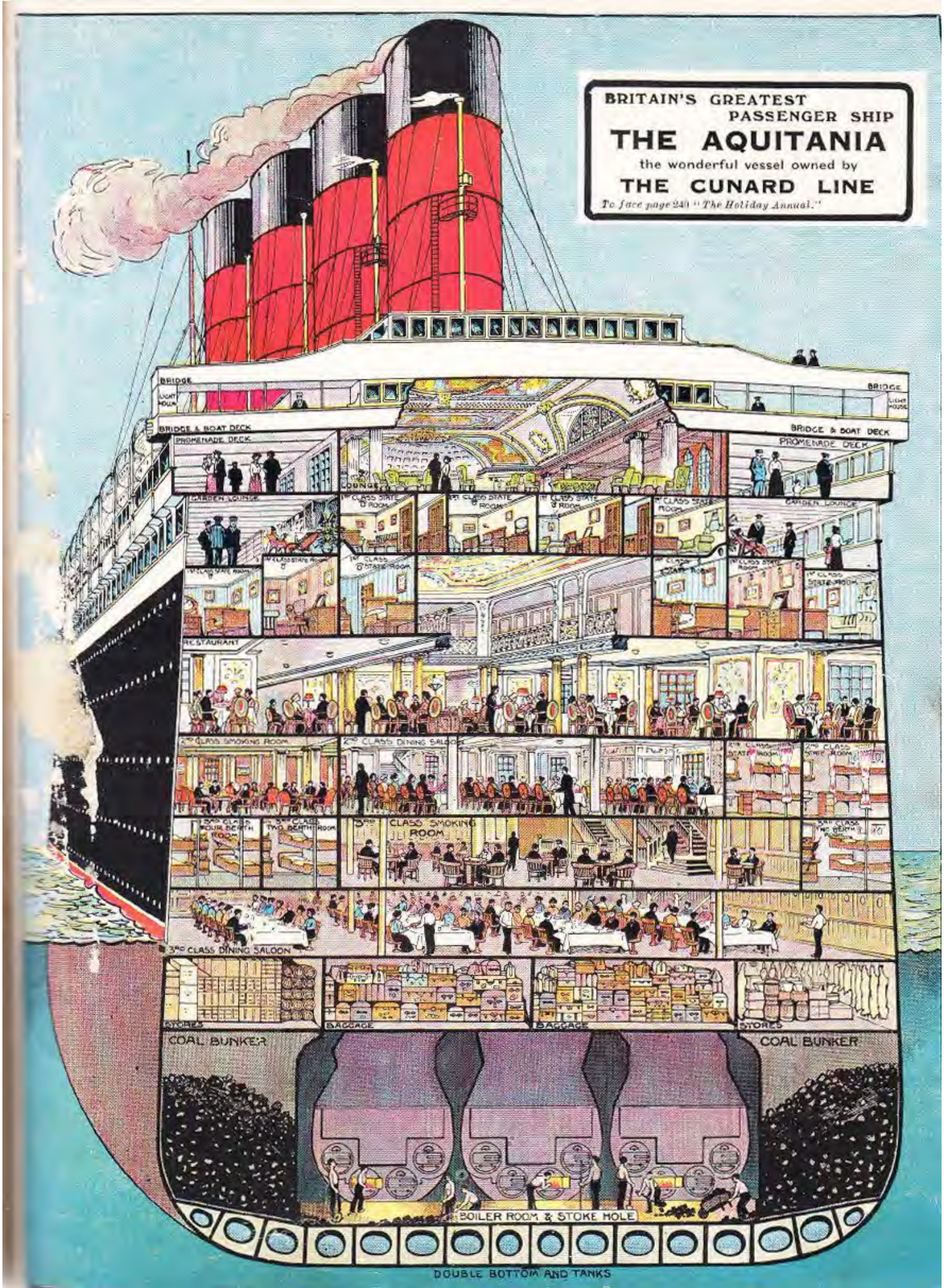
SIR RUFUS PONTIFEX fidgeted in his chair on one side of the fireplace, and the more he thought of matters the more difficult did the situation become.

"Boy," said Sir Rufus, "art sure the door is double-locked?"

"Quite sure, sir. I have double-locked it four times within the last hour, and it is strong enough, methinks, to resist a regiment of horse. I have no fear!"

Sir Rufus shook his head.

"You're young, boy—you're young, and


BRITAIN'S GREATEST PASSENGER SHIP
THE AQUITANIA
the wonderful vessel owned by
THE CUNARD LINE
To face page 240 "The Holiday Annual."
BRIDGE
LIGHT HOUSE
BRIDGE & BOAT DECK
PROMENADE DECK
LOUNGE
GARDEN LOUNGE
1st CLASS STATE ROOM
RESTAURANT
2nd CLASS SMOKING ROOM
2nd CLASS DINING SALOON
3rd CLASS FOUR BERTH ROOM
3rd CLASS TWO BERTH ROOM
3rd CLASS SMOKING ROOM
3rd CLASS DINING SALOON
STORES
BAGGAGE
COAL BUNKER
BOILER ROOM & STOKE HOLE
DOUBLE BOTTOM AND TANKS

your enemy, is a desperate man. These old houses are honeycombed with secret passages, and I, for one, shall be right glad to see the morning light!"

The baronet got up, and proceeded to pace the room with a heavy, uncertain tread, gazing several times at the window, which looked upon the inn yard, and measuring the distance with his eye to the ground.

He did not see two figures that stole cautiously under the low archway, and disappeared into the stable—two desperate men, who sought this spot till my Lord Mountmarmaduke should presently come to them.

On a sudden Sir Rufus sprang round, and seized his sword. Footsteps were coming up the great oak staircase—half a dozen men, from the sound—with much clamour of voices and striking of sword-sheaths against the panelling. Even Gilbert sprang to his feet and drew his sword, and the next moment there came a violent rapping on the chamber door.

"I open for no man!" cried Sir Rufus sternly.

"What! Odds fish! Is there a corner of my dominion to which I am denied access?" said a rather harsh voice, which Sir Rufus instantly recognised. "Unbar your portal, man, for we have come to make merry with you!"

And as Gilbert, at a nod from the astonished baronet, unlocked the door, King Charles II., attended by several lords of the Court, entered the room with a smile on his dark, saturnine features.

"What!" said the King, "Swords drawn and doors bolted! What is the meaning of this? We might be back in the troubled times again, instead of at peace with all men!"

"I crave your pardon, sire," said the baronet, sheathing his sword; "but your Majesty came with so much tumult that we knew not what to expect!"

"Ah, well!" said the King, seating himself. "I am in a merry mood to-night, and in the mind to hear more music; and since our young friend here is not abed, prithee, let him take his lute and charm us again."

At the King's command, Gilbert drew his lute from its case, and, running his fingers deftly over the strings, played "Crimson Velvet."

The silvery tones of Gilbert's voice floated out through the open window, and the two men in the stable crept to the door to listen.

"Gad's life!" muttered Quartermaine "The boy pipes exceedingly well! I would not wager a broken rapier against my lord's chance, unless we do the deed to-night!"

"They have company above," said Silas Double.

"Ay, that they have; some bloods of the Court, no doubt, turning night into day. What makes my lord tarry, I wonder? Surely an hour is spent?"

The music ceased, and soon the rattle of the dice-box took its place. The King had said aright when he had proclaimed himself in a merry mood.

Gilbert laid down his lute, and sat in a corner, looking on. The scene was new to him. Round the table sat the courtiers, brilliant in silk and satin, and flushed with wine, and soon gold pieces began to change hands with amazing rapidity.

"Art as good with the rapier as with lute, lad?" said my Lord Rochester, turning somewhat suddenly on Gilbert.

"I have some slight skill, my lord," said our hero.

"Ay, and skill he has used to good purpose, as I full know," said Sir Rufus. "Art minded to try a bout of fencing, my lord?"

"Nay," said Rochester; "but I am thinking Tim Killigrew looks bitterly disappointed with his cards, and we might pit the lad against him."

Killigrew, nothing loth, both combatants removed their doublets, and appeared in their shirts.

"Colonel Legge," said Charles to a stout officer present, "I command you to throw up their weapons at the first blood."

Colonel Legge arose, the chairs were thrust back, and space cleared in the centre of the room. And, drawing his rapier, the old cavalier prepared to do his Majesty's bidding.

Down below, in the dark stable, Quartermaine and Silas Double listened to the uproar and revelry in the room above. Neither was sufficiently acquainted with the Court to recognise the King's voice, and both waited impatiently for the coming of my Lord Mount-

marmaduke, and looked anxiously at the eastern sky, dreading the approaching morning before their unholy task should be completed.

"Remember, gentlemen," said the stern voice of Colonel Legge, "you cease on the first blood drawn! The King commands it!"

Killigrew was flushed with wine. Gilbert, a quiet smile on his face, presented a perfect model of lithe, youthful beauty, and there came a twinkling into the eyes of Sir Rufus Pontifex. A pass, a lunge, a fierce parry, a thrust in tierce, and Killigrew's rapier made a circle in the air, and landed on the table, where the point buried itself, and the blade quivered like a terrified thing, until the weight of the steel basket hilt brought it over with a crash. For a moment there was silence, and then tremendous uproar arose from the stable yard beneath, a mighty clatter of feet, a hoarse cry of "Die, dog—die!" and a tremendous oath from a certain nobleman.

"What in the name of Heaven have we here?" cried Charles, as the party above ran to the window and looked down.

"Split you, Quartermaine! Are you blind as a bat? You have run me through the shoulder!" And there was a sound of a man staggering and clutching the posts of the stable door.

"My lord," exclaimed an agitated voice, "we mistook you for one of the watch! Surely it is a strange cloak you are wearing?"

"Ay; and how it came to my room I know not," said Mountmarmaduke faintly. "But I am badly hurt."

"Hold, below there!" cried a voice from the window. "What is going on forward?"

A dead silence followed the King's call, and the three men in the stable yard looked up at the window with no little trepidation.

"Fly! Fly!" whispered the wounded nobleman, sinking to the ground. "They must not find you here. I can easily account for my wound by saying you were footpads, or robbers, or the like."

In the moment of silence that followed upon the flight of the two villains, a low groan came up from the stable-yard.

"Someone is wounded below, there," said Charles. "Some of you gentlemen descend and see who the sufferer may be."

Colonel Legge and the Earl of Rochester, followed by the rest, ran out on to the landing, and so into the courtyard beneath.

"Gad's life!" exclaimed Master Killigrew, as they bent over the figure that lay across the entrance to the stable. "It is my Lord Mountmarmaduke, and badly hit!"

Mountmarmaduke was stretched upon his back, his face very white. He had fainted from the agony of his wound. Lifting him up, they bore him into the inn and laid him on the table.

A doctor was sent for, and when they had stripped my lord of his doublet and shirt the wound was found to be serious.

"Will he die, Master Leech?" said Charles in a cold voice.

"My best endeavours will be employed to avert that dread calamity, your Majesty," said the physician. "I do not think the wound is mortal; but 'twill be some months before his lordship comes to Court again."

The King smiled, and followed by his party, left the inn, and betook him to the royal lodging.

The following morning Jasper Jenkins brought bad news for Gilbert, news which caused Sir Rufus Pontilex to give vent to fierce anger. For the goldsmith's house had been broken into during the night.

John Jewell had gone down to his strong room to find the wall broken away. On the floor of the next cellar a lantern was burning.

And the papers which held the proof of Gilbert's real identity were gone!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bargain of Gideon Bilge—And the Start of the Fire of London.

A SLINKING, shambling figure, in a very tattered doublet, and shoes that had more hole than sole to them, took its way into Alsatia, pausing, looking round, hesitating, sometimes halting altogether, and with a face on which the pinch of hunger was writ large.

For months Gideon Bilge had had in his possession documents, the sale of which to the proper person would have made him a rich man for life.

From the conversation of his dead master

and Captain Quartermaine at certain odd times, when Gideon's large ears had been glued to keyholes and applied to faulty doors, he had gathered that a certain packet in the possession of John Jewell was one of the chief things my Lord Mountmarmaduke was seeking; and on the night of Eli Nethersole's terrible death, when the swashbucklers and the seamen alike had deserted that haunted house, Gideon Bilge had crept into the cellar, and stolen on tiptoe into that holy of holies, John Jewell's strong-room, and stolen the papers.

He thrust the packet into his breast and stole away out of the strong-room, out into the adjoining cellar, and away out into the night.

At length, by dint of much application—which would have been praiseworthy had it been exercised in an honester cause—Gideon was convinced that the papers had reference to the Mountmarmaduke family; and, driven by the pangs of hunger, he resolved at last to seek my lord and make what bargain he might.

After many inquiries among grooms and horse-boys about the taverns near Whitehall, he learned that Mountmarmaduke had been severely wounded many months before; that he was out of favour at the Court; and was believed to have gone abroad. Then one day Gideon saw the familiar figure of Captain Quartermaine, and following him stealthily, saw him enter the conspirator's old quarters at the sign of the Goat and Rope.

Gideon had no wish to come into contact with Quartermaine again, but he reasoned wisely that the captain would know something of my lord's movements; and on the particular night in question Eli Nethersole's apprentice made his way in fear and trembling to that ruffianly hostelry, having taken the precaution to conceal the packet in his attic before he trusted himself in the presence of the captain.

It was Saturday night, about eleven of the clock, and Gideon Bilge met few pedestrians abroad. The windows of the tavern, however, were lighted up, and though Alsatia had been visited severely by the plague, there were sounds of laughter and revelry as he opened the door. The next moment Gideon Bilge shambled into the inner chamber, to find himself in the presence of Quartermaine and Silas Double, who sat at either end of a table, with pewter flagons before them.

"And where have you been all this time?" said the captain. "Unless report lied, your master had good store of money hidden away in his house. But first tell me what brings you here, and what do you want with me?"

Gideon's necessities made him bold.

"It is not so much you, captain, that I want, but my Lord Mountmarmaduke. I have something for his private ear."

"You can pour your news into mine first of all," said Quartermaine, with a short laugh, "and if 'tis worth anything I will pass it on to my lord."

"'Tis worth a great deal," said Gideon Bilge, in a low voice. "Mind you a packet of papers——" he began.

But Quartermaine started to his feet, and smote the table until the flagons jumped.

"That was brought to John Jewell's by Gilbert Nameless?" cried the captain.

"The same," said Gideon Bilge. "What think you, my lord would give for that packet?"

Quartermaine's face grew scarlet with passion and he was about to speak, when the door was thrown open, and a handsome gentleman, in pale blue satin, swung into the room.

"Ah, Quartermaine, you are first at the tryst!" he said. "Good-evening to you, Master Double! Whom have we here in this youngster, whose garments look as though the plague might linger in them?"

"I bring no plague, my lord," said Gideon Bilge boldly, "but great news. I have found a packet of papers that your lordship has long looked for."

Mountmarmaduke started, and turned a questioning glance on Quartermaine, who nodded in reply.

"Unless the rogue lies, my lord, 'tis the papers we seek," he said.

Mountmarmaduke and Quartermaine exchanged a swift glance, and the captain winked expressively.

"What is the value you place on these papers?" said my lord.

"Fifty guineas," said Gideon Bilge, gasping

at his own temerity and the immensity of the sum he named.

My lord smiled.

"If the papers are as you represent them to be," he said, "you shall have fifty guineas."

The alacrity with which my lord uttered these words sharpened Gideon's wits again. He did not doubt that the fifty guineas would be forthcoming, but that he would be allowed to leave Alsatia with them in his pouch he did doubt very much. A sudden thought came to him.

"If your lordship will come with me," he said, "I will produce the packet, on condition that the money is placed in my hands now. If the papers are not what I have said, the money is forfeited, and, if your lordship wills, my life with it."

"Then take him by the sleeve, Double," said my lord rising, "and we will follow you."

It was past midnight when that strange quartette left the Goat and Rope, and the City was sunk in profound repose. Their way led them up to Ludgate Hill, and so through narrow, winding ways which in these days led them to Canning Street, or Cannon Street as we know it now.

"My lord," said Gideon Bilge, "will you come with me now? We are but a stone's-throw from the spot. And the Captain and Master Double must keep watch at the door."

"Do not try my patience too far," said my lord. "I will do as you say."

And he grasped Gideon by the wrist, bidding the others follow them. Gideon quickened his pace, and turned into a narrow alley known as Pudding Lane; but he had not taken two steps forward, when he rose and shrank back, checking the angry exclamation that rose to my lord's lips with a fervent:

"Hush! For pity's sake, my lord, say not a word! Look yonder!"

He faltered, pointing with his trembling hand.

Mountmarmaduke laid his hand on his rapier. And, sure enough, several cloaked figures were to be seen standing in the centre of the alley, apparently waiting for someone.

"That stout man," whispered Gideon Bilge, "is Jasper Jenkins, the saddler, and the tall one beside him is the goldsmith. Gregory Firebrace leans at the mouth of yonder court, and with him Simon Barbican and Gilbert Nameless himself."

"Perdition!" said Quartermaine, who had come up to them in time to hear these words.

"If there's fire in perdition," said Silas Double, looking upwards, "then perdition it is, captain."

And as he spoke a tongue of red flame shot up close at hand, and illuminated the narrow alley from one end to the other.

The party of watchers at the door of Gideon's lodging wheeled round at the sudden illumination, thereby presenting their backs to the four rogues. They saw at once that it was a fire likely to be of some magnitude, for the fierce east wind blew the flames in a terrific whirl, that threatened to devour the wooden houses on all sides.

They had heard that Gideon Bilge was hiding in this part, and, suspecting him of having the papers, John Jewell and his party were here to make a capture of the young rogue.

"It is at Master Farryner's, the King's baker," said Simon Barbican excitedly.

And one and all raised a great shout of alarm.

For a moment all recollection of the errand upon which they had come was effaced by the sudden danger, and even Mountmarmaduke and his two ruffianly associates stepped into the centre of the alley, astonished by the brilliance of the glare, which now showed far above the roofs. Then it was that Gideon Bilge seized his opportunity, as his lord's grip relaxed on his wrist, and in three bounds he had reached the doorway of his lodging and darted in. This brought the scoundrels to their senses in the instant.

"Quick, follow me!" cried Mountmarmaduke.

And, alarmed by the clatter, Jasper Jenkins turned round, and saw three cloaked forms disappear into the doorway they had just left. The suspicions of Jasper Jenkins were immediately roused.

"Brother-in-law," said he, grasping the goldsmith by the shoulder, "three men have just entered the house we were guarding, and in desperate haste, too. And, to say the truth,

With a howl of terror, Gideon took to his heels and ran.
(See page 246)

though I got but a passing glimpse, the last of them was mighty like the rogue Quartermaine!"

Gregory Firebrace, who had been shading his eyes with his right hand, wheeled round at these words, and drew his sword.

"Jasper Jenkins, if what you say be right, our place is there. Wilt follow me?"

And, without waiting for a reply, the old soldier ran to the doorway and disappeared.

Jasper Jenkins looked right and left. "The fire is two doors away," he said.

"We have yet time to see our business through!"

And, followed by Simon Barbican and Gilbert Nameless, the worthy saddler dashed into the gloom of the doorway.

There was a terrible commotion upstairs, and when they reached Gideon's attic they found that the rogues had made their escape through the roof.

The fire was now raging fiercely, and the four gained the narrow staircase in safety, but on reaching the lane found it one seething mass of flame, and a crowd of excited citizens blocking the other end.

Of Quartermaine, or Mountmarmaduke, or the usurer's apprentice there was not a sign, and our friends had to take to their heels to escape the terrific heat, which already scorched their hair and hands. In the doorway of the house at the corner of the alley they crossed Pudding Lane they found John Jewell.

"We have lost them," said Firebrace gruffly. "They have as many lives as a cat!"

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

The fight in the burning church

GIDEON BILGE wormed his way through the mob, and my Lord Mountmarmaduke, his pale-blue satin very much crumpled by this time, shouldered after him, crying, "Give way, my good people—give way!" in so authoritative a voice that the panic-stricken citizens fell back; and Gideon, looking back over his shoulder, saw the man he most feared almost within arm's length of him. Then Gideon, with a howl of terror, took to his heels and ran.

In spite of my lord's threat and drawn rapier, Gideon Bilge had disappeared when he reached the edge of the crowd, and Mountmarmaduke paused at the angle of St. Margaret's Church. He could see no trace of the evil apprentice—nothing but the houses lit up by the reflection of the fire, and folk hurrying to the scene to add to the confusion.

As he stood, a figure, limping, came round the other corner of the church, and my lord uttered an oath.

"What, you, Quartermaine!" he exclaimed. "I thought you had been taken, or killed, or a thousand things!"

"And I had the same thought of you, my lord," said Quartermaine, whose appearance had not benefitted by his scramble over the roofs; "for I can read failure in your face."

"Ay, curse the man! Everything is against me, Quartermaine!" said Mountmarmaduke. "But, see, the church door is open! Come within and let us take counsel!"

They went into the silent interior of St. Margaret's. Quartermaine sank heavily on to a seat, and rubbed his wounded leg.

"You have cursed me often enough over this business, my lord," he said bitterly; "but I do not find it proceeding any better when your lordship takes matters in hand.

Now, it happened that our hero and his friend, Simon Barbican, though separated by the rush and confusion, met by chance, opposite that self-same church of St. Margaret's, and drawing a little aside, out of the press, gazed in silence at the tremendous scene before them. The fire was spreading rapidly.

"'Tis a terrible sight," said Gilbert. "It gains every minute, and I fear me the church itself."

They turned instinctively to look at the square building behind them, and Gilbert gave a sudden exclamation of astonishment.

"Is that a face against the window there, Simon?" he said, pointing.

Simon Barbican bent forward like a tiger about to spring.

"It is not only a face, Gilbert," he said, "but it is that of the very man we seek. I should know those ears anywhere. Ah, he has disappeared! Gideon Bilge is inside the church."

Without another word the two boys ran to the porch, and, finding the door set ajar, Simon set his hand warningly, and they both stole within on tiptoe.

Gideon Bilge, still visible against the glare, crouched a few yards away, looking over his shoulder, but not at them. And as they watched they saw him draw something from the breast of his jacket, and place it behind the sculptured figure of a marble tomb. The hands of the two watchers clasped with a significant pressure, and the pressure deepened as a sudden voice fell upon their ears:

"Well, Quartermaine, 'tis no good lingering here. Yonder fire seems to have scorched your wits."

A gruff voice made some inarticulate reply. And Gilbert Nameless, peering cautiously round the corner, gazed up the aisle, to see the two villains not a dozen paces away.

"Simon," said Gilbert, "you marked where yonder rogue placed those papers! Secure them at all costs, while I——"

What he meant to say was interrupted, for Gideon Bilge, still looking very cautiously about, stumbled over a hassock, and raised a mighty clatter, that brought Quartermaine

to his feet. Both rogues looked in the direction of the sound, and, Gideon Bilge, terrified out of his life, darted across the altar-rails in full view of them.

Mountmarmaduke leaped forward like an arrow from a bow.

"Let the rogue go, my lord, for the present!" cried Quartermaine suddenly as he espied Simon and Gilbert.

And, tearing down the aisle, Quartermaine rushed to the church door, which he closed with a dull bang.

For an instant Gideon Bilge was saved, and my lord, with a strange laugh, came towards the pew from which Gilbert and Simon emerged.

Quartermaine, who stood in some fear of Gilbert's sword blade, paused a moment after he had closed the door, and in that moment he saw the slinking form of Gideon Bilge steal to the little archway that led to the church tower, draw the key from the outside, slip within, and lock himself securely in at the foot of the winding stair that led up to the tower top.

"You couldn't have done an unwiser thing!" laughed Quartermaine. "We can find you when we want you. And now, unless my right hand has lost it scunning, John Jewell will be without his apprentices!"

Without a moment's hesitation, Gilbert, confident in his own skill, had advanced to meet his mortal enemy; but Simon Barbican, wishing to leave nothing to chance, closed with my lord at the same time.

Simon's formidable cudgel descended on my lord's left shoulder with a tremendous crash, and Mountmarmaduke's arm fell powerless against his side.

"Have a care, Gilbert!" cried Simon triumphantly. "Leave this lordling to me, and look to the man with the sword!"

Gilbert had only time to wheel round on his heel and fling up Quartermaine's sword. In another instant it would have pierced him through.

In a moment Gilbert's good blade entered Quartermaine's breast, and, with a cry that was half a curse, and with his staring eyes turned in unextinguishable hatred upon our hero, he slipped to the floor.

Gilbert was only just in time to flee down the aisle as the whole of the vast window fell into the church, followed by a terrific burst of flame.

"Quick, Simon, the papers!" cried Gilbert.

"I have them," cried Simon, drawing forth the precious packet.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER

How King Charles was called upon to do justice

SOME few hours after the event recorded in the last chapter, John Jewell, Jasper Jenkins, Gregory Firebrace, and Gilbert and Simon Barbican were standing outside the goldsmith's house.

While the five were standing thus, talking and watching the fire, the heavy tramp of armed men resounded in the street beyond.

"It is the King's guard," said Jasper Jenkins. "I marvel much that the king himself has not been roused."

"See," said Gilbert, "surely my Lord Mountmarmaduke is with them?"

Gregory Firebrace laid his hand on his sword involuntarily as he caught sight of my Lord Mountmarmaduke, but they were not prepared for the extraordinary development that followed. When the armed party came abreast of our friends, who were drawn to one side of the street to let them go by, the officer cried "Halt!" and, drawing a paper from his pocket, made a step towards the goldsmith.

"You are surely Master John Jewell, the goldsmith?" said the officer.

"I am that unfortunate man," was the reply.

"I am sorry, sir," said the officer, "for you are a citizen of good repute, and my regret is the more profound that I have orders to arrest you with the other persons named in this warrant. I beg that you will make no resistance, for the warrant is signed by the king himself."

"There is some mistake here," said John Jewell, in a surprised tone. "Will you, sir, kindly tell me upon what charge I am arrested?"

"The charge, sir, is serious enough," said the captain of the king's regiment. "It is

that you and these persons with you are concerned in the fire that now rages yonder."

"To which fact," said my Lord Mountmarmaduke, "I can myself bear witness." And, emboldened by the presence of the armed soldiery, my lord drew a step nearer to the goldsmith. "The tables are turned, John Jewell!"

"Yes," replied the goldsmith, smiling, "we shall see who wins, my lord! Well, Master Officer, you must do your duty. Put up your sword, Firebrace. Jasper Jenkins, I command you to lay no finger on that man yonder. Our time will come soon enough. Stay with your mistress, Simon," he added, as the apprentice looked from one to another and clutched his cudgel. "This matter will be cleared up before many hours are passed."

. . . . . .

In a large, handsome room, with a gaily painted ceiling and long windows looking on to the Thames, sat King Charles II. and his brother James. Standing beside the table, on which his fingers drummed a little nervously, was Lord Mountmarmaduke. Sir Rufus Pontifex was also present.

The guard marched in, and the Duke of York, shading his face with his hand, looked through his fingers at the faces of the prisoners and their accuser. James had his own ideas on the subject, and few things would have pleased him more than to see Mountmarmaduke discomfited.

"Now, Master Jewell," said the King, "the matter before us is unpleasant, and we will be brief. My Lord Mountmarmaduke charges you with complicity in this terrible fire that has burned our good City of London. He came upon you, it seems, with your three companions, issuing from the shop of Master Farryner, our baker, and as you came forth the flames arose likewise. Will you tell us what business took you to that spot at two o'clock on a Sabbath morning?"

"Very readily, your Majesty," said John Jewell, "and none knew our business better than my Lord Mountmarmaduke. We sought a certain packet of papers in which my lord had no uncommon interest. These papers I would crave permission to show your Majesty in private."

The King nodded to the captain of the escort, and the room was instantly cleared.

"Perhaps," said John Jewell, looking at Mountmarmaduke, "'twere better for the moment if my lord retired out of earshot."

Mountmarmaduke, his eyes glowing like live coals, went into a curtained recess, conscious that the Duke of York turned his cold eye upon him with a very obvious sneer.

"I am going to be brief, your Majesty," Jewell said. "The facts I have to offer you are clear. My Lord Mountmarmaduke brings a grave charge against me. I am about to prove in the first place, that my Lord Mountmarmaduke is not my Lord Mountmarmaduke at all. I will ask you, sir, to carry your memory back to that day of the Worcester fight.

"In the ranks of those unhappy men who were so unguided as to oppose your Majesty was Colonel the Earl of Mountmarmaduke, and as you may have heard, he fell by gunshot and died, leaving an only son.

"A corporal of Cromwell's Ironsides caught the earl as he fell from his horse, and this same corporal sought out the orphan boy, and, knowing his father's wishes, Gregory Firebrace cared for the little one, carrying him on his saddle-bow, and when Cromwell returned to London, the corporal conveyed the child into Kent."

Sir Rufus Pontifex saw the head of Mountmarmaduke peering round a curtain, and he marked that the face was livid and the lips blue.

"Master Chantry, finding that a nephew of the late earl's succeeded to the title on your Majesty's ascension, hid the boy's identity from him, and when the good man died he committed him to my care.

"And now comes the grim part of my story. Anxious to secure himself, the usurper hired a band of assassins to do away with the lad who had never harmed him, and ever since he came into my house we have had to guard him night and day."

"You speak glibly," said the King. "How am I to know that this boy you speak of is the rightful son of the rebel earl?"

"With your Majesty's permission, I would

ask that Corporal Gregory Firebrace should be admitted," said John Jewell.

Gregory Firebrace now entered the room, and told his tale with so much outspoken, soldierly bluntness that the King smiled more than once.

"Well, well" said the King, shifting in his chair, "you have cleared yourself of the charge of treason, and I must perforce believe what you tell me about the boy. Produce him, and let me see for myself."

Sir Rufus Pontifex went to the door and led Gilbert forward by the hand.

"Here he is, your Majesty," said the jovial baronet, "still as fine a lad as when he charmed us with his voice at Oxford, and showed you, sir, what he could do with his rapier."

"Bid the captain of the guard come hither, Master Firebrace, and seize the person of that rogue behind the curtain yonder," said the king.

The captain of the guard entered and strode across the room, but when he reached the curtain he stepped back a pace and cried:

"Your Majesty, my lord has gone!"

"Gone! How gone?" said the King.

"Through the window, sire," was the reply.

"Then, Gilbert, Earl of Mountmarmaduke," cried Charles, bursting into a roar of laughter, "I would advise you to hurry down to your estates and take possession before the late owner plays ducks and drakes with them. I myself will see later that the rascal swings for his roguery."

Too overcome to do more than mutter some inarticulate words, Gilbert left the royal presence, and in a few minutes he found himself passing through the privy gardens with his friends, through the red-coated ranks of the guard that had brought him thither under very different case, and so into Whitehall without.

SHADOW SHOWS

A Splendid, Illustrated Article Dealing with a Popular Form of Entertainment.

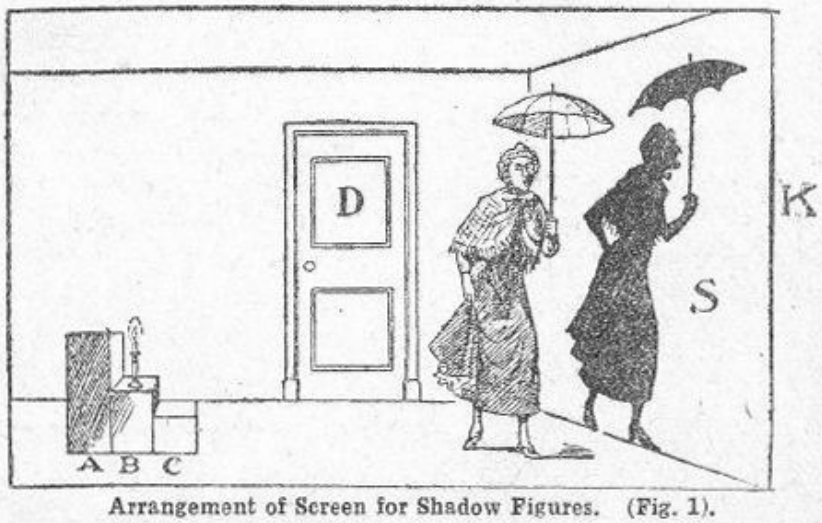
HAND SHADOWS.

FEW of us have not lain in bed by candle light, and with more or less success cast shadows upon the wall. Some may have seen public entertainments in which shadow pictures formed an important part of the programme, and have wondered in a dim kind of way how they were done. From what follows it will be seen how very simple are the arrangements, and how admirably adapted for the drawing-room entertainment a shadow theatre can prove.

Shadow shows may be divided into three kinds. They are:

1. Hand shadows, in which the performer stands in view of his audience.
2. Figure shadows, in which he stands behind a screen.
3. Puppet shadow shows, in which the shadows of lay figures are exhibited.

Of these three branches of art, hand shadows are distinctly the easiest to do, but they do not give scope for great variety, and although very good in their way, like most good things, are apt to pall upon an



Arrangement of Screen for Shadow Figures. (Fig. 1).

audience who, it must ever be remembered, have an unsatiable taste for novelty and change.

A screen of white cloth, about three feet square, should be fastened to the wall and drawn taut, so as to have no ruck or crease. A large sheet of perfectly smooth, white paper will make an equally satisfactory background.

The best light for casting shadows is given by a candle, which should not be lighted until a minute or so after the gas has been turned out. This will have the effect of making its light appear all the more brilliant.

Before attempting to give an exhibition of the various shadows, exercise the fingers to make them pliable. Clench the fist and try to raise one finger without moving the others. Raise each finger in turn and they will soon become supple; then you may commence learning to make the pictures.

The candle should be on a level with the hand, and you must stand rather to one side of the screen, in order that your body may not interfere with the view of the audience.

FIGURE SHADOWS

These are, perhaps, more entertaining than hand shadows, but require much greater space, it being necessary to arrange them somewhat after the manner of tableaux.

A white sheet must be drawn completely over one end of the room, as S in Fig. 1, whilst near the opposite wall three boxes of varying height should be arranged as A, B, C in that figure, a candle being placed upon the middle one.

There should be no other light in the room, upon either side of the screen.

When the performer enters by the door D, his shadow is thrown upon the screen in a natural size, but as he retires from the screen and approaches the candle, his shadow increases to enormous dimensions, and very funny effects will be produced.

A couple of performers may have a fight, the one near the candle apparently being of gigantic stature, whilst the other close to the screen is of ordinary build.

With a little practice it can be so managed that the two figures, although in reality at some distance from one another, appear to come to blows, and the incongruity of their respective statures makes the giant and dwarf fight of breathless excitement.

To add to the ridiculous situation, the giant can be given a knockout blow by the dwarf. A very small man can be made to make love to a huge woman, vainly endeavourng to reach her face in order to imprint a kiss upon her colossal lips.

Another amusing picture is to show a figure with a very swollen cheek. This illusion is best produced by tying a ball of worsted to the face. The dentist then approaches with a pair of large tongs in one hand and a carving knife in the other, opening and closing the tongs with fierce relish. Grasping the patient firmly by the throat, he extracts a large molar, made of cardboard stuck between the worsted and the cheek. Then, brandishing aloft the cause of his client's trouble, he slices off the swollen part of the sufferer's features, detaching the worsted, and proudly exhibits patient and tooth to the audience.

THE DISAPPEARING MAN

A surprising effect to be obtained in these figure shadows is the total disappearance through the ceiling of one of the actors. This is very simply done by stepping upon the lowest box C, striding over B, which bears the candle, and on to A, which makes the shadow appear to leap into the ceiling. Let a figure dressed as a policeman rush upon the scene, hotly pursued by a sailor brandishing a stout stick. The two chase each other about the stage for a time, and presently the sailor shouts very fiercely, "Get off the earth with you—get off!" and makes a

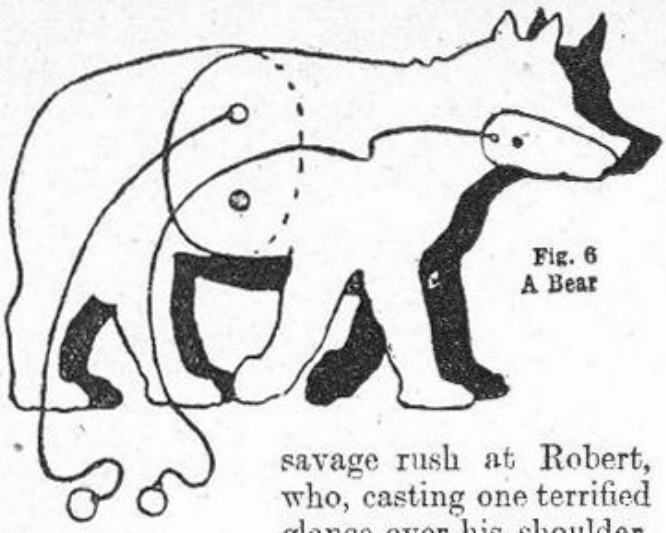


Fig. 6
A Bear

savage rush at Robert, who, casting one terrified glance over his shoulder, steps over the candle, and literally "gets off the earth." The sailor then bursts into a roar of laughter, dances a hornpipe, and retires.

During all these tableaux a running patter should be kept up, which, combined with fantastic doings upon the screen,

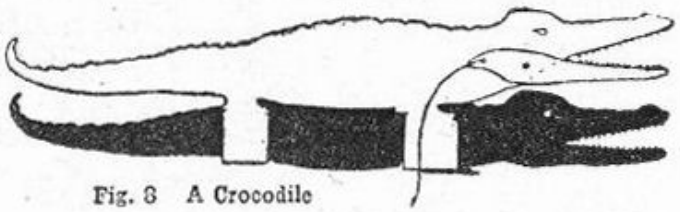


Fig. 8 A Crocodile

cannot fail to keep the spectators in fits of laughter. Figure shadows are certainly the most amusing of any shadow shows, and are so easily done that fear of failure need deter no one from undertaking them.

Almost any play can be adapted to shadow shows, nursery rhymes, burlesques of well-known tragedies, purely farcical

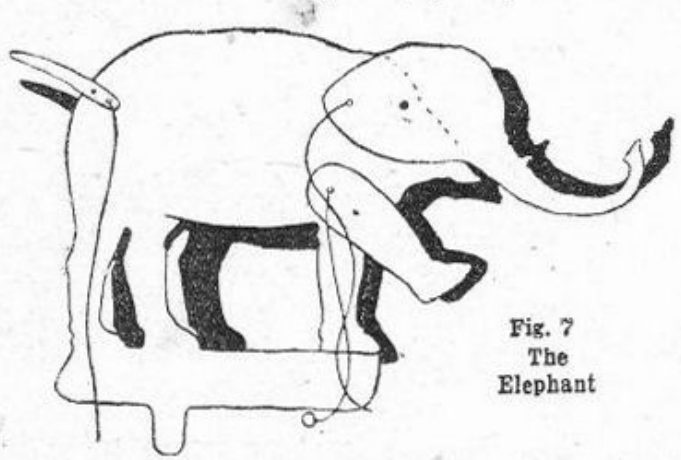


Fig. 7
The
Elephant

buffoonery—none will come amiss so long as there is plenty of action, whilst success is assured if all the actors concerned keep the ball rolling.

At the close of the entertainment, when the last piece has been finished, let one of the figures appear upon the screen and repeat:

"For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a magic shadow show,
Played in a box whose candle is the sun,
Round which we phantom figures come and go."

This will please the grown-up members of your audience who have read Omar Khayyam, and will also serve as a suitable finale to the evening's entertainment. Having said his little verse, the poet can then disappear into the ceiling.

Fig. 3
Partly finished figure of Crossing Sweeper.

PUPPET SHADOW SHOWS

To work a puppet shadow show is more difficult than either of the preceding entertainments, and requires considerable skill and ingenuity to present satisfactorily. As the name implies, the shadows in this case are cast upon the screen by lay figures, and the performers, of whom two are requisite, do not appear at all.

The simplest way to make a "stage" upon which to exhibit your puppets is to stretch a strong piece of cord across the corner of a room, and hang therefrom a sheet which shall reach from one wall to the other. Some people prefer to stretch it across an open doorway, but this is largely a matter of convenience, and is not always possible.

Before fastening up the sheet mark upon it a rectangle, as shown in Fig. 2, page 255, the rectangle being five feet from the bottom, two feet high, and four feet wide.

Now take the pieces of thick brown paper and tack them over the remaining portions of the sheet, so that when completed it shall be entirely opaque, except for the rectangle or stage upon which your figures are to perform. The brown paper will, of course, be on the side hidden from the audience. The next thing to be considered is the lamp, which should have a tin reflector and a one-inch burner. Arrange it in such a manner that it shall hang in the centre of the stage, and some eighteen inches or two feet from the screen—indeed at just sufficient distance to allow you to manipulate your fingers without coming into collision with the light. If possible shut out all light except that which is thrown by the lamp upon the stage, as the darker the room the more effective will be the appearance of the shadows. Take great care the sheet is so firmly fixed that it neither flaps nor creases.

Having accomplished this, turn to the making of the puppets.

The best material from which to manufacture them is thin zinc or tin, waste scraps of which any tinsmith will gladly sell for a mere trifle. With a pair of shears the metal can be readily cut to any shape, whilst it will also be strong enough to bear the rivets for working the figure.

The puppets should be about six inches in height. This is the best way to make them. Draw the figure selected upon a piece of fairly thin, white paper, taking care to accentuate all prominent points and features. Paste the figure—*e.g.*, a crossing-sweeper—upon a piece of tin, and carefully cut out the outline with the shears, as in Fig. 3.

Of course the puppets must be as comical as you can imagine, and should be neatly and accurately outlined. Notice that the figure has no arm, as this must be movable, and should be made separately, thus: Draw the limb, holding the broom as in Fig. 4, cutting it out in the same way as you have done the body.

Now take a punch and make a hole in the body at the shoulder, whilst two holes must also be made in the arm, as at A and B in Fig. 4. Get threepennyworth of quarter-inch iron rivets, and place one in the hole B of the arm. Make a loop in a piece of No. 9 size wire and place it over this rivet in the arm. Next bend the rivet with a pair of pliers, and fasten the wire as shown in Fig. 5.

Put a rivet through A in the corresponding holes in body and arm, and bend the rivet head over as before. Your crossing-sweeper is now complete.

By pulling the wire, which should run down one leg, and thus be invisible to the spectators, the arm can be raised or lowered from below, and the figure will appear to be sweeping vigorously.

Upon this plan every other puppet can be constructed, making as many joints in a similar fashion as are required.

Fig. 6 shows how to make a bear, which can rear up his hind legs and also open his mouth. He will serve as an example for making all animals, such as the elephant, Fig. 7, or the crocodile, Fig. 8.

Set-pieces, such as a church, or a house, can be easily constructed from cardboard, as in Fig. 9, whilst a very good effect can be obtained from a windmill with movable sails, Fig. 10.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the puppets needed depend entirely upon the piece you desire to represent.

Supposing it is your intention to exhibit three separate plays in the course of the entertainment, three different sets of figures will be required. The younger members of an audience are quick to observe any repetition.

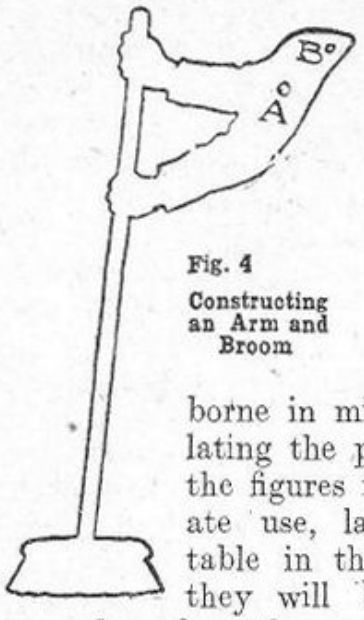


Fig. 4
Constructing an Arm and Broom

The figures are made so easily and cheaply that it will be quite as well to have a complete set for each play

MANIPULATING THE PUPPETS.

The following hints should be borne in mind when manipulating the puppets. Keep all the figures ready for immediate use, lay them upon a table in the order in which they will be required, and remember where they are, so that you can put your hand upon them the moment they are wanted. Keep your own head and fingers well out of sight—the whole effect will be spoiled if the spectators see a great black finger pulling some wire or adjusting a refractory limb. Keep as calm and collected as possible.

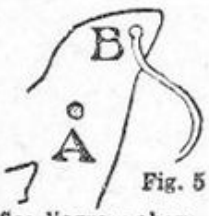


Fig. 5
See diagram above

If some part of a figure sticks and refuses to move, tell the audience, in an amusing piece of patter, that Jim, or whatever his name might be, has had a sudden stroke of paralysis, and must be carried away to the hospital.

Fig. 9. A House

When there is a hitch—and this will occur even with a professional—pass it off with a rattle of bantering fun, making the audience imagine it to be part of the show.

As the puppets are made from thin metal, be careful never to turn them round upon the stage. March the figures off the scene with some quaint excuse, and introduce them again facing in the direction you desire.

The Crossing Sweeper Figure completed.

It is impossible to lay too much stress upon the absolute necessity for the showman being ready with all kinds of patter. Funny as the scenes may be made with the figures alone, they are quite unentertaining unless all their doings can be explained with an unceasing tongue.

From the moment your first figure appears upon the scene, until the last one has made its exit, a continuous flow of amusing dialogue and comment should keep the audience on tenter-hooks of surprise and excitement—shrieking with

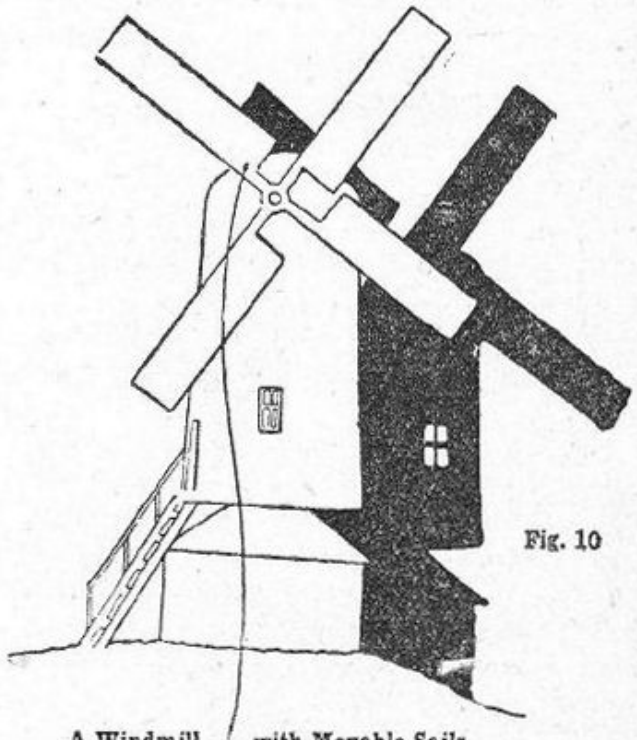


Fig. 10

A Windmill with Movable Sails

laughter over absurd remarks, or in an agony of wonder as to what will happen next. Dull and stupid the patter may appear on paper, it should certainly be written down and well studied before beginning the show, for the impromptu fun cannot be relied upon.

A lot of extempore humour can be introduced when you yourself have entered into the spirit of the show—but it is imperative that regular patter should be learnt by heart. Nothing can be more tiresome than a halting conversation of which one party has forgotten the cues, whilst the other cannot remember the lines.

If you can sing, intersperse a song or two here and there when there seems a suitable occasion, but be rather sparing than otherwise with your music.

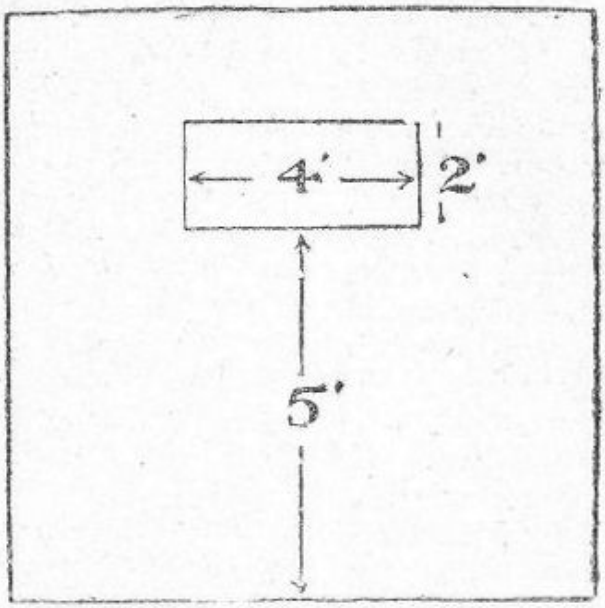


Diagram of Screen for Puppet Show

It may also be borne in mind that it is not necessary to have dialogue the whole time. A clever and amusing description of what is being done often proves better than a lengthy conversation in which the characters explain themselves. A few crisp remarks are worth a bookful of such speeches. However, when you are once fairly embarked on the play, let your puppets joke and abuse one another as much as they like.

We will conclude with a few words as to what is suitable for the puppet show theatre.

The greatest object of every entertainment is to be funny without using vulgarity. The nature of the show necessitates fairly short pieces, and experience has proved that several short and amusing plays are more appreciated than one long piece, during the performance of which interest is sure to flag.

Choose commonplace incidents of everyday life. An inventive mind will soon adapt the ridiculous side of things to a screamingly funny show. Do not attempt too much. With a smart patter, full of current expressions and allusions to topics of the time, preferably local, which all your audience can appreciate, the most casual events become laughable.

Take, for instance, the well-known family trouble—

THE PLUMBER

Figures :
Jim, the Plumber
Robert, the Policeman
Mrs. Hoggins
Mr. Plapper
Bridget, the Maid

With these five characters and a suitable amount of talking an amusing sketch can be given. The following is a mild suggestion of what can be done, but you will find that it can be made very much funnier when actually performed.

Scene : A House (Fig. 9)

Mrs. Hoggins emerges, loudly complaining that a pipe has burst and spoiled her nice new carpet. She blames everybody in the neighbourhood, not omitting Mr. Hoggins, who is in town. "Just like the man! Never here when he is wanted."

She calls Bridget, and tells her to run for the plumber. Bridget seems unable to understand. "Sure, mum, and the greengrocer came this mornin', and ye didn't want any fruit!" Mrs. Hoggins then explains matters with considerable volubility, and Bridget departs.

Mr. Plapper rushes out, waving his arm, and complaining that his house will be ruined by the overflowing water. The drawing-room ceiling has already come down. He sees Mrs. Hoggins and asks her heatedly what she means by it. That lady replies suitably, and they wrangle

until the plumber comes, when Mr. Plapper retires with a few sarcastic remarks.

Jim, the plumber, listens to Mrs. Hoggins' explanations, and disappears into the house to see what he can do, only to reappear in a moment, remarking that he must go home to fetch his hammer. He accordingly leaves the stage.

Mr. Plapper returns with a policeman, relating matters so excitedly that Robert is not quite sure whether it is a case of fire or merely a murder. He enters the house, and Plapper amuses the plumber, who, returning at this moment, thoroughly enters into the spirit of the fray.

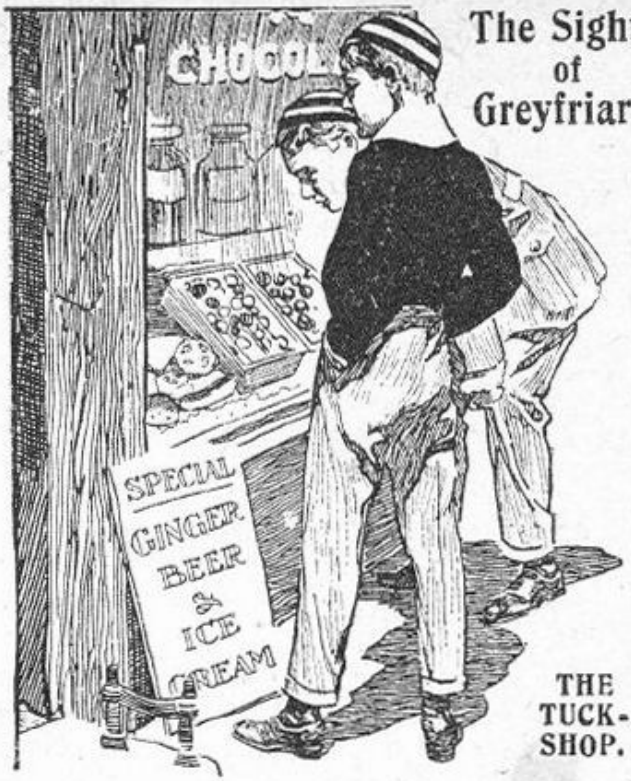
He also goes into the house, but comes out immediately, having suddenly remembered that it is time to go to dinner.

Mrs. Hoggins appears upon the scene once more, and encounters Plapper, who asks: "Well, ma'am, and what have you done about it?" "Done? If you would do something, instead of standing there talking like a monkey, perhaps we should know where we are!"

In an interval of the conversation, a loud sound of hissing is heard, and Mrs. Hoggins demands what it is. "Water oozing through my ceiling!" says Plapper. Mrs. Hoggins laughs sarcastically and retires. She apparently finds Robert making love to Bridget, for he suddenly appears running out of the house very hurriedly, followed by the fiery remarks of Mrs. Hoggins. He is making a few rejoinders, when Jim, the plumber, returns just in time to say that his wife is expecting him home to afternoon tea. A general chorus of excited abuse is then heard, in which Mrs. Plapper joins from the background. So Jim walks away, saying that he will cut all the water off, leaving them nothing to drink, let alone wash in, until next day.

This may seem very poor fun, but when staged and supplemented with good, strong patter, it should be most amusing. Opportunities always arise for introducing smart remarks and witty rejoinders, which cannot fail to "Bring the house down."

The Sights of Greyfriars.



THE TUCK-SHOP.

BENEATH the elm-trees' pleasant shade,
The Greyfriars tuckshop stands;
Jam-puffs and tarts and lemonade
Are served at our demands.
There, in the offing, with a grin
Upon his flabby visage
Is Billy Bunter, who's not thin.
But very plump for *his* age!

Here, Bunter is in Paradise.
And likewise he's in clover;
He votes the pastries jolly nice,
And bids you hand them over.
No appetite you ever saw
Compares with his—he knows it!
You watch him wolf the tuck with awe,
And wonder where he stows it!

The bustling dame is very sweet
To those who patronise her,
And pay spot cash for what they eat—
But Bunter sorely tries her.
One day, when hanging round the place,
He'll suffer an ejectment,
And, like the routed Prussian race,
He'll know what getting wrecked meant!

Long live the tuckshop! Place of cheer
Which gains our warm approval;
Thank goodness we need never fear
Its permanent removal.
So long as Greyfriars stands erect,
And keeps its proud position,
The famous tuckshop, we expect,
Will carry on its mission!

A NIGHT ALARM!

An Amusing Complete Story Written by H. Vernon-Smith, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars

I.

"GREAT jumping crackers!"

It was Bob Cherry who uttered the exclamation.

We—that is to say, the members of the Remove footer eleven—had just finished wiping up the ground with Highcliffe. We were passing through the hall, on our way to the bath-rooms, when an announcement on the notice-board arrested our attention.

Bob Cherry was the first to spot it, and we crowded round and looked over his shoulder. This is what we saw:

"NOTICE!

"In order that Greyfriars may be prepared, in the event of a fire, it has been considered necessary to introduce fire drill into the school routine.

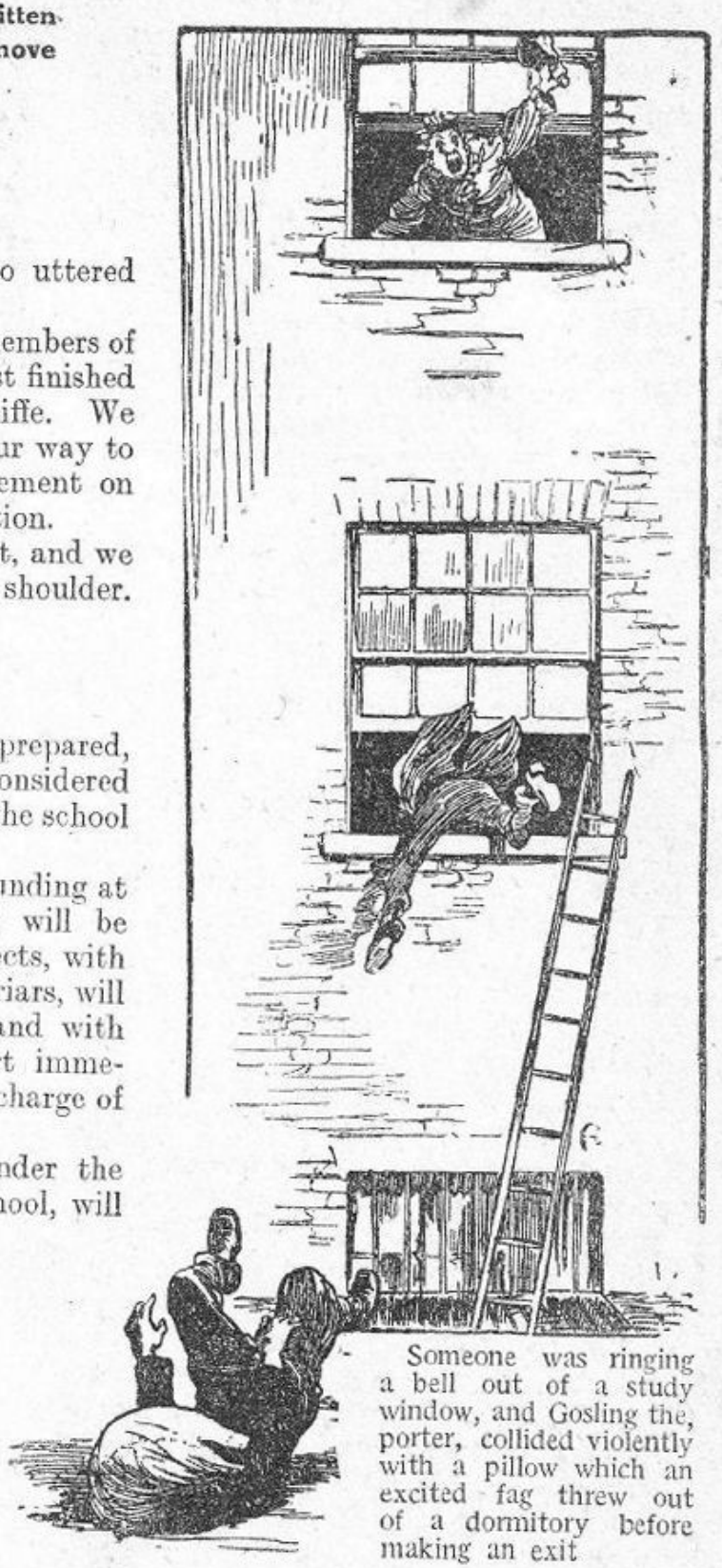
"In the event of the fire-alarm sounding at any time during the day—a gong will be employed for this purpose—the prefects, with the exception of the captain of Greyfriars, will arm themselves with fire-buckets, and with the necessary hose-pipe, and report immediately to Mr. Prout, who will be in charge of the proceedings.

"The remainder of the boys, under the supervision of the captain of the school, will assemble at once in the Close.

"Although the "fire" will be an imaginary one, the same promptitude must be shown as if it were a genuine oubtreak.

"Should the fire-alarm sound at any time during the night, the same instructions will apply.

"Chutes will be affixed in each



Someone was ringing a bell out of a study window, and Gosling the, porter, collided violently with a pillow which an excited fag threw out of a dormitory before making an exit

dormitory, and by means of these chutes everyone will descend into the Close.

"It must be clearly understood that there is to be no horseplay or practical joking. Any boy who disregards this warning will be severely dealt with.

"(Signed) H. H. LOCKE, Headmaster."

No wonder Bob Cherry had exclaimed "Great jumping crackers!" I made an equally lively remark myself.

Fire drill at Greyfriars! And we were liable to be called out at any hour of the day or night!

"My only aunt!" gasped Wharton. "This is a jolly queer whim of the Head's, and no mistake!"

"I can't quite tumble to his little game," said Nugent.

"I think I know what's happened," said Johnny Bull. "There was a report in the newspapers this morning about a big fire that broke out at Burchester College. The place was practically gutted. I expect the Head saw the report, and he's in a blue funk about it. Thinks the same thing will happen to Greyfriars."

"That's about it," said Squiff. "And he's decided that prevention is better than cure. But won't it be beastly if we have to turn out in the middle of the night?"

"It's jolly chilly these nights, too!" said Tom Brown, with a shiver. "I don't mind so much if the blessed gong sounds in the middle of morning lessons, when Quelchy's on the warpath; but if it goes off in the middle of the night I shall say 'Bother it!' or words to that effect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The notice-board was soon besieged by a perfect horde of fellows from all Forms.

It was rather amusing to hear the various comments.

Loder of the Sixth was furious.

"Of all the silly rot!" he snarled. "The Head's got bats in his belfry, I should think. Fancy having to rush around with fire-buckets and things in the middle of the night!"

We quite understood why Loder was waxy. It was a little habit of his to pay nightly visits to the Cross Keys; and these little excursions would now have to stop. For if the fire-alarm sounded one fine night, and Loder was discovered to be absent, there would be ructions.

"The whole thing's absurd!" declared Walker, who was with Loder. "We're going to have our beauty sleep spoilt just to suit a whim of the Head's!"

"It's the absolute limit!" growled Loder.

And the two Sixth-formers strode away in high dudgeon.

Coker and Co. of the Fifth, were equally furious when they saw the Head's notice.

"What awful rot!" said Coker. "The Head's fairly up the pole!"

"Fire-drill!" gasped Potter.

"At any hour of the day or night!" murmured Greene.

"I don't believe the Head wrote that notice at all, on second thoughts," said Coker.

"What makes you think that, old man?" asked Potter.

"Because the spelling's so awful! The word 'considered,' f'r instance, starts with a 'c,' when it really ought to be a 'k.' And then there's 'imaginary.' Surely there's a 'j' in 'maginary'?"

"Only an imaginary one!" chuckled Greene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This fire-drill stunt may be all right for the cheeky Remove fags," said Coker. "But it ought not to apply to us. I sha'n't believe that the Head wrote that notice until I hear the alarm go."

The Fifth-formers strolled away from the notice-board, and their places were taken by Temple and Co., of the Fourth.

Cecil Reginald Temple and his followers took the same view as the Fifth and Sixth.

The majority of the Remove fellows, too, were indignant at the Head's announcement; but it was hailed with great glee by the fags in the Second and Third. They anticipated getting quite a lot of fun out of the fire-drills. There was great excitement at Greyfriars that evening; and it was a common sight to see a fellow suddenly prick up his ears, as if expecting the fire-alarm to sound.

But nothing happened. We did our prep. as usual, and retired to the Remove dorm. at the allotted hour.

"Wonder if the first alarm will be given to-night?" said Wharton.

"Shouldn't be surprised," said Bob Cherry.

"It's a beastly cold night, and it will be just our luck to be routed out in the middle of it!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I don't think there will be anything doing to-night," said Mark Linley. "The chutes haven't been fitted yet. The workmen are going to do the job to-morrow morning."

"It will be rather ripping to whizz down a fire-chute!" said Dick Russell. "I'm quite looking forward to it."

"Dashed if I am!" said Peter Todd. "I don't think I shall enjoy the experience a bit—especially if Billy Bunter happens to be whizzing down on top of me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Most of us slept with one eye open that night, but there were no developments.

Once I imagined I heard the gong sound; but it was only the school clock striking midnight.

Next morning we saw the workmen fixing up the canvas chutes, and we guessed that the first alarm would not be long now.

In the middle of morning lessons there was what the newspaper reporters would call "an unusual incident."

Billy Bunter suddenly rose from his seat and dashed to the door.

We all sat speellbound; and as for Quelchy, I thought he was going to choke.

"Bunter!" he roared. "Come back, sir!"

Billy Bunter halted, and blinked at Quelchy through his big spectacles.

"Get a move on, sir!" he said.

"What!"

"Put a jerk in it!"

Quelchy nearly fell down.

"Bunter!" he gasped. "Do you realise whom you are addressing?"

"Yes, sir! The fire-alarm's gone, and we've all got to parade in the Close at once!"

Quelchy fairly exploded.

"How dare you?" he exclaimed. "Your effrontery in rushing out of the Form-room without permission almost leaves me speechless! No alarm of any sort has been given. This is a ruse on your part, Bunter, to escape from morning school. Come here, sir, and hold out your hand!"

Very reluctantly Billy Bunter obeyed.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Now go to your place, Bunter, and do not venture on such impertinence again!"

Grunting and gasping, Billy Bunter rolled back to his place, and he was careful not to dash to the door again until the word of dismissal came.

II.

BOOM!

It was the first stroke of midnight, sounding from the old clock-tower.

But there was another booming sound, too, and it was nearer and louder.

The fellows in the Remove dorm. stirred uneasily in their beds and awoke.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry drowsily. "There goes the merry old gong!"

Boom! Boom!

Whoever was beating the gong—probably Gosling, the porter—was putting his beef into it.

Harry Wharton was out of bed in a twinkling, and I was a good second.

"Tumble out everybody!" said Wharton. "It's the fire-alarm!"

"Oh, help!"

"It's come at last!"

"And it's a perishingly cold night!"

With two exceptions the fellows turned out of bed, grumbling and grunting.

The exceptions were Mauly and Billy Bunter.

Bunter was awake, but he did not stir. As for Mauly, he had not even heard the gong. Once Mauly is in the arms of Morpheus it takes more than a gong to rouse him.

"Out you get, Bunter!" said Wharton sharply.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"If it were a real fire, you ass, and you stayed in bed, you'd be slightly scorched!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Listen!" said Squiff suddenly.

The gong had ceased, and we could hear the fellows from the other dormitories clat-

tering down the stairs. They were muttering excitedly as they went. Someone was ringing a bell out of a study window, and Gosling, the porter, collided with a pillow which an excited fag threw out of a window before making an exit.

We heard Temple of the Upper Fourth remark that the chute which had been fixed up in his dormitory wouldn't operate properly. As a result the Fourth-formers were obliged to descend via the stairs.

"Those fellows seem in a frantic hurry," said Nugent. "My hat! Supposing it's a real fire?"

These words had a magical effect upon Billy Bunter. He fairly leapt out of bed, and he was absolutely panic-stricken.

"I say, you fellows, won't it be awful if the place is burnt to the ground?" he said, with a shiver.

"What I want to know is," growled Bolsover major, "have we got to put our togs on or not? The Head said nothing about it in his announcement."

"Well, we're not going down to the Close in our pyjamas!" said Ogilvy. "I'm not, anyway!"

We were struggling into our togs when Wingate of the Sixth looked in.

"Get a move on, you kids!" he exclaimed. "Everyone else is down!"

"Do we descend by the chute or the stairs, Wingate?" inquired Wharton.

"By the chute, if you can manage to lower it properly.

Wingate, who was looking rather flurried, took his departure, and shortly afterwards I assisted the Famous Five to lower the chute.

This done, Bob Cherry clambered up on to the window-sill to make investigations.

"There are scores of fellows down in the Close," he said. "And half a dozen of 'em are holding the end of our chute, waiting for us to come down."

"I—I say, Cherry," faltered Billy Bunter, "what else can you see?"

"Huge columns of smoke," replied Bob, pulling Bunter's leg, "and a forest of sparks——"

"Ow!"

"And a couple of ambulances, and a dozen stretchers."

"Groo! Whereabouts is the fire?"

"The smoke seems to be coming from the Head's study," said Bob.

Billy Bunter shuddered.

"Do you think there's any chance of the flames spreading to this dorm.?" he inquired anxiously.

"Well, I dare say we shall be smoked out in a few minutes," said Bob cheerfully.

Billy Bunter's complexion turned a sickly yellow. He rushed frantically towards the chute.

The prospect of whizzing down to the Close at express speed was far from pleasant to the fat junior. But anything was better, Bunter reflected, than being burned alive.

Billy Bunter put his feet through the cavity, but his body refused to follow, and he got hopelessly stuck.

"Help! Get me out of this!" he panted.

And half a dozen of us rushed to the spot.

"Do you want us to push or pull?" inquired Peter Todd.

"Yow—pull, you fatheads!"

We laid violent hands on Bunter's huge bulk, and tugged for all we were worth.

With a wild yell of anguish Billy Bunter shot back into the dormitory. Then, scrambling to his feet, he dashed out of the room and down the stairs, yelling "Fire!" as he went.

We were almost helpless with laughter, but, on hearing impatient shouts from below, we slid down the chute one by one.

It was quite a novel experience, and most of us enjoyed it. We shot out at the other end without mishap, and lined up with the rest of the fellows in the Close.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was dashing along the corridors, still shouting "Fire!"

Suddenly the fat junior was brought up short, and a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

"You silly young ass!" muttered Coker of the Fifth; for he was the owner of the heavy hand. "What are you yelling 'Fire!' for?"

"Because there is one, of course."

"Where?"

"In the Head's study!"

"What rot!" said Coker incredulously.

"It isn't rot—it's a fact! I've seen the blaze with my own eyes."

Coker saw that Billy Bunter was genuinely alarmed, and, hearing the shouts from the Close, he concluded that the fat junior's statement was correct.

"Come along," he said briskly.

"Where to?" asked Bunter.

"To put the fire out, of course. We must get hold of the hose-pipe, and buzz along to the Head's study."

At that moment there was a commotion near at hand, and a party of prefects rushed past Coker and Bunter. They were carrying a hose-pipe between them.

"Those fellows have forestalled us," said Coker. "Never mind. We'll bag a fire-extinguisher apiece."

There were some fire-extinguishers, of the approved pattern, hanging in the hall.

Coker remembered this, and he dashed off pell-mell in that direction. Billy Bunter—owing to circumstances over which he had no control—accompanied him.

It was dark, but not too dark to discern the extinguishers. Coker snatched one down from the bracket on which it had hung, and pressed it into Bunter's unwilling hands. Then the great Horace armed himself in a similar manner.

"This way!" he panted breathlessly. "We want to get to the Head's study before those bounders with the hose-pipe."

Away went Coker, with Billy Bunter hard on his heels.

The fat junior was beginning to feel less funky and more confident. What a triumph it would be, he reflected, if he assisted in quenching the flames.

In the Head's study were many valuable documents, and, thanks to the promptitude of Coker and Bunter, they would be saved from destruction. Perhaps!

"Do you know how to use that extinguisher?" panted Coker as he ran.

"Yes, you bash the knob on the floor, and the water shoots out," replied Bunter.

"That's right. You've got more savvy than I gave you credit for."

The corridor leading to the Head's study was deserted. Evidently the prefects had not yet arrived on the scene with the hose-pipe.

"Now's our chance," muttered Coker. Pile in."

The two would-be heroes dashed their extinguishers on to the floor of the corridor. Then Coker threw open the door of the Head's study, and two jets of water shot into that celebrated apartment.

Swish! Swish!

There was a startled exclamation from within, and the Head, who had been writing at his desk, leapt to his feet. As he did so, a powerful stream of water from Coker's extinguisher smote him in the chest, and he staggered back, utterly dumbfounded.

Coker realised that a terrible mistake had been made, but he was too paralysed to move. He continued to point his extinguisher at the Head, and that bewildered gentleman soon presented a very drenched and sodden appearance.

The Head fared badly enough, but the private papers and documents on his desk fared even worse. Billy Bunter had soaked and swamped them very thoroughly.

The contents of the two fire-extinguishers were exhausted at length, and Coker and Billy Bunter stood goggling stupidly at each other.

Presently the Head found his voice, and a very terrifying voice it was!

"Coker! Boy! What does this mean? How dare you? How dare you, I repeat? For this unseemly and disgraceful practical joke, you will be expelled from the school!"

"I—I——" stuttered Coker.

"We—we——" stammered Billy Bunter.

"Do not stand there mumbling incoherently!" thundered the Head, shaking some of the water from his gown. "You have had the audacity, the brazen effrontery, to attack your Headmaster with fire-extinguishers! Such an outrage is almost without parallel in the history of Greyfriars!"

Clutching the empty fire-extinguisher in his hand, Billy Bunter stood blinking at the infuriated Head through his big spectacles.

"We—we were pip-pip-pip——" he stuttered.

"You were what, boy?"

"We were pip-pip-putting the fire out, sir," said the fat junior, in desperation.

"But there is no fire, you absurd boy!"

"We—we thought there was, sir," explained Coker. "We were quite under that impression, sir. We understood that your study was on fire, and we hurried along to save all your papers and things, sir!"

"Instead of saving them, you have destroyed them, Coker—or, at any rate, rendered them useless!" snapped the Head. "However, it is patent to me that you acted under a misapprehension, and I shall not punish you with expulsion, as I threatened to do a few moments ago. But I cannot overlook what has occurred. You and Bunter will report to me after breakfast in the morning, when I hope to impart a severe castigation to each of you!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You will replace those extinguishers in the hall, and return to your dormitories!"

Coker and Bunter quitted the study which they had wrecked in their impulsiveness. And when they were out in the corridor, Coker had a few words to say to his companion. The "few words" terminated with Billy Bunter lying on his back, wondering if an earthquake had struck him.

When we heard of the amazing scene in the Head's study we simply roared. And we were still roaring long after we had returned to the Remove dorm.

"Oh, dear!" sobbed Bob Cherry. "It's rough luck on poor old Bunter. Perhaps I ought not to have pulled his leg, but I simply can't help laughing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Laughter, loud and long, rang through the dorm, and it was long, long before any of us got to sleep that night.

. . . . .

Next morning Coker and Billy Bunter went through the mill. And the Head made a public announcement to the effect that there would be no more fire-drills.

Probably he objected to having sudden shower-baths in the middle of the night.

Anyway, we were jolly pleased with his decision, and it was refreshing to know that in future we should be able to sleep sound o' nights

THE END.

THE SIGHTS OF GREYFRIARS

THE GYM.

AMONG the sights of Greyfriars, this
Deserves a high position;
For here, in eager, boyish bliss
We view each exhibition
Of fistic prowess with the gloves
(In fact, without them sometimes),
And every British schoolboy loves
A friendly scrap in glum times!

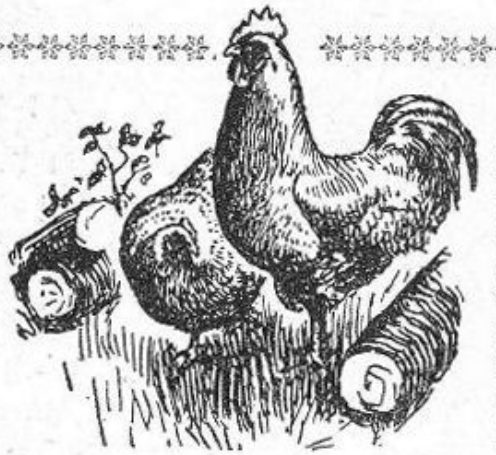
Some bouts, however, are not meant
To be devoid of vigour;
Each boxer slogs with grim intent
And cuts a fearsome figure.
The claret flows from many a nose,
And ribs are swiftly pounded;
And many a victim dizzy grows
Before the gong is sounded!

When Nugent minor cheeks his chum
The latter promptly mutters,
"You rotter! To the gym. we'll come
And I'll put up your shutters!"
Then blows are given and returned
With promptness and precision;
And many a youthful fag has yearned
To force a swift decision!

Although its sights are sometimes grim
And hardly nice to witness,
We gaze with pride upon our gym.
Inspiring skill and fitness.
If any chap should criticise
My muse, he'll live to rue it;
For I will promptly black his eyes,
And in the gym. I'll do it!

HOW TO KEEP CHICKENS

A Successful Lady Farmer's Useful Hints To Would-be Boy and Girl Poultry Keepers



Buff Orpingtons

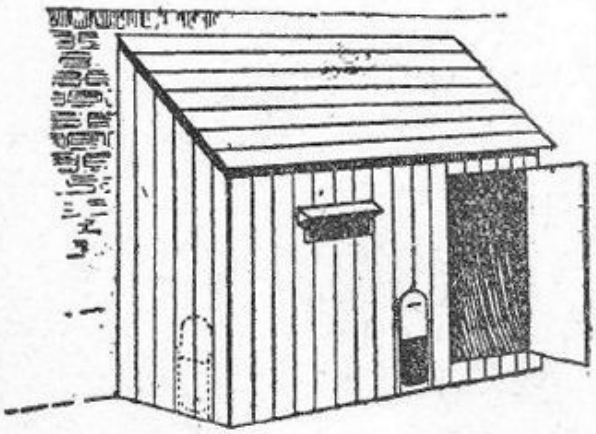
Do you want fresh eggs? Then you must keep hens. Eggs are now so dear and so scarce that it is almost impossible to buy them, and if you keep a few hens it is well worth the little trouble.

People who know nothing about poultry and take no interest in them, say they are the stupidest animals in creation. In reality this is not so, for some fowls show remarkable intelligence, and become great pets as soon as they know and understand one. So therefore you, so to speak, kill two birds with one stone—that is to say, you have your pets and you also have your eggs. It is undoubtedly true that since the war large poultry farms are a failure in the money-making line, and many people have sold their stock and closed down altogether. This, of course, is due to the enormous increase in the price of all feeding stuffs.

Twelve hens are sufficient to give a good supply of eggs for the family with a few over for sale, and only corn, sand, and bedding have to be bought.

Intensive Poultry Culture

has been practised a great deal lately, and is undoubtedly the best for egg production during the winter months, But for this a good special poultry-house is required with plenty of windows and shutters and a good deal of space. This is naturally very expensive, especially nowadays, and, unless you have one already, I should advise free range for your poultry. This means that the birds are out all day, and so practically any clean, dry, airy place with a few perches will do for them to sleep in. A stable makes an excellent henhouse. The birds require a scratching-shed under cover for wet weather, so either there should be straw, hay, shavings, peat, moss, or dried leaves on the floor of their house, or in some other sheltered place. If the latter, their floor should be sprinkled with sand or sawdust, and the droppings cleared away each day. This makes excellent manure for rose-trees, etc., so should be kept.



A good type of poultry shed

Varieties

The two best all-round fowls are undoubtedly Rhode Island Reds and Buff Orpingtons. They are both excellent layers (laying brown or tinted eggs), splendid table fowls, good sitters, and put on flesh faster than other birds. Also, being coloured, they always look clean, whereas white birds so easily look dirty and bedraggled. White Wyandottes, white Leghorns, and light Sussex are all good breeds, but the white Leghorns are only suitable as layers, and will not sit.

Of course, a great many

farmers and poultry keepers prefer a first cross, and if it is a thoroughly good one it may be all right. Personally, I prefer pure bred stock. They are more expensive to buy, but pay their way far better in the end.

If you buy your birds in the autumn—and that is really the best time—choose pullets hatched early in the year. Always examine before you buy your stock, or you may get let down, and, if you are silly enough to take anything, you cannot blame anybody but yourself. Pick out those birds which have bright eyes and red combs, clean legs, and are free of insects, and you will be all right. It is not necessary to have a cockerel with birds unless you require fertile eggs, and as it saves feeding an extra mouth do not get one until you want to breed. One cock to twelve hens is sufficient. Pullets should run with a two-year old cock, and old hens with a young cock. Do not forget that the cock must be unrelated to the hens, otherwise you will have weak chicks.

Feeding

Remember that all house scraps are very valuable as food, and you will find that these mixed with any good reliable whole-meal, well warmed and made crumbly moist, should be quite sufficient for the morning meal. If you have no meat scraps or bones for them to pick occasionally, give them some "Rentox" mixed with their mash. This is a preparation of dried blood, and, though rather expensive, is worth having. This, of course, only applies to the winter months, as in the summer birds find sufficient worms and insects in the ground. In the afternoon feed with oats, wheat, or mixed grain; a small handful for each bird is sufficient. It is a good idea to give these foods in turns, and in the winter they may be soaked in hot water and given warm and moist. Do not forget to have a good look at your corn before buying, and see that the oats are full, not husks, and the wheat free from mould. If the birds are in a confined run, or the weather is bad, and they get little or no exercise, bury the afternoon feed so that they have to scratch for it. Birds must have plenty of exercise, otherwise they will not lay.

Another good thing is to tie up lettuce or cabbage leaves, just out of the birds' reach, so that they have to jump for them. Poultry like swedes, mangolds, carrots, apples, and almost all roots, which can be given in the winter when greenstuff is scarce. Give the birds fresh water every morning; dirty water is very injurious.

In the winter after a warm mash, the water should be slightly warmed to prevent chills.

In the summer keep the water in the shade, as the sun's rays warm it very quickly, and this is bad for the birds, especially so for young chicks.

Always give all birds plenty of grit and oyster-shells, and a dust bath of cinders. Where birds have free range this may not be necessary.

Incubation.

If you only require a few chicks hatch out by natural methods; this is cheaper, less trouble, and more satisfactory on a small scale than an incubator. When your hen is "broody," find a nice quiet spot where she will not be disturbed, then take a hencoop, well wired underneath to keep off rats. Place the coop directly on the ground, get a large handful of hay, and make this into a good nest inside the coop, taking care to fill up the corners so that the eggs cannot roll about. Then get some china or useless eggs, and place the hen gently by the nest. After a few seconds she will get in by herself. If she is sitting well, place the proper eggs underneath after a day or two. Do not give her more eggs than she can cover comfortably—thirteen or fourteen hens eggs is the usual amount—but, of course, this depends on the size of the hen. Hens' eggs take twenty-one days to hatch out, fresh eggs may be a day less, stale eggs a day longer. Naturally, the fresher the eggs the better the result. Eggs that have travelled should be laid on their sides for twenty-four hours before going under a hen. In picking out eggs for hatching, reject all those which have roughness on the shell, are thin shelled, peculiar shaped, very large, or very small. It is quite probable that these would hatch out all right, but the chicks might be weakly or deformed.

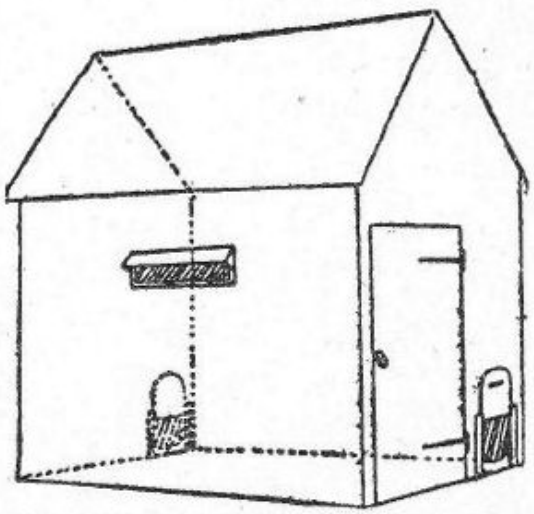
Feeding the Hen

At a regular period each day the hen must be fed. Maize is the best food at this time, and do not forget water, grit, and a dust-bath. These should be placed in front of the coop and the lid then removed. If the hen walks off by herself so much the better, but if she is a " close sitter " it is better to lift her off at once. Gently place the thumbs over the wings and the fingers under the thighs, taking care that no egg is clipped beneath the wing. Allow her to stay off about twenty minutes the first few days, after that ten minutes, and only five minutes the last few days. The hen will go back by herself; never force her in, as this may cause the eggs to be broken. If she is no hurry to go back, gently drive her in front of the coop, and she is sure to go in when she sees the eggs. When the chicks are hatching it is best not to disturb the hen too often. Take the shells away once during the day, and leave the chicks without food for twenty-four hours, and even forty-eight hours will not harm them.

Feed the Chicks

on breadcrumbs, boiled rice, hard-boiled egg or Spratt's chikko, and for the first few days, feed sparingly. A very little and often is the best method, usually about every two hours. Milk is better than water at first, and do not forget grit. After ten or fourteen days give the last feed of mixed grain for chicks. Little bits of meat are strengthening, and chopped dandelion, fine grass, or lettuce, all excellent.

Do not forget to dust the hen with insect powder a day or two before the chicks are due, otherwise lice may get in the chicks and kill them. Keep the hen cooped up at first, and let the chicks run in and out. About ten days after she may be allowed out with the chicks. Leave her with them, especially during cold weather, until they are a good size, as she keeps them warm. Do not forget to always have water within the hen's reach. The cockerels should be separated from the hens after six weeks.



An outline diagram of lean-to shed

Diseases

Some of the most frequent and their remedies :

Colds : Symptoms : Sneezing and discharge from nose.

Cure : A little eucalyptus, camphor, or sulphate of iron placed in the drinking water will, as a rule, effect a cure. This can be done in cold, damp weather as a preventative.

Gapes : A chick disease. The victim opens and shuts its mouth as if gasping for air.

Cause : This is due to a thread-like worm in the windpipe which prevents the chick from breathing.

Cure : Isolate at once, and remove others to fresh ground, stale ground being the usual cause. A small feather, stripped all but the tip and placed in eucalyptus oil and thrust down the windpipe, will often cure it. Another remedy is camlie powder. Place the chick in an air-tight box, and pump in the powder. Repeat the treatment in the evening.

Cramp : Usually due to dampness of soil.

Cure : Rub with Elliman's embrocation.

Cropbound—*i.e.*, the bird's crop is full and will not pass into the gizzard. This is due to long grass or too large piece of food.

Cure : Give a drink of warm water and gently work the crop about with the hand ; then give more water containing a teaspoonful of Epsom salts.

Scaly-leg : Due to dirt, and is a minute parasite breeding under the scales of legs.

Cure : Isolate and scrub the legs with warm water and soap, and smear with sulphur ointment or vaseline.

THE END

Fig. 4

TRICKS FOR THE TRICKSTER

Some Useful Tips to Boys and Girls Who Wish to Amuse Their Friends

Fig. 5

Blowing Through a Bottle

CAN you blow hard enough to make your breath pass right through a thick glass bottle? The majority of people will say "No," and dare you to perform the task. It is really very easy.

Fig. 1

Take a large round bottle or jam-jar, and place a lighted candle behind it as in Fig. 1. Now stand so that the bottle or jar is interposed between yourself and the light, and blow. The flame will be extinguished at once.

There is scarcely need to tell your surprised friends that the shape of the bottle has really caused your breath to follow the curve of the two sides, unite at the back, and blow out the light.

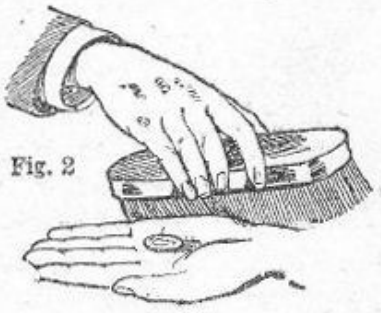


Fig. 2

A Safe Wager

LAY a sixpence upon the palm of your hand, and promise to give it to whoever can brush it off with an ordinary clothes-brush, as shown in Fig. 2. The only condition you need make is that they shall brush towards the tips of the fingers and not to one side.

You need have no fear of the result, and can feel quite assured that your money is as safe as if it were in your own pocket. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that no amount of brushing will move the coin the hundredth part of an inch on your open palm.

Do Not Touch the Coin

PLACE a sixpence upon a polished table, and ask one of your friends to pick it up without touching either the coin or the table.

A glance at Fig. 3 shows how the trick is done. Slightly curve your hand so that it almost touches the table, and blow steadily upon the table at a distance of about five or six inches. The force of your breath passing beneath the coin will carry it into your hand.

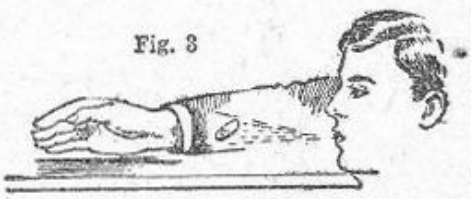


Fig. 3

Quis Separabit

IF there happen to be a newly-married couple amongst your friends, the following little trick may cause them a blush of happiness.

Get them to fold their hands, as shown in Fig. 4, in such a way that the wedding-ring finger of the left hand, and the corresponding finger of the right

hand, are doubled inwards as far as the second joint, and the knuckles of these joints press firmly against each other.

Now, tell them to separate their two thumbs, as in Fig. 5, while you say, "Parents and children may be separated!" Then let them do the same with the two forefingers, remarking, "Brothers and sisters may be separated!" The same performance may be repeated with the two little fingers, and you remark, "Even lovers may be separated!" Finally, let them try to separate the two middle fingers, when you will find they cannot get them apart. Whereupon you state emphatically, "But husband and wife can never be divided!"

Fig. 6

Stick No Bills

TAKE a piece of coarse brown paper, the coarser the better, and warm it steadily before the fire. Now draw it rapidly a dozen times between your arm and your body, as in Fig. 6, so that it receives a good friction on each side. Now press the paper against the wall, and you will find it remains as firmly stuck as though a whole pot of the best paste has been used for the purpose.

A Genuine Match

IT is surprising how universal is the law of love! Even two plain pieces of wood are unable to resist the impulses of the great passion.

Take out the bottom of a matchbox, and split it into two pieces.

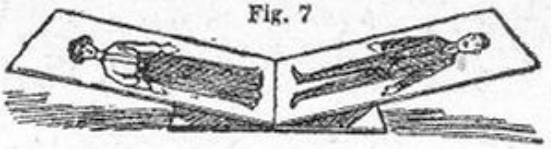


Fig. 7

Double over the ends at about a quarter of the way up, as in Fig. 7. On one piece make the rough sketch of a girl, and upon the other a similar drawing of a man, and then place the pieces together, as shown in the illustration.

If you pour a few drops of water over the joints on the two pieces of wood, you will find that the two figures slowly and surely rise up to meet each other, and will eventually press their two faces closely in a long kiss. They may be some time about it, but then pleasures delayed are always doubly enjoyable.

The Dying Fish

CUT a piece of deal into a prism about 4 inches long, and colour two of the sides black or dark blue, painting the remaining side white. Sharpen one end into a small triangular point, and paint two eyes and a mouth thereon, so that the completed figure appears as in Fig. 8.

Fig. 8

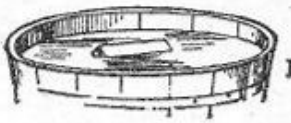


Fig. 9

Now, if you put this into a basin of water very heavily salted, you will find that the fish floats quite naturally, as in Fig. 9; whilst, if you place him in a basin of plain fresh water, he will immediately turn on his back and float dead, with the white side uppermost.

This is caused by the greater density of the salt water acting upon the prism.

Fig. 10

New-laid Eggs

HERE is a very handy method of discovering whether an egg is fresh or not.

Pass an elastic band round the egg,

and hang it upon a wire, as shown in Fig. 10. Twist the egg and band round several times, and then release it, when the band will rapidly untwist with the egg. If the latter be quite fresh, it will stop almost immediately, but if it happens to be rather older than is desirable, it will twist and untwist, reversing several times before it finally comes to rest. This also applies to eggs which have been boiled—indeed, to any egg that is "set."

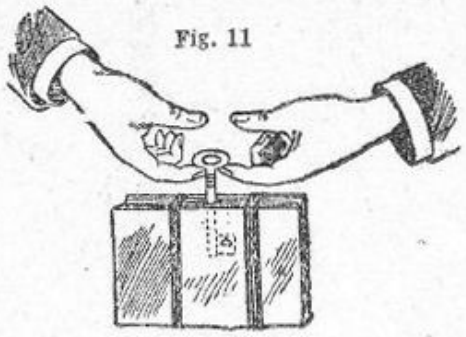


Fig. 11

A Will-power Test

THIS is scarcely a trick, as it really serves to prove which of two persons has the stronger will-power.

Place a door-key between the pages in the middle of a book in such a way that the handle projects an inch or two, as in Fig. 11. Pass a piece of string round the book, and draw into a tight knot, so that the key is held firmly in its place.

Now let the persons who desire to test the strength of their wills support the book by the ring of the key resting on their extending forefingers, as in the illustration. If one person wills the book to turn from right to left, and the other wills it to turn in the opposite direction, it will be found that the book obeys whichever party is possessed of the stronger will.

There is yet another way of testing this strange example of personal magnetism.

Let one of the parties—preferably he of the stronger will—think of some name, Mary, for instance. Informing nobody else of the name he has chosen, let him repeat the alphabet very slowly, when it will be found that, as he arrives at the first letter, M, the book will give a slight turn, and will behave in a similar way for all the other letters of the name, if both parties know the name the book will turn much more readily, as a result of the united forces of their wills.

The Magic Repeater

THIS is an interesting example of some strange agency at work amongst us.

Make a running noose at the end of a piece of fine thread, and pass it securely round a shilling, as shown in Fig. 12. Taking care that the thread passes over the tip of the thumb, support the thread from your hand, in the manner shown in the illustration, in such a way that the shilling is hanging within a wine-glass or tumbler. Take care also to keep the hand perfectly steady, and await results.

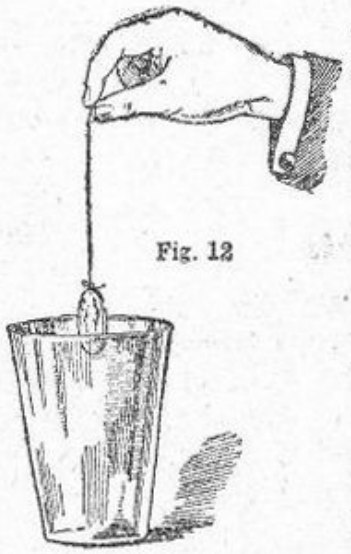


Fig. 12

For a few seconds the shilling will oscillate, but it will soon become quite still. Then, actuated by no motion of your hand, it will begin to swing to and fro like a pendulum, and will finally strike one of the sides of the glass.

Counting the times it thus makes the glass ring, you will find that the number corresponds exactly with the nearest hour to the time of day. For instance, at 11.20 there would be eleven rings, whilst at a quarter to twelve there would be twelve. The cause of this phenomenon can be left to scientists to decide.

The Obliging Banana

It is rare that one can get a fruit so obliging as to peel itself, but upon certain occasions a banana will put itself out of the way to render this favour.

Cut off one end of the banana, and with a knife start ripping up the skin on the four sides in the usual manner.

Now take an empty bottle, put some methylated spirits inside, and drop a lighted match to ignite the spirits. As soon as the flame has died out, place the prepared end of the banana in the mouth of the bottle, and you will find that the banana is slowly drawn inside, peeling off its skin as the fruit disappears (Fig. 13).

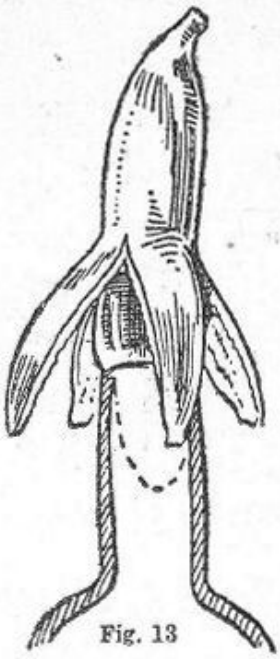


Fig. 13

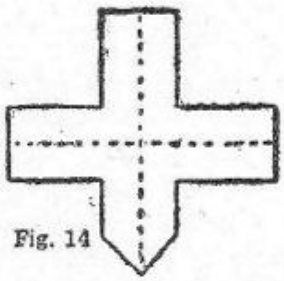


Fig. 14

The reason for this condescension on the part of the banana is simple. As soon as the bottle begins to cool from the heat of the flames, the air is contracted inside, a vacuum is caused, and the fruit is sucked into the bottle.

The same trick can be formed with a water-bottle and a shelled hard-boiled egg.

"That is the Man"

Fold a piece of paper into four, and cut a pointer out of it, as shown in Fig. 14. Now run a needle through a cork and balance the pointer on its tip as shown. Place an inverted tumbler over the whole contrivance (Fig. 14A).

By rubbing the outside of the tumbler with a piece of rag, or even a handkerchief, you can make the pointer turn in whatever direction you desire, as it will swing round to whatever portion of the glass you happen to rub.

Announce that you will make it point to Mr. Jones. If you then rub the glass on the side nearest to that gentleman, the paper needle will swing round and point directly to him.

The Magician's Bite

Take an ordinary piece of string or thread and offer to cut it in two if somebody present will guarantee to join it into one piece, again without any knot. You may announce at the same time that by wizardry you are able yourself to do this by a simple bite of the teeth.

The trick is done in this way. Appear to pass the string round the hands twice, as in Fig. 15, whereas by a deft movement you really loop the two ends round each other. Holding the point where they cross each other between the finger and thumb you request some person to cut the two ends at G, promising to join these ends with your mysterious bite.

Fig. 14a

Place the string in both hands into your mouth, and, whilst making a mumbling movement, contrive to catch the short, doubled piece in your teeth, and retain it there, whilst extending your hands to the company you show a whole piece of thread. The little piece which you have kept between your teeth can be easily removed without exciting suspicion, and there are few people critical enough to measure the string and find there is a piece missing.

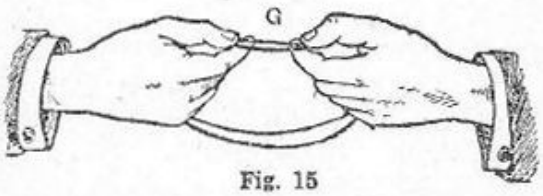


Fig. 15

WITH OUR NAVY MEN

An Interesting Article About :: :: Our Boys Afloat :: ::

"Thank God, and the British Navy, for my good dinner!"
—War-Time Grace

THERE are few men who have such a hard-working life of it as the British bluejacket, whether in peace or war. From the time he jumps out of his hammock in the early morning until he slings it up again for his night's rest he is worked as hard as a horse. Not many of our Navy-men, when afloat, know what it is to get eight hours' uninterrupted sleep.

Jack has to be an early riser, for the ship must be as clean as a new needle by eight in the morning, or his executive officer deals out severe punishment. The hour at sea when the watch below turn out of their hammocks to scrub and wash all decks, except the mess flats where they live, is 4 a.m. Then the boatswain's mates break the stillness with piercing blasts on their silver whistles, and shouts of "Starboa'd watch"—it may be the "Port watch"—"rouse out, rouse out! Show a leg! Show a leg!" Sometimes they call: "All hands! All hands lash up and stow hammocks! Show a leg! Show a leg!"

Every one of the watch is now on the move.

The men unhook and lash up their "micks," then stow them away, and the watch they succeed go below for a little sleep. At 4.30 the fresh watch have bowlfuls of cocoa, hot and thick, and at 5 all begin cleaning decks, boats, etc. Dressed in his oldest blue serge working "rig," his trousers tucked up to his knees, and a broom in his hand, Jack scurries about, his feet naked, swabbing down the decks, scrubbing and cleaning, and doing housemaid's work in general all over the ship. And he does it well. Usually on this job he works alongside his "raggie" or chum.

Meanwhile, while all this is going on "topsides," the men of the other watch who have turned in at four o'clock sleep soundly in their hammocks below. A little after 6 a.m. they also are turned out, hammocks are lashed up, and the mess-deck prepared for the first meal of the day, while the watch on deck clean bright metal-work, coil down ropes, and make everything very neat and tidy.

Between half-past six and seven Jack's breakfast is served—a pint of cocoa, sweetened (but without milk), and biscuit or bread. Then after that the bugle sounds "Clean Guns," and the work of cleaning is resumed by all hands. Below, the engine-room complement carry out a similar task on the engines and boilers. During this time, if the ship has a band, it plays popular airs. On the mess deck all is bustle—stowing away tables and stools, and sweeping up the flats.

At eight o'clock the ceremony of hoisting the Colours takes place, when every one on deck faces aft and salutes while the White Ensign is being slowly hoisted, and the band plays the National Anthem. In winter, the Colours are hoisted at nine o'clock. Immediately this ceremony is completed, the bugler sounds "Stand easy, and hands to clean." Half-an-hour is usually allowed for the bluejacket to have his real breakfast—the provisions for which he purchases out of his own

money at the canteen—smoke his first pipe for the day, and change into the proper "rig" in accordance with orders.

After this stand-easy "Clean-up decks" is piped, then at nine-ten the bugler sounds off "Divisions," when all hands muster and are inspected by the officers of divisions, who reprimand any not smart in appearance. Meanwhile, the commander inspects the upper deck, and the first lieutenant the mess deck for cleanliness and tidiness. When the inspection is over the tolling of a bell intimates that "Prayers" is come. Then the Roman Catholics fall out, and the other men are marched to the quarter-deck, where the "Padre" (chaplain) or, if the ship carries none, the captain reads the prayers. Then the "Disperse" is piped.

On board every British warship, except the torpedo craft, the morning ends with prayers.

At 9.30 a.m. both watches fall in, and are detailed off for ship's work, some having drill and instruction, till 11.30, when drill ceases, the ship is once more made tidy, and the commander or first lieutenant—if the vessel has not a "bloke," as the commander is nicknamed—serves out punishment to the hands who have incurred it.

By 11.45, when the decks are cleared up, the bugler sounds "Cooks," and at 12 o'clock dinner is piped. In a trice the men are hard at work eating their dinners, which have been prepared by the amateur cook of each mess—every member of the mess taking his turn—and cooked by the trained cooks in the galleys.

The rations at sea vary from day to day, but the chief provisions issued by the ship's steward and paymaster consist of one pound per man of salt pork, with split peas to make soup on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. For the other days, one pound of salt beef is supplied with nine ounces of flour, one and a half ounces of raisins and three-quarters of an ounce of salt suet, alternately with three quarters of a pound of preserved beef or mutton, and material for a pudding, or a quarter pound of preserved rice or potatoes. When in harbour the British Jack gets bread and fresh meat, together with vegetables. Whether in port or at sea, chocolate, tea, sugar, and rum are issued to him in respective proportions, together with small quantities of mustard, salt, pepper, and vinegar.

An hour and a quarter is allowed for Jacks' dinner-time. Cooks of the messes about 12.30 p.m. flock amidships round the great tub bearing on its side in brass letters the toast, "The King, God bless him," and are served with as many half-pints of grog as there are men in each mess, the drink consisting of one part rum and three parts water.

At 1.15 the bugler sounds "Clean guns," and the decks are also tidied once more. At 1.30 both watches fall in, when drill and instruction are carried on till 3.30, when the men are dismissed to stand easy. Then all hands muster at 4 o'clock at "Evening quarters," which is just the same as the morning "Divisions," and at 4.15 supper is piped, and hands "shift into night clothing." Mess tables and stools are set in place, and the men sit down to their "supper" at half-past four. This Admiralty meal consists of a pint of milkless tea and the remains of Jack's bread or biscuit. The hands who smoke do so. But at 5 p.m. it is "Out pipes and clean up decks. All but cooks for the rounds."

The men go to night quarters for inspection once more, and perhaps an evolution is signalled from the flagship. After this has been carried out, work is finished for the day, and Jack of the watch below smokes and talks, plays dominoes and draughts, and passes the time away till 7.30, when his real supper-time is piped. But for this meal the bluejacket buys his edibles from the canteen. Then at 8 p.m. hammocks are piped down, and the lower deck is cleared up for the rounds, which are carried out by the executive officer, commander, or first lieutenant, who sees everything is safe for the night. Already at 8 p.m. the men of the first watch have been mustered by the midshipmen of the watch for their night duties. "Pipe down" at 10 o'clock ends the lower-deck's day, forthen the men below must turn in. Such is the general routine life of the British bluejacket in peace and war.

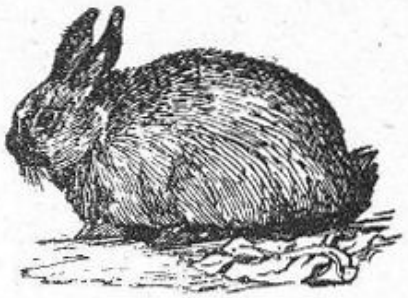
To keep fit and efficient like a high-grade machine with a brain, to be always ready—"Aye, ready!"—to shoot true, fight true, and win true—that is the entire end of the being and rigorous training of our bluejacket.

The Dutch Rabbit

How to Keep Rabbits

A Short but Interesting Article Dealing with a Simple Money-Making Hobby

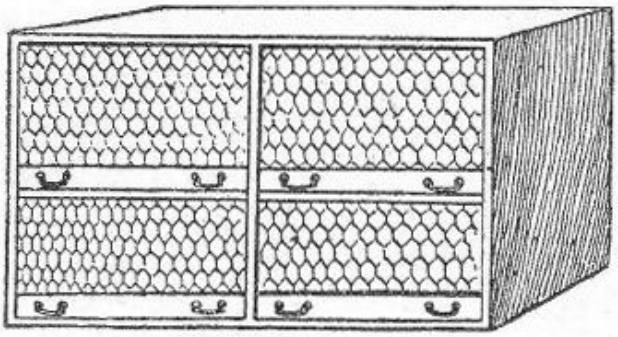
By "SCHOOLBOY"



The Silver-Grey Rabbit

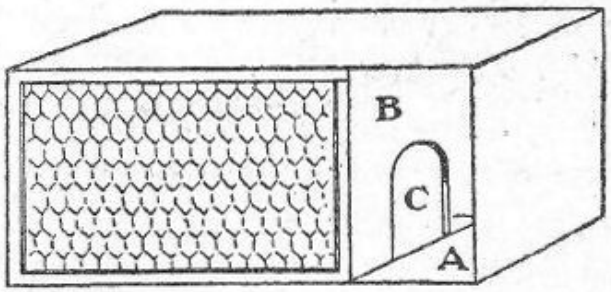
Do you feel inclined to earn a little money easily? Then keep rabbits! Not only have I kept them myself, but I know any amount of people who breed them to a very profitable degree. The trouble and time taken over them is almost nil, and the pleasure (to say nothing of the profit) derived from them is comparative.

Here are some easy practical hints for rabbit keeping, and if you follow these you will not go far wrong.



Hutches in Tiers

The first thing, of course, is the hutch. This can either stand outside or in an outhouse. If out of doors, it must be kept dry; always see that it is off the ground—damp hutches mean dead rabbits. If the hutch is in an outhouse it must be a light, airy one. Rabbits require sun just as we do, though fierce heat is extremely bad, and discolours the fur. The size of the hutch naturally depends on the size of the rabbit, but it is both cruel and unhealthy to have cramped hutches.



(A) Hutch and sleeping compartment
(B) sliding partition with (C) arched entrance

Rabbits are fond of jumping about, and it is a good idea to have a fixed board placed the length of the hutch about halfway up, halfway across, and stretching from one side to the other. Another movable board, coming down to the floor, makes a comfortable place for the rabbit to sleep in, and is just what is required for a doe with young.

The best *breeds* for production and for size are the Flemish Giants and Belgian Hares, preferably a Flemish Giant buck and Belgian Hare doe, but either is good, and a cross of the two quite satisfactory.

Feeding is almost the main point in successful rabbit-keeping, and is therefore also the most difficult. There are so many different foods which are all good that it is impossible here to mention half of them, but here are the simplest and most satisfactory:

Greens. — Dandelions, groundsel, clover, chickweed, coltsfoot, parsley (in small quantities), carrot tops, lettuce and grass.

Roots. — Carrots and mangels (cleaned and topped), potatoes (for fattening young).

Other Foods. — Hay, straw, tea leaves, crusts of bread, bread and milk (for does in kindle or with young), oats, bran, bran mash, Sussex ground oats.

To make a bran mash: take sufficient bran moisten with boiling water, dry off with Sussex ground oats.

Rabbits do well on grass in the daytime, if you can give them a wired-in run so much the better, and it is also cheaper.

The best and simplest way of looking after rabbits is as follows:

Morning.—Clean out hutch well, sprinkle lightly with harmless powdered disinfectant, scatter sand, sawdust, or chaff on the floor, put hay behind the board (this need not be done daily, rabbits are very clean as a rule, and if properly kept rarely make their bed in a mess). Fill water basins up fresh, give a good handful of green food, and the same of hay or straw.

An English Rabbit—the Full Lop

All that is left for the afternoon is feeding. Vary the foods as much as possible in the afternoon.

Monday.—Bran and carrots.

Tuesday.—Crushed oats and mangel.

Wednesday.—Bran mash, crusts of bread.

Thursday.—Whole soaked oats and tea-leaves, carrots, etc.

Foods may be mixed with milk or water or a mixture of both.

Breeding.—The period of gestation is thirty days, one day more or less. The litter usually arrives in the night. A few days before the young are due place a *large* quantity of hay behind the board, and do not worry the doe or let others worry her. When the young arrive examine them after three days, and remove any dead ones. For at least a week before the young are born, and for several weeks after, the doe will require almost twice as much food as in the ordinary way. Milk is very precious before and after, and should be supplied if possible, as she will drink a large quantity, which will help her considerably with her litter.

(A) Angora Rabbit; (B) Belgian Hare

Do not touch her bed till the young are running about, which will be in about ten days, and no one except the owner should approach her till then. Almost as soon as the young start running about they will start feeding themselves, and this should be encouraged as it relieves the doe. The young may be removed after about six weeks, and allowed to remain together up to twelve weeks, when the does and bucks must be separated.

If required for market the youngsters must be well fed. Little and often is the best method. Potatoes mashed with bran, Sussex ground oats, with milk, bread and milk, cooked maize, are all fattening foods.

The Disease most common among rabbits is called "snuffles." This is a cold and most infectious. Isolate at once and give three drops of sweet spirits of nitre for three days in warm milk or water at the end of which time the rabbit has usually recovered.

Some Do's and Don'ts

1. Don't forget rabbits burrow easily.
2. Never forget water (or milk) for does, otherwise they will eat their young.
3. Don't give apples—they are poison.
4. Always examine rabbits' ears when buying, to see they are clean, and see that their eyes are bright.
5. Don't starve, on the other hand don't overfeed—one is as bad as the other.
6. Always write down the date when doe is due to kindle.
7. Never be unkind to your animals, rabbits will tame very easily.
8. Always examine fodder before buying.
9. Don't leave your rabbits dirty—dirt breeds disease.
10. Always carry a rabbit by holding the loose skin at the back of the neck with the right hand and placing the left hand underneath the rump.
12. Do not handle does in young.
13. Do not mate does in moult.
14. Do not give the young too much greenstuff or they will get "pot-bellied."
15. Always dry greenstuff first.

THE END

THE STAR OF THE PANTO

A Splendid Story of a Boy Acrobat

BY H. T. JOHNSON

With Illustrations . . By . . Ernest Ibbetson

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Charlie Applies for a Job

EVERYBODY who knew Charlie Chickweed declared he ought to be on the stage. But as everybody knows, the people who ought to be there as a rule don't get there, and those who get there in many cases ought not to be there.

So Charlie had to be content with being funny in places, and at times when his funniments were, so he was told, out of place and out of season.

He would get roars of laughter by standing on his head on the teacher's desk, and sparring with his feet—till the teacher suddenly came in; then Charlie would get a whacking that made him want to stand all the time, right or wrong side up didn't matter, so long as he hadn't to sit down.

If a piano-organ came down to Stibble Street, Charlie would start dancing to it, and crowds would get round and forget all about the errands they were going on till the man came round with the collecting pannikin. But generally a policeman would come round first and "scruff" Charlie by the neck for holding up the traffic.

On one occasion a burly constable brought him up before the local magistrate, and, swelling with indignation till he was burlier still, said:

"Patrolling my beat on Friday, the 13th instant, your washup, I saw a tremendous crowd screechin' with laughter. Makin' my way through, I see the prisoner chuckin' 'andsprings an' doin' the splits, then doublin' hisself backwards till he was grinnin' at the crowd from between his knees till they was so 'ighly delighted that I took him into custody for obstructin' of the traffic."

"Have you any questions to ask the witness?" growled the magistrate.

"Half a tick," replied Charlie; and, clutching at the top of the partition of the dock, he did a slow pull up, then threw his legs over the rail and sat on it. And, before the usher had left off gasping enough to tell him to get down, he chirped:

"Being a Friday and the thirteenth, you expected something unlucky to happen, didn't you, old sport?"

"Yes, and it did. Somebody stole my watch while I was taking your name and address," blurted out the guardian of law and order.

"Now—on your oath," Charlie went on, shaking a finger at the witness, "you never moved a hand to stop that show till the collector came round?"

"What has that to do with it?" roared Robert.

"Why, it makes you out a deadhead, doesn't it? And I'm cross-examining as to character. And I want to know where you expect to go when you die?"

His worship began to blow his nose in a big bandana handkerchief, and he said at last, after doing a bit of choking: "Have you anything to say in your defence?"

"Yes, my lord duke," Charlie chortled. "But I want you to say something first. I want you to say if this little stunt of mine, which was all that happened, can be called disorderly conduct?"

Then, springing up on his hands on the dock-rail, he threw a somersault on to the lawyer's table, and began whirling over and over in a series of handsprings, scattering not only books and papers, but lawyers and their clerks, till the magistrate roared out "Stop! Stop! This is a court of justice, not a circus."

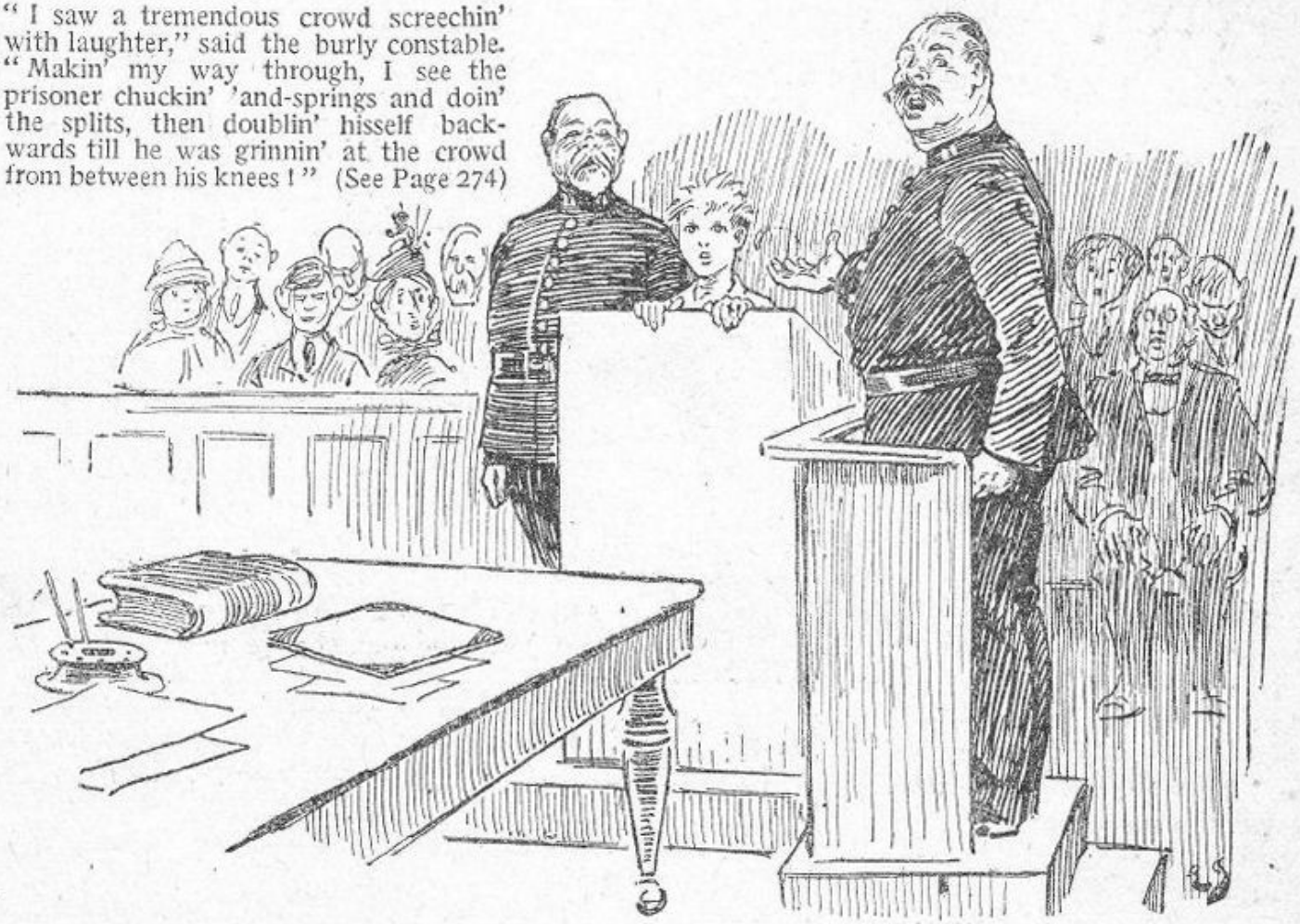
"Just so, your royal highness," squeaked Charlie. "And in the interests of justice, I ask you is my little show disorderly?"

"It's certainly out of place here. You ought to be on the stage," said the magistrate, holding his sides and catching his breath. "You—ought—to be—on the stage! And here, boy, here's a shilling for you for bringing a bit of sunshine into this dreary old court."

Just after that they took Charlie Chickweed away from school, and the class-rooms began to get on with their work. But the office he went into began to get a bit out of gear.

Charlie's idea of "balancing" ledgers was raising half a dozen of them on one end of a ruler, the other end resting on his forehead; but it would have worked better if the manager hadn't bustled in through the swing-door and upset the equilibrium. It upset him, too, especially when people asked him where he got the black eye and how the other man was. So the next time he happened on Charlie spinning a leaden inkstand with the handle of a feather duster, Charlie got the order of the old boot exit, besides having the cost of taking the inkmarks out of his employer's white waistcoat docked off his week's salary.

"I saw a tremendous crowd screechin' with laughter," said the burly constable. "Makin' my way through, I see the prisoner chuckin' 'and-springs and doin' the splits, then doublin' hisself backwards till he was grinnin' at the crowd from between his knees!" (See Page 274)



Off his office stool and on his uppers he began to feel fed up with a world that objected to being amused. Wherever he went looking for work in the neighbourhood he found his reputation had arrived in front of him. People told him they had no use for juvenile knock-abouts in their warehouses, and that he ought to go on the stage.

So he called at quite a lot of theatres and explained his object to various managers.

They told him usually to run away and play.

He replied to one that he couldn't imagine anything except a mouse running away from him, and another that that was what he was there for, seeing their posters said they were putting up a comedy; he proposed playing in it. Then the leading comedian, who had just blown in, told him not to be funny.

"Can't help it," said Charlie. "Don't be too hard on me; you might be struck that way yourself some day." Then that comedian got cross; he wasn't used to being laughed at.

All this would have been very discouraging to an ordinary youngster, but Charlie's spirit was like his body, the heavier the tumble the higher it seemed to bounce. The pantomime season came along, and he determined that one of the "crowds" would, at any rate, have to find a place for him.

He learned that at the Corinthian Theatre they were in need of boy and girl "supers" to carry banners, come on in troops of elves or fairies, take part in harlequinade "rallies," and so forth. Promptly Charlie Chickweed made a bee-line for the Corinthian stage door.

Luckily it happened to be one where he was unknown by sight to the stage door-keeper, but the discouraging circumstance was that he found on arrival a long queue of juveniles waiting to offer their services, and the attitude of these was far from promising.

"What do you want here?" one hulking boy inquired angrily of each newcomer. "Think there's a job going? Well, that's where you're making a mistake. All the places have been taken hours ago."

"Then what are you waiting for?" asked Charlie pleasantly; and the bully snarled at him:

"What's that to do with you? Want a thick ear?"

"No; nor yet such a long pair as yours," replied the unruffled Charlie. "If I were a donkey they might be of some use to me."

A titter arose from the rest of the queue, whereupon Charlie's mis-informant growled that if it wasn't for losing his turn he'd drop out and break Charlie's neck, to which Master Chickweed replied by butting him suddenly and violently in that region known as the "bread-basket," to the huge delight of the rest of the queue.

"Let me alone! I'll put the policeman on to you!" blubbered the youth who had threatened to break necks and bestow thick ears, and just then a gaunt man with a blue-shaven chin interposed and commanded them to "chuck" their "nannikin," or else he would clear the whole crowd of them away, adding that they did not require any "rallies" off the boards there.

Then, nodding to Charlie and one or two others, he directed them to follow him to a side door, which he opened with a pass-key.

They followed the blue-chinned one along a dark passage reeking with the smell of gas to a step-ladder, ascending which they found themselves on—a stage.

A real live stage. At least it was alive with a crowd of ladies and gentlemen in walking costume, while another gentleman with an untidy type-written book and a blue pencil was shouting a lot of things at them all, to which they appeared to be paying not the slightest attention.

"Super-master," shouted the blue-chinned one to a weary-looking individual munching sandwiches, "I've picked these kiddies out of the crowd. You might just see what you think of them; they seem the least unlikely of the lot."

The super-master, having taken their names and addresses, herded the youngsters apart like so many sheep, and they watched the "stage-damager," as everybody styled the gentleman with the "book," distribute a lot of other books among the rest of the company, with a lot of instructions about calls for lines and being letter-perfect by Wednesday, and a lot more. Meanwhile, Charlie was in a sort of raptured dream.

He was on a stage. A real stage. But how strange it all seemed; the stalls, pit, boxes, and balconies all covered with sort of holland pinafores in a dusty, dusky gloom; a crowd all chattering at once inside the row of foot-lights, or "floats," as they called them.

In the centre was a piano, and a lot of the people clustered round a stout gentleman who sat at it, and who now and then played

over a bar or two of the music jabbed at him by them.

Another gentleman, the weariest and saddest-looking of the lot, was making notes in another brown-backed book at the demand of the others, who kept asking him where their "novelties" came in.

Charlie couldn't make out who or what he was till he heard one of the seal-skin ladies telling the blue-chinned gentleman that that weariest and saddest gentleman had said that certain lines had to go in at a certain place, whereupon Blue-chin bawled back:

"Nothing of the kind. What's he to do with it? He's only the author!"

It was all a jumble, a din, a hurly-burly.

Suddenly Blue-chin shouted at Charlie:

"Call to-morrow at eleven sharp for all supers, mind. You're a goblin!"

"Beg pardon, sir," protested Charlie politely, "I haven't touched a morsel since breakfast. Then I only had two slices of bread and marg."

"Are you dotty—or just pulling my leg?" demanded Blue-chin. For a lot of those round about were giggling.

"Far be it from me, sir," replied Charlie.

"Well, let's understand. What do you think you're here for?" demanded Blue-chin; and Charlie replied briskly:

"I'm here to play in the panto—to dance, to sing, to chuck myself about and set the house off into roars of laughter, to whistle like everything from a canary to a steam-engine, to throw back somersaults till I look like a revolving disc, to back-talk, cross-talk, and patter till all the fat old gents' collar buttons fly off and all the kiddies have to have their backs slapped hard to stop them laughing themselves into convulsions — I'm here to pack this house and empty every other one within a mile, I'm here to be a money-magnet, to make a record boom, to——"

"Here—half a motor-car!" interrupted Blue-chin. "If you want to stop in this show you'll get this into the place where your brain ought to be—and you'll do it instanter. You're here to keep your head shut and your eyes open; to do just what you're told and nothing else; and if you come any of your hank you'll get the bird and find the most adjacent window doing duty for your emergency exit. Now, young man, do you tumble?"

Charlie's idea of "balancing" ledgers would have worked better if the office manager hadn't bustled in through the swing-door! (See page 275)

"Do I tumble, sir? Why, yes, certainly. It's my stunt," replied Charlie, rolling up his eyes like a cherub. "Watch this!"

And then and there he threw a standing back somersault that made all the gentlemen jump, and the ladies squeal out "Oh, my!" Then he whirled round the stage in a series of catherine-wheels and finished up by doing a

back bend that brought his face up between his knees. And he inquired cheerfully of Blue-chin :

" What do you think of that ? "

There was a shout from all the company, " Bravo, kiddie ! " But then there was a sudden silence.

They were all stage-folk, depending on their work for their bread-and-butter. If this wonderful nipper were given a show to himself in that panto it might mean the cutting down, or cutting out altogether perhaps, of one of their novelties, and the cutting down of their figure on the salary list—perhaps the cutting it out altogether.

But the girl who, strangely enough, had been pointed out to Charlie as the " principal boy," and another who was referred to as " principal girl," and a lean, middle-aged gentleman who was spoken of as the " dame," and whose parts were secure, all chattered at once to Mr. Blue Chin that the nipper was " the goods," and that it would be " ridic " to let him run loose.

And he, after mumbling a few words with the " stage damager," scratched that chin of his, and remarked slowly :

" I'm just for the moment undecided, my lad, whether to fit you with a small part. I'll think it over, and let you know this time to-morrow, when you turn up at the call."

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Rehearsal

A SMALL part ! Charlie could scarcely believe his ears. He was ready to do another handspring for joy. But he didn't. He had noticed how grown-ups did their bargaining in all sorts of businesses.

So he said in a very thoughtful tone :

" Thank you, sir. That's all, Sir Garnet. Because, seeing the chances of getting a small part or no part at all here are fifty-fifty, it leaves me free to take a bigger part if one should come along in any other of the quarters that I have a chance in."

The gentleman who was to play the Bold Bad Baron in the panto chuckled to the lady who was cast for " second principal boy."

" Good egg ! That kid's as cute as he's clever. No flies on him."

And the young gentleman who played the Old Witch in the panto and the Pantaloon in the harlequinade, said :

" Dear heart alive ! I thought old Nat was the champion bluffer of the wide, but this cherub carries too many guns for him. Youth wins the world."

The gentleman with the blue chin glared at Charlie as though he were about to eat him, then, seeming to be struggling with his feelings, he replied :

" Now, none of your hank, laddie. Don't you go forgetting you're engaged for a small part here for the run of this panto. Pound a week salary, half a crown each rehearsal ; and if you go scooting off to any other show you'll be looking for trouble. 'Nuff said."

Charlie went home that day in a whirl of delight. He was on the stage. In a part. He wouldn't have changed places with the Prime Minister. What his part was to be he hadn't the vaguest notion. All he knew was, whatever that part might be, he felt capable of playing it. That was what he called his self-confidence, and other people his " cheek and impudence."

Next day he turned up in good time for the " call." He was informed that the sad-looking gentleman called the author, and whose job was to do as he was told, had written what was called a " carpenter's scene " round him.

This, he learned, was a special turn that had nothing to do with the story of the pantomime.

He was rather disappointed at that, till he reflected that in that respect it didn't differ from any of the other parts. Indeed, he was not long in learning that " carpenter's scenes " very often got more " biscuit," which was the stage name for applause, than any others.

It was to be played in front of a backcloth, while the stage hands were setting the great scene of the show, " The Valley of Diamond Dews."

Charlie's turn was not to be a singing one. And he was for the moment staggered by the news that the part he had to play was that of a monkey dweller in the grove of trees shown on one side of that backcloth flat.

Many a time he had been called a young

monkey off the stage, now he was called upon to be one upon it; and in that character he was to turn somersaults, handsprings, and that wild, wonderful dance of his own in addition to those handswings on the trapeze bars he had picked up at the gymnasium in Stibble Street, and which had been the delight and marvel of all his chums.

Here was the chance of a lifetime—and Charlie was quick to grasp it.

But not too quick. The same shrewdness that had made him stick out for a part prompted him to remark coolly:

"Of course, my name will be in the bills!"

And, instead of "rounding" on him for his cheek, they seemed to admire him for it.

"You've got a nerve, sonny," said the blue-chinned gentleman. "No, we can't put a name like 'Charles Chickweed' in our 'printing.' The British public has a strange preference for un-British names on bills of fare and bills of the play. Though we may not always agree with the B.P., we've got to give it what it wants. You will appear in our bills as 'Carlo Chiquido.'"

That was good enough for Charlie, especially as he had had a hint that, if he were found worth anything, that one pound a week would be raised to five.

So he was given a "script" of his part, setting out all his "business," and he at once settled down to the work of the rehearsals.

No game that he had ever played gave him such delight. He enjoyed watching the building up of that panto from the stage side of the footlights a thousand times more than anyone he had ever seen from any pit or gallery. For hours he would sit watching Mr. Nat, book in hand, shouting himself red in the face at the troops of performers, fairies, elves, imps, sprites, and goblins.

"Now then! Six paces down the stage, wave your hands. Turn inwards. 'Hail, pretty princess!' No, no! That won't do! Pick up your feet, and when I say, 'Wave your hands,' I don't want you to bring 'em up like semaphores, nor yet whirl 'em round like windmills. All over again!"

And all over again they would go through it, and Mr. Nat would howl:

"Not 'Ale!' You're not fetching the dinner beer this time. "Hail!' Get it off your chests! Ain't any of you never been to school? Now once more. I'm going to get this scene perfect if we stop here for a month of Sundays! Now, put a bit of life into it. That's better. Come along, Fairies of the Grove! Where's the ballet mistress? Now, madame, remember we've got to knock 'em with this movement. No talking, my dears!

"Oh, Charlie, my boy," said Mrs. Wimple, "you'd never let want of money tempt you to touch any that didn't belong to you, would you?"

"Not if I were starving, mother!" replied Charlie, bravely. (See page 281)

I can do all the chin-wag that's wanted in this business. Up stage, elves and sprites; get a move on!"

Wardrobe mistress, property master, lime men, chorus master, each and all had allotted tasks and places. Charlie was amazed to find what a lot there was in a pantomime that never met the eye of the audience.

Then he had to betake himself to the costumiers to be fitted with the wonderful skin that made him look just like a real monkey.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Christmas Surprise

CHARLIE was an orphan, and he lived with a widowed aunt, who resembled the old woman who lived in a shoe, in that she had so many children she didn't know what to do, especially in the matter of feeding and clothing them.

People who were harder-hearted and better off used to say it was no wonder the Widow Wimple was so poor, seeing that she added to the burden of her own children that of bringing up another boy who had no claim on her. But it is often the poor who are kindest to the poor, and Mrs. Wimple could never bring herself to letting little Charlie go to the workhouse, though he was more of a handful than all her own little ones put together.

Then and there Charlie threw a standing back-somersault that made the company jump in alarm. (See page 277.)

And when Charlie was in work he always brought home his wages to her, and whatever she allowed him for pocket money he spent mostly in buying toys and toffee for his little cousins, Jacky, Jimmy and Joey, and Billy and Milly, the twins.

All the money he got for rehearsals, too, he took home to her; but he kept his new occupation a secret from them all. In the first place he hadn't had the heart to tell Mother—for that was what he called her, same as the rest, and she had been a real second mother to him—about his getting the "sack" from his billet as office boy.

Secondly, everybody had drummed into him that it was all nonsense when he used to tell them his ambition to go on the stage. And thirdly, his new good fortune seemed too good to be true, or to last.

So for the time he kept his secret, and accounted for getting home late after rehearsal by saying that he had been kept at work, which was quite true. And Mrs. Wimple, being mostly kept late at her own duties, didn't notice anything, especially as Charlie was such a little rascal.

Then there came still more rehearsals—rehearsals with lines, costume rehearsals, rehearsals with "props," with "limes," with full orchestra. The thing began to shape itself into a right down regular royal panto.

"Chiquido" threw himself into his part in every sense of the word. He threw himself from one trapeze to another, from one side of the stage to another, in hand swings, catherine wheels, back somersaults; at the rehearsal they gave him the honour of a "clear stage," and the rest of the company, and some visitors from the stalls and boxes, and prompt and opposite prompt wings clapped him, and said that he was "It."

The music got into his head, his feet, his heart. He had never been so happy in his life.

And the dear stage people! If they had seemed wonderful in their walking clothes,

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CHARLIE REHEARSES HIS "TURN" FOR THE CHRISTMAS PANTOMIME

their astrachan collared overcoats, their sealskins, and their smart blouses and skirts, they were still more so with their faces white and bright red with grease paint, their eyes black-ringed, and their funny wigs.

The rehearsal that followed was the only one in which Blue-chin had to tell Charlie to "Put a bit more go in it, laddie!"

As Christmas Day drew near Charlie found it harder than ever to keep his secret from Mrs. Wimple and the little Wimples. Although he had been giving the widow more money for his keep, he dared not give her as much as he would have liked to in case of raising wrong suspicions.

Indeed, on Saturday she said to him, with an unhappy look in her face:

"Charlie, dear, where is all your money coming from? You're giving me more than usual, and you've been buying all sorts of chocs and sweeties for the little ones. Have you had a rise?"

"Yes, mother," he answered quickly. "That's it. Good-night!"

"And you're out so late, too. And you've been buying a watch and chain. Of course, you're wise to, if you can afford it. Only, Charlie"—then she blurted out what he guessed was coming—"you'd never let want of money tempt you to touch any that didn't belong to you, would you?"

"Not if I were starving, mother!" he answered, and the tears came to her eyes as she said:

"I'm sure of that, dear boy. I'm sure my dear sister's boy would never do that, often as he may get into other sorts of mischief. I ought not to have talked of such a thing, only you know how anxious I am that you should never come to harm."

"I know that, dear old mother," he answered, throwing his arms round her neck and giving her a good hug. "And I love you all the more for being anxious about me. But it's all right; I earn every penny I get—and honestly. Soon I'll be earning more; I'm getting on so at my work."

After that it was harder than ever to keep his secret, but Christmas was now quite close, and he didn't want any of them to know he was on the stage until he had made good.

Strangely enough, Mrs. Wimple went on to say:

"I'm not often discontented, but I was thinking to-day I should like for once to be rich enough to take all you children to the pantomime. Jacky and Jimmy were saying there's a lovely one coming on at the Corinthian Theatre, called 'Humpty-Dumpty, or Harlequin Goosey Gander and the Fair One with the Golden Locks.' They nearly made the twins cry telling them how beautiful it was going to be, and me having to tell the duckies I couldn't afford to take them."

"Can't you?" repeated Charlie. "We'll see about that!" And he looked so mysterious that the widow was going to ask him what he meant, but he added: "Good-night, mother! Don't you worry!" And the next moment had run upstairs to bed.

Then came the full rehearsal on Christmas Eve, and for once the Widow and the little Wimples thought their Charlie a little unkind in not spending it with them for the first time on record, besides coming home later than ever.

Even the heap of sweets and toys he left in a big parcel didn't quite make up for the fun he used to make for them all on former Christmas Eves.

But on Christmas morning they forgot all that when—though nobody heard the postman—Joey picked off the doormat a letter addressed to Mrs. Wimple, and the widow, opening it, drew out six tickets for Boxing Night at the Corinthian Theatre.

Amphitheatre, too. None of your gallery, or even pit, though the little Wimples would have been overjoyed with these. But numbered tickets—front row! Oh, it was too good to be true. Mrs. Wimple said they'd better give it back to the postman; it must have come to the wrong number.

Then Charlie up and said:

"Rats! It's the right name and the right number. Don't you see the idea? All the theatres like to be full on a first night. The only shows people want to go to are those there's no room for them in. So the 'first robber,' that is the box office manager, what he calls "papers the house," sending out free tickets to people."

He was careful not to mention that every reserved seat at the Corinthian had been booked for weeks, and those tickets had only been got by worrying the "first robber's" life out of him. There was no need for him to say any more. All the little Wimples chimed in with loud cheers.

So Mrs. Wimpole said what a lot Charlie seemed to know about it, and that she hoped he'd take care of the twins when they went.

"Sha'n't be with them," said Charlie. "There's only six tickets!"

"Well, that's five of them and yourself," said the Widow.

But he answered quite shortly:

"No fear! It's five of them and you, mother. Don't argue. I've got another engagement!"

Mrs. Wimple looked at him more astonished than ever. Then she said, in an awe-stricken voice:

"You aren't walking out with—a girl—at your time of life, Charlie?"

"No fear!" he laughed.

But when Boxing Day came, and Charlie disappeared, she put on her best alpaca gown and bonnet, and went off with the kiddies to the panto, feeling very uneasy at poor Charlie not being in the treat.

What a crowd there was to be sure, and what a mercy they had those lovely seats waiting for them, though the Widow was haunted by the dread of somebody sailing along and bundling them out of them. But she soon forgot everything in the delight of watching the delight of her children—which is the mother's heaven all over the earth.

Oh, that panto! The Editor hasn't half room enough for me to tell you half about it.

To the little Wimples it was all a real fairyland, a realm of glitter, music, colour, song and laughter. All the rest of the world was a forgotten blank.

At last came the scene of the Golden Grove, discovering the Gorilla Goblin, Carlo Chiquida—his first appearance in England—seated on a palm-branch, hugging a property coker-nut, which he flung from him. Then he began his turn.

And if the little Wimples had clapped and laughed before, now they shrieked and squealed and crowed till the tears of merriment rolled down their chubby cheeks. Indeed, they helped to set the house alight and rocking, as the stage-folk call it.

And as the Gorilla Goblin swung and somersaulted, and whirled and danced all over the stage, the little Wimples, between their shrieks of joy, kept shouting to each other:

"Our Charlie does that!" "Charlie does this!" "Charlie doubles himself backwards, just like that!"

In fact the children's excited remarks helped to convulse the people sitting in the row behind, and all helped towards the success of Charlie's turn.

And when, after five minutes of the Gorilla Goblin turn that roused the entire house to a frenzy of boiling hilarity and cheers, and made the success of the pantomime, the curtain fell, and the Goblin, in response to the biggest "call" of the evening, appeared, and taking off his "property" gorilla head, bowed and bowed and bowed, and above the shouts of applause that shook the roof, arose the chorus of Jacky, Jimmy, Joey, and the twins:

"Why, mother, it is our Charlie!"

And there were no hard times with the Wimples after that.

THE END.

TOWSER'S TRIUMPH

A Laughable Complete Story Dealing with the Adventures of a Schoolboy's Dog - ***By GEORGE HERRIES***

THE finest, most faithful, as well as the most famous, of all the fellows' pets at St. Jim's is my bulldog, Towser. He is also the most lovble and affectionate, as this story will show. It also shows how intelligent he is. This is how it happened. Jack Blake, who shares a study with D'Arcy and Digby and me, had a fine cake sent him, and when we came in from the footer yesterday we thought we would sample it. You can imagine what we thought—and said—when we found that it had disappeared! It was gone — boned — raided, evidently by some unscrupulous villain whose greed had got the better of his conscience.

Gussy's jump of surprise and fear upset Towser, naturally, and the next minute there was a fearful mix-up!

"Bai Jove, you fellahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who is a bit of an ass, you know. "It's gone, you know! Somebody must have taken it!"

"Did you work that out in your head, without the aid of a net?" said Jack Blake politely.

"Wats!" said Gussy. "We must find out who committed the cwime at once—get on the twack of the wotter at once, you know."

"It was here when we went out to the footer, I know that," said Blake.

"It was," said Dig. "I saw it when I went to get my footer boots out of the cupboard. Wish we had eaten it then!"

"Good thing to eat just before a footer match, of course," said Blake sarcastically.

"Better than not having it at all," grunted Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was then that I had my great idea.

"I know!" I said quietly. "We'll put Towser on the track. He'll soon find it."

"Rats!" growled Blake crossly.

"Soon eat it if he did find it," grunted that ass Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Gussy. "Don't bwing that bwute Towsah into this study, for goodness' sake, Hewwies, deah boy!"

And those three dummies call themselves my chums! Of course I did not take any notice of their absurd remarks.

"I'll put Towser on the job at once," I said warmly. "You fellows are always grousing about Towser—now you'll see what he can do. This is a good chance for him. I'll go and get him at once!"

There was a sort of groan from Blake.

Digby gave a yell.

"Hold on, Herries——"

"Hewwies, deah boy——"

But I didn't wait to argue with the fatheads. They are always running down poor old Towser for some reason. I just went out and fetched Towser, and brought him up on the chain. Although the best dog in the world Towser is a bit impetuous, and is really better on the chain at first.

Directly Towser got into the room he made a dash for the cupboard—upsetting a couple of chairs as he did so. It was really marvellous the way that dog went straight for the scene of action—just as if he knew already exactly what we wanted him to do. I was awfully pleased. Blake seemed needlessly fussy about the chairs—only one of them was smashed, anyway.

Towser dashed straight at the cupboard, lugging me after him.

"You see how keen he is!" I said triumphantly.

"Look out!" roared Digby. "Mind the pork pie!"

"Blow the pork pie!" I said. "He's on the track of the cake already. He's keen—that's all. You don't understand Towser."

"Bai Jove! He's got it!" hooted Gussy. "The awful bwute!"

"Got what?" I said crossly. They weren't giving Towser a chance—making all that noise.

"The pork pie!" roared Blake, getting fearfully excited. "Stop him!"

Stop him! How could I stop him? I should like to see Blake, or anyone else, stop Towser when he is really keen! He had the pork pie all right—it was only half a one anyway—and it was the first thing he saw when he got to the cupboard, so he naturally took it. I don't see how you can blame him for that—he was probably hungry, poor old chap.

The fellows didn't seem to think of that, judging by the stupid remarks they made.

"Do be quiet!" I said impatiently. Towser had finished the pork pie now, and it was the only thing left in the cupboard. "He's on the track of the cake all right now. Look out, Gussy, you ass!"

Towser made a bound in the direction of D'Arcy, and growled a bit—simply from keenness, of course. But that chump Gussy got in a funk—as if Towser would have hurt him—and tried to jump out of his way. That upset Towser, naturally, and the next minute there was a fearful mix-up!

The chain got wound round Gussy's legs, somehow—Gussy always was a careless sort of ass—and Gussy went to the study floor with a fearful bump!

The worst of it was Towser dragged me over on top of him, so the three of us were all mixed up on the floor together. The yell D'Arcy gave could have been heard in Timbuctoo, I should think.

"Yawoo! Help! Wescue!" he shrieked. "Blake, Dig! Dwag 'im off! He's bitin' me! Help!"

It was absurd. Towser wasn't biting him at all. It was simply his trousers he was tearing—and Gussy has heaps of trousers. There was no great harm done that I could see—but the way Gussy went on was something awful! He struggled like one o'clock to get up. I was afraid he might kick Towser by accident. I shouldn't like Towser to get hurt, but Gussy is a clumsy sort of duffer at times.

Gussy got up at last in an awful stew.

I caught Towser round the neck, and held on to him tight.

"You wottah, Hewwies!" raved Gussy. "Look what your wotten bwute's done! I always said Towsah had no respect whatever for a fellah's twousahs!"

Gussy's trousers certainly were badly torn, there was no mistake about it. But it was silly of him to make such a fuss about a mere accident. He ramped up and down the study,

holding his hand to the place where his trousers were torn worst.

Blake and Digby cackled like a couple of hyenas—which, of course, only made D'Arcy rave worse than ever.

I was having a hard struggle to hold Towser.

"Better buzz off out of the study for a bit, Gussy," I said anxiously. "Towser seems excited about something—he wants to get at you, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake and Dig.

"Hold the wotten bwute in, then!" yelled Gussy. "I wefuse to be chased out of my own study by a wotten bwute of a bulldog."

"Better go, old man," I urged. "Towser don't seem to like you, somehow. I think he knows you are calling him names."

"You—you—you villain, Hewwies——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came again from those two cackling dummies, Blake and Digby.

Towser struggled violently, and I very nearly let him go.

"Look out!" I yelled.

D'Arcy seized a chair, and glared at Towser. It was silly of him—about the worst thing he could do, in fact. Towser hates being glared at.

"Don't stare at him like that, Gussy!" I shouted anxiously. "Of course you'll make him angry if you do that. Don't look at him at all. You know he hates being looked at!"

"You—you blitherin' idiot, Hewwies!"

After all, I was only telling the chump. Towser does hate being looked at. But Gussy did not seem a bit grateful. In fact, he raved worse than ever.

It was Towser who stopped him in the end. Towser gave a terrific growl, and a sudden bound, and my fingers slipped from his collar. He went straight for Gussy, growling like billy-oh.

"Look out!" yelled Blake and Dig and I together.

Gussy did not wait very long. He stopped raving, and made one bound for the door, and bolted off down the corridor like winking. Towser, of course, bolted after him, and I bolted after Towser. I still had hold of his chain, so I had to go.

Blake and Digby, who were almost doubled up with laughter, bolted as fast as they could after the rest of the procession. We made a good deal of row between us, and all the fellows came out of their studies to see what was up. But they all got out of Towser's way all right.

Gussy made the most noise. He kept yelling out words that sounded like Russian; anybody would think he was a Bolshevik.

"Help! Murder!" he shrieked, as he pelted along, his eyeglass flying out on the end of its cord over his shoulder, and his torn trousers flapping in the breeze. "Stop him, deah boys! Dwagimoff!"

But the grinning crowd just bolted out of Towser's way. They seemed to think it was rather a joke.

"Pullimoff, deah boys! Dwagimoff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy tore down the stairs and out of the door of the School House into the quad. Two or three fellows were walking in the quad from the direction of the New House. Gussy made towards them, shouting for help, with Towser and me in close pursuit.

The three fellows halted as Gussy neared them. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, of the New House, and I could see that they were grinning

"Hallo, Gussy!" sang out Figgins. "Wherefore this unseemly haste?"

"Been teasing Towser, eh, Gussy? I'm ashamed of you!" grinned Kerr.

"Put it on, old man! He's catching you!" chuckled Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy dashed straight at the chortling New House Co., and dodged round behind the solid form of Fatty Wynn.

"Help, you fellahs!" he gasped. "He's mad—Towser's mad! Dwagimoff!"

"Here, gerrout! Don't bring him here!" yelled Fatty Wynn, in alarm. "Take the brute away, Herries! Ow! Yaroooh!"

"Look out, Herries!" roared Figgins and Kerr in unison.

Look out! How could I look out? Old Towser nearly had me off my feet, as a matter of fact. Towser takes a lot of holding when he's excited. He's a fine, strong dog, is Towser. Anyway, I hadn't a ghost of a chance of stopping him then. He just dashed headlong

into the four of them—and of course I dashed with him.

D'Arcy gave a howl, and dodged desperately round the others. Towser, of course, made a dash at him, whilst I hung on to his chain for dear life.

The result, of course, was that the chain simply swept all three of the New House Co. off their feet; and we all went down with a terrific bump.

There was a powerful yell from all of us at once. It was said afterwards that the yell was heard all over Rylcombe.

Towser yelled louder than any of us. That clumsy ass Wynn sat down right on top of him—no wonder the poor old dog yelled. It pretty well knocked all the breath out of him, though, which was just as well for Wynn. I told Fatty afterwards that he might have been bitten if poor old Towser hadn't been too blown to bite anyone. It would have served the fat dummy right, in my opinion, if Towser had bitten him. People who are careless enough to sit down on dogs must expect to get bitten. Some people don't know how to treat dogs properly; that's what I say.

The New House Co. and myself and Towser were fairly mixed up. We sprawled and struggled on the ground, and all through everything I hung on to Towser's chain like grim death. I knew there was sure to be trouble if I once let go of his chain. So I didn't.

Figgins and Co. were yelling and struggling like eels. I think they thought they were being bitten, but poor old Towser was too puffed even to nip them playfully.

Of course the more they struggled the more mixed up we got.

"Help!" roared Figgins. "Herries, you ass, lemme gerrup!"

"You—you dummy, Herries! Take that brute away. I—I'll pulverise you—ow, you!"

That was Kerr. Why the two duffers should blame me I don't know. All those New House chaps are unreasonable.

Fatty Wynn was the worst of all.

"Ow! Help! I'm bitten!" he bawled.

"I'm being bitten to death! Dragimoff, you fellows—lemme gerrup! Hellup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake and Digby had come up and were cackling like a pair of silly hyenas. Gussy had sneaked off to change his silly clothes and get himself up like a tailor's dummy again, I suppose.

I was feeling a bit cross by this time after all I'd been through. Besides, I was worried about Towser. I thought the poor old chap might be hurt, with all three clumsy duffers sprawling all over him.

"Take your knee off my neck and let me get up, Figgins, you ass," I said crossly. "Blessed if I know what all the row's about! I hope Towser——"

"Blow Towser!"

"Bless Towser!"

"The brute wants shooting!"

The New House Co. were picking themselves up, groaning and glaring at me—what for, I don't know.

I didn't take any notice. I scrambled up and went over to where poor old Towser was lying quite pumped out.

"Poor old Towser!" I said, patting his head. "Poor old—Hallo!"

I broke off suddenly. I could hardly believe my eyes. For there, within a yard of Towser's nose, was something lying on the grass of the quad. And what do you think it was?

It was a piece of cake!

A piece of cake which I recognised at once by the almonds on top! It was a bit of our cake—of Blake's cake—the cake that was boned from our study! A piece of *the* cake, in fact, we were looking for!

And Towser—my good old dog Towser, had tracked it down!

I gave a yell of triumph.

"Look! Blake! Dig! Look there! Our cake! Towser's tracked it down!"

"What!" yelled Blake and Digby together, while the New House fellows simply stared.

Only Fatty Wynn turned very red.

I picked up the bit of cake.

"Look there! That's a bit of your cake, isn't it, Jack Blake?" I said triumphantly. "Look at the almonds on the top!"

Blake took the piece of cake and looked at it carefully.

"Yes, that's a bit of my cake, I could almost

swear to it. It was boned out of my study."

"Then—then how did it get here?" said Digby mystified. He's an awfully dense fellow sometimes, is old Dig. To me, of course, it seemed as clear as day.

"Fell out of the pocket of the chap who raided the cake from our study, I suppose," I said, looking hard at Fatty Wynn.

"By Jove!" said Blake softly.

Everyone looked at Fatty Wynn, who was as red as a beetroot by this time. Even his chums, Figgins and Kerr, looked at him queerly.

"Did that cake come out of your pocket, Fatty?" asked Figgins at last.

"I—I meant to tell you chaps, you know," stuttered Fatty Wynn. "It—it wasn't a whole one—quite; and I was hungry—simply starving, in fact, sus—so—I—I——"

"You boned it from our study!" shouted Blake wrathfully.

"And didn't even tell your pals!" exclaimed Figgins. "Oh, Fatty!"

"Ate the lot yourself except that measly bit!" hooted Kerr. "You—you fat gormandiser!"

"The fat, raiding villain!" said Digby. "Bump him!"

Fatty Wynn gave a doleful yell.

"Here, hold on! Leggo—I—I——"

"All together," said Figgins firmly, as New House and School House fellows alike laid hold of the unfortunate Fatty. "Now then! Bump!"

"Ow! Yow!"

"Once more!"

"Yow! Yaroo!"

"And another!"

Bump!

"Yaroooooh!"

"That'll teach you not to be a raiding villain!" remarked Blake.

"That'll teach you to tell your chums another time what you've raided!" grinned Figgins.

"Ow! Grooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As for me I never in my life felt so proud of Towser as I did then.

"That shows you fellows once for all what Towser can do!" I said triumphantly, as I stroked Towser's head. He was recovering rapidly, and was sitting up now.

"What's that?" said Blake.

They all stared at me.

Then I saw that the silly chumps hadn't even yet realised what a magnificent performance it was of Towser's.

"Do you mean to say you dummies can't see yet what Towser's done?" I said indignantly.

They still stared at me as if fascinated.

"I see that Towser's caused an infernal uproar and trouble!" said Blake.

"He's also torn Gussy's trousers and nearly sent him into a fit!" said Digby.

"Not to mention bowling us all over the quad!" snorted Figgins. "Blow Towser! I say."

"Bless Towser!" said Kerr.

"The beast ought to be kept in a cage as dangerous!" grunted Fatty Wynn.

Now I ask you, did you ever know such a thick-headed set of dummies in your lives? Blessed if I ever did! It's—it's almost incredible!

Still, I was as patient with them as I could be. I saw it all myself, of course. For a moment I felt like leaving them in all their ignorance—they were so hopelessly thick-headed. But in justice to old Towser, I decided to explain. I would prove to them, once and for all, what I have always said—that Towser can track down—well, almost anything; and that he is the most wonderful dog that ever lived.

So I explained to them.

I pointed out that all the time we thought Towser was chasing Gussy, he was simply tracking down the cake. He knew at once that it was the cake that we were looking for, so he went straight off as hard as he could go on the track of it! No one could say he wasn't keen. Why, he nearly pulled my arms out! Of course, with that ass Gussy dashing along in front of him, yelling and waving his arms, everyone thought Towser was chasing him. But of course it wasn't that at all—that was absolutely proved now. Towser had dashed straight out of the School House on the track of the cake, straight across the quad for the New House fellows, and wound his

chain round their legs so they couldn't escape! And there was the missing cake—all that was left of it, at least—in the pocket of one of them! Why, Sexton Blake's famous bloodhound couldn't have tracked down a missing article in quicker time! It was simply marvellous.

The five fellows listened to me in silence, staring hard at me all the time. Their eyes seemed to be almost bulging from their heads, in fact. As I explained the simple story of Towser's remarkable intelligence the expression of stupefaction on their faces was almost idiotic. I suppose it simply took their breath away to find it proved what a marvellous dog Towser was. They never appreciated Towser properly before. After this they'll have to change their tune, I fancy.

When I had finished I just stood there smiling and enjoying my triumph—or rather, Towser's triumph. Towser did not seem a bit concerned himself. I was patting his head, and he was thoughfully eating the last bit of Blake's cake.

For at least a minute no one spoke. Then Blake took a deep breath.

"Well, m-my hat!" he exclaimed. "My only aunt's latest panama! If that doesn't beat the blessed band!"

That was all he said. He was too overcome, I suppose, by his realisation at last of Towser's greatness.

The others did not say anything at all. They simply stared at Towser and me—rather like a set of stuffed fowls, I thought.

Then Towser growled. He seemed to have quite recovered now.

The fellows walked off after that—still without saying anything more. Their feelings seemed too deep for words. I dare say they were.

I was left alone with my dear old Towser. What a day it had been!

I simply hugged him—till he growled a bit. Towser doesn't much like being hugged. But what a day!

I shall always remember it as the day of Towser's Triumph!

THE END.

The Sights of Greyfriars

THE PUNISHMENT ROOM

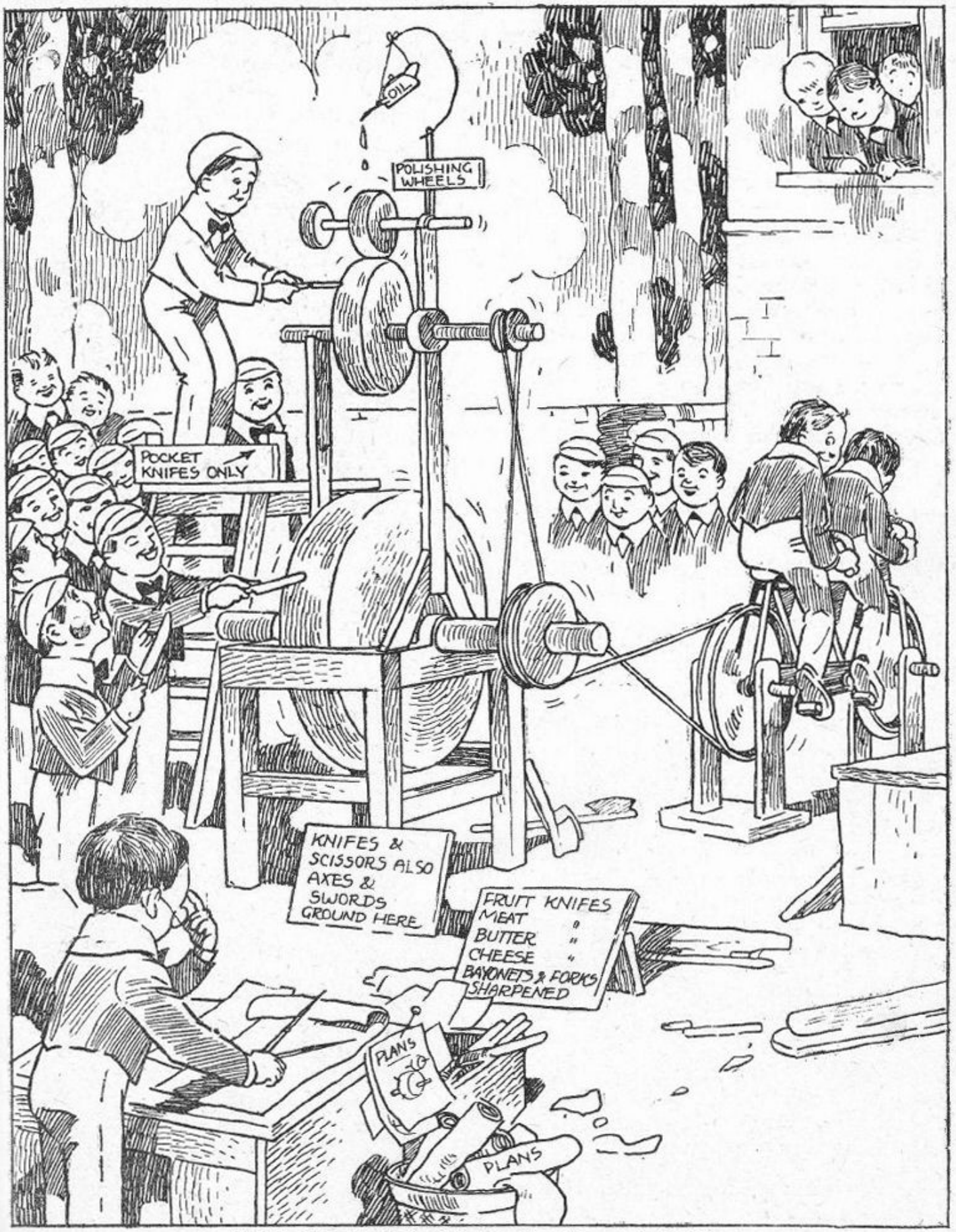
AMONG the many Greyfriars sights
I think I ought to mention
The place where culprits spend long nights
Of dreary, dull detention.
Within this bleak and barren room
They sit in silent sorrow
And wait for their approaching doom—
Expulsion on the morrow!

As in a vivid dream they see
The fellows all assembled
Before the Head, at whose decree
A host of boys have trembled.
They see, as in a nightmare black,
The prospect that awaits them;
They know that it will be "the sack."
No gleam of hope elates them.

The midnight chimes ring out; and still
They wait, with wild surmises;
They yet have many hours to kill
Before the grey dawn rises.
No bright and pleasant thoughts enhance
The gloomy situation;
They'd give the world to have a chance
To save their reputation!

These verses are not merry ones—
The subject's far from merry,
And does not merit jests or puns,
It's grim and gruesome—very!
Then take a warning from this rhyme
Ye blades and gay marauders!
Remember, a career of crime
May lead to "Marching orders"!

THE INVENTIONS OF SMITH MINOR



Smith Minor's Patent Device for Sharpening Knives

HOW I HOPE TO SPEND CHRISTMAS

Some of our famous—and infamous—Contributors describe their intentions.

Harry Wharton:

I hope to spend the Christmas Vacation at Wharton Lodge. I expect to take not less than a dozen of my chums home with me. (Billy Bunter is requested to keep off the grass). If it snows, we shall have a battle royal on the lawn; if it freezes, we shall disport ourselves on the ice; if it rains we shall have a fancy dress ball at the Lodge. We shall enjoy ourselves up to the hilt, whatever happens.

Bob Cherry:

My Christmas will be spent with Harry Wharton—whether it's at Greyfriars, Wharton Lodge, the North Pole, or India's coral strand. Harry and I are sticking together.

Billy Bunter:

I have not desyded weather to spend my Krissmus with Aunt Proo, Aunt Sally, Harry Wharton, or at the Home for Prize Porpoises at Porkerville. I must rite and find out which has the biggest horde of grubb. I mean to go to a plaice where I shall be fed up. I am suffering sadly from lack of nurrishment, and I hope to put on a grate deel of wate this Krissmus. At pressant, I am a mear skellington. My motter for the festiff seezon shall be as foloes: "Let us eat, drink, and be merry—at sumboddy else's expence!"

William Gosling *(the School Porter)*:

Wot I says is this 'ere—I shall spend my Christmas a-sweepin' up the leaves in the skool gateway. No tirkey and plum-pooden for me! Mine is an 'ard life, young gentlemen,an' I 'ope as 'ow you will display your Jennyrossity this Christmas by givin' me some substanshal tips. Thankee kindly, young gents, in antisipashun.

Hurree Singh:

I hopefully expect to spendfully pass the esteemed and ludicrous Vacation with the worthy Wharton at his lodgeful mansion. If my humble expectations are realised, everything in the garden will be worth two in the bush, as the English proverb has it.

Lord Mauleverer:

Where shall I spend the Christmas Vacation, dear boys? Yaw-aw-aw! Between the sheets, begad!

Wun Lung:

Me tinkee me spendee Chlistmas Vacation with Hally Wharton. If he not aglee, me choppee offee pigtail in disgust.

Mr. Quelch:

In the absence of my noisy pupils, I shall hope to add a further series of chapters to that wonderful labour of love, "The History of Greyfriars."

Peter Todd:

I shall devote the Christmas Vac. to tackling the thousand lines which Quelchy gave me twelve months ago. Perhaps!

Dick Penfold *(our tame poet)*:

Last Christmas Vac. I had a snack, which made me very seedy; and so this year I'll shun good cheer—at least, I won't be greedy.

The Headmaster:

During the Christmas holiday I intend to take part in a golfing tournament in Scotland. Mr. Prout will accompany me.

Horace Coker:

My Kristmass Vakkation will be spent in planning japes on the cheeky Remove faggs for neckst term. I anticipate that it will be a "scrappy" New Yeer!

A WINGED PIRATE

A Short Complete Nature Story

By

CLIVE FENN

IT had been a long, hard day for the Bee; plenty of housework in the new hive, and any amount of trouble, too, for a most unlucky thing had happened that very morning. It was July, and the poppies were dropping their petals right and left. The brigade of honey getters had their work cut out for them, but the safety of the home was first consideration, after all, but there had been a calamitous occurrence.

It was this way. The night before a heavy-weighted snail—it was addressed as Helix Aspersa at the learned society meetings—had crawled for shelter into the hive, a most unusual and tactless act on its part, but the colimaçon, as the French call the snail, had been frightened out of its wits by a blackbird, and had slipped into the first shelter, which was the beehive, and—it is a grievous story—had died there from fright. This was what caused the bees to be late the following morning for the honey collecting parade. The dead snail was too heavy to move, and it could not be allowed to remain just as it was. The long and the short of it was the bees had to muster in force and build the ugly object in with wax so that no harm would accrue. It was an emergency measure, and the work was not over till the dawn. Consequently the Bee was fagged out from the first. He is ready for anything, but he is not always on the qui vive for the wasp, and so it was in this case. The Bee was an excellent honey merchant. Time was nothing to him. Trouble did not count. He slaved hard through the summer day, seldom pausing to dream, though he had his dreams, of course, dreams which thrilled him now and then as he darted through a garden where the hollyhocks nodded, and the sunflowers peeped over the wall, for he had his keen interest in life, his myriad duties, his home, and the special job which was his to carry on for a time, then to relinquish to another. So he had not bothered his head specially about the wasp, the pirate of his world.

The wasp was a privateer, often sailed under false colours, frequently showed that he was not really civilised. And it had been a tiring day—a day of working overtime all on account of the miserable and totally unexpected appearance of the snail the night before. How the ugly visitor had managed to pass the sentinels passed understanding. The guard was ordinarily smart enough, and barred every kind of intruder; in fact, brought their rifles down even if a caller had momentarily forgotten the password. Oh, the unhappy business had caused a pretty commotion one way and another, though there was no risk now, thanks to the steps taken. The Bee had done his day's work at greater speed than usual, hardly stopping to talk at all, or admire itself in the shining waters of the lake in the garden at the squire's. The meadowsweet which grew close to the waterside was a specially favoured hunting ground as a rule, but the Bee was out for bulk, and the sunflowers gave it, also the Harpalium Rigidum, with its golden-yellow flowers, and the giant hollyhocks, which were always a treat to be taken floor by floor. Not much to grumble at, and at last the Bee rested to take breath amidst the poppies.

He had paid great attention to the Shirleys, and regretted in his heart the decline of the summer. It was cheery to meet a ruminative Red Admiral perched close by. There is no serious rivalry in trade between the butterflies and the bees. They understand one another, and they entertain a mutual distrust of the wasp. But something for nothing, or at least for a very little trouble, is the wisdom of the wasp. The Bee was thinking of getting back hiveward. He had exchanged a few chatty nothings with the handsome Red Admiral when—whirr—bizz—the alarm was given, but too late. The wasp was on the alert. It was all so quick, the horrid deed done even before the Red Admiral could flit off for help. Down came the wasp, and its tired and laden victim collapsed under the fierce attack—the Bee was dead in a flash. No help came. The wasp cut away the tender body with its bag full of honey, leaving the hard portion to drop to the ground. Then, carrying its booty, the marauder sailed off in triumph—all the result of a toilsome day's work gained by a moment's murderous work.

* * * * *

Blame the snail, blame the blackbird, blame the hive staff for letting an overtired bee go out to work; blame anybody. But you will admit the Bee had done its duty to the end!

DO YOU KNOW THIS?

A Page of Catchy Conundrums

WHAL is worse than raining cats and dogs?
Hailing motor-'buses.

What did the earwig say when it dropped off the tree into a puddle?
"'Ere we go" (earwig-oh).

What did the window-pane say when a tree fell across it and smashed it?
"Tremendous" (tree, mend us).

Can you say what it is won't go up the chimney up, but will go up the chimney down, or down the chimney down?
An umbrella.

Why is O the noisiest vowel?
Because all the rest of them are in "audible" (inaudible).

What age is the most deceiving?
The sausage.

Why is a horse that is constantly ridden and never fed not likely to starve?
Because he has always a "bit" in his mouth.

Why can the world never come to an end?
Because it is round.

Why is your eye like a schoolmaster inflicting corporal punishment?
Because it has a "pupil" under the "lash."

Why is the History of England like a wet season?
Because it is full of "reigns."

When is a potato like a bell?
When it is peeled (pealed).

Why is a fishmonger never generous?
Because his business makes him sel-fish!

What is a button?
A small event that is always coming off.

Why is a good actor like an architect?
Because they both "draw" good "houses."

Why is a stupid boy like a jungle?
Because he is dense.

Why are penmakers wicked men?
Because they make people steel pens.

When is a cow not a cow?
When it is turned into a meadow.

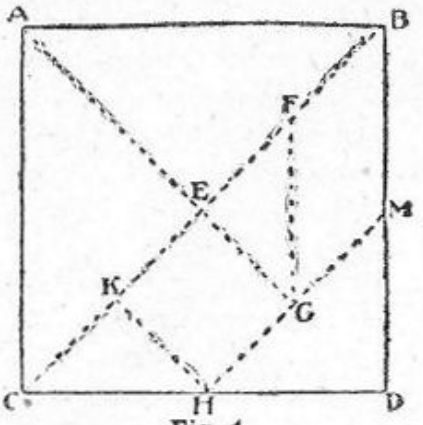


Fig. 1

TANGRAMS

All About a Fascinating Puzzle Invented Over Four Thousand Years Ago

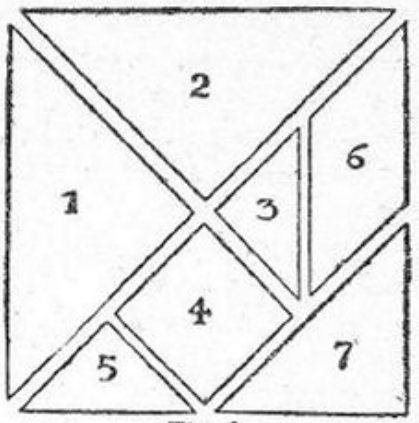


Fig. 2

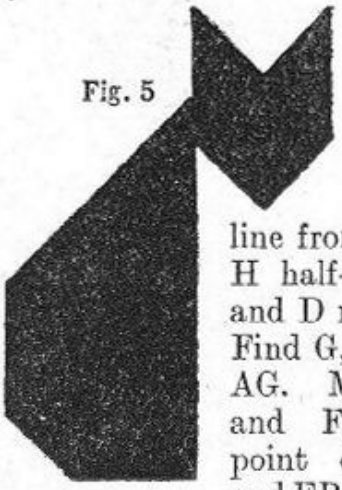


Fig. 5

ONE of the oldest and most fascinating of puzzles comes, like so many quaint things, from the Far East, where, over four thousand years ago, a learned Chinaman named Tan made the invention which forty centuries have been unable to improve or alter. Worthy of a civilisation that invented chess, Tan's puzzle has lived on unchanged through the ages, affording amusement and thought to men of such ability as Napoleon, who, during his exile on St. Helena, used to spend hour after hour with the little black geometric figures.

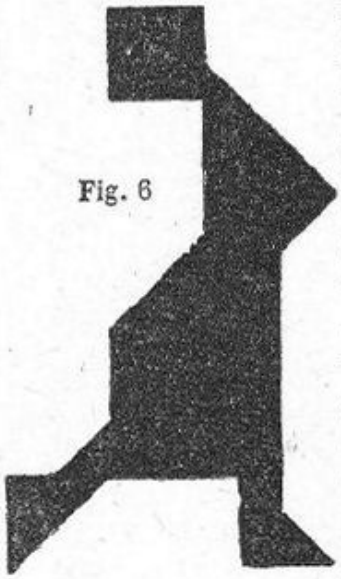


Fig. 6

Take a perfect square of stiff cardboard of any size—say, five inches—and see that the angles and sides are true. Now, very carefully mark it off according to the dotted lines in Fig. 1, which may be explained thus: ABCD is the square. Rule a line from B to C, and mark off M and H half-way between B and D and C and D respectively, and join M and H. Find G, the midpoint of MH, and join AG. Mark K and F, midpoint of CE and EB respectively, and join KH and FG. Having thus marked out the card, take a very sharp knife and cut the cardboard along the dotted line. You will then have the seven pieces as shown in Fig. 2, which are numbered for convenience sake. Having coloured these pieces dead black with Indian ink on both sides, you are ready to start the great Tangram puzzle.

Fig. 6b

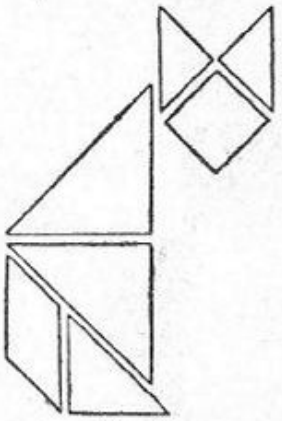


Fig. 5a

All these seven pieces must be fitted against each other, never overlapping, in order to make the figures of men, boats, houses, or the like.

Take, for example, Fig. 3,

which shows the original Tan presenting the puzzle. Fig. 3A shows how the good gentleman can be fitted together, as the numbers designate which pieces are to be placed against each other.

The individual in the cocked hat who appears in Fig. 4 is another example of how the pieces are to be put together; similarly the d-e pressed cat in Figs. 5 and 5A, or the lady in Figs. 6 and 6A, who is holding her skirt up so high as she crosses the street. Figs. 6B and 6C show a gentleman apparently tired of life.

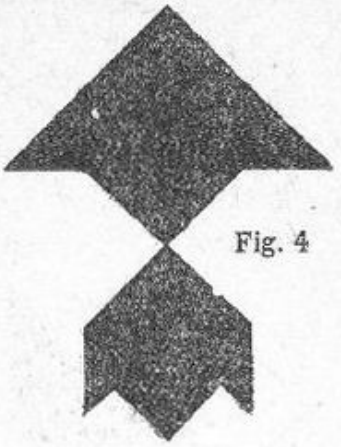


Fig. 4

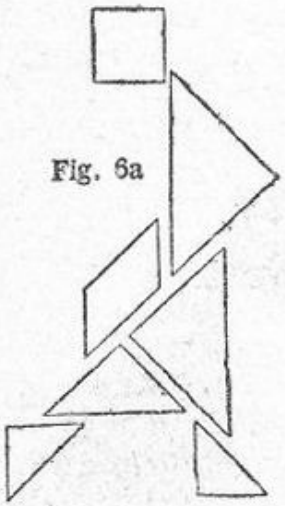


Fig. 6a

Those seven pieces can be so disposed as to make hundreds of figures, giving scope for boundless ingenuity and skill.

A good winter evening competition can be arranged by making several sets of Tangram pieces, and distributing one set to each member of the party. The name of some familiar object should then be announced—for example, horse, cat, washerwoman—two minutes being allowed for the constructions, and points given to the best Tangram.

A variation can be introduced by taking a well-known nursery rhyme or fairy tale, and asking each person to make a Tangram to represent a different subject in the tale. Supposing "The Farmer's Boy" to be the rhyme, one person would make the figure of that youth, to another would fall the house, to a third the dog, and so on. As in the former case a prize might be awarded to the most successful manipulator of the little black pieces.

Others have to kill time besides Bonaparte on his island, when he designed unflattering pictures of Wellington, for a long spell in a railway waiting-room will pass like magic if you have the Tangram Puzzle in your pocket.

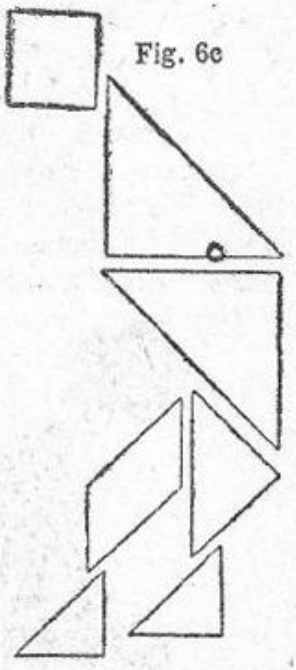


Fig. 6c

Tan did a great service to the world by his invention. He hit on the idea as a rest for the brain, for he was one of the hardest workers of his day.

In the same way, anybody in these times can derive endless pleasure in the game. You can show Queen Elizabeth or the daily charwoman about to start work. Another set of pictures can be arrived at by portraying various characters in the field of sport; or comedy and drama connected with the sunshine or storm of school life; or the characteristic poses of one's friends and relations. The Tangram is not in the least particular. It is one of those ingenious pastimes which improves, if anything, with the passing of the years.

Fig. 3

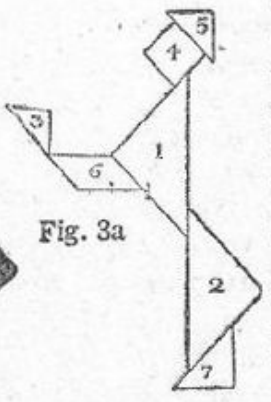


Fig. 3a

THE END

THE MISFORTUNES OF A FAG!

Being the Correspondence between Master Richard Nugent, of the Third Form, and Various Others

I.

DICKY NUGENT TO GEORGE WINGATE

"April 1st, 1920.

"Deer Wingate,—i have just had a letter from my pater to say that my dog Rufus has devvellopped an attack of hooping-koff, and is not ekspected to live.

"i want to get permishun to go home and see that he is sootably berried, and as you are my fagg-master, I am approaching you with this rekwest.

"Hopeing to reseeve a faverable reply —I remane, yore obedyent servant,

"RICHARD NUGENT."

II.

GEORGE WINGATE TO MR. TWIGG

"April 15th 1920.

"Dear Sir,—The enclosed application from Nugent minor to be allowed to go home for the burial of his dog is forwarded to you as you are Nugent's Form-master.

"I regret the delay in forwarding this application, but it has been mislaid for a fortnight.—Yours respectfully,

"GEORGE WINGATE."

III.

MR. TWIGG TO THE HEADMASTER

"April 20th, 1920.

"Dear Dr. Locke,—Nugent minor has approached Wingate with a rather peculiar request. He wishes to be allowed to go to his home in order to witness the interment of his dog Rufus.

"Wingate has forwarded the application to me, but I fear that I have no jurisdiction in the matter, and I therefore pass Nugent minor's request on to you.

"Yours sincerely,

"EUSEBIUS TWIGG."

IV.

THE HEADMASTER TO HENRY NUGENT, ESQ.

"April 26th, 1920.

"Dear Sir,—Your son Richard states that his pet dog Rufus is expected to sever his connection with this world. In consequence your son wishes to be allowed to go home to see that the poor creature is appropriately buried.

"I am quite willing to grant your son a day's leave of absence from Greyfriars provided the story is genuine.

"Would you be good enough to inform me if your boy has stated the true facts of the case.—Yours very truly,

"HERBERT T. LOCKE,
"Headmaster of Greyfriars."

V.

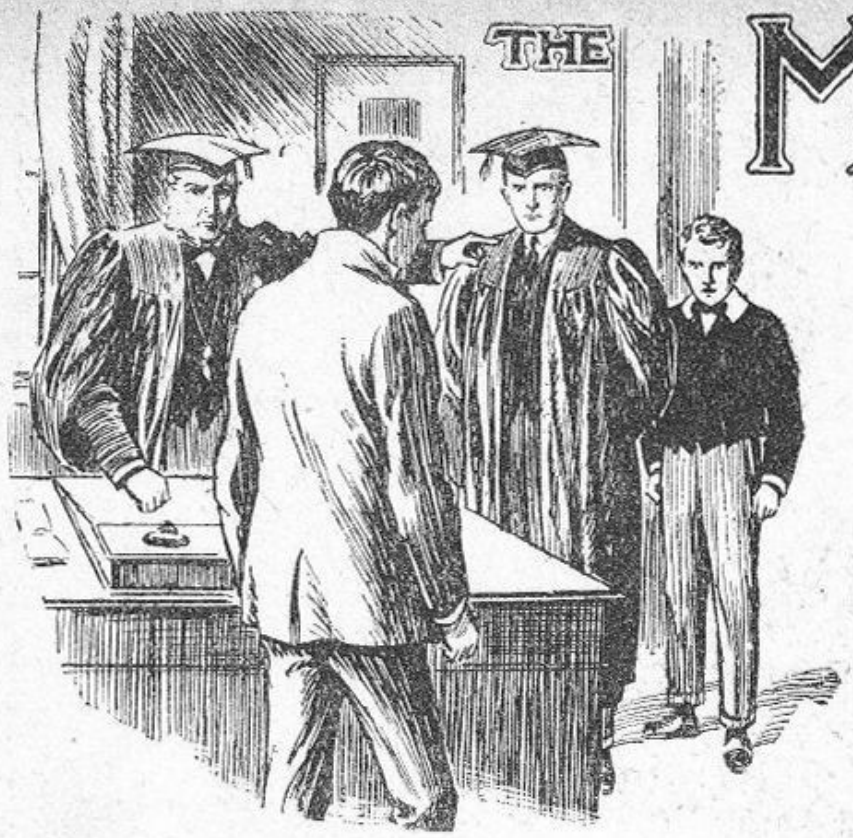
HENRY NUGENT, ESQ., TO THE HEADMASTER

"May 1st, 1920.

"Dear Sir,—In reply to your letter, my son's statements were quite correct. The dog Rufus departed this life a month ago, and the burial took place immediately.—Yours faithfully,

"HENRY NUGENT."

(Partial collapse of Head. Total collapse of Nugent minor!)



THE MASTER'S SECRET

or HOW TOM MERRY CAME TO ST. JIM'S

A Splendid Complete Tale of School Life

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

With Illustrations by

R. J. MACDONALD

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Startling News

"TOM MERRY again!"

Herr Schneider snapped his teeth over the words. The German master at Clavering School had just come out of his study with a cane in his hand, and a dark frown upon his face, and he stood for a moment in the passage, listening.

There certainly was a terrific din proceeding from the corridor above, where the studies of the young gentlemen of the Middle School were situated. A peculiar bumping and crashing noise was followed by the stamping of feet and the shouting of voices, and loudest of all was the voice of Tom Merry.

"Bravo, old Manners! That's a wicket to you!"

"Now let's see what you can do, Tom!"

"Right-ho! Chuck me the ball!"

"Here it is!"

"Ass! I didn't say chuck it at me. Why couldn't you give me a catch? Never mind, here goes. Stand clear, you chaps!"

Herr Schneider's hair stood on end with wrath. He took a firm grip on the cane, and began to ascend the stairs three at a time. It was a rainy day out of doors, but the chums of the Shell were not to be done out of their cricket practice, and they were practising bowling in the upper corridor.

It was Tom Merry's way to make the best of everything, and that was what he was doing now; but the German master, whose study was underneath, was not likely to be pleased by indoor cricket practice just over his head. But, as Tom said, it was impossible to please everybody.

"Beastly close quarters for cricket practice," said Tom Merry, as he took hold of the ball. "Never mind, it saves the fag of fielding, anyway. Now I'm going to bowl a lob."

"I say!" exclaimed Manners, in alarm. "I think I heard——"

But the ball had already sped. Down the long corridor it went, just as Herr Schneider, crimson with wrath, came bouncing up the staircase and rushed into the corridor. The next moment he gave a fiendish yell. The cane went one way, his spectacles another, and Herr Schneider danced on one leg, clasping the other affectionately with both hands.

"Ach! Mein leg! Mein leg! Mein leg!"

He howled with pain and rage as he hopped frantically.

The boys of the Shell gasped with alarm at the sight of the catastrophe, but the sight of the fat German clasping one leg and hopping on the other was too funny. A shout of laughter rang through the corridor. It added to the fury of Herr Schneider.

"Ach! Mein leg! It is proken! Tom Merry, you did tat on purpose!"

"Did the ball hit you, sir?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

And the boys yelled again at the absurd question. It was pretty plain that the ball had hit the German.

"Ach! Mein leg, it is proken!"

"Then you're out, sir," said Tom Merry demurely

"Hein? Vat you say?"

"You're out, sir. Leg-before wicket, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners.

Herr Schneider panted with rage. It was only Tom's fun, but to the Herr it seemed like insult added to injury.

"Merry! I—I—vat shall I say? You are te vorst poy in te whole school. I do not feel equal to dealing mit you meinself, so you vill go to the Head. You vill say tat you have trown ein cricket ball at your master."

"But I didn't, sir. I didn't know you were going to hop in on the pitch like that."

"You vill do as I tell you, Merry."

"But——"

Herr Schneider hopped towards him, and Tom deemed it better to go.

It was hard lines, for although Mr. Railton would believe that the German's mishap was an accident, Tom was certain to "catch" it for bowling cricket-balls in the corridor. But there was no help for it, and so Tom marched off to the study of Mr. Railton. He tapped at the Head's door. There was no answer from within. Tom tapped again more loudly. Still no reply. The scamp of the Shell smiled to himself.

"The Head's not there," he murmured, "so I certainly can't report myself. I suppose I'd better look in, in case the old Dutchman asks me."

He opened the door of the study and carelessly glanced in. The next moment he gave a violent start. The room was not empty, as he expected it would be. Mr. Railton was in his accustomed seat at the writing-table. But his attitude was such as Tom Merry had never seen before. Both his elbows rested upon the table, and his face was sunk in his hands. Before him on the table lay a letter. His attitude was so plainly expressive of utter despondency, that Tom Merry could not help seeing that a heavy blow had fallen upon the popular Head of Clavering.

Mr. Railton was evidently so absorbed in his gloomy reflections that he had not heard Tom's tapping at the door. Tom hesitated, wishing he had not entered, and at the same time wondering what could have happened to cause such a change to come over the usually strong and cheery Head.

Mr. Railton raised his head. He started at the sight of Tom Mery, but in a moment he seemed himself again.

"I knocked twice, sir," said Tom. "Herr Schneider sent me to you, sir."

Mr. Railton nodded.

"You may come in, Merry."

Tom walked into the study. Mr. Railton's handsome face was very pale, and he looked worn, but he was quite calm. He took up the letter from the table.

"Herr Schneider sent you to me, Merry. Why?"

"It was an accident, sir."

Mr. Railton smiled slightly. Tom's career at Clavering School had been marked by unusual happenings, and the Head never knew what to expect next.

"Well—well, what was it, Merry?"

"I was bowling a lob in the upper corridor, sir, and Herr Schneider got leg-before-wicket—I mean, he came bolting into the corridor without warning, and stopped the ball with his leg, sir," said Tom ingenuously. "I was awfully sorry."

"I dare say you were. Do you assure me that it was an accident?"

"Certainly, sir, on my word."

"Then I will excuse you, Merry. It is wrong of you to bowl in the corridor—you might hit anybody, and you must never do it again. I do not wish to punish you, however. I do not wish the last act of my authority here to be the infliction of punishment."

And Mr. Railton sighed. He had spoken the last words more to himself than to Tom Merry, and hardly seemed to be aware that they were uttered aloud. But Tom caught them. And in his amazement he stared at the headmaster.

"Mr. Railton! You are not going away, sir?"

The distress in the boy's face touched the Head. He liked Tom Merry, in spite of his scapegrace ways, and it moved him to see what he did in Tom's look.

"Yes, Merry. I did not mean to mention it, but I may as well tell you now. I intended in any case to make an announcement to the school to-night. But it is not only I who am going, and probably we shall not part. Clavering School is to be closed."

Tom looked blank. He had been only a few months at Clavering, but he already felt quite at home there, and quite part of the institution.

There had been rumours abroad in the school lately—rumours vague and undefined, foreboding change of some sort; but Tom had never looked for this.

"Clavering to be closed, sir!"

"Yes, Merry," Mr. Railton nodded, "the school is to be closed. It is a heavy blow to me, as you may imagine, but there are reasons. But, as I said, we may yet be together. I am making arrangements for the transfer of the boys to another school; the two schools will be, in fact, amalgamated. That school is the famous St. James's—better known to you as St. Jim's. The school Clavering played a short time ago on the cricket-field."

"St. Jim's, sir! We are going to St. Jim's!"

"Yes, Merry. It is a grand old school, older than Clavering, and more famous, and you will be in good hands there, all of you. Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, is my oldest and best friend, and we are arranging this matter between us. I shall take a position at St. Jim's, and most of my boys, I think, will accompany me there. Their parents, of course, have all been communicated with, and their consent obtained. By the way, I think your governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, will be coming down to see you about it. She has written to me and seems a little anxious about the change." The Head smiled slightly. "Now you may go, Merry. I depend upon you to keep the best of order for the last few days that we shall be at Clavering."

"Yes, sir." Tom hesitated. "Don't think it's an awful cheek of me," he broke out, "but—but can't anything be done, sir?"

"Nothing, Merry," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I need not conceal—it will soon be known to everyone—that money has been advanced upon the land Clavering stands on, and that the person who advanced it claims his strict rights. A seam of coal has been discovered on the land, and it extends right under Clavering College, and the moneylender sees a prospect of immense profit, and so he is not likely to make any concessions. As a matter of fact, I have here a letter from him, warning me that he is coming down to-day, and that no concession need be expected."

"The—the brute! I beg your pardon, sir. But—but it's rotten!"

Tom Merry went slowly to the door. It was not so much himself that he cared about. He liked Clavering, but he was quite ready to go to St. Jim's. He had met the fellows from that school on more than one occasion, and he knew that he could have a good time there. But he knew that this was a heavy blow for the Head. And he liked Mr. Railton.

He went out and closed the door, and went back to his own quarters looking less cheerful than usual. Monty Lowther and Manners were in the study, and they met their chum with glances of sympathy.

"Got it on both hands, Tom?" asked Manners. "Hard cheese!"

"Looks more like a flogging," said Lowther. "Did he lay it on awfully hard, kid?"

"I've not been licked," said Tom.

"You don't mean to say that he let you off?"

"Yes, he did."

"And you come back looking as solemn as an owl, and cheating us out of our sympathy!" Manners exclaimed indignantly. "What do you mean by it?"

"I've had some news."

"Oh, is that it? Something awful going to happen? Is Miss Fawcett coming down to see you?"

Tom laughed.

"Yes, I think so, but that's not the worst. It's all up with Clavering."

"Don't rot! What are you talking about?"

Tom explained the news he had received from the Head. Monty Lowther and Manners gave expressive whistles.

"Well, my Sunday topper!" exclaimed Manners. "This is a go! I'm sorry for the Head, but I dare say we shall be able to dig up some fun at St. Jim's."

"It's all right if we all go together," said Monty Lowther. "We must write to our people, and give 'em their orders. You know there's two houses at St. Jim's, and they're always on the warpath against one another, and I've heard they squeeze a lot of fun out of that. We must all three go into the same house."

"Rather!" said Tom Merry.

The news was not long in spreading over Clavering. It was received with mingled feelings, partly with regret, partly with a relish for the novelty of the situation. The boys were curious to see how they would get on at St. Jim's, a school they had met more than once on the cricket and football field.

Before bed-time the boys were called together in the hall, and the Head made a speech. It was a brief one, but to the point.

He explained the difficulties into which the school had fallen, touching very lightly upon that part of the subject, and then passed on to explain the new prospects to such of the boys as were permitted by their parents to accompany him to his new abode. The speech was received in perfect silence.

It was broken by Wingate, the captain of Clavering, who stepped forward to reply for the school.

"We're all sorry to hear this, sir," said the captain of Clavering; "but we're glad to be able to go with you, and I expect most of us will do so. I shall for one, I know."

"And I!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"And all of us!" came a general shout.

"Thank you, Wingate! Thank you, my boys!" said Mr. Railton. "We have, I am safe to say, done our best, and played a straight game while we have been here, and I hope we shall do the same in a new sphere. St. Jim's will not need to be ashamed of us, and I hope we shall lose nothing in being merged in a greater and more famous school; but I hope St. Jim's, in fact, will gain by it. Now, good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The first post in the morning brought Tom Merry a letter from his old governess and nurse—Miss Priscilla Fawcett. It announced that the good lady was coming down to see him that day, in order to consult with him over the news Mr. Railton had written to her.

Miss Fawcett was at Clavering an hour after her letter. The news of her coming was brought to Tom in the Shell class-room, and he was permitted by the master to go out and see his affectionate governess.

"Dearest Tommy!" exclaimed Miss Priscilla, enfolding him in her embrace. "Dearest Tommy, how have you got on all this long time?"

"Why, you saw me only a fortnight ago!" said Tom.

"It seems such a long time, my sweetest!"

"Oh, please don't! Somebody may hear you!"

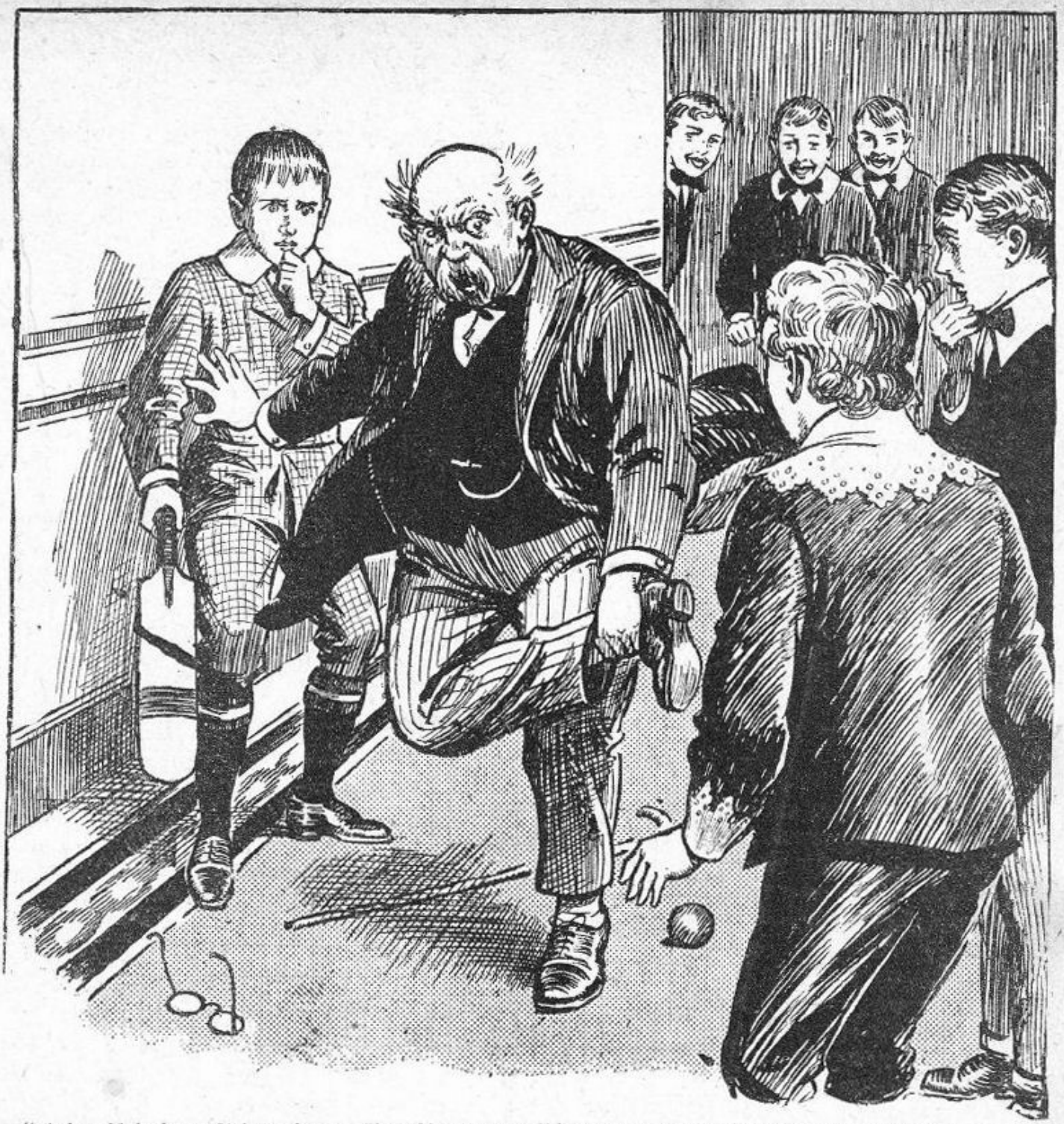
"Very well, dear Tommy. You know why I have come down," said the old lady, holding him at arm's length and regarding him affectionately. "It's about this change Mr. Railton designs to make. It's a little unreasonable of him to decide to change the quarters of the school at such a short notice, before I have had time to fully inquire and inspect the new college; but I do not mean you to go there into danger——"

"Danger!" exclaimed Tom. "What on earth are you driving at, my dear nurse?"

"My sweetest boy, there may be draughts or—or anything. The drains may be bad. They may put you into a draughty study."

Tom Merry grinned. It seemed funny to him that Miss Fawcett's principal concern in the catastrophe that had overtaken Clavering was whether he might be put into a draughty study when he took up his new quarters.

"I shall have to go over the school, of



" Ach ! Mein leg ! It is proken ! Tom Merry, you did tat on purpose ! " cried Herr Schneider. " Did the ball hit you, sir ? " asked Tom Merry, innocently. (See page 298.)

course, and examine things," said Miss Fawcett " I have heard nothing about the school——"

" It's one of the finest in England," said Tom hotly. " They licked us at football once, and at cricket twice, and what more could you want to know ? I've seen a lot of their chaps, and they are ripping. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, is a regular ripper."

" What an expression, Tommy ! But I have heard that there are two houses at St. James's——"

" So there are at lots of schools ; five or six sometimes."

" Yes ; but these, the School House and the New House, are always on bad terms with one another, and sometimes they

fight," said Miss Fawcett, looking horrified.

Tom laughed.

"My dear nurse, if you think I've been all this time at Clavering without learning how to fight, you are a giddy old innocent!" he exclaimed. "You should have seen my slogging match with Gore. It was an eye-opener."

"Oh, Tommy!"

"Besides, there's always a certain amount of rivalry between two houses at a school," said Tom, who had learned much of public school life since leaving Laurel Villa, at Huckleberry Heath. "It does them good. Keeps them up to the mark in sports, and so on. And it's jolly good fun at St. Jim's. I've heard about it from the chaps. Why, that's what I'm looking forward to."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tom Merry Arrives at St. Jim's.

"HALLO, a new kid!"

As Tom Merry stepped from the vehicle, Jack Blake, of St. Jim's, fell into the arms of Herries, while Digby collapsed into the embrace of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The chums of Study No. 6 in the School House seemed completely overcome.

"What is it?" murmured Blake, in tones of exaggerated faintness. "What can it be? I wonder if it has a name?"

"It's something new," said Digby. "I've never seen anything like it before off a Christmas-tree. Fancy meeting that!"

"It is weally too extwaordinary," said D'Arcy. He pushed Dig into a sitting position, and solemnly adjusted his eyeglass, and through it took a survey of the wrathful Tom Merry. "It is alive; I can see its features move. What a stwange object!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking warlike. "If you——"

Blake covered his face with his hands.

"Don't!" he gasped. "Don't! Oh, Don't!"

"Don't what?"

"Don't ask me to look! I can't really. I'm not strong, and I'm afraid it might be too much for me!"

"Tommy! Dear Tommy!"

It was Miss Priscilla's voice from inside the hack. And Tom, with whom politeness outweighed everything else, turned to assist the lady from the vehicle.

"Take no notice of those rude boys," said Miss Priscilla. "Give me your arm, dearest Tommy."

Dearest Tommy turned scarlet, but he obeyed. Blake gasped with merriment. He hadn't seen anything as funny as this for a long time.

"Oh, my only hat!" he giggled. "Dearest D'Arcy, give me your arm. Don't take any notice of these common, rude bounders. You vulgah people, get off the earth!"

And Blake, taking the arm of D'Arcy, followed Miss Priscilla and Tom Merry to the door of the Head's house. He walked in a graceful way, leaning upon the arm of the swell of the School House, and the sight was irresistible. Herries and Digby howled with laughter, and Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looking out of his study window to see what was the matter, had to laugh, too.

"Oh, that young rascal Blake!" he murmured. "Blake! Blake!"

The chief of the School House juniors stopped.

"Did you call me, Kildare?"

"Stop that immediately!"

"Oh, I say, Kildare!" remonstrated Blake. "Mustn't D'Arcy and I take a little constitutional for our health after morning school?"

"Weally, we wequire it for our livah," said Arthur Augustus.

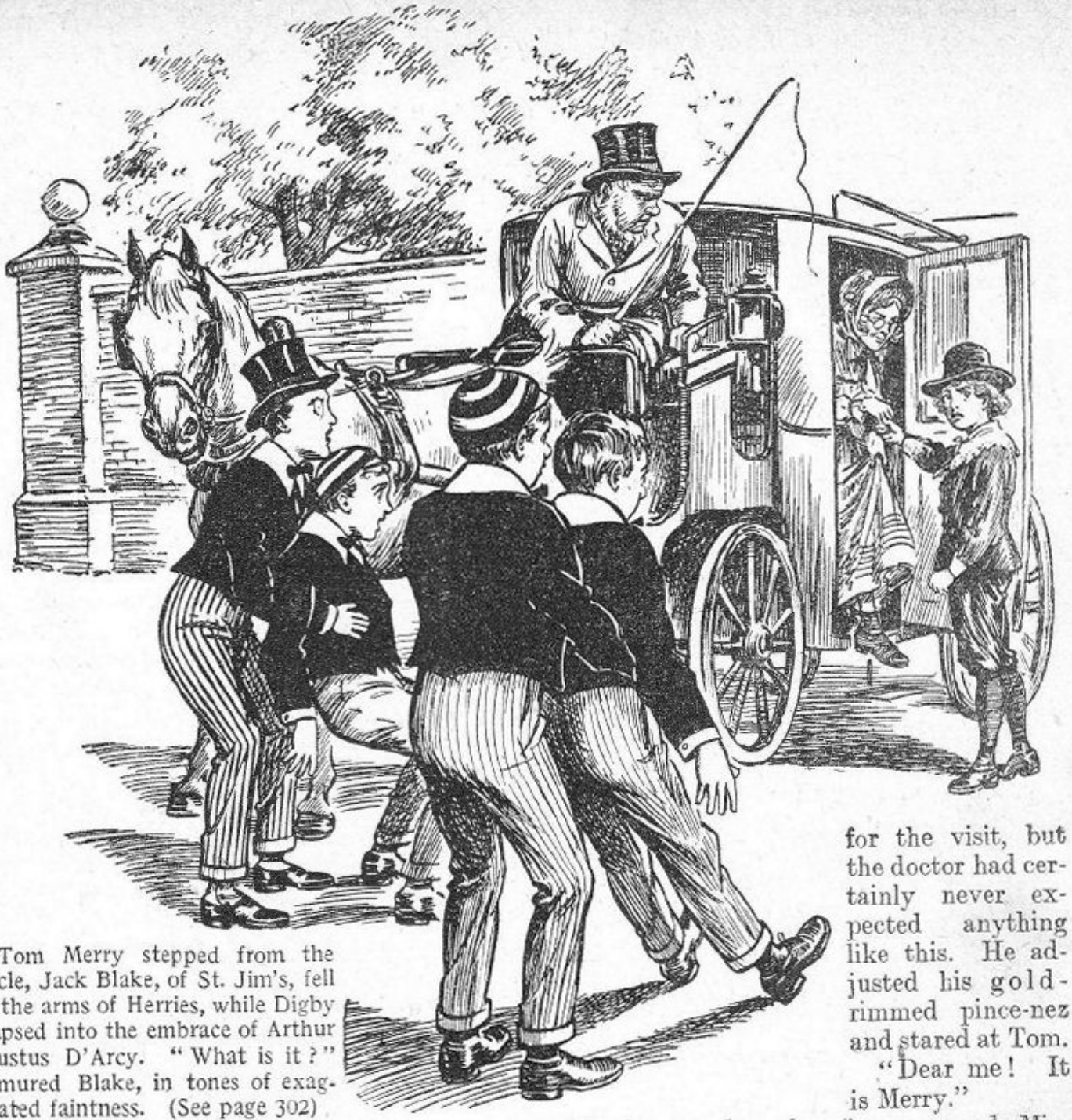
But the door opening to admit Miss Priscilla and Tom Merry, sent Blake and D'Arcy scuttling off. They rejoined Herries and Dig.

"Well," said Blake, wiping the tears from his eyes—"well, my pippins, we're not likely to go in want of a good cackle if that funny merchant is going to stop at St. Jim's!"

"I suppose it's a new kid," said Herries. "But if they put it in the School House I shall kill it. It's too funny to live."

Blake looked alarmed.

"Oh, they wouldn't dare!" he exclaimed. "The New House is the proper place for it. It was a bit of a wrench for us to stand D'Arcy when he came——"



As Tom Merry stepped from the vehicle, Jack Blake, of St. Jim's, fell into the arms of Herries, while Digby collapsed into the embrace of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "What is it?" murmured Blake, in tones of exaggerated faintness. (See page 302)

"Oh, weally now, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Then they gave us that howler, Marmaduke Smythe, but we shoved him off on to Figgins & Co.," went on Blake. "Figgins can have this merchant. We won't. If they stick it in here there will be trouble. But, my word, what a giddy velvet suit. Ha, ha, ha!"

Meanwhile, Miss Fawcett was shown into the presence of the Head of St. Jim's. Mr. Railton had somewhat prepared Dr. Holmes for the visit, but the doctor had certainly never expected anything like this. He adjusted his gold-rimmed pince-nez and stared at Tom.

"Dear me! It is Merry."

"It is my dear boy," announced Miss Priscilla, with a glance of fond pride at Tom. "I have brought him with me, Dr. Holmes. You will be very kind to him?"

Tom Merry gave a wriggle.

"Oh, very kind," said Dr. Holmes. "But what is the meaning of this peculiar attire? I—ah——" he paused, reflecting that it would be easier to deal with this matter after Miss Fawcett was gone. "Well, let it pass. Now, what is it you wish, my dear madam?"

"As I informed you, I believe, Dr. Holmes

I wish to make an inspection of the school, in order to fulfil my duties towards this dear boy," said Miss Priscilla. "Of course, I fully accept your assurance, but at the same time——"

"Exactly," said Dr. Holmes, touching a bell. "As Merry will go into the House School, I will ask Mr. Kidd, the housemaster, to show you over the building, Miss Fawcett. I am, unfortunately, very much occupied just now." He turned to the maid who answered his ring. "Kindly request Mr. Kidd to come to me."

In a few moments the master of the School House made his appearance. He gave Tom Merry a very curious look as he bowed to Miss Fawcett. The doctor explained in a few words.

Mr. Kidd expressed himself as delighted to be of any service to Miss Fawcett, and he politely conducted her to the School House. The lady insisted upon taking Tom by the hand, and making him accompany her, so that he, too, should be satisfied by an inspection of his new home, and this was a martyrdom to Tom. Fellows came to their study doors, or collected on the stairs and in the corridors, to look at him.

Morning school was over, and all the School House seemed to be at liberty to devote its attention to the new boy. Mr. Kidd kept a face as solemn as a judge's, as he escorted Miss Fawcett over the building, and whenever he saw a grinning face he frowned at it. But chuckles and giggles followed the party wherever they moved. When they passed along the upper corridor, the chums of Study No. 6 were standing at their door, looking out with much interest.

"There it is again!" said Blake. "As large as life!"

And as Tom Merry passed, they all four bowed low, with their hands upon their hearts, in the most respectful and graceful manner.

"Dear me!" said Miss Priscilla. "What nice, polite boys!"

But Tom was boiling inwardly. A little later, when Miss Fawcett went to inspect the dormitory, Tom contrived to slip away, and he returned to Study No. 6. He wanted to have a little talk to the chums there, a little talk which would probably have led to a little fight had Blake and his comrades been still there. But when Tom Merry opened the door the room was empty. The juniors were no longer in their quarters. Tom Merry glanced round the study, and a gleam of mischief darted into his eyes. He stepped quickly inside.

On the table stood a hat-box, which evidently contained a new silk topper, destined for one of the dwellers in Study No. 6. Near it were the books, papers, pens and ink belonging to the juniors, left where they had used them last.

Tom Merry's brain worked rapidly, and he owed the chums a little account which he now saw an opportunity of paying. Quickly opening the hat-box, he took hold of the hat, a gorgeous new topper, belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's.

"My word!" murmured Tom Merry. "This will be a surprise for whoever wears this giddy hat. It will be one to me."

There was an inkpot of red ink on the inkstand. Tom picked it up and emptied about half the contents inside the leather lining in the hat. Then he returned it to the box.

There was a surprise in store for whoever wore that hat. Tom quitted the study and closed the door.

"My dearest Tommy, wherever have you been?" exclaimed Miss Fawcett, a little later. "I have looked over the house, Tommy, and I think it is quite satisfactory. Mr. Kidd has shown me the study you are to have. You will share it with two companions."

"Manners and Lowther, or there will be a row," said Tom to himself.

And he went to inspect the study.

It was a new room belonging to some additions that had lately been built to the School House. A pleasant room, though not over large, and Tom liked it. His nurse had already made a long list of articles that were to be sent down to furnish it from London. Tom having expressed himself satisfied with his new quarters, the tour of inspection ended for the time. Miss Priscilla lunched with the Head, while Tom took his dinner in the dining-hall of the School House with the rest of the house.

Later Miss Priscilla came out into the quad and found Tom Merry.

"I have just inspected the New House, Tommy, and I am quite satisfied with that. For the present, until further arrangements are made, you will share a study with four boys named Figgins, or Wiggins—no, I think it is Higgins—and I forget the others; but I was assured by a very polite young gentleman named Monteith that they are nice boys."

Tom, however, had heard of Figgins and Co. Figgins, long and lanky; Wynn, short and stout; Kerr, canny and sandy—three of the best, were famous at the good old school as leaders of the New House juniors in their alarums and excursions against the School House! But Tom intended making his own arrangements.

"I am leaving the school now, Tommy," said Miss Priscilla, "so good-bye, sweetest boy."

Tom looked round nervously. Near by Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form, was arranging a column of Third and Fourth Form and Shell juniors preparatory to taking them for a nice country walk.

"Good-bye, nurse," said Tom Merry hastily—"good-bye!"

"You will not forget what I told you about always wearing flannel on your chest, and the hot-water bottle——"

"Yes, yes."

"If you take the cod-liver oil I have left for you every evening, a tablespoonful——"

"Yes; good-bye!"

"Pardon me, madam, but you are delaying us," said Mr. Lathom politely.

Perhaps he took pity on Tom, who was scarlet, while the rest of the column were giggling like lunatics.

"I beg your pardon, sir. Good-bye, dear Tommy!"

And, throwing her arms round Tom's neck, Miss Priscilla kissed him on the forehead, and at last he escaped.

Most of the juniors seemed to be in hysterics as they marched for the gate. Even Mr. Lathom was smiling, though he tried to keep a serious face.

Tom breathed more freely on the open road, safe from the attentions of his fond nurse.

"Oh, chase me!" murmured Blake. "Kiss me on my baby brow, and call me Angelina!"

Tom glared at him.

"Do you want a thick ear, Blake?"

"Silence there!" said Mr. Lathom. "Step out! Dear me, D'Arcy, what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, sir," said Arthur Augustus, looking surprised.

"Do you feel no pain? Look at your face!"

It was hardly possible for D'Arcy to look at his face, but he put up his hand and felt it, and the effect was startling.

The red ink Tom Merry had so liberally placed under the band inside his hat was oozing through, and it had begun to trickle down his forehead. D'Arcy had felt the dampness, and imagined it to be perspiration, as the day was warm. As he felt over his face to see what was the matter, he smothered the streams of red ink over his features.

Mr. Lathom was too short-sighted to see what the juniors saw at once, that it was red ink oozing out under the brim of D'Arcy's hat. He fixed a horrified gaze upon the boy.

"D'Arcy! This is terrible! Come here, let me examine your injury at once."

"But I am not injahed, sir!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Your head is bleeding terribly."

D'Arcy looked at his hand, which was crimsoned. He took off his hat and looked into it, and uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Some horrid beast's been sticking red ink into my hat!"

"Ink!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, greatly relieved, but very angry. "Who could have played such a trick? This must be inquired into at once!"

"My new hat!" bellowed D'Arcy. "It cost me a guinea!"

"His nice, new hat!" said Figgins. "Ha, ha, ha!"

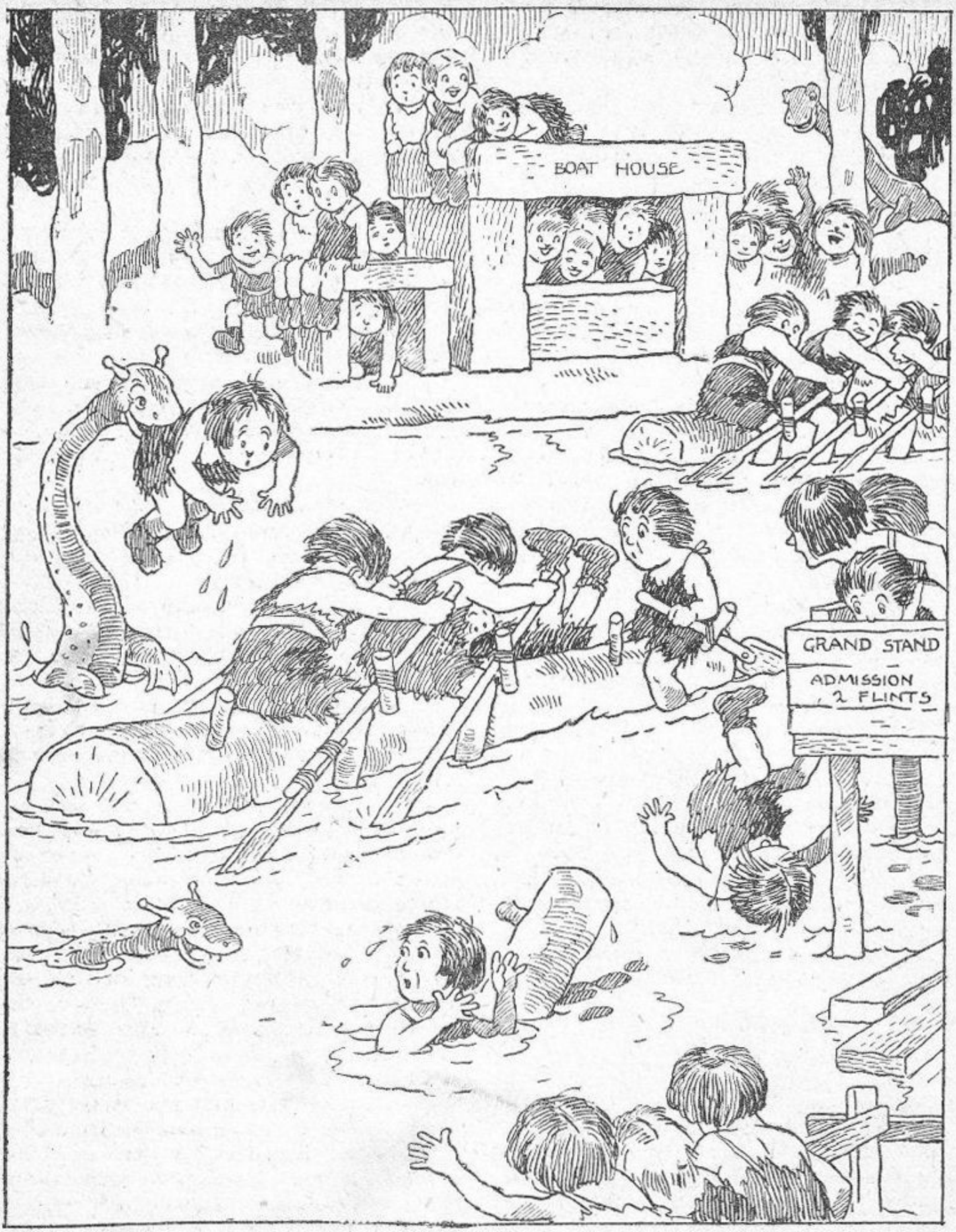
"Figgins, did you play this absurd trick upon D'Arcy?"

"I, sir? Oh, no, sir. I respect D'Arcy too much to play a trick upon him."

"Where did you leave your hat, D'Arcy?"

"It came down from London to-day!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "It was left in the box on my study table. Some beastly bounder——"

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL IN PREHISTORIC DAYS



AN EASY VICTORY FOR THE SIXTH FORM—THE FINISH OF THE ANNUAL BOAT RACE

"It must have been one of your study mates," said the master of the Form sternly. "Now, Blake, Herries, and Digby, you will each of you take fifty——"

"Pardon me, sir," said Tom Merry, with his best bow. "May I speak, sir!"

"Certainly, if you have anything to say connected with this matter."

"I happen to know who played that trick, sir, and I think I ought to tell you."

A hiss came from every boy within hearing.

"Sneak! Sneak!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, though he looked far from pleased. "Speak, Merry."

"Shall I tell you his name, sir?"

"You had better do so."

"I don't want to get him punished, sir."

"It would have been better if you had not spoken. Tale-bearing is not approved of in this school, Merry. I shall not punish the perpetrator of this practical joke, because I should not consider myself justified in doing so under the circumstances. Now you may tell me his name."

"Very well, sir. I did it."

There was a moment's silence, then the juniors howled with laughter. Mr. Lathom stared at Tom Merry for a moment, and then caught him by the ear.

"Hold on!" cried Tom. "You said you wouldn't punish me!"

"I said I—you—well, well." The master of the Fourth released Tom's ear. "I will keep my word, Merry, though you have certainly tricked me. D'Arcy, you may return to St. James's, and get that terrible mess cleaned off, and you had better go, too, Merry. Boys, march on."

And the afternoon's walk proceeded without Tom Merry or the swell of St. Jim's.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

The New Master

THE next day Tom Merry's box arrived from Clavering, and he was able to effect another change of clothing, which he very much needed. Clad in everyday raiment, he ceased to be the conspicuous object he had been on his first arrival at St. Jim's, but the juniors did not soon leave off chipping him. Tom Merry stood all that cheerfully.

On the following day Monty Lowther, and a good many of the Clavering boys, arrived. Tom Merry was glad to see his chums Lowther and Manners again. With little trouble, they managed to get put in the School House together, and they quickly fell into the new state of affairs.

"Study No. 6 are awfully decent fellows," Tom remarked to them; "but, of course, they have got to follow our lead. I fancy there will be ructions in time."

At the same time Blake was speaking on the same subject in Study No. 6.

"Tom Merry is an awfully decent chap, kids," said Blake; "but, of course, these new fellows will have to follow our lead. I shouldn't wonder if there were ructions to come."

On Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at St. Jim's, the three chums, Tom Merry, Monty Lowther and Harry Manners, decided to walk over to Rylcombe.

"We'll call in at the station," said Tom, "it's high time our bikes arrived. Perhaps they'll come on the afternoon train if they're not there already."

"I heard one of the chaps say that the new master for the Shell is due to arrive to-day," remarked Lowther, "Kidlet's going down to meet him."

The "Kidlets" referred to was their respected master, Mr. Kidd, of the School House. Unknown to the chums, he had noted the quickness with which the three Clavering fellows had found their feet at St. Jim's, and knew also that they were being already referred to as the Terrible Three. Others, too, had their eyes turned towards them with interest, for since the coming of Tom Merry to the school, Blake had been put upon his mettle to see that his laurels as leader of the School House juniors were not won from him.

"We'd better step out," said Manners, "it looks as though a storm were coming on."

The three chums reached Rylcombe and called in at the tuck-shop to regale themselves with cakes and lemonade, and then proceeded to the station. To their delight they found that their bicycles had arrived and were

waiting them, and an obliging porter wheeled them from the luggage room and obtained their receipt.

"Now, then, you chaps," said Tom Merry, "we can have a jolly good spin before going back to St. Jim's!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a low growl of thunder caused them to pause.

"Oh, come on," said Tom, "it isn't going to be much. We've time to get back, anyway."

Hardly, however, had they wheeled their bikes outside the station when the deluge burst. With almost tropical force the rain beat down and with the rain spattering upon them they beat a hasty retreat to the station to escape a thorough wetting.

"We'll have to wait now," said Lowther, "so we might as well be comfortable. Let's go into the waiting-room, where there's a fire."

"Yes," agreed Manners, "I'm nearly soaked as it is. Five minutes of it outside would about have drowned us!"

They propped their bikes against the wall and entered the waiting-room in which a small fire blazed cheerfully. As they stood chatting the faint whistle sounded in the distance, and two minutes later a train drew into the station. The rain was pelting down still, but the two or three passengers who alighted seemed to make for the exit, for no one entered the waiting-room. The Terrible Three were left in sole possession of the little fire, and they grouped round it, cheered and warmed by its influence. Not until the train had left the station and the last faint chugs had died away in the distance were they disturbed in their possession. Quick, nervous steps sounded outside and a stranger entered. He wore a travelling coat and cap, and carried a leather-strapped bag upon which were the initials "A. K." He was looking the reverse of amiable as he came in, and he threw himself on to the hard seat of the waiting-room with an air of annoyance.

"It's a pity people cannot be punctual in their engagements!" he muttered. Then, seeing the three St. Jim's juniors steaming away merrily before a fire, he rose and walked over to them.

"Stand aside from the fire!" he commanded. "I wish to see it!"

The Terrible Three stared hard. They did not like the look of the stranger at all. He had a hard face and little keen, grey eyes, that looked like flints, and very tight lips.

"Excuse me, sir," said Tom Merry politely, "but we got rather wet and are drying ourselves."

"Do you want me to box your ears, boy?"

"Not particularly."

"Then do not be impertinent. You should not be so careless as to become wet. If you were in my charge, I should cane you very severely. Stand aside!"

As Tom Merry did not move very quickly, the stranger pushed him roughly out of the way and settled himself comfortably with his legs outstretched and his back towards the fire.

"I didn't know pigs were allowed in here," said Monty Lowther to Tom.

The stranger bristled with fury and advanced threateningly on the speaker.

"You—you young pup!" he gasped. "I'll thrash you—I'll—I'll——"

But the rest of his remarks were lost, for Mr. Kidd, the master of the School House, strode into the waiting-room.

"Excuse me," he said, approaching the stranger. "Are you the new master of the Shell Form at St. Jamss's?"

"I am Mr. Keene," replied the man. "But I understood that someone from the school was to meet my train."

"I am sorry I am late," said Mr. Kidd, "but I was delayed unexpectedly. However, the trap is waiting outside, and I will drive you to the school."

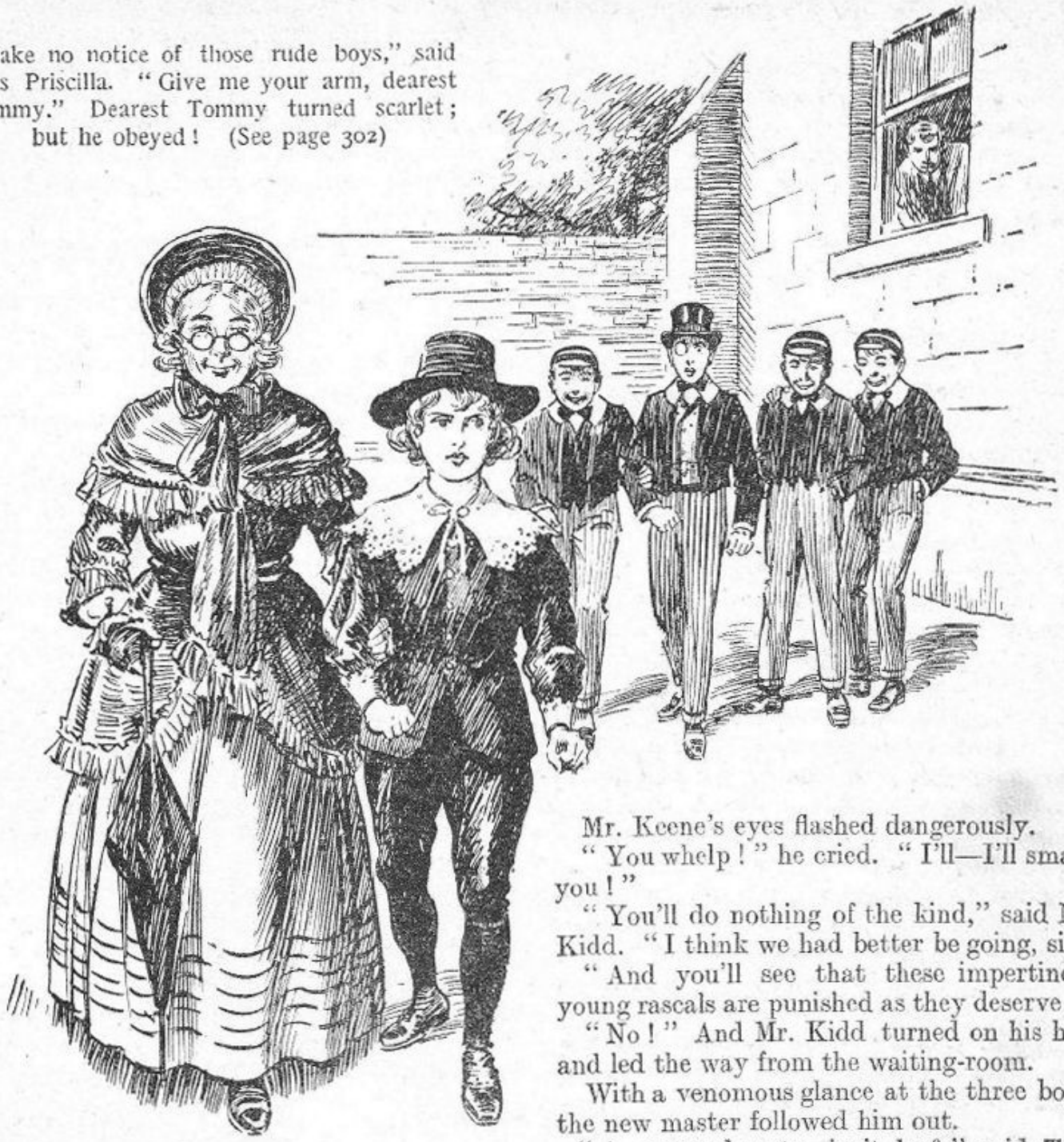
"Before I go," said Mr. Keene, "I should like to mention that these three lads, who are from the school apparently, have been grossly insulting me."

"Merry—Lowther—Manners! Impossible!

"Do you doubt my word, sir?"

"It—it seems so unbelievable," stammered Mr. Kidd. "It is true, I have known these boys but a very short time, but I would have sworn to their having the instincts of gentlemen."

"Nevertheless, these young pups insulted



"Take no notice of those rude boys," said Miss Priscilla. "Give me your arm, dearest Tommy." Dearest Tommy turned scarlet; but he obeyed! (See page 302)

me!" said the new master fiercely. "One of them actually called me a pig to my face!"

Mr. Kidd looked at the three chums.

"Merry, what explanation have you to offer?" he asked.

"We did not know he was the new master, sir," said Tom. "And we could not have guessed from the way he came in and pushed us out of the way and bagged the fire for himself. He acted like a pig, sir, and brought the remark upon himself."

Mr. Keene's eyes flashed dangerously.

"You whelp!" he cried. "I'll—I'll smash you!"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Kidd. "I think we had better be going, sir."

"And you'll see that these impertinent young rascals are punished as they deserve?"

"No!" And Mr. Kidd turned on his heel and led the way from the waiting-room.

With a venomous glance at the three boys, the new master followed him out.

"A pretty beauty, isn't he?" said Tom Merry. "Let's wait till he gets clear of the station, and then we'll bike back. The rain has stopped now."

"It's a rotten prospect having to put up with the beast in the Shell," said Lowther. "He'll have it in for us. Did you notice the queer way in which he looked at you when Kidlets mentioned our names? I suppose you've never met before?"

"Not to my knowledge," said Merry.

The encounter with the new master was

soon forgotten in the exhilarating ride back to the school, but they were soon to have cause to remember him again.

The new master at St. Jim's did not become popular. Boys are sometimes very keen, and the boys of St. Jim's did not take to Mr. Amos Keene, without knowing exactly why they did not like him, but at the same time quite, quite sure that they did not like him a little bit.

To the other masters he was very pleasant and suave, and he got along with them pretty well, except perhaps Mr. Kidd, the master of the School House. The House-master was always polite to Mr. Keene, but he did not like him.

The boys of the Shell disliked him from the top boy to the lowest. And the Fourth Form, whom he took in the English history class, disliked him equally.

Mr. Keene boarded in Mr. Kidd's house, and so the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 saw more of him than their fellow-formers in the New House. And the more they saw of him the less they liked him.

Mr. Keene did not go in for sports of any kind, for one thing. That was the head and the front of his offending in the first place. Then he was spiteful, and would sometimes rap knuckles with a ruler in a way that was exceedingly unpleasant to the recipients of those little favours. Whenever he imposed lines, he never forgot them afterwards, as some of the other masters did; and he imposed more than any other two masters in the school.

His nature was hard and cold, and such a nature was not likely to pull well with boys. It was noted from the first that he had a peculiar dislike for Tom Merry. It could not have been wholly due to the adventure in the railway waiting-room.

It seemed almost as if he had known Tom in the past, and had saved up a dislike for him, as it were. Yet, as far as Tom knew, he had never seen the man before he met him in Rylcombe.

There was, in fact, some slight smack of mystery about the new master, which probably added to his unpopularity.

One Saturday afternoon, a half-holiday, the Terrible Three arranged with the chums of Study No. 6 to go for a long spin on their bikes. The weather was glorious, and in high fettle they met Jack Blake and Co. in the quadrangle.

"Come on!" cried Tom. "Let's get the old jiggers from the shed and push off. We mustn't waste an afternoon like this!"

As he spoke the words, Mr. Keene crossed the quad towards them.

"Merry!"

The master of the Shell spoke in the hard, harsh tone he usually used in speaking to Tom Merry. Tom touched his cap.

"Yes, sir."

"I gave you an imposition this morning, I believe," said the master of the Shell.

"Yes, sir. A hundred lines from Virgil, sir," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Have you written them out?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Did I not tell you to do so before you left the school?"

"I—I believe you did, sir. I quite forgot."

Mr. Keene smiled sarcastically.

"Then you must learn not to forget, Merry. You will write them out and bring them to me before tea, and another hundred lines as well."

Tom looked dismayed, as well he might. The imposition would fill up every minute that was left of his half-holiday.

"Oh, I say, sir, wouldn't it do if I did them this evening? I——"

Mr. Keene glared at him.

"It would not do, Merry. When I say a thing I mean it. It would not do. You will bring me the two hundred lines before tea, or I shall double the imposition and report you to the Head."

"I will do them, sir," said Tom quietly, but with a glint in his eyes.

"You had better, Merry. If you forget again the consequences may be serious for you," said Mr. Keene, clicking his teeth.

And he walked out.

"The beast!" said Blake, looking at Tom sympathetically. "What has he got such a down on you, for Tommy?"

"Blessed if I know," said Tom. "He seemed to dislike me from the first. He gave me the impot. this morning for next to nothing. I

just whispered to old Manners. Fancy a hundred lines for that! Any other master wouldn't have given twenty."

"Keene is a beast," said Blake.

"Keene's a cad," said Manners.

"Keene's a rotten outsider!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "I wish we could get the brute kicked out of St. Jim's."

"I wish we could," said Tom with a sigh. "Well, I suppose I had better cut off and do that impot. I don't want to be reported to the Head."

"I'll come and help you," said Blake generously.

Tom shook his head.

"Thanks, Blake, that's good of you, but it's no go. Old Keene is as sharp as a needle. Monty did some of my lines for me yesterday, and he detected the difference in the handwriting at once, and he made me write out the whole imposition again, what I had done myself as well as what Monty had done."

"The horrid bounder! What a howling cad!"

"So I'd better cut off. Ta-ta!"

And Tom Merry went away to his study to work through the imposition. It was a long and hard one, and though Tom set to work with a will, the lines seemed endless before him. He commenced with the familiar "Arma virumque cano," and went on slowly through the first book of Virgil, weary of his task before it was half-over. Manners and Lowther came into the study while he was still hard at work.

"Nearly done, Tom?" asked Manners, looking over his shoulder.

Tom grunted.

"Another sixty to do," he replied.

"Then you'll never do it, old kid. The tea-bell goes in ten minutes."

"I shall have to take them in unfinished, then," said Tom. He finished the line he was doing and rose from his chair. "There will be a row, I expect."

"Try and soap him over," said Manners. "You mustn't have any more this evening. Blake is going to smuggle the parrot into his study, and he wants us to go there and help to teach him to talk."

"Not much good trying to soap over old Keene," said Tom; and he took up the lines he had written and went to the study of the master of the Shell with them.

Mr. Keene was there, and he looked up sharply as Tom came in, with his black, ferrety-looking eyes, that always had an unpleasant glint in them. He had been reading a letter, and he laid it on the table as Tom entered.

"Well, Merry, have you done your lines?" he asked pleasantly.

"I've done all I could, sir," said Tom respectfully. "I haven't had time to do the whole two hundred. I have been doing them ever since you spoke to me, sir"

"Indeed! It would have been better if you had not forgotten them in the first place, Merry, would it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have not finished them, then. Very good! Hold out your hand."

A deep flush came into Tom's face as the master of the Shell picked up a cane from the table. He had had it there all ready, evidently anticipating that the junior could not get the imposition finished in time.

"Hold out your hand, Merry."

"You are going to cane me, sir?"

"Yes, I am going to cane you," snapped Mr. Keene, savagely. "Hold out your hand."

Tom slowly held out his right hand. The cane came down upon it with a slash that made him wince.

"Now, the other."

A second slash made the left palm feel as if it had been burned.

"Now the right hand again."

Tom put his hands behind him, his eyes sparkling.

"You have no right to cane me like this!" he broke out, passionately. "If you touch me again I will complain to Mr. Kidd."

The master of the Shell stared at him for a moment, as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

"Merry!"

Tom did not speak, but his hands remained behind him, and his clear blue eyes met the master's steadily.

Mr. Keene seemed to be at a loss for a moment. He was inclined to take Tom by the collar and thrash him without mercy, but he felt that it would not do. Punishment was

rarely inflicted by the under-masters at St. Jim's; serious cases being dealt with by the Head himself. Mr. Keene had never looked for resistance, but he knew that if his conduct was made known to the House-master, he would find himself in trouble. And the new master was already not on the best of terms with Mr. Kidd.

There was an awkward pause. It was broken by an unlooked-for incident. The study window was open, and the wind at that moment blew the letter Mr. Keene had been reading off the table, and it fluttered to Tom Merry's feet.

Tom stooped to pick it up as a matter of course. The new master muttered something, and sprang forward to snatch it from him. To Tom's amazement, Mr. Keene's face had gone quite pale, and his eyes were startled, almost scared.

His hand knocked against Tom's, and the letter fell to the floor again. It was impossible for Tom to avoid seeing the writing then. It was a thick, black writing, which showed up heavily on the thin, foreign notepaper. It was a hand he knew!

He did not touch the letter again, but allowed Mr. Keene to pick it up. The new master thrust it hastily into his pocket. Then his ferrety eyes searched Tom's face.

Tom's look was startled, amazed.

Mr. Keene saw that he had seen the handwriting of the letter, and that he had recognised it. He bit his lip hard. Then, with a wave of his hand, he dismissed the boy.

Tom, glad enough to escape, hurried from the room, and hastened back to his study, where Lowther and Manners were waiting for him.

"Got off all right?" asked Manners. "Hallo, what's happened?"

Tom's startled look caught his attention.

"A giddy mystery," said Tom. "I don't know what to think. Keene was reading a letter when I went in. The wind blew it off the table, and I picked it up——"

"Nothing particular startling about that, that I can see."

"I saw the writing by accident, and I recognised it. It's the writing of my cousin, Philip Phipps, in India."

Manners and Lowther stared at him.

"You're dreaming!" exclaimed Manners. "What could your cousin want to write from India to a master at this school for?"

"I don't know; but I'm certain of what I say."

"Then it looks fishy," said Manners, shaking his head. "How do you get on with that cousin of yours—chummy?"

"I haven't seen him for years, but we never pulled very well together. He's ten years older than I am, you see, and not a bit like me."

"We said that Keene acted as if he knew something about you before he came to the school," said Manners, thoughtfully. "If he knows your cousin that would account for it. But why he should be down upon you, Tom, is a funny mystery. Hallo, there goes the tea-bell!"

The three hurried down to tea. The matter was certainly mysterious, but for the time they dismissed it. Amazed as they were, they did not dream of the strange developments that were to follow the coming of the new master to St. Jim's.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Midnight Excursion!

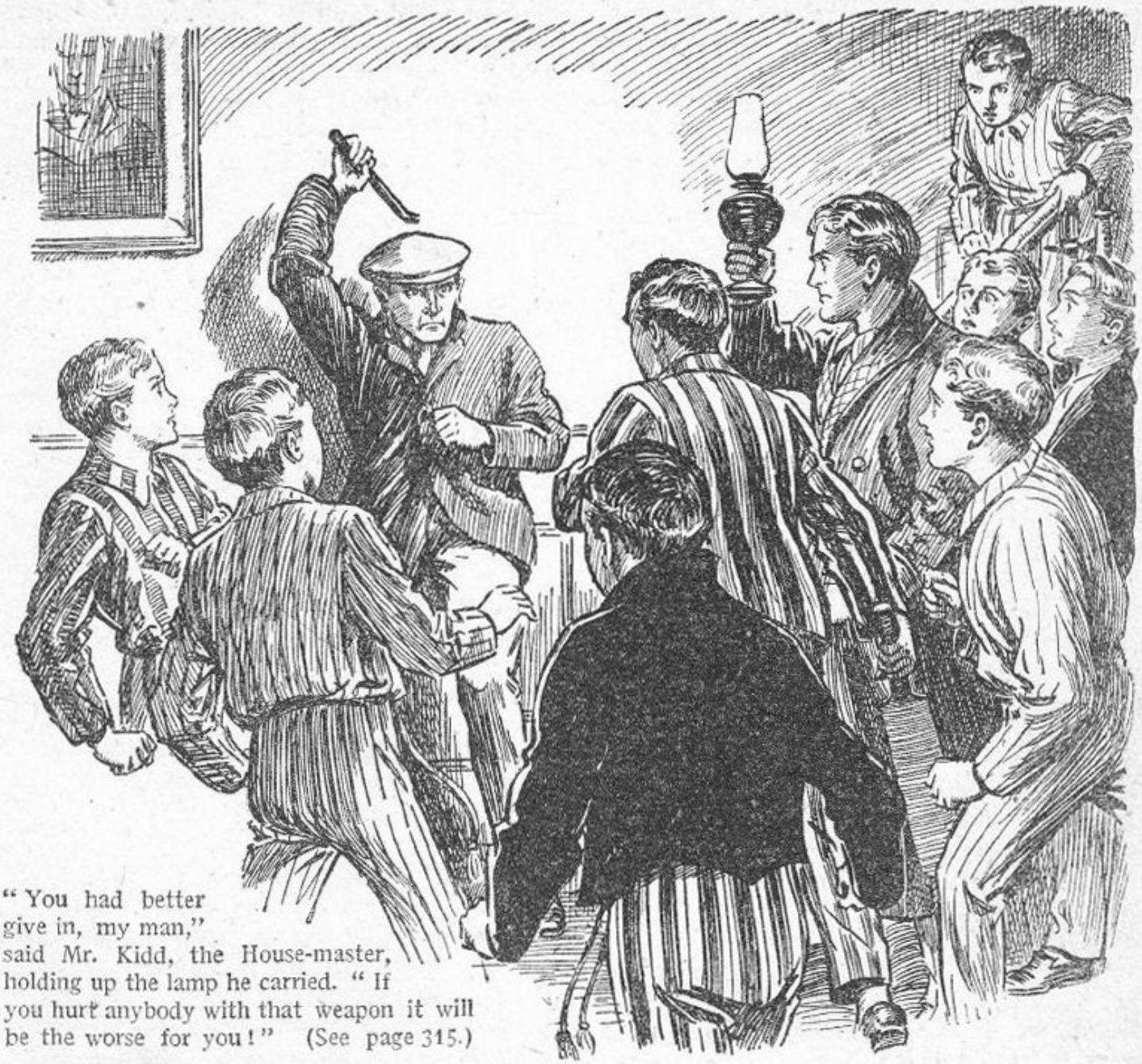
"HUSH!"

Tom Merry spoke in a low, cautious whisper. Still and silent lay the vast pile of St. Jim's. Upon the wide, green, quadrangle the moon glimmered faintly, and the old elms cast ghostly shadows. Within the School House the corridors were dark and gloomy, only from under one or two doors coming a gleam of light, showing where some "swotting" student still burned the midnight oil.

"Hush, you chaps! I believe I heard something!"

The three juniors stopped in the dark passage, still as mice, listening. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—known in St. Jim's as the Terrible Three—were on the warpath. The Fourth Form dormitory was the object of their midnight raid.

There the chums of Study No. 6 were sleeping the sleep of the just, little dreaming that their rivals for the leadership of the School House juniors were up and doing.



"You had better give in, my man," said Mr. Kidd, the House-master, holding up the lamp he carried. "If you hurt anybody with that weapon it will be the worse for you!" (See page 315.)

The Terrible Three had left their sleeping-quarters as the clock boomed out the hour from the tower of St. Jim's, and as the last stroke died away they stole silently down the shadowy passage towards the head of the stairs. It was then that Tom Merry suddenly called a halt.

The three chums listened breathlessly. The raid had been planned in the sunny afternoon, under the elm-trees in the quadrangle, and then it had seemed a ripping good idea to the Terrible Three. Now, in the still hour of night in the midst of a silent, sleeping building, it did not seem quite so ripping. They had hardly thought that the old, familiar house could seem so strange and ghostly and eerie. And Tom's whispered warning sent the hearts of his comrades beating and thumping like hammers.

"Wh-wh-what was it?" murmured Manners.

"I didn't hear anything," muttered Monty Lowther. "You're getting nervous, Tom."

"Shut up! I believe it's the new master moving about."

"Oh, crumbs! Mr. Keene?"

"What did you think you heard?" whispered Manners.

"A footstep."

"You must have been mistaken."

"I suppose so, for it seemed to come from the stairs. Come on!"

There was a glimmer of light in the hall below. The juniors did not need telling whence it came. It was evidently a glimmer from a partly unclosed dark-lantern. The three chums stopped still, their hearts beating hard. Who could be moving about in the school in the middle of the night with a dark-lantern?

"Wh-wh-wh-wh can it be?" muttered Lowther.

Tom pressed his arm.

"It's a burglar!"

Manners and Lowther shivered.

"A b-b-burglar!" muttered Manners. "Let's get back. We don't want to meet a b-b-burglar."

Tom held him fast as he would have retreated up the stairs.

They held their breath. Unfortunately, Monty Lowther had been holding his already, and he was beginning to feel suffocated. He held on as long as he could—as long as flesh and blood could stand the strain—and then gave vent to an involuntary but exceedingly noisy gasp. There was a muttered exclamation in the darkness.

"Diable!"

It was a foreigner with whom they had to deal. The next moment a groping hand in the gloom struck against them, and Tom Merry, realising that all was up, took his courage in both hands, as it were, and sprang at the unseen enemy.

The result was disastrous to the midnight intruder, and to Tom Merry as well. The impact sent the burglar reeling down the stairs, and Tom Merry went with him, and, clutching each other, they rolled to the bottom of the staircase. Tom was dazed and breathless when he reached the bottom, but he was still clinging to his foe.

"Help!" he shouted. "Help—help!"

"Help!" roared Manners and Lowther; and, caring nothing for danger now, they raced down the stairs to the assistance of their chum.

Their shouts rang through the School House.

"Diable!"

The burglar was struggling furiously with Tom Merry. Tom—strong and athletic as he was for his age—was, of course, a child in the hands of a grown man. He would have fared badly had not Lowther and Manners come tearing to the rescue.

The light was streaming on the dark stairs now from Mr. Keene's door in the corridor above. The new master of the Shell, aroused by the disturbance, had come hastily out of his room, and was looking down the stairs in amazement.

"Help!" shouted the Terrible Three in unison as they grappled with the burglar.

Mr. Keene came running downstairs. Other doors were opening now. Lights were flashing, and voices calling. The whole School House was roused by the terrible uproar in the middle of the night.

The burglar, with a powerful effort, wrenched himself loose from the chums, and staggered a few paces away. Encouraged by the help near at hand, the heroes of the Shell were springing upon him again, when he whipped an iron jemmy from his pocket, and his hand went up savagely to strike.

Tom Merry jumped back, dragging back his chums with him.

"Hold on, kids!"

They could not face a weapon like that. The burglar, exhausted by the struggle, reeled panting against the wall, his hand still upraised. Mr. Keene had reached the bottom of the stairs, and Mr. Kidd, the master of the School House, was upon the spot at the same moment.

Lights were gleaming on all sides, and the midnight intruder was cut off from escape by the window in the rear of the house by which he had entered. He stood like a wild animal at bay—gasping, defiant, desperate. He was not a pleasant object to look at. His face had been blackened with soot from forehead to chin, for purposes of disguise, and from the sooty blackness of his countenance his white teeth gleamed, bared like a savage dog's, and his eyes glittered with ferocity. Escape was cut off. He stood at bay.

On the stairs stood Mr. Keene, the master of the Shell, with a poker in his hand; and

behind him were a score of fellows in night-shirts and pyjamas.

Mr. Kidd, whose bedroom was a floor lower than Mr. Keene's, had come upon the scene even more quickly, with a dressing-gown hastily thrown round his athletic form. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was only a few moments behind him, and Kildare had caught up a cricket bat before leaving his room. After Kildare came Darrel, Rushden, and a dozen School House seniors. And from a Fourth Form dormitory, which was on the same floor, came a crowd of juniors. And, needless to say, Jack Blake and the chums of Study No. 6 were in the lead.

Like a wild beast surrounded by hounds and hunted to a corner, the grim-visaged ruffian stood glaring upon his foes, still with the weapon raised to strike any who should approach close to him, and there was a pause.

"You had better give in, my man," said Mr. Kidd, the House-master, holding up the lamp he carried and surveying the blackened face of the burglar. "If you hurt anybody with that weapon it will be the worse for you."

The ruffian snarled savagely, and gripped the jemmy tighter.

"Keep back!"

He spoke in English, with a nasal accent.

"You will not be allowed to escape," said the House-master calmly. "If you do not immediately surrender yourself you will be seized by force."

"I will kill whoever approaches me!"

"We shall see. Kildare, give me that bat, please. Mr. Keene, you and I between us can manage this rascal, I fancy. Boys, stand back!"

"I—I—— Yes, certainly," said Mr. Keene, in a strange, halting voice.

For the first time the burglar looked towards the master of the Shell. Amos Keene was pale as death, and there was a strange light in his eyes and his lips were twitching.

Those around him who noticed it put it down to "funk," and certainly the master of the Shell looked as if he were a prey to deadly fear. The man with the blackened face stared at Mr. Keene, and his eyes blazed.

"You!" he exclaimed. "You will lay a hand upon me!"

Mr. Keene made a step towards him.

"My good man," he said, in halting tones, "it will be the better for you if you surrender quietly. Don't be a fool. Give in, I advise you, and you will be all the better for it in the long run."

A strange look came into the ruffian's eyes.

"Come," said the House-master testily, "we have no time to waste, fellow. Make up your mind."

He took a grip on the cane handle of the bat. Jemmy or no jemmy, the burglar did not look as if he would have much chance against the athletic Mr. Kidd.

The jemmy went with a clang to the floor.

"I give in," growled the ruffian. "Diable! I am your prisoner."

"You are wise."

The next moment the man was pinioned by the House-master and Mr. Keene, one on each side. Mr. Kidd called for a rope, which was promptly brought by Jack Blake.

The House-master secured the ruffian's wrists.

"Shall I telephone for the police to come from Rylcombe, sir?" asked Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

Mr. Keene looked round hastily.

"It would be better to lock the man up in the box-room till morning, would it not, Mr. Kidd?" he asked quickly. "The police would not be here under an hour, and we do not wish to remain up for them."

The House-master nodded.

"Yes, he will be safe enough in the box-room. Show a light, Kildare, and we will take him there."

The burglar walked between the House-master and the master of the Shell without a word, a crowd following them. The man with the blackened face did not seem to be downcast by his capture. On the contrary, there was a jauntiness in his step, and an assured impudence in his look, which seemed strange enough to see in one in his situation.

The key of the box-room was turned upon him, and he was left to consider himself till morning there. The excitement was over, and the boys prepared to go back to bed to

discuss the startling happening rather than to return to the arms of Morpheus. Mr. Kidd signed to Tom Merry to stop.

"You were the one to give the alarm, I believe, Merry?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Did the burglar wake you up, Merry?"

"We were going to work off a surprise on Study No. 6, sir," said Tom Merry regretfully. "The game's up now, of course."

"I am glad to hear that," said Mr. Kidd grimly. "I shall excuse you upon this occasion, Merry, as the matter has turned out so fortunately. The next time you will not escape so easily. You may go back to your room."

"Thank you, sir."

Ere long silence and slumber reigned in the great school; but there were some who were wakeful. The captured burglar, shut up in the locked box-room; the master of the Shell, pacing his room with a white, haggard face and burning eyes; and four juniors in the Fourth Form dormitory, sitting on their beds and talking in low tones. Study No. 6 were wide awake as the school clock chimed out again. One good turn deserves another; and Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy thought so. The happenings of that eventful night were not yet over.

Jack Blake slipped off his bed as the clock chimed out.

"Are you ready, you chaps?"

"Rather!" said Herries and Digby together.

"Excuse me, I am not quite weady," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I cannot—aw—discovah my monocle. Pway wait for me, deah boys."

"Monocles are barred, ass," said Blake. "You may get a fist in your eye this journey, and then your giddy monocle will give you a pain. Don't be a sillier cuckoo than you can help, Adolphus!"

"You are wewy wude, Blake, and——"

"Shut up! Now, chaps, ready for the raid? I'm going to take a wet sponge with some red ink on it. I think that's what Tom Merry needs to improve his countenance, and that's what he's going to get, anyway. Perhaps he'll wish he hadn't started on the warpath, and started us innocent kids retaliating."

"Ha, ha! I shall take a stuffed stocking," said Herries.

"I've got a pillow," said Dig. "What have you got, Gussy?"

"I'm looking for my monocle," said D'Arcy, who was groping on the floor in the dark. "I am vewy wegwetful to diswegard your opinion, Blake, deah boy, but weally I cannot start on this expedition without my——"

"Then we'll leave you here," said Blake. "I'm getting fed up with you and your beastly monocle. You are going on exactly the right road to get a prize thick ear, Gussy! I'm warning you for your own good."

"Thanks vewy much, Blake. But I weally——"

The chums did not wait to hear D'Arcy's finish.

They left the dormitory, leaving Arthur Augustus still groping hopelessly in the dark for his beloved monocle.

Blake led the way with a light step.

The three juniors were grinning hugely in the dark. The Terrible Three had started out to raid them, and the unexpected incident of the burglar had sent them bootless home. But Blake could see no reason why the compliment should not be returned.

It would be a surprise for Tom Merry to be attacked in his own stronghold, and it would be one to Study No. 6 if they carried out the scheme successfully.

The School House was very dark and silent. To reach the stairs the chums had to pass the box-room where the captured burglar was locked in. As they drew near it Blake suddenly stopped, and his companions halted.

"Hold on!" whispered Jack.

The juniors "held on," wondering what was the matter.

"What is it?" whispered Dig. "Not another giddy burglar?"

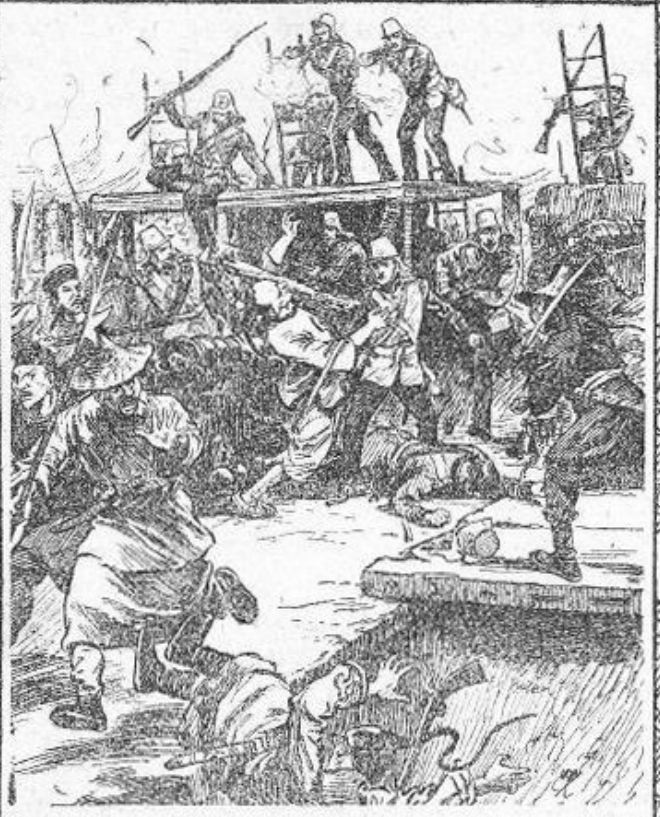
"There's someone on the stairs."

"I didn't hear anything."

"But I did," said Blake, in a low voice. "I tell you there's someone coming down."

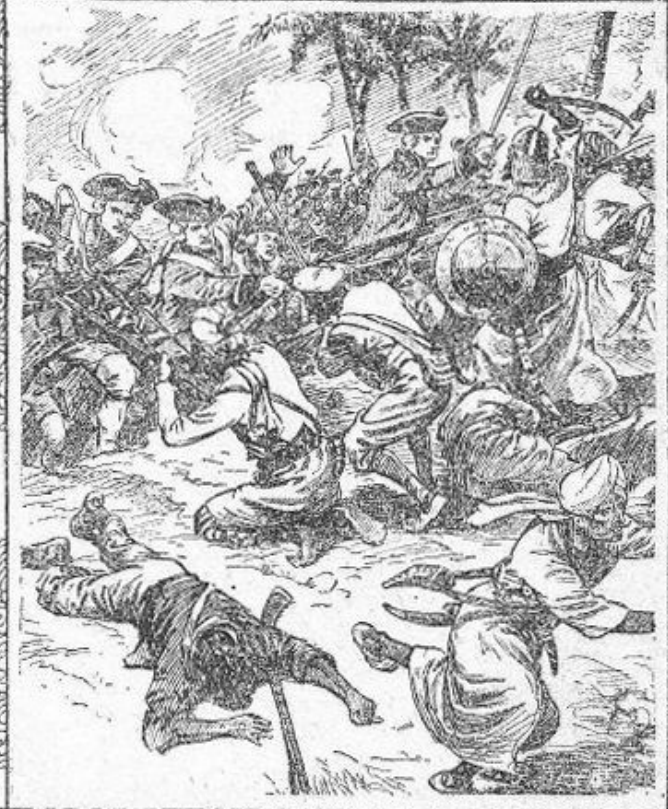
That it was a second burglar was extremely unlikely. But why should anybody belonging to St. Jim's go about the house at such an hour with such cautious tread, and without carrying a light?

Famous Fights for the Flag



The China War. The storming of the Taku Forts on August 21st, 1860. Drummer Phillips, of the 61st gallantly defending a wounded officer

The Battle of Doom Kop on May 29th, 1900. The Gordon Highlanders carrying an important Boer position. Bugler McAllister, saving the life of his captain



The Battle of Plassey on June 23rd, 1757. The British soldiers gallantly charging the enemy, which led to the final rout

The footsteps passed them, and stopped. The hearts of the juniors were beating with excitement as they realised that the unseen man had stopped at the door of the box-room.

Click!

It was the faintest of sounds, but sufficient to tell the breathless three that the door of the box-room had been unlocked from the outside.

Whoever the mysterious individual was, he was evidently there to visit the burglar!

It was mystery piled on mystery, and the chums were lost in wonder.

They dared not move, lest their presence should become known to the unseen man; they could only remain still, breathless, expectant?

There was a faint creak as the box-room door opened.

Then a whispering voice in the gloom:

"Lasalle!"

Blake gave a jump.

He knew that voice, though it spoke in a faint and trembling whisper,

It was the voice of Amos Keene!

The new master of the Shell—the mysterious new master at St. Jim's, whom, before this, the boys had been puzzled about by more than one strange circumstance!

Blake, in his excitement, gripped Digby's arm so hard that Dig was hard put to it not to gasp aloud. He gave Blake, as he supposed, a punch in the ribs as a hint to let go; but in the dark the punch alighted upon Herries's back, and the astonished Herries staggered against the wall.

"You silly cuckoo!" gasped Herries.

In the still silence of the night, Herries's words might have been heard half across the School House; and the new master was not much more than six or seven paces distant!

It was clear that Amos Keene had instantly taken the alarm.

There was not a second to lose.

What the consequences might be if the master of the Shell discovered their presence there, Blake did not know; but he knew they could not be pleasant.

He seized Herries and Digby each by the arm, and dashed away, dragging them with him, in a hurried, frantic flight.

"Who—who is there? Stop!"

It was the panting, frightened voice of the master of the Shell!

The juniors took no heed.

Their only thought was to get back to their dormitory and scuttle into bed before their identity could be discovered.

The three juniors fled down the passage and dashed into the Fourth Form dormitory. As they did so Blake collided violently with somebody and crashed to the floor. Staggering to his feet, he heard the voice of D'Arcy near by.

"You wuff bwute, you have bwoken my eyeglass!"

"Blow your old eyeglass!" growled Blake. "Nip into bed sharp!"

"You have hurt me."

Blake grasped D'Arcy and slammed him on his bed.

"Ass!" he whispered fiercely. "Cave! Old Keene's coming!"

The door of the dormitory opened.

Fortunately, even Arthur Augustus realised from Blake's tone that something unusual was afoot, and to the immense relief of the chums he said no more, but laid down and covered himself up.

A second later, Mr. Keene was looking into the dormitory.

He heard nothing but the steady breathing of sleepers, and the faint snores of some of the juniors. But that did not satisfy so old a bird as Amos Keene.

"Boys!"

It was a faint whisper, but clearly audible to the wakeful ones. Mr. Keene was in a difficult position, which might have troubled a man of stronger nerve. He had given himself away to somebody, he did not know whom. He did not know whether the boys he had almost captured were juniors or seniors, but he had come to the Fourth Form dormitory because most of the mischief on that floor proceeded from the Fourth.

"Boys, are any of you awake?"

No sound but a businesslike snore from Herries.

The master of the Shell waited a full minute, holding the handle of the door, straining his eyes into the gloom of the dormitory.

Then, baffled, he withdrew, and the door silently closed.

There was a faint creak as the master of the Shell stole quietly away down the passage.

For full five minutes the dormitory remained silent, the chums not moving or speaking, in order to make assurance doubly sure. Blake was the first who sat up in bed and spoke.

"That was a narrow shave, kids."

And even Blake's voice was a little shaky.

"A blessed mystery about this," said Herries. "What could Amos Keene want paying a visit to the burglar in the night?"

"Did you hear him call him by name?" said Blake.

"Yes; shows that he knew him."

"It's a giddy mystery," said Digby. "How could a master at St. Jim's know a burglar—and a French chap, too? Looks queer!"

"Anyway, one thing's a dead cert.," said Blake sagely, "if he discovers that we were the parties who found him visiting the burglar, he will be down on us like a hundred of bricks—and he's down on Study No. 6 as it is."

"Right-ho!"

"So mum's the word."

And this important point being settled, the chums went to sleep, without troubling to answer the curious inquiries of Arthur Augustus. As Blake said, the swell of the School House had been bother enough for one night. And they slept like tops till the unwelcome clang of the rising-bell called them up to a new day.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

The Escape!

Tom Merry seized Blake by the shoulder as he came down that morning.

"Have you heard?"

Blake stared at him.

"Heard what?"

"The news."

"What news?"

"The burglar's escaped!"

Blake gave a jump.

"Escaped! The chap in the box-room?"

"Yes."

"Is this a little game?" asked Blake suspiciously. "Has he really hooked it?"

"Honour bright," said Tom Merry. "All the fellows who are down are talking about it. I've looked into the box-room myself. Kidlets is looking quite worried."

"My hat!" said Blake. "So the man's gone, has he?"

"Yes, I tell you. And Kidlets 'phoned to the station before he knew, and the police are coming from Rylcombe to fetch him, and he isn't here!"

"That accounts——"

"Eh? What accounts? And for what?" asked Tom Merry.

"Nothing!" said Blake. "I'm going to have a squint at the box-room. I want to see with my own peepers how the bounder bounded."

Jack Blake hurried off to the box-room, with Tom Merry.

The news was certainly true. The room was vacant—so far as the burglar was concerned.

Two forms could be seen in it—those of Mr. Kidd and Inspector Skeet, the fat, pompous official from Rylcombe.

The inspector had just arrived, and was listening to the housemaster's explanation that the captured burglar had made his disappearance. A policeman was waiting below, jingling in his pocket the handcuffs that were no longer wanted.

"The man's gone!" said Mr. Kidd, looking very worried, as Blake peeped in at the open door. He had his back to the door, and did not notice the juniors in the passage. "I had not, of course, the faintest idea that such was the case when I telephoned to the station. It appeared impossible for him to get away."

The fat inspector wagged his head wisely.

"There's no telling what tricks these rascals will get up to!" he exclaimed. "I see that the window is open. Inference that he escaped that way."

"There is a blank wall below, and no means of descent," said Mr. Kidd testily. "He certainly was not able to do anything of the kind."

And Blake murmured, sotto voce:

"Then the inference is that he did not escape that way. Good old Sherlock Holmes!"

The inspector gnawed the end of his pencil.

"But I thought you said that the door was locked on the outside, Mr. Kidd?"

"That was the case."

"Yet the burglar escaped by the door?"

"Evidently, as he did not use the window."

"Unless he went up the chimney," murmured Tom Merry.

"Why doesn't the inspector track him up the giddy chimney? He might find footprints in the soot."

Mr. Kidd, whose face expressed a decided unbelief, strode from the room. The two juniors had nipped into the recess near at hand in time, and the housemaster passed without noticing that they were there. Blake was grinning.

"Let's watch Sherlock Holmes," he murmured. "It's really too funny. I wouldn't miss it for worlds."

They crept back to the door. The fat inspector was evidently bent on rivalling the famous Sherlock, for he was examining every corner of the box-room with a critical eye.

What he expected to find was a mystery; but, doubtless, material for some more notes in the fat pocket-book lying on the trunk.

He came towards the door at last, and the two juniors stepped quickly back into the recess. Mr. Skeet examined the lock and the key, and gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"Ah, the key has evidently been turned from the inside with a pair of pliers!" he muttered, loud enough for the juniors to hear.

"I can distinctly see the traces."

Blake doubled up with mirth.

"Here, shut up!" whispered Tom Merry. "You'll give us away."

"Oh, my only maiden Aunt Matilda!"

"What's the matter, ass? There's nothing funny in his finding traces on the key if the burglar chap turned it from inside."

"No, if he did; but he didn't."

"How do you know?"

"Because — he, he!—I was here — he, he! — and the door was unlocked from the outside — he, he, he!—and I saw it. He, he, he!"

And Blake seemed to be trying to tie himself up into a knot. Tom Merry shook him.

"Quiet! He'll hear you. Don't give it away."

Blake controlled himself with an effort. The inspector's deductions as to what had — or, rather, had not — taken place, and his triumphant discovery of traces that did not exist, proving the occurrence of something that had never happened, were excruciating, from the junior's point of view, and Blake deserved great credit for not exploding on the spot.

Having examined his examination of lock and key, the inspector passed down the passage, his eyes bent carefully on the linoleum. Tom Merry waited till he had turned a corner, and then he darted out of the recess and into the box-room. Blake was after him like a shot.

"Nearly done, Tom?" asked Manners, looking over his shoulder. Tom Merry grunted. "Another sixty to do," he replied. (See page 311.)

To face page 321

TOM MERRY'S GUARDIAN SAYS GOOD-BYE TO HER WARD

"Here, I say, what's the game, Tom?"

Tom Merry had opened the inspector's note-book, which lay on top of a trunk. He was busy with the inspector's official pencil. Blake glanced over his shoulder, and nearly gave a yell, for at the end of the imporant notes made by Mr. Skeet Tom Merry had written in big letters the following sentence:

"George Frederick Skeet is the champion ass!"

Tom closed the book again, and left it as he found it.

"Oh, you bounder!" gasped Blake. "Come on; we shall have to prove a fearfully strong alibi over this!"

They hurried from the box-room. In the alcove they hugged each other with silent mirth.

"Oh, my only Panama hat!" sobbed Blake. "I only want to see George Frederick's face when he opens his pocket-book again, and die!"

"Shut up! Here they come!"

There was a rustle of a gown in the passage. Dr. Holmes, the revered Head of St. Jim's, and Mr. Railton, his second master, were coming towards the box-room. They evidently expected to find the inspector there.

Mr. Railton, who had now taken up a position at St. Jim's, was a great object of interest to the School House lads, because there was a rumour that he was to become House-master when Mr. Kidd left.

The two gentlemen passed into the box room, and looked around them. The room was empty, save for the boxes, and the fat pocket-book lying upon one of them. Dr. Holmes glanced round over his gold pince-nez.

"I certainly understood from Mr. Kidd that Inspector Skeet was here."

"Here he is!" said Mr. Railton.

The fat inspector entered the room. The knees of his trousers looked rather dusty, as if he had been down on them looking for clues. No doubt he had.

"Good-morning, gentlemen! This is a bad business. I hope to lay the rascal by the heels shortly, however."

Dr. Holmes, who had had a previous experience of the inspector's ability in laying rascals by the heels, did not look too hopeful.

"Have you discovered anything more, inspector?" asked Mr. Railton, with a blandness which would have seemed suspicious to anyone less absolutely self-satisfied than George Frederick Skeet.

"Certainly," said the inspector. "After leaving this room the villain went down the passage, descended the lower stairs, and let himself out in the hall in the usual way. A trace of clay, evidently from his boots, I found here, and again in the hall just inside the front door."

"Splendid, inspector!" said Mr. Railton. "Few would have discovered that clue, especially as the hall has been swept this morning. To an untrained intellect it might have appeared that the fragment of clay was deposited there since the hall was swept, and, as you say, it shows the use of a detective force. You think, then, that you will find the man?"

"I hope so, sir. I haven't his description at present, but Mr. Kidd will give me that. I have made a few notes on the matter," continued the inspector. "Perhaps you would like to see them."

He picked up the pocket-book. Dr. Holmes was thinking of his breakfast, but he was nothing if not polite.

"Certainly, Mr. Skeet."

The inspector opened the pocket-book where the pencil marked the place, and handed it to the doctor.

"These notes relate to the circumstances of the happening last night," he explained. "I shall be glad if you will look at what is written there, and tell me if it is correct."

Dr. Holmes's face was amazed for a moment; then he burst into an involuntary laugh. He was reading—not the notes made by the official but the concluding note made by Tom Merry, and it struck him as funny.

Mr. Railton, who saw it at the same moment, could not help breaking into a chuckle.

The inspector stood very stiff and dignified. He knew that he was not admired at St. Jim's so much as he deserved, but he had never expected the two masters to actually smile when he presented his notes for inspection.

"I fail to see what can excite your risibility there, gentlemen," he said stiffly. "I only wish to know whether what is written there is correct."

"Indeed," said the doctor, "I hope not."

"I hope not, certainly!" echoed Mr. Railton.

The inspector stared at them in amazement.

"You hope not, gentlemen! I fail to understand you."

"Do you know what is written here, Mr. Skeet?"

"As I wrote it myself, sir, I can hardly fail to know."

"You wrote this yourself?" ejaculated Mr. Railton.

"Certainly!"

"Then I can only conclude that it is correct," said Mr. Railton, handing the inspector back the book.

Inspector Skeet, puzzled, glanced at the line written there under his notes:

"GEORGE FREDERICK SKEET IS THE CHAMPION ASS!"

He turned pale with wrath.

"What—who—which—— My notebook has been tampered with!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton.

"I never wrote that, sir."

"It is some trick of a junior, I suppose?" said Dr. Holmes, trying not to smile. "You must forgive it, inspector. Boys will be boys."

Mr. Skeet, with a countenance of a really beautiful crimson colour, was scratching away at the offending line with his pencil to obliterate it. He was bubbling over with wrath.

"It is a serious thing to tamper with the law!" he almost shouted. "I demand to know who——"

Tom Merry seized Blake by the arm and dragged him away.

"This is where we hook it," he murmured. "There's sure to be a row if we're seen. Some people don't like the truth being told 'em all of a sudden."

And the grinning juniors hurried away.

How Dr. Holmes succeeded in pacifying the angry inspector they did not know; but a little later he left St. Jim's, with the constable and the unused handcuffs—doubtless on the track of the escaped burglar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake laid themselves down in the passage and laughed till their ribs ached. The idea of Inspector Skeet showing Dr. Holmes what was written in his notebook, and asking him if it was correct, seemed too funny for words.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Hear us smile!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" echoed Tom Merry. "He, he, he!"

"Did you see old Skeet's face?"

"Yes. I spotted him through the crack behind the door."

"The champion ass! Ha, ha!"

"He wanted to know if it were correct.'

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"When you are quite finished, boys!" said a quiet voice.

Blake and Tom jumped up as if they had been electrified. Mr. Kidd, the House-master, was looking down at them with an expression he vainly tried to make severe.

"Well, Merry—well, Blake," said the House-master calmly, "you seem to have been immensely amused by something. May I share the joke?"

Tom Merry looked at Blake, and Blake looked at Tom Merry, but they could not find a word to say.

"Come," went on the House-master genially, "what is the joke, Merry?"

"The joke, sir?" stammered Tom Merry.

"Yes, I think I spoke plainly. Can it possibly have any relation to the incident Mr. Railton has just described to me, concerning Mr. Skeet's pocket-book?"

Tom Merry looked solemnly at Blake.

"Can it, Blake?" he asked.

"I was just about to ask you the question," replied Blake.

"It is very wrong," said Mr. Kidd, "to show impertinence to an officer of the law engaged in the zealous execution of his duty."

"Yes, sir," said Tom; "but—but we

For an instant Blake remained petrified with amazement. A man was springing at him from the trees with a cudgel upraised to strike him down. (See page 336)

couldn't help laughing, sir. His clues are so funny."

"Indeed! What do you know about his clues?"

Tom turned red; he had given himself away.

"We happened to be in the passage, sir," he murmured.

"Quite by chance, of course?" said Mr. Kidd. "I am afraid I can't allow these chances to go unpunished. You will take fifty lines each for happening to be in the passage when Mr. Skeet was working out his —er—clues."

"Yes, sir."

"And were it not for the fact that I overheard your words by accident, I should punish you for the trick upon Mr. Skeet's pocket-book," said the House-master. "Of course, as it is, I can take no notice of the matter. Go in to your breakfast, or there will be no time for you to have any before school."

"Yes, sir," said the delighted scamps; and they hurried away.

"Well out of that," said Tom Merry, thumping Blake on the back; "but you were a giddy goat to give yourself away!"

THIS is the seat of mighty brains,
Where many things are written
Which cause the most side-splitting pains
To girls and boys of Britain.
Here budding authors nobly strive,
For it is Wharton's sanctum;
Then blessings on the Famous Five!
I'm sure you've often thanked 'em!

They sit and burn the midnight oil
With faces bright and ruddy,
Though interruptions sometimes spoil
Their progress in the study.
Dick Penfold staggers in with verse
(Each poem is a winner);
And gentle Lonzy doth rehearse
"The Trials of a Sinner"!

The artful Bunter then rolls in:
This is a moment when you
At once snatch up a rolling-pin
And wipe him off the menu!
For Billy Bunter is a bore,
He's always in a poor way;
"I say, you fellows——" No word more,
He's flying through the doorway!

Of course, this study is the scene
Of countless celebrations;
And nothing infra dig. or mean
Attends these jubilations.
It is a ripping spot, by Jove,
Where all is bright and merry;
Within its walls I love to rove—
(Hear, hear, old chap!—Bob Cherry.)

"I?" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "Why, it was you!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry, changing the subject. "I say, I want you to tell me how you know the box-room door was unlocked from outside."

"All right; I'll tell you after school. Grub now!"

"There you are, then; go to the other kids," said Tom.

And he passed on to the Shell table, leaving Blake speechless with wrath.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Keene Makes a Discovery.

"MERRY! Blake!"

It was Kildare's voice. The captain of St. Jim's came along the passage.

"Hallo, Kildare!" said Tom. "What do you want?"

"You and Blake are wanted in the Head's study at once."

The two leaders of all the mischief that ever happened in the School House at St. Jim's looked at each other in dismay.

"I say, Kildare," exclaimed Blake, "I'm sure you're joking!"

"You won't find it a joke if you don't hurry up."

"Is the Head alone?"

"No. Mr. Kidd and Mr. Railton are with him."

"Have they—have they got any canes knocking about?" asked Blake diffidently.

"No," said the captain, laughing. "I don't think it's a punishment. Cut along!"

Considerably brightened up by this intelligence, the two juniors cut off as bidden, leaving Lowther and Manners wondering what the secret was which Blake had so nearly confided to them.

Inspector Skeet was perfectly satisfied that he had discovered the true ways and means of the burglar's mysterious escape from the box-room; but Dr. Holmes was not so sure about it. The Head of St. Jim's turned the matter over in his mind, and after morning school, when he was at leisure, he asked Mr. Kidd and Mr. Railton into his study, to compare notes with them on the subject.

"The inspector believes that the man got his hands loose, and then opened the door from inside by means of some instrument," the Head remarked. "What is your opinion, Mr. Kidd?"

"That he did nothing of the kind," replied the housemaster immediately.

"And yours, Railton?"

"The same as Mr. Kidd's."

"Then I agree with you both," said the Head, with a nod. "The traces which Inspector Skeet found upon the key he was determined to find there, because they were necessary to bear out the theory he had formed in his mind. It is pretty clear to me that the door was unlocked from outside in the usual way."

"My opinion exactly, sir," the housemaster agreed. "Mr. Skeet is too wise to see what is under his very nose. I did not suggest this thought to him, however, doubtless for the same reason that you remained silent."

"My reason," said the Head, "was that the inspector is too fond of fanciful theories, and if it had been suggested that someone belonging to St. Jim's opened the door of the box-room he might have begun theorising that the burglar had a confederate in the house."

"Exactly! It was our duty to call in the police, but not to furnish them with theories," the housemaster remarked. "I was glad to see Mr. Skeet too occupied to notice the staring facts of the case."

"And I, also," said Mr. Railton. "But I take it, Dr. Holmes, that the matter is not to rest here. It is a serious matter, and, though Inspector Skeet is happily out of it, the party who released the burglar ought to be discovered and punished in a fitting way."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I think so. I am certain that the door was opened for the burglar by somebody within St. Jim's, but after that I can say no more. The only possible explanation is that one of the boys was curious to see the burglar, and ventured into the box-room, or else was touched with compassion for him, and went there deliberately to release him. In either case, it is necessary to get at the truth. I have sent for the two boys who are likeliest to know something about the matter."

The other two masters smiled.

"Tom Merry is one of them, I presume?" Mr. Railton remarked.

"And Jack Blake the other," said Mr. Kidd.

"You are right."

Tap!

"Come in!" called out the doctor.

The two juniors entered the study. They were looking very innocent. Tom Merry especially really seeming as if butter could not possibly melt in his mouth. But the masters knew them too well to take much heed of that.

"Merry," said Dr. Holmes, "did you last night unlock the box-room door, and release the ruffian who was confined there?"

Tom's look showed his utter astonishment at the question.

"No, sir," he said immediately.

"Do you know any boy who did?"

"No, sir."

"Blake, was it you?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"And you do not know what boy was concerned in the matter?"

"No, sir," said Blake, with an inward sigh of relief at the form the question took.

Of course, he did not know for certain that the master of the Shell had released the imprisoned burglar, but everything pointed to that, and the junior could not help suspecting Mr. Keene. But he was far from wishing to give the master away on a suspicion, however strong and well founded.

But the Head of St. Jim's, of course, never dreamed that a master of the school could have done what he suspected the juniors of doing. Dr. Holmes looked puzzled. He knew both Merry and Blake too well to think that either of them would tell him a deliberate lie, yet he had fixed upon them first of all as the probable culprits.

"Understand me, boys," he said. "I think that the burglar did not escape without assistance, and I can only conclude that some very young boy released him, probably from a merciful motive. But I believe your word."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom. "It certainly never crossed my mind to set the man loose. He was too utter a ruffian for that."

"Very well; you may go."

And the two juniors departed.

"I don't understand this, gentlemen," said the doctor, with a shake of the head. "If a Lower Form boy of the School House had done as I suspect, it is not likely that it would long escape the knowledge, at least, of Merry and Blake, even if they had no hand in it. It must have been a junior who performed this foolish action; a senior would be more reflective. I am afraid we must give the matter up for the present."

And Mr. Railton and the House-master nodded assent.

Blake's face was very grave as he left the principal's study. He wondered whether he ought to have told Dr. Holmes of the strange happening of the night. Yet to make such a serious accusation against a man in Mr. Keene's position, and with such shadowy proofs to advance, would be a dangerous step. For, although he was certain that it was the master of the Shell who had passed him in the darkness, and whose voice he had heard whisper the name of "Lasalle" at the door of the box-room, he might not find it so easy to convince others on that point.

Mr. Keene would undoubtedly deny it all from beginning to end, and the possibility of a mistake in the dark, in a moment of high excitement, was great. In fact, it was possible that the Head would think that he had dreamed it all, rather than believe that a master of St. Jim's could be on terms of acquaintanceship with a member of the criminal classes, and the evidence of Manners and Lowther would be worth no more than his own.

It was undoubtedly wisest to keep silence, to say nothing of a boy's natural feeling against telling tales about anyone which would get the party told about into trouble. Yet Blake was not quite easy in his mind.

Tom Merry was not long in noticing that. He gave Blake more than one curious glance, but the junior did not speak.

"I say, Blake," exclaimed Tom, who was never long in coming to the point, "what have you got upon your chest? It isn't possible that—that——"

"That what?" said Blake, stopping in the passage and looking at him.

They were standing close to the corner of the corridor which led back into the school House, the principal's house at St. Jim's being only an adjunct of the more ancient building. Tom hesitated for a moment.

"Well," he said, "you are a cheeky kid, Blake, and you haven't a proper respect for a fellow in the Shell two months and seven days older than yourself—quite your senior, in fact—but I know you ain't the sort to tell a lie to the Head."

Blake placed his hand upon his heart and bowed.

"Many thanks, Master Merry; your perspicuity does you credit," he said solemnly.

Tom grinned.

"All the same," he went on, "you know something about this matter, and you feel that perhaps you ought to have told the Head. Now, I know you wouldn't tell a whopper, so I'm sure that it wasn't a junior who let the burglar out of the box-room."

"Quite right."

"But you know whom it was. That's what you were going to tell us, I suppose, when Kildare called us to come to the Head."

"Right again. But——"

"But you don't mean to say that it was a senior did such a silly trick? And—and what did you mean by mentioning Mr. Keene's name to us in connection with the matter?"

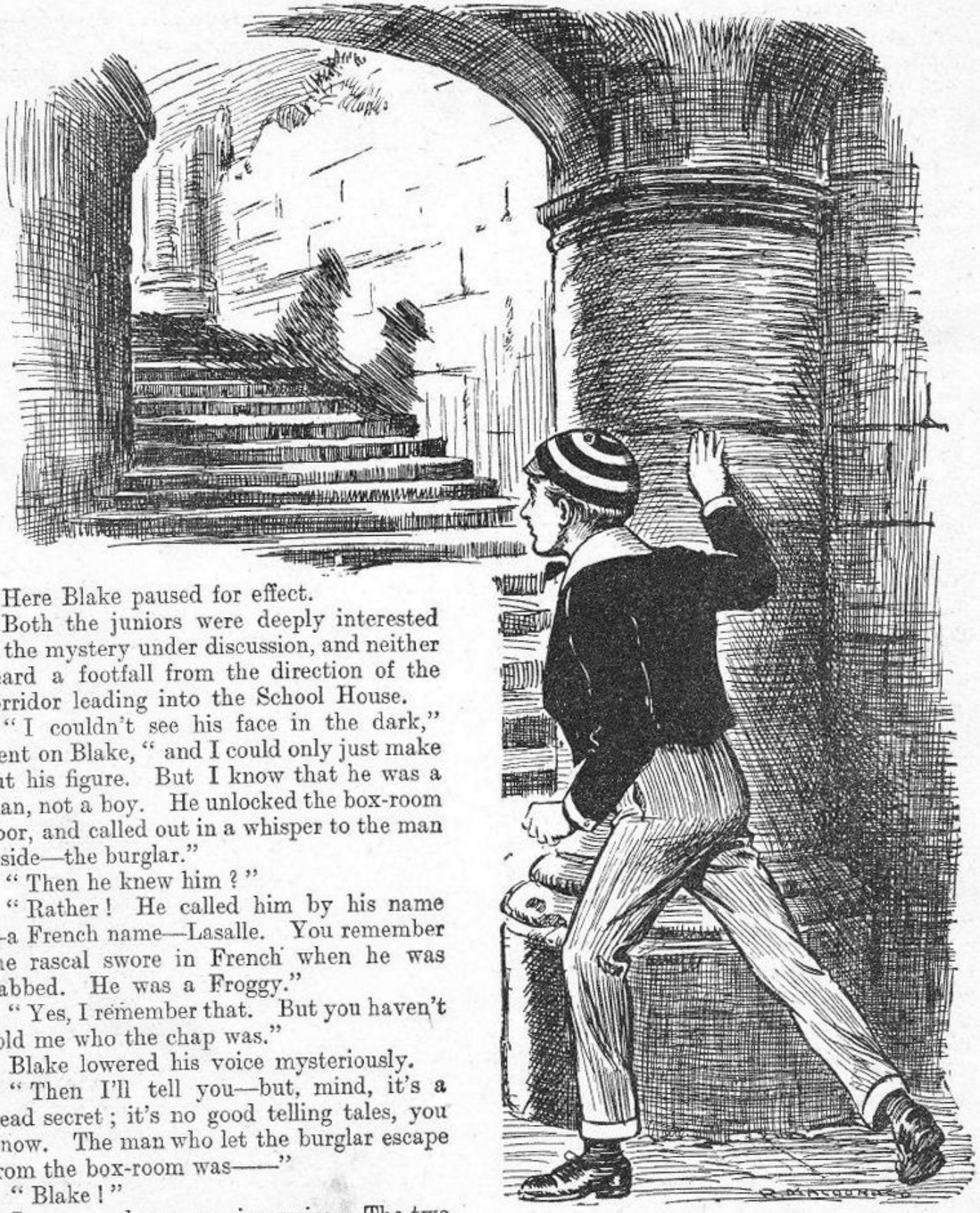
"There's no harm in telling you about it," said Blake thoughtfully. "It's a curious business altogether, and I can't get the hang of it, somehow. The Head asked me if I knew if any boy was mixed up in setting the burglar loose, and I told him I didn't. That was quite true. There wasn't any boy concerned in it. It was a man."

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom, deeply interested. "Go on!"

"It happened this way. After the alarm, we heard you say that you were coming to raid us, and we made up our minds to return the compliment—see?"

"Oh, you did, did you?" said Tom Merry, rather grimly.

"That's how it was. Herries and Dig and myself were coming towards the stairs, when we heard someone coming, and dodged into the alcove near the box-room."



Here Blake paused for effect.

Both the juniors were deeply interested in the mystery under discussion, and neither heard a footfall from the direction of the corridor leading into the School House.

"I couldn't see his face in the dark," went on Blake, "and I could only just make out his figure. But I know that he was a man, not a boy. He unlocked the box-room door, and called out in a whisper to the man inside—the burglar."

"Then he knew him?"

"Rather! He called him by his name—a French name—Lasalle. You remember the rascal swore in French when he was nabbed. He was a Froggy."

"Yes, I remember that. But you haven't told me who the chap was."

Blake lowered his voice mysteriously.

"Then I'll tell you—but, mind, it's a dead secret; it's no good telling tales, you know. The man who let the burglar escape from the box-room was——"

"Blake!"

It was a sharp, rapping voice. The two juniors started violently as Mr. Amos Keene, the master of the Shell, came from the side corridor, his face pale, and his eyes blazing.

Crouching on the stone steps below, Tom Merry felt a sickness of horror creep into his heart at something he detected in the tones of the master of the Shell. (See page 333)

Blake's heart gave a painful jump. He knew that the master of the Shell must have overheard his last words, and had purposely interrupted him in time to prevent the secret being told to Tom Merry.

He knew that Mr. Keene was now aware of the identity of the boy he had nearly caught in the corridor, and who had escaped. And Blake, in spite of his nerve, felt a thrill of uneasiness as he caught the savage blaze in the eyes of the master of the Shell. For a moment there was a tense pause. Mr. Keene looked as though he would spring upon the junior, and both Blake and Tom Merry placed themselves in an attitude of defence. But the master of the Shell controlled himself.

The drawn, tense look passed from his face, his hands unclenched. With a great effort he regained his calmness.

"Blake, what are you dawdling about the passages here for?" he exclaimed harshly. "You two boys, Merry and Blake, are always in mischief of some kind. Merry, I have given you an imposition for the afternoon. Go to your Form-room at once!"

"Mustn't I have any dinner, sir?" said Tom innocently.

He had been startled by the sudden appearance of his Form-master, but Tom Merry was never long in recovering his coolness.

Mr. Keene bit his lip. In his confusion of mind he had forgotten that.

"You may go to the dining-hall, Merry. Remember that you are detained for the whole afternoon, and if you finish the first book of Virgil before tea, you will commence on the second. Not a word. Go!"

Tom Merry, with a comical grimace at Blake, went. The master of the Shell fixed his eyes upon Blake, with a strange expression in them. He had been thinking rapidly.

"Blake, do you happen to be much occupied this afternoon?"

The change in his voice and manner astounded Blake. He had expected a punishment of some kind, for Mr. Keene was never at a loss to find an excuse for one. He would not have been surprised if the master had ordered him to remain in for the half-holiday, and set him some endless imposition to do.

"Occupied, sir?" repeated Blake. "There's the cricket practice, sir."

"Ah, and you do not want to miss that, Blake?"

"The School House will be meeting the New House soon, sir, in the junior house match," said Blake. "I'm in the School House junior eleven. A chap wants to keep fit."

"Then you would have no time to go over to Wayland for me?" said Mr. Keene. "I wanted someone to take a message there for me."

"Oh, yes, sir," said Blake. "I'll have a go at the nets after tea. I don't mind going a bit, sir."

Blake was always willing to oblige, and he had no objection to taking a stroll through the woods and along the leafy lanes to the country town.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Keene. "I will give you a pass to allow you to go out of bounds, Blake. Come to my study, and I will give you the message."

Blake followed the master of the Shell to his study. A suspicion had glimmered into the junior's mind. Mr. Keene had stopped him just when he was going to tell Tom Merry who had released the captured burglar the previous night. Mr. Keene knew that Blake had seen him in the act. Yet his manner was quiet and almost cordial.

What was this sudden message to Wayland invented for? Blake could not help thinking that it was an excuse to get him away from the school, so that the secret would yet remain untold.

When he came back it might be told, certainly; but this was just the device of a scared and startled man, weak of nerve, to gain time.

If Amos Keene had made a frank appeal to Blake then to say nothing about the occurrence, the junior would have given his word cheerfully, and kept it; but that was not Amos Keene's way.

He had never been kind to Blake, and the junior had only too much cause to dislike him. It would therefore have been difficult for Mr. Keene to ask a favour of the boy he had often bullied and punished, and he was of

too unscrupulous a nature himself to have much faith in the honour of others. If Blake had given his word he would have kept it through thick and thin; but Amos Keene would not have believed that.

The master of the Shell sat down at his table and wrote a note. He sealed it, and handed it to Blake. The juniors' dinner-bell was beginning to ring.

"You will take that to Wayland, Blake. Here is your pass. Give the note to Mr. Short, at the White Lion Hotel. Mr. Short is to make the catering arrangements on the day of the school sports," he added, in a tone of explanation, "and the Head has asked me to see to it."

"Yes, sir," said Blake, looking as stupid and wooden as he could.

Inwardly, he was more convinced than ever that the message was designed simply to get him away from the school for the afternoon.

"You will deliver it as quickly as possible," said Mr. Keene. "It is important. You need not get back to the school before tea. Come in by then, and it will be all right. You may go."

"The dinner-bell is ringing, sir," Blake ventured.

"You can dine at the hotel, Blake. I have mentioned it in my letter to Mr. Short."

"Certainly, sir."

"Now you may go. Stay! I will walk down to the gate with you."

"Yes, sir."

The master of the Shell put on his cap, and walked across the quadrangle with Blake. He stood at the gate, and watched the junior disappear into the wood down the lane. Then with slow steps he returned to the School House. Up the stairs he went, and into his study, where he locked the door, and as soon as the key was turned he seemed to break loose in an instant from the restraint he had been imposing upon himself.

The expression of calmness vanished from his face like a mask that is torn off, and his features seemed to grow old and thin and haggard in a moment. He paced his room with irregular strides

"So it was Blake!" He hissed out the words. "I was sure of it when I went into the Fourth Form dormitory last night and challenged any of the juniors who might be awake. I felt that it must be Blake. Now I know for certain."

He ground his teeth together.

"Was he alone? It seemed to me that there were others with him, but I could not see them in the dark. Perhaps I was mistaken. He has evidently not told the secret yet; but I was only just in time to stop him from telling it—and to Tom Merry!"

Amos Keene's face grew more lined and haggard. There was a weight upon his mind—a weight of guilt and fear.

"Blake knows enough to get me kicked out of St. Jim's—to ruin me at this school, and to prevent me from doing the work I came here to do. Then what have I to expect from Philip Phipps? I came here to carry out his plan in regard to his cousin, Tom Merry; and if I fail, it is not only that I lose the price of success, but I am at his mercy, and he will show me none. Only flight—the loss of everything—could save me."

He muttered the words feverishly.

"What shall I do? What can I do? Blake must be silenced, but how? I have put off the telling of the secret. I am safe for a few hours. But then he will speak; it will spread over the school, and I am ruined!"

The school clock chimed out and interrupted the meditations of the miserable, guilty man, restlessly pacing the room. He started.

"It is time I was gone." A blaze came into his eyes. "I must see Lasalle He has brought this danger upon me. Perhaps he can save me from it."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

The Plot Overheard

"'ARMA virumque cano,'" groaned Tom Merry, opening his Virgil at the old, familiar lines. "'Trojae qui primus ab oris——' Rats!"

Tom Merry was in for it. Lowther and Manners had offered, in the true spirit of friendship, to stay in with him; but, as Tom said, it was no good to spoil three half-holidays instead of one, and he would not let them

stay. Tom stepped on a desk near one of the windows, and looked out over the sunny quadrangle. He saw the form of Amos Keene cross to the gates and disappear.

"The bounder's gone out," muttered Tom. "Why shouldn't I go out, too? I've got an impot for nothing, and as I can't possibly finish it, what's the good of beginning?" He returned to his desk, and looked dubiously at his books. "He knew I couldn't do half of it, for that matter. It's only a mean excuse for rowing me. I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb; so here goes!"

He slung the foolscap one way and Virgil another. Then he put on his cap and walked out of the class-room.

As it was quite possible that Mr. Keene had asked some prefect to keep an eye on the detained boy, Tom Merry did not venture to linger in the quadrangle.

And so he passed out of the gates of St. Jim's, and crossed the stile down the lane into the wood before he stopped to reflect what he should do with himself for the afternoon.

He had noticed in passing that Figgins and Co. were not to be seen in the school grounds, and he remembered what Blake had said about the excursion planned by the New House juniors for that afternoon.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—the famous trio of the New House and the deadly rivals of the School House juniors—were doing things in style that afternoon.

They were having out a trap in Rylcombe for an afternoon's drive, and the thought crossed Tom Merry's mind of going down to the village and looking for a chance of taking a rise out of the ancient enemies of the School House of St. Jim's.

But he shook his head.

Figgins and Co. had doubtless started on their drive before this; and, anyway, it was not much use for a single fellow to go on the war-path against three, and one of those three the great Figgins!

"Where shall I go?" murmured Tom. "There's that old castle; I haven't explored that yet, and Blake was telling me a thrilling yarn the other day about a St. Jim's chap being kidnapped by a gipsy and kept a prisoner there once upon a time. Suppose I go and have a look at the place? I've got to keep off the grass round the school, that's certain, and it's no good hunting for Figgins and Co. I've got plenty of matches, and I could explore the vaults there all right, and see the place where D'Arcy was shoved by the gipsy."

It seemed about the best idea, and Tom Merry was not long in acting upon it.

He followed the footpath through the wood to the Castle Hill, upon the slopes of which the ruins of the ancient castle stood.

Suddenly he halted with a muttered exclamation.

He had caught sight of a figure on the path before him—a figure he knew. It was that of Mr. Amos Keene, the master of the Shell.

"Oh, my Aunt Maria!" murmured Tom. "What an awfully narrow shave! I might have run right into him. He's going to Woodford, I suppose. I'll go through the trees."

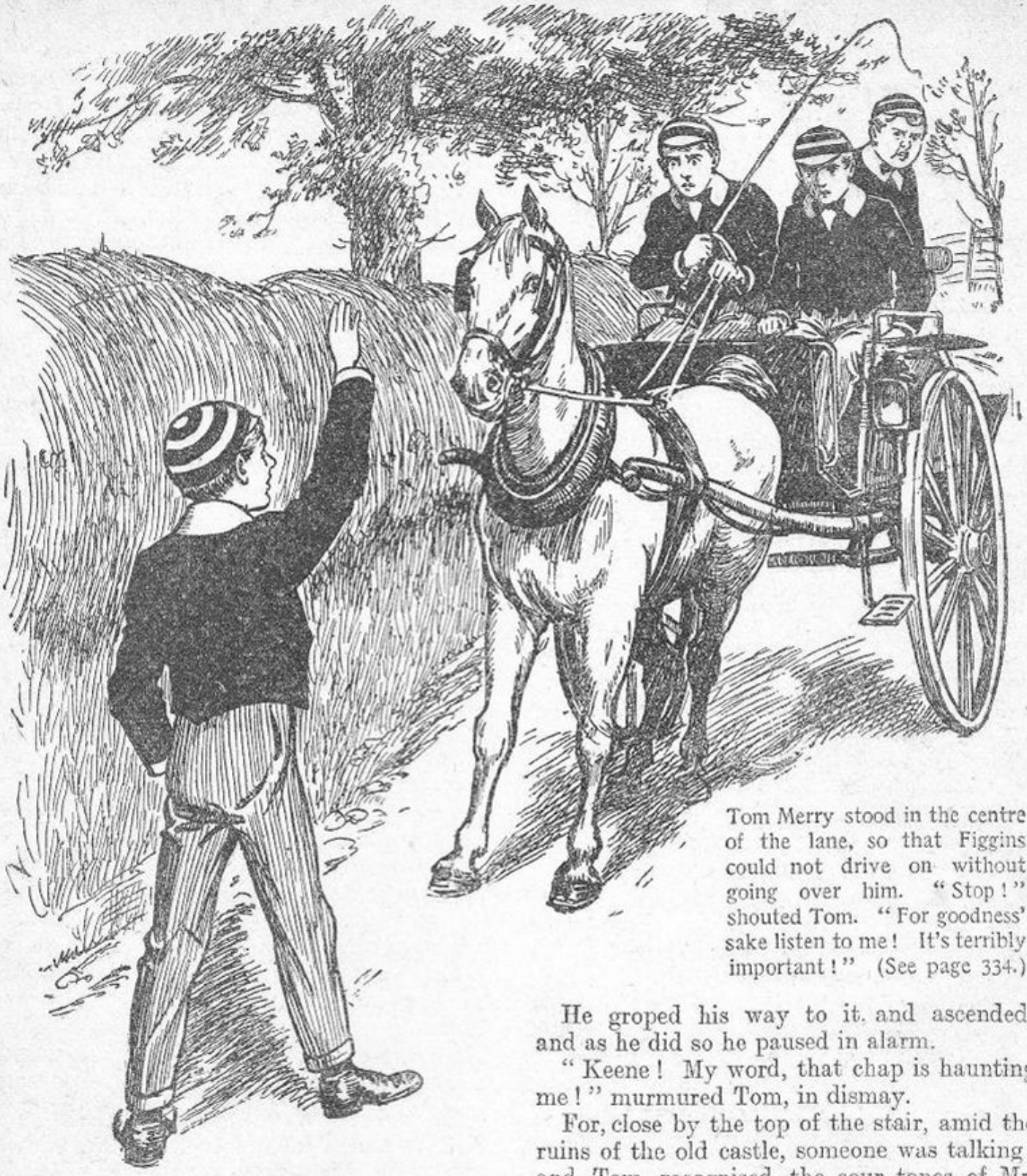
And the scamp of the Shell left the footpath and plunged into the wood. It was a pleasant walk under the old elms and beeches, amid the wood-ferns that grew waist high. Tom came out of the wood close to the old castle, at a considerable distance from the spot where the footpath entered the lane at the foot of the hill.

The ruins of the old castle were before him, and in a minute more the boy was inside the remains of the ancient building and picking his way among huge masses of fallen masonry and fragments of the ancient walls and windows, now open to the four winds of heaven.

"Jolly old place!" murmured Tom, looking round him. "I'd like to explore every inch of it; but awfully lonely. I wish old Manners and Lowther were here."

He stopped at the yawning gap in the stone flags which gave entrance to the stone stairs leading down to the vaults below the castle.

He stepped into the opening and descended the stair. The first turn of it plunged him into darkness, and he struck a wax vesta.



Tom Merry stood in the centre of the lane, so that Figgins could not drive on without going over him. "Stop!" shouted Tom. "For goodness' sake listen to me! It's terribly important!" (See page 334.)

He had a boxful of them, and did not spare the matches. Dark and gloomy looked the vaults, damp and eerie.

His last match went out, and, having had quite enough of the vaults, Tom turned back to the stairs that lead him to the upper regions.

He groped his way to it, and ascended, and as he did so he paused in alarm.

"Keene! My word, that chap is haunting me!" murmured Tom, in dismay.

For, close by the top of the stair, amid the ruins of the old castle, someone was talking; and Tom recognised the sour tones of Mr. Amos Keene, the master of the Shell!

Tom stood quite silent, in dismay.

To be caught by Mr. Keene, when the Form-master imagined him to be writing out his endless imposition in the class-room at St. Jim's, would have painful results for the truant junior.

THE SIGHTS OF GREYFRIARS

LITTLE SIDE

HISTORIC footer ground! the scene
Of many thrilling tussles;
Upon your level stretch of green
We exercise our muscles.
When dreary lessons have expired
We seek your verdant patches,
And there, in footer garb attired,
We play our merry matches!

St. Jim's have often figured here,
To lick us is their mission;
And round the touchline cheer on cheer
Has hailed their exhibition.
When Fatty Wynn is keeping goal,
How eager every one is!
It really is, upon my soul,
A sight for gods—and bunnies!

The Rookwood boys have also paid
Full many a rousing visit;
And often in the mud they've laid,
It's not surprising, is it?
For sometimes, Little Side, you cause
Confusion, slips, and muddles;
And then we like you not, because
You're just a sea of puddles!

Whatever happens, Little Side,
We cannot do without you;
Though on occasion, in our pride,
We feel we'd like to rout you.
Long may you flourish to behold
Our games so scientific!
We love you when you're neatly rolled,
When bumpy, you're "terrific"!

It was evidently his best plan to lie low, and remain hidden where he was until the coast was clear.

"Confound the man!" murmured Tom. "He seems to haunt me! I suppose he was coming to the castle, and not going to Woodford at all when I saw him in the wood. What on earth can he want here? He isn't the kind of chap to want to explore an old ruin, and—— My only aunt! Who's that he's talking to?"

Tom gave a violent start as he heard a second voice above him.

He had cause to be astonished.

"Diable! It is safe enough to meet here, I should think. Who could possibly see us? Besides, I could not be recognised now. Mon ami, you allow your fears to run away with you!"

Tom Merry knew that voice.

It was the voice of the Frenchman with whom he had struggled the night before; the voice of the burglar who had broken into the school in the still small hours!

The voice of the man who had so mysteriously escaped from the box-room in which the House-master had locked him for security!

What was the meaning of this meeting—evidently a secret one—between the master of the Shell and this escaped criminal in the lonely ruins of the old castle?

Tom Merry remained silent, lost in amazement and alarm.

The sharp, rapping voice of the master of the Shell replied to the remark made by the Frenchman.

"You should not have remained in this vicinity. You should never have come at all."

The other laughed slightly.

"My dear fellow, my appearance is so changed that I tell you no one could recognise me. You forget that my face was blacked last night, a complete disguise."

"I know it, but——"

"As for the rest, I did not know you were at the school when I came. How was I to know that my old friend had turned over a new leaf, and——"

"Confound you!" muttered Mr. Keene. "Leave all that unsaid. I am in no mood to

be mocked. The mischief is done now, anyway."

"True; and it is useless to recriminate. I had no idea that you were a master at St. Jim's, but had I known, I tell you frankly that it would have made no difference. I am in want of money; and this is my profession. It was different in the old days; my position was as good as yours is now, or better. We both made false steps; but the difference is that I was found out, and lost all, while you, somehow, bought the silence of the man who could have ruined you."

"And have been under his thumb ever since," exclaimed Mr. Keene hoarsely. "The slave of his will, to do as he chooses to order!"

"That is better than penal servitude, which was my fate," said the Frenchman. "You fared better than I did, though I acknowledge that almost any fate would be preferable to being under the thumb of a man like Philip Phipps."

Tom Merry gave a jump.

His cousin's name—on this man's lips! What did it mean? He knew that his cousin was in communication with Mr. Keene. The mystery was deepening.

"Hark!" exclaimed Amos Keene. "Did you hear anything?"

"No."

"I thought I heard a sound."

Tom Merry scarcely breathed.

He had made a slight sound, involuntarily, at the mention of his cousin's name; a sound that would have hardly alarmed a rat, but Mr. Keene's ears were those of a man in ceaseless fear, which nothing could escape.

The boy remained still as stone; he dared not venture to go down the steps again, for he knew that he would be heard. He almost held his breath, his heart beating hard.

To his relief the Frenchman broke into a mocking laugh.

"You are as nervous as an old woman, Keene! It was nothing!"

The master of the Shell drew a deep, quivering breath.

"I have been in terror since yesterday. As you know, I was seen to open the door of the box-room and release you. I did not know then by whom; I have heard since. It was a boy named Blake, and to-day I stopped him in the very act of telling the secret to Tom Merry."

"Ma foi!"

"That is what I wish to speak to you about," said Mr. Keene, lowering his voice involuntarily, though he did not think there was anyone to hear. "You have insisted upon meeting me here, Lasalle, and I knew what you wanted; and I am willing to pay you, if you can help me."

"Good! But what can I do? Nothing will still the boy's chattering tongue."

"Listen! I stopped the boy, as I told you, before he had time to tell the secret, and I have sent him away upon an excuse which will keep him from St. Jim's all the rest of the afternoon. The secret is safe for a few hours."

"But then?"

"He has gone from St. Jim's," went on the master, unheeding. "He has gone to Wayland, a town near here, and will come back by a footpath through the wood, the loneliest in the county."

Lasalle started.

And Tom Merry, crouching on the stone steps below, felt a sickness of horror creep into his heart at something he detected in the tones of the master of the Shell.

"And what then?" said the Frenchman.

"Upon his silence hangs my safety," said the master of the Shell, in low tones. "It is not only that I shall be ruined, but I am at St. Jim's to do the work of Philip Phipps. I need not explain how, and I shall suffer if I fail. Do you understand? If I go, he will think it is a trick to escape doing his bidding, and he will not spare me. I dare not leave the school, yet if this boy tells his secret I shall have no choice. He must not tell it, Lasalle."

"But you do not wish me to——"

"Fool! That will not be necessary!" muttered the master of the Shell, understanding the Frenchman's unspoken thought. "You remember what you did once—a blow behind the ear, and there was no memory left. Nothing more serious than that."

Hidden upon the stone steps, Tom Merry remained half frozen with horror.

He realised now that it would not only mean

a punishment, but danger, if he showed himself. The villain who was capable of this cowardly plot against Blake was capable of anything.

"I will do as you wish," said Lasalle. "I am in desperate need of money, and the task is not difficult. But, mark you, I must have fifty pounds."

"Then I will tell you of a spot which will be the best for your purpose, and leave you there. I must be at St. Jim's when it happens, to have an alibi ready proved in case of any suspicion. There is a spot where a plank crosses a pool, and if you remove the plank, Blake will have to stop, and then you can deal with him. Lose no time."

There was a sound of retreating footsteps, and then silence.

Tom Merry remained in suspense.

The master of the Shell was within a dozen paces, leaning against a fragment of wall, and smoking a cigar. His back was towards Tom.

The boy's heart beat painfully.

What was he to do? Already Lasalle was on his way to his dastardly work, and here was Tom cooped up, unable to fly to Blake's aid or to warn him. If he showed himself now he would have to deal with a desperate man, and that would not help Blake.

Would the villain never go? He looked out again. To his joy he saw that the master of the Shell had thrown away the stump of his cigar, and was walking out of the ruins. Tom barely waited till he was gone before he came up from the stone stairway.

Then, taking a different course from that followed by Mr. Keene, the boy quitted the ruins, and in a few minutes more found himself in the lane at the foot of the hill which led to Woodford and Wayland. There he paused in painful doubt and indecision.

He could race off to Wayland to warn Blake, but he might—possibly would—miss him. He could cut off to the scene of the ambush to help the junior when he was attacked, and doubtless arrive in time. Which should he do? What was the use of two juniors meeting the attack of an armed and desperate ruffian? Yet that was better than leaving Blake to his fate. If there were only help to be had? But the place was lonely, and the minutes were precious.

"Hallo, there! Get out of the way! Hallo, hallo!"

Tom Merry started and looked up. A trap was coming down the lane at full tilt, and the reins of the pony were held by the great Figgins, the chief of the New House juniors. Fatty Wynn and Kerr were with him in the trap, munching oranges.

"Hallo!" roared Figgins. "That you, Merry? Going to sleep standing up, like a giddy horse? What do you want to take a nap in the middle of a road for, fathead?"

Tom waved his hand.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Stop, Figgins, I want to speak to you."

"That's likely, you School House waster! Get out of the road, or we'll run over you."

"Stop!"

Tom stood in the centre of the lane, so that Figgins could not drive on without going over him. Figgins, whose threat, of course, was an empty one, dragged the pony to a halt.

"Here, hold these reins, Kerr!" he said wrathfully. "I'll teach that School House cad to stop me like this!"

And Figgins jumped out of the trap, looking very warlike.

"Now then, School House cad, come on!"

"Pax, Figgins, I——"

"Pax be blowed! I'm going to punch your head."

"Figgins! For goodness' sake listen to me. It's terribly important!"

Figgins for the first time noted the junior's strained, white face. His hands unclenched themselves immediately. The rival houses of St. Jim's were always on the war-path against one another, but at a serious time they could forget their little differences and pull together in a true, loyal, British way.

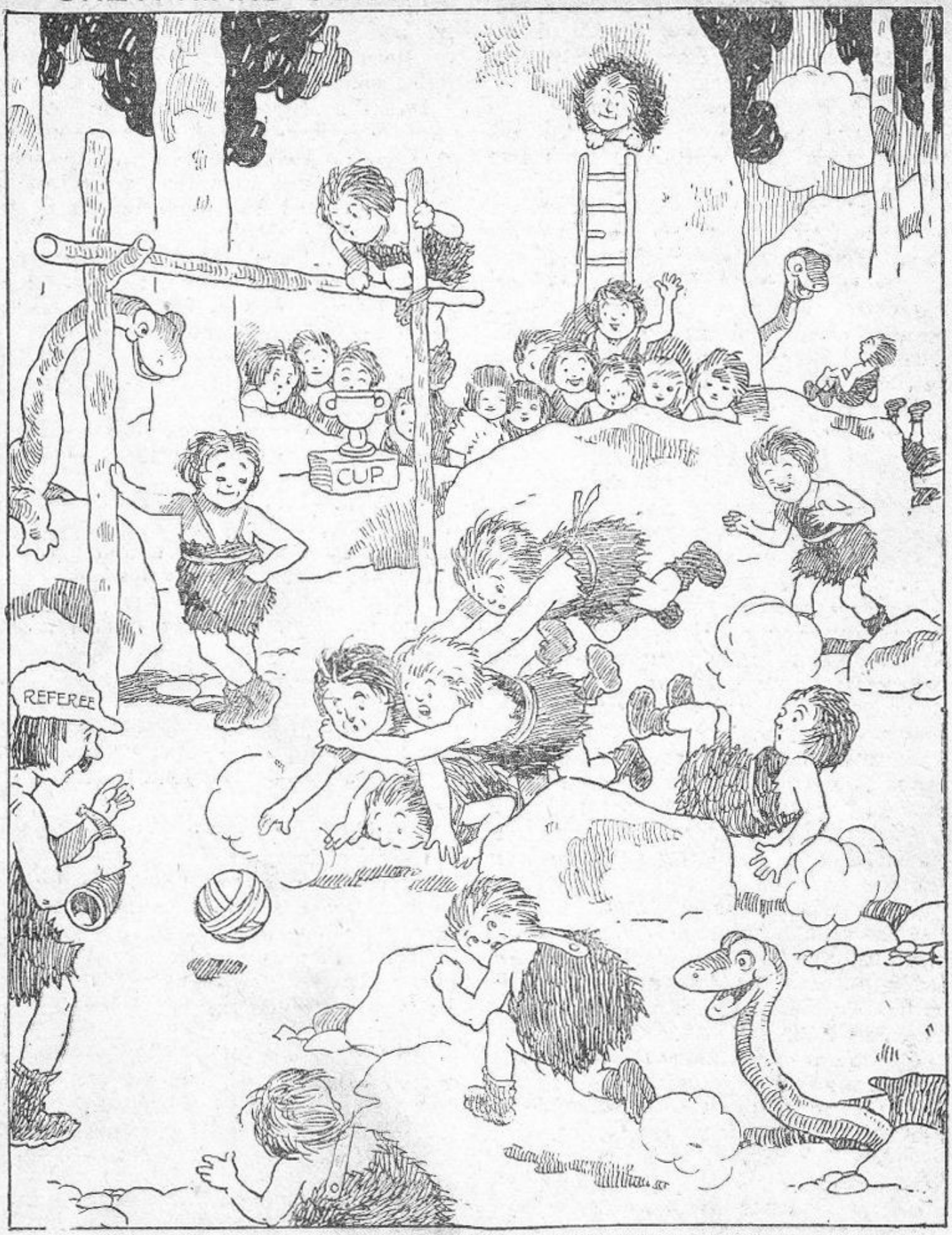
"What is it, Merry?" asked Figgins quickly. "Anything gone wrong? I was only rotting, old chap. What's the row?"

"It's Blake!" gasped Tom Merry. "He's in danger—horrible danger. Will you chaps help me to save him?"

"Will we?" said Figgins. "Well, rather! Where is he? What's the matter?"

"You know the plank over the pool, on

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL IN PREHISTORIC DAYS



THE FINAL FOR THE HEAD-MASTERS' CHALLENGE CUP—A GRIM STRUGGLE IN THE PENALTY AREA

the footpath through the woods from Wayland ?"

"Yes; I gave Blake a ducking there once."

"There's a scoundrel waiting there for him, to hurt him. It's the burglar who broke into the School House the other night. He's going to injure Blake; perhaps kill him. Never mind how I know. I am going to save him, or get served the same myself. Will you come ?"

"I—I say, Merry, you're not romancing, are you ?"

"Do I look as if I were romancing ?" cried Tom, in an agony of anxiety.

"No, you don't. Let me see," Figgins thought rapidly. "The trap will take us more than half the distance, and then we'll cut through the woods on foot. Jump in !"

Tom Merry nimbly followed Figgins into the trap.

Figgins took the reins again, and turned the vehicle in the lane, and set off at a spanking speed. And as they went, Tom hurriedly explained what he had overheard in the ruins.

The trap fairly flew, and the distance was covered in good time, and then the four juniors dismounted, and tied the pony to a tree beside the lane.

Then they plunged into the woods, led by Figgins, who knew every inch of the ground for miles around St. Jim's.

With Figgins and Tom Merry, two of the best junior sprinters at the school, in the lead, the rescuers dashed through the wood, Kerr close behind the leaders, and Fatty Wynn panting desperately in the rear. There was a sudden ringing through the wood.

"Help ! Help !"

Blake's voice !

Tom Merry and Figgins dashed madly on.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Capture !

JACK BLAKE came along the footpath from Wayland whistling cheerily.

The chief of Study No. 6 had delivered his message in the little country town, and hung about looking at the shops for some time, and after a pleasant afternoon he was returning to St. Jim's to arrive in time for tea.

He came down the footpath without a thought of danger.

He had been puzzled at Mr. Keene's sending him off, knowing well that the master's object was to gain time before the secret was told. What else might be in Mr. Keene's mind he did not guess; and he would never have dreamed of suspecting Mr. Keene of the black treachery of which he was really guilty.

In his little excursion, in fact, the junior had almost forgotten the matter, and he was thinking of anything but the master of the Shell and his secret as he came along whistling under the old beeches.

Even in broad daylight this footpath was dusky, overshadowed by the huge branches that interlaced above. Blake arrived at the pool which, spreading far under the trees, blocked the path, and was usually crossed by a long, wide plank.

"Hallo, hallo !" muttered Blake, stopping in dismay on the margin of the pool. "Some silly ass has shoved the plank into the water."

He looked across the pool in dismay.

The end of the plank, which should have rested on the margin, was plunged into the water, sunk deep in the mud below, five or six feet from the bank.

Blake was calculating the width of the pool, and wondering whether he could venture to attempt a clear jump of fifteen or sixteen feet, when there was a rustle in the foliage near him.

He looked round.

For an instant he remained petrified with amazement. A man was springing at him from the trees with a cudgel upraised to strike him down.

A moment more, and the blow fell, and few lads would have been quick enough to escape it. But Blake did not put in continual practice on the cricket field without learning to be quick and wary. He instinctively dodged, and darted away, and the cudgel swept the empty air a couple of feet from his head.

Lasalle—for, of course, the ruffian was he—turned upon the junior again with a snarl.

Blake, his heart beating like a hammer, for he could only imagine that he had a dangerous madman to deal with, fled at top speed, back the way he had come.

"Help! Help!" he shouted.

The next moment he caught his foot in a root trailing over the path, and went heavily down. Dazed by the fall, he struggled blindly to regain his feet, but before he could do so the Frenchman was upon him.

"Diable!" hissed Lasalle. "Did you think to escape me?"

He flung himself upon the junior, and Blake went down heavily again, with the ruffian's weight upon him.

"Help! Help!" he shrieked.

There came a crash in the wood—a crash of parting thickets.

"Buck up!" yelled Figgins. "St. Jim's to the rescue!"

He came out of the wood like a shot, and, without a thought of hesitation, hurled himself upon the Frenchman.

Lasalle went over backwards with a clutch upon his collar.

He struggled furiously, but before he could use his weapon Tom Merry had hold of his arm, and, twisting it savagely, forced him to drop the cudgel.

"Diable!"

The man fought like a wild cat. But Kerr came panting up, and piled himself upon him, and Blake, dazed and dizzy as he was, was not the fellow to be left out of a fight. He soon had a grip on the scoundrel. Last, but not least, Fatty Wynn arrived, panting and breathless, his fat figure quivering with his exertions, but as plucky as anybody. He plumped himself down on the Frenchman's head, and that settled it!

Fatty's weight would have settled almost anybody. The suffocating ruffian ceased to struggle, only wriggling painfully. Figgins giggled.

"That's right, Fatty! Sit on his head, the brute! We've got him!"

"G-r-r-r-r!" came from the Frenchman.

"Hold him tight! Give me your belt, Kerr, to fasten his wrists. Hurrah!"

Lasalle's wrists were soon secured. Powerful ruffian as he was, he had no chance against five determined and plucky juniors. His hands were fastened, and then his legs were shackled. Then they dragged him to his feet.

A torrent of oaths in his native tongue poured from his lips, but Figgins soon stopped that by picking a wet turf from the bank of the pool, and ramming it into his mouth, sending it well home with a thump. Lasalle stammered and spluttered frantically.

"Got him!" exclaimed Figgins jubilantly. "This is one up for the New House kids!"

"School House, you mean," said Tom Merry quickly. "Why—— But never mind. We won't row about that now. You've done jolly well this time, Figgy, and you're a decent sort."

"Thank you," said Figgy, with a bow. "We needn't quarrel about the glory. We've got the brute, anyway. Let's march him off to the trap, and drive him into Rylcombe to the police-station. They'll be glad to see him."

The prisoner's legs were left loose enough for him to shamble along in the grasp of the juniors. He was forced through the wood, and out into the lane where the trap was waiting. He was bundled into it, and then the jubilant boys drove off in triumph to Rylcombe.

It was rather a close fit in the trap, with the ruffian and the five juniors, but they managed it. Figgins drove, and they entered Rylcombe in great state, Kerr performing a selection upon his mouth-organ to attract the attention of the public.

Needless to say, they attracted attention, a huge crowd following the trap to the police-station, where the prisoner was delivered into the charge of the astounded Inspector Skeet, who was glad enough to get him, though amazed by the capture.

"Now for St. Jim's!" said Tom Merry. "And for Amos Keene! We had better tell Mr. Kidd first, and leave it to him whether Keene is arrested or not. We don't want to bring any disgrace upon St. Jim's if we can help it; but, in any case, our Form-master will have to go, and a jolly good riddance!"

It was dark when the juniors arrived at St. Jim's. They entered the School House quietly, not wishing to give the alarm to the master of the Shell, and went straight to Mr. Kidd's study. The housemaster was there, and he looked rather astonished when, in response to his cheery "Come in!" five juniors marched into his study.

He looked more astonished still when he heard what they had to tell him. He was at first inclined to be incredulous, but when he learned that Lasalle was a prisoner at Rylcombe police-station, he could no longer doubt.

"You may go back to the New House, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn," he said. "You have done very well, my lads—very well indeed. I am proud of you. Merry and Blake will come with me."

The New House juniors, pleased as Punch with the House-master's words of commendation, went back to their own house. Mr. Kidd, with a dark brow, signed to Tom and Blake to follow him, and went direct to the study of the master of the Shell.

"There's a high old time in store for the Keene bird, Tommy!" whispered Blake. "He deserves all he gets, but I don't envy him facing Kidlets just now—do you?"

"Rather not, Blake."

Mr. Kidd tapped at Mr. Keene's door, and entered. The juniors, at a sign from him, followed him into the room. The master of the Shell was there, apparently busily at work. The "alibi" would certainly have been an excellent one had the cowardly deed in the wood turned out as the schemer had designed.

Mr. Keene looked up as the House-master came in. His glance was simply inquiring at first; but when it passed Mr. Kidd and fell upon the two boys, a hideous greyness overspread his face.

There was Blake, well and strong, evidently none the worse for the ambuscade in the wood. He had escaped. And what did this visit to the study portend? Ruin, for all must be known now.

"I have a few words to say to you, Mr. Keene," said the House-master. "I have just learned a story that has amazed me, but which I cannot doubt. Were you the one who released the burglar from the box-room last night?"

"A very strange question to put to a man in my position, Mr. Kidd!" said the master of the Shell, trying to speak calmly. "I presume you are jesting?"

"Did you meet him at the ruined castle this afternoon?"

Amos Keene started violently

"Did you plot with him to waylay Jack Blake in the wood, and injure him so that he would be unable to bear witness against you?" went on the House-master remorselessly.

"Good heavens!"

"If you did, the best thing you can do is to make a clean breast of it, for your accomplice, the Frenchman Lasalle, is arrested, and all is known."

"Lasalle arrested?"

"Yes," said Mr. Kidd sternly. "Coward! Villain! Your plot was overheard by Tom Merry, and he, with the assistance of some juniors belonging to the New House, rescued Blake from the hands of your dastardly confederate. Lasalle is now in prison, to take his trial for burglary and murderous assault. I need not ask you if the tale is true. Your face tells me enough."

The master of the Shell gave a hunted look round. His glance fell upon Tom Merry again, and his eyes flashed.

"Listen!" he cried. "I came to St. Jim's with an object—a secret motive—and it concerns the safety of that boy. I can tell you what may save him from disaster—perhaps from death—as the price of my liberty!"

"I have no right to grant you liberty."

"Then Tom Merry is doomed! What I came here to achieve others can achieve, if I am sent to prison. Spare me, and I will tell all!"

The House-master hesitated.

"Come with me," he said briefly. "Merry, you may come also. It is for the Head to decide what shall be done. Blake, I can trust you to say nothing?"

"Certainly, sir!"

The House-master and Mr. Keene left the study. The latter walked with dragging steps, like a man upon whom old age had suddenly descended. The blow had crushed him. Tom Merry followed. The boy was amazed. Was the strange mystery which had surrounded the new master to be cleared up at last—that mysterious communication between Philip Phipps and the master of the Shell to be explained?

Dr. Holmes looked in surprise at his

The prisoner's legs were left loose enough for him to shamble along in the grasp of the victorious juniors! (See page 337)

visitors. He looked amazed when the housemaster, in a few clear, crisp sentences, explained his errand.

"Impossible!" gasped the Head. "Have the walls of St. Jim's sheltered such a scoundrel? The law must take its course. I would not interfere for the sake of such an utter villain, even if I had the power!"

"You have the power!" muttered Amos Keene huskily. "I ask only to be allowed an hour's interval to make my escape; and I can save Tom Merry!"

"What danger threatens this boy?"

"A danger I came here to bring upon him, which will threaten him till it overwhelms him unless I give you the warning, which is the price of my liberty."

There was a long pause, during which the

face of the exposed villain seemed to grow older, more haggard, as if years instead of minutes were passing.

"Speak!" said the doctor at length. "Speak, and if you are telling the truth, I will grant you what you ask. And Heaven forgive me if I do wrong! It will be in a good cause!"

The master of the Shell huskily cleared his throat.

"I was forced to come here by Philip Phipps, Tom Merry's cousin. I am in his power. It is years since I was concerned in a crime with Lasalle. The Frenchman went to penal servitude. It lay in Philip Phipps's power to send me also, but he forbore. He knew that he could make use of me. I need not tell you all that I have done at his bidding. I may be a villain. I am an angel of light beside him."

"My cousin!" murmured Tom Merry, pale to the lips.

"He made me come here. I was to plot against Tom Merry—to ill-use him as much as I could, to drive him into rebellion if possible, and obtain him a bad name in the school, then to fix upon him some disgraceful charge; and as soon as he was disgraced, driven in shame from the school, I was to have my reward."

"And why," said the Head, horror-stricken—"why was this cowardly, this dastardly plot formed against an innocent lad?"

"Because he is Philip Phipps's rival for a fortune; because General Merry, his uncle in India, intends to leave him the bulk of his wealth, and would cross his name out of his will to-morrow if he were convicted of being a coward or a thief. A fortune is at stake, and Philip Phipps has no scruples. He is supposed to be in India, but he is in England, and I have been under his thumb ever since I came to St. Jim's, acting under his orders. When I am gone, Tom Merry will still have him to fear. I swear that I have told you the truth. Have I earned my freedom?"

"Go!" said the Head slowly.

Without another word Amos Keene left the room, and five minutes later he had left the school, never to return.

"Merry," said the Head quietly, when the door had closed behind the departing scoundrel, "you have heard this story. How much truth there is in it I cannot say. I can only say that while you are at St. Jim's I shall watch over you with every care, and see that no harm comes to you from any enemy you may possess."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom.

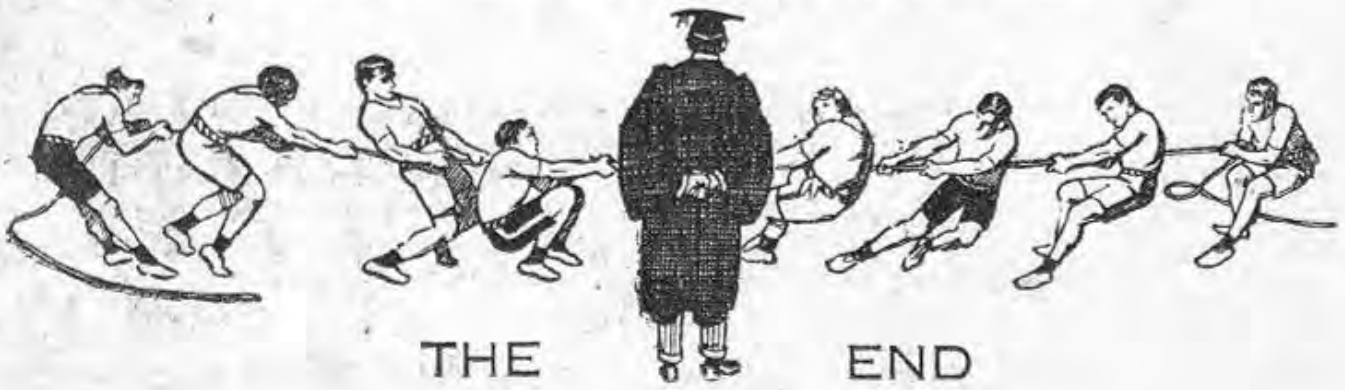
And he quietly left the study. His face was very sombre as he went. The master of the Shell's confession had cast a cloud even upon his sunny spirits; but in the passage he met Blake.

"Hallo! Down in the dumps?" exclaimed Blake, slapping him on the shoulder. "Buck up! I've come for you."

"What's on?"

"Figgins and Co. are giving a feast to celebrate the departure of our highly-respected new master, and we're all going. Lowther and Manners are waiting, and so are Study No. 6. So clear your noble countenance, and come and eat, drink, and be—Merry!"

And Tom laughed, and willingly enough went over the way with the little crowd of School House guests, to be hospitably received by Figgins and Co., and to have what the juniors afterwards correctly described as a real, ripping, high old time.



THE END

A NEW BOY'S LETTER TO HIS FATHER

* * * * *

"Dear Pater—I must write
a line
(A duty most unpleasant)
To hope that you are feeling fine,
As this child is at present.

I'm doing very well in class,
Especially at Euclid;
The fellows call me 'Silly ass!'
But I'm a clever new kid!

I'm settling down with might and main
To all the new conditions;
So far, I haven't had the cane,
But merely impositions.

My study-mates are Peter Todd,
Tom Dutton, and Alonzo;
And Bunter too, whose ways are odd,
(He always carries on so!)

Old Quelchy, with the gimlet eye,
Is my illustrious master;
I dare not cheek him on the sly,
Or I shall meet disaster.

Dear pater, I am stony broke,
For I have blued your fiver;
And now (don't treat it as a joke)
I haven't got a stiver!

So please despatch to me with speed
A rustling fat remittance,
That I may stand a study feed,
And grant my pals admittance.

Tell mater I'm quite warm enough,
The climate here would roast me,
So I sha'n't need the furs and stuff
She volunteered to post me.
I don't require the socks and ties
She threatened she would knit me;
But ripping cakes and apple-pies
Would absolutely fit me!

I hope your gout is not so bad,
Likewise your fits of ague;
I trust no further ills, dear dad,
Will pester you and plague you!

And now, not having more to say,
I'll end this long effusion;
Please send that fiver off to-day,
Or there will be confusion.

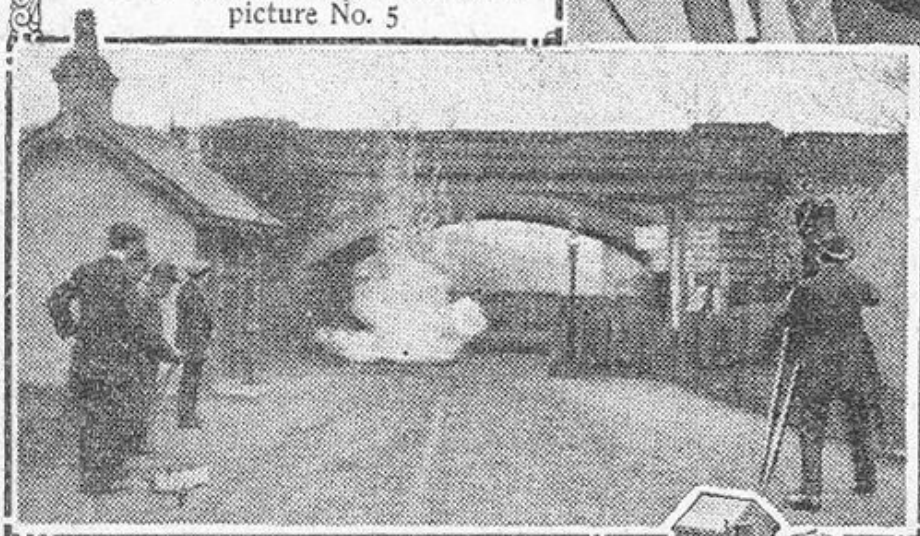
With kind regards to all I know,
And hoping they are bonny,
I now remain, for weal or woe,
Your own devoted
Johnny."

How a Picture Play is Made by a Producer

1. Fourteen days to make; fourteen minutes to burn! A complete model of an old-fashioned house, four feet six inches long

2. Making a model of a laboratory. See the sequel to this in picture No. 5

3. A producer and his operator in the act of photographing a film-play



4. Taking a bomb explosion near a railway bridge. A moment after this snapshot was taken the whole party present was deluged by débris from the explosion

5. In the act of filming the blowing up of a model laboratory

HOW A PICTURE PLAY IS MADE

An Interesting Article Dealing with Picture Play Makers A Few of Their Thrills, and Something About Their Lives Specially Written for the "Holiday Annual"

By A Well-Known Producer

How many readers who go to "the Pictures" have not at some time or other wondered "how this and that was done?" And, again, who has not thought that the life of a film actor, and others engaged in the making of "Pictures," must be a jolly one; what sport it must be to take part in the many daring feats so often seen on the screen?

There are now several film studios in this country, and frequently one has an opportunity of going behind the scenes and learning quite a great deal about the mysteries of the work.

Then, too, in the summer weather especially, it is not uncommon to meet a party of film-makers at work taking some exciting scene, such as that of a young hero jumping into a river to save someone who is *not* drowning; or a horseback chase of the villain; or, again, the rescue of a fair maiden from a burning building with much smoke issuing from the windows. But a great many others are not so fortunate, and have never seen a screen-play in the making.

It is true that when some important procession or similar event is taking place, the camera-man is often to be seen, perched up in some advantageous spot, turning away at the handle of his camera; but this to the fancy is commonplace in comparison with the "make believe" piece of sensation, or shall I say, the "real thing."

It must be apparent to the majority of picture-goers, however, that it would be very difficult, very expensive, or next to impossible to photograph the "true article" in some instances, and one often hears the remark: "Of course that was faked," or "Surely that was not a real house that was blown up?"

But "faking"—though the word is not quite a suitable one—has to be done very cleverly in these days of critical audiences, so that whilst watching a thrilling episode on the screen the beholder loses all idea of the artificial in the excitement he feels at following the action. It is only afterwards that he is curious to know how obvious difficulties were overcome in taking the picture.

Now, I am going to let out just a few secrets—not sufficient to spoil many illusions that every picture-goer would wish to retain—which, I hope, will be of interest to the reader, and help him to realise to what a great extent mechanical ingenuity enters into the production of some films, and whilst endeavouring to do this I will acquaint him with some idea of how a picture is made from start to finish, the troubles of the people responsible for the work, and also the good time they have on some occasions—the jolly trips to the seaside or mountains, or perhaps abroad, and the sporting element that exists—all going to counterbalance the strenuous time and real hard work that has to be done.

Before the actual production—and by "production" we mean "taking," not "showing"—is commenced, a scenario of the subject is prepared, describing the action scene by scene; each of these scenes is numbered from 1 upwards; in some films the scenes total 200 or more.

The sub-titles, inserts, letters, etc., are all written and noted in their proper places.

The scenario is then analysed, and a list made of all the numbers of scenes to take place in, say, the drawing-room, dining-room, office, street, railway station, or whatever rooms and backgrounds are required.

The interiors of rooms are generally built up in the studio, and are called "interior sets." The exterior scenes are mostly taken out of doors, the particular spots being termed "locations."

It is the duty of the producer, or stage manager, and the camera-man to hunt up and select the suitable spots or locations for the production before commencing the picture; it is also necessary in many instances to obtain permission for scenes to be enacted either in public places or on private property.

This work is frequently a very pleasurable one. Setting out in a car or motor-cycle, armed with a compass and a camera view-finder, the spot-hunters travel sometimes many miles, and spend many days in their quest for the best and most suitable bits of scenery or buildings, occasionally taking a snapshot, or making a sketch of the window or doorway of some house which they intend using to assist the scene builders at the studio to make a similar structure for the interior scene, which will possibly be taken before that taking place outside the house.

Notes are made of the places, the most suitable time of day to take the scene in order to obtain the best lighting effect, and any detail likely to be of later use. It has been my work to make some very elaborate drawings and interior photographs for this purpose in connection with important films, and very complete instructions are posted off at night to the scenic staff for carrying out their work.

Then it often happens that the producer has to obtain local colour, information regarding customs, dress, etc. It is sometimes necessary to find scenery in this country to represent far away lands.

I recollect on one occasion travelling by night train to a certain place in Cornwall. Not finding what I wanted I came back to London the following night, and went straight on to Yorkshire, and eventually found what was wanted in the North-east of England.

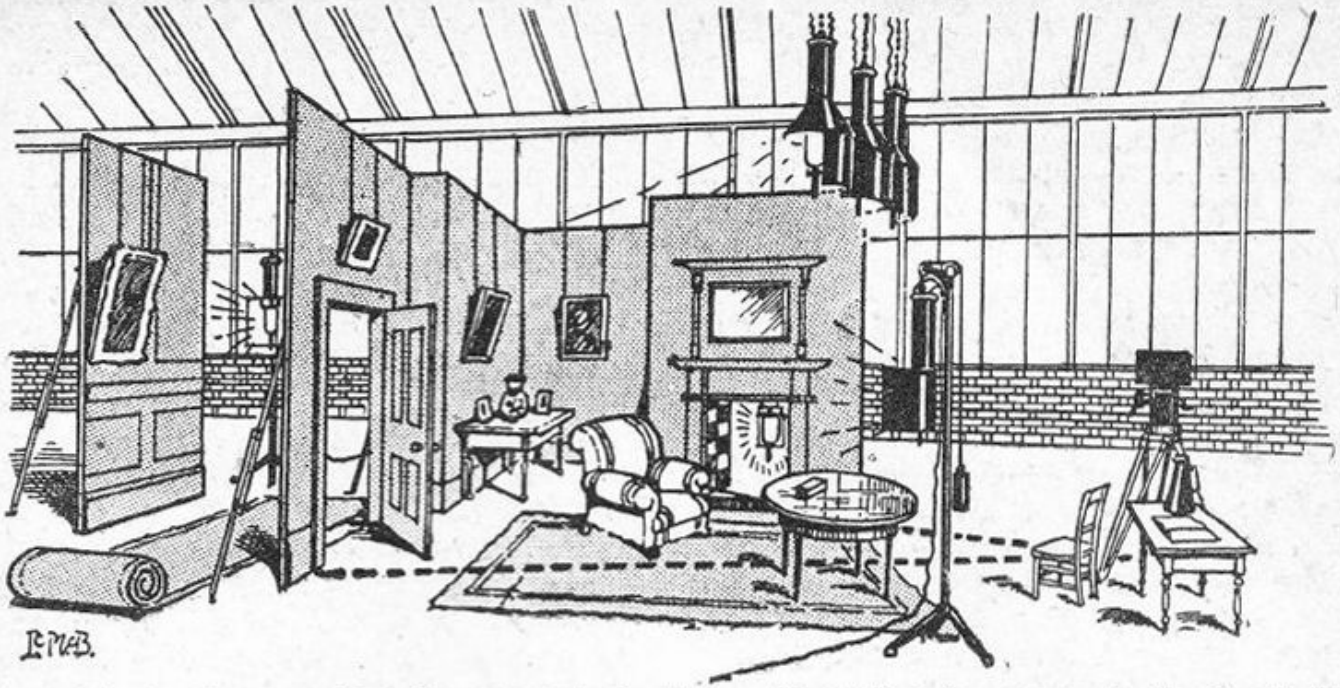
For another film it was necessary to find extensive sand dunes and a particular type of coastline, as well as snow-clad barren land representing Labrador. I discovered the former in Somerset, and the latter in Inverness-shire!

While this "spotting," as it is called, is being carried out, the carpenters and scenic artists at the studio are busy preparing the necessary sets—interiors of rooms, etc. These are usually made of 3-ply wood, and are in sections to simplify the erecting and "striking"—that is, taking down. They have to be very carefully painted, and a clever scenic artist will often deceive an expert, so realistic does his work appear. These rooms seldom contain more than three sides, the fourth side being left open for the camera view, the camera being a considerable distance from the back of the room in order to get the width, the furniture often being brought forward in an exaggerated fashion.

The actors having been selected and engaged, the costumes—if any—are hired, and also the necessary furniture, and the stage properties are prepared by the property-man. In due course everything is in readiness for commencing the work of production.

Now it will be a surprise to some to hear that the action in a picture is not usually photographed in the order that it appears on the screen. For instance, all those scenes taking place in the drawing-room may be done first; then those in the office and other rooms as the case may be. Later, all the outdoor scenes are taken, those in the roads, then say, those at the seashore. In fact, it is quite possible that the first scene taken will come in probably the third reel; sometimes the final scene of all in a picture is taken first.

It is the task of the producer—the man who is responsible for the whole work—to stand by the camera-man and tell the actors what to do, scene by scene, each scene separate from others and complete in itself. It is for him to bear in mind how these several actions will form the whole play when pieced together in the proper order and cut to the right length. An assistant makes detailed notes of the dress of each actor in every scene, so that if "Mr. Brown" enters the room



A sketch showing a small studio set ready for taking. The dotted line represents the view limits of the camera. The producer's table is by the camera

wearing a lounge suit, carrying a bowler hat in his left hand and a glove on his right hand, when perhaps a month later, the scene showing him entering the house is taken, he does not forget and wear a morning coat, silk hat, and a different glove on his left hand.

A very possible coincidence and a very probable one in the early days of cinematography when these little detail errors were very common, and had they not interfered greatly with the thrill of an exciting drama, would have been very funny and appreciated from the humorous point of view.

When the actors have rehearsed a particular scene to the satisfaction of the producer, and shown to him that they have grasped the situation and carried out the work in the specified time without "masking"—that is, getting one in front of another, the brilliant electric lights necessary for photography are switched on fully, and the camera-man at the word "go" commences to turn the handle of his camera, and the actors go through their parts. Very likely the scene is taken twice over in case of any mistakes that might have passed unnoticed, or in the event of a possible defect in the film itself—a contingency not beyond possible bounds—at the conclusion of which a slate is held in front of the camera bearing the words "2nd take" or "use this." When photographing an explosion, a cliff fall, a railway collision, or other scenes which of necessity could not easily be retaken, it is customary to have two, three, or more cameras at work simultaneously.

But to come to the point about those little dodges and devices which on occasion have to be resorted to in order to accomplish feats or present episodes which would be next to impossible to photograph in the ordinary way; the camera renders many natural impossibilities very possible photographically, and, at the same time, very interesting. First, then, supposing we wish to show a house on fire, or one being blown up. It is very difficult these days when there are not enough houses for people to live in, to get the owners of a building to allow a producer to burn or blow it up. Moreover, presuming that little difficulty were overcome, what an expensive matter it would be! How then is the problem solved? Simply enough. The property maker or modeller sets to work to make a small model, a replica of the real house which has already been used in taking

those scenes leading up to the fire or explosion. When this model is complete it is fixed on the ground or to a table, with a white or black curtain behind to represent a sky by day or night. This toy house would have to be well proportioned, but need be quite a small affair—say about 2 or 3 feet high, very likely less. In the case of it having to be destroyed by fire, some pains should be taken to build it on the lines of a real house, so that during the conflagration the rafters, window-sashes, etc., would be left burning and glowing after the tiles, glass, plaster, and other material had fallen in. A powerful electric lamp placed inside a well-made model house will give a very good night effect, a little piece of burning camphor at the bottom of a small tin chimney will also be useful for daytime view of the house, showing the chimney smoking. To fire the model is a simple matter, some old film, petrol or oil with some cotton-waste will readily catch, and effectively complete the work. In the case of an explosion a few gunpowder bombs, consisting of little bags of powder in which are placed pieces of thin fuse wire joining wires from a battery or an electric-light crircuit are put in two or three places in the model, and as soon as the camera handle is being turned a switch will allow the current to fire the gunpowder, and the work is complete. Naturally, the camera is placed quite near to the small model which in consequence appears quite big, and can be arranged to fill the whole picture-palace screen. Some models take a long while to make, and the constructor is very downhearted when the time comes for his handiwork to be destroyed.

Some time ago it was necessary during the production of a certain film to show a very old-fashioned sailing ship out at sea, and later to show it locked in Arctic ice; finally, the ice was to be seen breaking, and so liberating the ship. A little model about 4 inches long was constructed and photographed on the film, so that it appeared quite small but distinct about the middle of the picture, the part of the film underneath the ship was masked in the camera. The film was rewound after taking in this manner, and the operator took his camera to the seaside, and, having altered the position of the mask so that the top part of the picture—already taken—was covered and the underpart exposed, he then photographed on the original film the sea and waves breaking on the beach. This model was later used in the Arctic scene, the ice being flat pieces of plaster of Paris resting on a sheet of glass over black velvet—to represent water—the icebergs consisting of large lumps of washing soda. The ice floes were moved over the glass with the aid of pieces of black thread as was also the ship. The effect was very good, and obtained great applause at the first exhibition.

I designed the interior of a belfry containing eight bells. This was made of wood and entirely to scale, each bell being about six inches in diameter, and complete with beam wheel, etc. In order to get these bells to swing in proper fashion and order, it was necessary to construct an apparatus somewhat resembling a barrel-organ, the handle of which was turned while the camera was working.

How is it we sometimes see people walking or running exceedingly quickly on the screen, much faster, indeed, than would be humanly possible? The answer is simple: the camera handle is turned more slowly than usually, that is all! This is why sometimes two motor-cars collide at apparently high speed without really killing the occupants. To explain this problem we have only to realise that pictures are taken at the rate of sixteen each second, and projected on the screen at this same speed.

Suppose a man walks two yards in a second, then sixteen pictures are taken while he completes that distance. Now we will turn the camera handle more slowly so that only eight pictures are taken in one second—the time he takes to walk two yards. But as the picture-palace lantern always projects at the rate of sixteen pictures per second, the man will have apparently completed two yards in half a second; that is to say, the man will appear to walk at the rate of four yards a second or twice as fast as he actually did.

When we see a man jump backwards on to a wall, or from the sea to a cliff top, it simply

means that the direction of the film in the camera was reversed while the man was jumping off the wall or into the sea.

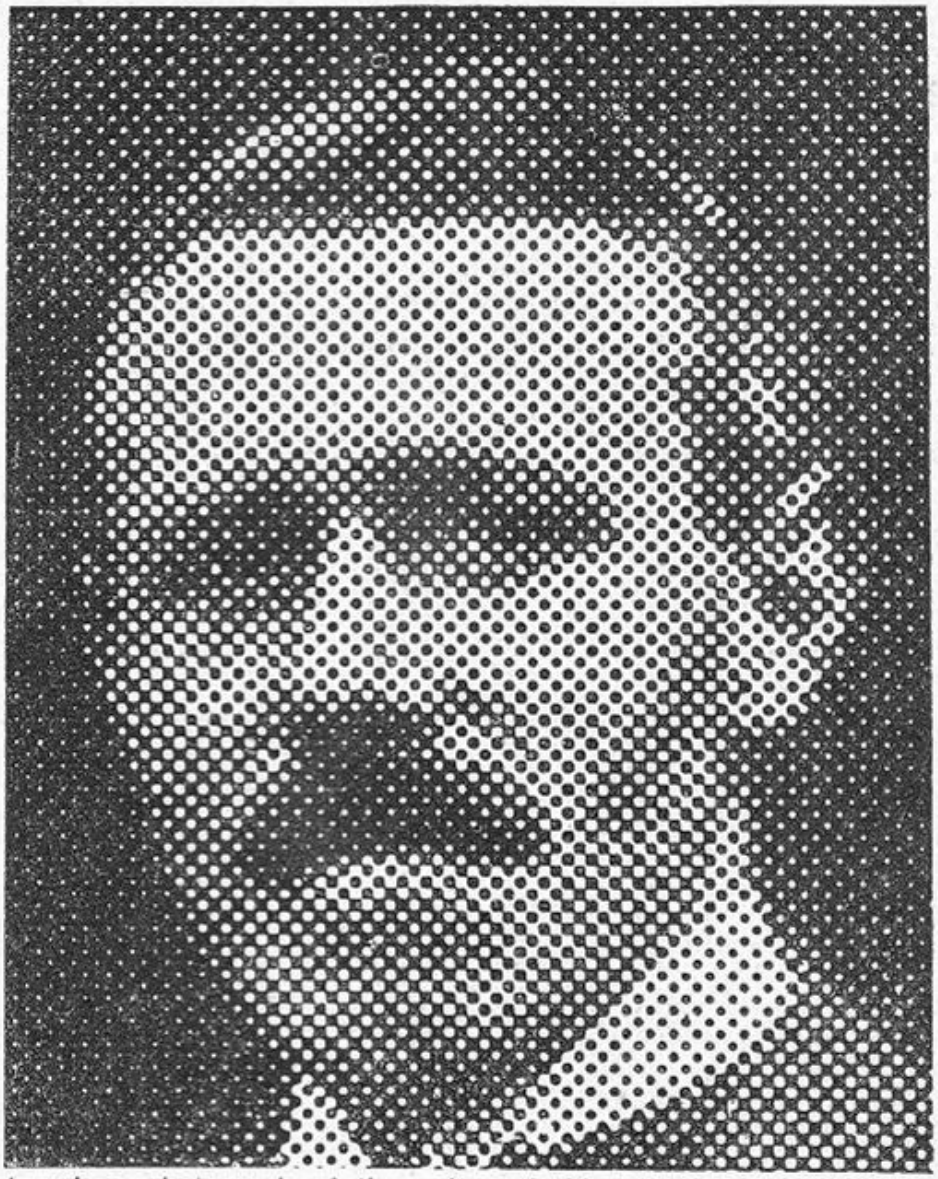
Very slow turning of the camera handle is used when it is desired to show inanimate articles like dishes, pieces of furniture, or letters moving by themselves; the fact of the matter is that they are really moved by hand a short distance at a time in between the separate turns of the camera-handle, that is between each picture. In like manner the growth of plants is shown, one picture being taken, say each hour, by means of clockwork, so that one month'sgrowth of a flower is shown in forty-two seconds!

Now we know why the cartoonist's hand goes so quickly!

To come now to the pleasures or otherwise of the life of the "movie-maker." On the whole, it is quite good. The producer and his photographer have a lot of worry and responsibility. There are many things to make them anxious, but then there are times, especially when away on exterior scenes, that they join in a little fun. The actors certainly have a pretty good time of it. It is seldom they are wanted all the while the party is away and when not wanted, are free to enjoy themselves.

Film work is a clean, healthy life, full of thrills, variety, sport and good fellowship. It is going to be a real big thing, and people now begin to realise it.

While it would be foolish to imagine that one has only to knock at the door of a studio to obtain a post or engagement, there is always a chance for a boy or girl who has real talent and ability, and is athletic. There are too few good boy-actors at the call of the producer. A reputable company pays good money, but unfortunately at the present time it is unusual to give anything like a long engagement except to those who have made a name for themselves. But let a boy or girl prove ability and they are pretty constantly in demand. There are over a hundred girls to every boy aspirant for the screen stage. On the technical side there is much scope for a lad bent on mechanics or photographically inclined, and the proper course is to start at the bottom of the ladder, become useful, and eventually rise to a post really worth having.



A unique photograph of the writer of this article. A close view of the above reveals only a series of dots and squares, whilst looked at from a distance the genial countenance of our contributor can be plainly seen.

A COMPLETE CINEMA STORY IN FUNNY PICTURES!

THE ROOKWOOD RAIDERS

A Play in Verse for Amateur Actors.

Introducing -

JIMMY SILVER & Co OF ROOKWOOD.

[NOTE.—This play may be performed by readers of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL, without fee or licence, on condition that the words, "By permission of the Editor of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" appear on each programme.]

HINTS FOR THE GUIDANCE OF WOULD-BE PERFORMERS.

(1) The part of Tubby Muffin (which is the biggest in the Play) should be allotted to a plump performer, and one who can memorise well.

(2) A special guard should be set over the tuck before the curtain rises—otherwise the audience will gaze upon an empty tuck-shop!

(3) If Eton jackets are unobtainable the Play can be performed in everyday garb.

(4) Ask your favourite master to undertake the part of Mr. Bootles.

(5) Be sure to hold several rehearsals before the actual performance, to ensure that every member of the cast is word-perfect.

(6) Don't "rush" the performance—otherwise it will prove too short. Speak slowly and distinctly, and above all, be natural. The audience will then refrain from hurling bad eggs and other missiles at the performers.

(7) The Editor of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL will be glad to receive reports of each performance of the Play.

Characters:

JIMMY SILVER LOVELL RABY NEWCOME	Members of the Classical Fourth.
PEELE GOWER LATTREY	Three of the black sheep.
HANSOM	A conceited Fifth-former.
TUBBY MUFFIN	The glutton and spy of the Classical Fourth.
SERGEANT KETTLE	Proprietor of the school tuck-shop.
MR. BOOTLES	Master of the Classical Fourth.

Also a score of the rank and file of the Fourth.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The School Tuckshop.*

(JIMMY SILVER & CO. *are within.* SERGEANT KETTLE *waits expectantly for orders.*)

SILVER:
In funds at last! My worthy aunt
Has forwarded a fiver!

LOVELL:
You lucky dog! Your comrades can't
Make merry with a stiver!

SILVER:
But you are going to join with me
In one gigantic bust-up! See?

RABY:
You fellows must agree this whim is
A most delightful one of Jimmy's!

LOVELL and NEWCOME: Yes, rather!

SILVER:
Five quid will clear this blessed shop
Of buns and tarts and ginger-pop!

SERGT. KETTLE:
This afternoon, gents, I surmise
I'm getting in some fresh supplies.
I shall be pleased, without a doubt,
To see my patrons clear me out!

SILVER:
You chaps! We'll have tremendous fun;
I'll stand a feed to everyone!

LOVELL:
Yes, that will be a ripping wheeze;
Just let them order what they please!

(JIMMY SILVER *walks to the door and makes a megaphone of his hands.*)

SILVER:
Walk up, my merry friends, walk up!
And sample what you like!
Come and partake of bite and sup,
Ere Kettle goes on strike!

LOVELL (*over* SILVER'S *shoulder*):
Although you chaps might think it odd, he
Is standing treat to everybody!

CHORUS FROM WITHOUT: Hurrah!

(*Enter a crowd of juniors, with* TUBBY MUFFIN *first and foremost.*)

TUBBY MUFFIN:
I say, you fellows, I will eat
A loaf, a tin of potted meat,
Some marmalade, a pot of jam,
Twelve doughnuts and a round of ham!

SILVER:
Dry up, you fat and greedy freak!

LOVELL:
I've never heard such frightful cheek!

MUFFIN:
Oh, really! I've not finished yet!
That's not enough for me, you bet!
I want some jam-tarts (tuppenny ones);
I want a crowd of currant buns,
And in my hunger I'll devour
Six rabbit pies within the hour;
Some maids-of-honour (just a score);
I'll tell you if I want some more;
Some treacle tart, dished out in doles,
And half a dozen sausage rolls
Then (if I find I have more room)
Some whipped-cream walnuts I'll consume.
So get a move on, Sergeant Kettle!
I'll show you that I'm on my mettle!

RABY:
If Tubby Muffin shifts all that,
By Jove, he'll wax exceeding fat!

NEWCOME:
The silly, gormandising coon
Will go off like a toy balloon!

SILVER:
A fiver would not be enough
To buy that quantity of stuff!

MUFFIN:
Starvation has me in its grip!
I cannot let this prospect slip!

PEELE:
Now, Sergeant Kettle, look alive!

GOWER:
Hand over ginger-pop for five!

LATTREY:
I vote we rush the counter first,
And let old Kettle do his worst!

SILVER:
Just hark at them, the awful cads!
I vote we chuck them out!

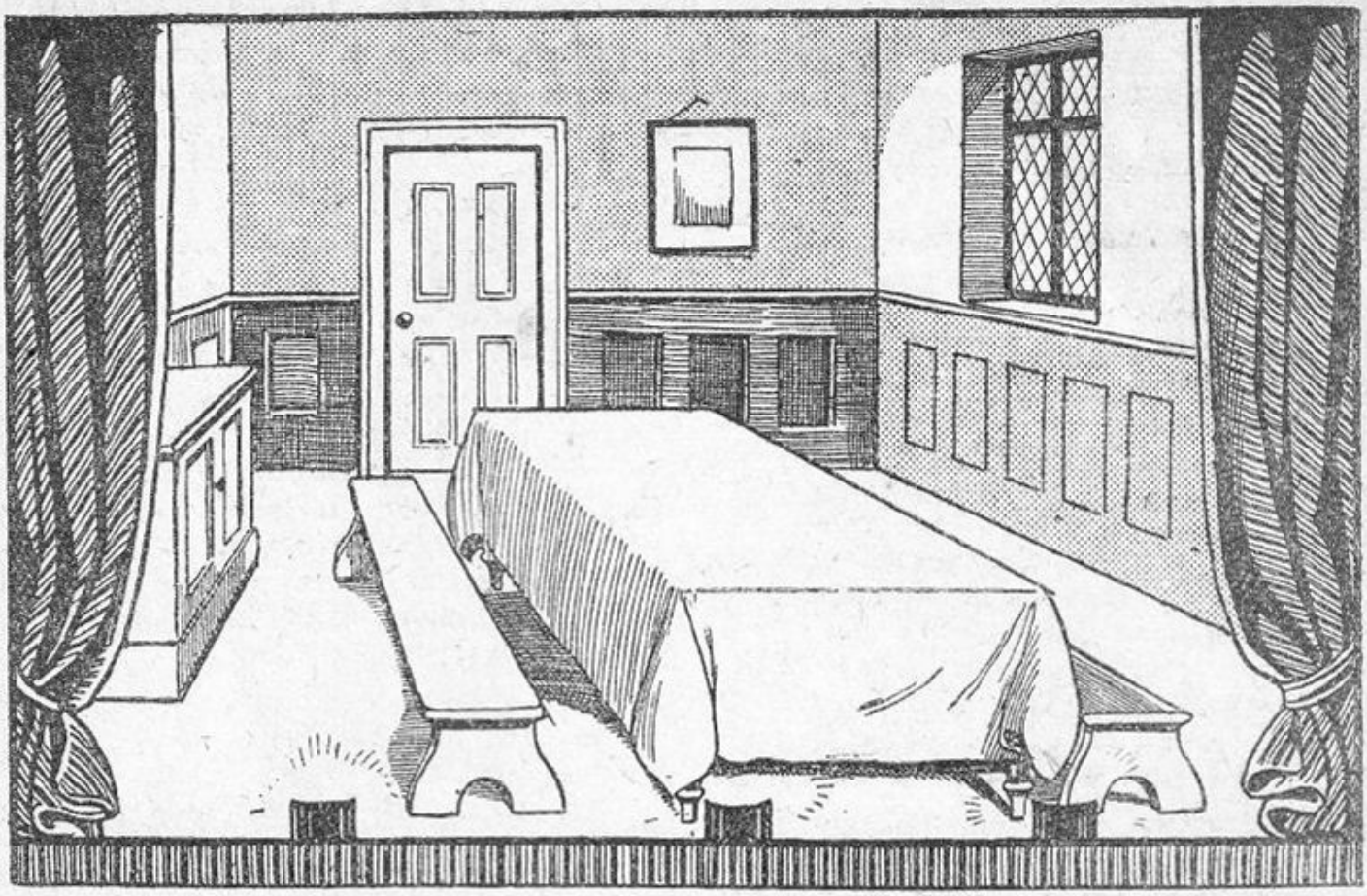
LOVELL:
Hear, hear! Such aggravating lads
We'll swiftly put to rout!

(*The juniors make a movement towards* PEELE & CO. *They stop short as* HANSOM *of the Fifth enters.*)

HANSOM:
Look here, you greedy, wolfish mob——

HOW TO MAKE UP THE CHARACTERS

NEWCOME :
Remove your face ; it makes me sob !
HANSOM :
Disgusting orgies such as these——
SILVER :
Now, Hansom, turn the tap off, please !
HANSOM :
Excessive feeding is a crime——
RABY :
Then Hansom should be doing time !
(*Loud laughter.*)
HANSOM :
Now, Sergeant Kettle, buzz about,
And help me put these rascals out !
SERGT. KETTLE :
No, Master Hansom, I will not !
You're simply talking tommy-rot !
These gents are here to buy my stuff ;
Clear out, or else I'll cut up rough !
HANSOM :
How dare you order me to clear,
You pudding-headed profiteer ?
SERGT. KETTLE (*advancing round the counter towards* HANSOM) :
You call me names ? My eye ! Here goes !
Take that—and that—both on the nose !
(HANSOM *staggers back as the infuriated Sergeant attacks him.*)
SILVER :
Our Sergeant's of a fighting race ;
He scraps like Wells or Beckett !
LOVELL :
Just look at poor old Hansom's face !
The Sergeant's tried to wreck it !
SERGT. KETTLE (*still attacking* HANSOM) :
I'll clear you out, and quickly, too !
HANSOM :
Ow ! Keep him off ! Yow ! Groo !
Yaroooooh !
(*Exit* HANSOM, *pursued by* SERGT. KETTLE *and a roar of laughter. In due course, the* SERGEANT *returns, and is kept very busy serving tuck.*)
MUFFIN : I say, you fellows, please don't squeeze !
RABY (*smacking his lips*) :
I've never tasted tarts like these !
MUFFIN :
You fathead, Silver ! Mind my " pop " !
SILVER :
Get out of this confounded shop !
LOVELL :
Yes, Tubby fairly fills the place !
Let's send him flying into space !
(*A number of boots clump together on* TUBBY MUFFIN'S *person, and he disappears through the doorway.*)
VOICE FROM WITHOUT :
You beasts ! You rotters ! Just you wait !
NEWCOME :
These buttered scones are just first-rate !
(PEELE, LATTREY *and* GOWER *struggle to get near the counter, but they are beaten back, and are unsuccessful in their efforts to take part in the feed. Meanwhile, the good things are disposed of, and all the juniors, with the exception of* PEELE, LATTREY, *and* GOWER, *leave the tuck-shop.* SERGEANT KETTLE *disappears behind the scenes.*)
PEELE :
We didn't get a single crumb !
GOWER :
No, rather not ! I feel quite glum !
LATTREY :
Those cads monopolised the show !
PEELE :
It really is too thick, you know !
GOWER :
Renewed supplies will be here soon :
They're coming in this afternoon.
PEELE :
Then why not raid the jolly lot ?
LATTREY :
It's far too risky, is it not ?
PEELE :
Not if we came at dead of night,
With stealthy footsteps creeping ;
We'll raid the place by candle-light,
Whilst everyone is sleeping !
GOWER :
But Sergeant Kettle would awaken——
LATTREY :
And we should be severely shaken !
PEELE :
The crusty warrior won't be there,
A fact of which I am aware.
He's going to shut his merry shop
And to the village blithely hop.
GOWER :
That's ripping ! We can raid the tuck——



This is how the stage should be set in the Dining Hall scene. If a door cannot be arranged at the back of the stage, the performers can enter from the wings. Everything shown is quite plain, and should cost very little to set up.

LATTREY :

And scoff it, too, with any luck.

PEELE :

At night's most witching, solemn hour,
When midnight booms out from the tower,
We'll quit our beds, so snug and warm,
And then evacuate the dorm.

GOWER :

Then hither will we make our way,
And climb in through the window, eh ?

LATTREY :

We'll cart the grub away in sacks——

PEELE :

And swiftly cover up our tracks.

GOWER :

Of course, we must keep strictly mum
About this little scheme, by gum !
I shouldn't like to see our stuff in
The grasping hands of Tubby Muffin !

PEELE :

This secret is between us three,
And no one else shall share it, see ?
We'll let no others queer our pitch,
And all will go without a hitch.

LATTREY :

Now, having planned our dark devices,
We'll melt away like strawberry ices !

(*Exit the three plotters.*)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The School Tuckshop (by night).*

(PEELE, GOWER *and* LATTREY, *are within. Candles are burning on the counter. The rascals are busy cramming food into sacks.*)

PEELE :

Tuck—glorious tuck ! What deeds of shame
Have been committed in thy name !

GOWER :

Grub—glorious grub ! What acts of vice
You drive us to, 'cos you're so nice !

LATTREY :

Tarts—goodly tarts ! How sweet you are,
When viewed beneath the midnight star !

PEELE :

Come to the slaughter like a lamb
Ye dough nuts! Shed your strawberry jam !

GOWER :

Ye shrinking maids-of-honour, come !
We'll eat up every giddy crumb !

LATTREY :

Oh pies of ham and veal delicious,
You make me feel extremely vicious !

PEELE :

Fill high the sacks with tempting tuck !
Keep going, boys, and show your pluck !

GOWER (*in alarm*) :

Quick ! Put the candles out ! I hear
The sound of footsteps drawing near !

LATTREY :

Oh, crumbs ! If it should be a master
Our raid will end in dire disaster !

(*The candles are swiftly extinguished, and the three juniors step back hastily into the gloom.*)

(*Enter* TUBBY MUFFIN.)

MUFFIN :

Phew ! There's a ghastly smell about—
A smell of candles just put out !
I rather fancy Gower and Peele
And Lattrey have come here to steal !

(TUBBY MUFFIN *flashes an electric torch, and the light reveals* PEELE & CO. *shrinking in the background.*)

MUFFIN :

Ha, ha ! I've caught you in the act !
These bulging sacks with tuck are packed !

PEELE :

You spy ! You interfering worm !

GOWER :

I vote we make the beggar squirm !

LATTREY :

He heard us leave the dorm. no doubt,
And came to see what we're about.

MUFFIN :

My sense of duty—very strong—
Demands that I report you ;
I guessed that you were doing wrong,
And now, by Jove, I've caught you !

PEELE :

If you should dare to play the sneak—

GOWER :

We'll pulverise you, you fat freak !

LATTREY :

We'll paste you so that your own mother

PEELE :

Will promptly take you for another !

MUFFIN :

I care not for your empty threats ;
You'll have to pay for this, my pets !

GOWER :

Now, look here, Tubby, don't be mean !

MUFFIN :

You'll get it in the neck, old bean !

LATTREY :

Don't tell old Bootles ! I should dread—

MUFFIN :

It's all serene—I'll tell the Head !

PEELE :

You duffer ! We shall all be sacked !

MUFFIN :

I hope you will—and likewise whacked !

(*At this juncture the candles are re-lighted.*)

GOWER :

If you'll consent to let us off
And not to do your worst,
We'll undertake to let you scoff
Enough to make you burst !

MUFFIN :

Ah, now you're talking ! Pass that sack,
And I'll commence my little snack !

PEELE :

It isn't safe to linger here,
With people on the prowl ;
I think perhaps we'd better clear.
Wherefore that savage scowl ?

MUFFIN :

Look here, I mean to have my whack——

LATTREY :

You chump ! You'll get us all the sack !

GOWER :

I vote we take the sacks away,
And put them in our study ;

PEELE :

Good egg ! It isn't safe to stay ;
Mind you don't make them muddy !

(PEELE & CO. *heave the sacks towards the exit.*)

MUFFIN :
You stingy beasts, I give you warning——
GOWER :
Your feed must wait until the morning!
LATTREY :
We will not touch a scrap to-night,
We'll get it safely out of sight.
MUFFIN :
Look here, I'm hungry as a hunter!
PEELE :
You're just as bad as Billy Bunter!
MUFFIN :
I do not know who Bunter is,
And neither do I care;
But I'm resolved to get to biz,
And have a feed, so there!
GOWER :
The silly, gormandising fool!
Give him a pie to keep him cool!

(LATTREY *dives his hand into one of the sacks, and produces a pie, which he hands to* TUBBY MUFFIN.)

MUFFIN :
It's seldom I resort to flattery,
But you are quite a sportsman, Lattrey!
PEELE :
To-morrow morning, you may rise
With eager, hungry, bulging eyes;
Then to our study swiftly scoot,
And help yourself to all the loot!
MUFFIN :
Friend Peele, you are a king of virtue!
For those kind words, I'll never hurt you!
LATTREY :
Listen! I thought I heard a thump——
GOWER :
The wind outside, you silly chump!
PEELE :
Now, Tubby! Give us all a hand;
We hope you clearly understand
That in the morning you may come
And feed until the final crumb
Is stowed within your inner man.
It is a fact, old chap—you can!
MUFFIN :
I'm longing for the rising-bell
To rouse me from my slumber;
And first thing in the morning—well,
I'll quickly shift this lumber!
GOWER :
Come on, you fellows! Mind the step!
PEELE :
Are you all right behind, there——
LATTREY :
Yep!

(*The candles are extinguished. Silence reigns in the looted tuckshop. Exit* EVERYBODY.)

END OF ACT. II.

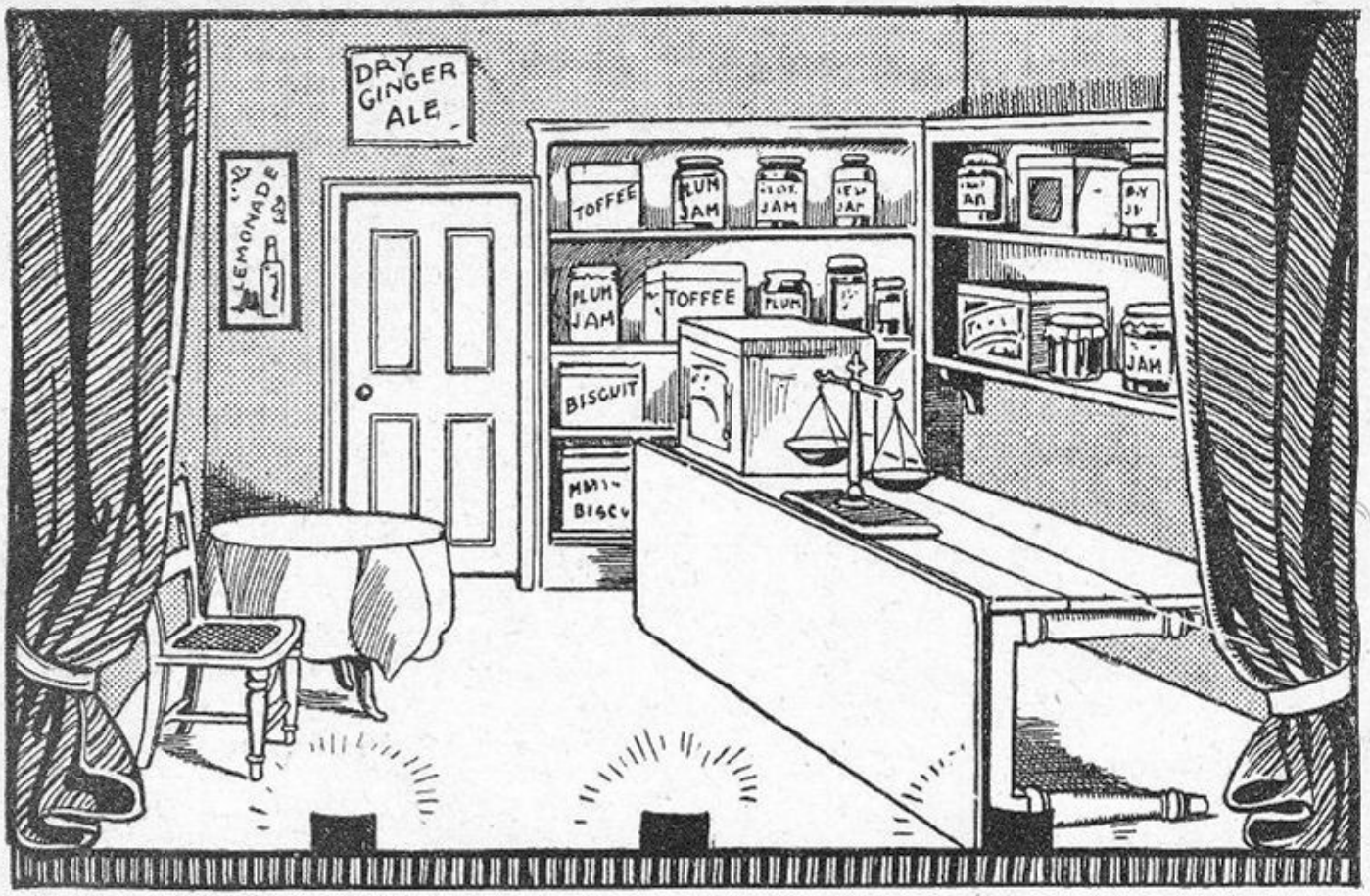
ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Fourth Form at breakfast in Hall.* MR. BOOTLES *presides at the head of the table.*

SILVER :
Once more we sit to do our stuffin'——
LOVELL :
Say! What's become of Tubby Muffin?
RABY :
It isn't often Tubby misses
A gorgeous breakfast such as this is!
NEWCOME :
The bacon will get cold and dry
Unless the duffer's pretty fly!
MR. BOOTLES :
Of Muffin I can see no trace,
I gaze upon an empty place.
Where can the foolish boy have got to?
When he arrives, I'll tell him not to!
SILVER :
Well, that sounds Irish, if you like!
LOVELL :
Perhaps young Tubby's gone on strike!
MR. BOOTLES :
The prospect will be very stormy
If Muffin chooses to ignore me.
How dare he stay away from hall?
I do not like his style at all!
PEELE :
Some one has left him in the lurch:
Please, sir, may I conduct a search?
MR. BOOTLES :
Yes, Peele; but do not be too rough in
Your handling of the errant Muffin!

(*Exit* PEELE. *He returns in a few moments with* TUBBY MUFFIN. *The fat junior has smears of jam on his cheeks, and his pockets are bulging.*)

MR. BOOTLES :
Now, Muffin, you are very late!



A simple and cheap setting for the Tuck-Shop scene. No elaboration is required, but a clever stage-manager can introduce novelties likely to amuse the audience

MUFFIN :
That's so, sir. Brekker had to wait !
MR. BOOTLES :
Where have you occupied yourself ?
MUFFIN :
In Peele's big cupboard—every shelf.
MR. BOOTLES :
Why did you not come into hall ?
MUFFIN :
I couldn't hear the bell at all !
MR. BOOTLES :
That is a paltry, lame excuse !
I must deplore, with strong abuse
Your laziness ; and in addition
You'll write me out an imposition !
MUFFIN :
Oh, crumbs !

(TUBBY MUFFIN *seats himself at the table, and starts unloading his pockets. A large variety of cakes and pastries is spread out on the table.*)

SILVER :
Where did you get that little lot ?
MUFFIN :
That is my business, is it not ?
PEELE :
You duffer ! Put that stuff away—
MUFFIN :
These doughnuts are first-rate !
PEELE :
Quick ! Hide the blessed lot, I say——
MUFFIN :
These currant-buns are great !
LOVELL :
Say, have you robbed a baker's shop ?
NEWCOMBE :
Or caught the house-dame on the hop ?
MUFFIN :
I will not satisfy your questions,
Nor listen to your base suggestions.
This tuck is all my own, I guess.
Delicious ? Echo answers " Yes ! "

SILVER :
I really think you nave been scrumping,
In which case, you deserve a bumping !
MUFFIN :
Oh, really, Silver ! All this tuck
Was handed to me for my pluck !
And if you say I looted it
You shall not get a single bit !
MR. BOOTLES :
I must request you to keep silence ;
Your voices can be heard a mile hence !
MUFFIN :
Sir ! Silver's made a big mistake——
MR. BOOTLES :
Wherever did you get that cake ?
MUFFIN :
A hamper came to me this morning——
MR. BOOTLES :
The post is not yet in. Take warning !
MUFFIN :
Ahem ! I had some money sent——
MR. BOOTLES :
You're telling falsehoods with intent !
MUFFIN :
Oh, sir ! I wish you would believe me !
MR. BOOTLES :
How dare you, Muffin, thus deceive me ?
MUFFIN : A wealthy relative of mine——
SILVER :
Oh, stow it, Tubby ! Draw the line !
MR BOOTLES :
You have upon the table there
A most extensive bill of fare !
No hamper came ; you had no money :
It therefore seems extremely funny
That you should come into possession
Of such a hoard. Now, make confession !
(*Enter* SERGEANT KETTLE. *He stumps up to Mr. Bootles, furious and distracted.*)
MR. BOOTLES :
How dare you come in here like this ?
Dear me ! Is anything amiss ?
SERGT. KETTLE :
Sir, in the watches of the night
Some scamp or scamps unknown,
Have ransacked my emporium, quite !
They haven't left a bone !
MR. BOOTLES (*rising to his feet*) :
Why, Sergeant Kettle, you surprise me !
You did your duty to apprise me.
You say that everything was taken ?
SERGT. KETTLE :
Down to the last half-pound of bacon !
MR. BOOTLES :
A midnight raid ! Perhaps it may be
The work of Silver, Lovell, Raby——
SILVER :
I fear you've made a big mistake,
For we should never undertake
To raid the tuck of Sergeant Kettle's
And rob the roses of their petals !
MR. BOOTLES :
But Sergeant Kettle's not a rose——
LOVELL :
A red one, judging by his nose !
(*Laughter.*)
MR. BOOTLES (*sternly*) :
This merriment and vulgar chatter
Must cease ! This is a serious matter !
SILVER :
We are not guilty, I avow, sir——
NEWCOME :
We'll prove it to you here and now, sir !
SERGT. KETTLE :
If I might make so bold, sir.
I think young Muffin rolled, sir,
Into my shop at night-time,
And had a very bright time !
MUFFIN :
Oh, really, sergeant——
SERGT. KETTLE :
Stealing I bar, gent !
MR. BOOTLES :
Now, Muffin, what have you to say ?
How did those foodstuffs come your way ?
MUFFIN :
Oh, crumbs ! I really couldn't tell you !
MR. BOOTLES :
In that case, I shall soon compel you !
MUFFIN :
I—really, sir, I didn't steal !
Don't let me come a cropper, Peele !
And please do all that's in your power
To save me from a licking, Gower !
LATTREY :
Shut up ! or else my boot you'll feel !
MR. BOOTLES :
Lattrey, stand up ! And Gower and Peele !

(*The three rascals, with their knees fairly knocking together, rise in their places.*)

MR. BOOTLES :
I am convinced that you three raided——
MUFFIN :
You're perfectly correct, sir—they did!
MR. BOOTLES :
Silver! I very much regret
That you were taxed with this, and yet
The evidence all seemed to fit——
SILVER :
You couldn't help it, sir, a bit!
MR. BOOTLES :
You wretched boys who shrink before me,
Must all admit the outlook's stormy!
You are convicted of a theft
Mose base, unscrupulous, and deft!
And Dr. Chisholm soon shall know
The shady depths to which you go.
I mean to take you all before him,
And there and then I shall implore him
To castigate you one by one——
MUFFIN :
I say, you chaps, what ripping fun!

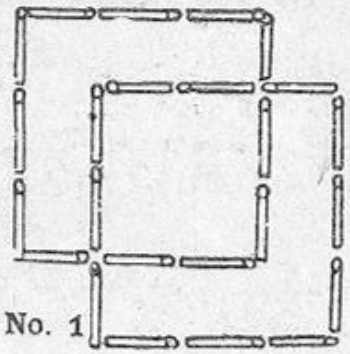
MR. BOOTLES :
You, Muffin, will be punished, too :
MUFFIN :
Oh, crumbs! I wasn't—didn't—Groo!
MR. BOOTLES :
The four of you shall come with me
To Dr. Chisholm's sanctum ;
SILVER :
Their chivvies I should love to see
As soon as he has spanked 'em!
(*Exit* MR. BOOTLES, *followed by* PEELE, GOWER, LATTREY, *and* TUBBY MUFFIN *in a doleful procession.*)
SERGT. KETTLE :
I wish, young gents., as how I were
The public executioner!
NEWCOME :
Let's drink to the confusion, boys,
Of every tuckshop wrecker!
SILVER :
Hear, hear! And then we'll taste the joys
Of this most tempting brekker!

CUR TAIN

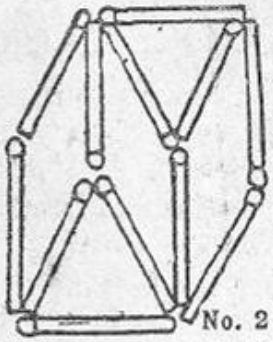
In order to prolong the evening's performance it may be a good idea to introduce a Pierrot troupe at the conclusion of the play. A few rousing songs and a little music, with no dull intervals, is certain to go down well

FUN AMONGST THE MATCHES

Keys to Puzzles on Pages 101 and 102.



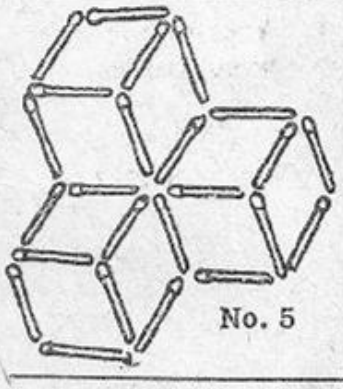
No. 1



No. 2

No. 3

No. 4



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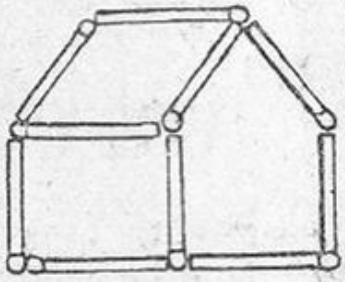

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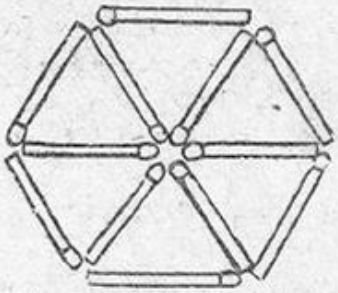

No. 7

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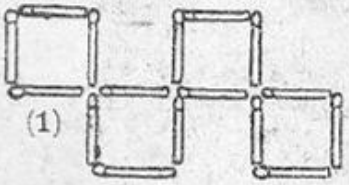

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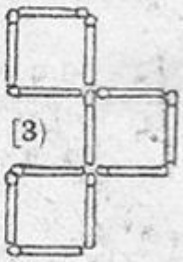

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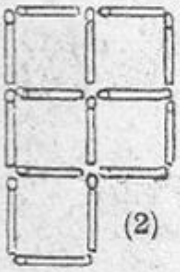

(2)

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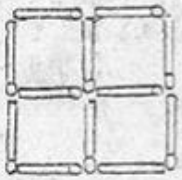

(4)

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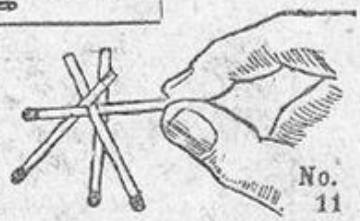
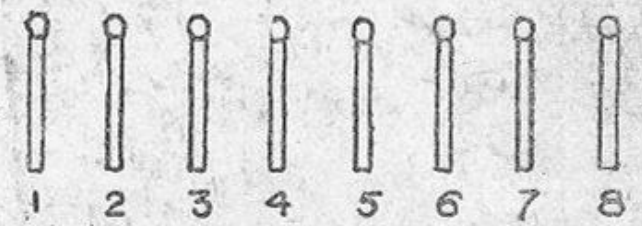


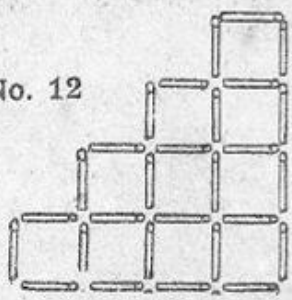
No. 11

Pass No. 5 over Nos. 3 and 4 and place it across No. 2. Then pass No. 3 over Nos. 4 and 6 and put it across No. 7. Then pass No. 1 over and put it across No. 4 and put No. 8 across No. 6.

No. 13

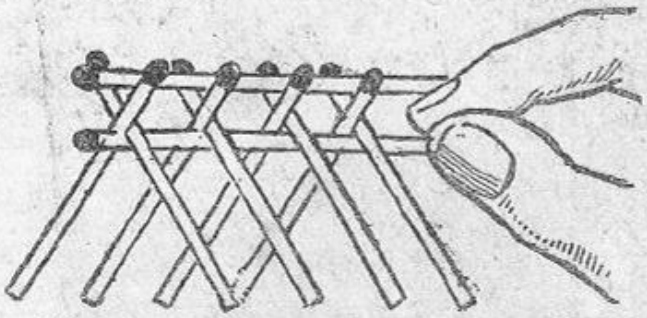


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



No. 12

No. 14



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