

1922

THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL

A BUMPER BOOK FOR BOYS
AND GIRLS.
PACKED WITH STORIES, ARTICLES,
AND PICTURES.

*This Book
Belongs to _____*

1922



- E. E. BRISCOE 1922

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

In presenting this my third volume of THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL to my many reader friends, I have behind me the comfortable knowledge of the instant and wonderful success scored by its two predecessors.

For the present volume I can confidently predict a greater reception still. Its big budget of fine stories includes complete tales of all the old favourites of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood Schools. The best work of such masters of fiction as Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest, Duncan Storm, Morton Pike, Sidney Drew, Michael Poole, and numerous others is here represented, together with hundreds of pictures, verses, articles and tricks.

For the younger generation, either boys or girls, as well as for many an "old fogey," this volume will prove the pleasantest of companions for leisure hours at the winter fireside or under summer skies.

As a book, the HOLIDAY ANNUAL, bright and interesting all through, is always in season, and year by year is welcomed as a prime favourite by a great and ever-increasing circle of readers.

With the great majority of these, I doubt not, I can claim old acquaintanceship through the pages of the famous series of Companion Papers from which the HOLIDAY ANNUAL has sprung.

To all these old friends, and to all new readers alike, this little foreword serves to convey the heartiest greetings and best wishes of

YOUR EDITOR.

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

THE HISTORY OF GREYFRIARS

By BOB CHERRY (of the Remove Form at Greyfriars)

(AUTHOR'S NOTE.—For years, Mr. Quelch, our respected Form Master, has been slogging away at a History of Greyfriars. I have been allowed to peruse his long-winded narrative, which I have condensed and served up in a readable form, so that even fellows of Billy Bunter's intelligence—or lack of it—will be able to read, mark, and inwardly digest.)

HUNDREDS of years ago, Greyfriars School was a sort of off-shoot of the Zoo. It was inhabited by the monks, and fragments of monkey-nuts are still to be found in ye ancient cloisters.

Some direct descendants of these monks still exist at Greyfriars. Coker of the Fifth and Temple of the Upper Fourth are good specimens.

Now, when Henry the Eighth—the monarch who had nine lives—or was it wives?—sat on

the throne, he summoned all the knights and squires to his consulting-room.

"I say, you fellows," he said, "I think all these monkey-houses—I mean monasteries—should be closed. Don't you?"

"Yes, rather!"

"True, O King!"

"But supposing the monks refuse to quit?" said Sir Fatted de Fitzbooters.

"Rats!" said His Majesty. "I'll get through on the 'phone to all the special constables, and have the monks ejected without delay!"

And he did, with the result that the Early Closing Order came into force from that day.

But the merry monks of Greyfriars defied the King, and hid themselves in the crypt. Henry offered a term's pocket-money for their capture, and eventually some scurvy knave betrayed their whereabouts, and they were collared, and hauled up before the King.

"Now, look here, you saucy varlets!" said Henry grimly,

"Tell me exactly where the treasure is hidden and you will be allowed to buzz off," said the king. Friar Tuck shook his head. "Go and eat coke!" he growled.



"I have reason to believe that you've got a goodly treasure hidden away in the vicinity of Greyfriars. Is that so?"

"Right on the wicket!" said Friar Tuck (who had been known to shift half a barrel of monkey-nuts at one sitting).

"Tell me exactly where the treasure is hidden, and you will be allowed to buzz off!" said the king.

Friar Tuck shook his head.

"Go and eat coke!" he growled.

"You refuse to divulge the whereabouts of the treasure?"

"Absolutely!"

"Then I shall have no alternative but to chop off your nappers!"

"Go ahead! If it will provide your nine wives with a bit of sport, never mind us!"

With a snort of rage, King Henry went to the phone and rang up the Public Executioner.

"Hallo! That you, Chopstein?"

"Yea, sire."

"I've got a job of work for you. Get a good edge on your axe, and take a taxi to Tower Hill. There's going to be a wholesale execution this afternoon. See that it's advertised in all the papers, and on all the hoardings."

"All serene, sire!"

That afternoon the people of England fairly went mad—in fact, it was surprising how many folk lost their heads! The chopper came down with a vengeance!

Even on the scaffold, however, when they saw Chopstein sharpening his axe, the monks refused to reveal their secret.

"You shall never know where the loot is!" said Friar Tuck. And he flicked his fingers contemptuously in King Henry's face.

The king gave a snarl.

"Get over that block!" he hissed.

And the next moment the executioner had done his fell work.

After he had disposed of the monks, Henry made strenuous efforts to find the Greyfriars treasure. Search-parties were constantly at work, but there was nothing to report. Beyond a barrel of monkey-nuts and some bottles of ginger-pop, nothing was discovered in the crypt and the subterranean passages. And at last King Henry realised that there was nothing doing. The monks had been too cute for him.

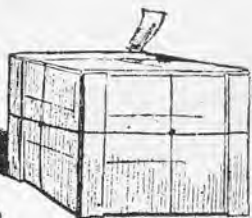
For some time after this, Greyfriars was allowed to go to rack and ruin. In 1551, however, Edward the Sixth got into touch with the Ministry of Labour, and arranged for the place to be restored. He then opened it as a school for mischievous young monkeys.



Beyond a barrel of monkey-nuts and some bottles of ginger-pop, nothing was discovered in the crypt.



Bunter and the Box



*A Humorous, Short, Complete Story of the
Chums of the Remove*

By PETER TODD

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Billy's Box

"I SAY, you fellows——"

A pair of huge spectacles glimmered in the doorway of Study No. 1, and the figure of William George Bunter, of the Remove at Greyfriars, insinuated itself into the room.

"I say, you fellows!" repeated Bunter earnestly. "That box——"

"Buzz off!"

"Outside, Billy! We're busy!"

"But—but, I say, you know! That box——"

"Skidaddle! Scoot!" snapped Bob Cherry, without looking up. "Travel, porpoise!"

But Billy Bunter did not "travel," nor did he "skidaddle," or "scoot." He rolled calmly forward, and his eyes blinked greedily behind the goggles, as they rested upon the box lying on the table, and round which the Famous Five were gathered.

Only a minute before, that box had been brought to the school by Cripps, the carrier, from Courtfield. And, as was usual when a parcel or box arrived at Greyfriars, it wasn't long before W.G.B. followed it to its destination.

"Oh, really, Cherry!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "It's most important. There's some mistake! You see, I'm expecting a box myself by post——"

"Rats!"

Bunter glared as that exclamation came in a simultaneous chorus from the Famous Five.

"I hope," he remarked with dignity, "I really hope you fellows don't doubt my word! I decline to be associated with fellows who doubt my word. It's low, and shows a mean, suspicious nature! You'll excuse my saying so, Wharton, but I consider you're a mean, suspicious beast—and jealous! In fact you're all jealous—jealous of my good looks and wealthy connections! I hope you don't mind my being candid?"

"Not at all," said Harry Wharton, cheerfully. "We like you best, Billy, when you're being candid—it's such a refreshing change, you know."

"That's all right, then," said Bunter. "And now about that box! Now, I'm expecting a box—a whacking great tuck-box, in fact. It's from one of my titled relations, you know——"

"Which one?" queried Nugent with interest. "Your uncle, the Duke of Spoofemall?"

"Or your great-uncle, the Marquis of Hookeywalker?" asked Johnnie Bull.

"Fortunately, the box has come!" went on Bunter firmly, nodding his head towards the table. "And that looks jolly suspiciously like it! You see, there's been a mistake. My uncle—I mean my cousin, has addressed it wrong. It's addressed to H. Wharton by mistake. I explained the error to old Cripps, and told him plainly it was really for W. G. Bunter. But—you fellows will hardly believe me—he wouldn't stomp it up—he doubted my word! In fact, he told me to go and eat coke! Still, now you fellows know the box belongs to me, I'll take it with me, and——"

"That you jolly well won't!" snapped Johnnie Bull.

"One moment!" said Bob Cherry, shaking his head gravely. "This is a serious matter—for Bunter. And Bunter's claim must be investigated. You say you are expecting a box by post, Bunt?"

"Certainly, Bob, old fellow," smiled Bunter, affectionately. "From a titled relation—my uncle, in fact. I say, I'll take it with me now; and—look here," went on Bunter with one of his rare bursts of generosity, "if there's any grub left—I mean—that is to say, when I've checked the contents, I'll bring you fellows some. I can't say fairer than that!"

"But this box came by passenger train," said Cherry blandly.

"D-di-did I say by post?" ejaculated Bunter. "Quite a mistake! I—I meant to say by passenger train. Certainly! Now I wonder what made me say that? My pater—I mean my uncle—I should say, my cousin, always sends all my tuck-boxes by passenger train. And——"

"However," continued Cherry, thoughtfully, with a wink at his chums. "If Bunter really is expecting a box, it would be a sin and a shame to rob or disappoint him. What do you chaps think—shall we give him one?"

"Certainly!" came the grinning chorus.

"Very well, then," observed Cherry resignedly. "But are you sure, Billy, that the box I am about to give you is the one you're expecting?"

"Oh, really, Bob," smirked Bunter with an expansive smile. "without a doubt! Of

course it is! The very one, in fact! Give it me now, Bob, old fellow!"

"Here you are then, Bunt dear!"
Slap!

"Yaroooh! Oh, my ear! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter leaped back, rubbing a fat ear that burned red from a hearty slap from Bob's hefty fist.

"There's your box, you fat fraud!" chuckled Cherry. "Now, take it outside with you. We're busy!"

Bunter's glasses fairly glittered in the gaslight as he glared at Bob Cherry. It was plain the box he got was not the box he had been expecting.

"Beast!" he howled. "You did that on purpose, Cherry! You're all beasts! Ow! Ow, my ear!"

"Why, don't you like the box now you've got it?" ejaculated Bob Cherry in surprise. "Well, try this one——"

But Billy Bunter did not stay for that one. At the door he turned a Hunnish glare upon the laughing Five.

"Yah! Beasts!" he howled viciously. "Keep your mingy box. Yah! Greedy pigs!" Then Bunter hurriedly departed.

But of course his departure, though hurried, was not permanent. When Bunter was on the trail—of grub, at any rate—he did not give up so easily. Bunter hadn't the slightest doubt that the mysterious box was chock full of good things to eat. And William George Bunter was determined to have some—somehow.

At the end of the passage he paused; then he tiptoed back to No. 1, and applied his eye to the keyhole.

He could not see much—just the legs of the table and a corner of the tablecloth. But he could hear whispering inside, and he put his fat ear to the keyhole instead. Then the whispering suddenly ceased, and the occupants of the study were suspiciously silent.

The fact might have warned Bunter. But it didn't. And once again the unfortunate Owl got it in the ear—so to speak.

"Whoosh!"

A stream of black liquid shot through the keyhole, and Bunter yelled in sheer surprise.

He yelled harder, however, as he overbalanced and his head struck the passage wall with a tremendous thud.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Framed in the doorway were the laughing faces of Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Bull, and Hurree Singh.

Bunter blinked at them speechlessly.

"Hallo! Haven't you gone yet, Billy?" grinned Cherry in surprise. "Here, there's just a drop of ink left. I'll—"

But again Bunter did not wait. The sight of Cherry advancing, squirt in hand, was enough for him.

With surprising agility, considering his bulk, he swarmed to his feet and scudded along the corridor.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Caught!

It took quite ten minutes' vigorous application of soap and water to remove the ink from the bespattered countenance of

William George Bunter. And the operation was a very unpleasant one indeed for W.G.B. It meant work, for one thing; it also meant the unsparing use of soap and water. And Bunter hated work, and he also hated to waste soap and water—upon himself.

But at length the Owl of the Remove emerged from the bathroom feeling much cleaner, but by no means happier.

Some fellows would have dropped the trail then. But not so Bunter. He wandered dis-

consolately along the passage, and, despite his late unfortunate experiences, his footsteps were drawn irresistibly towards the end study.

For some time he hovered around the door like a moth fluttering around a candle flame. Then he took the plunge and put his ear to the keyhole; but more warily this time.

Creak! Creak!

Bunter jumped. It was without a doubt the sound of a box being opened. Bunter shivered with excitement.

"Got him!" came Cherry's eager voice.

"Now for it! Have we time for just one before bed, Harry?"

"Just about, as we've finished prep, old man," came Wharton's cool voice clearly. "But buck up! The blessed bell will go in a tick!"

Then came a sound that Billy couldn't quite place. He decided that it was the study clock being wound up. And Billy didn't worry about that.

The thought of those greedy boundaries inside scoffing all the grub themselves—

Bunter groaned in anguish of spirit. He fancied he could hear Cherry's teeth cutting through a choice slice of plum-cake, while he was almost certain he could hear the gurgle of ginger-pop—or was it home-made cherry wine?

"Oh, dear!" murmured Bunter enviously. "If I could only get them out of the study for five minutes—my hat!"



Slap! "There's your box, you fat fraud!" said Bob Cherry. "Take it away with you!" (See page 6.)

Bunter suddenly straightened himself, and his face broadened into a cunning grin. Next moment he was tiptoeing towards a large cupboard in the passage. The cupboard was empty, but it was a tight squeeze for a fellow of Bunter's bulk.

Bunter crouched down inside, and, pulling the door to, got to work. And a moment later, Mr. Quelch's voice—or what seemed to be that master's voice—echoed down the passage.

"Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Bull, Singh—come here at once!"

Bunter chuckled gleefully as the door of the end study flew open and the occupants filed out.

They viewed the deserted passage in surprise.

"My hat!" gasped Wharton. "I'd swear I heard——"

"Do you hear me, boys? Come here at once!"

Wharton grunted and led the way towards Mr. Quelch's room, whence the voice appeared to proceed.

"Old Quelch is in a blessed hurry," growled Wharton. "What the dickens does he want now?"

Bunter heard the remark from his hiding-place, and he chuckled. But Bunter had chuckled too soon; he hadn't bargained for accidents. Almost before the five reached the study door, an awe-inspiring figure in cap and gown appeared. It was Mr. Quelch himself.

"Well, Wharton, what is it?" queried the master, for none of the juniors moved to let him pass.

"You called us, sir," answered Wharton in surprise.

"Called you—nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch testily. "You must have imagined it. You should be in your dormitory now, boys. It is already past your bed-time. Go, at once!"

And the master whisked along the passage.

"Well, this is a go!" gasped Wharton. "I'd swear I heard him——" Wharton stopped suddenly. From the cupboard along the passage came a half-stifled sneeze.

Wharton grinned.

"Bunter!" he breathed softly and grimly. "Not a sound, you chaps! My hat, we'll give

that fat fraud ventriloquism! Follow on, brothers!"

On tiptoe, Wharton slipped to the cupboard—and next moment a startled gasp came from Billy Bunter as the cupboard door was wrenched open.

"Out you come, you fat spoofer!" exclaimed Wharton.

Billy Bunter blinked apprehensively at the victims of his ventriloquial skill, and hesitated. It was extremely uncomfortable crouched inside the cupboard; but he had an idea that it would be far more uncomfortable outside.

"Re—really, you fellows——" he began.

Bunter was not given time to say more than that. Ungentle hands gripped him, and he was yanked out and rolled with a bump on the passage floor.

"Yow! You beasts!" he yelled. "Oh, you've broken my back! Yow, wow! I'm hurt!"

"I'm not surprised," grinned Bob Cherry. "And we'll hurt you some more yet. Bump him, you chaps! We'll teach the prize porker to work off his ventriloquial stunts on us!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Four times the Owl of the Remove was bumped, each bump eliciting a corresponding howl from the victim.

"There," said Wharton when the operation was over, "that will teach you not to be so beastly inquisitive about other people's boxes. And now, chaps, to bed, or old Quelch will be getting ratty."

Billy Bunter rose, angry and dusty. Then his little eyes glittered as the other fellows began to move along the passage. Instead of following them, he began to roll casually in the opposite direction. But he jumped as a hand fell upon his shoulder.

"Nunno! No, you don't, Billy!" chuckled Bob Cherry, turning back suddenly. "You'll come back with us, old son. Yank hold of him, someone! We'll put Billy to by-byes! It's his bed-time!"

"I—I—I—I say, you fellows—— Here, hands off! Gerroff! Leggo! I was only going to——"

The Removites knew perfectly well what Billy was going to do—at least the owners of that mysterious box did. And they didn't

wait to hear it. And the next instant Bunter was being frog-marched along the passage. Then with sundry bumps and howls from the passenger, the procession wended its way upstairs. Nor did the Removites leave Bunter until he was safely tucked under the sheets.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

In the Night!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER lay in bed and fumed. His little ruse to sample the contents of the box had failed miserably. In fact, it had been an unfortunate night altogether for Bunter. But his night's adventures were not over yet by any means.

For, beside being sore and angry, Bunter was hungry—very hungry. And when Billy Bunter was hungry sleep was not to be thought of. But how to appease that hunger was the question. And as might be expected, Bunter's thoughts were centred upon the box in Study No. 1, the contents of which he had no doubt would cure his sleeplessness.

For an hour Bunter concentrated on the problem, then he decided the time for action had arrived. Sitting up in bed, he blinked cautiously round the dark dormitory.

"I say, any of you fellows awake?"

No answer.

The Owl listened breathlessly to the soft breathing of the Removites, then he rolled out of bed.

Smiling a smug smile of anticipation, he carefully felt for his spectacles, and jammed

them upon his podgy nose. After which he put on his slippers and tiptoed to the door.

Bunter chuckled softly as he blinked out in the silent, deserted corridor. With infinite care he moved to the head of the stairs, and began to descend.

At the door of the end study he stopped and, softly pushing open the door, blinked inside.

The room was dark and shadowy, but Bunter could faintly make out the shape of the table, and—yes, the box lying there, just as the Famous Five had left it.

Billy chuckled again and entered.

What happened after that Billy never could clearly remember, or he didn't wish to. He remembered fumbling about the box in the darkness, then followed a sudden whirring sound that made poor Bunter's hair stand on end. To Bunter it sounded like the noise he imagined a bomb would make before it exploded.

But Billy had no intention of staying to see if this were a bomb. With an involuntary yell of terror the fat youth shot for the door.

Biff! Crash!

A loose bit of carpet tripped the Owl, and his head struck the edge of the door with a

thump that brought a million stars before the terrified junior's eyes.

"Yaroooh! Fire! Oh, help! Murder! Thieves!" howled Bunter.

"Police! Burgla—"

Bunter ceased his yells in sheer terror, for the whirring noise had ceased. But it was not followed by the crash Billy expected, only by the brazen tones of a man's voice.



Billy was in a hurry to get upstairs, and Mr. Quelch was in a hurry to get downstairs. It ended in both going downstairs! Bump! Bump!

Coming suddenly in the silence of the night, it was sufficiently startling for all that, but when the voice in a clear tenor began to sing something about "A Perfect Day," Billy lost his head completely.

"Help! Fire! Murder!" he howled frantically, and streaked through the doorway.

Poor Billy had lost his gig-lamps, and it was a marvel how he found his way in the darkness; but he struck the stairs at last. And leaving the clear clarion voice to echo and re-echo through the silent school, he bounded up those stairs two at a time.

But again Bunter's luck was dead out. The noise, of course, had aroused the whole school. Fellows were crowding out into the corridors, and amazed voices were questioning everywhere. And one of the first roused was Mr. Quelch.

Bunter met him at the top of the stairs. The meeting was unfortunate for both, for Bunter had been in a hurry to get upstairs, and the master was in a hurry to get down. It ended in both going downstairs.

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

It was fortunate for Mr. Quelch that Bunter was underneath when they reached the bottom.

"Oh, help! Oh, dear! Good gracious! Who was that?" gasped the master feebly, sitting up on the cold passage floor.

Bunter also sat up, but he did not answer. He was gasping and puffing like a stranded porpoise, and could not have answered had he wished; but there was no necessity. Wingate, candle in hand, and followed by a crowd of startled boys, dashed down the stairs.

And the light soon revealed to Mr. Quelch's astounded eyes the familiar pyjama-clad form of Billy Bunter in all its beauty of outline.

Wingate and Coker stopped to help the dazed master to his feet. But most of the fellows, headed by the Famous Five, scudded along to the end study, where "The End of a Perfect Day" was well into its second spasm. The Famous Five, at least, were nearly exploding. It hadn't taken them long to guess what had happened, especially when they saw Bunter.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Wharton feebly. "That blessed idiot must have started our gramophone! My hat! The blind Owl must have been fumbling about with it. Quick! Light the gas while I stop the blessed thing! My only Sunday tile! Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent produced a match and lit the gas. A moment later "The End of a Perfect Day" came to an untimely end with startling suddenness.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The stopping of the instrument was the signal for a wild howl of laughter to break out. The fellows could not restrain themselves, and the Remove passage rang again and again. But it soon stopped when Mr. Quelch appeared, his brow black with wrath.

"Stop! Do you hear me?" he stormed angrily. "Stop this disgraceful noise! Have you all gone mad? Wharton, what do you know of this astounding affair? And to whom does this—this machine belong?"

"It—it's a gramophone, sir," stammered Wharton. "It belongs to me—I mean, to us. We club—that is, we subscribed to buy it. It only came last night. We unpacked it, put a record on, and wound it up, hoping to have just one tune before bed-time. But before we had time to start it we—we were called away; you yourself ordered us to go straight to our dormitory. So we left it on the table, just as it was. We certainly did not start it."

"I give you credit for more sense than that, Wharton," snapped Mr. Quelch tartly. "In any case, you had no business to bring such an instrument into the school without first consulting me. But someone did start it. I presume it was Bunter."

"Perhaps it was a mouse, sir," suggested Bob Cherry foolishly. "I've heard of—"

"Cherry!" rapped out Mr. Quelch icily. "You will do me two hundred lines to-morrow for your insolence! Bunter!"

"Y-yes, sir!" groaned the unhappy Bunter.

"You appear to be responsible for this business," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I demand to know what you were doing out of bed at this time of night?"

"M-m-me, sir! Nunno, sir! Not at all, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I've been fast

asleep—never left the dorm. at all, in fact. I wouldn't. I—I've only just woke up!"

"What?"

"Certainly, sir," said Bunter. "I never even thought of raiding Wharton's grub. Besides, there wasn't any grub, so I couldn't, could I, sir? And as for starting that gramophone, I never did! Certainly not! In fact, I didn't know it was a gramophone, sir. I thought the box contained grub. That's why I came down. Nunno! I mean that's why I didn't come down. I wouldn't dream——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch, glaring around at the laughing juniors. "Bunter, you utterly foolish boy, how dare you tell such falsehoods? You will come to my room at nine to-morrow morning, when I shall require a truthful explanation of this affair.

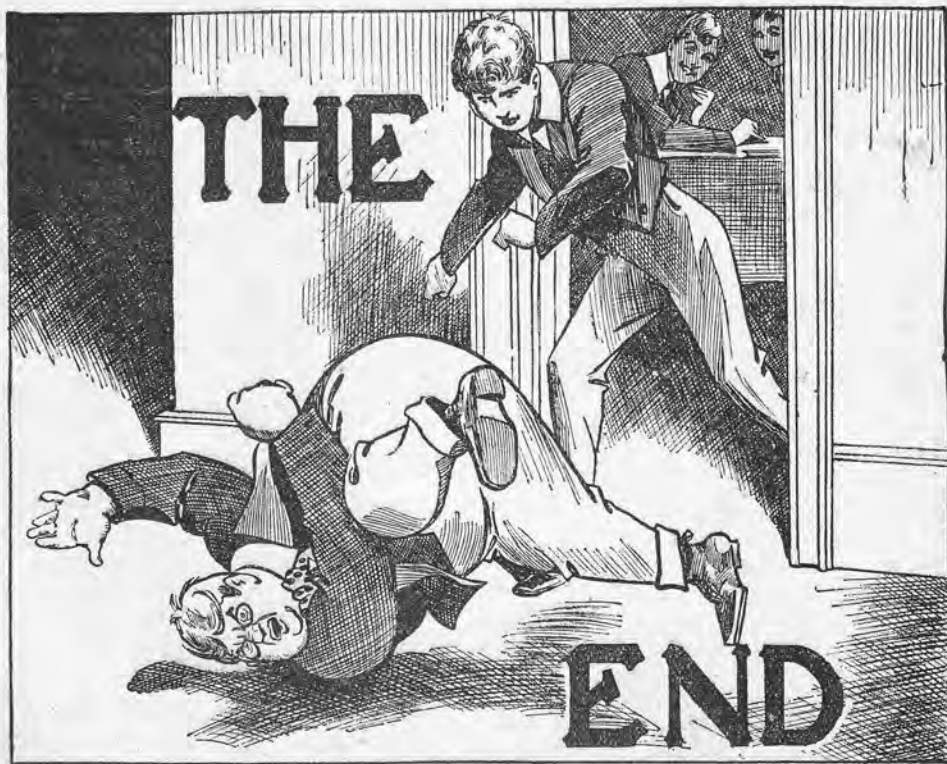
And now, enough of this. Wingate, will you be good enough to see these boys back to their dormitories at once?"

Bunter's face was the picture of misery. He had had the fright of his life, and he was still hungry. And now on top of all was the dismal prospect of an unpleasant interview in the morning with Mr. Quelch.

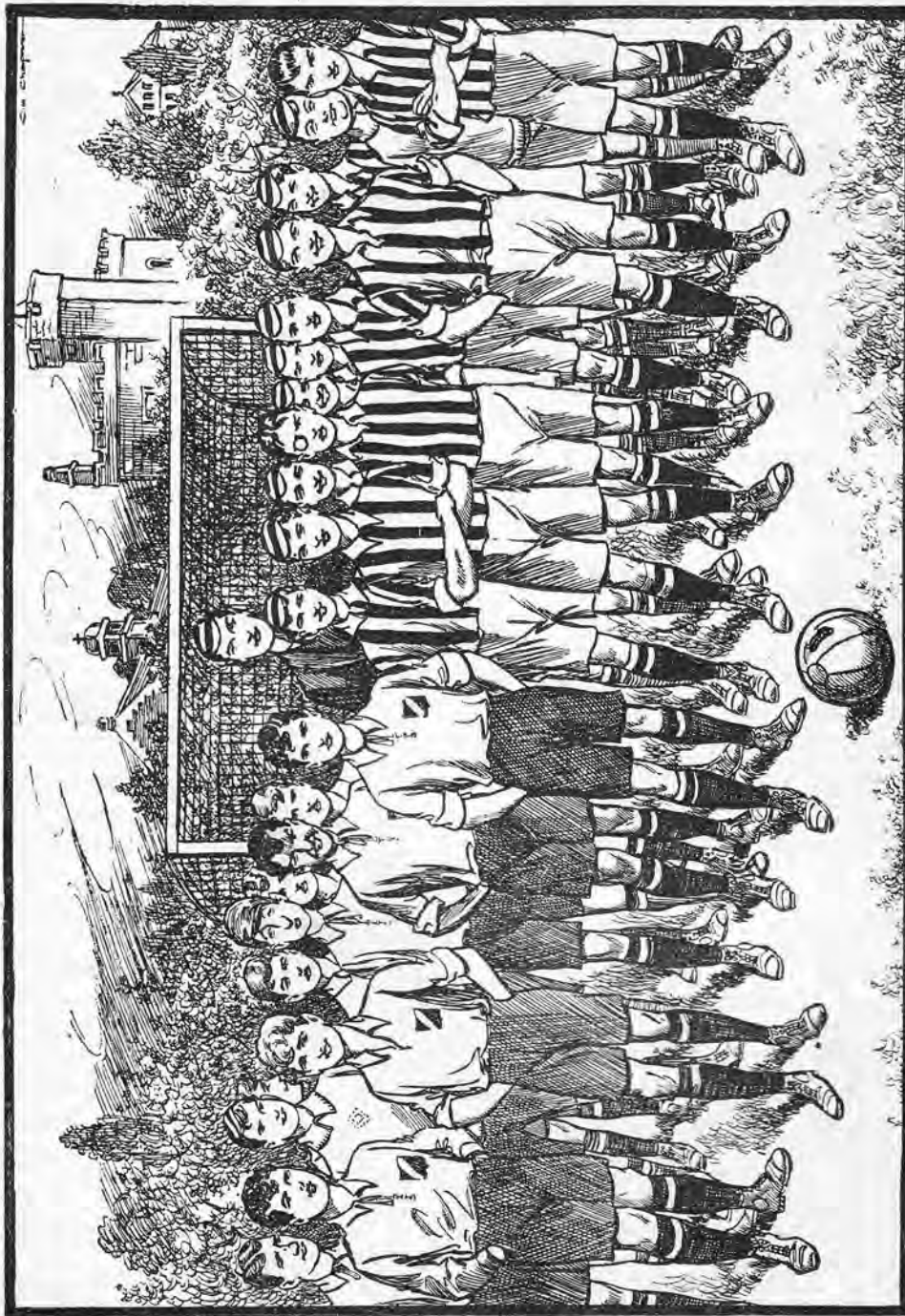
And Bunter rolled after the others to bed, feeling that life was not worth living.

But Bunter thought so more than ever the next morning when Mr. Quelch did get the facts of the case out of him. And the fat junior made a solemn vow never to go on midnight grub-raiding expeditions again as long as he lives.

And no doubt he won't—until he's hungry again.



THE GREYFRIARS AND ST. JIM'S FOOTBALL TEAMS



GREYFRIARS (reading from left to right): Vernon-Smith, Bull (Squiff), Field, Pentfold, Cherry, Nugent, Todd, Bulstrode, Hurree Slugh, Linley, Harry Wharton (captain). Kildare (captain of St. Jim's), referee. ST. JIM'S: Noble, Tom Merry (captain), Blake, D'Arcy, Lowther, Redfern, Talbot, Figgus, Kerr, Wynn, Jevison.



Who was the Winner?

A Humorous Complete Story, showing how the most thrilling fight in the history of Greyfriars was fought and won (according to the amateur journalist of the Remove)!

By MARK LINLEY

THE FIRST CHAPTER

I WOULDN'T have Harry Wharton's job for a whole term's pocket-money. His job of editing "The Greyfriars Herald."

I mean. He has to be always alive, active, and alert. If anything in the nature of a "scoop" comes along, he must snap it up at once. If he lets it slip through his fingers, one of the rival papers steals a march on him.

Harry was seated in his study, wading through a poem by Alonzo Todd, in nine hundred and ninety-nine stanzas, when the door suddenly opened, and the slim, feather-like form of Fisher T. Fish blew in from the passage.

"Say, Wharton——" began the Yankee junior breathlessly.

The editor of the "Herald" looked up quickly.

"Got a scoop, Fishy?" he inquired eagerly.

"Yep!"

"What is it? Get it off your chest right away. I'm on the verge of going to press."

Fisher T. Fish took a deep breath, and told his story.

"I guess there's goin' to be a display of fireworks in the gym," he said. "Bolsover major and Bob Cherry had a few words, you know. Bolsover called Bob a chopheaded chump, and Bob called Bolsover a chump-headed chop! Result—Bolsover challenged Bob to a scrap."

"Where? When?" demanded the youthful editor.

"It's to come off in the gym at five o'clock. I sorter calculate that the stretcher-bearers will be wanted to remove what's left of Bolsover."

Wharton jumped to his feet.

"Is this a fact, Fishy?"

"Sure!"

Without another word, the editor of the "Herald" dashed out of the study.

It would soon be five o'clock, the time fixed for the fight.

Wharton would not be able to be present himself—he was fighting against time to get his next issue ready for the Press—but he didn't mean to miss this wonderful "scoop."

"I'll get one of the fellows to go along and report the proceedings," he told himself, as he dashed out into the close.

Standing just outside the school tuckshop were three fellows. They were Tom Brown, Dick Penfold, and Hurree Singh.

A short distance away, with his nose flattened against the window of the shop, was Billy Bunter.

"Heard about the big fight, you fellows?" asked Wharton, approaching the group.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Brown. "I've booked a seat in the dress circle for five o'clock."

"It'll be a great scrap!" said Dick Penfold.

And Hurree Singh said that the scrapfulness would be terrific.

"Look here!" said Wharton—and Billy Bunter pricked up his ears. "I want somebody to report the affair for 'The Greyfriars Herald.'"

"I will!" said Tom Brown promptly.

"No, let me!" urged Penfold.

"Leave it to me, my worthy chum!" said Hurree Singh eagerly. "I will reportfully describe the scrapful encounter."

Wharton laughed.

"As you're so jolly keen," he said, "you can all report it. Let me have your descriptions by six o'clock, and I'll select the best for publication."

This course having been agreed upon, Harry Wharton went back to his study. And the three amateur reporters hurried away in quest of notebooks and pencils. Each of them was very eager to see himself in print.

That eagerness was shared by Billy Bunter, who had overheard the conversation.

"I'm a born journalist," murmured the fat junior. "I'll write a much better account of the fight than those three idiots. And I'll get Wharton to pay me at the rate of a penny a word. My hat! What a ripping way of raising the wind!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away, with a determined expression on his fat face. He had visions of netting quite a nice little sum of money for successfully reporting the great fight. He knew that there were three rivals in the field, but he did not falter. He was satisfied that he would be able to hold his own against all comers.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

SIX chimed out from the old clock-tower.

Harry Wharton sat in his study, surrounded by piles of manuscript.

"Surely the fight's over by now?" he murmured. "If those fellows don't buck up with their reports I shall have to go to press without including a description of the fight."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in, fathead!" sang out Wharton.

The "fathead" proved to be Tom Brown. He entered somewhat breathlessly, threw a manuscript on the table, and hurriedly withdrew.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Wharton in surprise. "Young man in a hurry, what? How did the scrap go off, Browney?"

But Tom Brown was already out of earshot.

Wharton was about to peruse the account of the fight, when the door opened again, and Penfold burst in like a cyclone. He aimed a folded document at the editor of "The Greyfriars Herald."

"Catch!" he exclaimed. "My report!"

And before Wharton could say "My only aunt!" Penfold was gone.

Then, after an interval of a few seconds, in dashed Hurree Singh.

"I have reportfully described the esteemed scrapful fight, my worthy chum," he said. "Here it is—a thrilling story, couched in the best English language."

"But—but what's the hurry?" gasped Wharton. "School isn't on fire, is it?"

"You said you were waiting to send the stuff to the printers pressfully. I therefore put an esteemed jerk in it."

"Quite right. But it isn't a life and death matter. I've a few minutes to spare. Was it a good scrap?"

"I suggestfully propose that you read what I have reportfully written, and see for yourself," said Hurree Singh.

And he quitted the study.

Wharton picked up the three manuscripts, which had all been delivered within the space of one minute; and he was about to read them with a view to selecting the best of them for publication, when Billy Bunter rolled in.

"Buzz off, porpoise!" growled Wharton. "I've no time to attend to you just now."

"Oh, really, Wharton! That's hardly the way to treat a valued contributor like myself!"

"What rubbish have you brought me now?"

"It isn't rubbish!" said Bunter indignantly. "It's a report of the great fight."

"Oh!"

"And what's more it's jolly good stuff! It knocks all other reports into fits, and I shall expect to be paid at the rate of a penny a word."

"No harm in your expecting!" said Wharton drily. "Hand over your article, and quit!"

Billy Bunter obeyed.

GREYFRIARS LANDMARKS



THE CRYPT

A dim and dismal place is this,
Where monks of old held meetings;
You see the spiders in their bliss,
You hear some ghostly greetings.
Your throbbing heart beats quick and loud,
You pause in fear and wonder;
You long for sunshine and the crowd,
And hate to be "down under."

Here, in the grim and gloomy crypt,
Beneath the ancient cloisters,
The merry monks once sat and sipped
Their wine, and ate their oysters.
The monks have vanished long ago,
They're gone, but not forgotten;
Man dwells no longer here below,
The place is rank and rotten!

And yet the crypt has been of use,
For when the Hun invaders,
On Greyfriars School their bombs let loose,
We here defied the raiders.
We heard the anti-aircraft guns,
We heard the bombs descending,
But here found safety from the Huns,
Who failed to catch us bending!

This dim vault also plays its part
When anyone transgresses,
And munches cake and apple tart,
Within its dark recesses.
Here Billy Bunter sometimes comes,
With tuck which has been raided;
Like monks of old, he leaves no crumbs,
But scoffs the lot, as they did!

I do not love thee, dingy crypt,
You favour not the muses;
For on your stony floor I've slipped,
And I'm a mass of bruises!
I much prefer the open air,
The footer field and river;
To be a prisoner down there
Would make the bravest shiver!

When the fat junior had gone Wharton took the precaution of locking the door. Then he threw himself into the armchair, and prepared to read the four reports which had been handed in. He was bursting with eagerness to know how Bob Cherry had fared in his fight with Bolsover major.

The first manuscript he perused happened to be Tom Brown's.

The writer evidently believed in brevity, for his description of the fight was short and sweet. It ran as follows:

"STIRRING CONTEST IN THE GYM! HOW THE BEST MAN WON!"

"In the historic gymnasium of Greyfriars, before a packed audience, Bob Cherry encountered Percy Bolsover in fistic combat.

"The first round was tame.

"The second round was ditto.

"The third round resembled a display of fireworks. Bob Cherry drove his burly opponent round the ring, amid great excitement.

"Bolsover was soon in a bad way. He was suffering from injuries to the nose, eyes, ears, jaw, ribs, and spine. He pleaded for quarter, but none was given, and Bob Cherry finally dispatched his opponent with a blow on the solar plexus.

"Bob's victory was well-deserved, and he showed his chivalry by assisting the ambulance men to convey Bolsover major to the Cottage Hospital."

"Good!" muttered Harry Wharton. "I'm awfully glad Bob won. Afraid I can't publish Brown's report, though. There's not enough of it. It's more like a 'stop press' announcement than a full report. I expected better things from Brown. Now let's see what Inky's got to say."

Hurree Singh's report ran as follows:

"THE TERRIFIC SCRAPFULNESS! BOLSOVER MAJOR LICKFULLY THRASHES BOB CHERRY!"

"The English playwright, William Shakespeare, has informally told us that, 'twice armed is he who hath his quarrel justfully; but thrice is he armed who gets his blow in justfully.'

"The wisdom of this esteemed saying was demonstrated in the Greyfriars gymnasium

this afternoon, when Bolsover major defeatfully licked Bob Cherry in the first roundfulness.

"As the special reporter of 'The Greyfriars Herald,' I was allotfully given a seat on the box-horse, which served as a Press box. I was thus enabled to obtainfully get a clearful view of the fistful combat.

"The applause, as the two combatants squared up face-to-facefully, was terrific.

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Now then, Bob!"

"Knock him into the middle portion of next weekfulness!"

"These, and other cries, resoundfully echoed through the gym.

"The referee consultfully glanced at his watchfulness, and blew the whistle for the esteemed kick-off.

"My Cherryful chum was in great form, but he could not breakfully get through Bolsover's guardfulness. And presently Bolsover sailed in dashfully, and administered the dotfulness on the boko.

"Bob Cherry went crashfully to the mat, and in my dismay I toppled from my perchfulness.

"Buck up, Bob!" urged the supportful partisans of my Cherryful chum. "Surely you haven't shot your boltfulness? Get up, man, and give Bolsover the sockfulness!"

"But Bob failed to bobfully bob up again; and the groanfulness, as the referee counted him out, was terrific!

"Thus ended the terrific scrapfulness."

"M-m-my only aunt!" gasped Harry Wharton when he had finished reading that extraordinary report.

He scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

According to Tom Brown, the fight had been won by Bob Cherry. According to Hurree Singh, it had been won by Bolsover major.

"There's something wrong somewhere," said Wharton dazedly. "They can't both have won. Either Tom Brown's indulging in flights of fancy, or else Inky is."

For some moments Wharton remained in a state of utter stupefaction. Then he picked up Dick Penfold's report.

"Now we shall see what really did happen," he told himself.

And he settled down to read the third report of what Hurree Singh had described as "the terrific scrapfulness!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

DICK PENFOLD is quite a decent fellow. But unfortunately there's a strain of lunacy in his make-up. You see, he's a poet. And all poets have bats in their belfry.

Just as some fellows can never keep their hands from picking and stealing, so Dick Penfold can never keep his brain—such as it is—from evolving poetry. Instead of reporting the Cherry-Bolsover contest in good, honest prose, as any civilised person would do, he had reported it in rhyme. And his version of the affair ran as follows:

ROBERT CHERRY VERSUS BOLSOVER MAJOR!

"Quite an Exciting Scrap, I wager!

"By DICK PENFOLD.

"It was a winter evening,
And in the crowded gym
Two boxers fought, as boxers ought,
With energy and vim.
A storm of cheering rent the air,
For Bob had backers everywhere!

"Bob started with a smashing left
That laid Bolsover flat;
The bully rose, and punched Bob's nose—
That made it tit-for-tat!
Then came a spell of rush and thrust,
(I couldn't see the ring for dust.)

"Bob gained the honours in Round One,
Bolsover in the second;
And in Round Three, the referee
To both the boxers beckoned,
And cried, 'Your faces are a sight!
You've had enough. I'll stop the fight!'

"'You silly chump!' Bob Cherry roared,
'We haven't started yet.
We mean to go twelve rounds, you know;
No need to get upset.
Although our faces are disfigured
They're handsomer than yours!' (Crowd
sniggered.)

"At this the referee grew wild,
He tried to part the boxers;
A fierce free fight ensued, and then
I had an awful shock, sirs
I toppled headlong from my seat
Amid a mass of arms and feet!

"I will not dwell upon that scene
Of chaos and disaster;
I crawled away from the affray
In search of strapping-plaster.
As for the thrilling fight I saw,
The final verdict was, 'A Draw!'"

"A draw!" gasped Harry Wharton, in blank amazement. "Well, I'm beat! I've read three versions of the fight, and they're all different. Tom Brown declares that Bob Cherry won; Inky says it was the other way about; and Penfold calls it a draw. Dashed if I know which of these reports to publish. They can't all be correct!"

The editor of "The Greyfriars Herald" was almost at his wits' end. He ran his fingers through his curly hair, and stared blankly at the manuscripts which were piled on his knee.

The harassed editor then remembered that he had yet another report of the fight in the gym—the report which Billy Bunter had written.

"If Bunter's account tallies with one of the others," he said, "I shall take it to be genuine. It can't very well differ from all the rest—that's one blessing. Where is it? Oh, here we are! I could tell Bunter's spidery scrawl a mile off."

Harry Wharton then proceeded to read Billy Bunter's version of the fight. It was an amazing narrative, and it was worded thus:

"THE GRATE FITE. IN THE JIM!"

BY WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER.

"At 5 o'clock this afternoon, deer reeders, Bob Cherry was dew to meat Bolsover major in the jim. But at 5 minnits to 5 his curridge failed him.

"As I was wending my way to the seen of the kombat, Bob Cherry tapt me on the sholder. I notissed that his face was as pail

as deth, and he was tremmlin like a naspen leef.

"What's rong, Bob?' I inkwired.

"Everythink!' he cride horsely. 'I arranjed to fite Bolsover major at 5 o'clock, and now that the time has come I'm in a blew funk.'

"Cowherd' I said skornfully. 'I mite have 'known you would show the wite fether.'

Bob Cherry klutched my arm konvulsively. The look of terror on his face would have melted a hart of stoan.

"I—I can't go threw with it!' he muttered. 'Help me, Bunter! We have allways been boozum palls.'

"What, eggactly, do you want me to do?' I asked.

"I want you to take my plaice."

"And fite Bolsover major?"

"Yes."

"I hezzitated. Then, struck by the look of abjeck mizzery on Bob Cherry's face, I kon-sented to take his plaice in the ring.

"Of corse, Bolsover major is a hefty grate booly, considerably above my wate. But I walked boldly into the jim, without any nervus tremmers.

"Want do you want hear?' demanded Bolsover.

"Yore blud!' I replide.

"Rite you are. I'll deel with you as soon as I've nocked out Bob Cherry."

"Bob Cherry is indisposed," I said. "I have there 4 undertaken to fite in his plaice."

"Bolsover larfed—a hollo, mocking larf.

"I'll jolly soon put pade to your akkount, you fat porpuss!' he eksclaimed.

"And the neckst minnit, having donned the gloves, we were fiting hammer-and-tongs.

"To give Bolsover major his dew, he fort pluckilly. But of corse he was no match for a seezoned vetteran of the ring like me. I led him a terribul danse in the first rownd, and twice I lade him on his back. But wen the refferree had cownted up to nine, he man-nidged to scrambel to his feat.

"In the sekkond rownd, howevver, I had my oponent at my mersy. He pleaded for 4, but there was nothing doing. 'In an affare of

this sort,' I said, 'no $\frac{1}{2}$ should be asked or givven. Take that, you beestly booly!'

"So saying, I shott out my left, strate from the sholder, and Bolsover went down for good. Eggsperts deklared it was the finest nock-out blow they had ever seen.

"And so, deer reeders, I defeated Bolsover major in fistick kombat. And I think you will agree that it was a fare nock-out!"

Harry Wharton hurled that precious manuscript into his waste-paper basket.

He had hoped to get some definite information concerning the result of the fight; but he was as much in the dark as ever.

Billy Bunter's narrative was, of course, a pure invention from beginning to end. The idea of the fat, ungainly Owl of the Remove defeating Bolsover major was too absurd for words.

"Blessed if I can make head or tail of the business!" grunted Wharton, rising to his feet. "I've read four reports, and I'm still left guessing as to who won the fight."

He paced up and down in his study, and then, chancing to look out of the window, he espied Bob Cherry in the Close.

"Oh, good!" he muttered. "Now I shall be able to find out the real facts of the case."

He thrust his head out of the window and gave a shout.

"Bob! Bob, old man!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, stopping short in his stride and gazing up at the window.

"Who won the fight?"

"Eh?"

"Did you lick Bolsover major?"

"No."

"Oh, crumbs! You don't mean to say he knocked you out?"

"No."

"Then—then it ended in a draw?"

"No."

Wharton looked utterly mystified.

"You didn't win, you didn't lose, and it wasn't a draw," he said in tones of perplexity.

"Would you mind explaining what actually did happen?"

"Nothing."

"What!" shouted Wharton.

"Nothing at all. You see, the fight didn't come off. It was fixed for five o'clock, but shortly before that Bolsover came to me and apologised, and the affair was smoothed over."

Harry Wharton nearly choked.

He could see it all now.

Tom Brown, Dick Penfold, and Hurree Singh had planned a practical joke on the editor of "The Greyfriars Herald." They had reported an imaginary fight, and they had deliberately arranged that their reports should differ from one another.

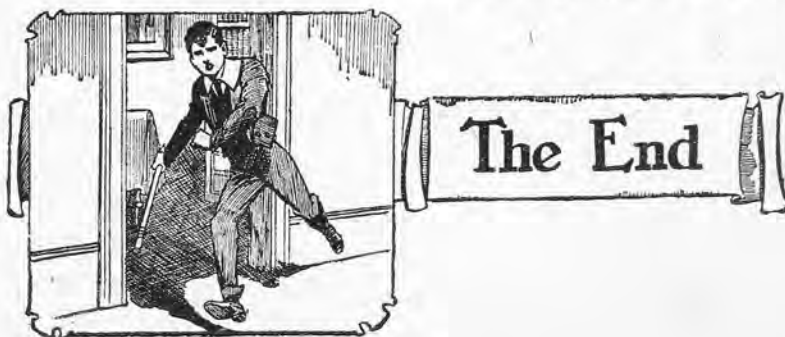
Billy Bunter had also reported an imaginary fight. But Bunter's motives had been different from the rest. He wanted to see his article in print, and to be paid for it at the rate of a penny a word.

Needless to state, the fat junior was unlucky.

As for Harry Wharton, he caught up a cricket-stump and rushed full-pelt from the study.

He was going to look for Tom Brown, Dick Penfold, and Hurree Singh.

The three practical jokers, however, were wise in their generation. They had vanished!





GREYFRIARS WHO'S WHO

Brief Pen Pictures of the Most Popular Characters at Greyfriars. Compiled by the Editor of the "Magnet" Library, in Conjunction with Mr. Frank Richards

GREYFRIARS is a college pleasantly situated near the coast of Kent, and is one of the most famous of our great public schools.

Greyfriars is divided into seven Forms, each Form having its own football and cricket elevens. There are junior and senior rooms, and the school is amply supplied with tennis, fives, and racquet courts. There is a hockey ground, and Big and Little Side, on which two games can proceed at the same time. The River Sark, which flows close to the playing fields, is greatly used by the Greyfriars boys for boating and bathing purposes. There is no division into houses at Greyfriars. The one building is easily large enough to accommodate all the boys at present.

SCHOOL COLOURS: Blue and White.

TELEPHONE: 106 Courtfield.

FOOTBALL COLOURS:

First Eleven.—Blue jerseys with white cuffs. White knickers.

Junior Eleven.—Light blue shirts. Blue knickers.

HEADMASTER: THE REV. HERBERT HENRY LOCKE, D.D.

Some Notes on the Leading Characters:

SIXTH FORM.

FORM-MASTER: DOCTOR LOCKE.

WINGATE, GEORGE BERNARD.—The captain of Greyfriars, and head prefect. A fine fellow with a rugged but good-natured face. Liked by both masters and boys. Captain of the First XI.

BENSON, HOWARD.—A studious fellow who pals with Coker minor.

CARNE, ARTHUR WOODHEAD.—A bully and a rotter. Holds a place in the First XI, but spoils any chances of achievement by playing the gay dog.

COKER, REGINALD (Coker minor).—The undersized and weakly brother of the great Horace. A good fellow, hopeless as a disciplinarian; often maltreated by bullies, but stoutly championed by his brother.

DOONE, ARTHUR.—A big, burly senior, who backs up Wingate, and could put up a strong scrap if needs be. Has a brother in the Upper Fourth.

FAULKNER, LAWRENCE.—A prefect chum of Wingate's, of a good average ability. A very keen footballer.

GWYNNE, PATRICK.—Pure Irish, and a jolly good

sort. The best chum of Wingate, a prefect liked by everybody, and a real sportsman.

HAMMERSLEY, VINCENT.—A tall, strapping prefect, and an all-round sportsman.

LODER, GERALD ASSHETON.—The biggest black-guard within the four walls of Greyfriars, bar none. An unscrupulous bully and adventurer, dissipated, a coward, and a funk. False to everybody—even to those who call themselves his friends. Hates the Famous Five, and Wingate.

NORTH, TOM.—A fairly easy-going prefect, who usually looks after the fags. He is greatly liked by them owing to his decent nature.

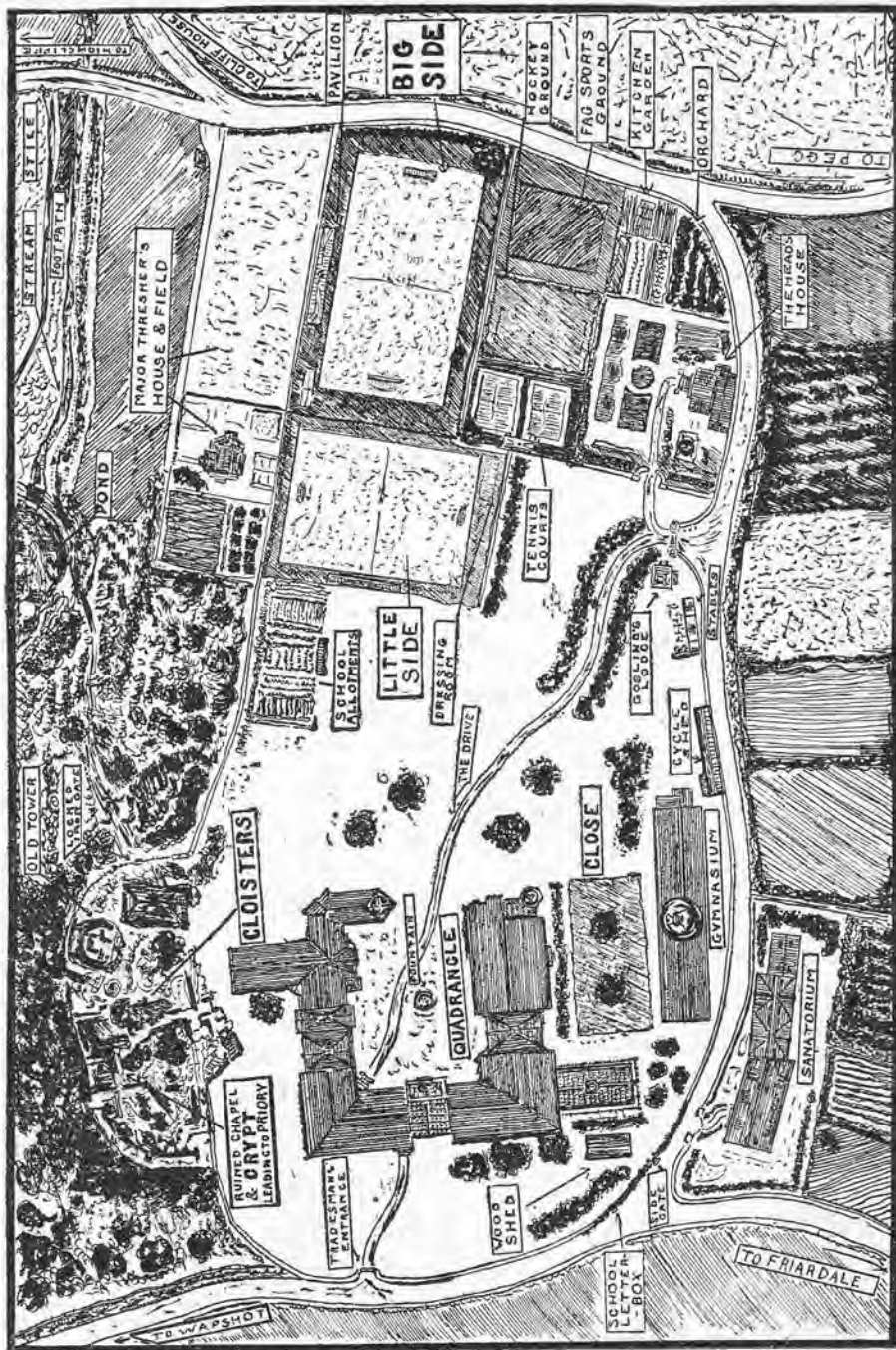
REYNOLDS, ROBERT.—A good fellow, who would make a good leader if chosen, but would not offer or impose.

TREMAINE, CHARLES.—One of the tallest of the Sixth Form. He has taken Arthur Courtney's place as a prefect. He and his chum Faulkner both hail from the West of England.

WALKER, JAMES.—A prefect, and a better fellow than Carne and Loder. Has associated with them a good deal, but has recently dropped them, and taken

The adventures of the famous Greyfriars schoolboys are chronicled every week in the "Magnet" Library.

WHAT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL LOOKS LIKE FROM AN AEROPLANE



A clever study, giving a bird's-eye view of the school in great detail. This drawing is the work of Robert Donald Ogilvy, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, who aspires to be a full-blown architect one day.

up sports. At his best he is a generous and decent fellow.

YATES, GEORGE FREDERICK.—A staunch senior and a general mover in all Sixth Form enterprises.

FIFTH FORM.

FORM-MASTER: PAUL PONTIFEX PROUT, M.A.

BLUNDELL, GEORGE.—Captain of the Fifth. A fellow with sound principles. A valuable man in the footer and cricket elevens. Sometimes falls foul of Coker. (Study No. 1.)

BLAND, BERTRAM.—Blundell's closest and most reliable chum. Will back up his leader through thick and thin, a good sportsman, and a fellow very much after his leader's pattern. (Study No. 1.)

COKER, HORACE JAMES.—A big, burly member of the Fifth. Spells worse than badly, and plays football in a way that ought to bring him great fame as a comedian. Has a brain of a boy of six, and the muscles of a man. His self-conceit makes him an attractive target for japes of every description. (Study No. 4.)



George Blundell

FITZGERALD, TERENCE.—A cheery good sort in every way. Capable and humorous. Pokes fun at Horace Coker, and at things in general. The study-mate of Smith major. (Study No. 2.)

GREENE, WILLIAM FREDERICK.—One of Coker's two special chums. Fond of Coker, especially when the great Horace is well supplied with funds. A bit of a poet, good at games, and quite a decent fellow. (Study No. 4.)

HILTON, CEDRIC.—A fellow who played the leading part in one yarn. But he carried an unreasonable outburst altogether too far, and spoilt all chances of success. (Study No. 6.)

POTTER, GEORGE.—The other chum of Horace Coker. The same kind of fellow as Greene, but a member of the footer and cricket elevens. (Study No. 4.)

PRICE, STEPHEN.—A dark-haired fellow of uncertain temperament. Once chummed with Bulstrode of the Remove, but gave him up when he was raised from the Shell to Fifth. (Study No. 5.)

SMITH, EDWARD WILLIAM.—One of the right sort. Has a brother in the Remove, and another in the Second. (Study No. 2.)

TOMLINSON, THOMAS TROTTER.—Tomlinson major. Has a brother in the Upper Fourth. A burly fellow, very fond of boxing. (Study No. 6.)

WAVERY, FRANK.—Takes after D'Arcy of St. Jim's, for style. Has more money than he knows what to do with. (Study No. 3.)



Mr. Hacker, Master of the Shell

musical genius of Greyfriars, and the study-mate of Hobson. Very ambitious, and quite conceited of his own skill. Has tried his hand at composing, as yet without success. (Study No. 5.)

JACKSON, PHILBERT.—Another nut. Jackson is well known to Greyfriars as exceptionally good at fancy skating on ice. He is also good at roller skating. (Study No. 4.)

LANGE, ARNOLD LAWRENCE.—Lange is known generally as the "mad inventor." But his inventions are of the Skimpole type—they never work! At times one would find his apartment looking very weird. At others he has tastes like Jackson. (Study No. 6.)

MILES, SAMUEL.—Shares Study 1 with Carr, and like him is a member of the Middle School Eleven.

RAYNOR, NEIL.—The study-mate of Stewart. Is a fair hand at writing, and is sound enough. (Study No. 3.)

ROBINSON, JACK.—A study-mate of Jackson, and a fellow of his type. Robinson is particularly bright at class-work, and often lends a hand to study-mate, Jackson—who's not up to that work. (Study No. 4.)

STEWART, EDWARD.—A firm, resolute Scot, and a good sort. (Study No. 3.)

The members of all forms from the Sixth to the Shell, inclusive are considered to be in the "Upper School" at Greyfriars, and consequently rank as seniors. From the Upper Fourth downwards the boys count as juniors. Further "Pen Pictures" of well-known characters at Greyfriars appear elsewhere in this issue.

SHELL.

FORM-MASTER: HORACE MANFRED HACKER, B.A.

HOBSON, JAMES.—The captain of the Form. A muscular and robust fellow, who is neither ladylike, or in favour of Hoskins' "music." A good footballer, and a keen cricketer. (Study No. 5.)

CARR, ALBERT.—A chum of Miles, and a member of the Middle School eleven. (Study No. 1.)

CHOWNE, CHOLMONDELEY.—A dandified fellow, who seeks after the society of the Sixth. (Study No. 2.)

CHURCHILL, LUKE.—Shares Study No. 2 with Chowne. The pair seem to hit it together all right. But Churchill is not an easy fellow to understand, and not too popular in consequence. (Study No. 2.)

HOSKINS, CLAUDE.—The musical genius of Greyfriars, and the study-mate of Hobson. Very ambitious, and quite conceited of his own skill. Has tried his hand at composing, as yet without success. (Study No. 5.)



Horace Coker

KING COKER!

Words by FRANK RICHARDS.

Music by MONTAGUE CRIDDLE.

PIANO.



1. I'm Co-ker of the Fifth, you know, a migh-ty man, and fa-mous; The
2. Good eric-ker-ers are born, not made, the sport-ing ex-perts tell us; And
3. If Nel-son and Na-po-le-on, and all the he-ros splen-did, Could



Head, why, gee! com-pared with me he's quite an ig-no-ra-mus! My spell-ing is a
John-ny Hobbs would shake with sobs (he'd be so jol-ly jea-lous!) If he could see me
be re-stored to life a-gain, and in-to one man blend-ed, With just a dash of



work of art, all lan-gua-ges I'm pat in; You'd sim-ply shriek to see my Greek, and
ma-king runs, at Grey-friars, by the mil-lion- Why, e-very "six" dis-lod-ges bricks, and
Crom-well, and of Wol-sey (wise old croak-er!) The re-sult would be, why, sim-ply ME- the



hear my mod-ern La-tin!
shat-ters the pa-vi-lion!
one and ou-ly Co-ker!

CHORUS.

Oh, I'm Co-ker of the Fifth, you know, The Fifth, the Fifth of No-ven-ber! And the kids all cry, "An-
Oh, I'm Co-ker of the Fifth, you know, The Fifth, the Fifth of No-ven-ber! At foot-er, too, I can
Oh, I'm Co-ker of the Fifth, you know, The Fifth, the Fifth of No-ven-ber! And I'm hailed a-like by

- o-ther guy!" When my tall and e-le-gant form they spy, For it's Co-ker of the Fifth am I—The
deft-ly roll The lea-ther thro' my own team's goal! I'm the Freak of the Fifth, up-on my soul—The
friend and foe As a su-per-man of "push and go," I'm the big-gest guy of the Fifth (what ho!)—The

Fifth, the Fifth of No-ven-ber!



Billy Bunter's Letter

To the Editor of "The Holiday Annual."

(Billy Bunter assures me that this contribution is quite original. I am sure it is—especially the spelling!—Ed. "H. A.")

DEER EDDITER,—I can't refrane
From sending you these verses;
I humbly hope they won't call fourth
Yore edditorial kurses!

I pickcher you in sollum state
Mid piles of kontributions,
Wich deel with skooldays, war, and luv,
And publick exeukutions!

But when you get this ripping rime,
All other things you'll bannish;
Into yore baskit's yorning depths
The manuscripps will vannish.

And you will say, "I have no time
To read this silly drivvel
Of luv and war, in days of yore;
Such nonsense makes me snivvel!

"I'll put all other things aside
And read this ode of Billy's;
His speling is a work of art,
And how inspired his quill is!"

Of corse, deer Ed., you no fool well
I'm not an igneramus;
I boast a massiff, mity brane,
And sum day I'll be famus!

Bob Cherry offen says that if
I serve my fello-man well,
I'm bownd to reech my final gole—
The marbel halls of Hanwell!

And Quelchy slapps me on the back
And cries, "Within this kollidge
There's not a single sole, my boy,
Who has yore (lack of) nollidge!"

Upon the footbawl feeld I'm grate!
And one day, sir, you *shall* see
A certain plump and podgy youth
Play for the 'Spurs or Chelsea!

I am a norther, too, of fame
(Did I not pen this ditty?)
Why, even bards like Kipperling
Regard my work with—pitty!

And that reminds me—if you wish
To publish this effusion,
Pleese send a check, sir, by return
(And thus prevvent konfusion!)

And mind the check's a big one, sir
(Methinks I heer you snigger!)
I hope the sum resembles *me*—
A fat, sub-shul figger!

I wish you, from my hart, sucksess
With all yore ripping papers
In wich you pubblish, weak by weak,
Fool detales of our kapers!

I'll toddle to the tuckshopp now
(I'm hungry as a hunter!)
And I remane, for wheel or whoa,
Yores trewly—BILLY BUNTER!



THE DORMITORY FIGHT!

By DICK PENFOLD

(The Poet of the Remove at Greyfriars)

"I guess I'll knock him into fits!"
Said Fisher Tarleton Fish.
"You jays can then pick up the bits
Of Bunter, if you wish!"

"I've not encountered," Bunter said,
"A swankier lad than Fish is!"
You chaps will bear *him* out, instead
Of bearing out his wishes!"

We gathered round by candle-light
And watched them face each other;
Said I, "If Bunty wins this fight
I'll hug him like a brother!"

Frank Nugent was the referee,
He fished an ancient clock out,
And murmured, "We shall shortly see
A really thrilling knock-out!"

"Go it, ye cripples!" I exclaimed,
Amid a storm of clapping;
Then, with clenched fists and eyes in-
flamed,
The scrappers started scrapping!

Fish led off with a Highland fling,
And then his fists got busy;
And Billy Bunter, poor old thing,
Sat down and gasped, "Where is he?"

"Up, Bunty, up! On, Billy, on!
Summon the grit that's in you!
Six seconds have already gone!
Rise, porpoise, and continue!"

"Unless you floor your fishy foe
We'll bump you!" hooted Morgan.
Then Bunter rose, and aimed a blow
At Fishy's nasal organ!

A smashing blow, a crashing blow—
A blow that found its billet!
So loud was the applause, you know,
That not a soul could still it!

The Yankee junior gave a groan,
For he was in a sore way;
His seven-stone-four of flesh and bone
Fell huddled in the doorway!

Then Quelchy strode upon the scene,
His brow was black as thunder.
"Boys! What does this disturbance
mean?
Who started it, I wonder?"

"'Twas Billy Bunter, sir!" howled Fish.
"'Twas Fishy!" hooted Billy.
"Be silent!" Quelchy cried. "I wish
You'd try to be less silly!"

"In future, boys, your holidays
Are subject to suspension;
And many melancholy days
You'll spend in dull detention!"

We carried Fishy back to bed,
(A human tub had licked him!)
"Here lies the body," Nugent said,
"Of Billy Bunter's victim!"



By MORTON PIKE

A Magnificent Long, Complete Tale of the Outlaws of Sherwood Forest, and the Sheriff of Nottingham Forest

THE FIRST CHAPTER

A Sack of Silver, and What Happened to It

IT was ten of the clock, and quite dark, but in spite of the lateness of the hour the streets of the good town of Nottingham were very busy.

Carpenters hammered, lights flitted hither and thither, men shouted one to another, and the bustle and confusion denoted that something was taking place.

The Sheriff of Nottingham was dead. Folks said that Robin Hood and his merry men had broken his heart; be that as it may, a new sheriff had been appointed by the King, and would arrive early next day, and the citizens of Nottingham were doing their best to give him a good reception.

Through the bustle of busy work and men the crowds of idle onlookers, who ought to have been all a-bed, came half a dozen armed men, escorting two who carried a heavy burden between them, the group being headed by Robin's old enemy, Thomas the Dog, who, thanks to fawning on his late master, was now installed in the porter's lodge under the sheriff's gateway.

"Room, varlets, place, I say!" cried Thomas the Dog, in a tone of authority, motioning back the citizens with a wave of his drawn sword. And as the little band passed

along the winding streets, scowling looks were cast upon the insolent Jack-in-office who put on as many airs as though he had been the sheriff himself.

It is very strange how things come about, and if the seneschal who had charge of the late sheriff's household had been at home when they reached the gateway, this story would never have been written.

Under the frowning shadow of the arch paced a soldier with a brown-bill on his shoulder, and to him spake Thomas the Dog: "Hast seen Master Faulkner?" said he.

"Ay, marry," replied the guard. "He hath but lately gone forth."

"Now a plague upon it!" said the spy. "But no matter. Carry your burden into the lodge, men, until the seneschal returns. 'Twill be safer there than anywhere else with all this coming and going, and who knows what rogues finding their way about."

The men did as he bade them, and ducking their heads under the little door built in the side of the archway itself, they set their burden heavily down on the brick pavement, not sorry to be rid of its weight.

Then they went away with their companions to the buttery, and as Thomas the Dog closed the door of the stone room, his wife came forward, with curiosity in her eyes.

"What have you there, Thomas?" she said.

She was a hard-featured, thin-lipped woman with jet-black hair, and a crafty expression on her face.

"Hush, not so loud, wife!" said Thomas, pointing to the sack, which bulged with its contents. "I would not that folks should know what that bag holds."

A curious smile played about his mouth, raising her curiosity to boiling point.

"You must know," he said, "that our new sheriff hath the will to make himself popular in the town, and that sack holds silver marks, three thousand of them, wife, which he will fling by handfuls to the crowd of gazers at the tourney to-morrow."

The woman's face turned very white, and her eyes gazed at the bag with a curious fascination.

"Good money," she said, in a low voice, "wasted on idle knaves, when we have worked hard to no purpose."

Thomas the Dog grew very still, and then began to tremble a little in the knees.

"A capful out of that sack would mean much to us," she continued, "and the new sheriff would never miss it."

"Nay, nay!" broke in Thomas the Dog quickly, all the same lowering his voice and glancing at the door. "I have just received it from the hands of Absolom, the usurer, in exchange for a parchment bond that was brought to the seneschal by a mounted man at sunset. I saw the money told out with my own eyes."

His wife looked at him sharply.

"Wert alone with the usurer?"

"Marry, that was I."

"Then thou art a fool, friend Thomas!" said his amiable spouse, with a cackling laugh. "Even supposing our new master had it counted again, is not thy word better than that of a Jew?"

"Hush, not so loud!" said Thomas the Dog. And, taking his evil chin in his dirty hand, he fell to pacing backwards and forwards in the little room, which was lit by one solitary candle that flickered in the draught.

The woman stood with her arms akimbo, her greedy eyes fixed in gloating on the sack, and it was at that moment that a little white face showed itself against the deeper

darkness of an inner doorway, and two large, brown, hungry eyes fastened themselves on the pair.

"The risk is too great, Alitha," said Thomas the Dog. "Moreover, the sack is sealed."

"Thou tomfool!" sneered his dame. "Is it not also sewed? And who is to know that my needle fastened up the rent my scissors made? Thou art but a cowardly rascal all said and done!"

"The black death seize you! Your tongue tempts like the serpent in the garden!" said the spy, his voice not so low but that the listener could hear every word of it.

"Leave that to me," said the woman. "All is scurry and bustle, and what we take will never be missed, but we must wait until the gate is closed for the night. Meantime, go thou into the garden and bring me a horse-bucket full of earth and stones."

The spy's eyes glistened, but he still hesitated.

"Listen!" she hissed. "Thou art porter to-night, to-morrow the new sheriff may send thee packing, and not a penny saved!"

Thomas the Dog nodded.

"I will go," he whispered. And he hurriedly left the room.

It wanted little short of midnight before the great gate closed with a clang, and the disturbed household sank into a semblance of repose.

Then, when there was no sound without but the melancholy footfall of the sentinel pacing the courtyard, and the moan of the night wind under the archway, Thomas the Dog and his wife came stealthily into the little stone room once more, and set a lamp on the table.

Even then the spy stole on tiptoe to the door and felt the bolts and bars to make assurance doubly sure; but his wife lost no time in kneeling beside the sack of money, and for the second time that little white face with the hungry eyes peered out of the darkness of the recessed doorway behind them.

A few deft snips with her scissors, and the seam of the sack gaped into a rent through which one could have thrust both hands.

"Hist!" whispered Thomas. "Wait till

the sentinel has passed. And wert not well to peep and see that the whelp is safe a-bed ! ”

“ The whelp ! ” said his wife, with a contemptuous sneer. “ He will not stir forth, for I have beaten him black and blue, for that he did loiter on an errand to-day gaping no doubt at the gay cloths and floating banners instead of running there and back as I did tell him to. ” Nevertheless as she spoke she glanced over her shoulder, but the little white face shrank deeper into the shadow, and she saw him not.

Presently it emerged again, the eyes dilating with astonishment as Dame Algitha drew out handful after handful of silver pieces, which she laid in her apron spread upon the floor.

“ Soft, wife — soft ! ” said the spy, laying his hand on her arm. “ Thou must not be too greedy, else our lives may pay for it ! ”

“ Nay, fool ! ” she whispered, in reply. “ If any must suffer, it must be the Jew. Thou hast but to raise an outcry, and the citizens will burn him and his house. ”

“ Thou art no fool ! ” said Thomas with a look of admiration.

“ Save only when I married thee, ” she replied, withdrawing her hand for the last time, with a sigh. “ It irks me sore to leave so much good money to be tossed among yonder fools. Now, then, fill up the space while I hold the rent open. ”

Thomas the Dog did as he was bid, and when he had emptied the contents of the bucket, and the sack once more swelled out to its original size, the crafty woman took needle and thread and sewed up the opening so cleverly that none could have told it had ever been touched.

The lamp threw their shadows in huge,

black forms upon the walls and ceiling, as, kneeling side by side, they counted out the coins they had stolen.

“ Six hundred and twenty silver marks ! ” said Algitha, with a triumphant smile. “ And fools we were not to have made it a thousand ! ”

Gathering the apron up by the four corners very cautiously, lest the chink of money should reach the ears of the sentinel, she took the lamp and led the way to their sleeping chamber, pausing as she passed the open door of a bare stone cupboard, for it was little more, where a



As the terrified palfrey plunged up the bank, Robin sprang out upon it, caught the red velvet reins in both hands, and forced the runaway on to its haunches. (See page 30)

straw bed lay among a litter of brooms and kindling.

The owner of the white face was curled up, and, to all appearances, sound asleep, and as she bent over him the face of the woman seemed to grow more than usually evil.

“ Thou little whelp ! ” she muttered. “ If thou had opened so much as an eye I would have killed thee ! ” But when she had gone, and the bolt of their sleeping chamber had creaked noisily into its socket, the half-starved boy opened both eyes, and lay there for a long time gazing into the darkness, and trembling.

The whimper of a hound, a restless neigh

from the stables, the shuffling footfall of the sentinel outside, those were all the sounds that disturbed the night, and presently the hungry eyes closed, and the motherless lad dropped into a troubled slumber.

When morning broke, Thomas the Dog came out of his lodge, and looked at all the bustle in the courtyard with a furtive twinkling of his red eyes.

The men-at-arms were busy brightening their harness; the grooms were rubbing down the horses with wisps of straw; cooks and scullions ran hither and thither, kicking the dogs that got under their feet, and sometimes one of them would resent it and fasten his white teeth in a tempting calf, and there would be a yell and a commotion, and if the dog were wise he bolted out of the gateway, and joined the outlaw dogs in the town.

"Now then, whelp!" snapped Dame Algitha, "break thy fast on this crust, and get thee to thy kennel! We are too poor to waste money on new clothes for such as thou, who art but an encumbrance, and our new lord must not see thee all rags and tatters. Set not thy nose outside this day, else will I flay thy back with a strap when thy uncle and I return from the sports in the meadow."

The poor little chap took the crust mechanically, and stood like one half dazed.

So he was not to see the knights and the ladies, and the archery and the tilting at the quintain, and all the merry frolic that would be held in honour of the Sheriff's coming.

Cuffed, beaten, and half starved since his cruel aunt had taken him under her charge on his mother's death, the lad's life had been a misery to him, and he envied the dogs, who, at any rate, found bones enough in plenty amid the rushes in the big hall, and could come and go at will.

As a great sob came into his throat, and the unbidden tears welled up into the brown eyes, one of his four-footed friends shot past the open door of the room to seek refuge among the crowd that even then was streaming towards the meadows, and all at once a great resolve came into the boy's heart, and, bare-headed as he was, with the hard crust of black bread tightly clutched in his hand, he watched his opportunity, and, slipping out into the

archway, dived into the throng of merry-makers, and ran as hard as his legs would carry him.

When he had passed the town gate he slackened his pace, and began to munch his breakfast.

He had no idea whither to go, but the worn had turned at last. This much he knew, he would see the sights and the entry of the sheriff, and after that he would never return to that cold, stone room under the archway, where the wind howled at night, and his aunt Algitha scolded all the day.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

How FitzAlwyn, the New Sheriff, met Martin of Ilkley in the Forest

THERE were high doings in Nottingham town, and all the world was agog to see them.

Sir Alwyn FitzAlwyn, the new sheriff, was expected to arrive in the early forenoon, and the townsfolk had prepared to give him a reception befitting his dignity.

The streets were hung with garlands, gay ribbons fluttered from the maypole. Lists had been erected, covered with crimson cloth, for there was to be tilting of the knights, and a gay city of booths and stalls had grown up round the meadow without the walls.

From east and west, and north and south, people were journeying to see the pageant, and partake of all "the fun of the fair."

It was a lovely morning. Fleecy clouds rolled on the wings of a soft south wind across a sky of brilliant blue, as sundry figures wended their way through the glades of Sherwood Forest in the direction of Nottingham Town.

The outlaws were determined that they would not be left out of it, and disguising themselves as countrymen, they trudged blithely in small groups towards the scene of the coming revels.

Robin had trimmed his beard close, and attired himself in a close-fitting jerkin and hood of Coventry blue, and with his bow slung at his back, and a stout cudgel in his hand, he strode out alone with a thoughtful smile on his handsome face.

"Well, well," he mused, muttering half aloud, "I wonder what manner of man our new sheriff will prove? We led the old one a fine dance, and if Alwyn FitzAlwyn meddles with us, beshrew me, but he will burn his fingers! Pah! Alwyn FitzAlwyn, a Norman to the backbone, no doubt, and a tyrant, which follows in due course. But soft! What do I hear?"

The distant sound of a horse's neigh came on the wind as Robin approached the highway, and, pausing on the edge of a thicket, he looked keenly in that direction.

At that point the forest fell back in a wide clearing where the green grass sprung strongly, and through it the narrow bridge track wound like a white thread.

"Ho, ho!" said the outlaw. "A goodly train of spears, though too far away to read the device that flaunts on the white silk banner. Some nobles, forsooth, come to mock at the sports of the common folk, and since the trees thin out, methinks I will stay where I am and let my lords ride by."

He flung himself down on the flower-bespangled turf in the cool shade of the young saplings, and leaning on his elbow, watched the approaching party.

At their head rode several gentlemen clad in armour that gleamed and glinted like silver in the sun's rays, and beside them caracolled a young girl on a cream-coloured palfrey.

As Robin watched, his eyes grew bright, for out of the forest on a sudden there swooped a head of red deer, at sight of which the on-comers gave a shout.

The timid creatures, already startled, swerved away and bounded back into the trees again, but then a strange thing happened.

Already restive, the cream-coloured palfrey reared and plunged, and taking the bit in its teeth, broke away at full gallop towards the outlaw. A cry of alarm went up from the girl's companions, and, spurring their horses, they galloped in pursuit, the sound of their hoofs like muffled thunder on the turf.

"Pardie, the child rides well," said Robin, "and if the frightened beast keeps to the clearing she will come to no hurt." But the muttered words had scarcely passed his lips

when the palfrey swerved to the left and dashed into the forest.

A hoarse yell of horror came from the horsemen, and, though he had little love for lords and nobles, honest Robin saw only a fellow-creature in danger, and, springing to his feet, darted towards the thick beechwood for which the runaway was making.

Looking over his shoulder as he ran, he saw the girl bend her head as they shot beneath some low branches, and exerting all his speed, he leapt up a sandy bank and bounded to the edge of the wood.

"Now, my beauty," he said, between his set teeth, "an' thou keepest as thou art going now, thou and I wilt meet, and we will see what a pair of strong arms may do to curb thy mad flight."

Crouching behind a trunk, whose smooth, grey bark was dappled with emerald moss, Robin braced himself, and as the terrified palfrey plunged up the bank he sprang out upon it, caught the red velvet reins in both hands, and forced the runaway on to its haunches.

In an instant he had plucked the child from her saddle, and 'twas well he did so, for, as she sank fainting on to his shoulder, the palfrey sprang forward once more, and, charging headlong against a tree, fell dead among the twisted roots.

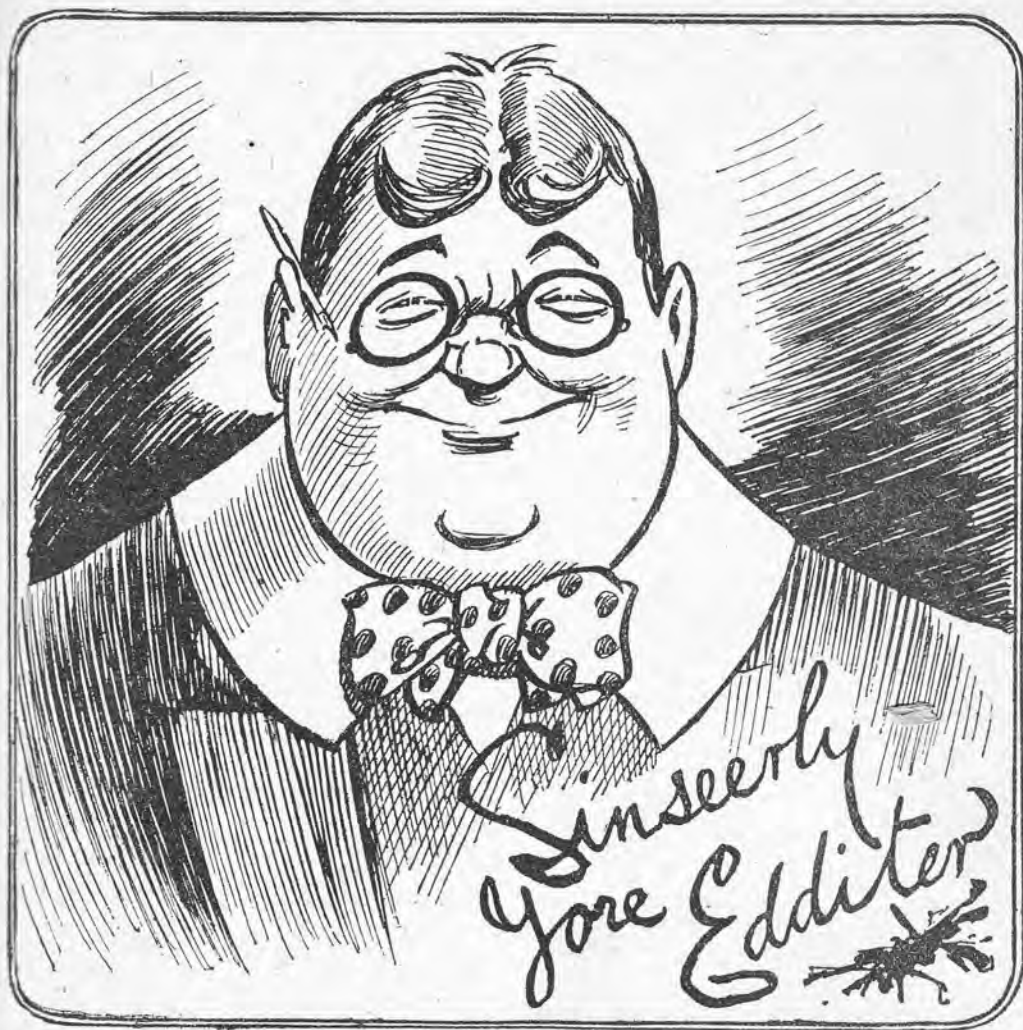
"The saints be thanked!" said Robin. "Another moment and this pretty poppet had shared the fate of her horse!" And, paying no heed to the riders behind him, he ran to a brook, that trickled out of the wood, and, laying the girl down on the crisp leaves, laved her face with water which he scooped up in the hollow of his hands.

The first to arrive was a soldierly-looking man of about fifty, wearing a white surcoat over his armour, on the breast of which was painted a black lion; and, reigning up beside him, he sprang from his saddle with a strange mixture of pious exclamation and Norman oath.

"Gramercy, good fellow!" he cried, sinking on one knee. "I thank thee from the bottom of my heart! Is the child hurt?"

"Nay, sir, I trow not," said Robin. "Methinks she is but affrighted, and even now her eyes begin to open."

PORTRAIT OF AN EDITOR!



The above "studio portrait" of the editor of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" is W. G. Bunter's favourite picture of himself. He says it's exactly like him—and he ought to know! He further declares that it is by a "grate artist," but it is strongly suspected that his young brother, Sammy Bunter, is responsible for it.

He rose slowly to his feet as the soldier took the slim figure in his arms.

It was easy to see that they were father and daughter, for the likeness between them was very strong. True, the man's hair was grizzled, what little could be seen where the line of chain-mail framed his strong face, but it had once been black as the two long plaits that fell about the child's shoulders.

"Father," she whispered, "he saved me!"

And she pointed to Robin, who had crossed his arms on his chest, and stood looking down on them with a strange smile.

"I know it, little one," he replied. "Thou hast my thanks and more, good varlet. What is thy name, and whose man art thou? Thou shalt learn that Alwyn FitzAlwyn is not ungrateful."

Robin started in spite of himself.

"Then, my lord, thou art the new Sheriff of Nottingham?" he said.

"You say truly," replied the soldier; "though but for your timely aid I had cursed the day the King conferred that honour upon me. Thy hand and thy name, good fellow?"

And their fingers closed in a firm clasp as Sir Alwyn's companions came riding up in great haste.

"They call me Martin of Ilkley," said the outlaw. "I am a herdman to whom my master hath given a holiday that I might shoot in a shaft yonder, having some skill with the bow."

"Then, Martin of Ilkley, thou shalt journey with us, and thou shalt carry back with thee a guerdon that shall make thee glad of this day. Come, *chérie*, thou must be content to ride behind me, and friend Martin shall show us the way to Nottingham. I doubt not even now the citizens are clamouring since we are over-late as it is."

Robin thrust his tongue in his cheek, made search for his bow, which he had flung aside, and then, with head bent and aspect of due humility, as became a poor man in the presence of the high and mighty sheriff, he set out with a long stride, thinking many things.

"Come hither, Martin of Ilkley!" said the sheriff. "I would fain have some speech with thee touching certain rogues who have

their home in the forest. I have special mandate from our liege the King to hunt down Fitzooth, the outlaw, and I have sworn a solemn vow to do it. Tell me, what manner of man is he?"

"Nay, my lord," said Robin. "He differs not from most, seeing that he hath two legs, and a cool head on his shoulders. As for thy vow, 'tis said the late sheriff died of nothing less than a broken heart, for the outlaw bears a charmed life, and is slippery as an eel."

"Eel or no eel," said the sheriff sternly, "a vow is a vow, and the dogs shall see that Alwyn FitzAlwyn will keep it!"

"Who is Fitzooth, father," said the girl, who rode with her arms entwined in the sheriff's belt, "and what hath he done?"

"The man is a robber, sweetheart," replied FitzAlwyn, "who steals men's purses on the highway—a very rogue, for whom hanging is too good."

"And where doth he live?" said the little maid.

"He maketh his lair in the forest," said the sheriff, "shooting the King's deer for meat—but what is this? I see great concourse of horsemen, who, having espied us, are coming forward with music and banners waving."

"They be the mayor and aldermen, my lord, come to bid you welcome," said Robin, and he fell back a few paces, not wishing to attract the eyes of some among the wealthy merchants whose purses he had lightened more than once.

There was great braying of trumpets and doffing of caps, and the mayor, dismounting, kissed the stirrup of the King's officer in token of obedience, and then the two parties joined and rode forward to the town amid the shouts of the vast multitude that lined the road, all agape to see their new master.

At the first opportunity, Robin mingled with the crowd, and was joined by Will Scarlet and Little John, who, like himself, was clad in Coventry blue, and when Robin had told them of the adventure that had befallen him, the three companions fell to laughing heartily.

"'Tis one thing to make vows, and another to keep them," said Will Scarlet, "as FitzAlwyn will find to his cost—but listen, Robin, we, too, have news, for scarce had we come

hither when we chanced upon the servant of the old Jew, Absolom, who told us that his master received a mysterious warning last night, bidding him not to stir forth to-day, if he values his life, and to see that his bolts and bars be well secured."

"Ho, ho, what means that, I wonder?" said Robin thoughtfully. "Absolom is a right worthy man. Is it possible that there will be a Jew-baiting to honour the coming of the new sheriff? To say truth, this FitzAlwyn pleases me, but he will be a hard opponent. Bid some of our lads keep watch from time to time on Master Absolom's dwelling, which is in the narrow lane leading from the market-place, and now let us mingle with the frolic. Gramercy! Look at poor Friar Tuck; 'tis a judgment on his fat sides that an old wife's kirtle and hood is the only disguise that will hide him from his enemies!"

It was a motley throng that had assembled to take its simple pleasures and its rough-and-tumble frolic in that broad meadow by the swift Trent.

Merchant and trader, weaver and butcher, master-man and apprentice jostled each other good-humouredly under the blue sky, and through the throng stole the little lad Edgar, his eyes wide open with delight, and the half eaten crust still tightly gripped in his hand.

True, from time to time he kept a wary eye for sight of Dame Alghitha, who, arrayed in a kirtle of Kendal green, had adorned herself with bunches of bright yellow ribbon, so that she looked for all the world like a bad bilious attack out for a holiday.

And now Sir Alwyn FitzAlwyn rode on

to the ground attended by his retinue of sturdy men-at-arms and the principal burgesses of the town, and dismounting from his horse, he seated himself upon a low platform that had been erected, draped with cloth of crimson, his little daughter, who had recovered from her fright of the morning, sitting on a cushion by his side.

"Now, Master Herald," cried the new sheriff, as two men deposited a heavy sack at his feet, "let your trumpets sound, these



"I am Robin Hood, the Outlaw, my lord, and methinks that Alwyn FitzAlwyn is not like to forget our meeting!" (See page 42.)

gallant knights are dying to break a lance in the gentle joust, and these good citizens and their buxom dames would fain be merry, I trow; so fall to it, and may nothing mar our happiness to-day!"

He passed his arm round his little daughter as he spoke, and as she nestled close to her father's side, FitzAlwyn gained golden opinions from the onlookers.

"La-la!" cried one motherly dame, clapping her fat hands. "Look how he loveth the sweet maid! Like any ordinary father of a child! He hath a tender heart, for certain!"

"And a strong hand, I warrant me," said her husband, who was a flesher from the market. "Methinks 'twill go hard with poor Robin Goodfellow now."

A hand squeezed the man's arm, and, looking up, the sturdy butcher started.

"Hush, friend Nicholas, not a word!" said a tall man in Coventry blue, with his forefinger raised to his lips. "Robin Goodfellow hath a way of taking care of himself!"

"Ay!" said the butcher, with a gleam of gratitude in his eyes. "And of poor folk, too! Never shall I forget, Robin, how thou didst befriend me——"

He did not finish the sentence, for the man in Coventry blue was already working his way through the throng, followed by two others, and a little ragged boy, who had been fascinated by the tall stature and manly bearing of the disguised outlaws, and had attached himself to them at a respectful distance.

"The plague on thee!" snapped Master Nicholas, the butcher, as an enormous woman jostled by him. "Have a look where thou goest, mother!"

The stout woman turned her huge frying-pan face upon him for an instant, and gave him a wink which made the honest man gasp with astonishment, for he recognised Friar Tuck in spite of the wimple and hood that hid as much of his features as any wimple and hood might.

"Out upon it!" muttered Master Nicholas to himself, as his own stout dame looked daggers after the retreating "giantess." "So the rogues are here. Gadzooks! I trust the day will pass without bloodshed!"

The trumpets were sounding now, and then the town herald, in a brand new tabard, proclaimed a solemn joust, and, amid great acclamation from the spectators, half a dozen mounted knights rode their horses toward Sir Alwyn's post of vantage.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

How Thomas the Dog repented him in the Morning, and Martin of Ilkley shot a Good Shoot.

Now, Thomas the Dog missed the jousting of the knights for a very good reason, having other fish to fry. To say the truth, when

morning dawned, the spy began to bitterly repent that tampering with the sack of silver over-night, and he and his wife almost came to blows about the matter.

The nearer drew the time for the coming of the new sheriff, the more anxious became Thomas the Dog, for, so well hated was he in the old household, that he was very desirous to curry favour with Sir Alwyn FitzAlwyn before anyone could put a spoke in his wheel.

He breakfasted at daybreak, and his first act was to summon a brace of servitors to carry the sack into the seneschal's room, where he delivered it over with a sigh of relief.

Still, he was far from happy in his mind, and he hung about the gate, turning over how best to destroy all trace of the theft, and how to perform some deed that should bring him prominently before the sheriff's eye.

"Ha, fool that I am!" he exclaimed at last. "There is only one thing for it—the Jew must die—Black Wynnyn is the man to my hand, and after that, why, if the outlaws come to the sports in the great meadow, I may lay grip on Robin Hood himself, if I am in luck, and here be I letting the moments slip away—ass, dolt, pig!"

I know not how many more choice epithets he would have bestowed on himself—all of them very well deserved, by the way—for at that moment he chanced to see the very man he wanted, crossing the narrow street beyond the gate, and giving a peculiar whistle, he lounged carelessly forth, having marked that Black Wynnyn had heard and understood the signal.

There was no rascality under the sun at which Black Wynnyn would hesitate, and as Thomas the Dog had put many a silver mark in his pouch, he was his to command, body and soul.

At a bend in the lane stood a little ale-house, and Black Wynnyn went straight towards it without looking to right or left.

As his tall figure darkened the doorway, the landlord reached to the wall for a cross-bow that hung there, meaning to use it, too; but behind him came the spy, and at sight of him mine host paused.

"Ale," said Thomas the Dog; and without

so much as a second glance at him, he led the way into the fenced garden behind the inn.

"What want you?" said Black Wynkyn, tapping his whistle significantly.

"The life of Absolom, the usurer, and that soon!" replied the spy. "He must die ere he can have speech with FitzAlwyn, or 'twill spoil all."

"Who hath Absolom in the house with him?" questioned the ruffian.

"His brother Jacob, whom those accursed outlaws helped to flee from London a year ago, Jacob's daughter, Miriam, and one serving-maid," said Thomas the Dog.

Black Wynkyn drank his ale slowly, wiped his mouth on the back of his dirty hand, and nodded.

"Go thy way, Thomas," he said, "and leave everything to me. But hold! One word. These Jews are passing rich, unless report lies. What I find I shall keep. Is it a bargain?"

Thomas the Dog started and ground his fangs. In his anxiety to remove all traces of his evil-doing of the previous night, he had overlooked the possibilities of plunder at the Jew's house, and for the moment he was greatly tempted to make one of the party.

A blare of trumpets, however, recalled him to the fact that the new sheriff was even then approaching, and, knowing that he must not be seen in the affair, he waved his arm with a despairing gesture of assent, and hurried away.

Before Black Wynkyn had entered the inn, however, the spy was back again.

"I have bethought me," he said, in a low voice. "How thou can come at the Jew's house without raising an alarm. Follow me to the porter's lodge and wait outside. I will give thee a coat of the sheriff's livery and a roll of parchment too large to pass through Absolom's grille."

"'Tis a good thought," said Black Wynkyn, "but be speedy about it."

The spy hurried off, and the ruffian, sauntering slowly up the street, now almost emptied of the crowd that had made its way to the meadow, saw a bundle flung through the archway, which bundle he pounced upon and carried off to his own lair.

Thomas the Dog reached the meadow as the last pair of knights ran their course under the eye of the new sheriff.

He was just in time to see the flash of steel on either side the crimson barrier, and to witness the splintering of the blunt lances.

As he wormed his way into the crowd, a deafening shout of applause went up to the skies, and as FitzAlwyn looked round the sea of faces and the forest of waving arms, his gaze fell on the blue jerkin of his acquaintance of the morning, "Martin of Ilkley," who was standing a few yards away.

Their eyes met, and the sheriff beckoned Martin to approach.

"Ho, there, my bold bowman!" he cried. "Come hither, and we will make a match wherein thou shalt try the skill with the long-bow of which thou spake."

Robin's face flushed scarlet under his hood, for, to tell the truth, he had not wished to attract the sheriff's attention so early in the day.

As for the promised guerdon, he had no thought of that, nor could he guess the reward he was destined to receive from FitzAlwyn's hands ere long.

"Keep watch," whispered Robin to Allan-a-Dale. "Methought I saw the ill visage of Thomas the Dog hard by yonder men-at-arms." And, obedient to FitzAlwyn's request, Robin strode fearlessly forward through the crowd, which opened to let him pass.

"Now, worthy citizens," said the sheriff, who was in the mind to win the favour of the men he had come to rule, "here stands Martin of Ilkley, who hath done me a greater service to-day than any of you know. Yonder I see 'set up a fair mark, and Martin of Ilkley shall be my champion. Stand forth all you knights of the bow-string, and for every arrow in the butt's eye will I give a silver penny."

Among the forty or fifty archers who sprang forward to try their skill, the foremost was a stalwart man-at-arms from the sheriff's own bodyguard, and as if by common consent, he and Robin stood side by side, and looked at one another.

Then they compared their bows, which were both made of English yew, each one the height of its owner.

Robin drew three arrows from this quiver and thrust them into his girdle, the man-at-arms doing the same, and then they spun a coin as to who should shoot first.

"'Tis a long range," said Robin, as he won the toss—"nine score yards if it is an ell."

"Ten score would not daunt me," said the man-at-arms, with a smile of superiority.

"That we shall soon see," laughed Robin. "Now for it."

He took up his position, standing fair and upright with his legs stretched apart, and drawing the grey goose feather to the tip of his ear, let fly the first shot.

"A hit, a hit!" cried the crowd; but the man-at-arms smiled triumphantly, for Martin's arrow, while it had struck the butt, had pierced it a few inches below the centre.

"'Tis my turn now," said his opponent; and, drawing quickly, he penetrated the centre of the target.

"Good for you," said Robin; and, discharging again, he this time planted his arrow as far above the mark as his first shot had been beneath it.

"I win!" cried the man-at-arms.

"Unless, perchance," said Master Martin of Ilkley, "thou wilt concede me another shot?"

Cocksure of his own skill, the man-at-arms made a gesture with his hand, and stepped aside; and Robin, scarce seeming to take aim at all, let fly a third shaft.

His arrow struck that of the man-at-arms straight on the notch, and, splitting it in twain so that it fell in two halves, remained quivering in the exact centre of the white mark!

The onlookers raised a lusty shout, the sheriff's little daughter clapped her hands with glee.

"Not so fast, Master Bluecoat!" cried the man-at-arms. "I did give thee one more shot, now thou must give me this much grace. Step back with me a good twenty paces, for I am best of all at a long flight."

"Right willingly," said Robin, disregarding the warning glance that Will Scarlet and Little John threw at him.

The crowd moved aside, and, carefully measuring out the distance, the two opponents once more stood side by side.

"Now shoot ye first, my friend," said

Robin. And the man-at-arms' arrow again pierced the centre of the target.

Twang! went Robin's bow-string, his shaft lodging beside his adversary's.

"Then black death seize thee!" exclaimed the soldier angrily. "Now what say ye to this?" And his arrow flew far beyond the butt, so that men who did measure the distance proclaimed it eleven score and two yards—a right mighty shoot.

When, however, the triumphant soldier turned with a laugh to look for his opponent, Martin of Ilkley was nowhere to be seen.

At the same moment Will Scarlet, Alan-a-Dale, and Little John had also moved quietly away and disappeared in the crowd, for secret word had come to them that they were badly wanted elsewhere.

"How now, my doughty champion?" cried FitzAlwyn, rising to his feet, and looking round. "Where is the rogue?"

But though the herald called aloud, and everybody clamoured for the archer in the blue jerkin, he was gone, and the sheriff frowned with evident annoyance.

"Well, well, my lusty man-at-arms," said he, "think not I grudge thee the prize, you won it worthily; yet am I sore displeased with Martin of Ilkley that he has not assayed a parting shot. Now, good fellows"—and, drawing a jewelled dagger, he cut the cord that bound the mouth of the sack—"here is largesse for thee!"

And, plunging both hands deep into the sack, FitzAlwyn flung their contents among the expectant crowd.

"Gadzooks! Oddslife! How now! Marry a plague on you, master, that playeth a rough jest! My mouth is full of dirt!" spluttered a stout citizen.

"And I have a stone in my eye, pardie!" cried another. And from all sides an angry murmur rose, stifling the smothered laughter that some of them had set up.

Thomas the Dog, wedged tightly in among the men-at-arms, caught his breath and held it. The terrible moment had come, and a quiver ran through his limbs.

The sheriff himself had discovered that something was wrong, and, looking first at his hands, bent down to examine the sack,

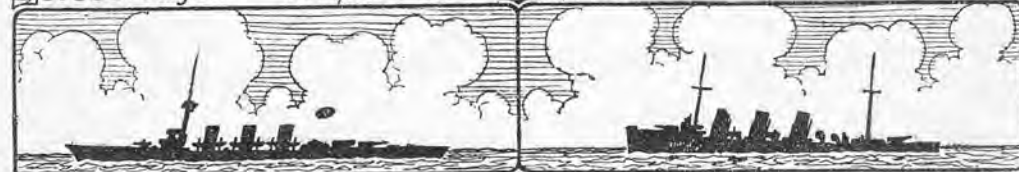
Can You Identify a Warship at Sea?



Super-Dreadnought. "Iron Duke" Class. Battle-Cruiser. "Queen Mary" Class.



Dreadnought. "St Vincent" Class. Armoured-Cruiser. "Minotaur" Class.



Light-Cruiser. "Arethusa" Class. Torpedo-Boat-Destroyer. "Swift" Class.



Torpedo-Boat. Monitor. "Mersey" Type. Torpedo-Gunboat.

If you see a warship in the distance, can you tell what it is? It is fairly easy to pick out warships from merchant vessels or liners, but not so simple to identify one type of warship from another. The silhouettes on this page illustrate the chief characteristics of the most important vessels in the British Navy. It will be seen that the Super-Dreadnought has one mast only, and two funnels behind the mast, whereas the Battle-Cruiser has two masts with three funnels between, and so on. The Armoured-Cruiser shown has four funnels, although many have only three. But, of course, the type is quite distinctive, and it is impossible to confuse a Cruiser with a Dreadnought. Then again, many Light-Cruisers (notably the "TOWN" class) have four funnels, although the one illustrated has only three. Monitors (of which the "Mersey" type is shown) are chiefly notable for their light draft and big guns. They played a most important part on the Flanders coast during the Great War. Gunboats and Torpedo-Gunboats are craft of light tonnage, and as a class have been superseded by the Light-Cruiser and Destroyer. They are mainly employed now on fisheries protection, patrol and surveying. There are, of course, many other types of ships in the Navy, such as Repair Ships, Submarines, Depot Ships, Seaplane Carriers, etc., but the above silhouettes represent the warships most commonly seen around the coast.

his handsome face glowing a dull crimson as he did so.

"By my sword, what knavery is this!" he thundered, as his eye caught the glitter of silver coins mixed up with earth and ashes.

"Ho, there, Master Seneschal, stand forth! What means this thing, I say?"

A dead silence fell upon the crowd, for everyone saw that something was amiss. Of the two handfuls that their lord had scattered among them, five silver coins alone had rewarded their greedy scramble. As for the rest, you know what it was!

The seneschal, a grave man who had grown white in the service of the late sheriff, came forward with a face of bewilderment.

He bent low and examined the two seals of yellow wax that had been affixed to the cord, and saw that they were perfect.

"In truth, it is a mystery beyond my solving," he muttered. "Ho, there, Thomas Needham, if thou art within earshot, stand forth!"

Master Needham, better known to our readers by the nickname that fitted his countenance so well, struggled out of the press of the men-at-arms and doffed his cap humbly.

"I am here, Master Gregory," said the spy. "What would'st thou have with me?"

The seneschal took him by the wrist, jerked him up the two shallow steps that led to the platform, and pointed to the sack.

It had come at last, and Thomas the Dog saw his way out of the difficulty.

"Gramercy!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands and regarding the spectacle with a look of horror. "This is the Jew's work! I swear no hand hath touched it since thou sentest me yestereve with Sir Alwyn's bond!"

"For which you took his true receipt, varlet," demanded FitzAlwyn, "and that after duly seeing the pieces counted?"

"Alack, no, my lord," said Thomas the Dog, cringing before his master. "'Twas ready wrapped and sealed when I reached the usurer's house, and the time being so short, I bade the men bring it straightway thence, having no thought that the old rascal would dare play falsely with the King's officer."

"Who is this man?" said FitzAlwyn

sternly, with a contemptuous gesture of his nail-clad arm in the direction of the spy, whose face pleased him not.

"One who served our late lord with some zeal," replied the seneschal.

"More zeal than discretion, if one may judge from results," said a mocking voice, whose owner was not seen.

Whereupon Thomas the Dog, casting a furious glance in the direction of the unknown speaker, fell into a mighty rage, and, holding up his hands, protested that he had suffered stripes, and risked his neck on twenty different occasions, and offered very valiantly to do battle with whoever should gainsay him.

"Methinks he speaks truly, my lord," said the seneschal, in a low voice. "I did dispatch him as one who might be trusted, and by all the saints, I swear that this is what he delivered into my hands."

It wanted but a word in those dark ages to turn the tide against the Israelites, whose thrift and fine business qualities brought them riches, and immediately a great shout rose up:

"Death to the Jews! Will my lord let this pass unpunished?"

"That will I not!" said the stern Norman. "Bring this fellow before me without loss of time!"

"I fear me, lord," said the seneschal, "an thou leavest it to the common folk, they will bring the Jew in little pieces."

"True," said FitzAlwyn. "My horse there! Keep back the crowd, soldiers, and do thou lead me to the Jew's house."

Thomas the Dog, raising his hands in an ecstasy of delight at the success of his stratagem, seized the sheriff's bridle as he mounted, and shouting lustily:

"Room for the noble FitzAlwyn, Lord High Sheriff of Nottingham! Back, base varlets! Back, ye mangy curs!" sped beside the horse as fast as his long legs could carry him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A Sheriff and a Man.

THE house of Absolom, of Nottingham, was situated in a narrow, winding lane of dwellings hard by the market-place.

It was built round a paved courtyard,

along whose sides ran a carved gallery on the first floor, not unlike some of the old coaching inns that one may still see in country places.

A low, arched doorway communicated with the street—a door strong as a castle gate, with a small grating in the postern wicket, through which you could scarce thrust your little finger, much less a pike-head or a sword-point; and upon that wicket Black Wynkyn, in a tabard of the sheriff's livery, knocked loudly.

Not content with this, he seized a wrought-iron handle that dangled in the corner, and, in response to a violent tug, there came the muffled sound of a bell somewhere in the interior of the house.

"Stand back well out of sight," he said in a low voice. And the four ragged ruffians who had come at his bidding glued themselves to the wall, and waited.

Presently the iron panel behind the grating slid noiselessly back, and a pair of dark eyes regarded Black Wynkyn intently.

He had put on an iron headpiece that hid his features, and that, together with the tabard and the brown bill in his hand, gave him quite an official appearance.

Through the corner of his eye Black Wynkyn had seen the panel open, but for the moment he stood there drumming impatiently upon the ground with his foot.

"Now, the plague on these folk!" he muttered, loud enough for the watcher to hear. "And all the folk at the sports, too, while I am kept cooling my heels!"

"What is thine errand, friend?" said a solemn voice from behind the grating. "Far be it from me to keep thee from thy frolics."

"Gramercy!" said the ruffian, affecting to start. "If thou be Master Absolom the Jew, then thou art he I seek. My master, Sir Alwyn FitzAlwyn, hath dispatched me with this scroll, which I am charged to deliver into thy keeping." The villain lifted his hand and showed a long roll of parchment, tightly tied with a ribbon. "Unbar the grating, Jew, and I will pass it in to thee."

"Nay, my friend," replied the old usurer; "I must fain unhook the door itself. Yet I marvel what my lord, the sheriff, can want with me further."

For an instant he pressed his face against

the grille of bars, but saw only one man, and, deceived by the livery coat he wore, Absolom drew back the bolts that secured the wicket.

The little door, clamped on the inside with iron until it was well-nigh a foot thick, opened just wide enough for the passage of a thin hand that protruded from the sleeve of a yellow gabardine, and then the supposed messenger gave a low whistle, and, seizing the wrist, flung himself against the door, only to find it held by a strong chain.

"Quick, Tancred, your axe!" said Black Wynkyn. And, drawing aside, still keeping tight hold of the wretched man's hand, he allowed room for another ruffian to deal a heavy blow upon the chain—a blow that snapped the links asunder, and let them all tumble in with a rush.

It was done in an instant, and the house of Absolom the Jew was at the mercy of men who knew not what mercy meant.

Tancred raised his long whittle, and the life of the old man with the fine features and patriarchal beard that reached to his girdle trembled in the balance.

"Put up your knife, fool!" thundered Black Wynkyn. "The old man shall show us where his treasures lie hid, before we slay him." And, still grasping him by throat and wrist, the leader of the ruffians pushed the usurer before him, the other four following until they reached the courtyard at the other end of the passage, leaving the wicket ajar in their haste.

The passage had been dark, and they blinked with astonishment as they came into the full blaze of the sunlight, for the courtyard was open to the sky.

Flowers grew in profusion in pots of curious workmanship brought by traders from across the seas, and hangings of rich colour, adorned with glistening threads of gold, draped the carved galleries here and there.

At the sound of coarse laughter that welled up from the courtyard, a door on the gallery opened, and from the room where she had been attending her sick grandfather, Miriam, the dark-eyed Jewish girl, whom our old friend Dick Quintain had rescued in London Town, glided out with questioning in her face, and, looking down, started back in

horror, clutching at her own throat lest she should scream aloud.

One glance was enough to tell her all she needed, and, slipping back, she approached the couch on which old Jacob lay.

Her first impulse was to tell him all; but what could that frail old man do against the five ruffians in the courtyard below?

Her second thought was best, and hastening, lest the ribald laughter should reach his ears, she bent down and whispered:

"Grandfather, I am going down to the well, and shall not be long; lie still until I return to thee." And, smoothing the old man's pillow, she glided from the room, locked the door noiselessly on the outside, and, slipping the key in her girdle, crept along the gallery behind the hangings until she had gained a stair that led into the interior of the house.

Unknown to the ruffians, as, indeed, it was the Israelites' nearest neighbours, there was another exit from the house of Absalom the Jew, a small door that folk imagined was part of the house of Master Nicholas, the butcher.

Master Nicholas kept the secret well. He could afford to be silent when twenty golden marks were paid him every year to hold his tongue!

Once outside, Miriam ran like the wind; over the empty market-place, down the winding streets, past the gateway of the sheriff's house, and so into the meadow by the river, where all the citizens were shouting at the success of Robin's third arrow.

On the outskirts of the throng she stopped, and her wildly beating heart turned cold.

Who should she ask to help her? The Jews were a despised race, and the citizens were more than likely to side with the robbers in those dark times.

Then, on a sudden, her roving eye lighted on a woman of such gigantic proportions as to stand a good head above the rest of her folk.

As luck would have it, the giantess had raised herself on tiptoe, the better to see what was going on forward, and, catching sight of the massive profile beneath the hood of Kendal green, the Jewess recognised Friar Tuck, and clasped her hands in a prayer of thankfulness.

"Pardie, thou malapert!" exclaimed the friar, suddenly looking down and grasping his kirtle with his leg-of-mutton fist. "Art after my purse?" Then he stopped short, and, bending down, his face changed as the terrified girl clung to him and whispered in his ear:

"Await us at the market-place," he said quickly. "By my halidom, we are well met, pretty Miriam!"

A mysterious word passed to a man in blue, and was passed on to a minstrel gay in red and yellow motley, who in turn whispered again to his neighbour, and so on, and so on; and so keen was the excitement of the crowd as the sheriff's man-at-arms drew his bow for the long shot, that none noticed how here and there a man disengaged himself and sped away through the willows towards the town.

One pair of eyes alone witnessed that strange departure, and those were in the head of the little ragged boy, Edgar, who had kept very close to Robin all the while.

He was too small and insignificant to attract the attention even of the outlaws, and he reached the market-place in time to see a slim figure, whom he recognised as Miriam the Jewess, set open a door in the wall of Master Nicholas's shop.

In a moment they had glided in, the archers in blue, and the countrymen in hoddens grey, the red and yellow mountebank, and, most surprising of all, a huge female who, gathering up her skirts, betrayed a pair of the most unfeminine ankles that surely ever crossed Nottingham market-place.

They left the door ajar, and curiosity burned strongly in the breast of the little wail.

He was afraid of nothing, but his cruel aunt, and, somehow, those archers in blue had seemed so big and kindly, and one had patted him on his brown curls.

Edgar went in.

The passage was dark and narrow; steps succeeded steps, and making no more noise than a mouse, the boy mounted them, and came so suddenly into the daylight that he stopped, wondering.

Before him was a rich tapestry of crimson and gold, hung over the edge of the carved railing. He had never seen anything so



ROBIN HOOD SCORES A BULLSEYE!

gorgeous in his life, but as he looked at it a shout of terror filled the air, and, running forward, he peered through the balusters, and saw a sight that made his blood grow cold.

An old man with a white beard knelt with his hands raised to Heaven, but it was not Absolom the Jew who had screamed, for, round the courtyard, vainly endeavouring to escape from the trap that enclosed them, sped Black Wynykn and four other men, whom he knew by sight as bad characters in the town.

With a low cry of vengeance there had darted out of the shadow of the gallery those men in blue and brown and hoddens-grey, and four of the ruffians were speedily overtaken and dispatched; but Black Wynykn spied a staircase in one corner, up which he bounded five steps at a time, with all the pack after him, save one, "Martin of Ilkley," the archer who had shot shaft for shaft with the sheriff's man-at-arms.

He bent beside the old man, and raised him up, but Edgar shrank into the folds of the tapestry as Black Wynykn came tearing along the gallery, green with terror.

Edgar was so frightened that he did not venture to peep forth until a hideous yell echoed through the courtyard. They had caught the ruffian, and flung him over the gallery on to the stone pavement below, where he alighted on his head, dead as a door-nail.

A cheer burst from the lips of the men who had pursued him, and one and all they leaned their arms upon the balustrade and looked down at their leader.

"Well done, lads!" cried the tall archer, his bronzed face all alive with laughter as he looked up at them. But, stopping in the midst of his speech, he started round, made a warning gesture to those in the gallery, and clapped his hand on the sheaf of arrows at his side.

Into the courtyard, their coming deadened by the outlaws' cheer, strode a posse of armed men, and foremost among them Sir Alwyn FitzAlwyn, the new sheriff.

"By St. Hubert!" cried the knight, knitting his brows, and pausing in astonishment as he recognised the archer, and at the same

time saw the dead robbers strewn about the court.

"Now what in Heaven's name is this? And what do you here, Martin of Ilkley?" demanded the sheriff.

"You may well ask, my lord," said the archer, with a grave smile. "There had been murder done had I not come in the nick of time."

"Methinks there hath been murder done," said the sheriff. "Who are these men?" And he turned to the old seneschal, who had been looking at the faces of the five ruffians.

"Rogues that the town is well rid of, my lord," replied the seneschal.

"That we will inquire into anon," said FitzAlwyn. "This, from his appearance, should be Absolom the Jew."

"The greatest liar in Nottingham, my lord!" cried Thomas the Dog.

"Face against face I had given thee the palm!" said FitzAlwyn drily. "But tell me, Jew, thou hast my bond for three thousand silver marks?"

"My lord, it is true," said the old man, looking at the sheriff with quiet dignity. "And that sum did I count out in the presence of your servant here last night, who did give me also his receipt for the same."

"Dog of a Jew!" yelled the spy, starting forward to clutch him by the beard. "The sack was ready sealed, and proves half full of sand and stone!"

The tall archer in blue, who had stood immovable, interposed his arm between the spy and the old man.

"Not so fast, Thomas the Dog," said he. "The chances are that the stones and sand were of your own putting!"

"Ay, marry that were they!" piped a childish voice that turned every face to the gallery up above them. "I watched him and my Aunt Alghitha take out three handfuls of silver pieces and sew the bag up again!"

"By my halidom!" said the sheriff, turning from one to another, "methinks there are some strange folk in this town of Nottingham!"

Then Thomas the Dog played his last card.

"My lord," he cried, pointing to the blue archer, "thou sayest truly indeed, and there

stands the strangest of all, for Martin of Ilkley is a false name, and that man is Robin Hood the Outlaw!"

"It has taken thee a long time to discover that fact," said Robin, with a smile; "but for once in thy life, thou craven, cringing hound, thou hast spoken truth! I am Robin Hood, the Outlaw; my lord, but methinks that Alwyn FitzAlwyn is not like to forget our meeting."

FitzAlwyn's hand fell away from his sword, and his broad chest heaved under the white surcoat with its black painted lion.

He saw only the man who had saved his child, and the Norman's heart was sore torn betwixt gratitude and duty.

They stood looking into each other's eyes amid a dead silence for some moments, only Robin Hood knowing that forty bows were bent in the gallery above, ready to avenge him at the first sign of his attempted capture.

Then Sir Alwyn spoke, and his words rang clear as a bell through the sunlit courtyard.

"People of Nottingham," said he, "hearken. In one short twelve-month the plague has robbed me of all I held most dear—my lady and three sons, leaving me only my little daughter, Editha, whom that man saved this morning from certain death. Go, Robin Hood, back to your greenwood lair unscathed for

once. Thou art a man whom I had been proud to call friend had not Fate and the laws made me your enemy. Think not again to meet with mercy if you fall into my hands, but to-day thou art free."

"My lord," cried Robin Hood, springing up the steps into the gallery, and appearing in the sunlight above them, "ere I go, forgive me if I settle one account which has been far too long outstanding." He made a sign with his hand, and the outlaws, unseen by their enemies, glided away out of the gallery, and left him standing there.

A pitiful squeal rang out as Robin fitted an arrow to his bow and drew the shaft to the tip of his right ear.

"Thou hast done too much mischief in thy evil life, Thomas, well named the Dog!" he said bitterly. And as the miserable coward leapt his length in the air in a frantic attempt to gain the safety of a pillow, the bow twanged out, and the shaft found a deadly target between his shoulder-blades.

"Oh, take me with you, Robin!" cried a childish voice, as Robin turned to go. And, looking down, he saw Edgar the Waif.

"Come then, child," said Robin, picking him up and sitting him on his shoulder. And, passing through the secret way, the outlaw and the boy disappeared in the direction of Sherwood Forest.





The Rivals of the Remove!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton and Co., and Jack Drake at Greyfriars School

By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Harry Wharton and Co. Are Not Taking Any!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
Nobody heeded Billy Bunter.

There were five juniors in the bike-shed when Bunter's fat figure loomed up in the doorway. Harry Wharton and Co., of the Remove, were getting their machines ready for a run that sunny afternoon. They had no time to waste upon William George Bunter.

Bob Cherry was in the throes of mending a puncture. It was a troublesome puncture, and Bob looked rather red and ruffled. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were giving an extra polish to their machines—partly to fill up time while they waited for Bob, and partly because they were going to have distinguished company in their spin that afternoon. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was helping Bob in tactful silence. Johnny Bull was informing the red and ruffled Bob—not

tactfully—that if he'd mended his puncture before he wouldn't have to mend it just before going on a spin. Which was perfectly true, but not specially comforting to Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows!" repeated Billy Bunter, more loudly.

Bob Cherry glanced round for a moment.

"Can't one of you fellows kick that fat owl out?" he demanded in an aggrieved tone. "You can see I'm busy."

"If you'd mended that puncture when you came in yesterday—" began Johnny Bull oracularly.

"Well, I didn't!" said Bob, in a tone nearly snappish as Bob Cherry's ever was.

"No. And now—"

"Where's that solution?" asked Bob.

"If you kept the solution where you could find it—" recommenced Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"My esteemed Johnny," murmured Hurree

Jamset Ram Singh. "your words are words of terrific wisdom, but there is a little too-muchfulness——"

"Here's the solution, Bob," said Nugent, laughing. "Go ahead and keep cool——"

"Who's not keeping cool?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Ahem! Here's the solution, anyway. Pile in! We don't mind waiting a bit."

"Marjorie will be waiting at Cliff House," remarked Johnny Bull. "I don't know whether she minds."

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter.

"For goodness' sake dry up, Bunter," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Roll away."

"I've got a message from Loder——"

"Bother Loder!"

"Loder of the Sixth——"

"Blow Loder of the Sixth!"

"Shall I go back and tell him you won't come?" asked Billy Bunter sarcastically.

Four glares were turned on Bunter. Bob Cherry was too busy with his unhappy puncture even to glare at Bunter.

Billy Bunter grinned.

As Loder of the Sixth was a prefect, it was scarcely possible to send a reply to him that the Removites wouldn't come. It would have led to a personal call from Loder, and trouble. The Famous Five of Greyfriars were not looking for trouble that afternoon. They wanted to get off and join Marjorie and Clara for a ride along the coast.

"What does Loder want?" asked Harry Wharton, after a pause.

"He wants a fag."

"Well, you'll do."

"A fag to bowl to him," explained Bunter. "Of course I'd do—as I'm about the best bowler in the Remove. But fellows think I can't bowl."

"Ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Bother Loder! We can't stay in and bowl to Loder this afternoon."

"Shall I tell him so?" grinned Bunter.

"No, you fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Which one has he asked for?" demanded Nugent. "He doesn't want us all to bowl to him, I suppose?"

"He told me to fetch a fag for bowling,"

said Bunter. "You fellows set up to be cricketers, so I came to you."

"Why, you fat sweep!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "Go and find somebody else then. Anybody will do."

"Well, you see——"

"There's those new chaps, Drake and Rodney. Go and find them."

"Too much trouble," answered Bunter calmly. "I've come to you! But I'll tell you what I'll do. If you're busy this afternoon——"

"We're going over to Cliff House, fathead."

"Oh, that's easily arranged then," said Bunter. "One of you can stop in and bowl for Loder, and I'll go in his place. Marjorie would rather see me than any of you, as you know."

"Ass!"

"Well, if I go back to Loder and tell him you won't come, he'll come down on you, and I fancy you'll all be kept within gates," said Bunter. "The fact is, you'd better be civil, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove did not look very civil at that moment. He looked as if he were on the point of committing assault and battery.

Bunter blinked cheerfully at the Famous Five. He felt that he held the whip-hand for once.

"By the way," he remarked genially. "Did I mention to you fellows that I was expecting a postal-order?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"It hasn't come," continued Bunter. "It's rather odd—it's a remittance, you know, from one of my titled relations generally quite reliable. Noblemen are, you know. But there's been some delay in the post. Could you lend me——"

"Get out."

"Could you lend me five bob till my postal-order comes, Wharton?"

"Ring off!"

"You can't?"

"No!" hooted the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, very well! If you're going to be mean, Wharton, I decline to discuss the matter any further. I'll just get back to Loder and mention that you won't come."

And Billy Bunter backed out of the doorway.

He had taken only one step backward, when Harry Wharton jumped forward and grasped him by one fat shoulder. Bunter suddenly found himself spinning into the bike-shed.

"You-ow!"

He stumbled on a bike stand, and sat on the floor with a yell.

"Keep an eye on that fat brute," said Harry. "If he moves, kick him."

"You bet!" grinned Nugent.

"Look here," roared Bunter indignantly. "I've got to get back to Loder——"

Frank Nugent drew his right foot back significantly. Bunter blinked at him, and blinked at his boot, and decided to stay where he was.

"If you fellows think you're going to keep me here till you've cleared out——" he howled.

"Shut up!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"You can go back to Loder when we've started," said Harry. "Now just say one more word, and I'll squeeze some solution down your neck."

Billy Bunter bestowed upon him a glare that bade fair to crack his spectacles. But he did not say another word. He did not want any solution down his neck.

"That's done," said Bob Cherry, rising at last. "Shan't be many minutes now."

"Good!"

Johnny Bull opened his lips to make a remark, but closed them again without making it. Bob did not look as if he would benefit by any more oracular wisdom. Billy Bunter sat and glared as the Famous Five wheeled out their machines at last.

Harry Wharton changed the key to the outside of the door when they were all out. Then Bunter jumped up with a howl.

"If you lock me in, you beast——"

Click! The key turned, and the five Removites wheeled their machines away, leaving Bunter quite safe. They were sure of getting clear of Greyfriars now before he could return to Loder with the statement that they "wouldn't come."

Bunter's fat face was framed in the window, and he shouted remarks after the Co. as they

went. But they walked off cheerily, and in a few minutes were riding fast on the road to Cliff House School. Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was squeezing himself through the window—not an easy task for a fellow of Bunter's ample circumference.

He dropped outside at last, and grunted, and gasped for breath.

"Beasts!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away to the school-house in search of another victim.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Fagging for Loder!

"WHAT are we going to do this afternoon, Rodney?"

"Any old thing," answered Dick Rodney cheerfully.

Jack Drake and Rodney, the two new juniors in the Greyfriars Remove, were in their study—No. 3 in the Remove passage. Their study-mates, Ogilvy and Russell, had gone out, and the two new juniors were discussing what was to be done with the half-holiday. Jack Drake was sitting on the corner of the study table, swinging his legs, Dick Rodney occupied the window seat.

"I'd like some cricket," remarked Drake thoughtfully. "We haven't had any cricket yet since we've been here."

"There isn't any junior cricket going on this afternoon. Might fag for some of the seniors at the nets."

Drake grunted.

"Thanks. I'd rather not. I've been going to speak to Wharton about the cricket. I want to play in the Rookwood match when it comes off."

Rodney smiled.

"That's asking rather a lot, for a new chap," he said. "The Rookwood match is one of their big fixtures."

"They haven't a better batsman than my little self or a better bowler than you, Rodney, excepting perhaps that inky chap."

"We shall have to convince them of that," said Rodney, laughing. "We may get a show in the trial match. They're having a trial to pick out the players for the Rookwood match."

Drake nodded.

"But this afternoon we'd better have the bikes out," he said. "We haven't seen much of the country hereabouts so far. What do you say?"

"That's a very good idea," assented Rodney.

"Hallo, what does that fat boulder want?" said Drake, as Billy Bunter blinked in at the open door of No. 3 Study.

"I say, you fellows

"Still expecting that postal order, Bunter?" asked Drake, with a grin.

The new juniors had heard about Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order already.

"Exactly," said Bunter genially. "How odd that you should mention it. I'm expecting a postal order to-day—"

"The same one you were expecting when you were a fag in the Second Form?" asked Drake. "Russell mentioned that one. It seems never to have come."

"Oh, really, Drake

"The best thing you can do," said Drake seriously, "is to write to the Postmaster-General and demand an inquiry.

There must be a huge accumulation of postal orders waiting for you somewhere in the post-offices, Bunter, if what you have told us is true."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know," said Bunter. "I didn't come here to listen to your rotten

jokes, Drake. I've got a message from Loder."

"Who's Loder?" yawned Drake.

"Loder's a prefect of the Sixth Form, you silly ass. He wants a fellow to fag at bowling for him, and he's sent me to find somebody. He won't mind who it is. I'm too smart for him myself!"

"Tell him we're sorry we can't come," said Drake. "We're going out."

"Loder will be awfully ratty—"

"I've no objection to Loder being ratty, old top, if it agrees with him."

"You ass!" exclaimed Bunter. "He'll come down on you and lick you."

"Oh! Will he?"

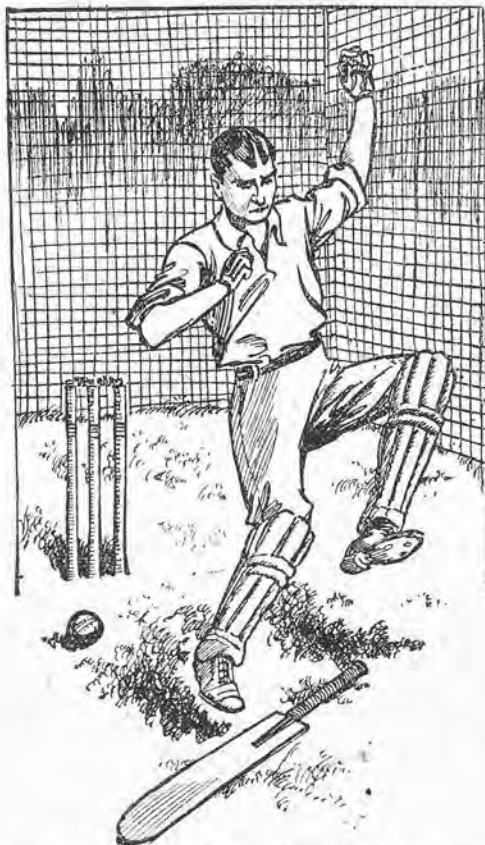
"Yes. But I think I can arrange the matter for you," said Bunter amicably. "Loder doesn't care which fag he has. I'll go and tell Linley or Penfold if you like. Of course, you understand that one good turn deserves another."

"I don't quite understand," said Drake, looking at him. "Suppose you explain, you fat owl."

"Well, I've mentioned that I'm expecting a postal order. Suppose you lend me

the five bob, and take the postal order when it comes? It's exactly the same thing, isn't it?"

"Not quite," said Drake, laughing. "Do you know that what you're asking for is bribery and corruption, Bunter, and that you are open to prosecution?"



The ball came whizzing down, and the next moment Loder gave a fearful yell and dropped his bat. "Yoop!" (See Chapter 3.)

"Well, one good turn deserves another. I'll rout out Linley, if you like—he's swotting in his study. Is it going to be five bob, you fellows?"

"Not at all!"

"If I tell Loder you won't come——"

"You can tell him at the same time that I kicked you—hard!" remarked Drake; and he slipped from the table.

Bunter made a jump for the passage, and Drake made a jump for Bunter.

Crash!

An active foot caught the Owl of the Remove as he fled through the doorway. There was a yell from Bunter, as he plunged into the passage, and landed on his hands and knees.

"Yow-ow! Beast!"

"Come back and have another!" said Drake invitingly.

"Yah! Beast!"

The Owl of the Remove picked himself up and fled. One was quite enough for William George Bunter.

Drake turned to his chum, laughing.

"Come on, Rodney!"

"But what about Loder?"

"Bother Loder! We're not going to spend our afternoon fagging for Loder. Let's get out."

"Oh, all right!"

The chums of the Remove left the study, and proceeded downstairs. In the doorway of the school-house stood Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form, with a bat under his arm and an angry expression on his face.

Billy Bunter was just explaining to him breathlessly that "Drake wouldn't come."

"And he kicked me!" said Bunter pathetically. "Kicked me hard, Loder!"

"Serve you right!" said Loder unsympathetically. "I'll kick you myself if you splutter at me. Oh, here's Drake! Drake!" called out Loder, as the two new juniors came along.

"Yes, Loder," said Drake politely.

"Come along to Big Side. I want a fag for bowling."

"You see, Loder——"

"Bunter says you wouldn't come when you were told I wanted you," said Loder, with a frown.

"You see——"

"You will take fifty lines, Drake."

"Look here——"

"And if you give me any more cheek, I'll lick you into the bargain!" snapped the bully of the Sixth. "Now get along."

"We're going out."

"What?"

"We're not going to fag on a half-holiday," said Drake.

Loder stared at him. He was more surprised for a moment than wrathful.

"Bunter!" he snapped.

"Ye-es, Loder."

"Fetch a cane from my study."

"Oh, certainly, Loder!" said Bunter, with alacrity.

He grinned at the new juniors as he rolled away for the cane. Loder gave Jack Drake a grim look.

"You haven't been long at Greyfriars," he remarked. "You don't seem to know the ropes yet. I'm going to help you to learn."

Jack Drake compressed his lips. He glanced out into the quadrangle, but Loder was in the way, and there was no chance of bolting. Dick Rodney pressed his arm warningly.

"Don't play the goat," he whispered. "Loder's a prefect. Can't be helped."

Drake nodded without speaking. He was feeling intensely exasperated; but he realised that he was in the toils. Billy Bunter rolled back with the cane.

"Here you are, Loder!" said the Owl of the Remove officiously.

Loder took the cane.

"Hold out your hand, Drake!"

Jack Drake hesitated for a moment. Loder stared at him.

"Do you want me to take you to the Head?" he asked.

"Drake——" whispered Rodney anxiously.

Drake held out his hands, with set lips. Swish!

"Take the cane back, Bunter. Now come with me, Drake; you too, Rodney; I may need you both. Carry that bat."

Loder turned and stalked out of the school-house. Jack Drake drew a deep breath.

"Come on, old fellow," murmured Rodney. "Needs must, you know. It's all in the day's work."

"If he thinks I'm going to fag at bowling—" began Drake savagely.

"Can't be helped. Do come on!"

Rodney drew his chum out of the house, and they followed Loder of the Sixth slowly. Billy Bunter chuckled as he blinked after them. He felt that the kick in the Remove passage was avenged now.

Drake's clouded face cleared as he arrived at the nets with his chum, in the wake of the Sixth-former.

"I suppose I've got to bowl," he muttered, with a glimmer in his eyes. "But I can bowl how I like. Perhaps Loder will be sorry he's fagging me this afternoon by the time I've sent a few balls down."

Dick Rodney looked a little uneasy.

"Loder doesn't look like a fellow to take a joke," he murmured.

"He won't have any choice about it—any more than I have about fagging for him," said Drake coolly.

"Drake!" rapped out the Sixth-former.

"Yes, Loder."

"I suppose you can bowl?"

"I suppose so, Loder."

"Did you play any cricket before coming here?" asked the Greyfriars Sixth-former, looking at him.

The question was really like insult added to injury, addressed to the finest junior cricketer of St. Winifred's. But Drake only smiled.

"Well, we played a bit," he said. "Not your style, I dare say."

"You young ass! Well, go on and see what you can do, anyhow. You can field the ball, Rodney."

"Yes, Loder."

And Jack Drake, with a glimmer of fun in his eyes, went on to bowl.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Cricket Extraordinary I

JACK DRAKE gripped the round, red ball, and glanced along the pitch. Loder of the Sixth stood with a careless straddle, gripping the willow. Loder was not a great man at cricket, and he was only "killing time" at the nets on this particular afternoon. Still, as a Sixth-former, he should have been

able to deal with any junior bowling. But the bowling he received from Jack Drake was of a kind never hitherto seen at Greyfriars—even when Billy Bunter and Coker of the Fifth disported themselves on the pitch.

The ball came whizzing down with plenty of force on it. The next moment there was a fearful yell from Loder.

He dropped his bat and hopped on the crease in anguish.

"How's that?" called out Drake.

There was a yell of laughter from five or six fellows who were on the cricket ground. Wingate of the Sixth came along with North, and stopped to look on at Loder's antics with surprise and interest.

"What on earth's the matter, Loder?" called out the Greyfriars captain. "Is that a new game?"

"Yooop!"

Jack Drake closed one eye at Rodney.

"Loder, what the thump—"

"That young villain has nearly punctured my ribs!" yelled Loder furiously. "He chucked the ball at me."

"Oh, my hat!" said Wingate.

"I—I—I'll—" gasped Loder.

"If the kid can't bowl, it's not much use fagging him at the nets," said the Greyfriars captain mildly. "Can't you bowl, Drake?"

"Eh! I am bowling," answered Drake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Temple of the Fourth. "Is that what you called bowling at your old school, Drake?"

"More like coconut shies, I should say," chuckled Skinner of the Remove.

Loder seemed inclined to rush along the pitch and test the weight of his bat on the bowler. He refrained, however, and Rodney fielded the ball and tossed it back to Drake.

"You can try again," said Loder, with a savage look, "and if the ball touches me, look out for trouble."

"I can't help it if you're leg before, can I, Loder?" asked Drake innocently.

"Send down that ball, you young fool!" howled Loder.

"Oh, all right!"

Drake took a little run, and sent down the ball. This time it was a wide—about six

yards wide. Loder glared, and howled to Skinner to chase after the ball.

"The kid can't bowl," said Wingate, laughing. "You'll have to put in some practice, Drake. You look as if you'd make a cricketer, if you tried."

Drake smiled.

The ball came back, and Drake bowled again. This time it was a still wider wide, and there was a fiendish yell from Temple of the Fourth, who was standing well away, half way along the pitch; how Drake could possibly send the ball at him by accident was a mystery. But it was Cecil Reginald Temple who got the ball, on the calf, and he hopped frantically.

"Yow-ow-ow! I'll scalp him! Ow-wow! Stop that dangerous idiot!" howled Temple. "Wharrer you give him a cricket ball to play with for? Ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shall I bowl again, Loder?" asked Drake innocently.

"No, you born idiot!" exclaimed Loder angrily.

"I was thought rather a good cricketer at St. Winifred's——"

"Get off, you young fool!"

"Sure you don't want me any more?"

"No!" roared Loder. "Rodney, see what you can do. If you don't do better than that born idiot, I'll lick you!"

Rodney met Drake's eye as he went on the bowler's crease, and Drake's eyelid twitched. Dick Rodney grinned. He was quite prepared to take his cue from his chum, and help to make Loder sorry that he had fagged them that afternoon.

Rodney took a terrific run, and seemed to turn himself into a catherine wheel. But the ball came down with a crawl, and stopped of its own accord half way to Loder's wicket. Loder glared at him speechlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wingate. "There's a pair of them!"

"Arcades ambo—bowlers both!" chuckled Squiff of the Remove. "Jevver see such cricketers, you fellows?"

"Hardly ever!" grinned Skinner. "Bunter is a Grace to this."

"Put a bit of beef into it, kid," said Win-

gate good-naturedly. "It's a cricket ball, you know, not a beetle."

"Didn't I bowl hard enough?" asked Rodney, with great simplicity.

"Ha, ha! No. Look here! Hold it like this, and deliver so! Now try."

"Thank you, Wingate," said Rodney demurely.

He benefited by Wingate's instructions, to some extent, at least. The ball went down with tremendous vim. Gerald Loder jumped frantically away just in time to avoid catching it on his shoulder.

"You young ass! You're throwing it!" exclaimed Wingate.

"What's the difference?"

"The—the difference! Oh, my hat!" said Wingate, almost overcome by that question.

"What's the difference?" chuckled Skinner.

"You fellows ever heard of any difference between bowling and throwing?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out, Rodney!"

Gerald Loder was chasing along the pitch with a business-like grip on his bat and a Hunnish gleam in his eye.

"Hook it!" exclaimed Drake.

The two new juniors fled.

"Hold on, Loder!" exclaimed Wingate, laughing. "Your own fault, for fagging two such young idiots at cricket. Field will give you some bowling."

"Pleased!" said Squiff cheerily.

Loder snorted angrily, but he went back to his wicket. Squiff gave him some bowling, which was certainly better—so much better that Loder of the Sixth lost his wicket twice in two balls. And even then Loder did not look pleased!

Drake and Rodney slackened down, at a safe distance from the cricket ground. They chuckled as they made their way to the bike shed.

"We've got off fagging fairly early," said Drake. "The silly asses don't seem to guess that we were pulling Loder's silly leg."

"Lucky for us Loder didn't guess it," remarked Rodney.

"Hem—yes, I suppose so. Never mind, we're free now for a spin."

"I say, though, the fellows have got a pretty rotten impression of our cricket," said Rodney. "That doesn't make it look any more rosy for our chances of getting into the Rookwood match."

"We'll undeceive them later," said Drake, laughing. "Come on."

The chums wheeled out their machines, and mounted at the gates. They took the road towards the sea, which soon burst upon their view, bright and smiling in the sunlight.

A mile or two from Greyfriars a bunch of cyclists came in sight—five juniors and three schoolgirls. The latter were Marjorie, Clara, and Barbara Redfern, of Cliff House School. Drake and Rodney raised their caps as the bunch swept by, and looked rather enviously after the Famous Five.

"They're the Cliff House girls," said Drake. "I rather think I'd like to join up. Right wheel, Rodney."

"But—"

"Oh, come on, old chap, and don't butt like a billygoat."

The two juniors wheeled round, and followed the bunch of riders. Johnny Bull was bringing up the rear of the little crowd, and Drake rode alongside and gave him an affable nod and smile.

"Lovely afternoon for a spin!" he remarked.

"Oh, lovely!" said Johnny Bull, in a very non-committal manner.

"Enjoying yourselves, what?"

"Quite."

"Going on to Cliff House after your ride?"

"Yes."

"I've never been to Cliff House."

"And you probably never will!" remarked Johnny Bull calmly; and he put on speed and joined his comrades.

Drake slowed down and grinned.

"No accounting for tastes, Rodney," he remarked. "For some reason, unknown to me, these fellows do not look like enjoying our company. Odd, ain't it?"

"Very odd!" said Rodney, laughing. "Come on; you ass—we'll make Marjorie's acquaintance sooner or later. Let's get going."

And the two rode away—leaving the Famous Five to follow their own devices.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Nothing Doing!

"ABOUT the cricket, Wharton?"

"The what?"

"Cricket!"

It was the following day, and the Famous Five of the Remove were just finishing tea in No. 1 study, when Jack Drake looked in. He had apparently come to talk business, and he seemed surprised by the loud chortle that greeted his opening observation.

"Cricket!" repeated Harry Wharton, smiling. "What do you know about cricket, Drake?"

"More than you could teach me, I imagine," retorted the new junior.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've heard all about it," chuckled Bob Cherry. "We haven't had the pleasure of seeing you play, but we've heard of your wonderful performances. Did they have an ambulance in attendance when you played cricket at St. Winifred's?"

"Ever had up for manslaughter?" asked Johnny Bull.

Drake gave an impatient shake. The display on Big Side the previous day was already a joke up and down the Remove. Drake's object on that occasion had been simply to pull Loder's leg, and to escape cricket faggings. But it had made an unfortunate impression with regard to his cricketing abilities—and first impressions are not easily removed.

"Wingate's spoken to me about you, Drake," added the captain of the Remove. "He's asked me to take you in hand a bit, and show you a glimpse of two of the beginnings of the game. Come down to the ground on Saturday, and I'll try to make you understand the difference between bowling to a wicket and braining a bystander."

"The difference is really terrific, my esteemed Drake," remarked Hurree Singh. "It is our honourable custom to keep a score of runs at cricket, and not a casualty list."

"Oh, don't talk out of your neck!" said



There was a roar of laughter from the juniors as they read the notice, and Drake's face crimsoned. "There now," said Bob Cherry. "That's what I call sensible of you!" (See Chapter 5.)

Drake crossly. "I think I could undertake to play your heads off, anyhow."

"No doubt—if we were within range when you got the ball in your fist," said Nugent.

"I'd rather keep my head where it is."

"I didn't mean that, ass—I meant——"

"Jever play cricket at your old school at all?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Look here——"

"We played their crowd once," said Harry Wharton. "Chap named Daubeny was skipper. They played like—like—like—well, there isn't a word to describe how they played."

"This dear boy wasn't in the team," said Bob Cherry. "If he wasn't good enough for that team, what is he good for?"

"Nothing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" said Drake, restively.

"You can have your little joke. But I want to play in the Rookwood match."

"The what?"

"The which?"

"The Rookwood match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"I tell you——"

"Dear man!" gasped Wharton. "You shouldn't be so funny all at once! Of course, when we play Rookwood at marbles——"

"What?"

"Or at hop-scotch, we'll give you a trial. Not at cricket."

"Not at cricket, old bean!" sobbed Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five roared again,

Drake stared at them rather morosely. Although they were on friendly terms enough, there was something of rivalry between Study No. 1 and No. 3. Harry Wharton and

Co. were of opinion that Jack Drake had far too high an opinion of himself as a mere "new kid." He was much too cool, they considered, for a fellow who had been at Greyfriars such a very short time. He failed to be properly impressed by the lofty position of the Famous Five, who ruled the roost, as it were, in the Remove.

"If that was a fault, however, Drake had no intention of amending it. He had been the leading spirit of the juniors on the school-ship, the old "Benbow"; and he had no desire to take a back seat at Greyfriars. Indeed, it had entered his thoughts that, later on, he might give Wharton a tussle for the captaincy of the Remove. That was a long way off, as yet, however; so far he was only a new fellow, and had not yet made his mark in his Form.

Harry Wharton was a good sportsman, and if Drake had shown the necessary quality, Wharton would have played him in the Remove eleven without demur. But as the matter stood, the Famous Five were not displeased to have a really good reason for regarding this somewhat cheeky new fellow with derisive amusement. They were quite sure that he was a fumbler at cricket, and they did not mean to flatter him on that subject by any means. They were more likely to err on the side of excessive frankness.

"Don't be ratty, dear boy," said Bob Cherry, smiling at Drake's clouded face. "We'll teach you how to hold a bat, and then how to handle a ball, and then we'll instruct you in the difference between a wicket and a wicket-keeper—"

"There really is a difference, you know Drake," murmured Nugent.

"The difference is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "Also it is needful to know which end of a bat to hold in your esteemed hands."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, Drake's got a lot to learn," agreed Harry Wharton. "We'll all give him some tips. Begin on Saturday, if you like, Drake."

"Look here—" began Drake hotly.

"Not Saturday," said Johnny Bull. "The trial match is on Saturday. We sha'n't have time for kindergarden."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about your minor, Nugent?"

asked Wharton. "Young Dicky plays fairly well for a fag in the Second Form. Perhaps he would be willing to take Drake in hand."

"I'll ask him!" grinned Nugent.

"You cheeky ass!" roared Drake.

"Keep cool, old top," said Bob, laughing. "Dicky Nugent will put you through your early paces. By the end of the term he may let you into the Second Form eleven, and then—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No. 1 Study rang with merriment.

"Will you let me explain?" roared Drake.

"My dear chap, there's nothing to explain—"

"I was fooling Loder yesterday—"

"Easy enough bizney for a born fool!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"I was playing the goat—"

"No doubt about that."

"On purpose, you dummy—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I tell you I could bowl Loder's head off—"

"You nearly did!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Temple's, too!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Temple is still vowing fearful vengeance."

"Wingate was trembling for his life, I hear," said Harry Wharton. "On second thoughts, I think Drake had better begin practice with a rubber ball. Cricket balls are a bit too dangerous in his hands."

"Will you listen to me?" shrieked Drake.

It was rather unfortunate that Drake's temper was rising. That circumstance only added to the hilarity of the Famous Five. They found entertainment in "getting his rag out."

"We'll listen," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Tell us about cricket! How many runs does a man score for braining the nearest spectator? Answer that!"

"You dummy!"

"Another question—suppose you were the only man left alive on the field, after your bowling, would you win the match?"

"I didn't come here to listen to rotten jokes," exclaimed Drake. "I want a show in the trial match on Saturday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you give me a show or not, Wharton?"

"No!" chuckled the captain of the Remove. "Lives are too precious, old top. We're not insured against Benbow cricket."

And the study rang again with laughter.

"Then you don't mean to let me have a look in for the Rookwood match?" exclaimed Drake.

"Wharton waved his hand feebly.

"Don't!" he gasped. "Don't be so funny! Don't over-do it! You might bring on apoplexy! Go easy!"

Drake stared grimly at the hilarious five.

"Well," he said, "I'm going to play in the Rookwood match, I can tell you that. I'll show you that I can play cricket, and somehow I'll make you shove me into the team for Rookwood."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake retired from the study, and slammed the door after him. A fresh yell of laughter followed him.

The interview had not been a success.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Not Nice!

"HE, he, he!"

Thus William George Bunter, when Drake and Rodney came into the junior common-room that evening.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles in great amusement. And his fat chortle was echoed from other quarters.

Jack Drake glanced round, rather crossly. He did not see why his arrival should be the signal for an outburst of hilarity on the part of Removites and Fourth-formers.

But it was—and he soon understood. His claim to play in the Rookwood match, after his extraordinary show on the cricket field, had become the favourite joke in the Remove by this time.

"Here's two of the Graces!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come and tell us about cricket, Drake!" bawled Bolsover major.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Drake.

"I've spoken to my minor, Drake," said Frank Nugent. "He's willing to take you in hand on Saturday."

"Hang your minor!"

"Dash it all, that's not grateful," said Bolsover major. "My minor will take you in hand, too, Drake, and tip you about bowling—it being understood that you pay the insurance in advance."

Drake's eyes sparkled, and Rodney pressed his arm. Rodney was rather amused than otherwise by the state of misapprehension existing in the Remove.

"Keep smiling, old chap," murmured Rodney. "They'll find out their mistake when they see you on the cricket ground. Come and play chess."

Drake nodded, and they sat down to the chess-board. A running fire of remarks was kept up among the juniors, on the subject of cricket, which Drake affected not to hear, though his ears burned. He was rather regretting, by that time, the extent to which he had pulled Loder's leg. The joke against him was too entertaining for the juniors to part with easily, and they would require some very clear proof before they would believe that he could play cricket.

Dick Rodney was a good man at chess, at which brainy game Drake was rather indifferent, and in about ten moves Drake was mate.

He tried once again, and was given white, with the Muzio opening—and still Rodney won again in a dozen moves. Some of the juniors who were looking on derived considerable entertainment from the result.

"The dear boy is going to be a chess champion as well as a county cricketer," remarked Russell.

"You should try draughts, old top," said Ogilvy very seriously. "Indoors, draughts is your game, and outdoors, marbles. Stick to your own games, you know, and you'll be all right."

"Ass!" said Drake.

Skinner, who had been absent for a time, strolled back into the common-room with a grin on his face.

"You fellows seen the new notice on the board?" he asked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Something new?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes; Drake's challenge——"

Jack Drake looked up quickly.

"Mine!" he exclaimed. "I haven't put anything on the board."

"Well, it's there," said Skinner negligently.

"One of Skinner's japes, I suppose," murmured Squiff. "Let's go and see."

There was a rush from the common-room to look at the notice board. Drake and Rodney went with the rest.

Certainly there was a new paper on the board, and the juniors chortled as they read it. It was scrawled in a large round-hand, which was not Drake's "fist" by any means, and it ran:

CHALLENGE!!!

The undersigned is prepared to meet any team—average age four to five—at MARBLES, HOP-SCOTCH, OR BLIND MAN'S BUFF!!!—J. D., No. 3 Study, Remove.

There was a roar of laughter from the Removites, and Jack Drake's face crimsoned with annoyance.

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "Now,

that's really sensible of you, Drake——"

"You know I didn't put that up!" roared Drake.

"Quite in your line," said Bob, unheeding. "A fellow ought to know his own limitations."

"You silly ass——"

"I don't see why Drake shouldn't become hop-scotch champion of Greyfriars," said

Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "I dare say it's quite a good game. I don't play it myself——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Drake——"

Jack Drake jerked down the notice from the board, and crumpled it angrily in his hand.

He was strongly tempted to lay hold of the grinning Skinner and punch him, but he restrained himself. He realised that it was ridiculous to lose his temper, and that would only add to the merriment of his form-fellows.

Rodney drew him away, and they strolled out into the quad instead of returning to the common-room.

Drake was silent for some time, breathing hard.

"No good getting your back up, old fellow," Rodney remarked soothingly. "The fellows will have their little joke."

"I don't like being made fun of!" growled Drake.

"Well, nobody does; but it's only fun," said Rodney. "Wharton himself will be glad to have you in the team for Rookwood when he knows what your form is really like."

"I sha'n't have much chance to show it if I'm kept out of the trials!" grunted Drake. "The match comes off next week. If this sort of thing goes on, I shall punch somebody's head."

"My dear chap, you must keep your temper," urged Rodney. "After all, they haven't seen you play cricket, excepting the weird show we put up fagging for Loder. You can't really blame them."



Drake looked from the marbles to the note. "What silly idiot brought this rubbish here?" he exclaimed angrily. (See Chapter 5.)

"Confound Loder! It's all his fault. Even that fat idiot Bunter is cackling at us!" growled Drake restively. "I'm getting fed up with it. But I suppose it wouldn't make Wharton see reason if I were to punch his head."

"Hardly," said Rodney, laughing.

The chums walked round the quadrangle in the cool evening air till Drake had walked himself into a good temper, and then returned to the school-house. They went to their study, No. 3, instead of the common-room, and found their study-mates, Ogilvy and Russell, there. Those two youths were smiling.

"This has come for you, Drake," said Ogilvy, jerking his thumb towards a parcel on the table.

Drake opened it.

"It's too late for post," he said. "How the thump did a parcel come for me?"

"We found it on the table," answered Russell.

Drake unfastened the parcel.

There was a considerable amount of wrappings, and when the wrappings were all removed, and the contents revealed, the contents proved to be six marbles, and a little note. The note contained the following message:

"A Present from the Remove! Go ahead with your game!"

Ogilvy and Russell chortled. Drake stared at the note and at the marbles. Rodney smiled. Perhaps his sense of humour was more highly developed than his chum's.

"What silly idiot brought this rubbish here?" asked Drake, looking at Ogilvy and Russell.

"Give it up, old bean!" chuckled Ogilvy. "We found it there! Rather kind of somebody to think of you, wasn't it?"

"Show us how you play your game, Drake?" suggested Russell. "Do you play it on the floor or on the table?"

Drake breathed hard.

"You chuckling asses!" he began.

But he controlled his exasperation, and contented himself with pitching the note, and the present from the Remove, into the grate. When the two chums turned up in

the Remove dormitory that night they were surrounded by smiling faces. Jack Drake laid his head on the pillow in a far from satisfied frame of mind. He fully intended, somehow or other, to make his mark in the Greyfriars Remove, but it was clear that he had not made a good beginning.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

From Words to Blows!

"**R**OTTEN!"

Jack Drake made that remark after lessons the next day. He had intended, that day, to turn up on the cricket ground, and let the Remove see that he was not the hopeless duffer they supposed at cricket. But when the Greyfriars fellows came out from lessons rain was falling.

"Yes, rotten, isn't it?" agreed Bob Cherry. "I only hope it won't spoil the pitch for the trial game to-morrow."

"Bother the trial game! I wanted to get out now," said Drake.

Bob smiled.

"The rain needn't interfere with your game," he said.

"Rot! Can't play cricket in the rain."

"No; but marbles——"

"What?" howled Drake.

"You can play marbles in the corridor, if a prefect doesn't come along," said Bob innocently.

"Or hop-scotch!" chimed in Johnny Bull. "I'll lend you a bit of chalk to make the lines, or whatever they are——"

"Or blind man's buff," suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "You can play it gamefully in the boxroom, my esteemed Drake."

And the Famous Five chuckled in chorus. They found some compensation for the bad weather in pulling Drake's hapless leg.

Drake glared at them. His temper had been sorely tried of late.

"I suppose you fellows think you're awfully funny?" he said at last.

"Not at all; it's you we think awfully funny," said Wharton. "Especially at cricket——"

"And talking about cricket!" said Nugent.

"But we're open to believe that you're no end of a big gun at marbles," said Johnny Bull affably.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake turned away without another word. Dick Rodney had gone into Mark Linley's study to play chess with the Lancashire junior, who was a doughty opponent at that game. Drake put on his coat and cap, and went out to walk on the cliffs, having a feeling of being "fed" with things generally. He did not mind the rain, and a walk in the open air is an infallible cure for annoyance or bad temper. The Famous Five smiled after him.

"The dear boy is waxy," said Bob Cherry, laughing. "Perhaps it's a shame to pull his leg so hard, but he shouldn't talk about things he doesn't understand. Fellows really shouldn't."

"They should not!" agreed Johnny Bull. "Now, there won't be any cricket to-day. We've fixed up a four-handed box with Temple and Co.—may as well ask them now. Who's on?"

"You four," said Harry Wharton. "I'm going over to Cliff House. I've undertaken to mend the puncture in Marjorie's bike."

"I wouldn't mind doing that," remarked Bob.

"My dear chap, I don't mind——"

"But you'd rather box with Temple," suggested Bob. "And I'm rather handier at mending punctures than you are."

"When you mend punctures, old nut, you're like the chap who made two blades of grass grow where one grew before," said Harry, laughing.

"Now, look here, you ass——"

"You stay in, Bob," said Nugent. "We want your mighty biceps on our side if we are going to box the Fourth."

Harry Wharton went for his cap and mack, and the other four members of the Co. proceeded to call on Temple, Dabney, and Co., of the Fourth, to arrange the details of the four-handed mill. Mending punctures was not a particularly pleasant occupation, but when Marjorie Hazeldene's bike was concerned, there was never a lack of offers. Bessie Bunter, at Cliff House, might have accumulated punctures by the score, and they would

have remained uncaulked; but with Marjorie it was quite a different matter. Harry Wharton started cheerfully to walk to Cliff House. He went by way of the cliffs, to breathe the keen sea air as he went.

By the time he came in sight of the sea, the rain had cleared off, only a few drops now falling, and the sun came out from behind a bank of clouds. The sea glistened like a flood of gold under the sunshine, rolling on the white sand at the foot of the cliffs.

Harry Wharton smiled as he caught sight of a figure on the narrow, steep cliff path before him.

It was Jack Drake.

Drake was standing on the narrow path, with his back against a big rock, only a few feet separating him from the edge of the path, where it dropped sheer towards the beach, a depth of a hundred feet or more. He was looking away towards the sea, bright in the sunlight.

He turned his head at the sound of Wharton's footsteps, and caught the smile on the junior's face. His own cheery expression disappeared, and he frowned. He understood that smile.

"Hallo!" he said gruffly, as Wharton came up.

"Admiring the scenery?" said Harry.

"Yes; it's ripping up here. Where does this path lead to?"

"Over the cliffs to Pegg, and Cliff House. It's a rather dangerous path for newcomers," said Harry. "A bit risky if you don't know the way."

"I haven't noticed any danger so far," remarked Drake, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Well, it isn't exactly safe just at this spot," said Harry. "A tumble over this cliff would be an end of all your troubles, and you'd never be able to show us how to play cricket."

Drake's eyes glinted.

"I'd have shown you to-day, if it hadn't been raining," he said. "Put me into the trial match for to-morrow and I'll open your eyes a little."

"More likely to close them for ever, if you get near me with a bat or a ball," said the captain of the Remove, laughing.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" exclaimed

Drake irritably. "I can tell you I'm getting 'fed' with these rotten jokes."

"My dear chap, you must expect fellows to smile if you are funny," said Wharton soothingly. "You shouldn't be such a humorist. When you talk cricket, you would make a donkey laugh."

"Not surprising, then, that it has that effect on you, I suppose," growled Drake. "But I tell you I'm getting 'fed,' and a chap who cackles at me is jolly likely to get his nose punched. That's a tip."

"If you punch noses as heftily as you play cricket, I advise you to leave it alone," said Wharton. "The results might be painful—to your own nose."

"If you'd like me to try," began Drake.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You can try if you like," he answered. "It doesn't matter to me one way or the other."

"Oh, doesn't it!" exclaimed Drake angrily.

"Well, then, the next time you chip me about cricket, I shall hit out."

"My dear man, you'll get chipped about cricket without a limit so long as you chat about a game you don't understand," retorted Wharton. "Stick to marbles, and—ah!"

Drake was as good as his word.

At the word "marbles" he put up his hands and advanced upon the captain of the Remove, his eyes gleaming over his clenched fists.

"That does it," he said. "Now put up your hands, and you'll see whether I can punch noses or not!"

"I'm your man!" said Wharton disdainfully.

The next moment they were pommelling, both forgetful of the dangerous path upon which they stood.

They were reminded of it in a minute or less. Wharton's foot slipped on the rock, slippery with the recent rain, and he fell sideways. He made a spring to right himself, and would have done so, had the cliff path been wide enough. But his left foot came down over open space, and in an instant, before the horrified Drake could move a finger to help him, Harry Wharton had disappeared over the edge of the cliff!

JACK DRAKE stood numbed with horror.

The catastrophe had happened so suddenly, that it was more like the fleeting vision of a dream than reality.

A moment before, Harry Wharton had stood facing him on the narrow rocky path—and now he was gone from sight, over the edge of the yawning precipice.

"Good heavens!" panted Drake, white as a sheet.

All his anger was gone now.

For a moment he stood transfixed, frozen; then he roused himself to action. He dropped on his hands and knees, and crept to the edge of the cliff to look over. Even on hands and knees it required a strong nerve to approach the fearful verge.

A hundred feet or more below, a strip of shelving sand lay between the precipitous rocks and the rippling sea. The fall was almost sheer.

With staring eyes, the horrified junior looked to see his late adversary lying crushed on the beach far below. The next moment he almost sobbed with relief.

"Help!" came a panting cry from below.

"Wharton! Hold on!"

Four feet below the sharp verge of the rocky path the rock jutted out in a narrow jagged ledge, and upon the ledge Harry Wharton was hanging, holding on with both hands to the rough jags of rock.

His grasp had fastened there as he slithered down the face of the cliff, and he was holding on for his life.

Below him the ledge fell away to the cliff, so that his legs were swinging in empty space.

His face, white as chalk, was upturned to Drake as the latter peered over the cliff.

"Hold on!" panted Drake.

The injunction was not needed. Wharton held on with all his strength. It was death to lose his hold, and he knew it. The ledge was too narrow to be climbed upon, there was nothing for it but to hold with his hands—so long as his strength lasted.

Drake gave a wild look up and down the path.



Before the horrified Drake could move a finger to help him, Harry Wharton had disappeared over the edge of the cliff! (See Chapter 6.)

"A rope!" he muttered.

The path was lonely, there was no one in sight. Drake's glance returned to the white but steady face four feet below him.

"Wharton! Can you speak? Tell me: Where can I get help? Where can I get a rope?"

"The nearest cabin's half a mile away towards Pegg," muttered Wharton faintly.

Drake groaned.

Before he could have run half that distance it was evident that Wharton's hold would be gone.

His heart throbbed wildly.

Was there no way?

For a moment the sea and the cliffs seemed to swim before him, but he steadied himself with a strong effort.

"Wharton—you can hold on—a few minutes?"

"Yes." Wharton's voice was steady. Even in that fearful moment his courage did not fail him.

"I'm going to help you. Listen to me." Drake's voice came harsh and strained. "I'm going to lower myself over the edge——"

"You can't."

"And get my feet on that ledge you're holding to. You'll get hold of me and climb up, holding to me. You understand?"

"It can't be done," said Wharton faintly. "I should only drag you down, too."

"It's going to be done."

Drake did not speak again, he hurriedly whipped off his coat.

With an iron nerve he took a grasp on the sharp edge of the abrupt rock, and swung himself over.

His feet rested on the narrow ledge within reach of Wharton's hands.

"Catch on!" he called out, without looking down.

Wharton did not speak, it was his only chance of life, and he accepted it. Carefully, cautiously he shifted the grasp of one hand to Drake's ankle, and then the other.

Drake, with his arms over the cliff-path, held on for his life now, his fingers clutching at ridges in the rough rock.

It was a hair's breadth between life and death for both of them now. If Drake failed to support the weight, he knew what must happen; he would be dragged away from the cliff, and the two juniors together would go hurtling down to death.

But his courage did not fail. He set his teeth and held on, and slowly, slowly but surely, Wharton climbed.

It was a difficult task, but the alternative was a fearful death. Slowly, slowly his tenacious grasp travelled upward by inches, and the strain upon Drake grew more terrible.

Every nerve was at its utmost tension, it seemed to him that he must be torn away; but still he gritted his teeth and held on.

Slowly—slowly—

It seemed an age before Wharton's climbing grasp was on his shoulder, and then shifted to the cliff-path itself.

Then both juniors stood on the narrow ledge, holding on to the edge of the rock, exhausted, breathing in great throbs. They were both too spent to climb back on the path for a full five minutes. They held on and rested against the sheer rock, breathing, breathing.

It was Drake who moved first.

He dragged himself up, got his knee on the path, and plunged on into safety.

Then he turned to give a helping hand to Wharton.

Lying across the cliff-path, he grasped the junior's collar, and pulled him as he climbed, and, after a struggle, Wharton too landed on the path.

He sank down there, his back to the rising rock on the safe side, to rest—utterly spent with the effort he had made.

It was a long time before either of the juniors moved.

The fearful peril they had undergone had told upon them less than the physical strain,

which had been terrible; they were aching and throbbing from head to foot.

Jack Drake rose unsteadily to his feet at last, and leaned against the upper cliff. He looked down on Wharton with a whimsical smile.

"Precious pairs of duffers we were to begin scrapping in a place like this," he said.

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Precious duffers to begin scrapping at all, for that matter," he answered. "We—we might both—"

He shivered, and was silent.

"All's well that ends well," said Drake, after a pause. "We're jolly well out of it." He picked up his coat. "You've about ruined your mack."

"Never mind the mack."

Harry Wharton rose now; he was recovering from the strain. He looked at Jack Drake, and hesitated. But he spoke at last.

"I'm sorry I chipped you, Drake, as you don't like it. No harm meant, you know."

"All serene. I was an ass to lose my temper," said Drake cheerfully. "My fault entirely."

"You've just saved my life," said Harry.

"After putting it into danger," said Drake, with a laugh.

"Well, that was my fault as much as yours. I suppose you know that the chances were about a thousand to one that I should drag you down?"

"The odd chance turned up in our favour," said Drake. "We're well out of it. All serene."

"I'm not a chap to jaw much," said Harry, colouring a little, "but—I'm grateful. What you did few fellows could or would have done."

"Rot! You'd have done it."

"I hope so, but that isn't doing it. You ran a frightful risk to get me out of that. I sha'n't forget it. I hope I shall have a chance of showing that I remember it."

"I'm not going to tumble over a cliff for you to pull me up," said Drake, with a grin. "Anything but that."

Wharton smiled, too, but his handsome face became grave again. He had been in the very shadow of death, and its effect was not yet gone.

"If ever I can do anything for you, Drake, you've only to say the word," he said. "I won't mention it any more, but I mean that. Now, I'll get on to Cliff House. Good-bye."

"Ta-ta!"

Harry Wharton tramped on by the cliff path, and Drake watched him out of sight with a rather curious expression on his face.

"Ass!" he muttered, addressing himself. "Ass!" And then he went on. "He's a good chap, though a trifle lofty—a really good chap. Thank goodness he came to no harm."

And Drake turned away to continue his ramble over the cliffs which had so nearly ended in a tragedy.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Bunter Does His Best

"I SAY, Drake, old chap!"

No. 3 Study were at prep. that evening when William George Bunter insinuated himself into the study.

"Hook it, Bunter!" answered Drake without looking up from his work.

"But I say——"

"Haven't you any prep. to do?" demanded Rodney.

"I don't need so much prep. as you fellows," explained Bunter. "I don't have to grind like duffy chaps like you. You don't mind my mentioning it? Brains, you know, it's brain that sees me through."

"It won't see you through if Quelch calls on you to construe in the morning," remarked Ogilvy. "Go and do some work, and don't be a loafer."

"Oh, really, Ogilvy——"

"Anyway, let us do ours," exclaimed Russell. "Carry your entertaining conversation into your own study, Bunter. Toddy can stand it; he's your studymate, so he's bound to."

"Oh, really, Russell——"

"Cut off!"

"I came here to speak to you, Drake," said Bunter. "It's rather important. In fact, it's a chance that won't recur."

"Cut it short, then," said Drake impatiently.

"Wharton's had a five-pound note from his uncle," announced Bunter.

"What the thump has that to do with me?" exclaimed Drake in astonishment.

"Well, Wharton's rather mean, as a rule——"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Horrid mean, as a rule," persisted Bunter. "He's refused several times to cash a postal-order for me. But on an occasion like this——"

"Like what?"

"This—after you've saved his life! He's bound to play up. My idea is that Wharton should stand a spread out of his five-pound note," explained Billy Bunter. "It's a special occasion, and I should suggest a rather select party. I don't mind making up a list of the fellows to come. Now, Wharton's bound to be a bit grateful to you for saving his life; in fact, he was saying something of the kind, so if you put it to him——"

"Put it to him," repeated Drake.

"Yes, if you put it to him, he can't very well say no," explained Bunter. "We'll have the spread in the Rag, with about seven or eight chaps, Wharton and you, and me, and——"

"Do you see that door?" asked Drake.

"Eh? Yes."

"Get t'other side of it."

"Oh, really, Drake——"

"You're nearest him, Ogilvy. You might give him a kick."

"Certainly," said Ogilvy.

Bunter dodged.

"Look here, Drake——"

"Cut off, you fat-idiot!"

"But Wharton's got a fiver—a whole fiver," urged Bunter. "Strike the iron while it's hot. I dare say his gratitude will have cooled down by to-morrow, 'tain't the sort of thing that lasts very long, as a rule. Look what I've done for ever so many fellows, frinstance, and are they grateful? Not they! Why, you're not grateful, you beast, though I'm offering you a chance of sticking Wharton for a first-class spread!" said Bunter indignantly. "Can't you see it's a chance not to be lost? You don't save a fellow's life every day, and a fellow doesn't have a fiver from his uncle every day. So you see——"

"What is the fat owl babbling about?"

asked Ogilvy, in wonder. "Have you saved Wharton's life, Drake? How did it happen?"

"Oh, it was nothing," said Drake. "Only a tumble on the cliffs. I suppose that owl has been listening at Wharton's door."

"Nothing of the kind," said Bunter warmly. "I happened to hear Wharton telling Bob Cherry—I'd stopped in the passage to—to pick up a—a pin, and I heard him—he said you jolly nearly went over the cliff with him, and that it was awfully plucky. I dare say he exaggerated, but what I want to point out is, catch him in the humour——"

"I'll catch you by the ear if you don't shift, you born idiot."

"Strike the iron while it's hot," urged Bunter. "I tell you he's got a fever. I've seen it. I saw him take it from the letter. Look here—yah—beast!"

Bunter made his final remark from the passage, whither he had fled just in time to escape Jack Drake's boot. Drake slammed the door after him, and returned to the study table—to meet Dick Rodney's curious glance.

"So you've been doing stunts on the cliffs this afternoon?" said Rodney.

"Oh, rot!"

"I'll ask Wharton for the yarn," he said.

"For goodness' sake don't," said Drake crossly. "What the merry thump does it matter? Hand me that, Dick."

And prep. went on in No. 3 Study. But Rodney, Ogilvy, and Russell finished their prep with unusual speed, and adjourned to No. 1 Study to hear an account of what had happened on the cliffs.

When Drake came down into the common-room, he found all the Remove in possession of the story. Harry Wharton naturally had told his friends, and Billy Bunter's long ears had heard the story, with the result that it was soon known throughout the Form.

"I hear you've done a rather plucky thing, Drake," remarked Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth, in his lofty and somewhat patronising way. "I was goin' to lick you for biffin' me with a cricket ball the other day. Now I won't."

"You couldn't anyhow," remarked Drake cheerfully. "My dear old nut, you couldn't lick one-half of me."

Whereat the lofty Cecil Reginald sniffed and turned away, and did not bestow any more commendation on the cheeky new junior.

There was one result at least of the adventure on the cliffs that was not displeasing. The Famous Five ceased to "chip" the new junior. They felt that it was up to them now.

The chums of the Remove had listened breathlessly to Harry's story of the peril he had been through, and they had agreed that Drake was a jolly good sort, with no end of pluck; and, much as he entertained them on the subject of cricket, they nobly determined to refrain from any more chipping. So for that evening Jack Drake had a welcome rest from the painful topic.

Billy Bunter eyed him rather morosely. He made an attempt to renew his valuable suggestion with regard to "sticking" Wharton for a spread, but he had to stop suddenly and retire out of range of a boot. Bunter was puzzled and disgusted. When you had a claim on a fellow, and that fellow had a five-pound note, the course seemed clear—to Bunter. The obvious thing to do was to "stick" him for as much as possible out of the fiver. Why Drake refrained from doing so was a deep and puzzling mystery to the Owl of the Remove. The new junior was letting a good chance pass him by—and it was not likely to recur, for two reasons—gratitude was a thing that cooled very rapidly, in Bunter's opinion, and five-pound notes did not last long in junior pockets. As Drake was so obstinately blind to his own interests, Bunter determined to put in a word for him, and he approached the Famous Five, who were seated in the window, chatting about the morrow's match. Harry Wharton was drawing up the final list for the twenty-two in the trial game.

"I say, Wharton——" began the Owl.

Wharton waved him away.

"Travel!" he said.

"It's rather important, Drake thinks——"

"Oh, what does Drake think?" asked Bob Cherry. "We know he thinks he can play cricket. Anything else?"

"He thinks that, as he saved your life this afternoon, Wharton, and you've got a

five-pound note, it's up to you to stand a spread in the Rag."

Wharton stared at the fat junior.

"Drake thinks so?" he ejaculated.

"Yes." Bunter nodded. "You see, as a sort of celebration of his pluck, you know—that's what he thinks. You really can't do less. Shall I tell him you've decided on it?"

"Do you mean to say that Drake said so?" stuttered Wharton.

"Well, not exactly said so," admitted Bunter cautiously; "but—but that's what he thinks."

"How do you know what he thinks?"

"Well, you—you see—"

"Bunter's a giddy thought-reader!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Or perhaps he knows what he would think in similar circles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's just it," said Bunter, blinking at them. "I know what I should think, so, you see, that's what Drake thinks. He's bound to think you're rather mean, Wharton, if you don't—"

"You silly owl!" said Wharton, in measured tones.

"Drake doesn't think anything of the sort, and you wouldn't suppose so if you weren't an over-fed Hum! Roll away!"

"Well, to be candid, he said so," said Bunter desperately. "In confidence, you know—he—he—he said—"

"Well, what did he say?" asked Wharton grimly.

Bunter blinked out of one eye at Drake.

That youth was playing chess with Ogilvy at a safe distance.

"He said, 'Look here, Bunter, you can speak to Wharton about it, if you like; but if he doesn't stand me a feed, after what I did, I shall think him jolly mean!' Those were his very words," said Bunter impressively.

The Famous Five stared at Bunter as if fascinated. Bunter had the most remarkably mixed ideas on the subject of truthfulness, but his "whoppers," though many and various, generally had the drawback of being incredible. The fat Owl of the Remove seemed to be quite unaware that there was any reason why his statement should not be believed.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry at last. "Bunter beats Baron Munchausen and George Washington rolled into one! Why ain't you in Parliament, Bunter? You're wasted at Greyfriars, with your gifts!"

"If you think I'm not speaking the absolute truth, Bob Cherry—"

"The truth!"

said Bob faintly. "Oh, my hat!"

"There are fellows," said Bunter loftily, "who scorn to tell a lie. George Washington was one of them, and I'm another. I know that you fellows are not quite so particular!"

"What?"

"You don't come up to my standard," said Bunter, shaking his head. "I'm not



The majority of the juniors left Drake and Rodney by themselves—some of them stood some little way away, laughing. (See Chapter 12.)

blaming you ; there are very few Washingtons and Bunters in this world ! ”

“ Too many, though ! ” said Johnny Bull. “ What else did Drake say ? Let’s have it all, because we’re just going to ask him. ”

Bunter started.

“ I—I say, you needn’t mention to Drake that I’ve told you what he said, you know, because—because—because— ”

“ Because he didn’t say it, ” said Harry.

“ Oh, no ! I mean, because— ”

“ Drake ! ” boomed Bob Cherry, across the common-room. “ Hallo, hallo, hallo ! Drake ! ”

“ Don’t bother ! ” answered Drake, without turning his eyes from the chess-board.

“ Bunter’s given us your message. ”

Drake looked up at that.

“ Eh ? I haven’t given Bunter any message, ” he answered.

“ I—I—I didn’t say he had ! ” gasped Bunter. “ I—I was only putting a case—a—a—really a figure of speech ! Leggo my nose, Bob Cherry, you awful beast ! Yow-ow-ow ! Led go by dose ! ”

Bob Cherry compressed a vice-like finger and thumb upon Bunter’s fat little nose.

“ Now own up, if you want any of your boko left ! ” he said. “ Say ‘ I’m a fat fabricator. ’ ”

“ Yow-ow ! You’re a fat fabricator ! ” gasped Bunter.

“ You silly ass ! You, not me ! ” snorted Bob.

“ You silly ass ! You, not me ! ” gasped Bunter.

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Have you been telling fibs ? ” said Bob.

“ Yow-ow ! No ! Yooooop ! I mean, yes—yes ! ” wailed the Owl of the Remove. “ Led go by dose ! Yez—yez ! Yow-ow-wooop ! ”

“ That’s better, ” said Bob, and he released the red and fiery “ boko ” of William George Bunter. “ Now roll away and learn not to tell fibs, Bunter ! ”

“ Yow-ow-ow ! ” Bunter rubbed his flaming nose furiously. “ I’ve a jolly good mind to lick you, you beast ! ”

“ Go ahead ! ” grinned Bob.

“ Only you’re not worth it ! ” said Bunter disdainfully. “ I scorn to soil my hands on you ! Yah ! ”

And Billy Bunter rolled away, still rubbing his glowing nose, and leaving Bob Cherry quite unwithered by his crushing disdain.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Held to His Word !

“ JOLLY good weather to-day ! ” said Frank Nugent, with much satisfaction, on the following morning.

A bright sun was shining on the old quadrangle of Greyfriars when the juniors came out from lessons on Saturday morning. The sky was of cloudless blue, and the chums of the Remove surveyed it with satisfaction.

“ All right for the game this afternoon, ” remarked Bob Cherry. “ You’ve settled about the twenty-two, Harry ? ”

Harry Wharton nodded.

“ Yes, Smithy is going to captain the other side, and I’ll let him pick his men from the list I’ve given him, ” he said. “ Every fellow in the Remove who can put up anything like a game will have a show to-day. ”

“ What price little me ? ”

It was Drake’s voice at the elbow of the captain of the Remove. Harry turned with a smile.

“ You can score for us, if you like, ” he said.

“ Thank you for nothing ! ”

“ Well, you can come and look on, ” suggested Bob Cherry. “ You’ll pick up some tips about the game. ”

“ I want to play ! ”

Harry Wharton looked a little uncomfortable. After what had happened the previous day, he felt constrained not to speak with his former frankness on this subject.

“ Well, I’m sorry, but it can’t be done, ” he said mildly. “ You see, this is a trial game to pick out the final team for the Rookwood match next week. If it was just an ordinary practice match, I’d play you, really. ”

“ I’m not specially keen on a trial match, if it comes to that, ” said Drake. “ What I really want is to play Rookwood. ”

“ Ahem ! You see— ”

“ Don’t be an ass, old chap ! ” urged Bob Cherry.

"Put me in the list for Rookwood, Wharton, and I shall be satisfied."

"You know I can't!" said Wharton, with some sharpness.

"I don't know anything of the kind."

"Well, you ought, then!" said the captain of the Remove shortly.

Drake smiled.

"Suppose I tell you I'm a really good cricketer?"

"What's the good of talking rot?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Do give us a rest, Drake!" said Frank Nugent. "You're really getting quite a bore on that subject!"

"The borefulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Drake!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Can I have a word with you, Wharton?"

"Yes, if it's not about cricket," said Harry. "It's really no good speaking on that subject, Drake. I'd do anything I could to oblige you, after what you did for me yesterday, but I'm cricket captain, and it's a question of a captain's duty. I can't muck up the Remove eleven to please anybody. You really ought to know enough about cricket to know that."

"Come into the quad and let me jaw to you a few minutes, anyway."

"Oh, all right!" said Wharton resignedly.

He went out into the quadrangle with the new junior, and they walked under the elms. The Co. glanced after Drake rather curiously.

"Now," said Drake, stopping under the elms and fixing his eyes on Harry Wharton, "I believe you're a fellow of your word?"

"I hope so," said Harry drily.

"Do you remember what you said to me yesterday?"

Harry started.

"Yes," he answered, very quietly.

"You said that if you could do anything for me, I should only have to say the word," said Drake ruthlessly.

Wharton felt his heart sinking.

"I said so," he answered.

"You meant it, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, play me in the Rookwood match next week."

"Drake!"

"I'm saying the word," said Drake coolly. "That's what you can do for me, and that's what I want. Play me."

Wharton stood very still.

"When I said that I wasn't thinking about cricket, of course," he said slowly.

"Think about it now, then!"

"I can't play you."

"You can if you like. You're cricket captain!"

"I know, but——"

"Play me, then!"

There was a short silence.

"This isn't a matter for me personally," said Harry at last, in a constrained voice. "Playing a hopeless duffer like you would be chucking away the Rookwood match. It's one of our most important fixtures, next to St. Jim's and Highcliffe. If I played a dud, Jimmy Silver and Co., of Rookwood, would simply walk over it. A single wicket thrown away would make all the difference; a single run might make all the difference. You don't understand what you're asking, Drake!"

"I do, quite! I'm asking you to play me and to play my pal, Rodney, in the Rookwood match next week."

"Two of you?" said Wharton bitterly.

"Two of us," assented Drake.

"I can't!"

Drake shrugged his shoulders.

"Then you never meant——"

"I did mean it, and you know I did!" broke out Wharton. "But you're asking for a thing that's outside my power. I shouldn't be doing my duty as captain if I did as you ask."

"My dear chap, I'm offering you a first-class bat and a ripping bowler!"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" snapped Wharton.

"Seriously, I was considered the best bat in the Benbow crowd, and Rodney was far and away the best bowler."

Wharton laughed impatiently.

"And a holy crowd they were at cricket!" he exclaimed. "Our Second Form could have beaten them. Don't be a fool, Drake; you know you can't play cricket. I can't play you, and there's an end. If you hold me to my word——" Wharton paused and drew a deep breath. "I wasn't thinking of anything

like this, as you know very well. But if you hold me to my word——”

“Well, what then?”

Wharton bit his lip.

“I shall think it rotten mean!” he said.

“I’m not asking you what you think, but what you’re going to do!” said Jack Drake cheerfully.

“If you pin me down——”

“I do pin you down!” said Drake with a nod.

“If—if you claim——”

“I do claim!”

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

“Then I don’t know what to do,” he said.

“I can’t break my word to you—but I can’t play two hopeless duds in the Rookwood match. The fellows would be wild. I should have to tell them the reason——”

“I don’t mind your telling them.”

“You don’t mind the fellows knowing that you’re taking a beastly mean advantage—for that’s what it is!” he exclaimed.

“Not in the slightest.”

“If I play you,” said Harry, his lip curling, “it’s as likely as not that the fellows will turn me out of the captaincy. I’ve no right to do it, and if they sack me they’ll be more than justified. In fact, if you drive me to put you and Rodney on the list, I hope they will ask me to resign.”

“Oh, they won’t do that.”

“They may—and I hope they will. If they get a new skipper, the new man won’t play you, and that will save the match, at least.”

Drake shook his head.

“You underestimate your giddy value, old bean,” he said. “The match would be lost without you—you’re wanted to make runs, as well as to captain the eleven. A new skipper won’t beat Rookwood, and the fellows know it.”

“Look here, Drake, if you like to ask anything else——”

“I don’t want anything else.”

“It’s not decent to ask a thing like that.”

“Never mind—I’m asking it. Do Rodney and I play next Wednesday, or don’t we?” asked Drake calmly.

“Yes,” said Harry at last. “I can’t break

my word; but I hope that the club will sack me when they see your names on the list. Tell Rodney to get ready this afternoon—you’d better play in the trial game, and perhaps you’ll learn enough to keep out of the way next Wednesday.”

Drake thanked him and said:

“My dear chap, if we play in the trial game this afternoon you’ll discover that you’ve got two jolly good recruits for next Wednesday.”

“I suppose you think you can play,” said Harry wearily. “You don’t seem to understand what a beastly mean thing you’re doing. Give me a rest now.”

And Harry Wharton walked away with a deeply clouded brow.

Drake glanced after him, and smiled. Then he joined Dick Rodney, who was sauntering under the elms.

“Pull up your socks, old top,” he said. “We’re wanted in the trial game this afternoon.”

Rodney brightened.

“Good! But what’s made Wharton change his mind?”

“He thinks a little practice will do us good, as we’re booked to play in the Rookwood match on Wednesday.”

Rodney jumped.

“The Rookwood match?”

“Yes.”

“Us?”

“Little us!” smiled Drake.

“But how—why, which——” stuttered Rodney.

Drake explained.

Dick Rodney’s face was very grave as he listened. He did not seem to look upon the situation as a good joke, as his more volatile chum did.

“Of course it’s all right,” he said. “We can show them this afternoon that we’re as good as anything they’ve got at Greyfriars, but until then, Drake, you’ll make all the fellows think you frightfully mean.”

“Let ’em!” said Drake carelessly. “When they see us play they’ll know they’ve jumped to the conclusion too quick, like a set of silly asses. Until then they can think what they like, and be blowed to them.”

"Well, it will be all right after the trial game," said Rodney.

"Right as rain!" said Drake cheerily. "Mind you put your beef into the bowling—you're the best bowler here excepting Inky. And I fancy I can keep my end up at batting with any fellow in the Remove without swanking. Don't you think so?"

"I know you can," answered Rodney. "Wharton's as good as you are, but no better. But till they know——"

Billy Bunter came rolling by. He paused to turn his big spectacles on Jack Drake, with a scornful blink.

"Yah!" he said.

"Hallo, what's biting you, Fatty?" asked Drake in surprise.

"I've heard—Wharton's just told Cherry, and I heard him. You'll be sent to Coventry for this!" said Bunter. "Yah! I call it rotten mean! You'll very likely get bumped! Yah!"

And Billy Bunter sniffed scornfully and rolled away. Bunter's was the first expression of the public opinion of the Remove on the subject. But it was not to be the last!

THE TENTH CHAPTER

The Finger of Scorn!

"You awful rotter!"

That was Bob Cherry's remark as he met Jack Drake coming in to dinner.

"Eh!" ejaculated Drake.

"What sort of a Prussian do you call yourself?" exclaimed Bob, his rugged, honest face pink with indignation.

"I don't call myself any sort of a Prussian," answered Drake coolly. "What's the matter with you, fathead?"

"If I hadn't promised Wharton to keep my hands off you I'd wipe up the quad with you, here and now," roared Bob Cherry in great wrath.

"Go ahead, old top."

Bob Cherry clenched his hands. But he restrained himself, and strode into the school-house simmering with wrath.

Nugent joined Drake as he was going in.

"You're surely not serious in this, Drake?" he said quietly.

"In what?"

"Pinning down Wharton to play you in the Rookwood match."

"Oh, quite."

"It's beastly mean."

"Think so?" said Drake affably.

"Everybody thinks so," said Frank hotly. "I wonder you're not jolly well ashamed of yourself."

"Go on wondering, old scout!" answered Drake, and walked into the house humming a tune.

Dark looks were cast at Drake and Rodney at the Remove dinner-table that day. It was known in the Remove that the two new juniors were to be played in the match with Rookwood, and the reason was known. It was a shock to the juniors. There was only one opinion among them on the subject. Wharton, in the fullness of his heart, had made a reckless promise to the fellow who had risked his life to save him—but only the



Drake's bat swept through the air—it met the ball—and sent it whistling on its journey—a boundary! (See Chapter 13.)

meanest kind of rotter would have taken advantage of that promise to pin the captain of the Remove down in such a way. If, as Squiff had remarked, it had been the case of a good player who hadn't been given an opportunity, it wouldn't be so bad—but for a "dud" to foist himself into the eleven this way was simply sickening.

Even Billy Bunter glowered scorn—and a fellow who was scorned by Billy Bunter must have sunk very low indeed!

So mean did the Removites consider Drake's action that some of the more good-natured ones opined that the new junior was pulling their leg—merely taking a rise out of Wharton, intending to let him off at the last moment. Perhaps Wharton nourished some faint hope to that effect—but if so it was faint.

As the juniors came out from dinner, Johnny Bull and Squiff joined Drake, one on either side of him, and accompanied him into the quad.

"Now look here——" began Johnny Bull.

"Look here——" said Squiff.

"You can't do this!"

"You simply can't, you know."

"Tain't decent!"

"Tain't honourable!"

"Take an ear each!" said Drake affably.

"Take it in turns to burble, or go it both at the same time, I don't mind."

"Look here, you rotter——"

"Look here, you outsider——"

"It's beastly——"

"Mean——"

"And rotten——"

Drake walked away, whistling. Johnny Bull and Squiff looked at one another. They had intended to try the effect of persuasion upon the obstinate new junior; but somehow their tongues had run to words of wrath. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh followed Drake as he sauntered quietly in the quad.

"My esteemed and ridiculous friend," murmured the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hallo, Inky! What time does the trial game begin?"

"Two-thirtyfully, my esteemed friend. But you are not really in the terrific earnestness to play this miserable and disgusting trick upon us?" murmured the nabob. "It is simply the pullfulness of the leg, is it not so?"

"Not at all."

"You will lose us the esteemed match with Rookwood."

"Win it, you mean."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave it up and walked away with quite a cloud on his dusky face. When Drake and Rodney changed into flannels, and came out with



The juniors could only stare as Drake lashed out at the ball. "Am I dreaming?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Do I sleep—or is visions about?" (See Chapter 13.)

their bats under their arms for the trial game, they received very expressive looks.

"After all, they may not turn out such awful duds," said Vernon-Smith hopefully.

"They look fit enough."

"Take one of them in your crowd, Smithy, and I'll take the other," said the captain.

"Righto—which shall I take?"

"It doesn't matter which out of a pair of hopeless duffers."

"Oh, draw it mild," exclaimed Drake, who came along in time to hear that uncomplimentary remark. "You'll see soon."

"Give us a chance!" said Rodney, mildly murmured.

Wharton's eyes flashed at them. He was bound by his word; but he did not take the trouble to conceal his disgust at being held to it in this way.

"You won't alter my opinion of you," he answered, with a curl of the lip. "You've got me in a cleft stick, and you're using your advantage in a mean way."

"Sorry you think so," said Drake politely. "It's the only way you've left us, since you've made up your silly mind that we can't play cricket."

"If the fellows choose they're at liberty to ask for my resignation," said Harry Wharton, looking round. "I've landed the eleven into a rotten scrape, and I deserve to be turned out of it."

"Oh, that's all rot," said Bob Cherry uneasily. "We can't beat Rookwood without you, Harry."

"No fear!"

"We can't beat Rookwood with two passengers in the team," said Harry.

"Well, we'll try."

"I've a jolly good mind to resign anyhow!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove passionately.

"You can't!" said Drake. "That would be creeping out of keeping your word to me, and you know it."

"I do know it," said Wharton savagely, "and that's the only reason I don't resign on the spot and stand out of the eleven. I'd be more pleased than otherwise if the fellows turned me out."

"Well, we're not going to do that," said Vernon-Smith. "Let's get going in the trial game. You take one idiot and I'll take the other. Drake, you'll play for me."

"Pleased, old top."

"That's more than I am, then," grunted the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"You're entertaining an angel unawares, you know," said Drake with a grin.

"Oh, don't talk rot."

It fell to Wharton's eleven to bat first in

the trial game, and the Bounder led his men into the field. Drake tapped his arm.

"Where am I going to field?" he asked.

"Anywhere you like, so long as you don't get in the way," growled Vernon-Smith.

Drake looked impatient.

"Look here, Smithy——"

"Don't talk to me."

Drake went to cover, and was promptly ordered off. He went to cover-point, and was shifted by Penfold. He looked rather angrily towards Vernon-Smith, who waved him back.

"Where am I to go?" shouted Drake.

"Out of the way."

Drake's eyes glinted. He crossed over to where Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were coming down to the wickets.

"Look here, Wharton——" he began.

"Go to your place," answered Wharton.

"I've got no place; that fool Smithy only tells me to keep out of the way," said Drake.

"About the best thing he can tell you," said Harry, and he went to his wicket.

"The best you can expect when you shove yourself in where you're not wanted," growled Bob Cherry, and he, too, went to his place.

"Get out of the way there, dud!" shouted somebody.

"Don't let Drake bowl!" yelled Skinner from the ropes. "Give us a warning first if Drake is going to bowl, Smithy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake's temper was rising. He glanced round at the fellows looking on, and met with mocking and scornful glances on all sides. Then he walked to where Dick Rodney stood—rather distant from the other waiting batsmen.

"Where are you on the list?" he asked.

"Last man in," said Rodney with a grimace.

"They've made up their minds we're a pair of duds, and if they can help it they won't give us a chance to prove we're not," said Drake. "I was going to put 'em out of their misery this afternoon—now I think we may as well go on pulling their leg. It's only a trial game, and most likely won't be finished, so the result doesn't matter. Play the goat."

"What!" exclaimed Rodney.

"I'm going to fool 'em to the top of their bent," said Drake coolly. "You do the same."

Then they can wriggle with anxiety till they see us playing in the Rookwood match next Wednesday. You can see what they expect of us this afternoon; well, let 'em have what they expect."

"But——" muttered Rodney.

"That's my game, anyhow; will you back me up?"

"Yes; but——"

"That's settled, then."

Drake went back into the field. So little was he regarded as a fieldsman that the game had already started while he was off the ground talking to Rodney. As he came back, and hovered afar, there were several hisses from the crowd that had gathered round the fields, and two or three "boos" and catcalls. Drake heard them plainly enough, though he did not look round. And they rendered firmer his intention of "pulling the leg" of the Remove cricketers—and leaving them under a woefully mistaken impression until the great match with Rookwood came off. As a matter of fact Harry Wharton and Co. had jumped rather hastily to a conclusion with regard to the two new juniors, and perhaps they deserved a little punishment. Drake considered that they did, at all events; and he intended that they should have it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Cricket?

"LOOK out!"

"Wake up, Drake!"

"Ass!"

Drake was in the long field, and nobody on the field of play cared whether he was there or not, till the ball came whizzing at him. Then, as it happened, Drake was the only fellow with a chance to stop it, and he was shouted at on all sides.

It was an easy catch enough, and Drake's first instinct was to catch Harry Wharton out, naturally. He made a quick move—and then stopped.

He had forgotten, for the moment, the rôle he intended to play that afternoon. The ball came down, and almost brushed his arm as it dropped into the grass.

There was a howl from the cricketers.

"Butterfingers!"

"Fathead!"

"Booooooh!"

The Bounder ran up. He gave Jack Drake a glare that was quite ferocious.

"You—you—you——" he stuttered.

"They're running," remarked Drake.

"Hadn't that ball better be sent in?"

"You—you——"

"Is this a cricket match or a conversation?" inquired Drake, with a gentle smile of polite inquiry.

The Bounder repressed his feelings—with an effort—and sent in the ball. He was strongly tempted to send it at Jack Drake just then.

There were groans and hisses for Drake from the crowd.

"That's the fellow who's shoved himself into the Rookwood team!" said Skinner. "If Wharton plays him he ought to be made to resign."

"I guess Bunter could have made that catch!" said Fisher T. Fish, with a shake of the head.

"Why, you almost could, Fishy!" said Skinner.

"I guess——"

"Yah! Butter-fingers!" roared Billy Bunter. "Call that fielding! Call that cricket! Yah! Go home!"

Drake's ears tingled. But he did not depart from his resolve. The Greyfriars fellows had chosen to set him down as a dud; and a dud he was going to be—till the Rookwood match came round.

This rather weird jape, of course, would not have been played in a match; but the trial game was only practice, and the score on either side was of no consequence. For the rest of the innings Drake had little chance of showing what he could—or could not do! He got in the way several times, and was shouldered out of it by indignant fieldsmen, but that was all. When Rodney came to the wicket—last man in for Harry Wharton's team—there were grinning and mocking glances cast towards him. Everyone expected him to go down first ball—and he did. Vernon-Smith bowled him out with a careless ball for no runs.

Drake expected some remark from Harry Wharton before the Bounder's innings commenced. But the captain of the Remove said no word.

The show the two new juniors had put up was more disastrous than he had anticipated with his very worst anticipations; it was clear to him that if they played against Rookwood School they would be two helpless passengers for the Greyfriars eleven to carry. But his word was plighted.

There was nothing to be said; and it was useless to recriminate. So Harry Wharton carefully avoided the two happy recruits.

The Bounder's innings began, and Drake was left to the tail-end. Nobody expected him to make a single run when he came to bat—and laughter greeted him when he made his appearance, at last, at the wicket. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went on to bowl to him. The nabob was the best junior bowler at Greyfriars, but he did not trouble to exert his skill against Drake's wicket. He tossed down a careless ball, and Drake slashed vigorously a foot from it, and crashed his wicket over with the willow.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How's that, my esteemed umpire?" chortled Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Am I out?" asked Drake, with a very innocent look at Temple of the Fourth, who was umpire at his end.

Cecil Reginald grinned.

"I rather sort of think you are, you know," he drawled. "Of course, you might be still in, the way you played cricket at your old school. According to Greyfriars standards, you're out."

"Do I count anything for that?" further inquired Drake.

"Eh?"

"I mean is it a run to me?"

"A—a run to you?" said Temple faintly.

"Nunno—not quite! I should rather say not! Speakin' under correction, I think not, dear boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get out of sight, for goodness' sake, you ass," growled Bob Cherry. "Go back to your marbles, or noughts and crosses. I

don't believe you can really play marbles—you haven't the brains."

"And you want to play Rookwood!" said Johnny Bull, in sulphurous tones.

Drake nodded coolly.

"Yes, I think I can keep my end up against Rookwood," he answered.

"By knocking down your own wicket?" inquired Frank Nugent sarcastically.

"What on earth will Rookwood think of us, if we have that idiot in the field!" said the Bounder. "Jimmy Silver will think we're potty."

"I'm going to try and knock up a century against Rookwood," said Drake innocently.

"Oh, dry up!" snorted Vernon-Smith.

The trial game was single-innings, and it was finished now. The cricketers cleared off in great disgust.

Rodney and Drake strolled away to the school-house together, with smiling faces, apparently quite unmoved by the angry scorn they had evoked. That evening there was a meeting of the cricket committee in No. 1 Study. It was rather an excited meeting, but it settled nothing. Harry Wharton was admitted to be bound to play the two new recruits if he remained skipper, and the committee had no idea of asking him to resign. Weighed in the balance, the presence of the two duds was no worse than the loss of their very able captain, they considered. And they still hoped that Drake might do the decent thing. Bob Cherry, indeed, proposed ragging him till he gave up his claim to play, but that suggestion was vetoed at once by the captain of the Remove.

The next day—Sunday—Harry joined the two new chums as they came away from morning service to make one last effort. Drake greeted him with a smiling visage.

"You're looking rather blue," he remarked.

"Anything up?"

"You know what's up," said Harry shortly.

"I want to make an appeal to you, Drake."

"Go ahead."

"Will you let us win the Rookwood match if we can?"

"Why, I'm going to help you."

Wharton repressed the desire to make an angry retort.

"You know you can't play cricket," he said patiently.

"I don't know anything of the kind."

"After the way you played yesterday——"

"Oh, you'll see quite a difference when I'm playing Rookwood. Same with Rodney. He's going to take Jimmy Silver's wicket for you."

"You can hardly think I shall give Rodney any bowling in the Rookwood match, even if I play him."

Drake knitted his brows.

"That's rather rotten," he said. "Rodney's a bowler——"

"Oh, rot!"

"Give him one over at least, early in the game. Unless you do that, you can't call it playing him," said Drake warmly. "Look here, give him one over when we play Rookwood, and if you're not satisfied, Rodney will agree to quit the team, and you can play a substitute."

"I'll agree to that," said Harry. "His wicket won't be worth anything, anyway. But—but won't you think better of it, Drake. Won't you let me off?"

"I would, only——"

"Only what?"

"Only I want to help to beat Rookwood," said Drake sweetly.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"That's your last word?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Very well."

Harry Wharton turned on his heel and walked away. Drake closed one eye at his chum.

"His noble nibs is ratty," he said. "His gorgeous nibs is indignant. His eye gleams with the fiery light of scorn. Why ain't we withered? Your hide must be like a giddy rhinoceros's, Rodney, if you're not withered."

Dick Rodney laughed.

"It seems rather a shame to pull his leg to this extent," he said.

"Oh, it will do 'em good," said Drake. "They'll be all right when they see how we really play Rookwood. To-morrow we're going to put in some practice, must keep our hand in."

"But if they see us——"

"They won't," said Drake coolly. "We're going down to the village green to do some practice all on our lonely own, where the village chaps play. The giddy secret's going to be kept till Rookwood day."

And it was.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Not Popular!

DURING the next two or three days the two new juniors at Greyfriars were regarded by their Form-fellows with a very peculiar regard.

The treatment meted out to them varied from honeyed politeness to incivility that was well-nigh ferocious.

The politeness was wasted on them by fellows in a persuasive humour; and the incivility was lavished upon them, because they were deaf to the voice of the charmer.

But after school hours on Monday and Tuesday they were seen little of, not that anyone cared whither they went, or how they were occupied. Drake had made friends with Trumper, of the village eleven, and the two chums did some good practice with the villagers, the Greyfriars fellows remaining in blissful ignorance of that fact. When they came in on Tuesday just in time for evening callover, Bob Cherry greeted them with a snort.

"You can't even turn up on Little Side to practice," he said.

"Practice!" repeated Drake.

"Practice!" mimicked Bob Cherry sardonically. "Do you know what the word means without the aid of a dictionary? I shouldn't be surprised if you didn't."

"Oh, practice!" said Drake, with a smile. "You see, we don't need so much practice as you fellows do."

"What?" howled Bob.

"We're in rather better form, you know."

"In—in—in rather better form," stuttered Bob.

"Exactly."

"After your show in the trial game?"

"After our show in the trial game," assented Drake, with exasperating good humour. "The fact is, we don't think so jolly much of your cricket here at Greyfriars."

"You—you—you don't?"

"No. Wharton's not bad as a bat——"

"Oh, Wharton's not bad, isn't he?" gasped Bob.

"No, and you're fair to middling——"

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"Inky's a good bowler," continued Drake.

"I may say, perhaps, that Inky is nearly on a par with Rodney here at bowling."

"N-n-nearly on a p-p-par?"

"Yes, nearly, but not quite. But your other bowlers couldn't touch Rodney, quick or slow. You wait for the Rookwood match. You'll be surprised," said Jack Drake cheerily.

Bob Cherry seemed to be suffering from an internal struggle.

"The Rookwooders will be surprised, you mean," struck in Bolsover major. "When they see you fellows in the team, they'll think they've got a visit from a lunatic asylum."

"Well, they won't be far wrong, will they?" said Drake.

"Why, you silly ass——"

"And suppose they saw you in the team?" suggested Drake. "What on earth would they think, then? You see, matters might be worse."

And Drake and Rodney walked on before Bolsover major could think of any adequate reply.

That night in the dormitory the Removites looked at the two new chums as if they could eat them.

They had given up hope now that Drake would do what they called the "decent thing." Evidently the hopeless ass was bent on claiming the fulfilment of the bond, like Shylock of old; exacting his pound of flesh with supreme indifference to the sufferings of the victim. The Removites admitted that the shrieking duffer fancied he could play—that was his only justification. But that didn't alter the fact that he couldn't play, and that he ought to be lynched for "wedging" into the Remove team as he had done.

Fellows who weren't in the team felt just as sore as the playing members. They were almost equally interested in the success of the eleven that was going over to Rookwood on the morrow. Success now was much more than problematic.

Greyfriars juniors required to be at the top of their form to beat Jimmy Silver and Co.; and Wharton had made up his mind that he would be, practically, playing nine men. It was, indeed, worse than even that; for the presence of two "rotters" had a demoralising effect on the team.

Harry Wharton still hoped to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, as it were; but the hope was faint. Still, cricket was a game of glorious uncertainty, and it was never lost till it was won. The mighty batsmen of the Remove dreamed of knocking up centuries which should neutralise the heavy handicap they laboured under. But it was a dreadful reflection that two wickets in each innings, at Rookwood would be "gonners" without a hope.

Wednesday dawned bright and sunny.

That day was always a half-holiday at Greyfriars; but on the occasion of the Rookwood match it was a whole one, for the members of the eleven and a select party that accompanied them. At a very early hour Harry Wharton and Co. were making their preparations for departure; they had a good distance to travel, and a very early train was to be caught.

Drake and Rodney turned out cheerily with the rest, and made their preparations in cheery spirits.

"Taking your bat, Drake?" asked Bob Cherry, in a tone of sarcastic surprise.

Drake looked up in astonishment.

"My bat! Of course."

"You won't want a bat, will you?"

"Ass!"

"You can knock down the wicket with your boot."

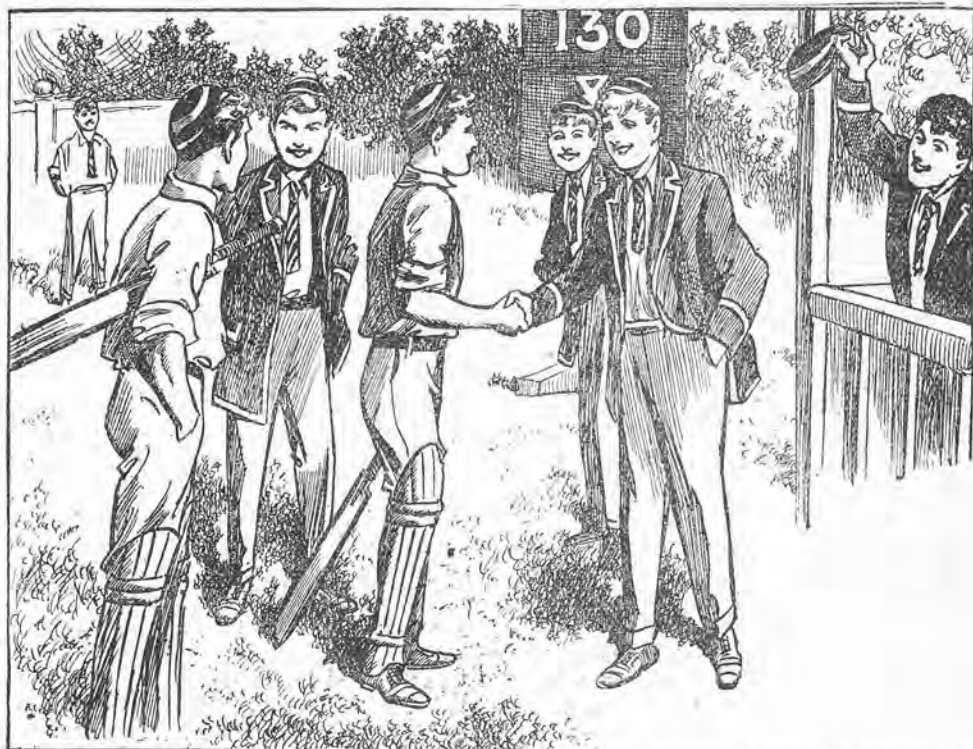
"Oh, rats!" growled Drake.

"He, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Jimmy Silver will think you're potty. You'd better drop Drake out on the line."

"I jolly well wish we could!" growled Johnny Bull.

Ogilvy approached Drake when the cricketers gathered in the hall ready to start. The Scottish junior had a most expressive and persuasive look on his face.

"Drake, old chap," he murmured.



The two juniors looked rather flushed and a trifle breathless as they came out, but they were smiling cheerfully. "You spoofers!" said Bob Cherry. "I told you we could play cricket!" was Drake's reply. (See Chapter 14.)

"Hallo! I was a cheeky beast yesterday," said Drake in surprise. "Where do you see the improvement?"

Ogilvy coughed.

"Look here, old fellow," he said. "You're my study mate, and it's up to you to act decently, for the credit of No. 3."

"That's what I'm going to do. It will be no end of kudos to No. 3 Study to have one of its members a winning cricketer."

"Oh, you fathead!"

"Same to you, dear boy, and many of them," said Drake affably.

"Two good men are left out of the eleven to make room for you two idiots," said Ogilvy. "I should very likely be in but for that. Now, old fellow, do the decent thing."

Ogilvy's look was quite imploring.

"My dear old grouser," said Drake, "I'll tell you what. I'm really a good cricketer——"

"Oh, you frabjous jabberwock!"

"If I don't do the team credit, you can kick me when I come back," said Drake, smiling. "That's a fair offer."

Ogilvy stared at him.

"Do you actually think you can play fellows like Silver?" he asked in wonder.

"I do—actually."

"Well, I'll take you at your word," said Ogilvy grimly. "If you don't do the team credit—and you won't—I'll give you the heftiest kick you ever heard of when you come sneaking home. Mind that."

"Righto!"

"Come on," said Harry Wharton.

There were fifteen or sixteen in the party; the eleven being composed of Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, Mark Linley, Vernon-Smith, Squiff, Tom Brown, Peter Todd, Drake, and Rodney. Frank

Nugent went with them—feeling rather sore—for he would probably have had a place in the eleven but for the two obnoxious intruders. But, as a matter of fact, there were a dozen fellows in the Remove who considered that Drake and Rodney had their places—and certainly the whole dozen could not have been satisfied by the withdrawal of the “duds.”

In the train for Rookwood, Drake and Rodney found themselves in a rather chilly atmosphere.

Harry Wharton was icily polite; but some of the team were exceedingly gruff, and there were a good many remarks made about duds, and duffers, and thrusting outsiders, and wedging rotters. All of which Rodney and Drake contrived to bear without feeling unduly “down.” The fellows who accompanied the team made the most obnoxious remarks to them—they nourished a hope, perhaps, that at the very last moment the two “duds” would back out and make room for better men. If so, they were disappointed. Drake and Rodney had not shown a sign of repentance by the time the party arrived at Coombe.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

A Slight Surprise!

JIMMY SILVER, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, was at Coombe Station, with a brake, to meet the arriving cricketers. The brake rolled on to Rookwood with Harry Wharton and Co. on board. Jimmy, who knew Drake and Rodney slightly, greeted them cheerily enough; but before the brake reached Rookwood School, he was aware of a certain “something” in the atmosphere surrounding the two, and realised that all was not quite as it should be with the Greyfriars’ party. However, as that was not Jimmy Silver’s business, he did not trouble his head about it.

The sun was shining down on Rookwood, as the cricketers had left it shining on Greyfriars. Stumps were pitched early, most of Rookwood being in the form-rooms; at Rookwood, as at Greyfriars, it was a whole holiday only for the eleven. So there were few on-lookers when the game began.

Harry Wharton won the toss, and elected to bat first. He had looked over the Rookwood

cricketers with a critical eye, and he realised that he was “up against” a tough proposition. He knew all the fellows—Silver, Lovell, Raby, Newcome, Mornington, Erroll, Conroy, Dodd, Cook, Doyle, and Towle. And he could see that they were in good form and quite confident. He did not feel happy at the thought of Drake and Rodney standing up to bowlers like Jimmy Silver and Erroll—he knew that they would test the powers of the strongest bats in the visiting eleven. Two wickets short—in each innings—against a team like that! And all through that unlucky adventure on the cliffs! But repining was useless, and Harry Wharton faced the prospect as cheerfully as he could. It would not be the first time he had fought an uphill fight.

Drake and Rodney were down for the tail-end of the innings, as they expected.

Drake tapped Wharton on the arm as he put on his pads.

“You wouldn’t like to open the innings with me?” he asked.

Wharton looked at him.

“Is that a joke?” he asked drily.

“Not a bit of it; serious as a judge—or, rather, more serious than most giddy judges!” said Drake. “Serious as a professional humorist!”

“Well, don’t be an ass!”

“I’m asking you not to be one. Put a good man in to begin. Pour encourageur les autres, you know.”

“Drake,” said Harry, in a low voice, “if this game you’re playing is only a jape—only a rotten practical joke—there’s still time for you to stand down. Nugent and Russell are here, and could take the places——”

“They’re not really up to Rookwood form,” said Drake, shaking his head.

“Are you?” said Wharton savagely.

“Oh, yes!”

“That’s enough!”

Harry Wharton signed to the Bounder, and they went in to open the innings for Greyfriars. Jimmy Silver and his merry men were ready, and Jimmy himself went on to bowl the first over. Harry Wharton had the bowling, and he was soon aware that the Rookwood junior skipper was quite at the top of the form for which he was famous.

The first ball that came down gave Wharton something to think about; the second gave him further food for reflection. He did not venture to hit out till the fourth, and then one of those unlooked-for disasters which happen in cricket, as in everything else, occurred. The batsmen were running when there was a yell, and Arthur Edward Lovell, of Rookwood, held up the ball and chortled:

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bob Cherry, his face falling.

Harry Wharton's feelings were not to be expressed in words. He had hoped that, somehow, a wonderful score should make up for the presence of the passengers in the team; and, lo and behold! by the cruellest luck, he was out without a single run to his credit.

Words were quite inadequate. No language, not even German, could have done justice to Wharton's feelings at that moment. With an impassive face, he carried his bat back to the pavilion.

"Man in," he said quietly.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" said Bob Cherry; and he went out to the vacant wicket.

Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith, between them, proceeded to make some runs; but Rookwood was "all there." The Bounder was clean bowled by Erroll for a total of ten, instead of the fifty the Greyfriars fellows had confidently looked for. And Bob Cherry, the mighty hitter, smote a ball right back into Jimmy Silver's hands after Jimmy had bowled it when he had only eight to his credit. The Greyfriars fellows looked at one another.

"Just our luck!" said Johnny Bull pessimistically. "We're loaded up with two silly fools, and our best men get it right in the eye at the same time! We may as well make Rookwood a present of this game!"

"Never say die!" remarked Jack Drake.

Johnny gave him a ferocious look.

"Don't you jaw!" he said savagely. "It ain't easy for a fellow to keep from rapping his bat on your silly head, as it is! You've landed us in for a record licking with your tomfoolery!"

"Perhaps I shall help to pull the game out of the fire," suggested Drake.

Johnny Bull's grip closed on the cane handle of his bat. Only the unseemliness of a "row" on the Rookwood ground prevented him from laying it round the obnoxious junior. He turned away with a grunt of wrath and disdain.

Peter Todd and Squiff were at the wickets now, and, as a rule, Toddy and Sampson Field could be relied upon for deeds of derring-do. But when a "rot" sets in, it sometimes works in weird and unexpected ways. Toddy was dismissed for six, much to his astonishment, and Squiff bagged only ten before he was caught out by Valentine Mornington.

Johnny Bull did some steady stone-walling while Mark Linley, at the other end, was knocking up runs. Johnny Bull was still at the wickets when there were only two more to fall, and Dick Rodney came in to join him. Bob Cherry almost groaned aloud as he looked at the score.

"Forty runs for eight wickets!" said Bob faintly. "Jevver see the like? Ducks' eggs are cheap to-day! Sorry, Harry, old chap! But jevver see anything like it? Forty for the innings!"

"The innings isn't over yet," Drake ventured to remark.

Snort from Bob Cherry.

"It's the same as over, isn't it?" he growled. "You and Rodney will last one ball each. Johnny will be 'not out.'"

"We may knock up a run or two," said Drake sarcastically.

"Oh, don't talk out of the back of your neck!" said Bob crossly. "The scorer can go for a little run now; he won't be wanted any more."

"Johnny may make a few if that fool at the other end keeps the innings open!" said Nugent.

"Last ball of the over, and it will do for Rodney, anyhow!" groaned Bob.

But it didn't.

Dick Rodney stopped that ball, apparently with ease, much to the surprise of the Greyfriars fellows.

The field crossed over.

Bob Cherry rubbed his hands.

"Johnny's got the bowling," he said:

"Johnny may put something on; old Johnny's good for a few. We may raise fifty."

Alas for Bob Cherry's hopes!

Johnny Bull was playing a cautious game—perhaps a little too cautious. At all events, he landed the ball in the open palm of Kit Erroll, and the umpire gave the disastrous verdict, "Out!"

Bob Cherry heaved a deep sigh.

"It never rains but it pours!" he said. "We're done—foiled, diddled, dished, and done! Is it worth while keeping the innings on for those two idiots to play the goat, Wharton? May as well shut up shop now!"

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Get on, Drake," he said. "Get it over!"

"There's still time for you to stand out and let a real man go on!" said Bob Cherry.

"I'm the real man, old top!"

"Idiot!"

Jack Drake went to the wicket calmly and cheerfully. Jimmy Silver was bowling, and Drake had taken Jimmy's measure. He had had a very careful and scrutinising eye on the game. He knew that he had hard work before him, but he was confident that he could play the Rookwood bowling. At all events, he meant to do his best.

"Look out for ducks' eggs!" said Bob Cherry dispiritedly.

"There he goes!"

The ball came down, hot and whizzing from Jimmy Silver's hand. The Greyfriars fellows looked on glumly, with the instant expectation of seeing Drake's wicket shivered—if he did not knock it down with his bat before the ball reached it.

But neither catastrophe happened.

The ball was stopped dead on the crease.

"Saved his bacon," said Bob, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"I say, though, that was rather neat," said Vernon-Smith. "That was a tricky ball. I shouldn't have played it. Drake was right to stop it like that."

"Sheer chance."

"I suppose so. But——"

The Bounder looked on with renewed in-

terest as the ball was sent back to the bowler, and Jimmy Silver whizzed it down again.

Drake's bat swept through the air.

It did not crash on the wicket, and it did not miss the ball—it met the ball, and sent it whistling on its journey—a long—long—journey.

As the fieldsmen ran, the batsmen crossed the pitch with lightning speed, and crossed again, and they were safe home when the ball came trundling in to the wicket-keeper—too late.

Harry Wharton stared. Bob rubbed his eyes.

"Am I dreaming?" asked Bob Cherry, in wonder. "Do I sleep, do I dream, or is visions about? What?"

"They can play," said the Bounder quietly.

"The playfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh. "Is it possible that the worthy and disgusting bounders have been pulling our esteemed legs?"

"Look!" yelled Johnny Bull in great excitement.

"Oh, my hat!"

The round red ball went on its travels again, and again the batsmen were crossing the pitch, hardly seeming to touch the ground. Once, twice, thrice! Three, and safe home, with Dick Rodney at the batting end.

Harry Wharton and Co. gazed on speechlessly.

The ball came down with a vim, and Rodney let fly. The batsmen did not run this time. Drake made a slight movement, but Rodney smiled, and waved him back.

"Why don't they run?"

"Ass! It's a boundary."

"A—a—a boundary!" whispered Bob Cherry. "That crass idiot, that hopeless dud, that shrieking frumpious chump, is hitting boundaries! Wake me, somebody!"

"Look!"

"Oh, my word!"

"Two for the last ball of the over," said Harry Wharton dazedly.

Then there was a yell from the Greyfriars cricketers, a yell in which astonishment and relief and admiration were mingled.

"Well, done! Bravo, Rodney! Bravo, Drake!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

All Serene !

JACK DRAKE chuckled.

He was beginning to enjoy the game.

He was at the top of his form, and in a mood for a winning game, and that mood was shared by his chum. They intended to play the game of their lives to-day, and undoubtedly they had started well.

Harry Wharton and Co. watched them, in growing wonder and relief. Somehow—anyhow—the two hopeless duds were playing up in the most remarkable way. The first success or two might have been flukes, but this could not be a series of gigantic flukes. They were two men as good as any in the Remove eleven, there was no denying that now. Jack Drake was equal to Wharton in his best form, and Dick Rodney was quite on a par with any other member of the Greyfriars eleven. It was the plain fact, amazing as it was, for all to see; and the Greyfriars party for the present felt only relief and gladness that it was so. As they watched that startling innings, they realised that the two chums must undoubtedly have been pulling their leg, there was not a shadow of a doubt about that now. The fine play they were now witnessing came all the more surprisingly by way of contrast with the unlucky opening of the innings. It was exactly what was needed to pull the game out of the fire—and it was there when it was needed.

A smile came over Harry Wharton's face as he looked at the score board. The figures stood now at seventy for nine wickets.

"Jevver hear the like?" murmured Bob Cherry, still half wondering whether there were visions about.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Thank goodness it's turned out like this," he said. "But who'd have thought it?"

"Cheeky rotters to pull our leg like that," grunted Johnny Bull indignantly. "What did they mean by it?"

"Oh, well hit!" shouted Vernon-Smith.

"That'll be a three," said Peter Todd.

But it was a four.

"Come to think of it," said Harry Wharton slowly, "they did tell us—at least, Drake

told us—that they were only pulling Loder's leg that day they played the goat on Big Side at Greyfriars."

"We thought the silly ass was rotting."

"But in the trial match," said Nugent, "you know what they did?"

"Pulling our leg, of course, because we'd set them down as duds," said Harry Wharton rather ruefully. "Perhaps—perhaps we were a little hasty, might have made them feel a bit sore."

"Like their cheek, though," granted Johnny Bull.

"The cheekfulness was terrific, but the playfulness on the present occasion is a sublime corker," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Bravo, Drake! Oh, good man, good man!"

"Up it goes!" chortled Bob Cherry. "I was promising Drake the licking of his life after this match, I'll hug him instead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose we can forgive them for spoofing us," said Harry, laughing. "And—and in the cires., I—I suppose Drake was entitled to a place in the team. It—it wasn't the mean trick we thought, seeing how it's turned out."

"Better Drake than little me," said Nugent frankly. "I couldn't stand up to Silver's bowling like that. I'm jolly glad he's in the team."

"Same here."

"The samefulness is terrific."

"The Rookwood chaps are getting more leather hunting than they bargained for," chuckled Squiff. "They thought it was all over bar shouting, and now they're getting tired in their little leglets."

"Bravo, Drake!"

"Good man!"

Jimmy Silver and Co. undoubtedly were surprised at this sudden, as it were telescopic, lengthening out of an innings they had supposed nearly over. The Rookwood bowlers did their best, the field was alert and wary, but the two batsmen had wonderful luck. They were getting set, and the utmost efforts of Rookwood seemed of no avail to shift them.

By this time Rookwood School was out of

morning classes, and a crowd was gathering round the field. They looked on with keen interest—and certainly they would have been surprised if they had known that these two batsmen had been brought along as “passengers” by the visiting team. There was not much of the “passenger” in their looks.

There were cheers from the Rookwood crowd for some of the mighty hits, and the Greyfriars party shouted stentorian approbation. Just then it would be safe to say that Drake and Rodney were the most popular fellows in the party from Greyfriars.

But the end came at last. Rodney was stumped in a gallant effort at four, and the innings closed—Jack Drake not out.

They came back to the pavilion to be greeted with loud cheers. They had earned them, for Rodney had made thirty runs, and Drake twice that number. Greyfriars first innings, after all, had closed for a total of 130.

The two juniors looked rather flushed and a trifle breathless as they came out, but they were smiling cheerfully.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo, you spoofing boulder!” roared Bob Cherry, greeting Drake with a mighty thump on the shoulder, “What do you mean by it, eh?”

“Ow!” gasped Drake.

“You spoofers!” said Nugent, laughing. Drake chuckled.

“I told you we could play cricket!” he remarked. “You wouldn’t believe it! You simply asked to have your legs pulled!”

“Well, I suppose we did,” said Harry Wharton, with a smile. “Anyhow, I’m glad you’re in the team!”

“Honest Injun?” said Drake.

“Yes, Honest Injun,” said Harry, laughing; “and—and I take back some things I’ve thought about you.”

“Same here,” grinned Bob Cherry.

“I think you’ve all got some remarks to take back,” said Drake. “As for holding you to your word about that promise you made, Wharton, you ought to have known I should not have done it if I hadn’t been a good man for the team. It mayn’t be modest, but, you see, I happen to know I can handle a bat, and there were some good cricketers at St. Winifred’s, though you didn’t see them when you

played Daubeney’s crowd. Sure you don’t feel sore any more?”

“Quite sure,” said Wharton, laughing.

“Good! Only this morning you were withering me with the fiery eye of scorn—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Jimmy Silver came up with a smile.

“You’ve got two jolly good new recruits there, Wharton,” he remarked.

“We have!” assented Harry.

“We have!” chuckled Bob.

“We’ll dish them after lunch, though,” said Arthur Edward Lovell. “Who says lunch?”

They all said lunch, and they adjourned to it in the cheeriest of spirits. There were many smiling faces in the Greyfriars crowd at lunch.

No need to follow that exciting match through all its details. Harry Wharton did not need pressing to “give an over” to Dick Rodney when the Rookwooders were batting; he pressed the ball upon him, and Rodney rewarded him with the “hat trick” twice. Jimmy Silver and Co. put up a great game; but in the Greyfriars second innings Harry Wharton had better luck, and his followers all did well—his two new recruits almost equaling their performance in their first innings. With the result—very satisfactory to Greyfriars—that Rookwood were short of sixty runs when their last wicket went down—that being the margin by which Greyfriars beat them. And the homeward journey of the Greyfriars crowd was a very hilarious one.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

The Great Celebration!

“WHERE’S that ass Drake?”

Ogilvy of the Remove wanted to know. The cricketers, tired after a long journey, arrived at Greyfriars after the summer sun had gone down, and came in a merry crowd across the dusky quadrangle. And two or three score of voices hailed them to inquire how many wickets, or innings, they had been licked by.

“Where’s Drake?” howled Ogilvy. “I owe him a kick.”

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's Drake," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Here I am, old top——"

"Did they beat you by an innings?" demanded Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"How many runs then?" bawled Billy Bunter. "I'll bet they beat you by a hundred runs, yah!"

"No."

"How many then?" demanded Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha! None!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"We beat them!" explained Wharton.

"You beat Rookwood, with those two howling idiots in the team!" yelled Ogilvy.

"Those two frumptious chumps!" howled Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows, don't be funny," said Billy Bunter. "Give us the facts, you know."

"We beat them by sixty runs!" said Bob Cherry, with a chortle.

"Sixty?"

"Phew!"

"Draw it mild!"

"And what did Drake do?" asked Ogilvy, blankly. "Don't I owe him a kick?"

"Ha, ha! No! Drake knocked up sixty in the first innings——"

"Gammon!"

"And nearly fifty in the second——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Honest Injun!" said Harry Wharton.

"The ass can play cricket, and so can the other ass, only they're too funny. They ought to be ragged for pulling our legs—but they helped more than anybody else to win, so——"

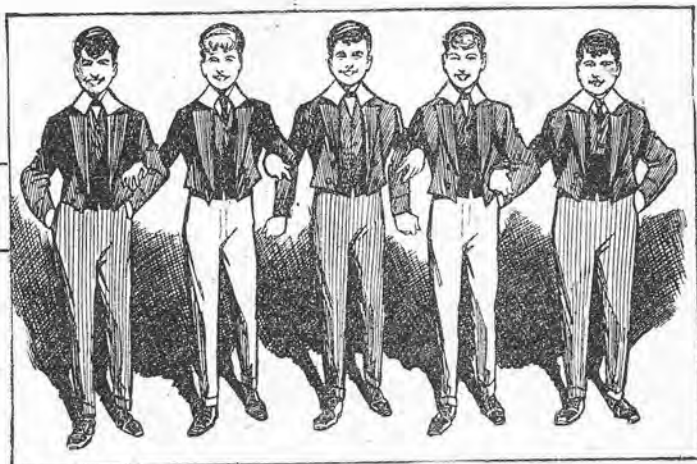
"Well, my hat!" said Ogilvy. "Did you ever?"

"Hardly ever!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"They ought to be jolly well thumped, but we're going to let them off; in fact, we're going to stand them a spread in No. 1 Study. Come on, you funny asses!"

It was a great celebration in honour of the victory at Rookwood, and Harry Wharton and Jack Drake wore smiling faces at the feast. For the present, at least, the hatchet was buried, and the most amicable peace reigned between the rivals of the Remove.

The



End

BILLY BUNTER'S COOKERY CLASS

By FRANK RICHARDS

I.

"COURTFIELD double-six, please!"

Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, halted in the Close, beneath the Head's study window, and pricked up his ears.

Dr. Locke was speaking on the telephone, and as his window was open, the sound of his voice came distinctly to Billy Bunter's ears. "Courtfield double-six," mused the fat junior. "That's the Elysian Café. Wonder why the Head's ringing them up?"

It was a little habit of Billy Bunter's to listen to conversations which were not intended for his ears. He picked up a deal of information in this way, and then passed it on, in a greatly exaggerated form, to his school-fellows, who generally bumped him for his pains. It would have gone hard with the Owl of the Remove had the Head stepped to his window and looked out.

But Dr. Locke was too engrossed on the telephone to keep a look-out for possible eavesdroppers.

"Are you there? Is that the Elysian Café, Courtfield? I wish to speak to the proprietor. Oh, you are the proprietor? I am Dr. Locke, of Greyfriars. Something of a calamity has occurred here, and I desire your assistance."

"My hat!" murmured Billy Bunter.

And he edged closer to the window.

"An epidemic of influenza has broken out among my kitchen staff," continued the Head. "The cook and her assistants are too ill to be able to pursue their duties. It is appalling. I am well-nigh distracted! What is that? You say you see no reason for my distraction? My dear man, it is now twelve o'clock. In an hour's time three hundred hungry boys will flock into the dining-hall. And there is nothing cooked or prepared for them—nothing!"

There was a pause.

Billy Bunter's face wore a woebegone look. No dinner for Greyfriars! It was a tragedy,

especially to the fat junior whose motto was, "Eat not to live, but live to eat."

The Head went on talking to the proprietor of the Elysian Café.

"I have called you up to ask if you could spare me the services of one of your chefs," he said. "You are having rather a slack time just now, and if one of your chefs is standing idle—What do you say? You have a good man whom you can spare for a few days? Splendid! I trust he is an Englishman? He is? Excellent! Send him to Greyfriars post haste, will you? I am afraid this is very short notice, but doubtless he will be able to serve up some sort of a meal. What is the chef's name? Robinson? Very well. Kindly ask him to report to me on his arrival."

The Head rang off, and Billy Bunter rolled away, with a very thoughtful expression on his face.

"Fancy the cooks being down with the 'flu!" he muttered. "It puts the Head in rather a fix. But why didn't he send for me? He knows what a jolly good cook I am. It wouldn't take me long to dish up three hundred dinners, provided I had about a dozen fellows under my command to do all the hack work, such as peeling potatoes and shelling peas."

Billy Bunter was annoyed to think that Dr. Locke had overlooked him.

As a culinary expert, the fat junior stood supreme. What he didn't know about cooking wasn't worth knowing.

And yet the Head had ignored Bunter's existence, and sent for a common or garden chef called Robinson.

"I dare say the fellow would poison the whole school if he turned up," murmured Billy Bunter. "But he's not going to turn up. I'll see to that."

The fat junior rolled out of gates, and proceeded in the direction of Courtfield.

Before he had gone very far, he encountered



To face page 80.

BILLY BUNTER TAKES COMMAND IN THE KITCHEN!

The Greyfriars Juniors prove that too many cooks spoil the broth!

a young man in a hurry. Bunter planted himself in the man's path.

"I say, Robinson——"

The man gave a start.

"How did you know my name?" he demanded.

"I happened to hear the Head making arrangements for you to come to Greyfriars," said Billy Bunter. "And my advice to you is—keep off the grass!"

"Why?"

Bunter lowered his voice and spoke confidentially.

"You'll be let down badly if you go to Greyfriars," he said. "The Head isn't going to study you a little bit. You'll have to cook for seven hundred fellows——"

"My boss said three hundred——"

"That was a slip of the tongue. There are seven hundred of us at Greyfriars, and in the ordinary way it takes a dozen cooks to look after the meals. Well, the whole of the kitchen staff's down with 'flu, and you'll have to run the entire show yourself—if you're ass enough to go. Even if you work day and night without stopping, you won't be able to keep pace with the job. The meals will be served badly or late—or both—and the fellows will mob you."

Mr. Robinson looked impressed. He was a dapper, inoffensive little man, and a keen worker. But the prospect which Billy Bunter conjured up was anything but pleasant.

"I also happen to know that the Head doesn't intend to pay you a penny," Bunter went on.

"What!"

"Ah, I knew that would rouse you! The Head's going to pay for your services, of course, but as far as you yourself are concerned you won't get a farthing."

"You're sure of that?" said Mr. Robinson.

"Positive!"

"Then I'm off! I'm not going to work like a galley-slave for nothing!"

So saying, the chef turned on his heel, and started to walk back to Courtfield.

Billy Bunter chuckled as he retraced his steps to Greyfriars.

"I've got that merchant out of the way, anyhow," he chortled. "The Head will have to apply for my services, after all. In a crisis

of this sort, he simply can't do without me!" On his return to the school the fat junior went straight to the kitchen.

He found the place deserted.

There were plenty of foodstuffs on view, but they were in a raw and uncooked state.

Billy Bunter soon got busy.

He peeled a dozen potatoes, and put them in a saucepan, which he placed on the stove. Then he washed and dissected a cabbage, and put that in a saucepan also. After which, he calmly proceeded to fry himself a steak.

Whatever happened to the rest of the Greyfriars fellows, Billy Bunter didn't mean to miss his dinner!

Nobody came near the kitchen whilst the fat junior was thus engaged.

Bunter made an excellent dinner. Then he proceeded to fry another steak. He waited until it was done to perfection; then he served it up on a plate with potatoes and cabbage.

"I'll take this along to old Prout," he muttered. "He'll be awfully bucked!"

The next moment, Billy Bunter threaded his way through the crowded corridor, carrying a laden tray.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's the little game, Bunter?"

"This is Prout's dinner," explained Bunter. "I got it ready myself."

"But—but what——?"

"The kitchen staff's down with 'flu."

"My hat!"

Billy Bunter passed on, leaving his school-fellows in a state of wonder.

Straight to Mr. Prout's study he went. The door was slightly ajar, and he kicked it open, and entered.

The master of the Fifth looked up in astonishment.

"Bless my soul! Bunter! What does this mean?"

"Your dinner, sir," said the fat junior, in the most polished manner of a highly-trained butler.

He set the tray down on the table, and Mr. Prout gasped.

"Rather than see you go without your dinner, sir, I got it ready myself," said Bunter. "I hope you'll like it, sir. The steak's done to a turn."

Mr. Prout was aware of the crisis which had arisen, and he had despaired of getting any dinner. To tell the truth, he was feeling very hungry, and the sight and smell of the steak appealed to him strongly.

"This is very good of you, Bunter," he said, picking up the knife and fork. "Though I fail to see why I should be singled out for special consideration."

"You're my favourite master, sir," said Bunter promptly. "You're not a beastly tyrant, like some masters I could name—"

"Hush, Bunter! You must not speak in that way," mumbled Mr. Prout, who had already started operations on his dinner. "Dear me, this steak is good—very good, indeed!"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"I'm a topping cook, sir," he said modestly.

"M-m-m-m!" mumbled Mr. Prout, by way of endorsing this statement.

The fat junior withdrew.

It was nearly one o'clock by this time, and all roads led to the dining-hall.

But there was a shock for the Greyfriars fellows when they got there. No steaming joints, or baked meat pies, greeted their hungry glances.

"Where's the grub?" growled Bolsover major. "We can't eat plates and knives and forks!"

"Guess a cannibal like you could eat anything!" said Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior.

Bolsover scowled.

"If you're not careful, I'll start on fried Fish!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows waited with growing impatience for dinner to arrive. But there was no sign of it.

There was a stamping of feet, and a loud murmur of protest—a murmur which rapidly swelled into a roar.

"Buck up!"

"Dinner this way!"

"What's happened to the merry cooks?"

The main door of the dining-hall opened, and Dr. Locke entered. He was looking very worried and agitated.

"I must apologise to you, my boys," he

began, "for the fact that dinner has not yet been served. The cook and her assistants have fallen victims to the influenza epidemic, and the chef whom I arranged to engage from Courtfield has not arrived. In the circumstances, I hardly know what course to take."

"There aren't any 'courses' to take at all—not even soup!" grumbled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Either you must be content to make a frugal meal of bread-and-butter, my boys," continued the Head, "or dinner must be postponed for an hour or more. Which do you prefer?"

It was a case of two evils, and the majority of the fellows voted for the postponement.

"Very well," said the Head. "I will take steps to have a hot dinner prepared as soon as possible, and the gong shall be sounded when it is ready."

A moment later the hungry and dissatisfied crowd streamed out of the hall, wondering why the cooks could not have arranged to contract influenza one at a time, instead of all together.

II.

"I HAVE solved the problem, sir!" said Mr. Prout.

Dr. Locke looked doubtful.

"I repeat, Bunter of the Remove is an expert cook," said the master of the Fifth. "He has already prepared me a most tasty and satisfying meal. If he were given the necessary assistance, I have no doubt that he could prepare dinner for the whole school."

"But, my dear Prout, it is unheard-of that a junior boy should have charge of the cooking arrangements!"

"It is a novel course to take, I grant you," said Mr. Prout. "But it is the only course possible. The man Robinson has not arrived, and there are three hundred mouths waiting to be fed. Something will have to be done at once, or the boys will break out in open revolt!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Hunger breeds desperation," said Mr. Prout. "You cannot allow the whole school to remain unfed. There are ample supplies of meat and vegetables in the kitchen, and if only you will set Bunter to work——"

Gradually the master of the Fifth won the Head over.

Billy Bunter was sent for, and the Head, though he little relished doing so, solicited the fat junior's help.

"Mr. Prout assures me, Bunter," he said, "that the provision of dinner for the whole school is a task which is not beyond your powers."

"No task is beyond my powers, sir!" said Billy Bunter, with a smirk. "You've only to say the word, and I'll jolly soon have dinner served up."

"Very well, Bunter. I leave it to you to select a number of assistants, and to prepare a suitable meal with all the skill and expedition of which you are capable. You may start at once."

Billy Bunter promptly went in search of recruits. He came upon a crowd of Removites in the Close, and rolled up to them.

"I say, you fellows! The Head's implored me, on bended cheeks, and with the tears streaming down his knees—I—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's entreated me to cook the dinner for the whole school, and I've agreed!" said Bunter.

"My hat!"

"I shall be able to kill two birds with one stone," Bunter went on. "I shall see to the dinner, and hold a cookery class at the same time. Anybody who wants to learn the art of cooking is advised to rally round at once. I can have as many helpers as I like."

"I'm game," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Same here!" said other members of the Famous Five.

"Count me in, Porpoise," said Peter Todd.

"Guess I'm willing," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'm hot-stuff at cooking. Give me a joint of meat and a few vegetables, and——"

"You'll make a hash of it?" suggested Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me lendee a handee with cooking!" said Wun Lung eagerly.

"Come on, then!" said Billy Bunter. "There's no time to be lost!"

A few moments later the Greyfriars kitchen presented a very animated appearance. At

least a dozen fellows had volunteered their services—more for the fun of the thing than from a desire to learn cooking under Billy Bunter's tuition.

The fat junior donned a white chef's garb over his Etons, and started rapping out orders:

"Now, then, Wharton, start peeling those spuds! Give him a hand, Nugent. I haven't got a penknife, but I expect somebody will oblige! Shell those peas, Toddy! Grease the frying-pans, Inky!"

"Please, sir, what can I do for you, sir?" asked Bob Cherry humbly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to make some apple-turnovers, to follow the first course," said Bunter. "You can get the necessary ingredients ready. It'll be rather a long job, but——"

"Rats! I can make an apple-turnover in a second!" said Bob Cherry.

"Don't be a silly ass!"

"Certainly not!" said Bob. "I don't want to poach on your preserves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How can you make an apple-turnover in a second?" demanded Bunter.

"Like this!" was the reply.

Whereupon Bob Cherry picked up an apple, and turned it over.

"There you are!" he said triumphantly. "I've made an apple turn over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I have any more of your silly rot, Cherry, I'll brain you with the rolling-pin!" said Bunter wrathfully.

The fat junior then turned his attention to the joints. He placed them in the ovens, and instructed Bulstrode to keep an eye on them.

"Whatever you do, don't let 'em burn, like Oliver Cromwell when he burnt the steaks!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The task of preparing the dinner went on merrily.

Billy Bunter laid down the law the whole time, saying how this should be done, and how that should be done. The fat junior was in his element. He was in a position of power and responsibility, for upon him would depend the success or failure of the school's dinner.

That it would prove an unqualified success

Bunter had no doubt. His schoolfellows, however, were not quite so optimistic.

Bob Cherry produced some flour, some chopped suet, and a basin of water. Then he peeled a number of apples, and handed them round to his chums, who ate while they worked.

Billy Bunter mixed the flour and suet into a dough, and then picked up the rolling-pin. At that precise moment Peter Todd was crossing the kitchen, balancing a huge pyramid of plates.

Billy Bunter brandished the rolling-pin as if it were a cudgel, and accidentally smote Peter Todd on the top of the head.

"Yaroooooh!"

Crash!!!

There was a wild yell of anguish from Peter, followed by a deafening series of crashes as the plates were dashed to smithereens on the stone floor.

"Todd, you clumsy ass!" shouted Bunter.

"Wow! It isn't me that's clumsy! It's you—you chopheaded chump! You jolly nearly fractured my skull!"

"It couldn't possibly affect your brain, that's one blessing," said Squiff. "Best of having a napper full of sawdust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order, please!" said Harry Wharton. "Or to-day's dinner won't be ready till Tuesday week!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled out the dough; then he looked round for the apples. But he looked in vain.

"I say, you fellows, what's become of the apples?" he demanded.

"The Cherry tempted me, and I did eat," said Nugent, remorsefully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cherry, you villain, how can I make apple turnovers without the apples? It's rotten!"

"Rotten to the core!" agreed Bob.

"I vote fully suggest that we have Cherry-turnovers," said Hurree Singh.

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner. "But we shall have to stone him first!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter looked round for a substitute for the apples. And at that moment Wun Lung, who had been absent for some time,

came into the kitchen, carrying a dead rat by its tail.

Bunter backed away in alarm.

"Ugh! Take that beastly thing away!" he gasped.

"Lat-pie velly nice," said Wun Lung. "We eattee lat-pie in my native countlee."

"Well, we're not going to eat it here. This is a civilised place."

Wun Lung looked disappointed.

"Me skinee the lat, and chopee him up," he suggested.

"Groo!"

"Won't you lettee me make lat-pie?"

"Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nobody seemed to fancy such a novel but gruesome dish as rat-pie. And Wun Lung was obliged to take the rat away, and feed it to the gardener's dog.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter unearthed a pot of strawberry jam, which he used in place of the apples.

"How are the joints going on, Bulstrode?" inquired the fat junior.

"Eh?" Bulstrode looked up with a start from the copy of "The Boy's Friend" that he had been reading. "Did you speak, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter lifted his nose in the air, and sniffed.

"There's something burning!" he said.

"Praps it's the fire?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter made a hurried dash for the oven. He seized the handle, and then leapt in the air with a yell like a dervish. The handle was red-hot.

"Ow-ow-ow! Gimme a dishcloth, somebody."

Johnny Bull handed over a cloth, and Bunter inspected the joints. They were burnt almost to cinders!

"Bulstrode, you chump!" yelled the fat junior. "You've done just what Nelson did—or was it William Rufus? You've let the beastly things burn!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"It's a burning shame!" said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully at his hilarious assistants.

"This is what comes of my trying to teach you cooking!" he roared. "I'm fed-up with you! I'll sack the lot! Get out!"

Sobbing with merriment, the juniors staggered out of the kitchen. They weren't sorry to go, for the atmosphere was fairly stifling.

Half an hour later, the thunderous boom of the dinner-gong sounded through the building, and the three hundred ravenous fellows surged into the dining-hall.

No words could describe that dinner. It beggared description.

The first course was advertised as roast beef, potatoes, and peas. But the fellows left it severely alone. The meat was burnt beyond recognition; the potatoes seemed to have got mixed up with a salt-mine; and the peas were as hard as bullets.

The second course consisted of jam-turnover. The jam was all right, but the turnover was all wrong.

Skinner had turned out the gas when Billy Bunter was not looking, with the result that the pastry was nothing more than dough. It would have been courting sudden death to have attempted to eat it.

The third course was the only eatable one. It consisted of bread-and-butter and cheese. The Greyfriars fellows ate it with a very bad grace, and immediately after the meal they

looked round for Billy Bunter to mob him. But Bunter was nowhere to be found. As a matter of fact, he had been summoned to the Head's study.

Dr. Locke's brow was like thunder as he addressed the fat junior.

"I have just discovered, Bunter, that you have acted abominably! You intercepted Mr. Robinson, the chef whom I had engaged, and you told him that it would be to his disadvantage to come here."

"Oh, really, sir, I——"

"You acted outrageously, and deprived the whole school of its dinner!"

"But—but they've just had dinner, sir!" said Bunter. "It was a tremendous success from start to finish. It—it fairly melted in the mouth, sir!"

"Silence, wretched boy! You will kindly place yourself in a convenient position to receive castigation!"

So saying, the Head picked up a cane, and proceeded to wield it with great vigour.

Billy Bunter acknowledged the receipt of each cut by a yell which could be heard all over Greyfriars. He was being taught that the way of the transgressor—and the amateur cook—is hard!

Next day Greyfriars had its dinner as usual. Mr. Robinson proved himself to be a genius at his job, and there were no complaints—save from Billy Bunter, who was refused a fifth helping of steak and kidney pudding.



THE END

The Modern Romeo!



: : A COMEDY IN VERSE : :

Horace Coker's Invitation

FARE FILLIS, of the marbel brow,
I wunder what you're doing now?
With yards of nitting on yore knee,
You dowlless sit and dreem—of ME!

And wile you nitt yore bruther's sox,
No dowl you think, with plezzant shox,
Of that most blissfool eve when, ah!
I took you to the sinnyma!

Deer Fillis, will you come agane
On Tewsdays (if it duzzent rane?).
I love to sit neer you, and chuckle
At Charlie Chaplin, and Arbuckle!

And when we've seen the pickchers through
I'll rambel down the lanes with you,
And tell you what is in my hart
(I'm used to playing Romeo's part!).

One last rekwest, deer girl (don't laugh!),
Pleese send yore latest fotygraph.
I'll guard it with the studdy poker—
Not $\frac{1}{2}$!—Yores evver, HORACE COKER.

Phyllis Howell's Reply

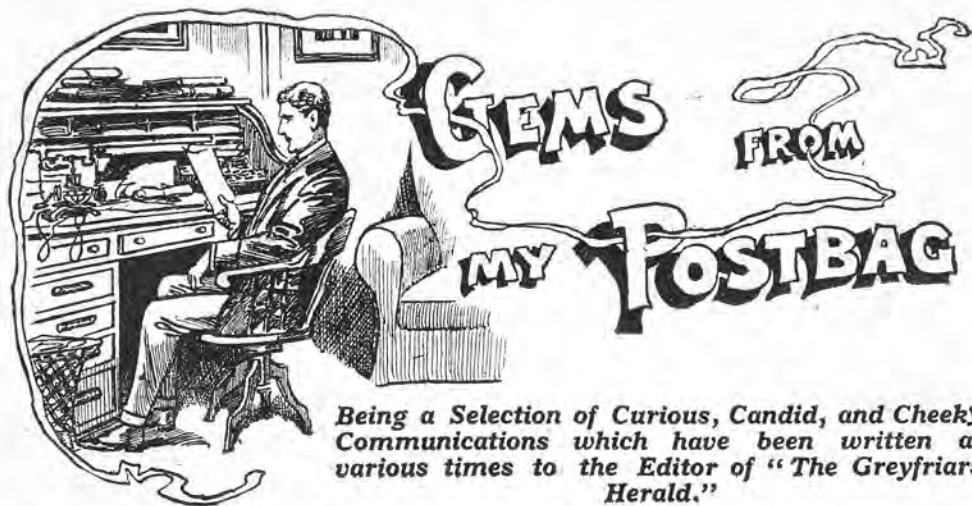
YOUR verses just to hand, dear Coker;
You are a most amazing joker!
I've more important things to do
Than sit and knit—and dream of YOU!

Yes, I remember that great "treat,"
You led me to a threepenny seat.
We saw the programme through six times;
The films were awful—like your rhymes!

I must decline your invitation
Without the slightest hesitation.
The Weather Clerk, to my delight,
Has promised rain for Tuesday night!

It really gives me quite a start
To know there's something in your heart.
However, it is pretty plain
There can be nothing in your brain!

I have no photograph to spare,
But I enclose a lock of hair.
Please guard it with a spade, or trowel
(It's Bessie Bunter's!) — PHYLLIS
HOWELL.



Being a Selection of Curious, Candid, and Cheeky Communications which have been written at various times to the Editor of "The Greyfriars Herald."

By **HARRY WHARTON**

QUITE one of the most interesting jobs in connection with "The Greyfriars Herald," which, as everyone knows, is the most popular schoolboy-edited paper in existence, is the reading and answering of readers' letters.

Some of these letters ring with praise of "The Greyfriars Herald," others are quite the reverse.

"Yours is a ripping paper," writes "A Staunch Heraldite," of Melbourne, "and I think the Editor deserves the O.B.E."

I scarcely know whether to take this as a compliment or otherwise. O.B.E.'s appear to be as plentiful as blackberries. Billy Bunter tells me that his pater has one, but, of course, that's only Bunter's exaggeration!

By the same mail which brought "A Staunch Heraldite's" letter came a communication from "Inconstant Reader," of Sydney. It was brief and to the point.

"I consider that 'The Greyfriars Herald' is an awful rag, and that its Editor ought to be put in the pillory!"

This epistle concludes, "Yours affection-

ately." Queer way some people have of showing their affection!

Puzzle—How to Please Everybody!

We publish the "Herald" on Mondays, with the "Magnet" Library. This satisfies a number of readers, but it annoys others.

Just look at this array of terrible threats which reached me only this morning!

"Dear Wharton,—I should like 'The Greyfriars Herald' to be published on Wednesday, as I have a half-holiday on that day.

"Unless you arrange this at once, I shall cancel my order for next week's issue.—

Yours, "TEDDY OF TOOTING."

"Dear Wharton,—'The Greyfriars Herald' is all right, but your publishing day is all wrong. Make it Thursday. I've got no time to spare on Monday, and my leisure moments on Wednesday are occupied in reading the 'Gem.'"

"Change your publishing day at once, there's a good chap, or you will incur the wrath of your ardent reader,

"BILLY BECKETT.

"(No relation to Joseph of that ilk.)"

"Deer wharton i think you ought to bring out 'The Greyfriars Herald' on friday bekaws thats my unlucky day and i want sumthing to cheer me up as i'm allways getting into trubbel on that day and if you dont ax seed to my rekwest i shall call upon you at no distant dait with a thick stick and give you a jolly good hidding as sure as my name's Freddie Freckles (age 8)."

"Dear Wharton,—Why don't you publish 'The Greyfriars Herald' on Saturday, as on that day I get my weekly—or, rather, weakly—allowance of pocket-money, viz., twopence.

"I can't hoard this princely sum in my pocket until the following Monday, consequently I have to go without the 'Herald.'"

"Unless you fall in with this request, we shall fall out!—Yours grimly,

"S. TONY BROKE."

"Dear Wharton,—Just a few lines hopping you are quite well as it leeves me at pressant with a sevre cold on the chest, and I shall be oblidged if you will see that 'The Greyfriars Herald' is published on Sundays in future, as on that day I am aloud an extra hour in bed.

"I shall look out for your paper on Sunday neckst, and if I don't see it I shall come down to Greyfriars and put your nose out of joint. No offense meant, of corse, but I might mention, ong passant, as the French say, that I'm the champion hevvy-weight boxer at my skool. So I should advise you to carry out my request, unless you want to be carried out yourself on an amberlance!—

Yours trewly, "PERCY PULP."

I might mention that I am unmoved by these threats of frightfulness. At the same time, it just shows what an impossible task the average editor has got. In pleasing one reader, he displeases another. Satisfied readers swear eternal friendship; dissatisfied ones swear—and that's all.

Needless to state, the publishing day of "The Greyfriars Herald" remains the same!

Some Curious Requests!

A successful editor must be something more than a mere figure-head. He must

be an Information Bureau, a Walking Encyclopædia, a Dictionary of General Knowledge, a philanthropist, an arbitrator, and goodness knows what.

Only a fellow who was a perfect storehouse of information, for instance, could answer the following:

"Dear Wharton,—Please answer these questions by return of post:

"(1) How many times does Billy Bunter's bootlace come untied in the course of one day?

"(2) If you can lick Belsover major at boxing, and Dick Russell can lick you, and Bob Cherry can lick Dick Russell, and Talbot of St. Jim's can lick Bob Cherry, where do the flies go in the winter-time?

"(3) If there are sixty studies at Greyfriars, and each study contains three occupants, and each occupant has a Latin primer, and each Latin primer contains 1,999 words on each page, when will Billy Bunter's postal-order arrive?

"(4) If Coker of the Fifth rides his motor-bike along the footpath of Friardale Wood at a proportionate speed of forty-five miles an hour, who killed Cock Robin?

"(5) How many square inches are there in the Close?

"(6) When is Gosling, the porter, going to be pensioned off?

"(7) What is the exact circumference of Billy Bunter's waist?

"(8) Is Billy's pater a profiteer? If so, who did he 'do' in the Great War?

"I enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Please satisfy my thirst for information at once. I shall wait eagerly for your reply.—Yours, in anticipation, "QUERIST."

I need hardly say that my queer querist had to wait a jolly long time. In fact, he is still waiting!

Another peculiar request I recently received ran as follows:

"Deer Wharton,—Please send me your fotygraph as I wish to stick it in my elbum.

Please also send photographs of Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, Mark Linley, Vernon-Smith, Tom Brown, Peter Todd, Dick Russell, Billy Bunter, Tom Dutton, Monty Newland, and Mr. Quelch (in the act of giving sumboddy a licking), and Mr. Prout (in the act of having his mourning bath).

"Please send these photographs along at wunce.—Yours sinseerly,

"WILLIE WAITE."

As in the case of "Querist," Master Waite will jolly well have to!

I could go on quoting indefinitely from letters which I have received at various times, but owing to pressure on my space

RANDOM RIDDLES

(Guaranteed to have been invented since the Flood.)

Why does Billy Bunter, after emerging from the tuckshop, resemble THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL?

Because he's packed inside with good things!

Why is Mr. Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove, like a faithful terrier?

Because he often "licks" our hands!

Why is Loder, of the Sixth, like an unreliable street-lamp?

Because he frequently goes out at night!

Why are the St. Jim's juniors a set of weaklings?

Because they can't stand Cutts and Knox!

Why is Gosling, the porter, a neglectful person?

Because when he's finished sweeping the leaves, he leaves the sweepings!

Why did Hurree Singh?

Because he saw Tom Merry and Gordon Gay.

(as Billy Bunter would say after a good tuck-in) I have no room for more.

In the course of my editorship I have received invitations to hundreds of homes, I have been asked to turn out for dozens of football teams, and scores of correspondents have volunteered to take over my job, and to make "The Greyfriars Herald" a far bigger success than it is already.

But I still continue my innings, and, at the risk of being thought selfish, I may say that it will be a long time before I hand over my bat to somebody else.

You see, it's great fun being an editor, despite the drawbacks attaching to that post, and I wouldn't relinquish my job for worlds!

HARRY WHARTON.

What is the difference between a certain type of dealer on the Stock Exchange and Baggy Trimble?

One is an outside broker, and the other a broke outsider!

Why is the New House football team at St. Jim's invincible?

Because it is never without a Wynn!

What popular song is most applicable to Tom Dutton, the deaf junior?

"Come Back to Erin!"

What is the chief difference between Harry Wharton and Alonzo Todd?

Harry's simply perfect, and Alonzo's perfectly simple.

Why did Gwynne Gwynne?

Because, whilst descending from a lofty tree-top, Mr. Twigg Mr. Twigg (missed a twig).

What is the difference between Coker's motor-bike and Billy Bunter in a stony-broke condition?

No difference. They both raise the "dust."

How do we know that Tubbs washes his neck at least once a year?

Because he has his "Holiday Annual."

THE JAMBOREE MARCH

Dedicated to the Chief Scout

Composed by HERMAN DAREWSKI

TRIO.

The musical score is written for piano and consists of six systems of music. Each system has a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system begins with a piano (p) dynamic marking. The second system continues the melody. The third system features a more active bass line. The fourth system includes a forte (f) dynamic marking. The fifth system has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic marking. The sixth system concludes with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic marking, a 'p.Cal fine.' instruction, and a repeat sign. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and rests.

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HOW I COMPOSED THE JAMBOREE MARCH

By HERMAN DAREWSKI

I HAVE had some busy days in my life, but I think that there is one day that I shall place on record as *the* most busy.

I shall keep it as a yearly festival, and call it "Jamboree Day."

Now, on the opposite page you have a copy of a march. It is called the "Jamboree," and you will play it over or have it played over, and little think of the record that lies behind it—that is, of course, if you haven't read this article.

Now I am going to tell you all how "Jamboree" came into being.

I was seated in my office one day, and, curiously enough, I was pondering over the meaning of "Jamboree."

As I am not a Scout, and as in my young days the movement had not been initiated, my ignorance can be forgiven, can it not?

Well, there I was, anyway, wondering what the word meant, and thinking how fascinating

it sounded, when suddenly there came an urgent messenger to tell me that someone wanted to see me. My visitor was connected

with the Boy Scout movement. Of course, I gave instructions that my caller was to come in at once, and come in he did. And he told me, in that convincing Scout manner that breathes of alertness and speed, that they wanted a Jamboree March for Olympia.

"That sounds all right," said I. "But the Jamboree opens to-morrow."

I looked at my watch.

"There isn't much time," I said.

But at that moment I had a vision of the great trek to Olympia from the far-flung corners of the world. I thought of all the lands that had sent their younger sons to join

in the big pow-wow. I heard the howl of the wolf cubs, and I made my decision at once.

"You shall have the march, and I won't spare any pains to have it done in time," I said.



Mr. Herman Darewski, the famous composer.

I didn't. It is not easy to get a theme for a march at a moment's notice, I can tell you, but I set my wits to work, and at last the motif came to me.

I ventured to think that it was ideal for the subject, so I scored it down, and told everyone to stand by to push the march through. The composing part was finished, but the mechanical side, the printing and engraving of it, was going to be the test.

Everyone entered into the spirit of the thing. For that matter they might have all been Scouts, for they worked hard, and they removed obstacles that seemed mountainous as though these obstacles were of the most trivial nature. The engravers worked a miracle. The cover design was done, and the block made in an extraordinarily short space of time.

It had been orchestrated, and soon along came the proofs, which were corrected immediately; then it was re-engraved and finally printed. And how long do you think the whole thing took?

I venture to think that even Scouts will be astonished at the record that was set up.

The "Jamboree Quick March" was entirely finished in twelve hours, and the biggest record for quick music printing set up.

I had commenced the work in the afternoon, and at noon next day it was being played and on sale at Olympia.

If you play it over, and think of these things, you will realise that it was no easy matter; but I am exceedingly glad to have had such a good opportunity of proving myself a good Scout. I have dedicated this piece of music to the Chief Scout, and I have been most exceedingly pleased to hear from a great many quarters that the "Jamboree" has already become so very, very popular that soon its air will be heard in all quarters of the globe where the Scout movement exists.

It will be a march that will remind all boys of the big brotherhood of Scoutdom, and remind them also of the fine and firm friendships they made when they all rallied together and in their mighty numbers formed the first Scout Jamboree.

Herman Townshend

GREYFRIARS LANDMARKS



THE PORTER'S LODGE

Within his cosy little hut,
Sits Gosling, not on duty;
Our famous porter is—tut! tut!
A type of manly beauty.
What matters if his rugged face
Is just a trifle mottled?
He's happy, for his eye can trace
Some spirits, newly bottled!

A thing of beauty Gossy is,
Likewise a joy for ever!
Note the expression on his phiz:
"Are we downhearted? Never!"
The Christmas vac. will soon appear,
And while he snacks his lips, he
Hopes fondly that the fellows here
Will "tip" him till he's "tipsy!"

Before the skylark starts to spout,
Old Gossy's up and doing;
And when the rising-bell rings out,
We know there's trouble brewing!
But every youthful slacker thinks,
As soon as day commences,
He'll take another forty winks,
And blow the consequences!

You ought to see how Gossy works,
He does it like a nigger!
When snow upon his doorstep lurks,
He sweeps it off with vigour,
At lifting weights he's lord of all,
He'd tackle mighty boulders!
And when we're punished in Big Hall,
He takes us on his shoulders.

Then, when the weary day is o'er,
Within his lodge you'll find him;
He loves to sit alone and snore,
With cushions piled behind him.
Rheumatics haunt him—it's a shame,
And he is old and mossy;
But Greyfriars wouldn't be the same
Without our dear old Gossy!

"KATIE'S" WEDDING MARCH



*A Magnificent, Long
Complete Story of
the Boys of St.
Katie's, and of their
form-master, "Jolly
Roger"*

By MICHAEL POOLE

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Jolly Roger Takes Tea

IMAGINE for a moment that you are a visitor to St. Katherine's School on a certain summer afternoon. Walking down the corridor which is known as the Trans corridor, because it is here that the boys of the Transitus Form have their studies, you would have observed quite a lot of interesting things.

Most of the study-doors were open, and you could see in each room two or three fellows, aged about fifteen or sixteen, making a brew of tea or arranging cups and saucers, or opening tins of fruit, or any old thing of that sort. And you would probably have noted the fact that the studies were not particularly neat and tidy, nor were the occupants quiet and orderly. The Transitus Form never had a reputation for anything of that sort, being happy lads of the "boys will be boys" breed, who liked to kick up a bit of a row round about tea-time.

At the end of the corridor was Study Ten. The door was closed, and if you had opened it your first idea would have been that you had

made a mistake and struck the prize sitting-room at a Model Homes Exhibition. The books were carefully arranged on their shelves, the pictures hung dead straight on the walls, and everything about the show was wondrous neat and clean, as it says in the poem.

The table in the centre of the room was set for a meal—a gentle, polite sort of meal, and not a giddy feast. Carefully arranged on chairs about the room were four boys, and each of them held a book, nicely bound and with gilt edges, showing that it was a great work, and one that would improve the mind.

They were nice boys, too, and not like the rowdy fellows in the other rooms. Their hair was properly brushed, and their faces bright and clean. You would have said at once that these were good boys, who always did as they were told, and won all the prizes for good conduct and steady work.

And you would have been hopelessly wrong. The big fellow who sat in the far corner pretending to read "The Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson," was Bill Strong, the best full-back and one of the steadiest bats Katie's had ever known. Bill didn't know much about

poetry, but when it came to captaining the Transitus team, everyone knew that Bill was a marvel.

Near him sat another athlete, just as tall as Bill, but a bit more on the willowy side. Jimmy Curtis, commonly known as the "Kangaroo" because he came from Australia, wasn't reading "Essays on Education" because he really liked it better than the "Book of Cricket," but just because he wanted to look as good as the rest of them.

Then there was the quiet-looking lad in spectacles, whose name was Dobbin. Old Dobbie was an expert with the camera, and with the aid of his friend, the Kid—

But you want to meet the Kid personally. He was the kind little boy who sat near the table and kept looking up anxiously towards the door. His full name was Richard Dexter, and when people first saw him they said what a dear, sweet child he was; and when they saw his big blue eyes and his little rosebud mouth, they always hoped that the big boys didn't hurt him, or make him unhappy.

But you can take it from me that the big boys didn't try any games of that sort with Richard. The Transitus Form considered that they were the rightful leaders of the school, because a fellow didn't get into the Transitus unless he had become something of a nuisance in every other form. And whenever there was any complicated sort of trouble knocking round the Transitus, or even in the school, it was fairly safe to reckon that Dickie Dexter was right in the centre of it. It was he who, with the aid of Jimmy Curtis, fixed up the great rag which resulted in the wrecking of all the Transitus and the Fifth studies. It was Dexter, again aided by Curtis, who led their dear form-master into a trap, so that he believed everybody in the school was gambling, and—but why go on? Everybody knew that the Kid was the brainiest little rag-inventor who had ever adorned St. Katie's.

At four-thirty there came a tap at the door, and a moment later there stepped into the room a tall, soldierly man, whose face was glowing and whose eyes simply beamed with joy. He seemed to be bursting with cheerfulness.

"Ah, ah!" he said. "Ah! This is very

pleasant! This is splendid! I feel an absolute longing to-day for bright society. I feel confident that I have come to the right address, Strong. I am sure I have."

They smiled. Dobbin dashed to the "Primus" stove and began to make the brew. Strong put a chair in the right position for their visitor, while the Kid pushed the cake a little nearer the centre.

Mr. Roger Blunt, form-master of the Transitus, sat down. When you come to think of the fact that he had under him the thirty most difficult and unmanageable boys at Katie's, you might wonder why he felt so cheerful. But Jolly Roger had come to the school for the express purpose of reforming the Transitus, and he was the sort of man who simply revelled in hard work.

They had done their best to cure him. They had tried all the old stunts and the Kid had invented several new ones, all with the express purpose of making Jolly Roger wish he'd never seen St. Katie's. But Roger smiled through it all. He never lost his temper, never threatened them with expulsion, or talked of reporting them to the Head. He simply said he was going to make them work—and in the end the Transitus did work.

Other masters before Jolly Roger had simply told the Transitus that they were a set of young scoundrels, and left it at that. Roger invited himself to tea with one or other members of his form. Sometimes, too, he invited one or more of his gentle pupils to take tea with him. And he always did everything with such an air of cheerful vim that you couldn't help feeling rather jolly about the whole business.

You've got to put that down to Roger's credit, just as you've got to admit that if he talked about school matters and learned one or two things that he wasn't intended to know, he never took advantage of it. The Transitus got to the stage where they bragged about Jolly Roger; they said he was a brute and a glutton for work, that he had an eagle eye which sent cold shivers down your spine, and that if the Fifth or any ordinary form had him they would all be pulverised. Jolly Roger said that he liked the Transitus; and the Transitus were really rather proud of Roger.

Generally, when Roger announced his intention of coming to tea he had something up his sleeve, so to speak. To-day he talked of cricket and boating, and of everything under the sun except the *Transitus* and work, which were usually his pet subjects. And Study Ten knew they'd been good lads just lately, so it couldn't be that he wanted to give them a gentle hint about their past misdeeds.

It came at last. Roger beamed upon them as he took the last piece of cake, and into his eyes came a little twinkle of joy.

"Excellent cake, Dexter! Splendid!" he said. "Let me see! What was I about to remark? Yes, I remember. Do you think, Dexter, that if I were away for a whole fortnight or so, the *Transitus* would still maintain the high standard of conduct which it has shown of late?"

Into Dexter's eyes came a sudden gleam of gladness. In a flash he realised what it would be like to have a whole fortnight without Jolly Roger's eagle eye upon them. Wouldn't they have a giddy time!

"Oh, yes, sir," he said cheerfully. "The *Transitus* would be all right, sir."

Jolly Roger looked at the four of them and noted the little light of eagerness on their faces. Then he smiled more broadly and more cheerfully than ever.

"No, no, Dexter," he said pleasantly. "I know precisely and exactly what is in your mind. For months and months I have been

trying to impress upon you the great advantage of having a brain which will rotate swiftly, and will observe all details. My brain rotates now, and I observe the thoughts which are in your mind. You propose to have what is commonly called a giddy time during my absence?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Dexter plaintively.

"Oh, yes, Dexter," mocked Roger genially. "That is your idea. I can see it. But that is why I am telling you my little secret before-

hand. In two or three days, my boys, I am going away. An important appointment, you understand. Mr. Steed will take the form while I am away, and it has occurred to me that I ought to beg you four to use your utmost endeavours to keep the standard of the form up to the level which we have now attained. I would like you to do that."

"Yes, sir," they murmured.

"Because, of course, when I come back I shall be bound to discover any little escapades or anything of that sort, even though you may have deceived Mr. Steed. You don't think

that any of you could keep a secret from me?"

He glanced quickly at each in turn, and they murmured, "No, sir."

Jolly Roger beamed upon them. "That is why I mention it now," he said kindly. "Sometime, when I think you are to be trusted, I will speak to you on the subject of keeping a secret, just as I have spoken to you



Margery was waiting for the juniors in the woods, and they could see at once that she had some tremendous news. (See page 96.)

on the question of keeping your brains bright."

He talked to them for some time after that, and it was all on the same idea. He wished them to deal gently with Mr. Sammy Steed, who would take the Transitus form during the absence of its master for a fortnight or so. He relied upon them to do so, and just in case there was any misunderstanding on the matter, he assured them again that they couldn't keep a secret from him. His brain rotated too swiftly, and they were far too young to deceive him.

"But I trust you," Jolly Roger remarked as he rose to leave them. "I shall tell Mr. Steed that he need not have one moment's anxiety regarding the Transitus during my absence on important business. When he knows that Dexter and Strong, Curtis and Dobbin are going to be shining examples to the rest of the form, he will be pleased. Good-bye, boys! I have enjoyed our pleasant chat very much indeed."

"My giddy aunt!" Bill Strong said when Roger had gone. "Old Roger's got everything weighed up. He knows we'd want to have a little rag with Sammy Steed, so he comes along and warns us in his own polite way. Mean to say—but what's the use? You can't keep anything from Roger."

"I'm with you," sighed the Kid sadly. "He's marked us again. We've just got to be good. Even if Sammy didn't tell him, Roger would come along and look right through you with his eagle eye, and then say, 'Ah, I perceive your conscience is worrying you, Dexter,' and we'd be telling him the whole stunt before we'd finished. I wish—he's a good sort, really, but I do wish I could do him in the eye just for once! But it can't be done, children. Even your Uncle Richard can't mislead the noble Roger. I'm going to be the good boy of Transitus this next fortnight. Make a note of it, Bill!"

But Bill Strong merely smiled.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Revealing a Secret

ON the following afternoon the four chums from Study Ten wandered out to Marshall's Woods. Margery Frayne had sent

them a message to say that she wanted to see them as early as she could.

All the four decided to go. You see, Margery wasn't an ordinary sort of girl. She was one of the best ever, and in the days gone by they had had some ripping picnics in the woods.

The Fraynes' house was quite near the woods, and everybody knew that Mr. Frayne—Margery's father, was a big friend of the head, master of Katie's. Likewise it was well known that Jolly Roger often went to see them, but it wasn't because of Mr. Frayne, though Roger liked Mr. Frayne. Only, Margery had a sister whose name was Nancy, and fellows like Big Hallam, who was captain of the school, and Dickie Dexter and Jimmy Curtis, and other chaps who could put two and two together, reckoned that one bright day Nancy Frayne was going to be Mrs. Roger Blunt.

Margery was waiting for them when they reached their usual meeting-place in the woods, and she greeted them gladly. They could see at once that she had some tremendous news.

"I've made up my mind!" Margery began straight away. "I'm going to tell you! It's the biggest secret that ever was—at least, it's a secret so far as you are concerned, because Roger says it's got to be. Roger is awfully nice and all that, but he really is a silly ass about some things. Don't you think so?"

"Of course!" they agreed. "But what's it all about, Margery?"

"Listen!" Margery was frightfully excited and seemed to hold her breath for nearly a minute. Then she blurted it out. "Mr. Roger Blunt and Nancy are being married at Devenham Church at two o'clock on Thursday!"

"But—why? I mean to say—why is it a secret?" Bill Strong was the first to recover from the shock and start asking questions.

"It isn't a secret really," Margery began again. "We all know, of course, and it's going to be quite a nice wedding; but Roger didn't want it to be known at the school, except among the masters. He thought—Oh, he thought a lot of silly things, you know!



Roger laughed, and Mrs. Roger laughed. Together they went forward and under the archway of cricket-bats which never flickered or moved. (See page 102.)

He doesn't want any fuss or noise, and, of course, Nancy is bound to agree with him, though I know that she would really like him to ask some of the boys to come. But Mr. Blunt said it would be much better not to, and dad said it was entirely a question for him to decide. Dad himself thought it would be rather nice if just a few of the boys came, but now they've definitely decided not to let the boys know, and it's to be kept quite secret."

When you come to think of it, there were quite a lot of complications about this

wedding. Margery explained to them some of the complications, but, of course, she didn't say anything about the fact that she would be frightfully disappointed if Dickie Dexter and Jimmy Curtis and Bill Strong and old Dobbie weren't there to see her do the bridesmaid act in a gown that would simply stagger them. But you'll probably have guessed a long time ago that this was one of the reasons why Margery didn't think much of Mr. Blunt's scheme of keeping it all so secret.

Roger's idea was quite a sound one. Getting

married was one of the things he preferred to have all on his own, and, anyhow, he didn't want half the Transitus knocking round and probably trying some giddy little stunt of their own. Wherefore Roger arranged that not a whisper should reach the boys of St. Katie's.

The masters knew, of course, and several of them were going to turn out in their best clothes and see old Roger safely through.

You may think Margery was a bit of a sneak to go and give away Roger's secret in this way. But was she? She knew the other side of the question, and knew that really quite a lot of people would have liked to see some of the bright and smiling faces of Katie's lads cheering their noble form-master on to his doom. It would just show what a popular sort of fellow Roger Blunt was, whereas if there weren't any boys from Katie's it would look—well, you know; not quite the thing.

"But you mustn't breathe a word that I've told you!" Margery begged. "If you do, I'll never speak to you again! Never! But don't you think it would be nice if just a few of you came and—you know—threw confetti and all that sort of thing, and made it look as though Roger really was a popular master?"

"Margery," said the Kid slowly, "you've done the right thing. You leave it to us. We've got to think about it, but nobody will ever know that you told us. Honour bright! We'll never, never tell!"

They talked quite a lot about the wedding after that, and then they said good-bye to Margery and told her to look out for them on the wedding-day, because it was quite certain they would be there.

"I wonder!" said Bill Strong, when they had left Margery. "I mean to say, we shall have to go very carefully, and, in any case, I'm not keen on weddings. But if Margery thinks——"

"I'd like to get a photograph of Roger doing the blushing bridegroom act," said Dobbie reflectively. "But he mightn't like it."

"He oughtn't to try and keep a thing of that sort secret," Curtis said. "Still, I

suppose we'll have to be good little boys and just crawl in at the back and try to dodge Roger's eagle eye. Better not tell any of the others, or else we should get a crowd there. What do you think, Kid?"

For Richard Dexter was striding ahead of them, and he had made no comment since leaving Margery. You could see that he was lost in thought, and brooding over some secret sorrow of his own.

But he turned and faced them now, and they suddenly perceived that the Kid had got that bright look in his eye which meant that life was once again a glad, sweet song so far as he was concerned.

"You shut up!" said the Kid politely. "I'm running this show. Roger's going to keep his little secret all to himself, is he? Who is Roger? What is he? I mean to say, do you chaps know anything at all about a wedding? Roger's only the figure-head in the business, and he doesn't count. What we've got to think about is the Frayne family and the honour of Katie's. Think about it! Let your brains rotate! Do you think Katie's are going to let him sink into a thing of that sort just because he wants to do the modest violet business? Not likely! You listen to your Uncle Richard!"

"But if he doesn't want any fuss——" began Bill Strong.

"My giddy aunt!" cried the Kid. "When I had a little secret about that last rag, and didn't want any fuss kicked up, did Roger keep quiet and consider my feelings? He did not! When you didn't do your prep a week or two ago, and wanted that kept quite secret, did Roger lie low? Not a bit! He talked to the whole form about it, and said it was for your own good. And now I'm thinking what's going to do Jolly Roger a bit of good. Be a man, Bill, and use your giddy intellect!"

"You mean that we ought to show everybody that Katie's really think a lot of Jolly Roger?" Curtis said reflectively. "That's what Margery wants, too. Come to think of it, I reckon it would be a miserable business for a chap like Roger to get married without Katie's taking a hand in it."

"Of course it would!" the Kid retorted.

"You leave it to me. Listen! We'll form a committee as soon as we get back. We'll have Smithy in this, and probably Big Hallam, if we can get him. It's all going to be kept secret, and Jolly Roger won't hear a word or see a sign—not even with his eagle eye. Dobbin, get your camera ready. You're going to get some snaps of historic events in the next day or two. But leave me; I must think!"

The Kid really did think, and the more he thought, the more he realised the truth of the situation. The Fraynes wanted the boys to be there. Miss Nancy Frayne wanted them, Margery wanted them, everybody except Roger wanted them. And Roger didn't count in this act!

At the school, the Kid sought out Smithy of the Fifth and confided to him the secret. For many reasons, Smithy of the Fifth had a tremendous respect for Jolly Roger, and he gasped when he heard the news.

"Great Jupiter!" he said. "Jumping snakes! Jolly Roger getting married! We simply must be there, Kid!"

The Kid explained to him quite fairly and clearly that it was a secret, and that Roger didn't want any of the boys from the school to be there.

"Of course not!" said Smithy. "He's that sort! But we're not going to let him get out of it in that way! We'll give him a regal send-off! We must talk about this, my dear Babe!"

"Smithy," said the Kid—and you might have thought he was just going to break into tears—"you're a brick! You've got the right idea! I feel sure we'll have a little surprise packet for Roger! We must make him glad on Thursday!"

"We will!" said Smithy. "I'll go and

see Hallam. I won't forget to tell him it's a secret, Kid!"

Now, Big Hallam was another fellow who had right ideas. He was an ideal captain of Katie's, because, while he wouldn't stand any nonsense, he wasn't the sort of fellow to put his foot down when it came to welcoming heroes, or cheering the chairman of the Governors, or any little thing of that sort.

He listened to Smithy's story with interest. He saw, even more clearly than either the Kid or Smithy had done, that it was absolutely

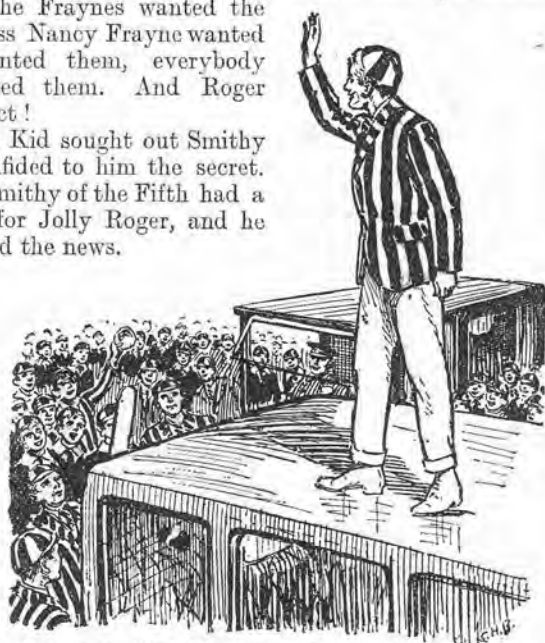
essential for Katie's to be strongly represented on such a memorable occasion. Being a big, broad-minded fellow, he fully appreciated Roger's point of view, and didn't blame him a bit. All bride-grooms were said, but that, he said, but nobody took any notice of them.

"And, of course, we mustn't give him an inkling that we know," Big Hallam pointed out. "But on Thursday—we shall be there! If Roger never knew it before, he will know on Thursday that Katie's regard him kindly."

Yes! You mentioned Dexter and Curtis? Tell them to come and see me at once. You come, too, Smithy, and tell Bellinger and Graydon I want them!"

A few minutes later the Special Committee for the Celebration of Jolly Roger's Wedding was sitting! In another half-hour they had the whole thing fixed up and all arrangements cut and dried.

They really do know how to do this sort of thing at Katie's!



Hallam saw that the time had come to cut out the cheering part of the business, and he hopped up on to the car and held up his hand. (See page 104.)

THE THIRD CHAPTER

A Great Day!

AT twenty minutes past twelve on Wednesday Mr. Roger Blunt finished the morning's lessons and spoke a few words of wisdom to the *Transitus*.

What he said had nothing to do with weddings or anything of that sort. He referred to the fact that he was going away for a fortnight or so, as though it were just a little business trip, and then passed on to his hopes regarding their conduct in his absence.

"I shall not see you again for a fortnight," he said, in conclusion, and then waved his hand gently as a sign that the class was dismissed. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, sir!" they murmured discreetly, but Roger fancied that one or two of them smiled.

"Young rascals!" he told himself, because he thought they were smiling at the prospect of not seeing him, whereas they were smiling because they jolly well knew they would see him! This just shows how clever fellows like Roger can form wrong impressions at times.

Later in the afternoon Roger Blunt shook hands with quite a number of his fellow-masters, and they all said nice things to him. Some of them said that they would see him on the morrow, and warned him not to be late, and everybody thought that was a frightfully funny joke.

Sammy Steed made a joke all on his own. He said that he'd thought of bringing along a little detachment from the Fifth and *Transitus* just to liven things up. And again everybody laughed.

"No, no!" said Roger, smiling gladly. "Not to-morrow, Steed! I am very fond of boys, but to-morrow is one of the days I can do without them. I may possibly think of them about two o'clock to-morrow, as I have arranged about half-a-dozen form matches for them. On the other hand, I may forget all about them! Ah, ah!"

Then Mr. Roger Blunt, after a good many more hand-shakes, went out. He reminded Mr. Gladridge about the cricket matches again before he went, and said that Hallam was fixing up the umpires and all that part of the business. And Mr. Gladridge said that

he would stroll round and keep a watchful eye on all the matches, because, of course, Mr. Gladridge hadn't the faintest idea that Hallam had already cancelled all the matches.

So that when, about five minutes to two on the Thursday, Mr. Gladridge strolled down to the playing-fields he was positively amazed to find them deserted. The wickets were there and the creases were bright and white, but even the groundsman seemed to have got lost.

All of which is a testimony to the organising powers of Big Hallam. There wasn't a detail he had overlooked. Most of the fellows didn't know until Thursday noon anything about the afternoon's stunt, but at one-thirty practically every fellow at St. Katie's was wending his way towards Devenham, which lay about a couple of miles from Katie's.

They didn't go in a bunch, and they didn't make a row about it. The first job was to get near the church and then take cover. Those were Big Hallam's instructions.

At two minutes past two a taxi-cab dashed past the church. Hallam and Curtis were in this particular conveyance, and they simply flew down a side-lane until out of sight of the church.

Then they descended and dragged out dozens and dozens of small boxes labelled "Confetti." A whistle from Hallam had a wonderful effect. From the fields, the hedges, ditches, from behind trees and from all manner of hiding-places swarmed the bright lads of St. Katie's.

Their captain's instructions had been strictly obeyed. They had not betrayed their presence by the flicker of an eyelid!

From the end of the lane two fellows came running swiftly. They represented the scouting department of the organisation, and you can bet that Richard Dexter and old Dobbie hadn't made a mess of the job!

"It's all right, Hallam!" the Kid called out, even before he reached the captain. "Everybody's inside now! Beginning to think you were never coming!"

"Had a bit of trouble to get all we wanted," Hallam said. "Now, then, you fellows! Distribute it as evenly as you can! Fall in the cricketers!"

The members of the First Eleven and the Second had come dressed up in their best flannels and blazers, and they were all armed with bats. Somebody handed Hallam his willow blade, and the captain spoke swiftly.

"You fix yourselves up!" he ordered. "No row! Everybody understands? There isn't to be a whisper. Mustn't give the game away at this stage. Form captains, keep in charge of forms! steady!"

You ought to have seen Big Hallam! He was great. He did everything swiftly, and yet he was never in a hurry; but Dickie Dexter and Curtis, who were now in attendance on him, had their work cut out to keep pace with him.

In front of the church six or seven fine cars were drawn up. Others were lying a little way off, but Hallam interviewed the driver of the nearest car first of all.

The chauffeur wanted to argue the matter, but when he saw the crowd streaming across the green in front of the church he realised that this wasn't the time for argument.

In about twenty seconds his car was retiring gracefully to the spot indicated by Katie's captain. Other cars were informed that their place was in the rear of the leader and they obeyed.

Two reporters from the local papers cycled up just about that time. They had had brief

notes warning them that if they didn't want to miss one of the greatest spectacles ever seen in the neighbourhood of Dulchester they ought to be outside Devenham Church about two o'clock on Thursday, and they had come to inquire into the mystery.

They stood and watched in wonder. When you see a great crowd of schoolboys you expect a row, but everything in this act was being done with barely more than a soft whisper.

Lined right up by the porch were four-and-twenty big fellows, twelve on each side, and all of them armed with bats. Anyone could guess what the idea was because from time to time they just practised the scheme by holding up their bats above their heads and making an archway. It was under this that Jolly Roger and his blushing bride had to pass in the fulness of time!

Old Dobbin was hopping round like a young gazelle, trying to find the ideal spot for the first photograph of this great event. The Kid was acting as a sort of messenger between Hallam and the captains of the

different forms, for Hallam himself had already taken his place at the head of the cricketers' section.

After the cricketers came the first detachment of the confetti brigade. Chiefly they were Transitus and Fifth fellows who could be relied upon to do the thing properly, but with discretion and discrimination.



"Well, Dexter! Well, Curtis!" said Roger, "I want to know exactly who is responsible for this? Someone has got to take the blame" (See page 104.)

The two Fourth forms had been converted into what might be called the musical item on the programme. Willard had brought his mandolin and Maynard his flute; two fellows had managed to dig out toy bagpipes which had been used in the long, long ago and forgotten until to-day. Ellams and Cumley, who had acted as buglers to the Cadet Corps, had brought along their bugles. All the other musicians had supplied themselves with that well-known but highly effective instrument known as the comb-and-paper.

Two Sixth fellows, assisted by Jimmy Curtis, were in charge of operations by the cars. There was quite a big crowd here of the younger boys, and most of them had secured a fair amount of confetti; others had managed to get hold of little flags.

It says a great deal for everybody concerned in the business that the people who were taking part in the more important business never heard a murmur through the open windows of the church. Everything went just as it ought to do on these occasions, and as Jolly Roger came down the aisle with the new Mrs. Roger Blunt he felt very pleased with the whole world. But to be quite truthful he wasn't thinking a little bit about St. Katie's, even though Mr. Bird, headmaster of the school, had been among the first to whisper his discreet congratulations and good wishes.

And then—Mr. and Mrs. Roger Blunt stepped from the dim, subdued light into the porch and caught a glimpse of the bright picture beyond. Roger was just in the act of jerking his hat up to his head when he realised that the world had changed since he first drove up to the church this morning!

"The boys!" It was Mrs. Roger who grasped the stupendous truth first of all. "I thought—they must have found out!"

She was right! They had found out! And when you come to think of it you'll probably agree that it was quite a good idea for Mrs. Blunt to realise in the first few moments of her wedded life that boys will be boys—and sometimes just a bit more!

Just for a moment Roger halted. A gleam of extra-brightness came into his eyes, and the soft smile of joy on his lips hardened into a firm line.

"We must go through, dear," he whispered. "You will not be afraid?"

That's how most men start talking when they've been through the same ceremony as Roger. They have an idea that a girl's a poor shrinking sort of creature, and it isn't a bad thing if they get undeceived pretty swiftly. So you can see that the Special Committee's scheme was doing a bit of good already!

"Good gracious, no!" said Mrs. Roger. "I—I think it's lovely, don't you?"

And she laughed—and Roger laughed. Together they went forward and under the archway of cricket-bats which never flickered or moved. Roger caught Big Hallam's eye, and smiled gladly upon him, but Hallam never moved a muscle.

Then, as they came from under the archway of bats and passed through the little gate the confetti merchants gave them the time of their lives! They did it artistically and well, for Hallam had told them so. They didn't just bang it at the couple, which is a poor way of doing the job, but threw it gently in the air, flung it over them, or sent it ahead and high above them, so that Roger and his bride were in a sort of perpetual snowstorm of confetti.

Margery Frayne, who was coming along with the best man just behind her sister and Jolly Roger, said afterwards that she had never enjoyed anything so much in all her life before. She hadn't seen Dickie Dexter or Curtis yet, but she had seen Bill Strong holding up his bat with the best of them, and she had caught a glimpse of old Dobbie hopping about like an animated eel with his camera, and she was quite sure that he had taken two snaps of her, which was really very nice of old Dobbie.

Then the band struck up! The showers of confetti grew less and Roger began to put a spurt on, wondering whether he would ever get to the car and hoping to goodness that it hadn't got lost or been hidden away by young Dexter or somebody else with a keen sense of humour.

Mr. Frayne had made all arrangements regarding the procedure after the wedding ceremony. But as soon as ever he came out of the church he also realised with a gasp of surprise that his arrangements had gone west.

He began to wish he could catch up with Roger and have a word with him. You want to grasp the idea right away that Mr. Frayne's surprise was a pleasant one, and he began to wonder whether—

But the band rather drowned his thoughts, and, anyhow, he couldn't do anything except go straight ahead. He tried to make out what the band was playing, but it was a bit difficult to identify it just at first, because the bugles were going ahead with every call they could play, from *reveille* to "Lights out," while the little bagpipes were just squealing out any old thing, and so was the flute and the mandolin, but the comb brigade were sticking fairly steadily to "MacPherson swore a feud against the clan MacTavish," because Big Hallam had chosen that as the opening item, as he thought it had a bit of a military touch about it.

Curtis and two or three others were hanging on to the door of the car which was awaiting the bride and bridegroom. If Roger thought that the programme was very near the end, he made a mistake, because it had only just started! There was another confetti storm, and the band seemed to get its second wind. In a perfect hurricane of confetti and band Roger helped his bride to step into the car, and he himself jumped in quickly after her.

He tried to lean through the window and wave good-bye to them, but already Katie's boys were lining up in front, at the sides, and behind the car. Big Hallam had handed his bat over to someone else, and had come down as quickly as he could to superintend arrangements. Through the drifting and dazzling confetti Roger saw him speak to a small boy who was pointing with both arms at once, and was evidently acting as a kind of super-man on the job.

And Roger sank back as he recognised the youth.

"It's young Dexter!" he gasped to his brand-new wife. "I thought—I felt quite certain— Of course, he was bound to be in it! And there's Curtis—and Strong! And Dobbin with his camera! I'm—I'm afraid we haven't finished yet!"

Mrs. Roger Blunt was laughing. This

was the great day of her life, and it was rather nice to feel that it was also going to be a memorable one.

"You seem to be very popular, Roger," she told him.

"Popular!" gasped Roger, because he hadn't appreciated it in that light so far. "Then if this is popularity, may I— Oh! I don't know! It is rather amusing, isn't it? And I thought we were going to have a quiet wedding!"

But the car was moving now—at the rate of two miles an hour! And that was the rate it kept up for the next half-hour, until, in fact, they reached the Fraynes' residence. Behind the car, and in front of it and alongside it, marched St. Katie's lads.

It was a great march! They spread themselves over the job, and every car, whether it contained a relative or a bridesmaid, or just a plain guest, had its proper contingent of marchers.

Mr. Frayne had managed to send a message to Hallam, and the captain of the school went to speak to him. It was an eminently satisfactory interview, though at first the captain said he needn't trouble at all, as they were going to clear off within about ten minutes of landing at the Fraynes' house. All they were concerned with was giving old Roger a proper send-off.

What Mr. Bird, who was one of the guests, thought about the wedding march nobody knows, because he didn't say much. In the car with him was Lord Velwood, a governor of the school and a great admirer of Mr. Roger Blunt, and he was enthusiastic about the whole business, but the Beak was content to smile in his well-known manner, and refused to give any opinion.

When, at last, the car drew up at the main entrance to the house, everyone made a rush to get round in time.

Jolly Roger at this juncture thought the time had come to do the daring escape business, and he and Mrs. Roger hopped out of the car quickly and ran up the steps.

And it was just then that Roger came face to face with an old friend. Richard Dexter had taken charge of this part of the programme, and with Jimmy Curtis to aid him

and three or four others to support them, they had closed the door and barred the way.

"You young scoundrel!" said Roger. "I've a great mind——"

"Dobbin is very anxious to get your photograph, sir," said the Kid in his best plaintive and child-like manner, and Curtis pointed out to Mrs. Roger the fact that Dobbin was trying to get through the crowd.

And by that time Big Hallam had started the first vocal item of the proceedings.

"For he's a jolly good fellow," boomed out Big Hallam, and the crowd made no mistake! Roger couldn't run away now; Mrs. Roger could only stand and smile gladly from the top step (with Dexter and Curtis in the background clinging to the door); the bridesmaids and the groomsman stood and smiled; Mr. Bird and Lord Velwood and Sammy Steed, and two or three other masters from Katie's stood quite still and smiled; everybody just smiled because there wasn't anything else to do, and, anyhow, they couldn't help smiling.

"Roger! Jolly Roger!" someone yelled out at the end, and everybody took it up and roared and yelled, "Jolly Roger!"

And then they cheered! Someone yelled out, "One for Mrs. Roger!" and they cheered again. Somebody else called something else (it sounded like "bridesmaids," but nobody cared), and they all cheered again. One of the Sixth fellows happened to catch sight of the Beak, and he called out, "One for the Beak!"

They gave Sammy a cheer, too, and they would have gone on cheering, but Hallam saw that the time had come to cut out the cheering part of the business. Before you could say "Boo," he had hopped up on to the top of the car and held up his hand.

Instantly everybody cut the cheering, and in the background Lord Velwood touched the Head and murmured, "Splendid! Oh, splendid, my dear Bird! Discipline, you know——"

Hallam had caught Roger's eye, and in the silence they heard the Transitus form-master cough. Then, in a voice that could have been heard at the far end of the drive, he called out:

"On behalf of my wife and myself—thank you all very much!"

The Kid and Jimmy Curtis promptly swung open the big hall-door, and a moment later Jolly Roger and Mrs. Roger disappeared inside. The guests followed them swiftly.

Katie's great Wedding March was over. And, as Hallam wisely said, it had been carried out in a proper and efficient manner, and no one could ever say that Katie's lads didn't know how to handle a job.

But the business wasn't completely finished. There were two details that deserve mention. The first is that Mr. Frayne had made swift arrangements and Dulchester had done its best to supply all the ginger-beer and other mixtures he begged them to send swiftly. Katie's boys remained on the premises and drank to Mr. and Mrs. Roger before they disappeared!

Also, Roger himself braved everything and strolled out among them. Accompanying him were Lord Velwood and another distinguished-looking person. With his eagle-eye Roger spotted the two boys he wanted and, despite the fact that they tried to dodge him, he tracked them down.

"Well, Dexter! Well, Curtis!" Roger tried his best to get the real old icicle touch into his voice, but it's a difficult thing to do on your wedding-day, and Roger made a pretty hopeless mess of it. "I want to know who is responsible for this? Someone has got to take the blame. It is impossible to overlook——"

"Please, sir," Dexter said apologetically, "if there is anyone to blame, it's all my fault." But I thought, sir, that we oughtn't to let you go quietly away——"

"Yes!" Roger said. "Thank you, Dexter! I merely wanted to know! Good-bye!"

They turned away, but Dexter and Curtis didn't forget to call out, "Good luck, sir!"

And that, bar the last little glimpse they had of him as he climbed into the car which was to take him and his wife away, was the last they saw of Jolly Roger for a full fortnight. A fortnight is a long time, but it wasn't nearly long enough for either Roger or the Transitus, or anyone else at Katie's, to forget the gorgeous success they made of the Great March on Jolly Roger's wedding-day.

THE END



Hurree Singh

GREYFRIARS WHO'S WHO

More Pen Pictures of Popular Characters
at the Famous School

THE UPPER FOURTH FORM.

FORM-MASTER: ALGERNON JASPER CAPPER, M.A.

TEMPLE, CECIL REGINALD.—The captain of the Form. Temple has as good an opinion of Cecil Reginald as Coker has of Horace Coker. Very conceited of his own abilities, and always up against Harry Wharton and Co. Remarkably sharp at boning their wheezes, but does not, as a rule, get much change out of them. (Study No. 2.)

ANGEL, AUBREY.—An unscrupulous, dandified fop. Figures only in his own rascally enterprises. Has a terrible past, spent mostly in the society of gaming saloons. He was well known to Temple, Vernon-Smith, and Sir Jimmy Vivian, long before he set foot in the school. (Study No. 6.)

DABNEY, WILLIAM WALTER.—One of Temple's closest chums. Has a good deal more common sense than his chief, but has never yet shown sufficient initiative to restrain any of Temple's conceited actions. A fairly good athlete, though athletics is not a point Temple gives great consideration to. His old timeworn remark—"Oh, rather!"—expresses his opinion of most questions addressed to him. (Study No. 2.)

DOONE, PERCY (Doone minor); has a brother in the Sixth.—A fellow always willing to back up Scott, rather than Temple. Suggests many mad-brained wheezes for "doing" the Remove, and those which Temple uses he promptly takes the credit for. (Study No. 7.)

PHIPPS, CHARLES. A satellite of Temple. Has plenty of cash, and is in consequence a dude—but very little else. (Study No. 8.)

FITZGERALD, PATRICK.—A cousin of Fitzgerald of the Fifth. Very much like him in ways—about twice

as mad—and talks with a beautiful Hibernian accent. (Study No. 4.)

FRY, EDWARD.—Temple's other chum. Rather dandified, and a member of the Middle School XI. Has more common sense than Temple, and more will power than Dabney; but on the whole is quite content with playing the follow-my-leader style. (Study No. 2.)

KENNEY, PAUL.—The study mate of Aubrey Angel. A funk, a sponger, and little more than a toady and hanger-on. (Study No. 6.)

MACDOUGALL, RONALD.—A lad from the Highlands. Sporty and quick-tempered. (Study No. 4.)

MURPHY, SHAMUS.—A wild Irishman from Connemara. An amateur photographer, and a bit of a poet. True to a friend, and can be trusted. On the whole is a decent fellow in his own queer way. (Study No. 1.)

SCOTT, JAMES KENNETH.—The most level-headed fellow in the Fourth. A fellow who takes after Johnny Bull of the Remove, especially as a stonewaller in cricket. (Study No. 5.)

TOMLINSON, TEDDY EDWIN (Tomlinson minor). Has a brother in the Fifth. Shares the study of James Scott. The pair are very good chums, and they frequently indulge in a chuckle over the stupidity of their chief. Tomlinson has a rotundity similar to Fatty Wynn's, and is rather robust, but must not be described as a Bunter. (Study No. 5.)

TURNER, MAURICE.—One of Temple's chums, and a member of the Upper Fourth Dramatic Society. Rather good at acting. (Study No. 3.)

REMOVE (LOWER FOURTH FORM.)

FORM-MASTER: HORACE HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH.

WHARTON, HARRY.—The central figure of most of the stories in "The Magnet." Skipper of the Remove,



Claude Hoskins

leader of the Famous Five. Also captain of the footer and cricket elevens, and ruler of the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society. He is brave, tender-hearted, and never vindictive. Replaced Bulstrode as captain of the Remove soon after he came to Greyfriars. He is a clever scholar, a good editor, a magnificent athlete, and a boy of very high promise. (Study No. 1.)

BOLSOVER, PERCY (Bolsover major); has a brother in the Third Form.—Usually a crossgrained fellow. Has done the straight thing before now, but only in the most ungracious manner. Gets on all right with his study-mate, Napoleon Dupont. (Study No. 10.)

BROWN, TOM.—A good sort in every way. Capable and humorous, and a fellow with high principles, and one who can always play the game. (Study No. 2.)

BULL, JOHN.—The last of the Famous Five at Greyfriars. Makes a special point of always being candid, and grumbles and grunts like a true Briton. Hits straight from the shoulder, and plays the concertina well. (Study No. 14.)

BULSTRODE, GEORGE.—Captain of the Remove prior to the election of Harry Wharton. In those days Bulstrode was a very undesirable character. He changed round when his younger brother Herbert died. He is now a regular goalkeeper for the Junior First XI. (Study No. 2.)

BUNTER, WILLIAM GEORGE, (Bunter major); has a brother in the Second.—The inimitable Owl of the Greyfriars, who requires very little introduction. His never-satiated appetite and his schemes devised to obtain provender are his chief characteristics. His postal order, when it comes, will have grown a beard and whiskers. He also thinks it impossible for any girl to remain unmoved by his charms, and is a ventriloquist of no mean order. (Study No. 7.)

CHERRY, ROBERT.—Bob is hero-worshipped to a greater extent than any other "Magnet" character. Sunny-tempered, always optimistic when things look black, and full of good cheer to those who are down-hearted. Plays regular alarm clock to Billy Bunter and Lord Mauleverer in the early morn. Good at games, particularly at cricket. He also holds the honour of being champion fighting man of the Form. (Study No. 13.)

DELAKEY, PIET, otherwise the "Rebel".—From South Africa, and the bearer of a famous Boer name. Quite a good fellow, though he has a very fiery spirit, and will cheek any authority if inclined. Keeps a watchful eye on Mauly, and is a good chum to Sir Jimmy. (Study No. 12.)

DESMOND, MICHAEL.—"Rale Irish." A good-natured son of Tipperary. His quaint brogue affords amusement for many, but Micky takes it all with good cheer. He can be persuaded to play the goat, but not very far. Has more backbone than Morgan, with whom he has always been chummy. (Study No. 6.)

DUPONT, NAPOLEON.—A fairly recent arrival. Shares the Study of Bolsover major, with whom he had some rare "busts-up" at first. But he has settled down all right now. Cooks some remarkable French dishes, greatly to the detriment of those whom he can persuade to eat them. A decent little chap on the whole. (Study No. 10.)

DUTTON, TOM.—Afflicted with the exasperating handicap of deafness. He is a speedy skater, both on rollers and ice. He possesses a firm belief in Peter Todd, and an equally firm disbelief in W. G. Bunter, and all that youth has to say and do. Has a keen taste for reading, and would be a keen sportsman were he not so handicapped with his hearing. (Study No. 7.)

FIELD, SAMPSON QUINCY IFFLEY.—From Australia. He celebrated his arrival at Greyfriars by working off a stupendous jape upon Cecil Ponsonby and Co., of Highcliffe. Was first called "Squiff" by Bob Cherry, who spotted the letters S.Q.I.F. on the new boy's trunks. Specially noted on account of his staggering wheezes. A fine all-round man, At with

the bat, and a first-rate fellow in every way. (Study No. 14.)

FISH, FISHER TARLETON.—A merchant from "Noo Yark" City in the great "Yewnited States." A junior who is everlastingly "on the make." Has a very weird idea of honesty—his form-mates term it "swindling." Thinks himself cut out to be a gay dog. Squiff and Bull put up with him in their study, but Johnny is frequently cutting up rusty at Fish's decidedly "fishy" schemes. (Study No. 14.)

HAZELDENE, PETER.—The brother of Marjorie Hazeldene of Cliff House School. He is considerably better now than he was in the days when the Remove called him "Vaseline." He is still very weak and passionate, a victim of the gambling fever, and cannot be trusted farther

than he can be seen. At his best is a good goalie, but he has his bad days, and is by no means reliable at cricket. (Study No. 2.)

HILARY, RICHARD.—He was a "case of conscience" when he arrived at Greyfriars—to quote the title of the story. He would raise his fists to fight nobody—not even the warlike Bunter. Then his circumstances were altered for him, and he found he could use his fists. Billy Bunter quickly ceased to be warlike. Dick even went so far as to challenge the heavy Bolsover to an encounter, but did not prove his superior in that direction. He is now quite comfortable in Study No. 5, with his congenial little study-mate, Kipps.

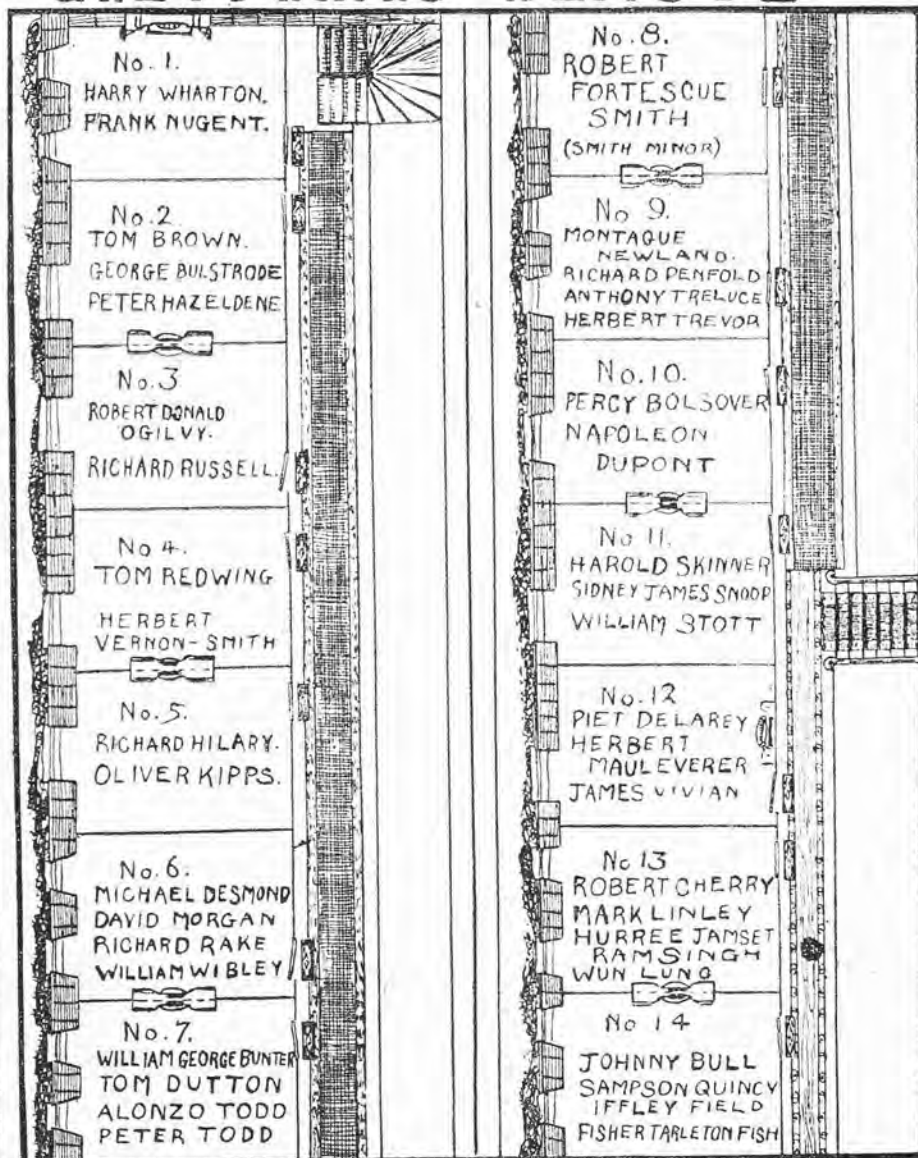
KIPPS, OLIVER.—A conjurer of extraordinary ability, otherwise he is not especially distinguished. He has amazed Greyfriars from time to time by his wonderful feats of skill. Not bad in the playing fields, but his staying powers are limited. (Study No. 5.)



Percy Bolsover

THE SCENE OF MANY HIGH JINKS!

GREY-FRIARS REMOVE



STUDIES & OCCUPANTS.

Plan of the Remove Form passage at Greyfriars School, showing the arrangement of the juniors' studies. Another drawing by Ogilvy, the budding architect of the Remove.

LINLEY, MARK.—A lad from Lancashire. A scholarship boy who worked in a factory before he came to Greyfriars. Was persecuted by cads because he was poor. He was staunchly backed up by Bob Cherry all through. Bob is now perhaps his best chum. A fine back in the Junior First XI. He likes work, and is in every sense of the word a true blue. (Study No. 13.)



William George Bunter

MAULEVERER, THE EARL.—His Christian names are Herbert Plantagenet. His style is the Right Hon, and he is a real live earl. His friends, who are many, shorten his name to "Mauly," as do some who are not, including Bunter. He is the "laziest ever," but has no end of pluck and money. Gets on all right with Delarey and Vivian, who share his palatial

apartment with him. (Study No. 12.)

MORGAN, DAVID.—A sturdy, good fellow. Lists to the wrong side sometimes, but never for long. Has a fiery temper, but no malice, and in all is a pretty capable chap. (Study No. 6.)

NEWLAND, MONTAGUE.—A Junior of the race of Israel. Monty is a credit to it. He is wise in every way, and takes no notice of the absurd names he is sometimes called by Billy Bunter. A generous, witty, and plucky fellow, and very fond of his Uncle Moses, who acts as his guardian, and keeps him well supplied with funds. (Study No. 9.)

NUGENT, FRANK (Nugent major); has a brother in the Second Form.—Frank is Harry's closest chum, and the first of the Famous Five at Greyfriars. He is nicknamed by some as "Baby-face," and can make up well as a girl. But he is by no means effeminate, and, within his limits of strength, is a good man with the gloves on or without. (Study No. 1.)

OGILVY, ROBERT DONALD.—A sturdy Scot from the Eastern Highlands. He has six fine soldier brothers. Cool, courageous, resolute, and able. Closely attached to his pugilistic chum Russell, who shares the Study with him. Has made up his mind to be a famous architect one day. (Study No. 3.)

PENFOLD, RICHARD.—The son of a Friardale cobbler, and a nature's gentleman. He is a chunk of real grit, who won a scholarship, and had a very rough passage of it at first. He now possesses the finest head for verse in Junior Greyfriars, is a champion in the playing fields, and a leading light in the Form-room. (Study No. 9.)



Herbert Vernon-Smith

RAKE, RICHARD.—Known better in the stories as "Dick" or "Dicky." A happy-go-lucky chap, very loyal, and a good hand in the time of trouble. He

is full of mirth, and with plenty of pluck and resolution. (Study No. 6.)

REDWING, TOM.—From Hawkescliffe. First came to Greyfriars under the name of Leonard Clavering. Has made for the Bounder the best friend he ever had, and is keeping him on the straight path. Stood

his part through a dreary drama of persecution from the snobs, and even from Vernon-Smith himself at times. Twice he left Greyfriars, but returned to stay the second time through the good offices of the Bounder. He settled down, after changing from Snoop's Study to No. 4, with Vernon-Smith himself. He is the son of a true-blue sea-captain, a live wire in the playing fields, and a hard nut to crack with his fists. (Study No. 4.)

RUSSELL, RICHARD.—Another Dick, and, like the other three, a good sort. Won the light-weight championship at Aldershot, having developed unusual skill as a boxer. There is a slight strain of weakness in him, but the strong comradeship of Donald Ogilvy has strengthened his backbone, and he has shown that he can go his own way for a friend's sake, or in defiance of anybody. (Study No. 3.)

SINGH, HURREE JAMSET RAM.—The Nabob of Bhanipur, and a ruler of an Indian territory. A member of the Famous Five. Talks a weird and wonderful English, due to the best native tutors. But he is always very amusing, and could express himself better at a pinch if he chose. A deadly bowler, and a speedy forward, and a good goalkeeper in the case of emergency. (Study No. 13.)

SKINNER, HAROLD.—The cad of the Remove. Now shares the study of Snoop and Stott. Used to be with Vernon-Smith. Skinner has more strength of character, more cunning, and more hardness than the other two. Though it is hardly fair to class Snoop with him now. Skinner is spiteful and treacherous and a hardened blade. He is revengeful, and will go to almost any lengths to get it. He is the enemy of nearly every decent fellow in the Form. In fact, he is preferable to have as an enemy than a friend, for he cannot be trusted. He tried his very utmost to keep Tom Redwing out of Greyfriars, and came within an inch of success, but he was repeatedly bowled out through the Bounder. (Study No. 11.)



Bob Cherry

SMITH, ROBERT FORTESCUE (Smith minor); has a brother in the Fifth, and a younger one in the Second. Has a study to himself at present, and may come prominently into the limelight when another junior is placed there. (Study No. 8.)

SNOOP, SIDNEY JAMES.—Snoop is slowly showing a better spirit, and leaving the path he had originally chosen. With the help of his father and Wally Bunter he realised what he had been, and resolved to give it all up. A climax was reached when Aubrey Angel, of the Upper Fourth, insulted him about his father. After repeated attempts Snoop turned and thrashed him. At present he is half and half, but we hope for his own sake that he will soon decide which road he is going to take. (Study No. 11.)

STOTT, WILLIAM.—The study-mate of Skinner and Snoop. Tared nearly as heavily with the same brush as Skinner. Has more will-power than Snoop but cannot lead, and has never been known to originate a piece of far-reaching rascality. (Study No. 11.)

TODD, ALONZO THEOPHILUS FELIX.—The most innocent fellow in the whole school. In fact, he is so innocent at times as to make people wonder whether he is "all there." He is soft-hearted, and soft-headed, with the very best of intentions, but capable of making a mess of anything in carrying it out. Is transparently honest, and with really high principles. His favourite hobby is studying the most hair-raising volumes on impossible subjects. (Study No. 7.)

TODD, PETER HASTINGS.—Alonzo's cousin. Quite as straight, though very far from being guileless. In some ways he is the cleverest fellow at Greyfriars. His father is a lawyer, and Peter takes greatly after him. He is as shrewd as the Bounder, and is the means of bringing many nefarious "schemes" of the great Bunter to the ground. Has professed to be able to make a man of that youth one day, but we think otherwise, at present. Leader of Study No. 7, a queer menagerie, the occupants of which are often termed the Four Freaks. (Study No. 7.)

TRELUCÉ, ANTHONY.—Is not one of the leading members of the Form, and has no desire to be. He and Penfold both hail from the West of England. Plays the gay dog slightly, but cannot be classed with the black sheep. (Study No. 9.)

TREVOR, HERBERT BEAUCHAMP.—Very much the same type of fellow as Treluce but with more decision of character. A son of a large Lancashire manufacturer, and with plenty of pocket money. In the early days of the "Magnet," Trevor, Skinner, Morgan and Co. all played in the junior team. But as better fellows came along they dropped from the limelight. Pals with Treluce, and though he shares the Study of Newland and Penfold, he is scarcely one of their sort. (Study No. 9.)



Mark Linley

VIVIAN, SIR JAMES, BART.—A real Baronet. Came from Carker's Rents, a habitation at the back of Euston Road. Was dragged up in the slums, rescued thence by Sir Reginald Brooke, and sent to Greyfriars. Is related both to Sir Reginald and Lord Mauleverer. Has very little money and no manners worth mentioning. Still finds a difficulty with his aspirates. He is quick and clever, but too young to be of any use in the Form sports. (Study No. 12.)

VERNON-SMITH, HERBERT TUDOR.—Nicknamed the Bounder, and he deserved it in every way when he first came to Greyfriars. Hard and cynical, he is apt to "fancy himself." In face of death in Flanders, early in the war, he was cool and sardonic. Even at his very worst he will always maintain a calm and fearless spirit which one cannot help admiring. Brains he has plenty, and as a sportsman Smithy has few equals. He can use his fists, too. (Study No. 4.)

WIBLEY, WILLIAM.—An amateur actor of unusual ability. Famed for his many impersonations, and not for very much besides. But he is always sound and decent, and generally thinking of stunts whereby he can shine as an actor. (Study No. 6.)

WUN LUNG.—"A heathen Chinese." Crafty and

cunning, and with no regard for the truth. Finds it very useful never to "savour" unless it suits him. Withstood some terrible persecution from Bulstrode at the outset, through fear of losing his pigtail. This was eventually cut off through misunderstanding by Alonzo Todd. Has all the faults of a heathen, but in all he is quite a likeable little chap. Greatly devoted to Bob Cherry, and his younger brother, Hop Hi. (Study No. 13.)

THIRD FORM

Form-master: EUSEBIUS TWIGG, B.A., B.Sc.



Harry Wharton

BOLSOVER, HUBERT.—Bolsover minor. Brother to the heavy Percy, who did not seem at all pleased when he learned that he was to have a younger brother from the slums planted on him. Bolsover minor—like Sir Jimmy Vivian of the Remove—had a lot to learn, and suffered in learning it. It was not long, however, before the Third began to appreciate him at his true worth, and he is now prominent among them.

BOLTER, OLIVER.—Another "chief," though not at present of any distinction. One who has authority in all fog enterprises.

CONRAD, LEONARD.—No relation to the fog in the Second, but a staunch henchman.

LUNN, HAROLD.—One of the rank and file.

PAGET, PERCIVAL SPENCER.—Tubb's right hand man and in strong contrast with his chum. In fact he is quite a little dandy, but plucky and manly enough.

SIMPSON, JOHN.—A strange little kid, with a particularly large pair of glasses. Follows the leadership of Tubb in a wild and excitable way.

TUBB, GEORGE.—The great "I am" of the Greyfriars fags. Shock-headed, and inclined to grouse and growl. Always maintains the idea that he can boast an eleven which could "whack the Remove to a frazzle." But he is a deadly little bowler, and quite a good sort as leader of the fags.

WINGATE, JACK.—The minor of the captain of Greyfriars. A wayward and spoiled youngster, with a great idea of his own importance. Quite a decent and capable kid when this idea is out of his head.

SAMMY BUNTER, HOP HI, DICK NUGENT, GATTY and MYERS, are the leading lights of the Second Form.

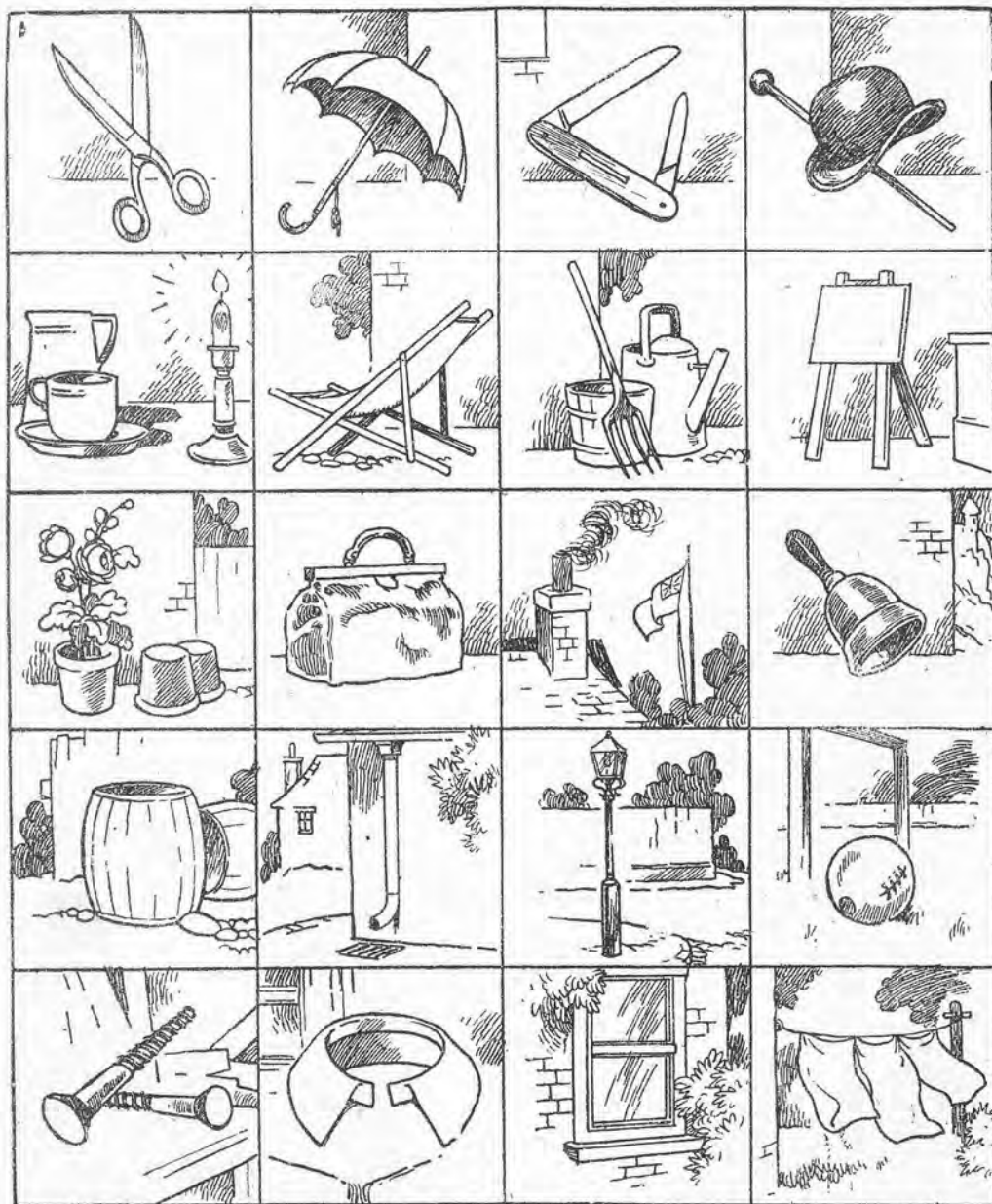
OTHER MASTERS AND SERVANTS WHO COME INTO THE STORIES.

Henri Charpentier, French master; Herr Otto Gans, German master; Lawrence Lascelles, Maths. master; Gosling, William, porter and lodgekeeper; Mumble, Joseph, gardener; Mumble, Mrs. Jessie, his wife, and in charge of the tuck-shop; Keble, Mrs., matron; Trotter, Fred, page-boy.



Lord Mauleverer

TEST YOUR OBSERVATION



What is wrong with these pictures? There is something inaccurate in every one of these drawings. Do you see what it is? Try it, and then turn to page 359 and see if your observation is correct.



The TWO HEROES

*A Magnificent Long, Complete Story
of the Chums of St. Jim's*

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Hard Cheese!

"WOTTEN!"

D'Arcy of the Fourth made that remark in dismal tones.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was seated at his desk, in the Fourth Form room, with books open before him and a pen in his hand.

There was a sheaf of impot paper before him, and on the top line of the first page was written:

"Conticnere omnes——"

That was all.

Arthur Augustus had been in the form room for half an hour, and so far he had written two words—out of two hundred lines imposed upon him by Mr. Lathom, his form-master.

At the rate of one word to a quarter of an hour, it seemed probable that Arthur Augustus's task would occupy him a considerable time.

"Wotten!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "Oh, wotten!"

"Rotten" was really the only word to describe it. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and there was sunshine in the old quadrangle, and a pleasant breeze blew in at the open windows of the form room. From the cricket-ground in the distance came the echo of merry

voices. But the house was very silent. Nearly everybody was out of doors on that bright half-holiday.

Arthur Augustus ought to have been out of doors also. He wanted very much to be out of doors. His chums were all going out. But between Arthur Augustus and freedom stood the edict of his form-master.

Arthur Augustus had set about his task in his own peculiar way. Having written two words, he had felt tired. So, having thus broken his duck, as it were, he took a rest, and watched the distant cricket from the form-room window for a space. There was a senior match going on, and Kildare of the Sixth was at the wicket, but the crowd round the field was too thick for D'Arcy to see Kildare batting. However, he watched with great interest till the sound of a footstep in the passage recalled him to his desk.

But the footstep passed on, and Arthur Augustus sat with his pen in his hand, thoughtfully jabbing the nib into the oaken desk; perhaps reflecting upon the classic beauties of the poem he was beginning to transcribe—but more probably not.

"Bother Virgil!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Blow Æneas! Bless Dido! My private opinion is that Dido must have been feahfully bored when Æneas

spun her that awfully long yarn in Latin. Oh, deah!"

Another step in the passage—in fact, several steps. Three cheery Fourth Formers looked into the room. Blake and Herries and Digby were in Norfolks, apparently about to start on a spin.

"Hallo, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, looking up dismally.

"How are you getting on?" asked Blake.

"Wotten!"

"Feeling a bit down?" asked Digby sympathetically.

"Howwid."

"You ought to have done your prep last night, you know," remarked Herries, with a serious shake of the head.

"Wats!"

"Well, we're just off," said Blake. "It's beastly to leave you here, Gussy. Anything we can do?"

"No, old chap, unless you like to go to Lathom's study and punch his nose before you start."

Blake chuckled. He was not likely to oblige his chum to the extent of punching his form-master's nose.

"Well, keep your pecker up, old top!" he said. "Ta-ta! Thought we'd give you a look in before we buzzed off."

"Thank you, deah boy. Wun away!"

The sympathetic three departed, and Arthur Augustus, with a groan, dipped his pen in the ink, and wrote several more words. Having finished the first line of "liber secundus," he took another rest.

"Wotten!"

Never had the dusky old form-room seemed so dismal. Never had the fresh air and the sunshine seemed to call to him with so seductive a voice. All the beauties of Virgil—if any—were wasted on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that afternoon. He would have given a great deal to be within hitting distance of P. Virgilius Maro, if that gentleman had still been in the land of the living.

More footsteps in the corridor—and this time three cheery Shell fellows looked in—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

"Thought we'd give you a look in," said Tom Merry cheerily.

"Thank you, Tom Mewwy."

"How many have you done?" asked Manners.

"One."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're taking your time," said Monty Lowther. "At this rate, you'll be finished some time next week."

"I weally do not feel equal to Virgil this aftahnoon, Lowthah. I have no doubt he is a vewy charmin' poet—to those that like him. I don't. I wish I had been Augustus Cæsar!" said Arthur Augustus savagely. "I would have given Virgil a feahful thwaslün' for perpetwatin' this wubbish."

"Stick to it, old chap. It will do you good, you know!"

"Wats!"

"What did Lathom land on you for?" asked Lowther.

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"He is such a fussy old duffah!" he explained. "I was not able to do my pwep last night. That uttah ass Hewwies spilt some ink on my twousahs, and I was vewy busy gettin' the stains out. Of course, I had no time for pwep, in the cires. So Lathom cut up wusty in class this mornin'. I explained to him that I would have done my pwep if I had had time; but that only seemed to make him wustier."

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"I suppose it would!" agreed Tom Merry. "Form-masters think prep is more important than trousers."

"That only shows a lack of pwopah sense of pwoportion, deah boy."

"Why not hook it?" suggested Lowther. "Lathom's shut up in his study; he will very likely never miss you—"

"I've been thinkin' of that," said Arthur Augustus. "But I might wun wight into the beast—"

"Better stick it out," said Tom Merry. "Grind away, Gussy, and get the lines done. Now, you fellows, we shall be late, so come on. Good-bye, Gussy, and keep your pecker up."

The Terrible Three walked off and disappeared. Arthur Augustus dipped his pen into the ink-well again, and laboriously inscribed:

" . . . inde tore pater Æneās sic
orsus ab alto."

Then he stopped again.

With the best intentions in the world, Arthur Augustus simply couldn't fix his mind upon the "pius Æneas" that sunny afternoon. He was glad when there were footsteps in the form-room passage again.

This time it was a fat, round face that looked in—the podgy and not very prepossessing countenance of Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form.

But D'Arcy was glad to see even Trimble in the solitude of the form-room. It was the very first time that he had been glad of the company of the fat and podgy Baggy.

"Going strong?" grinned Trimble.

"Wotten!"

"How many have you done?"

"Two."

"Oh, my hat! Wouldn't you like to come along the river this afternoon, old chap?"

Arthur Augustus sighed.

"I thought I'd drop in and see you," said Trimble affably. "I know what detention is, old fellow. By the way, D'Arcy, do you happen to have five bob about you that you don't want?"

"No."

"I want you to come home for the holidays with me to Trimble Hall," said Baggy. "You'd like it, I know; no end of huntin' and shootin' and fishin' and all that. You'll come, won't you, for the vac.? Did you say you've got a spare half-crown?"

"No," answered Arthur Augustus grimly. Trimble grunted.

"I happen to be short of money," he remarked. "These things will happen. I lent my last quid to Tom Merry, in my thoughtless, generous way. I could do with a bob for the present. Now, old fellow——"

"Oh, wun away!" said Arthur Augustus.

Even solitude was preferable to Baggy Trimble, on second thoughts. The fat Fourth-Former gave a discontented snort.

"I think you're a mean beast, D'Arcy," he remarked. "I've a jolly good mind to punch your silly nose. Yah!"

Arthur Augustus picked up Virgil, and took aim at Baggy Trimble with that ancient and

esteemed author. Baggy sniffed, and dodged out of the form-room, and departed.

"Oh, deah!" said Arthur Augustus.

His pen was dipped again, and he wrote, slowly and painfully:

" . . . infandum, regina, jubes re-
novars dolorem."

Then he laid down the pen.

It was no use; he couldn't do it. He thought of the rippling river, flowing in sunshine between green wooded banks. He picked up Virgil, and shied him across the form-room, and P. Virgilius Maro fell with a crash behind Mr. Lathom's desk. Then Arthur Augustus walked to the door, and strode away along the passage, determined to make a bid for freedom. He broke into a run in the corridor, and at the corner there was a crash—as he ran fairly into the arms of Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A Breaker of Bounds

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

Master and pupil stopped, breathless.

They stared at one another.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wathah think I have done it now."

Undoubtedly he had!

Mr. Lathom staggered back a pace or two, gasping for breath, and then he fixed his eyes upon the junior, and thunder gathered in his brow.

"D'Arcy!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, deah!"

"What are you doing out of the form-room?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

"I—I——"

"Were you bent upon breaking detention?"

"I—I——"

"Have you finished your task?"

"I—I——"

Mr. Lathom raised a commanding hand.

"Return to the form-room at once, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!" mumbled the hapless junior. He turned and retraced his steps, dis-

piritedly. Mr. Lathom, with wrathful brow and rustling gown, followed on his heels.

Mr. Lathom was quite a kind little gentleman as a rule. But he was very wrathful now, as was perhaps excusable. To be suddenly "cannoned" by a junior escaping from detention was very exasperating. There was such a thing as discipline, and Mr. Lathom intended to impress that fact upon the young, aristocratic mind of the Honourable Augustus D'Arcy.

"D'Arcy," he began in an awe-inspiring voice, "you neglected your preparation yesterday evening, and I gave you two hundred lines of Virgil to write out this afternoon. How many have you written?"

"Thwee, sir."

"And you intended to disobey my strict orders, and leave the form-room with your task undone?"

Arthur Augustus was silent. There was no denying it. He had to admit the soft impeachment, as it were.

"I fear, D'Arcy, that you are both an idle and an incorrigible boy!"

"Oh, deah!"

"You will complete your task," continued Mr. Lathom severely, "and you will continue to write out Virgil, after your task is done, until five o'clock."

Arthur Augustus suppressed a groan. His half-holiday was quite dished now. There would have been a remnant after two hundred lines were written. But now——

"I shall lock the door and take away the key, as you cannot be trusted to obey orders," said Mr. Lathom, with great severity. "I may add that, unless your task is done in a satisfactory manner, D'Arcy, I shall cane you when I return here at five o'clock."

Mr. Lathom shook his head severely, stepped out of the form-room, and drew the door shut after him. He locked it on the outside, and walked away with the key in his pocket.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Jevvah heah of such wotten luck! Where's that beast Virgil?"

He fielded Virgil from behind the form-master's desk, and sat down to his task again with a heavy heart and a clouded brow. His

pen travelled over the paper, adding to what he had already written:

"Troianus ut opes et lamantabile regnum——"

That was all!

He closed Virgil with a snap, laid down his pen, and rose to his feet.

"Can't be done!" he said aloud. "Simply imposs. I'm goin' to cut!"

Arthur Augustus had fairly made up his mind. The door of the form-room was locked; there was no escape that way. But it occurred to Gussy that, the door being locked, Mr. Lathom would not be on the look-out for a second attempt to escape. He went to the window, mounted on a stool, and looked out. Over on the playing-fields the crowd was cheering a mighty hit by Kildare of the Sixth. The quadrangle was deserted—save for one fat form. Baggy Trimble was leaning idly against the wall almost under the form-room window.

Baggy wasn't interested in cricket. He was deeply interested in the tuck-shop, but that fascinating spot was closed to him, because Baggy was in his frequent state of impecuniosity. Baggy Trimble was meditating upon the overwhelming miseries of existence, when he was startled by a voice over his head

"Twimble!"

Baggy jumped, and looked up.

"Hallo, you rotter!" he said gruffly.

"Bai Jove! If you want a feahful thwash-in', Twimble——"

"Yah!"

Arthur Augustus controlled his wrath.

"I was goin' to ask you to do somethin' for me——" he went on, after a pause.

"Ask away!" jeered Trimble.

"Will you wun in and get my stwaw from the lobby?"

Trimble looked interested.

"What do you want your hat for? Going to hook it?"

"Yaas."

"You refused to lend me a bob," said Trimble morosely.

"I will lend you a bob, Twimble, if you will fetch my hat."

Trimble reflected.

"Bit risky, helping a chap to break bounds,"

he said. "One good turn deserves another. Make it half-a-crown?"

"You fat boundah——"

"It's wrong to break bounds," said Trimble severely. "Lathom will be no end waxy if he finds it out. I heard him lock you in. You're idle and incorrigible, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"Will you fetch my hat, Twimble?"

"I'm afraid I couldn't have a hand in anything of the kind," said Trimble. "I don't approve of breaking bounds."

"I will make it two bob," said Arthur Augustus. He did not want to walk out for the afternoon without his hat, and he could not take the risk of fetching it himself. His little scheme was to drop from the form-room window, and scuttle round the house at top speed and escape.

"I hope you don't think I do anything from a mercenary motive," said Baggy Trimble loftily. "If you're trying to bribe me, D'Arcy, you can save your breath. Still, I don't mind doing you a good turn, and if you like to lend me two bob, I'll accept it—simply as a loan, of course. That's understood?"

"Anythin' you like, Twimble."

"Done!" said Baggy.

He strolled away, and Arthur Augustus waited impatiently for his return. In a few minutes Trimble returned with a straw hat under his fat arm. He grinned as he handed it up to D'Arcy.

"There you are, old bean!"

"Thank you very much, Twimble." Arthur Augustus dropped a florin into the fat hand of Baggy Trimble, who shot away in the direction of the tuck-shop like an arrow from a bow.

From the window, Arthur Augustus looked this way and that way, like Moses of old, to make sure that no one was nigh.

Then he slipped from the window and dropped lightly to the ground. He jammed

on his hat and cut away at great speed, and in a second or so he was round the building and scudding along by the fives' courts. Two minutes later he vaulted over the tradesmen's gate, and was outside the precincts of St. Jim's.

The manners of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth, were celebrated in the Lower School for the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. But just at this moment that lofty repose was conspicuous by its absence. Arthur Augustus was in a hurry. He came down the little lane from the tradesmen's gate to the

high road as if he were on the cinder path. To be "spotted" at the last moment and marched back ignominiously to the form-room would have been too painful.

At the corner of the lane he dodged behind a tree at the sight of Mr. Railton, the house-master, walking in the road with Monsieur Morny, the French master. The two masters did not glance in his direction, and D'Arcy backed cautiously away, and clambered over



"With my grasp firmly fixed on the poor fellow's hair, I bore him safely to the shore," explained Baggy Trimble loftily. "Then you woke up!" said Monty Lowther. (See Chapter 7.)

the fence into the fir plantation beside the lane. Thence he gained the fields beyond, and, by a wide detour, reached the bank of the glistening river.

As he came out on the towing-path by the gleaming Ryll, the swell of St. Jim's allowed himself to drop into an easy saunter. He fanned himself with his straw hat, and smiled.

"Wathah a close shave!" he murmured. "I'd have gone aftah Blake, if I could have got my bike; but pawwaps I shall dwop on Tom Mewwy along the vivah. I believe those Shell boundahs were goin' in a boat. Anyhow, this is vewy much nicer than the form-woom. And I can get back befoah five, by the time Lathom comes in for me. He won't know."

The smiling face of Arthur Augustus grew serious as he thought of that meeting with his form-master at five. If he succeeded in getting back into the form-room in time, Mr. Lathom wouldn't know that he had broken bounds. But he certainly would know that D'Arcy's task had remained undone—and there would be a caning.

But the shining river, the green woods, the sunny sky were much more pleasant to think of than the caning, so Gussy dismissed the latter from his thoughts, and sauntered on along the towing-path in a state of great contentment.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

By Sheer Pluck!

"**À** moi! **À** moi!"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

He had sat down to rest on a log, near the old mill when that sudden, startling howl came ringing along the river.

"Bai Jove! that must be Mossso!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

It was not very difficult to guess that much. Frenchmen were not very common in that quiet corner of Sussex—Monsieur Morny was the only one D'Arcy knew of in the neighbourhood. And the shrill, high-pitched voice was familiar to his ears.

"**À** moi! Mon Dieu! **À** moi!"

"I suppose that is the French way of callin' for help!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as

he shaded his eyes with his straw nat and stared at the river. "I wondah what is the mattah—bai Jove!"

He soon saw what was the matter.

A canoe was wobbling in the stream, and in the canoe was Monsieur Morny. The canoe was plunging wildly in the water, and Mossso was plunging wildly in the canoe. His paddle was floating a dozen yards away, and Mossso had nearly capsized his little craft in seeking to recover it. There was water in the canoe already, and Mossso was in a state of shrieking excitement. The mill-wheel was turning with a booming roar, and the canoe was caught in the whirl of water towards the turning wheel. No wonder Monsieur Morny was yelling for help at the top of his high-pitched voice.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus's first thought, at the sight of a St. Jim's master, was that he was out of bounds, and that it behoved him to keep out of view. But that thought vanished from his mind instantly as he realised that the Frenchman was in deadly peril.

Monsieur Morny could neither guide nor stop his canoe, and he was drifting into the mill-race. Arthur Augustus's face grew white as he looked at him.

Even as he looked, the little French gentleman made a desperate spring from the wobbling canoe, to attempt to swim ashore. The canoe went whirling on as Adolphe Morny struck out desperately for the bank.

"Bai Jove! He'll go undah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Mossso was not a powerful swimmer. In fact, he was a very feeble one. It was doubtful whether he would have stemmed the current of the Ryll at any point. In the mill-race he was a good deal like a cork tossed by the waters.

He went under the water while D'Arcy's horrified eyes rested on him, and came up again, struggling feebly.

He needed all his breath to struggle for his life, though he must have known that the struggle was futile. Arthur Augustus threw off his straw hat and his jacket. There was no time to remove his boots. With a flying leap from the bank he dived into the stream.

The swell of St. Jim's did not stop to think first. But in any case he would not have hesitated. He was a splendid swimmer, and he could not see a man drown before his eyes, desperate as the task of rescue was.

He came up close to the Frenchman, and caught him by the collar as he was sinking again.

"Hold on to me!" he breathed.

There was no reply—a white face and closed eyes were turned towards him. Monsieur Morny was already unconscious. He had been twice under, and his brief struggle was over.

Arthur Augustus gripped him, and struck out gallantly for the bank. His face was white, his teeth set hard. No one would have thought Arthur Augustus a "slacker" if he could have seen him at that moment. He was fighting for two lives, and he was putting every ounce of strength he possessed into the struggle.

The roar of the water was in his ears, deafening him. The current tore at him like some wild animal.

Deep and threatening sounded the boom of the mill-wheel—and it sounded closer.

Alone, Arthur Augustus could have swum to safety; burdened with the insensible Frenchman, the race of the current was too strong for him. But he did not let go. He did not think of letting go. He fought on desperately, with the boom in his ears, the water swirling round him.

To be sucked under the mill-wheel—crushed—battered—killed—— The fearful thought gave him strength. He fought on desperately, and the shore drew nearer.

It was better for him that the Frenchman was insensible. Had it been otherwise, the little gentleman's excited struggles would probably have dragged both of them to death.

As it was, Arthur Augustus held his own against the current, and slowly won his way.

There was a shout from the bank—a man in a white coat was waving his hand there. It was the miller.

"This way!" he shouted.

Arthur Augustus struggled on.

His heart and his head were throbbing wildly, a mist danced before his eyes. He

knew he was near the end of his tether. But a final desperate effort brought him within reach of the miller, who plunged waist-deep in the water to grasp him.

Arthur Augustus's senses were swimming as he felt a grip on his collar, and found himself dragged from the water—still with the insensible French master in his clutch.

He rolled in the grass by the water, nearly unconscious.

But in a few moments he was sitting up, gasping for breath. The miller had laid Monsieur Morny in the grass, and was bending over him to render aid. He glanced at D'Arcy.

"Is he—is he all wight?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"He'll do, sir," said the miller. "I'll carry him into the mill. You're a good plucked kid, you are!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet.

He was feeling weak and giddy after his efforts, but he was beginning to recover.

"Take care of him!" he gasped. "I'll let them know at the school, and they can send for him. It's Monsieur Morny, the French mastah at St. Jim's—our French mastah, you know."

"St. Jim's!" said the miller. "All right, I'll telephone from the mill."

"Oh, good!"

The sturdy miller picked up the Frenchman in his arms.

"But how about you, sir?"

"Oh, I'm all wight, thanks!"

"Come into the mill and dry yourself," said the miller; and he strode away with Monsieur Morny in his arms.

Arthur Augustus made a step to follow, but paused.

It had recurred to his mind that he was out of bounds, and that it was not judicious to let Mossoo see him when the little gentleman recovered consciousness. Mossoo had already shown signs of returning consciousness when the miller carried him off.

"Bai Jove! The soonah I get out of this, the bettah!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Mossoo would be suah to make a fuss, and then deah Lathom would know I had hooked it! I wathah think I had bettah cut!"

And Arthur Augustus hurried back to the spot where he had left his hat and jacket, and disappeared into the woods.

Monsieur Morny did not need him; he was safe in the miller's care. And Arthur Augustus did not need his thanks; he could get on quite well without them. But he wanted very much to avoid letting Mr. Lathom discover that he had broken detention that afternoon.

At a safe distance from the mill, Arthur Augustus stopped to take off his boots and drain the water from them, and to wring as much wet as possible out of his trousers and shirt. In a sunny glade in the wood, he succeeded in drying himself to some extent.

When he had donned his garments again, the sound of a chime came floating over the brown woods.

"Gweat Scott, half-past four!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

And at five Mr. Lathom was to come into the form-room for him!

If he was not there——

"Bai Jove, he will go to the Head! It may be a floggin'! Oh, cwumbs, I was wathah an ass to come out, aftah all!" muttered Arthur Augustus.

That reflection occurred to him rather late!

He set off at a trot for the school.

There was time, with luck, to get back into the School House, and to be in his place when Mr. Lathom unlocked the form-room door. Arthur Augustus trotted across the fields and plunged through the fir plantation. He peered over the tradesmen's gate at the back of the school; the coast was clear. He whipped over the gate and ran.

From the cricket ground there came a roar.

"Well bowled, Darrel!"

The Sixth-form match was still in progress there, and the crowd was thick round the field. Fortunately, it drew attention from other quarters; the quadrangle and the five courts were deserted. Arthur Augustus found himself under the open form-room window, partly screened by a leafy elm from general observation.

He made a spring to the sill, caught it, and clambered in, dropping breathless on the floor within.

"Gwoooogh!" he gasped.

He closed the window and turned to his desk.

From the clock-tower of St. Jim's came a stroke—the first of five. Arthur Augustus dropped into his seat at his desk, breathless but smiling, and shoved his straw hat out of sight under the desk.

"Just in time!" he murmured.

The hour of five finished striking, and a minute later there was a step outside the form-room.

The key turned back in the lock, and the door was thrown open. Mr. Lathom rustled in.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was seated at his desk, pen in hand, and he rose respectfully to his feet as the master of the Fourth entered.

Mr. Lathom gave him a severe glance.

"I trust you have not wasted your time this afternoon, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus thought of Mossoo Morny in the mill-race and smiled slightly.

"I twust not, sir!" he answered.

"You have finished your task?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"What? How many lines have you written?"

"F-f-four, sir!"

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus stood silent. He waited for the storm to burst. It was not long in coming.

"You—you have wasted a whole afternoon in the most inexcusable slacking!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, greatly shocked and deeply wrathful. "You have written nothing—nothing! Upon my word, D'Arcy, this is too much!"

Arthur Augustus did not speak. He only wondered what the form-master would have said if he could have guessed that the detained junior had been out all the afternoon, and had only just returned. Fortunately, Mr. Lathom did not guess that.

"D'Arcy, this is sheer, wilful obstinacy!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, sir!"

"No doubt you have some periodical here, and have been reading instead of working!"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"You have not been reading, D'Arcy?"

"Not a line, sir!"

"Then you have been wasting time in the most inexcusable idleness!"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"If you had succeeded in breaking bounds, D'Arcy, against my strict orders when you attempted to do so, I should certainly have taken you to Dr. Holmes and requested him to administer a flogging!"

Arthur Augustus felt very glad that he had succeeded in getting back before five.

"But what you have done is scarcely less reprehensible!" said Mr. Lathom very indignantly.

"Oh, sir!"

"You have deliberately wasted your time!"

"I—I—ahem!"

"I shall cane you for this, D'Arcy, with severity!"

"Oh, deah!"

Mr. Lathom took his cane from his desk and came towards the hapless victim.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy!"

Swish! swish! swish! swish!

"Wow-wow-w!"

"There!" said Mr. Lathom. "I sincerely trust, D'Arcy, that that will be a lesson to you!"

"Wow!"

Mr. Lathom laid down his cane, and with a severe frown, walked out of the form-room.

And Arthur Augustus rubbed his hands dolorously, and murmured again in tones of anguish:

Wow-wow-wow!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

The Tribulation of Trimble!

"BAGGY!"

"My only hat!"

Three cheery cyclists were pedalling along the lane to St. Jim's, and they slowed down with one accord at the sight of a fat figure plodding along the road in front of them.

It was Trimble of the Fourth; and Trimble looked in a parlous plight.

He was dripping with water, and he left a wet trail on the dusty road as he plodded homeward his weary way.

The fat junior looked round, and blinked dismally at the cyclists as they jumped off their machines.

"What's the row?" asked Blake, with a grin. "Been taking a bath with your clothes on, Baggy?"

"Not before you needed one, if you have," remarked Herries.

"I—I—I've had an awful time," groaned Baggy Trimble. "I've—I've been in the

water. Yes, really in the water——"

"You look it!" grinned Digby.

"Those Grammarian beasts," said Baggy, almost tearfully. "Nearly drowned me, you know. Oh, dear!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Blake incredulously. "The Grammar School chaps wouldn't shove you in the water."

"Well, I fell in, but it was their fault," said Baggy. "I've a jolly good mind to complain



There was a howl from the juniors as Mossco embraced the fat Baggy. "My brave boy, I owe you ze life!" said Mossco, with emotion. "Ow!" gasped Baggy. "Leggo! Groogh!" (See Chapter 9.)

to the Head. They were picnicking in the wood, you know, and I happened to come on them, and—and one of the beasts was taking photographs and the other beasts were watching him, so I—I—I—I just——”

Blake chuckled.

“I know what you did,” he agreed. “You had a go at the grub——”

“I may have just tasted the cake,” said Trimble cautiously. “Perhaps I had a good taste of it. That’s no reason why they should rush at me and chase me through the wood.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I think you fellows are unfeeling beasts!” said Trimble warmly. “I’d have given them a jolly good hiding all round, only——only——”

“Only you couldn’t,” grinned Blake. “What else?”

“I ran across the plank—you know that beastly plank across the beastly stream in the beastly wood,” said Trimble, “and—and I was in rather a hurry——”

“Ha, ha! I dare say you were.”

“And my foot slipped,” said Baggy dismally, “and I went in. And those rotters only laughed when I crawled out. And now you’re laughing, too, you beasts!” exclaimed Baggy indignantly. “If this is what you call showing proper feeling, you rotters——”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“The least you can do is to give me a lift on your bike back to St. Jim’s,” said Baggy. “I’m drenched! I’m going to c-c-catch cold. I might get pneumonia and peg out——”

“No such luck!” said Blake heartlessly.

“Why, you awful beast——”

“But you can get up behind my bike, if you like,” said Blake. “We don’t want you catching cold and sneezing in the dorm. Roll on.”

Baggy Trimble was glad enough to mount behind Blake’s machine. It would have been better for him to run, as a matter of fact, as his clothes were wet; but Baggy was not fond of exertion.

At the gates of St. Jim’s Blake dropped his load.

“Roll in and rub down, or you’ll catch a cold,” he said, as he wheeled his machine away.

Baggy Trimble tramped in dismally across

the quadrangle. He gave vent to a volcanic sneeze as he mounted the steps of the School House. Mr. Railton was near the doorway, talking with Mr. Lathom, and he glanced at Trimble.

“What is the matter with you, Trimble?” he exclaimed. “You look drenched——”

“I am drenched, sir,” mumbled Trimble. “I—I’ve been in the water——”

“You should be more careful, Trimble. Go and change your clothes at once.”

“Ye-e-es, sir,” mumbled Trimble.

He plodded up the staircase, and met his study-mate, Mellish, on the landing. Mellish eyed him curiously.

“Been out in the rain?” he asked, humorously.

“I’ve been in the water——”

“Jumping in to rescue somebody at the risk of your life?” asked Mellish, with a chuckle.

“Yah! Go and eat coke!”

Trimble progressed onward, squelching out water with every step. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther met him in the passage as he headed for the dormitory stairs. They paused to survey him. Trimble’s remarkable state was really attracting general interest.

“Who was it said the age of miracles was past?” exclaimed Monty Lowther. “It isn’t. Trimble’s been having a wash!”

“Yah!” snorted Trimble.

He tramped up to the dormitory.

To his surprise, he found Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, of the Fourth, in that apartment.

Arthur Augustus had come up to change his clothes, after being dismissed from the form-room by Mr. Lathom; but he had paused in the middle of that important operation to rub his smarting palms.

Trimble blinked at him.

“Hallo!” he grunted. “Been licked?”

“Yaas, Twimble.”

“Did you hook it, after all?” asked Trimble curiously. He had not glanced at Arthur Augustus after receiving the two-shilling piece for services rendered, and had, in point of fact, quite forgotten his existence till he saw him in the dormitory.

Arthur Augustus did not reply.

If Trimble was unaware of the facts, Arthur



To face page 121.

A NARROW ESCAPE!

Augustus had no desire to acquaint him with them. The less that was known about his escapade the better. The swell of St. Jim's had no desire whatever to collect that flogging that Mr. Lathom had kindly referred to.

"Did you?" snapped Trimble.

"I pwefer not to confide in you, Twimble, if you don't object," answered Arthur Augustus mildly.

Trimble sniffed.

"I knew you wouldn't have the nerve to hook it, after all," he said. "You haven't my nerve, D'Arcy. Few fellows have. Groogh! I'm drenched. What a beggar you are for changin' your clothes!"

Arthur Augustus did not confide to Trimble why he was changing his clothes. The adventure in the mill-stream was to remain a dead secret; from Baggy Trimble, at least.

"I've got to change mine," grumbled Trimble. "I've been in the water. Groogh!"

"Bai Jove! What did you go into the watah for, Twimble?" asked Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

Trimble blinked at him. Arthur Augustus was a very unsuspicious youth, and Trimble felt it was safe to draw the long bow with him. He would not have ventured it with Blake and Co., but Arthur Augustus possessed that valuable characteristic of aristocratic descent—an infinite capacity for being taken in. So Trimble ventured.

"Oh, I went in for a drowning man," he answered.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Just plunged in for him as soon as I heard him call for help," said Trimble carelessly. "Some fellows would have hesitated. Not me! I just went in."

"Bai Jove! That was vewy wippin' of you, Twimble."

"Yes, wasn't it?" said Trimble cheerily. "Not that it was much for me to do—a splendid swimmer like me."

"Bai Jove! I have nevah noticed that you were a splendid swimmah, Twimble."

"You mean you're jealous of my form? That's nothing new—lots of fellows are—duds, I mean."

"Weally, Twimble——"

"Groogh! I'm wet!"

"Did you wescue the dwownin' man all wight, Twimble?"

"Oh, yes. Terrific struggle, you know. But I got him out all right, and landed him. Narrow shave for both of us. Groogh!" Trimble towelled himself down. "I ought really to get a medal or something."

"Where did it happen, Twimble?" asked Arthur Augustus, eyeing the fat junior curiously.

"Oh, by the mill," said Trimble carelessly.

"The—the mill?"

"Yes. I got him right out of the mill-race," said Trimble, his imagination warming to its work, as it were. "Frightful danger. But I never turned a hair. Nothing to me."

"Bai Jove! That is a vewy wemarkable coincidence," said Arthur Augustus in perplexity. "How—how long ago was it, Twimble?"

"About an hour of so."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

It was little more than an hour since he had rescued Monsieur Morny from the mill-stream. Trimble, of course, was blissfully unaware of that.

"What a vewy wemarkable coincidence," said Arthur Augustus; and his tone was sarcastic now. "Weally, Twimble, I am shocked at you."

"I don't see any coincidence. What are you driving at?"

"I am dwivin' at this, you howwid bwaggin' boundah," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You are tellin' whoppahs."

"Look here, D'Arcy——"

"You did nothin' of the kind, and I do not believe you have been neah the mill at all. Certainly you were not there at the time you state."

"How the thump do you know?" demanded Trimble.

Arthur Augustus paused. He did not care to state how he knew.

"I am perfectly awah of it," he answered.

"I wegard you as a bwaggin' little fat beast, Twimble, and I am shocked at you."

And with that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left the dormitory. Trimble blinked after him in astonishment.

"Now, how the merry dickens did he know

I was telling whoppers ? ” murmured Twimble.
“ Beats me hollow ! ”

And Trimble shook his head in perplexity.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Keeping it Dark !

“ HERE’S the giddy dayteynoo,” said Digby.

There were six juniors in Study No. 6 when Arthur Augustus D’Arcy entered. The Terrible Three of the Shell had come in to tea with Blake and Co. They all smiled a welcome to the swell of the Fourth.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Robert Arthur Digby.

“ Pway what do you mean by callin’ me a dayteynoo, Dig ? ” he inquired.

Dig was great on French. His French would probably have mystified many a Frenchman ; indeed, it sometimes presented problems in Study No. 6.

“ Dayteynoo,” said Dig. “ You’ve been detained, haven’t you ? ”

“ Yaas.”

“ Well, then, you’re a daytenoo.”

“ If you are callin’ me names, Dig——” began Arthur Augustus warmly.

“ Perhaps Dig means a ‘ detenu ’ ? ” said Tom Merry, laughing.

“ Yes, a daytenoo,” assented Dig. “ You’re awfully slow in French, Gussy. You should let me give you a few lessons.”

“ Bai Jove ! I wathah think I should pwefer to wemain slow in Fwench, Dig, if you don’t mind. I’m glad tea’s ready, I am feahfully hungwy.”

“ Did you get through your lines ? ” asked Blake as he pushed an egg across to his noble chum.

“ No, I have been licked.”

“ Slacker ! ” said Herries.

“ Weally, Hewwies——”

“ Poor old Gussy ! ” said Monty Lowther. “ Fancy sticking in the Form-room all this lovely afternoon while we’ve been up the river. It’s too bad.”

Arthur Augustus opened his lips—and closed them again.

It was on his tongue to explain that he had been out of bounds and not in the form-

room all that lovely afternoon, but he decided that it would be wiser not.

There was no doubt that Mr. Lathom would be most seriously angry if the truth came to his ears. He would regard the escapade as a deliberate flouting of his authority, as indeed it was. Rather late Arthur Augustus realised in what light his proceedings would naturally be regarded.

A flogging from the Head loomed darkly on the horizon, but, added to that consideration, there was another. Arthur Augustus was very unwilling to let Mr. Lathom think that he had been treated with disrespect.

Certainly Gussy had meant no disrespect, but that did not alter the fact that in going out of bounds—against strict orders—he had set his form-master’s authority at naught.

It was evidently a case of “ least said, soonest mended.”

Tom Merry and Co., of course, could have been relied upon to keep the secret, but a careless word, carelessly uttered, might have given the matter away. And Gussy felt that it was better not to worry them with a secret to keep.

So he wisely kept his own counsel.

Fortunately, it did not occur to any of the juniors in Study No. 6 that Arthur Augustus had escaped from the form-room by the window, it was not likely to occur to them unless he mentioned it.

“ I wonder whether old Mossoo’s got home yet ? ” Tom Merry remarked presently.

Arthur Augustus started at that.

“ Mossoo ? ” he repeated.

“ Of course, you didn’t see him, as you’ve been in,” said Tom. “ He was going out in his giddy canoe when we started up the river. He paddles like a—like a—a—rhinoceros. Blessed if I think it’s safe for Mossoo to be trusted in that canoe. Of course, we couldn’t tell him so—he wouldn’t have been grateful for a tip from the Shell.”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Still, he ought to fill in the “ Daily Mail ” insurance coupon before he goes out in it,” said Manners. “ Might mention that to him.”

The door opened, and Julian of the Fourth looked in.

“ Heard about Mossoo ? ” he asked.

"Just talking about him," said Tom Merry. "Has he paddled downwards in that giddy canoe of his at last?"

"Yes."

"My only hat!" Tom Merry jumped up, his handsome face grave at once. "Nothing's happened to poor old Mossoo, has it?"

"Oh, he's all right," said Julian. "His canoe's been picked up, too—Talbot found it on the river and towed it in. I fancy there'd be an alarm about poor old Mossoo; but Railton's had a telephone call from the mill; he's at the mill."

"What the thump is he doing at the mill?" asked Blake.

"He's been capsized, and taken into the mill," answered Julian. "Blessed if I know how he got out of the river alive—he can't swim for toffee. But it seems he's safe and sound, and Mr. Railton's asked a couple of the Sixth to fetch him home in a boat. Rushden and Langton have gone—I heard Railton telling them. We've had a narrow escape of losing our giddy French master."

"Poor old Mossoo!" said Tom.

The juniors were serious enough now. They all liked little Monsieur Morny, all the more, perhaps, because of his queer little ways and his remarkable accent.

Arthur Augustus glanced rather anxiously at Julian.

"Anythin' else known about his accident?" he asked.

"No; only that the miller says he was taken out of the river."

"By the miller?" asked Harries.

"Blessed if I know—by somebody."

Julian went on his way; and Tom Merry and Co. discussed the matter over their tea. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not contribute to the discussion, but he smiled several times.

It dawned upon him—what he had not considered before—that there would probably be a good deal of talk on the subject of Mossoo's rescue—and some guessing at the identity of the fellow who had pulled him out of the mill-stream.

That identity would remain unknown, because Mossoo had been unconscious, and in no state to recognise his rescuer. Arthur Augustus was safe in that quarter. But if

there was a nine days' wonder on the subject, and a great deal of speculation, there would be considerable risk of the facts coming to light. Arthur Augustus was more than glad, now, that he had said nothing of his adventure.

With half a dozen fellows in possession of facts, it would have been almost certain that some remark would have escaped one or another of them, when the matter was discussed.

A few incautious words would be sufficient—and if the whole affair came out, and Mr. Lathom knew—Already, with his mind's ear, so to speak, Gussy could hear the Head uttering the dread words "Take him up, Taggles!"

Speech might be silvern, but undoubtedly silence was golden, in a case like this.

Arthur Augustus was feeling a little worried; he detested keeping secrets, and he repented him that he had "hooked it" from the form-room that afternoon.

Still, if he hadn't done so, indubitably Monsieur Morny would have been drowned in the mill-stream—so on reflection, Arthur Augustus felt glad, as well as repentant, that he had "hooked" it.

It was quite a troublesome state of affairs, and Arthur Augustus resolved to dismiss it from his mind.

After tea, Kerruish of the Fourth looked in, with the announcement that they were bringing Mossoo in. Kerruish rushed off to see the sight, as soon as he had informed Study No. 6.

"Let's go," said Blake.

Six juniors headed for the door. Arthur Augustus sat in the armchair.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"I'll remain heah, deah boys."

"Don't you want to see Mossoo?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not particulahly."

"Not when he's been nearly drowned?" said Blake, warmly. "Mossoo's a good little beast! Come and have a look at him, and see how he is."

"You can tell me when you come up, deah boy."

"Br-r-r-r!" said Blake.

Tom Merry and Co. headed for the staircase, and Arthur Augustus was left in solitary

possession of Study No. 6. He sat down to prep. at once. Gussy was very particular about his prep. that evening—such painful results had followed on the neglect of it the previous day. He looked up from his work when Blake and Co. came in.

"Is he all wight?" he asked.

"White as chalk," answered Dig.

"I mean is he all wight—?"

"He looks pretty done," said Blake. "He was leaning on Langton when he came in. Still, he's not hurt. He says that it was a St. Jim's chap who pulled him out of the river."

D'Arcy's heart stood still.

"How does he know?" he faltered.

"As it happens, he doesn't know," said Blake. "It seems that he was insensible—so he told Railton. But the miller told him it was a St. Jim's chap."

"The—the millah doesn't know the chaps by sight—not all of them."

"He knows the St. Jim's colours, ass. The chap was wearing a straw, with the school colours; besides, he told the miller that Mosssoo was his French master."

"Oh!"

"What's queer is, that he cut off suddenly, instead of going into the mill to dry his clobber," said Blake. "So Mosssoo doesn't know his name—he was gone when poor old Froggy opened his peepers."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Well, why couldn't he stop and see Mosssoo recover, and tell his name," said Blake argumentatively. "Ill-manners, I call it."

"He may have had weasons."

"Rot!"

"If you chawactewise my wemarks as wot, Blake——"

"Utter rot, old chap. I think the fellow was some silly ass, and when we know who it is, you'll see I'm right."

And, having thus disposed of the matter, Jack Blake sat down to prep.



"Ow! Yow!" yelled Baggy. "Leave off banging my head! I'll take the fiver back to Mosssoo!" "Then go at once, you fat fwaud!" said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard. (See Chapter 10.)

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Mysterious!

"WHO's the merry culprit?"

Monty Lowther asked that question, in the quadrangle the following morning.

"Who did it?" he continued. "It's jolly queer the chap hasn't given himself a name so far. Was it you, Trimble?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh that followed Monty Lowther's suggestion was not complimentary to Baggy Trimble.

"Trimble came in wet," said Manners, "we saw him! Trimble's just the fellow to plunge into a giddy mill-stream."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Look here, you chuckling asses!" shouted Baggy Trimble indignantly. "I suppose I'm as likely as any other fellow to——"

"Something wrong with your supposer, then," chuckled Blake. "Oil it, Baggy!"

"You ass——"

"Still, it's queer the chap doesn't tell us," said Tom Merry. "Here's old Mossos bursting with gratitude to some person or persons unknown——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When he finds the merry rescuer, he will fall on his neck, and kiss him on both cheeks—perhaps on the nose, too——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And there are no takers," said Manners.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I should not like vewy much to be slobbashed ovah."

"My dear chap, Mossos is bound to express himself a la Francais. He's prepared to fold the giddy youth to his waistcoat and weep briny tears of gratitude over him," said Monty Lowther. "My advice to the gallant youth, whoever he is, is to take an umbrella——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's been inquiring up and down the school already, before brekker," said Tom Merry laughing. "He's asking everybody if he's the garçon brave——"

"He asked me," said Talbot of the Shell, with a smile. "I had to plead not guilty—just in time to escape an embrace."

"Here he comes!" murmured Figgins, of the New House. "Shush! Jolly glad it wasn't I—I don't want to be kissed."

Monsieur Morny bore down upon the group of juniors, who capped him very respectfully. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy discreetly backed out of the group, and sauntered away.

"Bonjour, mes enfants," said Monsieur Morny, beaming at the juniors. "Perhaps he is wiz you here—yes? Zat garçon tres brave—vat? I do not know his name, but I desire so mooch to know his name, zat I may express ze gratitude zat overcrowd zis heart. Oui? If zat gallant garçon he is here, let him say so to me, n'est-ce-pas?"

There was no answer.

Monsieur Morny looked disappointed.

"He is not here?" he asked.

"It seems not, sir," said Tom Merry.

"But the Head is going to ask the whole school after prayers, and then you will know him."

"Ze gallant boy!" said Monsieur Morny. "I long to know him—to kees him in my gratitude—to tell him vat I zink of his brave, his tres brave conduct, isn't it? Oui? Monsieur at ze moulin—ze mill—he see him, he jump in and save me ze life—oh, he was one brave garçon! Ze millair he zink zat we bofe be towned—vat you call touch and come——"

"Touch and go," murmured Tom Merry.

"Mais oui, oui, touch and go—toucher et aller," said Monsieur Morny. "Zat gallant boy he reesk his life. Nevair sall I forget zis gallant action—jamais de la vie!"

And Monsieur Morny trotted away, apparently still seeking the unknown person who had "reesked" his life for him.

The bell to prayers called in the school. After prayers, it was known that the Head intended to call upon Monsieur Morny's rescuer to stand forward, and receive a proper acknowledgment of his gallantry. Monsieur Morny was bursting with gratitude, and naturally wanted to thank the brave youth. And the Head, having received a full description of the incident, was naturally pleased at such pluck and devotion having been shown by a St. Jim's boy, and was disposed to make a nice little scene of it, commending the gallant youth before the whole school.

Meanwhile, the gallant youth in question was feeling exceedingly uncomfortable.

There was a great deal of "kudos" to be gathered for having rescued Monsieur Morny from the mill-stream, no doubt. But that did not alter the fact that a flogging was due to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for having disobeyed his Form-master and broken detention.

With all respect to the French master, Arthur Augustus preferred to be without the gratitude and without the flogging.

After prayers, there was quite a thrill of interest in the school when the Head referred to the subject.

Having given a brief description of the heroic incident, Dr. Holmes called on the boy in question to stand forward.

There was silence.

Somewhat puzzled, the Head peered at the assembled school over his glasses.

"I trust I have made myself clear," he said. "I desire that the boy who so gallantly went to the rescue of Monsieur Morny will stand forward, that he may receive Monsieur Morny's thanks, and his head master's commendation."

Still silence.

There was a rustle and a murmur, as fellows turned in their places to look about them, seeking the gallant youth, as it were.

The Head looked more than ever perplexed.

He glanced at Mr. Railton.

"All the boys, of both houses, are present, I think, Mr. Railton?" he said.

"Every one, sir," answered the house-master.

"It is very odd that the boy does not come forward."

"Very odd indeed," said Mr. Railton, who was as surprised as the head master. "Perhaps some feeling of shyness—"

"But that is absurd. You have no idea personally of the identity of the boy in question, Monsieur Morny?"

"Pas de tout, monsieur," said the French master. "I am insensible and I see nozzings. Ze millar he would know—"

The Head coughed.

"We can scarcely send for the miller to pick out a boy who does not choose to come forward," he said drily. "The matter is, after all, of little consequence—I mean, so far as the boy is concerned. If he does not choose to speak, he is at liberty to remain silent."

"Mais, monsieur—"

"Evidently the boy does not choose to come forward," said the Head. "Whether it is shyness or misplaced modesty, I cannot undertake to say. Dismiss the school!"

"Helas! And I know not zat so gallant garçon!" said Monsieur Morny, in dismay. "I sould like to zank him for zat vich he have done viz himself. Voila, why he not speak? He is here at zis moment, j'en suis sur."

With a rustle of his gown the Head quitted the Hall; and the assembled school was dismissed. The St. Jim's fellows poured out of Hall in a state of astonishment.

Everyone—with a single exception—had expected to learn the identity of the unknown swimmer who had saved Mossoo, and nobody—again with a single exception—could account for the noble youth's extraordinary reticence.

It was simply a puzzle.

Mr. Railton and Mr. Ratcliff, the two house-masters, paused to speak for a moment or two at the door.

"It is very odd," Mr. Railton remarked.

"Very odd indeed," the New House master assented.

"Doubtless it was a School House boy—"

Mr. Ratcliff raised his eyebrows.

"I was just thinking that it was probably a New House boy," he answered.

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton. Then he smiled.

"I think I shall make some inquiries among my boys; I should really like to know who it was."

"I will do the same," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"There is, after all, a clue: the boy in question must have come in very wet, as he did not stop to dry himself at the mill."

"True! Doubtless it will be easy to discover him."

And the house masters separated. Both of them made inquiries among the members of their respective houses. Mr. Ratcliff had no luck, and he was driven to the conclusion that the noble youth was not a New House fellow after all. But Mr. Railton was more fortunate.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER A Thrilling Tale!

"MERRY!"
"Yes, sir!"

Morning lessons were over at St. Jim's, and Mr. Railton called to Tom Merry, as the Shell came out of their form room.

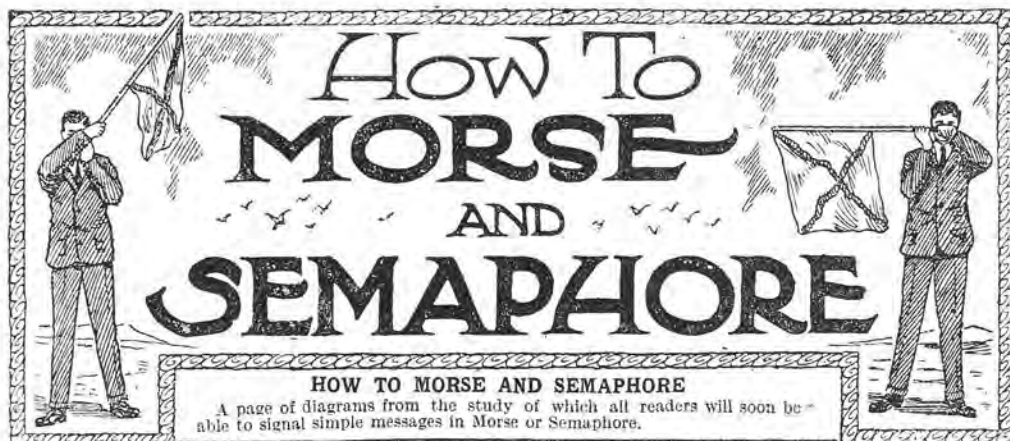
"I think I noticed you going to the boat-house yesterday afternoon, Merry," said Mr. Railton. "You were on the river?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was not, by any chance, you that rescued Monsieur Morny?"

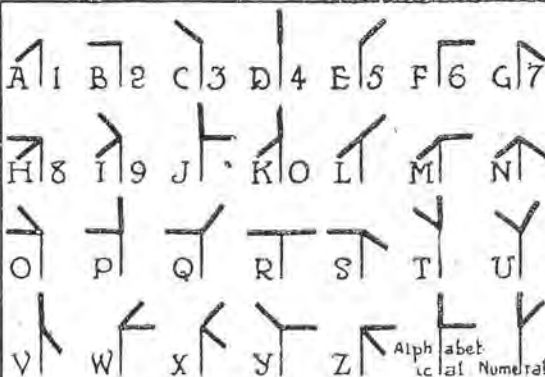
Tom smiled, and shook his head.

"No, sir. I should have owned up if it had been."



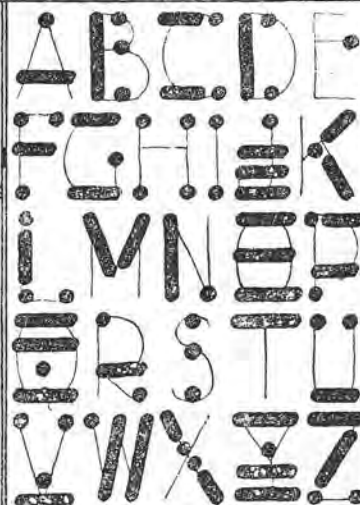
SEMAPHORE.

Semaphore is a method of signalling in which the letters depend on the position of one or two arms or flags in relation to a vertical line. The diagram on the right illustrates these arms, and shows the various positions needed for each letter or figure. On looking at the diagram it will be seen that the simplest way of learning the alphabet is thus: A to G; H to N, omitting J; O to S; T, U, V, "numerical sign," J (or "alphabetical sign") and W, X, and then Z. The letters A to D are made with the right arm, and E to G with the left, and so on. From this it will be seen that the signaller faces the person he is signalling to. Should he wish to change from letters to figures, he first of all gives the numerical sign, and then gives letter A for 1, B for 2, and so on, as shown in the diagram. When returning to letters, he must first give the J, or "alphabetical sign," and then carry on as usual.



In the **Morse** code two elements are used, called respectively "dot" and "dash," or "short" or "long," or sometimes "iddy," and "umpty."

In signalling, these symbols are conveyed by several different means (flashes, taps, etc.), but the dot and dash are always distinguishable by the time taken in making them, for the dash is always three times the length of the dot. Care must be taken that each letter is made continuously from start to finish, otherwise a letter may be read as two or more letters. For example, if not sent continuously, Q might read as MET, or TNT, or TK, etc. An interval equal to two dashes should be observed between words. On the right is a simple method of learning the Morse alphabet.



Alphabet			Numerals
A . —	J . — — —	S . . .	1 . — — —
B	K . . . —	T — — —	2 . . — —
C . — . .	L	U . . . —	3
D — . . .	M — — — —	V	4
E	N	W	5
F	O — — — —	X	6
G	P	Y	7
H	Q	Z	8
I	R		9
			0

Mr. Railton smiled, too.

"Did you see anything of the occurrence, Merry?"

"Nothing, sir—nor heard of it till Julian told us in Study No. 6, after we'd come in. Manners and Lowther were with me on the river."

"Do you happen to know whether any School House boy came in with his clothes wet?"

"Yes, sir, Trimble."

Then Mr. Railton started, too.

"Bless my soul! I remember now that I noticed him, but I should not have thought of connecting Trimble with—ahem!" Mr. Railton paused.

Certainly Mr. Railton, or anyone else at St. Jim's, would never have thought of connecting Baggy Trimble with a deed of heroism. But the house master desired to be quite fair. Undoubtedly Baggy Trimble had come in drenched to the skin, and it was a drenched fellow that Mr. Railton was looking for.

"It wasn't Trimble rescued Mossos, sir," said Tom, with a smile.

"Are you sure of that, Merry?"

"Well, sir——"

"How do you know?"

"Well, I know Trimble, sir," said Tom, colouring a little.

"Did Trimble explain how he came to be drenched with water?"

"He said he'd been in the water when I asked him," said Tom.

"Please find Trimble and send him to my study. The Fourth Form have been dismissed, I think."

"Certainly, sir," said Tom.

Tom Merry hurried on, and joined his chums, who were waiting for him in the doorway.

"What's the row?" asked Manners.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Trimble's wanted," he said.

"What's the oyster been doing now?" asked Lowther. "Raiding somebody's grub, or burgling the tuck-shop?"

"He came in drenched with water yesterday afternoon," said Tom. "Railton wants to know whether he's the giddy Noble Youth."

"Oh, my hat!" yelled Lowther.

"Lot of Noble Youth about Trimble," chuckled Manners. "Fancy him swimming in the mill-stream, too! He would swim like a stone."

"Well, Railton wants to see him; let's look for the fat bounder," said Tom. And the Terrible Three went out into the quadrangle in search of Baggy.

"Anybody seen Trimble?" called out Tom, as he came on a group of Fourth-formers, who were discussing the topic of the unknown swimmer.

"I've seen him," said Blake. "He's just been trying to borrow a bob of me. There he is—jamming his nose on the tuck-shop window."

"Peri at the gate of Paradise!" grinned Lowther.

"A jolly fat Peri! What on earth do you want Trimble for?" asked Blake. "He will borrow a bob of you if you don't look out."

"He's under suspicion," said Tom, laughing.

"Suspicion of what?"

"Of being a giddy gallant garçon——"

"What?"

"The Noble Youth!" roared Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"What silly ass has got that idea into his head?" demanded Blake, in amazement.

"Railton."

"Oh, I should have thought Railton had more sense!" said Blake candidly. "He must be dense to think it must have been Baggy."

"You see, Baggy came in soaked with water——"

"He fell into the stream in the wood—the Grammarians were after him," said Digby. "He told us."

"Ha, ha! So that accounts for the milk in the coconut. Still, I've got to give him Railton's message. Baggy!" bawled Tom.

Baggy Trimble looked round morosely from the tuck-shop window, where he had been devouring Dame Taggles's good things with his eyes—a shortage of cash preventing him from devouring them with his jaws.

"Hallo!" he grunted. "Wharrer you want?" Then he became affable. "I say, Merry, old fellow, if you've got a bob you don't want——"

"Mr. Railton wants you."

Baggy's fat face fell.

"Oh, I say! Has that brute Gore been complaining about his cake? I never had it! I'm willing to swear——"

"Shush!" said Monty Lowther severely. "If you swear here, you'll get bumped. Think of our innocent youth!"

"You know what I mean, you funny ass! I swear I never——"

"Ring off, Baggy," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's not Gore's cake. You're suspected——"

"If Mrs. Mimms thinks it was me in the pantry she's mistaken," said Baggy Trimble, in alarm. "You know what an old donkey she is——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're suspected of being a giddy hero——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Of rescuing Mossoo from a watery grave."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Of course, we know you're not guilty," said Tom Merry laughing. "But, as you came in soaked yesterday afternoon, and no other chap has owned up, Railton wants to see you about it."

Baggy Trimble blinked at him.

"I know no other fellow has owned up," he answered thoughtfully. "I was in Hall, and heard it—I mean, didn't hear it. And I——"

Baggy's round eyes glimmered.

"He's beginning!" said Monty Lowther. "I can see it in his eye! He's just considering whether it will be safe to make out he's the chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Lowther——"

"Poor old Baggy!" said Blake with a chuckle. "If he hadn't told us how he came to be wet, he might have worked it. The only time he ever told the truth, too!"

"I don't think you ought to run a fellow down, Blake, because he's done a jolly plucky thing," said Trimble.

"Eh?"

"Tain't as if I bragged of it," said Trimble calmly. "You can't say I've said a word on the subject, so far."

"Bragged of it?" said Blake dazedly.

"Still, if Railton wants to know the facts particularly, I suppose I ought to let him know."

"What facts?" yelled Tom Merry.

"About rescuing Mossoo——"

"Why, you—you—you fat frog!" shrieked Tom. "You're not going to say that you did it, are you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Go it, Baggy!" said Monty Lowther encouragingly. "It will be the biggest one you ever told—quite a record! Didn't I tell you fellows I could see it in his eye?"

"I'm accustomed to jealousy," said Trimble loftily. "Jealousy keeps me out of the cricket. But really I am surprised at you fellows running a chap down because he's saved a man's life."

"But you didn't!" howled Tom Merry.

"Didn't I come in drenched to the skin after it?" demanded Trimble.

"Yes, but——"

"I remember I told D'Arcy, in the dorm," said Trimble, that recollection suddenly flashing into his fat mind.

"You told D'Arcy you'd rescued Mossoo?"

"I didn't mention Mosso—I said a man. The fact is, I'm not a fellow to brag——"

"Oh, ye gods!"

"I wasn't going to say anything about it. That's why I spun Blake a yarn when he asked me how I'd got wet——"

"Sp-sp-spun me a yarn!" stuttered Blake. Trimble nodded calmly.

"Yes—I made out it was the Grammarians tumbled me in the water, just to keep it dark that I'd done a gallant deed, you know."

"Oh, my only aunt Selina!"

"I suppose I'd better go to Railton," said Baggy with a triumphant blink round at the astonished juniors. "After all, I suppose I ought to take the credit of my noble action—no good making a mystery of it. I wasn't going to—to mention it; but now it's come out——"

"But you didn't do it!" spluttered Tom.

"I'm surprised at this jealousy in you, Merry—I'd really thought better things of you."

"My hat!"

"But—but—if you did it, how did it happen?" asked Blake.

Trimble reflected for a moment. It was just as well to decide how it had happened before he proceeded to explain; Trimble felt that.

"It was in this way," he said. "Strolling along the river, I suddenly heard a cry for help. Imagine my horror——"

"Go it!"

"Pile it on!"

"Imagine my horror," howled Trimble, "imagine my horror at seeing Mosscoo in the water, clinging to an overturned boat——"

"It was a canoe," howled Herries.

"I mean a canoe! Imagine my horror at seeing Mosscoo clinging to a canoe——"

"He wasn't clinging to it!" shouted Blake.

"Yes he was——"

"I've heard Mosscoo say himself that he jumped out of the canoe and tried to swim ashore, because he was drifting on to the mill-wheel, and had lost his paddle."

Baggy Trimble was taken aback for a moment. But only for a moment.

"That's just what I was going to say——"

"What?"

"You keep on interrupting a fellow. How can a fellow explain when you keep on interrupting him? Imagine my horror when I saw Mosscoo spring from the canoe and try to swim ashore——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Without stopping to think——"

"You couldn't have done that, if you had stopped!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Without stopping to think. I sprang into the turbid stream, and seized Mosscoo in a grasp of iron. His eyes turned upon me in wild appeal——"

"They turned and whatted?"

"Turned upon me in wild appeal," said Trimble firmly. "He gasped 'Save me, Trimble!'"

"He—he—he gasped, 'Save me, Trimble!'" babbled Tom Merry.

"Yes; those were his very words."

"You frabjous ass!" roared Blake. "Then Mosscoo knows it was you?"

"Eh?"

"He's forgotten that Mosscoo doesn't know the chap," chortled Monty Lowther. "Try again, Trimble!"

"I—I mean——" stammered Trimble.

"Go it!"

"I—I meant to say, his—his eyes didn't turn on me——"

"What? Not in wild appeal?"

"No: they would have, you know, only they were closed. That's

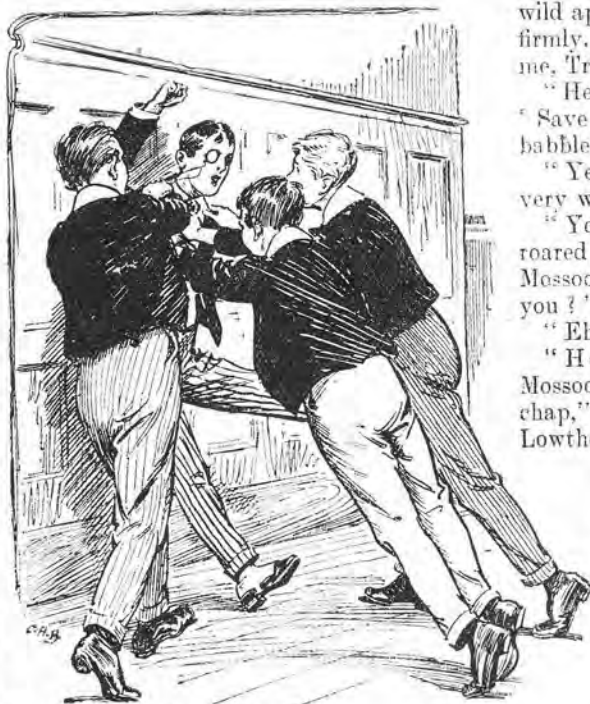
what I really meant. I said, 'I'll save you, Mosscoo.' He didn't say anything, now I come to think of it. He was——was senseless."

"So must you be, old chap, if you spin a yarn like that to Railton."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to tell Railton the exact facts, of course——"

"The facts! Oh, crumbs!"



Blake and Co. grasped their chum, and banged him against the corridor wall. "Tell us if you rescued Mosscoo—before we bang your silly head against the wall!" said Blake warmly. "Yaas!" gasped D'Arcy. (See page 152.)

"Seizing him by the hair of his head, I bore him——"

"That does sound true!" commented Lowther. "Trimble bores everybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I bore him ashore," exclaimed Trimble warmly, "that's what I mean, you ass. With my grasp firmly fixed in the poor fellow's collar, I——"

"It was his hair half-a-minute ago."

"I—I changed it to his collar. Gripping his collar with a grip of iron, I bore him——"

"Bored him?"

"No, bore him, you chump! Bore him to the shore, with the waves raging round me mountains high——"

"Waves—mountains high—on the river!" murmured Tom Merry.

"I—I—I mean——" Trimble stammered for a moment. His fertile imagination had taken the bit between its teeth, as it were, and bolted. "I—I mean they seemed mountains high. Of course, they weren't really."

"Not really?" grinned Blake.

"No, not really. But in that fearful moment, when all my past life came in a flash before my eyes——"

The juniors yelled. Trimble blinked at them angrily. He had thought that a very convincing detail.

"You silly asses, your past life always flashes before your eyes in a moment, when you're being drowned!" he exclaimed. "All my past flashed before my dizzy eyes——"

"You remembered everything?" asked Lowther. "Did you remember you owed me eighteenpence?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Struggling ashore, I placed him in the miller's arms," said Baggy. "He was still unconscious. Then I—I—I——"

"Then you woke up?" asked Lowther.

"You ass! Then I left. I—I didn't want his thanks and all that," said Baggy modestly. "You fellows know I'm not the kind of chap to want to get into the lime-light——"

"Phew!"

"And—and that's all," said Baggy.

"Quite a simple thing. Of course, it was fairly hefty while it lasted."

"And you're going to tell Railton that?" asked Tom Merry, in wonder.

"Certainly; I'm bound to tell him the facts."

"The facts!" stuttered Tom. "The—the facts! Oh, crumbs!"

Baggy Trimble elevated his fat little nose disdainfully, and marched off to the School House. There was a ripple of merriment among the juniors, as they watched him go to tell Mr. Railton the facts!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Mr. Railton is Satisfied!

"FOLLOW on!" grinned Jack Blake.

There was a general movement after Trimble. Evidently the fat Fourth-former was going to spin his amazing yarn to Mr. Railton, and the juniors were very keen to learn how the house master would take it. Quite a little army marched into the School House after Baggy Trimble.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was adorning the steps of the School House with his elegant person, and he turned his eyeglass in surprise upon the grinning crowd as they came along.

"What's goin' on, deah boys?" he asked.

"Trimble is," answered Tom Merry, laughing. "He's going on—stronger than ever. Did you know that Trimble was an Heroic Youth?"

"Bai Jove! No!"

"And a gallant garçon?" chuckled Lowther.

"I should certainly nevah have guessed it, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus. "What has he been doin'?"

"Rescuing Mossoo from a watery wind-up."

"What?"

"That's how he came in wet yesterday," said Manners, with a chortle. "He had been performing deeds of derring-do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!"

"Fact!" said Tom Merry. "Trimble says it's the fact—and Trimble ought to know. He's gone to tell Railton the facts."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Digby, "we shall

miss the lun. I want to hear Trimble when Railton starts in with the cane."

The grinning juniors followed on. Baggy Trimble reached the door of the School House master's study, and tapped. He gave the juniors a disdainful blink over his shoulder.

They were all doubting Thomases at present, that was clear. Nobody believed that Trimble had plunged into the mill-stream to rescue Mossoo—in fact, nobody believed that he could have got out alive if he had plunged in. The whole yarn was too highly improbable. But Trimble hoped to find more credit in the housemaster's study.

There was the undoubted fact that he had come in dripping with water soon after the rescue. That was a happy coincidence greatly in his favour. Then there was the fact that he had told D'Arcy, in the dormitory, that he had got wet in rescuing a man from drowning—he had even placed the scene of the rescue at the mill—an extremely happy coincidence. True, he had mentioned that spot in his fanciful yarn simply because it was a good distance from the school. But it was quite a good support for his tale, as it turned out. Often and often Baggy Trimble had come to disaster through his habit of departing from the truth: but for once, it seemed that one of his most reckless "whoppers" was going to be useful.

Trimble felt that he was in for a good thing.

Who really had dived in for Mossoo was unknown—it was evidently a mystery. As there was no claimant to the distinction, Trimble felt that it would be a pity to let it go at begging. As there was no rival in the field, Baggy saw no reason whatever why he should not bag the honour and glory. It was but seldom he was able to figure in the public eye as a youth of heroic mould. Certainly he wasn't going to lose this opportunity.

"Come in!" called out Mr. Railton, and Baggy Trimble marched into the study as bold as brass.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" he said.

Baggy had left the door ajar. He had no objection to the juniors hearing the interview. He hoped they would be convinced thereby of the truth of his extraordinary claim.

"Yes, Trimble," said the house master, eyeing the fat youth very keenly. "It appears that you came in yesterday afternoon, in a very wet state. I remember observing you, in fact. What was the cause of this, Trimble?"

"I'd been in the river, sir."

"For what reason?"

"To save a drowning man, sir."

"Was it Monsieur Morny?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"Why did you not come forward this morning, Trimble, when the Head requested you to do so?"

"I—I was feeling rather—rather shy, sir," stammered Trimble. "I—I'm not a chap to—to shove himself forward, sir. I—I felt that it would look like—like showing off, sir."

"Oh!"

"You see, sir, I—I'd rather have kept the whole matter dark," said Trimble cheerfully. "It was nothing to me—a splendid swimmer like me, sir. I just did it. That's all, sir."

"If you did it, Trimble, you have performed a very gallant action."

"Yes, sir," assented Trimble. "I always was as brave as a lion, sir."

The house master coughed again.

"Did you mention this circumstance to anyone after it happened, Trimble?"

Baggy smiled.

"Oh, yes, sir. I told a fellow when I came in."

"Oh, you did!" exclaimed the house-master.

"Yes, sir."

"Whom did you tell, Trimble?"

"D'Arcy of the Fourth, sir."

Mr. Railton glanced at the door. Hitherto, he had appeared unconscious of the fact that there was a scuffling of feet, and a breathless buzz of whispering, just outside his door.

"Blake!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Blake. "Yes, sir?"

He looked in, colouring a little.

"Is D'Arcy there?"

"He's along the passage, sir."

"Send him to me, please."

"Yes, sir."

Blake scudded along the passage to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was standing in the doorway, looking out into the quadrangle with a thoughtful cloud on his aristocratic brow. Arthur Augustus was quite shocked and perplexed by Baggy's amazing claim, and quite at a loss to know what he ought to do in the matter. Jack Blake tapped him on the shoulder.

"Railton wants you, Gussy!"

The swell of St. Jim's gave a start.

"Bai Jove! He doesn't know that——"

"That what?"

"Oh, nothin', deah boy."

Arthur Augustus walked along to the house-master's study. He made his way through the grinning crowd there, and entered. Baggy Trimble gave him a grin and a nod. Arthur Augustus remained loftily unconscious of both. He ignored Baggy, and looked at Mr. Railton.

"D'Arcy, it appears that Trimble told you, when he came in wet yesterday, that he had rescued a man from drowning. Do you remember this?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton, taken a little aback. "Did Trimble give you any particulars?"

"He told me some whoppahs, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean, he was womancin', sir," stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Look here," began Trimble warmly.

"Why did you suppose that he was romancing, D'Arcy, as you term it?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Well, I knew it wasn't twue, sir."

"But how could you have known that it was not true, D'Arcy? You were not with Trimble at the time——"

"That he wasn't, sir," said Trimble. "He was locked up in the form-room all the afternoon, because he tried to hook it when Mr. Lathom detained him."

Mr. Railton made a gesture to the fat junior to be silent.

"Answer me, D'Arcy."

"Well, I knew it couldn't be true, sir," said Arthur Augustus uneasily. "He—he said he jumped into the mill stweam aftah a

dwownin' man. He wouldn't have had the nerve, sir."

"Lot you know about that!" said Trimble contemptuously. "I've got an iron nerve! All the Trimble have! Look at the record of the Trimble family in the war! Victoria Crosses and D.S.O.'s and things in heaps."

"Wats!"

"Ahem! But you are aware, D'Arcy, that Monsieur Morny was rescued from the mill-stream by a St. Jim's boy yesterday afternoon."

"Oh, yaas, sir."

"Then what grounds had you for doubting Trimble's statement?"

"He couldn't have been there at the time, sir," answered Arthur Augustus unguardedly.

"How do you know that, D'Arcy?"

"Because——" Arthur Augustus stopped suddenly.

He was about to say that Trimble couldn't have been at the mill-stream at the time, because if he had been, Arthur Augustus himself must have seen him there. But that was a statement it was not judicious to make; as Gussy was supposed to have been locked in the form-room at the time.

"Well, D'Arcy?"

"I—I——" Arthur Augustus coloured and stammered. "I—I knew he was womancin', sir, that's all."

"Sheer jealousy!" said Trimble.

"You uttah ass——"

"You appear to have doubted Trimble's statement without adequate grounds, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton, somewhat severely. "If you were in the form-room, you certainly cannot know what happened at the mill-stream, more than two miles from the school. You should not be distrustful, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus wriggled.

Distrustfulness certainly was not one of his faults; he was much more inclined to an easy unsuspectingness. But he could not explain to Mr. Railton without telling the whole story, so he was silent. The house-master made him a sign to leave the study, and the swell of St. Jim's gladly retreated into the corridor.

Mr. Railton turned to Baggy with quite a genial expression. He was amazed—there

was no doubt about that. But he felt that Trimble had made out his case. Certainly it was a St. Jim's boy who had dived in for Mossos, and not one of the St. Jim's fellows had come forward. Baggy, indeed, had not exactly come forward; his heroism had transpired as the result of inquiry. Amazing as it was, Mr. Railton felt that it would be ungenerous to doubt. Baggy had come in soaked with water soon after the affair, he had mentioned at once to D'Arcy that he had got wet in rescuing a drowning man, and he had not claimed the honour and glory—only admitted it when he was questioned. Really, there was no further room for doubt.

"Trimble," said Mr. Railton, "you have acted with a gallantry and courage that do you the greatest credit."

There was an audible gasp in the passage. The juniors outside wondered whether they were dreaming.

"Railton's swallowed it!" murmured Blake.

"Oh, my hat!"

Trimble purred.

"Oh, not at all, sir," he answered modestly. "I was bound to go in for him, sir. I—I couldn't let him drown under my eyes."

"You went into very great danger, Trimble."

"Well, I suppose I did, sir; but I never stopped to think of that," said Baggy. "I just went in."

"You showed very great courage and devotion. Monsieur Morny will be delighted to know this. I shall inform him at once. You may go now, Trimble."

Mr. Railton shook hands with the noble youth very cordially, and dismissed him.

Baggy Trimble sailed out of the house-master's study as if he were walking on air.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Reward Required!

TOM MERRY AND Co. stared at Trimble.

The podgy youth stared at them, and smiled a fat and satisfied smile.

"Perhaps you fellows believe me now," he said loftily.

"Believe you!" stuttered Tom Merry.

"I don't think!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"You heard what Railton said?"

"You've stuffed him, you fraud!"

"Rats!" said Trimble. And he turned his back on the doubting Thomases, who still doubted, and rolled out into the quadrangle.

The juniors followed him, in a state of great amazement. Some of them were beginning to wonder whether, possibly, there might be some grain of truth in Baggy's amazing tale after all.

Arthur Augustus's eyeglass was fixed on Trimble in a wondering stare. The swell of St. Jim's felt as if he had lost all his bearings. How anybody except, a Prussian Hun, could tell such astounding whoppers was a perplexing problem to Arthur Augustus. And he was worried. He felt that it was not quite right to allow Trimble to tell such whoppers with impunity, but what he could do in the matter was a puzzle.

"It's amazin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "How can the fellow do it without blushin' ? That's what beats me, you know."

"You don't believe him, then?" asked Herries.

"Wubbish!"

"Well, blessed if I don't begin to think there's something in it, you know," said Herries thoughtfully. "Of course, we all know that Trimble is a fearful fabricator——"

"Yaas, wathah."

"But somebody went in for Mossos," said Herries. "It was one of the fellows, and nobody's owned up excepting Trimble. If it was some other fellow, why doesn't he say so?"

"B-b-but——"

"Railton believes him," said Herries. "Railton's no fool. If Railton believes him, there must be something in it."

"Wats!"

"Well, you know, a fellow must be reasonable," said Herries, in his slow, thoughtful way. "I'd never have swallowed it—but Mr. Railton ought to know. Besides, if Trimble didn't do it, who did?"

"Twimble is a feahful fabwicator, Hewwies. He was nowhere neah the mill-stwccm at all."

"How do you know?"

Gussy hesitated.



"This here is the young gent what did the rescue, sir," said the miller; and he indicated Augustus D'Arcy whose face, at the moment, was as expressionless as the face of a marble statue. (See page 156.)

"Well, I do know," he said.

"Gussy, old man, you always were a bit cocksure," said Herries, in a tone of friendly reproof.

"Wha-a-at?"

"You were in the form-room, so you can't possibly know anything about it, you see. Mustn't be cocksure."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Hallo, here's Mossoo!" said Herries.

Monsieur Morny came out of the School House with a rush. Evidently Mr. Railton had acquainted him with the result of the investigation.

"Vere is he?" he exclaimed. "Vere is zat brave boy? Zat noble Trimble! I must zank him! I must embrace him! Vere is he?"

"There he is, sir," grinned Herries.

Monsieur Morny made a rush towards Baggy Trimble.

The fat youth blinked at him.

"Trimble! It vas you!"

"Little me, sir," said Trimble modestly.

"You save me ze life, isn't it."

"Joly glad I was there to help you, sir," said Trimble, negligently.

"Gallant garçon! I embraces you!" gasped Monsieur Morny.

There was a howl from the juniors, as Mossoo embraced the fat Baggy, and imprinted a kiss on each of his podgy cheeks. Trimble wriggled. He wanted honour and glory, but assuredly he did not want this.

"Ow!" gasped Trimble. "Groogh! Leggo!"

"My brave boy, I owe you ze life!"

"Leggo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monsieur Morny released him, but he took his fat hands, and shook them enthusiastically.

Trimble did not mind that.

"Brave, brave garçon!" said Monsieur Morny, with deep emotion. "You save me ze life, isn't it? Oui, oui, oui! You reesk your lifes to save me from one vategy grave! Oh, yes! Nevair sall I forget zis zing—"

jamais de la vie! Ah, jamais! Always I remember zat my life he is save by zat brave, zat generous, zat noble boy Trimble."

Baggy Trimble looked round loftily at the grinning juniors. If this did not convince them, nothing would.

"Oh, zat I could do somezings to prove my gratitude!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny, still shaking Trimble's podgy hands.

Baggy's round eyes glimmered.

"Oh, it was nothing, sir——"

"Nozzing? It was somezing—it was noble, generous, devoted! I nevair forget him 'all ze time zat I sall live, Trimble!"

"Of course, sir, if you wanted to give a reward——"

"Hein?"

"I should feel bound to accept it, sir," said Trimble.

Monsieur Morny dropped Trimble's fat hands as if they had become red-hot. He seemed to have received a shock.

"A—a—a reward!" he stuttered.

"Yes, sir, if you felt bound to offer a reward for—for life-saving, I should not decline it."

"Mon Dieu!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "Trimble all over! I suppose we mustn't kick him while Mossos is here."

Monsieur Morny seemed to have become transfixed. He had rushed upon Trimble, bursting with fervid gratitude, but Trimble had given the heroic affair a business-like turn, which seemed to freeze up Mossos's fervour.

"You—you sall shoke, Trimble, n'est-ce-pas?" he stammered.

"I'm not joking, sir," said Trimble, opening his eyes. "Nothing to joke about, is there? I think it's up to you to offer a reward, if you ask me, sir. A five-pound note wouldn't be out of place. What do you think, sir?"

The juniors were staring at Trimble in wondering disgust. But their looks were quite lost on Baggy. Baggy was not thinskin.

Monsieur Morny had become very grave and quiet. His fervour had vanished. He took a pocket-book from his coat and opened it.

Trimble watched him with glimmering eyes.

"I give you reward viz pleasure, Trimble!" said Monsieur Morny.

"Of course, gratitude's all very well, sir," said Trimble. "But there's generally a reward in these cases, isn't there?"

Monsieur Morny extracted a five-pound note from his pocket-book—it was the only one there—and placed it in Trimble's fat hand. Then, without a word, only a bow, the French gentleman walked away.

As soon as he was in the house, Tom Merry and Co began to express their opinion to Trimble. He stared at them.

"You fat rotter!"

"You horrid worm!"

"You sneaking fraud!"

"You unspeakable Hun!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Trimble. "What's the matter with you now? It's quite customary for a reward to be given for life-saving, isn't it?"

"You awful rotter!"

"You—you—you—oh, there isn't a word for you!" said Tom Merry, in disgust. "I suppose you did pull Mossos out of the water, but you're a disgrace to the school, and you ought to be boiled in oil!"

"Look here——"

"There goes the dinner-bell," said Blake. "Blessed if Trimble hasn't taken my appetite away! Roll away, you horrid porpoise!"

Tom Merry and Co. streamed into the School House, and Trimble followed, in a state of indignant astonishment. The old proverb tells us that contempt will pierce even the shell of the tortoise, but Baggy Trimble was evidently better protected than a tortoise. He was only surprised and indignant. Why a fellow shouldn't be rewarded for life-saving was a question Baggy could find no answer to. True, he hadn't saved anybody's life; but Mossos supposed that he had, so it came to the same thing. Trimble felt that he was a very ill-used and misunderstood youth as he rolled in to dinner. Still, he had the five-pound note, which was a great consolation. Trimble could have stood a great deal of misunderstanding for that sum.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Arthur Augustus Chips In !

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had not been a witness of the scene in the quad. He had gone into the house to avoid the French master. So it was not till he heard the subdued remarks of the Fourth-formers at the dinner-table that he became aware of Trimble's latest departure.

Arthur Augustus could scarcely believe his ears.

That Trimble should lay claim to the credit of an action he had not performed was amazing enough to the noble Gussy, but that he should claim a reward for the same—and receive it—was beyond the understanding of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. What had only been "spoof" had grown into what could only be regarded as a swindle. Certainly, Trimble did not regard it in that light, but Arthur Augustus did.

The swell of the Fourth sat during dinner almost trembling with indignation.

"The awful wascal!" he whispered to Blake. "He must be made to give it up, of course."

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"He won't," he answered. "The fat idiot doesn't understand what a mean little scoundrel he is! He will freeze on to the fiver!"

"I shall not allow him to do so, Blake!"

"You can't help it, old top! You can talk to Trimble for a week, and you won't make him anything but a fat little horror!"

"But it is a swindle!" breathed D'Arcy.

"Well, Mosssoo gave it to him, if you come to that," said Blake. "If he's mean enough to take it, it's his business."

"But he nevah wescued Mosssoo!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly. "It is a fearful whoppah fwom beginnin' to end!"

"Begins to look as if he did, old chap! Even Trimble wouldn't take a reward if he hadn't done it, I should think."

"But he has!"

"Well, he did it, then!"

"He did not, you duffah!"

"Railton believes that he did."

"He has stuffed Wailton! Bai Jove!"

Aftah dinnah, I am goin' to make him take that fivah back to Mosssoo, or w'ing his neck!"

"Kindly do not talk so much at table!" came Mr Lathom's voice severely; and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was compelled to bottle up his indignation until dinner was over.

After dinner, Baggy Trimble was the first fellow out of the dining-room. He cut across to Mrs. Taggles's tuck-shop. Baggy had had a good dinner; but there was still room for more inside Baggy. He was prepared to negotiate a dozen tarts and several bottles of ginger-pop before afternoon classes.

But there was wrath and vengeance on the track of Baggy Trimble.

Arthur Augustus sprinted in pursuit of him, and overtook the fat junior half-way to the tuck-shop.

"Stop, Twimble!" panted D'Arcy.

"I'm in rather a hurry——"

"Stop, I tell you."

"Rats!"

Trimble scudded on. Arthur Augustus caught him by the shoulder, and stopped him forcibly.

"You fat wottah——"

"Leggo!" roared Trimble.

"You uttah fwaud——"

"Will you let go?" exclaimed Trimble indignantly, "I'd give you a jolly good licking, D'Arcy——"

"You are vewy welcome, you wottah!"

"Only—only I feel a bit done up, after my exertions yesterday," said Trimble, "I'm rather feeling the effects of that swim——"

"You awful pwevawicator, you nevah had any swim yestahday."

"When I rescued Mosssoo, I mean——"

"You did not wescue Mosssoo!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, "and you are goin' to take that five-pound note back to him at once."

Trimble laughed derisively.

"Catch me!" he said.

"I insist upon your weturnin' the money to Monsieur Morny immediately, Twimble."

"Leggo my shoulder!"

"Will you go to Mosssoo——"

"No, I won't!" roared Trimble.

"Then I'm goin' to make you."

"Yaroo! Help!"

"Here, hold on, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming up. "You can't make Trimble act decently if he doesn't want to. Draw it mild, old chap."

Arthur Augustus trembled with wrath.

"It is not a question of actin' decently, Tom Mewwy—but of actin' honestly. Twimble did not wescue Mossoo."

"He says he did——"

"He is lyin'."

"Well, it seems to be pretty well made out," said Tom. "Nobody else has turned up, you know. Let him rip, Gussy."

"I wescue to let him wip, Tom Mewwy. He cannot be allowed to wetain the fivah he has welshed out of Mossoo."

"Didn't I save his life?" roared Trimble.

"Certainly not."

"You don't know anything about it, you ass."

"I know all about it, you uttah wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly. "You can tell as many whoppahs as you like, but you are not goin' to swindle poor old Mossoo. I insist upon your takin' the money back at once."

Baggy Trimble jerked himself away, and ran for the tuck-shop. After him went Arthur Augustus, like an arrow from a bow. Tom Merry stared after them. The captain of the Shell did not quite understand Gussy's great excitement.

At the door of the tuck-shop, D'Arcy overtook the fat junior again. He seized Trimble by the collar, and whirled him out of the doorway, and jammed him up against the shop-front.

"Now, you wottah——"

"Yaroooh!"

"Listen to me, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus. "If you do not immediately weturn that fivah to Monsieur Morny, I shall go to Mr. Waiton, and inform him of the twuth of the mattah."

"You don't know anything about it, you beast," gasped Trimble. "Can't you take a fellow's word?"

"You uttah fwaud! I was at the millstream myself yestahday," said Arthur Augustus. "I know you were not there."

Trimble's jaw dropped.

"You—you were?" he stuttered.

"Yaas."

"You—you weren't! You were locked in the form-room, you rotter."

"I cleahed off, when you fetched my hat, Twimble. I know who wescued Mossoo, and I know it was not you."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Trimble.

He blinked at Arthur Augustus in dismay. But a cunning gleam came into his round eyes.

"You'd better keep that dark," he said.

"It's a flogging for you, if Lathom knows you broke bounds yesterday."

"I am awah of that, Twimble. But if you do not weturn that note to Mossoo, I shall tell Mr. Waiton the twuth, and take the floggin'."

"You—you wouldn't——"

"I will!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "You can take your choice, Twimble. If Mr. Waiton knows the facts, he will make you weturn the money, and you will get a floggin' into the bargain for bein' a beastly little swindlah."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Trimble.

"Now will you go to Mossoo, you wottah?"

"I—I say, Gussy—halves!" whispered Trimble.

"What?"

"Halves!" said Trimble eagerly. "What do you say to that? Yaroooooooop! Leave off banging my head, you beast! Yoooooop!"

"You howwid wottah——"

"Yow-ow-ow! I—I'll take it back to Mossoo, if you like," wailed Trimble. "Ow! You needn't cut up rusty, you awful beast! I'm going to take it back, ain't I?"

"Then go at once, you fwaud," said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard.

"Oh, dear! I—I say, I—I'll give it to Mossoo in the French lessons this afternoon—it's first lesson, you know."

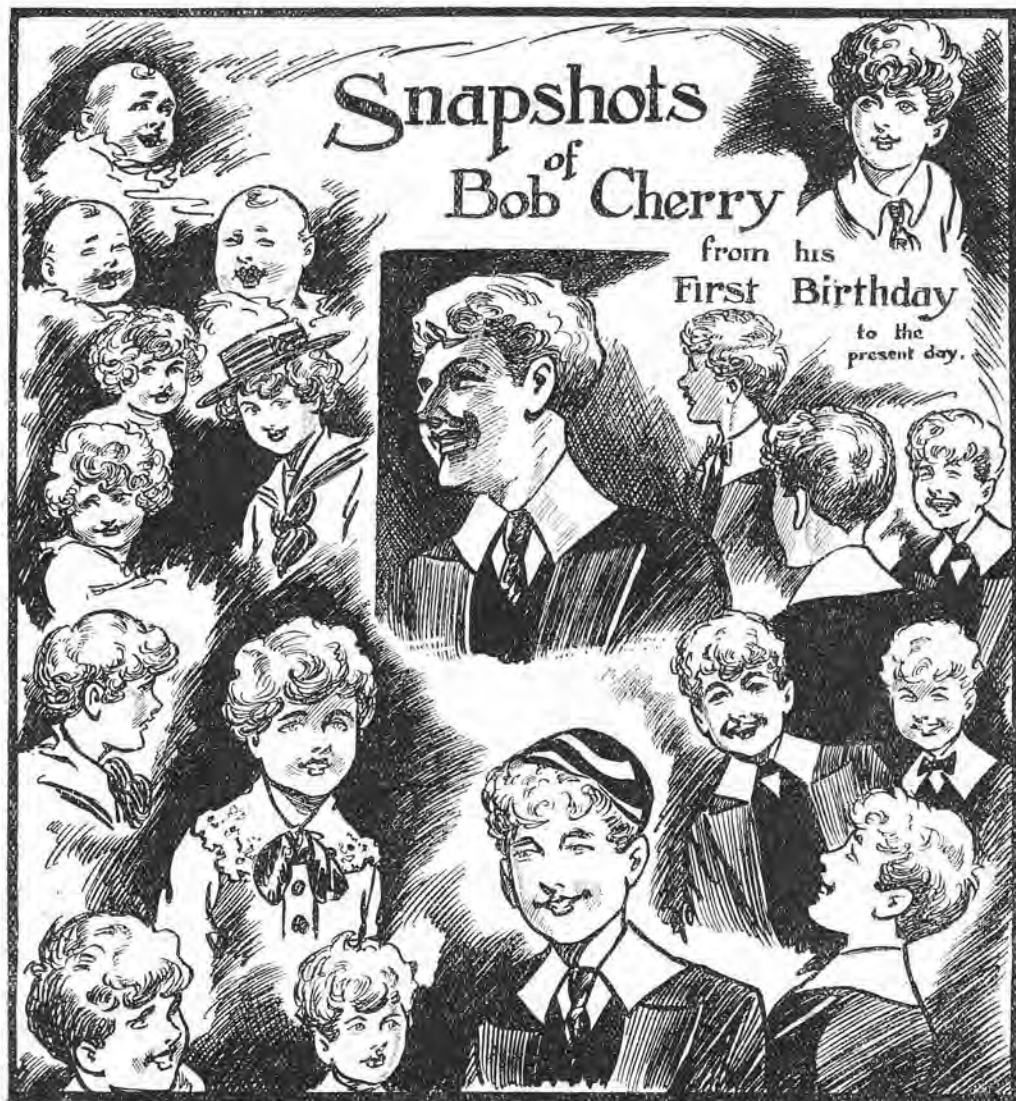
"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus grimly, "and I will wemain with you till lessons, Twimble."

"Can't you trust me, you rotter?" howled Trimble. "Don't you know it's rotten bad form to doubt a fellow's word?"

"Bai Jove!"

"You leave it to me," said Trimble, with a

A CLUSTER OF CHERRIES!



Cheery Bob Cherry is perhaps the most popular junior at Greyfriars School. With his fair, curly hair and sunny smile, he is the favourite schoolboy character of thousands of readers of "The Magnet" Library. Mr. C. H. Chapman's drawings show him laughing his way through life, from babyhood to boyhood.

hungry glance at the tuck-shop, "I'll—I'll do it—on my—my honour! There!"

"Your honour!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, blankly.

"Yes. I hope you're satisfied now?" said Trimble, with dignity.

"Bai Jove! I am satisfied that it is strictly necessary to keep an eye on you, you fwaud."

"Look here, D'Arcy——"

"Dwy up!" commanded Arthur Augustus, "I am goin' to keep with you till lessons. I am bound to tolewate your disgustin' company—but I am not bound to listen to your wotten conversation! If you speak to me again, I will punch your nose, bai Jove!"

Until lessons that afternoon, the Fourth-formers were treated to the unusual sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Baggy Trimble sauntering together in the quadrangle.

Often and often, Baggy Trimble had sought the society of the noble Gussy, and had been repulsed with little ceremony. Now he had it unasked; but he was not enjoying it. He would have given half Mossoo's fiver to be relieved of Gussy's noble company just then.

But he was not relieved of it; and when the bell rang, the two juniors went into the form-room together. And the five-pound note still reposed unchanged in Baggy Trimble's pocket.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

A Painful Parting!

MONSIEUR MORNY came into the form-room to take the Fourth in French; and Arthur Augustus gave Trimble a significant look.

Baggy shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

The five-pound note—the reward for life-saving—was still there; it was still his. But unless Arthur Augustus relented, it was to be his no longer. The hapless Baggy gave D'Arcy a series of imploring, beseeching looks. He received only stern frowns in response.

Arthur Augustus was adamant; why, Trimble could not even guess. He had offered Gussy halves, which he felt was a generous offer. Why Gussy insisted upon the bank-note being returned to the owner thereof, was a mystery to Trimble. He couldn't see any

sense in it. He considered that he was very hardly used—after his generous offer, too. But he knew that he had to do Gussy's bidding. Even a flogging would not deter D'Arcy from making the facts known, if he did not obey. Trimble realised that, although he failed to see any sense in D'Arcy's proceedings.

He had to yield up his ill-gotten gains; but it was worse than a visit to the dentist to do so. Trimble would rather have parted with a tooth. He sat in a state of misery, while Monsieur Morny took the Fourth on a personally-conducted tour among French irregular verbs.

The lesson ended, and still Trimble had not spoken.

Arthur Augustus looked at him, and Trimble glared. Quietly, the swell of St. Jim's rose to his feet. If Trimble would not speak, it was time for Arthur Augustus to speak.

"Pway excuse me, Monsieur——" began Arthur Augustus.

Monsieur Morny glanced at him.

"Vat is it, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Twimble——"

Arthur Augustus got no further. Trimble jumped up as if moved by a spring.

"It's me, sir," he gasped.

"Vat?"

Arthur Augustus sat down again.

"Twimble wishes to speak to you, sir," he said.

"You may speak, Trimble!" said Monsieur Morny coldly.

"I—I—I——" stammered Trimble. "The—the fact is, sir——"

"Well?"

"The—the fact is," babbled Trimble, "I—I—I——"

"You are wasting time, mon garçon."

"Yes, sir! You see, the fact is—you—you handed me a reward to-day, sir, for saving your life."

"Zat mattair he is close, Trimble."

"Not at all, sir! The—the fact is, I—I can't accept it, sir," gasped Trimble.

"Vat!"

"It—it's very kind of you, sir," groaned Trimble, "but I can't accept a reward for saving your life, sir. The—the consciousness

of—of having done a noble action, sir, is enough for me.”

“Mon Dieu!”

Monsieur Morny stared blankly at the fatuous Baggy. With an effort, the fat junior came out before the class, and disinterred the five-pound note from his pocket. He laid it on the master’s desk.

Monsieur Morny eyed him in wondering astonishment. He had been surprised and shocked by Trimble’s claiming a reward, in the first place. He was still more surprised by this extraordinary return of the same.

“There—there you are, sir,” mumbled Trimble, “I—I hope you—you understand, sir—how—how it is! I—I couldn’t accept a reward for—for performing a brave action, sir.”

“But you shall ask me, Trimble.”

There was no getting out of the awkward fact that Baggy had asked for a reward. But Baggy did his best.

“That—that was only a figure of speech, sir,” he stuttered.

“A vat?”

“A—a—a figure of speech, sir! What I really meant was, that—that I couldn’t think of accepting a reward! You—you misunderstood me, sir.”

“Est-il possible? Je me trompe, isn’t it. Mais je ne comprends pas— But zat is all right, Trimble! If I shall have misunderstood, I am sorry for zat.”

Monsieur Morny collected up the five-pound note, and returned it to his pocket-book, not without satisfaction. Fivers were not very plentiful with the French master.

Trimble almost crawled back to his place; he was feeling heart-broken. Certainly, he had regained the place he had lost in Mossos’s esteem. But he would have preferred the fiver to any amount of esteem.

He gave D’Arcy a glare as he passed him, going to his place. Arthur Augustus replied with a sniff.

Monsieur Morny quitted the form-room, and in the few minutes that elapsed before Mr. Lathom came in to take his form, there was a buzz of surprised voices. Baggy Trimble’s action in restoring the plunder had quite taken away the breath of his form-fellows.

“Is he potty?” asked Blake. “Have you gone right off your rocker, Trimble?”

“Yah!”

“The mean little beast has done the right thing, anyhow,” remarked Herries.

“Was it Gussy’s eloquence that did it?” grinned Digby. “I saw Gussy jawing him near the tuck-shop. Gussy must be no end of an orator if he can persuade Trimble to play up decently.”

Mr. Lathom came in, and the amazed discussion had to stop; but Trimble was eyed very curiously by his form-fellows that afternoon.

Baggy hardly noticed it; he wasn’t thinking of the Fourth-form’s opinion, but of the five-pound note.

That fiver had come and gone; it had reposed in his pocket for a time, and now it was gone from his gaze, like a beautiful dream. Mr. Lathom found Baggy a very inattentive pupil that afternoon. Baggy simply couldn’t put his fat mind into lessons. His thoughts were on the fiver; and like Rachel of old, he mourned and could not be comforted.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Tea in Tom Merry’s Study

“HAVING tea, you fellows?”

Baggy Trimble blinked in at the doorway of No. 10 in the Shell.

The table in that study was laid for four—and the Terrible Three, of the Shell, were busy. Tom Merry was making toast at the study fire; Manners was buttering it—and Monty Lowther was industriously disintering sardines from the interior of a tin. On the table reposed a large and handsome cake—upon which Trimble’s eyes lingered lovingly.

“Just going to,” answered Tom Merry, without looking round.

“Expecting a visitor, what?”

“Yes.”

“Perhaps I’m the visitor you’re expecting!” suggested Baggy.

“Perhaps!” said Tom. “But more probably not.”

“I say, I’ll stay to tea, if you like,” said Trimble. “The fact is—it’s awfully unfortunate—my money slipped out of my pocket

when I was swimming in the mill-stream yesterday. It's left me stony."

"Bow-wow!"

"Broke to the wide," said Trimble pathetically, "and all through doing a gallant deed, you know—risking my life to save old Johnny Crapaud. All my money rolled out into the water——"

"You swam head downwards?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Eh? N-no."

"Then how could your money roll out?"

"I—I mean it rolled out when I dived in. I—I dived in head down, you know. It shot out—in a stream——"

"All the gold and silver and banknotes and securities?" asked Monty Lowther sympathetically.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Let him stay," he said. "After all, he did a plucky thing, though he spoils it by bragging. There's a spread this evening—and it will run to five. Trot in, Trimble, and don't tell any more whoppers."

Trimble trotted in briskly.

"Who's the guest you're expecting?" he asked.

"D'Arcy!"

"Oh, I'll tell you what, Tom Merry—don't let him come! I don't care about sitting down to the table with D'Arcy. He's doubted my word."

"You couldn't sit down with anybody at St. Jim's, if that was an impediment," remarked Lowther.

Master Trimble chose to be deaf to that remark.

"I don't care for D'Arcy's company," he continued. "You can have him another time. See?"

"Fathead!"

"The fact is, Tom Merry," said Baggy, with dignity, "I don't care to stay if D'Arcy comes to tea. That's candid."

"Righto, old top," assented Tom.

"Then he's not coming?"

"Oh, yes; he's coming."

"If you wish me to leave this study, Merry——"

"I don't mind, old scout," said Tom, laughing.

"I don't mind overlooking D'Arcy being here, if you come to that. After all, I shall treat him with the contempt he deserves."

"You uttah wottah!" It was Arthur Augustus's voice in the doorway. "You are a howwid weptile, Twimble!"

"Oh, it's you, is it?" grunted Trimble. "I'd jolly well lick you for that, if I wasn't so—so tired, after—after my terrific exertions in the river yesterday——"

"Wats!"

"Some fellows get praised for bringing credit on their school," said Trimble, appealing to the Terrible Three. "I seem to meet with nothing but envy and carping. Lot of good doing heroic stunts at this rate."

Arthur Augustus came into the study and paused. Trimble had stated that he felt an objection to D'Arcy's company. Undoubtedly D'Arcy felt a very strong objection to Trimble's.

"Is Twimble heah to tea, Tom Mewwy?" he asked.

"Yes, he's a giddy distinguished visitor."

"An heroic youth whom we delight to honour," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"In that case, deah boys, will you be good enough to excuse me, and I will wetire."

"Hallo," said Tom Merry. "What's the matter now?"

"I feah, Tom Mewwy, that I could not sit down to the table with that depwaved young wascal."

"Oh, my hat! What's the matter with Trimble?" said Tom. "Of course, he's rather an unpleasant little beast——"

"Look here, Tom Merry!" roared Trimble indignantly.

"But dash it all, he did do a plucky thing yesterday," said Tom. "Pluck is like charity—it covers a multitude of sins. Come in, Gussy, and don't play the goat!"

"Twimble did not do a plucky thing yesterday, Tom Mewwy."

"But it seems to be proved that he did."

"Wubbish!"

"Gussy, old man, you're really off-side," said Manners, in his quiet way. "We all thought Trimble was humbugging at first, but it's really proved. Mr. Railton and Mossos are satisfied."

Ye Pillowe Fyte!

By DICK PENFOLD

As I lay a-snorynge, a-snorynge, a-snorynge,
Harry Wharton's heave hande descended
on my hedde;

In ye stillnesse of ye nyghte—
Why, it gave me quite a fryghte!
"Let us hasten to ye fyte!"

Wharton said.

As I lay a-snorynge, he pyched me out of bedde!

As I lay a-snorynge, a-snorynge, a-snorynge
On ye pile of blankets that were heaped upon
ye floore,

All arounde I heard ye thudde
Of ye pillowes (some were dudde!).
"Yea, forsooth, I'll have thy bloode!"

Came a roar.

As I lay a-snorynge ye Removites were at warre!

As I lay a-snorynge, a-snorynge, a-snorynge,
There were cries of "Byffe him, boys!" and
"By my halibutte!"

With his pillowe in ye aire,
Monty Newland did declare:
"I will flatten him, I sweare!"

Then—tutte-tutte!

As I lay a-snoryngē, he byffed me on ye nutte!

And then I lay a-wakyngē, a-wakyngē, a-wakyngē,
And a noyse boomed in my ears, like ye breakers
on ye shore.

But I dashed into ye fraye,
And when Newland came my waye,
I despatched him (so they saye)

To ye floore.

They removed him on a stretcher, and ye pillowe
fyte was o'er!

"Wubbish!"

"Besides, it was somebody," said Tom, "and if it wasn't Trimble, who was it? Nobody else claims it."

"For verry good weasons."

"What reasons?"

"Nevah mind. But it certainly was not Twimble, and I wefuse to have anything to do with that young wottah. With your permish, I will wetire fwom the study!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

And he retired.

The Terrible Three looked rather perplexed; but they had to let their guest go. After asking Trimble in, they could not very well turn him out. Besides, Trimble was already busy at the tea-table. The chums of the Shell had to make the best of it. In fact, they were rather surprised at Arthur Augustus. It was not like the noble Gussy to detract from another fellow's merit—and he ought really to have been pleased to see Trimble turn out not such a thorough "rotter" as the juniors had always believed him to be. But Arthur Augustus seemed obstinately determined to allow no credit at all to Trimble.

He had excellent reasons for that, of course, but the Terrible Three were not aware of them, and they could only judge on appearances.

"I don't quite understand old Gussy now," said Manners thoughtfully. "He's generally unsuspicious—not to say soft. I should have expected him to be quite enthusiastic about Trimble showing up decently for once."

"Same here," said Tom. "There really doesn't seem any occasion for him to get his back up in this style. He's not the fellow to grudge a chap a little kudos, when he's earned it."

"It's envy," explained Trimble, with his mouth full.

"Fathead!"

"That's what it is, Tom Merry—just envy; just the same as his being jealous of my good looks."

"Oh, my hat!"

"A fellow can't help being good-looking, can he?" said Trimble in an argumentative way.

"You seem to have helped it," remarked Lowther.

"And a fellow can't help being the pluckiest and bravest chap in the school," pursued Trimble. "I don't brag of it. But I think it's rather mean for other fellows to be jealous and envious. I'll have some more toast—pass the butter, will you? I like my butter thick. Five lumps of sugar, please, Manners. Thanks. As I was saying, I've brought a lot of credit on the school, one way and another, and I never get any thanks. After this, Tom Merry, I suppose you'll give me a chance in the cricket eleven?"

"I don't think," said Tom, laughing. "You may be a swimmer, Baggy, but you're no cricketer."

"Better cricketer than I am a swimmer, old scout—and that's saying a lot, considering what I did yesterday. I wonder which of you fellows would have gone in for Mossoo as I did?"

"Well, I hope we should," said Tom mildly.

Baggy shook his head.

"You couldn't have done it," he said. "It needed pluck—unbounded pluck—and nerve—iron nerve. That's me all over. I do these things, you know, and don't brag of them afterwards. That's me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'll try the cake now. I was going to stand a treat to you fellows, out of my five pounds, if that beast hadn't made me—ahem—"

"Hadn't made you what?"

"N-n-nothing! This is a jolly good cake!"

"Did D'Arcy make you hand that fiver back to Mossoo?" asked Manners, staring at the fat Fourth-former.

"Oh, no, of course not. I handed it back because—because—"

"Because what?"

"My noble nature, you know. I couldn't take a reward for performing a deed of heroism. You fellows might; I know you're not so particular as I am, in some things. Not me, though," said Baggy, shaking his head.

The Terrible Three looked at him.

"Are you always as nice as this when you go out to tea, Baggy?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"Eh? I say, this is really a good cake. You've got another in the cupboard, I dare say?"

"No," said Tom.

"Well, it's jolly good. As you fellows seem to like the toast, I'll finish the cake. You don't mind?"

Baggy Trimble transferred what was left of the big cake to his plate—a proceeding that was watched with a sort of frozen stare by the Terrible Three. He proceeded to finish it with great enjoyment.

When there was not a crumb left, Baggy Trimble rose, with a very comfortable sense of fullness.

"Thanks," he said. "I've really enjoyed my tea. You fellows must come to tea in my study to-morrow—no, not to-morrow, I'm having tea with a friend in the Sixth to-morrow. Saturday—no, not Saturday, I'm expecting my uncle, Sir Greville Fitzmaurice Trimble on Saturday; the next day—no, that's Sunday. One day next week, if you like; I really have so many engagements, it's a bit difficult to fit them all in. Ta-ta!"

And the worthy Baggy rolled away.

"What a nice boy!" said Monty Lowther reflectively. "What a comfort he must be to his people at home—and how I wish they had him there now!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

A Thrashing for Trimble!

"A PAWAGRAPH——"

"Yes."

"In the 'Weekly'?"

"Yes. Trimble wants a column—but the merry editor has agreed to a paragraph," said Blake.

"Imposs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy excitedly.

It was the following day, and the glory of Baggy Trimble had not faded. If anybody at St. Jim's had been disposed to forget that Trimble of the Fourth had covered himself with glory, Baggy was there to jog his memory. Indeed, it seemed probable that Baggy's heroism would never be forgotten, so long as St. Jim's had a "local habitation and a name."

Baggy had always been an active and persistent talker; in everything else he was slack, but in "chin-music" he excelled. Monty Lowther had likened Baggy's fat chin to Tennyson's little brook, because it went on for ever. Perhaps it had been well developed by exercise. Trimble's topics had a certain sameness—they all referred to Trimble, to Trimble's gaudy relations, and to the glories of Trimble Hall, which, according to Trimble, was the ancestral seat of the Trimbles, who had come over with the Conqueror, and were mentioned in the Domesday Book. Anyone who doubted that fact was begged to refer to the Domesday Book itself for proof, which was rather a difficult enterprise for juniors at St. Jim's. But now Baggy had a new topic—still more about himself, of course. His new topic was the wonderful courage, the iron nerve, and the generous devotion of Baggy Trimble.

On that topic Baggy descanted in season and out of season; he never tired of it, though he made other fellows very tired indeed. But an unusual patience was shown to Baggy just then; it had been, after all, an exceedingly plucky thing to dive into the mill-stream, and Baggy was credited with that plucky action. There was only one fellow who poured scorn upon Baggy's claim, and that was D'Arcy of the Fourth. So angry and exasperated was Gussy on the subject, that some fellows began to think that Baggy had some grounds for attributing his remarks to personal jealousy.

Baggy's latest stunt was a request to Tom Merry, as editor of the junior school paper, to put the heroic deed on record in the columns of the "Weekly." If a fellow's score at cricket was put in the "Weekly," surely such a deed of derring-do was worthy of being put on record. Tom Merry couldn't deny that it was. Certainly, the request did not come gracefully from the hero himself; still, Tom felt that the claim was just. Baggy offered to write a column description himself, and added that he would take a dozen copies of the paper to send to his people. But the editor limited him to a paragraph. Space, as he explained, was scarce.

Arthur Augustus heard the news with deep

indignation. He fairly blinked at Blake, who told him.

"Imposs!" he repeated. "Twimble's feahful whoppahs cannot be put in the 'Weekly,' Blake. It will make us all look asses, when it comes out that he is only lyin'."

"Gussy, old man, get off your high horse," said Blake. "You're making us tired, old scout. Trimble is a bragging little beast, but give credit where it is due."

"It is not due to Twimble."

"Well, he gets the par, anyhow," said Blake. "He's writing it out in his study now—I expect the editor will have to cut it down a bit. Trimble's sure to spread himself too thick."

"I wefuse to allow Twimble's feahful cwammahs to be put on wecord in the 'Weekly!'" shouted Aurthur Augustus.

"Bow-wow!" was Blake's rejoinder. As a matter of fact, Gussy was in danger of becoming a bore in Study No. 6, with his denunciations of the fat hero.

Arthur Augustus quitted No. 6, and headed for Trimble's study. He found the fat youth there, sitting at the table with a sheaf of impot paper before him, and a pen in his hand. There was ink on his fingers, and ink on his fat little nose. Trimble had the study to himself; and he was deep in the throes of composition. Arthur Augustus strode in wrathfully.

"Twimble!" he exclaimed.

"How many r's in heroic?" asked Trimble.

"What?"

"Two, ain't there?" asked Trimble; "and 'youth' is spelt with a double O, isn't it, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus glanced at the blotty, smudgy scrawl. It ran:

"The Edditor has been gennerrally rekwested to publish an akount of the galant resqoo of Monseer Morny by an herroic youth belonging to this school."

Thus far had Baggy got with his literary work. Arthur Augustus breathed hard. He jerked the smudgy paper from the table, and tore it across.

Trimble jumped up in great wrath.

"You rotter!" he roared. "Why, you—you—you——"

Arthur Augustus raised a commanding forefinger.

"Twimble, you fat wascal! You are not to put any of your woppahs into the 'Weekly.'"

"I'm jolly well going to!" snorted Trimble. "No business of yours, I suppose? This rotten jealousy——"

"I have told you, Twimble, that I was on the scene on Wednesday, and that I am awah that you were not there at all."

"You'd jolly well better not say so outside this study, though," said Baggy. "It means a flogging for you if Lathom finds out that you bolted out of the form-room that afternoon."

"Nevah mind that, Twimble. I will not allow you to place your feahful fabwications on wecord in the 'Weekly.'"

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, I will give you a feahful thwashin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"You mind your p's and q's," said Trimble. "You were out of bounds on Wednesday. Suppose I tell Lathom?"

"What?"

"I've a jolly good mind to, anyhow," said Trimble. "You'd get a flogging, and serve you right. In fact, I don't know whether it isn't my duty to tell Lathom. I don't approve of breaking bounds. Come to think of it, it really is my duty to mention the matter to my form-master."

"You howwid little sneak!"

"Don't you call me names," said Baggy, wagging a fat finger at the swell of St. Jim's in an exceedingly exasperating manner. "I'm not going to stand it—from you. I could get you a flogging by saying a word. Mind that! You'd better be jolly civil, I can tell you."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I wepeat, Twimble, that you are not to w'ite those awful whoppahs to be put in the 'Weekly.'"

"Go and eat coke."

"Or I shall thwash you——"

"Rats!"

"Bai Jove, I will thwash you, anyway!" exclaimed the exasperated Arthur Augustus.

His noble temper failed him, which was not

Some Hints on Drawing

A knowledge of the art of Drawing, besides being most useful in all situations of life, is a source of much pleasurable amusement.

This page is designed with a view to giving those interested a few hints on how to proceed.

All the materials required are pencils, paper, and a piece of soft indiarubber. The most useful pencils are those marked H.B., F and B, and the best paper for early attempts is hard cartridge paper.

In Sketch 1 the reader will observe the sort of house he probably formed when he first attempted to draw. The lines are all hard and unbroken. Hard lines can never be used in good drawing. (As a matter of fact, shadows are more far important than lines.)

Now look at Sketch 2. The outlines are formed of broken and "sketchy" lines. Never press heavily on the pencil when sketching. The effect will be far better, and you will be able to rub out quite easily, if necessary. Now we come to what is called the composition of a picture.

No. 3 is a diagram of the size we are going to draw our picture. Horizontally across it, is drawn a line. This is known as the "eye" or horizontal line. It is an imaginary line, and does not figure in the finished sketch. The best position for the line is generally a third of the picture up from the base.

We now fix our eyes on some object in the distance directly before us. In this case it is a church tower. We place this on the horizontal line in the centre of our sketch. The point we look at on the tower is called the point of sight. Next we fill in the other objects in the picture, as shown in Sketch 4. On the left is a wall in front of some trees, and on the right is a building. These objects seem shorter at the far end than they do nearer the eye. The farther they recede the shorter they become. If lines were drawn along the top and bottom of these objects, the lines would meet on the horizontal line. (See Sketch 4 again.)

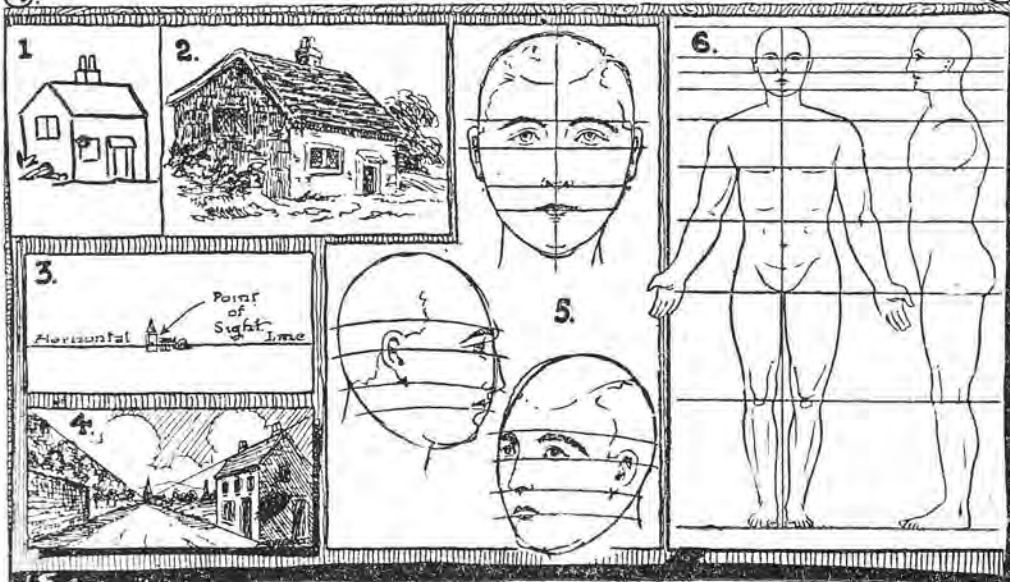
This is called perspective.

The human figure is the most difficult study in art, but the following hints will help many to make quite good sketches after a little practice.

Sketch 5 shows a simple way of roughly finding the positions of the eyes, etc., in the head. An egg shape is first lightly sketched in, and then marked off with lines, as shown. These lines will give the situation of the features, no matter what the position of the egg shape. It will be seen that the ear is exactly the length of the nose, etc.

The reader will see the relative proportions of the limbs to the body, etc., by studying the figures in Sketch 6.

These hints and illustrations will help the reader to start sketching, but the subject is, of course, too big to be fully explained on one page. It is a good idea to sketch whenever and wherever possible. Any little thing is well worth sketching, and if the student keeps all his rough sketches, they will in time become quite a valuable reference library, and he will be able to tackle all sorts of intricate sketching from memory.



surprising, in the circumstances. He made a rush at Baggy Trimble.

The fat junior dodged round the study table.

"Yaroooh! I'll tell Lathom!" he roared.

D'Arcy's grip closed on his collar. There was a fives bat lying on the table, and the swell of St. Jim's caught it up with his disengaged hand. He swung Trimble over a chair, and started in with the fives bat.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yooop! Help! Yarooooooh! Fire!" roared Baggy. "Leave off! I'm going to Lathom. I'll tell him you were out of bounds. Yaroooh! Help!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Hallo! What's the awful row?" asked Mellish, coming into the study. "Are you killing the pig, D'Arcy?"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yarooooooh!"

"Great Scott!" Jack Blake came along the passage. "Gussy! Hold on——"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"You'll burst him!" exclaimed Blake. "Draw a line, Gussy."

Whack! Whack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake ran into the study and grasped his noble chum, and fairly dragged him off the hapless hero. Trimble squirmed away roaring.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Tom Merry, looking in.

"Welease me, Blake——"

"But—but——"

"I am goin' to thrash Twimble——"

"My dear chap, you have thrashed him," chuckled Blake. "Enough's as good as a feast. Trimble's had enough. I'm sure he thinks so."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yarooooooh! Keep him off!" roared Trimble.

"I do not think the wottah has had enough, Blake——"

"Bow-wow! Come away, old son, and don't play the goat," said Blake, dragging Arthur Augustus out of the study. "If you burst him, who's going to clear him up? Besides, you mustn't burst him. Kim on."

"Weally, Blake——"

"This way, old scout."

Baggy Trimble glared out of the study doorway as Blake led his exasperated chum away.

"Yah! Rotter!" bawled Trimble. "Look out for a flogging! You're going to get it! Yah!"

"Bai Jove, I——"

"Kim on," said Blake, and he led Arthur Augustus into Study No. 6. "Never mind Trimble; let him rip."

And Baggy Trimble did "rip," with results that were very unforeseen.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Sentenced!

"D'ARCY!"

"Yaas."

"You're wanted, old chap," said Talbot of the Shell, as he looked in at the door of Study No. 6. "Mr. Lathom asked me to tell you."

"Bai Jove!"

"What's Gussy been doing now?" asked Dig, looking up from his prep. "Second time this week you've been in trouble, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus rose quietly to his feet. He could guess what he was wanted in Mr. Lathom's study for. It was pretty evident that Baggy Trimble had told.

Baggy had certainly asked for that licking with the fives bat. But he had not taken it kindly.

"Mr. Lathom looked a bit waxy," said Talbot. "Is anything the matter?"

"Yaas."

"What's up, then?" asked Blake. "You haven't been kicking over the traces since Wednesday, Gussy; I've had my eye on you."

"I feah it is a floggin', deah boys," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "To make the mattah worse, I feah that I deserve it, for I certainly did tweat Mr. Lathom's authowity with diswegard—a thing I do not approve of myself."

"But when—what—how?" exclaimed Blake in perplexity. "Lathom was all right to you in Form this afternoon."

"What blessed sins have you been committing without telling your old pals?" demanded Herries.

"I broke bounds last Wednesday," said Arthur Augustus. "I was keepin' it dark, but Twimble has given me away, because I licked him. Howevah, I will pwoceed to see Mr. Lathom."

Arthur Augustus quitted the study; leaving his chums staring at one another.

"Broke bounds last Wednesday!" said Blake. "He's dreaming. I remember he told us he started, but he ran into Lathom and was stopped. He was talking out of his neck. Let's go and see what happens. Gussy's jolly well not going to be flogged!"

Blake and Co. relinquished their prep—their concern for their chum was strong—and they were puzzled, too. They followed Arthur Augustus downstairs. The swell of St. Jim's was tapping at Mr. Lathom's door when they sighted him again. Blake and Co. waited in the passage when Arthur Augustus entered the Form-master's study.

Mr. Lathom met the junior with a very severe glance. His brow was almost like a thundercloud.

"D'Arcy! On Wednesday afternoon last, you were detained in the Form-room. I met you leaving, and locked you in the room. Did you, after that, quit the Form-room before five o'clock?"

Arthur Augustus paused for a moment. But he had to reply; and there was no way out of it—excepting by a falsehood, which Arthur Augustus would not have uttered to save himself from a dozen floggings.

"Yaas, sir," he said calmly.

"How did you leave?"

"By the window, sir."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

"I gave you the strictest orders—and you venture to tell me to my face that you directly disobeyed them."

"You—you asked me, sir."

"Don't be impertinent, D'Arcy."

"N-n-no, sir."

"You quitted the form-room by the window, in a surreptitious manner, and spent the afternoon out of gates, I presume?"

"Yaas, sir."

"How long had you been back when I unlocked the door at five o'clock, and dismissed you?"

"Only—only a few seconds, sir," faltered Arthur Augustus.

Mr. Lathom rose to his feet. His eyes were gleaming over his spectacles. Never had Arthur Augustus seen the mild little gentleman looking so angry.

"This is too much!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "It is—is unheard of! I have never believed, D'Arcy, that you were such an unruly and disobedient boy. I could scarcely believe my ears when I was informed of your action—indeed, I should not have believed it on Trimble's word alone."

"Weally, sir——"

"Have you anything to say, D'Arcy, before I take you to Dr. Holmes?"

"Yaas, sir! It is wathah wotten of Twimble to sneak, and pewwaps, undah the cires., you may think it wight to pass the mattah over, sir."

"Certainly I do not approve of Trimble's conduct in coming to me with a tale, D'Arcy. I told him so in the severest words. I do not think he will do so again. But having heard of your conduct, I am bound to take notice of it. It would be a dereliction of my duty to act otherwise. You will follow me to the Head."

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"Very well, sir," he said.

"I warned you, D'Arcy, that if you went out of bounds against my strict orders, you would be given a flogging."

"I quite wemembah, sir."

"Then you certainly know what to expect. Have you any excuse whatever to offer for your conduct?"

Arthur Augustus reflected. He might have stated, in extenuation, that he had saved a drowning man's life during his forbidden run out of bounds. But Gussy was not a Trimble; nothing would have induced him to make capital out of his rescue of Monsieur Morny. Besides, that did not affect the matter—there really was no excuse for D'Arcy's escapade. The call of the sun and the wind was his only excuse for "hooking" it that sunny afternoon; but that was not an excuse Mr. Lathom would have given ear to.

"No, sir," he said at last. "I feah I did vewy w'ong."

"Oh!" said Mr. Lathom, rather taken

aback, and speaking very drily. "I am glad you can see the matter in that light, D'Arcy. We will now go to Dr. Holmes."

"Vewy good, sir."

Mr. Lathom whisked out of the study, and Arthur Augustus, in the deepest gloom, followed him. Blake and Herries and Dig were in the passage, and they gave him inquiring looks.

"Can't stop now, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Mr. Lathom requires my pwesence in the Head's study."

"But——" began Blake.

Mr. Lathom glanced round.

"D'Arcy! Follow me at once!"

"Yaas, sir."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked on, holding his noble head up. He followed Mr. Lathom into the Head's study, and the door closed on him. Blake and Co. waited outside in great uneasiness.

They were mystified and they were worried. There was a murmur of voices in the Head's study; the chums heard it, with misgivings. Arthur Augustus was not detained long in the dreaded apartment. The door reopened, and he came out with Mr. Lathom.

That gentleman walked away to his own study, without a glance at the juniors; but they noted that he was frowning. Blake and Co. joined the swell of St. Jim's at once.

"Well?" asked Blake, anxiously.

"It's a floggin', deah boy."

"But—I don't catch on——"

"I am goin' to be flogged aftah bwakfast to-morrow mornin'," said Arthur Augustus, quietly. "I am sowwy if it distwesses you, old fellows, but it cannot be helped. Let's go back to pwep."

"Blew prep!" said Blake, crossly. "What are you going to be flogged for?"

"Bweakin' bounds on Wednesday."

"But you didn't!" howled Blake. "You were locked in the form-room."

"I got out of the window, deah boy."

"My hat! What have you been keeping it dark for, then?" exclaimed Dig.

"It was bettah to keep it dark," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, so long as no one knew it was all wight. I didn't want to be flogged. It is a vewy unpleasant opewation,

and wathah wuff on a fellow's personal dignity."

"Do you think we wouldn't have kept it dark, you ass?"

"You might have talked wecklessly, you know, and given it away without intendin' to do so. You are wathah a thoughtless youngstah, Blake."

"Why, you—you——" gasped Blake. Only the knowledge that Gussy was to be flogged in the morning, saved him from a punch on his noble nose.

"But that was not the only weason," continued Arthur Augustus. "You see, it was a sewious mattah and had to be kept vewy dark, and I did not want to wowwy you fellows with a beastly secwet to keep. It was fah more judicious to say nothin' about it."

"Well, perhaps that's so," admitted Blake. "But if you said nothing about it how has it come out?"

"Twimble has sneaked."

"But how did Trimble know if you didn't tell anybody?"

"I did tell Twimble."

"Well, you frabjous ass!" said Blake. "What the merry thunder did you tell Trimble for?"

"I had no choice in the mattah," explained Arthur Augustus. "Twimble was swindlin' Mossoo out of a fivah, you see, and he would not take it back. So I had to prove to him that I knew he hadn't wescued Mossoo, and thwreaten to lay the facts before Mr. Wailton. Then he handed the fivah back to Mossoo."

Blake stared at him blankly.

"What on earth are you driving at," he inquired.

"I twust I make myself cleah, Blake."

"Clear as mud," said Digby. "Your boltin' out of the form-room window hasn't anything to do with Trimble going in for Mossoo, that I can see."

"You are wathah dense, old chap. I informed Twimble that, bein' on the spot at the time, I knew he hadn't wescued Mossoo."

"On the spot at the time?" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

"You were by the mill-stream——"

"Yaas."

A STUDY IN EXPRESSIONS!



A Page of clever Bunter portraits, by C. H. Chapman.

"Then—then you saw Mossoo in the water?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you never told us?" howled Herries.

"I couldn't tell you, Hewwies, without mentionin' the fact that I was out of bounds that Wednesday."

Arthur Augustus's amazed chums blinked at him.

"So—so that's why you've been down on Trimble?" exclaimed Blake at last.

"Yaas. You see, I knew he was lyin', as I was there."

"Then you know who it really was that rescued Mossoo?" exclaimed Dig.

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Was it a St. Jim's chap at all?"

"Oh, yaas."

A light broke on Blake. He seized his chum by the shoulder, and shook him vigorously.

"You frabjous ass! You frumptions bandersnatch! Was it you?" he yelled.

"Yawoooooh!"

"Was it you, you frumptions chump?" yelled Dig.

"You are wumplin' my collab, Blake!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Was it you?" shrieked Herries.

"Pway welease me, Blake, you are wumplin'—"

Blake and Co. seized their chum, and backed him up against the corridor wall, with a bump.

"Now, you frumptions, asinine fathead!" said Blake. "Tell us whether it was you, before we bang your silly head on the wall!"

"Yaas!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Well, my hat!"

"Have you told the Head?" asked Dig.

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.

"Certainly not!" he answered.

"Why not?" demanded Herries.

"There was no weason to tell the Head, Hewwies."

"It might have got you off the flogging."

"I should wegard it as hein' dewogatowy to my dignity to get off a floggin' by bwaggin' of somethin' I had done, Hewwies. I wathah think we had bettah go and get our pwep done."

And Arthur Augustus returned to Study No. 6, followed more slowly by his amazed chums. And in about ten minutes, all the juniors in the School-House knew who really had rescued Monsieur Morny from the mill-stream.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

Looking after Gussy!

"TRIMBLE!"

Baggy Trimble looked up from his prep. with a grunt. His study door was thrown open, and a crowd of juniors appeared headed by the Terrible Three.

Baggy rose to his feet in alarm. It needed only one glance to show him that this visit was a hostile one.

"Wha-a-at do you fellows want?" he exclaimed uneasily. "If you think I've said anything to Lathom, you're mistaken."

"You've given D'Arcy away to Lathom!" said Tom Merry.

"Sneak!"

"Scrag him!"

It was quite a roar from the incensed juniors. They crowded into the study, and Baggy's fat knees knocked together.

"I—I say, you're mistaken, you know," he said. "I—I haven't been to Lathom's study at all, you know—"

"Why, I saw you go there, not half an hour ago!" said Julian.

"I—I mean I went there to ask Lathom a—a question about Latin—"

"Ring off," said Tom Merry. "Mr. Lathom mentioned to D'Arcy that it was you that gave him away."

"Oh, dear! I—I say, Lathom's mistaken."

"What?"

"You know what an absent-minded beast he is," said Trimble. "He—he mentioned my name instead of some other fellow's. I—I don't know who gave D'Arcy away—I can't even guess. Perhaps it was Talbot."

"What?" came Talbot's voice from the passage.

"Oh! I—I didn't see you, old chap. I—I meant to say perhaps it was Kangaroo—"

"Me?" roared the Australian junior.

"Nunno! I—I mean—"

"Keep the rest," said Tom Merry. "You've sneaked, and Gussy is landed for a flogging—"

"I haven't, you know—not a word!" gasped Trimble. "Besides, I told him I would for pitching into me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep off, you rotters! I wonder you ain't ashamed to start ragging a chap who's brought credit on the school!" exclaimed Trimble. "If—if I wasn't still feeling the effects of my—my struggle in the foaming torrent, I'd jolly well lick you, Tom Merry!"

"You spoofer!" roared the captain of the Shell. "We know now who it was that rescued Mossosoo."

"You—you know? Who was it, then?" he gasped.

There was a howl of laughter. As Trimble claimed to be the gallant rescuer himself, his question had its comic side.

"It was D'Arcy, you fat rascal. He was out of bounds, and he went in for Mossosoo; he's owned up now."

"Oh, crumbs!"

Trimble simply gasped with astonishment. He had wondered once or twice who really had rescued Mossosoo, but he had never thought of Arthur Augustus. Indeed, by the force of repetition, he had almost made himself believe that he, Baggy Trimble, actually had done it.

"So you can recover, now, from your terrific exertions in the raging torrent," said Monty Lowther, sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—I—I say, I—I don't believe it!" gasped Trimble. "If it was D'Arcy, why didn't he come forward when the Head asked?"

"Because he was out of bounds at the time, and didn't want a flogging," said Tom Merry. "Understand now, you fat oyster?"

"I—I say, 'tain't true, you know!" stammered Baggy Trimble. "It's no good, Gussy spinning a yarn like that, you know. It—it was me—"

"You're still keeping that up?" yelled Tom.

"Ye-e-s—c-c-certainly! You—you see, I did it!" said Trimble. "Not that I want to brag of it, of course—that's not my style. Still, the fact remains."

"The fact? Oh, my hat!"

"I really believe that chap would rather lie than eat—and that's saying an awful lot," said Manners. "Don't waste any more time on him. He knows what happens to sneaks."

"Srag him!"

"Yaroooh! Help! Rescue!" bawled Trimble, as the incensed juniors collared him. "Oh, yoooop! Leggo! I say, I'll own up! Yah! Oh!"

But there was no mercy for Baggy Trimble. The flogging that was to take place in the morning precluded that. The sneak was to be punished—and he was punished.

It seemed to Baggy Trimble during the following ten minutes that the end of all things had come. Afterwards, he had a vague recollection of a series of earthquakes and air-raids happening in his study.

When Tom Merry and Co. streamed out Baggy Trimble lay on the carpet, gasping, trying to get his second wind.

He had been bumped, and rolled, and ragged. His hair was tousled, and his fat face adorned with ink and gum. It was some minutes before he was able to stagger to the armchair, and collapse there—and it was an hour before he stirred out of the armchair again. During that space of time, Baggy had opportunity to repent him that he had betrayed Arthur Augustus's escapade.

The hapless Baggy was in grievous plight. Even his borrowed plumes had been shorn from him—and through his own act! The real identity of Mossosoo's rescuer was known, now—Baggy's brief glory was past! He was like unto the daw stripped of his peacock's feathers.

He had only one consolation—and that was, that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was going to be flogged in the morning. There was solace in that reflection. But it was a very dispirited Baggy that groaned and gasped during most of the remainder of the evening.

Meanwhile, there was an argument proceeding in Study No. 6. In that celebrated study prep. was neglected. Blake and Herries and Dig were urging upon Arthur Augustus to tell the story of the rescue of Mossosoo. They felt convinced that it would weigh in the scales against Gussy's undoubted delinquency on

that eventful Wednesday. But Arthur Augustus was adamant.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, deah boys," was his reply. "Wescuin' poor old Mossos has nothin' whatevah to do with the mattah. It would be beneath my dignity to try to make capital out of it."

"Bother your dignity!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Look here, Gussy!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "If the Head knew, he wouldn't give you a flogging—it stands to reason. It would be a sort of set-off—playing the goat on one side, and rescuing Mossos on the other—see?"

"I do not see, Blake!"

"Mossos would put in a word for you, too, if he knew," said Herries.

"I do not desiah Mossos to put in a word for me, Hewwies."

"Do you want to be flogged?" roared Blake.

"Certainly not. But I uttably wefuse to make capital out of goin' in for Mossos."

"Then I'll jolly well tell the Head myself!" exclaimed Blake.

"You will do nothin' of the kind, Blake. I should wefuse to admit it, if you did."

"Why, you—you exasperating ass——"

"I decline to be called an ass, Blake."

"Look here——" roared Blake.

"Pway do not wear at me, Blake. I have wemarked seweral times that I dislike bein' woared at."

Jack Blake controlled his feelings with difficulty. He felt so concerned for his noble chum, that he was inclined to rub his noble head in the coal-locker there and then. However, he refrained.

"Pway leave the mattah to me," concluded Arthur Augustus. "I know you mean well, dear boys, but I feah you would place me in an awkward posish fwom your want of tact and judgment, you know. Mattahs are nevah made any bettah by thoughtless youngstahs buttin' in."

"Come on, you chaps," said Blake, who seemed to breathe with difficulty. "I shall slaughter him if I stay here. Blessed if I wouldn't let him be flogged, only it's one up against this study. Let's go and see Tom

Merry, and we'll ask him what's to be done about it."

"There's nothin' to be done, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "You are mixin' up two mattahs that weally have nothin' to do with one anothah. I wequest you not to butt in."

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

"I do not wegard that as an intelligible wemark, Blake."

Blake and Herries and Dig left the study—Blake closing the door with unnecessary force. The three chums repaired to No. 10 in the Shell, where they held deep and solemn council with the Terrible Three. That Gussy's heroic rescue of Mossos would be regarded by the Head as some sort of atonement for his escapade, they all agreed—as Blake put it, the Beak simply couldn't lay into a fellow who had yanked Mossos out of a watery grave.

"Only——" said Tom, "it would have to be proved. Trimble's got the credit at present—and it would be Gussy's word against his—and Gussy says he won't say the word. So——"

"Easy enough to prove," said Manners. "There's the miller."

"He's two miles away."

"I suppose he can walk two miles?"

"Oh!" said Tom.

And there was fresh discussion. To judge by their looks, the juniors had come to a satisfactory conclusion when they separated. Nothing was said to Arthur Augustus on the subject; and in the dormitory that night, the noble Gussy remarked to Blake that he was glad he had "dwopped" the matter. Whereat Jack Blake only grinned.

The next morning, Tom Merry and Jack Blake were on the river in the early sunshine, pulling up to the mill. They were still absent when the other juniors went in to breakfast.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

At the Eleventh Hour!

"D'Arcy!"

Mr. Lathom rapped out the name as he rose from the breakfast-table.

"Yaas, sir!" said Arthur Augustus quietly.

"You will come with me. The other boys will be in Hall at nine o'clock," added Mr. Lathom, glancing round.

Arthur Augustus obediently followed his form-master.

There were a good many gloomy faces among the St. Jim's juniors, when they began to assemble in Hall.

It was never a pleasant experience to assemble to witness a flogging—as Monty Lowther had observed, it made a fellow think of what might happen to himself some time. And there was general sympathy for Arthur Augustus. It was true that he had been guilty of a serious dereliction of discipline; but naturally the juniors did not regard that so seriously as the Head and the form-master did. And now it was known that it was the noble Gussy who had rescued Mossoo, he was an object of general admiration as well as sympathy. So there were clouded faces as the juniors took their places in hall, and waited for the execution.

Only one fellow looked cheerful, in fact—and that was Baggy Trimble. He seemed to be enjoying the prospect. Perhaps that was why Herries and Dig both trod on Baggy's large feet—one each—with a heavy tread. Trimble yelped, and his enjoyment of the occasion was quite dashed.

Two places were empty—Blake's in the Fourth, and Tom Merry's in the Shell. Some of the juniors wondered what had become of them. Others—who knew—wondered whether they would be back in time. The execution was close at hand now.

Taggles was standing by the dais at the upper end of the hall, ready to "hoist" the unhappy kictim. There was a murmur as the Head entered by the upper door.

Mr. Lathom followed him in, accompanied by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

That youth kept his eyes fixed on the floor.

There was a flush in his cheeks; he felt his position acutely enough. There was no doubt whatever that a public flogging impaired a fellow's personal dignity very considerably; and Arthur Augustus gave great consideration to his dignity. Sympathetic looks were cast upon him on all sides—Monsieur Mrony was heard to murmur "Helas!"

The Head fixed a stern glance upon the junior who stood before him. He picked up the birch, which was ready to his hand.

Arthur Augustus shivered slightly as he saw it.

But his courage did not falter. He was prepared to face the music without weakness.

"D'Arcy!" the Head's voice was very deep. "I am sorry that this occasion has arisen——"

"So am I, sir," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

The Head coughed; and there was something very like a chuckle audible among the juniors. But Dr. Holmes glanced round, and dead silence succeeded.

"You have been guilty of a flagrant dereliction of your duty, D'Arcy," said the Head, impressively.

"I feah so, sir."

"Ahem! After being warned by your form-master that a flogging would be administered if you disobeyed his commands, you deliberately did so."

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"I twust, sir, that Mr. Lathom does not think I intended to be guilty of diswespct," he said, in distress. "I should wegard anythin' of the kind as shockin' bad form, sir."

"Nevertheless, that is what you have been guilty of, D'Arcy, and it is my duty—my painful duty—to inflict severe punishment."

"Yaas, sir."

"Take him up, Taggles!"

"Yessir."

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head, as there was a sudden stir and buzz at the lower end of the crowded hall.

One side of the big double doors had been pushed open, and Tom Merry and Blake came hurriedly in—leading a gentleman in a rather floury white coat, with a white hat in his hand, and a pink flush in his plump cheeks. All eyes were turned on that unexpected newcomer.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, "The millah!"

"What is this?" exclaimed the Head, in wrathful astonishment. "Merry—Blake—what—what—who is this man?"

"C'est l'homme du moulin, monsieur!" said Monsieur Morny.

"What! what? Oh, the miller—but what does this mean——"

"Un honnête homme, sir," said Monsieur Morny. "Un homme tres honnête—he have give to me ze help when I am somewhat drown in ze vattair."

"Yes, yes; but——"

The execution was stayed. Tom Merry and Blake were piloting the blushing miller up the hall towards the scene of the suspended execution.

"Merry! What——!" began the Head, sternly.

"It's the miller, sir," said Tom breathlessly. "He—he saw Monsieur Morny rescued on Wednesday, sir——"

"That is no reason."

"I—we—I—us—ahem—we thought you'd like to know the—the chap who rescued Mossoo, sir," stammered Tom. "So—so we brought the miller to pick him out for you, sir."

"Really, Merry——"

"The boy is already known," exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Trimble——"

"It wasn't Trimble, sir," said Blake.

"What! But——"

"It was D'Arcy, sir!"

"D'Arcy!" exclaimed the housemaster.

"You uttah ass, Blake," breathed Arthur Augustus. "I warned you not to butt in, in your weckless mannah."

"This has no concern with the matter in hand," said the Head severely. He bowed courteously to the miller, but he was evidently annoyed. "Another time——"

"But it was D'Arcy, sir," exclaimed Tom. "We've brought the miller to prove it. If Gussy—I mean D'Arcy—hadn't broken out of bounds on Wednesday, sir, Mossoo would have been drowned under the mill."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Head.

"Mon dieu!"

"I was asked to come 'ere, sir," said the miller. "These young gentlemen says as 'ow I was wanted as a witness, sir. That's the young gent that went into the river and pulled out the Froggy, sir." And the miller pointed a slightly floury finger at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bless my soul! Mr. Lathom, Trimble is present, I presume? Send him here."

"Trimble!"

"Oh, dear!"

"You're wanted," grinned Herries. "Out you go!" And Herries' heavy boot gave the hapless Baggy a start.

Baggy Trimble wriggled along painfully to the Head—he looked as if he would have liked to crawl on all fours. His progress up the hall was slow, but he arrived at last.

"Kindly look at this boy," said the Head, addressing the miller. "That is not the boy who swam to the rescue of Monsieur Morny?"

The miller shook his head.

"Never seen him before, sir, that I know of. This here is the young gent!" and he indicated Arthur Augustus, whose aristocratic face was as expressionless, at that moment, as the face of a marble statue.

"Thank you very much, sir," said the Head, courteously. "I am much obliged to you for taking the trouble to come here. You must allow me to send you home in the trap. Taggles, kindly see to it."

"Yessir," grunted Taggles.

Taggles looked a little disappointed. He feared that there was not going to be a flogging after all; and Taggles believed in floggings and plenty of them. But the St. Jim's fellows looked relieved when Taggles retired with the miller. It looked as if there was hope for Gussy after all.

"So, D'Arcy!" said the Head, turning to the delinquent. "It was you who performed that very gallant action, to which Monsieur Morny owes his life?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Why did you not come forward and tell me so, when I asked for the name of the boy concerned?"

"Ahem! You—you see, sir, I—I was supposed to be in the form-room, and—and—and I—I don't like being flogged, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I feah that I weally deserve it on this occasion, sir, but it is vewy unpleasant, all the same."

"Trimble!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Trimble.

"You have spoken untruthfully, Trimble, and made a base and unjustifiable claim."

"Oh, no, sir!"

"What! You declared that you were the person who rescued Monsieur Morny from the mill-stream."

"Oh, no, sir! You—you see, sir, it—it was like this—I—I—Mr. Railton asked me, sir—"

"He did not ask you to tell him a falsehood, I presume."

"Nunno, sir, but he asked me, and—and I—I—I didn't know it was D'Arcy, sir."

"You knew it was not yourself!"

Trimble wriggled.

"Well, sir, you—you see—Mr. Railton seemed to think it was me, sir, and—and I didn't like to argue with him, sir. I—I felt it wouldn't be respectful, sir—and—and I'm always respectful to my kind masters, sir—not like D'Arcy—"

"Bless my soul! Mr. Lathom, perhaps you will have the kindness to administer a severe caning to Trimble for practising this deception?"

"Most certainly, sir," said Mr. Lathom.

"Oh, dear!"

"You may go back to your place, Trimble—Mr. Lathom will deal with you later."

"Ow-wow!"

Baggy Trimble crawled back to his place, in the lowest possible spirits. After his brief period of glory, it seemed that his misfortunes would never cease. Baggy felt that life was hardly worth living in a school where he was so grievously misunderstood.

Tom Merry and Blake had gone quietly to their places in the Shell, and the Fourth. They had done their best; and they hoped for the best. Arthur Augustus stood like a stone image, with a really impressive display of the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Mr. Lathom looked at the Head, and the Head looked at Mr. Lathom. Dr. Holmes felt a very natural disinclination to proceed with the execution, after the revelation that had been made.

"Ahem! In the circumstances, Mr. Lathom—"

"I was about to suggest, sir," said Mr. Lathom.

"My noble and tres brave preservair!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny.

"Yawwooh!"

Monsieur Morny advanced upon Arthur Augustus, and before the swell of St. Jim's could escape, embraced him. Two loud smacks rang through the hall, followed by a chorus of chortles. Mossoo, in his enthusiastic gratitude, had kissed the hapless Gussy on both cheeks.

"My preservair!" exclaimed Mossoo. "I shake you by ze hand—I zank you from depths of ze heart! Monsieur Holmes, zis gallant garcon have save me ze life—I beg of you zat you flog him not—afair he have reesk ze life in ze vattair—"

"Pway, welsease me," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy glad I saved your life, sir, but I have a vewy stwong objection to bein' hugged!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Monsieur le docteur, you vill pardon zis gallant garcon," exclaimed Monsieur Morny. "I vill go on my knees—I vill veep—"

"Pray do nothing of the sort, Monsieur Morny," exclaimed the Head, hastily. "Mr. Lathom, I leave the matter in your hands—if you think fit—"

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Lathom. "After D'Arcy's brave conduct, I think he may very well be pardoned."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, barely dodging another embrace from Monsieur Morny. "Weally, sir—"

"My preservair!"

"Oh, cwumbs! Weally—"

"The matter is closed!" exclaimed the Head. "Dismiss the school!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's chums gathered round him, and marched him out of hall in triumph.

* * * * *

That evening there was a great celebration in Study No. 6. Tom Merry and Co. were there, and as many more fellows as the study would hold. And to the amazement of the merry party, the door opened and admitted the fat face of Baggy Trimble, with a feeble propitiatory grin on it.

"I—I say, you chaps—" began Trimble.

"Bai Jove! You have the feahful nerve to come heah, you howwid fwaund!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Well, after all I've done for you, Gussy."

"What!"

"It was all my doing, you know," said Trimble, blinking round at the astonished juniors. "If I hadn't given Gussy away, you know, it would never have come out about his fishing old Froggy out, you know, and then he wouldn't have got off the flogging, you know, and—and—the fact is, I planned it all along—planned the whole thing from start to finish, simply to do Gussy a good turn;"

"Gweat Scott!"

"After that," said Trimble. "I'm surprised at you fellows leaving me out of this!"

I'm accustomed to, eh—ingratitude, but—really——"

"Bai Jove!"

"Still, it's all right," said Trimble, venturing into the study. "Let bygones be bygones, old fellows. Got a chair for a chap?"

It appeared that there was no chair for Trimble. But there were a variety of boots at his service—and they came into play. A howl echoed along the passage, and Baggy vanished, not again to stop the celebration in Study No. 6.

THE END

PUZZLE—FIND THE GOALKEEPER!



This lively picture of an interrupted football match also contains a concealed picture of the missing goal-keeper. Can you find him?



HOW TO BE- COME HANDY WITH YOUR FISTS!

*Some Valuable Boxing Tips
from Mr. Percy Longhurst*

THERE are instances of good boxers, first-class boxers, men who have ultimately fought for and won championships, never having had a boxing lesson during the whole of their career, but it's just as well to remember that these individuals are exceptional; that because they succeeded in doing well without expert instruction gives no reason to believe that every lad with a taste for boxing needs no instruction in the art.

Jem Belcher, one of the earliest and most successful of English champions, taught himself; one of the real champions and most scientific boxers of the present day, Jim Driscoll, and one of the gamest fighters, an ex-champion, Tancy Lee, the Scot, also never received a boxing lesson in his life. But these men won success and fame simply because they could not help becoming champions; they did not succeed because they had not had the opportunity

for youthful instruction in the art. For the average fellow to attempt to learn boxing without the advice and assistance of someone knowing the game is for him to court disappointment and disaster.

But the instruction must be of the right kind. The instructor who gives his pupil a hard clout on the jaw or a severe drive in "the wind," and says, "Now, that's the thing to do to your opponent. Now don't let me do it again to you," isn't a bit of use to the enthusiastic novice. He isn't instructing him at all. In a good many cases he is simply administering a severe check to the youngster's enthusiasm.

Fortunately there isn't so much of that type of instructor as there used to be when I was myself trying to learn boxing. But he does still exist. And he does a deal of harm, far more than he does good.

Then again there is the kind of instruction



A friendly handshake before the commencement of a bout.



A turn with the punchball is excellent practice. Even Billy Bunter sometimes indulges in it.

which the novice tries to obtain from a text book. It may be—very probably is—written by a good man, that is to say a successful boxer. But being a successful performer with the gloves doesn't necessarily mean that the individual is a good instructor. I can call to mind one tutor I had, at one time the second best man of his weight in England. He gave me many lessons, and a lot more besides; but later I realised that as an instructor he was a bad failure. He knew all right what ought to be done, and he could do it, but he had not a notion of teaching a novice how *he* was to do it.

The trouble with most text books is that they are far too advanced for the novice. They try to get the novice to attempt things which he ought carefully to leave alone until he has gained quite a lot of experience. The A B C of the game isn't taught. Trying to learn from an average text book is very much like trying to read before one has mastered the alphabet—and about as useful.

Without letting the novice attempt to break running records before he has learned properly how to walk, it is possible to develop rather than lessen his interest and enthusiasm, while yet at the same time taking care that he doesn't miss the foundations of boxing know-

ledge and ultimate skill. A boxing lesson is no fun at all unless *some* real boxing is to enter into it.

In the army there is a system by which the liking for a bout of fisticuffs is encouraged and developed to the greatest possible extent. Men are taught so that they contrive to get a deal of fun and interest out of it even while learning. I'd like to see the young boxing novice get similar treatment.

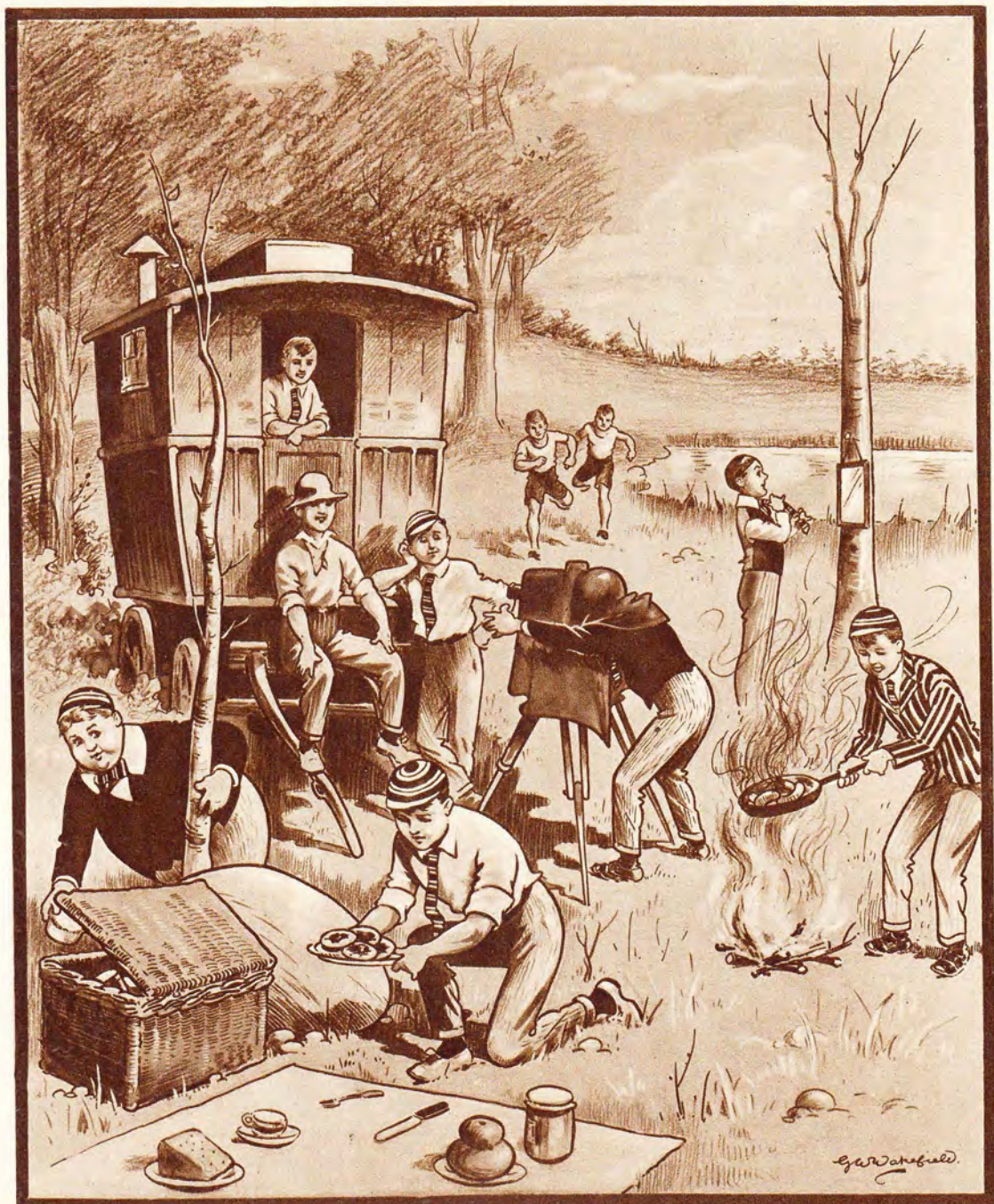
Bouts are arranged between novices, and each man is told that he is to do his best to hit the other fellow on the nose. There is no need to hit hard—he isn't wanted to hit hard, just a tap will do. The watching instructor stops the contest as soon as one man touches the other's nose. He is the winner. Then the instructor gives advice, and a few hints to the loser, showing how

he might have prevented the point being made against him, and to the winner indicating how he might have won sooner. Then the pair are matched with two more men, and they begin all over again.

It is wonderful how this system appeals to the men. To lads it would have just as strong an appeal. Let them try it. They'll learn ever so much more quickly than by a system which gives them a dozen bits of advice to



"Give the novice just one definite thing to do—to reach his opponent's nose—and he'll try to do it."



To face page 160.

THE SCHOOLBOY CARAVANNERS!

Breakfast-time in a camp of amateur gipsies.

remember; that he mustn't get his right foot in advance, that he mustn't get his feet crossed, that he must look after his guard, that he must hit with a straight left, and from the shoulder with all his weight behind the blow, and not just from the elbow, that he must hit with the knuckle part of the glove—these and many other points which in ordinary instruction are dinned into the ears of the novice are too much for him. He simply *can't* recollect to pay attention to all these points at the same time. If he actually tries he gets confused, he does nothing well or wholeheartedly, and he is worried by his non-success. He isn't getting any fun out of the game.

But give him just one definite thing to do—to reach his opponent's nose—and he'll recollect that, and try to do it. The mistakes he makes in trying it can be corrected afterwards. A bit at a time is the way to learn, the average boxing novice isn't taught that way, he is supposed to learn everything at once. And it's too much.

Boxing novices, try this army tip, and I guess that you'll think well of it. Without knowing it your boxing will improve. You'll soon realise that the villainous round arm swinging (and that's not confined to novices by a long way) isn't a bit of use in helping you get at the other chap's nose. Without thinking of it you'll learn to hit straight. Not being called upon to guard shots at the body, swings at the head—attempts to hit you anywhere and everywhere, you'll pick up the knack of parrying four times as fast as you will by trying to box according to the old rule of thumb methods.

You'll quickly learn the value of feinting, of drawing your opponent's guard, of tricking him, also of overcoming such tricks. You'll learn to think quickly, to move quickly, and to hit quickly. Give this new method a trial and you'll quickly see the advantage of it. When you stand up to your opponent you'll do so with a definite object. You'll know exactly what you ought to do and mean to do. Get out the gloves, get your chum to join you, and make a start with this army tip rightaway. That's my advice to the novice boxer.

GREYFRIARS LANDMARKS



The Woodshed

When Harry Wharton wants to call
An extra special meeting,
He does not choose the lecture hall,
The woodshed takes some beating.
For here, shut off from everyone,
Amid the dust and cinders,
We get our urgent business done;
No prowling prefect hinders.

The woodshed isn't what you'd style
A residence luxurious;
The quaint old shack would make you smile,
Its furniture is curious.
An ancient table, and a form
(Both gradually decaying);
No cheery fire to make you warm
When winter winds are playing.

Here Harold Skinner sometimes goes
With others just as caddish;
With doggish air, he puffs and blows
A beastly Flor de Radish.
One day they'll set the place alight,
The fumes will fairly choke 'em;
And it will serve the rascals right
If they should all pick oakum!

Within the woodshed Wibley goes
And dons his quaint disguises;
Then springs upon both friends and foes
A series of surprises.
And here we gather to rehearse
For winter entertainments:
We render plays, in prose and verse,
And prove our high attainments.



Gan Waga and Marzipan of the Japes

*A Splendid, Humorous Adventure Story,
Introducing Many Old Favourites.*

By **SIDNEY DREW**

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Worcester Sauce!

IN the fierce glare of the sunshine the yacht might have been built of mother-of-pearl.

She was painted a dazzling white from stem to stern. Within pistol shot to port and starboard the unruffled sea was as blue as a starling's egg; but where the yacht lay at anchor the water was stained a dingy brown. Her nose pointed towards the mouth of the Sanuli river, an unpleasant locality, famous for its moist heat, mud, mangroves, ravenous mosquitos, and malaria. From the deck of the ocean-going steam yacht Valissa the shore looked a green, enticing place.

"Something at last, by honey!" grunted Mr. Thomas Prout.

Prout was nominally the captain of the yacht, but only the deck hands addressed him by that title. Her owner was Ferrers Lord, the famous millionaire. Prout removed his yachting-cap and rubbed his shining bald head with a silk handkerchief. His friend, Mr. Benjamin Maddock, who had been snoring in a deck-chair awoke and began to take notice.

A dirty little petrol-launch came briskly down the streak of yellow water towards the yacht, and a tall negro who was standing in

her bows, heaved something aboard that fell on her deck with a thud and a bounce. Circling the Valissa, the launch made back for the river, leaving a stench of bad petrol and a coconut-shell wrapped in matting behind her.

"I reckon it's the postman, Ben," said Prout, as he used his knife on the matting. "And about time, too, by honey!"

The coconut shell came apart in two halves. It contained a sheet of paper. Prout read the message slowly.

"His esteem and glorious highness, Prince Ching Lung of Kwai-hal give me to inform that to-night you have the high honour to receive his illustrious greatness. Also, to receive the esteem Gan Waga of the becoming countenance. Likewise to receive the great chief Marzipan, who accompany. For these tremendous honours I thereby instruct you to dress ship and deliver the salute of twenty-one guns in default thereof your nappers shall go off.—(Signed) CHU SAN PONG, secretary."

Prout grinned, and handed this curious missive to Maddock. There was no mention of Ferrers Lord in it, but that did not surprise them, for the millionaire's movements were usually mysterious and unaccountable. They had received a wireless message to anchor off the Sanuli river, and went there. Ferrers

Lord's men never asked questions, they merely obeyed.

"The sauce of it," said Bos'n Maddock, chuckling. "So that fat Eskimo has got to be the esteem Gan-Waga of the beaming countenance now, has he? Souse me, I'll punch that beaming countenance a few times when I get near it, and if we don't dress ship and fire twenty-one guns off go our nappers. Tremendous honours, what? I must put on my thickest sea-boots and kick that little yellow rat, Chu San Pong, good and hard. This letter, Tom, my lad, is a full-sized insult."

Across the sunlit deck, clad in white from the crown of his cap to his pipe-clayed shoes, came Mr. Barry O'Rooney. Maddock passed the letter over to him. The last of the O'Rooneys, late of Ballybunion Castle, took the cigar from his lips.

"Phwat, phwat, phwat?" Barry grinned widely. "Bedad, Oi can see us dhressin' ship. Tremenjuss honours, is it? We live and learn. Dhress ship for ould Ching and that oily blubberboiter, is ut? Fan me a bit afore Oi faint. And who's this grate chafe Marzipan? Phwat's Marzipan ut all, ut all? Isn't ut some swate sthuff you ate?"

"Almond paste and sugar," said Prout. "They give those nigger chief any old name. There'll be no dressing ship, by honey, and no salute. It's a sight too warm for that. Why don't you write 'em a poem of welcome, Barry, and read it to 'em. That'll kill 'em stiff."

Barry was a gifted poet, but men with dull minds like Prout and Maddock could not be expected to appreciate the beauties of his compositions. Though they frequently fell out, the three sea-dogs were the staunchest friends in the world. They had not met Ching Lung and Gan Waga the Eskimo for several months, and they were only too eager to welcome them. It was another matter to dress ship and fire a salute.

"I only hope this 'ere Marzipan ain't another freak the prince has gone and dug up, souse me," said Benjamin Maddock. "That tallow-eatin' Eskimo is freak enough to keep anybody busy. There she fizzes. Somebody's talking to us."

He looked up at the wireless. Presently the operator came up and gave Prout the message.

"From the chief, boys," he said. "We've got to pick up Ching Lung and then make for Bomdua. That's better than hanging about, anyhow."

The afternoon wore on, hot and breezeless. As the blue of the sky began to pale the yacht swung round lazily to meet the in-going tide.

With tropical swiftness the light faded out and the cloudless sky blazed with stars.

"If they don't show up afore we get the land breeze, I'll back off a knot or two, by honey," said Prout. "There are too many fever microbes in that breeze to suit me. They're sure to turn up, for I never knowed the prince say a thing and not do it. Ain't that a light?"

Low down towards the shadowy coast a twinkling light appeared. Then through the quiet night came the splashing sound of paddles. A long, low canoe approached the yacht. A cheer rang out. Five minutes later Prout was shaking hands with Prince Ching Lung.

"Here we are againses and all merry and brightness!" gurgled a familiar voice, the voice of Gan Waga, the Eskimo. "How yo' was, hunk, my butterful boys? How olds Tommy Sprouts and Ben Maddocks, and Barry O'Loonatics? Dears, dears, dears! Yo' morer nglifuls than evers, hunk? Where Marzipan? I hope we nots drops him overboards. Oh, there yo' wases. Mind the steps, Marzy, olds ducksy."

"Wha-a-a-a—" gasped Prout.

Maddock and Barry O'Rooney said something very like it. The canoe had backed clear. With goggling eyes the three sea-dogs gazed at the great chief Marzipan. The chief wore an old tall hat, an old striped football jersey, and a pair of blue football knickers. His hands and feet were bare and very hairy.

Gan Waga's mouth was not a small one, but Marzipan could give him inches. Gan's nose was a mere button, but the newcomer had no nose at all to speak of. He was smoking a clay pipe and carrying a portmanteau.

"Prout perspires, Maddock perspires, and

O'Rooney perspires, Marzy dears," said Gan Waga. "They yo' relations, Marzy."

"Souise me, if it ain't an ape!"

Marzipan put down the portmanteau, showed a set of teeth like the key-board of a grand piano, lifted his ancient hat with a flourish, and extended a hairy paw to Mr. Thomas Prout.

"Go-oo-oo-oo-ooo!" he remarked pleasantly. "Goo-goo-ooo!"

"Shake hands with the gentleman, Tom," said Ching Lung. "He's quite friendly and harmless. We bought him from a nigger, and we've been amusing ourselves by educating him. We haven't managed to teach him to talk, but that's about the only thing he can't do."

Prout shook hands with the stranger rather gingerly. He had never seen an ape like it before. The face was parchment-coloured and almost devoid of hair. There was plenty of hair on the animal's head, as red as a beetroot, neatly brushed and parted in the middle. He was a big fellow, nearly five feet tall, and he kept himself erect. There was doubt and distrust in the eyes of Prout, Maddock, and Barry O'Rooney.

"Oi could have put up wid the ape av the Prince had lost the blubberboiter, Ben," muttered Barry. "Bedad, Oi don't loike ut! Is this a gentleman's yacht, or is it a zoo? Look at the ugly baste! Oi can see throuble, bhoy, and av ut wasn't so far, Oi'd walk home!"

Gan Waga waddled below, followed by Marzipan, and Prout climbed to the bridge. Presently the anchor-chain was clanking through the hawse-hole. Ching Lung went into his cabin with a sigh of relief, and luxuriated in a hot bath. A knock sounded at the door.

"Don't yo' be too longness, Chingy, old dears!" said Gan Waga, through the key-hole. "Dinner ready in twenty minutes."

The pampered Eskimo did exactly what he liked with Ching Lung's belongings. He helped himself to one of the Chinese prince's cigars, and then opened a wardrobe. There were a good many garments hanging there. Gan, who disliked the heat, had come aboard very scantily clad; now he was wearing a

suit of thin silk pyjamas. He ran his fingers through his oily jet-black hair and waddled out with a bundle of clothing on his arm. Ching Lung uttered another sigh of relief and content as he emerged from the bathroom to put on a dress-suit.

He had asked Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney to dine with him. It would have been waste of breath to have invited Gan Waga. Gan did exactly what he chose. He was in awe of nobody except Ferrers Lord, and it was only on the rarest occasions that even the millionaire reprimanded him.

The Valissa was heading southwards over a calm, waveless sea when Ching Lung entered the beautiful dining-saloon. His three guests were there before him, sipping sherry and bitters. It was perfectly well understood that the prince, as one of the millionaire's oldest friends, had to be treated exactly as if he owned the yacht.

"What's the move now, Prout?" asked Ching Lung. "Have you had any orders from the chief?"

"Bomdua, sir," said Prout. "We got the wireless soon after your message was shied aboard."

"And if we didn't dress ship and fire a salute, our nappers was to some off, souise me!" added Mr. Benjamin Maddock.

"That's the sort of stuff Chu San Pong would write," said the prince, smiling. "Unlike you rascals my secretary respects me!"

In his dress-suit, Ching Lung, who had long ago discarded his pig-tail, looked more like a European than a Chinaman. In his opinions and habits he was thoroughly British. As they sat down, someone tapped at the closed door, and the steward opened it.

"Wow!" he yelled, and jumped back, his hair standing on end. "Wha—wha—ooh—O! Wharrisit?"

It was only Marzipan. The ape stood in the doorway, bowing. He was clad in one of Ching Lung's evening-dress suits. It was not a bad fit, either, though rather tight across the chest; for the prince was slim of build. The effect was rather spoiled by a pair of hairy feet, for it is not fashionable to go bare-footed when wearing evening-dress.

Marzipan was leaning gracefully on Gan Waga's arm.

"Don't he look butterfuls, Chingy?" grinned Gan Waga. "I 'fraid the old dears get cold feets, 'cos I couldn't find no bootses big 'nuff to fitts him. Ho, ho, hoo! Dears, dears, dears! I t'ink I laugh soonness, Chingy. Come in, Marzy, and have yo' dinners!"

"Bedad, they're twins!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Av Oi didn't know the blubber-boiter by his pyjamas, Oi couldn't tell t'other

from which! Take ut away, ye oily rogue! By the ruins of Ballybunion Castle, swate home of me childhood, Oi'll have no apes wid me at meals! Shift ut away and put ut in a cage.

"Ut's moighty funny, but av ut comes near me, Oi'll throtle ut!"

"And I'll help you, by honey!" said Prout. "Shift the beast out of this and chain it up. You're gorilla enough wi'out two of 'em!"

Still, it was impossible not to laugh. Marzipan stood bowing politely. The steward, who had not seen the ape before, had seized a champagne bottle by the neck, in order to club the animal over the head with it if it attempted to attack him.

"Get out!" roared Prout, Barry, and Maddock, with one voice.

They leapt to their feet, and as Gan Waga saw them coming with a rush, he thought it wiser to go out than be thrown out. He pulled the ape back and closed the door. Marzipan grunted and gurgled, and the fat Eskimo rubbed his head.

"They an awfulness bad-temper lot, Marzy!" he sighed. "They gotted no manners, old dears. I frightful hungriness. Yo' never minds. Ho, ho, hoo! This a bit of butterful joys, hunk? Have a goes at that

lots, Marzy, and I soon be back."

The steward had left a tray of dessert on a table outside the saloon—bananas, nuts, grapes, a melon, and a pineapple. Marzipan gave a gurgle of delight, squatted down, and got busy. The steward looked out cautiously



Marzipan clutched his dress shirt with two hairy paws and gave a howl of agony. Then, with a six-foot leap, he landed in the centre of the dining-table. (See

page 166.)

at Prout's bidding. He did not see the ape.

"They've gone, sir," he said, and proceeded to fill the soup-plates from the tureen and hand them round.

At that moment, with his teeth dug into a melon, Marzipan noticed something that excited his curiosity. It was a large silver cruet filled with many cut-glass bottles. The ape hurled the melon away, took out one of the bottles, and removed the stopper. He was educated enough to know that bottles

often contained nice things to drink like lemonade, cider, and limejuice. Marzipan took a long pull.

It was the first time he had ever tasted Worcester sauce, and this happened to be a particularly hot brand. It burnt his inside like a draught of molten lead. Marzipan clutched his dress shirt with both his hairy paws and uttered a shriek of agony. Then a weird red-headed apparition in a dress-suit came bounding into the dining-room, howling. A six-foot leap landed the ape into the very centre of the dining-table. Still howling, he rolled over amid a clatter of china and glass, and a jingle of knives and forks.

Prout got the contents of the soup-tureen, but luckily the soup was not hot enough to scald. Ching Lung, Maddock, and O'Rooney dived under the table just as the ape rolled off.

Howling almost as loudly as the ape, the terrified steward bolted. He put his foot on the melon, skated forward on one leg, and dived headlong into Gan Waga, who was just returning. With great violence Gan tumbled backwards.

Gan did not see the reason why he should be knocked down for nothing at all, so he took the steward's head under his arm, and was about to use his knuckles, when a hairy foot planted on his face floored him again.

It was the foot of Marzipan in full flight. Gan lay where he had fallen, trying to think it out.

Prince Ching Lung crawled out from beneath the table, and gazed at the ruins. Prout, with soup in his hair and his nice white uniform soaked and stained, was dancing a war-dance in the middle of the saloon. From beneath the tablecloth appeared the heads of Mr. Barry O'Ronny and Mr. Benjamin Maddock, who had escaped without any very serious damage.

"Why did Oi lave swate Ballybunion and come to say?" said Barry. "Bedad, here's ould Tom larnin' a new jazz dance, Ben. Go ut, Tom! I towld ye go ut Tom, not go away. Where are ye off to in such a hurry, swate youth?"

"To get a gun, by honey, and shoot that ape!" roared Mr. Thomas Prout.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Return of the Lost One

It is quite probable that if Marzipan had been discovered at the time, a bullet would have put an end to his promising career. An ape can be pardoned for a good deal of queer conduct, but only a mad ape could have acted as Marzipan had acted, and a mad ape is as dangerous as a mad tiger. But Marzipan could not be found. They searched high and low. Gan Waga had a large and sore bump on his head, but he sorrowed not for the bump but for his pet. The discovery of the broken bottle of Worcester sauce gave Ching Lung an idea of what had happened. Half a pint of Worcester sauce taken internally was enough to upset the manners of the most gentle-hearted ape that ever cracked a nut or climbed a tree.

"I'm afraid the poor beggar has gone overboard," he said. "Marzipan wasn't used to hot drinks like that."

"Bedad, ut must hav given the insect a bad thirst av he dived over the side to quench that same thirst wid cowl salt wather," said Barry. "Don't look so weary and tired, Gan. When we get ashure ye can put up a tombstone to his mim'ry, and troth Oi'll write a lovely epitaph to carve on ut. Oi'll do ut now whoile the poetic mood is on me. Howld tight, for here goes:

"Here lies an ape, poor Marzipan,
And sad we mourn his loss.
His loife he did throttle out of a bottle
Of extrhay sthrong Worcester soss.
At laste he'd be buried in this same grave,
Av he hadn't gone fishin' beneath the
wave."

It was so sad and touching that Prout, who had changed his soupy uniform, laid his head on Maddock's shoulder and sobbed heart-brokenly.

"Beautiful, souse me!" said Maddock, with tears in his voice. "I'm a strong man, Barry, but don't give us any more like it, or you'll be wanting a tombstone yourself after I've hit you. I know the grief you feel, Tom, but don't snivel down the back of my neck, or there'll be three tombstones on order. He

was a fine ape, but thoughtless, or he wouldn't have gone off wi' the prince's dress-suit. What wi' the broken crockery and the bill to pay, sweet Marzipan has left a lot of little things behind him."

Like Gan Waga, Ching Lung was really sorry. He did not blame the three mariners for making fun of Marzipan's tragic end, for they had not known the ape. It was not a very romantic end to die through a bottle of Worcester sauce. Ching Lung put some arnica on the Eskimo's bump, and Gan Waga made his way down to the cold-storage room. In

that dim and chilly place, with only one electric lamp burning, and ghostly sides of beef and carcasses of mutton surrounding him, Gan sat down on a block of ice and sang a lament in Eskimo. It was the sad song of a baby seal that came out of a hole in the frozen northern sea to play, not noticing that a polar bear was peeping round an adjacent iceberg. As Gan crooned it in the tongue of his fatherland the first few lines sounded something like this:

"Skogok quigx moshniffy swant snonox,
Blaffgonx ook noggixwog chunkz
Sogggnorf washniffbloff swanx."

Even when he only crooned Gan's voice resembled a dinner service and a few dozen tin tea-trays falling down an iron staircase. Luckily there was no one to hear. A side of mutton dropped from its hook with a thump when the Eskimo started the second verse. But the singing did Gan Waga good. He

dined off a couple of tallow candles and felt at home on the cold slab. And there he fell asleep.

The Valissa churned steadily on her way. As the dinner had proved a fiasco, Barry O'Rooney and Maddock decided to pay Mossoo Limpot a friendly call. Monsieur Limpot was the chef who cooked only for the saloon. He was a tall, bony Frenchman, with a pointed beard and fierce moustaches. He was rather excitable, but he had done very creditable things in the Great War. He had a very nice galley, covered with white glazed

tiles and electric cooking-stoves. He was warming himself and reading an out-of-date French newspaper when they looked in.

"Good-evenin', chef," said Maddock. "It smells cosy and comfortable in here, souse me. Cleanest and snuggest place on the ship, ain't it, Barry?"

"Sure ut reminds me of the ould kitchen at swate ould Ballybunion Castle, me choildhood's

home," said Barry. "That was the place to ate your dinner off the flure. And how's yourself, chef darlint? Phwat a handsome man he is, Ben! D'ye see the flashin' oies of him and the brawny chist? Faith, av Oi could grow a set o' whiskers loike that Oi—Oi'd—well, Oi'd take prussic acid," he added in an undertone.

"Vat you vant, zen?" asked the chef suspiciously. "You get nozzing, so I tell you. Nozzing, nozzing is vat you get. Go away!"

"Tut, tut!" said the bos'n. "Just a bit of cold beef and a pickle or so, and a bottle of beer, chef. We're starving, souse me, and



Marzipan gave one nimble bound and his hairy paws caught the top of the dresser—and it broke clean away. An avalanche of plates, dishes, jellies, and tins followed him to the floor.

(See page 169.)

that Eskimo done it. Didn't you know Gan Waga had busted up our dinner?"

"Ah, ze Eskimo, yes," said Mossoo Limpot, with a gleam in his black eyes. "Yes, yes, ze Eskimo he vill bust anysing. I haf made ze vow, ze oath so terrible that it shall be broke nevaire. I, Jules Jean Jacques Simon Dujardin Limpot, solemn and terrific zat he shall die, zat abominable Eskimo. Again I svaire to keel Gan Waga so—like zat, zat, z-z-zat!"

Mossoo Limpot clenched his hands on an imaginary throat and squeezed and jerked. Then he hurled the owner of the imaginary throat to the floor, placed his foot on the imaginary chest of his fallen foe, and snapped his fingers triumphantly. He did not seem very fond of Gan Waga.

"Fineloy said, chef," grinned Barry O'Rooney. "Ye niver swore a betther swear. May Tom and me be there to see the good wurrk done and to lind a hand av nadeful. Faith, ut will be a noble dade, a grand dade. Tell us whin and we'll be round in toime for the early durs. There niver was such a spalpeen. He make loife a nightmare. When Oi think phwat we've suffered through that baste, ut's loike an awful dhrame."

The chef had also suffered. Gan Waga had a habit of raiding the galley. It was practically useless to complain. Ben Maddock winked at Barry O'Rooney. The chef disappeared into a little room behind, and returned with two plates of beef, a jar of pickles, and two bottles of beer.

"Oi always towld you he had a good heart, Ben," said Barry. "Whin the Iskimo said to Pront that the chef was a mane rascal Oi denoied ut. When the blubberboiter said he wasn't fit company for an ould walrus that had been dead a month, I denoied that, too, didn't Oi?"

"That's true, souse me, you did deny it," said Maddock. "You stuck up for him and said he was, and you never said a truer word."

Then they both sniggered. Quite unaware of the true meaning of Barry's denial, the chef beamed and shook hands with him.

"Bon," said Mossoo. "For zat you steek up for me I give you after some of ze cheese and celery. Ar-r-r! Vicked Eskimo! He come vaire nobody is permeet. Voleur!"

T'ief! He come in my galley and steal. I tweak ze snob nose of him. I give him terrible blows wiz my foot—ze hard kick. I shall learn ze box and blow ze nose of him wiz my fist. Ar-r-r-r! I keel Gan Waga twice or four times, ze fat vash-out."

It was very nice beef. Barry and the bos'n exchanged further winks. They did not think Gan Waga's life was in any great peril. The Eskimo, when the weather was warm, usually slept in a bath of cold water. Ching Lung glanced into several bathrooms, but failing to find Gan Waga, he took a turn on deck and then went below to his cabin.

"It's a pity about that ape," he thought. "We might have made a lot of him. Fancy committing suicide, all on account of an overdose of Worcester sauce! Poor old Marzipan! It can't be nice stuff to drink as a beverage."

Ching Lung turned in, and so did others whose luck permitted it. Down below in the coal bunkers Marzipan the ape was feeling a good deal better. After rolling about in the coal to relieve his anguish, he had snuggled down to sleep. When he awoke, he remembered Gan Waga.

Marzipan liked Ching Lung, but he was devoted to the Eskimo. He crawled over the coal, becoming dirtier than ever, and climbed an iron ladder. He may have guessed what he looked like, for he was not anxious to encounter any strangers. He crawled along on all fours, nosing at the closed cabin doors like a dog. Smelling something good, he opened a door. By accident his paw touched an electric switch. As yet Marzipan knew nothing about electric switches. He jumped up in alarm as a bright light shone out, revealing the empty galley.

Nothing alarming happened, and as the appetising smell came from that direction, the ape went in. Following the seductive scent he went further. It was darker in the room behind. There was a tall dresser there, shining with plates and trays and metal dishes. The smell seemed to come from the very top of the dresser. Whatever it was he wanted it badly, and meant to have it.

Marzipan the ape gave one nimble bound and his hairy paws caught the top of the dresser. The ape was a fair weight, a good

deal too weighty for the shelf. It broke clean away. As he fell, Marzipan made a grab at the second shelf and tore it out by the roots, so to speak. There was a succession of bangs and crashes. The ape stood on his head, and an avalanche of plates, dishes, jellies, cold roast fowls, bags of flour, and tins rained down upon him. Then came a tin of pepper, and as it struck the floor the lid came off.

Marzipan thought it was time to leave. If he had been wise he would have left before the arrival of the pepper. He got a strong whiff of it. Then Marzipan got up and began to dance and sneeze. Voices were shouting, but he was too busy with his own affairs to bother about voices. He was performing somersaults and filling the air with squeals and sneezes when Monsieur Limpot burst into the galley.

"Ar-r-r!" shrieked the chef, his hair on end. "I am mad. Vat is eet I see? No, eet is not zaire. I dream ze awful zing. Ar-r-r-r! Help!"

It was a very unpleasant thing even to dream. Marzipan was half coal-dust and half flour. He did not mind the coal-dust or the flour a little bit, but he objected to the pepper. Craving for human aid and sympathy he flung his arms round the chef.

"Ar-r-r-r! I am murdaire! I am keel! Ze vild bogey-man haf— Help! I die! Murdaire!" he shrieked. "Come queek or I expire. Ar-r-r-r!"

The first arrivals were Barry O'Rooney and Maddock, bare-footed and in their pyjamas. Marzipan was waltzing the chef merrily round the galley. As Ching Lung had assured them that the presumably dead ape was playful but thoroughly harmless, Maddock and Barry stood still, roaring with laughter. The chef broke free and clutched a frying-pan. He smote the ape, making the coal-dust and flour fly from the tails of Ching Lung's frock coat. It was a hefty smite. Marzipan did not want another like it, so he made for the door head-long and Barry O'Rooney and Maddock got nimbly out of the way.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed the bos'n. "'Ware ape! The wild man of Berneo has got loose, souse me. 'Ware ape! And they said he was only playful, Barry! Ho, ho, ho,

ho! Who said he was overboard? Here they come, mum! Ha, ha, ha! Gone to ground, ain't he?"

Seeing the enraged cook tearing after him with the frying-pan and a couple of sailors barring his way, Marzipan seemed to be in for a bad time. But the ape's luck had changed. At that moment Gan Waga, in his pyjamas, pushed his way between the two sailors and, with a gleeful squeal, the ape hurled himself into the arms of the Eskimo. It was a dirty embrace, but Gan Waga did not care. With the light of battle in his eye and the frying-pan in his hand, M'sieu Limpot rushed on. He thought of his ruined galley, and saw his foes at his mercy. Just in the nick of time a cabin door opened and Ching Lung stepped out.

"Hello!" said the prince, "what's all this row about? Don't be in such a desperate hurry, Limpot. Where are you chasing to?"

The chef pulled up, his whiskers bristling.

"Oh, Chingy, he ain't drowned!" shouted Gan Waga joyfully. "It's my butterfuls old Marzy! Where yo' been, my old lovelifuls?"

"Go-oo-oo-oo-ooo!" gurgled the ape. "A-a-atishoo! Gra-atish-gra-oo-oo! At-at-gratishoo!"

"I'm glad he's turned up," said Ching Lung. "Uncuddle, you two, and let's have a squint at you."

There was a row of laughter as the Eskimo and the ape drew apart. The only person who did not laugh was M'sieu Limpot.

"Poor old Marzy," sighed Gan Waga. "He caughted an awful badness cold, Chingy. I tink he better have a plaster-mustard on his chest. Ooh, yo' badful, badful boys, Marzy! How yo' get so dirtiness, hunk? See the mess yo' make of my niceful pymjamas."

"Ar-r-r! Vat you mean, your niceness pyjamas, yes?" screamed the cook. "See ze mess he make of my nice galley. Eet is destroy, eet is ruin as if ze bomb fall brum-brum-bang! I keel you both, murdaire you both. Again I take ze big svaire zat I slay Gan Vaga. Ah, voleur-tief! You and ze ape is two apes. Brr! I hate you, so zaire!"

"Oh, cut it out, souse me!" said Maddock. "Look here, Gan, my lad, if you let that hairy insect run loose on me, I'll do a bit of killing."

"Bedad, and don't forget to send for me and help in the good wurrk, darlint!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Oi've not kilt an Iskimo for ages, but Oi'm ready and willin'. And thur enough the playful monsther has made a bit of a mess of Mossoo's galley, sir," he added to Ching Lung. "Av he take's a few more joy-roides of the koind we'll be mighty short of crockery, Oi'm thinkin'. He's a raal terror on ut."

Gan Waga led Marzipan away and the chef went back to his galley. With folded arms and gloomy eyes he surveyed the wreckage.

"Ut's a crooil thing, a monstherous thing, Ben," said Barry, winking at the bos'n. "Woild Iskimes and woilder bastes rampagin' the yacht. Avey could look into me heart, Ben, yo'd see ut filled wid tears. Oi could cry for the poor chef. I could c-c-croy!"

The chef turned his head sharply. He saw no sign of tears, but only two broad and cruel grins. He opened a drawer and took a meat knife about eighteen inches in length and three inches in breadth. When he flourished it, Barry and Maddock left him to his sorrows.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Gan Waga Goes a Little Too Far!

A BREAKDOWN in the engine-room caused some delay. Ching Lung advised Gan Waga to keep Marzipan out of mischief, for breaking crockery at such a pace was an expensive business. Marzipan had got over his fright. He was a most intelligent and

docile beast, and seemed to understand every word the Eskimo said to him. Gan took him on deck for an occasional airing, but he spent most of his time in a spare cabin. Gan Waga allowed no one to go in there except the prince. Those who passed the cabin frequently heard roars of mirth. Gan Waga was educating his queer pet, and as the ape was quite willing to be educated it was an easy matter.

"Ho, ho, hoo! I tink he be able to read and writes soonful, Chingy," chuckled the Eskimo, as he carefully locked the cabin door. "Looks."



Gan Waga put his thumb to his nose and spread his fingers out. "By honey, he's getting worse!" gulped Prout. (See page 171.)

He withdrew the key, and Ching Lung put his eye to the keyhole. He saw Marzipan gravely perusing a newspaper as he sat in an easy chair. Gan had obtained a pair of boots from one of the sailors that fitted Marzipan. It had been rather difficult at first to persuade the ape to wear them. Marzipan did not object to clothes, but he had a habit of getting rid of the boots the moment the Eskimo turned his back. Gan was very patient and patience

always wins, as the saying goes.

"He's a queer sort of fossil, Gan, but I warn you to look out," said Ching Lung. "I don't know what the chief will say about it. He's your property, my sleek and plump one, and I'm not going to take the responsibility. That, dear blubber-biter, is right up to you!"

"I not knows what ponsibility is, Chingy," said Gan Waga. "I don't tink I never tasted none. My merry old Marzy, he alrightness. Don't yo' tells the chief he busted the crockeries. And he nevers meant to, Chingy. Yo' bust crockeries ifs yo' swallers Worcester

sauce and gotted hot pepper ups yo' noses. I look after my butterfuls olds Marzy. Ho, ho, hoo! I watches that alls the times, Chingy."

Smoking a couple of cigars at once—for he had expensive tastes—Gan Waga strolled on deck. A fresh breeze was blowing. He climbed to the bridge, his pyjamas fluttering in the breeze. Mr. Thomas Prout looked at the Eskimo out of the corner of his eye. He was fond of Gan Waga, although Gan had caused him considerable pain and grief at different times. Prout ordered him off the bridge.

"My dears Thomas," said Gan Waga, "ifs yo' speak to me in that tone of voices, I biffs yo' a big hard one on the nose. Yo' gotted a swell heads, and it will be a swelder heads ifs yo' not carefulness. Yo' tink its yo' merry old ships, hunks? Tommy, yo' was mis-taken."

"It don't matter who's ship it is, by honey, but I don't want you messing about up here, so hop it briskly, you tallow factory," said Prout.

Gan Waga could not read a word or write a line, but he took a notebook and lead-pencil out of the pocket of his pyjama-jacket.

"I puts that down and reports yo' to the chief fo' insultants," he said, making some spidery remarks in the book. "Ifs the chief don't sacks yo', I will. Yo' a mostful impertinents feller, Tom Prout. How dare yo'? Say another word and I make yo' stops the ship."

"Rats!" said Prout.

The next moment he regretted it. He made a mad clutch at the Eskimo, but was just too late. Prout snatched up the megaphone.

"Stop him!" he yelled frantically. "Stop that crazy Eskimo. Stop, you lubbers, can't you? Grab the idiot!"

Gan Waga was far too quick. Several men made a rush at him. He gained the side, placed his thumb, and went headlong overboard.

If Prout had not been bald already, he would probably have torn off all his hair. A plunge over the side of a fast moving boat was mere child's play to Gan Waga. As a swimmer he was peerless, a human seal. He rose far astern, bobbing up and down on the waves, and when Prout looked at him through

his binoculars Gan, like the little vulgar boy in the poem, put his thumb to his nose and spread his fingers out. And Prout, almost foaming at the mouth, was compelled to stop the ship.

Gan Waga came churning along. When he climbed on deck he was still smoking his two cigars. How the Eskimo managed to keep a cigar alight after a plunge and a long swim in a choppy sea was a secret he had only divulged to Ching Lung.

Prout gulped down his rage, and said nothing at all to Gan Waga. If he had said what he wanted to say, Gan might have gone over again, and kept them waiting an hour.

"By honey, he's getting worse!" he confided to Barry O'Rooney. "This sort of game is past a joke. It's the first time he's done it, but the fat heathen could do it three or four times a day, just to make us wild. It's the wickedest trick of the lot."

"Phwat d'ye mane?" said Barry. "Tom, me bhoy, you're skipper of this boat, and on the high sea the skipper's wurd is law. Av he does ut again, clap him in irons. The Chief will back ye up. Ut's preventin' the safe navigation of the vessel and delayin' the voyage. Kid the blubberboiter to do ut twice, and thin into irons wid him. Oi can see wan glame of joy in a darrk wurld. Kid him, Tommy—kid him."

"By honey, I will, Barry," said Prout, grasping the Irishman's hand. "I'll show the fat grampus who's boss. Let him come this way."

Barry winked, and went to look for the Eskimo. He discovered Gan Waga in the fo'c'sle galley. Gan never ventured into the saloon galley while Mossoo was about, but in the fo'c'sle he was made welcome.

Gan was regaling himself with one of his favourite dishes—sardines and marmalade, with a dash of vinegar and a spoonful of treacle to improve the flavour.

"Cheerio, ye haythen monsther, how goes ut?" said Barry genially. "Prout tells me ye had a bit of a rumpus on the bridge. Bedad, ye mustn't take the laste bit o' notice of Tom Prout, Gan. He says things he doesn't mane, and he's sorry next minute. Pace is a lovely thing, Gan. Ut's so easy made. In the

swate days of me youth at Ballybunion Oi've seen me Uncle Diinnis fight for two solid hours hammer an' tongs, and then shake hands and make ut up. Two minutes later, when they got breath enough, they were at ut. Oi mane, ut's a beautiful thing, bhoy, to live in quoiut and friendship. Ould Tom is willing to put out the glad hand. He's disthressed is Tom. A big heart he's got, big and tendher. He's pining and griev-ing, Gan. Go to him, and sure he'll apologise for the angry wurrd he put on ye."

Gan Waga drank the few drops of oil that remained in the tin, wiped his fingers on his hair, and blinked his little beady eyes. His shiny, olive-brown face was the picture of innocence, but the Eskimo was not quite as innocent as he looked.

"Old Tommy Sprouts not orders me about, Barry," he said. "He a very rudeness man."

"But don't I kape tellin' ye he's just longin' to apologise," persisted the man from Ballybunion.

Gan Waga was suspicious, but he chuckled to himself. He had discovered a method of keeping Prout on thorns every time the yacht was moving, provided, of course, that the owner of the vessel was not on board. He had merely to threaten to go over the side, and hold up the Valissa, to make the skipper go down on his hands and knees to him. It was a brilliant idea altogether.

"I tink about it, Barry," said the Eskimo. "I nots take no sauceness from Tommy Prout. I gotted old Tommy by the neck. Ho, ho, hoo!"

Still Gan was suspicious. It was very unlike Prout to suffer from heartache over a few hot words, and it was equally unlike Prout to want to apologise to anyone.

Gan waddled off in quest of Ching Lung.

The prince was in the writing-room dictating letters to his yellow-faced secretary, Chu San Pong. Ching Lung listened to what Gan had to say as he smoked a cigarette.

"Fattest," he said, "if you don't smell a rat here, the long and dreary hours I have spent on your education have been utterly wasted. This is an attempt either to pull your leg, or pull your ear. It was very wrong of you to stop the yacht, a waste of time, coal, and money, not to mention the wear and tear of machinery and the damage to Prout's temper. I have warned you; it's my busy day, so clear out!"

Barry O'Rooney, who had been doing a little scouting, joined Prout and Ben Maddox on the bridge.

"Ut won't wash, Tommy," said Barry, shaking his head. "That yellow freak is gettin' as woide as a mothor-charabanc crammed wid chimpanzees. Oi did me best. Oi descroibed ye as sheddin' tears and fadin' away wid remorse, and towld him ye were just down to



The ape was jamming the lever about, signalling everything marked on the dial at terrific speed. (See page 174.)

sink on your knees and beg his pardon. He's gone to the prince, and ye may bet that the prince will put the lid on ut."

"Souse me, look at that!" said Maddock. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Across the deck came Marzipan, in a reefer suit with brass buttons. On his head was a yachting cap that was rather too small for him, for the ape took a large size in hats. Under his arm was tucked a large brass telescope, and in his mouth was a briar pipe.

Marzipan paused and put the telescope to his eye to survey the distant horizon. Then he turned to the bridge and walked up, not too easily, for the ape still found his boots rather a hindrance.

"Gar-oo-oo-ooo!" said Marzipan, offering Prout a huge hairy paw in a most amicable way. "Goo!"

"Goo!" said Prout, accepting the paw. "How goes it, old bean? You've got a kind face, but a bit of sand-papering would improve it, by honey! You get more like Gan Waga every minute. How's your father, and the family at home?"

"He sames to miss 'em," grinned Barry. "Oi notice a homesick expression in his roight ear. Cheer up, Marzipan, and bedad Oi'll buy ye a ha'pirt of nuts ye won't be able to crack when we get to the next ironmonger's shop."

"It would do him a sight more good if you cut out the nuts and bought a good, heavy spanner, and clouted him over the head with it," said Maddock.

The ape grinned as if he understood the remarks and was highly amused. Once more he put the telescope to his eye.

"By honey, I never see such a thing," said Prout admiringly. "If he ain't human he's quite as human as that tallow-chewing Eskimo anyhow, by honey. Marze, you precious old tin of condensed milk, I forgive you for spilling that soup over me."

Marzipan saluted and descended to the deck to the great delight of the grinning crew. Finding a deck-chain, he sat down, and taking a book from his pocket, he opened it and began to study its pages. Presently along came a grinning steward with a tray, a bottle of lemonade and a glass. He placed a table

before the ape and poured out the lemonade. Marzipan unbuttoned his reefer jacket, put a hairy thumb and forefinger into his waistcoat pocket, and presented the steward with a shilling.

"Well, if that don't cap everything, souse me," said the amazed bos'n. "That's a knock-out, that is. I wouldn't have believed it."

Prout bawled an order to the amused seamen who had gathered round that sent them scuttling away.

"Whisht!" said Barry, staring at Marzipan. "Is ut an ape ut all, ut all, or is ut some big bluff that the Prince is springing on us? Oi'll make sure."

The same thought was in the minds of Prout and Maddock, for Marzipan was so grotesquely human. Barry sat down opposite Marzipan and had a good stare at him. In the bright sunlight the cleverest theatrical make-up could not have evaded detection. Marzipan was an ape without a doubt, not some ape-like negro dressed up for the occasion as Barry had suspected. Marzipan looked up.

"If I had a face like your's, Barry," he remarked, "I'd have it tanned and use it for soleing and heeling my boots. It's a horrid face."

Barry O'Rooney was so startled that he jumped out of his chair. Then, as he saw Prince Ching Lung leaning over the rail, apparently deeply interested watching the sea, he grinned. He was well aware of Ching Lung's ability as a ventriloquist, and he knew it was the prince not the ape who had made the rude statement about his face. Then Gan Waga came waddling along, wearing a wide grin.

"Butterfuls," he gurgled, seeing Ching Lung. "Everyting merry and brightness. Now I find out what olds Tommy mean by spologies."

With Ching Lung there to protect him, Gan felt that he was perfectly secure. Sticking out his chest he climbed to the bridge.

"Tommy," he said, "I the most good-naturedness chaps in the world. You not be rudeness to me no morer, hunk?"

Prout's eyes glittered. He took the pipe

from his mouth and gazed thoughtfully at Gan Waga.

"Olds Barry say peace a lovelifful ting," went on Gan Waga. "I not want to hurts yo', Tommy, that's why I not biff yo' when yo' was so rudeness. I killed lotses and lotses of men fo' less than that. Yo' go on yo' handes and kneeses, and apologise and I forgive yo', Tommy."

Prout's mouth worked queerly as if he had swallowed some vinegar and did not like the flavour of it.

"I wants to be kindness, Tommy, so I lets yo' off lights," said Gan Waga, while O'Rooney and Maddock grinned, "only I not stands rudeness. Yo' go on yo' marrer bones and say, 'Beautiful Gan Waga, I was a fatheads to nimsulk yo'. I am a silly ass, and if yo' was to kick me it would serves me rightness. I begs yo' pardon, and won't do it no morer, so please, Gan, don't punches me on the noses.' Say that, Tommy."

"Yes, yes, for the sake of pace, grovel and do say ut, Tom," pleaded Barry O'Rooney. "Oi cun see violence in his gooseberry oie. Don't anger him, and let him hit ye, Tom, for if he lays you out who's to navigate the ship? On me own knees Oi implore ye to say ut, Tom."

"Me too, souse me," said Maddock. "Say it, Tom, before the terrible heathen does you some awful injury. Say it—say it; I'm terrified."

Barry and the bos'n sunk on their knees and held up supplicating hands to Prout. Prudence told Gan Waga to bolt, but the nearness of Ching Lung, on whose protection he relied, gave the Eskimo confidence. Out shot Prout's hand and he took Gan Waga by the lobe of the ear. Gan howled "Ow! Hellups! Leggo! Chingy!" as Prout dragged him round by his ample ear and administered a kick that sent Gan Waga rolling down the ladder to the deck. Gan picked himself up, shook his fist at the laughing mariners on the bridge, and went merrily overboard.

"Got him at last, by honey," chuckled Prout, as he signalled to the engine-room. "I'll give that candle-eater apologise, my boys!"

Gan Waga was angry and hurt. He rose and

floated on his back like a cork, wishing that he had taken Ching Lung's warning. The yacht seemed a long way off, but a trifle like that did not trouble Gan Waga. He was determined to teach Prout a lesson by staying where he was for an hour or so. They could not go without him, and it was useless to lower a boat and chase him. It would have taken a whole flotilla of boats to catch him, for he could swim like an otter and dive like a cormorant. So Gan Waga chanted the song of the baby seal, closed his eyes, and, rocked in the cradle of the deep, he sank into slumber knowing that he was perfectly secure, and that he would awaken at the first splash of an oar or crack of a rowlock.

"Bit of a nuisance, Prout," said Ching Lung. "I think the blubberbiter means to play us a dance this time."

Prout had come down from the bridge, followed by Maddock and Barry O'Rooney.

"By honey, it will be the last dance he'll play us this trip," said Prout. "At this rate we'll never make Bomdua in a month. What the——"

Prout broke off with a yell as the propeller began to churn the water. He gazed open-mouthed at the bridge. Someone had taken on his job, and that person was Marzipan. He was on the bridge. He had signalled full-speed ahead, and now the ape was jamming the lever about signalling everything marked on the dial at terrific speed. As Prout made for the bridge the head engineer rushed up from below, his face purple with fury. He had brought a big spanner with him, and was thirsting for somebody's blood.

Prout made no bones about it. He did not attempt to argue the point with Marzipan, or attempt to show him that it was impossible to run a boat as you crank up a motor-car that has no self-starter. He took the astonished Marzipan by the neck and one leg, and pitched him over the weather-screen. Fortunately for Marzipan, and unfortunately for another person, the angry engineer was below. Marzipan clasped him as he fell. The engineer was a strong man as well as an angry one. He locked an arm about the ape's neck, and was about to hit, when he saw the ape's face. It was his first glimpse of Marzipan. His



Marzipan pounced on the waiter, and, picking the man up in his powerful arms, dumped him in the fountain among the startled goldfish. (See page 180.)

arm relaxed and he reeled back. If the ape's face had scared the engineer, the engineer's face had also frightened Marzipan. The ape squealed, looked round wildly, made one tremendous leap, and vanished head first into the gaping mouth of a ventilator. And as he dropped into the unknown, Marzipan uttered another anguished wail.

Marzipan alighted in the stokehold. He did not stay there long, for nasty, black-faced men, armed with fire-bars, chased him out of it. The engineer stormed. He threatened to kill the ape, until Prout pointed out that

Marzipan was the property of Gan Waga, and that it was Gan Waga's fault for jumping overboard instead of looking after the animal. Then the engineer vowed to kill Gan Waga in about a dozen different ways, all equally slow and painful, and Maddock and Barry shook him warmly by the hand and promised their assistance.

For a good hour they fumed and kicked their heels. At last Gan Waga awoke and yawned. A seagull who had taken him either to be a harmless corpse or a floating log, had perched on his chest to preen its feathers. Gan said,

"Boo!" and the startled bird winged away.

"If I wasn't so hungrefuls I'd stop longerer," thought the Eskimo, as he rolled over and began to swim. "Ho, ho, ho, hoo! Olds Tommy he tink twiceness 'fore he grab my car next times. He, he, hee! I putted the wind ups Tommy Sprouts. I gotted Tommy. Every times he nastiness, overboards I go. Oh, Mist'ers Gan, yo' a funny, funny man, and old Tommy Prout's got the wind ups."

Gan Waga climbed aboard grinning, squeezed the water out of his hair, and gave himself a shake.

"I awfuls sorry to keep yo' waitings," he said, "only I had to go and see a winkles about a pin. Ha, ha, ha! All merry and bright-ness, hunk?"

"Clap him in irons!" said Prout. "I'll do all the pinning, my fat winkle, by honey. I will collar the mutineer and shove him below!"

Two brawny sailors pounced on the Eskimo and pinioned his arms. In an instant a pair of handcuffs were locked on his wrists. Gan had never suffered such an indignity as this before. He howled and kicked. A second later he was flat on his back, with a sailor sitting on his chest, while another sailor fixed the leg-irons. Prout and O'Rooney, being hard-hearted wretches, held their sides and roared, and M'sieu Limpot, who had come up to see the fun, danced in delight. The prisoner turned frantically to Ching Lung, but the prince only spread out his hands hopelessly.

"I can't help it, Esquimoses," he said. "Prout's our captain and boss of the ship. If you will play the giddy ox and the festive goat, you must take the consequences. They used to hang chaps for less than you've done in the old days. It's rank mutiny, and now you've got it!"

Wailing and protesting, the unhappy Eskimo was lifted and carried below.

"Boys," said Barry O'Rooney, "this is the happiest day of me loife. No more do Oi regret that Oi left Ballybunion, the swate home of me childhood, to face the perils of the angry say. And there are other hearts this day that throb wid bliss loike moine. Ut's worth a poem, bedad, ut is, but Oi'd leave that for a minute. Here's Mossoo wid happiness and delight bubbling out of him all over, avin out of his

whiskers. Mossoo has charge of the saloon champagne. He's a generous man, and doesn't have to pay for the woine Tres bong! Toot sweet! Napoo! Allez!"

They trooped down to the saloon galley in the wake of the beaming chef. The champagne popped, and they clinked glasses.

"Here's to a mouldy Iskimo, Who really thought he owned the show; But now we've clapped him into clink, He'll do another sort of think.

So our bold skipper's health we'll drink." Said Barry O'Rooney.

"Ar-r-r! Zat vas fine poetry," said M'sieu Limpot. "Ve drink ze health of ze brave skippaire. A bas Gan Vaga! Vive Skippaire Prout!"

"Abah what, souse me?" asked Maddock. "What d'ye mean abah and veeve? What are you chuntering about?"

"And what you mean chuntaire, yes?" demanded the chef. "I chuntaire nevaire. I say a bas Gan Vaga and vive Prout. It mean down vit ze Eskimo, and long life to ze captain. And vat is zis chuntaire? Who chuntaire? If it is rudeness to me I blow your nose!"

"Drink up and don't argue the point," said Prout. "By honey, I caught the blubberbiter bending that time. Now I'll turn in for a spell."

Mr. Thomas Prout went yawning to his cabin, undressed, drew the cover over the port-hole to shut out the light, and proceeded to get into his bunk. A violent prod in the chest hurled him back. Prout switched on the electric light. His bunk already had a tenant. Slumbering there, with the yachting cap over one eye, and dreaming, perhaps, of the lost joys of his native forests, lay Marzipan the ape.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

In Trouble and Out Of It.

THEY were raising the palm fringed island of Bomdua when Mr. Barry O'Rooney came on deck with a paper in his hand, and a grin on his face.

"Bedad, Tom!" he said, "whin Oi read it over to him, he fairly screamed and howled.



As Marzipan and Gan Waga careered down the street the people rushed from their seats to see the race, whilst from behind came loud cries: "Stop 'em! Stop thieves!" (See page 182.)

Oi never see a woilder Eskimo. Oi explained that av he didn't soign the apology, he'd have to sthay where he was till we got to Bomdua. Oi didn't tell him we were roight atop of ut, and Oi guess the poor haythin thinks ut a few thousand miles away. Anyhow, there's his cross, and that greasy mark at the bottom is his thumb print done in butter."

Prout grinned in turn as he read the apology, to which Gan Waga had so reluctantly affixed his mark and seal.

"I'm an oily Eskimo, and Mr. Prout is a perfect gentleman. I deserve more than the punishment he gave me. I'm just a common blubber-eater, and very ignorant. I apologise to Mr. Prout. I think him very handsome. I promise to take my hat off to him. I will try and imitate his refined ways, and not eat

jam with my fingers. I also think Mr. O'Rooney and Mr. Maddock very nice gentlemen, and will raise my hat to them, too."

"A bit of a tough mouthful to swallow, by honey!" chuckled Prout. "Poor Gan! If he can really bring himself to think that you and Prout are very nice gentlemen, he must have softening of the brain. Well, tell them to let him out. We've always got this against him, anyhow, and if ever we want to see a demented Eskimo loop the loop, we've only got to fetch this along and read him a line or two of it."

Marzipan, after been thrown out of Prout's cabin, had been sharing Gan Waga's brief captivity. The moment they were let out, Gan Waga and his pet made for Ching Lung. The prince was in the saloon, yawning over a

book. Gan came in, his little black eyes rolling with indignation.

The Eskimo had a splendid memory. Word for word he repeated the apology as read over to him by Barry O'Rooney.

"Haves I gotted to do all that awfulness, Chingy?" he asked. "I got tiredness of being locked up. I shoots myself sooner than do its, Chingy."

Ching Lung was tremendously amused, but he assumed an air of extreme gravity.

"My corpulent friend," he said, "this requires thought. You have affixed your hand and seal to this document, but there is a legal saying that the law compels no person to do what is impossible. As it is impossible for you to consider Prout very handsome and a perfect gentleman, that portion is not binding. That applies also to O'Rooney and Maddock. As for being an oily Eskimo, a common blubber-eater and very ignorant, that's not true, so it doesn't matter. Where you've caught yourself is about promising to imitate Prout. That isn't serious, for you have only pledged yourself to try. So that's that. Now we come to the really serious part of the contract. You've promised to raise your hat to the bounders, and not to eat jam with your fingers. You don't pledge yourself to try to take your hat off, but to take it off. Same with the jam. It's jolly serious, Wag-tail."

"You don't mean I—I gotted to do it?" asked the Eskimo desperately. "I soonerer suicide myself, Chingy. Have I gotted to do it, Chingy?"

"A promise is a promise, and every gentleman keeps his promise," said Ching Lung. "You've signed it, you know. I'm afraid there's no hope."

Gan Waga leaned his head on Marzipan's shoulder and moaned. Feeling that his friend and master was in sorrow, Marzipan gently chewed Gan's ear.

"I nots breaks my promises, fo' I wants to be a gentleman, Chingy," sighed the Eskimo, "but I suicide myself soonerer than take off my hats to those rascalnesses. And jam tastes rotten out of a spoon, Chingy. I tried, I run away with Marzy. I nevers take off my hats—nevers."

"Are you certain it said hat, Gan? You're sure it was your hat you had to take off?"

"That rightness, Chingy," replied the dismal Eskimo. "I remember quite plainness."

"Then we've got the beauties walloped first time," chuckled the prince, smacking Gan Waga on the shoulder. "Don't wear a hat, my son, wear a cap or else go bare-headed, and you've got 'em beat to a frazzle. It's hat you're to raise to the wretches, a cap doesn't count, got me?"

"Ho, ho, hoo! Oh, my wonderfulness, Chingy, yo' gotted all the brains," cried Gan Waga, grinning from ear-tip to ear-tip. "That butterfuls. Yo' hear that, Marzy? Ho, ho, hoo! Tink again, Chingy. I hates jam out of a spoons, Chingy, and I promise not to eats him with my fingers, old dears."

"Then eat it with your thumbs, old scout, and the agreement is busted," said Ching Lung. "Do the little Jack Horner dodge on them. You remember the diminutive Jack and his Christmas pie. He put in his thumb and he pulled out a plumb, lucky boy. Do likewise with the jam, Gan, but don't tell 'em you got the tip from me. And about that ape. You'd better make him look pretty for the chief, and I'll help you."

As yet there was no harbour at Bomdua deep enough to berth a ship of the Valissa's tonnage, so Prout dropped anchor in the roadstead. Ferrers Lord was developing the island. There was valuable deposits of tin, and the beautiful island was already producing magnificent crops of cocoa, sugar-cane, copra and bananas. With his wealth and his energy, Ferrers Lord could almost work miracles. At the head of the azure bay, a town—Lordstown—had sprung up with cafés, hotels, picture-halls, electric tramways, and one of the most beautiful parks in the world.

Prout, Barry O'Rooney, and Maddock went ashore in the steam pinnace. About an hour later a motor-launch put off from the Valissa. The yacht possessed what as yet Lordstown did not possess, a little theatre of its own. Ching Lung and Gan Waga had been looking over the costumes and properties and that is why they were rather late. The launch ran briskly between the small shipping and busy dredgers, and landed its passengers on the

sunny quay. Ching Lung looked very cool, and very smart in his well-tailored suit of white duck and panama hat. The loungers stared. Behind him came Gan Waga also in white, but bare-footed. The Eskimo wanted some protection from the sun. A cap was useless, and as he was afraid of meeting Prout and company he would not risk wearing a hat, so he wore a large lampshade of pink silk instead.

But the gentleman who came last was the climax. His flannel trousers were dazzling white and creased almost finely enough to shave with. His waistcoat was a brilliant yellow with a flowing tie to match. Buckskin boots with pearl buttons adorned his feet and a white top hat adorned his head. In his left eye was a monocle, in his left hand was a cane, and from his pink cheeks flowed straw-coloured side whiskers.

As this magnificent nut walked up the street with a curious rolling gait, a little crowd of cheering natives followed. The cheers grew louder as the gorgeous stranger raised his top hat and his tomato-hued hair caught the sunshine. His hair absolutely twinkled.

"Our friend Marzipan is creating quite a sensation, Gan," said Ching Lung. "Here's a motor-car coming. I hope he won't scare it and make it shy."

"Now looks heres, Marzy, old ducks," said Gan Waga over his shoulder. "Yo' just keeps up stiff on yo' bootses. If yo' go on all fourses and dirty yo' niceful new gloves, I'll give you a real hard smack. He, ho, hoo! I tink they take him fo' the king of the Callible Islands, Chingy."

Europeans as well and natives stopped and stared. The Europeans looked round to see where the men with the cinema-cameras were, fancying that a film was being taken. Ching Lung paused and clicked open his cigarette case. Marzipan hampered by his gloves could not extract a cigarette, so the prince put one in his mouth, and lighted it for him. And so they approached the Royal Café, where marble topped tables were set in the open and a fountain was playing amid the sheltering palms to cool the air.

"By the way, Marzy, dear boy," said Ching Lung, "would you like to treat us to a whisky-and-soda or some old refresher like that?"

"Gro-oo-oo," replied the willing Marzipan.

"I don't know any drink of that name, but we'll try a few," said Ching Lung. "Hallo, Gan, look at that bunch of rebels."

Barry O'Rooney, Prout and Maddock, wearing broad grins, were seated at another table. Quick-witted Barry saw the trick at once.

"Bedad, we're bilked," he said.

"That oily Eskimo won't lift his hat to us. D'ye see phwat the cunnin' spalpeen is wearin' in place for hat? The prince must have put him up to ut, bad luck to him for spoilin' a joke. But the ould ape is foine. Did ye ever see a bettther get-up?"

Marzipan's conduct was just as elegant as his appearance. He sipped his lemonade like a gentleman, and attracted all eyes. They had rouged his parchment-coloured face, and though he could not be termed handsome by any stretch of imagination, he was certainly stylish. He absolutely fascinated the negro



Followed by Rupert Thurston, Ferrers Lord stepped aboard the ship and raised his hand to the brim of his hat in response to the salutes of his men. (See page 182.)

waiter, and the waiter caused it. Ching Lung had placed a little heap of cigarettes on the table, and having smoked the one the prince had given him, Marzipan helped himself to another. The attentive waiter whipped out a match-box and struck a light. As he held the match to the tip of Marzipan's cigarette an unexpected puff of wind came and blew Marzipan's side-whiskers across the flame.

It is not at all a pleasant thing to have one's side whiskers ablaze, though people who wear such things deserve no better fate. Marzipan was hot and hurt. As his straw-coloured whiskers burst into flame and he felt the heat, Marzipan lost his temper as well as his cheek ornament.

Marzipan uttered his battle-cry, a weird, ear-splitting yell, and bounded from his seat. Gan Waga made a frenzied clutch at him, but Marzipan's elbow prodded him in the ear so violently that the Eskimo rolled off his chair. Then Marzipan pounced on the terrified waiter. Picking the man up in his powerful arms and holding him high above his head, the ape took three leaps forward and dumped the negro into the fountain among the startled gold-fish amid yells of laughter.

The ape had spilled a good deal of water, but he had not spilled his eye-glass. Looking as dignified as he could with half his whiskers gone, he walked back to the table and jerked Gan Waga to his feet by the collar. The spluttering waiter rolled out of the fountain and bolted.

"I tink we ought to go, Chingy, old dears," said Gan Waga anxiously. "There'll be a rowse, Chingy. Yo' hurted muchness, Marze, old ducks."

Marzipan patted his cheek and said "Gra-oo-oo-oo!" which was not a very enlightening answer.

"I'm not going till I've finished my drink, dear child," said Ching Lung. "Here comes the boss. It's not likely there'll be a row in Lordstown, but if there is I know who'll get hurt. Those three grinning idiots over there will help us out."

The proprietor of the cafe came hurrying out, followed by his moist waiter. He was a fat, mottled man with a red moustache who looked like a Hun and spoke like a Hun. He

was really a Dutchman, for there was no room in Bomdua for Germans.

"Vod is dis, vod is dis?" he shouted "Vod you mean dot you drow into der vater mine vaiden? Ad vonce, dell me vod you mean?"

"There's no good talking that sort of English to that gentleman, for he doesn't understand it," said Ching Lung, keeping a warning gaze on the ape. "In fact, he doesn't speak English. And what does your waiter mean by burning my friend's whiskers off?"

"Dot vas ein accidend and if it vas nod ein accidend you haf no righd to assauld my vaiter," said the proprietor. "Vor der loss of his viskers he could glaim damadges. Berhabs he vould ged vourpence. Ged oud of my gafe. I kill nod haf you in mine gafe. Go away."

Anticipating trouble, Prout, Maddox and O'Rodney left their seats. To their momentary surprise Ching Lung beckoned to Gan Waga and walked away.

"I see how it is, by honey," said Prout. "If we'd been anywhere else Ching Lung wouldn't have stood any insolence from that bounder. You see we're on Bomdua, and the whole island belongs to the chief. He doesn't want a row here. It wouldn't do, for they'd soon find out who he was."

In a quieter street Ching Lung removed Marzipan's remaining side whiskers to level things up.

"It's no good lecturing him about his bad conduct, for you can't blame him for getting a bit ratty," said Ching Lung. "I never wore any whiskers, but if I did and somebody cremated half of them, I'd get ratty myself. If we hadn't been just where we are I'd have put that Dutchman in his own fountain."

"I nots like old Marzy so muchness now," said Gan Waga. "He's spoiled without his whiskers, Chingy. Nevers minds, Marzy, we'll get you a fresh set, butterful bright blues with pink tips, and yo' looks a treats. Where we go nows, hunk, Chingy?"

Ching Lung pointed up hill to a white house that was half hidden among trees. It was Ferrers Lord's residence when he visited the island. They patched up Marzipan's damaged beauty with some rouge the prince had brought with him in case of accident.

"They following us up, Chingy, Tommy and the rest of the lunatics," said Gan Waga, with a backward glance. "I don't think we'd better go."

"Why not?"

"P'raps someting happens to make old Marzy go off the deep-ends again, Chingy," said the Eskimo anxiously. "And ifs he wented off the deep-ends a lots and the chief saw him—oh, Chingy, it would be horrible ifs the chief wouldn't let me keeps the old pets and sent him to the Zoo."

"Sensible notion that," said Ching Lung. "I've got to see the chief, anyhow. He isn't half-trained yet, and he might go potty. Take him back, then, and shove him on board."

So Ching Lung kept the uphill track. He had certain reports to make to his friend, Ferrers Lord, concerning his trip up the Sannli river. Gan Waga turned back. After what he had done to the negro, Gan was not quite sure that Marzipan might not break out in a fresh place, and even to the wayward Eskimo the millionaire's word was law. It was much safer to keep the ape on the yacht until his training was complete.

"Bow-wow! Are you taking your little brother home again, Gan?" said Maddock. "And where and oh where did you get that handsome hat?"

"Yo' minds yo' own silliness interferences," said Gan Waga. "Ho, ho, hoo! What yo' tink of Marzy now, hunk? You see him swat that waiters, hunk?"

"We admire him, bedad," said Barry O'Rooney. "He looks years younger since ye had him shaved. Are ye going right back?"

"Chingy tinks it better and me too," said the Eskimo. "We afraids old Marzy start a freshness stunt and make the chief angriful, that's whys."

"Anyhow, he's a daisy," said Prout. "By honey, I've took a fancy to the insect. When his whiskers were afire you ought to have put that thing you're wearing on your head on him and he'd have looked the proper goods. Sail ahead, boys, or we'll miss lunch, and I could eat the hind leg of a stone camel."

So far Marzipan had kept himself proudly erect, but suddenly he sighted a large green

beetle that was crawling across the road. It was evidently a tasty morsel, for the ape flopped down on all fours to seize it and popped it into his mouth. Gan Waga himself had queer ideas in the matter of eatables, but he had never sampled beetles, and he gave a shudder as he heard the ape crunching up his capture.

"Yo' gotted to stops this sort of ting, Marzy," he said severely. "Yo' nevers be a gentleman while yo' crawls on all fourses and eats beetles. Ugh. It most horridness. Yo' be a very good boys till we gotted aboard and then I gives yo' someting niceness."

Marzipan seemed to have had almost enough of it for one day. It was with great difficulty than Gan persuaded him not to take off his boots. However, he did persuade him to retain his footgear for a little while longer, and they went on again arm-in-arm. They were nearing the café when a gentleman, who wore a pith helmet and smoked glasses, stopped them. He had a gold watch in his hand, and was peering at it.

"I beg your pardon," he said, addressing Marzipan, "but I'm afraid I omitted to wind up my watch last night. Can you tell me what time it is?"

Marzipan did not know what a watch was, but he liked the colour of it, and thought it might be good to eat. To the horror of Gan Waga, Marzipan snatched the watch and crammed it into his mouth. There was a sound of breaking glass and bending metal.

"Now, yo' dones it!" yelled Gan Waga, as the ape spat out the unpleasant mouthful. "Ohmi, Ohmi! Run! Run, Marzy, run!"

Over ice and snow Gan Waga was swiftness itself, but he was not very speedy on land. If fear did not actually lend him wings, it made him do his utmost. The gentleman was so near-sighted that he had not seen the ruins of his fifty-guinea repeater fall, nor did he hear it, owing to Gan Waga's yell. He knew he had been robbed, or thought so, and that the daylight robbers were running away with their booty.

"Thieves! Fire! Murder! Stop thief!" he shrieked, dancing on his own watch. "Stop 'em! Thieves! Stop thief!"

The people seated at the tables of the res-

taurant saw an amazing sight. They saw a fat, bare-headed gentleman, with a lampshade for a hat, tearing down the street as if trying to beat all records for people of his weight. But this was nothing, though remarkable enough in itself, considering that the thermometer stood over ninety degrees in the shade. Behind the man with the lampshade came a gentleman in a white suit, white trousers, white button boots, white tall hat, and yellow waistcoat and gloves, who, further, wore a monocle in his eye. This amazing person was cantering along on all fours. He was a good distance behind lampshade, for Marzipan had had to stop to pull a piece of broken glass out of his molars, but he was travelling so easily that he looked a certain winner unless the course was a short one. Evidently it was some wager, and people rushed from their seats to watch. Under the lampshade Gan Waga's tallowy black hair was bristling, and it took a good deal to make those thick, well-oiled locks do anything of the kind. Gan had recently had one visit to the clink, and he did not want another.

A noisy motor-lorry, grinding its way up the hill, had deadened the shouts of the short-sighted man, but as he came puffing along, howling people began to realise that it was not a race for a wager, but a case of highway robbery. With the perspiration streaming from him, Gan Waga turned his head. He saw a mob of people and half a dozen dogs in hot pursuit. It looked a tremendous distance to the bay. He was almost breathless. Marzipan, who did not know what it was all about, but did know that his boots hurt his feet, sat down, wrenched the buttons away, pulled his boots off, and flung them away with a chuckle of glee. Then he loped after Gan Waga.

"Stop thieves! Stop 'em!" rang the shouts. "Knock 'em down! Bowl 'em over! Stop thieves!"

The Eskimo got rid of the lampshade. Thinking he had dropped it by accident, and might not like to lose it, Marzipan picked it up and put it on over his own hat, which, in some unexplainable way, still clung to his head.

"Bad 'ruff awfuls!" moaned Gan Waga.

"I can't run much more. Ohmi! Oh, dears, dears, dears! I'm beat. Murders!"

Gan Waga felt inclined to faint as ten or a dozen men, mostly negroes, dashed out of a side street, attracted by the shouts. It was all over now, for their retreat to the launch was cut off. Utterly beaten by the heat and lack of breath Gan Waga gave in, and flopped down on his back in the middle of the road. Yells of triumph greeted his fall. Gan looked up with haggard eyes, and saw the ape bending over him.

"Boats, boats, Marzy!" he gasped. "I beated, Marzy. They gotted me, but don't, let them getted yo' or they put yo' in the Zoo, old ducks."

The ape blinked his eyes. There was a curious, shamed look in them. The ape realised one thing: that these shouting people who were racing towards them meant no good to his master. He bared his great teeth, and uttered a vicious snarl as if prepared to show fight. In his wild forest days he had learnt that a single ape could fight a single ape, or even two, but that to attempt to battle against numbers meant death.

He lifted Gan Waga in his arms, and gave one shrill cry of hate and defiance. He was ahead of the crowd from the café, but the negroes were barring the way. They made a rush, and then Marzipan gathered his great, iron-hard muscles under him, and began to leap.

Gan Waga might have been a feather pillow in his arms. He swerved in and out with tremendous bounds. In vain the yelling negroes attempted to get a grip on him. He went round them or flashed past them. They raced after him, and some of them could run, but the enormous kangaroo leaps of Marzipan of the apes quietly left them behind. On the very edge of the quay he dropped Gan Waga. The motor-launch was there, the pilot sitting in the stern, smoking his pipe. They were saved.

As the steam pinnace came out of the bay, the crew of the ss. Valissa manned ship. Ferrers Lord, the owner, stepped aboard, a tall, clean-shaven man, with iron-grey hair. He raised his hand to his hat brim in response to the salute of his men, and then went below

with Ching Lung and his friend Rupert Thurston. Thurston lingered to speak to an acquaintance. The next moment he met another acquaintance in the shape of Gan Waga. With a squeal of joy the Eskimo fell upon Thurston and hugged him.

"Oh, Ruperts, my old preciousness! I is so gladness to see yo'!" cried Gan Waga gleefully. "Where yo' been all this longful times, hunk?"

"Knocking about, old chap, and doing things," said Thurston, with a laugh. "You do look fine, Gan. What have you been doing? What was that shemozzle in the town this afternoon? Everybody's talking about it, and I know you were in it, for somebody described you to me, and there's only one Gan Waga alive, thank goodness. Who stole the gentleman's watch?"

"Nobody never stoles nobody's watch, Ruperts," he said. "We left him his silly old watch. He asks the times and said his watch stops, so Marzipan put it in his mouths to try and starts it fo' him. He my tame ape, Ruperts. P'r'aps Marzy did chew it ups a bit, but he too honestful to steals anyting that's not good to eats. He gotted his watch, so what he grumbings about, hunk? What he—— Oo-er! Helps!"

The shuddering Eskimo was gone like a flash. He had seen a sight that froze his blood, the owner of the watch himself. Gan Waga locked himself in a bathroom and got into the bath. He lay there in the cold water imagining horrible things, and trying to smoke one of Ching Lung's five-shilling cigars, but the cigar had no fragrance for the Eskimo on this occasion, but tasted like burning sawdust.

Time wore on, but nothing awful happened. Gan Waga dropped off to sleep in his curious bed, and was awakened by a bang at the door.

Gan Waga imagined it was the police at last, and sat up, quaking. To his intense relief, he heard Ching Lung's voice through the keyhole.

"Shift out of this quick, Gan," said Ching Lung. "Make yourself look pretty, and dress up Marzipan. We left some togs out for him on the table in my cabin. Those were nice goings on in the town the moment my back was turned, weren't they? Keep your pecker up, old son. When the steward comes for you

bring the ape along. You both deserve twelve months' hard labour, but if you're lucky you may save your skins yet."

At dinner in the saloon there was a good deal of laughter. Mr. Grimton, who managed one of Ferrers Lord's estates, related as well as he could the story of his lost watch, and Thurston caused roars of mirth by describing the flight of Gan Waga and his ape.

"I wasn't lucky enough to see it all," said Thurston, "but the way that ape got through the niggers was a caution. The beggar would make a fine Rugby player."

"We'll see the fellow," said Ferrers Lord. "I suppose I shall have to replace your watch, though I don't feel that I am responsible."

"You'll get precious little out of Gan Waga, Mr. Grimton," said Ching Lung, nodding to the steward.

"Unless you boil him down for oil," added Thurston. "You might get your money back that way."

The door opened, and Marzipan the ape stood bowing on the threshold. Ching Lung had found him another dress-suit. Marzipan lifted his opera-hat and walked into the saloon.

He put up his monocle to survey the guests, and then, as if by instinct, he knew who was master there. He extended his hand to Ferrers Lord.

"Gra-oo-oo-ooo!" said Marzipan.

"I'm sure I'm charmed to meet you," said the millionaire.

Marzipan hesitated, and fixed his eyes on Ching Lung. The prince made a quick gesture. For an instant the ape was at a loss. Then he put his paw into his pocket, took out a handsome gold watch and chain, and placed it before Mr. Grimton.

"You may come in, Gan Waga," said Ferrers Lord, who had seen the Eskimo peeping nervously round the door, "and you may keep your ape."

"It's almost a shame to call him an ape; he's a human sort of beggar," said Ching Lung. "And he's such a comical eard, too, that we'll alter it a bit. Marzipan, old bean, you are no longer Marzipan of the Apes, but Marzipan of the Japes."

THE END

LIVING MARIONETTES.

A GOOD "ONE MAN" SHOW.



Figure 1

ance of the weird creature, half human and half doll, makes the spectators laugh, and this laugh will scarcely subside until the curtain has been finally rung down on the entertainment.

The mysterious combination shown in Fig. 1 needs but little explanation, since it is very clear that the head is human whilst the body is wooden. This makes so comical a figure that anything but pure humour would seem singularly out of place issuing from those lips; it must, therefore, be clearly understood that the living Marionette is comic from beginning to end.

The stage must be about 3 feet wide, and of the same height, thus allowing room for the head and false body. The stage front may be made in the same manner adopted for the Marionettes proper, though so much space will not be required at the top, as can be seen from Fig. 2. The stage itself should be about

ALIVING Marionette entertainment is well adapted for a "One Man Show," and sure to prove a success. The very appear-

12 inches deep, and arranged at such a height that when standing behind, your chin will be about 11 inches above the stage. The whole construction will then be somewhat like the box and stage of an old-fashioned Punch and Judy Show.

A strip of perfectly black cloth is next stretched from side to side along the inner edge of the stage, i.e. the part farthest removed from the audience. This cloth should be 11 inches wide, and when in place will occupy the position shown in Fig. 3. Between this edge of the stage and the actual back of the box should be a space of 15 inches. The actual back must also be covered with black cloth. The sectional appearance of the stage will therefore be as in Fig. 4. An arrangement of curtains, as described in connection with the Marionette stage, must be fitted with the strings below the stage, in order that you may pull them unseen by the audience.

The wooden bodies should be 10 inches high, and headless. A collar must be sewn to the costume where the neck should be, in



Figure 3

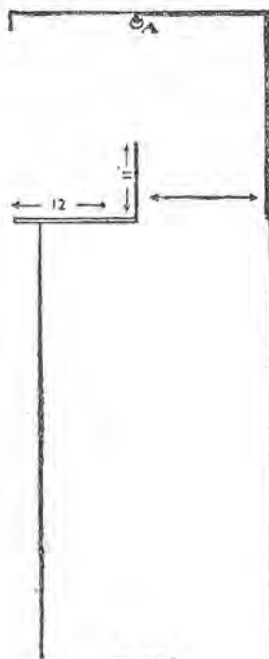


Figure 4

order to conceal the spot where the living head is thrust over the false body.

The most satisfactory way of working the limbs of the puppet is as follows: Above the stage, in the flies, a rod, upon which are strung several brass rings, extends from side to side (A, Fig. 4). Now the strings attached to the arms and legs pass up and through these rings, whence they descend behind the cloth screen, and are moved invisibly by the

operator. As there is only one figure to work, you can hold the arm threads in one hand, the leg threads in the other, whilst the supporting body thread passes in a loop around your neck. In this way the body is forced to move with the living head, as though really a part of it (Fig. 5)

You should now make up your face to suit the character. Suppose the body represents an ordinary Jack Tar, with bell-bottomed trousers, blue collar, and so forth. The comic sailor's beard must be so adjusted that its bushiness will conceal what may be called the junction between your head and his false body. The straw hat or round cap can be put on at a nautical tilt.

Having fixed the body-thread around your throat and fastened the beard, crane your own neck forward, and place the Marionette body upon the stage, having the strip of black cloth between it and your shoulders.

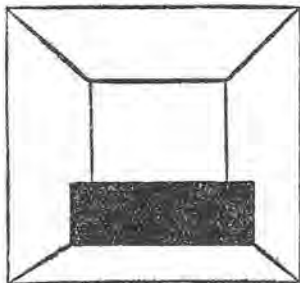


Figure 3

Arrange the arm and leg strings through the rings, and keep the ends in your hands ready for action. When everything is completed draw the curtain and commence.



Figure 5

COMICAL EFFECTS.

Songs and monologues are naturally the best turns for the living Marionette. Choose a rollicking, nautical song, suitable to Jack Tar. All the gestures and motions can be given to the limbs by means of the threads, whilst every now and again Jack can enliven himself and the audience by executing a hornpipe. A little practice with the leg-strings will enable you to perform this with great effect.

Always strive to obtain comical effects. If the gallant mariner has a telescope in his hand, this should be raised to the eye, where the extraordinary contrast between the tiny hand holding a midget telescope, and the enormous face emerging from its forest of beard, is ludicrous in the extreme.

Or if the other branch of the Service be on the boards, Mr. Thomas Atkins, resplendent in scarlet, may flourish a sabre, which, at full arm's length, will scarcely reach the tip of his ear. A tiny rifle raised to the shoulder makes another laughable effect.

The Man about Town is a

humorous figure. Dressed in an exaggeration of the latest style, with a dapper strut, flourishing a modish cane, he is a person to be admired—and laughed at.

Over the pigmy body looms an enormous face, smoking a huge cigar, big even for an ordinary individual. Naturally it would be impossible to sing or speak with the cigar in his mouth, and it cannot be gracefully removed with dummy hands that will scarcely reach it. The simplest method of getting the cigar out of the way is to make "Bertie" stumble over his own cane, for instance, and in the agitation of the moment drop his "smoke." He will then be able to air his peculiarities in comfort, and will prove a most amusing personage.

Two figures may be introduced upon the stage, although they are likely to prove a tight

fit. Some laughable dialogues and duets are the result. Quarrels or love scenes must be intensely funny. A young gentleman and a younger lady can be introduced with much formality, and, advancing to shake hands, meet with an embarrassing adventure.

Owing to the smallness of their arms and the largeness of their faces, before their hands have met their lips have perforce sealed the contract of friendship.

Living Marionettes are sometimes introduced in conjunction with an ordinary Marionette show, and should be given after the latter has concluded. The contrast between the symmetrical little manikins and the distorted living doll will be remarkable, whilst the exuberant humour of the latter is sure to provide a pleasant finale to what all will judge a delightful evening.

Riddles in Rhyme

My first is one of St. James's girls,
My second she owns, and they're white as
pearls.
My third is the lordliest "nut" on earth,
My fourth is an organ of priceless worth.
My fifth, Fatty Wynn's plate after a meal:
My whole is a sportsman, honest and real.

Solution to the above.

M a r i e
t E e t h
D a R e y
h e a R t
e m p t Y

My first is a coin of trifling worth,
My next, a resort of fashion and mirth.
My third, a sad state you are sometimes in,
My fourth is a prince of dusky skin.
My fifth is used in an indoor game,
My last is a vessel—a curious name!
The initials and finals, when set in a row,
Will reveal the names of two fellows you know.

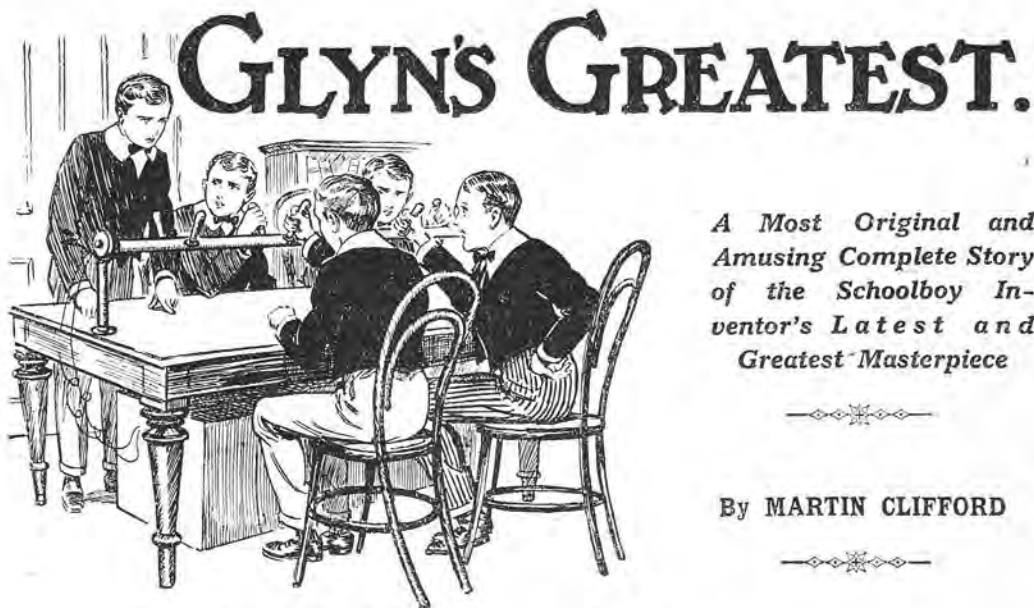
Solution to the one at bottom of first column.

G r o a T
R i v i e r A
U n w e l l
N a b o B
D o m i n O
Y a c h T

My first is an ancient Midland town;
If you sat on my next, you'd be stung—don't
sit down!
My third is a man who invents an idea,
My fourth is a half of my whole—persevere!
My fifth Bunter loves (soon he'll eat one, and
choke),
My sixth is a fellow who plans a deep joke.
My last—why, you've all heard them thunder
and blare,
In No. 6 Study, St. Jim's, one is there.
My whole, if you place the letters aright,
Two prominent schoolboys will bring to light

Solution to the above.

w a r W i c k
a n t H e a p
c r e A t o r
H E R R I E S
j a m T a r t
s p o O f e r
c o r N e t s



GLYN'S GREATEST.

*A Most Original and
Amusing Complete Story
of the Schoolboy In-
ventor's Latest and
Greatest Masterpiece*

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Skimpole's Latest

"GLYN!"

Tom Merry opened the door of No. 2 Study, in the Shell passage, and shouted:

"Glyn! Are you coming, you ass?"

"Eh?"

"Are you coming to tea?"

"Oh! Don't bother!"

There was a smell of chemicals in the study. Bernard Glyn, the inventive genius of St. Jim's, was in his shirt-sleeves, with a discoloured apron tied round him, a variety of stains on his fingers, and a smear on his nose. He seemed busy. There were glasses and jars and gallipots on the table, and a smelly liquid was fizzing in a pan, and the atmosphere of No. 2 was not savoury.

Tom Merry gave an emphatic sniff. Glyn's study was not always inviting, especially to the nose, when he was in one of his inventive moods.

"Don't bother?" repeated Tom Merry, indignantly. "Have you forgotten you were coming to tea in my study?"

"Eh? Yes."

"It's ready."

"Shut up a minute, old chap!"

"The other guest has arrived," said Tom. "Come along, you ass, and leave that silly stuff to fizz."

"Dry up!"

"But the muffins are toasted——"

"Bother the muffins!"

Bernard Glyn made all those replies without turning his head. He could not bestow his attention upon Tom Merry just then. His replies were certainly not polite, considering that he was an invited guest late for a study spread. But in the throes of experiment, the schoolboy inventor had no time for politeness.

"You were going to tell us all about your new invention," said Tom Merry. "We've waited tea."

"Wait it a bit longer, then—must finish this. Sit down in that arm-chair for a minute."

"Oh, all right."

Tom Merry came into the study and sat down in the arm-chair.

"Yaroooooh!"

Tom had reposed gracefully in the arm-

chair for the thousandth part of a second. Then he leaped to his feet with a wild yell.

Bernard Glyn smiled at him genially.

"Surprises you, doesn't it?" he asked.

"Yow-ow! What——"

"That's my electric chair," said Glyn, cheerfully. "Gives you a shock when you sit down, you know. No end of a joke on a silly duffer who sits in it without knowing. Don't you think so?"

"Why, you—you——"

"My own invention!" said Glyn, proudly.

"Rather good, what?"

Tom Merry looked expressively at the schoolboy inventor. Bernard Glyn did not seem to realise how near he was to a terrific punch on the nose. He rattled on cheerily:

"Now dip your finger in this stuff!"

"What is it?" asked Tom Merry, suspiciously.

"My indelible dye—my own invention. Perfectly indelible," said Glyn. "Warranted not to wear off for years—in fact, it's quite permanent."

"You—you—you frabjous ass!" gasped Tom Merry. "If it's an indelible dye, do you think I want to shove a finger in it? Do you think I want my fingers dyed, you frumpious chump?"

"Well, you'll be able to see for yourself that it's indelible," said Glyn. "Lot of satisfaction in putting things to successful tests, you know."

"Ass!"

"There, now I'm finished. You might just stir the fire together while I'm getting my jacket on."

"Buck up, fathead!"

Tom Merry crossed to the grate, and picked up the poker. The next moment another wild yell rang through No. 2 Study, and Tom Merry danced on the hearth-rug, poker in hand. He was trying to hurl the poker away, but it seemed glued to him.

"Yooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Glyn. "That's my idea, you know—there's a wire run to the end of the poker!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"And any silly ass picking it up gets a shock!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Turn it off!" yelled Tom.

"It does you good, you know——"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Excellent for the circulation——"

"Help!"

"Great Scott! What's the row?" Monty Lowther looked into the study from the passage. "You never coming to tea? Why—what—are you doing a dancing Dervish stunt, Tom?"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Is that a new jazz?" asked Manners, looking in over Lowther's shoulder.

"Bai Jove!" It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice. "Tom Mewwy is dancin' with the pokah! Is that a new thing in dancin', Tom Mewwy?"

"Help! Make him turn it off!" shrieked Tom Merry.

Bernard Glyn chuckled and touched a switch. Tom Merry dropped the poker with a crash into the fender.

"Funny, wasn't it?" said Glyn, with a smile.

Tom Merry did not answer. He made a straight rush at Bernard Glyn.

Glyn dodged round the table.

"Here, I say—keep off—can't you take a joke—drag him off!" roared Glyn in consternation, as the captain of the Shell grasped him.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, that is wathah wuff, Tom Mewwy! Pway westwain yourself, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, reprovingly. "You are wumplin' Glyn's collah——"

Thump! Thump!

"Yow-owoooo! Dragimoff!"

Manners and Lowther, chuckling, rushed into the study and collared their chum, and dragged him away from the hapless inventor. Bernard Glyn gasped for breath.

"You silly ass!" he stuttered. "I've a jolly good mind to mop up the study with you. Haven't you any sense of humour? Yow-ow-ow!"

Tom Merry laughed breathlessly.

"One good turn deserves another," he said. "Now let's go and have tea, or the muffins will be spoiled."

"Yow-ow! Blow your tea—sha'n't come."

"You were going to tell us about your latest invention, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy diplomatically. "We're no end intewested, you know."

"I'll come."

And Bernard Glyn came.

THE SECOND CHAPTER An Astounding Proposition

TEA in Tom Merry's study was a very cheery function. There was a bright

fire in the grate, the evening being rather cold; and a mountain of muffins were keeping warm by the fire. The fragrance of tea and muffins soothed Glyn's ruffled humour, and he was soon smiling. It was not, in fact, uncommon for the school-boy inventor to earn a thumping for his weird inventions. Some of them had a rather exasperating effect on his victims.

Good-humour and amity reigned in No. 10, and the juniors chatted cheerily. Tom Merry's favourite topic was cricket; Manners made remarks about his latest photographs, and Monty Lowther recited some of the very best jokes in his comic column for the Weekly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had some important opinions to pass with regard to the "Daily Mail" hat.

Somehow, the merry tea-party seemed to have forgotten that they were going to hear

about Bernard Glyn's latest invention. As a matter of absolute fact, they were not yearning to hear the details. Glyn found an endless interest in his experiments and inventions; but he did not always find willing listeners. His hobby did not interest other fellows so much as it interested himself, which is often the case with hobbies.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, suddenly. "You were goin' to tell us all about somethin' or othah, or somethin', weren't you, my deah Glyn?"

Glyn smiled rather sarcastically.

"I'm afraid I should bore you," he said.

"My deah chap, don't wowwy about that," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "I don't mind your borin' me."

"What!"

"You always do bore fellows, you know," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "But it's all in a day's work."

"You silly ass—"

"Go ahead, old chap," said Tom Merry, encouragingly. "What's the giddy invention? An aeroplane that will go to the moon, or a machine for extracting aniline dyes from cigarette-ends?"

"Something a bit more surprising than that!" said Glyn.

"A wireless telephone for talking to the man in the moon?" asked Lowther.

"More wonderful than that."

"Bai Jove! It must be a corkah, then," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "I am weally quite intewested now."



The rider drew a long horse-pistol from a holster. "Stand and deliver!" he rapped out. (See page 194.)

"Go it!" said Manners. "If it's anything to do with cameras, I'll be glad to hear it."

Bernard Glyn sniffed.

"Nothing so commonplace as that. It's the most extraordinary stunt ever stunted."

Tom Merry and Co. were really interested now. Arthur Augustus took off his eyeglass, polished it, and replaced it. Then he fixed it upon Bernard Glyn inquiringly.

"Pway go ahead, deah boy," he said. "I am weally on tentah-hooks to heah this extawordinawy thing."

"Look at that clock!" said Glyn, casually.

The juniors looked at the clock.

"Which way does that clock keep time?" asked Glyn.

"Rottenly," said Tom Merry. "It's an American clock."

"I don't mean that, ass. You know how clocks keep time, I suppose? Onward," said Glyn.

The juniors gazed at him blankly. Manners carelessly removed the breadknife out of Glyn's reach. Certainly, Glyn was a fellow with weird ideas; but his present remarks seemed to hint of a certain unfixedness in the upper story.

"Onward!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yes. Now, suppose there were a clock that would keep time backward."

"Bub-bub-bub-backward?"

"Yes."

"Gweat Scott!"

There was silence in Tom Merry's study. Glyn's face was perfectly grave; he seemed to be speaking in great earnest. Manners was glad that the bread-knife was out of his reach. Monty Lowther wondered whether he could venture to draw Glyn's cup and saucer away. It would be awkward if he started shying crocks about. And after what he had said, there was no telling what he might do.

"You seem surprised!" said Glyn, at last.

"A—a—a little," gasped Tom Merry. "Are you—ahem—ill, Glyn?"

"Ill? No! Why?"

"I—I thought you might be," stammered Tom.

"You mean you think the idea's potty," said Bernard Glyn, calmly. "No good telling you my invention, then."

"But—but——"

"Pway go ahead!" murmured Arthur Augustus, with one eye on the door.

"Well, that's the idea," said Glyn, calmly.

"With my achronometer——"

"Your which?"

"My achronometer, time goes backwards."

"D-d-d-does it?"

"Exactly. You see what that leads to?" said Glyn eagerly.

"N-n-not quite!" said Tom Merry faintly.

If there had been the ghost of a grin on the schoolboy inventor's face, Tom would have supposed that Glyn was trying to pull his leg. But Glyn's face was as serious as it could be—with a deep and almost tragic seriousness.

Tom was not thinking what Glyn's invention would lead to, if anything. He was thinking how sad it would be for Glyn's people when he was removed to Colney Hatch.

"Just think!" said Glyn, with grave enthusiasm. "The achronometer records time backwards. With an achronometer, instead of going forward along the ringing grooves of change, as the poet puts it, you go backward—into history."

"Into h-h-h-history!" moaned Lowther.

"Yes. You take hold of the handle of the achronometer—as many of you as you like—and forthwith you're taken back at any speed you choose—there's a speed regulator, and a brake—time unrolls itself again——"

"Unrolls itself?"

"Like a scroll," said Glyn.

"Like a—a—a—a—a scroll!" babbled Manners.

"Exactly. F'rinstance, in the ordinary way—with an ordinary chronometer—you get on from 1920 into 1921, don't you?"

"Naturally."

"But with the achronometer, you get back from 1920 to 1919."

"Oh!"

"And as far back as you choose," continued Glyn enthusiastically, but with grave restraint. "Just imagine dropping in at the reign of George the First——"

"George the First?"

"And then passing on to the time of the Stuarts——"

"The—the Stuarts!"

"Then calling on Queen Elizabeth, and passing the time of day with Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh——"

The juniors exchanged uneasy glances.

"And then," continued Glyn, "travelling further back than that, and telling King Henry the Eighth what you think of him——"

"Oh!"

"And dropping suddenly on Richard the Third——"

"Richard the Third!"

"Yes; might happen just in time to prevent the murder of the princes in the Tower, you know."

"Great Scott!"

"Then further back, to the time of Cœur-de-Lion and King John. I'd like to give King John my opinion of the life he led, wouldn't you?"

"Oh dear!"

"Then another jump back, among the Romans," said Glyn.

"No end of a catch to meet Julius Cæsar."

"J-J-J-Julius Cæsar?"

"Yes. Think what the 'Daily Mail' would give for a personal interview with him! Besides, I'd like to punch his Roman nose for writing the 'Gallic War.'"

"Glyn, old chap——"

"Poor old fellow——"

"While we're on the job, we could ascertain whether there really was a King Arthur," said Glyn. "Then there's that yarn about a Trojan kingdom in Britain. We could see whether there was any truth in it."

"Bai Jove!"

"Will you fellows come?" asked Glyn.

"K-k-kik-come?"

"Yes; I'll take all four of you, if you like. I'm starting this evening," said Glyn calmly. He rose from the table. "You need only trot along to my study in half an hour, and I'll have the achronometer all ready for you to hitch on to. I'm going anyhow, but I'd be glad of your company."

"You—you—you're going where?" asked Tom Merry, in a very faint voice.

"Back along the centuries."

With that astounding reply, Bernard Glyn nodded to the juniors, and quitted the study.

Tom Merry and Co. looked at one another.

"He's pulling our leg!" murmured Manners.

"He looked serious enough."

"But if he's serious, he's potty."

"Mad as a hatter, no mistake about that. May be

over-study—thinking too hard on his dashed inventions——"

"The poor fellow ought to be taken care of," said Arthur Augustus. "This will be wathah a shock to his people. Hallo, he's comin' back."

There was a tap on the door, and it opened. But it was not Bernard Glyn—it was Skimpole of the Shell who came in. Skimpy blinked at the alarmed and worried juniors seriously through his big spectacles.

"Glyn has been here?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom.



The young man stared at the St. Jim's juniors with blank bewilderment.

"Gadzooks!" he exclaimed. (See page 195.)

"Has he told you about his achronometer?" asked Skimpole.

"Eh? Yes! Do you know about it?" exclaimed Manners.

Skimpole nodded mournfully.

"Unfortunately, I do, my dear Manners. To my cost, I am perfectly aware of the existence of Glyn's diabolical invention," said Skimpole, in his long-winded way. "I surmised that Glyn might be taking you on, and I have come here to warn you not to touch that fearful contrivance."

Tom Merry and Co. stared at Skimpole. Was it possible—was it barely possible—that there was something in Glyn's astounding story?

THE THIRD CHAPTER

A Trip Into Past Time

BERNARD GLYN re-entered his own study, and turned the light on.

He closed the door. There was a smile on his face—such a smile as was often seen there when he was successful with one of his many inventions.

"Now to get the giddy achronometer ready!" he murmured.

He cleared the table and lifted the machine upon it.

It was a queer-looking machine—if it was a machine at all. It consisted chiefly of a rod of metal, with metal handles projecting from it. Insulated wires ran from it and disappeared under the table.

Glyn regarded it with a smile of satisfaction.

"I fancy that will surprise them!" he murmured. "It certainly surprised Skimpy—and it's going to surprise some other fellows! Ha, ha, ha!"

Having finished his preparations, Bernard Glyn sat down in the armchair before the fire, to wait for the arrival of Tom Merry and

Co.—to test his weird invention. Whether that invention was an "achronometer" or not, undoubtedly Glyn considered that it contained a surprise for Tom Merry and Co.

The schoolboy inventor stared thoughtfully at the fire.

He had been working hard at his own peculiar pursuits ever since lessons, and that, added to the ample tea in Tom Merry's study, made him doze while he waited for the arrival of the juniors. His eyes closed, and he was



"They come—they come!" exclaimed Charles the Second. "I will sell my life dearly—they shall never take alive the son of a hundred kings!"

soon slumbering peacefully. It was natural enough that in his dreams, as he sat asleep in the chair before the fire, the achronometer should figure. Strange expressions flitted over the face of the sleeper as the firelight played upon it.

Glyn started suddenly.

"Ready?"

He shook himself from slumber with an effort.

"Hallo! Have I been asleep?"

He murmured the words drowsily.

"Wake up, you ass! We're all ready!"

"Ready to start?"

"Yes."

"Oh, all right."

Glyn looked round the study, pulling himself together. The four juniors looked at him. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had very grave expressions—as when he had left them in No. 10. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was polishing his eyeglass with a nervous hand.



(See page 196.)

"Sure you're ready to come?" asked Glyn in a dreamy way. "It may be a bit of a shock to you, this journey?"

"If you are serious, Glyn——"

"My dear chap, you've only to embark on the machine. The achronometer does the rest," said Glyn testily. "The proof of the pudding's in the eating, isn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah! But——"

"Look at it!" Glyn waved his hand towards the strange-looking machine on the table. "See the clock at the centre—that works backwards. See the handles—that's where you take hold. This is the brake which enables us to stop in any century we please."

"Bai Jove!"

"If you're not funky——"

"Nothin' to be afraid of, is there, you ass?"

"Well, we may land in some queer places,"

said Glyn. "If we light on Dick Turpin and his gang, friantance, they might pot us and we should never get back to the twentieth century."

"Gweat Scott! It would be wisah to take a wevol-vah."

"My dear chap," said Monty Lowther, "the risk will be great enough without that."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Lay hold!" said Glyn.

For a moment Tom Merry and Co. hesitated. The experience was so strange, so bizarre. But Bernard Glyn had already seized one handle, and set the clock in motion—the backward-recording clock.

"You'll be left behind!" exclaimed Glyn.

With one accord the juniors seized a handle each.

"Hold on now for your lives!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Tick! Tick! Tick!"

The timekeeper—or rather, unrecorder—ticked away steadily. The light in the study paled, through the blind at the window came a glimmer of sunshine.

"Dawn!" ejaculated Manners, in astonishment.

"Ass!" said Glyn.

"What is it, then?"

"Yesterday's sunset."

"Oh, my hat!"

Tick! tick! tick! tick!

The unrecorder ticked away with amazing swiftness now so that the sound was mingled in a blur. The juniors were conscious of motion. They could not speak, they held on to the handles as if for their lives. Motion—motion—unceasing motion—a strange whirl, in which their senses grew giddy. They had a sensation of rushing—rushing—rushing.

Where were they?

Not in the study at St. Jim's, that was certain. Cold air was on their faces, fresh air that blew. Their dazzled eyes could distinguish nothing. Sunshine or stars were the same to them.

Tom Merry found his voice at last. He spoke in broken gasps.

"Stop! For mercy's sake, Glyn, stop!"

"I'm feeling for the brake." Glyn's voice sounded strange, far away. "I—I'll stop in a minute."

"Has the—the thing moved?" moaned Lowther.

No reply.

But there came a sudden jar, the ticking slowed down, and the machine stopped.

Tom Merry and Co. lay and gasped.

Their brains were still whirling, and it was some time before they could collect their senses. What had happened? Where were they? Light gleamed on their eyes; it was the light of the moon. High over a ragged line of trees the moon soared up, round and beautiful, and shone over a vast, lonely expanse of heath.

They sat up and looked round them at last. In the dewy grass lay the achronometer, still and lifeless now the ticking had ceased. The brake shut it off. They staggered to their feet. Round them the wide expanse stretched, bright in the moonlight, and close by them a muddy, rutty road traversed the heath, leading whither they knew not, and could not guess.

"We—we—we're not in St. Jim's now," muttered Manners, awestruck. "How—how did the horrid thing move, Glyn?"

Bernard Glyn was a little pale.

"That's part of the invention," he said

faintly. "Naturally, we don't want to stop in the same spot all through our voyage back to the beginning of time. I regulated it to move a mile for each decade ticked off on the achronometer. We must be somewhere near London now."

"My hat!"

Glyn consulted the clock.

"It indicates the year 1740," he said.

"Oh!"

The juniors gazed round them. There was a thudding of galloping hoofs on the lonely road. A horseman was approaching the spot.

"Somebody's coming," whispered D'Arcy. "We can ask him where we are, deah boys. And—and exactly what centuwy we are in, you know."

Thud! thud!

In the bright moonlight a horseman loomed into sudden view. He drew in his horse only a few yards from the juniors. They gazed at him, spellbound. Never had they seen a rider like him before. He was clad in a cloak of a strange cut and a cocked hat, and there was a black mask upon his face, through the eyeholes of which a pair of dark, fierce eyes glittered. As he stopped he drew a long horse-pistol from a holster, and levelled it at the startled juniors. His coal-black horse stood still as a statue.

"Stand and deliver!" he rapped out.

"Bai Jove!"

"Death and wounds!" continued the stranger, staring at them. "I have never seen the like of you before. Whence come ye?"

"Who—who—who are you?" faltered Tom Merry.

"What—what is this place?" asked Manners.

The horseman laughed grimly.

"Know ye not Bagshot Heath?" he replied. "As for my honourable self, I am fairly well known, though I wear a mask to cover my visage when I ride the lonely roads by night. Stand and deliver, if ye would not bide sharp shot from Dick Turpin!"

"Dick Turpin!" gasped the juniors.

"The same! I see, ye have heard my name," said the highwayman with grim satisfaction. "What is that strange machine

ye have there, which shines like silver metal, belike. Hand it to me at once, or—death and wounds, I scatter your brains under the heels of my mare Black Bess!”

And the highwayman made a threatening motion with the great horse-pistol.

Glyn gave his comrades a quick, warning look, and they stepped to the achrometer. There was only one way of escaping from this fearful danger. To hand the machine over to the highwayman was to lose the only possibility of ever returning to their own century. They grasped the handles of the machine, as if to obey Trupin's command, but at the same time Bernard Glyn released the brake.

Whirrr-tick-k-k-k-k! whirl!

They heard an uncouth oath, and, they thought, the report of a pistol. But they were already speeding back through the year 1739, leaving Dick Turpin sitting his black horse on Bagshot Heath in 1740. Horse and highwayman, heath and moonlight, vanished from their ken, as they whirled on through the unrolling century.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A Surprise for Charles the Second

“STOP!”

Tom Merry gasped the word breathlessly.

The buzz and the whirr of the strange machine, the rapid flashing of alternate darkness and light, dazzled and dazed him. He gasped out to Bernard Glyn to stop.

The machine slowed down.

Bright sunshine glimmered on the faces of the juniors, and they blinked in the light. Glyn glanced at the indicator.

“1652!” he said in a low voice.

“Bai Jove!”

“Where are we?”

The juniors felt dazed and tired. Gladly enough they released the handles of the achrometer, and rose to their feet. They were in a path that ran through a noble wood of oaks and beeches, mingled with tangled underwoods. Close by them, there was a rustle, and they stared at a man who lurked under the trees.

He was a young man, with dark hair and a

swarthy complexion. He was not handsome, but there was a noble air about him, in spite of the fact that he was evidently lurking in hiding. His dress was strange to the eyes of the juniors, though they had seen such garb in old pictures. His hat had once been gaily plumed, but the plumes were now sadly dragged—his doublet had been of velvet, but it was torn by bush and briar. He held a sword in his hand, hastily drawn as the St. Jim's juniors lighted upon his view. He stared at them with blank bewilderment.

“Gadzooks!”

He uttered the exclamation mechanically.

The juniors regarded him with interest. In spite of the drawn sword they did not think they had anything to fear from the young man—evidently a fugitive from deadly enemies.

He advanced from the trees.

“Odds wounds!” he exclaimed huskily. “Who are you? How come ye here? Are ye Roundheads?”

“Woundheads?” stuttered Arthur Augustus.

“Ye shall never take me alive, if ye be Roundhead spies!”

“Bai Jove! If you chawactewise me as a spy, sir, I shall have no wesome but to punch your nose,” exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

The young man started back.

“Hold! Would you raise your hand against your King?”

“What!”

“Wubbish!” said Arthur Augustus, forgetting for the moment that he was now in the seventeenth century. “You are not King George! You are not good-lookin’ enough for his gwacious Majesty.”

“What say you of George? There has never been a king of that name in this realm of England,” said the swarthy young man. “I am Charles, the second of that name—”

“Great Scott!”

“Charles the Second!” exclaimed Monty Lowther in astonishment.

“The same!” The unhappy fugitive monarch glanced round, as there was a sound of a movement in the wood. “Ah! The Roundhead caitiffs are at hand— They followed me from Worcester.”

"Worcester!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Odds fish! Know ye not that the Battle of Worcester has been fought, and that old Noll Cromwell has scattered my gallant cavaliers!" exclaimed Charles. "They come! They come! I will sell my life dearly—they shall never take alive the son of a hundred kings!"

The unhappy prince placed himself in a posture of defence, as a dozen or more Roundhead troopers came speeding up the forest path.

Tom Merry and Co. gazed on in horror.

They understood what had happened. The achronometer had stopped shortly after the date of the battle of Worcester—in which the Parliamentary troops had finally defeated King Charles and his cavaliers. The unhappy prince was a fugitive, tracked on all sides by the Roundheads. It was an amazing meeting!

The rough troopers, in buff coats and morions, came speeding up the path, sword in hand, with fierce glee in their faces.

"'Tis he!" shouted their leader. "'Tis the son of the chief Malignant, him whom they call Charles Stuart. Slay the Son of Belial."

"Hew him down as Agag was hewed in pieces!" exclaimed another of the Puritans. "But whom have we here?"

The Puritan soldiers stopped in amazement, at the sight of Tom Merry and Co.—as well they might! Undoubtedly they had never seen a party of schoolboys in Etons before.

"Whom may these be, With-Much-Tribulation Jones?" asked one of the Puritans, addressing the lieutenant who led the party.

The Puritan officer eyed the juniors.

"I know not, Glory-be-to-Israel Buggins," he replied. "But they are accomplices of the son of the Man of Blood, miscalled King Charles of this realm, and we will e'en take them before our General Cromwell, that he may inquire into them, as King David inquired——"

"Bai Jove! Fancy meetin' Olivah Cromwell!" murmured Arthur Augustus, faintly.

"The young Gibeonites may surrender, but the Malignant shall be slain," said With-Much-Tribulation Jones. "Hew him in pieces."

Bernard Glyn caught Charles the Second by the arm. It was a familiar gesture to use towards the son of a hundred kings, but there was no time to be lost, for the Puritan soldiers were about to rush on to the attack.

"Catch hold, Mr. Stuart—I mean, your Majesty!" he exclaimed. "We'll get you out of this!"

Charles seemed not to understand; but his hand closed mechanically on one of the handles of the achronometer, as Glyn guided it. Tom Merry and Co. had hold—the clock was ticking. Even then, the escape might have been too late—but fortunately the Roundheads held off from the strange-looking machine. It was a superstitious age, and they feared witchcraft.

"Guard you well for to approach too near this contrivance of the foul fiend," came the voice of Glory-be-to-Israel Buggins. "Surround the sons of Amalek, but keep your distance till——"

His voice was lost in the whirl and whirr of the achronometer.

"Gadzooks!" gasped King Charles. "What is happening? Whither go we, my masters? Is this treason?"

"Hold on, your Majesty!" gasped Bernard Glyn. "We're taking you to a safe place——"

"Oddsfish! But I understand not! But I will e'en bear you company for a space, since the danger is so near! Odds bodikins, but a stranger journey I never took in my life, even when I was among the canting psalm-singing knaves in the North, gadzooks!"

"That's all vewy well," murmured Arthur Augustus, in the rear of Tom Merry, who was next to him on the achronometer. "I suppose, undah the cires., we could not wufuse to help the poor chap. But I weally do not like the ideah of takin' Charles the Second along with us on our journey!"

"Why not, Gussy?"

"I do not wish to be too hard upon him, of course, deah boy, but I cannot approve of his mowal chawactah!" answered Arthur Augustus severely.

"Never mind that, Gussy! We can't leave him behind for Cromwell to cut his head off. Charles the First had his head bobbed, you know, and that's enough for one family."



"Darest thou call thyself king of this realm?" exclaimed Charles the Second. "Aye, so dare I!" answered Richard Crookback, disdainfully. (See page 198.)

"Vewy twue, deah boy. But I weally twust that he will not tell us any of his wibald stowies."

Arthus Augustus had no cause for alarm: the young king was too breathless and astonished for conversation. He clung to the achronometer like one in a maze. When Bernard Glyn stopped the amazing machine at last, Charles rolled away from it breathlessly and leaned against the side of a great tent.

"Gadzooks!" he said faintly. "Odds wounds and odds life! Where am I?"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

In Dire Peril

TOM MERRY AND Co. were interested to know that, too. They seemed to have landed in the midst of a great military encampment. The tent against which they

lay was a huge one, and was surmounted by the Royal Standard of England, floating bravely in the breeze. Soldiers were passing and repassing; but they were such soldiers as the juniors had never seen before. Some were clad in glittering armour, some in leathern jerkins, and they were armed with such weapons as the juniors had hitherto seen only in museums—bills and bows and halberds. The achronometer had taken a long leap this time, back into the midst of the fifteenth century. Several knights in armour rode by on magnificent horses, and through their open visors they stared curiously at the St. Jim's juniors—doubtless surprised to see them there. From the great tent against which the achronometer had stopped, a halberdier issued suddenly, and he raised his huge weapon threateningly.

"Bai Jove, keep off, you ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in alarm.

"Whence come ye?" exclaimed the halberdier. "Be ye emissaries from Henry Tudor, come to wreak harm upon our sovereign lord King Richard the Third?"

"Holy smoke!" gasped Tom Merry. "We've dropped into the reign of Richard the Third! You ass, Glyn—"

A figure in rich armour stepped from the tent.

The figure was slightly hunchbacked, but strong and sinewy; evidently the man was of great strength. He motioned to the halberdier to stand aside imperiously, and stepped towards the strange visitors.

The juniors gazed upon him in wonder, not unmixed with terror. They knew that it was Richard Crookback himself—he who, by the slaying of his unhappy nephews in the Tower of London, had raised himself to the throne of England. His fierce, dark eyes glittered at the juniors under the visor he wore. He was in complete armour, geared for battle.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "Treachery!"

"Nothin' of the sort, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I assuah you that we are incapable of anythin' of the sort!"

"Ha! You speak boldly, knave!"

"I wefuse to be called a knave!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "You have no right to

address me in that stwain, Wichard Plantagenet!"

"I am King in this realm, though my title be disputed!" said Richard the Third, grimly. "To-morrow, at Bosworth Field, I shall slay the pretender to my crown, who hopes to call himself King Henry the Seventh of England—"

"Your mistake, sir," said Manners respectfully. "Coming from where we do, we've had all that in history class, and—"

"Ha! What say you?"

"The best thing you can do is to get on our machine, and leave Henry the Seventh severely alone," said Manners. "We've got one king here already, and we don't mind giving you a lift."

Richard the Third stared at him in perplexity. Charles started forward.

"Darest thou call thyself King of this realm?" he exclaimed.

"Ay, so dare I!" answered Richard Crookback disdainfully. "And thou, thou saucy knave, shalt presently be tucked up to the gallows!"

Charles the Second flushed with anger. King Richard signed to the halberdier.

"Call the guard, thou caitiff, and seize me these minions, and see them hanged as high as Haman!"

"Gadzooks!" muttered Charles the Second in dismay. This was worse than Cromwell; the fugitive prince had escaped out of the frying-pan into the fire. "Think what you do, Sir Crookback—will you shed the blood of the royal Stuarts?"

"I have never heard of them," answered Plantagenet coolly. "Neither will I shed thy saucy blood, but thou shalt hang for thy knavery. Ha! Would'st thou?"

He sprang back as Charles the Second made a pass at him with his sword. Had that deadly thrust taken effect, Richard the Third would have fallen dead on the threshold of his royal tent, and the Battle of Bosworth would never have been fought. But the sword glanced from Plantagenet's armour, and broke.

"A murrain upon it!" exclaimed Charles, in anger.

"Look out!" shouted Bernard Glyn. "Catch hold—do you want to be hanged, you

asses! Don't you want to see St. Jim's again? Catch hold."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Odds fish!"

Tom Merry and Co. grasped the achronometer just in time—the halberdiers of Richard the Third were surrounding them. King Richard started in amazement—which was not unnatural in the circumstances—as the strange visitors vanished from his sight.

"Pursue them!" roared the royal hunchback. "Strike them down! Bring me a horse—a horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

But the achronometer was gone.

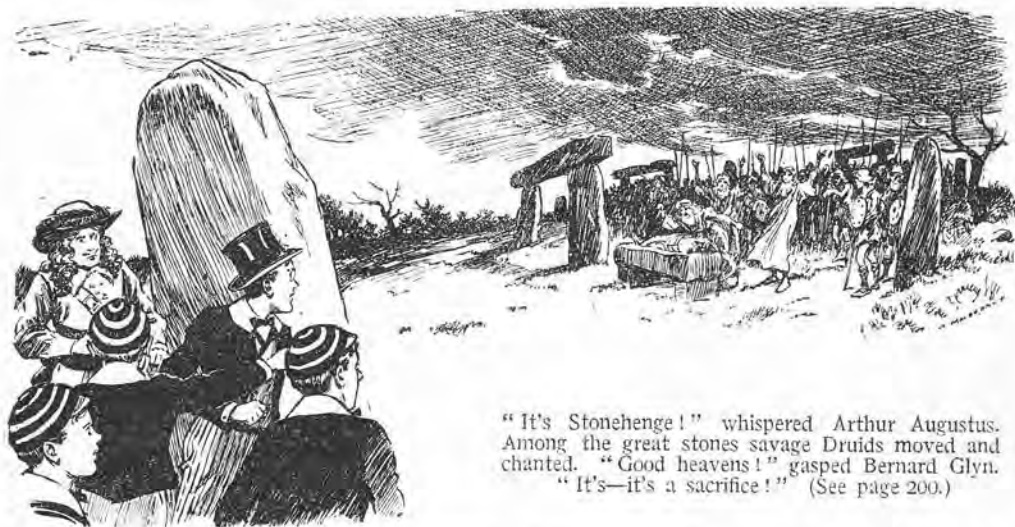
Once more Tom Merry and Co. were whirl-

person, the juniors did not feel disposed to stop. They would have preferred to find Alfred in the neatherd's hut, letting the cakes burn.

They whirled on again, through unrolling ages, till they were so dizzy that they simply had to stop. King Charles was heard faintly exclaiming: "Gadzooks! Marry come up and go to, but I am sore fatigued, my masters!"

And so the achronometer came to a rest at last.

Dim forests surrounded the juniors as they looked about them. They had landed in the midst of a plain, upon which the forests encroached on all sides. Great shapes of stone



"It's Stonehenge!" whispered Arthur Augustus. Among the great stones savage Druids moved and chanted. "Good heavens!" gasped Bernard Glyn.

"It's—it's a sacrifice!" (See page 200.)

ing away through the centuries, and soon they were in an age when Richard the Third was still unborn, and therefore quite harmless.

But the achronometer whirled on

The sample the juniors had already had of the "good old times" had not pleased them, and Glyn was nervous of stopping again. He slowed down after a time, just long enough to catch a glimpse of the reign of King John—but whirled on again fast, in time to escape the charge of a savage Norman knight.

When he slowed down again, it was to find the achronometer in the midst of a ferocious battle between Danes and Saxons, and though King Alfred was leading on the Saxons in

loomed near them—some standing upright, others lying across. And savage-faced old men in strange hanging garments of skins moved about among the stones, chanting in a strange tongue.

"Bai Jove!" whispered Arthur Augustus. "It's Stonehenge!"

Stonehenge!

All the juniors had seen that druidical relic; and Charles the Second knew it well. Solitary and sublime, it had stood through the long ages of English history—a hundred kings had seen it, and still it stands. But now the juniors gazed at it, in the first century of the Christian era, it was not surrounded by

wire as in the present day—and the stones were more complete. And among them the savage Druids moved and chanted, and round the weird altar were crowds of ancient Britons—fierce, savage, with long spears and hide shields, and matted hair, and their bodies painted with woad.

"Good heavens!" gasped Bernard Glyn, "It's—it's a sacrifice!"

The juniors shivered with horror.

"Gadzooks!" gasped Charles the Second.

There was no doubt about it. On the sacrificial stone lay a bound victim, and a brutal-faced priest was bending over him with a sharp stone knife.

"Stop, you beast!" shouted Bernard Glyn.

The Druid spun round.

His bloodshot eyes glared at the juniors, and he yelled to the Britons in a strange tongue. Instantly there was a roar of wrath from the savages, and they swarmed round the achronometer.

"Let's get off!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove, those feahful wottahs are too many for us!"

"Gadzooks! Have at ye!" shouted Charles the Second, cutting at the Britons with his broken sword. "Knaves, would ye shed the blood royal? Have at ye for traitors and caitiffs!"

"Back up!" roared Tom Merry.

It was too late to escape—the ancient Britons were upon them in a crowd, and they were dragged from the achronometer before they could set it in motion. Bernard Glyn found himself in the grasp of the bloodthirsty old Druid, who grinned down upon him with fiendish glee as he raised the stone knife to strike—

He struggled—he gasped—

He closed his eyes, he opened them, he wrestled and shrieked, and—and—**AWOKE!**

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Quite a Good Joke!

SKIMPOLE blinked very seriously at the juniors in Tom Merry's study. Skimmy generally was serious, and he was more serious than usual now. He seemed to be suffering under a grievance.

"Well, tell us about the dashed achronometer," said Tom Merry. "We've had it from Glyn—no end of balderdash—"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "The uttah ass has been twyin' to pull our leg, you know."

"The inconsiderate and absurdly humorous youth succeeded in pulling my leg," said Skimpole mournfully. "I entered his study, prepared to test the achronometer—for, astonishing as it was, I remembered that there are wondrous things in science, which—"

"Cut it short, old chap," said Monty Lowther.

"The machine was on the table," said Skimpole, blinking at them, "and Glyn told me to hold it first! And then—"

"Then?" said Manners.

"Then I received a sudden and most disconcerting electric shock!" said Skimpole.

"What?"

"It was not an achronometer at all—indeed, there is certainly no such phenomenon as an achronometer in existence," said Skimpole. "The unfeeling youth had spun that yarn simply to tempt me to take hold of an electric battery, and he proceeded to give me a series of shocks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shocking!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"I was exceedingly disconcerted, my dear friends—and that inconsiderate youth refused to let me go till I was fairly dancing, and I could not let go until he turned the current off—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"So that's why the ass was trying to pull our leg with a yarn about backing through time," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I suppose we should have taken hold of his blessed machine just to try—"

"Bai Jove! I wegard him as a cheeky ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "Undah the circs—"

"Much obliged to you, Skimmy, for giving us the tip," said Tom. "The silly ass won't catch us now."

"Yaas, wathah—you are a fwiend in need, Skimmy. Bai Jove, you fellows, let's go to Glyn's study, aftah all, and make him take hold of his beastly electwic machine himself,



To face page 201.

OFF FOR A CRUISE!

A merry party of schoolboys enjoy the delights of a yachting holiday.

and give him some of his own medicine, what? Let him think he has taken us in till we dwop on him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's valuable suggestion was adopted nem. con. When the half-hour had expired, the four juniors proceeded to Bernard Glyn's study. A peculiar sound of mumbling and gasping greeted their ears as they approached the door.

"Bai Jove, what's up?"

Tom Merry tapped at the door, and receiving no answer, threw it open. The four juniors entered the study.

Bernard Glyn was in the armchair by the fire—wriggling, moaning, and gasping—fast asleep, and evidently in the grip of a fearful nightmare.

"Mmmmm—groogh—oh—groo—mmmm!"

"Bai Jove, wake him up! He's dweamin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry grasped the schoolboy inventor by the shoulder and shook him forcibly.

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

Shake! Shake!

Glyn started wildly out of slumber, and out of the dream that gripped him. He blinked dazedly in the light.

"Keep him off!"

he panted.

"Eh? Keep whom off?"

"The Druid!"

"The Dwuid!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "What Dwuid? Are you weally potty?"

Glyn gasped. He was hardly awake yet—his strange dream was still strong upon him.

"You fellows—are you safe?"

"Safe? Of course!"

"Where's Charles?"

"Charles?" gasped Tom Merry. "What

Charles? Pull yourself together. Going potty?"

"Charles the Second."

"Wake up, you ass! Have you been dreaming about Charles the Second and giddy Druids? What a merry mixture!"

Tom Merry gave the dreamer another shake, and Glyn, as his teeth rattled together, came quite to himself. He started out of the chair and blinked at the staring juniors.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I suppose I've been dreaming!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Looks like it! Shouldn't go to sleep in a chair with your silly head hanging down! Might have had a fit!"

"Oh!" gasped Glyn. "It—it was a queer dream! I—I thought—I mean I—I dreamed that we'd gone off on the achronometer——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"We're heah weady to go off on it, deah boy," he said.

"Oh!" said Glyn.

He was himself again now. A glimmer came into his eyes. The "achronometer" was ready for the juniors—though it was not likely to take them through the centuries, and give

them such a shock as Glyn had received in his dream. But it was going to give them a shock of another kind—at least, that was the happy inventor's intention. It had not occurred to him that Skimpole had revealed his own painful experiences to Tom Merry and Co.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Quite!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now take hold of these handles," said Glyn, with great gravity.

"Take hold of one first, deah boy."



Tom Merry grasped the schoolboy inventor by the shoulder and shook him forcibly. (See this page.)

"I have to come last——"

"No, you jolly well don't!" said Tom Merry coolly. "You have to come first, my merry practical joker. Collar him!"

"Look here—ow!"

Glyn was promptly collared, and his hand shoved on the nearest handle. He gave a wild yell as he touched it.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-owoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Glyn was an entertaining picture at that moment. He was caught in his own trap, and, as Shakespeare has remarked, it is sport to see the engineer hoist by his own petard. Glyn danced and yelled and raved; he strove to let go the handle, but he could not. The little trick he had prepared for Tom Merry and Co. was being played upon himself; but, to judge by his contortions, it no longer struck him as funny.

"Yow-ow-wooop! Turn it off! Oh, my hat! I—I'm sorry—there! Now turn it off!" howled Glyn.

"Blessed if I know how!" said Tom, laughing.

"Wathah not! I haven't the faintest ideah how to turn off the wotton contwivance, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow! There's a switch under the table! Look for it—help! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry was merciful; he stooped and sought for the switch. Until he found it, Bernard Glyn continued to jazz. But the current was turned off at last, and the playful inventor—not feeling at all playful now—staggered away from the machine.

"Ow! Ow! Oh, dear!"

"Wathah a stwong shock, was it?" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I twust it will be a lesson to you, Glyn."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Co. crowded out of the study chortling joyously. And the voice of the schoolboy inventor followed them, in anguished tones:

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

THE END

GREYFRIARS LANDMARKS



The River Sark

Our river never fails to be
A source of great attraction;
It is a ripping sight to see
Our rival crews in action.
We love to lean upon our oars
And pull with vim and vigour;
Although each cad with laughter roars,
And chumps like Coker snigger,

We've had full many a joyous race
With Highcliffe and with Rookwood;
The river flows at just the pace
That any good-sized brook would.
But there are nasty currents found
Beneath its surface sometimes;
No Greyfriars chap has yet been drowned,
Although we've had some glum times!

To some, the river is a bore,
They'd never dare to swim it;
And if you offered them an oar
They'd say it was the limit!
Of course, we do not care a jot
For these confounded slackers;
As long as pleasure can be got
The Sark will have its backers!

Flow on, then, stream, through gentle glades,
Through wood and copse and bracken;
And when we swing our sweeping blades
Ne'er may our efforts slacken!
Long may you prove a source of joy,
And fill with jubilation
The heart of every British boy
Who's keen on recreation!



*A Magnificent
Complete Story,
Full of Fun and
Adventures Aboard
the School-ship,
Bombay Castle*

THE FIRST CHAPTER

"PULL his head, Pongo!"
"Shove him behind, Dick!"
"Mind he doesn't get in the water."

There was quite a lot of excitement on the bund or wharf of Amboyna, which is on the Dutch island of Ceram, one of the Moluccas, or Spice Islands.

There was no spice in the air of the little harbour, where a crowd of English schoolboys, who had just come ashore from the great school-ship, *Bombay Castle*, were trying to unload their pet goat, Horace.

The harbour smelled of drains and fever. The natives did not seem to mind, for they were crowding round the harbour to see this mad crowd of English schoolboys whose coming had been foretold by the local Dutch and Malay newspapers.

There were all sorts of mixed pickles standing on the edge of the wharf, looking down with solemn yellow faces on the two steam pinnaces and the four lifeboats which had brought the hundred boys and their masters and a few liberty men ashore from the tall mail ship which was anchored in the roads a mile from the shore.

There were Malays in their bright sarongs or kilts of figured silk; Chinese of all ages, mostly clad in blue; Dutch half-castes; traders from Ilo-Ilo and Zamboanga in the Philippines, wearing fine shirts of pina cloth and smoking black cheroots; Japs and Hindus.

Never was there such a mixed crowd. It seemed as though samples of all shades and all nations in the Eastern seas had gathered on the wharf to see the boys of the *Bombay Castle* come ashore.

Some of these loafers were fishing for tiddlers off the main drain, which was a favoured spot. These carried long bamboo fishing-poles, and were evidently playing the wag from school.

There were a lot of Chinese, Dutch, Malay, and half-caste children carrying enormous slates, which showed that they, too, ought to have been at school. But the schoolmasters of the East are easygoing, and, indeed, one fat Chinese schoolmaster had seated himself on the bollard of the wharf, regardless of the school-bell which was ringing, to watch the struggle that was going on, between these English schoolboys and their goat in the No. 3 lifeboat.

For some reason or other best known to his own goatish humour, Horace, the goat, did not want to go ashore. He was a fierce and disreputable Egyptian goat, almost as large as a donkey, with a head like a battering-ram, evil eyes of emerald green, and huge curling horns.

Struggling with him were his masters, a select coterie of the Fifth Form, known, from their sleeping cabin, as "*The Glory Hole Gang*." These were Dick Dorrington, a handsome, masterful boy, with blue eyes and fair, curling hair, which were in strange contrast

with a face burned nearly black by the sun ; there was Skeleton, a thin and cadaverous youth of gigantic appetite ; there was Chip Prodders, born in India, and a student of languages, small, quick, and resourceful ; there was Arty Dove, a huge, good-natured young giant of enormous strength ; there was Porkis, fat and short in the neck, panting from the stifling heat ; and there was Chu, a quiet, polite Chinese boy, who had been so long on the Bombay Castle that, in his school strawyard, blazer, and white flannels, he did not look like a Chinese at all.

The boys had managed to secure Horace by a line attached to his dog-collar. Now Horace was doing his best to hang himself, straining in the leash like a greyhound, butting, twisting, and turning in his efforts to remain in the boat.

Though Dick was hanging on to his tail, Horace made a dash over the thwart of the lifeboat.

"Look out, Pongo!" yelled the boys to their chum, Pongo Walker.

It was really very silly to tell Pongo to look out. Pongo Walker was looking out for himself as hard as he could, for he was hanging on to Horace's horns. With a rush forward, Horace bore Pongo down, sending him with a crash on to the gratings of the lifeboat.

Then he tore all the buttons off Pongo's blazer, put his foot on Pongo's straw hat, and started to eat it, school riband and all.

"Hoy!" yelled Pongo. "Steady on! I've got three Fishers in the lining of my tile!"

And he dragged at his hat, trying to pull the remnants from Horace's mouth.

At this awful news there was a rush on the goat.

"On the goat, School!" yelled Dick Dorrington. "He'll eat our lunch money!"

This was a fact. Pongo was the treasurer of the Glory Hole Gang, and had put the banknotes in his hat for safe keeping, for he had been warned of the light-fingered Malays and half-castes of Amboyna.

Horace, powerful though he was, was crushed to the ground—or, rather, to the gratings of the lifeboat—by the scrum of boys. The remnants of Pongo's strawyard were

wrested from his mouth, which was forced open with a marline spike, whilst Chu, who had a slender hand, and was as clever with his fingers as a pickpocket, rescued the three notes and half the lining of the hat, which was just about to disappear down the goat's throat.

Then Horace got a thump on the nose that made him sneeze, and was allowed to sit up, blinking angrily at the bright sunshine and at the curious crowd of onlookers who gazed down stolidly from the wharf.

An excited Hindu gentleman thrust his way through the crowd, waving a white umbrella with a green lining. He was neatly dressed in a suit of Tussore silk, and wore striped socks, spring-side boots, and a pink turban.

This was the famous Mr. Chatterjee Lal Tata, master of Hindustani and mathematics on the Bombay Castle. He was supposed to be responsible for looking after the Glory Hole Gang.

On the other hand the Glory Hole Gang said that they were responsible for looking after "old Tal," as they affectionately termed their master. Every scrape they got into Mr. Lal Tata was in for it as well as his pupils.

"Now, you boys!" cried Mr. Lal Tata. "Why you play fools with that goat fellow? Why are you so silly as to bring disreputable animals ashore. Why do you not leave him behind on ship with the monkey fellow?"

Dick Dorrington stood up in the boat, grinning all over his cheeky face.

"Please, sir, we had to bring him ashore, sir," said he. "It's Hobson-Jobson day aboard, and the butcher said that he would not be responsible for old Horace if we left him aboard. He said that the natives would get hold of him and wreath him in flowers, and cut his throat as a sacrifice."

"Hobson-Jobson day? What you mean?" demanded Mr. Lal Tata.

"Yes, sir, Hobson-Jobson day," replied Dick. "The butcher said so. The native firemen and some of the crew are going to have a procession, and they will throw flowers in the water."

Mr. Lal Tata closed his umbrella with a snap.

"The butcher is a fool fellow!" said he. "It is the day of sorrow for Hassan and

Hossein, two celebrated Mahomedan saints. There is no killing of goats. There are only lamentations and prayers and a procession. Do you slaughter cab horses on All Souls' Day in London?"

"No, sir," replied Dick.

"Then listen not to the foolishness of the butcher who has very vulgar ideas of Oriental customs. Hobson-Jobson Day, indeed!" fumed Mr. Lal Tata. "Bring that goat ashore, and do not talk any more of this stupid foolishness!"

The lifeboat was steered alongside the steps, and with a sudden rush and a heave Horace was rolled over its gunnel and on to the wooden stairway.

Horace landed on his back with such a thump that all the evil was knocked out of him for a few seconds, and the boys, closing round him, dragged him up the steps, cheering wildly, whilst Chinese, Malays, and Dutch half-castes scattered in all directions.

These proceedings were watched from a large prahu manned by many paddlers, which was waiting to come alongside the stairs when Horace should be pleased to get ashore.

It was a private prahu, and coiled on scarlet silk cushions in the stern was a young Malay, who surveyed the scene with a sneering smile. He had been paddled round the school-ship, examining her closely. But he had not offered to go aboard, though the large gilded prahu and its crew, clad in a sort of livery of scarlet and gold, showed that he was a personage of some consequence.

As a matter of fact, this was none other than the wastrel Prince Saru of Sambang, only son and heir of the Rajah of Sambang, who had come into "Town" to draw his annual income, to pick up the latest intelligence, and to further the many rascally schemes of his elderly and rascally father.

Over Prince Saru a couple of attendants held a huge gilded umbrella. Another attendant held a golden betel box, from which the prince occasionally refreshed himself with a chew of the betel nut dipped in lime, which had blackened his teeth.

A thin moustache was swept back from a cruel-looking mouth, and the evil slit eyes of the prince watched the boys and Horace and

Lal till they had disappeared in the crowd on the bund.

Then his rowers brought his gilded barque of pleasure alongside the stairs. A couple of Chinamen, on the look-out for this rascally young potentate, carried down a lacquered sedan-chair with golden poles.

Rising wearily from his cushions, Saru, the waster, was helped into the sedan-chair and was carried off to the house of Champagne Charley, the Chinese hotel-keeper, followed by a rag-tag and bobtail string of courtiers, each of whom carried his favourite fighting-cock under his arm.

For it was well-known that Prince Saru had drawn his yearly subsidy from the Dutch Government, a sort of conduct money, in return for which the rulers of Sambang promised to abstain from all sorts of piracy on the high seas, and from head-hunting and warfare ashore.

The allowance of Prince Saru was in the neighbourhood of one thousand pounds, and it was known that he would not leave Amboyna till he was spent up. And until he was spent up the black and tan and yellow courtiers of Prince Saru did not mean to leave him.

There was not much left now in the Prince's pockets. There would be a few more cock-fights, in which the birds of the prince inevitably lost, losing him many broad gold pieces at the same time, and the prince would smoke a few more pipes of the Black Smoke which Champagne Charley and his Chinese attendants dispensed. Then he would return to Sambang to be good till the next pay day came round again.

Any doctor looking at the bloodshot, glazed eyes of Prince Saru would have seen that he had been smoking far too freely of the opiate of hemp leaves, which is called *bhāng*, and that, notwithstanding the soothing fumes of the opium pipes that he had been smoking at intervals, he was rapidly approaching that state of mind and nerves when a Malay is liable to run amok.

But Saru was quiet enough now, as his palanquin bearers carried him off to the house of Champagne Charley. He was revolving a great scheme in his head, and he wanted to

keep his head clear to talk it over with Champagne Charley. He had picked up, from the talk of the bund, that the Bombay Castle would pass through the Straits of Sambang as she continued her voyage, and already his mind was turning to piracy.

It was a bold scheme and worthy of the son, and the grandson, and the great-grandson of a whole brood of wreckers who had made their livings for centuries as pirates, till steam had ousted sail in those narrow waters, and the Dutch Government, with its inspecting gun-boats and cruisers, had, more or less, put an end to piracy.

If he could only put the Bombay Castle ashore in the Sambang Channel he and his crowd of yellow pirates could hold these hundred boys to ransom. They would be cheap at one thousand pounds each. What was a thousand pounds to the lords and rajahs their fathers? He might clear easily a hundred thousand pounds—a hundred years of the miserable subsidy that the Dutch Government would pay him for being a good boy.

Prince Saru did not take his father, the rajah, into consideration. What with old age, brandy, bhang, and opium, the old rajah was pretty well in his son's hands. If Saru went



"Hoy!" yelled Pongo. "Steady on! I've got three Fishers in the lining of my hat!" (See page 204.)

But Prince Saru was full of his scheme. It was a year to the next payment of his subsidy. The Dutch Government were busy elsewhere in one of its little Eastern wars. He had heard that these English boys were all the sons of rich lords and merchant princes, and the exaggerated Eastern talk of the bund and the opium shops had enlarged them till the Bombay Castle was esteemed a ship of young millionaires.

And Saru, watching the boys out of his heavy lidded, narrow eyes, had done sums in his head.

back to Sambang with his scheme arranged, his father would have to fall in with it, though the old rajah had always been shy of piracy since a British cruiser had shelled his palace into rubble.

But Prince Saru had heard by the loose and exaggerated rumour of the Spice Islands that Great Britain was already preoccupied with rebellions and other troubles. He had a very hazy idea of the naval power of the British, and listened eagerly to every cock-and-bull story that the enemies of Great Britain were spreading through the East. So, thinking these

matters over pleasantly in his fuddled braing Saru was carried through the streets in state to the native hotel of Champagne Charley, where all the pepper rajahs, Bolshevik agitators, opium runners, and disguised pirates of the Java and China Seas were in the habit of meeting to trade illicit pearls and to hatch rascality.

The cock fight was not till noon, so there was plenty of time to talk the matter over with Champagne Charley.

At first Champagne Charley, an enormously fat Chinaman of a bland but rascally countenance, did not like the idea. But Prince Saru owed him money, and it was Prince Saru who would stand to be hanged for it, not Champagne Charley.

So Champagne Charley sent his runners forth, and it was not long before two of the Chinese greasers employed in the engine-room of the Bombay Castle were waylaid in the streets and brought round secretly to the back of the Hotel of the Sweet Scented Lotus, where the fighting cocks in their cages were already crowing their defiance at one another as they craned their heads through the bars.

And, for the space of an hour, the two Chinamen, with Champagne Charley and Saru, talked and plotted; Saru drawing many plans of the tortuous Strait of Sambang and its reefs to show how easy it was to collar a whole shipload of British schoolboys and to wreck a British ship.

The two Chinese oilers fell in with the scheme as soon as they had touched gold and drunk arrack from the same bottle as the prince.

Only Champagne Charley shook his head and groaned as his fat body rolled on the matting of the dark room in which they were plotting.

For Champagne Charley knew that the British Government, though it appears to be asleep most of the time, has a long arm, and has a trick of waking up suddenly and hitting hard.

It had hit Champagne Charley once, and as a result he had spent five years in a convict establishment of the Andaman Islands, where he had to do more work than he had ever done in his life, and more work than he ever wanted to do again.

But Saru was full of his mad notion, and the more sips he took at the arrack bottle the better it looked.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

LITTLE dreaming of the plot that was to be hatched against them, the Glory Hole boys of the Bombay Castle started to take in the town and suburbs of Amboyna with schoolboy thoroughness.

The first thing they did was to buy half a dozen pineapples and a huge bunch of bananas, sixty to the bunch, to fill Horace up so that he would be less restive.

It sounds extravagant to feed a goat on pineapples, magnificent fruits that would have been worth a guinea apiece at home. But when Pongo Walker asked the price of a Chinese vendor, the Chinaman held up one finger.

"He means a quid," said Dick Dorrington. "No, John," he added to the Chinese; "too muchee dear!"

The Chink smiled blandly, and looked patient.

"S'posee boy foreign devil no wantee pay penny pineapple. S'posee pay 'apenny?" he suggested in his quaint pidgin English.

"Pineapples a ha'penny each!" whispered Skeleton in awe-stricken tones. "He's off his head! He's not well!"

But Pongo Walker, who was always practical, put in his oar.

"Half a mo', you chaps," said he. "Let's try him!"

And he held out a halfpenny to the bland, smiling Celestial, who promptly held out a splendid pineapple.

"My word, John," said Pongo, "you are the chap we have been looking for for a long time. We will buy the shop."

The shop was a huge one-wheel barrow, and the boys bought the lot. There were pineapples, bananas, coconuts, both drinking and eating, nuts, and there were durians.

Mr. Lal Tata took a seat on a stone wall and lit his cigar, waiting patiently till Horace the goat was filled with pineapple slices and bananas till he swelled like a balloon.

"Do not eat too much fruits, boys!" said he. "Too much fruits is not good for the stomachs

in these too hot climates. Skeleton, my friend, beware of the pineapple's withered branch. I do not want to put mustard plasters round your stomachs for cholera."

"That's all right, sir," replied Skeleton cheerfully. "I've only eaten a dozen bananas and one pineapple. I am just going to try one of these durians!"

And Skeleton held up a huge fruit with a green rind, which none of his chums had yet ventured on.

Mr. Lal Tata looked on, smiling.

"It is most delicious fruit, the durian," said he, "but he is acquired taste. You have to get some use to him."

Skeleton took a bite of the durian. Inside the rough-looking green rind was a pink pulp like a strawberry ice, which in its turn was spotted by crimson pips.

"What's it like?" asked Pongo Walker.

Skeleton's face was a study.

"Whoo!" said he.

And he dropped the durian, twisting his face into a contortion of disgust.

"Phew!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington sniffing the air. "Does it taste like that? Take it away and bury it."

Skeleton pulled a dozen grinaces, each more hideous than the last.

"There is a beautiful taste in it somewhere if you could only get at it!" said he. "But it smells awful. Give me another banana to take the taste out!"

"So it is with everyone who tastes durian for the first time!" said Mr. Lal Tata. "It has fetid odours but the flavour of the fruit is like strawberry, raspberry, and pineapple and clove flowers when one person accustoms himself to the smell!"

But no one would venture on a second durian. They took the smell and Skeleton's word for it.

Horace, the goat, was now comparatively well behaved. He ate all the durians that were left over, and trotted on quietly amongst the boys as they resumed their walk.

The heat was tremendous, so they hired the Chinese fruit merchant and his single wheelbarrow to carry the two cricket-bags they had brought ashore with them. This Chinese wheelbarrow was the strangest vehicle they had

seen in their voyagings, for it consisted of one large wheel, six feet in diameter, on either side of which the contents of the barrow were balanced.

Passing through a large old Dutch fort, within which were the barracks and the Resident's house and gardens, they came to a grass lawn surrounded by the Dutch houses of the Dutch officials. Then they came to a Dutch street or two which looked like a chip of old Holland gone astray into the tropics, for the gardens and orchards surrounding the houses were full of flowering shrubs and palms. There were trees of nutmeg, cocoa, durian, and bananas, and palms of coco, areca, sugar, and sago. Delightful indeed were the lanes behind the town, but the heat was so great that the boys began to pant and puff as they walked under the shade of the bamboo, kanary, fruit and palm trees, and Mr. Lal Tata, taking off his pink turban, wiped away the perspiration that was streaming down his fat head!

They strayed into the ancient Dutch cemetery, whose crumbling collection of stone and brick monuments showed the age of the Dutch occupation of Amboyna.

The Chinaman and the wheelbarrow with the two cricket bags were left outside the cemetery. So was Horace. It was decided unanimously that Horace was not respectable enough to take into any cemetery, though there was no notice up that goats were not admitted.

The first stone they came to bore a partly obliterated Dutch inscription which commenced "Herr Ruhts."

"Herr Ruhts must have died a good many years ago!" said Pongo Walker reading the inscription. "I wonder what he died of?"

"Heat, I expect," said Porkis, puffing and blowing.

"Pineapples, I should think," put in Skeleton, moodily. "And look here, you chaps, there's another Herr Ruhts buried here. I expect he was a brother to the other one."

"And here's another!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington. "Why, the cemetery is full of Herr Rerr Ruhtses. They must have owned the place about a hundred years ago."

But now, Chu, their Chinese schoolfellow, was scratching his head in a puzzled fashion before yet another grave which bore the inscription, "Herr Ruhts."

"Too much plentee Herr Ruhts bury himself along cemeteryside!" said Chu.

And it was not till they had inspected the hundredth gravestone of this endless procession of Herr Ruhts that they discovered a clearer and more modern inscription which read "hier ruht" or here lies.

The mystery was solved, and the boys had had enough of cemeteries, though Mr. Lal Tata was greatly interested in the ancient graveyard.

"We came out to see life, not cemeteries," grumbled Pongo Walker.

"Come along, you chaps. Let's come outside and see if that Chink has bunked with the barrow and our cricket-bags!"

They were nearing the gate of the cemetery, when a howl of anguish from the roadway set them to a run.

"A-hoo! A-hoo! A-hoo!"

The howls echoed through the palm trees.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington.

"What's the matter!"

"Must be Horace setting about the Chink!" said Porkis, puffing and blowing with the heat as they ran.

But as they ran out on the roadway, Horace was sitting there, still tied to the wheel of the barrow, and full of pineapple and bananas. He was blinking amiably at the Chinese greengrocer, who was howling dis-

mally, with one hand thrust in the second cricket-bag, which was larger than its companion.

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Pongo. "He's put his hand in Gus's bag, and Gus has got him fast!"

This was the truth. In the second cricket-bag, the boys had stowed Gus, their pet crocodile, with the intent of giving him a run ashore after his long sojourn on the ship.

Gus did not have a very good time on the ship. He was either kept in the cricket-bag, or he was secured by a dog collar and chain to the foremast where the crew teased him, or he was splashed by the salt sprays.

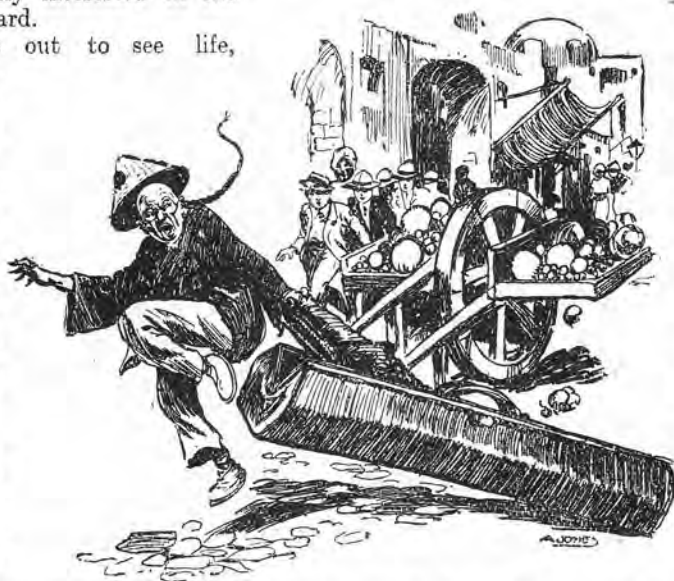
Perhaps his confinement in the cricket-bag was affecting Gus's temper, which was never of the sweetest. He had been kept in a cricket-bag since the boys had first captured him in their excursion up the Nile on the first voyage on the Bombay Castle. Gus had been

frozen in his cricket-bag north of the Arctic circle, and he had been roasted in it south of the equator.

And when the Chinese, intent on stealing something out of these mysterious long bags, had thrust his hand into the bag, Gus had nailed him like a rat-trap.

"Whoo-hoo!" yelled the Chink, at the sight of the boys. "Klicket-bat him bitee too much!"

"Well, you should have kept your hand out of the bag, Charles!" replied Dick



The Chink danced in the road with five feet of crocodile hanging to his hand and wrist. (See next page.)

severely. "Then Gus would not have got hold of you."

The boys unstrapped the battered bag, and the Chinese danced in the road with five feet of crocodile hanging to his hand and wrist.

It was very lucky for the Chink that his wrists were covered with heavy straps to strengthen them for the wheeling of the barrow. On these Gus's teeth had clinched like a rat-trap, but the boys found out that the Chink was more frightened than hurt.

"Let go, Gus!" said Skeleton gently to the crocodile.

But Gus's wicked eye glittered, as much as to say, "Sha'n't!" He was not going to let go. Gus never let go of anything once he had got a hold.

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Pongo, having had a look at Gus's irregular row of teeth. "Strikes me we had better put the Chink on a barrow and wheel him round till we can find a dentist. Perhaps if he gave Gus gas he might let go."

But Dick Dorrington had unlocked the other bag. He produced a couple of cricket stumps.

"If you lift his lips, Pongo," said he, "we can get these stumps in his back teeth, and if you, Chip, will bang him over the head with the cricket-bat, just there, on the top of his napper, maybe he'll lose his hold, and we can prise his jaws open."

These operations were in progress when Mr. Lal Tata, having finished his meditations amongst the tombs of Herr Ruhts, came bustling out of the road.

"What are you doing, boys?" he demanded. "What is this foolsomeness? How do you mean, bringing this wretched Gus fellow out and dragging him round town in cricket-bags? Ha, do you play cricket with crocodiles?"

"It's not our fault, sir, please," said Dick Dorrington. "If this miserable Chinese had not tried to steal from the bag, he would not have got his arm down Gus's neck."

They lifted Gus up between them, and tried to put the stump points between his clenched teeth.

But Gus did not want to bite on the cricket stumps. He wanted to chew the Chinese.

"Wait a minute!" said Skeleton, raking in his pocket. "If I put a bun on his nose and talk to him nicely, perhaps he will let go of the Chink and grab at the bun."

And Skeleton drew a dilapidated currant bun from his pocket, and perched it on the top of Gus's nose, talking to their pet in persuasive tones.

"Come on, Gussie!" said Skeleton, in soothing accents that might have decoyed a dove from an olive branch. "Look at the nice bun Uncle Skeleton has got for you if you will only let go of the Chinese gentleman."

But though Gus loved buns, he was not going to be caught by salt on his tail or buns on his nose.

He stood on his stubby hind legs on the dusty lane and clawed at the howling Chinese.

"Hold on a minute," said Pongo. "I'll try to hypnotise him. It is wonderful what an influence the human eye has on animals and reptiles."

And Pongo, standing in front of the angry crocodile, pulled a number of terrible faces as he stared into Gus's evil eyes and tried to mesmerise him.

Whether it was the result of Pongo's mesmerism or because his jaws were getting tired, it is difficult to say. But Gus relaxed his hold slightly on the leather wrist-strap of the Chinese.

Instantly the two cricket stumps were thrust between his back teeth, and Mr. Lal Tata, who had been assisting with his white umbrella at these dental operations, felt it slide through Gus's teeth.

"Heave, boys!" cried Dick, using his stump as a lever. "Whack him on his nut with the bat, Chip!"

Thus encouraged, Chip Prodggers beat upon Gus's thick skull with the bat.

"Whack him harder," urged Dick. "He only thinks you are tickling him, and it makes him laugh."

Chip whacked harder on Gus's skull, which was bullet proof, till at last Gus, his mouth forced open by the stumps, released his hold and let the Chinese go, with the sleeve of his blue jacket torn to ribands.

The Chinese at once turned to fly, but Arty collared him now.

"No you don't, John!" said Arty, with his pleasant smile. "We want you to wheel the barrow."

And as soon as Gus had let go his hold of the Chinese, his jaws crunched on the two cricket stumps and Mr. Lal Tata's umbrella.

The stumps were ground to splinters as Gus rolled in the dust, striking out with his claws, and Mr. Lal Tata gave a howl of anguish as he surveyed his umbrella.

"Ai! Ai!" he cried. "Look, boys! Look what your rascalsome crocodile fellow has done to my good umbrellas. It is ruined, my lovely umbrellas!"

But Lal did not have long to lament over his umbrella. Round a bend in the lane came a native driving a small but fierce-looking buffalo, of the sort that are used in the Philippines for ploughing.

There is nothing that this type of buffalo loves better than to wallow in a deep hole of black mud and water, with his nose just above the surface. And this was what this particular buffalo had been doing when fetched by his master to plough in a neighbouring pineapple field.

He looked just like a huge lump of black wet mud, from which peeped out two red angry eyes and two ugly curved horns.

The Philippine buffalo has one peculiarity. He is tractable enough with his yellow, brown, and chocolate-coloured masters, but he goes mad at the sight of a white man.

Now, though Lal was black, he was dressed very much in the style of a white man, and at the sight of him the buffalo lowered its muddy head and gave a deep bellow.

"Cave, sir!" cried Dick, who had just managed to get half of the struggling Gus back into his cricket-bag.

Lal switched round. The Chinaman had dodged behind his barrow.

The boys leaped for the cemetery wall as half a ton of mud roared down on Lal like a railway train.

"Yow!" yelled Lal, and opened his torn umbrella in the hope of shooting off the angry beast.

But he might as well have tried to stop a London and North-Western express passenger locomotive by the same means.

There was a biff and a bang.

Up went Lal and his umbrella, and his pink turban flying into the air, a huge patch of black mud on the seat of Lal's trousers showing where the buffalo express had hit him.

Lal fell sprawling in the road in a cloud of dust, and the angry water buffalo turned, skating along the road in its eagerness to turn and have another go at its prey.

But it came to a standstill, for, with a sharp pull at the line which fastened him to the barrow, Horace, the Egyptian goat, released himself and stood prepared to meet the enemy.

"Maw!" bleated Horace, lowering his great battering ram of a head to the ground, and pawing up dust with his cloven hoof.

"Maw!"

There was a note of defiance in the bleat which made the buffalo stretch forth its neck and bellow like the fog-horn of a steamer.

In the meantime, Lal, taking advantage of the situation, was climbing up a palm-tree as fast as he could go, whilst the Chinese, in the middle of the battle ground, yowled dismally under his overturned barrow.

"Moo-hoo!" bellowed the buffalo, lifting its sneering nose and dropping its horns in contempt of the new adversary.

"Maw-waw!" bleated Horace.

The buffalo was doubtful. It had never seen anything like Horace before.

Then, with an angry bellow, it charged.

But Horace was a cunning old fighter. In his time he had fought everything from a camel to a Polar bear, and he was not going to be upset by a common water buffalo.

He allowed the heap of mud to charge on to him. Then he neatly side-stepped and butted the buffalo one in the ribs in passing that sent it staggering across the lane, to fall with a heavy crash against the bank.

"Bravo, Horace!" yelled the boys from the top of the wall.

The water buffalo staggered to its feet, looking dazed. It bellowed, stamped, and lifted its sneering nose again to scent Horace, for, like all its kind, it was very short-sighted.

Then it saw Horace standing in the middle

of the road, pawing the ground and bleating triumphantly.

Away it went again, with an angry bellow. Horace dropped his head flat on the ground, as though he were trying to commit suicide under the charge of the angry buffalo.

But this was only one of old Horace's fighting tricks.

With a thunder of hoofs and a roar, the buffalo closed on him and ran over him. Then with one supreme twenty horse-power boost under the stomach, Horace lifted his heavy antagonist clean into the air so that it turned two somersaults and descended on its nose, ploughing up a column of dust.

"Well tackled, Horace!" roared the boys.

"Jollie well done, Horace!" shouted Mr. Lal Tata, looking down from his thirty-foot perch in a palm-tree.

"Hit him some jolly good hard kicks, Horace!" added Lal.

But the buffalo had had enough as it staggered to its feet. It saw Horace coming, and it turned and ran, Horace making a stern chase of it.

The native in charge of the buffalo ran as well.

Every time the buffalo tried to stop and turn, Horace charged it from behind like a battering ram.

"Whop! Whop! Whop!"

The boys could hear the thud of Horace's head echoing through the trees as the buffalo fled for its wallow of black mud and water, closely followed by its yelling master.

And with a parting rush Horace butted the buffalo back into its tank of ink-black mud. With a second butt, he sent its master flying after it. Then he turned and trotted back amiably to the breathless group of boys, who were shoving the one-wheel Chinese barrow in chase of him, with Mr. Lal Tata seated on one side of it, and the soap-faced, frightened Chink on the other.

The native stood up in the pool shaking his fist at them, looking as if he had been dipped in a pot of indian ink. He was telling the

boys what he thought of them and their goat in the purest Malay.

"It serves you right, my dear fellow!" answered Pongo Walker.

"You ought not to allow such dangerous brutes to walk about without a muzzle on. If your buffalo had left our goat alone, he would have left your buffalo alone. If I were you, I should take that buffalo, bath him, and



There was a biff and a bang, and up went Lal and his umbrella!
(See page 211.)

turn him into sausages!"

And, with this parting shot, the boys whirled the barrow away through the lanes behind Amboyna, skirting round the back of the Malay quarter, whose presence they could detect through the trees by the crowing of hundreds of fighting cocks and the strange Malay smell which Pongo called "Eau de Boulogne."

"We had better get out of this neighbourhood quickly," said Pongo Walker. "That Malay gentleman did not seem very pleasant

about his old buffalo. There are a lot of native huts hidden amongst the trees, and they do say these chaps stir out like a crowd of wasps from a nest when they are roused up. They are nearly as touchy as their rotten buffaloes!"

"Yes, boys!" said Mr. Lal Tata, gasping and waving his battered white umbrella feebly. "For sake of goodness, do hurry up and get out of this! Wheel the barrow along swiftly. I am in some funks. You are getting us into jolly lots of trouble!"

"Don't you worry yourself, sir," said Pongo, "we'll hitch Horace on to the barrow, just as they use dogs to pull them in China. He'll help to pull me along."

"Quick mister! Quick mister!" whimpered the Chinese, who was sitting on the barrow to balance Lal. "Malay man, him velley cross indeed. Listen!"

And, to be sure, there was an angry hum amongst the thick orchards and trees, to every few yards of which there was a Malay hut. The owner of the buffalo was stirring up his neighbours to come and take vengeance on this strange party who had upset his buffalo.

"That's all right, John!" said Pongo as he secured Horace to his rope and the rope to the barrow. "You leave it to us and keep up your pecker, we'll show you how to make a Chinese barrow shift in half a jiffy. All you have got to do is to hold tight to that cricket-bag with the crocodile in it. Nurse it in your arms tight. Gus don't like being shaken up. Are we all ready, boys?"

It was about time that they got a move on the barrow. The angry proprietor of the bullock, black from head to foot with mud, and brandishing a large twisty kris or dagger, had dashed out into the road behind them, closely followed by a number of his friends and relations, all of whom were part proprietors in the buffalo, which was a sort of Buffalo, Limited.

"Here they come!" said Pongo calmly. "Get along, Horace. Shove up, boys. Let her rip!"

And away went the barrow, the boys cheering and shouting, whilst Horace, excited by the noise, put down his head and charged along in noble style.

Soon the barrow was travelling down a steep lane on its one great wheel at a speed which left nothing to be desired.

They could hear the Malays howling behind them.

"Goodness, boys," gasped Lal, "we shall have terrible smashes! This is terrific speeds."

The boys were hanging on to the barrow, legging it down the hill as if they were wearing seven-leagued boots.

"You keep calm, sir!" puffed Pongo, striding along. "Those rascals won't chase us far. They will be afraid of running into a Dutch policeman. Another quarter of a mile and we shall be all right!"

The lane was rough and the single wheel of the barrow thumped and bumped as it flew downhill, the little group of boys leaping alongside it, whilst Horace tore along as though he were pulling at a fire-engine.

The Chinese proprietor of the barrow had turned green with fear. He knew that if the angry swarm of Malays behind caught them, he would probably be knifed. On the other hand, if the barrow came to pieces, he would probably be killed.

There was no time to think. The steep lane came to an end in the top of the Chinese quarter, at the head of what was called the street of Five Hundred Stairs.

This was a street of stone steps which led down to the bund from the high ground behind. It was something over a quarter of a mile in length, and before the boys could stop the barrow they were on the steps.

"Easy, Horace!" yelled Pongo as he was swung off his feet.

Bunk went the barrow down the first flight of steps. It was a terrible street that lay before them in tiers of steps.

Sometimes there were three steps in a group, sometimes there were four steps, sometimes there were flights of fifteen or sixteen steps.

Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! went the barrow down the first flight.

Horace seemed to have gone mad.

Chinese pigs rushed out of the way and dashed into the little Chinese shops that lined the street of Five Hundred Stairs.

"All right, sir!" puffed Arty. "I'll tackle him!"

And, rising to his feet, Arty closed his fists and advanced to meet the armed running man, who, with clenched teeth and staring eyes, was racing down on them. Arty had realised the situation at once. He had heard of Malays running amok, and he knew that he had got to meet, with his naked fists, a man who was as mad as a hatter and dangerous as a rattlesnake.

A superb boxer, Arty had no great fear for himself, for a man who knows how to use his fists is always a match for a man with a knife. But Arty was only a boy, and though he had a good long reach, he had to keep beyond the range of those two ugly twisty knives.

With a yell of "Deen!" (kill) Saru bore down upon him like the wind. The two glittering knives stabbed wildly at Arty.

But Arty's chest was not there when the knives stabbed with lightning swiftness. With a rapid side step he dodged the rush of the maddened prince.

Plunk!

It was a well-directed punch in the neck that took Prince Saru of Sambang in mid career, lifting him clean off the ground and turning over in a sort of somersault.

With a crash and a clatter of knives he thumped down on the roadway, his chin ploughing up the loose macadam. Then he rolled on his back and lay still, whilst Arty calmly stepped forward and collected the ironmongery.

"Ho, crikey!" panted Mr. Lal Tata, sitting up amongst the ruins of the wheelbarrow. "You have killed him, Arty! You have hit Malay gentleman running amok such kicks with your fists that you have give him spifflications. He is dead! He is no more! He is dead as hobnails!"

"I don't think so, sir," said Arty, leaning over the prince and laying his hand on his heart. "He is only winded. I have wafted him away into dreamland. He'll come round presently."

And now there was a rush of policemen to the spot. They were all very brave now that Arty had stopped the runaway, and they came running out of houses and shops and

sliding down lamp-posts in all directions; in fact, it seemed as though it was raining policemen.

They came up very excited, and they took Arty's name and address in Malay, and wrote it down in Dutch. Arty gave his name as Arthur Dove, schoolboy, of the British ship Bombay Castle.

The police-inspector took it down, "Artjee Dovjee, foolboy. Britischj Matschappie Bambooze Castlj."

Some of the policemen were fanning the prince, and they kept on fanning till he showed signs of life. Then he sat up, scowled at the boys in a dazed fashion, and allowed himself to be led off to the police-station very quietly.

Then the police-inspector, who spoke a little English, told Mr. Lal Tata that, though his Highness Prince Saru had run amok, he had not done any damage. He had not killed anyone. To run amok was not a misdemeanour. Any Malay gentleman might run amok as much as he liked so long as he did not kill anyone, and as nobody had been killed the prince could not be detained. But the police-inspector hinted that it would be just as well if he managed to keep the prince in the station till sunset, and that he hoped all the British boys would then be back on their ship safe, for a Malay gentleman, even when he is running amok, does not like to be punched in the jaw, as the Malays are a very proud and vengeful race.

The punch on the jaw had really done Prince Saru more good than a cab load of doctors. It had brought him to his senses.

But, recovering from the knockout blow and the mad frenzy of his run, Prince Saru had enough wits left to see who had administered the cure. The defeat and death of his favourite fighting cock had set him on the run. It was the last straw of many troubles. He had spent nearly all his thousand pounds, and he stood to win back three hundred or lose the lot when he had put his prize bird into the ring. But an unknown bird, a shabby, yellow-necked rooster, brought down by a gang of ragged sports and fans from Ilo-Ilo, had killed his bird in the first round.

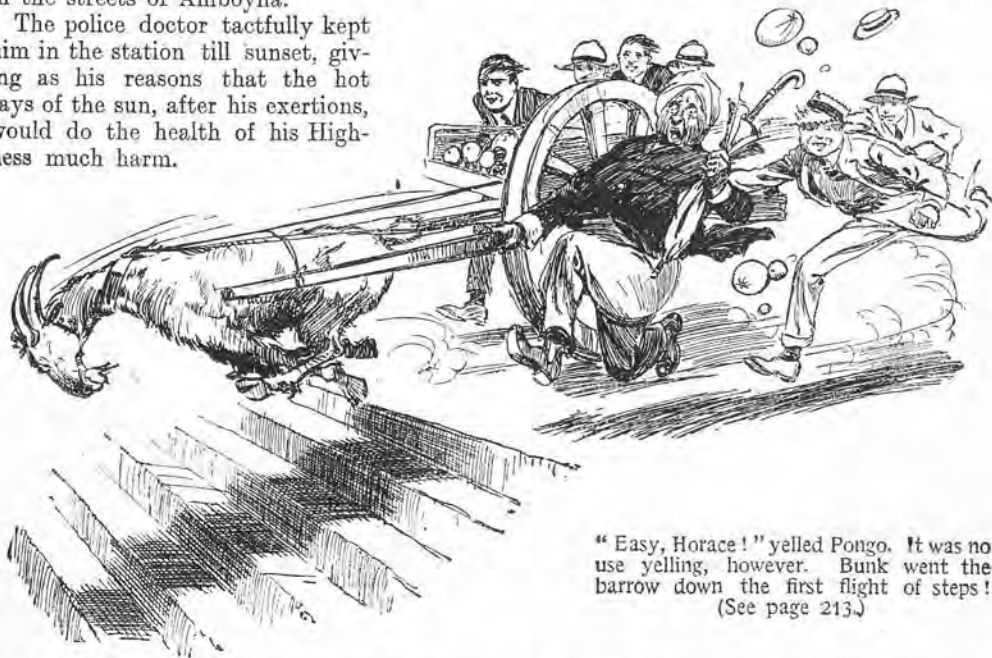
Then Prince Saru, with murder in his heart

and the red glare of bhong in his eyes, had seized his knives and had run forth to kill, with the results already narrated.

It was with a different feeling of murder in his heart that he allowed himself to be laid on a bed at the police-station, where his attendants fanned him and rubbed his feet.

The hot madness which had sent him amok had died out of his veins. But he vowed vengeance deep and dire against the British boys who had laid him low and who had made a laughing-stock of his reign of terror in the streets of Amboyna.

The police doctor tactfully kept him in the station till sunset, giving as his reasons that the hot rays of the sun, after his exertions, would do the health of his Highness much harm.



"Easy, Horace!" yelled Pongo. It was no use yelling, however. Bunk went the barrow down the first flight of steps! (See page 213.)

At the same time the inspector posted a couple of armed sentries at the door, partly in honour of his distinguished, if unwilling guest, partly to hold him down if he should show further signs of madness.

But Prince Saru lay quiet on the bed all through that hot, drowsy afternoon. Then, at sunset, he was escorted politely and officially to his great gilded prahu, which paddled off over an oil-smooth sea for Sambang.

They picked up a tow from a Dutch tug boat and travelled fast through the night, and

early on the following morning the prahu entered the Straits of Sambang on a tide that was running like a mill race.

By eight o'clock the Prince Saru was in the palace.

With a brow black as thunder he stalked through the crowd of anxious and obsequious courtiers to the innermost temple of the palace, and here, dragging back a heavy curtain of cloth of gold, he entered the large, silent hall which was floored with mother-of-pearl. Standing on a pedestal of onyx at

the end of the hall stood a hideous figure, lit only by a small red lamp of scented oil.

It was Balum, the good joss or Luck of Sambang, the figure of a huge orang-outang carved in wood by one of the superb Japanese artists of the olden days.

The lips of the hideous creature were drawn back revealing teeth of ivory, and the eyes were formed of two balas rubies of enormous value, which glowed red in the gloom of the dim hall.

Balum had been brought to Sambang by the first raiders who had started this pirate

settlement which had gradually developed into a petty principedom.

Earthquakes had cracked the palace. A British cruiser had bombarded it in the old days. But Balum had never taken any hurt.

And gradually about this terrible orang-outang figure had grown up a tradition which caused it to be worshipped as a god and even to become the object of human sacrifice. It was the Luck of Sambang, and the only thing that Prince Saru, in his dark soul, believed in. Otherwise, he would soon have prised the ruby eyes out of the joss and would have pawned them.

But the rubies were safe from Saru and from the eight hundred Chinese and flat-nosed yellow men who formed his subjects.

All these did poo-jah to the Luck of Sambang and burned joss sticks before it. On a small lacquered table were plates of rice and pickled fish and food, offerings which were daily renewed.

Even Saru dropped on his hands and knees and crawled across the mother-of-pearl tiles of the floor to the foot of this awful statue.

Then, prostrate on his face, he vowed that, ere another moon had waxed and waned, he would offer human sacrifice at the altar of Balum.

And Prince Saru, whispering to the floor at the foot of the idol's pedestal, particularly mentioned a huge fat British boy who was called Artec, and who hit blows with his hands like the kicks of a donkey.

Long years had elapsed since there had been human sacrifice in the Temple of Balum. And all the time the prosperity of Sambang had been declining. Steamers had knocked the bottom out of piracy, for they were independent of the calms and fierce tides of the Straits of Sambang, and the private junks could no longer tackle them.

But the rajah, Prince Saru's father, was very old and failing, and Saru was full of new ideas. He would start the piracy business again on novel lines, and, with a human sacrifice or two to inspire his followers, he would bring a new era of prosperity to Sambang.

And these were the thoughts of Prince

Saru as he lay prostrate on the floor before the idol which glared down on him with its baleful ruby eyes.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

IN the meantime our friends, having collected the remnants of the barrow, and having presented the Chinese owner of the fragments with ten shillings as a consolation prize, felt that they had had a thoroughly enjoyable and exciting morning.

Skeleton was hungry. So they got away from the admiring crowd which surrounded them and sought refuge in a Chinese eating-house, where they ate many strange things and asked no questions.

It was blistering hot now, so, at Mr. Lal Tata's advice, they decided to rest in the long cane chairs in the matted verandah of the hash joint, and here they reclined, drinking cups of weak, straw-coloured Chinese tea, till the sun declined towards the west and it was time for them to go on board the ship again.

When they reached the port, they read with dismay a notice posted by Scorchers Wilkinson, the Sixth Form master, who was in charge of the boat routine.

"No boy," ran the notice, "will be allowed to bring more than one pet on board.—By Order."

"Crikey!" exclaimed Pongo, dolefully looking round the fair which had been established at the port. "I suppose Gus and Horace don't count. But I was thinking of taking half a dozen of these big white parrots off to the ship and teaching them to talk and to fire cannons and to do all sorts of stunts. They're dirt cheap at ninepence each."

They were magnificent birds, not unlike the Australian cockatoos. But they had pink crests and great curling moustaches of feathers. And perched alongside there were hundreds of painted screaming lories, and any amount of Java sparrows, cut-throats, slaughter-jacks, golden-puffs, Ikey Moses, Black-eyed Susans, and other rare cage-birds which were to be had for the reasonable price of two a penny.

There were also silver monkeys and huge

baboons. You could get a baboon as big as Lower School fag for one-and-six. There had been a regular rush of baboons into the market when the news had gone forth that the school-ship was coming to Amboyna. So baboons were a drug in the market.

The Lower School kids, who were already heavily laden with bags of wonderful seashells and corals, were in despair when they read the notice.

"Scorcher is a rotter!" exclaimed one sadly. "I bought a hundred birds for five shillings this morning. Now I've got to leave them all behind. And I could have got five shillings apiece for them in London."

Then a bright thought struck Pongo Walker. In ten minutes the boats would shove off and the masters had already gone on board the Bombay Castle.

"Tell you what, boys!" he called. "If we are only allowed one pet apiece, let us have a good one. None of your Java sparrows or poll parrots. Let us all buy a one-and-sixpenny baboon. Let me do the bargaining. If we buy a hundred, we ought to get wholesale terms, tenpence each."

The baboon dealers were all listening intently, though they did not understand much what Pongo was saying. They were eager to get rid of their stock, for there is a secret in selling a baboon, just as there is a secret in selling a horse.

The baboon is a savage and unruly beast, and every one of the hundred and twenty sleepy beasts that were on the market that afternoon was quiet and well behaved only because he had been dosed early in the day with a small pill of opium. In an hour or two the effects of the drug would be gone, and the baboon would reveal himself in his real character, which is like that of a lot of unpleasant human beings, half monkey, half pig.

Pongo soon made his wants known. He pulled a monkey face, scratched himself, and gave a perfect impersonation of a baboon, to the great delight of the baboon merchants. Then he held up his hands, showing his fingers and thumbs ten times, indicating thereby that he wanted a hundred baboons at rock-bottom prices. The market price was indi-

cated by showing a penny and ten fingers and thumbs.

The baboon man tried to explain in Chinese Malay that one-and-six was the baboon quotation. Amidst loud laughter he offered Pongo a sick baboon for a shilling.

But Pongo turned to the parrot market, and at the sight of his movement the bottom dropped out of the baboon market.

In another hour or so the whole lot of baboons would want another opium pill to keep them quiet, and a baboon needs two-pennyworth of opium to take any effect on him.

Pongo handed over the money, and the baboon merchants handed over their tenpenny baboons, of which they were well pleased to get rid.

As a matter of fact, baboons were merely vermin. They came down from the hills and snaffled the nutmegs off the trees in the nutmeg orchards, and one baboon in a nutmeg orchard could do a pound's worth of damage in a night's pilfering and wasting.

The natives were jolly glad to see the last of the baboons. Nobody liked killing them, because it was like killing a human being. So they were always glad to send a baboon away on a ship if anyone would take him.

Some of the Lower School kids were half afraid of their purchases, which were as big as themselves. But Pongo marshalled the whole school up, and ordered each boy to take his baboon by the hand.

Then two by two, baboons and boys, they marched down to the boats and steam pin-naces that were waiting to take them off to the ship.

Mr. Lal Tata shook his head as he looked round the boats and saw a baboon sitting next to every boy, a horrible, dissolute gang of ruffians with thunder and lightning colours in their faces.

"You see," said he gloomily, "there will be jolly rows about all these monkey fellows. Captain Handyman will not want his lovely ship crowded with hooligan monkey people."

The sun set with tropic suddenness, and the purple dusk of the Eastern night had already fallen as the boys trooped up to the hurricane-deck to fall in for roll call.

The muster roll was always called when they came off from the shore, and the Bombay Castle was to sail that night.

There was a great shuffling of feet on the hurricane-deck as the hundred lined up by Forms, all toeing the seam of one long deck plank, and all holding a baboon by the hand.

The sailors were splitting with laughter, and the quartermaster, who had to sound the bugle to announce that the muster was all ready, could hardly blow his bugle.

Then Captain Handyman and Scorchers Wilkinson turned the corner of the deckhouse and came to a standstill as they saw one hundred boys and one hundred huge baboons lined up to answer for their names.

"Hey! What's this?" exclaimed the captain. "Do these young rascals think that I am going to have my beautiful ship turned into a monkey raft, or—"

The words were hardly out of his mouth than the boss baboon of the pack, the first to get over the soothing influences of his opium pill, gave a chattering bark at the sight of Scorchers Wilkinson in his cap and gown.

Pongo, who affected to understand monkey language, said that the old baboon called, "Cave!"

At any rate, the baboon gave a sudden snarl and snap at Arty, who was holding him, and tore his paw from Arty's grip.

At the call of their leader the whole pack of baboons seemed to wake up. They struggled away from their schoolboy companions and gathered in a barking mob round their chief.

And in another second they were off down the deck in a mad rush, barking like a pack of hounds in full cry.

"Look out, boys!" yelled Pongo. "The baboons are loose."

The parade broke up and rushed along the decks after the mob of infuriated baboons, who took to the upper or boat deck.

The pack followed their leader, who dashed up the funnel stays and led them all to the rim of the mighty funnel. There they stopped, chattering and barking, whilst Captain Handyman, looking up, wrung his hands in despair, for the funnel of the Bombay Castle was festooned with monkeys. And some of the baboons had picked up cobs of coal from

the coal bags for the steam pinnaces which were kept on the boat deck.

With these they started bombarding the groups of boys on the boat-deck, buzzing the coal with considerable accuracy and force.

Porkis got his head cut open with a lump of coal.

"Wait a minute!" called Captain Handyman. "I'll soon have the crush out of that!"

He ran to the bridge and pulled the wires both of the great steam fog-horn and the steam syren.

"Boo-o-o-o-o-m!" roared the fog-horn; "whoo-whoo-whoo-whoo-whoo-c-e-e-e-c-e-e!" wailed the siren, hiding the mob of infuriated baboons in a mob of steam.

The duet of the two steam blasts echoed in the dark hills behind Amboyna. The crowd of apes clapped their paws to their ears, stunned by the deep bass of the big foghorn and the whooping falsetto of the steam syren.

Then the whistle was too much for their nerves. They fell from the funnel in an avalanche, some shinning down the stays, others tumbling down forty feet with a thump on the decks.

One elderly baboon was so horrified by the blast that he fell down the funnel and climbed back covered with soot.

He was the last in the pack as it raced to the side of the ship. Alongside there was a Chinese water-boat which had just finished pumping in its load of fresh water into the tanks of the great steamship, and the furled sail and spar were rubbing against the rail of the Bombay Castle.

Greatly to Captain Handyman's relief, the pack raced down this spar full cry, swarming down in heaps on the deck of the water-boat, whilst the Chinese crew rushed down into their cabin, persuaded that it was raining baboons from the darkness above.

"Cast off that boat!" ordered Captain Handyman as the last of the baboons, the sooty old gentleman, had rushed off the ship by this exit.

And the water-boat was cast off, the tide taking it swiftly astern into the gloom with its load of jabbering, barking apes, who looked like a crew of demons in the half light of the dusk.

"Now, young gentlemen," said Scorchers Wilkinson sternly; "now that you have had your little jape, and we are free of that Simian crew, we will take the call over. After that you will assemble in the class-rooms and you will write me an essay, 'My Day in Amboyna, and What I Did with It.'"

"Jiminy!" murmured Dick Dorrington. "That's a stinger. It'll take hours and hours. And we'd better leave out all about the buffalo and the wheelbarrow and the chap who ran amok."

Otherwise we might get our leave stopped at the next port!"

And the boys were all writing busily as the Bombay Castle heaved up her anchor and stole quietly out over the calm sea, making a long detour round miles and miles of far-reaching coral reefs before she bore up for the entrance of the narrow Straits of Sambang.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

ALL that night the Bombay Castle steamed very slowly through the Java Sea, coming to an anchor at about four in the morning, and lying where she anchored till nearly breakfast time, for there were banks of mist on the sea, and these waters were treacherous and full of reefs.

But as the sun gathered strength the sea

mists rolled up like a veil of gauze, and it was a lovely afternoon as the ship waddled quietly along through a sea that was like blue paint for colour and a mirror for smoothness.

The day school was over. Scorchers Wilkinson had joined the captain on the bridge. Mr. Lal Tata was sitting down in the forewell-deck, his dark face beaming as he watched Arty Dove, the strong boy of the school, knocking the stuffing out of a Millwall steward who fancied himself as a sort of Isle of Dogs Carpenter.

Swinging by his arms to a rope, Cecil, the ship's orang outang, swung over the heads of the cheering mob of schoolboys and stewards who surrounded the boxing ring, the gentle rolling of the ship sending him from side to side like a pendulum. Cecil loved boxing above all things,



Pongo sat up amongst the ruins of the barrow, rubbing his head in a dazed fashion. "I should think we are in a muck!" he exclaimed. (See page 214.)

and this rope had been swung from the boom by the quartermaster specially for Cecil's benefit, for if he got amongst the crowd of boys round the ring, they always managed to step back on his toes, and that made Cecil cross.

"Break away there! Break away!" the boys were yelling. "Bravo, School! Sock old Pattypans one in the kisser!"

"Look at old Cecil!" said Captain Handyman, puffing at his Burma cheroot. "He's

enjoying the scrap as much as anyone. It's wonderful how keen that orang is on boxing."

"I've never seen Cecil look so well, sir, since we've been aboard the ship," said Scorcher Wilkinson, as he walked up and down the bridge keeping step with the captain.

"That's because we are getting back into his own climate and country," said Captain Handyman. "Stands to reason there's no place better for you than the place where you were born. I was born in Nelson Street, Portsmouth myself, and I've sampled most of the air in the world from the North Pole to the South Pole. But there's no air suits me better than that of Nelson Street, Portsmouth. I feel a new man as soon as I turn round the end of the street by the baker's shop. But look, young Arty Dove has deflated that steward chap!"

A yell of delight went up from the boys.

Herb Miffin, feather-weight champion of Millwall, was reclining on the deck, panting, whilst the referee counted him out, and Arty stood over him, ready to shake hands when he felt better.

Then Arty was led away to his corner and fanned and sponged, and a blank look settled on the faces of the Chinese firemen, who had come up from the depths of the ship to see the fight.

The Chinese are born gamblers, and they had put all the stokehole money on the steward. Captain Handyman glanced approvingly at the mob of cheering boys in the well deck below.

"The boys are all fit as fiddles," said he. "Dr. O'Sullivan hadn't got a case—not even a toothache or a little finger ache on his sick return for this morning. It's this craze for boxing that's doing them all good. It prevents 'em overeating and stodging lollipops in this hot climate. There's nothing like a turn with the gloves for boys and men."

"The engines have slowed since noon, sir!" commented Mr. Wilkinson.

Captain Handyman nodded.

"There's two reasons to that," said he. "Mr. MacStaggers is getting trouble with his condensers, and I'm wanting to hold her back to run the Straits of Sambang by night."

"Why is that, sir?" asked Mr. Wilkinson.

"The night tides are slacker," replied Captain Handyman, "and it's a passage that's safer to run by dark than by day, for there's a flaming baby volcano called Bula Tongi that's as good as a street-lamp through the strait. You can get all your bearings by Bula Tongi at night, but by day the prevailing east wind blows all its smoke down the strait as often as not, and one or two steamers have been put ashore by finding themselves in a sudden fog. That is why I prefer to run the Sambang passage by night."

"Sambang!" mused Mr. Wilkinson. "Was that not once a great resort of pirates? I think I once remember my uncle, who was captain of a China ship, telling me that he was attacked by pirates whilst becalmed near the Straits of Sambang."

"Pirates!" replied Captain Handyman. "Those Sambang people were always pirates and always will be pirates, though they are supposed to be looked after by the Dutch Government. What's bred in the bone comes out in the flesh, and I should not like anything to happen to my ship to-day in the Sambang channel. There's a Rajah of Sambang who would very soon be after any pickings that there might be. Why, it's only last year that he picked the bones of a Japanese Maru ship that hit the coral going through—cleaned her out till there wasn't a bit of brass or copper left in the ship. There was quite a lot of talk about it. That's what makes me a bit anxious till we are on the other side of Sambang. I feel responsible with these hundred boys on board, and last night I dreamed that the Rajah of Sambang had collared the lot of 'em."

Scorcher Wilkinson smiled grimly as he kept pace with the captain in his turns up and down the bridge.

"Speaking as their schoolmaster," said he, "I should be sorry for the rajah if he collared Dick Dorrington or his chum Arty Dove, or Pongo Walker, or Chip Prodgors, or any of that crowd that we call the Glory Hole Gang. I have a notion that they would make Sambang hotter for the rajah than he could make it for them!"

Captain Handyman smiled grimly.

"That's a fact, Mr. Wilkinson," said he.

"I am supposed to be a good disciplinarian, but I'd sooner handle the roughest gang of roustabouts from the crimps of the Barbary Coast, 'Frisco, than some of those young gentlemen of yours. Look! There's Skeleton putting the gloves on, and, by Jingo, they're pulling the gloves on the orang!"

Cecil had swung himself down from his rope into the ring, indicating that he, too, wanted to have a turn with the gloves. And Skeleton had expressed his readiness to give Cecil a few rounds.

Captain Handyman leaned on the rail of the bridge, and looked down at the excited crowd of boys.

"I say, Wilkinson," said he, "I suppose there is no chance of that orang turning rusty if he gets a left-hander on his boko? He's an ugly customer.

But Mr. Wilkinson laughed and shook his head.

"If it were a boy outside the Glory Hole Gang, I would stop it," said he; "but Cecil is perfectly safe with any of them. He is tremendously attached to Skeleton and his chums. Look, they are putting gloves on his feet."

Skeleton stood in the middle of the ring, whilst Cecil, retiring to his corner, crouched, then leaped into the air.

Skeleton did not have a chance as Cecil hurled himself upon him, hitting him and cuffing him with four boxing gloves simultaneously. He was rolled head over heels. Then Cecil chased the referee round the ring, giving time for Skeleton to regain his feet once more.

This time Cecil sparred up to him from the ground his long arms flying like windmill sails.

But Skeleton launched out, and by a lucky chance hit Cecil square on the nose. At the same moment Cecil, attempting to hit out with his left foot, punched himself behind the ear.

Shrieks of laughter went up from the boys as Cecil lost his temper with his own feet, and sat down in the ring to see about it.

He looked at the boxing gloves which covered them. Then he punched himself in the nose with his foot. In a second Cecil was all over himself, fighting with his gloved hands

against his gloved feet till, finally becoming frightened of the shower of blows that he was raining on himself, he leaped suddenly out of the ring, climbed up his rope, shinned up the mast, and sat on top of the foremast headlight, chattering angrily.

And he stayed up there till the sun began to sink in the west and distant mountain peaks above the horizon showed that the Bombay Castle was beginning to approach the dangerous Straits of Sambang.

It was not till dark that the great steamer approached the entrance of the narrow and tortuous channel. Rounding a dark point of land, Captain Handyman found his street-lamp burning, for the baby volcano of Bula Tongi was burning brightly, a red flare twenty miles away.

With two men in the chains the ship crept slowly into the channel, a swift tide rippling round her in races, reflecting the lights of the steamer in long swirling lines.

Up on the bridge, the captain and his officers were gathered together. The boys stood in groups on the decks, for the whisper had gone round that the straits of Sambang were a danger point of the voyage.

But Captain Handyman seemed to know where he was in the dangerous, reef-strewn passage through which the tide was ripping like a mill-race. First the land would loom up on one bow. Then the steering-engine of the ship would be heard clanking in the silence, and the Bombay Castle would tack across to the other shore.

The boys looked with interest at the low volcano of Bula Tongi, which burned steadily with its red flare. First it seemed on one side of the ship, and then the other, as she twisted and turned up the tortuous channel.

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Pongo. "We seem to be dancing all round that old volcano. But we are getting nearer and nearer all the time!"

The ship was about half-way through the Straits when Cecil, who was standing on deck with the boys, began to cough and choke.

"Old Cecil is getting cold," said Skeleton. "We don't want him laid up with bronchitis. Run down to the cabin, Pongo, and fetch my large ulster and a scarf or two."

Pongo did as he was bid. He brought up a large coat and pushed Cecil into it. Then he tied up Cecil's face in a scarf and clapped a school straw hat on top of his head.

"There you are, Cecil," said he. "Now you can't catch cold!"

Cecil grunted his approval. There was nothing he liked better than being wrapped up warm, and there were generally some brandyballs to be found in the pockets of Skeleton's overcoat.

Cecil loved brandyballs, and he was not disappointed when he thrust his paw into the pocket of his new coat. There was a fine paper of sticky brandyballs and Cecil pouched the lot, paper and all.

But the cause of Cecil's choking was not cold. His delicate nose and throat had been the first to pick up the waft of sulphur which a change in the wind had brought down the Straits from the volcano.

Had Captain Handyman noticed this, perhaps he would not have held on to run the most dangerous part of the narrow channel which he was approaching.

But it was not till ten minutes later that the flare of the burning volcano was hidden in a red glow, and in a few minutes the ship was surrounded by a thick fog which set all the boys coughing.

"Crikey!" exclaimed Porkis. "What a whiff of matches! It's like those French ones that burn blue. Sulphur—oh—wow! Honk! Honk! Honk!"

And Porkis, who was fat and chesty, and short in the neck, leaned on Cecil and coughed violently in the sulphurous fumes.

Cecil stroked his hand sympathetically. Cecil was always upset when any of the boys coughed or was ill.

The smoke grew thicker, enveloping the ship. The change of wind which Captain Handyman had feared had taken place, and Bula Tongi was pouring out enormous volumes of volcanic dust and gas which made the air thick as a London fog, and soon covered the decks with a fine sand.

All they could see of the volcano now was a dull red glare, and the boys looked at it awed.

"It's like the last days of Pompeii!" said Pongo Walker.

"Looks to me like the last days of the Bombay Castle if we don't have a bit of luck!" replied Dick Dorrington grimly. "This is where the captain wants to see his way a bit. We are near the narrowest part of the straits, and there's coral reefs on either side of us."

"Hallo!" he added. "What's that?"

The boys knew every noise in the ship now and its meaning, just as any old sea engineer listening to his engines can tell if there is anything wrong in their running.

And there was something wrong in the sound of the steering-gear on the bridge. Instead of the steady run-over of the engine, and the response of the great steel tiller-head astern, there was a jarring, irregular sound. Then followed a jangling of bells in the engine-room.

"What's up, Hodges?" called Pongo to a quartermaster who went racing astern.

"Up!" replied Mr. Hodges. "We're in a proper old frapp—jus' where we didn't want it. Steering gear's broken down! We're going to gear up the hand-steering! Rudder's jammed."

But before Mr. Hodges and his assistants could couple up the hand steering-gear and force the jammed rudder over to centre, there was a gentle rasping sound under the keel of the ship. A quiver seemed to run through the whole length of the gallant old Bombay Castle as, with her engines running fast astern, she seemed to be doing her best to fight off the reef that was waiting for her.

But it was too late. She came to a stop in the thick, sulphurous fog, with the tide ripping past her like a mill-race.

She was on the coral!

And the sulphurous mist, clearing a bit for a moment, showed them that she had a dismal neighbour. About four hundred yards away loomed the dim outline of a large steamer's funnels, upperworks, and masts. It was the Tokyo Maru, the ill-fated Japanese steamer which had stuck there and had been looted by the pirates of Sambang.

And the boys, peering through the mist, heard shouts in the blanket of smoke. Then, one, two, three, four, five, six—the outlines of large junks, swirling down on the tide, swarming with men, showed like a shadow-

show in the red glow. They heard shouts from the bridge, grapnels were thrown and hooked cleverly in the rails and davits of the stranded Bombay Castle, as junk after junk came bumping alongside.

The pirates of Sambang had not forgotten their cunning at the game.

As Captain Handyman afterwards told the boys, the handling of the junks in that swift tide was a masterpiece.

But all the boys knew about it was that over the rails leaped hundreds of yellow men, swarming on the deck of the steamer.

"Pirates!" gasped Arty, the first of the stupefied boys to realise the situation.

And up went his fists, hitting a yellow man in the face with a kerplunk that spread his nose all over his visage, and sent him shooting along the gritty deck.

But Dick, wiser than Arty, held his arm.

"Stop it, Arty!" he gasped. "We can't fight hundreds of armed men! Dodge back here!"

And he dragged his chum behind a fresh crowd of Chinese and Malays who poured over the rail, giving the Bombay Castle the aspect of a Chinese pleasure steamer.

Luckily the Chink who had received Arty's blow was so taken aback that he did not see who dealt it.

"Keep together, Glory Hole!" called Dick, as the pirates seized them. "We are all here. Stand by Cecil and keep him quiet!"

The pirates showed the boys no violence. They merely grabbed them by the shoulders, indicating that they were to climb over the rail and down to one of the junks.

When they hesitated they were shown a knife.

Cecil was grabbed with the rest. In the big ulster, with his head wrapped up and a school strawyard clapped down on top, he was not very distinguishable from the rest of the boys.

And he went very quietly, for he had got his mouth full of Skeleton's brandyballs, and they had stuck his huge jaws together.

They found themselves in a junk, which rapidly shoved off from the rest. They had a glimpse of the great hull of the Bombay Castle with all her lights burning, her masthead lights showing above the reek of the sulphurous fog which drifted along the face of the waters. Then the men rowing the junk bent to their sweeps with a deep-chested Hi! Ya! and the boys knew that they were being rowed ashore.

"My hat!" exclaimed Pongo. "We are nabbed! We are being taken to the pirates' home!"

They could not see much for a while. All they knew was that the junk was fighting her way across a stiff current through the fog, and that a fine rain of volcanic sand from the crater of the volcano was sifting down on the decks of the junk.

But soon the air cleared, and they saw the shadow of land ahead, whilst the rush of the current slackened.

A few minutes later, and the junk shot into a small harbour, surrounded by tall areca and coco palms, where the air was heavy with the scent of clove and nutmeg-trees.

Lights were sparkling ashore, and tom-toms were beating in the shadow of the trees, whilst in the

gloom they could see the white outlines of stone walls that looked like a fortress.

The junk bumped into a wharf of crazy bamboo piles. Then the boys were roughly ordered to get ashore, a powerful armed guard surrounding them.

"These chaps don't seem to want to kiss us!" remarked Arty. "I wonder what they've got up against us, and who their boss is?"

And little did Arty dream that the boss of their captors was none other than the infuriated bhang-soaked native he had bowled over but yesterday on the bund of Amboyna.



Prince Saru dropped before the awful statue. (See page 217.)

They passed through a high gate of masonry, and through gardens that were dark and mysterious under the stars. Before them they saw a huge house with a Chinese roof, with curly eaves and round windows.

There were more armed guards loafing here who raised a shout of exultation as they saw the boys marching between their captors. But nobody made a sign of threatening them.

Through the great gates of this palace, or castle, they passed to find themselves in a great, dark hall, which dimly showed pillars of gilded wood and huge glass candelabra. Then they were hurried through long passages of carved stone till, at last, they came to two great gates of teak, clamped with bronze, and secured by a huge lock.

These were thrown open, and they marched into a second great hall. Then the doors closed behind them with a clang, and the key was turned and bolts were shot on them.

"Crikey!" exclaimed Pongo. "What-ho! We have found it! It is the palace of the evil genie, and look—there's old Cecil's brother!"

He pointed through the gloomy space of the hall. There, lighted by a single sinister red lamp, standing on its onyx pedestal, was Balum, the orang god of the Pirates of Sambang.

The boys were not awed by the grim-looking carving. They marched to the idol and surveyed it closely.

"Carved wood!" exclaimed Pongo. "And look at its eyes! Real rubies! My hat! Isn't it fine! It's as near like old Cecil as makes no dif—"

Pongo had never a chance to finish his

remarks. He had been holding Cecil's hand when they had entered the great hall. But he had released it when he tried to slide across the mother-of-pearl tiles with which the floor of the Hall of Balum was paved.

But now there was a snarl and a growl behind him.

Cecil had spotted the figure of the other orang on its tall pedestal of onyx.

In a second he had crouched behind the boys. In another second he had stripped off Skeleton's overcoat, and had thrown his scarves and strawyard with the school riband on the floor. Cecil was going to fight, and he

did not like to be lumbered up with clothes when he was going to engage in mortal combat. He was wearing a pair of white flannel trousers, but he took these off by tearing them into ribands with one clutch of his mighty paws.

"Stop him, boys; he's going for the idol!" cried Pongo.

But he might as well have tried to stop an

earthquake. With one enormous bound Cecil leapt over the heads of his friends. With another he leaped up on the pedestal, his huge paws grabbing the carved figure by the throat.

The boys saw the two orangs, real and carved, rocking on the pedestal. Then down they went behind the altar with a crash.

Pongo groaned as he surveyed the empty pedestal of onyx.

"That's done it!" he exclaimed. "That's put the lid on! Cecil has done in their idol! There will be a row about this!"

The boys rushed round behind the pedestal. In his pocket Dick had an electric torch.



With a roar of rage, Cecil leapt down from his pedestal and caught up Prince Saru in his terrible grip. (See page 227.)

He flashed this on the scene, and they found Cecil, greatly surprised, nursing the wooden head of his supposed antagonist and staring into its red, jewelled eyes. The rest of the figure was broken into three pieces.

"Oh, Cecil, Cecil!" exclaimed Pongo. "You've done it! You've bust up their joss! Come, give Uncle Pongo that head! You don't want it; he does!"

Cecil gave up the head of his enemy with a snort of disgust. He had torn up his trousers to fight *this*!

"It's nobby work!" said Pongo, admiring the carved head. "But what are we going to do about it? These chaps will be mad; they might turn on us. Here they capture us from a stranded ship, and before we are in their place five minutes we've bust their old idol. I think we'll stick to the head, anyway. Those eyes shine like real jewels!"

"Him ruby!" said Chu, pointing to the eyes.

"Rubies in a wooden head, eh?" exclaimed Pongo. "Well, they must be worth a lot of money, and if we get out of this safely, we'll sell the rubies and we'll have the biggest blow-out there's ever been in the history of the Glory Hole! But some of these chaps will be coming back soon. What shall we do?"

"I've got it!" said Dick. "Cecil's torn up his trousers and he's bust up their old joss. Let him take its place. They won't be able to spot the difference in this light!"

"Brainy notion!" exclaimed Pongo, with approval. "Up you get, Cecil!"

He pointed to the pedestal.

"Good boy!" he whispered. "Stand still, for goodness' sake! Brandyball!"

Cecil knew what the magic word "brandyball" meant. He was used to standing to be photographed and sketched, and brandyball meant that if he stood still long enough, he would be rewarded with his favourite sweetmeat.

He hopped up on the pedestal, and the boys gave a cry of wonderment.

The Japanese artist who had made the original idol of brown lacquered wood had studied the orang-utang to a hair, and as Cecil stood in the place of the idol, the red

lamp shining on to his eyes and his white fangs showing, he assumed the exact pose of the original.

He stood steady enough. Cecil could stand for hours without winking or moving, if he were so disposed.

"What about the other chap?" demanded Dick.

"There's a niche in the wall there," said Pongo. "We'll stow the broken bits away there, and cover them with Skeleton's overcoat till we see what's doing. But I'll stick to the head. I'll wrap it up in my silk handkerchief."

And Pongo suited the action to the word, carrying the head of the idol under his arm like a coconut.

Only a few minutes elapsed before there were shouts and clamourings outside the door.

Chu, listening, said that the Chinese guards were talking. Things were not going so rosy with the pirates. After these first boys had been taken off the ship, men had suddenly rushed up from below with red-hot iron bars and hoses that squirted steam, and the Burra Malum, or first officer of the ship, had leaped amongst the pirates, shooting with revolvers and hitting their faces with his fists, which were like hammers, and kicking them with his boots. Three of the junks had been set alight with petrol cans which had been thrown into them by the ship's people, and were drifting down the Straits of Sambang in flames.

Chu translated this news to his chums.

"Hurrah, boys!" said Pongo, sliding across the polished mother-of-pearl flooring. "Let's cut out a slide in their old temple. The captain is giving 'em what Paddy gave the drum! It's a pity we did not know; we could have put up a fight or bunked down below!"

Chu shook his head.

"Pilate men kill us, for sure," said he, "s'pose we no come?"

The jabbering outside died away. Then came quick footsteps, and the great teak doors were unlocked, grating heavily on their hinges.

The boys stood back as a dozen men,

carrying lanterns and swords, marched into the temple.

They were headed by a glittering figure, gorgeous in a gold turban and a sarong of cloth of gold, who, advancing directly to the pedestal on which Cecil stood motionless, threw himself on his face, the men with the lamps gathering round him.

"Who is this rooster?" asked Pongo, in a whisper. "He looks as if he had walked out of a pantomime!"

Then the light of the lamps fell upon the evil face of the man, as he bowed again and again to the pavement before Cecil.

"Crikey!" whispered Arty. "It's the chap I slugged yesterday—the Malay bird who had run amok! What's he saying, Chu?"

Chu's face had lengthened.

"He make bad talkee!" he whispered. "He say idol cross along him. He going to give us to idol. Cut throat belong us!"

"Oh, he's talking about cutting our throats, is he?" muttered Pongo, as they looked on spellbound at this strange scene. "If he tries that on he'll find, maybe, that his old idol is a bit more cross than he thinks!"

"He tink because him cut throat, him win ship!" whispered Chu.

The glittering figure of Prince Saru rose to its feet. His evil face was grinning in triumph as he pointed to the little group of boys, for he had recognised Arty.

Arty was to be the first sacrifice to the evil joss of Sambang.

Two guards staggered across the floor, carrying a huge stone basin, which they placed on the floor before the supposed idol.

Cecil's eyes, shining like carbuncles, glittered curiously; but the guards all studiously kept their gaze from the dread god Balum.

At a word from Prince Saru, they threw themselves on Arty, dragging him across the floor to the foot of the pedestal.

The rush was so sudden that Arty was taken by surprise. But, wrenching himself from the grasp of one of his captors, he gave the chief guard an uppercut that caused the crack of his jaw to echo through the hall, sending him and his sword clattering to the floor.

"At them, boys!" cried Dick.

The boys rushed forward. But there was one who was on the spot before them.

This was the god Balum himself. With a roar of rage, Cecil, at the sight of Arty struggling with the guards, leaped down from his pedestal and caught up Prince Saru in his terrible grip.

One wild shriek from the pirate chief rang through the hall.

Then the guards bolted, leaving Cecil standing with the limp figure in its cloth of gold sarong and golden turban lying in his arms.

Cecil, growling and snarling, looked around to see that all the boys were safe. Then he turned the limp figure of Saru over in his arms wonderingly.

"Crikey!" exclaimed Skeleton, in awed tones, "I believe the chap is dead!"

"Good job if he is," replied Arty, examining the limp body. "If he hadn't died some of us would have gone west pretty quick. Those chaps who have bunked were out on business. But what's killed this chap? I didn't see Cecil maul him. Put him down, Cecil; put him down, old chap. I'll give you a brandy-ball!"

And thus commanded, Cecil rendered up his prize.

Saru was dead right enough. Chu leaned over him and touched his limp hands.

"Him too much dead!" said Chu. "Him too fright when he see monkey come to life."

And this was true. Saru had died of shock as the huge orang god, as he thought, had leaped on him from its pedestal. His evil heart, weakened by long indulgence in the fatal bhang, had ceased to beat.

The flying guards had left the door wide open. They were rushing through the palace, spreading panic everywhere, yelling that the Luck of Sambang had come to life and had strangled the Prince Saru.

And as the boys marched out, Cecil leading them, shadowy figures raced before them, begging for mercy of their angered god.

They pushed on through the palace and through the gardens, and down towards the wharf they heard cheers with the crack of revolvers and the smack of sticks.

They, too, hurried on, cheering, and, at a bend in the garden walk, they came suddenly upon Mr. Lal Tata, who, with a length of lead pipe in his hand, was flogging on a fat and unwilling Chinaman.

"Ha, you scoundrels!" Lal was gasping. "Show me where you have taken our boys! We have given you jolly good thrashings. We teach you to tinker our steering gear and" (whack!)—"put our grand ship on shore"—(whack!).

And Lal nearly burst out crying when he saw the boys all safe. He told them how they had caught the two Chinese on board who had tampered with the steering-gear, and how they had beaten off the pirates and were now come ashore with the steam pinnaces and lifeboats to rescue the captured boys.

And in a minute or two, Captain Handyman himself, heading a strong crush of white leading stokers, stewards, and quartermasters, raced up.

"Thank heaven, boys," he exclaimed. "You are all safe, and your ship is all safe! She'll pull off on the rising tide. Now, all that is to be done is to set this buzzard's nest alight before we leave it. It was a wrecking job. Wire hawsers and tangles of fishing-net all across the channel to tangle our screw-propellers. She cut through them, but it was two rascally Chinks aboard who jammed our steering. Where's this Prince Saru who's at the bottom of all this?"

"Dead, sir," replied the boys. "Cecil jumped him, and he died of fright."

"So much the better for him," said the captain. "Get to the boats, boys. Quartermaster, bring along the petrol. We'll show these rascals a flare that'll beat their volcano into the middle of next week."

And Captain Handyman was as good as his word.

As he marched his men back to the boats, thick curls of fat greasy smoke and licking tongues of flame were showing at the roof of the palace.

And as the boats steamed off in tow of the pinnaces to the Bombay Castle, this nest of the pirates broke out in a flare which rivalled the red glare of Bula Tongi.

The wind had changed now as the boys

climbed up to the deck of the stranded steamer, and the Straits were clear of smoke. Ashore, the palace of the Rajah of Sambang was burning fiercely. Down the Straits the junks were flaring like fireships.

The pumps of the Bombay Castle were thumping fast, pumping out her ballast-tanks, and the capstans were tightening on the warps astern.

Captain Handyman knew his waters. There was a record tide running in the Straits. The water was piling up fast. The stern was free, the hull of the ship was uninjured, and the rudder was working again.

Down in the engine-room Mr. MacStaggers, the engineer, and his stokehold staff were working like fiends getting the ship ready to float off on the tide. And the moment came at last.

The engine-room bells tinkled below. The great engines running astern worked up from slow to half speed, from half speed to full speed.

Then a cheer went up from the crowd who were leaning over the side watching the churning of the broken water.

"She's going! She's coming away!" cried a hundred voices.

And when the Bombay Castle came away she came in style.

With a swift slide astern she was free. Her great bows swung round with the current, and the engines stopping, went to full speed ahead. She was off!

"It was the Luck of Sambang that did it," said Pongo, as he nursed the hard wood head of the idol and watched the glare of the burning palace dying away astern, whilst the Bombay Castle, as though rejoicing in her freedom, forced her way through the roaring currents with the full strength of her eight thousand horse-power.

"It was the Luck of Sambang," he added. "And when we have sold these rubies for what they are worth we'll have the finest dormitory feast that the Glory Hole has ever seen. Now, what about supper, boys? We are through the Straits, and there's the open sea. Come on, Cecil, you shall feed in the saloon to-night."

THE END



*A Splendid Long Complete Story of
Jimmy Silver and Co., the Chums
of Rookwood School*

By OWEN CONQUEST

THE FIRST CHAPTER

A Hot Time for the Fourth

"WONDER where the Bootles bird is?" remarked Jimmy Silver of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, as he came out of Hall after breakfast one morning with his chums Lovell, Raby, and Newcome.

"He wasn't in Hall for breakfast."

"Having it in his study, I expect, he sometimes does," said Lovell carelessly.

"Ill, perhaps," suggested Newcome.

"That's just what I was thinking," said Jimmy Silver. "He looked rather seedy yesterday. If so I'm sorry—Bootles is a good sort."

"Not half a bad little chap for a Form-master," said Raby considerably. "Wonder who'll take the Form this morning if he is ill?"

"Bulkeley, I expect," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "If so, we must mind our eye. We didn't do much preparation last night, owing to the meeting about the footer."

"That's so," said Lovell. "And Bulkeley is a lot stricter than Bootles, though he is such a good sort."

"Yes, rather."

The quartette looked rather serious. The prospect of having Bulkeley, the popular and efficient captain of the school, to take the Fourth Form in place of their mild and in-

dulgent little Form-master, on the very morning after they had unfortunately neglected their preparation in favour of a footer meeting, was enough to make them look serious.

"Bulkeley's a good sport, after all," said Jimmy Silver, brightening up. "If he gets on the warpath, we'll tell him about the footer meeting; he knows how important junior footer is, after all."

"He may think prep. is important, too, if he's acting Form-master," said Lovell, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"Oh, don't croak, Lovell! No good meeting trouble half way, is it?" said Jimmy Silver warmly. "No time to swot the Latin up now. Anyway, let's punt a footer about for ten minutes before school and chance it."

"Hear, hear!"

And the four chums, known throughout Rookwood as the Fistical Four, devoted their energies to ten minutes' strenuous exercise with a footer.

When the bell rang they trooped into the Fourth Form class-room with the rest of the Fourth, and sat down to await the arrival of their Form-master or of Bulkeley, as the case might be.

The next moment there was something like a gasp of consternation from the entire Form.

A sour-faced, severe-looking gentleman, in cap and gown, strode into the room.

He glared angrily at the dismayed Form.
"Cease this talking at once!" he rapped out. "Mr. Bootles, being indisposed, has asked me to take his Form this morning. I trust you have all prepared your lessons thoroughly, as I warn you I intend to stand no nonsense!"

"Manders by all that's unlucky!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

It was Mr. Manders, Master of the Modern side at Rookwood, the most unpopular master at the school. He was a short-tempered gentleman, with little sympathy for boys. There was no love lost as a rule between Mr. Manders and the juniors of the Classical Fourth. And the Form had a very distinct feeling that they were "in for it" that morning.

"Just our luck, by gad!" groaned Mornington, the dandy of the Form, to his chum Errol.

Mr. Manders' hearing seemed uncannily sharp that morning.

"Mornington, you were talking!"

"Oh, gad! Ye-e-e-es, sir!"

"Kindly repeat what you were saying to Errol."

"I—I—ahem!"

"Tell me at once, Mornington!" thundered Mr. Manders.

Mornington jumped.

"I—I said, 'Just our luck, sir.'"

There was a breathless silence. Mr. Manders' brow grew darker. He understood perfectly what Mornington referred to, but it was characteristic of him to pretend otherwise.

"Indeed, Mornington!" he said icily. "And may I inquire to what you were referring?"

"I—I meant that it was unlucky that Mr. Bootles was ill, sir."

"I see. And why do you think it so unlucky, Mornington?" said Mr. Manders sarcastically.

"I am sorry for Mr. Bootles, sir," said Mornington demurely.

A wise master would have let the matter drop there.

Lurking grins appeared momentarily upon the faces of more than one of the juniors, only to disappear as if by magic as the angry glance of Mr. Manders swept round the Form.

Mr. Manders was not a wise master, only a severe one, and he was out for trouble.

"You were not reserving any of your pity for yourself, then, Mornington?" he grated.

Mornington was silent. He scorned to deny what every fellow present knew he really meant.

"Just as I thought, Mornington," pursued Mr. Manders viciously.

"Your remark was nothing more or less than a piece of studied impertinence to myself. You will take two hundred lines, Mornington!"

"Yes, sir," said Mornington quietly.

Jimmy Silver's brow grew grim as the lesson proceeded. Jimmy hated tyranny of any sort, and Mr. Manders' conduct of the lesson that morning was nothing more or less than tyranny.

Mr. Manders's opportunities of making the full weight of his authority felt by the Classical juniors at Rookwood were limited. Being on the Modern side, he had to be content with bullying the Modern kids, as Lovell had once aptly put it.

But now he had an opportunity which he was mean enough to take advantage of. Had he been aware of what was going on in his Form-room, Mr. Bootles' tender heart would have bled for his unruly charges. Lines fell amongst them as thick as leaves in Val-lambrosa, and more canings were administered, and more severe ones, than Mr. Bootles usually inflicted in a month.

The two worst sufferers were Mornington and Cyril Peele, who were both chastised severely, in addition to receiving in all five hundred lines. Mornington was a reckless fellow, as he had often proved, and Peele was not popular, as a slacker and a member of the fast set, who were a small minority in the junior school. But the whole Form felt that Mr. Manders' treatment of them was "too thick" altogether. Every member of the Classical Fourth was the richer by at least a hundred lines by the end of that awful morning. When it dragged to a close at last the juniors streamed out of the Form-room in a state of simmering indignation.

"I knew Manders was a rotter, but blessed if I knew what a howling rotter he was till

to-day!" burst out Arthur Edward Lovell, as the Fistical Four gained the sanctuary of their study at last.

"Lessons with that cad are worse than the Spanish Inquisition," growled Newcome. "Something ought to be done about it!"

"Hear, hear!" grunted Raby. "Can't we make the brute sit up somehow? It's too thick!"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"It's a bit too thick, I know, chaps," he agreed. "Manders had a regular field-day this morning. But you can't back against a master, especially a fellow like Manders, without trouble, and serious trouble, too. Besides, it's all over now, too. I've inquired after Bootles. He's only got a cold, and will be in school again this afternoon. So we'd better forget old Manders."

"Forget him!" shouted Lovell. "What about my lines, ass?"

"And mine, chump?" grunted Newcome.

"And my licking, duffer?" added Raby very feelingly.

"Well, I got a licking and a hundred lines, too," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "But I'm not making a song about it, like you fellows. So dry up and take your Uncle James' advice, and forget it!"

And after a little worse grumbling, Jimmy Silver's chums took their Uncle James' excellent advice, as they had a habit of doing—and dried up and forgot it for the time being.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Companions in Misfortune

THERE were at least two members of the Fourth Form, however, who were not prepared to forget so easily the treatment they had received that morning from the hands of Mr. Manders.

Cyril Peele, with his eyes burning and his hands thrust deep into his trousers pocket,

was tramping savagely to and fro in a little-frequented corner of the playing-fields after school, when he was confronted by the figure of Mornington of the Fourth.

Mornington, cool and careless as usual, looked at Peele with a mocking smile on his reckless features.

"How are you feeling, dear boy?" he drawled; and Peele scowled.

"That brute Manders has given



"Hallo, you don't often see those two together now," remarked Lovell, glancing after Peele and Mornington. "Companions in misfortune, I suppose," said Jimmy Silver sympathetically. (See next page.)

me beans," he burst out savagely. "But I'll get even with him yet!"

Mornington grinned sardonically.

"Feelin' pretty bad still, what?"

"Of course, you fool!" snarled Peele.

"I've got five hundred lines to do, and I'm feeling sore all over. That beast gave me three on each hand, and later on he bent me over and gave me six stingers. I'm not standin' it, I tell you!"

Mornington laughed his mocking laugh again.

"You'll find it more comfortable to stand than to sit for a bit, dear boy."

"Oh, rats!" growled Peele. "If that's all you've got to say to a chap——"

"Not at all, dear boy," drawled Mornington. "I got just the same as you did, five hundred lines and two lickin's, not bad for one morning, was it? I'm just sympathisin' with you."

"I'm not standing it, I tell you!" said Peele, his eyes burning. "I'm going to——" he stopped abruptly.

"You're going to what?" asked Mornington, looking at him curiously.

"Never mind!" said Peele.

"I do mind," said Mornington quietly. "I think Manders is a bullyin' cad, and I want to see him made to sit up, the same as you, dear boy."

Peele looked at him quickly.

"Then you've got an idea for paying him out, is that it?"

Mornington laughed softly.

"I may have," he said coolly. "But I thought perhaps you had one yourself, dear boy."

"Then——"

"Then a little chat together wouldn't do any harm, would it?"

Peele looked at Mornington long and searchingly. In the past these two had been in more than one shady adventure together, but latterly Mornington had set himself to run straight, leaving Peele to pursue his dubious paths alone. But Mornington's old reckless nature was still there, as all Rookwood knew, though he now seemed able to confine its escapades within the bounds of schoolboy honour.

"Honest Injun, Mornington?" said Peele. "Honest Injun——" said Mornington, with a laugh.

He fell into step with Peele, and the two walked up and down together, and were soon talking earnestly, in low tones.

Jimmy Silver and Co. swung by arm in arm.

"Hallo, you don't often see those two together now," remarked Lovell, regarding the pair with interest.

"Companions in misfortune, I suppose," said Jimmy Silver sympathetically. "They did get it hot from that beast Manders this morning and no mistake."

"The poor beggars are sympathising with one another," said Newcome. "Let 'em alone."

"Yes, rather! They're feeling pretty bad, I guess, and no wonder," said Raby.

And the Fistical Four passed on.

And, until the bell brought them into Hall for dinner with the rest of Rookwood, Cyril Peele and Valentine Mornington remained in close and earnest confabulation.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Fagging for Carthew

"WILL you be wanting a fag this evening, Carthew?"

This question was addressed by Valentine Mornington, in tones of unusual mildness to Mark Carthew, the most unpopular prefect on the Classical side at Rookwood.

Mark Carthew stared at the propounder of this amazing question in some surprise, and with some reason. Mornington had deliberately waylaid the prefect to ask it, and the prefect was hardly able to believe his ears.

Fagging for Carthew was not a popular pastime among the juniors of the Classical side at Rookwood. As a prefect, Carthew had a right to fag juniors, but his bullying propensities were so well known that it was only by "force majeure" that he was ever able to take advantage of this privilege. And here was a junior actually "asking for it." It was quite natural that Carthew should be suspicious.

He frowned at Mornington with a suspicious look.

"What's that, you young sweep?"

"I was just asking if you would be wantin' a junior to fag for you this evenin'," said Mornington mildly. "I hear you are thinkin' of having a little party in your study, so I thought of offerin' my services."

Carthew frowned again.

It was true that he had arranged a little party for a surreptitious smoke and a game of cards in his study that evening—two pas-

times to which Carthew was much addicted, in spite of the fact that they were very naturally frowned upon by the authorities at Rookwood.

Carthew took a step forward, and laid a rough grasp upon Mornington's shoulder.

"What's your little game, you young rascal?" he rasped. "Are you looking for a hiding?"

"No fear!" replied Mornington promptly.

"But, honest Injun, Carthew, I'll fag for you at your party this evenin', if you like."

"How do you know anything about it?" demanded the prefect roughly.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders and grinned.

"Oh, these things get about, you know, Carthew," he said coolly. "You know I'm not a goody-goody sort, and I don't care a rap if you smoke and play cards all night! Here! Wharrer you at?"

Carthew was shaking him until the junior's teeth almost rattled in his head. A momentary gleam of battle came into Mornington's eyes, but faded as quickly.

"You cheeky young whelp!" hissed Carthew.

"Oh, that's enough, Carthew!" said Mornington, coolly. "You can't come that game with me, you know. Remember that I've played cards with you myself before now."

This was true in Mornington's early, reckless days, and Carthew, as he realised it, released his grip on the junior's shoulder.

"It's straight goods, Carthew," said Mornington, coolly, as he smoothed down his ruffled jacket and collar. "I know you've got a party to-night, and I'm offering to fag for you. You know I sha'n't give you away, and I don't want to play, either. I've finished with that. But I've got nothing much to do for prep., and I'm making a straight offer to fag for you till bedtime, if you like."

Carthew paused.

It was true that it would be a great convenience to have a fag to get his study ready for the little party and to wait on his guests. But he had not dared to press any of the juniors into service for this purpose. There was too much talk at Rookwood already about his shady doings, in Mark Carthew's opinion.

But Mornington was quite different from the ordinary run of juniors, as Carthew well knew.

He could be trusted, if he gave his word, not to give the show away. For some reason of his own, he had made up his mind to offer his services voluntarily. What that reason was Carthew could not guess. Perhaps he wished to get away from his study-mates for the evening. Under the circumstances, Carthew felt tempted to accept his offer. But he was still suspicious.

"If this is one of your Fourth Form games, I'll fag you, Mornington, if I'm sacked for it, and so I warn you!" he said darkly.

Mornington laughed.

"It's no use trying that game on with me, Carthew," he said coolly. "You know you can't frighten me. I tell you it's a straight offer. It suits me to fag for someone this evening, for reasons of my own. If you don't accept my services, I shall offer them to Bulkeley—in fact, all round the Sixth till I get a job. But you've been pretty decent lately—that is, you haven't tried to bully me." Carthew glared. "So I thought I'd give you first offer, especially as I knew you'd got some friends comin'. And that's all there is to it!"

Carthew looked at him hard, and made up his mind.

"Very well, Mornington," he said, speaking civilly with an effort. "Come to my study as soon as you've finished your prep—"

"Oh, blow prep.!" said Mornington impatiently.

"Well, as soon as you like, then," said Carthew, looking at him curiously. "I can find plenty for you to do until bed-time, if you are willing to make yourself useful."

"Right-ho, Carthew. That's a bargain!"

And Mornington strolled away, leaving Carthew looking after him in a somewhat puzzled frame of mind.

Afternoon school under the returned Mr. Bootles passed off quite quietly and pleasantly for the Fourth Form.

Mornington indulged in half-an-hour's football practice before tea, and when the time for preparation arrived, when the juniors at Rookwood were supposed to prepare their lessons for the next day in the privacy of their studies, Mornington repaired to the

Sixth Form passage, and knocked at the door of Carthew's study.

"Come in!" growled Carthew.

"Here I am, Carthew!" said Mornington cheerfully. "All ready an' willin' to fag for you, like a little lamb, dear boy!"

"Well, set to work and tidy up the study!" grunted Carthew ungraciously. "Clear up the tea-things and put the green cloth on the table, and look sharp about it!"

"Right-ho, dear boy!" grinned Mornington.

He set to work industriously, and agreeably surprised Carthew by his neatness and dexterity. There were few things Mornington could not do, if he had a mind to.

He had not been at work ten minutes, while Carthew was lazing in front of his fire in the armchair, when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Carthew.

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, put his head in the door.

He nodded to Mornington.

"Hallo, youngster! What are you doing here?"

"Just faggin' for Carthew, Bulkeley," said Mornington demurely.

"Done your prep?"

"More or less," said Mornington, with a grin.

"Carthew will help me with it later, if—if necessary, Bulkeley. I'm just tidying up his study a bit."

"Oh, all right!" said Bulkeley. "I just looked in to tell you, Carthew, that you're playing in goal for the first eleven to-morrow."

"Oh, good!" said Carthew.

"We start off directly after breakfast, to get to Crayton for lunch," continued Bulkeley. "It's a long railway journey,

with several changes, so we have to start early. You'll be ready?"

"Rely on me," said Carthew, with satisfaction.

"The Crayton Wanderers are a pretty tough crowd, but I think we shall beat 'em. You'll have to look out in goal, though, Carthew."

"You bet!" said Carthew.

"All serene, then!" said Bulkeley; and the captain of Rookwood disappeared.

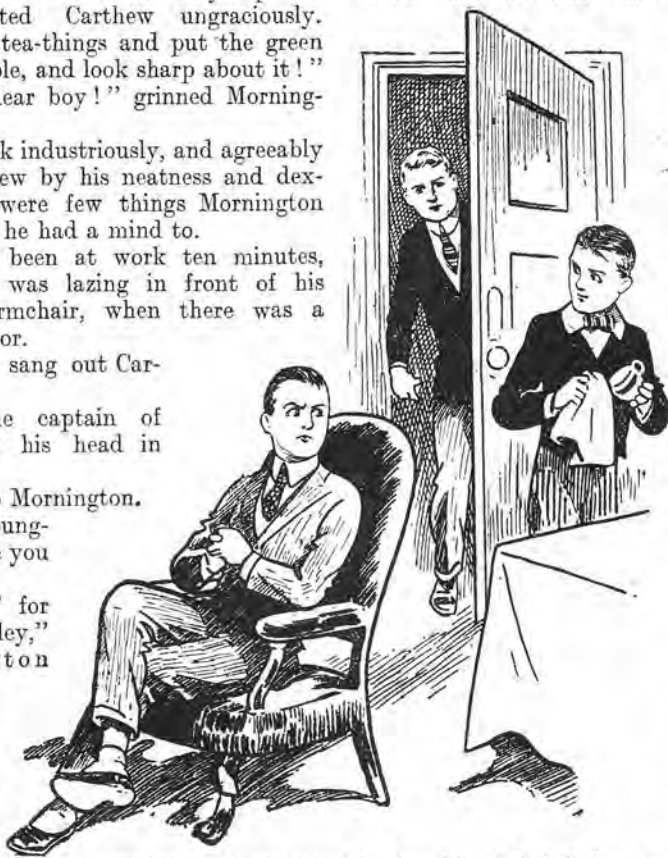
"Playing for the first to-morrow, eh?" said Mornington. "Hadn't you better call your little party off, Carthew? Smokin' over-night's no good for footer, you know!"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Carthew.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders. After all, it was a matter of indifference to him what Carthew did. It was Carthew's affair, not his.

But Mornington knew what view Bulkeley would have taken had he known of Carthew's little party. It is quite safe to say that, in that case, Carthew would have found himself left out of the team for the morrow's match.

Before long the guests began to arrive. Knowles, the Modern prefect, and Townsend and Topham, and a couple of other misguided



"Hallo, youngster, what are you doing here?" asked Bulkeley, putting his head in at the door. "Just fagging for Carthew, Bulkeley," said Mornington demurely. (See this page.)

youths with whom Carthew kept on friendly terms for his own shady purposes.

Mornington grinned sardonically to himself, but he said nothing. He busied himself in silence, waiting on the guests and making them coffee in the manner of a perfect fag. Indeed, Carthew had never had such satisfactory service from a fag before, and he grew quite amiable towards Mornington, even inviting him to join in a game. But Mornington only smiled and shook his head, and went on with his ministrations.

He was so employed right up to bed-time, when he said a quiet "Good-night" to the assembled gay dogs and cut off to the Fourth Form dormitory.

"Where have you been all the evening, Morny?" asked his chum Erroll, looking at him somewhat anxiously.

"Oh, just amusin' myself!" replied Mornington, with a laugh and a shrug of the shoulders.

And that was all anyone could get out of him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A Fearsome Apparition

"COMING for a run round Little Side before bed?"

Thus Tommy Dodd, the redoubtable leader of the Fourth Formers on the Modern side at Rookwood, to his bosom chums, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle, as he closed his Latin grammar with a bang by way of a signal that his prep. was finished.

Tommy Cook gave an unenthusiastic grunt and Tommy Doyle yawned.

Dodd glared at them.

"Well, aren't you fatheads coming?" he demanded warmly. "I suppose you haven't taken to slacking in your old age?"

"Nunno! But——"

"You see——"

"I see a pair of duffers who are trying to think out an excuse for not coming for a run before bedtime!" said Tommy Dodd darkly. "Haven't we got a match on with the Classical asses next Saturday?"

"Ye-e-es, but——"

"But be blowed!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd forcibly, if not politely. "You're

coming, my infants! Follow your Uncle Tommy!"

"It's cold!" ventured Tommy Cook dubiously.

"Faith, an' I believe it's freezing!" said Tommy Doyle.

Tommy Dodd simply glared at his study mates, and beneath that withering glance they looked a little sheepish.

"Well, supposing it is cold, what about it?" bellowed the Modern captain. "Since when have you been afraid to go out on a cold evening? Blessed if I know what the Modern side at Rookwood's coming to!"

"Oh, keep your wool on, Tommy darling!" said Doyle. "We're coming!"

Tommy Dodd snorted as he led the way from the study. As leader of the Modern Fourth, Tommy Dodd, naturally, took it upon himself to keep the Modern juniors up to the mark; and he was very much "down" on anything that savoured of slacking. Sometimes his chums wished he were not quite so energetic.

There was a pale moon in the star-spangled sky, and the air was keen and dry as the three Moderns emerged from the door of the house and started off on their run at a brisk pace.

Once they were on the move, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle enjoyed the exercise as much as their energetic leader.

Right round Little Side they ran, and round the old Quad, finishing up with a spurt at "hundred" pace towards the door of the Modern House again.

As they pulled up, panting, on the doorstep, the sound of loud and excited voices floated to their ears from the direction of the school gates.

"Hallo, what's that?" exclaimed Dodd, pricking up his ears. "Sounds like old Mack getting excited about something!"

"Faith, an' we'll cut over and see!" said Doyle. And the three ran lightly off towards the big gates.

"Which I don't know yer! Wot are yer doing here, that's what I says!"

The loud and angry tones of old Mack, the school porter, showed that he was thoroughly disturbed.

"We may be wanted here!" panted Tommy Dodd, as the three spurted up to where two figures could be seen in the moon-light. The next moment he gave a gasp of astonishment.

"M-my hat! What on earth——"

They had reached the figures now. One of them was easily recognisable as the school porter. It was the other figure that made Tommy Dodd gasp in astonishment.

It was the figure of a rather tall and bare-headed man, but who or what he was it was impossible to distinguish in that half-light. For he was covered and plastered from head to foot with clogging, slimy mud, which dripped from him at every movement. And the odour given off by the mud was more powerful than pleasant.

The three Tommies simply gasped at the amazing figure.

"Hout of it! Hout yer go, or I'll put yer!" shouted the angry porter. "How yer got in 'ere beats me, fer I knows yer didn't get in through the gate! Climbed over, I s'pose, yer varmint! Hout yer goes!"

"Who—what is it, Mack?" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Well yer may ask, Master Dodd!" snorted Mack. "'E ain't said a word yet, only tried to dodge me! But I ain't going to be dodged! 'Elp me to chuck 'im out, Master Dodd!"

"What—ho!"

Tommy Dodd and his two chums made a step towards the horrible, smelly, squelching figure, and then paused.

The next moment they all three jumped at least a foot into the air. For the fearsome figure spoke at last!

"Fool! Dolt! Let me pass, can't you!" hissed a concentrated voice. "Can't you see I'm Mr. Manders!"

"M-m-mum—Mr. Mum-Manders!" gasped the three Tommies and Mack together.

"Yes, Mr. Manders!" snapped the concentrated voice which was indeed the voice of Mr. Manders. "Do you think I want the whole school attracted here, to see me in this state! Let me pass, fool!"

Old Mack fell back, his eyes nearly starting out of his head.

"Oh, lor!" he gasped. "My heye! Mr. Manders!"

The figure squeaked forward in the direction of the Modern House door, the porter making no further attempt to stop it. Old Mack knew Mr. Manders too well to ask any further questions.

"My heye!" he muttered, turning away towards his lodge like a man in a dream. "Mr. Manders! Then he came in by the private wicket, of course! But what a state! My heye!"

And Mack almost staggered off, still muttering.

Tommy Dodd and Co. stood momentarily rooted to the spot, until they were recalled to their senses by the furious voice of their House-master.

"Slip into the house, and let me in by the side door, Dodd!" snapped Mr. Manders, striving to control his rage. "Some scoundrel—some unmitigated young scoundrel belonging to this school—is the cause of my being in this abominable state!"

"G-good gracious, sir?" mumbled Tommy Dodd, looking quite dazed. But almost mechanically he cut off to the Modern House, to do as he was bid. The fearsome figure was evidently Mr. Manders, without a doubt; but how he had got into that state, Tommy Dodd could not even guess.

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle accompanied their House-master in stupefied silence. Mr. Manders fumed and raged as he strode along.

"There shall be an inquiry into this! Someone shall pay dearly for this—this unexampled outrage!" he stuttered as he strode along. "I trust——" The mud-plastered figure turned threateningly upon the two Tommies, "I trust you two boys have no knowledge of this—this dastardly plot against me!"

"Us, sir? Nunno," said Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle in chorus promptly, and with perfect truth.

"I shall be sorry," grated Mr. Manders, "for the miscreant when he is discovered—as discovered he shall be!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

Mr. Manders had by this time arrived at

the side door of the Modern House, which Tommy Dodd was holding open for him, with a slightly scared expression on his face.

Mr. Manders stamped in, squelching mud at every step.

"Get off to bed at once, you three!" he snapped. "Groo-ooch!"

His last ejaculation was an involuntary one, as a quantity of muddy water splashed into his mouth. He squelched furiously off towards his room, while Tommy Dodd & Co. made themselves scarce without delay.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd, when they had regained the security of their own study. "What a go! Did you ever see such a sight?"

"Never!" said Tommy Cook, with emphasis.

"Poor old Manders!"

"Faith, an' he's a

sight intirely!" said Tommy Doyle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Now that the three Tommies were no longer in the presence of their bad-tempered House-master, the humour of the situation struck them, and they could afford to smile.

Mr. Manders was not popular with his boys, so that his plight suddenly struck them as extremely funny. They roared.

"Ha, ha! What a guy!" almost sobbed Tommy Dodd. "He looked like a walking mud-heap!"

"What a niff, too!"

"And wasn't he in a bate, begorra?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The question is, who did it?" gasped Tommy Dodd, at last, wiping his eyes. "He said it was a Rookwood chap—he must have been pushed into the ditch, I suppose!"

"That's it! The ditch along the edge of the Coombe road!"

"But who did it, begorra?" repeated Tommy Doyle.

The three Tommies looked at one another.

"Jolly lucky for us Manders found us running round the quad," he said.

"He could not suspect us, as it happens. If he could he would."

The other two Tommies nodded sagely.

Mr. Manders usually suspected them—and with some truth, it must be confessed—of being at the



The three Tommies simply gasped at the amazing figure, covered and plastered from head to foot, with clogging, slimy mud. "Hout of it!" shouted the angry porter. "Hout yer go, or I'll put yer!" (See opposite page.)

bottom of most of the "rags" of the Modern juniors. But this was a more serious affair, and the three Tommies congratulated themselves on having clear consciences in the matter.

"It must have been someone who had a down on him, for some reason," said Tommy Dodd. "A senior, perhaps."

"Might have been a junior," said Tommy Cook. "It would be quite easy for anyone to have jumped out on him, and barged him into the ditch, as he was coming along the road. A junior could have done it."

"Begorra, y're right!" said Tommy Doyle. "What about Mornington?"

"Mornington?"

The three Tommies looked at one another quite seriously. Mornington! This was just like one of Mornington's old reckless tricks. And Mornington had been one of the juniors who had suffered most severely under Mr. Manders that morning.

"Mornington!" repeated Tommy Dodd, slowly. "By jove! It's just like old Morny, too. I believe you've hit it, Tommy Doyle."

"Mornington! The reckless ass, it's quite likely!" said Tommy Cook. "My hat! There'll be a row about this!"

"There will!" said Tommy Dodd, with conviction. "But, anyway, we know nothing about it, or about Mornington either, my infants! Not a word! If Manders wants to know who did it, let him find out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bedtime now!" said Tommy Dodd, jumping up. "My hat! It'll be something to tell the fellows about in the dormitory, how our respected House-master came home to-night!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the three Tommies went off to bed, and to impart to their school-fellows the joke of Mr. Manders peculiar homecoming that evening.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Who Did It?

THE story was all over Rookwood the next morning, naturally. Old Mack's version of it was even more startling than that of the three Tommies. The whole school knew that Mr. Manders had been pushed into the wide ditch that bordered the Coombe road, the previous evening, by some person or persons unknown; but believed, at any rate by Mr. Manders, to belong to Rookwood.

Who did it?

That was the question that was on everyone's lips. There was very little sympathy felt for Mr. Manders, especially in the junior school. Bulkeley was heard to express the opinion that it was a bit too thick even for Manders.

But most of the juniors felt that it served the sour-tempered master right.

The Fourth Form especially, who had suffered so severely under Mr. Manders the previous evening, openly rejoiced. And when the question, "Who did it?" was asked in the fourth, a good many fellows looked at Mornington.

Valentine Mornington was the fellow who had "got it hot" from Mr. Manders that morning. His reckless nature was a by-word in the Fourth. And it soon leaked out that he had been absent from his study during preparation hours the previous evening. No one seemed to know where he had been.

Many curious, and even admiring, glances were directed at Mornington. One or two fellows even asked him in a whisper if he knew anything about the matter. To all of whom Mornington replied with a cool smile and a shrug of the shoulders. "Find out!" was all he could say. And it was noticed that his chum and study mate, Kit Erroll, looked troubled and uneasy.

The First Eleven team, who set off for their match against Crayton Wanderers at an early hour, departed almost unnoticed amidst the general excitement.

A crowd of juniors gathered in the Junior Common Room after breakfast, eagerly discussing the amazing occurrence. Mornington was there, unconcernedly reading a book with his chum, Kit Erroll sitting silent by his side.

"I'll bet old Manders makes a shindy about this!" said Conroy. "He'll move heaven and earth to find out who did it!"

"Faith, an' he'll want to scalp someone, that's certain!" said Flynn, the Irish junior.

"There he goes!" said Pons, suddenly looking out of the open door. "Going to the Head's study, by Jove! I thought so!"

"Now look out for squalls!" said Newcome.

Erroll glanced round uneasily.

"Morny, old man," he whispered. "Where were you last night when I was doing my prep. in the study, I mean?"

Morny glanced up from his book.

"Never mind that, old boy," he said, with a smile.

"Morny!" Erroll's tone was almost be-

seeching. "Why don't you tell me? If—if you've been doing anything reckless——"

Morny smiled again whimsically at his anxious chum.

"That's all right, Kit! Don't you worry!"

Erroll shook his head sadly. He knew Mornington's reckless nature, against which he had had many a hard fight. Erroll was devotedly attached to the wilful junior, to whom he had stuck loyally through thick and thin. It was owing to Erroll's devotion that Mornington was such a much better fellow than he had been when he first came to Rookwood.

He had almost succeeded in living down his reckless past. What if he had ruined all by an act which, if brought home to its perpetrator, could only lead to expulsion? Erroll's heart grew leaden at the thought.

Mornington, with another smiling glance at his dejected chum, shut his book, yawned and stretched himself.

"Time to be getting along to the form room," he said cheerfully. "Comin', Erroll?"

Kit Erroll got up with him in silence.

Curious glances followed them as they left the Common Room.

"Keep your pecker up, Morny, old scout!" said Raby.

"And mind your eye!" added Newcombe, in a tone of friendly warning.

"Oh, rats!" laughed Mornington, taking Erroll's arm.

"He's a cool beggar, even if he is a reckless bounder!" said Gower, half admiringly.

"Oh, shnt up, Gower!" growled Jimmy Silver, following Mornington out.

Jimmy Silver was puzzled and uneasy.

The Fourth Form seemed to take it for granted that Mornington had done it this time, and Jimmy knew that the rumour would spread throughout the school, and was bound, sooner or later, to get to the ears of the prefects, or masters, and thence to those of Mr. Manders and the Head. And in that case Jimmy trembled for Mornington, having a sincere regard for that reckless fellow since he had shown a real desire to play the game.

Whether Mornington was actually guilty of the outrage Jimmy did not know, of course. He did not know what to think about that.

But he could see plainly that, in the event of an inquiry, which was certain, the evidence would look very black against him, whether he were guilty or not. The only hope was that the culprit would be discovered in someone else. And Jimmy did not think, somehow, that that was very likely. In Jimmy's opinion, Morny was in a very tight place.

Mr. Bootles looked very grave when he came into the Fourth Form room that morning a little late. The juniors guessed that he had come straight from the Head's study, hence his lateness, and the distressed expression on the little gentleman's face showed that he had not had an enjoyable time there.

His glance rested upon Mornington for a moment as he came in. He settled himself at his desk and cleared his throat.

"Er—hem! My boys, a very—hem—grave and regrettable occurrence has taken place, an occurrence which—hem—can only be described as an outrage," said Mr. Bootles in a pained voice. "It concerns a—hem—most respected master in this school!"

There was a dead silence in the Form.

"I believe you all know—hem—to what I am referring," went on Mr. Bootles. "And I should like to ask you all here assembled"—Mr. Bootles's eye swept round the silent room—"one—hem—one question. Were any of you boys concerned in the outrage perpetrated upon Mr. Manders last night?"

In the breathless hush that followed his words a pin might have been heard to drop. The murder was out now, with a vengeance!

Instinctively many eyes turned upon Mornington. Mr. Bootles noticed it, and his eyes, too, turned upon that junior with a gleam of sternness in them.

"Mornington!" He spoke quite sharply. "Mornington, kindly stand up!"

Without a word, Mornington unconcernedly stood up.

"Mornington! I should like to repeat to you, directly and personally, the question I have already put! Did you, last night, so far forget yourself as to perpetrate the outrage I have alluded to upon Mr. Manders?"

Every eye turned upon Mornington.

An expression of polite surprise showed upon that junior's countenance.

"I, sir?"

"Yes, you!" said Mr. Bootles sternly.

"Certainly not, sir!" said Mornington quietly.

There was an in-drawing of breath from the Fourth.

"Very well, Mornington," said Mr. Bootles heavily after a brief pause. "The Headmaster's instructions are that you are to proceed to his study immediately."

"Certainly, sir!" said Mornington cheerfully. And he walked over to the door with a firm, almost jaunty, step, and left the room.

"We will now proceed with our Caesar," said Mr. Bootles.

And the Fourth Form, greatly intrigued, proceeded to try to concentrate their attention upon the works of that great Latin author.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Condemned!

MORNINGTON tapped at the door of the Head's study, and marched in. In spite of his cool demeanour, the junior's heart beat fast.

The moment he had been anticipating had come at last!

As he expected, Dr. Chisholm was seated at his desk, and by his side stood Mr. Manders. The Housemaster looked very pink, as if he had recently scrubbed his face hard—as indeed he had! His eyes gleamed malevolently as the junior came in.

"Mornington!" said the Head, in an ominous voice. "Mr. Manders here informed me this morning of an unprecedented outrage that was perpetrated upon him last night!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Returning from Coombe after dark, he was suddenly sprung upon, and, taken unawares, was pushed into the deep ditch which borders the road!"

"I was hurled violently into the ditch—a disgusting, muddy ditch—by a boy who deliberately charged me after the manner of a football charge!" said Mr. Manders vehemently. "It was a scandalous——"

The Head raised his hand.

"Quite so, Mr. Manders! Pray allow me

to continue. Now, Mornington, Mr. Manders is quite positive that it was a Rookwood boy who did this outrageous thing—he recognised the school cap, even in the dim light, and the boy was not very tall. He was, in fact, no taller than yourself, Mornington!"

"Indeed, sir?" murmured Mornington.

"My assailant was undoubtedly just about your height, Mornington," said Mr. Manders viciously.

"Quite so," said Dr. Chisholm. "Now, Mornington, kindly answer these questions: Was it necessary for Mr. Manders to punish you some-

what severely in the Fourth Form yesterday morning?"

"It was not necessary, sir—but he did it!" replied Mornington, demurely.

"Take care, Mornington," said the Head, sternly, while Mr. Manders simply stared. "Impertinence will not help your case. Mr. Manders, then, punished you severely yesterday morning?"

"He gave me two lickings, sir, and five hundred lines," said Mornington, quietly.

Dr. Chisholm frowned. That such severe



"Did you perpetrate this outrage upon Mr. Manders last night, Mornington?" asked the Head, sternly. "No, sir!" said the junior, quietly. (See page 241.)



To face page 240

AN OLD TIME PRIZE BATTLE
A fight on the Downs in the great days of the Ring

punishment should fall upon a junior boy in the course of one morning was very unusual at Rookwood, and Dr. Chisholm very strongly disapproved of it. He looked sharply at Mr. Manders.

"Is this so, Mr. Manders?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Manders, biting his lip. He plainly sensed the Head's disapproval. "This boy was both lazy and impertinent."

"Quite so! I have every confidence in your discretion of course, Mr. Manders," said the Head, rather drily. "But that is hardly the matter at issue. The boy was severely punished by you yesterday morning—that is the point."

"Now, did you do your preparation in your study as usual last evening, Mornington?"

"No, sir!"

"You were absent from your study?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Ah!" the atmosphere was electric. "Now, Mornington, we have established two points. Now for the direct question. Did you perpetrate this outrage upon Mr. Manders last night?"

"No, sir."

"The boy is not telling the truth, sir," burst out Mr. Manders, angrily. "He is a reckless—"

"Pray, contain yourself, Mr. Manders!" said the Head, coldly. "Were you outside the school, Mornington, when you should have been doing your preparation in your study?"

"No, sir."

The Head paused, and Mr. Manders sneered openly.

"Is there any person now in the school whom you can call upon to prove that you were indoors at that time, Mornington?" said the Head. "If so, I will send for him, or them, at once, and the matter will be ended."

Mornington thought a moment.

"There is no one," he said, quietly. "But all the same, I didn't do it, sir."

"But you can't prove it, Mornington?"

Mornington looked the Head full in the face.

"Isn't my word enough, sir?" he said quietly, and Mr. Manders sneered again.

Dr. Chisholm, a stern but just Headmaster, looked long and searchingly at Mornington, and sighed.

"I am afraid, in this case, that it isn't, Mornington!" he said, a trifle wearily. "You must remember that your past record at Rookwood is very far from being unblemished. You have proved yourself both reckless and foolish in the past, though I had thought recently you had very greatly improved. It appears, I fear, as if I were mistaken,

"Not at all, sir," said Mornington, with spirit.

"Silence, wretched boy!" exclaimed Mr. Manders, spitefully.

The Head's brow grew sterner.

"There are few boys at Rookwood, I hope and believe, sufficiently foolhardy or reckless to even contemplate an outrageous action such as this," continued the Head. "Your record, unfortunately, shows only too plainly that you are one of those few. I believe I am right in saying that the belief that you are the guilty party is openly held and expressed by the majority of your own form-fellows, Mornington."

Mornington was silent. It was true.

"These facts coupled with your undoubtedly strong motive, and your absence from your study at the time the outrage was committed—which you do not offer to explain—form a strong chain of circumstantial evidence, and this is a case in which I feel action is called for."

"Certainly—most certainly, Dr. Chisholm!" said Mr. Manders, rubbing his hands together.

"You will therefore be confined in the punishment room until to-morrow morning," continued the Head. "That will give me time to make further inquiries, and it will also—ah—allow you time for reflection Mornington."

The Head eyed Mornington closely.

Mornington did not speak.

"If upon reflection, you feel that you have a confession to make to me, Mornington, you have only to ring the bell, when the page-boy will convey a message to me."

"I understand, sir," said Mornington, quietly.

"Mr. Manders, perhaps you will kindly take this boy to the punishment room now?"

"Certainly, Dr. Chisholm!" said Mr.

Manders, with alacrity. "Boy, Mornington—follow me."

And Mr. Manders stalked out of the Head's study with grim satisfaction, while Mornington followed slowly.

For, perhaps, five minutes, the Head remained at his desk frowning deep in thought.

The good old doctor was grievously disappointed in Mornington, and somewhat puzzled by his attitude. His bearing was not that of a guilty junior, certainly. Yet, what was the Head to think, in face of the chain of circumstances that had come to light?

Mornington's recklessness was proverbial at Rookwood, and Dr. Chisholm had more than a suspicion of Mr. Manders' unpopularity in the school, and the reasons for it. It is possible that the doctor, as he got up from his desk with a sigh, wished the sour-faced master of the Modern side elsewhere.

As soon as the school was released from morning classes, all Rookwood was buzzing with the news that Mornington was in the punishment-room, awaiting sentence over the affair of Mr. Manders; and it was generally agreed that the sentence could only be expulsion, or, at best, a severe flogging.

Poor Erroll went off on a vain errand to obtain permission to see his chum. The general opinion of the Fourth Form was that it was bad luck on Morny, but that he was "bowled out" at last.

"A chap can't expect to go round pushing masters into ditches, even if they are beasts like Manders!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, oracularly discussing the matter with his chums in the end study.

"Yes, Morny was a reckless ass; but I'm jolly sorry for him, all the same!" said Newcome. "Manders is such an awful old beast!"

"I hear he's going round looking no end pleased," said Raby. "Just like him!"

Jimmy Silver was frowning thoughtfully.

"There's something jolly fishy about this, I think," he said slowly. "It looks to me as if Morny's done all he can to throw suspicion on himself."

His three chums stared at him.

"Well, we know what a cute chap he is generally," said Jimmy argumentatively.

"Where was he all that time last night? He didn't show up till bedtime. If he did push Manders into the ditch, he could have scudded back here quickly and shown up among us, couldn't he?"

Newcome nodded.

"Yes, it would have been some sort of an alibi."

"Exactly! Then Tubby Muffin heard Manders telling Bootles that he saw a Rookwood cap on the head of the chap who pushed him. Now, can you imagine a chap like Mornington wearing his school cap on a job like that?"

"It was dark—perhaps he thought it wouldn't be seen," suggested Lovell.

"Trust Mornington to think of a thing like that!" said Jimmy. "Hullo, Peele! What do you want?"

Peele put his head into the study. Peele was not a friend of the Fistical Four, and on an ordinary occasion they would probably have thrown a cushion at his head. But Peele's face was white and strained, and his distress was obvious to see.

"Do you think they'll sack Mornington, Jimmy Silver?" he asked anxiously.

"I don't know. It looks like a sacking job—if he's guilty."

Peele gave a start and looked at Jimmy queerly.

"But—but, surely, if he's in the punishment-room, he must be the chap who did it?" he exclaimed, still more anxiously. "What do you mean, Silver?"

"Well, the Head evidently thinks he's guilty, but I'm not so sure," said Jimmy calmly. "It looks jolly fishy to me."

"What does?"

"Oh, all sorts of things!" replied Jimmy airily.

Peele's face grew whiter than ever.

"Oh, rot!" he stammered. "If—if he didn't do it, who did?"

"Aha!" said Jimmy Silver mysteriously.

"That's for Manders to find out, not me. I'm not a giddy detective!"

"I think you're talking rot, Jimmy



Cathew stood up. "Mornington was in my study fagging for me from six o'clock until nine on that evening, sir!" he said distinctly. (See next page.)

Silver!" said Peele, disappearing and banging the door.

Jimmy chuckled.

"Looks rather scared about something, doesn't he?" he said.

His chums looked at him queerly.

"Look here, Jimmy, what are you driving at?" demanded Lovell.

"Never mind," said Jimmy cheerily.

"Your Uncle James sees a little further than the end of his nose sometimes, that's all! Let's go down to the Common Room to hear the latest about poor old Morny!"

And not another word of explanation could his chums get out of him to satisfy their curiosity.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

A Dramatic Scene in Big Hall

"Now, Mornington," said Dr. Chisholm sternly, "you know the serious offence of which you are accused. The evidence against you is overwhelming,

and I feel there is no alternative but to adjudge you guilty upon it, circumstantial as it is. Your sentence can only be one—expulsion from Rookwood! But if"—and here the Head's hand strayed to the fearsome-looking birch-rod which lay on the desk before him—"if you can bring yourself to make a full and frank confession, and beg forgiveness of Mr. Manders, I shall be prepared, with Mr. Manders' approval, to reduce your sentence to the infliction of a severe flogging, here and now, before the whole school!"

It was the following morning, and the whole of Rookwood had been called together in Big Hall to witness that most dramatic of all schoolboy scenes—a public "execution."

Valentine Mornington, standing out alone in front of the Head's desk before the silent rows of Rookwooders, heard the Head's grave tones, placing before him the two dismal alternatives, expulsion or a public flogging! Surely no wretched schoolboy can ever have heard those fateful words without a shiver?

Valentine Mornington was a schoolboy of a

very unusual calibre, but even he felt his heart quail momentarily as he heard his doom pronounced.

Then, remembering the part he had to play, he pulled himself together and met the Head's eyes steadily. In a second he became his old reckless self, as cool as ice. The Head's brow grew sterner as he noted it.

"Well, Mornington!" His voice was sharp. "Have you nothing to say?"

"Only this, sir. I did not do it—and I can call a witness to prove it."

There was a stir, and then a petrified silence.

Mornington's words, spoken in his cool tones, came like a bombshell to all Rookwood, with one or two exceptions. Jimmy Silver smiled slightly, as if he were not altogether surprised. Carthew, of the Sixth, who had returned with the football team late the previous evening, started and leaned forward.

Peele of the Fourth started, too.

The Head's brow grew grimmer.

"Indeed, Mornington! I asked you yesterday, and you said you had no witnesses to call."

"Nor had I, sir—yesterday!" replied Mornington. "I ask Carthew of the Sixth to stand up and say where I was from after tea until bedtime the day before yesterday."

"Kindly stand up, Carthew!" rapped out the Head. "Do you know anything about this boy's movements during the time mentioned?"

Carthew thought rapidly. His one anxiety was to keep the matter of his little smoking and gambling party from the Head's knowledge.

Unless he cleared Mornington, the latter would assuredly give him away. He could see that from the sardonic look the junior was turning on him even now. If he spoke up for him, all might yet be well.

He stood up.

"Mornington was in my study, clearing up and fagging for me, from six o'clock until nine, on that evening, sir," said Carthew distinctly. "He then went straight to his dormitory."

There was a stir and a sigh of relaxation from the school. The Head was completely non-plussed. Mr. Manders bit his nails furiously.

George Bulkeley, the burly captain of Rookwood, rose in his place.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, quietly. "I should like to say that I looked into Carthew's study just before seven that evening. Mornington was there then!"

"Then—then, do I understand, Carthew, that Mornington was in your study all the evening, during the whole of the period when this—this outrage upon Mr. Manders was committed?" asked Dr. Chisholm, in open bewilderment.

"Yes, sir. He was there all the evening. I—I was helping him with his preparation, sir!"

Mornington's sardonic smile grew more pronounced.

The Head turned to him, with an awful expression upon his stern countenance.

"Why did you not tell me this yesterday, Mornington?"

"I told you I did not do it, sir, but you wouldn't believe me!" said Mornington. "You asked me if I could produce any witness to prove my case, but both Carthew and Bulkeley were away all day with the football team, sir."

"If you had explained, I could have delayed dealing with the case until their return."

"You wouldn't take my word, sir—so I thought it would be no use explaining!" said Mornington, demurely.

Dr. Chisholm looked at the junior very hard indeed. He seemed upon the verge of an outburst, but checked himself. Mr. Manders glared at Mornington with a glare that was almost Hunnish.

Jimmy Silver afterwards said he could hear him gnashing his teeth.

To tell the truth, both gentlemen felt that this cool junior had put them into a somewhat ridiculous position. They more than suspected, moreover, that Mornington felt it also! But that astute young gentleman was careful not to show by his face whatever he may have felt.

Dr. Chisholm cleared his throat. His voice as he spoke was grim and uncompromising.

Rookwood held its breath, not daring to indulge in even the faintest of smiles.

"It is evident that a mistake has been made. I am glad that—ah—what would have been a serious injustice has been prevented. Carthew's evidence, supported by that of Bulkeley, effectually clears Mornington from all suspicion of having committed this grave offence."

There was a subdued cheer from the Fourth Form, and little Mr. Bootles fairly beamed. But the Head held up his hand with a sharp gesture, and frowned.

"I cannot by any means congratulate Mornington upon the way he has conducted himself in this—ah—unfortunate matter! It was largely his own fault that suspicion pointed so strongly to him. But that he acted under what he considered great provocation, I should be strongly inclined to punish him severely. As it is, I trust that he will take his narrow escape as a warning, and profit by it. Return to your place, Mornington! The school may dismiss!"

The school filed out decorously under the Head's stern eye, thrilled by perhaps the most dramatic scene Big Hall had ever been witness of. But once outside the great door, there was a rush and a whoop from the Fourth Form.

"Shoulder high!"

Valentine Mornington, cool and smiling, was rushed out into the quad, borne high on the shoulders of his Form fellows.

Three hearty cheers were given for him, rounded off by a groan for Mr. Manders.

That gentleman, baffled and furious, was heatedly protesting to the Head.

"But the culprit—the real culprit—has still to be found, sir!" he raved. "Is the author of this dastardly outrage—this unparalleled piece of ruffianism, to go unpunished?"

Dr. Chisholm was ruffled—and pardonably so—and the ravings of the Modern master did not tend to soothe him.

"After what has occurred, I do not feel inclined to go into the matter further, Manders!" he snapped. "It is very unlikely that the culprit could be discovered now. I confess, sir, that I am heartily sick of the whole affair, and I should be very glad to see it dropped!"

GREYFRIARS LANDMARKS



The School Kitchen

Of all the pebbles on the beach
The most illustrious pebble
That's ever come within our reach
Is good old Mrs. Kebble.
This lady fairly fills the bill,
She rules the downstairs regions;
It is her daily task to fill
The hungry schoolboy legions.

How ripping, on a winter morn,
Is her refreshing coffee!
And when you're famished and forlorn,
What price her home-made toffee?
I tell you, Mrs. Kebble's "IT,"
And it would sorely grieve us
If ever she should take a fit
Into her head and leave us!

We sometimes grumble at the fare
Soon after we awaken:
But life would be a sad affair
Without her eggs-and-bacon.
Her rabbit-pies and spuds and peas
With knives and forks we slaughter—
(Excuse me just a moment, please,
My mouth begins to water.)

I wish we didn't have to learn
Such stunts as Greek and Latin;
At cooking we could take a turn,
And very soon be pat in
The art of making cakes and pies
With Mrs. Kebble's knowledge;
Then life would be a Paradise
At this most famous college!

And with this plain hint to his disgruntled subordinate, the Head swept from Big Hall.

The affair was a nine days' wonder at Rookwood, and for the school in general the question "Who did it?" remained unanswered. Tubby Muffin, the Peeping Tom of the Fourth, grew almost frantic with curiosity, which for once had to remain unappeased.

The astute Jimmy Silver had reasons of his own for thinking that he might have been able to supply the answer to the question at a pinch, but he kept his own counsel.

When, on the following day, he caught sight of Mornington and Peele once more walking in a distant part of the playing-fields in close confabulation, Jimmy only grunted.

Had he been able to overhear their conversation his suspicion as to the true answer to that puzzling query would only have been confirmed.

"It was excitin', while it lasted!" Mornington was saying. "But I knew I was safe all the time, of course."

"But it was jolly risky! I didn't know what the dickens to do, when you were standing up there, with the Head offering you the choice of the sack or a flogging!"

"I told you I didn't want you to do anythin'—except push old Manders into the ditch, of course—and that was quite easy, wasn't it?"

"Easy as falling off a log!" said Peele, with a grin. "He went in with a fine old splash, too!"

Mornington chuckled.

"Wish I'd seen it! But I had to be in Carthew's study, workin' up an alibi, of course! I knew he'd clear me at the last moment, to keep me from splittin' about his poker party!"

Peele looked at Mornington with a sort of involuntary admiration.

"You're a cool customer, Morny, no mistake! No one else in the school would have thought of pulling the Head's leg like that!"

Mornington laughed lazily.

"The dear old Head's an old sport," he said. "He wanted to take it out of my hide for pullin' his leg, but he was too just, after havin' doubted my word! Jolly lucky for me! But I wanted old Manders to be paid out. I knew the only way to get you to do it was to take all the suspicion on myself up to the last moment, to put 'em off the scent! And it worked like a charm!"

"You don't think the Head'll start a lot more inquiries now?" said Peele, rather anxiously.

"No fear!" chuckled Mornington. "He's fed up—fed to the teeth! I could see it in his eyes. I'm not sure he isn't jolly pleased, privately, that old Manders got it in the neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the two young rascals chuckled shamelessly over their nefarious secret. And the great question "Who did it?" remains unanswered to this day!



PUZZLES & TRICKS FOR ALL

HISTORY records that the blind poet Homer lost his reason in a vain endeavour to solve a riddle, and from his days until these present times much care and thought have been expended in the invention of puzzles both difficult and simple. It is the object of this chapter to present the reader with a few simple ones.

Two easy and yet fascinating puzzles can be worked with an ordinary draught-board.

1. The Travelling Draught-man.

PLACE a draught-man upon a square near the centre of the board, as in Fig. 1. In how few moves can you make it traverse every square in the board and return to its starting-point?

2. Another Draught Puzzle.

PLACE sixteen men on a draught-board in such a manner that no three men shall be in a line, either horizontally or perpendicularly.

3. Joining the Rings.

NINE rings are connected by six straight lines, as shown in Fig. 2. Connect these same nine rings by four straight lines.

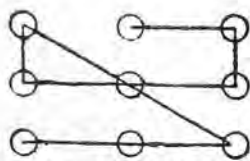


Fig. 2. Joining the Rings

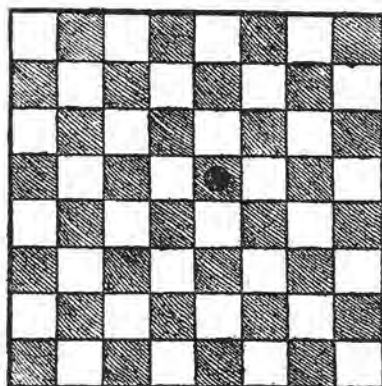


Fig. 1. The travelling draught-man

4. The Ten Rows.

THIS is a puzzle with nine draught-men or counters. Dispose these counters in

such a manner that ten rows are formed with three men in each row.

5. The Cabalistic Sign.

FIG. 3 shows a piece of paper cut into a famous cabalistic sign. How can you divide it into four pieces which, placed together, shall form a square?

6. The Dangerous Anarchists.

ONCE upon a time there were eight anarchists confined in separate cells connected by the system of passages shown in Fig. 4. The prisoners, each of whom had his own number, occupied cells in the order shown.

One day the governor of the gaol decided that his prisoners should be transferred from one cell to another in order that their numbers should run consecutively from left to right. Accordingly he gave orders for this to be done, but at the same time directed his warders that on no account were any two prisoners to meet, either in the passages or cells. As there was only one vacant cell at their disposal, how did the warders work this manoeuvre successfully?

You will find the best way to solve this problem is to draw a plan similar to that shown in Fig. 4, and place eight numbered counters in the respective cells.

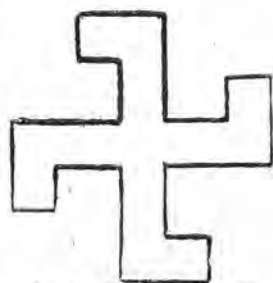


Fig. 3. The Cabalistic Sign

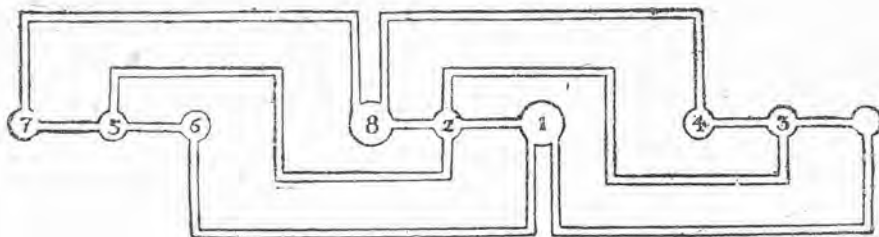


Fig. 4. The dangerous anarchists

7. Catching the Donkey.

A MAN once wanted to saddle a donkey, and proceeded, bridle in hand, to the field where Ned was feeding.

Let Fig. 5 represent the field, which the man entered by the gate at 63, whilst the ass was standing in the opposite corner at 2.

Now you can move either the man or the donkey to any number in the straight line, but neither must cross or rest upon a line covered by the other. For instance, if the donkey be at 2, the man can move to 62, 61, 59, 36, or 13; but he cannot go to either 60 or to 5, for then the donkey would gallop up and let fly with his heels. Ned, on the other hand, can go to 6, 28, 51, 3, or 4, but if he were to go to 60 or 5 the man at 63 would catch him at once.

Giving the donkey the first move, how soon can you place the man in such a position that the ass is cornered and can-

not escape being bridled?

8. Like to Like.

FOUR black and four white counters

9. The Broken Chain.

A LADY once took to a jeweller a gold chain, broken into five pieces of three links each (Fig. 7).

She asked him to repair the chain, agreeing to pay 1s. for each link that he had to break and weld in order to restore the chain to its original length.

The following day she sent her maid for the chain with 3s.

If you had been the jeweller, how would you have mended this lady's chain of five pieces by breaking only three links?

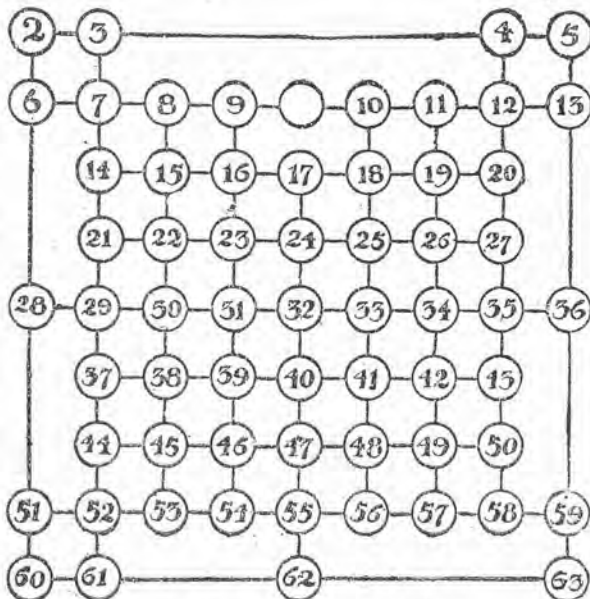


Fig. 5. Catching the donkey

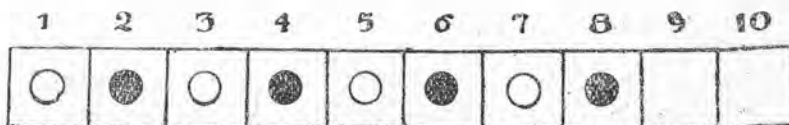


Fig. 6. "Like to like"

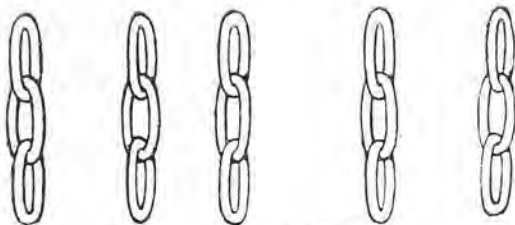


Fig. 7. The broken chain

10. The Diamond Cross.

THE same lady wished to have a diamond cross reset, and pleased with the intelligence shown by the jeweller, she decided to give him the work.

But she was determined to give him no opportunity of cheating her, so she counted the stones from top to bottom (Fig. 8), and found there were nine. She then counted them from

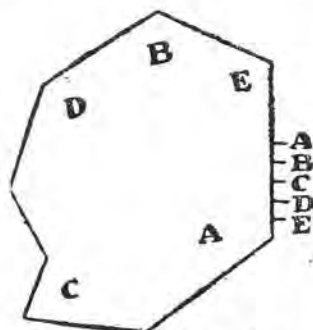


Fig. 9. The quarrelsome railway



Fig. 8. The diamond cross

the bottom to the extremity of each arm of the cross, and found that they also numbered nine. Having noted these figures, she sent the cross to be reset.

But the jeweller was a crafty man, and, knowing how she had reckoned the diamonds, he stole two, and having reset the remainder, he returned the finished piece of work.

When she received her cross the lady thought it looked rather different, and counted the stones according to her former plan.

The numbers were exact! So she paid the jeweller, who went off smiling.

How had he managed the theft?

11. The Quarrelsome Railways.

FIVE competing railway companies decided to place termini in a certain small town. But land was dear, and, after much negotiation they were able to secure sites only as shown in Fig. 9.

But none of the companies would grant any of its competitors running powers over its lines, and as the municipal authorities decided that all five lines should enter the city side by side, the engineers found themselves confronted with the following problem: How is each line to reach its destination without crossing any of its competitor's tracks?

How would you extricate them from this dilemma?

12. Another Railway Problem.

THIS problem is shown in Fig. 10. In the railway A, B, C there are two sidings, A, D and C, E, which meet at F. At this latter place there is only sufficient space to contain

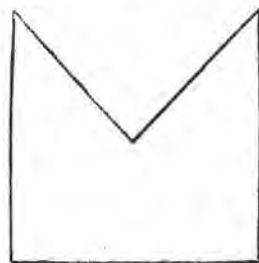


Fig. 11. The mitre

one truck of the size of G or H, and there is no room for the engine, I. Consequently, if this engine is sent up either of the sidings, it must return by the same tracks. The point to be discovered is: How can the engine, I, transpose the two

wagons G and H by simply using the rails shown in the illustration?

(The solutions to these problems will be found on pages 350 and 351.)

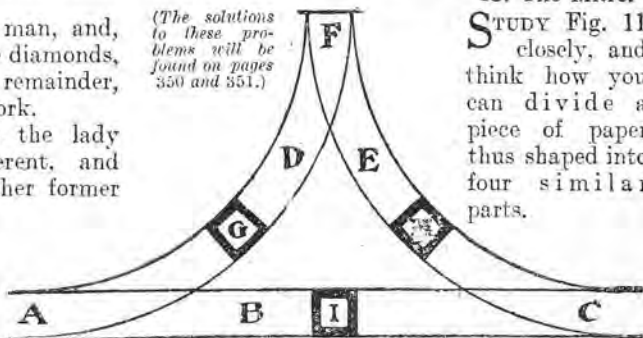


Fig. 10. The second railway problem

13. The Mitre.

STUDY Fig. 11 closely, and think how you can divide a piece of paper thus shaped into four similar parts.



To Save His Honour!

*A Magnificent, Complete
Story of St. Jim's, Intro-
ducing Tom Merry and Co.,
Talbot, and Miss Marie
Rivers*

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Figgins is Obstinate!

"**B**LOW the rain!" said Figgins.

"Yes, but——"

"Besides, who cares for getting wet?"

"Nobody; but——"

"If you School House chaps are afraid of wetting your tootsies, you can go and wrap yourselves up in cotton-wool!" snorted Figgins. "And you can call it a win for the New House."

To which Tom Merry and Co. replied with a general snort.

Certainly the weather was not promising. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the junior house match was fixed for that afternoon. But the rain, which had been threatening all the morning, was coming down at last in earnest. There was a steady drizzle in the quad, and the leafless elms were simply weeping. And the footer ground was, as Monty Lowther remarked, in a splendid condition for making mud-pies, but not for playing football.

Naturally Tom Merry and Co. deemed it advisable to postpone the match. But Figgins, the junior skipper of the New House, was intractable.

Figgins was not usually obstinate, but he could be very obstinate when he liked. Apparently he liked now.

Figgins wanted to play that match, weather or no weather. He had reason. In the last three matches the School House had beaten their old rivals. Figgins wanted to change all that. He had nigger-driven his team till they were at the top-notch of their form, and he anticipated victory. From the point of view of the New House team all was clean and bright so far as the prospects of the game were concerned. Now the weather had taken a hand in the game, and the ground wasn't really fit for playing on. But, as Figgins declared warmly, it was as fit for one side as the other. If the blessed match was postponed, goodness only knew when it could be played. Most of the dates were taken up with regular matches, and the weather might play the same trick again at any time. Figgins and Co. were eager to wipe out the galling record of their defeat, and they wanted to go ahead and "blow the rain!"

Tom Merry, with his coat collar turned up, surveyed the ground on to which the rain was falling. It was not a cheerful view.

"It's all rot," said Tom, with a shake of the head. "You're an ass, Figgy!"

Figgins grunted.

"Oh, chance it, and play!" he said.

"'Twouldn't be footer——"

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the most elegant member of the School House team. "Wats! We should uttably wuin our clobbah, Figgy!"

"It's rather thick, playing in this weather, Figgy," said Talbot of the Shell, Tom Merry's best winger.

Another grunt from Figgins.

"And don't be scared of a little wet," he said. "Don't be soft."

"Soft!" roared the School House juniors, in an indignant chorus, much incensed by that imputation.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Yes, soft!" sniffed Figgins. "Look here, we don't agree to calling it off, and if you shirk it we shall count it as a win for the New House."

"Rats!"

"Rubbish!"

"Piffle!"

"Bosh!"

"That settles it," said Tom Merry, frowning. "You're a silly, obstinate ass, Figgy, but if you are going to call us soft, we'll play you if it's raining in cartloads! We'd play you if it was raining Prussian Uhlans. Come on, you chaps!"

"Bai Jove, we shall be wet thwough, and smothahed in mud, you know."

"Can't be helped."

"Oh, play up," said Talbot laughing. "It's as fair to one side as to the other. And the rain may go off."

"Doesn't look like it," said Blake of the Fourth, blinking at the lowering sky. "But we'd play in a dozen thunder storms at once rather than call it a win for the New House."

"Hear, hear!"

Figgins grinned.

"That's right, buck up," he said. "Who cares for the weather? Though you may as well call it a win for us, for we're going to lick you out of your boots this time!"

"Bow-wow!" said Lowther.

Tom Merry made up his mind. It might have rained pitchforks and 75-guns, and Tom Merry would have played rather than submit to the imputation of softness. The

two teams came out of the pavilion into the dripping rain.

"Where's the giddy referee?" asked Tom Merry.

Lefevre of the Fifth was to referee the match, but he was not to be seen. Doubtless he concluded that his study was a more comfortable place in that kind of weather, and certainly his conclusion was a reasonable one.

"Cut off and call Lefevre, someone," said Figgins.

Talbot of the Shell sped off towards the School House. The juniors crowded back into shelter to wait for his return. There was not a single soul near the field to see the match. Nobody was likely to come out in that downpour to be a spectator. The rain was simply splashing down on to the football field, and the goal-posts were running water. But Figgins' obstinate face showed no signs of relenting, and Figgy's team backed him loyally. Redfern was overheard to whisper that Figgy was a blithering cuckoo, but he backed up his leader all the same.

Talbot was not long gone. He was soon seen speeding back from the distant School House. But he came alone.

"Well?" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the Shell fellow came up dripping and panting.

"Is Lefevre coming?"

Talbot grinned.

"No. He says he's not a duck, and this weather is only suitable for ducks to play footer. He says that if you're going to play this afternoon you must be ducks, or else——"

"Or else what, fathead?" said Blake.

"Geese!" said Talbot.

"And he's right, too," growled Kangaroo of the Shell. "You're an ass, Figgy. Where are we going to dig up a referee, if Lefevre won't come? I suppose we're not going to play without a referee?"

"A junior will do if we can't get a senior!" snapped Figgins. "You cut off, Kerr, and call one of the fellows."

"Right-ho!" said Kerr. "You chaps agree?"

"Oh, anything for a quiet life," said Manners resignedly.

Kerr rushed off to the New House, and he did not come back alone. He brought

Thompson of the Shell with him. Thompson had put on his overcoat and a waterproof after that, and a cap with flaps that pulled down over his ears. He looked more as if he was going to start upon an aeroplane journey than merely to referee a football match.

"Ready?" said Figgins.

"Well, you are a set of blessed duffers," said Thompson. "You'll all jolly well catch your death of cold."

"Well, you jolly well won't with all that clobber on!" said Figgins sarcastically.

"Now, if you School House kids ain't afraid of a little rain, we'll start."

"Oh, pile in."

And the teams went out into the field. Figgins and Tom Merry tossed, and the kick-off fell to Figgins, against the wind and rain. By the time the ball had started rolling the players were already wet through to the skin. Still, Monty Lowther remarked that it was a comfort that they couldn't get any wetter, for what that was worth.

Thompson of the Shell blew the whistle, and the ball rolled, and the rainy match began, amid an unaccustomed silence. There was not a single spectator on the ground. The cheers and shouts that usually accompanied a football-match were conspicuous by their absence. But as the game proceeded, the fellows in the houses became aware of what was on, windows that gave a view to the ground were crammed with faces, to catch distant glimpses of them through the falling rain. And the general opinion of both houses at St. Jim's was that twenty-two fellows were off their rockers.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

An Unfinished Match

"PLAY up!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Groooh! On the beastly muddy ball!"

Splash! Squash! Skid!

"Bai Jove!"

The rain was coming down harder. It was coming down so hard, in fact, that even Figgins thought that perhaps he had been a little too obstinate. But Figgins would not have admitted that for worlds.

In the drenching downpour the two teams did their best.

The ground was slippery and muddy. Nearly every rush led to falls and bumps. The ball might have been rubbed in lard for its slipperiness.

The two unhappy goalkeepers rubbed the rain out of their eyes and peered at the field. The players kept themselves warm by their activity, and they were soon streaming; but Fatty Wynn in the New House goal, and Herries in the School House goal, hadn't so much exercise, and they were soon sneezing instead of steaming.

The juniors ploughed their way along, and in ten minutes they were smothered with mud, and it was impossible to recognise the colours of the opposing teams. It was difficult to recognise the mud-bespattered faces, which led to some mistakes, Arthur Augustus passing the ball to a New House forward and Kerr sending it to a School House man. But little mistakes occurred like that on both sides, so it was as good—or as bad—for one side as the other.

Figgins and Co. made determined attacks. The New House team was in unusually good form, and in better weather they would have had a good chance of wiping out their record of defeat, but in that weather was at a discount. It was now a game of kick and rush and splash.

The wind drove the heavy rain into the faces of the New House, and they simply hadn't a chance in the first half, with all their determined rushes. Tom Merry and Co. came right down the field at last, and Talbot, beating the bewildered backs, sent in a swerving shot for goal. If Fatty Wynn had been on the alert as usual he would have saved that shot from the wing; but at that moment Fatty Wynn was nearly doubled up with a Gargantuan sneeze.

"Atchooo-chooo-chooo!"

The ball whizzed over his shoulder, and lodged in the dripping net. There was a gasp of triumph from the School House side.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Talbot!"

"Atchooo-chooo-chooo!" sneezed the fat goalkeeper.

"Chuck the ball out, Fatty!" growled Figgins.

"Atchoooo-choooo-choooo!"

"Oh, my hat! Don't catch a silly cold in the middle of the match!" howled the exasperated Figgins. "You might have a little consideration for your side, Fatty. Chuck out that ball!"

Fatty Wynn pressed the handkerchief to his nose with one hand and chucked the ball out with the other.

"I can't help gadging gold in this rain, fadded!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't a laughing madder," gurgled Fatty Wynn. "I've got a frighdful gold in by dose!"

"Oh, blow your nose," growled Figgins crossly.

"That's what he's doing!" grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchoooo-choooo-chooo!"

The teams lined up again. The first half was getting to its end, and only that goal had been taken. But the School House piled in again, with the wind and the rain behind them, when the whistle went. They brought the ball down and Talbot centred to Tom Merry, and Tom slammed it in. Fatty Wynn could have stopped that shot, too, at any other time. But at that critical moment he was blowing his nose. The ball rolled over his head.

"Goal! Hurray!"

"Buck up, Fatty, you ass!" shrieked Figgins. "Have you come out goal collecting?"

"I can't buck up wid this gold in by head!" groaned the unfortunate Fatty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchoooo-choooo-chooo!"

"Oh, don't you begin sneezing, Blake!"

"Atchoooo-choooo-chooo!"

"Keep moving!" gasped Lowther. "We shall all be laid up at this rate. I hope Figgins will catch complicated pneumonia and plenty of pleurisy and lumbago and rheumatism!"

Figgins opened his mouth to retort, but the retort did not come forth. A tremendous sneeze came instead.

"Hallo! Figgy's got it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchoooo-choooo-chooo!"

"Whad you gagging ad?" growled Figgins. "Blay ub!"

They played up. Figgins succeeded in getting through this time, and he put the ball in unresisted, for Herries was in the throes of coughing.

"Thad's wud vor uds, anyway," said Figgins as they walked back to the centre of the field. "We'll bead the bounders yed!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed a sharp voice. "You silly little asses, what are you doing down here in this rain?"

Thompson of the Shell was about to blow the whistle for the restart, when Kildare's voice was heard. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, had just come in, muffled up, and with an umbrella, and he caught sight of the players in the distance, and hurried down at once to the football ground.

"You muddy little sweeps!" shouted Kildare. "What are you doing?"

"Gadging golds!" replied Monty Lowther humorously.

"Blayig voodball," said Figgins. "Whad do you subbose we doig?"

"Playing football! Playing the giddy ox, you mean! Come out of that field at once!"

"Whad?"

"Get indoors, and rub yourselves dry instantly!" shouted Kildare angrily. "My only hat, the whole lot of you will be laid up! Get a move on; do you hear?"

"Weally, Kildare, we haven't finished the game!"

"Get in, I tell you!"

The juniors looked at one another. The word of the captain of the school was law. As a matter of fact, most of the players were not sorry that Kildare had chipped in. The moment they stood there they shivered, and it was pretty certain that most of them were booked for pretty bad colds.

They marched off the field sheepishly.

Figgins and Co. disappeared in the direction of the New House, and Tom Merry and Co. followed Kildare in a draggled crowd to the School House. As they came in, leaving mud-pools and streams of water where they trod, Mr. Railton met them. The Housemaster gave a jump at the sight of them.

"Bless my soul! What is this, Kildare?"

"The little idiots have been out playing footer, sir, and I fetched them in," said Kildare.

"Playing football in the dreadful down-pour! Go to your dormitories at once, and rub yourselves dry and get into bed."

"To b-b-bed, sir?" stammered the juniors in dismay.

"Yes, at once. I will have hot-water bottles sent to you."

"B-b-but we're all righd, zur!" said Blake. "We don'd veel ad all lige gatching golds, sir, nod ad all. Atitchoo! Atitchoo! Atitchoo!"

"Blake!"

"Atchoo! Atitchoo-choo-choo! Atitchoo-chew-ew-ew!" sneezed Blake. "We're quide all right, sir—atitchoo!"

"Go to bed at once, all of you!"

And the unfortunate footballers went to bed at once.

Rubbed dry, and tucked in with hot-water bottles at their feet, they had plenty of time to meditate on that disastrous football match.

Over in the New House, Figgins and Co. were suffering a similar fate, with the addition of five hundred lines each from Mr. Ratcliff, their Housemaster. And among all the heroes of that football match, the principle observations were "Atitchoo-choo-choo!" and "Wo-ow-oooooch! Grooooooooggggggh!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

On the Sick List

THE next day there were many vacancies in the form-rooms of the Fourth and the Shell.

All the twenty-two, fortunately, were not "down." But the large proportion of them had paid severely for Figgins's recklessness. Figgins himself had a glorious cold, which the other fellows agreed was only just. Kerr had a cold, too, and Fatty Wynn was in a pitiable state. Redfern and Owen and Lawrence were all laid up.

In the School House, Blake and Herries, Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, Bernard Glyn, Manners, and Digby were sad sufferers. Of all the School House side, only Tom Merry, Lowther, D'Arcy, and Talbot had escaped.

Monty Lowther had got the snuffles, but it wasn't bad enough to confine him to his bed. There were seven in the School House, and six in the New House, which made the extremely unlucky thirteen. And that day the dreadful word "Influenza" was whispered.

"Influenza!" growled Tom Merry, when he heard Dr. Taylor's report after visiting the unlucky juniors in the sanatorium. "Lucky for them it isn't pneumonia. Of all the silly duffers that ever duffed, I think Figgins takes the cake!"

"Thirteen blessed invalids!" said Talbot, with a whistle. "Laid up for days—perhaps weeks. Poor old Figgy! If it's influenza it may spread."

"Oh, don't be a horrid Jonah!" said Tom Merry, with a shiver. "I've had influenza once. I don't want any more!"

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shudder. "Bai Jove, what's the mattah with young Fwayne?"

"Atitchoo!" said young Frayne.

"Got a cold?"

Frayne of the Third blinked at them with watery eyes.

"I feel as if I've caught something," he said. "Perhaps I got it from Wally. He's snuffling and gurgling like anything."

"Bai Jove, is my minah goin' to be ill?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in distress. "Weally, you fellahs, this is too bad of Figgins."

An hour later D'Arcy minor and Joe Frayne were in the sanatorium with the other sufferers. There was no doubt that it was influenza, and that it was going the rounds. On the following day Reilly and Hammond, of the Fourth, followed the others, and then Mellish and Durrance and Lumley-Lumley. In the New House, too, there were more sufferers. Digges, Clampe, Clarke, Thompson, French, Pratt, Monteith, Baker, Langton, and Grey of the Sixth.

The St. Jim's fellows were in a decidedly uneasy state by this time—just the state to catch whatever was going, as a matter of fact. Gore and Skimpole were the next to follow, and after them went Cutts of the Fifth, and St. Leger and Gilmore. Russhden of the Sixth and Darrel went the same way.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE?



The Editor of that famous publication, "Billy Bunter's Weekly," looks forward to the time when he will possess an editorial sanctum like this, replete with every luxury, including unlimited tuck! For the present he has to be content to carry on his literary labours in a junior study at Greyfriars School.

"It's going the rounds," said Tom Merry gloomily. "Whether it started in that blessed football match or not, it's going round the giddy school."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus dismally. "It's wotten, béin' in Study 6. All on a fellah's lonelay own, you know. And they won't let me go and see Blake and Herries and Dig, in case I catch it too."

"And we can't go and see poor old Manners," said Monty Lowther.

"I'd like to give old Skimmy a look in," said Talbot; "but it isn't allowed."

Talbot shared a study with Gore and Skimpole, both of whom were on the sick list.

"You'd better dig with Lowther and me while your study mates are away, Talbot," said Tom Merry. "And you come too, Gussy. You don't want to have a study to yourself. We'll make it a foursome until some more of us go."

"Thank you, deah boy!"

It was not cheerful with influenza "going the rounds." The school sanatorium was pretty nearly full now. Two nurses had come from the Cottage Hospital in Wayland, but two were not enough. It was understood that the Head had sent for more nurses, but there was a hitch somewhere, probably due to the demand for nurses for other influenza victims.

Tom Merry and Lowther were a little glum in these days. They missed their chum and study-mate, Manners. Talbot and D'Arcy shared the study with them for a time, in Manners' place. Fortunately none of the four showed any signs of catching it.

But one evening, as he came into the study, Tom Merry had an alarm. Talbot of the Shell was sitting there alone, with a wrinkle on his brow and a gloomy expression of on his face.

"Talbot, old man——"

Talbot looked up quickly. He had a newspaper in his hand.

"You've got it?" gasped Tom.

"Eh? Got what?"

"The flu!"

Talbot smiled.

"No, I've not got that! I'm as sound as a bell, thank goodness!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath of relief.

"Jolly glad of that! You were looking so

down in the mouth, I was sure you'd got it coming on. The only way to dodge the flu is to keep cheerful, you know. Don't worry! What the deuce are you worrying about? Thinking of the footer matches we sha'n't be able to play till this is over? I've had to scratch with the Grammarians already."

"No, I wasn't thinking of that. Levison has just given me this paper. There's something that concerns me—in a way——"

Tom Merry looked uneasy.

"You remember that man who came here as a science master?" said Talbot quietly.

"He called himself Mr. Packington here. He came with forged testimonials to the Head. He was really a cracksman; they called him the 'Professor' in the gang. Well, when I found it out, I gave him a chance to clear. And he tried to rob the Head, as you know, and was collared. He said when they took him that the lock wasn't made that could hold him. It seems it's true. He's got away."

"Got away?" said Tom.

Talbot nodded.

"But—but if he has, he can't hurt you," said Tom Merry uneasily. "It's a bit rotten, Talbot, old man, that you should be worried about what's long past and done with. But this man can't come back here, at all events."

Talbot was silent.

Tom Merry sat on the edge of the table regarding his chum anxiously. It was evident that the news of the Professor's escape from the police worried the Shell fellow.

"What's the trouble, Talbot, old chap?" said Tom. "You can tell me, I suppose?"

"You know my story," said Talbot, in a low voice. "But I haven't talked to you much about it. It's not a pleasant subject, you know. But I'll tell you now. You know I'm a cracksman's son, brought up in a gang in which my father was leader. You know the life I led before I came here, a thief among thieves." Talbot shivered a little. "It seems too horrible now to think of, but there it is! The Professor—his name is Rivers—Captain Crow's right-hand man in the gang—and Captain Crow was my father. He knew me from my childhood, the Professor did; and—and I was brought up with his daughter, Marie."

"He had a daughter!" said Tom Merry.
"That ought to have kept him straight!"

Talbot smiled faintly.

"Marie was one of the gang," he said. "A better girl never breathed, and I was very fond of her; she was just my age. But she was brought up to help her father in his work—and you know the kind of work it is—just as I was brought up. I've thought about her very much since I've been here, and wished I could get a chance of finding her and helping her to do as I've done—throw the past behind and make a fresh start."

"A girl, brought up to be a thief!" said Tom.

"Yes. And yet a better girl never lived—except for that. And how was she to learn better?" said Talbot bitterly. "I've had my chance; but she never had a chance. And her father is the biggest rascal in a swell mob—the chief of the Thieves' Club now. And she's fond of him; he's her father."

"It's rotten!" said Tom. "Rotten! But, old chap, all that's done with now, as far as you are concerned. Everybody at St. Jim's knows your history, knows that you reformed and suffered for it. Everybody knows you're as straight as a die. They used to call you Toff—and you've proved yourself a toff, and no mistake! The gang can't hurt you now. They did their worst against you when you chucked up the old life, and they can't do anything more."

"I hope so!"

"But——"

"The Professor isn't a man to be beaten easily," said Talbot. "He wants me back in the gang. Kid as I am, I was the best cracksmen in the three kingdoms, and he knows it. I should be worth a fortune to them. When he was here in disguise under a lying name I gave him a chance to get out for the sake of old times, and for Marie's sake. Then he was arrested, at my word! The Professor doesn't forget! I have not heard the last of him, I know."

"But the police want him still; and if he should trouble you, a word will be enough to get him to prison," said Tom.

Talbot's face was almost haggard.

"There's Marie," he said, in a low voice.

"His daughter?"

"Yes, and my old chum. I denounced him when he was here, because he was here to rob the Head. After what Dr. Holmes has done for me, I—I couldn't keep silent, even for Marie's sake. But so long as he only tries to injure me, I'm helpless. Whatever he does to me, I can't hurt him without hurting Marie. And she's fond of him. He's her father."

Tom Merry set his lips.

"And you expect to see him again?"

"I fear it!" Talbot's lip quivered. "He won't leave a stone unturned to get me back into the old gang. And he's cunning—cunning as a fox! What he will do, I don't know—try to disgrace me here somehow, perhaps, and make it necessary for me to give up my scholarship and get out. Then I should be without resources, and he would think I should return to the old life for bread."

"But you wouldn't," said Tom Merry quietly. "I know you, Talbot. You would starve before you would steal."

"You're right there, Tom! I would starve before I would steal! I've seen the light now," said Talbot quietly. "But I've never been afraid in my life before, but now—You don't know that man's cunning and resources. Before I didn't fear him; he didn't know where I was—he had no suspicion that I was here, you see. When he came here under a false name, he knew me at once; and he was as surprised to see me as I was to see him when I found out his disguise and knew him. He knows where to find me now; and he will lay his plans, and——"

Talbot broke off.

"What a cad I am to bother you with all this, Tom! You've had enough to put up with on your own account."

"I'm glad you've told me," said Tom Merry. "You know you've got a pal to stand by you through thick and thin, anyway, Talbot. And if that scoundrel should try and trouble you again, he'll have two to deal with instead of one."

But the cloud did not leave Talbot's face.

It was a hard struggle the Toff had made to throw off the influence of the old, dark days of the past and face life afresh. But he had made it, and he had won. But the shadow of the

past was still over his young life. In the blackness of the past, when he looked back upon it, there was a bright spot. It was the face of his girl chum—a laughing face—with clear eyes of blue—a face he knew that he would never forget.

Marie—sweet, kind-hearted Marie—was still in the toils the Toff had escaped from. Her devotion to her father blinded her to everything else.

And her father was the Professor. John Rivers, the cracksman and forger! To save Marie, to lead her to tread a new path, as he had done, that had been the Toff's dream. And with the Professor safe behind prison bars it might have been possible.

But the Professor was free. And could Talbot raise his hand against the father of his old chum—the girl who in those old days had nursed him through a dangerous illness, and perhaps saved his life? He knew that he could not.

A wily and unscrupulous foe, who would hesitate at no cunning device, was already scheming against his honour and happiness. He knew that. And in a struggle with the wily enemy the Toff was disarmed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

The Polite Thing!

"PUT on your best bib and tuckah, deah boys!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the weather, having done its worst, had turned over a new leaf, and a keen winter sun was shining down on St. Jim's. Football practice was going on, but with so many members of the junior team laid up with influenza, the Gramunarian match had been scratched for that afternoon. But Arthur Augustus was not thinking about football.

D'Arcy and Talbot of the Shell were sharing Study No. 10 of the Shell with Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, as Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth, and Manners and Gore and Skimpole of the Shell were all in the sanatorium.

At the present moment the swell of St.

Jim's was resplendent. Never had his trousers been so beautifully creased; never had his necktie been quite so natty, or his silk hat so beautifully polished. There was evidently something "on."

"Hallo! What's the game?" asked Monty Lowther with a yawn. "Wherefore this splendour? Excuse me if I shade my eyes; you dazzle me!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Why this thushness?" asked Tom Merry. "Is Cousin Ethel coming?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, deah boy. But somebody is comin', and I wathah thought it was up to us to do the polite thing, you know. I've come for you fellahs to twot along with me to the station."

"Who's coming?"

"I have just heard it fwom Mr. Wailton," explained Arthur Augustus. "He is sendin' the twap for her, and I thought it would be wathah a good ideah to go in the twap and give her a gweetin' in the name of the school. You fellahs and Talbot had bettah come along with me."

"But who is it?" yelled Lowther.

"Miss March, deah boy."

"And who, in the name of thunder, is Miss March?" demanded Tom Merry. "I've never heard the name. One of your blessed cousins?"

"Certainly not. Miss March is the new nurse."

"Oh, a nursey!" grunted Lowther.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely upon Monty Lowther.

"You are pwobably awah, Lowthah, that there is a shortage of nurses. The Head has been wathah bothahed to get enough of them to look after the chaps in the sanatorium. There is a new one comin' to-day fwom an institution of young lady nurses in London—the Little Sistahs of the Poor, they are called. Wathah a nobbay title, isn't it? Well, one of the Little Sistahs is comin' heah to-day, and I considah it would be wathah decent for some chaps to meet her at the station. As they don't take any pay for nursin' people, it's vewy decent of them, and I wathah think we ought to testify some gwatitude to the Little Sistah—what?"

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm going down to the footer, but you can testify my gratitude for me."

"Lowthah, you ass——"

But Monty Lowther sauntered away, and D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Tom Merry and Talbot. He was full of his new idea.

"I twust you fellahs are comin'," he said! "It might look wathah pushin' if a chap went

alone. And this nurse is a wathah young one. Those who are already heah are vewy good persons, of course, but w a t h a h leathewy. But the Little Sistahs of the Poor are quite kids. Vewy likely she will be wathah nervous, and a kind gweetin' will buck her up, you know. You are comin', Tom Mewwy?"

"Well, there's the footer, you know."

"But the match is off."

"Footer practice," said Tom. "It'll be dark by the time you get back from the station. On reflection, I think I can safely leave it in your hands, Gussy. You can do the honours for the whole school. Put in a word for me, of course."

"You uttah ass! Pway don't walk away while I'm talkin', you duffah! Talbot, deah boy, I twust you are comin'. I don't want to go alone, you know. I have bwibed and

cowwupted Taggles to let me dwive the twap and fetch Miss March. It stands to weason she would. wathah be met by some nice fellahs like us than by a cwusty old boundah like Taggles. Come along, deah boy!"

Talbot cast a glance in the direction of the football field, and then gave in. He was always a good-natured fellow.

"Right-ho!" And prepared to start.

"Bettah put on a toppah," said Arthur Augustus anxiously.

"As many as you like, old chap," said Talbot affably. "Weally, Talbot——"

The Shell fellow went in for his topper, and came out looking quite satisfactory, from Arthur Augustus's point of view. They walked across the quad in great style, and found Taggles with the trap at the gates. Arthur Augustus was a first-class driver, and the trap was quite safe



Arthur Augustus gave a yell as a snowball caught his hat and sent it flying. "Ow! You awful wottahs!" (See next page.)

in his hands; and Taggles, who disliked work of any kind, and was quite impervious to the charms of any member of the feminine gender, old or young, was glad to get out of going to the station. And five shillings, which had formerly belonged to Arthur Augustus, were now reposing in Taggles' pocket, and that had decided any doubts that he might have had.

"All wight, Taggy, deah boy!"

The two juniors climbed into the trap, and D'Arcy took the reins, and they bowled away down the lane towards Rylcombe. It was a bright, keen winter afternoon. Behind the hedges snow was banked up from a late snowfall. The ride was most enjoyable.

The two St. Jim's fellows were not destined to reach the station without mishap.

Half-way to Rylcombe three persons were sighted, sitting in a row on a stile. They were Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Wootton major, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, and at the sight of Arthur Augustus driving the trap they exchanged a merry grin.

Gordon Gay jumped down from the stile, and held up his hand in the road to make Arthur Augustus halt, and at the same time Wootton major and Frank Monk slipped down on the other side of the stile, where the snow lay thick behind the hedge.

Arthur Augustus had to pull in the horse, for Gay was in the middle of the road in front of him.

"Halt!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "Fancy meeting you, Gussy! What have you been scratching the match to-day for—what?"

"Most of the fellahs laid up with influenza, deah boy. Pway don't delay me, as I am wathah in a huwwy—"

"No larks, Gay," said Talbot. "We're going to the station."

"Larks!" said Gay solemnly. "Do I look as if I were larking? I want to inquire after the health of the poor little invalids. How are they getting on with their gruel, Gussy?"

"Weally, Gay—"

Whiz! Whiz!

From behind the hedge came two squashy and muddy snowballs, with deadly aim.

Arthur Augustus gave a yell.

One of them caught his silk hat, and sent it flying towards the road, and the other landed in his neck, with ruinous results to his beautiful collar.

"Ow! Ow! You awful wottahs! Ow!"

Whiz! Squash! Squash! Squash!

Wootton Major and Monk were going strong.

The sight of Arthur Augustus, with all his warpaint on, was irresistible. They didn't snowball Talbot; he did not look so tempting. But muddy, watery snowballs squashed all over Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "Gussy, you look wet! You look muddy!"

Arthur Augustus dropped the reins and dabbed at his face, which was streaming with half-melted snow. Talbot caught the reins and drove on, to get out of the line of fire. Gay jumped out of the way, and the trap went bowling on down the lane. Snowballs whizzed after it in vain as it rushed along at top speed.

"My hat!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"We're out of fire now!" gasped Talbot.

"But my hat—"

"Your hat?"

"Yaas, it's left behind. Pway halt!"

Talbot drew in the horse. Arthur Augustus looked back along the lane. Three festive Grammarians were playing football with his silk topper in the distance. Arthur Augustus shook an infuriated fist at them.

"Oh, the wottahs! The uttah beasts! Oh, crumbs!"

"Never mind; we've got through," said Talbot consolingly.

And he drove on at a more moderate speed.

"Yaas; but look at me!" gasped D'Arcy.

Talbot looked at him, and he could not help smiling. Hatless, Arthur Augustus was simply smothered with snow and mud. The half-melted snow that had been kneaded into snowballs had contained a good proportion of mud. The state of the Swell of St. Jim's was deplorable.

"It's howwid!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "I don't see anythin' at all to gwin at, Talbot. I can't possibly meet Miss March in this shoekin' state. How can I present myself befoah a lady without a hat, and smothered with howwid mud?"

"Oh, I dare say she won't mind!" said Talbot, laughing. "I don't see how it's to be helped now, anyway!"

"Wats! You must dwop me in the village, and go on alone," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose I can twust you to meet the lady, Talbot?"

"Yes, if you like."

"I will dwop in at Mr. Bunn's, and get myself cleaned," said Arthur Augustus, with a shudder. "I am in a most disgustin' state. He may be able to lend me a hat—or a cap, at any rate, I twust you will be able to meet Miss March without makin' any blundah, deah boy!"

"Well, I'll try," said Talbot good-humouredly. "It won't really be a very hard bizney."

"Yaas; but a certain amount of tact is required in intwoducin' oneself to a young lady—a charming young lady," said Arthur Augustus doubtfully.

"Perhaps she isn't charming," suggested Talbot.

"All ladies are charmin', deah boy, to a pwopahly constituted mind," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"I stand corrected," smiled Talbot. "However, I'll do my best. I'll keep in mind exactly what you would do, and do it!"

"Yaas, that's the best thing you can do," agreed Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously. "Pway stop at Mr. Bunn's as you come back, and if I look all wight by that time, I will join you again—see?"

"Right-ho!"

And Arthur Augustus descended from the trap at the shop of the village tailor; and Talbot, smiling, drove on to the station alone.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Old Pals!

"MARIE!" Talbot panted out the name.

He had left the trap outside the station, and gone upon the platform. The train was in, and the passengers were coming towards the exit. Talbot was there to meet Miss March, the nurse. But all thought of Miss March, the nurse, was suddenly driven from his mind at the sight of a face he knew well—a face he had not seen for a very long time, but which he was never likely to forget.

A girl of about his own age, with a charming, candid face and clear blue eyes. She wore a long raincoat and carried a bag in her hand. Talbot met her face to face as she came down the platform.

He stopped dead.

"Marie! What are you doing here?"

The girl stopped too.

Talbot did not even raise his hat. He stood dumbfounded. His face had turned white, his hands clenched hard, till the nails dug into his palms. The cool, iron-nerved Toff seemed to be completely "knocked over" by the sight of that fresh, pretty face with the clear blue eyes that had a mocking light in their depths.

"The Toff!" murmured the girl.

"Marie!"

The girl nodded, showing a glimpse of white, even teeth.

"You came to meet me?" she said.

"N-no! I—I did not know you were coming here. I came to meet somebody else!" stammered Talbot.

"But you are glad to see me?" smiled Marie.

Talbot did not reply. He looked round among the passengers for the nurse he had come there to meet. But there was no sign of her. All the other passengers, besides Marie Rivers, were men. The nurse had evidently not come by that train.

Talbot was glad of it.

"Well?" said Marie, gazing at him with her mocking eyes. "Well, Toff! You look as if you were in a dream."

"It seems like a dream to see you again, Marie," said Talbot in a low voice. "What are you doing here?"

"Cannot you see? I have come by the train."

"And the Professor?" panted Talbot. "Is he here?"

Marie laughed.

"You did not see him?"

Talbot started violently, and looked round. But the passengers were gone from the station now; the two were left alone on the platform.

"He was there—among them?" asked Talbot.

"You did not see him?"

"No."

"Good!" said Marie calmly. "He has more luck this time than when he came to St. Jim's as Mr. Packington—and you betrayed him."

Talbot winced.

"Marie, what does this mean? What are you doing here? What is your father doing here? Tell me, Marie!"

"I will tell you, if you like. Let us sit down—the porter is already staring at us," said Marie lightly.

They went into a deserted waiting-room. Talbot seemed to be dazed. The blow he had feared, as he had told Tom Merry, had fallen. The Professor had come back! What did it mean—for him? Wherever John Rivers went, evil dogged his steps. He had come back, as he had threatened that he would! Why? And why was Marie here? Talbot smiled bitterly. He thought he knew. Marie was her father's defence. While she was there, at least, Talbot could not raise a hand against his old associate. He must stand idly by while the Professor carried out his nefarious work—whatever it was. A look of deep gloom settled over the Shell fellow's handsome face.

Marie's mocking face softened, and she touched the Toff lightly on the arm.

"What is it?" she said softly. "Are you so sorry to see me again, Toff? And we used to be such pals, you and I!"

"Marie! You know I'm glad to see you," said Talbot desperately. "Even though it means harm to me, your coming here, I'm glad to see you. But—but what is the game? What is your father here for? He means harm to me; I know that."

Marie shook her head.

"It is you who have done the harm, Toff. You have forgotten your old friends; you have betrayed an old pal. What change has come over you? In the old days you were the most reckless and daring of all; and now—now you have changed—now you are not even true to your old friends. You betrayed my father—"

"I did not!" said Talbot. "You don't understand, Marie. I tell you I've given it up! I've done with the past; I've thrown it all behind! The Professor came to St. Jim's in disguise, with forged papers to show the Head. When I knew at last who he was I gave him a chance to go. I would have begged him on my knees to go, rather than give up your father to the police. But he would not. He trapped me, and remained to carry out his scheme of

robbing the Head. You don't know how much Dr. Holmes has done for me, Marie. He has been like a father to me. If I had stood aside then, I should have been an ungrateful villain. I could not. I gave the Professor a chance, and he would not take it. Then I did what I had to do, my duty. And I am not sorry. Though, for your sake, I was glad to learn afterwards that he was free again. I knew what a blow it would be to you."

"You cared for that?"

"I did care for that, Marie."

"Yet you gave him away?"

"I had no choice, I tell you," said Talbot, huskily. "I could not let my benefactor be robbed. What sort of fellow do you think I am?"

"I think you are a fool, Toff," said Marie, the mocking light in her eyes again. "What are you wasting your life at the school for? You who might be rich as you could desire, working as a schoolboy on a poor scholarship, in want of money! Bah, what life is that compared with the old life, Toff?" Marie's voice became very earnest: "You are playing a fool's game here; it cannot last. Sooner or later you will grow sick of the dullness of it; you will grow tired of poverty and hard work. Why not throw it up and come back to your friends?"

Talbot shook his head without speaking.

"They would all welcome you!" said the girl eagerly. "They miss you—they resent your deserting them. But they'd forgive it all if you'd come back. Think of the life—danger, excitement, wealth—compare it with what you lead now. What does your present life offer in comparison?"

"Honour," said Talbot.

Marie laughed.

"Honesty," said the Toff steadily. "A clear conscience, Marie. Better poverty—yes, even hunger—and honesty with it, than wealth that is not mine, Marie. When I came to St. Jim's it was like the scales falling from my eyes. I had never seen things in their true light before. I was what I had been taught to be. If you knew the fellows—Tom Merry and the rest—you'd understand. They've been so decent. They know what I have been, and it makes no difference to them, because they

The Time all over the World.

Greenwich



Mid-day

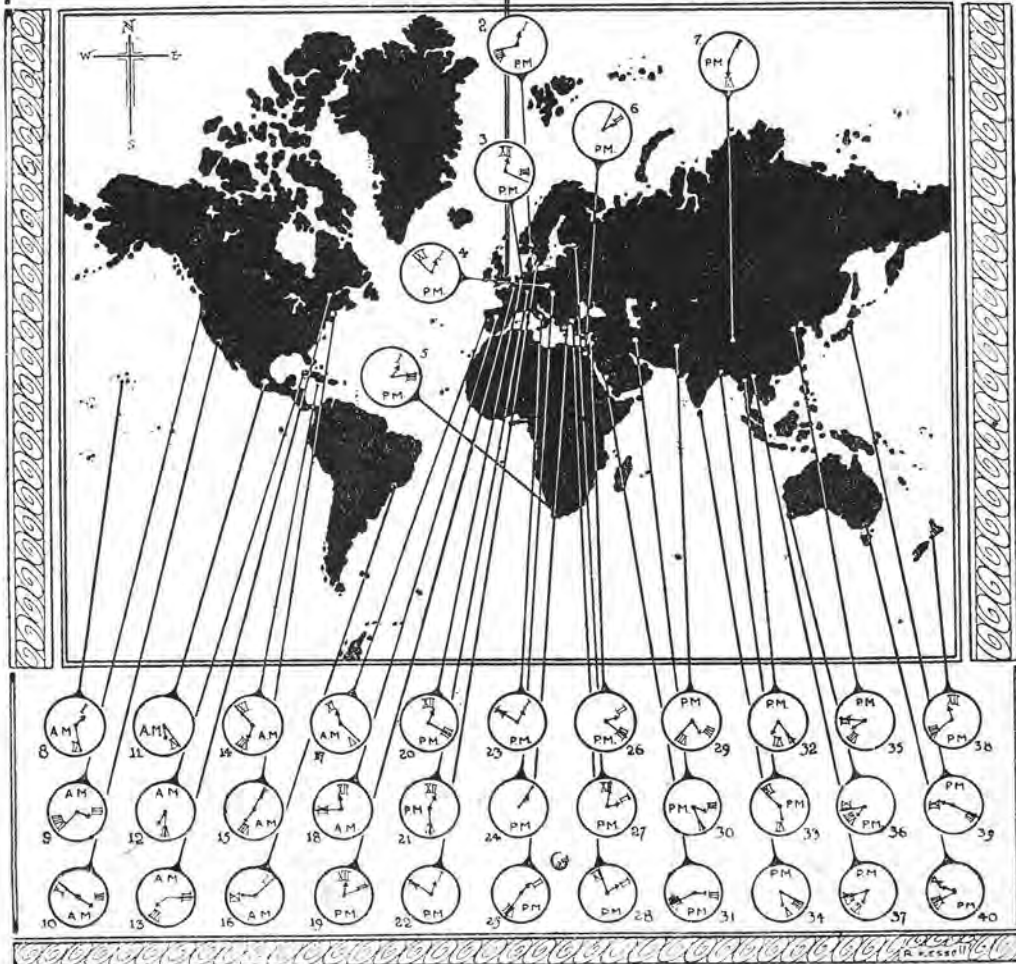
HOW TO READ THE DIAGRAM

"I wonder what time it is in China now?" How often has this question been asked? This page is designed to show the time at a glance anywhere in the world. To find this, look up the town you wish in the key. Let us take Jerusalem. In front of the name is the number 26. Now look for a small clock with the same number, and you will have the time in Jerusalem. By following the line from the clock to the map, you will see just where Jerusalem is.

These times are based on mid-day at Greenwich, but you can find out the time at any moment. Say it is now 7.30 p.m. by your watch. Jerusalem is 2 hours and twenty minutes faster than Greenwich, therefore the time in Jerusalem will be 7.30 p.m. plus 2.20 p.m., which is 9.50 p.m. When it is noon at Greenwich, all places East in the map are p.m., and all those West a.m.

Key to Cities and Towns

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. London. | 11. Mexico | 21. Berne. | 31. Mecca. |
| 2. Christiania. | 12. Havana. | 22. Copenhagen | 32. Mandalay. |
| 3. Brussels. | 13. Quebec. | 23. Rome. | 33. Calcutta. |
| 4. Berlin. | 14. Kingston (J) | 24. Vienna. | 34. Colombo. |
| 5. Cape Town. | 15. New York. | 25. Athens. | 35. Peking. |
| 6. Cairo. | 16. Rio de Janeiro | 26. Jerusalem. | 36. Perth. |
| 7. Ithaca. | 17. Lisbon. | 27. Petrograd. | 37. Bangkok. |
| 8. Honolulu. | 18. Madrid. | 28. Constantinople | 38. Wellington. |
| 9. Vancouver. | 19. Paris. | 29. Kabul. | 39. Tokyo. |
| 10. San Francisco. | 20. Amsterdam | 30. Teheran. | 40. Melbourne. |



have confidence in me. They know I am straight now. I would die rather than betray their confidence—a thousand deaths.”

“And you are satisfied?”

Talbot sighed.

“It isn’t so easy to forget,” he said. “I don’t keep any secret from you, Marie; I do miss the old life sometimes—the danger and the excitement, but—but I’ve made a right choice, and I mean to stand by it.”

Marie’s lip curled.

“Then we are enemies?” she said.

“Never that!” said Talbot.

“My father’s enemies are mine!” said Marie proudly.

“I am not your father’s enemy. I only ask him to let me alone!” exclaimed Talbot passionately. “Why cannot he leave me in peace?”

“You are too valuable, Toff! We’ve fallen on bad days since you left us. You must come back.”

“I cannot come back!”

“Not even for my sake?” said the girl softly.

Talbot’s lips twitched.

“Not that; even for your sake, Marie! I—I hoped—I thought that I might have a chance of seeing you, to—to bring you to my way of thinking, Marie. It has haunted me—the thought of you among those rascals; and the future, too. Marie, it can only end one way—prison, disgrace, lower and lower depths of crime! Marie, think of it! Throw it behind—you can do it—and—”

“And desert my father?” said the girl contemptuously.

“Your father has no claim on you if he persists in following a life of crime. He is clever enough to make his way in the world honestly—there is no excuse for him. And he has no right to drag you down with him!” said Talbot, fiercely. “Give him his choice of throwing up his way of life or parting with you!”

“Never! He is my father.”

“But—but for that, Marie, you would—”

Marie gave a shrug of her pretty shoulders.

“Perhaps. Who knows? But he is my father, and his wish is law to me. I will never desert him, and I will never disobey him.

He has enough enemies and false friends without his own child turning against him.”

Talbot gave a groan. What was he to say before that blind devotion, a devotion noble in itself, though felt towards a worthless and unscrupulous criminal? He knew that nothing he could say would turn the girl from her purpose. For good or ill, she was devoted to her father.

There was a long silence. The girl watched curiously the working of the handsome face of the St. Jim’s fellow. Talbot broke the silence at last.

“Why is he here?” he asked hoarsely.

“He has come—for me?”

Marie nodded.

“He hopes to induce me to return, or to force me—”

“We miss you so much, Toff.”

“It will never be. You can remember, in the old days, Marie, that I was always a fellow of my word.”

“Then”—the blue eyes gleamed—“then you are my father’s enemy, Toff?”

“Not his enemy, for your sake, Marie. But I will not serve his purpose. I will have nothing to do with him. Let him go, the world is wide, and he need not cross my path. But if he attempts to renew his game at St. Jim’s, then I will denounce him, come what may.”

“If he goes to prison, Toff, I go with him.”

“Marie!” groaned Talbot.

“Betray him and betray me!” said the girl disdainfully. “Well, I am here, at your mercy. You have only to call the police now, they will be glad of the chance. I am in your hands.”

Talbot’s face was deadly white.

“You know I shall not do that, Marie. What are you torturing me for?” he muttered. Marie rose to her feet.

“Bah! It is useless to talk, you have lost your senses.” She paused, a slight smile breaking out on her face. “What did you come to the station for, Toff? You came to meet someone?”

“Yes. A nurse,” said Talbot, rising heavily. “It does not matter, she has not come—”

“One of the Little Sisters of the Poor?”

"Yes," said Talbot, in surprise. "How did you know?"

Marie laughed, a clear silvery laugh.

"How good! Then you can take me to St. Jim's."

"To St. Jim's!" said Talbot.

"Yes, as that is what you have come here for."

Talbot looked at her blankly. Marie laughed again.

"I am Miss March," she said. "I am the Little Sister!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The New Nurse

TALBOT staggered back.

"Marie!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

He had not dreamed of that. Miss March, the Little Sister of the Poor, the nurse who was coming to St. Jim's—it was Marie, the cracksmen's daughter! It was a stunning blow to the unhappy boy. That was the Professor's game, then. Marie was to be placed in the school—for what, he could guess only too easily. The Professor, lurking in the village in his cunning disguise, would always be at hand to help her, to counsel her. That was the game.

Talbot could not speak. He could only gaze at the girl in anguish. That was the game, he knew it now, and there was only one way of baffling it—to denounce the girl who had been his best chum, to hand over Marie to the police—and that, he knew, he could never do. Never that!

His brain was in a whirl. What was he to do? That was the question that hammered in his mind. To stand aside while the Professor's work was done and his benefactor blundered—it was impossible! To denounce Marie—that was still more impossible! To endeavour to persuade her to abandon her worthless father—he knew that was hopeless!

"Bai Jove! Heah you are!"

An elegant figure loomed up in the doorway of the waiting-room.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, resplendent as ever, with a brand-new silk topper—a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, from the crown of his shining hat to the tips of his

elegant boots. Arthur Augustus raised his shining silk topper to Miss March with the elegance that was all his own.

"I've been waiting for you, Talbot, deah boy, and I came on to the station," he said cheerily. "So Miss March has awwived!"

"Yes," stammered Talbot—"yes! This—this is——"

The words died on his tongue. The crisis had come unexpectedly soon.

He had to present Marie Rivers to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as Miss March, the new nurse, or he had to betray her as the cracksmen's daughter. That was his choice, and he had only an instant in which to make it.

Marie was smiling. She knew the struggle that was going on in the Toff's mind; she knew her danger. But not a sign of it appeared in her smiling face.

Arthur Augustus looked a little surprised. He could not help seeing that something was "on" though he was not particularly observant.

"Miss March," stammered Talbot at last, "this—this is Gussy—this is D'Arcy, one of my pals at St. Jim's. We—we've come to take you to the school, if you will allow us."

The die was cast!

"You are very kind," said Marie sweetly. "I thank you very much. It is really kind of you."

"Not at ail, my deah young lady," said Arthur Augustus. "It is an honah and a pleasuah. The trap is waitin' outside. Is there anythin' I can do——"

"I think my trunk is on the platform," said Marie.

"Wighto! I'll look aftah it at once."

Arthur Augustus, glad to be useful, hurried out on to the platform. Marie looked at Talbot with her insouciant, mocking smile.

"Well done, Toff! You have answered for me now—I enter St. Jim's on your responsibility."

"Marie! It's not too late—have mercy on me! You—you can't go to the school——"

"But I am going."

"Marie——"

Marie walked to the door. Talbot followed her with heavy, stumbling footsteps. All the light was gone out of his handsome face.

"You will go, Marie—you will go there as a nurse?"

"I am a nurse," said Marie calmly. "I am a member of the Little Sisters of the Poor. They do not know my name, but they know that I am a good nurse. You should know that, too, Toff; but you have a bad memory."

"I remember it, Marie, and I have never ceased to be grateful. But——"

"There was a time when you told me that you would do anything for me!" said Marie mockingly. "You told me I had saved your life, and that your life belonged to me. You told me that, Toff. You do not choose to remember it now!"

"I remember it only too well, Marie, and you have just had proof of it," said Talbot huskily. "But tell me, Marie, you will go to St. Jim's simply as a nurse? You will not—you will not——"

He broke off.

"I shall do as my father directs me."

"Then—then I, also, must think what I must do!" Talbot said desperately. "Come what may, my benefactor shall not suffer!"

"Why did you not take your chance a few minutes ago, then?" asked Marie mockingly. "You had only to tell this boy D'Arcy my name, and the rest——"

"Marie!"

"It isn't too late. Tell him now."

"You know why I am silent!" groaned Talbot.

Marie came back towards him, put her little hands on his shoulders, and looked him in the face.

"Toff," she whispered, "you can't help it now. I am here, and you must help me. You can't betray me, and if I come to the school we must sink or swim together. Make up your mind to it, and stand by your old friends, for my sake, Toff!"

It was hard to resist the sweet, earnest face, the winning voice. For a moment, perhaps, Talbot's resolution wavered. What was the use of the struggle? After all his efforts to free himself from the past, the toils were closing round him again. He was in a net from which there was no escape. What was the use of the struggle? Marie saw the signs of weakness in his troubled face.

"For my sake, Toff!" she repeated.

Talbot pulled himself together.

"No!"

"Not for my sake?"

"Not even for your sake!" said Talbot steadily. "Not for the sake of life itself!"

The girl drew back, offended, cold, disdainful.

"As you choose, then!"

She walked out of the waiting-room. Talbot followed her slowly, miserably. The problem was hammering in the unhappy boy's brain. What was he to do? To denounce Marie, or to allow her to carry out the Professor's orders unhindered? The choice was terrible, yet it had to be made, and delay only made matters worse. Yet delay was his only resource; he must have time to think.

The little leather trunk had been placed in the trap, and Arthur Augustus was waiting for them. The swell of St. Jim's helped Marie into the trap with his inimitable grace. He did not notice Talbot's harassed looks; Arthur was a ladies' man, and all his attention was bestowed upon Miss March. Talbot stumbled into the trap, and sat silent and troubled. D'Arcy gathered up the reins, and they bowled away down the village street.

In the lane, Gordon Gay and Co. spotted them again, but there were no snowballs this time. At that charming vision beside the swell of St. Jim's the Grammarian juniors raised their caps with great respect and admiration. The trap bowled on towards the school, Arthur Augustus driving elegantly and chatting with his fair companion. Talbot sat behind in grim silence.

A man passed them in the lane, sauntering along carelessly—a man with a dark brown beard and moustache and an eyeglass, well-dressed, debonair. He paused to look at them, and Talbot's eyes fell upon him, and he started. The man smiled a little. Talbot turned his eyes to stare at him as the trap bowled on.

It was the Professor. No one recognised him now, but Talbot's eyes had penetrated the disguise. The man with the eyeglass sauntered on towards the village, humming a tune. He knew that Talbot recognised him,

but felt certain he would not say anything. Marie was the security for that.

They arrived at the school, the trap was handed over to Taggles, and the two juniors conducted Miss March to the Head's house. Tom Merry and Lowther had come off the football field, and they spotted them in the quad and raised their caps. Monty Lowther expressed the opinion to his chum that the new nurse was "stunning." Indeed, he said that he envied Manners now.

"Talbot seems to look down in the mouth," said Tom Merry.

"Catching the 'flu, perhaps," said Lowther carelessly. "By Jove, I've a jolly good mind to catch it, too! Not half a bad idea!"

Miss March disappeared into the Head's house. Talbot and D'Arcy came back to the School House, the latter smiling with great satisfaction, the former moody and silent.

"Did you see her, deah boys?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "Sorry we didn't come."

"Serve you wight!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "Though, of course, I should have gone just the same even if she had been a little bit leathewy, like the others. Quite a wippin' young lady! I've been thinkin'—"

"Go hon!" murmured Lowther.

"I've been thinkin'," repeated Arthur Augustus firmly, "that nurses have wathah a bore of a bizney, you know, lookin' afthah beastly invalids. They wequire a little change and excitement. All work and no play, you know, makes Jack a dull boy. I've been thinkin' that it's up to us, you know, to see that Miss March has a little amusement while she is heah—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for wibald laughtah!" said the swell of St. Jim's freezingly. "I wegard it fwom a point of view of dutay!"

"What about the other nurses?" grinned Lowther. "You haven't bothered your mighty brain about them, so far."

"Ahem! They are oldah, you know—fwightfully old, some of them, and—and, of course, they don't need amusin'. But Miss March isn't much oldah than I am, and it

stands to weason that she will be bored to death with beastlay sneezin', coughin' invalids in the beastlay sanatorium. It's up to us to see that she has a pleasant time, if poss., while she is at the school. Besides, the Little Sistahs of the Poor do this kind of thing for nothin', you know; they don't have any fees. I wegard that as vewy wippin' of them, considewin' that invalids are such beastly bothahs. I twust we shall be allowed to make things a little bwightah for Miss March. What do you think, Talbot?"

"Eh?" said Talbot confusedly. "Yes, certainly. Tea ready, you fellows?"

"Tea!" said Arthur Augustus scornfully. "Bai Jove, you're thinkin' about tea! I wegard you as an insensible ass, Talbot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was sittin' in the twap without speakin' a word all the way back," said Arthur Augustus. "Lookin' like a boiled owl, bai Jove! Anybody would think that Miss March was a Gorgon, instead of bein' vewy neahly as nice as my Cousin Ethel. I am surprised at you, Talbot!"

Talbot smiled faintly and went into the School House.

The four juniors were soon gathered at tea in Tom Merry's study; but, in spite of Talbot's inquiry after that meal, it was noticeable that he ate hardly anything, and he spoke scarcely a word. The Toff had one of his "black moods" on again evidently.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

Frayne's Trouble

MANNERS blinked at Tom Merry with watery eyes.

It was the day after Miss March's arrival at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry had obtained permission to visit his old chum in the sanatorium, with Lowther, for a few minutes.

Nearly all the beds in the school hospital were occupied, and the nurses had plenty to do. Manners was glad to see his chums again.

"How are you getting on, old man?" asked Tom Merry sympathetically, keeping well away from the bed, as he had been instructed by the head nurse.

"Rotten!" said Manners.

"Poor old chap!"

"It's beastly. But I'm on the mend. I'm going to massacre Figgins when I get well. All that fathead's fault! My head's buzzing like a beehive. Ow!"

"Hard cheese!" said Lowther.

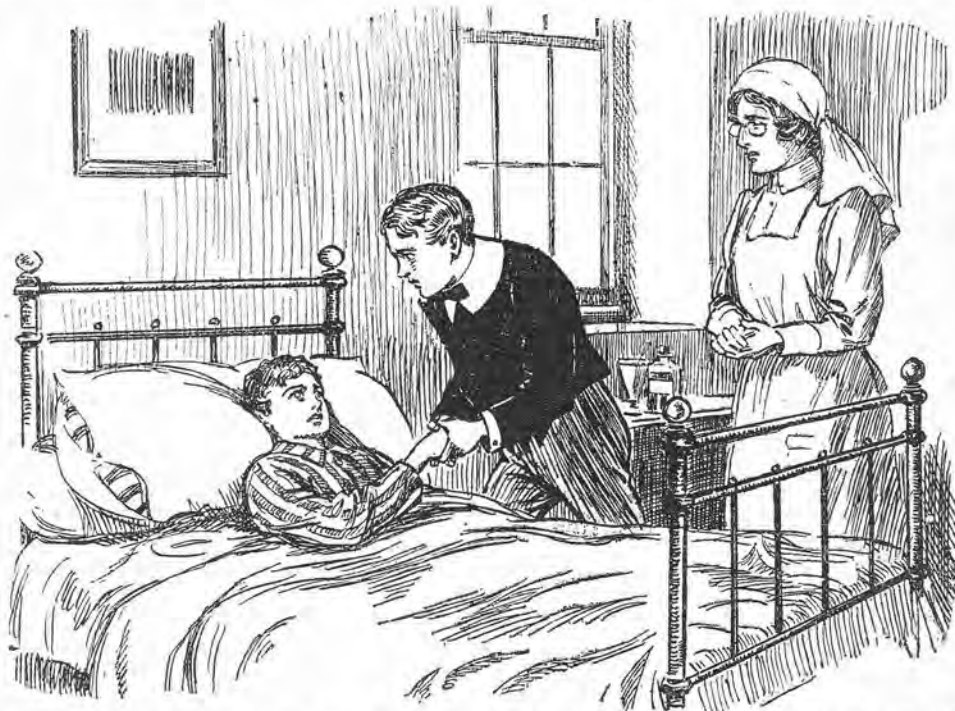
"Why the deuce couldn't you catch it instead of me, Monty?" groaned Manners.
"Ow! I'm fed-up with it! I say, have you seen the new nurse?"

"Next week!" groaned Manners.

The nurse made a sign to the juniors, and they nodded to poor old Manners, and passed on, to exchange a word or two with the other invalids. They came to Frayne's bed, and found the Third-Former looking decidedly bad. The head nurse signed to them not to stop there.

"Is he very bad?" whispered Tom Merry.

"He was best of all at first," said Miss



"I promise you, Joe, that until Miss Marie goes, the Professor shall not carry out his plans," said Talbot. "Good enough, Toff!" said Frayne as Talbot pressed his hand. (See page 272.)

"Miss March? Yes."

"She's a giddy angel," said Manners. "Makes it much nicer for a chap when a nice girl comes and has a jaw with him for a few minutes. I hope you haven't mucked up the films I left in the study."

Tom Merry smiled.

"They're all right, old son. I hope you'll soon be back. Talbot and Gussy are digging in the study at present."

Pinch, the head nurse; "but to-day he seems to be worse, for some reason I cannot understand. He seems to be troubled in his mind."

"Troubled in his mind?" repeated Tom.

"Yes. He is rather an odd boy," said Miss Pinch. "He speaks very differently from the others—quite an odd boy."

"He's a splendid little chap," said Tom Merry. "He had hard luck before he came here, nurse. He was a waif in a London slum

and had an awfully bad time, and my uncle sent him to St. Jim's. He's as good as gold."

Miss Pinch nodded.

"He has been asking to see somebody named Talbot to-day," she said. "Is that a great friend of his?"

Tom Merry started.

"Talbot! That's a fellow in the Shell—my form. He knew Frayne in his bad days, a good time ago. They don't see much of each other here. Talbot would come like a shot if he knew that Joe wanted to see him."

"He is in too feverish a state for seeing anybody," said Miss Pinch. "He has been mumbling most strangely about someone he speaks of as the Toff."

"That's a—a nickname for Talbot," said Tom Merry, colouring. He did not feel inclined to explain further on that subject.

"Oh, I see. He has been repeating another name, too—a girl's name," said Miss Pinch. "Has he a friend at the school, or near by, named Marie?"

"Marie!" said Tom. "Not that I know of. There's nobody about St. Jim's with that name that I've ever heard of." Then Tom gave a start, remembering Talbot's confidences. "Yes, now I think of it, he knew somebody of that name, long ago, when he was a kid in Angel Alley."

"He has repeated the name many times," said Miss Pinch, "quite feverishly. Indeed, he called one of the nurses Marie when she came to the bed to give him his medicine."

"Poor little kid!"

"But what the deuce can be worrying him like that?" said Monty Lowther, in wonder. "If you think he might see Talbot, nurse, Talbot would come at once."

"The doctor's instructions were that he was to see no one," said Miss Pinch. "But when Dr. Short comes again, I will speak to him about it. I suppose Master Talbot could come at any time?"

"Any minute," said Tom. "I'll tell him to be ready."

"Thank you!"

The two Shell fellows left the ward a little worried in their minds. They were concerned about poor little Joe. He was such a happy-go-lucky, careless little scamp,

as a rule, that it seemed extraordinary that he should have any trouble on his mind in addition to his illness.

They found Talbot in the study when they came back. He noticed their expression at once.

"None of the fellows worse, I hope?" he exclaimed quickly.

"Only Frayne," said Tom Merry.

"Frayne of the Third. Poor kid!" said Talbot, with feeling. "I hope it's not going to be serious. I suppose his constitution isn't quite so fit as the others; he must have had a lot of under-feeding in the old days. That sort of thing tells when you have to go through an illness."

"I don't know if it's that," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Miss Pinch, the head nurse, says he got worse to-day; either he's feverish, or there's something on his mind. He wants to see you."

Talbot did not seem surprised.

"I'm ready to go to him," he said.

"They're going to let you know if you can go when the doctor comes. He'll be here again this afternoon. You remember you mentioned a name to me the other day—a girl's name——"

Talbot turned pale.

"I—I remember," he said in a low voice. "Marie! It doesn't matter if you speak before Lowther, Tom."

"Well, that kid knew Miss Marie, I suppose, as well as you?" said Tom.

Talbot nodded.

"Yes. She did a lot for the poor—a lot more than people who would be horrified at a cracksman's daughter," said Talbot, with a slight curl of the lip. "She was like an angel. She looked after Frayne when he was knocked down by a cab and laid up. Goodness knows how he'd have lived if she hadn't taken care of him."

"He seems to have got her name on his mind now, the nurse says," said Tom Merry. "I dare say it's being ill makes him think of her, if she nursed him when he was ill before. Miss Pinch says that he called one of the nurses 'Marie' when she came to do something for him."

Talbot started.

"Which nurse?" he exclaimed.

"Blessed if I know—I didn't ask—one of them," said Tom. "It shows the poor kid is feverish."

"I—I think I ought to see him," said Talbot uneasily. "You know, I've got a lot of influence over him. He used to like me when I was the Toff, and he hasn't forgotten a few trifling things I did for him then. I'd like to see him."

"It depends on the doctor."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into the study with a smiling face.

"Tea weady?" he asked. "I say, you chaps, she is weally wippin'!"

"Who is?" asked Talbot.

"Miss March. She has just been takin' her constitutional in the quad," Arthur Augustus explained. "I took the liberty of joinin' her. I apologised for my cheek, but I explained that I thought she might like to be shown wound St. Jim's. She looks a beautiful picture in her uniform, don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes," said Talbot absently.

"You haven't an eye for beautay, you boundah. But she is weally wippin'—awf'ly intelligent for a gal, too!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have had quite a cheewy talk, and I hope I have cheered her up a bit. She has been lookin' aftah young Fwayne, my minah's chum, you know—lucky little beggah! She's awf'ly intewested in the school—asked all sorts of questions about the place, you know. She laughed like anythin' when I told her about the way we get out of the box-woom window sometimes aftah lights-out, and made me take her wound the School House and point out the window, and how we climbed up to it ovah the outhouse. Bai Jove, what's the mattah with you, Talbot?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"You had quite a queeah expression on your face, old scout. I twust you are not sickenin' for the flu!"

"Fit as a fiddle," said Talbot.

"Well, you don't look vewy fit. Keep your peckah up, deah boy, or you'll be in the sanatowium befoah you can say 'Jack Wobinson!' Not that it would be so vewy wuff to be in the sanatowium just now, with that weally wippin' Miss March to look aftah

you!" added Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I should not have a vewy stwong objection to having flu in a vewy mild form at pwesent."

And Arthur Augustus sat down cheerfully to tea. He kept up a cheery chat all the time, without noticing Talbot's silence.

But Tom Merry noticed it, and wondered. It was not like Talbot to be silent and down-cast. Did it mean that his anticipations had been realised, and that his old enemy had come back? Was the Professor still lurking in the neighbourhood? Had the Toff seen him? Tom Merry would not attempt to force his chum's confidence, but he felt very troubled.

There was a tap at the door as they finished tea, and Toby, the page, looked in.

"Master Talbot!" he said.

Talbot rose from the table at once.

"Dr. Short says that you can see Master Frayne now, sir."

"Thank you," said Talbot.

He left the study at once. Arthur Augustus accompanied him as far as the school hospital, in the hope of catching another glimpse of the charming Miss March. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were left alone in the study.

"Something's up with Talbot?" said Lowther.

Tom nodded.

"It isn't a secret from you, Monty, though it's not to be jawed about, of course. Talbot thinks that scoundrel, the Professor—you remember the man who came here calling himself Mr. Packington?—Talbot thinks he's coming back to make some attempt to get him back into his old life."

Monty Lowther gave a low whistle.

"Talbot's only got to dot him in the eye, or hand him over to Inspector Skeat," he said. "Old Skeat would be glad to bag him a second time!"

"His daughter—the girl we were speaking of—is Talbot's old chum. He can't hurt her father without hurting her. He won't do anything against the rotter. Look here, Monty, Talbot's our pal, and it's up to us!"

"Any old thing!" said Lowther. "If I come across the villain, I'll jolly soon put the bobbies on him, I know that. His daughter isn't my chum!"

"Nor mine!" said Tom. "I'm sorry for the

poor girl! She seems to be a good sort, by Talbot's description, but under the thumb of her rascally father. It's hard to blame a young girl for being led where her own father leads her. But what an utter villain he must be!"

"Awful rotter!" agreed Lowther.

"Talbot's hands are tied, but ours are free," said Tom Merry quietly. "Look here, Monty, if the fellow is hanging about here, we ought to be able to spot him. Strangers are pretty quickly noticed in a quiet, country place like this. We'll find out if there's a stranger staying in Rylcombe, and if there is—"

"Bump him on suspicion!" grinned Lowther.

"No, ass; find out if he's the man. And if he is, we'll put Inspector Skeat on him without saying a word to Talbot."

Monty Lowther regarded his chum admiringly.

"Tommy, old man, you're a giddy genius. I'm with you. Let's get a pass out of gates from Kildare, and take our bikes down to Rylcombe now. If there's a stranger in the village, we shall find him out at the bunshop, and then we can investigate."

"Good egg!" said Tom.

"And not a word to Talbot about it!"

"Not a syllable!"

Ten minutes later the chums of the Shell were riding down to the village. The Professor had other foes to deal with beside the junior who, for Marie's sake, he held in the hollow of his hand.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Honest Injun!

"TOFF, you've come at last!"

It was a faint voice from Joe Frayne's bed as Talbot of the Shell halted by his side.

The waif of the Third was very pale, save for a bright spot that burned in either cheek, and his eyes were feverishly bright.

Talbot's face was very kind as he bent beside him. He knew what was in the mind of the one-time outcast of Angel Alley.

"I came as soon as the doctor would let me, Joe," he said.

"You've seen Marie?"

"Hush!"

"That is the name he has been muttering and repeating, Master Talbot," whispered Miss Pinch. "Calm him if you can."

"I will try," said Talbot.

Joe's eyes wandered to the nurse.

"Lemme alone with Master Talbot," he said. "I wanten speak to the Toff, and I don't want nobody else to 'ear."

"Joe, old chap!" murmured Talbot.

But Miss Pinch nodded and smiled, and left them to themselves. Marie was not visible in the ward.

"She's gone," muttered Joe.

"Yes, kid."

"Nobody can 'ear me?"

"Only myself," said Talbot.

"That's orl right, then. You know as Marie's 'ere, Toff?"

"Yes," said Talbot.

"You've seen 'er, then?"

"Yes, old chap. Don't you worry about that. There's nothing to worry about," said Talbot, with an effort. "You'll make yourself worse if you worry, kid."

"I ain't got nothing ag'in Miss Marie—Miss March they call her 'ere," whispered Joe. "Which she was like an angel when I knowed her in Angel Alley. You remember the time, p'r'aps, when that bloke who called 'isself my father—which he was never my father at all—you remember 'im bein' drunk in the garret, and me lyin' with my legs 'urt owin' to the keb knockin' me over? Miss Marie, she looked arter me like an angel. And you remember you used to come in and give me money for the things I needed, Toff. Which I know 'ow you got the oaf in them days. But I was grateful all the same. And Marie was an angel, Toff. But—"

"She was always good, Joe."

"So you understand I ain't got nothin' ag'in her," said Joe. "But—but wot's she doin' 'ere, Toff? You remember when you first came, I told you if you was up to the old game, I wouldn't stand it 'ere—not even arter all you'd done for me. It's the same now with Miss Marie. Wot's she doin' 'ere, Toff?"

"She has come to help nurse," said Talbot. Joe smiled.

"Yes, I know, and I know that in them days she went to 'elp nurse in other places, and I know wot 'appened in them places, Toff. You know, too. You was in the thick of it in them days."

Talbot shuddered. "Them days," as poor Joe expressed it, were not so very far behind him, but whole oceans of time seemed to have flown between his old life and his new.

But what he had been Marie still was, and the evident suspicion of the little waif was well founded, and not all his gratitude for old kindnesses would keep Joe Frayne silent if he found that the "old game" was afoot at St. Jim's.

The Professor, with all his cunning, had not counted upon that. In the few days he had been at St. Jim's in the character of Mr. Packington, the science master had not come into contact with Frayne of the Third; he had never noticed the little fag among a hundred others. Joe had known nothing of him till the day he went away in charge of the police.

But he knew Marie, and he suspected the truth. Where Marie was her father would not be far distant, and it meant that little Joe's benefactors were to be deceived and robbed. No wonder the poor little chap had taken a change for the worse since he had seen the new nurse in the school sanatorium.

The feverishly bright eyes were watching Talbot's face. Joe seemed to be seeking to read his thoughts.

"Toff," he went on, "you wouldn't let them go for to do it, you wouldn't, arter all that's been done for you 'ere. I know as Marie was your pal, but you couldn't do it, Toff; you couldn't let the Professor carry out his game 'ere. You couldn't!"

"You can rely on that," said Talbot quietly. "Never!"

"He won't be fur off—the Professor," said Joe. "I know wot Miss Marie is 'ere for. I ain't a fool. All ready for the Professor to get his whack in, Toff. They'll get you into their 'ands if they can; but, anyway, the Head's safe is their game. And it ain't goin' to 'appen, Toff, not even if I 'ave to give Miss Marie away."

Talbot drew a quick, almost sobbing breath.

"Don't do that, Joe."

"Which I don't want to," groaned Joe. "But that game ain't goin' to be played 'ere, Toff, not while I'm alive!"

"You can rely on me, Joe," said Talbot, sinking his voice. "I know it all, and I am on guard. I promise you that what you're afraid of shall not happen. You know I am a fellow of my word. I'll stop it, even if it means ruin to me—as it may. On my word, Joe, there's nothing to be feared."

"Honest Injun, Toff?"

"Honest Injun," said Talbot.

Joe stretched a feeble hand over the coverlet, and Talbot took it in his own strong palm.

"Honest Injun," he repeated. "I know what I've got to do, Joe. You can trust me. Don't think anything more about it. Don't worry, you'll only make yourself ill. Leave it in my hands."

Joe's feverish face was already calmer.

"That's all I wanted to know, Toff. I know I can trust you. But—but Miss Marie, I don't want her to be 'urt, neither."

"When she is no longer needed here, Joe, she will go. And I promise you that until then I shall see that the Professor does not carry out his plans."

"Good enough, Toff."

Joe Frayne sank back on his pillow. The nurse approached.

Talbot pressed Joe's hand and left him. He left him reassured. The faith of the little waif in Talbot was complete.

Talbot left the ward. Marie was arranging a pillow for Blake as he passed out. She came away from Blake's bed and gave Talbot a smile and a nod. He whispered a word in passing.

"I must speak to you."

"I leave at eight," she whispered in reply, and passed on.

Talbot left the building.

It was dark in the quadrangle, and Talbot did not return to the School House. He paced to and fro under the old elms, thinking.

The interview with Joe Frayne had introduced a fresh factor into the problem—a new complication. It was not all in the Toff's hands now. If there were a robbery at the school there was another tongue to speak—

A VISION OF DREAMLAND!



A touching picture of Billy Bunter asleep in the Remove dormitory. The artist has kindly shown us the reason for the blissful smile on the face of the "sleeping beauty"!

and that would speak. Did Marie know her danger? If she did not know, he would tell her; and the Professor, at least, would understand that it would not do.

The intervention of the little waif might, indeed, solve the problem—cut the Gordian knot that had baffled Talbot.

He paced to and fro in the dark quad till eight o'clock rang out from the tower. Then he hurried away to meet Marie.

The girl came away from the sanatorium with her coat on, glad to breathe the fresh air of the quadrangle after the warmth of the wards. Without a word she followed Talbot towards the Head's garden, where it was quiet and secluded, and their interview was not likely to be seen.

"I have only a quarter of an hour, Toff," murmured Marie. "Have you decided?"

"I decided long ago; I have not changed my mind."

Marie smiled.

"Then why have you asked me to come here?"

"I have just seen Frayne."

"Yes, he has been asking for you. He knew me."

"He knew you at once, Marie; and if there is anything here—you understand—he will speak. Even if I keep silent, he will speak."

"It is a new complication," smiled the girl.

"But Joe is a good boy; he likes me. He will not hurt me if he can help it. And if anything happens here he will not know until too late. No one is allowed to carry disturbing or exciting news into the wards. You are aware of that. And if he speaks afterwards—after I am gone—it will not matter, will it, Toff?"

"Marie!" muttered Talbot wretchedly.

The new hope that had risen in his breast died away again.

"Joe will know nothing until it is too late," smiled Marie.

"I have given him my word that I will see to it," said Talbot, in a choking voice. "I've given him my word of honour that he may be easy in his mind—that I will see that the Professor does no harm here."

"Keep it, then!" said Marie scornfully.

"I am here at your mercy. You have only to go to Dr. Holmes and speak a word." She held up her pretty wrists. "You can place the handcuffs here with one word, Toff."

"Don't, Marie!"

"You will not do it?"

"You know I cannot!" groaned Talbot.

"But—but I swear that—that I will keep my word to Joe at any cost. I know you have begun already—you have been gaining information for the Professor—"

"As I used to gain it for you, Toff."

"I know it. No need to rub that in. But it won't do, Marie—it won't do. Promise me this, at least—see your father and try to make him give up his design. You might do that, at least, for me."

"On one condition, Toff."

"And that?"

"That you come with us."

"Impossible!"

"Then there is nothing more to be said," said the girl coldly. She looked at her companion. A ray of starlight fell upon his face and showed it white and strained with misery. "Toff, don't look like that!" There was a quiver in her voice. "I don't mean to hurt you. But—"

"There's nothing more to be said," muttered Talbot drearily. "There's only one thing for me to do—to go. But if I go I shall not go back to the old life. I will break stones on the road for my bread before I do that."

"You must, Toff! If you leave here you must come to us. You must live."

"The world is wide," said Talbot bitterly. "Wide enough to let me keep at a distance from the Thieves' Club. There is always work for honest hands to do."

"Honest?"

"Mine are honest now, and will always remain so. Do your worst, Marie. You will see that I can keep my word."

"I—I want to do my best for you," faltered Marie. "I—I will see my father, Toff. I will go to him. On my word, if I can make him give up this scheme I will do so. I promise you; and I, too, can keep my word."

Before Talbot could reply the girl turned and left him.

"Marie!"

But she was gone.

The Toff drove his hands deep in his pockets and strode away towards the School House.

Marie would keep her word. But what influence would she have upon the cold, hard, unscrupulous cracksmen?

Talbot had little hope. Before him was a dark and dreary prospect; whichever way he looked there was no light.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Marie's Father

TOM MERRY and Monty Lowther wheeled their bicycles up to the Rylcombe Arms, and leaned them against a tree and walked to the inn. The chums of the Shell had been busy; they had been investigating, and they had learned, at least, a little.

In a village like Rylcombe a stranger who stayed more than a day was certain to be remarked and commented upon. If the Professor was there, whatever his disguise might be, his presence, at all events, would be a subject for discussion among the villagers, and the two juniors had set themselves to discover whether there was a stranger staying in the village. They had dropped in at several places—Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop, and Mr. Bunn's, and the confectioner's, and the bunshop. But it was from their old acquaintance Grimes, the grocer's boy, that they had learned that there was a gentleman staying at the Rylcombe Arms, who had arrived the previous day. A regular nob, according to Grimes, with no end of beard and whiskers and a heyeglass. His name was Judd, and he was a very generous gent with his money, as the boots of the Rylcombe Arms, who was a special friend of Grimes', had testified.

As Mr. Judd, at the Rylcombe Arms, was the only stranger in the village that the two juniors could hear of, they had resolved to have a look at Mr. Judd. Beard and whiskers suggested disguise, at all events. They remembered that Mr. Packington had been so adorned, and he had worn spectacles. A different colour in hirsute adornments, and an eyeglass instead of spectacles, would make a very effective change of appearance. It was

more than probable, of course, that Mr. Judd was quite a harmless person—a commercial traveller was what Grimes supposed him to be. But as the only discoverable stranger in the village, he was the only possible object of the juniors' investigations, and they were there to investigate!

So they proceeded to the Rylcombe Arms finally, though it was getting towards the time when their leave would be up. They did not want the expedition to be wholly in vain.

They entered the old-fashioned inn, where they knew the proprietor. That plump and rubicund gentleman told them that Mr. Judd was in the reading-room.

To the reading-room the two juniors immediately proceeded.

Mr. Judd was alone there. He was seated in an armchair, reading the latest paper obtainable at Rylcombe. He glanced up carelessly as the juniors came in, and then resumed reading his paper.

Monty Lowther eyed his companion humorously. Mr. Judd looked a perfectly ordinary, respectable gentleman of about forty. He bore not the slightest resemblance to Mr. Packington, who had posed as a science master at St. Jim's. He looked a bigger man—though that might have been due to the cut of his clothes. Certainly he looked at least twenty years younger. It was even difficult to know if his eyes were of the same colour; for at St. Jim's Mr. Packington's eyes had always been covered by his glasses, and the juniors had never noted their colour.

The only thing against Mr. Judd was the fact that he was a stranger in Rylcombe, and, of course, that was nothing at all. The juniors were at liberty to observe him as much as they liked, but all they could observe was that he did not look in the least like a suspicious person.

Tom Merry sat down at the table opposite Mr. Judd, and while affecting to look over an illustrated paper he eyed the man.

Mr. Judd did not appear to observe it. He read his paper calmly and in the most commonplace manner. The two juniors strolled away to the deep bay-window, and stood looking out into the lighted street. Monty Lowther nudged his companion.

"Well?" he whispered.

"Looks all serene!" admitted Tom Merry.

"Can't very well ask him if he's a giddy cracksman in disguise," murmured Lowther, "and I suppose you can't pluck a perfect stranger by the beard to see if it's genuine—what?"

"Fathead!"

"Hallo!" murmured Lowther, with a nod towards the street. "There's Miss March."

Tom Merry looked down from the window. Miss March had just appeared in sight, coming down the old High Street with her light, graceful walk. To the astonishment of the juniors, she turned into the porch of the Rylcombe Arms, and disappeared into the inn. It was no business of theirs, of course, but the juniors could not help wondering what the Little Sister would have to do in the village inn at that hour in the evening.

They looked round as the door of the room opened.

Miss March came in, and, without noticing the two juniors in the deep window, crossed at once to the man seated by the table.

"I am sorry I am late," she said in her clear, sweet voice.

Mr. Judd rose to his feet. He made a gesture, and the girl turned towards the juniors. Tom Merry and Lowther advanced at once.

"Top of the evening, Miss March!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully.

"You are late out of gates," said the Little Sister, in surprise. "I thought juniors had to be indoors by locking-up!"

"We've got a pass out," explained Tom Merry. "We've got to be in by half-past eight, though, and it's close on that now. If you are going back to the school——"

"Hardly safe in the lane at night, you know, Miss March," said Lowther. "It would be a real pleasure to see you back."

Miss March smiled.

"My uncle will see me as far as the school," she said.

"Your—your uncle?"

The juniors felt inclined to kick one another. This brown-bearded gentleman, with the eyeglasses, whom they had suspected of being a possible criminal, was the uncle of Miss

March, the Little Sister of the Poor. His business in Rylcombe was explained; he had come there to see his niece!

"Yes." The girl turned to Mr. Judd. "These two young gentlemen belong to the school, uncle."

Mr. Judd bestowed a nod on the juniors. Tom Merry and Lowther beat a rapid retreat from the reading-room.

Outside the inn they looked at one another grimly before they mounted their bicycles. Tom Merry was frowning, but a grin lurked about Lowther's face. He could see the humorous side of the matter.

"What a disgusting sell!" growled Tom.

"Horrid!" said Lowther. "We've spotted the only stranger in the village, and he turns out to be nursey-nursey's tame uncle."

"Then the Professor can't be in Rylcombe, at all events," said Tom.

"If he's come here, he may have put up in Wayland," remarked Lowther. "It's farther off, but—— Ahem! Rather a big order to spot and examine all the strangers in Wayland—a market town. And we've only five minutes left."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Tom Merry. "Let's get back!"

And the chums of the Shell rode back to St. Jim's.

In the room they had left, Miss March was in conversation with the man she had called her uncle. Marie's quick wit had not failed her, unexpected as the meeting with the juniors was to her.

Mr. Judd scowled as the door closed behind the boys.

"What were they doing here, father?" asked Marie.

Mr. Judd, alias the Professor, shrugged his shoulders.

"Staring at me, chiefly," he replied. "Only interested in me because I am a stranger here, I suppose—they cannot suspect anything. I don't look much like Mr. Packington now, Marie—do I?"

Marie laughed.

"No, dad. But—but it's odd that they should be here, all the same." Her pretty brows wrinkled for a moment. "The Toff cannot have told them anything."

The Professor made an impatient gesture. "Never mind them. Have you any news for me?"

"Yes," said Marie.

"The Toff—what has he said?"

"That he will never come back under any circumstances. And he means it, father—he means every word of it. He is in earnest."

The man with the eyeglass sneered.

"He will change his mind; I shall see to that."

"It is useless, father," answered Marie.

"Nonsense!

Don't argue with me," said the Professor harshly. "Why has he not already given me up, then? He knows I am here. It is for your sake, Marie. And for your sake, too, he will come back. If he does not, there are ways and means—ways and means." The Professor smiled cruelly.

"We shall see."

"Father, there is more news than that.

Do you remember a little fellow in Angel Alley—a boy with a drunken father, named Frayne?"

"What of him?"

"He is at the school."

The Professor started, knitted his brows.

"I remember. Hookey Walker told me something of that. I had forgotten. I did not notice the boy when I was there; he had changed, probably. Certainly he did not know me. I had forgotten. What of him?"

"He is there—he has recognised you!"

The Professor gritted his teeth.

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"He has spoken?" exclaimed the Professor.

"No. He is ill. I nurse the poor little fellow. You know he used to be devoted to me—and he has not forgotten. He has spoken to the Toff, and to calm him Talbot has promised him to see that—that—you understand. Joe knows why I am there, you bet."

"If he is ill, then he need not be reckoned with," said the Professor coolly, "and if he has left it all in the Toff's hands it will be safer still. The Toff will not speak."

"But——"

"You are seeking trouble!" exclaimed the Professor, with a sharp look at the clouded face of the girl. "Come! What is in your mind? Tell me!"

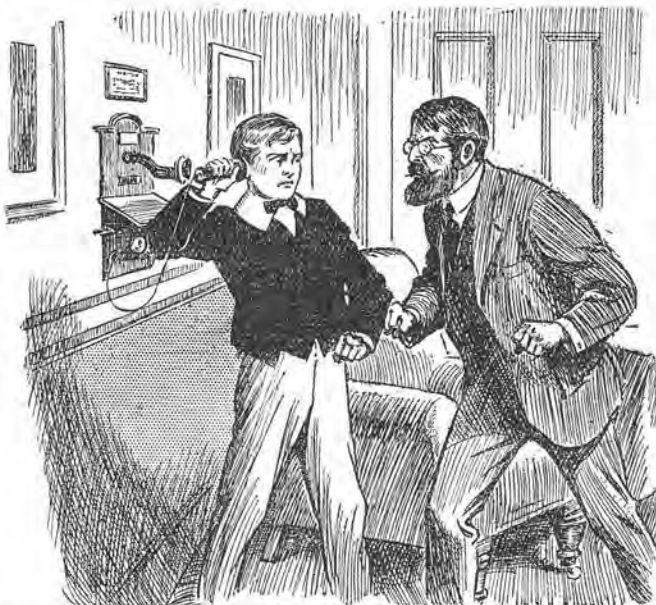
Marie's lips

quivered, as she answered, sadly:

"Father, I—I can't bear this!" The tears rose to her eyes. "If you saw the Toff now, you would pity him—you would have mercy on him. If he wishes to leave our ways, father, why not let him go? Let us leave him in peace. Let us——"

The girl paused as she saw the bitter sneer on the hard face before her.

"I expected something of the sort!" said the Professor grimly. "First the Toff, and



"Will you go?" demanded Talbot. "Or shall I give information to the police?" The cracksman clenched his fists in his fury. "I will go!" he hissed. "I'll make you repent—you shall suffer!" (See page 285.)

then you, Marie. He has deserted his old friends, and he is inducing you to desert your father."

"I will never desert you, father," said Marie firmly. "Whatever your fate may be, I shall always share it. But—but I beg you to give up this scheme—leave the school in peace—there is plunder elsewhere. Leave the Toff to lead his new life. If he chooses to come back to us, let him come; if he does not, leave him alone. Father!"

"Is that all you have to say?"

"That is all," said Marie, with a sinking heart.

"Very well; now I will give you your instructions," said the Professor coolly. "As for Frayne, since he is ill and in your charge, there is no danger in that quarter. And since you are his nurse, you can take care that he does not get well in time to interfere with our plans!"

"Father!" It was a cry of horror from the unhappy girl. "What are you saying? Do you think I could—that I would—"

"Bah! Leave him out of the discussion," said the Professor contemptuously. "I tell you there is no danger in that quarter. As for the Toff, we shall see." The Professor set his teeth for a moment. "It is between him and me—man and boy—and we shall see. But you have your work to do, Marie. I must have money!"

"Money?" faltered Marie.

"Money!" said the Professor sarcastically. "Does that astonish you? What else am I in my profession for? I am in need of it. Have they taken any special precautions at the school since I was there? It is likely enough."

"I—I do not know—"

"You do not know!" exclaimed the Professor fiercely. "You have been in the school twenty-four hours, and you do not know! Take care, Marie! Has the Toff persuaded you to follow his new path, to the extent of allowing your father to fall into a trap?"

"Father!"

"I do not think so, Marie. But until you can give me information I cannot get to work at the school. But you can, Marie; you are free to act, and every little helps." The

hardened rascal grinned. "I tell you I am in need of money. Owing to the Toff, I have spent, and have gained nothing in return. My stay at St. Jim's was a dead loss to me. At this moment I have not five pounds in my pocket."

"What do you want me to do, father?" said the girl dully.

"I want you to do what you are there to do," said the Professor savagely. "There are rich boys there—there is money to be had—plenty of it. You know what you are to do. Enough of this! Before you were five years old I had taught you your business, and you could pick a pocket with any professional in London. You know what you are to do. I order you to do it!"

Marie stood silent.

"What does this mean?" said the Professor harshly. "Why do you not answer me? Has the Toff influenced you so much then in one day? At his word you will abandon your father—"

"Never!" said Marie; but her voice had lost all its sweetness, and sounded dull, lifeless. "I will do as you tell me."

"I have told you what to do. Now do not stay longer; you do not wish to cause remark and suspicion, I suppose?" grunted the Professor.

Marie shivered, and drew her coat more closely about her. Without another word she quitted her father.

The Professor threw himself into his chair again, and lighted a cigar. Through the darkness the girl was hurrying back to St. Jim's—alone.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Not the Toff!

"**B**AI JOVE! This is vewy wemarkable!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's expression, also, was remarkable as he made that statement.

"What's the trouble?" yawned Levison of the Fourth.

It was Monday, and lessons were over. The rain was falling in the quadrangle, and most of the School House juniors were in their studies or the common-room—those who were

not "down" with influenza. It was in the common-room that Arthur Augustus stated that it was very remarkable. Two or three fellows turned their heads to look.

The swell of St. Jim's was examining the pockets of his beautiful waistcoat. He seemed to expect to find something there which was missing.

"Lost something?" asked Smith minor.

"Yaas."

Arthur Augustus went through his waistcoat pockets again.

"Anybody seen a watch?" he asked.

"Yes," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, good! Pway hand it over!" said Arthur Augustus, with great relief. "I was afwaid it was lost."

"Hand it over?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But why should I hand you my watch?" queried the humorist of the Shell in surprise.

"You uttah ass! You said——"

"I said I'd seen a watch—so I have. Mine."

"I wegard you as a fathead, Lowthah. Has anybody seen my watch? Some silly ass has taken my watch off me, and I want it."

"Ask Talbot if he's seen it," suggested Crooke of the Shell, with an ill-natured grin.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strode towards the cad of the Shell, his eye gleaming behind his monocle.

"Are you makin' a beastly, cowardly insinuation against my fwiend Talbot?" he asked, in measured tones.

Crooke backed away a little.

"Oh, I didn't mean—I only said——"

"You said a wotten, beastly, cowardly thing, Cwooke!" said Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "You know that old Talbot is as stwaight as a die!"

"Well, we all know what he was!" sneered Crooke. "And if your watch is really missing, what's become of it? It hasn't walked!"

"Oh, wats!"

And Arthur Augustus walked away with a frowning brow. The loss of his watch, which had been a present from his noble pater, worried him; and the possibility that, if it were not found, suspicion might fall upon Talbot, worried him still more.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked

into the junior common-room a little later. There was a frown upon his usually good-natured face.

"Which of you young rascals has been larking in my study?" he demanded, addressing the remark to everybody present.

"Larking!" said Monty Lowther, in a shocked tone. "Us! Oh, Kildare!"

"None of your cheek," said Kildare, who was evidently not in a humour for Monty Lowther's little jokes. "Some young ass has been larking in my study—in a specially silly way, too! Who was it?"

"Not guilty, my lord!" said Lowther.

"But what's happened?" asked Buck Finn.

"Somebody has taken the silver Challenge Cup," said Kildare. "I suppose it is an idiotic lark, and I'm going to warm the larky person when I find him!"

"What an inducement for him to own up!" murmured Lowther.

"I say, that cup's worth ten guineas," said Kerruish. "Somebody has pinched it, Kildare!"

"Nonsense!" said the captain of St. Jim's sharply. "It's a silly joke, of course!"

"Gussy's lost his watch, too," said Crooke.

"D'Arcy! His watch!" exclaimed Kildare.

"Yes."

Kildare started.

"That's very odd. I suppose there's some precious practical joker at work. I'll jolly well find out who it is, too, and stop his joking!" said the captain of St. Jim's angrily; and he strode out of the room.

The juniors looked at one another curiously. The loss of the silver cup—a very valuable trophy, won by St. Jim's first eleven—following upon the loss of Arthur Augustus's famous gold "ticker," which was well known to have cost twenty-five guineas, impressed the juniors strangely. If it was the work of a practical joker, he was a fellow who dealt in valuables, evidently.

Kildare strode away to Mr. Railton's study. He found the Housemaster with an unusually serious expression on his face. Kildare did not notice it for a moment.

"What is the matter, Kildare?"

"Somebody has taken the silver trophy from my study, sir," said Kildare. "I can't get at who has done it. If you would order an inquiry, sir—"

The Housemaster started.

"Do you mean that it has been stolen, Kildare?"

"Oh, no, sir! It might be a lark, of course. But the young rascal who has done it ought to be caned. He might damage it or lose it!"

"I hope it is a lark, as you say, Kildare. But it is very odd. Have you heard of anything else being missed in the house?"

Kildare looked surprised.

"Yes; Crooke of the Shell mentioned to me that D'Arcy has lost his watch. I suppose it is the work of the same practical joker."

"The fact is, Kildare, I also have missed something from my study," said Mr. Railton gravely. "I had only just made the discovery when you entered."

"By Jove, sir!" said Kildare, startled. "Anything serious?"

"A number of currency notes, amounting to ten pounds," said the Housemaster quietly. "Phew!"

Kildare could not help looking surprised. It was not like Mr. Railton's usually careful habits to leave money where it could be handled. The Housemaster understood his look.

"I am not usually careless with money, Kildare, as you are aware. I was doing the House accounts, and had taken the money from my desk, where I keep it locked, when I was called away to see the Head, who wished to speak to me. I put the notes, with my papers, in the table-drawer. When I came back, a few minutes ago, they were gone. The papers are just where I left them, but the notes have been taken!"

Kildare knitted his brows.

"That doesn't look like a practical joke, sir. It must have been a theft."

"I fear so."

"I—I say, sir! That's rotten—a thief in the house!" said Kildare with a worried look.

"It is very serious. I am afraid it may cause some of the boys to think unpleasant things on the subject of poor Talbot! In a

matter like this, he is certain to be thought of in connection with it. I am perfectly convinced of his honesty, of course. The poor boy will always have that difficulty in connection with his past. However, in this case, probably the matter may be cleared up as far as he is concerned. I was not absent from my study more than a quarter of an hour—from seven to a quarter past. I shall ascertain at once where Talbot was at the time. Do you know where he is now?"

Kildare shook his head.

"I understand that he shares Tom Merry's study while his study-mates are in the sanatorium," he said. "He is not in the common-room; I have just come from there. He may be in Merry's study."

"I will go there at once."

Mr. Railton proceeded at once to the Shell passage. He tapped on the door of Tom Merry's study.

"Come in!" sang out Tom's cheery voice.

The Housemaster entered and Talbot and Tom Merry, who were there, rose to their feet at once.

The Housemaster's expression showed them at once that he had come on a very unusual errand, and they waited uneasily for him to speak.

"I wish to speak to you, Talbot," said Mr. Railton quietly. "There has been a very unpleasant happening—some Treasury notes have been taken from my study!"

Talbot turned white.

"Oh, sir!"

"Don't imagine that I suspect you, for one moment, Talbot," said Mr. Railton kindly. "My object is to ascertain at once where you were at the time, so that your name cannot be dragged into the matter."

"You are very kind, sir," stammered Talbot.

"I find you in this study," pursued the Housemaster. "How long have you been here, in company with Merry?"

"I don't know, sir—about half an hour."

"About that, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Whoever went into my study must have done so between seven and a quarter past," said Mr. Railton. "During my absence, you understand. You see the importance of the



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NECK AND NECK!

A breathless moment in a thrilling speed-contest between racing cars and motor-cycles

matter, Merry. Can you assure me that Talbot was with you here before seven o'clock?"

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry promptly. "I heard seven o'clock strike while I was talking to Talbot, sir."

"Very good! I heard seven o'clock strike before I left my study," said Mr. Railton. "Talbot has been here ever since?"

"Yes, sir."

"He has not left the study?"

Tom paused.

"He went out to get a map, sir—only into his study. It's next door, sir. But he only popped in and out again—two minutes at the most."

"You are quite sure of that, Merry? He could not have descended to my study and returned in less than five minutes."

"Two minutes at the most, sir. I just stirred the fire while he was gone, and then he was back again."

Mr. Railton nodded.

"That settles that point, then. I am very glad of this. You must not suppose, Talbot, that suspicion regarding you entered my mind for a moment. My desire simply was to prevent suspicion entering other minds, and that is accomplished now. Merry's evidence is quite sufficient."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Railton gave the juniors a kind nod and left the study.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Jolly lucky you were with me, Talbot, old man!" he said. "Not that any of the decent chaps would have said a word about you; but there are some of them—Crooke and his set—who might have tried to make capital out of it. It's lucky, isn't it?"

Talbot did not reply. He had sunk into his chair. His face was white as death and his eyes had a hunted look.

"Talbot, old man, what's the matter? You can't think that anybody would suspect you now?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Talbot shook his head.

"It's not that!"

"Then what's the matter?"

"Heaven help me!" groaned Talbot.

"It's come at last!"

Tom Merry regarded him in amazement and alarm.

"Talbot, what's come at last? What do you mean?"

Talbot did not reply.

Tom Merry put his hand on his shoulder.

"Talbot, I say! What's the matter with you? It's a beastly unpleasant thing to happen, but it needn't worry you. It's nothing to do with you. Where are you going?"

Talbot had risen to his feet.

"Don't talk to me now, Tom," he muttered. "I—I—I want to think this over."

He quitted the study without another word.

Tom Merry did not follow him. He stood rooted to the floor. It was impossible that the Toff could have done that—impossible! But what was the cause of his strange emotion—of the horror that Tom had read in his stricken face?

The captain of the Shell felt a chill at his heart. His faith in his chum did not waver. But—but what was the matter with Talbot?

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

The Toff's Resolve

"MARIE!"

The girl started.

Marie had come out of the school hospital, looking a little pale and tired. The rain had ceased, and the stars glimmered in the dark sky. As the girl came down the path towards the quadrangle, a dark figure detached itself from the blackness of the trees and stood before her.

"You startled me, Toff," said Marie, with a catch in her breath.

"I have been waiting an hour for you," said Talbot.

"You want to see me?"

"Yes. You know why?"

Marie peered at him in the dark. She could see that Talbot's face was deadly white. Her own look was uneasy.

"Why, Toff?" she asked in a low voice.

"I know what you have done, Marie."

"What have I done?"

Talbot made a weary gesture.

"It has come at last, Marie. You have

done what the Professor ordered you to do. I am not condemning you. Heaven knows that six months ago I should have acted as you have acted. I have no right to judge you, to condemn you. But I know what I must do, Marie, and I am going to do it."

Her face hardened as she asked quietly:

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to keep my word to Joe Frayne," said Talbot steadily. "I am going to do my duty by the Head."

"You are going to betray me?"

Talbot shivered.

"No. Never that! I am going to see the Professor, and unless he goes I am going to denounce him to the police."

"You will never——"

"I shall!"

There was a short silence. Talbot's tone rang with grim determination.

"He has left me no other resource," he said. "Even for your sake, Marie, I cannot keep silence now. And—and what has been stolen must be returned, Marie. And you must leave the school."

"You are too late."

"Too late?" said Talbot with a start.

"How too late?"

Marie gave a little mocking shrug.

"Did you think that I should carry the loot about with me or place it in my room? It is already in the Professor's hands."

"But—but—— So soon? How—how——"

"Oh, you are dull!" said the girl. "The Professor has been here——"

"Within the gates? Impossible! The gates are locked at dark, and the thefts were not committed till after dark."

"Not within the walls," said Marie.

"You mean that——"

"I mean that I have done what I was commanded to do—as you would have done before you deserted us," said Marie scornfully. "The Professor was in waiting outside the walls after dark—waiting for my signal. An hour ago I gave the signal, and he answered it, and a bag was tossed over the wall. Do you understand now?"

"Then—then the plunder—what you have taken—is no longer in the school?" said Talbot, drawing a long breath.

"No."

"I—I did not expect that." Talbot knitted his brows gloomily. "But it is all one. He shall return it."

"He will not!"

"Then he shall take his choice between that and arrest!" said Talbot between his teeth.

"And I?" said Marie bitterly. "Is that your friendship, Toff? Where my father goes, I go. You know that!"

"You can leave in safety."

"I cannot. When he is arrested, it will be known that I am his daughter. Two of your friends have already seen me with him, and I called him my uncle, to deceive them. Even if I keep silent, it will be known. And the stolen things—it will be known that they were stolen by someone inside the school. You will send me to prison, Toff, as well as my father."

Talbot gave a groan.

"I cannot do that, Marie."

"You must, unless you keep silent."

"Marie!"

"I—I could not face that, Toff," whispered the girl. "I—I could not! Toff, you won't bring that on me?"

"I must keep my word to Frayne. I must do my duty here or feel myself an ungrateful villain!" said Talbot dully.

Marie's eyes flashed.

"You will send me to prison?"

"No, no, no!" gasped Talbot. "Never that! There is some way—there must be some way—— I will think——"

"There is no way. What I have taken—I make no secret of it to you—let it be found upon my father, and my guilt is proved. Even you could not save me then from disgrace, ruin, prison!"

"Marie!" groaned Talbot.

"What is the use of fighting against your fate?" said the girl softly. "Break with it all, Toff, and come back to us!"

"Never!"

"Then do your worst!"

"My worst, Marie—to you!" said Talbot bitterly. He pressed his hand to his throbbing brow. "There must be some way to save my honour and yet to save you—there must!"

"There is no way but silence."

"Marie, you don't understand—you can't understand! The House is full of it now—the thefts! Someone may be suspected—someone who is innocent! I cannot keep silence—I cannot!"

"Then betray me!" said the girl.

"And that I cannot do."

Marie laughed softly.

"But one or the other you must do, Toff—and you must not betray me. That I know!"

"You know it only too well, Marie!" said Talbot wretchedly. "You know I would die to save you, if need were. I must save you—and I must do my duty. Ah!"

Marie look at him curiously, peering at the white face in the dark. A sudden light had come into Talbot's eyes.

"What are you thinking of, Toff?" muttered the girl, vaguely uneasy.

"There is one way—the only way."

"And that?"

"I am going to the village now. Unless the Professor returns the stolen things to me, and leaves by the evening train, I shall denounce him. That I have resolved upon. Nothing shall alter that. But as for what has been stolen, it shall never be known that it was by your hand."

"It must be known——"

"No! The innocent will suffer for the guilty," said Talbot quietly. "It will not be difficult to make them believe that the Toff has broken out again and resumed his old ways—that it was I who conveyed the plunder to the Professor. It is ruin for me; but I shall save you."

"You!"

"Enough said, Marie. Good-bye! You will not see me again!"

The girl caught him by the arm as he was turning away.

"Toff! You don't mean that! You—you will confess——"

"I shall confess."

"It will be ruin!"

"I know it."

"They will send you to prison——"

"Better send me than you, Marie."

Her grasp upon his arm tightened. Her eyes looked into his—wet now with tears.

"Toff! You would do that? You care so much as that?"

"You shall see."

"But—but it is madness!" panted Marie. "Toff! They will send you to prison! What of your new life—your good name? Have you forgotten all that?"

"I have not forgotten," said Talbot dully. "Better keep my honour than my good name, if I cannot keep both. Let me go, Marie."

"But—but——"

"There's nothing more to be said. You shall not suffer; that I promise you. After all, perhaps the end was bound to come—the fight's been too hard for me. You shall be safe, Marie. Your father will be silent—he will be glad enough to see me suffer in your place," said Talbot with a bitter smile. "Let me go!"

"But—but——" moaned Marie.

Talbot drew himself away. Marie stood unsteadily, looking after him in the darkness, panting. She reeled against a tree, wet with rain, her brain in a whirl. Her father would never yield—she felt sure of that. And—and Talbot was to suffer in her place—to save her. That was his return for her share in the plot against him. The girl's heart ached with misery.

"Toff!" she called out. "Toff!"

But there came no reply. The Toff, the sport of the strange fate, whose struggle for right and honour had come to a tragic end at last, was gone. The black night had swallowed up the hurrying figure, and Marie was alone—alone in the darkness, weeping.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Beaten at the Finish!

"WELCOME!"

Mr. Judd, alias John Rivers, alias the Professor, spoke the word with a sarcastic smile. Mr. Judd, the only guest in the Rylcombe Arms, had the reading-room to himself that evening. He had been using the telephone in the corner, and as he laid down the receiver the door opened, and Talbot strode in.

The Shell fellow of St. Jim's closed the door behind him, and came directly towards the Professor.

"They told me you were in here," he said.
"Yes—and glad to see you, Toff," said the Professor. "Welcome! You have decided at last?"

The Professor rubbed his hands.

"Good!" he said. "Good, my boy! I knew how it must end—you were bound to come back, Toff! You'll get a warm welcome, all bygones will be forgotten—what? They won't bear any malice for your desertion, Toff—they will be too glad to have you back. But I'm glad you've decided."

Talbot laughed harshly.

"I have decided," he said, "but I have not yet told you my decision."

John Rivers looked at him sharply.

"What do you mean? You are coming back?"

"No!"

"Then why are you here?" demanded the Professor, savagely. "Has anything gone wrong at the school? Has Marie—?"

"Marie is safe—and will remain safe. She has carried out your orders, and you have the stolen property. That is what I have come for."

The Professor laughed.

"You are joking, of course."

"You will find that I am not joking." Talbot looked at his watch. "I have broken bounds to come here. It is a quarter to nine. There is a train that leaves Rylcombe at nine-five. You are going to take that train, and I am going to see you take it."

"Really?"

"And before you go you are going to hand me the things that Marie took from the school, at your orders."

"You are quite amusing," yawned the Professor.

"Or else," said Talbot, his voice deepening, his eyes gleaming—"or else you will be handed over to the police now—at once."

The Professor yawned.

"I am in earnest!" said Talbot.

"And Marie?" said the Professor, watching him narrowly, in spite of his assumption of indifference. "You seem to have overlooked, my friend, that it was Marie who handed to me these trifles—now in my possession. Are you prepared to send Marie to prison?"

"Marie need not suffer, unless you choose to betray her," said Talbot, with white lips. "Villain as you are, you will not do that!"

"It will not rest with me. It will be known that those articles were stolen inside the school, and that I cannot have done it. It will be known that the thief was in St. Jim's."

"That is true."

"Yet you say that Marie will not suffer."

"She will not suffer—for I shall confess to the theft," said Talbot huskily. "Now do you understand?"

"You?" gasped the Professor. "You are fooling me!"

"I am in earnest."

"You lie!" said the Professor fiercely. "You think you can deceive me—an old hand. You will go to prison—you will lose your liberty—lose everything—for the sake of restoring those wretched trifles, worth fifty pounds at the most—"

"I shall suffer to save Marie. That is, unless you come to my terms. Will you go?"

"I will not go!"

"You do not believe that I am in earnest?"

"Hardly."

"Very well," said Talbot, with a deep breath. "You refuse?"

"I refuse."

"Then all is said."

Talbot crossed the room and took up the telephone-receiver. The Professor watched him with burning eyes. Was it possible that the boy was in earnest, after all, he wondered savagely. Talbot spoke into the receiver.

"Number-one-nought-one, please!"

"What number is that?" asked the Professor with a mocking smile, as Talbot stood like a statue, receiver in hand, waiting for his number.

"The police-station," said Talbot quietly.

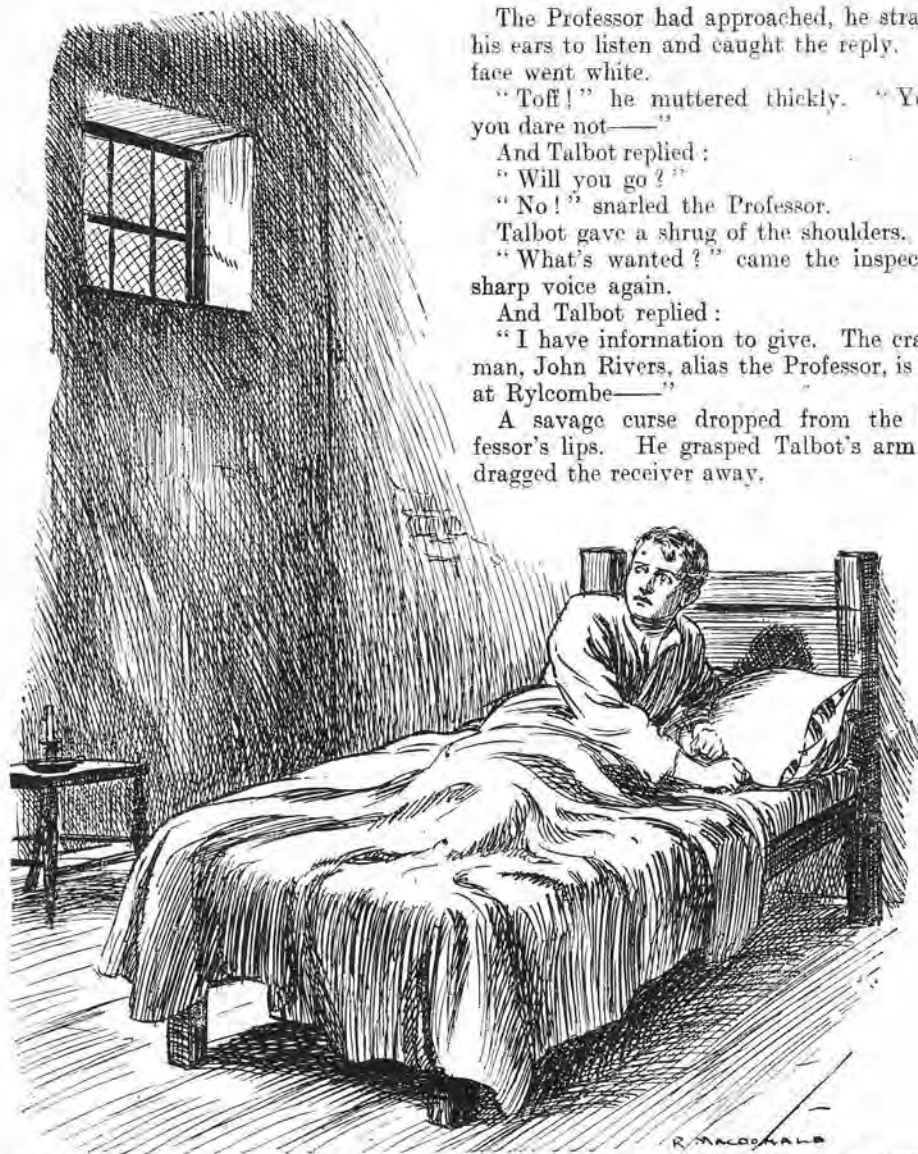
John Rivers clenched his hands.

"You are bluffing me," he said, between his teeth. "You dare not call up the police!"

Talbot did not answer. His resolve was taken, and he was past argument now. He waited in grim silence.

The bell rung.

Talbot spoke again, clearly and calmly, the Professor watching him with clenched hands and burning eyes.



Talbot propped himself up in bed. He knew where he was—a garret in the old building where the Thieves' Club held their meetings. He was a prisoner. (See page 308.)

"Is that Rylcombe Police Station?" asked Talbot clearly.

"Yes."

"I wish to speak to Inspector Skeat."

"I am Inspector Skeat. What is wanted?"

The Professor had approached, he strained his ears to listen and caught the reply. His face went white.

"Toff!" he muttered thickly. "You—you dare not——"

And Talbot replied:

"Will you go?"

"No!" snarled the Professor.

Talbot gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"What's wanted?" came the inspector's sharp voice again.

And Talbot replied:

"I have information to give. The cracksmen, John Rivers, alias the Professor, is now at Rylcombe——"

A savage curse dropped from the Professor's lips. He grasped Talbot's arm and dragged the receiver away.

"Enough! A thousand curses! I will go!"

"You have decided only just in time," said Talbot grimly.

"I will make you repent this!" hissed the

cracksman. "You shall suffer for it, you shall suffer——"

"You have none too much time to catch the train, and Inspector Skeat knows now that you are in Rylcombe," said Talbot quietly. "You have no time to lose."

The Professor realised that. He made a movement towards the door.

"Where is what I have come for?" asked Talbot calmly.

"In my room, curse you, Toff!"

"I will come with you."

Ten minutes later the Professor stepped into the train in Rylcombe Station, and Talbot, with a bag in his hand, stood on the platform and watched him go. The baffled plotter shook a savage fist at him from the train window.

"I go now," he muttered. "I go, Toff; but I shall return, don't doubt that. You have not heard the last of me. You shall remember——"

The shriek of the whistle drowned his voice. The train glided out of the station, and the Professor disappeared from Talbot's sight. Quietly the junior turned and left the station.

"Toff!" The whispered voice in the dark quadrangle made Talbot start. He had climbed in over a school wall. Marie, her white face wet with rain, caught him by the arm.

"Marie, you here!"

"I have been waiting—waiting and watching for you!" panted the girl breathlessly. "Toff, you have seen him? I know he will not go. Toff, I shall confess everything. You shall not suffer for me. If he will not go, Toff, you shall not suffer."

Talbot smiled gently.

"It is finished, Marie. He is gone."

"Gone!" murmured Marie. She reeled; the reaction was too much for her. Talbot caught her in his strong arm.

"Yes, Marie, he has gone, and in this bag I have all that was—was taken. I shall leave it where it can be found in the morning. It will be supposed that it was taken for a joke, and it will be forgotten. There is nothing to fear, Marie. Dear Marie, calm yourself. The danger is now over."

A long shudder ran through the girl.

"I—I have been waiting—so long—for you to come back," she whispered. "I would not have let you suffer, Toff. And—and he is really gone?"

"I watched him into the train."

Marie gave a sob.

"And you are saved, Toff, and I am safe—safe. But they will miss me in the ward. I must go back. But before I go, Toff, you have my word, so long as I am here, there shall be nothing more—nothing more of that. You understand?"

Talbot drew a deep breath, and his face grew very bright.

"Thank you, Marie. Heaven bless you!"

"Whatever my father says, there shall be nothing more of it here—nothing. I—I am ashamed, Toff, and yet that has never come to me before. I have never cared. It is you who have made the difference, Toff."

Talbot pressed her hand silently.

Marie flitted away into the darkness. A quarter of an hour later Talbot entered his study in the School House. Tom Merry and D'Arcy were there finishing their preparation, and Monty Lowther was busy upon his Comic Column for the "Weekly." They all looked inquiringly at Talbot.

"Where have you been, you boundah?" asked Arthur Augustus. "You haven't done your pwep. You will get into a wow in the mornin'."

Talbot smiled. He could smile now.

"What about supper?" he said cheerily.

"I've had a walk, and I'm hungry. Never mind prep. for once. I'll chance it with Linton."

Tom Merry gave him a curious look. The Toff met his eyes with a smile. And Tom Merry understood that the trouble, whatever it was, that had weighed like a black cloud upon his chum, was lifted. He asked no questions; he was only too glad to see Talbot his old self again. And supper in Tom Merry's study was a merry meal that evening.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

The Toff's Secret

It was several days after the discovery of the missing articles, which had been restored by Talbot, that Gore of the Shell came into the study with an unusually good-

tempered expression on his face. Talbot and Skimpole were there, having their tea. The three somewhat ill-assorted juniors shared that study.

Gore and Skimpole had had their share of the "flu," and Skimpole was still looking a little pale. But George Gore was quite recovered. He was in boisterous spirits.

"Hallo! Tea ready?" said Gore, pulling a chair up to the table. "That's right! Pass the sardines, Skimmy. I'm hungry. Been at practice!"

"You look very chippy," said Talbot, a little surprised. Gore was not always so good-tempered.

"I'm playing in the match to-morrow," said Gore. "I'm going in as goalkeeper. I can keep goal. No chance for me if that New House boulder Wynn was up. Luckily, he's still in the sanatorium; and so is Herries. So this is where I come in. It's a jolly good chance for me."

"Good luck!" said Talbot.

"Oh, I shall do all right," said Gore confidently. "Tom Merry wouldn't have put me in if he could have helped it!" Gore sniffed. "But I'll jolly well show them that I can keep goal. It will be rather a tag, rag, and bob-tail team. More 'n half the fellows in the sanatorium. I dare say I should still be there myself, but for that new nurse—Miss March. Jolly good sort!"

"Jolly good!" said Talbot.

"She seems to get on awfully well with you, Talbot," said Gore. "Anybody would hardly think that you'd never met her till last week, the way you get on."

Talbot coloured.

"I suppose you never met her before she came here?" said Gore curiously.

Skimpole chimed in before Talbot could reply.

"My dear Gore, I am glad to see that you appreciate the kindness of Miss March. You are not generally grateful, my dear Gore."

"Oh, rats!" snapped Gore.

"You are quite right about that young lady," went on Skimpole, blinking at Gore through his spectacles. "She is intelligent—very intelligent. While I was getting well I had quite long talks with her. I explained

to her about my new invention—my system of a self-acting propeller—and she listened without any of the idiotic interruptions I am accustomed to from you, Gore——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Talbot rose to his feet.

"Hallo! You haven't finished tea?" said Gore.

"Yes, I've finished," said Talbot, taking up his cap.

"My dear Talbot," murmured Skimpole. "I was going to explain my propeller to you after tea."

"Later on, old chap," said Talbot. "I'm going to take a turn in the quad."

"Oh, that's all right," said Skimpole. "I'll take a turn with you, my dear Talbot. I can talk while I walk."

"You can talk while you sleep, I think!" growled Gore. "For goodness' sake pass the jam, and shut up!"

Talbot hesitated. Skimpole had taken up his cap to accompany him in that little walk in the quad. The colour deepened in the handsome face of the Shell fellow. He had reasons for not wanting Skimmy's company just then, and equally good reasons for not wishing it to appear that he wanted to go out alone.

But Skimmy took his arm affectionately, and walked him out of the study. They descended the stairs together, and strolled out into the dusky quad. Skimpole was going at full tide, but Talbot heard hardly a word he said. They strolled under the old elms, swept clear of leaves by the keen winter wind.

"What is your opinion, my dear Talbot?" asked Skimpole.

"Eh?" ejaculated Talbot, coming out of a brown study, and realising that he had not heard a word that Skimpole had been saying.

"Would you place the crank as I have described, Talbot?"

"Oh—er—yes, certainly!"

"And where would you put the fly-wheel?" asked Skimpole.

That was a poser.

Eight o'clock rang out from the old clock-tower, and Talbot started.

"I am glad to see you so thoughtful, my

dear Talbot," went on Skimpole. "It shows that you take an intelligent interest in these scientific matters. But you have not yet told me where you would put the fly-wheel. What do you think?"

"I think it's time for prep," said Talbot. "Come on, Skimmy!"

He started for the School House at a run.

"My dear Talbot! I say, Talbot——"

But Talbot had already disappeared into the darkness.

Skimpole blinked after him in vain. In some annoyance, the genius of the Shell started for the School House to look for Talbot, and extract his unprejudiced opinion on the subject of that fly-wheel.

But Talbot was not in the School House.

As soon as he was out of sight of Skimpole, he had dodged round the elms, and from a safe distance he watched Skimpole enter the House. Then he turned away in the direction of the Head's garden.

He reached the little gate, and vaulted over it, and proceeded up the garden-path, thickly populated with fallen leaves, to a little summer-house, dank and dark in the evening.

He entered it quietly, and whispered:

"Marie! Are you here?"

There was no reply.

Talbot drew a deep breath, and waited.

He was not feeling comfortable. Anything of a surreptitious kind was foreign to his frank and candid nature. He had dodged the unsuspecting Skimpole, and had entered the Head's garden, which was out of bounds for juniors, to keep an appointment with Miss March, and it worried him a little.

There had been a good many smiles among the juniors about the great friendship between Talbot of the Shell and Miss March, the "Little Sister." When Talbot was free from lessons, and Miss March was free from her duties in the sanatorium, they were often seen speaking together. They had grown "chummy" quite quickly, and St. Jim's did not suspect that they were old acquaintances.

It worried Talbot.

He sat down on a seat in the dusky summer-house while he waited, his hands thrust into his pockets and a gloomy frown on his brow.

Was there never to be an end of deception?

he asked himself, miserably. Was he always to have a secret to keep?

He smiled bitterly as he thought of the change that had come over him. There had been a time, and not so very long ago, when a secret to keep—many secrets—had not troubled his mind. He had had dark secrets to keep in the days when he had been known as the Toff, when he was a member of the gang of cracksmen of which the Professor was now the chief.

It was not so very long ago, but sometimes it seemed to Talbot that centuries had passed since, so greatly was he changed.

He had won his pardon, he had faced a new life, he had won his way to honour and respect, and his black past was forgiven, if not forgotten—and, indeed, Talbot was so popular at St. Jim's that most of the fellows had already forgotten that he had ever been anything but what he now was—a frank and cheery schoolboy. In his early life everything had been against him. He had changed as soon as he had a chance. The past was dead and done with.

And so Tom Merry and Co., his chums, believed.

And so it was. But the grip of the past was not easily thrown off, and Talbot wondered bitterly what his loyal chums would think if they could have known, as he knew, that Miss March, the "Little Sister," the devoted nurse, was Marie Rivers, the daughter of the Professor, the cracksmen who had sought to rob the school.

He could not betray Marie—his childhood's chum.

Did he wish her to leave St. Jim's, to leave him free from that constant reminding of his shadowed past?

He hardly knew.

He knew that it would be a blow to him if she went. But while she remained he was kept incessantly in mind that he was the Toff, the one-time cracksmen; and behind Marie, too, loomed the shadow of her father, the unscrupulous, scheming Professor, determined by hook or by crook to get Talbot back into the ranks of crime—a figure distant, unseen, but ever threatening.

How was it to end?

A PIG PUZZLE!



CAN YOU FIND TWELVE PIGS IN THIS PICTURE?

There was a light step on the garden-path, and Talbot sprang to his feet.

"Toff!"

It was a soft whisper. Marie, in her nurse's dress with a silk muffler drawn about her graceful neck, stood before him.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Marie's Warning

"MARIE!" said Talbot quietly.

The girl was breathless.

"I am sorry I am late, Toff. I was kept in the ward. But—but what is the matter?" She peered at the handsome, clouded face in the deep dusk. "You did not want to come?"

"I always want to see you, Marie," said Talbot quietly. "You know that, Marie. But why now—why here—why a secret meeting like this, my dear?"

"I had to see you, Toff. It is important, and I could not speak to you in the ward."

"But to-morrow—"

"To-morrow will be too late!"

Talbot looked at her anxiously. He had been deep in thought ever since he had visited the sanatorium that afternoon to see little Joe Frayne of the Third Form. Marie had whispered to him in passing that she must see him; she had told him to come to the summer-house at eight, when she would be free for a time. Talbot had been unable to reply.

He had come.

The secrecy of the meeting troubled his mind; but it was not only that. Marie had her reasons; it was not merely to speak to him on casual matters that she had told him to come. Every day, after morning lessons, they met in the quadrangle, and could speak freely. She had her reasons; and Talbot, with a heavy heart, thought of the Professor, that threatening, unseen figure he had striven to banish from his mind.

"I had to see you to-night, Toff."

"But why, Marie?"

"It was important—"

"You have heard from—him?"

"From my father—yes."

Talbot drew a deep breath, and his eyes gleamed in the dusk.

"Marie, I know you are loyal to your father, little as he deserves it. I don't ask you to be otherwise. But you have promised me, Marie, that never again will you allow his orders make you break the law. You have promised me that while you stay at this school, at least, you will not obey his wicked orders. You are going to keep that promise, Marie?"

The girl lifted her head proudly.

The cracksmen's daughter, trained from childhood to assist in her father's lawless career, had come to St. Jim's with the full intention of helping John Rivers to carry out his plans—to tempt Talbot back to the old life that he had left, and the cunning Professor had counted upon her influence as upon a certainty. But in his cunning he had overreached himself. Talbot had not been tempted back to dishonesty; but his influence had implanted in the girl's mind a growing horror of her father's way of life. The result had been the reverse of what the Professor had calculated.

"You'll keep that promise, Marie?"

"I shall keep it, Toff. You know that."

"Yes, I know it, Marie. But—but, then, what is the trouble?"

"I had a letter from my father this afternoon." The girl's voice was unsteady. "He is angry—angry with me, because I—because I have kept my promise to you, Toff. I have not done what he has ordered. I will never desert him—that I have told him; but such orders as that I will never carry out again. But—but he is my father, Toff, and in his way he is fond of me."

Talbot sighed. Truly the position of the girl was as difficult as his own. Between her longing for the path of honour and honesty and her devotion to her worthless and unscrupulous father she was torn and troubled—and the end was still doubtful.

"But—but that isn't all, Toff. The Professor has come back."

Talbot started.

"He is not here?"

"Not here—no. The letter came from Abbotsford."

Talbot drew a breath of relief.

"That is a long way from here, Marie."

"But—but I am sure that it means harm to you," said Marie in a low voice. "The Professor has never given up the idea of getting you back, Toff. They have had evil days since you left them, and he will stop at nothing. They know now that you will not go willingly; they know I cannot and will not persuade you, and—and I fear——"

She broke off.

"What do you fear, Marie?"

"They will use force, Toff."

Talbot smiled slightly.

"How can they use force, Marie? They cannot kidnap me."

"But that is what I fear."

"Marie!"

"He is at Abbotsford," she whispered.

"You are going there to-morrow, Toff. He knows that, and I am convinced that that is why he is there. You must not go."

"But there is no danger; I shall be with the football team, Marie. There will be eleven of us," said Talbot reassuringly.

"You do not know how cunning he is. You must not go. He will have some trick of separating you from the others. Toff"—the girl's voice was agitated and broken—"you must not go! I shall be in fear for you all the time! Promise me you will not go!"

Talbot's face became very grave.

"But I must go, Marie. It is a special match. Tom Merry is hard put to it to make up a team at all, owing to so many fellows being in the sanatorium, and he would never forgive me if I failed him—for nothing, too! I could not explain it to him."

"You must not go!"

Woman-like, Marie came back to the point, oblivious to argument.

"But I must, Marie. What could I say to Tom Merry?"

"Anything! You must not go!"

"There will be no danger. Besides, I am not afraid."

"I am afraid," said the girl. "I am afraid, Toff. You will not make me miserable? You will not go?"

Talbot's handsome face clouded. It was difficult to refuse, and he knew how deep was the girl's concern for him. But to abandon

Tom Merry in a difficulty, without a reason to give for his conduct——

"Marie dear, I—I must go! There is no danger. I could not desert the fellows; they depend on me. And I cannot even tell Tom Merry about your father. I must go, dear!"

Marie's little hand closed on his arm with an almost convulsive grasp.

"You will not go?" Her voice was broken by a sob. "Toff, tell me that you will not go!"

"Marie," said Talbot wretchedly—"Marie, I——"

"Promise me!"

Dark as it was, he could see the tears that glistened on the soft, rounded cheeks. For a moment more he hesitated.

"Toff, I—I haven't asked anything else of you! Promise me that you will not go to Abbotsford to-morrow!"

"Very well, Marie, I—I will do the best I can," said Talbot heavily. "I cannot promise not to go; that's out of my hands. But—but I will resign my place in the eleven to-morrow and get Tom Merry to put another fellow in. If he does that, it won't be necessary for me to go."

"You will do that, Toff?" said Marie, with a breath of relief. "You will resign your place in the eleven? That's all I ask!"

"I will do that, Marie!"

"Thank you, Toff; my mind will be easy now! Thank you, and good-night!"

She pressed his hand and was gone.

Talbot, with knitted brows, made his way out of the Head's garden and returned to the School House. He had a difficult task before him.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

High Words!

"THAT's settled!" said Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three had finished tea, and Tom Merry had been at work again on his troublesome task of finally settling the football eleven.

He had done it at last. With more than half the best junior players laid up, and most of the reserve players too, it had not been an

easy task. But the captain of the Shell had done the best he could.

Monty Lowther and Manners read over the list and nodded approval. It was the best that could be done. The list read:

Gore; Lumley-Lumley; Reilly; Kerruish, Thompson, Lowther; Hammond, Talbot, Tom Merry, Blake, D'Arcy.

"I don't know what Gore will be like in goal," said Manners dubiously. "But as Wynn and Herries and Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn are all laid up, there doesn't seem to be much choice. The front line's good, anyway. Hammond will play up pretty well at outside-right."

"Have to keep on attacking," said Lowther. "The forwards are good."

"Yes, thank goodness, we're strong somewhere!" said Tom Merry. "Talbot will be a giddy tower of strength. We're jolly lucky to have him."

"Yes, that is a little bit of luck," agreed Lowther.

"And, luckily, he's at the top of his form, too," said Tom Merry. "Hallo! Come in!"

There was a tap at the door, and Talbot came in. The Terrible Three greeted him with genial looks.

"Just talking about you," said Manners.

Talbot laughed constrainedly.

"Something to my credit, I hope?"

"You bet!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "Congratulating ourselves on having you in the team to-morrow. Look at the list. What do you think of it?"

Talbot coloured painfully, and he hardly saw the list as he looked over it. He had come there to break it to Tom Merry that he could not play for St. Jim's on the morrow, and his greeting made it very difficult for him to begin.

"If you can suggest any improvements, out with it!" said Tom Merry. "Always open to suggestions, you know. I've had a valuable suggestion from Gussy. He thinks it would be a ripping idea to get Miss March to come over and see the match—just the idea that would flash into his mighty brain at a time like this! But what do you think?"

"The—the list seems all right," stammered

Talbot. "There's Levison of the Fourth, you know; he's been hard at practice, and he is coming on."

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes, I must say that Levison is showing up unexpectedly well lately," he admitted. "He will be a good forward if he sticks to it. But you never know with a chap like Levison; he's too jolly uncertain, and, anyway, he hasn't been at the game long enough to be reliable. To give him what credit's due, though, I must say he is turning out very well lately. I hear he's even given up smoking. It's jolly queer that your influence should have all that effect on him!"

"My influence?" said Talbot, with a smile.

"Yes, yours! He was an arrant blackguard until you took him in hand, and you remember how he was up against you at first. Now he would back you up through thick and thin, I verily believe," said Tom Merry. "If he keeps on like this, I shall give him a chance in the team later on, certainly. Not in this match, though."

"The—the fact is——" said Talbot, and halted.

"Yes?" Tom Merry looked curiously at his flushed face. "What's the matter?"

"The fact is, I was going to recommend Levison to you," stammered Talbot.

"In whose place?" asked Tom Merry, taking the list again and looking at it. "Nothing to blush about, my son! I know you know the game from A to Z, and I'm jolly glad to have your advice. He wouldn't be any good in goal."

"No, not in goal."

"He's best in the forward line," said Tom. "But we've got a very good forward line. Hammond is all right on the wing—better than Levison, anyway. Which place were you thinking of for Levison, Talbot?"

"Mine," said Talbot, with an effort.

It was out at last. The three Shell fellows stared at him.

"Joking?" asked Monty Lowther.

"No; I mean——"

"Blessed if I know what you mean," said Tom Merry wonderingly. "Do you mean we could take him along as a reserve? No harm in that."

"No; I—I don't mean as a reserve. The— the fact is, I—I want you to excuse me to-morrow," said Talbot haltingly.

"Bow-wow!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny!" urged Manners. "What should you want to stand out of the match to-morrow for?"

"You're jolly well not going to, whether you want to or not, Talbot," said Tom Merry decisively. "We can't possibly do without you. The team's weak enough as it is. I was just congratulating myself on having you. Of course, you've got to play!"

"I can't!" said Talbot.

Tom Merry knitted his brows. He had a great regard for Talbot—they were close chums; but this was a little too unreasonable. After all the trouble he had had in getting together an eleven that could uphold the colours of St. Jim's it was a little too much for his best player to ask to stand out, for no apparent reason.

"Why can't you?" Tom demanded.

"I—I want to stand out, if you don't mind."

"But I do mind!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "What the dickens, Talbot! You can't leave us in the lurch like that! What do you want to stand out for?"

Talbot's colour deepened. Certainly he could not mention Marie Rivers, whom the juniors knew as Miss March, and still more certainly he could not mention the Professor, for if the Terrible Three had known that the cracksman was in Abbotsford, they would have taken instant measures to inform the police. It was not for Talbot to give Marie's father into the clutches of the law.

The chums of the Shell regarded Talbot in amazement. They could see that he was distressed and agitated, but they could not imagine the reason.

Talbot did not speak. What was he to say? He had no explanation to give. There was a painful silence in the study.

Tom Merry broke it at last. His voice was not quite so good-tempered as usual.

"Will you tell us why you want to stand out of the team? If you've got any good reason, of course, that makes a difference!"

"I'd rather not play."

"Rather not play!" said Monty Lowther hotly. "Is that a reason for leaving the team in the lurch, when we've got trouble enough on our hands already?"

"I—I'm sorry."

"I should jolly well think you are sorry!" grunted Lowther. "If I were skipper of the team, and a player served me such a trick——"

Monty Lowther paused, remembering that he was talking to a chum; but he didn't feel very chummy at that moment.

"Hold on, Monty," said Tom Merry. "Talbot must have some reason. Get it out, Talbot—there's nothing to be bashful about. Why don't you want to go to Abbotsford? Don't you feel fit?"

"It isn't exactly that," said Talbot.

"Then what is it? I suppose I've a right to know, as your footer captain?" exclaimed Tom Merry testily. "You said nothing about it before. I've consulted you a dozen times about making up the team. You leave it till nearly the last minute to spring it on me, and I've a right to know your reason!"

Tom Merry's voice was rising a little, unconsciously, though he was doing his best to keep his temper.

"I—I don't want you to misunderstand me," said Talbot wretchedly. "I—I don't want to come to Abbotsford to-morrow, that's all."

"Do you mean you won't come?" demanded Tom Merry.

"No. I—I—I want to resign my place in the team, that's all. But—but if you don't consent, I—I must come!"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"I don't understand you," he said. "Will you tell me why you don't want to come, or won't you?"

Talbot was silent.

"You know how we stand," said Tom Merry angrily. "You know what sort of a team I've been able to get together, with half the fellows in the sanatorium. Do you think it's acting like a sportsman to leave us in the lurch like this?"

"Talbot must have some reason," said Manners quietly. "Don't you feel up to it,

old man? You're not catching the flu, are you?"

Talbot shook his head.

"Well, why don't you speak!" said Tom. "You're going to play us this trick without giving a shadow of a reason. Why don't you answer?"

"I've got nothing to say," said Talbot. "I—I've said all I had to say. I'd rather you left me out to-morrow. But—but I'll come if you insist upon it!"

Tom Merry made an angry gesture.

"Oh, I don't insist upon it! You're not a slave, I suppose; and that's not the humour for a fellow to play in, anyway. If you don't want to come, don't. But I think it's rotten, and I say so plainly!"

Talbot nodded,

and turned to the door. "What is this?" demanded Mr. Railton. "Merry! Gore! Cease this instantly! How dare you! What is all this about?" (See page 317.)

The Terrible Three watched him grimly as he went out. They were in a bad humour, and they did not take the trouble to conceal it. The door closed behind Talbot.

"Well, my hat!" said Monty Lowther, with a low whistle. "That beats the band! What's come over old Talbot? This isn't like him at all!"

Tom Merry frowned angrily.

"I don't understand him!" he snapped.

"I know that this is a beastly thing to do. I shall have to put in Levison, and the result

will very likely be a licking. To leave us in the lurch like this, when the fellows are all crooked! I never expected that of Talbot!"

"I—I suppose——" began Lowther slowly.

"You suppose what?" said Tom crossly.

"I suppose there's nothing"—Lowther hesitated—"nothing in it about—about Talbot's old connections? He hasn't been seeing any of his old friends—the Professor, or Hookey Walker, or the rest?"

"Not that I'm aware of. Hookey Walker's in prison, and the Professor is skulking some-

where, with the police after him. Besides, even if he'd heard from them, that could not have anything to do with a footer-match! You don't suggest that he's throwing us over to meet any of those rotters to-morrow?"

"Oh, no! He's given us his word

of honour about that kind of thing."

"They can't influence him. What would they care about a footer-match?" growled Tom Merry. "It can't be anything of that sort. He's got some idea in his head—perhaps some lot about giving Levison a chance. Blessed if I know what he's got in his head! He must have some reason, I should think, for playing us this trick. But I must say I don't like it. If it were any other fellow, I'd take jolly good care that he never played in the team again, after deserting us like this!



And even with Talbot—" Tom Merry paused. "Dash it all, let's get on with the prep! I shall lose my temper if I talk about it any more!"

Monty Lowther grinned. He thought his chum was perilously near having lost his temper already. But he made no remark, and the chums of the Shell went on with their preparation glumly.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Crooked!

ELEVEN juniors wheeled their bicycles out of the gates of St. Jim's after dinner the next day. They had a good long ride before them; and it was a splendid afternoon, dry and sunny, and cold. A crowd of fellows came down to the gates to give them a send-off, but Talbot was not among them. Talbot was avoiding his comrades, to escape their comments and questions upon his inexplicable conduct.

Tom Merry and Co. rode away in cheerful spirits. Levison of the Fourth looked the most cheerful. He was unaffectedly glad of the chance that had come into his way; though he, too, was thinking a good deal about Talbot's curious action.

The eleven had a long ride before them and there were no followers on this occasion. The eleven had gone off by themselves. The miles glided under the swift wheels, and Abbotsford drew near at last. The road was muddy, and the mud was cut up by frequent motor-cars, and the juniors were pretty well splashed by the time Abbotsford came in sight in the distance.

Zip, zip, zip!

It was another motor-car, which had been following the juniors at a moderate pace for some distance now. Now it had bucked up, and Tom Merry and Co. drew to the side of the road to let it pass. It was a small car, with a chauffeur completely unrecognisable in a cap with flaps and huge goggles. The hood of the car was down, but a glimpse could be had of a heavily bearded man sitting inside as it passed on in the direction of Abbotsford. The passenger looked out, scanning the juniors as he passed them, and Tom Merry glanced

carelessly at a thickly bearded face with a pair of large, gold-rimmed spectacles.

The car, which was painted grey, glided on ahead of the juniors. The road was narrow at this point, and at the sides it was thick with ridges of mud. Jack Blake, who was sprung out ahead of the party as they got out of the way, skidded upon a muddy rut, and just dragged his machine out of the way in time as the grey car buzzed on past him. There was a crash, and Blake and his machine were deposited by the roadside in a heap.

The grey car shot ahead, and then stopped. The cyclists halted, jumping off their machines, and Tom Merry and D'Arcy ran towards Blake. The Fourth-Former was sitting up beside his machine, his face very pale and contracted with pain.

"Hurt, old chap?" exclaimed Tom, anxiously.

Blake grunted.

"My beastly ankle! I caught it on the pedal! Ow!"

"Oh, what rotten luck! Let's look at it."

Blake pulled back his trouser-leg and pulled down his sock. The skin was growing blue, and he gave a yelp as Tom Merry touched his ankle.

"Yow!"

"It's a sprain," said Tom Merry, with knitted brow. "How utterly rotten!"

"Oh, I'm not really hurt!" growled Blake. "I sha'n't be able to play, though— Ow! Hang that rotten car!"

"Well, it wasn't his fault," said Tom. "You skidded."

"I know that."

Blake rose to his feet with difficulty. His ankle was hurt, and though the injury was not serious in itself, it was painful, and it made it quite out of the question for him to play in the football match.

Tom Merry set his lips. It was the last straw. The team had had a series of strokes of ill-luck already, and now one of the best of the eleven was disabled. It was the last straw, and the match was as good as gone.

The car had halted at a little distance, and the passenger inside alighted and came back towards the juniors. He wore a big fur overcoat, buttoned up, and a silk hat, and

his gold-rimmed glasses gleamed in the sunlight.

"Nothing serious, I hope?" he exclaimed.

"No," said Blake, a little snappishly.

"I am sorry you had a fall," said the old gentleman kindly. "Can I give you a lift into the town?"

"Thank you, sir!" said Blake, a little more graciously. "I can't ride that's a cert! One of you fellows can wheel my bike!"

"And what about the match?" muttered Lowther. "Are we going to play Abbotsford a man short? That will be the giddy finish!"

Tom Merry made an impatient gesture.

"Talbot will have to come, after all," he said.

"Talbot! But——"

"Too late!" said Thompson.

"It isn't too late. We can ask the Abbotsford chaps to leave kick-off a little later, and get Talbot here."

"But how?"

"A wire from the post-office in Abbotsford," said Tom Merry curtly. "He will get it almost at once, and he will come. I won't give him any choice about the matter. I'll simply wire that he's to come."

"Oh, that's all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "He's bound to come. Talbot won't leave us in the lurch, even if he has to put off takin' a little walk with a weally charmin' young lady."

"If that's his reason for keeping out, serve him right if he's disappointed!" growled Blake. "It's a good idea, Tommy, and it's the only thing to be done. Help me into the car. My ankle won't stand the strain."

"Heah you are, deah boy."

Blake was helped into the grey car, and the bearded motorist followed him in. The grey car glided on towards Abbotsford, and the ten cyclists remounted their machines and followed it. Tom Merry rode with a grim brow. There was no real reason, so far as he could see, why Talbot shouldn't play; and if there was a reason, Talbot should have explained it. As he had given no reason, his captain was fully entitled to call upon his services, especially as it was now the only possible alternative to defeat.

The grey car stopped outside the big post-office in Abbotsford High Street, and the team dismounted there from their bikes. Blake was helped out of the car. But the chauffeur did not drive on. The bearded, spectacled old gentleman apparently had business in the post-office as well as Tom Merry. He followed the St. Jim's junior in, and as Tom Merry stopped at the telegraph-desk the spectacled gentleman stopped at the next desk, and also took a slip of paper and a pen.

Tom Merry wrote out his telegram to Talbot. He made no effort to conceal what he was writing. It did not occur to him to do so. There was no reason why he should suppose that the obliging motorist at the next desk was interested in his telegram.

"Talbot, School House, St. Jim's.—Blake crooked. Man short. Come at once. Waiting for kick-off till you arrive Abbotsford."

"TOM MERRY."

And that peremptory message was promptly ticked off.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

Man Short!

TOM MERRY came out of the post-office and rejoined his chums. The juniors were standing in a group, with their bicycles, near the grey car.

Jack Blake was standing on one leg, leaning on the shoulder of his sympathetic chum, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was suffering a good deal of pain, though he was bearing it quietly. He was not a fellow to make a fuss.

"Sent the telegwam, deah boy?"

"Yes," said Tom.

"It's all wight; he'll come."

"He's a good cyclist. He'll scorch for all he's worth, and he won't keep us waiting long," said Levison. "We're early, anyway."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, we're early," he agreed. "What are you going to do, Blake? You can't stay and watch the match, I suppose? You'd better get home."

Blake made a grimace.

"I'd better get back, I suppose," he said. "Though I'm blessed if I know how."

"You can get taxi-cabs heah, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "That will be all wight. You can have your jiggah put on top."

"Frightful big bill, here to St. Jim's."

"Oh, wats! I've got plenty of tin. You can't go by twain with that foot!"

"Well, I suppose it will have to be a taxi," groaned Blake. "The blessed thing hurts like anything. If I pass Talbot on the road I'll hurry him up."

"He'll take the short cuts," said Tom Merry. "Let's find a taxi first, and then get on to the school."

Jack Blake was soon bestowed in a taxi-cab, his machine being mounted on top. He started off on the return journey, and Tom Merry and Co. remounted their machines and rode on towards Abbotsford School. The grey car was still outside the post-office, the chauffeur sitting idle in his seat.

But when the juniors were out of sight, the long-bearded, spectacled old gentleman came out, spoke a few words to the chauffeur, and stepped into the car, and it swung round in the road. Apparently the old gentleman's business in Abbotsford was finished, for the grey car hummed off back the way it had come—and once out of the town the chauffeur "let her go" at a tearing speed in the direction of St. Jim's.

Thinking of anything but the grey car, Tom Merry and Co. arrived at Abbotsford School, which was on the outskirts of the town.

Yorke, the junior captain of Abbotsford, gave them a warm greeting, but he looked rather surprised at finding only ten of them.

"Man short?" he asked, as he shook hands with Tom Merry.

"Accident on the road," Tom explained. "We've wired for another man. If he's a bit late——"

"Oh, we'll wait!" said Yorke cheerily. "You're early, anyway. And we can put off the kick-off for a bit. Anything you like, so long as we have time to finish before dark."

"Thanks!" said Tom.

The St. Jim's juniors changed in the Abbotsford dressing-room, and then waited, lounging about, or punting a ball to pass the time.

What ever haste Talbot made on receipt of

the telegram, it would be some time before he could reach Abbotsford, and his comrades had to wait with what patience they could muster.

It had been arranged that Levison was to take Blake's place, and Talbot would have his old place of inside-right. If he came in time to play, the St. Jim's team would not be the worse off for Blake's accident. And surely he would come in time. What ever might be his motive for cutting the match, he could not possibly disregard that urgent telegram from his captain.

"Cheero!" said Monty Lowther, as he noted the cloud on Tom Merry's brow. "Talbot will come all right."

"He couldn't be here yet," said Levison, looking at his watch. "Give him a chance, you know. You don't think it's possible he won't come, surely?"

"Oh, I suppose he's bound to come!" said Tom uneasily.

"Yaas wathah! Quite certain, deah boy!"

"And he knows all the short cuts, and he's a ripping cyclist!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess he'll turn up pretty soon."

Yorke came over towards the St. Jim's fellows.

"Your man coming along?" he remarked.

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Well, I suppose it's pretty nearly time he was here," he remarked.

"I don't want to hurry you, of course, but it gets dark pretty early at this time of the year, you know. We want to finish."

"Make it another quarter of an hour, and if he's not here we'll begin, anyway."

"Right-ho!"

"That'll be the limit," said Lowther. "We can't play after dark. I suppose Talbot wouldn't be ass enough to come by the road. He knows the short cuts."

"Oh, he'll turn up in a few minutes!" said Reilly.

A few minutes passed, but Talbot did not turn up. More minutes ticked away, and the quarter of an hour was up. Talbot had not appeared.

Tom Merry's brow grew very dark.

Even had Talbot gone by the high road, and had not taken advantage of the short

cuts, he should have been at Abbotsford by this time.

What was delaying him ?

He must have received the telegram, and he must know how urgent it was. Yet he had not come.

"Accident on the road perhaps," hazarded Lumley-Lumley. "Those short cuts are a bit thick just now, I guess."

"Oh, rot ! Two accidents don't happen in the same afternoon !" said Tom Merry irritably. "He hasn't had any accident !"

"Then why don't he come ?"

"Might have been some delay getting the telegram, or—or—I don't know. Anyway, we've got to play ; we can't keep those chaps waiting any longer. There isn't too much time to finish before dark, as it is."

"Play a man short then," said Kerruish.

"No choice about it."

Yorke and his men were showing some signs of impatience, in spite of their politeness.

Tom Merry hurried over to the Abbotsford captain, who was idly punting a ball.

"We're ready !" he called out.

"Wait a bit longer, if you like," said Yorke.

"No good ; it'll be too dark to finish if we do. When my man comes, he can come straight on the field."

"Right you are !"

The teams went into the field and lined up. The kick-off fell to the visitors, and the game was soon going fast and furious. With a man short in their ranks the St. Jim's fellows devoted themselves to defence. They missed Talbot sorely, and they missed Jack Blake, Levison was doing unexpectedly well in the front line, but he did not make up for what was missing.

Tom Merry did not give up hope, however.

When Talbot arrived he would come into the game, and that would make all the difference in the world. If he did not come, of course the match was lost. With a full team, such as it was, the Saints would not have very brilliant prospects. With a man short, they were booked for a thorough licking.

"But he was bound to come," Tom Merry told himself almost savagely. Never had he felt so angry with his chum. It was really

too bad of Talbot, and Tom Merry could find no excuse for him.

With the odds against them, as they were, the Saints would not have done so badly if Fatty Wynn had been in his old place at goal. Gore was doing his best there, but he was not a patch on the Welsh junior. The Abbotsford fellows attacked hotly, too, and when they got through Gore was not quite equal to the demands made upon him. The ball went into the net—and went in again !

Still Talbot did not appear.

Tom Merry packed his goal, and the Saints defended hard, and till the whistle went for half-time no more goals were taken. But at the interval Abbotsford were two up, and the Saints had nothing to show. They came off the field for a rest, looking far from cheerful. If Talbot did not come, the second half was pretty certain to be a repetition of the first, and St. Jim's would go home with a record licking—without even breaking their duck.

Why had Talbot not come ?

He had had ample time now, if he had taken the longest route, and if he had had even a puncture. There was no reason to be imagined why he should not have come.

Tom Merry looked anxiously towards the gates for a sign of him as the teams went into the field for the second half, but he was not to be seen, and Tom had to resign himself to the certainty that he would not come. And the ten St. Jim's players lined up once more, determined to do their best, but with the certain prospect of a licking before them, and their feelings towards Talbot were not pleasant.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

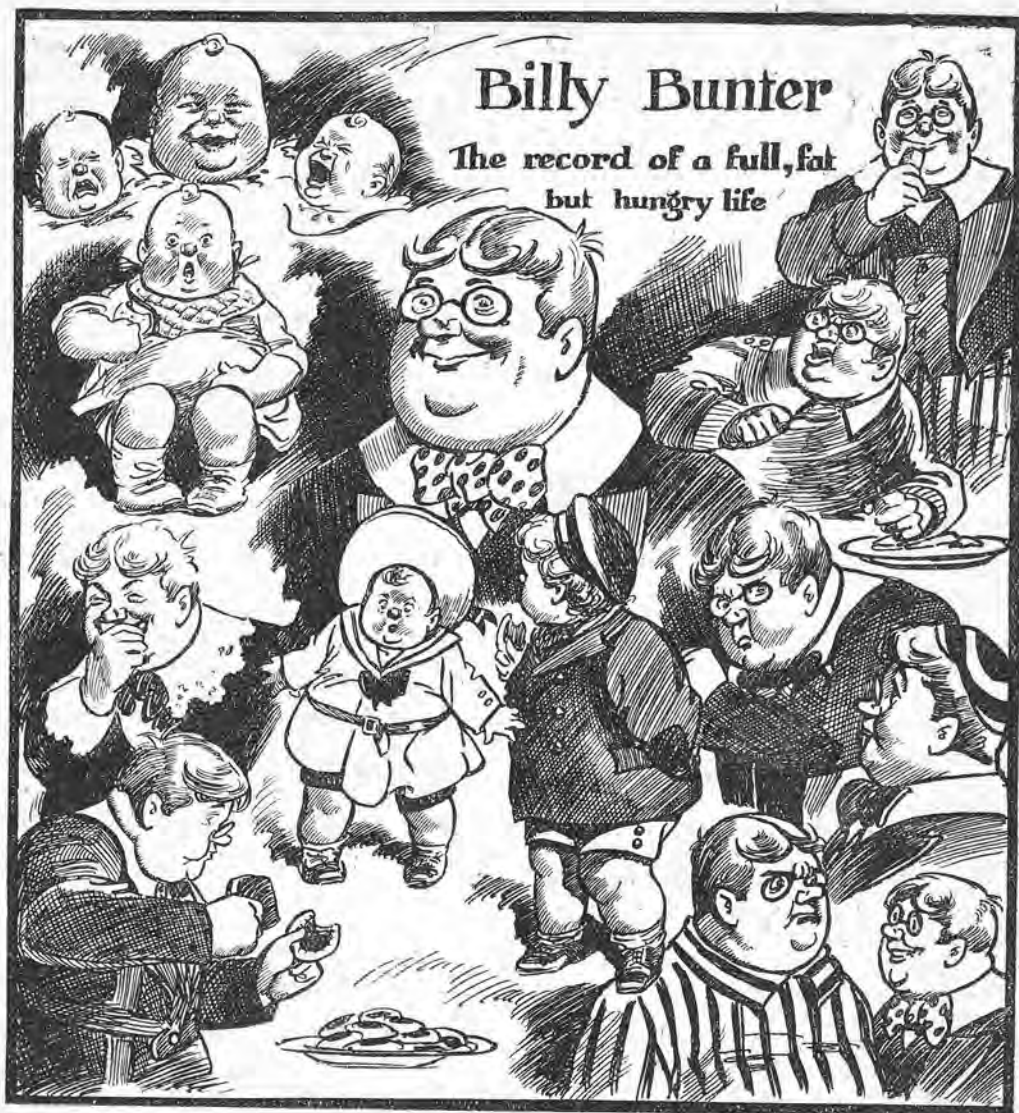
Taken by Force!

"TELEGRAM for you, Master Talbot !"

Toby, the page of the School-house, brought it into Talbot's study.

Talbot was alone there. He had done as Marie asked him—he had given up the match. He was disappointed, but his own disappointment did not trouble him so much as that of his chums. He could not help feeling that he had fallen in their opinion by his unexplained desertion.

A FAMOUS FAT FELLOW IN FIFTEEN PHASES!



Our friend William George Bunter, commonly known as "the Owl" in the Remove Form at Greyfriars, is here depicted by Mr. C. H. Chapman in various stages of podginess. Judging by these pictures, Billy Bunter has never suffered from under-feeding!

He had resolved to pass the afternoon in studying hard; it was the best way to keep depressing thoughts out of his mind.

After the departure of the team he had seen Marie for a few minutes in the Head's garden, and the girl had been much relieved to be assured that he had not gone to Abbotsford. Marie was on duty again now in the sanatorium, and Talbot was "swotting" at Latin when Toby brought in the telegram.

"Thank you, Toby!"

Talbot opened the telegram in some wonder. There was nobody, as far as he knew, that was likely to send him a wire, unless it was some new attempt of the Professor to trouble him.

He started as he read Tom Merry's message.

"Tom Merry, by Jove!"

"Any answer, sir?" asked Toby.

"No, Toby."

The page departed, and Talbot stood for some moments in thought, with the telegram in his hand.

He had to go, of course.

He had told Marie that he would resign his place in the team and stay behind, but that he must go if Tom Merry insisted.

The telegram from Tom Merry was insistent enough.

He had to go. He wondered for a moment whether he should tell Marie. But the girl was on duty in the ward; it would not be easy to see her. And Talbot, remembering her agitation the previous evening, decided very quickly that it was better not to tell her. He had to go; and it was useless to cause the girl worry and alarm, unfounded as her apprehensions were. She need know nothing of it till he came back with the St. Jim's team.

A minute was enough for Talbot to think that out. Then he rushed away to the bike-shed to get out his machine. To fasten his football things into a bag and on his machine was the work of a few moments.

He wheeled the machine out of the school gates, and mounted and started off in high spirits.

He had to go, and Marie could hardly blame him afterwards for having obeyed the direct order of his captain. And he was glad to go. A football match was better than grinding

Latin in his study. And it would make matters right with the fellows who were hurt and offended by his unaccountable refusal to play. Once he was at Abbotsford he would pile in and play the game of his life, and everything would be ripping. Talbot's heart was light as he pedalled away.

He simply flew along the road. He passed Rylcombe, and sped on along the high road, and then turned into a short cut that saved him a couple of miles. He came out on the high road again, and a few minutes later drew aside to let a taxi-cab pass. A hand was waved to him from the window of the cab.

"Put it on, old son!"

Talbot recognised Jack Blake.

There was no time to stop, but Talbot smiled and waved his hand. The cyclist shot on past the taxicab, and Blake proceeded on his way to St. Jim's much comforted in mind.

Talbot rode hard.

He had to follow the winding high-road for a couple of miles, and then there was another short cut that lessened the wide loop of the road. But before he reached the turning a grey car came into view.

The motor-car had been proceeding at a snail's pace. Talbot did not know it, of course, but the car had been crawling up and down that section of the road for a considerable time that afternoon. The spectacled motorist might have been supposed to have plenty of time on his hands, from the conduct of his chauffeur.

At the sight of Talbot scorching on his machine the chauffeur "bucked up," and came rushing along directly in the cyclist's path.

Talbot swerved to avoid the car, but the car swerved, too, looping across the road as if the driver were intoxicated and reckless.

Talbot slacked down and jumped off his machine. He was exasperated at wasting a minute, but concluding that the motor-driver was drunk, it was the only way of avoiding a collision.

The chauffeur jammed on his brakes, and the car halted within a few yards of the cyclist.

Talbot wheeled his machine out into the

road angrily, to re-mount and ride on past the halted car.

But as he did so the door of the car opened, and the bearded, spectacled motorist jumped out, and at the same moment the chauffeur left his seat.

Talbot had to stop, as both of them had jumped directly in his way.

"What the dickens——" began Talbot.

Then he almost staggered.

In spite of the beard, in spite of the big glasses, he knew the face of the motorist, even if his actions had not betrayed him.

The Professor!

"Well met!" said John Rivers, with a chuckle.

"Don't try to stop me," said Talbot, between his teeth. "I have nothing to say to you, John Rivers, and I have not a moment to spare. Get out of the way!"

"Not a moment?" asked the disguised cracksman sarcastically.

"Not an instant!" exclaimed Talbot angrily. "Let me pass!"

The Professor cast a quick glance up and down the road. He had chosen that spot because it was lonely, and because he knew that a cyclist coming from St. Jim's could not avoid passing there. Talbot jerked his machine aside to pass, and as he did so the two men rushed at him.

Then the junior understood.

It was not an appeal from his old confederate that he had to listen to this time; it was not the Professor's intention to urge him to return to his old haunts. John Rivers had learned that that was useless. Marie's misgivings had not been unfounded, after all; the rascals meant violence. But Talbot was not an easy fellow to handle.

He let the machine slide, and put up his hands instantly as the two scoundrels closed upon him. The chauffeur, powerful man as he was, reeled back from the heavy drive on the chest, and pitched against the car. But even as he reeled away the Professor was upon the boy. He had torn away his glasses, and it was well for him, for Talbot's left crashed full in his face. Heedless of the blow, the cracksman grasped the junior in a savage grip.

"Quick, Nobbler!" he panted.

Talbot struggled fiercely with the Professor.

He was a boy against a man, but he would have freed himself in a few moments had he had only the cracksman to deal with.

But the chauffeur was quick to recover himself, and he rushed at the schoolboy again and grasped him savagely.

Talbot fought hard in the grasp of the rascals. He was strong, he was active, and he had unbounded pluck and determination. And as he fought for his liberty he shouted for help.

"Hold him!" panted the Professor.

The cracksman dragged a leather bag from his pocket as Talbot struggled with the chauffeur. He opened the bag, and a strange, sickly scent came to Talbot's nostrils. Before he could release himself from the chauffeur the Professor was upon him again, and a cloth saturated with chloroform was pressed over his face.

The boy still struggled feebly, but he was firmly held, and the cloth was kept tight on his face. In a minute more he lay helpless in the grasp of the kidnappers.

"Hang him! He gave us enough trouble!" snarled the Professor. "Into the car with him, quick! There's a waggon on the road."

The insensible junior was lifted quickly into the car. Down the road a farm waggon had appeared in sight, jogging on towards the scene of the kidnapping, with the driver half asleep.

Talbot was lifted into the car, and a big coat wrapped round him. Nobbler lifted the bicycle to the roof of the car.

The waggoner came along and glanced at them carelessly. He noted nothing but a boy huddled up, apparently fast asleep in a corner of the car. The waggon passed.

"Close shave!" said the Professor, clicking his teeth. "But a miss is as good as a mile. We've got him at last. Get off, sharp!"

The Professor stepped into the car. Nobbler gave a doubtful look at the junior.

"He won't come to!" he muttered.

The Professor laughed savagely.

"If he does, I shall give him a second dose. Get off!"

"Home?" asked the chauffeur.

"Yes; London, and let her go!"

"Right!"

The chauffeur took the wheel again, and the car started. Talbot, overcome by the drug, scarcely breathing, motionless and inert, lay huddled in the car, as it hummed and roared along the roads. The Professor's eyes gleamed with triumph. The Toff was in the hands of his old confederates at last. Talbot, of St. Jim's, had disappeared, and the Toff had come to life again.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

A Surprise!

"BEATEN to the wide!"

"Rotten!"

"Hard cheese, deah boys!"

Tom Merry and Co. came off the football field at Abbotsford in black humour.

The match had ended, as it could only possibly have ended, with a scratch team and a man short, against keen and determined opponents.

Talbot had not come. If he had arrived even in the second half, the fortune of war might have changed. But he had not come.

St. Jim's had been beaten to the wide. They had played up gallantly, and done their best. Tom Merry had succeeded in putting the ball in, in spite of the odds. St. Jim's had scored a single goal. But Abbotsford had taken three in the second half, in spite of the Saint's efforts.

Five goals to one!

It was a crushing defeat. Seldom or never, had five goals been scored against Tom Merry's eleven in a footer match.

They put the best face on they could before the Abbotsford fellows. It was no good looking glum after a licking. If it had been a fair licking after a fair fight they would not have minded. But they had lost because their man hadn't come, because their player had left them in the lurch. That was where the bitterness came in. They changed, and mounted their bikes in the winter dusk for the ride home to St. Jim's.

Tom Merry was silent. He was feeling morose enough; he could imagine no reason why Talbot had failed him in this way. But the other fellows made remarks pretty freely. Talbot had left them in the lurch—it was a rotten trick—and they had plenty of things to say to Talbot when they got back to St. Jim's. They said some of them en route by way of relieving their feelings.

At any other time nothing was more certain to rouse Tom Merry's ire than a slighting remark concerning Talbot. In the Toff's earlier days at the school his chums had come down very heavily on mean fellows who had been inclined to bring up Talbot's past against him. Tom Merry and Co. had ragged Cutts of the Fifth for that offence. They had given Levison a very rough time for the same reason. But now, Tom Merry had not a word to say in defence of his chum. There was nothing to be said. Talbot, knowing how they were placed, had chosen to leave them in the lurch.

"Oh, I'll talk to him when we get in," said Thompson of the Shell savagely. "A New House chap wouldn't have left us in the lurch like this."

Thompson belonged to the New House.

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther crossly.

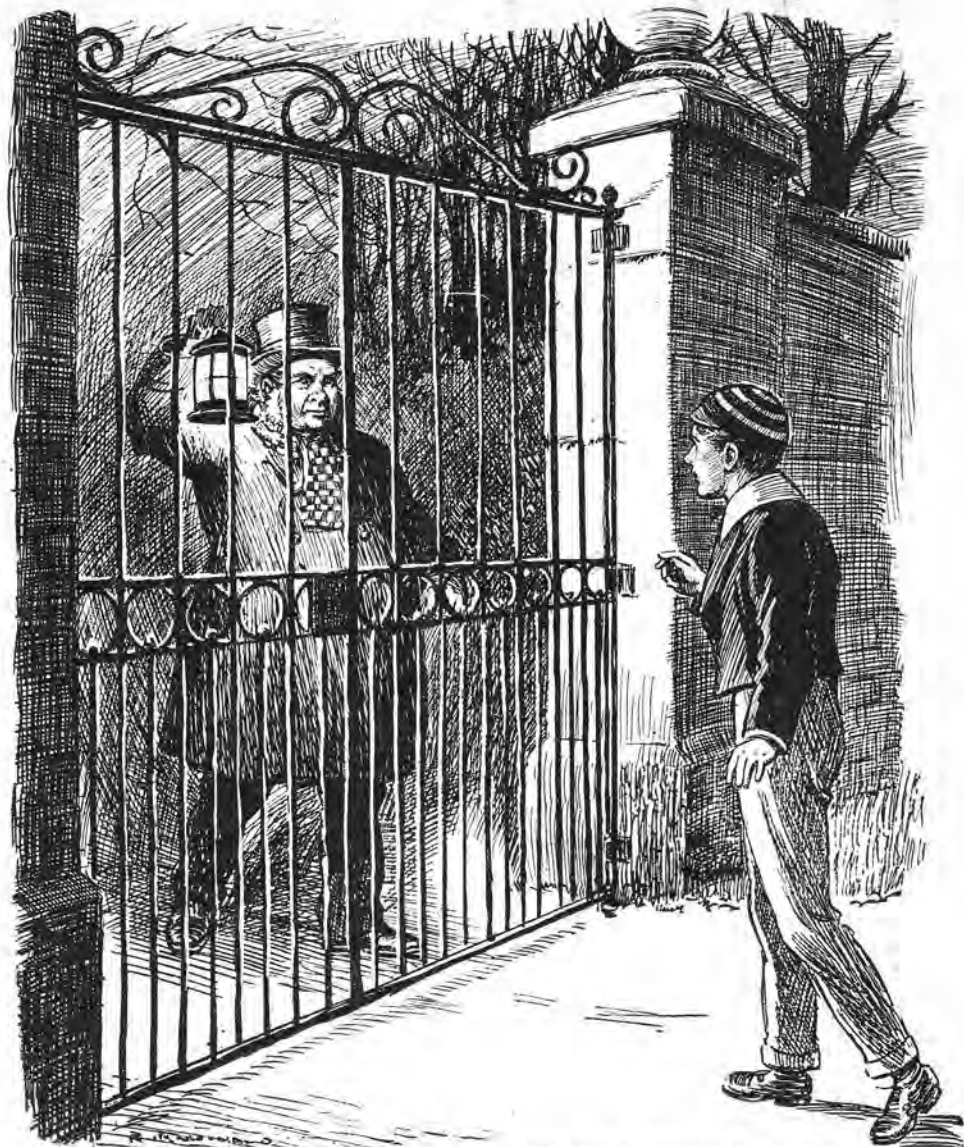
"There were New House chaps who would have played, too!" growled Thompson. "But, of course, you had to pick a School House fellow, who goes and leaves you in the lurch! Poof!"

"Weally, Thompson——"

"It's no good talking," said Tom Merry savagely. "Talbot must be able to give some explanation of this. If he can't, he's out of the team for good—both for School and House matches. I'll never play him again unless he gives some jolly good explanation."

"What explanation can he give?" snorted Gore. "I suppose the telegraph hasn't broken down, has it? And you don't suggest that he broke his neck riding over? Rot! He didn't come because he wouldn't come. Five goals to one! My hat! Why, the blessed fags in the Second Form will be grinning at us! I've hardly got the cheek to show my face at St. Jim's at all."

"It's pretty rotten," said Levison. "But don't be down on a fellow till you know how



Taggles came down to the gates, lantern in hand. He almost dropped the lantern as he peered through the bars of the gate and made out Talbot's face. (See page 320.)

matters stand. Give him a chance, anyway."

Gore gave another emphatic snott.

"Rot! What are you backing up the fellow for? You used to be more down on him than anybody else. I never believed in

being down on him because of his past. Nobody can say I've ever chucked that up against him. But I'm down on him now. I think he's acted like a cad!"

"Rotten cad!" said Thompson.

"I guess it does look rotten!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Still, as Levison says, give him a chance to explain."

"Br-r-r!" said Gore. "After all, you can't expect much from a fellow who's been a cracksman and a blessed thief, when you come to think of it."

"Let that drop, Gore," said Tom Merry sharply. "That's got nothing to do with this, anyway."

"How do you know?" snarled Gore. Gore was excited and very bad-tempered just now. There had been some unpleasant remarks on the subject of his goal-keeping, which certainly had not been very successful. That match had been a great chance for Gore, but he had not shone. "How do you know, I say? Why didn't he come in the first place? And why didn't he come when you wired? What reason has he got for wanting to keep by himself all the afternoon? Look's to me as if there's something on. Looks to me jolly suspicious."

"Oh, draw it mild!" murmured Reilly.

"Well, that's what I think, and I say what I think!" growled Gore.

"And now you've said what you think, shut up, or I'll have you off that bike and mop up the road with you!" said Tom Merry savagely.

Gore grunted and let the subject drop. In far from a cheerful humour the juniors finished the ride home, and arrived at St. Jim's tired and dispirited and out of humour. They put up their bicycles, and hurried into the School House to look for Talbot. Jack Blake, limping a little, met them as they came in.

"Hallo! How did it go?" he asked eagerly.

"Wotten, deah boy!"

"Licked?" asked Blake, his face falling.

"Licked to the wide—five goals to one!" growled Gore. "Pretty record for St. Jim's junior eleven—what!"

"My only hat!" said Blake, in dismay. "Five goals to one! Don't tell everybody, for goodness' sake! What was the matter with you?"

"Scratch team, and man short!" growled Lowther. "What could you expect?"

"Man short?"

"Yes, ass!"

"But—but why?" exclaimed Blake. "Where's Talbot? Hasn't he come back with you?"

"Talbot! He didn't come!"

"Didn't come!" howled Blake with a jump. And then he howled again as he got a twinge in his damaged ankle. "Didn't come! Talbot didn't come! Ow! Why?"

"That's what we're going to find out," said Tom Merry grimly. "Where is he? Have you seen him?"

"Yaas, where is the boundah, deah boy?"

"Seen him?" said Blake dazedly. "Yes, I've seen him. I passed him on the road as I came home in the taxi. Why didn't he come?"

"You passed him on the road?" yelled Lowther.

"Yes."

"Going to Abbotsford?"

"Of course. Where the deuce would he be going?" demanded Blake. "It was about five miles out of Abbotsford, and he was scorching like thunder. I gave him a yell, and he didn't stop to answer, but he saw me. Do you mean to say that he didn't arrive at Abbotsford?"

"Wathah not!"

"Well, my hat!"

The footballers stood dumbfounded. This was an unexpected light on the matter. They had come in prepared to rag Talbot bald-headed for having failed to respond to the telegram. But it was evident that he had responded if Blake had passed him on the road to Abbotsford. What did it mean?

"You're—you're sure it was Talbot you passed, Blake?" exclaimed Tom Merry, bewildered.

Blake sniffed.

"Don't I know him, fathead? Of course it was Talbot! I yelled to him, and he waved his hand and he kept on without stopping, going like old billyho—ahem—like thunder!"

"Going towards Abbotsford?"

"Yes, I keep telling you!"

"B-b-but he didn't arrive there!"

"But he must have arrived!" exclaimed

Blake. "Why shouldn't he arrive? What was there to stop him?"

"Bai Jove! There's been some feahful accident!" said Arthur Augustus soberly. "I was suah all the time that Talbot would not leave us in the lurch. You fellahs will wemembah I said so all along."

"I don't remember!" snapped Gore.

"Weally, Goah!"

Tom Merry knitted his brows in troubled thought. All his resentment had vanished now. What ever had been Talbot's reason for standing out of the match in the first place, he had loyally come to his comrades' help when he received Tom's urgent message. That was clear now. But what had become of him? He had passed Blake on the Abbotsford road, and then he had vanished seemingly into thin air. Certainly he had never arrived at Abbotsford.

"An accident, of course," said Lowther uneasily. "I was afraid there might have been an accident all the time. Poor old Talbot! I say, Tom, we'd better go and tell Railton at once."

Tom Merry had turned his steps in the direction of the House master's study.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER

Dark Suspicions

MR. RAILTON received the captain of the Shell with a genial smile.

"How did the match go, my boy?" he asked pleasantly. The School House master always took a keen interest in the junior matches.

"We were beaten, sir," said Tom. "But that doesn't matter. I'm afraid something has happened to Talbot."

Mr. Railton looked grave at once.

"Talbot! Was he not with you?"

"No, sir," Tom Merry explained.

The House master listened to him in surprise. He did not speak a word, however, until the junior had finished.

"That is very extraordinary!" he exclaimed at last. "If there has been a serious accident, surely word would have reached us by this time? However seriously injured, Talbot would have told where he lived, and we should have been communicated with."

Tom Merry faltered.

"I know, sir. That makes me think—makes me fear—"

"Don't think of such a thing, Merry. A fatal accident is extremely unlikely to have occurred. Of course, a road frequented by motor-cars—" said Mr. Railton slowly.

"But even so, word would have reached us before this. Talbot would have had something on him to show his identity. His cap would be known by its badge. Then there is the telephone. Certainly, who ever found him would have telephoned at once. It is extraordinary. However, inquiry must be made, of course. I will see the Head at once."

Mr. Railton hurried away to the Head without losing a moment.

Tom Merry rejoined his chums.

The juniors had come home hungry, but the Terrible Three, at least, had little appetite for tea. Manners had tea ready in the study, and they sat down to it in a lugubrious mood.

Where was Talbot? He had not arrived at Abbotsford, and he had not come back to St. Jim's. What had happened to him?

An accident was the only possible theory; yet how was it that the news of the accident had not reached the school? Hours had passed since it must have happened, if it had happened at all; and Talbot, even if, in the worst possible case, he had been killed outright, would be known at once as a St. Jim's fellow. Word would be sent to the school as soon as possible—and hours had passed.

Blake and Digby and D'Arcy came into the study after tea. They were all looking very glum.

"No news yet?" said Blake. "I say, you chaps, this is beastly! I'm worried about poor old Talbot!"

"Same here!" said Manners.

"Yaas, I wathah think we're all wowwied," said Arthur Augustus. "It is weally a most extwaordinawy happenin'. I have just been talkin' to Toby. He says he took the telegwam to Talbot, and he left at once. Some of the wottahs are sayin' that pewwaps he has gone off on his own; but, you see, it's quite cleah that he went as soon as he weccived the telegwam, and not befoah. And the books

are in his study just as he left them; the Latin grammar open."

"And I passed him on the road," said Blake for the twentieth time. "He must have been going to Abbotsford. He was going in that direction, top speed."

"There's no doubt that he was going to Abbotsford," said Tom Merry miserably. "But he never got there. A motor-car, perhaps——"

He stopped.

"But then they would have 'phoned up," said Blake, "or sent a messenger, or something. Even if a motor knocked him down, and didn't stop, somebody would have found him on the road."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I simply can't make it out," said Tom. "It beats me. I only hope that he comes back safe and sound, that's all."

All the fellows waited anxiously for news that evening. Gore and some of the others muttered a suspicion that he hadn't had an accident, but had gone off "on his own." If there had been an accident somebody would have heard of it.

Crooke of the Shell remarked that he had suspected something of the sort all along. Mellish of the Fourth fully agreed with him. But as yet the possibility of a tragic accident kept those remarks to furtive muttering. If there was no news later on, they would be heard more openly, and from other fellows besides Gore and Co. There was no doubt about that.

And no news came.

The Head, it was known, had telephoned to Rylcombe and Wayland, asking for news. No news of the accident was known there. Nothing at the police-station. Nothing at the cottage hospital. Nothing at the doctor's. It seemed as if the missing junior had vanished into space.

Bedtime came and the juniors went to their dormitories, most of them in a very hushed and subdued mood.

It was late that night before Tom Merry slept.

He was awake and down before rising-bell in the morning. Mr. Railton was already down, but in response to Tom Merry's anxious

inquiry for news, the Housemaster shook his head.

"Not a word, sir?" asked Tom.

"Nothing."

"But—but there must have been an accident, sir."

"It does not seem possible, Merry," said the Housemaster quietly. "News would have reached us before this. We have been in communication with the police at Rylcombe, Wayland, and Abbotsford, and with the hospitals. Nothing has been heard or seen of Talbot. No accident has been known to have happened, even to an unknown person."

Tom Merry looked and felt utterly wretched. He thought he could read behind the Housemaster's frowning face.

"Merry," went on Mr. Railton very quietly, "you have been, I believe, Talbot's closest friend here?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Has he ever said anything, or dropped any hint concerning an intention of leaving the school?"

"Never, sir."

"Has he ever said anything to lead you to suppose that he was in communication with his former acquaintances?"

Tom Merry flushed. He had guessed that was what was coming.

"I know that he has not, sir. I know that he has thrown them over. I think that he has proved that when he gave away that rascal who calls himself the Professor, and who came here calling himself Mr. Packington."

"Quite true, Merry," said the Housemaster, with a nod. "Heaven forbid that I should suspect him without proof! Yet it is scarcely possible to believe that an accident has happened. The facts simply are that he left the school of his own accord, and has not returned. Have you any knowledge, any reason to suppose that his former acquaintances were making any effort to cause him to rejoin them?"

Tom Merry's cheeks crimsoned again.

"Come, Merry!" said Mr. Railton sharply. "I see you are aware of something. At this moment it is your duty to tell me anything you know."

"I suppose I ought to, sir. But it's very

little. Talbot told me last week that he was afraid the Professor had not done with him, and he would try to cause him some harm. He said that he feared the villain would some back. But after that he seemed to be as cheerful as ever, so I concluded that it was all right."

"He was afraid the man would come back!" repeated Mr. Railton. "But this man who was known here as Mr. Packington, and whose real name seems to have been Rivers, could not come back here without being arrested, Merry."

"I suppose he would not have come openly, sir," said Tom. "I had an idea that he would skulk about the neighbourhood secretly, and that Talbot was afraid of hearing from him. He thought the man was still making plans to get him back."

Mr. Railton knitted his brows thoughtfully.

"But Talbot had only to refuse to have anything to do with him, and to denounce him to the police, as he did before. He was under no obligation to treat the man with respect or consideration. If he has reappeared, and Talbot has gone with him, it must have been of his own accord."

"I—I've been thinking, sir, that poor old Talbot may have been collared by those rascals," said Tom diffidently.

The Housemaster started.

"Kidnapped, do you mean?"

"Isn't it possible, sir?"

"It is possible, I suppose," said the Housemaster slowly, "but it is far from probable. How was it, Merry, that Talbot came to be going to Abbotsford alone? Was he not a member of the eleven? A regular member?"

"Yes," said Tom reluctantly.

"If he had gone over with the party, this accident—or whatever it was—could not have happened; not in such a mysterious way, at all events. Why did not Talbot go with the rest?"

"He resigned from the team, sir, and I put another chap in. Then Blake was crooked going over, and I had to wire for him."

"That is very odd. If he was able and willing to play, why did he resign from the team in the first place?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You had had no quarrel?"

"Oh, no! Talbot simply said he didn't want to go to Abbotsford."

"He gave no reason?"

"No, sir."

"But surely that was very unusual? Did you not question him as to his motives?"

"Well, yes. But he—well, he didn't explain. I don't know why he didn't want to play," said Tom, with an uncomfortable feeling that he was making things worse for his chum instead of better. "He didn't say why. He simply stood out."

"Then it was due to Talbot's own action that he came to be left behind, and that he came over to Abbotsford alone?"

"I—I suppose so."

"Then how can you suggest that he has been kidnapped, Merry, by his old associates? He could not have been kidnapped if he had been with the rest of the party, certainly. And he deliberately kept away from the rest of the party. If he had fallen in, alone, with his old associates, and has gone with them, willingly or not, is it not due entirely to his own action in keeping out of the eleven?"

"I—I suppose it is, sir."

"I am afraid therefore, that that quite abolishes the idea of a kidnapping," said Mr. Railton drily. "Further, is there any proof that when he left here on his bicycle yesterday he really intended to go to Abbotsford at all?"

"Blake passed him about five minutes out of the place, and he was scorching as fast as he could go, sir."

"That is no proof that he did not intend to stop at some place this side of Abbotsford. You say he gave no reason at all for resigning from the eleven?"

"None, sir."

"He did not say that he had another engagement?"

"No, sir."

"Did not you think this very odd?"

"Well, I did, sir, at the time."

"He must have had some reason, Merry. He was, I understand, very keen on football?"

"Keen as mustard, sir."

"As you lost the match, I suppose Talbot's staying out was bad for your chances?"

"Very bad indeed."

"He knew that, I suppose?"

"Yes, I told him so."

"And yet he persisted in staying behind, although he knew you needed him?"

"Ye-e-es," said Tom Merry reluctantly.

Mr. Railton pursed his lips.

"That will do, Merry. I still hope that it may prove that Talbot has simply met with some accident."

Tom Merry went out into the quadrangle in a state of utter misery and discomfort. He knew very well what was in the Housemaster's mind. Mr. Railton could not help suspecting that Talbot's unaccountable action of the previous day meant that he had some appointment with his old associates. And if he had met them deliberately and of his own accord, the theory of kidnapping was out of the question. If he had gone with them, he must have gone freely, as he was under no compulsion to meet them. He might have gone to Abbotsford with Tom Merry's team, and then all would have been well.

Indeed, into Tom's mind there crept a moment of chilling doubt.

Was it possible that Talbot had yielded to temptation at last—that the persuasion or threats of the Professor had turned him at last back to his old paths?

It was a miserable thought, and Tom drove it angrily from his mind, but, in spite of himself, it would come back to him.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER

In the Hands of the Tempter!

TALBOT opened his eyes. His head was aching, his pulses throbbing.

Where was he?

He looked dimly, dizzily round him. Back into his aching brain came the remembrance of what had happened to him on the road to Abbotsford, the struggle with the Professor and Nobbler, the chloroform, and then a blank.

He was in the hands of his old friends, now his enemies. Marie's fears had been only too well founded. He had smiled at her uneasiness, but he realised now that she had seen more clearly than he.

He was in a small room, lying upon a miserable bed. There was a little window high up in the wall, covered with a strong wire netting, evidently prepared in advance for a captive. Through the window came a dim light—the light of a foggy city.

He did not need to ask where he was—he knew. He remembered that room—a garret in the old building where the Thieves' Club held their meetings. He remembered the building only too well—one of those old, once stately mansions in what had been a fashionable quarter of London two centuries before, now a rookery of poverty and vice. The ground that had once surrounded the old mansion was thick with alleys and narrow lanes, teeming with the half-starved slum population of a great and ill-governed city—Angel Alley, Murderers' Row, and the like.

Well he knew the place in which his earliest years had been passed. In that big building he had been many a time in his early days, when his father—now dead—was the chief of the dangerous gang of forgers, cracksmen, and thieves.

In the alley outside, little Frayne had played and shivered and starved, before Tom Merry had found him there and rescued him, and taken him away to a new life. In this very garret, Talbot remembered, he had studied with his books while his father was below, carousing with the Professor and Hookey Walker, Nobbler, and the rest. It all came strangely back to his dazed mind as he lay on the wretched pallet and gazed about him.

He was a prisoner.

The Professor's blow had fallen, he was in the hands of the thieves once more. Once their associate and leader, now their prisoner.

He rolled off the bed and tried the handle of the door. It was locked on the outside. He crossed to the window, mounted upon a rickety chair, and looked out through the strong wire-netting that made it impossible to think of escape.

There was fog below, and through the fog he caught a glimpse of uneven roofs, filthy chimneys, broken, patched windows. The sight struck him with a chill. Once it had been familiar enough to his eyes, and he had thought

little of it, but there had been a change in his life since then.

At St. Jim's the wide, green playing-fields, the old quad, shaded by ancient elms, the grey old buildings and airy class-rooms, the dusky library, how different his later surroundings had been.

And now he was in his old haunts, thrown back among the wretches who had never been able to escape from them, among the rascals who did not wish to escape from them.

He sat on the bed, striving to collect his thoughts. His head was still buzzing from the drug.

What was the object of his captors? To imprison him, to threaten him until he agreed to rejoin them—to place his peculiar talents at the service of the gang? He knew that that was what the Professor had planned. He set his teeth grimly at the thought.

The Toff, once the prince of cracksmen, was made of sterner stuff than they deemed. Even for the sake of life itself he would never yield. Life! What would life be worth under the old conditions, with everything that made it worth living taken away? To be a cracksmen, a thief, a hunted felon, a new Ishmael, his hand against every man's, and every man's hand against him!

That should never be.

He went to the door again, and struck upon it with his knuckles. He wished to let the Professor know that he had recovered his senses, that he was ready to "have it out." The sooner that was over the better.

A whistle sounded below, and a few minutes later there was the sound of the key turning in the lock. The door opened.

The Professor stepped into the room.

His disguise was gone now, he had no beard, no glasses. He revealed a hard, cold, clean-shaven face, the face of a man still young.

He gave the Toff a nod as he came in. Behind, in the dirty passage, loomed the athletic figure of Nobbler. There was no chance of escape. The Professor closed the door behind him.

"So you've come to, Toff?"

"Yes."

"Sit down, and we'll talk it over."

Talbot sat on the bed. He was still weak

and dizzy. The Professor seated himself on the rickety chair, and took out a cigarette-case. He extended it to Talbot.

The Shell fellow of St. Jim's shook his head.

John Rivers shrugged his shoulders and lighted a cigarette.

"There is nothing to talk about," said Talbot. "You cannot keep me here. I shall get out of this sooner or later. You may as well make up your mind to it, and let me go at once."

"You will not find it so easy to get away," said the Professor coolly. "And there is much to talk about. You are in our hands. You will remain so until you come to your senses. You chose to desert the gang, and you must come back. You have had your fling, that is all over. Now you are here again in your old quarters. Take a sensible view of it, Toff. Did we treat you badly when you were with us?"

Talbot shook his head.

"In this very room," said the Professor, "you were always keen to study, and you remember that I helped you. Your father was keen to take care of your education, at least, to fit you for the part you had to play—a swell mobsman, in brief. And did I not help you? You owe me something, Toff."

"Very little, considering your motives," said Talbot.

"Did we treat you badly? You were a genius in the profession. Even your father did not possess your skill, though they still remember Captain Crowe at Scotland Yard as one of the best cracksmen of his time. You had the touch of a magician for a safe. You were worth a fortune to us. You had nothing to complain of. You never wanted money; you might have had thousands. You did have thousands, only you were fool enough to part with them when you tried this new game—this fool game!"

"It's useless talking," said Talbot. "Money is nothing unless it is earned by honest work. I've learned that since I left you."

The Professor sneered.

"Honest work! Don't be an idiot, Toff! How many of the millionaires in this very city have earned their money by honest work?"

"That is no business of mine," said Talbot.

"Two wrongs don't make a right. Cut it short, Professor; I will never be a thief."

"You use such hard words," smiled the Professor. "A redistributor of wealth, that is a milder term. You know I have not always been in this line. There was a time when I was entitled to the name that is now only a nickname; you know that. I had money in those days. I worked on the stock market. What is the difference between a Stock Exchange speculator and a crackman? I have been both, and for my life I don't see any difference, honestly. You get hold of the other fellow's money without doing any work. The end is the same, the means slightly different. Come to look at it fairly, every man who lives without working is either a beggar or a thief. But there are a good many highly respected gentlemen in this city, Toff, who toil not, neither do they spin, but who live on the fat of the land, all the same. Isn't it so?"

"I suppose so," said Talbot.

"You are dreaming dreams, Toff," went on the Professor persuasively. "What is this honesty you have suddenly grown so particular about? Look from that window, look at the filthy rookeries! The landlords draw rents for those buildings, Toff, from half-starved, wasted wretches—grind out of them all they can pay, Toff, no matter how they slave or steal or starve to get the money; and those landlords are honest and honourable gentlemen. The honourable gentleman who owns the ground this building stands on—he draws thousands, Toff, thousands every year. Does he work for it? Has he, or his father, or his grandfather, ever done a stroke of honest work, ever done anything but waste in extravagance and riotous living the money that other men's hands have earned? Work! You could not insult him more than by suggesting that he or his people have ever worked. Offer him a fair day's wages for a fair day's work, and he would think you were mad. Toff, we've got to take the world as we find it—with thieves in high places, and the whole world run on a system of thievery. We've got to make the best of it. There are two classes in the world, Toff, the looters and looted. I choose to be a looter."

Talbot smiled slightly.

"It's easy enough to talk," he said. "There are lots of rotten things going on, I know that. But a decent fellow's business is to do his little bit to alter it, to make things better. And his business is to begin by being honest himself. That's the first point."

The Professor shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm trying to be patient with you, Toff. I'm pointing out to you that, if you are a crackman, you are in the same position as most millionaires, the same thing under a different name. You will be a thief, but you will be in good company, in honourable and distinguished company. That's good enough for you."

"Not quite."

The mocking expression left the Professor's face, his features hardened.

"You have changed, Toff. You used to see all this as clearly as I do."

"I have changed," said Talbot. "I see more clearly now. Honesty comes first, that's the cardinal point. Let every fellow make up his mind to be honest, and all the evils you have talked about will disappear of their own accord. And the wrongdoing of others is no excuse for one's own wrongdoing. If everybody acted on your principles, Professor, we should all be thieves, and there would be nothing to steal."

The Professor laughed.

"You mean that you have made up your mind, and that nothing that I can say will make any difference?" he asked.

Talbot nodded.

"Then the time comes to use something more than persuasion," said the Professor, his face hardening again. "You are determined to live your new life—a struggle for honesty—as long as you can?"

"All my life," said Talbot.

"It may become impossible to you," said the Professor. "What is your prospect now? They have given you a scholarship at St. Jim's. But when you leave? You hope to slip into some comfortable berth, I suppose, and live in idleness or semi-idleness, while the work of the world is done by others less lucky. Is that much better than stealing?"

"I hope to get a chance to work my way," said Talbot. "I will never touch a penny

that is not fairly earned by my hands or my brain."

"But what if you are forced to leave the school, if you are turned out in disgrace, with the reputation of having fallen back into your old ways?" said the Professor menacingly.

"That will not happen."

"There you make your mistake. That is exactly what is going to happen," said John Rivers coolly. "The first step has

been taken. You have disappeared from the school—of your own accord. If you tell a tale afterwards of kidnapping, who is going to believe you?"

Talbot changed colour a little.

"My friends will believe me," he said.

"You will see. You do not know the whole game yet. You played into my hands yesterday, and I shall take full advantage of it. I was there with the car, hoping to get a chance of nailing you while you were in Abbotsford—at any risk. But chance helped me, and you came alone, and there was no witness to the kidnapping. You did not know how much you helped me, Toff, by staying behind and coming on later by yourself."

Talbot was silent. Marie had, in fact, in

her effort to save him, only thrown him all the more helplessly into the hands of his enemies.

"Now they will suppose at the school that you have gone of your own accord. And when the robbery takes place——"

"The robbery!" said Talbot, with a start.

"Exactly. And when some little article belonging to you, and easily recognisable, is picked up on the scene of the robbery——"

"You—you villain!"

"And still you fail to appear to justify yourself—what then?" asked the Professor, with a sneer. "What will your new companions think?"

"That—that is what you intend?" panted Talbot.

"That is it."

The boy sat silent,

crushed. What could prevent that dastardly scheme from being carried into effect? Only his instant return to St. Jim's, and he was a prisoner.

The Professor watched his working face with grim mockery. He broke the silence at last.

"Make the best of it, Toff. The game's gone against you; you can't play it out. Throw in your lot with us——"

"Never!"



There was a shout as Talbot stepped into the light. "Here he is!" "Talbot!" "The thief!" "He's come back!" There was a rush of feet from all quarters. (See page 320.)

"But it must come—when you are ruined, disgraced, suspected, hunted by the police—"

"Never!"

"How will you live?"

"I will face whatever comes!" said Talbot fiercely. "Death, if you like! But while I live I will live clean!"

"You will have your choice," said the Professor grimly.

He rose to his feet.

Talbot sprang up.

"Nobbler!" called out the Professor, reading the boy's desperate intention in his face.

The muscular ruffian came into the garret instantly. Talbot made a spring for the door. It was desperate, hopeless, and he knew it; but he would not submit tamely. The two men grasped him, and he was flung back on the bed. As he rolled there, Nobbler and the Professor quitted the room, and the key turned in the lock, on the outside.

Talbot sat up dazedly.

There was no chance. He was a prisoner—a helpless prisoner, while his cunning enemy carried out his plans, while his honour was smirched, his reputation lost for ever, his future blackened past hope!

The struggle was over, and he had been beaten. St. Jim's would be closed to him; his closest chums would never believe in him when the Professor's diabolical plot had been carried into effect. It was all over. The unhappy boy let his face fall into his hands, and a sob shook him from head to foot. For the first time, since he had set his feet upon the new path, the Toff's courage failed him.

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER

Sealed Lips!

"I—I want to speak to you!"

Tom Merry stopped, raising his cap, as Marie Rivers came towards him in the quad.

The girl's face was pale, and her eyes had a haunted look. It was easy for Tom to see that "Miss March" had heard of the disappearance of Talbot, and that the news had been a heavy blow to her.

"Yes, Miss March," said Tom. "What is it?"

"Talbot! I have heard! They are saying—what has happened to him?" exclaimed the girl breathlessly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Nobody knows, Miss March. He has simply disappeared—that's all we know so far."

"But—how—how—when? Tell me!"

Tom Merry explained once more what had happened the previous afternoon. Miss March listened to him, breathing hard.

"Then—then he went to Abbotsford—alone?"

"Yes."

"And—and he did not come back?"

"No."

The Little Sister caught her breath. Her face was so pale that Tom Merry thought she was going to faint, and he made a move forward. But Marie controlled herself.

"Why did he go—why did he go?" she murmured. "I—I thought that you went without him! I thought he would stay! Now he has gone—gone!"

A sob checked her.

Tom looked at her curiously.

"Miss March," he exclaimed, "if you know anything about this it will be best to speak up. Do you know why Talbot gave up the match yesterday?"

The Little Sister did not reply, but her eyes fastened on Tom Merry's face with a startled look.

"You see, it looks bad for Talbot now," said Tom. "My idea was that he had been kidnapped, but it does look as if he gave up the match on purpose, so as to get away from the school by himself. He gave no reason for throwing the match over. If you know why he did it—"

"I can tell you nothing," said the girl heavily.

And she turned at once, and hurried back into the Head's garden, towards the sanatorium.

Tom Merry knitted his brows. It was borne in upon his mind more strongly than ever that Miss March, the Little Sister of the Poor, knew something of the Toff's reason for giving up that match. If that reason could be explained, it meant that a weight of suspicion

would be lifted from Talbot. She had said that she could tell him nothing—not that she had nothing to tell. He noted that. Yet, if she could say a word to help Talbot in this strait, why should she leave it unsaid? Her uncontrollable agitation showed how hard hit she was by the happening.

Marie had hurried back into the garden. There, secure from observation, she stopped, under the leafless trees. Her face was white, and the large tears rolled down her pale cheeks.

"My father!" she moaned. "My father! What can I say? How can I help him? But—but he will not dare to injure him. He will not do that."

The thought was her only comfort.

That Talbot had fallen into the Professor's hands was certain; she had no doubt upon that point.

And what could she say?

Confess that she was the cracksman's daughter—that her work as a Little Sister of the Poor was a sham, an imposture to cover the miserable truth?

Even that she would have faced for the Toff's sake.

But it was not only that. There was her father.

Villain as John Rivers was, he was her father. A word uttered to help Talbot was a word to help in the condemnation of her father.

She could tell what she knew—that the Professor had been in Abbotsford the previous day—that she suspected that he had waylaid Talbot and seized him by force. She could tell, even, whether the kidnapped boy had been taken, she had little doubt. And then?

Talbot's rescue might follow, and the clearing of his name. And inevitably the arrest of her father!

That could not be avoided.

To save Talbot the police must be set on the track of John Rivers. Once in the grip of the law he had escaped, but that would not happen again. Arrested, his fate was certain—long years of crime had to be atoned for. A life sentence of penal servitude would be his lot—a fate worse than death. Every man's hand was against him; was his daughter's hand to be raised against him, too?

She knew that it was impossible. Even for Talbot's sake, for the sake of the innocent, she could not give her father to justice.

To send her father to lifelong prison—her father! He deserved his fate, but did not deserve it at her hands. In his way, he was fond of her, and he was her father.

She knew that she could not speak.

Her lips were sealed.

But Talbot—what was to happen to Talbot? That he would refuse to take up the old life, that he would never yield, she knew. What would they do with him? They must let him go at last. But not till, by the Professor's cunning, his good name had been blackened, his career at St. Jim's ruined for ever, his new life made an impossibility. She realised clearly enough that that was the plan. She had her choice to make—to keep silent while the Professor carried out his deadly scheme, or to hand her father over to the law. And that she could never do. The Professor knew that she could never do it, or he would not have run the risk. Her lips were sealed.

But it seemed to Marie that the anguish was greater than she could bear.

And she must bear it in silence. There was no one she could tell; no one who could counsel her.

She tottered rather than walked back to the sanatorium at last. She was late, and Miss Pinch, the head nurse, met her with a severe look, which softened as she saw the girl's white and stricken face.

"You are ill!" she exclaimed. "My dear child, you have been overworking yourself. Go to your room at once."

Marie went to her room. She was glad to be alone—to think. Yet thinking could show no way out of the terrible tangle. Her father or Talbot—one or the other she must desert.

The poor girl moaned aloud as she tried to think it out.

The day passed wearily and anxiously to her. She did not fear for Talbot's personal safety, as his chums did. The Professor and his confederates would not harm him. The Toff was too valuable for that. But she anticipated what was coming—the blow that was to fall

And she could not raise her hand to avert it—she could not speak a word to save the innocent lad whose honour was to be the sacrifice—not without betraying her father to the law he had outraged and defied.

The hours passed on wings of lead.

Miss March did not appear in the sanatorium again that day. When Frayne of the Third inquired for her, he was told that she was over-tired, and was taking a spell off duty. Truly, the Little Sister was in no state to minister to others!

THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER

What Happened in the Night!

WEARILY, too, passed the day to Tom Merry and his friends. There was no news of Talbot.

Lessons were got through somehow. But the thoughts of the chums of St. Jim's were with their missing friend.

Where was Talbot?

That there had been an accident was now known to be impossible. The whole route Talbot had taken to Abbotsford had been carefully searched, and there was no sign of him, or of the bicycle he had taken with him.

He had vanished as completely as though he had melted into thin air.

Was he coming back at all? the juniors wondered. Had he gone freely? Had he been taken by force? Questions there was no answering.

Gore and a good many other fellows were not slow to state their opinions now that the possibility of an accident was definitely cleared away.

The Toff had grown tired of his new life. He was sick of the routine of St. Jim's after the wild excitement of his former life. Sick of the poverty of a scholarship boy, after the wealth and waste he had known as a crackman, he had stayed behind from the match on Wednesday afternoon in order to be free to leave the school unhindered, unquestioned. That was how Gore looked at it, and how more and more fellows looked at it as the day wore away and there came no news of the missing junior.

Even Talbot's best friends were staggered.

Tom Merry and Co. remembered his flushed face, his confusion when he had told them that he wanted to be left behind. They remembered that he had not given a shadow of a reason for his wish.

Had he, even then, had this intention in his mind—to leave St. Jim's quietly after they had departed?

It looked only too probable.

But they clung to their faith in him. They clung to the hope that he would return; that he would be able to explain.

Inspector Skeat had called to see the Head on the subject. He looked very grave, and hummed and hawed. To the doctor's anxious question as to whether he thought a kidnapping possible, he had replied with a shake of the head. His opinion was that the boy was "fed-up" with his new, orderly life and had gone back to his old haunts and associates. Which was really only to be expected, the inspector added.

However, he promised that inquiries should be carefully made. And they were duly made. But the result was nothing.

Talbot was gone, and that was all. He had not left a trace behind. His personal belongings remained at the school, but his bicycle had vanished with him. The inspector hinted very plainly that Dr. Holmes had every reason to be thankful that the schoolboy crackman had gone empty handed. Probably some latent conscience in him prevented him from robbing his benefactor before he went. Certainly he could easily have done so. To the light fingers of the Toff the Head's safe would have offered no difficulties, and the money and securities would have offered him a very valuable plunder to pay his footing among his old friends. Dr. Holmes shook his head decidedly at that. The boy had gone, apparently on his own accord, but he would never go back to dishonesty. Above all, he would never rob the man who had been kindness in itself to him. The inspector had his own opinion about that. His profession did not make him confident in human nature. He hinted that the Head would do well to take special precaution to guard his valuables, a warning that fell on deaf ears.

Tom Merry and Co. had glum looks that

evening. They missed their chum, and they were worried about him. They clung to the belief that he had been kidnapped.

And a fellow like Talbot, plucky, determined, full of resource, was not the kind of fellow to be kept a prisoner long. Lowther pointed out. He would get away, and he would come back, and then he would be cleared of suspicion. Tom Merry tried to think so.

The chums of the School House did not speak much upon the matter. They took no part in the endless discussion upon Talbot's disappearance. What was there to say, except to reiterate their faith in him?

In a gloomy mood they went to bed that night.

Tom Merry slept badly.

In his dreams he seemed to see his old chum a prisoner in the hands of the Professor—bound, confined in some murky cellar in a London slum, threatened and persecuted, but never yielding to the demands of his old confederates.

Tom Merry was tired and pale when the rising bell clanged out and he rose.

The Shell fellows came down.

They had not been long down when they realised that something unusual was "on" in the School House.

Mr. Railton, with a frowning brow, passed them in the passage without a word. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was seen talking in low tones to Darrel. Before breakfast, Inspector Skeat was seen to arrive, and he was immediately shut up with the doctor and Mr. Railton in the Head's study.

"Something's on," said Monty Lowther uneasily. "It must be some news of Talbot."

"Looks like somethin' pwetty sewious," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Let's ask Kildare."

As the juniors came out from breakfast some of them asked Kildare.

"You'll hear all about it pretty soon," said Kildare curtly.

"Is it news of Talbot?" asked Tom Merry.

Kildare looked at him queerly.

"I'm afraid it is," he said.

"But—but—what—"

"You'll know soon."

Kildare strode away. The curiosity of the juniors was at burning point. It was only too clear that something had happened in the night. If there were news of Talbot, why could they not be told.

They went into the form-rooms in mystified and worried mood.

After morning lessons they knew.

The news spread through the school, and Tom Merry and Co. were stricken dumb when they heard it. Levison of the Fourth brought them the news. Levison was looking pale and disturbed himself.

"There was a robbery last night," he said. "The Head's safe was broken in. Luckily there wasn't much in it—about fifty pounds, I hear. But it's gone."

So that was the news.

There had been a burglary in the school. That was the cause of the portentous look they had seen on Inspector Skeat's face.

Later in the day details were known, passing from mouth to mouth.

The Head's safe had been opened by a master hand, evidently, for the lock had not been broken. It was the work of a skilled cracksman. The burglar had gained admittance to the house by clambering over an outhouse and unfastening a window in a box-room. The window had been found unfastened in the morning. And there was a clue—a clue in the hands of the police.

What was the clue?

Tom Merry felt his very heart sicken at the news. A burglary—the night after Talbot had gone! And he had not come back! Had he paid a surreptitious visit to his old school for that purpose?

Tom Merry drove the thought fiercely from his mind.

But the other fellows were discussing it; and there was little division of opinion among them. And even those who doubted could doubt no longer, when it leaked out what was the clue in the hands of the police. A knife had been used to open the box-room window, and the blade had broken, and the broken knife had been dropped there in the dark, and it had been found. It was a penknife. And it was marked with Talbot's initials in the silver handle!

Talbot's knife used to effect an entrance into the house! It was scarcely possible to doubt further. And that was not all. From Talbot's study a number of things had been taken—books and small personal belongings—things of no value whatever to a thief, but of value to the junior himself. That an ordinary burglar would have taken them was impossible to suppose. What would a burglar want with Talbot's cheap little camera, with his lesson-books, and his colour-box?

"But—but—" said Tom Merry. "I—I can't believe it! I can't! It wasn't Talbot, you fellows. I know it wasn't Talbot."

Monty Lowther and Manners were grimly silent. They, too, wanted to believe it wasn't Talbot. But their faith was shaken.

Tom Merry strode away towards the Head's study. He would endure the suspense no more—he felt that he must know the worst.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER

Condemned!

DR. HOLMES received the junior with a very grave face. Mr. Railton was in the study, and he, too, was looking grave and troubled.

"What is it, Merry?"

The Head would have spoken sharply; he was in no mood to be troubled by juniors then. But the white misery in Tom Merry's face touched him to the heart, and his voice was very kindly.

"About—about Talbot, sir. The fellows are say—saying—" Tom Merry choked. "It wasn't Talbot, sir—I know it wasn't!"

"I am afraid there is no doubt, Merry."

"None!" said Mr. Railton.

Tom Merry almost staggered.

The Head, who had been kindness itself to Talbot—Mr. Railton, whose faith in him had been complete—they both believed that he was guilty. They would not have been satisfied without evidence—conclusive evidence. Tom Merry caught at the back of the chair to steady himself.

"I don't believe it, sir. There's some awful mistake, or else a plot of some sort. You remember Talbot was suspected before, and turned out—"

"That is quite a different matter, Merry. Calm yourself, my boy," said the Head kindly. "I understand your feelings—I admire your faith in that unhappy boy. It is a heavy blow to me to know that that faith is misplaced. I see now that I made a mistake in allowing him to come here after his wretched past. I confess it. Yet Heaven knows I had faith in him."

"It can't be true, sir," gasped Tom Merry. "I won't believe it!"

"You must, my boy!" said the Head patiently. "Unfortunately, there is no doubt whatever. I will explain the matter to you, Merry, and you may tell the others, so that there may not be the faintest suspicion that injustice has been done. My safe was robbed last night—opened in a way that showed great skill; and we all know the skill that the unfortunate boy possessed. It was evidently done by somebody with a complete knowledge of the interior of the house. Admittance was gained in the easiest way. There was no alarm—even the alarm in this room was carefully disconnected. A knife, proved to have been in the possession of Talbot, was used to open the box-room window, and was found broken. The boy's own personal possessions have been taken—a camera, some books, a colour box, a pencil-case, and other trifles. Who would want them but Talbot? Who would know where to find them, if wanted, but Talbot? There is no doubt, my boy. A warrant has already been issued for the wretched boy's arrest, and he is being sought for. That is all, Merry."

"Still, I don't believe it, sir. I can't!"

"My poor boy, there is nothing more to be said."

Tom Merry realised that. He staggered rather than walked from the study.

The Head glanced at Mr. Railton.

"It is a heavy blow to the poor lad," he said—"a heavy blow. Talbot seems to have had a gift of inspiring confidence."

"I believed in him," said the Housemaster.

"And I," said the Head, with a sigh. "I can see now that I made a mistake; but who could have believed that that lad's apparent frankness and earnestness could hide so much duplicity?"

Tom Merry went blindly away from the Head's study. Manners and Lowther met him in the passage.

Monty Lowther caught his arm anxiously.

"Well, Tom?"

"Well," said Tom, almost crying with rage and bitterness, "it's all up with poor old Talbot. They believe he's guilty, and there's a warrant out for him."

"And a jolly good thing, too!" exclaimed Gore angrily. "We all know what he did. What's the good of talking rot?"

Tom Merry clenched his fists furiously.

"You cad!"

"Oh, cheese it!" snapped Gore. "Hard words break no bones, and we all know what to think. Why did he slope off like that? How did his penknife come to be found where he used it to open the window? Who'd know about the trick of getting in at the box-room window but Talbot? We've used the window often enough, and Talbot knew it. And who'd want his books and rubbish? A burglar? Rot!"

"Utter rot!" said Kerruish. "I believe in sticking up for a fellow, Tom Merry; but, dash it all, you can't go against positive facts!"

"Give a fellow a chance when you can," said Reilly, with a shake of his head. "But shure this is settled now."

"I can't quite take it in, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus distressfully. "I wefuse to believe that Talbot is a thief. I can't!"

"You know what he was?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, but he dwopped all that."

"I guess he's taken it up again, then."

"It's too howwid to believe!"

But even the loyal Arthur Augustus spoke half-heartedly. The evidence was too strong even for him.

"We're jolly well rid of the cad!" growled Gore. "He had every chance here, and he's an ungrateful beast."

"Shut up!" cried Tom Merry. "I tell you I won't stand it! Talbot's not a thief—I believe in him, and I stick to him. And I won't hear a word against him from anybody."

"Yes, let it drop, anyway," said Blake, uneasily. "No good running a fellow down.

If he's done it, he's got to pay pretty dear for it; and we shall never see him again, any way."

"So you believe it, too?" exclaimed Tom.

Blake was silent.

"And you, D'Arcy?"

"I—I don't know what to believe, deah boy," muttered the swell of St. Jim's miserably; "it looks fwrightfully bad."

"It looks what it is—a cert," said Mellish of the Fourth. "Even Levison believed it against him. Didn't you, Levison?"

Levison flushed uncomfortably.

"I—I haven't said so," he muttered. "I don't know what to think. I'd never have believed it, only—only—" He broke off. "I know Talbot helped me out of a tight corner once, like a thoroughly decent chap, and whether he's guilty or not I'm not going to say a word against him."

"Quite wight, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Well I'm going to say a word against him, and a good many words, and as many as I like!" exclaimed Gore violently. "I think it's like Tom Merry's cheek to stand up for a convicted thief—"

Smack!

"Oh, you rotter!" roared Gore, as Tom Merry's open palm came across his face with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"If you want any more, you've only got to repeat your words," said Tom Merry, clenching his teeth.

"I'll jolly well repeat them as loud as I like!" shouted Gore. "Talbot's a thief. A convicted thief, and— Oh! Yah! Would you?"

The next moment they were fighting furiously.

"Cave!" muttered Reilly, as Mr. Railton came striding down the passage from the Head's study.

"What is this?" exclaimed the House-master angrily. "Merry! Gore! Cease this instantly! How dare you! What is all this about?"

"Tom Merry standing up for that thief!" panted Gore, as he separated from his opponent breathlessly, with a flushed face. "He—"

"Merry !"

"He called Talbot a thief," said Tom Merry fiercely.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Talbot is a thief," he said coldly. "If you are going to quarrel with everyone who thinks so, Merry, you will find yourself in trouble. Go to your study immediately."

Tom Merry turned away without a word. Mr. Railton had repeated Gore's words, but it was scarcely possible to quarrel with the Housemaster. But Tom Merry's heart was burning with rage and hopeless resentment. He could not, he would not, believe that Talbot of the Shell had deceived him—he never would believe it unless his chum confessed it with his own lips.

Manners and Lowther followed him gloomily into the study.

"No good getting your back up, Tommy," said Lowther. "You can't fight the whole school and the giddy Housemaster, you know."

Tom Merry panted.

"Do you believe it about Talbot?" he exclaimed.

"And you're not going to fight me, Tommy," said Lowther very quietly. "Keep your wool on, my child."

Tom Merry gave him a fierce look for a moment; he was almost ready to fight his oldest and best chum at that moment. But the anger passed, and he flung himself into a chair, his face a picture of misery.

Manners and Lowther eyed him uncomfortably. They had never seen Tom Merry "blub," and they were almost scared to see two tears roll down his cheeks now.

"Tommy, old man——" murmured Manners.

Tom Merry choked.

"I—I say, Tom," muttered Lowther, "I—I believe the same as you do, you know. I—I—I do, really. I back up old Talbot."

"Same here," said Manners. "Pull yourself together, Tom, old chap. We three 'll stick to him against the whole school."

Tom Merry did not speak. They would stick to him.

But what use would that be to Talbot—disgraced, shamed, hunted, lost ?

FREE !

Talbot could scarcely believe it as the bitter wind blew in his face in the foggy, misty street.

Free !

What did it mean ?

For four days he had been a prisoner in the old rookery behind Angel Alley. He had been guarded—watched. Always the Professor and Nobbler had come together when his food was brought, lest he should make an attempt to escape. Always the door had been locked and bolted upon him. Then suddenly his imprisonment had ceased. The door had been left unlocked. He had tried it, and found it open to his hand.

The house had been deserted. No one had stopped him, no one had appeared as he stole cautiously down the stairs and made his way into the street.

He was free !

What did it mean ? He asked himself that question with a throbbing heart. For he knew that this was no carelessness on the part of his captors. The Professor was not a man to make mistakes of that kind. Had the cracksmen given up in despair the hope of inducing him to join the old gang ? Had he abandoned the attempt and left the Toff his liberty ? Caring only to be rid of him without further trouble ?

It was possible, but it was not likely. It was far more likely that the Professor was serving his scheme in thus allowing the Toff to go free ; that it was all part of the cunning scheme. How ? Did it mean that John Rivers had been at work at the school—that Talbot's name was already so blackened there that his return could not help him ; that he would go back there only to meet with contempt and condemnation ?

Talbot felt that that was the probable explanation. As a recalcitrant prisoner he was useless to the gang. But if he were turned out of St. Jim's, if he found himself once more an outcast, despised, avoided, hunted, perhaps then the Professor might calculate that the Toff would fall into his hands an easy prey.

Where would he turn for help—for bread? In the bitterness of the injustice, would he not turn back to his old associates as the only resource left to him?

What was awaiting him at St. Jim's?

Talbot shivered as he thought of the possibilities. But he must get there at once, whatever reception awaited him. He must know the truth. He must explain. He must protest his innocence. He would convince them somehow. At all events, he would not give up hope while a gleam of hope remained. He felt only too bitterly that the Professor would not have allowed him his liberty until it was no longer of use to him. But he would try.

He tramped through the dim streets of the city. The hour was late. He had no money. That had been taken from him while he was unconscious, with all his other belongings except his clothes. It was bitterly cold, but the junior hardly felt it as he strode rapidly along. The mere exercise was a boon to him after his long inactivity. He must get to St. Jim's. That was his only thought now.

He tramped on through the night, leaving Angel Alley and the Rookery further and further behind, safe from pursuit, safe from recapture.

Through the silent streets, dimly lighted, lowering with fog, he tramped on, till the city and the suburbs were left behind, and the grey dawn rising found him tramp-

ing on still through wide country spaces. He had far to go, and he had only himself to depend upon. He had a few crusts in his pocket, saved from his last meal in the garret, and no possibility of obtaining other food, unless he should steal. Was that the Professor's hope—that sheer hunger would drive him from the path he had marked out for himself?

Talbot set his teeth. Better to fall fainting by the roadside, better to die in a ditch, than to touch anything that was not his own! He had fought too hard for his honour to give it up at last.

Through the bitter winter morning he was tramping still, fatigued now, but still determined. Only one thought was in his mind—to get back to St. Jim's. If his strength held out till then that was enough. And if the doors were closed in his face, if his old friends deserted him—then death would not come too soon.

Afterwards he hardly knew how that day passed.

Weary; wearing tramping; lifts in market-carts; once a lift on a long stretch of road by a kindly motorist—somehow the ground was covered. But the early winter night was closing in when he drew near at last to the old school.

Footsore, weary, he stood at last outside the gates of St. Jim's.

There he paused.

The gates were closed, and he hesitated to ring the bell. What was to be his reception—



A glimmering match showed in the darkness, and Tom Merry caught a glimpse of a white face in the dark doorway of the old barn. "Talbot!" he exclaimed. "Thank goodness I've found you!" (See page 323.)

what was it the cunning of his enemy had prepared for him ?

He must know. He rang the bell at last.

Taggles, the porter, came down to the gates, lantern in hand. He almost dropped the lantern as he peered through the bars of the gates and made out Talbot's face in the cold winter night.

"Master Talbot !"

"Open the gate," said Talbot faintly.

"You'd better get off," said Taggles, hesitating, and wondering whether it was his duty to ring up the police. But he always liked Talbot. The boy had always been kind and considerate to the school porter, and he felt that he would give him a chance. "You cut off !" he whispered, through the gate.

"Let me in !"

"But—but they're arter you !" whispered Taggles.

Talbot looked at him with dull eyes.

"After me ! Who are after me ?"

"The perlice !"

Talbot shuddered.

"Let me in, Taggles ! I must see the Head."

Taggles opened the gate at last. He had done his best. Talbot staggered in, and the porter did not fasten the gate again.

"Which you've done very badly, Master Talbot," he muttered. "But—but this 'ere gate's open for a bit—you understand ?"

And the worthy Taggles disappeared into his lodge without waiting for a reply.

Talbot did not heed him. He dragged his weary limbs on towards the School House. The windows blazed with lights into the dim mist of the quadrangle.

How long was it since he had been there, a cheery schoolboy, among his chums ? Five days. It seemed like years. With an inward shudder the unfortunate boy felt that he had broken with his life there—that things could never be the same again with him. He felt that he and St. Jim's were parted—that between the cheery lad who had started out to cycle to Abbotsford and the haggard, weary tramp who returned there was a great gulf fixed.

But he kept on.

He dragged himself up to the steps of the School House. The great door was open, and

the hall dazzling with light. Talbot blinked in the light, momentarily blinded. He stepped into the light. There was a shout.

"Here he is !"

"Talbot !"

"The thief !"

"He's come back !"

There was a rush of feet from all quarters. Fellows gathered round him in a crowd. But no welcoming hand was stretched out, no kindly glances met him. Contempt, dislike, scorn, mingled with surprise—that was all there was to meet him !

Talbot looked at the sea of faces with haggard eyes.

"Blake—Levison——" he muttered.

"So you've come back !" shouted Gore, with a mocking laugh. "Come back, by gum ! Forgotten something you meant to steal ?"

"Cut off !" said Blake hurriedly. "What have you come back for, Talbot ? Are you mad ? Cut off ! The Head's coming—Talbot——"

"What have I done ?"

"Talbot !" It was the Head. He swept towards the white-faced junior, his brows contracted, his eyes flashing. Never had the St. Jim's fellows seen their headmaster look so angry and indignant. "Wretched boy ! You—you here ? You dare to come here ?"

Talbot panted.

"What have I done ? What——"

There was a shout on the stairs. Tom Merry had been in his study. He came tearing down the staircase, his face lighted up.

"Talbot, old man ! You've come back ? I knew you would ! I knew——"

"Merry !" thundered the Head. "Stand back !"

"But—but, sir——"

"Silence ! Do not dare to approach that wretched boy ! I forbid you to touch him—to speak to him !"

Talbot staggered. It was the worst he could have anticipated. It was worse than the blackest of his anticipations. What had he done ? What was he supposed to have done ?

Tom Merry had paused. Monty Lowther and Manners caught him and pulled him back, or at that moment he might have defied even the orders of the Head.

Dr. Holmes fixed his eyes upon the junior who had returned, and he raised his hand, trembling with anger and indignation, and pointed to the door.

"Go!" he said.

"What have I done, sir?"

"Have you come back here to attempt to brazen it out? Have you no shame—no sense of decency?" thundered the Head. "Have you left your criminal associates to make one more attempt to impose yourself upon my confidence? Go! I warn you that I shall immediately telephone to the police! You have no time to lose! Go!"

"What have I done?" Talbot panted again, his eyes growing almost wild. "I—I have been kidnapped, sir! I have been kept a prisoner. I—I—"

"Do not tell me falsehoods, boy! I repeat that you cannot deceive me now. I am not to be imposed upon a second time," said the Head bitterly. "You have taken advantage of my trust and betrayed it. You have robbed your benefactor. You have disgraced your school. Even at this moment the police are seeking for you. Unless you wish to add more shame to your villainy by being arrested within the walls of your school, you will go at once!"

Almost stunned by the torrent of words that struck him like lashes of a whip, the unhappy boy turned blindly and obeyed. He was condemned—condemned past hope. With heavy, dragging feet he passed out into the quadrangle, out into the darkness, into the winter night. The great door swung to, and closed, and shut off the light behind him—and, with the light, hope!

He went blindly down to the gates. It was all over. He was an outcast once more; driven into the darkness. He groaned aloud in bitterness of spirit. So this was the end of his struggle; this was the outcome of his fight for the right! What remained for him now—what but the old life? He was adjudged guilty—but of what?—guilty and condemned unheard. And not a friend there to raise a voice for him. Deserted by all, what was there left for him but to throw up the useless struggle and succumb to his fate?

There was a hurried step in the dusky quad.

A panting voice: "Talbot! Talbot!"

It was Tom Merry.

He gripped Talbot's cold, nerveless hand.

"Talbot! Don't think that I believe it, old chap! I trust you! I believe in you always!"

A new light came into Talbot's face.

"You, Tom! But—Heaven help me!—tell me—what has happened?"

Tom Merry told him in hurried, broken sentences. Talbot groaned as he listened. Too well he realised how cunningly the plot had been laid, how cunningly it had been carried out.

"I am innocent, Tom!"

"I know you are, Talbot. I will stake my life on it. You—you must go. They are telephoning to the police. But—but I will work for you, fight for you! I will find out the truth, somehow! You shall come back!"

Talbot shook his head. Hope was dead in his breast. But the faith of his chum had given him new courage—new life. While Tom Merry believed in him he would have the strength to fight his way, to resist temptation. The faith of one loyal chum meant everything to him at that fearful moment.

"Good-bye, Tom! Heaven bless you! Believe in me; that's all I ask of you now. That will help me. Good-bye—good-bye! The best pal a chap ever had!"

Tom, blind with tears, watched him as he passed through the gateway. He could not speak. His voice was choked with sobs.

"Good-bye!" whispered Talbot.

He was gone.

His footsteps echoed on the frosty road—echoed for a few minutes and died away.

Tom Merry listened and then turned away with a groan. The footsteps of the outcast were lost in the silence of the night.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER

One True Chum!

TOM MERRY was very silent when the Shell fellows came up to their dormitory. The rest of the juniors were in a buzz of talk.

Talbot's unexpected and dramatic return to St. Jim's, and his crushing reception, formed the sole topic. Gore declared loudly

that it was like his thumping cheek to come back; and Crooke remarked that the Head ought to have detained him and telephoned for the police.

Tom Merry said nothing. He was feeling miserable and subdued. He felt he was "up against" what all the other fellows regarded as indisputable facts. It was useless—worse than useless—to rag every fellow who made disparaging remarks about his former chum. He would soon have found himself fighting his old friends one after another.

Yet his inward faith and determination did not waver. His belief in Talbot was founded as upon a rock.

He went to bed, but not to sleep. After Kildare had put out the light in the Shell dormitory there was a buzz of talk from bed to bed, and it was all upon the same subject—the Toff, and his unexpected return to St. Jim's, his yarn that he had been kidnapped, and speculations as to whether he would succeed in escaping the police.

It was no wonder, under the circumstances, that Talbot should never be heard of again at St. Jim's—that he should be forgotten there.

But Tom Merry could not forget. As he lay sleepless in bed, he thought of the unhappy junior, who had gone forth alone, friendless in the night, to face a bitter struggle. He should not want for a friend if Tom Merry could help him.

Manners and Lowther were helpless, too. They were wondering uneasily what Tom Merry intended to do. That he had some plan in his mind they were certain. And if he sought to find and help his old chum there was expulsion from the school hanging over his head. Dr. Holmes had given him warning.

Monty Lowther sat up in bed as he heard the captain of the Shell moving. Tom Merry was slipping out of bed a quarter of an hour after Kildare had gone.

"Tom!" said Lowther softly.

"It's all right, Monty!"

"Where are you going?"

"Out."

"But, Tom——"

"No good talking, Monty. I think I shall find him. I shall try, anyway. I'm going to help him if I can."

"Oh, Tom, think of the risk!"

"He wouldn't think of the risk if I needed his help," said Tom.

"I'll come with you," said Lowther.

He knew it was useless to argue.

"No good, Monty. If there's anything to be done, I can do it, and you couldn't help. It's all right."

"Hallo! What's that mumbling about?" came a drowsy voice from Noble's bed.

"Who's that going out?" asked Gore.

"Mind your own business!" said Lowther.

"Going out to look for that rotter—what?" sneered Gore. "Well, serve you jolly well right if a prefect nails you!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Manners.

Tom Merry took no notice of Gore. He dressed himself and slipped quietly from the dormitory, leaving his chums in a very anxious state of mind. They did not insist upon accompanying him; one fellow was less likely to be spotted than three. He was safer alone.

Tom was in a reckless mood, in a way—he was facing a great risk and he knew it. If the Head learned of his escapade his wrath would be great, and Tom knew what to expect. But he was careful.

He took his boots in his hand, and crept softly away down the dark passage. In the box-room he stopped to put on his boots, and then climbed from the window, over the out-house, to the ground. There was a bitter wind outside, a slight drizzle of rain. Tom Merry cut across in the shadows to the school wall, and in a few minutes he dropped into the road.

Talbot had tramped away in the direction of Rylcombe. Tom knew that, and he hurried in the same direction. It was two hours since the disgraced junior, cast out from school, had gone.

Was there a chance of finding him yet? If he had gone away at once there was no chance. But Tom Merry remembered how footsore and weary the junior had been. All the previous day he had spent in tramping from London. He had been at the end of his tether when he had reached St. Jim's. It was not likely that he had gone. He would have to rest before he could recommence his weary tramp back to the city. He could not go to the

station, even if he had money; for he knew that the police were looking for him, to show himself in public meant arrest.

Where was he likely to be?

Sheltering in some spot from the drizzling rain, waiting for dawn before he resumed his weary tramp, that was most likely.

Now that he was outside the school walls Tom realised the difficulty, the almost hopelessness, of the task he had set himself. But it was some comfort to be trying to help his chum; better than lying in a warm bed while Talbot was facing the cold night.

He tramped down the lane towards Rylcombe, his collar turned up, his head bent towards the wind. He paused as he reached the stile in the lane.

Which way had Talbot gone?

Probably not through the village, where he would have been seen and recognised. By the footpath, perhaps, towards the moor, through the dank, dark wood.

A sudden thought came to Tom Merry's mind, and he sent forth a shrill, echoing call—the call of the Curlew. Talbot had belonged to the Curlew Patrol when he was at St. Jim's. If he were within hearing, he would recognise the signal of the Scouts.

Was he near, or was he, perhaps, miles away on the road to London?

Again and again Tom Merry sent out that call through the silence of the night.

He gave a sudden start as an echoing call came back at last—but it was not an echo this time. It was the Scout signal!

Tom's face lighted up.

"He is still here!" he muttered joyfully.

The Curlew call came ringing eerily over the dark wet fields. Tom Merry remembered the old barn in the field, a hundred yards from the hedge. He plunged through a gap in the hedge, and tramped across the sodden grass. The call came again—it came from the old barn. It was there that Talbot had taken shelter.

A glimmering match showed in the darkness. Tom Merry caught a glimpse of a white face in the dark doorway of the old barn.

"Tom Merry!"

"Thank goodness I've found you, Talbot!"

"Tom!" repeated Talbot, in amazement.

In the light of the glimmering match his handsome face showed pale and worn and troubled.

Tom Merry came into the old barn. Through the doorway fell a faint glimmer of starlight through the drizzling rain; he could dimly make out the form of his chum in the gloom.

"I—I thought you mightn't be gone," said Tom Merry breathlessly. "I came out to see if I could find you, old chap."

"It's good of you, Tom. I'm dead beat," said Talbot. "I couldn't have tramped much farther, and in the rain. I got in here to get some rest and shelter. There's straw here. I was trying to sleep when I heard your signal. I couldn't understand it at first, then I guessed and answered it. Tom, why have you run this risk? You'll get into a fearful row if they—"

"That's all right," said Tom. "Nobody knows I'm out; they won't know. I shall get back all serene. I had to see you again, Talbot. What are you going to do?"

"Get away from here as soon as it's light," said Talbot quietly. "I mustn't be seen about here where I'm known by sight. I shall start tramping at dawn, and I shall be safe enough. It will be quite like old times," he laughed bitterly. "Dodging the police! I had thought that was done with. The Toff has come to light again; Talbot of the Shell is dead and done with."

Tom Merry felt a throb in his heart. This was what he had feared—this reckless, desperate mood, which might throw his chum back into his old ways, into the hands of rascals who had plotted to drive him back into crime.

"That's what I was thinking of, Talbot," he said. "I—I want to speak to you about that. I—we—we're going to do what we can to find out the truth, to clear you. It must be possible; somehow we shall manage it."

Talbot did not answer. His silence told eloquently enough that hope was dead in his breast.

"But at the worst, Talbot, you mustn't think of letting those villains have their way," whispered Tom. "The truth must come out some day, and then you will be cleared. But—but if you should fall back, then it would be

useless to clear you. At any price, you've got to stick it out, old chap."

"You needn't be afraid, Tom. I shall never see the Professor again. I shall not go back to the Rockery in Angel Alley. I am going to earn my bread honestly or starve."

"I knew it, old chap, but—but I was afraid. I know you mean it."

"Honour bright, Tom!"

"But what are you going to do? You've got no money?"

"No. They cleared me out when they collared me," said Talbot. "The Professor thinks I shall have no resource but to go back to the gang. He doesn't know me. Resource, or no resource, I shall not go back."

"That's what I thought, Talbot. And I've brought something for you," said Tom.

Talbot started back.

"No," he said.

"But, old chap—"

"I can't Tom!"

"You must," said Tom. "I've put together all the tin I could raise, and I've brought it here. It isn't much—a couple of pounds. But it will keep you from starving at first. And I've got a bundle of sandwiches. And you are going to take my coat. You've got no coat. You must be frozen."

"Tom," said Talbot huskily.

"Don't think of refusing, old chap, this is hard enough for me as it is," said Tom. "Don't make it worse for me. Let me do a little if I can."

There was a short silence.

"Very well," said Talbot at last, "I won't refuse. You're a good pal. If I'd known you years ago all this mightn't have happened. But I suppose it was to be."

Tom Merry slipped off his coat with the money and the sandwiches in the pockets. He put it on Talbot, and as he did so he could feel the boy shivering. It was all he could do, and it was little enough. But the proof of loyal friendship was worth much to Talbot in that dark hour. So long as there was one loyal chum who believed in him and trusted him, he felt that he could face the hard fate before him with courage, strengthened by Tom Merry's faith in him.

"Now you must go," whispered Talbot.

"You're running a fearful risk for me. If the Head knew—"

"You must let me know how you get on," said Tom. "You must send me news somehow. You can't write to the school, that's forbidden. But—but you must let me hear from you sometimes, Talbot."

"I'll try, Tom. There's one other thing. Have you?"—Talbot's voice faltered—"have you seen Marie—I mean Miss March—lately—the nurse, you know?"

"She isn't well," said Tom. "She's not on duty in the sanatorium now. I haven't seen her for a day or two."

Talbot groaned.

"Poor Marie! Tom, when you see her, tell her that you've seen me, that I'm safe, and that I'm all right. You will?"

"Yes," said Tom.

"That's all I can tell you about her," said Talbot, his face flushing in the darkness. "But—but she will be troubled about this. I want her to know that I'm safe. That's all, Tom."

"I'll tell her," said Tom.

A few more words, a grip of the hand, and Tom Merry was gone. He tramped back to the school sad, but his heart lighter. In the old barn the outcast threw himself into the straw to sleep if he could. But his heart, too, was lighter, his courage was higher, for he felt that so long as there was a faithful pal who stood by him and trusted him the future, dark as it looked, held at least a ray of hope.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER

The Crackman's Daughter

"**B**AI JOVE! It's the inspectah!"

It was the morning at St. Jim's. A crowd of juniors had come out of the School House, when the stolid figure of Inspector Skeat of Rylcombe was seen crossing the quad. He passed into the House.

"It's about Talbot, I suppose," said Blake. "They telephoned that he had come back here, and the giddy inspector is after information. I—I hope that they won't get at him."

Arthur Augustus nodded thoughtfully.

"Yaas, I hope they won't," he agreed.

"He has acted vewy wottenly; but, consider-win' all the cires, I twust that the poor bwute will get away."

"Same here," said Herries. "It's a beastly surprise, Talbot turning out like that. But, of course, there can't be any doubt now."

"Of course there can't," said Digby. "I'm blest if I can understand Tom Merry. He don't seem to know what evidence is."

"I am afwaid Tom Mewwy is wathah an ass!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "It is quite touchin', the way he sticks to Talbot, considewin'— Heah he is!"

The Terrible Three came out of the School-house. Tom Merry had been the last down, for once. He was tired from want of sleep. He had returned to the Shell dormitory the previous night without discovery, but at a very late hour, and little sleep had visited his eyes after he had got to bed.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down upon the captain of the Shell with a somewhat hesitating manner. Tom Merry's look was grim.

"Good-mornin', deah boys!" began Arthur Augustus.

"Morning!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Pway don't be watty, deah boy!" said the swell of St. Jim's pacifically. "I have considered the mattah, and I considah I owe you an apology."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom.

Arthur Augustus coloured. It was not a very encouraging reception.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Tom.

"Ahem! Undah the cires, I feel it is due to myself to pwofiah an apology," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I do not agwee with yoah vewy wemarkable opinion, but I admit you have a wight to think as you like, and I am sowwy I made a wemark in yoah studay which was somewhat wantin' in tact. That's all. Fwom one gentleman to anothah, I pwesume that an apology sets the mattah wight."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You're a good little ass, Gussy!"

"Weally, I object to bein' descwibed as a good little ass! Howevah, I will let the mattah dwop, makin' allowance for yoah

state of feelin's," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

Tom Merry walked away with his companions. His brow was moody. He had seen the inspector enter the House, and he knew what it meant. Mr. Skeat was very anxious to lay hands on Talbot. Probably he never believed in the Toff's reformation, and he was expecting something of this kind.

"He won't get Talbot," said Monty Lowther. "He'll have sense enough to clear off and put a good distance between himself and this place, Tom."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, I think very likely he'll keep clear of that," he said. "But—but suppose he does keep free, that isn't all. He's got to be cleared. How's that going to be done?"

Lowther gave a hopeless shrug of his shoulders.

"Blessed if I can see, Tom! What can we do?"

"He was suspected before," said Tom, "and he was cleared."

"That was different. If it wasn't Talbot who cracked the Head's safe last night, it's some cracksmen who's not likely to come near St. Jim's again."

"Not likely!" said Manners.

"I don't know," said Tom. "Look here. There was fifty pounds taken from the Head's safe. There's often more money in it than that. The rotter, whoever he was, made a very poor haul. He might try again for something better. It's clear he's a man who knows the ins and outs of the place."

Lowther and Manners were silent. The fact that the thief was someone who knew the ins and outs of the place was another point against Talbot.

"I'm going to think it out," said Tom. "Something's got to be done. I'll never rest while Talbot is down and out."

"You can depend on us if there's anything to be done," said Manners. "But I'm blest if I can see anything that can be done, myself!"

The Shell fellows went into their classroom. Tom Merry forced himself to work—he had no choice about it under Mr. Linton's keen eye—but his thoughts were with his

absent chum, tramping wearily through the country side, almost penniless, friendless, and alone.

After morning lessons, Tom went out into the quad by himself. He remembered Talbot's message for Miss March, the Little Sister of the Poor, and he hoped to see her. He knew that she often walked in the Head's garden, which was overlooked by the school sanatorium. He was not disappointed. Under the leafless trees, he caught a glimpse of a graceful figure, pacing to and fro. The Head's garden was "taboo" to juniors, but Tom Merry did not hesitate. He vaulted over the gate and approached the girl. Miss March was looking pale.

Tom Merry raised his cap. The girl looked at him eagerly.

"I have heard," she said, before Tom Merry could speak. "He came back last night—Talbot."

"Yes," said Tom.

"Where is he now?"

Tom Merry told her quietly of the meeting in the barn. He could see the signs of suffering in the girl's face, and he wondered why she should care so much about Talbot. He knew nothing of the secret history of the cracksman's daughter, or that she had known the Toff in the old days, before he came to St. Jim's. That Miss March, the Little Sister of the Poor, was the daughter of John Rivers, the Professor, was a secret Talbot had never confided to his chums.

"Then he is safe, at least?" said the girl at last.

"I think so. I hope so," said Tom.

"And everyone believes that he is guilty?"

"Not everyone," said Tom quietly. "I believe that he is innocent, Miss March. I am sure of it, and I'm going to try and do what I can to prove it."

"What can you do?"

"I have to think that out. The scoundrel who robbed the Head's safe has got to be found!" said Tom, between his teeth.

The girl grew very pale.

"You are not well," said Tom, making a quick movement towards her.

It seemed for a moment that she would fall, but she recovered herself quickly.

"No, no; I'm all right! It is nothing! You—you think that—that the man can be found—the man who committed the robbery?"

"I hope so. He's got to be found. And I know who it is, too!"

The girl gave a cry.

"You know! How can you know?"

"I will explain. Before you came here, Miss March, there was a man here, a rascal who passed off on the Head as Mr. Packington, a science master. Talbot found out that he was really a cracksman, called the Professor among his associates. He was arrested, but he escaped. I know that after that Talbot expected to hear something more of him. The Professor was a member of the gang Talbot belonged to in the old days. You know his story?"

The girl nodded, with a faint smile. She knew the story of the Toff only too well—better than Tom Merry did. She wondered what the eager junior would have thought if he had known it was the daughter of the Professor he was speaking to, but Tom Merry had no suspicion of that.

"Well, this is my idea of it," said Tom. "Talbot was kidnapped by the Professor—the villain's name is John Rivers—and he tried to make Talbot join him again. Of course, he wouldn't. Then I am certain the Professor carried out the robbery here. Having been here as a master for a short time, he knew the place perfectly well, of course. He not only robbed the Head's safe, but left Talbot's penknife where the window had been forced. He took some small things that belonged to Talbot. All those idiots, including the Head, take that as proof that it was Talbot who did it. But I am quite sure that it was the Professor, and he did it especially to make suspicion fall on Talbot."

"Oh, no—no! I can't believe that!"

"You don't know what a cunning villain he is!" said Tom, unconscious that every word he uttered was like a dagger to the heart of the girl listening to him. "His aim was to force Talbot back into his old ways. That was the way he did it. Having made it appear that Talbot had committed the robbery, he let his prisoner go, and poor old Talbot came back to here, to find himself condemned,

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER

The Professor is Disappointed

unheard. Now he calculates, of course, that Talbot will make the best of it by going back to the gang. But he doesn't know him. Talbot will starve first. And somehow or other I'm going to prove what I know to be true. I don't know how yet, but it's got to be done. As soon as that scoundrel Rivers is arrested the truth will come out!"

"And not till then?" faltered the girl.

"Not till then, I suppose. But he may come back here for another haul. I hope he will."

The look on Tom Merry's face made the girl shiver. It was upon her lips to cry out: "He is my father!" But she checked herself; that miserable secret had to remain a secret. And it would have made no difference to Tom Merry. Whoever should suffer, the truth should come out to light if he could contrive it.

Miss March made a sign of adieu, and moved away slowly and heavily towards the house. In her own room she drew out a letter—a letter she had received that morning. It was in the hand of John Rivers, the cracksmen.

"I must see you. I shall wait at eight o'clock by the boat-house.—Your FATHER."

If Tom Merry had only known!

DARKNESS had fallen upon St. Jim's.

There was a powdering of snow upon the walls and trees. The Ryll, which bubbled and sang among the green rushes in the summer days, was frozen hard and silent. The boat-house was deserted, buried in gloom. Close by the shadowy building a dim figure moved to and fro, wrapped in a heavy over-

coat, muttering words of impatience.

A light step came along the path from the school, and the man waiting by the boathouse started.

"Marie!"

"Father!"

"You have not been seen to come?" muttered the man, peering at her in the gloom, dimly revealing a hard, cold face and

glinting eyes. "Answer me that question."

Marie shook her head.

"I was careful," she said. "I have the key to the gate, father. Why have you come here?"

John Rivers smiled.

"It is some time since I have seen you, Marie. And I want news—news that you can tell me. What of the Toff? He came back?"

"He came back," said Marie.

"And now?"



Miss Marie made as if to speak, but she closed her lips tightly. The look on Tom Merry's face made her shiver. The miserable secret had to remain a secret. (See this page.)

"Now he is gone," said the girl dully. "He came back, to find himself in danger. He has gone, and I have not seen him."

The Professor rubbed his hands.

"Good! It has gone exactly as it should have gone. The young fool, to pit his brains against mine! Now all will be well, Marie. There is no need for you to stay longer at the school. Do not leave in a hurry. You must not excite suspicion. But the Little Sister of the Poor can find work in other directions now."

He laughed again. The Professor had cause for satisfaction.

"You must be growing tired of it, Marie. You will be glad to come back to the old life—with the Toff, too—what?"

"Talbot will not be one of us," said Marie.

"Where will he be?" sneered the Professor. "He must come back! Only with his old friends can he find bread to keep him in life—even in safety. He must come to us. Everything will be as it used to be, Marie, before he took this idea into his head to lead a new life."

"It will never be, father. I have learned that much. The Toff changed from his ways, and ours, but he will never change back to us. He will never change again!"

"I do not believe it! He must join us, or starve!"

"He will starve, then!"

"Bah!" The Professor gritted his teeth. Perhaps he felt an inward doubt himself. "If he is an obstinate fool, then let him starve. Let him die in a corner in disgrace! That will be his punishment for deserting us! If he will not come back, he will suffer for it, and we can do without him."

The Professor looked sharply and inquiringly at the girl's pale face.

"What is in your mind?" he exclaimed roughly. "Why do you not speak?"

"Father"—Marie spoke with an effort—"it can never be as it used to be. I cannot go back to it any more than the Toff. I have changed, too."

The Professor muttered an oath.

"You, also? You wish to desert me?"

"I cannot go back to that," said Marie. "I did not think before. I knew only what

you had taught me. But since—since, father, it is impossible. That life is finished for me. I have changed, too. Honesty——"

"So this is the Toff's work!" said the Professor bitterly. "Instead of leading him back to us, Marie, you have let him lead you away from us!"

The girl was silent.

"And what will you do?" said her father. "What will you live on? Have you thought of that?"

"I am a good nurse, and I have been offered a permanent place here in the sanatorium," said Marie.

"And you wish to stay?"

"Yes."

"To desert me?"

"I will not desert you, father. I want you to think—to think it over, and—to do as the Toff has done, as I have done. It is not too late."

"Don't preach to me!" said the cracksmen savagely. "I was not born to be a poor man. Give me honesty and five thousand a year, and I will be as honest as the day. Until that time I will remain what I am—and you will help me, Marie."

"I will never help you again in dishonesty," said the girl quietly. "I have thought it over. I cannot."

"Have you forgotten that I am your father?" exclaimed the Professor, as much surprised as enraged at the unexpected declaration of the Little Sister.

"I have not forgotten. But even my father has no right to command me to do what is wrong now. I knew it before, but I had never thought, I had never realised. The Toff has made me understand. Now I understand there is no going back for me."

"This—from you!" exclaimed John Rivers bitterly. "Bah! You will soon forget all this! The Toff will be one of us again soon!"

Marie shook her head.

"That will never be, father! Father, I—I want you to spare him." She caught the man's arm in a trembling hand. "Father, won't you have mercy on him? Let it be known that he is innocent; let his good name be given back to him."

The Professor laughed harshly.

"Give myself up to the police, do you mean? Is it likely?"

"You need not do that. But let it be known that Talbot was innocent. Father, what do you think I feel when I know it was your deed that he is condemned for, when I could clear him by speaking a word?"

"And betraying your father?" sneered John Rivers. "Speak, then! You are welcome to do so."

The girl wrung her hands.

"You know I cannot. But—but if you would go to a place of safety, and then write to Dr. Holmes and tell him——"

"You are talking childishly. Besides, I am not finished here yet."

Marie looked at him in terror.

"Not finished! What do you mean?"

The cracksman made an angry gesture.

"I did not come at an opportune moment," he said. "What did I take—a trifle over fifty pounds! Yet, as I learned when I was staying at the school, there is sometimes hundreds in the safe, and the securities that are sometimes there, if one came at the right moment. I depended on you for information, Marie; you could find out for me."

"Never!"

"You disobey me!" exclaimed her father furiously.

"In that—yes!"

John Rivers clenched his hand. It seemed for a moment as though he would strike the shrinking figure before him. Marie did not move. The incensed rascal lowered his hand.

"You will come to your senses!" he muttered.

"I will never repay the kindness I have received with ingratitude and treachery!" said the girl in a trembling voice. "There has been enough of that—there has been too much. I must keep your secret, and let the Toff suffer unjustly, because you are my father; but further than that I will not go."

"I shall do without your aid!" said the cracksman sullenly.

"Father, there is danger for you here," said Marie. "One of the boys—Tom Merry—has told me. He is working to clear Talbot; he believes in him still, and——"

"So there is one who believes in him still?" sneered the Professor. "Not more than one, I warrant! As for danger, do you think I fear a schoolboy? And if there should be danger, it will be because you refuse to help me. Listen to me. I must repeat my visit to the school——"

"You must not!"

"But I shall! And if I am taken because you do not help me, you will know that you send your father to end his days in a convict prison."

The girl gave a moan.

"Father, you are cruel! Even if you will not give up this dreadful life, keep away from this place. There are other places."

"Not so easy—not so well known to me," said the Professor coolly. "I did not come here for nothing. What I have learned I shall put to use. Through the Toff the whole business has been rather a loss than a gain to me. I have to make good. I ask you once more, Marie—will you come with me?"

"I cannot!"

"Enough said!"

The Professor turned without another word, and strode away into the darkness. Marie clasped her hands.

"Father!" she called softly, and then more loudly: "Father!"

There was no reply; the cracksman had gone.

With a sob the girl turned away and hurried towards the school.

THE TWENTY-NINTH CHAPTER

Talbot's Warning!

"MERRY!"

"Yes, Kildare."

"You're wanted in the Head's study."

The Shell had just come out after morning lessons. Tom Merry nodded as the captain of St. Jim's rapped out that information.

"Right-ho!"

"What the deuce!" muttered Monty Lowther, as Kildare strode away. "More blessed trouble, I suppose. They can't have found out. No blessed sneak would have given away about your getting out that night, surely!"

Manners clenched his fists.

"If they have——"

"I don't think so," said Tom, with a shake of his head. "Even Crooke or Scrope, would stop short at that, I should think. But I don't care much. Anyway, I've got to face the music, whatever it is."

And he went to the Head's study. He found Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, with Dr. Holmes, and both the masters were looking very grave. Dr. Holmes had a letter in his hand.

"You sent for me, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, Merry. This letter has come for you," said the Head.

"For me, sir?" said Tom, wondering what the Head was doing with his letter.

As a rule, the correspondence of the boys was not interfered with, though, of course, the Headmaster reserved a right of overhauling it when he thought fit.

"Yes. Since this unhappy boy, Talbot, has been sent away, I have exercised a supervision on this subject," said the Head. "I feared that he might attempt to correspond with some of the boys. This letter is written in his hand, and therefore, by my instructions, it was brought to me."

"From Talbot, sir?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise and satisfaction.

"You did not expect a letter from him, Merry?" asked the Head, with a searching look at the Shell fellow's face.

"I did not expect one, sir; but I did want him to write to me and tell me how he was getting on," said Tom.

"I desire you to open this letter in my presence, and hand it to me, to judge whether it is suitable for you to read, Merry."

Tom Merry flushed crimson, and he felt angry.

"Very well, sir. I know Talbot wouldn't write anything that the whole school couldn't well see."

Dr. Holmes passed him the letter. Tom opened the letter and laid it on the Head's table. He could see it was a few lines scribbled hastily in pencil.

"You have no objection to my reading this, Merry?"

"Of course I haven't, sir!"

Dr. Holmes took the letter and glanced over it, and an expression of surprise came over his face. He then passed it on to Mr. Railton.

The Housemaster read, and coughed.

"Now may I have it, please?" asked Tom. "Yes."

Tom took the letter from Mr. Railton and read it hurriedly. It ran:

"Dear Tom,—I have met the Professor. He has tried, as I expected, to get me back with him, you know where, and for what. I need not tell you that I have refused. You can always rely on me; come what may, I shall never do anything that would make you ashamed of having me as a friend.

I hope some day that the truth may come out, and I shall be able to see you again; but, at all events, I shall never forget you, and so long as you believe in me it will help me to keep decent. But that is not what I was going to say. From some words dropped by Rivers I suspect that he has some plan of further robberies at the school. I dare not write to the Head; he might not believe what I would say, though Heaven knows I shall never forget his kindness to me when he did not believe that I was honest. I am telling you, it may be in your power to stop that villain if he should make any further attempt. At least, you will be on your guard. Good-bye. old chap!

R. TALBOT."

"Good old Talbot!" said Tom Merry. "Oh, sir, this letter—can't you see by this letter that old Talbot is as true as steel?"

"Put it in the fire!" said the Head.

"But—but mayn't I keep it, sir?"

"Do as I tell you!"

The letter dropped in the flames.

"Now, Merry, if you receive any further communications from this boy without my knowledge I expect you to bring them to me at once."

"Yes, sir!"

"You will remember that. You may go."

Tom Merry left the study.

"That letter is very curious, sir," said Mr. Railton thoughtfully. "If the evidence against Talbot were not so absolutely over-

whelming it would lead me to suppose that there has been some dreadful mistake."

Dr Holmes shook his head.

"Nothing would delight me more than for it to prove so, Mr. Railton. But I cannot help thinking that that letter was written to meet my eyes. That wretched boy calculated its effect upon me."

"It is possible."

"I trusted him once, in spite of his past," said the Head. "I cannot trust him again. Henceforth he is dead to us."

Tom Merry rejoined Manners and Lowther in the passage.

"Another row?" asked Manners.

"No. A letter from Talbot," Tom Merry explained.

"Rotten to make you burn the letter," said Lowther. "I suppose the old codger thinks it's all bunkum?"

"I suppose so. But I don't think so," said Tom in a low, eager voice. "Talbot wrote that because he thinks the Professor means to have another try here. I thought of it myself; he didn't make much of a haul, and he might have better luck if he tried again. Oh, I hope he will try."

"What idea have you got in your head, now?" asked Lowther uneasily.

"Don't you see? Suppose he came here and we nailed him?"

"But——"

"Then Talbot would be cleared," said Tom eagerly. "Even that brute would have the decency to own up, I should think, when it wouldn't hurt him to tell the truth."

"More likely to keep silent and let Talbot suffer."

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Well, he would get his deserts, at any rate," he said. "Look here, we're going to do our best. If he comes——"

"If he comes, he'll come when we're asleep in the dorm," said Manners. "I suppose you're not thinking of keeping watch for him?"

"That's just what I was thinking of," said Tom.

"Tom, old chap——"

"I mean it!"

"But if he comes he may not come for

weeks; he's sure to wait till this has blown over a bit."

"I shall keep watch."

"But you can't, Tom," urged Lowther. "How are you going to keep watch every night, night after night? It's impossible!"

"It's not impossible," said Tom, in a low, earnest voice. "I don't say I can keep awake night after night; I know it's impossible. A thief gets into a house only after midnight, after everyone's in bed. And he won't come after a certain hour in the morning. I could keep watch for a few hours every night, from midnight till five."

"You can't, you silly ass! What about your health?"

"Blow my health!"

"You'll be found out!"

"I'll chance that!"

"I—I say," muttered Manners. "Now the Head's seen that letter, he's bound to take some steps, you know——"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"He doesn't believe that letter. I could see in his face what he thought. He thinks it's a trick of Talbot's to get into favour."

"Oh!"

"He doesn't know old Talbot," said Tom bitterly. "But if there's a chance—if there's a ghost of a chance—of setting him right, I'm going to take it. I don't care if it knocks me up. Let it!"

"You're not going to chance it alone," said Lowther. "If you mean this, we'll take it in turns, Tom."

"Turn and turn about," said Manners decidedly, "then it will be only one of us every third night, and we can stand that."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"I'd rather——"

"Never mind what you'd rather," said Lowther coolly, "you do as you're told, we're going to have our whack—and if you don't agree, we'll tell Railton, and have the little scheme knocked on the head."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You won't do that. But—but you can take your turns if you like—that's agreed."

"Done!" said Manners and Lowther together.

"And if he comes—if you spot him—wait

till you're sure of him before you give the alarm—he mustn't have a chance of getting away," said Tom. "If either of you spot him, come and call me before you make a sound!"

"Done!"

"And not a syllable on the subject to anyone else," added Tom Merry.

THE THIRTIETH CHAPTER

A Thief in the Night!

TOM MERRY's face was brighter that day.

Hope—ever so light a hope—was enough to raise his spirits.

There was a chance now, a slim chance, that Talbot's name might be cleared. It would be something, at all events, for the real criminal to be caught—and Tom Merry had not the slightest doubt that the real criminal, who had thrown suspicion so cunningly on Talbot, was the Professor. Even if the whole truth did not come to light, at all events Talbot's enemy would have to pay for his crime, and that was something. And Tom Merry hoped that once the scoundrel was in the clutches of the law, he would have a rag of decency left that would make him do justice to the boy he had wronged—or he might seek to make matters better for himself by telling the truth.

That night the secret scheme of the Terrible Three was carried into effect.

Tom Merry was to take the first night's watch. There was not much doubt that he would wake at the appointed time. It was more likely that he would not sleep till then. The Terrible Three went to bed as usual with the Shell, and when midnight rang out from the clock tower, Tom Merry was awake and alert. He slipped out of bed and dressed himself in the dark.

The rest of the Form were fast asleep.

He left the dormitory quietly. The whole House was in darkness, the last of the seniors and the masters had gone to bed; not a single light glimmered in the great building.

Tom Merry, in rubber shoes, descended the stairs silently. He knew where to take up his watch. At what point a burglar might enter the house he could not be certain. Probably at the box-room window as before, perhaps in some other place.

But wherever he entered, his object would be the Head's study where the safe was. It was upon the Head's study that the watchful junior had to keep watch and ward. In the deep darkness Tom Merry groped his way along the passage to the recess near the Head's door. There, in the recess of a deep window was a window-seat, deep and cushioned.

Tom sat down, his coat wrapped round him for warmth, and waited.

It was a weary vigil.

There was little danger of his absence from the dormitory being discovered. He had made up a dummy in his bed in case of a chance visit there, and nobody was likely to suspect that a junior was downstairs, in the darkness, keeping watch and ward through the winter night.

The hours passed slowly, he heard each hour strike dully from the old clock tower. He knew that he was probably watching in vain.

If the thief came, he might not come for some time—perhaps not for a long time—yet, on the other hand, he might come this night. A single night passed unwatched might mean failure instead of success.

His eyes were heavy with sleep, but he did not close them. It was for the sake of his chum, to undo a bitter wrong, to clear the innocent. That thought was enough to sustain him.

Slowly the dark night dragged. And there was no sound save a rat scuttling behind the old wainscot, no alarm. As five o'clock struck from the tower, Tom Merry knew that the first night's watch had been in vain.

He made his way back to the dormitory. It was not yet light; he undressed hastily and slipped into bed.

When the rising bell clanged out in the morning he was fast asleep. He woke up to find Monty Lowther shaking him.

"Time!" shouted Lowther, with a faint grin.

"Turn out, slacker!" said Kangaroo.

Tom Merry rubbed his eyes and turned out. The loss of sleep had told on him, strong and healthy as he was. But he could have stood more than that for a chum's sake. He was dull and heavy in the class-room that morning.

Mr. Linton was sharp with him several times. But he got through the work somehow.

It was Saturday, and in the afternoon the St. Jim's juniors were meeting a team from Rylcombe Grammar School. Tom Merry, naturally enough, did not feel very fit for footer, but Jack Blake of the Fourth cheerfully undertook to captain the team. Figgins and Co. of the New House, quite restored to health after their spell in the sanatorium, were fit as fiddles, and it was a strong team that turned out for St. Jim's. Tom Merry did not even see that match. He was asleep most of the afternoon in the armchair in his study.

He was dozing there when the door was thrown open, and Monty Lowther and Manners came cheerfully in, bringing a breezy gust of fresh air with them. Tom Merry sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Hallo! Who's won?"

"They have," said Lowther. "Two to one against us."

"We wanted Talbot," said Manners. "We miss him, you know; and you staying out, too, you boulder."

"Better luck next time," said Tom Merry.

Even football and the school record had taken secondary place in his thoughts now.

"You look a blessed sleepy hedgehog," said Monty Lowther. "Too sleepy to help to get tea? I'm as hungry as a hunter!"

"No," said Tom, laughing. "Have the Grammarians gone?"

"Yes, rather. Gone off as cheery as crickets after licking us," said Lowther. "Whose turn to play the giddy ox to-night, you or me, Manners?"

"Toss up for it," said Manners.

They tossed up after tea, and the lot fell to Manners. He grunted.

"You'll be careful, old top?" said Tom Merry anxiously. "You won't fall asleep? I wish you'd leave it to me, you know."

"Fathead," said Manners. "If you keep awake every night, you'll have to go to sleep every day, and you'll jolly well be spotted."

There was no doubt about that, and Tom Merry had to submit to the inevitable. That night it was Manners who took up his post, secretly and silently, in the window recess in the passage, close to the Head's study, and

watched until the small hours of the morning. But he watched in vain.

On Sunday morning Manners was glad that it was a day of rest. He slept like a top most of the afternoon.

Lowther took his turn cheerfully the next night, but when Monday morning came there had been no alarm. Lowther was decidedly drowsy in class on Monday morning, though he did his best to conceal it.

He was glad when lessons were over, and he could take a "nap" in the armchair in the study. He felt better after that in the afternoon.

"Your turn again to-night, Tommy," he said as he sat up to tea that evening. "Fill yourself up to the neck with tea, it helps to keep you awake. How long are you going to keep up this game?"

"Until we succeed," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"But I don't want you fellows to bother about it," said Tom hastily. "I'm quite willing to take it on my own—"

"Rats!" said Lowther.

"Likewise bow-wow! And many of them," chimed in Manners.

That night Tom Merry found himself on watch again. It was the fourth night since he had received Talbot's warning. As he sat in the window recess in the deep darkness he was thinking of the outcast junior. Where was Talbot now? What had become of him? Would he ever see him again?

Hour after hour struck dully through the night. Wearily but grimly Tom Merry kept at his vigil. Three o'clock. Silence, deep and still, followed the chime.

Tom Merry started. Was it a rat in the wainscot, that slight, sudden sound he heard? He sat up, breathing hard, his heart throbbing as if it would burst. It was not a rat. A soft, stealthy sound in the passage—the sound of a cautious footfall.

Tom Merry's heart throbbed almost to suffocation. He scarcely dared to breathe as, in the darkness, that stealthy footfall passed the recess, the unseen intruder passing within two feet of him. The stealthy sound stopped outside the door of the Head's study. There was a breathless silence, then a click. The

locked door had been opened. Tom Merry, straining his ears, heard the soft sound as it was closed again.

He started to his feet, trembling in every limb with excitement.

At last!

In the Head's study was the man who had wronged Talbot. He had come again like a thief in the night. And Tom Merry knew what to do.

THE THIRTY-FIRST CHAPTER

Capturing the Cracksmen!

TOM MERRY crept silently from the recess in his rubber shoes, and stood in the wide passage, listening.

The door of the Head's study was closed, and not a gleam of light came from under it. He guessed that the midnight intruder had placed a rug inside the door to hide the light, for from the keyhole there came a faint glimmer.

The cracksmen was at work.

Tom Merry bent his head outside the closed door and listened. There was a faint sound within—the sound of a drill at work on iron.

The junior, with fast-beating heart, crept away.

The man was there. How long he would remain Tom Merry could not guess—but long enough for the junior to take measures for his capture. Tom Merry had no thought of facing the ruffian alone. The rascal was not to be given the slightest chance of eluding capture this time.

Tom Merry made his way to the stairs, treading softly, and to Mr. Railton's room. He opened the door of the Housemaster's bedroom and called softly. He was at a sufficient distance from the scene of the cracksmen's operations to be sure that he would not be heard by the thief.

"Mr. Railton!"

His whispering, throbbing voice sounded strangely, eerily, in the dark room.

"Mr. Railton!"

There was a sound of a sudden movement, then a startled voice:

"What—who is that?"

"Wake up, sir. It's I—Tom Merry! Don't call out, sir, or he will hear you!" said Tom hurriedly.

"He! Who? What do you mean, Merry? What are you doing out of bed at this hour?"

"The cracksmen, sir."

"What?"

"He's in the Head's study, sir!"

"Merry!"

"He is drilling through the safe now, sir."

"Good Heavens! Merry, do you mean—are you sure——"

"Yes, sir!"

"You have been down?"

"He passed within a couple of feet of me, sir."

"You should not have run this risk. But never mind now. Go back to your dormitory and leave this to me."

Mr. Railton was already out of bed, dressing himself hurriedly in the dark.

Tom Merry glided away to the Shell dormitory, as the Housemaster directed him. Not that he intended to remain there. He did not mean to be off the scene when the cracksmen was taken. He crept into the dormitory and shook Lowther. Monty woke up with a start.

"What—wharrer marrer? Yaw-aw!"

"Wake up, Monty! He's come!"

"My hat!"

"Manners, old man——"

Tom Merry shook Manners.

"He's really come?" muttered Lowther excitedly.

"Yes. Railton's going down. I expect he'll call Kildare. We're going to be on in this scene, too."

"You bet!" murmured Manners.

"Don't wake the others; we don't want a crowd."

The two juniors dressed quickly. The rest of the Shell were fast asleep. Leaving them undisturbed, the Terrible Three crept out of the dormitory and down to the next floor. Mr. Railton had come out of his room and gone to Kildare's room, and then to Darrel's. In the faint starlight that came in through the hall window the Terrible Three saw them come out of the Sixth Form passage—the Housemaster and the two stalwart prefects,

each of them with a poker or a cricket-stump in his hand. They made their way quietly to the Head's study.

"We bring up the giddy rear," murmured Monty Bowther. "I say, Tommy, you're quite, quite sure, eh?"

"Yes, ass! Come on!"

"Is it the Professor?"

"I suppose so. I couldn't see him in the dark. I don't know that I should know him by sight, anyway, as he was disguised when he came here under the name of Packington. But I'm pretty sure it is he."

The juniors crept on, keeping their distance, for they knew that the Housemaster would send them back if he spotted them.

But Mr. Railton was not thinking of them just then. He reached the door of the Head's study with the two excited seniors, and the glimmer of faint light from the keyhole struck upon his eyes in the darkness. There was no doubt that the cracksman was there. Faintly, almost inaudibly, in the silence came the steady sound of the drill.

"You are ready, my boys?" said Mr. Railton, in a low voice.

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Kildare.

"Follow me in, but leave him to me," said the Housemaster.

Kildare and Darrel grinned in the darkness. They were not likely to leave all the risk to the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton turned the handle of the door and threw it open.

He rushed into the study, with the two Sixth-Formers at his heels.

A man, who was bent before the safe, working by the concentrated light of a small electric lamp, sprang round with a panting cry.

Kildare turned on the electric light in the study as he followed Mr. Railton in. The room was flooded with light.

"Surrender!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

The cracksman uttered a hoarse oath.

His hand was already in his pocket for a weapon, but the Housemaster was upon him before he could draw it.

In the powerful grasp, the smaller man struggled in vain.

The cracksman was head and shoulders

shorter than the Housemaster, and Mr. Railton had not been a lifelong athlete for nothing.

The rascal had no chance.

He panted fiercely behind the mask of black crape that covered his face, fighting wildly for his liberty.

But the Housemaster's grip bore him backwards to the floor, and he went down on the carpet, and a heavy knee was planted on his chest.

It had passed so quickly that Kildare and Darrel, keen as they were, had no chance of helping. But now they grasped the man's arms as he struggled, and held him helpless.

Outside the open doorway three juniors blinked into the lighted study. The Terrible Three were there in case they were wanted. But the cracksman was already a prisoner. Mr. Railton wrenched a revolver away from him.

"Let's see his face," said Kildare; and he jerked the crape from the hidden features of the cracksman.

A hard, clean-shaven face it revealed. But in the features, in the eyes, there was something familiar to them.

"I've seen him before somewhere," said Darrel.

"Fasten his hands, my boys," said Mr. Railton. "A handkerchief will do."

The cracksman gave a sudden low groan, and stretched out inert under their grasp. His eyes were closed, his jaw had dropped; he seemed hardly to breathe.

"Fainted, by gum!" said Darrel. "Not quite enough nerve for the business, I should say."

The man lay inert.

The grasp upon him relaxed, and they drew back. And as he was released the apparently unconscious man made a sudden spring to his feet.

"Collar him!" roared Kildare. "Shaming, by thunder! Hold him! My hat!"

The cracksman was through them like a flash, knocking Kildare aside, and eluding Darrel and the Housemaster. A desperate bound carried him through the doorway.

It had been a clever trick—a desperate attempt—and it would have succeeded if the way had been open. But the desperate man,

bounding through the doorway, rushed directly into the arms of the Terrible Three.

They fastened on him like cats, and dragged him down.

Before he could even attempt to struggle free from their grip, Mr. Railton was upon him again, and Kildare and Darrel were clutching at him.

With six pairs of hands upon him, he was dragged back into the room.

"Not this journey!" chuckled Monty Lowther breathlessly. "Not this time, my infant!"

Kildare bound the rascal's hands with a twisted handkerchief. The cracksman lay panting on the carpet.

"Thank you, my lads!" said Mr. Railton. "You should have been in your dormitory, but certainly you have been very useful here. Keep hold of that rascal, Kildare, for the present."

"I've got him, sir," said the captain of St. Jim's cheerfully. "He won't play that trick on us twice."

"Malediction!" muttered the cracksman between his teeth.

Tom Merry looked down upon him keenly.

In the hard, clean-shaven face he sought for a resemblance to the Professor, the man who had been known once at St. Jim's as Mr. Packington, the science master. And he knew that he was not mistaken.

"At last, you villain!" said Tom Merry. "Do you not recognise him, Mr. Railton?"

"Recognise him?" repeated the House-master.

"Yes, sir. You have seen him before."

Mr. Railton looked puzzled.

"There is something familiar to me in his face," he said; "but——"

"It is Mr. Packington."

"Bless my soul! Yes, I know him now!"

"The Professor!" exclaimed Kildare.

"The man Talbot denounced when he was here, passing himself off as a science master. I know him now."

"Yes," said Tom Merry steadily; "the man Talbot denounced, and the man who committed a robbery here last week, and left evidence behind him to make suspicion fall upon Talbot."

"Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I am sure of it, sir! Ask him. He may tell the truth now."

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes upon the baffled, panting cracksman.

"You hear, man?" he said. "You are a prisoner now; you will get your deserts. It will do you no harm—it may do you good in your position—to tell the truth. Was it you who came here in the night a week ago——"

The Professor laughed sardonically.

"I?" he repeated.

"Yes, you—who robbed this safe, which you have attempted to rob again; who took articles belonging to Talbot of the Shell, and left Talbot's penknife——"

"A pretty story!" said the Professor.

"Do you confess it?"

"Hardly. This was my job, because the Toff made so small a haul last time," said the Professor coolly. "The Toff, whom you call Talbot, is one of us now. He had better luck than I have had."

"It is a lie!" exclaimed Tom Merry fiercely.

The Professor laughed again.

"It is useless to expect the truth from him, I fear," said Mr. Railton, with a sigh; "but I begin to think, Merry, that you may be right."

"A pretty story!" repeated the Professor sneeringly. "Why, it was from the Toff that I learned all I needed to know about this place—about this safe——"

"That at least is false," said Mr. Railton quietly. "You had no need to learn anything from Talbot. When you were here as Mr. Packington you had ample opportunity to learn all you wished to."

"This is the man who kidnapped Talbot," said Tom Merry between his teeth. "You can see now how Talbot's penknife came to be here. It was easy enough for that scoundrel to take it from him when Talbot was his prisoner. And he took Talbot's things away to make it look blacker because Talbot had denounced him when he was playing his game here. Mr. Railton, you must see that it is the truth——"

"I see that it is possible," said the House-master guardedly. "But this is not a time to discuss that. Take this rascal to the

punishment-room, my boys. He can be kept securely there for to-night, and handed over to the police in the morning."

And, with strong hands grasping him, the cracksman was marched away.

THE THIRTY-SECOND CHAPTER

A Startling Meeting

THE house was still silent; there had been no alarm. The capture of the cracksman had been effected with little noise. The sleeping-quarters were at a distance from the Head's study. In their dormitories the School House fellows were sleeping, little dreaming of the dramatic scene that had passed below.

The punishment-room in the School House—Nobody's Study, as the juniors called it—was a small room, with a little barred window, plainly furnished. In the older days of the school, recalcitrant schoolboys had been confined there on bread-and-water for days at a time—in the "good old days" when discipline was iron and punishments hard and frequent. In latter times the punishment-room was seldom used, and the bread-and-water diet had long been a thing of the past.

The cracksman glanced round him quickly and eagerly as he marched into Nobody's Study.

It was clear that he was calculating his

chances of escape, but a glance was enough to tell him that there were none. There were strong bars to the window, and outside was a drop of forty or fifty feet. And the door was solid, the lock big and strong. And the cracksman was thoroughly searched, and every kind of instrument or weapon taken from him before he was left. Mr. Railton, too, had sent one of the juniors for a cord, and the man's hands were bound behind him—loosely enough to allow him personal comfort, but se-

curally enough to prevent him from using them.

A bed with a mattress was in the corner of the room, and Mr. Railton pointed to it.

"You will remain here for to-night," he said. "Sleep if you can. I will send you some blankets. I do not wish you to suffer."

The cracksman shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply. The door of the punishment-room closed upon him.

"He is safe!" said the Housemaster. "You may return to bed now, my boys. There is no need to cause an alarm in the house at this hour; the man is safe. One moment, Merry. It was you who discovered this man's presence in the house. How did that come about? You could not have been in your dormitory."

"I was not, sir."

"Then where were you?" asked Mr. Railton, a little sternly.

"I was keeping watch, sir."



A light step came along the path from the school, and the man waiting by the boat-house started. "Marie!" "Father!" "You were not seen to come here?" muttered the man. (See page 327.)

"Keeping watch!"

"Yes, sir. I may tell you now," said Tom Merry calmly. "Ever since Talbot wrote to me that warning that you saw, sir, we have been keeping watch—one or another of us. We knew the villain would come sooner or later."

Mr. Railton knitted his brows.

"Then it's Talbot who's really caused this rascal to be arrested!" exclaimed Kildare.

"Yes," said Tom.

"By Jove! It looks——"

"It looks as if Talbot has been wronged," said Tom Merry bitterly. "Yes, I'm glad you're beginning to see it now."

"You may go to your dormitory," said Mr. Railton, without passing any comment upon Tom Merry's confession.

The Terrible Three returned to their dormitory. The Housemaster and the prefects went back to bed; but in the Shell dormitory Tom Merry did not turn in. He sat on his bed in the darkness, thinking.

"Better turn in, Tom," said Lowther, in a low voice.

Tom shook his head.

"It's all over," said Manners. "We've got our man. There's nothing more doing, Tom."

"We've got the man," said Tom; "but he hasn't done what I hoped. It hasn't come out that he was the thief and that Talbot was innocent."

"Not much good expecting him to own up, I'm afraid," said Lowther. "Still, this makes it look better for Talbot. It can't be denied that it was owing to his warning that the Professor was collared."

"That's something," said Manners.

"That's something," said Tom Merry; "but that's not enough. Look here! We've got that man; he's our prisoner, isn't he?"

"I—I suppose so," said Lowther uneasily.

"What are you thinking of, Tom?"

"He's our prisoner," repeated Tom Merry; "and he's going to clear Talbot. If he makes a confession and clears Talbot, I don't care what becomes of him. He can go free, or go to the deuce, for all I care!"

"Tom!"

"I'm going to see him!" said Tom Merry determinedly.

"But—but it's no good, Tom," said Manners, in a startled whisper. "The fellow would say anything to get free—he would write anything—sign anything. Unless he was to make a personal confession to the police, it wouldn't be taken any notice of."

"I don't see that. If he writes out a confession, stating how Talbot was kidnapped, where he was kept, and so on, we can jolly soon find other evidence to prove it," said Tom. "Others must have seen Talbot when he was a prisoner, and they can be found, arrested perhaps, and made to confess. If we once get the true story, we may be able to prove it; but if that villain is taken away by the police to-morrow morning he will keep silent, if only for revenge upon Talbot."

"But—but——"

"He's our prisoner, and we're going to do it," said Tom.

"There'll be a row——"

"I don't care for that."

"But—but he's locked up in the punishment room, Tom. You can't get at him——"

"We've still got the key—the other key," said Tom. "You remember when I was shut up there once, you fellows got a key for the door, and I've kept it. It's in my box now."

"But I say, Tom——"

"Nuff said, old chap. As soon as Railton's fast asleep I'm going down."

There was no moving Tom Merry from his resolution. In the darkness he hunted in his box for the key. Half an hour was allowed to pass. By that time it was pretty certain that the Housemaster and the prefects were asleep again.

"We're coming with you," said Lowther.

"Just as you like."

The Terrible Three left the dormitory silently. Manners and Lowther were feeling extremely doubtful and uneasy; but, as Tom said, the cracksman was their prisoner. They had kept watch and ward for him, in the hope of helping Talbot by means of his capture. Tom Merry was acting within his rights, whatever view the "powers that were" might take of the matter.

The three juniors crept down the passage. All was silent and dark about them.

But as they came upon the lower land-

ing Tom Merry suddenly paused, with a deep breath.

"Hold on, you fellows!" he whispered.

"What!"

"Listen!"

A sound had come from below—from the dark hall. It was a slight sound, but they knew what it was. It came from the little window in the hall.

"My only hat!" murmured Lowther. "Lucky we didn't go to bed. There's another. He must have a confederate outside, and we never thought——"

Manners chuckled softly.

"All serene! We'll nab him like the other. Wait till he's got inside."

"What-ho!"

The juniors—forgetting all about the prisoner in the punishment-room for the moment—crept silently down the stairs to the ground floor. In the darkness of the hall they watched the little window. Outside was a glimmer of starlight, and against it a form showed dimly at the window. There was another faint creak. Then creak—creak again. The juniors stood with bated breath. They had no doubt now that the cracksman had had an accomplice who had remained outside the house, and, of course, by the light in the Head's study, and then the light again in the punishment-room, the rascal outside had guessed what had happened. He was seeking to enter the house to release the Professor—perhaps to carry out the interrupted robbery. That, at least, was how it appeared to the Terrible Three. And they waited grimly and silently for the newcomer to enter—to cut off his escape when he was fairly inside the house.

The minutes passed. Evidently the newcomer was not so skilled a cracksman as John Rivers or the Toff. To them the casement window would have presented few difficulties. But minute followed minute, and the shadowy figure without was still at work. The juniors waited, wondering.

"I say," murmured Lowther, when a quarter of an hour had passed, "that can't be a giddy cracksman—it can't be! More likely some fellow who's broken bounds, and is trying to get in again. Anybody who knew

the bizney would have had that window open long ago."

The same thought had come into Tom Merry's mind.

"Might be Cutts of the Fifth," chuckled Manners. "Been on the randan, perhaps, and found that he couldn't get in again. Railton found a window open, and fastened it, you know. Cutts might have got out before the Professor got in."

The chums of the Shell laughed silently. If the black sheep of the Fifth had been out of bounds, and had found his return cut off, they could guess what a blue funk he would be in. He would have to get into the house somehow, and he might have tried the hall-window, as the easiest way. Little as they liked Cutts of the Fifth, it was not their business to give him away if he had been on the "randan," as Manners expressed it; and if the figure outside proved to be a St. Jim's fellow, they had no intention of interfering with him. But it was necessary to be sure.

The creaking at the window continued.

"We'd better make sure before we bring Railton on the scene," murmured Lowther. "It might be Cutts, or St. Leger, or Knox, or Levison of the Fourth—and we don't want to get a fellow sacked—'tain't our bizney."

"Let him get in, and we'll see who it is," said Tom Merry in a whisper. "As soon as he gets in we can see—there's enough light here. Keep in cover."

The juniors kept back in the shadow of the banisters. Thence they had a view of the dim hall, into which the starlight was falling. Dim as the light was, it was enough for them, when they had a clear view of the intruder, to tell whether he was a St. Jim's fellow or not.

The window swung open.

A dark figure appeared in the opening for a moment, and dropped lightly into the hall. The window was closed again.

The juniors remained still, scarcely breathing.

A figure, certainly not so tall as themselves, stood in the starlit hall, and they could hear a subdued, panting breath. The figure was wrapped in a coat from head to foot, but there was something in the outline that brought a strange and startling suspicion into

their minds. Under a closely drawn cap there was a glint of light on coiled hair.

Lowther grasped Tom Merry's arm. It was not a man—it was not a boy. It was a woman—or, rather, a girl—from the stature evidently a young girl—who had forced a way into the School House in the dead of night.

The Shell fellows were dumb with amazement!

Who was it?

A girl—evidently. But who? Back into Tom Merry's mind came a remembrance of something that Talbot had told him once—of a girl-chum he had had in the old days—the Professor's daughter!

Tom Merry thought that he understood. The Professor's accomplice was not a member of the gang—not a male member, that is—but his daughter! It was Marie Rivers—that was the name; he remembered it now.

There was a scratch in the darkness—a match flared out. It showed up a white, scared face.

A cry of amazement burst from the three juniors uncontrollably, for they knew that face.

The girl who had entered the School House was Miss March, the Little Sister of the Poor, the young nurse who had served so well and so bravely in the sanatorium during the influenza epidemic—Miss March!

Tom Merry sprang forward.

"Miss March! What are you doing here?"

THE THIRTY-THIRD CHAPTER

Father and Daughter!

THE match went out. There was a low, strangled cry, and the girl reeled; and Tom Merry had just time to catch her as she fell.

She lay heavily in his arms, scarcely conscious, scarcely breathing. The shock had been too much for her.

"Good heavens!" muttered Manners. "Miss March, what—"

"The Little Sister!" gasped Lowther. "But—but what is she doing here?"

"Goodness knows!" said Tom.

The girl struggled free.

"Miss March, don't be afraid!" whispered Tom Merry. "We're your friends here—only Manners and Lowther with me. There's nothing to be afraid of!"

The girl gave a sob.

"But what are you doing here?" said Tom, in wonder.

"Oh, I—I—" In the starlight he could see the tears running down her cheeks. "I—I had to come—I had to—"

"But why? Why aren't you in bed at this time of night?" said Tom, in utter wonder, mingled with a half-formed suspicion. "Why did you come here?"

"I had to! Have pity on me—help me!" sobbed the girl.

"Of course we will help you!" said Manners. "But what's the matter?"

"My father!"

"Your father! I don't understand—"

Tom Merry understood. He could not doubt any longer. Indeed, now that the flash of truth came into his mind he wondered that he had not guessed something, at least, before. The friendship between Talbot and Miss March—many of the fellows had remarked that they seemed to have known each other all their lives. And the shock little Frayne of the Third had received when he saw Miss March in the sanatorium, and Frayne had known Marie Rivers in the old days when he was an outcast of the slums. When first the Little Sister had come to his bedside Frayne had been heard to call her "Marie." It had been supposed that he was feverish and wandering in his thoughts; but Tom Merry understood now.

"My father!" the girl was repeating.

"But your father—he's not here!" said Monty Lowther.

"He is here! Help me to find him. Listen! I saw the light in the Head's study, and then I knew—I knew—" She sobbed again.

"Then he did not come out, and there was a light in the punishment-room, so I guessed—"

"But—but—but—" stammered Lowther blankly. "That's a burglar; that's the cracksman. It's the Professor; he's come back, and we've caught him!"

"I know—I know!"

"He is your father?" said Tom Merry.

She sobbed.

"Yes."

"You are Marie Rivers?"

"I am Marie Rivers."

"Good heavens!" muttered Lowther.

"But—but—but—" stammered Lowther blankly.

"No, no—never! I had told him I would not—I could not; but—but I knew that he would come. Ever since I have been unable to sleep. I have been doing no duty. I have slept in the day and watched at night. I knew he would come. And—and to-night I did not see him, but when I saw the light I knew—" She choked.

"Poor kid!" muttered Lowther "That awful villain is your father!"

"He is my father. I came here to save him. I knew that he must be a prisoner here, as he was not taken away. I—I must save him! He is my father!"

The juniors were silent. Villain as John Rivers was, he was her father, and she sought to save him. They understood now why the poor girl had forced her way into the School House at that hour. It was to save the cracksman before the morning came—before the police closed their grip upon him and hope was lost.

He was her father!

And the devotion of the unhappy girl went straight to their hearts. They understood that she was no confederate of the villain—she had watched for him to attempt to turn him from his purpose. But when she found that he was a prisoner, her devotion had led her to this.

It was wrong—yet it was noble. He was her father. It was not for a child to set up judgment upon a parent.

"You will help me?" breathed the girl.

"Help you!"

"I must save him! Afterwards I will go away. I will leave the school—I will do anything you choose! But you will let me save him?"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Goodness knows, I'm sorry," he said; "but—but it was the man who robbed the school, Miss March. It was he who threw suspicion upon Talbot. Talbot's name has to

be cleared. The innocent cannot suffer for the guilty."

"Let me see him. I will plead with him. I will make him tell the truth. Talbot shall be cleared," whispered the girl. "Now, in this strait, he will yield. I am sure of it."

"You can see him," said Tom Merry. "But—but as for letting him go, I—"

"Let me see him!"

"That much, yes."

"God bless you!"

The chums of the Shell, still in a state of amazement, led the girl to the punishment-room. What to do in that amazing emergency they simply did not know. Their hearts ached for Marie. They knew that she must be suffering. But in their thoughts Talbot came first. The innocent must not suffer for the guilty, even if a girl's heart were broken.

Tom Merry silently unlocked the door.

There was a low, startled exclamation from within. They heard the cracksman roll off the bed. He had not been sleeping.

Tom Merry struck a match, and lighted a candle-end that Lowther produced from his pocket. The flickering light showed up the room, and the cracksman, with his hands behind him, bound. His face was haggard. He gazed at the stricken girl as she came in, with amazement.

"You here!" he muttered.

The juniors followed the girl into the room and closed the door. The cracksman did not look at them. His eyes were fixed upon the colourless face of his daughter. For once remorse had awakened in the Professor's hard heart.

"You!" he repeated.

"Father!"

"Hush!"

"They—they know," said the girl. "I have told them that you are my father."

"Marie!"

"They have let me see you. I—I tried to come to save you," muttered the girl, with white lips. "Now it does not depend on me. Father, why did you come here? I—I watched for you—every night I have watched from the quadrangle, in the cold and darkness, to stop you when you came, to turn you back, and—and when you came I did not see you,

I did not know until you were a prisoner," she sobbed.

"And you came to save me?" said the cracksman, in wonder.

"Yes."

"You are a good girl, Marie," said the Professor, in a softened tone. "I have not been a good father to you. Perhaps—if it were over again—things might be different; but it is too late now. Go back. Don't you understand that you are risking your liberty in coming here?"

"I do not care."

"But you must care! Go back while there is time. These boys will keep your secret. Save yourself, you foolish girl!"

Marie turned her wet eyes on the chums of the Shell.

"You will let me save him?" she pleaded. "It is nothing to you if he escapes; but he is my father."

"Let him confess, then," said Tom Merry steadily. "Let him confess that he was guilty and that Talbot was innocent. Let him prove it, and—and we'll take the law into our own hands and let him go."

"Father! You hear?"

"I hear," said John Rivers.

There was a strong expression upon his face. The white, stricken face of his daughter had deeply moved him, hard-hearted criminal as he was.

"You will do justice to the Toff?" said Marie. "It will cost you nothing now, father. That is not much to ask."

"And my liberty?" said the Professor, with a gleam in his eyes.

"You shall go free if you can clear Talbot," said Tom Merry. "But he must be cleared beyond the shadow of a doubt."

The Professor shrugged his shoulders. Even at that moment he hesitated. His plans, carefully laid—to get the Toff, the prince of cracksmen, into his hands again—they had to be thrown aside and abandoned. His face hardened again.

"Well?" said Tom Merry.

"I have nothing to say," said the Professor sullenly.

Marie uttered a cry.

"Father—father!"

"You have made your choice, John Rivers," said Tom Merry, setting his teeth. "You will remain here till the police come, then."

The Professor did not reply. The thought was working in his mind that his daughter would yet contrive to save him. He knew that the girl would not abandon him.

"Father!" exclaimed Marie appealingly.

"I have nothing to say. Leave me to my fate!"

"I cannot!" The girl turned streaming eyes upon Tom Merry. "You will let me save him? Say that you will let me! Let him go free! He is my father!"

"Miss March——"

"Let me save him! I will save him! You shall not stop me, unless you send me, too, to the police!"

The juniors looked at one another helplessly. To let the girl share the fate of her rascally father through them was not to be thought of. Was, then, the cunning villain to escape after all, and Talbot uncleared, still an outcast? Yet to resist the pleading of the weeping girl was a harder task than Tom Merry was equal to.

There was a silence in the room, broken only by the sound of Marie's sobbing. In the silence there came a heavy step without, and the door was flung open. Mr. Railton strode in. There was an angry frown upon his brow, and angry words upon his lips, but they were checked at the unexpected sight of the weeping girl.

"Miss March! You here! Tom Merry, what does this mean?"

THE THIRTY-FOURTH CHAPTER

Light at Last!

TOM MERRY stood silent.

The matter was out of his hands now. The juniors had taken it a little too readily for granted that the Housemaster had gone back to sleep. Evidently he had remained very much awake. As a matter of fact, the Housemaster had thought of the possibility that the cracksman had not come alone, and he had decided to watch for the remainder of the night. He had come to look at the punishment-room to be sure that all was safe,

THE SCHOOLBOY MESMERIST



1. Benjamin Broadbrow, one of the brightest pupils at Dr. Swisher's Academy, was always swotting up something or other. For a time he took up Spellmanism—until the Head cured him with his cane.



2. Afterwards Benjamin started to learn all about mesmerism in his spare time. When he had finished practising on the school mouser, he decided to put the 'fluence on some of his little pals. Out in the quad—



3. He cast his eagle eye on Willie Wiggins. "Willie," he quoth, "you are mesmerised. Imagine you are a prize pup! So get down on your benders." "Tee-hee! Now we shall see some fun!" smiled the lads.



4. "Get to your kennel!" then ordered Benjamin, "and have a tuck in from that dish of bones!" "Bow-wow!" barked Willie, leaping lightly into the kennel. "Oo-er! I'm off!" gasped the cat.



5. Then Willie Wiggins popped his head out of the kennel and growled like one o'clock. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared all the juniors. "This is funny!" "Now get into the kitchen, sir!" cried Benjamin.



6. And, arriving there, Willie straightway started licking the platters clean! But when Dr. Swisher found out about it all he gave Benjamin full marks for his cleverness—with his cane!

and he had seen the light and heard the voices. But the sight of the weeping, troubled girl had taken him utterly aback, and the vials of his wrath were not poured out upon the juniors.

"What does this mean?" he repeated. The hope that had risen in his breast was gone now.

"Miss March——" began the bewildered Housemaster. "How did you come here? What——"

"I am not Miss March," said the girl dully. "That is not my name. My name is Marie Rivers, and I am his—his daughter."

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Railton almost staggered.

"I knew he was a prisoner, and I came to set him free," said Marie. "Now—now it is all over, and you may send me to prison with him."

"Marie!" muttered the cracksman.

"That man, John Rivers, is your father?" said Mr. Railton.

The girl sobbed.

"Yes."

"But—but you had nothing to do with this—this—with his coming here?" the Housemaster said hesitatingly. "I cannot believe that!"

Marie shook her head.

"I will not keep the secret any longer," she said wearily. "I have been no better than he—no better than Talbot was in the old days; but—but since I came here, since I saw the Toff again—I—I changed even as Talbot has done. After that, it was my only object to prevent this. I would have stopped him if I could, but now I—I could not abandon him. He is my father."

"It was Talbot who showed you better things, a better way of life?" said Mr. Railton.

"Yes; it was Talbot."

"And yet he has—has gone back——"

"He has not gone back!" said Marie. "Father, the truth shall be told now. If you will not tell it, then I will tell it."

The cracksman did not speak.

"It was not Talbot who robbed the Head, sir; it was my father. It was his plan to make suspicion fall on the Toff, to force him to go back to his old life."

"You knew it?"

"I knew it."

"And you allowed that unhappy boy to be driven from the school in disgrace when you could have saved him with a word?" exclaimed the Housemaster, in agitated tones.

The girl moaned.

"Could I betray my father? Now it does not matter. But while he was free I could not give him up—I could not, though my heart was almost broken. I have suffered——"

"My poor child," said the Housemaster softly, "I understand. Poor Talbot! But why did he not speak? If he had told us that you knew the truth, you could not have concealed it then."

Marie smiled faintly.

"Talbot would never have uttered a word to harm me," she said.

"And he has suffered for his silence," said the Housemaster, deeply moved. "The unhappy lad! But there, at least reparation shall be made!"

"But my father—my father——"

Mr. Railton knitted his brows in thought. The misery in the girl's face touched his heart, as it had touched the hearts of the juniors. The sullen cracksman deserved, a dozen times over, the punishment that was in store for him, but——

"I must speak to the Head," said the Housemaster at last. "In this I cannot act on my own responsibility. But if this man will write out a free and full confession, it is possible that something can be done. I promise nothing."

"Father!" whispered Marie.

The cracksman gave a hard laugh.

"Bah! After you have told all it is not much use for me to keep silent," he said. "I will do as you wish."

Mr. Railton made a gesture to the juniors.

"Go back to your dormitory," he said. "Kindly do not leave it again until the morning. Miss March, go back to your room; you may leave your father with me."

"But—but——"

"At dawn I shall consult the Head. You may be present. I cannot promise you more than that. But you shall see the Head before anything is decided."

"Thank you, Mr. Railton." Marie moved towards her father timidly. "Father, you will do what is right now? It is your only chance; you see that?"

"You can rely on me to see which side my bread is buttered," said John Rivers, with a sneering laugh.

Tom Merry and Co. quitted the room.

"How did you enter here, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"I—I had a key, sir," stammered Tom.

"Kindly give it to me."

Tom Merry handed over the key, and the three juniors returned to the Shell dormitory. They turned in.

"Well, this has been a night!" said Monty Lowther, as he drew the sheets about him.

"It means everything for Talbot," said Tom Merry, with a deep breath. "He will be cleared, now—through Marie Rivers."

"Poor girl!" said Manners. "I—I say, we'd better keep all that dark, you know. No need for anybody else to know that she is that villain's daughter!"

"Yes, rather!"

It was some time before the juniors slept.

They were up before the rising-bell clanged out in the morning.

Tom Merry was very keen to know what had happened since the cracksman had been left with Mr. Railton.

He had a strong suspicion that John Rivers would be allowed to escape, after signing a confession, for the sake of the Little Sister.

The rising-bell was beginning to clang when the juniors came downstairs in the grey dawn.

They made their way first to the punishment-room. The door was unfastened; the room was empty. There was no sign of John Rivers.

"Gone!" murmured Lowther.

They strolled out into the quadrangle. In the grey dawn a light streamed from the window of the Head's study. Dr. Holmes had evidently been down very early. A slight, graceful figure came away from the School House, and hurried across towards the sanatorium. Tom Merry ran to intercept the Little Sister.

"Miss March!" he exclaimed. "It is all right?"

The girl stopped and smiled at him through her tears.

"Yes," she said, "I have been with the Head. He was very kind. There is a full confession, signed by my father, and witnessed by Mr. Railton and the Head. It is going to be made public to-day. Talbot is cleared!"

"Thank goodness! But—but your father?"

"He is gone," said Marie, in a low voice.

"He—he was placed in the punishment-room again, but—but the door was not locked, and—and he escaped."

Tom Merry smiled.

"I am glad," he said.

"And—and he is not so bad as you have believed," said the girl, with pathetic eagerness. "He has promised to amend. I—I hope he will keep his promise."

"I hope so," said Tom.

"I shall help him all that I can," said Marie. "I shall join him."

"You are leaving here?"

Marie smiled a little.

"After—after what has happened, could I remain?" she said.

"Why not?" said Tom. "Nobody will know about—about your connection with him. You don't think we shall chatter, surely? And Talbot, when he comes back—"

Marie shook her head.

"I must go," she said. "I'll stay a few days, that is all. I—I am not well enough to go at once, but then— And—and you will tell Talbot that I have done all I could for him, and I was sorry to let him be wronged, but he will understand that I could not sacrifice my father; he is always generous."

"I will tell him," said Tom.

Marie hurried on. Tom Merry was very thoughtful. All had gone well so far, but Talbot remained to be found. Where was Talbot?

There was a surprise for St. Jim's that morning. After prayers the whole school was assembled in Big Hall, and the Head came in with a grave face, to address the school.

There was a hush of expectancy. With the exception of the Terrible Three, no one had the faintest idea what was coming.

"Somethin' wathah unusual on this mornin'," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy whispered to Blake. "I wondah——"

"Silence!" rapped out a prefect.

"All wight, Dawwel, deah boy!"

There was deep silence as the Head began to speak, and then a buzz of wonder as the juniors heard what he had to say. Dr. Holmes, with emotion in his fine old face, told them in concise words of the discovery of the plot that had been made against the Toff, his former confederate, of the rascal's confession, and the complete clearing of Talbot from all suspicion. The St. Jim's fellows listened in blank amazement. The plotter had confessed, and not only confessed, but given proof, for sewn up in his clothes had been found some of the banknotes which had been taken from the Head's study on the occasion of the robbery that had been attributed to Talbot. Of Marie Rivers the Head had made no mention. The girl's secret was to be kept.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in utter wonder. "I must wemark, deah boys, that this beats the band, you know. It appeahs that Tom Mewwy was wight all the time. That is not surpwisin'; but it appeahs also that I was w'ong, and I wegard that as vewy surpwisin' indeed. Astonishin', in fact!"

"Shurrup!" murmured Blake. "The Head's starting on another lap."

"My boys," resumed the Head, "I have explained this to you that justice may be done to that unhappy lad who has been so cruelly wronged. I need not say that search will instantly be made for him, that he will be found and brought here to take his place once more among us all in honour. And I can rely upon you all to give him a hearty welcome."

"Hurrah!" shouted Lowther.

And the cheer was taken up.

"Hip-hip, hurrah!"

There was no doubt of the kind of welcome Talbot would get when he returned to St. Jim's.

THE THIRTY-FIFTH CHAPTER

Through the Valley of the Shadow

TALBOT had been cleared!

St. Jim's was eagerly waiting to welcome his return.

But where was Talbot?

Search for him had immediately been started, but day followed day, and there was no news of him. The unhappy boy, penniless, alone, unfriended, hunted as he believed by the police, had disappeared.

That he had gone to London was assured, but in that vast, overgrown city, where was he to be sought? In what den of poverty, if not of crime, had the once happy Shell fellow of St. Jim's hidden himself?

Tom Merry and Co. waited anxiously for news.

But news did not come. Day followed day, and the detectives the Head had employed to seek the unhappy boy made ever the same reports—nothing.

Talbot had disappeared into the labyrinths of the modern Babylon. He might already, as Tom Merry felt, with a sickening sense of misery, have fallen a victim to cold, to hunger, to want. Had his justification come too late? Was the Toff, after all, to fall a victim, still more terribly a victim, of his old associate's scheming, although the truth was known, and all his old friends were anxious to repair the injury that had been done him?

A week had passed, and still there was no news, and Tom Merry made up his mind what he must do. He went to the Head's study to ask leave to look for Talbot himself, fully resolved to take French leave if it were not accorded. But the Head was kind; his own heart was heavy with anxiety for the missing junior. If he thought of a refusal, it died upon his lips as he looked at Tom Merry's pale, careworn face.

"But what could you do, my dear lad, where others have failed?" said Dr. Holmes, kindly enough.

"I can try, sir," said Tom restlessly. "I—I can't bear this, sir. He may be dying of want; he may be dead!" Tom's voice broke, and he tried in vain to keep back his tears. The picture of Talbot, once so strong and hearty and handsome, stretched upon a pallet in some frozen garret, haunted him.

"You may go, you and your friends," said the Head, with a sigh. "I give you leave for a week, but you must obtain permission from home."

"Thank you, sir!"

Permission from home was obtained easily enough, and the Terrible Three prepared for their forlorn hope. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy expressed his sympathy, but he was doubtful, owing to the Terrible Three having forgotten to ask permission for him to accompany them and direct operations. But he nobly hoped for the best. Before they started Tom Merry sought Marie Rivers to tell her they were going. He found the Little Sister pale and troubled.

"Heaven grant you success!" she said. "I have almost given up hope!"

"And you?" said Tom. "Will you be here when Talbot comes—if he comes?"

Marie smiled faintly.

"I shall be here," she said. "I—I have had a letter from my father. He has left England. He has promised me again to keep the promise he made to the Head—to repent and reform. I think he will keep his word. And—and Dr. Holmes wishes me to remain in my post here, and I have consented. He has forgiven me, and trusts me! Oh, I shall be happy here, if—if—"

"We will bring him back," said Tom. He knew she was thinking of Talbot. "We won't come back without him!"

And the Terrible Three started with determination, if with faint hopes.

Mr. Foxe of Scotland Yard met them at the London terminus. The detective, who had once hunted Talbot as a victim, was seeking him now to restore him to honour; but even Mr. Foxe had failed so far.

For several days the juniors, sometimes with Mr. Foxe and sometimes alone, pursued their search. They had put up in an hotel near the station, and every day they were at their work—searching, searching. But as the days passed they realised the hopelessness of it.

At St. Jim's it was easy to think of searching for Talbot in London. In London, they realised what it meant. In that vast desert of bricks and mortar, where millions came and went, a single human being could disappear like a drop of water in the ocean.

In the wintry, misty streets, in parks and commons, where recruits were drilling, under

the shadows of night in darkened thoroughfares, they wandered and sought in vain.

They found themselves scanning strange faces, peering into crowds, in the hope of seeing the well-known face of their chum among the thousands—among the tens of thousands—while hope died lower and lower in their hearts.

Into many strange places they penetrated, where poverty, and the vice that comes of poverty, cowered for shelter from the bitter winter. Many a heartbreaking sight came under their eyes—the grim, gaunt, unnecessary suffering of an ill-governed city—but still they did not find what they sought.

At night they went without fail to the Embankment, that last hideous refuge of the homeless poor, and peered at the shivering, wasted figures shrinking pitifully on the seats, in the hope—the dreadful hope—that their friend might be among those unhappy, crushed victims of a faulty civilisation. And still they did not find him.

"We won't give in," said Tom Merry, when the week of leave was up. "I'm going to write to the Head for leave to stay longer. He must let us. Come what may, I'm not going back without Talbot. To think of him here—on the Embankment, perhaps at night, in the rain!"

"And those others," said Monty Lowther miserably. All the cheery humour had gone out of Lowther's face now. "It's horrible! It keeps me awake at nights thinking of them! Surely something could be done?"

"Yes," said Tom bitterly; "when the country wakes up, if it ever does, and elects men to do things, instead of politicians to babble. But to think of Talbot among all that— We must find him—we shall find him!"

"We must!" said Manners; but there was little hope in his voice.

But they were determined, hope or not, to succeed—to find their chum, to get him away from that noisy, roaring, heartless desert of bricks, back to the green country, where Nature is still as God had made it.

The night came on again—night dark and chill and misty, with a drizzle of rain, and the three chums turned up their coat-collars,

and pulled down their caps, and went on their pilgrimage once more along the cold, shining river—the great river that flows unchanging through so much of woe and despair.

Even in the drizzle of rain there were wretched outcasts upon the seats, huddled in their rags. With heavy hearts the juniors walked on, peering at the bleared faces, brutalised by suffering.

A figure was leaning on the stone balustrade, looking down at the river—a ragged, tattered figure, only too familiar to their eyes now in its misery.

Tom Merry paused. There was something in the fixed gaze of that outcast, bent upon the water, that startled him. Well he knew that to many of those hopeless wretches the deeps of the river were the only refuge from suffering. Was this another poor wretch about to seek release in the icy waters?

But even as he paused the figure turned away, and Tom saw him shake his head. He moved on, and in the shivering form it seemed to Tom Merry that there was something familiar. His heart bounded. Was it possible? At last!

He ran forward.

"Talbot!"

The tattered figure swung round with a startled cry. The light of a lamp flared on his face—showed it thin and wan, emaciated—a face of death. But even in that changed and frozen face Tom recognised the once handsome and healthy face of his old chum. He grasped the boy's arm, his hand trembling.

"Talbot, I've found you at last, old man!"

Talbot reeled.

"Tom Merry!" he muttered thickly.

"Talbot! Oh, old chap!" muttered Lowther. "Here, take my coat; wrap it round you. Oh, Talbot, to find you like this!"

Talbot was reeling unsteadily. They wrapped him in Lowther's warm coat, and Tom led him to the nearest seat.

They held his frozen hands. Talbot could not speak. But it was Talbot—it was the Toff—and they had found him.

"You—you've been looking for me?" muttered Talbot at last.

"Yes, yes!"

"But—but why—how are you here?"

"Don't you understand? It's all come out. John Rivers has confessed—you're cleared. You've got to come back; we're all waiting to welcome you!"

"Oh, Tom"—Talbot closed his eyes for a moment—"it—it seems more like a dream! And—and you've been looking for me, and I—I've been hiding and starving!"

Tom chafed his frozen fingers in his own warm hands.

"What have you been doing, Talbot, all this time?"

"Starving and freezing," said Talbot bitterly. "I had no chance. I wouldn't go back to—to—you understand?"

"I knew it!"

"And there was nothing else. I tried to get work; but unknown, without a character, and these are hard times," said Talbot. "I got a job here and there every now and then—an odd job. But jobs are not easy to get these days. And when my money was gone—the money you gave me, Tom—I had to sleep under arches, in brickyards—anywhere I could get for shelter. And that soon settles a fellow's clothes. You can't even get clean with that kind of life. They talk about the poor being dirty. How are they to keep clean, Tom? They talk about their being drunken. Goodness knows I was tempted often enough, when I had a few pence, to swallow something that would keep out the cold, if only for an hour! But I never did; I had sense enough not to. But I've learned, and these poor wretches haven't, and—Have you got something to eat about you, Tom? I haven't tasted food for three days."

"We'll be at the hotel in five minutes," said Tom.

He signed to an empty taxi that was crawling by. Talbot, weak and faint with hunger and suffering, could scarcely step into the vehicle. They helped him in, and drove off. And the outcast devoured ravenously a chunk of toffee that Lowther found in his pocket. Tom Merry could scarcely keep back his tears.

"Oh, it's like new life to see you fellows again!" said Talbot, with a catch in his voice. "You don't know what it's like. I'm not soft, but—but I've been through it—hard!"

I meant to fight it out to a finish. The finish wouldn't have been far off if you hadn't found me!"

There was a terrible dread in Tom Merry's breast that it might not be far off now, as he looked at the outcast's emaciated face. Had they found him in time?

And he had cause to fear, for in his room at the hotel, when food was brought, Talbot could eat little—starving as he was—and there was a fearful greyness in his face that brought a sickening dread to the hearts of his chums.

Manners had slipped out to call in a doctor, and the medical man when he came ordered the boy immediately to bed. And in the morning Talbot did not wake in his senses—he awoke with wildly staring eyes and babbling tongue, not knowing where he was or what he said. It was evident that he was ill—that he was going to be very ill—and he could not remain where he was.

Unconscious of what was done to him, the unhappy boy was carried down, warmly wrapped, into an ambulance car, and, with his three chums caring for him, was carried swiftly away from the cold, grim city where he had known so much suffering.

The journey was swift, but Talbot saw nothing—knew nothing of it. He did not know when they arrived at St. Jim's; he did not see the kind, anxious face of the Head bending over him. For that day and for many days he was dead to his surroundings.

There was a hush of sadness in the school during those dark days, while it was known that Talbot lay between life and death in the sanatorium, under the care of the girl who had been his childhood's chum, and whose face now he did not know. They were dark

days for Tom Merry. The chilling fear was in his heart that he had found his chum too late to save him.

But a strong constitution pulled Talbot through the crisis, and there came a day at last when his eyes opened with meaning in them, and he looked about him in wonder, and recognised a sweet, kind face that watched by his bedside. Talbot stretched out a thin, feeble hand.

"Marie!" he whispered.

The girl's pale face lighted up.

"Toff, you know me again!"

"Where am I now?" Talbot's eyes wandered about him. "This is—is——"

"The school," said Marie. "They found you and brought you back."

"And I never knew! Have I been very ill?" asked Talbot.

"Very ill," said Marie softly. "But you are better now; you will be well soon."

"I'm very happy now," said Talbot.

From that day he mended fast. In a few more days his chums could come in and talk to him; and the other fellows came in to chat with the invalid—to tell him they were sorry they had doubted him. And Talbot listened to them with a smile.

He was very happy now. The dark days of the Toff were over, and the future stretched bright and golden before him. The Professor was gone—the wide sea rolled between him and the boy he had persecuted—but Marie remained. And when Talbot at last emerged from the school hospital, the rousing welcome he received from the St. Jim's fellows was more than enough to banish from his heart the bitterness of the past.

THE END.



WERE YOU RIGHT?

Solutions to the Puzzles and Tricks on Pages 247-9

1. The Travelling Draught-man.

YOU cannot make the draught-man traverse all the squares in less than sixteen moves, as shown in Fig. 1.

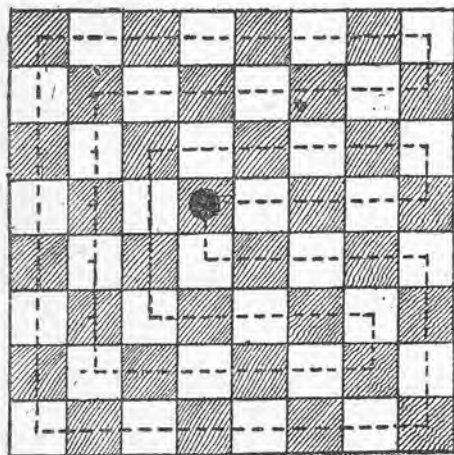


Fig. 1

2. Another Draught Puzzle.

THE way to place the sixteen pieces so that no three are in a line in any direction, can be seen from Fig. 2.

3. The Rings Joined.

THE nine rings can be joined by four lines, as shown in Fig. 3.

4. The Ten Rows.

THE complicated geometrical figure shown in Fig. 4 shows the ten rows formed with nine counters.

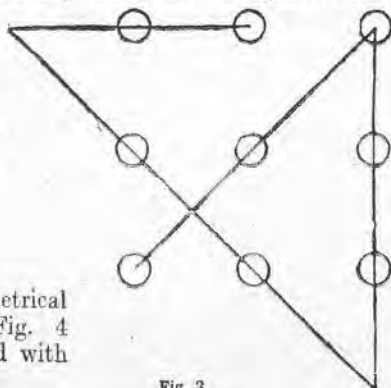


Fig. 3

5. The Cabalistic Sign.

BY making the two cuts shown in Fig. 5, the piece of paper will be divided into four parts that will fit together into a square.

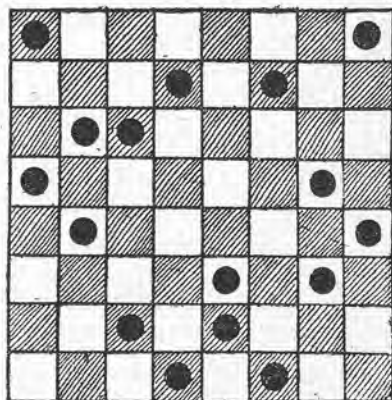


Fig. 2

6. The Dangerous Anarchists.

THE simplest method of rearranging the prisoners was as follows (as there was only one vacant cell at any time the numbers designate which prisoner was moved therein)
—1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 6, 5, 3, 1, 2,
6, 5, 3, 1, 2, 4, 8, 7, 1, 2, 4,
8, 7, 4, 5, 6.

7. Catching the Donkey.

ACCORDING to the rules of the game, the donkey moves first, and the following is one of the shortest methods by which the man can catch him. It will doubtless amuse you to find other, and probably quicker, ways of cornering Ned.

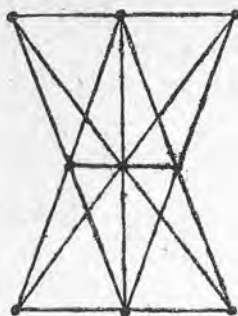


Fig. 4

Donkey to 3
Man „ 36
Donkey „ 21
Man „ 30
Donkey „ 3
Man „ 8
Donkey „ 4
Man „ 7
Donkey „ 3
Man „ 12

When the man has driven the ass into the corner at 5, of course

there is no more chance of escape, and Ned has to submit to the bridle with resignation.

8. Like to Like.

MOVING two men at a time, the four moves are :

2 and 3 moved to spaces 9 and 10
5 and 6 moved to spaces 2 and 3



Fig. 6

8 and 9 moved to spaces 5 and 6
1 and 2 moved to spaces 8 and 9
The counters will then appear as in Fig. 6.

9. The Broken Chain.

TO repair the chain the jeweller had recourse to a very simple device. Breaking the three links of one of the pieces he used them to join the remaining four pieces, thus restoring it to its original length.

10. The Diamond Cross.

THE owner of the diamond cross thought she had been very clever in counting the stones as she did, but her cunning overreached itself,

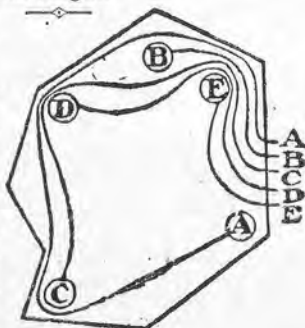


Fig. 8

for the jeweller had only to remove the diamonds at the extremities of the crosspiece, and shift this latter up one point, as in Fig. 7, to make this theft almost unnoticeable. You will find the diamonds count nine, even though two stones have been removed.

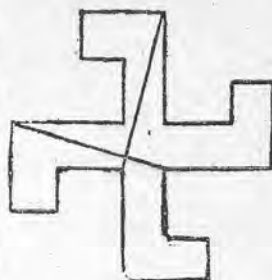


Fig. 5

11. The Quarrelsome Railways.

AFTER much surveying and discussion, the railways laid their lines as shown in Fig. 8.

12. The Other Railway Problem.

THE following is the simplest method by which the engine could transpose the trucks G, H.

I pushes G into F, and returns and pushes H up to G. The two trucks are then coupled together, drawn down to C, and pushed over to A. G is then uncoupled, and I takes H back to F, and leaves it there. I then returns to G, pulls it back to E, and leaves it there. I then returns to H by way of C, and draws it down to D, thus completing the task.

13. The Mitre.

A GLANCE at Fig. 9 will show how the mitre can be divided into four similar parts.



Fig. 7

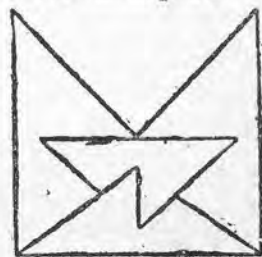


Fig. 9



BILLY BUNTER'S TREASURE

A PLAY IN VERSE FOR AMATEUR ACTORS

INTRODUCING

HARRY WHARTON & CO., OF GREYFRIARS,

AND

THE GIRLS OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL.

[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 PERFORMERS

(1) The part of Billy Bunter (which is an extensive one) should be allotted to a plump performer, and one who can memorise well.

(2) If no lady performers are available, the parts of the Cliff House girls may be taken by boys.

(3) Act III. should be rendered with the stage in semi-darkness. The packing-case containing the "treasure" can, if necessary, be hauled into view from one of the wings.

(4) No elaborate attire will be needed, save in Act II., when Billy Bunter visits Cliff House.

(5) The services of an efficient stage-manager should be obtained, so that there is as little delay as possible between each Act.

(6) Don't "rush" the performance—and don't gabble. Speak slowly and distinctly, so that the audience finds it easy to follow what is being said.

(7) If your performance is reported in the local Press, don't forget to send a cutting to the Editor of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

Characters :

HARRY WHARTON	..	..	..	..	} The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove.
BOB CHERRY	..	..	..	..	
FRANK NUGENT	..	..	..	..	
JOHNNY BULL	..	..	..	..	
HURREE SINGH	..	..	..	..	
BILLY BUNTER	..	..	..	..	} The plump and greedy Owl of the Remove. The leader of No. 7 Study, and a lover of practical jokes.
PETER TODD	..	..	..	..	
TOM DUTTON	..	..	..	..	} A deaf junior, and an occupant of No. 7 Study. Billy Bunter's sister, at Cliff House. Captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House. Barbara's friend and study companion.
BESSIE BUNTER	..	..	..	..	
BARBARA REDFERN	..	..	..	..	
MABEL LYNN	..	..	..	..	

ACT I.

SCENE.—No. 1 *Study in the Remove Passage.*

(THE FAMOUS FIVE are within, busily engaged in preparing tea.)

CHERRY (*taking a pie from the cupboard and placing it on the table*):

I'm jolly glad this rabbit-pie
Escaped the greedy Bunter's eye!

NUGENT:

I'm glad no study-raider's been
And sneaked our very last sardine!

BULL:

This extra-special currant cake
Looks jolly nice, and no mistake!

HURREE SINGH:

Say, Wharton, you're in luckfulness!
Your pater acted brickfully;
Through him we've got the tuckfulness:
We smack our chops right lickfully!

WHARTON:

The pater's fiver came in handy:
I'll drink his health in ginger brandy!

(*The table having been laid, THE FAMOUS FIVE seat themselves around it. Enter BILLY BUNTER, flourishing a document in his hand, and blinking excitedly at the juniors.*)

BUNTER:

I say, you fellows——

ALL:

Get outside!

BUNTER (*stopping his ears*):

Can't stand such bellows!

ALL:

Go and hide!

BUNTER:

I've had a most delightful shock,
I'll tell you all about it.

CHERRY:

You've heard great news from Dr. Locke?
Well, we can do without it!

BUNTER:

I've just picked up this document——

WHARTON:

So that's the sort of shock you meant?

BUNTER:

I say, you fellows! Peter Todd,
Whose ways are jolly quaint and odd,
Was strolling in the Close just now,

A thoughtful look upon his brow,
I promptly trotted up behind
To ask old Toddy if he'd mind
Advancing me a bob or two
(My postal-order's nearly due).
I was about to speak, then stopped:
I saw that Peter Todd had dropped
A sheet of paper on the ground;
I stooped to pick it up, and found
The most amazing thing I've met——

NUGENT:

It was a five-pound note, you bet!

BUNTER:

Not so, my friend; it was a screed
On faded parchment, hard to read.
But I've deciphered it at last,
And now my heart beats loud and fast!

BULL:

Is that the parchment in your hand?

BUNTER:

It is, and, oh, it's simply grand!
I'll soon be rich beyond all measure,
When I have found the hidden treasure!

WHARTON:

What hidden treasure? Speak, you
chump!

HURREE SINGH:

Our worthy friend gives me the hump!

BUNTER:

Within the smuggler's cave, you chaps,
A weighty treasure lies, you know!

CHERRY:

And here——though not for long, perhaps——
A weighty porpoise "lies"—just so!

ALL:

Ha, ha, ha!

BUNTER:

I'm sorry you should doubt my word——

NUGENT:

A wilder yarn we never heard!

BUNTER:

Oh, really, this is not a fable!
I'll lay this parchment on the table,
That you may read, and mark, and learn
The words thereon, which makes me yearn
To find this treasure right away,
And roll in quids for many a day!

(*The Famous Five gather round and examine the parchment. Wharton reads it aloud to the others.*)

And I'm certain that the gold
Will be found in Compton's cove,
Then you chaps will simply rave
When you see me roll in quids—

NUGENT:

Roll him through the doorway, kids!

(THE FAMOUS FIVE seize BILLY BUNTER
and overpower him. They roll him towards the
door.)

BUNTER:

Yaroooo! Hold on—I mean, leggo!
My constitution's weak, you know!

CHERRY:

I say, you chaps, it makes me grin
To see a human rolling-pin!

(Laughter.)

BUNTER:

You beasts! You rotters! I'll depart!

BULL:

He's got no option, bless his heart!
(Renewed laughter.)

BUNTER:

You cads will never get a share
Of all my treasure-trove, so there!
And when I own a private car,
I'll scorn you like the beasts you are!
Within my swiftly-gliding Ford,
I'll sit and swagger like a lord!
And when, on bended knees, you plead
That I should treat you to a feed,
I'll snap my fingers in your faces,
And put you in your proper places!

NUGENT:

Your proper place is in the passage!

CHERRY:

And then, methinks, he'll need a massage!
(Laughter.)

BUNTER:

No wealth of mine shall e'er come your
way!

WHARTON:

Let's roll him gently through the door-
way!

(Exit BILLY BUNTER, loudly protesting.)

CHERRY:

Farewell, my plump and podgy tub!

BULL:

He only came to cadge our grub!

BUNTER (from without):

Oh, help! Fire! Murder! Yow-ow-ow,

I'll go along to Cliff House now,
And call upon my sister Bessie—

NUGENT:

Not in *those* togs, they're somewhat
messy!

CHERRY:

Yes, you must don your best apparel
Before you see the girls, old barrel!

BUNTER:

I go. I will return at leisure—

WHARTON:

And don't forget to bring the treasure!

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—No. 4 Study, Fourth Form passage,
Cliff House School.

(BARBARA REDFERN, MABEL LYNN, and
BESSIE BUNTER are within. The two first-
named—known as "BABS" and "MABS"
respectively—have just finished tea; but BESSIE
BUNTER is still devouring jam-tarts.)

BESSIE:

I say! These tarts are simply prime!

BABS:

You'll burst unless you stop in time!

BESSIE:

I'm still as hungry as a hunter—

MABS (aside):

The favourite saying of a Bunter!

BESSIE:

My hunger's reached a dreadful pitch,
My appetite's enormous!

BABS:

A well-known fact, dear girl, of which
There's no need to inform us!

BESSIE:

I'd dearly love a plate of ham,
Some muffins, and some strawberry-jam;
A currant cake, some chocolate fingers
(The memory of them sweetly lingers!)
Some home-made toffee—twenty slabs—

MABS:

The girl's a perfect glutton, Babs!

BESSIE:

A glutton, am I? Don't be silly!
You ought to see my brother Billy!
They gaze upon his feats in Hall
And wonder where he stows it all!

BABS :

Your brother Billy is a fat
And good-for-nothing toad—that's flat !

(Enter BILLY BUNTER attired in his Sunday best, with a shining silk "topper" perched on his head. He removes the "topper" with a flourish, and makes a sweeping bow.)

MABS :

Why, talk of angels minus wings !—

BUNTER :

What have you said of me—nice things ?

BABS :

Well—er—ahem !—that is to say—

BUNTER :

You've simply sung my praises, eh ?

Ah, well, I'm not surprised a bit,

For all the ladies say I'm "IT."

A handsome, dashing chap like me

Is always being asked to tea !

MABS :

You haven't been invited here—

BUNTER :

A grave omission, girls, I fear !

BESSIE :

Now, Billy, come and sit by me,

And help me shift these jam-tarts.

BUNTER (airing his French) :

Oui !

(BILLY BUNTER absent-mindedly sits on his "topper," which he has placed on the chair. He jumps up in alarm.)

Your topper looks as if it's been a

Bellows, or p'raps a concertina !

BUNTER :

I really am a clumsy fool—

This hat belongs to Johnny Bull !

(Laughter.)

(BILLY BUNTER removes the "topper" to a place of safety, and sits down. He reaches towards the dish for a jam-tart, but to his dismay he finds that BESSIE has eaten the lot !)

BUNTER :

The dish is empty ! What a sell !

BESSIE (with a groan) :

I've fed not wisely, but too well !

BUNTER :

Such gormandising makes me weep !

BESSIE :

Oh, shut up, Billy ! Go to sleep !

BABS (to BESSIE) :

Your brother Billy looks excited ;

Has he been raised to fame, or knighted ?

MABS :

Sir William Bunter, O.B.E.,

Sounds most attractive, you'll agree !

BESSIE :

Now, Billy, tell me what's the matter—

Why, yes, you certainly look fatter,

As if you're bursting with some story !

Of how you've won both fame and glory !

BUNTER (looking confused) :

I'm not excited, Bess, a scrap ;

I never was that sort of chap !

I've got no news of any sort,

There's really nothing to report.

I've never even heard of Roger,

The smuggler and the artful dodger,

Who collared treasure of the best,

And stored it in the old oak chest !

BESSIE (in great surprise) :

Billy ! Whatever are you saying ?

BUNTER :

Nun-nothing ! I was only playing !

I simply tried to pull your leg.

There is no treasure stored at Pegg.

Whoever searches with a spade

Will be unlucky, I'm afraid,

For Compton's Cave contains no chest

Of bright doubloons, and all the rest.

It's all a fairy-tale, I guess ;

And so let's change the subject, Bess !

BESSIE :

You've got a secret—that I know—

And it will be my pleasure

To take a spade to-night, and go

To dig for hidden treasure !

BUNTER :

No, no ! Don't venture near the coast

Or you may meet the smuggler's ghost !

BESSIE (firmly) :

I'll go to-night, with spade and pick :

I see a chance to get rich quick !

BABS :

What nonsense ! You are both insane !

MABS :

Billy's got water on the brain !

BABS :

I think that such a coon as he

Should suffer for his lunacy !

BUNTER :

I say, dear girls, I must be off !

MABS :

There's nothing here for you to scoff !

BUNTER (*extending his hand*) :

Good-night, Miss Redfern, and Miss Lynn !

Why, aren't you going to shake my fin ?

BABS :

That paw of yours is far too grubby—

MABS :

We dare not touch it. Good-night, tubby !

(*Exit BILLY BUNTER.*)

BESSIE (*aside*) :

He's fairly let the secret out !

That treasure will be mine !

I'll soon be rich, beyond a doubt :

Oh, won't it be divine ?

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

(*SCENE.—The smugglers' cave on the coast of Pegg.*)

(*The place is practically in darkness. Enter BILLY BUNTER, armed with spade and lantern. He sets the lantern down on the sanded floor, and peers around him.*)

BUNTER :

My hat ! It's jolly dark in here !

I hope no grisly spooks are near.

Hark ! What was that ? Was it a ghost,

Or breakers dashing on the coast ?

(*He gazes fearfully into the shadows, and shudders.*)

I'm not a coward—not a bit,

But this is most uncanny !

I seem to see before me flit

The ghost of my old Granny !

However, I must banish fear,

And seek the gold that's buried here !

(*He commences operations with the spade. Whilst he is digging in the sand, by the light of the lantern, he hears an exclamation without.*)

Oh, dear ! I'm sure this place is haunted !

But I'll continue, nothing daunted.

(*Enter BESSIE BUNTER, also with spade and lantern. She peers round the cave, and gives a start when she recognises BILLY.*)

BESSIE :

Hallo ! So you are here before me ?

BUNTER (*aside*) :

Oh, crumbs ! The outlook's jolly stormy !

BESSIE :

This is the right cave, is it not ?

BUNTER :

No, no ! the whole thing's tommy-rot !

You'll find no treasure here, you know,

So don't you think you'd better go ?

BESSIE :

Excuse me, I'm remaining here ;

You can't deceive me, Billy dear.

I'll dig until my hand's all blisters,

The treasure-trove shall be your sister's !

BUNTER :

I wish you'd run away and play !

No treasure-trove will come your way !

BESSIE :

Now that I've made this evening trip,

I'm coming into partnership.

So, Billy, let us dig together,

And then we'll soon discover whether

The old oak chest is in this cave.

BUNTER :

Your conduct, Bessie, makes me rave !

BESSIE :

Come ! let us burrow in the sand,

And soon the hoard will come to hand !

BUNTER :

I'd much prefer to see you scoot :

Still, you may stay and share the loot !

BESSIE :

Your kindness far exceeds your beauty !

I really think it is my duty

To check these greedy thoughts within you.

BUNTER :

Oh, dry up, Bessie ! Let's continue !

(*BILLY resumes his task, aided by his sister. They shovel up a quantity of sand between them, and presently BILLY stops short.*)

BUNTER :

My spade struck something hard—the treasure !

BESSIE :

Oh, Billy ! I am mad with pleasure !

(*They continue to dig, and a large packing-case is exposed to view.*)

BUNTER :

No old chest is in this place !

BESSIE (*excitedly*) :

The treasure's in this packing-case !

BUNTER :

But how are we to open it ?

BESSIE :

Ah, that's the question ! Wait a bit !

Have you a pickaxe, Billy dear ?

BUNTER :

Why should I bring such weapons here ?

BESSIE :

Then we must take this case between us

And guard it like the Epstein Venus !

To Greyfriars we'll convey it, Billy,

Then force the lid——

BUNTER :

Oh, don't be silly !

BESSIE :

We dare not leave it where it is.

Come, Billy ! Let us get to biz !

BUNTER (*stooping to lift the packing-case*) :

The weight of this thing is immense !

BESSIE :

No matter ; we must take it hence.

BUNTER :

But, Bessie, it will break our backs,

And give us chronic heart attacks !

BESSIE :

But think of all this treasure, Billy !

Why, soon we'll strut down Piccadilly

Monarchs of all that we survey.

"The wealthiest in the land !" they'll say.

I'll have a fur coat, you a Ford,

And we'll be worshipped and adored

By belted earls and dashing dukes——

BUNTER (*with a shudder*) :

Let's quit ! I have a dread of spooks !

This cave was once a smugglers' lair,

And now it's haunted I declare !

Heave-ho, then, Bess ! This packing-case

Will soon be in a safer place !

Then we'll enjoy the pleasant toil

Of counting up the merry spoil !

BESSIE :

We'll leave the spades and lanterns here.

BUNTER :

Yes. Come on, while the coast is clear !

(*Exit BILLY and BESSIE, gasping and grunting beneath the weight of the packing-case.*)

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—No. 7 *Study in the Remove Passage.*

(*PETER TODD and TOM DUTTON are within, doing their prep.*)

TODD (*looking up from his work*) :

I wonder what's become of Bunter ?

DUTTON (*with his hand to his ear*) :

Eh ? What was that about a punter ?

TODD :

Bunter, not "punter !" Where's he got to ?

DUTTON :

Don't shout ! I've often told you not to !

TODD :

He went out just as dusk was falling——

DUTTON :

Yes, rather ! I object to bawling.

TODD :

You chump ! You'll drive me to despair !

DUTTON (*pointing to the door*) :

Clear out, Todd, if you want to swear !

TODD (*aside*) :

Oh, help ! His deafness makes me groan !

My kingdom for a megaphone !

DUTTON :

I say, I wish you wouldn't mutter !

I can't hear the remarks you utter.

Not that I'm really deaf, you know ;

I'm slightly hard of hearing, though !

TODD :

Have you seen Bunter ? Speak, you fool !

DUTTON :

Eh ? What is wrong with Johnny Bull ?

TODD :

You mix up every word I speak !

DUTTON (*jumping angrily to his feet*) :

How dare you say that I'm a freak ?

TODD (*backing away in alarm*) :

I didn't ! Let me put you wise——

DUTTON (*clenching his fists*) :

I'll punch your nose, and black your eyes !

(*PETER TODD dodges round the table, hotly pursued by the infuriated DUTTON.*)

TODD :

Stand back, you madman ! Keep your distance !

DUTTON (*grimly*) :

No, thanks ; I don't require assistance !

(Enter BILLY and BESSIE BUNTER, carrying a packing-case. They dump it on to the floor, and collapse over it, utterly exhausted.)

BUNTER :

Oh, dear ! I'm jolly nearly dead !
I've shooting pains right through my head !
My back is broken and my legs
Will shortly snap like wooden pegs !

BESSIE :

I am exhausted past all measure,
But never mind ; we've got the treasure !

TODD :

The treasure ! Why, what *do* you mean ?

BUNTER :

Now, then, you rotters, keep your distance !

CHERRY (*dropping pleadingly on one knee*) :

Aren't we to share a portion, Fatty ?

BUNTER :

Get up, you worm ! You make me ratty !
When first I told you of the treasure
You sneered, but now I've got the pleasure
Of handling all the giddy loot !
Buzz off, you jealous cadgers ! Scoot !

BESSIE :

The lid is coming off—how grand !

Key to the "Test Your Observation Picture" on page 110.

The scissors have no rivet. The umbrella has no ribs. The blade of the knife is too long for the handle, and there is no notch to open the blade with. The hat has no band and the stick no ferrule.

The shadows of the cup and jug are in the wrong place. The deck-chair has no cross bar or notches to hold it. Handles are missing from the garden-fork, bucket, and watering-can. Easel has no peg holes. Roses do not grow with oak leaves, and flower-pots should have an opening. The bag has neither catch or clasp or lock. The smoke is blowing in a contrary direction to the flag. The bell has no clapper.

The barrel should have hoops. The rain-pipe should be fastened to the wall. The lamp-post has no support for a ladder. No seams are shown on the football.

The screws could not be driven in by a screw-driver. There are no stud or button-holes on the collar. The window shows no catch. The clothes should be pegged on the line.

BESSIE :

Hand me the poker !

TODD :

All serene !

(*He picks up the poker and hands it to BESSIE, who begins to prise open the lid of the packing-case. Enter the FAMOUS FIVE.*)

WHARTON :

My hat ! What's going on in here ?

TODD :

They've found the treasure !

NUGENT :

Why, that's queer !
I didn't think 'twas in existence !

TODD (*aside*) :

And so's the little jape I planned !

(*BESSIE BUNTER wrenches off the lid of the packing-case. She gazes within, and a stupefied expression comes over her face. BILLY rushes to her side.*)

BESSIE :

Of all the horrid, heartless tricks !

BUNTER :

This packing-case is full of bricks !

TODD :

You're spoofed and diddled, dished and done !

CHERRY :

This beats the band, and takes the bun !

BULL :

This hoax would tickle anybody !

WHARTON :

Were you the author of it, Toddy ?

TODD :

Yes, it was carried out by me,
And proved successful, as you see.
I hatched the plot—you know what
followed :

The bait was very neatly swallowed !

Armed with a lantern and a spade,

Bunter (and this misguided maid)

Went to the smugglers' cave at Pegg—

BUNTER :

You rotter, Todd ! You pulled my leg !

BESSIE :

If I'd a hatpin here, I guess

I'd stab you all with vigour !

BUNTER :

It fairly gets my back up, Bess,

To see them stand and snigger !

CHERRY :

Say, Bunter, can we share the treasure ?

BUNTER :

Yes—with the very greatest pleasure !

(He dives his hand into the packing-case for some bricks, and proceeds to hurl them at his schoolfellows, who scatter in all directions, and make their exit, holding their sides with merriment. BESSIE assists in the brick-throwing, but nobody is hit. Eventually, BILLY and BESSIE are the only two left in the study.)

BESSIE :

So the treasure consisted of—simply
bricks !

With misfortune we're anointed ;

BUNTER :

"Blessed is he that expecteth nix.

He shall not be disappointed !"

CURTAIN

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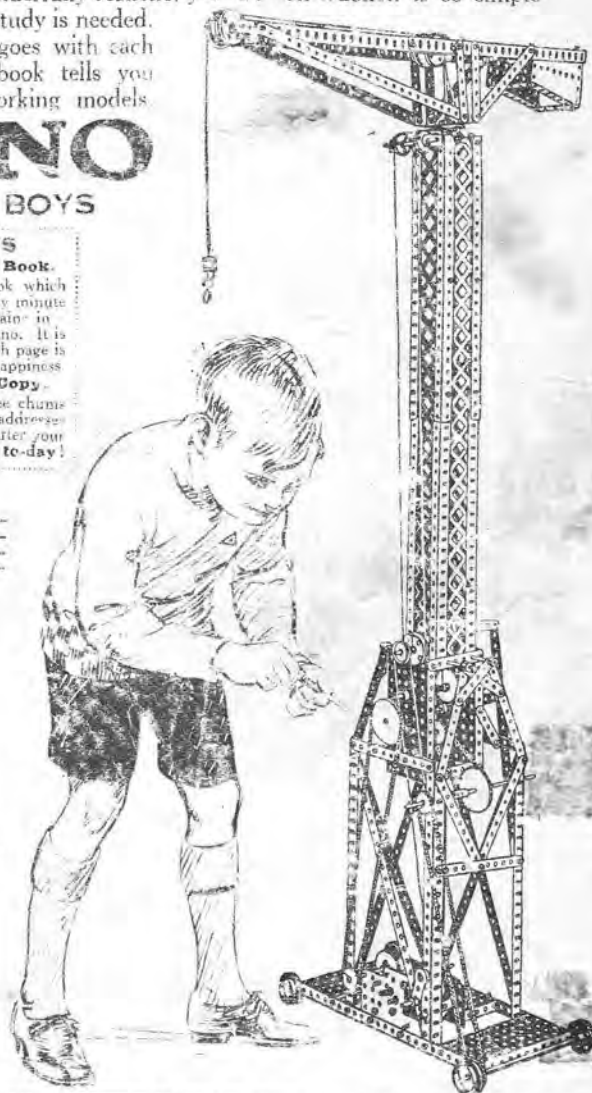
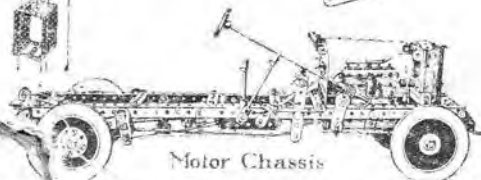
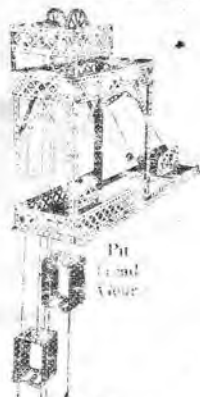
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