

The Haunting of the Herr!



You've heard of the lion in an ass's skin? Here we have asses in a horse's skin—a really funny yarn of a great school jape!

By G. E. ROCHESTER

THE FIRST CHAPTER The Herr's Story!

THE Fifth, to a man, adopted an air of breathless interest and pleased expectancy which Herr Guggenslogger must have found extremely gratifying. They knew what was coming. They had heard it often before, and they infinitely preferred it to lessons.

"A young man I vos ven id occurred," commenced the Herr, "and vid mein liddle brudder I addended ad de University of Munich for to learn de languages."

"What languages, sir?" inquired Boulter, with polite interest.

"Id does nod madder vot languages, Boulder," replied the Herr, a trifle testily. "Dat has noddings to do vid vot I indend to tell you. Allow me to broceed. Mein liddle brudder vos de naughty von!"

"Oh, sir!" came in shocked chorus from the Form.

"Ja!" The Herr nodded solemnly. "He vos inaddendive to de lessons, and luffed to blay de sword games vid de oder studends. For to buy a sword he vonce sold mein luffy red waisdcoad!"

"Your red waistcoat, sir?" inquired Boulter, with concern.

"Ja, I haf said so! Blese nod to inder-rubt, Boulder! But von day he took de horse of mein fader for to haf id shod!"

"Shot?" ejaculated Pilson, with well-simulated horror.

"Nein! Shod—shoes pud on de feed of id ad de blagsmith. Bud mein liddle brudder vished for to go to Augsburg for to see de duelling between de studends, and he had no monies. So vot did he do?"

The Herr paused dramatically.

"Sold the rest of your waistcoats, sir," ventured Boulter brightly.

"Ach, no! You are de foolish von, Boulder! He sold de horse of mein fader to de sausage-machine mans, and ven mein fader vent for to seek de horse, de mans gived him a big basket of luffly sausages!"

The Fifth hugged themselves with delight.

"Bud dat is nod all, nein!" went on the Herr. "Dat horse vos a goot horse, and id vos angry ad being pud through de sausage-machine!"

"You mean it was cut up, sir!" murmured Boulter, and giggled delightedly at Pilson.

The Herr stared at him suspiciously for a moment, then went on:

"Dese interrutions I vill nod haf, Boulder! I say de horse vos angry, and for why do I say dat? Becos," he waved a podgy forefinger at the class, "becos on de anniversary of the day ven he vos pud through de machine, de ghost of him abbears and gazes ad me so sad and so rebroachful! I dink id dinks dat I should haf saved id from ids sad fade in de machine!"

"And that's to-day, sir, isn't it?" said Boulter, with disarming interest. "It appears to-night, sir, doesn't it?"

"Ja, to-night, Boulder!"

"How often have you seen the ghost, sir?" inquired a respectful and admiring voice.

The Herr hesitated. He was never quite sure how far St. Freda's believed these reminiscences of his. Then, with the air of a man sticking to his guns, he replied:

"Ofden haf I seen id! But sometimes I am asleeb, and do nod see id!"

"Doesn't it wake you up, sir?" inquired Boulter. "I mean, it must feel awf'ly fed up at coming all the way from Munich to St. Freda's and then finding you asleep!"

"Id does nod wake me up, Boulder!" replied the Herr. "I'd—— But dere is de bell ringing. De lesson id is ended. Blese to dizmizz!"

Boulter hoisted himself to his feet, and, as the Herr strode from the Form-room, he turned grinningly to Pilson.

"I'll bet it'll wake the fat old liar up to-night!" he remarked. "We'll see that kid, Howard, after school!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Plot Thickens!

TUFTY HOWARD, of the Lower Fourth, was having tea with his pal, Carstairs, in their study when the door was thrown open and Boulter strode into the room, followed by Pilson.

"Hallo, kids!" greeted Boulter. "I understand that you brought a horse's skin back with you after last hols—some theatrical rubbish. I want to borrow it!"

That was like Boulter. He never beat about the bush, particularly when dealing with kids.

"You're not going to get it, Boulter, so shove off!" replied Tufty. "And if you must bring Pilson into other men's studies, you might ask him to wash his neck and change his collar!"

"You cheeky young rotter!" yelled Pilson, and made a rush for the table.

Boulter grabbed him by the arm.

"We don't want any impertinence, young Howard!" he said loftily. "Are you going to hand over that skin?"

"No!" retorted Tufty. "So buzz off! We don't want to have to fumigate the study!"

Boulter choked.

"I'll give you a thundering good hiding if you don't hand over that skin!" he shouted.

A peculiar look crept into Tufty's eyes.

"Why do you want it?" he demanded.

"Never mind why I want it!" snapped Boulter. "I want it—that's good enough for you!"

"There's a rag on in the junior common-room to-night, please, Boulter," said Tufty, with a humility which caused Carstairs to gape at him in consternation. "We wanted to use it ourselves, please, Boulter!"

"I can't help that!" retorted Boulter, with a slightly mollified air. "You hand it over without any more argument!"

"All right!"

Tufty rose to his feet and stepped towards the cupboard. Then he halted.

"I'm afraid it's in a bit of a mess, Boulter," he said. "I'll clean it up and bring it along to you."

"Yes, give it a clean, you grubby little beast!" replied Boulter. "And if you don't bring it to my study this evening I'll come back here with an ash-plant!"

"I'll bring it, Boulter."

With a triumphant snort Boulter stalked from the study. Outside in the corridor he turned to Pilson.

"Nothing like high-handed methods with these kids!" he said. "We men in the Fifth have got to assert our authority! Now, come on! I want to see Meeke."

And in the study Carstairs was eyeing Tufty in amazement.

"Are—are you dotty?" he gasped. "Dash it, man, what d'you mean by knuckling under to that rotter?"

Tufty eyed him calmly.

"My dear ass," he replied, "Boulter's been throwing his giddy weight about all term. We're fed up with him. And this—this——"

He flopped down in the arm-chair and gave himself up to a paroxysm of silent laughter.

"Well?" inquired Carstairs grimly.

"This," spluttered Tufty, "is—is where we get our own back! Just—just wait!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

The Phantom Horse!

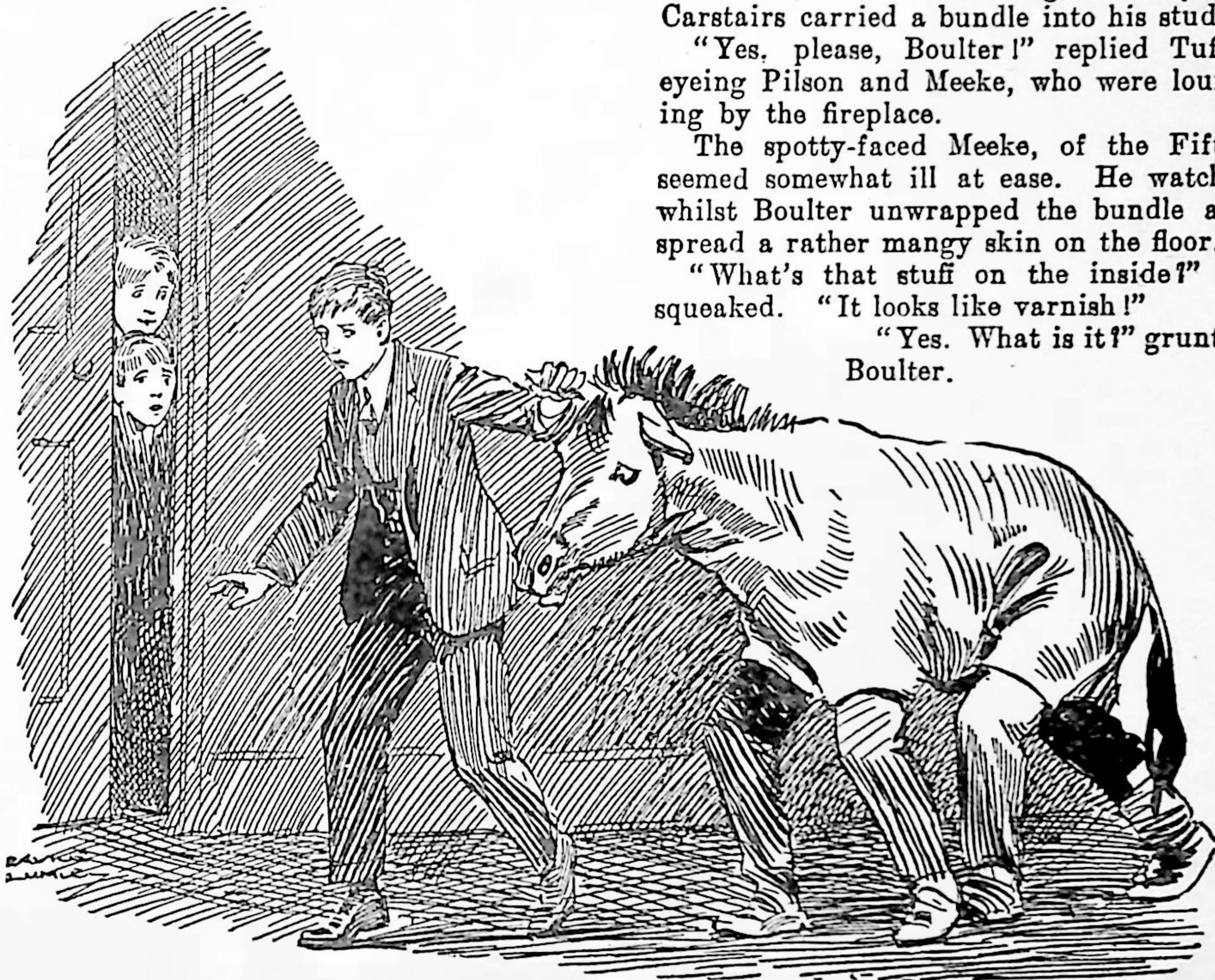
"So you've brought it!" remarked Boulter, later that evening, as Tufty and Carstairs carried a bundle into his study.

"Yes, please, Boulter!" replied Tufty, eyeing Pilson and Meeke, who were lounging by the fireplace.

The spotty-faced Meeke, of the Fifth, seemed somewhat ill at ease. He watched whilst Boulter unwrapped the bundle and spread a rather mangy skin on the floor.

"What's that stuff on the inside?" he squeaked. "It looks like varnish!"

"Yes. What is it?" grunted Boulter.



Two forms appeared. One was the skinny figure of Meeke, and the other was an angular-looking horse, which he was leading along by the ear! (See Chapter 3.)

"It's a dressing," replied Tufty. "A sort of preservative, please, Boulter."

"All right! Clear out! You can come and collect the thing to-morrow," growled Boulter.

Tufty and Carstairs withdrew. But till prayers they lurked about the Fifth Form corridor. They wanted to see what Boulter & Co. were up to. Lights out came, and Boulter had not sallied forth except to go up to the dorm. with Pilson and Meeke.

"We'll slip downstairs again as soon as we can!" whispered Tufty as he and Carstairs undressed in their own dormitory. "The beast is up to something, and it's going to happen after lights out—that's obvious!"

An hour later they crept downstairs and crouched in a doorway at the end of the Fifth Form corridor. The minutes dragged slowly past, and more than once Carstairs voted the thing a wash-out, and suggested going back to bed. But Tufty would have none of it, and suddenly he grabbed Carstairs by the arm.

Three shadowy forms were coming along the dimly lit corridor. They disappeared into Boulter's study. Then followed a wait of ten minutes or more, and two forms reappeared. One was the skinny figure of Meeke, and the other was an angular-looking horse, which he was leading along by one ear.

"Boulter and Pilson in the skin, and—and Meeke leading 'em!" spluttered Tufty. "Come on!"

Silently the two juniors crept in the wake of Meeke and his peculiar quadruped.

"They're making for the masters' quarters!" whispered Tufty.

They were. They were making for Herr Guggenslogger's bed-room, and, reaching it, Meeke gently turned the handle, then bolted back along the corridor, leaving the horse to carry on alone. He whizzed silently past Tufty and Carstairs, who were crouched in an alcove, and disappeared through the green baize door at the end of the corridor.

The horse nosed open the door of the Herr's bed-room and lumbered across the

threshold. A night-light was burning in the room, and the juniors, who by this time were ensconced outside the door, had an excellent view of the subsequent proceedings.

The Herr was snoring lustily, his pink pyjama-clad form rising and falling beneath the sheets. The horse pranced to the foot of the bed, and, thrusting its head over the rail, uttered a penetrating moan.

The Herr stirred uneasily. Again came the long-drawn moan. The Herr awoke. He opened his eyes sleepily. Then they popped open wide, and stayed like that. A horse was staring at him over the foot of the bed. It was a sad, mournful-looking horse. Its features fairly oozed melancholia.

Herr Guggenslogger was galvanised into action. He sat up with a jerk. His mouth opened. It was his laudable intention to bellow for help, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He made feeble, throaty noises.

The horse placed its forefeet on the bed. It was shaking its head at the Herr, as though in reproach. Again it moaned—a long, horrible moan, which caused a cold perspiration to break out all over Herr Guggenslogger.

And what of Boulter and Pilson, inside the skin? Boulter was the head, shoulders, and front legs. Pilson formed the rear quarters. It will be noted, therefore, that really Pilson had very little say in what followed next. Boulter, through the eye-holes in the head, could see all that was going on. He was grinning delightedly. The Herr's funk was extremely gratifying to Boulter. He did not like the Herr. He soared to further efforts. He decided to get into the bed!

He lumbered forward, and Pilson followed. Pilson had no other choice in the matter. Like some horrible nightmarish form, the horse heaved itself on to the bed, and commenced to tuck itself under the clothes.

But Herr Guggenslogger had had enough. Sheer panic brought motion to his limbs. His plump form shot out of bed with a howl.

"Donner und blitzen!" he bellowed, and bounded for the door.

"Ein geist! Ein geist!" he roared as he shot into the corridor.

"Helb! Helb!" he howled as he legged it down the corridor, gesticulating wildly with frenzied arms.

And Tufty, supporting himself against the limp and almost hysterical Carstairs, wept silent tears of overwhelming mirth.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A Horse In Distress!

SCARCELY had the Herr reached the green-baize door and thundered through it than the horse emerged from the bed-room and went along the corridor at a shambling trot. Boulter and Pilsen had the wind up. They didn't want a crowd to collect before they got clear.

They also disappeared through the baize door, and the two juniors were preparing to follow when Herr Guggenslogger returned with Mr. Snooker, the maths master, and Egbert, the janitor.

The Herr was breathing stertorously, and still gesticulating wildly.

"A bantom!" he was booming. "I dell you dat a bantom vos in mein bed-room!"

"A bantam!" growled Egbert. "'S'funny! There ain't no 'ens around this 'ere school!"

"Fool! Block'ead!" boomed the Herr. "I do nod say a bantam, bud a bantom! A bantom—a ghosdt! Ein geist!"

"Ah, a phantom!" said Mr. Snooker. "But, my dear Guggenslogger——"

He stopped abruptly as his eye fell on Tufty and Carstairs.

"What are you boys doing here?" he demanded.

"We thought we heard a shout, sir," explained Tufty.

"A lot of shouts!" chimed in Carstairs.

Mr. Snooker was in a poisonous mood. He had been literally yanked out of bed by a babbling Herr Guggenslogger. He



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thought the Herr was suffering from nightmare. He remembered the enormous dinner the Herr had shifted that night. Certainly he did not believe that the fatuous Teuton had seen a ghost. And emphatically he did not wish a master to become a laughing-stock, so he snapped:

"Get back to your dormitory at once! There is nothing the matter—nothing whatsoever!"

Tufty and Carstairs departed, thankful to have got off so lightly. But they did not return to their dormitory. They made their way to Boulter's study. A chink of

light was shining under the floor, and strange noises were coming from inside the study. The frenzied squeak of Meeke was intermingled with shufflings and grunts.

With a grin at Carstairs, Tufty knocked quietly on the door, and, opening it, stepped into the room, with Carstairs at his heels. Meeke, very red in the face and very scared-looking, was standing in the middle of the floor. The horse had taken dubious cover behind the ramshackle arm-chair, and was staring over the back of it at the intruders.

"Grrr! Brrrrr! Mrrrrrrrr!" it said.

"What do you want?" translated Meeke.

"We want that skin!" said Tufty. "What's the idea? We didn't know it was going to be used after lights out. What footling idiots are in it, anyway?"

The horse shoved aside the arm-chair with its head and advanced threateningly.

"It's—it's Boulter and Pilson!" squeaked Meeke. "I—I can't get 'em out of it! The skin's stuck to 'em!"

"Oh, has it?" replied Tufty slowly. He turned to Carstairs with sudden concern. "I say, old man, I hope we didn't get the skin preservative mixed up with that liquid glue!"

"Looks as though we must have done, old chap," replied Carstairs solemnly.

"What?" screeched Meeke. "Oh, my hat! Glue! Glue, did you say? Oh, dear!"

"Grrrr! Brrrrr! Mrrrrrrrr!" grunted the horse, and pranced frenziedly on the carpet in front of the fireplace.

The trouble was that, although Boulter could see and hear quite plainly, the horse's head was not constructed to allow for speech. There was much Boulter could have said had plain speech been possible, but he had to content himself with muffled grunts and subdued bellowings.

Tufty, Carstairs, and Meeke watched with interest whilst the horse, after seemingly endeavouring to tie itself into knots, fell into the fireplace.

"Some—something's got to be done!" stuttered Meeke. "Have you got any scissors, and we'll cut 'em out of it."

"We want to know where you've been!" said Tufty. "As for scissors, the matron's the only person from whom we can borrow scissors, and I'm dashed if I'm going to knock her up at this time of night. It'll mean the sack for the three of you if this is discovered! What have you been up to?"

"Never mind," wailed Meeke.

He cast a look at the horse, then edged towards the door.

"It—it was an idiotic plan from the—the start!" he squeaked. "I—I'm going to bed."

He made a rush for the door. The horse, in a valiant but unsuccessful effort to head him off, bashed its head through the panels of the cupboard. Tufty and Carstairs extracted it with difficulty, and backed it into the centre of the floor.

"Can you hear me, Boulter?" asked Tufty. "Nod your head if you can."

The horse nodded violently.

"Then sit down. Carstairs, take a pew. We've got to hold a council of war."

The horse seated itself on the hearthrug, and gazed forlornly at the two juniors.

"We'll find out later what giddy idiocy you've been up to," went on Tufty. "What concerns us at the moment is how to get you out of that skin!"

"Brrr! Grrrrr! Mrrrrrrr!" assented the horse heartily.

"It's a pity Meeke's sloped off to bed, or we could have sent him for the vet." continued Tufty. "I—— Whoa, you brute!"

The horse had lumbered to its feet, and was advancing in a menacing sort of double shuffle.

"You don't want the vet. Is that it?" inquired Tufty, from behind the chair, where he had taken ambush.

The horse shook its head violently—passionately. Plainly it did not want the vet.

"Then you'll have to stay like that," said Tufty. "Although, if I was the Head, I'd object to a bally horse coming in to lessons! I suppose," he went on reflectively, "that at mealtimes they'll turn you out to grass in the playing-fields."

"And we'll get a subscription list up to

buy you a nice enamelled bucket to drink out of," chimed in Carstairs.

"You'll have to go home in a horse-box when the holidays start," supplemented Tufty. "Taken all round, you're in for no end of a jolly time! What—what did you say?"

"Brrrrr! Grrrrr! Mrrrrr!" bellowed the horse, and whirled frenziedly up and down the floor in a frantic effort to dissolve itself into its component parts.

It concluded the performance by tripping over the hearthrug and charging head-first into the fireplace.

"T h e r e !
There! Good 'oss! Good 'oss!" said Tufty soothingly, patting its flank, and receiving a kick in the region of the waistcoat for his pains.

"U n g r a t e f u l
brute!" he said feelingly. "Well, Carstairs, it'll probably want to sleep here, so I vote we leave it and shove off to bed!"

"B e d d o w n
now, 'oss!" said Carstairs authoritatively. "B e d down now! Good 'oss! Quiet, now!"

In desperate haste, the horse collected itself together and made for the door at an ungainly trot.

"You don't want us to leave you, what?" inquired Tufty.

"Brrr! Grrr! Mrrrr!" bellowed the horse, and shook its head angrily.

"Well, what do you suggest we do?" demanded Carstairs. "Dash it all, Boul-

ter, we're not a couple of blessed grooms, you know!"

"I've got it!" cried Tufty triumphantly. The horse regarded him hopefully.

"We'll make him a topping loose-box with the Form-room blackboards, and—Whoa, you brute!"

He skipped aside to avoid a savage rush by the outraged horse.

"You see," said Carstairs plaintively, "it doesn't matter what we suggest, the brute won't listen! I think it might jolly well show a little more appreciation——"

"M r r r r h !
G r r r r r h !
Brrrrh!" snorted the horse indignantly.

"We might, of course," said Tufty slowly, "get the fatheads out of that skin with a pen-knife!"

The horse pranced excitedly, and nodded its head with frantic enthusiasm. Carstairs watched it with interest.

"Looks to me as though it's going to have a fit," he remarked laconically.

"No. I believe it's pleased," replied Tufty. He turned towards the door, with a wink at Carstairs. "I'll go and get my knife from the dorm. I won't be long."

Smiling to himself, Tufty left the Fifth-Formers' study and hurried to the dormitory.



Meeke was standing in the middle of the floor. The horse had taken dubious cover behind the ramshackle armchair, and was staring over the back of it at the intruders! (See Chapter 4.)

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

"De bantom! De bantom!"

HE was back within a few minutes, his penknife in his hand. The horse was sitting on the hearthrug, gazing with simmering wrath at Carstairs, who, mounted on the table, was spouting, with impassioned gestures:

"I was known as the Punter's Pride, sir,
When I won the Northumberland
Plate.

The bookies all sat down and cried, sir,
When I stood at the starting gate.
I was very soon into my stride, sir.

Great corn-bins! I went at a rate!
Let me tell you the tale of that ride, sir—
For I won at a hundred to eight!
I only stopped once——"

He broke off at sight of Tufty, and grinned.

"The brute was a bit restive after you'd gone," he explained, "so I've been soothing him with a little poetry."

The horse lumbered to its feet, and approached Tufty in a sort of crab-like shuffle. Then it halted, and backed apprehensively. For the Lower Fourth, to a man, were filing slowly into the study.

"Now, listen, Boulter!" said Tufty. "You've made an awful beast of yourself this term. So has Pilson. I'm going to get you out of that skin all right—you needn't worry about that. But you're coming down to the gym. first, to stand your trial for being a rotten, swelled-headed bully! If you won't go quietly, we'll chivvy you there!"

Firm hands gripped it, and started it down the main staircase. The horse half walked and half slithered down the stairs, and, helped by a judiciously-applied towel, crossed the hall and made for the gym. at a shambling trot.

But the sleepless Herr, with ears attuned for the slightest sound, was sitting up in bed, grabbing the coverlet with a shaking hand.

Ja! There it was again! Something was moving far away downstairs. It might

be the phantom again. The Herr shuddered. Then, summoning up all his courage, he slid out of bed, and legged it along the corridor again to the room of Mr. Snooker.

Meanwhile, in the gym., candle-ends had been lighted. The horse stood gazing frenziedly over the top of a fireguard, which served as the dock. Tufty, the judge, sat perched precariously on the parallel bars.

Counsel for the defence, a thin youth whose father was an eminent barrister, did his best. But it was obvious that his heart was not in his job. He himself had felt the heavy hand of the lordly Boulter on more than one occasion. He pleaded for leniency in a speech which caused the horse to indignantly knock the dock over in an effort to get at him.

The jury brought in their verdict without retiring.

"Guilty!"

Tufty cleared his throat.

"Prisoner at the bar," he said gruffly, "you have been found guilty of being a particularly poisonous sort of bully! I am addressing both the front and hind quarters. The sentence of this court is that you be photographed, and that the photograph shall hang for all time in the junior common-room! Mr. Stubbs, do your duty!"

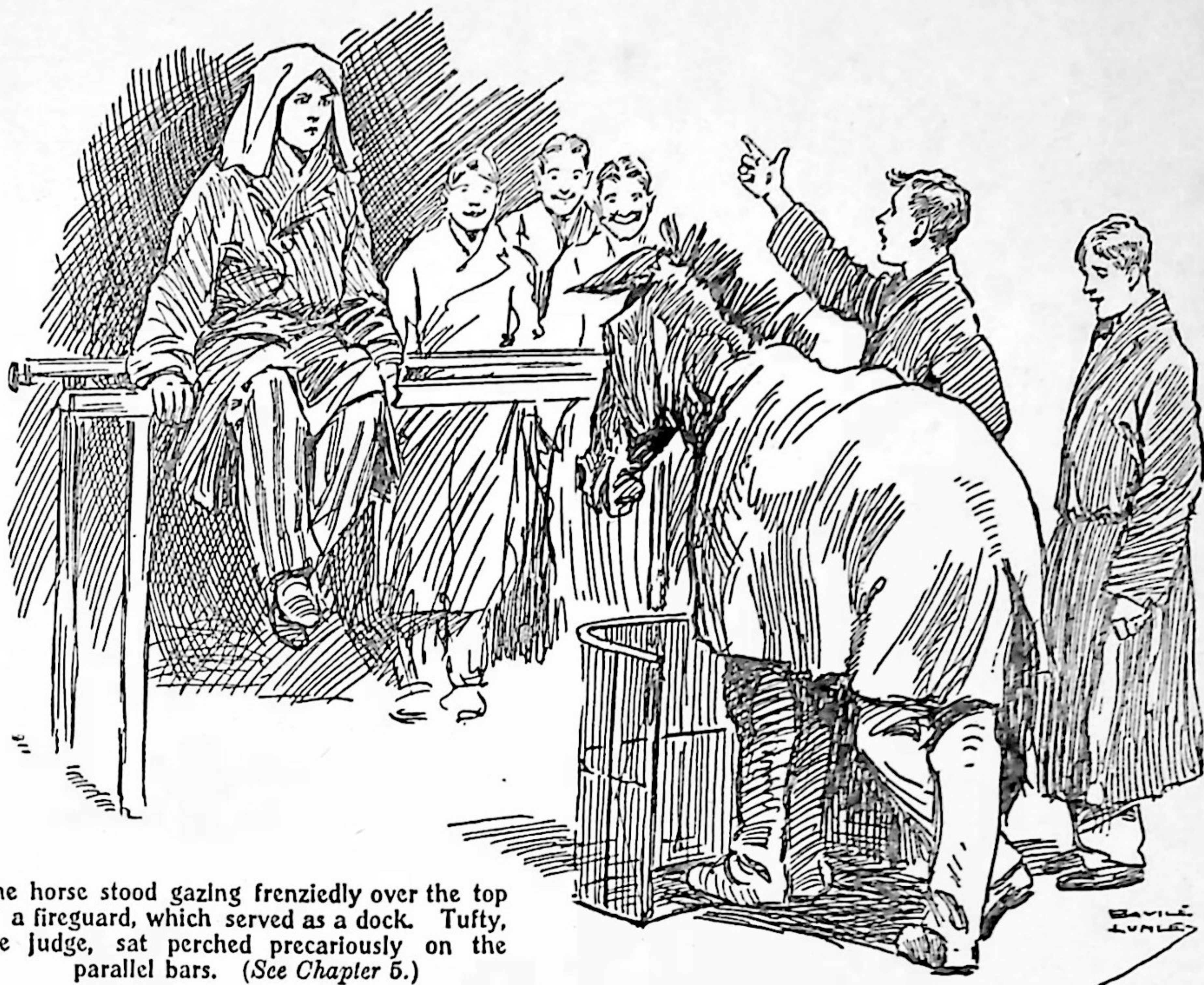
Stubbs, the Lower Fourth photography expert, stepped forward. The horse plunged and kicked frantically, but willing hands held him. Stubbs produced his camera and a box of magnesium-powder, with which to take the flashlight photograph.

"Right! I'm ready!" whispered Stubbs.

The candle-ends were promptly squashed. It was at this interesting point that Herr Guggenslogger and a fuming Mr. Snooker crept cautiously towards the gymnasium door and silently opened it.

Swish!

A brilliant, blinding light illuminated the gym. The Herr had a vision of a savage-looking horse charging towards him.



The horse stood gazing frenziedly over the top of a fireguard, which served as a dock. Tufty, the judge, sat perched precariously on the parallel bars. (See Chapter 5.)

"De bantom! De bantom!" he howled, and turned to flee.

He scudded across the dimly lit hall, ventured one glance over his shoulder; then, with another howl, bounded upstairs.

The horse was galloping at his heels. Behind it came an almost apoplectic Mr. Snooker, making frantic efforts to grab the flying tail. And behind Mr. Snooker trooped the whooping and delighted Lower Fourth.

With a howl, the Herr slipped. He slid downstairs, and bellowed with alarm as he felt the horse trampling on his prostrate form.

There came a long, tearing rip as Mr. Snooker grabbed the tail and the skin parted.

"Pilson," said Boulter half an hour

later as the two Fifth-Formers crawled painfully up into bed.

"Yes, Boulter?"

"It's beastly undignified for a Fifth-Form man to be flogged as though he were a blessed little lower-form kid!"

Pilson wriggled painfully.

"Do—do you know what I think, Boulter?" he said feebly.

"No."

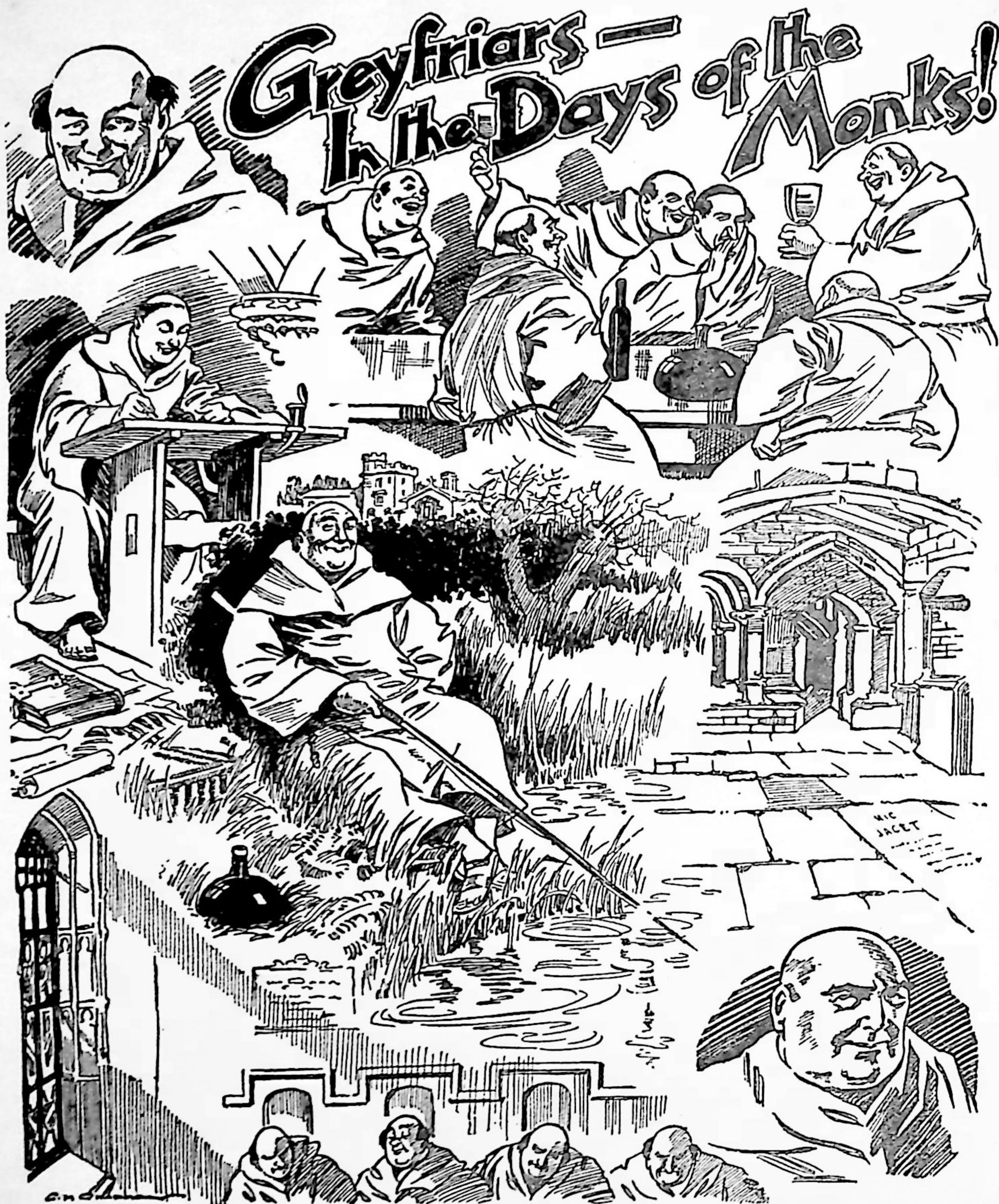
"We got off rather lightly. We—we wouldn't have done if those kids hadn't made out it was just an end of term rag. They got five hundred lines apiece for their share, you know."

Boulter snorted.

"I heard that little beast Howard say it was worth it!" he snapped. "Good-night!"

"Good-night, Boulter!" moaned Pilson.

THE END



How the Jolly Friars of Old Passed their Peaceful Days!