

# My Little Mistake!



*A Humorous Complete Story of Rookwood School.*

*Written by CLARENCE CUFFY*

*(The Simpleton of the Modern House.)*

## THE FIRST CHAPTER

### Dear Thomas's Good Deed.

I AM a most unfortunate youth. Dreadful! Sometimes I think, dear readers—though it sounds wicked to say so—that my gentle manner and kind heart are taken advantage of by some of my sweet playfellows. Ah! I shudder as I write those terrible words; but really, really—

I shall not easily forget the time when dear James Towle persuaded me to place a frog in the desk of my Form-master, a somewhat short-tempered gentleman named Manders. Dear James informed me that Mr. Manders had been complaining of the number of flies in his desk, and he—dear James—said that frogs were noted for the way they devoured flies. If only Mr. Manders had the frog in his desk, he would never be troubled by flies again.

I therefore inserted the amphibian in the master's desk, nothing doubting that Mr. Manders would be overwhelmed by gratitude. Unfortunately, however, the misguided creature flew into Mr. Manders' eye when the desk was opened, and this put the master somewhat out of temper. To cut a long story short, I was the reluctant recipient of six strokes of the cane upon a spot which considerations of modesty prevent me from making public.

I should have put the whole affair down to an accident had not dear James come forward

and told Mr. Manders that he had prevailed upon me to put the grotesque creature in the desk by way of a joke. My eyes were opened, dear readers. I gave dear James a short lecture—a mere two or three hours of it—and I think he is converted now.

The last person in Rookwood whom I should have conceived of playing practical jokes was dear Thomas Dodd, the captain of the Form. But even here it seems that I was too sanguine. My eyes fill with tears, dear boys. Scalding tear-drops blind me as I write, but truth must be told at any cost. Dear Thomas Dodd is no better than anybody else.

I knew him when he was a sweet, angelic infant at Ganders Green. If anybody had told me then that he would play such a low and debased trick upon me as he did last week, I should have refused to believe it. But now—ah, me! I know it but too well.

This was how it happened, dear fellows.

It was nearly tea-time when I came in the study. In addition to dear Thomas and his two friends, James Towle and one or two other sweet youths were present. I beamed at them in a friendly way, and then I perceived that Thomas was holding a bottle in his hand.

"What is it, dear Thomas?" I asked. "Medicine?"

Thomas coughed.

"Ahem! Exactly!" he replied seriously.

"A very powerful medicine, in fact."  
"That's very nice," I said. "But I didn't know there was anything the matter with you, Thomas."

"It's not for me—ass!" replied Thomas, in his pleasant way. "I'm going to do a good turn with this medicine. Ain't I, Towle?"

"Oh, rather!" giggled James, who is a somewhat frivolous youth.

"This medicine bucks you up, you know," went on Thomas. "It sort of makes you feel braced, if you understand. You want to roll on the floor in ecstasy, don't you, Towle?"

James shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, absolutely!"

If James said so, I thought, it must be true; for dear James is very fond of chemistry, and knows a lot about it. He is always experimenting in the laboratory, and many a time he has made fearful concoctions which give off most unpleasant smells.

"What are you going to do with the tonic?" I asked Thomas.

"I'm going to give it to our dear little playfellows over in the Classical House," answered Thomas. "I am sure Silver and Lovell and Mornington and the rest will benefit by it."

I beamed with joy. This—this was kindness itself. For dear Thomas Dodd and dear James Silver were rivals. The two Houses, my dear fellows, are always engaging in friendly rivalry, and to my mind there is a danger that such things will run to real enmity.

"This is noble of you, Thomas," I said, with moist eyes. "I am so proud of you, my dear fellow."

Thomas coughed again.

"Quite so!" he nodded. "But the fact is, Cuffy, I don't want dear James and the rest to know who gives them this tonic. I don't want them even to know they are taking it. We want to hide our lights under a peck, you know—"

"A bushel, dear Thomas!"

"I meant a bushel. So we've decided to ask you to administer this medicine to the Classics."

Can you picture my joy and gratification.

my dear fellows? I was overwhelmed with honour.

"Dear Thomas, this is splendid of you," I said, and nearly wept. "But why pick on me, my dear fellow?"

"Well, the fact is," said Thomas cautiously, "if any Modern man went into the Classical passage, he would be booted out. But they won't take any notice of you. You're well known to be a bit potty—I mean, to be so friendly and kind-hearted."

"Very good, dear Thomas," said I, taking the bottle. "But how am I to give it to them without them knowing it?"

"Put it in their tea."

"In their tea?"

"Yes. We want you to go along the Classical passage and put one spoonful of this stuff in every Classical tea-pot you can find."

"But they'll see me doing it, surely, dear Thomas."

Thomas paused, and it seemed to me that he eyed me cautiously.

"We've thought of that," he said slowly. "So we've thought out a little scheme to get them out of the way. We'll wait until they are all at tea, and then we'll stand under their windows and—sort of invite them to come out and play with us for a few minutes."

"Oh!"

"They'll all rush out of the House, and directly they are gone, you will nip into their studies and put one teaspoonful of the mixture into each tea-pot. See?"

He paused. The other juniors looked at me in a way I can only describe as wolfish. And I'm bound to say, my dear boys, that I considered the idea for some minutes in silence. It was so very extraordinary, if you understand me, that really I wondered what might lay behind it.

However, I overcame my fears and consented.

Thomas grasped my hand.

"You'll do it!" he choked, almost speechless with emotion.

"Certainly, dear Thomas!" I rejoined, with sparkling eyes.

At this point James Towle fell under the table and shrieked. He was black in the face

with laughter when he crawled out.

"It's the heat," explained Thomas Cook. "It's given him a slight touch of hysterics."

"Dear me!" I cried. "Poor James! Perhaps a little of this medicine might make him better."

"Don't you give me any of that stuff!" gasped Towle. "I made it, and I know what's in it!"

"Shut up, you ass!" admonished dear Thomas.

I shook my head sadly.

"I fear you are a little lightheaded, dear James," I said. "I will fetch you a little pill that has worked wonders with me."

I left the study to get it, but when I came back they had all disappeared.



Unfortunately the misguided frog flew into Mr. Manders' eye when the desk was opened.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### Making the Most of It.

As the clock struck four-thirty I secreted the precious bottle under my jacket and made my way over to the door of the Classical House. There was nobody about at the moment, and I wondered, my dear fellows, what had happened to my Modern playmates.

In five minutes they appeared. But in what a disgusting and degrading state! I gasp with shame as I write these words, but I must tell you all. They were carrying dear Reginald Muffin—a Classical fellow.

No doubt they meant it for the best. Perhaps dear Reginald was tired, and they were

assisting him back to the school. But how careful they should be in that case. They should not, my dear friends, carry their passenger by his arms and legs, with his face turned to the ground. I understand it is termed a "frog-march." I should imagine that it cannot be very comfortable. Judging by dear Reginald's remarks, it was very uncomfortable indeed.

I was about to go forward and venture a gentle remonstrance, when they halted under the windows of the Classical studies and began, slowly and deliberately, to bump poor Reginald Muffin. Imagine my horror! They were deliberately bumping a poor schoolfellow.

Dear Arthur Lovell heard Muffin's cries,

and he looked out of his study window very indignantly—rightly so, in my opinion.

"You—you—you rotters!" bawled Arthur Edward Lovell, in what was almost a Hunnish voice. "Bumping one of our own men at his House door! Why, we'll spifficate you!"

I began to feel alarmed. I am unacquainted with the verb "to spifficate." I am sure we have never conjugated that verb in class. But the tone of dear Arthur's voice left me in no doubt that to be spifficated was to be submitted to some very unpleasant process.

"Rescue, Classics!" roared dear Flynn from his window.

"The cheeky villains are bumping Muffin right outside our door!" shrieked Oswald.

"Mop them up!" roared somebody else.

"This way, you men!" came the voice of dear James Silver, the captain of the Form.

For a moment there was silence, except for the agonised yells of poor, dear Reginald Muffin. Then the staircase was full of wrathful fellows, and the whole of the Classical Fourth poured out into the quadrangle.

Ah, my dear fellows, I cannot write about the scene that followed! It was a dreadful—dreadful battle royal. A scene of riot and carnage such as I have never witnessed before. I could not stay to hear the cries of the injured ones. Stopping my ears with my fingers, and trembling with horror, I rushed up the stairs and made my way to the Fourth-Form passage.

Study after study was untenanted. In each tea-pot I dropped a little dose of that wonderful tonic, my eyes glistening with pride as I did so. It is, of course, very, very wrong to fight; but dear Thomas was doing it in a good cause, for when dear James and the other Classics returned to their studies their tea would contain a dose of a wonderful revitalising medicine.

Only in the study belonging to dear Cyril Peele did I meet with any opposition. Dear Cyril had not gone downstairs with the other juniors. He was having tea in his study. When I looked in at the door he did not wait to hear what I required. He merely picked up a large lexicon and flung it at me. The book caught me squarely on the nose. I was pained, my dear fellows—pained in the nose

and in the bosom. I did not imagine dear Cyril was such a barbarian.

In all the other studies I dropped a dose of the mixture, and when I had finished I discovered to my delight that the bottle was still nearly half-full. Hiding it once more beneath my jacket, I made my way downstairs to the hall, where I found Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, talking to Mr. Greely, the Fifth Form-master.

Mr. Greely has an exceptionally loud, booming voice, and I couldn't help hearing his remarks.

"The hot weather, my dear Dalton," he was saying, "affects my system powerfully. I am very susceptible to fatigue, and I grow tired and listless in this weather."

"I am the same, to a smaller degree," agreed Mr. Dalton. "A certain languor descends on one——"

"Exactly!"

"A weary, fatigued feeling——"

"You have taken the words out of my mouth, Dalton. What we really need is a strong, bracing tonic——"

I waited to hear no more, my dear fellows. A splendid idea had dawned upon me. Here was yet a further chance of doing a good turn. I moved away swiftly to Mr. Dalton's study.

The maid had just got his tea ready. The tea-pot was steaming gently on the hob. With a quick action I measured out a teaspoonful of the tonic, and poured it into the pot. Then I visited Mr. Greely's study, and treated his tea-pot in the same way.

As I came out, my friends, I paused. If Mr. Greely and Mr. Dalton were affected by the heat, no doubt all the other masters were in the same condition. I had plenty of tonic left. It would be a pitiful thing to waste it.

Mr. Wiggins was the only master in his study, so he was unfortunate. I could scarcely drop the mixture into his tea while he was still there. Into the tea-pots of Mr. Manders, Mr. Flinders, Mr. Mooney, and Mr. Bohun, however, a dose of the tonic was inserted carefully.

Then I made my way cautiously to the study of the headmaster, Dr. Chisholm. He was out. With my eyes glistening with gratitude, I treated his tea-pot in exactly



the same way.

When I issued forth into the quadrangle, the awful warfare was still in progress. Ah, how I yearned to stop the fight. But I dared not. Tempers were rising to such a pitch that I was really doubtful if the inflamed juniors would have paid any heed to me. Indeed—awful as it is—they might even have struck me in the violence of their anger. Terrible, blood-curdling cries were coming from the struggling juniors.

"Mop them up!"

"This way, Classics!"

"That's for your eye, Doddy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

My heart was nearly broken as I wended my way to my own House. Ah, dear readers, can you not sympathise with me? Can you not imagine that awful, horrible scene of enmity and bloodshed? To my certain knowledge noses were punched, and eyes were blackened. Indeed, later Thomas Dodd was wearing a much larger size in ears than is customary with him, and he said it was a present from Kit Erroll. And dear Kit, I know well, is as peaceable a youth as any in Rookwood. Is it not terrible when a savage temper breaks out?

I entered the study of dear Thomas, and was about to place the bottle upon the table, when I perceived that it was still a quarter



Todd and Cook held their waists-coats and moaned in agony, and Doyle dived under the table. "My dear fellows," I managed to cry, "what ever is the matter?"

full I thought it would be a shame to waste it.

"Would it not be pleasant?" I smiled, "if dear Thomas and dear James and the other Moderns could also have a dose of the tonic they have so unselfishly given to their rivals?"

Filled with this noble idea, I went through the Modern House, dosing each tea-pot with the mixture. Then—when the stuff was all gone—I smiled in a whimsical way.

"After all," I said to myself, "the only junior in Rookwood—except dear Cyril Peele—who loses his share in the tonic is the one who has distributed it. Myself. Well, well, I must not be selfish. I can only hope that it will do everybody good."

## THE THIRD CHAPTER

### Awful !

DEAR Thomas Dodd came in ten minutes later. He looked at me in a certain way.

"Dummy !" he said.

I jumped.

"What was that, my dear Thomas ?"

"Dummy !" bawled Thomas Dodd. "Why couldn't you have let us know you had finished the job ? We've been hanging out the fight to give you plenty of time, and all the while you have finished the job and are roosting in the study. B-r-r-r-r !"

"Mum-my dearest Thomas——"

"Rats !"

It was a time to speak firmly, my dear readers. You will understand that. Thomas Dodd had been fighting ; his temper had suffered. He had done things he ought not to have done, and left undone things he should have done.

I began to give him a mild, but disapproving lecture. I pointed out how pained I had been to witness that pitched battle between juniors who should have been friends. I admonished him on the treatment he had meted out to dear Reginald.

While I was still speaking, dear Thomas Cook and dear Doyle advanced upon me like a couple of tigers. They laid rough and violent hands upon my person. Dear Thomas Dodd opened the door. I felt myself lifted off my feet, and then ensued a peculiar sensation, as though I was flying through the air.

The next second I had hit the linoleum in the passage.

"Oooooooooop !" I observed.

"Now talk sense or shut up !" howled Thomas.

They applied themselves to their tea, while I nursed my injuries. I say nothing of their black ingratitude. I was wounded to the depths of my soul, but I have chosen to forget it, and to put it down to their sinful tempers.

For a few moments there was peace.

Then dear Thomas suddenly rose to his feet, dropped the cup of tea he was drinking, and clapping his two hands upon his waistcoat, he jumped into the air and said :

"Oooooooooosh !"

I stared at him. But before I could make any remark, dear Thomas Cook and Doyle were similarly affected. Thomas Cook fell over backwards and broke his chair, and Thomas Doyle dived head-first under the table.

"Yow ! Whoooooop !" shrieked Thomas Cook.

Dear Doyle moaned fitfully like a demented cow.

"My dear fellows," I managed to cry, "whatever is the matter ?"

"Yooooop ! Moooooh ! Ger-roooooch !" screamed Thomas Dodd. "I'm poisoned ! Oooooop !"

I turned pale.

"Mum-my dear boys," I muttered, trembling. "You are ill. I shall fetch a doctor."

"Oooooch !" yelled Thomas Cook. "You—you—yow burler ! Have you put anything into our tea, you howling maniac ?"

"Only a dose of the tonic, dear Thomas," I replied.

Never shall I forget the expression that dawned upon Thomas Dodd's face. He caught up the bread-knife, and for one dreadful second, my dear fellows, my life was in danger. Then, fortunately for me, another severe pain shot through his interior, and he clasped his hands upon his middle and howled.

"Holy mother av Moses !" moaned Thomas Doyle from under the table. "I'm kilt, intirely. If I doie, bhoys, kill that spalpeen Cuffy for me. If I don't, begorrah, I'll do ut meself ! Oooooop !"

My head was absolutely swimming round.

"I don't understand," I cried. "Why should that strengthening tonic give you pain ? Is it not tasteless ?"

"You—you—you——" yelled Thomas Cook. "It was a joke, you shrieking dummy. Towle made the stuff to give to the Classics. Ow-ow-ow ! Yerroooooh ! It gives the fellow who takes it a severe pain in the tummy for a few minutes. Oooooop ! Otherwise it's quite harmless, of course. Ow !"

I saw it all.

Nobody will ever be able to understand the disgust and horror that overwhelmed me. I was sickened with dismay. All the time I thought dear Thomas Dodd was

doing a good turn, he was merely making use of me to give pain to the other dear fellows in the Classical House. How can I describe my feelings? I won't try. You can imagine them better than I can portray them.

My face was pale.

"I understand everything, Thomas," I said sternly. "I shall now try to undo the wrong I have done through you. I shall go over to the Classical House immediately, and warn every fellow not to taste his tea."

"Come back, imbecile!" howled Thomas Cook.

I paid no heed. My duty was clear. I had done a great wrong unintentionally, and that was the only way to right it.

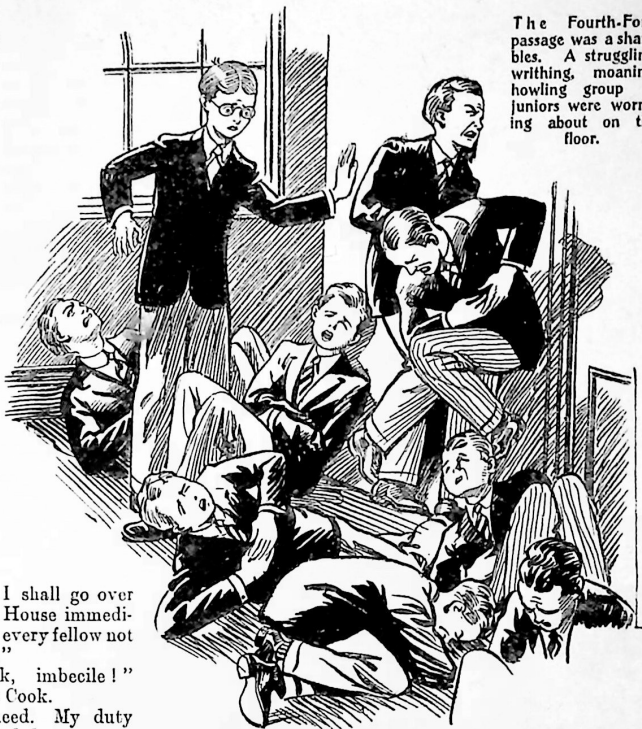
But as I sped hot foot to the Classical House, I knew I was too late.

From every part of the building furious yells and demoniacal howls were ascending to the sky. I rushed into the hall. The first object that met my eye was Mr. Greely, rolling downstairs. Every time he hit the stairs he gave forth a booming roar.

Bump! Roar! Bump! Roar!

He rolled into the hall and lay there, moaning indecently at frequent intervals.

"Ah! I am poisoned! Oh, I am a dead man!" I ran forward to assist him to rise.



The Fourth-Form passage was a shambles. A struggling, writhing, moaning, howling group of juniors were worming about on the floor.

"Mr. Greely——"

"Let me die, boy!" he groaned, waving me away. "I have been foully murdered, like Hamlet's father. Cut off in the prime of life, boy! Sent to my final reckoning with all my imperfections on my head. Gerrroooch—fetch a doctor! Stay! It is too late! Fetch an undertaker at once! Woooooooh!"

I ran upstairs. The Fourth-Form passage was a shambles. A struggling, writhing, moaning, howling group of juniors were worming about on the floor.

"Ooooooooooooh!" yelled Lovell. "I've swallowed prussic acid!"

I bent over him.

"No, you have not, my dear Arthur," I said soothingly. "You have merely——"

His fist caught me on the nose. With a dreadful yell I added myself to the writhing group. In a moment daylight was blotted from my gaze by a struggling heap of bodies.

More dead than alive, I regained my feet. I was obviously too late to save the Fourth. Perhaps Mr. Dalton or one of the other masters had not yet partaken of the venom.

—Mr. Dalton was not in his study. At least I thought not for the moment. Then I perceived him under the table. He was jerking his legs about spasmodically, and trying to bury his head in the wastepaper basket.

"My dear sir——" I gasped.

He gave me five thousand lines.

I retired, hurt, and went to Mr. Bohun's study.

Mr. Bohun was hanging so far out of his window that for a moment I thought he was trying to commit suicide. I tapped him on the shoulder.

"Mr. Bohun! My dear sir!" I gasped. "You will fall out."

"Push me out, boy!" he roared fiercely. "Push me out this minute! Better a quick death than lingering agony! Moooooooooh!"

I hesitated. I am not a boy to disobey the commands of my kind masters, yet surely it is a trifle awkward to be told to push a gentleman out of a second-floor window?

However, such were my orders and, stifling a groan, I caught hold of Mr. Bohun's ankles and commenced to tip him out of the window.

It was at this moment that he changed his mind. He said that he would rather drown himself in the river, as that was a more comfortable death. I was thankful to hear him say so, and I hauled him in and left him.

Mr. Manders was in a really wicked frame of mind. No sooner had I opened the door of his study than he clutched his cane and made such a terrible swipe at me that he would certainly have cut me in halves if I had not fallen backwards into the passage. As it was he pursued me down the corridor,

cutting at my legs, and I was thankful to reach the quadrangle alive.

I saw Dr. Draycott, the medical man, racing to the school in his car. He went straight to the Head's study, and through the window I observed Dr. Chisholm leaning on his shoulder, weeping.

"I have been poisoned, my dear sir," wept the Head. "I have been cruelly poisoned by some wicked miscreant who——"

"No doubt, no doubt!" said the doctor soothingly.

"Some evil and base-hearted reprobate has placed a dreadful toxicant in my tea."

I waited to hear no more. Too dispirited to heed what I was doing I wandered back to my own House, and the first thing I found out was that every fellow in the House was seeking my blood.

I dodged into the boot-room, quaking.

There was a key in the door of the boot-room. I turned it. Then, squatting down among the old boots, brushes and blacking, I waited for three hours, palpitating.

Ah, what a terrible fracas there was, afterwards, my dear fellows! The Head sent for me, and said he would be merciful, and merely sentence me to be flogged within an inch of my life and expelled from the school. I dread to think of what would have happened to me if he hadn't decided to be merciful.

Fortunately Thomas Dodd, Cook, Towle and the others came to my rescue, and after the matter had been explained, we were all sentenced to a severe caning. Dear Thomas Dodd, however, point-blank refused to hear of me being caned—saying that I was under the impression all the time that I was doing a kindly action. So well did he put the case to the Head that, to my surprise, I was dismissed without being caned or even detained.

I am grateful to dear Thomas for that—but, ah! the burden of sorrow upon my heart when I think of his deception. My faith in him is shaken. Never again can I consider him the spotless youth of former years.

But it's a sad and sinful world, and the longer I live the more I find it out.

## BEHIND THE COUNTER!

*Our Special Reporter, TOM BROWN, chats with DAME MIMBLE, of tuckshop fame.*

**P**ERCHED on one of the high stools at the tuckshop counter, with my notebook on my knee, and a dish of jam tarts at my elbow, I chatted with the plump and matronly Dame Mimble.

"It must be great fun running a tuckshop," I suggested. "Nothing to do all day but dispense jam tarts to those that hunger, and ginger-pop to those that thirst. Why, it's the life of a lady of leisure."

Dame Mimble gave me a reproachful glare.

"Nothing to do, indeed!" she exclaimed.

"You know nothing about running a tuckshop, Master Brown. Why, I'm as busy as the day's long."

Even as she spoke, the worthy dame was vigorously churning ice cream in a barrel.

"In that case, ma'am," said I, "you want an assistant. I shall be pleased to act in that capacity for a salary of six doughnuts per day, and a strawberry ice whenever I happen to fancy one."

Dame Mimble shook her head.

"I've had enough of assistants," she said.

"Once, in a moment of weakness, I agreed to let Master Bunter help in the shop. I told him he could help himself to an occasional tart, or a glass of ginger-beer, but he helped himself too fast and frequent for my liking. Why, the fat rascal ate me out of house and home."

"Ha, ha, ha! Just like Bunter!"

"It was no laughing matter, Master Brown. As fast as I made cakes Master Bunter tucked 'em away. I had to exhibit the 'SOLD OUT!' notice long before closing time came, and my customers were wild. I got rid of Master Bunter, and I'll never take on an assistant again—never!"

And Dame Mimble churned the ice cream quite viciously.



"Who is your best customer, ma'am?" I inquired.

"Lord Mauleverer," was the prompt reply.

"His lordship spends pounds where others spend pence. He thinks nothing of spending a five-pound note on a study celebration. And once, on a very special occasion, he bought up my entire stock."

"My hat! And who is your worst customer?"

"Master Bunter and Master Skinner tie for that distinction. Master Bunter is always wanting credit. He doesn't seem to realise that this is a tuckshop—not a tickshop. As for Master Skinner, he's dreadfully mean and artful. When I was giving away free samples of ice cream the other day—one sample per customer—Master Skinner came back at least half a dozen times and each time he declared it was his first appearance. And he always waits till my cakes are stale before he buys them, because they drop to half price."

I was pondering on the meanness of Skinner by contrast with the liberality of Lord Mauleverer, when the tuckshop was suddenly besieged by an army of cricketers, and I was swept from my perch.

There was an impatient clamour of "Ice cream here!" and "Ginger-pop here!" and "Buck up, Mrs. Mimble!" And I squeezed my way out of the shop, leaving the tuckshop dame to her strenuous labours.



## The Song of the "FISH"!

O H, yes !  
I'm Fisher, I guess,  
An American guy  
In my talk and my dress.  
I'm cute and I'm early, I'll twist you to-day ;  
'Sno use being surly—it's business, you jay.  
Hi ! Guy !  
I mean what I say.

Say, bo !  
I've bargains to show ;  
I sell any object,  
I'm out for your dough.  
I'm a business firm, sonny—the boss and the staff.  
Why, gee ! That ain't funny—no reason to laugh.  
Eh ? Say !  
I mean it—not half !

Here, you !  
You're looking quite blue !  
I'm a swindler, you say ?  
Get out of it, do !  
I know it's sharp practice; you don't need to talk.  
You see, sir, the fact is, I come from New York.  
Too—true !  
We're sharp in New York !

Buy, buy !  
Swindling, my eye !  
I have to make money—  
Or, rather, I try.  
Whenever I start on a scheme to make gain  
Cherry and Wharton both give me great pain !  
Ow-Wow !  
It's a ragging again.

Don't care !  
I never despair !  
They rag me and nag me,  
But Fisher's still there.  
So roll up, my tulips—roll up to my shack !  
And spend your spondulicks—you won't get 'em  
back.  
I'm prime !  
Till I get the sack.

## Eyes of the Night!

WHO could foresee the rapid development that would come of the initial successful flight of the first power-driven aeroplane? Certainly not the famous Wright brothers who accomplished that first flight—and very few others even so much as dreamed of the startling strides that flying would make.

One of the directions in which aeroplanes have made the most progress is shown in the accompanying photogravure plate, where a flight of four night-bombers is seen in action. These 'planes, loaded with death-dealing bombs, are attacking an enemy objective. The enemy has got "wind" of their approach, and one of the bombers has been caught full in the blinding glare of two searchlights.

Behind those revealing beams are anti-aircraft guns. And woe betide the "spotted" night-bomber if the pilot thereof does not twist and turn, and scoot into the blackness which masked his stealthy approach !

Only by sweeping the sky in all directions is there a chance of the night-bombers being spotted—unless the defenders' mechanical "ears" manage to pick up the sounds of the enemy's approach. These "ears" are the night-bombers' greatest danger, for they register the direction and height of approaching 'planes for the guidance of the crew manning the defending anti-aircraft guns.

The night-bombers, unless caught in the blinding glare of the restless, sweeping searchlights, are absolutely indistinguishable in the dark sky. To render them ordinarily invisible in such circumstances, British night-bombers are painted dark green, and from the usual red, white and blue R.A.F. identification circles the white is omitted.

R.A.F. pilots are amazingly adept at dropping deadly "eggs" from thousands of feet in the air, the pilot of the machine releasing his bombs by pulling a lever—the deadly bombs being slung beneath the undercarriage of the big night-machines. Always the pilot has in mind the possibility of a forced landing which, if clumsily carried out, may result in his load of bombs bumping the ground and promptly blowing him and his machine back, in fragments, into the night sky !

