

KIPPS AND THE FIVER!

By TOM BROWN



Kipps' new conjuring trick, "The Vanishing Banknote Mystery," was too clever — for he found himself accused of "vanishing" Lord Mauleverer's lost fiver!

THE FIRST CHAPTER THE VANISHING BANKNOTE !

OLIVER KIPPS, our pet conjurer, once performed a trick called the Vanishing Banknote Mystery. But no power on earth can induce him to do it to-day.

And thereby hangs a tale.

It was after prep. one evening, just before Christmas, when Kipps joined a crowd of us round the fireplace and asked if anyone could lend him a fiver.

Most of us thought for a moment he was seriously asking for a loan. Kipps had been tempted into buying rather more conjuring kit than he could afford at the beginning of the term and was notoriously hard up in consequence.

"What's the security, Kipps?" asked Skinner.

"Fathead! I'm not after a loan,"

Kipps answered, turning red. "I just want to show you a new trick of mine—the Vanishing Banknote Mystery."

"Sorry! That's different, of course," grinned Skinner. "Any gentleman oblige with a five-pound note? Or perhaps a fifty-pound one will do, Kipps, if we happen to be short of fivers?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer, who is rolling in oof, came to the rescue.

"Here you are, dear man," he said, sighing at the effort of passing Kipps a crisp, rustling note.

"Thanks. Now watch me carefully, all of you," said Kipps.

And then he began to conjure with that fiver. And how he did conjure with it, too! As Smithy put it afterwards, he made it do everything except sit up and talk!

He sealed it up in a pink envelope and put it in Mauly's pocket—only to make it vanish and reappear inside a green envelope in Wharton's pocket, a few minutes later! He rolled it up into a ball and threw it on the fire, and then drew it, intact, from Bob Cherry's mop of hair. He shut it up inside a book and caused it to disappear immediately—then found it again inside an orange which Bunter was slicing up with his pocket-knife! And a lot more besides.

Taking it all round, Kipps' Vanishing Banknote Mystery was as good a conjuring trick as most of us had ever seen in our lives.

Finally, he told Mauly to look in the fob pocket where he kept his notes—and Mauly found it there, folded just as it had been when he first drew it out, and looking none the worse for its remarkable experiences.

But it was just at that point that the trouble started. Mauly looked at the note and then looked at Kipps in rather a puzzled way.

"Yaas, that's all right, dear man—but is it the same fiver?" he asked.

"Well, of all the asses!" Kipps exclaimed. "Of course it is the same fiver—same number and everything. Haven't you got a note of the number?"

"Sorry, old bean, but I didn't bother!" answered Mauly, with his usual languid unconcern. "I don't doubt your word for a moment, dear man; I just wondered what I'd done with the other fiver I had, that's all!"

"Oh!"

That did it—though Mauly's remark was made quite innocently and certainly with no idea of involving Kipps in a scandal. The crowd fairly gaped at Kipps. As for Kipps, his jaw sagged.

"Let's get this straight, Mauly," he said. "Are you suggesting that you had two fivers when we started and that you've only one now?"

Mauly sat up with a jerk then, realising that he had put his foot in it.

"Oh, gad, no! Dear man, don't run away with that idea for a moment!" he gasped. "I thought I had two—but I suppose I must have spent the other, or somethin' or other!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Skinner, who revels in making trouble for other people, thought it time to put his spoke in the wheel.

"Look here, this is jolly fishy," he remarked. "Mauly starts off with a couple of fivers. Kipps conjures with one of 'em and spends ten minutes buzzin' it in an' out of chaps' pockets, includin' Mauly's. An' then at the end of it, Mauly finds he's one short. Sure you haven't left one of 'em hidden away somewhere, Kipps?"

Poor old Kipps turned scarlet.

"I don't know anything about it," he said. "I only had one fiver, and I've returned that to Mauly. You heard what Mauly said—that he must have spent the other?"

"Spent a fiver without remembering what he spent it on?" yelled Skinner.

"My hat! That's a new 'un!"

"Chuck it, Skinner!" snapped Wharton. "We all know how careless with money Mauly is—though it does seem far-fetched for even Mauly to spend a fiver without remembering anything about it. Can you think for certain whether you had one fiver or two, when Kipps began his trick, Mauly?"

"Dear man, it must have been one. Let's forget all about it."

"Bedtime, you kids!" called out Wingate from the doorway at that

moment, and the argument ceased—but not for long.

THE SECOND CHAPTER ALL SERENE !

After lights out that night, the Remove dorm. fairly buzzed with the topic of Mauly's missing fiver.

Mauly himself did his best to put a stop to it. But the fact that he couldn't remember the going of the second fiver rendered his efforts useless. It seemed fantastic to imagine even a wealthy chap like Mauly spending a fiver in a day without remembering a thing about it—in fact, the circumstance that Mauly hadn't been out all day made it to all intents and purposes impossible.

What were we to think ?

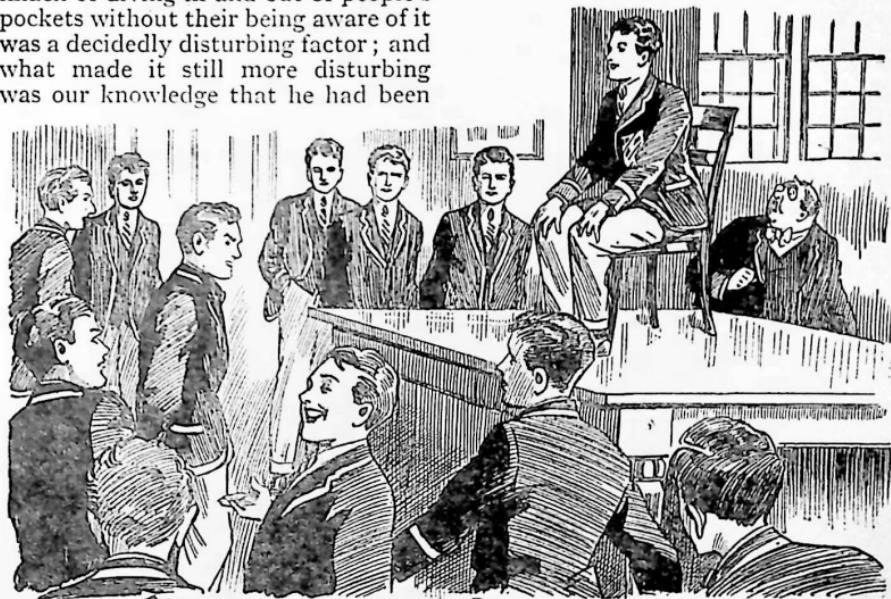
So far as we knew, Kipps was an honest enough kid. But his uncanny knack of diving in and out of people's pockets without their being aware of it was a decidedly disturbing factor ; and what made it still more disturbing was our knowledge that he had been

in a fix for money all through the term.

Notwithstanding these unhappy features of the affair, some of us were willing to take the generous view and drop it—hoping that circumstantial evidence had, as sometimes happens, been misleading and that Kipps was innocent of wrongdoing.

But there was a noisy section that clamoured for further inquiry. Skinner and his pals were bent on making the most of it, and make the most of it they did. The moral indignation of these cads would have been funny if it hadn't been so tragic for Kipps !

Nothing, of course, was done about it that night. The fellows dropped off to sleep one by one and gradually the talk stopped. It wasn't surprising that Kipps was the last to sleep. Skinner & Co. had given him plenty to worry about.



Wharton, the Judge, sat in solitary state on a chair on the table, with dozens of witnesses grouped around. "All ready?" he asked. "Ready, aye, ready!" "Right, then I declare this Court of Inquiry open!"

Next morning the argument started all over again with renewed vigour. It was soon pretty clear that something would have to be done about it. Demands started pouring into Wharton's study for a Form trial—with Kipps as the prisoner, charged with defrauding a fellow Removite out of a fiver!

Wharton squashed that idea right away. But eventually, seeing that an inquiry could in any case do no harm, he agreed to hold a Court of Inquiry in the Rag after prep. that evening, with Kipps figuring merely as a witness.

It opened in what journalists call a "tense" atmosphere. Wharton, the Judge, sat in solitary state on a chair on the table. Witnesses, of whom there were at least a dozen, stood grouped around the table.

"All ready?" asked Wharton.

"Ready, aye, ready!"

"Right, then! I declare this Court of Inquiry open!"

Then came the interruption. Just as Wharton finished speaking who should walk in but the Head!

Dr. Locke looked rather surprised at the unusual appearance of the Common-room.

"Is Mauleverer here?" he asked.

Mauly rose.

"Yaas. You want me, sir?"

The Head nodded.

"Yesterday morning, after prayers, Mauleverer, we made the usual Christmas collection for the poor and needy of Friardale."

"Oh!" gasped Mauleverer—why, we didn't understand, for a moment.

"The charity, while, of course, a deserving one, does not call for more than a nominal, or at least a normal, contribution," said Dr. Locke. "For that reason I did not wish any boy to give an amount exceeding five shillings

—but I find that somebody has given a five-pound note!"

"Oh, gad!"

Mauleverer gasped. So did the rest in the Rag, now!

"Were you that boy, Mauleverer?" asked the Head.

Mauleverer nodded.

"Yaas, sir. I'd forgotten all about it, but I remember now."

"Very well. I will ask you to accept the money back," said the Head, producing a five-pound note. "You may give a smaller contribution to Mr. Quelch in the morning if you wish, Mauleverer—and I should add perhaps that it would seem advisable for you to be less absent-minded about money!"

"Thank you, sir! Yaas!" gasped Mauly.

He pocketed his fiver. The Head went his way.

"Oh, gad! That's it!" said Mauly. "I remember puttin' it in the collection-box now—I'd forgotten all about it! Kipps, old bean, I could only have had one fiver when you did your stuff last night, after all! Dear man, how on earth will you ever be able to forgive me?"

Kipps, who was naturally delighted with the turn events had taken, laughed cheerfully.

"That's easy enough," he said.

"Is it?" asked Wharton. "Well, it may be for you, but it's not easy for the rest of us! I've decided to turn this Court of Inquiry into a Court of Correction—and the first act of this Court shall be to sentence the prize chump Mauleverer to be bumped so hard that he'll remember never to forget what he does with his fivers for the rest of his life!"

Needless to say, the sentence was carried out. So was Mauly, afterwards!

THE END