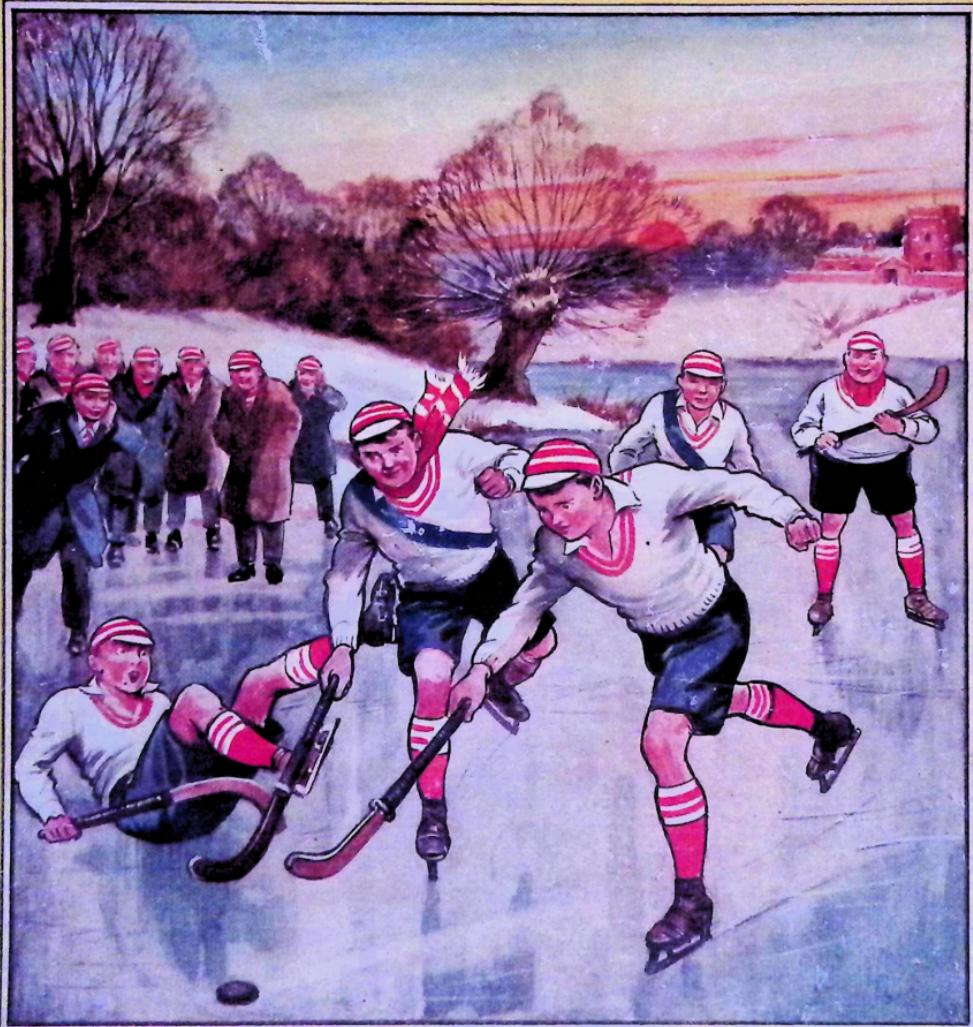


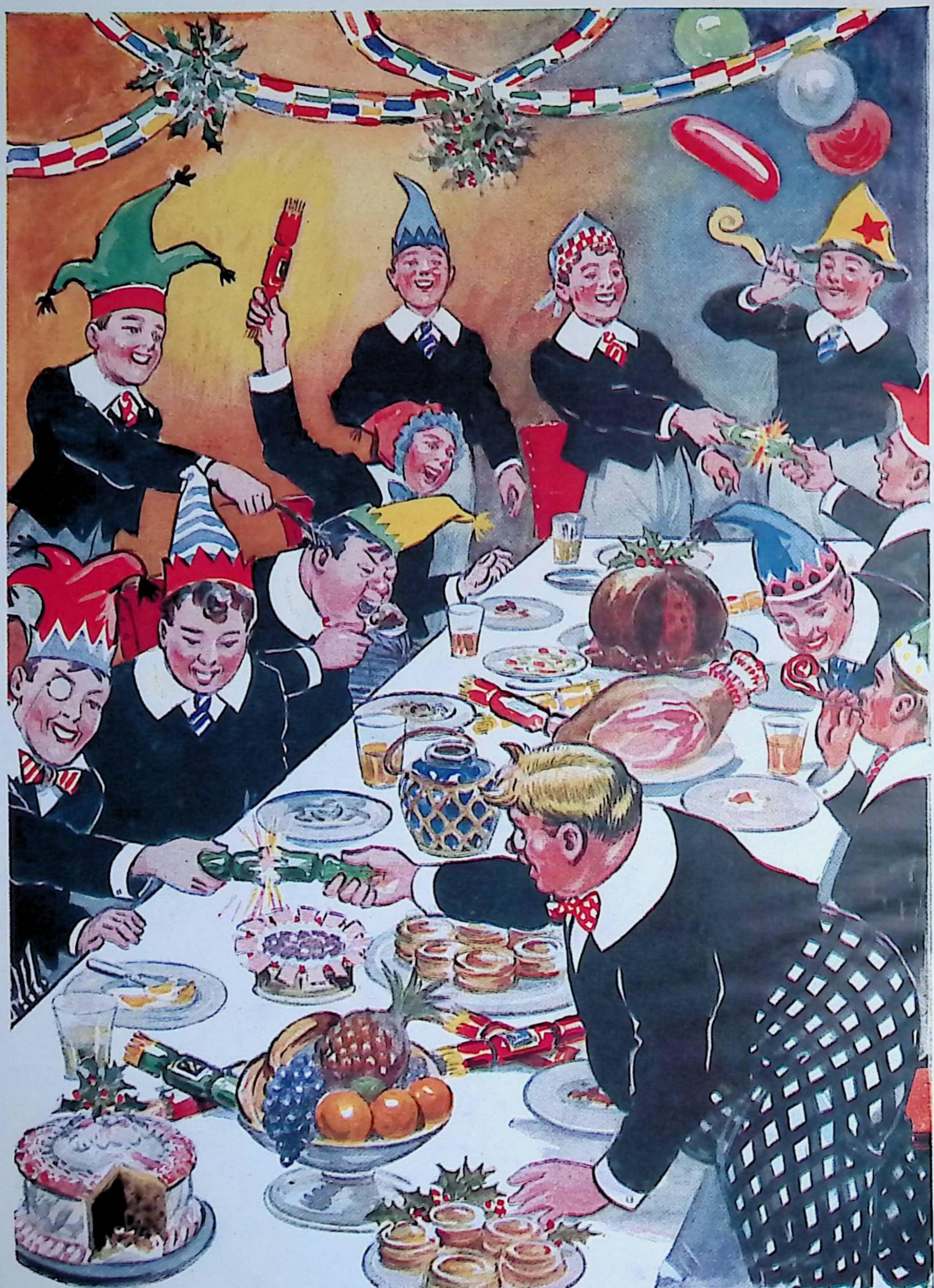
The Greyfriars

HOLIDAY ANNUAL FOR BOYS & GIRLS

1938

1938





Frontispiece

HA

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" CHRISTMAS PARTY!

Specially painted by R. J. Macdonald.

The GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY

Annual



This Book
Belongs to

TINKER DAVIES,
22 BOUNDARY ROAD,
LONDON, W.C.1.

The Editor To His Friends

THE appearance every year of a new volume of "The Holiday Annual" is an event which is hailed with delight by thousands of families throughout the British Empire. For it is unique in that its contents deal largely with the adventures, amazing and amusing, of those famous characters Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars; Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's; and Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood.

These names are household words throughout the English-speaking world, familiar to every boy and, in most cases, to his father as well!

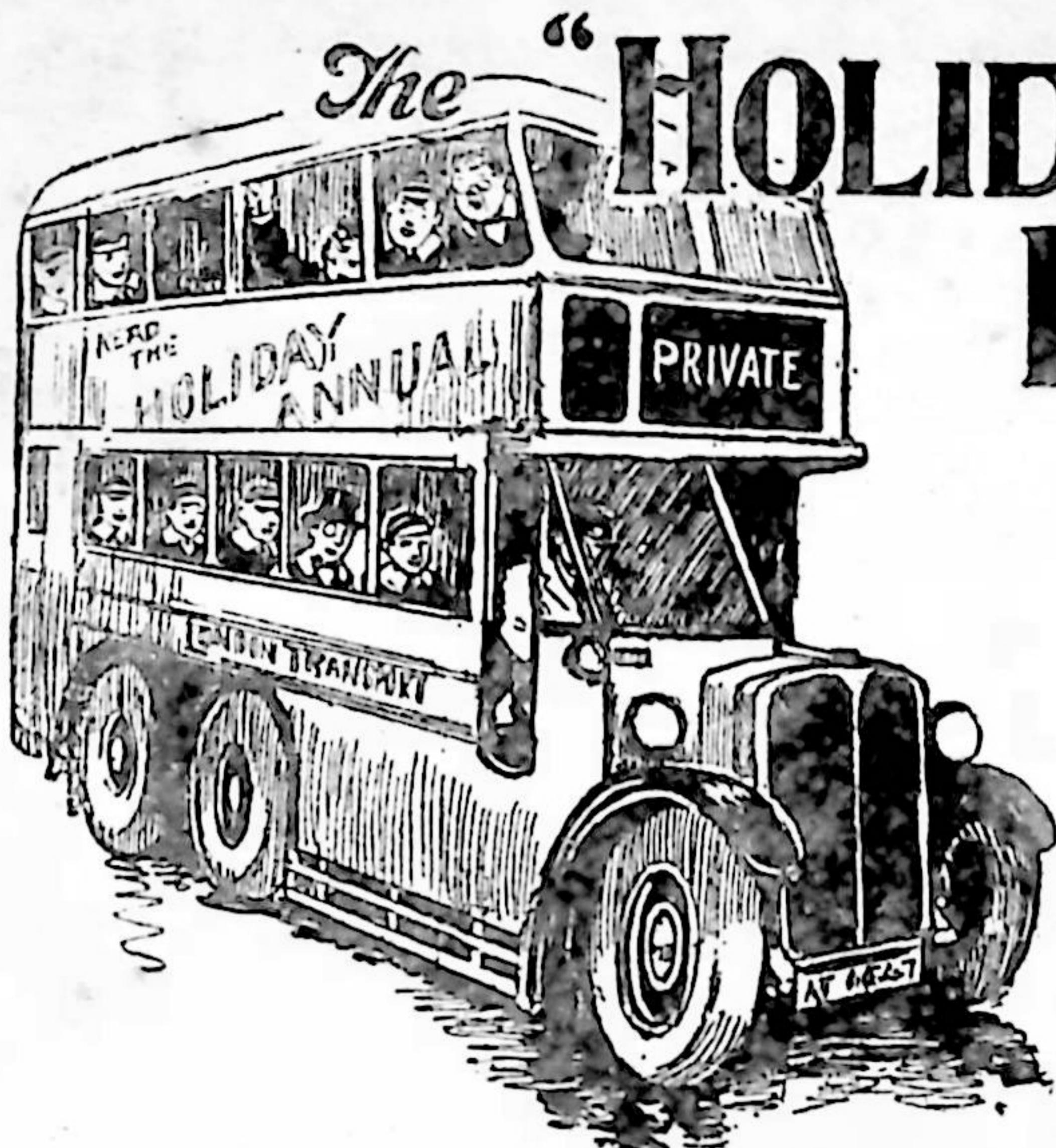
In the pages which comprise this the nineteenth successive "Holiday Annual," the famous schoolboys appear at their very best and liveliest in story, article, picture and verse. And to every one of you who have been lucky enough to secure this book I can safely promise a rare feast of fun and good cheer!

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
FARRINGDON STREET,
LONDON, E.C.4.

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The "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" BEANO

By the EDITOR

In which I stand treat to "Holiday Annual" schoolboy contributors for services rendered, and a good time is had by all—especially the fat boys of St. Jim's, Greyfriars and Rookwood!

"WELL, that's that," I said to my sub, when we had finished correcting the proofs of this year's HOLIDAY ANNUAL. "That's another twelve months' work finished."

"Yes," grinned the sub-editor. "Now we can start right away on the 1939 issue."

It had been a gigantic task. There were stories to be arranged, authors and artists to interview, long-haired poets to throw down the lift-shaft, and would-be Shakespeares to set the office dog on to. Thousands of letters had been written, and our waste-paper basket was brimming full with works by Alonzo Todd, Herbert Skimpole and other gifted (?) writers.

And when we had fixed up the stories, articles, poems, plates, sketches, etc., the giant printing machines began to pour a continuous stream of "galley-proofs" into my sanctum; we were flooded out with line and colour blocks from the process engravers, and we had to fight desperately with shears, gum and blue-pencil to save ourselves from being submerged!

Finally we cut and cancelled our way through the pile—trimming, deleting, compressing, arranging and pasting up, until the 1938 HOLIDAY ANNUAL actually began to take shape. Mountains of manuscripts and whole art galleries of drawings were slowly but surely melted down between the covers of this present volume. Then we went out and had a spot of lunch.

After that, there was a meeting of the "professional" authors and artists—all first-class men at their jobs. We threw them bags of gold for their contributions, and after drinking our health in ginger-pop, they danced away down Farringdon Street, gaily flourishing their dubbloons and singing.

"And now," said I, "what about the others? What about that mass of good stuff we get free, gratis and for nix?"

"You mean the stories and verses by the school fellows?" asked my sub.

"Certainly! If Wharton and the rest were pro's instead of amateurs, we should have to pay them half their



"Where is the Splitz Hotel ?" panted Billy Bunter, charging down the platform like a runaway omnibus. "I haven't had a square meal for ages!"

weight in gold to write a line for us. As it is, we get a stack of first-class copy for nothing more than a kind smile. I think it's up to us to stand the fellows a feed, don't you?"

"Hear, hear!" said my sub enthusiastically, thus showing that he himself expected an invitation.

"Good! Then let us make the necessary arrangements!"

We devoted the afternoon to getting out a list of the fellows we meant to invite, and to hiring the banqueting hall of the Splitz Hotel for the occasion. As we felt doubtful whether Dr. Locke, Dr. Holmes and Dr. Chisholm would allow the boys to come to London during the term, we arranged the beano for the first day of the Christmas vac.

The Splitz Hotel fairly excelled themselves and provided a ripping feast. I had to convince them that we should not be requiring wine or other strong drinks, but we ordered unlimited gallons of ginger-pop and cherry wine.

Directly the train from Friardale drew up at Charing Cross there was a terrific commotion. People were knocked headlong right and left. Porters and trollys were mixed up in hopeless confusion.

This was due to Billy Bunter, who charged down the platform like a runaway omnibus.

"Where is it?" he panted, when

he saw me. "Which way to the Splitz Hotel? I haven't had a square meal for ages!"

"Calm yourself, my corpulent friend," I replied. "I have engaged a private bus to take us there—"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "But, I say, you know, I want to get there first."

"Indeed! Why?"

"Well, you see," said Bunter, with a burst of confidence, "I happen to know that Baggy Trimble and Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's, and Tubby Muffin of Rookwood, are coming. It stands to reason that there won't be enough grub to give us all a square meal, so I want to get in first."

I managed to convince Bunter that the Splitz Hotel was equal to the terrific task of feeding all four appetites, so he mounted the bus, beaming like a full moon. I then had a chance to speak to some of the other fellows.

"Awfully decent of you to invite us, Mr. Editor," said Bob Cherry, with a smile of cheerful anticipation.

"Hear, hear!" agreed Harry Wharton. "I must say that you chaps at Fleetway House are real sportsmen, and no mistake."

"The sportsmanshipfulness is terrific!" added Hurree Singh.

I then made my little speech of welcome and we moved towards the ticket-collector in a bunch. I noticed that Fisher T. Fish was very careful to conceal himself in the crowd as we passed the ticket-collector, but the eagle-eyed official barred his path.

"Ticket, sir?" he asked.

Fisher T. Fish turned pale.

"I—I—I guess I've lost it," he said.

"Then you'll have to pay again. Six-and-threepence, please, sir."

"Say, look hyer, I guess I ain't gonna pay twice. No, sir, not this

baby!" And Fisher T. Fish made a break for the exit.

A porter sprinted after him and collared him low, Rugby-fashion, and Fishy sprawled and roared. I hurried up to settle the matter, and when six-and-threepence of my life's savings had been transferred to the railway, they let Fishy go through.

I spoke to the sub-editor about it as we drove away to Waterloo.

"Look here, Jones," I said. "Did we invite Fisher T. Fish to this beano?"

"Blessed if I can remember," he answered; "but I rather fancy not."

I gave the Transatlantic gate-crasher a grim look. But for my reluctance to disturb the harmony of the occasion, Fishy would have left our bus on his neck.

At Waterloo we were just in time to meet the Southampton train which bore the Rookwood contingent. Tubby Muffin was equally anxious to get to the banquet. He had a dreadful fear, he told me, that Bunter would get there first.

I greeted Jimmy Silver & Co. as they piled on the bus and exchanged Christmas greetings with the Greyfriars fellows. Then we drove off to Victoria, where the St. Jim's fellows were waiting for us.

"Bai Jove!" beamed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the merry old bus drove up. "This is wathah jollay!"

Baggy Trimble and Fatty Wynn were waiting together on tiptoe with impatience.

"Where's Bunter?" they howled in chorus, as the bus stopped.

"Here he is!" I replied. "Do you want him?"

"Nunno!" replied Trimble. "We were afraid he might have got there first."

This touching solicitude of the fat

juniors for Bunter was really pathetic.

We all shouted a welcome to the St. Jim's fellows as they poured into the bus, which was now crammed to bursting-point. There was general alarm when Trimble and Wynn attempted to go upstairs. Bunter and Muffin were already on the top-deck, and it was obvious that the roof wouldn't have stood the strain of all four of them. The conductor hurriedly stopped them, and they went inside.

Then off we crawled to the Splitz Hotel. We had to crawl because the bus was loaded down far below the Plimsoll line, and it was a wonder that the engine moved it at all.

Arrived at the Splitz, the four fat boys had a foot-race through a crowd of surprised waiters, and they all four dead-heated at the winning post (the banqueting hall), having lowered the record for the distance by nearly three seconds.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter, in ecstasy. "I say—ripping—" He couldn't speak for delight.

The tables were piled high with



When Fisher T. Fish tried to bilk the railway, a porter sprinted after him and collared him low, and Fishy sprawled and roared.

Christmas fare. A great fire threw a cheerful, ruddy glow over the whole scene—spotless table-linen, glistening cutlery, sparkling glass, holly, mistletoe and coloured streamers. The table was laden with turkeys, ham, beef, sausages, puddings, pies,

jellies, dessert, vegetables, pork pies, nuts and raisins, ginger-pop, etc., mixed up in wonderful and delicious profusion.

No wonder the fat boys were speechless with delight!

"Now, gentlemen," I exclaimed, as the waiters began to bustle about, "sit down and let the revels commence!"

"Hooray!"

Tubby Muffin was already seated. He sat down at a distance of about two-and-a-half feet from the table.

"Draw up your chair, Muffin," I said genially.

"I'd rather not," said Tubby. "You see, I'm going to sit like this and eat until my waistcoat touches the table. Then I shall stop!"

"You will!" I answered grimly. "You'll be a hospital case by then!"

I had arranged the table so that Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood fellows were mixed together. D'Arcy was sitting between Lovell of Rookwood and Tom Brown of Greyfriars, and so it went on all down the table.



The four fat juniors had a race through a crowd of surprised waiters, and all of them dead-heated at the winning-post—the banqueting hall!

There was a buzz of merry talk mingled with the rattle of knives, forks and glasses. Fisher T. Fish and the four fat boys were too busy to talk, but everyone else exchanged friendly, good-humoured chat about every subject under the sun.

One quaint result of the beano—and one I had not anticipated—was the number of invitations for Christmas which were showered on me.

Wharton asked me to put in a short time at Wharton Lodge, D'Arcy begged me to join his party at Eastwood House, Jimmy Silver was equally anxious to see me at the Christmas party at his home, and Bunter pressed me to share a bedroom with a couple of reigning monarchs at Bunter Court.

It was nice to be so popular, but my own arrangements forced me to decline these invitations. My sub-editor, however, accepted them all, including Bunter Court.

"Whoever cooked that turkey," said Bunter, with a blissful sigh, "knew something about turkeys!"

"Well, you ought to know," grinned Tom Merry. "You've eaten the whole bird."

"Bunter often gets the bird," remarked Monty Lowther, "so he's used to it! Pass those pies, Raby, old top!"

"Pleasure!"

"Bai Jove!" beamed Arthur Augustus to Tom Brown. "I wegard this as simply stunnin', you know! There's only one thing w'ong with it!"

"What's that?" inquired Brown.

"We should be weawin' dinnah clobbah, deah boy," said Gussy seriously.

"How remiss of us!" agreed Lovell, with a grin.

"But othahwise evewythin' is toppin'!"

I can say with truth that the fat boys excelled themselves. I began to grow distinctly alarmed after a time, and I saw the waiters whispering among themselves, with glances at Bunter & Co. The amount of provender they shovelled away had to be seen to be believed.

I noticed with anxiety that Tubby Muffin's waistcoat was already half-way to the table, and he was still

going strong. Fisher T. Fish was making notes of everything he ate, together with the probable prices of the things, so that he would know how much he succeeded in "cinching" on the beano.

I hope he was careful to add my six-and-threepence to the list!

All good things come to an end eventually, and our banquet was no exception. Even Bunter finished after a time. I noticed that he looked with agony on the piles of stuff still on the table, but even he couldn't manage another ounce. Tubby Muffin leaned back with a sigh of utter bliss, and I noticed that his third waistcoat button was gently touching the table.

Then came a shower of crackers, which were duly pulled, and the paper-hats contained in them were put on. Then Wharton rose to his feet, a glass of ginger-pop in his hand.

"Gentlemen!" he cried.

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm going to propose the health of the staff of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL. (Loud cheers.) This has been a ripping beano——"

"Mmmmmmm!" agreed Bunter, full beyond words.

"And we've enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. ('Yaas, wathah!') THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL can't help being a first-rate book with such a first-rate Editor in charge of it——" (I blushed modestly amid the cheers.) "So let us wish him and his staff a really ripping Christmas, long life and happiness."

The toast was drunk with great enthusiasm. I made some sort of speech in reply; but I was really very happy indeed to see all those beaming faces around me, and I felt that my job was well worth while, if only for this alone.

But there are thousands of beaming

faces which I cannot see, and I didn't forget them at that moment.

"I want to propose a toast too," I said. "A toast to the fellows who have made not only THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL, but even this banquet, possible. So I ask you to join me in



Even Billy Bunter finished eating after a time. He looked with agony upon the piles of stuff on the table, but he couldn't manage another ounce!

wishing, most sincerely, health, happiness and prosperity to those very good friends whom perhaps we never see—Our Readers!"

I want you to be sure that this toast was honoured with terrific cheers, and the friendliness we felt for each other was extended to include you all, wherever you may be.

After that, the merry meeting broke up. Bunter was far past the power of movement, and the hotel manager arranged a chair for him in the lounge, where he could sleep off his terrific gorge like a boa-constrictor. When we left the hotel, he was fast asleep, with a gentle smile on his face.

I shall never forget that beano. Neither will Jones, my sub-editor. He ate himself into a state of coma, and we had to wheel him back to Fleetway House in a bath-chair! Still, as he said when he regained consciousness:

"I wouldn't mind doing the work of an Annual twice the present size if there was a beano like that at the end of it."

To which I can only add, "Hear, hear!"

A KANDID KONFESSION!

(OR THE LITTLE FAILING OF A GREAT SPIRIT)

By BILLY BUNTER

I'm always full of vigger,
And if you shood want to see
A fine athlethick figger,
Well, just take a look at me!

I'm not so thin as Toddy,
Who coold crawl inside a pipe;
I've a fine subbstancial bddy !
Strong and stirdy—that's my type !

Said our medickal eggsaminer
When testing me last week,
" For a bild of strength and stamminer
You're probabbly uneek !

" And your figger, Master Bunter,
Has no match in ert or sky,
Unless you count the grunter
In old Farmer Cobbett's sty !

But altho in eech direckshun
I'm a credtit to my sex,
I am still not quite purfeckshun,
For I have a few defex !

In the 1st place, I'm unabell
To do jusstis to my food !
And my appetight at tabel
Very often isn't good !

Tho I may be simply thirsting
For the appul-dumplings fine,
I feel very neer to bursting
When I've eeten more than nine !

Sum fine day I hope to alter
Such a meeger appetight !
Eat my fill, and never falter
When the bursting-point's in site !

Then, agen, it's rather funney,
But my memmory is slack !
I can think to borro mumney,
But forgett to pay it back !

Tho I serch my mind sinseerly
When my postle-order cumbs,
Yet I can't remmembber cleerly
All those tryflying littel sums !

And agen, I serch it vainly
When sum grubb I chance to spot,
For I can't remmembber planly
Wether it is mine or not !

Yet altho I laber under
Such a horrid handicapp,
You'll agree that I'm a wunder,
And, in fakt, an " all-round " chap !



FOOLING FISH



It's not like Fisher T. Fish, the Shylock of the Remove, to get the worst of a bargain. But for once the chums of the Remove hit on a wheeze for fooling him!

By MARK LINLEY

THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE SHYLOCK

HALLO, hallo, hallo ! Where did you get that ? "

Harry Wharton laughed. The Famous Five were tea-ing in Study No. 1. There were peaches for tea, but the tin obstinately refused to let itself be opened. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull had tried in vain, and now Wharton produced an ancient pocket-knife for a fresh assault—

Bob having buckled up the tin-opener for good.

"Where did you get that knife ? " demanded Bob.

"Bought it ! " grinned Wharton. "I lost my other knife, so I bought this one from Fishy. He charged me two bob for it."

"Two bob ! " exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Why, that was my old knife ! I sold it to Fishy for two-pence ! "

" Wha-at ? "

" Ha, ha, ha ! " roared Nugent, Bull and Hurree Singh.

Fisher T. Fish is a great business man. Coming from America, he naturally regards money as the beginning and end of all things. He carries on an extensive trade in the Lower School. He will buy and sell anything, as long as he can buy it cheaply and sell it dearly.

Fishy's one ambition is to possess all the money at Greyfriars—or, failing that, as much of it as possible. We must admit that he does his best !

Having persuaded Bob Cherry, in an idle moment, to sell that knife for twopence, Fishy put it by with his other junk until a victim came along. Evidently Wharton was the victim !

" Twopence ! " he gasped. " The awful Shylock ! Why, he asked me three-and-six for it, but I only had two bob."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" You silly ass ! " snorted Bob. " Fishy has rooked you ! Why, I would have given you the knife if I had known you wanted one."

Wharton felt annoyed—pardonably so.

" It's too thick ! " he said, and the others agreed. " I suppose that worm Fishy has to make a profit, but two bob for twopence is daylight robbery ! "

" The robberyfulness is terrific ! " agreed Inky. " The esteemed and disgusting Fishy should be made to disgorge."

" He'd rather die ! " grinned Johnny Bull.

Wharton kept an eye open for Fisher T. Fish when the juniors went down to the Rag after tea. He meant to have a word with that enterprising youth.

There was a crowd of us in the Rag, and Wharton's story met with a

mixture of laughter and sympathy. Most of us felt that it was beyond a joke, but Lord Mauleverer, our born-tired aristocrat, shook a solemn head.

" D'you know anythin' about metaphysics, old bean ? " he asked.

" Eh ? What ? No ! "

" Metaphysics, " said Mauly languidly, " is a very remarkable study. I've been readin' about it. The science of pure thought, and so on. Well, accordin' to metaphysics, you haven't been swindled at all."

" How do you make that out ? " demanded Wharton.

" Well, relatively speakin', nothing that happens after an action affects it psychologically."

" Great Scott ! "

" I mean, you were satisfied with the bargain when you first made it, so the fact that you've found out what profit Fishy made doesn't turn it into a swindle. Theoretically, you see—"

" Theoretically, I see a silly ass, old chap ! Two bob for twopence is rank swindling, and you can't get away from it."

" Hear, hear ! "

Lord Mauleverer smiled amiably. High-brow sciences sound all right in books, but some of them are apt to break down in ordinary human beings.

When Fisher T. Fish came in, Wharton went over to him.

" Look here, Fishy, " he said restively. " About that knife you sold me yesterday. It seems that you bought it for twopence ! "

" Correct ! " said Fishy tersely.

" And you charged me two bob for it, and took my last coin into the bargain ! " exclaimed Wharton indignantly.

" Sure, " agreed Fishy. " Why not ? "

" Oh, gad ! " gasped Mauly.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" You rotten worm ! " growled Bob. " I should think even Shylock would have been satisfied with a tanner."

Fishy sniffed derisively.

" Come off it ! Buying and selling are two different things, I guess. Business is business, you geck ! "

" I call it swindling ! " snapped Wharton. " I don't want the money, if it comes to that, but you've got to chuck this kind of thing ! "

" Aw, hire a hall ! " yawned Fishy. " You wanted the knife, and you got it ! "

" Well, you don't want it, but you're going to get it," replied Wharton, taking out the disputed knife. He opened the blade and began to prod Fishy with the business end.

" Hyer, I guess—— Ow ! Yooop ! You back down ! " howled Fisher T.

Fish, skipping wildly. " Lerrup, you jay ! You hear me talk ? I guess—— Yaroooooh ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Fishy dodged wildly, for he couldn't argue with the pointed end of a knife. With a fiendish howl he made a jump for the door and disappeared.

A roar of laughter followed him out.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A BAD BARGAIN !

" I wish I knew how to make that rotter sit up," growled Harry.

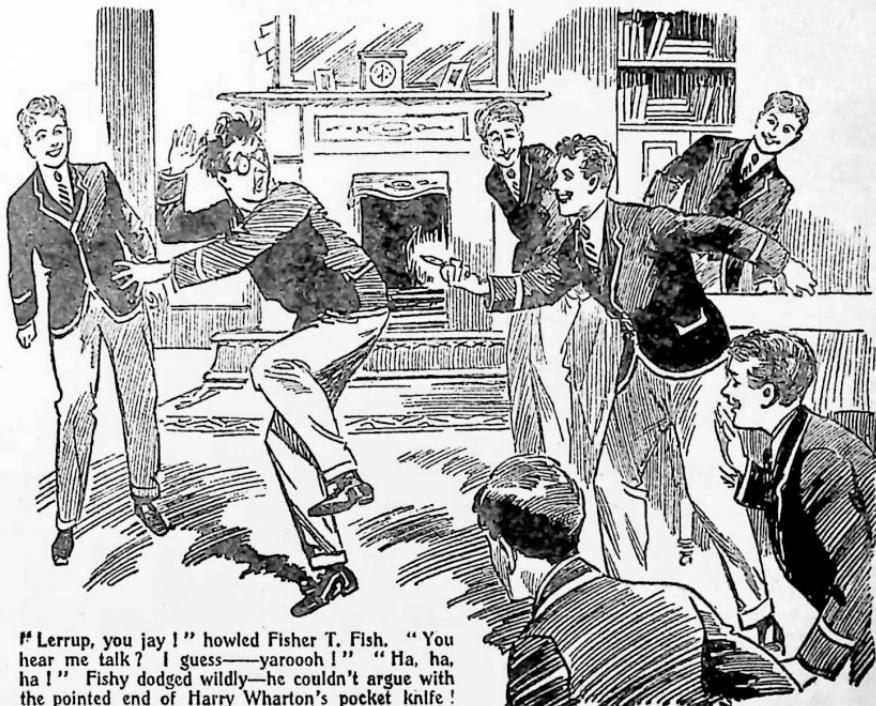
" Well, anyway, you've stopped him sitting down," put in Peter Todd.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Accordin' to metaphysics——"

" Oh, give us a rest, old chap ! "

But Mauly declined to give us a rest. He had exerted himself enough



" Lerrup, you jay ! " howled Fisher T. Fish. " You hear me talk ? I guess——yaroooooh ! " " Ha, ha, ha ! " Fishy dodged wildly—he couldn't argue with the pointed end of Harry Wharton's pocket knife !

to glance at a book on metaphysics, and he was full of the subject.

"Accordin' to metaphysics, you could get that two bob back from Fishy, and make him sit up into the bargain."

"Could I?" Wharton was interested. "Good! I'm stony!"

"Only theoretically, old chap. You see, we're arguin' theoretically."

"Oh! Well, that's not much good. Mrs. Mimble doesn't sell tuck on the theoretical system."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Theoretically—"

"There he goes again," grinned Toddy. "He has just learnt that word and he likes it."

"Theoretically," pursued Mauly, "it would be the easiest thing in the world to rook Fishy of two bob, though, in reality, Dick Turpin himself couldn't do it—"

"Hardly!"

"But the point is this—as Wharton is feelin' sore over losin' a theoretical two bob, why shouldn't Fishy feel the same thing? I'm goin' to try it on. I'll dish him of two bob in theory, although in reality I shall give him a shillin'. It will be interestin' to see what happens."

We began to be interested. Mauly is no end of an ass, but his brains are absolutely moth-proof.

"Toddy can help me," he went on. "If you fellows went, Fishy might smell a rat. I happen to know that Fishy has a dictionary for sale. He gave sixpence for it, and it's the only one he has. Come on, Toddy, let's go and buy it! Here's a shillin'—I want a new dic., anyway."

None of us knew what he was driving at, but we followed on to Study No. 14. Peter Todd went in, leaving the door slightly open. Fisher T. Fish was rubbing his wounds and scowling.

"Git!" he said. "Absquatulate, you geck!"

"I've come on business," said Toddy.

The words acted on Fishy like a magic balm. His pains were gone in a moment.

"Sure!" he beamed. "What can I sell you, big boy?"

"Prep starts in a minute," Toddy told him, "and I want a dictionary. Have you one to sell?"

"I guess you've come to the right shop!" said Fishy heartily, taking a volume out of his cupboard. "Hyer you are! Good as noo and not a mark on it! It's yourn for four bob!"

"It's not!" retorted Toddy. "It's mine for less than that, or it's no sale!"

"Don't go off on your ear, buddy! Call it three bob!"

For answer, Peter laid one shilling on the table.

"A bob?" Fishy shook his head. "I guess not! No, sir! Not so's you'd notice it! I ain't in business for my health! Make it half-a-dollar. I'll surely say I ain't sellin' at a bob."

"You'd better," advised Peter. "You might have the book on your hands for months. Quick sales and small profits is good business!"

Fishy haggled desperately, but Toddy was firm. And at last the price went down, penny by penny, to a bob.

"Take it!" sniffed Fishy, pocketing the shilling.

Hardly had he spoken than there was a tap on the door and Lord Mauleverer looked in.

"Sorry to butt in," said Mauly, "but I want a dic. in a hurry, and I thought you might have one for sale."

"Wha-at?" Fisher T. Fish jumped.

"I don't mind goin' to three bob for one, y'know!"

Fishy eyed the volume wolfishly, but Toddy's grasp was on it.

"Say, listen, Todd, I guess—Look hyer," said Fishy thickly ; "I reckon that's no sale. Hyer's your money back—"

Peter shook his head.

"Too late!" he answered. "I've bought the book."

"You ain't!" howled Fishy. "That sale's off! You hear me yawp! You gimme that book! Out with it, you piecan!"

"Nothing doing," answered Peter curtly. "If you really want a dictionary, Mauly—"

"Say, you let up!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish. "That book's mine—you hear me? Hyer, Mauly, you wait a tick! Say, Todd, you hand over that book—"

"Rats!"

"I—I guess I'll take it, then!"

And Fisher T. Fish, frantic at the thought of losing a maximum profit, jumped at Peter Todd. Toddy raised the dictionary and brought it down on Fishy's head.

Crash!

"Yoooop! Wake snakes! Ow! You pesky piecan!"

Fishy rolled under the table and roared.

"Now, Mauly," said Toddy, with a cheerful grin, "you can have the dic. if you like. I gave Fishy a bob for it—"

"Well, I was going to give three, so I'll take it at that price, or not at all!"

"Please yourself!"

Fishy's eyes started out of his head as Mauly calmly handed Peter three shillings and walked off with the book. It was more than flesh and blood could stand.

"I guess this gets my goat!" yelled Fishy. "Hyer, Todd, you gimme that two bob, you geck—"

"I guess I'm not in business for my health!" chortled Peter, and he walked away to return Mauly's three bob.

All that evening deep and dreadful groans came from Study No. 14. The sounds were so heart-rending that we couldn't do our prep. Had Fishy been cleft to the chine with a battle-axe he might have borne it; but to see a profit of two bob slip clean out of his hands was far past any human endurance.

Grinning faces surrounded Fishy in the Rag after prep. We were forced to admit that Mauly had made him "sit up" in no uncertain manner. But so wretched and woebegone was Fishy's face that some of us began to wonder whether Mauly had not, after all, been rather too cruel.

But we all agreed that metaphysics must be a very remarkable science.

Theoretically, at any rate!

The DETERMINIST

By HARRY MANNERS
(of the *Shell* at St. Jim's).

SAID Skimpole, on the cricket ground,
"Pray listen, my good youths,
While I endeavour to expound
Some practical home-truths!"

"Clear off, you fathead!" came a yell.
"Go east, west, south or north,
But do not interrupt the Shell
Until we've whopped the Fourth!"

The Fourth replied, with grim intent,
"Oh, let the fathead bawl,
For if he waits for that event,
He'll never speak at all!"



We did not heed the silly chump,
But let him wag his chin;
And groaned when Blake removed a stump
When bowling Bernard Glyn.

When Merry smote an off ball, which
Made all the fieldsmen hop,
Old Skimmy strode upon the pitch
And boldly shouted "Stop!"

"I can't allow you to persist
In such a futile game;
To any good Determinist,
The thought is simply shame!"



Said Skimpole, "Cease this idle chat
When everything's at stake!
Waste not your time with ball and bat—
St. Jim's," he cried, "awake!"
But we preferred to watch the match,
And Skimpole howled in vain;
When Gussy made a ripping catch,
We cheered with might and main.
"These games," said Skimpole, "are to me
But little short of crime!
How pitiful it is to see
This brainless waste of time!"



"That you play cricket here is due
To thoughtlessness, no doubt!
But, fellows, I appeal to you,
Arise and cast it out!"

"We won't cast out our cricket team,"
Tom Merry grimly said;
"We've got a rather better scheme—
We'll cast you out instead!"

And so we did—upon his neck!
Poor Skimmy gave a roar,
And crawled away, an utter wreck,
To trouble us no more!



TOWSER'S DIARY!

A week in the exciting life of George Herries' pet, as imagined by Monty Lowther, the humorist of the Shell Form at St. Jim's.

SUNDAY. Ho, hum ! Things are quiet. Dashed sight too quiet for my liking, in fact ! Why *must* Herries keep me on a lead when we take our Sunday afternoon stroll ? It doesn't give a dog a chance. He seems to have no regard for my wants in the way of exercise on Sundays. And is he short-tempered ? Why, I only had to make a playful snap at Gussy's trousers to get a flick from the whip ! Roll on Monday and better times !

While we walked, Herries was telling the rest about Mr. Ratcliff and Knox. "Ratty" got him into a row with the Head and Knox gave him a "sixer" for being cheeky. I must see if I can't do something about those two tomorrow.

MONDAY. Gr-r-r ! A much better day, this ! Broke loose at midday and had a useful run round the school. Two lucky meetings, too ! Bumped into Ratty first and then Knox. Whoopee ! Did I get a good

grip on the seat of Knox's pants ? I'll tell the world ! Ratty wasn't so easy ; those gowns the beaks wear would put any dog off his stroke. Still, I tore a good strip out of his jacket and made the gown a slightly worse rag than it was before ! That'll learn 'em !

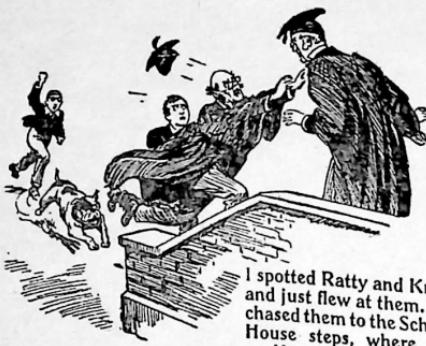
What I can't understand is Herries' attitude. After what he said yesterday about Ratty and Knox, I thought he'd be jolly pleased with me. But he's not. He seemed quite down in the mouth about something when he took me back to my kennel. No accounting for some people, is there ?

TUESDAY. Urrrrrgh ! Had a feeling when I woke that this was going to be my unlucky day—and so it



was ! It was chasing Ratty and Knox that caused it. I spotted them when Herries was exercising me at morning break, and just flew at them. They flew, too, when they saw me—and Herries came flying after, yelling to me to come back ! He

I tore a good strip out of Ratty's jacket as I chased him across the quad. That'll learn 'im !



I spotted Ratty and Knox and just flew at them. I chased them to the School House steps, where the Head was waiting.

caught me up and pulled me off just as we all reached the Head, who was standing at the top of the School House steps. And then the fur began to fly !

" Now, sir, you can see for yourself the kind of thing we have to endure from this wretched animal ! " spluttered Ratty.

" Exactly, sir ! " burbled Knox. " This is just what we complained about yesterday. The brute shouldn't be at large ! "

Then they both began abusing me together. The Head coughed, Herries started putting up an indignant defence and I started growling and snarling. There was the very dickens of a din for a minute or so !

Finally, the Head stopped it and trotted out a decision that left me fairly snorting with rage.

" It seems that only one thing can put an end to the trouble, Herries, " he said. " The dog must go ! Kindly arrange for it to leave by the end of the week ! "

WEDNESDAY. The injustice of it ! The ingratitude of it ! All the time I've been at St. Jim's I've been a model bulldog, and now, just because I look after my master's interests, I'm to go ! It's a bitter pill to swallow —and it makes it no less bitter

hearing what people are saying about me. I haven't heard a soul besides Herries utter a word of regret that I'm leaving. Even Herries' pals seem to grin over my downfall and that chump Gussy is simply chirruping with joy. Gr-r-r !

THURSDAY. Well, I've found one other friend, anyway—the local tailor. Herries took me along there to-day when he went to be measured for a new overcoat and the old boy seemed quite dismayed to hear I was going. I noticed Knox's trousers and Ratty's coat on the bench and felt jolly glad they didn't succeed in poisoning his mind against me.

By the way, he advised Herries to crack up my merits as a watchdog to the Head and to tell the Head what a lot of burglars are about just lately. I wonder if there's a chance of getting a reprieve on these lines ? It's worth chewing over !

FRIDAY. Made up my mind to catch a burglar at all costs. Perhaps the Head would look on me with a kindlier eye then, I thought ! So I made a getaway when Herries took me for my evening run and hid in the bushes till night-time. Then I came out and kept watch.

What a bit of luck ! Just about midnight, what should I find climbing in at an open window in the School House but a real live burglar ! I had my teeth into his trousers in no time. Down he came like a sack of spuds ! I cornered him after that and kept on growling at him till someone turned up. It



I had my teeth into the "burglar's" trousers in no time, and down he came like a sack of spuds !

was Herries who turned up. He had been lying awake, waiting to hear something of me again. He looked at the "burglar" and gasped "Knox!" And Knox it was—not a burglar, after all!

But this time it ended up very nicely. Instead of threatening to call the Head, Knox said "Quiet, you young ass! Call that dog off, and for goodness' sake don't make a row about it!" It seemed that Knox didn't want to report me to the Head this time!

Herries said: "Look here, Knox, that's all very well, but Towser's going to-morrow because of you and—"

"Call him off and I'll ask the Head to reconsider it to-morrow!" begged Knox. "I mean that!"

And Herries called me off. And there's no doubt about it—he is pleased with me this time!

SATURDAY. Urrrrrgh! Gr-r-r! Everything in the kennel's lovely again! Knox came down to see me with the Head and Herries soon after brekker. I wagged my tail and cooed like a turtle-dove. After a bit of humming and hawing, the Head said:

"Very well, Knox. I must say your request has surprised me, but the dog certainly does seem better behaved. In view of your representations I will rescind my previous order. You may keep him on after all, Herries!"

I wagged my tail again and winked at Herries. A dog's life isn't so bad at times like this! Gr-r-r-r-r-r!

OUR CHAMBER OF HORRORS



EUCLID

By JACK BLAKE

I'd give my bank-book as it stands,
With all the money in it,
If I could only get my hands
On Euclid for a minute!
The pest! The beast! The brute! The toad!
I'd like to punch his boko!
I'd love to meet him on the road,
I'd give the rotter toco!

I'd knock his angle so obtuse
That he would scream for mercy!
I'd kick his old hypotenuse
From John o' Groats to Jersey!
I'd pull his teeth out by the roots
And send them to our teachers!
And with a pair of football boots
I'd jump upon his features!

It's Euclid's fault I'm kept away
From footer, I may mention.
The Rookwood match is played to-day,
And I am in detention!
I've worked until I'm fit to drop
At Euclid's beastly angles;
I loathe that forty-seventh prop,
It's full of tricks and tangles!

Who thinks I'm eager to produce
An area that's double
The square of the hypotenuse?
It isn't worth the trouble!
To Euclid, bother him, I owe
This load of work and worry.
He died two thousand years ago—
I'll tell the world I'm sorry!

The Shadow Over Eastwood House!



By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER TRIMBLE DECLINES!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY chewed the end of a stump of pencil, and wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

There was a pocket-book in the other hand of Arthur Augustus. It was open, and a list of names appeared on the open page.

Arthur Augustus read them over aloud, as he stood by the window in the Fourth Form passage in the School House.

"Blake—Hewwies—Dig—of course, they must come," he murmured. "And Wildwake, Kangawoo, and Talbot—that's all wight. Woylance and

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's Christmas house-party would have been a very cheery one but for the anxiety caused by his father's illness.

As it turns out, D'Arcy's schoolboy friends are able to defeat a dastardly plot, thereby lifting the shadow that hangs over Eastwood House.

young Wally—that's eight. If I ask those New House boundahs, Figgins & Co., that will make eleven."

Three juniors came along from the Shell passage, and paused as they saw the swell of St. Jim's chewing his pencil over his list.

Tom Merry, and Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, caught Arthur Augustus's mutterings, and they smiled.

"Hallo, old top!" said Tom Merry.
"Making up a football team?"

Arthur Augustus glanced up.

"Not exactly, Tom Mewwy—"

"Or is it a Christmas subscription list?" asked Manners. "Put me down for a penny!"

"Weally, Manners——"

"Me, too!" said Monty Lowther generously. "Christmas is a time for opening the heart and the purse-strings. Count me in! Mine's a ha'penny!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Don't leave me out," said Tom Merry gravely. "I can go three-halfpence. I hope it's a good cause."

"Weally, you know——"

"If it solves the question of the unemployed, or pays off the War Loan, we shall feel that our money has not been wasted," said Lowther. "Here you are!"

Monty Lowther tossed a halfpenny to Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's did not seem prepared for that contribution, for he caught the coin with his nose, not with his hand.

"Ow! You uttah ass——"

"Here's mine!" said Manners, and a penny landed on Arthur Augustus' ear.

"Yawooooh!"

"Mine!" said Tom Merry, and he playfully wedged a penny and a halfpenny down Arthur Augustus' neck, as the swell of the Fourth rubbed his ear.

"Gwoogh! You feahful ass!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Put our names down, you know — our generosity ought to be put on record," said Lowther.

"You feahful ass—— Ow——"

The Terrible Three chuckled and passed on.

Whether Arthur Augustus was making up a charity subscription for some deserving cause, or not, they did not know; but it was worth the moderate sum of threepence to pull his noble leg.

"He, he, he!" Baggy Trimble appeared in the offing, as Arthur Augustus was making strenuous efforts

to extract two coins from the back of his neck. "He, he, he! Is that a new thing in ju-jitsu, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Twimble——"

"You jolly well needn't put my name down," grinned Trimble.

Arthur Augustus looked at him. He gave up the attempt to recover Tom Merry's contribution, letting the coins slide down where they would.

"You do not want me to put your name on my list, Twimble?" asked Arthur Augustus, with a rather curious expression on his noble countenance.

"No fear!" answered Baggy promptly. "Catch me shelling out money for anybody! Not such an ass!"

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"Vewy well, Twimble, just as you like it!"

Arthur Augustus walked away up the Fourth Form passage and looked into Study No. 9. Trimble shrugged his fat shoulders. Levison and Clive and Cardew were in No. 9; and Trimble heard a murmur of voices. Arthur Augustus was scribbling more names on his list as he came out of the study. Trimble saw him look back.

"Levison, deah boy——"

"Yes, Gussy?"

"Shall I put down your minor?"

"Certainly, if you like!"

"I am going to ask Mannahs minor, and pewwaps Fwank would like to——"

"I'm sure he would!"

"And what about your sistah Dowis, Levison? As she is a fwient of my cousin Ethel——"

"I think I can answer for Doris, old scout!"

"Good!"

Arthur Augustus scribbled more names on his list, and came down the passage. Trimble gave him a wink.

" Sticking 'em all round, ain't you ? " he remarked.

" Yaas ! "

" Blessed if I'd go round cadging like that ! " sneered Trimble.

Arthur Augustus smiled.

" What are you raising a subscription for, anyhow ? " demanded Baggy.

" Wats ! "

" I know the game, " said Trimble, with a grin. " Helping the poor at Christmas, and helping yourself, too—what ? A penny for the poor and two-pence for yours truly ! He, he, he ! "

Arthur Augustus did not deign to reply to that remark. He went downstairs and walked out into the quad. Blake and Herries and Digby were loafing round the door, and Blake called to him.

" Getting on with the list, Gussy ? "

" Yaas, wathah ! "

" How many now ? "

" Sixteen, deah boy, without countin' Dowis Levison and my cousin Ethel."

" Bravo ! " chirruped Herries.

" Have you put Towser down ? "

" Towsah ? " Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows. " Weally, Hewwies, you know vewy well that that feahful bulldog—"

" Leave him out, " said Herries. " I have arranged with Taggles for Towser. He might get neglected—"

" Bai Jove ! "

Arthur Augustus walked on. Baggy Trimble came rolling out of the School House. He was quite interested in the progress of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's subscription list. He felt interested to know how many fellows would be fools enough to part with their money—that was how the amiable Baggy looked at it.

D'Arcy trotted across to the New House, where Figgins & Co. were punting about a footer. Perhaps they did not see him coming—or perhaps

they did ! Anyhow, Figgins passed the ball to Wynn, who passed it to Arthur Augustus—landing it on his chest. There was a yell as Arthur Augustus sat down, his pocket-book flying in one direction, and his pencil in another.

" Yawoooh ! "

" Oh, sorry ! " ejaculated Figgins.

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet. He grabbed at his dangling eyeglass and jammed it into his eye, and glared at the grinning chums of the New House.

" I have a gweat mind not to put your names down now, " he said wrathfully. " Howeveh, as it is Chwistmas-time, I will ovahlook your wathah wuffianly conduct."

" What's on ? " asked Figgins.

Baggy Trimble was rolling towards the spot, but he was too late to hear Arthur Augustus explain what was on. But he was in time to see the swell of St. Jim's write down three more names on his list.

" Three more silly asses ! " commented Baggy, as D'Arcy passed him on his way back to the School House.

Arthur Augustus did not deign to heed. Roylance, the New Zealand junior, met him outside the School House.

" Finished the merry list ? " he asked.

" Yaas, wathah ! " said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. " There will be twenty-one, includin' my cousin Ethel and Dowis Levison."

" Quite a party ! " said Roylance.

" Yaas."

" Lot of silly owls ! " said Baggy Trimble. " Catch me putting up a threepenny-bit ! Fools and their money are soon parted ! "

Roylance glanced at him, puzzled. Arthur Augustus grinned, and turned to Baggy Trimble.

"Twimble, deah boy—"

"Don't ask me for a sub!" jeered Trimble. "I'm wide awake! I've got my eye-teeth cut! No good spinning me a yarn about the deserving poor! He, he, he!"

"Shall I put your name down, Twimble?"

"No fear!"

"Suppose it is for a vewy good cause?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Rats!"

"You are suah you do not want me to put your name on the list?" asked the swell of St. Jim's.

Trimble sniffed.

"Jolly sure!" he answered.

"Vewy good!"

"What does the fat owl think the list is for?" asked Roylance, in wonder.

Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"He thinks it is a list of contwibutahs to some Chwistmas chawity!" he explained.

"Oh, I see!"

"Well, isn't it?" demanded Trimble, rather taken aback.

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"Then what is it?"

"My patah has given me permish to take a numewous partay of fwends to Eastwood House for Chwistmas!" explained Arthur Augustus. "I am mak-



Figgins passed the ball to Wynn, who passed it to Arthur Augustus—landing it on his chest!

in'up the list of fellows for the partay!"

Baggy Trimble jumped.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Roylance, quite entertained by the expression on Baggy Trimble's fat face at that moment.

"I—I say, Gussy!" gasped Trimble. "I—I didn't know—I—I never thought—Put down my name, old chap!"

"Wats!"

"I'll be jolly glad to come!" said Trimble eagerly. "I should really enjoy it, you know!"

" Vewy pwob, deah boy ! But I wathah think that your undesirablw pwersence would detwact fwom the enjoyment of othahs——"

" Gussy, old man——"

" I gave you a chance to have your name down ! " chuckled Arthur Augustus. " You wefused, you know ! "

" I—I—— Of course I'll come with——"

" You jolly well won't, Twimble ! Go and eat coke ! "

And Arthur Augustus snapped his pocket-book shut, put it in his pocket, and walked away grinning. And Baggy Trimble, as he blinked after Lord Eastwood's elegant son, felt inclined to kick himself hard !

THE SECOND CHAPTER CELEBRATED IN STUDY No. 6

" **S**TANDING room only ! " grinned Monty Lowther.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Oh, come off ! " said Wally of the Third.

It was the last night of the term, and there was a celebration going on in that celebrated apartment, Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

The study was crowded, not to say crammed. For Arthur Augustus had asked to that little gathering all the fellows who were going home with him for Christmas. And it was a numerous party—much too numerous for the space allotted to a junior study.

How the juniors got into Study No. 6 was a mystery. How they were going to get out again was another mystery. And how the three fags who had just arrived were going to squeeze in was a third and still deeper mystery.

The Terrible Three sat in the window-seat. Seven chairs were occupied by Talbot, Kangaroo, Roy-

lance, Wildrake, Levison, Cardew, and Clive.

Figgins & Co. of the New House shared the coal-locker and a box. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy were standing ; they averred that they preferred to stand.

It was rather warm in the study, though the weather was that of December. The door had been left open for air, and into the open doorway came Wally & Co. of the Third. Baggy Trimble had appeared there a few minutes before, and had been rapidly disposed of. Wildrake, who was nearest the door, " guessed " that Trimble was going to get his boot. And it proved that the Canadian junior had guessed correctly. Trimble got the boot, and departed with a howl. But Wally and Reggie Manners and Frank Levison of the Third Form were honoured guests, and could not be disposed of by means of Wildrake's boot.

" Twot in, deah boys ! " said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hospitably.

" Puzzle—find the room for trotting ! " grinned Levison.

" Oh, we'll manage ! " said Wally. " Shove in along with me, kids ! "

" Hear, hear ! " grinned Manners minor.

" Wedge in ! " grinned Frank Levison.

D'Arcy minor led the way ; the other two minors followed hard. There was a roar from the occupants of the study as they " wedged " in. They certainly found room somehow. A cup of coffee was spilt over Ralph Reckness Cardew's elegant trousers ; an egg squashed on Roylance's jacket. But these trifling casualties did not worry Wally & Co. They shoved in regardless, and reached the table, which was loaded with good things.

"Bai Jove! Don't be a little wuffman, Wally!" exclaimed D'Arcy major.

Wally D'Arcy wagged a rather grubby forefinger at his major.

"Don't you begin, Gus!" he implored.

"Weally, Wally——"

"Pass those ham-patties!" said Wally. "They look nice! Ever such a good stunt of yours to stand us a farewell supper, Gus, old bird! I don't see why you wanted to crowd out the study with the Fourth and the Shell, though!"

"You cheeky young sweep!" growled Kangaroo.

"Same to you, and many of them, old bean!" answered Wally cheerily. "Gussy, old man, leave off talking, and pass the grub!"

"I was wemarkin'——"

"Never mind what you were remarking, old humming-bird! Don't remark—just pass the tommy! We're peckish!"

"You are a feahful young wuffman, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus. "I must weally apologise to these fellahs for your feahful mannahs!"

"Do you hear what he's saying about you, Reggie?"

"Look here——" began Reggie.

"Weally, Wally, you are quite awaha that I was not alludin' to Mannah's minah! I was alludin'——"

"Still, you're right! Reggie is rather a sweep!" said Wally cheerily.

"He takes after his major!"

"Does he?" snorted Manners major, from the window.

Wally looked round, and nodded affably to the Terrible Three.

"Hallo! Didn't see you little yellow birds there! So Tom's got his fearful Manners with him, too——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not to mention his awful Lowther and his frabjous self!" said Wally.

"You ought to be glad to get three decent and well-brought-up youths like us to come and see you, Gus, in a frumptious crowd like this!"

"Bai Jove!"

"If D'Arcy minor is never hanged," remarked Cardew of the Fourth, "it won't be for want of neck!"

"Bow-wow!" answered Wally independently. "I say! What am I going to sit on? Your knee will do, Wildrake!"

"Sit down!" said the Canadian junior.

"Right-ho!"

Wally sat on the knee of the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch. The knee gave way under him the next moment, and he sat next on the carpet. There was a roar in Study No. 6.

"Call that a joke?" yelled Wally. "I'd jolly well punch your head if it wasn't Christmas-time! Fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess you can try the other knee if you like!" chuckled Wildrake.

"Yaas, wathah! Twy the othah knee, you cheekay young boundah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, rats! Pass the jam tarts!"

"It's a bit of a squeeze, but what's the odds so long as you're 'appy?" remarked Figgins. "Cake this way!"

"Heah you are, deah boy. I twust you like the cake, Wynn."

Fatty Wynn beamed.

"Topping!" he said. "Pass another this way! You needn't trouble to cut it; just shove it along."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By the way, there's a letter for you, Gus," remarked Wally, with his mouth full of plum cake.

"Bai Jove! You were a young ass not to bwing it up to me!" said Arthur Augustus reprovingly.

" But I——"

" Wats ! You were a young ass, and a very thoughtless duffah ! " said the swell of St. Jim's.

" Oh, all right," said Wally. " Have it your own way, old top ! "

" Did you notice whether it was a lettah fwom home, Wally ? "

" Easthorpe postmark," said Wally. " I don't know the fist. But it was one of the pater's envelopes."

" Then it is fwom the patah," said Gussy. " Pwobably his secwetawy addwessed it for him. Wun down and fetch it."

" Bow-wow ! "

" Weally, Wally——"

" Likewise rats ! "

" I wegard you as a young wascal, Wally. Twy to let me pass, will you, deah boys ? It may be somethin' wathah important."

" Better walk across on our heads," suggested Roylance.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

It was not easy for Arthur Augustus to wind his way through the crammed study to the door. But he succeeded at last, and disappeared downstairs. Wally looked after him with a grin, and pulled a letter from his pocket and laid it among the teacups.

" Is that Gussy's letter ? " exclaimed Blake.

" That's it ! "

" Then you did bring it up ! " ejaculated Herries.

" Exactly. Gussy wouldn't let me tell him ! " yawned Wally. " Queer how old Gussy jumps to conclusions, ain't it ? I hope it will do him good to go rooting in the rack for a letter that isn't there. Pass the jam, Kerr."

There was a chortle in Study No. 6. It was ten minutes before the aristocratic countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reappeared in the door-

way. There was a frown on his noble brow.

" Wally, you young wattah, there isn't any lettah——"

" Here it is ! " chuckled Digby.

" Bai Jove ! How did that lettah get there ? " exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

" Suddenly flew down the chimney," said Wally, with sarcasm.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Bai Jove ! You are a disrespectful and uttahly wussianly young wascal, Wally, and I have a gweat mind to give you a feahful thwashin' ! " exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as he took his letter. " Will you fellows excuse me while I glance at this lettah ? "

" Sure we will, old bean," said Wally. " Anything to keep you quiet for a bit."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Arthur Augustus gave his cheerful young brother a look that ought to have withered him, but didn't. Then he opened his letter.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS ON THE HIGH HORSE
" CHEEK ! "

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that ejaculation suddenly as he finished the perusal of the letter from home. Clouds had been gathering on his brow during the perusal, and the juniors in the study wondered what was the matter.

" Feahful neck ! " breathed Arthur Augustus. " I shall disdain to make any weply to this."

" Gus, old man, I can't allow you to talk about the governor like that ! " said Wally chidingly.

" You young ass, this lettah is not fwom the patah ! It is fwom his secwetawy—that man Bloore. The cheekay ass——"

"Nothing wrong at home, I hope?" asked Tom Merry.

"The patah is not vewy well, deah boy. He has not been vewy well for some time," said Arthur Augustus. "But in his lettah to me he said he twusted to be well enough to join in the celeb wation of Chwistmas Day. Now this cheekay boundah—Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus looked quite excited with wrath. For once his noble manners lost the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Who on earth is Bloore?" asked Jack Blake.

"The patah's secwetawy," explained Arthur Augustus. "His pwevious secwetawy had a nervous bweakdown, and has been sent away to the South of Fwance. This man Bloore is a tempowawy secwetawy. I saw him when I went home a few weeks ago, and did not like him. He has a howwid taste in neckties."

"What a dreadful character!" said Cardew gravely.

"Not exactly dweadful, Cardew, but vewy unpleasant," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I wathah



"You see, I am makin' up a list of fellows for my Chwistmas party!" explained Arthur Augustus. Baggy Trimble jumped. "Oh!" he gasped. "I—I didn't know—I never thought—Put down my name, old chap!"

thought he was wantin' in pwopah civility in some wespects; but, as you fellows know, I am not the chap to make a fuss. My patah seemed to find him useful, so I let him wip. But now—I will wead out his lettah, and you fellows tell me what you think of it."

"Go ahead!" said Wally.

"You wead it out, Tom Mewwy. I disdain to look at the man's cheekay scwawl again!"

"Certainly, old top," said Tom, with a smile. "I haven't seen his necktie, so I can stand him—in a letter. Here goes!"

The captain of the Shell read the offending letter aloud, the whole party listening to it with interest. Arthur Augustus punctuated the reading with a series of scornful sniffs.

"Dear Master Arthur,—I am sorry to say that your respected father's illness appears to have taken a more serious turn. The doctor is firmly of opinion that he should be kept quiet, and disturbed as little as possible. I believe it is your intention to bring a large party of your school-fellows home for Christmas. May I suggest that you should refrain from doing so, as the effect upon his lordship may be quite serious? If I may venture to make a further suggestion, it would be advisable for you and your brother, Walter Adolphus, to accept some invitation from a school-fellow instead of returning home this vacation. At the very least, I trust that you will not bring a party of noisy schoolboys here.—Yours respectfully,

"GILBERT BLOORE."

"My only hat!" commented Blake.

"Jevvah heah of such a nerve, deah boys?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Sheer neck!" said Wally. "Catch me taking any notice of the Bloore bird! I'll jolly well jaw him for this!"

Tom Merry looked grave.

"If your father is seriously ill, Gussy, old man, don't you think—"

"My fathah is not too ill to w'ite to me himself, if this was his wish, deah boy."

"He might be—" said Tom hesitatingly.

"In that case his medical attendant would w'ite."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's so," he said. "This man Bloore seems to have taken a lot

upon himself, unless he is acting under the instructions of the doctor."

"Dr. Millard would not act thwough him, Tom Mewwy. The doctah knows me vewy well, and he would w'ite to me personally."

"Looks like sheer cheek!" said Kerr.

"I guess it's outside the limit," remarked Wildrake. "Besides, we're not a noisy lot of schoolboys, are we? Nice quiet kids—"

"Especially Wally!" remarked Lowther.

"Oh, come off!" said Wally of the Third. "I'll bet a tanner—"

"Weally, Wally, I wish you would not use such expwessions—"

"I'll bet a tanner that the pater doesn't know Bloore has written to Gussy at all!" said D'Arcy minor. "Like his thumping cheek! We're jolly well going!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You really think we ought to come, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus' eye gleamed.

"I twust all my fwieuds will come with me, as awwanged," he said. "I wegard it as bein' up to them to wally wound me and show this cheekay ass that nobody takes any notice of him."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Wally.

"Well, if you put it like that, old top—" said Figgins.

"I do put it like that, Figgay."

"Then it's a go!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, wathah!"

And that point was settled.

And the next day, when St. Jim's broke up for the Christmas holidays, a charabanc came over from Wayland to convey Gussy and his numerous guests to Eastwood House, in Hampshire.

A crowd of St. Jim's fellows saw the charabanc off with loud cheers,

and Arthur Augustus waved his eyeglass to them as the party started.

Piled with baggage and schoolboys, the charabanc rolled away, and St. Jim's was left behind.

It was a merry party that rolled away, up hill and down dale, by road and lane, with a cheery buzz of talk going on all the time. Wally had provided himself with a tin trumpet, upon which he blew fearsome blasts. Reggie Manners and Levison minor contributed sweet music with a mouth-organ and a tin whistle. The hilarious party exchanged cheery chipping with the passengers in other charabancs that they passed on the roads. It was a frosty December day, and Tom Merry & Co. enjoyed the journey through the keen air. Only Arthur Augustus was a little subdued, and he even forgot to reprove Wally for the terrific din he was making with the tin trumpet. The thought was in Gussy's mind that perhaps he would find his father worse—that perhaps Lord Eastwood was more seriously ill than he had revealed in his letters—and that painful thought troubled the swell of St. Jim's very much. He was glad when the charabanc rolled up the stately drive of Eastwood House at last !

THE FOURTH CHAPTER HIS LORDSHIP'S SECRETARY !

DAD !

There was a slight tremor in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice.

It was but seldom that the swell of St. Jim's allowed himself to betray emotion, but he could not quite help it now. And the old familiar "dad" of childhood came unconsciously to his lips at this moment.

Lord Eastwood turned towards his son with a weak smile.

The old gentleman was reclining

upon a cushioned couch in the library of Eastwood House, close to a blazing, leaping log fire. The wide windows gave a view of the great park, with its leafless trees, backed by the setting winter sun. Arthur Augustus felt a pang as he noted how pale and worn his father looked. He had known that Lord Eastwood was unwell ; but he had supposed that the earl was run down—a little exhausted, perhaps, by a busy political life. But he could see now that it was real illness. There was a kind of transparent pallor in the earl's face that almost alarmed the junior.

"Dad," faltered Arthur Augustus, "you're not well ! "

"I—I say, are you really crocked, father ?" asked Wally, who had followed his brother in. Even the irrepressible Wally was reduced to seriousness by his father's ill look.

"I am not very well, my dear boy," said his lordship in a low but steady voice. "I am very glad to see you, though. I hope you have brought your friends with you as arranged ?"

"Yaas, wathah ! "

"Bloore——" began Wally.

Arthur Augustus made his minor a sign. If the earl was unaware of his secretary's intervention, Arthur Augustus did not wish to trouble him with any complaint. Wally understood, and was silent.

"Bloore," repeated his lordship—"you have met Bloore, I think. I want you boys to be very kind to Bloore. He has been most attentive to me in my illness. Indeed, Dr. Millard declares that he is better than a nurse."

"Bai Jove !" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"I do not think you liked Bloore very much, Arthur, when you were at home last time."

" I—I was not awaah that you—you noticed it, sir!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

The earl smiled faintly.

" I am sure, Arthur, that you will carry out my wishes, and show every consideration to him, when I tell you that he has cared for me in my illness with as much kind attention as I could have received from a son."

" I shall thank him myself!" said Arthur Augustus nobly. " I should be vewy sowwy to misjudge him, even if he should wathah ovahstep the line in his anxiety for you, sir. I am vewy much obliged to him if he has taken care of you!"

And Wally mentally renounced some very plain things that he had been going to say to Gilbert Bloore!

" Isn't old Conway comin' home for Chwistmas?" asked Arthur Augustus.

" No; your elder brother is staying with some friends in Scotland," said Lord Eastwood. " He wished to come home when he heard that I was not very well; but I would not allow him to cancel his arrangements. The matter is not so serious as that."

" But—but you don't look well, dad," faltered Arthur Augustus.

The earl sighed.

" I do not feel well, yet there is little the matter that can be given a name," he said. " I have overtaxed my strength, the doctor thinks. I require a long rest. Dr. Millard says so. Rest and care, and I am receiving the best of care. Bloore sees to that, as well as Lady Eastwood. Your Aunt Adeline is also here, Arthur, and your Cousin Ethel arrived to-day. But let your friends come in and see me. I am afraid I shall have to be much alone at present, but you must not allow my indisposition to cloud your festivities. There is really nothing the matter—nothing in the least serious.

Only a feeling of fatigue, which will be cured by rest."

Arthur Augustus made up his mind to interview Dr. Millard at the earliest opportunity; but he did not say so. He brought Tom Merry & Co. into the library to be presented to his lordship. The juniors came in very quietly, and with rather serious faces.

Lord Eastwood greeted them with a smiling face, and an air of courtesy that soon put them at their ease. He was evidently pleased to see the crowd of healthy youthful faces about him. Kit Wildrake, whom he had never seen before, was introduced, and Lord Eastwood asked him some questions about Canada. He seemed interested by Wildrake's talk, and most of the other fellows retired, and left Wildrake still in conversation with his lordship. In his earlier years Lord Eastwood had travelled in the great Dominion, and Wildrake found that he knew British Columbia, had canoed on the Fraser River, and shot elk in the Cascade Mountains. He knew Telegraph Creek, fifty miles from where Boot Leg Ranch was situated.

Arthur Augustus remained, after the rest had retired, with Wildrake, and he encouraged the Canadian junior with a smile. He was glad to see that in the interest of his talk with the boy from the Boot Leg Ranch Lord Eastwood's face became animated, and a little more colour crept into the pale cheeks. Gussy noticed, too, that Wildrake's keen eyes several times dwelt on his lordship's face with a piercing, inquiring glance that puzzled the swell of St. Jim's a little. But his lordship never caught any of those penetrating looks.

There was a soft step at the door, and a young man came into the library, treading softly, almost stealthily. Wildrake glanced at him.



Wally sat on Wildrake's knee, which gave way under him the next moment! There was a roar of laughter in the study. "Call that a joke?" yelled Wally.

He was a rather tall, slim man of about thirty-five years, with keen black eyes, and a narrow slit of a mouth. His hands were very white, with long, thin, tapering fingers. He came over towards his lordship's couch.

Lord Eastwood nodded to him, with a smile.

"Ah, you are back, Bloore?"

"Yes, my lord. I did not care to leave you for very long," said Bloore in a soft, rather musical voice.

"You must take care of your own health, Bloore."

The young man smiled deprecatingly.

Kit Wildrake rose to his feet.

"I hope I haven't tired you, sir?"

he said. "Perhaps I ought not to have talked so long."

"Not at all, my dear boy!" said Lord Eastwood kindly. "I have quite enjoyed our little talk. By the way, you do not know Mr. Bloore—my secretary and kind friend—Kit Wildrake."

Bloore held out his hand, and Wildrake touched it and felt a chill from the long, cold fingers. He fixed his eyes on Bloore's face.

"Haven't I met you somewhere before, Mr. Bloore?" he asked.

"I think not," said the secretary, with a smile.

"You haven't been in Canada?" Bloore started.

"Canada?" he repeated.

"British Columbia," said Wildrake. "That's where I come from."

"Indeed! No, I have never been in Canada," said Bloore. "I have travelled in the Colonies, but chiefly in Australia and New Zealand. I have never had the good fortune to visit Canada—a great country, I believe. But it is time that his lordship's medicine was given."

Arthur Augustus and Wildrake quitted the library, and Bloore followed them out. He closed the door, and then spoke again.

"I am sure you young gentlemen will excuse me," he said softly; "but it's very important that his lordship should not be excited by too much talk. He is rather disturbed at present, I fear."

Wildrake coloured.

"Weally, Bloore—" began Arthur Augustus.

"Doctor's orders, sir," murmured Bloore.

Arthur Augustus swallowed something with difficulty. He did not like the man, or his soft suave manner; and he liked still less the secretary's interference. But he remembered what his father had said.

"I am vewy much obliged to you, Bloore," he said, with something of an effort. "You appeah to have been takin' gweat care of my fathah."

"My duty, sir—and my pleasure, too," said Bloore softly. "His lordship has overwhelmed me with kindness, and I should be very ungrateful if I did not strive to make some small return, now that it is in my power to do so. My own health, and indeed my life, weigh little in my mind compared with his lordship's well-being."

"Bai Jove, you are a weally good fellow, Bloore," said Arthur Augustus.

"I was feelin' wathah watty about your lettah to me at St. Jim's; but, upon the whole, I am suah you meant vewy well."

"You did not see fit to act upon my suggestion, Master Arthur," said the secretary.

"That was quite imposs," said Arthur Augustus briefly.

The secretary bowed without replying, and returned into the library, closing the door after him. Arthur Augustus walked away with Wildrake.

"Wathah a tactless chap, but vewy good at heart, I think," said Arthur Augustus. "He seems vewy gwateful to the patah."

"He talks a good bit about it, at least," said Wildrake drily.

"Bai Jove! I hope you don't think him insincere, deah boy. That would be wathah howwid."

Wildrake made no reply to that, and they joined the rest of the St. Jim's party.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

WILDRAKE WANTS TO KNOW!

LADY EASTWOOD presided at tea, to which the crowd of St. Jim's fellows did full justice. Ethel Cleveland helped her ladyship, and the juniors helped Ethel—especially Figgins. And Fatty Wynn murmured to Kerr that Ethel seemed to be very careful to see that George Figgins had plenty of the best, whereat George Francis Kerr grinned. Arthur Augustus had sometimes complained that Figgy seemed to think that Ethel was his cousin, not Gussy's at all; and certainly Figgins was as attentive to Miss Cleveland as the most affectionate and devoted cousin could have been. Tea was nearly over when Gilbert Bloore came quietly in and took a seat. Arthur Augustus made it a point to greet him pleasantly;

but Wildrake—who was very interested in the silent-footed secretary—noted that Cousin Ethel avoided speaking to the young man; and he also thought he detected that Lady Eastwood avoided his look, though her ladyship had too much social grace to betray her dislike, if she felt any.

It was quite a merry party at tea. Lord Eastwood's genial manner had quite reassured Tom Merry & Co., and even Arthur Augustus felt that he had been too much alarmed by the first sight of his father. It was Kit Wildrake who was the most thoughtful member of the party, and he spoke little, but in the general buzz his silence was not noted.

A little later, when Wildrake was sauntering on the terrace which ran the length of the great house, he came on Levison, Cardew, and Clive, and caught Cardew's voice.

"The man's a rank outsider."

Wildrake wondered if he was speaking of Bloore.

"What's the matter with him?" yawned Sidney Clive. "You take such jolly sudden dislikes to people, Cardew."

"You do, and no mistake," said Levison. "Though in this case I can't say I like the man."

"My dear old tops, I don't trouble to dislike the Bloore bird," said Cardew with disdainful indifference. "I spotted him as an outsider, that's all. Cad through and through. Dashed if I know how the old johnny came to be landed with such a rotter."

Wildrake walked on, thinking. Cardew was a rather cynical and malicious youth in some ways, but Wildrake knew what a keen judgment he had. He had seen at a glance through Bloore's soft, pleasant ways.

He was not interested in the secretary in the least; he had seen through him, ranked him as an outsider, and then dismissed him from his mind. That was Cardew's way.

But Wildrake was interested in the man. From somewhere in the back of his mind came a haunting remembrance of those keen black eyes and that narrow slit of a mouth. Where had he seen the man before? Was it in Canada? But Bloore denied that he had ever been there.

There was a sound of music from within, and Wildrake strolled into the music-room through the French windows. Monty Lowther was extracting sweet strains of jazz from the grand piano, and Tom Merry and Manners, Cousin Ethel, and Kerr and Wynn were there. Manners broke out as Wildrake quietly joined the group.

"Chuck it, Monty! That syncopated muck is an insult to the piano!"

Monty Lowther chuckled, and rose from the music-stool.

"Give us something classic, Manners. I can stand it, if Cousin Ethel will sing."

Cousin Ethel would sing, and Manners sat down to accompany her. At the first notes of "Should he upbraid," George Figgins scuttled into the music-room. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed him in.

"Weally, Figgins, I was just sayin'—"

But Figgins was deaf and blind now. Arthur Augustus sat down, with a rather severe look on his noble face. He had been enlightening Figgins on the subject of "off-side," when Cousin Ethel's sweet voice spirited his hearer away. Kit Wildrake sat down beside the swell of St. Jim's. They were at a distance from the piano, and could talk in low tones without interrupting the music.

" You've seen your father again, D'Arcy ? "

D'Arcy's face became very grave.

" Yaas. He seems to me wathah worse since he has taken his medicine."

" Oughtn't he to have a nurse ? "

" Bloore is takin' care of him, you know. He gives him his medicine and looks aftah him in every way."

" You seem rather to like Bloore, now."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

" I am gwateful to him for his attention to the patah, you know. Personally, I do not like him, somehow, but I am sowwy for it. I must twy to like him bettah."

" I had an idea I had seen him before, somewhere," said Wildrake musingly. " But he says he's never been in Canada. How long has he been with your father, D'Arcy ? "

" About two or thwee months."

" Do you know how he came to get the job ? "

" The patah's secwetawy was ill, you know, and he wanted a tempow-away man. Bloore had vewy good wecommendations from Sir Thomas Mapleton, a vewy old fwieand of my fathah's."

" Oh, that looks all clear ! " said Wildrake, with a puzzled look. " If an old friend of your father's answers for him——"

" Oh, yaas," said Arthur Augustus. " Sir Thomas' lettah of wecommendation was all that could be desiahed. I wemembah scein' it at the time."

" A letter of recommendation——"

" Yaas. Bloore was Sir Thomas' secwetawy before he fell ill and went to live at San Remo."

Wildrake drew in a deep breath.

" Then your father hasn't seen Sir Thomas since he engaged Bloore ? "

" Oh, no ! "

" He had no communication except by letter ? "

" Yaas. But he w'ote specially to Sir Thomas on the subject, and old Mapleton answahed wecommendin' the man vewy warmly." Arthur Augustus was not a very observant youth, but he turned a very curious look on the Canadian junior now. He could not help being struck by Wildrake's peculiar interest in the secretary. " What are you thinkin' about the man, Wildrake, deah boy ? Do you suspect him of anythin' ? "

" My dear chap, what could I suspect him of ? " said Wildrake lightly.

" Let's get nearer the merry music."

" Wight-ho ! " said Arthur Augustus.

" Where are Kangy and Roylance ? " asked Wildrake.

" Knockin' the billiard balls about."

" Right ! "

Kit Wildrake strolled away from the merry party in the music-room and descended the stairs to the billiards-room. There he found Talbot and Fatty Wynn engaged in a game, and Kerr marking for them. Roylance and Harry Noble were looking on, having finished a game. Wildrake joined the two Colonial juniors.

" You chaps seen Bloore ? " he asked.

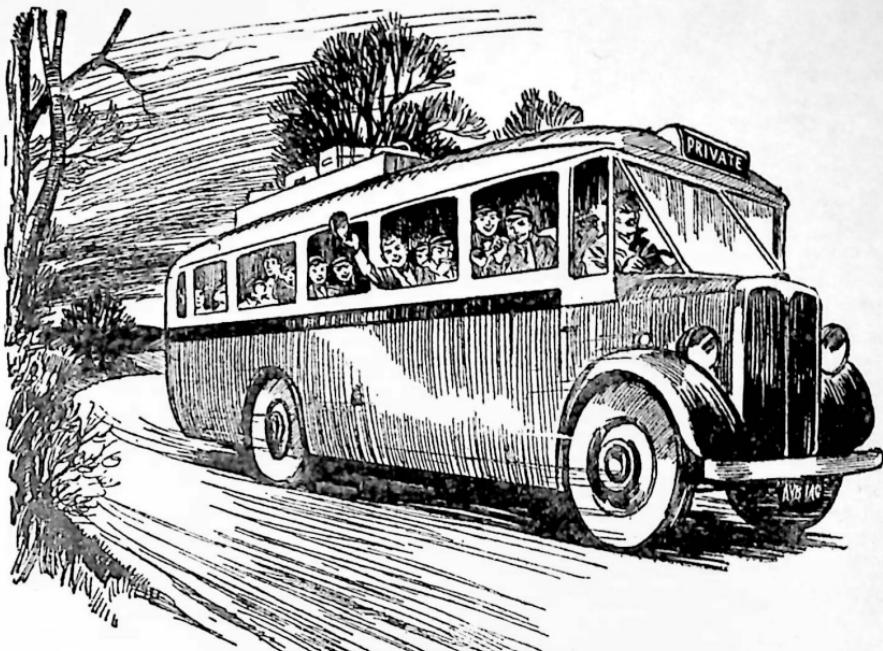
" The giddy secretary ? " said Roylance. " Yes. Seems a rather pleasant fellow."

" Bit too much like a cat for my taste," said Kangaroo.

Wildrake smiled.

" He's like a man I saw in Canada once," he said. " But he's never been to Canada. He mentioned to me that he's travelled in Australia and New Zealand. I don't like the man's looks. I want you fellows to speak to him."

" Eh ? Why ? "



Piled with baggage and schoolboys, the charabanc rolled away, up hill and down dale, en route for Eastwood House.

" You needn't talk of this, of course," said Wildrake quietly. " But I've got a bad opinion of that man. If he's not worth Lord Eastwood's confidence, it ought to be looked into."

" No business of ours, is it ? " asked Kangaroo, with a stare.

Wildrake coloured slightly.

" Nope ! But I'd like to know whether the man is a liar, as I suspect. You come from Australia, Kangy ; and you from New Zealand, Roylance. Will you jaw to him a bit, and see whether he knows anything of either country ? I want to know whether he's a liar, I guess."

" Any old thing," yawned Kangaroo, and Roylance nodded.

Wildrake strolled back to the music party, and he seemed to dismiss Lord

Eastwood's secretary from his mind for the rest of the evening. It was not till the next day that he referred to the matter, with the other two Colonials. That afternoon, Ernest Levison, Frank, and Arthur Augustus were going to the station with Cousin Ethel, to meet Doris Levison. The juniors gathered round on the terrace to see them off in the car. When the car had started, and the crowd broke up, Wildrake joined the Australian and the New Zealander.

Both of them grinned at him.

" Talked to our bird ? " asked Wildrake.

" I got him at brekker," said Roylance. " He shut up like an oyster when he heard I was from New Zealand. Never heard of Maoris or hot

springs in his life, I fancy. What he doesn't know about New Zealand would fill whole books of travel."

"And you, Kangy?"

The Australian laughed.

"I tried him on the giddy Island Continent at lunch," he answered. "I've been speaking to Gussy, and I got from him that Bloore's old governor, Sir Thomas Mapleton, was a Minister to an Australian state, and afterwards to New Zealand, and that Gilbert Bloore was his secretary there. Well, I got him on to Australia, and he talked like a man who had never travelled farther than Bromley-by-Bow. Said he'd seen the hot springs at Sydney—ha, ha, ha!—when I drew the long bow to test him. And when I mentioned that Melbourne was in the Northern Territory, he agreed that it was. And when I let out that I was from down under, he shut up like a pocket-knife. He's never been to Australia in his natural."

Wildrake nodded.

"I guessed he was a bad egg," he said.

"But it's mighty queer," said Kangaroo. "It seems clear that Sir Thomas Mapleton's secretary was with him in Australia, and afterwards in New Zealand. And this is the same man, Gussy says. But he knows nothing about Australia, and Roylance says he's blank on New Zealand. Doesn't that strike you as jolly queer, Wildrake?"

"I guess it does."

"Is he some sort of a spoofe?"

"I guess so."

"Well, I suppose it's not our business," said Kangaroo. "I say, coming out to skate? Wally says the ice will bear."

"I'll join you later."

Kit Wildrake remained alone on the terrace, his youthful brow corrugated deep with thought. Kangaroo evidently distrusted Bloore; but he had said that Lord Eastwood's secretary was none of his business. That was right enough! His lordship's arrangements certainly were no affair of his son's guests from school.

All the same Kit Wildrake "guessed" that it was his business. Whether it was or not, he was going to make it his business, during that Christmas holiday at Eastwood House.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

DARK SUSPICIONS

"WEALLY—bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus frowned. It was a clear, frosty morning as the swell of St. Jim's trotted cheerily out on the long terrace of Eastwood House.

He looked round for Cousin Ethel.

And what he saw was Cousin Ethel and George Figgins walking away down one of the garden paths, so deep in conversation that they seemed quite lost to their surroundings.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Gussy, frowning. It was borne once more upon Gussy's noble mind that Figgy's air of proprietorship when he was with Cousin Ethel was a little disconcerting. And Cousin Ethel seemed very interested in her talk with Figgins, which was surprising enough to Gussy. Gussy had certainly never noticed that George Figgins was particularly brilliant or entertaining in the conversational line.

"Hallo, Gus, old top!" Wally came scudding up. "Where's Doris?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Doris is coming on the ice this morning," said Wally. "I say, Doris isn't half bad for a girl, Gus. Got a lot of sense."

"Weally, you young sweep——"

"Oh, here she is!" exclaimed Wally, as Doris Levison came in sight with Ernest and Frank and Clive. "Waiting for you, Doris. You coming on the ice, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Keep at a safe distance from him, Doris," advised Wally. "You don't know what Gussy's like when he gets going on skates."

"Bai Jove! Pway don't take any notice of that young boundah's wemarks, Miss Dowis," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall be vewy honahed if you will allow me to take you wound the lake."

"I shall be delighted!" said Doris, with a sweet smile.

"Shall I telephone for the doctor?" asked Wally. "Doris may need him after you've taken her round."

"You young ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Still, we know how to render first aid," said Wally thoughtfully. "Keep close, Frank—and you, too, Reggie! We shall have to go to the rescue when Gussy drops Doris through the ice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I trust you will not dwive me to givin' you a feahful thwashin' this vacation, Wally."

"I trust not!" chuckled Wally. "Think of the state your features would be in afterwards, old bean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! Pway come along, Miss Dowis!"

Arthur Augustus led Doris Levison away towards the lake, with the party of skaters; and cousin Ethel and Figgins passed out of his noble mind.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus would have been surprised if he had known the topic which Cousin Ethel was discussing so earnestly with Figgins. Bloore, the secretary, who

interested Kit Wildrake so much, seemed to interest Cousin Ethel also. He was the topic. Doubtless, Ethel had her own reason for choosing Figgy as her confidant. Certainly Figgy was not the brightest member, intellectually, of the St. Jim's party; but there was something about rugged, honest old Figgy that made one turn to him instinctively in time of trouble. And Ethel Cleveland was troubled now.

"I have seen the man several times," she was saying, as she walked down the garden path with Figgins. "I never liked him. And—and I know that my aunt, Lady Eastwood, does not trust him."

"Seems a bit soapy, to my mind," said Figgins. "Can't say I've noticed him much."

"I—I wish you would."

"Why, Ethel?"

"I—I don't trust him," said Ethel. "Lady Eastwood does not trust him; she does not like him to be so much about with my uncle, especially in his illness. But Lord Eastwood has a very high opinion of him, and my aunt can say nothing. But—but I know she is troubled."

"Gussy says Bloore looks after Lord Eastwood splendidly," said Figgins.

"I know."

Figgins wrinkled his brow in thought. He had not taken much notice of Gilbert Bloore; indeed, only under the stress of politeness had Figgins taken much notice of anyone but Cousin Ethel. But what he had seen of the man he did not like. "Soapy" was Figgy's way of describing it.

"But I don't quite catch on," said Figgins, after a long pause. "The man isn't doing any harm, is he?"

Ethel's eyes were on the ground. She seemed to hesitate.

"I—I don't know," she said at last. "But—but my aunt is troubled. The man has an influence over my uncle. He seems to have been a very useful and industrious secretary, and has made himself almost indispensable. But—but it was only since his coming that Lord Eastwood's health began to fail."

Figgins jumped.

"There can't be any connection between the two things," he said.

"I suppose not," confessed Ethel.

"Does Lady Eastwood think—"

"I hardly know what she thinks; I think she hardly knows herself," said Ethel. "Last night she was very distressed; she talked to me in my room for a long time—much more freely than she generally speaks. She has a sort of instinctive distrust of the man. And Lord Eastwood's illness is a very strange one. The doctor cannot give it any specific name, and yet he seems to be getting steadily worse. And, of course, this is the strictest confidence—"

"Of course," said Figgins.

"I think my aunt might not like me to speak of it, but I—I must consult somebody," said Ethel. "I know I can trust you."

Figgins' honest face glowed with loyalty and devotion.

"I hope so, Ethel," he said softly.

"A few days ago Lord Eastwood sent for his solicitor and added a codicil to his will," said Ethel in a low voice. "It was no secret, of course, to Lady Eastwood. He has left the sum of five thousand pounds to his secretary, Gilbert Bloore."

"Oh!" said Figgy.

"In return for services rendered, or something of the kind, to provide for the man," said Ethel. "Lord Eastwood places a very high value

upon his services. Of course, it is not a large sum to a man so wealthy as Lord Eastwood. It is a large sum, however, for a poor man to receive; and—and Lady Eastwood has not spoken a word to his lordship about it, but she cannot help suspecting that Bloore has cunningly brought it about somehow, and—and—"

She broke off.

"But surely," said Figgins—"surely there is no possibility of—of—of your uncle dying?"

Ethel's lips quivered.

"Heaven knows! What does this strange illness mean? Why does he seem to be sinking, when the doctor can find nothing specific the matter with him? My aunt hardly knows what she fears—I hardly know! But—but I—I am frightened. I—I was uneasy, and when I heard about the codicil it seemed to me that—that there was something— Oh, I cannot put my thoughts into words—they are too vague, too dreadful; but I am afraid!" Her voice trembled.

Figgins' face was the picture of distress.

"I know!" he said at last.

Ethel gave him a hopeful look.

"Let's speak to Kerr," said Figgins.

"Kerr?" repeated Ethel.

"Kerr's the chap to think a thing out," said Figgins. "He's Scotch, you know—no end of a brain. You wouldn't mind my telling Kerr—he's mum as an oyster? I'd rather consult old Kerr than the sharpest lawyer going."

Ethel smiled faintly. Figgy's belief in his Scottish chum's sagacity touched her.

"If you think it best—" she said.

"I do, really."

"Then we will speak to Kerr."

While Tom Merry & Co. were disporting themselves on the frozen lake, Figgins and Cousin Ethel drew Kerr into a pagoda in the grounds, and there was a long and earnest consultation.

The Scottish junior listened quietly to what Ethel had to tell him — the vague fear and disquiet that oppressed her.

His keen, intellectual face grew darker as he listened.

"You're sure about the codicil?" he asked at length.

"Lady Eastwood has seen it."

"Of course, it may mean nothing at all," said Kerr. "A man in Lord Eastwood's position would naturally make a decent provision for a secretary who had served him well. It's probable enough that the man is pulling his lordship's leg for a legacy. But—added to a mysterious illness and the fact that Lord Eastwood has got steadily worse since he signed the codicil, and that Bloore is in complete charge of him and of his medicines—" The Scottish junior paused, and the three looked at one another with startled faces.

Like some hideous shadow in the background, a vague, indefinite suspicion of crime seemed to be hanging over them.



Bloore held out his hand, and Wildrake felt a chill from his long, cold fingers.
"Haven't I met you somewhere before, Mr. Bloore?" he asked.

"It will bear looking into," said Kerr quietly. "You can trust me, Ethel, to see if there's anything—anything not on the square. Not a word to a soul—leave it to me to look into. If Gilbert Bloore is playing some rascally game here—"

"He wanted to keep everybody away from the house this Christmas," said Figgins. "He tried—"

Kerr nodded.

"It will bear looking into," he said. "The doctor comes this afternoon, and Gussy is going to have a talk with him. I'll ask Gussy to let me be present. That's for a beginning. Don't worry, Ethel. If there's

any villainy going on here, you can trust me to root it out."

"Thank you!" said Ethel simply.

And the girl's face was much brighter as she walked away to the lake with Figgins to join Doris and Tom Merry & Co. Kerr remained alone in the pagoda, his brows wrinkling in thought.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

TWO ON THE TRACK!

"**G**ussy, old man——"

"Yaas, Wildwake?"

"The medical galoot's with your po per now, I guess?"

"Yaas."

"You're going to have a chin with him after he's seen popper—what?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Would you mind if I were present?"

"Bai Jove! That is vewy odd," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the Canadian junior in surprise. "Kerr has made the same wequest."

Wildrake raised his eyebrows.

"Kerr?" he repeated. "Kerr of the New House! Well, two of us won't be in the way, Gussy—what?"

"You will be vewy welcome, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, I am feelin' vewy uneasy. The patah seems to me worse to-day; but I saw him for only a few minutes. Bloore was weadin' aloud to him, and he seemed wathah impatient when I dwopped in. I do not want to be ungwateful to a chap who is lookin' aftah my patah so well," added Arthur Augustus thoughtfully, "but weally Bloore is wantin' in tact. I shall certainly not allow him to keep me away fwom my fathah."

Kerr of the Fourth came along, and joined the two juniors as they were

going into the morning-room, where D'Arcy was to see the doctor before he left. Kerr regarded Wildrake rather curiously.

"Seeing the medical johnny?" he asked.

"Yep."

"Heah is Dr. Millard," said D'Arcy.

The ruddy, genial-looking country doctor came in. Arthur Augustus introduced his two friends, and then asked about his father. The doctor's face was grave.

"His lordship seems a little better to-day," he said. "Nothing whatever to be alarmed about, Master D'Arcy. It is simply a matter of his lordship having overtaxed a somewhat tired constitution. There is assuredly nothing organically wrong."

"But my fathah looks vewy weak and pale," said Arthur Augustus, with a falter in his voice. "I weally had the impwession that he was sinkin' when I saw him this mornin'."

"Nothing of the kind. But he is certainly very weak and languid," said Dr. Millard. "It is rather a perplexing case—his lordship's constitution is naturally strong. There is absolutely nothing wrong with him that can be given a name. It is general weakness and languor; but he will pull round—he will pull round."

"No disease, sir?" asked Wildrake.

"None."

"May I ask if his lordship has ever been in a similar state before?"

"I have attended him for fifteen years, and have never known him so low as at present," said the medical gentleman. "That is rather perplexing—this heavy languor seems to have attacked him during the past few months, and it has grown."

"You are satisfied that Bloore takes the best care of him?"

Dr. Millard gave the Canadian junior a quick glance.

"Quite—quite!" he answered. "He is as careful as a trained nurse. I place every reliance upon him, and so does his lordship."

"He gives him his medicine?" asked Wildrake.

"Certainly."

"He weally 'seems a vewy dutiful chap," said Arthur Augustus.

"Very!" said Kerr, rather dryly.

"Undoubtedly," said Dr. Millard. "The medicine has to be taken regularly, and Mr. Bloore is as punctual as a clock. Well, I must be going."

The medical gentleman took his leave, Arthur Augustus going with him as far as the door. Kerr and Wildrake were left alone in the morning-room.

The Scottish junior closed the door and came back towards Wildrake.

"You are on to something?" he asked.

"Are you?" asked Wildrake.

"Yes."

"Same here, I guess," said the Canadian junior. "We'd better compare notes. Nobody seems to suspect anything."

Kerr hesitated. Ethel had spoken to him, of course, in confidence, in the consultation in the pagoda. But he knew that Ethel would allow him discretion in the matter, and he determined to be quite frank with Wildrake. He had a good deal of faith in the keenness of the Canadian junior.

"We're in on this affair together, Wildrake," he said. "If you suspect anything, you'd better tell me—and the same on my side. We may be able to help one another."

"Sure!"

"There are others who suspect—at least, who are very uneasy," said Kerr in a low voice. "I had a talk

with Ethel Cleveland this morning and—"

"I guess I noted that she didn't seem to cotton on to the Bloore bird," said Wildrake.

"Lady Eastwood does not trust him, and Ethel shares her distrust," said Kerr.

Wildrake whistled softly.

"Women are pesky keen sometimes," he said. "They often jump to the right conclusion from a sort of instinct, while men are fooling around looking for reasons. Kerr, there's foul play going on in this house."

"You think so?"

"Sure!"

"And your reasons?" asked Kerr.

"I guess I've sized up the Bloore man, and he's some spoofe," said Kit Wildrake. "He's supposed to have been secretary to a man who held posts in Australia and New Zealand. Well, I've put Kangy and Roylance on him to pump him, and Kangy's convinced that he's never been to Australia, and Roylance will go bail that he's never seen New Zealand. What do you figure on that, Kerr?"

Kerr drew a deep breath.

"That's news to me," he said. "I thought we could help one another in this, Wildrake. You've got on to some details, and I've got on to others, through Ethel. Anything more?"

"This!" said Wildrake quietly. "The day we came here I met Bloore, and I was struck that I'd seen him before—I reckon in Canada. He said he'd never been in Canada, and had been in Australia and New Zealand. On that he lied, as I've found out!"

"If he lied—as I believe, too—he cannot be Sir Thomas Mapleton's former secretary, Gilbert Bloore," said Kerr.

"Nope!"

"Then he is an impostor, and is here in another man's name," said the Scottish junior.

"Correct!"

"Lord Eastwood has no suspicion of that; and a talk with a couple of schoolboys isn't much in the way of proof," said Kerr. "We shall have to walk warily."

"I guess so," assented Wildrake.

"You think you've seen him before—in Canada. Can't you figure it out where and when?"

Wildrake knitted his brows.

"I can't exactly," he confessed. "I reckon I know those sharp black eyes and that slit of a mouth. I reckon the galoot has been in British Columbia in his time, though he's not a Canadian. If I could get to know something about him, I reckon I could place him. But, anyhow, I know his face."

"If you could prove that you saw him in Canada under another name, that would be something to go upon."

"I know. I've been trying to figure it out, but he's got me beat so far," said Wildrake. "But what else did you get from Ethel?"

Kerr gave the details of the talk in the pagoda.

"Jumping Jerusalem!" breathed Wildrake. "It's O.K. about that codicil?"

"Ethel says her aunt has seen it."

The Canadian junior breathed hard.

"Five thousand pounds to come to the man if his lordship pegs out," he said. "Little enough to Lord Eastwood; but a lot to an adventurer who has wedged into a house under a false name. A mysterious illness, and—and the fellow's in entire charge of the sick man and his medicine! It looks like—like—"

"Poison!" whispered Kerr.

Wildrake nodded.

"You've given me the clue," he said.

"The clue?"

"Yep! I reckon I can place him now, sure!" said Wildrake very quietly. "It was a case of poisoning out at Fraser. 'Dandy Jim' was what the man was called. He was a gambler and a real bad egg. He had a partner, who died. The dead man had friends, who kicked up a shindy; but at the inquest it was a verdict of heart failure. But a good many galoots suspected that it was poison; they opined that Dandy Jim had used a poison he got from the Kootenay medicine-men—a beastly stuff unknown to white doctors.

"I was only a kid then; but I remember the fuss, and remember a mob getting hold of Dandy Jim. He just got away with his life. That was the only time I ever saw him. I was on the street at Fraser with my popper when he came tearing by on a horse—white as chalk, riding for his life. You see, he stood to land a handsome sum by his partner's death, and the galoots put two and two together.

"I know him now. It's four years since I saw him—and I saw him only once. But I never forget faces. Gilbert Bloore was in British Columbia four years ago, and he was called Dandy Jim, and suspected of using a poison that the doctors couldn't trace."

Wildrake spoke with quiet conviction.

"You—you're sure?" breathed Kerr.

"I guess I'd put all my dollars on it."

"There's no time to lose, Wildrake. But what are we going to do?"

The Canadian junior set his lips.

"I guess we've got to show him up, and stop his rum game here," he said. "But we've got to be careful. No good my going to Lord Eastwood and telling him that his secretary was Dandy Jim, the gambler, four years ago. Gilbert Bloore was in New Zealand then, and Lord Eastwood thinks the man is Gilbert Bloore. He would think I am dreaming!"

Kerr nodded.

"Leave Lord Eastwood out," he said. "No good saying a word to him without positive proof. But if the man isn't the genuine Bloore, that man can be found. Sir Thomas Mapleton would know, but he's at San Remo."

"I guess we could get a photograph of this man, and send it out to Mapleton, and ask if it was a picture of his former secretary."

"That's true. But, in the meantime—"

"In the meantime, Dandy Jim is poisoning Lord Eastwood to get hold of the legacy of five thousand pounds," said Wildrake. "That's what we've got to stop, Kerr; and it would take



Bloore held up his hand. "Please do not enter now," he said in a low voice. "His lordship is feeling very low, and he ought not to be disturbed."

a week to get an answer from San Remo, even if Sir Thomas Mapleton can answer letters. He's ill, you know. It's here on the spot that we've got to act."

"Us two, against that scoundrel!" said Kerr.

"Yep!"

The door was thrown open, and Fatty Wynn came in.

"Oh, here you are, Kerr!" he exclaimed. "Don't you jolly well

know it's tea-time ? I say, Doris has made a cake ! "

" Has she really ? " said Kerr.

" You bet ! " Fatty Wynn was beaming. " I say, it's a splendid cake ! I've seen it. Come along, you slackers ! I say, I've tasted the cake ! It's a real dream ! I'm going to help Ethel and Doris with the Christmas pudding ; only Doris says I should bag the stuff. As if I would, you know ! Perhaps a snack here and there ! But come on ; we don't want all that cake to be gone ! I'm hungry, you know ! "

And the juniors went to tea.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER THE SECRET PASSAGE !

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was turning the handle of the library door, when it was opened from within, and Gilbert Bloore came quickly out. Wildrake and Kerr were with the swell of St. Jim's, and all three juniors stepped back. Bloore held up his hand.

" Please do not enter now, " he said in a low voice. " His lordship is feeling very low ; he ought not to be disturbed."

" Weally, Bloore——"

" Has his lordship said that he does not wish to see his son ? " asked Kerr very quietly.

Bloore looked at him.

" It is my duty to see that his lordship is not excited in any way, " he said.

" You have not answered my question, " said the Scottish junior, in the same quiet tone.

Bloore's eyes gleamed for a moment.

" Dr. Millard leaves his patient entirely in my hands, " he said.

" Pewwaps we had bettah go, deah boys, " said Arthur Augustus, with a hesitating look at his companions.

" There's your mater, " murmured Kerr.

Lady Eastwood came down the corridor towards the library. Bloore did not venture to oppose her ladyship's entrance.

She gave the juniors a faint smile and passed into the library. Bloore followed her in and closed the door.

" Bai Jove ! " murmured Arthur Augustus. " I weally think that Bloore is takin' wathah a gweat deal upon himself. Of course, he means well ! "

" No doubt ! " assented Kerr dryly.

" I suppose you fellows do not specially want to go into the libwawy ? " said Arthur Augustus apologetically. " It is the patah's favouwite woom, you know, lookin' out on the park. It is wathah bein' turned into a sick-woom now. But there are lots of books up in my den if you want to read."

" My dear chap, we didn't come along here to read, " said Wildrake, laughing. " We're going to help you spend a merry Christmas."

D'Arcy's face clouded.

" I feah that it will not be vewy mewwy, in the circs, " he said. " I am vewy sowwy that there is sickness in the house, and ewewythin' is wathah dismal. Howeveh, we must keep our peckahs up."

The juniors strolled away, Arthur Augustus wandering towards the music-room, where could be heard the clear, young voices of Ethel and Doris, in a duet. Kerr and Wildrake stopped by a window on the terrace.

" It's coming to a crisis, I think, " said Wildrake, in a low voice. " We've got to chip in, Kerr."

Kerr nodded.

" Lord Eastwood is practically confined to the library now, excepting when he's in his own room, " went on Kit Wildrake, " and Bloore has the old gentleman practically in his hands. If the medicine is doctored, it's after

it's out of Dr. Millard's hands. It's not an easy business—and all we know sounds more like wild suspicion than cold fact. What are you thinking of?" he added.

"Follow me!" answered Kerr.

Wildrake, in some surprise, followed him up the second staircase.

Kerr led the way along a deserted corridor, and opened the door of an empty, dusky room.

Wildrake followed him in.

He glanced round the room in some wonder. It was a spacious apartment and the domed ceiling was decorated with paintings. It was empty of furniture, save for a huge, old-fashioned bedstead. The panelled walls glimmered in the rays of the setting sun.

"This is the Painted Room!" said Kerr.

"I've heard of it," said Wildrake, with a nod. "Tom Merry told me a yarn about it. It's supposed to be haunted, isn't it?"

"Yes, and it's never used. A trick was played on Gussy once, when he slept in this room," said Kerr. "I was staying here at the time—a crowd of us were. That was before you came to St. Jim's. But you've heard the story, I dare say."

"Sure! There's a secret panel in the wall, I remember hearing Tom Merry say—"

"That's so. Here it is."

Kerr carefully closed the door of the Painted Room, and crossed to the panelled wall on the opposite side.

Kit Wildrake watched him curiously, as he felt over a panel. There was a click, and the panel slid back.

"By gum!" ejaculated Wildrake.

He looked into the opening, and made out the top steps of a dim and dusky stone staircase.

"Where does that lead?" he asked.

"Down to the vaults. But there's a branch passage on the level of the ground floor, that leads to the library."

"Oh!" said Wildrake.

"I've explored it all," said Kerr. "Gussy knows about it, of course. It's very unlikely that Bloore has ever heard of it. He hasn't been at Eastwood House very long, and this room is never used. Have you got your electric torch?"

"Yep!"

"Come with me, then!"

Kerr stepped through the opening, and the Canadian junior followed him. The panel clicked shut behind them.

"You can open that again, I reckon?" asked Wildrake.

"It's easy when you know where to find the spring. We could get out by the secret door into the library, if we liked—but, of course, Lord Eastwood is there, and we can't show up. Keep quiet!"

"You bet!"

Kit Wildrake flashed on his electric torch, and the two juniors cautiously descended the ancient stone steps.

The strange, hidden recess was interesting enough to Wildrake. It was six or seven hundred years since that stone staircase had been built, in the thickness of the ponderous wall. It was easy enough to imagine some grisly phantom gliding at midnight, through those dusty and musty recesses. It was all strange and novel to the boy from the Boot Leg Ranch.

"Turn off here," said Kerr.

The flight of winding steps ended in a narrow passage. Farther on, another and broader flight led farther downward. But Kerr turned off along the passage, and Wildrake followed him.

"Put off the light now," whispered Kerr.

Then they stood in blackness the next moment.

"Keep hold of my shoulder, and feel your way along the wall. Not a sound now!"

"Sure!"

They moved on, cautiously and silently.

A thin, sudden gleam of light struck their eyes in advance. Wildrake pressed Kerr's shoulder.

"Where does that come from?" he whispered.

"The library."

"Oh!"

A few minutes more, and they stood in an arched gap in the stone wall of the library itself. The gap was covered by thick oak panelling. Wildrake remembered that the interior walls of the room were panelled in oak, where the bookcases did not cover them. He understood that the panel before him formed a door.

There was a narrow opening in the panel, at the height of a man's head. On the other side, it was concealed in the carving of the panel. But had the juniors carried a light there, a gleam of it through the slit might have betrayed them.

Suddenly there was a sound of voices.

Wildrake started, and thrilled a little. There was only the wooden panel between the juniors and the library; and Lord Eastwood's voice came quite distinctly to their ears:

"Do not be alarmed. I do assure you, my dear, that I do not need the services of a professional nurse. My valet and Bloore take every care of me."

Wildrake drew back.

He knew that Lord Eastwood was speaking to his wife, and he felt a natural repugnance to listening.

Lady Eastwood's voice could be heard in answer, but in tones so low that the words were inaudible.

A few minutes later, the juniors distinctly heard the sound of a door opening and closing.

Lady Eastwood was gone from the library.

Kit Wildrake raised himself on tiptoe, and peered through the slit in the panel. Small as it was, it was cunningly contrived to give a view of a very large part of the room. He saw Lord Eastwood sitting wearily in a deep armchair a short distance from the blazing log fire.

Near at hand was a small table, on which stood several bottles and a wineglass, and a silver dish of tempting fruits. The library had very much the look of a sick-room in that quarter.

As Wildrake looked at his lordship's white, worn face, the figure of Bloore crossed his line of vision.

Bloore was coming back after closing the door after Lady Eastwood. He was behind his lordship's chair, and Lord Eastwood could not see him. But Wildrake had a clear view of the cold, calm, hard face, with its slit of a mouth. And he read much in that face—off its wary guard as Bloore believed that there were no eyes to see him.

In that face, at that moment, the Canadian junior read a cynical triumph, a cold, cruel, mocking derision. But the next moment, as Bloore came nearer to Lord Eastwood, his face resumed its habitual expression of quiet, kind, almost affectionate respect. The look came on his face like a mask.

Wildrake set his teeth. He suspected—he knew—that the man was a scheming villain. He was sure—as sure as he could be without proof—that the man known as Gilbert Bloore was the man who had narrowly escaped lynching for a crime of

poisoning in British Columbia. If he had doubted, that change in Bloore's face would have convinced him.

"Her ladyship seems very anxious," the juniors heard Bloore murmur, in his soft voice.

Lord Eastwood nodded.

"The fact is, Bloore, I am feeling weaker to-day," he said. "I really cannot account for this lassitude. The doctor is, I believe, a bit puzzled."

"Perhaps your lordship will be able to drive out in the morning."

"I do not feel equal to it, Bloore—or, indeed, to any exertion. But I am determined not to take to my bed if it can be avoided."

"Her ladyship seems to think—"

Lord Eastwood made an impatient gesture.

"I will not take to my bed, and have the whole paraphernalia of nurses and doctors, if it can be possibly avoided!" he exclaimed a little irritably. "I am having the best of care now. What more can be done?"

"Nothing, indeed, my lord."

"Dr. Millard has sent me some fresh medicine to-day, I believe?"

"Yes, my lord."



"Your father is sinking under his illness, and there's foul play!" said Wildrake. Arthur Augustus started to his feet, exclaiming "Good heavens!"

"It seems to do me little good—if any! When is it to be taken?" asked Lord Eastwood wearily.

The secretary picked up a bottle that stood on the table.

"One teaspoonful in water at eight o'clock," he said. "The dose to be repeated at midnight if you do not sleep."

"You shall not stay up late again, Bloore. If I need a dose in the night my valet shall see to it. He sleeps in the next room."

"My lord, I hope you will allow me to make so slight a return for all your kindnesses to me."

"You are a good fellow, Bloore. It shall be as you like."

"Thank you, my lord!"

Wildrake moved away from the spyhole as Lord Eastwood sank back

wearily in his chair and closed his eyes.

"Let's go!" he muttered.

The two juniors returned to the Painted Room.

THE NINTH CHAPTER COMING TO A CRISIS!

"TOM MEWWY—"

"Yes, old top?"

"I am going to twust you to look aftah Ethel and Dowis this evenin'," said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry looked inquiringly at the swell of St. Jim's.

It had been arranged that Arthur Augustus and his numerous guests should drive over to Wickstead Hall that evening to a dance. The St. Jim's party were looking forward very cheerfully to the prospect. There was a great sorting-out of white shirts and dress-clothes, and a trying-on of ties.

But for once Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had given little attention or thought to his darling "clobber." Even Wally of the Third had given that matter more thought than his major.

"The matah and Aunt Adeline will be comin'," said Arthur Augustus, "and I was goin' to take charge, of course—"

"Of course," smiled Tom Merry.

"But I have altahed my mind, deah boy, and if the fellows will excuse me, I would wather wemain at home this evenin'."

"You will break the hearts of all the young ladies at Wickstead, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"Relent, old chap!" urged Manners.

But Tom Merry looked very grave.

"Does that mean that your father is worse, Gussy?" he asked.

"Not exactly worse, deah boy, but I am wathah anxious about him," said D'Arcy. "I do not quite feel up to festivities this evenin'."

"We'll stay in, too," said Manners at once. "I'll play you at chess, old bean."

"I'll give you some of my comic recitations," said Monty Lowther. "Cheer you up no end."

Arthur Augustus smiled faintly.

"Thank you vewy much, but I would wathah you went," he said. "Look aftah Cousin Ethel, you know, and see that that silly ass Figgins doesn't bag her for all the dances. He tweads on people's toes fwightfully, you know, and Cousin Ethel is so awf'ly polite, you know, she stands him with weally too much patience."

The Terrible Three grinned.

"I shall not be left quite on my own, eithah," continued Arthur Augustus. "Kerr and Wildwake are not goin'."

"What on earth are they missing it for?" asked Tom Merry.

"The young asses have caught colds and—"

"What rotten luck!"

"Yaas, wathah! They are goin' to bed early, and I shall dwop in and talk to them," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally do not feel like dancin' this evenin'."

"Wildrake looked as fit as a fiddle this afternoon," said Tom Merry, rather puzzled.

"So did Kerr," remarked Manners.

"Yaas. It was wathah sudden."

"Hard luck!" said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was "high tea" for the young people before the cars came round to carry them to Wickstead in the December evening. Wally & Co. were in great spirits, but some of

their elders looked rather thoughtful. They were thinking of the sick man in the library. But they knew that Lord Eastwood particularly wished that no entertainment should be cancelled on his account; and, of course, they could have done no good by staying in. Lady Eastwood's face was slightly clouded as she entered the car with Aunt Adeline and Doris and Cousin Ethel. Ethel gave Figgins a look as he handed her a wrap.

"Kerr's staying in," whispered Figgins. "Leave it to Kerr and Wildrake. It's all right."

And Ethel gave him a smile and a nod.

Arthur Augustus saw the party off from the steps, smiling bravely and genially.

As the cars drove away Arthur Augustus turned back into the lighted hall. The great door was closed, and Arthur Augustus stood thinking, with a glum brow. He had missed the dance—it was true that he did not feel "up" to merry-making just then. But he felt rather "down" when all his friends were gone. He would have been glad to see his father, but he knew that Lord Eastwood would be displeased at his staying in, and he did not go near the library. But he signed to Bloore as he caught sight of that gentleman in the hall.

"How is Lord Eastwood now, Bloore?" he asked.

"A trifle better, I think, Master Arthur."

"Bai Jove! I'm glad to heah that."

"You have not gone with the rest, sir."

"I did not feel equal to dancin', Bloore."

"I quite understand your feelings, sir," said the secretary, with a sympathetic look. "I think, however,

that it will be wise not to disturb his lordship—"

Arthur Augustus compressed his lips.

"I was not thinkin' of doin' so, Bloore. I am goin' to spend the evenin' in my snuggewy with Wildrake and Kerr, as they have colds and have to stay in."

"Very good, sir!"

Bloore passed on, and Arthur Augustus saw him disappear into the library, and the door closed on him. Slowly and despondently the swell of St. Jim's mounted the staircase.

He came into his own "snuggery"—a rather large room that adjoined his bed-room. There was a blazing fire on the hearth, and in two arm-chairs close to it sat the two invalids, Kerr and Wildrake. They did not look much like invalids, certainly. Arthur Augustus, as he glanced at them, was smitten by a doubt.

"You fellahs look fit enough," he remarked.

"And feel the same, I guess," said Wildrake, with a laugh.

"Bai Jove! I twust you were not spoofin' about a cold—"

"I'm afraid we were," said Kerr. "You see, we had a reason for staying in, and didn't want comment on the subject. It seems that you are staying in, too, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat down. He turned his eyeglass alternately upon his two companions, evidently perplexed.

Wildrake looked at his watch. It was nearly seven.

"Plenty of time yet," he remarked. "I suppose Bloore is with your father, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas. Weadin' to him, I expect. But why did you fellows want to miss the dance at Wickstead?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"I guess we didn't want to miss the dance," said Wildrake, "but we had something to do here; and we're going to tell you about it, now, Gussy. You've got to act with us in the matter."

"Bai Jove! You are wathah mystewious, deah boy."

Wildrake looked at Kerr.

"He's got to be told," said the Scottish junior. "Tell him, Wildrake."

"It's about your father, Gussy," said the Canadian junior gently. "You'll take it quietly, I hope."

"I don't quite understand, deah boy——"

"Your father is ill, and his illness puzzles the doctor. There's no name for it, but he's sinking under it," said Wildrake.

"Yaas," faltered Arthur Augustus.

"And there's foul play!"

Arthur Augustus started to his feet.

"Wildrake!"

"Foul play!" repeated the Canadian junior. "I know, and Kerr knows! Unless we're making a frightful mistake, your father's medicine is being doctored after it leaves Dr. Millard's hands——"

"Bloore?"

"Yes!"

"Good heavens!" whispered Arthur Augustus, his face white as a sheet. "You—you can't be sewious! Do you mean poison?"

"Yes."

"Impossible!"

"Will you listen to me quietly while I tell you all we know?"

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"Go on, deah boy!" he said faintly.

With an occasional word from Kerr, the Canadian junior quietly told of what he knew and suspected. Arthur

Augustus did not interrupt him once; he listened, and watched him, with eyes growing wider with horror.

"Good heavens!" he muttered when Wildrake had finished.

"You had to know, Gussy——"

"I am glad you have told me, deah boy. But—but it must be some feahful mistake! I cannot believe——" Gussy's voice broke.

"If you'd gone with the party we should have acted on our own," said Kit Wildrake. "But I'm glad you stayed in, I guess. It's better for Lord Eastwood's son to be acting with us."

"But—but what are you goin' to do?"

"Bloore gives your father his medicine at eight o'clock. We're going to see him do it."

"But—but if we are pwesent the wascal would not dweam of attemptin' foul play——"

"The secret panel!" said Kerr.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

"That's the idea," said Wildrake. "If he is using poison—the secret Indian poison Dandy Jim used that time in Canada—he will not dare to put it in the medicine bottle. It could be traced there in case of suspicion. He will put it in the wine-glass in which he gives your father his medicine. After it is swallowed it cannot be traced in the body by a post-mortem. But in the medicine it can be traced. If he doctors the stuff in the wineglass we shall see him, and we shall take care that your father does not drink it—and we shall take care, too, that it's kept as evidence against the villain!"

Arthur Augustus shuddered.

"Bai Jove! If the fellow is weally such a howwid snake in the gwass as——"

"He sure is, I guess!" said Wildrake.

The swell of St. Jim's clenched his hands.

"I am with you, of course, deah boys," he said. "Bai Jove! What is the time now?"

"Half-past seven!"

"Let us get a move on, then!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. He was quite calm now, and his face was set hard.

"Come on to the Painted Room!" said Wildrake.

The three juniors put on rubber shoes and left D'Arcy's "den," closing the door behind them. They walked away quietly to the Painted Room. The upper corridors of the great house were silent and deserted; there was no one to observe them.

In the Painted Room, Kerr opened the secret panel, and the three juniors passed through. The panel clicked shut behind them.

Wildrake turned on his electric torch, and the juniors descended the stone staircase, as Kerr and Wildrake had done before that afternoon. The Canadian junior turned off the light as the beam from the secret panel door in the library wall struck his eyes.

The three juniors drew close to the panel. Both D'Arcy and Kerr knew where to touch the secret spring to open it in case of need. The narrow,



Crash! The secret door flew open and three juniors burst into the room. Gilbert Bloore spun round, the wineglass clutched in his hand.

horizontal slit in the ornamental panel was above their heads, but by standing on tiptoe they could look through it. Three heads were placed very close together, and the three juniors were able to peer into the well-lit library.

The sound of a soft, monotonous voice came to their ears. It was the voice of Gilbert Bloore, and he was evidently reading aloud to Lord Eastwood. His lordship was leaning back in his chair, shading his eyes with his hand. The secretary's voice went on—reading some political report from "The Times."

It ceased at last.

Lord Eastwood looked up.

"What is the time, Bloore?"

"Ten minutes to eight, my lord."

"Read on a few minutes more."

"Yes, my lord."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. If Gilbert Bloore was not the respectfully affectionate attendant he appeared to be, he played his part remarkably

well. Arthur Augustus could scarcely bring himself to believe in such treachery and wickedness as Wildrake and Kerr suspected. But the matter was soon to be put to the test.

Bloore laid down the paper at last.

"It is time for your lordship to take the medicine."

"Very well, Bloore."

The secretary rose and stepped to the little table upon which the medicine bottle stood. Lord Eastwood's eyes were fixed moodily and heavily upon the fire. He did not think of looking at his secretary's actions. He would have seen nothing if he had looked, for the secretary was standing between the armchair and the table, and his back was turned to Lord Eastwood.

Three pairs of eyes at the slit in the secret panel watched him feverishly.

Bloore measured out half a wine-glass of water from a carafe. He added to it a single dose of medicine from the bottle.

Then, with a quick movement, he drew a small phial from his waistcoat pocket, removed the stopper, and held it for a moment over the wineglass.

Five or six drops of an almost colourless fluid dropped into the medicine.

The stopper was replaced, and the phial restored to the man's pocket, all in a few seconds.

He picked up the wineglass, shook it, then turned to Lord Eastwood.

"Your medicine is ready, my lord."

"Thank you, Bloore," said his lordship.

THE TENTH CHAPTER BROUGHT TO BOOK!

CRASH!

The secret door flew open.

Lord Eastwood started up in his chair with a cry.

Gilbert Bloore spun round, the wineglass clutched in his hand.

Three rather dusty juniors burst into the room—Arthur Augustus first. As Bloore turned towards Lord Eastwood with the poisoned draught, Arthur Augustus, without stopping to think, had pressed the secret spring and hurled the panel open.

He leaped into the room.

"You scoundrel!" he shouted.

"Arthur!"

Lord Eastwood grasped the arms of his chair and raised himself. His face was dark with anger.

Bloore's face was white, hard, fixed. He stood like a man in a dream, hardly knowing what to think. The surprise to him had been utter and complete. But, dazed as he was, it was borne in upon his mind that his villainy was known—that he had come to the end of his tether.

"Arthur! How dare you burst into my room like this—how dare you!" thundered Lord Eastwood. "And these boys—"

"I guess—" began Wildrake.

"Excuse us, sir!" said Kerr.

"We—"

"You are guests in this house," said Lord Eastwood. "To you I will say nothing of this foolish trick. But you, Arthur—"

"It was not a twick, dad—"

"A foolish practical joke like this—"

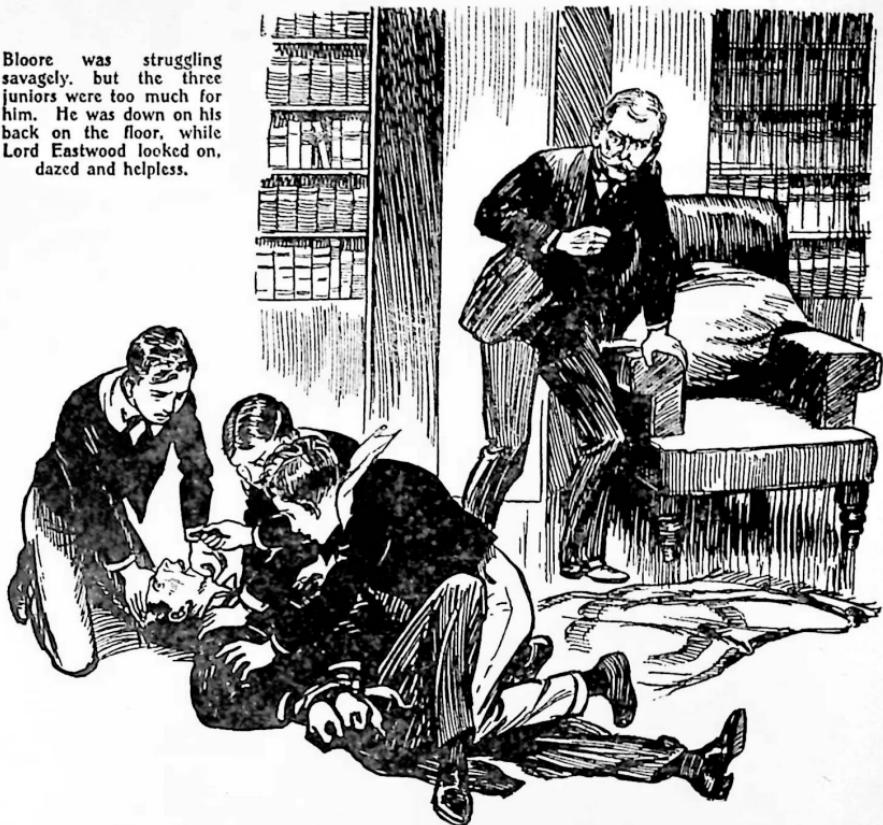
"Fathah! That man is poisonin' you!"

"What!"

Wildrake's grasp closed on the dazed rascal's wrist. He placed the other hand over the top of the wine-glass, to prevent the contents from being spilled, and wrenched it away.

Bloore gave a husky cry. He seemed to make an effort to pull himself together.

Bloore was struggling savagely, but the three juniors were too much for him. He was down on his back on the floor, while Lord Eastwood looked on, dazed and helpless.



"What—what does this mean?" he stammered. "You—you dare accuse me—"

"I accuse you, Dandy Jim!" said Wildrake, savagely and sternly.

Bloore staggered back.

"What—what did you call me?"

"Dandy Jim—the poisoner at Fraser—"

"It is false! I—I—"

Lord Eastwood staggered to his feet.

"In Heaven's name, what does this mean?" he exclaimed.

Wildrake held up the wineglass. Bloore made a movement towards it, but Kerr intervened.

"No, you don't!" said the Scottish junior grimly. "Hands off, you scoundrel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This medicine is doctored, sir," said Kit Wildrake. "We suspected that scoundrel—I'll tell you the reasons later—and we watched him through the spy-hole in the panel. We saw him take a phial from his pocket, and add something to the medicine."

"Good heavens!"

"When a specialist analyses this wineglass of stuff, he will have the evidence to send that villain to gaol," said Wildrake—"and the phial is still in his pocket. Stop him!"

Bloore's hand had flown to his waistcoat pocket. Kerr grasped him at once, and dragged his hand away. Arthur Augustus rushed to his aid. There was a crash as they brought the man to the floor. Wildrake hastily placed the wineglass on the mantelpiece, and ran to the aid of his comrades. Bloore was struggling savagely now.

But the three juniors were too much for him. He was down on his back, with D'Arcy grasping his wrists, and Kerr's knee on his chest.

Lord Eastwood looked on, dazed, helpless, thunderstruck.

"Fasten the brute's hands!" gasped Kerr. "He's got a revolver in his pocket—I can feel it—"

Bloore struggled furiously. But his wrists were dragged together, and Wildrake knotted a handkerchief round them.

"It is impossible!" gasped Lord Eastwood at last. "I—I trusted him—he came to me with excellent recommendations—"

"He came with lies and trickery!" said Wildrake. "He is not Gilbert Bloore at all, but a scoundrel who has always lived by his wits. I can't prove that at once, but inquiry will bring it out, sir. But I can prove that he tried to poison you—as he has been doing for weeks—a small dose at a time, to keep off suspicion."

"It is false!" screamed Bloore. "Lord Eastwood, I have served you faithfully—you cannot believe—"

"I cannot!" exclaimed the earl.

"Put it to the test, then!" said Wildrake grimly. "Hold him, you

fellows, and force open his jaws!"

Wildrake felt in the rascal's pocket and took out the phial. He removed the stopper; and Arthur Augustus and Kerr, with a wrench, forced the bound rascal's jaws open.

A fearful scream came from the wretch as Wildrake made as if to pour the contents of the phial down his throat. His face was convulsed with awful fear.

"Stop! Mercy!" he shrieked.

"Stop—stop! It is murder—"

Wildrake drew back his hand with a grim smile.

"Does that convince you, Lord Eastwood?"

"It does!" said Lord Eastwood. He fixed a terrible look upon the trembling, quivering wretch.

"You villain! I have trusted you, and you have sought my life—sought it, I presume, for the provision I made for you in my will, believing you to be true and loyal! Wretch!"

"I—I—"

"Silence! Arthur, go to the telephone and ring up the police station at Easthorpe immediately. Ask them to send a constable here to take in charge a man accused of attempted murder. This phial, and the wine-glass, shall be handed to the police. Bloore—if Bloore is your name—you need say no more. What you have to say may be said to the police when you are in custody!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

A MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Tom MERRY & Co. returned late that night, in a merry crowd—and that night they knew nothing of what had happened. But on Christmas morning they knew all.

From D'Arcy and Wildrake and Kerr, they learned that Gilbert Bloore had passed the night in a cell at the

police station, charged with attempted murder—and that the proofs were in the hands of the police.

It was startling news for the St. Jim's party. Cardew showed no sign of surprise. He smiled and nodded to Levison and Clive.

"I think I remember mentionin' that the man was a rank outsider," he remarked. "Cad all through, what! What price little me as a reader of character?"

"How is Lord Eastwood now, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Bettah, deah boy!" smiled Arthur Augustus. "That feahful villain was sappin' away his stwength with small, continual doses of that awful stuff—the fwightful wottah! Missin' one dose has done the patah a lot of good. You should have seen Dr. Millard's face when he was told I The patah's picked up wonderfully—and the matah is no end bucked. As for Ethel, I weally think it was only a stwict wegard for pwopwietry that pwevented her kissin' Wildwake and Kerr—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins rushed away in search of Cousin Ethel. The girl was on the terrace, and she met him with a bright face.

"Didn't I tell you it would be all right if it was left to Kerr?" said Figgins, beaming.

"You did!" said Ethel softly. "Oh, I am so glad—so glad! I have seen my uncle this morning. He has had a very severe shock, but he looks better—much better. His life was being sapped away—" She shivered. "Oh, I am so glad that Kerr and Wildrake—"

"Kerr chiefly," said the loyal Figgy. "But Wildrake was jolly smart. And Gussy played up like a little man, it seems. I say, it's going

to be a merry Christmas, after all!" Figgins was right.

Gilbert Bloore spent his Christmas behind stone walls and iron bars. It was afterwards—when the police had had time to work on the case—that the facts came out with regard to the dastardly adventurer. His real name was not known; but proof was forthcoming that he was the man who had been known as Dandy Jim in Western Canada—and by a dozen other names in different cities. It was found, too, that he had robbed the real Gilbert Bloore of his papers in France, when Sir Thomas Mapleton's secretary was returning after leaving his master at San Remo, and starting for America to take up a new post there. And the real Bloore came forward when the police inquiries were made. The analysis of the phial and the wineglass provided ample evidence of Dandy Jim's murderous attempt, and at his trial he was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude—with another arrest and a trial in Canada waiting for him when he came out.

But all that came afterwards. For the present, the St. Jim's party only knew that the rascal was safe in prison, and they gave him no further thought.

Lord Eastwood recovered, and on Christmas evening he was able to sit among the merry party. The shadow of tragedy had passed, and all was frolic and merriment. Arthur Augustus had no more serious trouble than his observation of the fact that Figgins seemed to think that Ethel was his cousin, not D'Arcy's at all!

In fact, Arthur Augustus' noble countenance was one of the very brightest among the numerous merry faces that thronged Eastwood House during Gussy's Christmas Party!

THE END



WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG!

By HARRY WHARTON

What were some of the "beaks" at Greyfriars like when they were schoolboys? Strict disciplinarians as they now are, it seems hard to believe that Mr. Prout was once expelled, that Mr. Twigg often broke bounds, and that Mr. Quelch was the leader of a rebel movement against fagging!

OUR "beaks" at Greyfriars are "stickers," and the average junior thinks they're immovable—as unresponsive to the changes of time as the four walls of the school itself! The mere suggestion that Greyfriars masters were ever schoolboys themselves gives most chaps quite a shock!

But the fact remains that even the strictest and sternest of them were at some remote period in the past just boys like we are to-day. And some recent discoveries of mine make it pretty clear that in those days they got up to the same tricks and enjoyed life in just the same sort of way as other youngsters!

For instance, Mr. Prout, the portly and pompous master of the Fifth, whose passion for explosives evidently goes back a long way, distinguished himself at the age of twelve by

manufacturing a bomb and depositing it in the cycle-shed belonging to his school just to see if it would work. And it did! What's more (keep this under your hats, boys!) Prout was bunked for it! Shocking, eh?

Mr. Capper of the Upper Fourth is another gentleman with a surprisingly murky past. At the age of fourteen he was the ringleader of a secret society of river "pirates" who raided picnicking parties on "halfers"; and on one occasion they wore masks and actually raided tuck from a party which included one of the masters! Unfortunately for them, the boat capsized as they were making off with the booty, and they had the mortification of being rescued by their own "victims!" Mr. Capper was luckier than Mr. Prout. He was let off with a whacking—and incidentally abandoned piracy from that day on.

One of our beaks at least is no stranger to breaking bounds. If you get Mr. Twigg of the Third in a confidential mood, he may tell you that he seriously estimates the number of times he broke bounds during his



Mr. Capper was the ringleader of a secret society of river "pirates" who raided picnicking parties on "halfers."

schooldays at no less than two hundred ! In justice to Mr. Twigg, I should mention that the explanation is a comparatively innocent one. He had an early passion for the stage, and made a habit of attending a local theatre regularly once a week.

You can hardly imagine Mr. Hacker of the Shell running off with bathers' clobber at the seaside, can you ? Yet he actually did that on one occasion, and as a result the three bathers affected had to run across country a distance of more than a mile before they were able to find sanctuary. And the three bathers, if you'll believe it, were his headmaster, his House-master and his Form-master ! Hacker must have been a rare " go-er " in his youth, if this incident is in any way typical.

But I've reserved the best of the lot for the finish.

The heroes are Doctor Locke and Mr. Quelch. You'd never guess the nature of the two exploits that are

recorded against their respective names, even if you had a month of Sundays in which to do it.

Mr. Quelch (whisper it !) was actually at one time the leader in the Form to which he belonged of a rebel movement against fagging. And at the climax of his campaign he startled the school by climbing a tall flagstaff and nailing up side by side with the Union Jack an outsize in pennants which bore the rebel device " No Fagging for the Fourth " ! Can you credit that ?

But our revered Head caps the lot. At the age of thirteen he ran away from school altogether, with the fixed intention of spending the rest of his life as a sailor man !

As Bob Cherry would say—that beats Barney. It quite takes my breath away to think that but for the fact that he was found and returned to school in time, my headmaster might now have been patrolling the bridge of some great liner or swabbing the deck of some old tramp steamer !

Still, there's no harm in reminding ourselves occasionally that the beaks are only human after all. For they are, really, you know—even though their most human qualities belong to the d a y s W h e n T h e y W e r e Y o u n g !



It takes my breath away to think that my headmaster might have been swabbing the deck of some old tramp steamer !



Taken from the sketch book of the "Holiday Annual" artist, here are some of the outstanding incidents in the match between those old rivals of the cricket field—Greyfriars and St. Jim's. The excellent quality of the cricket was only equalled by the keen sporting spirit with which it was played out—Greyfriars winning a memorable match by two wickets!

THE CEDAR CREEK PANTOMIME

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD



*In the days of his youth Frank Richards, famous author of the *Greyfriars* stories, went to school in British Columbia. Here is a cheery story of his schooldays at Cedar Creek, told by his old friend and colleague, Martin Clifford.*

THE FIRST CHAPTER PREPARING FOR THE PANTO!

"**W**HERE do I come in?"
Chunky Todgers asked
that question.

It was not immediately answered.
Frank Richards & Co. were busy.

There were nine or ten Cedar Creek
fellows in the dining-room at the
Lawless Ranch, and most of them
were busy, and all of them were
talking. For it was the morning of
Boxing Day, and that evening there
was to be a great event at Cedar
Creek—nothing less than the per-
formance of the first pantomime
ever performed in the Thompson
Valley of British Columbia.

It was Frank Richards' idea—in
which he was loyally backed by his
chums, Bob Lawless and Vere Beau-
clerc. And all the members of the

Cedar Creek Thespian Society backed
him, too, with enthusiasm.

The performance was to be given in
the big school-room at Cedar Creek—
which, like most Canadian schools in
outlying districts, was a general
meeting-place for the "folk" of the
section.

The snow that covered hill and
valley, creek and timber, was not
likely to keep away the audience. On
snow-shoes and sleighs and in buggies,
they were sure to come from far and
near. The Cedar Creek school-room,
large as it was, was sure to be crowded

Frank Richards & Co. were busy
with the costumes now. Frank had
assigned all the parts, and had
coached the panto performers; the
preparations had been going on for
some time. At Gunten's Store in
Thompson there was a large notice

posted up in a prominent position, to the following effect :

" BOXING NIGHT !!!

GRAND PERFORMANCE OF
THE WONDERFUL PANTOMIME
' THE THREE BEARS ! '
BY THE CEDAR CREEK THES-
PIAN SOCIETY.

In the School-Room at Cedar Creek.

6 p.m. sharp.

Admission 50 cents."

That notice was read by nearly all the inhabitants of Thompson, and nearly all had decided to pay their fifty cents and come.

Frank Richards had written the "book" of the panto. That was quite in his line, for was he not already an author? Did not a short story appear every week in the "Thompson Press," signed "F. Richards"? Frank had selected the "Three Bears" as a subject, for excellent reasons—there were bear-skins available for the actors.

The skin of a gigantic grizzly, shot by Mr. Lawless long ago, was for the Great Huge Bear, and two smaller skins were available for the Middle-Sized Bear and the Little Wee Bear. And Molly Lawrence was available for the part of Little Silverhair—though Molly's hair, as a matter of fact, was golden.

The room at the Lawless Ranch was in a buzz of voices; and costumes, and materials for costumes, covered the long pinewood table and most of the floor. Mrs. Lawless had given that room up; it was not much use trying to keep it tidy while the Cedar Creek Thespians were at work.

Bob Lawless was trying on the grizzly skin; and Frank Richards the Little Wee Bear—which was the most desirable part of the three, really, as the skin required less padding for the Little Wee Bear.

Vere Beauclerc was going to be Prince Charming—a part for which his good looks fitted him.

Chunky Todgers was looking on. Somehow or other—it was inexplicable to Chunky—no part had been assigned to him. Chunky had mentioned that fact several times, without obtaining any satisfaction; and now he mentioned it again, very emphatically.

It was really Chunky's own fault. He had cheerfully laid claim to the part of Prince Charming, and announced that if it wasn't given him, the Thespians needn't expect any support from him. The Thespians took him at his word—which was not apparently quite what Master Todgers expected. So now Chunky was as gloomy as a skeleton at the feast, while the cheery preparations went on, and several times he demanded morosely :

" Where do I come in? "

" You don't come in at all, old chap," answered Frank, without looking up from his needle and thread.

Chunky Todgers snorted.

" I'm going to wash my hands of the whole affair," he said loftily. " It's bound to be a failure, I guess. I'm going— "

" There's pie for dinner!" said Bob Lawless.

Chunky Todgers paused in the doorway.

" Oh! " he said thoughtfully.

And Chunky's departure was postponed. He was not going to bewitch the Cedar Creek audience with his



"Pelt them!" roared Lawrence. The Cedar Creek crowd gathered round and hailed snowballs on the hapless Dicky Bird & Co. as they rolled in the snow. "Oh, crumbs!" gasped the Hillcrest chums. "Groogh!"

remarkable histrionic powers; but there was solace in the pie.

THE SECOND CHAPTER DICKY BIRD IS NOT PLEASED!

HALLO! "Hallo, Dicky!"

Three youths on snowshoes came to a stop on the trail through the timber. The Lawless Ranch buggy, driven by Bob Lawless, was progressing along the trail in the direction of Cedar Creek.

Dicky Bird, Blumpy, and Fisher, of Hillcrest School, stopped as they saw it, and hailed the occupants.

Bob was driving, and Frank Richards sat beside him. Vere Beauclerc and Molly Lawrence and Kate Dawson were in the buggy, with bundles galore of "props" that were to be used in the Cedar Creek pantomime.

Bob slackened down, and grinned at the Hillcrest trio.

"Coming to the panto?" he asked. "Six sharp, and fifty cents admission. All are welcome—if they pay at the door."

"My dear chap, if you're acting, I guess I'd rather pay a whole dollar to stay away," answered Dicky Bird.

"Of course, you'll be expected to wash your faces if you come," went on Bob Lawless. "We're rather more particular at Cedar Creek than you are at Hillcrest."

"Why, you cheeky jay—" began Blumpy.

"You're really going to spring a pantomime on the folks?" asked Dicky Bird, looking up curiously at the occupants of the buggy.

"Haven't you seen the notice in Gunten's store?" asked Frank Richards, with a smile. "And there's

a whole column advertisement in the 'Thompson Press,' too."

"I guess I've seen it. And you've really got the neck?" said Dicky Bird. "You should have asked us for help. Even a panto is improved by a little good acting."

"That's why we didn't ask your help, old scout."

Bob Lawless cracked his whip, and the buggy ran on. Dicky Bird & Co. raised their caps very politely to Molly and Kate. It was the presence of the Cedar Creek girls that saved the buggy from a volley of snowballs.

"We're done this time," remarked Fisher, as the buggy disappeared towards the backwoods school by the creek. "You ought to have thought of getting up a panto, Dicky."

"Does Dicky ever think of anything?" remarked Blumpy, in a decidedly disparaging tone.

Dicky Bird grunted.

He was feeling a little annoyed. In the rivalry between the two schools in the backwoods, Frank Richards & Co. had certainly come out ahead this time.

"Hallo! Here's Fat Jack of the Bonehouse," observed Fisher, as Chunky Todgers came along the trail.

Chunky blinked rather suspiciously at the Hillcresters. He had an uneasy expectation of snowballs as he sighted them.

"No larks, you fellows!" he said. "Don't you play any tricks!"

"Tricks!" repeated Dicky Bird in mild surprise, as he stooped for a handful of snow. "What tricks?"

"Look here, you beast——"

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Chunky Todgers, as the snowballs rained on him. "Keep off, you pesky jays! Help! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Cedar Creek pantomime exasperated the Hillcrest fellows a little. They found comfort in snowballing Chunky Todgers. The fat Chunky sped forward on his snowshoes in a hail of snowballs. Dicky Bird & Co. fairly showered them on him as he fled.

Then up the trail from the direction of the ranch came Tom Lawrence, and Dawson, and Hopkins, and half a dozen other Cedar Creek fellows. They were following the buggy, and they came quite suddenly on the Hillcrest trio.

"Hillcrest rotters!" shouted Tom Lawrence. "Give 'em socks!"

"Look out!" gasped Dicky Bird.

The Hillcrest trio spun round to stand on their defence, and there was a collision in the trail.

The next moment Dicky Bird & Co. were rolling in a snowdrift by the trail, with their snow-shoes in the air.

"Pelt them!" roared Lawrence.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Cedar Creek crowd gathered round, and hailed snowballs on the hapless three as they struggled in the drift.

Then they sped on after the buggy, laughing merrily, leaving Dicky Bird & Co. to sort themselves out.

Snowy and rumpled and breathless, the chums of Hillcrest crawled out of the snowdrift.

"Oh dear!" gasped Blumpy.

"Oh crumbs!"

"The cheeky rotters!" gasped Dicky Bird. "They—they took us by surprise——"

"Somebody's always catching you napping!" snorted Fisher.

"You silly ass——"

"Br-r-r-r! Nice state we're in, and those Cedar Creek jays chortling at

us ! " howled Fisher. " You're no good, Dicky ! "

" If you want your nose punched, Fisher—"

" Yah ! " retorted Fisher.

He jerked off a dislocated snowshoe, and tramped away. His temper appeared ruffled.

" Silly ass ! " said Dicky Bird. " You see, Blumpy—"

" Rot ! " said Blumpy. " You're no good, Dicky ! You let Cedar Creek beat you all along the line. Yah ! "

And he followed Fisher.

" My hat ! " murmured Dicky Bird.

He followed his chums, with a very ruffled countenance. Dicky Bird's prestige was at a low ebb just then.

" Look here, you fellows— " he said, as they came out into the Thompson trail.

" Br-r-r-r-r ! " said Fisher.

" I've been thinking—"

" You couldn't ! Dry up, old scout ! "

" About their pesky pantomime that—"

" Bother their pantomime, and bother you ! " said Fisher morosely. " They score all along the line, and we're no good ! You're no good ! Rats ! "

" Listen to me, you jay ! " said Dicky Bird impatiently. " Don't you tramp off to Thompson. We're not going home."

" Why not, ass ? "

" We're going to Cedar Creek ! "

" I guess I'm not going to their pesky panto ! " roared Fisher. " They can bring it off without my paying to see them do it."

" Fathead ! I've got an idea—"

" Take it away and bury it ! "

" It's no end of a stunt—"

" There's no end of your chinwag, you mean ! Cheese it ! "

Evidently there was something like mutiny in the Hillcrest camp. But

Dicky Bird did not " cheese it." He persisted in explaining the remarkable " stunt " which had dawned into his fertile brain.

Fisher and Blumpy interrupted him from time to time with scornful snorts and sniffs. But they listened.

Finally, an appreciative grin dawned upon their faces.

" Might be something in it ! " admitted Blumpy, when Master Richard Bird had finished.

" Lots in it, tons in it ! " said Dicky Bird loftily. " Now, you fellows, come along to Cedar Creek—"

" If they spot us—"

" We're not going to let them spot us. Besides, they're too jolly busy with their pesky panto to think of us. Come on ! "

And the Hillcrest trio changed their direction and headed for the backwoods school.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE PANTOMIME !

LIGHTS glimmered from the windows of the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek.

The early dusk of the Canadian winter was falling. Deep shadows lay over the snow that covered the playground of the backwoods school. But inside the schoolhouse all was light and activity.

Frank Richards & Co. were very busy.

The plank stage had been fixed up, and trestle seats made to accommodate a numerous audience. Additional lamps had been hung up, as well as a row to serve as footlights. The stage was adorned with a festoon of coloured Chinese lanterns, bought by the dozen at Gunten's store in Thompson.

There was holly on the walls of the schoolhouse, and the whole effect was, as Bob Lawless declared, O.K.

Behind the stage, screened off by "scenes," was the ladies' dressing-room, where Molly Lawrence was already transforming herself into Princess Silverhair. Kate Dawson and Clara Hopkins were also there, and Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek, was kindly lending a helping hand.

The little door at the end of the lumber schoolhouse gave access to the gentlemen's dressing-room, which was more crowded. A covered way led to a shed, and that shed was the dressing-room. It was rather cold and a little draughty, and the oil-lamp that illuminated it smoked a little. But these were only minor discomforts, disregarded by the enthusiastic Thespians.

Vere Beauclerc was already complete as Prince Charming, and he was chatting behind the scenes on the stage with Dick Dawson, who was a halberdier.

Harold Hopkins was a dumb page, but he was chatting, too. He had to be dumb when he went on. Frank Richards had not felt disposed to decline the Cockney schoolboy's services. But 'Arold's weird accent would have been quite out of place on the histrionic boards, so Frank had had the brilliant idea of making him a dumb page.

Having written the panto himself, Frank was able to extend it here or lop it there, to fit the characters, costumes, and scenery, which was a great advantage.

Frank Richards came along the passage, and joined the schoolboys behind the scenes. He was in his garb of the Little Wee Bear, only his face being visible through the open jaws of the bear's head. Frank's good-looking face peering out from the bear's fur had a curious effect, and he was greeted with a chuckle.

"You'll 'ave to shut up that 'ead before you go hon!" remarked Hopkins; and there was another chuckle.

Hopkins' liberties with the aspirate always tickled the Canadian schoolboys.

"That's all right," said Frank, with a smile. "It shuts when I want it. But the bears don't come on in the first scene. Where's the Wicked Old King?"

"Here!" said Bunker H. Honk, who was in all the glory of a gorgeous robe, studded with precious stones—not genuine—and a gilt-paper crown. "I guess I'm ready to mosey on, Richards!"

"For goodness' sake, don't guess when you're in front!" said Frank Richards uneasily. "It will spoil the effect. Kings don't guess."

"I guess I know my lines all O.K.," answered Bunker H. Honk confidently. "You leave it to this infant!"

"You and Beau and Princess Silverhair are wanted in the first scene, with the halberdiers. Where are the halberdiers?"

"Here you are!"

"And the giddy Dumb Page——"

"'Ere!" said Hopkins.

"Mind you don't speak. You're only to hold up the Princess' train when she sweeps off the stage——"

"Orlright!" said Hopkins. "But couldn't I say just a word? S'pose I jest said, 'Ere you are!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or 'Old my 'and, madam!'" suggested Hopkins.

"Not a word!" said Frank severely. "You're a Dumb Page, you ass! It's a—a quite romantic character. If you fellows crock on your lines, I'll scalp you! Where's the Princess?"

The Middle Bear came in from the passage to the dressing-room, and he looked quite an alarming object. Big glass eyes glittered from the bear's head. But Tom Lawrence looked out from an opening left in the muzzle.

"I expect the Princess will keep you waiting," chuckled the Middle-Sized Bear. "She always keeps me waiting, starting for school."

"Stuff!" said a sweet voice; and Molly Lawrence came out of the dressing-room, smiling and charming as the Princess.

"Ripping!" said Frank Richards heartily. "Now buzz on! The audience are coming in, and it will

soon be time for the curtain to go up."

Frank Richards was stage-manager and general manager, as well as Little Wee Bear. He arranged the first scene on the stage, hidden by the closed curtain from the view of the audience, now pouring into the schoolhouse of Cedar Creek.

There was an incessant stamping of heavy boots and murmuring of cheery voices in the auditorium.

Thompson Town was turning up in great numbers, and cattlemen had ridden in from half the ranches near at hand. Billy Cook, the foreman of the Lawless Ranch, was already in a front seat, with a crowd

"Hallo, you jays!" ejaculated Bob as the three Hillcresters ran in. "Why—what— Oh, crumbs!" Fisher and Blumpy rushed at him and in a moment the Great Huge Bear was in their grasp.



of the Lawless cattlemen, and their stentorian voices could be heard all over the building.

Frank Richards peeped through a slit in the curtain and nodded his head with satisfaction.

"Nearly full already. Here come the Smileys."

"Good!"

"Mr. Peckover's come, and Mr. Penrose. Penrose will put a good report of this in the 'Thompson Press' next week. You fellows remember there's a representative of the Press present," said Frank, laughing. "Now then, all ready?" he asked.

"Yes, old scout!"

"Ring up the curtain!"

Frank returned behind the wings, and the curtain was rung up, and disclosed to the enraptured gaze of a crowded audience the first scene in the Cedar Creek pantomime.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER DICKY BIRD TAKES A HAND!

BOB LAWLESS was busy.

The grizzly bear's skin was about six sizes too large for the rancher's son, and the difference had to be made up with padding.

Bob had plenty of time to finish his preparations in the shed—or, rather, dressing-room—before he was wanted on the stage. He could hear the voices of the players as the first scene progressed, and the applause of the audience. Prince Charming and Princess Silverhair were making a good impression on the audience, whatever the Wicked King and the Wicked Prince were doing.

Bob Lawless was so busy that he did not observe three faces that looked in at the window of the shed. He had no eyes for the window.

He would have been interested, however, if he had seen the grinning

features of Dicky Bird, Fisher and Blumpy of Hillcrest.

Through the window they watched Bob Lawless at work, and noted, too, that he was the sole occupant of the dressing-room.

"What scrumptious luck!" whispered Dicky Bird. "Couldn't be better!"

"Any of the jays may come in any minute!" muttered Fisher.

"We've got to risk that," answered Dicky. "Anyhow, they're busy. The play's started."

"That's so."

"Strike the iron while it's hot!" said Dicky Bird. "He won't be able to put up much trouble with all that rubbish on him. Come on!"

Dick stole round quietly to the door of the shed and opened it.

The three Hillcresters ran in.

Bob, who was struggling with the big bearskin, stopped to stare at them.

"Hallo, you jays!" he ejaculated. "This isn't the door for the audience. You go round to the big door at the other end. Why—what— Oh, crumbs!"

Fisher and Blumpy rushed on him, and in a moment the Great Huge Bear was on the floor, with the two kneeling on him.

Dicky Bird had dashed at once to the other door of the shed, which opened on the passage leading into the schoolhouse.

He closed that door quietly and quickly.

Then he stooped and jammed a wedge of wood under it. The door could not open from the other side now. The three adventurers from Hillcrest were safe from interruption, for a moment at least.

Then Dicky Bird ran to help his comrades.

Bob Lawless was struggling furiously, but, cumbered by the bearskin, his struggles were not of much avail. He had opened his mouth to yell, but Blumpy had a hand over his mouth with a grasp like iron.

"Keep him quiet!" panted Dicky Bird.

"I'm keeping him!" chuckled Blumpy.

"Grooooggh!" came in muffled tones from Bob Lawless.

Dicky Bird knelt over him, and coolly and methodically rammed a handkerchief into his mouth, and tied it safely with a length of twine. Bob Lawless glared up at him in helpless and silent wrath.

As yet he could not guess the object of the raiders, but he did not need telling that they meant mischief.

"Off with that bearskin," breathed Dicky Bird. "Sharp! There isn't a second to lose!"

The costume of the Great Huge Bear was jerked off Bob Lawless. As soon as he was freed from it he began to struggle fiercely. But he was powerless in three pairs of hands, and in less than a minute his wrists were tied together behind his back.

"Get him away!" snapped Dicky Bird.

Bob Lawless' eyes spoke volumes, though unfortunately his tongue could say nothing.

Fisher and Blumpy hurried him out of the shed into the darkness, but before he was gone, Dicky Bird was getting to work—slipping into the big bearskin that Bob had been deprived of.

Then Bob Lawless understood, but he was powerless to interfere. With his hands tied behind him, and Blumpy and Fisher gripping either arm, he was hurried away.

Dicky Bird gave a breathless chuckle.

Luck had befriended him at last. For a couple of hours the Hillcrest chums had lurked about the building, watching for a chance, and it had come more completely than they had dared to hope.

With almost feverish haste, Dicky enveloped himself in the bearskin, and closed down the mighty jaws over his face.

He could see now through a slit in the great red muzzle armed with terrible-looking teeth. But he could not have been recognised by any of the Thespians.

With hurried hands he stuffed in the padding. There was a footstep in the passage, and Dicky jumped to remove the wedge he had put under the door. It was not needed now.

Frank Richards came in unsuspectingly.

"Nearly ready, Bob?"

"I guess so," came in muffled tones from the head of the Great Huge Bear.

Frank glanced at him.

"Your voice sounds a bit muffled, old chap," he said. "Perhaps you've got the head closed a bit too tight. Voice must be clear. What the thunder have you got the outside door open for? Cold enough, I should think."

Frank Richards closed the outer door, little dreaming that his chum had been walked through it a few minutes before by a couple of Hillcrest fellows.

"Well, if you're ready, come on. The first scene's nearly over, and it's going as strong as anything. Audience no end delighted. Come on, old scout!"

Dicky Bird grinned inside the bear's head, and followed Frank Richards along the passage to the stage.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER UNREHEARSED !

THE curtain rose upon the second scene in the Cedar Creek pantomime. It disclosed the den of the Three Bears, in which later Princess Silverhair was to take refuge. The Three Bears were seated round a little table, upon which stood the porridge-dishes containing their breakfast.

There was a general chortle from the audience at the sight. Bears in the Thompson Valley did not sit up to porridge for breakfast. According to the "book" of the pantomime, the Three Bears were to go out hunting after breakfast, and then Little Silverhair was to appear.

But there was destined to be an unrehearsed development in that scene. Not for an instant did it occur to Frank Richards that the skin of the Great Huge Bear concealed anyone but Bob Lawless, and when the Great Huge Bear departed from the programme, Frank wondered whether Bob had taken leave of his senses.

The Three Bears rose from the table, and the Great Huge Bear picked up his porringer, and with a sudden movement, jammed it down on the head of the Little Wee Bear. There was a howl of astonishment from Frank Richards.

"Bob, you ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the audience.

The Great Huge Bear seized the end of the table and up-ended it, sending it crashing across the stage. The Middle Bear dodged it just in time.

"You jay, Bob!" shrieked Tom Lawrence.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience took this for part of the performance, and they shouted

approval. Frank caught hold of the Big Bear's shoulder.

"Bob! Are you potty?" he shouted. "Get off the stage—quick! Yaroooop!"

Frank broke off as one of the Great Huge Bear's paws smote him, and he landed on his back.

Tom Lawrence seized the Great Huge Bear, in utter consternation, to drag him into the wings. The Big Bear closed with him, and the astounded audience were treated to the view of a wild and whirling bear-fight on the stage.

The Great Huge Bear was victorious. The Middle Bear was bundled through the footlights, and rolled among the audience, gasping.

Frank Richards sat up, dazed and gasping. He could only suppose that Bob Lawless had gone suddenly insane.

"Bob!" he spluttered.

He squirmed out of the way as the Great Huge Bear charged at him. The huge paws were laid on him, and Frank was sent whirling after Lawrence. Yells of merriment from the audience greeted him as he rolled down.

The wings were crowded with the Thespians, now, staring at the scene on the stage in wonder and alarm.

They backed and scattered as the Great Huge Bear turned and charged at them.

"He's mad," gasped Dawson—"mad as a hatter!"

"Bob!" called out Beauclerc anxiously. "Don't play the goat!"

"Don't play the goat!" shouted a dozen voices in the audience, echoing Beau's words. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank staggered to his feet, treading on the toes of Mr. Penrose as he did so.

"Put the curtain down!" he gasped.

Two Cedar Creek fellows were in charge of the curtain. They lowered it hurriedly.

But as it came within the reach of the Great Huge Bear, he seized it and dragged it with terrific vim, and the curtain came down bodily.

It enveloped Frank Richards and Lawrence as it fell, as well as the two fellows who were handling it.

that something was wrong now, and that these proceedings could not possibly have been part of the programme.

Frank Richards struggled out of the rumpled curtains.

"Get him off!" he shouted.

He sprang on the stage and rushed at the Great Huge Bear. They closed in combat.



Prince Charming had hold of the Great Huge Bear's head, and suddenly it came off. As a flushed face was revealed, the mystery was explained. "Dicky Bird!" yelled Frank Richards.

The audience shrieked.

The Great Huge Bear, exhilarated by his success with the curtain, turned and charged at the "scenes," and sent them all whirling. The remainder of the company were exposed to the view of the audience as the scenes went down. The stage by that time looked a good deal as if a cyclone had struck it.

The audience were all on their feet, staring breathlessly. It was evident

"Go it!" roared the audience.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bob, you potty idiot, come off!" gasped Frank. "You're ruining everything, you—you—you—Help me, you fellows!"

Prince Charming and the Middle Bear rushed to his aid, as well as the Dumb Page and the Wicked King, and the Wicked Prince and several other members of the company.

The Great Huge Bear put up a terrific fight.

Round and round and over and over the combatants swayed and rolled, and the grizzly skin suffered very considerably in the struggle. Prince Charming had hold of the head, and it suddenly came off. And then, as a flushed face was revealed, the mystery was explained.

"Dicky Bird!" yelled Frank Richards.

"Squash him!"

The Cedar Creek Thespians fairly piled on Dicky Bird. The Great Huge Bear was dragged bodily off the stage to the dressing-room.

"Let up!" gasped Dicky Bird. "Only a stunt, you know—just helping you with your panto——"

"Where's Bob?" shrieked Frank Richards.

Dicky gasped.

"He's in the stables. Blumpy and Fisher are looking after him."

"Go and bring Bob in, some of you!" gasped Frank Richards. "The ass, to let these rotters—— Jump on that brute! Bump him! Rag him!"

The bearskin was stripped from Dicky Bird. He was bumped and shaken and smacked with great vigour, and finally a dozen boots assisted him into the outer darkness. He collapsed in the snow, gasping, and wondering dizzily whether he was still all in one piece.

Three Hillcrest youths fled into the night a few minutes later, chuckling—though Dicky Bird's chuckles were breathless and spasmodic. Bob Lawless had been found in the stables and released, and Fisher and Blumpy promptly fled. In the Cedar Creek dressing-room, as on the Tiber banks of old, there was "tumult and affright." The audience were roaring

with laughter, and their roars could be plainly heard. But the Cedar Creek Thespians were not laughing.

"It's all mucked up!" gasped Frank Richards. "The curtain's down, the scenes are all knocked over. You can't wear that dashed bearskin in this state! Oh, my hat! What's going to become of the panto?"

"We must go on—can't chuck it in the second scene," said Beauclerc.

"We—we must manage somehow!"

They did manage somehow.

After Dicky Bird's miniature tornado, it required a lot of hard work and time to right the stage. Scenes had to be righted, the curtain had to be re-erected, and most of the players had to spend much time in the dressing-rooms attending to their costumes, which had suffered in the conflict.

Frank Richards went on the stage, and, in a little speech to the laughing audience, explained that there had been a "little hitch" in the programme, but that the performance would proceed in the course of half an hour or so. Most of the audience had guessed at the real cause of the "hitch," and took the delay all in good part.

Yells of laughter greeted the actors when they showed up on the stage again, and there was a ripple of laughter all through the remainder of that unfortunate pantomime.

How they ever got through the performance the performers hardly knew; but they did get through it—somehow. And when it was over, the audience were still chortling—and they were chortling as they departed—there was no doubt whatever that they had been entertained that evening. So from that point of view, at least, success had attended the Cedar Creek Pantomime.

THE END

REMOVE AUCTION NOTES!



Happening to be at Greyfriars, the HOLIDAY ANNUAL representative presented himself at the Annual Remove Auction Sale. Judging by his notes, this event is certainly something new in auctions!

THE Annual Auction took place in the Rag a day or two before Breaking-up Day. Peter Todd, the official auctioneer, had a number of interesting articles to offer, and although the prices realised were not exactly record-breaking, the affair was voted a complete success.

The first item consisted of a postal-order for sixpence made payable to William George Bunter. For an article of such unique character some spirited bidding naturally took place, Vernon-Smith eventually getting the prize for the princely bid of 7s. 6d. The purchaser cynically remarked that he intended to have the postal-order framed, upon which the auctioneer, with a cheerful grin, informed the crowd that he had bought the article himself at Friardale Post Office, and the whole thing was therefore already a "frame-up"!

The next bargain offered was a typical herring of the kind used for frying on the end of a penholder in the Third Form-room. The auctioneer assured the crowd that it had been acquired from the Third Form at

great cost. His listeners, however, seemed to think that the tale was a little fishy, and Skinner loudly expressed the opinion that it was all cod. Billy Bunter bought the fish for a bad halfpenny, after "bating" the auctioneer down.

Roars of ironical applause greeted the appearance of a cricket bat which Coker of the Fifth had entered in the sale. The auctioneer mentioned that although Coker had used the bat for two seasons, it was quite as good as new—the reason being that during the whole of that period Coker had not succeeded in hitting a ball! The article was soon withdrawn—the only bid being Johnny Bull's offer to exchange the bat for a book on "Cricketing for the Beginner."

A bulky volume, entitled "The Story of a Potato," was the next offer. The auctioneer explained that his cousin, Alonzo, who was parting with the edifying book with heartfelt regret, intended to give the proceeds to the Society for Providing Haircuts for Hottentots. But at this juncture the owner said that he had suddenly

changed his mind and decided to send the book itself to the Society for Bringing Big Books to the Blacks. "The Story of a Potato" was promptly returned to its owner forcibly !

A pair of old boots belonging to Bolsover major caused a good deal of amusement. The auctioneer displayed one boot and "put his foot in it" by offering the pair as curios, saying that they were claimed to be the largest size worn by any schoolboy in Great Britain. At this statement, Bolsover, with a menacing growl, flung himself at the humorous Peter. Representatives of the Auctioneers' Protection Corps hurriedly rushed to the rescue and ejected the interrupter — together with his boots !



Bolsover was ejected from the Rag without ceremony — together with his boots !

Before anything else could be offered Tom Dutton rolled up with the news that Bunter had been seen running up to the box-room with a cake that looked suspiciously like Peter Todd's. With a yell that sounded like, "I'll squash that fat burglar !" the auctioneer immediately jumped off his rostrum and leaped for the door, and the auction thereupon came to an abrupt end.

Our Chamber of Horrors



WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER

By BOB CHERRY

OUR Chamber of Horrors would not be complete
Without the worst horror of all !

When ever you've anything tasty to eat
You know that the Porpoise will call !
You lock up your cake in a cupboard as strong
As a bank, when you have to go out ;
Be perfectly sure it'll not be there long
If the Porpoise is hanging about !

" Well, granted my food is not safe from attack,
My money's as sound as a bell ! "
Alas, my poor friend, you are on the wrong track !
He'll get all your money as well !
A big postal-order is coming his way ;
It's been in the post for ten years.
He'll take all your cash with a promise to pay
The moment that order appears !

" My food and my money in danger ? Oh, well,
At least he won't get at my clothes ! "
Alas and alack, it's my duty to tell
The whole truth without sparing the blows !
" He'll make a selection of all your best hats,
Your waistcoats he'll slit up the back,
And when it is fine, he'll go out in your spats,
And when it is wet, in your mack !

My food and my money and clobber ! Great Scott !
Thank goodness my home is all right ! "
It grieves me to say, my poor friend, that it's not ;
Your home's in a dangerous plight !
Before the vacation he'll make you his friend,
And stick like a leech to your side ;
You can't keep him out, he will go in the end
To your home, for he won't be denied !



MUTINY ON THE SPINDRIFT!

By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER A WILD NIGHT

ONE ! The deep note from the old clock-tower of Greyfriars sounded through the night, and Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory.

The old school was buried in slumber.

In the Close the wind from the sea rustled the branches of the old elms. Far in the distance the waves rolled on the rocks of the bay with a dull boom that could be heard by wakeful ears at the school.

It was but seldom that the hour of one, booming out from the clock-tower, was heard by junior ears. As

a rule, the Greyfriars fellows were fast asleep. But there was at least one fellow wakeful in the school now. Vernon-Smith was grinning as he sat up in bed and called out in cautious tones :

“ You fellows awake ? ”

A mutiny at sea—with only two schoolboys and the wounded captain to keep the desperate mutineers at bay ! A vivid, life-and-death experience on the Spindrift is the result of a midnight escapade of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry of Greyfriars !

Remove dormitory.

“ Wharton ! Cherry ! ”

Still silence.

Vernon-Smith stepped out of bed and approached the bed of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. Wharton was sleeping soundly as the Bounder of Greyfriars bent over him.

Vernon-Smith shook him by the shoulder.

" Lemme alone ! " murmured the junior drowsily.

" Wake up ! "

Wharton's eyes opened.

" Hallo ! What—"

The Bounder laughed softly.

" Have you forgotten ? "

Harry Wharton sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

" By Jove ! I had—I was asleep ! "

The Bounder laughed again unpleasantly.

" Convenient to be asleep, isn't it, when one doesn't want to keep a promise ? "

Wharton flushed hotly in the darkness.

" You cad ! Do you think I was pretending ? "

" Well, you're awake now," said the Bounder, without answering the question. " If you're going to keep your word, now's your chance. Bob Cherry's fast asleep, too ; or he's putting it on."

" Rotter ! " said Wharton angrily.

" You agreed to call us ! "

" Well, I've called you."

" Bob ! "

Deep breathing came from Bob Cherry's bed.

" Bob, old man ! "

" Hallo, hallo, hallo ! " came a sleepy voice. " Tain't rising-bell ! "

" It's one o'clock ! " said the Bounder.

" Oh, rats ! "

" If you want to funk it——"

Bob Cherry rolled out of bed, and disentangled himself from the bedclothes. He groped his way towards Vernon-Smith in the darkness.

" Where are you, Smithy ? " he asked.

" What do you want ? "

" I want to punch your head."

Vernon-Smith backed away.

" Look here, Bob Cherry——"

" I'm looking—looking for you," said Bob Cherry. " I think you mentioned the word 'funk,' didn't you, Smithy ? "

" Look here," said the Bounder, " I don't want any row now ! Yow-oh ! "

Biff !

Bump !

Bob Cherry's heavy fist smote the Bounder, and he sat down on the dormitory floor with sudden violence.

" Ow ! You beast ! Oh ! "

Bob Cherry chuckled.

" If you still think I'm funkings, Smithy, you can get up, and I'll show you I'm not a funk before we start. Plenty of time."

Vernon-Smith scrambled to his feet.

" Hallo ! What's the row ? " came Bolsover major's voice. " What are you waking us up for in the middle of the night ? "

" I'm having a little argument with Smithy."

" Well, shut up ! "

" Yes, shut up ! " said Frank Nugent. " What's the row ? "

" The rowfulness is terrific ! " murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur. " What is the cause of the wakefulness of my esteemed chums ? "

" Cheese it, Bob ! " said Harry Wharton. " We don't want a fight here now. If we get the prefects on the scene, Smithy will say we've done it on purpose to be stopped from going out."

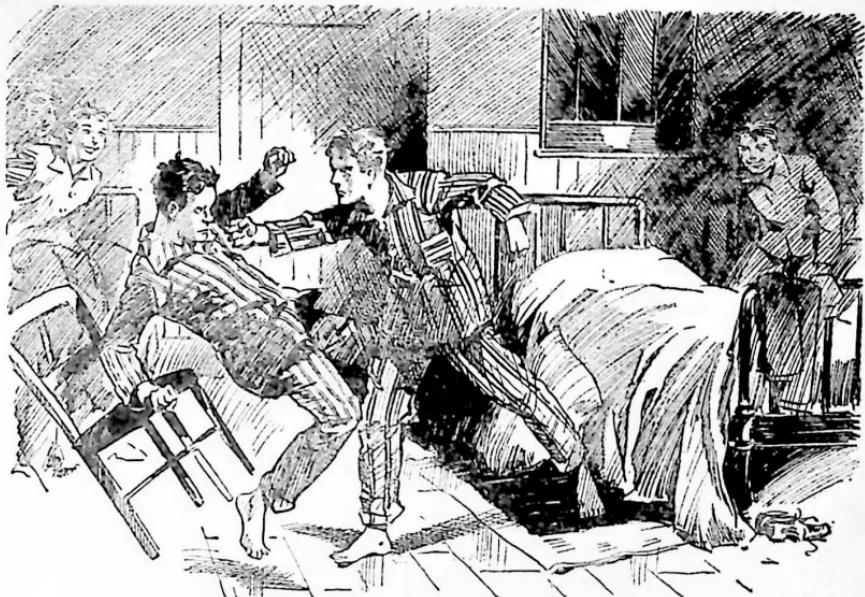
The Bounder snarled.

" I believe that's your little game, too ! " he exclaimed.

" Oh, dry up ! "

" Well, I've woke you up, as we agreed," said the Bounder sulkily.

" It's past one o'clock. If you're



"Look here," said the Bounder, "I don't want any row now! Yow—oh !" Biff I Bump I Bob Cherry's heavy fist smote the Bounder, and he sat down on the dormitory floor with sudden violence.

going out in the boat, now's your chance. If you don't go, you'll have to own up to all the Remove that you're funkings it."

"We're going!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

A gust of wind from the sea rattled the windows of the dormitory, and the trees in the Close creaked and shivered.

Nugent shivered as he sat up in bed.

"It's blowing to-night!" he said.

"Oh, it's only a puff of wind," said Vernon-Smith. "But if Wharton and Cherry feel nervous, they'd better stay in."

"They'd better stay in, anyway," said Nugent angrily. "We didn't calculate on a blow coming on to-night. There'll be a gale before morning. Are you dressing, Harry?"

"Yes."

"Then you're going?"

"Yes."

"It's too risky."

"Oh, we shall be all right."

"It's all rot!" said Johnny Bull, getting out of bed. "Look here, you shan't go, Wharton! It is going to be rough on the bay before morning."

"Can't be helped."

"Ass! The boat may capsize."

"We shall be careful."

"You may be drowned."

"Chaps born to be hanged can't be drowned," remarked Bolsover major comfortingly.

"Look here, you're silly asses to go!" said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. Most of the Remove were awake now. "It can be put off to another night."

"We're going to-night," said Bob Cherry.

"But the wind's rising."

"We shall be back before it blows very hard, I hope."

"But if you're not?"

"We shall have to chance that. We're not going to have Smithy going round the school saying that we've funk'd doing what he's done!"

"Faith, I'd rather let Smithy rip than take a boat out on the bay to-night!" remarked Micky Desmond.

Bob Cherry and Wharton finished dressing. The wind was certainly rising, and the trees in the Close were not silent for a moment. Again the dormitory windows rattled under a heavy gust.

"You can come down and let us out, Smithy," said Harry Wharton.

The Bounder hesitated.

"Look here," he said, "the wind's really rising. If you want to put it off—"

"And have you crowing over us to-morrow, you cad," said Bob Cherry. "We're going to-night."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, please yourself," he said.

"The boat's ready to-night, too," said Wharton. "I don't think it will be very rough, either. And it's only a quarter of an hour's pull out to the Shoulder, Frank."

"You oughtn't to go," said Nugent uneasily. "I don't like the sound of the wind."

"It will be all right."

"Look here—"

"I'm waiting for you," said the Bounder.

"We're ready."

Vernon-Smith opened the door of the Remove dormitory and the chums followed him out into the passage. The dormitory door closed behind them.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

BLOWN OUT TO SEA!

GREYFRIARS was buried in silence and slumber.

Save for the wind, there was no sound in the old School House as the three juniors trod softly upon tiptoe along the passage.

They made no sound as they passed the door of Mr. Quelch's room. The master of the Remove was a light sleeper. But they passed the door in silence, and descended the stairs.

Harry Wharton's face was very grim. He was thinking. The chums of the Remove were going out into the dark, windy night; but that was not all. The previous night Vernon-Smith and Bolsover major had gone out in a boat on the bay, and the Bounder had challenged the captain of the Remove to do the same.

Harry Wharton had refused the challenge at first. He had broken bounds before, certainly—he was not a perfect youth. But he didn't want to break bounds for no reason but to show that he dared do it.

Harry Wharton and the Bounder were old rivals, and Vernon-Smith was always looking for a chance to score. And he had not hesitated to use the word "funk"—a word always unpleasant to schoolboy ears. And others had echoed it.

Wharton had ended by accepting the challenge, and had agreed to go that night—if the Bounder called him. The Bounder was not likely to fail to do that.

Wharton and Bob Cherry were to take the boat out and row to the Shoulder—the great cliff across the bay—as the Bounder and Bolsover major had done.

They had not calculated upon rough weather setting in. But if the

weather had been rougher still, it would not have stopped them. It was better to face danger on the sea than to face the sneers and innuendoes of the Bounder the next day, and the covert mockery of the other fellows.

Wharton had been "chipped" into accepting the challenge, and he would certainly be chipped still more if he drew back from the task after accepting it.

The Bounder stopped at the hall window and opened it silently. Outside, the wind was blowing in great gusts, and the trees groaned and rustled. From the distant shore the boom of the sea could be heard.

"My hat, it's rough!" said Bob Cherry.

"Are you going?" asked the Bounder, with an undertone of mockery in his voice.

"Yes."

"I'll close the window after you—and wait up. Throw up a stone to the dormitory window when you get back."

"Right!"

The two juniors climbed out of the window and dropped to the ground outside.

"Bon voyage!" grinned the Bounder.

He closed the window.

"Come on, Bob!" said Harry Wharton shortly.

They tramped in the darkness across the Close. They reached the school wall and climbed it, and dropped into the road.

The wind came sweeping down the road, and

they held back against the wall for a minute or two while the gust passed.

Bob Cherry caught his breath.

"We're a pair of fools, Harry!" he said.

Wharton grunted.

"I know we are, Bob!"

"We ought to have hammered Smithy instead of taking up his silly challenge!"

"I know we ought."

"It'll be rough out on the bay."

"Can't be helped!"

Bob Cherry hesitated.

"Look here, Harry," he said at last, "we didn't count on bad



Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry climbed out of the hall window and dropped to the ground outside. "Bon voyage!" grinned the Bounder.

weather. It wasn't in the programme. Let's chuck it ! "

Wharton smiled bitterly.

" And have Smithy crowing over us for ever and ever ? No, thanks ! "

" We could go another night."

" The weather will get worse. There won't be a chance for days. Something may get out, too, to prevent us going—if the prefects got a hint of it—"

" Phew ! "

" It would be like Smithy to let a word drop, so that we should be prevented from going again—so that he should have the whip-hand of us."

" I suppose it would ! " grunted Bob Cherry.

" He would like to get us labelled as funks," said Wharton savagely. " It's no good, Bob ; we've got to go, or else admit that we don't want to do it ! "

" I suppose you're right," said Bob. " But—but it's rotten ! Come on ! "

They tramped down the dark road, with the wind whirling past them.

It was a short walk to the sea from Greyfriars School, but in the strong wind it was slow going. But they came out on the seashore at last.

The night was dark, and the wind was blowing the great drift of clouds inland. On the wide bay the stars were glimmering. The dim light showed the sleeping village of Pegg, and Cliff House School away to the left. The waves were breaking on the beach with a dull, heavy murmur.

Out at sea little white crests danced and glimmered in the starlight.

But the chums of the Remove did not hesitate. They dragged a boat down to the water's edge. There were a good many boats on the beach, drawn up beyond the reach of high tide. It was not easy work launching the boat, and the juniors were drenched with surf before they succeeded.

But the boat was launched at last, the rudder was shipped, and Harry Wharton sat down to the oars. Bob Cherry steered as he pulled out to sea.

The water was chopping and foaming round the boat as it glided out over the bay.

The little craft rocked dangerously. Wharton pulled on grimly.

They had to reach the low belt of sand under the shadow of the Shoulder and upon a high, flat rock to leave something as a proof that they had been there—to be found the next day by the Remove fellows.

And they were determined to go through with it, though at every moment the sea was growing rougher and the wind increasing in violence.

" My hat, how it blows ! " gasped Bob Cherry at last.

" It will help us back, Bob."

" It won't help us back ; it's veering ! "

" Can't be helped."

The wind had been hammering at them, but now it veered, and progress became easier. It was blowing to the south now—hard and strong. Another shift of the wind, and it blew off-shore, and now progress became quite easy.

The boat made good progress over the water, and the great shadowy mass of the Shoulder loomed over them.

Bob Cherry peered anxiously past Wharton.

" Steady ! " he said. " We don't want to go to pieces on the rocks ! Get the oars in ! "

Wharton pulled the oars inboard.

The boat rocked on towards the Shoulder.

Bump !

The gunwale bumped against the big rock, rising abruptly from the sea, which was the goal. Farther

on, the Shoulder loomed up huge and threatening.

"Hold her a minute, Bob!"

"Right!"

Bob Cherry caught hold of the rough rock and held on. Wharton drew a broken cricket-stump from his coat, and clambered on the rock, and jammed the stump into a crevice. That was the proof that the juniors had accomplished their task. Whatever happened now, the Bounder would not be able to say that they had shirked it.

But what was to happen now?

Wharton jumped back into the boat, and shoved off from the rock.

"Now we've got to get in, Bob."

Bob Cherry set his teeth.

"That won't be so easy," he said.

"Hang the wind!"

The bows were turned towards the distant shore, and Harry Wharton bent to the oars.

But the boat made no progress.

The wind was now blowing sheer off-shore, and it was increasing in force.

Bob Cherry relinquished the tiller, and took one of the oars, and the two juniors pulled away desperately.

After ten minutes of fierce pulling they looked round to see what progress they had made.

Bob Cherry uttered a startled exclamation.

The boat was farther off-shore than before.

"Harry!" Bob's voice was hoarse with exertion. "Look!"

Wharton nodded grimly.

"I can see it!" he said.

"We're being blown off-shore!"

"Yes."

"Blown out to sea!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes—looks like it!"

They said no more.

Each of them realised the deadly peril that menaced them. If they did not succeed in pulling back to the beach, they would be blown out to sea—out into the wild North Sea that night.

They pulled desperately at the oars. The minutes passed—minutes of fearful strain. They rowed as they had never rowed before.

But it was in vain. Even while they strained at the oars they knew that it was in vain. They looked round again, and the shore was gone from sight—only the summit of the Black Pike and the great Shoulder showing up against the sky.

Bob Cherry, with a gasp of exhaustion, let his oar go.

"It's no good, Harry!"

"Another pull, Bob!"

"What's the use? I'm worn out—I can't!"

Wharton laid his oar inboard. He knew it was useless to row. The wind was too strong for them, and a heavy sea was running.

Wharton's face was white as he looked at his chum.

"Bob, old man, I've got you into this," he said huskily.

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry, with a cheerfulness he was far from feeling. "We both got into it, like a pair of silly duffers."

"You would have turned back."

"No, I wouldn't!"

"I should never have let the Bounder badger me into this," said Wharton passionately. "I was a fool; and I've got you into it."

"Rats!"

The boat was dancing like a cork on the waves. Slowly the great Shoulder sank out of sight.

Round the boat the sea was running high, and white-crested waves raced past. Bob Cherry gripped the rudder

lines again. The bows of the boat swept to seaward.

"Better run clear," he said. "If this sea takes us on the gunwale, we'll capsize, Harry. After all, it may turn out all right."

"The land's out of sight now."

"It's a good boat!"

Wharton was silent.

Well he knew that the chances were a thousand to one against the boat living through the night on the rolling, swamping sea.

Away swept the little craft, farther and farther from the land, into the wilderness of wild waters.

In the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars most of the Remove fellows were still awake.

They lay in bed listening to the increasing roar of the wind and the groaning of branches in the Close.

An hour passed—two hours!

Four rang out from the clock-tower, the deep tones ringing out on the wind.

Wharton and Bob Cherry had not returned.

Vernon-Smith, a little pale now, had waited and listened for the pebble at the window—the sound that did not come. He had gone down once to the window in the hall, in the faint hope of seeing something of the chums ; and he had seen nothing.

All the Remove were awake now, with the exception of Billy Bunter. Billy Bunter could have slept through earthquakes.

Five o'clock!

"Good heavens!" said Frank Nugent, as he sat up in bed and listened to the wind. "They've been gone four hours!"

"And not back yet!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"The wind's blowing out to sea

now," said Tom Brown. "If they haven't got back long before this they won't get back at all."

"I—I—it isn't my fault," muttered Vernon-Smith. "I—I warned them not to go. You all heard me."

"It is your fault," said Nugent. He slipped out of bed. "Something's happened to Wharton and Bob Cherry. I'm going to wake up Mr. Quelch."

"Hold on! They may be back any minute."

"If they were coming back, they'd be back before now."

"Quelchy can't do anything if—if—"

"Better wake him," said Ogilvy.

Frank Nugent left the dormitory.

The juniors lay wakeful, shivering. What had happened to their two Form-fellows out on the windy sea?

The dawn came creeping in at the windows of Greyfriars School. But Wharton and Bob Cherry did not return.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

PICKED UP AT SEA!

"BOB!"

Harry Wharton's voice was low and tense.

The boat was rocking on the windy sea, sweeping down into the trough of the waves and rising again on a foamy crest, with the spray splashing over the drenched juniors.

How long had it lasted? Wharton hardly knew. It was hours—it seemed like centuries. Land had long since disappeared ; indeed, Wharton no longer had a clear idea in which direction the shore lay.

Bob Cherry had sunk down and was sleeping. The rocking of the boat, the lashing of the spindrift, could not keep the exhausted junior awake.

But Harry Wharton did not close his eyes.

He held the rudder lines now, and was keeping the boat's head steady, the only thing to be done to save her from being swamped.

Wharton's face was white and tired.

His conscience reproached him bitterly. It was weakness to yield to Vernon-Smith's mocking challenge, as he had done, and to undertake a reckless task because he was afraid of being called a "funk." It was worse than weakness to persist in it after it had become certain that there was danger for his comrade as well as himself. He was glad to see Bob Cherry close his eyes in weary slumber. He could not sleep himself. He held the rudder steady and watched the tumbling sea.

Outside the bay the sea was rougher, and the boat was miles

from the bay now. A faint hope was in Wharton's breast that some ship might be sighted. They were in the track now of ships that came and went from the Channel.

Yet on that dark night, in a gale of wind, what chance was there of being picked up? But there was a chance, however faint, and Wharton watched the sea with untiring eyes.

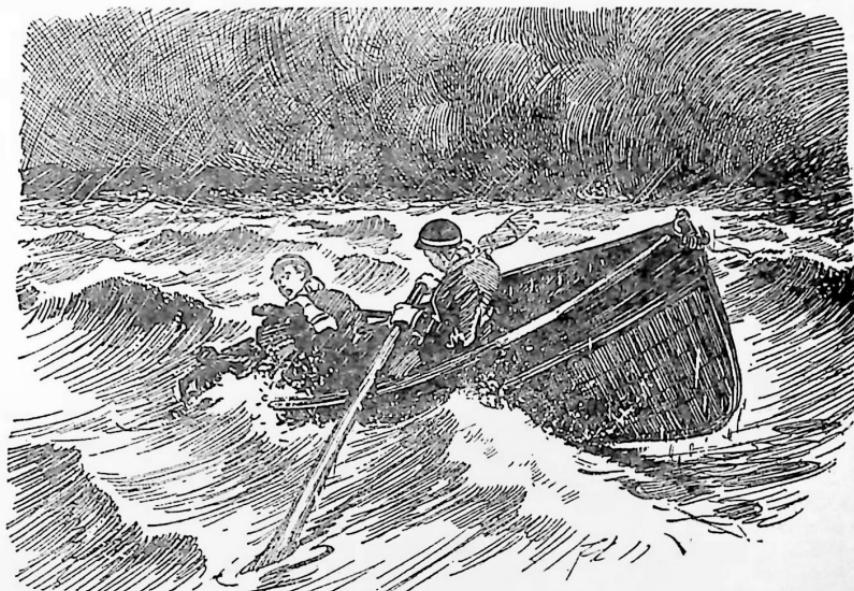
His heart gave a throb as he caught sight of a looming form in the gloom, of a light that glimmered through the night.

It was a ship!

Then he called his chum.

Deep breathing only answered him. Bob Cherry was fast asleep. Harry Wharton bent towards his chum and shook him by the shoulder.

Bob started.



Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry pulled desperately at the oars. The minutes passed—minutes of fearful strain. But their struggle was in vain. The two juniors were being blown farther out to sea!



Specially painted for the "Holiday Annual" by L. Shields

Facing page 80

SAVED FROM THE SEA!
An exciting incident in the story "Mutiny on the Spindrift!"

" Hallo, hallo, hallo ! 'Tain't light yet ! What— Oh ! " He remembered. " Hallo, old man ; we've not gone under yet."

" There's a ship, Bob ! "

" My hat ! "

" Look ! "

Bob Cherry stared in the direction of Wharton's pointing finger. A red light glimmered through the haze, and then a green one. They were evidently head-lights, and meant that the vessel was coming towards them.

" My hat ! She'll run us down if we're not careful," said Bob, seizing an oar.

" They're coming right on us, Bob ! " Wharton's voice throbbed with hope. " They will pick us up, if—if we can make them hear."

Bob Cherry cast a glance at the tumbling sea. With the best will in the world, it would not be easy for the crew of the approaching vessel to pick them up. But it was the only chance.

" Yell ! " said Bob.

The juniors put their hands to their mouths and shouted.

" Help ! "

Slowly, steadily, the great shape loomed up through the night. It was not a steamer, evidently, but a sailing vessel—a large brig, with close-reefed sails. She surged heavily through the tumbling seas.

" Help ! "

Like two strange eyes, the lights winked and blinked through the spin-drift at the juniors in the boat.

" Help ! "

Close now—so close that in the gleam of the stars the boys could make out her rigging, could make out the form of a man in oilskins on deck.

" Help ! "

Did the look-out hear them ?

The wind was howling, but it should have carried their voices to the ship. Surely if the watch on deck saw them they would make some effort to pick up the boat ?

" Help ! Ship ahoy ! Help ! "

A face looked over the side, a dark face, and so close that the juniors could catch the glitter of two black eyes.

Wharton waved his hand.

" Help ! "

The ship seemed to be rushing down upon the boat. The fate of the two schoolboys hung in the balance.

Then a voice came sharp and clear from the brig.

" Stand by to catch a line ! "

Wharton waved his hand to show that he understood.

" It's the only chance, Bob ! " he exclaimed thickly. " If we get the rope—all right ; if we don't, this cockleshell will be washed over, and it—"

" And it's good-bye ! " said Bob huskily. " I understand ! "

" Bob, old man, I'm sorry I—"

" Rot ! Look out for the rope ! "

The brig seemed to be bearing down upon them. It was only too evident that she could not round to pick up the boat, even if her skipper felt inclined for the risk. It was only too evident, too, that the wash of the brig as she rushed by would swamp the rocking boat.

The line was the juniors' only chance—if they caught it ! And it was all passing in seconds ; there was little time to think.

Yet—so clear had peril made the boy's brain—Wharton watched the brig with perfect calmness as she rushed down, and noted the swarthy face of the man who was looking at him, his gleaming black eyes, and the gold ear-rings in his ears.

He saw the rope flung—he caught the heavy knotted end as it crashed into the boat. Bob Cherry's grip was upon it at the same moment, and Harry Wharton's grip was upon the rope and upon Bob Cherry.

Then followed what seemed a nightmare.

Deep under a swamping wave the boat vanished from sight, and the two juniors were struggling in the water; but Harry Wharton's left arm was wound about the rope and his right was gripping his chum.

Bob Cherry's hands had slipped from the rope, but Wharton's grip held him fast.

Thumping, crashing water, a strain on his arm that seemed about to tear it from his shoulder, choking in his throat, darkness before his eyes.

Then he was swinging clear of the water, and the rope was still about his arm, and Bob Cherry was still in his grip.

Then hands grasped him; he felt himself dragged clear of the water; he was conscious of being dropped heavily upon hard planks, and his senses fled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER IN STRANGE COMPANY!

HARRY WHARTON opened his eyes. A terrible ache was in his left arm, still coiled in the rope.

He was drenched and dripping with water.

Lantern-light gleamed in his eyes; there was a burning, bitter taste in his mouth, a sickening smell of spirits.

He gazed wildly round him, blinking in the light.

He was lying on the deck of the brig, with the roar of the sea in his ears. Round him men were standing, staring at him. The man with the

black eyes and the glimmering ear-rings was bending over him. Bob Cherry lay by his side, very still. Wharton tried to rise, and sank back.

The man with the ear-rings laughed.

" You are safe, youngster." His voice had a strange, soft foreign accent in it, but his English was good. " Both alive, for a wonder ! "

" Bob—"

" He is all right."

" Thank heaven ! "

" Thank Captain Silver, I should say," said the man with the ear-rings, laughing again, and showing two rows of white, gleaming teeth. " Take another swig of this ! "

" What is it ? "

" Rum."

" Thank you, no ! "

" That's what brought you round," said the man with the ear-rings, putting the flask to Wharton's lips.

Wharton took a sip; he did not want to refuse the man who had saved his life. The spirit had revived him, no doubt; but the mere taste of it sickened him. The man laughed again, and drew the flask away.

There was a grunt from Bob Cherry, and he sat up dazedly.

" Hallo, hallo, hallo ! " he said faintly.

" Bob, old man—"

" You are all right, Harry ? "

" Yes."

" Thank goodness ! How did I get here ? I lost the rope—"

" Your mate held you," said the man with the ear-rings. " If he had let you go, you'd be in Davy Jones' locker now, nino ! "

Bob gasped.

" Harry, you've saved my life ! "

Wharton staggered to his feet. They had been picked up; so far all was well. He gave a quick glance

round him. The ship was straining under the gale, surging heavily through the rough sea under close-reed canvas. The men standing round him were sailor-men, by their clothes. But their faces? Wharton caught his breath as he saw the hard, grim looks. They were not ordinary sailor-men, and the man with the ear-rings—

What ship had they fallen upon?

A big man standing near Wharton, with a bloodstained bandage across one eye and cheek, laughed hoarsely as he caught the boy's look.

"I guess you're safe, kid," he said. "No need to be scared. You're safe—so long as you're useful—eh, Captain Silver?"

The man with the ear-rings showed all his teeth again in a grin.

"Quite safe, nino," he said. "Look after them, Peter Bones!"

"I guess so, captain."

The man with the ear-rings walked aft.

Bob Cherry picked himself up and stood close to his chum. Instinctively the boys knew that this was no ordinary ship that had picked them up. There was something strange about the vessel—about the crew.

What was the meaning of the blood-stained bandage upon the big man, Peter Bones, as the captain had called him? And the man with the ear-rings—he did not look like a sea-captain; he was not dressed like one. What was the meaning of the revolver stuck in the big man's belt? Sailor-men do not go armed in British waters.

"What ship is this?" asked Wharton, addressing the big man.

"The Spindrift, I guess."

"British?"

"I guess so."

"And the captain—"

"Jim Silver is skipper of this hyer craft. I'm boatswain. Peter Bones, of Nantucket—that's me!"

"Thank you for picking us up!" said Harry, in a shaking voice. "You've saved our lives."

"I guess so."

"I—I suppose you can't put us ashore in this gale?"

There was a chuckle from five or six men standing around them.

Peter Bones grinned hugely.

"No; I guess we're not puttin' anybody ashore jest now!" he remarked. "The fact is, we're short-handed this trip—some accidents have happened."

The men chuckled again.

"Accidents will happen to seafaring men," said Peter Bones, who was evidently a humorist in his way, though at present the Greyfriars juniors could not quite see where the joke came in. "It's a dangerous trade. And when there's a capful of wind, there's no tellin' what may happen, I guess."

"Is this ship equipped with wireless?" asked Wharton.

"I guess not, kid—not this old tub."

"I suppose we shall have to wait till you get to port, then?"

"Yep, I guess you will!" said Peter Bones.

"Anyway, we're very much obliged to you!" said Bob Cherry.

"You ought to be, I guess. You owe your lives to Captain Silver. But enough talk—that will do in the morning. Just take them below, Bill Dunn!"

"Just a minute," said Wharton. "Where are you bound?"

"We're bound on a long voyage."

"But you'll touch land before—"

"I guess not."

"We're schoolboys," Wharton

explained. "We've been blown out to sea. They'll be anxious about us at the school if we don't turn up."

"I shouldn't wonder!"

"Would it be possible to send a message somehow—"

"I guess not."

"You might put us on some other ship, when the gale goes down—"

"Younker, you talk too much!" said Peter Bones. "Ain't I told you that we're short-handed this trip—owin' to accidents?" He chuckled—a chuckle that sent a cold chill to the juniors' hearts. "You're goin' to work your passage!"

"We don't mind doing that," said Harry; "we're not slackers."

"Good! Stick to that, and you'll get on! Take 'em into the fo'c'sle, Bill Dunn, and pitch 'em into bunks! They can have Thompson's and Finsen's bunks. They won't be wanted any more."

And there was a laugh.

Wharton and Bob Cherry followed Dunn without another word. They felt that they were in the midst of some strange mystery, and that the

big man with the bandaged face did not intend to enlighten them. They staggered along the deck, finding it difficult to keep their feet on the heaving planks. Dunn pointed into the opening of the forecastle, where a swinging oil-lamp was burning dimly.

"Them's your bunks," he said.

"Turn in. You'll 'ave to report to Captain Silver in the morning."

"Thank you!" said Harry.

The juniors scrambled into the forecastle. They were glad enough to



"Help!" yelled Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton as the brig surged heavily towards them. "Ship ahoy! Help!"

get off their drenched clothes and wrap themselves in blankets.

But, exhausted as they were, they did not think immediately of sleep.

The strangeness of their situation excited them.

"This is a queer ship," said Bob, in a low voice.

Wharton nodded.

"Very queer!" he said.

"That man with the ear-rings doesn't look like a captain."

"And you noticed how familiar the men were with him," said Wharton, "especially that big chap, Peter Bones? And—and Bones was wounded."

"I noticed that."

"And he had a revolver in his belt."

"I noticed that, too."

"And they're short-handed, owing to accidents," said Wharton, in a strained voice. "What sort of accidents do you think, Bob?"

Bob Cherry's face was pale.

"I don't like to think," he said.

They were silent.

It seemed to them that a shadow of tragedy was brooding over the ship. Into what company had they fallen?

Wharton looked round the forecastle. There was nobody in it but themselves. The crew were all on deck, evidently. Where was the watch below? Had all the hands gone up on account of the gale? But the gale, though rough to an open boat, was little enough for a ship—it was not severe enough to call all hands on deck. Why were none of the crew in their bunks?

Wharton's eyes, as they wandered round the forecastle, fell upon a dark patch on the floor.

He started, and looked at it again.

"Bob!" he said in a hushed voice.

"Look!"

"Oh!"

The juniors gazed as if fascinated at the dark patch on the planks.

It was a deep stain—and it was still wet!

"You know what that is, Bob?" Wharton muttered huskily.

"Yes."

"Blood!"

"Yes."

"There's something horrible been going on here, Bob," said Harry. "They are short-handed—we know why now."

"Yes," muttered Bob Cherry.

"They saved our lives," said Harry, "but—"

"No good thinking about it, Harry," said Bob quietly. "They saved our lives, so we—we can't be in any danger from them. Better turn in."

The juniors turned into the bunks.

But it was a long time before they slept.

They lay listening to the creaking and groaning of the timbers and the wail of the wind, and wondering—wondering what had happened that dark night upon the sea before they came aboard the mysterious brig. They slept at last, but in their sleep strange dreams haunted them—of the dark, mocking face of the man with the ear-rings, the bandaged face of the boatswain, and that dark and terrible stain upon the planks of the forecastle.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER NEW HANDS.

THE two juniors of Greyfriars slept deeply, in spite of the dreams that haunted their slumber. It was broad day when they awoke. No one had been down to disturb them, but as Harry Wharton sat up in his bunk and rubbed his eyes, he saw that two or three of the other bunks were occupied.

There was still a sound of straining cordage from above, but the vessel was not rolling as much as during the night. The gale was going down, or the vessel was getting beyond the radius of it.

Wharton did not feel any uneasiness from the motion of the vessel ; he was a good sailor. He clambered out of the bunk, and shivered in the cold draught that blew upon him. His clothes lay where he had left them, wet and hardened with sea-water. It was not much use thinking of putting them on ; and he wondered if the men of the Spindrift would give him a change of clothes.

A hoarse voice from the scuttle hailed him, and he looked round and saw the boatswain looking in upon him, a grin on his bandaged face.

"So you've turned out, younker ?" he grunted.

"Yes," said Harry.

"Feeling pretty sick, eh ?"

"Thanks, I feel all right."

"That's right ; I guess you've got to earn your rations this trip."

"We're quite willing to do that," said Wharton. "But can you give me some clothes ? My own are soaked with water."

The boatswain looked at him doubtfully.

"Well, them clothes ain't much good for a sailor-boy, that's a fact," he said. "I'll tell Cookey to see what he can do."

The boatswain moved away from the forecastle opening, and a few minutes later a negro came down the steps into the little dusky place. He was a big, powerful fellow, but his look showed that he was under the influence of fear. He had a bundle of rough sailor clothes in his hands, a pair of scissors, and a needle and thread.

"Mass' Bones say I make dese clobber for you," he said.

"Thank you," said Harry.

"Dis chile soon fit you out."

"Wake up, Bob, old man !"

"I'm awake," said Bob Cherry, looking out of the bunk. "I say, this is a bit different from the dorm. at Greyfriars, isn't it ?"

"Yes, rather."

"Still, it's good of them to send us their own tailor," said Bob with a grin.

The negro grinned, too. He was cutting down the clothes with a very rough-and-ready hand, and their fit was likely to be very much at fault. But the schoolboys were only too glad to get clothing of any sort.

"What port did this ship sail from ?" Harry Wharton asked the negro, as he sat on the edge of a bunk, with his black fingers busy.

The darky did not answer.

"How long have you been to sea ?"

No reply.

"What's your name ?" asked Bob.

"Mark Antony."

"Hear, hear !" said Bob Cherry.

"Are you the same chap who killed Julius Caesar, or one of his ancestors ?"

The negro grinned.

"Why don't you answer my questions, Mark Antony ?" asked Harry. "Don't you want to tell me where this ship sailed from ?"

"Mass' Bones, he say no talk."

"What happened here last night, before we came on board ?" asked Bob Cherry, in a low voice.

"Mass' Bones say no talk."

"You won't tell us anything ?"

"Mass' Bones get mad if I talk."

"Mass' Bones seems to have scared the wits out of him," said Bob.

"He'll scare the wits out of you if there's too much of your lip, young 'un," said a rough voice, as the

boatswain looked in. "I guess you ain't hyer to ask questions. You mind your own business."

"There's no harm—"

"I'll guess you'll obey orders," said Bones, with a scowl that made his bandaged face look hideous. "I keep a rope's-end for younkers who have too much jawing tackle."

Bob Cherry flushed.

"Hurry up with them clothes, Cookey, and get back to the galley."

"Yes, Mass' Bones."

"And don't jaw!"

"No, Mass' Bones."

"And clean up this fo'c'sle," said Peter Bones, looking round. "The place wants swabbing up, I guess."

"Yes, Mass' Bones."

Peter Bones' eye lingered for a moment upon the dull red patch on the floor. He looked at the juniors and observed that their eyes were upon it, and an extremely ugly look came over his face.

"Kinder noticed it, I see?" he remarked.

"We could not help seeing it," said Harry.

"Made you think—eh?"

"Yes."

"And what are you thinking about it?" said Peter Bones, coming nearer to the juniors.

Wharton faced him fearlessly. There was a threat in the man's manner, and a very unpleasant look in his deep-set eyes.

"I don't know what to think," said Harry.

"Man fell out of his bunk and hurt his head," Bones explained.

"Is that all?"

"Wot more should there be?" demanded Bones, with another scowl.

"Very well; I don't want to ask questions."

"You'd better not!" said Bones, scowling.

He tramped away to the deck, leaving the juniors with a sick feeling in their breasts.

If they doubted that a tragedy had occurred on board the Spindrift before they set foot upon her planks, they could have doubted no further. The fear of the negro, and his secrecy, added to Bones' manner, told them plainly enough.

The cook did not speak again. He glanced once or twice furtively at the boys as he sewed the rough clothes, and that was all.

When they were finished he left the forecastle.

The juniors dressed in silence.

Bones looked into the forecastle again.

"You're wanted on deck!" he exclaimed.

"Very well!"

"Report aft to Captain Silver."

"Yes."

"Can't you say 'Aye, aye!' like a sailor-man?" demanded Bones.

"Yes; if you like. Aye, aye!"

Peter Bones grinned and turned away. The two juniors exchanged glances.

"Well, we'd better go up," said Bob.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Come on!" he said.

They ascended to the deck of the Spindrift.

The sea had gone down, and the sun was shining in a cloudy sky. There was still a roll upon the sea, and the vessel pitched and swung, but the short-lived gale was over. Most of the men of the Spindrift were on deck, and Wharton and Bob could not help observing that the brig was indeed short-handed. The men on deck and those in the bunks below did not number more than eight,



"Mass' Bones seems to have scared the wits out of Mark Antony," said Bob Cherry. "He'll scare the wits out of you if there's too much of your lip!" said a rough voice, as the boatswain looked in.

including the captain and the boatswain. Of mates they could see nothing.

Captain Silver was on deck smoking a cigar. His golden ear-rings glistened in the sun as he walked to and fro, at times scanning the sea with an anxious frown. There was no sign of land in any direction. But the mist that was creeping over the sea might account for that. That they were still in the narrow seas the juniors were sure; the brig could not have got out of them during the night.

The main and top sails were out now, and the brig was moving rapidly through the water.

The juniors' hearts were heavy

as they looked over the expanse of glimmering water. Every moment the bellying canvas was drawing them farther away from Greyfriars, farther away from England and home.

Captain Silver caught sight of them and beckoned to them to approach. The juniors scrambled aft along the sloping deck.

The man with the ear-rings eyed them curiously.

Now that they saw him in the daylight, they could see that he was a foreigner, with no trace of English blood in him. His face was swarthy, his eyes deep black, and his short moustache jetty. He belonged to the South; but whether in America or in

Europe they could not tell. His English was good, and only occasionally when he spoke a Spanish word escaped him.

"Ah! So you are awake, ninos?" he said.

"Yes, sir!" said Harry.

Silver nodded.

"You know I'm the skipper of this craft?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I'm short-handed!"

"Yes, we noticed that."

"I've lost some of my men," said the man with the ear-rings, "and some of my officers. You two boys will be useful to me. You will have to work your passage in the Spindrift, ninos. Are you willing to work?"

"Quite willing, sir!"

"Good! As a matter of fact, I picked you up for that purpose," said the man with the ear-rings. "As soon as I saw you in the boat it occurred to me that you would be useful. But I saved your lives, and you owe me that."

"We shall not forget that," said Harry.

"Very good! Work, do as you're told, and don't ask questions, and you'll find you're all right on board the Spindrift. Give trouble, and you'll go back where you came from —quick! Savvy?"

"I understand," said Harry.

"That's all!"

"One moment, sir. Can you tell us when we're likely to have a chance of going ashore again?" said Harry.

Captain Silver showed his white teeth in a smile.

"I think not," he said.

"We belong to a school——"

"Then you would have done wisely to stay in it," said Captain Silver.

"We know that now," said Harry.

"How did you come out at sea in

that open boat?" the captain asked abruptly.

Wharton explained.

Captain Silver laughed when he had finished.

"A pair of foolhardy young swabs," he said. "You deserve what's happened to you, and more. If I had not picked you up, you'd be food for fishes. You'll have to earn your keep on this craft. Get forrad!"

"Would it be possible to let our people know we're safe somehow, sir?"

"No!"

"You might put us on a passing ship."

"I might," assented Captain Silver. "But I didn't pick you up to put you on a passing ship. You're going to belong to the Spindrift for this voyage."

"Can you tell us how long the voyage will last, sir?"

"Didn't I tell you not to ask questions?" demanded Silver.

"Yes; but——"

"That's enough! Get forrad!"

"But——"

Silver drove his hand into his pocket, and drew it out again with something in it that glimmered and flashed in the sun. The juniors started at the sight of a revolver.

"If hands talk to me after I've told them not to ask questions, I'm liable to drill holes in them," said Silver. "Get forrad!"

"We're not hands here," said Harry Wharton indignantly. "We're willing to work and to obey orders while we're on this vessel; but we don't belong to her, and——"

"Peter Bones!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Take these ship's boys forrad, and if they don't work give them two dozen apiece."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The juniors went forward without another word.

They were helpless to resist, and they knew that they were in desperate hands. The sea, surging by the side of the brig, seemed to tell them what they might expect if the crew of the Spindrift did not find them useful.

Peter Bones rapped out orders, and the juniors obeyed him unquestioningly. And there was plenty of work to be done. The crew, short as they were in numbers, did not seem inclined to make up for that by extra exertion. Indeed, excepting for the handling of the ship, they seemed to do nothing at all ; and if the captain or the boatswain gave an order, it was obeyed slowly and sullenly or not at all.

The juniors worked ; but they kept their eyes and their ears open. And ere the sun of noon shone down upon the vessel they were quite clear in their minds upon one point—that Jim Silver, the man with the ear-rings, was not the true captain of the Spindrift, although he occupied that position, and that, excepting for the actual sailing of the ship, the men were by no means inclined to obey him.

Where were the rest of the crew ? Where was the true captain ? The juniors asked themselves those questions, and looked at the rolling sea and shuddered.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

THE MUTINEERS.

MY hat ! What's that ?" Harry Wharton muttered the words with blanched lips.

The juniors had been working for hours under the rapping orders of the boatswain, and so willingly that even Peter Bones found nothing to grumble at.

But they had not been below aft, and

once when Bob Cherry stopped near the companion-way Bones shouted to him and ordered him forward.

It was evident that for some reason the boys were not to be allowed to enter the cuddy or the cabins.

Wharton wondered why.

He had been swabbing the deck near the cabin skylight, when a low sound from below came to his ears.

It was a groan.

He started, and listened, pausing with the mop.

Groan !

The sound was repeated, and, faint as it was, it struck heavily upon Harry Wharton's ear.

It was the groan of a man in pain—wounded. He knew that. Was it one of the crew, several of whom bore signs of conflict, or—

" What are you loitering there for ? " shouted Peter Bones, coming threateningly towards the junior.

Wharton faced him fearlessly.

He did not need to answer, for as Bones came striding up the sound of the groan from the cabin was repeated.

" Oh, you heard that, eh ? " said Peter Bones.

" Yes, " said Harry.

" And you was wondering about it, eh ? "

" Yes."

" Ain't you been told to mind your own business on this craft, eh ? " demanded the boatswain furiously.

" I couldn't help hearing that, " said Harry. " There is a wounded man down there."

" S'posin' there is, that don't concern you, I guess. You keep forrad."

" Very well."

" Don't you come aft agin ! " said Peter Bones. " Nor the other one, neither ! You ain't got any business hyer ! "

The two juniors went forward.

Bones ordered them to scrub out the forecastle, and they obeyed.

But as they worked Wharton told Bob in low tones what he had heard.

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"A wounded man in the cabin!" he muttered.

"There's no doubt about it, Bob."

"Who can it be?"

"It can't be one of this gang, or Bones wouldn't be so particular about our knowing."

"No. Then—"

"It may be the captain."

"The real captain?"

"Yes."

"Harry, old man, what do you think has happened on this ship?" asked Bob Cherry, pausing in the scrubbing and looking hard at his chum.

"Mutiny!" said Wharton briefly.

I—, "I was thinking the same. But

"Mutiny!" repeated Harry. "Jim Silver is no more a sea-captain than I am, though he seems to know how to sail a ship. He may have been mate. Some of the crew are missing—we can guess what has become of them. We know how Bones got that damage to his head. There must have been a fight here last night, Bob, and the mutineers got the best of it. They picked us up because they wanted hands—not from humane motives. We don't owe the villains any gratitude."

"I'm not troubling about that. But—if the skipper's there wounded—why have they let him live? They must have killed the others."

Wharton shook his head. "I don't know. Silver had a reason—I don't know the reason. But I'm going to find out."

Bob Cherry gave his chum a startled look. "What are you going to do, Harry?"

"If there's an honest man left on board this ship, we're going to help him, Bob!" said Harry, in low, determined tones. "We're not going to make ourselves parties to a crime!"

"They'd pitch us overboard as soon as look at us if they had trouble with us, Harry."

"I know they would. But how do we know that they won't pitch us overboard, in any case, when we're no longer any use to them? If they're running away from justice, they won't want to leave two witnesses alive."

Bob shuddered.

"It's only too jolly likely," he said.

"They've seized the ship, and they're making off with it. I don't know if there's anything valuable on board they mean to steal, but they won't want us to remain to tell about them. They mayn't be able to put us ashore, even, without danger to themselves. We've got to get out of their hands somehow, Bob, if we're to save our lives. And if the captain is alive—"

Bill Dunn entered the forecastle at that moment, and the juniors ceased to speak.

But Harry Wharton's brain was busy.

Darkness was falling over the sea.

The Spindrift, with her lights gleaming ahead through the shadows of the night, plunged on through the heavy waters.

The juniors had slaved hard all day and were exhausted; but there was to be no rest for them yet. They helped the cook with the washing-up in the galley, and waited on the seamen. The forecastle hands of the Spindrift evidently considered that they were not under the necessity of turning their hands to anything. And their manner showed quite plainly that if Captain Silver gave them

orders against their inclinations they would not obey.

The most inexperienced eye could have seen that the men of the Spindrift were not captain and crew, but a gang of adventurers who had selected one member as chief for their own interests.

It was late at night before the juniors were free from the many tasks laid upon them. Two or three of the men had gone below, and were smoking, and drinking rum, in the forecastle.

The watch on deck were also drinking rum-and-water, and a hoarse sea-song rang through the ship.

Captain Silver glanced at the men and scowled, but he did not interfere with them. Peter Bones was talking aft with the captain, but presently he joined the watch and drank with them.

Silver took the wheel.

Harry Wharton had thrown himself to rest in a dark corner of the deck, but he was not asleep. Bob had gone into his bunk in the forecastle. But Wharton was on the watch. He meant to discover what mystery was hidden aft, and he thought now that his opportunity had come.

Keeping in the shadows, he stole aft.

Wharton was very cautious. The moan of the sea against the sides of the vessel warned him of what he was risking.

It was half an hour more before he slipped down the companion-way,



"Harry, old man, what do you think has happened on this ship?" asked Bob Cherry, pausing in the scrubbing. "Mutiny!" said Wharton briefly.

while Jim Silver's face was turned to the sea. The watch on deck were too fuddled now to notice anything. Wharton wondered what would become of the Spindrift if the gale came on again.

The junior reached the bottom of the cabin steps, his heart beating violently.

All the men were on deck or in the forecastle ; he had counted them. But someone was below—the man who had groaned.

There was a swinging lamp burning in the cuddy, shedding a dim light. It had evidently not been trimmed for a long time. The juniors had not been allowed to enter the cuddy, and no one else had done any work there.

Wharton glanced round the cuddy.

There were the remains of a meal on the table, and the place was untidy. He glanced into the alleyway where the doors of the cabins opened.

A low groan came from the nearest cabin. Wharton stepped silently to the door, and opened it with caution.

Groan !

The cabin was dark ; only a faint glimmer of starlight shone on the glass of the porthole.

Wharton made out the bunk dimly. There was a man in it—a man who moved restlessly, like one in pain.

He had evidently not heard Wharton enter.

The junior hesitated.

If this was a prisoner of the gang above, Wharton was his friend, and could trust him. But if it was a member of the gang, wounded in the fight that he knew had taken place, he would only be drawing down the vengeance of the mutineers upon himself by making his presence there known.

He stood hesitating, doubting ; and as he stood, silent, he heard a step on the companion ladder.

His heart throbbed.

Someone was coming down—he guessed that it was Silver.

Was he coming to the cabin ?

If he found him there—

The dull surge of the sea struck

upon Wharton's ears and upon his heart.

He acted quickly.

Dim as it was in the cabin, Wharton had made out the interior of the room with quick eyes. There was a table, clamped to the floor, with a long cloth over it. Wharton sank down upon his knees, keeping the table between him and the bunk where the injured man lay, lifted the edge of the cloth, and crawled beneath.

There was just room to conceal himself. He let the cloth fall. So long as he kept silent, and was not missed above decks, he felt that he was safe.

But his heart throbbed faster as he heard the footsteps drawing nearer.

They had paused in the cuddy, and he heard the clink of a bottle and glass. Then they came into the alleyway, and the cabin door was opened again.

“ Sapristi ! In the dark, señor ? ”

It was the voice of Jim Silver.

A groan from the bunk answered.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE CAPTAIN OF THE SPINDRIFT.

HARRY WHARTON crouched silently and still, scarcely daring to breathe.

There was the scratch of a match, and light glimmered in the cabin.

He heard Silver lighting the lamp on the table, and the man's boots were within six inches of him as he crouched there.

The cabin was lighted now.

But it was evident that Silver had no suspicion that anyone was there, with the exception of himself and the man in the bunk.

The man with the ear-rings stepped across towards the bunk, and stood looking down at the occupant.

A face, bronzed and sunburnt, but

now strangely pale, and with dull, red stains on the forehead, looked back at him.

The man with the ear-rings nodded and grinned.

"How do you find yourself, captain?"

A groan was the only reply.

"You are no better?"

"You know I am not, Silver!" said the man in the bunk. "If I were able to move or help myself, you would not leave me here unguarded."

Jim Silver chuckled.

"You are right, captain."

"What do you want?" asked the man in the bunk faintly.

"I want a few words with you, Captain Curril."

"I am in your hands. Give me something to drink."

"Here is my flask."

"Water!"

Silver shrugged his shoulders.

"Water if you choose," he said.

The wounded man drank greedily.

"Now for our little talk," said Silver. "You are not so badly hurt as you suppose, captain. Given a chance, you might pull through—you've a good constitution. You've only had a crack on the head."

"From behind, you coward!"

Silver laughed.

"I didn't want to give you a chance to use your shooter, captain. I have let you live; there were seven who went over the side!"

"You will have to answer for that."

"Who knows?" said Silver, with a shrug of the shoulders. "But that is not the business now. You know why you did not follow the rest?"

"I know."

"You have hidden the money—two thousand pounds in solid cash—

that you were taking back to Buenos Aires."

The captain groaned.

"I knew you'd hidden it," resumed Silver. "You suspected—only a little while before we struck, though. But you were too quick for me."

"You will never get the money, Silver. You may as well finish your work now," said the man in the bunk hoarsely.

"Where have you hidden it?"

"Where you will never find it."

"You did not throw it overboard. I know that."

"I wish I had done so."

"But you did not," said Silver quickly.

The captain was silent.

"Listen to me," said Silver quietly. "Your injury is not serious. With proper care, you would recover easily. I offer you the chance. Tell me where the money is hidden, and I will put you safely ashore."

"You lie!"

"I swear—"

"Do you think I believe that you would let me live to denounce you? You are lying, Silver! You would throw me into the sea the moment you had your dirty fingers on the money! But you never will!"

Silver gritted his teeth.

"I shall find it, you fool!" he muttered. "It is only a question of searching, and searching again, until it is found."

"Then why have you spared me?"

"You can save me the trouble. And I have no time. Do you know what the men are doing now?" said Silver. "They are drinking—they've done little else since—"

"Since the mutiny."

"Yes. Suppose a blow came on now—"

"Heaven send one!" said the

skipper. " It would be a comfort to take you rascals to Davy Jones' locker with me ! "

" If the gale came on again now we should all go to the bottom together," said Jim Silver. " The hands are all fuddled by this time, and they won't listen to me. I can't keep them away from the rum."

" They're not likely to obey you, after turning on their captain."

" Listen to me ! We're all in danger every minute now ! Tell me where the money is hidden, and I swear to set you ashore ! "

" Lies ! "

" Will you speak ? "

" No ! "

Silver made a gesture of rage.

" Listen, Captain Cull ! I am not a soft man—you know that. Seven men went into the sea last night for the money you have hidden. I am not the man to stick at trifles, or to stay in this floating coffin because you are obstinate. If you do not speak, I shall find a way to make you."

" You cannot."

" You shall see. There are more ways than one," said Silver, with an ugly gleam in his eyes. " I have left you here to lie all day in pain, thinking that it would bring you to your senses."

The man in the bunk did not speak, but his pale, pain-lined face showed nothing but hard and grim determination.

" But it has done no good," said Silver. " You are as obstinate now as when I held a pistol to your head last night."

" And I shall remain so," said the captain.

" The men are losing patience. They want to see the money. We've worked for it, and we want it. We're going to pile the Spindrift up and

clear ashore when we have it. If you want to live, tell me where it is."

Silence.

" I give you until the morning," said Silver, in a low, concentrated tone of rage. " If by eight bells you haven't made up your mind to speak—" He paused.

" What then ? "

The voice of the man in the bunk was unyielding.

" Then I shall make you. I'll have you tied up on deck, wounded as you are, and flogged as hard as Peter Bones can flog you, till the skin peels off your back !" said Silver, in a savage voice. " That will make you speak."

" It will not make me speak !" said the skipper.

" You fool ! We shall see."

Silver strode from the cabin and slammed the door behind him. Wharton heard his furious footsteps die away on the companion ladder. The man in the bunk groaned.

Harry Wharton raised the cloth of the table and crawled out. The lamp had been left burning in the cabin, and the man in the bunk saw him as he came out of his hiding-place. He stared fixedly at the Greyfriars junior.

" In Heaven's name," he muttered, " who are you ? "

Wharton put his finger on his lips.

" Quiet ! I'm a friend. I'm going to help you if I can. But quiet. If they knew I was here——"

The man in the bunk nodded. A flush had come into his face, and his eyes were bright. Hope was in his breast again now.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

A FRIEND IN NEED.

WHARTON stepped silently towards the bunk and spoke in a whisper.

"I understand now; I know all that's happened. You are the captain of this craft?"

"Yes."

"There was a mutiny——"

"Last night," muttered the captain. "Silver was second mate. He stunned me from behind and the men who were loyal went overboard. You heard what the villain said?"

"Yes."

"I hid the money; I felt a warning of what was coming," muttered the captain. "They will never find it. They'll pile up the ship soon, the drunken scoundrels, and that will be an end of the money—and of them."

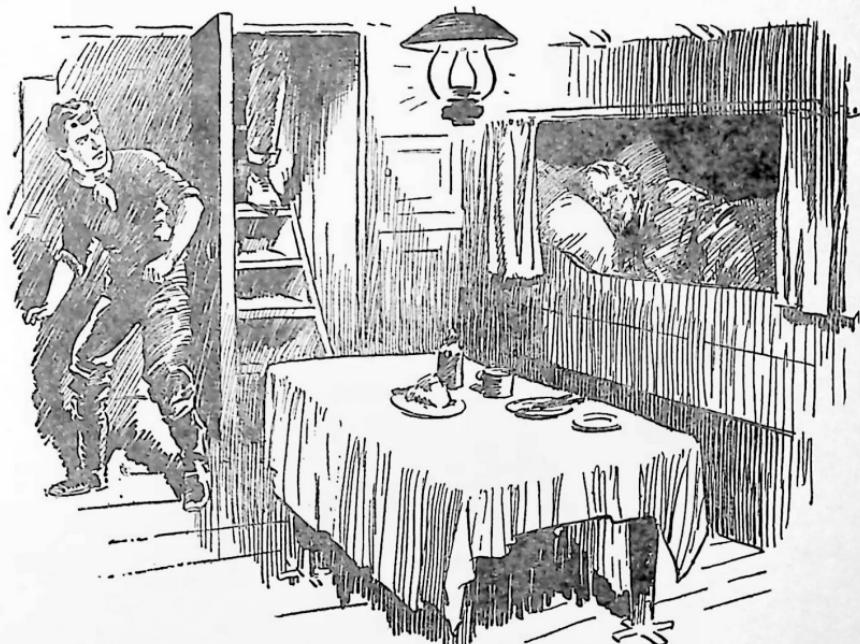
"Can't I help you?" whispered

Wharton. "Isn't there anything that can be done? I've got a chum aboard. We were picked up from a boat last night. We'd do anything. We're not afraid——"

"You're a plucky youngster." The captain of the *Spindrift* made an attempt to move, and groaned again. "Look here, youngster. I'm not so bad as I've led those scoundrels to believe. You understand?"

"Yes."

"If I could get a chance, there might be hope yet. They mean to find the money, and then let me go down with the ship, while they escape. Silver would deceive me if he could, but I know him now." The



Harry Wharton stood hesitating, doubting; and as he stood, silent, he heard a step on the companion ladder. Someone was coming down, and if he was caught in the cabin he would have to face the vengeance of the mutineers.

captain groaned. "I wish I had known him in his true colours before. He means what he says. In the morning I shall be lashed to death if I do not tell him where the money is hidden."

"And if you do——"

"Then he will be done with me, and I shall be thrown overboard."

"The scoundrel!" said Wharton between his teeth.

"It was Providence that sent you aboard this ship," whispered the captain. "Are you game to help me?"

"Try me!" said Harry.

"But, you understand, they will stop at nothing——"

"What chance have we got, anyway? When they're done with the ship, they won't leave two witnesses alive to tell the police."

"That's true. We're both in the same boat," said the wounded man.

"But—but you're only a boy."

"Tell me what I can do."

"Listen to me! If we could down Silver, we might be able to handle the rest—if I were armed. Silver will come in here in the morning——"

"Yes, yes."

"If I tell you where to find a revolver and cartridges, could you get it and load it and bring it here to me?"

"Quite easily."

"And you and your mate, you could smuggle yourselves in here, to help me when Silver comes in the morning——"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

He understood the scheme that had outlined itself in the mind of the wounded captain of the *Spindrift*, and he was ready.

There was a step on the companion-way.

Wharton started.

"Get out of sight!" breathed the captain.

The Greyfriars junior darted under the table again.

But it was only the black cook who entered the cabin.

"Mass' Silver he say put out light," he said.

The captain did not reply.

The black cook extinguished the lamp and left the cabin without another word, closing the door behind him.

Wharton waited till his shambling footsteps had died away.

Then he emerged once more from his hiding-place.

"All right, lad!" came the captain's voice from the bunk. "The darkey didn't see you."

"Is he one of them?" asked Harry.

"No; he's frightened out of his wits, that's all. They're keeping him to cook for them, but he is not one of the mutineers. Do you know how many men there are on the vessel now—you have seen them?"

"Eight."

"Then Silver told the truth about those who have gone overboard. Eight men—to be tackled by a wounded man and two boys!" muttered Captain Cull.

"It can't be worse if we show fight than if we don't, from what I can see," said Harry in a low, steady voice.

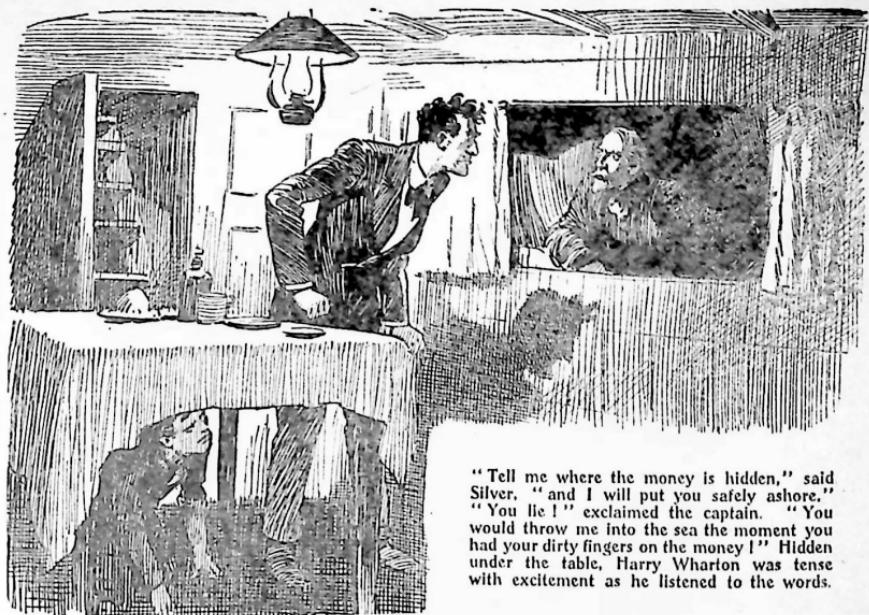
"That's true enough. You are a plucky youngster. What is your pal like?"

"Right as rain!" said Harry. "I'll get back and explain to him, and we'll sneak in here in the night somehow. But now I've got to get the revolver for you."

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

The captain did not reply for a moment.



Wharton, fearing that the exertion of talking had overcome him in his weak state, made an anxious movement towards the bunk.

But the captain's voice went on :

" I can trust you, kid ? "

Wharton flushed in the darkness.

" I should have thought I'd shown that already," he said.

" Yes ; but— "

" But what ? "

" There is a revolver—hidden in— "

He paused again.

" Yes ; where ? "

" In the same place with the case of coin," said the captain slowly. " If I tell you where to get the revolver, you will know where the money is."

" I see."

" Swear that you will never tell Jim Silver, even if—even if he should treat you as he threatens to treat me ! "

" Tell me where the money is hidden," said Silver, " and I will put you safely ashore." " You lie ! " exclaimed the captain. " You would throw me into the sea the moment you had your dirty fingers on the money ! " Hidden under the table, Harry Wharton was tense with excitement as he listened to the words.

Wharton was silent.

" You are not answering me, lad."

" I'll do my best," said Harry honestly. " I promise not to tell Silver anything about the money if I can possibly help it. But if he should find out that I know, and should put me to torture as he has threatened with you, I don't know what I might say. If that isn't good enough, don't tell me where it is ! "

There was a long silence.

" That's good enough," said the captain at last. " Don't say a word on the subject, and Jim Silver can't learn that you know."

" Right-ho ! "

" Listen to me—carefully. You will see that I trust you. Go into the cuddy—mind you are not seen—"

" Not much danger of that. The rotters are all drinking on deck or in

the forecastle," said Harry—" all excepting Silver, and he was at the wheel when I came down. I think he has gone back to the wheel, but I can soon see."

" Good ! In the cuddy—" Captain Curril paused again, as if reluctant, after all, to utter the secret ; but he went on : " There's a locker—you may have seen it—"

" I noticed it—it had been broken open ! " said Harry.

The captain chuckled slightly.

" Yes ; but that locker has a false bottom. If you feel over the wood, you will find a little depression in the corner, and if you press there hard, you will see the bottom of the locker tilt up, and there is an opening underneath. You understand ? "

" Yes."

" There you will find my spare revolver—Silver has the one I carried in my pocket. There are cartridges there also, and the money. Leave the money where it is, and bring me the revolver and the cartridges."

" Good ! "

" You can do it without being seen. If they see you—"

" I shall be careful."

" There is a light in the cuddy ? "

" Yes ; the lamp is burning, but it is very dim. I shall take care not to be seen. It will not take me long."

" Then go ! Good luck, my lad ! "

Wharton glided out of the cabin in the darkness.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

HARRY WHARTON'S heart was beating fast.

He knew that he was carrying his life in his hands.

If Jim Silver suspected—if the mutineer captain of the Spindrift even discovered that he was aft at

all—he knew what he had to expect.

The rascals who had already stained their hands with blood, and who had only picked him up from the open boat to make him useful to them, would not hesitate in dealing with him if they found him dangerous.

He needed all his courage now.

True, to leave matters as they were would not save his life. It was plain enough that Jim Silver intended to " pile up " the Spindrift, and leave all but his confederates to go down with her. In that way, and that way alone, he could save himself from the penalty of his crimes. He would already have done so if he had found the hidden two thousand pounds.

If the juniors fell in the struggle with the mutineers, it would be but hastening the end. Yet it required courage and determination to face that struggle. Wharton's heart was beating hard. But he was not afraid.

He crept to the companion-way and listened.

There was a sound of a drunken chorus from the deck forrad, where the watch were making merry. Wharton distinguished the hoarse voice of Peter Bones, the boatswain, above the others.

Then the sharp tones of the man with the ear-rings rang out :

" Belay that, you drunken swabs ! "

Only a laugh answered from the seamen. The mutineers of the Spindrift were not in the least under the control of their ringleader. The brig was in danger, with the sea running high after the gale, and only one man in the mutineer crew sober. But the mutineers did not care for that. They were free from discipline now, and they were making the most of it.

If the man with the ear-rings had not taken charge of the wheel, the

catastrophe would have come already. Harry Wharton breathed a breath of relief. The drinking mutineers were not likely to come below, and the man with the ear-rings was too busy.

Wharton found the locker. It had been broken open and searched, evidently, but the secret of the false bottom had not been discovered. Articles lay loosely in it, and Wharton removed them quickly and silently, and then felt for the depression in the wood the captain had described to him.

He found it immediately, and the bottom of the locker tilted up as he pressed, revealing a cavity below.

Wharton felt in it, and felt the revolver under his hand, and a packet, which he guessed to contain the cartridges. There was a larger and heavier packet, too, and he guessed what that contained.

He took out the revolver and the case of cartridges, and closed the secret lid, and replaced the articles upon it.

Then he groped his way back to the captain's cabin.

He entered the cabin, and closed the door without a sound. But the keen ears of the disabled man in the bunk caught his breath.

"Who is it?"

"It's I, sir."

"Good! You have the pistol?"

"Here it is."

"Do you know how to load it?"

"Yes."

"Good! Do so, every chamber!"

"Right!"

In the glimmer of light from the porthole, Harry loaded every chamber of the revolver, and handed it to the captain. Captain Curril thrust the case of cartridges under his pillow; the six-shooter he kept in his hand beneath the bedclothes.

"You've left nothing to show them——"

"Nothing, sir."

"They won't see——"

"No, no!"

"Good! I can't help being anxious, lad. It isn't only that Jim Silver shan't have the money; but when that is found, he is going to scuttle the *Spindrift* or else pile her up the Channel. I want to save my ship, and to save our lives. Now get back forrad and tell your chum—if you're sure you can trust him."



It was no time for half-measures. Their lives hung upon a thread. Bob Cherry held his bludgeon ready, while Harry Wharton bound the drunken boatswain.

"That's all right."

"If we get through this alive, I shall remember what you've done for me!"

"We'll be back here as soon as it's safe," said Harry.

"I shall wait for you, lad."

Wharton quitted the cabin.

He crept up the companion-way. A mist was creeping over the sea, and it clung clammy to the rigging of the Spindrift. A white haze was on the deck, and it made Wharton's task easier. He crept out and glided forward, keeping in the shadows. On the deck two or three of the men were sleeping from the effect of the rum, but Peter Bones and Bill Dunn were still drinking.

"Harry, where have you been?"

Bob Cherry grasped Wharton's arm, near the forecastle.

Wharton drew a quick breath.

"I thought you were asleep, Bob."

"So I was," said Bob. "They woke me up with their giddy chorus, and I found you hadn't come down. Where have you been?"

Wharton explained in whispers.

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "So the captain is still alive, and we're booked for a row with these blackguards in the morning?"

"That's it, Bob!"

"It's a jolly serious business, Harry."

"I know it is; but what else can be done?"

"Nothing. I'm ready."

"We'll leave it a bit later before we get aft," said Harry. "Those rotters will all be fast asleep soon, and it will be easier."

Wharton was right.

About an hour later, Bill Dunn came staggering down into the forecastle and threw himself into a bunk and snored heavily.

Peter Bones went down the companion-way and disappeared.

Jim Silver remained at the helm.

The Spindrift glided on through the misty night. The juniors did not feel like sleeping now. They were tired enough, but they were too excited to sleep even if they had had the leisure to do so.

Each of them secured a weapon, the best they could find. Wharton had an iron belaying-pin, and Bob Cherry a heavy billet of wood of a handy size to use as a club. The mist was thickening over the sea. Once or twice the juniors heard steamer sirens hooting through the mist.

"My hat!" Bob Cherry murmured. "If a ship came right on us now, the Spindrift would go down like a stone. Those idiots are risking their lives and ours by getting drunk now."

"I don't envy Silver his crew," said Harry. "He couldn't run the ship long on these terms."

"It's not far from dawn now, Harry."

"Let's get aft."

The juniors stole aft through the misty darkness.

They reached the companion-way and slipped below. They had seen Peter Bones go down that way, but they were sure that he was deep in a drunken slumber, and that they had nothing to fear from him. They were right. The deep snore of the boatswain could be heard from the mate's cabin as they went down.

A new thought flashed into Wharton's mind. He paused in the alley-way, and caught Bob Cherry by the arm.

"That rotter is dead drunk, Bob," he whispered.

"Sounds like it," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Why shouldn't we make sure of him now we've got the chance? It will be one less to tackle when the row comes."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"I—I don't mean to hurt him," said Harry hastily. "But he's drunk. We can tie him up while he's asleep. There's plenty of rope here, and—"

"We'll try," said Bob. "If he wakes up, I'll give him a crack with this, and he'll go to sleep again. We can't be particular now."

"I should say not."

Wharton cautiously opened the door of the mate's cabin, which the boatswain had taken possession of.

The room was pitch dark but the heavy snoring of Peter Bones guided them to the bunk.

They paused there, hesitating and listening. Wharton had caught up a rope from the cuddy, and he uncoiled it silently.

As their eyes grew more used to the darkness, they could dimly make out the huge form of the boatswain stretched in the bunk fully dressed.

He was evidently plunged in a deep torpor from the quantity of powerful spirit he had consumed.

"Ready, Bob?"

"Yes."

"If he wakes up, he mustn't call out."

"He shan't!" said Bob grimly.

It was no time for half-measures. Their own lives hung upon a thread. Bob Cherry held his bludgeon ready, and Harry Wharton cautiously bent over the sleeper. The drunken man did not move as Harry passed the rope round his legs, and then round his arms, making slip-nooses in it. Then the junior cautiously drew the slipknots tighter and tighter, and knotted them again and again. Peter Bones snored on heavily. He was a

helpless prisoner now, unable to move a hand or foot when he awoke.

Bob Cherry breathed a sigh of relief when Wharton had finished.

"I'm glad I didn't have to hit him," he said.

"Same here. But he mustn't be allowed to yell out when he wakes up, or we've taken all our trouble for nothing."

"Shove something into his mouth. He can breathe through his nose if he wants to go on breathing," grinned Bob Cherry. "His nose is big enough, anyway; and he's using it as a musical instrument now."

Wharton chuckled. Whatever danger might be threatening him, Bob Cherry was always ready to crack a joke. Wharton gently stuffed his handkerchief into the wide-open mouth of the boatswain, and passed a string round his head to secure it there. The drunken ruffian was gagged now, and unable to cry out if he awoke. Wharton had finished the last knot when he became aware that the man's eyes were wide open, and gleaming in the gloom. The junior started back a little, startled.

Peter Bones made an effort to move.

He only wriggled in the bunk. Wharton had done his work well.

The man was still deeply under the influence of drink, but some of his senses had returned. The deadly gleam in his eyes showed that he recognised the juniors, and knew what they had done.

He struggled in his bonds. But his great strength was useless to him now. A hoarse gurgle came from his throat as he tried to shout.

Bob Cherry grinned down at him.

"Yes, you can try as hard as you like, my beauty," he said. "But you won't be able to sing any more to-night!"

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Gurgle!

" You're jolly lucky not to have your silly brains knocked out. That's what you'd do for us, if you could."

" Gurgle !

" You're going to stay here," said Bob Cherry. " Give that gag another twist, Harry ; his gurgling gets on my nerves."

The gag was jammed tighter, and Peter Bones' gurgling died away.

He lay helplessly in the bunk, his eyes gleaming with deadly hate and rage at the two juniors.

" The brute's safe," said Bob. " We'll lock him in and take away the key. If we can only make sure of Silver, I don't think the others will give much trouble. But Silver won't be nabbed so easily as this."

" I'm afraid not."

" Come on."

There was a key in the lock of the cabin door. Wharton transferred it to the outside. They left the cabin and locked the door, and Wharton dropped the key out of the nearest porthole into the sea. There was no danger of Peter Bones being released in a hurry now.

Then the juniors entered the captain's cabin.

Captain Cull was wide awake.

" We're here, sir," said Harry, in a whisper. " I've brought my chum with me."

" Good ! "

" And we've put Peter Bones out of the way for a bit."

" What ! How ? "

Wharton explained.

" By James ! " said the skipper. " You are plucky youngsters, and no mistake. You couldn't have done better. Peter Bones was the most dangerous of the gang after Silver. You've locked the door ? "

" Yes ; and dropped the key overboard."

" Good ! They'll have to smash in the door to release him, and the door is just opposite this one, across the alleyway. They won't smash it in while I've got a six-shooter in my fist, with this door open. I begin to think that we shall get out of this all right. Once Silver is settled the men may come round. Anyway, we've a good chance of handling them now. Keep out of sight when Silver comes in, my lads, and be ready to pile on him when I give the word."

" Aye, aye, sir ! " said Bob Cherry.

" You've brought a rope in case it's wanted ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Good ! Now we've only got to wait for morning—and Jim Silver."

They waited with beating hearts.

The Spindrift plunged on through a heavy sea, as the dim light of dawn struggled up through the mist.

THE TENTH CHAPTER AT CLOSE QUARTERS !

DAWN on the sea !

The light came feebly in at the porthole, which was a circle of white vapour. The mist had thickened on the sea. There was no sound of stirring on the Spindrift. In the mate's cabin Peter Bones, whether asleep or awake, could not stir. In the forecastle the seamen were still buried in drunken slumber. On the deck of the brig only Jim Silver was awake.

They heard his step upon the companion presently.

Harry Wharton drew back into the darkest corner of the cabin, where he would be behind Silver as he came in. Bob Cherry crouched under the table. There was room for only one there, and Wharton would not be seen as the mutineer came in. When he was inside the cabin, it was Wharton's

business to close the door behind him and lock it. Then the ringleader of the mutineers would be shut up in the cabin, with the two juniors and the wounded captain to deal with.

As the man was armed, and quite certain to use his weapon if he had a chance, there was no telling how the struggle in the cabin would go. But they would have the advantage of a surprise ; and in the captain's hand

face dark and savage, his golden ear-rings glistening in the light.

He strode directly towards the bunk.

" Awake, captain ? "

Captain Curril was sitting up in the bunk.

" Yes," he said. " I am awake, Silver."

" Have you decided——"

Crash !



As Silver's hand went into his pocket for his weapon, the captain fired on the instant. Crack ! There was a fierce, sharp yell from Silver, and he grasped his right arm.

under the bedclothes was gripped the loaded revolver, and the grim expression upon his pale face showed that he would not hesitate to use it.

The mutineer's steps came along to the cabin.

The door was open.

Jim Silver stepped in, his swarthy

Silver started round.

Wharton had shut the door hurriedly and turned the key, and now he faced the mutineer, panting, the belaying pin in his hand.

Silver saw him for the first time.

" You cub ! What——"

" Silver, keep your hand out of

your pocket!" came the captain's sharp tones. "I've got my finger on the trigger."

Silver stared blankly at the skipper.

The revolver had come into sight now; it was levelled at the breast of the man with the ear-rings, and the skipper's hand did not falter.

His finger was on the trigger, and the hammer was rising slightly.

Silver glared at him.

"You—you—Where did you get that barker?"

"Keep your hands out of your pockets. I shall spare your life if I can. But—ah! Would you?"

In spite of the warning Jim Silver's hand went into his pocket for his weapon. The captain fired on the same instant.

Crack!

The cabin seemed filled with deafening noise.

There was a fierce, sharp yell from the man with the ear-rings, like the yelp of a dog in sudden pain.

His hand did not enter his pocket. His right arm dropped to his side like a lump of wood. The bone was broken by the bullet.

The swarthy man reeled back, his face white and ghastly with pain.

"Sapristi!"

"Do you want another, through your heart?" said the captain. "Put your left hand over your head, Silver, or you're a dead man."

The man with the ear-rings ground his teeth.

But there was no mistaking the captain's deadly earnestness. The mutineer raised his left hand in the air.

The revolver in the hand of the wounded skipper never wavered.

"That's better," he said.

"Oh, curse—"

"That's enough, Silver. Hold your tongue!" said the captain tersely.

"I'm skipper of this craft again now. You're going to obey orders. Understand?"

"Caramba! Is it this boy who—"

Captain Cull nodded.

"You've hit it."

"Thousand curses!" muttered the man with the ear-rings. "If I had left him to drown—"

"You did not save me for my own sake," said Harry. "You wanted to make use of me. You said so, you scoundrel!"

"Hang you I—"

"Search him for his weapons, lad," said Captain Cull. "If he resists, I'll lay him dead on the floor!"

The man with the ear-rings did not resist. He was almost fainting with pain, and he sank heavily upon a stool, still, however, keeping his left hand above his head.

Harry Wharton extracted a revolver and a case-knife from his pockets.

"His teeth are drawn now," said the captain, with a grim laugh. "Tie his left arm to his side. He won't use his right arm again in a hurry."

The mutineer's left arm was tied down.

He was utterly helpless now.

He sat dazed, clenching his teeth to keep back a cry of pain. Jim Silver was a scoundrel, but he was game.

The shot in the cabin had caused no commotion outside. It was doubtful if the drunken seamen above had heard it, or at all events had noticed it. And Peter Bones, bound hand and foot in his cabin, could not move.

"You shall pay for this, all of you!" muttered Silver at last. "You have got the rest of the crew to deal with yet!"

"Six rough scoundrels," said the captain. "But I shall deal with them."

" And Peter Bones——"

" Peter Bones is in his bunk, trussed up like a turkey."

The man with the ear-rings ground his teeth again.

Bob Cherry had come out of his hiding-place, but his bludgeon was not wanted. He grinned, and nodded cheerfully to the man with the ear-rings.

" Bit of a change in the programme," he remarked.

" You cub!"

" I'd better look after that fin of yours, I think," said Bob. " I suppose even that brute oughtn't to be allowed to bleed to death, sir?"

" Serve him right if he does!"

" But I think——"

The captain gave a short laugh.

" Look after him, if you like."

" Leave me alone!" muttered Silver savagely.

Bob Cherry took no notice of him. He ripped away the man's sleeve with Silver's own knife, and showed the wound. The bone was broken, and Bob Cherry could do nothing for that. But with a sheet from the bed, torn into pieces, the two juniors made bandages and bound up the wound, stopping the flow of blood. They had learned first aid as Boy Scouts at Greyfriars, and their knowledge was useful now.

" The mutineers don't seem to be awake yet, sir," said Harry, listening at the door. " What's the next move?"

The captain groaned.

" If I could get on deck I'd handle them easily enough, the brutes! They would knuckle under fast enough if they saw me with a shooter in my grip, now that this scoundrel is safe. But——"

" You can't get up, sir?"

" No."

The captain was sinking back in his bunk, his face deadly pale.

The exertion and excitement had told upon him, and he was overcome, now that the reaction had set in.

Jim Silver regarded him with a savage grin. The man's endurance of pain was wonderful. The juniors knew how the wound in his arm must have made him suffer; but, save for a pallor in his swarthy face, he hardly showed a sign of it.

" You'd better have made terms with me, captain," said Silver. " You can't handle six men, stuck in your bunk as you are, and these boys can do nothing. As soon as the crew are on to what's happened here you'll have them upon you."

" They won't find me easy to deal with," said the captain. " Can either of you kids use a revolver?"

" I can, sir," said Harry.

" Then take that rascal's weapon. Is it loaded?"

" Yes, sir," said Harry, examining the revolver.

" Keep it in your fist. They will attack the cabin soon, and then it will be wanted. You can shoot?"

" I've had a good bit of rifle practice," said Harry. " I can handle a revolver, too, I fancy. I'll try, anyway. It won't be a long range."

" Tie that villain to the stanchion there," said the captain, " just opposite the bunk. If the trouble goes against us, he's going to have my last bullet."

Silver was placed against the wall on the stool, and secured to the stanchion with another length of rope.

There was still no sound of stirring on the deck.

If the captain had been able to move it would have been a great opportunity for tackling the rest of the mutineers, but for the two boys

to attack them unaided was not to be thought of. The odds would have been hopeless. The only thing to be done was to wait till the mutineers discovered what had happened in the cabin, and then to deal with them when they came.

The cabin door was set wide open at the captain's order, and he watched the doorway, revolver in hand. Exactly what the wounded skipper intended to do the boys did not know, but it was evident that he had some plan in his mind. It was not for them to speak. Captain Curril was commander of the *Spindrift*, and it was for the juniors to obey his orders.

Bob Cherry brought in biscuits and cold meat from the *cuddy*, and the juniors ate their breakfast while they waited. The captain ate, too. The strain of the situation, and their extreme peril, had not destroyed their appetites, and it was necessary to eat to keep up their strength.

Presently a hoarse voice came rolling down the companion.

"Ahoy, Peter Bones!"

The captain propped himself up in the bunk a little higher, his hand closing on the butt of the revolver.

"Ahoy, Jim Silver!" came the hoarse voice again. "Where are ye, man? Did ye lash the helm and go to sleep, ye lubber?"

"That's John Mallet's voice," said the captain, with a grim look. "He'll be coming down here soon, I fancy. Not a sound, Silver. I'd kill you as soon as look at you, after what you've done, and glad of the excuse!"

Silver was silent.

He wondered why the captain had not shot him dead in the first place, and he knew that his life hung upon a thread now.

There was a sound of heavy footsteps coming below, and then the

seaman came tramping into the alley-way.

His burly form was framed in the open doorway of the cabin, and he stared stupidly in, utterly amazed by what he saw.

He had no time to recover from his astonishment.

The trigger of the captain's revolver was already rising.

Crack!

Mallet yelled, and fell.

"Good heavens!" muttered Harry Wharton. He had not been prepared for that.

Mallet rolled in the doorway, groaning. Wharton started towards him.

"Don't be scared, young 'un," said Captain Curril quietly. "He's not dead. But he won't walk again till he's had a spell in hospital, I fancy."

Mallet groaned deeply, and fainted. The bullet was in his right leg, and it was certain that he would not walk again for a long time.

"That leaves five of the brutes," said Captain Curril. "Hark! I can hear them coming now. Now's the time. Courage, lads!"

"We're not afraid, sir."

There was a trampling of footsteps outside, and a hubbub of voices. But the mutineers did not come past the open doorway. Mallet, lying in the doorway, was a plain enough warning for them, though they did not know what had happened.

"Who's done that?" roared the voice of Bill Dunn.

"I did, Bill Dunn," called back the captain; "and I'm ready to do the same for you if you'll step up."

Dunn did not accept the invitation.

"Captain Curril!" he exclaimed, in amazement.

"Yes, you mutinous dog!"

"I thought you were a goner, captain."

"That was a little mistake Silver made, too."

"Where is Silver, captain?"

"He's here—trussed up, and with a broken arm."

"Souse me!" said Dunn.

"There are three of us here," said Captain Curril. "If you men choose

to return to your duty, I'll let you off as lightly as I can. If not——"

There was a hoarse laugh from the mutineers outside.

"Not this time, captain. We ain't looking for penal servitude."

"We can do without Jim Silver, captain," said another voice. "Peter Bones will skipper us as well as he could."

"Peter Bones is a prisoner, too."

"Where is he?"

"Tied up like a turkey, same as Silver."

"Souse me!" said Bill Dunn again.

"Rush 'em!" said another voice.

"We'll have them kids overboard in a



Through the mist Wharton saw the shape of a vessel. Clinging to the bowsprit, he shouted for help. "Help! Ship ahoy!" But there came no answer from the other vessel.

jiffy, and then we'll hack the place inside-out and find the money."

"Shet up!" replied Bill Dunn. "We'll take the captain's offer. If he'll promise to let us off as light as he can, we'll go back to our duty."

"You fool, Bill Dunn——"

"Shet up!"

Whispering followed, and the occupants of the cabin could distinguish no words, but they knew very well what the whispering meant.

Dunn, who had assumed the leadership of the reduced gang, intended to deceive the captain, if he could, with a clumsy pretence of submission, and he was explaining his scheme to his more obtuse comrades.

The intended treachery was so plain and palpable that the captain smiled grimly as he waited for the mutineers to speak again.

Bill Dunn called out at last.

"I've talked 'em over, captain. We're going to give in."

"Good!" said Captain Curril.

"Give us your word not to shoot, and we'll come into the cabin, and——"

"You'll come into the cabin one at a time, holding your hands above your heads, and these boys will tie you up, one at a time," said the captain curtly.

There was an outbreak of angry oaths immediately. The mutineers realised at once that the captain was not to be deceived, and the flimsy pretence was thrown aside at once.

"Cap'n," said Bill Dunn hoarsely, "if you don't give in, we'll rush the cabin and cut you to pieces—you and them cubs!"

"Come on, then!"

"Give in, and let us have the money, and we'll leave you alone, and clear off in the longboat."

"Bah!"

"You won't do it, skipper?"

"No, you dog!"

"Rush 'em!" muttered Bill Dunn.

The captain gave the juniors a quick look.

"They're coming," he muttered.

"It's life or death now, my lads. Fight for your lives, and heaven help us all!"

There was no time for more.

There came a heavy rush of feet in the alleyway, and the next moment the doorway was blocked with struggling, furious, cursing men.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER THE FATE OF THE SPINDRIFT

CRACK!
Crack!

The first shot came from the captain's revolver, the second from Wharton's.

Bill Dunn staggered, and fell heavily across the insensible Mallet. Another man reeled back into the passage, shrieking. Wharton's bullet had hit him—where, the boy did not know. He had fired into the crowd of them, sure of hitting somebody.

The doorway was blocked by the fall of Dunn, added to Mallet, and the mutineers—only three of them now—raged there, scrambling in, and the captain fired again before the first report had died away.

A man fell on the planks with a choking cry.

Crack! Crack!

But the last bullets were wasted. The two remaining mutineers, sickened of the struggle, had fled. They were heard stumbling up the companion-way, and hurrying along the deck to the forecastle, so great was their terror. Three badly-wounded men were groaning about the cabin doorway.

"Beaten them!" said Captain Curril.

A loud voice rang out from the mate's cabin. Peter Bones had succeeded in chewing away his gag at last.

"Help here, you lubbers! Help! Come and cut me loose!"

Deep groans from the wounded men answered him.

Wharton was very white. He had fired in self-defence, but the thought that the shot might prove fatal was a terrible one. But he was soon relieved. The man who had been hit by his bullet picked himself up and dragged himself away to the companion and crawled on deck.

The others had lost consciousness now.

The captain fixed his eyes upon Jim Silver.

"What price your mutiny now, you scoundrel?" he said.

Silver gritted his teeth.

"The game isn't played out yet," he said. "You've got a clumsy old tub to sail in a mist on a rough sea without a crew. We'll all go to Davy Jones together."

"Well, I'll have the pleasure of your company there, at any rate," said Captain Curril. "I don't think those two frightened scoundrels on deck will give any more trouble."

"Hang you!"

"Wharton, call Cookey, will you? Cookey will be on our side now that he's not in any more danger," said the captain, smiling.

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Wharton hurried to the galley. He found Mark Antony trying to conceal himself under a tub and whimpering with terror. The black cook had evidently heard the firing.

"You not shoot Cookey?" he roared, as Wharton came in. "Cookey all right! You not shoot poor ole Cookey?"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"It's all serene, Cookey!" he exclaimed. "We've beaten the mutineers, and you're to go to the captain's cabin."

Cookey stared at him in wonder.

"Beaten dem mutineers!"

"Yes; beaten them hollow!"

"Beaten Mass' Silver?"

"Yes, rather!"

"De Lord be praised!" said Mark Antony. "Me look after Mass' Captain like anything. Me not afraid!"

"No; you're a brave chap—anybody can see that," agreed Wharton. "Come along."

The black cook went aft to the cabin. The two mutineers who had taken refuge in the forecastle looked out, but at a motion from Wharton's revolver they scuttled into cover again. It was evident that there was nothing more to be feared from them.

Wharton cast a glance out over the sea.

The mist shut off the view at a distance, and it was impossible to tell where the vessel was. Land might have been within a mile, and he would have been no wiser. A ship might have been passing within a dozen cables'-lengths, and he would not have seen it.

The peril of the brig was borne in very clearly upon his mind. The Spindrift was drifting, and there was no one to handle her—no one to help if trouble arrived. And on that misty sea troubles was sure to come to the unmanned craft.

The struggle with the mutineers was over, but the position of the chums of Greyfriars was not much less dangerous now, though the danger was from a different quarter.

Bob Cherry joined him on deck.

"Queer business!" he remarked.

"What are we going to do now,

Harry? We've beat Jim Silver & Co., but——"

"Blessed if I know!"

"There will be an accident sooner or later if we drift on like this," said Bob, staring into the mist. "What on earth's to be done?"

"We may get help from another ship."

"We can't get any signals seen in this mist."

"Let's speak to the captain."

Captain Curril was still in bed, exhausted by the strain of what he had gone through, but still grim-faced, and keeping the revolver in his hand.

He had rapped out orders to the black cook, and Mark Antony was obeying them.

The wounded mutineers were carried on deck by the powerful negro, and put into their bunks in the forecastle.

Peter Bones was still a bound prisoner in the mate's cabin, roaring out furious curses at intervals.

It would not have been safe to release him for a moment, and the juniors paid no attention to him. Jim Silver was still bound in the captain's cabin, and the hard, grim, sneering grin was still upon his face.

"You're not out of the wood yet, nino!" he said, as Harry Wharton came in.

Wharton did not reply.

"What orders now, sir?" he asked, looking at the skipper.

Captain Curril suppressed a groan.

"Are the two hands giving any trouble?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Where are they?"

"In the forecastle."

"If they come abaft the mainmast, you're to shoot! Do you hear? Shoot them as you would mad dogs!"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't think they'll give trouble now, though. Rudge and Leache were the least guilty of the gang, I think, and the biggest cowards," said the captain. "They hung back fast enough when the shooting began, and I don't think they'll be looking for any more. But keep your eyes peeled. If they get a chance to dig you in the back, they may turn the tables again."

"We'll be jolly careful, sir," said Bob Cherry. "What about the wounded men? They ought to have some care——"

"Let Leache and Rudge look after them, if they choose! You boys are not to go into the forecastle. You would be set on at once."

"Very well, sir."

"We must get out signals of distress," said the skipper, "then we may get help from another craft. There are plenty of ships in this sea. It's this infernal mist that troubles me! But it's the only chance. I——"

He broke off.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The brig reeled and trembled from end to end.

There was a yell of terror from the deck where the two mutineers in the forecastle came running out like frightened rabbits.

"Good heavens!" gasped Bob Cherry.

He had been flung across the cabin by the shock, and he found himself rolling against the man with the ear-rings. Wharton was clutching at the clamped table. The captain held on to his bunk, white as death.

A roar of voices from the mist, then silence.

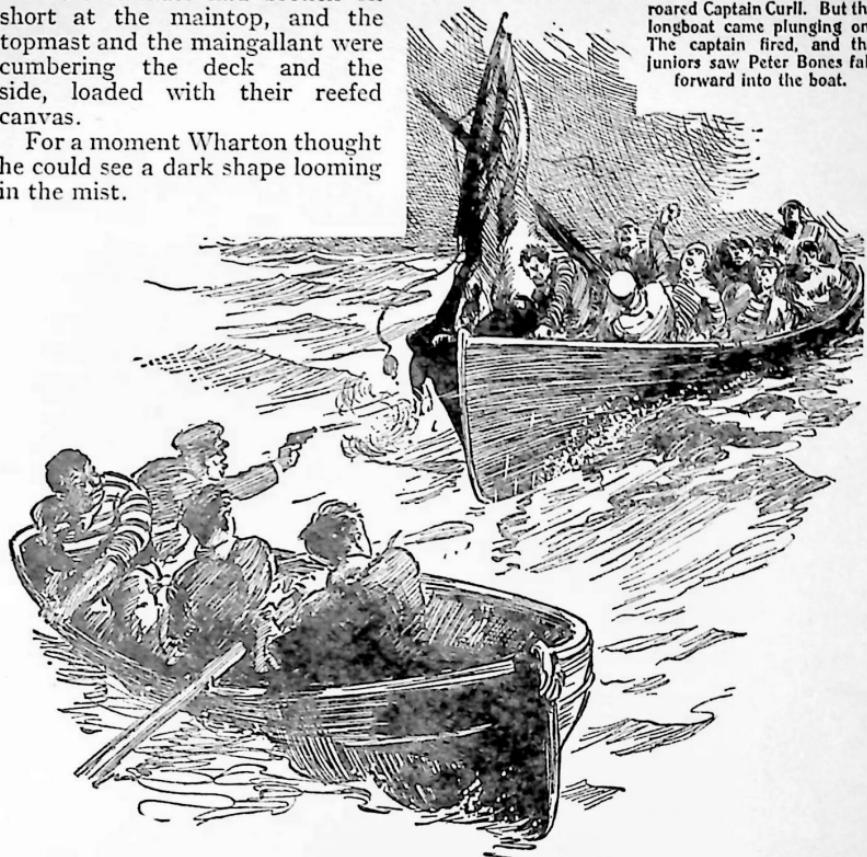
Wharton gathered himself together and clambered madly up the companion-way.

The deck was aslant.

The mainmast had broken off short at the maintop, and the topmast and the maingallant were cumbering the deck and the side, loaded with their reefed canvas.

For a moment Wharton thought he could see a dark shape looming in the mist.

"Sheer off, or I'll fire!" roared Captain Cull. But the longboat came plunging on. The captain fired, and the juniors saw Peter Bones fall forward into the boat.



It was the shape of the vessel that had run the brig down.

Then it vanished, swallowed up by the white vapour.

The Spindrift was rocking drunkenly, and there was a heavy wash of water below.

Wharton clung to the binnacle and shouted for help. He had a faint hope that the crew of the other vessel might hear him.

"Help! Ship ahoy! Help! Help!"

But there came no answer from the mist.

The other vessel, probably damaged by the collision, too, though not so severely as the Spindrift, had backed away and disappeared.

She had struck the Spindrift full amidships with her bows.

But she was gone now.

The mist swallowed her.

Only the dim, faint echoes of Wharton's shouting answered him:

"Help! Help!"

Back faintly from the mist came the echo:

"Help! Help!"

But that was all.

No answering voice. The mist did not carry his shouting—the vessel was too far off for ears to hear.

If they were in a condition to search for the vessel they had run down, the crew of the stranger were probably doing so; but the mist hid everything.

Wharton realised, with a sickening feeling, that there was no help to be looked for.

The Spindrift, crippled and sinking, was left alone.

Wharton hurried below.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

ADRIFT ON THE SEA!

CAPTAIN CURLL was out of his bunk now, trying feebly to dress himself. Bob Cherry was helping him. The skipper had been half-dressed, and Bob helped him on with his coat and his boots.

Jim Silver's face was like a demon's. But no one glanced at the man with the ear-rings. In the cuddy, the black cook was whimpering with terror.

"It's all up with the Spindrift!" the captain muttered. "The poor old Spindrift! All up with her!"

"I'm afraid so, sir," said Harry. "The maintopmast is down."

"Did you see the ship—"

"She's disappeared. I thought I saw her for a moment. If they're searching for us—"

"They won't find us in this mist."

"That's what I was thinking, sir."

The wash of water below could be plainly heard. It was only too clear that the brig had received severe damage beneath the waterline.

"Help me on deck, lads!" said the captain.

They supported his weight up the companion ladder.

Weak as he was, feeble from his injury and from loss of blood, the peril seemed to have given the hardy sailor-man new strength.

Leache and Rudge came running aft.

"Captain, she's sinking!" called out Leache.

"All your fault, you dogs!" said the captain.

"We've got to save our lives, captain!" said Rudge savagely.

"That's an old story now."

"Give us orders, sir!" said Leache.

"Look after yourselves!" said the captain. "Keep your distance, that's all! Take the longboat, and get your mates into it!"

"It's all we can do!" said Leache, with an oath.

"The quarter-boat will do for us, lads," said the captain quietly. "Get up provisions and water, and get them into the boat! Take your time—the Spindrift will float half an hour yet, if I'm any judge."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Cookey! Where are you, cookey?"

"Here I am, Mass' Captain!"

"Help to load the boat!"

"Yes, sah."

Rudge and Leache were cramming necessities into the longboat. The Spindrift was settling down deeper into the water. From the forecastle the wounded men were shrieking for help.

Wharton and Bob Cherry and the black cook laboured manfully at getting provisions and kegs of water into the quarter-boat.

It was finished at last.

"Now for the gold!" said Captain Curll. "We must take that with us!"

Leache and Rudge, who had been

whispering together, approached the captain. The skipper eyed them grimly, his revolver in his hand.

"What do you want?" he demanded sharply.

"The money, captain——"

"What about it?"

"You're not going to leave it to sink with the Spindrift, sir?"

"We'll return to our duty, captain—we'll obey your orders. Bring it into the longboat with you, and we'll——"

The captain laughed scoffingly.

"And you'll pitch me overboard, and keep it," he said.

"We swear, skipper——"

"Enough said! I'm not coming in the longboat. I'm going to take the gold in the quarter-boat, with me and these lads and Cookey."

The two men exchanged fierce glances.

"Captain, if you'll take us back, we'll leave the others in the lurch."

"Enough said."

"Will you——"

"Get for'ard!"

"But, captain——"

"Get for'ard!" cried the skipper, swinging up his revolver. "Now, then, hop it for the fo'c'sle—double quick—before I drill holes in you!"

The seamen sullenly retreated forward.

"Into the forecastle!" shouted the captain.

"Look here, captain——"

Crack!

A bullet whistled past Leache's head, and the men did not stay for further talk. They bolted into the forecastle like rabbits taking to earth.

"Now get up the gold," said the skipper. "You know where it is, boys."

"Yes, sir."

The juniors ran down into the

cuddy, and Wharton opened the secret receptacle in the bottom of the locker.

The case of gold was carried on deck and placed in the boat. From the opening of the forecastle the mutinous seamen watched them, but they did not venture out.

"All's ready now," said the captain. "You'll have to get me into the boat before you lower away. You can manage to lower the boat without up-ending her? Cookey will help you."

"We'll manage it, sir."

"Good!"

The captain was helped into the boat.

Then the juniors and the black cook released the falls carefully, and the boat slid into the water. The Spindrift was very deep in the sea now, and the boat had not far to go.

"Now come aboard," said the captain.

The black cook jumped into the boat. The juniors hesitated.

"Come on!" called out the captain. "What are you stopping for?"

"What about the injured men, sir?"

"Those mutinous dogs can look after one another!" said the captain savagely. "I tell you you wouldn't be safe among them."

"Silver and Peter Bones are tied up. You don't want them to drown like rats, sir."

"Serve them right if they do! But Leache will set them free and give them a chance."

"All right, sir."

"Come aboard at once. We shall be sucked down by the brig if we don't hurry."

The juniors clambered into the boat.

Wharton quickly seized an oar and pushed off.

Leache and Rudge could be seen now at work with the longboat again. But as the smaller boat pushed away from the brig the mist swallowed them up.

The captain's face was very white as he looked back at the disappearing vessel.

"The poor old Spindrift!" he muttered. "That's the last voyage for her. But I've got the money safe. The owners will go easy when they know that's all right—if we save it."

"The money will be saved if we're saved ourselves, sir," said Harry Wharton.

The captain nodded.

The mist had swallowed the brig now, and they did not see her sink.

"Those rascals won't find us very easily here," said Bob Cherry. "One can't see fifty yards in this fog."

"No; I reckon we're safe from Jim Silver now, even if that gang take the trouble to put him in the boat."

"Do you think they might leave him bound there?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, horrified.

Captain Cull shrugged his shoulders.

"They might."

"Oh, it would be horrible!"

"It will save him from hanging," said the skipper. "But it's no business of ours what they do now. We've got to save ourselves."

There was a short silence. No one on board the boat had the faintest idea of their situation. The juniors had been aboard the brig for more than thirty hours, and all that time she had been in motion. But they did not know what course she had taken, and for a great part of the time she had been simply drifting under reefed canvas. The thought occurred to Harry Wharton that probably they were not very far from

the place where the juniors had been picked up at sea.

"The wind's changed," he remarked. "It was blowing a gale east by south when we were blown out to sea. It's chopped right round now."

"We're in the North Sea, that's all I know," said Captain Cull; "but we might be close on Holland, or close on the English coast, or drifting to the Channel, it's impossible to tell. Keep a look-out for steamers' lights, and listen for sirens."

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Hallo! What's that?"

A dim shape loomed up in the gloom. It was a sail, but so close down to the water that it was evidently the sail of a boat, not of a ship.

"Might be a fishing craft," exclaimed Bob Cherry hopefully. "Give 'em a yell!"

And the juniors and the black cook shouted together:

"Boat ahoy!"

The boat came sweeping down towards them under the sail. Captain Cull uttered a sudden exclamation.

"By James! It's the longboat!"

The longboat of the Spindrift it was!

It loomed into view out of the mist, and the juniors saw the man with the ear-rings, his right arm in a sling, and his face chalky white. They saw Peter Bones, and the two seamen, Leache and Rudge, and on a pile of canvas the group of wounded men, lying helplessly and groaning.

Captain Cull raised his revolver.

"Sheer off, or I'll fire!"

There was a curse from Peter Bones, who was at the tiller.

"Sheer off, I tell you!"

But the longboat came plunging on. It was evidently the boatswain's intention to run down the smaller craft.

Captain Curril fired with a steady hand.

The juniors saw Peter Bones release the lines and fall forward into the boat. The bows of the longboat sagged round, and with a snap the mast came down, and the sail was plunged deep into the water.

Then the longboat drifted out of sight in the mist.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER CAST ASHORE !

ALONE on the sea. Round the boat was choppy water and the thick, enveloping mist.

There was no sign of a passing vessel, but one might have passed within a hundred yards and the castaways would have been none the wiser.

The longboat had vanished hours ago. The captain's boat drifted on over the misty waters. It was useless to row when it was impossible to tell which direction should have been taken.

At intervals the juniors shouted, and fired a pistol in the hope of making themselves heard on some ship.

But no answer came from the mists, nothing but sullen echoes.

It was fortunate that the sea had gone down considerably; as it was, the boat rocked and plunged in the trough of the waves.

Suddenly, late in the afternoon,

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet, his face flaming with excitement.

The captain was sleeping on a pile of rugs, well wrapped up in coats. Bob Cherry looked up at Harry.

"What is it, Harry?"

"Can't you hear?"

"I hear nothing."

"Don't you know the Shoulder?" exclaimed Harry Wharton excitedly. "Look at it, Bob—look at it!" "My only Uncle Christopher John!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. Chance had brought them to shore within a mile of Greyfriars itself!



"Listen—there it is again."

Bob Cherry put his hand to his ear and listened.

"My hat!" Bob breathed hard.

"It sounds like a bell."

"It is a bell!"

"But—on a ship—"

"It isn't on a ship!" cried Harry excitedly. "It's on land!"

" Land ! Oh ! "

The sound came more clearly through the mist.

Harry Wharton awoke the captain. The wounded skipper looked somewhat wildly about him as he started out of slumber.

" What is it ? What's the matter ? " he exclaimed.

" We're near land, sir ! "

" Land ! How do you know ? "

" I can hear a church bell."

" By James ! "

The captain's worn face lighted up as he listened.

There was no mistake about it. At times the sound was lost as the wind veered, but then it came again clearer than before.

Church bells !

The old familiar sound brought joy to their hearts. It even seemed to Wharton that he had heard those bells before ; that he knew their chime.

The sound ceased at last.

But the direction of land was certain now ; and the two juniors and the black cook pulled out the oars and rowed for shore.

They rowed with energy, new hope in their breasts.

An hour passed.

Then a big, dusky shape loomed up in the gloom. Night was falling, and thickening the mist. But the shape of the great cliff loomed up clearer and clearer.

The rowers bent desperately to their oars. Safety was in sight at last. Whether the shore was English or Dutch did not matter ; it was firm land, and safety lay there.

Bigger and bigger the great cliff loomed up.

And now the sound of the sea could be heard as it broke on the shore, and the rowers eased a little.

It would be a sorry ending if the boat had come to grief on the rocks, so near to safety.

Something familiar in the dim outlines of the great cliff had struck Harry Wharton's mind ; but he kept to himself the strange thought it brought to him.

Captain Curril was sitting with flushed face and eager eyes.

" Land ! " he said. " No doubt about that ! Looks as if it will be a bit tricky getting ashore ; but—look out—"

Bump !

The boat scraped upon a sunken rock.

" Look out ! "

Wharton sprang with his oar to shove off the rock.

The boat glided into a narrow channel with great rocks on both sides. Wharton's eyes were gleaming now.

" We're shipping water ! " muttered Bob Cherry.

" Bale her out ! "

The boat had started a plank in the collision with the rock. Bob Cherry baled out the inflowing water with a tin can, while Wharton rowed carefully.

Bump !

It was upon sand this time ; the boat's nose was deep in shelving sand !

" Hurrah ! " roared Bob Cherry.

He leaped upon the shore, knee-deep in water and soft sand, and dragged the boat farther on. Wharton jumped after him and helped, and then the cook. The boat was dragged up to safety.

The mist still blotted the surroundings from their eyes.

But behind them the great cliff loomed up like a giant keeping watch and ward over land and sea.

In the distance, unseen, they heard

the heavy boom of the waves upon hard rocks.

Bob Cherry looked round him.

"I wonder where we are?" he remarked.

"Safe ashore, at any rate," said Captain Curril. "Help me out of the boat. It must be a civilised country, and when the mist clears off we shall get help."

The captain was lifted ashore, and the boat cleared of its contents. The wounded skipper was made comfortable with coats and rugs.

"Golly!" said Mark Antony. "Dis am better. S'pose dis chile get a fire started, and sumfin to eat, and hot coffee, Mass' Captain."

"Good for you, Cookeney!"

"We'll find out where we are in the morning," said Captain Curril, after a pause. "I fancy it is the English coast."

"I know it is, sir," said Wharton, his face flushed with excitement.

"How do you know?" asked Bob.

"I thought I knew the bells," said Harry.

"The bells?"

"Yes."

"But—but—"

"Bob!" exclaimed Harry, grasping his chum by the arm, almost wild with delight. "Don't you know the bells of Friardale Church by this time?"

Bob Cherry almost staggered.

"Friardale Church!"

"Yes! Don't you know the Shoulder?"

"The Shoulder!" gasped Bob.

"Look at it, old fellow—look at it! Don't you know the old Shoulder again?" shouted Wharton.

Bob Cherry looked up at the dim cliff and gave a yell.

"My only Uncle Christopher John! You're right, Harry!"

"Yes, rather! I knew it."

"It's the Shoulder!" roared Bob Cherry. "Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"What are you talking about?" asked Captain Curril. "Do you mean to say that you know this place?"

Wharton's eyes were dancing.

"I should jolly well say that we do!" he said. "Eh, Bob?"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Bob Cherry gleefully.

"This is the Shoulder, sir—Pegg Bay's over yonder in the mist—and Pegg village, and Cliff House School. And less than a mile back there, behind the cliff, is Greyfriars."

"Greyfriars?"

"Our old school, sir."

"By James!" said the captain.

There was no doubt about it. The brig, drifting on the sea, had floated at the mercy of wind and wave, and had drifted to the same place where the juniors had first seen her. The boat had brought them to safety—and home! Chance—or was it Providence?—had brought the Greyfriars juniors back to the English shore, within a mile of the old school itself.

No wonder their eyes were bright.

"I can get over the cliff, sir," said Harry. "It will be rather stiff work in the mist, but I know it like a book. I can get over it to Greyfriars, and get the fellows here to help. I'll start as soon as we've had something to eat."

"By James!" was all the skipper could say.

"Jolly risky, climbing the cliff at night, Harry," said Bob Cherry gravely.

"I can manage it."

"I'll come with you, then."

"Can't leave the captain alone."

"But—"

"Suppose the other boat came ashore in the same place," said Wharton. "It's quite possible that

we haven't done with Jim Silver yet, Bob."

" I forgot that," said Bob Cherry. " Right you are ; I'll stay. Get help here as soon as you can, old chap."

" What-ho ! "

And ten minutes later Harry Wharton disappeared in the mist, following the rough path over the cliff with unfaltering steps.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER THE RETURN OF THE WANDERERS.

" **A**NY news ? "

" No ! "

" Oh, it's rotten ! "

A gloomy group were talking in the junior Common-room at Greyfriars.

It was evening ; but the Remove fellows were not thinking of their prep.

They had other things to think of.

It was the second night since Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry had gone down to the bay upon their foolhardy mission.

And since they had been let out of the school by the Bounder nothing had been heard of them.

The same night search had been made, after Nugent had awakened Mr. Quelch.

But the search had discovered nothing.

The next day the alarmed Head had communicated with the police and the coastguards, and the search was extended.

Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull and several more Greyfriars fellows had taken a boat out to the Shoulder, in the faint hope of discovering some clue there to the missing juniors.

They had discovered the broken cricket-stump jammed in a crevice of the rock ; sure proof that the missing juniors had carried out their compact.

But that was all.

The whole day the search went on.

But no body was washed ashore, and the boat had disappeared. It was only too certain that the two juniors had been caught in the gale and blown out to sea.

There was a faint chance that they had been picked up at sea ; but when the fellows remembered how rough the night had been they had to acknowledge that the chance was very faint indeed.

Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Singh were plunged into misery too deep for words.

They felt that they would never see the other two members of the famous Co. again.

Wharton and Bob Cherry had gone ; they had vanished out of the life of Greyfriars ; their fate to remain unknown, probably, until the sea gave up its dead.

Vernon-Smith was not much happier than the Co.

The Head had learned all about the challenge and its reckless acceptance ; and he had spoken very plain words to the Bounder. The Bounder had not been punished ; his anxiety and remorse were punishment enough.

For the Bounder, hard as he was, was not insensible to remorse ; and the thought that he had sent his two schoolfellows to their death haunted him.

The second day had passed gloomily.

A shadow hung over the school.

Searching had been given up now. It was useless to carry it further. Nothing could be known unless the bodies were washed ashore, or unless news was received that the juniors had been picked up by some passing vessel. And the latter hope was too faint to be counted on.

Johnny Bull had just been down to

Pegg village, and as he came in after returning, the other fellows greeted him with inquiries.

But the junior only shook his head.

There was no news.

"It's rotten!" said Frank Nugent miserably.

"The rottenfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, whose dusky face was as pale as its rich complexion would allow. "We shall never see our esteemed chums again."

The Bounder came into the Common-room.

No one spoke to him. The Bounder flushed as he looked round at the averted faces and came towards the Co.

Nugent gave him a bitter look.

"Keep your distance!" growled Johnny Bull.

The Bounder bit his lip.

"You needn't rub it in like this," he said, in a low voice. "I'm as sorry as you are for what's happened."

"It was your fault," said Nugent. Vernon-Smith nodded.

"I know it was, in a way," he said. "But—but I couldn't guess it was going to turn out like this. They needn't have gone."

"You know why they went, because you'd have accused them of funk if they hadn't gone!" said Johnny Bull savagely. "You'd better hold your tongue."

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles, "this is really rotten about Wharton



The Juniors gave Wharton a hearty welcome. They shook his hands and thumped him on the back. In their relief and glee they could not make enough of him.

and Cherry. They can't possibly be coming back now, can they?"

"I'm afraid not," said Nugent.

Bunter was blinking very thoughtfully.

"They won't want their things any more," he remarked.

"Eh?"

"Oh, Bull, I wish you wouldn't bawl out at a fellow like that so suddenly!" said Bunter, in a peevish tone. "You quite startled me. I was only saying that if they're not coming back they won't want their things any more."

"You fat beast!"

"Look here, Bull, I don't see that you've got any reason for calling me names," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "We must look at these things in a sensible light. As it happens, Colonel Wharton is abroad now, and he hasn't been told; but he won't want his nephew's things. I'm sure of that. There's no harm if——"

Johnny Bull glared at the fat junior.

"If what?" he asked, in a dangerously quiet tone.

"If we all have our whack out of them," explained Bunter. "I want Wharton's camera. I'm sure he would have wanted me to have it, poor fellow; you know how fond he always was of me."

"You—you toad!"

"Oh, really, Bull! Wharton and I were great chums before you ever came to Greyfriars, and I'm sure he'd like me to have the camera; and you're jolly well not going to have it, I can tell you; and—— Ow—ow—ow!"

The juniors fell upon Bunter and bumped him, and smote him, and hurled him forth from the Common-room. Billy Bunter roared as he fled, and he did not come back again.

But the bumping of Billy Bunter did not relieve the feelings of Harry Wharton's chums. They conversed in low tones, with gloomy looks.

Suddenly there was a shout in the passage.

"Come out, you fellows! Hurrah!"

Nugent jumped.

"Does that mean news—good news?" he exclaimed.

"Sounds like it," muttered Johnny Bull huskily.

The juniors rushed out of the Common-room in an excited crowd. Wingate, of the Sixth, was in the passage.

"What is it, Wingate? Quick!"

"He's come back!"

"He—who?"

"Wharton!"

"And—and Bob?"

"Here I am!" shouted Harry Wharton, from the hall. "Where are you fellows? Come and give a chap a welcome!"

"Where's Bob?"

"Safe as houses."

"Thank goodness!"

They gave Wharton a welcome—a right, hearty welcome. They shook his hands and thumped him on the back till he was aching and breathless. It was Harry Wharton right enough—Wharton unwashed and unkempt—but Wharton! And the juniors, in their relief and glee, could not make enough of him. Frank Nugent kept hold of his arm as if afraid that he would suddenly melt away. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was shaking his hand in the same moment. Johnny Bull mechanically thumped Wharton on the back. He was a fellow of few words; but his actions spoke for him.

"Wharton, old man," exclaimed Mark Linley, "then you weren't drowned!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I don't look like it, do I?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"I say, you fellows, it's really Wharton. Jolly glad to see you back, Wharton. I said all along that you'd come back safe and sound!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Why, you fat Ananias!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Oh, really, Brown, I said to Nugent that I knew Wharton was all right, and I told Bull distinctly that he mustn't think of taking Wharton's camera——"

"Why, you——"

"Now you know I did, and—and—yaroo ! " And Billy Bunter disappeared among the legs of the juniors as Johnny Bull smote him.

Dr. Locke, the reverend Head of Greyfriars, came rustling out of his study. His face lighted up at sight of Wharton.

"My dear lad ! So you have come back ! Where is Cherry ? "

"He's quite safe, sir."

"Thank heaven ! You did a very wrong and reckless thing in going out that night, Wharton."

"I know, sir."

"But in the present happy circumstances, I shall forgive you. I presume that you were picked up at sea ? "

"Yes, sir."

"And the vessel has come here——"

"The vessel's at the bottom of the North Sea, sir."

"Bless my soul ! Then you——"

"We came ashore in a boat, sir. It's a long story ; but the captain and cook of the vessel are with us, sir ; and they want help. I've come to fetch some of the fellows to help them. They're on the beach round the Shoulder, sir. Can I take a dozen chaps to look after them, and bring them here, sir ? "

"Most certainly. Wingate, you shall go with the prefects, and if you care to go, Mr. Quelch——"

"Most certainly, sir."

"I am more pleased than I can say, Wharton, to see you again," said the Head, shaking hands with the junior. "Good heavens, what is this on your shirt—blood ? " He started.

"It's not my own, sir," said Harry hastily. "It's from a wounded man. There was a fight on the ship, sir—a mutiny ! And we saved the captain's life, sir."

"Dear me ! "

"He says so, sir. We've got him ashore. He's wounded."

"Oh, this is too rich ! " exclaimed Nugent. "Harry, you bounder, what do you mean by getting into a thing like this and leaving your pals out ? Don't I wish I'd been there ! "

"The wishfulness is terrific."

"It wasn't so ripping while it was going on," said Harry. "But, buck up, some of you, and let's get to them."

And in a few minutes more an eager party of Greyfriars fellows, with electric torches gleaming, were following Harry Wharton to the rescue of the castaways.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER GREYFRIARS TO THE RESCUE !

CRACK !

Crack !

Two sharp pistol-shots rang out in the misty night.

They came clearly to the ears of the Greyfriars fellows, scrambling over the rough cliff path.

Wharton turned pale.

"That means that Silver and his gang have found them ! " he claimed. "Hurry ! "

On the way to the cliff Wharton had hurriedly explained the situation in which he had left his friends. And the Greyfriars fellows, to tell the truth, were rather hoping that they would find the mutineers there as well as the castaways. They wanted to have a little of the fun, as Coker, of the Fifth, explained. Indeed, Coker declared that it was like the cheek of those Remove kids to have it all to themselves as they had done.

The sound of the ringing pistol-shots from the beach, however, suddenly impressed the Greyfriars fellows with a sense of the seriousness of the situation.

But they did not hesitate.

They scrambled on faster than before.

Through the misty night a dancing gleam of flame guided them—the fire the black cook had lighted upon the beach.

As they came scrambling down the cliff, the Greyfriars fellows could see, in the light of the fire, what was passing on the beach.

Harry Wharton recognised the Spin-drift's longboat, bumping on the sand, with a bunch of men in her.

He recognised Jim Silver and Peter Bones, ashore, knee-deep in sand and water, and with iron belaying-pins in their hands.

Bob Cherry and the black cook and Captain Cull were in a group close against a big rock, and the captain's revolver was levelled. He had fired twice, hastily, and though none of the enemy was hit, they had paused. But Leache and Rudge, with oars in their hands, were scrambling ashore to help their leaders.

Jim Silver called out hoarsely to the captain :

"Captain Cull! It's all up with you!"

"Come on, and you will see, you swab!" said the captain grimly.

"Give us the money, and we will go."

"You'll go without it."

"Then your blood be on your own head," said Silver.

Bob Cherry gave a yell. He had caught sight of the dark figures swarming down the cliff.

"Help! Here come the fellows, sir! It's all right!"

Jim Silver and his confederates swung round furiously. They saw the advancing crowd, and realised that the game was up.

The man with the ear-rings made one leap into the boat. Peter Bones

and the two seamen followed him. The boatswain pushed off with furious haste, while the Greyfriars fellows raced down to the beach to stop them.

But the mutineers were too quick for them.

The longboat glided off and disappeared into the mist, and a yell of mockery came back from the man with the ear-rings.

Jim Silver was gone.

He had gone without his prize—without the two thousand pounds he had schemed and plotted and stained his hands in blood for! But he was gone! He had saved his liberty—if the stormy sea spared him!

The Greyfriars fellows, disappointed, turned back from the beach.

They surrounded the castaways, and Bob Cherry's hand was shaken until he had an ache in the wrist.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob cheerily. "All alive and safe, you see, and jolly glad to be back again! Only two days, too! It seems weeks since we got out of the old dorm. Hallo, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith put out his hand in a shamefaced way.

"I'm glad you're back," he said.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Not so glad as I am," he said.

"I was cut up when—when I thought you'd both been drowned," muttered the Bounder. "I hope you'll believe that."

Bob Cherry gave him a grip that made him wince.

"Of course I believe it!" he said. "It's all right, Smithy! I never thought I should ever be glad to see your mug again; but I am—jolly glad! Honest Injun!"

Mr. Quelch was directing the seniors to make a stretcher for the wounded captain.

Captain Cull was borne away in it,

to be placed under the doctor's hands in Friardale Village, and the black cook went with him. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were marched back to Greyfriars in the midst of a triumphal procession of fellows.

It was a joyous homecoming for the chums of the Remove.

In the dining-room a most magnificent supper had been prepared for the returned wanderers, and Billy Bunter was already seated at the board, disposing of the lion's share. But



As they came scrambling down the cliff, the Greyfriars fellows could see what was passing on the beach. Jim Silver and Peter Bones were wading ashore from the longboat; while Bob Cherry, the black cook, and Captain Curl, his revolver firing, were grouped against the rock. Harry Wharton had brought rescue only just in time!

everyone was so happy that Bunter was allowed to do as he liked.

And over that supper the heroes related their adventures on board the Spindrift, to be listened to with breathless interest by seniors and juniors alike. Even the Head came in to listen.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "You have had a narrow escape, my dear boys, and I am glad—very glad—that you had this opportunity of helping the captain of the Spindrift. There is no doubt that you saved his life, my dear boys. You have acted very well, and very bravely."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Johnny Bull.

And Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry went to bed at last, tired out and very happy. Bob Cherry yawned luxuriously as he stretched himself between the clean white sheets of his bed in the Remove dormitory.

"Harry, old fellow!" he called out.

"Hallo!" said Wharton sleepily.

"This is better than the forecastle of the Spindrift—eh?"



Wharton chuckled.

"Yes ; rather ! "

"I say, Harry—"

"Groo ! "

"Going to sleep ? "

"Groo ! Snore ! "

"Good-night, old son ! " Bob said.

And in another minute he was asleep, too.

The adventures of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were over, but they were glad enough to get back to Greyfriars.

Captain Curril recovered from his injury, and before he left Friardale he came to the school to thank the juniors for what they had done for

him. And they made him have tea in the study, and the study, needless to say, was crammed with other guests to see the captain of the Spindrift.

Of the boat that had fled seaward with Jim Silver and his battered crew, nothing more was heard. Whether the man with the ear-rings had escaped, or whether the sea had closed over the boat and its ruffianly crew, was unknown. But Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, as they went about their daily occupations at Greyfriars, often wondered what had happened to the mutineers. It would be a long time before they could forget their thrilling adventures during the mutiny on the Spindrift.

OUR CHAMBER OF HORRORS



MR. MANDERS

By TOMMY DODD

To Manders, the Modern House master,
we fix

Harsh names which are often unlawful !
His liver went wrong about 1906,

And ever since then he's been awful !

His features alone would turn any milk sour,
He's snappish, ill-tempered and sneering,
He'll jaw bitter words at a chap for an hour,
Until the chap loses his hearing !

And then he will lovingly pick up his cane,
For punishing chaps he's a glutton !
He knows it is going to give a man pain,
But what does he care ? Not a button !
Does he choke back a tear as we wriggle and yell ?

No fear ! He is cold and disdainful !
He thrashes us grimly and thrashes us well,
Though I'm sure he must know it is painful !

Sarcastic as always, he tells us to go,
And we do, with a haste that's unseemly !
It's not that we mind being walloped, you know,

But we're sure he enjoys it extremely !
"Ha, ha ! " he will laugh to himself, the old beast !

"I think that will do for the present.
I must have administered twenty at least ;
I found it exceedingly pleasant ! "

He creeps about looking for faults he can find,

And then his behaviour is drastic !
He has a suspicious and horrible mind,
And he wears boots with sides of elastic !
I wouldn't mind any man trying to spot
The faults which are seldom detected
If he were a gentleman. Manders is not,
And that's why he's never respected !



TUBBY MUFFIN GOES GAY!

By
OWEN
CONQUEST

Why did Tubby Muffin become a "gay dog"? Why did he start smoking and gambling like the other "bad lads" of Rookwood? This short complete story is one long laugh!

THE FIRST CHAPTER TUBBY OR NOT TUBBY?

"WHAT the thump——" Jimmy Silver, of the Rookwood Fourth, stopped short. Words seemed to fail him, as he stood in the doorway of No. 2 Study. "Surely it can't be!" gasped Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Impossible!" said Newcome, with a shake of his head.

"Must be a mirage!" grinned Raby.

Tubby Muffin looked round from his armchair by the fireside. There was a grin on his podgy face and a lighted cigarette between his lips. It was that lighted cigarette that had caused consternation amongst the Fistical Four, as they looked into the study.

"I say, you fellows, trot in!" drawled Tubby. "Make yourselves at home, you know. What about a little flutter?"

"A—a whatter?"

"Flutter—a game of cards!" ex-

plained Tubby. "Which do you prefer—nap or banker?"

"N-n-ap?"

"B-b-banker?"

"I say, don't stand there lookin' like a lot of moultin' owls!" urged Tubby. "I know you chaps aren't goers like me, but you needn't look so soft about it. Trot in an' have one of these fags. They're rippin'!"

"You—you fat idiot!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "What's the game?"

"He, he, he! That's just what I'm askin' you!" grinned Tubby, who was omitting his final g's with fearful emphasis. "We'll make it nap, if you like. I'm a dabster at nap!"

"Ye gods!" said Lovell and Newcome together.

"Mad!" declared Raby. "I've always said he had a screw loose somewhere."

Really, it was enough to make the Fistical Four have serious doubts about Tubby's sanity. Tubby had never previously smoked or gambled

or omitted his final g's in the manner approved by the Rookwood "smart set"; and it was difficult to think of a reasonable explanation unless there was a temporary mental indisposition of some kind.

The Fistical Four looked hard and suspiciously at Tubby Muffin.

"Becoming a bit of a gay dog, eh, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"'Becoming'?" You mean I always was!" retorted Tubby Muffin, with a podgy smirk. "I was never a soft Good Little Eric like you chaps. I've been a goer all the time, at heart, though I'm only just beginning to break out."

"Oh, you're just beginning to break out, eh?" remarked Jimmy Silver. "So you'll be smoking a lot of cigarettes and having a lot of little flutters, I suppose?"

"Oh, rather!" grinned Tubby.

"Then, in that case," remarked Jimmy Silver. "it seems to me we'd better cure you before the trouble gets serious! Shall we cure Tubby, you men?"

"What-ho!" grinned Lovell and Newcome and Raby.

Tubby removed his cigarette from his lips and jumped up in sudden alarm.

"I say, you fellows, no larks, you know—ow! Leggo, you beasts! Yaroooook!"

Wild yells rang out in Study No. 2 as Tubby's podgy form smote the floor. But the Fistical Four did not let Tubby's yells deter them from performing their duty. They carried on regardless.

"Going to chuck being a bad lad now, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver genially, when half a dozen bumps had been registered.

"Ow! Beast! Grooogh! Yes!"

"Well spoken!" grinned Jimmy

Silver. "Here's your cigarette back, old fat bean—just to impress the lesson on you!"

With that, Jimmy Silver picked up Tubby's discarded cigarette, which was still smouldering, and pretended to stuff it down the fat junior's back. What he actually inserted was an unlighted cigarette from the packet on the table. Tubby's imagination, however, promptly provided it with a burning end, and, under the impression that he was being burnt all the way down his back, he started performing a series of leaps that would have done credit to a Russian ballet dancer!

"Whooooop! Beast! I'm burning!" shrieked Tubby. "Water—quick! Fetch the fire brigade! Yarooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why not run up to the bath-rooms, old scout?" gasped Newcome. "There was a bath filling when we passed just now. You can put yourself out if you jump in!"

The Fistical Four hardly expected Tubby to take that advice seriously. But such was Tubby's panic that he did! Leaping and yelling, he flung himself out of Study No. 2 and made tracks for the bath-rooms. There, the astonished crowd he had swiftly collected en route saw him dive into a bathful of water and deliberately immerse himself up to the shoulders.

There was a roar from the crowd.

"What's the idea, Tubby?"

"Learning to swim, old chap?"

"Ouch! Grooogh! That's put it out, thank goodness!" gasped Tubby. "I say, you fellows—"

A tall figure appearing in the bathroom doorway cut Tubby's speech short. It was Mr. Dalton, the Fourth Form master. Dicky Dalton's eyes almost popped out of their sockets

at the sight of a fully dressed junior in the bath.

"Muffin! What in the name of goodness are you doing, boy?"

"Pip-pip-please, sir, putting myself out!" gasped Tubby. "Silver set me on fire and—"

"Silver set you on fire?" hooted the Form-master.

"Well, sir, he put my cigarette down my back and—"

Dicky Dalton glared.

"You were smoking a cigarette then, Muffin?"

"Oh, no, sir—nothing of the kind! I wouldn't dream of smoking—and anyway I had only one or two puffs at it and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" snapped Dicky Dalton. "Is Muffin's allegation true, Silver?"

"Not exactly, sir!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I did put a cigarette down his back, but it wasn't the lighted one. I threw that into the grate!"

The crowd gasped. Then, despite Mr. Dalton's presence, there was a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—oh, crikey!" finished Tubby, finding no words capable of expressing his emotions.

There was a twinkle in Dicky Dalton's eye. But he still frowned on Tubby.

"You had better dry and change,

Muffin," he said. "After that, report to me. I shall cane you for smoking."

"Oh, lor'!" gasped the fat junior.

And that, so far as the spectators were concerned, ended the matter. And the general opinion was that the disastrous fate of Tubby's strange attempt to become a gay dog and a bold, bad blade would send him back to the straight and narrow path with a rush.

But that, strangely enough, proved to be an entirely mistaken opinion.

In the days that followed the incident of Tubby and the cigarette, the Fourth had their eyes opened. They began to see that Tubby Muffin was bent on acquiring a murky reputation at all costs.

He was seen more than once studying a pink sporting paper.

He was observed in earnest conversation in Coombe Lane with a shady person named Jim Huggins,



Tubby, under the impression that Jimmy Silver had thrust a lighted cigarette down his back, started performing a series of leaps that would have done credit to a Russian ballet dancer. "Whoop! Beast! I'm burning!" he shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jimmy Silver and Co.

who was known to be a collector of wagers on horse races in the neighbourhood.

He was even rumoured to have paid a visit to an inn near Bagshot for an afternoon game of billiards with Peele of the Fourth.

"Something has got to be done about it," said Jimmy Silver, after dinner one half-holiday, on being informed by Lovell that Tubby was contemplating another suspicious outing that afternoon. "We can't let Tubby go to the bow-wows like this!"

"If the fat idiot wants to do so, it's his funeral!" snorted Raby.

"True; but I've a funny feeling that he doesn't want to be a bad lad at all, in spite of appearances," said Jimmy Silver, wrinkling up his brow. "He doesn't really like smoking and gambling, you know. He's several sorts of a silly ass—but not that particular kind of a silly ass! I'd like to find out what's behind it."

"Well, let's ask Tubby!" said Newcome.

"Good egg!"

And the Fistical Four, without any more ado, went along to Study No. 2—to find Tubby just emerging in his outdoor clothes.

THE SECOND CHAPTER MEETING UNCLE GEORGE.

"**T**ELL us all about it, Tubby!"

Jimmy Silver's tone was friendly—but firm. Tubby looked alarmed.

"Look here, if you're talking about Mornington's cake, I don't know anything about it. Besides, it was only a wretched currant cake, hardly worth bothering about."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not talking about Mornington's cake, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver

firmly. "I'm talking about you. Why have you gone gay? Confide in your Uncle James."

"Look here, Jimmy Silver, I told you the other day I'd always been a goer—"

"Chuck it, Tubby! I know better," said Jimmy Silver sceptically. "What's at the back of it all? Out with it, old fat man!"

Tubby paused and pondered. Then he grinned a podgy grin.

"All right, then. Seeing that you chaps are more or less pals of mine, I'll let you into it. The fact is, I've turned into a goer to please my pater."

"What!" yelled the Fistical Four.

"A week ago he wrote me saying that my Uncle George from Canada would be visiting Rookwood shortly," said Tubby. "He mentioned that Uncle George had made a fortune in Canada, and that he wanted to leave Uncle George with the impression that I was going to turn out the same kind of go-ahead chap myself."

"Well?"

"He also said that Uncle George was himself an old Rookwood boy."

"Didn't you know that much about your uncle before, fathead?" asked Newcome.

Tubby grinned.

"No, I didn't. That's just where my turning into a goer comes in. When I told the Head about Uncle George coming here, you see, I found out that my pater had been keeping the truth about him from me. The Head let it out before he realised I didn't know. The truth is, Uncle George was expelled from Rookwood!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Expelled for blagging," grinned Tubby. "It seems he was a real bad hat while he was here—gambling and

smoking and all that. Now do you see the point?"

"Not quite."

"Well, you're an ass, Jimmy Silver!" said Tubby disgustedly. "Here's an uncle who was bunned from Rookwood for being a rank outsider—and never looked back from that day. He's coming back to his old school to see me, and I've got to give him the idea I've got the makings of a successful man like he is in me. How am I going to do it?"

"Oh, my hat! You mean——"

"I mean that the only way to impress my uncle is to show him I'm a gay kind of chap like he was himself in his young days. Just that!" grinned Tubby. "Now you know why I've changed a bit lately. I've been trying to get a bad reputation. See?"

"Great pip!"

The Fistical Four looked at each other and then at Tubby Muffin. Then they grinned.

"Now we understand!" grinned Lovell.

"Clear as daylight!" chuckled Jimmy Silver, looking quite relieved. "You haven't taken the wrong turning really. You've just pretended to take it, so as to impress your uncle! My hat!"

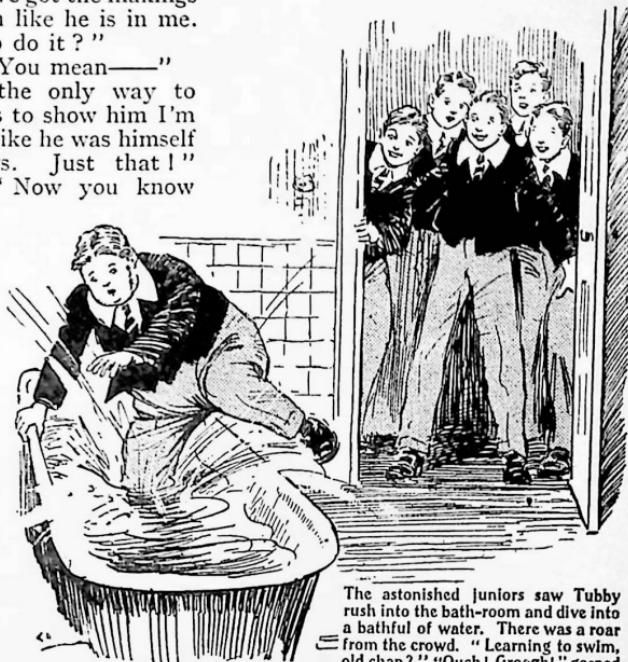
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you chaps! It's nothing to laugh at," said Tubby seriously. "My uncle made good after being a real bad egg at Rookwood, and he'll be awfully pleased when he

finds I'm a bad egg, too. I expect he'll make me his heir, you know. Probably I shall be wealthy for life through turning into a rank outsider."

"Ye gods and little fishes!" said Jimmy Silver. "When does Uncle George arrive, then, Tubby?"

"This afternoon. I'm just off to meet him at the station," said Tubby



The astonished Juniors saw Tubby rush into the bath-room and dive into a bathful of water. There was a roar from the crowd. "Learning to swim, old chap?" "Ouch! Grooghl" gasped Tubby."

"Look here, you chaps, what about coming with me? Of course, you'll have to pretend to be smoky blackguards—the sort of chaps Uncle George will approve of, you know."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"We'll come, Tubby. It strikes me you may need someone to keep

an eye on you this afternoon, and if you do, we're the men for the job, eh, chaps?"

"What-ho!" grinned Lovell and Newcome and Raby.

And so it came about that when Uncle George's train steamed into Coombe Station that afternoon the Fistical Four, as well as Tubby Muffin, were there to meet it.

"By the way, I've no idea what my uncle looks like, but I expect we shall recognise him as soon as we see him," said Tubby. "He'll look a gay old boulder, you know!"

But the passenger who introduced himself to the Rookwood juniors as Tubby's uncle was short and plump—not unlike Tubby, from some angles—and his manner was brusque and not very friendly. Tubby Muffin and the Fistical Four eyed him in undisguised surprise when he announced himself.

"My hat! But I expected—" began Tubby. Then he pulled himself together and said hurriedly: "I mean, how are you, uncle? I'm your nephew!"

"How do you do, Reginald?" remarked Mr. George Muffin, eyeing Tubby with a critical eye, as he grasped Tubby's podgy hand. "Like most of the family, you run to fat, I see!"

"Oh, really, uncle—"

"No need for these muscles to be so flabby, though!" went on Uncle George, giving Tubby's arm a grip that made Tubby squeak. "I'd have thought your games would have kept you in better trim, Reginald!"

"Ow!" gasped Tubby. "I'm fit enough, uncle—but, of course, I'm not one of those athletic freaks who spend all their time developing their muscles! I've got other interests—cards and horse-racing, for instance!"

The Fistical Four, watching for Mr. Muffin's reaction to that cheerful admission, saw him jump.

"You—you—what?" he exclaimed.

"But I was forgetting—these are some friends of mine I brought along, uncle," said Tubby, with a podgy grin. "Silver—Lovell—Newcome—Raby; four absolute dogs, you know, uncle!"

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Uncle George.

"I don't think your nephew really means that, sir," said Jimmy Silver, with a cough. "He's—er—a bit of a leg-puller, sometimes, aren't you, Tubby?"

"He, he, he! I say, Silver, old chap, don't be scared of Uncle George!" grinned Tubby. "You don't mind a chap being a dog, do you, uncle?"

"Well, upon my soul!" ejaculated Uncle George, registering considerable surprise at that cheerful statement.

"Hem! I fancy Tubby—that is, Reginald—was going to suggest getting back to Rookwood right away, sir," said Jimmy Silver, diplomatically. "If that suits you, sir."

"Most certainly. I'm extremely anxious to see the school again," said Tubby's uncle, displaying a little enthusiasm for the first time since his arrival. "Are we all ready?"

"Oh, rather!"

And the entire party made a move out of the station.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

NOT ACCORDING TO PROGRAMME!

THE one thing that impressed itself on the minds of the Fistical Four as a result of those first few minutes with Tubby's uncle was that he was by no means the type Tubby had been anticipating. If his

expression was anything to go by, Mr. George Muffin certainly did not approve of Tubby's being interested in cards and horse-racing. On the contrary, he looked as if he disapproved very strongly, indeed.

The Fistical Four, feeling that it was up to them to convey this information to the slower-witted Tubby, did their best to convey it by signs and grimaces, as they quitted the station. But Tubby failed entirely to follow their meaning, and waxed more and more talkative over his imaginary misdeeds.

The more he talked the more silent Uncle George became; two pink spots developed in his cheeks and a strange gleam came into his eyes. The Fistical Four noticed these signs, and expected the storm to break at any moment.

By the time they reached Rookwood, Tubby had really warmed up to his work.

He stopped Peele and asked him if he knew the winner of the two-thirty race that afternoon—a question that made Peele jump.

He tapped Hansom of the Fifth on the arm near the steps of the Classical House and asked him if he had put his name down in the forthcoming billiards championship. Hansom was left leaning back against the stone balustrade of the steps, as Tubby passed on—apparently rendered speechless by that cheery inquiry!

All round the Classical House, as they continued their tour of inspection, Tubby was tapping fellows on the arm and buttonholing them with inquiries relating to the world of gay dogs and bold, bad blades. It was quite an ordeal for Jimmy Silver and Co., as time went on. As for Mr. Muffin, he was certainly being impressed; but a glance at his thunder-

ous brow and compressed lips was sufficient to tell anyone with eyes to see that he was not being impressed quite as Tubby had intended!

The climax came after tea in No. 2 Study—provided, after a whispered confab., by Jimmy Silver.

It was then that Tubby, so to speak, reached his top note. Grinning triumphantly, he produced a cigar-case and offered it round. And after the mesmerised juniors and Uncle George had declined in turn he calmly lit one of the torpedo-shaped horrors himself and puffed away vigorously. Then he brought to light a pack of cards.

"Now for a little flutter!" grinned Tubby. "Name your game, gentlemen, and we'll see how much we can rook each other for!"

It was the last straw that broke the camel's back! Mr. Muffin jumped to his feet, red with rage.

"You young rascal!" he roared. Tubby jumped.

"Eh, what? Look here, uncle—"

"You young villain!" hooted Uncle George furiously. "Put that idiotic cigar out and come along with me! I am going to take you to your headmaster and request him to give you the flogging of your life!"

Tubby blinked. He was completely taken aback.

"But—but I thought—whooop!"

"So much for that poisonous thing!" snorted the infuriated Mr. Muffin, snatching the smouldering cigar from Tubby's mouth and hurling it on to the fire. "Now come with me!"

"Mr. Muffin, I think perhaps I can explain—" began Jimmy Silver.

But, for the moment, Mr. Muffin was not in the mood to listen to explanations. He grabbed Tubby by the scruff of the neck and rushed him out of the study.

"Oh, my hat! Better follow!" grinned Lovell; and the Fistical Four followed along the passage and down the stairs and across the Hall right to the door of the Head's study. And there, before their eyes, the last act of the piece was played out.

"Doctor Chisholm, you remember me?" Mr. Muffin was saying, as they arrived. "I am Muffin—the one you expelled years ago. On that occasion, sir, you did me a good turn for which I shall always be grateful to you. You brought me to my senses. Now I want you to do a similar good turn to this wretched nephew of mine by flogging some sense into him before expulsion becomes necessary."

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Doctor Chisholm, quite shocked. "What ever has he been doing?"

"Precisely the same foolish things as I did at Rookwood, Doctor Chisholm—gambling, smoking, breaking bounds."

"Bless my soul! Is this true, Muffin?"

"No, sir—yes, sir! What I mean, sir, is—"

Jimmy Silver took a hand in the game. He felt it was up to somebody to get Tubby out of his tangle.

"Perhaps I can explain it all, sir," he said. "It's not my business, but if Mr. Muffin will allow me to bring in his name—"

"If you can say anything in the young reprobate's defence, by all means bring in my name!" said Mr. Muffin.

And then Jimmy Silver explained just how Tubby had come to take the wrong turning.

The Head and Mr. Muffin listened carefully. When Silver had finished, they looked at one another. Then Mr. Muffin relieved the tension by laughing.

"So that was it!" he said. "Well, well, it's a relief. It's good to know that my nephew is not a rogue—even though it appears that he's several sorts of a young ass!"

"Look here, uncle—" protested Tubby feebly.

"You can all listen to this, boys," went on Uncle George, beckoning to Lovell and Newcome and Raby, who were hovering uncomfortably in the doorway. "I was one of the so-called 'smart set' at Rookwood in my day. My nephew seems to have thought on that account that I should still approve of similar foolishness on the part of Rookwood boys to-day. He was wrong.

"I've seen a lot and learned a lot since I left school, and all I've seen and learned has confirmed the lesson Doctor Chisholm taught me—that the schoolboy who apes grown-up weaknesses in order to look manly is heading for trouble. I learned that lesson in time. But that is not everybody's good fortune. Get the idea?"

Doctor Chisholm smiled.

"Then I can disregard your request to flog Muffin?" he asked.

"Most decidedly! I did him an injustice—as he unwittingly did me."

"Cheers!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

And though, of course, it was impossible to cheer in the Head's study, they made up for it by cheering when Mr. Muffin, having given a tip to Tubby the size of which made that junior's eyes goggle, took his departure.

Uncle George's visit had certainly not gone according to programme. But it had been successful from all points of view—particularly in ensuring that never again would Tubby Muffin want to go gay!

THE END



The Thousand-Dollar Kid!

By RALPH REDWAY

THE FIRST CHAPTER

HUNTED DOWN !

THE spattering of shots from the prairie startled the Rio Kid from his siesta. The boy outlaw of the Rio Grande lay deep in ferns, resting lazily in the heat of the Texan day. Overhead, the tangled boughs of the chaparral shut off the blaze of the sun that burned with tropical heat on the open prairie. The Kid lay at ease in the ferns, his head resting on his saddle. Near by the grey mustang cropped the herbage.

One thousand dollars is the reward offered for the Rio Kid. But the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande is a wily customer to catch—as a treacherous gunman discovers to his cost!

Save for the quiet crop, crop of the horse, and the chirrup of a cicada in the thicket, all was silent and still in the drowsy heat of midday.

The Kid had been thinking, half-dreaming, of old days on the Double-Bar Ranch; old days when he had ridden with the Double-Bar bunch before he had been outlawed and a price put on his head. But as that sudden spattering of shots broke the drowsy silence, the mustang raised his head from the grass and laid back his ears—and the

Rio Kid leaped to

his feet, his hand grasping a gun.
Thud, thud, thud!

Faint from afar, then closer and louder came the hoof-strokes of a galloping horse.

"Shucks!" murmured the Kid, as he listened. "I guess the galoot that's riding that cayuse is sure riding it hard."

The Rio Kid had camped on the edge of the chaparral. A dozen steps, and he was looking out over the open prairie that stretched from the dusky wood, mile on mile, towards the distant Rio Pecos. Keeping in cover of the trees, tangled with masses of pendant Spaniard's beard, the Kid looked out over the sunlit plain, wondering who was riding so hard in the blaze of the sun.

A horseman was spurring towards the chaparral. His broncho, thick with dust, caked with sweat, was on the point of exhaustion—only the savage urging of whip and spur drove him on. The Kid's brows contracted as he looked. To save his life, the Kid would never have driven an exhausted horse so mercilessly.

But it was to save his life that the horseman was spurring. Over a grassy fold of the prairie behind three Stetson hats were bobbing. Three riders were on the track of the fugitive, and gaining on him at every leap of their horses, in spite of his savage spurring and lashing whip.

The Rio Kid looked on grimly.

The fugitive had lost his hat in his wild flight. The blazing sun beat down on his face and tousled head. The Kid knew that dark, black-bearded face, the mouth that was like a gash, the hard, savage eyes set close together.

"Rube Smith!" murmured the Kid. "Shucks! I guess them jaspers yonder will be raking in that five hundred. Sure thing!"

The fleeing broncho staggered, and seemed about to fall. A savage hand on the rein steadied him, and he panted on towards the chaparral. Bang, bang, bang! came from the riders behind. They were in full sight now, firing on the fugitive as they rode him down.

The Kid made no movement.

Rube Smith was making a desperate effort to reach the chaparral. Close as his pursuers were, he had a chance of escape once in the tangled woods and thickets. But he would never reach it—the Kid could see that. At every stride he expected to see the over-strained broncho pitch over in the grass.

The Kid's look was dubious. For a hunted man he could feel sympathy; he had been hunted himself, and had known what it was to ride for his life with deadly foes spurring on his trail. But he had little feeling for the desperate bandit who was fleeing from the Sheriff of Plug Hat and his men.

All along the border Rube Smith was known for his desperate deeds—a gunman, a rustler, a cow-thief, a ruthless killer, with a reward of five hundred dollars on his head. Every cowman in Texas would have been glad to see Rube Smith swung up to the branch of a cottonwood, and the Rio Kid would not have been sorry.

Crash!

Within a dozen yards of the spot where the Kid stood, screened by hanging lianas, on the edge of the chaparral, the over-driven mustang crashed suddenly to the earth.

The rider fell heavily.

The Kid saw him strive to rise, and sink back again, helplessly. One leg was pinned under the fallen horse.

Rube Smith lay at the mercy of his pursuers. There was a shout of



From the green wall of the chaparral came a sudden blaze of firing as the Kid's guns roared. With lead whizzing round their heads, the sheriff and his men wheeled their horses and rode madly back the way they had come.

triumph as the Plug Hat men rode on to secure him.

Then the Kid woke suddenly to action.

"Bad man" the outlaw was—the most lawless and desperate border ruffian in Texas. But the Kid felt a stirring of sympathy as the ruffian lay at the mercy of his foes. He would not see him taken.

From the green of the chaparral came a sudden blaze of firing as the Kid's walnut-butted .45's roared.

Bang, bang, bang!

The sheriff of Plug Hat, riding a few yards ahead of his men, gave a yell as the Stetson spun from his head. His followers reined in their horses as the lead whizzed by their ears.

Bang, bang!

For a second the three riders stared

at the green wall of the chaparral, with the whizzing lead buzzing round their heads ; and then they wheeled their horses and rode madly back the way they had come. Plying whip and spur, they dashed away over the prairie, riding for their lives.

The Kid grinned as he threw lead after them.

The bullets went close, grazing here an arm, there a shoulder or an ear. The Rio Kid could place his lead where he liked. Not one of the sheriff's men was hit ; but every one of the three figured that he had had the closest call of his life as he rode frantically out of range of the hidden marksman.

They vanished across the grassy plain, nothing doubting that the fleeing bandit had led them into an ambush from which they had narrowly escaped.

The Kid, his smoking guns in his hand, stepped out of the trees and advanced towards the fallen bandit.

Rube Smith had given up his efforts to drag his pinned leg loose. The horse did not stir. It was death-stricken as it fell, and it lay, an inert mass, its weight pinning the bandit's limb, crushing it into the earth. Lying on his side, raised on an elbow, the bandit dragged a six-gun from his belt, his eyes glaring over the barrel at the Rio Kid as he came out of the chaparral.

"Drop it, feller!" ordered the Kid. "You pesky jay, don't you savvy that I've jest saved your neck—though it sure wasn't worth saving! Drop it, hombre."

The Kid's gun looked full in the face of the panting bandit.

"The Rio Kid!" breathed Rube Smith.

"Sure!"

The bandit's savage eyes glared at him over the six-gun. But he knew—none better—that the Rio Kid's aim never failed. A glitter came into the Kid's eyes.

"Drop it, you durned coyote—"

The six-gun sagged into the grass.

"I guess it's your say-so, Kid," said Rube Smith hoarsely; and he dropped the gun.

"You've said it," agreed the Rio Kid.

He picked up the bandit's revolver and, with a swing of his arm, tossed it away over the tree-tops into the chaparral.

THE SECOND CHAPTER IN CAMP!

THE wattled jacal was built in the heart of the chaparral, by a little stream that flowed and rippled amid tangled mesquite and pecan and

post-oak. It was a flimsy hut, but shelter enough for the Rio Kid.

He was not anxious to draw attention to himself. The encounter with the sheriff's men from Plug Hat was not pleasing to him for that reason.

Whether they had seen him or not as he fired on them from the chaparral he did not know, but if they had they would spread the news that the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande was on hand. The Kid called himself a gink for having chipped in to save Rube Smith from a well-deserved fate.

And he had the gunman on his hands now. Without a horse, with his leg hurt, and disarmed—the Kid had seen to that!—the gunman was helpless. The Kid had brought him to the jacal where he camped, and the bandit lay now on a pile of skins in the little hut.

Night brooded over the chaparral.

It was densely dark, hardly a gleam of starlight penetrating the tangled vegetation. Outside the doorway of the jacal a low camp-fire burned on which the Kid had cooked his supper—and his guest's.

Little as he liked Rube Smith, and though he called himself a gink for having saved him, the Kid's hospitality was boundless. The hunted man was welcome to a share in the shelter of the jacal and to a share of the Kid's provender.

The Kid would be glad enough to see the last of him, and while he stayed he could not trust him an inch, but he was welcome to stay if he liked. He was a hunted man, hunted for his life, and that was enough for the Kid.

"Grub, feller!" called out the Kid cheerily, when the flap-jacks and bacon and beans were ready.

Rube Smith crawled from the bed of skins.

His leg had been hurt where it had

been pinned under the dead bronco ; but the Kid had examined it and found that no bones were broken. It seemed to the Kid that the bandit was making much of a slight injury, though Rube Smith, strong and savage and desperate, was hardly the man to play the invalid.

He sat on one side of the little fire, and ate his supper with voracious appetite. While he ate he stared at the Kid in the ruddy gleam of the fire.

" You figure it's safe to light a fire hyer, Kid ? " he asked.

" Sure ! It won't be seen from the plains," answered the Kid. " I reckon I'll stamp it out, though, afore I turn into my blankets."

" I guess I never reckoned I'd meet up with you, Kid," said the bandit. " Lucky for me you was around here. Them guys had me dead to rights when you horned in."

" They sure had."

" I guess I'm powerful obliged, Kid," said Rube Smith, his shifty eyes on the handsome, sunburnt face across the fire. " But what's the big idea in taking my hardware off me, feller ? "

" You're sure safer without it," said the Kid. " You might get a hunch to pull a gun if you had one, and that would mean sudden death for you, feller."

Rube Smith laughed uneasily.

" I guess I wouldn't pull a gun on you, Kid, arter you saved me," he said. " You can sure trust me for that."

The Kid smiled, and made no reply. He trusted Rube Smith about as much as he trusted a rattlesnake.

" Well, I reckon I don't want a gun while I'm camping here," said Rube Smith. " You're sure a white man, Kid, to stand by a guy like this. Say, what you doing in this country ? "

" Lying doggo," the Kid answered briefly. " There's a lot of guys want to meet up with me, bad, but I ain't pining to see them. What you been doing on the Pecos, feller ? "

Rube Smith did not answer that question. He ate bacon and beans in silence.

His supper finished, he half-rose, and sank back again with a faint gasp.

" My leg's sure bad ! " he said. " Mebbe you'll give me a hand back into the shebang, Kid."

" Sure ! "

The Kid helped the ruffian back into the jacal, and Rube Smith sank down on the bed of skins with a faint groan.

The Kid, in the shadows of the hut, looked at him curiously. Again, it was borne in upon his mind that the bandit was making much of his injury, more than the hurt to his leg warranted.

The man's record was a black one, and the Kid knew that he was none too good for any treachery. He was unmounted now, and for the sake of the Kid's horse he would have been capable of repaying the boy outlaw's service with a bullet through the head. The Kid was quite aware of it.

He wondered whether it was the bandit's game to give him an impression of being helpless in order to make some attempt on him while he slept that night. Rube Smith was none too good for it, and a stone or a billet of wood might have sufficed for dealing with a sleeping man.

The Kid smiled at the thought. He slept like a weasel, and if the bandit had any idea of taking him by surprise when he was in his blankets he was likely to meet with a surprise himself.

" You are all right now, feller ? " asked the Kid.

"I guess so. You turning in?"

"I reckon I'll let you have the shebang," said the Kid. "I'm taking my blankets into the chaparral."

"You sure don't trust a guy, Kid."

"Not a whole heap!" said the Kid coolly, and picking up his blankets and slicker, he left the jacal.

Rube Smith's eyes gleamed after him in the gloom.

The Kid laid down in his blankets in the thickets, by the side of his mustang.

But he did not sleep.

The camp-fire died out, and all was dark, save here and there where a gleam of starlight came through the tangled branches.

Night, full of the strange, eerie sounds of the chaparral, lay like a dark cloak round the camp of the Rio Kid.

He had lain by the mustang more than an hour, when there was a faint sound from the jacal close at hand.

The Kid smiled in the darkness.

His hand was on the walnut butt of a six-gun. He had given the fugitive bandit help and shelter, and if Rube Smith was meditating treachery the Kid was prepared to give him hot lead, with no more compunction than if he had been a prowling wolf.

Lying silent in the thicket the Kid listened. He heard the bandit leave the jacal, and there was no sound of the dragging of an injured leg. He smiled again. His judgment had been correct; Rube Smith's leg was bruised but it was not disabled. He was moving easily and freely enough now.

The Kid gripped his six-gun hard. He fully expected to detect the ruffian stealing towards him in the darkness with murderous intent.

But to his surprise there was no sound of the bandit's approach. For some minutes there was silence—he

knew that the ruffian was listening. Then there were faint sounds receding, and the Kid realised that Rube Smith was leaving the camp.

The Kid whistled under his breath.

Why? There was no reason why he should not have left the Kid openly, at any moment he liked. Why had he affected to be disabled, and why was he stealing away softly in the darkness? The Kid reflected on that problem for a few moments. What it meant he did not know—except that it was more than likely that it meant treachery of some sort.

The Kid, quietly leaving his blankets, moved silently through the thickets; and as Rube Smith picked his slow and cautious way through the gloom of the chaparral there was one that followed behind him, unseen, like a flitting phantom in the shadows of the night.

THE THIRD CHAPTER BLACK TREACHERY!

"You, Rube!" "I guess so, Jake Saunders." "You're dog-goned late." "You been waiting?" "Since sundown!" growled the rough-bearded man who leaned on the trunk of the cottonwood, deep in shadow, the glow of his cigar indicating where he stood to the eyes of the bandit who came creeping from the thickets.

Rube Smith stopped under the shadowy branches of the tall cottonwood, half a mile from the jacal where the Rio Kid's camp lay. Jake peered at him in the gloom.

"I been waiting since sundown," he repeated. "I reckon I'd have hit the trail mighty soon, Rube. You allowed you'd be here to meet up with me at dark."

"I guess it was a chance whether

I met up with you at all," growled the bandit. "The sheriff of Plug Hat got track of me, and I had to ride for my life!"

Jake whistled.

"I guess they'd have cinched me," went on Rube Smith, "but the Rio Kid horned in, and threw lead at the Plug Hat guys, and I got away. He's fixed up in a jacal in the chaparral, lying doggo. He allows that there ain't a chance of any galoot roping in the thousand dollars that's offered for him."

"Gee!" muttered the other.

"That's why I kept you waiting," went on the bandit. "I didn't figure on letting the Kid know I had a pard meeting up with me here."

"He ain't wise to it?"

"Not by long chalks, he ain't! I've left him in his blankets, and I

guess he won't open his eyes till sun-up."

"He's a spry galoot, that Kid! If he spotted you getting away—"

"He didn't!" grinned Rube Smith. "He took his blankets out into the chaparral; he reckoned he wasn't safe too near to me in the dark. He sure was right; I've got an old grouch agin him, and if he'd left me a gun—"

He gritted his teeth.

"What's the game, then?" asked the other. "I can sure fix you up with a gun; but you don't want to go to gun-play with the Kid. He's a bad man to crowd."

"I ain't crowding him, I guess." The bandit paused a moment. "That Kid's worth a thousand dollars, Jake. I sure can't walk into Plug Hat or any other cow-town and tell them



Before Rube Smith could draw his gun a rim of cold steel was jabbing against his cheek. "Forget it, feller!" came the cool voice of the Rio Kid. "You draw that gun and you're a dead coyote!"

where to cinch him. I reckon it would be shooting on sight if I did."

Jake chuckled

"It sure would," he assented. "I guess they'd rather have you than the Kid, Rube."

"That's so. But they ain't wise to you, Jake—no guy in this section knows that you work with me. You can walk into any cow-town on the Pecos ; you wouldn't be much use to my outfit if you couldn't. All they know of you is that you're a puncher on the Sunset Ranch. They ain't wise to it that you're in with my bunch—"

"If they was, I guess I shouldn't be here chewing the rag with you," grinned Jake. "I should sure be strung up on a limb."

"You get me?" muttered Rube Smith. "You hustle into Plug Hat, and put the sheriff wise that you know where to lay hands on the Rio Kid. He sure will jump at the chance of roping in that pesky firebug. Bring the sheriff and his men around hyer at dawn, and they'll have the Kid jest where they want him. They can surround his camp and close in on him, and he won't have a dog's chance of getting clear. You get me?"

"Sure!"

"It's a thousand dollars," muttered the bandit. "You rope in the dollars, Jake—easy as falling off a log. We divide afterwards."

"Looks a sure thing," said Jake.

"It's jest pie!" said Rube Smith hoarsely. "The Kid ain't got a suspicion. He don't trust me any, but he ain't wise to it that I've got a pard here—and a pard that can show up in any cow-town without being known as one of my outfit. It's jest pie."

"You've said it!" agreed Jake.

There was an eager muttering of voices as the bandit gave his confederate the description of the spot where the jacal was built by the little stream.

"I guess I know the place," said Jake Saunders. "I been all through this chaparral. I reckon I could find it with my eyes shut now you've put me wise. You sure the Kid will be there?"

"It's a cinch! He won't miss me till dawn—and then, if he does, how's he to get wise to this racket? He knows I daren't show up in any town in Texas. He don't know about you."

"You ain't going back?"

Rube chuckled hoarsely.

"Not by a jugful! I reckon the Kid might get suspicious when the Plug Hat guys come around, and he might let me have the first bullet. And I sure don't want the Plug Hat galoots to find me along with the Kid—they'd be powerful pleased to string me up on the same branch, I reckon. Nope—I ain't going back. You hit for Plug Hat now, jest as fast as your cayuse can raise the dust, and you'll get the sheriff by dawn. I'll see you again to-morrow at sundown. I guess I can camp here safe; it's more'n half a mile from the Kid's camp, and they'll come to it from the other way, with you guidin' them."

"Sure!" assented Jake.

"Lend me a six-gun, and beat it."

A few minutes later there was the sound of a horse pushing through the thickets, followed by the ringing of distant hoofs when Jake Saunders reached the open plain and galloped for the cow-town.

Rube Smith stood under the cottonwood, smoking a cigarette, and holding in his hand the six-gun Saunders had given him. His grip was hard on

the butt of the Colt, and a savage light burned in his eyes. His thoughts were of the Rio Kid and the temptation was on him to return to the jacal, now that he had a weapon in his hand, and give the boy outlaw "his."

"Dead or alive!" muttered the bandit aloud. "They want him dead or alive—and I guess Jake would cinch the reward if they found him dead. And they'd be surer of finding him—with a bullet through his heart, dog-gone him! I've sure a hunch to go back—"

But the bandit shook his head. No doubt the Rio Kid would be securely roped in when the jacal was surrounded by the sheriff of Plug Hat and a score of determined men. But gun-play, single-handed, was another matter.

Rube Smith shook his head and thrust the six-gun into his belt. With such black treachery afoot, it was not healthy to return to the Rio Kid's camp. Safer to camp where he was, skulking in hiding till the boy outlaw was a prisoner in hands that were not likely to loosen him once they had fastened their grip on him. It was an easy thousand dollars, the bandit reflected.

Silent he stood, staring with unseeing eyes into the dim shadows—wondering afresh which course it would be more profitable, for himself, to pursue.

Something that stirred in the shadows made the bandit start and drop his hand again to the gun he had thrust into his belt. But before he could draw it a rim of steel was pressing against his neck, and a soft, pleasant voice said in his ear:

"Forget it, feller! You draw that gun and you're a dead coyote!"

The heart of the bandit missed a beat as he heard the voice of the Rio Kid.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

IN HIS OWN SNARE!

THE Rio Kid smiled pleasantly in the shadows of the cottonwood branches at the startled, scared face of Rube Smith.

The bandit eyed him desperately.

The Kid, whom he had deemed sleeping in his camp half a mile away, was there. The Kid had trailed him when he left the jacal. How much did he know?

Rube Smith's fingers closed convulsively on the butt of the six-gun. But it was death to draw it, and he did not venture. The Kid, with his left hand, relieved him of the gun and tossed it away in the darkness. His face was still smiling, but it was a grim and deadly smile.

"You—you trailed me?" muttered Rube Smith hoarsely.

"You've said it."

The Kid laughed softly.

"I allowed you was a pizen coyote, Rube Smith! I sure reckoned I was some gink to get you away from the sheriff of Plug Hat. Say, you're going to take a little journey with me. We're going back to camp."

"Why?" hissed Rube Smith, between his teeth.

"I sure ain't so tired of your company, feller, as you are of mine," smiled the Kid. "I reckon I'll take a cinch on your paws before we start, and, if you raise any objections, Rube, you want to remember that this six-gun is mighty likely to go off sudden!"

The ruffian stood still while the Kid tied his hands behind his back. In the gloom, he could see the smile on the Kid's face, and the boy outlaw's tone was pleasantly mocking. But the fear of death was in the heart of the bandit who had sought to sell the Kid to his enemies in return for the saving of his life.

Taking the ruffian by one bound arm, the Kid led him away through the chaparral, in the direction of the jacal.

Rube Smith stumbled on by his side.

"Your laig's sure a whole lot better'n it was," said the Kid, with gentle sarcasm. "Say, you was sure fooling me, Rube! But I guess I wasn't quite so fooled as you allowed."

The bandit panted.

"You're wise to it, Kid—I know that. You heard me chewing the rag with Jake Saunders!"

"Every word," drawled the Kid, "You poor fish! I wasn't six feet from you all the time!"

"Then you know——"

"I guess you ain't got a lot more to tell me," admitted the Kid.

"Dog-gone you!" hissed Rube Smith. "What are you taking me back to your camp for? If you're going to drill me, you gol-darned cuss——"

"Who's going to drill you?" said the Kid, in a tone of mild surprise. "This infant sure ain't!"

"You ain't?" breathed Rube Smith.

"Sure not."

"Then what's your game?"

"I guess you'll be wise to that pronto."

The Kid led his prisoner on by tangled paths. Rube Smith tramped and stumbled by his side, powerless in his hands, savagely surmising what his fate was to be. As soon as he knew that the Kid was wise to his treachery, he had expected to be shot out of hand. But the Kid did not intend to use his gun. What, then, did he intend?

The Kid did not choose to explain. In silence, he led the bandit through the gloomy chaparral, and they

reached the jacal by the little stream. There was a stirring in the thicket, and Side-Kicker looked out at his master. The Kid paused to pat the glossy neck of his mustang.

"I guess we'll be hittin' the trail mighty soon, old hoss," said the Kid. "You, Rube Smith, you hump it into the shebang."

Rube Smith stopped, and faced the Kid with a desperate light in his eyes.

"Look here, Kid!"

"Get into the shebang, I'm telling you."

"You dog-goned cuss!"

"I guess I ain't got a whole lot of time to chew the rag with you, Rube Smith," said the Kid amiably. "I got to hit the horizon afore the sheriff of Plug Hat horns in with his posse. You get inside."

With a grasp on the bandit's shoulder, the Kid drove him into the wattled hut. There, with a length cut from his trail-rope, he bound the outlaw's feet fast together.

Rube Smith lay on the earth, staring up at the Rio Kid with eyes that scintillated like a snake's.

The Kid bent over him and examined his bonds carefully, and rose, as if satisfied. Then, from the doorway of the jacal, the Kid looked up at the stars through an opening of the tangled branches.

"Two hours to dawn," he remarked. "I guess I ain't got a whole lot of time. But Side-Kicker can sure cover a lot of ground in two hours. The sheriff of Plug Hat is going to be some disappointed when he horns in here with your pard, feller. You give him the Rio Kid's respects, and tell him he's welcome to follow on my trail if he likes, if he's longing for Plug Hat to get a new sheriff. You get me?"

Rube Smith panted.

He understood now.



As the Kid stepped out of the jacal a torrent of savage oaths from the bandit followed him. He glanced back, amused. "Say, ain't you honing to enjoy that little surprise party you fixed up for me?"

As the Kid stepped out of the jacal, a torrent of savage oaths from the bandit followed him.

He glanced back, amused.

"You sure can cuss some, Rube," he said. "Say! Ain't you honing to enjoy that little surprise party you fixed up for me? Gee-whiz! I guess I'll tell the world you can cuss some! This here talk ain't good for Side-Kicker to hear, it sure ain't! I'm hitting the trail, and if cussing makes you feel better, feller, you can sure cuss all you want!"

The Kid saddled and packed his mustang, and led Side-Kicker away through the chaparral. The brushing and rustling died in the distance; and Rube Smith, breathing vile curses, struggled with his ropes in the jacal. Far away on the edge of the chaparral the Rio Kid mounted the grey mustang and rode away under the stars

that were paling at the approach of dawn.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER THE SHERIFF'S PRISONER!

"**N**ot a word, you guys," breathed Long Bill Haines, sheriff of Plug Hat.

Dawn was glimmering in the chaparral by the banks of the Rio Pecos. A faint light spread amid tangled branches and dusky bushes; faint, but enough to light the Plug Hat men on their way. Ten armed men, guns in hand, were with Long Bill Haines, closing in on the camp of the Rio Kid. With them came Jake Saunders.

Glad enough had Long Bill been to leave his bed and call up his posse on the news that the Rio Kid was at hand. The previous day, Rube Smith had escaped him; but the boy

outlaw of the Rio Grande was a more valuable prize.

Every man in the sheriff's outfit was keen and eager to get a cinch on the outlaw puncher, who had so long defied all the sheriffs in Texas, and whose escape from the Mal Pais, where the rangers had him cornered, was the talk of every cow-town and camp along the Pecos and the Rio Grande.

"Not a word!" breathed the sheriff.

Every instant the men of Plug Hat expected to hear the crack of a six-gun, telling them that the boy outlaw was wise to their coming.

But there was no stirring, no sound of alarm as they crept through the thickets, searching every inch of ground as they advanced, in the rising light of dawn, and at last reached the lonely jacal by the stream.

The little wattled building was surrounded, and before the doorway the sheriff paused. From within, he heard the sound of a movement—the man he sought was there.

Jake Saunders had told him that the Kid was camping in his blankets outside the hut; but he had not been found outside, and within the jacal something stirred. The chill of the night had driven him into the shelter of the hut, no doubt.

With a gesture to his men to follow, the sheriff strode into the jacal, gun raised, finger on trigger.

"Put 'em up, Kid!" he rapped.

It was deeply dusky inside the jacal. In sheer amazement the sheriff of Plug Hat stared at a figure on the floor—a figure that wrenched madly at ropes that bound his limbs. Even in the dim light he could see that the rough-bearded ruffian was not the Kid.

A swift glance showed that there was no one else in the jacal.

"Hyer, you, Jake Saunders!" exclaimed the sheriff. "What you

giving me? This here galoot ain't the Kid!"

Jake Saunders stared into the jacal. What he saw made his jaw drop in surprise and alarm. For an instant he stared, dumbfounded, at the bound figure on the earth. Then he backed away, plunged into the thickets, and disappeared. If Rube Smith was taken, he was more likely than not to betray an associate.

"I guess I don't get on to this!" growled the sheriff of Plug Hat. "This hyer galoot ain't the Kid—and he's sure tied up like an ornery steer. Get him into the light."

Two or three pairs of hands grasped the bound man, and rolled him out of the jacal into the clearer light outside. Then the sheriff of Plug Hat gave a roar.

"Rube Smith!"

A panting curse answered him. Rube Smith, sweating, exhausted from his long and unavailing struggle with the ropes, lay and panted, and glared at the posse from Plug Hat. They gathered round him in amazement. Long Bill Haines stared at him blankly.

"Rube Smith!" he repeated. "The dog-goned firebug that got away from us yesterday! I should smile! That galoot Saunders allowed we'd cinch the Kid here; but the Kid sure ain't around. But I guess we ain't had our trouble for nothing! Gee!"

The sheriff and his men rode out of the chaparral with Rube Smith bound to a broncho in their midst.

They rode back to Plug Hat with Rube Smith a prisoner; but where the Rio Kid was they did not know, and never knew. Far away over the grassy prairie the grey mustang was galloping, and the Rio Kid, free as the wind that blew in his careless face, still snapped his fingers at his foes.

THE END



THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE ORDER OF THE BOOT!

"Ow! Whoop!" William Wibley roared.

Really, it was enough to make a fellow roar. He was walking along quite peacefully when Bob Cherry came up to him and kicked him.

Bob did not offer any explanation for the kick. He walked away, grinning, and a howl of laughter arose from other fellows in the quad.

It was a bright spring morning, in the interval between class and dinner. Fellows were kicking footballs, chatting, laughing and otherwise enjoying themselves. Mr. Quelch, the Master of the Remove, was sampling the sunshine with an agree-

able smile on his face. Even the acid-tempered Hacker, master of the Shell, was talking pleasantly to Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. Sunshine bathed the old quad in brightness, and everyone was gay.

Except Wibley! Wibley was brooding!

The Remove Dramatic Society were producing "Julius Cæsar" at the end of the month, and Wibley, as producer, manager and chief actor, was worried. The cause of his worry was Harold Skinner, who had been cast as Cassius.

At the rehearsal the previous evening Cassius had organised a rag. Skinner had a gift for acting. He had also a gift for practical joking, and it was the latter gift he used on this occasion.

MR. QUELCH'S DELUSION!

By HARRY WHARTON

When William Wibley, the actor of the Remove, sought revenge on Harold Skinner, the outcome of his scheming had alarming results for Mr. Quelch!

The upshot was that Wibley had "chucked him," and "Julius Caesar" was now short of a Cassius. Producing "Julius Caesar" without a Cassius was rather a problem; hence Wibley's wrinkled brow!

To add to his worry, there was the strange conduct of the fellows in the quad. More than a dozen of them had already kicked Wibley, and not one of them had condescended to explain his reason for it.

Wibley was fuming.

He turned round to glare at Cherry, and as he did so Hobson of the Shell came up behind him and let out his boot.

Crash!

"Whooop!" roared Wibley. "You silly ass! What are you kicking me for, you fathead?"

Hobson walked away, laughing.

Had Wibley been able to see the back of his own jacket, he would have understood.

Perhaps Harold Skinner felt rather sore at being "chucked," or perhaps his gift for practical joking was too strong for him. At all events, he had hooked a large square of cardboard on to Wibley's back, and on that cardboard was the legend:

"FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRY-MEN, LEND ME YOUR BOOTS!"

This was too good a jest to be neglected. Friend and foe alike took the opportunity to lend Wibley a boot, and the unfortunate producer was aching all over.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd in the quad, and Wibley spun round in fury.

Mr. Quelch, basking in the sunshine near the steps, frowned slightly as he glimpsed a placard on Wibley's back. Wibley was a Remove fellow,

and Quelch did not approve of Remove fellows making themselves ridiculous.

"Wibley!" he said severely. "Come here!"

Wibley approached.

Harold Skinner was standing close to Mr. Quelch, and as Wibley passed him, Skinner deftly hooked that placard off his back. He did not want that little joke to meet the eye of a beak. It was cleverly done, and Mr. Quelch did not observe it.

"Yes, sir?" said Wibley, wriggling.

"Why are you acting in this foolish manner, Wibley? Take that ridiculous cardboard off your jacket."

"Wha-at?" gasped Wibley. "What cardboard?"

"Are you not aware, Wibley, that there is a notice attached to the back of your jacket?"

"Nunno!" howled Wibley, straining his neck to see behind him. "It's some rotten joke!"

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch's mouth twitched. "Turn round, and I will remove it for you."

Wibley turned round.

Quelch gazed at him with a puzzled frown. The placard was now under Skinner's jacket, well out of sight. The Remove master had not seen Skinner's action, and the absence of the cardboard startled him. True, he had obtained only one glimpse of it, but he was certain the cardboard had been there.

He looked from Wibley to the ground.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured.

"Isn't it there, sir?" asked Wibley.

"Apparently not, and yet I was positive—" Mr. Quelch coughed. "You yourself did not remove it, Wibley?"

"Nunno, sir! I never knew it was there!"

"H'm ! Very well, Wibley, possibly I was mistaken. Indeed, it seems that I must have been ! "

And Mr. Quelch walked away with a very puzzled expression.

Mr. Hacker and Mossoo were still chatting as Mr. Quelch walked by. Hacker gave him a nod.

" You are looking worried, Quelch," he remarked.

Mr. Quelch stopped.

" I am wondering, as a matter of fact, whether my eyesight may be growing defective," he replied nervously. " It is a strange thing, Hacker, but I am positive I saw some paper or cardboard attached to a boy's jacket just now. Yet when I investigated, I found I was mistaken.

Do you think it possible that a trick of the eye—"

Hacker shook his head. He was looking very grave.

" Not the eye, Quelch," he responded solemnly. " The brain, my dear fellow—the brain ! "

" What ? "

" The brain ! " murmured Mossoo. " My dear Hackair—"

" I have no doubt of it," said the master of the Shell. " You are suffering, Quelch, from a form of hallucination, brought on by over-work."

" Do you suggest, Mr. Hacker, that I am—ahem—"

" No, no, no ! " laughed the Shell Form master. " Don't misunderstand



"Whoop ! " roared Wibley, as Hobson of the Shell came up behind him and let out his boot. " You silly ass ! What are you kicking me for, you fathead ? " Wibley was quite unaware of the "Invitation" on his back !

me, my dear Quelch. Hallucinations of that kind are quite common, and are not necessarily serious. It is a state which can be described as a strained brain. You have been overworking, and your nerves are causing you to imagine things."

"But I saw it so plainly——"

"That is one of the symptoms," said Hacker cheerfully. "I have a large book on 'Hallucinations and Nervous Disorders.' I will lend it to you, if you like."

Mr. Quelch certainly looked as though his nerves were disordered at that moment.

"I—I—I cannot believe that——"

"Watch closely," said Hacker. "If it was an hallucination, it will be repeated in other forms. If you see anything else mysterious, let me know. I am really quite interested in your case."

"Thank you!" answered Mr. Quelch cuttingly. "It is very kind of you, Hacker; but I do not believe it was anything of the kind. I am not likely to imagine anything else, either now or in the future."

And the Remove master, puzzled and rather angry, walked back to the house.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

WIBLEY'S WHEEZE.

SKINNER, Snoop and Stott, the gay dogs of the Remove, were having a quiet cigarette—or three quiet cigarettes, to be precise—after dinner. As cigarettes, quiet or otherwise, were forbidden at Greyfriars, the three Removites had to keep out of sight, and for this purpose they repaired to the top box-room and smoked in secret.

"Nothin' like a cigarette after dinner," remarked Skinner, puffing luxuriously.

"Nothin'," agreed Snoop and Stott.

The door of the box-room opened. Skinner & Co. spun round with startled faces. The intruder was William Wibley, and he looked wrathful.

"You—you silly ass!" growled Skinner. "I—I thought it was a prefect, bother you!"

And Stott, who had swallowed a cubic foot of smoke in his alarm, coughed and spluttered wildly.

"You weedy rotters!" snorted Wibley, coughing out the fumes. "It would serve you right if a prefect did catch you smoking."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I'm looking for you, Skinner! You fastened a card on my back before dinner, and I'm going to wipe up the floor with you—see?"

Skinner laughed.

"You couldn't wipe up one side of me, old top!"

The next moment Wibley charged. Skinner was just putting a cigarette to his lips when Wibley whirled him over, and the cigarette went in lighted-end first.

"Ah-wah-wah!" shrieked Skinner, with his mouth full of burning tobacco. "Oooo-wooo-wooo-wooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wibley.

Skinner dabbed frantically at his mouth with a handkerchief. He was burnt and he was savage.

"Thlow that lotter ouder here!" gurgled Skinner, and he advanced on Wibley, aided by Snoop and Stott.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Wibley. "Man to man, you rotters! Three against one isn't fair—Yarrooop!"

Wibley was overborne by the odds. He wasn't much of a fighting man at the best of times, and pluck did not avail against superior numbers. The three blades grasped Wibley and up-ended him. A steep staircase led

from the Remove passage to the box-room. It was down this staircase that Wibley was thrown.

Bump ! Bump ! Bump !

"Oooop ! Woooop ! Yoooogh !"

"Ha, ha, ha !" yelled Skinner and Co. as Wibley crashed.

Wibley picked himself up and crawled back to his study.

"The rotters !" he groaned. "I'd like to whop those three smoky ticks. But how——" He paused, as an idea smote him.

In the French class that morning, the three slackers had all been in trouble with Monsieur Charpentier. They had been given lines to hand in by tea-time, but they hadn't troubled to do them, because Mossoo always forgot.

But supposing Wibley made up as Mossoo and caned Skinner & Co. for not doing their lines !

Wibley had made up once or twice before as the French master. They were much of the same height, and Wibley could stuff himself to Mossoo's thickness with the aid of cushions. He had a false beard, moustache and wig which he kept specially for his Mossoo make-up.

"Ripping !" chortled Wibley. "I can make up so like Mossoo that a microscope couldn't tell us apart. The only drawback is, I shall have to borrow a gown and mortar-board. Still, Quelchy's got a spare outfit, and I know where he keeps it."

Fired with this idea, Wibley went along to Mr. Quelch's study to annex his spare gown and mortar-board. Quelch, he knew, would be in the Form room, preparing some lessons for class that afternoon.

As it happened, however, Mr. Quelch walked back to his study for a book. He turned the corner of the Masters' Corridor just as Wibley was vanishing into his study.

"Who's that ?" demanded Mr. Quelch, as he had only a fleeting back view of the visitor.

"Oh, crumbs !" gasped the dismayed Wibley inside the study. "Here comes Quelchy !"

Wibley made a jump for the cupboard, and crouched inside it. He certainly did not want Mr. Quelch to see him appropriating his scholastic gown.

Quelch strode along the passage and entered the study.

"What do you want ?" he inquired, as he came in. "You should not—bless my soul !"

He stared around the study in dismay. The study was—or appeared to be—empty !

Mr. Quelch rubbed a shaking hand over his eyes. To make quite sure, he looked under the table and behind the screen, but he knew, as he did so, that it was useless.

Was Hacker's doleful verdict right ? Had he really got a strained brain ? Was he the victim of hallucinations ?

He took the book and left the study, his face quite pale. With a faltering step he made his way back to the Form room. He would not tell Hacker about it—anything was better than admitting to Hacker that he had been right all the time. But he would secretly tell his troubles to a doctor. And yet—Mr. Quelch shook his head. No, he would keep the matter to himself and trust that nothing more would happen.

In class that afternoon he was quite worried. Wibley, however, was cheerful. He had annexed the gown and mortar-board, and that was all he cared.

Skinner grinned at Wibley when the Remove was dismissed. Wibley grinned, too.

" You wait," he murmured, " till I get my make-up on ! Then you'll see some fireworks, you rotter ! "

THE THIRD CHAPTER

MOSSOO'S TWIN !

" **H**OWLY Moses ! " gasped Micky Desmond. " It's Mossoo himself, intoirely ! "

Wibley grinned complacently. Desmond, his study-mate, had been helping him don his make-up, and now the transformed schoolboy actor stood in all his glory—as like Mossoo as one pea is like another.

" Bon soir ! " clucked Wibley, *à la* Mossoo. " Now zen, Desmond, mon enfant, vat you zink of zees—yes ? "

" Begorrah ! " grinned Desmond. " Ye look more like Mossoo than Mossoo does himself. If I didn't know it was yez, I wouldn't belave it, intoirely."

Wibley picked up a cane. With his beard and moustache, and his figure padded out to triple-size, no one could have imagined he was only a boy. He grinned and turned to the door.

As he did so, there was a tap on the door. Wibley stopped.

The door opened and a voice spoke.

" Bon soir, mes enfants, I desire zat — mon Dieu ! " howled Monsieur Charpentier, clutching at his forehead. " Vat is zees ? "

Mossoo had been beaming as he opened the door, but at the sight of Wibley his hair stood on end, and he seemed about to have a couple of fits.

Wibley groaned beneath his make-up. It was the worst possible luck ! What mischance had brought Mossoo on the scene he neither knew nor cared, but it was obvious, now, that the game was up.

Desmond looked on in dismay.

" Ar-r-rh ! " shrieked Mossoo. " I

go mad, vasn't it ? Who is zees zat look so mooch like me ? Pardieu, I am amaze ! "

Wibley was silent.

" Speak viz yourself, rascal ! " hooted Mossoo fiercely. " Zat isn't me—no ? I'm here, not zere ! Who is it zat make himself like me ? Speak, scelerat ! "

" I—I—I'm Wibley, m'sieu ! " stuttered the unhappy jester. " I—I—I— You see—"

" Wibley ! C'est ne pas possible ! Vat for zen you look like zat ? "

" I—I was just making up for—er—" Wibley gasped. " You see, I—I—I—"

" Oui, oui ! I see ! I zink so ! " nodded Mossoo grimly. " You vill make yourself like me on ze purpose, hein ? It is to make ze zhoke of me, yes ? "

" Oh, Mossoo ! "

" Oui, oui, sans doute ! Ve vill see what Monsieur Quelch zink of heem. Allons, mon enfant ! Follow me and bring too zat gown and zat hat ! "

" Oh, lor' ! " groaned the wretched Wibley.

" Faith, and it's hard luck, ould chap ! " murmured Desmond.

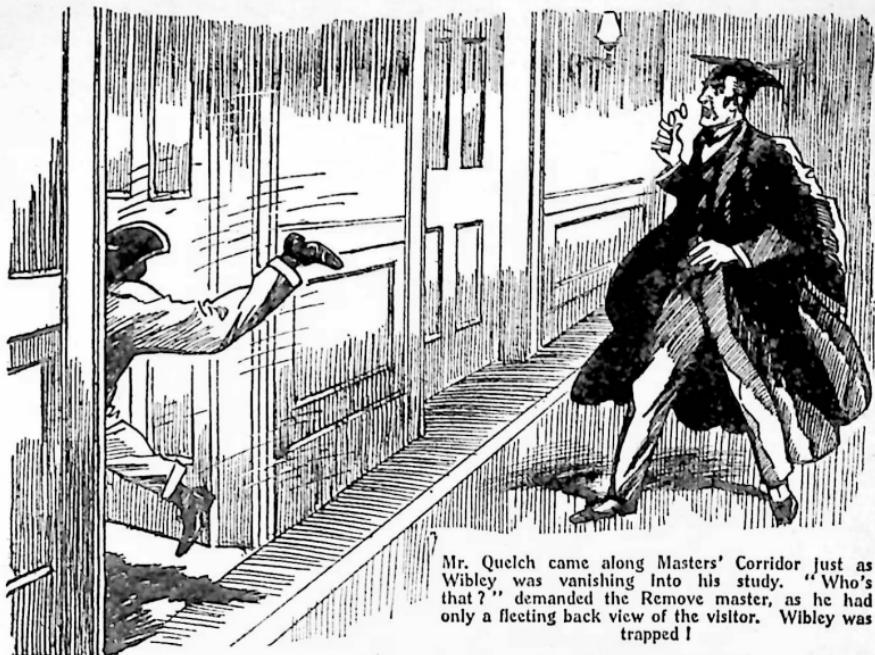
Wibley groaned again as he walked with Mossoo towards Mr. Quelch's study. Not only would he be punished for the trick, but there was the little matter of Quelchy's gown into the bargain. It seemed to the unlucky jester that his woes were without end.

There were howls of astonishment and laughter at the sight of Mossoo and Wibley walking together, as like as two peas. Fellows could hardly believe their eyes.

" Great pip ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" What on earth—" Harry Wharton gasped. " Mossoo's got a twin ! "



Mr. Quelch came along Masters' Corridor just as Wibley was vanishing into his study. "Who's that?" demanded the Remove master, as he had only a fleeting back view of the visitor. Wibley was trapped!

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Mossoo is beside himself with rage. He, he, he!"

"It's Wibley!" gasped Desmond. "Poor old Wib!"

"Wibley!" The fellows understood at once, and there was a roar of laughter.

"The howling ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "He'll bag a flogging for this!"

"Venez!" hooted Monsieur Charpentier, grasping Wibley by the arm.

"Come in!" called Mr. Quelch, when they tapped his study door.

They went in, and stood side by side before Mr. Quelch's desk. The Remove master was writing busily. He did not look up.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Mon cher Quelch——"

Mr. Quelch looked up.

For one second his eyes dwelt on the twin Mossoos in front of him. Then he left his chair and proceeded in the direction of the ceiling for a distance of three feet.

Having come to earth again, he uttered a howl of dismay and fairly bounded out of the study.

"My dear sair——" gasped Mossoo, astounded.

But Quelch was gone.

Mr. Hacker was about to start his tea when the door of his study was flung unceremoniously open, and Quelch flew in and collapsed into a chair.

"What—what—what——" Hacker exclaimed, startled.

"Hacker, I'm going mad! I'm beginning to see double! You were quite right—I admit it—hallucinations—delusions—"

"I was sure of it," said Hacker soothingly. "Come, come, my dear Quelch, don't give way. There may still be some vestige of hope for you."

"I assure you, Hacker, that not two minutes ago I distinctly saw two figures of Monsieur Charpentier in my study. I saw them as plainly as—"

"Yes, yes, of course," agreed Hacker. "An infallible proof of mental aberration. Probably a case of incipient paranoia."

"Can—can anything be done for it?" groaned Quelch.

"Done? Why, of course. After a few years' rest—"

"A few years!" cried Quelch.

"Yes, in absolute solitude—"

"Oh!"

"It is quite possible that you may recover," said Hacker cheerfully. "We must not, of course, under-estimate the gravity of your condition, but there is a distinct chance—Why—what—what—" howled Hacker, as Mossoo and Wibley appeared in his study doorway.

Mossoo was gasping with astonishment.

"Pray listen to me, sair—"

"Two of them!" hooted Hacker, clutching his head.

Quelch turned to him eagerly.

"Can you see two of them?" he demanded hopefully.

"See them, sir? Of course I can see them! Do you think I am blind?" Hacker fairly gibbered.

Mr. Quelch laid a soothing hand on his arm.

"Come, come, don't give way, Hacker," he said. "There may still be some hope for you. Of course,

we must not expect too much, but after a few years' rest—"

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Meestair Quelch!" howled Mossoo, in despair. "Listen, sair! Ecoutez, je vous prie!"

"If you are Monsieur Charpentier," gulped Quelch, "will you kindly tell me who is—that!" He pointed to Wibley.

"Certainement, if you vill pairmit me to speak," roared Mossoo. "C'est Wibley, sair, en deguise! He has made himself to look like me—"

"Wibley!" Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath. "Ah, now I understand! This is not the first time he has impersonated people at this school. So, Wibley, you have dared to caricature Monsieur Charpentier in this ridiculous way?"

"I—I—yes, sir!"

"I leave ze mattair to you, sir," said Mossoo, and, with a bow, he walked away, considerably puzzled.

Mr. Quelch glared at Wibley. Mr. Hacker glared at both of them.

"You will be punished severely for this prank, Wibley. I am greatly inclined to take you to your headmaster for a flogging." Wibley writhed. "Where did you procure that gown and mortar-board you are carrying?"

Wibley groaned dismally. He had expected this.

"They're yours, sir!"

"What?" Mr. Quelch glared. "Do you mean that you have abstracted them from my study?"

"Mmmmmmm!"

"When?" The master's voice was like buzz-saw going through teak.

"Just—just before class, sir!"

A glitter shot into Mr. Quelch's eyes.

"Were you in the study when—when—"



"Bon soir, mes enfants, I desire zat—mon Dieu!" howled Monsieur Charpentier, clutching at his forehead. "Vat is zees?" At the sight of his double in the room the French master seemed about to have a couple of fits!

"Yes, sir, in the cupboard," replied Wibley, with a faint grin.

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch pondered. "Wibley, did you have anything on your back in the quadrangle this morning?"

"Eh? Yes, sir—a card. A fellow pinned it on me for a joke."

"Indeed?"

Wibley was amazed to see the dawning of a gentle smile on Quelchy's face. The Remove master, in fact, was thrilling with happiness. Relief poured over him like a healing stream. There were no delusions, after all.

Wibley waited miserably to hear his doom.

"Follow me," said Mr. Quelch abruptly, and led the way to his own study. "Replace my gown and mortar-board!" Wibley took them off in silence. "Very well! Now you may go!"

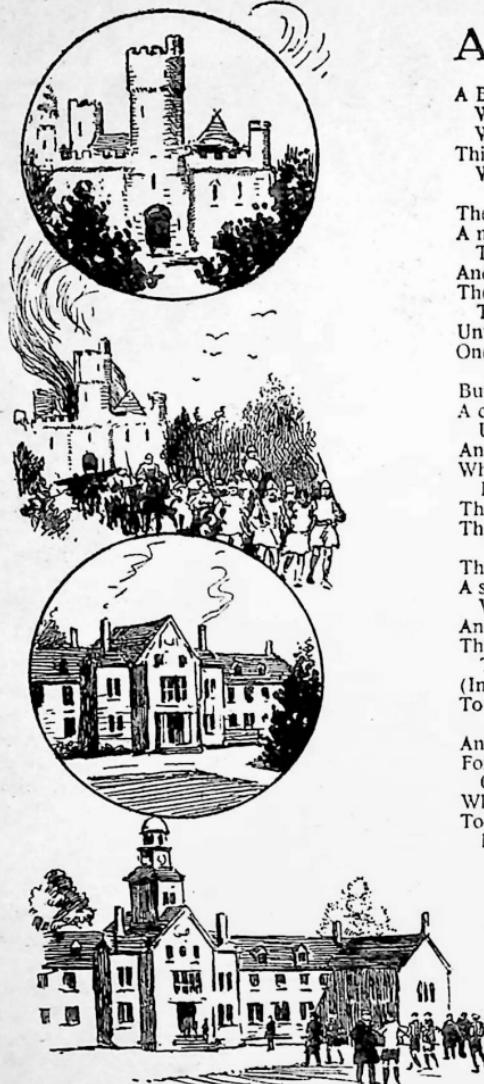
"Eh?"

"You may go!" Mr. Quelch simply couldn't look severe. He beamed. "I propose to overlook the matter this time. But if anything of the kind occurs again—"

Wibley didn't wait for the rest. Amazing, incredible as it was, Quelch had told him to go. Wibley went, before Quelch could change his mind!

THE END

The STORY of ROOKWOOD



A BOUT eight hundred years ago,
There lived in Happy Hampshire, so
The old historians tell us,
A Baron, last of all his line,
Who split his rivals to the chine
Whenever he felt jealous !
This Baron's gloomy castle stood
Within a rook-infested wood.

The building was in Norman style,
A mighty and forbidding pile,
To fit the Baron haughty !
And from its portals, strong and stout,
The Baron frequently went out
To make a sudden sortie,
Until the castle was attacked
One morning, and completely sacked !

But Rookwood wasn't finished yet ;
A certain grim Plantagenet
Upon it hung his banner,
And stayed until the Civil War,
When Rookwood was besieged once more
In no uncertain manner ;
The keep, though partly ruined, stood ;
The rest was battered down for good.

There next was built a country seat,
A spacious manor-house, complete
With windows, large and leaded :
And secret passages galore,
Through which the owners ran, before
They found themselves beheaded.
(In those old days it often paid
To have a secret passage made.)

And many dramas here took place ;
For instance, we may take the case
Of one poor girl, Eleanor,
Who went one morning to her tower
To sit and paint, and since that hour
No eye has ever seen her !

She simply disappeared—but how
Has not been answered even now.

But space forbids us to recite
The tales of terror-stricken flight,
With ghostly candles burning !
The manor passed through many hands
And now, as Rookwood College, stands,
A famous seat of learning !
And yet its glories still increase,
Long may it flourish thus in peace !

LOVELL on the WARPATH

by
OWEN CONQUEST



When Arthur Edward Lovell set out to get his own back on the new Maths Master at Rookwood, he little guessed what sensational results his "rag" was to lead to!

THE FIRST CHAPTER THE ELUSIVE HALF-CROWN

IT was Arthur Edward Lovell's idea. Lovell rather prided himself upon being a fellow with ideas.

Generally, Lovell's chums did not think much of his ideas. But Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome admitted that this particular idea was rather funny, and might afford entertainment.

There was a wait of twenty minutes at Latcham Junction for the local train to Coombe, the station for Rookwood. Rookwood fellows swarmed the platform at Latcham, gathering from all corners of the kingdom for the opening of the new term. Fellows of all Forms loafed

about the platform or consumed refreshments in the buffet, or exchanged greetings and cat-calls with friends and foes while they waited for the local train. And Arthur Edward Lovell weighed in with his little scheme for passing the time in an entertaining manner.

It was quite simple.

Lovell was the happy possessor of a "lucky" half-crown; that is, a half-crown in which some individual, regardless of the laws upon the subject of defacing the King's coinage, had bored a hole.

By means of that bored hole Lovell had attached a thin string of elastic to the half-crown.

The half-crown lay near Lovell's

right boot, on the platform, glimmering in the wintry sunshine.

It looked like a coin that had been dropped and forgotten—a lost coin that anybody might have picked up.

But the string of black elastic, invisible against Lovell's dark trousers, held it captive, in spite of appearances.

The other end of the elastic was in Lovell's hand.

His hand, to all appearance, was shoved into his overcoat-pocket for warmth that cold day. In reality it was shoved through the slit in the lining, and held the end of the elastic attached to the coin, ready to jerk the half-crown away as soon as someone stooped to pick it up.

Now, properly speaking, Lovell's little joke ought to have been an absolute failure, because nobody to whom the half-crown did not belong ought to have thought of taking possession of it.

But Lovell was quite sure, nevertheless, that somebody would attempt to pick it up, a belief which really showed rather a want of faith in human integrity on Lovell's part.

Lovell and his chums stood in a row near a waiting-room door, apparently quite unconscious of the half-crown so near them on the platform. They were waiting for victims.

And a victim was not long in coming.

Leggett of the Modern Fourth came along the platform, and his sharp eyes fell at once on the dropped coin.

Leggett paused.

He was not on friendly terms with the Fistical Four, and had had, until that moment, no intention of greeting them. Now he edged towards them with a friendly grin.

Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned, too

They were quite aware of what Albert Leggett was after.

"Hello! You fellows back?" said Leggett cordially.

"Yes, here we are again," said Jimmy Silver.

Leggett blew his nose, and dropped his handkerchief skilfully on top of the half-crown.

It was really done quite skilfully on Leggett's part, and had that half-crown been a lost coin, undoubtedly Leggett of the Modern Fourth would have captured it. And it is much to be feared that he would have kept it.

Leggett stooped—for his handkerchief.

His bony fingers slid under the handkerchief for the half-crown. His finger-tips just touched it.

Then it moved.

Leggett was so surprised as the coveted coin slipped away from his fingers that he gave quite a jump. A half-crown that was endowed with the power of motion, on its own, was a surprising sort of coin.

He grabbed up the handkerchief.

The half-crown was gone.

The elastic had jerked it up under Lovell's overcoat. But Leggett was not yet aware of that fact.

His expression, as he stood with the handkerchief in his hand, blinking at the blank spot where the half-crown had been, was bewildered—almost idiotic.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four yelled. They had meant to keep up an air of detachment, but Leggett's expression was too much for them. They yelled.

"I—I say—" he stuttered.

Arthur Edward Lovell allowed the lucky half-crown to dangle down below his overcoat. Leggett saw it fluttering there, and then he understood.

" Oh ! " he ejaculated.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Leggett, with a very red face, stalked away. Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled loud and long.

" That's the first giddy victim," he remarked. " There'll be another soon. Here comes Tubby Muffin."

Reginald Muffin of the Classical Fourth rolled up to greet the Fistical Four. His eyes fell at once on the half-crown, now lying on the platform in its former place.

Tubby did not think of adopting strategy as Leggett had done. He made a plunge for the coin at once, his fat hand extended to clutch it.

It seemed like black magic to Tubby when the half-crown whisked up under Lovell's overcoat, a second before his fat fingers could reach it.

" Oh ! " gasped Tubby.

" Try again," grinned Lovell.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Yah ! " said Reginald Muffin, and he rolled away in great annoyance, without wasting any greetings on Jimmy Silver & Co.

" There's Carthew ! " murmured Raby, a few minutes later.

Carthew of the Sixth, the old enemy of the Fistical Four, bestowed a scowl on them

in passing. In the act of scowling at them, he caught sight of the half-crown near Lovell's boot. He was walking with Knowles of the Modern Sixth. He stopped suddenly.

" Hold on a minute, Knowles."

" What's up ? " asked the Modern senior.

" I think I dropped something—a coin, I think," said Carthew.

" I didn't hear it."

" Well, I did. Hallo, there it is ! " And Mark Carthew came across towards the Fistical Four, to pick up the half-crown.

Knowles stood and watched him. Certainly he had not heard the coin drop, and he was thinking that it must have rolled a good distance before settling down, if Carthew had



" Hallo, here's the half-crown I dropped ! " said Mark Carthew, and he stooped to pick it up. Whisk ! The coin suddenly disappeared under Lovell's coat !

dropped it. But there it was, and Carthew stooped to pick it up.

Whisk !

The half-crown disappeared under Lovell's overcoat.

Carthew stood, half-stooping, transfixed for a moment. Cecil Knowles burst into a roar of laughter.

" Ha, ha, ha ! Sold again, Carthew ! "

Carthew spluttered.

" I—I thought—"

" Ha, ha, ha ! " roared Knowles. " You dropped it, did you ? Queer that it tied itself on the end of a string in that fag's paw, what ? Ha, ha ! "

Carthew gave the heroes of the Fourth a deadly glare, and moved away, crimson with confusion. Knowles was chuckling as they went up the platform, and Carthew was scowling.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave his comrades a blissful grin.

" What price that ? " he chuckled. " I never expected to catch a Sixth Form senior. I say, the Head ought to look after the Sixth a bit better, they're not honest, you know."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Jimmy Silver looked at his watch.

" Train's due in five minutes," he remarked.

" Oh, we'll catch two or three more in that time," said Lovell cheerfully. " Who'll be the giddy next, I wonder."

The half-crown, glimmering on the platform, remained unnoticed for a minute or two—or, at least, unregarded. Then a rather tall, thin gentleman came out of the waiting-room door near at hand. The Fistical Four noticed him casually. Without looking at him, they were aware that he had paused, and that the glance of his eyes was fixed upon the " lost " coin.

They looked away across the line towards the opposite platform, with an elaborate air of unconsciousness.

The thin, green-eyed gentleman looked about forty ; and certainly they had not expected to catch so old a bird with so simple a trick. Also, they were rather shocked at him. They felt, rather than saw, that he had designs on the half-crown ; and, really, at his age, he ought to have known better. As the half-crown lay so near Lovell's boot it looked as if Lovell had dropped it ; and anyone who bothered about it at all ought to have drawn Lovell's attention to it, as presumably it was his.

But the thin, green-eyed gentleman did not do that. He moved along towards the Fistical Four with a sliding movement.

He did not stoop for the half-crown. Before Lovell could guess his intention, he had placed his foot on it.

Lovell jerked the elastic, but he jerked in vain. The coin was pinned to the platform by the thin gentleman's boot.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome grinned—but Lovell did not grin.

The thin gentleman glanced at the juniors.

" Is this the right platform for Coombe ? " he asked. No doubt the thin gentleman asked that question as a sort of explanation for stopping so close to the juniors.

" Yes, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

" Thank you ! "

Lovell hoped that the thin gentleman would move on. But he did not. He waited—and it dawned upon the juniors that he was hoping that they would move, and give him a chance of picking up the half-crown unnoticed. They were not likely to do so.

"The train's signalled!" said Raby.

"There'll be a rush," remarked Newcome. "Don't let those Modern cads bag all the carriages."

"No fear!" agreed Jimmy. "Better get a move on!"

Arthur Edward Lovell gave another vain jerk at the elastic. The thin gentleman's boot pinned the half-crown to the platform; and evidently he had no intention of moving. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were growing more and more enter-

tained, and Lovell was growing uneasy and restive. He did not want to lose his half-crown. He had had several little jokes with it, but he did not want to pay half-a-crown for the entertainment.

"Here comes the train!" said Jimmy. "We shall have to shift, Lovell!"

Lovell looked at the thin gentleman.

"Would you mind getting off my half-crown, sir?" he asked politely.

The thin gentleman started.

"What? What?"

"You're standing on my half-crown, sir—your left foot," said Lovell coolly.

The thin gentleman's greenish eyes glared at him.

"Nothing of the kind! Don't be impudent, my boy!"



Smack! The thin gentleman's bony hand shot out and boxed Arthur Edward Lovell's ear. "Ow!" roared Lovell, staggering back. "Oh! Ow! Ooooh!"

"Look here, sir——"

"Nonsense!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Lovell, in angry astonishment. "Look here, sir, that's my half-crown, and I want it, see! Take your boot off it!"

The thin gentleman did not move. But the train was coming in now, and there was no more time to waste. Lovell gave the thin gentleman a slight shove, and the boot had to move. The half-crown was revealed.

"You young rogue!" exclaimed the thin gentleman sharply. "That coin is mine—I must have dropped it——"

"Rats! It's mine!"

"Stand back!" snapped the thin gentleman.

He stooped for the half-crown, and

his long, thin fingers fairly clutched at it. Lovell jerked at the elastic at the same moment, and the coin was jerked up from the platform, and vanished under Lovell's overcoat.

For an instant the thin gentleman stood dumbfounded. Then he realised the trick, and his thin face flushed a deep crimson. And then—

Smack !

The thin gentleman's bony hand shot out, and boxed Arthur Edward Lovell's ear—with a terrific box !

"Ow ! " roared Lovell, staggering back against the waiting-room window. "Oh ! Ow ! Ooooh ! "

THE SECOND CHAPTER TROUBLE IN THE TRAIN

" **H**a, ha, ha ! "

Jimmy Silver & Co. roared.

Lovell, knocked spinning by that terrific box on his ear, staggered and almost fell. He recovered his balance, however, and stood rubbing his ear, his face blazing with wrath.

This unexpected ending to his little joke struck Jimmy Silver & Co. as irresistibly funny—the funniest part of the whole episode, in their opinion. It did not impress Arthur Edward Lovell in the same way.

"Why the—the cheeky rotter ! " howled Lovell. "I'll go after him, and—and—and— ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

"What are you cackling at, you silly chumps ! " hooted Lovell. "My head's singing—ow ! Why, I'll hack his shins—I'll—" Lovell glared round for the thin gentleman.

Jimmy Silver caught him by the arm.

" Hold on, you ass ! "

" I tell you I'll—" "

" You jolly well won't," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Come on and catch the train—we don't want to get left."

" I'll hack his shins ! A beastly thief—that's what he is ! " hooted Lovell. "Saying it was his half-crown—he knew jolly well it wasn't, though he didn't know it was on a string. A rotten pickpocket—"

" Come on—we're losing the train."

" Blow the train ! I—I—"

But Lovell was rushed away by his comrades towards the train, which was filling rapidly. A good many of the fellows had to wait for the second train ; and though the wait was not a long one, nobody wanted to wait. Something like a battle was going on between a crowd of Classical fellows and another crowd of Moderns, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were never "backward in coming forward" on such an occasion.

" Back up, Classicals ! " shouted Valentine Mornington. "Pile in, you slackers ! "

" Mop up those Classical cads ! " shouted Tommy Dodds of the Modern Fourth.

" Now then, order there ! " roared Bulkeley of the Sixth, towering over the mob of juniors.

But in the excitement of the moment Bulkeley's voice was not heeded. Tommy Dodd & Co. were shoving back the Classicals—and the reinforcément, in the shape of the Fistical Four, came just in time. Even Lovell forgot the offensive thin gentleman, and the box on his burning ear, in joining up for the first scrap of the term with the Modern fellows.

" Kick them out ! " roared Lovell.

" Back up, Classicals."

" Go it, Moderns ! "

" Oh, my hat ! Ow ! Oooop ! "

Tommy Dodd & Co. were swept back from the open carriage door. Jimmy Silver and a crowd of Classicals poured into the carriage—the

Fistical Fou^z, and Mornington, and Erroll, and Rawson, and Gunner, and Dickinson minor, and Oswald, and two or three more fellows. There was no room in the carriage for so many, especially as there was already a grown-up passenger inside—but the juniors found room somehow.

"Order! Stop this scuffling!" shouted Bulkeley.

And the captain of Rookwood headed off Tommy Dodds & Co., as they were rushing back to make a desperate attempt to carry the carriage by assault.

"Crawl away, you Modern worms!" roared Lovell victoriously, from the window.

"Yah! Classical cad!"

"Modern worm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The carriage door was closed and held from inside against attacks. The enraged Moderns went along the train, consoling themselves by upsetting stray Classicals on their way.

The whistle screamed, doors slammed, and the train began to move.

"We've done those Modern cads in the eye!" grinned Lovell. "I say, let a fellow sit down."

Lovell was standing at the window till the train moved, prepared to repel boarders. Now he made the cheerful discovery that all the seats were bagged. In the far corner sat a tall, thin gentleman, frowning at the noisy crowd of schoolboys; and there were five other seats, occupied now by eight or nine juniors.

"Standing room only, old bean!" said Mornington.

Lovell grunted.

Then his eyes fell on the gentleman in the far corner, sitting bolt upright with a grim face, and he recognised the claimant to his half-crown, who had boxed his ears.

"Hallo! That rotter!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Eh, what?"

"Look out for your pockets!" said Lovell.

"What the thump do you mean?" exclaimed Mornington.

"Cheese it, Lovell!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "We don't want a row here."

Lovell snorted.

"I didn't want my head thumped by a fellow who was trying to bag my half-crown!" he retorted.

The thin gentleman glanced across at Lovell. His close-set, greenish eyes glittered at the Rookwood junior. His face was rather red, under the curious looks of the juniors. Lovell met his angry stare undauntedly.

"You can scowl!" he said coolly. "You tried to bag my half-crown, and you know you did!"

"You insolent young rascal!"

"Oh, can it!" said Lovell.

"Shut up, Lovell!" urged Newcome. "What's the good of a row?"

"You boys belong to Rookwood School, I presume?" said the thin gentleman, eyeing the crowd crammed in the carriage.

"Oh, yes!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You will hear again of this insolence. I shall lay a complaint before your headmaster."

"Rats!" said Lovell.

"Boy!"

"More rats!" said Lovell. "Nobody here cares twopence for you, my man, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it! You tried to bag my half-crown. You're not honest!"

"Lovell!" urged Erroll.

"I know what I'm talking about," said Lovell. "He wanted to make out that it was his half-crown. He



Specially drawn for the "Holiday Annual" by Savile Lumley.

Facing Page 161

BACK TO ROOKWOOD!

Rival juniors indulge in a first-day-of-term "rag." See the story "Lovell on the Warpath!"

didn't know I had it on a string. Look here!" Lovell displayed the "lucky" half-crown with the elastic attached. "Said it was his!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, the gentleman may have thought he had dropped it," said Erroll. "You shouldn't play kid tricks like that, Lovell."

"You go and eat coke, Erroll!"

The thin gentleman glared across at Lovell as though he would have liked to bite him—as perhaps he would.

"You young rascal! Will you hold your tongue?" he exclaimed. "Another word of insolence and I will lay my stick about you!"

"Rats!"

The thin gentleman started up in his place, grasping his walking-stick. He plunged towards Lovell.

But it was not easy to get along a carriage crowded by twice the regulation number of passengers. Two or three feet came in the thin gentleman's way—perhaps by accident. He pitched forward and dropped on his hands and knees among innumerable feet.

"Oh! Ah! Oh!"

"Try again!" grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The thin gentleman struggled up, with a furious face. Two or three hefty "licks" from his walking-stick elicited loud yells from some of the Rookwooders. Then the thin gentleman was on all fours again, and someone jammed down the back of his head, and his nose ground into the dusty floor of the carriage.

"Make it pax, sir!" suggested Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Young rascals—scoundrels! Yarooth! Groooogh!"

"Hallo, here we are! Coombe!" called out Rawson.

The train slowed down in the village station. Lovell hauled the carriage door wide open.

"Ow! Oh! Release me! I—I—I—" The thin gentleman was spluttering on the dusty floor.

Jimmy Silver & Co. streamed from the carriage on to the platform at Coombe. Jimmy glanced back into the carriage and saw the thin gentleman struggling to a sitting posture, gasping for breath and covered with dust. Then he joined the stream of Rookwood fellows pouring out of the station.

THE THIRD CHAPTER AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY.

"THE Bull's gone!"

Mornington loafed along the Classical Fourth passage that evening, and looked into the end study to make the remark. It was an item of news on the first night of term.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at supper in the end study. There was no prep that night, and Rookwood School was still in a good deal of buzz. There had been supper in Hall, and a speech from the Head—but there had been, as Putty of the Fourth described it, more speech than supper and the Fistical Four were solacing themselves with welsh rarebit in their own quarters.

"Trot in, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Join the festive throng, old scout. What's that about the Bull?"

"Mizzled!" said Morny, as he sat on a corner of the table and helped himself to welsh rarebit.

Mr. Bull was mathematics master. Generally he was spoken of with the definite article before his name instead of the "Mister" to which he was entitled.

"I say, that's rather good news,"

said Arthur Edward Lovell. "We may get off maths for a time."

Raby shook his head.

"No such luck!" he said. "The Head's sure to bag another maths master fast enough. There's lots of them."

"Three a penny, almost," said Mornington. "Shouldn't wonder if a new man was already engaged to begin the term."

"It's most likely, I think," said Jimmy Silver. "The Head's always particular about the time-table. Ten to one there's a new maths master all ready to jump on poor little us."

"Rotten!" said Lovell. "What's the Bull gone for? Is he gone for good?"

"Crocked, I hear," said Mornington. "Winter sports in Switzerland, and a tumble. Can't get back for the term, and mayn't show up again for weeks. They'll have to have a new man in his place. Let's hope he'll get into a railway accident comin' down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mathematics, though a valuable study, did not really appeal to the heroes of the Classical Fourth. All very well for Modern chaps, who went in for chemistry and German

and suchlike "tosh." All the Classicals were agreed that the curriculum on the Modern side was tosh. The Moderns, on the other hand, professed to regard Latin and Greek as "piffle," and commiserated the Classicals for having to waste their time on such stuff.



"Another word of insolence from you and I will box your ears!" exclaimed the thin gentleman. "Rats!" retorted Lovell. The thin gentleman started up in his seat and plunged across the carriage towards Lovell.

Tubby Muffin rolled along to the end study.

He rolled in and blinked hungrily round. The Welsh rabbit had been "whacked" out, but there was a bag of tarts on the table. Reginald Muffin helped himself to a tart.

"You fellows heard?" he asked.

" Heard which ? "

" There's a new 'maths' beast instead of the old 'maths' beast," said Tubby. " Beast named Skinforth. What a name, you know ! "

" Oh, they've got a new man already, have they ? " grunted Lovell. " Might have given us a week's rest, at least."

" Catch them ! " said Tubby. " I say, I don't like the man's looks. I saw him in the masters' Common-room. Mr. Dalton was introducing him to old Greely. Looks a hard nut to crack."

" Oh, he won't be worse than the Bull," said Morny. " The Bull made us work, and nobody can do worse."

" What's he like to look at ? " asked Newcome.

" Long-legged sort of a merchant," said Muffin. " Looks a bit foxy, if you ask me—greeny sort of eyes, close together, you know. Sharp as a beastly razor."

Lovell started a little. The description recalled the thin gentleman he had encountered that day at Latcham Junction.

" He came along with us, if we'd only known it," went on Muffin. " I remember seeing him on the platform at Latcham, only I didn't know then that he was coming to Rookwood."

" Oh ! " said Lovell.

" Phew ! " murmured Mornington.

Morny and the Fistical Four exchanged glances. It dawned upon them that the thin gentleman, whose nose had been rubbed on the dusty floor of the railway carriage, was a Rookwood master !

Of course, a mathematics master was not so important as a Form-master—nevertheless, he was a member of Dr. Chisholm's staff, and much too important and dangerous a person to have his nose rubbed on a carriage floor.

Tubby Muffin annexed another tart. He was annexing a third, when Lovell rapped his fat paw with a ruler, and Reginald Muffin took the hint and rolled out of the end study, seeking for other worlds to conquer.

" Well, this beats it ! " said Valentine Mornington. " We shall have a jolly time in the 'maths' set this term. Who'd have thought that skinny merchant was a new master for Rookwood ? "

" I—I suppose it's the same chap," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully.

" Looks like it ! "

" I don't care ! " grunted Lovell. " He did try to pinch my half-crown. You fellows know he did."

" Forget it," grinned Mornington. " Isn't it just like Lovell to land us all in a scrape like this ? "

" Oh, just I ! " said Raby.

" Lovell all over," agreed Newcome. " We really ought to get a muzzle for Lovell and lead him about on a chain."

" You silly owls——" began Arthur Edward wrathfully.

" Keep smiling," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. " I dare say the man will let the matter drop. If he reports us to the Head, we can explain that we didn't know who he was—and anyhow he started with his giddy walking-stick, and he smacked Lovell's head at Latcham, too. He's in the wrong."

" That doesn't make much difference when it's a master," said Mornington. " He said something about reporting us to the Head, too. I wonder whether he noticed that it was I who jammed his cheeky head down on the floor in the train."

" Let's hope not," said Jimmy, laughing.

" After all, it mayn't be the same chap," said Lovell hopefully. " Let's

go down to Hall again and see. He's bound to be about somewhere."

To which Lovell's chums assented, and, the tarts being finished, the Fistical Four sauntered down the Fourth Form passage and went down to Hall.

Hall was crowded, as was usual on the first night of term. Some of the masters were to be seen there, but not the new mathematics master. Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled along in the direction of masters' Common-room, where they found Mr. Greely, master of the Fifth, in sole possession, with an evening paper. Mr. Greely's lengthy and dictatorial comments on the news in the evening paper had cleared the other masters out of Common-room.

"Where's the beast hiding himself?" grunted Lovell.

"Gone to bed, perhaps," said Jimmy Silver. "Well see him to-morrow, anyhow."

"I want to see him to-night," growled Lovell. "I want to know whether there's going to be a row to begin the term, fathead. I was up before the break just before we left for Christmas, and I don't want to be up before him again to begin the term, ass. Let's rout out the bounder."

"I suppose he'll have the Bull's old room," suggested Raby. "Maybe unpacking his things there. Any excuse for going up to his room?"

The Fistical Four pondered over that. They really were anxious to know whether Mr. Skinforth actually was the thin gentleman whom they had so unluckily handled in the train to Coombe.

"After all, we don't know officially that there's a new maths

beast," said Lovell. "Let's go up as if we thought it was the Bull there, and say how-d'ye-do. We were friendly enough with the old Bull."

"That's all right," agreed Jimmy Silver.

And the Fistical Four proceeded upstairs again, and stopped at the room which had been occupied the previous term by Mr. Bull.

There was a light under the door



Jimmy Silver glanced back into the carriage. The thin gentleman was struggling into a sitting posture, gasping for breath and covered with dust!

which indicated that the occupant was at home.

Lovell tapped on the door.

The juniors heard the sound of a movement in the room. Footsteps crossed to the door and it was unlocked. They heard the key turn back in the lock, softly but quite clearly, with some surprise. Mr. Bull's room was a double apartment, the bedroom opening out of the sitting-room; and there was no apparent reason why the sitting-room door should have been locked.

The door opened.

A tall thin figure stood before the juniors, and two close-set, greenish-grey eyes were fixed on them in annoyed inquiry.

They had a glimpse of half-unpacked bags in the room; and the thin gentleman's look and tone showed that he did not like being interrupted in his unpacking.

They recognised him at once—it was the thin gentleman of Latcham. He recognised them almost at the same moment.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "You!"

His brows knitted darkly.

"You!" he repeated. "Give me your names! I have not yet reported your ruffianly conduct to the headmaster. I will take down your names at once."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell, rather wishing that he had not "routed out the bounder," as he had expressed it.

"Your name?" snapped Mr. Skinforth, whipping out a pencil and notebook and fixing his eyes on Lovell.

"I don't see—" began Lovell.

"Your name—at once!"

"The fact is, sir," said Jimmy Silver, in his gentlest tone, "we're sorry there was any trouble at—"

"Oh, yes," said Raby, "we're sorry." Mr. Skinforth smiled unpleasantly.

"No doubt," he said. "That does not alter the fact that you have acted with insolent disrespect, and that you will be punished. Give me your name at once, boy."

"You're going to complain of us to the Head?" asked Lovell.

"Certainly. Your name?"

Lovell closed one eye at his chums.

"Jones," he said. "Jones, primus, of the Shell."

Mr. Skinforth wrote it down.

"Your name?"

"Jones secundus," said Raby. "Same Form."

"And yours?"

"Jones tertius," said Newcome, entering cheerily into the joke. "Same Form."

"And yours?"

"Jones quartus," said Jimmy Silver. "Same Form."

Mr. Skinforth eyed them sharply. Perhaps he was surprised at meeting so many Joneses all at once. Still, Jones was not an uncommon name, and there were bound to be Joneses at Rookwood, as everywhere else.

"Very good!" he snapped. "You will hear more of this."

He shut the door in the faces of the Classical chums, and they heard the key turn again. Then there was a sound of Mr. Skinforth rummaging among his bags. Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away, wondering what would be the outcome when Mr. Skinforth reported four non-existent Joneses of the Shell to the Head.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER LOOKING FOR JONES!

DR. CHISHOLM frowned a little. He had had a busy day and a busy evening. He had retired to his study for a quiet half-hour, and

everybody who knew the manners and customs of Rookwood School knew that he did not want to be interrupted there. A new master, however, could not be supposed to be well acquainted, so far, with Rookwood manners and customs, and the special manners and customs of the headmaster. So Mr. Skinforth, the new mathematics master, tapped at the Head's door and came in.

Mr. Skinforth had already, of course, made the Head's acquaintance, and had been duly inspected, so to speak, by that stately gentleman. The Head was not in the least desirous of another interview. He was desirous of devoting his whole and undivided attention to Euripides—what would have been a severe punishment to any Rookwood fellow was a mild and genial relaxation to the headmaster.

"What is it, Mr. Skinforth?"

"I trust I am not interrupting you, sir."

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Skinforth, you are interrupting me," said the Head ruthlessly. "However, what is it?"

Mr. Skinforth coloured faintly.

"I have to place before you, sir, a matter of some seriousness. On my journey here to-day I was treated with great disrespect in the railway train by a number of Rookwood boys. I have now ascertained their names."

"Indeed! That certainly is a serious matter."

"I was sure you would think so, sir. The boys' names are—they are all named Jones—"

"Four boys, did you say?"

"Four, sir. There were others, but these four were ringleaders."

"I was not aware of four boys named Jones at Rookwood. To what Form do they belong?"

"The Shell."

"In any case, Mr. Skinforth, you need not have troubled me in the matter. Minor details of discipline are left to the Form-masters."

"Oh!"

"I refer you to Mr. Mooney, the master of the Shell."

"Oh! Very good, sir!"

Mr. Skinforth retired from the study, with slightly flushed cheeks. The Head returned at once to Euripides, and forgot the existence of Mr. Skinforth. The mathematics master, on his side, did not so soon forget the existence of the Head. A snub is one of those things which it is more blessed to give than to receive. When the study door had closed Mr. Skinforth stared at it for nearly a minute, with a very disagreeable expression on his face. He seemed to be thinking over the things he would have liked to say to Dr. Chisholm—had he dared!

Then he walked down the corridor, with a knitted brow. He could not say to the Head what he would have liked to say; but he could, no doubt, "take it out" of the offending Joneses. Meeting Bulkeley of the Sixth in the corridor, he inquired his way to Mr. Mooney's study, only to find that apartment untenanted. Mr. Mooney, the master of the Shell, was in Hall; and Mr. Skinforth sought him there. He found the Shell master in conversation with Mr. Dalton and Mr. Wiggins, comparing notes on the subject of the holidays, and the three masters welcomed him into their group very civilly and pleasantly. Mr. Skinforth, however, had not come there to be pleasant.

"The Head has referred me to you, Mr. Mooney—"

"Indeed, sir."

"In a matter of reporting four

members of your Form for disrespectful conduct," said Mr. Skinforth.

"Indeed, sir," repeated Mr. Mooney very dryly.

Mr. Dalton and Mr. Wiggins exchanged a glance and moved away a little.

"Ruffianly conduct, I may say," added Mr. Skinforth.

"I trust that no member of my Form is likely to be guilty of ruffianly conduct," said Mr. Mooney, drier than ever.

"Unfortunately, your trust is misplaced, in that case," said Mr. Skinforth tartly. "These four young rascals——"

"Kindly do not refer to boys in my Form by such an epithet, Mr. Skinforth," said the master of the Shell. "I shall, of course, inquire into the matter, as you say that the Head has referred you to me. What are the names of the boys in question?"

"Jones, sir!" snapped Mr. Skinforth.

"Jones!" repeated Mr. Mooney.

"Jones!" said Mr. Skinforth, more snappishly than before.

"Not all of them, I suppose?"

"Yes, all of them."

Mr. Mooney smiled slightly.

"There is a mistake somewhere," he said.

"There is no mistake, sir," said Mr. Skinforth. "I demand the exemplary punishment of these juniors. I——"

"There is not a single boy in my Form of the name of Jones, sir," said Mr. Mooney calmly. "And certainly not four of the same name."

Mr. Skinforth started.

"What! What! Are you sure of that?"

"I am very well acquainted, sir, with the names of the members of my Form," said Mr. Mooney.

The new master set his teeth, his face flushing with anger. He realised that his leg had been pulled by the Fistical Four when they had given in their names.

"So I have been deceived!" he stammered.

"It would certainly appear so," said Mr. Mooney, smiling. "No doubt you will be able to point out the boys, if you care to step into my Form-room to-morrow."

"Yes, yes; no doubt——"

"But as they have—ahem!—misled you with regard to their names they may also have misled you with regard to their Forms," suggested the master of the Shell. "In that case I cannot help you."

Mr. Skinforth did not take the trouble to reply. He turned and stalked away, and left Hall with a glint in his green-grey eyes. He did not leave a very pleasant impression on the other masters.

For some time Mr. Skinforth was making angry inquiries. He learned that there were two Jones at Rookwood—not four—and that they were Jones major of the Sixth, and Jones minor of the Fourth. Only the latter afforded a possible clue; and, having ascertained the number of Jones minor's study in the Classical Fourth passage, Mr. Skinforth repaired thither in the hope of discovering one at least of the delinquents.

There were four fellows in Study No. 2 in the Fourth when Mr. Skinforth arrived there—Jones minor, Putty, Tubby Muffin, and Higgs. They were devoting their attention to a large cake which Higgs had brought back to school with him. Mr. Skinforth threw open the door without knocking, and strode in.

The four juniors stared at him.

"It's the new 'maths' man!" murmured Tubby Muffin.

"Is Jones here?" snapped Mr. Skinforth.

"Yes, sir," said Jones minor.

"You are Jones?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Skinforth would gladly have boxed Jones minor's ears; he was feeling, by this time, almost feverishly anxious to box somebody's ears. But Jones minor was a complete stranger to him, and even in his extreme annoyance he could not very well box his ears.

He gave a grunt, and stepped back out of the study, and slammed the door.

"What a nice man!" grunted Higgs.

Mr. Skinforth stood in the Fourth Form passage, scowling. Sooner or later, no doubt, he would again see the four juniors who had given the name of Jones, and ascertain who they were; the trouble was that he wanted to see them sooner, not later.

And, as luck would have it, as he stood there, Arthur Edward Lovell came out of Study No. 4, where he had dropped in to speak to Morny. Lovell had been telling Morny and Erroll about Jones primus, secundus, tertius, and quartus, with many chuckles, and he was still smiling as he came out of the study. The smile died suddenly off his face as he met Mr. Skinforth's glinting eyes.

"Oh!" ejaculated the new master.

"So I have found you!"

Lovell eyed him warily.

"Were you looking for me, sir?" he asked.

"You gave me a false name!" rapped out Mr. Skinforth. "You told me your name was Jones."

"Do you like Smith better?" asked Lovell;

"What?"

"Your name?" snapped Mr. Skinforth, whipping out a pencil and notebook and fixing his eyes on Lovell. "I don't see—" began Lovell. "Your name—at once!" snorted the new master.



"I'll make it Smith, if you like, sir. Or Robinson."

Mr. Skinforth trembled with anger. There was no doubt that Lovell was "cheeky." This really was not the way to answer a Rookwood master. But the fact was that Lovell had no respect for this particular master—

the incident of the half-crown at Latcham prevented that. His opinion of Mr. Skinforth was that he was a rank outsider, and no class, and not worthy of respect. Moreover, Lovell was aware that Mr. Skinforth was going to make things as hot for him as he possibly could, and he had a feeling that he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, so to speak.

"What is your name?" hissed Mr. Skinforth.

"Any old thing, sir," said Lovell coolly. "Doesn't Shakespeare say, 'What's in a name?' Make it Perkins."

"I presume that you belong to the Fourth Form, as I find you here?" gasped Mr. Skinforth.

"Anything you like, sir!"

"For the last time, give me your name."

"Make it Wilkins," said Lovell. "Does that suit, sir?"

"Very well!" said Mr. Skinforth, between his teeth. "You shall suffer for this insolence. If you will not give me your name——"

"I've given you several, sir," said Lovell cheerfully. "If you'd like some more——"

"I shall take you to your Form-master," said Mr. Skinforth. "Mr. Dalton shall know of this insolence. Come!"

He stepped towards Lovell, and grasped him by the collar. Arthur Edward eyed him coolly.

"I'm quite prepared to go to Mr. Dalton," he replied. "I'm ready to tell him all that happened, and that all the trouble was caused by your trying to pinch my half-crown!"

Mr. Skinforth started violently. Lovell had played his trump card, as it were; and he had played it with effect, as Mr. Skinforth's look showed. For the first time the new master

seemed to realise that he had extremely little credit to gain from the affair; and that, indeed, the less that was said about it, the better it would be for him.

Lovell's heart beat rather fast.

He did not respect Mr. Skinforth—but, respected or not, a master was a master, and it was no light matter to "cheek" him.

But his shot told, even more effectively than he had expected. Mr. Skinforth's face grew crimson, and then pale.

"Are we going to Mr. Dalton, sir?" asked Lovell, victoriously aware now that that was not Mr. Skinforth's intention.

"No," said Mr. Skinforth, between his teeth. "I shall not trouble your Form-master on the first night of the term."

"Thank you, sir!" said Lovell, with mocking humility.

"I shall punish you myself," said Mr. Skinforth.

And the new master suited the action to the word. Arthur Edward Lovell staggered under a terrific box on the ear. It was against all the laws and traditions of Rookwood for a fellow's ears to be boxed. Perhaps Mr. Skinforth did not know that—and perhaps he did not care. Lovell staggered under the blow, and almost fell—and a heavy box on the other ear set him right again. He reeled and roared.

"Oh! Ow! Whooooop!"

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Mornington, looking out of his study. "I say, that won't do for Rookwood, sir! It's not done here!"

Mr. Skinforth gave him a glare and stalked away to the stairs. Arthur Edward Lovell staggered against the wall, with both hands to his head.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!"

In a few minutes a sympathetic crowd surrounded Lovell — some advising him to go to Mr. Dalton and make a complaint — others suggesting the Head. Lovell did not heed. His head was singing and aching ; but he had no idea of making complaints to anyone. He moved away to the end study, leaving a crowd of the Classical Fourth in a buzz of comment on the incident—and all the juniors agreed, *nem con*, that Mr. Skinforth was a rank outsider, a no-class snob, and the last word in rotters. In which opinion the Classical Fourth possibly were not very far wrong.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER MYSTERIOUS !

RAG him ! ”

“ Yes.”

“ Lovell, old chap ! ” murmured Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell rubbed his burning ears and glared.

“ Do you think I’m going to take this lying down ? ” he roared.

“ Well, no ; but——”

“ Dicky Dalton would jolly well call him to order,” said Newcome. “ Maths masters ain’t allowed to whack a fellow, anyhow ; they have to report you. And slapping a fellow’s head—that’s the limit.”

“ It’s more than the limit ! ” said Raby. “ The fellow’s a rank outsider. Dicky Dalton would call him to order fast enough.”

“ I’m not going to tell Dicky Dalton, or anybody else. I’m going to make him sit up on my own,” said Lovell savagely.

“ But——” murmured Jimmy.

“ I’ve a jolly good mind to hack his shins, and chance it——”

“ Phew ! ”

“ But I won’t do that,” said Lovell.

“ No, I—I shouldn’t ! ” murmured Raby.

“ I’m going to rag his quarters,” said Lovell. “ I’m going to rag his rooms right and left—see ? ”

“ But he’ll guess——”

“ Let him ! If he wants the whole thing to come out before the Head, let him ! ” hooted Lovell. “ I’ll tell my story fast enough if he tells his. I don’t care ! I’m going to rag him ! ”

Jimmy Silver nodded thoughtfully.

“ If he catches you at it——”

“ I shan’t let him, fathead ! Though I’d jolly well hack his shins if he touched me again, I can tell you. I’m going now. It’s dorm in half an hour, and there’s no time to waste ! ”

“ I say, Lovell——”

“ Rats ! ”

Arthur Edward’s mind was made up. He was in a state of raging wrath that would not brook delay. Boxing any fellow’s ears was a serious matter enough—boxing Lovell’s ears was a matter of unparalleled seriousness. Lovell’s chums sympathised ; but they had doubts as to the wisdom of carrying on this feud with a man who was, after all, a Rookwood master—howsoever much the heroes of the Fourth disapproved of him. But Lovell was in no mood for wisdom.

Lovell settled the matter by leaving the end study, and his comrades followed him rather dubiously. They reached the door of the room that had been Mr. Bull’s and was now Mr. Skinforth’s. The Co. rather hoped that Mr. Skinforth might be there—which would have prevented the proposed “ rag,” and left the matter over till Lovell was cooler. But there was no light under the door.

Lovell turned the handle. The door did not open.

"What the thump does the man keep his door locked for?" he snorted.

"Well, it seems that he does," said Jimmy Silver, rather relieved. "Must chuck it, after all, old scout."

Another snort from Lovell.

"Chuck it be blowed! The key of Dicky Dalton's room fits this lock—you remember the time Putty locked the Bull in for a lark, and Dicky Dalton had to let him out."

"But—"

"Blow your 'buts'!"

Lovell went along to Mr. Dalton's room and abstracted the key from the lock. Mr. Dalton was still in Hall. The junior came back, and quickly unlocked the door of the Bull's room.

"You fellows keep watch and sing out if anybody comes up!"

"Oh, all right!"

Lovell stepped into the room and turned on the light.

The room was in some little confusion; Mr. Skinforth had done a good deal of unpacking, but had not yet stacked away all his things in drawers and wardrobes. Lovell marched boldly into the adjoining bedroom and started by dragging off all the bedclothes and bundling them into the fender. Then he hurled heaps of shirts, socks, and other articles into the middle of the floor, and overturned a coal-scuttle on them.

Then he came back into the outer room, feeling a little better. His chums watched him anxiously from the corridor, with one eye in the direction of the staircase.

Bump!

Lovell overturned a trunk.

"Old chap, chuck it!" whispered Raby. "You've done enough—too much, in fact."

"Rats!"

"For goodness' sake——" breathed Newcome uneasily.

"Bosh! You fellows can cut if you like!"

"Oh, don't be an ass! This may mean a flogging," said Jimmy Silver.

"I don't care!"

Lovell, in his present mood, did not care—though later on, if it came to a flogging, it was probable that he would care very much indeed. He bumped the trunk over again, and the locked lid burst open.

"Great Scott! You've busted the lock!" ejaculated Raby.

"I don't care!"

"Oh, go ahead!" said Jimmy Silver resignedly. "I suppose we shall all get a Head's licking for this. That's what you seem to want!"

"Rot!"

Bump!

The trunk went over again, and its contents streamed out on the floor. There were books and papers and other articles, and they streamed round Lovell, and he proceeded to kick them right and left. It was a record "ragging."

Suddenly Lovell gave a jump.

"Why—what—what—what——"

He fairly stuttered as he stood still, as if rooted to the floor, his eyes upon a bundle of papers he had kicked.

"What is it?" asked Raby.

"Great Scott!" gasped Lovell.

He jumped after the bundle and picked it up, and held it up in the light, staring at it with round eyes of amazement.

"Banknotes!"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Rot!"

"Look at it!" gasped Lovell.

Forgetting, in their surprise, the necessity of keeping one eye on the staircase, Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome came into the room.



"Great Scott!" Lovell stooped and picked up the bundle and held it up in the light, staring at it in amazement. "Banknotes!"

They stared blankly at the bundle of crisp slips of paper.

The top slip in the bundle was obviously a five-pound note. The others seemed to be the same; but if they also were fivers the sum of money represented there was an amazing one. For there were at least a hundred of the crisp slips of paper, fastened together by a rubber band.

Lovell let the ends run through his fingers, like the leaves of a book. There was a crisp rustling.

"Fivers!" gasped Raby.

"Five-pound notes!" stuttered Jimmy Silver. "Why, there—there's five hundred pounds in that bundle! Is the man a millionaire in disguise?"

"Five hundred quids!" breathed Newcome. "Oh, my hat!"

"There's another bundle——"

"Phew!"

"And another——"

"Great pip!"

The Fistical Four looked at one another in amazement, in something like awe. Who—what was Mr. Skinforth, mathematics master of Rookwood at a moderate salary—and in possession of ready cash to the tune of at least fifteen hundred pounds? One thousand five hundred pounds—and perhaps more, if the juniors had cared to look!

"Well, this beats it!" said Lovell dazedly. "What—what—what can it mean? It can't be his own money! It can't!"

"Go easy, old chap——"

"Well, I think—blessed if I know what to think——"

"For goodness' sake let's get out!" breathed Jimmy Silver. "We've seen too jolly much already! Goodness knows what it means—but it's not our bizney, anyway. Get out!"

Even Lovell was willing to get out now. The light was turned off, and the juniors hurried out of the room, locking the door behind them with Mr. Dalton's key. That key was returned to the door to which it belonged, and then the Fistical Four scuttled away—and a few minutes later they joined the Classical Fourth on the way to dorm.

What Mr. Skinforth thought when he found his rooms ragged and his bundles of banknotes lying on the floor the Fistical Four did not know,

and could not guess. They wondered the next day whether they would hear. That the new master would guess the identity of the raggers was fairly clear—indeed, when they passed him in the quad that day he gave them a look which revealed that he knew, plainly enough. But he did not speak—and no complaint was made on the subject of the ragging. Obviously Mr. Skinforth felt that the least said was the soonest mended; and Lovell thought he knew why; the new master did not want anything said on the subject of the bundles of banknotes. But on that subject Jimmy Silver & Co., if they said nothing, thought the more—and the more they thought of it, the more strange and mysterious did it appear to them.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER NOT OFF !

“ I’m off ! ”

Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Classical Fourth, spoke in determined tones.

“ Off ! ” repeated Jimmy Silver.

“ Yes.”

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome regarded Lovell with surprised inquiry.

They were due in No. 2 class-room at two-thirty, in the “ set ” presided over by Mr. Skinforth.

It was now two-twenty-nine, so the Fistical Four of Rookwood had exactly one minute in which to reach No. 2 class-room. And they did not want to be late; at all events, three members of the quartette did not. Mr. Skinforth was not a pleasant gentleman, and he had a special dislike for the Fistical Four—a dislike quite unfounded in the view of the four, but probably not in Mr. Skinforth’s view.

With sixty seconds at their disposal, and trouble awaiting them if they were late, Jimmy Silver & Co. were not disposed to hang about the corridors. But Lovell had stopped, with his most obstinate expression upon his face, and announced that he was “ off.”

“ I don’t quite catch on,” said Jimmy, puzzled. “ You’ve not forgotten that it’s maths, I suppose ? ”

“ No.”

“ Well, then, come on ; we’ve only just time—”

“ I’m not going in to Skinforth’s set,” said Lovell, with calm deliberation. “ I’m going to cut maths.”

“ Fathead ! ”

“ I’m off ! ”

“ I think you must be,” agreed Newcome. “ Right off—off your onion. You can’t cut maths.”

“ I jolly well can—and shall.”

“ Look here—” began Raby.

“ I’ve made up my mind,” said Lovell. “ I’m fed-up with Skinforth. Isn’t he always down on me ? ”

“ H’m ! ”

“ Doesn’t he try to make me look a fool before all the mathy set ? ”

“ He doesn’t have to try very hard,” murmured Raby.

“ What ? ” roared Lovell.

“ I—I mean— Oh, come on ! We shall be late.”

“ He’s been down on me ever since the term started,” said Lovell. “ He knows jolly well it was I who ragged his rooms the first night here. He hasn’t said anything about it ; but he knows. And he tries to take it out of me in class. I’m not a whale at maths—”

“ You’re not ! ” grinned Newcome. “ Not even a tadpole ! ”

“ But if I could beat the head of the Sixth at the game, Skinforth would still find fault,” said Lovell. “ Well, I’m fed-up. I’m off.”

"But you can't cut maths, old man," argued Jimmy Silver. "I know Skinforth is a first-class rotter, and I jolly well wish Mr. Bull were back again. But we've got to stand the Skinforth-man so long as he lasts."

"I'm not standing him."

"Lovell, old man——"

"You fellows can go in, if you like. If Skinny asks after me, tell him he can go and eat coke—from me."

"We're likely to!" chuckled Newcome. "Now, come on, Lovell, and don't play the giddy ox!"

"I'm off!"

Arthur Edward Lovell settled the matter by swinging round and walking through the door to the quad-rangle.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Lovell!" shouted Raby.

Lovell did not heed.

He disappeared from the gaze of his anxious chums into the quad, evidently quite determined that he would not endure, that afternoon, any more of the unpleasant manners and customs of Mr. Skinforth, the temporary "mathy" master at Rookwood.

Mornington came hurrying along the passage.

"You fellows will be late!" he called out in passing.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome followed Valentine Mornington. Lovell was gone; and anxious as they were about him, they could not run him down and collar him and carry him bodily into No. 2 class-room. That really was out of the question.

Arthur Edward Lovell, with a grim and determined expression on his face, strode out into the quad.

He had suffered a good deal at the hands of Mr. Skinforth, and now he

had taken the bit between his teeth, so to speak.

He did not expect his dereliction of duty to pass unpunished. But a licking from his Form master, Mr. Dalton, was really better than the mathy set with Mr. Skinforth, in Lovell's opinion.

So he stalked away, resolute.

His idea was to pass the next hour in the old clock tower, with a "Modern Boy's Annual" and a bag of nuts. This was distinctly an improvement on "maths."

But alas for Arthur Edward!

He had just reached the archway leading into Little Quad, when forth from the old stone arch stepped a majestic figure.

Dr. Chisholm, headmaster of Rookwood, stopped and fixed his eyes on the Classical Fourth-Former.

Lovell paused at a sign from the Head.

"Lovell!"

"Yes, sir!" faltered Arthur Edward.

"Why are you not in class?"

"I—I——"

It was useless to hope that the Head would be ignorant of anything going on within the ancient walls of Rookwood. There was not the most trifling detail in the school time-table that the Head did not have at his august finger-tips.

Dr. Chisholm glanced at his watch.

"You should be with Mr. Skinforth now, Lovell, I think."

The Head said "I think"; but as the hapless Lovell remarked afterwards to his friends, he jolly well knew!

"Oh! Yes, sir!" mumbled Lovell.

"You are going directly away from the House, Lovell." The Head knitted his brows. "Is it possible, Lovell, that it was your intention to play truant?"

No answer.

"Follow me!" said the Head grimly.

He rustled on, and Arthur Edward Lovell followed him, in the lowest of spirits. Rebellious as he was that afternoon, Lovell did not think of disobeying the Head. It was "maths," after all, and trouble with the headmaster to boot! Truly, it was not Arthur Edward Lovell's lucky day.

Lovell trailed dismally after his headmaster.

Dr. Chisholm walked, slow and stately, into the House; slow and stately, to No. 2 class-room.

Slow, but anything but stately, Arthur Edward Lovell limped after him.

The "mathy" set were just about to settle down to business when the Head came in with Lovell.

Mr. Skinforth's close-set, greenish eyes glittered at Arthur Edward. His manner to the Head was extremely deferential; "soapy" in the opinion of the class.

"Mr. Skinforth, this boy should be present, I think——"

"Yes, sir. He has absented himself without permission," said Mr. Skinforth. "He is a very unsatisfactory pupil in every way, sir."

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly fetch the cane from the desk in my study."

"Oh! Yes, sir."

Lovell stood with a dogged face, while Jimmy Silver was gone on that unwelcome errand.

The captain of the Fourth returned, and the Head took the cane from him.

"Hold out your hand, Lovell."

Swish!

"The other hand!"

Swish!

"I trust, Lovell, that this will be a warning to you," said the Head; and he left the class-room taking the cane with him.

And the hapless Arthur Edward, squeezing his hands convulsively, was left to the tender mercies of Mr. Skinforth.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER TOO THICK!

"OLD bean, you're wanted!" Valentine Mornington came along the Classical Fourth passage, and looked into the end study with that announcement.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at tea.

One member of the Co. looked savage and morose; the other three members looked as sympathetic as they could. Arthur Edward Lovell was "up against it," and naturally his comrades sympathised. Doubtless it was partly by Arthur Edward's own fault that he had landed into such a peck of troubles. Nevertheless, his chums sympathised deeply.

"Wanted!" repeated Jimmy Silver looking round. "Who wants Lovell now?"

"Dicky Dalton."

Lovell gave a snort.

"More trouble!" he said. "I know jolly well that Skinforth has reported me to Mr. Dalton. I knew he would."

"Well, you did rather cheek him at 'mathy,'" said Newcome.

"Isn't he a rotter?" demanded Lovell.

"Hem! But——"

"Hasn't he got a special down on me because I happen to know that he's a rotter?"

"Hem!"

"Dicky Dalton told me to bring you the message, Lovell, old bean," said Mornington, with a curious look at Arthur Edward. "You seem to be

in the jolly old wars ! You never see the Skinny-bird without trouble ! ” Lovell’s eyes gleamed.

“ I could tell you why, if I liked,” he said.

“ Least said, soonest mended,” said Jimmy Silver. “ Mr. Skinforth is only here till Mr. Bull comes back, and he’s coming back this term. Grin and bear it.”

“ I’m not standing much more ! ” growled Lovell. “ I’ve a jolly good mind to tell Mr. Dalton what I know.”

“ It wouldn’t be any good—and likely as not, there’s nothing in it,” said Raby.

Morny started.

“ You’re jolly mysterious,” he said. “ What’s the giddy secret about the Skinny-bird—if any ? We all know he’s bad-tempered and stingy, and a rather foxy sort of a bird. Anythin’ more ? ”

“ Come in and shut the door and I’ll tell you,” said Lovell. “ I’d like to have your opinion, Morny. You’re a keen chap.”

“ Thanks.”

Morny, much surprised, came into the end study, and the door was shut. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome looked rather uneasy. But Arthur Edward Lovell went ahead.

“ You know we had trouble with Skinforth in the train, coming here the first day of term,” said Lovell.

“ Well, he smacked my head afterwards, and I ragged his rooms in return.”

Morny whistled.

“ Like your neck ! ” he said. “ No wonder the Skinny-bird is down on you, if you ragged his rooms. He knew you did it ? ”

“ Well, I know he knows, though he’s said nothing,” said Lovell. “ Ragging his things, a trunk burst open—”

“ Great Scott ! You must have been goin’ it ! ”

“ I was going it,” said Lovell. “ I admit it was a bit thick—I never really meant to go that far. But that’s what happened. When the trunk burst open, I kicked the things in it right and left. And then—” Lovell paused. “ Then I saw the banknotes.”

“ Banknotes ! ” said Morny blankly.

“ He had bundles of banknotes in his his trunk.”

“ Gammon ! ”

“ I tell you he had ! ” roared Lovell. “ More than a thousand pounds in fivers and tenners ! ”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ” roared Mornington. Arthur Edward Lovell glared at him.

“ What are you cackling at, you dummy ? ” he demanded.

“ My dear man,” chuckled Mornington, “ a yarn like that might do for Tubby Muffin—might send him

rootin' round the Skinny-bird's rooms lookin' for loot! It might do to stuff up Gunner. But what's the good of spinnin' such a yarn at me?"

"Don't you believe me?" howled Lovell.

"Of course not."

"These fellows saw the banknotes, too."

"Rot!"

"We did, Morny," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Fairly took our breaths away! Nearly two thousand pounds, I think."

Mornington ceased to chortle, and stared at the Fistical Four.

"You're not stuffing me, then?" he asked.

"No."

"It's genuine," said Raby. "We all saw them. We were keeping cave at the door while Lovell was ragging the man's rooms."

"The banknotes were there right enough," said Newcome. "Tied up in bundles, with rubber bands, like they have them at banks, you know."

"Well, my only summer hat!" said Mornington.

"You believe it now?" snapped Lovell.

"Well, if you fellows give me your word, I—I suppose I believe it," said Mornington, in great astonishment. "But what does it mean? Mathematics masters don't have thousands of pounds. Fifty pounds in the bank perhaps, put aside for a rainy day. But thousands in banknotes—phew! Are you fellows quite sure you didn't dream it?"

"Fathead!" growled Lovell. "The money was there. We were pretty startled, I can tell you—"

"I can quite believe that!" grinned Mornington.

"We left the stuff just where it was," went on Lovell. "Of course,

when Skinforth went to his rooms, he found what had happened. He knew that somebody must have seen his bundles of banknotes. He knew jolly well that it was I, too. I don't know whether he guesses that these chaps were with me—perhaps not. But he knew it was I, right enough. That's why he's down on me. It's put his back up."

"Well, the ragging would do that," said Mornington. "But he could have reported it to Mr. Dalton."

"He didn't want the banknotes mentioned, I fancy. What's a 'mathy' master in a school doing with thousands of pounds in banknotes in a bag?" demanded Lovell. "Can it be his own money?"

"Great Scott! Whose, if not his?"

"Well, it's a lot of money, and he's a beast. He's pretty unscrupulous, too—I'm sure of that. Looks to me as if he's pinched all that money from somewhere," said Lovell.

"That's rot," said Mornington decidedly. "The Skinny-bird hasn't been distinguishin' himself in a hold-up at a bank, what?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned involuntarily at the thought. Certainly Mr. Skinforth did not look like a man to carry out a desperate enterprise of that kind.

"Well, where did the money come from?" said Lovell. "If he had thousands of pounds of his own he wouldn't be working as a 'mathy' master in a school."

"Blest if I can make it out!" said Mornington. "He may have had a legacy or something."

"Legacies aren't paid in banknotes. The money would be in a bank."

"Most likely. But—" Mornington wrinkled his brows. "Look here, you fellows, are you quite sure?"

You may have taken bundles of somethin' else for bundles of banknotes."

"We're sure enough," said Jimmy Silver. "Lovell thinks that Skinny never reported the ragging of his rooms because he didn't want it mentioned about the money being there."

"Perhaps he preferred to take it out of Lovell himself," smiled Morny. "He seems to have done that pretty effectually. I say, I take your word about this, of—of course. But it's not a yarn I'd tell in the Common-room, if I were you. It sounds much too steep, you know."

"I know," said Jimmy.

"Well, I'm jolly well thinking of telling Mr. Dalton," said Lovell grimly. "Skinny is down on me like

anything because I know. If there's anything fishy about it the Head ought to know."

"The Head wouldn't believe a word of it, or Dicky Dalton, either," said Mornington. "It's altogether too much like a fairy tale. Even if they believed that the money was there, they'd be bound to believe that it was Skinforth's own. Whose else could it be?"

"You don't think——"

Lowell hesitated.

"I don't think he's a giddy burglar, hiding his giddy loot at Rookwood," grinned Mornington. "Not quite. If—if you're sure the money was really there——"

"You silly owl, it was there!"

"Hold out your hand, Lovell!" said the Head. Swish! "The other hand!" Swish! "I trust, Lovell," said Dr. Chisholm, "that this will be a lesson to you."



howled Lovell. "Do you think four fellows could be mistaken?"

"Well, I dare say you were a bit hurried and excited, and—and—well, let's take it that the money was there," said Mornington, evidently with a lingering doubt. "In that case, I should say, that most likely the Skinny-bird had received a legacy, and was keepin' the money in hand till he reinvested it, or somethin' of the sort. If you tell Dicky Dalton the banknotes were there, you won't have the neck to suggest that Skinforth didn't come by the money honestly, will you?"

Lovell was silent. Bitter tongue-lashings in the "mathy" set, many canings following reports to his Form master, had deeply embittered him. But even Lovell realised that his intense personal dislike of Mr. Skinforth could scarcely justify so terrible an accusation against him.

"Besides, you're known to be up against him," said Mornington. "Only to-day the Head caned you himself for cutting 'maths' with Skinforth. Anythin' you said would be put down to malice."

Jimmy Silver started a little.

"My hat! Is it possible that that's why Skinforth is so awfully down on Lovell—to discount in advance anything he might say?"

"Jolly likely!" growled Lovell. "Well, I've asked your opinion about it, Morny. What do you think?"

"I think you'd better keep your mouth shut about the giddy banknotes—if any," said Mornington, with a laugh. "Nobody will swallow such a story, to begin with; and you can't mention it without admitting that you ragged the Skinny-bird's rooms so frightfully that a dashed trunk burst open. That's a Head's flogging if it comes out!"

Mornington strolled to the door.

"Dicky Dalton expects you in his study, you know," he remarked, and he sauntered away, smiling.

His smile seemed to indicate that he did not, on the whole, place a very firm belief in the story of the banknotes. That Jimmy Silver & Co. had told untruths, he did not think for a moment, but that they were mistaken seemed much more likely than that the "mathy" master had thousands of pounds in banknotes in his possession.

The Fistical Four looked at one another.

"The silly owl doesn't quite believe it!" growled Lovell. "If—if he doesn't, I suppose Dicky Dalton wouldn't."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"It's too thick," he said. "In—in fact, I've been wondering a bit whether it's possible we made some sort of a mistake. Anybody can see that Skinforth isn't a rich man. He doesn't dress well, he never spends money, and—and—"

Lovell grunted and left the study. He had to see his Form master, whether he told him of the strange discovery in Mr. Skinforth's rooms or not.

Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, received Arthur Edward Lovell with a frown. A cane lay on his table.

"Lovell, I am sorry to say that I have received another report from Mr. Skinforth concerning your conduct in the mathematics set," he said.

"He's always down on me," said Lovell sullenly.

"He informs me that you were insolent in the class, and that you actually snatched or pulled a pointer out of his hand," said the Fourth Form master sternly.

"He was rapping my knuckles with it," muttered Lovell.

"Do you consider that an excuse?"

"Yes."

"Then our opinions differ very considerably," said Mr. Dalton dryly, taking up his cane. "You will hold out your hand, Lovell."

Lovell hesitated.

"I—I could tell you why Mr. Skinforth is down on me, sir," he stammered.

"I refuse to believe for one moment that Mr. Skinforth is down, as you call it, on you or any other junior," said Mr. Dalton.

"I know something he wouldn't like me to tell!"

Mr. Dalton stared.

"Do not be absurd, Lovell!"

"I can tell you, sir——"

"If you know anything about Mr. Skinforth's personal affairs, Lovell, you are quite well aware that you have no right to repeat it, especially to me," said Mr. Dalton sternly. "Not another word! Hold out your hand!"

Swish, swish!

Arthur Edward Lovell left his Form-master's study with his hands tucked under his arms, squeezing them desperately. He fairly wriggled his way back to the end study in the Fourth.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER SUSPICIOUS!

"**T**HREE'S the rotter!"

It was Saturday afternoon, and Jimmy Silver & Co. came out of the House a cheery little crowd. It was a half-holiday, and there was no match on at Rookwood that day, and the Fistical Four were going over to Bunbury for the afternoon.

Bunbury was a good distance from the school—fifteen miles, at least—



Arthur Edward Lovell left his Form-master's study with his hands tucked under his arms, squeezing them hard.

and, of course, out of bounds; but there was a football match at Bunbury that afternoon between the Bunbury Rovers and the Latcham Ramblers, and the Co. had obtained a special exeat from their Form-master to see the match. It was one of the occasions when the excellent reputation of the Fistical Four stood them in good stead. Their Form-master was aware that they could be trusted out of bounds, and out of bounds they were going.

Lovell's remark was caused by the sight of Mr. Skinforth walking down from the House to the gates.

Evidently the "mathy" master was going out for the half-holiday.

There was nothing to cause surprise in that, however, for it was a custom of Mr. Skinforth to spend his leisure hours away from the school.

In the few weeks he had been at Rookwood, he had never spent a single half-holiday within the walls.

Rain or shine, Mr. Skinforth left after dinner, and did not return till lock-up. It was understood that he was a great walker, and went for long walks, and it had rather been commented upon that he always went by himself, no other master ever accompanying him on those long walks. But in that, too, there was nothing surprising, for Mr. Skinforth was not popular in masters' Common-room. He was on civil terms with the rest of the staff, but he had made no friend among them, and he had made it fairly clear that he did not care for their company in his leisure hours.

Indeed, it was also known that Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, had one day condescended to join Mr. Skinforth as he walked out, and had been snubbed for his pains. It was an act of condescension on the part of the portly, important Fifth Form master ; he had intended to be kind, in his lofty way, to a man who, as he expressed it, was " new among us." And he had been greatly offended when Mr. Skinforth made it clear that his portly company was not desired ; and since then Mr. Greely never bestowed more than the curtest of nods upon Mr. Skinforth, and never spoke of him if he could help it.

" There he goes ! " repeated Lovell, with a dark look after the thin, angular figure of the "mathy" master. " Off on one of his jaunts."

" Let him rip," said Jimmy Silver

carelessly. " Thank goodness, we've done with him for this week, anyhow ! "

" Yes, rather ! "

The Fistical Four walked away to the bike-shed for their machines.

It was a clear, frosty afternoon, with an unusual amount of sunshine for the time of year. The chums of the Fourth were prepared to enjoy their ride to Bunbury.

They pedalled away cheerfully from Rookwood. As they passed through the village of Coombe they sighted again a tall, angular figure in a dark overcoat and silk hat, a bag in his hand.

" Skinny again ! " grinned Raby.

" Blow Skinny ! "

" Blow him as hard as you like, old chap."

Mr. Skinforth was entering the railway station at Coombe, and he did not notice the four cheery juniors wheeling by. They rode on, and the tall thin figure vanished from their sight and from their thoughts. The Fistical Four had much more pleasant things to think about that sunny afternoon than the unpopular "mathy" master.

It was a long run to Bunbury, and the juniors enjoyed every mile of it.

Bunbury was reached at last. And the Fistical Four stopped at the railway station there, where they intended putting up their machines while they walked down to the football ground.

The bicycles were disposed of. And the juniors were about to leave the station, when Arthur Edward Lovell uttered a sudden ejaculation.

" Blessed if he isn't haunting us ! "

" He ! Who ? "

" That beast Skinny ! "

" Skinforth here ! " exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Look!"

"My only hat!"

A tall, thin gentleman was standing at the "left luggage" office, his back partly turned to the juniors, who were at a little distance. But they had a glimpse of his profile, and they knew the thin features and sharp nose of Mr. Skinforth.

a mystery. But that was not all. Mr. Skinforth had left Rookwood in a dark overcoat and a silk hat. Now he was wearing a light check overcoat and a bowler hat.

But for the well-known sharp features the juniors would not have known that it was Mr. Skinforth at all; the change of hat and coat made a very great difference in his appearance. Had they seen only the back view of him, indeed, they would never have observed that it was Mr. Skinforth at all.



Jiminy Silver & Co. stared as Mr. Skinforth handed the bag in at the cloak-room. Why the new master should carry the bag from Rookwood, take a train to Banbury, and hand the bag into the luggage office there, was a mystery.

They stared. They could not help it.

Mr. Skinforth was handing in a bag to be taken care of—the bag he had carried in his hand from Rookwood. Why a man should carry a bag from Rookwood, take a train to Banbury, and hand the bag into the "left luggage" office there, was rather

Mr. Skinforth, having handed in his bag and taken a ticket for it, walked away to the street without a glance in the direction of the Fistical Four. Obviously, he did not know they were anywhere near at hand; in fact, Bunbury being far out of bounds for Rookwooders, he could not have supposed that any Rookwood fellows would be in the town that afternoon at all.

"Well," said Arthur Edward Lovell with a deep breath, "what do you fellows think of that?"

"Queer!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Jolly queer!" said Lovell emphatically.

"I say, do you think the Skinny-bird is a bit off his rocker?" asked Newcome. "He must have brought that hat and coat in his bag and changed in the train from Coombe. Why should he?"

"Must be a bit potty!" said Raby. "Anyhow, no bizney of ours. Let's get off to the Rovers' ground. There'll be a crush."

"Yes, come on!" said Jimmy.

The proceedings of the "mathy" master were undoubtedly singular. But they were, after all, no concern of the Fistical Four, who had come over to Bunbury for the football match.

But Arthur Edward Lovell halted.

"Hold on," he said.

"We haven't got too much time," urged Raby. "We want to get a front place. We're not taking expensive seats, you know!"

"Hold on, I say. I don't like the look of this!" said Lovell.

"Of what?"

"Skinforth——"

"Nobody could like the look of Skinny!" grinned Raby. "He's no beauty. But what the thump are you driving at, Lovell?"

"It's fishy!"

"What is?" exclaimed Raby impatiently.

"This is," said Lovell warmly. "Is it a natural thing for a man to come out in one hat and coat and bring another lot in a bag and change in a railway train?"

"Well, no. But I suppose it's no bizney of ours. Blow Skinny and his hats and coats!"

"It's practically a disguise," said Lovell.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Anybody seeing him here would never know that it was Skinforth, unless he saw him quite close. He's never worn that coat at Rookwood, and I've never seen him in a bowler-hat. It's been remarked on that he always sports a topper."

"So does old Greely," said Jimmy Silver. "The Fifth Form chaps say that Greely lives in his top-hat and goes to bed in it."

"But he doesn't change it for a bowler out of sight of the school. That man is up to something over here this afternoon, and he doesn't want to be recognised."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Well, if he's up to something, let him rip," said Newcome. "Are we going to miss the Rovers' match while we discuss Skinny's hat?"

"I'm going to, whether you fellows do or not," said Lovell deliberately. "My belief is that Skinny is up to no good!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, old fellow!"

"I'm going to keep an eye on him and see what he's up to," said Arthur Edward Lovell obstinately.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"You're not," he said quietly. "We don't like Skinny, and he may be up to some game he doesn't want known at Rookwood, for all I know. But you can't watch a man; that's outside!"

Lovell flushed.

"Can't pry on a man like Tubby Muffin, old chap. Cut it out and come along!"

"If he's up to something——"

"Not our bizney if he is!"

"It may be everybody's bizney. He may be going to add to his collection of banknotes!" said Lovell.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" What are you cackling at ? " roared Lovell.

" Well, old chap, if you're suggesting that Skinforth has come over here this afternoon to hold up the Bunbury bank—"

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" You silly owls ! " hooted Lovell. " I don't know what he's up to, but it's no good, and I'm going to see. And if you like to call it prying, you can call it prying and be blowed ! "

And with that Arthur Edward Lovell marched out of the station, taking the direction Mr. Skinforth had taken, which happened to lead directly away from the Rovers' ground.

" Lovell ! " shouted Jimmy.

" Rats ! " retorted Lovell, over his shoulder.

" Look here ! We're going to the match ! "

" Go, then ! I'm not stopping you ! "

" Aren't you coming, you ass ? "

" No, I'm not ! "

" Then turn up at the station at five. We'll be here, then."

" All right."

Lovell marched on after the tall, angular figure that was still visible at a distance in the High Street of Bunbury. His three chums looked at one another in a rather exasperated mood.

" The silly ass ! " growled Raby. " Lovell's fairly got a bee in his bonnet on the subject of that man Skinny ! Anyhow, we're not going to miss the Rovers' match playing detectives ! "

" No jolly fear ! " said Newcome emphatically.

" Come on ! " said Jimmy Silver.

The three juniors walked down to the football ground. They were soon

watching the struggle between Bunbury Rovers and Latcham Ramblers, quite forgetful of Mr. Skinforth—and, indeed, of Arthur Edward Lovell too. It was not till the match was over that they remembered their chum and wondered where he was and what he was doing.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

LOVELL—DETECTIVE !

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL was perplexed.

More than once, as he " kept an eye " on Mr. Skinforth that afternoon in the busy streets of Bunbury, he stopped, and was tempted to give it up, and join his chums at the Rovers' ground to see what was left of the football match.

Of what he suspected Mr. Skinforth he could hardly have said himself. He knew, too, that his opinion of the man was coloured by his dislike of him, and the man's harshness towards himself.

Yet the great sum of money he had seen in Mr. Skinforth's room at Rookwood was suspicious—more than suspicious. Added to that, Mr. Skinforth's change of coat and hat on this expedition—what could it mean, if not that Mr. Skinforth was on some " shady " business of some kind ?

Was he a thief—perhaps a pickpocket ? Lovell shook his head over that. Pickpockets, howsoever skilful and successful, do not accumulate wads of banknotes in their peculiar profession.

Yet, whether it was dislike of the man, or superior sagacity—the latter, he was inclined to believe—Lovell was sure that the great mass of money in Mr. Skinforth's trunk had not been come by honestly. If it had been come by in honest ways, why did the man carry it about with

him in banknotes instead of banking it? That question seemed to Arthur Edward Lovell unanswered.

Yet Mr. Skinforth's proceedings that afternoon—in spite of the change of coat and hat, that seemed so suspicious—appeared innocent and harmless enough.

He went into the clothier's shop in the High Street, and emerged with a bundle in his hand. He seemed to have been buying hosiery, or something of the sort. Later, he dropped into a bookshop, and came out with a little parcel under his arm, that apparently contained books. His third visit was paid to a bootshop, and another parcel swung from his hand when he emerged.

Lovell began to feel rather foolish.

In the firm belief that Mr. Skinforth was "up to something" of a shady nature, Lovell had felt it his duty to watch him. But he was quite conscious of the meanness of watching a man's actions. It savoured horribly of spying. Only a sense of duty could justify it—as in the case of a detective, for instance, or a policeman. Lovell had constituted himself a private detective for the afternoon. And he had discovered that Mr. Skinforth had visited Bunbury to buy shirts or socks, boots and books. It was rather a "facer" for Lovell, and he felt more and more uncomfortable.

He was more and more careful, too, that Mr. Skinforth should not see him on the watch. He kept at a distance—all the more carefully because he noticed that Mr. Skinforth looked round sharply at times—really almost as if he half expected to be watched by someone.

After Mr. Skinforth's visit to the Bunbury Boot Emporium, Lovell gave it up. He was disappointed and annoyed, and rather ashamed of

himself now—which was a very uncomfortable state of mind to be in. Mr. Skinforth, too, was heading for the railway station at a brisk walk, as if he had finished his business in Bunbury, as, doubtless, he had.

He disappeared from sight—no doubt to reclaim his bag at the station, and take the train home to Coombe.

Lovell leaned on the shop-front of the Bunbury Boot Emporium and thought it out—worried, puzzled, and irritated. Was the man wrong in his head? Why had he practically disguised himself by that change of coat and hat in order to buy harmless and necessary goods at the shops in Bunbury? Lovell felt that if a policeman had known of the thing he would have become suspicious. But what would he have suspected? Lovell could not guess that.

What could there possibly be of a suspicious nature in the purchase of a pair of boots? Lovell flushed deeply when he thought of meeting his chums and reporting progress. He could hear, in advance, the chortles of the Co. when he should tell them what he had discovered—that the suspected man had been buying shirts and boots.

Really Lovell couldn't possibly confess that to Jimmy Silver & Co. And in his eager keenness to think of something that would at least justify his having "kept an eye" on Mr. Skinforth that afternoon, Lovell thought of another circumstance. Why had Mr. Skinforth come to Bunbury at all to do his shopping—a railway journey of fifteen miles? Everything he wanted, everything he had bought, could have been obtained in Latcham, a few miles from the school, or in Rookham, a few more miles. Why pay the extra fare, and take the

extra time, for a journey to Bunbury ? Lovell wrinkled his brows over it.

There was something in it—something, he was certain. All Mr. Skinforth's proceedings were strange, odd, suspicious. A detective would have detected something, Lovell felt sure of it. But what ? More and more Lovell felt that the man was some kind of a rogue. But what was his roguery ? He remembered the incident of the first day of the term, when Mr. Skinforth had attempted to annex the half-crown Lovell had dropped on the platform at Latcham. A man who would steal a half-crown would steal anything. But he could not have been stealing in the Bunbury shops. A thief could not walk out of a shop with his plunder in parcels.

What did it all mean ?

Lovell cudgelled his brains. Was it possible that Mr. Skinforth had got the goods on " tick," without intending to pay the bill ? It was wildly improbable ; in fact, it was certain that the shopkeepers would not let the goods go without the money, in dealing with a stranger.

Then what—what—

Arthur Edward Lovell strolled into the Bunbury Boot Emporium at last. What he hoped to learn there he did not know ; but he had a desperate hope of picking up some information—enough to justify himself in his own eyes at least. Anyhow, Mr. Skinforth was safe off the scene now, and would know nothing about it.

The emporium was deserted, save for a couple of yawning shopmen. A very large proportion of the inhabitants of Bunbury were on the Rovers' ground that afternoon, and trade was not brisk. A young man came towards Lovell to inquire what he wanted.

" Has my uncle been here ? " asked Lovell, adopting Mr. Skinforth as his

uncle on the spur of the moment, by what he really regarded as an inspiration.

The young man smiled slightly.

" I'm afraid I don't know your uncle, sir," he said. He could see that Lovell was a schoolboy, and he plainly thought him a rather foolish schoolboy.

" I think he was here," said Lovell, colouring under the shopman's smile.

" He wore a light check overcoat."

" I think Mr. Montgomery served a gentleman in a light check overcoat, about twenty minutes ago," said the young man. " I will ask him."

" Thank you."

The young man crossed over to the other young man, and spoke to him. Mr. Montgomery came over to Lovell.



Mr. Skinforth went into a clothier's shop and emerged presently with a bundle in his hand. He little knew Lovell was keeping an eye on him, in the firm belief that the new master was up to something shady !

"I'm afraid your uncle's gone, sir," he said kindly. "Is it Mr. Judson you are inquiring for?"

"Judson!" repeated Lovell. "I mean a man—rather tall and thin, with a light check overcoat and a bowler hat; nose rather like a beak, and a very tight mouth."

Mr. Montgomery smiled.

"I think that was the gentleman," he said. "Name of Judson."

Lovell's brain was almost in a whirl. Had Mr. Skinforth given a false name in the shop? Why had he given a name at all? Customers do not give their names, true or false, in boot emporia, as a rule. But Lovell calmed himself with an effort. He felt that he was undoubtedly on the track of something now—though of what he was still in the dark.

"That's all right," he said, his heart beating. "If he told you his name was Judson—"

"Yes, Judson," said the young man.

"You know him, I suppose?" said Lovell.

"Not at all, sir—quite a stranger here."

"But he, my—my uncle, told you his name was Judson?"

"He wrote it on the banknote."

Lovell almost staggered.

"The—the banknote!"

Mr. Montgomery eyed the Rookwood junior with increasing surprise.

"Certainly," he said. "We always require a customer, not personally known to us, to write his name on a banknote—his name and address. It is the usual custom."

"I—I know!" gasped Lovell. "I—I thank you! I—I dare say I shall find him all right."

Lovell hurried out of the bootshop, leaving the two shopmen staring after him, and winking at one another.

But Lovell did not care what they were thinking of him. His brain was in a whirl. Mr. Skinforth had changed a banknote at the boot shop, and signed a false name on the back of it.

Why?

THE TENTH CHAPTER

ASK A POLICEMAN!

JIMMY SILVER and Raby and Newcome strolled into the railway-station soon after five o'clock. Arthur Edward Lovell was waiting for them.

"Here we are again, old bean!" said Jimmy cheerily. "Rovers beat the Ramblers by two to one."

"Blow the Rovers and bother the Ramblers!" said Lovell. "I've found out something."

"Caught Skinny holding up a bank?"

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Or spotted him pinching watches in the High Street?"

"Don't be an ass! Come over here, and I'll tell you," said Lovell, his face aglow with excitement.

"I say, we've got a long way to go, you know. What about lock-up?"

"Blow lock-up!"

"Oh, all right!" said Jimmy Silver resignedly.

The three followed Lovell into a quiet corner by a stack of luggage. There they listened, with smiling faces, as he started his narration. It was plain that they were not disposed to take Lovell's detective work very seriously.

But their faces grew serious as he came to the incident of the false name endorsed on the banknote in the boot emporium.

"I say, that's jolly queer!" said Newcome.

"It's more than queer," said Lovell, with a sombre look. "There's something awfully fishy in it. He comes

fifteen miles to buy his boots, which he could get at Latcham if he liked, and he endorses a bank-note with a false name. What does he do it for ? "

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows.

" Can't imagine," he said.

" It's a sort of forgery, isn't it ? " said Lovell.

" Well, no. The bank-note was his own, I suppose, and it's just as good with Judson on the back as with Skinforth. Perhaps he doesn't want it known that he does his shopping at Bunbury, though why, goodness knows. Let's get the bikes out."

" The bikes ? " repeated Lovell.

" Yes. It will be rather a close thing for lock-up at Rookwood. We don't want to be late, as Dicky Dalton was so decent about letting us come."

" You can leave the bikes where they are," said Lovell coolly. " I can't quite understand this ; but it's frightfully fishy and I'm quite sure that a policeman would know what it meant. So I'm going to ask one."

His chums blinked at him.

" You—you ass ! " exclaimed Raby. " You're going to spin yarns to a policeman about a Rookwood master ? Are you off your chump ? "

" I can ask without mentioning names," said Lovell. " I've a right to ask a constable for advice."

" Yes, but——"

" Lovell, old chap——"

" I'm going to," said Lovell ; and he



" Why should a man changing a banknote in a shop where he wasn't known, sign a false name on it ? " asked Arthur Edward. " Only one reason, I suppose," said the constable. " Either he'd stolen the note or it was a counterfeit one."

settled the matter by walking across to a stout gentleman in blue who was on duty at the railway station.

" Excuse me, officer," said Lovell, while his comrades looked on in silence.

The big policeman looked down at the schoolboy good-naturedly.

" What is it, my lad ? " he asked.

" Can I ask you something, as an officer of the law ? " said Lovell.

The constable smiled.

" Certainly. Go ahead."

" Suppose a man changed a

banknote in a shop," said Lovell. "Suppose he was asked to endorse it with his name and address, you know, and suppose he put a false name on it?"

The constable stared.

"What's that?" he ejaculated.

And the good-natured smile on the officer's face was replaced by a very keen and alert look, as Jimmy Silver & Co. noticed at once.

"What would you think he did it for?" asked Lovell. "I can't make it out, but I thought a policeman might be able to. Of course, a man changing a banknote in a shop where he wasn't known would have to sign his name on it. Why should he sign a false name?"

"Only one reason, I suppose," said the constable, staring. "Either he'd stolen the banknote or it was a stumper."

"A—a—a what?"

"A counterfeit note," explained the constable. "If you know about anything of the kind, young man, you'd better tell me."

Lovell fairly staggered. Like a blinding flash of light the revelation came to him.

"Kik—kik—counterfeit!" he gasped.

"Counterfeit!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "False banknotes? Oh, my Aunt Matilda!"

The constable dropped his gloved hand lightly on Lovell's shoulder.

"What's happened, and what do you know about it?" he said, very quietly, but very decisively. "Come now, out with it!"

Lovell gasped.

"Can you tell a false banknote when you see one?"

"I fancy so."

"Then I'll take you to the place. But, mind, I'm not going to mention

any names till I know. But I'll tell you this, the man has got thousands of pounds in banknotes in his trunk, and I've seen them. I—I—I never dreamed they might be counterfeit."

"If you're pulling my leg, young man—"

"Come to the shop! For goodness' sake, come to the shop!" exclaimed Lovell, and he jerked at the constable's tunic in his excitement.

"Where's the shop?"

"The boot shop only a few minutes from here."

"Right."

With a heavy tread the big policeman marched beside the excited, gasping schoolboy. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome followed, quite forgetful of lock-up at Rookwood now. They were almost as breathless with excitement as Arthur Edward Lovell. Was it possible—was it—or was Lovell putting his foot in it again in the way his chums knew only too well? But this time, apparently, Arthur Edward had something to "go" upon.

The two shopmen in the Bunbury Emporium looked rather surprised when the constable entered with four schoolboys. Lovell gasped out:

"That banknote—"

"Eh?"

"That banknote with Judson on it—show it to the constable."

"What on earth—"

"The man's name wasn't Judson!" shouted Lovell. "I know him, and his name wasn't Judson! He signed a false name."

"Your uncle—"

"He's not my uncle. That was gammon!"

"Oh, was it?" said Mr. Montgomery sharply. "I think—"

"Better let me see the banknote, sir," said the constable. "There's

been a lot of stumers passed the last few weeks in these parts ; it's supposed that somebody's working the district."

That was enough for Mr. Montgomery. He looked quite alarmed as he cut across to the cash-desk. In a few moments he came back with a five-pound note in his hand.

" It looks all right," he said, " right as rain ! We sold a thirty-five-shilling pair of boots, giving three pounds five change."

The constable took the banknote and examined it with care.

" It's one of the best I've seen," he said at last. " Ninety-nine people in a hundred would be taken in by that note, I fancy. By gum, I should be taken in myself, only I've seen one like it that was passed at Rookham a week ago. It's a stumer."

" Done ! " breathed Mr. Montgomery.



" That banknote with Judson on it," said Lovell as he entered the shop with the constable and his chums, " show it to the constable." " What on earth— " began the shopman. " The man's name wasn't Judson ! " exclaimed Arthur Edward.

Lovell's eyes danced. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked intensely relieved. For once, at least, Arthur Edward had not put his foot in it.

" You'd better let me take this note away for the present, sir. And you young gentlemen had better come to the station with me. You'll have to tell us what you know about the man ; he's the man that's been wanted for weeks."

" He went to two other shops," said Lovell. " I know them both."

" Come on, then."

The constable and the excited juniors visited the bookshop and the clothier's shop in turn. In each was found a banknote, one endorsed in the name of J. A. Smith, the other in the name of William Brown. Evidently Mr. Skinforth used a different name every time.

Lovell seemed to be walking on air as he accompanied the constable to



Rookwood Characters

A Small Selection of Rookwood Fellows

LEADER of the Classicals,
Smiling through whate'er befalls,
Sunny-tempered, good at games—
JIMMY SILVER—"Uncle James!"

Leader of the Modern House,
Never feels disposed to grouse,
Sturdy, with a heart of gold—
TOMMY DODD, a warrior bold!

Always in a famished state,
Weighs about six hundredweight,
Lives and moves and schemes for grub—
TUBBY MUFFIN, Rookwood's Tub!

With his cool, keen-witted brain,
He has been the masters' bane,
Bold, defiant, reckless, shrewd—
MORNINGTON, we must include!

He's a dandy and a knut,
With his clothes of matchless cut,
Shirts and socks and ties of silk—
SMYTHE, ADOLPHUS of that ilk!

He's a prefect and a cad,
He is everything that's bad,
Bully, waster, gambler, sweep—
CARTHEW of the Sixth—black sheep!

Headstrong, often obstinate,
Full of pluck, at any rate;
And he always plays the game—
ARTHUR LOVELL is his name!

He is full of tricks and japes,
Constantly in fearful scrapes,
Though he has a "cherub's" face—
TEDDY (alias PUTTY) GRACE!

Bunbury Police Station. He gave his comrades triumphant looks. Undoubtedly there was a hint—more than a hint, in fact—of swank in the manner of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Arthur Edward was immensely pleased with himself, and for once his comrades were pleased with him. Lovell was often a great man in his own eyes, and now he was a great man in the eyes of his comrades.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER EXIT SKINFORTH!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. were late for lock-up that evening at Rookwood. But that did not matter very much, in the circumstances.

They arrived at the school in company. Four bikes were stacked on top of a big car, and in the car were packed the Fistical Four and an inspector and two constables from Bunbury. And in the inspector's pocket was a warrant entitling him to search the belongings of Mr. Skinforth at Rookwood.

The sight of the official uniforms caused a sensation in the school. Crowds of Rookwood fellows stared at the two constables, while the inspector was admitted to the Head's study to explain the purport of his visit to Dr. Chisholm.

In Mr. Dalton's study, the Fistical Four explained the matter to their Form-master. They had the privilege of seeing Mr. Dalton's face when he heard, and it was, as Lovell said afterwards, a sight to behold!

Mr. Skinforth had been in more than an hour when the official visit took place. He was in his room when the Bunbury inspector arrived there, with the startled Head and the two constables bringing up the rear—behind them a buzzing mob of excited Rookwooders.



Mr. Skinforth opened his door to a knock, and his face changed colour at the sight of the police.

The Bunbury inspector, the Head and the two constables entered the room. The door closed, much to the disappointment of the Rookwood crowd. A quarter of an hour later it opened.

Mr. Skinforth came out walking between the two policemen, with handcuffs on his wrists!

He was hurried down to the car and whirled away, and Rookwood was left to thrill with excitement.

Many particulars became known later with regard to Mr. Skinforth. He was not the counterfeiter himself; he was the distributing agency for a gang of counterfeiters in London. He was a good man at mathematics, with good testimonials to show, and sometimes he had a post in a school, sometimes he set up to take private pupils; but, wherever he was, his

The door of Mr. Skinforth's room opened and the new master, his face chalky white, walked out between two constables—with handcuffs on his wrists!

dwelling-place was the centre of his operations as a distributor of counterfeit notes. Never more than for a few weeks in one place, he had hitherto followed his peculiar profession with impunity. And he might have been following it with impunity still but for one person of the name of Arthur Edward Lovell!

But he had been brought up with a round turn now, so to speak. His activities were at an end, and he was booked for a long, long rest; and Rookwood had lost its unpopular "mathy" master, which was still better news to the juniors. Altogether, it was admitted in the Classical Fourth that Lovell was entitled to swank a little.

And there was no doubt that Lovell did!

THE END

CLASS-ROOM COUPLETS

A Double Alphabet

By FRANK NUGENT

A is for ALPHABET. This we learn first,
Then comes the ASHPLANT to give us the
worst.

B is the BLACKBOARD which sometimes
we smash,
Then comes the BIRCH (a worse plant
than the ash!).

C is for CLASSES which very soon pall,
Then comes the CANE ; it's the worst of
them all !

D is DIVISION, a sum we all hate,
Then comes DETENTION, a miserable
fate !

E is EXAMS which we all have to suffer,
And EUCLID at which I'm a dunce and a
duffer !

F is for FRENCH, which I try hard to
speak,
And make the whole FORM (and the Form-
master) shriek !

G is for GREEK, which I study in vain,
The GRAMMAR alone makes me frantic
with pain !

H is for HORACE. My head fairly aches !
And also for HISTORY. Who burnt the
cakes ?

I is for IDIOT talking in class,
An IMPOT will very soon punish the ass !

J is for JUNIORS, masters don't love us !
Also for JUVENAL, work far above us !

K is the KALENDS of Classical Greece,
Also our KNOWLEDGE, which doesn't
increase !

L is for LATIN, a subject we spurn,
Because it's a LESSON we all have to
LEARN.

M is MATHEMATICS, no subject's as bad !
We MEASURE and MULTIPLY till we
go mad !

N is for NEUTER, a gender unkind,
And when it's a NOUN it is always
"declined."

O is ORTHOGRAPHY—learn how to
spell !
Our ORAL dictashun is spelt verry well !

P is for PENCIL and PAPER and PEN,
We need 'em for PREP, so get busy, you
men !

Q is for QUELCHY, our awe he has won !
And Q.E.D.—which is, Quite Easily Done !

R is the ROW which is bound to begin
When any REMOVE fellow sits on a pin !

S is for SUBJECTS as deep as the
SPHINX,
Like SCIENCE, for instance, or otherwise
—STINKS !

T is the TIME which we have to endure
Old Quelchy's TUITION so steady and
sure.

U is for our UNDERSTANDING of all
The things in the UNIVERSE, mighty or
small !

V is for VIRGIL. The rotter ! The worm !
His VERSE and his VERBS make me
wriggle and squirm !

W's for WRITING. My fingers are sore !
I WORK till I feel I can't do any more.

X is for XENOPHON—works so immense
That even X-RAYS can't discover their
sense !

Y is the YEARNING we have for our
class,
It's shown in our YAWNS as the hours
slowly pass.

Z is for ZOOLOGY—not a bad stunt !
It tells us the ZEBRA is striped back and
front !

HINTS TO THE HEAD

By TEDDY GRACE

(The Joker of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood)

*Teddy Grace hopes his hints will not meet the eyes
of the Head. If they do, Teddy will meet the cane!*

I've drawn up the following hints in the hope that they won't meet the eyes of Dr. Chisholm. If they do, I expect he'll draw up a hint which will reach me in some other spot! Now these hints will help any Head to be popular, so if you want the fellows to cheer you instead of jeer you, you can't do better than practise what I preach.

1. Abolish Latin. This is essential. Of course, we must have lessons, but Latin is simply a waste of time. It stands to reason that fellows don't want to learn languages that nobody ever speaks. Suppose, for instance, a fellow wants to buy a tart in the tuckshop. What would be the good of asking for a "Hic, haec, hoc, hujus, hujus, hujus!" Why, a chap would be carted off in a strait-waistcoat to a padded cell! What we want to learn is a language we have to use. When we told Clarence Cuffy of the Modern House to "go and eat coke," we merely wanted him to buzz off. But because he learns French and German instead of English, he proceeded to the coal-cellars and devoured lumps of coke and had to be treated

in the Sanny. To avoid this sort of thing, you should—

2. Substitute "The Holiday Annual" or "The Schoolboys' Own" for Cæsar and Virgil. You see, there's some sense in books like these, and what's more, fellows would take some interest in their lessons. If Dalton said in class: "Silver, you will kindly construe the first chapter of



Having devoured lumps of coke in the coal-cellars, Clarence Cuffy had to be treated in the Sanny afterwards.

the Rookwood story in the current Holiday Annual," it would be so much more fascinating. After all, the object of schools is to make fellows enthusiastic over their lessons, and who's going to be enthusiastic over Virgil? Br-r-r-r! Put him on the fire and save coal-bills!

3. Spoil the rod and spare the child! Rods are easily spoilt by being broken in halves and fed on the Form-room fire.

4. Instead of drill and physics, let us have lectures on cricket, football, etc., illustrated by indoor matches in the class-room. Critical points of goal-keeping, etc., could be demonstrated by the master keeping goal in the fireplace while we took penalty kicks with a couple of dusters tied together by string.

5. Impots should be given from works of imagination and mystery, such as "The Clue of the Baked Haddock." This would make them more palatable. After perusal by the Form-master, lines should not be torn up, but should be carefully stored away with the name of the writer on them. At the end of every term all these reams of paper could be sold to a waste-paper merchant, and the money given to the writers as a reward of industry. I should make my fortune in a year!

6. Impots of more than a million lines prohibited.

7. "Out of Bounds" rules should still be enforced, but the bounds should be made bigger. A good scheme is to make them consist of the British Isles. Boys requiring to go outside the British Isles during schooltime must get a special permit from the Captain.

8. Examinations would, of course, have to be greatly altered. Special subjects would be set, of which the following are fair examples :

Arithmetic and Commercial Sense. Juniors will be given ten shillings

each and allowed to spend it on what they like. On examination day, the purchases must be arranged for the inspection of the examiner, with the receipted bills attached. Marks will be awarded according to the examiner's de-

cision as to the best value for money. Top marks (i.e., a full ten-shillings' worth of value), 100.

Literature. Quotations from "The Holiday Annual," etc., will be set, and juniors must state the story, verse or play from which they were taken.

Languages. A number of expressions, such as "frabjous bandersnatch," will be given and must be construed by the competitors.

Cricket (or Football, according to season). Test papers on rules, tactics, etc., and open-air examinations on the pitch ; bowling (50 marks), batting (50 marks), and so on.

Geography. Competitors will be asked questions on all or any of the cinemas, theatres, tuckshops, football grounds, etc., in Hampshire. Opportunity to explore and visit these will be granted beforehand.

9. *School Reports.* Boys should be permitted to write their own, the headmaster signing them on request.

And, finally, every headmaster should remember that noble motto : "England expects that every Head this day will dodge his duty!"

Now I'm going to interview the Head of Rookwood. I've prepared a little speech I shall make. It's simple, but very touching. This is it :

"Ow-wow-wow-wow-wow!"



Useful points of goal-keeping could be demonstrated by the master keeping goal in the fireplace while we took penalty kicks with a couple of dusters tied together.



It would be much more fascinating if Dalton said : "Silver, you will construe the first chapter of the Rookwood story in the 'Holiday Annual'!"

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 ?

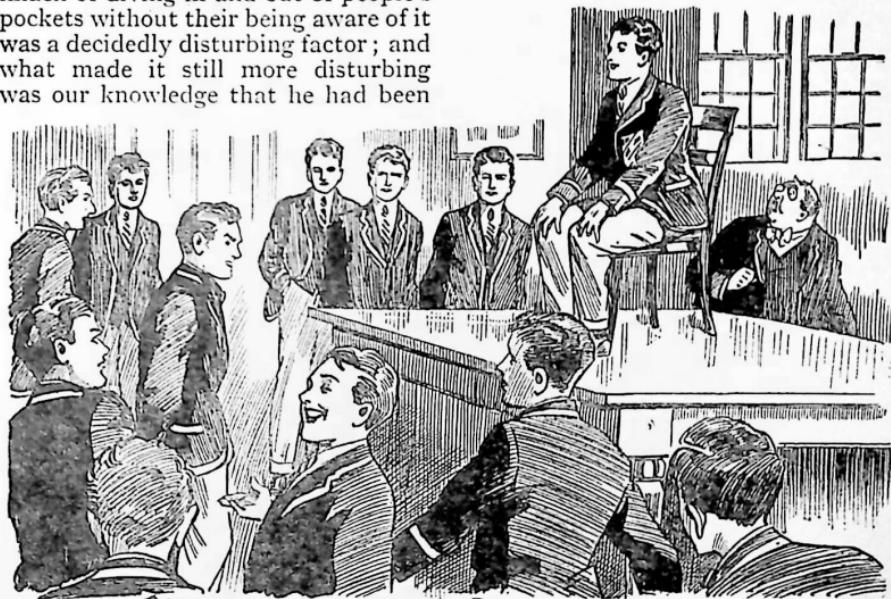
So far as we knew, Kipps was an honest enough kid. But his uncanny knack of diving in and out of people's pockets without their being aware of it was a decidedly disturbing factor ; and what made it still more disturbing was our knowledge that he had been

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



SKIMPOLE WORKS HIS WILL!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"By the exercise of my Will Power," says Skimpole, the worst cricketer at St. Jim's, "I can play as well as anybody!" And he proves it by winning the match for the school!

"Pardon me, my good youth, but—"

"Skimmy's not to blame," broke in Talbot, with a rueful grin. "He's gated, too, anyway. It was my fault for not stopping him."

"Precisely!" exclaimed Skimpole, with an approving nod. "Every individual is responsible for his own destiny. As Professor Balmycrumpet says—"

"Blow Professor Balmycrumpet!" yelled the irate crowd of cricketers that had gathered in Tom Merry's study.

"Really, my good youths! Anyway, I, too, as Talbot mentioned, am to suffer similar punishment," said Skimpole, solemnly. "What is more, in my case it means the loss of something much more serious than a mere juvenile game. As it happens, I was going to Abbotsford myself on Wednesday—not for a game of cricket, but for a lecture on Will Power!"

"Bother your blessed lecture!" snapped Tom Merry. "It's our cricket match that matters at Abbotsford on Wednesday—not your potty lecture! Abbotsford are fielding their strongest side and if we don't have Talbot—"

THE FIRST CHAPTER THE WHEEZE THAT WENT WRONG!

FATHEAD!"

"Really, my dear Merry—"

"Footling, frabjous, freakish fathead!" snorted Tom Merry of the St. Jim's Shell. "Why couldn't you have buttonholed Talbot at some other time?"

Herbert Skimpole, the genius of St. Jim's, blinked through his spectacles in mild protest.

"My good youth—" he began.

"If you hadn't kept on gassing to him in that teashop at Wayland about your blessed Will Power, he wouldn't have missed his train," said Tom Merry, unheeding. "And if he hadn't missed his train, he wouldn't have been late for calling over and Railton wouldn't have gated him for next Wednesday—the very day when we were relying on him to play cricket for us at Abbotsford!"

"Half-a-mo! I've got an idea!"

All eyes were turned to Monty Lowther. An idea from the humorist of the Shell was usually worthy of attention.

"Spill it, Monty!" said Tom Merry encouragingly. "If it's an idea for getting Talbot to Abbotsford next Wednesday, you'll earn our undying gratitude!"

"It is!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Of course, the best solution really would be to put me in the team in Talbot's place. But as you're all so keen on keeping him and the problem is simply to get him to Abbotsford, why not disguise him?"

The juniors stared at Monty Lowther rather blankly. Tom Merry frowned.

"N.G., Monty, I'm afraid. Knowing how things stand, Railton's bound to tell a prefect to keep an eye on our motor-coach—and a fishy-looking stranger aboard will catch his eye right away."

"Quite likely," nodded Lowther. "But there'd be nothing fishy-looking about a conductor, would there?"

"Oh!"

The juniors looked at Lowther, then looked at each other; and then they grinned.

"My hat! I believe you've picked a winner, Monty!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Motor-coaches often do have conductors, and there'd be nothing odd about one turning up with ours. If we can find a white smock and a peaked cap amongst the Dramatic Society's props—"

"There are two of each," said Kangaroo. "One set's bound to fit Talbot."

"Then it's just a question of Talbot slipping in as though he'd arrived with the coach—and the deed's done! What do you say, Talbot?"

"I'm on," smiled Talbot. "Of course, it will mean staying disguised till we get there, to avoid any danger of being spotted en route. But once we're there, there'll be no need to worry. Thanks for the wheeze, Lowther."

And that, so to speak, was that. The meeting broke up on a note of most cheery optimism.

Nothing happened up to the Wednesday to disturb the renewed optimism of the St. Jim's cricketers. One of the Dramatic Society's peaked caps fitted Talbot to perfection, and Mr. Railton made it known that no restrictions were to be placed on the movements of Talbot and Skimpole apart from their not being allowed out of gates. Both these happenings favoured Lowther's scheme.

When the fateful Wednesday afternoon arrived, everything seemed to go swimmingly. As the cricketers' motor-coach drove through the gates, Tom Merry & Co., walking over from the pavilion with their bags, saw emerging from the School House a bewhiskered and bespectacled conductor whom nobody could possibly have associated with Talbot of the Shell.

They hurried to join the coach and go while the going was good.

All went well. The bogus conductor sat with the driver, and Kildare of the Sixth saw the coach off without registering the slightest suspicion.

It was not till they reached Abbotsford that the juniors realised that something was wrong. But then they realised it with a vengeance. The disguised St. Jim's junior stepped down from the coach and removed his false whiskers—and, with a gasp of horror, the cricketers recognised the last man they had anticipated seeing at Abbotsford that afternoon.

"SKIMPOLE!"



The disguised St. Jim's junior stepped down from the coach and removed his false whiskers. With a gasp of horror, Tom Merry & Co. recognised the last fellow they had expected to see at Abbotsford that afternoon. "SKIMPOLE!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER BY POWER OF WILL!

"SKIMPOLE!" gasped Tom Merry, faintly. "What the thump——"

Skimpole blinked solemnly at the half-paralysed cricketers.

"I regret deeply having had to deceive you, my good youths," he said. "But necessity knows no law. It was vitally important for me at the present stage of my studies to get to the lecture that is being given at Abbotsford this afternoon on Will Power!"

"You—you dummy!"

"How did you do it?" yelled Tom Merry. "Where's Talbot?"

"Locked up in his study, my dear Merry. I locked him in myself, while

he was changing into the conductor's outfit!"

"Oh, ye gods!"

"I thought it would be an excellent idea if I myself resorted to the ingenious subterfuge Lowther suggested," explained Skimpole. "I am sure the knowledge that you are assisting me in my study of Will Power will compensate you for Talbot's absence."

"You—you——"

"I must go now, or I shall be late for the lecture," went on the genius of the Shell, glancing at his watch. "I'll see you later, my dear fellows!"

And Skimpole went, leaving the cricketers staring after him as though mesmerised!

And so it came about that St. Jim's played only ten men against Abbotsford that afternoon. There was no help for it. Manners, the scorer, was the only spare man with the team and he had an injured ankle.

Tom Merry and his men settled down to the game with feelings that were too deep for words !

But time healed their outraged feelings, and as the afternoon wore on they cheered up and forgot their troubles in the enjoyment of a great game. With one man short and Abbotsford at the top of their form, they were fighting with their backs to the wall. But that fact inspired them to greater efforts than they might have made with Talbot in the team, and the Abbotsford men were soon shown that it was going to be no walk-over for them.

Abbotsford scored 98 in their first innings ; St. Jim's only two runs less. Then Abbotsford went in again and, on a deteriorating wicket, knocked up 81, which left St. Jim's with 83 to score for a tie or 84 for a win. Not a very formidable task on paper, but the wicket was tricky and becoming trickier. Tom Merry realised that they were up against it. They could, of course, play for a draw, but that wouldn't have been in the St. Jim's tradition. He gave his men orders to go all out for a win.

As time went on, it became clear that it was going to be a desperately close finish. But nobody anticipated quite such a close finish as it proved to be. The score crept up and batsmen came and went—until, with the score at 82, Jack Blake was caught out and Fatty Wynn, last man in of the team of ten, joined Kangaroo at the wicket. Disaster came swiftly. Raikes, the Abbotsford skipper, sent down a

fast ball that gave Fatty Wynn no chance.

There was a cheer from the home supporters.

" Abbotsford wins ! "

And then—

Suddenly, Tom Merry, standing at the bottom of the pavilion steps, was aware of a weedy bespectacled figure wandering towards him.

" Skimpole ! " he ejaculated. " My hat ! I wonder—"

To think was to act. Tom dashed on to the pitch, where the players were just turning towards the pavilion.

" Raikes, old chap, there's a man of ours just turned up. It's a bit unusual, but do you think we might—"

" Play him ? By all means," said Raikes readily. " You've been a man short all the afternoon, Merry, and I'd be a poor sport if I didn't agree to your having a full team for the finish. Send him in ! "

" Thanks ! "

" Don't mensh ! It will give me a chance to complete my hat-trick ! " grinned Raikes. " Stay on, you men ! We haven't finished yet ! "

Tom ran back to Skimpole.

" Skimmy, old bean, it's up to you ! " he gasped. " You're last man in and we want two runs to win ! Lend him your boots, Figgy ! Here's a pair of pads ! "

" Ow ! Really, my good youths," exclaimed Skimpole breathlessly, as he felt himself grabbed by willing helpers and sat down forcibly on the pavilion steps as a preliminary to being fixed up for cricket.

" No jaw ! " said Tom Merry. " This is the time for deeds, not words. All you've got to do, Skimmy, is to stand at your wicket and stone-wall till they change over. Then if

only Kangaroo can score another two, we've won the day. Savvy?"

Skimpole blinked.

"But, my good Merry, inasmuch as the runs are of equal value to the side whichever individual scores them, it would surely be an economy of time if I scored them myself!"

"It would if you could bat, old son," grinned Tom. "But as you can't—"

Skimpole frowned.

"Pardon me, my good youth, but there are no limits to what can be accomplished by the exercise of Will Power. The lecturer to whose discourse I have been listening this afternoon distinctly said—"

"Chuck it, old bean!" begged Tom Merry, as Skimpole's helpers stood him on his feet again and pushed a bat into his hand. "Be a good scout and do as I tell you. Just keep your wicket intact if you can and—"

Skimpole shook his head.

"I am sorry, Merry, but I cannot agree to take merely a passive part in the game. I admit that I have never aimed at pre-eminence at cricket, but I maintain that by the exercise of my Will Power I can play cricket as well as anybody! Stand aside!"

"Oh, crikey!"

The St. Jim's juniors stood aside. They were too surprised at the unexpected effect of the afternoon's lecture on Skimpole to do anything else!

Skimpole trotted solemnly down to his wicket and faced the bowler. The St. Jim's men left behind at the pavilion groaned.

"Well, this finishes it," Tom Merry remarked lugubriously. "Had that chump gone in with the intention of just stopping the ball, there'd have

been a chance. But now he's decided to hit out and try Will Power on it, we're done!"

"Play!"

The spectators watched breathlessly. Raikes sent down one of his swiftest and deadliest and Tom Merry & Co. closed their eyes in almost agonised suspense as they saw Skimpole step out to it.

Clack!

"Hallo! What the thump—"

The St. Jim's men opened their eyes again and stared.

Skimpole's wicket was not spread-eagled, as they had thought for a moment. The "clack" they had heard, incredible as it seemed, was the sound of Skimpole's bat smiting the ball!

"He's hit it!" yelled Figgins. "Oh, what a fluke! He's hit it! Good old Skimmy!"

"It's a boundary, too!" gasped Tom Merry. "Skimmy's won the game! Hooray!"

The miracle had happened! Skimpole had won the game for St. Jim's!

The visitors yelled themselves hoarse.

"Well, you did it, Skimmy!" grinned Tom Merry, as Skimpole returned. "Of course, as it was your fault Talbot didn't turn up, it was the least you could have done, anyway—still, I didn't expect it of you!"

Skimpole blinked solemnly through his spectacles.

"No other result was possible, my good youth," he said. "It was simply and solely the result of my exercising my Will Power!"

And, although Tom Merry & Co. had their own ideas about that, they allowed the genius of the Shell to have it his own way!

THE END



Here is the famous story that every "Holiday Annual" reader knows, told to you in a novel and interesting manner by popular Greyfriars characters.

BILLY BUNTER STARTS THE STORY:

I ALWAYS think Red Riding Hood might have been a jolly good story. It's about a basket of tuck which a little girl was told to take to her sick grandmother, but it seems to me if she had had any sense she would have just found a nice corner in the woods and scoffed the lot. Her mother packed the basket tight with apples and pears and home-made cakes and a jelly, and she warned Red Riding Hood to carry the basket upright so as not to slop the jelly. Red Riding Hood had had a good breakfast and she didn't attempt to touch the tuck—at least, until she got deep into the wood, and then she began to get a bit scared in case somebody should bag it from her.

ALONZO TODD CONTINUES:

WHEN Red Riding Hood had penetrated the depths of the wood, she was overcome with acute symptoms of fear, caused by the unexpected appearance of a carnivorous quadruped, canis lupus, otherwise known as the common wolf. Upon perceiving the voracious creature, Red Riding Hood agitated her larynx and emitted a cry of alarm, which had the effect of frightening off the wolf.

FISHER T. FISH CARRIES ON:

SURE, it looked just as if that old wolf had sniffed danger and gone humping hot-foot back to his lair. But he had actually done nothing of the sort. That old wolf was a wise guy, I'll say he was! He wasn't all set to risk mixing it with the Red



The old wolf humped along behind young Riding Hood till he figured out she was heading for her grandmomma's shack.

Riding Hood, keeping her red sombrero in sight, till he figures out she was heading for her grandmomma's shack.

BILLY BUNTER TAKES UP THE STORY AGAIN :

RED RIDING HOOD had forgotten the wolf. She had felt hungry, and had just looked at the jelly to make sure it hadn't slopped out of the basin. She thought she had better try it, her mother having luckily put in a spoon, and almost before she knew it the jelly had gone. It was only a small one, anyway. That made the basket lighter, and Red Riding Hood had just eaten a couple of pears and a few apples to keep her strength up, when she noticed that the basket was practically empty! There were a few cakes left, so she hurried on to her poor old grandmother's, for she did not want the old lady to starve. She wondered how she was going to explain that she had only a few cakes left, though, and decided to eat them and not say she had brought anything at all.

Riding Hood gal at the moment. They were too near a forest trail, and a passing cowboy might have ridden up and quickly riddled him with lead. So what does the old wolf do? He humps along behind young

BOLSOVER MAJOR BUTTS IN :

WHEN this kid Red Riding Hood saw her grandmother in bed, she got a bit of a shock. The old lady looked several sizes bigger than usual, almost as big as a heavyweight boxer. She'd got a big pair of spectacles on, too, bigger than Bunter's, and she spoke in a gruff voice that shook the bed.

"What big eyes you have, grandmother," said Red Riding Hood.

"All the better to see you with!" snarled the wolf, for it was the wolf dressed up in the grandmother's clothes. He had already taken in the grandmother like Bunter taking in a pie. You knew that, of course.

"And what big teeth you have!" said Red Riding Hood.

FISHER T. FISH RESUMES :

"SAY, can it!" snarled the wolf, leaping out of bed. "I'm not your grandmomma, and if you'd been the cute baby I took you for you'd have got me taped from the word 'go'! As it is, I guess you'll make me one big tasty meal. Yes, ma'am."

Was the Riding Hood kid scared? Nix!



Red Riding Hood just ate a couple of pears and a few apples, when she noticed that the basket was practically empty!

That old wolf had a surprise coming to him, I'll say he had !

Quick on the draw as any ranger, the Riding Hood kid flashed out a couple six-shooters.

"Lift those mitts, and make it snappy!" she said.

"Say, you can't do this to me!" blustered the old wolf.

"No?" snapped the Riding Hood kid. "Say, big boy, you thought I was a sorta tenderfoot, maybe?"



The Riding Hood kid flashed out a couple shooters.
"Lift those mitts, and make it snappy!" she said.

Say, you must come up to Riding Hood Ranch some time and meet the bunch. No tricks, now—the boys say I never miss my aim!"

"Sister, I give over!" whined the wolf. "I'll be no trouble!"

"I'll keep my guns handy!" gritted the Riding Hood kid.

ALONZO TODD CONCLUDES:

THERE are several conflicting versions of the end of the story, but I think the most authentic is that Red Riding Hood then rang up Whitehall One Two One Two, and having given the wolf some milk to sustain it, handed it over to the police. I have nothing but the highest admiration for the exemplary courage shown by little Red Riding Hood in the face of grave danger.



THE GREYFRIARS GHOST

By DICK PENFOLD

TO-NIGHT I went upstairs alone,
And just outside the dorm.
I heard a most appalling groan
And saw a fearful form !
I wasn't scared, you understand,
For I am not a funk ;
But I was in a hurry, and
I therefore did a bunk !

It was a ghastly, grisly ghost
In robes of shining white !
He was, I must admit, a most
Uncomfortable sight !
He drifted down the corridor
With wailings full of woe.
My feet were rooted to the floor—
But not for long, you know !

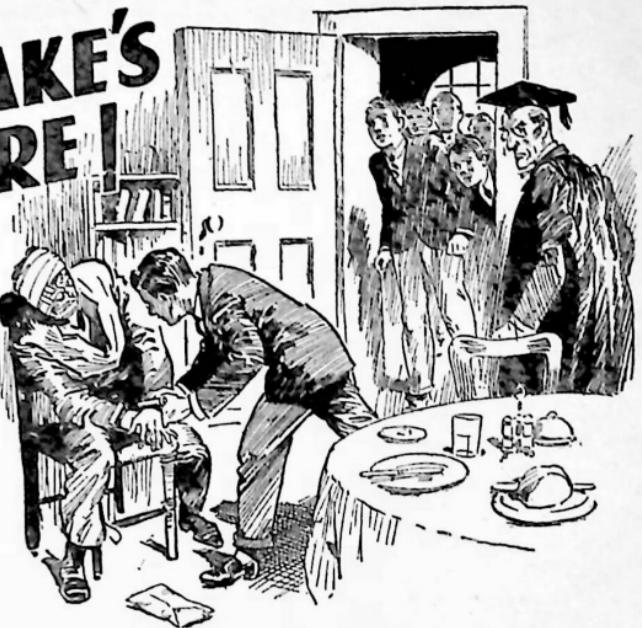
This phantom abbot groaned and growled
And made a beckoning sign.
I saw at once his head was cowled,
But not so "cowled" as mine !
His chin was like a marlinspike,
His nose was long and bent,
His face, upon the whole, was like
A railway accident !

I did not like this mystic monk,
But still, I'm bound to state,
The reason why I did a bunk
Was just that I was late !
I did the course on speedy feet
In thirteen seconds dead,
And thereby had the luck to beat
The record by a head !

JACK DRAKE'S CAPTURE!

By
FRANK RICHARDS

Jack Drake, assistant to Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, combines business with pleasure when he pays a visit to his old friends at Greyfriars!



THE FIRST CHAPTER UP TO JACK DRAKE!

FERRERS LOCKE put up the receiver and turned from the telephone, a thoughtful look on his clear-cut face. His eyes fixed on his boy assistant, Jack Drake, seated at his desk sorting over press cuttings.

"Drake!"

Scissors in hand, Drake glanced round at his chief.

"It is some time, I think, since you have seen your old friends at your former school, Drake," remarked Ferrers Locke.

"I haven't seen a Greyfriars man since the last holidays, sir," answered Drake.

"You would like to see them again—Wharton, Cherry, and the rest?"

The famous detective smiled at the brightening in the face of his assistant.

"Yes, rather, sir!" answered Drake promptly. "I'd be glad to see even Billy Bunter!"

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"A change from Baker Street to the green fields of Kent would do you good, Drake," he said. "I believe your old Form-master, Mr. Quelch, would make you very welcome. I can easily arrange matters with my relative, Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars. A few days at your old school, and perhaps a spot of football—what?"

Jack Drake chuckled.

His reply was surprising.

"Height five feet eight inches, eyes grey, nose aquiline, slim build but strong and muscular," he said.

"What?" ejaculated Ferrers Locke.

"Last seen near Lantham, in Kent," continued Drake. "Evidently seeking to reach the coast and escape from the country, with seven thousand pounds in banknotes taken from the Capital and Suburban Bank—"

The Baker Street detective stared

blankly at his boy assistant for a moment. Then he burst into a laugh.

" You are quick on the uptake, my boy," he said.

" You've taught me to be, sir," said Drake. " Do I get you ? "

" You get me exactly ! " said Ferrers Locke, with a smile. " As I was saying, a change will do you good, and you will enjoy a visit to your old friends at your old school. But while your old schoolfellows are in class, you will naturally take walks abroad, and spins on your bicycle, visiting the old familiar scenes. At the same time you will be keeping an eye open for Julius Drew, whose description you apparently know by heart."

" I thought so, sir ! " assented Drake. " Greyfriars School being only nine or ten miles from Lantham, where the man was last seen, I couldn't help jumping to it."

Locke's face became serious again.

" I have just been asked to take a hand in the matter," he said. " The police, of course, have it in hand ; but the Capital and Suburban Bank is naturally more concerned about the bundle of banknotes than anything else, and they desire me to take up the matter unofficially. I am too busily engaged at the present time to leave London. But I can spare my assistant for a short time, valuable as he is—"

" Thank you, sir ! " said Drake. " I'll try to prove my value, if there's anything doing in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars School."

" It appears to me," said Ferrers Locke, " very probable. It is nearly a week since Julius Drew, bank-robber and hold-up man, was seen near Lantham. Since then he has disappeared as completely as if he had sunk into the earth, or vanished

into the air. As he has, of course, done neither, it would seem that he is lying low in some obscure hiding-place. The local police are keeping a very careful watch on the coast, and the railways, of course, are carefully watched also. It does not seem likely that he has succeeded in getting away. I should imagine that he is lying very low, waiting for the search to relax, to give him a chance."

" It looks like it, sir," agreed Drake.

" He must be obtaining food from somewhere," went on Ferrers Locke. " It is unlikely that he would venture into even a remote village store when his description has been so widely circulated. An inquiring schoolboy may pick up news of even such trifles as the robbing of hen-roosts or the purloining of loaves from a baker's cart. Such trifles will lead, in ninety-nine cases in a hundred, to a pilfering tramp, but in the hundredth case—"

" To Julius Drew ! " said Drake, with a nod.

" Precisely ! A visit to your old school, Drake, combining business with pleasure—"

" Suits me fine, sir ! When do I start ? "

" I will get on the telephone to Dr. Locke while you are packing your bag, my boy. There is a train at two-fifteen for Lantham Junction."

Half an hour later Jack Drake, once of the Greyfriars Remove, stepped into a taxi and whizzed away down Baker Street.

THE SECOND CHAPTER THE DOUGHNUTS THAT DISAPPEARED !

" I SAY, you fellows ! "

" Wonderful ! " ejaculated Bob Cherry.

" Eh ! What's wonderful ? " asked Billy Bunter, blinking into No. 1 Study in the Remove passage at

Greyfriars through his big spectacles.

"Your scent for a feed, old fat man!"

"The wonderfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I never knew you had doughnuts!" said Billy Bunter. "How the thump should I know you had doughnuts here?"

"Didn't you?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Hadn't the foggiest!" said Bunter. "I never saw you get them at the tuck-shop, old chap—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Billy Bunter. "I never came up here for your mouldy old doughnuts. I thought you'd like to hear the news."

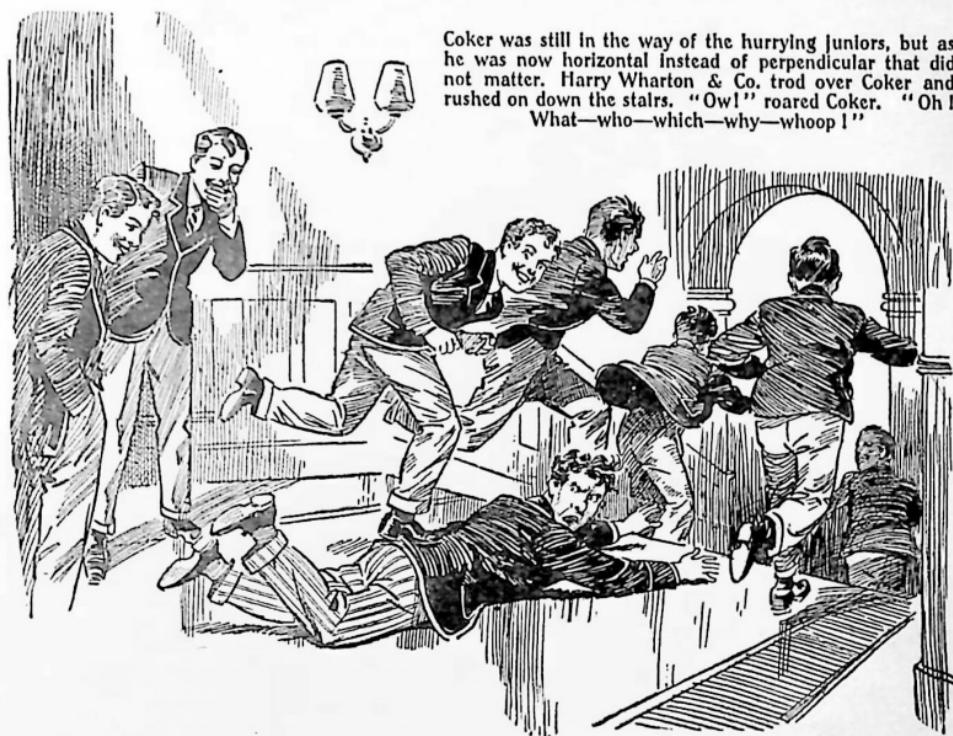
"What's the jolly old news?" asked Frank Nugent. "Don't say your postal order's come!"

"Anything but that!" grinned Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton had just opened a large paper bag on the table in No. 1 Study. It contained a dozen doughnuts. After football practice in a keen wind the chums of the Remove were prepared to deal with a dozen doughnuts easily. Still, there was one for Bunter, as Bunter had blown in. The drawback to that was that one doughnut was not of much use to the fat Owl of the Remove. Even the whole dozen would have left him yearning for more.

Billy Bunter had a hungry eye—in fact, two hungry eyes as well as a pair of spectacles—on that bag!

Coker was still in the way of the hurrying Juniors, but as he was now horizontal instead of perpendicular that did not matter. Harry Wharton & Co. trod over Coker and rushed on down the stairs. "Ow!" roared Coker. "Oh! What—who—which—why—whoop!"



Bunter had had only two teas—one in his own study with Peter Todd, the other in No. 12 with Lord Mauleverer. So he was still hungry.

"Here you are, old fat man!" said Harry Wharton. He held up a doughnut.

To the general surprise, Bunter shook his head.

"I never came up here after your old doughnuts," he declared. "It's a bit sickening, I think, that a fellow can't look into a study without fellows thinking that a fellow's after a fellow's tuck——"

"What a lot of fellows!" ejaculated Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep your mouldy old doughnut!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I've a jolly good mind not to tell you the news now. After all, you fellows were never pally with Drake like I was."

"Drake!" exclaimed the Famous Five in chorus. At the mention of that well-remembered name they forgot the doughnuts.

"I dare say you've forgotten Jack Drake, who used to be in the Remove here with us," said Billy Bunter scornfully. "I'm not the fellow to forget an old pal——"

"What about Drake, you silly ass?" hooted Bob.

"He's come!" said Bunter.

The Famous Five jumped up as if moved by the same spring.

"Old Drake's here!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"He's in Quelch's study now," said Bunter. "Quelch asked me to tell you, and to go down if you wanted to see him. He can't stay long."

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Bob. "Fancy old Drake blowing in! We jolly well want to see him—rather!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter, apparently disdainful of doughnuts, rolled up the Remove passage, having imparted the glad tidings. Harry Wharton and Co. came out of the study with a rush. Doughnuts, at such a moment, were trifles light as air. There was no doubt that they wanted to see Jack Drake, the fellow who had been their pal in the Remove, and who had since become the assistant of the famous detective, Ferrers Locke. They saw him sometimes in the school holidays, but in term time it was an unexpected pleasure; and as Bunter had stated that he couldn't stay long, there was no time to lose.

They went scampering down the stairs, forgetful of doughnuts. But those doughnuts were not wholly forgotten. As the Famous Five disappeared down the Remove staircase, Billy Bunter revolved on his axis and rolled back to No. 1 Study—with a fat grin on his face.

Harry Wharton and Co. did the Remove staircase almost in one! On the next landing, Coker of the Fifth was standing, laying down the law on the subject of football to Potter and Greene, who were leaning on the banisters. It was unfortunate—for Coker, at least—that he was in the way of five juniors who were in a tearing hurry.

What hit him suddenly in the back, Horace Coker did not know. It felt like a battering-ram or a runaway lorry.

"Yoo-hoop!" spluttered Coker, ceasing his remarks on the subject of Soccer quite suddenly, as he flew.

Coker crashed! His nose, his chin, and his waistcoat established contact with the hard, unsympathetic floor. He was still in the way of the hurrying juniors, but as he was now horizontal instead of perpendicular

that did not matter. They trod over Coker, and rushed on to the lower stairs.

"Ow!" roared Coker. "Oh! What — who — which — why — whooooop!"

He sat up quite dizzily.

Harry Wharton and Co. had vanished. Potter and Greene were grinning, as if they saw something funny in the episode. Coker spluttered.

The juniors scampered on, without even stopping to ask Coker whether he was hurt! Still, that was unnecessary, as they knew from his roar that he was!

Not till they reached the corner of Masters' passage did the chums of the Remove slacken speed. In those precincts it was impossible to rush at top speed. They walked up that passage, and tapped at Mr. Quelch's door, and opened the same.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Here we are, old chap!" said Harry.

"The herefulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Drake!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Quelch was seated at his study table. Standing at the table, in talk with the Remove master, was a handsome, sturdy fellow whom the chums of the Remove knew at once. He turned towards them with a smiling face. Mr. Quelch, on the other hand, did not smile. He glared!

"Wharton!" he rapped. "Cherry! Bull! Nugent! Hurree Singh!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped the five together.

"What do you mean by rushing into my study in a crowd?" asked Mr. Quelch. "I can understand that you desire to see an old friend—but you should have waited until Drake came to you."

The Famous Five blinked at him. They blinked at Drake. The latter was smiling, evidently glad to see his old schoolfellows again; but he was looking a little surprised at their sudden invasion of Mr. Quelch's study.

"But—but we've just been told that Drake's here, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"That is no reason—"

"But you sent us a message to come, sir!"

"What do you mean, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch testily. "I did nothing of the sort! Neither is there any hurry for you to greet your former schoolfellow, as he will be staying here some days, and you will have ample opportunity—"

"But—but Bunter said—" gasped Harry.

"Bunter said he wasn't staying long—" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"And that we were to come, if we wanted to see him—" gasped Nugent.

"So—so we came—" said Johnny Bull.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"There is some absurd mistake!" he snapped. "Drake is paying us a visit, and arrangements have been made for him to spend some days at his old school."

"Oh, good! I—I mean, we—we thought—"

"That ass Bunter—" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, well, there is no harm done," said Mr. Quelch, his brows unbending. "Drake, I will see you again—at present, you may go with your friends, who seem very glad to see you."

"Thank you, sir!" said Drake.

And he left the study with the Famous Five. In the corridor they surrounded him, shaking his hands, and thumping him on the back.

"Jolly glad to see you, old bean," said Harry Wharton. "That fathead Bunter got it all wrong, of course! Never mind—here you are! Come up to the study—you haven't had your tea?"

"No," said Drake, smiling. "I was rather looking forward to tea in the study—like the jolly old times!"

"Good egg! Come on! You cut off to the tuckshop, Franky—"

"Right-ho!"

Frank Nugent cut off to the tuckshop. With a distinguished visitor to tea, something was required to back up the doughnuts. Wharton and Bob, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh gathered round Drake and marched him off to the Remove passage. A dozen fellows greeted him on his way there. Ferrers Locke's boy assistant had left many friends behind him at his old school, and they were all glad to see him again.

The chums of the Remove arrived in No. 1 Study and marched Jack Drake in.

"Ripping to have you here again, old fellow!" said the captain of the Remove. "That ass Bunter said you weren't staying long, and that Quelch said we were to come down if we wanted to see you—just like that blithering owl to get it all mixed—"

"Tea won't be long," said Bob. "Have a doughnut to go on with—why, where's that bag of doughnuts?"

He stared at the study table. There was an inkstand, a dog-eared Latin grammar, a dictionary, and a sheaf of various papers to be seen there. But there was nothing even distantly resembling a doughnut.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Drake. "Did you leave a bag of doughnuts here?"

"Yes, rather! Goodness knows where—"

"And Bunter told you Quelch said you were to go down if you wanted to see me!" chortled Drake.

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Without being trained by Ferrers Locke, I think I could handle the Mystery of the Missing Doughnuts—from what I remember of Bunter!" chuckled Drake.

"The fat villain—"

"The pilfering porpoise—"

"The snaffling slug—"

"I'll scrag him!" roared Johnny Bull. "Making out he didn't want a doughnut, and pulling our legs, and snaffling the lot! I—I'll—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Drake.

Wharton and Bob and Hurree Singh joined in the laugh. Johnny Bull rushed out of the study, picking up a fives bat as he went, to look for Bunter—and the doughnuts! But Billy Bunter was not to be found within the circumference of Greyfriars School—though there was little doubt that the doughnuts, if ever found, would be found within the circumference of Billy Bunter!

THE THIRD CHAPTER ONLY ONE FOR BUNTER!

BILLY BUNTER grinned.

He grinned over the success of his strategy—and over the doughnuts! Both pleased Bunter—especially the doughnuts!

Harry Wharton and Co. had not been long absent from No. 1 Study, but they had been absent long enough for Bunter. Not generally rapid in his movements, the fat Owl could put on speed for a really urgent and important reason—such as tuck! Billy Bunter rolled out of the House with that bag of doughnuts under a fat arm—and, like Iser in the poem, he rolled rapidly! In wonderfully quick time the Owl of the Remove had



"What do you mean by rushing into my study in a crowd?" asked Mr. Quelch, glaring at Harry Wharton & Co. "I can understand your desire to see an old friend, but you should have waited until Drake came to you."

scuttled through the gateway and across into the wood in the direction of the river.

Out of doors did not attract Billy Bunter very much, especially on a keen winter's day. He would have preferred to frowst over a study fire while he disposed of his plunder. But as it was probable—not to say certain—that the owners of the doughnuts would very soon be on his track, the fat Owl prudently decided to place a safe distance between himself and the trackers.

He rolled down the woodland footpath towards the river. From that footpath he turned into the wood, threading a way among the trees and brambles for a hundred yards or so.

That distance seemed safe enough

to Bunter. Even if the juniors hunted for him out of gates, they were not likely to spot him among the trees and thickets along the Sark. And he was eager to get going!

He sat on a log under the branches of a beech screened by hawthorns and opened the bag on his fat knees.

He grinned with unbounded satisfaction. There were a dozen doughnuts in that bag, and every one of them looked plump and fresh and attractive.

"Prime!" said Bunter.

And he started.

The first doughnut went down almost like an oyster. The second was in Bunter's podgy hand, about to follow it on the downward path, when a rustle in the thickets startled him.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter.

With the doughnut half-way to his capacious mouth, the Owl of the Remove gave a frightened blink round through his big spectacles.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I never bagged those doughnuts," he gasped. "I—I say, I—I haven't got them here. Oh, crikey!"

It was not one of the juniors who looked through the hawthorns at the fat Owl seated on the log. It was a man's face on which Bunter's startled eyes fixed—a face pale, gaunt, almost haggard.

The fat junior blinked at him in alarm. In dodging so carefully the danger of pursuit, it had not occurred to Billy Bunter that he might be getting into any other danger—out of the frying-pan into the fire, as it were. Now he realised it as he blinked at that haggard, hungry face.

But he blinked at it only for a moment. He had hardly time to see what it looked like, except that it had a prominent nose.

The gaunt-looking man plunged through the hawthorns, straight at him. He came almost with the spring of a wild animal.

Billy Bunter bounded from the log in dire alarm! All the Famous Five, at once, would not have alarmed him so much as that hungry-looking vagrant lurking in the wood by the river.

Smack!

"Ow! Wow! Help! Yarooth!" roared Bunter as he spun.

A heavy hand landed on the side of Billy Bunter's fat head. He landed on the earth with a heavy bump.

The bag of doughnuts flew from his fat hands. But Bunter, in his terror, forgot even the doughnuts!

"Ow! Keep off!" he roared. "I

say, you keep off! Ow! Beast! Help! Yarooth! Oh, crikey! Oh crumbs! Ow!"

There was a rustle in the thickets again. The terrified Owl blinked round him, dizzily, as he sprawled.

The gaunt man was already going. In one hand he held the bag. In the other he held a doughnut, cramming it into his mouth as he fled.

Billy Bunter sat up, blinking.

His fat head was singing from the smack that had knocked him over. He rubbed it ruefully with a fat hand. With dizzy eyes he blinked after the fleeing man.

The latter vanished in a few seconds. The rustle in the wood died away—he was gone with the doughnuts!

Billy Bunter tottered to his feet.

"Oh, crikey! Beast!" he gasped. "Oh, dear, if I'd known there was a beastly tramp here—Oh, lor'! Greedy beast, bagging the whole lot! I'd have given the beast one if he was hungry—but bagging the whole lot—the awful rotter! Oh, crumbs!"

Bunter was both indignant and shocked! It was clear that the unknown man was hungry, from the fact that he crammed food into his mouth as he ran. Bunter could feel for a fellow who was hungry! It was an awful state for any fellow to be in! Bunter had known what it was to be hungry—Mr. Quelch had sometimes stopped him at his fourth helping at dinner! Willingly he would have given one of the doughnuts to a man who was hungry—even a tramp. But bagging the whole lot seemed to Billy Bunter the limit!

"The awful beast!" said Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to go after him and give him a good hiding! Absolutely disgusting beast—bagging the whole lot! Thank goodness I've had one!"

Billy Bunter was no longer grinning as he took his way out of the dusky wood. He had had one doughnut—which he might have had in No. 1 Study! The rest were gone—gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream! All that his deep strategy had earned him had been a terrific smack on his head, and the prospect of a booting when he got back to the school!

It was a sadder if not a wiser Bunter that rolled in at the gates of Greyfriars!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER TEA IN NO. 1 STUDY!

JACK DRAKE's face was very bright as he sat at the festive board in No. 1 Study in the Remove.

In the underworld of London there were crooks who regarded with dread the keen-witted, wary assistant of the celebrated Baker Street detective. But anyone who had seen Drake at the present moment would never have dreamed that he was a detective, that he had solved problems of crime and trodden the paths of danger. He looked like what he had been—not so very long ago—a happy and cheery schoolboy.

He was so evidently pleased to find himself in a Greyfriars study again, among Greyfriars fellows, that Harry Wharton and Co., already pleased to see their old friend, were more pleased than ever.

There was quite a spread on the study table, though the doughnuts were missing; and the cheery talk in the study was very different from what Drake had been accustomed to in Ferrers Locke's consulting-room in Baker Street. The topic was Soccer, a subject into which Jack entered with the keenest zest.

"Couldn't have happened better, really!" said Harry Wharton. "It's

a half-holiday to-morrow, old bean, and we play the Shell. If you're keen on a game——"

"If!" grinned Drake.

"The if-fulness is probably not terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and idiotic Drake was a preposterous keen footballer while he still honoured these absurd scholastic precincts with his excellent and execrable presence."

Jack Drake chuckled.

"Inky, old man, it's a real pleasure to hear you talking English again!" he said. "And I think more than ever that that old moonshee at Bhanipur who taught you was a stout lad!"

"The stoutfulness of the lad was terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The wise and benighted Mook Mookerjee taught me well of English pure and undefiled, though it does not always agree with the idiots of this country!"

"The what?"

"Inky means idioms," explained Bob Cherry. "It's a sort of guessing game to make out what he means."

"My esteemed and atrocious Bob!" said the nabob of Bhanipur reproachfully.

"I say, you fellows!"

The study door opened rather cautiously, and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in.

The Famous Five stared round at Billy Bunter.

"That fat burglar!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"That pilfering porpoise!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Come in and be scragged, you obnoxious octopus!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the spread on the table with longing eyes. But he did not seem in a hurry to come in.

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" he said. "I say, I hope you didn't

think I had the doughnuts ! If you missed them, I—I hope you won't put it down to me ! I—I say, Drake, old chap, how do you do ? "

" Fine ! " said Drake. " I'll lend a hand scragging you, old fat man ! "

" Oh, really, Drake—"

" Have you brought back those doughnuts ? " roared Johnny Bull.

" I—I—I was going to ! " stammered Bunter. " I—I was really going to, you know, but—but I couldn't when a tramp bagged them after I'd eaten only one ! Not that I had them, you know ! I—I dare say they're still in the study, and you've overlooked them, or something."

" Ha, ha, ha ! " yelled Drake.

" Drake jolly well knows I'm not the fellow to bag a fellow's doughnuts," said Bunter warmly. " Don't you, old chap ? You remember what I was like when you were at Greyfriars, Drake ? "

" Yes, rather ! " agreed Drake. " Like a boa-constrictor ! "

" Has that fat cormorant really scoffed a whole dozen doughnuts ? " asked Frank Nugent.

" No ! " hooted Bunter. " I tell you a beastly tramp got them away from me. I say, you fellows, I—I thought you'd like me to come to tea, as my old pal Drake is here. C-c-can I come in ? "

Jack Drake gave the fat Owl a keen, penetrating look. For a moment he was Ferrers Locke's assistant again.

" A tramp bagged them from you ? " he asked.

" Yes, old chap. Rushed on me like—like a tiger ! " said Bunter. " I fought like anything, knocked him right and left, but—but he got away with the bag. Lucky he didn't rob me of my splendid gold watch, wasn't it ? It was a birthday present from one of my titled relations, you

know, and cost thirty guineas. But he only seemed to want the doughnuts. I—I say, Bull, wh-what are you going to do with that fives bat ? "

" Lay it round a pilfering porpoise ! " answered Johnny Bull.

" I—I say, I—I hope you're not going to kick up a row, when we've got a visitor here ! " said Bunter. " I say, that tramp really had the doughnuts, and—"

" Yes, I can see a tramp snaffling doughnuts ! " said Johnny Bull. " Your splendid gold watch is worth five bob, an he'd have taken that, if he'd taken anything."

" I—I think he was hungry ! " said Bunter. " He really had them, old fellow ! I was sitting in the wood and started on them, when he sprang at me like a tiger, and—"

" Then you had them ? " asked Harry Wharton.

" Oh ! No, " said Bunter promptly. " I never had them ! As if I'd touch a fellow's tuck ! It's rather rotten for you fellows to make out before Drake that I'm the sort of fellow that snoops tuck ! Drake jolly well knows I wouldn't, though, don't you, old chap ? "

" Isn't he a cough-drop ? " said Jack Drake. " Isn't he the jolly old limit, and then some, and a few over ? You fellows mind if we have him to tea ? "

Johnny Bull stared for a moment. Then he laid down the fives bat. Drake was an honoured guest and his request was law.

" Right-ho ! " said Harry Wharton. " Roll in, Bunter."

" Well, I didn't really come to tea ! " said Bunter. " I never came up here because I thought you might be standing Drake a spread in the study ! Still, as you're so pressing, I'll stop."

Bunter rolled in. He drew a chair to the table and sat down with a beaming fat face. He had looked into No. 1 Study like a lion seeking what he might devour, so to speak; but he had never expected so much luck as this! Harry Wharton and Co. were already glad that Jack Drake had dropped in at his old school. Now Billy Bunter was glad, too!

"Now tell us what became of the doughnuts!" said Drake, as Billy Bunter started on the foodstuffs.

"The fat villain bolted them,

"I—I say," gasped Bunter, "I—I haven't bagged those doughnuts! Oh, crikey!" It was not one of the Juniors who looked through the hawthorns. It was a man's face—a face pale, gaunt, almost haggard!



of course!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You don't need to be a detective to work that out."

"I didn't!" said Bunter, with his mouth full. "I never touched them! There weren't any doughnuts in the

study when I came in after you fellows went down, and they were still there, just as you left them, when I went out. Not that I came into the study, you know! I was nowhere near it! I was in the gym. at the time I was here——"



"Oh, crikey!"

"Drake can take my word, if you fellows can't!" said Bunter scornfully. "He knows me!"

"There couldn't have been a vacancy in a home for idiots when they sent Bunter to Greyfriars!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, these sosses ain't bad! If you fellows don't want any, I'll take the lot!"

I say, go easy with those poached eggs—I shall be ready for them in a minute! I've had nothing since tea, except just that one doughnut——"

"Except a dozen doughnuts, you podgy bandit."

"I tell you that tramp collared

them ! " hooted Bunter. " I hadn't started on the second one when he jumped on me, and knocked me over and snaffled them."

" What was he like ? " asked Drake.

" Hungry-looking beast," said Bunter. " The fact is, he looked so jolly hungry, I'd have let him have one or perhaps two ! But the greedy beast grabbed the lot."

" Not the first greedy beast that grabbed the lot—if he did ! " chuckled Bob.

" Hungry, was he ? " said Drake.

" Well, yes, rather ; he crammed one into his mouth as he scuttled off," said Bunter. " Must have been pretty hungry to do that, I should think."

" Isn't he spinning that yarn just as if he believed it himself ? " said Bob. " As if a tramp would bag a fellow's doughnuts, and not go through his pockets ! He couldn't have known there was nothing in them—not knowing Bunter ! "

" Tell us some more ! " said Jack Drake, laughing. " What were his jolly old features like, Bunter ? "

" Oh, like—like features, you know ! " said Bunter vaguely. " He had a face that was like—like a face, you know. I say, pass that ham ! "

" Bunter's a good hand at a description," remarked Drake gravely. " The police would run him down as easy as anything on that ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Well, I rather notice things, you know," said Bunter. " I'm rather an observant chap, you see ! "

" Did you notice the colour of his eyes ? "

" Well, they might have been blue—or brown. Or perhaps grey. Or—or some other colour, old chap."

" We're getting on," said Drake gravely, while the Famous Five chortled. " Any fellow would spot

him from that. What sort of a nose, Bunter ? "

" Oh, rather a beak—I noticed that ! " said Bunter.

Drake's eyes gleamed for a moment.

" You don't really believe there was a tramp at all, Drake ? " asked the captain of the Remove in astonishment.

" Well, accidents will happen," said Drake, " and Bunter might be telling the truth for once. I remember he told it once while I was at Greyfriars—or was it twice, Bunter ? "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Oh, really, Drake ! I say, you fellows, if you don't want any of those poached eggs—I say, I suppose you want a fellow to have something to eat when you press him to come to tea ! You haven't left me half the eggs ! Never mind—I can fill up on cake ! I never was greedy ! "

And Bunter filled up on cake, and then finished the jam—which the presence of the distinguished visitor saved him from having down the outside instead of the inside of his fat neck !

THE FIFTH CHAPTER BUNTER DRAWS A BLANK !

" A PICNIC-BASKET ! "

" That's it ! "

" Certainly ! But isn't it a bit parky for picnicking ? " asked Harry Wharton, with a smile.

" Ripping weather for long walks—and a fellow gets hungry in this sharp weather ! " said Jack Drake, smiling too.

It was after breakfast the following morning. Ferrers Locke's boy assistant was strolling in the old quad of Greyfriars with his friends till the bell rang for school.

That morning, while the Greyfriars' fellows were in class, Jack Drake was

going to take a long walk, visiting the old familiar spots round about the school—especially the wood where Bunter had seen a tramp who, judging by the fat Owl's description, was sorely in need of food.

His request to borrow a picnic-basket rather surprised the juniors. It would have been natural to take a bundle of sandwiches in his pocket. But taking a packed picnic-basket seemed rather more like Billy Bunter than Jack Drake.

However, they were more than willing to oblige ; and Frank Nugent cut into the House to fetch a picnic-basket from the study.

As he came out with it in his hand, a pair of little round eyes, behind a pair of big round spectacles, fell on it. Billy Bunter bestowed his fascinating company on the chums of the Remove at once.

" I say, you fellows, who's picnicking ? " he inquired. " I thought you were playing football this afternoon. I say, if you're cutting the football to go on a picnic, I'm on ! Jolly good idea, I think."

" Ha, ha, ha ! " roared the Famous Five.

The idea of cutting a football match to go on a picnic struck Billy Bunter as good. It did not strike the Remove footballers in the same way.

" Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said Bunter. " I think it's a ripping idea. When do you start ? "

" Kick-off at three," said Bob Cherry.

" Eh ! I mean the picnic, fathead ——"

" There isn't any picnic, cormorant ! We're lending this basket to Drake to take out with him this morning," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

" Oh ! Going for a picnic on your own, old chap ? " asked Bunter.

" Sort of ! " assented Drake.

" Well, look here, if I can get leave from Quelch, I'll come," said Bunter. " I say, as you're a visitor here, Quelch might let me off if you asked him as a special favour. What about that ? "

" Oh, fine ! " said Drake. " I'm going to walk about twenty miles——"

" Oh ! I'm afraid Quelch might not let me off class," said Bunter. Even class was better than a walk of twenty miles ! " But I say, I'll help you to do your shopping, old chap, and pack the basket for you. I'm pretty good at packing grub——"

" Nobody better at that ! " agreed Drake.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Well, come on," said Bunter. " It will be class in ten minutes. Time to get your basket packed. I'll help with the grub. I say, you fellows, don't walk away when a chap's talking to you ! " roared Bunter.

But the juniors did walk away, Drake swinging the empty basket in his hand. Billy Bunter blinked after them wrathfully. Breakfast had left the fat Owl with plenty of space yet to fill—and, though not generally an obliging fellow, Bunter would have been glad to oblige Jack Drake by packing that picnic-basket for him. It was probable that more would have been packed in Bunter than in the basket.

Drake, however, appeared to have no use for Billy Bunter's services as a grub-packer. He walked and talked with his friends till the bell rang, when they had to leave him to go into class.

Billy Bunter was frowning as he rolled into the Remove room with his Form. He was not in the least interested in Latin verse, but he was deeply, intensely interested in Drake's picnic-basket.

He had no doubt that while he was sitting in the Remove Form-room, Drake was packing that basket with excellent provender to take with him on his morning walk. Obviously, he had borrowed that basket to pack it with grub. He could hardly have wanted it for anything else.

"If—if you please, sir—" exclaimed Bunter suddenly.

Mr. Quelch looked at him.

"What is it, Bunter?"

"I—I've just remembered that I left the tap running, sir! M-m-may I go and turn it off, sir? In the Remove passage, sir."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"You may, Bunter," he answered, "and you may take a hundred lines for your carelessness."

"Oh, crikey! I—I mean, yes, sir."

Bunter rolled out of the Remove Form-room. He did not head for the Remove studies, but for the quad.

There he cut across to Mrs. Mimble's little shop in the corner behind the elms. He had no doubt that Drake was there, packing the basket.

To his surprise, Drake was not there. Mrs. Mimble had seen nothing of him. The fat junior rolled out again, and hurried down to the gates. Gosling, the porter, eyed him from his lodge.

"I say, Gosling, has Drake gone out yet?" squeaked Bunter.

"Which I ain't seed him, Master Bunter!" answered Gosling. "And wot I says is this 'ere—you're out of class, and I'll report you."

Bunter snorted and rolled off to the House. He could only conclude that Drake was getting supplies for that picnic-basket from the house-dame. Near the House, Jack Drake came into sight, the basket in his hand.

"Hallo, Quelch given you leave?" asked Drake, as the fat Owl of the Remove rolled up to him.

"Oh! Yes! No!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, I've got out to see you off, old chap! I—I say, I'll carry that basket for you as far as the gate."

"You're awfully good!" said Drake.

Most Greyfriars fellows would have thought twice, if not three times, before handing a picnic-basket to Bunter to carry. Such a burden would have been likely, like Aesop's of old, to grow lighter and lighter the farther it was carried. But Jack Drake, perhaps, had been long enough away from Greyfriars to have forgotten Billy Bunter's manners and customs. At all events he handed over the picnic-basket at once.

Bunter's fat fingers closed eagerly on the handle. Drake, smiling, walked by his side towards the school gates.

"I—I say, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "Wharton wants to speak to you before you start. About—about the football this afternoon, you know."

"We've fixed all that up," said Drake.

"I—I mean, he—he's rather anxious that—that you don't walk too far, and—and tire yourself before the football, you know. He—he wants to speak to you very particularly!"

"Quelch won't like me speaking to him in class," said Drake, shaking his head.

"He—he's got leave out of class—he's waiting for you in the Rag—he asked me specially to tell you—"

"Oh, all right!" said Drake. "Look after that basket while I'm gone, will you?"

"Oh! Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter.

The fat Owl could scarcely believe



The terrified Bunter blinked up dizzily as he sprawled on the ground. The gaunt man was already going. In one hand he held the bag. In the other he held a doughnut, cramming it into his mouth as he fled.



in his good luck as Drake turned and walked towards the House. Ferrers Locke's boy assistant might be able to deal with crooks, but he did not seem equal to the deep duplicity of William George Bunter! Apparently he had not the remotest idea that Bunter had felonious designs on that basket.

Almost as his back turned, Bunter changed his direction. He whisked round the nearest of the ancient Greyfriars elms and set the picnic-basket on the old oak bench under the tree.

He grinned joyously.

Drake, perhaps, would be five minutes gone! Five minutes was plenty of time for Bunter! It was worth a hundred lines from Quelch to have five minutes at a well-packed picnic-basket!

Grinning, Bunter opened the lid.

Then the grin faded from his fat face! He stared into the basket, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

There was no "grub" in that basket. If Drake was taking anything in the way of provender, it was in his overcoat pockets.

The picnic-basket contained the usual fittings. It contained nothing else. There was nothing to eat—and nothing to drink! There was not even a sandwich! There was not so much as a jam tart or a bun!

Bunter gazed into it!

Drake had specially borrowed that picnic-basket to take with him on his morning's walk. He had been heading for the gates when Bunter stopped him. Any fellow seeing that basket swinging in his hand would have taken it for granted that it contained

provisions. Who could possibly guess that a fellow was going out for a walk carrying an empty picnic-basket? Brighter fellows than Bunter might have failed to guess that one!

"Mad!" gasped Bunter.

That was the only possible conclusion to which Bunter could come.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

It dawned on his fat brain now why that picnic-basket had fallen so easily into his clutches. It was not because Jack Drake was blind to his obtuse manœuvres. It was because there was nothing to eat in it. Even Bunter, who could eat almost anything, could not eat the basket itself!

For a long minute Billy Bunter glared at the empty picnic-basket, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. Then, in speechless disgust, he rolled back to the House.

Drake passed him on his way.

"Wharton doesn't seem to be in the Rag," he remarked.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He rolled on with that. Jack Drake chuckled and walked on. He picked up the picnic-basket, closed the lid carefully, and walked out of the gates, swinging it in his hand. If during his long ramble through the woods that morning, a hungry outcast spotted a schoolboy carrying a picnic-basket, and snatched the same, he would not benefit much in the way of provender—but he would furnish Ferrers Locke's assistant with a clue to Julius Drew!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER FOOTBALL—AND THE FALLING PLANE!

"**F**EELING fit?" asked Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"Fit as a fiddle!" said Drake cheerily.

In the changing-room that after-

noon it was like old times to Jack Drake. He had played for the Remove in his days at Greyfriars School, and he had been a good man at Soccer. It was sheer satisfaction to him to be lining up with the Remove footballers again.

Ferrers Locke had said that in his visit to his old school he would be combining business with pleasure. But it was mostly pleasure so far!

Many a long mile had he rambled that morning, through the woods round Greyfriars, the tempting picnic-basket swinging in his hand, to catch a watchful eye. But he had had no luck.

It was possible—indeed probable—that the lurking outcast who had snatched Billy Bunter's doughnuts was the man who was wanted. Ferrers Locke's assistant had easily been able to sift the wheat from the chaff in the fat Owl's strange tale.

Drake had a clue—he had little doubt that the hunted, hidden man was somewhere in the neighbourhood. His morning had been devoted to business—with no result! His afternoon was to be devoted to pleasure—football with his old schoolfellows! On the morrow, when his friends were in class again, business would be resumed! He did not dream, just then, what was going to happen before the morrow! Business was destined to be combined with pleasure in a way that Ferrers Locke himself certainly could not have foreseen!

He had had quite a long ramble that morning. But he was fresh as paint as he walked down to Little Side with the Remove footballers.

Hobson, the captain of the Shell, gave him a grin of welcome. Drake's face was very bright as he lined up with the Remove men.

Potter of the Fifth blew the whistle.



Specially painted for the " Holiday Annual " by A. Coombs.

A LEAP FOR LIFE !

A thrilling moment in the Greyfriars yarn " Jack Drake's Capture ! "

Facing page 224

A good many Greyfriars fellows gathered round the field to watch, as much interested in Ferrers Locke's assistant as in the game. Even Lord Mauleverer made an effort to walk down to the field, and Billy Bunter rolled after him—not in the hope of seeing Remove men bag goals, but in the hope of touching Mauyl for a little loan to tide him over till his celebrated postal order arrived.

"Goal!"

In the first ten minutes of the game the leather went in—from the foot of the new recruit!

"Good old Drake!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Bravo!"

"By gum," said Hobson of the Shell, "that man hasn't left his shooting-boots in Baker Street!"

Harry Wharton clapped Drake on the shoulder as they walked back to the centre of the field.

"Good man!" he said. "We'll have a few more like that!"

And Drake grinned cheerily. That goal for the Remove was almost as much a satisfaction as it would have been to clap the handcuffs on the wrists of Julius Drew!

The whistle blew again, and the game went on, hot and strong. Fellows round the field hardly noticed the boom of an aeroplane in the steely sky—the footballers did not notice it at all. Plenty of planes zoomed over Greyfriars School from the air camp at Wapshot ten miles away.

But Billy Bunter blinked up uneasily through his big spectacles as the humming of the plane sounded closer and louder.

"I say, you fellows, that beastly plane is flying jolly low!" squeaked Bunter.

The hum deepened into a roar, and a good many fellows glanced up.

The plane was flying low—dangerously low! It dawned on the fellows on the football ground that the airman was in trouble.

More and more fellows stared up—until, at length, all faces round the field were turned upward, and the game went on unregarded.

"I say, you fellows, he's going to fall!" squeaked Bunter in alarm.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter.

The plane shot on, passing over the school grounds, and rising a little over the trees beyond.

Every eye followed it.

Even the game stopped now. The footballers ceased play, all eyes on the plane. It was still in clear view when what looked like a doll suddenly dropped from it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob Cherry, utterly forgetful even of Soccer. "Look!"

"He's falling—"

"The pilot—"

With starting eyes, the Greyfriars crowd stared at that distant falling figure, watching in tense anxiety to see the parachute open. From the pitching plane a spurt of flame came, but the airman was clear of it. It was only a second—but it seemed to the watching crowd like an hour—before the parachute spread, and the whizzing fall of the airman was changed into a gentle descent.

"Oh, thank heaven!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"The thankfulness is terrific!" breathed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The wind was strong, and it was carrying the floating airman farther and farther away, over the tree-tops, as he sank lower and lower under the full-spread parachute.

It was well for him, too, for the plane, with a sudden plunge, shot

down, and crashed, bursting into flames in the middle of a meadow.

But the floating man was clear of it.

"He will fall in Friardale Wood!" panted Bob Cherry. "If that 'chute' fouls on the trees——"

"Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Chuck it, Hobby, what?"

"You bet!" said Hobson of the Shell. "Get going, you men—we've got to help that chap if we can!"

Fellows were already streaming off the ground. The footballers followed them with a rush.

They were keen on Soccer, but Soccer did not count when a man was in danger of losing his life.

"Put it on!" exclaimed Jack Drake.

The man swinging on the parachute was down now. He had disappeared from sight in the trees of Friardale Wood.

That the parachute had fouled on the branches seemed certain, but whether the man was hurt or not could not be discovered till the spot was reached. And the whole Greyfriars crowd ran hard.

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton drew ahead. Jack Drake was quickly with them. The three reached the wood ahead of the panting crowd.

But in the wood they had to slacken speed.

Exactly where the parachute had fallen it was impossible to see among the trees and thickets. They listened anxiously for a call for help, but no call reached their ears. The terrible thought was in their minds that the airman might have been killed by the fall, and it was quite likely that he had been stunned. They heard nothing but the rustle of the wind in the branches, and their own hurried breathing.

A shout came from a distance.

"This way!" roared the voice of Johnny Bull.

"Come on!" panted Drake; "Johnny's found him!"

They plunged through tangled thickets.

"Here!" shouted Johnny Bull. "This way!"

The panting juniors burst into a glade. From the branches of an oak, the wrecked parachute hung tangled. This was the spot where the airman had fallen, that was certain.

"That's the parachute!" shouted Johnny Bull. "He can't be far away!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

An answering call came from the thickets by the glade.

"Help!"

"That's him!" exclaimed Bob promptly and ungrammatically; and the juniors rushed into the thickets, to gather round a man in airman's garb, who stood leaning and panting on a tree—while from all directions, shouting voices and hurrying footsteps told of others hastening to the spot.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE MAN FROM THE SKY!

"HURT?" asked Harry Wharton. "Shaken—bruised—that's all!" the man panted.

Apparently the fallen airman had disentangled himself from the crumpled parachute and started to find his way out of the wood, when he heard the shouts and footsteps of the Greyfriars crowd.

Eager, sympathetic faces now surrounded the panting man. All eyes were fixed on him—more and more every moment, as a swarm of fellows gathered round the spot.

It was a little difficult to see what the man looked like. His face was

smothered with dirt, as if he had rolled face down in mud after his fall. Hardly a feature could be distinguished, except a prominent nose.

"No bones broken?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No!"

"That's good!"

"The goodfulness is terrific!"

"Anything we can do?" asked Harry.

"Nothing, thanks! I've got a few bruises, but I can manage! Unless somebody's got a sandwich—I've had a—a long trip—"

"Oh! You're not from Wapshot Camp?"

"No. Paris this morning, and I lost my bearings in a fog—it's been



Grinning, Bunter opened the lid of Jack Drake's picnic-basket. Then the grin faded from his fat face. He stared into the basket, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles. There was no grub in it!

"Your plane's gone!" said Johnny Bull. Over the tree-tops the glare of flames could be seen from the plane burning in the meadow a quarter of a mile away.

The panting man stared round at the crowd of eager schoolboys. It seemed as if he was surprised to find himself so suddenly surrounded, especially by fellows, a score of whom were in football garb.

a long flip, and if any of you lads have a sandwich—"

"I'm afraid not," said Harry. "We were playing football when we saw you falling, and rushed off to help if we could. But come with us—our school's quite near—if you can walk."

"I can walk all right, if you lend me a hand! If your schoolmaster wouldn't mind—"

"Everybody would be jolly glad to do anything, after what you've been through!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Come on."

The panting man stepped away from the tree. Wharton gave him an arm on one side, Bob Cherry on the other.

That the man could walk was quite clear. He walked quickly, and the two juniors had to step out to keep pace. The whole crowd of Greyfriars fellows marched off with him—with one exception. Jack Drake lingered under the tree on which the man had been leaning.

But in the excitement of the moment, and the general concern for the wrecked airman, even the distinguished visitor to Greyfriars was forgotten. Not a fellow in the crowd noticed that Jack Drake stayed behind.

In a few minutes they emerged from the wood into a footpath which led into Friardale Lane. Up the lane they marched in an excited crowd for the school. Every fellow there was anxious to help a man who had had a terribly narrow escape from a fearful death.

Five or six fellows cut ahead at a rapid run to tell the news that the rescued man was coming. If he had had a long and anxious flight from France, and had been "up" since early morning, he was very likely to be in need of a meal. His request for a sandwich showed that he was, as a matter of fact, hungry. Hospitality, in such a case, would be unbounded at Greyfriars. Even Billy Bunter would have shared his last jam-tart with a man who had fallen from a burning plane!

Considering what he had been through, the man seemed brisk enough. He walked fast, and clearly did not

need much assistance from Wharton and Bob.

Every fellow was glad to see that he had suffered so little from so fearful an experience. The crowd arrived at the school, with the airman in their midst, in a sort of triumphal procession.

Five or six fellows had already burst in with the news. Mr. Quelch met them at the door of the House.

"Here he is, sir!" chirruped Bob Cherry, as the airman was marched in. "Safe and sound!"

"I am very glad to hear that!" said the Remove master. "Anything we can do for you, my dear sir—"

"I say, you fellows, he wants a wash!" said Billy Bunter in a stage whisper, which was heard far and wide.

"Shut up, you fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Anything in our power, sir—" Mr. Quelch was saying.

"Thank you, sir! I have had a very long and trying flight, and if I might rest for the remainder of the afternoon—somewhere—"

"Most assuredly."

"And I have eaten nothing since—since early morning—"

"Bless my soul! I will give instructions at once—"

"And perhaps someone could find me some sticking-plaster, sir. I have a few cuts on my face—"

"Immediately!" said Mr. Quelch.

Taking charge of the airman, Mr. Quelch led him into the House. A buzzing, excited crowd was left as the man disappeared with the Remove master. It was quite a thrilling episode at Greyfriars School. Even the unfinished football match was forgotten.

"Tons of nerve!" remarked Smithy of the Remove. "Who'd

think that chap had just had a parachute drop from a burning plane?"

"The tonfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, fancy having had nothing to eat since early morning!" said Billy Bunter. "Awful, ain't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently, in the opinion of Billy Bunter, that was the most harrowing part of the flying-man's experiences!

"Jolly lucky he wasn't damaged!" said Johnny Bull. "When I spotted that parachute crumpled on the tree I thought he must have come a cropper."

"It seems that his face is cut, from what he said to Quelch," remarked Harry.

"Yes, he must have banged it somewhere to get all that mud on it," said Bob. "Well, this has rather mucked up our football match. Rotten for old Drake, but we'll jolly well make him stay over Saturday and play it out. But where's Drake?"

"Drake! Hasn't he come in?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Drake, old bean!" roared Bob Cherry. "Anybody seen Drake?"

Nobody, it seemed, had. Now that they remembered him, his friends found that he was missing.

Two or three fellows cut down to the gates and looked out into the road. But there was no sign of Drake returning.

"He must have stayed behind in the wood," said Harry Wharton, greatly puzzled. "I suppose he can't have gone for a walk in football clobber. Why the dickens hasn't he come in?"

"Goodness knows."

Considerably puzzled, the Famous Five went to the changing-room. Jack Drake did not come in, and where he

was, and what he was up to, was rather a mystery. Having changed, the chums of the Remove went down to the gates to wait for him.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter joined them at the gates a little later.

"I say, what about tea?"

"Blow away, Bunter!"

"Well, I was going to ask you fellows and Drake to tea in my study," said the fat Owl. "But I find that my postal order hasn't come——"

"Roll away!"

"I say, I—I wonder if that airman chap would like a little company," said Bunter thoughtfully. "They've fixed him up in a room, and I saw Trotter taking in a tray of grub——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I say, there was ham and eggs, and cold beef, and a steak-and-kidney pie, and—and I think very likely he would like a little friendly company," argued Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he's had a wash, and got that mud off, but his face is fairly covered all over with sticking-plaster; he must have cut it a lot. I saw it when I watched Trotter taking in the grub—I mean I never watched Trotter taking in the grub; I just looked in out of sympathy——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Drake!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

A boyish figure came trotting up the road from Friardale, and Jack Drake, with a smiling face, joined his friends at the gate.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER STARTLING!

JACK DRAKE grinned as he met the surprised stares of his friends. They could not help being surprised. Drake was still in football rig, as when he had rushed off the soccer field with the rest to the rescue of

the falling airman. Why he had remained out of gates for an hour, in keen wintry weather, in that rather sparse attire was a mystery to the chums of the Remove. But howsoever he had been occupied, it was clear that he had returned in the best of spirits. He was grinning cheerfully, and his eyes sparkled.

"Well, here you are again!" said Harry.

"Here I am again!" agreed Drake. "I'll cut in and change—it's a bit parky in this rig."

His friends walked with him to the dressing-room. They waited while he changed, perplexed not only by his unaccountable proceedings that afternoon, but by the happy satisfaction that beamed on his smiling face.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter's big spectacles gleamed in at the door. "I say, now Drake's got back, what about tea?"

"Shut up, Bunter! What on earth have you been up to, old bean?" asked Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I can make you out."

"I say, Drake must be hungry—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"I've been rather busy since you fellows left me in Friardale Wood," explained Drake. "To tell you the truth, it was not wholly for the pleasure of seeing you chaps—and even Bunter—that I've blown in at Greyfriars this time. Ever heard of Julius Drew?"

"Blessed if I have," said Harry.

"I say, you fellows, I've seen that name in the papers," said Billy Bunter. "It's a bank-robber, or a hold-up man, or something or other."

"That's it!" said Drake. "Hidden somewhere in this jolly old locality, waiting for a chance to cut when the hunt slackens! Seven thousand

pounds in his pockets, of which he doesn't dare to spend a bob on grub—think of that, Bunter!"

"Poor chap!" said Bunter, with feeling. "Whatever he's done, that's awfully rough luck!"

"The awfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"And you're after him, Drake?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Sort of," admitted Drake.

"By gum! You've been tracking a jolly old bank-robber this afternoon!" exclaimed Bob.

"That's it," assented Drake.

"See?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Harry blankly. "I suppose you mean that you picked up a clue while we were all looking after that airman—is that it?"

"You've got it!"

"Good egg!" said Johnny Bull. "Got the man?"

"Just going to, I hope."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob. "I suppose you're pretty sure, or you wouldn't be telling us about it now."

Jack Drake chuckled.

"You can bet your football boots on that!" he agreed. "And the jolly old Soccer ball along with them."

"I remember now," said Harry. "I've seen it in the papers! The man was seen near Lantham—but that's a week ago. How the thump did you pick it up that he was near Greyfriars?"

"Bunter told me!" chuckled Drake.

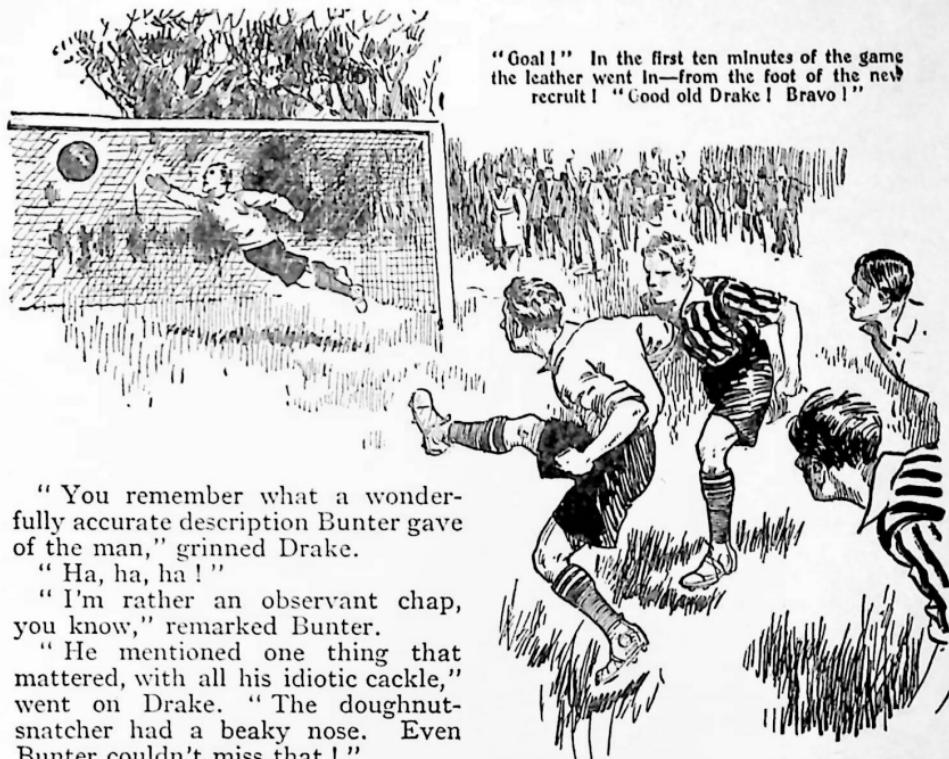
"Bunter!" yelled the juniors.

"A tramp who snatched a bag of doughnuts, and gobbled one of them as he ran, looked sort of hopeful, anyhow," grinned Drake. "You see, the man has been without food for a week, except what he could snoop here and there!"

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, crumbs! Mean to say—oh, lor'!" The fat Owl fairly gaped at the idea that it was a desperate hold-up man, wanted by the police, who had smacked his fat head, and snaffled that bag of doughnuts.

"You are, old bean!" said Drake. "Come on, you fellows." He had finished changing now, and he left the room with his friends. "I hope they've fed that jolly old airman! He must have been hungry."

"They have," said Harry.



"You remember what a wonderfully accurate description Bunter gave of the man," grinned Drake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm rather an observant chap, you know," remarked Bunter.

"He mentioned one thing that mattered, with all his idiotic cackle," went on Drake. "The doughnut-snatcher had a beaky nose. Even Bunter couldn't miss that!"

"Oh, really, Drake—"

"Well, that's not much of a clue!" grinned Bob. "The airman chap has a beaky nose—it was all we could see of his features, with so much mud on his phiz—what are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Drake.

Bob stared at him.

"Well," he said, "if I've said something funny, I must be one of those jolly old unconscious humorists."

"Goal!" In the first ten minutes of the game the leather went in—from the foot of the new recruit! "Good old Drake! Bravo!"

"Bunter's been watching the grub taken in—"

"Has he washed his face?"

"Eh? Yes, I suppose so!" said the captain of the Remove, staring. "Yes—Bunter's seen him—"

"Bunter sees everything, doesn't he?" grinned Drake. "I remember his jolly old ways. What has he put on his face since he washed it, Bunter? Sticking-plaster?"

"Yes," answered Bunter. "No end of it. He seems to have been cut all over the chivvy——"

"Look here, Drake, is that jolly old magic, or what?" asked Bob Cherry. "You couldn't have seen that the man's face was cut, under all that mud, when you saw him in the wood! How the thump did you know he had put anything on his face after he washed it?"

The Famous Five stared at Drake. He had not seen the airman since the Greyfriars fellows had brought him out of Friardale Wood. This seemed to them, as Bob put it, rather like magic.

"Well, I sort of guessed it would be sticking-plaster," said Drake, with a grin. "What else could he put on?"

"You knew his face was cut, then?"

"No; I knew it wasn't!"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Wandering in your mind, old chap?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The wanderfulness must be terrific."

Drake chuckled.

"I've got to see the man," he said. "Take me along to his quarters, will you? I must see him before he leaves."

"He won't leave yet," said Harry. "I heard him ask Quelch if he could rest here for the remainder of the afternoon——"

"Yes, but it gets dark early."

"Eh! What? What's that got to do with it, ass?"

"He might prefer to leave after dark," explained Drake. "But it will be dark in an hour from now. Lead on, old bean—I want to see him."

"But I don't know whether you can, old chap!" said Harry Wharton, perplexed. "If he's resting——"

"I've got something to tell him," explained Drake. "There's a man coming here to see him—and he won't be long after me."

"Oh, I see!"

"Come on, old chap!" said Bunter. "I'll take you to him! I wonder if he's finished all that grub yet? There was lots and lots."

Jack Drake followed Billy Bunter, and the Famous Five followed Drake, more than a little mystified. They arrived at the door of the room that had been assigned to the airman. Drake tapped at the door, and it was opened by Mr. Quelch, who was there with the flying-man.

"What is it?" he asked. "You boys should not come here——"

"Drake has a message for the airman, sir," said Harry.

"Oh! In that case, you may come in, Drake."

Jack Drake entered, the other fellows remaining at the door. They looked across the room at the man, with considerable interest. The mud had been washed from his face; but it was, as Billy Bunter had said, covered all over with sticking-plaster. It was as difficult as ever to see what his features were like, except that he had an aquiline nose.

The remains of a meal—an extensive meal—were on the table. The man had, apparently, disposed of the whole of the large supply that Bunter had seen Trotter taking in. Obviously, he must have been very hungry.

"This lad has a message for you, sir," said Mr. Quelch courteously.

The man sat upright suddenly, his keen grey eyes glinting among the strips of sticking-plaster. He seemed startled by that simple announcement.

"A message—for me!"

Drake put his hands in his pockets and fumbled. His left hand came out, with an envelope in it. He stepped across to the man and held it out.

The airman stretched out a hand to take the envelope.

What happened next passed in a flash—so swiftly that the eye could hardly follow it. As Drake handed over the envelope with his left hand, and the airman took it, his right whipped from his pocket, with something in it that gleamed. With the same movement he flung himself on the man in the chair, and there was a sudden click!

Mr. Quelch gave a startled cry—echoed by the juniors at the doorway! In that split second Jack Drake had grabbed the wrists of the airman, dragged them together and snapped the handcuffs on. It was so unexpected and so swift that the man was taken utterly by surprise—as utterly as the Remove master and the Remove fellows!

For an instant he sat as if stunned! Then with a roar of rage, he leaped to his feet, wrenching madly at the handcuffs.

"Drake!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Drake!" yelled the juniors.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter his eyes nearly starting through his spectacles.

Drake smiled—grimly!

"Sorry to startle you, sir!" he said. "But the man carries an automatic—and I couldn't give him a chance of using it! Your game's up, Julius Drew!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER

HOW IT WAS DONE!

"But how—" gasped Harry Wharton.

It was half an hour later—in No. 1 Study in the Remove. Drake was

ready for tea—Billy Bunter more than ready! The Famous Five, however, were not giving much thought to tea in the study for the moment.

They were in a state of almost dizzy amazement.

The man in the handcuffs had gone. Inspector Grimes had arrived from Courtfield not long after Drake. With great satisfaction, the inspector had taken the prisoner away in a taxi—and fellows who had seen him go, had seen that the sticking-plaster was no longer on his face—neither were any cuts revealed by its removal. That Ferrers Locke's boy assistant had made no mistake was proved by the fact that Inspector Grimes had taken the man into official custody, and by the fact, now known, that seven thousand pounds in banknotes had been found on him, as well as the automatic that he had used, more than a week ago, in the hold-up at the Capital and Suburban Bank. But the chums of the Remove could not begin to understand how Drake had done it.

"How—" they all demanded together.

"I say, you fellows, I'll cook the sosses—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" roared five voices.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Now, look here, Drake, how—"

"I'll tell you while Bunter cooks the sosses," chuckled Drake. "Get on with it, old fat man."

"What-ho!" said Bunter. And he got on with it. He was interested in the remarkable exploit of Ferrers Locke's boy assistant, but not to the same extent, naturally, as he was interested in fried sausages!

"I suppose you had the blighter's description," said Bob. "But you couldn't have recognised him with all that mud on his face—"

"That's why the mud was there, old bean!" Drake smiled. "You see, it was at least a quarter of an hour after that parachute fell that the first man arrived on the spot. That gave Drew time."

"You mean that he was——"

"After what happened to Bunter's doughnuts yesterday, I never doubted that he was somewhere around!" said Drake. "I went out for a walk this morning, with a picnic-basket in full view, in the hope of drawing him. I had no luck. But if he did not spot a schoolboy with a picnic-basket this morning, he could hardly fail to spot a falling 'plane, and an airman dropping in a parachute, if he was anywhere about. I fancy he marked the spot where the airmen fell, and ran for it."

"But why——"

"The man was desperate for a chance of escape—still more desperate for food," said Jack Drake. "I've no doubt that as soon as he saw the airman dropping he saw his chance. I didn't think of that at the time, of course—I was only thinking, like you fellows, of helping a fallen flying-man. But when I saw him——"

"We all saw him, and took him for the airman," said Nugent.

"You haven't worked with Ferrers Locke," smiled Drake. "From the way the parachute was crumpled on the tree, it looked as if the pilot had had a fall——"

"Yes, Johnny noticed that, but——"

"But he was unhurt," said Drake, "and his face was smothered with mud. Where did the mud come from?"

"Eh?"

"If he fell where the parachute fell—as the airman must have done—he fell on grass. You fellows did not look round for a muddy spot?"

"Nunno!"

"I did—and there was none! Our friend could not have collected all that mud on his face in falling and rolling over—he had collected it carefully, and smudged it over his face——"

"To avoid recognition, of course!" said Harry. "I see now."

"And his first request was for a sandwich," said Drake. "An airman might be hungry after an unexpectedly long flip, but there was no 'might' about it with Julius Drew—he may have had nothing for days except Bunter's doughnuts."

"But, if you knew——" gasped Bob. Drake shook his head.

"I didn't know," he said. "If I'd known, I'd have got him then. I took him, at first, for an airman, same as you fellows did. Then I began to figure it out. By the time you walked him off I had it pretty clear in my mind—but I had to make sure. It was only theory so far. But if the theory was correct, that brute had pounced on the fallen airman immediately he fell, and got rid of him; overpowered him and got his clothes and outfit, and obviously the poor chap could not be very far away."

"You looked for him?"

"At once. Not only to get proof of my theory, but to help the poor chap without delay," explained Drake. "I was a quarter of an hour finding him—you fellows were back at Greyfriars with your man by that time! I found the flying-man, bound hand and foot, gagged, and crammed into a deep hollow under the roots of an old tree, hardly a hundred yards from the spot where you found that scoundrel in his outfit."

"The brute!" breathed Bob.

"A desperate brute," said Drake quietly. "You can bet that the flying-man was jolly glad when I got



"That's him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry promptly and ungrammatically; and the juniors rushed through the thickets, to where a man in airman's garb stood leaning against a tree.



him. He had had a nasty knock when he dropped, the parachute crumpling on the tree, and was nearly senseless, and unable to help himself when Drew pounced on him.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"If you hadn't been here, Drake; if you hadn't spotted the trick and found him——"

"He would have had a night in the wood to-night, with goodness knows what results!" said Drake. "As soon as I got him, of course, I knew who the man must be whom you had brought to the school. I cut into the village, sent Police-constable Tozer and a party to bring him in, and telephoned from the village post-office to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield. And then I walked home," added Drake, with a smile.

"And that's how you knew he'd have sticking-plaster on his face, after he'd washed it!" exclaimed Bob.

Jack Drake laughed.

"Well, he had to get a wash—he couldn't keep the mud on his face for

ever!" he said. "And as his description is pretty widely circulated, he had to understudy the shy violet, and not let his face be seen—and sticking-plaster was plausible in the circumstances, and a useful thing till he could get some better disguise."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But the sosses——"

"Shut up! Go on, Drake, old man."

"That's the lot," said Drake, smiling. "I fancy Drew's first idea was simply to get fixed up in the airman's rig, as a chance of breaking fresh country undetected; above all, of getting a meal somewhere without being arrested while he was scoffing it! Then he suddenly found himself

surrounded by forty or fifty Greyfriars men, swarming up to help the airman ! He called for help when he saw that the wood was swarming with fellows and he could not steal away unseen. And then, I've no doubt, he jumped at the chance of being taken in as an airman who had had a disaster—the chance of a square meal, which he wanted more than anything else—of a safe hiding-place till dark—and some sticking-plaster to put on his face instead of a daub of mud ! ”

“ And he would have pulled it off without a hitch if he'd only had Greyfriars fellows to deal with,” said Harry. “ We were all taken right in.”

“ And Drake—if he noticed Drake at all—he took for a Greyfriars fellow like the rest ! ” chuckled Bob. “ He didn't know that that particular Greyfriars fellow was Ferrers Locke's jolly old assistant ! ”

“ I say, you fellows——”

“ Shut up, Bunter ! ”

“ Shan't ! ” roared Bunter. “ I say, the sosses are done, and I'm hungry ; I mean, Drake's hungry.”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Well, I'm done,” said Drake, laughing, “ and if the sosses are done,

too, well then, let's have tea, what ? ”

And, to Billy Bunter's relief and satisfaction, they had it !

It was quite a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars.

Jack Drake, so long as he stayed, was the cynosure of all eyes at his old school.

Everybody was glad to hear that the airman, thanks to his prompt discovery by Drake, was little the worse for what had happened to him. Everybody was glad, too, that a desperate hold-up man was safe at last in the hands of the police. And everybody was glad, also, when the interrupted football match was played over again on Saturday, and Jack Drake kicked the winning goal for the Remove. Everybody was sorry when Jack Drake at last left to rejoin his chief in Baker Street—except Billy Bunter ! For Drake, perhaps as a reward for the doughnut clue, cashed Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order before he left, the fat Owl solemnly promising to send it on to Baker Street as soon as it arrived. But it never did !

THE



END



Lowther's Lament

I THOUGHT Kildare was pining,
As he looked so very flat,
So just to cheer him up
I put something like a cup
Of gum around the lining
Of his hat!

My little jokes, I've noticed,
Very often go awry!
He didn't like my tricks,
For he promptly gave me six,
And there isn't the remotest
Reason why!

When Blake was looking wistful,
Just as if his heart would break,
I bought a bag of snuff,
During tea I had the stuff,
And I put about a fistful
On his cake !

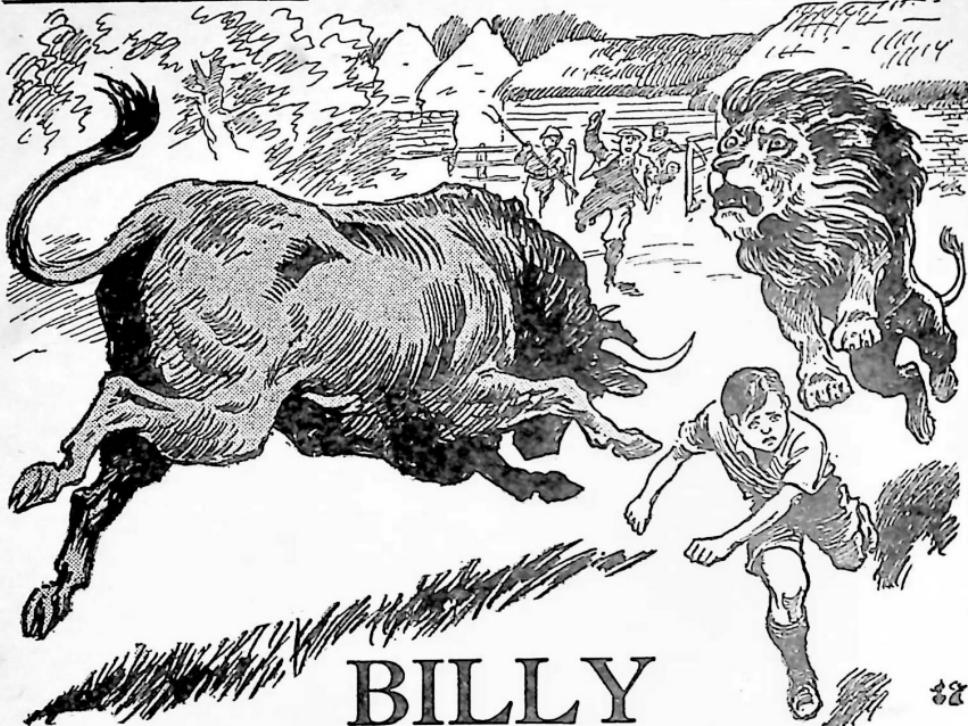
This trick I thought was pleasing,
It would make him bright and gay!
But he seems to be upset,
Though he hasn't punched me yet
(For he hadn't finished sneezing,
Sad to say!).

To-day I was disgusted
By the mournful face of Gore,
So I set some fun afoot
With a pan of ink and soot,
Which I carefully adjusted
On his door!

D'you think the brute was grateful
For this kind and tender care?
Not a bit! It made him roar!
Then he rolled me on the floor,
And he rubbed about a plateful
In my hair!

When Glyn was doing syntax
How he shuffled on his feet !
Lynton gave it to him bad,
So to cheer the poor old lad,
I put half a dozen tintacks
On his seat !

If he laughed, I'm hard of hearing !
Had I sold the ass a pup ?
He could not have been more wild,
For he scowled instead of smiled !
And I'm getting tired of cheering
Fellows up !



BILLY the BULL!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
THE KING OF BEASTS!

BILLY, the bull at Brooks' Farm, had always enjoyed a bad reputation. The village of Mount Green had always been scared of him. He was not exactly pretty to look at.

Timkins, the donkey, had the temerity to trespass in Billy's special paddock.

Timkins was more than a bit of an ass, and he thought he could get away with it. But the village still remembers the sight of the ass showing a clean pair of heels with Billy after him in full cry!

Billy the bull had always enjoyed a bad reputation at Brooks' Farm—until an escaped lion gave him his chance to prove his worth.

Although the bull showed his sullen side to some people, he was quite different with Peter Brooks.

Peter was the favourite of everybody on the farm, including Jim Croft, the big overseer, who had a knowing expression in his keen grey eyes.

Peter was eleven years old, and always enjoyed a ride on Billy's back. He could do almost anything with the bull. When he entered the paddock, Billy would always trot up to see if Peter wanted a ride. If Peter did, there was Billy's broad back all ready and waiting for the expedition.

It was this friendship with Peter which made Croft, the husky overseer, stand up for the bull when certain timorous folk declared that he was not safe and that he should be turned into beef.

"He's safe enough with Peter, anyway," Jim Croft would always say.

The overseer would have had the surprise of his life, used as he might be to the uncertainties of bulls, had he realised that the old farm was actually the destination of a certain visitor from the coast whose temper was, to say the least, unreliable.

This stranger trotted along across country, keeping himself to himself. He growled at some children at a cottage who threw stones at him. Little did they know, as they scampered indoors, that the dusky fellow was the king of beasts, and had come to Brooks' Farm in search of food.

The lion was a really magnificent fellow, and his tawny skin was hardly noticeable as he slunk into the shadow of the big hayrick.

He moved furtively, as if half afraid of being seen; but, of course, he was not frightened, for he was a lion, a regular African king of beasts, powerful, daring, and ready for anything.

A lion is never scared. He has his reputation for dauntless courage to maintain.

But the place in which this particular lion found himself was extremely strange, and his experiences had been odd, even fantastic, ever since he had skilfully dodged his keepers at the port some forty miles away.

He had been shipped over from Beira at great expense by a learned and peculiar professor gentleman who lived some half a dozen miles from the farm.

This professor had a small zoo in his own park, and the country folk

told extraordinary stories of what they heard of this private menagerie.

This was the first time he had introduced a lion to the company, and ill luck had attended the venture, for the newcomer had not taken kindly either to the voyage or to his keepers. He had just waited for an opportunity to make a break for freedom. The chance came at the quay during a moment when the men who had him in their charge were off guard.

The lion glided off like a shadow behind a stock of timber, and then made his way down a lane between bales of heavy merchandise.

It was early in the morning, with most people in bed and asleep, so that the runaway was able to make a clear bolt for the open country. There it felt a trifle more at home than on board ship, though not a great deal, for the land was unfamiliar. There were no rolling plains worth mentioning, no jungles and forests.

The lion slunk along behind hedges, for he was somewhat nervous after all he had been through.

But he did not hesitate a moment when he felt hungry and caught sight of a small pig snouting for acorns at the edge of a grass track.

One squeal, and the pig was dead, and the lion went on his way much heartened by his meal.

It was late in the afternoon when he reached Brooks' Farm, for he had tarried to appease a healthy appetite with a few incautious rabbits.

The farm-hands had been busy all the morning at the farm with the sacks of hops which were coming in from the fields, and there was a pleasant smell floating out from the steeple-shaped oast-houses where the hops were dried.

Jim Croft, the overseer, was stepping down the fenced path which led

from the low, rambling farmhouse to the outbuildings and the oast houses when Jumbo, his terrier dog, who always kept as close to Jim as his shadow, gave a growl, and stood still.

Jumbo was looking terrified, for there was a curious whiff in the air, something which the dog knew meant danger, though he could not explain what it was.

Next moment Croft saw a lithe form glide from behind the haystack, and move towards the chicken run.

"What's that?" he muttered to himself, and coming suddenly to a halt.

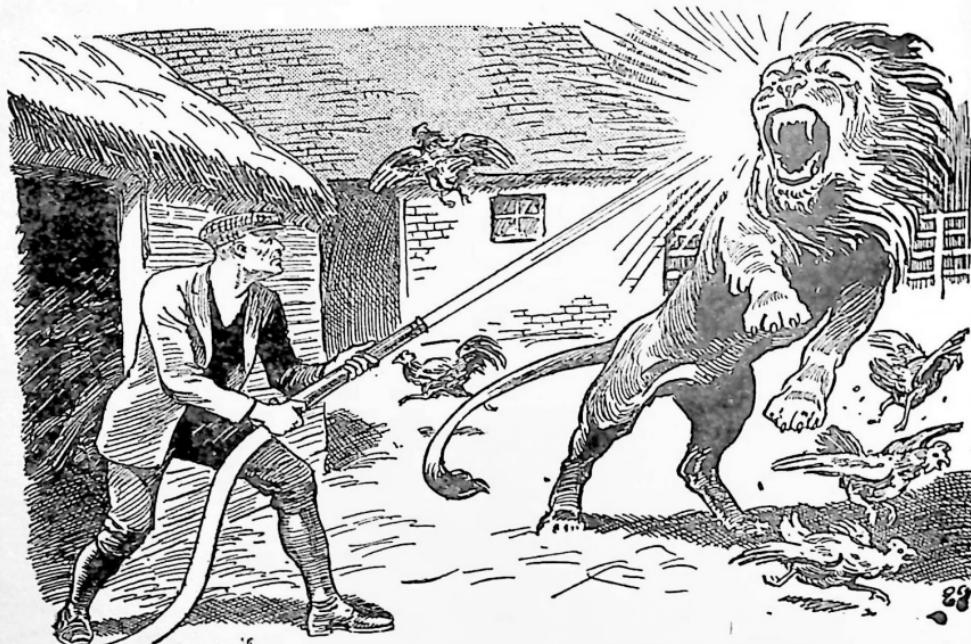
He knew the next second, and thought he must be dreaming, for what he saw was a lion.

In a flash the alarm had been given amongst the inhabitants of the

poultry run. A moody old nervous hen set up a cry and flapped for safety to the nearest shed. The ducks, which had been making in single file through the long grass to the pond, broke their alignment and fled quacking in disorder. A fat old sow, busy at the mash tub in the large sty by the pump, suspended feeding operations and set up such a squealing that alarmed everybody.

Jim Croft had to do something. His main idea was to drive off the unwelcome visitor and keep it from getting near the horses, which had just come in with the wagons from the distant hop gardens.

Making a dash for the hydrant used for sluicing out the yards, he yelled to Wilks, one of the farm hands, to get the pump going.



Swoosh! Croft suddenly turned on the hose and the lion got what it least expected! Water swamped full in its face, the force of the rush making the beast swing round.

"Hurry!" he roared. "We must scare the beast off!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER BILLY TO THE RESCUE!

As the lion crept cautiously onwards, smelling another meal in the well-stocked farm, he found himself faced by Croft who was armed with what looked like a long gun with a tail.

The lion paused in the sunshine which flooded the stretch of coarse grass, his tail lashing, and his low roar giving Croft a woozy feeling, as he admitted afterwards over a pipe at the Flower Pot.

But the gun did not fire, and the lion came on.

Croft backed towards a low woodshed, the lion growling savagely.

Then—swoosh! The lion got what it had never expected! Not fire, but water. It swamped full in his face, the force of the rush making the beast swing round.

Before the lion could recover his wits he was caught by another gush of water.

He growled again and leaped, but not at Croft. His aim was the thatched roof of the shed, and he reached this point of safety, clawing and tearing the thatch as he struggled upwards to the ridge.

"Phew!" panted the overseer as he stood there, the nozzle in his hand, looking up at the lion which was shaking himself free of the water that had drenched him.

"Hallo, Jim, what've you got there?" cried a cheery voice, as young Peter Brooks came running up, his face aglow, his eyes sparkling.

"Oh, a lion!"

Croft did not move his gaze from the enemy.

"You cut off home, young 'un!"

he cried anxiously. "Run, I tell you!"

Jim Croft might as well have saved his breath to cool his porridge, for Peter gave a merry laugh and came nearer. An order to run from such a sight was as useless as requesting the wind to change its direction.

"Oh, Jim, let's hold the nozzle and give it another swoosh!" begged Peter.

The lion had had quite enough. He suddenly leaped from his perch on the damp thatch, and to Croft's horror made a dash in the direction of Peter, heedless of the jet of water aimed by the overseer.

Croft gave a husky shout, and hurled himself in front of Peter, giving the lion a heavy whang with the brass hose piece as it came on.

The next second it seemed to the overseer as if he had been struck by the side of a house, as the lion charged straight at him, knocking him over like a ninepin.

The nozzle flew out of Croft's hand as he was bowled over, and dropped to the ground, a steady flow flooding the yard.

In a flash, the overseer was up and making for the lion.

"Run, Master Peter!" he roared.
"Run for your life!"

Peter ran, and made a leap for the paddock fence, the furious lion after him. The youngster scrambled over the fence, his pursuer close behind, and plunged into the long grass.

Behind lumbered Croft, scared out of his life at the thought of Peter's peril, while Wilks and a bunch of farm hands closed up the rear.

The lion advanced in a series of leaps. Some mad reasoning seemed to guide the beast to the boy as if Peter were the cause of all his trouble.

When Croft threw himself forward and grabbed the beast's lashing tail, the lion only swung half round, snarling, freeing himself, seemingly without effort, and sending the overseer sprawling again.

It meant to get at Peter, there was not the slightest doubt, and the lad, frightened out of all knowledge, panted on.

Croft was up again and charging on.

What would the master say if anything happened to Peter, the laughing lad whom everybody at the farm loved?

The big overseer tripped and fell, but struggled up and blundered on, tears in his eyes.

Suddenly there was another roar, but not by the lion this time. The roar came from Billy, the big bull, the huge beast that had taken more prizes than one could count, the bull with a face like a nightmare of fury, as he had been described.

Billy had been spending best part of the morning in the midst of the thick growth by the stream. This was *his* paddock, so he thought, and as he turned his massive head he saw, to his amazement, young Peter, his sworn friend, the boy who could do anything with him even in his black moments, being chased by a new sort of foe.

But Billy did not pause to consider what the new kind of foe might be. He let out another roar, and swung his massive girth round so that he could get a better view.

Peter was at his last gasp now. He tore on as he felt the hot breath of the lion behind him, and then stumbled, pitching forward as the lion's paw caught his shoulder.

He was not really hurt, though his jacket was torn.

Next second he was up again, thankful to find he was out of the chase.

It was Billy, the bull, who had matters in hand, for, as the lion made an attempt to seize Peter, the huge bull charged, head down, hurling himself forward with his immense weight, impelled by the rage of a thousand furies, fairly maddened by the thought that his pal, Peter, should be in peril.

Attack his Peter! There was something to be said about that!

The ground fairly shook as the big bull made its tornado rush.

But if Billy was ready for anything, so, too, was the lion.

The king of beasts made a lightning spring and lighted on Billy's back, only to be pitched off again by a quick swerve.

Next moment, the lion had thrown himself at his enemy's flank, and was clawing and biting, while the bull in his agony rolled on his side, well nigh crushing his assailant in the act.

Though dislodged, the lion was up again, tearing at the bull's neck, frenziedly trying to drag his enemy down.

Time after time Billy shook off his twisting, biting, writhing antagonist, but the lion returned to the charge again and again, getting under the bull's main power of attack, his deadly horns which threatened to transfix the lion every minute, as Billy stamped and let out thunderous roars.

The red of the streaming blood dyed the tawny beast's mane, and, as the lion sprang this way and that, the bull's bellowings filled the air.

It was a grim, relentless fight to the death! Billy had met his match at last, but he did not yield.

There was a hoarse shout for a gun from one of the men, but to fire at the lion might mean killing the bull.

Again Billy shook off his attacker, and then made a head-down rush, but the lion crouched and prepared for another leap, fighting to get his teeth in the bull's throat.

Billy fought head down, trampling, kicking, his whole massive frame quivering, his enormous head swaying from side to side.

For once the lion was off his guard, not ready for the bull's irresistible onslaught, for Billy seemed to have rallied all his remaining strength.

He pitched suddenly forward, a vast battering ram, irresistible, and that was the end.

The lion caught the full force of the rush, tried to leap again, clawed feebly, overwhelmed by the full brunt of the bull's rage. Then he flopped sideways, growling savagely in his impotence, fought angrily against the weakness, recovered for a flash, then toppled over again to lie there at the bull's feet, pawing wildly, emitting a husky growl.

A moment more and he lay still. So may a king of beasts die, fighting to the end.

Billy, the bull, stood there, swaying rather feebly now, shaking his gigantic head as if to rid himself of a buzzing. He did not look at the dead lion, but backed slowly. There was still that swing of the massive head, while he stamped the trampled grass and bellowed faintly.

When Peter Brooks ran up, Billy the bull turned and gazed at his friend and then nosed him in a wistful, friendly style.

"Good old Billy!" said Peter. Billy, the bull, nodded contentedly when Peter put his face against his ear and whispered something. There is not the faintest doubt he understood what was said!

THE END

Our Chamber of Horrors



UNCLE BENJAMIN

By PETER TODD

MOST readers of this Annual,
And all the Greyfriars men,
The fags and prefects, short and tall,
Have heard of Uncle Ben.
My cousin 'Lonzy often says
That Uncle would be sad
And shocked by all our sinful ways—
Too bad, alas, too bad !

Alonzo is a harmless freak
Like Uncle Benjamin ;
The fearful words they love to speak
Would break a fellow's chin.
" Expressions quite commensurate
With infinite exactitude ! "
As Uncle Ben himself would state
In language he thinks good.

Alonzo stays with Uncle Ben
When he is not at school,
And always quotes his precepts when
A fellow plays the fool.
" My Uncle," 'Lonzy sternly cries,
" Would be quite shocked at that ! "
" My aunt ! " the sinful youth replies,
And makes it tit for tat !

Sometimes Alonzo's bumped a bit
Like other tiresome freaks.
" My Uncle Benjamin says it
Is bad for me ! " he shrieks.
The bumpers answer with a grin,
" Yes, isn't it a shame ! "
Well, fetch your Uncle Benjamin,
And he will get the same ! "



The Remove Variety Show

CHARACTERS :

HARRY WHARTON, Captain of the Remove.

BOB CHERRY

FRANK NUGENT

HURREE SINGH

JOHNNY BULL

BILLY BUNTER, The famous fat boy.

OLIVER KIPPS, The schoolboy conjurer.

WILLIAM WIBLEY, The junior acting expert.

Others of the
Famous Five

his job to see that the whole show goes with punch and smoothness from the start.

THE SET.—Any platform will do, and no special furniture is needed beyond one or two chairs and a waste-paper basket. If KIPPS is to do any real conjuring tricks, he will, of course, need his apparatus. THE FAMOUS FIVE only are on the stage as the curtain goes up, and may or may not be in costume, according to taste.

NOTE FOR PERFORMERS.

If you are giving a performance of this Show, you should include a number of more or less "straight turns" for interest, as these are simply the outlines of burlesque numbers. The great essential is a lively pianist, who can get together all the old tunes which are used. Most of these will be found in any good collection of Camp Fire Songs or Student Songs. Above all, elect a producer and do as he says, for it is

OPENING CHORUS :
(Tune : Bonnie Dundee.)
To the fellows of Greyfriars and other good men
Who fancy a laugh and a joke now and then,
Come, get a fine seat in the very first row
To see the Removite Variety Show !

*We've music and magic and marvels
and mirth,
So come in and pay what you think it
is worth!
Roll up in your hundreds, you won't
want to go
Till you've seen the Removite Variety
Show!*

*You'll see many stars who are famous
and great.
We're paying them all an exorbitant
rate.
And Bunter, who's not only great,
but immense,
Is coming to-night at enormous expense.*

CHERRY : In other words, an enormous expanse at enormous expense ! Now for the chorus, after which the audience will en-core-us !
(Groans !)

*We've fun and frivolity, fancy and fact,
With pep, punch and polish our
programme is packed,
And now that we've told you, you all
ought to know
We're really a splendid Variety Show !*

NUGENT : Well, what shall we do next ? Shall I recite "The Burn Stood on the Boiling Neck ?"

WHARTON : The fact is, we haven't thought out a real programme. I suggest, for a start, that you all agree to do exactly as I tell you.

ALL : Exactly as you tell us !

BULL : What the audience really wants is to hear me play the cornet.

WHARTON : Oh, go and eat coke !

BULL : No help for it ! (He produces a lump of coke and starts gnawing.)

HURREE SINGH : Well, let us get on go-fully ! The esteemed Quelch will be waiting for us.

WHARTON : Oh, blow Quelch !

HURREE SINGH : Certainly, my ludicrous friend. (He goes out.)
CHERRY : Quelch will be surprised.
(There is the distant report of an explosion.)

NUGENT (sadly) : That was Quelch ! What a shame !

WHARTON : Oh, go and chop chips ! (NUGENT produces a block of wood and an axe and gets to work.) Stop that row, you ass !

CHERRY : Well, why don't you get on with the show ?

WHARTON : Oh, go and drown yourself !

CHERRY : Boys, I resign ! This lets me out !

WHARTON (angrily) : Look here, you asses ! Stop fooling ! I'm expecting our star turns here shortly. Until they come I suggest that we each say what we can do and we'll put it to the vote. You begin, Johnny.

(Tune : Oh, No, John !)

BULL : My cornet solos are so splendid
That the audience shout and cheer
Every time the solo's ended—
Let me play my cornet here !

(ALL) Oh, no, John, no, John, no,
John, no !

CHERRY : My recitations are so funny
That the folks who get in free
Tell me they're worth twice the
money—

Surely you will vote for me ?
(ALL) Oh, no, Bob, no, Bob, no,
Bob, no !

NUGENT : My tenor songs have always sounded
Very fine to everyone ;
People say they are astounded,
Shall I show you how it's done ?

(ALL) *Oh, no, Frank, no, Frank,
no, Frank, no!*

WHARTON :

*My keyboard-thumping is so
polished*

*That I play with all my might!
Ten pianos I've demolished.*

Let me have a go to-night!

(ALL) *Oh, no, sir, no, sir, no, sir, no!*

(Enter BUNTER and KIPPS.)

BUNTER : I say, you fellows, are we late?

CHERRY : Just a few !

BUNTER : Sorry, but I was expecting a postal-order—

KIPPS : You fat burglar ! Your postal-order's come already ! Here it is, in your pocket. (Takes a postal-order from BUNTER's pocket.)

BUNTER (gasping) : Oh, crikey ! I—I remember now ! Yes, it came this morning in the post ! Give it to me, old fellow !

KIPPS (roaring) : Ha, ha, ha ! Was it this one ? Because it's a dummy ! A little exhibition of sleight-of-hand, ladies and gentlemen !

BUNTER : You—you rotter ! (Coughs.)

WHARTON (speaking without moving his lips) : Get out of this, Kipps ! We don't want you here, you cheeky rotter !

KIPPS : What ? Why, you told me you wanted some conjuring tricks.

WHARTON : What do you mean ?

KIPPS : So I'm a rotter, am I ? I'll show you ! (He tries to get at WHARTON, but the others hold him back.)

BUNTER : He, he, he ! A little exhibition of ventriloquism, ladies and gentlemen.

KIPPS : You cheeky, fat rascal ! Why, I'll burst you !

WHARTON : 'Nuff said ! It's your innings, Bunter ; you've got to do



Wharton : "Oh, go and chop chips !" Nugent produces a chopping block and an axe and gets to work.

a turn. Even a worm will do a turn, you know!

BUNTER : I'm going to start with a song, and you beasts can back me up by joining in the choruses.

BUNTER (*Tune : Billy Boy*) :
Oh, you fellows often say I'm an ass !

(ALL) *I'm an ass ! And that when I brag and bray, it's all gas !*

(ALL) *It's all gas ! But I'm going to show you now That I'm marvellous, and how !*

(ALL) *Oh, you're never quite so clever As you think, my Billy boy !*

I will very shortly prove if I'm a fool !

(ALL) *I'm a fool ! I'll astonish the Remove and the school !*

(ALL) *Not the school ? You'll be staggered when you see*

A great hypnotist in me.

(ALL) *There'll be laughter following after You have tried, my Billy boy !*

BUNTER : Oh, really, you fellows ! I tell you I'm a hypnotist ! I'm going to put the 'fluence on Bob Cherry. I've read a book about it. Sit in this chair, Cherry.



Kipps : "You fat burglar ! Your postal-order's come already ! Here it is, in your pocket !"

CHERRY (*meekly*) : Don't be too hard on me !

(BUNTER makes weird and wonderful passes in front of CHERRY's eyes until the latter falls asleep.)

BUNTER : He, he, he ! I told you I could do it ! He's now under the 'fluence. I'm going to make him believe he's somebody else. (*In a dramatic voice*) Cherry, you are now old Quelchy.

CHERRY : Bunter, how dare you allude to me by that disrespectful and opprobrious form of address ? Have you no manners, boy ?

BUNTER : He, he, he !

CHERRY : Bless my soul ! Is it possible, Bunter, that you venture to laugh in my face when I am correcting you ? I shall cane you most severely. Wharton, bring me a cane from my study !

WHARTON : Yes, sir. (*He goes out.*)

BUNTER (*hugely entertained*) : I say, you fellows, ain't it a scream ? He, he, he ! (*Snaps his fingers in CHERRY's face.*) Who cares for you, Quelchy ? Yah !

NUGENT : Look here, Bunter, you'd better stop this stuff. It's not safe.

BUNTER : Rats ! I'm going to make the beast cringe before I finish with him !

(WHARTON *returns with a cane.*)

CHERRY : Thank you, Wharton. Bunter, you will bend over that chair. (*BUNTER cackles.*) What ? Do you refuse to obey me ? (*BUNTER makes a face at him.*) I fear this boy is a little insane ! Wharton, you and the others will kindly bend Bunter over that chair for me.

WHARTON : A pleasure, sir !

(*They grasp BUNTER and bend him over the chair, despite his yells and struggles.* CHERRY then lays on "six" to the accompaniment of fiendish howls.)

CHERRY : There, Bunter, I trust that will be a lesson to you. Now, you fellows, let's throw Bunter out and get on with the show.

(*BUNTER is thrown out with a thud.*)

WHARTON : We now introduce the famous Indian Fortune - Teller, Mahatee Khan !

(*Enter HURREE SINGH, in robe and turban, with a jungle of beard. Piano strikes up "The Wraggle-Taggle-Gipsies," making it as weird as possible.*)

HURREE SINGH :

Ye fellows of cadfulness, small and great,
Would you like to know your life and fate ?
I'll read the future while you wait,
With a woollah-walla-abra-cadda-cooshty-oh !

(*Reads CHERRY's palm.*)

Oh dear, my friend, it is quite as plain
As your facefulness that you soon will gain
From Quelchy's cane a smiteful pain,
With a—etc., etc.

(*Reads WHARTON's palm.*)

Oh help ! Dear me ! I'm very sad
To see such terrible things, poor lad !
I daren't say what—it is far too bad !

With a—etc., etc.

(*Reads BULL's palm.*)

Alas, your future's past a joke !
You'll always be quite stony-broke,
And all your plans will end in smoke.
With a—etc., etc.

(*Reads NUGENT's palm.*)

Oh dearfulness ! An awful sight !
I never have known such a terrible plight !

For you'll be burnt next Bonfire Night,

With a—etc., etc.

(*Reads KIPPS' palm.*)

Ah, this is worse than I had feared,
You'll stop your trickfulness so weird
When you yourself have disappeared !
With a—etc., etc.

CHERRY : Can you read your own palm, you bright beast ?

HURREE SINGH : No future is hidden from the wise and wonderful Mahatee Khan. (*He consults his own palm.*) I see certain persons who will affect my life. They will grasp me firmly, with malice aforethought. I shall be kicked with great force into the middle portion of next weekfulness. Alas ! All that I prophesy is bound to come to pass !

WHARTON : Right on the wicket ! And it's coming to pass now ! Collar him !

(*They collar HURREE SINGH and kick him out.*)

KIPPS : Now what about a few conjuring tricks ?

WHARTON : Good ! We will go out and refresh ourselves with a bottle of pop. (*The others go out, leaving KIPPS alone. KIPPS at this point gives a selection of his best tricks, and finishes with one of the other sort.*)

KIPPS : Now, in order to prove that my last and greatest trick is completely above-board, I want some gentleman who has the misfortune to be blind, deaf and dumb to come up here and see for himself. (*Enter BUNTER.*) Well, this isn't a gentleman, but it will do. I want you to help me in a trick, Bunter.

BUNTER : I'm expecting a postal order !

KIPPS (*fishing another one out of BUNTER's pocket*) : I know ! Here it is ! Now stand here, and I'll explain what I'm going to do. One of the greatest problems facing a fag in the Third is how to get ink off his face without washing. I've invented a marvellous new trick to deal with that. I shall paint your face with ink—

BUNTER : Will you ? I don't think !

KIPPS : Then I shall put a waste-paper basket over your head, and as you stand there in full view of the audience I will take it all off as

clean as a whistle with one sweep of my hand.

BUNTER : Are you sure you can do it ?

KIPPS : If I don't, I'll stand you a ten-bob note !

BUNTER : Done, old fellow !

(*KIPPS thereupon paints BUNTER's face with ink and places the waste-paper basket over his head.*)

KIPPS : Now, you heard what I said ?

I would put the basket over your head and remove it with one sweep of my hand ! (*Removes the basket.*) There you are ! I've done it !

BUNTER : But the ink hasn't gone, you fathead !

KIPPS : I said I'd remove the basket—not the ink !

BUNTER : You—you ass ! Then what's going to happen to the ink ?

KIPPS : You'd better ask Mahatee

Bunter makes weird and wonderful passes in front of Cherry's eyes until the latter falls asleep !





WIBLEY : Boy, why are you loitering about here? Take a hundred penalty kicks and finish them before tea.

(KIPPS exits.)

WIBLEY (*Tune : The Vicar of Bray*) :

*In good old Greyfriars olden days
We all learnt Latin grammar,
We'd mumble Virgil's ancient lays
And never feel their glamour!*

But now the times have changed indeed,

*The Governors have appointed
A Head who cultivates your speed
And makes you supple-jointed!
And this is law, as I maintain,
I'll teach you how to play, Friars!
And whosoever may complain,
I'll still be Head of Greyfriars!*

Hurree Singh: "All that I prophesy is bound to come to pass!" Wharton: "And it's coming to pass now!" The juniors collar Hurree Singh and kick him out.

Khan! I'm a conjurer, not a fortune-teller!

BUNTER (*yelling*): You shrieking idiot! I shall have to go and wash now! Take that!

(*Hurls the waste-paper basket at KIPPS and then rolls out.*)

KIPPS: And now, ladies and gentlemen, you may like to know that we have a new headmaster at Greyfriars since the school has been turned into a college for learning football instead of Latin. Let me introduce Dr. Bootemard, the hero of our comic opera.

(Enter WIBLEY, bearded and made up, wearing a gown and mortarboard with a football jersey and shorts.)

*When class begins the boys go out
And practise forward passes,
They're taught to kick by Mr. Prout
Who takes the shooting classes!
And if they miss an open goal,
They always get a licking!
Which seems to make them, on the whole,
More accurate in kicking!
And this is law, etc., etc.*

Then Quelch shows how to trap the ball

By means of demonstration,
And when the shades of evening fall
They start their preparation!
They practise kicking till they're lame
And undergo a massage,
And then they have to play a game
Of football in the pas-sahge!
And this is law, etc., etc.

(Enter CHERRY, made up as MR. QUELCH, followed by the rest. CHERRY is smothered with bandages and sticking-plaster, and has crutches.)

MR. QUELCH (Tune: *I'll Go No More A-Roving*)

To-day I refereed a game—

WIBLEY: Bless me, I see you did!

MR. QUELCH :

And now I'm
absolutely
lame,
Oh, mind what
I do say!
They trod on
me with foot-
ball boots
And charged
me like a lot
of brutes,
I'll go no more
a-reffing
For you, dear
sir!

THE BOYS :

A - reffing,
a-reffing!
Since reffing's
been his
ruin!
He'll go no more
a-reffing
For you, dear
sir!

WIBLEY (Tune:
*Come, Lassies
and Lads*):

Come, come, my dear sir! It's bound to occur

When you referee games, you know!

It's all in a life of trouble and strife
And you're bound to find it so!

To me it is rather fun,

I feel I could chuckle with glee,
I find your bruising very amusing,

Come, my dear Quelch, you agree?
For every master smiles at disaster,

Why can't you laugh like me?

(Laughs heartily.)

MR. QUELCH (Tune: *One More Ribber*):

Perhaps it is true that it's funny to view—

WIBLEY: You see, there's no need to be cross!



Bunter: "But the ink hasn't gone, you fathead!"

Kipps: "I said I'd remove the basket—not the ink!"

MR. QUELCH :

*And I would laugh, too, if it happened to YOU,
And then, sir, I shouldn't be cross.*

WIBLEY (Tune : *Blue Bells of Scotland*) :

*Now why, tell me why, have you brought these boys to me?
I think, yes I THINK, they'll regret it presently!*

MR. QUELCH :

*I'm far too weak to cane them, so give them their desert,
And it's oh, how I hope that the punishment will hurt!*

BUNTER (Tune : *I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls*) :

*Oh, really, sir, it isn't fair,
The footer was far too muddy!
Besides, you know, I wasn't there!
So can I leave the study?*

MR. QUELCH :

*This wretched boy, upon my soul,
Is still no good at all;
To-day he missed an open goal,
And sat down on the ball!*

WIBLEY (Tune : *If You Were the Only Girl in the World*) :

*If you were the only goal in the world,
And I was the only ball!
We should never meet together all the while*

You'd be playing football in your well-known style!

*A baby of even just over two
Would make you exceedingly small!*

There would never be a goal scored in the game

*Neither side would ever win the game,
If you were the only goal in the world,
And I was the only ball!*

(He picks up a cane. Tune : *Marching through Georgia*.)

*Swing the good old ashplant now
So bend and touch your toes!
Touch them as you used to touch them
Some time, I suppose!*

(BUNTER tries dismally.)

*Far too fat, but never mind,
Just keep that graceful pose,
While I get busy with the walloping!*
(*Whack! Whack!*)

BUNTER :

*Yarooooh! Yarooooh! I think it's rather rough! (*Whack! Whack!*)
Yarooooh! Yarooooh! I say, sir, that's enough!*

*Let me off this time, sir,
And I won't do it again!*

Don't give me any more walloping!

WIBLEY (Tune : *Hearts of Oak*) :

*Come, cheer up, my lad, it is painful,
it's true,
But it hurts me far more than it ever hurts you!
Yet you see how I bear it, I grin all the while,
So stop your lamenting, and let's have a smile!*

THE OTHERS :

*Heart of oak is our Head to another man's pain,
He always is ready—steady, boys, steady!
I fancy he's beginning to cackle again!*

MR. QUELCH (Tune : *Allan Water*) :

*In the case of Harry Wharton
It's my painful task to state
That at football class this morning
He was very late.*

*When I asked him for the reason
Wharton told me to my face,
That he'd just been reading grammar—
It's a dire disgrace!*

WIBLEY (sternly. Tune : *Men of Harlech*) :

*Wharton, have you lost your senses?
Reading verbs and present tenses!
Well, you know the consequences
For this awful crime!*

WHARTON (wildly) :

*Please don't send me packing,
Can't you give a whacking?
I won't look at any book*



BUNTER : "Yarooth ! Yarooth ! I think it's rather rough ! (Whack ! Whack !) Yarooth ! Yarooth ! I say sir, that's enough !"

*If only you will let me off a sacking !
 I was tempted to begin it,
 Just to read for half a minute,
 But when I was deeply in it,
 I forgot the time !*

WIBLEY (Tune : Cockles and Mussels) :
*In Greyfriars great college
 All booklore and knowledge
 Has now been forbidden and mustn't
 be seen,
 Instead we're enlarging
 On dribbling and barging
 To give us strong muscles and make us
 all keen.
 To give us strong muscles,
 Yes, mighty strong muscles,
 To give us strong muscles and make
 us all keen.*

WHARTON (going down on his knees).
 Tune : Polly-Wolly-Doodle) :
*If you'll let me off just this once
 more*

*I'll kick a bally footer all the day,
 I'll pass and dribble, shoot and score,
 I'll kick a bally footer all the day !*

WIBLEY :
*Fare thee well, fare thee well,
 Fare thee well, my foolish friend !
 For you're going home to mamma
 Just for reading Latin grammar,
 And I hope you'll get there safely
 in the end.*

BULL (Tune : Solomon Levi) :
*Well, since the brute will give us the
 boot
 If that is what we try,
 I'll now admit that I'm doing a bit
 of Virgil on the sly !*

NUGENT :
*I've had a pick at arithmetic
 To pass the hours away !*

HURREE SINGH :
*And as for me, it's geometry—
 Why, I do it all the day !*

CHORUS OF JUNIORS :

*Down with the football! We've had
about enough!
Give us our Virgil! It's jolly excit-
ing stuff!
We're fed with goal and ball-control
And penalty kicks and all,
And we're more than fed with this
putrid Head,
Let's use him as a ball!*

*WIBLEY (Tune : The Vicar of Bray) :
And thus it happens when we bring
Our human nature to it,
If we're compelled to do a thing,
We never want to do it!
For work and play are simply true
As far as we're obedient
To dodge the things we ought to do,
And do the things we needn't!
(Gosh!)
And this is law, as I'll maintain,
Whatever you may say, Friars,*

*And though perhaps you may com-
plain,
I'll still be Head of Greyfriars!*

ALL : WILL YOU ?

*(They all set on WIBLEY and kick
him out, MR. QUELCH lending a
helping crutch.)*

WHARTON : And to finish up with,
we're going to sing a little verse in
English. The words may seem
strange to you, but I think you'll
recognise the tune.

FINALE (Tune : Auld Lang Sync) :
*So shake my hand, my trusty friend,
Until you make me wince,
We'll say Good-bye at this, the end,
For the sake of Old Long Since!
For Old Long Since, my lads,
For Old Long Since,
We'll drink a glass of ginger-pop
For Old Long Since.*

CURTAIN

• DON'T SAY "GOOD-BYE"

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MEET 'EM ALL AGAIN!

 * **CONTENTS** *

	PAGE
Billy the Bull! <i>Story by Clive R. Fenn</i>	238
Cedar Creek Pantomime, The <i>Story by Martin Clifford</i>	57
Class-room Couplets. <i>A Rhyming Alphabet by Frank Nugent</i>	194
Determinist, The <i>Poem by Harry Manners</i>	14
Euclid. <i>Poem by Jack Blake</i>	17
Fooling Fish. <i>Story by Mark Linley</i>	9
Greyfriars Ghost, The <i>Poem by Dick Penfold</i>	208
Greyfriars versus St. Jim's. <i>Full-page Drawing</i>	56
Hints to the Head. <i>Article by Teddy Grace</i>	195
"Holiday Annual" Beano, The <i>By the Editor</i>	3
Jack Drake's Capture! <i>Story by Frank Richards</i>	209
Kandid Konfession, A <i>Poem by Billy Bunter</i>	8
Kipps and the Fiver! <i>Story by Tom Brown</i>	197
Lovell on the Warpath. <i>Story by Owen Conquest</i>	155
Lowther's Lament. <i>Poem</i>	237
Mr. Manders. <i>Poem by Tommy Dodd</i>	124
Mr. Quelch's Delusion! <i>Story by Harry Wharton</i>	145
Mutiny on the Spindrift! <i>Story by Frank Richards</i>	71
 Our Chamber of Horrors:	
Euclid. <i>By Jack Blake</i>	17
Greyfriars Ghost, The <i>By Dick Penfold</i>	208
Mr. Manders. <i>By Tommy Dodd</i>	124
Uncle Benjamin. <i>By Peter Todd</i>	243
William George Bunter. <i>By Bob Cherry</i>	70

CONTENTS—Continued

	PAGE
Plates in Colour :	
Back to Rookwood !	Facing p. 161
“ Holiday Annual ” Christmas Party, The	Frontispiece
Leap for Life, A	Facing p. 224
Saved From the Sea !	Facing p. 80
Red Riding Hood. <i>As told by Greyfriars Characters</i>	
Remove Auction Notes !	206
Remove Variety Show, The <i>By the Greyfriars Rhymester</i>	69
Rookwood Characters. <i>Poem</i>	244
	192
Shadow Over Eastwood House, The <i>Story by Martin Clifford</i>	
Skimpole Works His Will ! <i>Story by Martin Clifford</i>	18
	201
Story of Rookwood, The <i>Poem</i>	154
Thousand-Dollar Kid, The <i>Story by Ralph Redway</i>	
Towser’s Diary. <i>Imagined by Monty Lowther</i>	133
	45
Tubby Muffin Goes Gay ! <i>Story by Owen Conquest</i>	125
Uncle Benjamin. <i>Poem by Peter Todd</i>	
	243
When They Were Young ! <i>Article by Harry Wharton</i>	
William George Bunter. <i>Poem by Bob Cherry</i>	54
	70



Baked Jam Roll.

Baked Jam Roll—crisp,—delicious,—most nourishing, is no more trouble to make than a milk pudding, when you use

Hugon's **'ATORA'** *The Good BEEF SUET*

RECIPE.

$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Self-raising Flour, or
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Plain Flour and teaspoon Baking Pdr.
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Mix the ingredients with the flour, then rub in the 'Atora.' (In cold weather the Suet should be slightly warmed before using, but *not* melted). Add enough water to make a stiff paste, roll out thin, and spread over with jam or marmalade. Roll over (sealing up ends by turning them in), damp edges and pinch together. Bake for about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour in a greased tin. Serve hot. Sufficient for 6 persons.

This inexpensive recipe is taken from the 'Atora' Book of 100 tested recipes. Send a postcard for a copy, post free from HUGON & CO., Ltd., Manchester.

