

The Greyfriars
HOLIDAY
ANNUAL

For
BOYS
and
GIRLS

1939

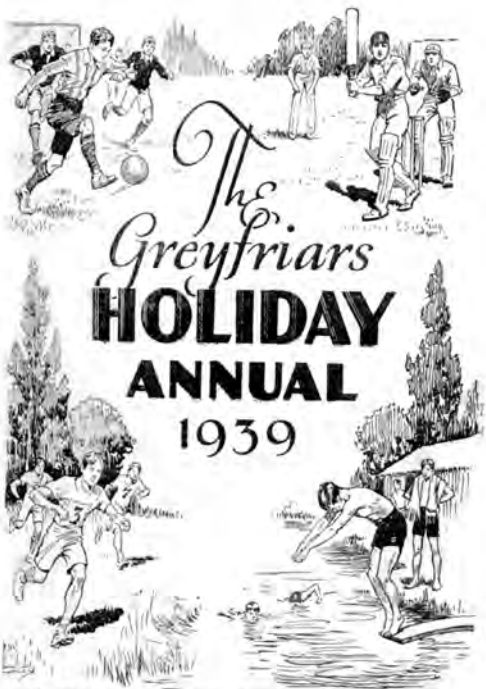




Frontispiece

FOLLOW YOUR LEADER!

Specially drawn for the "Holiday Annual" by R. J. Macdonald.



Issued from the Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

The Editor To His Friends

AS its title implies, the "Holiday Annual" is conceived year by year on the note of fun and cheery sportsmanship which is the essence of the real holiday spirit. It is this cheery note, running through the pages of the book like a golden thread, which helps to make it, year after year, the most popular Annual on the market.

In the present volume—the twentieth of the series—Harry Wharton & Co. and the inimitable Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School play their usual prominent part, aided and abetted in the business of fun-making by Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, and by Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood. These evergreen and famous characters have made for themselves a place in British fiction that is all their own, as countless thousands of boys and girls can testify; and their appearance each year in the "Holiday Annual" is an event eagerly looked forward to in innumerable British homes.

To all my old friends and loyal supporters of many years' standing I give warm greetings; while a special welcome is extended to those who with this volume are tasting the delights of the "Holiday Annual" for the first time.

THE EDITOR.

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

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JUST IMAGINE!



"Just imagine meeting Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars and Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's," says this "Holiday Annual" reader—and as if by magic he finds himself among his schoolboy heroes!

JUST imagine the time we'd have if we could meet Harry Wharton & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. and the rest of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL fellows!

It was my Cousin Jim who made that remark when we were all sitting round the library fire at my place after our Christmas dinner.

Jim and I and my other cousin, Arthur, were in festive mood. There was snow and frost outside, and the fire blazed and crackled merrily. The luscious flavour of Christmas pudding and mince-pies still lingered on our lips. They had jolly good reason to linger on mine. I had had three helpings of pudding and four mince-pies!

Mater and pater and aunt and uncle were talking of Christmases of long ago. Jim and Arthur and I were discussing a much more exciting matter—the expected arrival of the Editor of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL!

Not many chaps have the chance to meet the Editor of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL. We were among the favoured few. My pater had known him at school, and had been asking him to come to see us for years. Now, at last, he was coming, and we felt like jumping for joy!

"If only we could!" sighed Arthur, referring to Jim's remark about meeting Wharton and Merry and the rest.

"Well, why



"Is it possible for you to introduce me to the St. Jim's and Greyfriars chaps?" I asked. "Why, certainly!" replied the Editor. "I'll introduce you to them now!"



"I say, old chap, when you meet Wharton, give the beast a punch on the nose for me!" spoke up a squeaky voice beside me. "BUNTER!" I yelled.

not?" I asked. "The Editor himself is coming here to-day. If he can't give us an intro., nobody can. I've a jolly good mind to ask him and elance it!"

"What's this you want to ask me, young man?" asked a deep but pleasant voice from the doorway.

In walked the Editor himself. We recognised him at once from a photograph of him that stands in the pater's study.

As soon as greetings were over, I answered his question.

"What I wanted to know, sir," I said, "was whether it's possible for you to introduce me to the Greyfriars and St. Jim's chaps?"

Of course, I fully expected him to say it couldn't be done just then, because it was holiday time and they would be scattered all over the country. So it was quite a staggerer to me when he calmly answered:

"Why, certainly! I'll introduce you to them now, if you like!"

"Great Scott! Do you mean to say you've brought them all along with you?" I asked faintly.

"Well, hardly," laughed the Editor.

"And yet, in a way, I have. If you'll come with me, you'll see what I mean. Will you excuse us?"

The old folks said they would. Jim and Arthur were not so sure.

"What about us?" asked Jim. "We'd like to come, too. Wouldn't we, Arthur?"

"What-ho!"

"I'm sorry, but it can't be done," said the Editor regretfully. "There's room for no more than one at a time, so it's a case of 'first come, first served.' Have you got your HOLIDAY ANNUAL, youngster?"

"Rather! Here it is!"

"Bring it with you, then. You'll need it."

I was fairly bubbling over with excitement when we left the library together. There was an air of mystery about the business that tickled me no end. How on earth, I wondered, was the Editor going to introduce me to the heroes of Greyfriars and St. Jim's when they were not there to be introduced?

Well, I'll tell you how he did it. It was really the giddy limit! As soon as we were in the hall, the Editor dived into his pocket and brought out a paper bag.

"Eat this!" he commanded, as he whipped something out of the bag.

I blinked at it. It was a mince-pie.

"Well, really, sir," I said, "I've had four already, and I don't think I can—"

"If you want to meet your HOLIDAY ANNUAL heroes, eat it!" said the Editor, in a tone that brooked no argument. "Put your ANNUAL on the floor first."

I stood the ANNUAL upright on the floor and ate the mince-pie, and then a most extraordinary thing happened.

I found myself diminishing in size!

When I started eating that mince-pie, I stood about as high as the Editor's shoulder. After two bites I was no higher than his hips, and by the time I had got half-way through it I had descended to the height of his knees.

After I had finished it, I shrank so much that in a few seconds my copy of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL seemed to tower over me like a house!

"I say, Mr. Editor, what's happening to me?" I gasped.

The Editor, who now looked rather like a close-up of Mount Everest, beamed down on me reassuringly.

"It's all serene, kid!" he said. "Just walk into the book and you'll soon feel all right again."

I took his word for it and stepped inside the front cover, which was ajar. And, much to my surprise, I found myself walling up a carriage-drive towards a grey pile of buildings that seemed strangely familiar to me.

When I looked back, all trace of the book had vanished and I could only see an old gateway and a porter's lodge.

"Why, it's Greyfriars!" I ejaculated. "The Editor has kept his word and I'm going to meet Wharton and——"

"I say, old chap, when you meet Wharton, give the beast a punch on the nose for me!" spoke up a squeaky voice beside me. "I'll hold your coat if you like!"

"BUNTER!" I yelled. "The fat old Owl himself—as large as life and twice as natural! How do you do, old fat man?"

Bunter blinked at me reprovingly through his big spectacles as I seized his podgy paw.

"Blessed if I know who you are!" he said, with a sniff. "Don't call me fat, anyway, whoever you are! I'm

not fat. I'm not a living skeleton like some of the beasts in the Remove, admittedly, but I'm not fat either—just well covered!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

I roared. Bunter's solemn protests against being called fat were even funnier in reality than in Frank Richards' stories. Bunter sniffed again; then he stopped sniffing and eyed me with closer attention.

"I say, old fellow, I don't know you, but you seem to know me, so perhaps you'd like to help me out of an embarrassing situation—as one gentleman to another, you know. The fact is, I've been disappointed about a postal-order——"

"From a titled relation, I suppose?" I chuckled; and Bunter blinked.

"Er—yes, exactly! How did you guess? Anyway, if you can let me have ten bob now, I'll pay you back out of the postal-order the moment I get it and——"

"Nothing doing, my fat pippin," I said. "I know too much about you. But, just to show there's no ill feeling, here's half a crown as a gift."



"Why, it's Gussy!" I gasped. "I thought you were Bunter." Arthur Augustus gave me a look of withering scorn through his celebrated window-pane. "Weally, deah boy!"

Bunter frowned.

"Look here, if you think I accept gifts from fellows I don't even know, you're jolly well——"

"Oh, all right, then, I'll hang on to it!" I grinned.

That threat was enough for Bunter. His scruples vanished in a flash and he fairly grabbed at my half-crown.

"Gimme the cash as a temporary loan, old chap!" he gasped. "But it's distinctly understood that I don't accept it as a gift!"

"Anything for a quiet life!" I laughed.

I pressed the silver coin into Bunter's fat and grubby paw.

The next moment I had the shock of my life. As if by the wave of a magician's wand, that fat and grubby paw had suddenly changed into a neat and exceedingly well-manicured hand!

I looked up. What I saw made me rub my eyes. It was no longer the fat and fatuous Bunter who stood before me, but the slim and elegant Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's! There was no mistaking that immaculate topper and gleaming monocle.

"Why, it's Gussy!" I gasped. "I thought you were Bunter."

Arthur Augustus gave me a look of withering scorn through his celebrated window-pane.

"Weally, deah boy! If you're wefewwin' to that fat boundah of the Wemove at Gweyfwiahs, I uttahnly fail to undahstand how such a mistake

is even wemotely poss! Is this half-crown yours?"

"Yes. But—but isn't this Greyfriars, then?" I stuttered, as I pocketed my half-crown again.

"Bai Jove! I should say not!" said Gussy warmly. "This is St. Jim's, deah boy—an' St. Jim's is a cut above Gweyfwiahs, though I gwant you there are some quite decent fellows at Gweyfwiahs! Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it's a real treat to see your smiling face, anyway, old bean!" I said. "I'm just a reader of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL, and how I got here I don't quite know. But now that I am here, I'd like you to introduce me to Tom Merry and Figgins and the crowd generally!"

"Pleasuah, deah boy, I assuah you!" said Arthur Augustus. "Let's twot ovah to the footah pitch. Most of them are playin' at pwesent."

Naturally, I jumped at it, and we duly "twotted ovah" to the "footah" pitch. There was a game in progress when the playing-fields came into view through the trees, and I immediately indentified the rugged-faced youth who was charging madly after the ball.

"That's Grundy!" I grinned.

"Wight on the wicket, deah boy! Watch him twy to score a goal. You may find it wathah funny."

I watched. Grundy stopped his mad rush and steadied himself, then booted the ball. It was no surprise to me to see the ball fly



Instead of booting the ball I found myself booting the rear portion of a gentleman wearing a schoolmaster's cap and gown! "Whooooop!" howled Henry Samuel Quelch.

off his foot at a tangent and go sailing over the touchline instead of into the goal—to the accompaniment of a howl of laughter from the other players.

"Look out, dear boy!" exclaimed the swell of the Fourth.

He was warning me of the ball, which was descending right on to the spot where I stood.

I could not resist the temptation to boot it back to the field of play. Judging it to a nicety, I aimed a kick at it just as it reached me.

What happened next was simply horrifying.

Instead of booting the ball, I found myself booting the rear portion of a gentleman who was wearing a school-master's cap and gown!

"Whoooooop!" howled the gentleman. And while I was dazedly trying to figure out how it had happened I realised that I was no longer out in the open but inside a rather stuffy class-room, watched by a crowd of grinning juniors!

My hair almost stood on end when my visitor wheeled round and fixed a gimlet eye on me. I knew him at once. What HOLIDAY ANNUAL reader would not recognise the stern features of Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove?

"I'm sorry, sir—" I faltered.

"Boy! How dare you?" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "You had the temerity—the incredible audacity—to bring your pedal extremity into collision with my anatomy!"



"Wharton, you will introduce this boy to the Form," said Mr. Quelch. "Oh! Yes, sir," smiled Wharton.

"It was an accident, sir—really and truly! I'm really awfully sorry!"

Mr. Quelch's brow grew less thunderous.

"If that is really the case, of course, the enormity of your offence is considerably lessened. But who are you—and what are you doing here?"

"I am a reader of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL, sir. I am here because I want to meet Wharton and the other chaps I've read so much about."

The Remove master's brow cleared completely. His tight lips relaxed into a faint smile.

"Well, really, this is most unusual. But the HOLIDAY ANNUAL is a juvenile publication which I hold in high esteem and I would not wish to see you disappointed. As the lesson is nearly over, you may meet the boys, Wharton!"

A bright-eyed fellow at the top of the Form stood up.

"Wharton, you will introduce this boy to the Form," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir," smiled Wharton, and he stepped out and shook my hand and introduced me to himself for a start.

The next few minutes were really great. I went all round the Form with Wharton, meeting and chatting with all the fellows I'd been longing to see. Many of them, like Bob Cherry, the Bounder, Peter Todd, Bolsover major, Skinner, Lord Mauveverer, Fisher T. Fish, and, of course, Hurree Singh and Wun Lung, I recognised at once.



"Bai Jove! So you're a New House wottah, are you?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, wailing into me.
 "I wondahed that when I met you befoah. Take that, deah boy!"

Others were not so easy to place, but they were all equally welcome to me.

Bunter was there, looking rather peeved over something; but he brightened up when I came along.

"I say, old chap," he murmured, "you didn't give me that half-crown you promised me, you know. But if you'll hand it over now, it'll do."

"Wait till we get outside and I'll take you to the tuckshop and make it good for you there," I answered. "In fact, while I'm about it, I'll stand treat to the whole Form and blow the expense!"

"Oh, good!"

It was not my fault that I failed to keep that promise. As soon as Mr. Quelch released his Form, I marched out of the old School House with the entire Remove at my heels and headed for the tuckshop under the elms.

Then fate intervened—in the shape of Horace Coker! The great man of the Fifth was sitting at the counter with Potter and Greene when we arrived. He gave us one look, then pointed to the door.

"Outside!" he said.

"Same to you, old bean, and many

of 'em!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "I said 'outside,' and that's what I mean!" said Coker, descending from his stool. "I'm not having a rowdy crowd of fags barging round me while I'm here. Buzz!"

We did not buzz.

Coker decided that he would try to make us buzz! He took a step forward and raised his fist threateningly.

I was in the front of the crowd and I raised my arms to defend myself. The next moment I was in the thick of a wild and whirling battle.

And it was then that I found that once more things were not what they seemed! Instead of fighting with Wharton & Co. against Coker and his henchmen, I seemed to be fighting with a different crowd entirely against quite a different enemy.

"Go it, School House!" some of the combatants were yelling.

"New House for ever!" came an answering shout from the foe.

This part of my adventure is rather peculiar. I've always been a staunch supporter of the School House myself. But now I found myself fighting stoutly for the New House, side by side with Figgins, Kerr and Fatty Wynn and a crowd of other New House fellows, with Tom Merry and his followers in opposition.

The fighting grew fiercer and more desperate. I found myself hemmed in by a bunch of School House fellows, all hammering away at me for all they were worth.

Most prominent of all amongst them I saw Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his monocle still gleaming, as he battled for his House.

"Bai Jove! So you're a New House wottah, are you?" I heard him cry as he waded into me. "I wondahed that when I met you befoah! Take that, deah boy!"

I took it—but, to my relief, it turned out to be not a buff on the nose, as I had fully anticipated, but a presentation volume of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL which Gussy was giving me!

Once again the scene had changed. Now I was back in the great hall of St. Jim's—or Greyfriars or goodness knows where! Everybody seemed to be there from both schools, and for some reason they were all cheering me heartily!

Arthur Augustus silenced the crowd with a wave of his hand.

"Gentlemen!" he cried. "I am suah I voice the feelin's of ewewybody when I say that the awwival of this young admiwah of ours gives us the utmost pleasuah and gwatification!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm afwaid I did the youngstah a vewy gwave injustice a short time ago," went on the swell of the Fourth, giving me an apologetic glance. "I mistook him for a New House chap!"

That brought a yell from the New House section.

"If that's what you did, you paid him a compliment!" they roared.

D'Arcy smiled indulgently.

"Now, deah boys," went on my inimitable host, "it is my pleasuah an' pwivilege to invite all and sundwy to twot up an' shake our honahed visitah by the hand. Pway don't wush!"

But there was a rush all the same. The first to reach me was Bunter.

"Look here, old chap," he gasped, "about that half-crown——"

But Bunter was swept aside and I saw him no more.

I had a busy time after that, I can assure you! Heroes of Greyfriars and St. Jim's passed by me in endless procession, each stopping for a word and a handshake, with Gussy standing by as a genial M.C.

I began to feel quite dizzy.

Gussy's monocle seemed to gleam more and more brightly.

Then suddenly I began to wonder whether it really was Gussy's monocle, after all. I looked at it closely—and then I jumped.

What I had taken to be Gussy's monocle was only my Cousin Jim's new wrist-watch gleaming in the firelight!

I was back in the library at home, and pater was digging me in the ribs with my HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

"Wake up, you lazy young beggar!" he was saying. "Here's the Editor of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL just coming into the room and you fast asleep! It's the Christmas pudding and mince-pies that have done it!"

Yes, it was only a dream, after all!

But it beats any dream I've had before or since; and if I never do meet my HOLIDAY ANNUAL heroes in reality, I shall always consider that I've done the next best thing—just imagined it!



BILLY BUNTER *the Fat Boy of* GREYFRIARS



A FEW CHARACTERISTIC STUDIES

By C. H. CHAPMAN

Every picture tells a story! Billy Bunter in characteristic poses both grave and gay. It is to be regretted that several pictures show him eating—but then, Bunter spends half his time feeding his face!



Billy Bunter's Fearful Affliction!

By

FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE TRIBULATIONS OF BUNTER!

"WILL you lend me——"

"No!"

"Lend me——"

"Nix!"

Five voices replied each time to Billy Bunter; and they replied in unison, and with considerable emphasis.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove seemed of one mind in the matter. Billy Bunter had not yet stated what it was he wanted to borrow; but the Famous Five, apparently, weren't lending Bunter anything.

"I say, you fellows—you might lend a chap——" recommenced

When Billy Bunter goes blind, he finds himself the object of much sympathy and no little kindness in the Greyfriars Remove. But, as the juniors discover, there's something a little "fishy" about Bunter's fearful affliction!

Bunter in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

"Rats!"

"If you think I want to borrow any money off you——" Bunter started again, warily.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Don't you?"

"No!" roared Bunter.

"What is it, then?" demanded Bob Cherry. "If it's a boot, I'll lend you a boot, with pleasure. Where will you have it?"

Bunter dodged back.

"Yah! Keep off, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a boot!" howled Bunter.

"I want you to lend me a book."

"A book!" ejaculated the Famous Five together.

"Just that!" said Bunter.

"Well, my hat!" said Wharton in surprise. "If it's a book, we can lend you a book! What the thump do you want a book for?"

"To read, of course."

"Taking up reading?" asked Bob.

"Well, I dare say you can improve your mind that way; and goodness knows it needs improving. I can lend you my new Latin dictionary."

"I want something interesting, of course, you ass," said Bunter. "You see, I'm detained this afternoon."

"You don't want a book to read in detention," said Wharton. "Mr. Quelch will set you something to do."

Bunter snorted.

"I know he will, the beast; but I jolly well ain't going to do it, I'm not going to mug up filthy deponent verbs on a half-holiday; not if I know it. I shall have to stay in the Form-room; but it won't be so bad if I've got a book. Squiff's given me some toffee, and Smithy's stood me some bulls'-eyes——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "With toffee and bulls'-eyes and a book you ought to be able to get through detention all right."

"Just what I was thinking," said Bunter, blinking sagely at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "I can spin Quelchy a yarn about not getting the dashed detention task done—I can pull his leg somehow. But I've got to get through the afternoon from three to five. So I want a book a fellow can read. A 'Gem' would do."

"I've lent my 'Gem' to a chap in the Fourth," said Johnny Bull. "I can lend you Todhunter's Algebra!"

"Ow!"

"I've got a Greek lexicon!" said Nugent.

"Wow!"

"We've got some books in the study," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. The captain of the Remove was quite kind and interested, now that it turned out that Bunter only wanted to borrow a book. It was really a very mild request, especially for William George Bunter. W.G.B. was not often so moderate.

"Something exciting, with murders in it," said Bunter. The fat junior's taste in literature was evidently rather lurid.

"Oh, my hat!" said Wharton. "I haven't anything with murders in it. Some good school stories——"

"Rot!" said Bunter.

A deep voice called from the direction of the School House, and Billy Bunter spun round.

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was standing in the doorway, beckoning to the fat junior.

"Yes, sir?"

"It is time you were in the Form-room, Bunter."

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter rolled away to the School House; and the Famous Five, for once, regarded him sympathetically.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

COKEE SHOWS HOW!

BILLY BUNTER followed Mr. Quelch to the Remove-room with a frowning fat brow and a discontented face.

An afternoon's detention was a heavy blow; all the heavier if it was accompanied by exercises in deponent verbs, as it was in this case.

Bunter didn't care a rap about verbs, deponent or otherwise; but

he cared very much about a half-holiday.

All his usual occupations were knocked on the head. True, he wasn't keen on footer, and he didn't care much about a cycle spin, and nothing would have dragged him out of gates for a walk in the woods or a ramble on the cliffs. But he might have spent the time happily enough in scouting through the studies, while the other fellows were out, on the quest for stray tarts or remnants of cake. He might have dunned the whole Remove and Fourth for a loan, and succeeded in raising the wind sooner or later for a visit to the tuck-shop.

Instead of which he was to sit in the Form-room for two hours, and devote his attention more or less to that troublesome variety of Latin verb, the deponent.



Potter made a swift and powerful movement, and Coker, to his great astonishment, sat down with a sudden bump on the floor. Potter didn't wait for Horace James to recover: he and Gressel scuttled out of the Form-room.

His only consolations were Squiff's toffee and Smithy's bull's eyes. He had not even a book to while away the weary hours.

Mr. Quelch grimly set him his task.

"I shall return here at five o'clock, Bunter," he said. "I shall expect you to have made considerable progress by then."

"Yes, sir," said Bunter dismally.

"I am sorry you are detained this afternoon, Bunter——"

"So am I, sir!" said Bunter, with deep feeling.

The Remove master coughed.

"Doubtless it will impress upon your mind, Bunter, the necessity of bestowing a little attention on your work."

"I—I think it would impress it better on my mind, sir, if—if I was in the quad!" said Bunter.

"That will do," said Mr. Quelch. "No doubt after your detention this afternoon, Bunter, you will remember that a deponent verb is passive in form but active in meaning."

"Oh, yes, sir! Certainly!"

"Remember that this is for your own good, Bunter!" added Mr. Quelch as he withdrew.

Bunter snorted when the Form-master was gone.

Possibly it was for his good, but Bunter did not want Mr. Quelch to look after his good in this assiduous way. He would have preferred his Form-master to let him go to the bad a little.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "Rotten Latin, rotten verbs, rotten bosh! I wish I had a good murder story!"

He dipped his pen in the ink, wrote half a line, adorned it with a blot and a smudge, and then rested from his labours.

He started on the toffee, and found solace in it. The toffee disappeared in record time.

The bull's-eyes followed. By that time Bunter was feeling a little happier and looking a great deal stickier.

He was turning a dreary eye on his Latin grammar again, when the door suddenly opened, and Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth Form appeared in the doorway.

"This room will do," said Coker of the Fifth. "There's nobody here. More room here than in the study—"

"I say—" began Potter and Greene simultaneously.

Horace Coker interrupted them with a wave of the hand.

"Don't jaw, you fellows," he said. "I've always said that you talk too much. I'm going to show you that ju-jutsu trick. You first, Potter—"

"But—"

"You first!" rapped out Coker.

Coker of the Fifth prided himself on having what he called a short way with fags. Sometimes he had a short way with his fellow-Formers in the Fifth, too. Potter and Greene were looking very restive.

As a matter of fact, Potter and Greene wanted to be on the footer-field, but the great Horace was quite indifferent to that. He wanted to show them a ju-jutsu trick he had mastered, and he was going to show it to them.

"There's somebody here," said Greene.

Coker glanced carelessly round towards the fat junior sitting in solitary state amid the empty desks.

"Only a fag!" he said. "He doesn't matter!"

"Doesn't he!" said Billy Bunter warmly. "Don't you come playing the goat in this Form-room, Coker! Go into your own Form-room!"

"Prout's there," said Coker. "Besides, I'll come into any Form-room I like! Shut up, Bunter!"

"Look here—"

"If you want a thick ear, Bunter, you've only got to say so."

Bunter sniffed, and was silent. He did not want a thick ear; and Coker was only too liberal in the way he handed out those adornments.

"Come on, Potter!" said Coker impatiently.

George Potter unwillingly submitted to the ordeal. He wasn't interested in the developments of Coker's wrestling, but it was no use arguing with Coker.

"You see, I take a grip on you like this," said Coker, "and then I get you with my left like that—see?"

"I see," assented Potter.

"Now I've got you fairly locked, with scarcely any exertion on my

part!" grinned Coker. "Catch on?"
"Not quite."

"Well, try to get loose, that's all!"
"Right-ho!" said Potter.

He made a swift and rather powerful movement, and to Coker's great astonishment he—Coker—sat down with a sudden bump on the floor of the Form-room.

Potter did not wait for Horace Coker to recover. He joined Greene at the door, and the two Fifth-Formers scuttled away down the corridor. Somehow or other they were keener on football than on Coker's ju-jutsu demonstrations.

"Here, come back!" roared Coker.

He scrambled up rather dazedly.

"Come back, you duffers! I haven't finished yet!" he roared.

But it was clear that Potter and Greene had finished. They had disappeared from view down the passage.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

Coker, who was striding out in pursuit of the deserters, turned back. That "he, he, he!" seemed to annoy him, somehow. He strode across to Bunter.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"Well, you looked such an awful ass, you know," said Bunter.

"What?"

"You can't wrestle for toffee!" said the fat junior. "You don't know anything about ju-jutsu, Coker!"

Coker's reply was not in words. Words were quite inadequate to express his feelings. He reached across the desk and took hold of Bunter's fat ear with a sudden grasp.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Don't I know anything about wrestling?" asked Coker grimly, compressing his finger and thumb like a vice.

"Yow-ow! Yes!" gasped Bunter.
"Lots! No end! Yow-ow-ow! Beast! Yah! Oh, my ear! Leggo!"

Coker grinned and released the fat ear, and strode out of the Form-room in search of Potter and Greene. Billy Bunter rubbed his ear, which was crimson in hue, and ejaculated:

"Beast!"

And then he turned his attention once more dolorously to deponent verbs.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

GOOD GILBERT!

SKINNER of the Remove looked into the Form-room a few minutes after Coker was gone. Bunter blinked up drearily at him.

"Nice here?" asked Skinner, with a grin.

"Rotten!" groaned Bunter.

"It's too bad!" said Skinner sympathetically. "I heard you asking Wharton about a book in the quad, Bunter, so——"

"The beast might have brought me one!" said Bunter. "I suppose he's gone down to the footer and forgotten all about me."

"Lucky for you I'm such a kind and thoughtful chap!" said Skinner agreeably. "I've brought you a book, old top!"

"Eh?"

Bunter blinked at him suspiciously. Skinner of the Remove was a youth of very humorous proclivities, but his jokes were not generally good-natured. It was quite unlike Skinner to bother himself about a fellow in distress.

"What's the game?" asked Bunter suspiciously.

Skinner smiled blandly.

"No game!" he said. "I knew you wanted a book to read in detention, so I've brought you one. I call that kind, Bunter."

"If you're not pulling my leg——"
"Here it is!"

Skinner drew a volume out from under his jacket and held it up to view.

"It's a jolly good book," he said.
"My Aunt Selina sent it to me for a birthday present. I haven't read it myself; Aunt Selina's taste in books isn't exactly the same as mine. But I'm sure you'll like it no end, Bunter. It's a real good thing!"

"Hand it over," said Bunter.

"Here you are, old fellow!"

Skinner tossed the book on the desk, and quitted the Form-room hurriedly—perhaps to escape Bunter's grateful thanks, or perhaps to escape the danger of being spotted there by Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter's fat face looked quite hopeful as he picked up the volume. He felt that it was uncommonly kind of Skinner to think of a fellow in distress like this.

But the next moment Bunter gave a snort of disgust.

The volume was a gilt-edged one, a coloured picture on the front representing a schoolboy, who seemed to be understudying, in expression, an expiring duck in a thunderstorm. The title, in gilt letters, was: "Good Gilbert, the Blind Schoolboy."

Bunter did not want to read any farther.

The adventures of Good Gilbert did not seem to him much more attractive than deponent verbs. And his gratitude to the humorous Skinner was summed up in the one word:

"Beast!"

He found a momentary consolation in shying the volume across the Form-room.

Then he turned to his exercises again.

But deponent verbs could not hold

Bunter's attention. He quitted his desk, and stared out of the window.

He found himself staring at the back of Mr. Quelch's head. The Remove master was standing in the quad talking to Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. Bunter popped back quickly.

"Oh dear!" he groaned.

He wandered round the Form-room like a caged animal and at last, in sheer desperation, picked up Skinner's attractive volume.

He sat down on a form and opened it. Bunter yawned over a few pages dismally. It was not exhilarating reading. Possibly it was edifying. But by no stretch of the imagination could it be considered exhilarating.

"Gilbert was very happy. The affliction of his blindness sometimes caused him to weep. But the serenity of his cherubic face soon returned. His schoolmates vied with one another in showing him acts of kindness. His goodness had won over to the path of virtue many naughty boys. His greatest grief was that his lack of sight interfered with his lessons. The joy he felt in mathematics was cruelly dashed. No longer could he see the beloved Greek characters or the algebraic symbols. This was the hardest to bear."

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter, and once more he shied Good Gilbert across the Form-room. "What a silly owl! I wouldn't mind being blind if I could cut lessons, and everybody would give me things. I jolly well shouldn't find it hard to bear if I had to miss prep, I know that."

Bunter roamed round the Form-room again. It was barely four o'clock, and his detention was till

five. He groaned in anguish of spirit. The deponent verbs remained unattended; it was bad enough being shut up in the Form-room, without worrying over rotten Latin verbs, Bunter felt. In blank boredom he picked up the volume again, and opened it by chance, and read:

"Naughty Georgie, whose cruel and thoughtless blow had caused poor Gilbert's affliction, wept bitter tears of remorse and repentance."

Bang! The volume went to the floor again, to remain there this time. Deponent verbs were better than that!

Billy Bunter sat at his desk, and tried to fix his thoughts upon those dreadful verbs which were not only passive in form, but active in meaning. He rested his head on his fat arms at last, and slumbered.

He was awakened suddenly by a shake.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked up. It was five o'clock, and Mr. Quelch stood frowning before him.

"You have not finished your task, Bunter!" said the Remove master in a voice that resembled the rumble of distant thunder.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Really, you incorrigibly idle boy—"

"Not at all, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I—I— The fact is, sir, the—the—I—I fell asleep, sir—"

"I can see that, Bunter."

"The—the fact that I—I haven't done my task, sir, is—is the hardest to bear," said Bunter, with a dim recollection of Good Gilbert in his hazy mind.

"What!"

"My—my sight is—is very bad



Bunter was awakened by a shake. He blinked up, to see Mr. Quelch frowning over him. "You have not finished your task, Bunter!" thundered the Remove master.

to-day, sir," said Bunter, astutely putting to profit what he had just read in "Good Gilbert." "I—I felt that I ought to be careful of it, sir. It would be my greatest grief if lack of sight interfered with my lessons, sir."

Mr. Quelch gazed at him.

"If it is true that you have felt a strain upon your eyesight, Bunter, I will excuse you—"

"It—it was fearful, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, sir—"

"I will excuse you this time," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall take measures for your sight to be properly examined, Bunter. If I find that you have been deceiving me, I shall cane you very severely."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"You may go now!"

Billy Bunter went. His chief regret was that Good Gilbert was only a character in a book. Bunter would have given a great deal just then to be able to kick Gilbert.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

BUNTER'S LATEST!

"He, he, he!"

That sudden cackle from the Owl of the Remove sounded loud in the junior Common-room that evening. Several fellows glanced round at Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What the thump have you got an alarm-clock in your pocket for, Bunter?"

"Eh? I haven't!"

"Then what was that row?" asked Bob, looking puzzled.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"What's the merry joke?" asked Peter Todd, looking in surprise at his fat study-mate.

Bunter's sudden merriment was really a little mysterious. The Owl of the Remove had been sitting for some time in deep thought, oblivious of the fellows round him. And the outcome of his deep cogitations had been that sudden unmusical cachinnation.

And Bunter was still grinning. Evidently something of an extremely humorous nature was working in his fat brain.

"Whack it out, Bunter," said Squiff. "What's the screaming joke? Thinking of something awfully funny?"

"He, he! Yes."

"Your face?" asked Squiff innocently.

"Oh, really, Squiff——"

"Well, what is it, Bunty?" asked Bob Cherry. "You oughtn't to go off

suddenly like that without giving a reason. What little game have you been playing now?"

"I was just thinking," said Bunter.

"Gammon!"

"It was his greatest grief——"

"Eh?"

"That he couldn't do his lessons," said Bunter. "It wouldn't be much of a grief to me."

The juniors stared at Bunter. He seemed to be rather following some hidden train of thought than making a communication. But his mysterious remarks naturally caused surprise.

"What are you burbling about?" asked Hazeldene.

Bunter rose from his chair.

"Perhaps I've thought of a stunning stunt, and perhaps I haven't——"

And the Owl of the Remove rolled out of the room, apparently to avoid further questioning.

"Silly owl!" commented Bob Cherry.

And with that Bob dismissed from his mind Billy Bunter and his mysterious "wheeze," whatever it was.

But it wasn't dismissed from Bunter's mind. Bunter was grinning as he went down the passage, and he was grinning in his study when Peter Todd came along to Study No. 7 for prep. And Peter inquired the why and the wherefore of the broad grin in Bunter's fat face.

"Only your features, old chap," said Bunter. "Can't think of you without grinning. Look in a looking-glass, and you'll grin, too."

Peter asked no more questions. He and Tom Dutton worked at their prep.

Bunter sat at ease while his study-mates worked. Evidently he intended to "cut" prep again, in spite of the serious results of his last transgression.

Bunter was rather given to "chancing it with Quelchy" in the matter of prep; and he seemed to have decided to chance it again. Peter Todd finished his work and rose and yawned.

"That's done," he remarked. "You're a silly ass to cut prep, Bunter. You'll get a frightful ragging in the morning from Quelchy."

ought to see a doctor if this goes on! Have you felt it coming on long?"

"Rats!" answered Bunter.

Peter gave a shrug of the shoulders and left the study. Billy Bunter stretched himself luxuriously in the armchair, and again he grinned. Apparently he felt quite safe in cutting prep that evening. A little later he rolled out of Study No. 7, and made



Bob Cherry drew back his powerful right arm. But before he had time to do more, Bunter hopped actively into the passage. "Come back and be punched, you fat goat!" roared Bob.

"I don't think so," said Bunter. "Quelchy's rather a beast, but he's bound to be a bit sympathetic."

"Sympathetic because you've cut prep?" asked Peter, mystified.

"Nunno; I mean on account of my fearful affliction."

"What affliction?" roared Peter.

"Oh, nothing!"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Toddy, in amazement. "Really, Bunter, you

his way along the Remove passage to Study No. 1.

Prep was over there, and the Famous Five had gathered in that celebrated study for a chat on football. Billy Bunter blinked in, and Bob Cherry waved a hand at him.

"Pass on!" he said. "No free suppers here!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——" Bunter rolled in.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

HORACE COKER OBLIGES !

HARRY WHARTON & Co. continued to talk football. There was no supper "going" in the study ; so it was not clear what Bunter wanted. But the Owl of the Remove evidently wanted something.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo ! Haven't I told you there's no supper?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Go and call on Smithy. He's generally got a bone over for a stray dog !"

"Ha, ha, ha !"

"The fact is, I want you to do something for me, Cherry."

"My dear Owl, I know you're expecting a postal-order by the very next post, and I know I'm not going to lend you anything on it," said Bob. "Roll away !"

"It isn't that ! I want you to punch me !"

"Wha-a-at !"

Bob Cherry blinked at the Owl of the Remove. The Co. regarded him with astonishment. Billy Bunter had succeeded in surprising Study No. 1 !

"Punch you !" howled Bob.

"Yes, that's it."

Bob doubled a large fist.

"Anything to oblige," he said.

"Where will you have it ? I don't often find pleasure in obliging you, Bunter ; but this time it will be a real treat !"

Bunter jumped back.

"Hold on——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo ! Changed your mind already ?"

"Nunno. I—I want you to punch my head—not hard. Not hard enough to hurt me," explained Bunter anxiously. "Only hard enough to give me a fearful shock."

"I'm blessed if I understand," said Bob Cherry, staring at the Owl of the

Remove blankly. "If you're not potty, Bunter, what are you pretending to be potty for ?"

"The pretendfulness is not terrific," said Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Bunter is really potty."

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it," said Frank Nugent in wonder.

"You fellows are awfully dense," said Bunter impatiently. "Gilbert had a shock caused by a punch, and that caused——ahem !——"

"Who on earth's Gilbert ?"

"Oh, nobody you know !" said Bunter hastily.

"Great Scott !"

"What I really want is a pretended punch," said Bunter thoughtfully. "Of course, I don't want any real damage done. Then, when I tell the Head——"

"Tell the Head ?" said Bob dazedly.

"Yes ; when I tell the Head, I can say the calamity was caused by a brutal blow from you, Bob Cherry——"

"My hat !"

"What calamity ?" yelled Wharton.

"Oh, nothing !"

Bob Cherry rose to his feet, a rather grim look on his face.

"I don't know what you're driving at, Bunter," he said. "I suppose you're trying to pull our leg, somehow. But you've asked me to punch you, and I'll do it——"

"Soft, you know," gasped Bunter.

"Hard as I can do it !" answered Bob. "Stand steady."

Bob Cherry drew back his powerful right arm. Before he had time to do more William George Bunter had hopped actively into the passage.

"Come back and be punched, you fat goat !" roared Bob.

"Yah !"

Evidently Bunter had decided not

to risk it. He rolled on down the Remove passage, with a frown of deep thought on his fat brow. He left the chums of the Remove deeply puzzled. Bunter's mysterious words really seemed to hint that he was not quite right in his head.

"Silly ass!" muttered Bunter discontentedly. "I've got to work it somehow, though. No good asking Toddy; he would punch me hard. So would any other beast in the Remove, I suppose. But it's got to be worked somehow."

Bunter went down the Remove staircase, still deep in thought on the subject of the strange and mysterious stunt that was working in his fat brain.

On the lower landing he found Potter and Greene of the Fifth leaning

on the window, and chatting. Potter and Greene were Coker's study-mates in the Fifth, but they were far from their study now, possibly not yearning for the great Horace's company that evening. It was Bunter's usual inquisitiveness that caused him to slacken pace as he passed and hear what the two Fifth-Formers were saying. They paid no heed to Bunter.

"Keep out of the study, for goodness' sake!" said Potter. "That howling ass will be giving us ju-jutsu if we go in. The silly owl doesn't know anything about it, and never will; but he'll take up the rest of the evening in showing us what he can do."

"What he can't do, you mean!" chuckled Greene.

Potter chuckled, too.



Billy Bunter went down on the hearth-rug, and his head banged on the rug with a loud thud. But instead of scrambling to his feet, the Owl of the Remove lay where he had fallen, his eyes closed. "Tumble up!" rapped Coker. "You can't go to sleep on my carpet, Bunter!"

"He jabbed his silly elbow into my eye showing me what he calls ju-jutsu an hour ago," said Potter. "I'm fed up!"

"Same here," said Greene. "The silly owl banged my napper against the mantelpiece. We'll give Coker a miss this evening."

"Yes, rather!"

Billy Bunter rolled on his way, and went down the lower stair. His round eyes were glimmering behind his big spectacles.

That little talk between Potter and Greene, which he had overheard, seemed to have put a new idea into Bunter's head. His steps took him in the direction of the Fifth Form passage.

He tapped at the door of the study that was honoured and distinguished by sheltering the great Coker.

"Come in!"

Bunter went in. Coker was at the table, studying a volume in which were depicted athletic figures in all the stages of wrestling. He glanced up, and frowned at the sight of Bunter.

"You ass, I thought it was Fitzgerald!" he grunted. "Here, Bunter, cut along to Fitzgerald's study and tell him to come here! I want to show him a ju-jutsu trick."

Bunter blinked at him.

"That's what I've come about, Coker!" he said meekly. Coker of the Fifth never had much politeness to waste on anybody, and least of all upon a fag of the Lower Fourth.

But Coker's leg was easy to pull, even by a fag—in fact, it was the easiest leg to pull in all Greyfriars! And William George Bunter was well aware of that fact.

"I'm awfully interested in ju-jutsu, Coker," went on Bunter, with some meekness.

Coker laughed.

"Lot of good you'd be at wrestling; Japanese style or any other style!" he said. "You'd burst!"

"Well, I thought you might be willing to show me a trick or two, as you know the whole thing from start to finish," said Bunter. "Temple of the Fourth thinks he knows something about ju-jutsu; so does Hurree Singh. But I told them I wasn't going to waste time with them if Coker would give me a show. Always best to come to the fountain-head. Don't you think so, Coker?"

Coker regarded Bunter more amiably.

"Of course, it's wasting your time," said Bunter. "But you could show me in a few minutes what would take any other fellow hours."

"That's so," said Coker. "There's precious few things I couldn't show you in ju-jutsu, Bunter, if it was worth my while. Dash it all, I don't mind showing you a trick or two! Come into the study."

Horace Coker rose to his feet, looking quite amiable. Coker could always be softened by flattery, and he liked his flattery in chunks. Bunter had administered it in chunks, and so everything in the garden, so to speak, was lovely.

"I'll show you the arm-lock that I was showing that duffer Potter in your Form-room this afternoon," said Coker, with a smile. "Just stand there, Bunter."

Bunter stood there.

"Now, I hold you like this—see?"

"I see," said Bunter.

"Then I get a grip like that," said Coker.

"Yes."

"Now you're absolutely helpless," smiled Coker. "I'm not exerting my strength—not in the least! But I've got you quite helpless."

"Have you?" gasped Bunter.

He did not feel helpless, but he was willing to take Coker's word for it.

"Quite!" said Coker. "Now, with the slightest turn of my right arm, I could lay you on the floor on your head."

"I—I say, do it!" gasped Bunter. "It will be all right on the hearth-rug, and—and I don't mind getting a—slight shock."

"Sure you don't mind?" asked Coker.

"N-n-not at all!"

"Then I'll show you."

Bump!

Billy Bunter went down on the hearth-rug, and his head banged on the rug with a loud thud.

The rug softened the blow, however, and Coker looked down on him with a smile, expecting to see Bunter scramble up.

But Bunter didn't scramble up.

He lay with his eyes closed behind his big spectacles, and Coker of the Fifth stared at him.

"Tumble up!" he rapped out. "You can't go to sleep on my study carpet, Bunter!"

Bunter sat up.

He put his hand to his eyes and blinked dazedly.

"I—I've had a shock!" he gasped.

"Not much of a shock," grinned Coker. "Tumble up, and I'll show you again, if you like."

"Where are you?"

"Eh?"

"Where are you?" repeated Bunter. "I can't see you."

"Can't see me?" repeated Coker blankly. "What do you mean? You're blinking straight at me with your blinking goggles, you owl!"

"Have you turned the light out?" asked Bunter.

"The light? No; you know I haven't," said Coker, puzzled and beginning to be angry. "What the thump are you driving at, Bunter? Get up before I kick you, you silly owl!"

"I—I can't see the light!"

"Eh?"

"I—I'm blind!"

"B-blind?" stuttered Coker.

"Yes. Oh, dear!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER AWFUL!

"**B** LIND!" Horace Coker repeated the fearful word, blinking at the Owl of the Remove in blank astonishment.

Bunter rose slowly to his feet.

His eyes were blinking behind his big spectacles, and they certainly looked the same as usual. But, according to his own statement, Billy Bunter was blind—like Gilbert in the volume presented to Skinner of the Remove by Skinner's Aunt Selina.

"Are you trying to pull my leg, Bunter?" asked Coker angrily.

"Nunno! Where are you?"

"Here I am," snapped the irritated Coker. "Standing just in front of you."

"I can't see you."

"Gammon!"

"Will you lead me back to the Remove passage?" demanded Bunter hotly. "I should think you might have a little sympathy, Coker, when you've made me blind."

"I haven't, you silly owl!" hooted Coker. "I'll kick you back to the Remove passage, if you like."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"I give you one minute to get out of my study," said Horace Coker, in great exasperation. "I'll teach you to spin me yarns about being blind, you silly young ass! Get out!"

Bunter groped his way to the door.

If he were not blind, he certainly played his part very creditably. He bumped into a chair, and then into the table. He groped over the table, and sent an inkpot spinning.

There was a yell from Coker.

"Look out, you idiot!"

"Did—did I touch something?" gasped Bunter.

"You—you—you——" panted Coker.

He rushed to rescue the inkpot, which was streaming over a pile of papers. Then he turned on Bunter, who was groping blindly to the door.

"Get out!"

Coker's boot swung up, and was planted fairly behind Bunter. The fat junior did not need to grope his way to the doorway then. He flew through it, headlong.

Bump! Bunter landed in the passage, and roared.

"Now clear off!" shouted Coker.

"If I have to come out to you, I'll kick you all the way to the Remove staircase."

"Help!" shouted Bunter.

"Shut up!" hissed Coker. "I'll help you, you fat fraud! Will you hop along, or shall I kick you along the passage?"

"Help!"

"That does it!" growled Coker.

And he rushed out of the study to kick Bunter along the passage as he had promised.

But Bunter's yells had brought several fellows out of the Fifth Form studies, as the Owl of the Remove had sagely calculated. Blundell and Bland and Fitzgerald came on the scene.

"What on earth's the matter?" demanded Blundell, the captain of the Fifth.

"Help!" yelled Bunter. "I'm blind!"

"What?"

"Blind!"

"Only some of his rotten spoofing!" snorted Coker. "He makes out he's been knocked blind by bumping his silly head on my study carpet. I'll blind him! A few kicks will set him right."

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Blundell, pulling Coker back. "If there's anything wrong with the kid——"

"There isn't!" snapped Coker.

"Well, let's see."

"Rot!"

"Keep back!" said Blundell authoritatively.

And Horace Coker fumed and kept back.

Blundell stooped over Bunter and raised him to his feet. The Owl of the Remove blinked at him.

"Now, what does this mean?" demanded the captain of the Fifth. "Do you mean to say that you can't see me, Bunter?"

"No. Are you Bland?"

"I'm Blundell."

"Yes. I know your voice now," said Bunter. "Would you mind leading me back to the Remove passage, Blundell? I can't see, and I might fall over the stairs. I don't blame Coker. He was showing me a ju-jutsu trick when he banged my head and blinded me. It wasn't his fault. I think he ought to buy me a dog to lead me about."

"My hat!" gasped Coker.

Blundell of the Fifth regarded Bunter very doubtfully.

"Do you really mean to say that you can't see your way, Bunter?" he exclaimed.

"All is dark!" said Bunter.

"There's a light on in the passage, as usual."

"I—I can't see it."

Blundell whistled.

"My hat! That's jolly serious, if it's true," he said. "I don't see why he should say so if it wasn't. I'd better take you to your Form-master, Bunter."

"Yes, do," said Bunter feebly. "I'd be ever so much obliged to you,

the Remove walked by his side without hesitation. If he was "spoofing," it was clear that the fat junior was prepared to carry out the spoof even in the terrific presence of the Remove master.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Harry Wharton & Co. were coming down to the Common-room, and they met Blundell and his charge on their way to the Remove master's study. "What's



Bunter groped over Mr. Quelch's writing-desk, and knocked over an inkpot. The Remove master uttered a sharp exclamation as a stream of ink splashed across the desk. "Take care, Bunter!" "D-d-did I touch anything, sir?" asked the fat junior.

Blundell. Don't think I blame Coker. He couldn't help it."

"I believe he's spoofing!" growled Coker. "He'll bunk before you get him to his Form-master."

"I'll take jolly good care he doesn't," said Blundell grimly. "Come with me, Bunter."

He took a firm grip on Bunter's arm and led him away. The Owl of

the matter with Bunter?" demanded Bob Cherry. "What's he buzzing along here with his eyes shut for?"

"He says he's blind," said Blundell shortly.

"Blind!" yelled Bob.

"Bunter—blind!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, don't worry about me," said Bunter faintly.

"Coker did it. He gave me a terrible shock bumping my head on the floor, showing me a ju-jutsu trick. He didn't mean it. I don't blame Coker. But I'm blind. It's awful! My greatest grief is that I shan't be able to do my lessons."

"Come on!" said Blundell.

He marched Billy Bunter on, leaving the Famous Five standing rooted to the passage floor, staring.

"Bunter—blind!" repeated Harry Wharton. "If—if it's true——"

"It's some new spoof," said Johnny Bull suspiciously. "You remember the time once when he made out he was deaf——"

"The blindness is not terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of the head.

Bob Cherry looked very serious.

"He always was a short-sighted owl," said Bob, in a low voice. "I—I suppose he might go blind. If it's true—poor old Bunter!"

"I think we'd better find out whether it's true before we waste a lot of sympathy on him," said Harry Wharton, rather dryly. "He says Coker gave him a shock, and that caused it. He was asking you to give him a shock half an hour ago, Bob."

Bob Cherry started.

"My hat! Was that——"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"If Bunter's blind, we'll stand by him, and do everything we can to help," he said. "But I want a little proof first; and I rather think I shan't believe in it till a doctor's seen him, at least."

And the Famous Five waited in the passage, watching the closed door of Mr. Quelch's study. And as other juniors came along and inquired what they were waiting for, the news soon spread. In ten minutes, more than

half the Greyfriars Remove were waiting in the passage in an excited crowd—waiting for news of blind Bunter!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

FACING THE MUSIC!

BILLY BUNTER felt an inward tremor as he was marched into Mr. Quelch's study. The Remove master was a very keen gentleman; his pupils often compared his eyes to a pair of gimlets on account of their penetrating qualities. To keep up a "spoof" in Mr. Quelch's presence required nerve; and Bunter had more "cheek" than nerve. But he comforted himself with the reflection that Quelch wasn't a dashed doctor or an oculist, and couldn't know anyhow whether a chap was blind or not. Besides, Bunter calculated a great deal on touching Mr. Quelch's heart. Rusty and crusty as he was considered, it stood to reason that Henry Quelch had a heart somewhere—it couldn't possibly have been left out of his anatomy. If he had a heart surely it must be touched by so terrible a tale of woe. Bunter had observed, in glancing through Skinner's birthday book, that Good Gilbert's kind teachers had been deeply touched by Gilbert's misfortune. There was no reason why Mr. Quelch shouldn't be equally touched. Yet the Owl of the Remove felt a tremor run through him as he found himself standing under the steady gaze of Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Quelch. "Why have you brought Bunter here, Blundell?"

"He says——" began Blundell.

"One moment! Why are you staring in that peculiar manner, Bunter?"

"Am I, sir?" asked Bunter in an expiring voice.

"You are! What is the meaning of it?"

"I—I'm blind, sir."

Mr. Quelch jumped. Whether his heart was touched or not, undoubtedly he was startled and astonished.

"Blind!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir! It—it's awful, isn't it, sir?"

"Bless my soul!"

"He says it was caused by a shock he received in Coker's study, sir," said Blundell. "Coker was showing him some ju-jitsu tricks, and his head knocked on the floor, I understand. He says that brought it on."

"You speak as if you doubt his statement, Blundell."

"Well, sir——"

The Fifth-Former hesitated.

"Quite so," said Mr. Quelch, with a nod. "I also doubt Bunter's statement, very much indeed. I am not a surgeon, but I apprehend that it is very unlikely that blindness could be caused by knocking one's head on the floor. It would certainly be very unusual."

"All is dark, sir!" said Bunter with dramatic effect. "I—I shall never gaze upon the blessed sunshine, sir——"

"What?"

"I—I shall never hear the little birds singing in the woods, sir," continued Bunter pathetically.

"Why not, Bunter? I presume that this concussion has not caused you to become deaf also?"

Bunter started. He was overdoing it, as usual.

"I—I mean I shall never see the little birds singing, sir," he stammered.

"You would scarcely see them singing in any case. I should imagine," said Mr. Quelch dryly. "Will you be kind enough not to talk nonsense to me, Bunter?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"When did you find that you could not see, Bunter?"

"On the spot, sir; as—as soon as my head banged. Coker had to help me out of his study, sir."

"And you cannot see me at the present moment?"

"No, sir," Bunter said, staring direct at the Remove master, and summoning up all his nerve. "I—I shouldn't know it was you, sir, excepting for your voice. It—it might be the Head, or—or Gosling, sir, for all I can see. I know your voice, sir, of course; it's so musical, sir, and——"

"That will do, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

He regarded the fat junior in perplexity for some moments.

It was possible, of course, that Bunter's statement was well founded, and in that case such a tragedy as the loss of sight was deserving of the deepest sympathy.

"I shall have to send for the doctor at once, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, certainly, sir! I—I want to see him, of course," faltered Bunter.

"It will be very inconvenient for Dr. Pillbury to come up to the school at this late hour, Bunter."

"I—I wouldn't mind leaving it till to-morrow, sir."

"Not a moment must be lost, if what you state is really the case, Bunter. For the last time, I ask you whether you are telling me the truth, or whether you are playing some unscrupulous trick with a view to escaping lessons."

Bunter shivered inwardly. What on earth made Quelch think of such a thing as that, he wondered. He was sure that Good Gilbert had never been suspected in this way by his kind teachers.

"Oh, sir!" he murmured. "I—I

never thought of such a thing, sir. It's my greatest grief that—"

"Very well, Bunter. I will telephone to Dr. Pillbury, and he will come to see you at once. You had better remain here. You may go, Blundell."

Blundell of the Fifth quitted the study, looking very grave. Outside in the passage a score of voices addressed him as he emerged and closed the door behind him.

"How's Bunter, Blundell?"

"Is he really blind?"

Blundell of the Fifth shrugged his shoulders.

"Blessed if I know," he said. "Mr. Quelch is keeping Bunter in his study and is going to ring up Pillbury to come and see him."

"He's keeping up the yarn before Quelch, then?" exclaimed Skinner. "Yes."

"Phew! What a neck!"

Blundell went his way; but the Remove fellows remained crowded in the corridor. Harry Wharton & Co. were very grave now—it looked more and more as if there was truth in "Bunter's latest." They were not convinced, but they were beginning to feel that there was probably something in it. Surely the fat Owl of the Remove would not venture upon such a "spoof" with so exceedingly dangerous a customer as Mr. Quelch! Certainly there was no other fellow in the Remove who would have had the required nerve. They did not remember, for the moment, that according to the proverb, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

STICKING TO IT!

"You may sit down, Bunter."

Mr. Quelch spoke kindly enough.

"Thank you, sir!" said Billy Bunter.

He looked round for a chair.

Fortunately—for Bunter—he remembered in time that, being blind, he couldn't possibly see where there was a chair. And it came into his mind at the same moment that possibly "Quelch" was trying to "catch" him out. If Bunter had walked to a chair and sat down, certainly the Form-master would not have believed that he was blind.

So Bunter put out his fat hands and began to grope. He groped over Mr. Quelch's writing-desk, and knocked over an inkpot. The Remove master uttered a sharp exclamation as a stream of ink shot across the desk.

"Take care, Bunter!"

"D-d-did I touch anything, sir?"

"You have knocked over my inkpot!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, dear! Sorry, sir! I—I can't help being blind, sir!" said Bunter pathetically.

Mr. Quelch suppressed his feelings. He rose to his feet, took Bunter by the shoulder, and led him to a chair.

Bunter sat down.

Mr. Quelch was busy for the next few minutes, mopping up spilt ink. There was a twinkle in Bunter's eyes as he watched him. Considering that he was blind, he derived a remarkable amount of entertainment from watching Mr. Quelch mopping up ink.

The Remove master went to the telephone, and rang up Dr. Pillbury in Friardale, and requested him to come up to the school as speedily as he could. Then he returned to his table, took up his pen, and plunged into his work again.

Bunter sat still, not in a very happy mood now. It was likely to be at least half an hour before Dr. Pillbury arrived; and sitting in the Form-

master's study for half an hour was not an exhilarating occupation. So far as Bunter knew, this sort of thing had not happened to Good Gilbert. Good Gilbert was loved by his kind teachers, and his loving schoolfellows were always bringing him little gifts. That would have suited Bunter; but sitting in Mr. Quelch's study was not pleasant at all. Bunter shifted and squirmed and groaned inwardly. Mr. Quelch glanced across at him.

"Kindly keep still, Bunter."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Bunter resigned himself to his fate.

It was a good half-hour before there was a sound of a car and Dr. Pillbury's voice was heard in the corridor. Mr. Quelch rose and opened the study door. The stout medical gentleman came bustling in; and for a moment Bunter had a view of a crowd

of Remove fellows in the passage. Then the door closed again.

Mr. Quelch shook hands with the school doctor, and proceeded to explain to him what had happened. Dr. Pillbury listened with evident surprise, his eyes fixed on Bunter.

"Extraordinary!" he commented.

"I cannot, of course, pass an opinion on the matter myself," said Mr. Quelch; "I have no scientific knowledge of the subject. I think I should mention, however, that this boy Bunter is exceedingly lazy, and has often been guilty of tricks to escape his lessons. On one occasion at least he affected illness."

"Quite so," said Dr. Pillbury. "I will examine the boy. If the matter is serious, of course, a specialist must be called in."

"Certainly."



Yelling wildly, the Owl of the Remove was yanked to the washstand and washed—thoroughly. It was the most thorough wash Bunter had had for a long time!

"Come here, Bunter," said Dr. Pillbury.

Billy Bunter rose from his chair, and was about to cross over to where the medical gentleman was sitting; but he remembered in time, and walked in the wrong direction. He bumped into a small table before the window, upon which stood a jar of flowers.

Crash!

The table reeled, and the jar went to the floor, and there was a smashing and a splashing.

"Oh dear!" ejaculated Bunter. "Have I—have I knocked something over, sir?"

"You have!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice.

"I—I'm awfully sorry, sir! Being blind, you know——"

Mr. Quelch took Bunter by the shoulder and led him to the doctor. The fat junior stood before Dr. Pillbury, who fixed a very penetrating gaze on him.

"Let me see your eyes, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir."

"Remove your glasses, please!"

Bunter removed his big spectacles.

The doctor examined his eyes very keenly. Billy Bunter winked and blinked under his inspection. There was growing disbelief in Dr. Pillbury's face.

"Where did you receive this concussion you speak of, Bunter?" he asked.

"Oh, on the back of the head, sir!"

"And it was immediately followed by the loss of sight?"

"Immediately, sir."

"You have seen nothing since?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You cannot see me at the present moment?"

"No, sir."

Dr. Pillbury coughed. His expression showed that he did not believe

Bunter's statement; but he seemed a little perplexed.

"A more thorough examination will, of course, be necessary," he said, rising. "Bunter suffers from astigmatism, but otherwise his eyes are very strong. If he is actually blind at the present moment it is very surprising to me—very surprising, indeed. If you desire it, Mr. Quelch, I will telephone for a London specialist the first thing in the morning."

"I suppose that is essential, if Bunter persists in his statement," said Mr. Quelch.

"Undoubtedly!" Dr. Pillbury turned to the fat junior again. "If you are exaggerating for any reason, Bunter, I recommend you to tell your Form-master the truth now."

"Oh, sir!" said Bunter.

"The specialist's fee for a visit to Greyfriars will be ten guineas, which your father will be called upon to pay," said Dr. Pillbury. "You realise that that is a serious matter."

Bunter's fat brain swam for a moment. He could imagine the feelings of William Samuel Bunter, Esquire, when he was presented with a bill for ten guineas.

But it was really too late for retreat now. Like other great men mentioned in history, Bunter had burned his boats behind him. To own up now meant at the least a flogging from the Head. He had deceived his Form-master, or attempted to deceive him; he had knocked over Mr. Quelch's inkpot; he had smashed a jar of flowers; he had brought the busy doctor to the school at nine in the evening. That list of sins would call for a flogging at the very least.

A flogging in hand was worse than a bill for ten guineas in the bush, so to speak.

So Bunter stuck to his guns. He



Feeling before him with his hands, Bunter ran into the page, who was carrying a tray to Mr. Prout's study. There was a gasp from Trotter and the tray went to the floor with a crash. "Oh dear!" exclaimed Bunter. "Have I run into somebody?"

had really left himself no choice in the matter.

"You understand?" snapped the school doctor.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You have nothing to say to Mr. Quelch?"

"Only—only that I'm much obliged to him, sir, for his kind sympathy to me under this terrible affliction."

Mr. Quelch coughed; and Dr. Pillbury made a grimace.

"Very well!" said the medical gentleman. "I will make the appointment with the eye specialist at as early an hour as possible, Mr. Quelch."

"Thank you, Dr. Pillbury!"

And the doctor took his leave.

Mr. Quelch surveyed Bunter with a very keen gaze when the medical gentleman was gone. Even the keen Removemaster's suspicions were

shaken now. His voice was kinder as he addressed Bunter:

"I shall accept your assurance for the present at least, Bunter. If this affliction has really fallen upon you, you may count upon the utmost kindness and consideration. I will ask Wharton to take you in his charge."

Mr. Quelch opened the study door. Nearly all the Remove were crowded in the passage now. There was a buzz of voices, which died away as the Removemaster appeared.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!"

The captain of the Remove stepped forward.

"Bunter is apparently blind, Wharton, and, if this is actually the case, he is in need of care. He will be seen by a specialist to-morrow, when the matter will be placed beyond the shadow of a

doubt. May I ask you, my boy, to take charge of Bunter in the interval?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Bunter made a step towards the door, and remembered again, and began to grope. Mr. Quelch caught him by the collar just before he was able to knock the clock off the mantelpiece.

"This way, Bunter!"

Harry Wharton led the fat junior down the passage, amid a puzzled, perplexed, but sympathetic Remove.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

POOR OLD BUNTER!

"**P**oor old Bunter!"

"Poor old rats!" murmured Skinner.

"Shut up, Skinner!"

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, "I don't mind Skinner! He can't help being a rotten cad, can he?"

"Why, you fat, cheeky chunk of lard," exclaimed Skinner wrathfully, "I'll jolly well——"

Bob Cherry jerked Skinner back with a grip of iron on his collar.

"Let go!" yelled Skinner. "He's only spoofing, you silly owl!"

"Give him a jolly good hiding, Bob!" said Bunter. "I think even Skinner ought to be decent at such a fearful time——"

Bob Cherry jerked Skinner away, and he fell up against the wall with a bump.

"Look here——" gasped Skinner.

"Shut up!"

"How did Bunter know it was Bob Cherry that collared me, if he can't see?" howled Skinner.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob. "That's so! How did you know, Bunter?"

Bunter gasped.

"I—I—I——"

"Yes, how did you know, you

bounder?" demanded Vernon-Smith.

"I knew Bob would stand by me, now I'm blind," said Bunter. "Bob Cherry isn't the chap to let Skinner bully me now I'm blind and can't stand up for myself!"

"Well, that's so!" said Bob.

"I guess that won't wash!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I kinder calculate that Bunter can see as well as any other galoot here!"

"You shut up, Fishy!"

"Come on, Bunter, old chap!" said Wharton.

Wharton was perplexed; but the bare possibility of Bunter being blind was enough to make him gentle and kind to the fat junior.

"Where—where are you taking me?" murmured Bunter.

"To your study, old fellow."

"Mind how you get me up the stairs," said Bunter.

"I'll be jolly careful!"

Wharton led the Owl of the Remove away, and very carefully piloted him up the staircase. Half of the Remove followed them. The juniors were very much interested in blind Bunter.

Wharton led him into Study No. 7 and Peter Todd placed him in the armchair. Half a dozen fellows crowded into the study, and a dozen more crowded round the doorway. Most of them were quite keen to do anything they could for blind Bunter, though probably every fellow there was afflicted with a lingering doubt.

Bunter sat down very comfortably in the study armchair, with a fat smile of satisfaction on his face.

To-morrow and the specialist he dismissed from his fat mind. For the present he felt himself in clover. From being the most insignificant fellow in the Remove, he had suddenly become that Form's most

considered member. The benefits that had accrued to Good Gilbert in his affliction were going to accrue to Bad Bunter, if he could contrive it—and he thought he could.

"Anything we can do for you, kid?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I feel a bit hungry," said Bunter. "The—the shock seems to have brought it on."

"My dear chap, we'll have some supper in two ticks!"

"Yes, rather!"

Peter Todd pulled the armchair, with Bunter in it, to the table. A dozen fellows went to their study cupboards to collect tit-bits to grace the supper-board.

In a very short time Billy Bunter was spreading himself in enjoyment for such a supper as did not come his way once in a term.

He was still going strong when Wingate of the Sixth came along the Remove passage with the announcement that it was bed-time.

"Let Bunter finish his supper, Wingate," said Bob Cherry. "He's blind, you know."

"Is he?" said Wingate, with a grunt. "He seems to be helping himself pretty easily for a fellow who can't see."

"Oh, really, Wingate——"

"Anyhow, it's bed-time," said the Greyfriars captain. "Cut off!"

"I say, Wingate, let me finish the last tart——"

"The what?" asked Wingate.

"The last tart," said Bunter, reaching out to the dish that had contained a dozen jam-tarts when his supper started.

Wingate smiled grimly.

"How do you know there's only one more tart, Bunter?" he asked.

"I—I——"

"Because he can jolly well see it!" said Skinner from the passage.

"I—I——" stammered Bunter.

"Well, get off to bed," said Wingate. "Now, then, get a move on, the lot of you!"

Bunter grabbed the last tart, and munched it as Harry Wharton led him out of the study. But Wharton was certainly feeling very suspicious now. So were the other fellows. But they felt that they ought to give Bunter the benefit of the doubt, so long as a vestige of doubt remained, at least.

Wharton led him very carefully to the Remove dormitory. Bunter sat on a bed while Bob Cherry took off one boot for him and Frank Nugent took off the other. The Owl of the Remove rather liked being waited on; and assuredly he was not likely to exert himself so long as sympathetic fellows were prepared to wait on him.

Skinner watched the proceedings with a sarcastic grin. Skinner was a rather cynical youth, and probably would not have believed Bunter's story if it had been true. Certainly he did not believe it now.

"Rather rotten that poor old Bunter shouldn't have been allowed to finish his supper," said Skinner. "Have some toffee, Bunter?"

"Yes, old chap!" said Bunter at once.

"Here you are!"

Skinner extended a cake of soap to the fat junior.

Bunter glared at him.

"You rotter! What do you mean? Take it away!" he snorted.

"Take what away?" smiled Skinner. "Don't you like toffee? You said you'd have some. It's jolly good toffee, Bunter!"

"I guess Bunter can see jolly well

for a blind man!" chortled Fisher T. Fish. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter started. Once more he had given himself away. Rather too late he reached out for the soap.

"Thank you, Skinner——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner. "You silly owl, can't you see you've just given yourself away now?"

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He—he knew it wasn't toffee! How did he know?"

"I—I smelt it was soap!" gasped Bunter.

Skinner chortled.

"Smell this soap, you fellows," he said. "It's unscented, and I wasn't holding it within a yard of Bunter. If anybody here can smell it's soap at a foot off, I'll eat it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, then, tumble in!" said Wingate of the Sixth, appearing in the doorway. And the Removites turned in, most of them sceptical by this time as to the genuineness of Bunter's blindness.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

WASHING BUNTER!

CLANG!

The rising-bell sounded in the autumn morning, and the Removites of Greyfriars awoke and yawned. Bob Cherry was usually the first out of bed, after the first clang of the rising-bell. But on this special morning Harold Skinner preceded him.

Generally, Skinner remained in bed as late as possible. Doubtless he had his own reasons for hopping out actively as soon as the rising-bell clanged on this occasion.

He came over to Billy Bunter's bed, and shook the fat junior. He was careful not to speak; but he shook him vigorously.

Bunter's round eyes opened, and he blinked sleepily.

"Leggo!" he murmured. "I'm not going to get up this morning! I can't go in to lessons, as I'm blind! Besides, I feel weak."

Shake, shake, shake!

"Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "Skinner, you rotter——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

"I say, you fellows, make Skinner leggo——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! How do you know it's Skinner?" roared Bob Cherry.

"The—the beast said—I—I heard his voice——"

"He didn't speak!" shouted Squiff.

"I—I——"

"I was jolly careful not to speak," chuckled Skinner. "I wanted to show up the blessed spoofer!"

"So your sight's come back suddenly, has it, Bunter?" demanded Wharton sarcastically.

"Eh? Certainly not!"

"Then how did you know it was Skinner?"

"I—I recognised his voice—I—I mean, I—I recognised his touch," said Bunter. "His bony claws, you know——"

"Too thin, I guess!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"The thinfulness is terrific!"

"For goodness' sake chuck up that silly gammon now, Bunter!" exclaimed Nugent. "You've given yourself away!"

"I think it's pretty clear now," said Harry Wharton in great disgust. "What put the stunt into your silly head, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Why, this must be the stunt he was thinking out when he started cackling in the Common-room yesterday!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.



"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Quelch in amazement, as Coker marched the squirming Bunter into the Remove master's study. "This fat fraud made out he was blinded in my study last evening!" exclaimed Coker. "It's all spunk, sir!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"It's as plain as anything!" exclaimed Bob. "He got the idea from somewhere yesterday, and——"

"I didn't!" roared Bunter. "I—I never thought of such a thing. You fellows might be a bit sympathetic in my fearful affliction."

"There isn't any affliction!" howled Bob.

"I keep on telling you I'm blind. Some blind chaps' schoolfellows are kind and sympathetic, and bring them little gifts," said Bunter. "Fat lot of that here, I must say. Beasts!"

"Spoofers!"

"Who's going to put my boots on for me?"

"Nobody, I fancy!" said Wharton, laughing.

"I say, we'll wash him, though!" said Bob Cherry. "It's time he had

a good wash. He hasn't had one since we ducked him that time when we were caravanning!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll all lend a hand at that!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

There was a roar of protest from Bunter.

"Beasts! I don't want to be washed! Keep off, you rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"We're bound to help a blind chap," he said. "You can't see to wash yourself, can you, Bunter?"

"Nunno!"

"Then we're bound to wash you!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The washfulness is very necessary, Bunter, and it shall be terrific!"

"Beasts! Yarooooogh!"

Billy Bunter dodged round the beds

as half a dozen of the Remove made for him. If any further proof was needed that Bunter's blindness was "spoof," it was afforded now. Bunter dodged round one bed and scrambled over another and dodged round a third, and then doubled back along the dormitory, with the yelling juniors after him. Certainly a blind fellow would have met with disaster in that hot chase up and down the Remove dormitory; and most certainly Billy Bunter could see where he was going.

But there was no escape for Bunter. If he was blind, he needed washing by his kind schoolfellows; and they were going to wash him. If he wasn't blind, it was his own fault.

The Owl of the Remove was captured and yanked back to his washstand, yelling. There he was washed—thoroughly. It was the most thorough wash Bunter had had for a long, long time. When he opened his mouth to yell, a lather of soap crammed into it, and he spluttered and gasped wildly.

The Removites washed him, with howls of laughter, and howls of quite a different kind from Bunter.

When they had finished the fat junior was certainly much cleaner than he had been at any time during that term. He clutched up a towel—seeing where it was quite easily, in spite of his blindness. He was spluttering with wrath when he rolled out of the dormitory.

"Hold on, Bunter!" shouted Bob Cherry. "You want to be helped downstairs, don't you, now you're blind?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Of—of course!" stammered Bunter.

"Hold on a minute; I'm going to lead you down by your ear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll take the other ear," said

Johnny Bull. "We must see Bunter safe, now he's blind. Don't be afraid we'll let go, Bunter; we'll hold on jolly tight!"

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter rolled out.

"After him!" shouted Bob.

Bunter broke into a run, and escaped to the stairs. Not till he was out of the reach of the merry Removites did he begin to grope around and feel his way, step by step, in order to make a proper impression upon anyone who might observe him. The game was up, evidently, so far as the Remove was concerned. Bunter's schoolfellows were not likely to shower kind attentions upon him and bring him little gifts, as Good Gilbert's schoolfellows had done.

But Bunter still hoped to share Good Gilbert's luck so far as getting out of lessons was concerned. The "stunt" had not "panned out" as well as the Owl of the Remove had hoped, but he felt that there was still something in it; and even one day of slacking was so much to the good, from Bunter's point of view. And so, when he caught sight of Mr. Quelch in the distance, Billy Bunter stared straight before him and felt his way along with his fat hands—and made it a point to run into Trotter, the page, who was carrying a tray to Mr. Prout's study. There was a gasp from Trotter, and a crash as the tray went down.

"Oh, dear!" said Bunter. "Have I run into somebody?"

"My heye!" gasped Trotter.

"Bunter!"

"Oh, yes, sir! Is that Mr. Quelch?"

"Why did you run into Trotter like that, Bunter?"

"I'm blind, sir," said Bunter meekly.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"Why is not Wharton taking care of you, as I directed?"

"I'm afraid Wharton's rather selfish, sir."

"You must not wander about in this way, Bunter. Ah, here is Wharton! Wharton, I asked you to keep Bunter under your care for a time."

"Ye-e-es, sir; but—but——"

"But what?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, nothing, sir!" stammered Harry.

He did not feel disposed to give Bunter away to the Form-master.

"You will kindly take care of him, Wharton; at least, until the oculist has seen him."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Quelch rustled away, and the Owl of the Remove grinned at Wharton.

"You fat fraud——" said Harry.

"Lead me into the quadrangle, please!"

"You fat rotter! You can see your way as well as I can!"

"You heard what Mr. Quelch said," grinned Bunter. "Lead me into the quad, and if you ain't jolly careful with me I shall have to complain to Quelchy. I don't want to get you into trouble with Quelchy, Wharton, but if you ain't jolly careful I shall have to complain."

And the captain of the Remove, suppressing his feelings, led Billy Bunter into the quad, and remained in charge of him until the bell rang for breakfast.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

THE HISTORY OF THE MYSTERY!

BILLY BUNTER came into the Form-room with the rest of the Remove that morning. Harry

Wharton led him there. When Mr. Quelch came in he glanced very sharply at Bunter.

"You do not feel any better this morning, Bunter?" he asked.

"No, sir! Worse!" said Bunter promptly.

"Do you feel any pain in your eyes, Bunter?"



"Dare you assert to me, at this moment, that you are blind?" thundered Mr. Quelch, swishing the cane.

"I—I believe I can see now, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Yes, sir—awful! Something like burning hot daggers, sir——"

"What?"

"And something like red-hot gimlets, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"You will be excused lessons this morning, Bunter. You may sit in your place and listen."

Bunter grunted.

He might almost as well have been doing lessons as sitting in his place unoccupied, while the other fellows did theirs. This was not the way a blind chap ought to be treated.

"If you please, sir—" he began.

"Well, Bunter?"

"I—I think I should feel better out of doors, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

"I don't want to cut the Form-work, sir," said Bunter. "It's my greatest grief that I shall have to miss lessons—"

"That will do, Bunter!"

"But I think, sir—"

"You will kindly be silent!"

Lessons commenced in the Remove-room, Billy Bunter sitting in a state of great discontent, and looking on. He heard the other fellows construe in turn, and it was some comfort not to be called on. But he was dreadfully bored. A really sympathetic Form-master would have allowed him to walk in the quad, instead of sitting there; Bunter felt that. Good Gilbert, evidently, had had a much kinder Form-master than Bunter had.

During the morning, Mr. Quelch was called from the Form-room to answer a call on the telephone. And when the Remove was dismissed, he called to Bunter.

"The specialist cannot get here before six, Bunter. You will be ready to see him at that hour."

"Very well, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You will take Bunter out, Wharton."

"Yes, sir."

The captain of the Remove led Bunter from the Form-room. In the quad he gave the fat junior a very expressive look.

"You fat, spoofing bounder!" said Harry in concentrated tones. "How

long are you going to keep this up?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The specialist will bowl you out when he comes."

"Rot! I—I say, Wharton, can you lend me five bob?"

"No!" roared Wharton.

"I'm expecting a postal-order tomorrow morning," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I think you might lend me five bob on it, now I'm blind. Of course, I'll hand you the postal-order immediately it comes!"

"I'll hand you a thick ear, you fat fraud!" growled Wharton.

"You might be a bit sympathetic! Gilbert's schoolfellows—"

Bunter stopped in time.

"Who the thump is Gilbert? You've mentioned him a dozen times," said Harry impatiently. "What are you driving at?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from a dozen Removites who were standing in a group round Skinner in the quad under the elms. Skinner had a book in his hand, and was reading aloud from it. Bunter gave a jump as he recognised the gift volume which Aunt Selina had presented to her hopeful nephew. Evidently Harold Skinner had remembered it, and had put two and two together.

"Hallo! What's the joke?" called out Wharton.

Skinner roared.

"I lent Bunter this book when he was detained yesterday. It's called 'Good Gilbert, the Blind School-boy'—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's where he got the wheeze from!" howled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all about a blind schoolboy, whose greatest grief was that his

affliction caused him to miss his lessons," chortled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, Bunter's very words!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I say, you fellows——"

"So now we've got to the bottom of it," grinned Vernon-Smith. "That book ought to be shown to Quelchy!"

Bunter jumped.

"D-d-don't let Quelchy see it!" he gasped. "I—I say, you fellows, Quelchy would—would misunderstand."

"You mean, he would understand!" grinned Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Beasts!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving the Removites yelling. But Bunter did not heed their yelling. He had caught sight of Coker of the Fifth in the quad—a rather remarkable circumstance, considering that he was blind—and he bore down upon Coker. Billy Bunter had business with Horace Coker.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

PAYING THE PIPER!

"I SAY, Coker!"

Horace Coker stared grimly at Bunter. Potter and Greene, who were with their chum, grinned.

Coker had been rather worried that day. Since the misadventure of Bunter in his study he had not been showing off any more ju-jutsu tricks. Indeed, Coker wished that he had never heard of ju-jutsu. Certainly, he could not have foreseen the calamity that had happened to Bunter—no fellow could have. But it was awful, all the same.

And Coker, who was a good-hearted fellow, repented that he had kicked Bunter out of his study—after he was blind! Of course, he

hadn't believed it; but now it looked genuine. Bunter had gone before his Form-master; a specialist was coming down. Coker was convinced, and he was sincerely sorry. He was just remarking to Potter and Greene that he thought he ought to do something for Bunter, when the Owl of the Remove astonished him by coming up to him in the quad, with the greeting: "I say, Coker!"

It was said of old that liars should have good memories. And it was Bunter's weakness that he had a very bad memory. He had forgotten, for the moment, that blind fellows couldn't see!

"I've been looking for you," continued Bunter.

"Looking for me?" gasped Coker.

"Yes. I've got a bone to pick with you," said Bunter. "You see, you made me blind. I don't blame you; you couldn't help it, in the circumstances. But that's how it stands. A specialist is coming, and he's going to charge ten guineas. I think you ought to pay it, Coker. You've got plenty of money."

Horace Coker breathed hard.

"I've got plenty of money," he assented.

"You could pay it if you liked," said Bunter.

"I could—if I liked."

"Well, I think you ought to," said Bunter. "There'll be a fearful row at home if that bill goes to my father!"

"I dare say there will," assented Coker.

"As you did it, you ought to pay," argued Bunter. "You've got the money. It's up to you, Coker. You see that?"

"If I did it, I ought to pay, certainly," said Coker, with unusual self-restraint. "I was just saying to

Potter that if you were really blind, I'd see you through somehow."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "Well, if you stand the money for the specialist it will be all right. I don't want to worry them at home by letting them know that I'm blind. I may recover, you know."

"You may!" said Coker.

"I think you will!" grinned Potter.

"If you like to hand me the money I'll pay the man when he comes, and it will be all right," said Bunter.

Potter and Greene chuckled. Horace Coker was breathing harder and harder. He seemed to be on the verge of a volcanic eruption.

"You're sure that you're quite blind, Bunter?" he said in a suppressed voice.

Bunter nodded cheerfully.

"Oh, quite sure!" he answered.

"You can't see anything?"

"Nothing at all."

"You can't see me, f'rinstance?"

"Nunno!"

"Then how"—Coker's voice began to resemble thunder—"then how did you know me just now?"

"Eh?"

"You marched right up to me and spoke to me by name," said Coker. "How did you do it, if you were blind?"

"I—I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter and Greene.

Bunter backed away. He did not like the expression on Horace Coker's face.

"I'm waiting for your answer, Bunter!" said Coker grimly.

"I—I—I—— You see——"

"The question is, whether you see," said Coker, with grim humour. "I think you do."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from Potter and Greene.

Billy Bunter blinked at them indignantly.

"I call it rather unfeeling to cackle at a fellow who's blind," he said warmly. "You ought to be a bit sympathetic to a chap suffering under a fearful affliction—— Yaroooh! Leggo, Coker!"

Horace Coker had laid a sudden, powerful grasp on Bunter's collar. His rugged face was crimson with wrath.

"You fat villain!" he gasped.

"Ow! Yow! Help!"

"Come along!" roared Coker.

"Yaroooh! I won't! W-w-where are you going?" gasped Bunter.

"I'm going to take you to your Form-master, and tell him just how blind you are, you spoofing rotter!" said Coker grimly.

"I—I won't go! Yaroooh! Help!" Bunter struggled, but he was an infant in the grasp of the powerful Fifth-Former. Coker of the Fifth marched him directly towards the School House, heedless of his struggling and wriggling and spluttering. Right into the School House he marched him, and on to Mr. Quelch's study.

Coker banged at the door with his disengaged hand.

"Come in!"

Coker threw the door open.

Mr. Quelch was in his study, and he raised his eyebrows at the sight of Bunter squirming, with Horace Coker's iron grip on his collar.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the Remove master in amazement.

Coker gasped for breath.

"That fat fraud, sir——"

"What?"

"I—I mean, Bunter—Bunter makes out that he was blinded in my study last evening, sir."

"I am aware of that, Coker. A specialist——"

"It's all spoof, sir!" roared Coker.

"It is what?"

"I mean, Bunter was pulling your leg. I—— That is to say, it's all lies, sir!" stammered Coker. "He can see as well as ever he did. He came up to me in the quad and spoke to me by name. He was twenty yards away when he saw me, and he came across——"

"I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter.

"Potter and Greene were with me, sir, and they saw him. It's all spoof!" howled Coker.

Mr. Quelch's jaw set grimly.

"You may release Bunter," he said. "Now, Bunter!"

"If—if you please, sir——" gasped Bunter.

"I have very strong doubts, Bunter, as to the truth of your statements," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I suspected from the first, Bunter, that it was a trick to escape lessons."

"Oh, sir! My greatest grief——"

"Silence! It now appears to be proved, Bunter, that you have deceived me, or attempted to do so!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You—you ask any chap in the Remove, sir, and—they'll tell you I'm utterly incapable of deceit, sir. I've often got into rows by being so truthful. I—I say, wha-a-at are you going to do with that cane, sir?" spluttered Bunter.

"How did you know that I had picked up my cane?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I——"

"Answer me, Bunter."

"I—I saw—I—I mean, I heard you, sir."

"You heard me pick up my cane?"

exclaimed the Remove master, scarcely able to believe his ears.

"Oh dear! Yes, sir," gasped Bunter desperately. "I—I—I'm awfully keen of hearing, sir. Blind people are, you know."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "This boy's impudence passes all bounds! I have never heard such wicked prevarication in my life."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I hope you don't think I'm telling an untruth, sir. I—I'd scorn it, sir."

"You saw me pick up my cane, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I don't know that you've got the cane in your hand at the present moment, sir!" groaned Bunter. "If—if you asked me, sir, I—I shouldn't know whether it was a cane or—or a fishing-rod, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch, quite dazed.

Coker grinned, and sidled to the door. Coker of the Fifth felt that he could safely leave Bunter in Mr. Quelch's hands now.

"Oh, sir, I—I—I'm afraid I'm wasting your time, sir!" stuttered Bunter. "I—I feel that I ought not to waste your time, sir, when you're writing a letter!"

"And how, you wretched boy, do you know that I am writing a letter if you cannot see?"

"Oh dear!" moaned Bunter.

Mr. Quelch rose from his desk. He seemed to tower over the hapless Owl of the Remove.

"Bunter!"

"Oh dear! I—I—— If you don't mind, sir, I—I'd prefer to let the whole matter drop."

"I shall telephone to Dr. Pillbury, Bunter!"

"Oh, good, sir! I—I'd like to see the doctor, sir, as—as I'm blind and—and afflicted!"

"I shall telephone to him, Bunter, to cancel the appointment with the specialist. Fortunately there is yet time. It is now clear to me, you wretched boy, that you have grossly deceived me. You have attempted to make me believe that you had lost your sight, for the miserable and contemptible motive of avoiding your lessons. This miserable cheat, Bunter, would have been discovered as soon as you were examined by a specialist. Did you hope to deceive the oculist, you unscrupulous boy?"

"Yes, sir. I—I mean, no, sir."

"Dare you assert to me, at this moment, that you are blind?" thundered Mr. Quelch, swishing the cane.

Bunter jumped back.

He was not a bright youth. But he could see that it was not much use keeping up the "stunt" any longer. Bunter's blindness was now a chicken that would not fight, so to speak.

"I—I say, sir!" he said feebly.

"Well?"

"I—I believe I can see now, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've recovered my sight, sir. I—I can see you quite plainly. Ain't—ain't it wonderful, sir?"

Mr. Quelch gazed at him. He was not so much surprised by the fat junior's humbug as by Bunter's absurd belief that such obvious humbug could impose upon anyone—especially Mr. Quelch!

"Bunter, if I did not believe that you were too stupid to realise the turpitude of your conduct, I should take you to the Head and request him to administer a severe flogging!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"I—I say, sir, d-d-don't do that! I—I shouldn't like to interrupt the

Head. He—he will be going to dinner now, sir——"

"I shall cane you myself!"

"Oh!"

"Severely!"

"Oh dear!"

"With the utmost severity, Bunter!"

"Wow!"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!" thundered the Remove master.

"Oh dear! I—I say, sir, I—I—I'm not blind now—really! I've had a wonderful recovery, and—and I—I don't think a chap ought to be caned, sir, for going blind and then making a wonderful recovery! It—it ain't just, sir!"

Mr. Quelch took Bunter by the collar. Then the cane rose and fell, with heavy swishes across the Owl's fat shoulders.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooo—ooo—ooooo!"

"Bunter's asked for it," gasped Bob Cherry, hearing the sounds from within as he stood with other Removites in the corridor, "and now he's got it! He really begged for it! And he's got it!"

"The gotfulness is terrific!"

"Now you may go, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "And if ever you should attempt to deceive me again——" Mr. Quelch did not finish. He left the rest to Bunter's imagination.

The Owl of the Remove limped out of the study. A yell of laughter greeted him as he blinked at the crowd of juniors there.

His next few hours were not happy ones. When he turned up in the Form-room that afternoon, however, he appeared to be able to see his way about quite well. The Remove heard nothing more of Blind Bunter.



By MONTY LOWTHER (*the humorist of the Shell Form*)

You can't beat the good old-fashioned Christmas—as Bernard Glyn, the inventor of St. Jim's, is compelled to realise when he runs an ultra-modern Xmas party!

WHEN Bernard Glyn asked us to a Christmas party just before breaking-up, we might have known that it was going to be no ordinary here-we-go-round-the-mulberry-bush affair.

To do him justice, our tame inventor did actually warn one or two fellows beforehand not to expect the usual Festive Season stuff.

He told Grundy, for instance, that it would not be a common or garden Christmas party. But Grundy, with his usual originality, took this to mean that the party would not be held on the common or in the garden and thought no more about it!

Whispers of a difference of opinion between Glyn and his sister over the party reached us as we drew near the

end of the term, but we didn't pay much heed to them. At the most, we thought, it would be on such a question as where to hang the mistletoe or how many mince-pies made five.

In actual fact, however, it concerned much more momentous matters than mince-pies or mistletoe.

We didn't know anything about that; and when we marched up to Glyn House in best bib and tucker on the great occasion, we fondly imagined we were going to the usual cheery orgy of mince-pies, jellies, dancing, postman's knock, cracker-pulling and gifts off the Christmas-tree.

You can take your Uncle Monty's word for it, we soon found out our mistake when we arrived!

The first thing that met our wide-eyed gaze as we walked up the drive of Glyn House was a neon sign over the door. It read :

**" WELCOME TO BERNARD
GLYN'S STREAMLINED PARTY ! "**

" Why ' streamlined ' ? " we asked ourselves.

" Oh, probably that's Glyn's way of



" Good-evening, friends ! " the Robot roared. " A merry Christmas ! Kindly hang your coats and hats on my hooks. "

telling us the party's an up-to-date effort with modern improvements, " we told ourselves, after a little reflection.

Then we put on our happiest grins and trotted up the steps to meet Glyn.

But we didn't meet Glyn. We met an outsize in Robots instead. As the door was opened—by invisible hands, incidentally—we saw this mechanical object standing in the hall. It gave us quite a jump to hear a rasping electrical voice from its innards bellowing at us.

" Good-evening, friends ! " the Robot roared. " A merry Christmas ! Kindly hang your coats and hats on my hooks ! "

" Great pip ! "

We did as we were told—staring at the Robot goggle-eyed as we did so ! The very moment the object was

loaded up on all hooks there was a whirring noise, and it simply streaked across the hall on a rail we had not noticed previously and finished up with a crash in a cloakroom. A few seconds later, it returned empty and pulled up with a click in front of the door, ready for the next arrivals !

" Well, that's that ! " Tom Merry said. Which just about summed up what we all felt !

In our blissful innocence, we imagined that that would be the end of Glyn's efforts at mechanising his Christmas party.

It was only the beginning !

When we reached the buffet and saw that it was called a " RUNNING Buffet, " we thought that that was merely a hint that it would be open throughout the party. But, believe it or not, they really meant " running " ! All the tuck was on a large circular table which revolved continually, leaving the guests to grab what they wanted as it passed them !

Quite a nifty wheeze, you'll think. We might have thought so, too, if the thing had worked properly. But the dashed thing went too fast. To get what you wanted, you had to chase it round at a dickens of a speed ; so, for the first part of the evening, the running buffet was full of fellows running after a fancied snack, like champs on a cinder-track !

And was it worth the effort when they got it ?

It grieves me to say it, old pals, but it really was not ! You see, Glyn had been studying science in diet and had decided that we should get the maximum amount of nourishment and satisfaction out of a choice selection of unflavoured vitamins. So he had spread out platefuls of caraway seeds and raw carrots and covered them with cardboard imitations of

Christmas puddings and mince-pies to make it look like the Festive Season!

Ye gods! You should have seen Fatty Wynn's face when he scooped up a Christmas pudding and found it was merely a brace of carrots in disguise! You should have heard Trimble's howl when he snatched up a plate of mince-pies and discovered that it was only a ration of caraway seeds in special Christmas clobber!

Glyn turned up at last. He was grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"Enjoying yourselves, boys and girls?" he chortled; and before we had time to open our mouths, he said: "That's great! What do you think of my little mechanical gadgets, eh? I knew you'd like 'em! But what you've seen so far is nothing compared with what you're going to see! Have a decko at the band, for instance!"

With these words, Glyn charged cheerfully into the ballroom, whence weird and wonderful sounds were wafting.

We tottered after him, and when we saw the origin of those musical strains we felt decidedly strained ourselves. Believe it or not, Glyn had achieved the masterpiece of a complete automatic orchestra!

There was a piano-player, drums controlled by a sort of central non-stop hammer, a violin played off a paper roll, and a saxophone and cornet worked by electric bellows. The whole thing was going full steam ahead under the direction of an overalled mechanic!

"On with the dance!" said Glyn gaily.

So, out of politeness to our host, we picked our partners and got going.

There was nothing wrong with our dancing. Most of us St. Jim's chaps could stagger through a fox-

trot at a pinch without disgracing ourselves, and Cousin Ethel and Barbara Redfern and their pals were experts.

It was the auto-orchestra that let us down. It's true that all the instruments played the same tune, but they happened to play it at varying speeds. If you want to know how that cramped our style, try dancing to half a dozen gramophone records all playing at the same time, and then you'll understand!

What a party! Did we enjoy ourselves?

WE DID NOT!

Mechanisation is all right in some things, but when it's applied to a Christmas party in all its branches, you reach the giddy limit.

We put up with an auto-butler and an auto-snack-bar, not to mention an auto-orchestra, an auto-balloon blower-and-supplier, an auto-dance announcer and a number of other minor autos. But when Glyn thought it shouldn't stop at that, we thought



For the first part of the evening the running huffst was full of fellows running after a fancied snack, like champs on the cinder-track.

it dashed well auto—pardon, ought to! The mechanical Santa Claus was what did the trick.

It came careering into the ballroom with gifts for Glyn's guests in its interior.

Theoretically, the gifts should have



Instead of handing our Christmas-gifts to us one at a time, the auto-Santa started rushing all over the place, shooting out presents like a machine-gun.

glided down a chute and stopped in the auto-Santa's palm one at a time till taken, but something went wrong with the works. Instead of standing still and doing its stuff in a leisurely manner, the dashed thing started rushing all over the place, shooting out presents like a machine-gun.

There were shrieks from the girls and yells from the fellows. I never saw anything like it, myself. Somebody remarked afterwards that it was a knock-out. He must have meant it in the plural. I saw half a dozen knocked out before Glyn stopped the auto-Santa's capers!

Then Glyn's guests threw their manners to the wind and told him what they thought of him and his streamlined Christmas party, and it looked as if a flop was in the offing, when Glyn's sister came to the rescue.

"Don't mind Bernard, please," she said. "He had to do it in his own way first. I told him it wouldn't work, but he just had to inflict it on you. Luckily, I made preparations for an old-fashioned party to start as soon as the streamlined one broke down. I think I'd better start it right now!"

That announcement was the best thing of the evening so far.

Everybody cheered. As for Glyn, he grinned a sheepish grin.

"I think you're the most out-of-date lot I ever saw!" he said. "But if you prefer the old-fashioned stuff, by all means have it! Like to help me clear away the automatic gadgets?"

"What-ho!"

And we all joined in with a will.

You will hardly be surprised when I tell you that Glyn's gadgets put up a stern resistance when we set about them.

Santa Claus came to life again, and we had a rare old struggle with him before we overcame him. Tom Merry worked the oracle in the end by smothering him with a plush curtain.

The auto-orchestra turned awkward, too. The big drum hit Manners in the bread-basket and the trombone gave Gussy a omer on his elegant chin. Then Grundy crept up from behind like a Redskin on the warpath and switched off. Eminent authorities state that this is the only rational action Grundy has ever been known to perform.

The running buffet was easier to stop. But it stopped too suddenly and most of the eatables on the table shot off at a tangent and found targets among the guests before finishing up on the floor.

Naturally, the Robot in the hall shied like the dickens. We managed to lasso him at last and dragged him back to his cloakroom in triumph.

Well, that put everything in the garden lovely, and in five minutes we were enjoying real Christmas fare and old-fashioned Christmas fun. It was all such a success that by the time we reached "Auld Lang Syne" we could afford to look back on the streamlined opening as quite a hit in its way.

All the same, I have an idea Glyn's next Christmas party will steer clear of streamlined effects!

THEY CALLED HIM A FUNK!



The white feather! It's not like Gussy to show cowardice—yet what other reason could he have for leaving his chums in the lurch in a snow-fight?

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD**

THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE MAN WHO RAN!

"**B**ACK up!" roared Tom Merry.
Whiz! Whiz! Squash!

The snowballs were flying.

It was quite a surprise.

Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther, of the Shell at St. Jim's, were walking down to the river, when it happened—suddenly. The Rhyl was frozen hard, and they were going to skate. But they forgot all about skating as a volley of snowballs came whizzing from among the frosty trees. The three School House juniors were caught napping.

"New House cads—ow!" gasped Manners, as a snowball caught him under the chin.

"That ass Figgins——" gurgled Lowther, sitting down suddenly with a snowball in each ear and another landing on his nose.

Skates were dropped and snow grabbed up. On either side of the path a dozen New House juniors showed up among the trees, whizzing snowballs hard and fast. Tom Merry and Co. had walked right into the ambush. Whiz! Squash! Smash! Squash!

"Back up—oooh!" gasped Tom Merry. Five or six squashy snowballs landed on him at once, and he stumbled and fell over Monty Lowther.

"Give 'em beans!" roared Figgins of the New House.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

Snowballs fairly rained on the School House trio. They scrambled up, and hurled back snowballs. But the odds were altogether too heavy. Figgins and Co. were in great force. There were more than a score of the New House, and they had piles of ammunition ready. George Figgins had planned that ambush with great astuteness. The School House three were surrounded, and fairly overwhelmed.

"Chase them back to their House!" yelled Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut, you School House ticks!" chortled Fatty Wynn. "We're coming after you!"

But Tom Merry and Co. did not cut. They stood in the path, targets for innumerable snowballs, and returned the fire as well as they could.

"Rescue, School House!" yelled Tom Merry, as several caps appeared in sight on the path in the direction of the school.

Four juniors came cutting up the path. Luckily they were School House men — Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove! What's up?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as his eyeglass gleamed at the startling scene under the wintry trees.

"House row, fathead!" hooted Blake. "Come on!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Come on, ass!"

Blake burst into a sprint. Herries and Dig rushed after him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stayed only to jam his eyeglass a little more firmly into his eye, and then cut after his friends.

Reinforcements were badly needed. The three Shell fellows looked almost like snowmen by this time, smothered from head to foot by squashing snowballs. Blake and Co., grabbing up

snow as they ran, rushed into the fray.

"Back up, School House!" gasped Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! Oh, cwikey!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, as a snowball squashed in his noble ear, and he tipped over.

Whiz! Squash! Smash! There were seven of the School House now; but the enemy were three to one, and they were hard pressed. Figgins and Co., chuckling gleefully, rained missiles on them, coming out from the trees into the path, and pelting from close quarters.

They were going to put the School House men to flight if they could, and chase them back to St. Jim's under showers of snowballs. But Tom Merry and Co. were not thinking of flight. They were fighting a losing battle, but they fought it gamely.

"Roll 'em home!" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgy and Kerr grabbed Tom Merry. Tom grabbed Figgy and Kerr, and the three rolled in the snow together. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy charged to the rescue, and Fatty Wynn put out a foot, and the swell of St. Jim's went headlong over it. He landed on his face, burying his nose in the snow and gurgling:

"Gwooooooh!" came in muffled accents from Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Roll 'em home!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Leggo!"

"Take that——"

"And you take that——"

"Ooogh!"

Snowballing ceased. It was hand-to-hand now! If the School House fellows could not be snowballed home, they were going to be rolled home!

But they were not easy to roll!

With such heavy odds against them, they ought really, like Iser in the poem, to have rolled rapidly! But they did not! They resisted with great energy, disputing every inch.

Two or three New House fellows grasped every School House man, excepting Arthur Augustus, who was half-buried in snow, and struggling for breath. Both sides trampled on him wildly in the struggle. Arthur Augustus gasped and gasped.

"Roll 'em home!" howled Figgins. "Here, lend me a hand with Tommy—Tommy's fractious!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you New House rotters!" gasped Tom Merry. "Leggo! I'll—oooh!"

Three or four pairs of hands grasped Tom, and he rolled at last. After him rolled Manners and Lowther, Blake, Herries and Digby. They

rolled slowly—but they rolled, still scrapping. The uproarious mob surged away down the snowy path towards the school.

Then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last succeeded in getting on his feet. He had been rather overlooked in the excitement, and was left behind. He leaned on a tree, gurgling for breath, and groping for his celebrated eyeglass, which fluttered at the end of its cord. Two or three New House fellows turned back for him.

Blake, dragging himself loose from the grasp of Kerr and Fatty Wynn, bounded to his feet. He jumped away, gasping, and hit out right and left as they grasped him again. Five or six of the enemy rushed at him.

"Gussy!" yelled Blake. "Back up, you fathead! Lend a hand, you dummy!"

"Collar Gussy, some of you!"



"Back up—ooch!" gasped Tom Merry. Squashy snowballs landed on the Terrible Three as they walked into the New House ambush, and Tom and Lowther collapsed in the snow. "Give 'em beans!" roared Figgins.

shouted Figgins, glancing up from the Herculean task of rolling Tom Merry.

What happened next was a surprise to all parties.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was expected, naturally, to rush back into the fray. Instead of which he rushed at top speed in the opposite direction.

School House and New House had a view of his back as he tore away up the path towards the river.

In a few seconds he vanished from sight, dodging out of the woodland path, and cutting along the tow-path up the Rhyl.

"Gussy!" shrieked Blake.

"D'Arcy!" howled Herries.

"Come back!" raved Digby.

But answer there came none! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was gone!

"Oh crumbs! What a funk!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Here, roll these bounders home before any more of them run away!"

Blake went over again, struggling. He punched right and left with great vigour; though, at that moment, he would rather have punched Gussy for letting his pals down than the New House enemy.

"Hang on to them!" chortled Figgins. "They'll bunk if they can! They're funky in the School House."

"I'll give you funk!" gasped Tom Merry; and he got one hand loose and landed it, clenched, in Figgy's eye.

"Oh! Ow!" roared Figgins, rolling over.

Tom struggled to his feet. But it booted not! He was rushed over again, and rolled. The heavy odds told; and six School House fellows, resisting vainly, went rolling through the snow, gathering it up as they rolled. Snow filled their hair and their ears, and slid down their necks and covered them as if with a garment.

Not till they came out into the road

did the New House release them; and then they gathered fresh snowballs and pelted the sprawling, gasping six. But in sight of the school gates fresh reinforcements arrived—Talbot of the Shell came up with a rush, followed by a dozen more School House men.

After which the battle raged loud and long—till Kildare of the Sixth came out at the gates with his ash-plant in his hand—at which it ceased suddenly, and the breathless rivals of St. Jim's scattered to their Houses.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

FUNK!

"FUNK!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started.

He was coming up the Fourth Form passage in the School House, heading for Study No. 6 for tea, when that unpleasant word reached his ears.

It was uttered by Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, grinning at him from the doorway of No. 2 Study.

Arthur Augustus stared at him, adjusted his eyeglass, and stared again, and then looked round him, as if seeking the person to whom Baggy alluded.

Five or six of the Fourth were in the passage, and they were all looking very curiously at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Mellish was grinning—Lumley-Lumley sneering—Bates shrugging his shoulders—Tompkins turning up his nose. Arthur Augustus was perplexed.

"Funk!" hooted Trimble.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Are you talkin' to yourself, Twimble?"

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Baggy.

"I mean, you are the only funk pwesent!" explained Arthur Augustus. "Mellish is wathah funkay, if

you don't mind my mentionin' it, Mellish—but you are a weal corkah in that line! But what are you callin' yourself a funk for, deah boy?"

"Why, you cheeky rotter!" gasped Trimble.

"Weally, Twimble——"

"Funk!" yapped Mellish.

"Weally, Mellish, you should not call Twimble such names, considewin' that you are vewy fah fwom bwave yourself!" said Arthur Augustus chidingly.

"You silly ass!" howled Mellish.

"I'm calling you a funk, see?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Me!" he ejaculated in astonishment.

"Yes, you! Who ran away from the New House bounders?" booted Mellish.

"Who bolted and left his pals in the lurch?" squealed Trimble.

"Funk!" squeaked Tompkins.

"Anybody got a white feather for Gussy?" called out Bates.

Arthur Augustus gazed at the Fourth-Formers, his noble face gradually assuming the hue of a newly-boiled beetroot.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "You cheeky wottahs——"

"Got your feet cold in this weather, D'Arcy?" inquired Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, my feet are wathah cold, deah boy—why?"

"I thought so!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you mean to imply that I am funkay, you wottah!" roared Arthur Augustus, suddenly catching on.

"I don't mean to imply it, old bean. I mean to say so out plain!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther appeared at the end of the passage, on their way to their study in the Shell.

They glanced down the passage at the Fourth-Formers; and all three frowned at the sight of Gussy. The latter turned his eyeglass on them.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy——" he called out.

"Well, what?" asked Tom gruffly.

"I am sowwy I had to leave you so suddenly when you were scwappin' with the New House boundahs. You see——"

"Oh, yes, I see!" granted Tom.

"We all see!" snapped Manners.

"You and I and all of us, the great, the short, the tall of us!" said Monty Lowther. "We all see—quite! I recommend fur-lined boots."

"Bai Jove! For what, Lowthah?"

"Cold feet!"

"I fail to undahstand this," said D'Arcy, his eye gleaming through his eyeglass. "Some of these sillay asses have started callin' me a funk——"

"What did you expect them to call you?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

The three Shell fellows passed on their way, Arthur Augustus staring blankly after them.

Then he turned his eyeglass on the grinning Fourth-Formers.

"You uttah asses!" he said. "If you think I wan away fwom the New House wottahs——"

"Well, sort of," said Lumley-Lumley. "All the fellows saw you do it, and everybody knows."

"I did not!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"You had pressing business in another direction, all of a sudden?" asked Reilly.

"Yaas, exactly."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funk!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little more firmly in his

noble eye, and surveyed the fellows in the passage with ineffable scorn. Then he turned his back on them and walked into Study No. 6. A hiss followed him as the door closed.

Three juniors in that study sat at tea—and all three looked round glumly and grimly at D'Arcy as he came in. Blake, Herries and Digby were suddenly silent as their chum entered. They had been, as a matter of fact, discussing Gussy's unexpected and surprising display of funk in the House row, and the disgrace he had thereby brought on that celebrated study.

They gave him grim looks, which he did not, at the moment, notice. How and why Gussy had developed funk, they could hardly guess—he had never, so far as they knew, shown the white feather before. But there was no doubt about it and it was a severe knock at the prestige of the study. Over in the New House the enemy were making a standing joke of it. Kerr was reported to have already composed a limerick on the subject. It was up against the House, as well as the study; and Blake and Co. gloomily expected never to hear the end of it.

"Oh, you've come back, have you?" grunted Blake.

"Yaas! I have been wathah delayed——"

"Waiting to see whether the New House cads had gone into their House?" asked Herries sarcastically.

"Eh! Why should I have waited for that, Hewwies?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

"They might have snowballed you!" said Herries, with intensifying sarcasm. "They might have punched you! You might have had to sprint again!"

"There's one thing," said Digby. "We can put up a man from this study for the school hundred yards, next time. D'Arcy will win it hands down."

"Bai Jove! Do you weally think so, Dig?" asked Arthur Augustus, flattered. "I weally think I am pwetty good at wunnin', myself."

"You are!" snorted Blake.

"Fearfully good!" said Herries.

"Your long suit," said Digby. "If you put up for the hundred yards, D'Arcy, you'll win! We'll stand there and call out that Figgins is coming! Then you'll cover the ground all right!"

The true meaning of all these remarks was rather slow in dawning on the aristocratic brain of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But it did dawn!

His face changed as it dawned. An expression came over it as grim as the expressions on the faces of his three comrades.

"Pway make your meanin' cleah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, very quietly. "Some cheeky asses in the passage have just been calling me a funk, appawently because I cut off while that House wow was goin' on. Am I to undahstand that you wepeat this offensive wot!"

"I don't know whether you understand it," snorted Blake. "I don't expect you to understand anything, with a brain like yours! Nobody expects you to have any sense! But a man in this study is expected to have a spot of pluck."

"Yes, rather," said Herries. "You can't help being a goat, D'Arcy—you were born one, and it's too late to worry about that! But you can help being a funk—at least, you ought to."

"What was there to be afraid of,

if you come to that?" demanded Digby. "You've never shown up like this before! Can't you face having your silly head punched, like any other fellow?"

"Nothing in it to get damaged if you got a punch or two!" said Blake. "Did you think Figgins might knock your silly head off your silly shoulders, or what?"

"A funk in this study!" said Herries with a deep breath. "We shall never hear the end of it! They're yelling over it in the New House."

"We'll give them something else to yell for, to-morrow!" said Blake savagely. "We'll jolly well show them that we're not all cowards."

Arthur Augustus stood very still, his eyeglass turning from one face to another. He did not speak.

"Why did you do it?" asked Blake helplessly. "You've been in House rows before—lots of times! Sudden panic, or what? But what about?

What the thump was there to frighten you?"

"Are you suggestin' that I was frightened, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, no!" said Blake, with fierce sarcasm. "I dare say it was pluck that made you run away! Just bursting pluck!"

"Are you accusin' me of wunnin' away, Blake?"

"Didn't I see you running?" yelled Blake. "Didn't I yell to you to help me, scrapping with those New House cads, and didn't you turn your back and bolt off to the tow-path?"

"Yaas!"

"Well, then, what did you do it for if you weren't scared out of your seven senses—if you've got seven, or any?" hooted Blake. "Can't you see that you've disgraced the study and the House?"

"Certainly not."



What happened next was a surprise to all the juniors. Instead of joining in the snow-fight and helping his chums, Arthur Augustus rushed off at top speed in the opposite direction!

"Do you think we're going to be proud of having a funk in the School House?" roared Herries.

"Pway do not wear at me, Hewwies! I have we remarked more than once that I dislike bein' woreed at!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy calmly. "I was goin' to tell you fellows why I cut off——"

"Think we don't know?" snorted Dig.

"Yaas, wathah! But I wefuse to uttah a word to any fellow who calls me a funk! I wequiah to know, plainly, whethah you fellows are wegardin' me as a funk or not," said Arthur Augustus in his most stately manner. "I wequiah a plain answah—yaas or no!"

"Look here, boot him!" said Herries. "Funks ought to be booted."

"Very well," said Arthur Augustus, setting his lips. "That teahs it. I am sowwy to have to bah you fellows, as we have been fwends, but fwendship, of course, is quite imposs. now. I am bound to we mark that I wegard you with feahful scorn. That is the vewy last we mark I shall make to you."

With that, Arthur Augustus turned to the door.

"Look here——" roared Blake.

"Wats!"

"You silly, howling ass——"

"I wefuse to heah anythin' furthah fwom you, Blake. Our acquaintance dwops fwom this moment! Pway do not address me again."

Arthur Augustus opened the door, passed out of Study No. 6, and shut the door after him with a bang. Blake, Herries and Digby were left exchanging exasperated stares. Arthur Augustus, with a set face, went down to hall to tea—having shaken the dust of Study No. 6 from his noble feet.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE WHITE FEATHER!

TOM MERRY rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

He was perplexed.

It was the morning following the House row, and the St. Jim's fellows were out in break. And Tom's eyes fixed on a solitary figure—pacing lofty and lonesome in the quad.

It was the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Seldom left on his own, the great Gussy was now deserted.

Blake, Herries and Dig came along and seemed about to speak to him. Wrathful and resentful as they were, it seemed that they were not disposed to turn their backs wholly on the fellow who had disgraced the study.

But D'Arcy had no such compunction.

He glanced at the three, turned on his heel and walked away, giving them a view of his elegant figure as seen from the south, as it were.

Whereat Blake, Herries and Dig breathed hard. And Tom Merry, looking on, was puzzled and perplexed.

Had Study No. 6 turned down Gussy, that was no more than any fellow might have expected after what had happened. But for Gussy to turn down Study No. 6 was, in the circumstances, rather remarkable.

"Look here, you men," said Tom to Manners and Lowther, who were also staring curiously. "Is there some mistake? We all thought yesterday——"

"Same as we think to-day!" said Lowther. "Don't be an ass, Tom. A fellow who scuds off in a scrap and leaves his pals in the lurch——"

"Beastly funk!" said Manners, with a nod.

"Well, yes," said Tom. "It did look pretty bad—even Trimble would

hardly have done it. But—I—I wonder— Look here, what has Gussy got his back up for if he knows—

"Cheeky ass!" suggested Lowther.

"He's coming this way," said Tom.

"I'm going to speak to him. I can't help thinking— Hallo, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus came to a halt. He screwed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed the Shell fellows with lofty, calm disdain.

"Did you speak to me, Tom Mewwy?" he inquired frigidly.

"Getting deaf?" asked Tom. "I did!"

"Then pway do nothin' of the kind! I have dwopped your acquaintance, and desiah to have nothin' whatevah to say to you."

"What did you bunk for yesterday?" hooted Tom. "You've made all the school think you a rotten, howling funk—"

"I have requested you not to address me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Even Trimble wouldn't have done what you did!" roared Tom. "Why, what are you grinning at, you ass?"

Arthur Augustus grinned. But in a moment his face was serious and scornful again.

"Did I gwin?" he asked. "Nevah mind! I wegard it as vewy pwob. that Twimble would not have acted as I did! I think you night—"

"You think I might?" exclaimed Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! I twust so."

"You trust so?" gasped Tom.

"Gone off your rocker? Have you ever seen me run away from a scrap, you cheeky ass?"

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy, if you've got anything to say about it—"

"Nothin' at all!"

"You run away, and kept out of sight—never turned up all the time

the scrap was on—never came in at all till a couple of hours afterwards!" exclaimed Tom Merry hotly. "Why didn't you?"

"How could I come in, you ass, when I had to dwy my clobbah?"

"Eh! Did you get wet?"

"Natuwally."

"Well, we all got a bit damp rolling in the snow! Mean to say you went off somewhere to dry your clothes?"

"I don't mean to say anythin'!" declared Arthur Augustus. "Only I wequest you to keep your weemarks to yourself! You are a fellow I no longah know, and I wefuse to speak to you."

"I've a jolly good mind—"

"Wubbish! If you had a jolly good mind, you would do some thinkin' with it, and then you would wealise what a sillay ass you are!" retorted Arthur Augustus.

And with that, the swell of St. Jim's turned once more on his heel, and walked off, with his noble nose in the air.

Baggy Trimble came cutting across the quad, and barged, apparently by accident, into D'Arcy as he walked away. He clutched at the back of Arthur Augustus' jacket for support, and hung on to him, gasping.

"Oh! Sorry!" gasped Baggy.

"Bai Jove! Pway do not hang on to me, Twimble—your paws are always vewy sticky!" said Arthur Augustus. "I weally disalike you to touch me, Twimble."

Trimble backed away, grinning.

"Yah! Funk!" he yapped. And he dodged round Tom Merry and Co. as Arthur Augustus' eyes gleamed at him.

With a set brow, the swell of St. Jim's walked on. A roar of laughter followed him.

He was happily unaware of what the fat and mischievous Baggy had done while he was hanging on. Arthur Augustus was wearing a cap that morning. Now, at the back of his cap, a feather was sticking up in the air, nodding as he moved.

It was a white feather! The artful Baggy had had that feather all ready, with a pin through the stem—and now it was pinned to the back of D'Arcy's cap—invisible to Gussy, but visible to every other fellow in the St. Jim's quad.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from all sides.

Arthur Augustus glanced round him. His very eyeglass gleamed with wrath and indignation.

Unaware of the feather in his cap, he was aware that the outburst of merriment was addressed to him. On all sides, laughing faces regarded him.

His face grew redder and redder.

"Look here, that's too bad!" muttered Blake.

"Well, he's asked for it!" grunted Herries.

"Yes, but——"

"Let's kick Trimble!" suggested Dig.

"Good egg!"

Baggy Trimble was chuckling with glee at the success of his trick. He ceased to chuckle as Blake and Co. bore down on him. They kicked him hard, and they kicked him often, and Baggy fled yelling.

"Hallo! White feather!" yelled Figgins, coming out of the New House.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth is he wearing that white feather for?" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, in wonder. "Does he want to show off that he's a funk?"

"Looks like it!" chuckled Kerr.

"Unless some joker's stuck it on him! Hallo, Gussy, feet warmer this morning?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus disdained to reply. He walked loftily away—but wherever he walked yells of laughter greeted him, surrounded him, and followed him.

His face was crimson, and his eyes gleaming. But his lofty pride upheld him. He was not going in till the bell rang for third school; nothing would have induced him to dodge the public view. Whether the other fellows were satisfied with him or not, Arthur Augustus was quite satisfied with himself; and he walked on his lofty way regardless.

Still, he was not enjoying himself, and he was glad when the bell rang. A procession gathered round him when he headed for the House, howls of laughter awaking the echoes of the quad.

With his head erect and his noble nose in the air, Gussy was the picture of lofty scorn. But there was no doubt that the white feather nodding over his head spoiled the effect. His unconsciousness of that adornment made the fellows shriek.

Kildare, of the Sixth, in the doorway of the House, stared at him blankly as he came up. It was the first time he had seen a junior parading the quad with a tall feather nodding over his head.

"You young ass!" exclaimed the St. Jim's captain. "What's the game?"

"Weally, Kildare——"

"What have you got that feather stuck in your cap for?" demanded Kildare.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"A—a—a feathah in my cap!" he gasped. "Are you dweamin'."

Kildare? I should not be likely to walk about with a feathah in my cap! What do you mean?"

Kildare stared at him—and laughed.

"Oh! A rag, I suppose!" he said. "You'd better take it out, you young ass!"

Arthur Augustus took off his cap. Then he jumped again, at the sight of the white feather pinned to it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A LONG LIST!

"COME in!" sang out Tom Merry as a tap came at his study door after tea.

"Oh! You!" he added, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared in the doorway.

"You needn't come in!" said Manners.

"Run away!" suggested Monty



"Funk!" exclaimed the Fourth-Formers. Arthur Augustus surveyed them with inselable scorn, and then turned his back on them and walked away. A hiss followed him.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell.

Arthur Augustus glanced round. His face, which had been crimson, became quite pale. He realised the significance of the white feather. He stood with it in his hand, looking at it for a moment or two. Every eye was fixed on him. Then, quietly, he tossed it away, and walked into the House. The crowd of juniors in the quad followed him in, still chuckling over the joke.

Lowther. "Your long suit, you know!"

"I have no intention of entahin' this study!" said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I have a few words to say to you fellows."

"The fewer the better!" remarked Manners. "Why any?"

Arthur Augustus disdained to reply to that question. He had a notebook in his left hand, and a little gold pencil in his right. Why he had brought those articles with him the chums of

the Shell could not guess. But they were soon enlightened.

"You wottahs have been callin' me a funk!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Guilty, my lord!" said Monty Lowther.

"I am goin' to thwash ewevy wottah who has called me a funk!" pursued Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, my hat!"

"To-morrow is Wednesday," said D'Arcy, in the same icy tones. "It is a half-holiday, and there will be plenty of time to thwash you all wound. I am makin' a list of the sneakin' boundahs I am goin' to thwash! Shall I put your name down, Tom Mewwy?"

"Not in a list of sneaking bounders," said Tom, laughing.

"Are you afwaid to put your hands up, Tom Mewwy, and answah for your wotten impertinence?"

"You ass——"

"I have been called a funk!" said Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling for a moment. "Some cad stuck a white feathah in my cap in bweak this mornin'. I am goin' to give ewevy one of the wottahs a feahful thwashin'. That is the only way to set the mattah wight. I am challengin' you wottahs to a fight."

"Not to a fight?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I wefuse to answah wibald we-marks, Lowthah! I am goin' to put down the name of ewevy fellow who has pluck enough to stand by what he has said, and to put in the word 'funk' for ewevy fellow who wefuses to do so. Shall I wite you down as a funk, Tom Mewwy?"

"You howling ass!" roared Tom. "You couldn't fight one side of me! And if you're so keen on scrapping, why didn't you scrap with the New

House cads on Monday, instead of running away?"

"I am waitin' for your answah, Tom Mewwy!"

"Rats!" said Tom.

"Vewy well, I will wite you down a funk!" said D'Arcy. And in full view of the captain of the Shell, he wrote down in the notebook, "Tom Merry, funk." "Now, are you afwaid too, Lowthah?"

"You cheeky ass!"

"Am I to wite you down a funk, like Tom Mewwy?" asked D'Arcy calmly.

"No, fear!" said Monty. "Put my name down, and I'll turn up and watch you run."

"Vewy good! What about you, Mannahs?"

"Oh, put me down!" grinned Manners. "Are you going to run away from Monty before you run away from me, or run away from me before you run away from Monty?"

"I disdain to weply to that, Mannahs! You are suah you pwefer to be labelled a funk, Tom Mewwy? I have nevah wegarded you as a funk before; but we live and learn!"

"You burbling fathead!" said Tom. "Are you going to fight three fellows in one afternoon?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ass!"

"I am puttin' you fellows first in the list, that is all; there are more to come——"

Tom Merry gasped.

"Oh, put me down, then!" he said. "Don't leave me out of the running!"

"Gussy will do the running!" said Monty Lowther. "Still, we'll run after him! Don't forget your running shoes, D'Arcy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's thwee!" said Arthur

Augustus. "Pway turn up in the Wivah Meadow not latah than half-past two to-morrow aftahnoon, deah boys—I mean, you cads! This scwap will have to take place outside the school, or we shall have the pwefects buttin' in. It will be on wathah a large scale!"

"We'll be there!" said Tom, laughing. "I don't think you will, though."

"I wegard that wemark with contempt, Tom Mewwy."

And Arthur Augustus closed his notebook with a snap, walked out of the study, and banged the door. The Shell fellows looked at one another—Manners and Lowther grinning, Tom Merry perplexed.

"Blessed if I make this out!" said Tom. "Look here, we weren't dreaming yesterday—Gussy did run away, didn't he?"

"Just a few!"

"Well, then, what does he mean?" said Tom. "I—I suppose there can't be any mistake! He cut off towards the river—he was nearer the river than we were—might something have been going on that he saw, and we didn't see?"

"Well, what?"

"Well, somebody might have fallen over, or something, skating——"

"And Gussy rushed off to help him, leaving us to be mopped up by the New House!" said Lowther sarcastically. "Don't be an ass, Tom!"

"Well, I suppose it's rather thin," said Tom. "But—I can't make the chap out! If I showed the white feather, which I hope I never shall do, I should want to get into a hole and pull it in after me—not walk about with my nose stuck up in the air, as if I'd done something to be proud of! If Gussy's funky, what's the big idea of challenging fellows to scrap?"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"Gammon!" he said. "All right till the time comes—then we shan't see his heels for dust!"

"I'm not going to punch him!" said Tom.

"That's all right; he won't wait to be punched."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, meanwhile, arrived at Study No. 6 in the Fourth. He'd had tea in the hall; Blake and Co. in the study. They eyed him rather uncertainly as he presented himself.

"I am makin' up a list of wotten cads," said Arthur Augustus. "Shall I put your names down?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I am goin' to thwash you all wound for callin' me a funk!" explained D'Arcy. "Pway do not suppose that I have come here to speak to you as a fwiend. I am speakin' to you, not as a fwiend, but as a fellow who weguards you with fwightful scorn!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I have thwee names on my list so fah—Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah. You thwee come next, if you are not afwaid to put your hands up."

"Afraid?" bawled Herries.

"Yaas!"

"You burbling idiot——"

"I have wequested you before, Hewwies, not to wear at me. Am I to put your names down as fellows who are goin' to fight me to-morrow, or as funks?"

They gazed at him.

"If you are not suffewin' fwom cold feet," said Arthur Augustus sarcastically.

"Oh, put us down!" gasped Blake. "There will be a lot of you left for us when Tom Merry's done with you—I don't think."

Arthur Augustus wrote three names down on his list, and quitted No. 6—leaving Blake and Co. staring at one another.

He left the School House, and walked across to the New House. Figgins and Co., who were adorning the doorway of that building, grinned at him as he came.

"Where's your feather, Gussy?" called out Fatty Wynn.

"I have come ovah here to challenge you fellows—" began D'Arcy.

"Running match?" asked Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothin' of the kind, you cheekay wottah! I am makin' up a list of wotten wascals, and I am goin' to put your names down—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Unless you are afwaid! You New House cads haven't much pluck, I feah. Howevah, I am givin' you a chance! Will you turn up in the Wiyah Meadow to-morrow aftahnoon, and have the gloves on?"

"The three of us?" yelled Figgins.

"Yaas! I am goin' to thwash the three of you, aftah I have thwashed Tom Mewwy, Mannahs and Lowthah and Blake, Hewwies and Digby," explained Arthur Augustus. "There are some othahs to come aftah you."

"You—you—you're going to thrash us three after you've thrashed six other chaps?" gasped Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, my hat! We'll come!" gurgled Figgins.

"Vewy well, I will put you on the list! I am vewy glad to see that you have pluck enough to put up your hands, and answah for your wascally impertinence!"

"Is this a joke, or what?" asked Kerr.

"You will not find it a joke, Kerr, when I get goin'. I am goin' to give you somethin' like what my ancestahs gave yours at the Battle of Bannockburn."

"Just about!" chortled Kerr, whose knowledge of history was a little more accurate than Gussy's.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus elevated his noble nose and walked off. The New House trio, watching him go, saw him stop Lumley-Lumley, and then Bates, and then Reilly, and then Kerruish, and then Gore of the Shell. Each time he wrote a name down in his notebook.

Returning into the School House, Arthur Augustus met Talbot of the Shell in the doorway. He stopped, with a stern brow.

"Talbot, deah boy—or—or you beastly wottah—" he began.

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Talbot.

"I mean to say, deah boy, if you do not wegard me as a funk. You are a beastly wottah if you do!" explained Arthur Augustus. "You have made no wemarks on the subject so fah. Do you wegard me as a funk, Talbot?"

"Not at all, old bean."

"You are suah?"

"Absolutely, definitely, and with knobs on!" said Talbot, with great gravity.

"Vewy well! Then I will not put you on my list, deah boy! I have fourteen fellows down already—to thwash to-morrow aftahnoon—"

"Eh!" gasped Talbot. "What? You—you're going to thrash fourteen fellows in one day!"

"I twust so, Talbot! I am vewy glad not to have to put you down as numbah fifteen! I weally dislike the idea of knockin' you about, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus passed on, leaving

Talbot blinking. In the junior room, he found Baggy Trimble.

"Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I am makin' up a list of wascally wottahs that I am goin' to thwash to-morrow, and your name is goin' on the list."

"Oh, draw it mild, you know!" said Baggy anxiously. "I—I say

"You need say nothin', Twimble! I insist upon thwashin' you, and you are goin' down as numbah fifteen."

"Number fifteen!" gasped Baggy.

"Yaas; you will have to take your turn, you know," explained Arthur Augustus. "I shall thwash you after I have thwashed Tom Mewwy, Man-nahs and Lowthah and Blake, Hewwies and Digby and Figgins, Kerr and Wynn and Weilly, Bates, Kewwuish, Lumley-Lumley and Gore

"He, he, he!" gurgled Trimble.

"What are you laughin' at, Twimble?"

"He, he, he!" chortled the fat Baggy. "Put me down! He, he, he!" Even the fat Baggy was not alarmed at the prospect of being tackled after Arthur Augustus had worked through that formidable list.

Baggy's name went down.

With fifteen fellows on his warlike list, Arthur Augustus put his notebook away. There were other offenders, it was true; but he considered that, in the circumstances, they could wait. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy feared no foe, and his confidence in his fistical powers was unlimited. He saw himself like Cæsar of old, coming, and seeing, and conquering. Still, he felt that fifteen scraps in one afternoon would be enough. It was quite within the bounds of possibility that they would be too much!



"You wottahs have been callin' me a funk!" said Arthur Augustus. "Guilty, my lord!" said Monty Lowther. "I am goin' to thwash every wottah who has called me a funk," pursued D'Arcy, "and I am makin' a list of their names."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

THRASHING TOM MERRY!

"ARE you weady?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"I asked you if you were weady, Tom Mewwy."

"And I told you not to be an ass!" answered Tom.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out of the House on Wednesday afternoon with a little bag in his hand. That bag contained boxing gloves, a sponge, and a towel, ready for the fray.

He found Tom Merry and Co. in the quad, talking football, and apparently forgetful of their warlike engagement for that afternoon.

Exactly what Arthur Augustus meant by this extraordinary stunt the St. Jim's juniors really did not know.

No doubt a fellow accused of "funk" could set himself right by thrashing all his detractors, one after another; there could not, indeed, be a clearer way of proving the matter.

But that a fellow, who only a couple of days ago had run away from the enemy, intended anything of the kind, was not easy to believe.

Moreover, at least half a dozen of the fellows on Gussy's list were quite capable of knocking Gussy into a cocked hat in a couple of rounds. This, it was true, was quite unknown to Gussy, but it was known to everyone else. Few juniors in the School House could stand up to Tom Merry; and, in the New House, Figgins reigned supreme in the fistical line. Either of them could have made rings round Gussy; so it was really hard to believe that Arthur Augustus was seriously undertaking to thrash both of them, and a dozen more fellows to follow.

But Arthur Augustus' noble countenance expressed deep and deadly

determination. His eye, and his eyeglass, gleamed scorn at the captain of the Shell.

"Cold feet?" he asked, with a curl of the lip.

"Fathead!"

"You have accepted my challenge, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ass!"

"If you are afraid to turn up——"

"Idiot!"

"I shall pull your nose, here in the quad——"

"Oh, my hat! Look here, you blithering chump," said Tom, "if I take the trouble to walk as far as the River Meadow—it's half-way to the mill, you ass—I shall jolly well whop you when you get there. See?"

"I do not think you will last vewy long, Tom Mewwy, when I get goin'," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"If you are not suffewin' fwom funk, come along."

"Blitherer!" said Tom. "Come on, you fellows! I want you to keep an eye on D'Arcy, and don't let him cut."

"We'll watch him!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"What-ho!" agreed Manners.

"Ewewy fellow who fails to turn up will be bwanded as a wotten funk!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is possible that I may not be able to thwash the lot of you—I do not mean that it is pwobable, but it is possible—and in that case I shall thwash as many as I can, and begin again on the west on Saturday."

"Little man, you're going to have a busy day!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"

"Look here, you ass——" bawled Blake.

"I wefuse to look there, Blake!"

I am waitin' for you to start—if you are not gettin' panicky——"

"Oh, crikey! Come on, you men!" gasped Blake. "We'll jolly well all stand round and see that he doesn't bolt!"

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Baggy Trimble.

Figgins and Co., grinning, joined the School House crowd as they started for the gates. Not only the fifteen challenged victims, but twice as many other fellows, followed Arthur Augustus out. Quite an army of fellows were interested. A crowd of both Houses marched down the road after Arthur Augustus, grinning as they went.

Gussy marched on ahead, his nose in the air. For the moment, clearly, he was not afflicted by "funk." But everyone expected a different tale to be told when they reached the scene of combat. Then, it was generally expected, Gussy's courage would ooze out at his finger-ends, and he would put up a show similar to his performance on Monday.

And then, it was agreed all round, he was not going to be allowed to get away with it! Having asked for it, he was going to get that for which he had asked.

Still, it was certain that the swell of St. Jim's was displaying absolutely no sign of uneasiness so far.

He turned off the road into the woodland path that led to the river, and the grinning army marched after him.

He marched along the tow-path to the meadow selected for the scene of this tremendous fray. It was quite a suitable spot for proceedings that did not require interference from masters or prefects. It was half-way between St. Jim's and the old mill. On one side was the frozen river; on

the other, wintry woods shutting off the view. The mill loomed over the trees in the distance. Except for an occasional passer-by on the tow-path, nobody was likely to come along.

"Here we are," said Arthur Augustus. He set down his bag and opened it, and drew the boxing-gloves therefrom.

More than forty pairs of eyes were fixed on him. Calmly, the swell of St. Jim's took off his jacket, pushed up his cuffs, and donned the gloves.

His eyeglass dropped to the end of its cord.

"You first, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus.

Tom looked at him. So did every other fellow. If Arthur Augustus fancied that he could scrap with Tom Merry, it showed, certainly, that he was an ass! But it showed that he was anything but a funk. Really, it was getting perplexing. This was the fellow who had raced away from the House row, and left his comrades in the lurch. A whole crowd round him were ready to stop any attempt at bolting now. But it really seemed that nothing was farther from Gussy's thoughts.

"Weady?" asked Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Look here, you ass!" said Tom uneasily.

"I have not come here to talk, Tom Mewwy! It is wathah too cold to stand wound talkin'. I have come here to thwash you! If you are funky——"

"Oh, I'll push your silly face through the back of your silly head, if you like," said Tom resignedly.

"Lowthah, you may as well be gettin' weady—you come next aftah Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Help!" gasped Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall not allow you to back out of it, Lowthah! You may as well get weady, too, Mannahs—you come next aftah Lowthah!"

"Why not take the three of us at once and save time?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"I am not suah that I could handle the thwee of you togethah, Lowthah! Two, pewwaps——"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody had bettah keep time," said Arthur Augustus. "I wealdy do not mind, but Tom Mewwy will need a west——"

"Thanks!" said Tom, putting on the gloves. "You keep time, Talbot, as you're not on the list for slaughter. Have you gone barmy, Gussy?"

"Certainly not, you cheekay ass!"

"Then what do you mean by standing up to a scrap to-day, when you ran away from one on Monday?"

"Wats!"

"Oh, he was running away from us, you know!" remarked Figgins. "Even a funk would hardly run away from School House ticks."

"Why, you cheeky New House fathead——"

"You silly School House ass——"

"I'll jolly well——"

"And I'll jolly well——"

"Pway do not start anothah House wow now!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I am waitin' for you, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh, all right! Where will you have it?" asked Tom.

"Time!" called Talbot.

"Well, this beats the band!" said Blake, as Arthur Augustus stepped up briskly at the call of "time." "Look at him! He can't scrap with Tom Merry's little finger, and everybody knows it but Gussy—but look at him! That's the same chap who

bolted on Monday and left us in the lurch. Anybody understand it?"

"I give it up," said Digby.

"If he bolts now, I'll jolly soon stop him!" growled Herries.

"Does he look like it, fathead?"

"Well, no, but he did——"

"Go it, Gussy!" sang out Blake.

Arthur Augustus was going it. He was going it hot and strong. He really had not even a sporting chance against Tom Merry, who was older, bigger, stronger, and a better boxer. But Gussy, like Gallio of old, cared for none of these things! Regardless of the fact that he was outclassed; indeed happily unconscious of it, he attacked hotly, hitting out right and left.

"Ow!" gasped Tom as a fist came home on his nose. "Wow!" he added as the other landed on his chin.

Then Tom piled in. What happened next, Gussy hardly knew. He found himself sitting in damp grass, gasping.

"Oh cwumbs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Man down!" grinned Figgins.

"Call it a day, what?" asked Tom Merry.

"Certainly not!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have not thwashed you yet."

"Oh, my hat!"

The swell of St. Jim's scrambled up. His aristocratic countenance was red with wrath and excitement. But there was, as all eyes could see, no sign of funk! Not a spot of it! He rushed on.

For a long minute there was wild slogging. Tom Merry blinked and blinked again, as a couple of knocks came home.

Then Arthur Augustus, again to his surprise, found himself sitting in the grass once more, without quite knowing how he had got there.



Tom Merry piled in, and what happened next Arthur Augustus hardly knew. He found himself sitting in damp grass, gasping. "Oh cwumbs!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Call it a day, what?" asked Tom Merry.

"Time!" called Talbot.

Arthur Augustus had a much-needed rest. He spent it in gasping for breath. His noble face was very serious now. Perhaps it was dawning on his powerful intellect that his waiting list would have to wait a considerable time before he finished thrashing Tom Merry!

"Time!"

Arthur Augustus rushed in. He got in a good one, and Tom Merry rallied and hit.

Bump!

"Oh cwikey!"

Arthur Augustus sat down on Sussex, with a bump that almost made Sussex shake. He sat and gasped. Talbot counted ten, and might have counted twenty or thirty; Gussy was still sitting and gasping.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

JUST LIKE GUSSY!

A MAN in a white coat came down the tow-path from the direction of the mill, and stopped at the edge of the meadow, to look on at the interesting scene there. He seemed specially interested in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. None of the St. Jim's crowd noticed the miller for the moment; all eyes were fixed on Arthur Augustus.

He tottered up at last.

He dabbed his noble nose, from which a thin stream of red oozed over his boxing-glove.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus breathlessly. "Oh cwumbs! I mean, I am weady, Tom Mewwy! Come on, you wottah!"

Tom Merry laughed, peeled off the gloves, and threw them aside.

"Call it a day, fathead!" he said.
"I wefuse to do anythin' of the kind!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have not thwashed you yet, Tom Mewwy! I came here to thwash you."

"Oh, my hat!"
"You're counted out, old man!" said Talbot.

"I wefuse to be counted out!" roared Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "I am goin' to finish thwashin' Tom Mewwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Fight's over!" said Tom, laughing. "Keep off, Gussy—or I shall run away, same as you did on Monday!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"If you wefuse to go on with the swap, Tom Mewwy——"

"I do—I does!"
"Vewy well," gasped Arthur Augustus. "Lowthah is next on the list! Are you weady, Lowthah?"

"You silly ass!" roared Lowther. "Tom hasn't left enough of you for me to wallop!"

"Wats! If Tom Mewwy has had enough, I am willin' to let him off."

"Oh crumbs!"
"And I am goin' to thwash you next——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"What a ferocious funk!" chortled Blake. "Look here, Gussy, where do I come in?"

"You come aftah Mannahs, Blake, who comes aftah Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"And poor little me?" gurgled Figgins.

"You will take your turn, Figgins! I am waitin' for you, Lowthah! Will you put those gloves on or not?"

"Oh, all right!" sighed Lowther.
He put the gloves on. Talbot called time. Arthur Augustus, breathless and

a little dizzy, but game, rushed to the attack. It was a terrific rush, and Gussy landed out with both fists as he rushed.

Monty Lowther nimbly side-stepped and the swell of St. Jim's rushed past him. But his hefty blows were not wasted. The miller had stepped into the meadow, coming towards the spot, and had nearly reached it, when Arthur Augustus rushed past Lowther as he landed out.

Bang! Bang! The miller got one on his nose and one in his neck.

"Ow!" roared the miller.
"Wow!"

He went over backwards.
"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the St. Jim's crowd, almost in hysterics as the miller sat down, roaring, and Arthur Augustus blinked at him blankly.

"Oh cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Awfly sowwy, Mr. Milsom—I didn't see you behind that wottah—oh cwumbs!"

"Oh!" roared Mr. Milsom. "Ow! My nose! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I am weally feahfully sowwy—I assuah you that I did not see you——" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Lowthah, you wottah, what do you mean by dodgin' away, and makin' me punch Mr. Milsom? I wegard it as a wotten twick!"

"Oh, help!" moaned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Three or four fellows rushed to help the plump miller of Rylcombe to his feet. Mr. Milsom stood gasping for breath and rubbing his nose.

"Pway accept my apology, Mr. Milsom!" gasped Arthur Augustus.
"Weally and twuly I did not intend—I weally hope you are not offended."

"All right, sir!" gasped the miller.
"Accidents will happen! Ow, my

nose! I wish you hadn't hit quite so 'ard, but it's all right! I shouldn't be likely to be offended with you, sir, after what you did on Monday! Ow!"

"I twust the little boy is all wight, Mr. Milsom?"

"Quite all right, sir, thanks to you—only a bit of a cold!" said the miller. "I'm sorry to see you fighting like this, Master D'Arcy. I've seen you with most of these young gentlemen, and thought you were all friends."

"Yaas, but——"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's that about Monday?"

"Ain't Master D'Arcy told you about getting my boy out from under the ice?" asked the miller.

"On Monday afternoon?" shrieked Tom.

"Yes. You see——"

"Gussy, you born idiot!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Tell us about it, Mr. Milsom!" exclaimed Tom.

"The kid had gone sliding," explained Mr. Milsom. "The ice cracked and let him through. I saw him from the mill—but you know the distance—it was near your school—and you can fancy what I felt—seeing him go through, and me too far off to help him. And then I saw Master D'Arcy rush out of the wood and go in for him——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Gussy, you potty old ass——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"I tell you, I ran as I've never run before," said Mr. Milsom. "But they were both in the water, and Master D'Arcy was holding him up, and couldn't get out—holding on to the edge of the ice—both of them near frozen——"



Money Lowther nimbly stepped aside as Arthur Augustus rushed at him, landing out with both fists. But Gussy's hefty blows were not wasted. The miller arrived just in time to get one on his nose and the other in his neck!

"And as playing the goat with snowballs all the time!" gasped Figgins. "If we'd known——"

"I got them out, and hurried them to the mill, to get them warm and dry," said Mr. Milsom. "If I'd been a few minutes later, both of them would have been gone! And Master D'Arcy ain't told you."

"Not a word, the fathead——"

"Well, he's a plucky lad, he is," said the miller, "and you young gentlemen ought to be proud of him instead of fighting with him." He rubbed his nose.

"I twist your nose is not much hurt, Mr. Milsom?"

"That's all right, Master D'Arcy!" said the miller. "But this here fighting——"

"There's not going to be any more, Mr. Milsom!" said Tom Merry.

"Glad to hear that, Master Merry!" And the miller touched his hat, and went on his way down the tow-path.

"You born dummy, Gussy!" roared Blake. "Why didn't you tell us? Did you expect us to guess?"

"So that was why you rushed off?" roared Figgins.

"I could scarcely leave a small boy to dwown. I saw him thwough the twees, and there was no time to lose, though I was, of course, sowwy not to stop and thwash you New House wottahs——"

"Why didn't you tell us?" bawled Blake.

"I came up to the study to tell you, and you called me a funk, and aftah that, of course, I disdained to explain! It was a mattah of dignity. A fellow has to comidnah his dig."

"I've a jolly good mind to wallop you, you blithering ass!" hissed Blake. "Letting the whole school think there was a funk in Study No. 6 when——"

"You are goin' to take your turn, Blake! I have not thwashed Lowthah and Mannahs yet——"

"You—you—you burbling cuckoo!" gasped Lowther. "Do you think anybody is going to scrap with you now we know?"

"Yaas, wathah! You have called me a funk——"

"You ought to have told us——"

"Well, we never really gave him a chance!" said Tom Merry. "Of course, we never knew——never dreamed——though I did think there must be some mistake—— But we might have known old Gussy better! He's never been a funk, though he's always been a silly ass——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Shoulder high!" said Tom. "Up with him!"

"Hurray!"

Arthur Augustus' gloves were jerked off, and his jacket jammed on. Then he was swept off his feet to the shoulders of Tom Merry and Figgins. He groped for his eyeglass, jammed it in his eye, and blinked at the cheering crowd.

"Bai Jove! Does this mean that you fellows take it back?" he gasped.

"Yes, ass!" hooted Blake.

"Oh, all wight! In that case, I shall westore you to my fwienndship," said Arthur Augustus graciously; "and I am sowwy that I thwashed you, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tom Merry.

"March him home, you fellows——triumphal march for the giddy hero!"

"Good old Gussy! March!" "See the conquering hero comes!" chanted Blake.

"Hurray!"

And all was calm and bright!

THE END

THE CHEAT!



By OWEN CONQUEST

It is all UP with Lovell at Rookwood unless he passes the English history exam.—and it's his weakest subject! But on the eve of the exam, the questions fall into his hands

THE FIRST CHAPTER

HISTORY UNDER DIFFICULTIES!

"**T**HOMAS À BECKET—born in eleven-eighteen—"

"One pair of tennis shoes!"

"Made Archbishop of Canterbury, eleven-sixty-two—"

"One pullover!"

"Assassinated in eleven-seventy—"

"One swimming costume. Two sports shirts. Now lemme see—"

"Fathead!"

"Eh?"

"Fathead!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell, glaring across the table in the end study at Rookwood. "Idiot! Chump! Shut up about your silly holiday kit, can't you?"

"Shut up about your silly English history, if it comes to that!" retorted Jimmy Silver warmly. "I've got a

jolly important problem to consider—holiday kit!"

"Same here!" chimed in Newcome.

"You're interrupting, Lovell!"

"Hear, hear! Who wants to hear a lot of potty dates when there's an important thing like holiday kit to settle?" asked Raby argumentatively.

"Give it a rest, old bean!"

Lovell eyed the three other members of the Fistical Four with a wrathful eye.

"Think I'm doing it for pleasure?" he hooted. "If you do, you're wrong. It's English history exam, to-morrow."

"Same goes for the rest of us," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Why worry?"

"For a jolly good reason!" snorted Lovell. "I haven't said anything about this before, but the fact is, I've simply got to pass in history to-morrow. If I don't—then I'm afraid it's all UP with me at Rookwood!"

Lovell's studymates jumped.

"All UP? What's the idea?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Are you trying to tell us that if you don't get a pass in English history you're going to be taken away from the school?"

"Just that!"

There was a roar from Newcome and Raby.

"Don't be an ass, Lovell!"

"Draw it mild, old sport!" protested Newcome. "Your pater's not such a fathead as to yank you away from Rookwood on account of one measly history paper?"

"Well, no—not in a way," said Lovell cautiously. "Pater's not so potty as that. And yet that's what it really boils down to to-night. What he said was that he'd shift me to another school if I didn't get two passes out of the six subjects in the annual exams."

"Oh!"

"That's different!"

"The worst of it is that it's not so different now—in fact, it's just the same thing!" said Lovell ruefully. "We've taken five out of the six subjects now, as you know. And I'm practically certain that the only one I've passed in is maths."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"So what it amounts to is that if I fail in that history paper to-morrow, I leave Rookwood!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Lovell's three studymates regarded him in dismay.

"Well, of all the asses!" said Jimmy Silver in measured tones. "The first we've heard of it, too! Why didn't you tell us when you first heard about it?"

Lovell shrugged.

"I didn't think there was any danger of my not passing in two subjects out of six—and I didn't want to worry you fellows without reason."

"You're an ass!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "Now if you'd come to your Uncle James right away——"

"You'd have given me extra toot, I suppose, and kept me grinding away at Latin prose and French irregular verbs?" remarked Lovell, with a somewhat sarcastic grin. "Don't be funny, James! The fact is, my idea was best—to keep it quiet and mug up the exam subjects on my own."

"All right if you'd carried it out; but you haven't!" grunted the leader of the Fistical Four. "Now you're up against it—and it's all your own silly fault! English history is your weakest subject, you prize idiot!"

Arthur Edward nodded gloomily.

"Exactly. That's just why I'm worried."

"Still, never say 'die'!" said Jimmy Silver briskly. "It's late to start swotting now——"

"My hat! Just a little!" grinned Raby.

"But you've got from now till bedtime—about an hour. I tell you what, Lovell. We'll get out our text-books and fire questions at you, and—ow!"

The leader of the Fistical Four broke off, his hand clapped to his face. A small object that had just flown through the window dropped from Jimmy Silver's face to the floor of the study.

Lovell and Newcome and Raby looked at that small object and then looked at their leader. And there was a murmur of wrath from them as they saw that it had left an inky smudge behind it on his cheek.

"Ink-pellet!" said Newcome.

"Somebody getting fresh with a catapult!" said Raby.

"Modern cads!" said Jimmy Silver.

There was a rush to the window. The Fistical Four saw at once that

Jimmy Silver was correct. In the quadrangle below, red in the light of the setting sun, stood Tommy Cook, Tommy Dodd, and Tommy Doyle—the three Tommies of the Modern House. They were armed with catapults, and they waved cheerily to the Classics.

"Thought we'd have a little target-practice before term ends," explained Tommy Dodd. "I was aiming at your nose, Silver, but I see I've hit your face instead. Mind if the others have a go? Your turn, Cooky!"

Four heads bobbed down suddenly as Tommy Cook took aim with his catapult.

Inside the end study the Fistical Four crouched down below the level of the window in a state of seething indignation.

"Of all the nerve!" said Jimmy Silver. "Not safe in our own blessed study now. What next?"

"Are we going to stand for this?" asked Newcome.

"What silly ass said an Englishman's home was his castle?" demanded Raby. "It's coming to something when we have to kneel down in our own room because three cheeky Modern cads feel like using us as targets for their catapults!"

Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

"They're going a bit too far—no mistake about that!" he said. "What we ought to do is to go down and mop up the quadrangle with them. But there's Lovell."

"H'm! Exactly!"

Arthur Edward frowned.



"We'll get out our text-books and fix quotations at you—ow!" Jimmy Silver broke off with a yell as an ink-pellet came through the window and struck him on the cheek. "Somebody getting fresh with a catapult!" exclaimed Raby.

"Don't mind me. Leave the history bizney till afterwards. You go down and pitch into them. I'll stay here and get on with my swotting—that is, if you don't mind?"

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

"But your history, old bean! We said we'd give you a hand——"

"Blow the history!" said Lovell.

"I'll get on with it on my own. You chaps buzz!"

"Well, if you really don't mind——"

"Buzz!" roared Lovell.

He grabbed his text-book and dived into the study armchair, which was in the corner out of range of the Modern sharpshooters.

Jimmy Silver, Newcome and Raby looked at each other. Then, with one accord, they crawled to the door. Lovell evidently meant what he said, and, in spite of their anxiety to help him in the exam., they were prepared, in the circumstances, to take him at his word.

The trio from the end study buzzed.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

LOVELL'S FIND

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL should have found it easier to concentrate on English history now that his noisy colleagues were out of the way.

But, in spite of the quietude that descended on the end study after the departure of the others, Lovell found that he could not get down to it. It seemed even more difficult than before to keep his attention on the England of olden times. His thoughts were far more concerned with the England of modern times and, in particular, that very small portion of England known as the quadrangle at Rookwood, into which Lovell's chums were now descending, bent on teaching the three Tommies what was what and who was who.

Lovell put down his text-book and listened.

He heard sounds of wordy warfare from below the end study, followed by the din of a regular battle.

Lovell went to the window and looked out. His chums were driving back the Modern raiders into their own territory.

And then, as he leaned out of the window, he saw that reinforcements were arriving for the three Tommies. Towle, Lacy and Wadsley happened to be taking a constitutional before bed-time; and, judging by the way they were hurrying towards the scene of battle, they had every intention of chipping in and turning the tables on the Classics.

"Oh, scissors!" murmured Arthur Edward.

His text-book on English history dropped to the floor. Exam. or no exam., Arthur Edward Lovell could not stand there and watch his pals vanquished by the Modern crowd.

Lovell fairly bounded out of the end study. He went down the stairs at quite a hair-raising speed and rushed out into the quad. The battle had moved away almost to the school wall by this time. Lovell made for the school wall at top speed.

"Up, the Classics!"

His war-cry rang out lustily. English history quite forgotten, he plunged into the fray.

But his part in the encounter lasted only a matter of seconds. Unnoticed by the combatants and Lovell, a grey-haired figure had been approaching from the gates. It was that of Dr. Chisholm, headmaster of Rookwood.

Before Lovell had had time to do more than give Wadsley a biff on the nose, Dr. Chisholm had intervened.

"Boys!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"The Head!"

Fighting ceased as if by magic. The dishevelled juniors gazed at the Head ruefully, while Dr. Chisholm seemed to be gazing at the juniors more in sorrow than in anger.

"Really, boys, this is inexcusable!" he exclaimed. "I can forgive a little horseplay at the end of the term—but I do seriously think you might be more profitably occupied on the evening before the last day of the examinations."

"Oh, sir!"

"Go back to your Houses at once and employ the time that remains before bed-time in preparing for to-morrow's test," added the Head. "Not you, Lovell. I want a word with you separately."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

The rest scattered. Lovell uncomfortably remained. The Head eyed him with a frown.

"I am particularly surprised by your being here, Lovell, having regard to the importance which your father has chosen to place on these examinations. You are aware of what will happen in the event of your failing to obtain two passes out of six?"

"Yes, sir."

The Head pursed his lips.

"Well, no useful purpose would be served by my lecturing you on the subject now. We will see what happens when your papers are checked. Return to your House, Lovell."

And the Head, with a nod, went his way.

Lovell turned to follow his chums. But before he rejoined them a white object on the ground attracted his eye and brought him to a stop. It was a typewritten sheet and had evidently been dropped by one of the juniors or by the Head.

Lovell picked it up and glanced at it.

A moment later he jumped. One glance was sufficient to tell him that it had fallen from the Head's pocket.

Lovell looked at it, and, as he looked, he gave a long, low whistle.

The paper was headed:

"ENGLISH HISTORY. Fourth Form. Time allowed: 2 Hours."

It was a copy of the examination questions which Lovell had to answer in the morning!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

HONOURS FOR LOVELL!

"Oh, my hat!"

Lovell blinked at the test paper.

That was all he seemed able to do for a few seconds. The unexpected sight of that paper temporarily deprived him of all power of movement.

Lovell had a sense of honour as strongly developed as that of any fellow at Rookwood. In the ordinary way, finding such a document in such circumstances, he would have run after the Head and handed it straight over to him.

Instinctively, Lovell felt like doing that now. But something held him back.

The English history exam. on the following day had a fateful significance for Arthur Edward Lovell of the Fourth. He felt practically certain that on the number of marks he obtained in that paper depended his father's decision as to keeping him on at Rookwood or sending him elsewhere.

Lovell very decidedly wanted to stay on at Rookwood.

And now, the means of ensuring that he would certainly stay on had fallen into his hands like manna from Heaven!

Lovell glanced at the test paper, his heart beating fast. It was just a matter of reading through the questions and memorising them roughly, then going back to the end study and preparing his answers with the aid of the text-book. Nothing could have been easier.

There was only one drawback about it.

It was dishonest!

Lovell's face turned crimson at that thought. And yet he did not run after Dr. Chisholm.

Slowly and deliberately he folded up the paper. He had no doubt whatever what was the right thing to do—to avoid looking at it, anyway, even if he did not invite inquiry by returning it to the Head.

But the temptation to take advantage of his find was a severe one, which was going to be very difficult to resist.

It was most unlikely that the Head would ever notice his loss. He would not be concerned directly with the Fourth Form examination, and would have no reason for referring again to a paper which had undoubtedly been one of a complete set of test papers which he carried about with him during examination time. He would probably consign the lot to a waste-paper basket after the examinations in the morning, without bothering to check them.

"Easy!" murmured Lovell, involuntarily uttering his thoughts aloud.

He crimsoned again at the unexpected sound of his own voice.

Jimmy Silver and the others were looking back for him now. Lovell stuffed the folded paper into his jacket pocket and hurried after them.

"Ticking off from the Deak?" asked Jimmy Silver, as he joined them.

"Eh? Oh—er—yes!"

"All serene. No need to jump out of your skin!" grinned the leader of the Fistical Four. "Must have been a pretty fierce one, if your face is anything to go on!"

Lovell was as red as a turkey-cock.

"Something wrong with my face, then?"

"Only the colour of it—apart from its usual faults, of course!"

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Lovell. And he tramped back to the House without another word—and with his thoughts centred on that all-important sheet of paper in his jacket pocket.

There was little time left for swotting now, and although Lovell's chums were eager enough to help now that they were back in the House, they realised that such help as they could give Lovell at this late hour was not likely to influence the result of the exam. one way or the other.

On hearing from Lovell that swotting was "off" for the night, they adjourned to the junior Common-room for a talk with the crowd before bed.

But Lovell went back to the end study.

In the privacy of the Fistical Four's room, he paced the floor for some minutes, turning the thing over in his mind.

If only the proposition his father had confronted him with had not been so unfair, there would have been no excuse for hesitation. But Lovell felt that he was not receiving a square deal over it. Many fellows at times had to pull their socks up so far as classwork was concerned. But for his pater to threaten to take him away from Rookwood altogether merely on the result of a school examination



"Up, the Classics!" roared Lovell, plunging into the free fight between the Classics and the Moderns. And he landed out with his fist, giving Wadley a biff on the nose. But at this point Dr. Chisholm came hurrying on the scene. "Boys!" he exclaimed. "This is inexcusable!"

seemed to Lovell to be hardly playing the game.

If ever there was an occasion when a lapse from usual standards would be justified, surely this was it!

With sudden resolution, Lovell dived into his pocket and drew out the test paper.

He sat on the edge of the table and deliberately read it. Now that he had made his decision, he found it quite easy to do so in cold blood without any uncomfortable reactions.

It was the whole bag of tricks—no mistake about that! The questions were entirely straightforward. No tricks or trimmings were discernible in them to Lovell's critical eye. They were all questions that could be answered fully and satisfactorily with the aid of the text-book.

Lovell fished the text-book from the floor where it had fallen.

From that time until bed-time he was busy reading up answers to the questions from the text-book.

Bed-time naturally put an end to his activities; burning the midnight oil was not allowed at Rookwood. There was no law, however, against a fellow getting up early in the morning for the purpose of swotting; and so it came about that Arthur Edward was up at least an hour before rising-bell, putting the finishing touches to his preparations for answering the questions which he knew would be asked in the examination.

Lovell was no swot. But he was no fool either; and, the need for coming through the exam. with flying colours being so urgent and pressing, he used his time to the best advantage.

By the time he sat down at his desk in the gym., temporarily taken over for scholastic purposes during the

examination period, he was just about ready to get honours in the test.

And that—surprisingly enough from the point of view of his friends—was exactly what he did get!

Two days before breaking-up day, the results of the exams. were called out in Hall.

Lovell had four failures to record. But, as he had anticipated, he had passed in maths, and then came the announcement that he had passed also in English history.

With honours!

Jimmy Silver, Newcome and Raby simply could not understand it, when they showered their congratulations on him after the assembly.

"How did you do it?" yelled the leader of the Fistical Four.

"Greely checked the papers," grinned Newcome. "Did you bribe him with a box of his favourite Burma cheroots to wangle it for you?"

And Jimmy Silver and Raby laughed.

But Lovell did not laugh. After the first pang of relief at the thought that the danger of his being removed from Rookwood had gone, he felt far from happy over the affair.

Lovell took the earliest opportunity of adjourning to the end study on his own and communing with himself over things in general and the English history exam, in particular.

Now that he had succeeded, he experienced the horrid thought that he would have been better satisfied had he failed!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

TWO LEARN A LESSON!

"EXCELLENT!"

"I am glad you think so, Mr. Lovell!"

"Excellent!" repeated Mr. Lovell, with emphasis. "It is a disappoint-

ment to me, Dr. Chisholm, that my son failed in four subjects. But the fact that he gained honours in English history is a very real compensation. I am delighted."

Dr. Chisholm drummed on his desk.

"It is gratifying to me, of course, to know you are content to allow your son to remain at Rookwood now, Mr. Lovell," he said. "At the same time, you must allow me to say that the test which you saw fit to apply to the case did not meet with my approval."

Lovell's father frowned.

"Yes, yes, I understand that you hold that view, Dr. Chisholm, although I must say I do not quite see your point. To me it seems an entirely fair proposition that I should put to the test in this way the education that my son is receiving at Rookwood and—"

"Excuse me," murmured the Head, as a tap sounded on the door. "Come in!"

The door opened.

Arthur Edward Lovell entered.

Mr. Lovell greeted him with enthusiasm.

"Hallo, Arthur! I was just talking about you to Dr. Chisholm. You got your two passes all right. Only two—but one of them was with honours. I am satisfied!"

Lovell shook hands silently with his father. There was a somewhat strained look on his face.

"I—I'm glad you're pleased, pater. But there's something I'd like to tell you——"

"In the circumstances, Arthur, as I have just been telling Dr. Chisholm, I am very happy to allow you to stay on at Rookwood," beamed Mr. Lovell. "You will naturally be pleased to know that."

Lovell bit his lip. Really he did not look as if he could be pleased about anything at that moment.

"Yes, I'm pleased, pater," he muttered. "But there's something I really must say."

"What is it, Lovell?" asked Dr. Chisholm, whose keen grey eyes had not moved from the uncomfortable Fourth Former since his arrival.

Lovell gulped.

"Please, sir—that English history—I didn't really mean to—I'm sorry——"

"What on earth are you talking about, Arthur?" exclaimed Mr. Lovell.

"The fact is, sir, I cheated!"

It came out with a rush.

The Head started.

Mr. Lovell stared for a moment.

Then he jumped.

"Cheated? What? What are you talking about?"

"I'm sorry," groaned Lovell. "I couldn't help it, somehow. I knew I'd only passed in maths. I knew I had to pass in English history if I wanted to stay on at Rookwood. Then I happened to pick up the test paper before the exam. You dropped it out of your pocket, sir, when you stopped us scrapping."

"Bless my soul!"

"I ought to have run after you with it, sir. But, like a fool, I stuck to it, and looked up all the answers. That's how I got honours.

Without it I couldn't even have got a pass! All I can say is, I'm sorry!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Mr. Lovell. There was a long and painful silence.

Lovell stood in front of the Head, his face red with shame and his eyes on the floor. The Head watched him keenly for some time. Then his gaze returned to Mr. Lovell, and he coughed.

"Mr. Lovell, I, too, am sorry."

"Please, sir—that English history exam—I didn't mean to—I'm sorry——" stuttered Lovell. "What are you talking about, Arthur?" asked Mr. Lovell. "The fact is, sir, I cheated!" said Arthur Edward. The Head started and Lovell's father stared in astonishment.



Lovell senior nodded dumbly.

"I must admit that I missed my copy of that particular examination paper," said the Head. "It did not occur to me that it had gone astray in this way."

"That is unimportant," said Mr. Lovell harshly. "What concerns me is that my son—the boy I thought had gained honours—is, on his own admission, a cheat——"

Dr. Chisholm coughed again.

"Mr. Lovell," he said quietly, "will you allow me to say that in my estimation you have no cause whatever to worry?"

"But he cheated——"

"A great temptation came his way, Mr. Lovell. That was partly my fault and partly yours. Mine because I was so careless as to drop that test paper. Yours because you placed such a high value on a mere examination that you threatened to take your son away from the school he liked if he failed!"

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"If you will allow me, sir!" said the Head firmly. "Whatever may be the case at other schools, boys do not come to Rookwood for the purpose of learning to pass examinations. That is certainly part of their training—but a very small part. Chiefly they are here to learn how to become men—how to face the problems of life with courage and honesty!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Lovell.

"Your son, sir, has been through an ordeal. He has been subjected to a temptation and he has given way.

But now, with most commendable spirit, he has realised his fault and has made a full and frank confession. He has gained full honours, sir, in a test that is far more important than the examination in which his honours were gained by cheating!"

"Dr. Chisholm! You need say no more!" gasped Lovell's father. "I see your point entirely now!"

"I am very glad indeed, Mr. Lovell, to hear you say so," smiled the Head. "As for you, Lovell, you have done well to admit your deception. The offence was a serious one, and I shall cane you for it. But, in spite of your examination failure, I shall be very pleased to know that you are staying on at Rookwood next term with the full approval of your father."

Mr. Lovell beamed.

"Dr. Chisholm, you have it! I am more than satisfied!"

"Despite what has happened?" asked the Head.

"No, sir, but *because* of what has happened!"

"Oh, thanks, pater!" gasped Lovell. "And thank you, too, sir!"

And that was that. And when Lovell rejoined his chums he was smiling his old care-free smile once again.

Which, as Jimmy Silver said, broke two records. Not only had Lovell won and lost the same examination; he had also received the distinction of being the only fellow in history to walk away from a Head's swishing with a smile on his face!

WHERE THEY FIND INSPIRATION!



Gorging—gliding—boxing—footer—cooking! Amazing and amusing are the varied ways in which popular Greyfriars characters seek elusive inspiration!

HARRY WHARTON. I find my inspiration on Little Side. Give me ninety minutes in the forward line in a keen footer game and I've gained sufficient inspiration to carry me through a week's hard work in the Form-room—not to mention the super-human task of editing a complete number of the "Greyfriars Herald"!

H. VERNON-SMITH. The place where I feel most inspired is—er—the Remove Form-room. There is something in that musty air and those map-laden walls that exhilarates my senses, while the frozen smile of Mr. Quelch invariably warms the cockles of my heart. I'd be bored to tears without my daily dose of inspiration in the Remove Form-room. Ahem! Excuse my cough, won't you?

DICKY NUGENT. I get all the inspirashun I want in front of the Form-room fire—toasting herrings on

the end of a penholder! The fragrant oader of these finny spessinens never fails to give me a brainwave for a fresh hare-raising story of St. Sam's.

GEORGE WINGATE. If I'm ever in need of inspiration, I take a walk across to Pegg Bay and climb down the cliffs to a rocky ledge I know. I let my eyes take in the grand view of the rugged coast and my ears the thunderous crashing of the waves below me. And inspiration arrives as surely as the incoming tide!

HAROLD SKINNER. For real inspiration commend me to a genuine Havana cigar like the one I'm smoking while I write. It dropped out of Sir Hilton Popper's pocket when he was stalking across the quad this morning, and I was on it like a bird. Boy! What a luxury! Am I enjoying myself? Am I feeling—(Skinner was unable to tell us how he was feeling. He

broke off at this point to make a wild dash for the nearest bathroom. We'll give you one guess!—Ed.)

GEORGE BLUNDELL. If you want inspiration, take my tip—try gliding. I've tried it and I got a record kick out of it! Sailing through the air in an engineless plane gives a man a sensation that has to be felt to be believed. I felt like a bird. When the Head heard about it afterwards I got the bird, too—but it was worth it!

BILLY BUNTER. My idee of inspiration is—the skool tuckshop! When I roll through that sacred portal and sit on one of those hallowed stools, something akin to extacy steels over me! Those sukkulent steak-pies! Those delicious doennutts! What a feast for the eye! What a feast for the Inner Man, too, if only a chap had enuff spare cash! And that reminds me, you fellows, I've been expecting a postal-order—*(Oh, no, you don't, old fat man!—Ed.)*

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE. Put me in a good, classy tailor's shop



I get all the Inspirashun I want in front of the Form-room fire—roasting herrings on the end of a pen-holder.—Dicky Nugent.



For real inspiration commend me to a genuine Havana cigar like the one I'm smoking while I write.—Harold Skinner.

with a large range of natty suitings to choose from. I'll find inspiration galore in ordering elegant clobber with which to adorn my not ungraceful figure!

FISHERT. FISH. I guess there just AINT no inspiration for a guy with his eye teeth cut at a sleepy hang-out like Greyfriars!

BOLSOVER MAJOR. What inspires me more than anything else is the good old boxing-ring—especially if I'm inside the ropes, pommelling away at somebody in gory and glorious battle. I find it a real tonic to turn a human being into a punchball. If his weight is suitable (about three stone less than my own) and he doesn't object to really tough methods, my joy is complete!

HORACE COKER. I'll tell you one place where I found inspiration—on the faces of the fellows I beat with such marvellous ease in the Senior Cross-country run this year! *(Coker is evidently confusing INSpiration with PERspiration!—Ed.)*



THE FIRST
CHAPTER

THE JAM FROM
INDIA!

"WHAT time
does the
Jam ar-
rive, Inky?"

"About three
o'clock, my es-
teemed chums."

"By train?"

"No; the excel-
lent Jam travels
carefully."

Billy Bunter
pricked up his ears.

Bunter was pass-
ing Study No. 1
in the Remove at
Greyfriars, and at
the sound of voices from within, he
lingered, and listened. That was a Harry Wharton.

The MYSTERY
of the
CHRISTMAS
CANDLES!

By
FRANK RICHARDS

*Four candles seem a strange sort of Christmas
gift for Harry Wharton & Co. to get from their
Hindu chum, Hurree Singh. But these candles
start the Greyfriars juniors on a whole series of
thrilling and mysterious Yuletide adventures!*

way Bunter had.

Bunter's eyes
glistened behind
his big spectacles,
and he moved
cautiously nearer
to the door of
Study No. 1. Bun-
ter was keenly in-
terested in the jam
that was to arrive
by car at about
three o'clock. If
a consignment of
jam was arriving
at Greyfriars for
Harry Wharton &
Co., Billy Bunter
intended to be on
the scene when it
arrived.

"Then we'll chuck footer," said
"You'll have to

be on hand to see the Jam, Inky."
Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, nodded.

"That is so, my esteemed Wharton."

"We'll back you up!" said Bob Cherry. "We'll all be around, and give the Jam a distinguished reception."

"Good!" said Frank Nugent. "I've never seen that variety of jam before."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows——" Billy Bunter rolled into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter's heard about the Jam!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. And there was a loud chortle in Study No. 1.

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five of the Remove rather puzzled. He did not see where the joke came in.

"I say, you fellows, are you expecting the jam in time for tea?" asked the Owl of the Remove.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"You've been listening, you fat boulder!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! I just happened to catch a word as I was passing the door—sheer chance! I was coming to see you fellows——"

"Well, you've seen us now," said Johnny. "Roll along!"

"About Christmas," said Bunter. "I suppose you fellows haven't forgotten that we shall be breaking up for Christmas soon. I'm making up a Christmas-party for Bunter Court. You fellows care to come?"

"Bow-wow!"

"That isn't the way to reply to a generous invitation for Christmas, Bob Cherry. I've refused several pressing invitations for the holidays, simply because I'm going to ask you fellows home!" said Bunter reproachfully.

"Cut along and accept some of them, then, before it's too late!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry. But, about the jam——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you fellows are getting in a thumping lot of jam this afternoon——"

"Not a thumping lot," chuckled Harry Wharton. "How much does the Jam weigh, Inky?"

"About eight stone, my esteemed chum," grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Eight stone!" he yelled.

"Aboutfully, my esteemed Bunter."

"But that's a hundredweight!" gasped Bunter. "Mean to say you're getting a hundredweight of jam?"

"Just that!" said Nugent.

Bunter's mouth watered.

The mere thought of revelling in a hundredweight of jam dazzled the fat junior. Even William George Bunter would have had to rest occasionally in getting through a consignment like that.

"Oh, I say, you fellows!" he breathed. "That—that's splendid! It—it's ripping! Where does the jam come from?"

"India," said Wharton.

"Do they make jam in India? I say, Inky, is the jam nice?"

"Extremely so, my worthy Bunter," grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I have always found the esteemed Jam delightful."

"Good!" said Bunter. "I'm glad I dropped in to see you fellows about Christmas. Of course, you won't want a hundredweight of jam all to yourselves. I'm willing to take half of it off your hands for cash."

"Puzzle—find the cash!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Cash—as soon as my postal-order comes," said Bunter firmly. "I've mentioned to you fellows that I'm expecting a postal-order, I believe!"

"Ha, ha! I believe you have!" chortled Bob Cherry. "I seem to remember something of the sort."

"Is it a go, then?" asked Bunter eagerly.

Hurree Singh shook his dusky head.

"I am not disposing of the Jam salefully," he answered.

"But you won't want it all, Inky! Suppose you let me have about a stone of it—cash, you know!"

The dusky nabob chuckled, but shook his head again. His face was wreathed in smiles. Apparently he saw something very humorous in Bunter's request for a portion of the jam. Bunter could see nothing humorous in it.

"Well, if it's not for sale, you can make me a present of it!" suggested Bunter. "A chap can accept a present from a pal—specially at Christmas-time. I'm not a fellow to accept presents as a rule——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm more particular than some fellows!" snorted Bunter, with a glare at the chuckling juniors. "But in this case, being Christmas-time, I should not refuse, Inky. How much am I going to have?"

"Nix, my esteemed Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"The nixfulness is terrific," said the nabob.

"Don't be a pig, Inky," urged Bunter. "I'm asking you down to Bunter Court, for Christmas, you know. One good turn deserves another. If you don't whack out the jam, when you're getting such a

thumping lot of it, you can't expect me to take you in for the vac. Can you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter peevishly. "I say, you fellows, I'm going to make you a generous offer. There's going to be quite a distinguished party at Bunter Court for Christmas. That chap Drake, who used to be here—the chap who's become a detective—I'm asking him, and his governor, Ferrers Locke—you'd like to meet Drake again, and, of course, Ferrers Locke is a great catch. Now, you fellows do the decent thing over this jam, and I'll stand you a couple of weeks at Bunter Court. What do you say to that?"

Bob Cherry winked at his comrades—a wink unseen by the short-sighted Owl of the Remove.

"That's a good offer," he said gravely. "Suppose we agree to let Bunter eat as much as he likes of the jam——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole study shrieked.

"I don't see where the cackle comes in," said Bunter. "If you fellows agree to that——"

"What about it, Inky?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing. "The Jam's coming for you, not for us."

Hurree Singh chuckled.

"The agreefulness is terrific," he answered. "If Bunter cares to eat the Jam, he may go aheadfully, and I shall not stop him."

"As much as I like?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"Certainlyfully."

"Oh, good!" Bunter rubbed his fat hands together. "You're not a bad sort, Inky. In fact, you're quite decent."

"The esteemed opinion of the ridiculous Bunter is grateful and comforting to my unworthy self," said the Nabob of Bhanipur gracefully.

"And the jam gets here at three!"

"Aboutfully."

Bunter glanced at the study clock.

"Why, it's five to three now!" he exclaimed. "I say, you fellows, if you'd like to go down to the footer you can leave the jam to me. I'll look after it."

"Oh, we'll be there!" said Bob Cherry. "We want to see how you like that Jam, Bunter. You've never eaten anything like it before."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better get along to the gates now," said Wharton. "Come on, you fellows!"

"I'm coming!" gasped Bunter.

The Famous Five quitted Study No. 1, and Billy Bunter rolled after them, quite a beatific expression on his fat face. There was a keen wind in the quadrangle, and it was very cold. Bunter preferred, as a rule, to spend a half-holiday loafing over the fire in cold weather. But now he braved the wind in the quadrangle without flinching. He wanted to see that enormous consignment of jam from India. He was very keen on it. His fat mind revelled in the prospect of unlimited jam till the end of the term.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh glanced down the road towards Courtfield.

In the distance a big motor-car could be seen coming on towards the school.

"Is that the car, Inky?" asked Bob.

"I thinkfully opine so," assented the nabob.

Bunter blinked at the distant car. He seemed puzzled.

"I should have thought it would come by lorry," he remarked. "Is the jam really coming here in a car, Inky?"

Hurree Singh nodded.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter. "I suppose the packing-case is inside the car?"

"I hardly think the Jam's in a packing-case," grinned Bob Cherry, and the chums of the Remove roared again.

"Well, it would be in jars, I suppose. But the jars are bound to be in a packing-case of some sort," said Bunter. "Jolly queer idea to stick it inside a car like that! Expensive, too! You do chuck your money about, Inky. I say, there's a nigger driving that car!" exclaimed Bunter, as the automobile came nearer.

"Not a nigger, my esteemed fat-headed Bunter," said the nabob mildly. "A Hindu."

"Same thing," said Bunter.

"The samefulness is not terrific."

"There's another nigger sitting beside him," said Bunter, blinking curiously at the oncoming car. "Are they in charge of the jam, Inky?"

"Looks like it," said Bob Cherry, chuckling. "Can you see the Jam yet, Inky?"

"Yes, my esteemed chum."

The big car was quite close now. It was a saloon, but the nabob's keen eye had caught sight of a dark face within. Billy Bunter blinked at the car with intense interest and curiosity.

"Blessed if I can see the jam!" he said. "I can see an old nigger sitting there in a turban, that's all!"

"If that old merchant hears you call him a nigger, Bunter, he may tell one of his servants to chop your head off!" grinned Bob Cherry. "That

old nigger, as you call him, is an Indian prince."

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Relation of yours, Inky?"

"My esteemed uncle."

"But where's the jam? Is he sitting on it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The big car rolled up, and slowed down at the gateway. The turbaned Oriental within glanced at the group of juniors, who lifted their caps very politely. The dark gentleman smiled, with a flash of white teeth, and returned the salute politely, and made an affectionate sign to Hurree Singh. The car turned in at the gates, and the juniors followed it in.

Billy Bunter caught at the nabob's sleeve.

"I say, Inky, hadn't the jam better be unloaded at the lodge? Gosling can take it in—"

Hurree Singh shook his head, and the juniors hurried on. The car moved at a leisurely rate up the drive, and they overtook it at the great doorway, Bunter trotting breathlessly to keep up. The car halted at the steps, and the dusky servant, who was seated beside the dusky chauffeur, jumped down and opened the door.

The old gentleman stepped out.

He was enveloped in a fur-lined overcoat, probably finding the English winter rather cold after India. But



"Where's the jam?" asked Billy Bunter. "There he is, just going in with Inky!" laughed Bob Cherry. "That's Inky's uncle—he's a Jam!" Bunter blinked blandly at the chums of the Remove. It was quite a different hundredweight of jam from what he had expected.

glimpses of rich Oriental attire could be seen, and his turban glittered with jewels.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh salaamed to his esteemed uncle, and his esteemed uncle salaamed to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, much to the entertainment of a score of Greyfriars fellows who were looking on.

Then they shook hands in the English manner. And then Hurree Singh presented his chums in turn, with polite ceremoniousness, but somehow forgetting Bunter.

But Bunter was not thinking of a

presentation to the visitor, even if he was a prince in his own country. Bunter was blinking into the motor-car in search of the jam.

There was no sign of anything in the shape of a packing-case, or even a box, inside that magnificently upholstered motor-car. Unless the jam was hidden under the seats, it was difficult to guess where it could possibly be. Bunter blinked into the car and then blinked at the nabob. He was puzzled and he was annoyed.

"I say, you fellows, where's the jam?" he demanded.

The little dark gentleman looked round, with a glitter of jewels as he moved.

"This is one other friend of yours?" he asked.

"It is the esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Singh. "Come with me, my uncle. I will show you the way to the Head."

"Where's the jam?" yelled Bunter, heedless of the visitor.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, appeared in the doorway. He saluted the Indian gentleman very politely. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh proceeded to present him.

"My esteemed and venerable Form-master the Sahib Quelch—my excellent uncle the Jam Sahib Bahadur Munny Singh—"

The Indian gentleman salaamed, and the Form-master bowed. Bunter blinked at them. Mr. Quelch ushered the dark gentleman into the house very impressively. Evidently the Jam Sahib Bahadur Munny Singh was a great gun. Billy Bunter clutched at Wharton's sleeve.

"Where's the jam?" he hissed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"There he is, just going in with Inky."

"Eh?"

"That's the Jam!"

"Wha-a-at? Wharrer you mean? That's Inky's uncle——"

"Inky's uncle is a Jam."

"A—a—a Jam!" stuttered Bunter.

The expression on Bunter's fat face was worth at least a guinea a box. He blinked blandly at the chums of the Remove.

"A giddy Jam!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "That's the Jam Inky was expecting this afternoon, Bunt—about a hundredweight of him——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"You see, it's a title in India," explained Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I don't know whether they have any nobby nob called a marmalade, but they certainly have a Jam, and Inky's uncle is a Jam."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"But the agreement holds good," said Bob Cherry. "You can eat as much of the Jam as you like——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Unless he raises objections, of course——"

"He might!" chortled Johnny Bull. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter bestowed a glare on the chums of the Remove that bade fair to crack his spectacles. He rolled away, in utter disgust. But he did not follow the Jam Sahib Bahadur Munny Singh. Healthy as Bunter's appetite was, and attached as he was to almost any kind of jam, he evidently did not want to sample that Jam.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

SOMETHING LIKE FOOTBALL

THE Jam Sahib Bahadur Munny Singh was an object of great interest to the Greyfriars juniors that afternoon.

All sorts and conditions of people had visited Greyfriars at one time or

another, but it was uncommon for the old school to be distinguished by the visit of a Jam.

The Jam was a very benign and affable old gentleman.

For some time he was shut up with Dr. Locke, and later on he was seen walking about Greyfriars, taking a survey of the old school, escorted by the Head in person.

Only very distinguished visitors were shown around personally by Dr. Locke, so it was plain that the Jam was a great gun.

The two august gentlemen arrived on the football-ground together, and paused to look on for a few minutes.

Harry Wharton & Co. were punting a ball about on Little Side, to keep themselves warm, with a crowd of other Removites. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was with his chums at the footer while his august uncle was occupied with the headmaster.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the giddy Jam!" murmured Bob Cherry, as the glitter of the jewelled turban caught his eye. "Bunter hasn't scoffed that Jam, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was an honour to the juniors for the Jam to stand in the keen wind looking at their play, and they felt it. Skinner of the Remove strolled on to the field and joined in the punt-about. Skinner, the slacker, never exerted himself in that way if he could help it; but on this occasion Skinner had a special motive.

"Give a fellow a chance at the ball!" he called out.

"Bow-wow!" said Bob Cherry. "What on earth do you want with a footer, Skinner?"

"I want the Jam to see me score a goal!" said Skinner.

"The Jam would have to stand there till he struck roots if he waited

for you to kick the ball anywhere near goal!"

"Well, let's try!" said Skinner.

Skinner was given his chance. He was just going to let fly, when Hurree Jamset Ram Singh made a rush forward and collared Skinner round the neck.

Crash!

Skinner and the nabob went to the ground together.

"Yaroooh!" roared Skinner.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry. "This isn't Rugger practice, Inky!"

"Yoop!" howled Skinner. "Leggo—lemme gerrup! Wharrer you at? Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Jam Munny Singh smiled as he looked on, and glanced at the Head, who seemed rather puzzled by the scene.

"One good game—yes!" said the Jam. "My nephew play same as honourable schoolfellows—yes! Fine!"

And the Jam clapped his hands.

Skinner was rolling on the ground in the grasp of Hurree Singh, and yelling at the top of his voice.

Hurree Singh was rubbing Skinner's features into the earth, and Skinner did not seem to be enjoying the process.

"Fine!" said the Jam Bahadur. "Oh, yes! Very fine!"

"Ah—er—yes!" murmured the Head. "We will—er—ahem—pass on. Yonder there is a senior game —"

And the Head walked his august visitor off to Big Side, where the Sixth were at football.

"Will you fellows draggimoff!" came in muffled accents from Harold Skinner. "I'll smash him! I'll—Help! Yoop! Help!"

Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull seized the nabob and jerked him away from his victim. Hurree Singh rose breathlessly.

Skinner sat up and spluttered.

"What on earth's the game?" demanded Wharton. "What sort of footer will your uncle think we play at Greyfriars after that?"

"My esteemed chum, the humorous and rascally Skinner was about to kick the ball at my honourable and ludicrous uncle——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton.

"That was Skinner's little game, was it?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Skinner, you cad——"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"I thought that was what he was up to!" said Peter Todd. "Inky stopped him just in time!"

"Yow-ow-ow-wow!"

"Bump him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Leggo!" raved Skinner. "Only a joke, you rotters! I was only going to buff his silly turban off—— Yaroooooh!"

"Bump him!"

"Yooop! Help!"

The Jam Bahadur, evidently under the impression that this was the famous British game of football, looked back and clapped his hands with enthusiasm.

"Oh! Fine! Fine!" he ejaculated.

He tore himself quite reluctantly away from the scene to accompany the Head to Big Side, and his looks showed that he did not find the Sixth Form game nearly so interesting.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE NABOB'S GUESTS!

"My esteemed chums——"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is the Jam coming to tea in the study, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his head.

"My excellent uncle is partaking of teaful refreshment with the worthy Head and the elegant mem-sahib," he answered. "He is going departfully in short time, and I am going with him——"

"Oh!" said Bob. "He's taking you back to London?"

"Exactly! I am sorry to leave my esteemed and ridiculous chums," said the nabob; "but we shall meet again Christmasfully!"

"Lucky bargee, to get away nearly a week before break-up!" said Frank Nugent.

"You'll be coming home with me for Christmas, Inky?" asked Wharton.

"I want my esteemed chum Wharton, and my other excellent pals, to come to me for Christmas!" explained Hurree Singh.

"It's rather a long step to Bhanipur, isn't it?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"My excellent uncle wishes me to bring my friends to his mansion in esteemed London for Christmas, where there will be high old time!" said the nabob. "I am going with him, by kind permission of honourable Head, to make all arrangements preparefully, if my chums will honour me with their desirable company at Christmas!"

"Good old Jam!" said Bob.

"It will be terrific honour and pleasure for my unworthy self——"

"Cut it out, Inky!" said Harry, laughing. "We'll come!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The worthy Jam has taken large mansion in fashionable square," said the nabob. "Everything will be very top-hole, and the grubfulness will be terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about Drake?" asked Harry Wharton. "I was going to have Drake home for Christmas if he'd come——"

"The askfulness will also be extended to the esteemed Drake."

" Good ! "

"Count me in, Inky!" said a fat voice at the door, and Billy Bunter blinked into Study No. 1.

"My esteemed Bunter——" murmured the nabob.

"I wouldn't desert you for anything!" said Bunter. "For your sake, Inky, I'll give up my own party at Bunter Court."

"Don't!" said Johnny Bull.

"You fellows can come on to Bunter Court afterwards, if you like," said the Owl of the Remove. "Bring your uncle, too, Inky, and his set of

niggers. There's plenty of room at Bunter Court. You can send down the car for us when school breaks up, if you like. I'm accustomed to travelling by car, you know."

"My worthy and ludicrous Bunter,
I—"

"Consider it settled!" said Bunter breezily. "I dare say I shall get on all right with your uncle, Inky. Funny old codger, isn't he?"

"Eh?"

"That turban and his features would make his fortune in a circus, wouldn't they?" said Bunter agreeably.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked rather fixedly at the fat junior, but he did not answer.

"Will there be a lot of other niggers there, Inky?" continued Bunter.



"Yaroooh!" roared Skinner as Harzer Singh brought him to the ground. "Wharrer you at?" Skinner soon discovered that! The nabob proceeded to rub his features into the earth! The Jam Munny Singh smiled as he looked on, assuming that it was all part of the game!

"There will be esteemed Indian friends of my respected uncle," said the nabob mildly.

"Well, I don't mind," said Bunter generously. "Bit queer to be mixing up with a lot of stove-polish gentry; but, dash it all, I'm no snob! I'll be quite civil to them, Inky."

"The excellent Bunter will lack the opportunity of bestowing civility upon esteemed uncle and other niggers," said the nabob grimly. "The niggerful doorkeeper will have orders to give esteemed Bunter the boot, if esteemed Bunter shows up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Seat, you fat boulder!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Of course, I know you're only joking, Inky, old chap," said Bunter. "I'm coming! And I tell you what. I'll telephone to the pater to send the Rolls-Royce for us. Now, what about tea?"

That question was not answered.

Bob Cherry took the Owl of the Remove by one fat ear, with a finger and thumb that gripped like a vice, and led him into the passage.

Bob did not speak, though Bunter did—loudly.

Having led the Owl into the passage, Bob slewed him round by his fat ear and planted a heavy boot behind him.

"Travel!" he said briefly.

And Bunter travelled.

The propulsion of Bob Cherry's boot was an irresistible argument. Bunter had no choice about travelling.

Then the Famous Five sat down to tea in Study No. 1 in a merry mood. Christmas with a Jam was an experience rather out of the common, and the chums of the Remove were rather looking forward to it. There was no doubt that the festivities would be

on a scale of Oriental magnificence.

After tea Hurree Jamset Ram Singh made a round of the Remove passage, adding names to the list of his guests.

Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, and Peter Todd, and Tom Brown, and Squiff, and several other fellows willingly accepted the invitation to the large mansion in the fashionable square for Christmas.

It was going to be quite a large party from Greyfriars, but it did not include William George Bunter, in spite of that fat youth's willingness to be civil to the niggers for the occasion.

When the car came round for the Jam, the Head came out to say good-bye to his distinguished visitor, and a crowd gathered round to see the Jam Bahadur off.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stepped into the car with his esteemed uncle. He said good-bye to his chums, and the dusky chauffeur started the engine. Billy Bunter shoved through the juniors and reached the car.

"Au revoir, Inky!" he gasped.

"Good-bye, my esteemed, ridiculous Bunter!"

"See you again at Christmas, Inky!"

"I think notfully."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Stand clear there, Bunter, you ass!" called out Johnny Bull.

The big car started.

The Greyfriars fellows raised a cheer as it rolled away with the Jam and the nabob.

Bunter stood blinking after it, with a rather dubious expression on his fat face. Bunter was determined that he was not going to be left out of the Christmas festivities, especially as he had heard Hurree Singh remark that the grubfulness would be terrific. That was an attraction

that William George Bunter could not possibly have resisted.

When Harry Wharton & Co. turned back into the House, the fat junior followed them in.

"Will you fellows be going up by train?" he asked.

"Most likely."

"I suppose one of you could lend me my fare, if my postal-order doesn't come before we break up?"

"You won't be going," said Johnny Bull. "And the Head will hand you your travelling money to get home."

Bunter blinked at him.

"My dear chap, I can hardly decline Inky's invitation, when he's depending on me to come!" he answered.

"Inky's what?"

"His pressing invitation!" said Bunter firmly.

"Why, you fat owl——"

"I hope you fellows will behave yourselves at the Jam's place."

"What?"

"None of your blessed horseplay, and all that," said Bunter. "I don't want to be disgraced by a mob of dashed hooligans, you know."

"Why, you—you——" stuttered Wharton.

"Remember that you'll be with me, and that I shall expect you to behave yourselves," said Bunter. "I shall be responsible for you, in a way. Inky looks on me as the head of the party, being so pally with me. Mind you take some clean collars, Bob."

"Why, I—I—I——" spluttered Bob Cherry.

"And for goodness' sake, Johnny Bull, don't have baggy trousers on an occasion like this!" said Bunter. "Baggy knees are all very well for the Remove passage; but at the

Jam's mansion I shall expect you to do me credit—as far as you can, of course."

And the Owl of the Remove rolled away, leaving the Co. staring after him as if mesmerised. William George Bunter had quite taken their breath away.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

THE CHRISTMAS CANDLES

"MASTER WHARTON!"

Gosling, the porter, appeared in the doorway of Study No. 1.

It was a couple of days since Hurree Singh's departure for London with his esteemed relative the Jam. Four members of the Famous Five were at tea in Study No. 1 when Gosling appeared in the offing.

The porter had a parcel in his hand, which had apparently arrived by post.

Harry Wharton glanced round.

"Trot in, old bean!" he said cheerily. "What is it?"

"It's a parcel for you, Wharton!" came Billy Bunter's voice from behind the school porter. "I say, shall I open it for you?"

Gosling came into the study and laid the parcel on the table.

"Jest arrived, Master Wharton," he said. "I thought I'd bring it up for you, sir."

The chums of the Remove smiled.

As a rule, Gosling would not have dreamed of carrying up a parcel to a junior study, if he could possibly have helped it. But the approach of Christmas always made a considerable difference to the crusty old gentleman. It was not so much that the festive season softened his heart, but there was an expectation of a crop of tips when the school broke up.

"Thanks no end, old bean!" said the captain of the Remove.

Gosling lingered.

"Them stairs is steep!" he remarked.

"They is!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "I say, you chaps, we ought to help Gosling downstairs, as he's come up to oblige us."

"Good egg!" said Nugent.

"As Inky would say, the goodness of the egg is terrific!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Hold on, Gosling; we'll all bear a hand!"

The Greyfriars porter did not wait for assistance from the merry Removeites. He departed hastily from the study, and was heard to grunt emphatically as he disappeared down the Remove staircase. Possibly he feared that his descent might have been too rapid with the assistance of the chums of the Remove.

Billy Bunter rolled into the study, and started unfastening the parcel. He seemed more curious about its contents than the junior to whom it was addressed.

"Tuck, most likely," said Bunter. "It isn't a hamper—and it's not a large parcel—but it's most likely tuck. Were you expecting tuck from somebody, Wharton?"

"Not that I know of," said Harry. "Let's look at it. Why, it's in Inky's fist!"

"The parcel's from Inky," said Nugent.

"Christmas presents, perhaps," said Billy Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his big spectacles. "Something for me in it, I should think; Inky would hardly forget his best pal. Sure this is addressed to you, Wharton? Just like that ass Gosling to bring it to the wrong study—"

"Look at it, fathead!"

Bunter blinked at the label. There was no doubt that the package was addressed to Harry Wharton; but the Owl of the Remove did not seem

to be quite satisfied. He shook his head.

"It's in Inky's fist," he admitted. "But he might have written the wrong name by mistake; he's a bit careless."

"Shut up, ass!"

Harry Wharton unrolled several thick sheets of brown paper, and disclosed a box.

The juniors gathered round curiously to see the box opened. Wharton unhooked the lid and threw it up.

Inside the box were four separate packages.

Each had a name written on the outside of it, and the names were Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, and Bull.

"One each!" remarked Frank.

"Isn't there one for me?" demanded Bunter.

"Looks as if there isn't," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Inky must really have forgotten how pally he was with you, Bunter."

"May be one under the packing," grunted Bunter. And he searched through the box. But there was nothing for Bunter. Astonishing as it seemed to the Owl of the Remove, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had apparently forgotten that his best pal at Greyfriars was William George Bunter.

The four juniors unrolled their packets.

Bunter eyed them almost wolfishly. "You've got mine, Bull!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Fathead!"

"There's my name on it——"

"Is your name spelt B-U-L-L?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"That isn't a double L, I think—looks to me more like NTER," said Bunter. "The B and the U are plain enough."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"



"Hallo, Inky!" yelled Bunter. The intruder jumped and gave a gasping cry. Next moment he sprang at the Owl of the Remove, and Bunter felt a hand grasp his fat throat in a grip like that of a vice.

"Look here, if there's something valuable in that parcel, it's for me!" roared Bunter.

Unheeding Bunter, the juniors unrolled the four packages. Somewhat to their surprise, what looked like four large Christmas candles were revealed.

"Candles!" exclaimed Bob.

Bunter's clouded brow cleared.

"He, he, he!" he chuckled. "You can have them; blessed if I want a candle! Inky is pulling your leg! He, he, he!"

The juniors gazed at the candles, rather taken aback. They were large, handsome candles, certainly, of a very hard aromatic wax. But it was rather a peculiar gift to receive from their dusky chum the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hold on! There's a letter with

mine," said Wharton. "Here it is. It was folded round the candle."

The four juniors gathered round the letter. Billy Bunter continued to cachinnate, evidently very much tickled by the nature of the Christmas presents.

Wharton read the letter aloud. It ran:

"My esteemed Wharton,—I trustfully hope that my excellent and ridiculous chums will accept the humble and ludicrous present of honourable candles. I beggully request that they shall not be lighted until placed on esteemed Christmas-tree on Christmas Day in mansion of excellent Jam. Then there will be small delightful surprise for esteemed chums.

"With kindful regards,

"HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose this is some little joke of Inky's. Something happens when the candles are lighted, I suppose."

"I suppose so," said Harry. "They look ordinary enough—just wax and a wick! But I suppose there's something else about them, or Inky wouldn't be so particular about their not being lighted till they're on the Christmas-tree."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you going off like an alarm-clock for, Bunter?"

"He, he, he! Inky's just pulling your leg!" chuckled Bunter. "Those candles are worth about sixpence each! He, he, he! If that's Inky's idea of a Christmas present, he needn't trouble to remember me. He, he, he!"

"Fathead!"

"Sorry for your disappointment," grinned Bunter.

"But we're not disappointed," said Harry Wharton mildly. "We're not Bunters, you know."

"Inky's rolling in money, and you jolly well expected something decent," grinned Bunter. "Serve you jolly well right! He, he, he! I never could stand chaps who suck up to a fellow because he's wealthy. Not in my line at all."

"Oh, my hat!"

"This ought to be a lesson to you!" chortled Bunter. "I'm jolly glad! He, he, he!"

Bunter's cachinnation was suddenly interrupted by Johnny Bull's boot being introduced into the conversation.

There was a loud howl from William George Bunter.

"Ow! Yah! Beast!"

Bunter rolled out of the study. But he put his head into the doorway again to ejaculate:

"I'm jolly glad! He, he, he!"

Then he vanished at top speed.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"We'll put Inky's candles away somewhere safe, and take them to London with us," he said. "Some ass might get lighting them by mistake. I suppose Inky's got some reason for not wanting them lighted till they're on the Christmas-tree. Anyhow, we'll do as he asks."

"As he begfully requests," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the four candles were replaced in the box, and the box was bestowed in Wharton's desk, and locked up. And then the four juniors gave their attention to prep, and for some time the Christmas candles were dismissed from their minds.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

IN DANGEROUS HANDS!

"INKY!"

Billy Bunter ejaculated the name in great surprise.

It was the day following the arrival of the Christmas candles for Harry Wharton & Co., and the December dusk was thick in the Greyfriars quadrangle. Billy Bunter was ambling between the old elms and the school wall, braving the keen winter wind—for a good reason. While he ambled, he was devouring jam-tarts from a bag under his arm. The tarts did not belong to Bunter; hence his retirement to a secluded spot while he devoured them.

A rustle in the ivy on the wall caught Bunter's ear, and he glanced round. As it happened, he was in the deep shadow of a tree, and quite invisible to anyone climbing the wall. But as he blinked in the direction of the rustling sound, Bunter caught a

glimpse of a dusky face and deep black eyes.

"Inky! My hat!" murmured Bunter.

He stood where he was, transfixed, with a jam-tart half-way to his mouth, with astonishment.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was supposed to be in his uncle's mansion in London, making magnificent preparations for the Christmas festivities. And here he was—climbing over the school wall in the most secret and surreptitious manner.

It did not occur to Bunter for the moment that possibly the dusky clamberer was not Inky. The bronze Oriental face and black eyes, of which he caught only a glimpse, were enough for Bunter. He did not expect to see any other Indian at Greyfriars; and he did not think of doubting for a moment that this was the nabob; though why he should be returning to his school in such a surreptitious manner was an amazing puzzle.

Bunter stood quite still, watching and listening. He heard the climber drop from the wall, with another rustle of ivy; but he could not see him now. The dusky intruder was hidden in the shadows.

Bunter grinned.

For some reason the Oriental was creeping secretly into the precincts of Greyfriars; and Bunter determined to give him a fright. He heard a faint footfall, indicating that the Indian was coming towards the trees, under which the fat junior stood.

Bunter drew back quietly behind a big trunk, and watched, still grinning. A dim figure in a heavy overcoat loomed in the dusk near him. Then Bunter gave a sudden yell.

"Hallo, Inky!"

His intention was to startle the intruder by that sudden yell.

He succeeded; there was no doubt about that.

The intruder jumped almost clear of the ground, and gave a gasping cry.

But what followed startled Bunter more than he had startled the Indian.

The dim form made a spring at him, and Bunter felt a hand grasp his fat throat in a grip like that of a vice.

Over his startled fat face loomed a dusky countenance, with glittering black eyes.

Bunter's heart almost ceased to beat with fright.

It was not Inky!

That iron grip was not Hurree Singh's; and the face, now that Bunter saw it more closely, was older than Inky's. It was the face of an Indian at least twenty years older than the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Two fierce black eyes, set very close together over a prominent nose like a beak, glittered at the frightened Owl.

Bunter would have yelled; but he could make no sound with the iron grip of the Indian compressing his throat.

He was forced back against the tree and pinned there, helpless in the grasp of his assailant.

His round eyes dilated behind his spectacles as he blinked at the dark face before him in utter terror.

It was not Inky—it was some man he had never seen before—and the expression on his dusky face was hard, cruel, ruthless. What the man could possibly want within the walls of Greyfriars was a mystery to Bunter. But he realised that he was in dangerous hands.

"Silence!"

Bunter did not need the injunction; the grip on his throat kept him silent. His fat limbs were shaking with terror.

A shiver ran through him, as something glittered in the dusk. It was a knife that the Indian had taken out from under his heavy overcoat.

"Silence! If you call out, you will never utter a sound again on this earth!" muttered the man in perfect English.

He loosened his grasp on Bunter.

"Oh dear!" gasped the fat junior.

"Are you alone here?"

"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

The man with the beaky nose stared round him suspiciously in the December dusk.

But there was no sound in the quadrangle, and the lights of the School House were hidden in the winter mist that hung low over the quad.

He seemed reassured at last. Bunter did not make a sound or a movement; the cold steel glimmering within a foot of him had an hypnotic effect on the Owl of the Remove. The Hindu fixed his black eyes again on the Owl's scared face.

"What is your name?"

"B-b-bub-bub-bub—" stuttered Bunter.

"What?"

"Bub-bub-Bunter."

"You are not Wharton?"

"Eh? No! Oh, I'm Bunter! If—if you want Wharton, he's indoors!" gasped Bunter.

He felt a sense of relief at finding that it was the captain of the Remove that the Hindu seemed to be after.

"You know Wharton?"

"Yes, he's in my Form."

"Has he received a parcel by post?"

Bunter started.

"Yes; yesterday he had one—some silly Christmas candles—"

The black eyes flashed.

"From Hurree Jamset Ram Singh?"

"Yes."

"Where are the candles now?"

"In Wharton's study."

"Where is that?"

"No. 1 in the Remove passage."

The hawk-faced Oriental made an impatient gesture. It was evident that he knew nothing about the interior arrangements of Greyfriars, and probably had never heard of the celebrated Remove passage.

Bunter was feeling a little reassured now. Evidently this mysterious marauder did not want him—and Bunter guessed, though he was not quite sure, that the knife was only displayed to scare him. If he wanted Inky's Christmas candles he was welcome to them, so far as William George Bunter was concerned.

"Listen to me," said the Hindu, after a pause. "I am a servant of the Huzoor Hurree Singh, and he has sent me to take away the candles."

"Has he really?" gasped Bunter.

"They are of no value, and were sent by mistake."

Bunter blinked at the man.

"I am here to take them away," continued the Hindu, watching Bunter like a hawk. "You will guide me to where they are placed, boy. I will give you money for your trouble."

"I'd do it like a shot," said Bunter; "but the chaps will be in their study now, most likely. They jolly well won't let you take the candles, unless you've got some authority from Hurree Singh."

Bunter grinned a little as he spoke. He was not a very bright youth, but he did not think for a moment of believing the Hindu's statement. Four candles worth about sixpence each hardly justified all these surreptitious proceedings, so far as Bunter could see.

There was a pause after Bunter's

reply. The Hindu seemed to be thinking deeply.

"I—I say, lemme go now!" mumbled Bunter. "It's close on bed-time, you know, and—and the prefects will be after me if I don't show up in time for dorm."

"You will point out the room to me?"

"Like a shot," said Bunter, glad of the chance of getting nearer to the School House.

"Lead the way! If you give the alarm, I shall drive my knife between your shoulders!"

"Ow!"

Bunter led the way in the gloom. There was a light from the window of Study No. 1, glimmering down through the mist, showing that Wharton and Nugent were in their quarters. Bunter pointed out the window.

"That's Study No. 1," he said.

The Hindu stared up at the lighted window.

"The candles are there?"

"Yes; locked up in Wharton's desk."

"They have not been used?"

"No; Inky told Wharton they weren't to be lighted till they were put on the Christmas-tree."

The Hindu nodded; he seemed to be quite as well aware of these details as Bunter himself.

"There's someone in the room now!" he muttered.

"Yes—Wharton and Nugent will be there. Perhaps Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry as well. I—I say, can I go now?"

The Hindu ignored the question.

"You say it is nearly bed-time?"

"Yes—ten minutes or so."

"These boys will leave their study at bed-time?"

"Yes, or sooner."

The Hindu scanned the lighted



Wingate rushed into the study with a mob of Juniors at his heels. They were just in time to see a dark-skinned face vanish from the open window!

window again, and his eye followed down the thick ivy from the window-sill to the ground. Bunter could see that he was calculating his chance of climbing the ivy to the window of Study No. 1.

The light in the study window suddenly went out.

"They're gone now!" said Bunter. "To bed?"

"Not till half-past nine. Most likely down to the Common-room, or to another study along the passage."

The Hindu muttered something in his own tongue in tones of satisfaction. His black eyes scanned the ivy again.

"I—I say, lemme go!" mumbled Bunter. "It—it's jolly c-c-cold out here, you know!"

"Silence!" The word came in a ferocious hiss that sent a chill of fear to Bunter's heart.

The Hindu turned on him. He drew a coil of thin strong cord from his pocket and proceeded to bind Bunter's wrists and ankles. The Owl of the Remove did not dare attempt resistance. He was bound till he could not stir a limb, and then a gag was inserted in his capacious mouth and fastened there with a cord passing round his head.

The Hindu lifted him—with some exertion—and laid him on the ground in the deep shadow of an elm. Bunter made no sound or movement while he was bound and gagged; he was too terrified for that. He blinked with dilated eyes after the Hindu as the man glided away in the gloom. A rustle of ivy came to his ears, and he knew that the lithe Oriental was climbing up towards the window of Study No. 1 in the Remove.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT!

WINGATE of the Sixth glanced round the Remove dormitory. The half-hour had chimed, and the Removites were about to turn in. But there was one member of the Lower Fourth Form missing from the dormitory.

"Where's Bunter?" rapped out Wingate.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The Owl's missing!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Better look for him in the pantry, Wingate!"

There was a laugh.

"Doesn't anybody know where the fat duffer is?" exclaimed the Greyfriars captain impatiently.

"I know he bagged a bag of tarts from my study," said Vernon-Smith.

"I was keeping a fives-bat ready for him, but I didn't see him again."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"He's keeping out of the way of Smithy's bat," he remarked. "He's forgotten all about dorm."

"I'll jolly well warn him for forgetting dorm!" said Wingate angrily.

"Some of you go and rout him out!"

"Right-ho, Wingate!"

The Remove fellows were not specially keen on going to bed—in fact, they were rather pleased to get another ten minutes or so. Nine or ten fellows who had not yet started taking off their shoes left the Remove dormitory to look for Bunter.

"Where the thump can he be?" asked Bob Cherry. "Can't be out of doors at this time of night!"

"I believe he scuttled out when he bagged my tarts," said the Bounder. "But he must have come in again before this—the door's been shut some time."

"We'll rout him out of a box-room, or one of the Remove studies," said Peter Todd.

"Blessed if I see why he hasn't turned up!" Harry Wharton remarked. "He must have finished the tarts long ago. They wouldn't last Bunter long."

"He's in hiding!" chuckled Bob. "We'll rout him out! Some of you fellows look in the box-room, and I'll go along the passage."

"Right!"

Harry Wharton and two or three juniors went along to the box-room,

and Peter Todd looked into Study No. 7. Bob Cherry and Nugent went along to Study No. 1.

If Bunter was in hiding, for fear of the wrath to come, it was most likely that he had taken refuge in a study, where there would be the remains of a fire. So the juniors looked into all the studies along the Remove passage.

Bob Cherry gave a soft chuckle as he came to the door of Study No. 1. A slight movement from within caught his ear.

"He's there!" murmured Bob.

There was a faint glimmer of light under the door.

Bob Cherry turned the handle, to throw open the door, but it did not move. It was locked inside.

He thumped on the panels.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob.

He heard a sudden movement inside the study, and a catching of breath. Someone had evidently been startled by the thunderous summons at the door. Bob rattled the handle.

"Bunter!" he roared.

"Is he there?" called Wharton along the passage.

"Yes; he's got the door locked!"

"The silly ass!"

The searchers scudded along the passage and gathered round the door of Study No. 1. There was a heavy thumping on the panels.

"Bunter!" roared Bob. "Bed-time, you fat idiot! Unlock the door!"

"Come out, Bunter!"

"Wingate will be after you in a minute, you fat duffer!" shouted Harry Wharton. "Come out at once!"

There was no answer from within the study, and the door was not opened.

Vernon-Smith stooped and put his eye to the keyhole.

Then he gave a yell.

"Great Scott!"

"What's the row, Smithy? Nothing happened to Bunter, I suppose——"

"Burglars!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"What?"

"Bunter's not here—I couldn't see him, anyhow! There's a Hindu at your desk, Wharton!"

"A Hindu—at my desk!" stutered Wharton.

"Look!"

The captain of the Remove, in utter amazement, put his eye to the keyhole.

Inside, the study was glimmering with the light of an electric torch. The light shone on Wharton's desk, and a man in an overcoat was stooping over the desk. The lock had already been forced, and two or three drawers pulled out, and the contents scattered. Wharton had a glimpse of the man's profile—it was that of a Hindu.

The captain of the Remove gasped.

"A burglar in a junior study!" he exclaimed. "Must be potty! Here, we're jolly well going to break in the door!"

"What's the row there?" called Wingate over the banisters. "Have you found Bunter?"

"Burglars!" roared Bob.

"What?"

"A Hindu breaking into Wharton's desk——"

"Rot!"

"Come and look——"

Wingate was on the scene in a twinkling. He stooped and peered through the keyhole.

Heedless of the clamour at the door, the hawk-faced Hindu was tearing out the drawers of the desk in frantic haste, scattering the contents far and wide as he searched eagerly for what he wanted.

"Great Scott!" gasped Wingate. He jumped up.

"A blessed burglar!" said Johnny Bull, in wonder. "What the thump can he want in your desk, Wharton?"

"Give it up!" said Harry. "There's nothing there of much value—only a few pounds, anyhow!"

Wingate strode along the passage and grasped the heavy form that stood in the window recess.

"Lend a hand here!" he called.

"What-ho!"

The form was rushed to the door of Study No. 1. It crashed on the lock with a terrific concussion.

Crash!

There was a gasp within, and the Hindu sprang away from the desk. The door shook and shivered, and it was obvious that it would fly open under a couple more such assaults.

Crash!

There was no time for the rascal to complete his search if he was not to be taken. He made a spring for the window.

Crash!

The lock gave way, and the door flew open with a bang. Wingate rushed into the study, with the mob of juniors in wild excitement at his heels.

They were just in time to see the dark-faced man vanish from the open window.

Wingate rushed to the window.

Below him the ivy was shaking and rustling as the man descended, hand-below-hand, with reckless hurry, and the activity of a monkey.

"Stop!" roared Wingate.

The man did not even look up. In the December dimness Wingate caught only a glimpse of him descending rapidly.

"We can cut him off in the quad if we hurry!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Come on!" shouted Bob.

The juniors went scampering down the stairs. Mr. Quelch met them in the lower hall, amazed by the uproar from the Remove passage.

"Boys, what—what—" he began.

"Burglars, sir!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Wingate came speeding down the stairs. He rushed to the door, and tore it open.

"Come on!" roared Johnny Bull.

The juniors rushed on past their astonished Form-master, after Wingate, into the misty quad. They tore round the house to the wall under the windows of the Remove passage.

A shadow loomed for a moment in the mist, and there was a pattering of running feet.

"He's off!" yelled Nugent. "After him!"

The escaping thief had reached the ground less than a minute before the crowd arrived on the spot. He fled into the mist and darkness, and there was a roar behind him, and a frantic rush in pursuit. All Greyfriars was alarmed now, and a hundred fellows had turned out into the quad.

There was little chance of running the fugitive down now that he was free in the darkness and shadowy mist. But the Greyfriars fellows did their best. They scattered among the elms, and shouted to one another, groping their way in the gloom. Bob Cherry stumbled over something that moved and wriggled, and immediately he grasped it and held on, and yelled:

"I've got him!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

A MYSTERY!

BOB CHERRY'S voice rang through the winter night.

"I've got him! Bear a hand here! I've got the brute!"

" Good ! Hold on to him ! "
" Bring a light, somebody ! "
" Hang on, Bob ! "

Bob Cherry's prisoner did not resist. He wriggled on the ground under Bob's grasp, and that was all. He seemed incapable of resistance. Neither did he utter a word, save for a faint inarticulate gurgle.

A dozen fellows were quickly on the spot, grasping the prisoner on all sides, groping in the gloom for a grip on him.

Mr. Quelch came hurrying up with a lamp.

" What—what—what is it ? " he gasped.

" Got him, sir ! "

" The burglar, sir," said Bob, breathlessly. " He was crouching here, and I fairly stumbled over him— "

" Got him safe, sir ! " said Nugent.

Mr. Quelch brought the light nearer, and it glimmered on the prisoner, who wriggled feebly in the grasp of the excited juniors. Then there was a startled yell.

" Bunter ! "

" It's Bunter ! "

" My only hat ! " gasped Bob Cherry.

The prisoner was released as suddenly as if he had become red-hot. The juniors blinked at Bunter in utter astonishment.

" He is tied up ! " said Mr. Quelch.

" He—he seems to have something in his mouth. A—a—a gag, apparently ! Release him at once, my boys ! "

Many hands were already at work releasing Bunter. The fat junior was soon free, and he sat up and spluttered.



As Mr. Quelch shone his torch on the prisoner, there was a startled yell, and the juniors dropped the prisoner as if he were red-hot. " It's Bunter ! My only hat ! " gasped Bob Cherry.

"Grooooooh!"

"What has happened, Bunter?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Grooooooh!"

"Bunter——"

"I'm c-c-cold——"

"Take the boy indoors," said Mr. Quelch. "Take him into my study, to the fire. All juniors will go indoors at once! Wingate, will you request the Sixth to help you in searching for the—the burglar?"

"Can't we help, sir?" asked Bob.

"You may go indoors, Cherry."

The Removites reluctantly gave up the hunt. As a matter of fact, it was pretty certain that the mysterious Hindu was, by that time, well outside the walls of Greyfriars, and far on the way to safety. Wingate and the Sixth-Formers made a thorough search, however.

Harry Wharton & Co. marched Bunter into Mr. Quelch's study. The fat junior was shivering and stuttering with cold. He squatted before the fire, and rubbed his fat hands, and gasped and groaned. To the questions the eager juniors showered upon him he made no answer whatever. He was too busy looking after his own comfort.

Mr. Quelch came in at last. He was looking very disturbed and a little cross.

"Have they caught him, sir?" asked Wharton.

"No; he appears to have escaped," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall telephone to the police at once. Bunter!"

"Ow! Yes, sir?"

"Kindly tell me how you came to be in the state in which we found you!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Were you attacked by the man who seems to have attempted to commit a robbery here?"

"Ow! Yes, sir."

"Tell me what happened, as briefly as possible."

"I—I was taking a walk for—for exercise before going to bed, sir," said Bunter. "Suddenly a fearful ruffian leaped on me, and pointed a pistol at my head, and said 'Hands up!'"

"Keep to the facts, Bunter!"

"Oh! Ah! Yes, sir. I mean, he took hold of my throat, sir, and showed me a knife."

"Not much difference!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Well, what then, Bunter?"

"He—he asked me about the candles, sir."

"Candles!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir, candles."

"Are you wandering in your mind, Bunter?"

"Nunno, sir."

"Do you mean to say that that unknown man came here to steal candles?" exclaimed the Remove master.

"Yes, sir. Wharton's Christmas candles."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch.

"It must be some practical joke."

"It wasn't, sir! He made me point out Wharton's study, and tell him where the candles were, sir. Then he tied me up, sir, and shoved something into my mouth, and stuck me under the tree, sir. It was frightfully cold. And—and I've lost the tarts, sir——"

"The tarts?"

"I—I mean I hadn't any tarts!" gasped Bunter, catching Vernon-Smith's eye at that moment. "Nothing of the kind, sir! I—I was shivering and freezing and shuddering and dying of cold, sir, and—and then some silly idiot came walloping over me—that silly fool Cherry, sir——"

"Oh!" murmured Bob.

"And that's all, sir," said Bunter. "I think I'm going to be seriously ill from—from exposure, sir, and—and if you don't mind, I'd rather stay in bed all day to-morrow, sir. My meals could be sent up to the dormitory."

"Can you explain this, Wharton? What are these candles to which Bunter alludes?"

"Inky—I mean, Hurree Singh—sent us four Christmas candles, sir," said Harry. "They're not to be lighted till Christmas Day. I can't understand why anybody should want to steal them. They can't be worth more than a few shillings."

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Quelch. "Are these—these candles still safe, Wharton?"

"I haven't looked, sir. I never thought about them."

"I will go with you to your study, Wharton. All the others will go to their dormitory immediately."

The Removites cleared off, Bunter going with them with many deep groans.

Harry Wharton and the Remove master proceeded to Study No. 1.

That celebrated apartment was in wild disorder.

The lock of the door was smashed, the window was wide open, and the drawers of Wharton's desk lay about the floor, and papers, books, pens, all sorts and conditions of articles were scattered on the carpet. The electric torch used by the burglar was still there.

Mr. Quelch switched on the light.

"Now look for the candles, Wharton," he said.

"Certainly, sir!"

Wharton opened the secret drawer of his desk, in which the box of candles had been placed. The drawer was not much of a secret; the

burglar certainly would have discovered it if he had been given time. Fortunately, he had been interrupted before his search could extend so far.

"Here they are, sir—quite safe!"

"Let me see them."

Wharton opened the box, and the Form-master looked at the four big coloured candles, knitting his brows.

"It is an extraordinary thing that a burglar should desire to possess himself of such things," he said.

"Why did Hurree Singh send these to you, Wharton?"

"A sort of Christmas present, I suppose, sir."

"It is very odd."

"He said they're not to be lighted till they're on the Christmas-tree, when we shall get a surprise."

"Is it possible that some article of value may be concealed in them," said Mr. Quelch. "Something in the nature of a surprise-package. Evidently the Hindu attached some value to them, as he ran such risks in coming here to steal them."

"Looks like it, sir," agreed the captain of the Remove, regarding the mysterious candles very curiously.

"I shall inform the police immediately of this occurrence, Wharton. In the meantime, these candles had better be locked up in the Head's safe. If they are really of value they are not safe here."

And Mr. Quelch carried off the box of Christmas candles with him; and Harry Wharton, very much puzzled, proceeded to the Remove dormitory.

It was long before the Removites slept that night!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

OFF FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

THERE was a great deal of excitement at Greyfriars the following day, on the subject of the attempted

burglary. Inspector Grimes came over from Courtfield, and interviewed Wharton and Billy Bunter and the Head, and inspected the set of Christmas candles. He smiled sceptically as he looked at the candles, evidently under the impression that they were not really the thief's objective. The affair was puzzling enough, and the inspector promised to investigate it, and he took his departure.

The Christmas candles remained locked up in the Head's safe till break-up day, and in a day or two the excitement was forgotten. The candles, valuable or not, were safe enough now, and it was not likely that the thief would venture to return.

Harry Wharton & Co. debated whether they would write to the nabob an account of what had happened, but they decided that there was no use in bothering Hurree Singh with the affair. The nabob's peculiar present was safe now, and that was all that mattered.

The Co. kept their eyes well open for any dark gentleman who might show up in the neighbourhood during the following days; but no dark gentleman dawned upon them. And, in the excitement of the approaching holidays, they soon ceased to give the affair much thought. It was arranged that Wharton was to take the candles home with him when the school broke up, as his chums were going with him. The party were to travel up to London on the morning of Christmas Eve, to arrive that day at the mansion of Inky's esteemed relative the Jam.

So when the Greyfriars fellows scattered to the four corners of the kingdom for the Christmas vacation, the box of candles reposed at the bottom of Wharton's trunk. The rest of Inky's guests went their various ways, to meet again on Christmas Eve

at the Jam's mansion. Billy Bunter waved a genial good-bye to the Co. when they changed trains for Wharton Lodge.

"See you again Christmas!" called out Bunter.

"Bow-wow!" answered the Co. in chorus.

"If you like, Wharton, I'll come along with you now, and we'll travel up to Inky's place together——"

"Rats!"

"Yah!" yelled Bunter.

And they parted.

Harry Wharton & Co. had to change trains a second time for Wharton Magnus, and they were careful to see to the transfer of the baggage. A man, wrapped in a heavy overcoat, and deeply muffled against the cold, with a cap drawn down over his brows, came along to the guard's-van, and at sight of the juniors, walked up the platform quickly. Bob Cherry glanced at him, and then looked after him rather fixedly.

"That chap's a Hindu," he said.

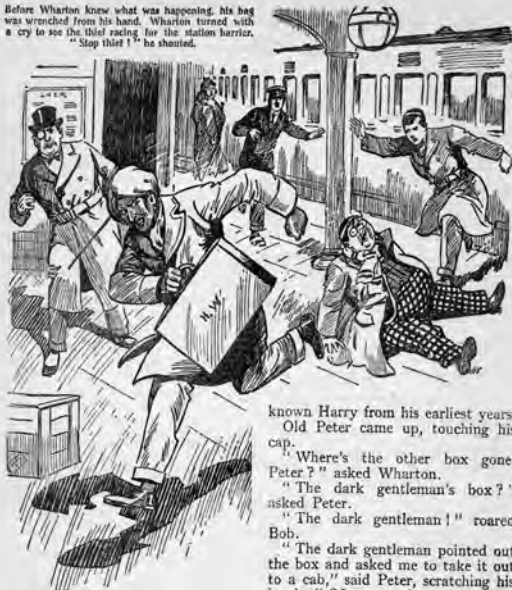
"After the giddy candles?" grinned Nugent.

"Well, he's a Hindu! I saw his chivvy!" said Bob. "We'll jolly well keep our eyes open. Of course, there's plenty of Hindus about, but a chap can't be too careful, considering what's happened."

"Right enough!" agreed Wharton.

At Wharton Magnus, a little country station, the four Removites left the train. Colonel Wharton was there to meet his nephew, and they chatted on the platform for a little time, while the other passengers cleared off. Bob Cherry, remembering the importance of looking after the baggage, hurried along the platform to where the trunks had been deposited. There were three boxes in a row.

Before Wharton knew what was happening, his bag was wrenched from his hand. Wharton turned with a cry to see the thief racing for the station barrier. "Stop thief!" he shouted.



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob. "Where's your box, Wharton?" "What?"

The juniors came racing up.

"Wharton's box isn't here!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Has it gone on in the train? Where's the porter?"

"I saw it put out," said Harry.

He called to the old porter, who had

known Harry from his earliest years. Old Peter came up, touching his cap.

"Where's the other box gone, Peter?" asked Wharton.

"The dark gentleman's box?" asked Peter.

"The dark gentleman!" roared Bob.

"The dark gentleman pointed out the box and asked me to take it out to a cab," said Peter, scratching his head. "Of course, there ain't a cab 'ere, but I told 'im he could get a fly from the Wharton Arms——"

"Come on!" shouted Bob.

The juniors rushed out of the station. Colonel Wharton followed them at a more leisurely pace, while old Peter stood scratching his head in perplexity. It was evident that the dark gentleman who had travelled by

the train had designs on Wharton's box, and pretty clear that he was the same Hindu who had attempted to burgle Study No. 1 at Greyfriars. It was a daring attempt, and had the juniors been a little less watchful it would certainly have succeeded. The porter had carried out the box at the dark gentleman's behest, without the slightest suspicion that it belonged to another passenger.

But the juniors were in time.

Outside the station the box reposed on the pavement, and a taxi was just driving up. The coated and muffled Hindu was calling to the driver as the vehicle arrived.

"Quick! Take up my box! I am in a great hurry!"

"That's the man!" roared Bob Cherry.

The Hindu spun round.

Harry Wharton & Co rushed straight at him. For a moment the man hesitated, his black eyes blazing at the juniors. But he evidently realised that the game was up. He turned, and fled along the village street, leaving the box where it stood, and the driver of the taxi blinking after him in astonishment.

"Chase him!" yelled Johnny Bull.

The juniors scudded in pursuit. But the dark man was out of the village in a minute, and he darted away down a misty lane and vanished. Harry Wharton & Co. slackened down.

"No good chasing him across the fields in the mist!" said Harry. "We shall never get him! Come back!"

The juniors returned to the station. They found Colonel Wharton awaiting them there.

"Well, what does this mean?" asked the colonel, eyeing the breathless juniors curiously.

Harry Wharton explained, and the party started for Wharton Lodge. The

colonel tugged thoughtfully at his white moustache.

"It's pretty clear that there's something valuable about Hurree Singh's Christmas candles," he said with a smile. "It's rather odd how that dark fellow has got on the track of them, however. You will have to be careful in taking them up to London, Harry."

"I jolly well won't let them go out of my hands on Christmas Eve!" said Harry. "He won't get another chance at them, the rascal! He must have been waiting for the break-up at Greyfriars, and must have watched us leave the school——"

"Chance for Drake if he had bagged them!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We could have set Drake to elucidating the 'Mystery of the Missing Candles'——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors arrived at Wharton Lodge in great spirits. During their brief stay there, before starting for London, nothing was seen or heard of the mysterious Hindu. And when on Christmas Eve, the chums of Greyfriars caught their train, Harry Wharton carried the precious candles in his own bag, which he did not even trust to the hands of a porter. And, so far as the juniors could see, there was no dark gentleman on the train. And they arrived at the London terminus without adventure, and feeling that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's mysterious Christmas present was safe at last.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

ROBBED!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"My only hat! Bunter!"

"Bunter—you boulder!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stepped from their carriage, and were greeted on

the platform by no less a person than William George Bunter. The Owl of the Remove grinned at them genially.

"Thought I'd meet your train!" he remarked. "I happened to hear you mention the train you were coming by at Greyfriars, you know——"

"You fat bounder!"

"The other fellows have come up," said Bunter. "I've seen Vernon-Smith and Toddy and Browney, and two or three more. They crammed into a taxi to drive to Inky's place. The beasts wouldn't give me a lift—— I—I mean I refused their pressing offer of a lift, because I thought I'd better wait for you fellows. Inky would like us all to arrive together, wouldn't he?"

"I don't think he'd like you to arrive at all!" said Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Buzz off!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"You fellows can lend me some things, of course," said Bunter. "I see you've brought your bags. I thought I wouldn't bring any luggage. I'll carry your bag for you if you like, Wharton."

"Let it alone!"

Bunter chuckled.

"Got those precious candles in it?" he grinned. "I suppose you're going to agree to my having one of them, Wharton?"

"Cheese it!"

"I hate selfishness!" said Bunter reprovingly. "Well, shall I call a taxi for you fellows? There's rather a rush on them. It won't take us long to drive to Trumpington Square. Take care of that bag, Wharton. There's a dark gentleman on the platform somewhere. I saw him in the crowd. May be the same chap——"

"Keep your eyes open, you fellows!" said Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

The Greyfriars juniors passed the barrier and gave up their tickets, and Bunter parted with his platform-ticket. The Owl of the Remove stuck very close to the Co. With all his nerve, Billy Bunter seemed to prefer to arrive at the Jam's mansion in company with Harry Wharton & Co. Evidently he hoped to insinuate himself into the Christmas party under the wing, as it were, of Inky's special chums. Outside the barrier there was a jostling, hurrying crowd of people going to catch trains or coming away from trains, and the chums of the Remove found themselves separated. Billy Bunter caught hold of the sleeve of Wharton's coat and hung on grimly, quite determined not to be shaken off in the throng.

"Let go, you ass!" exclaimed Harry.

"Oh, really, old chap——"

"You fat duffer——"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter. "I've dropped my umbrella! Silly ass jostled me——"

"Let go my coat!" roared Wharton.

"Shan't! You're not going to dodge me! Lemme get my umbrella!" howled Bunter.

Still grasping Wharton's sleeve with one tenacious hand, Billy Bunter stooped and groped for the fallen umbrella with the other. Two or three people jostled him, and the Owl of the Remove sat down and roared. Wharton was half dragged over by Bunter's grasp on his arm. He shook himself angrily, but the Owl of the Remove was not to be lightly shaken off. At the same moment someone hurried by and crashed against Wharton, almost sending him staggering over Bunter. A grip

fastened on his right wrist, twisting it suddenly and savagely, and almost before he knew what was happening his bag was wrenched from his hand.

Wharton turned with a cry.

"Stop thief!" he shouted.

He had one glimpse of a man in an overcoat, muffled up, who plunged into the jostling throng and disappeared. Wharton would have rushed furiously after him, but Bunter caught at his coat again and held on.

"I say, Harry, old chap——"

"Let go!" shrieked Wharton, dragging at his coat.

"But I say——"

Wharton wrenched himself loose. He darted into the crowd in the direction the thief had taken; but the man and the bag had vanished.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry came through the crowd with Nugent, and Johnny Bull arrived from another direction. "Anything up, Harry?"

"The bag——" gasped Wharton.

"What?"

"It's taken——"

"My hat!"

"That fool Bunter was holding me!" gasped Wharton. "Somebody twisted my wrist, and grabbed it and cleared! It was the Hindu, of course—the man we saw at Wharton Magnus! The bag's gone—and the candles——"

"Great Scott!"

Bunter came up gasping.

"Wharton, you beast, I've lost my umbrella! You'll have to buy me a new umbrella! It was all your fault——"

"Shut up!" howled Wharton.

"It was a jolly good umbrella—cost three guineas——Yaroooh!" roared Bunter as Wharton, out of all patience, thumped his hat and flattened it over his eyes.

Billy Bunter was busy with his hat for some time, and the chums of Greyfriars held a hurried consultation.

"Drake!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"What about Drake——"

"He's the man!" said Bob, with conviction. "We're seeing him at Inky's, you know——"

"He mayn't be there yet—most likely not——"

"Cut off to Baker Street," said Bob. "We'll go to the station police here about the bag, and you cut off to Baker Street for Drake; and if he's left, keep on to Inky's, and see him there. Jump into a taxi, and don't lose a tick!"

"Good!" said Wharton. "It's the best thing."

"Get a move on!"

Harry Wharton ran for a taxi followed by Bunter.

"Baker Street, driver, as fast as you can—Ferrers Locke's house."

"Yes, sir!"

The taxi glided away.

It stopped at last outside the house of the famous Baker Street detective.

A handsome fellow of about Wharton's age had just come down the steps with a bag in his hand. There was a taxicab waiting, and he was about to step into it. Wharton leaned from his window and shouted:

"Drake!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER

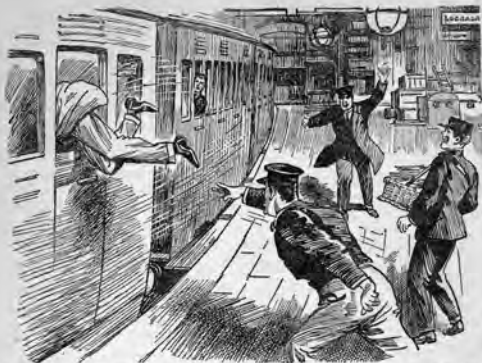
THE DETECTIVE ON THE CASE!

JACK DRAKE glanced round in surprise.

His face brightened at the sight of his old school-fellow. He turned from the waiting taxi and hurried towards Wharton.

"Hallo, old top!" he exclaimed.

"Jolly glad to see you!" He shook hands with Wharton through the window. "I didn't know you were



Jack Drake was determined not to miss the train. As it was steaming out, he raced up, grasped a carriage door, and heaved himself through the window head first.

calling for me. I was just off to Inky's——"

"Something's happened! I want your help!" said Harry. "Send your taxi away and jump in here, will you?"

"Certainly!"

Drake dismissed the waiting cabman and Wharton opened the door for him, and he stepped into Wharton's vehicle. Harry directed the driver to return to the station they had left, and the taxi glided away. Drake sat down facing Wharton, his bag on the floor. Billy Bunter blinked at him with a genial grin.

"So you're coming to the party, Drake, old bean?" he asked. "Jolly glad you'll be there!"

"Thanks!" said Drake, rather dryly. "You said something had

happened, Wharton. If I can help you——"

"I hope you can," said Harry. "I hardly like to turn up at Inky's place without the candles——"

"The what?" ejaculated Drake.

"I'd better spin you the whole yarn," said Harry.

And he told the story of the Christmas candles from the beginning.

Wharton had a strong hope that Drake might be able to help him, but he had to confess that he did not see how the boy detective was to do it. The man who had snatched the bag at the terminus had vanished into the crowd, and was lost in the wilderness of London. How Ferrers Locke's pupil was to get on his track was a mystery to Harry—if, indeed, he could do so at all.

"You think there's a chance?" asked Harry at last.

"I hope so," said Drake quietly. "We'll do our best, anyhow. You didn't see much of the man who robbed you?"

"Only that he was a Hindu."

"The same who tried to bag your luggage at Wharton Magnus?"

"I am almost sure. Anyhow, it seems pretty certain, doesn't it?"

Drake nodded.

"If it was the same man, he had a prominent nose, and black eyes set rather close together," said Harry.

Drake turned to Bunter.

"Does that fit the man who colared you in the quad at Greyfriars, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Good! Now tell me your yarn—just what happened to you that time," said Drake.

"I was—was pacing the quad," said Bunter. "Suddenly there was a fearful yell, and about thirty Hindus rushed at me with drawn scimitars—"

"For goodness' sake, tell Drake the truth, you fat fool!" shouted Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Let him run on," said Drake, with a smile. "I've had some training at disentangling the truth from the lies——"

"Oh, really, Drake, if you think I would tell you a whopper—or even exaggerate——"

"Get on with the washing, old top!"

Bunter grunted, and proceeded with his thrilling yarn. Evidently his tale of adventure had grown since the break-up at Greyfriars. It was now a thrilling, fearsome narrative.

But Jack Drake listened to it patiently.

Doubtless he was easily able to pick out the facts from the fiction and to reduce Bunter's startling yarn to the proper proportions.

"The man seems to have gone to Greyfriars specially for the candles?" the boy detective remarked.

"So he said," answered Bunter.

"He wanted Wharton's study, not one of the others——"

"Yes."

"He seemed to know that the parcel had been sent by post to Wharton."

"Must have," said Bunter.

"It's jolly queer how the man knew anything about the candles at all," Harry Wharton remarked.

"They contained some sort of a Christmas surprise for us; but how a stranger could get on to it is a giddy mystery! Must have been spying on Inky somehow."

Jack Drake nodded without speaking.

He sat in silence while the taxi buzzed on to the station, evidently thinking the matter out.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Nugent were waiting outside the station for Wharton. They came up quickly as the taxi stopped, and Wharton waved to them from the window.

"Got him!" said Bob Cherry, with satisfaction. "Good old Drake! Jolly glad to see you! Are you going to recapture those blessed candles for us?"

"I'm going to try," said Drake, with a smile.

"What's the first move? We've told the police here about it; but, of course, they can't do anything—the man's vanished long ago!"

"Better get on to Inky's," said Drake.

"But——" Wharton hesitated.

"We—we don't like turning up without the candles, Drake. If there's the faintest chance of recovering them——"

"I think there is," said Drake quietly. "But you told me, I think, that the candles are not to be produced till to-morrow, when they're to be put on the Christmas-tree——"

"That's so."

"Then you needn't mention to Inky that they're lost," said Drake. "I've got twenty-four hours to work in, and in that time I may be able to hand over the candles, and it will be all right."

"Good!" said Nugent. "That will be all right. Are you coming on to Inky's with us?"

"Yes; I'm a guest, you know."

"I mean, about looking for the thief and——"

"Never mind about that now."

Nugent looked surprised.

"Oh, all right! I—I thought——"

"Leave it to Drake," said Bob Cherry. "Drake has his own giddy, mysterious methods. I shouldn't wonder if he's got his eye on the thief already, and is going to produce him out of his hat like a conjurer."

Jack Drake laughed.

"It's not quite so easy as that," he said. "But you can leave it to me to do the best I can. Now let's get on to Inky's."

And the juniors crowded into the taxi and started for the mansion in Trumpington Square, the residence of the Nabob of Bhanipur and his esteemed uncle the Jam Sahib Bahadur Munny Singh.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

INKY IN ALL HIS GLORY!

BRIGHT lights gleamed from a score of windows into the December dusk. The great doors stood

wide open, giving a glimpse of a vast hall blazing with light and colour. Gorgeous Persian rugs covered the wide stone steps, and lay glimmering across the pavement. As the taxi stopped, a dusky footman, in the magnificent Oriental livery of Bhanipur, opened the door and salaamed profoundly. Harry Wharton & Co. blinked a little. They had expected Hurree Jamset Ram Singh to "spread" himself a little; but they had scarcely looked for this magnificence. From somewhere within the mansion came sweet strains of music.

"Salaam, sahibs!" said the six-feet-three of dusky magnificence, bowing to the carpeted pavement.

"Top of the afternoon, old top!" answered Bob Cherry affably.

"Will it please the huzoors to alight?"

"Blessed if I know what a huzoor is, but it will please us to alight," murmured Johnny Bull. And the juniors grinned.

They alighted.

The bags were lifted out by dusky servants in gorgeous garb, who appeared to spring from nowhere.

A fat and imposing major-domo, glittering in a jewelled turban, appeared to conduct the guests into the mansion.

In the hall, in the blaze of light, stood Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, to receive his chums.

They almost jumped as they saw him.

Inky of the Remove had vanished out of all knowledge; in his place stood the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Instead of the accustomed dress, Hurree Singh was clad in the native garb of a prince of India.

His costume, which rivalled Joseph's celebrated coat in its colouring,

glittered with jewels of price. His spotless turban was fastened with a gigantic diamond, which fairly blazed in the electric lights.

Only his smiling, dusky face was familiar.

There was a new stateliness in the Nabob of Bhanipur, but he was still the same cheery Inky of old in his friendly greeting to the chums of the Remove.

He salaamed graciously, a form of salutation never used in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, but which seemed quite in place in Inky's present magnificent surroundings.

Then he shook hands and grinned.

"Welcome, my esteemed and honourable chums!" he said. "The gladfulness of again beholding your handsome and ridiculous chivvies is enormous and terrific."

"Good old Inky!" said Bob Cherry. "I say, old bean, you're rather going it, aren't you?"

Hurree Singh grinned.

"It was the wishful desire of esteemed uncle that he should see me in proper style of Indian prince," he explained. "At first there was little difficulty in keeping excellent turban from falling off-fully. I have grown out of habit of wearing esteemed Indian headgears. But it is bit of all right and first chop style—what? I am glad to see my esteemed old pal Drake. Trot in, old beans—I mean, honour me by deigning to soil your feet upon my humble floor."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Other esteemed chums have already arrivefully turned up," said Hurree Singh. "Smithy, and Browney, and Toddy, and Squiffy, and Redwing, they are all here. But what is this?"

The nabob looked at Bunter.

Bunter wriggled forward, with his

most ingratiating smile upon his fat face.

"Jolly glad to see you, Inky!" he said. "I say, this show of yours reminds me of Bunter Court. It does, really!"

For a moment the nabob had an inward struggle. The sight of Billy Bunter did not seem to increase his pleasure on the joyful occasion. But hospitality came before everything. He salaamed to Bunter.

"The esteemed and fat Bunter is welcome," said Inky.

"Of course!" said Bunter. "I couldn't leave you in the lurch, Inky. I say, I'm rather hungry."

"Don't blame us for Bunter," said Nugent. "The fat boulder waylaid us at the station——"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"And wedged into the taxi," said Johnny Bull. "I'll sling him out on his neck if you like!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"All are welcome at this season of esteemed festivity," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Kalouth!"

The magnificent major-domo loomed up.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh spoke to him in his own language, which Bob Cherry always declared sounded to him like cracking nuts.

"Kalouth will show you to your quarters, old beans," said Hurree Singh; and the juniors passed on with the dusky major-domo.

Kalouth performed the office with great gravity and stateliness. The Greyfriars party were ushered up a vast staircase, to a suite of rooms that almost dazzled their eyes.

There was a room for every fellow, and every room of magnificent size, and furnished with Oriental gorgeousness, regardless of expense.

There they were left to their own



Facing page 112

A PRINCELY WELCOME FOR THE GREYFRIARS GUESTS!

Specially drawn for the "Holiday Annual" by C. H. Chapman.

devices for the present, to remove the stains of travel.

"I say, Wharton"—Bunter blinked into Harry's room—"I say, I haven't brought anything with me, you know. I suppose you can lend me some pyjamas?"

"My bag's gone," said Harry. "I shall have to borrow some things of someone myself."

Billy Bunter rolled towards Frank Nugent's room.

He caught sight of Jack Drake in the corridor, strolling round and looking about him. Drake disappeared amid the gigantic tubs of palms that decorated the corridor. Billy Bunter grinned and scudded into Drake's room.

A dusky valet had been assigned to each of the visitors, and Bunter found a man laying out Drake's clothes in his room.

"Speak English?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, Sahib."

"I've changed rooms with Drake. You can clear. Understand! Bunk off!"

"To hear is to obey."

The dusky valet glided noiselessly from the room. Bunter promptly locked the door after him.

Then he examined Drake's possessions with an appraising eye.

"Just about right!" he murmured.

"The bags will be a bit tight; but I can manage. I shall have to slit the waistcoat at the back; but the dinner-jacket will cover that up. It's all right. I hope dinner won't be late. This Eastern magnificence is all very well, but the grub is the principal thing!"

Billy Bunter proceeded to dress—in Drake's clothes. There were several slits and splits by the time he had finished; but they were all covered up successfully, and Bunter surveyed the

final result, in a tall pier-glass, with great satisfaction.

When he strolled downstairs he felt a slight inward trepidation. He could not help wondering whether Jack Drake might not recognise his own clothes distended on Bunter's fat person.

To his relief, Drake did not appear.

Where he was, or what he was doing, Bunter neither knew nor cared; he was not interested in the pupil of Ferrers Locke. But he was glad that Drake was out of sight.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

FACE TO FACE!

"DIN DAS?"

Two glittering, black, hawk-like eyes fixed upon Jack Drake questioningly, suspiciously.

"That is my name, sahib! What does the sahib desire?"

"A few words with you."

"The hour is late, sahib."

"My business will not wait!" said Drake quietly.

The Hindu eyed him.

The scene was a Bloomsbury lodging-house, and the Hindu stood at the door of a room, which he had opened to Drake's tap.

It was evident that the dark man would have been glad to close the door again, and shut out his visitor; but there was something in Drake's manner that made him hesitate.

"What is the sahib's name?" he asked at last.

"Drake."

"I do not know the name."

"You may have heard the name of Ferrers Locke," said Drake.

Din Das started. Evidently the name of the celebrated Baker Street detective was known to him.

"I am Ferrers Locke's assistant,"

said Drake. "Will you let me in now, Mr. Din Das?"

The Hindu compressed his lips.

"You have no business with me," he said. "I refuse to admit you." He made a movement to close the door.

Drake put his foot into the doorway.

"Do you prefer me to call in the police?" he asked.

"The police?"

"There is a constable within call."

Again the Hindu hesitated. Then he opened the door wider.

"The sahib may enter!" he said sullenly.

Drake stepped into the room. Din Das closed the door, and stood with his back to it, his glittering black eyes fastened upon the boy detective. Drake gave a careless glance round him. The shabby sitting-room communicated with a bedroom, of which the door was ajar.

"And now, what is your business, Sahib Drake?" asked Din Das, in a low voice that had a ring of menace in its tones.

"I have come for the bag you stole from Harry Wharton at the railway terminus."

"Sahib!"

"With the nabob's candles in it," said Drake.

Din Das breathed hard. His black eyes, set close together over a beak of a nose, glittered like diamonds.

"The sahib talks in riddles," he said coldly. "I know nothing of a bag and candles."

Drake smiled.

"Listen to me, Din Das," he said quietly. "You are a member of the Jam Sahib Bahadur Munny Singh's suite. You are on leave of absence from his service. This evening I have been making inquiries at the Jam's

house, and learned about you from Kalouth."

"For what reason, sahib?"

"I will explain. Four Christmas candles—of some unknown value—were sent to Wharton at Greyfriars by Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Shortly after he received them a Hindu attempted to steal them from the school."

"I know nothing of it!"

"The same man repeated the attempt on Wharton's way home, after the school broke up," continued Drake. "He made a third attempt at the London railway-station, and succeeded."

Din Das shrugged his shoulders.

"I know nothing of it!" he repeated. "Why do you come to me?"

"I questioned Kalouth," continued Drake. "I figured it out that only a member of the Jam's suite could possibly have known of the existence of the candles—he must have seen Hurree Singh preparing them, and learned all about them—and that was only possible to a resident in the Jam's mansion."

The Hindu smiled sarcastically.

"The Huzoor Jam Bahadur has a hundred servants," he said. "Why do you come to me, who have been absent from the huzoor's mansion for more than a week?"

"Because you have been absent," smiled Drake. "I have a good description of the thief at Greyfriars and I have seen every member of the Jam's suite, and he is not among them. I wanted to find one who was absent, and I learned all I wanted to know from Kalouth. I am looking for a Hindu with a prominent nose and close-set black eyes, Din Das. Do you recognise the description?"

Din Das did not answer, but he breathed hard.

"Kalouth told me of you, not knowing why I asked," said Drake. "You are the only member of the Jam's suite absent from his house. It must have been a member of his household who learned about the Christmas candles, and knew that they were of great value. I learned from Kalouth where to find you, and now I have seen you I recognise the description. Do you follow me?"

The Hindu did not speak.

"If you prefer I will call witnesses to prove that you are the man, and charge you with the theft," said Drake. "I would rather avoid a scandal, and take back the stolen goods without fuss. You know very well that Bunter could identify you, as well as several other fellows. Do you care to stand the test?"

The Hindu's black eyes were restless.

It was evident that he had deemed himself secure and unsuspected, and that he had only to avoid the Jam's house while the Greyfriars fellows were there, to escape any possible suspicion.

He had not counted upon the pupil of Ferrers Locke.

"I am here to take Wharton's property," said Drake. "Return it to me, and go your way. The Jam will



Jack Drake's eyes were on the watch as the train stopped with a shrieking of brakes. A carriage door swung open farther along the train, and a lithe, swarthy figure leaped out on to the track!

be warned of your dishonesty, and that is all. Refuse, and you will be arrested! Take your choice! I give you one minute."

He waited quietly.

Din Das made a gesture of resignation.

"The young sahib is very clever," he said. "The game is up. You will

find the bag in my bedroom." He waved a dusky hand towards the half-open door.

"Good!" said Drake.

He stepped to the doorway and glanced into the bedroom. On a chair lay a bag, still locked. But the side had been gashed open with a knife. Several articles were streaming out of the gashed side of the bag, and Drake did not need telling that the box containing the candles had been removed.

He looked back at Din Das.

"It is the candles I want!" he said. "You will hand them to me, Din Das. I do not intend to take my eyes off you."

"To hear is to obey!" said Din Das.

He passed the boy detective, and went into the bedroom. As he passed through the doorway a sudden change came over him. Drake was on the alert, but he was not prepared for the Hindu's sudden action.

The bedroom door slammed in his face in a twinkling.

Drake hurled himself on it the next moment.

Click!

The key turned on the other side.

"Open this door!" shouted Drake savagely.

He heard the sound of a drawer being dragged out. Dropping on one knee, he looked through the keyhole. From a drawer Din Das was taking an oblong box, the box containing Hurree Singh's Christmas candles.

He slipped it under his coat, into an inside-pocket, and turned to the window. There was no other door to the bedroom.

Drake sprang up and seized a chair, and crashed it on the lock of the door.

Crash, crash, crash!

In a couple of minutes the lock

cracked open, and Drake hurled back the door and rushed into the bedroom. He sprang to the open window. Outside was a rusty rainpipe clamped to the wall. And as Drake looked down into the misty gloom, he caught a glimpse of the nimble Hindu dropping to the ground.

The boy detective did not hesitate.

He swung himself from the window, and clambered down the pipe with the activity of a monkey.

As he sprang to the ground there was a sound of pattering footsteps, and he followed the sound through a misty entry into the street. In front of the house there was waiting the taxi in which Drake had come. He shouted to the driver.

"Have you seen a man—a Hindu—running—"

The chauffeur nodded.

"Yes, sir. There was a taxi just passing, and he jumped into it. There he goes!"

Drake gritted his teeth. It was sheer ill-luck that a belated taxi should have been passing at that moment. The escaping thief had taken instant advantage of it. Drake stared down the misty streets, and caught the winking lights of the speeding taxicab.

"Quick!" he panted. "After it! Don't lose sight of it! Two pounds if you run it down!"

"Jump in, sir," said the driver, all alacrity at once.

Drake sat panting in the taxi as it throbbed in pursuit of the escaping thief.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER RUN DOWN!

"STAND back!"
Jack Drake raced across the platform.

The night express for Dover was

just on the move. A porter and a guard jumped towards the boy detective on either side. But Drake eluded them, and tore at the door of a third-class carriage, the nearest at hand. The door was locked.

"Stand back!"

Drake did not heed.

From the window of a carriage farther up the train a dark face looked, and two black, jetty eyes scintillated.

Din Das had reached Charing Cross Station only a few minutes ahead of his pursuer. In the station yard Drake had left the taxi, a couple of currency notes on the seat for the driver. There was no time to stop. He ran into the station. It was easy to pick up the track of a hatless Hindu. Drake had barely time to take his ticket at the booking-office, where Din Das had taken one a couple of minutes previously, and race for the train.

Din Das grinned breathlessly as he watched from his window. The carriage door was locked, and the porter's extended hand was only a yard behind Jack Drake.

But the boy detective was not to be beaten.

He grasped the door, of which the window was down, and fairly shot into the carriage, head first.

His heels disappeared from the eyes of the astonished porter behind him.

The train was moving.

There was an exclamation of amazement from two or three passengers in the carriage. They blinked at Drake.

"Nearly lost it, young 'un!" remarked one.

Drake picked himself up breathless, and nodded with a smile.

"Nearly!" he said. "A miss is as good as a mile!"

Drake sat down next to the window.

He was in the same train with Din Das. He knew that. The Hindu's desperate flight had not thrown him off the track. He could guess the thief's object. But for his discovery by Drake, Din Das would undoubtedly have remained in London, and resumed his place in the Jam's household after the Greyfriars fellows were gone. That was impossible now. The thief could only hope to save his plunder and his liberty.

Drake looked out of the window, and smiled as he saw a dark face projecting from a window three carriages away.

The Hindu's eyes blazed at him, and then the dusky head was withdrawn from view.

The express raced on, gathering speed.

It was not a corridor train, or Drake would have proceeded to the Hindu's carriage at once. But he was not uneasy.

He had only to watch the train, and alight as soon as Din Das alighted.

The train slowed down.

Drake looked out watchfully. But there were no lights of a station; the train seemed to be stopping on the open track.

"What's up, I wonder?" said the passenger who had spoken to Drake before. "There's no stop here. Something's wrong."

"Somebody's pulled the communication-cord," said another.

Drake's eyes gleamed.

He knew that the express must be nearly half-way to Dover now, in open, lonely country. He could guess who had pulled the communication-cord.

The train stopped with a shrieking of brakes, and Drake's eyes, from his window, were on the watch.

A carriage door swung open, and a lithe figure leapt out. One flashing glance was cast towards Drake's carriage as the Hindu fled into the night.

Drake did not hesitate a second.

He squeezed through the window, dropped to the track, and darted off. The guard was coming along the train with a lantern, and he shouted to Drake. The boy detective did not heed—he scarcely heard.

He could hear the Hindu running and stumbling down the steep embankment in advance, and he had no eyes or ears for anything else.

There was a fence at the bottom of the embankment, and Drake caught a glimpse of a clambering figure. The next minute he was over the fence, in the lane on the other side.

Behind him the lighted windows of the train were gliding away; the express was in motion again. With a rattle and a roar, the train plunged on through the night.

Drake did not heed it.

On the wind the sound of pattering feet came to his ears, and he ran in steady pursuit.

Stars were glittering in the sky overhead. In the dim light Drake caught sight of the fugitive again, and realised, with a thrill of triumph, that he was gaining on him.

Closer and closer he drew to the fleeing figure.

The Hindu stopped at last.

He spun round, panting, and there was a glitter of cold steel in the starlight. Drake stopped as the knife flashed before his eyes.

His hand went into the pocket of his coat. The Hindu, his lips drawn back in a snarl from his white, set teeth, made a spring at him like a tiger. Jack Drake's hand flashed up with a levelled revolver in it.

"Stand back!" he rapped out.

The Hindu was almost upon him, but he leapt back from the levelled barrel. He stood panting, gripping the knife, his dusky face ablaze with rage and hatred.

"Drop that knife!" said Drake curtly.

Din Das muttered a savage curse in his own tongue. But he did not dare to come on in face of the revolver. He could read in the boy detective's face that he would not hesitate to pull the trigger if it were necessary.

"Drop that knife, or I'll put a bullet through your arm, Din Das!" said Drake, in low, steady tones.

Clang!

The knife clattered on the ground.

"Step back!"

Jack Drake advanced, and the Hindu, panting, receded, and Drake kicked the knife away into a ditch.

"Now put up your hands, Din Das!" he said firmly. "Mind, if you try any tricks I'll drop you where you stand!"

With a glare that spoke volumes of hate, the Oriental lifted his dusky hands above his head.

With the revolver in his right hand ready for use, Drake tore open the Hindu's coat with his left.

The pocket where the box of candles had been thrust sagged heavily. Drake thrust his hand into it, and drew out the box. The black eyes blazed at him.

Drake dropped the box of candles into his overcoat pocket. The prize was recovered at last.

Din Das stood trembling with rage.

Drake never allowed his eyes to move from the Hindu's face. Din Das muttered something under his breath, turned on his heel, and in a moment



Bump! "Ow! Yow-ow! If you burst——" howled Bunter. Bump! There was a rending sound of parting cloth. That second bump had done it—with fatal results to Drake's trousers!

had disappeared. Drake gave a sigh of relief, smiled, and set out for the nearest village to hire a car.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

LIGHT AT LAST!

"MY only hat! The cheek of the worm!"

Thus Bob Cherry. The chums had gathered in one of the magnificent rooms on the ground floor of the stately mansion. And Billy Bunter was with them. It was the clothes which Bunter wore which brought forth Bob's ejaculation.

Billy Bunter was wearing a pair of evening trousers only too evident not his own—they were so tight he could hardly move.

"The rotter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "They're Drake's bags

he's got on. And Drake—— Bump him, you fellows!"

"Look here——" began Bunter.

The juniors did not stop to hear what Bunter wanted to explain. They grasped him and whirled him off his feet.

Bump!

"Ow! Yow-ow! If you burst——" howled Bunter.

Bump!

There was a rending sound of parting cloth. That second bump had done it—with fatal results to Drake's trousers.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Merry Christmas! Good old English game! What, what!" chuckled the genial Jam.

Suddenly, even above Bunter's roars, there came to the juniors' ears the sound of a car in the road outside

Harry Wharton caught his breath as he heard the car stop. The thought was in his mind at once that it was Drake. Bob Cherry's eyes met his.

"Drake!" whispered Bob.

"I—I hope so——"

Harry Wharton hurried down the stairs. He was in time to see Drake enter, bowed in by the magnificent major-domo.

"Drake, old chap——"

"Here we are again!" Drake smiled. "Am I in time?"

"Yes, if—if——"

"I've got them. Here they are."

"How on earth——" began Wharton.

Drake laughed.

"It's a long story," he said. "I'll tell you another time!"

Harry Wharton returned to the festive gathering, with the box of candles in his hand. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled as he entered. It looked as if the captain of the Remove had been to his room for the box of candles, and Inky little dreamed of what strange scenes that box had been through, or of the boy detective's desperate night's work to recover it.

"Got it?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Wharton held up the box.

"Oh, good!"

"My esteemed chums, place the honourable candles on honourable tree, in places arrangefully prepared."

"Right-ho!"

The four Christmas candles were arranged on the tree, each with the label attached bearing the name of the owner. The juniors gathered round curiously. Jack Drake came in, looking merry and bright, as the candles were arranged, and the Jam Bahadur lighted them with a long taper.

The juniors watched breathlessly as the candles burned. They were aware that something was going to happen.

Pop!

It was a little explosion as the first candle burned down half an inch. Pop, pop, pop, came from each of the candles in turn.

"My hat!"

Out of each of the candles, as the explosion came, rolled a little ebony box.

Wharton and Johnny Bull, Nugent and Bob Cherry picked them up in wonder.

The lids snapped open.

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, Inky, you old ass!"

From each of the little boxes blazed a magnificent diamond pin! There were exclamations of admiration as the diamonds blazed and sparkled. Harry Wharton & Co. stared at them blankly. They had expected a surprise, but they had not expected this!

The nabob smiled beamingly.

"This is the little delightful surprise and honourable Christmas present to esteemed pals!" he explained.

"So that was it!" murmured Drake. "No wonder that dark beggar was after the candles, when he knew what was hidden in them!"

"Good old Inky!"

For the rest of that festive evening four Greyfriars juniors were adorned with sparkling diamond pins. The diamonds were too magnificent to be worn at Greyfriars, certainly, but they were quite in keeping with Harry Wharton & Co.'s present gorgeous surroundings. And before the merry party broke up for bed Jack Drake was called upon to tell the story of the recapture of the precious prize. And the whole party, from the Jam and the nabob to Billy Bunter, listened breathlessly to the story of the mystery of the Christmas candles.

THE END

A Chip of the Old Block!



By GEORGE E.
ROCHESTER

THE FIRST CHAPTER

BOUND FOR ARIZONA

MR. PIGGOTTY, the family lawyer, laid down his papers on the dining-room table. Removing his spectacles, he polished them with his handkerchief, and said:

"And that, my boy, is the position."

"I see," said Trevor Ringwood Stalkington—popularly known as Stalky—late of the Fifth Form at Ravenscourt. "What it amounts to is that Uncle William, my guardian, has died practically penniless, and there's not enough money left to keep me at Ravenscourt."

Indian Bend in Arizona is a far from healthy spot for a tenderfoot school-boy who is looking for gunmen. But "Stalky," fresh from England, has the murder of his sheriff uncle to avenge!

"That, unfortunately, is precisely how the matter stands," assented Mr. Piggotty. "I'm afraid it will be impossible for you to return to Ravenscourt even for the duration of the

present term. You must find a job, commercial or otherwise, without delay. I have some little influence in certain

quarters, and I may be able to obtain for you a post in some bank or office—"

"No, thank you, sir!" cut in Stalky with a grimace of distaste. "I'm afraid I couldn't stick either a bank or an office, sir. I'd go completely crackers sitting on a high-legged

stool totting up ledgers all day. I've had a letter——"

He produced it from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Piggotty. Taking it, the little lawyer adjusted his spectacles and read the hastily-written scrawl :

" Indian Bend,
" Arizona.

" My Dear Stalky,—Piggotty's cable just received re your Uncle William. Dreadfully sorry to hear the sad news. To get down to brass tacks, I'm afraid William can't have left much, as in the last letter I had from him he said he'd been badly hit financially in the City. If you find yourself up against things, why not join me out here? Needless to say I'd be more than delighted to see you. Am enclosing a money draft which will pay your passage should you decide to come. If you happen to have made any other plans keep the cash for any purpose you wish,

" Yours As Ever,

" UNCLE DICK."

" H'm ! " said Mr. Piggotty dubiously, folding the letter and handing it back to Stalky. " I've never had the pleasure of meeting your Uncle Dick, but I believe—er—h'm—that he's always been something of a rolling stone."

" Yes, he's knocked about all over the world," nodded Stalky, " tackling any job he fancied which came along. At the moment he's acting as sheriff in Indian Bend. It's a pretty tough spot as well, I believe, from what he's told me in his letters. The last two sheriffs of Indian Bend both died with their boots on."

" Really ? " exclaimed Mr. Piggotty. " Heart failure brought on by the dry and intense heat, I presume ? "

" Oh, no," said Stalky. " They were shot in the back—both of them. That's why Uncle Dick took the job on. The citizens of Indian Bend couldn't find anyone else to take it."

" Then if that is the case, I'm astonished at your Uncle Dick inviting you to join him out there," said Mr. Piggotty sharply. " You're not going, of course ? "

" I most certainly am," said Stalky firmly. " I'd twenty thousand times rather be out on the prairie, living in the open air, than sitting cooped up in a stuffy office all day. I'm sending Uncle Dick a cable this afternoon and I'm booking my passage on the first available boat."

In vain the little lawyer tried to dissuade him, pointing out the manifold disadvantages of taking up residence in a town where the citizens apparently thought nothing of shooting the sheriff through the back.

Stalky was determined to go. Since his earliest years he had looked upon his adventurous Uncle Dick with something pretty near to hero-worship, and the prospect of joining him out in the Golden West more than reconciled Stalky to having to leave Ravenscourt.

Three days later he was on the high seas bound for America and Indian Bend. On reaching New York he telegraphed his Uncle Dick, telling him of his arrival, and two mornings later he alighted from the train at Dry Gulch, the nearest railway depot to Indian Bend.

Stalky was the only passenger to alight at the quiet, little depot. As he stood a moment looking about him, he saw a tall, lanky cowpuncher, with two guns slung low on his belt, coming lounging towards him.

" Yore name's Stalkington, I reck'n," drawled the stranger, gazing

at Stalky with a pair of quizzical blue eyes, startlingly clear against the dark tan of his lean, sunburnt face.

"Yes, that's right," nodded Stalky.

"I'm Hank Wilson, yore uncle's deputy," explained the other laconically. "He's sent me to meet yuh. He's mighty sorry he can't git along hyar hisself, but he's kept kinda busy way back yonder at Indian Bend. Yore ready to ride?"

He indicated a couple of horses standing tethered outside the depot.

"Leave yore grip with the clerk and a buggy'll c'lect it later," he went on. "C'mon, we've got a twenty miles' ride in front of us, so we'd best be hitting the trail."

A few minutes later he and Stalky were riding for Indian Bend at an easy, effortless canter. Stalky was quite at home in the saddle, having

ridden in England since he was very young.

"How is Uncle Dick?" he asked.

"Waal, right now I reck'n he's okay, kiddo," drawled Hank. "But I'm aimin' to say there's no life insurance company what would call him a safe sort of investment. No, sir. In Indian Bend death's got a plaguey bad habit of coming mighty swift and sudden to hombres what wear the sheriff's badge."

"It's still a pretty tough spot, then?" asked Stalky.

"Tough?" repeated Hank. "Say, kiddo, it's that tough that guys there jest nat'rally chew bullets 'stead of baccy. Y'see, this hyar township of Indian Bend, being miles away from anywhere, has become a sort of hide-out for gunmen, rustlers, outlaws and suchlike guys who shoot first and talk



"What's hitting you guys that you're hanging around thisways?" rapped Hank. "Aw, h'lo, Hank!" drawled a voice. "The Britisher sheriff's bin plugged by the Kidd gang!"

after. Yore uncle's doing his best to clean the place up, but there's certain powerful factions in that there burg what are working against him behind the scenes. There's Bull Rawlins, frinstance."

"Who's he?" asked Stalky.

"He's the Big Boss of Indian Bend," answered Hank. "He owns all the saloons and gambling joints in the place. Him and Seth Spratt, the lawyer, are mighty close pards. They profess to be all for law and order and backing up the sheriff, but it's all jest boloney. They're a couple of rattlesnakes and jest as deadly. If there's any gun-play and killings in Indian Bend—apart from private quarrels—it's a plumb safe bet that either Bull Rawlins or Seth Spratt or both of 'em are behind it sumwheres."

"But they never come out into the open, eh?" asked Stalky shrewdly.

"No, kiddo, never!" answered Hank. "They're too blamed cunning for that. But there's no cattle rustling or bank hold-ups within a hun'erd miles of Indian Bend what they don't git their whack out of. The trouble is, it's so blamed hard to git proof."

"But I suppose there are some decent citizens in Indian Bend?" asked Stalky.

"Mighty few, kiddo, mighty few!" replied Hank. "And them what are decent are so plumb scairt of them what ain't that they jest lie low and say nuthin'. I tell you, it's more'n yore uncle and me kin do to raise a posse when one's needed, which is most about every other day."

As they rode on he told Stalky various tales of the wildness and lawlessness of Indian Bend.

"And there she lies!" he said when, during the afternoon, they approached a small, straggling town-

ship situated on the bank of a winding creek which cut through the dry and sun-baked prairie. "A real skunks' hole or buzzards' roost, whichever yuh like to call it."

"Yes, but I can understand Uncle Dick taking on the job of sheriff here," said Stalky. "It's just the sort of risky job that would appeal to him."

"You've said it!" agreed Hank heartily. "He's a real, one hun'erd per cent guy from the soles of his feet up, yore Uncle Dick, and if Bull Rawlins' gang don't git him afore he gits them, he'll clean up Indian Bend good and proper."

By this time he and Stalky had reached the outskirts of the little township. As they rode along the dusty, straggling main street which, even to Stalky, seemed strangely deserted, Hank suddenly rapped:

"Gosh snakes! Lookee yonder!"

Ahead of them, clustered outside a wooden building, was a crowd of men from whom came an excited buzz of conversation.

"That's yore uncle's shack—the sheriff's office!" ejaculated Hank. "Sumthing's happened! C'mon!"

Jerking his horse into a gallop he thundered along the street, with Stalky galloping by his side. As they reached the crowd of men gathered in front of the sheriff's office, Stalky thought he'd never seen such a rough, unprepossessing-looking bunch.

Every man had one gun or more slung in loosely-swinging belt holsters, and on many of the guns were some pretty sinister-looking notches.

"What's the trouble round hyar?" rapped Hank, reining in his horse almost to its haunches and swinging himself from the saddle. "What's biting you guys that you're hanging around thisaways?"

"Aw, h'lo, Hank!" drawled a



"I know nothing about the Kidd gang," said the big man angrily. "Shet your trap, Rawlins!" grated Hank. "I'll talk to you and these other coyotes in a minute!"

voice. "Tain't nuthin' much, I reckon. The Britisher sheriff's bin plugged by the Kidd gang an' folks is saying he's dead!"

With a glare at the speaker, who was a man swarthy of face and with a drooping, black moustache, Hank thrust his way roughly through the press and strode into the office with Stalky treading close at his heels.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

"GET OUT OR THEY'LL GET YOU!"

THERE was a group of men in the office, all talking in low, excited voices. Two of the men Stalky noted at once were wearing city clothes.

One of the men was a huge, massively built fellow with a great bull-neck, heavy features and cruel little

eyes. The other was small and spare, with a wrinkled, yellowish face, shifty eyes, and a twist to his mouth which gave it the expression of being twisted in a permanent grin.

"Out of the way!" grated Hank, elbowing the pair of them savagely aside and bending over an old-fashioned horse-hair sofa on which was lying a man whom Stalky recognised in an instant as his Uncle Dick.

Uncle Dick's shirt had been ripped open, disclosing an ugly bullet wound. His face was sunken and deathly and there seemed to be life only in his eyes, which were fixed on Stalky.

"Hallo, lad!" he gasped, his livid lips twitching in a brave but fleeting smile. "You—you've got here, then, and—and just in time, I reckon."

"Who did it, Dick?" cut in Hank.

"It—it was the Kidd gang who got me," gasped the dying sheriff. "But—but that hound was behind it!"

His eyes blazed with momentary fury as they flickered towards the big, bull-necked man.

"You're raving, sheriff!" said the big man angrily. "I know nothing about the Kidd gang——"

"Shet your trap, Rawlins!" grated Hank. "I'll talk to you and these other coyotes in a minit!"

Stalky was kneeling down by the side of the dying man, whose limp hand he had taken in his. Stalky could see that the sands of life were running swiftly out for his uncle whom he had come so many thousands of miles to join.

"Listen, uncle," he said steadily, although his face was white. "Can you hear me?"

"Yes, Stalky," whispered the other.

"I'm glad I'm here in time," said Stalky, keeping his voice under control by an effort, "and I want you to know that I'll never leave here until the curs who shot you are brought to justice!"

With the last remnants of his fast-ebbing strength, Uncle Dick shook his head.

"No, Stalky, no!" he whispered. "You've got to go—to get out. If you try to interfere they'll get you—like they got me——"

"Perhaps so!" said Stalky grimly. "But I'm not quitting!"

He felt his uncle's fingers clasp convulsively on his.

"No, you'll never quit, Stalky," whispered the dying man, a look of pride and affection in his dimming eyes. "You never were—the sort to quit. Good-bye, lad, and—and God bless you!"

With the words, Uncle Dick's head fell back and those around knew that life had fled. Obeying Hank's touch on his shoulder, Stalky rose, his face white and set, his eyes cold and hard.

"Waal, yuh jackals," said Hank harshly when he had covered the still and lifeless form with a blanket, "p'raps yuh'll put me and the kiddo wise as to how this hyar shootin' comed about?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the big, bull-necked man whom Stalky correctly took to be Bull Rawlins, the saloon and gambling-joint owner. "I'm still waiting to hear the details myself."

"Oh, yeah!" drawled Hank icily. "I s'pose none of youse know how it happened, hey? There ain't none of youse even so much as clapped an eye on the Kidd gang, hey?"

"Yes, we hev!" growled a voice. "They rode through the town less'n an hour ago and that's when it happened!"

"Is thasso?" said Hank, eyeing the speaker. "Waal, as you seem to knowsumthing about it, Snake Cooper, s'pose you tell us jest exactly what did happen!"

"There ain't nuthin' much to tell," replied Snake Cooper sullenly. "Everybody knows that ever since the sheriff said he'd wipe the Kidd gang out, they've bin waitin' to git him. Waal, upwards of an hour ago they rode into town, the whole six of 'em, and pulled their hosses up outside the office here. 'Hey, sheriff!' bawls Big Pete, the leader. 'Hey, sheriff, c'm out. We wanna word with yuh!' Waal, out walks the sheriff jest as cool and unconcerned as if he'd jest come out for an airing. 'So it's you coyotes, is it?' he begins when he sees who his visitors was; then afore he could let out another word

the six of 'em was banging away at him with their guns. He didn't expect it coming as quick as that. He didn't hev a chance. He jest reeled for'ard and went down, but afore he hit the side-walk the Kidd gang was burning the wind outa town the way they'd come. The whole thing was over in less'n a minute—and that's how it happened, Hank!"

"I git you, Snake," said Hank grimly, "and I ain't misbelieving you none!" He looked at Bull Rawlins. "And I ain't misbelieving the sheriff none when he said you was behind this, Rawlins," he went on. "You and this skinny buzzard, Seth Spratt!"

He indicated the little, yellowish-faced individual, whose grinning, twisted mouth screwed into a snarling:

"Curse ye, Hank Wilson! Whad-yeer mean by that? Neither Bull Rawlins nor me knows anything about the Kidd gang!"

"Don't ye?" retorted Hank. "Yuh didn't git yore share, I s'pose, when they held up the bank over at Arrow Head 'bout ten days ago? Oh, no! It wasn't you nor Rawlins, neither, nor one of the dirty crooks what works for yuh, who tipped them off that the sheriff had got wise to their hide-out away in the Blue Hills yonder. Oh, no! You're quite the real innocents, aren't yuh, you and Rawlins?"

His voice rose to a roar.

"Waal, git out of hyar, the whole b'iling lot of youse, or if you wanna come out into the open and shoot it out hyar's yore chance!"

He was standing with shoulders hunched, his hands hovering above his loaded six-guns. But his challenge wasn't accepted. Instead, Bull Rawlins drawled:

"You're clean crazy, Hank, to

associate Seth Spratt and me with the Kidd gang, or with any of the other crooks around here. We've never had anything to do with them, as one day you'll find out unless you keep a more civil tongue in your head!"

With that he turned on his heel and moved towards the door, Seth Spratt and the rest of the men following him outside into the street.

Closing the door and locking it on them, Hank turned to Stalky.

"I'm sorry, kiddo," he said quietly. "There ain't nothing more I can say than that. If yuh care to stay the night here, you're more'n welcome; then in the mawning you'd better hit the trail back to the railroad depot —"

"No!" cut in Stalky. "I'm staying here, Hank, and I'm not leaving Indian Bend until that Kidd gang has been arrested for shooting down Uncle Dick!"

"Say, lissen, kiddo, you dunno what you're saying," protested Hank. "The Kidd gang'll never be took. There ain't a hombre here in Indian Bend that'll ride out in a posse agin them. You kin trust Bull Rawlins and Seth Spratt to see to that. 'Nother thing, it wouldn't make no diff'rence if a posse did ride out agin them. The Kidd gang hev got a hide-out in the hills yonder what an army couldn't take. Yore Uncle Dick trailed 'em there, and even he was beat as to how to smoke 'em out of it."

"What's the place like?" demanded Stalky. "What sort of a hide-out is it?"

"It's a basin in the hills," explained Hank. "On all four sides the cliffs rise up as straight as a wall. A long, narrow gulch, bone dry and full of loose stones, leads up to a narrow gap no more'n a couple of yards wide in the wall what faces the foothills.

That's the only possible way into the basin and one man could hold it agin an army, for they'd have to advance in single file up the gulch."

"I see," said Stalky. "And they've always got a guard set, I suppose?"

"You bet you they have!" assented Hank. "They've got a guard set day and night!"

"But suppose we could raise a posse," said Stalky. "Wouldn't it be possible to creep up the gulch under cover of night and rush the place?"

"Nary a hope!" answered Hank. "I tell you, kiddo, that gulch is plumb full of loose stones. In the stillness of them lonesome hills, a posse couldn't git within two hundred yards of the head of the gulch without being heard and jest mown down with gun fire. No, the gulch is hopeless, kiddo!"

Stalky was silent for a few moments, his brow puckered in thought.

"How high are the cliffs?" he demanded suddenly.

"Aw, up'ards of a hundred feet or more," replied Hank. "But you can't git in that way, neither. I tell you, they rise up as sheer as a wall from the bottom of the basin. There ain't a foothold for a cougar, let alone a human being!"

"What are the tops of the cliffs like?" demanded Stalky. "Are they bare or wooded?"

"Wooded," replied Hank. "But don't you git no ideas into yore head about lying up there and picking the Kidd gang off one by one as you spot 'em. On the other side of the basin, exactly opposite the head of the gulch, the cliff overhangs and its right in there that they've got their hut built. You can't reach it with a bullet except from the head of the gulch, and that would mean firing

right across the floor of the basin, if you git me."

"Yes, I get you," nodded Stalky, "but I'm not thinking about lying up there in the woods trying to pick them off. I've got another idea altogether. You listen to me!"

Hank listened. As he did so, he stared harder and harder at Stalky, bursting out almost before the boy had concluded:

"Gosh, snakes, kiddo, but it's a chance! I'll try it, blamed if I won't."

"You mean we'll try it," corrected Stalky.

"You?" ejaculated Hank. "Nossir, you're not in on this——"

"Oh, yes, I am!" cut in Stalky firmly. "It's my idea and two guns'll be better than one. Don't stare like that, man. I can shoot all right. I learned shooting as well as riding in England."

"But listen to me," began Hank agitatedly. "If anything goes wrong us'll be trapped like rats down yonder and jest shot to pieces——"

"We've got to risk that," cut in Stalky, "and if we're careful nothing need go wrong. It's no earthly use your arguing, Hank—I'm going!"

Hank looked at him.

"Yeah, you're jest like yore uncle," he opined. "Jest a chip off the old block. Okay, kiddo, we'll ride together!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

ROARING GUNS!

DUSK had deepened into night when Hank and Stalky saddled a couple of fresh horses and rode quietly out of Indian Bend. They wished to avoid being observed, if possible, but neither of them cared very much if they were seen, for it would never be suspected for an instant by the citizens of Indian Bend

that Hank and the boy were riding out single-handed to tackle the murderous Kidd gang in their impregnable hide-out in the hills.

Once clear of the township, however, they jerked their horses into a long, raking gallop which quickly ate up the miles as they thundered through the night towards the hills.

The night was warm, and Stalky

that they were forced to abandon their horses. Taking several lariats from the pommels of their saddles, they left the horses hobbled in a hollow where there was a little sparse grass. Then, with Hank in the lead, they pressed up and up into the hills.

Half an hour's stumbling and climbing brought them to a dark belt of stunted timber.



Stretching themselves full length at the edge of the cliff, Stalky and Hank took careful stock of the position. "Yonder's the entrance, y'see—the head of the gulch," muttered Hank, pointing.

was riding in shirt, breeches, and riding boots only. About his waist was strapped his uncle's belt, with two cleaned and loaded six-guns in the twin holsters.

Before they reached the distant foothills, a prairie moon had swung up into a cloudless sky, bathing the dry and rolling rangeland in silvery light.

When well up into the foothills, the going became so rough and steep

"We're here!" muttered Hank, his hand laid warningly on Stalky's arm.

He moved cautiously on through the timber, then suddenly halted. Stalky also had halted, standing rigid and motionless as he stared down into a deep basin filled with moonlight and shadow directly below him.

The basin was about a quarter of a mile in diameter, and roughly circular in shape. The floor was grey and

stony in the moonlight, and as Hank had said, the cliffs dropped sheer and precipitous to their base a hundred feet or more below.

Stretching themselves full length on their stomachs at the edge of the cliff, Stalky and Hank took careful stock of the position.

"Yonder's the entrance, y'see—the head of the gulch," muttered Hank, pointing across the basin towards where a narrow, black gash showed in the moon-bathed cliff. "There'll be a guard there, but he'll be under cover behind a boulder, watching the gulch. The hut of the gang's directly below us here, hidden underneath the overhang of the cliff."

"Righto!" said Stalky. "Suppose we get busy!"

Crawling back into the black shadow of the timber, they went swiftly to work knotting into one long length the lariats which they had brought with them.

"I reck'n she's plenty long enough," said Hank at length when the last knot had been securely fastened and the long rope neatly coiled. "C'mon."

They moved away along the rim of the cliff until they came to where the moon was directly behind them and the cliff below them lost in inky-black shadow.

Tying one end of the rope to the foot of a tree and testing the knot by hauling the whole of his weight on it, Hank quietly paid out the rest of the rope until its full length was dangling down the dark, steep face of the cliff.

"Stalky," he muttered, laying his hand on the boy's arm, "lemme go alone, for there'll be no coming back this way. Once down there we're down for good, and if anything goes wrong—"

"Dry up!" cut in Stalky in a low

voice. "I'm going and I'm going now!"

Gripping the rope, he slithered over the edge of the cliff and commenced to slide down and down into the inky-black darkness.

He descended slowly and carefully, scared stiff of bumping against the cliff face and dislodging some stones which would fall with a clatter to the floor of the basin and raise the alarm.

Down and down he went, down into what would have seemed a bottomless pit had it not been for the moon-bathed floor of the basin beyond the black shadow of the cliff.

Suddenly he reached the end of the rope and hung there, his legs dangling in space. His face was pale and set, for the worst had happened. He and Hank had misjudged the height of the cliff and their rope was not long enough to reach the basin floor.

Stalky peered down into the darkness, striving desperately to gauge the distance of the drop between himself and the floor of the basin.

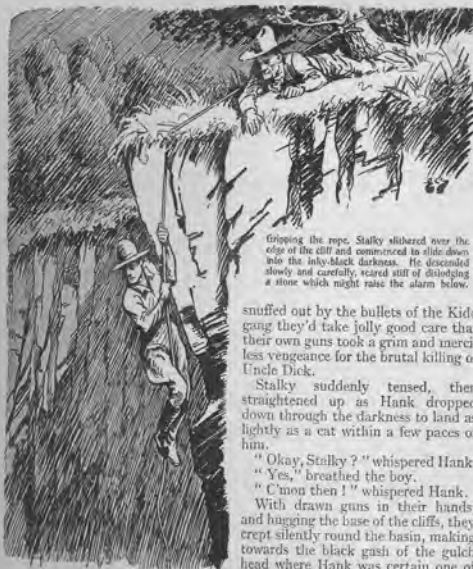
It was impossible to do so. He could see nothing below him except impenetrable darkness. Well, there could be no turning back now. He had come too far for that.

Easing himself a further few inches down the rope until he was gripping the very end of it, he released his hold and dropped down into the blackness.

He had relaxed every muscle so as to fall as lightly as possible, and next instant, with a fervent but stifled gasp of relief, he landed on his toes quite safe and sound.

Thank goodness the drop had not been a big one, he thought as, moving aside, he crouched rigid and motionless, waiting for Hank the while he peered about him with watchful eyes.

But one thing was very certain now. If anything went wrong in their daring



Gripping the rope, Stalky slithered over the edge of the cliff and commenced to slide down into the inky-black darkness. He descended slowly and carefully, scared stiff of dislodging a stone which might raise the alarm below.

snuffed out by the bullets of the Kidd gang they'd take jolly good care that their own guns took a grim and merciless vengeance for the brutal killing of Uncle Dick.

Stalky suddenly tensed, then straightened up as Hank dropped down through the darkness to land as lightly as a cat within a few paces of him.

"Okay, Stalky?" whispered Hank.

"Yes," breathed the boy.

"C'mon then!" whispered Hank.

With drawn guns in their hands, and hugging the base of the cliffs, they crept silently round the basin, making towards the black gash of the gulch head where Hank was certain one of the gang was on guard.

Suddenly Hank halted, tense and motionless, his lips at Stalky's ear.

"D'yuh smell it?" he breathed.

"Yes," whispered the boy as there came to his nostrils the faint aroma of cigarette smoke.

"Off with your boots," breathed Hank, beginning silently to remove his own.

attempt to capture the six members of the murderous Kidd gang, there could be no escape by means of the rope which dangled too far overhead to be within reach.

But Stalky was determined that nothing should go wrong. True, both he and Hank might never live to leave the basin alive, but before they were

A few minutes later they were crawling stealthily forward again, moving like shadows towards the boulders which marked the entrance to the basin.

The aroma of cigarette smoke was stronger now; then suddenly both Stalky and Hank froze. For within twelve paces of them the end of a lighted cigarette had described a glowing arc in the darkness as the guard threw it from him.

Long before this, the eyes of Stalky and Hank had become well attuned to the darkness and they could see the figure of the guard seated propped against a boulder, his back to them as he stared away down the gulch.

"Wait here!" breathed Hank. "There's no good both of us going!"

Next instant he was creeping silently forward towards the guard. Stalky waited, tense and rigid, eager to be with Hank, but knowing full well that one could do the job swifter and more neatly than two, who might get in each other's way and bungle the job at the crucial moment.

Silently as a shadow, Hank drew to within a couple of paces of the guard, who, blissfully unconscious of the impending attack, was sitting humming softly to himself, a rifle across his knees.

Next instant Hank leapt forward like an uncoiled spring, his gun whipping up to crash down on the guard's skull. With a grunt, the man reeled sideways, knocked out to the wide and never knowing what it was that had hit him.

A moment later Stalky had joined the jubilant Hank and together they bound the unconscious man with his own belt and handkerchief.

Apart from his rifle, he was armed with two loaded six-guns, Hank taking one and Stalky the other.

"Waal, that leaves five of the skunks," muttered Hank, staring across the basin towards a square glimmer of light which was the window of the hut. "I wonder when this hombre's due to be relieved?"

"We're not waiting for that!" said Stalky grimly. "I was always taught in the O.T.C. at school that the essence of attack is surprise. Come on!"

"Okay!" assented Hank.

Making a detour and moving as swiftly as was possible without their boots, they silently approached the lighted window of the hut. Reaching it, Stalky cautiously raised his head and peered in. Next instant he had ducked again and was breathing in Hank's ear:

"Four of 'em's sitting playing cards at the table. The fifth is lying on his bunk watching 'em!"

"Okay!" whispered Hank. "Now be ready to shoot—and shoot to kill if they go for their guns!"

He moved silently for the door of the hut. Without a sound his fingers groped for the latch. Next instant he sent the door crashing violently open and grated:

"Up with yore hands—the lot of you!"

The four card players and the man on the bunk stared for one split instant at the man and the boy whose four guns were covering them menacingly from the doorway.

Then with lightning-like swiftness they whipped into action, their guns leaping as though by magic from their holsters. But already the guns of Stalky and Hank were roaring into life, orange flame vomiting viciously from the blue-black barrels as the hut reverberated to the crashing roar of exploding cartridges.

Every bullet from the blazing guns of Stalky and Hank tore straight to its mark, for both were expert shots and the range was much too short to allow of a miss.

They shot for gun hands and shoulders and before the roar of their guns had died away, the five outlaws were cursing and moaning

street they were met by Bull Rawlins, Seth Spratt and a crowd of citizens.

"So you've come back," said Bull Rawlins. "We've been wondering where you'd got to."

"Aw, we've jest bin having a look round, I reck'n," drawled Hank.

"Yeah, we figgered you hadn't gone for good," grinned Bull Rawlins,



Hank sent the door crashing open. "Up with yore hands—the lot of you!" he grated. The four card players and the man in the bunk stared in astonishment at the man and boy covering them with four guns.

and clutching at their wounds, completely incapable of offering the slightest further resistance.

"Okay, Stalky, search 'em for weapons while I keep 'em covered," said Hank, "then we'll tie 'em up and tote 'em over to the county marshal at Fork Creek!"

It was sundown when next Stalky and Hank rode into Indian Bend. In the straggling and dusty main

"because the kid's grip's arrived from the railway depot."

Still grinning, he turned to Stalky.

"Us citizens of this high-toned township reckon you had a mighty poor welcome here yesterday," he said. "It was real tough you getting here to find them nasty Kidd hombres had bumped your uncle off. So we've had a meeting to figger out how we can sort of make it up to you, and whadyer think we've done?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Stalky coolly, staring at the man's grinning face.

"We've decided to offer you our services to help round up the Kidd gang," guffawed Bull Rawlins, whilst a great shout of laughter went up from the crowd with him. "I reckon it's a handsome offer and it shows the respect what we had for your uncle. Haw, haw, haw!"

He bellowed with laughter; then wiping his streaming eyes he went on in a mocking voice:

"So now you'll be able to get after them nasty, rough Kidd fellers and round 'em up. You can't let 'em get away with killing your uncle, son!"

"He hasn't!" drawled Hank. "He got 'em last night—the whole gang of 'em. Him and me's just been totin' 'em over to the county jail at Fork Creek!"

"What?" gasped Bull Rawlins. "Whadyer say? You've got the Kidd gang? Say, you're pulling our legs!"

"Oh, no, we're not," said Stalky. "I shan't need your help after all, Mr. Rawlins, or your pals either. In the meantime, d'you mind getting out of the way and taking your grubby pals with you. Hank and I want to get past. Thanks awfully!"

The dumbfounded crowd parted to give them passage, and riding on, Hank and Stalky dismounted outside the sheriff's office.

"I reckon you won't have no more trouble in Indian Bend, kiddo," said Hank dryly. "Them guys will give you a dry berth in future, I'm thinking."

"Thanks to you, Hank," said Stalky gratefully, holding out his hand.

THE END



ROOKWOOD RHYMES—

TOMMY DOYLE

(of the Modern Horse).

THE "Tommies" on the Modern Side

Are only three in number;
But, causing havoc far and wide.

They seldom seem to slumber.
With Jimmy Silver and his host

They wage perpetual warfare;
And every day fresh scars they boast,
Yet nothing could be more fair.

There's Tommy Cook and Tommy Dodd—

A precious pair of beauties,
Who sometimes—do not think it odd—
Neglect their daily duties.

They much prefer a rousing scrap
To Q. Horatius Flaccus;

And so do most of us, mayhap—
Therefore, the masters whack us.

Another Tommy shares the spoil;

He's always known to smile and
Look pleasant; this is Tommy Doyle;

Son of the Emerald Island.
Without him, both his chums would find

The game not worth the candle;
For Doyle's is quite a master-mind—
Vast problems he can handle.

Keen, daring, eager for a jape,

He wins our admiration;
Mixed up in many a boyish scrape
And warlike operation.

The Classic heroes must admit
That Tommy Doyle's a terror;

In youthful escapades he's IT,
And seldom makes an error.

Go forth and prosper, Tommy lad;

The future lies before you!
Long may your merry japes make glad
The readers who adore you!

Your sunny smile, in calm or strife,
Is ever bright and cheering

To those who, up the hill of life,
Are gamely persevering.



TRIMBLE THE TWISTER!

By JACK BLAKE

It is Baggy Trimble's boast that he will win Herr Schneider's prize for an essay in German. But in making good his boast, the artful Baggy lays himself open to a "prize" of another sort!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

BAGGY'S BOAST!

OLD Schneider, our German master, is a queer sort of bird and does some queer things. But I think we were all surprised when he gave out in class the other day that he had decided to award a prize for the best German essay by a Fourth Form fellow.

"To he who der best essay writes in Cherman I vill a very peautiful pook give after," he told us, in his queer lingo. "Der essay must not pe more dan five hondred vorts long, and it can be about any supchet you please. Der essays for der competition to me pefore Saturday must be given."

Some of the brainy men in the Form decided to have a shot at it. I myself did not see the fun of slogging away at a German essay for the sake of a beastly book, but old Gustavus D'Arcy, my study-mate, said he would go in for it.

"Ass!" I said. "You don't know as much German as I do!"

"I must wemark, Blake, that I wefuse to be called an ass," replied the ass. "I shall w'ite an essay on

clobbah, which will easily take the pwize."

Then Baggy Trimble, our prize porker, butted in.

"It's no use you fellows going in for the competition," he said loftily. "I've decided to enter myself——"

"Against the rules," put in Cardew, shaking his head.

"Eh? What's against the rules?"

"To enter yourself. You're supposed to enter a giddy essay, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" snorted Trimble. "I mean that I'm going to enter and I shall bag the prize. Most likely old Schneider won't trouble to read your silly rot after he's read mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But what's the use of a book to you, Baggy?" asked Dig. "You can't eat it."

"He can devour it with his eyes," said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you know, a fellow could sell the book for a few shillings. It's bound to be worth that, at least.

Who will offer me five bob for it now, and chance what book it is?"

Strange to say, no fellow seemed keen to offer five bob for it.

"First catch your hare," chortled Cardew. "You've about as much chance of winning a German prize as Oxford has of winning the Derby."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's only your blessed jealousy," sniffed Trimble. "I'm the best German scholar in the Form. Old Schneider told me once that I know more German than he does."

"Phew!"

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, Baggy," said Cardew, winking at us slyly. "I'll give you a whole pound-note for the book if you win it——"

"Oh, good!"

"And a record kicking if you don't."

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're taking no chances if you are such a wonderful German scholar," grinned Cardew. "The pound is as good as won already."

Baggy Trimble looked rather thoughtful, but presently he nodded calmly.

"Done!" he said.

"Mind," Cardew warned him, "I shall kick you jolly hard if you don't bag the prize."

"That's all right. The prize is practically certain to come to me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'll have the pound now, Cardew——"

"Not quite!" chortled Cardew.

"You shall have the pound when you hand over old Schneider's prize, and not before, my pippin!"

"Just as you like," sniffed Trimble.

"I call on all you fellows to witness that Cardew has offered me a quid for the book——"

"We'll witness that," I said grimly

"And we'll witness your record kicking if you don't win it, fatty."

"Right-ho!" agreed Trimble, and he rolled away with his fat head held high in the air.

"I wonder what his game is?" Dig murmured. "The fat chump must know he has no chance of bagging the prize. He can't even translate 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' into German."

"It's some spoof, of course," grinned Cardew. "But I fancy he won't find it so jolly easy to spoof Schneider. The old bird is very downy. At any rate, we shall see what we shall see."

We kept our eyes on Baggy Trimble during the next two days. The fat scamp was obviously in the throes of composition, and—not being in the competition—I contrived to drop into his study and look over his shoulder.

At the head of a smudgy paper he had written:

"ESSAY ON LERNING,"

and his brows were contracted in painful thought as he glared at the first two sentences:

"Lerning is a beestly difficult thing. The more you lern the less you kno."

I roared, and Trimble blinked round angrily.

"You rotter! You're trying to cheat off me."

"Steady on, old bean," I answered. "I'm not going in for the prize. But, I say, Baggy, this essay's got to be in German, you know. What language is that?"

"Eh? English, of course."

"Oh, is it?"

"I'm writing it out in English first, and then changing it to German afterwards."

"Rather a weird idea, isn't it?"

German construction is different from English, you know."

"Rats!"

I reported to Cardew and the others that Baggy was obviously very much in earnest, and we waited with keen anticipation for the following Monday, when Schneider was to make the award.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

TRIMBLE'S TRICK!

BAGGY TRIMBLE was quite confident as he came into class on the Monday. We had not seen much of him after I had dropped into his study, so we hadn't the faintest idea how his essay on "lerning" had progressed. But he told us that he was certain to be the winner, so we judged he had handed it in.

Old Schneider rolled in with a bunch of papers in his paw, and Baggy beamed confidently at him. We waited breathlessly to hear the result.

"I now der final judging in der Cherman essay gomppetition have made," said Herr Schneider. "Der essays vas all eggstremely goot, and it vas vith great diffigulty dat I decided which vas der best."

"That's mine," murmured Baggy.

"Dis very goot morocco-bound volume of Schiller's 'Villiam Tell' I have decided to present to Arnest Levison for his essay on Schiller."

Baggy's face was a study. We gave Levison a clap, but Baggy took no part.

"It's a swindle!" he hissed angrily. "There must be some mistake. I'm going to speak to Schneider."



"When I turn to der last page of Trimble's essay," said Herr Schneider, "another paper from between the leaves falls out." "Oh crickey!" gasped Baggy as the German master held up the account from the Rytcombe Typing and Translation Co.

He rose up indignantly. Herr Schneider blinked at him.

"Vell, Trimble! Vat is it pefore?"

"Didn't you read my essay on Learning, sir?" demanded Baggy indignantly. "It was easily the best."

"I am coming to that in vum moment, Trimble. Sit down viz you after, ain't it. Der best essay, as I have said, vas der one of Arnest Levison; but der most perfect Cherman was in der essay by der poy Trimble, and I am going a special award to make him."

We gasped with amazement, but Baggy Trimble beamed.

"I knew there was something else," he chortled.

"Dis essay, when I read him, entertain me very mooch," said Herr Schneider, holding up Baggy's effort. "The Cherman vos most eggcellent, and I am surprised mit myself dat Trimble can have written him. But when I turn to der last page, another paper from between the leaves falls out."

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Trimble, as Herr Schneider held up a thin account form.

"Dis odder paper I see is a bill addressed to Trimble—a bill for der sum of seven shillinks and sigspence. I now to you dis bill vill read:

“RYLCOMBE TYPING AND
TRANSLATION CO.

To Master B. Trimble, St. Jim's.	
To translating into Cherman	
an essay on "Learning,"	s. d.
4 folios at 1s. 6d. . . .	6 0
To translating the original	
into English first	1 6

7 6"

There was a dumbfounded silence for a minute when Herr Schneider

ceased. We simply blinked at Baggy. We understood now the nature of his spoof. The fat villain had taken his English essay to a firm of professional translators in Rylcombe and let them do all the donkey work for the sum of seven-and-six. It was an ingenious idea, and very nearly came off.

We burst into a yell of laughter at Trimble's face.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nein, it is no matter to laugh about, mein poys!" exclaimed the German master. "Trimble have tried to deceive me mit himself, and for dat I give him one very special award. I make him an award mit my cane. Gorn out to der front mit you, Trimble."

Baggy rolled dolorously to the front of the class, and the next moment he was going through it.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yooooooooop! Ow-ow-wow!"

"Dere!" gasped Herr Schneider. "As you are so geen on learning, Trimble, perhaps you will learn not your master to deceive. Go back and sid down."

But this was not the end of Baggy's woes. After class we surrounded him and marched him off to the Common-room.

"Look here!" he roared indignantly. "What's the game, you rotters? Let a fellow go!"

"Where's Cardew?" chortled Dig.

"Here I am," replied Cardew, clumping into the room. "I just stopped to put my football-boots on."

"Yaroooooh!" roared Baggy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bend him over!" I said.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that as the weally wight and pwopah thing to do. If Twimble hadn't have upset old Schneidah, I feel suah he would

have awarded me the prize for my essay on Globbah."

We bent the fat fraud over. He had made that bargain with Cardew of the Fourth, and we were determined that he should keep it to the full.

Cardew put all his beef into the kicking. Baggy squirmed and wriggled, but we held him grimly in position. Then Gussy opened the door, we poised Baggy on the threshold and with one final kick Cardew sent him sailing down the passage.

Bump!

"Yooooooooooooooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There!" gasped Cardew. "I say, Baggy, the lists for the English Literature prize will be out this week. I'll strike the same bargain on that prize if you like."

But Baggy had picked himself up and fled. Evidently he did not want to repeat the bargain.

And it's my opinion that Baggy will think twice before he tries that game on again.

BUNTER THE BANKRUPT

By PETER TODD

POOR Bunter is bankrupt, I'm sorry to say,

He owes all his schoolfellows money,
And as he has nothing whatever to pay,

We cannot regard it as funny!

So Wharton decided to summon the Form
To come to a creditors' meeting,

Which took place on Saturday evening in
dorm,

With candles for lighting and heating.

"The prisoner Bunter," our captain began,
As the Owl stood in dock with a warder,

"Has long been well known for accosting
a man

With a tale of a large postal-order!"

Considerable laughter was heard in the Court,
With cries of "Hear, hear!" by the

claimants!

And Wharton went on to read out a report
Of all Bunter's debts—but no payments!

Then Bunter replied in a voice full of tears
(But not, I suspect, of repentance!),

"You beasts, I'm expecting a——"

Laughter and cheers

Completed the rest of this sentence.

The Court then appointed a broker's man
(Bake)

To take up possession next morning

Inside Bunter's study, and forthwith to take

All his goods off for sale without warning!

An auction was held in the usual way,

The auctioneer (Fishy) was present.

(He asked for commission, I'm sorry to say,
And found our reply most unpleasant!)

"Now, guys and galoots," he cried, "walk
up and buy

These goods and this wearing apparel;
I guess it belongs to a bankrupted guy,

And we're selling it lock, stock and
barrel!"

"What offers, you ginks, for a solid gold
watch?"

It cost thirty guineas, consider!"

It went for three ha'pence to "Oggy,"
who's Scotch!

Alas, there was no other bidder.

A couple of handkerchiefs, perfectly black,
Were knocked down by Fishy's en-

deavour,

But the rest of the wearing apparel went back
To its owners for nothing whatever!

The sum of elevenpence-ha'penny was found
As the final stupendous position!

And this was shared out at a farthing all
round

With a ha'penny to Fish for commission.

The creditors didn't seem quite satisfied

With this state of affairs, and decided

To take all the rest out of Bunter's fat hide,
And none kicked him harder than I did!

TESS STANDS BY!



by

CLIVE FENN

When Jupiter, the tame fox cub, finds himself the victim of a hunt, only Tess, his Alsatian friend, stands between him and the pursuing hounds!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE NEWCOMER

JEM TUFTON, the burly farmer of Stag's End, gave a sharp ejaculation as there came the roar of a fast motor in the narrow lane. There was the dazzling flash of headlights and a big car charged past him, the speed being such that Tufton had only just time to back into the rough growth of a hedge which grew as it liked, before the racer slid past him into the darkness, leaving the night darker than ever.

The farmer was really no friend of motor-cars, though he possessed a cracked old bus which took him round his thousand-acre holding amidst the woods and hopfields, but at that moment he did not pause to vent anger on the racing car and its somewhat unthinking driver, for there was something else to think about.

The farmer heard a quaint little whimpering cry from some animal who,

less lucky than himself, had been right in the track of the fast roadster. Tufton had eyes as keen as those of a cat. He looked down at an odd little shadow there at his feet, and, stooping, picked up the victim of the rushing car. It was a very, very small fox cub, and it moaned as Tufton lifted it tenderly enough, for he knew how to handle a living creature. The poor thing had been bowled over in the charge and, as the farmer swiftly saw, had come out of the ordeal with a broken leg.

Tufton had no special reason to feel any tender sympathy for foxes, for his poultry yard was the happy hunting ground of the tribe. But he felt compassion for the cub. It, at least, had not been through his farmyard—far too young for that sort of sport. He trudged the mile he had to go, the tiny animal nestling close to him, and giving occasional yaps of pain. Tufton was a bit of a vet in his way, and once

inside the farm kitchen he did what he could for the sufferer, fixing up the damaged leg in splints. The injured cub lay passive on the table in the roomy old kitchen of the farm as the operation went through, watching the farmer as he worked.

Why he came to call the cub Jupiter, Tufton did not know, unless it was a remembrance of the word that escaped his lips as the devastating car swept by. But Jupiter it was, and the newcomer took kindly to his name, showing a deep appreciation of his friends at Crole Farm.

There was Tufton himself, gruff, a man of very few words; his wife, a lady who spent her life between her manifold duties in her dairy and the business of the wash-house; the odd man, Potter (he looked it!), and the others, including Tess, the wary old Alsatian, a dog of few barks, but those she gave she meant.

Jupiter shared the quarters of Tess, and a subtle fellow feeling sprang up between the pair. Anyhow, Tess was very gentle with the wounded stranger, and as time went on the two became fast comrades, sharing things together like sportsmen.

There were moments when Tess despised the fox side of her chum, but then she knew that Jupiter had never actually learned to be a real fox. He was caught too young. He was not in the least interested in those things which matter to the fox most, the ugly rumours of the chase, the baying of hounds.

Fox-hunting in that part of the country had practically fallen into abeyance, the mastership being vacant and nobody troubling about jerking things back into efficiency. As a result the foxes came and went as they chose, and never did a member of the race go short of a pulpet for a meal.

But the farmer, who had suffered from depredations as much as anybody, was downright pleased when he read in the district newspaper that a newcomer to the neighbourhood, a man with little knowledge of farming, pots of cash and plenty of leisure, had taken things in hand and set the pack going again.

Tufton was interested, of course, though he had little time for hunting. He would as soon have thought of shooting a fox as he would of going minus his dinner, but, for all that, he liked to hear that the ravager of poultry pens did not have things entirely his own way, but stood a sporting chance of closing his career, brush and all, after a smart run over the hills.

There came a sudden mystery urge to Jupiter, now a fully grown fox. He was fixed up now in a comfortable hide-out underneath the woodshed, for he had grown too big for the shake-down in Tess' kennel.

And there was no stifling that urge as one long glorious summer glided into fragrant autumn, with soft velvety nights, and not even the suspicion of a cold snap in the mornings. The nights made the fox thrill with an excitement which he could not understand—those nights with the moon at the full, gliding up there in radiant beauty amidst the cloud ships, the hedges still dense, the woods brown and gold, like the bracken, a strange peaty scent in the air. They tingled in his blood.

In the old farm garden the blackberries and bullaces were ripe. In the cultivated part the dahlias flourished, and here butterflies, the Brimstone, the Blue, the Red Admiral, the Tortoiseshell, and the Peacock, floated in the misty sunshine of the fall.

Less and less did Jupiter understand the meaning of the ideas that came to him. He was free to come and go, like any other member of the farm staff. He had plenty of food. It was not a quest for provender which made him simply yearn to be off and away—where he did not know. Some throw-back, perhaps, to the feeling of an ancestor who had listened on some hillside to the hallali of the hunting horn.

The urge would not be silenced. It was not the least bit of use for Tess, who would drop in to supper, to say it was all nonsense. Jupiter knew in his bones and his brush that there was something he had been kept out of, and, hang it all, he must know!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

HUNTERS—AND HUNTED!

ONE fine morning Jupiter slipped away, into that unknown world of which he felt he was really a part, and which his family had always understood.

Too late he found out his mistake—and yet it had to be. He had been

snuffing round the countryside, and was loping along the edge of a dense wood when he heard a distant sound of shouting, then the baying of hounds, after that the hunting call. Looking back he saw a number of horsemen trotting down a rough track, and the stubble field between him and them was dotted with dogs.

They were after him! He did not know why, but he sensed there was real peril, such as he had never experienced in his snug quarters at Crole Farm.

Jupiter flashed straight at the brown curtain of the wood and was gone, but if he thought he had thrown off danger, he was vastly mistaken. The hounds were swiftly on his track, as nimble as himself at flying across a stream, and darting up a hillside thickly clothed with yellow bracken.

If that was what he had dreamed of at the farm he most heartily wished he had dreamed again! It was a thousand pities he had not listened attentively to the wise advice of old Tess.

If only he had been less cocksure!



Looking back, Jupiter saw a number of horsemen trotting down a rough track, and the stubble field between him and them was dotted with dogs. They were after him!

It was no catch, being cheived and chased, realising at any minute the savage hounds would be on top. The members of the hunt were pleased as Punch, of course. This would be the first kill of the season.

The hunt held a flush hand, though it did not know it, for, while any ordinary fox would have made a bee-line for earth, this was out of the question in the case of Jupiter, for he had no earth. He had not been brought up that way! He understood little enough of the tricks of the trade.

There was only the farm, and Crole's was far away. Jupiter could run, but not well. He was puffed already. He had run to fat. When he and Tess were out together, Jupiter went at the Alsatian's dawdling amble out of respect for years.

And now he was winded already, while his pursuers were fresh as paint. Feeling pretty desperate he spurted on, the thunder of approaching peril in his ears.

Suddenly, mixed up in all that fury, he distinguished something else. It was a bark, a strangely familiar bark. The sound made his heart leap. He knew that bark, deep and throaty. It was Tess! But Tess could not be there. She was all snug at the farm. Tess did not know her companion was out! Did she not? The truth was that soon after Jupiter had mouched off on his own, the Alsatian had roused up, shaken herself, and gone to see how Jupiter was doing. But the fox was not there!

Had the fox thrown discretion to the winds, tossed his brush, as it were, over the windmill, and gone off in search of adventure? That was what it looked like. Tess sought her pal in all likely quarters, widening her range every minute. Then she picked

up the scent, and snuffled onward. Tess was wise to what was happening. Perhaps she might be in time to do something for the wilful fox.

Meantime the chase went madly on, with the soft life the fox had lived taking toll. He was not merely ignorant of the ropes, but ridiculously out of condition for a life-and-death run.

His spirit was ebbing away. He was handicapped at every turn. He felt his enemies were closing in on all sides. He would never make a getaway! Never! He charged on, and went head over heels into a gully, the fierce baying of the hounds sounding very near.

Then came that barking he had heard before. It was like music. The bark was a boom—louder and louder. Suddenly the grand old Alsatian leaped out from nowhere, as it seemed, right on to the spot where the scared fox, beaten to the wide, confused by his tumble into the ditch, tried to back into the tangled cover supplied by the damp gully.

The hounds fancied they had got the fox. Their mistake, that! They found themselves faced by a real adversary. An Alsatian is a loyal friend, a strong ally. It can be gentle enough, or otherwise. Tess at that moment was otherwise. Her old fighting spirit asserted itself. She was game, with bared teeth and a snarl of fury.

The hounds had cause for a pause, and under cover of the new turn of affairs, Jupiter got clear away. No need to blame him! He was too frightened to be censured. There is a funk which is only pitiable, not to be condemned.

Tess was ready to do battle, and she met the charge of the hounds, the

old wolf-like strain in her make-up to the fore. The momentary hesitation of the pack saved Jupiter, enabling him to slip for safety.

The hounds tore savagely at the old dog. A score of foes tried to drag her down, but she met the lot, the blood streaming from her flanks. There was life in the old dog yet. She fought on, conscious that her chum had got away.

The M.F.H. rode up and tried to make out what was happening. It was not a bit clear.

"I'm jiggered," he cried, "if it isn't that Alsatian from Crole Farm!"

He sprang out of the saddle and made to approach Tess, but the Alsatian eyed him warily, and backed away. Then she stood licking her wounds.

"Poor beast!" muttered the M.F.H. "How was it? I saw the fox myself!"

Tess could have told him, but the dog didn't, being always reserved. The Alsatian slunk off, being too much battered, anyway, to discuss matters. She stopped more than once to lick her hurts and these were pretty bad.

Jupiter tried to thank her much later, but was told to shut up.

Naturally the M.F.H. was curious as to what lay behind it all. He knew well there had been a fox, but it had faded out. Where? Then this sporting Alsatian had jumped in to play her own rôle!

Luckily, the master of the hunt bumped into Tufton next market day, and the genial M.F.H. heard all about the tame fox. Jupiter's getaway was dramatic, and the result was welcome to the farmer, likewise to Tess, who valued her foxy pal. But Jupiter has not forgotten the panic and the spinal cold feeling when he hears the horn, and he takes good care to stay at home.



ROOKWOOD RHYMES—

KIT ERROLL
(of the Fourth Form).

KIT ERROLL, fearless, frank, and free!
So true to all his vows and,
As "H. A." readers will agree,
A fellow in a thousand!

The way he backed up Mornington
Through fair and stormy weather,
Has for this dauntless junior won
Both praise and fame together!

He stood by Mornington throughout.
He backed him up in all things;
Nor was this faithful chum put out
By mighty things or small things.
If Mornington received the "sack,"
And caused a big commotion,
Kit Erroll would be at his back,
So great is his devotion.

He also brings off many feats
In every sort of pastime;
Each cricketing achievement beats
The score he put up last time.
His style at footer's very neat,
He joins in routs and rallies;
And, once the ball is at his feet,
He very rarely dallies!

Had Erroll lived in bygone days,
A knight in shining armour,
His chivalrous and manly ways
Would win him some fair charmer.
"A very perfect, gentle knight"
Would be his reputation;
And like a lion he would fight
For freedom and the nation!

Kit Erroll, you're a splendid sort!
The girls and boys of Britain
Enjoy your deeds in school and sport,
So well and ably written.
Long may you strive to play the game,
And noble virtues cherish;
Then never shall your name and fame
Within our memory perish!

ALGY SILVER'S PAL

By OWEN CONQUEST



Algy Silver is only too pleased to welcome to Rookwood an old pal from his former school. And heedless of Jimmy Silver's warning, he allows himself to be led into serious trouble!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

JIMMY SILVER TAKES A HAND

"ALGY!"
"Can't stop!"
"I want to speak to you, Algy!"

"Oh, it will keep! Can't stop now!"

Algy Silver of the Third Form at Rookwood walked on towards the gates, leaving his Cousin Jimmy staring after him wrathfully.

Apparently Algy was in a hurry.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome, who were looking on, grinned.

Jimmy Silver's efforts to keep his young cousin in hand and look after him always entertained Jimmy's chums.

Jimmy glanced at their grinning faces, and frowned more darkly.

"Nothing to snigger at, that I can see!" he snapped.

"You wouldn't!" agreed Lovell.

"It's a lovely afternoon for the river, Jimmy. Come on!"

"I'm going to speak to my cousin."

The captain of the Fourth followed Algy to the gates, hurrying to overtake him.

Lovell bawled after him wrathfully:

"Look here, Jimmy, we're not going to hang about while you play the goat! Let that silly fag alone!"

Jimmy did not heed.

He overtook Algy Silver at the gateway and clapped him on the shoulder.

Algy turned his head irritably.

"Hallo, you again!" he exclaimed.
"For goodness' sake, give a fellow a rest, Jimmy! Can't you keep your sermon till another time?"

"Where are you off to, Algy?"

"I'm goin' to the station."

"I'll walk with you," said Jimmy quietly.

Algy sniffed, then halted.

"I don't know that I want you," he said sulkily. "If you want to know, I'm goin' to meet De Vere, who's comin' to Rookwood this afternoon. He's comin' alone, as it happens, so I specially want to meet him. I don't know how you'll get on with him."

"I thought so," said Jimmy.
"Well, it's about this kid De Vere that I want to speak to you, Algy."

"Well, don't!"

"Are you coming on the river, Jimmy Silver?" bawled Lovell.

"No. I'm going along with Algy."

"More fathead you, then!"

"Better come, Jimmy," urged Newcome. "What do you want to fool around with a Third Form fag for?"

"Fag yourself!" retorted Algy warmly. "And for goodness' sake, take Jimmy on the river, or take him to Jericho, or anywhere you like! I'm fed up with him!"

"If that young rotter were my cousin," said Arthur Edward Lovell, "I'd take him by the collar and shake him till he couldn't yelp!"

"You'd jolly well get your shins kicked!" remarked Algy.

"Let's get on the river," said Raby.

"Well, I'm going!" growled Lovell.
"Are you coming or not, Jimmy?"

"Not just now."

"Then you can go and eat coke!" grunted Lovell. "Come on, you

chaps, and let Jimmy get on with his dry-nursin'. I'm fed up!"

Arthur Edward Lovell tramped away wrathfully.

Raby and Newcome hesitated a moment or two, looking at him and at Jimmy.

Then they followed him.

They were as fed up with Jimmy's cousin as Lovell himself was.

Algy grinned at his cousin.

"Well, why don't you go with your pals?" he asked.

"Never mind that. About this new kid, Algy——"

"I'm goin' to meet him now, and I've got to be in time for the train. Go on the river, old scout. Ta-ta!"

Algy started down the lane.

The fag was dressed with unusual care that afternoon.

He was in his best Etons, his collar was spotless, his tie neatly tied, and his boots shining.

Evidently Algy wanted to make a good impression upon De Vere, his old friend at his former school.

Jimmy Silver walked down the lane with him.

Algy's eagerness to greet his old pal, and his unconcealed delight that De Vere was coming to Rookwood, worried Jimmy.

He got no thanks—rather the reverse—for playing "Uncle James" to the wilful fag of the Third.

But, easy-going fellow as Jimmy was, he had a strong sense of duty.

Jimmy was well aware that Algy had been taken away from High Coombe School chiefly to get him out of the society of De Vere and his other friends there.

It was sheer bad luck, from Jimmy's point of view, that De Vere should be coming to Rookwood this term.

But Algy was delighted at the prospect.

Algy sniffed angrily as he found the Fourth Former walking at his side.

He could not shake Jimmy off.

"Look here, Algy," said Jimmy, after a long silence, "I wish you wouldn't be thick with young De Vere while he's here."

"You can wish!" answered Algy.

"You know very well that your father wouldn't like you to know him."

"Rats!"

"Why is the fellow leaving his own school in the middle of the term?" demanded Jimmy. "There's something fishy about it."

Algy laughed.

"I fancy he's made High Coombe too hot to hold him," he remarked, with some complacency. "Old De Vere is a goey chap. The Head had him up on the carpet last time—me, too. He jawed us both—but especially De Vere. Threatened not to let him come back at all, you know. All because of a few smokes and a sportin' paper! Rats! I fancy De Vere has been kickin' over the traces again, and his people have been asked to take him away."

"And now he's coming to Rookwood!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Is our school a refuge for young blackguards kicked out of other schools?"

"He hasn't been kicked out, you ass! His people are tremendous great guns! The Head wouldn't have dared to expel him. But I think he's been pilin' it on too thick, and he's been taken away quietly."

"A nice sort of a friend for you!" growled Jimmy.

"Oh, rippin'!"

"The less you have to do with him the better."

"Thanks!"

"That means that you're going to pal with him at Rookwood, I suppose?"

"Of course I am!" exclaimed Algy hotly. "I'm only too jolly glad he's comin'! He's just my sort. I fairly danced when I got his letter sayin' that he was leavin' High Coombe, and was goin' to wangle it to make his people send him where I was. It was toppin' of him!"

Jimmy walked on in silence, his brows knitted.

They came in sight of the village, and then Algy paused.

"Look here, Jimmy," he said, "I don't want you scowlin' at my old pal on his first day here. You cut!"

"I'll meet your friend with you," said Jimmy curtly.

"I don't want you!"

"Better make the best of it, then," said Jimmy. "I'm going to meet this specimen, and see what he's like. If he's at all decent, you needn't be afraid of me."

Algy breathed hard through his nose.

"Look here, as a matter of fact, we're not goin' straight to Rookwood!" he said savagely. "De Vere's arranged specially to drop his escort at Latcham, an' come on here alone, an' we're goin' to make somethin' of the half-holiday. See? An old sober-sides like you will be in the way."

"I guessed as much," replied Jimmy grimly, "and I'm going to see that you go straight to Rookwood, both of you!"

"You shan't!" roared Algy furiously.

Jimmy did not answer that.

He waited for the fag to start for the station again, quite determined that he should not go alone.

From all that he had heard of Bertie de Vere, late of High Coombe,

Jimmy Silver surmised that he was a shady young rascal.

Algy's father, Commander Silver, was away at sea, and the gallant sailor was not going to receive bad news of his son at school if Jimmy could help it.

Algy stood for some minutes, with a lowering brow, evidently at a loss.

Jimmy waited for him to move.

"Look here, will you get off?" demanded Algy at last.

"No."

"You're an interferin' cad!"

"Good!"

"You're a meddlin' rotter!" howled Algy.

"Go it!"

The fag clenched his hands.

"By gad, if I were big enough I'd mop up the road with you, you sneakin' meddler!" he shouted.

"You're not quite big enough, Algy. But you may as well bear in mind that I'm big enough to give you a good hiding if you don't use better language."

Algy snorted, and stamped into the station.

Jimmy Silver followed him in.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

ALGY'S OLD PAL

A PASTY face looked out of a first-class carriage window as the local train from Latham stopped at Coombe.

Jimmy Silver and his cousin were standing on the platform.

At the sight of the pasty face Algy rushed across to the train, and dragged the door open.

"Hallo, old scout!" he exclaimed.

The pasty face looked down at him.

"Oh, gad, it's you, Algy!" drawled a voice, that sounded as pasty as the face looked.

"You bet!"

Bertie de Vere stepped from the carriage.

He tossed his rug to Algy, who received it as if it were an honour to carry a rug for the noble Bertie.

De Vere was a smaller fellow than Algy, but he looked older.

His face was not healthy, and his eyes were dull, and there was a peculiar bored, tired expression about him that was amazing in a lad so extremely youthful.

His tiredness, no doubt, was partly affectation, but as far as it was genuine, it was no credit to his way of life.

He looked as if he had been up late every night for weeks on end. Perhaps he had.

"This Coombe?" he asked languidly.

"Yes, Bertie."

"Dreary hole."

"Yes, isn't it," said Algy, whose policy was evidently to agree with every sentiment uttered by this model youth.

"There's a trunk somewhere," said De Vere. "I suppose they'll have sense enough to pitch it out, an' send it on. I'm not goin' to bother about it."

"I'll speak to the porter."

"Oh, do!"

The new fag stood looking about him, without betraying the slightest interest in his surroundings, however, while Algy was looking after his box.

Jimmy Silver looked at him across the platform.

He had wondered a little what the fellow was like of whom Algy had talked so much, and through whom Algy had been landed in disgrace at his old school.

The sight of the fag confirmed his worst impressions.

He came across the platform, and

De Vere's glance turned lazily on him.

"My Cousin Jimmy, De Vere," said Algy reluctantly.

De Vere nodded carelessly to Jimmy.

He did not offer to shake hands, for which Jimmy was glad.

He did not want to shake hands with the new fag.

"How d'ye do?" yawned the new fag. "Let's get out of this, Algy. You can leave that rug with the porter; you don't want to carry it round all the afternoon. We're goin' somewhere, I understand?"

"Ye-es," hesitated Algy, with a dubious look at his cousin.

"Oh, yes; you're going to Rookwood," remarked Jimmy.

De Vere stared at him.

"Perhaps we'd better get straight on to the school, Bertie," muttered Algy.

"What's the game?" said the new fag coldly. "I've dodged old Rooke at Latham—left him stewin' in his own juice—to come on here an' meet you. You told me in your letter you were goin' to show me round the village before we got to the school."

"Ye-es."

"Good gad! It's bad enough when a chap does get there. Stick out till the last minute," said De Vere. "Now, where are we goin'?"

Algy gave his cousin a helpless, furious look.

But for Jimmy's presence, Algy's



"Let go!" shrieked Algy. "Come along!" answered Jimmy. And with a grip of iron on Algy's collar, the captain of the Fourth marched him, kicking and struggling, up the lane.

programme was marked out, and would have gone off swimmingly.

That programme included some items which, if known to the school authorities at Rookwood, would have earned Master Algy the "boot" in a very short time.

Evidently such items could not be carried out with Jimmy Silver's grim face looking on.

The unfortunate Algy was in a fix.

"Well, what are we waitin' for?" asked De Vere sulkily. "I didn't come here to stand moonin' on a station platform, Algy. Might as well have stuck to old Rooke, by gad!"

"Somebody was sent with you to

Rookwood, then?" asked Jimmy Silver.

De Vere stared at him, as if not thinking it worth while to take the trouble of replying.

Finally, however, he answered.

"Yaas. Old Rooke, my old tutor. Sneakin' old worm! The pater put me in his charge, to be landed at Rookwood."

"And you dodged him at the junction?"

De Vere grinned faintly.

"I spoofed him about the time of the train, an' landed him in the buffet," he said. "I dare say he's still there. Poor old Rooke!"

Algy chuckled.

"For goodness' sake," said De Vere, "let's get a move on! Do you want me to take root to these dashed planks, Algy?"

"Come on, then," said the fag.

They walked out of the station, Jimmy Silver keeping them company.

Jimmy was grimly determined that Algy, at least, should go straight back to Rookwood.

Algy was quite aware of his determination, and he was puzzled and dismayed.

They walked down the village street together, De Vere's pasty face growing more sullen in expression.

He saw no signs, so far, of the exhilarating time Algy had promised him on his arrival.

As they came out of the village, Algy's pace slackened more and more, and his eyes gleamed fiercely.

He was in danger of angering Bertie de Vere—perhaps of losing his valuable friendship—and all through "Uncle James."

"You're leavin' us here, Jimmy," he muttered half-savagely and half-appealingly.

"Not at all," answered Jimmy

calmly. "I'm walking to Rookwood with you."

"Look here, Jimmy——"

"Come on, kids!"

"We're not goin' to Rookwood yet!" exclaimed De Vere, with an angry, puzzled stare at the two of them. "We're goin' round the village a bit first. We're not bound to be in early."

"You're not going round the village, kid," answered Jimmy, as politely as he could. "You'd better go straight to Rookwood."

"Thanks, I don't choose to."

De Vere turned his back on Jimmy.

"Where's the place you mentioned in your letter, Algy—the Bird-in-Hand?" he asked.

Algy flushed a little.

"Just down the road," he muttered.

"Some of your friends are goin' to be there this afternoon, you said."

"Ye-es."

"Those fellows, Tracy and Gower, that you've told me about?"

"Ye-es," muttered Algy.

"What are you mutterin' about? Why can't you speak out?" exclaimed the other.

"The—the fact is——"

"Well?" snapped the fag from High Coombe.

"I—I—— Jimmy, you cad," exclaimed Algy savagely, "clear off, and leave us alone!"

"To go to the Bird-in-Hand?" asked Jimmy contemptuously.

"What business is it of yours, confound you?"

"Lots."

"Will you clear off?"

"No."

De Vere looked from one to the other. He began to understand.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "That's how the merry wind blows, is it?"

You've brought your father-confessor along with you, my buck?"

"I didn't want to!" said Algy, almost crying with rage. "The cad's my cousin, but I don't want him! He's fastened on to me. I want to get rid of him!"

"Get rid of him, then!"

"How are you going to do that, my cheerful young friend?" asked Jimmy Silver.

De Vere looked at him.

"You won't interfere with me!" he said. "Come on, Algy!"

They walked on, till they came abreast of the Bird-in-Hand.

The inn, among its gardens, lay well back from the road.

"That the place, Algy?"

"Yes."

"Well, come along!"

De Vere started for the building, and Algy, hesitating a moment or two, followed him.

Jimmy Silver's grasp closed on his collar, and he was swung back.

"Let go!" shrieked Algy.

"Come along!" answered Jimmy.

And with a grip of iron on Algy's collar, the captain of the Fourth marched him, kicking and struggling, up the lane.

The time had come for drastic measures, and Jimmy Silver was not standing upon ceremony.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

ON THE RAZZLE!

"HALLO! What's the game, Silver?"

Jimmy Silver started.

He was so occupied with Algy, who was strenuously resisting, that he had not observed anyone approaching.

Bulkeley and Neville, of the Sixth Form at Rookwood, were coming down the lane together, and the two

seniors stopped at the sight of the fag struggling in Jimmy's grasp.

Jimmy released Algy at once, colouring crimson.

The fag jumped away from him, and stood panting.

Bulkeley looked at the two rather sternly.

It looked, at first glance, like a case of bullying, and Jimmy's evident confusion added to that impression.

Jimmy stood dumb and confused.

"Well," said Bulkeley severely, "what are you up to, Silver? Do you usually drag your young cousin along by the neck?"

"Nunno!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Algy, panting, his fists clenched, looked at Jimmy with gleaming eyes.

He was very well aware that Jimmy would not tell Bulkeley the cause of the dispute. "Sneaking" was not in Jimmy's line.

"I shouldn't have thought this of you, Silver!" said Neville. "I've never seen you bullying a fag before."

"I wasn't bullying him!" exclaimed Jimmy hotly.

"What do you call it, then?" demanded Bulkeley sharply.

Jimmy was silent.

"He won't let me alone!" piped Algy. "He wants to make me go back to Rookwood! Can't I stay out of gates on a half-holiday, if I like, Bulkeley?"

"Certainly you can!" said the Rookwood captain. "I'm surprised at this, Silver! Let the kid alone!"

"I—I want him to go back to the school!" muttered Jimmy.

"Well, if he doesn't choose, he can please himself, I suppose?"

"Ye-es; but—"

"But what?"

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Jimmy.

"Well, let him alone!" said

Bulkeley, frowning. "Cut off, kid! And you can get back to Rookwood yourself, Jimmy Silver, and I'll see you start! Cut!"

"I—I——"

"Cut!" said Bulkeley tersely.

Jimmy Silver, with a crimson face, moved off down the lane.

There was no help for it.

He could not explain to Bulkeley.

The consequences to Algy would have been too serious if Bulkeley had known that the young rascal was being prevented from entering one of the shadiest resorts in the vicinity.

The two big seniors walked on, leaving Algy grinning in the lane.

The fag followed them slowly, and by the time he got back to the Bird-in-Hand they had disappeared into the village.

Algy looked round for his friend.

He was a little uneasy lest the captain of Rookwood might have seen De Vere lurking about the public-house.

But the new fag was astute in his way.

He did not know Bulkeley and Neville by sight, of course, but he guessed, when he saw them, that they belonged to the school, and he had taken cover at once.

He emerged from behind a fence as Algy looked round for him.

"Hallo! You've got away from your precious cousin!" he exclaimed.

"Bulkeley made him let me go!" grinned Algy.

"Who's Bulkeley?"

"Our captain," answered Algy.

"He must have passed you, with Neville——"

"Those two fellows?" yawned De Vere. "Two spoony-looking merchants!"

"Old Bulkeley isn't a spoony!" exclaimed Algy rather warmly.

Even Algy was numbered among the admirers of the most popular senior at Rookwood.

De Vere shrugged his narrow shoulders.

"He thought Jimmy was bullying me!" grinned Algy. "So he was, too, for that matter. He made Jimmy let me go. You should have seen Jimmy's face when he went off!"

"Didn't he tell your prefect what he was stoppin' you for?"

"Of course not!"

"I don't see why."

"Well, it would be sneakin'! Jimmy wouldn't do that!"

"Quite a model character, your Cousin Jimmy!" sneered De Vere. "Perhaps you'd rather go after him, after all, instead of havin' a good time this afternoon?"

The fag coloured uncomfortably.

"Well, he is an interferin' cad, but he means well," he said. "Of course, it was like his confounded cheek to chip in as he did! I never take any notice of him, I assure you."

"Let him drop, for goodness' sake! I'm fed up with your Jimmy!" said De Vere. "Are you goin' in here?"

"Yes."

Algy, like Moses of old, looked this way and that way before he ventured into the inn garden.

The lane was deserted. Bulkeley and Neville had disappeared in one direction, Jimmy Silver in the other.

"Come on!" said Algy briskly.

He led the way into a path near the inn, from which they entered the garden at the back by a side gate.

There they were quite safe from observation.

At the back of the house, an open french window looked on the garden, and from it came the sound of the clicking of billiard-balls.

Algy looked in, rather cautiously,

and then signed to his friend to follow him in.

"Only Tracy there, with old Hook," he whispered, "and Gower!"

The fags entered.

Allen Tracy, of the Classical Shell at Rookwood, was playing billiards with Joey Hook, the sharper.

Gower was looking on, smoking a cigarette.

Mr. Hook gave Algy a very affable grin.

Mr. Hook knew what had become of a good deal of the fag's too liberal allowance of pocket-money.

Tracy and Gower greeted Algy in a very friendly way.

The Shell fellow and the Fourth Former, as a rule, looked down with a lofty eye on fags; but they made an exception in favour of the enterprising Algy.

Algy Silver presented his friend, with some pride.

Tracy and Gower had heard of De Vere, and they had heard that he was wealthy, so they were prepared to be civil.

The new fag, however, seemed perfectly unconscious of the honour he received in being taken notice of by the Fourth and the Shell.

He acknowledged the introduction in a most perfunctory manner, and there was more than a trace of superciliousness in his look.

"Did you ever see such a sickenin', conceited little cad?" Gower murmured in Tracy's ear a little later.

"I'm goin' to make him pay for his cheek," answered Tracy in the same tone.

"He looks jolly cute."

"He looks a nasty little scoundrel. Little beast who's been spoiled from birth," growled Tracy. "He wants a hidin', that's what he wants, and I shouldn't be surprised if he gets it before he's been an hour at Rookwood."

But, in spite of that unfavourable opinion of Algy's dear old pal, Tracy very amicably started a game with him, with two pounds on fifty up.



"Will you come, Algy?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "No!" howled Algy. "Then I'll make you!" exclaimed Jimmy, and Algy's grasp was torn away from the table and he was whirled to the French windows.

It was soon evident that De Vere was no dud with the cue. His score mounted up quickly, and Tracy was "left."

And when the new fag ran out thirty ahead, and pocketed his two pounds with a careless hand, Tracy felt very much inclined to give him, in addition, the thrashing he had predicted was in store for him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

BACKING UP JIMMY

"WHAT'S the merry trouble?"

"Anything wrong, Jimmy?"

Jimmy was tramping on to Rookwood, his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a wrinkle in his brow, when he met Mornington and Erroll of the Fourth.

He paused, colouring a little.

"All the troubles in the world suddenly dropped on your shoulders?" grinned Mornington.

"Not quite," said Jimmy Silver, smiling. "Have you seen my pals?"

"Yes; catchin' crabs," answered Mornington, with a nod towards the river. "They've been rowin' with the Moderns over a boat, an' they've just started."

"Good! I can catch them, then."

"They're going down the river, Jimmy," said Erroll. "Cut across to the towing-path, and you'll see them."

"Right!"

Erroll and Mornington went on, and Jimmy Silver, leaving the lane, cut across the fields to the towing-path, without going on to the boathouse.

He ran out on the path, and sighted a boat on the river, with six fellows in it.

They were Lovell & Co. and the three Colonials—Conroy, Van Ryn and Pons.

The six seemed to be in great spirits.

"Hallo!" shouted Jimmy from the bank.

"Hallo, there's Jimmy!"

"Pull in," said Lovell.

The boat pulled to the bank, and bumped in the rushes.

"Changed your mind, Jimmy?" grinned Arthur Edward. "All serene! Jump in!"

"What on earth have you been doing to your nose?" demanded the captain of the Fourth.

Lovell rubbed his nose, while his companions chuckled.

"This is a Modern boat," explained Raby. "Tommy Dodd was just running it out. We mopped them up and collared the boat."

"We left 'em yelling on the raft," grinned Newcome. "You should have heard 'em yell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm afraid Tommy Dodd got rather wet," remarked Conroy. "But we couldn't dip his head in the river without wetting him, could we?"

Jimmy laughed.

"Jump in, Jimmy," said Lovell.

But Jimmy did not jump in.

"The fact is——" he said.

"The fact is, we'd better get off, or there'll be an army of Modern cads coming along," interrupted Lovell. "Get a move on."

"I want you chaps——"

"Well, if you want us, here we are. Jump in!"

"Get out!"

"Get in!"

"Look here, you fellows, I want you to back me up this afternoon," said Jimmy Silver, with a worried look. "Do come along!"

"Oh, we'll come!" said Raby at once. "You chaps don't mind if we clear?" he added to Conroy & Co.

"Not at all," said the Australian junior politely; and Van Ryn and Pons nodded.

"Any old thing!" grunted Newcome.

Lovell snorted.

Arthur Edward Lovell had a most expressive snort, and now he snorted fortissimo, a great deal like an angry war-horse.

But he stepped out of the boat.

He was not proof against the demands of friendship.

Conroy & Co., rather puzzled,

pulled out into the river again, leaving the Fistical Four together on the bank.

"Well?" grunted Lovell, while Raby and Newcome eyed Jimmy inquiringly.

"I'm sorry to interrupt your row—"

"Oh, bother your sorrow!" said Lovell. "What the dickens does that matter? If you want us, here we are. What's the rumpus?"

"It's young Algy—"

"I thought so."

"If you don't want to help me, Lovell—"

"Don't be an ass!" was Lovell's gruff reply, apparently implying that he did want to help.

"Algy was to meet a young cad named De Vere at the station."

"Well?"

"He was taking him to the Bird-in-Hand—"

"Ye gods!"

"To have a high old time before they turned up at Rookwood," continued Jimmy Silver, still looking worried. "De Vere was sent here in charge of a tutor or someone, and he gave him the slip at Latcham, and came on alone. He's a sneaking, caddish, pasty-faced, vicious little beast."

"Oh, my hat! All that?"

"Well, that's how he struck me."

"Perhaps you're a bit prejudiced," grinned Raby.

"Well, they've gone to that show together," said Jimmy.

"You ought to have stopped them," growled Lovell.

Jimmy explained how old Bulkeley had unfortunately come upon the scene at the wrong moment.

His chums chuckled.

"Just like you, Jimmy," remarked Lovell. "Always putting your silly foot in it. You've made old Bulkeley

think you a bully, now. Pity you didn't tell him the facts."

"Well, I couldn't, could I?"

"No, I suppose you couldn't; but it's a pity, all the same. But what the thump do you want us to do? You can give Algy a hiding without our assistance."

"That young cad is leading Algy into a rotten game already."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"It looks to me as if dear Algy's doing the leading."

"Well, he isn't."

"Oh, come on!" said Lovell.

"Algy's taking him on to the place—he can't have heard of the Bird-in-Hand when he was at school in Devonshire. It's Algy who's the guide, philosopher, and friend in this instance."

"You're mistaken, all the same. The little beast has made some arrangement with Algy to show him round the village, but Algy's playing up. Algy isn't really a bad sort—only he's under the influence of that scrubby little beast."

"Always under somebody's influence—never a beast on his own," said Lovell sarcastically. "Lattery's influence once, then Peele's—and now this new kid's. None so blind as those who won't see."

"Well, I know it looks bad, but I'm convinced that De Vere is really the party to blame," said Jimmy. "But whether that's so or not, I can't leave Algy in a low pub with that young scoundrel. I promised his father to stand by him, and look after him all I could. I've got to interfere."

"But you can't," said Raby. "You're not proposing to raid the pub, and yank him away by the ears, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You want us to go into the Bird-in-Hand looking for him!" exclaimed Lovell incredulously. "Suppose we're caught there? It's a flogging."

"It might be worse than that for Algy."

"You want us to risk getting a bad name and a thumping licking for the sake of that little rotter?"

"He's not a rotter. He's under the influence——"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Lovell——"

"Rats!" roared Lovell. "RATS!"

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver gruffly. "I'll go alone. You can go and eat coke, and be blowed to you!"

Jimmy, with a very grim face, tramped away.

But his affectionate chums tramped after him.

"Don't be an ass!" growled Lovell. "Or, if you can't help being an ass, don't be a silly ass! You're not going into that den alone."

"Well, come on, and don't jaw so much," said Jimmy.

"Of all the silly chumps——"

"Br-r-r-r-r! We can get into the garden from the towing-path, and there's no need for us to be seen."

Lovell & Co. exchanged a series of hopeless glances, but they made no further demur.

Jimmy Silver generally had his own way in the long run, and his loyal chums were quite ready to back him up, though their opinion was that he was a howling ass for his trouble.

To be discovered within the precincts of such a place as the Bird-in-Hand was a serious matter for any Rookwood fellow, and Lovell & Co. were not so reckless as Algy of the Third.

But they followed Jimmy Silver, as he opened the gate that led from the towing-path into the inn garden.

And Arthur Edward Lovell privately resolved that Algy of the Third should not get off without the licking he so badly needed.

Arthur Edward was prepared to see to that matter himself, and to see to it thoroughly and efficiently.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

GOING IT!

"**R**OTTEN little cad!"

"Regular billiard-sharper!"

Tracy of the Shell and Gower of the Fourth exchanged those complimentary opinions of Algy's pal as they walked away from the Bird-in-Hand in far from amiable tempers.

Bertie de Vere had given both of them fifty up.

Naturally, they had expected to walk over the new fag at the game of billiards.

They had had considerable practice.

To their surprise and mortification, the new fag had walked over them.

Master de Vere's skill in the game was further evidence of a misspent youth.

Even Joey Hook had opened his eyes, and had declined to play Master de Vere himself with money on the game.

Tracy and Gower could hardly conceal their irritation as they left.

Tracy had left three, and Gower two quids with the enterprising youth from High Coombe.

They could ill-afford to lose such sums, but they had noticed that De Vere had a wad of currency notes in his pocket-book.

They walked home to Rookwood in bad tempers, leaving Algy and his pal to their own devices.

De Vere put down his cue and yawned.

Partly from affectation, and partly because he sought pleasures only

suitable for a much older fellow, the fag seemed in a perpetual state of boredom.

"Pretty slow, this," he remarked to Algy.

Algy looked at him rather reproachfully.

"You've done pretty well, Bertie," he remarked.

"Oh, those fellows can't play!" said De Vere contemptuously. "They handle a cue as if it were a rake."

"Tracy rather prides himself on his game."

"Tracy's an ass!"

"H'm!"

Mr. Hook peered out of the door leading into the passage.

"There's some gents comin' in, I think," he remarked.

"Better clear, Bertie," said Algy.

"We don't want to be seen here."

"Why not?"

"Might get heard of at Rookwood," said Algy uneasily.

"Are you funky?"

"No, I'm not," said Algy tartly.

"But I don't want to be hauled up before the beaks."

De Vere shrugged his shoulders.

He looked curiously old when he did that, and Mr. Hook glanced at him very oddly.

Mr. Hook's opinion—which he kept to himself—was that he had never seen such a vicious young reprobate as Master Bertie de Vere.

"P'r'aps you gents will step into the next room," suggested Mr. Hook.

"If you'd care for a game——"



"Hallo, here's the merry Colonials!" exclaimed Raby. "They'll give us a lift back with these fags." Jimmy Silver hailed the boat, and Conroy & Co. pulled in.

"Just the thing!" said Algy, at once.

"Oh, any old thing!" yawned De Vere.

Mr. Hook opened a door, and they passed through, the sharper following them.

A few minutes later loud voices and the clicking of balls sounded from the billiard-room.

Mr. Hook's sitting-room was a pleasant apartment enough, with french windows opening on the lawn behind the house, shaded by a big elm.

It was rather stuffy from the ancient fumes of drink and tobacco, but the windows stood wide open, letting in the sunlight and fresh air from the garden and the river.

Upon a card-table near the window stood a box of cigarettes, and De Vere helped himself to one, Algy following his example.

"P'raps you young gents would like somethin' to drink?" suggested Mr. Hook, who was still watching De Vere very curiously.

"Yes, rather! Ginger-beer for me," said Algy.

"Same for me, with a dash of whisky," said De Vere indifferently.

Algy started a little.

"Bertie, old chap!" he murmured.

Bertie did not seem to hear.

Mr. Hook gasped a little, but he went to the door and gave the word, and came back with a tray.

Algy looked rather scared as De Vere "dashed" his ginger-beer with whisky—and it was quite a liberal dash.

He watched his friend as if fascinated as the fag from High Coombe drank the concoction.

De Vere's pasty face flushed and his dull eyes sparkled a little.

He lighted another cigarette.

He felt that he was quite a hero and

a man of the world in his friend's eyes; but, as a matter of fact, Algy was feeling very uncomfortable.

He felt that there ought to be a fine drawn somewhere, and for a moment he regretted that he had not taken Jimmy Silver's advice, and gone straight on to Rookwood.

There was a distinction between wilful recklessness and downright blackguardism, in Algy's mind; though his friend did not seem to see it.

"Well, what's the game?" asked De Vere, seating himself at the card-table and carelessly shuffling the cards.

Nap was the game, and the three soon began to play.

Mr. Hook was in a very smiling humour, and he cheerfully assented to half-crown points—extravagance which rather alarmed Algy.

Sixpenny points seemed reckless enough to Algy Silver, but he gave way to his friend, as he always did.

He was very anxious that the peerless Bertie should not consider him "spooky."

Mr. Hook was congratulating himself.

It was somewhat beneath his dignity to be playing cards with two fags like this—even Mr. Hook had some dignity.

But he had caught a glimpse of the contents of Bertie's pocket-book, and he fully intended to annex a considerable share of the currency notes he had seen there.

That task, which he expected to be an easy one, was a little more difficult than he anticipated, however.

Bertie had not been an ornament to the Form he belonged to at his old school, but in other respects his education was very complete.

He more than held his own in the game for quite a long time.

In fact, his currency notes did not begin to pass over to Mr. Hook until that gentleman fell back upon certain devices to assist fortune, with which even the knowing fag from High Coombe was unacquainted.

Algy Silver was soon cleared out of money; he was not nearly so well provided as his friend.

"Not leavin' off?" asked De Vere, as Algy signed to him not to deal him any cards in the next round.

"Stony!" said Algy tersely.

"Oh, rot! Have some of my tin."

"Good man!"

The wealthy youth carelessly shoved half a dozen currency notes over to Algy, who resumed play with renewed zest.

The luck was quite with Mr. Joey Hook.

When the dealing fell to him he had remarkably good hands, and even at other times he occasionally improved his hand with a card from his sleeve.

Certainly the sharper would have reaped a rich harvest that afternoon had there been no interruption to the "little game."

But there was.

"Nap!" De Vere was yawning when a shadow darkened the open french window.

"Here they are," said a quiet voice.

Jimmy Silver rushed into the room, with his chums at his heels.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

THE STRONG HAND!

THE Fistical Four had not found much difficulty in running down their quarry.

Jimmy Silver had glanced into the billiard-room, and seen there the marker and a couple of sporting gentlemen of Coombe—not the fellows he sought.

But he heard the voices through the open french windows of Mr. Hook's sitting-room, a little farther along.

He moved along, followed by his chums, and his eyes fell on the three at the card-table.

Jimmy's brows darkened savagely as he took in the scene—the cards, the bloated face of the sharper, the two flushed and excited fags, and the whisky-bottle on the side table.

Lovell gave a snort of disgust.

"My hat!" murmured Raby.

Newcome shrugged his shoulders.

The three chums followed Jimmy Silver into the room.

Mr. Hook rose to his feet, considerably taken aback. His golden harvest had been interrupted.

Algy started up, his face crimson.

Bertie de Vere did not move. He lay back a little in his chair, staring at the Fourth Formers of Rookwood with a cool and insolent smile.

"This 'ere is a private room, young gents," said Mr. Hook, hardly knowing whether to bluster or to try civility. "Billiard-room's the next."

"We're not looking for the billiard-room," growled Lovell.

"I've come here for you, Algy," said Jimmy Silver quietly, and without looking at the sharper. "Come with me."

Algy set his teeth.

"I won't!"

"You'd better, Algy."

"I won't, I tell you!"

Jimmy compressed his lips.

He was very angry and very determined. He did not want a scene there, but Algy had to go.

He crossed over to where the fag stood by his chair, and dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Come!" he said quietly.

"I tell you I won't!" exclaimed Algy shrilly. "Let me alone! What

business is it of yours, you meddlin' cad ? "

" Your father——"

" Oh, don't jaw about my father, you rotter ! "

" Your father asked me to look after you, Algy," said Jimmy Silver quietly. " He took you away from your old school, chiefly to keep you away from that young scoundrel sitting there. I'm going to keep my word to him, Algy. Come away without making a fuss."

He drew Algy towards the window, but the fag clung to the table. There was a bitter sneer on De Vere's sallow face, and it goaded Algy to fury.

" I won't go ! " yelled Algy. " Lend me a hand, Mr. Hook ? "

Mr. Hook stood irresolute.

" He'd better," said Arthur Edward Lovell. " You interfere, Mr. Hook, and you'll find your head in the coal-scuttle before you know how it got there."

Lovell and Raby and Newcome lined up between the bookmaker and Jimmy.

The fat sharper fell back a pace.

He did not relish the prospect of a tussle with those three sturdy young gentlemen.

De Vere did not move.

" Will you come, Algy ? " repeated Jimmy Silver.

" No ! " bawled Algy.

" Then I'll make you."

" Bertie—help me ! "

Algy's grasp was torn away from the table, and he was whirled to the french windows in Jimmy Silver's strong grasp.

De Vere started to his feet.

" Let him alone, you interferin' cad ! " he shouted. " Hook, call in somebody to pitch them out—do you hear ? "

Mr. Hook made a movement, and

Lovell put his back to the inner door.

" Stay where you are, Hook ! " he said curtly. " You'll get hurt if you come this way."

" Look 'ere, you ain't got no right 'ere," protested Mr. Hook feebly. " What call 'ave you to come interfering with a gentleman in his own rooms—hey ? "

" You can call in the police, if you like," suggested Raby.

Mr. Hook did not think of acting on Raby's suggestion.

" Help me, hang you ! " yelled Algy, as he was forced, struggling and kicking, towards the french windows.

De Vere looked at him, shrugged his shoulders, and sat down again.

" You should look after your merry relations a little better, old scout," he drawled. " I didn't come here for any fightin' with your relations, dear boy. My deal, I think, Mr. Hook."

" Oh, my eye ! " murmured Joey Hook.

" Lovell," called out Jimmy Silver.

" Adsum ! " grinned Lovell.

" Pitch that young cad out, too ! "

" Right-ho, my lord ! "

Lovell strode to De Vere, who glared at him with eyes that glittered like a reptile's.

" Don't you dare to touch me ! " muttered the fag thickly. " Don't you dare, you low hound ! You lay hands on me——"

He had no time for more, for Arthur Edward Lovell's hands were already upon him.

Lovell whirled him out of his chair, sending it spinning across the room.

" Kim on ! " said Lovell grimly.

Algy was already outside, still struggling breathlessly in his cousin's grasp.

Lovell followed with De Vere, and Raby and Newcome brought up the rear, with an eye on Mr. Hook, in

case that gentleman showed a disposition to chip in.

But Joey Hook didn't.

The High Coombe fag was kicking, struggling, and scratching like a cat. Lovell yelled as the nails scored his face.

"Out you go!" he panted.

He pitched the fag bodily out, and De Vere sprawled dazedly on the lawn.

Raby picked up two hats, and threw them out.

"There you are!" he remarked.

De Vere staggered to his feet.

His face was white with rage.

Jimmy Silver was half leading, half dragging Algy down the garden path.

The fag was still resisting furiously, but he had no chance.

Jimmy did not stand on ceremony with him, and the fag had to go.

De Vere stood panting, his eyes glittering at Lovell & Co.

"There's your way!" said Arthur Edward, pointing down the path.

"Do you think I'm goin' at your orders?" hissed De Vere.

"I do, my infant."

"Let me pass, you cad!"

"There's your way, I tell you. Get a move on, or I'll start on you with my boot!" exclaimed Lovell.

"You cheeky cad——"

"Are you going?" demanded Lovell impatiently.

"No, you hound!" yelled the fag.

"Then I'll jolly soon start you."

Lovell was more than fed up.

He grasped the fag by the collar, spun him round, and applied his boot.

De Vere dodged, but Lovell's boot followed, and he fairly ran down the path at last, Lovell after him, dribbling him, as it were, down to the gate.

Raby ran on, and opened the gate on the towing-path.



ROOKWOOD RHYMES—

ALGY SILVER

(the Scamp of the Third).

YOUNG cousins sometimes prove a snare,

And likewise a delusion;

They drive their elders to despair

And cause complete confusion.

These sentiments would be endorsed

By Algy Silver's cousin;

On Jimmy's shoulders he has forced

His troubles by the dozen!

The reckless rascal of the Third

Endeavours to be mannish;

And if the Head of Rookwood heard,

Then Algy soon would vanish!

His wild adventures prove a source

Of never-ending trouble;

And, but for some restraining force,

He'd exit—at the double!

The force in question emanates

From Rookwood's junior skipper,

Who steers his cousin through the straits

Of virtue with a slipper!

It's Jimmy Silver every time,

From whom a word or look would

Save Algy from a course of crime,

And keep him still at Rookwood!

And yet, in spite of wayward pranks

And japes most sly and skilful,

This wild Third-Former scarcely ranks

With rotters mean and wilful.

His nature is not really bad

Like some of Rookwood's beauties;

Although his antics largely add

To Jimmy Silver's duties!

Perhaps in future—who can tell?—

Spurred on by high ambition,

He'll rise, by working hard and well,

To some unique position.

His present failings may give place

To good that shall continue.

Go forward, Algy! Win the race,

And show the grit that's in you!

Jimmy strode through with Algy. De Vere made an attempt to double back into the garden, and Lovell swung him off his feet, and pitched him out on the towing-path.

Then he slammed the gate.

In his little sitting-room in the Bird-in-Hand, Joey Hook gasped, and stared out after the Rookwood juniors.

The wind had fairly been taken out of his sails.

"By gosh!" murmured Mr. Hook.
"By gosh!"

And Mr. Hook poured himself out an extra stiff helping of whisky to soothe his fluttered nerves.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

ALGY LOSES HIS PAL

JIMMY SILVER & Co. gathered round the two breathless and dishevelled fags on the towing-path.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were grinning. But Jimmy's face was sternly set.

"Now you're going to Rookwood, both of you," he said quietly. "Get a move on!"

"I'll do nothin' at your orders, you outsider!" said De Vere savagely.

"By gad, I'll make you suffer for this!"

"I'm stickin' here," said Algy sullenly.

"Mind, I'm going to take you both to Rookwood," said Jimmy. "You can walk, or you can be dragged. That's the choice for you."

"Hang you!"

"Hallo, here's the merry Colonials!" exclaimed Raby, pointing to the river. "They'll give us a passage back."

"Good egg!"

Jimmy Silver hailed the boat.

Conroy & Co. had seen from the river the sudden exit from the inn

garden, and they were watching the juniors rather curiously.

They pulled in, at Jimmy's call.

"Hallo, trouble in the family?" asked Van Ryn, with a smile.

"Will you take us along to the school boathouse?" asked Jimmy.

"Certainly. Roll in!"

"Get in, Algy."

"I won't!"

Jimmy bundled him in without ceremony.

Conroy & Co. looked rather surprised, but as they had seen the two fags yanked out of the garden gate of the Bird-in-Hand, they guessed pretty accurately how matters stood.

De Vere, after a quite ferocious look at Lovell, who was advancing upon him, stepped into the boat of his own accord.

The Fistical Four followed.

The Colonials shoved off, and pulled up the river with their passengers.

Algy sat up, gasping.

He clenched his hands hard.

"I'll make you pay for this, Jimmy, you rotter!" he muttered.

Jimmy did not heed.

The boat glided on, and stopped at the Rookwood landing-raft.

"Get out!" said Jimmy Silver briefly.

The fags got out, followed by the Fistical Four.

"Much obliged, you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver, as the Colonial Co. were shoving off again.

"Oh, don't mench!" said Conroy, with a smile.

"Happy to oblige!" said Pons.

Jimmy Silver & Co. marched up to the school with the two sullen fags in their midst.

They passed in at the gates of Rookwood.

Both the fags cast a last look down the road, but they made no attempt



A pocket-torch gleamed out in the darkness, and the light showed a strange scene. Mornington was scrambling to his feet, while down the passage two dim forms were receding.

to bolt. They had realised by this time that Jimmy Silver was in deadly earnest.

Under the escort of the Fistical Four Algy Silver and Bertie de Vere were marched into the School House.

Several fellows glanced at them, wondering a little at the two sulky, savage faces.

"Now will you let us alone?" muttered Algy, his voice trembling with passion.

"You can cut now!" said Jimmy. "I'm going to take De Vere in to report himself to his Form-master."

Algy changed colour.

"You—you're not going to tell —" he stammered.

Jimmy cut him short contemptuously.

"You know I'm not! Clear off!"

"I'll report myself when I choose!" said the new fag, between his teeth.

"You'll report yourself now!" answered Jimmy Silver, and he took De Vere by the collar, and led him on towards Mr. Bohun's study.

Algy gave his friend a last look, receiving a steely stare in response.

De Vere did not resist. Jimmy still had a hand on his shoulder when, with the other hand, he tapped at the Third Form master's door.

"Come in!"

Jimmy Silver opened the door, and Mr. Bohun looked up.

"De Vere, the new fellow, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh! Come in, De Vere!"

The fag entered the study, and

Jimmy Silver withdrew, closing the door after him.

He went slowly up the staircase, and to the end study in the Fourth Form passage, where he found his chums.

Lovell & Co. were getting tea, and they turned grinning looks upon Jimmy's sombre face.

"Well?" said Lovell.

"Well!" said Jimmy Silver gruffly.

"Ready for tea?" smiled Lovell.

"Hang tea!"

Jimmy Silver threw himself into a chair, his usually sunny face still glum.

He was worried and troubled.

He felt that he had acted for the best that afternoon, but he knew, too, that he had finally alienated Algy, and that he had only the bitterest aversion to expect from the fag afterwards.

What was the use of it all, after all?

And yet, could he have acted otherwise?

"Keep smiling!" said Raby.
"Your own merry maxim, you know!"

But Jimmy Silver did not smile.

"You haven't thanked us yet for backin' you up, and fetchin' Algy out of the lions' den, like a brand from the burning!" smiled Lovell.

"Thank you!" said Jimmy.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Lovell. "Don't look like a sudden attack of thunder, Jimmy! Algy isn't the only pebble on the beach; and I fancy, too, that there will be a rift in his cheery friendship with that sporty De Vere after this. That goey young sportsman won't want to chum with a fellow who's got a cousin with such a terrific sense of duty, I opine!"

"Not likely!" grinned Raby.

Jimmy nodded thoughtfully, and his expression brightened a little.

"Well, there's something in that!" he assented. "They may break it off for good over this. That's so much to the good!"

"Here's your Yarmouth warrior, old man! Tuck in!"

The Fistical Four sat down to tea.

The meal was not finished when the door was flung violently open, and Algy of the Third glared into the study.

The Fourth-Formers looked round, to see a shaking fist, and a savage, sulky face behind it.

"You rotter!" howled Algy.

"Hallo, young hopeful!" grinned Lovell.

"Jimmy, you rotter, you cad, you beast!" Algy was almost crying with rage. Jimmy looked at him steadily. "You beast! You beast! De Vere won't speak to me now—he won't look at me! It's all your doing!"

"I'm glad of it!" said Jimmy quietly.

"You're glad, you rotter? You—you—"

Words failed Algy. He shook his fist in Jimmy's face, and stamped away, crimson with rage and chagrin.

"Tragic end to a valuable friendship!" yawned Lovell. "Might have lasted till Algy's pal was sent to a reformatory! Sad! But keep smiling, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver smiled.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

JIMMY SILVER IS NOT PLEASED

"SILVER!"

Jimmy Silver looked round cheerily as Bulkeley of the Sixth called to him from his study doorway.

"Yes, Bulkeley?"

He came towards the captain of Rookwood at once.

Jimmy Silver was captain of the Fourth Form, but it was an honour to fag for "old Bulkeley."

"Will you find De Vere of the Third, and send him here? You know him. A new fag who came last week."

"I know him," said Jimmy.

"Tell him I want him at once."

"Yes, Bulkeley."

Bulkeley was frowning a little, and Jimmy wondered whether the new fag was already in the black books of the captain of Rookwood.

He would not have been surprised at that.

"Waiting for you," said Arthur Edward Lovell, as Jimmy came out of the School House. "If we're going to get down to Coombe before dinner——"

"Seen that kid De Vere?" asked Jimmy. "Bulkeley wants him."

"Oh, bother!" said Raby.

"Bless him!" said Newcome.

"But he's not far off. I saw him going into Little Quad a few minutes ago with——" Newcome paused.

"With?" repeated Jimmy, looking at him.

"With your Cousin Algy."

Jimmy frowned.

"I don't see what he's doing with Algy," he said gruffly. "I understood that they weren't on friendly terms now."

"You're such an innocent old duck, Jimmy!" was Lovell's remark.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Jimmy. "Didn't Algy come to our study himself, and tell us that De Vere wouldn't speak to him because I chipped in the other day when they were playing the giddy goat?"

"They've made it up since then," grinned Lovell. "I've seen them together."

Jimmy did not answer; but, with

a frowning face, he started across towards Little Quad.

His chums looked after him, smiling.

"Poor old Jimmy!" murmured Raby. "He's got all his work cut out if he's going to keep up the kind uncle bizney with his precious cousin. Anybody but Jimmy would have noticed that Algy and that new cad were as thick as thieves again."

"Oh, Jimmy doesn't see anything!" grunted Lovell.

Jimmy Silver was thinking so himself as he went through the old stone archway into Little Quad.

Algy Silver and Bertie de Vere were seated on a bench near the fountain, deep in talk.

They did not see Jimmy as he strode towards them.

It was obvious that the rift in the lute had been mended, and that Algy was on the friendliest terms with his old chum from his old school.

"To-night's the night!" Algy was saying as Jimmy Silver came along. "It will be no end of a lark!"

"About time we got a move on, I think," grunted his companion discontentedly. "I was expectin' to have a good time here. I've been bored to tears. This isn't much like my old school."

"You had to leave your old school," answered Algy, rather tartly.

Jimmy gave a grunt, partly in expression of his feelings, and partly to warn the two fags that he was within hearing.

The two Third-Formers looked up quickly, silent at once.

Algy Silver coloured a little.

De Vere looked at Jimmy Silver with an expression half of insolence, half of bitter dislike.

"Bulkeley wants you, De Vere," snapped Jimmy.

"Bother Bulkeley!"

"You're to go to his study at once."

"I'll suit myself about that!"

Jimmy gave him a look.

He was greatly inclined to take the cheeky fag by the collar and start him with his boot.

But he refrained.

If the fag chose to disregard Bulkeley's order it was his own business.

"Better go, Bertie," muttered Algy Silver. "Bulkeley's head prefect, you know. You'll make him ratty!"

De Vere nodded sulkily, and rose to his feet, lounging away with his hands in his pockets.

He knew that he had to go.

Algy was about to follow, when Jimmy Silver stopped him.

"Hold on a minute, Algy," he said quietly.

"Goin' to jaw?" sneered the fag.

"You told me you had finished with De Vere."

"I told you he wouldn't speak to me, because my meddlin' cousin interfered with him, like a cheeky cad!" retorted Algy savagely. "We've made it up, though."

"I'd be sorry to interfere between you and your friends, Algy," said the captain of the Fourth. "Only——"

"Well, don't do it, then!"

"There's plenty of decent chaps in the Third for you to make friends with—Wegg and Grant and Stacey—all decent kids——"

"That's my business, isn't it?"

"You were saying something about to-night—about a lark," said Jimmy, looking at him sharply. "Does that mean that you are going to start playing the fool again?"

"Find out!"

"Algy, old chap——"

"Rats!"

With that, Algy of the Third marched off.

He was not in the mood of sweet reasonableness.

Jimmy Silver repressed his feelings with an effort.

It was not of much use giving Algy a licking, much as he deserved one.

Arthur Edward Lovell looked through the archway.

"Staying there all day?" he called out.

Jimmy Silver rejoined his chums.

The Fistical Four started on their walk down to Coombe, but Jimmy's face was no longer as sunny as it had been that morning.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

THE CAPTAIN'S WARNING!

"SILVER says you want me, Bulkeley."

De Vere of the Third lounged into Bulkeley's study.

The new fag was certainly the only fellow in the Third Form at Rookwood who would have ventured to lounge into Bulkeley's study.

Fags generally came there with their most respectful manners on, if not in fear and trembling.

But the new fellow had his own manners and customs.

There was just as much impertinence in his manner as he dared infuse into it.

Bulkeley's eyes glinted as he looked at him.

"Yes, I sent for you, De Vere."

"Well, what's the row?"

"In the first place," said Bulkeley quietly, "don't speak to me like that. That isn't the way for a fag to address the captain of the school."

De Vere's lip curled, but he did not answer.

"Secondly, take your hands out of your pockets."

De Vere hesitated a moment, but he obeyed.

"And now stand upright, like a decent fellow, and don't slouch."

The fag's eyes glittered, but he pulled himself together.

"That's better," said Bulkeley, eyeing him. "I don't know how you got on at your old school, my boy, but I may as well tell you that cheek doesn't go down at Rookwood. You're new here, and you may not be aware of that. I suppose you know I'm a prefect?"

"I believe I've heard it mentioned," said De Vere carelessly.

"I've had an eye on you for some days."

"Thanks!"

"You've been here less than a week," continued Bulkeley. "You've been found smoking twice, and your Form-master took a sporting paper away from you yesterday."

The fag did not answer.

"Hold up your hands!" added Bulkeley sharply.

He inspected the hands as they were held up.

"I thought so!" he said. "Those stains on your fingers are from cigarettes, De Vere. You have been smoking again!"

No reply.

"Now, I want to speak to you kindly," said Bulkeley, as De Vere dropped his hands. "I fancy from your looks that you've been allowed to run wild at home, and you haven't found your feet here yet. You seem to have picked up bad habits at your old school, or at home. You must drop them here, and it will be all the better for you."

The fag looked sullen.

"Now, as to smoking," continued Bulkeley, in quite a kind tone. "You're not fourteen years old yet, and you must have sense enough to see that such a thing is ridiculous at



ROOKWOOD RHYMES—

DR. CHISHOLM

(the Head of
Rookwood).

THE "Great White Chief" of
Rookwood School,

So scholarly and clever,
Is Dr. Chisholm, 'neath whose rule
May Rookwood flourish ever!
A grave and reverend master he;
No other stands above him;
He's just, yet kind; and that, you see,
Is why his pupils love him!

I often think (What duffer said
A rhymester doesn't do so?)
It's no great fun to be a Head;
I'd rather be a Crusoe!
For on a desert isle you're clear
Of all the many troubles
Which at a public school appear,
And then expand like bubbles!

To rule the roost, to sit in state,
Sounds absolutely topping;
To have good food upon your plate,
And give your boys a "whopping,"
Yet note the furrowed lines of care
On Dr. Chisholm's brow, boys;
And don't be Heads, for I declare
It's better to be cowboys!

Yes, there are troubles in a heap
For every kindly shepherd
Like Dr. Chisholm, for his sheep
Are spotted, like the leopard.
He has to know and study boys,
Their follies, faults, and failings,
And flog each rascal who enjoys
A night spent "on the railings"!

Yet Dr. Chisholm seldom fails;
His aim in life, we trust, is
To evenly preserve the scales
Of fairness and of justice,
Then blessings on his massive brow!
And, lest he reads these verses,
I will resign myself right now
Unto his tender mercies!

your age. But that's not the worst. It's bad for the health. It will interfere with your growth and with your health generally. You must not suppose that the rules are made for nothing. There's a reason for them."

De Vere stared at him.

He had expected a "jaw" or a caning, but a kind appeal to his better sense and feelings surprised and took him aback.

"As for the sporting paper," went on Bulkeley, with a slight smile, "I'll take it that you were only looking at that out of curiosity. I can't suppose that a kid of your age could be really interested in such things. But keep clear of anything of that kind, my lad. It's easy enough to slide into wrongdoing from sheer thoughtlessness."

De Vere smiled.

"Now, I'll take it that you're going to think about this, and remember that you've got your bit to do in keeping up the good name of the school," said Bulkeley cheerily. "Now you can cut."

"Thank you!"

De Vere walked out of the study in rather a wondering frame of mind.

But in the passage a sneer curled his lip.

"Preachin' ass!" he murmured. "I suppose I shall have to be a bit more careful, though. Pah!"

He heard Algy Silver in the quad.

Algy looked at him rather anxiously.

"What did Bulkeley want?" he asked.

"Only jaw."

"Licked?"

"No, you ass! He talked to me like a Dutch uncle," said De Vere, shrugging his thin shoulders. "Seems to be a good-tempered old sort, in his way."

"He's good-tempered enough," said Algy. "But he can be as hard as

nails. I hope you won't get him down on you."

"Oh, I don't care!"

"But you must be careful, old chap. Things are a bit stricter here than they were at our old school," said Algy anxiously. "I've found that out."

"I seem to have landed in a nest of saints," said his chum, with a sneering grin. "Your Cousin Jimmy is quite a model youth. How pleased his aunts and uncles must be with him!"

"Jimmy's not a bad sort, in his way."

"I don't like his way, then. I think he's a meddlin' cad!"

Algy was silent.

"Now, about to-night," said De Vere, after a glance round to make sure that no one was near them.

"What time do we start?"

"Don't you think we'd better put it off, as Bulkeley seems to have an eye on you just now?"

"Oh, don't be a funk!" said De Vere scornfully.

"I'm not a funk!" retorted Algy hotly. "I was thinkin' of you. Bulkeley must have noticed somethin' to call you into his study."

"Well, if you're not funky, don't talk about puttin' it off. I tell you, I'm bored to tears here! I'm fed up!" grunted De Vere. "I feel as if I've got dead and buried since I came to Rookwood. Hole of a place!"

"We'll go to-night," said Algy. "It's easy enough. We'll wait till the fellows are asleep, and put dummies in the beds, and sneak out by way of the leads."

"You've done it before?"

"I've been out with Tracy of the Shell," said Algy loftily. "I went out once with Peele, too."

"You're quite an old hand," yawned his friend. "Your pal Tracy doesn't

seem to get on with me. He didn't like me beatin' him at billiards, I think. This isn't much of a sportin' school."

He gave another yawn.

"Let's go an' get a smoke somewhere," he suggested.

"Just before dinner?" asked Algy, hesitatingly. "It spoils the appetite, you know."

"Ye gods! Are you poachin' on your Cousin Jimmy's preserves, an' takin' to preachin'?"

"Come on, then," said Algy. "We'll go into the old abbey; no danger of bein' spotted there."

"It's a quarter of an hour to dinner," said De Vere, as they walked away. "Time for a game of nap."

"I—I'll get the cards, if you like."

"My dear man, I've got some—never without 'em."

"I say, Bertie, it's a risky bizney carryin' cards about you. They—they're rather sticklers about such things at Rookwood."

"Do the prefects go nosin' into a fellow's pockets?"

"They might, if they suspected—"

"Oh, rot!"



The Classics rushed at the Modern juniors, smiting with pillows, amid gasps of suppressed laughter. Right and left the Moderns went rolling under swiping pillows. "Give 'em socks!" roared Lovell.

Algy said no more. He was very much afraid of being considered funky in the estimation of his sporting friend.

The interval before dinner was spent in smoking and playing nap in the abbey ruins; and when they came back to the House there were some new stains on De Vere's fingers, if Bulkeley had thought of looking for them.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

LOVELL IS WRATHY!

"WE'RE going on the war-path to-night!"

Arthur Edward Lovell made that remark in the end study at tea-time.

Jimmy Silver started out of a brown study.

He had been very silent over tea.

"Eh! What's that about to-night?" he exclaimed.

"We're going on the merry war-path! Have you forgotten that we're going to raid the Moderns?" demanded Lovell.

"My hat! Yes!"

"What are you moaning about?" inquired Lovell. "Thinkin' of the dear dead days beyond recall?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, not exactly," said Jimmy, with a smile. "I was thinking of—"

"Don't say Algy!" groaned Lovell.

"Well, yes."

"Couldn't you find something a bit nicer to think of once or twice in a way?" asked Lovell. "I warn you, Jimmy, that you're in danger of growin' into a bore."

"I've noticed that," observed Raby.

"It's barely possible," remarked Newcome, in a reflective sort of way, "to hear too much and too often about Algy. I wonder whether that's ever occurred to you, Jimmy?"

Jimmy coloured.

"Well, Lovell asked me," he said. "I'm not talking about him, am I?"

"Don't think about him, either," grunted Lovell.

"Well, I'm rather worried."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I hoped he was off with that sneaking little scoundrel, De Vere! Algy's not a bad sort. He's easily led, that's all. I'm afraid that little brute

will get him into some trouble, and then the chopper will come down—on Algy."

"He's had warnings enough."

"I know. But—"

"What price giving Algy a rest?" asked Newcome, with the air of a fellow suggesting a new and interesting idea.

"Well, give him a rest," said Jimmy Silver, rather gruffly. "I don't want to talk about him. Lovell asked me."

"Give him a rest all along the line. Let him go and eat coke. If he's determined to go to the giddy bow-wows you can't stop him."

"His father's at sea," said Jimmy. "He was worried about Algy, after getting his old headmaster's report. He asked me to do what I could for the kid. So did my pater. He's practically trusted into my hands here."

"What a charge!" groaned Lovell.

"Well, I'll tell you what. We'll help you look after him."

"Oh, will you?" said Jimmy.

"Yes; we'll have him up in the study here, and give him a good thrashing with a fives-bat."

"Wha-at?"

"How does that strike you?"

"Hear, hear!" said Raby and Newcome together heartily.

"Ass!" was Jimmy Silver's reply.

"Well, to get back to the subject," said Lovell. "We're going on the war-path to-night, and I had a sort of an idea that it was up to the captain of the Form to make the arrangements. I may have been mistaken."

This was uttered with great sarcasm.

"Oh, the raid!" said Jimmy indifferently.

"Look here, Jimmy, if you don't want to raid the Moderns to-night—"

—said Lovell.

"I—I—" faltered Jimmy.

"Do you want to raid them, or don't you?" demanded Lovell.

"Well, I happened to hear something those blessed fags were saying in Little Quad this morning," confessed Jimmy.

Lovell stared at him.

"What on earth have the fags to do with raiding the Moderns?" he asked. "We're not going to call up the Third."

"They—they were saying something about to-night, and—and a lark. I—I'm afraid they've got some scheme on for breaking bounds."

"Dingy little beasts!" said Lovell, in disgust. "I don't see what it matters, though. Where's the connection?"

"Well, if—if there's a shindy to-night, it may—might draw attention to—to—to—"

Lovell interrupted his study leader with a yell of wrath, jumping to his feet.

"Algy again! We're to put off a raid on the Moderns because that shady little beast may be out of his dormitory, and if there's a row he may be found out? Oh, my hat! Oh crumbs! Oh scissors!"

Jimmy Silver crimsoned.

Put like that it really did seem a little "thick."

Jimmy naturally could not expect other fellows to feel his own concern about the wilful fag of the Third.

His chums, indeed, were sympathetic, but, as they had very plainly hinted, it was possible to get fed up with Algy.

"I'm fairly fed up!" hooted Lovell. "That young rascal can't show the cloven hoof without you going about day-dreaming! He can't plan a dirty trick without you wanting the whole Form to toe the line,

and act very carefully in case he gets found out! My hat!"

"Jimmy!" murmured Raby.

"I—I didn't mean exactly that," stammered poor Jimmy. "But if there's a row, and a prefect gets on the war-path, there might be something happen, and—and—"

"And Algy might be spotted out of his dorm, you mean?"

"Ye-es."

"All the better if he is. He'll get a flogging, and I hope it will be a lesson to him!" said Lovell savagely. "Look here, I don't consent to putting the raid off. I won't agree! And if you put it to the fellows, I'll jolly well tell them what your reason is!"

"Lovell!"

"I mean it!" hooted Lovell. "As if it isn't bad enough to be bothered all day long with that dingy little rascal, without having everything upset on his account! B-r-r-r-r!"

"Jimmy, old chap, it is really too thick," murmured Newcome. "Besides, the fags may not be goin' at all. You're not sure."

"No; but—"

"Oh, if they don't go to-night, they'll go some other night, and the Fourth Form can mark time till they've gone and come back!" exclaimed Lovell. "What's the Fourth Form for, except to stand waiting the convenience of Master Algy when he goes on the razzle?"

Raby and Newcome grinned.

"That will do," said Jimmy Silver.

"I was only making a suggestion."

"A dashed fatheaded one, too. That raid's coming off to-night."

"Agreed," said Jimmy. "And now, for goodness' sake, let the thing drop!"

Jimmy spoke with unusual tartness, and he left the study when he had finished.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER ON THE WAR-PATH!

THERE was some suppressed excitement in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth when these cheerful youths went to bed that night!

The raid on the Modern Fourth was fixed and settled.

Nearly all the Classics were in it, few preferring to remain in bed.

Tubby Muffin didn't mean to turn out; he was too fat and lazy.

Townsend and Topham, Peele and Gower were too slack.

But everybody else was going on the war-path.

Pillows were to be taken, and the onslaught on the dormitory of the Modern Fourth was to be something quite terrific.

There had been such shindies before, and they were not approved of by the school authorities—which was not to be wondered at.

Dr. Chisholm could not be expected to see the necessity for giving the Modern juniors the "kybosh."

The Modern quarters were really a separate building, but there was a long passage—or, rather, there were several passages—connecting the two, Rookwood being a rambling old place full of the most unexpected passages and recesses.

In one passage there was a great oaken door, which was kept locked, and the key was kept by old Mack, the school porter.

One of the Fourth-Formers was quite a hero, he having raided the key successfully from the porter's lodge.

The way was open now, and there was no doubt that the enemy would be taken by surprise.

The kybosh having been duly administered to the Moderns, the

Classicals would retreat to their own quarters, locking the passage door after them, and leaving the defeated enemy to rage.

It was quite an exhilarating prospect.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came in to see lights out for the Classical Fourth, and the juniors were very careful not to betray themselves.

Bulkeley heard some of them passing remarks on cricket and that was all.

But when lights were out, and there was darkness, and the prefect was gone, a buzz of voices broke out in the dormitory, subdued, but very eager.

"What time are we goin', Silver?" asked Mornington.

"Better make it early," remarked Conroy, the Australian.

"Ten!" said Jimmy.

"Good!"

"Ten's rather early, isn't it?" asked Kit Erroll. "The prefects usually haven't settled down at ten o'clock."

"Well, you see——"

"Half-past ten is safer!" boomed Lovell.

"Better make it half-past ten, Jimmy," remarked Van Ryn. "They don't put out the light on the staircase till ten."

"Oh, Jimmy's got his reasons!" snorted Lovell. "Never mind if we're caught and hauled up before Dalton in the mornin', or the Head! Never mind that, so long as it's all over before a sneakin' cad who's going to break bounds comes out of his dorm!"

"Shut up, Lovell!" muttered Jimmy Silver.

"What on earth are you talking about, Lovell?" inquired Pons.

"Jimmy knows what I'm talking about."

"Blessed riddles," said Dick Oswald. "But I agree that it ought to be a bit later than ten. We can't raid the Moderns with the prefects raging on our track."

"Ha, ha!"

"Half-past ten, then," said Jimmy Silver.

"That's better!"

"Yes, that's so," said Mornington. "Wake me up at half-past ten, somebody."

"Somebody had better stay awake!" yawned Higgs.

"I shan't sleep," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

Jimmy was as good as his word.

Before ten o'clock all the dormitory was silent, save for the sound of deep breathing and Tubby Muffin's rumbling snore, but Jimmy Silver was wide awake.

He was troubled.

There was no doubt that Lovell was right; it was scarcely safe for the raid to begin before half-past ten.

Jimmy's conscience smote him a little.

He had not meant it, but he had really been going to risk trouble for all the raiders by fixing the hour too early.

It was the thought of Algy that worried him, and had nearly caused him to make that false step.

The more he thought of it, the more convinced he was that Algy and his precious friend were going out of bounds that night.

Algy had said

plainly enough "To-night's the night," and that it would be a "lark."

And if they went, it was plain enough where they were going.

The new fag had already made the acquaintance of the sporting circle of the Bird-in-Hand.

It was not only the shady character of the thing—though that was bad enough—but there was the risk.

A fag in the Third was not likely to be expelled, but, in case of discovery, there was a flogging and the disgrace!

And Jimmy's opinion of Bertie de Vere was such that he had not the slightest doubt that, if discovered, the young rascal would do his best to save his own skin by throwing all the blame upon Algy, so far as he could.

In attempting to take measures to prevent the discovery, Jimmy had an uncomfortable feeling that he



Knowles jerked the coverlet off the bed, and bundles of clothing and bolsters were revealed. Bulkeley started. "My hat!" he exclaimed. "I think that settles it!" sneered Knowles. "Silver and De Vere are out!"

was becoming, in a measure, a party to their enterprise.

But what could he do?

Anyhow, the thing was out of his hands now.

He was pretty sure that if the fags went that night they would not venture to leave their dormitory much before half-past ten.

It was not safe for the raid on the Moderns to take place before that time, and it would not be safe for the fags to sneak out before then.

Jimmy was feeling very uneasy.

The raid was to be carried out without alarming masters or prefects, of course. But such plans only too often "ganged aley."

If there was a row—if there was disturbance, and prefects were brought on the scene—it might lead to a discovery.

Algy and De Vere might be coming out at that very minute, fully dressed for going out of doors.

The Third Form might be awakened, and miss Algy; or a prefect might go into their dormitory for some reason—any reason.

Jimmy's uneasiness certainly made him exaggerate the chances of a mishap to Algy; but it existed.

But there was no help for it.

At half-past ten Jimmy Silver slipped out of his bed, and called to his comrades.

There was a general turning out of the Classical Fourth.

The juniors slipped on their trousers and socks, and took their pillows—the latter to be used as weapons of offence.

"Got the key, Jimmy?" asked Mornington.

"That's all right," said Lovell.

"It's put in the passage door ready. I saw to that."

"Good egg!"

"You fellows ready?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"What-ho!"

"Lead on, Macduff!" chuckled Flynn.

The dormitory door was silently opened.

Softly, in their socks, the Classics crept out, and the door was closed again.

The staircase was quite dark; the passages black and deserted.

Almost on tiptoe the raiders stole away.

There was a sudden bump in the darkness, and an exclamation from Valentine Mornington.

Then there was the sound of a heavy fall.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

THE PILLOW FIGHT!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Who the dickens——"

"What!"

There were suppressed exclamations on all sides.

A sound of scuffling and struggling could be heard.

"Shush!" whispered Lovell.

"Quiet!"

"You duffers, do you want to bring the prefects here? Quiet!"

A sudden gleam of light flashed out in the darkness.

Somebody had turned on a pocket-torch.

The light glimmered on a strange scene.

Mornington was scrambling to his feet, his face red with rage.

Down the passage, in the shadows, two dim forms were receding.

Morny made a rush after them, and caught one by the arm.

"You cheeky young cad, Silver——"

"Let go, hang you!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Jimmy

Silver, pushing forward. "Show that light here, Rawson. So it's you, Algy!"

Algy Silver was wriggling in Morny's angry grasp.

De Vere stood close by him, startled and angry.

The two fags were fully dressed, even to their shoes.

"The young cad ran into me in the dark, and pitched me over!" exclaimed Morny angrily. "I'll——"

"Don't make a row, Morny," whispered Erroll.

"Put that light out!"

Rawson shut off the light.

"Let me go, Mornington, you fool!" muttered Algy, in suppressed tones. "I couldn't see you in the dark, you silly fool! I thought a prefect had got hold of me when I ran into you. Let go!"

"Let him go!" muttered De Vere.

"Let him go, Morny!" said Erroll. "We don't want a slindy here now. We may have been heard already."

Mornington grunted, and released the fag.

"What are you doing out of your dorm, Algy?" asked Jimmy Silver—not that it was necessary to ask. He knew only too well.

"What are you doing out of yours?" retorted the fag.

"We're going to raid the Moderns. Come with us, kid; it's fun, you know."

"Catch me!"

"Oh, a raid isn't good enough for him!" snorted Lovell. "He wants something a bit more exciting, such as playing cards in a pub parlour."

"Shurrup, Lovell!" murmured Newcome.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Algy, come with us, kid!" muttered Jimmy.

"Oh, rats!"

"Kick him back into his dorm!" said Lovell.

"Algy——"

There was no reply from Algy, save a sound of retreating footsteps.

The two fags were going.

Jimmy Silver stood, a prey to troubled emotion.

Here was proof positive, if he had wanted it, that the two young rascals were breaking bounds at night, and he was strongly inclined to take Lovell's advice and kick them back into their quarters.

But that meant a row, that was certain, and prefects coming on the scene and finding the raiders out of their dormitory.

The Classical Fourth would have had something to say to that.

Before Jimmy could decide what to do the fags were gone.

Faintly, in the distance, came the sound of an opening window, and in a minute more the two young rascals had dropped on the leads under the window.

The sudden meeting in the dark had startled and scared them, but the discovery that it was only the Fourth had quite reassured Algy and De Vere.

Whatever the Fourth-Formers might think of them, they were not likely to betray them.

"Well, are we moving on?" asked Conroy. "I've been listening, and I can't hear anything. It's all safe, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver was not thinking whether it was safe or not; he was thinking of his cousin.

But he roused himself.

"Right-ho! Let's get on," he said.

"We'll go after Algy if you like, and bring him back by the scruff of the neck," said Lovell.

"We jolly well won't!" exclaimed Higgs. "We're out to raid the

Moderns, not to look after sneaking fags!"

"Not so much row, Higgs!"

"Well, talk sense, then. Let's get on."

"Come on," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

He was almost relieved that the fags had got clear away.

Even if the raid led to a shindy, now, their absence was not likely to be discovered.

The raiders went quietly on their way into the winding passage that led towards the Modern quarters.

"Here's the door!" murmured Raby. "Show a light, Rawson!"

The electric torch glittered on the big oaken door.

Jimmy Silver turned back the key and the big door swung open.

Out went the light again, and the juniors marched through, along the passage past the door, coming out at last by the dormitory of the Modern Fourth.

Jimmy dismissed Algy and all his works from his mind.

He was the leader of the attack on the Modern stronghold, and he had to have his wits about him now.

He groped for the door of the Modern dorm. and turned the handle quietly.

All was silent there.

Starlight fell in at the high windows, and dimly showed up the row of beds, with the Modern juniors fast asleep in them.

"Not a suspish!" murmured Lovell gleefully.

"Get inside!"

The juniors tiptoed in.

Behind them, the door was closed to keep the noise in the dormitory, as far as possible.

It was certain that there would be some noise, perhaps a good deal.

Tommy Dodd, the chief of the Modern Fourth, was suddenly awakened by the bedclothes being stripped from his bed by a powerful jerk.

He started up.

"Here we are again!" sang Lovell softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Classical cads!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd. "Here, wake up, you fellows! Classical! Line up! Yaroooh!"

Tommy yelled as he was rolled out of bed with a bump on the floor.

"Yah! Classical cads!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Oh crumbs!"

All the Modern Fourth were wide enough awake now.

They turned out of bed as one man, even Leggett and Cuffy backing up with the rest to repel the attack of the enemy.

But they had simply no chance.

The Classics rushed them down, smiting with pillows, amid gasps of suppressed laughter.

Right and left the Moderns went rolling, swiped by the pillows, and tangled in their bedclothes.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Lovell, forgetting the necessity of caution in his excitement. "Down with the Moderns!"

"Yah! Classical cads!"

"Pile in!"

"Yaroooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Not so much row!" gasped Erroll. But he was not heeded.

The juniors were warming to the work now.

The Moderns had grabbed up pillows and bolsters, and they were putting up a splendid fight, though at a great disadvantage.

In the dim light, however, it was easy to mistake friend for foe,

especially in the thrill of excitement, and several of the Classics received terrific swipes that were intended for Moderns.

There was bumping and gasping and yelling on all sides.

Leggett, the cad of the Fourth, had taken refuge under a bed, and he was yelling at the top of his voice.

Leggett had no objection to bringing Knowles or Catesby on the scene—in fact, he rather wanted to.

Lovell groped under the bed, and brought Leggett out by the leg, and then Leggett's yells were louder than ever.

Bump, bump! Yell! Smash! Crash!

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Mornington. "We shall have the whole house up at this rate!"

Bump! Biff! Crash! Yell!

Erroll, in a whirl of the combat, found himself near the door, and he paused there to listen.

He opened the door an inch or two and then called out hurriedly:

"Chuck it, you chaps! They're coming up!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Retreat, you fellows!"

Footsteps could be heard on the lower stairs as the combat lulled.

It was no wonder that the alarm had been given, considering the noise that had been made in the pillow fight.

The Classics crowded to the door at once.

Most of the Moderns were gasping on the floor. It was a victory, though not quite complete.

"Sprint for it!" rapped out Jimmy Silver. "If we're caught over on this side——"

He did not finish.

It was not necessary.

The Classics did not need telling what would happen if they were



ROOKWOOD RHYMES—

TUBBY MUFFIN

(the Fat Junior of
the Fourth).

ST. JIM'S may boast of Fatty Wynn,
And Greyfriars harbours Bunter;
And each, just after a tuck-in,
Is hungry as a hunter.
You marvel how each famished youth
Can stow such stacks of stuff in;
The same remark applies, with truth,
To Rookwood's Tubby Muffin!

For Tubby loves a study spread,
No matter who supplies it;
So long as he himself is fed,
He does not dare despise it.
Does Tubby eat to live? Methinks
That's quite a foolish question!
He lives to eat, and seldom shrinks
From pangs of indigestion!

Man wants but little here below,
But Tubby's wants are legion;
His great ambition is to show
A bulging waistcoat region!
No tempting feast could ever mar
His bright and beaming visage;
Of gluttons, Tubby is by far
The masterpiece for HIS age!

In heaps of other ways, as well,
He is a holy terror;
When Bulkeley in the river fell,
Young Tubby made the error
Of claiming that the captain's life
Stood solely to his credit;
But later on, 'mid scenes of strife,
He wished he hadn't said it!

Yes, Tubby Muffin is a snare,
And likewise a delusion;
If I'd a ginger-pop to spare
I'd drink to his confusion!
Although he often makes us smile
When spirits are at zero,
I feel assured it's not worth while
To class him as a hero!

caught raiding the Modern quarters at that hour.

The raiders crowded out of the dormitory, and as the heavy footsteps came up the stairs and a light gleamed, they vanished down the passage in the opposite direction, fleeing for their own quarters.

"I can see you!" roared Knowles of the Modern Sixth. "Come back, you young villains! I can see you!"

Passing the dormitory door, Knowles rushed after the fleeing raiders, lamp in hand.

From a dark corner a figure leaped out, and a pillow smote Knowles, and he went over with a crash.

His electric-lamp went flying, and smashed, and Knowles rolled on the floor with a howl.

Jimmy Silver raced after his comrades.

"Jimmy!" panted Lovell.

"Here I am!"

"You—you downed Knowles?"

"Did you want him to recognise us, fathead? Buck up!"

The Classics sped on, and gained the passage door.

Jimmy Silver breathed more freely when they were on the safe side, and the big door was closed and locked.

"All serene!" he gasped.

Thump! Thump!

The next minute Knowles was hammering at the passage door.

But there came no reply from the Classical side.

Leaving Knowles to hammer at his own sweet will, Jimmy Silver & Co. scuttled back to their dormitory, and turned in in hot haste.

In two minutes they were in bed, and had all the appearance of enjoying innocent and balmy slumber, ready for any inquiring person who should glance into the room.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER THE DISCOVERY!

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

The Modern leader staggered to his feet dazedly in the dim dormitory.

There was wreck and confusion in the sleeping quarters of the Modern Fourth, and dismal howls and gasps came from all sides.

"They're gone, begorra!" panted Doyle.

"And Knowles is after them!" said Cook breathlessly.

"Turn in!" rapped out Tommy Dodd. "Get the beds tidy—quick! Turn in! We've got to be asleep when Knowles comes in!"

The Modern juniors set to work with breathless haste.

They had had the worst of the tussle with the Classics; but Tommy Dodd & Co. always played the game.

They did not intend to let the bully of the Sixth take a hand in the proceedings if they could help it.

In wonderfully quick time the Modern juniors were in bed and covered up, and trying to look as if they hadn't been disturbed.

"Why shouldn't we tell Knowles?" mumbled Leggett. "I think——"

"You tell Knowles, and we'll flay you to-morrow!" snapped Tommy Dodd. "Shut up!"

Leggett shut up.

The angry prefect was still hammering at the communication door.

But he gave that up at last, and came back, in a savage temper, to the Modern Fourth dormitory.

He expected to find it in a state of uproar, but when he strode in it was very quiet, and there was a sound of deep, steady breathing, artificially performed by Tommy Dodd & Co.

Knowles gritted his teeth.

"I know you're not asleep, you

young sweeps," he growled. "Don't try to take me in! Dodd!"

Silence.

"Dodd!" shouted Knowles.

Tommy Dodd yawned, and appeared to wake.

"Hallo! What's up?" he murmured drowsily.

"You know well enough who it is, Dodd. It's Knowles!"

"Tain't rising-bell!"

exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Anything up, Knowles? Fire?"

"You know it's not!" roared Knowles. "The Classicals have been here! Don't tell me any lies! One of them bowled me over in the passage."

"Great Scott!"

"Was it Silver, Dodd?"

"Eh?"

"Who has been here?"

"You have, Knowles!" answered Tommy innocently.

Knowles breathed hard through his nose.

"Will you tell me who has been here?" he hissed.

"Sure you haven't been dreaming, Knowles?" inquired Tommy Dodd.

"What makes you think anybody's been here?"

"I'll talk to you about this in the morning, Dodd!" snarled Knowles; and he stamped out of the dormitory.

He was quite aware that he would



"We—we went out for a lark, sir!" panted De Vere. "I—I really didn't understand at the time what Algy was leading me into." Algy Silver started and his eyes turned upon his chums in horrified amazement.

not get anything out of Tommy Dodd, but he was determined to visit condign punishment on the unknown assailant who had pillowed him in the passage.

He realised that he had been wasting time questioning the Modern juniors, and, having wasted it, he hurried downstairs and strode out into the quad, hur-

rying over to the Classical side.

There came a sharp knock at the door of Bulkeley's study, and Knowles strode in.

Bulkeley was chatting with Neville of the Sixth before turning in, and he looked surprised at the sight of Knowles at that hour in the evening.

"Hallo, Knowles!" he exclaimed.

"Anything up?"

"Some of the juniors on this side are up!" snapped Knowles. "I want you to look into it, Bulkeley."

"What's happened?"

"I fancy it was a pillow fight in the Fourth dormitory on my side. What the fags call a raid."

"They can't get through now the door's kept locked in that passage," said the captain of Rookwood.

Knowles gave an impatient grunt.

"They did get through! One of them knocked me over in the passage with a pillow!"

"Phew!"

"They had just got through the door, and locked it again, when I reached it," added Knowles. "They had the key, of course. I've been knocked over by some junior. The matter can't rest at that."

"Certainly not!" said Bulkeley. "Come up with me, Knowles, and we'll see about it."

Bulkeley led the way up the big staircase at once, and Knowles followed at his heels.

They went to the Classical Fourth dormitory first.

The Rookwood captain opened the door quietly, and turned on the light of a flash-lamp.

It showed a row of white beds with Classical juniors in them, sleeping the sleep of the just—or, at least, appearing to be doing so.

"Looks all right here," said Bulkeley.

"Spoofing, of course!" snapped Knowles. "They're awake right enough!"

"They don't look awake. Let's try the other dormitories."

"Oh, all right!"

Knowles cast a last suspicious look at the Classical Fourth, and then followed Bulkeley out, and the door was closed.

Bulkeley led the way, and opened the door of the Shell dormitory.

He flashed the light in.

Knowles scowled into the room.

The Shell were all in their places, and Adolphus Smythe woke up and blinked at the prefects in the light of the flash-lamp.

"By gad!" he murmured.

"All right, there!" said Bulkeley, with a slight smile. "Are you sure, Knowles, that it wasn't some kid on your own side?"

"I tell you they ran away through the passage door!"

"Well, we'll try the Third, if you like. It may have been some fag."

"As likely as not!" grunted Knowles.

They moved on to the Third Form dormitory, and Bulkeley opened the door.

Knowles scanned the row of beds in the light of Bulkeley's lamp.

Grant of the Third woke up, and blinked at them, startled.

"Have you been out since bed-time?" snapped Knowles.

"Eh? No! Why should I?" said Grant with a stare.

"I really think, Knowles, that you were mistaken," said Bulkeley, with visible signs of impatience. "You can't question every junior on this side one after another. I——"

"I don't want to!" said Knowles, with a sour smile. "Look at this!"

Knowles' sharp, restless eyes had noted what escaped the more unsuspicious Bulkeley.

Two of the forms stretched in the beds were not quite convincing enough for Knowles.

The two dummies under the bed-clothes were good enough to deceive a careless glance—but Knowles' glance was not careless.

He jerked the coverlet off one bed, and then off another.

Bundles of clothing and bolsters were revealed.

Bulkeley started.

"My hat!" he exclaimed.

"I think that settles it!" sneered Knowles.

Bulkeley stared at the empty beds.

Most of the Third were awake now, and the captain of Rookwood glanced over their faces.

"Two are out," he said; "Silver secundus and De Vere, the new boy."

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER IN HIS TRUE COLOURS!

THERE was a silence in the Third Form dormitory.

The two prefects and most of the juniors were staring at the empty beds.

Bulkeley was very grave. For, now that his eyes were opened, he noted that the clothes of the two fags were missing, even to their collars and ties.

They had not dressed themselves so fully for a raid on the Modern quarters. It was more serious than that.

Knowles understood, too, and a sour smile curled his lips.

"We seem to have stumbled on somethin' we didn't expect!" he said, with a sneer. "The fags on your side, Bulkeley, seem to have manners and customs of their own, by gad!"

"Do you know where De Vere and Silver II have gone, Grant?" asked Bulkeley, without heeding the Modern prefect.

"N-n-no!" stammered Grant, looking scared. "I—I didn't know they were out, Bulkeley."

Bulkeley's face was very troubled.

"You can leave this in my hands, Knowles," he said, in a low voice. "I shall wait here till they come back. As for the pillow business, that can be investigated in the morning, if you want to carry it further."

Knowles nodded, and quitted the dormitory with a grin of satisfaction.

Bulkeley closed the door, turned on the light, and sat down on Algy Silver's bed to wait.

He had not the slightest hope that the fags were merely absent upon some harmless-fag raid.

He knew it was worse than that.

He had to wait till they returned

and make them give an account of themselves.

It was a matter for the Head to deal with. And Bulkeley, who felt the disgrace keenly, had a heavy heart as he waited.

Most of the Third remained awake now, waiting with breathless suspense.

Midnight sounded dully from the clock-tower, and still the absent fags had not returned.

It was half-past twelve when a sound was heard at the door.

Bulkeley rose to his feet.

The door opened, and there was a gasping exclamation.

Algy Silver and Bertie de Vere, startled and terrified, stood blinking in the unexpected light.

"So you have come back?" said Bulkeley grimly. "I have been waiting for you."

The wretched fags did not speak. They could only stare at Bulkeley with terrified eyes.

"Go to bed now," said Bulkeley quietly. "I will see you in. It is too late to take you before the Head now. That will do in the morning. Turn in!"

In stony silence the two roysterers obeyed.

Bulkeley turned out the light and left the dormitory.

There was a breathless questioning from the Third, but the hapless fags answered not a word. It was long before they slept.

When the dawn glimmered in at the dormitory windows, and the rising-bell rang out over Rookwood School, Algy Silver turned out with a haggard face.

"We've got to go through it this mornin', Bertie," he whispered.

De Vere did not answer, save by a savage look, which startled Algy and made him draw back quickly.

At breakfast there was a subdued buzz at the tables.

Fellows glanced at Algy Silver and De Vere on all sides. The story had spread.

Jimmy Silver gave his cousin a miserable look.

What he had vaguely feared had happened. But Jimmy could only hold his peace. He could do nothing to help his cousin; and he would not "rub it in."

Algy glanced several times at his companion in disgrace.

If he had expected the dashing De Vere to carry the matter off jauntily, he was disappointed.

The new fag sat in stony silence, and did not meet his comrade's eyes once.

After breakfast Bulkeley called to them, and marched them into the Head's study.

He had already reported the facts to Dr. Chisholm.

The Head of Rookwood received the two culprits with a grim brow.

"Silver! De Vere!" he rumbled.

"Yes, sir," faltered Algy.

"You were out of school bounds last night up to a late hour. You did not return till long after midnight. Where had you gone?"

"We—we—we went out for—for a lark, sir!" panted De Vere. "I—I'm sorry I went, sir. I—I really didn't understand at the time what Algy was leading me into. He said it was a lark, and I—I—I went."

Algy Silver started as if he had trodden upon an adder.

His eyes turned upon his chum in horrified amazement and incredulity.

"I think I understand," said the Head, with a nod. "As a new boy here, De Vere, I can see some excuse for you. Naturally, you are not so much to blame as an older boy, well

acquainted with the school discipline, who appears to have led you into wickedness. It was Silver suggested this excursion, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you go?"

"The—the Bird-in-Hand, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"I—I'd never heard of the place before, sir," whined the wretched fag.

"I—I thought it was some place of entertainment. I—I know I did wrong, sir; but I thought it was a— a lark. I—I wouldn't have gone if I'd known what the place was like."

"I hope not," said the Head. "I trust not. Algernon Silver, I am aghast—simply aghast at your utter rascality. You deliberately led a new boy in the school into this shameful adventure, even deceiving him as to the nature of the place you were inducing him to visit. Do you deny it?"

Algy's face was white as chalk.

He did not speak. He could not.

Appearances were against him, even if he had chosen to enter into a wrangle of recrimination with his false friend.

He stood dumb.

"De Vere, I accept your excuse. As you are a new boy, under the influence of another who knows better, I shall pardon you this escapade. But take warning, sir. If anything of the kind should recur—"

"I—I—I never meant—"

"I understand. You may go!"

De Vere left the study.

"As for you, Algernon Silver," exclaimed the Head, rising and towering over the miserable fag, "I have a very great mind to expel you from the school on the spot! But for your extreme youth I should certainly do so. As it is, sir, I shall give you so condign a flogging that I trust it

will be a permanent warning to you. Bulkeley, will you kindly request the sergeant to step here?"

Algy Silver did not speak.

He was too overwhelmed with shame and horror and dismay to be able to say a word for himself—not that there was much to be said.

The flogging followed, and it was severe; but poor Algy did not feel it so severely as he felt the bitter blow of the betrayal of his friendship.

When the infliction was over, the wretched fag crept from the study.

With a face like chalk he crept down the passage and out into the fresh air of the morning.

Jimmy Silver touched him lightly on the shoulder, and Algy looked at him dumbly.

"I'm sorry, kid," said Jimmy softly.

Algy did not speak.

"De Vere seems to have got off scot-free," said Jimmy, looking at him.

The fag's lip curled bitterly.

"Yes. He made it all right for himself, Jimmy. I—I'm sorry, Jimmy. I—I'm sorry I—I was a fool, old chap. He got off. He put it all on me, after he'd been worrying and chipping me for days to take him to that place." Algy's voice broke. "I—I don't mind the flogging—'tisn't that—but he—he—he gave me away, and put it all on my shoulders!"

He panted.

Jimmy understood—he understood

what his cousin was feeling at that moment.

And, sorry as he was, he was glad that Algy, at last, could at least see his false friend as others saw him.

"Poor old Algy!" said Jimmy softly. "Poor old chap! I understand!"

A sudden glitter shot into Algy's eyes.

De Vere of the Third came up to him, with a somewhat uncertain expression on his face.

"I—I say, Algy——"

Algy looked at him.

"I—I suppose you've been through it?"

Algy nodded.

"No good both of us goin' through it—what? I say, old top——"

De Vere got no further.

Algy's fist, with all the force of his indignation and scorn behind it, was planted fairly in his face.

It was a crashing blow.

The new fag went fairly flying, and he crashed on his back with a yell.

Algy stood looking down on him, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing. De Vere sat up dazedly.

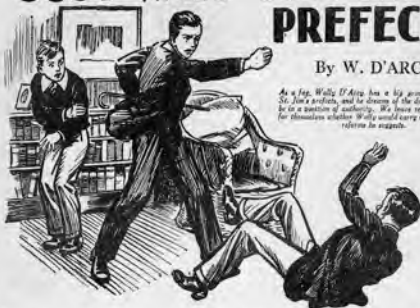
"You cur!" said Algy. "You rotter! You speak to me again, and I'll give you some more!"

De Vere did not answer. He sat on the ground, his eyes glittering, and wiped his mouth, from which the blood was trickling.

Algy Silver turned his back on him, and walked away with Jimmy Silver.

JUST WAIT TILL I'M A PREFECT!

By W. D'ARCY



As a fag, Wally D'Arcy has a big grudge against the St. Jim's prefects, and he dreams of the day when he will be in a position of authority. He leaves readers to decide for themselves whether Wally would carry out the startling reforms he suggests.

If you ask my opinion, our prefects at St. Jim's are a pretty poor lot.

They swank about like the lords of creation, but what they've got to swank about goodness only knows!

Of course, I don't need telling that Kildare and Darrell and one or two more are good at heart. The trouble is, they never show their hearts to the Third!

I can tell you one thing, though—there will be a very different story to tell in that distant day when I become a prefect.

The fags won't flee in fear when they hear my number nines clumping along towards the Third Form-room. They'll greet me with a round of cheers and hearty cries of "Here comes good old Wally!"

I shall set out to make myself the giddy champion of the oppressed. The despised and downtrodden will

learn to look on me as their pal.

When my fag turns up half an hour late with my morning cup of tea, what shall I do? Call him a lazy little beast and sling a slipper at him like the present-day prefect?

Not likely!

"Sit down, kid," I shall say, in my deep but kindly voice. "You must be tired, having to get up so early. Drink the tea yourself. I'll go without."

The youngster's silent look of gratitude will amply repay me for my noble gesture.

When the kid's heroic efforts to light my study fire fill the room with smoke and soot, I shan't jump about like a dancing dervish and kick him all round the study. No fear!

I shall bring the Head himself to the study instead.

"Sir!" I shall say. "Is it fair to

a boy to ask him to fag for me in an atmosphere like this? That chimney needs sweeping. Don't deny it—you'll only be adding to your guilt! I demand that you get in a sweep at once. What's more, to compensate this ill-used youngster for his ordeal, I insist on his being given a day's holiday from lessons."

I shall be well rewarded for my pains by the dumb look of thankfulness and relief on the face of the kid.

In my dealings with my fag I shall make a point of remembering that he is a fellow human being with sensitive feelings like my own. For that reason I shall take particular care not to complain of his cooking.

You know what the average prefect is like when you give him a well-browned round of toast.

"What do you call this?" he raves, reaching out furiously for his ashplant. "I asked for toast—not charcoal!"

What a contrast to the courteous and considerate words I shall use when I'm a prefect!



"Sir!" I shall say when the Head arrives on the scene. "Is it fair to a boy to ask him to fag for me in an atmosphere like this? The chimney needs sweeping—don't deny it!"

"One thing about you, kid," I shall say, as I munch away contentedly at the toast on which he has lavished his youthful skill, "you certainly can cook!"



If I'm peppered with peas by a crowd of innocent kids, I shall give them a beaming smile. "Well aimed, youngsters!" I shall call out encouragingly.

The flush of pride on his eager young countenance will make up for any slight toughness I happen to find in the toast.

Bullying will be put down with a firm hand when I'm in the saddle.

Let me catch one of my colleagues laming a kid with his ashplant and you'll soon see the fur fly! With one mighty bound I shall reach my brother prefect and snatch the ashplant from his hand.

"Take that, you brute!" I shall cry, as my fist lashes out, sending him slumping to the floor with a howl of agony.

The unspoken gratitude in the kid's eyes will easily compensate for the unpleasantness resulting between myself and the other seniors.

The fags' high-spirited pranks will never draw down the vials of my wrath on them as it does in the case of the old fogeys who boss it over us to-day. If I'm peppered with peas by a crowd of innocent kids during peashooting practice, I shall give them a broad beaming smile and chuckle with great enjoyment.

"Well aimed, youngsters!" I shall call out encouragingly. "Your marksmanship is almost as good as mine when I was your age. Keep it up!"

The gratified grins of the pea-

shooting brigade will make the discomfort of being a target a mere nothing.

Should I walk unsuspectingly into my study to find a painful of sooty water descend on me, I'm going to take good care not to fly into a rage and seek out the guilty fags and slaughter them. That would be typical of the present-day prefect; but it won't be when I hold sway!

Turning my soaked and sooty face towards the spot where I can detect youthful laughter, I will grin a dusky grin that will at once end any slight fears they feel.

"Ha, ha, ha!" I shall roar, "Don't run away, kids; I don't mind this! Matter of fact, it's reminded me to ask some of you kids to tea."

"G-g-great pip!" the startled young beggars will stutter.

"Come right in and make yourselves at home!" I shall say.

And the excited whoops of the grateful young jokers will be well worth a soaking in sooty water!

Last, but not least, I shall never dream of driving the fags up to their dorm at bedtime like a flock of giddy sheep, as Kildare and the others do.

"Stay up a little longer?" I shall say, with my deep but indulgent laugh. "Why, certainly! You chaps are the best judges of when you feel like bed. Stay up as long as you like, kids—and when you do get up to your dorm, mind you finish up with a jolly good pillow-fight!"

The ringing cheers of the delighted fags will remove all the distastefulness from my task of keeping the beaks at bay.

It all sounds like a dream, doesn't it? But it's coming true one day.

Just wait till I'm a prefect!

Laugh These Off!

—With MONTY LOWTHER

Hallo, Everybody!

Herries has composed a new "swing" tune. Blake says Herries may swing for it yet.

I hear a learned judge has admitted that all judges make mistakes. A thing all criminals have been convinced of for a long time!

Cricketers never really get old, we read. A man is as old as he fields! Ow!

During an upheaval in a South American country, the British Ambassador was having a conversation with the President when a messenger was admitted. After a whispered aside, the President rose with an apologetic smile. "If you will excuse me," he said to the British Ambassador, "I will send in the new President to finish our conversation."

Overheard at the Wayland Hippodrome:
Actor: "The last time I appeared here, people could be heard laughing a mile away."
Friend: "Indeed? What was on there?"

I hear a film company recently paid £200,000 for the rights of a screen comedy. The author thought it quite the best joke of his career.

News: Burglars who broke into London premises found only a few pennies, which they did not take. Of course, burglars always did regard coppers as unlucky!

A doctor recommends musical cures—Mozart for indigestion, Chopin for nerves, Wagner for depression, and so on. But he doesn't mention the cure for Bach-ache.

Good luck, fellows!



By
Martin Clifford

THE FIRST CHAPTER

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING

"Twot in, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke with even more than his accustomed affability.

The swell of St. Jim's was, in fact, beaming.

If he had been a parliamentary candidate, bent upon pulling the legs of his worthy electors, he could not have beamed upon them with more cheery and affable politeness.

He stood in the doorway of Study No. 6, with his celebrated eyeglass gleaming in his eye, welcoming his visitors.

Outside in the quadrangle, a dim November mist hung low and grey, the old elms looking like spectres through it. But inside Study No. 6 all was merry and bright. There was

a cheery fire, and the light was on, and the study looked really very inviting.

Blake and Herries and Digby were seated round the table, at work. They were painting cardboard masks, apparently in readiness for the celebrations of the Fifth, and they did not seem to have any time to waste on the visitors.

It fell to Arthur Augustus to do the honours of the study. But that was just in Gussy's line.

"Twot in, Julian! Twot in, Kewwuish, old top. Pway come in, Hammond! Weilly, old man, heah's a chair! Vewy glad to see you, Duwance. Is that you, Levison, and Clive, and Cardew? Woll in!"

The Fourth-Formers crowded in.

Some of them glanced round the study rather inquiringly, as if in expectation of seeing something that

George Alfred Grundy has good cause to remember the Fifth of November—thanks to his plot to "blow up" the St. Jim's Parliament!

was not visible. Arthur Augustus did not notice it. His attention was taken up by a fresh lot of visitors in the passage.

"That you, Gwunday?"

Grundy of the Shell stepped in.

"Here I am," he said. "Here's Wilkins and Gunn——"

"Twot in, deah boys."

The Shell fellows came in.

"Any more coming?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What's the game?" asked Jack Blake. "You fellows are welcome, of course; but I'm blessed if I know what's on. Is Gussy going to give a lecture on Relativity?"

"I thought it was a feed," said Levison.

"So did I," said Clive. "Isn't it?"

"Isn't it a feed, bedad?" demanded Reilly. "Sure, Gussy asked us to come, and tould us not to be later than five——"

"And we're here," said Grundy. "I don't often feed with Fourth Form chaps. But I've come."

"Twot in, Skimpole," said Arthur Augustus, as a lean face adorned by a pair of big spectacles blinked in. "Plenty of room for you, old fellow. Come along, Tompkins. Twot in."

"Standing room only," remarked Blake. "Perhaps some of you can sit on the mantelpiece."

"Weally, Blake——"

Three cheery faces looked in on the crowded study. They belonged to Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

"Room for three little ones?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Sowwy, deah boy——"

"Not turning down your old pals, Gussy, when there's a feed on, are you?" asked Monty Lowther, in a tone like that of the ghost in Hamlet—more of sorrow than of anger.

"It is not a feed, Lowthah."

"Not!" ejaculated Manners.

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boy! It is a fah more important mattah than a feed."

"My hat!"

"I'm sowwy I cannot ask you fellows——"

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry kindly, "there's no occasion for sorrow. If it's not a feed, we've got an important engagement at this very moment. Good-bye!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy closed the door of the study—with some difficulty, as there were many in the way. However, he closed it, and then turned and beamed upon the assembly.

"My deah chaps——" he began.

"Hold on!" interrupted Levison of the Fourth. "Did I hear you mention that it wasn't a feed?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then what the thump are we here for?"

"Weally, Levison——"

"There seems to be a misunderstanding," remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew. "We thought we were coming here to tea; and Gussy thought we were coming here to see him wag his chin. A mistake on both sides."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Cardew——"

"Good-bye, dear man!" said Cardew, and he opened the door and lounged out of the study.

"Pway don't wun away, Cardew. Where are you goin', Clive? I have somethin' vewy important to say——"

But Sidney Clive was gone.

"Levison——"

"We haven't had tea yet, old top," said Levison, laughing. "Sorry there was a misunderstanding. But I want my tea."

And Levison departed.

Several other fellows seemed inclined to follow his example; but Arthur

Augustus D'Arcy jerked the door shut.
"Pway listen to me, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I asked you all to get heah by five o'clock—for a meetin'—"

"Not a feed?" grunted Reilly.

"Oh, no! I am sowwy there was a mistake! But the meetin' is a vewy important one. I have to address a few words to you on a subject of burnin' importance."

"Cut it short!" said Grundy.

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Well, what's the throuble, any-way?" asked Reilly. "We'll give you a minute and a half!"

"Two minutes!" said Julian generously. "There you are, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! I am afwaid I could not deal with the mattah in two minutes, Julian! I shall not take up more than an hour of your time—"

"You can bet on that!" said Reilly. "You won't take up two minutes of mine."

"Weally, Weilly—"

"Cut the cackl'e and come to the hosses!" grunted George Alfred Grundy.

"I am comin' to the point at once, Gwunday. The mattah wefers to the new elections for the St. Jim's Parliament," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy impressively.

"Any refreshments to follow?" asked Gunn.

"Oh, no!"

"Then I'm off!"

"Weally, Gunn—"

William Gunn opened the door and departed. Before Gussy could close it again, two or three more fellows slipped out.

The St. Jim's Parliament was a very important thing. The impending



Arthur Augustus welcomed the visitors to Study No. 6. "Twot in, Julian! Twot in, Kewwush, old top! Is that you, Levysen, Clive and Cardew? Well in!" The Fourth Formers crowded in.

elections were very important. But there was a general failure to realise the importance of Arthur Augustus' remarks on the subject.

"Pway hold on, you chaps!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus anxiously. "Pway lend me your yahs, as the chap wemarks in the play. Mattahs in the St. Jim's Parliament are vewy fah fwom satisfactowy—"

"Hear, hear!" from Grundy.

"In the new session, to commence on November the Fifth, in Peppah's Barn, I considah that there ought to be a change—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I am not satisfied with Tom Mewwy's pwoceedings as Pwime Ministah of St. Jim's——"

"Hear, hear!"

"I have called this meetin', to wequest you fellows to wally wound," said Arthur Augustus impressively. "There is goin' to be a change. Things are goin' to be wun on bettah lines. What is wanted is a leadah."

"Good!" said Grundy.

"At a cwis is like the pwesent a man is wequiahed," said Arthur Augustus, much encouraged by Grundy's agreement—Grundy generally not being in agreement with anybody but George Alfred Grundy of the Shell. "The hour and the man, you know! What we wequiah as a leadah is a stwong, silent chawactah——"

"Just it!" said Grundy.

"Tom Mewwy is all vewy well in his way——"

"In his way!" snorted Grundy.

"Yaas, exactly. But a new leadah is wequiahed—a weal leadah. I beg to offah myself——"

"What——"

"And I wequest you all to wally wound, and secure me an ovah-whelmin' majowity in the elections——"

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy.

"Bai Jove!"

"You've got us here, supposing it was a feed, to hear you talk utter rot, have you?" exclaimed Grundy indignantly. "We jolly well want a change in the St. Jim's Parliament—but the leader we want isn't a silly owl in the Fourth Form! It's a man that's wanted, and I'm the man!"

"Weally, Gwunday——"

"I'm going in strong for the job at this election," said Grundy. "You can vote for me if you like——"

"I wegard the suggestion as widicu-

lous, Gwunday. A leadah in politics wequiahls bwains——"

"You cheeky ass!" continued Grundy. "It was a bit beneath my dignity to come to a spread in the Fourth; and now I find there's no spread, only chin-wag! As for voting for you, I'd rather vote for the House-dame's tomcat! We've been taken in, you fellows! Bump him!"

"Bai Jove!"

Grundy led the way, and the meeting seemed to agree with Grundy. They had come in expectation of a feed, and they were disappointed. Gussy's parliamentary eloquence did not seem so satisfying, somehow, as a study spread. Three or four pairs of hands collared the eloquent candidate, and Arthur Augustus found himself sitting on the study carpet. He sat there with rather a heavy concussion.

Grundy and the rest marched out of the study, leaving the swell of St. Jim's gasping for breath. The door closed with a bang.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Blake chuckled.

"You asked for it, old top!" he remarked.

"Begged for it," said Herries. "Now you've got it, I hope you like it!"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and dusted down his elegant "bags," which had suffered from contact with the carpet. He turned his eyeglass upon the three juniors at the table. They were grinning.

"There is nothin' whatevah to gwin at, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have been tweeked with gwoss diswespsect."

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

"I wegard Gwunday as a wuffian. It was not my fault if the fellows

expected to find a spweed heah. I nevah said it was a spweed. I wegard them all as wottahs. I suppose you thwee fellows are goin' to vote for me at the election?"

"I'm a candidate!" grinned Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"And I'm another!" chuckled Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"Same here!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"But I'll tell you what," said Blake. "You shall withdraw your candidature and vote for me. How does that strike you?"

To which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy replied laconically and disdainfully:

"Wats!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

NO COALITION!

THE Prime Minister's brow was wrinkled deeply in thought.

Two members of the Cabinet were looking very serious.

The Prime Minister referred to was Tom Merry, and the two members of the Cabinet were Manners and Lowther of the St. Jim's Shell.

Matters were not really going well with the St. Jim's Parliament.

The Terrible Three realised that fact.

Meeting of Parliament in Pepper's Barn had, of late, lacked the gravity that should have characterised parliamentary assemblies. Indeed, Monty Lowther averred that, of late, the St. Jim's Parliament had been almost as rowdy as the other assembly at Westminster.

As Tom Merry was Premier, he could not help feeling that any change was likely to be for the worse. Real Premiers feel like that, though they are very frequently mistaken.

While other fellows who were

ambitious enough to have an eye on the premiership, felt that any change was likely to be for the better.

Undoubtedly there was trouble. And the St. Jim's Premier, taking the high hand, had announced his intention of "going to the country," and the St. Jim's Parliament had been dissolved.

New elections impended, and excitement ran rather high. Every fellow in both Houses at St. Jim's had a vote in the elections—there was universal suffrage. But vaunting ambition was rife on every side, and it looked at present as if there would be more candidates than electors.

The Prime Minister's idea had been to get a fresh Parliament, and get returned to it with a bumping majority. This would clear the air, and silence the malcontents.

But it began to look as if that bumping majority was a very doubtful quantity. Study No. 6, it seemed, looked forward to getting the leadership into the hands of the Fourth; which all the Shell agreed was utter rot.

The Shell had agreed upon that; but they agreed upon little else. Grundy of the Shell was "up against" Tom Merry—in fact, he was up against everything generally. Grundy was trying to form a party of his own. At present his party consisted of two—Wilkins and Gunn. They were in Grundy's study, and they supported Grundy for the sake of a quiet life. Trimble of the Fourth was a possible recruit to Grundy's party—it depended on the number of jam-tarts that Grundy was prepared to stand Trimble.

A house divided against itself cannot stand, as was said of old. With Study No. 6 going one way, and Grundy & Co. going another, Tom

Merry's party lost a good deal of support. In the School House, probably, Tom still commanded a majority. But there was the New House to be reckoned with.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were ambitious, too. Figgy looked forward to getting things into New House hands, and it was known that Figgy was going in very hard for electioneering. It was only too likely that while three School House parties were contending for the prize, the New House would carry it off.

Hence the wrinkle in the brow of the boyish St. Jim's Premier, Manners was thinking deeply, too; and even Monty Lowther was serious for once. All three of them felt that things were coming to a crisis. For if the Government fell into the hands of the New House, the St. Jim's Parliament was certain to go to the dogs. According to Figgins, it had gone to the dogs already. But that was only New House swank.

"I think I've got it, you fellows," said Tom Merry at last.

Manners looked up from a list he was making on a sheet of impot paper.

"We shall carry the School House all right," he said. "But——"

"The New House sticks together," said Lowther. "Redfern and his pals are backing up Figgins & Co. They'll beat any single party in this House, I think."

"That's what I've been thinking out," said Tom, "and I've got an idea. What about a coalition?"

"A which?"

"Coalition!" said Tom. "You know what that means—two parties in politics coalesce, and back each other up——"

"But Blake & Co. won't back us up," said Lowther, "and, of course,

we can't back up cheeky Fourth-Formers."

"Grundy wouldn't coalesce," said Manners.

"I'm not thinking of Grundy, or Study No. 6. A coalition with the New House," said Tom.

"Phew!"

"We coalesce with Figgins & Co.," said the captain of the Shell. "We agree to let them in for a share of the seats in the St. Jim's Cabinet. That's how it's done in real politics."

Monty Lowther looked doubtful.

"St. Jim's politics are a bit different," he remarked. "There's no salary attached to the offices in the St. Jim's Government."

"What difference does that make?"

"Lots! Two parties, in real politics, get up a coalition to divide the plunder. But here there isn't any plunder."

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"You see, in a real Government they invent jobs for chaps, their friends and relations. The Opposition tries to show them up to the public, for the sake of getting them out of office, so they can get in instead, and invent jobs for their own friends and relations," said Lowther, with a wisdom beyond his years. "Then sometimes it becomes convenient to have a coalition of both parties, and they agree to whack out the jobs and salaries; and, without an Opposition to cause trouble, they can invent any number of jobs. And this goes on until there's a crowd of new men come along, hungry for salaries, and they form a new Opposition."

"But there ain't any salaries in our Cabinet," said Manners. "No inducement to an Opposition to coalesce."

"Ye-e-es," said Tom Merry. "I suppose that's so in real politics. But, dash it all, St. Jim's politics are a



Three or four pairs of hands grasped the eloquent candidate, and Arthur Augustus found himself sitting on the study carpet. Grundy and the rest marched out of the study, leaving the swell of St. Jim's gasping for breath.

cut above the real thing, I hope! The St. Jim's House of Commons hasn't quite come down to the level of the other one. I'm going to appeal to Figgins' patriotism. That wouldn't be much good at Westminster, but it ought to work here."

"Won't do any harm, if it doesn't do any good," assented Manners. "Figgins may realise, when it's pointed out to him, that the leadership must remain in the hands of this study. After all, he's not an utter ass."

"Let's go and see him, then," said Tom. "Strike the iron while it's hot. The elections take place to-morrow."

"Right-ho!"

The Terrible Three left their study and went towards the staircase. George Alfred Grundy looked out of Study No. 3 as they passed, and

called out to the captain of the Shell. "Tom Merry! Step in here a minute——"

"Busy, old top!" answered Tom, without stopping.

"Look here——" roared Grundy. "Rats!"

And the Terrible Three went downstairs without heeding the great George Alfred.

They crossed the quadrangle through the dim November mist, and entered the New House.

Tom Merry tapped at the door of George Figgins' study.

"Come in!" sang out Figgins.

The Shell fellows entered. Figgins and Kerr and Wynn were just finishing tea. They smiled genially at the School House juniors. Their looks showed that they were anticipating great things at the general election.

"Trot in!" said Figgins. "Take

a seat—if you can find one. Come to tea? There's one sardine left——"

"Thanks; we won't worry your sardine," said Tom. "We've walked over to talk politics."

Figgins chuckled.

"Feeling the draught?" he asked.

"I rather fancy we're going to give you the kybosh this time, Tommy."

"I fancy we're going to be the Cabinet next session," said Kerr. "You fellows needn't mind. We shall run the thing better."

"Much better," said Fatty Wynn. "As soon as I'm in the Cabinet I'm going to propose a new law. There will be an assessment on all members of the St. Jim's Parliament, excepting members of the Cabinet. The money will be used to provide refreshments. What do you think of that idea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at. I think it's a jolly good idea," said Fatty Wynn warmly.

"You would!" agreed Tom Merry. "Now, Figgy, come to business. I understand that all the New House fellows are backing up your party."

"They are!" assented Figgins complacently.

"You think you'll get a majority?"

"Sure of it, unless the School House all vote together. And they won't."

"Don't be too jolly sure of that," said Tom. "There's a certain amount of discontent in our House, I admit. The Fourth Form kids are cheeky, and Grundy is an obstinate ass! But if I can pull them all together, we shall knock out the New House. However, that isn't what I came over to say. We're willing to give you New House fellows a show on certain conditions."

"Give 'em a name," said Figgins tolerantly.

"What about a coalition?"

"Oh!"

"You back us up, and we back you up," said Tom.

"That's not a bad idea," said Figgins, after a glance at Kerr and Wynn. "We work together, and divide the seats in the Cabinet?"

"Exactly."

"With a New House Premier?"

"A School House Premier," corrected Tom Merry gently.

"Don't be an ass, old chap——"

"Well, don't you be a cheeky goat!"

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

"We didn't come over here to listen to New House swank!" exclaimed Monty Lowther warmly. "Have a little sense, Figgins. There's seven seats in the St. Jim's Cabinet. We'll let you have two."

"That's fair!" said Manners.

Figgins laughed derisively.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he replied. "We're prepared to take you into our party; and we'll let you have one seat in the Cabinet—as a reward."

"What?"

"On condition that you toe the line and do as you're told, of course," said Figgins.

"You silly ass!" roared Manners.

"If you're going to be a cheeky chump, Figgins, there's nothing more to be said!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I've a jolly good mind to punch your silly nose. That's what you really want!"

"I want all the punches any School House duffer can give me!" retorted Figgins disdainfully.

"I'll jolly well——"

"Rats!"

That was too much for the St. Jim's Prime Minister. He was not a master

of political strategy, like some Prime Ministers ; but he was quite good at punching noses, as he proceeded to show. There was a roar from George Figgins as Tom Merry's knuckles came in contact with his nose.

"Yoop ! Why, you cheeky rotter !"

Figgins was on his feet in a second, and Tom Merry in less than another second.

"Now, you School House rotter

—"

"Now, you New House chump—"

"Kick 'em out !" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Try it on !" snorted Lowther.

Fatty Wynn tried it on at once, with a rush at Lowther. They closed and struggled, and in a moment more Kerr was hotly engaged with Manners.

The political discussion had degenerated into a free fight.

The study table went flying in one direction, the chairs in another. There was a crash of the teapot on the floor.

In the midst of the wreck, six ambitious politicians struggled and shouted and punched.

The door was flung open, and Redfern and Owen looked in.

"What the thump—" began Reddy.

He did not finish. There was no need to ask questions. He shouted along the passage :

"School House rotters ! Line up !"

Then he rushed into the fray, followed by Owen. There were foot-steps in the passage, and five or six more New House juniors crowded in.

After that the Terrible Three felt as if they were in the grip of a nightmare.

They woke up, as it were, at the bottom of the stairs, whither they had been rolled.

"Oh ! Ah ! Ow, ow !"

"Come up and have some more !" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha !"

"Oh, dear ! Ow !"

The Terrible Three scrambled up, gasping for breath. There were a dozen New House juniors crowded on the steps above, but the Shell fellows were wrathful, and they were about to charge recklessly up the stairs, when Monteith of the Sixth came along, ashplant in hand.

"What's this thumping row ?" demanded the prefect. And without waiting for an answer he started in with the ashplant.

The Terrible Three retired rather hurriedly from the scene.

They were breathless and rather untidy when they limped back into the School House. And it was quite clear that there was going to be no coalition !

THE THIRD CHAPTER

GRUNDY'S WAY !

GRUNDY of the Shell was in Study No. 10 when the Terrible Three arrived there. Grundy was sitting on the table, swinging his long legs and looking impatient. He grinned as the dusty and dishevelled trio came in.

"Hallo ! Been in the wars ?" he asked.

"Oh, go and eat coke !" said Manners crossly.

"I called to you in the passage, Tom Merry—"

"Rats !"

"Do you call that civil ?" roared Grundy.

"Run away and play !" said Monty Lowther, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "You're a bore, Grundy !"

"The elections come off to-morrow—"

"Bother the elections—"

"I'm standing as a candidate——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"It looks to me," continued Grundy, unheeding, "as if the New House will pull it off if we don't stand together. I'm proposing that we sink our own differences, and all back up together against the New House."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three looked a little more amicable. This was unusually reasonable on the part of the hot-headed and obstinate George Alfred.

"That's a good idea!" said Manners. "Rather a pity you didn't think of it before. But better late than never."

"Well, I've thought of it now," said Grundy. "Are you fellows agreeable?"

"Certainly!"

"Shoulder to shoulder against the enemy?" asked Grundy.

"Right!"

"Good! I'm jolly glad you can see reason," said Grundy, with much satisfaction. "You see, Merry, you made rather a failure of it as Prime Minister, and you can realise that a new man is wanted. If you three fellows back me up, lots of the others will follow your example, and I don't see why I shouldn't carry the election."

"What?"

"You'll vote for me——"

"Vote for you?" repeated Tom Merry blankly. "Are you off your silly rocker, Grundy?"

"Why, you've just agreed to sink our differences and stand together against the New House!" exclaimed Grundy. "That means that you will vote for me, doesn't it?"

"No, you ass; it means that you will vote for me!"

"Don't be an idiot, Merry——"

"Oh, ring off, Grundy!" exclaimed Lowther. "I thought it was too

good to be true when you started talking sense!"

"Look here, Lowther——"

"Ass! Fathead! Chuck it!"

"Roll him out!" exclaimed Manners impatiently. "I'm fed up with Grundy!"

"Yes, rather!"

The Terrible Three were not in the best of tempers after their exciting experiences in the New House. They were in no mood to stand Grundy.

They collared the burly Shell fellow and whipped him off the table. George Alfred resisted furiously as he was swung to the door.

"Take him home!" said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With arms and legs wildly flying in the air, George Alfred Grundy was rushed along the passage to Study No. 3. Lowther kicked open the door, and Grundy was rushed in.

Wilkins and Gunn jumped up in amazement at that sudden and startling invasion.

"What the thump——" ejaculated Wilkins.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gunn.

Bump!

Grundy was landed on the study table with a loud concussion.

"There's your prize lunatic!" gasped Tom Merry. "I advise you to keep him on a chain! He will get hurt if he wanders up the passage again!"

And the Terrible Three retired, feeling a little solaced. Grundy had received what was due to Figgins & Co.

Wilkins and Gunn grinned as Grundy sat up on the table, looking rather dazed. Grundy's faithful followers were loyal to their great chief, but they seemed to see something comic in their leader's aspect at that moment.

Grundy glared at them.

"You silly owls, what are you grinning at?" he gasped. "Ow! Oh! I'll jolly well scalp those rotters! Oh dear!"

Grundy rolled off the table.

"Come on!" he shouted.

"Eh—where?"

"We're going to mop up Study No. 10! Follow me!"

Grundy rushed out into the passage. Apparently he was under the impression that his loyal henchmen were following close at his heels, eager to avenge the wrongs and injuries of their great leader. But if Grundy was under that impression, he was making one of his many mistakes.

Wilkins and Gunn followed him as far as the passage.

There, while Grundy rushed to the left, Wilkins and Gunn turned to the right; and by the time Grundy reached Tom Merry's study, Wilkins and Gunn were half-way downstairs.

Grundy was far too enraged and excited to think of looking round to ascertain whether his comrades were at his heels. He hurled open Tom Merry's door and rushed in.

"Back up!" he roared.



In the hands of the New House Juniors the Terrible Three felt as if they were in the grip of a nightmare. They woke up, as it were, at the bottom of the stairs, whither they had been rolled. "Come up and have some more!" roared Figgins.

And he rushed right at the Terrible Three.

"Hallo! Do you want some more?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Three pairs of hands grasped George Alfred Grundy and swept him off his feet. Bump!

"Back up, Gunny! Go it, Wilkins!" yelled Grundy.

But the voice of George Alfred was wasted on the desert air. Wilkins and Gunn were out of hearing by that time—not that they would have

heeded if they had heard. Wilkins and Gunn were not looking for trouble with Study No. 10. George Alfred Grundy feared no foe; but Wilkins and Gunn were wiser in their generation.

To his surprise and wrath Grundy discovered that he was single-handed in the fray; and the fray went very much against George Alfred.

He was whipped out of the study, bumped in the passage, and rushed back to his own quarters.

There he was bumped thrice on his own hearthrug; and his voice rang along the Shell passage in tones that might have been envied by the celebrated Stentor himself.

"If you want some more, come back and ask for it!" gasped Tom Merry.

And Grundy was left on his hearthrug, gasping for breath. He sat up spluttering.

"Oh, dear! Where are those rotters? Leaving a chap in the lurch! Oh, my eye! Oh, my nose! Oh, crumbs!"

Grundy scrambled up at last. His inclination was strong to invade Study No. 10 again. But even Grundy realised that he had had enough, and he sat down in the armchair instead.

When Wilkins and Gunn came in, they found George Alfred rubbing a variety of bruises, and he gave them a scornful glare.

"You didn't back me up!" he snorted.

"D-d-d-d-didn't we?" murmured Wilkins.

"You left me in the lurch——"

"You——you see——"

"I see a pair of blessed funks!" said Grundy scornfully. "I'm not having funks in my study! Get out!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Grundy picked up a fives bat.

"I give you one second!" he said grimly.

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a glance, and backed out of the study. They did their prep. that evening in Kangaroo's room. In No. 3, George Alfred Grundy was alone in his glory, with no companion save his own lofty dignity. He was still ambitious of a triumph in the St. Jim's elections. But, from the point of view of a disinterested observer, it would seem highly improbable that Grundy's methods would carry him through successfully.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

THE MEETING THAT DIDN'T COME
OFF

"WHAT silly ass——"

"Gwunday, of course——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of juniors had gathered round the notice-board, on the following day. A new paper was pinned on the board, and that new election manifesto attracted a considerable amount of attention. It ran:

"NOTIS!"

TO THE ELECKTORS OF
ST. JIM'S!

GRANDMEATING OF ELECKTORS
WILL BE HELD IN PEPPER'S
BARN AFTER MORNING LESSON
TO-DAY.

COME AND HEER THE REFFORM
CANDYDATE!

(Sined) G. A. GRUNDY."

"Like his blessed cheek!" said Jack Blake indignantly. "Meetings ain't allowed to be held in the barn, excepting when Parliament is in session."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, let him rip!" remarked Cardew. "Nobody will go!"

"Wilkins and Gunn will have to go, or Grundy will punch their heads in the study!" grinned Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here he comes," murmured Clive.

Grundy of the Shell came striding down the passage. He paused, and looked on with approval as he saw the attention his notice was attracting.

"You fellows reading that notice—what?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah, old top!"

"All are welcome, and the meeting begins in ten minutes," said Grundy. "I'm going along now. I expect to see all you fellows there!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I shall address the meeting. Interruptions will not be allowed, and there will be no questions, and no argument," said Grundy. "I'm going to explain the situation, and appeal to your patriotism to vote for the right candidate, and save the St. Jim's Parliament from going to pot. That's how it stands. Roll up!"

And Grundy walked on. In the corridor he rounded up Wilkins and Gunn, who really seemed to display some inclination to avoid him. But Grundy did not even notice it.

"Come on, you chaps!" he said.

"Where?" asked Wilkins feebly. If it was another attack on Study No. 10, Wilkins

did not intend to "come on" by any means.

"Pepper's Barn, to get ready for the meeting!"

"Oh, all right!" said Wilkins, relieved.

"Is there going to be a meeting, though?" asked Gunn, as Grundy led the way to the gates.

"I've called one!" answered Grundy stiffly.

"But if they don't come——"

"The fellows are hardly likely to ignore my notice, I suppose?"

"They might——"

"Don't talk rot, Gunny!"

"Look here, Grundy——"

"My dear chap," said Grundy kindly, "I know you mean well, and you can't help being an ass. You can't help being one any more than I can help being a fellow of unusual intellect. It's just how we happened to be born. But facts are facts, so the less you air your opinions the better!"



Grundy was landed on the table with a loud concussion. "There's your prize lunatic!" gasped Tom Merry. "I advise you to keep him on a chain!"

Gunn followed his great chief in silence after that. But both he and Wilkins were looking restive by the time they reached Pepper's Barn.

Grundy threw the door wide open and strode in. The rather large apartment was vacant. Grundy sniffed as he walked in.

"Somebody's been smoking here," he said.

"Racke or Crooke, perhaps," said Wilkins. "They're always sneaking off to smoke somewhere, the dinky asses!"

"Let me catch 'em smoking in our House of Commons!" said Grundy hotly. "I'll jolly well make an example of 'em anyway!"

"Is that your way of catching votes, Grundy?" inquired Wilkins. "Do you think chaps will vote for you if you punch their heads?"

Grundy snorted.

"I haven't asked for your advice, George Wilkins. I'm not a fellow that needs advice. All you fellows have to do is to back me up and hold your tongues. I've told you that before."

"Look here——"

"Don't interrupt! Now, I've got my speech here," said Grundy, taking a sheet of impot paper from his pocket, and glancing over it. "I think it's a pretty telling one. I've practically no doubt that it will carry the meeting, and give me a solid majority in the School House, at least. You fellows will stand by me and support me during the meeting. When I give you a sign, you shout 'Hear, hear!' same as they do in the House of Commons."

"Oh, all right!" yawned Wilkins.

"Don't yawn at a fellow, Wilkins. If you're not enthusiastic, you ought to be, and if you want a thick ear——"

"How long will the speech last, Grundy?"

"About half an hour!" Grundy sniffed again. "There's smoking going on here. I can't make a speech in an atmosphere like a tap-room. There's some of those smoky rotters in the cellar, I believe. I'll look!"

Grundy strode out of the barn, and round the building to the back, where the door to the cellar was situated. Wilkins and Gunn looked at one another.

"Do you think the fellows will come here to listen to Grundy spouting, Wilkins?" asked Gunn.

"I don't think!" grinned Wilkins.

"Do you want to hear him spout?"

"No jolly fear!"

"Shall we cut?"

"Let's!" said Wilkins.

And while Grundy was pursuing his investigations at the back of the barn, Wilkins and Gunn scuttled away in the direction of St. Jim's.

Blissfully ignorant of that defection on the part of his supporters, George Alfred Grundy jerked open the cellar door at the back of the barn. The ground sloped away under the barn, the floor of which was level, so that the cellar had a good depth at the back. It was, in fact, quite a roomy place. As Grundy threw open the door, he made the discovery—which he suspected already—that the cellar was not untenanted. Racke and Crooke of the Shell, and Chowle and Mellish of the Fourth, were there, smoking cigarettes—perhaps as an appetiser for their dinner.

They started up and stared at Grundy.

"Caught you, have I?" said George Alfred grimly.

Aubrey Racke gave him a scowl.

"Well, now you've caught us, you can clear!" he snapped. "Don't butt in where you're not wanted, Grundy."

"You're smoking!"

"Any bizney of yours?" sneered Crooke.

"Lots!" answered Grundy. "You're not allowed to sneak under the St. Jim's House of Commons like a gang of Guy Fawkes' conspirators, and smoke filthy cigarettes, and poison the atmosphere through the cracks in the floor. Get out!"

"Mind your own business!" roared Chowle.

"This is my business," said Grundy.

"I don't allow this sort of thing."

"Have they made you a prefect by any chance?" sneered Racke.

"Outside!"

"Rats!"

"I'll jolly soon show you!" said Grundy.

He strode into the cellar.

"Hold on, Grundy!" said Crooke uneasily. "The fact is, old fellow, we're going to vote for you, and—and we came here to talk it over, over a smoke——"

Short from Grundy.

"I don't want a dingy gang of smoky blighters to vote for me," he answered. "Now then, out you go!"

And Grundy, who never stood on ceremony with friend or foe, collared Crooke, and pitched him headlong out of the cellar. Crooke sprawled on the ground outside and roared.

"Collar the fool!" shouted Racke.

He gripped Grundy, and they



As Grundy threw open the cellar door he made the discovery that Racke and Crooke of the Shell, and Chowle and Mellish of the Fourth were there, smoking cigarettes. "Caught you, have I?" said George Alfred grimly.

struggled. Mellish and Chowle came on, half-heartedly. As the merry smokers were four to one, they ought to have been able to handle Grundy easily enough, burly as he was. But Grundy had no end of pluck; and that was a quality in which Racke & Co. were rather deficient.

Grundy freed one hand, and gave it to Mellish, clenched. Mellish caught it with his nose, and howled, and scudded out of the cellar. Chowle followed him without waiting for the same hint.

Racke was fighting savagely; but Grundy handled him easily enough. Aubrey Racke came flying out of the cellar in less than a minute, and he landed beside Crooke, spluttering.

The victorious Grundy followed them out.

"Now, then!" he commanded. "Clear!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"If I begin on you with my boots——"

Mellish and Chowle departed without waiting for Grundy's boots. Crooke received one kick, and fled. Racke received two or three before he scudded away after his comrades. The great Grundy was left victorious on the field of battle.

He grinned and closed the cellar door, and returned to the barn. There he looked round, rather puzzled, for Wilkins and Gunn.

"Wilkins!" he roared. "Gunny!"

Echo answered "Gunny!" But there was no other answer. Grundy's henchmen were far away by that time.

"Cheeky rotters!" muttered Grundy. "They've cleared while I was dealing with those smoky cads! I'm too kind to 'em—that's what it is—too gentle and soft in my ways, because they're my pals. I shall jolly well take a high hand with 'em after this. Can't have this sort of cheek!"

Unsupported by Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy unrolled his speech, and glanced over it. He nodded with approval as he read, quite pleased by his own eloquence. He had little doubt that that speech, delivered in his own splendid oratorical way to a numerous audience, would swing round public opinion at St. Jim's into his favour.

But where was the numerous audience?

Grundy was puzzled.

The notice on the board in the School House was plain enough for anybody to read, and he had told the fellows himself that the meeting began in ten minutes. Yet no one had arrived.

It was very peculiar.

Grundy stepped out of the barn at last, and looked across the misty field. There was no St. Jim's fellow in sight. A weary ploughman was plodding his way homeward, and that was all.

"Why the thump don't they come?" muttered Grundy, in perplexity. "Even those silly owls can't have made a mistake about the time of the meeting. It's jolly odd!"

Odd or not, the meeting did not arrive. Grundy paced to and fro in the barn, memorising the specially eloquent passages in his great speech, ready for the impressive delivery. But there was no sound of footsteps; not a single St. Jim's cap appeared in the doorway. And Grundy's watch told him at last that it was dinner-time. He took another look across the field and frowned. Still there was no one in sight.

Grundy breathed hard. Evidently, if he was going to deliver his speech at all, he would have to deliver it with only himself as audience. That was no use to Grundy; he did not, himself, need convincing that he was the right candidate for parliamentary honours.

He shoved the speech into his pocket and started for St. Jim's. He arrived late for dinner, and Mr. Linton gave him fifty lines; and there was a general smile round the Shell table, to which Grundy replied with a heavy frown. When dinner was over, he looked for Wilkins and Gunn, but those two youths were too wise to let Grundy find them. He did not see them again till they met in the Form-room for afternoon lessons, and, in the presence of Mr. Linton, Grundy could not tell them what he thought of them.

Grundy was in a pessimistic mood that afternoon. He could not help

feeling that St. Jim's was unworthy of him, that in his efforts to improve matters he was casting pearls before those who did not understand the value thereof. On his own account, Grundy felt inclined to throw up the whole affair and let the St. Jim's Parliament go to the dogs in its own way. But, for the sake of the school, Grundy nobly determined to keep on. He felt that, after all, it was up to him, and in that noble resolution George Alfred Grundy did not waver.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

THE ELECTION

ELECTION night at St. Jim's was full of excitement. Prep that evening was woefully neglected by the most industrious juniors. Much more important matters than prep were on the carpet. The Form-masters probably would not have taken that view, but Form-masters were dismissed from consideration at this crisis.

Electioneering was going strong right up to the election. There were meetings and whisperings and confabulations, arrangements and re-arrangings of groups; and, in fact, all the busy buzz of real electioneering, full of sound and fury and signifying nothing.

Grundy was indefatigable. He counted on Wilkins and Gunn, but he found that he could count on simply nobody else. Trimble and other fellows like Trimble were prepared to vote for any fellow who made it worth their while, but Grundy scorned bribery and corruption. Certainly he would not have had much of a look-in in real politics.

In St. Jim's politics he seemed to have no look-in at all. It was in

vain that he pointed out to fellows that he, George Alfred Grundy, was evidently the right man to vote for, and appealed to their common sense in proof of his statement. Either they hadn't any common sense or there was something wrong with Grundy's own belief. At all events, not a single elector undertook to see Grundy through, excepting Wilkins and Gunn, and they really had no choice in the matter. Life in Grundy's study would have been intolerable afterwards if they had voted against the great George Alfred. So they meant to vote for him, comforted by the knowledge that he wouldn't get any other votes anyhow and was sure of an imposing minority.

The Terrible Three were busy, with more success. So were Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, like Grundy, felt that there ought to be a change, and that he was the man to buck up things if the other fellows could only see it. For some reason, mysterious to Gussy, the other fellows didn't see it.

Blake and Herries and Digby found themselves in the same boat, as it were. Study No. 6, with four candidates for the Premiership in the St. Jim's Parliament, was too divided against itself to stand, and was pretty certain to fall altogether.

So, after much argument in that celebrated study, Blake & Co. paid a visit to Study No. 10 in the Shell, and there was an amicable discussion.

Tom Merry's scheme of a coalition was discussed and adopted.

But instead of a coalition between the Terrible Three and the New House, the two parties in the School House coalesced.

Honours were to be divided—three seats in the Cabinet to Study No. 6 and three to Study No. 10, with Tom

Merry as Prime Minister in the event of a successful election.

The agreement was arrived at only an hour before the election, under the stress of circumstances. For it was evident that without an agreement in the School House the New House would carry the day. And Studies No. 6 and No. 10 agreed that that would be utterly disastrous, and must be avoided at all costs.

So the list of candidates was redrawn amicably by the two studies sitting in committee, and the School House was once more united, the only disagreeable member being George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy had pasted a large poster on his study door announcing himself as the Independent Candidate. But that candidate was likely to preserve his independence only too well. In spite of his noble resolution to keep on and do his best for St. Jim's, Grundy could not help realising that his was a voice crying alone in the wilderness, as it were. And when the numerous candidates and electors met in the Hobby Club-room for the poll to take place, George Alfred Grundy strode in, with something very emphatic to say. The room was crowded, and there was a buzz of voices when George Alfred mounted on a chair to address the assembly.

"Gentlemen!" he shouted.

Tom Merry looked round.

"Shut up, Grundy!" he called out. "This isn't a political meeting. We're here for the poll."

Grundy did not heed.

"Gentlemen, I have a few words to say——"

"Dry up!"

"Chuck it, Grundy!"

"Only a few words," pursued Grundy. "I don't recognise this election."

"What?"

"Cheek!"

"Weally, Gwunday——"

"I mean it," persisted Grundy.

"I regard this election as null and void, and of no account. I decline to recognise the St. Jim's Parliament if elected as at present arranged——"

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"Go home!"

"And I shall make it my business to put a stop to the proceedings," pursued Grundy, undaunted. "My idea is that there are too many electors. Universal suffrage is rot. Votes for fools and donkeys is all piffle. You ain't fit to vote——"

"My hat!"

"You haven't sense enough to rally round the right candidate. My idea would be to disfranchise the New House, and the Fourth Form, and the fags. Only the Shell ought to vote, and only some of the Shell. In fact, if I had my way, I'd cut down the electorate to two—Wilkins and Gunn, the only two sensible fellows in the House."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I make a public protest against these proceedings," went on Grundy, "and I rise to move that the election be postponed till this day week, in order that I may have a chance of making the fellows understand that they're playing the goat in voting for this measly crowd of silly chumps. And otherwise, I shall not allow the St. Jim's Parliament to meet——"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I shall come down heavy——"

At this point Figgins of the Fourth hooked away Grundy's chair with his foot, and there was a sudden collapse of the excited orator.

Bump!

Grundy had said that he would

come down heavy, and undoubtedly he did come down very heavy indeed. He gave a fiendish yell as he came down.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What rotter hooked my chair away?" yelled Grundy. "I'll spifficate him! I'll pulverise him! I'll—"

"Order!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ordah, Gwunday!"

"Turn him out!"

"I'd like to see anybody turn me out!" roared Grundy.

Probably Grundy was not serious in that statement, and did not intend it to be taken literally. But if he liked to see it, certainly he had his wish, for he saw it immediately. He was collared on all sides, and jerked to the door, and turned into the passage.

Grundy limped away to his study in a state of simmering indignation. Wilkins and Gunn joined him there a little later. Grundy gave them a glare of inquiry.

"Result announced?" he sneered. Wilkins nodded.

"Tom Merry's crowd are in, I suppose?"

"Most of 'em," agreed Wilkins, "and Study No. 6 are all elected. Figgins & Co. are in, and Redfern. They're going to be the Opposition."

"School House majority, anyhow," said Gunn. "That's so much to the good, Grundy."

Grundy snorted.

"I decline to recognise the proceedings at all," he answered.

Wilkins winked at Gunn.

"I dare say they'll pull through somehow without your recognition, old top," said Wilkins. "Now, what about supper?"



"I shall not allow the St. Jim's Parliament to meet," said Grundy. "I shall come down heavy——" At this point Figgins hooked away Grundy's chair, and the excited orator suddenly collapsed.

"I've been thinking it out," said Grundy.

"About supper?"

"About the election!" roared Grundy. "I understand that the new session is to open on the Fifth of November?"

"That's it. Opening of Parliament in Pepper's Barn, to be followed by the bonfire celebrations," said Wilkins, with a nod.

"I shall be there!" said Grundy, darkly and mysteriously.

"Eh? You're not a member."

"You fellows will be there with me."

"But——" began Gunn.

"Ever heard of a man named Guy Fawkes?"

"Eh? Yes, rather! The Johnny who tried to blow up the House of Commons, and stop their chin-wag, in the reign of James the First," said Gunn.

"That's my idea," said Grundy.

"Eh? What is?" asked Wilkins, mystified.

"You wait a bit," said Grundy, still more mysteriously. "I shall want you fellows to help, and I'll explain when the time comes. You wait—and let them wait—let 'em all wait! I haven't done with them yet."

Which was exceedingly dark and mysterious, and would probably have puzzled Wilkins and Gunn very much had they not been thinking seriously about supper. But they were, and so Grundy's dark hints passed almost unregarded.

Meanwhile, great celebrations were going on in both the School House and the New House. Figgins & Co. had failed to secure the hoped-for majority, owing to the unexpected coalition in the rival House, but they had bagged a number of seats, and were going to be well represented at the opening of Parliament. Which was so much to the good, and caused satisfaction. And the School House coalition had secured a "working majority," and had the Government in their hands, so they were still more satisfied. And neither party, certainly, gave a single thought to George Alfred Grundy, or to the lofty wrath with which he regarded the

whole affair. And nobody—not even Wilkins and Gunn, so far—suspected the startling surprise that Grundy was elaborating in his mighty brain, to take place when the St. Jim's Parliament opened on November the Fifth.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

GRUNDY'S GUNPOWDER PLOT I

TOM MERRY & Co.—still utterly regardless of the great Grundy—were busy with preparations for the opening of the St. Jim's Parliament. It was going to be rather a great occasion. There would be a full muster of members in Pepper's Barn, and the leading members of the Government and the Opposition were preparing splendid speeches, to which the House was to listen with more or less attention—probably rather less than more. And while the schoolboy politicians were thus engaged, dark and darker thoughts chased one another through Grundy's powerful brain. During these days his proceedings, too, were dark and mysterious. Wilkins said that, judging by Grundy's looks, he seemed to fancy himself a genuine Guy Fawkes' conspirator. Perhaps he did.

Certainly, he made several excursions on his bike, without being accompanied by his chums, or explaining to them the why or the wherefore. On one of these occasions Wilkins sighted him in the lane, returning from Wayland with a big bundle strapped on his handlebars. But when he came in Grundy made no reference to the bundle or to what it contained.

A still more important circumstance struck Wilkins and Gunn. Tuck ran rather short in the study.

As a rule, Grundy's study was a land flowing with milk and honey.

George Alfred was an open-handed fellow, and he had a large allowance from his affectionate Uncle Grundy. He spent his money in princely fashion, and his study-mates were generally in clover. But, for some reason unknown, the study table was now much more sparingly provided than of old. Yet Grundy was not short of money; his chums knew that his usual allowance had come, as well as an extra tip from Uncle Grundy. They compared notes on the subject, and wondered what it meant.

"It's jolly odd!" Wilkins said to Gunn. "Old Grundy can't be growing mean. 'Tain't like him. He's a silly owl, and a fatheaded chump, and he can't play cricket or footer, or talk sense, and he has the manners of a bear and the intelligence of a bunny rabbit; but, otherwise, he isn't such a bad chap. He's never been mean. But twice lately we've had nothing but a few measly sardines for tea."

"If Grundy is going to be mean," said Gunn, with decision, "Grundy will have to learn to behave himself."

"Yes, rather!"

It was possible that the plenty generally reigning in Grundy's study had something to do with Wilkins' and Gunn's faithful friendship. Certainly they showed strong signs of restiveness when the fat years were followed by the lean years, so to speak.

And still George Alfred gave no sign, but went darkly on his mysterious way.

It was not till the evening of November Fourth—the eve of bonfire day—that Grundy enlightened his puzzled and wondering study-mates. It was then that Wilkins and Gunn found themselves elevated from mere study-mates to the rank of fellow-conspirators.

After prep that evening—during which Grundy had been very thoughtful—he unbosomed himself to his chums.

"You fellows ready?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Wilkins, thinking—or, at least, hoping—that this meant a supper in the study on the old scale.

"Anything you like, old chap!"

"Come on, then!" said Grundy. "Better put on your coats. It's a bit cold."

"Eh? Are we going out?"

"Yes."

"But it's after lock-up."

"I'll bunk you over the wall."

"Oh dear!" said Wilkins.

"No good yapping like that," said Grundy. "We've got to see that all's ready for to-morrow. There's a lot to do."

"Ready for what?"

"That's what I'm going to tell you. Come on!"

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a hopeless look, and followed Grundy. They contrived to bag their coats and caps and escape into the quadrangle unnoticed, and they climbed over the school wall and dropped into the road—two of them, at least, in a very uneasy and apprehensive frame of mind.

"Where are we going?" asked Gunn, rather rebelliously.

"Pepper's Barn."

"What on earth for?"

"You'll see."

It was useless to question Grundy. Evidently he intended to explain in his own way, and at his own time. His chums followed him dispiritedly across the field to Pepper's Barn.

Grundy approached the rear of the building, where the door gave on the cellar below the St. Jim's House of Commons.

"Going in there?" asked Gunn.

"That's it!"

"It's padlocked."

"I've got the key to the padlock. I had it made."

"The dickens you did!" exclaimed Wilkins, in astonishment.

Grundy unlocked the door, and opened it. He produced a bike-lamp from under his coat, lighted it, and flashed the light round the cellar. It looked very gloomy and eerie in the glimmer of the lamp.

Wilkins and Gunn shivered. The November night was cold, and a chilly mist was creeping over the field, and wisps of it followed them into the cellar under the barn.

From a dark recess of the cellar Grundy rolled out several bundles into view. His chums looked at them.

"Tuck?" asked Gunn, brightening a little. Certainly it was a queer time and place to choose for a spread; but, if it was a spread, Grundy's chums were prepared to play up.

Grundy snorted contemptuously.

"Nothing of the sort, you ass! Tuck, indeed! I suppose you know what the date is to-morrow?"

"The Fifth!" yawned Wilkins.

"Exactly. On November the Fifth, once upon a time, Guy Fawkes undermined the House of Commons with gunpowder, and jolly nearly succeeded in blowing the whole crowd of chin-waggers sky-high," said Grundy. "That's our game."

Wilkins jumped.

"You're going to blow up the St. Jim's House of Commons?" he stammered.

"Well, not exactly blow it up," said Grundy. "That would be too drastic!"

"It would—a little!" murmured Gunn.

"I think Guy Fawkes was a bit of

a brute," said Grundy. "Blowing up the House of Commons was too thick. Of course, a fellow can understand how he felt about it—a lot of chin-wagging blighters, spoofing the public and browsing on the public funds, and all that. Still, blowing them sky-high was rather brutal. I wouldn't have done it myself. And, of course, I couldn't think of anything of that kind here. I'm not going to blow up Pepper's Barn, or even set it on fire——"

"Nunno!" gasped Wilkins.

"This lot isn't gunpowder," said Grundy. "It's fireworks—some of them jolly powerful ones!"

"That's what you've been spending your money on!" exclaimed Gunn.

"That's it! There's going to be a Guy Fawkes' celebration that they little dream of," said Grundy impressively. "To-morrow, when the St. Jim's House of Commons opens, we lock ourselves in the cellar, where they can't get at us——"

"D-d-d-do we?"

"We do. And then we start. We can't blow the silly asses up. But we can bombard them with crackers and squibs and things!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And there won't be much of a grand opening of Parliament, with the fireworks going off among them," grinned Grundy—"what?"

Wilkins and Gunn understood now. They were astonished; though by this time they really ought to have ceased being astonished at anything George Alfred Grundy thought fit to do.

"But—I say——" babbled Gunn.

"You needn't say anything. Just listen!"

"But—how are you going to get at them with the fireworks?" asked Wilkins. "You can't chuck a



"Bal Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus as he jerked off the canvas sheet. The guy was revealed, adorned with a silk hat and an eyeglass, and there was a general chuckle. "I wegard this as uttah cheek!" said D'Arcy indignantly.

cracker through a solid floor, can you?"

"That's an idiotic question, Wilkins! Of course I can't! I've been at work on the floor already, cutting through the boards——"

"Phew!"

"That's what we're going to finish to-night," said Grundy. "There isn't much time to be lost, so pile in, and don't jaw."

"But—but, you know——"

"I've said there's no time to be lost, Wilkins. If you want to jaw, you can jaw afterwards. Blessed if I ever saw such a fellow for jawing. You ought to be in the House of Commons yourself!" said Grundy witheringly.

"They'll skin us afterwards!" howled Gunn.

"Let 'em!"

"But I don't want to be skinned!" protested Gunn.

"For goodness' sake do shut up, Gunn. You're as bad as Wilkins; like a sheep's head, all jaw, you know. Now pile in, and do exactly as I tell you."

Never had Wilkins and Gunn been so near to rebellion. But the masterful George Alfred had his way. He generally did. His helpless chums submitted to their fate, and proceeded to carry out Grundy's instructions.

The conspirators set to work.

Grundy had shown unusual sagacity in his preparations. He had drilled one of the floor-boards from below in several places, so that little more work was required to knock out a section of the board.

The opening thus made would give ample room for the conspirator's bombardment from below; while it was too small for the members of Parliament above to get through and deal with the conspirators.

The section was marked out in chalk, and on the chalk line there were already a large number of drill-holes. Grundy & Co. now took turns with the brace-and-bit, drilling more holes round the chalked section.

As for the damage he was doing to somebody else's property, that did not worry Grundy at all. His lofty mind passed over such trifling considerations. He was very keen on his Fifth of November plot, which he felt was fully justified by the fact that he was left out of the St. Jim's Parliament. If the St. Jim's fellows chose to leave out the only man who could have run things in a creditable and satisfactory manner, they could take the consequences. That was how Grundy looked at it.

"I say, it's nearly time for dorm!" Wilkins gasped, at last.

"Can't be late for dorm!" urged Gunn.

Grundy surveyed the work done.

"All serene," he said. "That section will knock out quite easily when the time comes. Just a rap from a hammer. All serene."

"You—you really mean——"

"I generally mean what I say, Wilkins."

"They'll simply lynch us if we muck up the opening of Parliament."

Grundy smiled superior.

"We shall be masked," he said.

"Masked?"

"Yes, black masks, of course. If they see us they won't know us."

"They'll jolly well guess——"

"You argue too much, Wilkins. Let's cut."

Wilkins and Gunn were glad enough to cut and gladder still to find themselves safe back within the walls of St. Jim's.

That night Grundy slept the sleep

of the just: but there were two unhappy conspirators who found it less easy to sleep.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

"WOTTEN weathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Please to remember the Fifth of November," replied Jack Blake. "You don't expect it to be like the fifth of June, I suppose?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Real November weather," said Tom Merry cheerily, as he blinked into the mist in the quadrangle. "Lucky there's no rain, anyhow. The bonfire will go off all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was the Fifth, and lessons for the day were over. All thoughts were turned upon two subjects—the opening of the St. Jim's Parliament in Pepper's Barn, and the bonfire celebrations that were to follow.

The "guy" which was to be burned on the bonfire, and to which Monty Lowther had given artistic touches, was made of canvas and straw, clad in tattered garments which had been purchased at a very cheap rate. It reposed at present in a corner of Pepper's Barn. Monty Lowther had surreptitiously added an old silk hat and an eyeglass, to give the effigy a playful resemblance to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Some of the juniors had already gone along to begin piling up the fuel for the bonfire, which was to be burned in the field adjoining the barn. But Tom Merry & Co. were thinking more about the opening session of Parliament than about the Guy Fawkes celebrations, at present.

After tea, Grundy came out of the School House with Wilkins and Gunn. Grundy's rugged face wore an expression of grim determination; while

Wilkins and Gunn looked like fellows who had resigned themselves to an unhappy fate.

Grundy gave Tom Merry a lofty look as he passed him in the quad.

"Parliament opening soon?" he asked sarcastically.

"Six sharp," said Tom.

"All going well—what?"

"Quite," said Tom.

"Ha, ha!"

With that ominous and mysterious cackinnation, George Alfred Grundy walked on. Tom Merry glanced after him. But he had little time or attention to waste on Grundy.

"Come on, Tommy!" called out Monty Lowther.

"Buck up, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You have got to open the pwoceedin's with a speech fwom the thwone, you know. If you don't mind my suggestin' it, Tom Mewwy, you might cut it wathah short. It would not be fair to bore the fellows, would it?"

"Fathead!" answered Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Gussy wants to do all the boring," remarked Herries. "He's written out a speech filling eleven sheets of impot paper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I twust that I shall be given time to delivah my speech," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I have to touch upon a gweat many important subjects. For that weason, Tom Mewwy, I suggest your openin' Parliament with a few words, and not spweadin' yourself——"

"Bow-wow."

"Undah the cires, you know——"

"Rats! Come on, you fellows."

Tom Merry & Co. started for the barn, joining quite a procession of members of Parliament who were bound in that direction.

Pepper's Barn looked unusually bright and festive when the members entered it to take their seats.

A dozen bike-lamps were fixed round the walls to illuminate the House of Commons, and the whole place was newly swept and garnished.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon a still form that lay in a corner, covered by a sheet of canvas, while the members were taking their places, with much buzzing of voices and shuffling of feet.

"Bai Jove! Is that the guy?" ejaculated Gussy.

"That's it!" said Lowther.

"It is wathah infwa dig to have such a widiculous object pwesent at the openin' of Parliament!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"My dear chap," said Figgins, "that's not the only ridiculous object present."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is quite twue, Figgins, but as you are a membah, you must be allowed to wemain——"

"Why, you silly ass——"

"But that sillay guy ought to be wemoved befoah the pwoceedin's pwoceed," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I will take it away."

Arthur Augustus approached the corner where the guy reposed and jerked off the canvas sheet.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

The guy was revealed, adorned with a silk hat and an eyeglass. There was a general chuckle in the House of Commons.

"I wegard this as uttah cheek!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Lowthah, I pwesume that you have done this——"

"Guilty, my lord!"

"Tom Mewwy, I wequest you to delay the pwoceedin's while I give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'——"

"Order!"

"Call him to order, Mr. Speaker."

Talbot of the Shell was Speaker. He signed to Arthur Augustus.

"If the honourable member does not cease to interrupt the proceedings with personal remarks concerning another honourable member, the honourable member will be requested to withdraw," said Talbot.

"Bai Jove! I should uttahly we-fuse to withdwaw."

"Order!"

"Shut up!"

"Wats!"

With that unparliamentary retort, Arthur Augustus stooped to knock the silk hat off the guy. The next moment he gave a yell. Quite to his surprise, the floor gave way under his foot, with a loud crack.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus jumped quite clear of the floor in his astonishment.

"What on earth——" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! The floor's givin'——"

"Look out!"

"My hat!"

Arthur Augustus had jumped just in time, as a section of the floorboard, about a foot long, gave under his weight. The section of board dropped through, and there was a sudden, fiendish yell from below. Apparently it had dropped on the head of someone in the cellar underneath.

Tom Merry rushed across to the spot.

"Look out, deah boy, it's givin'——"

"The floor's all right!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Somebody's cut through that board——"

"Bai Jove!"

"There's somebody in the cellar!" roared Blake.

"It's a jape——"

"Grundy!" exclaimed Monty Low-

ther. "I thought that howling ass was up to something!"

There was a confused buzz of voices below. A glimmer of light came up from the cellar.

"Come on, you fellows!" shouted Tom Merry. "They're up to something! Let's have 'em out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The sitting of Parliament was interrupted before it had fairly commenced. Every member rushed out of the barn after Tom Merry, and they dashed round in an excited crowd to the cellar door at the back.

Tom Merry dragged at the door.

He dragged it open, and the mob of excited juniors rushed in. A startling scene met their gaze.

A single bike lamp burned in the cellar. In the dim light three masked figures were seen—the gunpowder conspirators, caught in the very act!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

GLORY FOR GRUNDY!

"COLLAR them!"

"Bai Jove, it's a wegulah conspiwacy——"

"Scrag them!"

Tom Merry & Co. crowded into the cellar.

The three masked conspirators backed away, their eyes blinking with apprehension through the eyeholes of their masks.

The plot was clear enough to the eyes of the members of the St. Jim's Parliament. The hole in the floor told its own tale; and there were stacks of fireworks, all ready for their deadly work. But for the accidental discovery made by Arthur Augustus in stepping on the drilled board, Grundy's gunpowder plot would undoubtedly have been a success. In ten minutes the St. Jim's Parliament would have been in the full tide of parliamentary

eloquence, and Grundy would have been ready to chip in.

But the discovery had come too soon. Grundy had intended to screw the cellar door inside, to render his fortress impregnable during the bombardment. Afterwards he intended to escape during the confusion and excitement. But Grundy's plans had not had time to ripen. He had not started the screwing yet—indeed, he was busily engaged in rubbing his damaged head, where the section of board had fallen. And so the indignant members of Parliament found nothing to stop them when they arrived on the scene, and the gunpowder plotters were fairly caught.

"Who are they?" exclaimed Blake.

"St. Jim's chaps, of course——"

"Unsuccessful candidates!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Grundy, you bet!" said Fig-gins.

"Yaas, wath-ah!"

"Collar them!"

"Hands off!" roared the well-known voice of Grundy, as the members of Parliament rushed on the conspirators.

The next moment George Alfred Grundy was struggling in half a dozen pairs of hands.

The masks were jerked off the conspirators, and the faces of Grundy, Wilkins and Gunn exposed to view.

Wilkins and

Gunn did not resist. They knew it was useless. But George Alfred Grundy put up a terrific fight.

But the juniors simply swarmed over Grundy, and he went down on the cellar floor, and Fatty Wynn sat on his chest and pinned him there. With Fatty Wynn's weight on his chest even Grundy had to give in. There was no arguing with Fatty's *avoiirdupois*.

"Gwunday!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "It's weally Gwunday! The feahful wottah——"

"A giddy gunpowder plot!" chuckled Jack Blake. "Grundy's got Guy Fawkes on the brain—if he has any brain——"

"Lemme up!" roared Grundy. "I'll lick the lot of you! Lemme get up!"

"Yank him up!" said Tom Merry.



Tom Merry dragged open the door and the excited mob of juniors rushed in. A single lamp burned in the cellar, and in the dim light three masked figures were seen—the gunpowder conspirators, caught in the very act!

Grundy was jerked to his feet. He stood helpless in the grasp of many hands, gasping and glaring defiance.

"I say, you chaps!" stuttered Wilkins. "Go easy, you know! You—you see——"

"You see——" stammered Gunn.

"Kick those two duffers out!" said Tom Merry. "It's Grundy that we've got to deal with!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Wilkins and Gunn were escorted to the door, and about a dozen boots helped them to depart. They yelled as they went, but they were glad to go. Never in all the history of gunpowder plotting had two wretched conspirators been so relieved to have done with a conspiracy.

They picked themselves up and fled, but George Alfred Grundy was not to escape so cheaply.

"The cheeky duffah was actually goin' to chuck up fireworks into the House of Commons, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, with breathless indignation. "Actually conspiwin' to muck up the openin' of Parliament, you know!"

"Scrag him!"

"Lynch him!"

"Have you got anything to say for yourself, Grundy?" demanded Tom Merry sternly.

Grundy snorted defiantly.

"Lots!" he answered. "I don't recognise this Parliament at all! I was jolly well going to muck up the whole show! And I'll do it somehow yet! Go and eat coke!"

"Bump him!" roared Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Look here! We're going to make an example of him!" exclaimed Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Exactly! Grundy has chosen to butt into the proceedings, and now he is going to take a leading part. Bring him into the barn."

"Oh, all right!"

With six or seven hands grasping him, the truculent George Alfred was marched out of the cellar and round to the barn. At a word from Tom Merry, the fireworks were gathered up by a crowd of the juniors.

In the barn, Grundy stood in the midst of a wrathful crowd, still defiant. The House of Commons waited, however, for the Prime Minister to pronounce sentence upon him.

"Gentlemen!" said Tom Merry. "There has been a gunpowder plot, on the lines of the celebrated Guy Fawkes, and the chief conspirator is now in our hands. His punishment must be exemplary."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yah!" from Grundy.

"Grundy thinks that he ought to take a leading part. Well, he's going to. I beg to move that the opening of the St. Jim's Parliament be postponed till after the bonfire celebration. And in that celebration Grundy will be given a leading part—that of the guy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Wippin', deah boy!"

"Carried unanimously!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

There was a roar from Grundy.

"You cheeky rotter! If you dare I'll lick you! I'll—I'll—I'll——"

Grundy almost foamed.

It was true that he had aspired to leadership; that he yearned to play a principal part. But it was not the part of a guy in a Fifth of November procession that he yearned for. But that was what Fate allotted to Grundy.



There was a blare of tin whistles and mouth-organs as the procession, bearing Grundy tied to the hurdle, marched round the quad. Grundy's wild yells were drowned in the roars of laughter and cheering.

Monty Lowther stripped the tattered garments from the guy, and Grundy was quickly adorned with them.

A few touches of red ink on his face added to the effect, together with the ancient silk hat jammed down on his head.

Then he was mounted upon the hurdle which had been provided to carry the guy to the place of execution.

Grundy resisted desperately all the time, but his resistance was quite useless. His hands and feet were tied to the hurdle, and he simply had to sit where he was placed.

Then the hurdle was raised on the shoulders of a number of fellows, and Grundy was borne out of the barn.

"Into the quad first!" said Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The procession started. There was a blare of tin whistles and mouth-organs and the bray of a concertina.

The procession marched in at the school gates, amid shouts of laughter, and marched round the quadrangle.

Dr. Holmes glanced from his study window and smiled. That procession round the quad was always allowed on the Fifth of November; but the good old Head, as he glanced out at it, little dreamed that the effigy borne aloft was a Shell fellow of St. Jim's. Grundy's wild yells were drowned in the roars of laughter and cheering.

"Boys will be boys!" the Head remarked to Mr. Railton, with an indulgent smile. "But, bless my soul, what a very ridiculous-looking effigy they have contrived for this occasion."

The ridiculous effigy was yelling at the top of its voice; but, fortunately, the Head could not distinguish its words amid the general din.

But all the fellows in the quadrangle knew the identity of the effigy, and they howled with laughter.

Right round the quadrangle went Grundy of the Shell, in stately procession, amid shrieks of merriment.

Then he was borne out at the gates again, and away to the stacked-up bonfire, all ready to be lighted, in the field.

The procession halted at the bonfire.

"Shove him on!" roared Blake. "I've got the matches ready! Good-bye, Grundy!"

"You silly owls!" howled Grundy in great alarm. "Keep me away from that bonfire, you chumps——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good-bye, Gwunday! I twust you will not suffah much!"

"You silly idiots!"

Grundy was really alarmed for the moment. But the hurdle was set down in the grass, and the "other guy," as Lowther put it, was fetched from the barn for execution.

Grundy had the pleasure of watching the scene, still tied to the hurdle, and the further pleasure of seeing his expensive collection of fireworks used up to the last cracker. It was quite a glorious celebration, and everybody enjoyed it—excepting Grundy. Judging from the expression on Grundy's face, he did not share the general joy. But in such circumstances it was impossible to please everybody.

After the bonfire had burned out the members of the St. Jim's Parliament adjourned to Pepper's Barn, where Parliament was opened in state—without any further intervention from George Alfred Grundy. Even Grundy had had enough. And there was no doubt that for a long time afterwards Grundy of the Shell would remember the Fifth of November!



TOWSER

By Arthur Digby

WE have a little bulldog
That goes in and out with us,
And though he is a cruel dog
We must never make a fuss,
For Herries thinks a deal of him,
The dog is his delight;
But we don't like the feel of him
When Towser starts to bite!

Poor Gussy says that, "Towsah's
Quite a savage bwute to crows!
He'll bite a fellah's twousahs,
Which is uttably imposs!
And Hewwies likes to set him on
To bite my bags, the bwute!
Next time, deah boys, I'll get him on
The boko with a boot!"

When Herries says he's bringing
"Poor old Towsey!" to the den,
You'll see Gustavus springing
Round the study like a hen!
"Yawwooh! Help! Pushimout, deah boys!"
He yells, and tears his hair.
"Pway kick him on the snout, deah boys,
Or bwain him with a chair!"

Then like an angry feline
Enters Towser on his chain,
And promptly makes a bee-line
For poor Gussy once again!
He soon shows his intention in
A snatch at Gussy's limbs—
Yes, the brute deserves high mention in
The Horrors of St. Jim's!

BUNTER'S BIG BLUFF!

By S. Q. I. FIELD (of the Greyfriars Remove)



Mr. Quelch has often had to reprimand Bunter for his ventriloquist tricks, but there came a time when he thanked his lucky stars that Bunter was a ventriloquist.



EVERYONE knows that Billy Bunter is a ventriloquist. But not many people are aware that he was once threatened with the order of the boot if he ever again practised ventriloquism. Nor do they know of the strange happenings that afterwards led to Mr. Quelch looking on Bunter's peculiar gift with a more lenient eye.

Funnily enough, both the ban and the lifting of the ban arose out of the same cause—the presence of a suspicious character in the neighbourhood of the school.

Several fellows had seen a fishy-looking cove hanging about and the matter had been reported to the Head. The Head, having consulted the police, had learned that the stranger was possibly an ex-convict, only recently released, who belonged to a gang that was suspected of having hidden a whole lot of swag in the Friardale district. As a result of this disclosure, the Head had taken the precaution of ordering everybody to stay indoors after dark—and, as it was mid-December, when it got dark before tea, that meant we were unable to get across to the tuckshop for supplies after midday.

You can just imagine how Bunter

felt about that. Even if he succeeded in borrowing a bob or two, he couldn't get to the tuckshop to spend it! It was simply awful for the poor old porpoise. All he could do was to go foraging in the House itself. And as everybody was indoors and most studies were occupied, that didn't do him a lot of good.

So Bunter, in desperation, started clearing the studies one at a time with the aid of his ventriloquism. Which was quite a bright wheeze of his, if only he had used his savvy at the same time. Unfortunately, Bunter doesn't possess a lot of savvy, and his imagination didn't take him further than imitating Mr. Quelch's voice and ordering chaps to go to Mr. Quelch's study!

It wasn't long before our gimlet-eyed Beak smelt a rat, I can assure you! He'd known occasions before when fellows had reported to him, thinking he'd called them, and he had a pretty shrewd idea what was going on. After half-a-dozen chaps had called on him in succession, Quelch grabbed a cane and trotted up to the Remove passage and found Bunter.

Of course, Bunter rolled out lavish

denials. He said he respected Mr. Quelch far too much to play such tricks on him. Other fellows might think Mr. Quelch a beast, but he admired and respected him himself; he wouldn't dream of using his ventriloquism like that. In any case, he wasn't a ventriloquist—and so on. But all his denials were useless. Quelch yanked him down to his study.

Then came the solemn ban. After giving Bunter six of the best, Mr. Quelch told Bunter he intended reporting the matter to the Head, and then issued this warning: that the next time Bunter was caught playing ventriloquial tricks, he would recommend the Head to expel him!

Bunter was in the dickens of a state when he rolled back to the Remove quarters. No more ventriloquism! Why, he was losing almost his sole means of livelihood! For the rest of that evening Bunter was like a man in a dream.

Probably it was worrying his fat brain about it that kept him awake. Whatever the reason, Bunter couldn't get to sleep that night.

As time went on, Bunter became conscious of something. He was feeling rather peckish.

He heard eleven strike. After the last stroke had died away, the House seemed very silent.

Bunter came to a sudden decision. He would hop downstairs and try his luck in the pantry. Nobody would be about.

He rolled out of bed, put on a dressing-gown (mine, as a matter of fact) and quitted the dorm. But Bunter found his summing-up had been wrong. There *was* somebody about!

That "somebody," as it happened, was a hefty-looking chap with a

life-preserver in his hand and a mask on his face—and when Bunter rolled along, he was just about to enter Mr. Quelch's study!

Bunter gasped. The man in the mask whirled round.

"Make a sound and you'll get this on your head!" he hissed, raising the life-preserver. "You go in first!"

Bunter tottered into the Remove master's study. Mr. Quelch looked up.

"Bunter! What are you——"

Mr. Quelch broke off and jumped to his feet as the masked intruder slipped in and closed and locked the door behind him.

"Quiet, you!" growled the crook. "I won't hurt you—so long as you do what I tell you! Your name's Quelch, ain't it?"

Mr. Quelch, breathless with surprise, nodded.

"Right! Then you're the expert that knows all about the underground tunnel that leads from this here school to the ruins in Friardale Woods. There's something in the third vault from the woods that I want. You're going to show me to that particular vault or you'll get something you won't like. See?"

Mr. Quelch nodded again. He could see that it was useless to argue with this desperate-looking customer.

"I'm told there's a secret panel leading to the vaults from this room," the crook went on. "We'll go that way. It'll be safer. You'll come, too!" he added to Bunter.

"The entrance from this room has been closed and sealed for some time," Quelch said coldly.

"We'll open it up again, then!" snarled the man in the mask.

He did so without a lot of difficulty. And with the crook at the back lighting their way with a torch,



Mr. Quelch and Bunter, with the crook behind them, were descending the steps to the vaults when a voice rang out from the direction of the Form-master's study. "Stop! I've got you covered! Hands up, there!" The crook gave a snarl as he swung round—but up went his hands.

Mr. Quelch and Bunter went down into the vaults! And then Mr. Quelch thought of Bunter's ventriloquism!

"Bunter!" he muttered, as they groped their way down the stone steps. "If you could only deceive him with a ventriloquial trick——"

Bunter gasped. Then his eyes gleamed in the dim light.

Suddenly, a voice rang out from the direction of Mr. Quelch's study.

"Stop! I've got you covered! Hands up, there!"

The crook gave a snarl of rage. But his hands went up!

"Wingate! Phone for the police!" said the voice. "North! Loder! Walker! Bring your rifles over here—and if that scoundrel tries any tricks, shoot him without hesitation!"

"Yes, sir!" came a muffled reply—apparently from within the study!

"Come, Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "We will go up first. How lucky that the others arrived in time!"

The Remove master and Bunter returned, leaving the raging crook standing in the vault with his hands above his head—fully under the impression that a crowd of armed men were awaiting him at the top of the steps!

Back in the study, of course, Mr. Quelch soon had things fixed up. He telephoned for the police first; then sent Bunter for help. Within five minutes, the crook was a prisoner in the hands of a crowd of burly seniors and the danger was over.

What a triumph it was for the old porpoise! He had accomplished the capture of a dangerous burglar and enabled the police to recover a big haul of stolen property.

But even that didn't please him quite so much as the fact that Mr. Quelch lifted the ban on his ventriloquism. And now you know how it is that Bunter remains a ventriloquist to this very day!

THE CEDAR CREEK VENTRILOQUIST!

By Martin Clifford



THE FIRST CHAPTER

TODGERS' LATEST!

"**C**HUNKY'S at it again!"
Frank Richards & Co.
chuckled.

The snow was falling in the playground at Cedar Creek school, in British Columbia, and the three chums had strolled into the school-room, where the logs were crackling cheerily in the stove.

It was not yet time for afternoon lessons, and the big school-room had as yet only one occupant.

That solitary occupant was Chunky Todgers.

Chunky was seated before the stove, with a book on his knees, held in his plump hands. But he was not reading. He was leaning back in his chair, his eyes fixed on the crackling

logs, an expression of deep thought upon his fat face.

Chunky was thinking. He was in a deep reverie.

He did not hear the three school-boys come in. He was too deep in his reverie for that. When the imaginative Chunky plunged into the realms of fancy, he was deaf and blind to his immediate surroundings.

The Co. chuckled softly as they looked at him.

They had seen Chunky Todgers in that dreamy mood before—many a time and oft. Chunky always fancied himself in the character of the hero of the latest volume he had borrowed from Gunten's Circulating Library. The open book on his fat knees indicated the trend of his thoughts.

"I guess that fat jay is about a

As a ventriloquist Chunky Todgers is the laughing-stock of the Cedar Creek school in British Columbia. But Frank Richards & Co. sit up and take notice when Chunky succeeds in throwing his voice—little guessing there is more in it than meets the eye!

million miles away at the present moment!" murmured Bob Lawless. "Shall I wake him up out of dream-land? Quiet a bit, you fellows!"

Bob stepped back to the porch, and gathered up a handful of snow.

Then he re-entered the school-room, and trod softly towards the dreamy Todgers.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc stood still, and grinned.

Wherever Chunky Todgers was in his thoughts, he was about to be brought back to reality—suddenly!

He did not turn his head as Bob approached. He was lost to time and space. His round eyes blinked at the fire dreamily.

Bob Lawless arrived just behind him.

He raised his hand, full of snow, and reached over Chunky's head and dabbed the snow on Chunky's little fat nose.

Then Chunky woke up.

"Grooooooooooch!"

The fat youth bounded to his feet, spluttering wildly. "Valentine Vox, the Ventriloquist"—for that ancient book happened to be the one Chunky had been reading—crashed on the floor.

Chunky roared and spluttered.

"Gerrooooooch! Grooh! You silly jay, wharrer you at? Oooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yurrrggggh!"

"Only waking you up, old scout!" said Bob Lawless.

"Yooooooooocchhhh!"

"Where were you, Chunky?" asked Frank Richards, laughing.

"Killing Saracens along with old Cœur-de-Lion?"

"Or tracking the Iroquois along with Chingachgook?" asked Beauclerc.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly jays!" gurgled Chunky.

He dabbed the snow from his fat face and blinked indignantly at the chums of Cedar Crook. Bob Lawless picked up the fallen book, and glanced at it.

"Valentine Vox!" he said, reading out the title. "Is that it? Never heard of it before! What's it about, Chunky?"

"Grooooooh!"

"It's an old novel—I remember beginning it once," said Frank Richards. "A relic of the Victorian era!"

"I—I say, you chaps," said Chunky Todgers, "I've got an idea out of that book——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Richards & Co.

There was really no need for Chunky to tell them that. They were well aware that the imaginative Chunky changed like a chameleon with every book he read.

"You needn't snigger, you jays!" said Todgers. "I've got no end of an idea! There's a galoot in that book who was a ventriloquist——"

"A which?" asked Bob.

"Chap who chucks his voice about, you know," said Todgers. "Makes all sorts of weird noises come from unexpected places, and makes people jump, you know. No end of fun in ventriloquism, I should think!"

"Easier to do in a book than in real life, I guess!"

"Well, it's in the way of a gift," said Chunky. "But practice makes perfect, you know. I've been thinking it over. Just fancy making a bear growl behind Miss Meadows' desk when she's giving us lessons!"

"How on earth could you make a bear growl behind her desk, when there isn't a bear there?" asked Bob.

"With my ventriloquism, I mean,"

explained Chunky. "Then suppose I made a voice come from somewhere, saying 'Hands up!' in the voice of Five-Hundred Dollar Jones, the rustler? Make the folks jump—eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you're going to be a ventriloquist now!" said Frank Richards, chuckling. "I wonder what would happen if you read the 'Life of Caesar Borgia'? Stick to 'Valentine Vox'!"

"It never occurred to me before," continued Chunky, unheeding. "Fellows have gifts, you know, and never suspect 'em, until—until they suspect 'em you know!"

"Go on!"

"For instance, listen to this!"

Chunky Todgers screwed up his mouth, compressed his fat throat, and, with a look of expiring anguish in his round, bulging eyes, emitted a prolonged and painful squeak.

Frank Richards & Co. stared at him.

Chunky unscrewed his face, and gazed at them, evidently expectant of approval.

"There!" he said.

"Have you got a pain?" asked Bob Lawless, in astonishment.

"Eh? No!"

"Not been eating too much maple-sugar?"

"Nope!" roared Chunky. "I was ventriloquising!"

"Oh! Is that ventriloquising?"

"Throwing my voice, you know."

"Blessed if I noticed it thrown!" said Bob.

Chunky sniffed.

"Don't be an ass, if you can help it, Bob!" he snapped. "Didn't that sound to you like a canary?"

"A—a—canary! Nunno!"

"Singing at the window?" said Todgers.

"At the window! Great Scott! No!"

"What did it sound like, then?"

"Like a fat pig squeaking!" said Bob. "That's what it was, wasn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly jay!" howled Chunky.

"Where did it seem to you to come from, then?"

"From your silly neck!"

Snort from Chunky.

"Perhaps I'm not quite perfect yet," he said. "I may need some practice, though I'm convinced it's a gift. But it's no good telling me that that didn't sound like a canary at the window, because I know it did! Now I'll make a wolf howl behind the desk."

"Go it!"

Chunky Todgers proceeded to screw up his fat features again, as if he were trying to tie them into a sailor's knot.

A wild howl rang through the school-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

"There!" gasped Chunky. "What did that sound like?"

"Like a fat idiot yelling!"

"Look here, Lawless——"

"I guess you want some practice yet," chuckled Bob, "and you'd better be rather careful, Chunky. Suppose your face got fixed like that. Anybody that met you on the trail would shoot you at sight!"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Chunky. "I tell you, I'm quite sure that I'm a born ventriloquist, just like that chap in the book. I'm going to develop my gift. 'Tain't everybody who can make his voice come from all sorts of places. That chap in the book had no end of fun. So I'm going to! I guess I'll jolly well make you fellows jump!"

"Go it! We're ready to jump!" chuckled Frank Richards.

"Richards! How dare you!"

"Eh?"

"D-d-didn't you think that was

Miss Meadows' voice just behind you?" asked Todgers, rather crestfallen.

Frank Richards yelled.

"Ha, ha! No! I thought it was the voice of that duffer just in front of me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'll show you some more of—"

But the school bell rang just then, and the Cedar Creek boys and girls came trooping in, and Chunky Todgers' ventriloquism was cut short, which was, perhaps, not a heavy loss. For there was no doubt whatever that the Cedar Creek ventriloquist needed some more practice to make him perfect!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

MISUNDERSTOOD!

"GURRRGG!"

Mr. Slimmey jumped.

Lessons were over for the day at

Cedar Creek, and the backwoods school had emptied.

Mr. Slimmey came back for a book he had forgotten, but when he entered the doorway he stopped and fairly jumped as a weird and mysterious sound suddenly smote on his ears.

"Gurrrig! Goooooooooooo! Gooooo! Gooooo!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Slimmey.

The school-room was rather dim, and for a moment or two he was puzzled to find from whence the mysterious sounds proceeded.

Then he spotted the fat figure of Chunky Todgers, standing by one of the windows.

A glimmer of the setting sun fell upon Chunky, and showed his podgy face contorted into an extraordinary expression.



Chunky Todgers, far away in his thoughts, was brought back to reality—suddenly! Bob Lawless raised his hand and dabbed snow on his fat little nose. "Grooooooch!" spluttered the fat youth.

His mouth was open, his eyes were bulging, and he seemed on the very verge of a severe attack of apoplexy.

And from his open mouth issued the astonishing sounds that had startled the young master.

"Gurrrrrrrrrg! Goo! Goo! Goo!"

Mr. Slimmey ran into the room in great anxiety. He could only suppose that Joseph Todgers was in the grip of a fit.

"Todgers!" he gasped.

"Gerrrooogh!"

"My poor boy! My dear Todgers!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey. "What—what is the matter? Try to calm yourself! Do not gasp in that way! Try to breathe regularly——"

He clapped Todgers on the back to help him get his breath.

Chunky Todgers ceased his wild and weird ventriloquism suddenly, and gave a howl.

"Ow! Leave off!"

"Do you feel better, my boy?"

"Groogh! Leggo! I'm all right."

Chunky squirmed away from the anxious master. In the midst of his ventriloquial efforts, the thump on the back had nearly—as he afterwards described it—"spificated" him!

"I—I—I'm all right!" he muttered.

"Leave me alone! Ow!"

"Can you get your breath now?" asked Mr. Slimmey anxiously.

"Eh? Of course I can!"

"If you are quite well, Todgers, you had better go," said Mr. Slimmey. "Why did you remain behind after the others?"

"I—I guess I wanted to practise at——"

"To—to what?"

"Practise," said Todgers.

Mr. Slimmey blinked at him. He failed to understand, which was not surprising, in the circumstances. He did not know that Chunky Todgers

was a wonderful ventriloquist—yet!

"Todgers! Why were you making those ridiculous noises, and assuming such a very alarming expression of countenance?" demanded Mr. Slimmey warmly.

"I—I was practising——"

"Are you out of your senses, Todgers?" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey.

"Nimno! I——"

"Leave the school-room at once!" snapped Mr. Slimmey. He really began to have some doubts as to Joseph Todgers' sanity.

Chunky left the school-room, grumbling to himself. He had just been getting on nicely with his ventriloquial practice when Mr. Slimmey had interrupted him. He rolled out into the porch—and stopped there. Chunky was very keen on his practice—he was always keen on any new stunt that came into his powerful brain.

"The silly jay!" murmured Chunky. "I'd nearly got it when he came moseying in! I guess I'm going to try again."

And Chunky tried again in the porch.

Chunky Todgers was throwing his voice in the manner of the ventriloquist in the novel. But perhaps he was not throwing it according to the rules. The sound that issued from his fat throat was like the last expiring croak from a frog.

"That's better!" murmured Chunky, with satisfaction. "That sounded as if it came from the playground. Now I'll see if I can make a rat squeak behind the wall."

"Squeeeeeeaaak!"

"Upon my word!"

Miss Meadows looked out of the doorway into the porch, with a startled expression on her face.

Chunky Todgers grinned.

He concluded at once that the Canadian schoolmistress had heard the squeak of the rat, and had been scared by it. It was proof positive that the Cedar Creek ventriloquist was getting on!

"Todgers——"

"Were you frightened, ma'am?" asked Chunky, much gratified.

"Frightened!" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

"Yep! Shall I look for the rat, ma'am?"

"The—the rat?"

"Yep! I guess I'll look for him and rout him out, ma'am, if you like," said Chunky, grinning.

He was going to keep it up that it was a real rat. He was not going to let Miss Meadows discover his wonderful ventriloquial powers yet.

But there was a slight misunderstanding.

"Todgers! Are you being impertinent or silly?" exclaimed Miss Meadows, with asperity.

"Eh?" ejaculated Chunky, in surprise.

"What rat are you speaking about?"

"The—the rat that squeaked just now, ma'am!" stammered Todgers.

"D-d-d-didn't you hear it?"

"I shall cane you, Todgers, if you talk such nonsense! I looked out to see who was making ridiculous noises in the porch. It was you! Why are you acting in this foolish way?"

"Oh!" gasped Chunky.

"I believe you are the stupidest boy in my class!" said Miss Meadows crossly. "But you are expected to have sufficient common sense, Todgers, not to play foolish tricks like this!"

Miss Meadows turned away frowning, and Chunky's eyes gleamed. He determined to give Miss Meadows a

fright, which he felt she deserved. A mouse squeaking close by her skirt would give her a lesson, Chunky thought.

"Squeeeek!"

Miss Meadows spun round again. For a moment Chunky thought she was frightened by the supposed mouse. The next moment he realised his mistake. Miss Meadows strode towards him, grasped his fat shoulder, and shook him.

"Todgers——"

"Ow!"

"What do you mean, sir, by emitting those ridiculous noises, when I have just reprimanded you on the subject?"

Evidently Miss Meadows had not even suspected that it might possibly be a mouse!

She shook Todgers vigorously.

"Oh dear!" gasped Chunky.

"Now go home, and don't be so silly!" said Miss Meadows severely. And she pushed Chunky out of the porch.

Chunky Todgers trotted away dispiritedly for the corral, to fetch out his fat pony. These repeated disappointments were discouraging, even to a determined youth like Joseph Todgers. He led his pony out at the gates, and found Frank Richards & Co. there, chatting with Molly and Tom Lawrence before starting for home.

Chunky could not resist the temptation to make one more attempt. The sudden growl of a grizzly bear from the dusk would startle that chatting group, and Chunky promised himself a laugh at their expense when he explained that it was only he—the Cedar Creek ventriloquist.

"Gurrrrrrrh!"

That deep and savage growl was supposed—by Chunky—to proceed

from the dusk of the trail; he was throwing his voice again.

But again there was something wrong with the throw.

Instead of shrieking with terror, Molly Lawrence looked round, and gazed at Chunky Todgers in astonishment.

"Todgers! What is the matter?" she exclaimed. And Tom Lawrence stared at him blankly, while Frank Richards & Co. chuckled. They could guess what was the matter.

"Matter?" repeated Chunky.

"Have you a bad cold?" asked Molly.

"A—a-c-cold! Nope."

"Or a cough?"

"Nope!" roared Chunky. "I—I say, didn't you hear the bear growl?"

"What bear?" asked the astonished Molly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Richards.

Chunky Todgers gave a grunt, and climbed on his fat pony and rode away. Tom Lawrence looked at the chums of Cedar Creek in dismayed inquiry.

"Has Chunky gone potty?" he asked.

"Not more than usual, I guess," chuckled Bob Lawless.

"What was he barking like that for, then, like a dog with bronchitis?" asked the puzzled Lawrence.

"Ha, ha! It's only Chunky's latest stunt—he's a ventriloquist now!" shrieked Bob. "He was throwing his voice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

• That roar of laughter followed Chunky Todgers down the trail, and it made his fat ears burn. And Chunky vowed that, somehow, by hook or by crook, he would develop his wonderful ventriloquial gift, and show these doubting Thomases who was who, and what was what!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE DUCK THAT QUACKED!

THE next day Chunky Todgers was met by smiling faces at Cedar Creek.

His latest weird stunt was known to all the backwoods school now, and the Cedar Creek fellows were much entertained by it.

Until the bell rang for lessons, Chunky was besieged by demands to "throw his voice"; and he obliged willingly, until the shouts of laughter apprised him that his fat leg was being pulled.

Chunky went in to lessons in a morose mood.

But Chunky was a stickler! The gift was there—he was quite sure about that. It only remained to develop it. That chap in the book had done it easily enough! And Chunky had more brains than any chap in any book! He was well aware of that.

After morning lessons at Cedar Creek he retired to a secluded corner of the corral and practised till dinner. He succeeded to his own satisfaction, and there was a contented grin on his fat face when he rolled into the dining-room. His powers were developing, and he was ready to put them to the test again.

He dropped into a seat on the pine-wood form beside Yen Chin, the little Chinese, who grinned at him. Chunky regarded that grin as disrespectful, and he determined to give Yen Chin a lesson. He threw his voice behind Yen Chin in an imitation of a dog growling.

Yen Chin stared at him for a moment, and then looked round with a startled expression.

"Bad doggee—go 'way—no bitee poor lil' Chinese!" he exclaimed. Chunky chuckled.

"He, he he! Only my ventriloquism, you young ass!" he said.

"Chunkee velly clevee ventriloquist!" murmured Yen Chin.

Chunky Todgers smirked.

"I guess I can throw my voice where I like," he said. "Nothing to me! It's a gift, you know."

The little heathen's almond eyes glimmered. He jerked his thumb towards a fat duck that Miss Meadows was carving.

little heathen was pulling his leg.

Certainly a ventriloquial quack from a duck that was being carved ought to have a startling effect—and Miss Meadows did not know that Chunky was a ventriloquist, so the "quack" could not be traced to him!

Chunky cleared his throat in readiness. Frank Richards leaned over towards him.

"Don't play the goat here, you ass!" he whispered.



"My dear Todgers!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey. "What is the matter? Try to calm yourself! Do not gasp in that way!" And he clapped Chunky on the back to help him regain his breath. The fat boy ceased his ventriloquism suddenly. "Ow!" he yelled. "Leave off!"

"S'pose makee duckee talk!" he whispered. "Chunkee so clevee, he makee duckee quack, quack—oh, yes!"

Chunky nodded.

After his many disappointments he would have hesitated to try his wonderful gift at the dinner-table, in the presence of the schoolmistress, had he not just had proof positive of success. It did not dawn just yet on the fatuous Chunky that the wicked

Chunky's lip curled.

"I guess I'm going to make that duck quack!" he whispered back.

"You awful chump, Miss Meadows will—"

"Don't you give me away, Richards."

"Give you away!" gasped Frank. "You thundering ass, do you think Miss Meadows won't know who's quacking?"

"I've just made a dog growl behind Yen Chin, and he thought it was a real dog, anyhow," said Chunky disdainfully.

"Fathead! He was pulling your leg!"

"I'm accustomed to jealousy from you, Richards; but you really might draw it mild, you know," said Chunky, with increased disdain.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank.

He gave it up! If the Cedar Creek ventriloquist chose to rush upon destruction, he had to have his own way.

Chunky cleared his throat again, and started. Throwing his voice with all his skill—which was not perhaps so great as he supposed—he emitted a sonorous:

"QUACK!"

There was a start all along the table. Miss Meadows looked up blankly.

If the carved duck had actually quacked, there could hardly have been more astonishment at the Cedar Creek dinner-table.

"Qua-a-a-ack! Kuk - kuk - kuk!" plunged on Chunky recklessly.

"What the thump——"

"Todgers——"

"Is he potty?"

"You silly ass——"

"Silence!" Miss Meadows rose to her feet, a picture of wrath. "Todgers!"

Chunky looked as unconscious as possible.

Doubts crept into his fat mind.

"Todgers!"

"Ye-e-e-es, ma'am?"

"Are you out of your senses?"

"N-n-nunno, ma'am!"

"Then what do you mean by imitating the quack of a duck at the dinner-table?" exclaimed Miss Meadows wrathfully. "Is this a place for foolish pranks?"

"I—I—I—— D'd—did you think

is was me, ma'am?" gasped Todgers.

"Leave the room at once, Todgers! If you cannot behave yourself with propriety, you shall not sit at the table!" snapped Miss Meadows. "You may ask the cook for some bread and cheese for your dinner!"

"Oh!"

"Go at once!"

Miss Meadows' hand pointed to the door.

"Oh dear!" groaned Chunky.

He detached himself from his seat, cast a last, lingering, affectionate look at the duck, and vanished. While the duck was disposed of, Chunky Todgers gnawed bread and cheese in the kitchen, and bemoaned his fate. The life of an amateur ventriloquist at Cedar Creek was a hard one.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

VENTRILOQUISM EXTRAORDINARY!

"YOU fellows——"

"Still throwing your merry voice about, old chap?" asked Frank Richards.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was two or three days later when Chunky came up to the Co. in the playground at Cedar Creek, after morning lessons. Chunky, it was understood, was still cultivating his great gift, though he had not been heard "throwing his voice" so much of late.

"You fellows don't believe that I can ventriloquise!" said Chunky, with a disdainful sniff.

"Ha, ha! Not quite!"

"I guess I'm going to prove it to you!"

"Go ahead!" chuckled Bob Lawless. "Make a horse neigh on the roof!"

"I—I—I guess I haven't practised making a horse neigh yet——"



Miss Meadows hastily unlocked the cupboard and Bunker Honk, dusty, red and breathless, staggered out.
 "Honk—what—what—" gasped the schoolmistress. Chunky Todgers' spoof was all up now!

"Well, make a dog bark under the bench in the porch—"

"I—I'm leaving over dogs just for the present—"

"Well, give us any sample you like," said Vere Beauchere, laughing. "You're best at making ducks quack, I think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What would you say to making a man call for help from an empty cupboard?" asked Todgers.

"Topping!" said Frank Richards.

"The only drawback is that you can't do it, old chap."

"I guess I'm going to show you!" said Chunky Todgers loftily. "You can jolly well watch me do it!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob. "We'll watch you."

"Come on, then!"

Frank Richards & Co. grinned as they followed Chunky Todgers into the school-room.

"Sit down," he said. "I'll stand here by Miss Meadows' desk, and I'll

make a voice come from the cupboard where the easel's kept."

"I don't think!" said Frank.

"You see, I've had a lot of practice now," said Todgers. "I've cultivated my gift, you know. I can hold a conversation with an unseen person, making the answers come from where I like."

"Rats!"

"Well, just listen!"

Chunky started. Half a dozen fellows had strolled into the school-room to see what was on, and they were all grinning. There was a plentiful lack of faith in Chunky's ventriloquial powers.

"Are you there?" called out Chunky.

A faint voice was heard in reply:

"I'm here!"

The Cedar Creek fellows jumped. For—to their ears, at least—it certainly sounded as if the voice proceeded from the locked cupboard.

Chunky gave them a triumphant glance.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

"Jolly good!" said Bob heartily. "Blessed if I don't begin to believe it isn't all gas, after all! Keep it up!"

Todgers went on cheerily:

"What are you doing there?"

"Sitting down," came the faint voice.

And the schoolboys jumped again. It seemed unmistakable that the voice came from the cupboard.

"What's your name?"

"John Brown."

"How old are you?"

"Forty."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom Lawrence, much impressed. "Blessed if I wouldn't swear there was a man in the cupboard answering! I suppose there isn't anyone there?"

Chunky started.

"It's locked!" he said hastily. "Miss Meadows keeps the key in her room. You know that."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Lawrence. "Well, I must say it's jolly clever. Let's hear some more, Chunky."

"Are you still there, John Brown?" called out Chunky.

"I'm here!" came the faint voice.

"Just like real!" said Bob Lawless. "Chunky, old man——"

Bob was interrupted by the entrance of Miss Meadows from the passage. The Canadian schoolmistress was frowning.

"Has anyone here taken a key from my sitting-room?" she asked.

"A—a—a key?" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"Yes; the key of the easel cupboard. It has been taken from the hook."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

Chunky Todgers' fat face had

become suddenly crimson. Miss Meadows' eyes were fixed accusingly upon him.

"Todgers!"

"Yes, ma'am!" spluttered Chunky.

"Dinah says she saw you leaving my sitting-room. Have you taken the key? If so, return it to me at once."

"Oh dear!"

With a limp hand, Chunky Todgers extracted a key from his pocket, and handed it to the Canadian schoolmistress.

"If you meddle with things that do not concern you again, Todgers, I shall cane you!" said Miss Meadows sternly.

And she quitted the school-room with the key in her hand, leaving Chunky Todgers dumbfounded. There was a howl from Frank Richards & Co. as soon as the schoolmistress was gone.

"You fat fraud!"

"You spoofer!"

"You had the key!" roared Bob Lawless. "You've got a chap locked up in that cupboard to pull our legs!"

"I—I—I——" stuttered the hapless Chunky.

Bang!

It was a loud thump on the inside of the cupboard door.

"Here, lemme out of this!" shouted a voice. Evidently the hidden individual had heard all that had been said in the school-room. "You go and get that key and let me out, Todgers!"

The voice from the cupboard was no longer faint. It was an alarmed yell. And the chums recognised it now. It was the voice of H. B. Honk!

"Honk!" yelled Bob Lawless.

Chunky's fat face was a study.

"I—I—I don't know how he got in the cupboard!" he gasped. "I—I didn't know anyone was there when I started!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thump!

"Let me out!" yelled Honk. "I guess I shall suffocate if I'm left in hyer! You said it was only to be for ten minutes, you fat jay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I can't get the key!"

Thump, thump, thump!

Honk was getting desperate.

"Bless my soul! What is this?" Honk's yells and thumps had reached the ears of Miss Meadows, and she came in again hastily. "What—what—"

Thump!

"Lemme out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is—is somebody locked in the cupboard? Todgers, you bad boy——" Miss Meadows hastily unlocked the cupboard, and Bunker Honk, dusty and red and breathless, staggered out. "Honk—Todgers—what—what——"

Frank Richards & Co. beat a retreat from the school-room, leaving the two culprits to explain as best they could. When Honk and Todgers emerged into the playground a few minutes later, they were both rubbing their hands, and looking very excited.

"Yow-ow-ow!" Chunky Todgers was remarking.

"Oh swipes!" groaned Bunker Honk. "You fat jay, catch me helping you in a stunt again! You owe me half-a-dollar, anyhow!"

"You silly ass!" howled Chunky Todgers. "You spoiled the whole thing! Catch me giving you a half-dollar!"

"You pair of pesky spoofers!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "Collar them, you chaps, and roll them in the snow! That's what they want!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I—I guess—— Yaroooop!"

"Leggo! Help! Yoop! I—I say—only a joke on you fellows! I—I— Ow!"

Chunky Todgers and Bunker Honk went rolling together in the thick snow, and they were rolled and rolled till Frank Richards & Co. were tired. By that time Chunky Todgers had probably repented of his fraudulent attempt to convince Cedar Creek of his wonderful ventriloquial powers, and Bunker Honk had probably repented of helping him for the consideration of half-a-dollar—unpaid! And from that unlucky day nothing more was heard from Chunky Todgers on the subject of his new and amazing gift. It was the last performance of the Cedar Creek Ventriloquist.

THE END

FOLLOW YOUR SCHOOLBOY FAVOURITES EVERY WEEK!

Don't say good-bye to all the cheery chums you've met in the "Holiday Annual"—meet 'em all again! In the "Magnet," on sale every Saturday, price 2d., you will find Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. The chums of St. Jim's are featured in the "Gem," out every Wednesday, price 2d.; while the "Schoolboys' Own Library," price 4d., publishes grand long yarns of the chums of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood Schools.

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This inexpensive recipe is taken from the 'Atora' Book of 100 useful recipes. Send 6 postcards for a copy, post free from HUGON & CO., Ltd. Manchester.

