

The Greyfriars
HOLIDAY
ANNUAL
1940 *for BOYS* 1940





Frontispiece

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

D'ARCY'S DARING RESCUE!

(See the story, "Fighting the Flames!"—beginning on page 151.)

The Greyfriars **HOLIDAY ANNUAL**



1940

1940

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

The Editor To His Friends

WITH the appearance of this the twenty-first volume, the HOLIDAY ANNUAL celebrates its "coming of age"—a record of twenty-one years of such popularity with the youth of the Empire as it is given to few publications to achieve.

The young readers who gave the first HOLIDAY ANNUAL such a rousing welcome are now middle-aged, with youngsters of their own who now demand the famous Annual in their turn! In complying with this demand, parents will discover that, miraculously, they can renew their own youth by reading once again stories of the famous schoolboy characters whose cheery adventures held them spellbound in the past.

In a world where almost everything has changed, these characters remain as popular as ever. Harry Wharton & Co. and Billy Bunter are still in the Remove at Greyfriars. Tom Merry & Co. still grace the Shell at St. Jim's, where Jack Blake and his chums, not forgetting the noble Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, dispute the leadership of the Fourth Form with Figgins & Co., of the New House. The ancient foundation of Rookwood School is likewise still ornamented by the presence of Jimmy Silver and his pals, whose cheery personalities and amazing japes continue to enliven that part of Hampshire.

All these old favourites of twenty-one years ago, in fact, are firm favourites still with the youth of the present generation. Through the years they have maintained their youthful freshness and that cheery spirit of good sportsmanship which is perhaps their greatest attraction.

In this bumper twenty-first volume all the famous characters—the most popular schoolboys in the world—appear to greater advantage than ever. This statement may seem to some of you enthusiastic HOLIDAY ANNUAL readers of many years' standing something like an exaggeration, but to prove the truth of it you have only to dip into the pages that follow.

THE EDITOR.

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

(All rights reserved, and reproduction without permission strictly forbidden.)



WITH OUR COMPLIMENTS

By HARRY WHARTON

The Chums of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood place on record their gratitude for the friendship, enthusiasm and loyalty of the countless readers of the "Holiday Annual."

I HAD long wished for a chance of placing on record the gratitude felt by the fellows of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood for the friendship and enthusiasm of the countless readers who follow their adventures in the "Holiday Annual."

One fine day last June, a happy coincidence gave me just the chance I wanted.

It so happened that the Greyfriars First Eleven were playing St. Jim's, while our junior team opposed Rookwood on Little Side; and the St. Jim's seniors had brought with them a numerous following of juniors. The result was an unique gathering of the leading lights of all three schools.

The opportunity was too good to be missed. I made up my mind to ask all the fellows I met—celebrities and nonentities alike—for suggestions on how best to thank our innumerable chums for their loyal support.

Armed with a notebook and pencil,

I sallied forth to meet the first arrivals from Rookwood, as they drove past old Gosling's lodge in a motor-coach. When their coach came to a stop outside the School House, I soon set to work.

After exchanging greetings with Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome—the celebrated Fistical Four of Rookwood—I put the problem to them. The cheery quartette at once gave the idea their hearty support.

"Jolly good wheeze, Wharton!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Whatever is done in the way of thanking our supporters will have the unqualified approval of your Uncle James!"

"Same here!" said Arthur Edward Lovell genially. "But how to do it?"

"That's just the question I want answered," I responded. "If you chaps have any suggestions, I shall be glad to take a note of them!"

"What about a whip-round so that



"A fat lot of gratitude there'd be in a crowd of Moderns broadcasting their chivvies and breaking all the readers' television sets!" said Jimmy Silver. "Why, you Classical bounder——" began Tommy Dodd. "Pax, my infants!" I exclaimed.

we can buy presents?" put in Raby brightly.

That guileless question drew a loud laugh from the Rookwood fellows. I had to smile myself at Raby's sublime innocence.

"I'm afraid that's right outside the bounds of possibility, old chap," I said regretfully. "You have to remember that the 'Holiday Annual' circulates in every corner of the English-speaking world. To buy presents for all the boys and girls who follow our fortunes, we should need one or two of our wealthier members to part up with a cool half-million or so! I suppose none of you Rookwood chaps are prepared to pay out on that scale?"

"Well, not exactly," admitted the crestfallen Raby. "The most I can go to at the moment is half-a-crown!"

"Trust a Classical to trot out a really crack-brained idea!" chuckled Tommy Dodd, the happy-go-lucky leader of the Rookwood Moderns, as he joined the swelling throng. "If you're looking for a brainy wheeze from Rookwood, Wharton, apply to the Modern Side!"

"And you'll never get it!" added Newcome derisively. "What's your suggestion, anyway, Tommy Dodd?"

Tommy Dodd knitted his brows thoughtfully, as did also his loyal henchmen, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle. Knowing Tommy Dodd's reputation as an originator of brainy schemes, I was not surprised to find him coming out with a suggestion before either of his followers.

"Got it!" he exclaimed suddenly. "We'll all give a broadcast!"

"Ye gods!"

"A broadcast on the wireless!" said Tommy Dodd enthusiastically. "We can all join in—all the most important figures from the three schools! And readers all over the world can listen in to us!"

"Topping wheeze, by Jove!" said Tommy Cook, looking very relieved at not having to apply his own intellect to the problem any longer.

"Shure, an' it's a great idea intirely!" chortled Tommy Doyle, in his rich Irish brogue. "No need to worry yeself any longer at all, at all, Wharton, me bhoy! Tommy's hit it!"

"Why not make it a television broadcast?" said Tommy Cook. "Then they'll all be able to see our faces!"

"Ass!" said Jimmy Silver promptly. "We're supposed to be showing the readers our gratitude. A fat lot of gratitude there'd be in a crowd of Moderns broadcasting their chivvies and breaking all the readers' television sets!"

"Why, you Classical bounder——"
"You Modern freak——"

"Pax, my infants!" I interposed laughingly, as Moderns and Classicals began to look daggers at each other. "Save your House rags till you get back to Rookwood! Your suggestion, Dodd, is a really brainy one——"

"Thanks, old bean!"

"But I'm afraid the difficulties in the way of carrying it out are almost insurmountable. The chief difficulty, I think, would be to get the B.B.C. to put us in their programme. That our broadcast would be a big, popular success goes without saying—"

"Oh, rather!"

"But I very much doubt if the B.B.C. would want to give us more than ten minutes or so. And ten minutes or so would not be sufficient. We'd want at least an hour."

"Something in that!" nodded Tommy Dodd. "But what else, then?"

"That's what I'm going to find out! But first, let me show you fellows to your dressing-rooms."

I conducted the Rookwood men to the quarters assigned to them. By the time I returned to my task, two more coaches had arrived—one carrying the St. Jim's seniors and another the juniors. The new arrivals were scattering far and wide, renewing old acquaintances among the Greyfriars fellows and inspecting our historical old school buildings. I could see that I was in for a busy time, seeking out the brainwave that I wanted!

My first encounter was with Figgins and Kerr and Fatty Wynn. The famous New House trio from St. Jim's were taking it easy under one of the big elms in the quad.

The idea of a concerted effort to thank our "Holiday Annual" admirers made an instant appeal to them; but when it came to saying how to do it, Figgins and Fatty Wynn were stumped.

Kerr, who is never at a loss for long, pondered for a few seconds and then said:

"Why not make a film?"

"Good egg!" his chums chimed in.

"Good egg's right—if we can arrange the cash side of it satisfactorily!" I smiled. "The trouble about films, as I understand it, is that it costs at least thirty thousand pounds to make one!"

"It might easily earn ten times as much as that if it made a hit," said Figgins. "All you've got to do, Wharton, is to find a producer and somebody who's willing to speculate thirty thou!"

"Sounds easy enough!" I grinned. "But I fancy, all the same, that it's more an idea for the future than for the immediate present. If you fellows have any more brainwaves, let me know!"

And off I trekked—to find Tom Merry and his chums of the Shell and Jack Blake and his followers of the Fourth all engaged in critically inspecting the senior pitch on Big Side.



"Why not make a film?" said Kerr. "The trouble about films, as I understand it," I replied, "is that it costs at least thirty thousand pounds to make one!"

The cheery School House men greeted me with their usual boisterous enthusiasm. They lent a very sympathetic ear to my plan for paying tribute to our mutual "Holiday Annual" chums.

"I'm with you all the way, old son!" remarked Tom Merry cordially. "As for ways and means—well, what's wrong with inviting a number of readers to each of our respective schools for a holiday?"

"Not a bad wheeze, that, considering it came from a half-witted Shellfish!" grinned Jack Blake. "What say you, Wharton?"

I thought it over.

"Well, so far as I'm concerned, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have a number of 'Holiday Annual' readers here at Greyfriars as my guests," I answered at last. "The principal objection I see to it is—what would the Head say about it?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been polishing his celebrated monocle very thoughtfully, jammed it in his eye at this moment and intervened in the debate.

"If it will solve the pwoblem, Wharton, deah boy, I shall be delighted to place Eastwood House, my ancestwal home, entirely at the disposal of our pwoposed guests. I am quite suah that my governah would waise no objection whatevah. On the contwawy, he would considah it an honah and pwivilege, in the circs! I well wemembah —"

"Cut the cackle, Gus!" urged Herries, who was struggling to put the lead on his unwilling bulldog, Towser. "It isn't Speech Day."

"Weally, Hewwies—yawoooooh!"

Ow-ow! Call off your beastly dog, you wottah! Ow! My twousahs!"

D'Arcy's remarks ended in a wild shriek, as the aggressive Towser made a leap at his nether garments. Herries, frowning heavily, made a grab at his faithful hound, while the swell of the Fourth spun round like a teetotum in his frantic efforts to dodge the bulldog's fangs.

Towser's attack on D'Arcy's immaculate "bags" seemed to have brought the debate to an untimely end; so I decided to cut. Truth to tell, I was not at all sorry to put a safe distance between my own reach-me-downs and the gaping jaws of Herries' ferocious pet!

The start of our cricket match on Little Side delayed my further inquiries into the fellows' views on what should be done about our "Holiday Annual" chums. It fell to Greyfriars to bat first and I opened the innings with Tom Redwing.

The playing-fields looked a picture in the bright June sunshine, and the pitch was in perfect condition. I should very much like to enlarge on the game, which was one of the most enjoyable I ever remember. But my space is limited, so I will merely record that the score stood at 98, to which I had contributed 53 runs before I was caught out by Tommy Cook off a tricky ball from Jimmy Silver—and promptly returned to my self-imposed task of collecting opinions!



"Call off your beastly dog, you wottah, Hewwies!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Ow! My twousahs!" His remarks ended in a wild shriek as Towser made a leap at his nether garments!

So away to Big Side for handshakes and chats with Kildare, the stalwart captain of St. Jim's, Reginald Talbot, the one-time "Toff"—Harry Noble, better known as "Kangaroo"—the dense but determined George Alfred Grundy—and others too numerous to mention.

One and all welcomed the idea I mooted—but how to give it practical shape was a problem that baffled most!

Grundy's brainwave was a signed photograph of himself, to be distributed among "Holiday Annual" readers. I politely told the great man of the Shell that I would consider it—but I'm afraid Grundy's idea of his own importance is somewhat exaggerated!

Kildare put up what I thought was a very good wheeze.

"Why not a mammoth sports meeting at some great sports stadium, open to the three schools and readers alike?" he said.

I foresaw many difficulties in arranging such a stupendous affair; but I had to admit that Kildare scored full marks for a really brilliant notion.

Leaving the senior cricket game, I went across to the tuckshop. Mrs. Trimble's cosy little rendezvous under the elms was filled to overflowing with a noisy crowd, busily engaged in discussing cricket—not to mention ice-creams, jam-tarts and ginger-pop.

Suggestions came in briskly when



Suggestions came in briskly when I asked for them in the tuckshop. Baggy Trimble of St. Jim's suggested a gigantic banquet. He would!

I asked for them. Baggy Trimble of St. Jim's suggested a gigantic banquet. He would! My somewhat dingy Form-fellow, Harold Skinner, said that a smoking-concert would fill the bill. Bolsovermajor, the pugilist of the Remove, wanted a great boxing tournament, open to all the "Holiday

Annual" readers to compete.

When Hurree Singh came in to announce that the Greyfriars innings had ended, the problem was still unsolved.

"There's only one thing for it," I said. "Before the coaches go to-night we must hold a mass meeting outside the pavilion to decide."

And at that I had to leave it till our game with Rookwood was over.

The game ended soon after tea—incidentally, we won by the narrow margin of 5 runs—and immediately afterwards, the game on Big Side having also finished, we held our mass meeting.

It was a well-assorted crowd that gathered round the pavilion steps to hear my speech. Greyfriars men, of course, were there in full force. Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent and Hurree Singh—the four who, with myself, make up the quintette known as the Famous Five—were well to the front, together with most of the Remove. Temple, Dabney and Fry and a crowd of other Upper Fourth men looked on rather superciliously from the rear. Hobson of the Shell, with Hoskins the pianist,

and most of their Form colleagues were present, while the Fifth, headed by Blundell, turned up *en masse* even to dear old fatheaded, self-opinionated Coker!

Our visitors from St. Jim's and Rookwood were there to a man, and when the meeting was thrown open, after I had summarised the suggestions I had so far received, they contributed notably to the debate.

Speech after speech was made, however, without any definite objective being reached, and I had almost begun to think we should have to break up without arriving at a solution when Billy Bunter butted in.

Nobody, of course, expected anything from the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove, apart from a proposal for a whacking great feed—and this proposal we duly got! He even went one better than Baggy Trimble by suggesting that as he was the most famous character in the "Holiday Annual," the banquet should be his alone, because the readers would enjoy his having it almost as much as having it themselves!

But Bunter did not stop there. Having made that footling proposition, he went on to talk sense—possibly for the first time in his life!

"In addition to the feed," he said, "I have two other ideas to put forward. The first is that we pass a hearty vote of thanks to all the readers of the 'Holiday Annual' for their friendship and support."

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"That's better!"

"Wattlin' good ideah, bai Jove!"

"And secondly," went on Bunter, "I suggest that as a sort of practical gesture of goodwill, we pass a resolution asking the Editor of the 'Holiday Annual,' his staff and the authors and artists to put forward a really special effort to make the 'Holiday Annual' for 1940 the best they have ever done!"

For a moment there was silence. Then there was a chorus of "Hear, hear!" which rapidly turned into a storm of cheering!

Those enthusiastic cheers left me in no doubt. The idea I had been seeking had come—and it had come, amazing as it seemed, from William George Bunter of the Greysfriars Remove!

The vote of thanks to our readers was passed with acclamation. The resolution was passed unanimously and telegraphed at once to the Editor of the "Holiday Annual" in London. And we were so pleased about it that we even gave Bunter his feed—so everybody was happy!

That the Editor and his helpers have done what we asked them to do, you will find out for yourselves, as you read the pages that follow. And now, having told you all about it, I will leave you to devour the rest of the "Holiday Annual," which reaches you this year, owing to Billy Bunter's happy thought, With Our Compliments!



MUSIC HATH CHARMS!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast," is an old saying. But not many fellows would dare to prove the truth of it on a savage Form-master. Vernon-Smith of the Greyfriars Remove does—with amazing results!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

HOSKINS' BRAINWAVE.

"**B**UZZ!" "Look here, Vernon-Smith

"Buzz!" repeated Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of the Greyfriars Remove. "We've got trouble enough in this study already, Hoskins, without a half-baked piano-thumper like you buttin' in an' addin' to it! Buzz!"

Claude Hoskins did not buzz. He blushed instead. The musical genius of the Shell regarded himself as something of a prodigy on the pianoforte, and to hear himself described as a half-baked piano-thumper by a mere Remove kid was rather an unpleasant shock.

Hoskins' first instinct was to wade

through the crowd of Removites in Smithy's study and give Smithy a punch on the nose. But he remembered that he had called on a mission particularly demanding patience and good humour, and conquered the instinct in time. He held up some tickets.

"Don't be so dashed rude, Vernon-Smith!" he said. "I've called to ask you fellows if you'd like——"

"We wouldn't!"

"If you'd like to come to a piano recital I'm giving in the music-room——"

"We wouldn't! Now buzz!" snapped the Bounder. "To return to Quelchy, you fellows, my mind's made up. He's declared war on me, an' now I'm goin' to declare war on him!"

"Ass!"

"Idiot!"

"You'll only make matters ten times worse," said Harry Wharton. "It's bad enough for the Remove team to lose you for to-morrow's game. We don't want you to lose your halfers for the rest of the term—and that's what'll happen if you really get Quelchy's rag out!"

"Hear; hear!"

Vernon-Smith's face hardened.

"If Quelchy is goin' to detain me for things I haven't done, it doesn't matter whether I act the giddy goat or not! He said I was talkin' in class. I wasn't."

"You've told us that already."

"I'll tell you it again—I wasn't!" snapped the Bounder. "He detained me all the same. Well, now I'm goin' to give him somethin' to detain me for. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Possibly; but it's dashed silly, too, old bean," said Wharton patiently. "Quelchy has made a mistake this time, but it's not likely to happen again."

"The old ass was out of sorts, Smithy," explained Bob Cherry. "We all know why. It's because the Head has given him the job of calling on Major Thresher this afternoon to apologise for our trespassing on his land."

"Exactly. So he took it out of me; an' now you're askin' me to stand for it!" said Vernon-Smith bitterly. "Nothin' doin'!"

"About these tickets——" broke in Hoskins from the doorway. But nobody heeded Hoskins.

"Forget it, Smithy!" they were urging.

"Chuck it, old sport!"

"Go to him nicely and tell him again he was mistaken," suggested Frank Nugent. "He's sometimes a

beast, admittedly; but he's a just beast. If you handle him like a Dutch uncle he'll admit he was wrong and cancel your detention."

Vernon-Smith shrugged.

"It's not my habit to go cap in hand to anybody, let alone Quelchy! My detention stands—an' Quelchy's for it!"

"Well, of all the chumps——"

"Half a minute, you chaps! Perhaps I can help."

The hubbub ceased. All eyes were turned to the doorway. Hoskins had succeeded in attracting attention at last.

"You help?" asked Wharton, rather blankly. "How the dickens can you help, Hoskins? Thinking of acting as a mediator?"

Hoskins' dreamy brow was furrowed with thought. He nodded slowly.

"Something like that. I think I may be able to mediate very successfully—with the aid of music."

"Eh?"

"Music! The very thing! The more I think of it, the better I like it!" said Hoskins, quite an enthusiastic gleam coming into his dreamy eyes. "You can take it from me, you fellows, the one thing to put Quelchy right is music!"

"What the thump——"

"You say he's out of sorts—bad-tempered. The fact is," said Hoskins, "his nerves want soothing. Music is the one thing to do it!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"If I could get Mr. Quelch locked up in the box-room next to the music-room for about an hour, I bet I could do it, too—by playing suitable music to him on the piano."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I see anything to laugh at!" said Hoskins warmly. "Of

course, he might be a little annoyed at first——"

" 'Might' ! " murmured Wharton, quite faintly. " Ye gods ! I imagine that's quite likely ! "

" But, after a time, the soothing influence of my music would permeate his whole being," Hoskins went on. " 'Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast,' you know. It's an old saying and a true one. Unconsciously Mr. Quelch would throw aside the anger that possesses him at present. A mood of peace and goodwill would descend on him. My music would be designed to that end. His first rage on finding himself locked in would give place to tranquillity. By the time we let him out he'd be simply eating out of your hands ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

The Removites simply shrieked. The idea of Quelch—Quelchy of the gimlet eyes and tight lips—being locked in a box-room and emerging in a state of blissful tranquillity as a result of Hoskins playing the piano to him struck them as really funny. They roared.

The surprising exception was the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith did not laugh. He eyed Hoskins closely instead. There was a slight gleam in his keen eyes.

" Perhaps this isn't so funny, after all," he said. " You chaps can cackle ; but I'm wonderin' myself if there's somethin' in what Hoskins says. "

The Removites stared. Hoskins smiled.

" I'm glad there's one chap here who has some idea of the power that music possesses," he said. " You think it's a good idea, Vernon-Smith ? "

The Bounder smiled—a somewhat peculiar smile—and nodded.

" I think it's a regular bright one,

old bean. If you're willin' to help by playin' the piano, I'll see that Quelchy's locked up in that box-room ! "

" Oh, crumbs ! "

The Remove fellows gazed at Vernon-Smith almost in horror.

" Mean to say you're seriously thinking of locking up Quelchy in a box-room ? " gasped Bob Cherry. " Why, you must be potty ! "

" Better chuck it, Smithy," said Wharton, with a frown. " You know well enough that this is about the barmiest wheeze that was ever invented. It only appeals to you because you can see it leading to trouble ! "

" Nothin' of the kind. It appeals to me because I want to give Hoskins' music a chance to change Quelchy's character ! " said the Bounder, with a mocking grin. " Hoskins an' I are goin' to perform a giddy miracle between us. Mum's the word, everybody, of course ! "

The Removites grinned. Wharton compressed his lips.

" We'll keep mum, naturally. But I think you're a complete idiot. "

" Thanks. Now you'd better all run along an' leave me an' Hoskins to work out a plan," said Vernon-Smith coolly. " Wish us luck ! "

" Fathead ! "

" Half a minute ! What about these tickets ? " asked Hoskins, as the Removites turned to go.

" Leave 'em to me, old bean," chuckled the Bounder. " If we pull off this stunt, I'll sell the whole lot for you. "

And Hoskins thanked Vernon-Smith profusely.

Apparently the musical genius of the Shell had no doubts whatever that they would " pull off " the " stunt " with entire success !

THE SECOND CHAPTER

SOOTHING THE SAVAGE BREAST

THUMP! Thump! Thump!
" Bless my soul ! "

Mr. Quelch put aside his book and frowned.

Afternoon classes had just finished and the master of the Remove had retired to his study for a quiet half-hour with Sophocles.

He was not in the best of moods. At the end of the half-hour he had to call on Major Thresher to discuss a recent trespassing offence on the part of members of the Remove—a task which he would gladly have shirked. The thought of that interview rather marred the joys of Sophocles.

Those diluted joys were still further marred when a terrific thumping broke out on the floor above Mr. Quelch's study.

Thump! Thump! Thump!
" Goodness gracious ! "

Mr. Quelch's brow grew quite thunderous. He rose to his feet.

It was a fine summer afternoon and, classes being over for the day, the School House was nearly deserted. What could be the cause of this nerve-racking din was a mystery—a mystery that Mr. Quelch intended to solve at the earliest possible moment.

The Remove master quitted his study and made for the stairs, frowning portentously. He would have frowned still more portentously had he suspected that the noise that had brought him out was caused by Vernon-Smith jumping about on the floor above with the deliberate intention of luring him upstairs. But naturally that thought did not occur to Mr. Quelch.

Bang! Thump! Thud!

The din grew louder as Mr. Quelch hurried up the stairs. Mr. Quelch's

lips tightened as he came in sight of the landing and spotted a box-room door open.

He broke into a run and made a dive for the box-room, fully expecting to find there the explanation of the thumping.

Rather to Mr. Quelch's surprise, however, the box-room was empty. The Remove master stood in the middle of the room, glaring round suspiciously. But there was nothing in sight to arouse suspicion.

The noise had stopped now. Mr. Quelch turned to go.

Then he received a shock. There was a slight "click" from behind him. The door had closed—and been locked from the other side! Mr. Quelch simply blinked.

With quite an extraordinary expression on his face, he crossed over to the door and turned the handle. The door was undoubtedly locked. He rattled the handle and tapped sharply on the door panel.

"What are you doing?" he barked.
"Unlock this door at once!"

There was no reply. Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"If this is a practical joke, I warn you that the consequences will be serious unless you open this door at once!"

Still no answer. The Remove master tapped on the door again more sharply than before. The tapping became a knocking and the knocking a thumping. The time came when Mr. Quelch was beating quite a deafening tattoo on the stout oak door of the box-room. And still there was no result!

Then the prisoner in the box-room uttered a sudden grunt of relief. A sound had broken the ominous silence outside.

Somebody had struck a chord on a piano in the music-room next door;



Mr. Quelch stood in the middle of the box-room, staring about him suspiciously. Then suddenly there was a sharp click behind him. The Remove master blinked round. The door had been closed and locked from the other side!

and the sound struck a chord of hope in Mr. Quelch's heart. It was an unusual experience for Mr. Quelch to feel glad at the sound of a piano from the School House music-room; but he felt decidedly glad now. He left the locked door and went over to the wall dividing the box-room from the music-room. He started tapping on the wall.

Mr. Quelch's expression, which had relaxed a little, hardened rapidly again in the course of the next minute. His vigorous tapping must have been clearly audible to the pianist in the next room, who was playing one of the celebrated Nocturnes by Chopin on a particularly soft pedal. But the pianist was carrying on regardless!

The master of the Remove almost foamed at the mouth.

"Stop! Stop playing that piano at once! Do you hear me?" he roared. "This is Mr. Quelch speaking.

I order you to stop playing that piano. I am locked in this box-room. Find what has happened to the key at once!"

The soft and dreamy tinkling of the piano continued.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fairly glittered. Unless the pianist in the music-room was deaf—which would be absurd—he could not possibly have failed to hear his voice. It was an act of deliberate defiance!

"For the last time I order you to stop!" he shrieked.

The opening notes of the "Moonlight Sonata" were the only answer he received!

In the music-room next door, Claude Hoskins allowed his hands to stray lightly over the piano. He was in a mood of quiet optimism.

"Spring Song" and "Liebestraum" followed the "Moonlight Sonata." The musical genius of the

Shell had an extensive repertoire of soft and soothing melodies, and he was prepared to go on for hours if it proved necessary.

Hoskins was confident that ten minutes would do the trick. He smiled cheerfully as he heard Mr. Quelch's furious banging—serene in the assurance that the storm would give place to blessed peace as the dulcet notes from the music-room penetrated the inner reaches of the Remove master's heart.

But something went wrong with Hoskins' calculations. Ten minutes went by and the banging and shouting from the box-room grew louder and more insistent than ever.

Hoskins grimly kept on playing. But as time went on without result, his confident smile began to fade and a somewhat uneasy expression appeared on his face.

Hoskins felt himself assailed by the first pangs of doubt and alarm.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

TROUBLE IN THE OFFING!

"ANYBODY here seen Smithy?" Bob Cherry asked that question in the cricket pavilion after net-practice that afternoon. It drew a general shaking of heads from the juniors who were putting away kit in their lockers.

"Nothing doing," said Bulstrode. "He was due to turn up to practice, but he didn't."

"Losing his halfer to-morrow put Smithy right off his stroke, I'm afraid," remarked Tom Redwing, who shared Study No. 4 with the Bounder. "Who wants him, Bob?"

"Wharton. He's just been across to the House and there's the very dickens of a shemozzle going on." Bob chuckled. "Wharton says the Quelch-bird sounds as if he's wrecking

that box-room. Meanwhile, Hoskins is carrying on his snake-charming act on the piano like a Trojan—but without success!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared. But Tom Redwing, who was guide, philosopher and friend to the Bounder, did not join in the laughter. He frowned instead.

"Sounds as if Smithy is piling up trouble for himself," he said gravely.

"Just what Wharton said," nodded Bob Cherry. "He wants to find him to advise him to let Quelch out—pronto. Sure none of you have seen him?"

"Positive."

"All serene." And Bob quitted the pavilion, with a troubled-looking Tom Redwing following him—to find outside that Harry Wharton had just received news of the missing Bounder.

"It's all right, Bob," he called out. "Bunter has just seen him in the tuckshop."

"Oh, good. Going along now?"

"Right now," answered the captain of the Remove grimly. "If that door isn't opened soon, I can see Quelch bursting—and the Bounder getting the sack!"

And Wharton set off, with the rest of the Famous Five and Tom Redwing to keep him company.

They duly found Vernon-Smith in the tuckshop. He was seated on a tall stool at the counter, calmly imbibing a glass of lemonade through a straw. He smiled cynically when he saw them.

"Hallo, you men! Have a lemonade?"

"Don't be an ass, Smithy. This isn't a social call and you know it," said Wharton bluntly. "Quelch's up in that box-room and he can't get out."

"Good! Then everythin's goin' accordin' to plan! Is dear old Hoskins playin' soothin' music still?"

"He is—and it's having such a soothing effect on Quelchy that he sounds as if he's wrecking the place!"

"Good again! The change will do him all the more good when the music does work," grinned the Bounder. "It's all a matter of time. After an hour or two you'll find that butter won't melt in his mouth. He'll come out of that box-room with peace in his soul an' a seraphic smile on his face an'——"

"Chuck it, you utter idiot!" said Wharton impatiently. "This is serious and we've come to tell you it is. Unless you want the sack this afternoon, Smithy, there's only one thing to do, and it will have to be done quickly. You must take up the key of the box-room and slip it under the door—then run for your life!"

"Nothin' doin'. Think I want to be taken for a fag?"

"You'll be taken for a ride if you're not careful—with Wingate to keep you company as far as the station," said Wharton, with grim humour. "Listen to reason, Smithy. We're here for your good."

"Wharton's right, Smithy," put in Tom Redwing quietly. "It was a mad trick from the start, and your only chance of getting away with it is to free Quelchy quickly and trust to luck that he doesn't go all out to find who did it."

"Leave it any longer and it's a dead cert. that Quelchy will be so wild he'll willingly devote days to getting his man," said Frank Nugent. "You've got to call it off—simply must!"

"The mustfulness is simply terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Smithy!" said Hurree Singh gently.

Vernon-Smith knitted his brows.

Wild horses could not drag him from his course once he had made up his mind about it. But he was not altogether unaffected by outside influences where he had not committed himself too deeply. There was a streak of common sense running through the Bounder, despite his reckless and defiant ways.

This time, for once, it came to the surface.

"Well, you all seem very anxious over me," he said, with a wry smile. "I don't want to cause a giddy upheaval in the Form. I only want to get even with Quelchy, and if he's as wild as you say he is, I've done it. He can have the key back."

"Good man! The odds are against you getting away with it even now, but there's just a chance," said Wharton. "Dash back to the House and try it, anyway. Stop Hoskins and slip Quelchy the key, then bunk."

"It's a deal!" grinned the Bounder.

He quitted the tuckshop on his own. There was no sense in attracting attention by taking the crowd.

The tinkling strains of Hoskins' music were still mingling with a feverish crashing and banging from the adjoining room when the Bounder reached the music-room. But Hoskins soon stopped playing when the Bounder entered.

The musician of the Shell looked relieved to see Vernon-Smith. He looked worried, too, and not a little puzzled.

"I say, Vernon-Smith, do you think it's working?" he whispered. "I've played all the most soothing music I know, but——"

"No time for debates," interrupted the Bounder firmly. "Kim on!"

And he seized Hoskins by the

shoulder and ran him out of the music-room.

"Run!" he hissed, when they reached the landing.

Hoskins, after a moment's hesitation, took his tip and ran.

Vernon-Smith tip-toed back to the box-room. The banging was still going on furiously. Mr. Quelch's voice, a little husky by this time, was still calling for help.

The Bounder grinned. He knelt down and flicked the key under the door.

Then he followed Hoskins down the stairs at express speed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

THE MIRACLE!

MR. QUELCH jumped.

He had been doing quite a lot of jumping during his unwilling sojourn in the box-room, but it was a different kind of jump this time—a jump of surprise.

Somehow, the last thing Mr. Quelch ever expected after such a long interval was to see the key skimming towards him from under the door. He had quite resigned himself by this time to waiting till his shouts and bangings attracted attention, and thereafter sending for Gosling and a master key. He certainly had not anticipated that the perpetrator of this outrageous hoax would have the effrontery to return.

But there was the key right enough—slithering across the floor towards him. Mr. Quelch was surprised; but he did not allow his surprise to prevent him making a bid to find out who had sent it.

He fairly swooped on to the key, fielded it, and dived at the door.

Hardly two seconds could have elapsed between the appearance of the key and Mr. Quelch's opening of

the door. If he broke his bones in the process, the Remove master intended to make an attempt to catch the man who had just posted that key to him.

But, quick as he was, he was not in time to spot his quarry. The only evidence of another human being in the vicinity was a sliding sound suggestive of somebody going down the banisters at breakneck speed; but by the time Mr. Quelch reached the top of the stairs that sound had ceased and there was nobody in sight.

Mr. Quelch came to a stop with an expression of concentrated fury on his face. He was not a remarkably good-tempered man at the best of times, and his experience on this occasion had driven him to breaking point.

Almost choking with anger, the Remove master rushed back across the landing and looked into the music-room on the chance that the pianist was still there. A glance into the silent room showed him that it was empty. He stamped out again, slamming the door behind him with a slam that rattled the window of the adjacent box-room.

Mr. Quelch's glinting eyes looked again into the box-room, as he passed the open door.

That momentary glance had no result till he reached the landing once more.

Then the recollection of it suddenly penetrated Mr. Quelch's consciousness.

Something happened to Mr. Quelch. He stopped with a faint gasp and slowly retraced his steps. This time, he gave the box-room far more than a momentary glance; in fact, the more he studied it, the more agitated he grew.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch at last.

All his rage had suddenly evaporated. In its place was embarrassment. Something suspiciously like a blush had appeared on his cheeks. There was panic in the quick movement with which he turned to see if anyone had yet appeared on the stairs.

Mr. Quelch drew out a handkerchief and mopped his brow, as he surveyed the scene of his recent imprisonment.

The box-room looked a wreck!

A window-pane was broken; so was an electric bowl-fire with which he had tried to smash the lock; two suitcases were badly dented and a large piece of plaster had been knocked out of the wall. The contents of the room were in dreadful disorder. Really, it looked as if a riot had taken place.

Mr. Quelch looked at it and blushed. It was all his own work; and it shocked him.

A tendency to dyspepsia and lum-

bago made the Remove master on occasions severe and irritable; but he usually preserved a pretty tight control over his feelings. The lapse from his normal standards which was now plainly revealed to him was most distressing. He gazed at the box-room in blank dismay.

Then a footstep behind him brought his gaze back to the stairs.

It was Gosling who appeared on the landing. The school porter was frowning, as he touched his cap.

"Wot I says is this 'ere, sir: if I find the young rip as broke that winder, I'll report 'im. I saw it go with my own heyes, sir, an'——"

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath—a breath of relief. He also drew out his notecase.

"Never mind, Gosling. I want you to inquire no further into this unfortunate matter. Do you understand?"



"Run!" hissed Vernon-Smith. Hoskins took his tip and ran. Then the Bounder tip-toed back to the box-room, with the key in his hand. Mr. Quelch's voice, a little husky, was still calling for help.

Gosling scratched his head.

"Yessir, but wot I says is——"

"I want you to tidy up this room and make good all the damage with as little fuss as possible. I want you to send the bills to me and I will see that they are settled promptly. You will kindly say nothing to any other person regarding the matter. You understand?"

Mr. Quelch slipped a ten-shilling note into the porter's horny palm.

Gosling blinked at it, and then a smile dawned in his crusty old face.

"Ho, yessir! Suttinly, sir. Thank'ee, sir!"

"Thank *you*, Gosling!"

And Mr. Quelch rustled away.

His face was inscrutable as he descended the stairs; but there was no longer a trace of the rage that had been simply oozing from him only a few minutes before.

Leaving Gosling, he went straight to the Shell passage and sought out Hoskins. Hoskins was in his study. He registered quite a lot of alarm when Mr. Quelch stalked in.

But the Remove master's manner soon reassured him. Mr. Quelch seemed most unusually mild.

"You play the piano, I believe, Hoskins," he said. "Were you by any chance playing in the music practice-room upstairs this afternoon?"

Hoskins nodded dumbly. Now that his amazing experiment in the soothing powers of music was over, he felt considerably less certain of the outcome than he had felt before it began.

"In that case, Hoskins," said Mr. Quelch, "surely you must have heard me calling to you to assist me to escape from the adjoining box-room in which I had been locked?"

"'M'yes, sir! But—but don't think because you got no answer that we

meant any actual disrespect to you, sir," he added. "You see——"

"By 'we,' Hoskins, you presumably mean yourself and the boy who locked me in the box-room," pursued Mr. Quelch, calmly and unemotionally. "May I ask the name of your fellow-conspirator?"

Hoskins suppressed a groan.

"I'm afraid I can't sneak, sir. It was my idea, anyway. I thought that music of the right kind would put you in a better temper and——"

Mr. Quelch's lips twitched. His gimlet eyes gleamed. He looked as if he had found at last something he had long been seeking.

"So that was the scheme, Hoskins! You locked me in the box-room and played music to me in order to put me in a good temper!"

"That's it, sir," assented Hoskins, growing bolder as he saw that the Remove master was showing no signs of animosity. "You were in a bad temper because you had to call on Major Thresher——"

"What!"

"So I told this chap you'd punished unjustly that the best thing to do was to lock you up in a room and make you listen to soothing music whether you wanted to or not! And we did it!"

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"I understand, Hoskins; and I can only say that your behaviour was foolish in the extreme."

"Oh, sir!"

"However—ahem!—on this occasion I shall not report you to your Form-master," went on Mr. Quelch. "Please do not behave in such an absurd manner in future, Hoskins!"

That was all. He turned without another word and departed.

From the Fourth passage he turned his footsteps in the direction of Masters' passage.

Half-way there he met Dr. Locke. The Head, for some reason, looked quite relieved to see him.

"Ah, Quelch! Then you have not gone yet!"

"I should have gone, sir," said Mr. Quelch, "but unfortunately——"

"I am delighted that you have not had to waste your time!" beamed the Head. "Major Thresher has just been on the telephone to me. He was in

Smith to his study, the general opinion was that Smithy was fairly "for it."

The Bounder felt so, too. But a big surprise awaited him. To his utter amazement, Mr. Quelch was in a most friendly mood.

"Vernon-Smith! You locked me in a box-room this afternoon!"

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped the Bounder.

"It was a foolish trick, Vernon-



"I want you to tidy up the box-room and make good all the damage with as little fuss as possible," said Mr. Quelch. "Do you understand?" The Remove master slipped a ten-shilling note into Gosling's hand and the porter pocketed it. "Ho, yessir!" he said. "Suttinly, sir!"

an unusually gracious mood and I was able to settle up the little point of difference between us most amiably. Pray do not let it trouble you any further!"

"Oh! Ah! Very well, sir! Very well indeed!"

Quite a flustered Mr. Quelch went on his way, fairly rejoicing.

Naturally, the Remove had no idea that he was rejoicing. When, five minutes later, he summoned Vernon-

Smith. But I will overlook it this time. With regard to your detention to-morrow afternoon, I have been reconsidering the matter. Do you give me your solemn word of honour that you were not the boy who was talking in class this morning?"

"Yes, sir. Absolutely!" said the Bounder in astonishment.

"Very well. The detention is cancelled. You may go."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped

Vernon-Smith. He left the Form-master's study in quite a daze.

The crowd waiting at the end of the passage greeted him with an eager chorus of inquiries.

"What is it, Smithy? The sack?"

"Booked for a Head's swishing, old bean?"

"Neither!" answered the Bounder dizzily. "He knows I locked him in that box-room—an' yet he's let me off scot free, an' cancelled the detention, too!"

"Ye gods!"

"Has he gone off his rocker?"

"Well, that's one possibility," acknowledged the Bounder, with a chuckle. "Yet he seemed sane enough to me."

"Ask Gosling how he found him," suggested Frank Nugent, as slow and ponderous footsteps became audible from the stairs. "He was the first man to meet Quelchy out of the box-room, so he must have seen him at his worst."

"Good wheeze!"

There was a rush to the foot of the stairs to meet Gosling.

"Keep your distance, chaps!" sang out Tom Brown. "You never know. After climbing all those stairs for nothing, he may bite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the juniors were in for another surprise. When Gosling reached the bottom of the stairs he was registering none of the unhappiness that they had expected. On the contrary, his crusty face bore on it an unwonted expression of geniality.

"What cheer, Gossy?" greeted Bob Cherry. "Let's hear your view on the burning topic, old bean. Is Mr. Quelch potty, or has he turned soft-hearted in his old age?"

Gosling rubbed his chin and eyed the juniors with a ruminating eye.

"Wot I says is this 'ere: I dunno wot you're talkin' about, but Mr. Quelch is wot I call a gentleman!" he said gruffly. "One o' the best, 'e is, an' nobody can convince me different!"

"My hat! Gosling's changed, too!" said Vernon-Smith in astonishment. "It must be an epidemic!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere," continued Gosling. "Mr. Quelch is no more potty than wot I am meself, an' if you say 'e is, Master Cherry, I'll report yer!"

"All serene, Gossy; I was asking you, not telling you!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Gentlemen, chaps and fellows, Gossy has settled it! Quelchy is not potty!"

"Then what's the explanation?"

"Let's ask Hoskins!" ventured Redwing.

And to Hoskins' study in the Shell passage they all adjourned—to find the musical genius of Greyfriars with a ready answer to their question.

"It's simple!" he said, with an elegant wave of his long hand. "Surely it's not necessary for me to explain it! 'Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast'!"

"Great pip!"

"I told you that soft, soothing music would cure Quelchy. Well, I've proved it. Nothing surprising in it at all to me!" said Hoskins cheerfully. "Now what about those tickets for the piano recital, Vernon-Smith?"

"Give 'em to me; I'll get rid of them for you if I have to buy the lot myself!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "But I shall never understand it as long as I live! Quelchy must be a jolly good fellow, after all. An' even then, it's a miracle!"

And a miracle it remained to everybody at Greyfriars—with the possible exception of Gosling!



CRAZY WEEK AT ST JIM'S!

By MONTY LOWTHER

"Why not a crazy week at St. Jim's?" says the humorist of the Shell. But after reading his startling suggestions we think he's crazy!

GENTLEMEN, chaps and fellows, I've got the brightest notion that's struck me for at least five minutes.

Crazy Week at St. Jim's!

Why not? Dash it all, we spend nearly forty weeks out of the year in sombre and sober sanity, hedged round with rules, restrictions and respectability. Why not go "goofy" sometimes, for a change? It would do us all good!

Just imagine a whole week of carnival, with all the fellows doing exactly what they pleased! Whoop-pee!

Lessons would be optional, of course. But with lickings and lines barred and no restrictions on behaviour there'd be a full attendance—it would be too good to miss!

In the Shell, we'd pelt Mr. Linton with chalks and erasers as he came in—inkpots would be barred by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Schoolmasters, I'm afraid! And

when he remarked, as he sometimes does, "Let me see, first lesson is English History," we'd yell back "Rats! You mean funny stories!"

Questions would naturally be answered in the crazy way. "When did Henry IV come to the throne?" would draw the reply "Some time before Henry V, I fancy, old bean!" The answer to "Where were the kings of England crowned?" would be "On their nappers, of course!" and so on.

When we got bored by lessons, we'd buzz off and leave Linton to carry on to the empty desks. If the Fourth were still in class, we might liven things up by paying them a visit and indulging in an ink-pellet battle—with perhaps Mr. Lathom standing in the middle to see fair play!

Dinner in hall would be a regular riot. Beaks would be inconspicuous and prefects would lie low and say nothing—or take the consequences! The menu would be varied and liberal

—as seaside landladies tell you prior to serving up small portions of beef and spuds for a fortnight! Ginger-pop and chocolates and rare and refreshing viands would be available in unlimited quantities, and what was left over would be used as missiles to be hurled at inattentive waiters!

After dinner the time would be devoted to amusements forbidden in normal weeks, such as playing footer with the Head's best topper, decorating the busts of Caesar, Eutropius & Co. with prefects' clobber and false beards and specs., and turning the fire hose on Mr. Ratcliff! All this would be awfully jolly!

Just to give the poor, oppressed fellows of the Fourth and Shell a treat, all juniors between the Fifth and Third Forms exclusive would be promoted to the rank of prefect. Prefects, on the other hand, would be reduced to the rank of fags. The new prefects would, as a matter of course, be allowed to administer punishment to the new fags with implements provided for that purpose. Just light, inoffensive weapons, of course—say a couple of sjamboks and a cat-o'-nine-tails to each man!

One of the great features of Crazy Week at St. Jim's would be the



Leisure time would be devoted to amusements forbidden in normal weeks, such as playing footer with the Head's topper!



The new prefects would be allowed to administer punishment to the new fags with an inoffensive weapon like a cat-o'-nine-tails!

decorations. If I had my way, there'd be so many decorations you wouldn't be able to recognise the old place! Flags would fly and pennants proudly flutter all over the place.

Calling-over would be abolished and juniors would be allowed to stay out half the night if they wished. For the benefit of those who felt like staying in, there would be theatrical performances, boxing displays and film shows in the dormitories as long as they were required. These arrangements would ensure a perfect end to a perfect day for everybody!

That, briefly, is my idea of a Crazy Week for St. Jim's. I don't expect everybody to agree with it at once. I shall be very much surprised, in fact, if the Head hugs me affectionately as soon as he hears about it and cries "Lowther, my boy, it's the wheeze of the century—let's start Crazy Week right away!" Still, I hope to convert the Head—in time.

Once Dr. Holmes agrees, the rest of the masters will soon follow his lead; so the time may come when Crazy Week at St. Jim's is a regular annual institution.

On the other hand, it may *not*!

THE END.



THE CASE of the BEAK'S BLACK EYE!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER GUSSY MEANS BUSINESS!

"WATS!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, made that remark emphatically.

Arthur Augustus was not usually emphatic. Generally his manners had the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. But, at the moment, he was a little excited; and he was very determined.

"Look here, Gussy——" urged Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

"My dear ass——" said Blake.

"I wepeat, wats!"

"You howling ass——" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Barge him!" suggested Monty Lowther. "He's jolly well not going into Selby's study! Selby's too dangerous! Barge him out!"

"I wefuse to be barged out!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly, "and if you fellows do not let me pass I shall push you out of the way, and vewy wuffly, too!"

At which Tom Merry and Co. grinned. It would not really have been an easy task

for Arthur Augustus to push six fellows out of the way.

Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake, Herries and Digby of the Fourth, barred D'Arcy's way. They were gathered in the passage, between Gussy and the door of Mr. Selby's study.

Who gave Mr. Selby a black eye? All the evidence points to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy being the culprit, and he is booked for the "sack." But can Gussy really be guilty? It is left to Ferrers Locke to establish the truth.

That study was Gussy's objective. But Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form at St. Jim's, was not a man to be trifled with. He had a sharp temper, and a sharp tongue, and a sharp eye: he was, altogether, the kind of "beak" to whom it was judicious to give a wide offing.

"If Selby spots you——" said Digby.

"That's all wight!" said Arthur Augustus. "He won't! Young Wally told me he was goin' out this aftahnoon. He weally can't spot me, you know, when he's gone out! I am goin' into that study to fetch my Holiday Annual, while he is ovah at Wayland."

"But——" urged Tom Merry.

"You need not keep on buttin', like a billy-goat, Tom Mewwy! Mr. Selby had no wight whatevah to confiscate my Holiday Annual."

"He caught your minor reading it in prep!" hooted Blake. "You lent it to Wally, he was reading it in prep——"

"I am perfectly awah of that, Blake, and I quite appwove of Mr. Selby takin' a book away fwom a young wascal who was weadin' it in pwep. But I have explained to him since that it is my book, and we-quested him to weturn it to me. He has wefused to do so, and I am goin' to get it! I shall certainly not allow my Holiday Annual to wemain in his study till the Chwistmas hols. I have not finished weadin' it—and I am goin' to wead it in my study——"

"If you snaffle it, you ass, Selby will miss it at once, and get after you!" hooted Manners. "He may come in any minute, and he will get on your track——"

"Pewwaps you are wight, Mannahs. I will not wead it in my study!" assented Arthur Augustus. "I do not

want a wow with Selby—that is weally why I am goin' to take it while he is gone out, you know! I shall take it to some quiet spot——"

"You'll leave it where it is!" hooted Blake.

"It is a vewy nice aftahnoon, quite nice for weadin' out of doors!" said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I shall take it to the old towah to wead it——"

"The old tower's out of bounds, fathead——" said Tom Merry.

"All the bettah, deah boy, as Selby won't be likely to look there, if he misses the book fwom his study! Now pway let me pass——"

"Look here, fathead——"

"Look here, ass——"

"You are wastin' time!" Arthur Augustus pointed out. "I weally want to get thwough before Selby comes in. If he spotted me here—— Oh! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus broke off suddenly as the study door opened and Mr. Selby came out.

"Oh, cwikey!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Selby had an overcoat on, and a hat in his hand. Evidently, he was going out! Equally evidently, he had not yet gone! For there he was!

Arthur Augustus stared at him, his noble eye almost popping through his eyeglass. Having heard from his young brother, Wally of the Third, that Selby was going out that afternoon, Gussy had taken it for granted that he was gone by that time. Apparently he had taken a little too much for granted.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Gussy all over!" breathed Blake.

Even Gussy, at that moment, was rather glad that Tom Merry and Co. had barred his way! He was quite determined to have his Holiday

Annual; but certainly he had not planned to walk into Mr. Selby's study and bag it right under the sharp nose and sharp eyes of the Third Form master. Obviously, if he was going to bag that Holiday Annual, he had to bag it while Selby was out of the study. And Selby had been in the study all the time!

Mr. Selby gave the juniors a glance—not a pleasant one. His eyes gleamed for a moment at Arthur Augustus.

Some of the juniors suspected that, from within the study, he had heard the voices in the passage and was aware of Gussy's design. Certainly his expression was very expressive.

"What are you juniors doing in this corridor?" rapped Mr. Selby. "Disperse at once."

The juniors dispersed at once. Mr. Selby walked down the passage and put on his hat, and went out into the autumn sunshine of the quad.

From the doorway, an eyeglass gleamed after him as he went. Arthur Augustus smiled as he watched Mr. Selby walk down to the gates.

Then he turned and cut back to Mr. Selby's study. Six voices hooted after him as he cut.

"D'Arcy!"

"Gussy!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Come back!"

"Stop!"

Six voices hooted in vain! Two or three of the juniors made a rush in pursuit; but the sight of Mr. Railton, the House-master, glancing out of his doorway, stopped the rush at once.

"What——?" began Mr. Railton.

Without stopping to hear any more, Tom Merry and Co. faded out of the picture. Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus stepped into Mr. Selby's study.

It did not take him long to find what he sought there. On the study table lay that attractive and entertaining volume, the Holiday Annual. Arthur Augustus promptly picked it up.

It was like Gussy to lend that attractive volume to his young brother, D'Arcy minor, before he had finished reading it himself. It was like Wally of the Third to read it surreptitiously in prep. It was like Mr. Selby to spot him and confiscate the volume; and to keep it confiscated, even after learning that it really belonged to Wally's major. And it was like Gussy to proceed, with regardless recklessness of possible consequences, to recover that volume.

Now he had recovered it. Selby could have it back, if he liked, after Gussy had finished reading it, and keep it parked in his study till the end of the term. But Gussy was going to finish reading it first—he was going to devote that half-holiday to the happy task, and he was going to take care that no sharp eye fell on him before he had finished. Gussy was quite determined on that—his determination was as fixed and immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

Five minutes later, Tom Merry and Co. beheld Gussy strolling cheerfully out into the quadrangle, with the Holiday Annual under his arm!

"So you've got it!" said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!" smiled Arthur Augustus.

"Better get it out of sight, then, ass!" said Tom. "I believe Selby heard us in the passage—and it would be like him to come in and catch a fellow——"

"That's all wight, deah boy! I'm goin'!"

And Arthur Augustus went.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

ONE LOVELY BLACK EYE !

"UPON my word ! " said Mr. Selby. He shut his thin lips, hard. He was standing in his study, gazing at a vacant spot on the study table, where, half an hour ago, a Holiday Annual had reposed.

His face was grim, and it grew grimmer and grimmer. Mr. Selby's look was generally rather sour. Now it was pure acid. He was intensely angry.

Mr. Selby was not a good-tempered man by nature—and handling the Third Form at St. Jim's was not a task to improve any man's temper. Moreover, Mr. Selby had lately had a worry on his mind, which had made him more irritable than ever. A local solicitor at Wayland had absconded, taking with him various sums of money belonging to trustful clients. Mr. Selby was one of the clients. Twenty pounds belonging to Mr. Selby had vanished into space. It was true that that unscrupulous solicitor's other clients had, in many cases, lost much larger sums—it was rumoured that old Major Stringer had lost £1,000 ! But it was the twenty pounds that worried Mr. Selby—and it worried him a whole lot.

He had intended to walk over to Wayland that afternoon and ascertain whether there was any news of that unscrupulous Mr. Sanders, who had disappeared so suddenly and disagreeably. But what he had heard in the passage outside his study had caused him to turn back from his walk.

Some of the juniors suspected that Selby had caught some of their talk. He had, in point of fact, heard every word ! And it was, as Tom Merry had said, like him to come back and catch a fellow !

Instead of going over to Wayland, Mr. Selby postponed his visit to that town, and walked back to the school under the half-hour ! He had little doubt that, when he entered the study, he would miss that Holiday Annual ! And he did !

He gazed, or rather glared, at the spot where it had lain ! He had confiscated that Holiday Annual till the end of the term. He was fully justified in so doing. The fact that the volume had, as it turned out, only been lent to Wally of the Third made no difference. It had been in D'Arcy minor's hands—he had been reading it in prep—and that was that !

That any St. Jim's fellow should have the nerve, the impudence, the audacity to bag a confiscated volume from his study was almost beyond belief ! Mr. Selby's lips set harder and harder.

He turned to the study door at last ! Had Arthur Augustus been in the Third Form instead of the Fourth, he would have put a cane under his arm. But even Mr. Selby could not venture to cane fellows not in his Form. He was going to catch D'Arcy of the Fourth, with that volume in his hands, and march him in to his House-master. He was going to explain to Mr. Railton the almost incredible delinquency of that Fourth-form boy, and demand exemplary punishment. He was going to see D'Arcy get six of the best, from Mr. Railton's cane, on his elegant bags, and he was going to re-confiscate that Holiday Annual.

He knew where to look for the disrespectful young scamp ! What he had heard from the passage enlightened him on that point. He was not going to look in the day-room or the studies—he knew all about the quiet spot to which Gussy had planned

to retire with that entrancing volume. He walked out of the House with a shut jaw.

In the quad, Tom Merry and Co. were punting a football. They had seen Selby come in—so they were not surprised to see him come out of the House again, with that expressive expression on his face.

"After Gussy!" murmured Blake.

"He won't spot him in a hurry," said Herries. "Gussy's safe till call-over."

"Unless Selby heard—Gussy was gabbling in the passage outside his door——"

"Well, we tried to stop the silly ass!" said Digby. "Gussy will ask for these things!"

"Poor old Gussy!" sighed Tom Merry. "He will never finish reading

that jolly old Annual! Look at Selby—you can see he guesses where the fathead is."

There was little doubt on that point. Mr. Selby—after a sour glance at the juniors—walked away across the quadrangle; and from the direction he was taking it was fairly clear that he knew where to look for Gussy.

Tom Merry and Co. watched him till he was out of sight. Then they resumed punting the football. They expected, before very long, to see Mr. Selby returning—with the swell of St. Jim's in his company! They only hoped that Arthur Augustus, when he was run down, would take it quietly.

But there really was no telling what might happen when Arthur Augustus was on the high horse!



"I weally want to get my Holiday Annual before Selby comes in," said Arthur Augustus. "If he spotted me here—— Oh! Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus broke off suddenly as the study door opened and Mr. Selby came out. "What are you juniors doing in the corridor?" rapped the Third Form master.

He might decline to obey a beak who was not his Form-master—he might raise strenuous objections to being, in that case, taken by the collar—it was even imaginable that, if Selby collared him, he might shy the Holiday Annual at Selby's napper! They were rather anxious moments for Gussy's loyal pals, after the Third Form master had disappeared in the direction of the old tower.

Heedless of Gussy's pals and what they might be thinking, Mr. Selby walked on, with his jerky stride, with shut lips and knitted brows.

The old tower, which was a part of the ancient edifice that had stood on the spot many long centuries ago, was at a distance from the school buildings. It was in so ruinous a state that it was strictly out of bounds for all St. Jim's fellows. Little more than the lower part of the old building remained; but when there was a high wind, chunks of ancient masonry would sometimes come tumbling down from the dismantled walls.

Those old walls—what was left of them—were quite hidden from the general view by the almost equally ancient beeches and oaks that grew round the ruin.

The spot was enclosed by a high fence to keep out reckless fellows who might have gone in to explore the old place, at danger to limb if not life. But there was a spot where palings had broken away—perhaps with a little assistance from youthful hands—and Mr. Selby knew that particular spot, and headed for it now.

He pushed in through the fence and stared about him with glinting eyes. Arthur Augustus, if he was there, was not in sight. No doubt he had found some comfortable nook to read that entrancing publication, the Holiday Annual.

Mr. Selby pushed on towards the old doorway of the building from which the door was long gone. Within was a floor of large stone blocks, one of which could be raised to give access to the old crypt below. Great masses of masonry, fallen from above, lumbered the interior; and it was deeply dusky, almost dark; lighted only by loop-hole windows, which were partly blocked with rubble.

The Third Form master paused in the doorway. It was difficult to pick one's way about the place, and it occurred to him that if D'Arcy was reading that Holiday Annual he could hardly have chosen the dim, dark interior of the old tower for that purpose.

But as he paused he heard a sound within—a stealthy footstep, and a quick breath. That settled it! Either D'Arcy was there with his book, or he had spotted Selby coming and dodged in out of sight—anyhow, he was there! Mr. Selby made a swift stride through the doorway.

Bang!

He hardly knew what happened! It happened so suddenly; moreover, it was unbelievable that the most reckless fellow at St. Jim's would dream of greeting a Form-master with a punch in the eye. Mr. Selby, naturally, had never expected anything of the kind.

He did not even see who hit him, it came so suddenly. Something banged right in his eye, and he went over backwards as if he had been shot.

Crash!

He landed on his back. He sprawled and spluttered. He was so utterly surprised, so utterly taken aback, that he was really lost to the world for a minute or so.

He sat up at last. He put his hand



Mr. Selby made a swift stride through the doorway. Smack ! Before he knew what was happening a fist crashed right in his eye, and the Third Form master went over as if he had been shot.

to his eye. It was already blackening. He had been punched in the eye ! He had been given a black eye ! It was incredible—but it had happened.

" Oh ! " gasped Mr. Selby. " Ow ! Good gracious ! My eye ! The—the—the dastardly young villain—oooh ! My eye ! Wooh ! My eye ! The—the ruffianly young scoundrel ! Wooh ! "

He staggered to his feet. That eye winked and winked. It was quite useless to him for the moment. With the other he glared round him.

" D'Arcy ! " he shouted. " D'Arcy ! You young rascal ! You shall be expelled for this—you young ruffian, you have dared to strike a Form-master—you shall be flogged—expelled—"

He tottered in through the doorway. Had his clutches fallen on

Arthur Augustus at that moment he would have disregarded the fact that Gussy was not in his Form ; and Gussy might have been quite damaged. But he failed to find the swell of St. Jim's.

" D'Arcy ! " he shouted. " You young rascal, I shall take you at once to the Head ! Where are you ? "

But answer there came none. Mr. Selby realised that anyone in the old tower had had plenty of time to escape by any of the openings in the old walls while he was reposing on his back outside the doorway. He rushed out again.

" D'Arcy ! " he shouted.

With his sound eye he glimpsed a running form. It was the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, cutting off through the trees—with a book under his arm ! He was going strong.

"D'Arcy!" roared Mr. Selby.
"Stop!"

D'Arcy vanished.

It was not much use for Mr. Selby to give chase to an active junior. With his hand to his eye, and with feelings that could have been expressed in no known language, Mr. Selby tramped back to the school—and as he crossed the quad to the House horrified eyes fixed on him.

"Look!" almost groaned Blake.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, scissors!"

Tom Merry and Co. had feared that there might be something in the nature of ructions if Mr. Selby collared Arthur Augustus in the old tower. But they had never dreamed of this! As the Third Form master passed them they gazed, in utter horror, at Mr. Selby's black eye!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS IS WANTED!

"It's the sack!" said Baggy Trimble.

Blake kicked Trimble, and Trimble howled indignantly. But the same thought was in Blake's mind—and in the minds of his chums.

It was the "sack"—short and sharp! It could not be anything else! Any St. Jim's man who raised his hand to a Form-master was booked for the long jump. The lightest tap on a boko would have been enough for that. And Selby had been given a black eye!

Neither was it a mild black eye—a merely discoloured optic. It was an awful black eye, a fearful black eye, a terrific black eye! Dozens of fellows had seen it; and every witness agreed that it was a record black eye—black as the ace of spades, or blacker! The darkest shades of midnight had nothing on that eye! It

was an eye that leaped to all other eyes! It was an eye that was a cynosure to all eyes! It was an awful, fearful, frightful eye!

"The ass!" groaned Blake.

"The chump!" moaned Digby.

"The fearful idiot!" said Herries.

"What on earth made him do it?" groaned Tom Merry. "Selby is a Tartar, and I dare say he grabbed Gussy; but—but—you can't hit a beak in the eye! You really can't!"

"Selby may have smacked his head!" said Manners. "But even that——"

"You never know, with Gussy!" groaned Blake. "It ain't really safe to let Gussy out of your sight. We ought to keep him on a chain in Study No. 6."

"Poor old Gussy!" sighed Lowther.

It was nearly time for calling-over. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had not come in yet. No one was surprised at that. A fellow who had punched a Form-master in the eye might naturally feel nervous about showing up in the school afterwards. Probably he would stay out till the last minute. He knew what to expect when he came in.

"Must be potty!" said Levison of the Fourth. "Lots of fellows would like to punch Selby in the eye. But fancy a fellow doing it!"

"Gussy is a law unto himself," remarked Cardew. "But, by gad, it really is the jolly old limit! Where's Selby now?"

"Still with the Head," said Blake. "Pitching his tale to the Big Beak, of course——"

"He hardly needs to do that," said Grundy of the Shell. "That jolly old eye speaks for itself!"

"They'll bunk him!" said Baggy Trimble. "Bound to bunk him! Bet you he'll be booted out first thing in

the morning—yaroooooh! Keep your hoofs to yourself, blow you!"

"I wonder if he'll come in at all," remarked Herries. "Might hike off home. He must know what's coming to him for blacking Selby's eye."

"Oh, my hat, so he might!" said Tom Merry. "Hallo, here's Kildare!"

Kildare of the Sixth came up to the

all we know," answered Tom Merry. "He must have made Gussy fearfully wild."

"Might have smacked his head," said Blake. "He does that sort of thing. And Gussy wouldn't stand for that."

"That would be no excuse," said the prefect. "But it never happened like that. I've heard what Selby told



With his sound eye Mr. Selby glimpsed Arthur Augustus cutting off through the trees—with a book under his arm. "D'Arcy!" roared Mr. Selby. "Stop!"

group of juniors by the doorway of the House. The St. Jim's captain was looking very grave.

"Hasn't D'Arcy come in yet?" he asked.

"Haven't seen him, Kildare."

"The young ass! What on earth made him do it?" asked the Sixth-former. "Any of you kids know?"

"Selby was rooting after him, that's

the Head. He hadn't even spotted the young ass, when D'Arcy jumped at him and knocked him down."

"Knocked him down!" gasped Blake.

"Knocked him right over with a punch in the eye! The kid must have gone out of his senses, I think!"

Kildare walked away. The juniors looked at one another in dismay.

"Knocked him down!" said Blake faintly. "Not merely blacked his eye—knocked him down! You—you can't knock beaks down, you know! Even Gussy ought to understand that you can't knock beaks down! You really can't!"

"I say, there he comes!" squeaked Baggy Trimble.

"What!"

"Gussy! Here he comes!"

From the direction of the gates an elegant figure came sauntering. All eyes fixed on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Every fellow, of course, expected to see him looking sorely troubled, in view of what he had done and of what awaited him. They could scarcely believe their eyes as they looked at him.

He did not look troubled in the least. He did not look worried. He looked his usual calm and noble self. He even smiled, quite a cheery smile, as he met the staring of the anxious crowd of juniors.

"So—so—so you've come in!" gasped Blake.

"Yaas, old chap—had to woll in for callin'-ovah, you know. I expect the bell will be wingin' soon," said Arthur Augustus. "But it's all wight."

"All right, is it?" gasped Tom Merry.

"I mean I've finished that wippin' stowy in the Annual," explained D'Arcy. "A vevy funnay stowy about that chap Buntah." Arthur Augustus grinned at the recollection. "You see, this chap Buntah——"

"Never mind that chap Bunter!" howled Blake. "Mean to say you've been sitting around reading that Annual, after Selby——"

"I dodged Selby all wight!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "The old ass came wootin' aftah me to the old

towah, but I got away all wight. He was shoutin' at the top of his voice."

"No wonder!" said Tom Merry.

"Well, it was all wight for me, as I dodged him, you see," said Arthur Augustus. "He spotted me wunnin' and yelled aftah me, but of course I took no notice. Selby is not my Form-mastah. I am not bound to take any notice of Selby's yellin', and I am pwepared to tell him so. But I thought I'd bettah get away, you know, so I twotted along to Wylcombe Bwidge and sat there to finish weadin' my book. It was a vevy funnay stowy. That chap Buntah——"

"Oh, here you are!" Kildare of the Sixth came up, almost at a run. "D'Arcy, you are wanted in the Head's study at once."

"Bai Jove! Has Selby weported me for goin' to the old towah, I wondah?" said Arthur Augustus. "Weally, I wish he would mind his own bizney! It does not mattah to Selby if a Fourth Form chap goes out of bounds. He is wathah an inter-fewin' old gentleman."

Kildare stared at him.

"Go to the Head at once, D'Arcy!" he said.

"Yaas, Kildare, I am quite weady to do so," answered Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah surpwised that Selby should wowwy the Head about such a twiflin' mattah."

"A trifling matter! Are you mad?"

"Weally, Kildare——"

"Do you call it a trifling matter to knock a Form-master down and give him a black eye?" gasped the St. Jim's captain.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove, no!" he answered.

"Has anybody given Selby a black eye? Oh, cwumbs! I hope my young bwothah Wally has not been gettin' into twouble again!"

"Mad!" murmured Blake. "Quite potty!"

"Has Selby weally got a black eye, you fellows?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Didn't you know?" shrieked Blake.

"Weally, Blake, how should I know?"

"You know you hit him in the eye, I suppose?"

"Pway do not make wotten jokes, Blake. This is a sewious subject. If old Selby has a black eye, Kildare, who gave it to him?"

"You did!" roared Kildare.

"I?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, you, and you're going to your Headmaster to be sacked for it! Now come with me!" snapped the prefect.

"Bai Jove! But——"

"Come at once, I tell you!"

"But I nevah——"

Kildare of the Sixth grabbed Arthur Augustus by the collar and walked him into the House. Arthur Augustus seemed to go like a fellow in a dream. Tom Merry and Co. gazed after him, and gazed at one another.

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble. "He's blacked Selby's eye and forgotten all about it! He, he, he!"

"Is he off his rocker?" asked Tom Merry blankly.

"Is he ever on it?" groaned Blake.

The juniors followed Arthur Augustus into the House. They ventured as far as the Head's corridor. They saw Kildare tap at the door of Dr. Holmes' study and open it. They had a glimpse of the majestic Head, with a countenance of portentous gravity; and a glimpse of Mr. Selby, with an eye bandaged.

"Here is D'Arcy, sir!" said Kildare.

"D'Arcy! Come in!" came the Head's deep voice.

"Yaas, sir! I nevah——"

The Head's door closed on D'Arcy. Kildare came back down the passage, and signed to the juniors to clear off. Tom Merry and Co. cleared off, with sorely troubled faces! Arthur Augustus was up for judgment; and they did not need telling what the judgment was going to be! It was the "sack"; and on the morrow St. Jim's would know the ornament of the Fourth Form no more!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

THE ONLY WAY!

SACKED!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat in Study No. 6, after calling-over, with a stunned look on his noble face.

Sacked!

It was hard to believe it! Almost he fancied that he must have dreamed that he had heard his Headmaster pronouncing the stern words: "D'Arcy! You are expelled!"

It was like a nightmare!

His friends had gathered round him. They were silent! There was nothing to say! Every face was long. Every brow was clouded. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sacked—bunked—expelled! On the morrow he was going. It was too awful to be true! But it was the awful truth!

Blake and Herries and Digby could almost have wept. Tom Merry and Manners had faces as long as fiddles—even Monty Lowther was serious. There was nothing a fellow could do—nothing a fellow could say! But it was harrowing!

Fellows looked into the study from the passage, with sympathetic glances, now and then.

"Sorry, old chap."

"Rough luck, old bean."

Arthur Augustus did not heed them. He sat in the armchair in the study, for quite a long time, without speaking. When he broke his silence at last, it was to ejaculate :

" Bai Jove ! "

Then he adjusted his celebrated eyeglass in his noble eye, and surveyed the sad and silent juniors in the study.

" This is pwetty wotten, you fellows ! " he said.

" Rotten ain't the word ! " groaned Blake. " What on earth did you do it for, Gussy ? Didn't you know you'd be sacked for hitting a beak ? "

" I twust, Blake, that you do not considah me capable of so vewy diswespectful an action as hittin' a beak ! "

" Oh, dear ! "

" I should wegard it as the vewy worst of bad form ! " said Arthur Augustus. " Absolutely wotten bad form. "

" But you did ! " howled Herries.

" Weally, Hewwies— "

" Who did, if you didn't ? " asked Tom Merry, staring at the swell of St. Jim's. " Selby's eye never blacked itself, you know. "

" I haven't the foggiest ! " confessed Arthur Augustus. " I was afwaid at first that it might have been that young ass, Wally—Selby wather wags him in form, you know, and he whopped him yestahday for weadin' in pwep. But Wally says he nevah did it—in fact, he thought I had, till I told him I hadn't— "

" Doesn't the Head think you did, fathead ? "

" Yaas ! Othahwise, of course, he would hardly have sacked me ! " said Arthur Augustus. " But I can forgive him— "

" Eh ? "

" I mean, a headmastah is bound

to act on evidence ! " explained Arthur Augustus. " Of course, a fellow has a wight to expect to have his word taken, and I am wather surpvised that Dr. Holmes wefused to accept my statement that I had not done it ! But the fact is, deah boy, that when a man's up for the sack, even a vewy twuthful fellow might stwetch a point, I feah—and I suppose the Head thought I was stwetchin' it ! That is the only way I can account for his havin' sacked me ! "

" Oh ! "

" I can quite excuse the Head for makin' such a mistake, in the circs, " said Arthur Augustus generously. " Selby thinks I punched him in the eye, and he made the Head think so, see ? Besides, look at the evidence ! I was there—and so fah as anybody knows, no othah fellow was ! Selby saw me wunnin' and fancied that I was wunnin' after punchin' him in the eye ! Selby is wather a beast—but it was a natuwal mistake ! "

They gazed at him !

" But you—you—you— " stammered Blake helplessly.

Gussy's word was as good as gold ! He was the frozen truth itself. He beat George Washington in that line. George said that he could not tell a lie ! Gussy really couldn't !

And yet—he had done it ! He must have done it ! All St. Jim's, from the Sixth Form down to the Second, in both Houses, knew that he had done it ! He certainly had done it, because nobody else could have done it, and nobody else had any reason for doing it ! Selby knew that he had done it—the Head knew that he had done it, and had sacked him for it ! Yet he said he hadn't ; and if Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was saying the thing that was not, it was time for the skies to fall !

"I do not blame the Head," went on Arthur Augustus calmly, "and I do not blame Selby vewy much! But I cannot help feelin' a feahful scorn for the fellow who weally blacked Selby's eye and left it on me! That is a fwightfully wotten action! The fellow ought to own up, you know, now that anothah chap has got it in the neck!"

"But——!" groaned Blake.

"Pwobably a New House chap!" said D'Arcy. "I can hardly think that a School chap would do such a wuffianly thing. I suppose it wasn't one of you fellows that did it?" he added, glancing round inquiringly.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Chump!"

"Idiot!"

"This is not a time, deah boys, to indulge in oppwobwious expwessions," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "Some-thin' has got to be done! The Head says I'm sacked, and I'm goin' to-mowwow! Of course, that is all wot!"

"Eh!"

"I should wefuse to leave the old coll. in such disgwaceful circumstances," said Arthur Augustus. "That is all wubbish!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"The wottah who did it is goin' to be spotted, somehow!" said Arthur Augustus determinedly. "If you fellows have any ideah who it might have been——"

"Only you!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Did you see any other chap there



The juniors followed Arthur Augustus and Kildare as far as the Head's corridor. The captain of St. Jim's tapped at the door of Dr. Holmes' study and opened it. "Here is D'Arcy, sir," he said.

while you were there?" asked Tom Merry, with a gleam of hope. "If some other fellow happened to go there——"

"I never saw anybody, Tom Mewwy! So fah as I know, nobody came!" said Arthur Augustus. "I mean, till Selby came. You see, I had parked myself with my book in a shady little nook among the twees, and old Selby nevah saw me, but I heard him wustlin' about, though I nevah saw him, eithah. But I nevah heard anybody else."

"Did you tell the Head that?" asked Blake.

"Yaas; he asked me."

"Oh, my hat! Don't you see that that puts the lid on? If you heard Selby, you'd have heard anybody else, so—what was the Head to think?"

"I suppose I was bound to tell him the twuth, when he asked me, Blake."

"Oh, dear!"

"But, of course, some chap must have butted in, although I nevah saw or heard anythin' of him—because, as Tom Mewwy has vewy wisely wemarked, Selby's eye nevah blacked itself—it couldn't have! I heard Selby wootin' and wustlin' about, and then he started shoutin' to me, and I thought it time to clear! So I cleahed! I nevah even knew he had a black eye—I should natuwally have stopped to wendah assistance, had I known——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Selby is wathah a beast, but, in such circs, any fellow would be bound to play up, you know! But I nevah knew! And, of course, when I was gone, and Selby was gone, the weal man got away all wight—but who was it?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed

inquiringly at his friends. They could only gaze back at him. It was, perhaps, barely possible that some other St. Jim's fellow had broken bounds in the old tower—barely possible that he had been there unseen and unheard by D'Arcy on the spot—barely possible that he had hit Mr. Selby in the eye—but the possibility was so bare that it was hardly worth entertaining.

"Oh, Gussy!" groaned Blake. He really wondered whether Gussy's noble brain had wandered a little, and whether he had hit Selby in the eye and forgotten it!

"There's only one thing we can be suah of, in this vewy mystewious mattah," said Arthur Augustus, "and that is that I nevah did it—that bein' a mattah within my own knowledge, you know!"

"Oh!"

"If I had lots of time I have no doubt that I could wun the wottah down—I am wathah a fellow of tact and judgment, as you know! But, you see, there's no time—the Head makes out that I'm goin' to-morrow! So, in the circs, there is only one thing to be done!" said Arthur Augustus. "That's what I've been thinkin' out."

"And what's that?" asked Tom. "Blessed if I see anything that can be done."

"We shall have to call in pwo-fessional aid, deah boy."

"Eh!"

"What?"

"A detective!" explained Arthur Augustus. "Detectives are called in to solve mystewies, you know—it's the only way, as the chap says in the play."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You have heard of Fewwahs Locke——"

"Ferrers Locke!"

"He is a vewy celebawated detective, and fortunately I am acquainted with him—he did somethin' or othah for my patah, and he has stayed at Eastwood House! He is a vewy decent sort of man, and if I can get him on the phone——"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Do you think Ferrers Locke would take a hand in a matter like this?"

"The Case of the Beak's Black Eye!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Oh, holy smoke!"

"My deah fellows," said Arthur Augustus, as he rose from the arm-chair, "Fewwahs Locke takes up cases of wobbewies, and burglawies, and missin' jewels, and all sorts of things, much less important than this."

"Less important!"

"Yaas, wathah! I presume that a jewel wobbewy is hardly so sewious as a fellow havin' his word doubted by his headmastah—and gettin' sacked."

"Oh, scissors!"

Arthur Augustus crossed to the study door. His friends gazed at him.

"You—you—you are going!" stuttered Blake.

"I am goin' to bowwow a telephone, deah boy, and get Fewwahs Locke! And I twust he will consent to take up the case!" said Arthur Augustus. "I believe his fees are vewy high, and I shall only be able to offah him about seven-and-six——"

"Ye gods!"

"But pewwahs he does not care vewy much about money—weally nice people don't, you know! I wathah think he will play up!"

"Gussy, you ass!"

"Gussy, you fathead!"

"Gussy, you goat!"

But Arthur Augustus, unheeding,

walked out of Study No. 6. Tom Merry and Co. were left gazing at one another in silence! Arthur Augustus seemed to have taken the general breath away!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

TWO ON THE TELEPHONE!

"MAJOR STRINGER speaking——"
"Really, sir——"

"We seem to have been cut off, Mr. Locke."

"Quite! And we are going to be cut off again, Major Stringer!"

And Ferrers Locke hung up.

The celebrated Baker Street detective was taking a rest that evening. One of the busiest men in London, or in the wide world, Ferrers Locke did not often get a quiet evening to himself. But it happened, at the moment, that he had to wait for a report from his boy assistant, Jack Drake, now away in a Midland town—and he did not expect that report just yet. When it arrived, Ferrers Locke was going to be busy—until it arrived, he was going to enjoy one of his rare rests. Telephone calls, in the circumstances, were superfluous.

Having cut off, Mr. Locke returned to his settee by the fireside, picked up his book, rested his feet on a hassock and his head on a cushion, and resumed his peaceful reading! Twice Major Stringer—whoever Major Stringer was—had rung him up—and the major seemed to fail to understand that Mr. Locke was not at his service. No doubt the major was a great gun in his own locality, and took it as a matter of course that a detective—any detective—would jump when he said jump! Instead of which Ferrers Locke shut down the major with great brevity.

Buzz!

It was the telephone bell again!

Ferrers Locke sat up and looked at the instrument. Then, with a grim look, he stepped to it.

"Ferrers Locke!" It was the deep, throaty voice he had heard twice before. "Cut off again, hey? What? These dashed telephones! The Government ought to do something about it! What!"

"I have told you, Major Stringer, that I am not at liberty——" said Ferrers Locke, in concentrated tones.

"Oh! Quite! But I must explain that it is an urgent matter! I'm speaking from Wayland—Stringer Lodge, Wayland, Sussex. Got that? Pray listen carefully! That scoundrel Sanders——"

Ferrers Locke made a movement to hang up again. However, he decided to let the major have his three minutes.

He was not in the remotest degree interested in Major Stringer, or in any scoundrel Sanders; and had no intention whatever of occupying himself with some petty matter of pilfering in a little country town. Really, he had more important matters on his mind; though Major Stringer, Retired, did not comprehend that fact. Still, it was possible that the quickest way to get shot of Major Stringer was to give him a hearing; so he held on.

"A dashed solicitor—a local solicitor—got that? Trusted by everybody. I trusted him, like the rest, and I'm not a fool, dash it!"

Ferrers Locke doubted that statement! But he listened patiently.

"Bolted, sir!" came the throaty voice. "Bolted—with all he could lay his hands on! Dashed scoundrel, sir! A thousand pounds of my money—and other sums, sir, from others! No doubt that he's got the cash on him—no doubt, or most of it, sir—most of it! Feathered his nest nicely right up to the last moment,

sir, and then bolted—dash it, sir! Bolted in the night! What? Got that?"

The major paused for breath.

"The local police can do nothing—he's out of their reach, of course—been gone three days, now! Bolted, sir—making for a port, I've no doubt. Might be in London this minute—or Southampton—or Liverpool—what? No track of him—he's not put up at any hotel, I can tell you that, Mr. Locke—I'll put my shirt on that. I'll tell you why! They've searched his place, of course—found that he packed a camping-outfit to take with him—and he had lately been getting in canned foods—see the point? See the game? Camping out on his way to the coast, keeping out of sight—what? Making out to be a hiker, I daresay—hiking off to a port to take a steamer abroad—got that?"

Another pause for breath.

"A thousand pounds of mine in his dashed pockets, Mr. Locke! I want you to take up the case! Get here by the first train in the morning—what? Eh! Are you there, Mr. Locke?"

"I regret that I am unable to take up the case, Major Stringer, having other business on hand. Good-night."

"Gad, sir! Haven't I explained that——"

Ferrers Locke, hoping that he had made it clear at last, hung up once more. He sat down to his book—and had just settled to it when the telephone bell buzzed again.

Ferrers Locke's lips were compressed when he stepped to the telephone again. He was more than tired of Major Stringer.

"Cut off again—dash these telephones!" came the throaty voice. "That you, Mr. Locke? I was saying——"

"Will you listen to me, Major



Sacked ! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat in Study No. 6 with a stunned look on his noble face. Sacked ! On the morrow he was going. It was too awful to be true. But it was true ! His chums looked on in silence. There was nothing to say.

Stringer ? " Ferrers Locke hooted into the transmitter. " I cannot take up your case. I have no time to travel down to Sussex and such a case is not of interest to me, anyway. Will you have the kindness not to ring me up again ? "

" Good gad ! Listen to me ! I—— "

" I will not listen to another word ! " said Ferrers Locke. " I cannot take up your case, and that is that ! Now leave me in peace ! "

" Dashed impertinence, by gad ! A dashed detective—— "

Ferrers Locke jammed back the receiver. Once more he settled down at the cheery fireside. This time, he hoped, he had made it unmistakably plain, and that the fact that he could not and would not take up the case of that scoundrel Sanders had sunk even

into the solid brain of Major Stringer, Retired. The frown departed from his brow as he settled down in comfort.

Buzzzzz !

It came only five minutes later !

" Upon my word ! " exclaimed the exasperated detective. Really, it was too much for any man's patience.

He hurled his book aside, bounded to the telephone, and grabbed the receiver. He almost shouted into the mouthpiece :

" What the dickens are you ringing me for ? Haven't you the sense of a bunny rabbit ? Don't you understand plain English ? Can't you get away from that telephone, you ass ? "

" Bai Jove ! " came a startled voice over the wires. " Gweat Scott ! Is that Fewwahs Locke speakin' ? "

" Oh ! " gasped Locke.

He had taken it for granted that it was the major again. But it wasn't. That surprised voice was nothing like the major's. It was a familiar voice to him—a boyish voice, with an inimitable accent that, once heard, was never to be forgotten. Certainly it was not Major Stringer's!

"Oh!" repeated Ferrers Locke. "Ah! Sorry—a mistake—I thought—um! Quite a mistake! Ah! Um!"

"I twust I am not intewwuptin' you or anything?"

"No! No! I think I know your voice——"

"Yaas, I wathah thought you would pwobably wemembah me, Mr. Locke. D'Arcy speakin', fwom St. Jim's! Good-evenin', Mr. Locke."

"Oh! Good-evening, Master D'Arcy!" said Ferrers Locke, wondering why on earth Lord Eastwood's son had rung him up from the school. "What——"

"Are you feahfully busy as usual, Mr. Locke?"

"At the moment, no——"

"Bai Jove! That is vewy luckay, sir! Could you wun down to St. Jim's in the mornin'—the earlih the bettah?"

"Wh-a-t?"

"A feahfully mystewious thing has happened here, sir! You are such a corkah at solvin' mystewies that I thought of you at once—almost at once, I mean——" Came Arthur Augustus's voice, "I am in feahful twouble, Mr. Locke."

"I am sorry to hear that!" said Ferrers Locke. "But—but what——"

"It is a vewy extwordinary mystewy, Mr. Locke! A mastah here has been given a black eye."

"What?"

"A black eye!"

"My dear boy, how can that possibly concern me!" gasped

Ferrers Locke. "I am sorry that any master at your school has been given a black eye, but really——"

"They think I did it, Mr. Locke."

"Oh!"

"The Head is sackin' me tomowow," continued Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to be hoofed out of St. Jim's, unless they find out who blacked old Selby's eye! It is feahfully mystewious, because I was on the spot, and nobody else was."

"Eh?"

"And Selby nevah saw who hit him in the eye, he got it so suddenly, and it was wathah dark in the old towah, of course——"

"My dear boy——"

"Ewevybody thinks I did it, you know; but I feel suah that you wemembah me well enough, Mr. Locke, to wealise that I am not the sort of chap to black a beak's eye—even that old Tartah Selby's."

"But——" gasped Ferrers Locke.

He gazed at the telephone, almost like a man in a trance.

He remembered Arthur Augustus very well indeed; he liked that cheery youth; he liked him a lot! But it was really rather difficult to believe that Arthur Augustus fancied that a busy London detective, with cases of international importance on hand, could run down to a school in Sussex to investigate the "mystery" of a beak's black eye!

"You see how urgent it is, I twust, Mr. Locke!" continued the happy Gussy. "The Head has wefused to take my word on the subject! I haven't the faintest ideah who blacked old Selby's eye—and, of course, Selby hasn't. He thinks that I did it—and the Head hasn't, or he wouldn't have sacked me instead of the wight man! It's a feahful mystewy! You bein' so good at solvin' mystewies——"

"But—my dear boy!" gasped Ferrers Locke.

"Some chap must have been in the old towah! That stands to weason, you know—because, as Tom Mewwy vewy sensibly remarked, Selby's eye couldn't have blacked itself! You see that, Mr. Locke?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! But——"

"If you catch an early twain,

I can assuah you that this is a feahfully sewious mattah. Weally, Mr. Locke——"

"I will come!" said Ferrers Locke. "I am sorry you are in trouble, my young friend, and I will do my best to get you out of it. Expect me by the first train to Wayland in the morning."

"Yaas, wathah! I say, that's feahfully good of you, Mr. Locke!



Dr. Holmes gazed at Ferrers Locke as if he could hardly believe his eyes. The famous detective could understand the Headmaster's surprise at seeing him there. He was surprised himself to be there. But there he was!

Mr. Locke, you will awvive in time, and spot the wottah befoah I am turfed out! See? When shall I expect you, sir?"

Ferrers Locke gazed at the telephone. Then his astonished face relaxed into a smile. The smile widened into a grin. Then he laughed.

"Bai Jove!" came from the other end: "Are you laughin', Mr. Locke?

Pewwaps, as it is a business mattah, I had bettah mention the fees. I have seven and six——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ferrers Locke.

"Bai Jove! Are you laughin' again? Weally, Mr. Locke——"

"In this case, Master D'Arcy," said Ferrers Locke gravely, "I shall waive the question of fees! Expect

me early in the morning! Good-night."

Ferrers Locke rang off and returned to his settee and his book. Every now and then, however, his perusal of that volume was interrupted by a chuckle. Ferrers Locke had grave and weighty matters on his busy mind; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite unconsciously, had furnished him with a little comic relief.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

FERRERS LOCKE AT ST. JIM'S!

DR. HOLMES gazed at his visitor. Life is full of surprises, and no doubt the Head of St. Jim's had had his share of them in his time. But, assuredly, he had never before been so surprised as he was now. He was almost due in the Sixth Form room, but he forgot even class. He just gazed at Ferrers Locke as if he could hardly believe either his eyes or his ears.

Locke smiled faintly.

He could understand Dr. Holmes' surprise at seeing him there: he was, indeed, surprised himself to be there. But there he was!

Dr. Holmes was courteous. He was acquainted with Ferrers Locke, and had a great respect for him. But he was surprised—he was astonished—and he was not pleased!

"Really, Mr. Locke!" he ejaculated. "Really—really—a gentleman of your position, never without important and urgent business on hand—to take heed of a telephone call from a foolish schoolboy—really—really——"

"I must confess, sir, that this is somewhat unusual," said Ferrers Locke, "but I hope and trust that you will not refuse me permission to look into the matter."

"There is nothing into which to look!" explained the Head. "If you desire to be acquainted with what has happened, I will tell you in a few words. But such a waste of your valuable time, Mr. Locke——"

"I shall hope that my time will not be wholly wasted, sir! I am really deeply interested——"

"The matter is perfectly simple, and there is nothing mysterious about it, as that foolish boy seems to have told you," said Dr. Holmes. "Yesterday, D'Arcy of the Fourth Form took a book from Mr. Selby's study, which had been taken from his young brother for reading it during preparation. He appears to have retired to the old tower—an adjacent ruin, Mr. Locke, which I think I showed you over on the occasion of your last visit here——"

"I remember it perfectly, sir!"

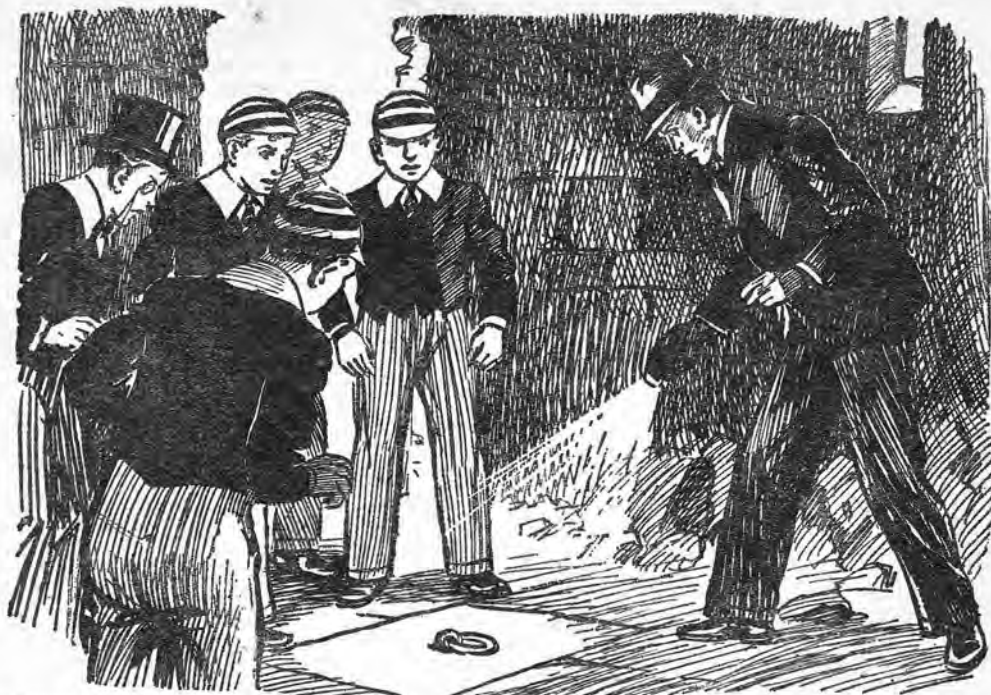
"D'Arcy appears to have retired there with the book, to read it; and Mr. Selby, finding the confiscated volume gone, and in some way guessing where he was, followed him there, to take him to his House-master for punishment. Immediately he looked into the building he was struck in the eye and actually knocked down, and while he lay for some moments in a dazed state, the boy made his escape—refusing to stop when Mr. Selby saw him running and called to him. That is the whole story, Mr. Locke."

"But D'Arcy denies——"

"He would scarcely admit such an act," said the Head dryly. "He is, I believe, a very truthful boy, but in such circumstances——"

"Quite!" assented Ferrers Locke. "And yet——"

"In view of his denial, however, inquiries have been made—very strict inquiries—and it cannot be



Ferrers Locke flashed the light round, and came to a halt at a flat stone with a rusted ring let into it. "That leads down into the old crypt, Mr. Locke," said Tom Merry.

ascertained that any other boy, of either House, was anywhere near the old tower yesterday. It is, of course, strictly out of bounds. Moreover, D'Arcy himself admitted that, though he heard Mr. Selby arriving, he did not hear anyone else about the place, or see anyone. It is, in fact, absolutely certain that no other St. Jim's boy was there, Mr. Locke—even if any other boy could be supposed to have a motive——"

"But such an act, sir—it is somewhat out of keeping with D'Arcy's character——"

"No doubt! It is an unprecedented act—utterly unprecedented! I can only suppose that the foolish boy, already in an angry frame of mind, suddenly finding himself discovered and about to be taken away for punishment, acted without

reflection, in the excitement of the moment."

"Possibly," assented Ferrers Locke, "but Mr. Selby did not actually see him strike the blow——"

"The interior of the old ruin was very dark, naturally; and the blow was struck very suddenly, before Mr. Selby could see anyone. I fear that the boy may have calculated on this—hoping thus to escape being discovered out of bounds——"

Ferrers Locke nodded slowly.

"I can scarcely understand," said the Head, "the boy's audacity in telephoning to you—and I am bound to say that I can still less understand your having taken notice of his absurdity, Mr. Locke."

The Baker Street detective coloured faintly. Dr. Holmes was too polite to tell him that he thought he was

making a fool of himself. But it was easy to read the unspoken thought.

"Nevertheless, sir, with your permission——" said Locke.

"Oh, certainly!" The Head could not restrain a touch of sarcasm. "You are at full liberty to make any investigations you please, Mr. Locke. If injustice has been done, no one would be more pleased than I, naturally, to learn the facts! But you will certainly find that no other boy——"

"Some member of the public may have obtained access to the ruin, sir, by climbing the fence towards the road——"

Dr. Holmes stared.

"No such thing has ever happened before, to my knowledge," he answered. "Neither can I imagine any reason why a member of the public should assault a form-master of this school. A trespasser could only be told to go—it would be very singular if he struck a brutal blow without provocation and without motive——"

"Most true," said Locke. "And Mr. Selby, I presume, saw no one——"

"No one, naturally, but D'Arcy, as only D'Arcy was there. Had a trespasser been on the spot, he certainly would have hurried away after such an act—and Mr. Selby would naturally have seen him, as he saw the boy——"

Dr. Holmes glanced at the study clock.

"I will not waste your time further, sir!" said Ferrers Locke apologetically, and the Headmaster rose from his chair. "But since I am here, may I take it that D'Arcy will not be sent away from the school until I have had an opportunity of looking into the matter?"

The Head pursed his lips.

"I ask only this morning, sir!"

"It was my intention to send D'Arcy away, as he is expelled from the school, when the other boys went into class," said Dr. Holmes. "But—but if you ask it, certainly I will postpone his departure till—till third school, Mr. Locke."

"I can only thank you, sir. Please do not let me delay you further. You will, perhaps, allow me to use your telephone?"

"It is quite at your service, Mr. Locke."

Dr. Holmes made his way to the Sixth Form room with compressed lips. He was surprised, displeased, annoyed. Only his respect for the celebrated Baker Street detective made him tolerate this extraordinary, unexampled, unwarrantable intervention of Ferrers Locke in a matter concerning only the school and its Headmaster. As it was, he found it difficult to suppress his impatience, and he was glad to terminate the interview.

Left in the Head's study, Ferrers Locke smiled faintly. He sat at the telephone and called up the police-station at Wayland. For ten minutes he talked with Inspector Skeat, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had called him in, and the Head, who contrived to tolerate his intervention, would both have been very much surprised had they heard him on the telephone. Neither, certainly, would have been able to guess how Ferrers Locke hoped to solve the mystery of the Beak's Black Eye by a conversation with the Wayland police-inspector on the subject of an absconding solicitor!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE MAN IN THE CRYPT!

"FEWWAHS LOCKE, bai Jove!"

"Mr. Locke!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"The goods!" said Monty Lowther. "Now we shan't be long—perhaps!"

Tom Merry and Co. came out in break that sunny morning with faces far from sunny. Arthur Augustus, who had been packing—or, at least, had been supposed to be packing—joined them when they came out of class, and all eyes turned at once on a lean, athletic figure pacing in the quad.

Mr. Locke greeted the juniors with a pleasant smile as they surrounded him with eager faces.

"All wight now?" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Have you got the wottah yet, Mr. Locke?"

"Not yet," said Ferrers Locke.

"Pewwaps it would be best to begin in the New House," suggested Arthur Augustus. "They are wathah a wuff old lot in that House, and I weally can't believe it was a School House man who bunged up old Selby's eye, you know."

"Dry up, fathead!" said Blake. "Think Mr. Locke wants you to help him out?"

"Weally, Blake, I was only offahin' a suggestion! As a fellow of tact and judgment——"

"Shut up, old chap!" said Tom Merry. "Mr. Locke, it's awfully good of you to come down. Is there any hope for Gussy?"

"I trust so," said Ferrers Locke.

"He says he never did it," said Digby. "But he must have——"

"Weally, Dig——"

"I mean to say, I take your word about it, old chap, of course. But if you didn't do it, who did?"

"That is what Mr. Locke is goin' to discovah, Dig. He is feahfully clevah at solvin' mystewies. I am quite assuahed——"

"I am much obliged by your faith in my powers," said Ferrers Locke

gravely. "I shall do my best to justify it, Master D'Arcy. Let us now proceed to the spot. You may all come, and perhaps we may spot the offender."

Ferrers Locke turned in the direction of the old tower. Tom Merry and Co. gazed at him.

"But, Mr. Locke, it—it happened yesterday!" stammered Tom. "The—the chap can't be there now. Every chap turned up for calling-over last night and——"

"Leave it to Mr. Locke, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "Pwobably he is goin' to look for fingah-pwints, or somethin'. Or pewwaps a spot of cigawette-ash! Detectives find out lots of things fwom cigawette-ash, I believe! Twust Fewwahs Locke!"

Arthur Augustus's faith was unshaken, but the other fellows could not help wondering as they followed Mr. Locke to the old tower. He squeezed through the broken palings, and the juniors, one after another, squeezed through after him.

He led the way to the shattered doorway of the old tower. He turned on an electric flash-lamp as he stepped in. Tom Merry and Co. followed, picking their way among the rugged masses of masonry that cumbered the floor. Ferrers Locke flashed the light round, and came to a halt at a flat stone with a rusted iron ring let into it.

"That leads down into the old crypt, Mr. Locke!" said Tom Merry.

"Quite!" agreed Ferrers Locke. "And no one belonging to the school. I presume, ever goes down into that dismal old place."

"Not likely!" said Tom, with a smile. "It's out of bounds, for one thing—and it's a damp, dark, horrible place for another."

"Howwid for a fellow's clobbah,

Mr. Locke!" said Arthur Augustus. "Must be feahfully dirtay down there."

"No doubt!" assented Ferrers Locke. He concentrated the light on the rusty iron ring. "But if you look at this closely, my young friends, you will observe that the stone has been moved lately—you can see where the rust has been disturbed by the grasp of a hand."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom, "I see—the fellow who punched Selby dodged down there till Selby was gone—I shouldn't wonder! Selby certainly never saw him—and, of course, he would be awfully keen to keep out of sight, as he was leaving it on poor old Gussy—"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I certainly think that he dodged down into the crypt!" he assented. "No doubt he was taken by surprise when Mr. Selby stepped in—and his only chance of escaping unseen was to do exactly what he did! He seems to have succeeded perfectly."

"The awful rotter!" said Blake. "And then he got out when the coast was clear—and nobody ever knew he had been here at all. There's no other way out of the crypt—and if old Selby had thought—instead of jumping to it that Gussy had done it—he might have spotted him coming out—"

"I hardly think so!" smiled Ferrers Locke. "He was not, I think, in a hurry to come up again, after such an alarm."

"Again!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Suppose," said Mr. Locke, "that he had been some time in those noisome depths! He would naturally come up for a little fresh air and sunshine, on a fine autumn afternoon, when the coast was clear."

"But—but he couldn't have been there long!" stuttered Tom. "He must have been in his House at dinner—no fellow could cut tiffin without being missed at once—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Are—are you going down, sir?" asked Blake blankly, as Ferrers Locke grasped the iron ring and tilted up the flat stone.

"Quite! You boys remain here for the present."

The lifting of the stone revealed a flight of stone steps leading down into darkness. Ferrers Locke stepped into the cavity, taking his flash-lamp in his left hand; and, to the amazement of the juniors, taking an automatic from his hip-pocket with the other.

They gazed at his head as it sank and disappeared.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"What the mewwy thump—"

"He can't think the chap's still there!" gasped Manners. "How could he be? Nobody's missing from school—"

"And what the thump does he want a gun for?" breathed Blake. "I—I—I say, I don't get this! What the thump—"

"Hark!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

There was a gasping cry from the dark, dismal depths of the old crypt. For a moment they fancied that Mr. Locke must have stumbled and fallen. But it was not Ferrers Locke who had uttered that cry. In utter amazement the juniors realised that there was someone else in the dark old crypt. Following that startled gasping cry, they heard Ferrers Locke's voice, muffled from the depths.

"Your game is up, Mr. Sanders! Don't lift that stick, or I shall put a bullet through your arm!"

Tom Merry and Co. listened—



The juniors gazed dumbfounded at the man who emerged from the dark crypt with handcuffed wrists—followed by Ferrers Locke. They were too astonished to speak.

spellbound. A hoarse gasping voice came in answer.

"Who are you? My name is not Sanders! I—I—my name is Smith—William Smith! I—I am aware that I am trespassing here—but—but I had a fancy for exploring this old place—there is no harm done, and I am willing to go—I am prepared to leave this moment——"

"You will certainly leave this moment, and in my company. Drop that stick! Very good! And now come——"

"I tell you, I am doing no harm here—exploring——"

"With a camping outfit, an electric lamp, a supply of blankets, an oil-stove for warmth, and canned foods in abundance! It was quite an astute scheme, Mr. Sanders, to lie

low here for a week or two, till the hunt died away—quite! Had you not gone up to take the air yesterday afternoon——"

"I—I did not—I—I was not here—I—I——"

"You are wasting your breath! I have your complete description from Inspector Skeat."

"Who—who—who are you?"

"My name is Ferrers Locke!"

"Oh!" came a gasp.

"Your wrists, please! Thanks!"

"Bai Jove! Are we dweamin' this, you fellows?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dazedly.

"Here they come!"

"Oh, crikey!"

The juniors gazed, dumbfounded, at the man who emerged from the dark crypt with handcuffed wrists—

followed by Ferrers Locke. They were too astonished to speak! They just gazed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

ALL SERENE!

"CAN you beat it!" said Tom Merry.

"Didn't I say twust Fewwahs Locke?" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "All serene now, what?"

All St. Jim's was buzzing with it! It was more than a nine days' wonder!

D'Arcy of the Fourth was still D'Arcy of the Fourth! The sentence of the "sack" had been, of course, immediately rescinded by an astonished Headmaster—only too glad to have learned the truth before that sentence was carried out!

Ferrers Locke was gone! With him went Mr. Sanders, to be handed over to Inspector Skeat at Wayland—much to the satisfaction of Major Stringer and other clients of the legal—or rather, illegal—gentleman!

"To think that that abscondin' wottah had the cheek to pick a hide-out heah, you know!" said Gussy. "Such a feahful nerve——"

"Lying low, in that jolly old crypt, till it was safe to cut and run!" said Blake. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Nobody!" said Tom Merry. "No wonder he came up for some fresh air——"

"And no wonder he hit out when Selby suddenly butted in!" grinned Monty Lowther. "If he'd let Selby see him——"

"Selby knows him—and if he'd had a glimpse of him——" said Manners.

"He took care that Selby didn't!" chuckled Blake. "Bung in the eye! Presence of mind, my beloved 'earers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! And the awful wottah, you know, must have heard Selby yowlin' aftah me, so he knew the old ass fancied that I had bunged him in the eye—so he nevah expected to be wooted out, you see——"

"He wouldn't have been but for Ferrers Locke!" said Tom Merry. "Mr. Locke seems to have put two and two together——"

"Didn't I say twust Fewwahs Locke, deah boys?" chuckled Gussy. "I knew he would woot out the wottah all wight, though I admit that I wathah expected that it would turn out a New House chap! And the best of it is, you know, that that old Tartah, Selby, has got a black eye, and nobody's goin' to get toco for it! That's wathah wippin', what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Co.

Mr. Selby, probably, did not regard that as ripping, in the least. Opinions, naturally, differed on that point. Still, Mr. Selby was glad—with a view to getting back that twenty pounds, with which the iniquitous Mr. Sanders had bolted, among his other plunder! It was a consolation, at least, for his discoloured optic.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed to be walking on air that day! His friends shared his happy satisfaction. And no doubt Ferrers Locke—back in Baker Street, and busy on a much more abstruse case—was pleased and satisfied, also, at the happy outcome of what Monty Lowther called "The Case of the Beak's Black Eye!"



THE AMAZING PROCEEDINGS OF TIMOTHY TUPPER!

By Owen Conquest



When sudden good fortune comes to Timothy Tupper it marks an amazing change in the manners and customs of the Rookwood boot-boy. No longer is he the willing servant, at the beck and call of everyone. He shows his independence with a vengeance.

CHAPTER I

UNCLE BILL'S LEGACY

"MASTER SILVER!"

"Yes, kid!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily and politely.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were taking a saunter in the quadrangle at Rookwood after second lesson, having an interval of a quarter of an hour at their disposal. They were discussing cricket prospects when Timothy Tupper came up.

Jimmy stopped at once. Lovell and Raby and Newcome followed his example. Tupper—page, bootboy, and general factotum below stairs—had a letter in his hand and a rather excited expression on his face.

"What is it—a message?" asked Lovell.

"No, Master Lovell. I've got this 'ere letter," said Tupper. "It's from my father."

"Yes," said Jimmy, rather puzzled.

"I'd like you to read it, sir, if you'll be so kind, and tell me what you think," said Tupper.

"Not bad news, I hope?" said Jimmy.

"Oh, no!" said Tupper. "It's a surprise to me. P'raps I shan't be staying at Rookwood no longer! Looks like it."

"Oh, that's too bad!" said Raby sympathetically.

It was well known that the "sack" often impended over Tupper's head, like the sword of Damocles. Tupper had a great gift for not hearing a bell ring, and the number of knives he

broke in the knife-machine was supposed to constitute a record. When called to account for these little failings, Tupper had a way of being what Mrs. Maloney called "saucy." So Raby supposed that the chopper had come down at last.

But Tupper did not look despondent. He looked unusually bright.

"Not the sack, kid?" asked Raby. Tupper sniffed.

"No fear! You read the letter."

Jimmy Silver, in considerable perplexity, took the letter, and began to read it. Tupper stood and watched him, with an excited grin on his chubby, scrubby face.

It was quite an interesting document. It ran:

"Deer Tim,—Your uncle Bill ave pegged out quite sudden and the Peal of Bells comes to me. Ime going down to see about it. According to wot Bill used to say it's worth thousands; no more work for me nor you neither. Fancy me behind my own bar and you woshing up the glasses. Bit of all right. Not arf.

"Yore father,

"ERBERT TUPPER."

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Sounds all right, what?" said Tupper.

"Topping!" said Jimmy. As Tupper did not seem to be in any way overcome by grief for the sudden demise of his Uncle William, Jimmy made no remark on that subject. "The Peal of Bells is an inn, I suppose."

"Pub!" said Tupper.

"Oh! Yes, I see."

"I ain't seed much of Uncle Bill," said Tupper, "but from wot I've 'eard, he was his own best customer. Thirsty bloke, you know. I

say, Master Silver, this is a bit of all right, ain't it?"

"Looks like it," said Jimmy. "If the place is worth thousands, you're in for a good thing, Tupper!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Lovell. "I wish I'd been your Uncle Bill's favourite nephew, Tupper!"

"Only you mustn't count your chickens too early," said Jimmy. "It may not turn out quite so well as your father supposes. Still, it certainly looks like a good thing for you!"

"Thousands!" said Tupper brightly. "P'r'aps more! Uncle Bill always used to spend his money very free. He used to drop fivers and tenners on the races."

"Must have been pretty well off to do that," said Lovell.

"I don't know," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "Dropping money on races isn't the road to riches. The more you lose the less you have left, I should think. I shouldn't count on too much, Tupper!"

"Stick to your job here till you're sure," said Raby.

Tupper gave another sniff.

"No more answering bells and grinding knives for me!" he said derisively. "This 'ere was rather a surprise. It only come this morning, and Mrs. Maloney had the cheek to interrupt me when I was a-reading of it. You think it's all right, Master Silver?"

"Looks all right," said Jimmy. "I congratulate you, Tupper!"

"Thanks!" said Tupper, in a rather off-hand way.

He took his letter back, and blinked at it. His good fortune had come as a surprise to him, and evidently he had felt the need of a friendly opinion on the subject.

"This is orl right," he said. "Father

hasn't said anything about me going 'ome, and he ain't sent any money. I s'pose that means he thinks I'd better finish out the week 'ere. I don't see it myself. Any'ow, I shan't stand any non-sense!"

"Eh?"

"No non-sense!" said Tupper firmly. "I'm independent now, same as you, Silver!"

"What!"

"No more blessed 'Yes, sir!' and 'No, sir!' for me!" said Tupper.

"'Timothy 'ere and Timothy there,' and all that! I'll give it to 'em plain!"

"Tupper, old man," said Jimmy Silver mildly, "you'd better go slow! It's not a sure thing yet, you know."

"Rot!" said Tupper.

"What-a-at!"

Tupper waved a scrubby, grubby hand at the Fistical Four. Evidently Tupper was much "bucked" by his sudden turn of fortune, now that he fully realised it.

"I've stood a lot of cheek 'ere!" said Tupper. "You ain't been a bad sort, young Silver! You've always 'ad a civil word for a bloke!"

"Young Silver" blinked at him.

"But some of 'em," said Tupper. "I'll show 'em! You mark my words, young Silver!"

"More likely to mark your nose, if



In considerable perplexity, Jimmy Silver began to read the letter. Tupper stood and watched him, with an excited grin on his chubby, scrubby face.

you're cheeky," said Jimmy Silver rather gruffly. "Don't be an ass, Tupper!"

"Yah!"

"What!" roared Jimmy.

"Yah!" repeated Tupper loftily and defiantly.

And with that he walked away, leaving the Fistical Four staring.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver; and he burst into a laugh.

"Cheeky young ass!" exclaimed Lovell indignantly. "I've a jolly good mind to pull his silly ears!"

"Leave his ears alone!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "I hope, for Tupper's sake, that the legacy will turn out a good one. At this rate, he will get the sack before he's much older, anyhow. Hallo! There's the bell!"

And the chums of the Fourth walked away towards the School House, and forgot all about Timothy Tupper and the sudden good fortune that had turned Timothy's head.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

SURPRISING FOR SMYTHE

"TUPPER!"

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell made a slight gesture with an elegant hand. He was chatting with Tracy and Howard, after classes, when Timothy Tupper appeared in the offing. Apparently Adolphus required some slight service from Tupper, hence his lofty but elegant gesture summoning that scrubby youth.

Generally, that beckoning finger was promptly obeyed when it beckoned to Tupper. For Adolphus, who had been rather neglected by Nature in the matter of brains, had in compensation been well provided with that useful article, cash. Adolphus was good for "tips"—indeed, he quite liked tossing a half-crown in a lofty, careless way to an obliging servant. Tupper's opinion of Adolphus was that he was a "hass"—but tips were tips, and so Tupper had always been extremely obliging to Adolphus.

That made his conduct on the present occasion all the more surprising.

That he observed the beckoning finger was certain. But he did not heed it.

Instead of heeding it, and approaching Adolphus with respectful meekness, Tupper walked on, only acknowledging Smythe's gesture with a slight sniff.

Adolphus raised his eyebrows.

He was astonished.

"Tupper!" repeated Adolphus, slightly raising his voice.

Tupper still progressed on his way. "Begad!" said Smythe. "Is the fellow deaf?"

Jimmy Silver & Co., who were coming down the staircase, grinned as they noted what was going on. They were aware of the cause of Tupper's peculiar manners, and they were interested and entertained. They paused, and looked over the banisters.

"Tupper! Come here!" snapped Adolphus, raising his voice a little more.

Tupper turned round at that.

"You speaking to me, Smythe?" he asked.

"Wha-at?" ejaculated Adolphus.

"What do you want, young Smythe?"

"Are—are—are you callin' me 'young Smythe,' Tupper?" asked Adolphus, in a dazed way.

"Can't you 'ear me a-doin' of it?" retorted Tupper derisively. "You call me 'Tupper,' don't you? Well, I calls you Smythe! See?"

"Is he mad?" asked Adolphus, appealing to space.

"Must be, I think," said Howard, staring at the page. "Mad as a hatter, I should think! Or else he's askin' to be kicked."

Tupper laughed derisively.

"You try it on!" he said.

"Oh, gad!" said Howard.

"The kid can't have been drinkin'," said Smythe blankly. "What's the matter with the young ass? Tupper, take this letter to the post for me."

"Take it yourself!" said Tupper.

"Tut - tut - take it myself!" repeated Adolphus.

"Jest that, Smythe!" said Tupper.

There was a chuckle from the Fistical Four on the staircase. They found this new Tupper entertaining.

"Who do you think you are?" asked Tupper, standing in front of Adolphus Smythe with his arms akimbo.

"Wha-a-at?" murmured Smythe helplessly.

"Think you're somebody, eh?" asked Tupper crushingly.

"Oh, gad!"

"Tupper 'ere, and Tupper there!" continued Timothy. "Post this 'ere letter for me, Tupper! Carry this 'ere bag for me, Tupper! Take this 'ere blooming message for me, Tupper! Ho! 'Ere's a 'arf-crown for you, Tupper! Yah! Keep your 'arf-crowns, young Smythe!"

"Mad!" said Tracy. "Quite mad!"

"You 'old your tongue, young Tracy!"

"What?"

"Dry up!" said Tupper. "Wot call 'ave you to come butting in when I'm torkin' to young Smythe?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look here, you cheeky little ruffian—" began Howard.

"Shut up!"

Howard shut up in sheer astonishment.

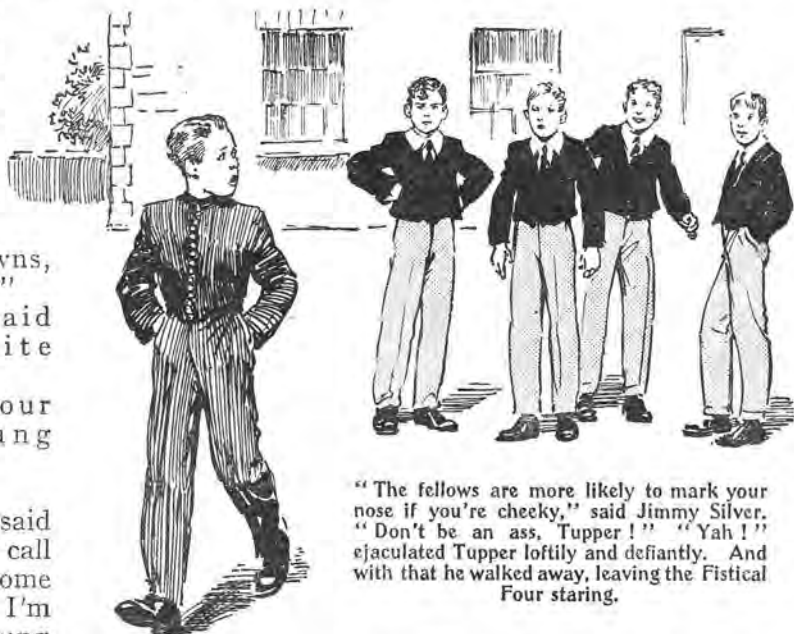
"Got anything more to say, young Smythe?" asked the victorious Tupper. "If you want to speak to me you can speak as man to man. No more of your Tupper 'ere and Tupper there. Post this 'ere letter, says

you. Post it yourself, says I! Now then, what about it?"

But Adolphus Smythe was unable to tell Tupper "what about it." He gazed at him blankly, so astounded that his mouth stood open like that of a fish out of water.

Tupper bestowed a triumphant stare on the astonished juniors, and walked away.

He felt that he had vindicated himself.



"The fellows are more likely to mark your nose if you're cheeky," said Jimmy Silver. "Don't be an ass, Tupper!" "Yah!" ejaculated Tupper loftily and defiantly. And with that he walked away, leaving the Fistical Four staring.

Adolphus found his voice at last.

"He ought to see a doctor," said Adolphus. "He's potty—quite potty! If he's not potty, what's the matter with him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Perhaps he's come into a fortune, Smythe."

"What?"

"Money makes the mare go, you know!" chuckled Lovell. "Tupper has come into a jolly old legacy! He's going to give Rookwood the go-by and roll in filthy lucre!"

"What rot!" said Smythe incredulously.

"Fact!" chortled Raby. "Quite official! Tupper doesn't want any more tips!"

"And he doesn't mind if he gets the sack!" grinned Newcome. "In fact, he's going to give himself the sack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tupper looked round again.

"Sack!" he said scornfully. "I can tell you I'm going to give Dr. Chisholm the sack! A feller in my position ain't staying on 'ere, I can tell you! This 'ere ain't good enough for a feller in my position."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young ruffian!" exclaimed Smythe indignantly. "I've a jolly good mind to kick you!"

"Yah!" retorted Tupper.

"By gad!" exclaimed Adolphus angrily. "I'm not standin' your cheek, whether you're sackin' yourself or not! Take that, you scrubby young hooligan!"

Smythe of the Shell strode at Tupper and smote him. A hefty box on the ear was what Tupper wanted, in Smythe's opinion, to bring him to his senses.

But Tupper's opinion of his own wants was quite a different one. It was indeed a point upon which agreement was unlikely.

Tupper gave a yelp as Smythe smote, and to the utter amazement and consternation of Adolphus, he smote in return.

Crash!

It was rather the surprise than the force of the blow that overturned Adolphus Smythe. But overturned he was.

He sat down with a heavy concussion.

"Take that, you!" gasped Tupper.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, gad!" gasped Smythe, as he sat breathless. "Oh, crumbs! I'm dreamin' this! Oh, crumbs!"

Tupper stared round defiantly at the grinning juniors.

"I don't give twopence for the lot of you!" he announced.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tupper stalked away. At the corner of the corridor he turned and snapped his fingers.

"Not twopence!" he said emphatically.

Then Tupper disappeared, leaving the juniors howling with laughter—excepting Smythe. Smythe rubbed his nose in a dazed way—for quite a long time afterwards Smythe looked dazed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

MUFFIN, THE DEMOCRAT!

Tubby Muffin put a fat face into the doorway of the end study after tea. Jimmy Silver & Co. were sitting down to prep; but Reginald Muffin, as usual, was not in a hurry to begin prep. Reginald was always in a hurry to finish prep, but never in a hurry to begin. Jimmy waved a dismissing hand at him, but Tubby rolled into the study.

"What's this about Tupper?" he asked.

"Nothing about Tupper," said Jimmy Silver. "Roll away, old fatty! Prep, you know."

"Yes, but I want to know," said Tubby. "All the fellows are cackling over Tupper. He punched Smythe's nose!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"He would get the sack if Smythe reported him," said Tubby.

"Oh, I don't know! Smythe punched him," said the captain of the Fourth. "Anyhow, Tupper's going."

"That's what I want to know," said Tubby eagerly. "Is it true that he's come into a fortune?"

"I don't know about a fortune. He's come into a legacy—at least, his father has. He thinks it's worth thousands of pounds. I hope it is."

"You fellows know it for a fact?" inquired Tubby.

"We've seen the letter about it—Tupper showed it to us," said Jimmy. "What on earth does it matter, fatty?"

Tubby Muffin looked thoughtful.

"Well, I just wanted to know if it was a fact," he said. "I've spoken to Tupper, and he says he's rich now. But, of course, a fellow couldn't take his word. But if you fellows know it for a fact, that's different."

"Well, he acts as if he's got some other resources besides his job in the school," said Lovell with a chuckle.

"He does," agreed Tubby. "He's been cheeking a lot of the fellows to-day."

"The young ass!" said Jimmy Silver, frowning. "But the poor kid hasn't

much brains—not much more than you Tubby. I suppose his silly head is a bit turned! No need to take any notice of his rot!"

"After all, if he's rich," said Tubby thoughtfully. "I never was a snob, you know. I don't like being down on a chap because he happens to be a servant. Anybody might be. Morny says that Smythe's father was a butler. He says he knows it by Smythe's aristocratic manners."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tupper's got his good points," went on Tubby. "Money means a

lot. If his people had had money he might have been a Rookwood fellow, instead of the Rookwood boot-boy."

"Quite so," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But what on earth about it?"

"Well, I don't believe in snobbery," said Tubby. "I don't see why a gentleman shouldn't take notice of him, though he's only a boot-boy. After all, we live in a democratic age, don't we? I'm going to take some notice of Tupper. He deserves it."



"Who do you think you are?" asked Tupper, standing in front of Adolphus Smythe with his arms akimbo. "Wh-a-at?" murmured Smythe helplessly. "Think you're somebody, eh?" asked Tupper crushingly.

"You horrid fat toad!" roared Lovell. "Are you going to borrow money from the boot-boy?"

"I disdain to answer that question!" said Reginald Muffin, with dignity. "I'm a democrat! A fellow of really good family, bearing a historic name, can afford to be a democrat."

"Oh, my hat!"

"A historic name!" ejaculated Raby.

"Certainly. There were Muffins in this country before the Normans came over," said Tubby.

"And crumpets, too!" said Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tubby.

"I'm really shocked at you fellows, you know! I never thought you'd be snobbish in this study!"

"Snobbish!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Yes. Tupper's all right—right as rain! I'm going to make a friend of him," said the fat Classical. "Not because he's come into money, of course. I'm indifferent to such things. But because I'm not a snob, and I think Tupper is one of Nature's gentlemen."

"Phew!"

"You fellows can be snobs if you like," said Tubby. "I hope I've got a mind above that!"

Lovell picked up the Latin dictionary; and Tubby Muffin beat a rather hurried retreat into the passage. He rolled along to his own study, No. 2 in the Fourth. His studymates, Higgs and Putty Grace, were working there. But Tubby Muffin was not thinking of work. More important matters than prep filled his fat mind. Now that the news of Tupper's good fortune was official Tubby was resolved that no snobbish considerations should prevent him from making a friend of one of Nature's gentlemen.

"Putty, old man——" said Tubby.

"Don't interrupt, fathead!"

"Will you lend me five bob, old fellow?"

"No!" answered Putty, without looking up.

"It's awfully important, old chap."

"It always is!" agreed Putty.

"I want to ask a chap to supper in the study," said Tubby Muffin. "A friend of mine, you know. I happen to be stony."

"Did you ever happen to be anything else?"

"Hem! I could do it on five bob, and I'll ask you fellows to meet my—my friend."

"We can ask ourselves, if we stand the supper," answered Putty. "Shut up, and get on with your prep, or Dicky Dalton will scalp you in the morning!"

"It's really urgent, old chap," said Tubby Muffin earnestly. "My pal may be leaving Rookwood soon. I want to stand him a supper. You fellows can have your whack. Look here, lend me two bob each——"

"Shut up!"

Higgs looked up. Higgs was rather an overbearing fellow, but he was sometimes good-natured. And he happened to be flush of money just then.

"If it's like that——" he said.

"Just like that, Higgs, old man," said Tubby eagerly. "Lend me five bob, old man, so that I can stand my pal a supper in the study, before he leaves Rookwood, you know."

"I haven't heard of any chap leaving," said Putty Grace.

"Hem! You—you see——"

"Dash it all, I'll do it!" said Higgs in a burst of generosity, and he fumbled in his pocket. "But who's your pal, Tubby?"

"Hem! It—it's——"



To the utter consternation of Adolphus Smythe, Tupper hit out, and the Shell junior sat down with a heavy concussion. "Take that, you!" exclaimed Tupper.

"Well, who?"

"Tupper."

"What!" shouted the two juniors together.

"Young Tupper, you know," said Tubby. "He—he's a good sort, and—and I'm not a snob, you know."

"I'm not a snob, either," said Higgs, "but I draw the line at boot-boys to supper in the study. Have you gone off your rocker, you fat dummy? What do you mean?"

There was a chuckle from Putty of the Fourth.

"Haven't you heard that Tupper's come into a fortune?" he said. "The young ass has been cheeking fellows right and left all day. Tubby's after the lucre!"

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Tubby warmly. "I don't know anything about it, and I never asked Jimmy Silver if he knew it for a fact.

I—I want to make friends with old Tupper!"

Higgs jumped up.

"So you're sucking up to the boot-boy because you think he's got some oof, you fat boulder!" he exclaimed.

"Well, if you're chummy with Tupper, you can go and chum with him in the boot-room! Out of this!"

"I—I say—yaroooooh!"

The burly Higgs took Tubby Muffin by the collar and spun him round in the doorway. Then a heavy boot smote Tubby's tight trousers.

"Whooooooooop!"

Tubby Muffin shot through the doorway like an arrow from a bow. He landed in the passage on his hands and knees.

Slam!

The door closed on him.

"Ow! Wow! Ow! Yow!"

Tubby Muffin picked himself up

ruefully. Evidently there was going to be no supper for his new pal in Study No. 2. Tubby Muffin's new career as a democrat, with no snob-bishness about him, was beset with difficulties.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

NOT PALLY!

TIMOTHY TUPPER sat in the boot-room.

Timothy was in high feather. His work that day had been light.

It had been light because it had mostly remained undone. Mrs. Maloney, the housekeeper, had had difficulties with Tupper that day.

Often and often had Tupper been "saucy." But the possibility of the "sack" had hitherto kept his sauciness within bounds.

Now that possibility did not worry Tupper in the least. Mrs. Maloney had told him that he was to go, expecting thereby to reduce him to repentance and subordination. And Tupper had only laughed. He could afford to laugh!

The inheritance of the Peal of Bells, which had so suddenly and unexpectedly fallen to the Tupper family, made all the difference.

Tupper had resources now.

Indeed, he would have shaken the dust of Rookwood scornfully from his feet that very day had he had a little cash in hand. But the inheritance, magnificent as it was, had not yet materialised, evidently, in the form of cash. Doubtless it would take Mr. Tupper some days at least to get possession of the inheritance, and until that had been effected ready cash would not be forthcoming. Anyhow, none had reached Tupper in the communication from his father, and his own cash resources were small.

So he was prepared, if necessary, to "finish out his week" at the school; but he was not prepared to do his duty in return for wages, board, and lodging. Poor Tupper was only prepared to assert his independence, having had his head completely turned by his new prospects.

So he had carried his "sauciness" to unheard-of lengths, and Mrs. Maloney had had to retire from the contest of tongues. Tupper was feeling very satisfied with himself and things generally. He sat in the boot-room, with his feet resting on a chair, smoking a cigarette. His thoughts wandered to the Peal of Bells, and all the wealth and luxury that were to accrue from the possession of that establishment. His rosy reflections were interrupted by the opening of the door and Reginald Muffin of the Classical Fourth presented himself.

Tupper did not rise to his feet. He only stared at Reginald Muffin coolly. He had no great opinion of Reginald; and he was quite unaware that Reginald had suddenly discovered great qualities in him, and was prepared to banish all snobbish considerations and make a friend of him.

"Ho!" said Tupper, by way of greeting.

"I've just looked in——" began Muffin.

"Look out again."

"Eh?"

"Don't I speak plain Henglish?" asked Tupper derisively. "Ain't you got any hears? Look out again!"

"I—I say——"

"This 'ere," said Tupper loftily, "is my apartment! P'r'aps it ain't a harrystocratic one. That's as it may be. Sich as it is, it's my apartment. I don't choose to 'ave visitors

in my apartment, unless I asks them personal!"

Tubby Muffin blinked at him. Tubby had expected, of course, to be greeted with open arms. His lofty condescension should have produced its proper effect on Tupper. But Tupper did not even give him time to explain that he intended to be loftily condescending.

"I—I say, you know——" stammered Tubby.

Tupper raised a hand and pointed to the door.

"Houtside!" he said.

"B-b-but——"

"Next time you come to a gentleman's apartment," said Tupper, "you knock at the door. See?"

"Oh! I—I say, sorry!" gasped Tubby.

"Your apology is accepted!" said Tupper, in the same lofty strain.

"All the same, I don't remember asking you to visit me in my apartment, Master Muffin—I mean young Muffin!"

"I—I just looked in!" gasped the bewildered Tubby. "The—the fact is, Tupper——"

"Do you mean Mister Tupper?"

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

"If you mean Mister Tupper, you can say Mister Tupper, I s'pose?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes, Mister Tupper!" gasped Tubby. "I—I looked in to—to offer you my congrattars, Tupper—Mister Tupper!"

"Ho!" said Tupper.

"I'm glad to hear of your good luck!" said

Tubby Muffin eagerly. "I am, really, you know! The fact is, I always thought you a good chap, Tupper, and I'm pleased!"

"Ho!" said Tupper again, suspiciously. Knowing nothing of Tubby's democratic proclivities, he suspected the fat and fatuous youth of seeking to pull his leg.

"I was going to ask you to supper in my study," went on Tubby Muffin.

"Was you?"

"The other fellows wouldn't have it," said Tubby. "They're rather snobs, you know. Nothing snobbish about me!"

"Ho!" said Tupper again.

"I don't believe in being down on a chap because he's rather a low blighter, you know," went on Tubby Muffin tactfully.

Tupper stood glaring at the sprawling, breathless Tubby. "Do you want any more?" he roared. "Ow! Wow!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "You cheeky rotter—ow!"



"D-d-don't you?" gasped Tupper.

"Not at all! I'm a democrat," said Tubby. "I'm not down on you because you're common and all that. I'm not a snob!"

Tupper gazed at the fat junior speechlessly. Tubby's way of putting it was not, perhaps, diplomatic.

"I've just dropped in, in a friendly way, to congratulate you, you know," went on Tubby Muffin breezily. "I dare say it surprises you. Naturally, you wouldn't think that a gentleman like me would touch a common fellow like you—not with a barge-pole. But——Wharrer you at?" yelled Tubby Muffin suddenly, in great alarm.

The question was really superfluous. What Timothy Tupper was "at" was quite evident. He was jumping out of his chair, and jumping at Tubby Muffin!

"Here, I say—stop it—you rotter! You silly ass——Yaroooh!" Tubby Muffin went whirling through the boot-room door in the angry grasp of the object of his kind condescension. "Tupper, you grubby cad—Yaroooh! Leggo! Oh, my hat! Why, you ruffian——Yooooooooop!"

Crash!

Tupper stood glaring at the sprawling, breathless Tubby.

"Now, do you want any more?" he roared.

"Ow! Wow! You cheeky rotter—ow!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"Are you going, or do you want some more?" roared the indignant Tupper. "I'll give you low feller! Get hout!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tubby Muffin, as the indignant Tupper started operations with a boot.

The fat junior picked himself up and fled. Tupper sniffed, and went back sniffing into the boot-room.

Five minutes later, Tubby Muffin limped painfully into the Fourth Form passage. He limped into his study, and sank, gasping, into a chair.

"That low rotter ought to be sacked at once!" he gasped.

Putty of the Fourth looked up.

"What low rotter?"

"That horrid cad Tupper!"

"Your new pal?" grinned Higgs.

"Ow! Cheeky rotter, you know!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "What the lower classes are coming to I'm blessed if I know! I've given him a jolly good hiding——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Higgs.

"You look as if you've given somebody a hiding—I don't think!"

"Hadn't he anything to lend you, old chap?" inquired Putty sympathetically.

"Wasn't he pally?" chortled Higgs.

"I should not be likely to be pally with a menial, I hope," said Tubby Muffin. "Kindness to inferiors is all very well, of course. But there's a limit beyond which a gentleman cannot go."

"But that wouldn't apply to you, you know," suggested Putty.

"Yah!"

Evidently Tubby Muffin was no longer a democrat.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

TUPPER GOING STRONG

DR. CHISHOLM was annoyed.

Thrice he had touched the bell; and, unless that bell was seriously out of order, there should have been a corresponding ring in the regions below. In response to that ring Timothy Tupper should have presented himself in the Head's study.

But thrice had Dr. Chisholm touched the bell in vain. Tupper had not appeared.

The Head, naturally, was annoyed. Rookwood fellows were supposed to tremble at his frown. Masters' Common-room was always thrown into a flutter if he knit his brows. So a person in his employment—especially so very insignificant a person as a house page—should have been prepared to go through fire and water rather than keep the Head waiting a minute or less. To hear should have been to obey.

It should have been, but it wasn't! Tupper ought to have

appeared when the Head touched the bell, just as the genie appeared when Aladdin rubbed the lamp. But he did not appear.

But the bell had been heard, and a housemaid appeared in lieu of Tupper. Dr. Chisholm stared at her over his glasses.

"Where is Tupper, Sarah?" he asked.

"A-walking in the quadrangle, sir," said Sarah.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"You can see him from the winder, sir," said Sarah, with a suppressed smile.

"Bless my soul!"

The Head made a gesture of dismissal, and walked to the window. Then Tupper came into view.



From several sources, in late days, the Head had learned that Tupper was giving trouble. He had learned it from some of the prefects, and from some of the masters, and from Mrs. Maloney, the housekeeper. Mrs. Maloney was especially eloquent.

So the Head had resolved to speak to Tupper. Speaking to Tupper, of course, would reduce him to instant submission. At all events, the Head supposed so.

That was why he had rung for Tupper. Now he stood at his study window and looked at

that fatuous youth, and the frown on his brow deepened and intensified.

Tupper was walking in the quad, where he had no right to walk unless duty called him there. That slight infraction of the fitness of things might have been overlooked. But Tupper was not merely walking to take the air. He was what Sarah would have termed "showing orf."

Tupper was not in buttons. He had discarded those symbols of servitude. He was in his best clothes, which, unfortunately, were of an ill cut and a striking pattern. He wore a bowler hat cocked rakishly on his bullet head. He carried his hands in his trousers-pockets, and whistled.

A number of fellows had noticed him with smiles. One or two frowned at him. But, so far, he had been left to himself.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

And he raised his voice and called out "Tupper!"

Timothy looked round coolly.

"Come here, Tupper," said the Head mildly.

Tupper approached the open window. He did not remove his hat, or even touch it. He stared up at the Head.

"What does this mean, Tupper?" asked Dr. Chisholm, fixing his eyes upon the heir of the Peal of Bells.

"What does what mean?" retorted Tupper.

"I rang for you, Tupper."

"Ho!" said Tupper.

"Why are you not attending to your duties, Tupper?"

"Can't a bloke take the hair if he likes?" asked Tupper.

"The—the what? Oh, the air!" ejaculated the Head. "Certainly not, Tupper, at this time, or in this manner. Is it your intention to be insolent, Tupper?"

"Is it yours?" asked Tupper.

"What!"

"You asks me one question, and I asks you another," said Tupper independently. "Don't you cheek me, and I won't cheek you, see?"

"Bless my soul!"

"You be civil, old Chisholm, and I'll be civil!"

"Old Chisholm!" murmured the Head dizzily.

"That's your name, ain't it?" said Tupper.

"Boy! How dare you?"

"Oh, come orf!" said Tupper.

"No good doing the high-faluting stunt with me. I'm one bloke, and you're another. I've got as much money now as you 'ave. I've stood as much lip from you as I'm a-going to stand, old Chisholm, so you put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

The Head gazed at Tupper from the window. If the bust of Socrates in his study had opened its marble lips and addressed him in that fashion, the Head could scarcely have been more dumbfounded.

"So that's that!" said Tupper.

"You tork to me, and I'll tork to you. As for the boots, blow the boots! I'm above boots now, Chisholm, and the sooner you know it the better. As for the knives, I know I've broke 'em, and I'd break 'em again, if I was going to touch the blinking machine, which I ain't!"

"Bless my soul! Tupper, you will leave this place immediately—you are discharged!" gasped the Head.

"That's nothing noo!" said Tupper, with derision. "I'm sacked already, and I'm going on Saturday. I only 'ope you'll get a bloke as good as me in my place. 'Tain't likely! But I wouldn't stay on if you was to go down on your bended knees, Chisholm."

"Upon my word! I—I——"

"Ow!" ejaculated Tupper suddenly.

Bulkeley of the Sixth had walked up and taken him by the collar.

Shake, shake, shake!

"'Ere! You leggo!" roared Tupper. "You've no right to touch me, young Bulkeley! Ow! Leggo! I'll 'ack your shins!"

"Keep a civil tongue, you young

ass!" said Bulkeley, with a smile. "You mustn't cheek the Head, you know!"

Dr. Chisholm disappeared from the study window. Apparently he felt unequal to dealing with Tupper. Bulkeley released the heir of the Peal of Bells and walked away, smiling. Tupper rubbed his neck rather ruefully.

"Cheek!" he sniffed.

"You young ass!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "You must draw a line at cheeking the Head, Tupper."

"You shut up, young Silver! Who's a-torking to you?" retorted Tupper. "I don't care tuppence for the 'Ead! I don't care tuppence for you! I don't care tuppence for the whole show! I'm as good as any cove 'ere, and don't you forget it! As for you, I despises you!"

And Tupper stalked away, leaving Jimmy Silver laughing.

That evening, when the Fistical Four were at prep in the end study, Tubby Muffin rolled in with a fat face crimson with wrath and indignation.

"What do you fellows think?" he spluttered.

"That you'd better get off to your prep and leave us to ours," said Jimmy Silver.

"That cheeky cad Tupper——"

"Oh, bother Tupper!"

"He's cuffed me!"

"What?"

"Cuffed me!" roared Tubby Muffin. "Actually told me I was cheeky and cuffed me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the four.

"It's not a laughing matter!" howled Tubby Muffin. "He has laid hands on me—him, you know—and me, you know! I'd have knocked him into little bits, only—only—only I felt that I couldn't soil my hands on a menial, you know!"

"You needn't have worried about that, Tubby. They couldn't be much more soiled than they are now!"

"Look here, Jimmy, you jolly well ought to kick him!"

"I'll kick you instead, old scout!" said Jimmy Silver, getting up.

"Yah! Rotter!"

Tubby Muffin vanished, to retail his grievance in some more sympathetic study. The Fistical Four chuckled.

"Tupper's going strong," grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Well, he's going for good tomorrow," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Poor old Tupper!"

The amazing proceedings of Timothy Tupper were quite a topic at Rookwood. Timothy did not mind; he seemed to draw great satisfaction from the sensation he had caused. Under the influence of his great good fortune, Tupper was swelling like the frog in the fable. The rise of Timothy Tupper had been startling, but the decline and fall were at hand.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

ALAS FOR TIMOTHY!

"Oh, dear!"

Jimmy Silver paused.

"Oh! Ow! Oh, dear! What's a bloke going to do now? Oh, crumbs!"

It was Tupper's voice, and the tones of it were so dolorous that the good-natured Jimmy paused. In his new rôle, Timothy Tupper had forgotten many little acts of kindness he had received from Jimmy, and had "cheeked" Jimmy as recklessly as any other fellow that came his way. But Jimmy was a tolerant fellow, and he made allowances for the hapless youth whose light head had been turned.

Now he couldn't help feeling sympathetic. Tupper had evidently had

bad news. Jimmy found him sitting on the stairs with a letter in his hand, and an expression of woebegone misery on his chubby, scrubby face.

"Hallo, kid!" said Jimmy kindly. "Up against it, what?"

Tupper groaned.

"Oh, Master Silver!" Jimmy, apparently, was no longer "young Silver." "Oh, sir, I'm done for! Oh, dear!"

"Not so bad as that, surely?"

"I've got to go to-day!" groaned Tupper. "I've cheeked Mrs. Maloney, and I've cheeked the 'Ead. I—I've cheeked you, Master Silver!"

"Never mind that, old scout!" said Jimmy, with a smile. "But you want to go, don't you? You're well-off now."

Tupper groaned again deeply.

"Read that blinking letter," he mumbled.

Jimmy Silver glanced at the letter. It was in the sprawling fist of Timothy's father.

"Deer Tim,—I ope you aven't give notice at the skool. Mind you don't. It won't do for you to lose your job. It's all a catch. There was a mortgage on the pub, and Uncle Bill's left nothing but bills to pay. I've been into it with the lawyer cove, and I ear that there ain't enough to pay yore Uncle Bill's debts. So no more from yore loving father.

"ERBERT TUPPER."

"Poor old chap!" said Jimmy Silver sympathetically. "I'm sorry, Tupper!"

"That's very kind of you, sir, arter I've cheeked you, same as I 'ave the rest!" groaned the unfortunate Tupper. "But what's a bloke going to do now? I've got the sack!"

"Well, you asked for it, old man, didn't you?"

"I know I did!" groaned Tupper. "And jobs ain't so easy to get these days. They're 'ard up at 'ome, and they depend on the few bob a week I send 'ome to them, you know. Now there'll be another mouth to feed instead of the bobs I sent 'ome. Oh, dear!"

Jimmy Silver looked at him curiously. There were good qualities in poor Tupper, in spite of his late amazing proceedings. His qualities shone more in hard times than in prosperous times—as is the case with many beside Timothy Tupper. Tupper strutting in the quad and cheeking the Head was one person—Tupper sending home a portion of his earnings to help support his relations was quite another. Jimmy's heart was deeply touched.

"Think it's too late now, Master Silver?" asked Timothy, looking hopefully at Jimmy.

"I—I hope not," said Jimmy. "Mrs. Maloney's a good sort. Tell her you're sorry for playing the giddy goat—"

"But the 'Ead!" groaned Tupper. "I cheeked the 'Ead! He's been a good master, though very 'igh in his ways—a good master he was, and I goes and cheeks him. Oh, dear!"

And Tupper fairly wept.

"Go and see him," said Jimmy. "He's in the study now."

"I—I daren't!" gasped Tupper. "Not arter the way I torked to 'im only yesterday. Oh, dear! P'r'aps you'd come with me and put in a word for me, Master Silver."

"I don't know if it would do any good," said Jimmy dubiously. "But I'll come if you like."

"Thank you kindly, Master Silver."

Jimmy Silver led the hapless Tupper to Dr. Chisholm's study. He tapped at the door, and the deep voice of the Head bade him enter.

Dr. Chisholm stared at Tupper over his glasses.

"Tupper! Are you not gone yet?"

"Oh, dear! No, sir!"

"Then kindly go as quickly as possible."

"Oh, sir!"

"Your wages are paid, I believe?"

"I—I don't want to go, sir," mumbled Tupper. "It's 'ard on a cove, sir, to get the sack in these 'ere 'ard times, sir."

"Nonsense!" said the Head.

"You are discharged, Tupper, for your own misdoings—and, as I understand, it was at your own desire."

"Tupper's changed his mind, sir," ventured Jimmy Silver.

The Head gave him a cold look.

"It is too late for Tupper to change his mind!" he snapped. "Neither is that a matter for your intervention, Silver."

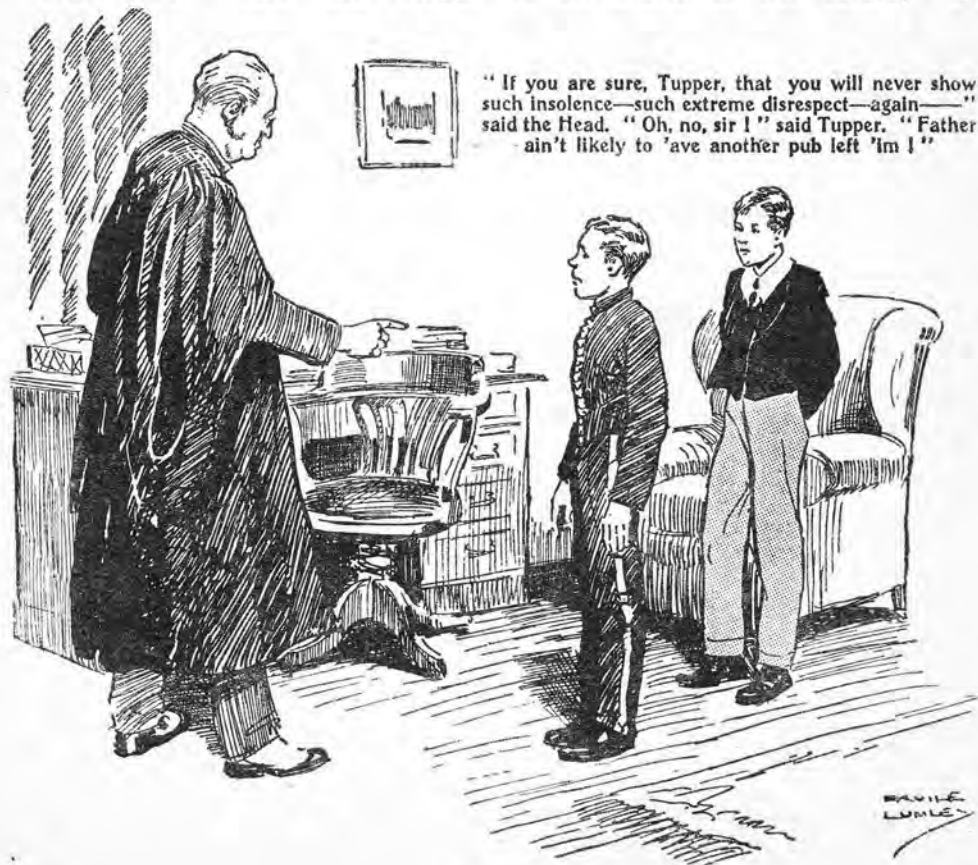
Tupper groaned.

"It's all up!" he said. "I'll go!"

"Hold on a minute, kid," said Jimmy. "If—if you'll let me speak a word, sir——"

"Nonsense!"

"Tupper's sorry, sir, and he means to do better in the future," said



"If you are sure, Tupper, that you will never show such insolence—such extreme disrespect—again——" said the Head. "Oh, no, sir!" said Tupper. "Father ain't likely to 'ave another pub left 'im!"

Jimmy, hoping that his statement was correct. Tupper was a rather unreliable youth, but Jimmy hoped for the best. "He—he supposed that he had come into a fortune, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, staring at Tupper blankly.

"And it's turned out a blooming sell!" groaned Tupper.

"A—a—a what?"

"He means he's been disappointed, sir," said Jimmy hastily, "and it will be hard on his people, sir, if he goes. Tupper helps them out of his wages, sir."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "That is very meritorious of Tupper. But—such insolence—such extreme disrespect! However, if you are sure, Tupper, that such a thing will never occur again——"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Tupper. "Father ain't likely to 'ave another pub left 'im, and I shouldn't believe

it if he did. It won't never occur again, sir, if you'll give me another chance, sir, like the good gentleman as you are, sir."

The Head coughed.

"Very well, Tupper. The matter rests with Mrs. Maloney, but I will speak to her and do my best for you."

"Thank you kindly, sir!" mumbled Tupper. And he breathed freely as Jimmy Silver led him out of the Head's study.

Tupper stayed.

For a week at least he was on excellent behaviour; never had boots been so brightly polished at Rookwood; never had bells been answered so promptly. Then Tupper began to slack again—but never, never was he likely to repeat the extraordinary proceedings which had marked the rise and fall of Timothy Tupper.

THE REMOVE FOOTBALL TEAM

BY ONE WHO IS IN IT!

Our footer team's a perfect dream,
Applaud it heart and soul!
Away with "blues"! We'll never lose
While "Squiffy" keeps the goal!

The backs are Brown, of great renown,
And Bull, a ripping sort;
And side by side when sorely tried,
They hold the giddy fort.

The half-back line is really fine;
There's Peter Todd and Cherry,
And Linley, too; a noble crew
That's always making merry.

The forwards shoot with fearless boot,
What splendid chaps they are!
When Wharton plays, in awed amaze
We watch that brilliant star.

Another strain of this refrain,
Might make you look quite blue, gents.
But mind you prize, and don't despise,
These ardent lines of Nugent's!

BY ONE WHO IS LEFT OUT!

Our crackpot team's a perfect scream,
It makes you roar with mirth.
Such hopeless freaks cause endless shrieks.
Oh, wipe them off the earth!

The backs are Brown, a stupid clown,
And burly, blustering Bull;
Try how I may, I cannot say,
Which is the bigger fool!

The half-back line no words of mine
Could faithfully describe;
With Peter Todd, so quaint and odd,
The funniest of the tribe!

The forwards play in such a way
To make the angels weep;
And Wharton's game is simply tame.
Oh, send me off to sleep!

This ghastly crew, so sour to view,
Will never come out winners.
So learn the truth, O, Greyfriars youth,
Of these remarks of Skinner's!

GREYFRIARS v. ST. JIM'S—



—And YOU'RE THE REF!

You are the referee.

Whenever a stoppage occurs give your decision. Count two points for each correct decision concerning a goal, and one point for each correct decision over a mid-field incident. Check up—and see if your knowledge of football is wide enough to enable you to referee a match!

Harry Wharton kicks off, and attempts a quick dribble on his own, without the help of the other forwards. He only gets a few yards, though—Kangaroo has charged him heavily, and Wharton goes down.

1. Pheep! Stoppage—give your decision.

Your decision having been given, the game is resumed. Play sweeps into the St. Jim's half. Fatty Wynn makes a fine save and boots clear. Hurree Singh, at outside-right for Greyfriars, tackled by Kerr, puts the ball neatly forward to Nugent, his inside-right, who has only Wynn to beat. Nugent, quick as a flash, shoots hard towards the far corner of the net. Wynn dives full-length in a desperate effort to save, but he is beaten.

2. Pheep! Stoppage—give your decision.

The game is resumed. St. Jim's are keeping the ball bobbing in front of the Friars goal now. Hazeldene, the

Friars goalkeeper, leaps high and punches out a hot shot from Talbot. Hazeldene accidentally catches Blake on the chin as he punches, and Blake has to receive attention.

3. Pheep! Stoppage—give your decision.

Off we go again. St. Jim's are maintaining fierce pressure—St. Jim's are coming through on the left. D'Arcy, at outside-left, has the ball, centres it squarely, with a bunch of players in front of goal. Bull, at right-back, drops behind Hazeldene as the goalkeeper ventures out to catch the ball. But Tom Merry springs up, gets his head to the ball, and it whizzes past Bull into the net. Bull's hand, outstretched, to regain his balance, almost touches the ball! As the ball comes to rest, there is an appeal for offside.

4. Pheep! Stoppage—give your decision.

Greyfriars are obviously out for blood. A brilliant run by Hurree Singh on the right wing is checked by Kerr. The ball goes into touch, and from the throw-in, Hurree Singh forces a corner. As he prepares to take the corner-kick, Noble, St. Jim's centre-half, stumbles against Wharton, Greyfriars centre-forward. The whistle blows for Hurree Singh to take the kick. Owing to an adverse wind, it falls short—but Cherry, dashing in, shapes to trap it. But the ball spins awkwardly, and strikes Cherry's hand just before he brings

it under control. All in the same second, Cherry shoots for goal. Wharton, starting forward, trips over Noble's foot inside the penalty area. The ball, hot from Cherry's foot, enters the top left-hand corner of the net.

5. Pheep! Stoppage—give your decision.

From the resumption St. Jim's press, but Greyfriars return to the attack, and a fine short-passing movement leaves Wharton with a clear shot at goal. As he shoots, Herries' bulldog, Towser, runs out on to the field towards Herries, at left-half. Wharton's shot beats Fatty Wynn completely, and the ball lodges safely in the net.

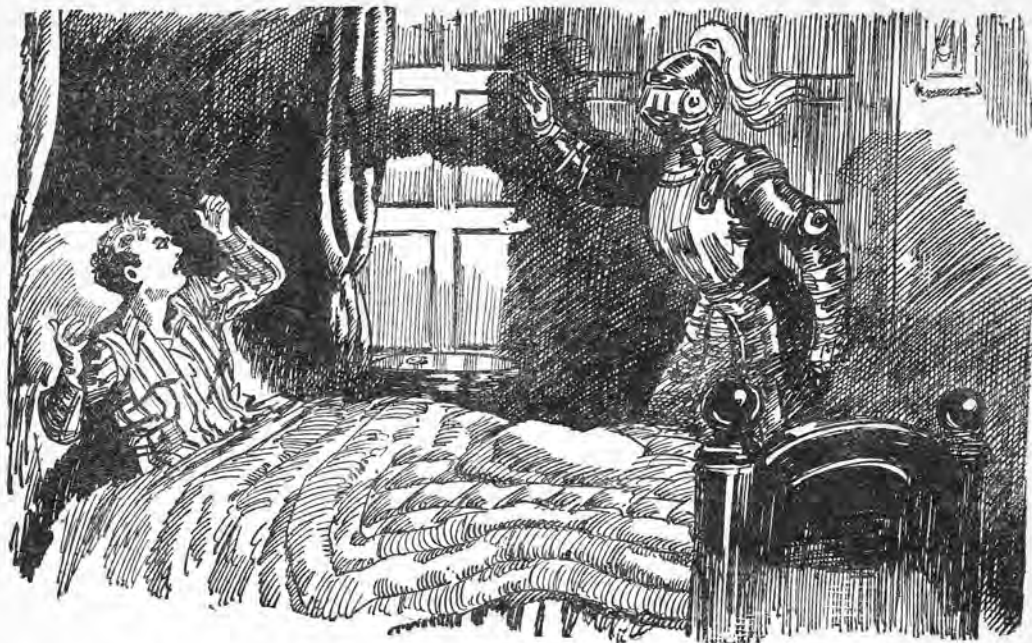
6. Pheep! Stoppage—give your decision.

In the closing minutes St. Jim's are almost through when Hazeldene makes a heroic dive at Tom Merry's feet, hoping to snatch the ball away. But Merry swerves like a wizard, and avoids the goalkeeper. As Merry steadies himself to shoot into an empty net, Johnny Bull dashes across and just succeeds in shouldering Merry off the ball. Merry staggers slightly, and before he has recovered, Bull has cleared. Hazeldene is still on the ground, having apparently hurt himself in diving. There are fifteen seconds to go.

7. Pheep! Stoppage—give your decision.

(Now turn to page 121 and see how many decisions you have got right.)





Sir Fulke's Warning!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

MAULY IS MYSTERIOUS!

"**H**EM!"

Thus Lord Mauleverer.

It was the last day of term at Greyfriars; on the morrow the old school was to break up for the Christmas holidays.

In Study No. 1 in the Remove a merry party had gathered, and the hubbub was terrific.

Harry Wharton & Co. were winding up the term with a final royal spread. Holly decorated the walls of the study

and highly coloured bunting was looped over the cracked looking-glass, giving the study quite a festive appearance. The Famous Five of the

Remove were all there, and Lord Mauleverer was a specially distinguished guest.

It was quite a festive scene, and the chums of the Remove were in the highest of spirits.

Only Lord Mauleverer, the distinguished guest, was rather silent—even more so than usual. Lord Mauleverer was not a great talker—he found

When the gauntlet drops from the armoured figure of Sir Fulke Mauleverer, it is a warning of death! And, on holiday at Christmas with Harry Wharton & Co. at Mauleverer Towers, Lord Mauleverer receives the dread warning!

By

FRANK RICHARDS

talking an unnecessary exertion, and the chief object of Mauly's existence seemed to be to glide through life with the smallest possible amount of exertion.

But on this festive occasion he was still more silent than was his custom, and there was an unusual shade of thought upon his brow.

His remarks for quite a long time were confined to the monosyllables "Yaas" and "No," and he made them at random. It was evident to the Famous Five that something was weighing upon Mauly's noble mind, and they wondered what it was.

So far as they could see, Mauly had nothing to worry about. He was going home for Christmas to the magnificence of Mauleverer Towers. That was ripping in itself; and if anything was wanted to make it more ripping, Mauly had it—for the Famous Five were going with him. That was enough to fill any fellow's cup of satisfaction to the brim.

"'Hem!' said Mauly again.

"Go it!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly.

"Eh, what?"

"Speech!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The speechfulness of the esteemed Mauly is not terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

"'Hem!' said Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Get it off your chest, Mauly, old man," he said. "If something's up, tell us, and don't worry. It's not too late to make some other arrangements, if——"

"Oh, is that it?" said Bob. "Dear old Mauly! Pump it up!"

Lord Mauleverer reddened.

"The fact is——" he said at last.

"Go it!"

"'Hem!' said

"The 'hemfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"'Hem! You fellows are coming home with me to-morrow," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm jolly glad you're comin'. But——"

"But——" said Harry Wharton.

"'Hem! "

"You'll be getting hem-stitched if you keep on like this, Mauly," said Bob Cherry.

"'Hem! I ought to tell you——" said Mauleverer.

"Go it, then!"

"But I—I'd rather not."

"Then don't!" suggested Wharton.

"But I must, you see."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You see, in the circs, I can't very well take you there without tellin' you, can I?" said Mauleverer dismally.

"That depends on what it is," said Harry, in blank wonder. "Is your guardian ill? Sir Reginald——"

"No, no! Right as rain."

"Has the ghost of Mauleverer Towers started walking?" asked Nugent.

"Nunno!"

"Have you asked Bunter to come?" inquired Bob. "We could stand even that, for the sake of your fascinating society, old chap."

Lord Mauleverer grinned faintly.

"No; Bunter isn't comin'."

"Hurrah!"

"But — but — but ——" stammered Mauleverer. "You see, if I'd known earlier—but I didn't—and now it's fixed—and I want you to come. Only—I feel I ought to let you know—only I don't want to mention it. But I can't let you meet the chap without lettin' you know—oh, gad!" Lord Mauleverer's voice trailed off disconsolately.

"Meet the chap!" said Bob.

"Some other giddy guest?"

"Yaas."

"You told us you'd asked Drake, who used to be at Greyfriars," said Harry. "We'll be jolly glad to see old Drake again!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"'Nother chap," said Mauleverer.

"Well?"

"Cousin of mine!" gasped Mauleverer at last.

"Didn't know you had one."

"Never mentioned him," said Lord Mauleverer. "He's a bad hat."

"Oh!"

"Well, even if your jolly old cousin is a bad hat, I suppose we can meet him and no harm done," said Bob Cherry in wonder. "Does he bite?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you see——"

Lord Mauleverer rose from his chair, evidently in a great state of dismay and worry. He stood with his hands driven deep into the pockets of his elegant trousers, and blinked at the fire.

"I'm bound to tell you," he said. "I can't let you meet him without knowin'. It wouldn't be playin' the game. If you feel inclined to chuck it up an' not come, I shan't be offended. But what I'm goin' to tell you is in the strictest confidence, of course!"

"Of course!" said Wharton. "But don't tell us if you'd rather not."

"Must!"

"Then cough it up!" said Bob Cherry.

"He—he—my cousin, you know—he——"

"Yes?"

"He—my cousin, Brian Mauleverer, has——"

"Well?"

"He—he—he—well, he's been in—in—in——"

"In the soup?" asked Bob.

"In—in—in——" stammered Mauleverer.

"In what, for goodness' sake?"

"Chokey!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"Prison!" said Mauleverer dismally. "Now you know!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A BAD HAT—AND A HOT TART!

"GREAT SCOTT!"

The chums of the Remove fairly blinked at Lord Mauleverer. They had not known what to expect; but most assuredly they had not expected this. That Lord Mauleverer, the schoolboy earl, the millionaire, master of Mauleverer Towers and unnumbered acres, had a relation who had been in prison, was about the last thing they would have suspected.

Lord Mauleverer sat down again, crimson.

It was out now! And it was not surprising that Mauly had found it difficult to get out.

"Dear old man," said Bob Cherry, "you're dreaming. The ginger-beer's got into your head."

"It's true. I was bound to tell you, as you're comin' to my place, and you'll meet him," said Mauleverer dismally. "If you'd rather edge off, don't mind me. It'll be a disappointment; but you've a right to. Not that there's any harm in old Brian, you know. Not now, at all events. He's a bad hat, of course. A remarkably bad hat. But I couldn't turn him down. Peace and good will at Christmas-time, you know—forgiveness, and all that. Couldn't turn him down. But I've no right to expect fellows to meet a—a—a gaolbird—not without lettin' them know. Oh, gad!"

"Poor old Mauly!" said Harry.

"So that's what you've had on your mind?"

"Yaas."

"If you'd rather we didn't come with——"

"Oh, no! I want you to come! But I was bound to give you the warnin'."

"Suppose you tell us a little more?" said Nugent. "Of course, it will be kept in this study. We shouldn't jaw."

"We shall observe the golden silence that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb says," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Mauleverer grinned. He seemed a little cheered by the English proverb.

"It's a rotten yarn," he said. "Cousin Brian is years older than I am. He's next to me for the title and the dubs, you know. It really ain't quite fair for me to have such lots and old Brian nothin'. He had some-thin' once, but it went—gee-gees and things. He painted the town too red, an' red's an expensive colour. He was always a miscellaneous sort of johnny. I've only seen him three or four times in my life, an' never liked him. But blood's thicker than water, isn't it?"

His lordship paused.

"I've heard that he made things too warm for him in England, and went over the Channel," he resumed. "There he came an awful mucker. What he had left, and what he got out of Sir Reginald, he dropped at a Continental casino, tryin' to break the bank. The bank broke him. Then he stuck up another kind of bank, and was roped in and sent somewhere quiet for some years. He came out quite recently. It's a dead secret, of course; he had the decency to go to chokey in France under another name. Now he's turned up, like a bad penny. Like the giddy prodigal, you know. Repented, an' all that. And

—and when I heard from my uncle that he's turned up at the Towers, I wired back to nunky to keep him over Christmas. Couldn't do less, could I?"

"Hum!"

"He's quite a new character now, I believe," said Mauleverer. "Learned his lesson, you know—he's had a pretty severe one. If I find there's any harm in him, I shall set him travellin'. But I think not. Uncle says he's in good order, and anxious to get some sort of a job somehow. Can't imagine him doin' any work—but it's a good sign. If you fellows meet him, of course, you won't let him know I've told you? But I was bound to let you know the sort of chap you're goin' to meet. But if you want to cry off, don't mind me."

Lord Mauleverer stopped, with a dismal look. He looked like a fellow who was awaiting sentence as he waited for the chums of the Remove to speak.

There was a brief silence in the study.

"Well," said Wharton at last, "it was decent of you to tell us, Mauly—I suppose you couldn't have done anything else. But I don't see that it makes any difference. If you're satisfied with the chap, I suppose we can be satisfied, too."

Lord Mauleverer brightened up.

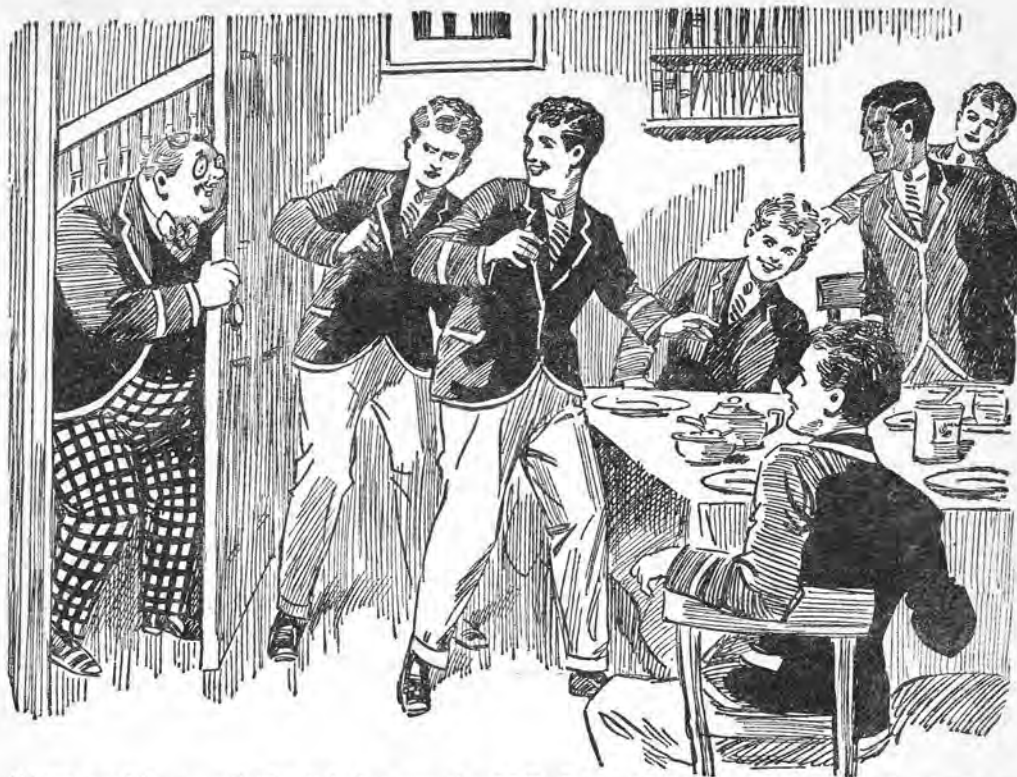
"That means that you'll come, all the same?" he asked.

"If you want us," said Harry, with a glance at his chums, who nodded assent.

"Of course I want you!" said Lord Mauleverer plaintively. "I shall feel awfully done if you let me down."

"That settles it," said Harry. "We're coming."

"Sticking to you like glue, old top!" said Bob Cherry.



"I say, you fellows——" The study door opened and Billy Bunter blinked in. He gave Lord Mauleverer an affectionate grin. "I've been looking for you, Mauly," he said. "Now go and look for somebody else!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll just forget what you've told us, and meet your cousin just as we shall meet old Drake," said Johnny Bull.

"That's it!" assented Nugent.

Lord Mauleverer looked immensely relieved.

"You're awf'ly good, you chaps!" he said gratefully. "I really believe Brian has turned over a giddy new leaf. Nunky thinks so. If I find that he's at the old game, he goes quick enough. But I want to give him a chance, specially at Christmas-time. He's got an idea of takin' over a farm on the estate—gentleman farmer, you know. Rippin' if it turns out well.

He's a rather agreeable chap, too, in his way; no end of a merry merchant. I shouldn't wonder if you like him when you see him."

"We'll make it a point to," said Nugent, laughing.

"I say, you fellows——"

The study door opened and Billy Bunter blinked in. He gave Lord Mauleverer an affectionate grin.

"I've been looking for you, Mauly," he said.

"Yaas."

"Now go and look for somebody else, Bunter," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Bunter rolled into the study. Having found Lord Mauleverer, he did not

seem disposed to part with him. He blinked at the table, from which most of the good things had disappeared by this time.

"If you fellows had told me there was a feed on I'd have come," he grunted.

"That's why we didn't tell you, old fat pippin!"

"If you think I wanted to come to a measly study feed, Bob Cherry, you're making a mistake. I say, Mauly, what time does the train go to-morrow?"

No answer.

"You didn't think I was going to desert you for Christmas this time, did you, old fellow?" asked Bunter affectionately.

"Yaas."

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"I'll be gettin' along, you fellows," said Lord Mauleverer, rising.

"I hope you're not getting out because I've dropped in, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Beast! I—I mean, I don't mind your little joke, old chap. He, he, he! I'll come along to your study with you if you're going."

"Oh gad, don't!"

"Look here, Mauly——"

"Won't you try a tart, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry temptingly.

Bunter's attention was transferred from Lord Mauleverer at once. His lordship took advantage of it, and escaped from the study; and a moment later a key might have been heard to turn farther along the Remove passage. His lordship, apparently, was not yearning for the charming society of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter held out a fat hand for the tart.

"Hold on a minute!" said Bob

gravely. "I'll put a bit of extra jam in it for you, Bunter. You like jam."

"Go it!" said Bunter.

Bob Cherry ladled jam into the tart, thereby concealing the fact that he had already ladled mustard into it.

For days—in fact, ever since break-up for Christmas had drawn nigh—Billy Bunter had haunted Lord Mauleverer as if he had been the family ghost of Mauleverer Towers.

Now evidently he was only stopping for the tart before he pursued his lordship to his study and cornered him, as it were. Bob Cherry's idea was to give him something else to think about for a little while.

Bunter fairly grabbed the jammy tart, his eyes glistening behind his spectacles.

"That looks good," he said. "I say, you fellows, I understand that you're coming to Mauleverer Towers with Mauly and me. It'll be rather a crowd. You don't mind my mentioning it, do you? But I think it's rather thick, the whole crowd of you sticking Mauleverer like this."

"What?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Thick!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "If there's a thing I always did despise it's fishing for invitations."

"My hat!"

"Rotten, I call it!" said Bunter.

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, of course, but I feel bound to say I'm disgusted."

"You fat rotter!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Of course, you don't look at these things as I do," said Bunter loftily. "You're not sensitive. I hardly like letting my old pal Mauly be done like this——"

"Like what?" breathed Nugent.

"Well, sticking him like this for

Christmas, you know," said Bunter. "I couldn't do it."

"Why, you—you——"

"Some fellows are not quite so particular as I am," said Bunter calmly. "But it's rather rotten—disgusting, in fact. I must say that I despise you!"

And having thus delivered his valuable opinion, Billy Bunter gobbled up the tart.

Bunter's mouth was capacious, and nearly the whole tart went in at the first gobble.

For a second the expression on Bunter's face was beatific. He liked jam, and the jam was thick.

But the next second there was a sudden awful change.

"Grooooooh!"

"Like that tart?" asked Bob Cherry affably.

"Ooooooooooch!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?"

"Yurrrrggggghh!"

Billy Bunter spluttered and spluttered, and almost exploded. He grabbed the fragments of the tart from his capacious mouth with his fat hands, and gurgled and gasped and yelled.

"Ooooooch! Grooooooh! I'm burnt! Ooooooooooch!"

"Don't you like mustard in your tarts?" asked Bob.

"Mustard! Ooooooch! Beast! Grooooooch!"

"Grgrrgrgrgrrrrrr!"

Billy Bunter staggered out of the study, uttering wild, weird, incoherent sounds, in search of a tap.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now I fancy Bunter will give old Mauly a rest for a little while!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

And Bob was right.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

NO TAKERS!

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL was in a buzz of excitement the following morning. Motor-coaches rolled off laden with cheery fellows, everybody in good spirits and in a good temper. Even Coker of the Fifth shouted a friendly good-bye to the Famous Five, forgetful of unnumbered troubles



"Yurrrrggggghh!" Billy Bunter spluttered and gasped, and almost exploded. He grabbed the fragments of the tart from his mouth with his fat hands. "Ooooooch! Grooooooh! I'm burnt!" "Don't you like mustard in your tarts?" asked Bob Cherry.

with those merry youths. Even Loder of the Sixth looked genial, and did not cuff his fag that day. If any fellow in the merry swarm looked anxious, it was William George Bunter. But Bunter had some cause for uneasiness, as he had not completed his arrangements for the vacation. As a last resource, Bunter was going home; but that was only a very last resource. Somehow, he did not seem to look forward to a happy Christmas with his brother Sammy and his sister Bessie. Mauleverer was marked down as his victim.

After breakfast he hunted for Mauleverer, but did not find him. With great indignation, Bunter realised that Mauly was deliberately keeping out of his way. Mauly found it very difficult to say "No" to anybody, but he was determined not to say "Yaas" to Bunter. So he dodged the Owl of the Remove; and Bunter sought him up and down Greyfriars, but sought him in vain.

Fellows whom he asked after Mauly only grinned, and gave him humorous answers. They seemed to sympathise with Mauly. Vernon-Smith advised Bunter to look on the roof. Peter Todd suggested the coal-cellar as a likely place. Bunter came upon the Famous Five finishing their packing, but he obtained no information from them.

"Where's Mauly?" he demanded.

"Echo answers, where?" answered Bob, with a chuckle.

"The wherefulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Singh.

"He's keeping out of sight!" roared Bunter.

"Shouldn't wonder," assented Wharton.

"Beasts! Look here, I can't hang on here all day, hunting for a silly fathead——"

"Better not," assented Bob. "Why

not phone home to Bunter Court for the Rolls-Royce, and roll home in state?"

"Beast! You can give Mauly a message from me," said Bunter. "Tell him he's a silly, fatheaded slacker——"

"Good!"

"And that I refuse to come home with him——"

"Hurrah!"

"And that I despise him!"

"Bravo!"

"And you, too!" roared Bunter. "I despise the lot of you!"

"Hear, hear!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving the Famous Five quite unmoved by his crushing scorn.

Ten minutes later he blinked from his study window and frowned at the sight of the Famous Five in a crowded bus. Lord Mauleverer was with them; he had turned up in time for the bus. His lordship was looking happy and genial, perhaps because Bunter wasn't there. The bus rolled away and disappeared from Billy Bunter's sight, and he gave a snort.

He spotted Sir Jimmy Vivian in the passage and bore down on him. Sir Jimmy was Mauly's relation, but apparently he had not departed with his noble relative. Bunter bestowed his most ingratiating grin on the schoolboy baronet.

"Overtaking Mauly at the station?" he asked.

"No!" answered Vivian.

"Catching the next train?"

"Yes."

"Good! I'll come!"

"Will you?" said Sir Jimmy, looking at him.

"Yes, old chap! What time do you get to the Towers, Vivian?"

"I don't get there at all."

"Eh?"

Sir Jimmy grinned.

"You see, I'm going home with Newland for Christmas," he said; and he walked away grinning.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

An hour later Billy Bunter was at the station with his minor Sammy. Bessie Bunter, from Cliff House School, joined them there. And the three Bunters travelled home together and perhaps enjoyed one another's society very much. But they did not look as if they did.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

THE SCAPEGRACE!

"MY cousin Brian, you fellows!" Lord Mauleverer coloured slightly as he spoke. But Harry Wharton & Co. had their best manners on, and not by the slightest sign did they betray the fact that they knew anything about Mr. Brian Mauleverer.

A big car from the Towers was waiting for the Greyfriars party when they came out of the railway station, and a young man was waiting by the car, smoking a cigarette; and that young man was presented to the Famous Five as Lord Mauleverer's cousin.

The juniors shook hands with him and they could not help regarding him with interest. He was apparently about twenty-five years old, though he had an older look at first glance. The life Mr. Brian had led had not helped him to preserve his youth. His face was a good deal like Mauleverer's in feature, but strikingly different in expression. His eyes had what the juniors could not help observing was a shifty look; and there were signs in the face that told of late hours and reckless living.

In the circumstances, the chums of Greyfriars had no choice but to swallow Mr. Brian whole, so to speak, and to dismiss from their minds what

Mauly had told them about the unfortunate young gentleman. But they had their own opinion on the subject, and as soon as they saw Mr. Brian that opinion was strengthened. Mr. Brian certainly was a prodigal; but whether he was a repentant prodigal was a very doubtful question.

Harry Wharton's opinion was that the scapegrace, having run through every penny he possessed, had "landed" himself on his good-natured cousin for want of other resources. But that was Mauly's business, and the Greyfriars fellows were not called upon to sit in judgment upon the prodigal, repentant or not. Mauleverer had given them fair warning, and as they had decided to come to Mauleverer Towers all the same, it was up to them to treat Mr. Brian as they would have treated any other relation of Mauly's.

And the young man was quite agreeable and pleasant. He greeted Mauly with warmth, evidently glad to see him, and pleased by his kind and friendly manner. He chatted cheerily with the juniors as the car ran on to the Towers, smoking cigarettes incessantly the while, till the car was in a blue haze of smoke. The number of cigarettes that the young man consumed was amazing.

Harry Wharton & Co. were glad when they arrived at the Towers; the atmosphere in the car was getting too thick for comfort.

Sir Reginald Brooke, Mauly's uncle and guardian, met them at the door with a cheery smile and a hearty handshake. Lord Mauleverer conducted his guests to their rooms, Mr. Brian drifting away aimlessly into the gardens, still smoking cigarettes. A magnificent suite of rooms had been prepared for the guests, communicating with one another, and all of them opening with

French windows upon a long balcony. The change from the old dormitory at Greyfriars was startling, and the juniors smiled as they looked at their magnificent surroundings. Everything at Mauleverer Towers was on the grand scale, and undoubtedly Lord Mauleverer was a fortunate youth much to be envied.

"I hope you chaps will find yourselves comfy," said his lordship.

"We'll try!" said Bob Cherry solemnly. "If there should be a crumpled rose-leaf or anything serious like that we'll let you know."

His lordship grinned.

"There'll be a late lunch," he said. "Amble down when you feel disposed. Look in for me first."

"Right-ho!"

Lord Mauleverer ambled away to his own quarters. Before going down, Harry Wharton stepped out on the balcony, which was on the south side of the house and gave a wide view over stretching parklands. The December dusk was setting in, and a slight fall of snow had whitened the park—the leafless trees glimmering spectre-like through the gathering dusk. Frank Nugent came out of his room and joined the captain of the Remove.

"Rather topping, what?" said Frank, with a smile.

"Yes; Mauly's a lucky bargee."

"No end lucky," agreed Nugent; "and the dear old chap never thinks of putting on side. What would Bunter be like if he owned a place like this?"

"I wonder!" said Wharton, laughing.

"What do you think of the jolly old cousin?"

"I think he would be better for smoking a few less cigarettes," said Harry, with a smile.

"Not a bad chap, so far as one can see, though. He seems jolly good-tempered, and rather fond of Mauly."

"He was pleased to see him, anyhow, I think."

There were footsteps below the balcony, and a fragrance of tobacco floated up. The two juniors exchanged a glance. They guessed that Mr. Brian Mauleverer was walking below with his eternal cigarette.

Then a voice was heard; the voice of Sir Reginald Brooke.

"Brian!"

"Well?"

"Dear me, Brian, you are always smoking. Don't you think you would be wise to smoke a little less?"

Wharton and Nugent exchanged a smile.

"Certainly, sir," answered Brian; "but I never was wise, you know. But if the cigarette offends you, there it goes!"

"Now that there are schoolboys in the house, Brian, it would surely be advisable to be a little more—hem—circumspect."

"I am not a schoolboy."

"No, but——"

"By gad! A new character for me, settin' up as a model to youth." The young man laughed. "But you are right, sir. The scrubby little bounders shall not take any harm from me."

"Oh!" murmured Nugent.

Brian's manner to the juniors had been pleasantness itself. It was rather a shock to hear him describing them as scrubby little bounders. And it was not agreeable.

"Really, Brian, I wish you would not speak of Herbert's guests in that way."

"My mistake, sir. I forgot I was on my good behaviour here. I'll promise not to talk horses to them, or to spin them any yarns of wild nights at Monte Carlo."



"Be serious, Brian. I want to warn you once more to say nothing to Mauleverer concerning the incident of the armour——"

"That's all right!"

"Of course, there is nothing in it, but considering the old superstition attached to the armour of Sir Fulke——"

"I understand, uncle!"

"Neither need it be mentioned to the other boys——"

Wharton and Nugent went in quickly at the French windows. It dawned upon them that they were about to hear something that was not intended for their ears.

A few minutes later the Famous Five foregathered in Lord Mauleverer's den.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

THE UNREPENTANT PRODIGAL!

THE den of Herbert, Lord Mauleverer, was a den that Fortunatus himself would not have

"My cousin Brian, you fellows!" said Lord Mauleverer. A big car from the Towers was waiting for the Greyfriars party when they came out of the station, and a young man was waiting by the car. The juniors greeted Lord Mauleverer's cousin.

despised. The juniors found his lordship loafing before a leaping log fire, and he turned to them with a smile. On a previous visit to the Towers, Harry Wharton & Co. had seen Mauly's magnificent quarters, but they looked about them with much interest.

The room was extensive, and opened upon the same southern balcony where Wharton and Nugent had stood. Floor and walls were of dark solid oak, and the domed ceiling was painted in the Italian style. Tall French windows opened on the balcony, with another deep window on either side of the French windows. Between the windows stood two figures of ancient armour, complete even to the steel gauntlets.

On the walls hung several trophies of ancient weapons—weapons used

probably by old Mauleverers in days that were long gone by.

At the farther end of the room a door opened into Lord Mauleverer's bedroom. There was another door from the bedroom to a corridor.

The electric light was on in Mauly's "den," glimmering on the polished oak, and the armoured figures, and the old weapons on the walls. Half a dozen deep armchairs stood about in the ample space, and three or four almost priceless Persian rugs glowed in colour on the oaken floor.

"And Mauly never grumbles at the study at Greyfriars!" remarked Bob Cherry, with an amused glance round.

"Eh? Why should I grumble at the study?" asked Mauly. "It's a jolly good old study, isn't it?"

"Bit different from this!" grinned Bob.

"Oh, yaas."

Bob walked up to the armoured figures. He tapped the nearest one on the breast-plate.

"Nobody at home, I suppose?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer did not join in the laugh. For some reason his lazy face became very grave.

"That's old Sir Fulke's armour-plate," he said.

"Who was Sir Fulke?" asked Bob.

Wharton started a little. He remembered that name, uttered a few minutes before by the old baronet.

"One of my giddy ancestors," answered Mauleverer, "that lived before there was an earldom. He used to chop the Saracens in the good old days, in that very set of tin ribs."

"Good man," said Bob. "And who's the other johnny?"

"That's the armour of Sir Gilbert, his brother. They weren't a credit

to the family, I believe," said Mauleverer. "There's an old yarn about Sir Fulke——" He paused.

"You shall spin us the yarn, Mauly," said Bob. "Is it a ghost story?"

"Yaas."

"Jolly old Sir Fulke revisits the glimpses of the moon, what?" asked Johnny Bull, with a grin.

"Well, of course, he doesn't," said Mauleverer slowly. "But——"

"But——" asked Johnny.

"Well, it's an old yarn, and, of course, there's nothin' in it," said Mauleverer. "We don't believe such things nowadays. But a fellow is bound to give his own family legends some respect, you know. But, dash it all—never mind ghost stories—you fellows must be famished."

"Hungry as Bunter, or a wolf," confessed Bob.

"Let's get down."

The Greyfriars party went down to a very late lunch. Brian did not join them; but Sir Reginald presided at the table with a beaming, cheery face. But the beaming smile faded from the old gentleman's countenance when Bob Cherry made some allusion to the ghost story. Bob was a little interested in the legend of the ghost of the Towers, though he did not dream of taking it seriously. But the sudden gravity in the old baronet's face made the juniors realise, to their astonishment, that Sir Reginald did not take the matter with the same lightness.

"We want Mauly to spin the yarn," said Bob. "It will make no end of a merry Christmas if the giddy ghost walks on his beat."

"I am afraid the tale is not a very pleasant one," said the old baronet. "They were lawless days when Sir Fulke Mauleverer lived. Herbert

would do well to dismiss the legend entirely from his mind."

"Oh, yaas," said Herbert.

And Bob Cherry let the subject drop at once. But when he strolled out on the terrace later with Wharton, he expressed his amazement to the captain of the Remove.

"Mauly can't be ass enough to believe in the ghost story, surely?" he said.

"Well, it's a family ghost," said Wharton, laughing. "Perhaps Mauly feels that it's up to him."

"I'd like to hear the yarn all the same," said Bob. "I dare say the Brian-bird knows, and he'll spin it for us."

And when Bob went in he asked a manservant where Mr. Brian Mauleverer was. He was directed to the billiards-room, where he found the young man idly knocking about the ivory balls. There was a discontented expression on Brian's face.

He rapped at the ball viciously, but made a good shot. Bob Cherry stopped to watch the shot, and for the moment the scapegrace of the Mauleverer family did not notice that he had entered. The young man placed the balls in a difficult position, and



Bob Cherry walked up to the armoured figure and tapped it on the breast. plate. "Nobody at home, I suppose?" he asked. "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the other fellows.

brought off a cannon from the top cushion—with a deftness that showed that a considerable portion of his youth had been misspent.

As he caught sight of the junior, however, the discontented look left the young man's face, and he smiled genially. It was like a mask being put on a face.

Bob Cherry suppressed a grin.

He was not blind to the fact that Mauly's scapegrace cousin was bored to extinction at the Towers, and saw no prospect of enjoying Christmas in company with a crowd of fellows from school. Much older and wilder company would have been required to

make it a happy Christmas for Brian Mauleverer.

But it was evidently Brian's cue to affect a satisfaction with his surroundings that he was far from feeling. In his personal dealings with the Greyfriars juniors, he certainly gave no hint of the fact that he regarded Mauly's friends as "scrubby little bounders."

"Like a game, kid?" he asked genially. "Let me see, your name's Berry, isn't it?"

"Cherry!" said Bob.

"Sorry—always forgettin' names. I'll give you fifty in a hundred."

"Done!" said Bob.

Bob played billiards in a schoolboy fashion. He was rather proud of leading off with a break of fifteen. Interested in showing his skill, he forgot all about his intention of asking Brian concerning the ghost story. Brian followed him with a break of twenty-five, and then potted his own ball clumsily enough. Bob followed on with ten, and again the scapegrace played badly, and Bob ran out with his hundred, having started with fifty to his score. The schoolboy of Greyfriars felt very pleased with himself.

"Good man!" said Brian cordially. "You can play."

"Not so bad, was it?" said Bob, innocently.

"Jolly good. I'll give you fifty again, and try you once more," said Brian. "Let's have a pound on the game to make it interestin'?"

Bob Cherry started a little. He shook his head.

"Can't be done," he answered in his direct way. "Never play a game for money."

"Oh, great gad!" groaned Brian Mauleverer. "Where have I landed?"

Bob laughed.

"Sorry," he said. "Play you for love, if you like."

"I'll put up a fiver against your quid," said Brian. "Let's have somethin' to put life into it."

"Nothing doing," said Bob tersely. And as Nugent looked into the billiards-room just then, Bob nodded to the scapegrace and walked away with Nugent.

Bob was no fool; and a little reflection showed him that Brian had played very badly—after displaying great skill in practice shots. He had, in fact, allowed the schoolboy to win the game, and, obviously, for the purpose of tempting him to play for money. It was pretty clear that whatever kind of a prodigal Brian Mauleverer was, he was not of the repentant kind. His conduct, in fact, was that of a billiards sharper; nothing less or more.

"Poor old Mauly!" Bob said to himself. It was pretty clear that the schoolboy earl was being imposed upon by his rascally relative.

But it was not Bob's business; and he did not mention the incident even to his comrades. But he showed no desire after that to seek Mr. Brian Mauleverer's company.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

A LEGEND OF OLD TIME!

"YOU fellows look awfully jolly." Brian Mauleverer made that remark. He stood in the doorway of Lord Mauleverer's den.

Certainly the fellows looked jolly.

Round the blazing log fire on the wide hearth, half a dozen deep, big chairs were drawn, and the Greyfriars party sat in a merry half-circle, with the firelight playing on their cheery faces.

The evening was growing old, and the party had gathered in Mauly's

den for a "jaw" before going to bed. Sir Reginald Brooke was already in bed, and Brian was out of doors when the juniors gathered there. Now he looked in on the party with a smiling face.

Lord Mauleverer turned a smiling look of welcome on his cousin.

"Trot in, old fellow!"

"Do!" said Wharton. "We're spinning a yarn, Mr. Brian."

The young man sauntered in.

Bob jumped up and pulled another big chair into the circle. Brian sat down in it, crossing one elegant leg over the other. As he sat, he was almost facing the gleaming suit of armour that in ancient days had been worn by Sir Fulke Mauleverer. The firelight glimmered on the shining

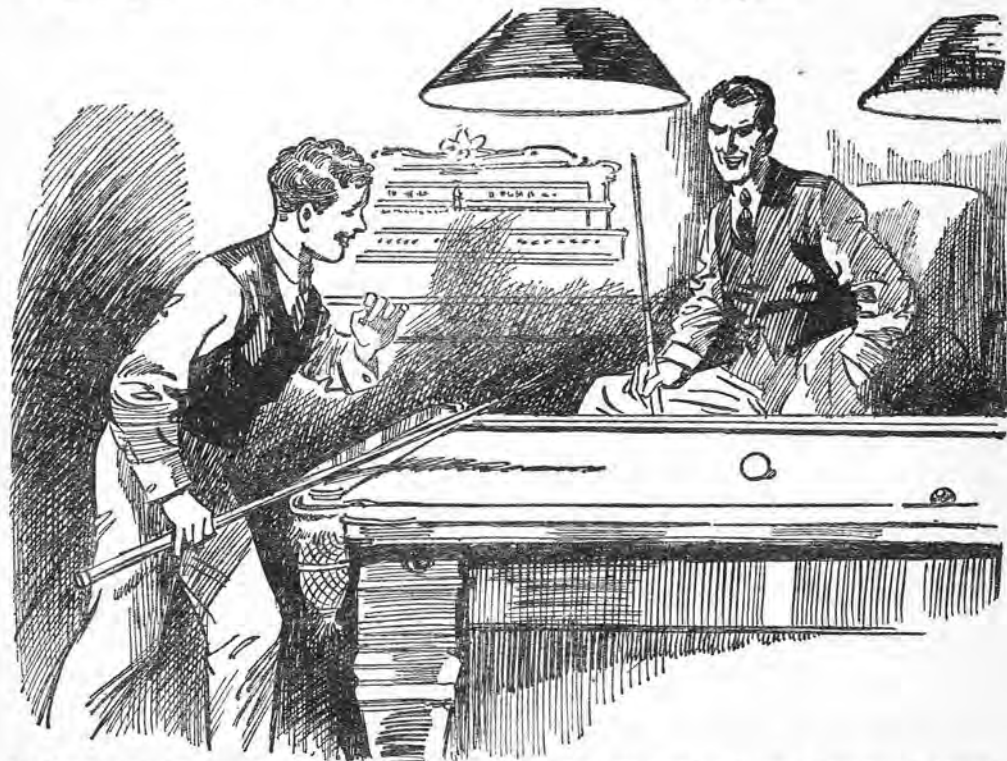
coat of mail and on the closed visor of the helmet; it needed little imagination to suppose that the figure was real and living. Brian's eyes dwelt upon it curiously for a moment or two, and then he lighted one of his endless cigarettes.

His coming did not damp the party in any way. The schoolboys felt, in fact, a little flattered at an experienced man of the world like Brian Mauleverer seeking their company. Johnny Bull had been spinning a yarn and he had just come to a conclusion.

Mauleverer glanced at his cousin.

"Your turn, Brian," he said.

"Good!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "You've seen a lot of the world, Mr. Mauleverer; you must have a good many yarns to spin."



Bob Cherry was the first to reach the hundred, and the Greyfriars junior felt very pleased with himself. "Good man!" said Brian cordially. "You can play."

Brian laughed.

"I'm afraid many of my yarns would not do for this company," he said, "but Christmas is the time for ghost stories—what?"

"Good! Let's have a ghost story," said Bob.

"I'll tell your friends the legend of Sir Fulke, Herbert—what?" asked the young man, with a careless glance at Lord Mauleverer.

Wharton, looking at his lordship, had an impression that Mauly would have preferred to avoid that subject. But Mauly nodded cheerily.

"Go ahead—if they'd care to hear," he said.

Brian took his cigarette from his mouth, and the juniors settled themselves down to listen. They glanced a good many times at Sir Fulke's armour, towering by the shadowy windows. Outside the house, the December wind wailed along the terrace and creaked the branches of the old trees. Wharton threw a fresh log on the fire.

Brian told the tale in a low, clear voice, staring at the fire most of the time and allowing his cigarette to expire. It was a strange old tale of battle and murder and feud—a tale of the "good old times" when life was held cheaply.

Sir Fulke Mauleverer's career in the reign of Richard the First had been an exciting one, according to the story. He had added field to field and manor to manor with a strong hand, and a life of cruelty and bloodshed had ended in violence. In the old stone tower, the ruins of which still stood, he had fallen by the hand of his brother, Sir Gilbert. The fratricide, haunted and conscience-stricken, had found death on a Saracen battlefield, leaving the great Mauleverer estate to his son, the ancestor

of the dandy of the Remove, who was sitting silent, staring at the fire, as Brian told the tale.

"The spirit of the wicked old knight, slain by his brother's hand, could find no peace," went on Brian in his low, clear voice. "For ever afterwards the Mauleverers were a haunted race, even to this day. When death is coming to a Mauleverer there is always a sign from Sir Fulke. And the legend tells that more than one Mauleverer has met his death at the hands of the wicked old knight, whose restless spirit has returned to inhabit the armour that he wore when he was a living man."

He paused a moment.

"More than once a Mauleverer has been found dead, with the iron grasp of Sir Fulke on his throat——"

There was a sudden movement from Mauly. But he smiled as the juniors glanced at him.

"A steep yarn, begad!" said his lordship.

"There can't be any truth in it, of course," said Wharton, looking oddly at Brian. The young man had spoken with the deepest seriousness.

Brian shrugged shoulders.

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy," he remarked. "A great poet has told us that. And it is at least certain that the death of a Mauleverer, in recent times, has been hinted at by the figure yonder."

The juniors' glances turned involuntarily towards the figure.

"Before the last Earl of Mauleverer died—killed in the hunting-field—a gauntlet dropped from the armoured figure," said Brian. "It had held its place from time immemorial. It fell with a crash on the evening before the last lord met his death; and last night——"

Lord Mauleverer started violently.

He turned a quick, searching look upon his cousin.

"Last night!" he exclaimed. "What happened last night, Brian?"

The young man hesitated. Wharton and Nugent, remembering the chance words they had heard on the balcony, exchanged a quick glance.

"Nothing," said Brian at last. "I—I—in fact——" He stammered a little.

Lord Mauleverer sat bolt upright in his chair. There was a trace of pallor in his cheeks.

"Tell me!" he said quietly.

The juniors looked at Brian. He seemed overwhelmed with confusion.

"I did not mean to allude to it," he said at last. "Sir Reginald asked me not to tell you, Herbert. But after all, it is only a legend. Why should you be afraid?"

Mauleverer flushed.

"I am not afraid," he answered. "But if anything happened, I ought to know. What was it?"

"I suppose I had better tell you, as the matter has been mentioned," said Brian at last reluctantly. "I heard a noise in my room—you know I have a room at the end of the corridor. I think I had been dreaming—perhaps the legend was in my mind while I slept. I heard a sound of—of——"

"Of what?"

Mauleverer's voice was sharp.

"Of armoured feet treading."

"Oh, gad!"

"I jumped out of bed and ran here," said Brian. "I looked in and flashed on the light; and I thought that——"

He paused.

The juniors felt an eerie sensation. All eyes were fixed on the towering armour-clad figure.

"You thought——"

"I thought, for a second, that Sir Fulke moved," said Brian in a low, shuddering voice. "No doubt the sudden light deceived me; no doubt I had dreamed the sound of iron footsteps. Sir Reginald thought so when I told him this morning. He did not wish me to tell you. Forgive me."

Mauleverer laughed lightly.

"I'm glad to know," he said. "It was a dream, of course. And I'm not afraid that Sir Fulke's gauntlet will fall and warn me of my death——"

Crash!

Mauleverer stopped, the words dying on his lips, his face ashy pale. With a loud metallic crash a gauntlet dropped from the armoured figure on to the polished oak. Through the silent room the crash rang like thunder.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE SPECTRE KNIGHT!

LORD MAULEVERER sat fixed, motionless, his eyes staring at the figure of Sir Fulke and the gauntlet that lay on the floor. The juniors started to their feet with suppressed exclamations.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Brian.

He sprang up.

Then there was silence; and for some minutes no one spoke. Lord Mauleverer was making painful and visible efforts to pull himself together. The crash of the falling gauntlet had rung like a knell of doom in the ears of the schoolboy earl.

"Good heavens!" breathed Bob Cherry at last. He hurried across to the armoured form, that seemed to tower threateningly over him.

For some moments he had felt a superstitious thrill; but his sturdy common-sense came to the rescue.

He picked up the heavy gauntlet. "Just come unstuck!" he said, with an attempt at humour.

"It has not happened since—since—" Brian Mauleverer was muttering. He broke off without finishing.

"Quite a dramatic climax to Brian's yarn," said Lord Mauleverer calmly. He was smiling, but there was a quiver in his lips. "The dashed thing couldn't have given way at a more appropriate moment, by gad! I fancy somebody has been monkeyin' with that armour!"

"Who would touch it?" said Brian.

Lord Mauleverer shook his head. Wharton looked at him; Mauly was calm, smiling, but there was a dew of perspiration on his forehead. It came as a shock to Harry to realise that Mauleverer was not untouched by superstitious belief in the legend of his family.

"Mauly, old chap—" he said.

"There's no cause for alarm," said Brian, with a curious look at his cousin. "The thing became detached, and fell. The same thing happened a day before your poor father was killed in the hunting-field, Herbert—when you were a baby. Sheer chance, of course."

"Oh, of course," said Mauleverer, but his lips twitched. "Brian, old man, you tell a ghost story well; and Sir Fulke plays up like a little man to increase the effect. You fellows know it's getting on for twelve? We're riding in the mornin', and Drake's comin' to-morrow. What price bed?"

And the party broke up.

Brian Mauleverer said good-night to the juniors, and went away to his own quarters, at the end of the old wide corridor upon which all the juniors'

rooms opened. Harry Wharton stayed last to speak to Lord Mauleverer after the other fellows had gone.

Mauly was cool and calm and smiling; but he was not completely hiding the effect of the fall of the gauntlet upon him. And Wharton was feeling a little uneasy about his chum.

"You're rather an ass to have your giddy ancestor in your den, Mauly," he said. "I'd have him shifted."

Mauleverer smiled and shook his head.

"He's stood in this room for a hundred years," he said. "I've heard that he used to stand in the gallery; but people were frightened by a ghostly iron-clad tread in the dead of night. The jolly old dog has never walked in my time. Brian was dreamin' last night—"

"Of course," said Harry. "But how—"

"All serene, old top! Good-night!"

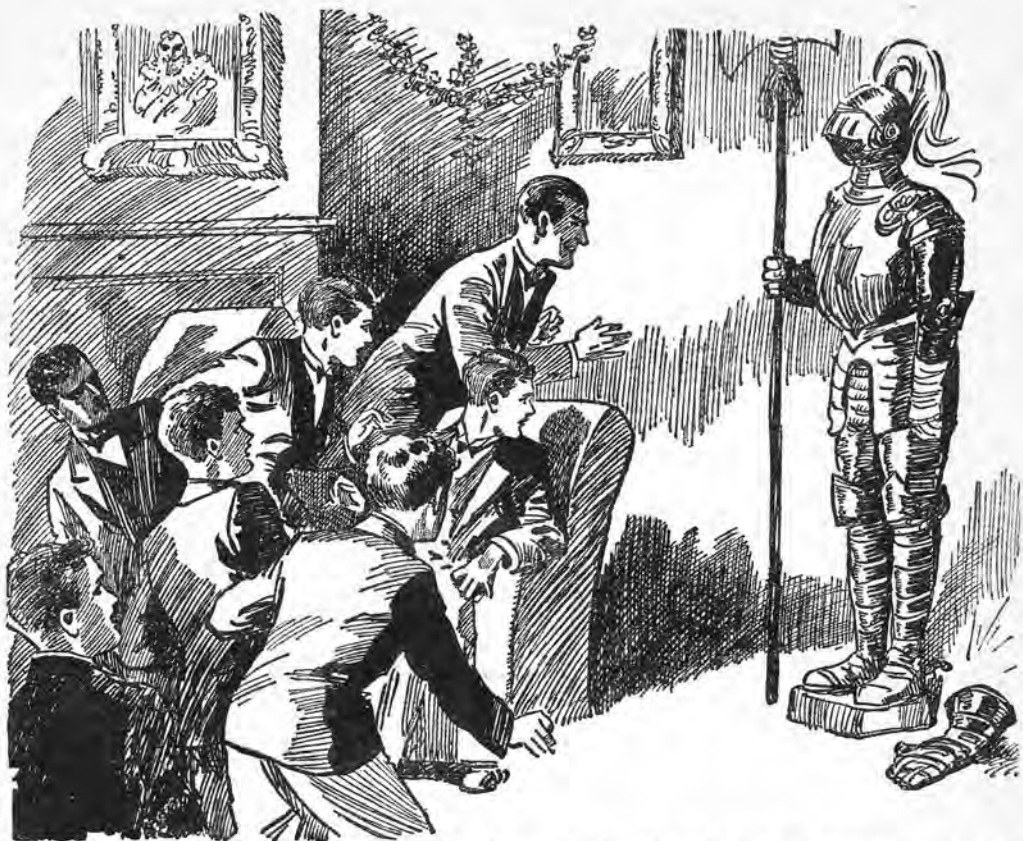
"Good-night, Mauly!"

Wharton went along to his own room, and Mauleverer's door closed. The schoolboy earl, as soon as he was alone, dropped the mask of smiling nonchalance. His face set gravely, and he walked up to the armoured figure and stood before it for some minutes, in silence, regarding it. The gauntlet still lay where it had fallen.

For some time Mauleverer stood regarding the figure in silence, strange thoughts passing in his mind. Then he turned off the electric light and passed into the adjoining bedroom.

He turned in and put out the light; but sleep did not come soon.

The old legend of the Towers, which Mauleverer had known from childhood, had a strange effect on his mind. He did not exactly believe in it; but it weighed with him, and the falling



"I'm not afraid that Sir Fulke's gauntlet will fall and warn me of my death," said Lord Mauleverer. Crash! With a loud metallic crash a gauntlet dropped from the armoured figure on to the floor! The juniors started to their feet with suppressed exclamations.

of the gauntlet seemed too strange to be a coincidence. Last night Brian had heard the ghostly tread of the wicked old knight; to-night the gauntlet had fallen—as it had the night before the death of Mauleverer's father. It was chance—it must be chance—and yet while Mauleverer's brain told him that there was nothing more in it, something in his heart seemed to tell him a different tale. Something, somewhere in his nature, responded to the call of superstition that his mind rejected.

He slept at last, but it was uneasily. A light sound would have awakened

him from a slumber tormented by dreams of a wicked old knight, whose evil eyes glittered through the holes in his visor. Suddenly Lord Mauleverer awakened—

He sat up in bed, his very flesh creeping.

What was it that he heard?

Outside, there was a faint wail of the winter wind. But what he heard was closer at hand.

It was the tread of iron feet.

In the darkness he sat, his heart throbbing, the sweat running down his face. Was he dreaming—was he mad?

Tramp ! Tramp !

It was no dream. Unless he was mad, he heard it. The tramp of a man in armour—approaching the door of his bedroom, from the room where the figure of wicked old Sir Fulke stood—

The door opened.

A thrill of horror and dread ran through the unhappy boy in the bed. He would have stretched out his hand to the electric switch, but horror held him motionless. He could only stare in the gloom—still, dumb, in unspeakable horror.

From the open doorway came a gleam of firelight—the log fire yet burned. It played through the doorway, glimmering. What was it that the firelight glimmered on ?

On a figure in armour—the figure of Sir Fulke Mauleverer—towering in the gloom.

A wild shriek broke from Herbert Mauleverer, and he fell back in a dead faint.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

THE HORROR OF THE NIGHT !

HARRY WHARTON leaped from his bed.

A shriek was ringing in his ears—a fearful cry that had awakened him, and yet rang and echoed and throbbed in his brain.

That terrible cry came from Mauleverer's room—he knew it !

What had happened ?

Wharton did not stop to think. He stopped for nothing. He raced out of his room into the corridor, only pausing a fraction of a second there to switch on the electric light.

Another second, and he was at the door of Mauleverer's den and had hurled the door wide open.

He switched on the light in the room..

It showed the room exactly as the juniors had left it—the armchairs still ranged round the red embers on the hearth—the two armoured figures standing between the windows.

The door of Mauleverer's bedroom was shut. No sound came from beyond the closed door.

Yet Wharton was certain of the cry he had heard. Something had happened to Mauleverer—something that was terrible.

" Harry ! "

It was Bob Cherry's voice behind Wharton.

" You heard it, too ? " gasped Harry.

" Yes—was it—— "

" Mauly ! "

Evidently Wharton had not fancied it. Bob had heard it, too ; and the doors of three other rooms were opening—Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh hurried out. All had heard that terrible cry.

" Wharton—what—— "

Harry Wharton dashed across the room and threw open the door of Lord Mauleverer's bedroom. All was in darkness ; but in a moment he had found the switch and turned the light on.

" Mauly ! "

Lord Mauleverer lay across the bed, motionless. The bedclothes were thrown back. Wharton ran to him.

" Mauly ! " he exclaimed, huskily.

No sound, no word, no movement ! Mauleverer was insensible.

" He's fainted ! " said Harry.

" But what—what can have happened ? " asked Bob Cherry, in a low, scared voice.

" Heaven knows. "

There was a faint moan from Mauleverer. His eyes opened, and he stared wildly round him. For the moment he did not seem to recognise the chums of the Remove.

He shuddered violently.

"Mauly!" breathed Wharton. He threw his arm round the schoolboy earl and drew him to a sitting posture on the bed. "Mauly, old fellow——"

A long and terrible shudder ran through Mauleverer's limbs again. He muttered something incoherently.

"Better call Sir Reginald," said Nugent.

Mauleverer made a movement then.

"All right in a minute," he muttered. "Don't—don't call my uncle. Don't! Stay with me a bit, you fellows——"

"Of course we'll stay," said Harry. "Get into the other room, to the fire, old chap; you're shivering. Stir the fire together, Bob."

"Right!"

Mauleverer seemed scarcely able to move. Wharton caught up a dressing-gown and placed it on the shivering junior, and half led, half carried him into the adjoining room. Bob was stirring the embers into a blaze.

The faces of the juniors were scared and startled. They asked themselves what could have happened, without being able to find an answer. Something had struck the schoolboy earl with horror and fear—what, they could not even guess.

Mauleverer sank into a chair by the fire, still shivering, and the juniors noticed that he kept his face turned away from the armoured figures by the windows.

"Wharton!" whispered Mauleverer at last.

"Yes, old fellow?"

"Is he—is he still there?"

"He? Who?" asked Harry, wondering whether Mauleverer's mind was wandering.

"Sir Fulke."

Mauleverer scarcely breathed the name.

Wharton started. His eyes turned on the armoured figure.

"It's still there, of course, Mauly."

"Has it moved?"

"Moved?" said Harry. "Of course not!"

Mauleverer shuddered.

"Look at it, Harry! Look at it closely, old chap, if you've the nerve. Tell me if it—if it seems to have moved—even an inch——"

In silence Harry crossed over to the figure of Sir Fulke.

So far as he could observe, it was standing exactly in its old position. There was no sign of its having moved. How could it have moved?

Each of the armoured figures looked exactly as when the juniors had seen them last.

Mauleverer did not speak, but his eyes seemed to beseech Wharton, as the captain of the Remove came back.

"It's not moved," said Harry.

"Sure?"

"Quite sure, old chap!"

Mauleverer stared into the fire. Bob had fanned it into blaze, and was heaping up half-burnt embers. But the schoolboy earl still shivered, as if the cold were in his very heart.

Wharton closed the doors of the room. The juniors did not think for a moment of leaving their chum. No one else in the house seemed to have heard the cry that had awakened them. The servants' quarters were at a distance; only Brian Mauleverer's room was occupied within range of hearing. But Brian had not turned out.

Wharton thought of him, and asked Mauleverer whether he should call his cousin.

The schoolboy earl shook his head.

"No! What's the good?"

The juniors gathered round the fire. The night was cold, and they were

clad only in their pyjamas. For a long time there was silence, but Mauleverer spoke at last.

"A dream," he said. "Was it a dream? You fellows will think me mad, or a funk. But I saw—I saw—I——" He shuddered.

"What did you see, old fellow?" asked Nugent softly.

There was no vestige of colour in Mauleverer's waxen cheeks. But he was calm now, and his voice was steady as he answered.

"I think I fainted. Did you fellows find my bedroom door open?"

"No; shut."

"Was Sir Fulke in his place?"

"In his place? Of course!"

"Was there—was there anybody in the room, or—or anything?"

"Good heavens!" murmured Wharton under his breath. Aloud he said: "No, old fellow, nobody—nothing that's not here now. If there'd been anybody, he couldn't have cleared. I heard you cry out, and came at once."

"Then it wasn't a trick?" said Mauleverer.

"A—trick?"

"Harry, old man"—Mauleverer's voice grew husky—"as I'm living, my bedroom door opened and Sir Fulke came in—Sir Fulke Mauleverer——"

"Mauly!"

"Unless I'm mad, I saw him!" Mauleverer shivered. "I remember I cried out; then I must have fainted. You fellows know I'm not a funk, to be frightened by a shadow. I saw Sir Fulke—in armour——"

The juniors exchanged alarmed glances.

"You'd been dreaming, old chap!" said Bob, uncomfortably.

"I had—I know I had! But it was he—the signal of death to a Mauleverer!" muttered the schoolboy earl.

"Well, I'm not afraid! It was only the horror of it——"

"Mauly!" exclaimed Wharton sharply. "Look here, old man, if you saw the armoured figure, there was somebody inside it——"

"I've thought of that. It might have been a cruel trick. But you say yourself that there was nobody here——"

Wharton crossed over to the mail-clad figure. The armour was empty.

"Look about the rooms, you fellows," said Harry. "It's barely possible——"

The juniors searched, though without expectation of making any discovery. Every recess was looked into. There was not the remotest trace of an intruder.

Yet if someone had played a trick with the mail-clad figure it was evident that he could not have escaped unseen. Wharton had been on the spot at once—his chums close behind him. The corridor had been flooded with electric light. The upper end of it was a blank wall and shuttered window: and in the other direction any fugitive from Mauleverer's room must have passed the doors of all the rooms occupied by the Famous Five. A trickster could not have escaped unseen, that was certain.

The juniors gathered round the fire again. Every face was grave. There was little doubt in their minds that Mauleverer had cried out in the grip of a terrible nightmare.

But they did not say so.

Bob Cherry heaped more wood on the fire. The juniors were sleepy, but they did not think of bed. But Lord Mauleverer rose to his feet at last.

"I'm keepin' you fellows up," he said. "You're tired. I'm goin' back to bed."

"Not alone," said Harry.

"It's all serene, old fellow."

Wharton shook his head.

"Whatever it was—dream or not—you're not being left alone again to-night, Mauly. There's room for two or three in that big four-poster of yours. One of us is going to stay with you."

Lord Mauleverer smiled faintly.

"It's rotten to worry you fellows like this," he said. "A jolly Christmas I'm givin' you, begad!"

"Rot, old chap!"

And when the other fellows went back to bed Harry Wharton went with Lord Mauleverer, quite determined that the schoolboy earl should not be left alone.

Wharton kept the electric light on, and in a short time he was glad to see that Mauleverer was asleep. He did not sleep so soon himself; he lay thinking of the strange occurrence. And suddenly he gave a start. For a moment it seemed to him that he heard a sound in the adjoining room—a sound of movement. He started up in bed, listening intently, with throbbing heart. But the sound was not repeated; he heard nothing but the faint wail of the wind.

He slept at last, fatigued with watching, and he did not open his eyes again till the sun of the winter morning was glimmering in at the windows.

THE NINTH CHAPTER DRAKE ARRIVES!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were feeling a little heavy-eyed when they

came down in the morning. But a good breakfast and a spell of skating on the frozen lake made them feel quite themselves again—with the exception of Lord Mauleverer. Mauly was quiet and calm, and even cheerful in a way; but the juniors could see plainly enough that the strange events of the night had told on him. At Mauly's request nothing was said to Sir Reginald Brooke on the subject; he did not wish the kind old gentleman to be distressed. And the juniors mentioned none of the circumstances to Brian Mauleverer. The least said, the soonest mended, was Mauleverer's



The firelight glimmered on a figure in armour—the figure of Sir Fulke Mauleverer—towering in the gloom. A wild shriek broke from Herbert Mauleverer, before he fell back in a dead faint.

view ; and probably he did not care to hear Brian's comments on the subject. It was odd enough, when the juniors came to think of it, that Brian had heard nothing during the night, as his quarters were so close at hand ; but if he was in ignorance of what had occurred, it was as well to leave him so.

Mauleverer did not join the skaters ; and while his comrades were gone out, Wharton looked for the schoolboy earl, and found him in his den. He was seated in a deep armchair, with his eyes fixed on the armoured figure of Sir Fulke, his face strangely pale and worn. He glanced up with a smile as Wharton entered, but the smile evidently was forced. And it came into Wharton's mind that the strange visitation had told upon Mauly more than he had guessed.

" You're coming out on the ice, old fellow ? " said Harry.

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

" I think not. Lazy, you know. "

" But—— " said Harry.

" Besides, Drake's comin' to-day, " said Mauleverer. " I think I'll go down in the car to meet him at the station. Like to come ? "

" Good ! " said Wharton. " When do you go ? "

" Twelve. "

" Right-ho ! I'll be ready. Won't you come out for a run now ? "

" Dear boy, you go ahead with the strenuous life. I lost some sleep last night, an' I want a little extra nap. "

Mauly closed his eyes. Harry Wharton joined the skaters ; but as soon as he was gone from the den, Mauly's eyes opened again. His glance turned almost haggardly on the figure of Sir Fulke.

Brian Mauleverer joined Harry Wharton as he was going down to the lake. The young man was

smoking a cigarette, as usual, and he seemed in a cheery mood.

" 'Nothin' wrong with Herbert, is there ? " he asked suddenly.

" Mauly ? " said Wharton.

" Yes. He seemed a little off his feed this mornin'. " Brian looked curiously at Wharton. " I hope the ghost story didn't give him a jolly old nightmare last night ; but from his looks I'm afraid it did. "

" Very likely, I think, " said Harry.

" Friend of yours comin' down to-day, I believe ? " said Brian, changing the subject.

" Yes, Jack Drake. He used to be at Greyfriars with us, " said Harry.

" Oh, a schoolboy ? "

" Well, it's not long since he was a schoolboy, " said Wharton, with a smile. " He's a jolly good sort. "

Brian nodded, and strolled away into the park, while Wharton joined the skaters. The captain of the Remove left his comrades in time to join Mauleverer for the run to the station. Mauleverer looked a little more like his old lazy and cheerful self as the car ran down the drive in the frosty sunshine. But the signs of strain in his face were only too clear.

" Mauly, old man, " said Wharton, as the car left the park gates behind, " I've been thinking—— "

" About the giddy ghost ? " asked Mauleverer, with a faint smile.

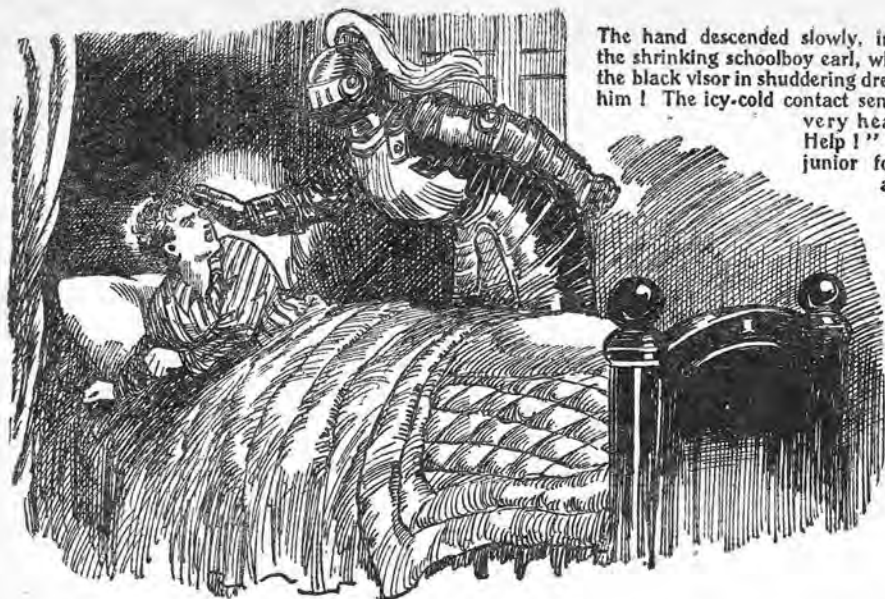
" Yes, old chap. I know it's not an agreeable subject to you, " said the captain of the Remove, " but I want to ask you a question. Now it's all over—now it's daylight—do you feel sure that you saw—what you thought you saw last night ? "

Mauleverer was silent.

" Yaas, " he said, at last.

" You feel sure it wasn't a dream ? "

" Yaas. "



The hand descended slowly, inexorably upon the shrinking schoolboy earl, while he watched the black visor in shuddering dread. It touched him! The icy-cold contact sent a chill to his very heart. "Help! Help!" The terrified junior found his voice at last.

"Then what do you think?"

The schoolboy earl did not speak.

"If you saw it, Mauly, it must surely have been some sort of a trick," said Wharton.

"I don't see how."

"Neither do I," said Harry, with a nod. "Nobody else was there—nobody but ourselves—even if anybody in the house could have thought of playing such a dastardly trick. But——"

"But what?"

"Well, to put it plain, old chap, ghosts are all rot," said Harry.

"Now, we're going to meet Drake, and I'm more glad than ever that he's coming. You know that when Drake left Greyfriars he entered the service of Ferrers Locke, the famous detective. He's a detective himself, now."

"Yaas."

"Well, my idea is, tell Drake all about it, and see what he thinks," said Harry. "Sort of professional opinion, you know."

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"This isn't the kind of business a detective could deal with, Harry," he answered. "Either it's a potty fancy—and I want a doctor for that, begad—or—or the old legend's true, and that old villain Sir Fulke Mauleverer has come back to warn me that I'm near the end. And if it's that, a detective can't help—not Ferrers Locke himself."

"But if it was some sort of a deception——"

"How could it have been? You searched my rooms, and there was no one there—and you know nobody could have got away before you arrived."

"That's true. But——"

"Nothin' doing, you know," said Lord Mauleverer.

"All the same, I'd like to tell Drake and get his opinion. He's no end of a keen chap. If there's anything to be found out, Drake's the fellow to find it out."

Mauleverer hesitated.

"Drake's a practical sort of chap," he said. "I'm afraid he'll think it's silly nerves. I don't want to be chipped."

"I understand that," said Harry. "But whichever way you look at it, Mauly, it's a serious matter. Drake will be glad to help, if he can help. If something of the kind happened again this Christmas, you'd feel the shock pretty seriously. Let Drake know, anyway."

"I'll do whatever you like," said Mauleverer, at last.

"Good man!" said Wharton, relieved.

The car stopped at the station, and Mauleverer and Wharton went on the platform. The train came in, and a cheery, good-looking youth with very keen eyes jumped out and waved his hand to the two juniors. They rushed across the platform to greet him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

JACK DRAKE TAKES A HAND!

JACK DRAKE looked very merry and bright.

He shook hands warmly with Wharton and Lord Mauleverer, evidently glad to see his old Greyfriars schoolfellows again.

"It's jolly to see you!" he exclaimed. "Topping, in fact!"

"You're looking just the same, Drake," said Wharton, smiling. "I don't think I should guess you were a giddy detective, to look at you."

"Begad, no," said Lord Mauleverer. "I suppose you've been runnin' in a jolly old cracksman before brékker every mornin'—what?"

Jack Drake chuckled.

"I'm a schoolboy again, for the Christmas holidays, at least," he said.

"I almost wish I were going back to Greyfriars again with you next term."

"But not quite?"

"No; not quite," said Drake, laughing. "I like my new life, and Ferrers Locke is a man anybody might be happy to work with."

The three schoolboys walked out of the station together. Drake's face was very bright as he sat in the car with the Greyfriars juniors.

He glanced round appreciatively as the car glided along a lane with all leafless trees, white with frost, on either side.

"This is a jolly change after Baker Street," he said.

"But not so excitin', dear boy."

"No, but rather more jolly," said Drake. "You fellows have already started late hours, I see."

"Oh, you see that?" asked Harry.

"I fancy so," Drake grinned. "I'm a detective, you know, and a disciple of Ferrers Locke. Tell me what it is, Mauly."

"Eh? What what is?" ejaculated his lordship, with a start.

"What you've got on your mind."

"Eh? How the thump do you know I've got anythin' on my mind?" demanded Lord Mauleverer.

"I shouldn't be of much use to Ferrers Locke if I couldn't see that, old scout," said Drake. "Has anything happened since you came home for the holidays?"

"By gad!" said Mauleverer.

"I hope nobody has burgled the Mauleverer plate?" said Drake. "But if so, hand over the case to me—the man on the spot, you know!"

"Not so bad as that," said Wharton, laughing.

"But something's happened?"

"Yes."

"Something in my line?"

"I don't know yet," said the captain of the Remove, "but we were going to tell you and ask your opinion."

"Good!" said Drake. "I'd be no end pleased if I could help. Get on with the yarn at once."

Drake leaned back on the soft cushions, drinking in the keen, frosty air, while Wharton told the story, Lord Mauleverer putting in a few words here and there.

Mauly's foreboding that Drake might "chip" him on the subject was not realised.

The schoolboy detective listened with quiet gravity, and it was easy to see that he was taking the incident with great seriousness.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Harry, when the story was finished and the schoolboy detective was in possession of all the circumstances.

"I think it's jolly lucky that Mauly asked me down for Christmas," said Drake quietly. "There's somebody in Mauleverer Towers who will bear watching."

"Oh, gad!" murmured Mauleverer.

"I suppose it's known that I'm coming?" said Drake. "Has it been mentioned about my connection with Ferrers Locke?"

"The fellows know, of course," said Harry, "and Mauly's uncle may know. It's not been mentioned otherwise."

"Better not speak of it, then," said Drake. "I'm coming along just as your old schoolfellow from Greyfriars, that's all. No need to put anybody on his guard if we can avoid it."

"That's so," assented Wharton.

"But you can't think——" began Mauleverer, perplexed.



Drake lifted the slim junior in his arms and bore him into the outer room and placed him in the armchair before the fire. Mauleverer ceased to mutter; the pallor of death was in his face.

"It's a bit hard to know what to think, so far," said Drake. "But I'm going to look round, and then do some hard thinking."

And that was all Ferrers Locke's assistant had to say. The car glided up the drive at the Towers. Brian Mauleverer was strolling on the terrace with his inevitable cigarette, and he came to meet the juniors. Lord Mauleverer introduced Drake, who was referred to simply as a former Greyfriars fellow. Brian was genial enough to him, but took no special note of the newcomer, evidently not having the faintest idea that Jack Drake was

anything but what he looked—a cheery schoolboy.

Drake met the rest of the Greyfriars party at lunch. Wharton had already spoken a word to his chums, and no reference was made to Drake's profession. After lunch Lord Mauleverer sought out Harry Wharton, with a rather worried look on his face.

He found the captain of the Remove on the balcony, enjoying the view of the parklands.

"You remember what I told you fellows before we broke up at Greyfriars," he said.

"About your cousin?"

"Yaas. Drake's come here in the same way, and—and I suppose I ought to let him know. But I couldn't let him know before he came, and—and now it doesn't seem specially necessary to mention it, as he's landed, what? I hate referrin' to the subject, of course."

Wharton smiled.

"Drake's landed, as you say," he said. "No need to mention it now, I should say."

Lord Mauleverer looked relieved.

"I'm glad you think so. I was bound to let you fellows know—and Drake, too, if I'd seen him—but I didn't! Now it's too late, let it drop—what?"

"I should think so," assented Harry.

"Good!"

And nothing was said to Jack Drake on the subject of Brian Mauleverer's peculiar antecedents. But it is probable that Ferrers Locke's pupil needed telling very little on the subject; he had had more than experience enough to read the signs that were indelible in Brian's face, and he needed no prompting to make him decide, at the first meeting, that Brian Mauleverer had been a "bad hat," and had not changed since.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

THE GHOST WALKS AGAIN!

HARRY WHARTON had looked forward to the arrival of Jack Drake as the means of solving the strange mystery of the ghost of Mauleverer Towers. But in the course of the day he was conscious of some disappointment. True, it was Drake's object to appear nothing but a careless schoolboy on holiday, and to keep the "detective" quite out of sight. If he was playing that as a part, he was playing it remarkably well. For no one seeing Drake among the Greyfriars juniors at the Towers would have dreamed that he had any thought in his mind but to enjoy his Christmas holiday. He skated on the frozen lake, he rode one of Mauleverer's ponies, he wandered in the great picture gallery, he chatted to Jerningham, the stately old butler, and he played a game of billiards with Brian Mauleverer. He contrived to put a great deal into the afternoon; but nothing of it, so far as Wharton could see, had any connection with the mystery he had undertaken to solve.

And in one respect Drake seemed to have changed since he left Greyfriars—as Wharton discovered when he strolled into the billiards-room and found the schoolboy detective at play with Brian Mauleverer. The captain of the Remove learned that there was a fiver on the game. He made no comment; it was no business of his. But he was surprised, and he was not pleased. The "bad hat" was evidently at his old tricks again, in spite of his supposed reform; and Drake had been led into it. After leaving the billiards-room, Drake walked on the terrace in the dusk, and Harry Wharton joined him there.

"We're going to have tea up in

Mauly's den," he said. "You've seen Mauly's quarters already."

"Oh, yes; and looked at Sir Fulke!" said Drake. "He looks a bit too solid to take midnight saunters, doesn't he?"

"He does," agreed Wharton. "You seem to get on fairly well with Mr. Brian?"

Drake looked at him.

"You don't like the chap," he said.

"Hem!"

"I'd never heard of Mauly's cousin before," said Drake. "Good reasons for keeping him dark, I dare say. It would be a bad day for the Mauleverer family if Mauly took a header through the thin ice when he's skating, Wharton. Mr. Brian isn't exactly the johnny to make a reputable head of a noble family."

"You think he's a bad hat?"

"I don't think, I know! It's amazing that Mauly should have a relation like that. Son of a younger son—brought up expensively and left with hardly a brown," said Drake thoughtfully. "It's not uncommon for fellows of that kind to go to the dogs. Unless I'm mistaken, the worthy Brian went to the dogs at top speed, and landed there up to the neck."

"I see you've worked it out," said Harry. A sudden thought struck him. "Of course, you've been drawing him."

"I've been getting posted," said Drake coolly, "and I know what to think of a man who eggs a schoolboy to play for money."

"Oh!" said Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was Bob Cherry's stentorian voice. "You fellows coming in to tea?"

"Right-ho!"

Tea in Mauly's den was a good deal like a spread in the study at Greyfriars. Sir Reginald Brooke joined the

merry circle for a while, and Brian Mauleverer came in, to smoke cigarettes and chat.

Once or twice Brian made allusion to the ghost story, but the juniors, realising how distasteful the topic was to Mauleverer, headed him off, as it were.

There was besides a topic of great interest to the juniors—a dance that they were to attend at a neighbouring mansion in the evening. Lord Mauleverer was to take his whole flock, and he asked Brian whether he was coming.

The young man shook his head.

"I'm readin' up farmin', you know," he said. "I'm goin' to put in an evenin' of steady readin'. You young fellows go off and enjoy yourselves."

And after dinner the party rolled away cheerily in the big car. Harry, who eyed Mauleverer anxiously at times, could see that the fall of darkness brought a sombre shade to the face of the schoolboy earl, and guessed that Mauly was looking forward to the coming night with uneasiness. He was glad that Mauly's mind was to be occupied till bedtime.

It was at a late hour that the party returned to Mauleverer Towers. Sir Reginald Brooke had gone to bed, but Brian was found in the smoking-room, in a haze of cigarette smoke.

"Had a good time?" he asked.

"Top-hole!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"The top-holefulness was terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Brian grinned.

"That's good!" he said. "Good-night!"

And the juniors went up to their rooms.

They gathered in Lord Mauleverer's den to say good-night to his lordship. Mauly was smiling cheerily. Whatever

he felt inwardly, he was not likely to show any outward sign of disquiet if he could help it. Bob Cherry and Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh went to their rooms sleepy and contented. Wharton and Drake lingered for a few minutes.

"Mauly, old man, let one of us camp with you to-night," said Harry in a low voice.

"Rot, old fellow!" answered Mauleverer.

"But if there was anything——"

Mauleverer shook his head.

"I'm not draggin' anybody else into it," he said. "If there's anythin', it's for me to stand."

Wharton looked at Drake.

"There won't be anything if there's somebody with Mauly," said the schoolboy detective. "Mauly, old man, keep your pecker up—and if something happens to-night, all the better. It will help us to clear up the mystery."

Mauleverer smiled faintly.

"Well, good-night, old infants!" he said.

Wharton took a last glance at the mail-clad figure of Sir Fulke as he went. The door closed.

Drake went to Wharton's door with him. The face of the schoolboy detective was very grave.

"I sha'n't sleep to-night," he said in a low voice. "You'd better not, either, Harry. But keep in your room unless you hear an alarm."

"You think——"

"I think that the scoundrel will try to repeat his villainy, if he finds the coast clear," said Drake.

"But—I can't understand! Why should anybody try to hurt Mauly? Who could want to?" muttered Wharton. "He hasn't an enemy in the world. Some lunatic, perhaps."

"If it's a lunatic, there's method

in his madness," said Drake dryly. "Poor old Mauly keeps it under, but he's fairly shaken up by this. A little more of it, and Mauly's condition will be pretty serious. Fellows have died under shocks like that."

Wharton started.

"But—but you can't suspect——"

"We shall know better what to suspect when the ghost has walked again," said Drake, and he nodded good-night and left Wharton to himself.

The captain of the Remove was not likely to sleep. He turned out the light and waited. His anxiety for Mauleverer drove away the thought of slumber. And Jack Drake, in his room across the corridor, was not thinking of sleep. After turning out the light, he lifted a chair close to the door, sat down, and listened—and for a very long time Drake did not stir, though his eyes did not close.

The light still glimmered under Lord Mauleverer's door till a late hour. The schoolboy earl was tired, but he was disinclined for sleep. But when the hour of one tolled out, Mauleverer rose at last from his chair by the log fire and turned wearily to his bedroom.

He left the electric light burning in his den.

He switched on the light in the adjoining bedroom, and the hurried glance he gave round him showed how the strange visitation of the previous night had told on his nerves.

He undressed and got into bed, leaving the electric light at full force.

If the ghost of Mauleverer Towers walked that night, it would not walk in darkness.

Mauleverer did not sleep; but at last, after long listening to the December wind wailing without, he dozed.

He came out of the doze with a start.

A thrill ran through him, and a groan came to his lips.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!

The tramping of iron feet was not loud—but it was clear, distinct. Lord Mauleverer sat up, pressing his hand to his heart. His face was chalky white and dewed with sweat.

His eyes were fixed on the open doorway between the rooms.

He knew what was to appear.

His starting eyes fell on the armour-clad figure advancing from the outer room, the visor closed; advancing with steady iron tread.

Closer and closer!

It was no dream of the night, no fancy born of darkness and shadow. In the full glare of the electric light

Sir Fulke Mauleverer towered over his unhappy descendant—and a gauntleted hand rose over Mauleverer as he cowered on the bed.

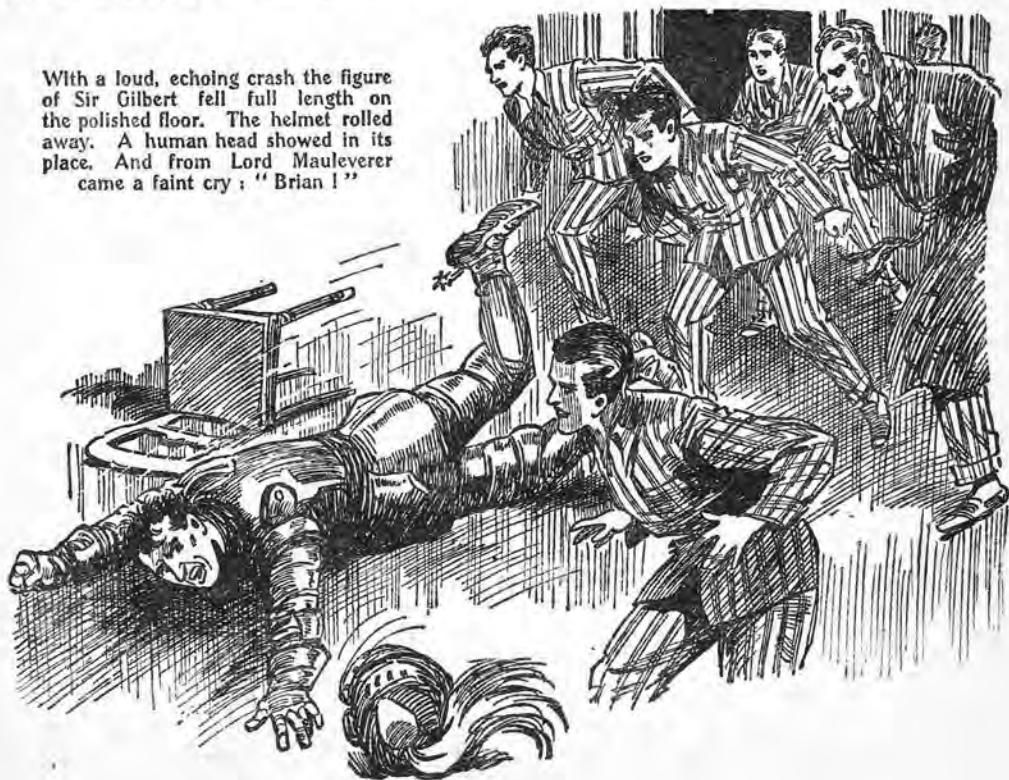
The hand descended slowly, inexorably upon the shrinking schoolboy earl, while he watched the black visor in shuddering dread. It touched him! The icy-cold contact sent a chill to his very heart.

"Help! Help!"

The terrified junior found his voice at last. His cry rang through the room as he tore himself away from that phantom touch and rolled from the bed, on the other side, with a crash. And then, as he lay, wild incoherent mutterings came from his lips; and for the moment, at least, Lord Mauleverer's senses failed him.

Maully had received a terrible shock.

With a loud, echoing crash the figure of Sir Gilbert fell full length on the polished floor. The helmet rolled away. A human head showed in its place. And from Lord Mauleverer came a faint cry: "Brian!"



THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

THE AMAZING DISCOVERY!

JACK DRAKE tore open his door and switched on the electric light in the corridor. At the same moment Wharton's door opened, and his face, white as death, stared out.

"Drake, it's Mauly——"

"Come on!"

They raced to Mauleverer's room. The whole corridor, bright in the electric light, was before them. They hauled open Mauleverer's door, and the room before them was bright with light. The room beyond was lighted, too, and from that room cries came faintly, incoherently.

"See that no one gets out, Wharton!"

"But——"

"I'll see to Mauly."

Drake ran across into the bedroom. Wharton remained in the doorway of the outer room.

If some foe was there—some ruthless scoundrel—as Drake evidently suspected, he had no chance of passing Wharton and escaping. Bob Cherry, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh hurried out of their rooms and joined the captain of the Remove.

"Better call Mr. Brian!" said Wharton hurriedly. "Drake thinks someone is here! We may want help!"

"Right!" muttered Bob, and he ran down the passage to hammer at Brian Mauleverer's door.

Meanwhile, Jack Drake had reached Mauleverer. The schoolboy earl, stretched on the floor, was alone in the bedroom. He was conscious; but there was no light of consciousness in his eyes; his glance was wild and strange, and the words from his lips came in a wild, meaningless babble. It was clear that the unhappy boy had received a terrible shock.

Drake lifted the slim junior in his arms and bore him into the outer room and placed him in the armchair before the fire. Mauleverer ceased to mutter, but his face was still distorted, his eyes strange in their look. The pallor of death was in his face.

Drake set his teeth.

"Another shock like that and there will be a new earl of Mauleverer, I think," he said in a low voice to his comrades.

"But what has happened?"

"We shall soon know."

Bob Cherry came back along the corridor.

"I can't make Brian hear," he said.

"He must be in a jolly deep sleep."

Wharton's lip curled. He had little doubt that the scapegrace had been drinking heavily before going to bed, and for that reason could not be awakened.

"Shut the door!" said Drake.

"Lock it!"

Wharton obeyed.

The juniors gathered round Lord Mauleverer. For some minutes the schoolboy earl looked at them dazedly, not knowing them. A terrible fear was in their hearts that Mauleverer was losing his grip upon his sanity.

But the wild look faded from his face at last, and he grew calmer. He was shuddering from head to foot.

"It's the warning," he said, in a voice so low that the juniors could barely hear it. "I'm not afraid! I'm ready."

"Mauly, old man——" muttered Wharton.

A faint, tremulous smile glided over Mauleverer's white face.

"It's rotten to bother you fellows like this! But there was no doubt this time. I saw him. He touched me——"

"Touched you?" said Bob.

"Touched me! I felt the chill of the gauntlet."

"Impossible, old fellow," breathed Nugent.

Mauleverer's face worked.

"I never believed in the legend," he said—"never quite, at any rate. Now I've had proof. He touched me—I was broad awake—in the night."

"Who—what touched you?" asked Johnny Bull in a scared voice.

Mauleverer made a gesture towards the two armoured figures between the windows.

"Sir Fulke?" breathed Nugent.

"Yes."

"Old fellow——"

"Dear old chap," said Johnny Bull, "the armour couldn't move unless there was somebody inside it. And we can see there isn't."

"Search the room," said Drake.

"We did that last night," said Nugent. "There was nobody."

"Search, all the same."

"We may as well," said Bob. And the juniors proceeded to search. They examined every corner of the bedroom, and tried the door that led to the farther corridor. But it was bolted on the bedroom side, as it had been the previous night. Then they came back to Lord Mauleverer's den, and searched once more. But they gathered round Lord Mauleverer again, with clouded faces.

The schoolboy earl smiled — a ghastly smile.

"You see, Drake," he said, "nobody's here—and nobody could have got away."

"That's certain," said Wharton.

"Old fellow, you dreamed it," said Johnny Bull uneasily.

Lord Mauleverer made no reply to that. He knew that he had not

dreamed the terrible sight and the freezing touch of the gauntlet.

All eyes turned upon Jack Drake. His face was grave and grim.

"Drake," said Wharton huskily, "can't you help? Can't you give us some light? This is killing Mauleverer."

"I know that!" said Drake quietly. "That is the game."

"What?"

"You called Mr. Brian, Bob?"

"Yes. He couldn't hear."

"Did you go in?"

"His door was locked."

"Call Sir Reginald Brooke," said Drake.

Lord Mauleverer made a gesture.

"No, no! I——"

"You've put the matter in my hands, Mauly, and you must give me my head," said Drake gently. "I've got a reason. I'm going to save you from the scoundrel who has nearly driven you out of your senses and endangered your life."

"Drake!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Call Sir Reginald!"

Without further demur the captain of the Remove quitted the room. It was in less than five minutes that he came back with the old baronet, in dressing-gown and slippers, with pale and startled face. Sir Reginald hurried to his nephew.

"Herbert!" he said huskily.

"I didn't want them to tell you, uncle," said Lord Mauleverer. "It's rather a shame. But I've seen it!"

"Tell me all!" said the baronet, his voice quivering.

He listened, his pale face growing paler and more worn. The juniors stood in silence. Drake had quietly locked the door again after the baronet had entered. His face was hard and grim, and there was a glint in his eyes.

"My poor boy!" whispered the old baronet. "I——"

"I have something to tell you, sir," said Drake quietly. "Maully, old man, you have been tricked. A scoundrel has played on your fears, old fellow. It's a dastardly trick from beginning to end."

"But how—how?" exclaimed the old baronet. "There is no one here!"

"We've searched, Drake," said Bob. "You know we've searched!"

Drake nodded.

"Maully did not fancy what he saw!" he said quietly. "He saw the armour of Sir Fulke Mauleverer in motion. That means that somebody was inside it. It was not the phantom of the old knight. It was a cunning trickster who will gain by Mauleverer's death."

"Drake!"

"Look in the armour," said Drake.

"It's empty now."

"Look in it!"

Wharton obeyed. He shook his head.

"And now," said Drake, with a grim smile, "take off the helmet of Sir Gilbert."

"What?"

"The other suit of armour!" said Drake.

"Drake!"

All eyes turned upon the figure of Sir Gilbert Mauleverer. It stood motionless in its place.

"It was Sir Fulke I saw," breathed Mauleverer. "The black armour——"

"Take off Sir Gilbert's helmet!"

"But——"

Wharton was interrupted. There was a sudden amazing movement, and the shining armour of Sir Gilbert Mauleverer was in motion. With clanking footsteps, the armour-clad figure left its place, rushing towards

the door. For a moment the juniors stood transfixed, amazed, horror-stricken, unbelieving what they saw. But Jack Drake made a spring at the striding figure of the knight, and grasped at the armour, seemingly tenanted now by a living body.

"Back up!" shouted Drake.

He dodged a savage blow from a steel gauntlet, and clung to the figure in armour. Wharton and Bob Cherry, dimly understanding at last, rushed to his aid.

Crash!

With a loud, echoing crash the figure of Sir Gilbert fell full length on the polished floor.

The helmet rolled away.

A human head showed in its place—a human face, distorted with rage and fury and despair. And from Lord Mauleverer came a faint cry:

"Brian!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

UNMASKED AT LAST!

"**B**RIAN MAULEVERER!"

It was Brian Mauleverer—the scapegrace, the adventurer, the scheming plotter—exposed, and unmasked at last!

Lord Mauleverer started to his feet, with staring eyes. Sir Reginald Brooke gazed at the sprawling, armour-clad figure dazedly.

Jack Drake smiled grimly.

"There's your ghost, Maully!" he said quietly.

"Brian!" repeated Lord Mauleverer.

The young man stared at the startled faces, his features working with fury. A savage curse dropped from his lips.

"A trick!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, panting with relief. "He was hidden in the armour! Why, last night——"

"Last night he was hidden in the same place, I should say," said Jack Drake. "He had no time to get clear, according to what you told me, before you got on the scene. After playing his trick, he got out of Sir Fulke's armour and replaced it; then he heard you coming, and I imagine that at that moment he was fairly scared out of his rascally wits. He dodged into the other suit of armour as a desperate resource——"

"I—I see—now you——"

"I fancy he was palpitating there while you searched the room last night," said Drake. "But you did not guess—and he escaped——"

"I remember hearing a sound—after going to bed in Mauly's room. Of course——"

"And as he found it safe once, he felt safe enough to-night in hiding in the same way," said Drake. "Don't blame yourself—you didn't guess that there was a cunning villain—not hidden, but standing out in full view under your eyes—inside a suit of armour. But——"

"You guessed?" exclaimed Bob. Drake smiled.



"Get out, you cur!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. And with a black scowl on his face, and a curse on his lips, Brian Mauleverer went, quitting Mauleverer Towers for ever!

"That's my business," he said. "My business is to look as deep into a thing as possible, and where there's no explanation, to find one. I expected the ghost trick to be played again to-night. I listened at my door, but the rascal trod by too softly even for me to hear. I never knew that anything was on till Mauly cried out. But after that there was no chance of the rascal getting away, and as we saw nothing of him I knew

that he would be found inside the other suit of armour——"

"A thousand curses!" muttered Brian Mauleverer.

Drake gave him a scornful look.

"The less you say the better, you scoundrel!" he exclaimed.

"But why?" exclaimed the old baronet hoarsely. "Why—why did this man, befriended by my nephew, play so dastardly a trick——"

"Look at Mauleverer!" said Drake. "You can see the effect it has produced upon him. A little more and Mauleverer would not have lived. Even now the shock might have——" He paused. "You need not ask that scoundrel his reason, Sir Reginald. He is heir to the earldom of Mauleverer, and his object was Mauly's death."

"Good heavens!"

"The awful villain!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Lord Mauleverer breathed hard. The look on his face showed that he had already guessed, before Drake spoke. He knew the reason of Brian's dastardly plot.

There was no anger in his face as he looked at the baffled rascal. There was pain, and contempt, and grief. Even the hardy adventurer shrank from his cousin's steady look.

"It's clear enough now," said Wharton slowly. "That is why he told the ghost story—that's why the gauntlet fell—he had fixed that, of course, to work on Mauly's mind. That was his game from the beginning. Mauly, that rascal must go from here to prison. You can't run a risk like this again."

Mauleverer did not speak.

Brian clambered unsteadily to his feet in the clanking armour of the old Crusader. His face was white, his look bitter.

"What can you prove?" he said contemptuously, savagely.

"You will not be harmed, Brian," said Lord Mauleverer quietly. "You have acted like a villain. I received you here in friendship, trying to forget what you had been—a rascal, a sharper—a gaol-bird! This is how you have repaid me—by seeking my life! You would have succeeded; you knew how to play upon my belief in the Mauleverer legend; you would have caused my death. Jack Drake has saved me, and you will have no chance in the future; you can go unpunished. But go!"

"But——" began Bob Cherry.

"Let him go!" said Mauleverer.

"This very hour, then!" exclaimed the old baronet.

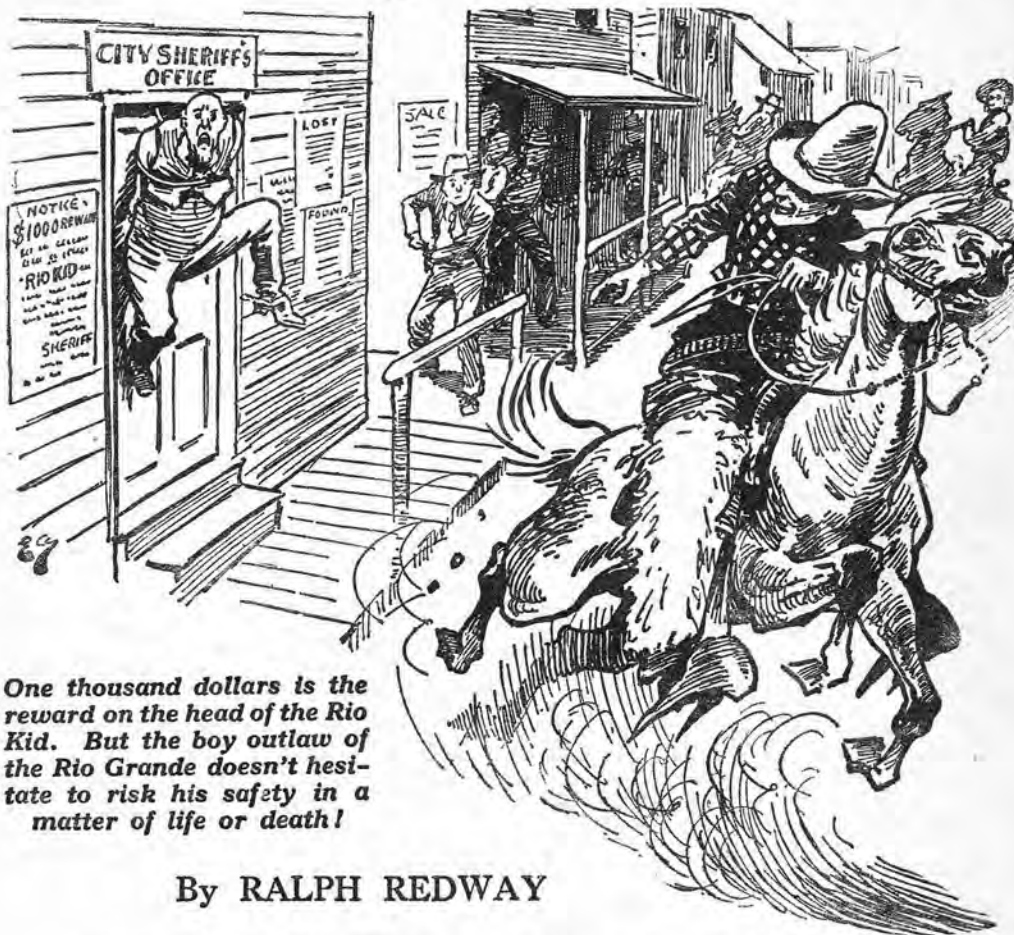
Five minutes later Brian Mauleverer stood at the open door below, with the Famous Five. Outside, the night wind howled, drifting snowflakes against the old windows of Mauleverer Towers. The adventurer looked into the snowy winter's night—he looked at the juniors. There was no relenting in their faces. As he hesitated on the threshold, Bob Cherry raised his hand.

"Get out, you cur!" he said.

And with a black scowl on his face, and a curse on his lips, Brian Mauleverer went, quitting Mauleverer Towers for ever!

Harry Wharton & Co. enjoyed their Christmas holiday—and Lord Mauleverer, quite his old cheery self again now, was as merry and bright as any fellow in the party. And the chums of Greyfriars did not seem able to make enough of Jack Drake. They were well aware that that Christmas might have been a tragic one had not Drake come to their aid and laid so effectively the ghost of Mauleverer Towers.

The Laughing Outlaw!



One thousand dollars is the reward on the head of the Rio Kid. But the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande doesn't hesitate to risk his safety in a matter of life or death!

By RALPH REDWAY

THE FIRST CHAPTER STRINGING UP THE SHERIFF!

"PUT 'em up, sheriff!"

Sheriff Watson, of Frio, gave a sudden start, and his hand shot towards the butt of the Colt in the holster at his belt.

A minute ago the sheriff, sitting at his pinewood desk in his office fronting the plaza of Frio, had been staring out moodily into the dusty

plaza, through the wide-open doorway. The sun was setting on the cow-town on the banks of the Rio Frio. Here and there horsemen were riding in from the Texas prairie; and among them, the sheriff's eyes rested on a cow-puncher whose goatskin chaps were thick with alkali dust from the plains. And when the puncher pulled in his cayuse, and threw the reins over the hitching-post

by the office door, Jake Watson wondered, hopefully, for a moment, whether the rider was bringing him news of the Rio Kid—the boy outlaw on whose head the reward of a thousand dollars was placed. News of the Rio Kid, and a chance of getting on his trail, would have been like meat and drink to the sheriff of Frio; disgruntled, exasperated, and embittered by failure after failure to get a cinch on the elusive boy outlaw of the Rio Grande.

The puncher tramped in. His Stetson hat, pulled low, hid his face all but a smooth boyish chin as he entered. But as he stepped into the office he pushed it back with one hand, and at the same moment a six-gun appeared in the other. And Sheriff Watson, with a convulsive start, stared at a face he had never dreamed of seeing in his own office, and reached for his gun.

"Don't!" said the Kid, smiling.

He was smiling—but the handsome blue eyes had a glint of cold steel in them over the levelled barrel of the six-gun. And the sheriff's hand stopped before it reached the butt of his Colt. It was not healthy to handle his hardware with the Rio Kid's gun looking him in the face and the Kid's eyes glinting over it.

"You!" breathed the sheriff. "You here, you dog-goned firebug! By the great horned toad——"

"Sure!" said the Kid, smiling.

With his left hand he threw the office door shut; then he stood leaning on it, regarding the sheriff of Frio, still smiling. But the gun in his hand never wavered. Jake Watson clenched his hands till the nails dug into his horny palms. But he sat tight. Within call were a hundred men whose guns would have leaped from their holsters at the name of the

Rio Kid. But the sheriff did not figure on uttering a call that would have been the last sound to leave his lips on this earth. He glared at the Kid with deadly rage in his eyes; but he controlled his temper.

"What you want, you gol-darned outlaw?" he muttered hoarsely. "You reckon you can bulldoze a sheriff in his own office?"

"Jest a few!" agreed the Kid, with a cheery nod. "You been hunting me a whole lot, sheriff—I guess you got a bunch of guys out on the trails now, looking for this baby; and I figured that you wanted news of the Rio Kid! I sure humped in to give you the news. You sure can see now, with your own two lookin' eyes, that the Rio Kid is around—and not fur away—not so fur, mebbe, as you'd like him!" And the Kid chuckled softly.

Jake Watson's hand made a convulsive move downward. But it stopped again. It was sudden death to touch a gun.

"I guess I said put 'em up, sheriff!" drawled the Kid. "You reachin' for the roof, like I'm asking you so polite?"

Slowly, the sheriff's hands went up above his head. With his hands up, he sat and glared at the Kid, with burning eyes.

The Kid stepped to him, jerked the Colt from his belt, and tossed it into a corner. Then he stepped back to his former position at the door.

"I'll say you're safer without your gun, sheriff!" he remarked. "You might try to pull it, and I guess I'd be sorry to have to spill your juice all over your office. I'd sure hate to shoot up a guy, so long as he was a good little man, and did as he was told."

There was a clatter of heavy boots

outside, and a hand on the door-handle. The sheriff's eyes gleamed. Instantly the high heel of the Kid's cowman's boot was jammed against the door, preventing it from opening.

The door-handle rattled, and a voice called :

" Say, sheriff ! You to home ? "

It was the voice of Abe Harrigan, the sheriff's man ; a glad sound to Jake Watson's ears. But the sheriff did not stir or speak under the Kid's gun.

" You want to tell that guy you're busy, and stall him off, sheriff ! " murmured the Kid. " And you want to tell him quick ! "

Sheriff Watson drew a quick, hard breath. His desire was intense to shout out the Kid's name—to bring

Harrigan in, gun in hand, with a band of Frio guys after him. But he did not want the Frio guys to find a dead sheriff in the office. He choked, but he jumped to the Kid's order.

" I guess I'm busy, Abe, " he called out. " I got a guy here chewing the rag. You give me a look-in later. "

" Sure, sheriff ! " The heavy boots tramped away.

The Kid smiled cheerily.

" What you want here, dog-gone you ? " breathed the sheriff, his voice husky with rage. " What game you playing, you pesky firebug ? "

" I'll give you a guess, sheriff ! " said the Kid banteringly. " You been hunting me with a rope—you got your guys combing the Huecas



" Put 'em up, sheriff ! " Sheriff Watson, of Frio, gave a sudden start and stared at the face he had never dreamed of seeing in his own office—the Rio Kid's ! " You here, you dog-goned firebug ! " he breathed.

for me now, rubbering after my hide-out in the hills. I guess you aim to string this baby up on the nearest tree, if you get a cinch on him. Ain't that the programme, sheriff?"

"Yep!" snarled the sheriff. "I ain't telling you no lies, Kid! If I get you, you go up on a rope—and now shoot if you durn well like."

"I ain't come here a-shooting, old-timer," said the Kid. "I got a rope for you, same as you have for me." He made a gesture with a lasso coiled on his left arm. "You get me, sheriff? I guess you ain't stringing me up on a cottonwood in the Huecas—not so's you'd notice it, sheriff! Your galoots are going to find you strung up in your office."

"What?" gasped the sheriff.

"But I guess I ain't going to make it last sickness for you, Jake!" grinned the Kid. "I always was a tender-hearted cuss! Why, if I pushed you over the range, mebbe they'd get a new sheriff in Frio that knowed how to set about roping in an outlaw—and I shouldn't be safe then, Jake—like I am with you playing sheriff!"

"Dog-gone you——" hissed Jake Watson. "You——"

"Pack it up!" smiled the Kid. "I ain't got a lot of time to waste here—Frio ain't too healthy for this baby. Put your paws down to your belt."

The Kid stepped to the sheriff and dropped the loop of the lasso over his shoulders. He drew the noose taut, pinning the sheriff's arms to his sides. Then with the rope he jerked him to his feet.

He holstered his gun, stepped to the door and opened it. Here and there, in the dusty plaza, were horsemen—at a little distance Abe Harrigan

was talking to a cow-man at the door of the Red Dog. But no one was near the door of the sheriff's office. The Kid set the door wide open, and pushed the sheriff to the front of it, his burly back to the door. Helpless, breathing fury, Jake Watson watched him with smouldering eyes.

The Kid threw the rope over the top of the pinewood door. Then, dragging on it, he pulled the sheriff off his feet. The rope was knotted to the door-handle on the inside. Sheriff Watson hung on the door, his boots a foot off the ground, and the Kid stepped back and surveyed him with a smiling face.

"I guess you don't look pleased, Jake!" he exclaimed. "But I guess if you were stringing me up, you'd sure put the rope a piece higher, old-timer! You ain't got no kick coming, Jake."

The sheriff did not speak. Rage choked him. The grip of the rope, pinning his arms to his sides, was like an iron band with his weight on it. It bit into his sinewy arms. His heels drummed on the door as he hung.

"I'll say that all Frio will sit up on its hind legs and snicker when they see you that-a-way, Jake!" smiled the Kid. "What you figure?"

The Kid, grinning, stepped out of the office.

"Duck your cabeza, Jake!" he grinned. "I'm sure going to shut this here door!"

The sheriff ducked his head as the Kid drew the door shut after him, with Jake Watson hanging on the outside of it, fronting the plaza. In a moment more the Kid was in the saddle. Sheriff Watson, strung up on the outside of his office door, was in full view of all Frio, and it was not healthy for the Rio Kid to linger now.

"So-long, Jake!" he called. "I guess this here dog-goned cow-town is going to see how much you and your bunch worry this baby! You want to see me again, Jake, you follow me up into the Huecas, and mebbe I'll string you up again, in a way you will dislike."

The Kid dashed away at a gallop. The dust flew in clouds from the galloping hoofs of his mustang as he went.

From across the plaza came a roar of voices. In a few moments, dozens of pairs of eyes were on the sheriff, strung up on the outside of his office door. Abe Harrigan came across from the Red Dog at a run, at his heels a crowd of Frio guys. They stared at the sheriff—they fairly goggled at him—and there was a roar of laughter.

"Say, sheriff—what the great horned toad —," gasped Abe.

"The Kid!" panted Jake. "The Rio Kid! Get after him, you goob—the Rio Kid—he's riding! Shoot, dog-gone you, shoot!"

"The Kid!" gasped Abe.

"The Rio Kid!" roared a score of voices.

"Shoot!" spluttered the sheriff. "Dog-gone you, shoot! Get the Kid!"

But the Rio Kid was already at a distance, riding hard. A dozen men rushed after him, blazing away with



"I guess you don't look pleased, Jake!" said the Rio Kid. "But I guess if you were stringing me up, you'd sure put the rope a piece higher, old-timer!"

their Colts. But the Rio Kid, laughing, dashed out of the cow-town on the prairie trail and was gone. Round the sheriff's office the crowd thickened. From all corners of Frio guys rushed up at the news of the Rio Kid's latest exploit, and roars of laughter rang in the infuriated ears of the sheriff. Even Abe Harrigan was grinning as he pushed open the door and released the hapless sheriff at last. And Jake Watson, with a crimson face of fury, slammed the door in the faces of the laughing crowd—but

the shut door did not keep out the sound of laughter, which echoed long and loud in the plaza of Frio.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

"STICK 'EM UP, KID!"

"WE'VE got him!" breathed Jake.

Moonlight, clear and bright, streamed down on the rocky slopes of the Huecas; on rugged cliffs and precipices, steep arroyos and shaggy pinewoods. In a deep gulch, where the pines cast dark shadows under the moon, the red flicker of a camp-fire glimmered through the night. And Jake Watson, as he saw it, breathed deep and hard, and signed to his men to be silent. If the Rio Kid was sleeping, it was well known that he slept like a cougar, with one ear open; and a footstep on the rocky soil would have been enough to awaken him.

That they were close on the track of the boy outlaw, the Frio bunch knew. A score of times they had seen him and exchanged shots during the past week. They were hunting him, and hunting him hard, in the almost trackless rocky waste of the Huecas—hunting him till they were bone weary; wearier than the elusive outlaw they sought, and in a mood growing blacker and more bitter with every passing day. Gladly, the Frio bunch would have quitted the trail and left the Kid to run, during those hard and weary days of combing pinewoods and tangled chaparral, rugged rocks and jutting precipices, amid yawning chasms and abysses. But the sheriff of Frio drove them to the task. Tireless himself, Jake Watson was ruthless to his posse—and weary, day after day, night after night, they combed the Huecas for the Kid. Since that day when the mocking Kid had strung him up on

the office door, for all Frio to look at and laugh, the sheriff had been on the trail; and he swore savagely that he would never quit till he had the Kid.

And now it looked as if, at long last, he had him. Many a sign had led them to that lonely, shadowy gulch, and they had left their horses at the lower end, and crept forward on foot, in the hope of surprising the Rio Kid in his camp. And his camp lay before them—the flicker of burning pine chips glimmering in the night. And by the camp-fire lay a figure rolled in blanket and slicker—motionless! And Jake's eyes burned, as he grasped his Colt with a convulsive grip.

The Kid was cornered at last—caught, for once, napping! High up in the Huecas, in that rocky wilderness, no doubt he had figured himself safe to camp, and take the rest he sorely needed; but he had not counted on the grim, fierce determination of the sheriff of Frio. The sheriff was not resting, he was not sleeping, that moonlit night—neither were his weary men. And closer and closer to the glimmer of the camp-fire in the mountain they crept—six of them, grim-faced, savage, gun in hand. And still the figure in the rolled blanket and slicker did not stir!

"By the great horned toad!" The sheriff's eyes danced. "We got him—we sure got him dead to rights! I'll say the Kid never was caught napping before; but we got him, we sure got him! Get your guns on him and riddle him with lead if he stirs a finger!"

"We got him covered, sheriff!" whispered Abe Harrigan.

They halted, standing within six or seven paces of the recumbent figure, every hand grasping a six-gun, every gun aimed at the sleeper. The sheriff called:

"Wake up, Kid! Wake up, dog-gone you! Stick 'em up, Kid—we got you covered!"

The sleeper did not stir.

"You hear me, Kid?" roared the sheriff. "You figure on playing possum, you dog-goned geck! Stick 'em up, or—one second, Kid!"

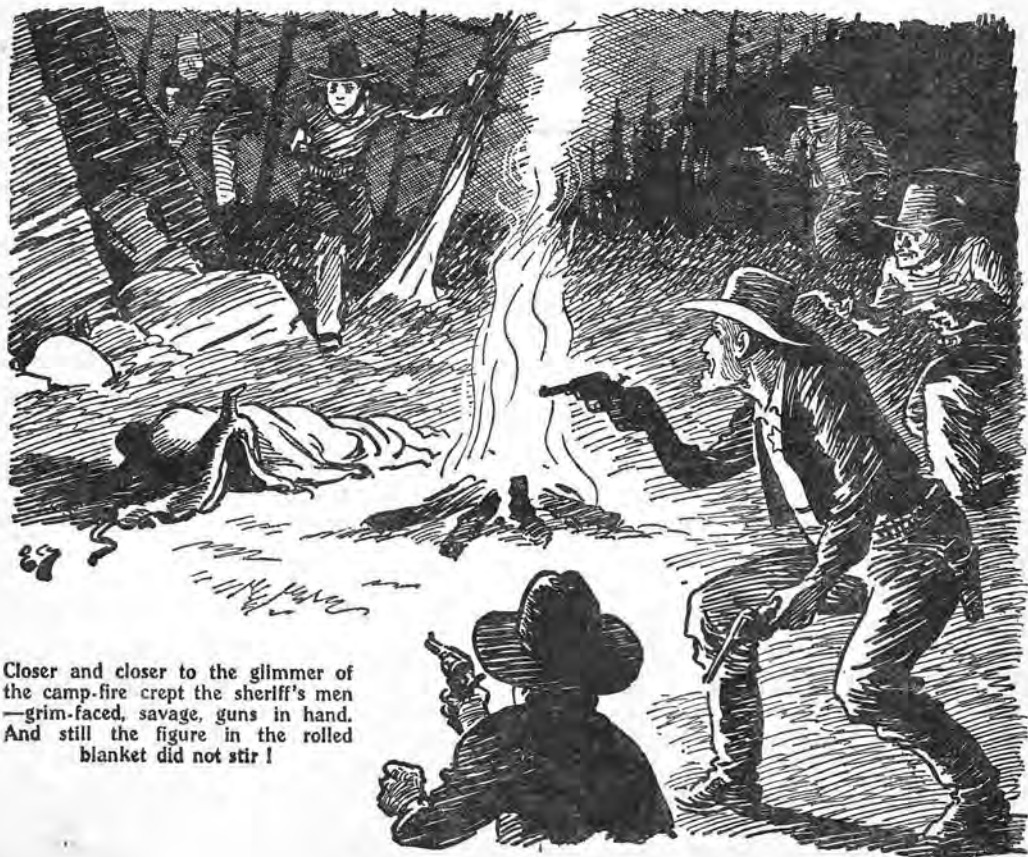
The sleeper still did not stir, but the sheriff reckoned that, under the blanket, a hand was seeking a six-gun, and he did not figure on giving the Kid a chance to burn powder. He fired, and the roar of the six-gun awoke a thousand echoes among the rocks and pines. The bullet crashed through slicker and blanket.

"I guess the Kid's got his!"

roared the sheriff, and he ran forward with the revolver smoking in his hand, his men at his heels. His gun was ready for another shot, if the Kid stirred. But the sleeper did not stir. And the sheriff, gloating, kicked the blanket aside—and then a yell of rage pealed from his lips as he beheld a log that lay beneath—scarred by the bullet that he had figured had gone through the Kid.

"Tricked!" breathed Harrigan. "Dog-gone my boots, the Kid is sure around—watch out, you-uns!"

The sheriff swore fiercely. But his men stared round with startled, uneasy eyes at the dark sweep of the pinewoods. It was a pine log that lay



Closer and closer to the glimmer of the camp-fire crept the sheriff's men—grim-faced, savage, guns in hand. And still the figure in the rolled blanket did not stir!

under the Kid's blanket—and they had been tricked into the firelight. They stood full in the light, full in the Kid's fire, if he was at hand—and only too surely they knew that he was! Hardly a few seconds later, from the dark pinewoods, black as a pit, came the flashes of a six-gun.

Crack! crack! crack! crack!

The firing was so rapid that the shots were almost blended into one. The sheriff yelled as a bullet tore along his cheek, whipping off a patch of beard and bronzed skin. Abe Harrigan yelled as another cut a tip from his ear. With a roar of rage and alarm, the sheriff's posse of Frio ran for cover, racing down at top speed the gulch that they had ascended so slowly and cautiously. Crack! crack! crack! rang from the darkness of the pines behind them, and bullets hummed like bees round the ears of the Frio bunch as they fled—and yell after yell rang wildly in the night as man after man was hit.

Yet no man went down. Scratches, some of them deep, every man had, spurring him on into frantic flight. But the hidden Kid was not shooting to kill. Every life in the bunch was at his mercy, and he could have thrown lead into every guy there as he ran; but the Kid was not the man to do it. Not by his own wish, or by his own fault, was the Kid an outlaw—and an outlaw's ways were not his ways. With raining bullets, he drove the Frio bunch to wild and desperate flight, but he was grinning in the darkness of the pines as he threw lead.

Wildly trampling boots echoed down the gulch, and the Frio bunch, running for their lives, vanished out of the moonlight at last, and the Kid ceased to burn powder. From the distance, echoing over the mountain, came the beat of hoofs. The bunch

had got back to their horses, and were mounting in hot haste, and riding—but they were not riding into the gulch. They were riding down the mountain at a gallop, in dread every moment of whistling lead from the dark shadows.

The Rio Kid emerged from his cover, the moonlight glimmering on a laughing face. The grey, black-muzzled mustang, his companion on many a wild trail, followed him. From the dark distance came an echo of galloping hoofs that died away in the night, and the Kid laughed as he stroked the glossy neck of his mustang.

"I guess we're through with that bunch, Side-Kicker, old hoss!" grinned the Kid. "I'll say they sure have lit out like they was sent for, old-timer! Mebbe Jake'll quit the trail, and I sure figure that his bunch will, if Jake don't! I'm telling you we're through, old hoss."

And the Kid, laughing, picked up his blanket and slicker, and in the darkness of the pines he slept as peacefully as ever he had slept in the bunkhouse at the old Double-Bar before hard fate made him an outlaw.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

RIDE TO DEATH!

"GEE-WHIZ!" exclaimed the Kid. Clatter, clatter, clatter, came the ring of hoof-beats on the hard rock, and the Kid checked his mustang and glanced back over his shoulder. But in the steep winding ravine he could not yet see the horseman who rode, fast as the unseen man was galloping on his track.

In the bright morning, the Rio Kid was riding, humming the tune of a Mexican fandango as he rode, light-hearted and carefree. The Frio bunch, he figured, had hit the cow-town in the home-trail, and he was through with them. For a week or more he



Facing page 112

SAVING HIS ENEMY!

Specially painted for the "Holiday Annual" by E. Ibbetson.

HA

had played hide-and-seek with his hunters in the rocky recesses of the mountain; and, now that he was through, he rode at his ease, on the trail for the Rio Grande. That day, he figured, he was going to leave the Huecas behind him; before sundown he would be riding knee-deep in grass, on the prairie trails he loved. But that clatter of hoofs on the rocks behind hinted that he had another guess coming.

High up in the Huecas there were few riders; no cows ever strayed in those desolate canyons and gulches to draw a puncher from the plains. It was a foe who was riding on his traces, and the Kid had a guess that it was Jake Watson; he had a lingering doubt whether the sheriff would give up when his bunch gave up. He shrugged his shoulders and rode on. If Jake followed him on this wild trail, the Kid reckoned that Frio would soon be in want of a new sheriff. It was no spot for reckless riding.

The narrow ravine which the Kid was following ended, opening like a gateway on the edge of a yawning barranca. Sheer from the rocky trail dropped the side of the chasm, sheer as the wall of a house. The barranca was deep and wide—deep, the Kid would have reckoned, to a thousand feet or more, way down to the level of the surrounding prairies, and wide by not less than a hundred feet, barring the way to all creatures that had no wings. But to the right, between the dizzy verge and the soaring rocks, ran a narrow path, which the Kid knew, and he backed his horse on it.

Between the high rock and the yawning gulf there was a width of less than half a riata's length—more than enough for the Kid, accustomed to ride in perilous places. He backed Side-Kicker on to that perilous path

and halted there, facing back, and now his hand rested on the walnut butt of a six-gun.

The corner of rock beyond which he had backed his steed was sharp almost as the corner of a building. It shut off the Kid's view of the ravine through which he had come.

The ringing hoof-beats sounded through that ravine as the pursuing rider galloped on. When that rider reached the end, as the Kid had done, he had to halt on the edge of the abyss, or else turn where the Kid waited. And in either case he came under the Kid's gun, and his life was at the mercy of the outlaw of the Rio Grande. And if it was Jake Watson, as the Kid reckoned that it was, it would be gun to gun, shot for shot, and the quickest man on the trigger would ride away alive, and the other would be left for the black vultures that soared high over the rocky Huecas. And the Kid did not reckon that it would be a galoot about his size who would be left for the vultures.

Clatter! clatter! From the hidden ravine the rider came galloping, galloping, and the Kid laughed. At that rate of speed he would not find it easy to pull in his horse at the end, where the ravine opened on the deep wide barranca; he risked going over the verge, to plunge a thousand feet on rocks far below. And it suddenly flashed into the Kid's mind that the pursuer did not know that the barranca was there!

No doubt he had picked up sign of the Kid—perhaps glimpsed his Stetson from afar as he rode—and knew that he was close behind the escaping outlaw. He knew the Kid was ahead of him, but he did not know the trail; surely he did not know that wild trail, or he would not be coming on at a

gallop, direct for the precipice in front of him !

The Kid whistled softly. His hand touched his gun, but he did not pull it—he did not figure that it was needed. When that mad rider came sweeping round the last bend of the winding ravine, at that mad speed, it would be too late for him to pull in his steed—horse and rider must go headlong over the precipice, and the Kid knew it. It was not going to be gun-play ; all that the Kid had to do was to sit in the saddle, beyond the rocky corner, and watch his enemy hurl himself to destruction.

Clatter ! clatter ! The hoof-beats rang loud and clear and near—the rider was close ; in a few moments more— And then the Kid, the hunted outlaw, whose wild deeds were the talk of every cow-camp and rodeo in Texas, knew, like the white man he was, that he could not stand for it. It was a foe, a deadly foe, who came, gun in hand at a mad gallop, but the Kid could not sit idly and see him rush to so fearful a fate. And he shouted :

“ Pull in ! You pesky bonehead, pull in your cayuse—you are sure riding into a barranca ! Pull in, and save your neck ! ”

His shout rang sharp and clear, but the clatter of the ringing hoofs may have drowned his words, or the warning might have been heard too late—or unbelievably by the sheriff of Frio. For the rushing hoof-beats came on unchecked, and a few seconds later the horseman leaped into the Kid's view, coming out of the ravine at a gallop—and the Kid knew that all was lost for him. Not till he was right on the verge could the rider see the barranca that yawned ahead—and then, madly, he dragged on his reins, too late.

And the Kid's sunburnt face whitened a little as he watched Jake Watson. For a fraction of a second the horseman hung there, struggling on the edge of the chasm, and then he was over—horse and rider plunging into the almost bottomless gulf that yawned below.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER ROPED !

WHIZ !
The lasso flew.

The Rio Kid did not stop to think. Had he lost a split second, it would have been too late. The swiftness of the leaping cougar would have been too slow. Swifter than the cougar, swift as the lightning-flash, the Rio Kid grasped his riata and made the cast.

Swift and sure was the Rio Kid's hand with the forty-foot rope—no plunging steer, no untamed buck-jumper, had ever escaped the rope when it whirled from the hand of the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. Swift and sure, uncoiling as it flew, the riata shot after the doomed rider as he plunged headlong over the cliff ; swift and sure, yet the Kid, had he had time to think, would hardly have reckoned that he could make the grade.

Over the rocky edge, down into the yawning chasm, the sheriff of Frio was shooting like a stone, when the whirling loop shot over his head and dropped round his body.

It was the tug on the rope that told the Kid that he had succeeded. His end of the riata was fast to his saddle ; and Side-Kicker braced himself, instinctively, with planted forefeet to take the shock, as he was used to doing when the Kid roped in steer or broncho. But firmly as he stood, the sudden tug and twang of the tautening rope almost dragged the mustang

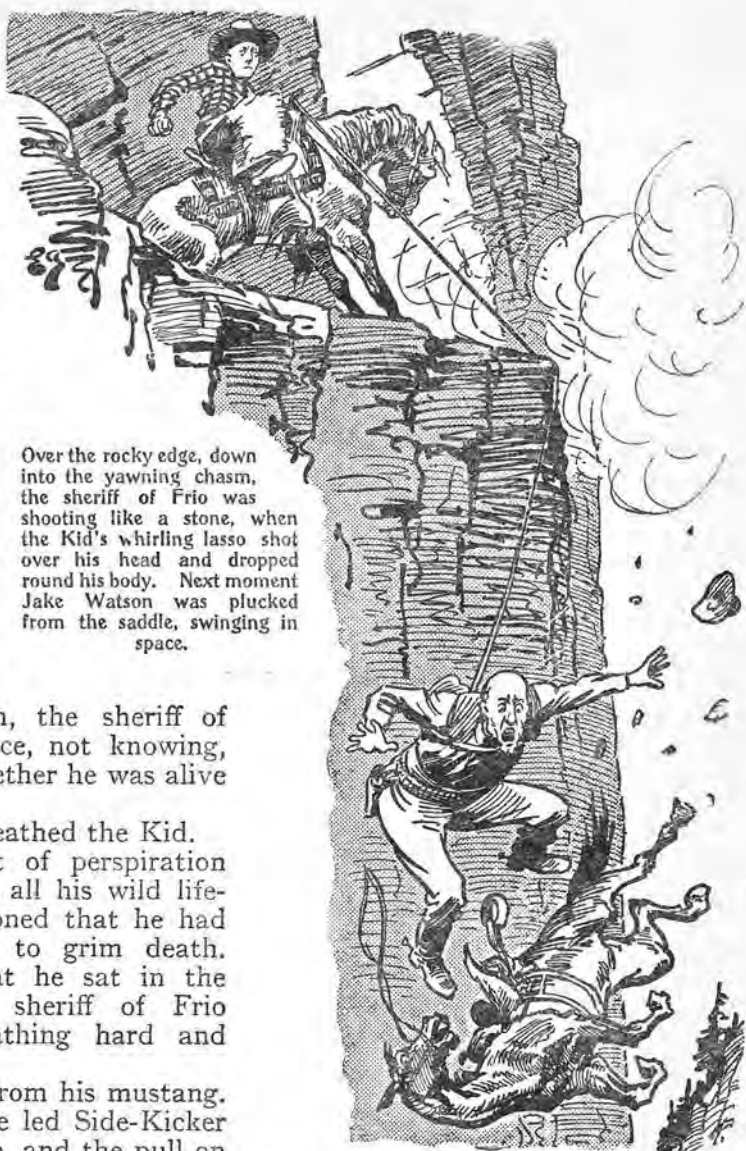
over the verge, and the Kid, for one wild moment, reckoned that he was going after the sheriff of Frio. But nobly the grey mustang stood the strain, braced back from the very verge of a terrible death; and at the other end of the riata swung Jake Watson, while his riderless horse plunged down, and down, and down, and disappeared into the far depths of the barranca below. Plucked from the saddle by the Kid's rope, even as he shot downward to death, the sheriff of Frio swung in space, not knowing, for the moment, whether he was alive or dead.

"Gee-whiz!" breathed the Kid.

He wiped a clot of perspiration from his brow. In all his wild life-trail, the Kid reckoned that he had never been nearer to grim death. For a long moment he sat in the saddle, while the sheriff of Frio swung below, breathing hard and deep.

Then he slipped from his mustang. Taking the reins, he led Side-Kicker back into the ravine, and the pull on the lasso dragged the swinging sheriff up to the rocky verge. The mustang pulled on, and the Kid stepped back to the edge of the precipice, grasped the lassoed sheriff, and dragged him up on the rock.

The sheriff of Frio did not speak. His bronzed face was white, his eyes



Over the rocky edge, down into the yawning chasm, the sheriff of Frio was shooting like a stone, when the Kid's whirling lasso shot over his head and dropped round his body. Next moment Jake Watson was plucked from the saddle, swinging in space.

fixed and glassy. He lay like a log as the Kid unhooked the riata, coiled it, and hooked it on his saddle again. He stirred at last, and dragged himself to his feet, leaning on the rock, breathing in great gulps.

The Kid smiled.

"I'll say that was a close call,

sheriff!" he drawled. "Say, you sure was burning the wind after this baby."

Jake Watson looked at him. He nodded, but did not speak. His glance went, for a moment, to the edge of the precipice, and he shuddered. Then he looked at the Kid again.

"O.K., feller!" smiled the Kid. "I guess it's shook you up a few—but I sure roped you in time, and Frio won't be looking for a new sheriff! I guess I allowed that I'd string you up again, sheriff, if you hunted me in the Huecas!" He chuckled. "But I'll tell a man I never figured on stringing you up that-a-way!"

The sheriff found his voice.

"You roped me!" he muttered. "I guess you're the only guy in Texas, Kid, so quick with the rope! What have you saved my life for, Kid? I guess you know I was hunting you with a gat in my grip, and if I'd got a bead on you it would have been you for the long jump! What d'you save me for, you geck?"

"You can search me!" grinned the Kid. "I guess it's jest my way."

The sheriff of Frio looked at him, long and hard. The gun had gone from his hand, dropping to the bottom of the barranca. But if the gat had still been in his grip, it was not in the sheriff's mind to burn powder. Long and hard he looked at the smiling Kid.

"You get me guessing!" he said. "You're a dog-goned outlaw, Kid, and a pesky firebug, and I guess I got to get you; but I'll tell the world you're as white as any hombre in Texas. Burn the wind, Kid—burn the wind! I guess I got to hoof it back to Frio, and I reckon I ain't going to hurry none—but when I get back I got to ride after you with my bunch. Burn the wind!"

The Kid, laughing, swung himself into the saddle. The sheriff's eyes followed him as he wheeled his horse on to the narrow trail between the barranca and the cliff.

"So-long, sheriff!" grinned the Kid. He swept off his Stetson in polite farewell. Then, with a clatter of hoofs and a light laugh, the Rio Kid was gone.

THE END

AN ODE TO HORACE COKER

By DICK PENFOLD

The Greyfriars Poet.

Who seeks to take the world by storm,
And thinks he's ruler of his Form,
In class, and playing-field and dorm?
Why, COKER!

Who grinds out poems by the yard,
And really is a comic card?
Who'd benefit by "six months' hard"?
Why, COKER!

Who once played footer in his pride,
And caused amusement far and wide
By netting for the other side?
Why, COKER!

When Aunt's "tips" come on the scene,
Who sits before a spread serene
With one who's Potty, one who's Greene?
Why, COKER!

Who keeps his schoolmates bright and gay
By spelling "captain" with a "k"?
Who gave the "Koker Kup" away?
Why, COKER!

Who really is a mighty man?
Who japes Removites (when he can)?
Who leaves George Robey "also ran"?
Why, COKER!

RIP VAN WINKLE at GREYFRIARS

by BOB CHERRY



A modern Rip Van Winkle visits Greyfriars—and criticises in no uncertain terms the present day school and its scholars!

HE came hobbling across the quad from the direction of the gates—a weird old johnny if ever there was one!

Wharton and Inky and I were sunning ourselves at the top of the steps. We simply blinked at him. He was bent nearly double with age and had two stout sticks to help him to walk. He wore tight-fitting trousers of a very ancient pattern, a bottle-green frock-coat and a venerable chimney-pot hat.

Wharton "capped" him when he came to a stop.

"Can we help you, sir?" he asked.

"Maybe you can," replied the old chap in a piping, quavering voice. "I want to see Doctor Dickinson."

Wharton shook his head.

"Sorry, sir, but there's no Doctor Dickinson here. Who is he?"

"Why, the headmaster, to be sure!" piped the old sport. "Show me to Doctor Dickinson at once, young fellow!"

We all registered puzzlement.

"Sure you've come to the right place, sir?" I asked. "This is Greyfriars School."

"Exactly; and the headmaster of Greyfriars School is Doctor Dickinson! Where is he?"

"The wherefulness is terrific, esteemed and ludicrous sir!" remarked Inky gravely—and then it was the visitor's turn to stare! He gaped at our dusky nabob as though he were a museum specimen.

"Bless me soul! A boy from the Indies!" he piped. "How could a boy from the Indies be expected to know Doctor Dickinson's whereabouts?"

Bolsy had had enough. When he got up again, he donned his coat, which seemed quite in order to us.

But it didn't meet the old boy's ideas in any way. Oh, no, thank you! He shook one of his sticks at Bolsy and fairly glared at him.

"Coward! Poltroon!" he shrieked. "How many rounds have you fought?"

Brownny looked over and answered: "Three, sir!" for Bolsy, and the old warrior simply danced.

"Three!" he gasped. "A Greyfriars boy giving in after three paltry rounds? Why, when I fought Slogger Sampson on this spot, I lasted fifty-eight rounds before I yielded!"

"Great pip!"

"Let me fight the winner of this wretched so-called fight!" raged our ancient guest. "I'll show him!"

And, believe it or not, the old warhorse dropped his sticks and actually began to peel off his bottle-green frock-coat!

Then a newcomer butted in. He was a somewhat decrepit-looking coachman who had ambled across from an ancient carriage that had pulled up in the drive.

"Now, now, sir! Time to be goin', sir!" he barked. "I promised 'em I'd 'ave you safe an' sound back in the nursin'-home by four, an' it's 'arf-past three already. This way, sir!"

"But I haven't seen Doctor Dickinson!" shrieked the old 'un.

"Can't 'elp it, sir! Time's time!"

And the coachman had his way, and the old boy hobbled back to his coach without having seen Doctor Dickinson.



"Let me fight the winner of this wretched so-called fight!" raged our ancient guest. "I'll show him!" And, believe it or not, the old warhorse dropped his sticks and began to peel off his bottle-green frock-coat.

We had a word with that coachman before he went.

"Who is he?" we asked.

"Ol' gent from the Redclyffe Nursin' Ome," was the reply. "Used to belong to this 'ere school when he was a boy, 'e did, an' he's allus wanted to visit it. Nice ol' chap. Only one weakness—sometimes suffers from delusions that 'e's back in 'is young days agin!"

"How old is he?" Wharton asked.

The coachman grinned.

"Now you're askin'! I don't believe it meself, but they do say as 'e's a hundred and fifteen year old."

"My hat!"

Mr. Lascelles came up while we were still standing staring after our vanished Rip van Winkle. We decided to ask his opinion.

Larry listened with interest. When Wharton had finished, he smiled and nodded.

"It's all quite genuine," he told us. "The old gentleman is known to us here by repute. He is certainly the oldest living Greyfriars Old Boy. And there certainly was a headmaster named Dickinson. If you'll look up the school records, you'll find out how long ago it was."

"But it couldn't have been as long ago as that, sir!"

"You can soon check it up."

Thereupon we made prompt tracks for the school library.

There we found a musty tome containing the school records of the early nineteenth century.

Doctor Dickinson was there as large as life. He came to the school in 1826 and left in 1838.

So the only conclusion left was that we really had been talking to a johnny who had attended Greyfriars over one hundred years ago.

Can you beat it?

The Referee's Decisions

(See "Greyfriars v. St. Jim's," page 67.)

HERE are the decisions you should have made at each stoppage—provided you are a good referee.

1. Wharton was charged heavily by Noble, but this could not be regarded as an offence, as Wharton had already broken Law 2 by attempting to dribble through on his own from the kick-off without another player touching the ball.
2. Nugent, receiving a forward pass from Hurree Singh with only Wynn to beat, was clearly offside. The goal should have been disallowed.
3. Though Hazeldene struck Blake in the penalty area, it was obviously accidental. The ball should be dropped to re-start the game.
4. As Tom Merry scored, Johnny Bull almost touched the ball—but not quite! No "penalty." Merry scores. St. Jim's 1, Greyfriars 0.
5. Cherry infringed Law 9 ("hands") by touching the ball, even by accident, and his goal should have been disallowed. Wharton's accidental trip over Noble's foot had no bearing on the matter. Free kick given against Greyfriars for handling.
6. Wharton had scored; the intrusion of Towser did not affect the play. Referee should see that Towser is removed from the field as quickly as possible. St. Jim's 1, Greyfriars 1.
7. Bull charged Merry legitimately, so no "penalty" could be claimed. Merry merely staggered slightly. The injury to Hazeldene called for a stoppage, the ref. signalling the Greyfriars trainer to come to his aid. The last 15 seconds are played out with no further score.

PUBLIC BENEFACTOR No 1!

By OWEN CONQUEST



THE FIRST CHAPTER

LOVELL'S BRAIN WAVE!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, had not spoken for five minutes.

This did not, perhaps, constitute a record. But it was unusual; and Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome wondered what was "up."

Lovell was taking his ease in the armchair in the end study. It was time for prep; and Lovell's three chums were sorting out their books reluctantly. Prep was one of the necessary evils of existence—one of the unpleasant things that couldn't be helped, and had to be stood—like bad weather, or a spill from a bike, or a Head's lecture.

Arthur Edward Lovell, however,

was not bothering about prep. He was thinking!

The wrinkle in his brow showed that he was thinking, as well as his silence. Thinking was not one of Arthur Edward's customary occupations. Silence was still more uncustomary with him. Obviously, something in the nature of a sudden brain-wave was going on.

"Prep, old man!" hinted Jimmy Silver.

Lovell grinned.

"Prep?" he said.

"Mr. Dalton was waxy this morning," said Raby. "We had to scamp it last night owing to the boxing match with the Modern chaps. Better not give it a miss again this evening."

Lovell shook his head.

Arthur Edward Lovell is hailed at Rookwood as Public Benefactor No. 1 when he invents a fool-proof scheme for making lessons as simple as A B C. But Arthur Edward and his schoolfellows reckon without the fatuous Tubby Muffin!

"I've been thinking that out!" he said.

"Thinking out prep?" asked Jimmy Silver, puzzled.

"Yes. Look here, you fellows," said Lovell, coming out of his reverie, and apparently prepared to impart to his chums the results of his deep cogitations, "it's high time something was done about this. Look at the time that's wasted in prep."

"Can't be helped."

"The question is, can it be helped?" said Lovell. "Waste of time is a jolly serious thing. Hour and a half every evening—think how that mounts up in a term. Look at the things we have to leave over, just because of prep. We might get up some boxing."

"But——"

"Or a rehearsal for our play——"

"Yes, but——"

"Or rag the Moderns," said Lovell; "lots of things in fact! We're busy chaps, and prep takes a big chunk out of every evening. Think of the whole life of a schoolboy, from the Second Form to the Sixth, and figure it out how much of that time is wasted in prep. It makes a chap's flesh creep to think of it."

"Horrid!" yawned Newcome. "But it's got to be did! Talking won't make any difference."

"Talking won't!" agreed Lovell. "But thinking might! I've thought this matter out, right from alpha to omega, and I know how to deal with it. I'm going to tell you fellows the secret, because you're my pals; but we shall have to keep it rather dark. If my stunt is a success, we're practically rescued from prep for the whole time we're at Rookwood."

"Great pip!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. blinked at Lovell.

Never had they suspected that youth of being an inventive genius. Lovell was a good half-back; quite a good boxer with a very hefty punch; good on the cycle-track, and good at swimming. But inventive genius had never been supposed to be one of his gifts.

But if Lovell thought of a stunt for enabling a fellow to steer clear of prep during his whole school career, it was obvious that Lovell was an inventive genius of the first water.

The discovery of printing, of steam, of the aeroplane sank into insignificance beside such a discovery as this. Lovell would be entitled not only to the gratitude of his chums, but—when the discovery became widely diffused—of all Rookwood school, and, indeed, of all other schools in the kingdom, if the discovery were communicated to them.

"Gammon!" said Raby, after a pause of astonishment.

"Lend me your ears, old fellow!" said Lovell. "I tell you I've thought it out," Lovell was speaking with a calm, earnest enthusiasm. "Dicky Dalton is taking us, at present, in the seventh book of the 'Æneid.'"

"Don't we know it?" groaned Newcome.

"He's down on cribs!" went on Lovell. "Fellow can't smuggle a crib into the Form-room without Dalton jumping on his neck. He bagged Peele the other day with a crib."

"The silly ass shouldn't have taken it into the Form-room," said Jimmy Silver. "Too risky."

"All very well," said Lovell. "Of course, a crib is useful in the study. But it's in the Form-room that you really want it. Look at what happened to Putty Grace the other day. He cribbed enough to see him

through, as he thought—and he was put on to a different place, and was all at sea."

"Hard lines!" said Raby. "But I'm blessed if I see what you're driving at. You're not thinking of taking a translation of the whole giddy 'Æneid' into the Form-room to-morrow morning, are you?"

"Not quite. We're doing the seventh book this term," said Lovell. "A translation of the seventh book will see us through all possible contingencies."

"But how?"

"You see, I've got the crib," explained Lovell. "My idea isn't to mug it up here in the study—the old-fashioned, slovenly way. My idea is to do it in a modern, efficient way. When we're called on to construe, we've got the English translation right under our eyes all the time. Instead of having had to worry the thing out of grammar and dics, like a dog worrying a bone, we're ready to hand out a perfect construe without any preparation at all. See?"

"But how?"

"Dalton will be pleased, too—and he's a decent chap, and I'd like to please him," said Lovell benevolently. "So long as a chap hands out a really good construe, Dalton hasn't anything to grumble at, has he?"

"No. But——"

"I'll work it out, and show you!" said Lovell.

The great inventor came to the study table, and took pen and ink and paper.

And Jimmy Silver & Co.—quite forgetful of prep now—watched Arthur Edward, while that inventive youth worked out the brilliant scheme which was to revolutionise school-work at Rookwood.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

TRYING IT ON THE DOG!

ON the following afternoon there were traces of suppressed excitement in several members of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

That afternoon Monsieur Monceau, the French master at Rookwood, was taking his class in the Fourth Form room.

Four members of the Fourth, at least, were prepared to deal with Monsieur Maximilien Monceau in the most efficient manner.

Lovell's wonderful scheme was to be tried.

Wonderful as the scheme was, the chums of the Fourth hesitated to try it on Mr. Dalton, their Form master. Dicky Dalton was well known to be a "downy bird." It was feared that his extremely keen eyes might see through even the most wonderful scheme.

So the great wheeze was to be tried first on Monsieur Monceau, who was a good-tempered and unsuspecting little gentleman, not likely to be on the watch for "ways that are dark, and tricks that are vain."

If it answered with Mossoo, then it could be tried, with more assurance of success, upon Mr. Dalton the next day.

"You see," said Lovell, with great wisdom, "a fellow can't be too careful. If you've got some medicine you're doubtful about, you give some to a dog and watch the effect. That's the idea now. Trying it on Mossoo is practically trying it on the dog, see? If he takes it all right, we'll give Dicky Dalton a dose to-morrow."

And Lovell's chums chuckled, and agreed that it was wise.

So that afternoon they were going to try it on the dog—Monsieur Monceau being the dog.

If success followed, prep practically was a thing of the past; indeed, a fellow would be able to keep up in class without the slightest worry.

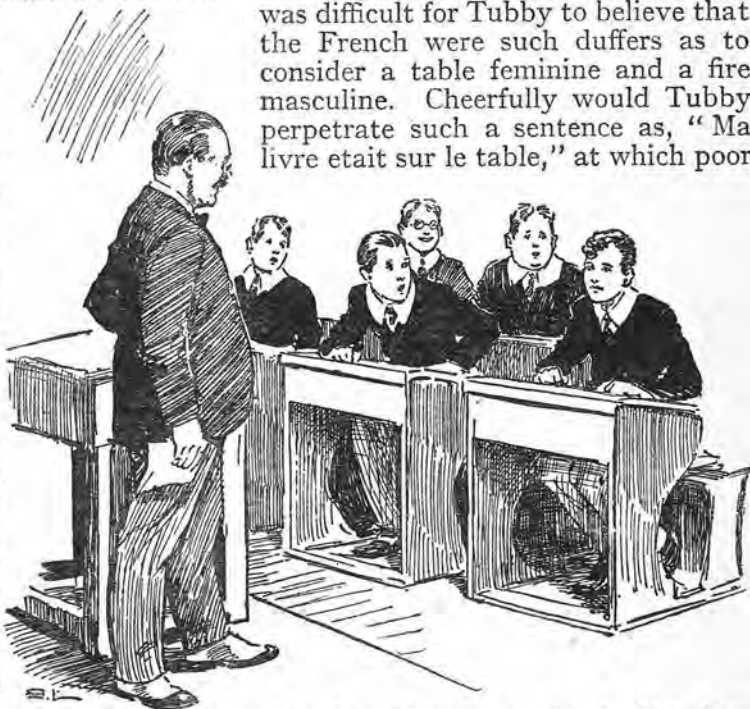
That this was not an excellent method of acquiring knowledge was a circumstance that escaped the notice of the juniors just then. They were too keen on the wheeze to think of details like that. Such reflections might occur later—especially when examinations came round, and they found their minds a beautiful blank on the subjects concerned. For the present they were not looking ahead.

The French lesson was rather popular with the Fourth, Mossou being so patient and good-tempered that no fellow was in danger of putting an undue strain on his intellect. Besides, Mossou could make even French instruction interesting. The Fourth at present were dealing with a very carefully edited edition of "Gil Blas," which they found entertaining.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were quite pleased to see Monsieur Monceau come in, and bow to his class in his polite way, with his sweet and agreeable smile.

Mossou always began with a sweet smile, though often that smile faded away and was replaced by a troubled frown, especially when he was dealing

with Tubby Muffin and French genders. Being a conscientious little gentleman, he gave particular attention to the backward members of his class—for which those backward members were not in the least grateful. Tubby Muffin had a firm, deeply seated conviction that all languages but English were "rot," and it really was difficult for Tubby to believe that the French were such duffers as to consider a table feminine and a fire masculine. Cheerfully would Tubby perpetrate such a sentence as, "Ma livre etait sur le table," at which poor



When it came to Arthur Edward Lovell's turn to translate, he did it without a falter. "Bon!" said Monsieur Monceau. The other fellows looked at Lovell in surprise, for he was not a brilliant French scholar.

Mossou would almost tear his hair and weep.

Muffin, being the most backward member of the Fourth Form—in French as in everything else—Mossou gave him particular attention, with really heroic self-sacrifice. Jimmy Silver & Co. were anxious to get to "Gil Blas"; but Mossou started with genders and Tubby Muffin. Such a sentence as "Ton oncle et ta tante

sont arrives," presented to the unfortunate Tubby difficulties that seemed insuperable. Mossoo took a chalk and inscribed it on the blackboard, and went through it word by word for Tubby's especial benefit, watched by a grinning class.

"Maintenant—now—you understand, isn't it?" exclaimed Monsieur Monceau, wiping his brow.

Tubby had listened with an air of great attention; but, as a matter of fact, he had been thinking of certain new tarts that were displayed in the school shop, and wondering whether he could borrow a shilling off Jimmy Silver after lessons in order to sample those tarts.

It was irritating to be aroused from important reflections of this kind, and Tubby felt it so.

"Vous comprenez—you shall understand, Muffin?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Translate zat sentence, Muffin."

"Oh!"

"I waits for you, mon petit."

Tubby Muffin cast an appealing look round, and then blinked at the blackboard.

"Ton oncle et ta tante sont arrives!" murmured Muffin. "It—it's something about a ton of tar——"

"Comment?" shrieked Monsieur Monceau.

"I—I—I mean——"

"You shall not have listened to me, Muffin. Ecoutez! Thy uncle and thy aunt have arrived——"

"Have they?" exclaimed Tubby.

"Now you shall understand."

"Certainly, sir!" Tubby Muffin jumped up eagerly. "I'm so glad, sir!"

"Vat?"

"I'm very fond of my uncle and aunt, sir!" said Muffin.

"Comment?"

"Can I go and see them, sir?"

Tubby Muffin left his place. Monsieur Monceau blinked at him and waved the pointer.

"Muffin! Zat you sit down!"

"But, sir, my uncle and aunt——"

"Mon Dieu! Sit down viz you!"

"Oh, very well, sir!" said Tubby indignantly. "Mr. Dalton always lets us go at once, sir, if our relations come to the school!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from the class. Monsieur Monceau looked at Tubby like a man in a dream.

"Vat? Vat? Is it zat your relations shall have come to Rookwood to see you, Muffin?"

"My uncle and my aunt, sir!"

"If your oncle and your tante have come, Muffin, you may leave ze class, certainly. But how do you know zat zey have come?"

Muffin stared at the French master in bewilderment.

"You've just told me so, sir."

"Vat?"

"You said distinctly, sir, that my uncle and aunt have arrived!" exclaimed Muffin.

"Silence!" ejaculated the French master, clutching at his hair. "Muffin, you are most stupid boy zat ever was! I do not tell you zat your oncle and your tante have arrived."

"But you said so, sir. All the fellows heard you!" protested Muffin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Taisez vous!" roared Monsieur Monceau. "Ze next boy zat laugh, I give him pointer!"

Sudden gravity fell on the French class.

"Muffin, I zink you are not so stupid. I zink you are lazy and you give no attention. I do not tell you zat your parents—your relations—have arrive. I translate zat sentence on ze blackboard."

"Oh!" gasped Tubby.

"Zis evening, Muffin, you write out zat sentence one hundred times, and you bring him to me to-morrow."

"Ow!" groaned Muffin.

Reginald Muffin sat crushed. Fortunately, Monsieur Monceau let him alone after that. He was a conscientious gentleman, but a certain amount of Tubby Muffin was all his constitution would stand.

"Gil Blas" came next, and at last Arthur Edward Lovell was able to "weigh in" with the wonderful wheeze.

Generally Lovell was not glad to catch the master's eye. On this occasion he was pleased.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome watched him eagerly, when he was put on to translate.

"Me voila donc hors d'Oviedo, sur le chemin de Pegnaflor, au milieu de la compagne, maitre de mes actions, d'une mauvaise mule et de quarante bons ducats."

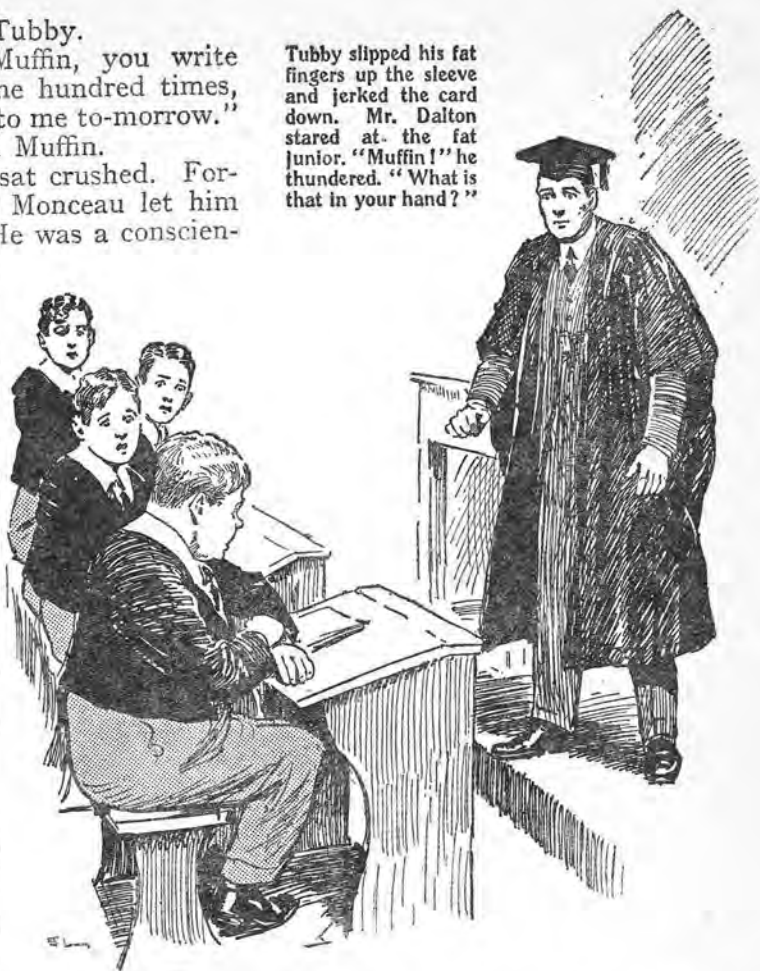
Lovell translated without a falter.

"Behold me, then, out of Oviedo, on the Pegnaflor road, in the midst of the open country, master of my own actions, of a bad mule, and of forty good ducats."

"Bon!" said Monsieur Monceau.

Mornington looked at Lovell—other fellows looked at him in surprise. Lovell was not a brilliant French

Tubby slipped his fat fingers up the sleeve and jerked the card down. Mr. Dalton stared at the fat junior. "Muffin!" he thundered. "What is that in your hand?"



scholar. Now, certainly, he seemed to read a page of French as easily as a page of the Holiday Annual.

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome distinguished themselves in turn. Monsieur Morceau beamed on the Fistical Four.

He gave them words of praise; indeed, he almost patted Arthur Edward Lovell on the head.

French, that afternoon, was a triumph for Jimmy Silver & Co. Without an effort they had won great credit.

But after the class was dismissed there was rather a worried frown on Jimmy Silver's brow as he went out into the quadrangle with his chums.

The French master's unsuspecting praises smote Jimmy's conscience.

"Blessed if I quite like it, after all," Jimmy Silver said candidly. "It's jolly like spoofing."

"Oh, rot!" said Lovell. "Utter rot!"

Lovell spoke with great emphasis because his own conscience had a little twinge.

"Well, I felt a bit rotten at pulling old Mossoo's leg," confessed Raby.

"Rubbish!"

"It saves no end of trouble," said Newcome. "But—but—but dash it all, is it quite playing the game?"

"Bosh!"

"You see, Lovell——" said Jimmy.

"Utter trash!"

"But——"

"Rot!"

Evidently Arthur Edward Lovell was not open to argument on the subject.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE PUBLIC BENEFACTOR!

AFTER tea there was rather a crowded meeting in the end study.

The Fourth-Formers wanted to know, as it were.

The distinction Lovell had won in the French class, naturally, could not pass unnoticed. Many of the Fourth regarded Arthur Edward as more or less of a duffer in class. In French Arthur Edward was given to stumbling woefully. Fellows asked Lovell how he did it, and whether he had a "dodge." To which Lovell replied with mysterious hints and winks—so that in a very short time most of the Fourth were aware that there was a "dodge."

Naturally, they wanted to know all about it. So they came along to the end study after tea to inquire.

Mornington was the first, and Peele and Gower followed, and Tubby Muffin, Townsend and Topham came in, and Jones minor, and Higgs, and Oswald, and several more fellows. Fellows like Rawson and Erroll, who took their work with unusual seriousness, did not come—they, apparently, were in pursuit of knowledge, not of "dodges." But there was no doubt that the majority of the Fourth Form would have welcomed any wheeze that saved them from the peril of brain fag.

Lovell was looking pleased.

Never before had he been able to step into the limelight as a brainy fellow—as a chap who could put other chaps up to clever dodges. Naturally, he enjoyed the position.

His chums were rather lacking in enthusiasm, owing to certain twinges they were feeling in their consciences. Lovell, doubtless, had as tender a conscience as his chums, but the wheeze being his own, his enthusiasm was greater, and banished uneasy reflection.

"Let's have it, old bean," said Mornington. "If you're on to a good thing you don't want to keep it to yourself."

"Not at all," said Lovell generously. "My idea is to benefit the whole Form now it's proved a success."

"Bravo!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Lovell!"

"Will it work with Dalton in Latin?" inquired Townsend.

"Certainly!"

"Oh, good! That's toppin'!"

"Top-hole, an' no mistake!" said Mornington. "Expound, old chap—we're all ears."

Arthur Edward Lovell proceeded to explain to a very attentive audience. Wonderful as the wheeze was, in fact, epoch-making in school history, it was simple, like all great inventions.

"Take the section we've got for prep now," said Lovell. "I've got it here——"

"Æneas primique duces——" said Mornington.

"That's it. I've got the crib," said Lovell.

"Crib! Is that the wheeze?" asked Putty Grace in disgust. "Call that a dodge? There have been cribs in schools ever since there were schools at all."

"Fathead! You take the translation——"

"But——"

"Let a chap finish!" roared Lovell. "How's a fellow to explain a wonderful wheeze with silly asses interrupting him all the time? Fellows have had cribs in their studies before now. I know that; but what is wanted is a crib in the Form-room, right under the master's nose."

"Oh!"

"And one crib," said Lovell impressively, "is enough for a whole Form."

"Oh!"

"You simply take your section and copy down the translation," said Lovell, with a glare at Putty Grace. "You write it out small on a round piece of cardboard that can be held in the palm of the hand—with abbreviations to save space—like this——"

Lovell took a pen and jotted.

The juniors watched him attentively.

With the help of the English version it took Lovell no more than a second or two to turn "Æneas primique duces et pulcher Julius" into "Æneas

and his chief captains and the handsome Julius."

This Lovell jotted down as follows:

"Æ and chf captns and hndsme J."

"You see, that's plain enough for anybody," explained Lovell. "Leaving out most of the vowels saves space, and you can see the word all the same—something like shorthand, you know."

"That's so," agreed Morney. "But——"

"On those lines, in the smallest fist you can do, you get the whole section written out on a bit of cardboard no bigger than a five-bob bit," said Lovell.

"Yes, but——"

"Of course, you must keep on butting like a billy-goat," said Lovell crossly. "I haven't finished yet."

"Do you ever finish?" murmured Putty of the Fourth.

"Look here, Putty——"

"Order!" said Mornington. "Let's have it out! I'm blessed if I see anything in it so far."

"You wouldn't!" said Lovell crushingly.

"Do you think Dalton is going to let us stand with that in the giddy palms of our paws?" demanded Topham. "Think he wouldn't spot us jerking it out of our pocket as soon as we're called on to construe?"

"Of course he would!" said Townsend.

"I tell you I haven't finished yet!" roared Lovell.

"Oh! Go ahead."

"You get a length of elastic——"

"Elastic!" ejaculated Mornington.

"Elastic!" said Lovell firmly.

"What on earth for?"

"You fasten one end to the bit of cardboard, and the other end up your sleeve——"

"Oh!"

"That keeps the card out of sight. When you want it you give your sleeve a jerk, as if you were shooting your linen, you know, and down comes the card into the palm of your hand."

"Phew!"

"If Dalton noses round too near, back it goes—the elastic jerks it up your sleeve," said Lovell. "Otherwise, there you are, with the card hidden in your hand and your eye on it. You can construe as fast as you can read English."

"Great Scott!"

"My word!" said Tubby Muffin.

"Oh, great!" gasped Jones minor.

Admiration was general. Arthur Edward Lovell's frowning brow cleared, and he smiled. The great inventor was receiving his due meed of praise at last.

"You see, a chap simply can't be nailed," he said. "At the very worst, you let the card jerk back up your sleeve, and there you are—no worse off than if you hadn't got it. Generally, of course, it will be all right—a glance at the card sets you going. Mr. Dalton will be jolly pleased to find everybody so proficient."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at," said Lovell.

"I'm speaking seriously. Of course, I should like to please old Dicky. He's a good chap, though he does worry us in class. With this invention he will stop worrying us, and we shall stop worrying him. Good for both sides."

"Hear, hear!" chortled Putty.

"We tried it in the French class, as you saw," went on Lovell. "That was my idea—trying it on the dog, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That was a success," said Morny,

with a nod. "My hat! Looks as if we're on to a good thing."

"I say, though——" said Tubby Muffin.

"Well?" said Lovell.

"This won't help me with genders and irregular verbs."

"Blow your genders and irregular verbs!" howled Lovell. "Do you expect an invention to do everything? Expect it to get you up and wash you in the morning, and find your collar stud, if you've lost it? Don't be an ass!"

"Gentlemen," said Mornington, "I suggest a vote of thanks to Arthur Edward Lovell. In my opinion he has deserved well of his country. Lovell is a public benefactor."

"Hear, hear!"

And the meeting in the end study broke up with considerable enthusiasm.

That evening quite a dozen of the Fourth, instead of devoting their attention to prep, devoted it to Lovell's wheeze.

Ten minutes served their purpose, instead of an hour and a half; a saving of time that was very considerable.

Fellows borrowed Lovell's crib in turn, and round pieces were cut out of old fragments of cardboard, and upon them the required translation was written in abbreviated form.

Not a single grammar or dictionary was opened by the happy possessors of this great invention.

Prep became rather a lark than a labour.

There was a great demand for lengths of elastic. Fellows who happened to possess that commodity were able to effect sales at profiteering prices.

With great glee the juniors practised in their studies the art and

science of jerking the disc up and down the sleeve.

Juniors who were not in the secret were surprised to see fellows, in the studies and passages, engaged in "shooting their linen" with untiring industry.

Practice makes perfect, and before bedtime Lovell's followers felt quite prepared to deal with Dicky Dalton in the morning.

Before their dazzled eyes stretched the enticing prospect of a term with practically no "swotting"—Latin classes with no "lines" and no "jaw."

Uncle James of Rookwood was not wholly satisfied.

He felt that he could not say a word to dash the happy satisfaction of his chum, Lovell. But he was rather worried.

Lovell's wheeze had been adopted keenly by a dozen fellows, but with especial keenness by the slackers of

The delinquents were ranged in a row before Mr. Dalton's desk, and then one after another the unhappy culprits went through it!



Arthur Edward Lovell—on this evening, at least—was a great man in the Fourth Form. He felt that he had brought credit and distinction on the end study. With becoming modesty, Lovell bore his blushing honours thick upon him without "swanking." But if ever a fellow was entitled to swank, surely it was Arthur Edward Lovell, public benefactor No. 1!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

BLACK INGRATITUDE!

JIMMY SILVER had a very thoughtful expression when he went into the Form-room the following morning.

the Form, such fellows as Peele and Gower and Lattrey and Tubby Muffin.

When Peele & Co. approved of a thing, Jimmy Silver naturally felt that there must be something wrong with it.

It was a great invention—a wonderful wheeze. But Jimmy could not help realising—on reflection—that a scheme for dodging work was a scheme for slacking, and not nearly so admirable as it appeared to the enthusiastic eyes of its inventor.

This opinion, however, Jimmy kept to himself for the present. Moreover, he was not absolutely certain of

success. Mr. Richard Dalton was a far keener gentleman than Monsieur Monceau.

There was a thrill of excitement in the Form when P. Vergilius Maro came on the scene that morning.

Arthur Edward Lovell, as it happened, was the first fellow called on to construe.

All eyes were upon Lovell as he started at "*Æneas primique duces, etc.*" Lovell, who was not brilliant in French, was still less brilliant in Latin, as a rule.

On this particular morning, Arthur Edward Lovell won golden opinions from his Form-master.

His construe was almost perfection.

Mr. Dalton gave him a smiling nod of approval, though there was surprise as well as approval in his smile.

Mornington was called upon to go on where Lovell left off.

Morny gave his sleeve a little jerk, as if to set his shirt-cuff, and went on cheerfully. He construed without a fault.

Peele came next.

Cyril Peele was a slacker of the first water, and was often in trouble in class. On this occasion the most critical master would have had no reason to find fault with Peele.

Mr. Dalton could not help being surprised. He was still more surprised when Raby and then Newcome gave him faultless renderings. Then Tubby Muffin was called upon.

Tubby Muffin gave his sleeve a little jerk.

The juniors waited, prepared to hear Tubby, for the first time in his life, construe without some egregious blunder.

But Tubby was not in a hurry to begin.

He jerked his sleeve, and jerked

it again, and his fat face became very red.

"Muffin!" repeated Mr. Dalton.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Tubby. "A—a second, sir!"

He jerked at his hapless sleeve, but Tubby's sleeves were tighter than other fellows' sleeves. Tubby was a plump youth, not to say podgy. His cardboard disc was there ready, attached to the elastic, but it did not come down in the palm of his plump paw when jerked.

Mr. Dalton eyed him curiously.

"I am waiting for you, Muffin," he said.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Tubby.

There was no help for it. The card was jammed in Muffin's sleeve. He slipped the fat fingers of his other hand up the sleeve and jerked the card down. Mr. Dalton's eyes, which were fixed on the fat junior, grew wide open—wider and wider.

"Muffin!"

His voice resembled thunder.

"Eh? Yes, sir!" gasped Muffin.

"What is that in your hand?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

Mr. Dalton strode towards him. Muffin jerked desperately, and this time the elastic obeyed, and jerked the little card up his sleeve.

"Hold up your hand, Muffin."

Muffin held it up—empty.

Lovell & Co. looked on, scarcely breathing with anxiety. Obviously "Dicky" was suspicious. Perhaps he had already noted that juniors had fallen into a habit of jerking their cuffs when called upon to construe. Possibly Lovell's wonderful wheeze was not so new and original as he deemed, but might have been known to Mr. Dalton in his own far-off schooldays.

"Muffin," said Mr. Dalton, "step out before the class."

"Yes, sir."

Reginald Muffin stepped out.
 "Take off your jacket, Muffin."
 "Mum-mum-my jacket, sir?"
 "Yes, at once!"
 "Oh, dear!"

Slowly and reluctantly Tubby Muffin peeled off his jacket. The Fourth Form watched him as if fascinated.

"Now turn the sleeves inside out, Muffin."

With a groan Tubby Muffin obeyed.

Mr. Dalton grimly picked out the card and the elastic from the interior of Tubby's sleeve.

"As I thought!" said Mr. Dalton calmly. "A very ingenious device, Muffin. Quite an improvement on a device known to me twenty years ago. I used only a bootlace."

"Oh!" gasped Lovell involuntarily.

Mr. Dalton glanced at him.

"Elastic," he said, "is an improvement. I am afraid, Muffin, that you are thoughtless. You have lost sight of the fact that you are sent to school to learn. Schoolboys are liable to lose sight of that fact—it is a master's duty to keep it present to their minds. On the occasion I have referred to, twenty years ago, my Form-master gave me two severe cuts with his cane, which, though painful at the time, benefited me. They caused me

to reflect. I shall try the same method with you, Muffin, and trust that it will produce an equally beneficial result."

"Oh!" gasped Muffin.

Mr. Dalton glanced over the breathless class.

"Every boy present will take his jacket off and turn out the sleeves!" he said.

"Oh!"

With glum faces the hapless juniors

"Colliar him! Lynch him! Scrag him!" There was a roar from the juniors, and Arthur Edward Lovell ran for his life. Obviously it was no time to argue with the enraged Fourth Formers!



obeyed. Twelve fellows had adopted Lovell's invention, others had waited to "see how the cat jumped" as they expressed it.

Mr. Dalton took his cane.

The delinquents were ranged in a row before his desk. Mr. Dalton proceeded to deal with them one after another.

"You first, Silver!"

Swish, swish!

One after another the unhappy culprits went through it. When Mr. Dalton laid down his cane he looked a little breathless.

"We will now resume!" he said genially.

They resumed. Construes, after that, were not perfect. It was not a happy morning in the Fourth Form room. Nearly a dozen fellows were giving Lovell deadly looks. They had only one solace—the happy anticipation of dealing with Arthur Edward Lovell after lessons!

"Collar him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Lynch him!"

It was a roar in the corridor. Arthur Edward Lovell ran for his life. He did not stop to argue or to expostulate. Obviously the enraged Fourth Formers were not in a mood to listen to argument or expostulation.

There was a rush of vengeance on his track. Sounds of strife were heard in the end study. Lovell had had no time to lock the door. Then there was a sound of bumping that seemed to shake the floor. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome rushed to the rescue at last, and drove the infuriated avengers out of the study. They found Lovell sprawling on the carpet, breathless, dizzy, dusty, dishevelled.

He sat up and spluttered.

"Ow, ow, ow! Wow! Ow! Wow! Grooooooogh! Catch me—groogh!—making any more inventions—ow!—to save them fag— Woooooop! Ungrateful—ooch!—rotters! I'll never—grooch!—make another—gug-gug-gug—invention, so long as I'm at—grooh!—Rookwood!"

And Arthur Edward Lovell didn't!

JIMMY SILVER

A Verse of Praise. By the Rookwood Rhymester

HATS off to the immortal James!

The loyal Classic leader,
Whose boyish japes and skill at games,
Delight each ardent reader.

He plays all those amusing pranks
That heroes in a book would;
But now and evermore he ranks
The chosen son of Rookwood.

Though Harry Wharton fills the bill,
And likewise good Tom Merry;
And hosts of loyal readers still
Bow to the charms of Cherry,
It cannot be denied that when
One's spirits are at zero,
They very soon revive again,
Thanks to this Rookwood hero!

The daring japes of Tommy Dodd
Compel our admiration;
He figures as a young tin god
In some chaps' estimation.

But even Tommy Dodd is done

When Silver takes the platform;
The Fourth Form Classics are At—
There's nothing wrong with that Form!

And yet, despite their feuds and scrapes,
Their fierce and breathless tussles,
And all the merry fistic japes
That exercise their muscles,
The Classic chums are staunch and true,
Not merely gay and skittish;
And we're convinced they'd never do
A thing that wasn't British!

Then here's to Jimmy Silver! May he rule
Within our hearts for ever!
Supreme alike in sport and school,
Courageous, swift and clever!
And British boys are all agreed
They'd have to make a long quest
To find such ripping yarns to read
As those of Owen Conquest!

FALSE WITNESS!



Innocent of snowballing the irascible headmaster of Hillcrest School, Frank Richards finds himself unable to prove it against the false evidence of the victim!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER

MR. PECKOVER MISUNDERSTANDS!

"MY hat!"

Frank Richards reined in his pony.

He was riding from the town of Thompson on the trail to Cedar Creek School at a leisurely pace, for the trail was thick with snow.

The flakes were no longer falling; but the snow lay thick on the ground, and it was piled in drifts against the trees along the trail.

At the corner, where the Hillcrest path jutted from the Thompson trail, Frank Richards caught sight of a tall,

angular figure, muffled up in coat and scarf against the wind.

Muffled up as it was, he recognised Mr. Peckover, the headmaster of Hillcrest School.

Mr. Peckover was coming down the path from the hill, apparently about to turn into the main trail for Thompson.

And as he turned, a snowball flew from the cover of the frozen thickets and smote Mr. Peckover full upon his long, red nose.

It was a large snowball, it was a hard one, and it was hurled with unerring aim.

It crashed on Mr. Peckover's nose, taking that gentleman completely by surprise.

"Ooooooooooh!"

The Hillcrest master staggered, his foot slipped in the snow, and he came to the ground with a crash.

Frank Richards, who was not a dozen yards away, looked on, and smiled.

There was no love lost between the Cedar Creek fellows and the Hillcrest headmaster; and Mr. Peckover's disaster earned him no sympathy from Frank Richards. Indeed, from the point of view of an onlooker, there was something quite comic in Mr. Peckover's sudden downfall. The comicality was, naturally, lost upon Mr. Peckover himself.

He rolled in the snow spluttering.

He was on rather a steep slope when he fell, and as he rolled he came down the slope and pitched into the drift beside the trail.

The next moment nothing was seen of Mr. Peckover but thrashing arms and legs and a cloud of powdered snow.

Frank Richards chuckled.

But he remembered that Mr. Peckover was a middle-aged gentleman, and entitled to respect and assistance, and he jumped off his pony and ran to the rescue.

Whoever had hurled the snowball had not shown up, but a momentary swaying in the frozen larches hinted that the marksman was beating a rapid—and judicious—retreat.

Whether it was a Cedar Creek fellow or one of Mr. Peckover's own boys, Frank Richards could not guess—the latter was very possible, for the headmaster's snappy severity made him far from popular in his school.

"Oooooooooch!"

Mr. Peckover struggled and plunged

in the drift. His hat had come off, and his scanty locks flowed in the wind. His clumsy plunges only landed him deeper in the drift, and he was badly in need of assistance. Fortunately, Frank Richards was there to render it.

He plunged actively through the snow, and grasped Mr. Peckover by the collar.

"Yoooop!" spluttered Mr. Peckover. "You young ruffian——"

"Eh! I'm helping you!" exclaimed Frank.

"Grooogh!"

Grasping the thin, angular gentleman with both hands, Frank exerted all his strength, and dragged him out on to the trail.

There Mr. Peckover sat in the snow, and gasped for breath.

He seemed quite winded, and his breath came and went in wild, spluttering gasps.

"Grooogh! Oh! Oooooch! Ow! Wooooooooop!"

Frank Richards paused to pick up Mr. Peckover's hat, and return it to him. He had no time to waste, as he had to be back at Cedar Creek in time for afternoon classes.

"Can I do anything more for you?" asked Frank politely.

"Grooogh! You young rascal!"

"What?"

"You—grooogh!—young scoundrel!" panted Mr. Peckover.

Frank Richards flushed angrily.

He was aware that Mr. Peckover did not like him—neither did he like Mr. Peckover. But he had naturally expected a word of thanks, at least, for rendering first aid, as he had done.

The Hillcrest master staggered to his feet.

"You—you—you shall suffer for this!" he bellowed.

"For helping you?" exclaimed Frank.

"You young rascal! You hurled a snowball at me, and knocked me over into the drift!" shouted Mr. Peckover, making a fierce stride towards the Cedar Creek schoolboy.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Frank, jumping back. "You're mistaken, Mr. Peckover! I did not throw the snowball!"

Mr. Peckover groped for his stick in the snow, and started towards Frank Richards.

Frank dodged away towards his waiting pony.

"You jolly well won't!" he exclaimed. "I tell you I did not throw the snowball, and I don't know who did."

"And I tell you that I do not believe you, and that I am going to



As Mr. Peckover was about to turn into the trail for Thompson a large snowball flew from the cover of the frozen thickets and smote him full upon his long, red nose. "Oooooooch!" gasped the Hillcrest headmaster.

"Don't tell me falsehoods!" roared Mr. Peckover.

"I was on my pony, riding, when I saw it thrown——"

"Lies!"

"I jumped down to help you!" exclaimed Frank indignantly. "If this is your thanks, you can help yourself next time!"

"You young rascal! I will—will thrash you!"

thrash you!" roared Mr. Peckover.

"Rats!" retorted Frank.

He jumped on his pony.

Mr. Peckover was between him and Cedar Creek, and his escape was cut off if the Hillcrest master had the nerve to stop a running horse. But Frank knew that he hadn't! He put his pony to the gallop, and Mr. Peckover made a hasty jump out of the way.

"You—you——" he panted.

He made a swipe with the stick as the rider passed, but Frank swerved, and it just missed the pony's flank.

The Cedar Creek schoolboy laughed, and waved his hand in farewell, as he galloped on down the trail. Mr. Peckover brandished the stick furiously after him.

Frank Richards swept out of sight round a bend in the trail, and Mr. Peckover, gasping, took his way up the hilly path to Hillcrest, not feeling disposed for his walk to Thompson just then.

"Hallo, Richards!"

Frank drew in his pony, as a voice called from the wood, and a rather scared, boyish face looked out at him. It was the face of Dicky Bird, of Hillcrest.

Frank nodded and smiled.

"Was it you?" he asked.

"Yep! I—I say, I didn't mean to bowl old Peckover down like that, of course," said Dicky Bird. "I meant just to give him a dot on the boko, for caning me this morning for nothing. He didn't see me, did he?"

"No; he thinks it was I——"

"Oh, that's all right, then!" said Dicky Bird. "If he guessed it was I, there would be tantrums at Hillcrest this afternoon! So-long!"

And Dicky Bird, much relieved in his mind, disappeared into the wood, and Frank Richards rode on, smiling, to Cedar Creek.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

FALSE WITNESS!

"Just in time!" called out Bob Lawless cheerily.

"You're nearly late, Frank," remarked Vere Beauclerc, as Frank Richards jumped from his pony at the gates of Cedar Creek.

The schoolbell was ringing for afternoon lessons when Frank Richards arrived at the backwoods school.

"All serene," he answered cheerily. "I was delayed on the trail."

Frank hastily put up his pony in the corral, and the three chums joined the crowd of fellows heading for the lumber schoolhouse.

"What happened on the trail?" asked Bob Lawless. "I guess I noticed you looked a bit flustered!"

Frank Richards explained the happening on the trail, and his rather unfortunate attempt to play the Good Samaritan to Mr. Peckover.

Bob Lawless chuckled.

"Serve Peckover right!" he remarked. "If I belonged to Hillcrest, I should feel more like lynching him than snowballing him. Ungrateful brute!"

"He thinks it was I that snowballed him!" said Frank. "Of course, he didn't see the other chap!"

"Let him think so, and be blowed to him!" said Bob.

"He was in an awful wax!"

"Let him rip!"

"What I mean is that, thinking I did it, he's pretty certain to come over here and complain to our school-mistress."

"Let him!" said Beauclerc. "Miss Meadows will take your word!"

"I guess so!" said Bob.

Frank Richards nodded.

"I suppose so," he assented. "Of course, the silly ass can't say he saw me snowball him, as I never did. He can only say he thinks so!"

"And that won't cut any ice with Miss Meadows!" said Bob Lawless confidently.

The chums of Cedar Creek passed into the school-room. Chunky Todgers had heard their talk, as he came in with them, and Chunky gave Frank

Richards a fat wink as he dropped into his seat.

"Do you think it will wash, Franky, old sport?" inquired Chunky.

"What do you mean, fathead?"

"About snowballing old Peckover, you know. If you ask my advice," said Chunky, with quite a paternal air, "I'd own up!"

"You silly owl, I didn't do it—it was a chap in the timber——"

Chunky winked again.

"I guess I hope you'll be able to slide out on that yarn," he said charitably. "But do you reckon it will wash?"

Frank Richards gave him a glare, but made no other reply. Chunky did not always stick to the straight and narrow path of veracity himself, and he was far from giving other fellows

the credit of doing so. Frank Richards comforted himself with the reflection that Miss Meadows knew him better.

Miss Meadows came in to take her class, and the afternoon's lessons commenced. The recollection of Mr. Peckover was soon driven out of Frank Richards' mind.

But he was to be reminded of the existence of that gentleman before the day was over.

The second lesson was just finishing when there was the sound of hoofs and wheels in the playground outside.

Miss Meadows' back being turned for a moment, Bob Lawless stood up on the form and took a quick glance out of the window. He dropped quickly into his place again.

Frank gave him an inquiring glance.

"It's old Peckover in his buggy," whispered Bob.



"You—you——" panted the enraged Mr. Peckover. He made a swipe with his stick as Frank galloped past, but the Cedar Creek fellow swerved, and the stick just missed the pony's flank.

Frank Richards compressed his lips. He had expected that Mr. Peckover would drive over; and now he had come. In spite of his knowledge of his own innocence, Frank could not help feeling a little uneasy. Miss Meadows was well aware of her boys' dislike for the Hillcrest master, and she was very severe upon any public demonstration of it. If she believed Mr. Peckover's accusation, matters were likely to go hard with Frank Richards.

There was a loud knock on the school-room door, and it opened. Miss Meadows glanced round in surprise as the Hillcrest master strode in.

Mr. Peckover's brow was knitted, and his thin lips were set in a tight line. All eyes were upon him at once. It was clear, at a glance, that Mr. Ephraim Peckover had come to Cedar Creek for vengeance.

Miss Meadows frowned slightly. She did not like interruptions of lessons.

"Mr. Peckover——" she began.

"Madam — I have called ——" began Mr. Peckover, in a rasping voice.

"As you see, I am busy with my pupils," said Miss Meadows coldly. "If you have any business with me, Mr. Peckover, surely it can be postponed till——"

"My business cannot be postponed, madam!" rapped out Mr. Peckover. "It is necessary for it to be gone into before the young rascal leaves for home!"

"To whom are you alluding?"

"To Frank Richards."

Miss Meadows made an impatient gesture.

"If you have any accusation to make against Richards, I will hear it," she said. "I must ask you to be as brief as possible."

There was a breathless hush in the

school-room—Mr. Slimmey's class, as well as Miss Meadows', all looking at the Hillcrest master. Lessons had stopped all through the school-room.

Mr. Peckover pointed an accusing and bony finger at Frank Richards' flushed face.

"That is the boy!" he exclaimed. "He assaulted me on the Thompson trail a little more than an hour ago and——"

"I was not aware that Richards had been out of school bounds during the dinner interval," said Miss Meadows. "Is it the case, Richards?"

"Madam, if my statement is not accepted——"

"I must question the boy, Mr. Peckover. Richards, have you been on the Thompson trail to-day?"

"Yes, ma'am! I rode into Thompson on a matter of business," answered Frank. "I met Mr. Peckover on the way back."

"And assaulted me!" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"Nothing of the kind!"

"In what way did Richards assault you, sir?" exclaimed Miss Meadows testily. Whether the charge was correct or not, it was evident that the angry master was using very exaggerated language.

"By hurling a snowball at me!"

"He snowballed you——"

"I was knocked flying!" panted Mr. Peckover. "I was hurled down a dangerous slope into a snowdrift, and I have caught a cold as well as sustaining several severe bruises. If you do not regard that as serious, Miss Meadows——"

"On the contrary, sir, I regard it as very serious indeed!" interrupted the Cedar Creek schoolmistress.

"I am glad to hear you say so!" snorted Mr. Peckover.

"Richards, stand out here!"

Frank Richards came out before the class.

"Richards! You are well aware of the seriousness——"

"I did not do it, Miss Meadows!"

"You do not deny Mr. Peckover's statement?" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Richards!"

"Let me explain, Miss Meadows!" exclaimed Frank hastily. "I was riding along the trail home when I saw Mr. Peckover knocked over by a snowball. I jumped down to help him out of the drift. The chap who had thrown the snowball did not show up, and Mr. Peckover thought it was I, as he could see nobody else on the trail. I was only helping him."

Miss Meadows' brow cleared.

"Ah! It is a mistake!" she said.

"You hear Richards' explanation, Mr. Peckover——"

"He is speaking falsely!"

"I know Richards to be a truthful boy," said Miss Meadows coldly, "and the mistake was a very easy one to make——"

Mr. Peckover seemed on the verge of a fit. To do him justice, he fully believed that Frank Richards was the delinquent, and that the Cedar Creek schoolboy was lying himself out of a scrape.

"There was no mistake!" he thundered.

"Richards says——"

"He is lying! I saw him hurl the snowball!" shouted Mr. Peckover.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

FALSELY CONDEMNED!

FRANK RICHARDS jumped.

He stared blankly at Mr. Peckover.

That Mr. Peckover had seen anything of the kind was, of course,

impossible, since Frank had not thrown the snowball. But for a schoolmaster to utter a falsehood in an accusation against a schoolboy seemed equally impossible.

Miss Meadows' face hardened like steel. Even Bob Lawless and Beaulclerc looked in dismay at their chum now. Could anyone believe that the headmaster of Hillcrest was uttering a falsehood?

Mr. Peckover, as a matter of fact, hardly realised that he was doing so. He was absolutely certain that Frank Richards was the guilty party, and his statement was only intended to make that certainty equally clear to others.

If there had been a shadow of doubt in his mind, certainly he would not have made the statement. But there wasn't a shadow of doubt in his mind—not the slightest.

But Frank Richards was taken utterly aback. He stared at Mr. Peckover open-mouthed.

"Oh Jerusalem!" murmured Bob Lawless.

Miss Meadows' eyes seemed to glint as they turned on Frank Richards. The hapless schoolboy could see that he was already condemned by the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek.

"Richards, have you anything more to say?" asked Miss Meadows, in a voice of ice.

Frank gasped.

"Yes, I—I—I——"

"Do you deny Mr. Peckover's statement now?" snapped Miss Meadows.

Frank's face flushed with anger.

"Yes!" he shouted. "He is lying!"

"Richards!"

"It is a lie!" exclaimed Frank, careless of his words now. "He

never saw me, as I didn't do it. And I'm sorry I helped him. I dare say he thinks I did it, but he knows he didn't see who threw the snowball!"

"Silence!"

"That is the truth, Miss Meadows."

"Silence, I say!"

Mr. Peckover choked with rage.

"I—I——" he spluttered. "Miss Meadows, this—this boy, he—he dares to—to—to——"

He choked helplessly.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Peckover!" said Miss Meadows quietly. "Richards will be severely punished for his wanton attack upon you, and still more severely for venturing to cast doubt upon your word!"

"Miss Meadows——" began Frank.

"You need say no more, Richards. I was prepared to accept your explanation, not being aware that Mr. Peckover actually saw you——"

"He did not! He——"

"Silence! I cannot cane you for this, Richards; a caning is not sufficient punishment. I shall send a note to your uncle requesting him to come here and administer a flogging to you in the presence of the school. That is the only way of dealing with your offence. Mr. Peckover, I shall be glad if you will be present when Richards' punishment is dealt out."

"I assure you that I intend to be present, Miss Meadows!" said the Hillcrest master venomously.

Frank Richards breathed hard.

"Miss Meadows," he faltered, "I—I assure you——"

"Enough! Go back to your place!"

Frank Richards returned to his seat, feeling quite dazed. Mr. Peckover gave him a bitter look.

The Hillcrest master exchanged a few words with Miss Meadows in a low voice before he drove away in his buggy.

Lessons were resumed at Cedar Creek.

But the whole school was in a state of suppressed excitement.

Frank Richards, when he looked round at his schoolfellows, could see that nobody believed his statement against the assertion of the Hillcrest master.

He was intensely glad when school was dismissed at last, though his return home that evening was not likely to be a pleasant one. Miss Meadows called to Bob Lawless, and gave him a note to carry to his father.

The three chums came out dismally into the playground.

They fetched out their horses and rode away on the homeward trail. They rode at first in dead silence. When Frank Richards spoke at last, he turned almost a haggard face on his chums.

"I—I suppose you fellows believe me?" he said.

"Yes," said Beauclerc quietly.

Bob flushed.

"I guess it's awfully queer!" he said. "How—how could Peckover think he saw you if he never saw you, Frank?"

Frank bit his lip.

"He doesn't think so," he answered. "He thinks I threw the snowball, and I suppose he imagines he's justified in saying he saw me do it. But it's false."

Bob drew a deep breath.

"I believe you, old chap," he said.

"But—but—but you can't blame Miss Meadows for not believing you, or—or anybody else. I—I'm afraid popper will take the same view as Miss Meadows."

"I know he will!" said Frank gloomily.

They rode on in dismal silence.



All eyes turned to the doorway as Dicky Bird of Hillcrest came dashing into the big school-room. "Stop!" he shouted.

Beauclerc left his chums at the fork in the trail, as usual, and Frank and Bob rode on to the Lawless Ranch in the gathering dusk.

Mrs. Lawless was away just then, on a visit to a relation at Kamloops, and Frank was glad of that now. But he had his uncle to face. The rancher noted at once the glum looks on his son and nephew when they came in, and he eyed them curiously.

"What's the trouble, boys?" he asked, in his hearty way.

Bob handed him Miss Meadows' note by way of reply.

Mr. Lawless, looking a little puzzled, opened it, and his face grew grim as he read the contents. The genial expression was quite gone, and Frank's heart sank as he noted it. The rancher fixed his eyes at last upon his nephew, with a knitted brow.

"I'm surprised at this, Frank!" he said quietly. "You ought not to have snowballed a schoolmaster; but that's nothing compared with the rest. Miss Meadows says that you lied about it, and that you accused Mr. Peckover of lying. Were you out of your senses?"

Frank made his faltering explanation.

The rancher listened till he had finished, and then he shook his head.

"You are asking me to believe that a schoolmaster bore false witness against you, Frank!" he said. "Do you expect me to believe such a thing?"

"I—I suppose it's not easy to believe——" faltered Frank.

"I guess it's impossible to believe. You must see that for yourself!" exclaimed the rancher impatiently.

Frank did see it.

"I—I know how you must look at it, uncle," he said miserably. "But I've told only the truth. I even know who it was that threw the snowball at Mr. Peckover. I met him as I came back afterwards."

"Who was it?"

"A Hillcrest fellow."

"Name?" rapped out the rancher sharply.

"If I give you the name, uncle, what will you do?" asked Frank.

"Call upon Mr. Peckover, and demand that he shall question the boy, of course."

Frank's lip trembled.

"I supposed so. I can't give him away."

Mr. Lawless made an impatient gesture.

"You had better say no more, Frank," he said. "You are making matters worse instead of better. I can't imagine what's come over you; you always seemed to be as open and honest as the daylight. Miss Meadows has asked me to ride over to the school, and take your punishment into my hands in her presence. I cannot refuse."

"It's not that I mind," muttered Frank, his voice breaking. "I—I'm not afraid of a licking. But—but to be set down as a liar—" He turned his face away. "And I've told the truth—only the truth, though I know you can't believe me."

He left the room with an unsteady step. It was a dismal evening at the Lawless Ranch that day.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR!

MR. LAWLESS' horse was saddled when it was time for Frank and Bob to start for school the next morning. When Vere Beauclerc joined

his chums on the trail, he found the rancher with them. The four rode on to Cedar Creek in grim silence. The first bell was ringing when they arrived, and the playground was crowded with the Cedar Creek boys and girls.

Molly Lawrence gave Frank a look of sympathy, and came up to him impulsively, as the rancher strode into the house to see Miss Meadows.

"I believe you, Frank," she said. "It's a shame!"

"Thank you, Molly!" said Frank, his voice faltering.

"Here comes old Peckover!" called out Chunky Todgers.

Mr. Peckover drove in in his buggy. He hitched his horse, and went into the school-house, without a glance at Frank Richards. Nearly all Cedar Creek gathered round the three chums.

Cedar Creek marched into the school-room. Miss Meadows and Mr. Peckover and the rancher were already there, as well as Mr. Slimmey and Mr. Shepherd. The school took their places in a grim silence.

Frank Richards went to his place with the rest, but Miss Meadows beckoned to him to come out before the class.

Frank came out quietly, his heart beating.

Mr. Lawless' bronzed face was cold and grim. He had a riding-whip in his hand, which was evidently to be the instrument of punishment. Frank glanced at it, and felt a choking sensation in his throat. Hitherto, he had received only kindness at the hands of his Canadian uncle. And yet he could not blame the rancher for what was about to happen. Everything was against him, and Mr. Lawless was only doing what appeared to him his bounden duty.

Miss Meadows broke the painful silence.

"Richards!"

"Yes, Miss Meadows?" faltered Frank.

"You are about to receive a flogging—not for having attacked Mr. Peckover, or even for having spoken falsely when accused—but for your reckless and unscrupulous audacity in accusing this gentleman of falsehood. Mr. Peckover will witness your punishment, as well as your school-fellows. I am very much disappointed in you, Richards. I can only hope that this punishment, and the pain you have caused your uncle, will be a severe lesson to you."

"I hope so, too!" said Mr. Peckover, his eyes glinting at Frank. "I trust, sir, that you will not exercise any undue leniency."

"You can leave that to me, Mr. Peckover," said the rancher brusquely.

He gripped the riding-whip.

"I'm sorry for this, Frank, as you know," he said. "But I have my duty to do. You will bend over this form."

Frank Richards quivered. The thought of resistance came into his mind—of flight—of defiance. It was not fear that withheld him. Unjust as his punishment was, he owed respect to his uncle; he owed him gratitude for much kindness. The thought came into his mind—but it passed away, and he obeyed.

Clatter, clatter!

There was a thunder of horse's hoofs in the playground. Then came a rapid crash of running feet in the porch and the passage.

All eyes turned on the doorway.

Dicky Bird, of Hillcrest, flushed and panting, stood there, his face crimson, his breath coming thick and

fast. At a glance he took in the scene.

"Stop!" he shouted.

He dashed up the big school-room.

Frank Richards straightened up again, in sheer amazement. Hope flushed into his pale, strained face.

All eyes fixed on Dicky Bird in amazement. Mr. Peckover raised his hand with an angry gesture.

"Bird, how dare you come here! How dare you——"

"I had to!" he gasped. "I—I heard from Todgers last night what was going to happen."

"Go!" thundered Mr. Peckover.

The Hillcrest schoolboy stood his ground.

"I've come to own up!" he gasped.

Mr. Lawless made a sudden movement. He remembered what his nephew had told him at the ranch the previous day. He made a stride towards Dicky Bird.

"To own up?" he repeated. "Then—then——"

"I threw the snowball" said Dicky Bird, panting, but his voice was very clear. "I—I wanted to keep it dark. I told Richards, but I knew he wouldn't give me away——"

"Bless my soul!" muttered Miss Meadows.

"I—I knew Mr. Peckover hadn't seen me," faltered Dicky Bird. "I—I thought it wouldn't come out. I—I was fairly knocked over when Todgers told me Mr. Peckover said he'd seen Richards throw the snowball."

Mr. Peckover's face was a study.

"It wasn't Richards; it was me," said Dicky ungrammatically, but very earnestly. "I—I couldn't let Richards be flogged for it, when it was me all the time. So—so I rode over. I—I'm jolly glad I got here in time——"

He broke off, panting.

There was a deep silence.

"So that is it!" Mr. Lawless' voice was like the growl of thunder. "My nephew told me last night that it was a Hillcrest boy, but he would not betray him. I did not believe him, for I thought it impossible that you, Mr. Peckover, could have made a false statement."

"Richards," said Miss Meadows, "go to your place. You are completely exonerated. I am sorry I ever doubted you. Only on Mr. Peckover's explicit assertion would I have done so, and it proves that his assertion was false.

"Thank you, ma'am!" faltered Frank.

The rancher strode towards the Hillcrest master, the riding-whip grasped in his hand, and the look in his eyes made Ephraim Peckover shrink back.

"Keep your distance, sir!" gasped Mr. Peckover. "I—I—the—the law —"

The rancher laughed contemptuously.

"You have lied, sir," he thundered, "and you have nearly caused me to punish my innocent nephew by your falsehood! This boy, Bird, has saved him, by owning up in the nick of time—a manly action, which he certainly did not learn from his headmaster. You deserve, sir, that I should lay this whip about you!"

"Keep your distance!" shrieked the hapless Hillcrest master. "If—if you dare——"

"You will pardon Bird for what he has done, and you will not punish him at Hillcrest," said Mr. Lawless.

Mr. Peckover's eyes blazed.

"I will punish him! I—I will —" He choked with rage.

"He deserves to be pardoned for

his courage in coming here to prevent an injustice. You will assure him, in my presence, that no punishment shall fall upon him, or I will thrash you, sir, within an inch of your life!" roared the rancher. And the whip half rose.

Mr. Peckover gulped.

"In the—the circumstances, I—I shall c-certainly pardon Bird!" he stuttered. "I—I am, in—in fact, very much obliged to you, B-b-bird —"

"Thank you, sir!" said Dicky demurely.

"Bird," said Mr. Lawless, "if you should be punished, in spite of Mr. Peckover's words, let me know! I do not trust this man. Peckover, if you lay a finger on this lad I shall come to your house, sir, and I shall bring a stock-whip, and I will thrash you, sir, before your school till you howl for mercy!"

And with that the rancher strode out of the school-room. Dicky Bird slipped away, smiling, and mounted his horse. He felt quite secure now. As for the hapless Mr. Peckover, he seemed rooted to the floor for some moments. He detached himself at last, however, and limped away to the door, followed by a loud and prolonged hiss from all Cedar Creek. The buggy was heard to drive away a few minutes later, and Mr. Peckover was gone, without even the consolation in prospect of flogging Dicky Bird. The thought of the rancher and his stock-whip effectually prevented that.

Frank Richards' face was very bright that morning, and so were the faces of his chums, all the more so when they reflected upon the probable feelings just then of the discomfited False Witness.

THE END



Detective Kerr

Investigates

The MYSTERY *of the* BROKEN FISHING-ROD

THERE was a sensation in the School House when a valuable fishing-rod was missed from Mr. Lathom's study one Saturday morning and found late the same afternoon abandoned broken on the banks of the Rhyl. The fishing-rod had evidently been taken during school hours, which automatically ruled out everybody except those fellows who had had occasion to leave their Form-rooms during lessons. Mr. Lathom's inquiries revealed that Gore, Reilly, Crooke, and D'Arcy minor were the only four who had had such an opportunity, and finding that the other three were able to prove that they could not have gone fishing on Saturday afternoon, he concluded that D'Arcy minor was the culprit. Refusing to believe that his younger brother was guilty, Arthur Augustus appealed to Detective Kerr.

KERR : You were out on Saturday afternoon, I understand, Wally.

D'ARCY : Matter of fact, I was. Went into Rylcombe to get my footer

boots repaired and looked around a bit.

KERR : Did you come straight back ?

D'ARCY : Yes.

KERR : Sure ?

D'ARCY : Yes—well, I just popped into the woods to look for something.

KERR : What were you looking for ?

D'ARCY : I'd rather not say.

KERR : I can't help you if you won't.

D'ARCY : Very well, if you'll promise not to split. I went to look for a bit of wood for a catapult. Old Selby's forbidden them, you know.

KERR : O.K., kid ; I'll keep mum.

KERR : Oh, Crooke, you were under suspicion for having taken Lathom's fishing-rod.

CROOKE : What if I was ? It was proved I didn't. Young D'Arcy took it, the little sweep.

KERR : Where exactly were you on Saturday afternoon ?

CROOKE : I was watching the footer match on Little Side.

KERR : Strange. You don't generally honour us with your presence. Any-one see you ?

CROOKE : Of course they did. I had

a chat with Skimpole, and another with Gore. Any more questions?

KERR: Just one. Why did you leave the Form-room?

CROOKE: I'd forgotten my French dick, and Mossoo let me go and fetch it.

KERR: Beginning of the second hour, eh?

CROOKE: Look here, what are you driving at?

KERR: Nothing, my infant, nothing.

REILLY: Sure, 'tis the sleuth himself.

KERR: Right first time. Care to answer a few questions?

REILLY: And why should I be after refusin'?

KERR: Wait a minute. I'm doing the asking. In the first place, you left the Form-room on Saturday morning. Why?

REILLY: I did so. Wasn't it meself had blacked the eyes of Racke and his precious pal Crooke, and them after batin' the hide off young Smith when I caught them, the miserable spalpeens? And didn't Racke flick an ink-ball at me on Saturday morning and Mossoo send me out to wash it off, and me not guilty at all, at all?

KERR: Hold everything! Mossoo sent you out to wash some ink off, eh? You went up to the bath-room for that?

REILLY: I did then. And on the way down I was after nippin' into the study to get a toffee. Will you be havin' one yereself now?

KERR: Thanks. How long did you stay in the study?

REILLY: Ah, sure, I was there tin minutes. 'Twas my prep I'd been skippin' on account of the footer practice, so I stayed there as long as I could.

KERR: Door open?

REILLY: Indade it was.

KERR: 'Nother thing, where were you on Saturday afternoon? I thought I heard you saying you were going into Rylcombe.

REILLY: I did. But Kerruish and Hammond persuaded me to stop and watch the footer.

KERR: You're fond of fishing, aren't you?

REILLY: Sure, 'tis a faine sport. Were you ever in Killarney? You weren't? Wait now while I relate to you the fishin' I've done in Killarney.

KERR: Sorry, old man! Another time.

KERR: I say, Gore—

GORE: Hallo! Want some help with your giddy mystery?

KERR: Not exactly. I want to know why you left the Form-room.

GORE: On Saturday? For the same reason I told Mossoo. I cut myself sharpening a pencil and went to get it bandaged.

KERR: The House-dame did that?

GORE: No; she wasn't there, so I trotted along to the study and did it myself.

KERR: Anyone see you?

GORE: Naturally not. There wasn't anyone about. Crooke had just come back. I must say you do ask some dumb questions.

KERR: Put it down to my insatiable curiosity. What about Reilly?

GORE: I met him in the corridor outside. He gave me a toffee.

KERR: And on Saturday afternoon?

GORE: Just as a matter of routine, you know.

GORE: Cast iron alibi, my lad. I was over in the san, having my finger dressed properly. Marie Rivers was having tea and invited me to stay. Jolly decent of her.

KERR: H'm! You haven't exactly been in Lathom's good books lately, have you?

GORE: He overheard me call him a silly old buffer, if that's what you're driving at. The blighter reported me to Railton and I got licked for it. But if you think I'd go and pinch the man's fishing-rod to get even, you're mistaken. Besides, I hate fishing.

Gussy: Weally, deah boy, I insist that you're barkin' up the w'ong twee. None of them could have gone down to the Whyl and got back in time.

KERR: There I agree with you.

Gussy: It was pwobably a burglah -fwom outside.

KERR: Imposs. If anyone had taken the risk of breaking in and stealing the rod they'd hardly have left it lying on the banks of the Rhyl.

Gussy: Bai Jove, I wegard that as a bwilliant piece of deduction!

KERR: You can't see who must have done it?

Gussy: Wathah not.

KERR: Think it over again. I spotted something in some of the answers that didn't quite fit, and I started working from rather a different angle. There's only one explanation that fits everything, and I'm backing it as the right one.

Can you work it out? Who took Lathom's fishing-rod, and why? Turn to page 181 for Kerr's solution.

GRUNDY'S DREAM!

Written in George Alfred Grundy's Best Style.

THE sun came down in torrents
From a cleer and clowdless sky;
The First Eleven were batting,
And I was standing by.

Kildare was at the wicket;
He smote with mite and mane;
Till his middel stump went spinning,
Then he toddled back again!

Monteith took up the running,
And he gave a sudden rore
As the ball removed his nee-cap.
Said the umpyre, "Leg before!"

Then Darrell, Gray and Baker,
Went in to try their luck;
But they all came back defeeted,
And each won got a duck!

Kildare broke down with sobbing,
And he turned to me and cride,
"Arise, George Alfred Grundy,
The last hope of the side!"

I rose up like Napoleon,
And grasped my trusty blade;
When the feeldsmen saw me coming
They staggered back, dismade!

Two hundred runs were wanted
To give St. Jim's the match.
"The skool shall win!" I muttered.
"I sware by Colney Hatch!"

I flogged the pewtrid bowling
North, south and east and west;
And the feeldsmen sank exhawsted,
For they had to give me best.

"O stay, George Alfred Grundy!
O stay thy mighty hand!
Your batting terns us giddy;
It farely beets the band!"

I still kontinewed slogging
That week and feeble stuff.
"Declare!" the feeldsmen showted.
"Oh, crumms! We've had enuff!"

I rattled up a hundred,
And then a hundred more.
The Head came out to see me
He marveled at my score.

"Well played, George Alfred Grundy,
By all St. Jim's adored!
Your wunderful performance
Doth merriit a reward!"

The Head advanced to meat me.
"You're simply grate!" he said.
I blinked, I gasped, I shivvered,
And then sat up in bed!

"You silly ass! You're snoring!"
Said Lowther in disgust.
Then he skweezed the sponge with vigger,
And my merry dream went bust!



George Kerr—the
canny Scot of the
New House.



Arthur Augustus
D'Arcy—the swell
of the Fourth.

The *St. Jim's* **PORTRAIT GALLERY**



Eric Kildare—
captain of St.
Jim's.



Tom Merry—the
leader of the
junior school.



Richard Redfern—
the New House
scholarship boy.



Fatty Wynn—the
Falstaff of the
New House.



FIGHTING THE FLAMES!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Gussy, the fireman, falls an easy victim to a jape of the rival New House juniors. But when a fire breaks out in the New House, it's Gussy who comes out strong in fighting the flames!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE ONLY WAY!

"I SHALL have to get some ovelwalls!"

"Some what?"

"Ovelwalls, deah boy!"

"And what the thump," demanded Tom Merry, "are ovelwalls?"

"Something you get over a wall with, I should think!" remarked Monty Lowther thoughtfully.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Well, what are they, anyhow?" asked Manners.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth turned his eyeglass severely upon the Terrible Three. He seemed to be under the impression that the Shell fellows were deliberately misunderstanding him.

"When I say ovelwalls," he said, "I mean ovelwalls, natuwallly!"

Tom Merry burst into a chuckle.

"Oh, the ass means overalls!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah! I said ovelwalls," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Undah the circs, I wegard them as vewy necessawy. I wathah appwove of old Wailton's ideah with wegard to wegulah fire-dwill, you know. But a chap must think of his clobbah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke with great seriousness, evidently having given the matter considerable thought.



Crammed at the window of the box-room, six haggard, grimed faces glared out into the open air, and six terrified voices shrieked for help.

But Tom Merry & Co. did not look at all serious.

"I see," said Lowther thoughtfully. "If there's an alarm of fire in the middle of the night, you're going to stop to put your overalls over your clobber, in case they get a bit smoky. If you're burned to death while you're doing it, that doesn't count as a goal, I suppose?"

"Wats! I am alludin' to the fire-dwill in the daytime," said Arthur Augustus. "It's a nobbay ideah, as fah as it goes! F'winstance, suppose some anarchist or someone came along settin' fire to St. Jim's! Nothin' like bein' weady. But buzzin' up and down fire-escapes, and jumpin' into blankets, and squirtin' with a hose would play ducks and dwakes with a fellow's clobber! We've got to go stwaight fwom lessons to fire-dwill. No time to wush up and change clothes."

Arthur Augustus polished his eyeglass thoughtfully.

"It's wathah a pwoblem," he continued. "I have been givin' it some deep thinkin', I can tell you. Of course, a fellow could go in to lessons in his old clothes——"

"He could!" assented Tom Merry.

"That's all vevy well for you chaps," said D'Arcy, with a nod. "You chaps are wathah slovenly, anyway, if you don't mind my mentionin' it. But I've always made it a point to be wathah well-dwessed, and set an example to the Lowah School, you know. Goin' into class in old clothes would be wathah infwa dig. On the othah hand——"

"On the other hand——" grinned Lowther.

"Yaas, on the othah hand, a fellow can't wush off to fire-dwill in decent clobber, and get his sleeves wubbed and his knees baggay, and all that.

So I have thought of havin' a set of ovelalls in the lobby always weady. I shall nip into them in a twinklin', you know, and there you are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for cacklin', you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, raising his eyebrows. "I have been thinkin' it out, and it flashed into my bwain, you know."

"Yours is exactly the brain it would flash into!" assented Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! I think of things, you know," said Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously. "I can get them at Mr. Wiggs', in Wylcombe. He has a lot of stock to sell off cheap—ovewalls among othah things. I think I will buzz off on my bike now, as dwill begins aftah lessons this aftahnoon. If you fellows see Blake, tell him I'm sowwy I can't turn up to cwicket——"

"Can't you?" demanded a voice behind the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth had come out of the School House while Arthur Augustus was making his sage remarks. Blake gave the swell of St. Jim's a playful tap on the back of the head, tilting his topper over his nose, just to announce his arrival.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus retrieved his topper, and turned a wrathful eye upon the chums of the Fourth.

"You uttah ass, Blake——"

"Come on!" said Blake. "Half an hour at cricket—lots of time! We've got to beat the Shell on Saturday, you know."

"Not in your lifetime!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Rats! Come on, Gussy!"

"I was just wemarkin', Blake——"

"Your remarks can be continued in our next, old chap. Come along to the cricket!"

"I'm goin' down to Wylcombe——"

"Not to-day! Come on!"

"I wequiah some ovelwalls——"

"Cricket! Come on!"

"Cwicket can come latah, Blake——"

"Ass! It's fire-drill after lessons—Mr. Railton's new stunt!" said Blake. "Blessed if I can see why we should have it, when the New House don't! But it's no good arguing with a House-master!"

"It's because we have fire-dwill aftah lessons that I wequiah my ovelwalls, Blake——"

"Fathead! This way!"

"I am sowwy——"

"Keep your sorrow for another occasion, old top," said Blake. "Take his right arm, Herries——"

"Let go, Hewwies, you ass!"

"Take his left, Dig——"

"Weally, Digby——"

"I'll prod him behind!" said Blake, taking a business-like grip on his bat. "Now then——"

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus frantically, as Blake prodded.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Terrible Three.

"Welease me, you uttah asses——"

"March!" said Blake.

Herries and Digby marched, and Arthur Augustus had to march between them. It was, as Monty Lowther remarked, like a wild elephant being led between two tame ones.

The Terrible Three followed, chortling.

Arthur Augustus turned round a crimson face towards Blake.

"You shwiekin' ass——" he gasped.

Prod!

"Yow-wooop! You uttah chump, I——"

Prod!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' in to Wylcombe to get my ovelwalls!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"You're going to Little Side to do cricket practice!" answered Blake.

"I wequiah them immediately aftah lessons——"

Prod!

"You feahful wottah——"

"Hold on, old chap!" said Monty Lowther, as if struck by a bright thought. "I'll cut down to Rylcombe and get your overalls, if you like, Gussy. Leave it to me!"

"Bai Jove, that's vewy decent of you, Lowthah!"

"Not at all, old chap! Happy to oblige!" said Lowther affably. "Rely on me to get a first-class fit!"

"Tell Mr. Wiggs to put it on my bill, deah boy. Keep that bat away, Blake, you wottah! I will come down to the cwicket, since Lowthah is so obligin'. You'll be suah to get back befoah lessons, Lowthah!"

"Yes, rather, as Mr. Linton will scalp me if I don't!" grinned Lowther. "If I don't see you, I'll hang 'em on your peg in the lobby."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy! Yawwooh! Keep that bat away, Blake, you wuffian!"

Arthur Augustus disappeared with his chums in the direction of Little Side.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

MONTY LOWTHER OBLIGES!

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

Those polite remarks were made by Tom Merry and Manners, as the Fourth-Formers departed. The remarks were addressed, of course, to Monty Lowther, who smiled benignantly at his chums.

"What's the row now?" he inquired.

"Fathead!" said Tom Merry. "What the merry thump are you pulling Gussy's leg for? He can't show up at fire-drill in overalls!"

"Mr. Railton will drop on him like a ton of coke, if he does!" remarked Manners.

"My dear infants, isn't it a fellow's duty to oblige a loved schoolmate?" asked Monty Lowther. "Am I not always doing these kind things?"

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

Monty Lowther looked pained.

"Instead of upbraiding your chum for performing a kind action, come along and help me select the overalls," he said.

"Catch me," said Tom. "I'm going to do some batting before lessons. We're going to beat the Fourth on Saturday."

"I've got some films to develop," said Manners.

"Then I shall have to go alone," said Lowther. "Well, I dare say I can manage. I've seen that lot of goods at Mr. Wiggs, and I think I can pick out something suitable for Gussy. Ta, ta, old toplets!"

Monty Lowther walked away to the bicycle shed, leaving his chums rather perplexed.

"I suppose it's a stunt," said Tom Merry, after some thought. "He can't be ass enough to bring in a suit of overalls for that howling ass. Let's get along to the cricket, Manners."

"Come and help me in the dark-room," suggested Manners.

"Rats!"

"Bow-wow, then!"

And the chums parted, each to follow his own inclination. Tom Merry was batting to Talbot's bowling, and Manners was enjoying himself in the

red light of the dark-room, when Monty Lowther wheeled out his bicycle, and cycled away cheerfully to Rylcombe. On the Fourth Form pitch, Arthur Augustus had nobly consented to throw himself into the cricket, satisfied now on the important subject of the overalls. It was not till the bell rang for lessons that the cricketers came off.

Monty Lowther had not reappeared when the juniors crowded into the School House for afternoon lessons. Tom Merry looked out of the big doorway, with a knitted brow. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was very keen on punctuality, and the chums did not want to be late. They generally received lines enough, without asking for more.

"Lowthah come in, you fellows?" asked Arthur Augustus, coming along with Blake & Co. on his way to the Form-room.

"Not yet."

"Bai Jove! I twust he will not be late, as he went down to Wylcombe to oblige me," said Arthur Augustus, with friendly concern.

"Come on, Gussy!" bawled Blake.

"Comin', deah boy!"

The Fourth-Formers went into their Form-room. Most of the Shell had gone into their room, too, where Mr. Linton was ready for them; but Tom Merry and Manners still lingered. They did not want to go in without their chum.

"The ass!" grunted Manners. "We shall get lines for this."

"Hallo, there he is!"

Monty Lowther came speeding up to the School House, with a big bundle under his arm. He came in rather breathlessly.

"Fourth gone in?" he asked.

"Yes; and we're late——"

"Never mind that," said Lowther



Arthur Augustus turned round a crimson face towards Blake as the latter prodded him with the cricket bat. "You shwiekin' ass——" he gasped. Prod! "Yow-woop, I——" Prod! "I am goin' to Wylcombe to get my ovelalls!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

cheerfully. "I've got the goods, but I didn't want Gussy to see them before lessons."

"Ass! I tell you——"

Monty Lowther cut into the lobby. There he jerked the string off the parcel, and unrolled the brown paper. A blue bundle rolled out. Tom Merry and Manners stared at it.

"What on earth——" began Tom.

Monty Lowther shook out the overalls. He held them up for inspection before his astonished chums.

"I fancy this lot was worn by a fellow about six-feet-six," he remarked. "A bit long for Gussy, perhaps——"

"Ha, ha! You funny ass!" gasped

Tom Merry. "So that's why——"

"The trousers are about four feet long—the jacket about the same," said Lowther, thoughtfully. "None of Gussy's clobber will show when he's got this lot on, I'm sure. Think so?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd have got them a bit bigger, but this was the largest size going." Lowther hung his precious purchase on the peg sacred to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth. "Now let's cut, or Linton will be getting his hair off."

"He's got it off already, most likely, you awful ass!"

The Terrible Three cut off hurriedly to the Shell-room.

Lessons had started there, and Mr. Linton turned a freezing eye upon the three juniors as they came in, several minutes late.

"Fifty lines!" he snapped.

Tom Merry and Manners each bestowed a ferocious look on their too-humorous chum. But Monty Lowther only smiled as he went to his place. He considered that his little joke on Gussy was worth fifty lines.

The thought of Gussy turning up to fire-drill in those overalls was joyful to Lowther, and it enabled him to bear the frowns of his Form-master with great equanimity.

Most of the School House fellows were looking forward to fire-drill after lessons. It was to be taken under the personal supervision of Mr. Railton, who had instituted it in his House. Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, had pooh-poohed the suggestion. He did not approve of any suggestion that came from the School House master. So the New House fellows were not taking part in the drill.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were consequently disposed to make fun of it—while the School House took it with awful seriousness. Already noses had been punched on the subject.

But it was not in Monty Lowther's nature to take anything with very much seriousness. And certainly the first parade of the St. Jim's firemen was not likely to be very serious if Arthur Augustus turned up in the extensive overalls Monty had provided for him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS CAUSES A SENSATION

"CRICKET for me!" remarked George Figgins of the New House, when the Fourth Form, dis-

missed by Mr. Lathom, came out into the corridor. Figgins made that observation loud enough for Blake & Co. to hear. He wanted it to be fully understood that any stunt in which the New House did not share wasn't much of a stunt, anyway.

Jack Blake looked round.

"Well, you fellows need some practice," he said. "The way you play cricket is enough to make the angels weep."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins waved his hand airily.

"Run away, little boys, and play at firemen," he answered. "After all, the School House may catch fire some day, if Racke or Crooke or Mellish drops a cigarette about——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr and Fatty Wynn.

"That's not likely to happen in the New House, you know!" grinned Redfern.

Blake gave a snort.

"What about Clampe and Chowle!" he demanded. "They're smoky beasts, if you like. They'll set fire to a box-room some day with their smokes, and then you fellows will be jolly glad for us to come along and save your lives."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "And we will wolla up like anythin', Figgins, and save your life, deah boy, although you are a wathah cheeky ass!"

"I'll reward you out of my old-age pension," said Figgins. "I shall be getting it by the time you firemen learn how to handle a fire!"

"You uttah ass——"

"Oh, come on!" said Blake. "Railton's out in the quad already; no time to waste on New House asses!"

The Shell were coming out now, and they joined the crowd of the

Fourth. All the School House fellows made for the quadrangle, under a fire of chipping from the New House crowd. Most of the juniors stayed only to snatch their caps; but Arthur Augustus had more to do than that. Arthur Augustus was clad in his usual nobby elegance, and he had his clobber to think of. Fortunately, his elegant clobber was in no danger, owing to the wonderful idea that had flashed into his noble brain. With amateur hands handling a fire-hose, there really was no telling what might happen to a chap's clobber, and Arthur Augustus was running no risks. The overalls settled the question for him.

But a rather thoughtful shade came over his noble brow as he took down the big blue overalls from the peg.

In such garments as overalls even Arthur Augustus did not expect a fashionable cut or fit. But there was a limit. Monty Lowther had been kind and obliging—Gussy admitted that—but— He held up the overalls, and blinked at them through his eyeglass.

"Blake, my deah boy——"

But Blake was gone.

"Hewwies——"

"Come on!" answered Herries, jamming his cap on his head, and bolting.

"I say, Dig——"

"Get a move on, Gussy!" said Dig, as he disappeared.

"Wildwake——"

"I guess I can't stop, old scout!" answered Kit Wildrake. "You'd better hustle. Railton won't like anybody late." And the Canadian junior vanished.

"Bai Jove! I say, Tom Mewwy——"

"Good-bye!"

"Mannahs——"

"Fare thee well!" grinned Manners.

"Lowthah—pway wemain a moment, Lowthah——"

Everybody seemed in a pressing hurry with the exception of Monty Lowther. That kind and obliging youth lingered with Arthur Augustus.

"Don't you know how to get into them?" he asked cheerfully. "I'll help you, old top!"

"Aren't they wathah big, old fellow?" asked D'Arcy dubiously.

"Well, you're such an athletic chap for your age, you know," said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, but——"

"Overalls always fit a bit loosely," said Lowther. "You take in a tuck here and there, you know. I've got some pins."

"Yaas, but—but——"

"Jump into them," said Lowther. "There's Kildare bawling for us already. No time to waste, Gussy."

"I—I suppose it would not do to wisk my clobbah——"

"Suppose some ass turns the hose right on you?" asked Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

"Here you are! Get in——"

Monty Lowther held the vast trousers ready, and Arthur Augustus stepped into them, and nearly vanished.

"Gweat Scott! I——"

"They fasten like this, and the jacket part comes down over them——"

"But they are floatin' all wound my feet——"

"I'll pin 'em up——"

"But——"

"There you are——"

"Yawooooh!" yelled Arthur Augustus suddenly.

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Yow-ow! You wan that pin into my calf, you feahful ass!" spluttered Arthur Augustus.

"Never mind——"

"That's all vewy well for you, you uttah ass, but it was my calf!" shrieked the swell of the Fourth.

"My dear chap, there's no time to waste, and you shouldn't have such a fattened calf. There——"

"Yooooop!"

"What's the matter now?"

"You've wun it into my othah leg!"

"My hat! You're always grouching at something, Gussy!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "The bags are fixed now, anyhow. Now for the rest."

"The rest" of the overalls enveloped Arthur Augustus like a tidal wave. They descended to the floor around him, and mingled gracefully with the bagginess of the trousers.

"Bai Jove! I weally think——"

"Now you're fixed. Come on!"

"But weally——"

Monty Lowther grasped the swell of St. Jim's by the arm, and ran him out of the lobby.

"Your clobber can't get touched now, Gussy——"

"Yaas, but——"

"Come on!"

Lowther cut out of the House. Arthur Augustus hesitated. Undoubtedly, his elegant clobber was remarkably well protected, but——

Cutts of the Fifth came hurrying along. He had been sent by the Housemaster to round up stray juniors.

He almost fell down at the sight of Gussy in his overalls.

"What the—what—what—— Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Cutts.

"Weally, Cutts——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fifth-Former. "What a game! Get along with you, D'Arcy; Mr. Railton's waiting."

And Cutts of the Fifth pushed Arthur Augustus out of the House, and followed him, still chortling. There was doubt and dismay in Gussy's noble mind now; but it was too late—the die was cast.

He hurried towards the crowd of School House juniors gathered round Mr. Railton in the quadrangle. Kildare of the Sixth already had the hose in position. Darrell and Langton and Rushden were in charge of the fire-escape, and a number of other Sixth-Formers had life-saving sheets in hand. At a respectful distance stood a crowd of New House fellows, venturing on the exact amount of chipping that could possibly be ventured upon in the presence of a Housemaster and a bunch of prefects.

Mr. Railton had his back to the House just then, and did not see Arthur Augustus hurrying up. But the others saw him; and from the New House crowd there went up a wild yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy——" shrieked Blake blankly.

"Gussy——" babbled Herries and Dig.

"Oh, you benighted jay!" gasped Wildrake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm weady, deah boys," panted Arthur Augustus, "quite weady. Sowwy I'm a minute or two late——"

He hurried to join his chums. And then the pins in the extensive trousers—perhaps not put in very securely—jerked out, and the enormous trousers flopped down round Gussy's ankles, and tripped him up.

The roar of laughter caused Mr. Railton to turn round, with a frowning brow, to ascertain the cause.

He was treated to a startling sight. Arthur Augustus, tripping and

stumbling in his floating trousers, took a "header" and landed on his hands and knees fairly at the Housemaster's feet!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

VERY WET!

MR. RAILTON stared at the extraordinary figure sprawling at his feet. He did not seem to know what it was for the moment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered the Housemaster.

But it was useless for even the Housemaster to command silence at that moment. The sight of Arthur Augustus sprawling, enveloped in overalls, was too much for the juniors, and the seniors, too. The quadrangle of

St. Jim's rang with shouts of laughter.

"Oh dear!" gasped Tom Merry. "Gussy will be the death of me some day!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Gwooooh! Help a chap up, somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get up at once!"

"I—I—I'm twyin'!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He scrambled up, caught his foot again, and rolled on the ground, with a splutter. Mr. Railton stooped, took a grip on the back of his neck, and lifted him bodily to his feet.

"Gwooooh!"

"You utterly absurd boy!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "What do you



Monty Lowther shook out the overalls and held them up for inspection before his astonished chums. "I fancy this lot was worn by a fellow about six-feet-six," he remarked. "A bit long for Gussy perhaps—"

mean by coming into the quadrangle in this extraordinary garb ? ”

“ They—they’re my ovelwalls, sir ! ”

“ Your what ? ”

“ Ovelwalls—to save my clobbah, sir. ”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Silence ! D’Arcy, go back into the House at once, and remove those ridiculous things. And take a hundred lines ! ”

“ Oh deah ! Weally, sir—— ”

“ Go ! ” thundered Mr. Railton.

Arthur Augustus started. He gathered up his vast trousers in both hands, and stumbled away.

A yell of laughter followed him.

The sight of Arthur Augustus tripping away, holding up his skirts, was irresistible.

“ Oh dear ! ” gasped Blake. “ Of all the asses—— ”

“ I guess he does annex the prize bun ! ” grinned Wildrake.

“ Silence ! ”

Mr. Railton’s frowning brow restored silence at last. The House-master apparently failed to see the joke.

But though the School House fellows were reduced to something like gravity, the New House crowd, at a little distance, persisted in grinning. They were determined that, for their part, the fire-drill was not going to be taken seriously.

Mr. Ratcliff came along from his House, and lifted his scanty eyebrows at the sight of the School House array.

The amateur firemen were at hose-work by this time, and the old elms were receiving a shower-bath, which probably did them good.

Mr. Ratcliff curved his thin lips in a sour smile.

It did not please him to approve of the proceedings ; and in those

circumstances it would have been in better taste for Mr. Ratcliff to keep off the scene. But he preferred to appear. The New House master never neglected an opportunity of making a remark that might cause discomfort.

“ Ah ! Busy, my dear Railton, I see ! ” he remarked, with a manner that indicated that he regarded the whole affair as child’s play.

Mr. Railton, determined not to observe his colleague’s unpleasant smile, nodded cheerfully.

“ As you see, Ratcliff ! ” he replied.

“ What are—er—these—these objects ? ” asked Mr. Ratcliff, glancing at the life-saving sheets.

“ They are for jumping into from a window, in case of fire, ” explained Railton.

“ You really seem to anticipate a fire, my dear fellow ! ”

“ Surely it is not impossible, Ratcliff ! Why not be prepared ? ”

“ Oh, quite so, quite so ! ” said Mr. Ratcliff, with the same disagreeable smile. “ I dare say you are quite right. ”

His tone indicated that he was perfectly convinced that Mr. Railton was quite wrong.

“ Why not let your boys join in the drill ? ” suggested Mr. Railton good-humouredly. “ It would at least do them no harm. ”

“ Waste of time, Mr. Railton—waste of time, in my opinion. ”

“ Hem ! ”

After that remark, even Mr. Railton’s politeness was not equal to any further conversation with Mr. Ratcliff. But the New House master was not finished yet. Everybody present would have been obliged by Mr. Ratcliff’s walking off ; but he had no intention of walking off so long as anything disagreeable remained to be said.

"And this is the hose," he remarked. "What are you going to do with the hose, Lowther?"

Monty Lowther had just taken charge of the nozzle. Every fellow was going to do hose-drill in turn.

Lowther looked up innocently.

"I'm learning, sir," he answered meekly.

"I should suppose that any boy, however stupid, knew how to handle a fire-hose!" said Mr. Ratcliff, his lip curling.

"Well, sir, you have to learn to keep a good aim, and all that," said Monty Lowther. "It's not so jolly easy— Oh dear!"

Swish! Swooooooosh!

Whether it was because Monty Lowther had not yet learned to take a good aim, or because he had, the nozzle suddenly swung round right on the New House master.

The jet of water smote Mr. Ratcliff fairly on the chest.

The tall, thin gentleman gave a mighty jump and a mightier roar.

"Oh! Ah! What— Help! Stoppim! Yoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the amateur firemen.

"Lowther!" thundered Mr. Railton.

Lowther seemed petrified by what he had done—so petrified that he stood motionless, with the hose still playing on Mr. Ratcliff.

That astounded and enraged gentleman danced in the whizzing flood of water, like an insect in a beam of sunlight.

"Yourrrrrgggh! Stoppim! Yooooop!"

"Lowther——" shrieked Mr. Railton.

Knox of the Sixth was nearest, and he rushed at Lowther. He seized him by the ear—with unnecessary force.

"You young fool, shut it off!"

yelled Knox. "Oh! Ah! Yooooop—gooooooch!"

The nozzle swung round on Knox, and caught him fairly under the chin.

Knox spun backwards.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowther, stop——"

"Put it down——"

"Yorrrrrggggh!"—from Knox.

"Groooooooooo!"—from Mr. Ratcliff.

Kildare jumped at the Shell fellow. The hose did not turn on him. Monty Lowther was wise in his generation; he did not venture upon such "accidents" with the captain of the school.

The water was shut off at last; the hose dropped from Kildare's hand. Knox, drenched and dripping, and crimson with fury, streaked for the School House, for a much-needed change. Mr. Ratcliff stood, streaming with water and shaking with fury.

"Mr. Ratcliff," gasped the School House master, "I—I regret this exceedingly! That clumsy boy shall be severely punished! I cannot sufficiently apologise for——"

"This is a plot, sir!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff furiously.

"Mr. Ratcliff!"

"I am well aware, sir, that this outrage was planned!" yelled the New House master. "The boy, sir, was meeting your wishes, as I am very well aware. I despise such artifices, sir!"

And Mr. Ratcliff, in a towering rage, stamped away, squelching out water with every stamp.

Mr. Railton drew a deep breath. There was a dead silence.

"Dismiss!" said Mr. Railton quietly. "The drill is ended for today! Lowther, I shall see you in my study!"

"Yes, sir!" said Lowther meekly.

Mr. Railton strode away, and the amateur firemen proceeded to stack up their paraphernalia. Among the juniors, at least, there was incessant chuckling, and most of the seniors were grinning. Mr. Ratcliff's remarks had not won him favour among the School House fellows, and there was nobody present who regretted Lowther's accident with the hose.

Only Lowther—who generally had the keenest possible appreciation of his own little jokes—looked a little grave.

"You funny ass!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Why don't you laugh? It was the funniest thing going!"

"Yes, rather!" gurgled Manners. "I'd never seen Ratty doing the fox-trot before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther grinned.

"It was funny—— Ha, ha, ha! But I'm rather afraid that it won't be funny in Mr. Railton's study!" he said. And he started for the School House looking rather dismal.

And the humorist of the Shell was right—it wasn't!

As Tom Merry & Co. came back to the House, a shabby looking figure emerged. Only by the eyeglass gleaming in the eye could it be recognised as that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The juniors stared at him.

"What on earth are you doing in those trousers?" demanded Blake.

Arthur Augustus glanced down at his trousers.

"They're wathah seeday, aren't they?" he remarked.

"Rather isn't the word—they're the limit, I guess!" said Wildrake. "Where on earth did you dig them up?"

"And that old jacket——" said Tom Merry.

"And that waistcoat——"

"You see, deah boys," explained Arthur Augustus, "as Wailton was down on my ovelwalls, I have changed my clobbah. I got these fwom Toby, the page, you know. I asked him to lend me his oldest clobbah. Now I'm weady for the fire-dwill."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to cackle at, deah boys. I am quite weady now, and eagah for the fway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Only it's all over, you see!"

"Bai Jove!"

"So you can go and change your clobber again!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Weally, you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus, realising that he had changed his clothes a little too late, drifted disconsolately into the School House to change them once more.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

TRIBULATIONS OF A HUMORIST!

"THAT boundah was pullin' my leg!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been very silent at tea in Study No. 6 after the fire-drill. Blake and Herries and Digby were chatting away cheerily, nineteen to the dozen, if not a round score. But there was a deep shade of thoughtfulness on the aristocratic brow of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as if he were dealing with a mental problem of some severity. He came out of a brown study with a sudden remark, and his chums looked at him.

"Hallo! Woke up?" asked Blake.

"I have not been asleep, Blake. I have been thinkin'——"

"Draw it mild, old chap!" remonstrated Digby.

"Pway be sewious, Dig. I have



Cutts almost fell down at the sight of Gussy in his overalls. "What the—what—what—— Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Cutts. "Weally, Cutts——" said Arthur Augustus.

been thinkin' it ovah, and I have come to the conclusion that Monty Lowthah was pullin' my leg in landin' me with that feahful set of ovelwalls."

"You really think so?" gasped Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

"You've thought that out, on your own?"

"Yaas."

"Without the aid of a net?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"What born idiot was it that said the age of miracles was past?" asked Blake. "It isn't. It can't be! Here's Gussy thought it out in less

than an hour; thought out something that was clear from the start——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Herries and Dig.

The swell of St. Jim's adjusted his monocle in his eye with great care, and surveyed his hilarious chums with severity.

"You uttah asses! Did you wealise fwom the beginnin' that Lowthah was pullin' my leg?"

"I had just a faint suspicion!" gurgled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard it as anythin' but a laughin' mattah. I twusted Lowthah

to get me those ovelalls, and in landin' me with those widiculous things, big enough for some beastlay giant, he was weally guilty of a bweach of twust," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I cannot let this pass without the vewy sevewest wepwewhension."

"Fan me, somebody!" murmured Blake.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Will you be my second, Blake?" he asked, with dignity.

"Eh?"

"I am goin' to give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'."

"Oh, spare his life!" said Blake.

"Remember he's young. These are the faults of giddy and unthinking youth, Gussy."

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake! He has made me widiculous——"

"Only helped," said Blake.

"Nature started it."

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "I wegard you as a wibald jestah, Blake. Hewwies, will you be my second?"

"Catch me!" said Herries. "Don't play the goat, old chap!"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Besides, it was funny," said Blake. "If you could have seen yourself in those trousers, Gussy——"

"Will you be my second, Dig?"

"I don't think!" said Dig.

"If you fellows wefuse to back me up I shall be obliged to look for backin' outside this studay!" said Arthur Augustus.

It was a crushing remark. But somehow Blake & Co. did not look crushed. They smiled.

Arthur Augustus eyed them for a moment, and then he turned and stalked out of Study No. 6, very much on his dignity. He closed the door after him with emphasis.

"Hallo! Wherefore the frown upon that noble brow?" asked a cool, cheery voice in the passage. Cardew of the Fourth stopped to ask the question.

"Cardew, deah boy, will you be my second?"

"That depends," answered Cardew thoughtfully. "Are you going to fight my pal Levison?"

"No."

"My other pal, Clive?"

"No."

"Or my merry cousin, Durrance?"

"No, that's all wight."

"Sorry I can't be your second, then," said Cardew politely. "If you were goin' to fight a friend of mine, I'd oblige you with pleasure. Ta-ta!"

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Cardew! Hallo, Julian! Stop a minute, deah boy!" Dick Julian stopped, as Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled away. "Julian, old scout, will you be my second? I am goin' to thwash Lowthah!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Julian. "I'll tell you what, Gussy, I'll bring the doctor you'll need afterwards."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked off to the Shell passage. He did not trouble about any further quest for a second.

He reached Study No. 10 in the Shell, tapped at the door, and opened it. The Terrible Three were all there—Tom Merry and Manners seated, and Monty Lowther standing up. For once, there was absolutely no trace of humour in the features of Montague Lowther.

"Pway excuse my buttin' in, deah boys——" began Arthur Augustus.

"All right, so long as you butt out again!" grunted Lowther.

Arthur Augustus fixed an accusing eyeglass upon him.

"I have come heah to thwash you, Lowthah!"

"Ass!"

"You planted that wotten, widi-culous set of ovelalls upon me for the expwess purpose of makin' me look an ass!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Fathead!"

"Do you deny it, Lowthah?"

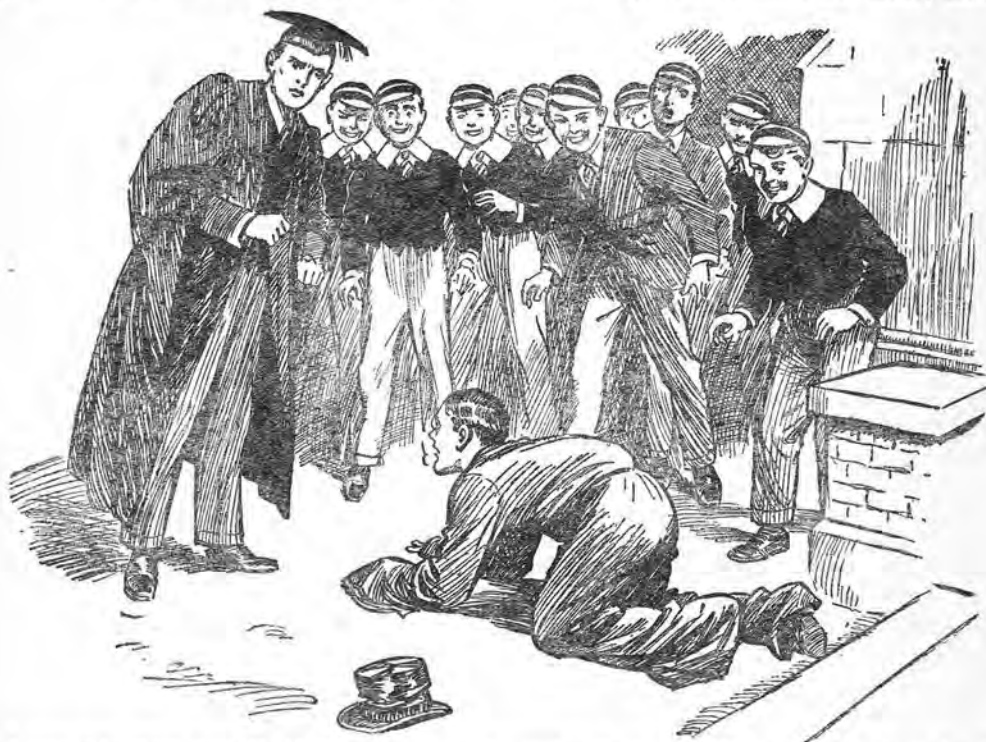
"Come over here, and let me smash you!" was Lowther's reply. "I want

"A chap can't knock the stuffing out of a Housemaster!" groaned Lowther. "I like old Railton, but I'd have loved to dot him one right in the eye when he was handling the cane! Ow!"

"It'll wear off!" said Manners.

"Ow! I know that, ass! The trouble is that it hasn't worn off yet!"

"Bai Jove! Undah the circs, Low-



A roar of laughter caused Mr. Railton to turn round to ascertain the cause. He was treated to the sight of Arthur Augustus, tripping and stumbling in the floating trousers, taking a header and landing at his feet!

to smash somebody, and you'll do."

"Bai Jove! I——"

"Shut up, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Can't you see Lowther's been through it. He's been walloped for drenching old Ratty!"

"Oh, let him come on!" said Lowther. "It will do me good to knock the stuffing out of him!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

thah, I will let you off the thwashin' I was goin' to give you," said Arthur Augustus, with great consideration. "But you will pway undahstand, Lowthah, that you are to wegard yourself as havin' been thwashed."

"Why don't they put him in the Zoo?" said Monty Lowther. "Extraordinary that they should let him wander about like this."

"Bai Jove! You cheeky ass——"
"Order!" said Tom Merry. "Run away, Gussy, there's a good little boy."
"If you allude to me as a good little boy, Tom Mewwy——"

"Run away and play, old top!"

Tom Merry gently pushed Arthur Augustus out of the study, and closed the door on him. Lowther was wriggling from his recent infliction in Mr. Railton's study. The Housemaster had not spared the rod. He had laid it on, as Lowther considered, not wisely, but too well.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

FIGGINS & CO. ASSIST!

GEORGE FIGGINS drummed on the table, in his study in the New House, with his knuckles. Figgy was looking very thoughtful and a little morose. Kerr and Wynn bore the drumming on the table with exemplary patience, though Kerr was deep in a mathematical problem, and Fatty Wynn was copying a recipe from a cookery book borrowed from the house-dame.

"You fellows are awfully busy, I suppose?" Figgins remarked, with a touch of sarcasm, still drumming.

"Not specially," said Kerr, looking up with a smile. "What's the game, Figgy? Are you going in for table-rapping, and are you trying to call spirits from the vasty deep?"

"What I don't catch on to," said Fatty Wynn, "is this! It says here that you take four new-laid eggs——"

"Give us a rest!" said Figgins.

"And two fresh tomatoes——"

"Bother your tomatoes!" roared Figgins.

"Eh? What's the row, Figgy?" asked Fatty, looking up in surprise. "Ain't you getting ready for supper?"

"Bless supper!"

Figgins drummed on the table again.

"It's not a bad idea in itself!" he said.

"Just what I was thinking," said Fatty Wynn brightly.

"Oh, you've been thinking about it, have you?"

"Yes, rather—and I think that tomato omelettes will go down a treat. But it says here——"

"Who's talking about tomato omelettes?" shrieked Figgins.

"Weren't you?"

"I was talking about the School House stunt," growled Figgins—"their dashed fire-drill!"

"Oh, that rot!" said Fatty Wynn. "I was talking about tomato omelettes. If you take four new-laid eggs——"

"I'll take a Welsh rabbit, and knock his silly head on the table, if you don't dry up!" said Figgins ferociously.

"Order!" said Kerr. "Get it off your chest, Figgy! What's worrying your serene highness?"

"About that School House stunt," said Figgins. "As I said, when Fatty bumped in with his rot, it's not a bad idea in itself. To be quite candid, old Ratty made a mistake in keeping the New House out of it."

"Old Ratty's always making mistakes."

"Railton's idea is a jolly good one, to be perfectly truthful," continued Figgins, "and if old Ratty had joined in, we'd have House drill, and beat the School House hollow. We could do it on our heads."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, we're really left out in the cold," said Figgins; "that's what it amounts to. All we can do is to pooh-pooh the whole scheme, and chip those School House duffers."

"Well, we'll do that."

"We've got to do that to save our

face," remarked Fatty Wynn. "I'd rather go in for fire-drill. But we can't admit that to the enemy."

"That's it," assented Figgins. "I'm glad to see you can think of something beside tomato omelettes, Fatty."

"Look here, Figgy——"

"We can't let those cheeky asses get ahead of us with their blessed stunt," said George Figgins. "Ergo—we've got to dish them somehow, and make them look asses; and the question arises, how are we going to do it? That's what I've been trying to think out, instead of looking into cookery-books for tomato

omelettes!" said Figgins crushingly.

"Well, tomato omelettes are jolly good!" said Fatty Wynn defensively. "If you take four new-laid eggs——"

"Shush, Fatty!" said Kerr, laughing. "You're asking for a big order, Figgy. All the School House is in the stunt, Housemaster and prefects and all, and we can't pull the leg of a Housemaster or the Sixth."

"Bother the Housemaster and the Sixth!" said Figgins. "They can rip, for all I care! But we've got to dish Tom Merry and Blake and that crowd somehow, or else hide our diminished heads. That ass Gussy



Monty Lowther suddenly swung the nozzle of the hose right round at the New Housemaster. The jet of water smote Mr. Ratcliff fairly on the chest. "Oh! Ah! What—Help!" he spluttered. "Stoppim! Yoooooop!"

was saying the other day that his House is going to save the school, if a gang of anarchists should ever come along and set fire to it!" Figgins snorted. "As if any beastly anarchists would be asses enough to come along here playing the giddy goat!"

"Gussy is an ass!" said Kerr. "But"—a glimmer came into the keen eyes of the Scottish junior—"but if Gussy is on the look-out for anarchists they might happen along——"

Snort from Figgins.

"They might!" persisted Kerr. "Three of them, for instance, might turn up at St. Jim's, on purpose to pull Gussy's leg."

"How could they?" roared Figgins. "Have you got their telephone number? And can you call 'em for a jape?"

"Ha, ha! No! But there's little us——"

"Us?" said Figgins dazedly.

"Us!" said Kerr.

"I say, we ain't anarchists!" said Fatty Wynn, with a stare. "I don't know what anarchism is exactly. I've asked Reilly and Mulvaney minor, and they don't seem to agree. They were fighting about it yesterday."

Kerr sighed.

"I'll try to put it into words of one syllable, so that it will penetrate into your feeble intellects," he said. "Gussy's never seen any anarchists, and is never likely to see the genuine article. That's all the more reason why he should be spoofed."

"Oh, it's a jape!" said Figgins.

"Dear man," said Kerr affectionately, "has that just dawned upon your powerful brain?"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Figgins. "If you've got an idea for pulling the leg of those cheeky School House duffers——"

"Listen, and I will a tale unfold," said Kerr. "I've been thinking it out already. What price a plot to burn St. Jim's to the ground, and Gussy getting on the track of it, and the School House Fire Brigade turning out to the rescue——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Let's talk it over, then," said Kerr.

"After supper," said Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"Bother supper!"

"There's nothing like laying a solid foundation, whatever you're going to do," said Fatty, shaking his head. "I'll buzz off and get four new-laid eggs and three tomatoes——"

"If you do," said Figgins, in concentrated tones, "I'll squeeze 'em down your back, Fatty!"

"Look here, Figgy——"

"Shut up! Go ahead, Kerr!"

Kerr went ahead, and Figgins listened with great attention. Fatty Wynn gave all the attention he could spare from the enthralling thought of tomato omelettes.

The discussion in Figgins' study was punctuated by many chuckles. When it ended, George Francis Kerr was busy for some minutes with pen and paper. Then he quitted the study with Figgins, and David Llewellyn Wynn was free at last to devote his enthusiastic attention to tomato omelettes for supper.

Figgins and Kerr strolled towards the School House, chatting carelessly. Fire-drill had been going on that afternoon; it was a regular institution in the School House now, and Tom Merry & Co. were growing exceedingly pleased with the knowledge and skill they were acquiring. Jumping into blankets was looked upon as a very entertaining game by the fags, and was taken up with

enthusiasm by the Third Form especially. Figgins and Kerr came on several groups of School House juniors discussing the afternoon's performances as they strolled around. They were looking for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and they wanted to come on him by chance. They found the noble youth at last, and hailed him.

"How's the fire brigade bizney going on, Gussy?" asked Kerr affably.

"Vewy well, considewin', deah boys," answered D'Arcy.

"Only considering?" said Figgins. "Considering that the New House are not backing it up, do you mean?"

"Nothin' of the sort, Figgins! But Mr. Wailton is wathah an obstinate and unweflectin' gentleman in some wespects. He does not seem to want to weceive suggestions."

The New House juniors grinned.

"There was a haywrick burned on Giles' farm the othah day," continued Arthur Augustus. "There was no evidence that it was done by any anarchists, but that looks vewy suspicious to me—they covah up their twacks so carefully, you know."

"Nothing could be more suspicious than a total absence of evidence!" said Kerr gravely.

"Exactly, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously. "But when I ventured to suggest to Mr. Wailton that a watch should be kept for these wuffians, he said 'Pooh! Non-sense!' He did, weally."

"He doesn't realise the fearful peril!" remarked Figgins.

"Wathah not! But I'm goin' to keep my eyes open," said Arthur Augustus, with a sage shake of the head. "If they waid St. Jim's, I am not goin' to be taken by surprise, I can tell you!"

"Hallo, what's this?" exclaimed

Kerr, stooping and picking up a fragment of paper at his feet.

"Only a scawp of papah," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass on it.

"There's something written on it——"

"My hat!" exclaimed Figgins, staring at the scrap of paper.

"Bai Jove! What is it, deah boys?"

"Look!"

Arthur Augustus glanced at the scrap of paper.

Then his startled eye almost burst through his eyeglass.

There was writing on the paper, in a rough, crabbed hand. It ran—apparently a fragment of a letter of instructions:

"Lenovitch will take the petrol

School House first, and

one box dynamite

Sarovitch

and Marsovitch

burn

destroy

the woodshed at St. Jim's at nine

o'clock Tuesday

start the fire——"

That was all. The fragment of paper was torn irregularly, and the rest of the startling letter was only to be guessed at.

"Gweat Scott!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Some awful incendiawy wottah has been here, deah boys, and he has dwopped this."

"Somebody must have dropped it in the quad!" remarked Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! Some wottah spyin' out the place last night, you know," said Arthur Augustus excitedly. "You see that the lettah has been torn acwoss—the wottah meant to destwoy it, you see!"

"Clear enough, the way you put

it!" said Figgins. "But, I say, this letter belongs to us, Gussy. Kerr found it——"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr.

"Wats!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "It's up to the School House to baffle their knavish twicks. There isn't any fire bwigade in the New House. Leave it to us."

"But——"

"Weally, Figgins, I insist upon takin' charge of this affaih!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus firmly. "I insist upon your leavin' it in my hands."

"But——"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus; and he walked away, with the telltale scrap of paper in his hand.

"I say, give me my paper!" bawled Kerr.

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"Wats!"

Figgins and Kerr exchanged a glance, and then walked away towards the New House, smiling. And Arthur Augustus, bursting with suppressed excitement, rushed into the School House with the precious paper. There was no time to be lost. For it was Tuesday, and it was eight o'clock, and the fire was to be started by the plotters at nine—according to the mysterious document.

And in such a thrilling hour of danger, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not the fellow to let the grass grow under his feet.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

NO BACKERS.

"NONSENSE!"

"But, sir——"

"It is some absurd practical joke, D'Arcy——"

"Weally, sir——"

"Throw it away, my boy!"

"But——"

"You may go, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quitted the Housemaster's study, in the School House, with feelings too deep for words.

Generally, he had a great respect for Mr. Railton. But his respect for that gentleman very nearly failed him now.

Being in possession of information relating to a terrible incendiary plot, Arthur Augustus had gone to his Housemaster, as a matter of course. He expected instant measures to be taken, and the School House Fire Brigade to be called out as a precaution for emergencies.

Instead of which, Mr. Railton, with incredible rashness and recklessness, looked on the thing as a practical joke.

It was amazing to Arthur Augustus. Evidently, if St. Jim's was not to be burned to the ground that night, it depended on Arthur Augustus to save the old school. He hurried away to Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

"You fellows——"

"You're late for prep!" said Blake. "Do you want a row with Lathom in the morning, Gussy?"

"Wats! There is no time for pwep this evenin'!"

"Eh?"

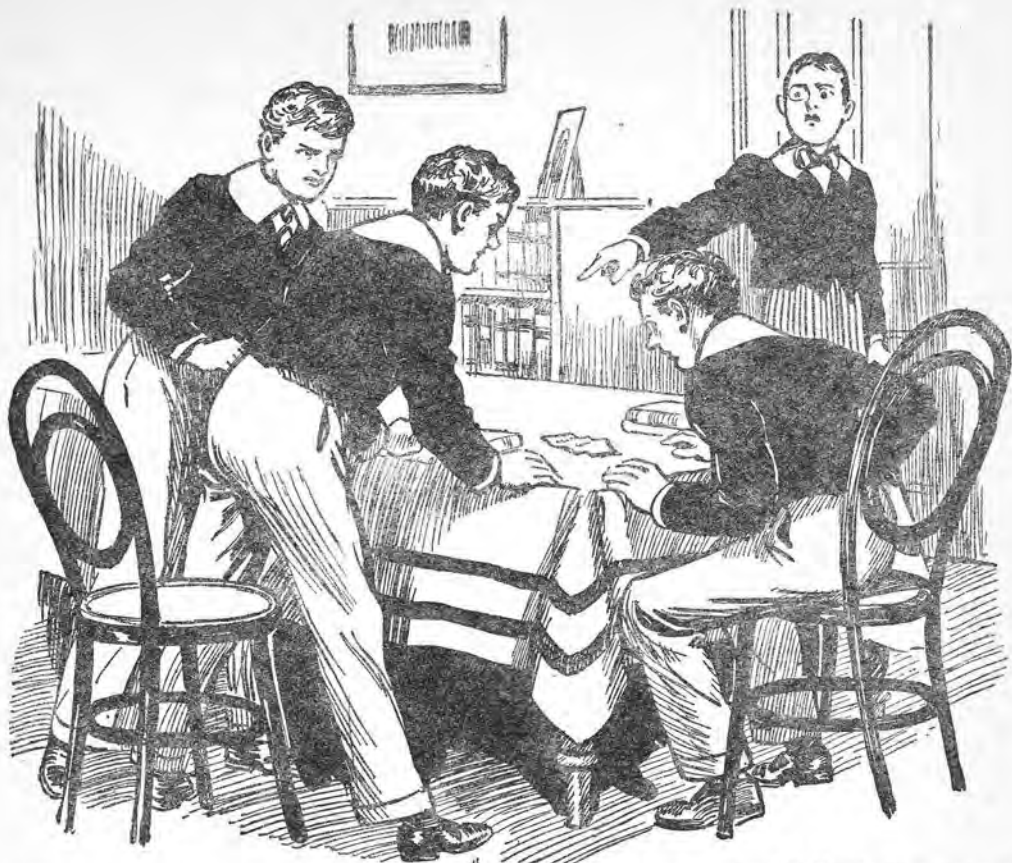
"Do you fellows want to save St. Jim's fwom bein' burned to the gwound?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

Blake jumped.

"Hallo! Is there a fire?" he asked.

"Good!" said Herries. "Chance for us to wedge in with the fire brigade. If I can get hold of the hose, I'm going to try to catch Knox of the Sixth——"

"This is a sewious mattah, Hewwies. Look at that!"



"This is a sewious mattah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Look at that!" He threw a scrap of paper on the study table. Blake, Herries and Digby looked at it. "Hallo! Who's pulling your leg this time?" asked Digby.

Arthur Augustus threw a scrap of paper on the study table. Blake and Herries and Digby looked at it.

"Hallo! Who's pulling your leg this time?" asked Digby.

"This is an anarchist document, Dig—"

"Anarchist rats!" said Dig.

"You uttah ass! You're as big an ass as Mr. Wailton!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Cannot you wealise the feahful dangah?"

Blake chuckled.

"I'll get on with my prep. and chance the danger," he said. "I'd

rather chance these jokers than chance Lathom in the morning."

"Bai Jove!"

"You shouldn't play these tricks, Gussy!" said Herries, shaking his head. "What are you trying to pull our leg for?"

"Weally, Hewwies, if you think I manufactured that papah—"

"Didn't you?" asked Herries.

"You uttah ass! It was dwopped in the quad yestahday—or last night—by an anarchist spy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you goin' to back me up in

stoppin' this feahful outrage?" demanded Arthur Augustus hotly.

"Try next door!" said Blake.

"I am surprised at you. I am——"

"Where's that dashed dictionary?" said Blake, looking round. "Gussy, old bean, you're interrupting the prep."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus would have poured forth the vials of his wrath upon his incredulous chums, but there was no time to waste. It was already turned half-past eight, and the danger was getting close. He rushed out of the study, and sped away to No. 10 in the Shell. He burst into Tom Merry's study like a cyclone.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"What the thump——"

"Wally wound, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Dangah! Fiah!"

"What?" yelled the Terrible Three.

"The anarchists are here——"

"Here?" howled Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! They are goin' to start the fiah in the woodshed at nine o'clock, and burn St. Jim's to the gwound——"

"Oh, let 'em!" said Manners.

"Call me when they begin, and I'll bring out my camera."

"Look at that papah—dwopped by a spy in the quad last night——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cannot you wead, you duffahs? Look at it——"

"Gussy's getting quite bright," said Monty Lowther. "But he can't expect to pull the leg of this study. It isn't the first of April, either. Go and look for greenhorns in the Fourth, Gussy; none in the Shell!"

"Bai Jove!"

There was no help to be had in No. 10. Minutes were precious now, and

Arthur Augustus quitted the study again with a rush, leaving the Terrible Three chuckling.

Three-quarters chimed out from the clock-tower.

"Bai Jove! A quarter to nine, and nothing' done!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Talbot—I say, Talbot——"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Talbot.

"The madmen are just goin' to set fiah to the school——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Pway come along and help me——"

"But what about prep?" asked Talbot.

"You awful ass!"

Arthur Augustus sprinted down the stairs. There were no backers for him in the School House, and either he had to baffle the plotters on his own, or else allow St. Jim's to be burned to the ground. He stayed only to annex a golf-club, and started for the woodshed. He prepared to face the foe on his "lonely own."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

ONLY A FALSE ALARM!

THERE was a sound of muffled voices.

Arthur Augustus thrilled. It was dark by the woodshed, and the muttering voices came to Gussy's ears from the deep shadows.

Evidently he had come upon the rascals mentioned in the torn letter!

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Pour out the petrol, Lenovitch!"

"Got the matches, Sarovitch?"

Probably only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would have taken those ejaculations for the remarks of the plotters.

His heart beat fast as he gripped his golf-club.

"Ah! The foe!" exclaimed a deep

voice. "The automatic pistol—quick! Slay him—shed his gore—Aha——"

Three dark figures rushed on Arthur Augustus from the shadow of the shed. Before he could use his golf-club it was jerked away, and three masked faces were round him, three pairs of eyes glistening through the holes in the masks.

"Slay him!"

"Shoot him!"

"You howwid wuffians!" gasped Arthur Augustus, struggling as the masked figures seized him. "I—Gwoogh—Leggo! Help! Fire! Help!"

He tore himself away from the gang with surprising ease, and dashed away towards the School House for help.

"Thunder! He's escaped!"

"Set fire to the woodshed!"

"Pour out the petrol!"

Arthur Augustus ran for his life.

Crack, crack, crack! rang out behind him. To Gussy's startled ears it was a succession of pistol-shots. He was far too excited to recognise the Fifth-of-November cracker.

Crack, crack!

"Help! Fire!" roared Arthur Augustus, as he pelted into the School House.

"What——"

"Where——"

"Fire, fire, fire!"

Arthur Augustus roared out the alarm with all the power of his lungs.

"Fire, fire!"

The alarm was taken up on all sides.

Excited fellows shouted inquiries from the studies, the stairs, and the passages. Wildly-excited fags came streaming out of the Third Form room, shouting and yelling.

"Fire, fire!"

Clang, clang, clang!

The alarm-bell crashed out into the night.

Footsteps rang on the staircases, seniors and juniors poured out into the quadrangle.

The alarm was general now.

Mr. Railton's deep voice was heard giving commands. Kildare and Darrell had rushed for the hose. In the distance across the quadrangle, three youths stared at the excited scene outside the School House. They crammed their masks into their pockets, and gasped.

"My only hat!" stuttered Figgins. "There'll be a row! They're really turning out their merry fire brigade!"

"Oh, great pip!" gasped Kerr.

"Get indoors!" breathed Fatty Wynn. "We shall have to prove a jolly strong alibi for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three young rascals disappeared into the New House. A minute more, and they were deep in prep in their study.

Meanwhile, the alarm was spreading fast. Windows in the School House were thrown wide open, lights blazed into the quad. Tom Merry & Co. were all out of doors, shouting questions. Everybody knew there was a fire, but nobody seemed to know where it was. Mr. Railton's deep voice dominated the uproar and confusion.

"Where is the fire? I can see nothing! Who gave the alarm?"

"D'Arcy!" said a dozen voices.

"Where is D'Arcy?"

"He's ringing the alarm-bell, I think," said Blake.

"Calm yourselves, my boys! It appears to be a false alarm," said Mr. Railton. "Bring D'Arcy here at once, Darrell!"

Darrell rushed into the House, now almost empty. He reappeared, with his hand on Arthur Augustus' collar.

Arthur Augustus was protesting.

"Welease me, Dawwell! I insist

"D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, sir?"

"You gave the alarm of fire?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where is there any fire, you stupid boy?"

"In the woodshed, sir! The anarchists——"

"What!" gasped Mr. Railton.

"They wushed on me, sir——"

"What—how—who—who rushed on you?" exclaimed the astonished Housemaster.

"The spies, sir!"

"Is the boy out of his senses?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in bewilderment.

"I—I showed you the scwap of papah, sir——"

"You incredibly foolish boy, I told you that that was only a foolish practical joke of some person——"

"But they are here, sir!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "They've got automatic pistols and petwol, sir, in the woodshed! They wushed on me—thwee masked wuffians, sir——"

"Three!" murmured Tom Merry. "I think I could guess the names of those giddy raiders, and I fancy they're back in the New House by this time!"

"The boy seems to be suffering from some delusion," said Mr. Railton, greatly perplexed. "Boys, you may return into the House; there is no fire. Kildare, come with me to the woodshed, and we will see if there is anything amiss there."

"Look out for their automatic pistols, Mr. Wailton——"

"Nonsense!"

"They were fiwin' at me, sir——"

"Absurd!"

"I wepeat, sir, they were fiwin——"

"Silence, D'Arcy!"

A crowd of fellows followed the Housemaster to the woodshed. Five or six bike-lamps shed light on the scene. There were no anarchists to be found, no trace of fire, not a drop of petrol, and not the ghost of an automatic pistol.

Kildare picked up something from the ground. It was the exploded shell of a repeating-cracker.

D'Arcy's eyeglass fell from his eye as he looked at it. His eye almost fell after it!

"Bai Jove!" he stuttered.

"This is what you mistook for firing, I suppose, D'Arcy!" snapped Mr. Railton.

"Oh deah! Then——"

"Some foolish prank has been played on this boy," said the Housemaster. "You have given an alarm of fire for no reason, D'Arcy!"

"But—but—but those thwee masked wuffians, sir——"

"Nonsense! You are the victim of a practical joke!" said Mr. Railton crossly. "You have caused great trouble and confusion by your folly, D'Arcy, and I shall consider your punishment——"

"Bai Jove! I—I was twyin' to save the school fwom bein' burned to the gwound, sir——"

"Tish!"

Mr. Railton strode away with a frowning brow. Some of the juniors were laughing, but some of the seniors, who had dragged out hose, and fire-escape, and life-saving sheets from their places, looked exceedingly sheepish and exceedingly wrathful. Knox of the Sixth bestowed a cuff on Gussy's noble ear, which made him stagger, and Rushden righted him again with a cuff on the other ear.

"You young ass!"

"You silly idiot!"

"Kick him!"



Clang, clang, clang! The alarm-bell crashed out into the night, and seniors and juniors were soon pouring out of the School House. Three youths across the quadrangle stared at the scene. "My only hat!" exclaimed Figgins. "There'll be a row!"

"Oh cwumbs!"

"Won't the New House chortle over this!" growled Blake. "Of course, it's a New House jape——"

"Figgins & Co., of course!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I wemembah those boundahs were with me when I found the scwap of papah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Leggo my yah, Kildare!"

Arthur Augustus jerked away his suffering ear, and fled. Even Arthur Augustus did not believe in anarchy any longer. The School House crowd returned to their House, most of them chuckling. But they ceased to chuckle over the incident the next

day, when they found the New House chuckling over it. The laugh was on the side of Figgins & Co.—and the School House Fire Brigade ceased to see anything funny in the matter, and waxed exceeding wrath.

And that day Arthur Augustus D'Arcy led a life in the School House which could only be described as a dog's life!

Everybody seemed to have something unpleasant to say—and said it!

The next time the School House Fire Brigade turned out to drill, Figgins & Co. turned up in great force to watch, and they yelled to the firemen to look out for bombs. And they did not cease troubling till the hose was turned on them accidentally, and then they departed in a great hurry.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

A LITTLE SMOKING-PARTY, AND WHAT
IT LED TO!

"SAFE here!" said Racke of the Shell.

"Safe as houses!" said Clampe.

"No dashed prefect likely to come nosing up here in the box-room, I suppose?" remarked Crooke.

"No fear!"

It was quite a party in the box-room in the New House. Leslie Clampe and Chowle of the New House were there, and Racke, Crooke, Scrope and Mellish of the School House. It was a little smoking-party, and smoking-parties at St. Jim's had to be kept very secret. If Mr. Ratcliff had known of the use the box-room in his House was being put to, Mr. Ratcliff would have descended upon the merry little party with a cane, and the sportsmen of St. Jim's would have felt anything but sporting by the time he had finished with them.

But there was, as Clampe had said, no risk. The box-room was rather secluded, and was not likely to be visited by interfering prefects. Clampe had locked the door and put the key in his pocket, and lighted a tin-backed lamp that hung on the wall.

Racke produced cigarettes galore—the wealthy Aubrey had cigarettes to hand round with great liberality. He also had a pack of cards—the meeting was not only for the joys of smoking.

An upturned box served as a card-table. On other boxes and chairs the merry party sat round it, and six cigarettes were soon going strong. Racke lighted his "smoke" and threw the match over his shoulder.

"I say, be a bit careful!" said Mellish. "There's a lot of straw about here. Somebody's been unpacking a packing-case——"

"Oh, rot!" said Racke carelessly.

"We don't want to give the School House Fire Brigade a job here," grinned Crooke. "Awful rot, that fire brigade, ain't it?"

"Bosh!" said Scrope.

"Tosh!" agreed Clampe. "Jolly glad the New House is out of it. How do you fellows like turning up to fire-drill?"

"Rotten!" growled Racke. "I cut it all I can!"

"Who's going to deal?"

"Cut!"

"There you are."

Racke & Co. were soon busy at poker. Prep was likely to suffer that evening, but prep often did suffer with the black sheep of St. Jim's. Racke had the best of the game, and he raked in the stakes with an unpleasant grin of triumph.

"Your deal, Crooke."

Crooke shuffled the cards.

Aubrey Racke selected a fourth cigarette from his case, and struck a match.

"Careful with that match!" said Mellish, as Racke lighted his cigarette.

The loose straw was behind Racke, and Mellish was nervous.

With a contemptuous laugh, Racke tossed the match over his shoulder. It circled in the air, and dropped on the straw. Racke had expected it to become extinguished as it fell.

But it did not.

It was still alight when it dropped into the straw, and the next moment there was a flare.

"You silly ass!" howled Mellish. "What did I tell you?"

"Oh, gad!"

The juniors jumped up in haste.

The flare of flame ran through the straw, and there was a leaping blaze and a rush of smoke, and they crowded back from it in affright.

"Stamp it out!" exclaimed Crooke. But he did not offer to begin the stamping-out.

"Great Scott!"

"Any water here?" gasped Racke.

"Of course there isn't!"

"Oh, gad!"

"It—it'll die out!" panted Clampe.

"Good heavens, if it's seen from the window there'll be a crowd here——"

"Let's get out!" muttered Racke.

"Open the door—quick!"

"But the fire——"

"Hang the fire! Let's get out before we're spotted!"

"It's spreading!" panted Mellish.

"Some silly ass has been spilling oil here!"

"Some was spilt when I fixed up the lamp," said Chowle. "But, dash it all, let's buzz. There'll be a fearful row over this!"

Racke was already at the door, dragging at it.

"Where's the key?" he cried shrilly. "What silly fool's taken the key out? Do you want us all to be burned to death? The key—quick!"

"I—I've got the thing somewhere!" gasped Clampe, fumbling in his pockets. "Oh dear! I—I—— Here it is!"

Racke snatched savagely at the key, and dropped it. He plunged after it, but a rush of flame along the floor drove him back. There was a huge blaze by this time, and the crackling of wood could be heard. The packing-case was blazing up as well as the straw, and boxes were catching, and the flames were leaping up the walls, licking the ceiling, and creeping over the floor. The six terrified juniors crammed the door.

"The key!" muttered Crooke hoarsely.

"The key—quick! Unlock the door!"

"It—it's there! The fire's over it! We can't get it now!"

"Oh, you idiot!"

"Help!" yelled Mellish, quite losing his nerve. "Help!"

"Quiet, you fool!" bawled Racke.

"Do you want us all to be caught here?"

"You dummy! Better be caught than suffocated!" howled Mellish.

"Help! Help! Help!"

Mellish hammered frantically on the locked door. There were shouts and footsteps outside, and shouts from the quadrangle. The flames had been seen flaring at the window of the box-room.

"Help!"

Racke tore at the door. But it was stout and strong, and it was locked fast. Nothing short of an axe would have hewed a way through. It hardly shook under Aubrey Racke's frantic efforts.

Racke himself was yellow now. He shrieked and raved for help. A flogging from the Head was a trifle to think of in that extremity, for all the occupants of the box-room were in fearful danger now. The flames were roaring in the room, and the heat was terrible. The perspiration streamed down their smoke-blackened faces. They beat and hammered and kicked on the door, screaming for help.

"Help!"

"Fire! Fire!"

A rush of flames drove the hapless juniors from the door. They crowded to the box-room window, and Racke helplessly smashed out the glass with a chair. The rush of fresh air was reviving to the parched and suffocating juniors, but it fed the flames, and the fire roared now with a deep and sullen boom.

"Fire! Fire!" The alarm rang

through the New House from end to end, startling the juniors from the Common-room, and Mr. Ratcliff from his study.

Crammed at the window of the box-room, six haggard, grimed faces glared out into the open air, and six terrified voices shrieked for help. From within the house there was now no help for Clampe & Co. The locked door was licked by devouring flames, cutting them off from the house. Only from the quad could help come; and in the quadrangle crowds were gathered, and swarming round the angle of the building to stare up at the box-room window, from which smoke was billowing.

"Help! Help! Fire!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER

GOOD OLD GUSSY!

"FIRE!"

The alarm rang over St. Jim's from end to end, and from the School House Tom Merry & Co. came swarming. It was nearly bed-time for the juniors. Fortunately not quite. As Tom Merry came speeding out he caught the flare of flame against the sky, and the thick column of smoke that dimmed the stars.

"Fire! Fire!"

"It's in the New House!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Wescue, deah boys!"

"Boys!" It was the deep voice of Mr. Railton. "Order! To your places!"

The fire-drill of the School House fellows, at which Mr. Ratcliff had smiled so sourly, stood Mr. Ratcliff's House in good stead now.

With perfect order, though with excited faces, the School House crowd obeyed the orders of their House-master.

In a wonderfully short space of time the School House Fire Brigade

was at work. The exact location of the fire was quickly ascertained, and the fire-hose, in Mr. Railton's hand, sent a stream of water into the box-room window in the New House.

Flame as well as smoke licked from the window, over the terrified heads of Racke & Co.

"Help! Help!"

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Ratcliff hurried up, wildly excited and twittering. "My dear Railton! Bless my soul, the—the house is on fire—actually on fire! Good heavens!"

Mr. Railton did not heed his twittering colleague. Mr. Ratcliff wrung his hands and babbled, as useless in that emergency as the smallest fag in the Third Form. Fortunately, the School House master was made of sterner stuff. Plying the hose with a steady hand, he rapped out orders. A group of School House juniors gathered under the window, the life-saving sheet extended and gripped firmly in their hands.

"Jump!"

Racke clambered out desperately and dropped into the sheet. He was taken aside, and Clampe followed him, and then Crooke. They were helped away, babbling and gasping. Scrope was the next, and he landed safely. Mellish hung on the window-sill, palpitating from sheer funk, and dropped, half by accident, in the sheet.

Only Chowle remained, and as he stared in terror from the window, equally terrified by the fire behind him and the leap before him, there came a rush of flame and smoke from within, and Chowle disappeared.

There was a gasp from the crowd below.

Mr. Ratcliff gave a shriek.

"He is lost! He will be killed, burned to death! Oh, heavens——"

"Silence, sir!" said Mr. Railton

gruffly. "The ladder, boys—the ladder! For the love of heaven, quick!"

Kildare and Darrell were rushing the ladder to the window. It crashed on the sill. A hundred pairs of eyes watched for Chowle to reappear. But the window remained blank. It was pretty clear that the wretched junior had been overcome by the smoke, and that he lay within the room, a helpless prey to the devouring flames.

Mr. Railton handed the hose to Kildare, and rushed up the ladder. A cheer followed him. His head went in at the smashed window, but a heavy volume of smoke drove him back, and he reeled on the ladder.

Darrell rushed up and grasped him. Smoke poured out above them in a black volume. The Housemaster, almost insensible, was helped down the ladder by the Sixth-Former.

The next moment there was a yell.

"D'Arcy!"

"Gussy!"

"Stand back!" roared Kildare.

The captain of St. Jim's made a spring forward. But he was too late!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, was skimming up the ladder with lightning speed.

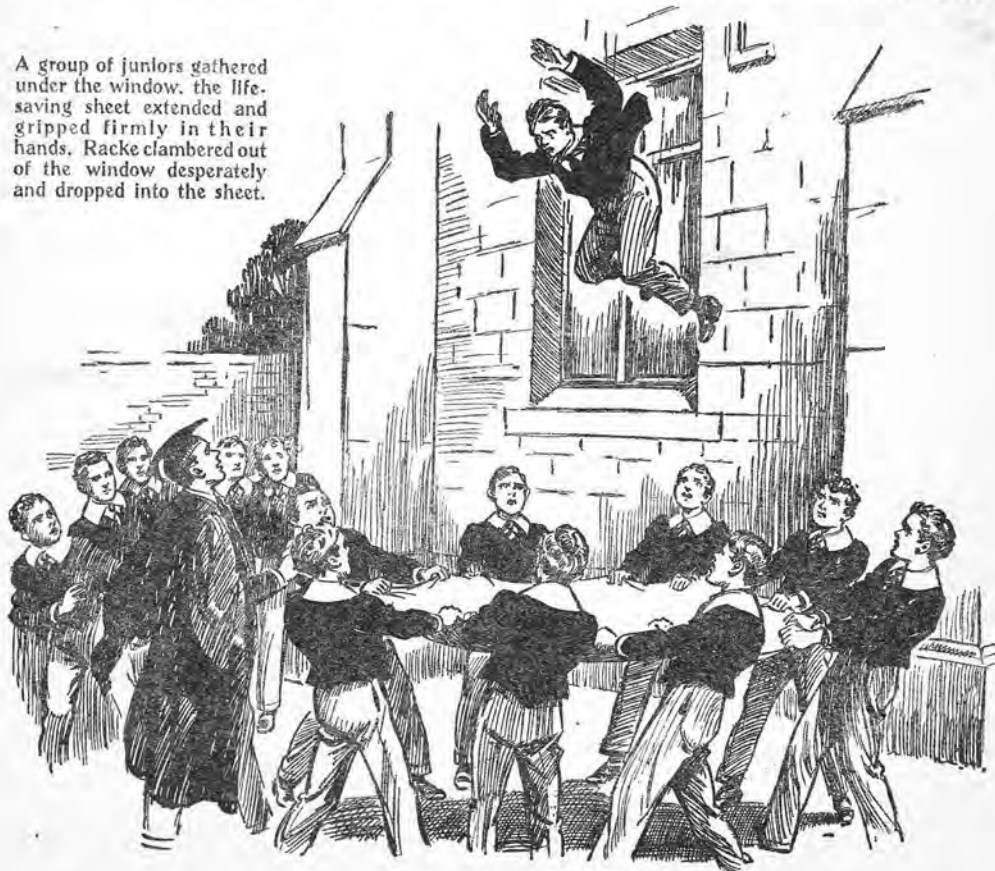
"Gussy!" groaned Blake.

"Come back——"

"Bravo!"

Heedless of the clamour below,

A group of juniors gathered under the window, the life-saving sheet extended and gripped firmly in their hands. Racke clambered out of the window desperately and dropped into the sheet.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused a moment at the top of the ladder to tie his handkerchief over his mouth and nose. Then he plunged headlong into the sea of smoke, and vanished. Mr. Railton struggled to his feet, panting for breath.

"D'Arcy!" he shouted.

But D'Arcy was lost to sight.

Three or four of the Sixth struggled up the ladder. Tom Merry & Co. made a rush, but Mr. Railton waved them back. Kildare was the first at the window.

A smoke-grimed figure rose to view within. From the blackened face an eyeglass gleamed.

There was a roar from the crowd below.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy staggered to the window with Chowle's insensible form grasped in his arms.

"Gussy! Good old Gussy!" shrieked Blake. "Bravo!"

"Good old Gussy!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Give him to me!" panted Kildare, and he took the insensible junior from D'Arcy's hands, and passed him down to the Sixth-Formers lower on the ladder. And Chowle was carried into safety.

"D'Arcy——" Kildare turned back to the window. "Quick!"

Arthur Augustus panted.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! I'm comin'."

The swell of St. Jim's clambered out of the window. He was black as a sweep, his hair was sizzling, there were fierce burns on his face and hands. But he was still cool and calm. Smoke and flame rushed out of the window above him, hardly held in check by the steady stream from the hose.

Arthur Augustus lowered himself on the ladder steadily, and then he

reeled. Kildare's strong arm caught him.

"It's all wight!" murmured Arthur Augustus faintly. "I can manage all wight."

"Hold on to me!"

"Vewy well. Sowwy to twouble you, deah boy." Even at that moment Arthur Augustus' exquisite politeness did not fail him.

Kildare bore him down the ladder.

Arthur Augustus landed on the ground, and stood unsteadily, supported by the St. Jim's captain's strong arm.

He blinked dizzily at the juniors as they crowded round.

"Gussy——"

"Oh, Gussy——"

"Bai Jove! Be careful, you fellows. Stand back, for goodness' sake!"

"What the——"

"I've dwopped my eyeglass. Mind you don't twead on it." And then Arthur Augustus fainted.

The School House Fire Brigade were still fighting the flames when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was laid in bed in the sanatorium, the next bed to Chowle's, and the school doctor, hastily summoned by telephone, was hurrying to attend the two sufferers.

The fire had obtained a good grip on the New House, and inside and outside the House the schoolboy firemen were fighting long and hard before it was got under.

It was at a late hour that night that the last of the flames were conquered, the last spark drowned out.

Mr. Ratcliff wrung his hands when he surveyed the scene of devastation at close quarters—when the danger was over.

The box-room was burnt right out, two or three adjoining rooms were

guttled, passages and walls and ceilings had suffered. It was only too evident, even to Mr. Ratcliff, that the whole House would have been burned but for the prompt aid rendered by the School House Fire Brigade.

But that had been averted, and no lives had been lost. But George Figgins remarked to his chums, when the New House Fourth went to bed that night at a very late hour :

"It's Ratty's fault! If we'd had fire-drill along with the School House chaps we——"

"We'd have got it under sooner, before much damage was done," said Kerr.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Fatty Wynn. "It's all Ratty's fault, and I hope the old scout is satisfied now!"

"And Gussy," said Figgins, with a catch in his voice—"Gussy, whose jolly old leg we pulled! He's a merry old ass, but what a splendid chap!"

"Hear, hear!"

In which opinion both Houses at St. Jim's heartily concurred.

The next day there was an inquiry into the cause of the outbreak, and it was very fortunate for Racke & Co. that the facts did not come to light.

Chowle was out of the sanatorium that day; his damages were not serious. He had been overcome by the smoke, and his clothing had been scorched, that was all.

But Arthur Augustus had suffered more seriously.

He had had to search and grope for Chowle in smoke and darkness, and he had received a good many severe burns, and it was many days before his schoolfellows saw him again.

But his chums were admitted to the sanatorium at last, to see the hero of the hour, and they found him sitting

(Continued on next page.)

SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE BROKEN FISHING-ROD

See page 147.

KERR: Looking through my notes it struck me as peculiar that although Reilly was in his study at the time Crooke should have been getting his dictionary, and the door was open, he didn't apparently see or hear the other junior. This suggests that Crooke didn't go up to the study at all; and if he was lying, then it was most probably he who took the fishing-rod. (D'Arcy minor must be eliminated for lack of motive.)

Now, why should Crooke take it?

Obviously to revenge himself for the ragging he had received from Reilly. Reilly had expressed his intention of going into Rylcombe, and practically all the other fellows would be watching the match between School House and New House juniors. Moreover, Reilly was known to be a keen fisherman.

Therefore, if a way could be found of getting Reilly to leave the Form-room, the crime could be planted on him. A way was found—an ink pellet flicked by Racke, who had also suffered at Reilly's hands and might be expected to take just as keen an interest in revenge.

Which explains how the rod came to be on the banks of the Rhyl. Obviously the person who took it from Lathom's room didn't have to take it to the Rhyl also. In fact, Crooke established an alibi for himself by watching the footer, while Racke surreptitiously left the school and finished the dirty work. Only Reilly's later decision to watch the match upset their little scheme.

Faced with the prospect of a Form ragging, Racke and Crooke accepted the alternative of owning up—thus clearing Wally D'Arcy.

up in bed, looking as if he consisted chiefly of bandages, but with his famous eyeglass gleaming in a cheerful eye.

"Glad to see you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "Wathah wotten to be stuck here, though Miss Mawie is vewy good. Did they find out what caused the fiah?"

"The Head didn't," said Tom Merry. "But we've got an idea——"

"I guess we can name the culprits, if we wanted to," said Wildrake.

"Was it—was it——"

D'Arcy hesitated.

"Was it what, old chap?"

"Was it—was it anarchists, deah boy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows——"

"It was Chowle and Racke and that gang smoking cigarettes, I believe," said Tom Merry, laughing. "They were all there, anyhow, and the fire must have started while they were there——"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was a little disappointed.

"Sorry we couldn't find any anarchists, Gussy!" grinned Figgins.

"Only some smoky fags—merely that and nothing more. No anarchists have been seen at St Jim's since the lot you ran down at the woodshed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

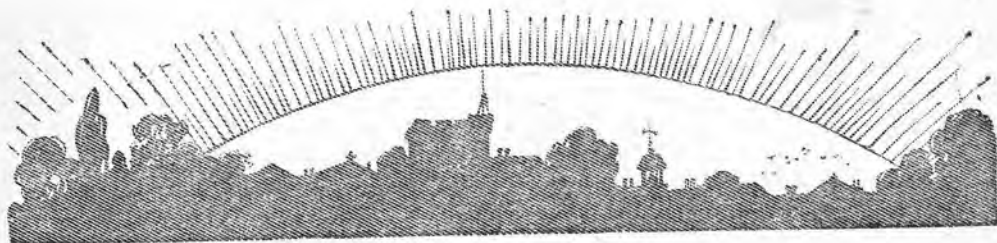
"And those three were named Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn," said Figgy repentantly, "and we're sorry we pulled your leg, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus smiled genially.

"All sewene, deah boy! The laugh is on our side now, I wathah considah! The New House would have been in Queeah Stweet but for the School House Fiah Bwigade—what!"

And Figgins cheerfully admitted that it would have been.

And there was another triumph in store for the School House; for, after the fire, the Head made it a point to speak very decidedly to Mr. Ratcliff on the subject, and Ratty was constrained to abandon his opposition, and the New House enrolled for fire-drill with the School House. So that, as Figgins said, the next time there was a fire at St. Jim's, the two Houses would be shoulder to shoulder in Fighting the Flames.



The FERNDALE RECRUIT



THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE FERNDALE FOOTBALLERS

"**T**HEY'VE got something up their sleeve," said Jack Nelson, his boyish brow wrinkling in a thoughtful frown. "They're so cocksure about the result. But I'm blessed if I can guess what it is."

And Ted Hammond, the youthful captain of Ferndale Junior Athletic, nodded. The two lads were walking home from their place of business in Ferndale, when Jack Nelson made the remark. Ferndale Juniors were a club of working lads, mostly employed in the workshops of Ferndale.

They played football as most Lan-

cashire lads play it, putting all their heart and all their "beef" into it. Nelson and Hammond were discussing a match, fixed for the following Saturday afternoon, which, owing to their opponent's cocksureness, occasioned the boyish footballers some anxiety.

By

CHARLES HAMILTON

In recruiting two League players, the bumptious Widdbrook Wanderers are quite cocksure about beating their youthful challengers, Ferndale Juniors. But Ferndale gain a recruit, too—much to the discomfiture of the Wanderers!

The Ferndale youngsters had had a most successful season so far; but in challenging Widdbrook Wanderers, they had, in classic phrase, bitten off more than they were likely to be able

to chew—at least, in the opinion of the greater part of the public.

For the Wanderers were much older and stronger in many ways. They ought to have been able to wipe the

Ferndale boys off the face of the earth ; and they had declared their intention of doing so. *

Only a few keen observers noted the fact that, while the younger club were in perfectly fit condition to make a strenuous fight for victory, the Wanderers had allowed themselves to slack to a dangerous extent.

As a matter of fact, the Wanderers prided themselves to some extent on class superiority, and looked down on the working boys' club.

Older and stronger as they were, it was quite possible that when the two sides met on the football ground, the fitness and excellent training of the younger team would carry the day. Ted Hammond and his chum Jack Nelson firmly believed so ; and, in fact, the Wanderers themselves had begun to experience doubts.

Their affected superiority over the Ferndalers had almost led them to decline the challenge ; but they had to accept it to save their face ; and they had promised to wipe up the juniors as a punishment for their cheek.

The Ferndale boys serenely awaited the wiping-up process, without feeling very nervous.

"They average a year or two older than we do," Ted Hammond had remarked ; "but they are all gas and swagger. They ought to be able to lick us, but I believe we shall beat them ; and I believe they're beginning to think so themselves, too."

That was a week ago. But now a change had seemed to come over the Wanderers. Their bumptiousness had returned in full force, and they were swaggering about the licking they were going to give the cheeky youngsters, and Hammond and Nelson were puzzled.

It was this that led Jack to remark

that the Wanderers had something up their sleeve, as the only way of accounting for their cocksureness.

"It looks like it," said Hammond, thoughtfully. "But what is it, then ? I know they haven't been training hard. If they did, they would give us the tussle of the season. But they haven't ; they hardly train at all. It's all gas with them."

"But it would be a shocking come-down for them to be beaten by a junior club," said Jack. "They would be laughed at in Widbrook itself ; the very kids would poke fun at them. They won't take a licking from us if they can help it."

"But I don't see how they can help it."

"I don't, either ; but I feel certain they've got something up their sleeve," said Jack, with conviction.

Hammond walked on for a little way with a thoughtful frown on his face. It was Saturday afternoon, and the streets were crowded with fellows leaving their work. Hammond spoke again abruptly after a few minutes.

"There's something in what you say, Jack, though I can't guess at their little game. Suppose we go over and have a look at them this afternoon before we turn out for practice ? I know they're playing at home."

"Well, it's not more than twenty minutes' walk, Ted."

"Then we'll go after dinner."

"Good !"

And the lads separated at Jack's door. Jack went in to dinner still with that frown on his brow. He felt convinced that Widbrook Wanderers had a surprise prepared for their rivals, but, cudgel his brains as he might, he could not guess what device they had thought of to escape impending defeat.

Jack Nelson joined his chum again

in time to walk over to Widbrook, which was not a great distance from Ferndale. They arrived in time to see the commencement of the match the Wanderers were playing at home.

It was easy to see that there was a difference in position between the Widbrook club and the Ferndalers. The Widbrook fellows had a more expensive ground and better equipment generally.

There was a goodly crowd to witness the match on the present occasion, the friends of the Wanderers being there in strong force. They were playing a club of their own calibre, called the Northley Rovers. Hammond and Nelson hardly looked at the latter. Their eyes were fixed on the Wanderers as they lined up for the kick-off.

"My hat!" muttered Jack Nelson. "Two new men in their ranks—that's the little secret! They've taken on two new recruits to lick us, and they're trying them in this match!"

"That's it!" said Hammond.

"And I've seen them before," said Jack, a little bitterly. "That fellow at centre-forward is Dave Tait, who was a professional player for two years, and has played in Second League football. And look at the centre-half! That's Wright, who played as an amateur for a First League team last year."

"The rotters!" said Hammond.

The Wanderers' captain, Melville, was, of course, at liberty to play anybody he chose, so long as he wasn't a professional; but to take on two experienced players for a match



"Goal!" shouted the spectator, clapping his hands. His shout drew the attention of the juniors to him. "Mr. Frank!" exclaimed Jack Nelson. "I didn't see you, sir."

with a junior club was not exactly to be called playing the game.

And, as a matter of fact, both Hammond and Nelson shrewdly suspected that the two players must have received some consideration—secretly, of course.

Fellows who had played for League teams were not likely to waste their time in minor local football for nothing. That, however, would be impossible for the juniors to prove, even if they cared to rake up so unpleasant a subject.

"Well, I call it rotten!" said Jack, as the whistle went, and the game started. "Those two chaps make all the difference. Can't we object to them playing?"

"We haven't any right, and they would say it was only an excuse for getting out of a job too big for us. They'd scratch the match."

"Then they've got us!"

"Yes," said Hammond grimly, "they've got us!"

The two lads looked on in silence at the play. On ordinary occasions Northley and Widbrook were about equally matched, but just now Widbrook simply walked over their visitors.

The two new recruits made all the difference. A youthful amateur side was not likely to offer much opposition to fellows who had taken part in the stern struggle for League honours.

The visitors were walked over, and goal after goal was scored by Tait, till the score was four in the first half alone.

Nelson and Hammond looked on with glum faces. When the following Saturday came, they would certainly put up a better fight than the Northley fellows were now doing; but against a forward like Tait and a half like

Wright they knew that they would crumble. Ferndale played a fine game, but it was no use expecting miracles of them.

In the second half the success of Widbrook was still more pronounced. The match ended with the home side eight goals to one, and the Widbrook crowd cheered them as they came off the field. Hammond and Nelson were standing close to the spot where the players passed, and Melville, the Widbrook captain, nodded to them with a smile. There was a lurking glimmer of triumph in his eye.

"What did you think of the match?" he grinned.

"Oh, you were bound to win!" said Hammond curtly.

"Feel a bit nervous about next Saturday?" laughed Melville.

"We've got a couple of new recruits, as I dare say you've noticed."

"You will be playing them against us?"

"Oh, yes; I think so!"

And Melville passed on, grinning, and most of his fellows were grinning, too. The Wanderers had been uneasy, but they felt secure enough now. Their prestige was quite safe.

Hammond and Nelson walked home in silence. They had looked forward very much to the next Saturday's match, but now it was only a defeat that they had to look forward to.

A defeat on fair terms they would not have cared for: but to feel that they had been over-reached was not pleasant.

"Well, we'll give them a tussle, anyway," said Hammond at last. "If they had a whole side of First Leaguers we'd do our level best."

"That's all we can do," agreed Jack. "Only it's a licking."

And the lads went to their own ground, where the rest of the eleven

was awaiting them for a practice match.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

THE CORINTHIAN

FERNDALE JUNIORS turned out a good team, and there were sufficient playing members of the club to form two elevens for a hard practice match. The Ferndale ground left much to be desired. Over in Widbrook, the Wanderers had a ground of their own, with permanent dressing-rooms and some accommodation for spectators. They had money to spend.

The Ferndale youngsters had a portion of a field fenced off, and had to take every care of it themselves. The ground belonged to Mr. Lacy, Jack's employer, one of the richest manufacturers in that part of Lancashire, whose interest in the great game was very keen. His son, Frank Lacy, was a Corinthian, and his exploits were often talked of in the Ferndale shops. Mr. Lacy was proud of his son and of his fame as an amateur footballer, and it was partly this that led him to take an interest in the game of his young employees.

The ground was lent to the boys, and the goalposts and nets had been a present from the kind-hearted manufacturer when the club was founded. More than once Frank Lacy, when he had happened to be at home, had come over to the ground to see the youngsters play, and had often given them golden tips on the game. The boys naturally looked up to and respected the Corinthian very much.

The play had started, and the youngsters were in the thick of it, when a handsome young fellow of about twenty-two came strolling down to the ground.

The boys were too busily engaged

to notice him for the time, and he stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on at the play with a smile on his handsome face.

Hammond was captaining the Ferndale side, and Jack Nelson had taken command of the scratch team for the nonce.

Nelson was playing up splendidly. He was light, lithe, and active, and the way he wormed a path through opposing halves and backs was wonderful.

No one seemed able to stop him, and twice already he had slammed the ball into the net.

Hammond's eyes glistened with satisfaction at the clever play of his chum, though at the moment he was doing his best to stop him.

There wasn't a trace of jealousy in the Ferndale captain's heart. He was only too glad to see Jack in such form. It gave him a glimmering of hope for victory next Saturday when they met the Wanderers.

"By Jove," muttered the onlooker, "that lad plays well!"

Jack had taken the ball fairly from the foot of Bert Robins, an opposing half, and was skimming away with it. He dodged the backs in masterly style, dribbling the ball round them, and rushed for goal. He tricked the goalkeeper and sent the leather into the empty goal.

"Goal!" shouted the spectator, clapping his hands. His shout drew the attention of the juniors to him.

"Mr. Frank!" exclaimed Jack Nelson. "I didn't see you, sir!"

Frank Lacy laughed.

"Quite right. Keep your eyes for the game. Play up, my lads! I'm going to see the finish!"

And Frank Lacy stayed until the finish, watching the junior game with great interest.

When the match was over, and the boys had changed, the heir of half Ferndale walked part of the way home with Jack Nelson, who was naturally very proud of the honour.

Frank Lacy chatted cheerily about football and kindred matters as he walked by Jack's side, and he soon referred to the next Saturday's match.

"I hear that you are playing Widbrook Wanderers next week," he said. "Aren't they a team a little above your weight?"

"They ought to be," said Jack frankly. "But they are mostly swagger, sir. They could eat us if they played the game as hard as we do; but they don't."

"So you are going to eat them!" laughed Frank.

"I don't know. We expected to—and we did want to take them down a peg, after all the side they've put on, you know—but they've lately taken on new players, and they may be too strong for us, after all."

"I hope not. Play your best, that's all," said Frank, shaking hands with the lad as he parted. "Play hard, and do your level best. I shall walk over there to see the match, I think, as I am staying over next week at my father's."

And he walked away with a cheery smile. But Jack's face was a little overcast when he joined Ted Hammond.

"It's rotten!" he said. "Yesterday I'd have been jolly glad to have Mr. Frank see our match. Now he'll only come to see us licked!"

Hammond set his teeth.

"I feel jolly well inclined to tell Melville what I think about it, and scratch the match!" he said.

"Then they'd say we were afraid."

"I suppose so—the rotters!"

"We must go through with it."

THE THIRD CHAPTER

FRANK LACY TAKES A HAND

"HALLO, Nelson!"

It was a few days later.

Jack Nelson was walking towards Ferndale in the dusk of the evening, after a visit to a neighbouring town, when two forms loomed up in the gloom, and he stopped as he recognised Melville, the captain of the Widbrook club, and his friend Tracy.

"Penny for your thoughts," said Melville, grinning. "You are looking pretty down in the mouth, my son."

"Thinking of next Saturday, perhaps," taunted Tracy.

"Well, I suppose he knows it's a licking for the kids!" said Melville. "I thought all along they would be sorry for their cheek!"

"I don't know about that!" exclaimed Jack hotly. "We should have made you sorry for accepting the challenge, I expect, if you had played the game."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, if you call it fair to take on two League players against a junior club, I don't, that's all!"

"I suppose I can play any member of the club I like?"

"Yes; if they are bona-fide members of the club—though, even then, it would be sharp practice. But they're not!"

An ugly look came over Melville's face.

"So you can't take my word on that point?"

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"What's the good of talk?" he exclaimed. "I didn't mean to say anything about this matter, but we may as well have it out. You can't pull the wool over my eyes. If you played us we should beat you hollow, and you've taken on two players who are practically professionals, simply

to save your prestige, and you know it. I don't say they are professionals, but it amounts to that."

"You young hound——"

"Better language, please!" said Jack fiercely. "And while we're on the subject I'll say it all out. I believe you're paying Tait and Wright, as I know jolly well they wouldn't join a small local club for the fun of the thing!"

"Yes, we are going to beat you, and make you sing as small as ever you sang in your lives," said Melville.

"And if you say anything more, we'll give you a hiding now to start with!" added Tracy.

Jack's eyes blazed.

"You couldn't do it! You can't fight any better than you can play football, and you can only win at either by foul play!"



Melville and Tracy were as infants in the grasp of the powerful Corinthian. Frank Lacy brought their heads together with a "biff" that made them see stars!

"It's a lie!"

"It's not a lie! It's the truth, and you know it! We shall see whether they remain in the club after next Saturday!"

"They can leave whenever they choose, of course!"

"Yes. And they will leave when their job is done. You are going to beat us on Saturday, but it won't be by fair play."

The two Widbrook fellows wasted no more breath in words; they rushed straight at Jack, hitting out savagely.

Jack Nelson was ready for them, in spite of their sudden attack.

His left came up to guard his face, and his right caught Melville under the chin, and the Widbrook captain rolled in the muddy lane.

The next moment Jack had closed

with Tracy, and the two were fighting furiously.

The hardy Ferndale lad would have gained the upper hand; but before he could master his foe, Melville had sprung up and resumed the attack.

In the grip of the two fellows, Jack Nelson was forced down to the ground, struggling bravely, but in vain, against the odds.

"Now, you swab," hissed Melville, "I'll give you a lesson! Roll him into the ditch, Tracy!"

"Good! In he goes!"

"You cowards!" gasped Jack.

"Roll him in!"

Jack went rolling through the mud. The ditch was almost full of water, and Jack struggled desperately.

There was a footstep in the lane, and an athletic figure loomed up through the dusk.

"Hallo! Fair play, there!"

Jack knew the voice, and he shouted for aid.

"Mr. Frank! Help!"

Mr. Frank—for it was Frank Lacy—ran straight at the two Widbrook fellows and grasped one in either hand. A powerful wrench dragged them off Jack Nelson, who lay gasping in the road.

Melville and Tracy struggled fiercely, but they were as infants in the grasp of the powerful young Corinthian.

Frank Lacy, smiling grimly, brought their heads together with a "biff" that made them see stars, and then flung them contemptuously aside. Tracy slumped to the ground, and Melville against a tree. Lacy's finger pointed up the road.

"Beat it!" he said.

And with sullen, savage faces they went.

Then Frank Lacy turned to Jack and helped him to his feet.

"So it's you, Nelson! I am glad I came along just then. Which way are you going?"

"To Ferndale, sir."

"Then I'll walk with you."

"I'm much obliged to you, sir," said Jack, as the young Corinthian strode along by his side in the dusk. "They were going to duck me in the ditch."

"The rascals! I think I have seen them before——"

"They are Melville and Tracy, of the Widbrook Wanderers, sir."

Lacy frowned a little.

"What! Quarrelling with members of a rival team, Jack?"

Jack Nelson coloured.

"It wasn't my fault, sir—well, only partly! I suppose I oughtn't to have lost my temper, but—but it's hard to lose a footer match by sharp practice."

"How do you mean? Have you had any foul play from the Wanderers?"

Jack hesitated a moment. He did not like to place himself in the position of complaining, but he felt that he must explain.

"I'll tell you about it, sir," he said, after a pause. "You can judge whether it's a fair business or not."

"Go ahead!" said Frank Lacy tersely.

And Jack explained.

Frank Lacy's brow grew darker as he listened. He heard the boy through without any comment, and then walked on in silence for some minutes.

"These two men, Wright and Tait, are practically professionals," he said. "It is inconceivable that they would join Widbrook Wanderers without ulterior motives. It looks to me as if they are being paid for it."



"So Widbrook have taken on two players above your weight?" said Frank Lacy. "Yes," replied Jack. "Well, suppose you play me?" went on Frank. Jack Nelson nearly jumped clear of the ground. "You, sir?"

"That's what we think, sir. But we can't do anything."

"No, I don't see how you can, unless you scratch the match."

"Then the whole neighbourhood would say that we funk'd it."

Frank Lacy pursed his lips a little.

"It's a difficult position," he said.

"You can't scratch the match, and, at the same time, you go to it knowing you will be licked by—by sharp practice, if not actual foul play."

"They've been too clever for us," said Jack despondently. "We can play footer, but we're not up to tricks like that."

"No. But——"

Frank Lacy broke off. A smile dawned upon his face. The smile broadened to a laugh. The laugh became a roar. It was evident that something had suddenly struck the

young Corinthian which tickled him extremely.

Jack looked at him in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank.

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha! Jack, my lad, I can see a way out of it!"

"Yes, sir?" said Jack eagerly.

"They've taken on two players above your weight——"

"Yes——"

"Suppose you served them the same trick——"

"But who could we play, sir?" said Jack, in amazement.

"Play me!"

Jack Nelson nearly jumped clear of the ground.

"You, sir?"

"Yes!" said Frank. "I shall be down here on Saturday. If they can play Wright and Tait, you can play me. I'm an amateur, though I've played against the best teams in

England. Eh, what do you say? Will your skipper play me?"

Jack grinned.

"He'd be jolly glad to, sir! But—but will you really play for a side like the Ferndale Juniors, sir—will you really?"

"There's my hand on it," said Frank. "Tell Hammond to come and see me about it, and we'll make all arrangements. It's settled."

Jack Nelson seemed to be walking on air as he hurried off in search of Ted Hammond. It was not only the prospect of licking the Wanderers, but the honour of playing a Corinthian in the Ferndale side. As for the match, that was all right now. Tait and Wright were good players, but Frank Lacy would walk over them. With Lacy in their ranks, the Ferndalers had every reason to be confident. It was a Roland for an Oliver with a vengeance.

Ted Hammond gave a hurrah that rang the length of the street when Jack told him. And from that moment the spirits of the Ferndale Juniors went up with a bound.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

THE MATCH.

SATURDAY afternoon was a fine, clear cold winter afternoon—ideal for football. On the Widbrook ground the Wanderers were early ready for their visitors. The kick-off had been fixed for three, and it was now a quarter to, and the boys from Ferndale had not yet arrived.

"I shouldn't wonder if they funk it, after all," Melville remarked to Tracy, as he looked out of the doorway of the pavilion. "They know they've got no earthly against us."

Tracy nodded with a grin.

"That's so—you can tell that by the fury young Nelson was in the

other night. It was because he knew the Ferndale lot were done in."

Melville gritted his teeth.

"Yes. I'd have given him a hiding for his cheek, if that confounded Lacy hadn't come up. Never mind; we'll give them a licking to-day, and put the cads in their place."

"If they come!" grinned the other.

"Ha, ha! Yes! Ten minutes to three."

"Hallo, there's a coach!"

"Shouldn't have thought they could afford it," sneered Melville. "Is it the Ferndale lot?"

"Yes, look! But I say, who's that with them? Young Lacy!"

"He's come to see the match, I suppose—come to see them licked!"

"I suppose so. But—but I suppose he can't be playing?"

"Playing? Frank Lacy play for a working boys' club? What bosh!"

"No; I suppose it's impossible."

But the Widbrook fellows soon discovered that it was not impossible—that it was not only possible, but a fact. When they learned that Frank was playing for the visitors, an extremely glum look came over the faces of Melville and his friends.

They were fairly caught!

Any objection they might have raised to an adult playing in the junior team was discounted in advance by the fact that they were playing two adults themselves.

Both Tait and Wright were older than Frank Lacy, and one at least of them had been a professional, if he were not one now.

Melville simply hadn't a leg to stand on. He could only acquiesce quietly, without a word of objection, though with deadly rage and uneasiness in his heart.

A goodly crowd had gathered to

see the match, and when it was known that there was a Corinthian in the visiting side, he was loudly cheered. Every eye was turned upon Frank Lacy when the teams went into the field.

Handsome and very fit he looked in the red shirt of Ferndale, head and shoulders above his fellow players, sturdy lads as they were.

Frank was taking his usual place as winger, leaving the centre to Hammond, and he had refused Hammond's urging to accept the captaincy.

To all urging he had replied with a laugh and a shake of the head. He was simply playing as a recruit, under the orders of the team's captain, with a total absence of anything like bumpiousness that more than ever endeared him to the Ferndale lads.

The sides lined up, and the home team took the kick-off. The game started, and from the first it was fast and furious.

That the Widbrook fellows' football was, as Jack had said, mostly swagger and bounce, was soon seen when they were opposed to the hard and steady play of the lads from Ferndale.

The addition of Tait and Wright to their ranks would certainly have turned the scale in their favour; but the presence of the stalwart Corinthian changed all that. Frank played up splendidly.

In high spirits, the Ferndale lads threw themselves into the game.

They were "on the ball" all the time, and most of the play took place in the home half. Frank Lacy slammed the ball in twice, and then gave his young friends a chance.

Next the leather went in from Jack Nelson's foot, and then again from the toe of Ted Hammond.

Bert Robins headed it in just before the whistle went for the interval.

The first half ended with Ferndale five goals up.

The spectators cheered them loudly, and the news of the game spreading through the town, fresh crowds flocked up to see the second half, so that before long there were some hundreds of people watching the game.

The Ferndale lads laughed gleefully as they rested for the brief interval. From their point of view it was funny enough.

Had the two junior teams fought out the match without allies on either side, the home team would certainly have been licked; but the licking would not have been so overpowering as the one they were getting now.

Ferndale had scored five goals to nil the first half, and the home players had been nearly run off their legs. What was the second half to be like?

The Ferndale Juniors came out for the resumption of play in gay spirits. Frank Lacy wore a genial smile. Many of the spectators were laughing, too, for many of them knew the peculiar circumstances of the match, and were quick to catch on to the joke.

When the whistle went Ferndale kicked off, and again they plunged hotly into a fast and hard game. The wind was in their faces now, but it made not the least difference to them. They rushed the home team fairly off their legs, and slammed the ball into the net time and again.

Goal after goal was added to the Ferndale score till the game assumed an almost farcical aspect, and the crowd were laughing too much to cheer.

When the whistle finally went for the cessation of play, it was a sound

welcome enough to the ears of the Widdbrook Wanderers. They were absolutely spent, and they had not scored a single goal from start to finish. Ferndale had scored eleven goals.

Eleven goals to nil !

No wonder the lads grinned as they crowded off the field ; no wonder the onlookers laughed and chuckled ; and no wonder the Widdbrook Wanderers crept away with pink faces, not daring the meet the glances of their townsmen !

It was such a licking as the Wan-

derers had never dreamed of in a nightmare, and a lesson they never forgot. Jubilant enough were the Ferndale boys.

" We owe it all to you, sir," said Jack Nelson to Frank, as the motor-coach bore them homeward. " Without you we should have been done in. The Wanderers will have to sing small after this."

Frank Lacy laughed.

" Yes, I don't think they will put on so much side again for some time to come," he remarked.

And he was right.

BILLY BUNTER'S POSTAL ORDER

By Johnny Bull

Billy Bunter was a citizen
Of " credit " and renown ;
He called on me one sunny day
And borrowed half-a-crown.

He promised me right faithfully
That he would play the game,
And pay it back most promptly when
His postal order came.

I waited for a week or so,
And then my anger grew.
Quoth Bunter : " It's delayed, you know.
The postman's down with 'flu."

I waited till the end of term.
Said Bunter : " It's no catch !
The titled cove who's sending it
Is now in Colney Hatch ! "

When holidays were past and gone,
I called for my half-crown ;
But Bunter said : " I'm sorry, John,
I've left my quids in town ! "

I waited on for many moons,
And so fed-up was I
That each time Bunter came in sight
He got a damaged eye !

That postal order grew a beard ;
It grew side-whiskers, too !
And to my long-lost half-a-crown
I sadly bade adieu !

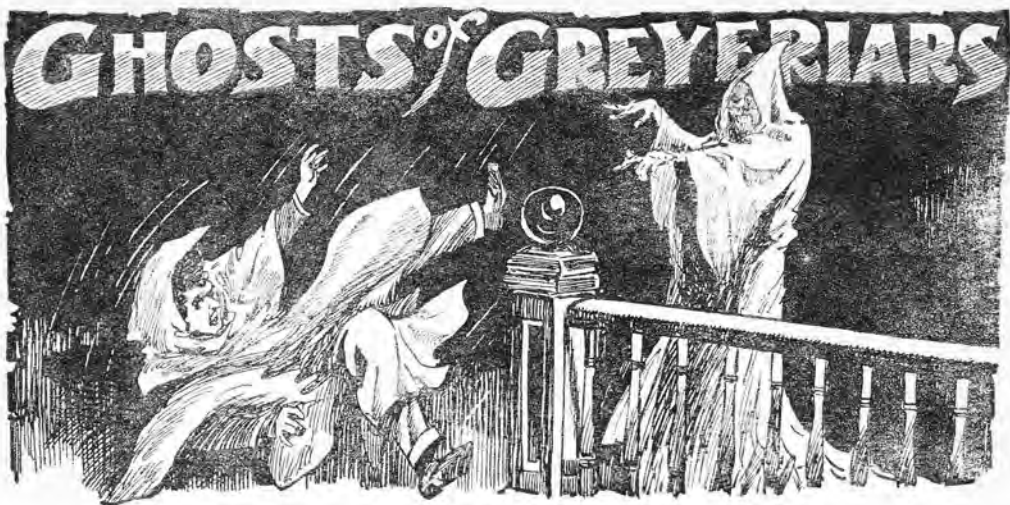
Then dawned a day of dire alarms ;
Deep in my mind it sticks.
The chap who kept the Bunter Arms
Sent Billy two-and-six !

" 'Tis mine ! 'Tis mine ! " I fondly cried.
" Deliver up the loot !
Just hand that half-a-crown to me,
Old barrel-face, and scoot ! "

So Bunter, weeping tears of blood,
Gave up the half-a-crown.
I placed it in my study and
Walked off with Blake and Brown.

We went to Mrs. Mimble's shop,
And planned a stunning spread ;
We ordered cakes and ginger-pop.
" My treat ! " I proudly said.

But in the study, that same night,
I gave a sudden yell ;
For that P.O. had vanished, quite—
And Bunter had, as well !



TOM BROWN of the Remove recalls some amusing facts of supernatural—and non-supernatural!—ghosts that haunt Greyfriars.

WHEN Henry the Eighth made his celebrated swoop on Greyfriars, he found that the monks had put all the valuables in cold store before he arrived. He had the abbot hauled before him in double quick time.

"Bring forth ye merry gold plate and bejewelled what-nots, or thou wilt get it where ye chicken got ye chopper!" he thundered.

"Sorry, your majesty!" replied the abbot firmly. "I fear me there's nothing doing!"

"Thou saucy varlet!" hooted Henry. "Dost know thou art talking to ye mighty and popular King Hal?"

"Yea, rather, your majesty! I've also heard that you have very taking ways——"

"Thou hast heard truly!" roared the King. "What's more, know ye that I'm taking all ye boodle I can lay my royal hands on from Greyfriars! Part up!"

The jolly old abbot, however, refused to be intimidated; so Henry, in a dickens of a rage, rang for his Chief Torturer.

"Give this scurvy knave ye giddy works!" he commanded. And the Chief Torturer and his assistants got busy at once.

They put him through the most fearsome tortures you can imagine. They tied him up and tickled him under the arms, and tweaked his nose, and put itching powder on the back of his neck and generally had a high old time with him.

But did the jolly old abbot blow the gaff? No fear! He remained as mum as an oyster!

Eventually, King Henry had to give it up as a bad job. He retired from Greyfriars, tearing his beard in baffled rage—without finding a clue to the whereabouts of the missing plate.

Out of sheer spite, he gave the monks the Order of the Boot and

turned Greyfriars into a roadhouse, which it remained till the end of his reign.

In the meantime, the abbot snuffed it without telling anybody the secret hiding-place of the valuables. (In fact, for all we know, the stuff is still tucked away somewhere on the school premises to-day !)

So what do you think the old jossler did ?

He came back and haunted Greyfriars !

That's why, occasionally, at the mystic hour of midnight, a hooded figure carrying a big key can be seen gliding through the Cloisters or across Big Hall.

I've never seen it myself ; but quite a number of fellows claim to have caught a glimpse of it at various times. It's the ghost of the Abbot of Greyfriars !

This particular spook is by no means the only ghostly guest we are thought to entertain in our ancient school buildings.

Another picturesque spectre is a knight in shining armour, who is said to stalk through the ruins of the old monastery on certain days of the year. The legend is that he is the ghost of an unfortunate johnny who came to a sticky end in the grounds, where he was hiding from a local baron who had taken a dislike to him. This particular phantom is supposed to have spasms in which he lashes out right and left with a nasty-looking broadsword. But as this elongated toothpick, like its owner, is transparent, nobody need fear a dig in the ribs from it. In fact, it would be quite "immaterial" !

There are several other medieval spectres of doubtful authenticity belonging to Greyfriars ; but the best known of all our ghosts is quite a

modern specimen, dating back a mere 150 years—the ghost of Dr. Beaton.

Dr. Beaton was headmaster of Greyfriars from 1785 till 1789, when his tyrannical ways led to a great rebellion which ended his career. What happened to him after he left Greyfriars is not known, but numerous witnesses in the nineteenth century testified to having seen his ghost walking through the School House, with a birch-rod held aloft as though threatening invisible victims. Quite reliable people belonging to the school claim to have seen the same apparition



Another phantom of Greyfriars is a knight in shining armour, who is said to walk through the ruins of the monastery on certain days of the year.

at irregular intervals during the present century, and I think the ghost of Dr. Beaton can be fairly said to be the best established and most authentic of all our spectral visitors.

While on the subject, I should mention that Greyfriars is haunted by a number of non-supernatural "ghosts."

There is a bespectacled figure, for instance, that is always haunting the tuckshop and waylaying customers with requests for them to cash invisible postal-orders. The yarn he spins is transparently thin ; but that's

more than you can say of the "ghost" himself, whose name, I need hardly mention, is William George Bunter!

The back of the woodshed is likewise haunted by three bright lads answering to the names of Skinner, Snoop and Stott, who can often be seen dimly through a mysterious haze of smoke performing strange rites. But the mystery ends when you discover that the smoke emanates from the cheap cigarettes with which these gay young "spirits" are trying to turn themselves into men!

Bunter, Skinner and Co., however, hardly fall within the category of spooks—though Skinner, on more than one occasion, has dressed himself up as one or other of the school ghosts in the hope of giving nervous fags a fright.

Skinner's sense of humour failed him badly the last time he did this. Wibley, happening to hear of his proposed jape, got busy himself and,

with the aid of his theatrical "props," rigged himself up as a skeleton and met the cheery japer on the landing.

Skinner, although a professed sceptic over such things, received the shock of his life and tumbled headlong down the stairs in his eagerness to escape the clutches of the fearsome apparition!

Is there any truth in the legends of ghosts and ghostly happenings that associate themselves with historical old buildings like Greyfriars? Well, it's a matter of opinion. There is a sort of weird fascination in discussing the alleged phantoms of Greyfriars; but I doubt whether many Greyfriars fellows seriously believe in them.

Our venerable porter, William Gosling, claims to have seen the lot, many a time and oft. But, knowing what peculiar tricks his eyesight plays on him after he has imbibed from that mysterious bottle he keeps in the cupboard of his lodge, I can't accept his evidence at its face value!

THE TUCKSHOP TRAGEDY

By DICK PENFOLD

(With Apologies to "Excelsior.")

The shades of night were falling fast
As into Mrs. Mimble's passed
A boy with much more flesh than bones
Who cried in faint and famished tones,
 "Ten Doughnuts!"

His brow was sad, and moist his eye;
He drew a deep, despairing sigh;
And as he staggered to his seat
They heard his feeble voice repeat:
 "Ten Doughnuts!"

Said Mrs. Mimble in despair:
"You must be mad, I do declare!
I've kept this shop for many a year,
But never known a boy to clear
 Ten Doughnuts!"

"Rats!" cried the youth. "I'll have some ham,
Some pickles and a jar of jam.
Those mutton patties look all right,
And quick, don't keep me here all night—
 Ten Doughnuts!"

"Try not the tarts," his schoolmates said,
"Already you have overfed,
And no more room remains inside."
But loud that clarion voice replied:
 "Ten Doughnuts!"

When all his dainties hove in sight,
He danced the tango with delight;
With waistcoat buttons all undone,
He then demolished one by one,
 Ten Doughnuts!

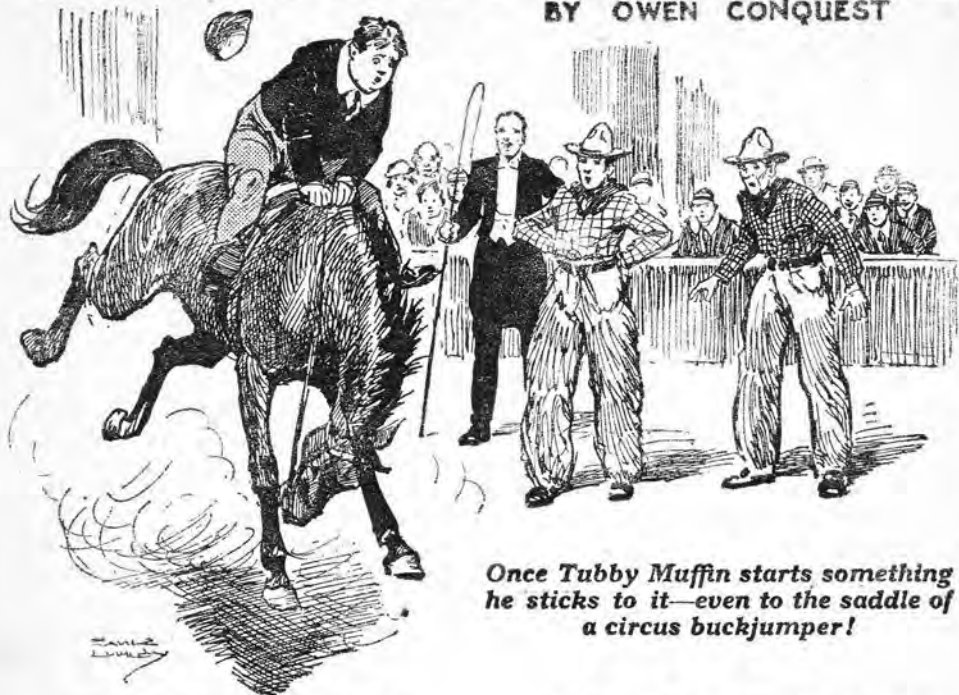
Alas! his inner man was packed,
The vital organs failed to act,
And with a wild and startled cry,
He sank, weighed down in anguish by
 Ten Doughnuts!

There, in the tuckshop, on the mat,
Writhing in agony, he sat,
And ere his eyelids closed in death,
He murmured, with his latest breath:
 "Ten doughnuts!"

(William George Bunter, take warning!—Ed.)

WHEN TUBBY SAT TIGHT!

BY OWEN CONQUEST



Once Tubby Muffin starts something he sticks to it—even to the saddle of a circus buckjumper!

THE FIRST CHAPTER STICKY!

"FIVE quid! Five jimmy-o'-goblins! Just for riding a broncho! It's worth winning!"

"I say, Silver, old chap——"

"I could buy a new cricket-bat with that fiver—and a new armchair for the study, and——"

"Silver, old chap! Jimmy, old fellow!"

"Dry up, Tubby; I'm talking business!" said Jimmy Silver, with a frown at Tubby Muffin. "Sit still and keep quiet!"

But Reginald Muffin neither sat still nor kept quiet.

It was a difficult enough matter for the fat Fourth Former to sit still and keep quiet at any time. On the present occasion it was impossible.

Out of the crowd of Rookwood juniors in the bus that was speeding along the quiet country lane leading to Coombe, all had paid their fares with the exception of Tubby. The conductor was now standing by the seat on which Tubby had parked his podgy person. He had an unpunched ticket in his hand and a frown on his face. He was waiting for twopence—Tubby's fare to Coombe. Tubby, who had waited in vain for one of the other fellows to pay that twopence, saw that active measures were required if he was to remain on the bus. He had no intention whatever of sitting still and keeping quiet in the circumstances.

"Look here, Jimmy Silver——" he gasped.

"If I win that fiver, you fellows——"

"Tuppence, please!" The conductor's voice was curt.

"I say, Jimmy, old chap, give this fellow tuppence for me!" roared Muffin. "I've run out of change!"

The Rookwood fellows grinned. Jimmy Silver frowned.

"I might have known it!" he remarked disgustedly. "Was there ever a time when you got on a bus with me and did have change?"

"Look here, you rotter, if you're going to make a fuss about a measly tuppence——"

"Tuppence, please!" The conductor sounded as though his patience was rapidly becoming exhausted. "Wot I want to know is this: do you pay me your fare or do I stop this bus?"

"Give him his tuppence and shut him up, for goodness' sake!" gasped Tubby. "Look here, Silver, if you're worrying about your tuppence, I'll give you your blessed money's worth now—and a bit over for interest. Here you are! I made it myself this morning."

And Tubby dived a hand into his pocket and produced a paper bag filled with broken lumps of moist and exceedingly sticky toffee.

The Rookwood fellows grinned as they saw the glutinous mixture in Tubby's paper bag.

Lattrey and Gower and Peele, who were sitting at the back of the bus, seemed to derive even more enjoyment out of it than the others. The three black sheep of the Fourth almost doubled up at the sight of Tubby's proffered gift.

There was a reason for Lattrey and Co.'s mirth.

Unknown to Tubby Muffin, they had added an unusual ingredient to the toffee mixture before Tubby had cooked it. That ingredient was liquid

glue. They were waiting with great eagerness for the moment when someone would start eating Tubby's home-made confectionery, and the sight of it being brought out on the bus had quite a devastating effect on Lattrey and Co.

"Tuppence, please!"

There was a note of finality in the conductor's voice now. He took a step towards a bell-push. Jimmy Silver reluctantly unearthed two copper coins from his waistcoat pocket and deposited them in the conductor's palm.

"Give him his ticket, old bean! And give him a thick ear at the same time, if you like, with my compliments!"

The leader of the Rookwood Classical juniors turned to his chums to pursue the congenial topic of what he could do with a fiver. But before he could resume that pleasant task there arose above the chatter in the bus a peculiar sound that caused him to look back sharply in Tubby's direction.

"M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m!"

"What the thump!"

"Mmmmmmmmm! Gug-gug-gug! Mmmmmmmmm!"

"Tubby, you fathead! What the dickens——"

"Um-um-um-um! Mmmmmmm! Gug-gug-gug!"

"Why don't you speak, you fat chump?"

"The toffee!" gasped Lovell. "It's that toffee of his! He's taken a mouthful and can't get his jaws unstuck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwood fellows yelled.

Tubby looked funny; there was no doubt about that. He was rolling about in his seat, clawing wildly at his jaws. Like the celebrated statesman,

Tubby discovered that his lips were sealed; and the contortions he was going through in order to unseal them were very remarkable indeed. The Fistical Four found it funny. So did Lattrey & Co. Reginald Muffin, on the other hand, was apparently finding it the reverse of funny. While the rest of his supply of home-made toffee flowed over his seat, Tubby tugged desperately at his jaws and pulled faces which would have gained him a prize among any exhibition of Guy Fawkes masks.

It was while he was engaged in his titanic struggle that a gentleman who had just boarded the bus decided to sit down next to him.

The newcomer, who was a heavily-built gentleman, could not have made a worse choice; but he did not immediately notice this, though he stared a little at Tubby's frantic manoeuvres.

Tubby, on his feet now, went on struggling more fiercely than ever, encouraged by generous applause and plenty of cheery advice from his Rookwood confrères.

"Go it, Tubby!"

"Stick it, old fat man!"

"He's stuck it already!" grinned Lattrey. "Problem is, how to unstick it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Success crowned the fat Fourth Former's efforts at last. His podgy lips parted and he emitted a shuddering gasp of relief. Simultaneously, in the pardonable exuberance of the moment, Tubby flung out his arms in an instinctive gesture of triumph.

It must have been Tubby's unlucky day. The heavily-built gentleman in the next seat had to choose that very moment to lean forward; and the result was that his somewhat prominent nose collided with Tubby's

podgy paw—head-on, so to speak! Smack!

"Whoooooop! By dose!"

Tubby's neighbour uttered a roar and leaped to his feet.

That was what he intended doing, anyway. But the intention miscarried. As he tried to leap to his feet, the heavy gentleman seemed to be seized by some invisible power and yanked back to his seat.

What had pulled him back was at first a mystery. But the mystery was soon solved when he tried again. His second effort was a more powerful one than the first. It was succeeded by a rending sound, the explanation of which was soon revealed when he was seen to have left behind him quite a large portion of the seat of his nether garment.

Raby and Newcome, leaning over wide-eyed to see what had happened, simply gasped at what they saw.

"Oh, scissors!"

"He stuck to the toffee!"

There was a burst of smothered laughter from the Rookwood juniors. Needless to say, the heavy gentleman did not join in it. He glared at the seat, then he glared at his fat neighbour—with a glare that almost transfixed the unhappy Tubby!

"My pants!" he hooted. "I sat on your gosh-darned candy! Now look at my pants!"

"Oh, crikey! I—I'm sorry——"

"I guess you surely will be sorry before I'm through with you!" roared the heavy gentleman, whose accent had a strong transatlantic flavour. "Those pants cost me twenty-five bucks—five pounds, in your coinage, you fat young hoodlum! I guess I'll trouble you for five pounds right now!"

"Five quid! Oh, my hat!" Tubby almost reeled. "I—I'm sorry, sir," he

stuttered. "I—I'm afraid I left my notecase behind. Of course, I'll see that you get proper compensation——"

"I guess I surely am getting twenty-five bucks for those pants or else something mighty unpleasant is going to happen to you!" The transatlantic gentleman brought out a notebook and pencil. "What's your name and where do you hang out?"

Tubby trembled.

"M - m - my name? It's—it's John Smith, isn't it, you chaps? And—and the address is——"

"Chuck it, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "You'll never get away with that—and anyway, Rookwood chaps aren't allowed to dodge trouble by fibbing. Not while their Uncle James is about, anyway. His right name's Muffin, sir—Reginald Muffin. John Smith was a mistake."

"You're telling me!" snorted the transatlantic gentleman. "And the address is that school up the road—Rookwood, huh?"

"Right on the wicket!"

"O.K., then, Mr. Reginald Muffin, alias John Smith. I'll be getting twenty-five bucks from you by this time to-morrow, or else— Get that?"



"Mmmmmmmmm! Gug-gug-gug!" gurgled Tubby Muffin. "What the dickens——" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "It's that toffee of his!" yelled Lovell. "He's taken a mouthful and can't get his jaws unstuck!"

Tubby nodded dumbly.

Nothing more was said. They had reached Coombe village by this time. All the passengers alighted. The Fistical Four marched up the village street, and Tubby Muffin rolled after them—looking back over his fat shoulder at intervals to gaze with rueful eyes at a retreating figure with a newspaper held protectingly behind him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

WANTED—A FIVER!

"OH, lor'!"

That was what Reginald Muffin kept on repeating, as he

tramped into the yard of Hunter's Riding Establishment in Coombe at the heels of the Fistical Four.

Tubby Muffin was disconsolate.

He had been saying "Oh, lor'!" ever since descending from that ill-fated bus. He was saying it now in tones even more lugubrious than when he had begun.

"Look here, you chaps—" he began, as the heroes of the Fourth halted in the centre of the stable yard to await the arrival of someone to attend to their wants.

"No—nor five hundred!" interjected Jimmy Silver somewhat enigmatically. Tubby blinked.

"What do you mean, Jimmy Silver, by 'No—nor five hundred!'?"

"I was answering the question you were going to ask, old bean," grinned Jimmy Silver. "You were going to ask us if we could lend you five pounds, weren't you?"

"Well, yes, I was, as a matter of fact," admitted Tubby, looking extremely surprised. "How did you guess?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell and Newcome and Raby chortled at that ingenuous inquiry. Jimmy Silver frowned at them in mock disapproval.

"Nothing to laugh at, you men. Not everyone's gifted with telepathic ability. Fact is, Tubby, I was thought-reading, and I'm not surprised at your finding it mysterious! You've got your answer, anyway. Nothing doing!"

"But what's going to happen, then?" wailed Tubby. "That American chap means business—you can tell that. If I don't part up with a fiver, he's coming up to the school, and there's going to be the dickens to pay!"

"I know!" said Lovell brightly.

"You can win yourself a fiver!"

"Eh?"

"We're going to have a try for it, and there's no reason why you shouldn't. You can win it for yourself at the Wild West show on the common—a crisp, rustling fiver!" said Arthur Edward, impressively. "We're going to practise horse-riding here this afternoon just to get ourselves in trim. But I dare say you stand just as good a chance as a raw novice."

"But what do you have to do?" asked the fat Fourth Former. "Anything difficult?"

"Not a bit of it! All you have to do is to stay seated for two minutes on the back of a fiery, untamed mustang!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Lovell, I wish you'd be serious——"

"It ought to be dead easy to a chap of your weight," said Newcome, with a critical glance at Tubby's podgy figure. "With you on its back, I should say the bronc will find it hard to stand upright—let alone throw you off!"

"Beast! Look here, you chaps——"

But the arrival of an attendant belonging to the riding establishment took away the attention of the Fistical Four at that moment, and interest in Tubby Muffin and his troubles evaporated completely.

Tubby watched in moody silence as they helped to saddle the four docile quadrupeds that were led out for them. In the state of impetuosity in which he at present found himself, he could not even gauge his possibilities as a Wild West roughrider with a trial spin on one of Hunter's tame hacks. Not that a test on the back of one of those mild-looking animals was likely to provide

a very reliable guide to a fellow's chances on an untamed prairie mustang.

The Fistical Four rode out of the yard at last at a walking pace, and Tubby Muffin rolled lugubriously after them. When they urged their steeds to a trot, he gave them up as a bad job and turned his footsteps back towards Rookwood.

In catching the same bus as the cheery quartette that afternoon, Tubby had had high hopes of partaking of tea out somewhere or other at their expense. But disillusionment had come to the fat Fourth Former, and his hopes of a free tea had now vanished.

Lattrey and Co. were just coming out of Mrs. Wicks' tuckshop as Tubby rolled down the village street. They greeted him boisterously. It was the one thing that was needed to complete Tubby's discomfiture.

"Got any more toffee left, Tubby?" chortled Lattrey.

"You might let us have a bit of it if you have," sniggered Gower. "We've got a broken chair we want to mend in the study. It ought to be just the thing for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A faint flicker of hope came momentarily into Tubby's woebegone countenance.

"I say, you chaps, I have got some left, back at the school. Plenty, as a matter of fact; and it's no earthly good for eating, either. If you really want some——"

"Thanks, awfully, old sport!" grinned Peele. "How much will you give us to take it off your hands?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" Tubby glared at the humorous Fourth Formers with a glare that was almost homicidal in its intensity. "Dashed if I see any-

thing to cackle at! That toffee ought to have been really prime. Something went wrong with it somehow. Somebody must have put something in it!"

"Go hon!"

Tubby's eyes opened with a dawning suspicion, as he glared at the cackling trio.

"My hat! I believe you rotters know something about it!" he gasped. "You did come into the study when I was mixing it up this morning, come to think of it. You—you awful cads! You put glue or something into my toffee mixture!"

"Gentlemen, chaps and fellows, I call for three cheers for Tubby Muffin!" chortled Lattrey. "For the first time in history, Tubby has shown a glimmering of intelligence! Hip, hip, hip——"

Tubby didn't wait to hear the cheers. He fled—his fat face red with indignation, and his podgy breast almost bursting with anger.

For the rest of that day, the fat Fourth Former prowled about Rookwood like the proverbial cat on hot bricks. The revelation that the cads of the Fourth had deliberately added glue to his toffee had put the finishing touch to him. It had added rage to the anxiety he already felt about that American gentleman's torn trousers. Altogether, Tubby's podgy brain was a seething whirlpool of emotion for several hours after his meeting with Lattrey and Co.

Towards bedtime, however, Tubby began to calm down a little, and a good-natured invitation from Jimmy Silver to supper in the end study worked wonders in bringing him back to his normal self.

Talk at the supper table was all on the subject of the next day's Wild West show. As he listened to it, a

strange thing happened to Tubby. He had a sudden brainwave.

What that brainwave was, he kept to himself for the time being. Whatever it was, it brought consolation to the fat Fourth Former, and he went up to bed that night in a much more cheery frame of mind.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

TUBBY'S TRIUMPH!

"ROLL up! Roll up! Rip-roaring rodeo champions from the wild and woolly West! The greatest show on earth! Roll up!"

The people were rolling up—from all directions. Many were rolling up from the direction of Rookwood. A Wild West show on Coombe Common was something that had not happened before; it was decidedly not to be missed, from the point of view of a good many Rookwood men. They would have rolled up in any circumstances and in any weather—even without the admonitions of the big cowboy who was roaring encouragement to them through a megaphone from a raised dais in front of the show.

The Fistical Four were early arrivals. Tubby Muffin was in close attendance on them, and Jimmy Silver generously "forking out" the required admission fee, the fat Fourth Former passed into the great marquee with them.

"Seat for you, Tubby!" called out Uncle James, when he had selected a favourable position inside.

Tubby's answer to that invitation was a strange one. Instead of parking his podgy carcase in the proffered seat, he shook his head and edged back to the gangway. At the same time there appeared on his face a peculiarly guilty look which was for the time being quite incomprehen-

sible to Jimmy Silver and his chums.

"Thanks, old chap; but the fact is, I prefer to stand just now!" said Tubby Muffin.

The Fistical Four stared at him rather blankly.

"Potty?" asked Newcome.

"Must be something wrong when Tubby declines a seat," remarked Raby. "Had a Head's swishing, Tubby?"

"Perhaps he's wearing his Sunday worst bags and doesn't want to spoil 'em!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell. "Spill the beans, Tubby, and tell us all about it!"

Tubby, however, appeared unwilling to "spill the beans"—though what there was to spill was a puzzle, anyway. His reason for not sitting down could not be discomfort following a swishing, for the simple reason that he had not had a swishing. Nor could it be fear of spoiling his "bags," which, in point of fact, looked as though they had recently adorned a scarecrow or a November the Fifth "guy." In fact, Tubby's strange preference for standing and his acute embarrassment at being asked about it would have seemed very extraordinary indeed to the Fistical Four, had they been given much time to think about it.

But the show started soon after their arrival, and Jimmy Silver and his chums soon forgot all about Tubby in their enjoyment of the programme.

It was not till the last item but one in the programme was reached that they remembered Tubby again.

Then Tubby came back to their thoughts with a rush.

For the item in question was the broncho-busting contest in which the sum of five pounds was being offered to any member of the audience

remaining on the back of a fiery prairie pony for two minutes on end. And no sooner had the ringmaster made the announcement than Tubby Muffin rolled down the gangway to try for the prize!

The Fistical Four fairly swooped on their fat colleague as they saw his move.

"Tubby, you fat ass!" gasped Jimmy Silver, catching him up just as he entered the ring. "You can't go in for this. You'll be hurt—badly, perhaps!"

"You don't know what it's like," hissed Newcome. "We're all pretty good riders—but even we probably don't stand an earthly!"

But Tubby, amazing as it seemed, was not to be dissuaded!

Even when Raby mounted the mustang and was promptly shot over its head, Tubby still stood firm. And as the Fourth Formers could hardly restrain him forcibly, Tubby's candidature for the prize had to hold good. As Lovell remarked, it was Tubby's funeral. Jimmy Silver pessimistically added that it probably would be, anyway.

The competitors went up one by one and one by one they were thrown. Quite

a number of local young men as well as Rookwood fellows were having a go. But from the regularity with which they were deposited on the floor of the ring, it seemed unlikely that any of them were going to win the fiver.

Newcome and Raby went up, and returned rubbing their bruises ruefully.

Even Jimmy Silver, who was a horseman of some skill, finished up in the sawdust.

Tubby's turn came at last. There was a roar—of amazement as well as encouragement—as he was helped on to the broncho's back.

Nobody expected for an instant that Tubby would last two seconds—let alone two minutes!



When the heavy gentleman succeeded in rising from his seat, there was an ominous rending sound. He left behind him quite a large portion of his nether garment!

Two burly cowboys held the pony while Tubby mounted. Then, to a chorus of cracking stockwhips, they released the animal and stood back to watch the fat broncho-buster being hurled half-way across the ring.

Then they rubbed their eyes.

Tubby was not hurled half-way across the ring. In fact, he was not hurled anywhere!

Incredible as it was, Tubby remained seated while the squealing, infuriated pony bucked, twisted, shied and kicked in vain!

It was a dizzy experience for Tubby. There could be no doubt about that. But dizzy as it was, he remained seated while the cheers of the crowd grew louder and louder and the seconds ticked away remorselessly!

"TWO MINUTES!" The ring-master's voice boomed out at long last, and there was a roar of cheering. "Ladies and gentlemen! This intrepid young horseman wins the prize, which will now be presented by the proprietor himself."

The two burly cowboys held the pony again, and Tubby, perspiring freely but beaming cheerfully at the same time, remained seated as a heavy-looking gentleman strode into the ring, holding aloft a five-pound note.

It was a shock for both when Tubby and the heavy-looking gentleman came face to face and recognised each other as the ill-fated companions on that bus to Coombe. The transatlantic gentleman simply jumped.

"You?" he gasped.

Tubby took the fiver. Then, recovering his self-possession, he offered it back to the donor.

"I—I fancy this puts us right, sir, doesn't it?" he said nervously.

The showman rubbed his chin. Then a slow smile dawned on his heavy features.

"I guess I'll pay for the pants, kid," he said. "The cash is yours!"

"Oh, thank you, sir—thanks, awfully!"

Tubby pocketed the fiver and dismounted.

As he did so, there was a sharp sound of material rending asunder behind him.

The showman stared. The cowboys stared. Jimmy Silver and his chums at the ringside stared.

And then there was a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, great pip!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Tubby stuck himself on! He must have had glue on his trousers! He couldn't possibly fall off!"

"The toffee!" howled Newcome. "He must have plastered the seat of his trousers with that toffee! No wonder he didn't want to sit down! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd shrieked. The cowboys guffawed.

Even the showman grinned eventually—though it was a somewhat rueful grin.

"I guess this beats everything!" he said.

Which just about summed it up. The crowd evidently considered—and the Rookwooders certainly agreed—that Tubby Muffin had beaten everything.

And as, in the process, he had cleared his debt and won himself a fiver, it was an eminently satisfactory end to the matter from Tubby's point of view!



Statistics for Schoolboys!



By HARRY MANNERS

With the aid of ice and stimulants, Manners has worked out some startling statistics of St. Jim's. If you don't believe them, we shall not be surprised!

I FIND figures fearfully fascinating. To my mind, numerical intelligence is intensely interesting and intriguing.

What I mean to say is, I get a real kick out of contemplating, for instance, the fact that St. Jim's fellows write each year in impots a grand total of 1,000,000 lines.

I worked this out myself. Not content to leave it at that, I tied a block of ice round my head and worked out what it measured. The answer came to about 100 miles.

Think of it, lads! The lines written each year by the long-suffering inmates of our home for the sons of gentlemen, placed end to end, would stretch from St. Jim's to London and all the way back to St. Jim's again! Get a load of that solemn and awe-inspiring thought!

This little calculation of mine made me ambitious. I worked out other St. Jim's phenomena in statistical terms. I can now put before an eager world facts and figures that throw a lurid light on St. Jim's and its inhabitants.

To begin with, I have ascertained that the quantity of ginger-beer consumed in Dame Taggles' tuckshop during the summer months would fill a swimming-pool measuring 100 feet by 25 feet and having depths varying from 2 feet 6 inches in the shallow end to 10 feet in the deep end.

Again, if all the jam-tarts eaten at St. Jim's each year were used as a floor covering, they would cover an area sufficiently large to provide courts that would enable the entire school simultaneously to play games of "squash." (Loud laughter—I hope!)

If Baggy Trimble were presented with a penny every time he told the truth, he would probably, by trying hard, earn himself in the course of a year the sum of twopence.

If Knox were presented with a penny every time he appeared in public wearing a happy smile on his face, he would receive an average of one halfpenny a month.

Here are some more startling facts I have unearthed :

The quantity of ink used by the fags in decorating their fingers and faces is sufficient to give the entire woodwork of the school a brand new coat of blue-black once a year.

Herries' bulldog's playful little habit of fixing his fangs into fellows' bags keeps one Rylcombe tailor and two assistants in affluence for three months out of every twelve.

Supposing Grundy's improvement at football to be maintained at its present rate, he will become a really efficient player by the time he is 156 years old.

If Dr. Holmes fined himself a shilling every time he said " Bless my soul ! " he would be bankrupt within five years.

If wielding a cane for half an hour made a man one per cent stronger, Mr. Ratcliff would take half a term to become the strongest man on earth.

Assuming that the quantity of tact and judgment possessed by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is measured by the size of his monocle, he would have to wear a monocle with a diameter of 6 feet before he possessed the average amount of commonsense.

If House differences were decided on the size of fellows' feet, New House would always be Cock House.

Considerations of space prevent me from going further into these illuminating statistical sidelights on St.

Jim's. Before I conclude, however, I should like to give you the results of a painstaking inquiry I have made to find out just what the average St. Jim's fellow is like.

THE AVERAGE ST. JIM'S CHAP

Is 5 feet 3 inches high.

Weighs 8 stone 6 pounds.

Has fair, brown-black, ginger hair and blue-grey-brown-green eyes.

Belongs to the Fourth-and-a-half Form.

Plays $17\frac{1}{2}$ games of cricket and $26\frac{1}{2}$ games of footer each season.

Wears out $3\frac{1}{2}$ suits a year.

Receives annually $18\frac{1}{2}$ whacks with the cane.

Says " Yaroooooh ! " $78\frac{9}{10}$ times and " Ow ! By dose ! " $23\frac{1}{2}$ times a day.



If wielding a cane for half an hour made a man one per cent stronger, Mr. Ratcliff would take half a term to become the strongest man on earth !

Smokes $3\frac{1}{2}$ cigarettes and eats $243\frac{1}{2}$ jam-tarts every year.

Slides down the banisters $1\frac{1}{2}$ times a week.

If you correspond exactly with this exact scientific description, then, dear reader, you can fairly claim that you are the exact counterpart of the average St. Jim's man. That you'll feel no end bucked about it goes without saying.

I think that will be all for now !



BILLY BUNTER'S BIKE!

By BOB CHERRY

THE FIRST CHAPTER
THE COMPETITION EXPERT.

"FIRST prize—a magnificent bicycle, complete with three-speed gear and latest accessories. Guaranteed to last twenty years!"

Billy Bunter fairly rolled the words on his tongue, as if they were strawberry ices. We were in the junior Common-room—generally known as the Rag—when Bunter read that announcement.

The fat junior had either begged or borrowed without permission a copy of "The Weekly Joker," which contained details of what it was pleased

to call an absorbing and fascinating competition.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, blinking at us, "I'm going to bag that bike!"

"Go hon!" said Frank Nugent.

"There are twelve pictures here," continued Bunter, flourishing the paper, "and they represent the names

of railway stations in Great Britain. Of course, no ordinary fellow could be expected to solve even half of them. You want brains for that sort of thing."

"Then why are you competing?" asked Nugent. And there was a laugh.

It is Billy Bunter's proud boast that he will bag the first prize of a bike in a competition. But pride goes before a fall—and oh, what a fall Bunter has!

"You can dry up, Nugent!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I don't want any insults from a fellow of your low order of intelligence!"

"My hat!"

Bunter spread the paper out on the table, and we glanced over his shoulder.

"Take the first picture," said Bunter. "It shows a castle, with an elephant in the foreground. That's Cowes, of course!"

"Elephant and Castle, you ass!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter sniffed.

"If you had studied your geography, Bull," said Bunter, "you'd know there's no such place as Elephant and Castle."

"My only aunt!" said Peter Todd. "You'll be saying there's no such place as London next!"

"Well, there may be something in what Bull says," said Bunter, on reflection. "All the same, I shall stick to Cowes."

"Thereby losing any faint chance you might have had of bagging the bike," said Wharton.

"Oh, rot! The second picture's dead easy. It's a black pool of water. Even a fellow of dull intelligence, like Johnny Bull, can see that it's Waterloo!"

"Blackpool, you fat chump!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You're wandering in your mind, Smithy. Whoever heard of a place with a name like that?"

"You won't find a seaside resort in England to beat it!" said Mark Linley, loyal to Lancashire.

Bunter said he was convinced that the solution was Waterloo. However, he was careful to scribble the word "Blackpool" in his notebook.

"The next picture shows a pen, a ton weight, and a small house," said

Bunter. "How's that for Swiss Cottage?"

"Right off the wicket!" said Nugent. "It's where you'll end your days, Bunty—Pentonville!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter continued to make entries in his notebook, until—thanks to our timely aid—he had completed the list of solutions. His fat face was beaming as he stowed the notebook in his pocket.

"I'm the winner all the way!" he said. "A magnificent bike, you fellows! Just think of it! Of course, it would have been more considerate of the editor to make the first prize a tuck-hamper. Still, I shall be able to sell the bike, I expect, and have no end of fine feeds at the tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble will jolly soon play up to me when she sees the colour of my money."

"When?" grinned Wharton.

And we all joined in the chorus:

"When I get some money,
I'll be in the Upper Ten;
When I get some money
When, when, when, when, when."

"It'll be sooner than you fellows think!" retorted Bunter. "Anybody got a stamp?"

"Better try Friardale Post Office," said Peter Todd.

"What! You think I'm going to fag all that distance for a mouldy stamp! Surely one of you fellows can oblige an old pal? Hi, Dutton! Have you got a stamp about you?"

"Certainly!" said Tom Dutton, the deaf junior. And stepping forward, he gave Bunter a box on the ear that sent him spinning.

The fat junior roared with anguish.

"Yaroooh! Wharrer you up to?" he demanded wrathfully.

"You told me to clout you," said Dutton, in surprise.

"I didn't! I asked you if you had a stamp."

Dutton looked mystified.

"What on earth do you want a lamp for?" he said. "It isn't dark yet."

"Oh, help!" moaned Bunter. "Have you got a stamp—a thing that you stick on letters?"

"So you think I ought to know better, do you?" roared Dutton. "I'll jolly soon show you!"

And he boxed Bunter's ear again—harder this time.

We simply yelled.

"Ow! Pulverise him, somebody!" groaned Bunter. "Look here, how can I send in my entry for the competition unless I have a stamp?"

"I should let the editor pay three-halfpence on the letter," said Skinner. "Editors are very generous sort of chaps, you know."

"Or you could mark the envelope 'O.H.M.S.'," said Nugent thoughtfully.

"'O.H.M.S.'?" said Bunter. "What does that mean?"

"Oh, Help Me, Somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think you're a set of beasts!" said Bunter, blinking at us through his large spectacles. "You're all too mean to dish up a stamp! I shan't let any of you ride my bike—when it comes."

And Bunter rolled out of the Rag in high dudgeon.

He devoted the next hour or so to stamp collecting. Nugent minor came



As Bunter crept towards the Form-room door he failed to notice Bolsover's foot protruding from under the desk. Next moment he tripped over it and pitched to the floor. Crash! "Yaroop!" yelled the fat junior. Mr. Quelch spun round from the blackboard. "Bunter!" he thundered.

to the rescue with a halfpenny stamp, which he extricated with difficulty from a mass of toffee, crayons, and chewing-gum. Bunter took his word for it that it really was a halfpenny stamp. It looked more like a paper pellet that had lost its way.

Another weather-beaten stamp—a penny one this time—turned up from the pockets of Sammy Bunter, who, as a return for handing it over, insisted upon being allowed to use his major's bicycle whenever the spirit moved him.

That evening Billy Bunter posted his entry form. A black cat was crossing the Close at the time, and Bunter hailed it as a symbol of good luck.

When the fat junior dropped off to sleep that night, we could hear him murmur, in between his snores :

"Magnificent bicycle—three-speed gear—latest accessories. Winner—W. G. Bunter of Greyfriars School."

THE SECOND CHAPTER

SQUIFF'S SCHEME

MR. QUELCH did not find Bunter a very attentive pupil the next morning. Bunter never was, as a matter of fact. He considered that a little knowledge was a dangerous thing ; therefore, he acquired as little as possible. But on this particular morning he was the limit.

When Mr. Quelch asked him where King Charles the First was beheaded, Bunter replied, in an abstracted tone, "Clapham Junction, sir!" and received a hundred lines for his pains.

When he went on to tell Mr. Quelch that the Magna Charta was signed in Piccadilly Circus the imposition was doubled. Finally, when Bunter gave the startling information that William the Conqueror came over to England on a magnificent bicycle, with three-

speed gear and latest accessories, he received a couple of stinging cuts on each hand, and came back to earth with a jerk, and his great expectations were forgotten.

But not for long. Bunter had that bike on the brain. He bored us stiff by gloating over the good times he intended to have as soon as the machine arrived.

"Of course, I shall ride it for a bit," he said, "and when something goes wrong with the works I shall sell it for five quid or so. It will be simply great! A fellow can get a good feed for five quid——"

"You've got to get the five quid first!" growled Johnny Bull.

"To say nothing of the bike!" I interjected.

"Don't talk rot! I've sent in twelve correct solutions, and therefore the bike's a cert. I believe you fellows are eaten up with jealousy because you know I'm going to win."

"You think we're jealous of a conceited bladder of lard like you!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I don't think—I know! It's this personal jealousy on your part that has kept me out of the cricket and footer teams. Why don't I kick runs and hit goals for the Remove? Jealousy, of course! Why haven't I been elected skipper of the Form? Jealousy again! You fellows know in your hearts that I'm a born leader, but you deliberately keep me under. Sheer bad sportsmanship, I call it."

"Oh, slay him, somebody!" ejaculated Nugent.

We were fed-up with Bunter. As the days advanced we became still more so. He strutted about with his nose in the air, as if he owned the earth and all that therein is. In fact, you simply couldn't hold the fat beast. He was soundly bumped on several

occasions ; but all the bumping in the world wouldn't stop him swanking.

After a while we put our heads together and decided to teach Bunter a lesson.

It was Sampson Quincey Iffley Field—commonly called Squiff—who suggested the novel wheeze.

"Bunter thinks he deserves a bike," said Squiff, "and he shan't be disappointed. It would be too awful if all his castles in the air came tumbling down. He's thought and dreamed of a bike so much that he's genuinely convinced that he'll get one. And so he shall."

"What!" yelled Peter Todd. "You're going to present Bunter with a bike?"

"Certainly!"

"Then you must be potty!"

"The pottyfulness of the esteemed Squiff," murmured Hurree Singh, "is terrific!"

"Wait," said Squiff; "I haven't told you what sort of a bike. During my wanderings in Courtfield I've discovered the whereabouts of an old-iron shop."

We began to see what Squiff was driving at.

"In the yard at the back of the shop," he went on, "there's a very ancient bike, thick with cobwebs, and rusty as old Quelch when he's on the warpath. The bike was invented over a hundred years ago, and it's about the most weird-looking thing you ever struck. The front wheel stands higher than I do, and the handlebars are the last word."

"Then it is a thing of booty and a toyfulness for ever, as your English proverb has it?" said Hurree Singh.

"Exactly. And it'll suit Bunter."

"Down to the ground," chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I propose that we collar the ancient bus," said Squiff, "and leave it at Friardale Station, addressed to W. G. Bunter, 'to be called for.'"

"Ripping!" said Wharton.

"And we'll write a letter, presumably from the editor of 'The Weekly Joker,' stating that Bunter has been awarded the first prize. How's that?"

"Top-hole!" said Peter Todd. "There's just one point, though. This bike will cost money, and we're all on the verge of being stony."

"Set your mind at rest, Toddy," said Squiff. "Instead of our having to pay the proprietor of the shop, he'll pay us—for removing a dangerous obstruction from his premises."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We fell in with Squiff's idea at once.

When afternoon lessons were finished we biked over to Courtfield, and rescued the ancient contrivance from the scrapheap. The proprietor was only too glad to see the back of it. He told us it had been a positive eyesore to the place.

Then we piloted the prehistoric bike to the railway station at Friardale, and left instructions with the porter.

Two mornings later there was a letter in the rack for Bunter. Letters for the fat junior were not as plentiful as blackberries, in spite of all his high talk about titled relations and fat remittances.

Bunter pounced on the letter at once.

Quite a crowd of fellows drifted up to see the fun.

"Hallo!" said Bolsover major. "Is that a letter from Lord Bunter de Bunter?"

"It's not from one of my titled relations this time," said Bunter. "There's no crest on the back."

"Perhaps it's from the uncle who

keeps the Bunter Arms?" I suggested. "Trot out the joyful tidings, Bunty."

Bunter inserted a fat finger in the fold of the letter and ripped it open. The next moment his little round eyes were gleaming with delight.

"It's come!" he exclaimed.

"Not the postal order, surely?" said Skinner, in surprise.

"No. It's the letter announcing that I've won the first prize in the picture-puzzle competition."

"Gammon!"

"Read it yourself, then!" said Bunter.

And we crowded round to see the letter. It ran as follows:

Editorial Office,
THE WEEKLY JOKER,
London.

W. G. Bunter, Esq.,
Greyfriars School,
Friardale, Kent.

"Dear Sir,—I have much pleasure in informing you that you have been awarded the first prize in our recent picture-puzzle contest.

"The magnificent bicycle, complete with three-speed gear and latest accessories, awaits you at Friardale Station.

"I congratulate you most cordially upon your success, which I trust may be the forerunner of many more in this respect.

I am, dear sir,
Yours faithfully,
THE EDITOR."

Squiff had compiled that letter, and he had sent it to a pal in London to post on. Most of us knew it was a fake, of course; but Bolsover major and Skinner, who weren't in the know, were frankly astonished.

"Congratulations, Bunty!" said

Skinner, when he had recovered from the shock. "You're a cleverer fellow than I imagined."

"Yes, rather!" said Bolsover. "This does you credit, I must say."

"I always said Bunter had some brains stowed away somewhere," said Russell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows needn't toady up to me now that you know I've won!" said Bunter. "I don't mind telling you in advance that only two people are going to use my bike—and they're me and Sammy."

"Can I ride on the step if I'm very good?" asked Nugent.

"No, you can't. You've often refused me the loan of your bike, Nugent, and this is where I get my own back. You fellows are jealous of me more than ever now, I see. Why don't you go and cultivate some brains?"

"You'll cultivate a thick ear if you're not careful!" said Bolsover major.

And then the bell rang for morning lessons.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

TAKEN FOR A RIDE

JUST as we were going strong with Roman history, Billy Bunter rose in his place.

"If you please, sir——"

"Sit down!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, really, sir! I——"

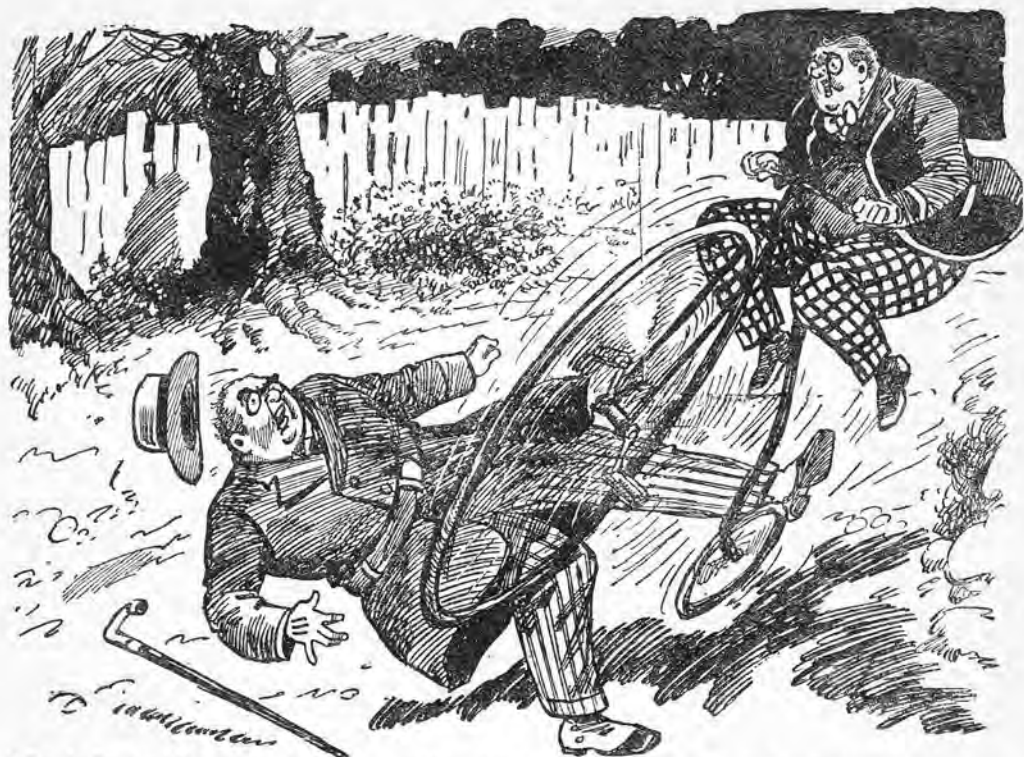
"If you have any request to make, Bunter, kindly defer it till after the lesson."

"But it's important, sir."

"It cannot be more important than your Form-work, Bunter!"

"You really must listen to me, sir——"

"Sit down!" Mr. Quelch's voice



"Boy! Bunter!" stormed Mr. Prout. "How dare you imperil the lives of pedestrians in this reckless manner? Stop!" Bunter swerved to one side to avoid Mr. Prout, but the latter swerved at the same time, and there was a grinding collision.

resembled the booming of breakers on the beach. "If you utter another word, Bunter, I shall cane you!"

Billy Bunter dropped into his seat.

He was restless and uneasy as lessons proceeded; and presently, when Mr. Quelch had his back to the class and was writing on the blackboard, Bunter slipped from his seat and moved towards the door.

We stared at him in surprise. It was unheard of for a fellow to walk out of the Form-room in the middle of morning lessons.

Bunter was half-way to the door, and Mr. Quelch was still engaged at the blackboard. We held our breath, wondering if Bunter would succeed in getting clear in time.

But luck was against him.

As he moved forward on tip-toe, his eyes were fixed on Mr. Quelch. Consequently he failed to notice an obstruction in his path, in the shape of Bolsover major's foot, which protruded from under the desk.

Bunter tripped over and pitched forward to the floor.

Crash!

The fat junior landed in a heap.

"Yaroop!"

Mr. Quelch spun round from the blackboard. For a full minute he stood petrified, unable to move or speak. When he did find his voice it resembled the rumble of thunder.

"Bunter!"

"Ow! Yessir!"

"How dare you grovel on the floor in that ridiculous manner?"

"Yow! Some silly ass stuck his foot in the way, sir——"

"Get up at once! How came you to be out of your place?"

"Ahem! I—I was on the point of opening the door, sir. We—we want some fresh air in the room, sir."

"You are prevaricating, Bunter!"

"Nunno, sir! Certainly not, sir! I wouldn't dream of telling a lie, sir."

"Good old Georgie Washington!" murmured Squiff.

Mr. Quelch picked up a cane.

"Tell me the truth at once, Bunter!" he rapped out.

"I—I—well, you wouldn't listen to me in the first place, sir!" said Bunter wildly. "I wanted to go and get my bike, and you wouldn't let me explain. So I thought I wouldn't worry you again, sir, and I was just—ahem!—slipping out of the room."

Mr. Quelch could scarcely believe his ears.

"You were in the act of leaving the Form-room without permission, for the purpose of getting your bicycle?" he thundered.

"Ow! I—I didn't think you'd mind, sir."

"You are a perverse and obtuse boy, Bunter! I shall cane you most severely!"

Mr. Quelch strode towards Bunter, and the cane came into play. It rose and fell with deadly accuracy, and Bunter's yells fairly awoke the echoes.

"There!" panted Mr. Quelch, when he had finished. "Let that be a lesson to you, Bunter."

"Yow-ow-ow! M-m-may I go and fetch my bike now, sir?"

"No, you may not!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Go back to your place at once."

Billy Bunter limped back to his seat, and the lesson proceeded. There was no further attempt on the part of the fat junior to sneak out of the Form-room.

Directly lessons were over, however, Billy Bunter rushed away like a whirlwind. There was no stopping him. He was hot on the track of that magnificent bicycle, complete with three-speed gear and latest accessories.

"I should like to see Bunter's face when he gets to the station," said Nugent.

"Let's go along and meet him," said Wharton. "We'll give him a rousing reception as the winner of the first prize."

"Hear, hear!"

Quite a crowd of us started for the railway station. Some had brought mouth-organs, and others, for want of better instruments, had armed themselves with combs and tissue-paper.

"When I give the order," said Wharton, "we'll strike up 'See the Conquering Hero Comes.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We got to the station just in time to see Billy Bunter pushing the ancient bike out into the roadway. His fat face was a picture. He had certainly got his bike—but what a bike!

Instead of a smoothly-running modern cycle, it was a dreadful-looking monster. Only a skilled acrobat could have climbed up on to the seat; and as for steering it—well, very few of us would have cared to run the risk.

"I say, you fellows, I've been spoofed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This isn't a bike at all—it's a beastly gridiron."

We roared.

"I shall write and tell the editor

of 'The Weekly Joker' what I think of him!" snorted Bunter. "How the dickens does he suppose that I'm going to ride this old crock?"

"We'll give you a hand, Bunty," said Bolsover major obligingly

"Here, hold on! I—I mean, leggo!" yelled Bunter in alarm.

Skinner had taken hold of the bike, while Bolsover major and several others, grunting and groaning under Bunter's weight, lifted the fat junior up on the seat

"Now," said Bolsover. "One to be ready—two to be steady—three to be—"

"Off!" chuckled Skinner.

Bunter lurched forward. He was clutching the handlebars as if his life depended on it.

"Strike up, you fellows!" gasped Wharton, in between sobs of merriment. And then the band started "See the Conquering Hero Comes."

"Goes would be more correct," gurgled Nugent "Good-bye, Bunty!"

Bunter had reached the brow of the hill by this time, and he disappeared over the top. We raced along in the rear to see the fun

Bunter careered down the hill at a most alarming pace. He gathered impetus as he went, and he hung on like grim death.

Labouring up the hill at that moment came Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. Mr. Prout was taking a constitutional; and when Bunter loomed on his horizon he stopped short, wondering if he had suddenly been transplanted into the nineteenth century

"Stand clear" yelled Billy Bunter

Mr. Prout declined to stand clear. He took it upon himself to remonstrate with a cyclist who was riding in a manner dangerous to the public. Accordingly, Mr. Prout stepped into

the middle of the road, with a portentous frown on his florid face.

"Boy! Bunter! How dare you imperil the lives of pedestrians in this reckless manner? Stop! I command you!"

Billy Bunter saw that Mr. Prout was a fixture—that wild horses would not drag him away from what he conceived his duty. The fat junior swerved to one side in the hope of avoiding Mr. Prout; but the latter swerved at the same time, and there was a grinding collision.

"Oh, my aunt!" sobbed Squiff. "I—I'm sure I shall bust a boiler in a minute!"

Mr. Prout lay on his back in the roadway, blinking up at the heavens, and wondering why the stars should suddenly appear at midday.

We rushed up to render first-aid; but beyond a few bruises the Form-master was unhurt. But he was consumed with wrath which equalled that of Jove of old.

"That young villain! That depraved hooligan!" spluttered Mr. Prout. "Stop him!"

"Afraid he's gone too far now, sir," said Nugent solemnly.

Bunter had! By a miraculous stroke of good fortune he had survived the collision with Mr. Prout; but it seemed that he had only passed out of the frying-pan into the fire.

He continued his headlong rush down the hill, at the foot of which lay a green and slimy duckpond. Bunter's nerves were in such a state by this time that he had lost all control of his machine. He headed straight as a die for the pond, pitched over the handlebars like a fat fowl in flight, and turned a complete somersault into the water.

"A fitting climax to such hare-brained riding!" said Mr. Prout.

A moment later a fat, slimy porpoise rose up from the bottom of the pond. Reeds and mud clung lovingly to his head and neck, and he bore a distinct resemblance to the wild man of Borneo.

"Groooh!" spluttered Bunter, gouging frantically at his eyes and mouth. "Ow! Yah! I'm dying! I've fractured my spinal column!"

Mr. Prout hurried to the spot, and we followed.

"You have only yourself to blame for this, you foolish boy!" stormed Mr. Prout. "How dare you ride such an absurd and clumsy contrivance on the highway?"

And Mr. Prout pointed to the ancient gridiron, which lay half-submerged in the slimy ooze.

Bunter staggered out of the pond. His clothes were full of water, and he was blown out like a balloon.

"Anybody got a pin?" inquired Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout resumed his attack on Bunter.

"As soon as you have removed the evil-smelling weeds and mud from your person," he barked, "you will wait upon me in my study. I will endeavour to teach you that practical jokes of this sort are out of place in a public thoroughfare."

"How could I help it?" roared Bunter, squelching mud. "I wasn't riding the beastly thing for fun."

"That's so, sir," said Bolsover major. "It was I who suggested Bunter should ride the bike, sir."

"Then you will take five hundred lines, Bolsover!" snapped Mr. Prout. "And I will acquaint your Form-master with what has occurred."

"Yes, sir."

A general move was made in the direction of Greyfriars.

"Not going to leave your bike behind, Bunter, surely?" laughed Wharton.

"Especially when you can get five quid for it," chuckled Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter turned and flourished a fat fist in our faces.

"Beasts!" he muttered. "I don't believe that letter came from 'The Weekly Joker' at all. This is a jape, at my expense."

"Go hon!"

"Pride goes before a fall," said Nugent. "You shouldn't have swanked so much about your blessed bike, then this wouldn't have happened."

Bunter said no more.

When we reached the school he made hurried tracks for the nearest bath-room, and for quite an hour afterwards there came sounds of much rubbing and scrubbing.

Billy Bunter disliked soap and water; but he realised that a liberal application of both was necessary on this occasion, unless he wished to smell like a duckpond for the rest of the term.

"Poor old Bunter!" I remarked. "He'll dry up about his precious bike after this."

But I was wrong.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

BUNTER, THE PRIZE-WINNER!

NEXT day Billy Bunter was crowing as loudly as ever. He had left the bike of yesterday to rust in the duckpond. Bunter was finished with it; and it had nearly finished Bunter.

But the bike of to-morrow—the bike he yet hoped to obtain from "The Weekly Joker"—formed his main topic of conversation. He chattered about it in season and out of season.

A few mornings later Bunter received a letter—a genuine one this time—from the editor of "The Weekly Joker." The name and address of that periodical were printed on the top of the notepaper, so there was clearly no hoax this time.

The letter ran thus :

" The Weekly Joker,
Fleet Street, London.

" W. G. Bunter, Esq.,
Greyfriars School,
Friardale, Kent.

" Dear Sir,—It is my pleasure and privilege to inform you that you were successful in solving the whole set of picture-puzzles correctly.



A fat and slimy porpoise rose up from the bottom of the pond, reeds and mud clinging lovingly to his head and neck. "Grooh!" spluttered Bunter. "Ow! Yah! I've fractured my spinal column!"

" A further communication on this subject will be sent to you in due course.

" Meanwhile, with hearty congratulations on your good fortune,

I am,

Yours faithfully,
THE EDITOR."

" There you are!" said Bunter triumphantly. " I told you merit would tell! I've won the bike after all, and I think some of you fellows ought to apologise for disbelieving me."

We were certainly very much taken aback. Was it possible that Bunter

had really won the magnificent bicycle awarded by " The Weekly Joker " ? If so, our practical joke would have fallen flat, and Bunter would have the laugh of us at the finish.

We all waited, in a state of curiosity, for the " further communication " to arrive from the editor.

Bunter always made it a point to waylay Bloggs, the postman, on his way to the school. The fat junior was almost bursting with impatience and excitement.

At last the letter came. The fellows swarmed round Bunter like bees as he opened it.

"Read it out, Bunter."

"Have you won the bike?"

"Is it waiting for you at the station?"

Bunter pulled out the letter and read it aloud to us.

"Dear Sir,—I am writing you again, as promised, on the subject of the picture-puzzle competition.

"You will be glad to learn that you, in company with seven hundred and ninety-nine other competitors, have qualified for the first prize, namely, a magnificent bicycle, complete with three-speed gear and latest accessories.

"As it is hardly feasible to divide the bicycle into eight hundred parts, it has been decided that the sum of twenty pounds shall be divided equally among the successful competitors. This being so, I have pleasure in enclosing herewith postal order for sixpence (6d.).

Yours faithfully,
THE EDITOR."

Bunter went purple.

"It's a swindle!" he yelled. "A swindle from beginning to end."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Instead of a bike they've sent me a mouldy postal order—for sixpence!"

"And it's made payable to Bunter at Courtfield Post Office," chuckled Nugent. "That means you've got to tramp all the way to Courtfield to cash it."

Bunter's face worked convulsively. He was not a fighting man, but if the editor of "The Weekly Joker" had put in an appearance at that moment Billy Bunter would have gone for him.

"Sixpence!" gasped Bunter, almost overcome.

After all his boasting, all his great expectations, he had received not a magnificent bicycle, but the princely sum of sixpence!

"Competitions," said Bunter, "are a delusion and a snare. I shall never go in for 'em again—never!"

"Hadn't you better get your postal order cashed, Bunter?" said Wharton, laughing.

"I suppose so," grunted the fat junior. "It means some tarts and a ginger-pop at Uncle Clegg's, anyway."

And he started off on the long, long trail to Courtfield.





Tom Redwing, son of
a fisherman.



Lord Mauleverer, the
slacker of the Remove.



Fisher T. Fish, the boy
from "Noo Yark."

The Greyfriars PORTRAIT GALLERY



Harry Wharton, cap-
tain of the Remove.



Wun Lung, the cheerful
Chinese.



Mark Linley, the
scholarship boy.

Greyfriars School Song

Words by FRANK RICHARDS

Music by JEFF LYTTON

Marcia

Brioso

ff

mf

marcato

R.H.

There

once was a friar of ord - ers grey Who

found-ed a school when he came this way, And

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Marcia' and 'Brioso'. The piano accompaniment starts with a forte (ff) dynamic. The score is divided into four systems. The first system shows the piano introduction. The second system includes the first vocal entry with the word 'There'. The third system contains the lyrics 'once was a friar of ord - ers grey Who' and features a 'marcato' tempo change. The fourth system continues the melody with the lyrics 'found-ed a school when he came this way, And' and includes a right-hand (R.H.) piano solo section. The score concludes with a final cadence.

since that far date ump - teen years long a - go ——— Good old

Grey friars School — has con - tin - ued to grow. — There

may be a school some-where that is our match ——— But we

don't quite be - lieve there can be. ——— We

ra - ther think Grey-friars the best of the batch - At the

top! At the top! Right up at the top of the tree! - 8va.

(Sing) The top! The top!

CHORUS *a piacere*

Good old Grey friars, sec-ond to none, - *ffz*

Past and pres-ent, and for-ty years on! *R.H.*

Never in the cart, ——— ev - er in the van, ——— For

that is the way of a Grey - friars man! ——— With

work and play ——— our days are full, ——— Our

claim to fame ——— we play the game ——— And

ff

car-ry on _____ the fam-ous name, _____ The fam-ous

ff *ffz*

1.

name _____ of good old Grey - friars School! _____

rit 8

2.

Grey - friars School! _____ Grey friars

Last time. rit

rit *D.S.* 8

a tempo

School! _____

ff a tempo



2nd verse

When the rising-bell clangs in the dewy morn,
We roll out of bed, by the light of dawn.

"Now, then, they're my trousers!"

"They're my bags, you tick!"

"What swob's got my socks?" "I say,
this is too thick!"

We wash—all but Bunter—and rush down
to prayers,

"Hurry up, you men, here comes a pre!"
The last buttons buttoned halfway down
the stairs,

Tempus fugit, tempus fugit, tempus fugit,
and ditto do we!

Chorus.

Good old Greyfriars, second to none,
Past and present, and forty years on!
Never satisfied as an also ran,
For that is the way of a Greyfriars man.

We may get it hot, but we keep quite cool,
When Sixth Form ticks hand over six,
We pack our bags with Latin dic's, to take
the licks,

At good old Greyfriars School.

3rd verse

Sometimes there's a pillow-fight in the dorm,
And sometimes a rag on the beak in Form;
We work when we must, and we play when
we can,

For that is the way of a Greyfriars man.

We mug up our Latin, in verse and in
prose,

But we can't help a few rows and rags,
And then it's "Bend over, and touch
your toes!"

And it's six, and it's six, and it's six of the
best on the bags!

Chorus.

Good old Greyfriars, second to none,
Past and present, and forty years on,
Following tradition, that's the good old plan,
For that is the way of a Greyfriars man.
We toe the line when the beak's no fool,
Saying, "Yes, sir, oh!" and "Please, sir,
no!"

As our fathers did long, long ago, long, long,
ago,

At good old Greyfriars School!

4th verse

At games, I may mention, we're quite a
force,

We may lose a match now and then, of
course;

But the men here play footer, I'm open to
say,

With the accent emphatic and strong on
the "play";

Who cares if his jawbone is barged on
a boot?

We are not here to loaf or to loll,

Never mind a few hacks, they don't
matter a hoot,

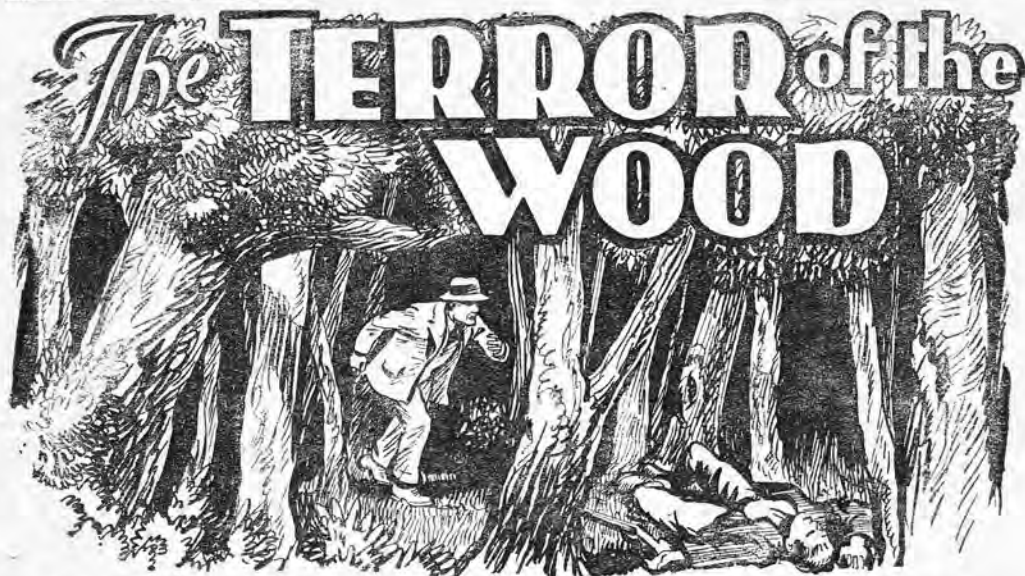
If you hear the School yell for a goal!

Chorus.

Good old Greyfriars! On the ball, on!
Play up, a game's never lost till it's won;
Stick it to the end, keen as you began,
For that is the way of a Greyfriars man!
Go in and win, and take your gruel,

Who cares a pin for a broken shin,
Or a broken neck? Oh, shove it in! An-
other win!

For good old Greyfriars School!



What is the terror of Temperly Wood? The good folk of Little Bilcombe are far from guessing the real identity of their mysterious visitor!

SAM TODD whistled a merry tune as he trudged through the shadows of Temperly Wood. Sam was extra late going home, for the overseer at the farm was abed with fever, and the boy had a lot more work than usually fell to his share.

He tramped on, thinking pleasantly of the supper awaiting him at the little cottage on the hill, when something curious happened close to him. He turned his head and tried to spot what it was in the deep gloom, but could at first make out nothing.

Sam heard a rustling, then a soft pat, pat, quite near him, then a strange hissing, such as might come from a cat which is nettled about something or other. It was no early owl, nor anything to suggest a fat adder which had been frightened. The wood boasted plenty of vipers. Sam knew all about them; he had

killed a goodish few in his time. He did not whistle now; he only stared. The odd little rustling came again; something was trotting close to him. In the sudden light of the nearly full moon the boy saw a dark form in the undergrowth. It was an odd little animal, and it came on quite unconcernedly as if the wood belonged to it.

Sam stooped to get a better view. He was not afraid. He thought at first it was a cat, but speedily realised his mistake. The strange creature had not the movement, nor the grace of a cat, and most decidedly it was not a dog, at least of any breed that Sam knew. Sam saw its quaint cock ears, its bright eyes glowing with anger in them, its strange orange markings in its rather bronzy green coat. What could it be?

Sam shifted his position to get a

better look, moved by sheer curiosity. The action was not pleasing to the stranger. With a lightning swing round, and with its furry tail lashing, it shinned up the smooth trunk of a beech tree and gained a low branch, from which post of observation it stared down at Sam.

The boy looked up at the stranger in real amazement. He went right up to the tree and raised his hand, intending to take hold of the creature, which did not look so very formidable.

Then he had the surprise of his life. There was a scream of rage, followed by a scuffle, and the lad started back wildly as a sharp claw tore his cheek. The weight of the attacker bore the lad back. He stepped aside, fighting to get rid of his assailant, but tripped, and went rolling with the enraged animal on top of him, tearing at his face, ripping his coat and screaming at him. Sam clutched, thinking he had got his enemy, but he had only secured a bit of fur. There was a snarl close to his ear, and then a flurry and scurry in the branches of the beech, and the angry creature was away.

Sam picked himself up slowly. He was ready to jump out of his skin with fright. A horny beechnut hit him on the head and he turned and ran.

Panting after his run, he gained his home in the village. He was late for supper, and his mother was put out, but the good soul forgot her vexation when she saw the boy's damaged face.

There was plenty of talk at Little Bilcombe. Some said the savage beast which had attacked Sam was a wild pig. That theory was promptly dismissed. There were no wild pigs. It might have been a cat. Sam

sniffed and said it might have been a wandering elephant. Temperly Wood fell into sad disrepute. People ceased to regard it as a useful short cut anywhere. It was left alone, and this suited the mysterious visitor down to the ground.

The plain fact was that the unknown resident in the thick recesses of the wood was no other than a young specimen of the Chinese Giant Panda. About the size of a fox, it looked something like a bear. Its ears were little tufts of black fur set in a round, brownish head, and the dark fur round its eyes gave it the appearance of having been in a particularly ferocious scrap. To add to the quaint effect, its paws curled inward like hands.

How the Panda got there was fairly simple, though not so much so that anybody in the neighbourhood guessed the truth.

It had been brought over in a tramp steamer from Shanghai, for one of the Lascar crew had kept it as a pet. As the ship lay in dock, the Panda had struck for liberty, since the confined hold did not satisfy its roving nature. It had managed to get ashore from boat to boat, then gained a wharf, and after that the region of dockside streets.

How it passed muster is a puzzle. People who spotted it slinking along by the houses thought that it was a prowling cat. It glided on, reaching the country at last, where it felt more at home, and eventually reaching the dim sanctuary of Temperly Wood. It had not been used to hot climates and consequently the chill of winter did not worry it overmuch.

It ranged the whole district. It could, and did, live on the country. Missing chickens were put down to Reynard's account; raids on barns

and fold yards to the rats. And it discovered perfectly satisfactory shelter in the empty rooms of Sudley Grange, the long deserted house to which Temperly Wood rightly belonged.

This derelict house is part of the story, for even before the amazing adventure of Sam there had been weird happenings in the old domicile. There were many sceptics as to the place being haunted, but, anyway, they kept the echoing pile at a distance. Extraordinary noises had

conscious in the densest part of the wood. His gun was by his side, and he seemed to have been pretty badly handled. He explained that something had suddenly gone for him, catching him by the shoulder and half-smothering him. What it was he had no more notion than the man in the moon.

The papers got wind of the affair, and for the first time Temperly Wood became famous. There were those who declared that some immense



Sam had the surprise of his life as he raised his hand to take hold of the strange creature. There was a scream of rage, and the lad started back wildly as a sharp claw tore at his cheek.

been heard; it was said that something had been seen peeping out of one of the windows.

John Travers, the farmer of Little End, who had a penchant for looking round, armed with an antique fowling piece, alone stood out, and used to tramp through the wood and past the tenacious stronghold of evil reputation.

A few months after Sam's discomfiture, the farmer was found un-

animal, very likely a left-over from Noah's Ark, was hiding in the wood.

The creature grew bigger and bigger in public estimation as time went on. People were far from dreaming that the cause of all the trouble was a relatively harmless little Chinese Panda, who found the living good and the old house not so bad.

As to the dilapidated house, well there was nothing doing. Stubbs, the agent at Bindings, seldom referred

to it. He knew nobody in his senses would dream of taking it. For one thing it would cost a mint of money to repair it, for the ceilings were always falling, and the spiders had things pretty well all to themselves.

But the house was taken at last, and by no other than an astute old professor who spotted the ruin one day when trudging through the countryside. He was much taken by the beauty of the district, and would have made no bones as to price. As it was, he got the whole property for a mere song, and he had the residence made habitable, with fresh floorings where the planks were rotted away.

The professor was a man of the early morning, and one summer day, long ere the first cock had heralded the sunrise, the secret of the place was made manifest to the learned savant as he sallied out into the dewy garden. He caught sight of a fleck of brownish fur in the tall grass of the meadow, which was cut off from the rosery by a trim fence.

The fleck was the Panda. The animal crept out of concealment and came sidling up to the professor, whose

interest and sympathy were unbounded.

He knew what it was. He had often speculated about the species. Here was the creature which had terrified Sam and left a stout farmer flat on the earth like a hewn log.

The professor knew the animal's name. Possibly this fact warmed the heart of the Panda towards the professor. Anyway, it listened kindly as the learned man talked to it, and then to testify its appreciation it rubbed its head against the professor's rumpled trousers.

They were friends. The Panda returned to the house and took a saucer of milk. It really liked human companionship, and as a stowaway on the tramp in the confined quarters of the Lascar, it had never been unfriendly.

Once again the old house came into the papers, and so did Temperly Wood. The Zoological Society was ever so much interested and its members came down in parties, but the professor declined to send the Panda to a zoo. One does not part with a friend.

AN ODEFUL TRIBUTE TO THE ESTEEMED COMPANIONFUL PAPERS

BY HURREE SINGH

The "Magnet" and the "Gem" are fine;
I chant their praises songfully;
They both unite to keep us bright,
And gay when things go wrongfully.
The stories of our worthy school
Are written with some skilfulness,
When troubles come and we are glum
They nobly fill the billfulness!

The Famous Five are all alive
With every playful prankfulness;
In work and play they lead the way,
And take the frontful rankfulness.
We ever seek to shield the weak,
And fight their battles proudly;
Then, when the fray has cleared away,
We laugh both long and loudly.

Terrific are the penful powers
Of Sahib Richards, Frankfully.
With eager joy the British boy
Devours his stories thankfully.
And Martin Cliff describes each tiff
With much amazing mirthfulness;
If cads condemn the good old "Gem,"
We'll wipe them off the earthfulness!

Long may we read of feastful feed;
Of goals obtained with kickfulness;
Of japeful larks on gay young sparks,
To whom we give the lickfulness.
Whoever looks for ripping books
To make the hours fly dancefully,
Should never fail to read each tale,
And order them advancefully!

INDEX

	PAGE
Amazing Proceedings of Timothy Tupper, The <i>Story by Owen Conquest</i>	49
Billy Bunter's Bike! <i>Story by Bob Cherry</i>	209
Billy Bunter's Postal Order. <i>Poem by Johnny Bull</i>	194
Case of the Beak's Black Eye, The <i>Story by Martin Clifford</i>	23
Crazy Week at St. Jim's! <i>Article by Monty Lowther</i>	21
False Witness! <i>Story by Martin Clifford</i>	135
Ferndale Recruit, The <i>Story by Charles Hamilton</i>	183
Fighting the Flames! <i>Story by Martin Clifford</i>	151
Ghosts of Greyfriars. <i>Article by Tom Brown</i>	195
Greyfriars Portrait Gallery, The	221
Greyfriars School Song	222
Greyfriars versus St. Jim's—And You're the Ref.! <i>Feature</i>	67
Grundy's Dream. <i>Poem</i>	149
Jimmy Silver. <i>Poem by the Rookwood Rhymester</i>	134
Laughing Outlaw, The <i>Story by Ralph Redway</i>	105
Music Hath Charms! <i>Story by Frank Richards</i>	9
Mystery of the Broken Fishing-Rod, The <i>Detective Kerr Investigates</i>	147
Odeful Tribute to the Esteemed Companionful Papers, An <i>Poem by H. Singh</i>	231
Ode to Horace Coker, An <i>Poem by Dick Penfold</i>	116
Plates in Colour :	
D'Arcy's Daring Rescue!	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Saving His Enemy!	<i>Facing p. 112</i>
Public Benefactor No. 1! <i>Story by Owen Conquest</i>	122
Referee's Decisions, The <i>Solution to Feature on Page 67</i>	121
Remove Football Team, The <i>Poem</i>	66
Rip Van Winkle at Greyfriars. <i>Article by Bob Cherry</i>	117
St. Jim's Portrait Gallery, The	150
Sir Fulke's Warning! <i>Story by Frank Richards</i>	69
Solution to The Mystery of the Broken Fishing-Rod	181
Statistics for Schoolboys! <i>Article by Harry Manners</i>	207
Terror of the Wood, The <i>Story by Clive R. Fenn</i>	228
Tuckshop Tragedy, The <i>Poem by Dick Penfold</i>	197
When Tubby Sat Tight! <i>Story by Owen Conquest</i>	198
With Our Compliments <i>By Harry Wharton</i>	3

ROLY-POLY PUDDING
 6-oz. Self-Raising Flour. 3-oz. Shredded *ATORA*. Pinch of Salt
 Mix the Self-Raising flour, salt and Suet with cold water to a stiff paste. Roll out thin, and spread over with jam, marmalade or golden syrup. Roll over, pinch top and bottom edges together. Dip pudding cloth in boiling water, flour it, and wrap round pudding, tie ends with string. Steam for 2 hours. Sufficient for 4 to 6 persons.



Here's the recipe for healthy appetites — an *Atora* pudding two or three times a week!

How they'll love that delicious melting crust

that *Atora* beef suet makes and how good it is for
 kiddies who won't eat fat in the ordinary way.
 Every single shred of *Atora* is honest nourishment—
 there's no waste, no fear of failure with *Atora*. But
 remember, you can't get *Atora* quality at less than *Atora* price!



IN PACKETS

2^D & 4^{1D}

AND LARGER SIZES

Send a postcard to-day to Hugon & Co. Ltd., Openshaw, Manchester, 11, for your copy of the new *Atora* RECIPE BOOK—it's FREE!

Not a shred of doubt about

Atora

THE BEST IN BEEF SUET