

# THE FAVOURITE HALFPENNY STORY-BOOK.



THE POPULAR NEW STORY BOOK

# EMPIRE

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# 1/2

## THE POPULAR SCHOOL TALE.

Readers are informed that the characters in the following Serial Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.

### Pupil Against Master.

I DO not think I ought to be caned for nothing, sir. You have caned me without cause several times in the few days I've been here," said Pen.

"You—you dare to say so to me—your Form-master!" stammered Mr. Blagden.

"It is the truth, sir. The fellows all know it."

Mr. Bush gave a general glare round. The fellows were not likely to bear witness for Pen. There was silence.

"Penwyn," said Mr. Bush, with a cold calmness, "for the last time, order you to hold out your hand."

Pen did not speak. His hands remained behind him.

"You will not do so, Penwyn?"

"No, sir."

"My hat!" murmured Newcome. Then I shall thrash you, Penwyn—I shall thrash you like a disobedient child," said Mr. Bush, striding towards the junior, and grasping him by the shoulder.

Pen's eyes gleamed at him.

"You had better not touch me, sir," he said.

"What? You threaten me?"

"I have done nothing to be thrashed for, and I will not be thrashed," said Pen quietly, firmly. He was a little pale, but hard as iron.

"Don't touch me with that cane."

Mr. Bush gazed at him speechlessly for a moment. Then the cane rang through the air, and descended striking across Pen's shoulders.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

Mr. Bush seemed possessed by a demon—he was lashing like a madman, and the blows of the cane rang and echoed through the room. The juniors stared speechlessly. There was a sudden cessation of the lashing.

Three savage blows had fallen, and Pen's face was wrinkled with pain.

But now the grip of the Cornish lad was upon his master. Pen grasped Mr. Bush's wrists, and held them, and the Form-master could not use the cane. Pen was but a lad, and Mr. Bush was a man, twice his age.

But the grip of the Cornish lad was like iron; the flabby, ill-conditioned man in his grip was helpless, powerless even to loosen his wrists from the grasp of the boy.

"Boy!" gasped Mr. Bush, in a choked voice. "Penwyn! Let me go!"

Pen's grasp did not relax.

"Not till you promise not to use that cane again, sir!" he said quietly.

Mr. Bush gasped for breath.

He had made one tremendous wrench to get his wrists free of the grasp of the Cornish lad, and he had failed.

Some sense of dignity prevented him from struggling further. It was too absurd for a Form-master to be seen, by his whole Form, struggling with a lower school boy.

Mr. Bush's face was perfectly white, and his eyes burned from it like live coals.

"Penwyn!" he gasped. "Penwyn!"

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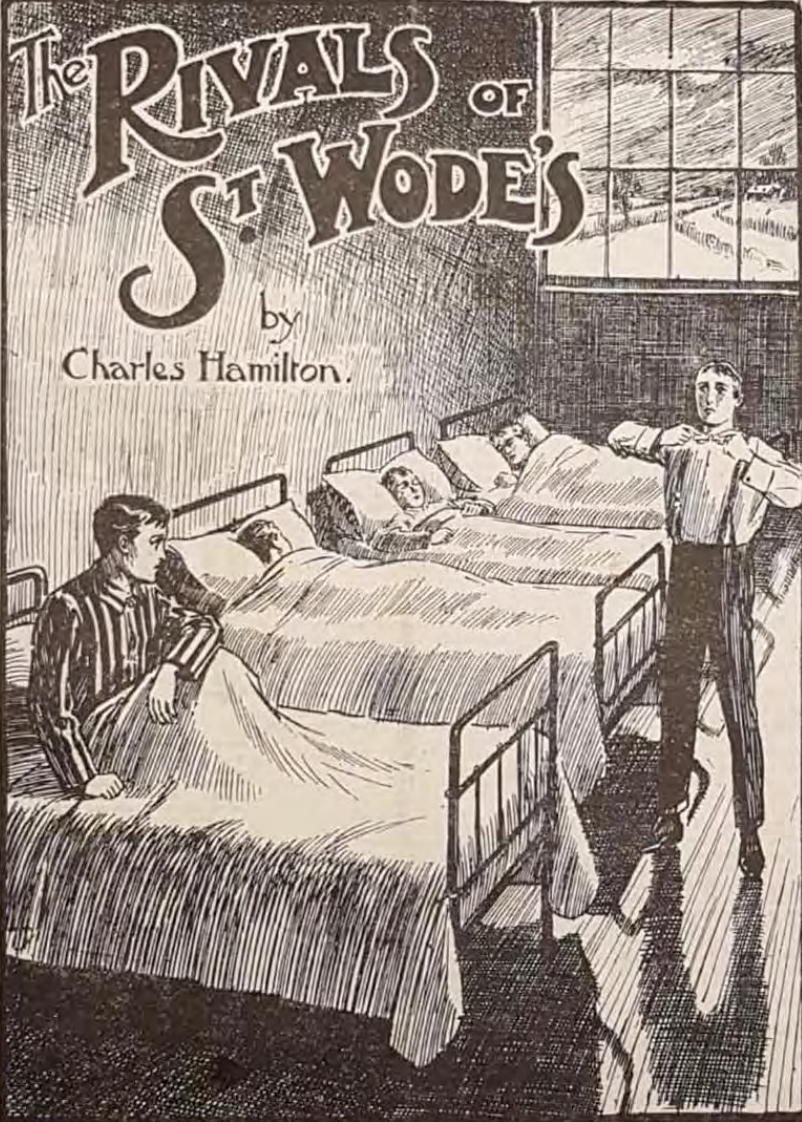
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# The RIVALRY OF ST WODE'S

by Charles Hamilton.

"Don't go!" said Pen desperately, sitting up in bed. "Do you think it's playing the game, Bunny?"

"Oh, rats," said Lord Lovell, going on dressing. "Crawcour's expecting me, you know."

Boy! How dare you! Release my hands at once, sir!"

Dick Penwyn did not reply. But his grasp did not relax, it tightened, and the meagre Form-master gasped with pain under the iron grasp.

"Penwyn! I shall report this to the Head."

"Very well, sir."

"Will you release me?"

"Not until you promise not to use that cane."

Mr. Bush cast a wild glance round. The Fourth Formers were watching breathlessly. Even those who disliked Pen the most could hardly help admiring his nerve and courage.

"He'll be expelled for this!" muttered Rake.

Newcome nodded.

"Faith, and it's a broth as a boy, he is!" murmured O'Donovan.

"Sure, and he's a darling intirely! I'm sorry for him."

Mr. Bush found his voice. "Boys," he panted. "I—I am attacked by this cowardly ruffian from the Council School. I call upon the boys of my Form to help me. Blagden! Bamford! Corton!"

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:  
THE SCAPEGRACE OF THE REGIMENT.

Pen's help under the very eye of Mr. Bush. Newcome had no desire to be expelled for the sake of the scholarship boy.

Mr. Bush came towards the struggling Pen with an ominous tightening of the lips, and the cane grasped firmly in his hand.

"Hold him!" he said viciously. But Pen's blood was up now.

He saw the Form-master approaching, and he exerted his great strength. How great the Cornish lad's strength was, was a surprise to the ends of the Fourth.

Blagden, who was holding him, received an upper cut under the chin, which sent him reeling backwards, feeling as if a sledge-hammer had struck him. Bamford was whirled round and sent flying against the wall. Corton lost his nerve and his hold at the same moment as his comrades fell, and retreated; but he was not to escape lightly. Pen's fists were dashing out, and Corton had both of them full in the face.

He dropped like a log.

Mr. Bush was raising his cane when Pen thus rid himself of his enemies and turned towards the Form-master.

The master sprang back with ludicrous haste.

Pen, standing erect, with blazing eyes, his fists clenched, his breath coming thick and fast, did not look safe for anyone to tackle.

There was no doubt that at that moment he would have knocked the Form-master flying if Mr. Bush had laid a finger on him.

But the Fourth Form-master did not do so. He lacked the courage!

"Penwyn!" he gasped.

"Hands off!" said Pen.

"I—I shall not punish you now," gasped Mr. Bush. "I—I shall—I shall report this lawless conduct to the Head! I say to the Head, Penwyn!"

"Do so!" said Pen recklessly.

"Report what you like! I don't care! I'd rather be turned out of the school than put up with your cruelty!"

"Boy!"

"I don't care!"

And Pen did not care at that moment.

Mr. Bush drew in his breath in little gasping jerks.

"You—you outrageous young ruffian!" he gasped.

"Report me to the Head!" said Pen fiercely. "I'll report at the same time; and, if Dr. Wimpeis is just, I shan't have anything to be afraid of. I don't believe he would let you use any boy like this if he knew."

Mr. Bush stammered.

He knew that very well himself. He knew he had exceeded his authority in the way he had dealt with Penwyn. The danger of an appeal to the Head—a recognised right of the St. Wode's boys—was over him—and he knew that Dr. Wimpeis was a just man.

"I—I cannot talk to you any longer, Penwyn," he stammered.

"You would be a disgrace to any school—a reformatory, in fact! I say you would be a disgrace to any reformatory! I—I will deal with you to-morrow."

Those who sympathised with Pen could not venture openly to take sides against their Form-master. But they meant to do their best to keep the ends of the Fourth from interfering.

Three or four pairs of hands were laid upon Dick Penwyn, and he was dragged off.

Mr. Bush jerked his wrists away at last. They were blue from the hard grip of the muscular lad. He grasped his cane.

But three juniors were hanging upon Pen, and Newcome, daring as he was, could not venture to go to

Continued on the next page.

The Most Popular School Story. THE RIVALS OF ST WODE'S



(Continued from the previous page.)

Mr. Bush strode from the room with nothing more. He wanted to retire with dignity. But that was scarcely possible. He had made a foolish exhibition of temper. He had driven a quiet body into resistance and had had the worst of the contest. There was no concealing that from it was plain to himself, and plain to every lad in the Fourth Form.

New School Tale. By CHARLES HAMILTON. Author of "THE RIVALS OF ST. KIT'S."

Pen strode back to his seat by the fire and sat down quietly. His temper was passing; indeed, he was becoming so much less hot than he had been from his usual self-control. Blagden helped Blagden up, and the two entered the Common room. Newcome came over to Pen. The Cornish lad looked up quietly as Newcome tapped him on the shoulder. "I'm sorry," said Newcome. "You think I shall be expelled?" "I don't care much," said Newcome. "It's hard chess," said Newcome. "Rotten bad on you! I'm afraid that's what it means, though. There is one chance—Bully may not want to show himself up to the Head—you'd be able to make out a good case in your defence. Bully may decide to take it lying down, instead of going to the Head, and take it out of you some other way."

"I hope he will." "You want to stay at St. Wode's?" "I don't know that I do," said Pen. "It's not a pleasant place for me. But it would be a disappointment to my father if I were kicked out, that's all. He never knew the sort of things I should meet with here—never knew it myself, for that matter. When I was grinding for the scholarship exam, I didn't know that this was what I was working for. It wouldn't have seemed worth it, you see." And he laughed mirthlessly. Newcome nodded, but did not speak. He was sorry for Pen, as he had said; but there was nothing of comfort to be said. The question was—had Mr. Bush gone to the Head's study? If Pen would be called there in a few minutes, and the great probability was that he would be informed that his presence was no longer desired at St. Wode's.

The juniors all knew it, and they waited. Were they to be rid of the scholarship boy so easily, after all? Pen waited, and every footstep in the passage made his heart beat painfully. As the reaction set in, Pen felt sick and miserable, and it needed but the summons to attend the Head's study to fill his cup to the brim.

Bunny Knew Best. RAKE came into the junior Common-room, grinning. Pen started, and looked up quickly. Was this the messenger from the Head? "Take seemed to be highly amused about something." "What are you grinning at?" demanded Newcome. "Bulky!" said Rake. "What about Bulky?" "He's in a waz, follow—Lard!" "Has he gone to the Head?" asked Newcome eagerly. "Rake grizzled, and shook his head. "No. He's just gone into his own study. He's slammed the door, and Blawke came out of his study and asked what the row was. I told him it was old Bulky in a waz."

"Then he's gone into his own study!" exclaimed Newcome. "He didn't go to the Head?" "No."

Newcome turned to Dick Penwyn. "You're all right, Pen, my boy! He's not going to report it to the Head, after all. I dare say he knows it would be risky, and he would rather have the cost himself. Dr. Wimpson is a decent old boy—not much like Bulky whippers."

Pen drew a deep, deep breath. He felt as if he had had a narrow escape. It had seemed to him that Mr. Bush would not raise himself in the estimation of the Head by reporting such an occurrence. But there was no telling what the Fourth Form-master might do in his fury. He felt as if he had been looking at a relief. That he would follow the scholarship boy with a hotter new intensity and bitter wariness. Pen had made the loudest enemy of his life—an enemy who would stop at no things to injure him. But he felt that, after what had occurred in the Common-room, Mr. Bush would keep his hands off him.

The master of the Fourth was a coward, if ever man was a coward. Pen felt that he would not fear the Form-master; the danger, indeed, was the opposite of that—it was that he might give impudently and cocksurely after such a victory over authority, and so place it in Mr. Bush's hands to make out a convincing case against him to lay before the Head.

But Pen was a quiet and level-headed lad, and he was not likely to place himself in Mr. Bush's power in that way. "Faith, and you're all right, kid!" said Pen. "Back up!" Pen nodded without speaking. He sat by the fire, looking into the red embers. He wondered how long he would be going to be, and whether the game of bridge was over yet.

Many of the fellows looked very nervous at Pen, and of course, the story was all over St. Wode's in a few minutes, and seniors looked into the junior room, to see the junior who had been with his Form-master's wrists and prevented him from using his cane.

Pen took no notice of them. He was in fact, he hardly saw them. He was just sitting there, and thought. He was in a brown study when bed-time was announced, and Bunny came into the common-room. Crawford and Bray had talked with him as far as the door, and they said good-night to him in the passage.

Bunny tapped Pen on the shoulder. "Bed, old fellow!" he said. Pen rose. "Have you had a good time, Bunny?" he asked. "Oh, yes, jolly!" said his lordship. "Did you win?" "Ahem! Sometimes." "And that's lost!" "A great deal!" "Oh, no, only about five pounds," said Lord Lovell carelessly.

Five pounds was not much to the heir of one of the largest fortunes in England, but the sum made Pen almost stagger. "Five pounds!" he gasped. "It's all right!" "Five pounds!" The viscount laughed. "My dear Pen, it's nothing. Besides, they're going to give me no money. You are going to play again?" "Yes, rather!" "Bunny, I wish you wouldn't," said Pen in a low, earnest tone—"I wish you wouldn't! It's wrong—it's rotten and wrong!" Bunny laughed. "My dear Pen, you make a mountain out of a molehill," he said. "A little flutter on the cards is all right. Everybody does it." "Not fellows of our age."

Bunny laughed again. "That's all you know, Pen. A game of mine lost a hundred pounds one evening, in the waz, to a chap I know."

"Bunny! A hundred pounds!" "Yes, Bunny chuckled. "You should have heard the patter rave," he said to me afterwards. "The old man was all thunder and lightning!" "So would I!"

"It's all right, Pen—I've got lots of tin. Besides, I shall beat them hollow, yet. You play cards for those things, you know," explained Bunny. "Now, you're a jolly fellow, you know—you stand by me like anything. You're for above my weight in fighting, and that sort of thing; but I'm a fellow of the world, you know, and in that line, you see. What?" "It's gambling, Bunny?" "Oh, rot! Of course, I wouldn't gamble!" "But what do you call it, then?" "A little flutter."

"But what is the difference between a flutter and gambling, if both mean that you play cards for money?" asked Pen, perplexed. "My dear Pen, what jokers you do put to a chap!" said his lordship. "Let's go up to lucker. I'm sleepy!" "But really, Bunny, you know—" "Fair play, Pen. Don't preach at a chap when he's sleepy," said



Pen grasped Mr. Bush's wrists, and held them as that Form-master could not use the cane. They gasped Mr. Bush in a choked voice. "Penney! Let me go!"

Bunny, laughing good-humouredly. "I've been warned to look out for your seniors." "Ah! I might have guessed that Crawford would speak against me!"

He hasn't, Pen. Crawford spoke to you in, jolly high terms," said Bunny. "He said it was to your credit, you know, that you had won that scholarship, and so on, and that a chap like you might be a credit to an school, don't you see. Crawford spoke of you jolly well, I can tell you, and so did that chap Barley—I'm Verney. I forget his name." Pen smiled in a constrained manner. Poor Bunny's softness had never been more in evidence. The Blades knew that it was useless to speak against the viscount's friend openly. Bunny was too loyal and true in listen to them. They had, therefore, taken the line of praising Pen, and Bunny had never doubted their sincerity. "Bed, you fellows!" called out Newcome from the door. "Right!" said Pen.

And they went up to bed. But it was a long time before Dick Penney went to sleep. He was not thinking of himself. His trouble with Mr. Bush had evidently never for the time.

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But what could the scholarship junior do to save him? Pen found classes in the Fourth Form were a great deal more tolerable during the next few days. Mr. Bush seemed to have dropped the petty persecution which had been directed against him. Pen knew that it was due to the scene in the common-room, and his respect for the Form-master was not increased by the knowledge that he had respected a man who would bully what he had driven his victim into resistance, and would then come to bully. Pen would have resented him, indeed, if he had kept on in the same way. But it was a relief to get rid of the carrying tongue for a time. Mr. Bush seemed to have made up his mind to ignore Pen, as if he were not in the Fourth Form at all. As a matter of fact, he was growing a little kinder to the Cornish lad. Since he had driven Pen to revolt, and learned what the lad was capable of, he was uncertain what might be the result. And so, in respect to him, he gave the scholarship junior a rest.

Many of the Fourth, too, gave Pen a rest, though in a different way. Blagden and his friends were more hostile to him than ever. They had learned that fistouls were of no use against a lad who could take his own part quite as well. That line of attack was dropped. But a quieter and more cutting attack could be made. Blagden made it. He, too, had seen Pen severely alone. They ignored the scholarship boy—perhaps taking the cue from their master.

Pen's life would have been solitary, indeed, but for Bunny. Newcome, and Rake, and O'Donnovan, and some others, persisted in treating him as friendly as ever. They were "up against" Blagden & Co., and that was partly their reason. Some of them liked Pen too. But they did not agree with him; and as they had their own interests apart from his, he could not depend upon them for companionship in solitary hours.

With Lord Lovell it was different. Lovell had chummed with him, and Lovell was true to his friendship. The Fourth, however, he stayed at St. Wode's the more clearly he realized the truth of what Pen had warned him of at first—that his friendship with the scholar in the school would mean things awkward for himself.

But Bunny did not seem to mind that. And as there were many fellows in the Fourth to whom a vicent and a rich fellow was a valuable acquaintance, many of them had to stand Pen, as he and Bunny were by this time, in some way. In many things Pen and Bunny were as wide as the poles asunder; but this difference of training seemed only to cement their friendship more strongly. Pen's chief worry at this time was Bunny's friendship with Crawford and the Blades. Pen was not

GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

bitter enemies of both the new juniors, who came together. To the disgust of a scholar at St. Wode's. "Blunny" Lovell is taken up by Crawford & Co., of the Fifth, whose company Pen sees rightly, in doing so, as giving young vicent no good. Newcome, of the Fourth, is talking to Pen about Mr. Bush, the snobbish master of the Fourth Form, having been a scholarship boy himself when the master strided up. He determines to cane Pen, but the lad keeps his hands to his side. "No refuse to obey me!" shouts Mr. Bush. (Now go on with the story.)

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THE RIVALS OF ST. WODE'S.

Blades of Hunny's other friends—it was not that. The Blades were doing much better than the dormitory.

The master weighed upon Pen's mind. Hunny was keeping later hours than he was good for him, and he was sickly.

Pen was thinking it out one night in the dormitory. The Fourth Form were in bed, but Pen had noticed that he would have had some of the money.

Pen started up, he said, "Are you getting up, Hunny?" he asked. "Yes, Pen."

"You're going down to Crawford's?" "Yes." "You were looking very scedy this morning, Hunny," said Pen quietly.

"My dear Penguin, I'm all right! You can rely on me to look after myself, what?" "You'd better get some sleep, Hunny."

"Both, old fellow!" And the vicount stepped out of bed, and proceeded to draw on his trousers. Pen sat silent and miserable.

There was nothing more he could do. He felt a bitter dislike for Crawford, and set down the blame on his head.

But Pen's head depended upon his subordinates to look after these matters, and his subordinates in this respect were feeble.

A word to the Head—but it was impossible. It would have been sneaking! Sneaking was barred—seen from a sense of duty!

And to begin to sneak from a sense of duty—the way lay priggishness and all kinds of catchiness. It would not do. A boy was bound to follow the broad lines of honour, and to give the tales was one of the nearest of sins.

Yet to allow this to go on, to see Hunny being made a fool of, cheated, and led into terrors—how was his friend to stand that? Hunny was drawing while these miserable thoughts were passing through Pen's mind.

"Hold on a minute, Hunny!" "Certainly, dear boy, but Crawford's expecting me. What is it?" "Don't go."

"My dear person—I mean, my dear Pen, don't be an ass, you know. Crawford's got me in a fix. He's invited me. I can't disappoint Crawford, can I?"

"It's not playing the game," said Pen, desperately, in a low, hoarse tone, so that only Hunny could hear him. He knew that there were others awake in the dormitory.

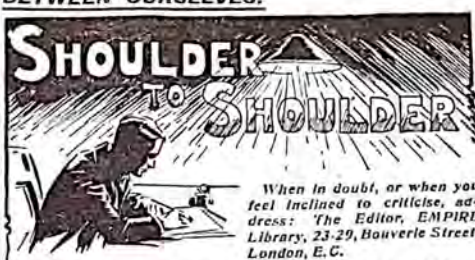
"Oh, rats, you know!" "What would the Head say?" "I don't know."

"My dear lad, what do any of the fellows think of what the Head would say? He's a bit of a snob, but he makes it a point of paying no attention to the masters. He says it's a question of personal dignity, really."

"I suppose you do," said Newcome. "The whole dorm. knows, for that matter," he said. "It's not likely it would be a secret. He's gone down to Crawford's study."

Pen started up, he said, "Yes, Newcome," he said. "I want to speak to you," said Newcome. "He's got up out of bed, and sat on the edge of Pen's, peering at the Cornish junior in the darkness."

BETWEEN OURSELVES.



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TAKE CARE, JONES! Scout Hooper (examining foot-prints): "What do you make of it, Jones?"

PLUS ONE. Teacher: "How many bones have you in your body?" Jack: "Two hundred and nine."

STILL TIME. She: "Am I the only girl you ever loved?" He: "Yes, but I'm young yet."

A "RIPPING" LETTER. The following appreciation from Adelaide naturally gives me great pleasure, and although the contents of this paper have changed somewhat since A. B. wrote his letter, I publish it as an evidence of the good feeling that I am happy to see exists between my readers and me, not only in the good Old Country, but also beyond the seas:

Dear Sir,—I was pleased to note my name amongst other names in the Postcard Exchange column, and am glad to say that I have received four or five postcards since from the country that I wished to exchange with, and am much obliged to you.

Now, I would like to say a few words about your paper. I am very much satisfied with the four stories that are now appearing.

Firstly, I am very fond of the detective yarn which, I think, is the best of its kind. And I am very fond of reading about Cousin Ethel, I am a fond reader of the 'Gem,' and I like very much to follow Cousin Ethel. And the story I think everybody must like is the 'Laird of the Black,' which I think is a grand adventure story.

WELL! Once again I greet you, and as they used to say, I hope this finds you as well as it leaves me at present.

For this cheerful state of mind I have you, my helpful reader, to thank, and I hope that my new readers will be no others but non-readers. It is the best turn you can do me.

NOW to our stories. How do you like them? "The Scapgrace of the Regiment," for instance? Don't you think it is a capital yarn—breezy, full of incident, and thoroughly enjoyable, and free from namby-pamby nonsense?

IS THIS YOUR OPINION? In any case, drop me a postcard, for I like to have your candid criticism to all our stories.

NEXT WEDNESDAY you will find "Panther" Grayle again, also "London Gals & Co.," this latter being an extremely funny story.

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TOOLS OUT OF DATE. Father: "Have you found that screwdriver yet?" "No, dad. It isn't anywhere."

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES. What are weights and measures?—Weights and measures, you know, at Christmas time, and measures are what papa says he will take to stop them.

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A CABBAGE JOKE.



Black: "Is your friend Brown a vegetable?" White: "I believe he is." Black: "What makes you think so?" White: "Well, I've smoked one or two of his cigars!"

- R. G. Balesock, Gawler Station, South Australia, with Birmingham, England. F. E. Abbott, 133, Elizabeth Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, with France. P. E. Turner, 9, Wellington Street, Newtown, New South Wales, with Pacific Islands, N. Queensland, Newfoundland. Miss I. Owen, c/o Mrs. J. McNaughton, Martindale Street, New South Wales, Australia, with Scotland; Italy; North America; London, England; Wales.

Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be occasionally mentioned, but the Editor assumes that to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.



THE RYLCOMBE ROLLER SKATERS

An Amusing, Complete Tale of Gordon Gay & Co. By PROSPER HOWARD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Parcel for Gordon Gay.

HERE'S a parcel for you, Gordon Gay. I saw it down in the hall, so I brought it up with me.

Thus spoke Harry Wootton, of the Fourth Form, at Rylcombe Grammar School, as he came into Study No. 13—the famous apartment shared by the four inseparables known as Gordon Gay & Co.

Jack Wootton, Harry's brother, looked up with a grin at his minor. "Trust you to look after the tomy, Harry!" he remarked, glancing at the bulky parcel which formed Harry's burden.

"I guess you wouldn't have bothered to bring that parcel up if it had been marked 'boots?'" Harry Wootton glared at his brother.

"You ass, how do you think I know it's tomy?" he demanded indignantly.

"Blessed if I know," said Jack, "unless you've sampled it already."

"You—you dummy! The blessed parcel may be boots, or—anything, for all I know!" said Harry, with an air of scornful indifference.

"Looks jolly like grub to me, anyhow!" said Jack critically.

"Of course—I mean does it?" said Harry, correcting himself hastily.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Wootton, and Gordon Gay joined in the laugh.

"You cackling dummies!" said Wootton minor, with a real face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Perhaps you'll kindly hand me my parcel when you've quite finished discussing its contents with your blessed brother," remarked Gordon Gay at last.

"As a matter of fact, I haven't an idea what's in it myself."

"Here you are, then."

And Harry Wootton heaved the bulky parcel up on to the study table.

There was a curious tinkle from the parcel as it bumped on the table, and the three chums pricked up their ears.

"What the dickens is it, I wonder?" said Jack Wootton curiously.

"Doesn't sound quite like grub, after all!"

"Perhaps it was jam-pots clinking together," suggested Harry hopefully.

"Well, we'll see!" said Gordon Gay, cutting the string.

"Good!"

The parcel was hastily unwrapped, and there was a chorus of exclamations as the contents were brought into view.

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Roller-skates!"

Gordon Gay stared at the roller-skates in absolute amazement.

"Two—four—six pairs!" he

gasped. "Who on earth can have sent me six pairs of roller-skates?"

"Here's a letter!" This he explained, perhaps," exclaimed Jack Wootton, picking up a letter addressed to Gordon Gay, Esq., which had fallen on the floor.

"Hand it over, Jack!" Gordon Gay hastily ripped open the envelope, still in a state of astonishment.

"Don't know the writing, either!" he remarked. "Hallo! Well, I'm blessed!"

He read the letter, which was typewritten, out aloud to his chums. It ran as follows:—

"Dear Sirs:—In connection with our great advertising scheme, we take the liberty of sending, herewith, six samples of our Rollasy Skates. We guarantee these skates to be the finest on earth, and genuinely worth ten dollars a pair; but as an advertisement, and to introduce them to the notice of English schoolboys, we are prepared to sell the enclosed samples at one dollar—five shillings—per pair. We shall be greatly obliged if you will do us the favour of kindly giving them a trial, and helping us by inviting your schoolfellows to do likewise."

"If, after a thorough trial, the skates prove satisfactory—as we are confident will be the case—kindly remit thirty shillings at your earliest convenience. If, for any reason, you do not wish to keep any or all of the skates, please return them to our London depot.—Yours faithfully, THE PORKVILLER, ROLLASY SKATE CO., Parkville, Mass."

"What do you think of that?" finished Gordon Gay.

"My hat! What a wheeze?" exclaimed Harry Wootton.

"It certainly is a jolly smart dodge," said Jack Wootton. "Just like their Yankee check! They don't look bad skates, though!"

"No; they look worth a dollar—though one dollar is nearer four bob than five," said Gordon Gay. "What beats me is, how the bouders got my name!"

"Oh, there's lots of ways of getting chums' names!" said Jack wisely.

"They've probably got local agents everywhere."

"Well, anyway, I vote we oblige the Porkvillers by giving 'em a jolly good trial—eh?" grinned Harry Wootton.

And the chums responded with one voice: "Rather!"

CHAPTER 2.

A Chapter of Accidents.

WHIR-R-R! G-r-r-r! Whirr-r! The great school-room at Rylcombe Grammar School resounded with the roar and whirr of skates.

The juniors had not been long in "obliging the Porkvillers," as Harry Wootton termed it, and trying the roller-skates.

Gordon Gay, Jack and Harry Wootton, Frank Monk, and Nicky O'Donnell, the Irish lad, were grinding round the school-room at a great rate, while an admiring crowd of juniors looked on. The user of the sixth pair of skates was Horace Tadpole, the fourth member of Gordon Gay & Co., and the genius and general nuisance of the Junior School.

Tadpole was not getting on very well on his skates. He had insisted on trying them, as he explained that he regarded the motion of skating as graceful and artistic. Before he realised he was on a long, however, he realised that it is possible to be ungraceful, to say nothing of unartistic, on roller-skates.

"Really," he gasped, after having sat down with a bump that jarred every bone in his body for the fifth time in two minutes, "it—it is most extraordinary. There must be something wrong with these roller-skates! But I will try again."

And he raised himself up painfully, supporting himself with his hand against the wall.

There was a yell of encouragement from the onlooking juniors, many of whom were quietly expressing the opinion that it was as good as a play to watch him.

"Go it, Taddy!" "Stick to it!" "You're getting on fine!"

Tadpole shoved himself cautiously off from the wall, and wobbled unsteadily towards the centre of the room.

Instantly there was a roar of warning.

"Look out, you duffer!" "Breakers ahead!"

There was a howl from the onlookers.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Encore!" "Look out, Monk!"

The warning came too late. Frank Monk was grinding along straight for the two fallen juniors. He made a desperate effort to avoid them, but in vain.

There was another crash, and Monk sprawled headlong over them, and there were fresh yells.

"Ow!" "Oh!" "Groo!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wootton was the next victim.

He was skimming past, when one of Frank Monk's wavering feet tripped him up, and he added himself to the struggling heap, head first.

The din was now terrific. Some of the watching juniors were on the verge of hysterics, and groans both loud and long came from the fallen heroes.

Gordon Gay and Jack Wootton continued to grind round alone on their erratic courses for some time, and speculation was rife as to which of them would be the first to join their comrades on the floor.

A sudden yell of laughter announced that the expected had happened.

Jack Wootton's feet flew up in the air and he crashed down right on the head of his brother, who was just attempting to get on his feet again.

With a wild roar the two brothers rolled on the floor, leaving Gordon Gay master of the field.

But the leader of Study No. 13 was having an anxious time. He continued to whirl round the school-room, but he found it increasingly difficult to keep his feet from carrying him into the struggling mass on the floor. The perspiration started to

tions with bated breath, he made a last violent effort to avoid disaster, and succeeded in executing a fearful swerve towards the door.

As he was about to crash into the oak, the door suddenly opened, and with a terrific gasp Gordon Gay flew through like a thing possessed.

The next moment there was a heavy bump, and a gasp of dismay from all the juniors.

Gordon Gay had charged full into the reverend Head of the Grammar School—Dr. Monk himself!

To quote Harry Wootton again, "that did it."

When Dr. Monk, who had been attracted to the school-room by the terrific din proceeding therefrom, had recovered sufficiently from the shock of the impact—fortunately the old gentleman was not seriously hurt—no uncertain voice.

Fortunately, besides being a very mild old gentleman, Dr. Monk was gifted with a keen sense of humor, and when the whole story of the skates was unfolded to him by the shaken and dismayed juniors, he took a more lenient view of the situation than they had dared to hope for. A caning, or flogging, or round, with perhaps a fogging for Gordon Gay, was the very least most of them expected to happen; but Dr. Monk, at the conclusion of a short homily which he read them, being extremely, not to say certainly, likely to be inflicted in the event of a repetition of such an outburst of enthusiasm for roller-skating among the juniors of the Grammar School.

The only parties who had cause to congratulate themselves upon the unanticipated issue of the matter were the surprising business gentlemen of Parkville, Mass., who had sent the roller-skates to Gordon Gay. After the rough usage to which they had been subjected, the skates were scarcely in a fit condition to be returned to the Rollasy Skates' depot.

Gordon Gay gave a shudder of dismay as he looked at them.

"My hat, you chaps, I can't send the things back like this!" he said.

"You're right," agreed Wootton, ruefully. "But anyhow, the skates are worth five bob apiece—or they were when they were new, anyway."

"I shall be pleased to keep mine," put in Tadpole. "I feel that with a little practice I shall be expert at roller-skating."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "Tadpole, then?"

"Albion!" As a matter of fact, Gordon Gay didn't appear to have that gum on me just now. But I will have a sale of some of my masterpieces before long, which ought to easily realise that sum."

"I'll let you owe me the five bob for the present, Taddy," gasped Gordon Gay. "I dare say the couple of dozen masterpieces you have stored up in the study might fetch that for the paint on them alone."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "Here's five bob for mine," said Frank Monk, having down two half-crowns. "I've had that amount of fun out of them already, I guess."

"Ha, ha, ha! Reaver!"

The requisite thirty shillings was made up between the six juniors who had used the skates, and duly dispatched to the 'cute merchants of Parkville, Mass. But enthusiasm for roller-skating, at any rate, as practised in school-rooms, died down as quickly as it had arisen in the breasts of the Rylcombe roller-skaters.

THE END.



"Look out, Monk!" yelled the onlookers, but the warning came too late. There was a crash, and Frank Monk sprawled headlong over the two fallen juniors.

But Tadpole lunged on, his feet quite out of his control, and there was a terrific crash.

"Bump!" "Ow!" "Yaroo!"

The genius of the Grammar School had collided with Nicky O'Donnell with a terrific crash, and the two went to the floor with a bump that shook the building, locked in each other's arms.

his brow—as the novelist would say—as he found himself rapidly losing all control over his flying feet. He had just swooped past within an inch of a pair of struggling feet, and now felt himself being irresistibly drawn towards the very centre of the disturbance. His feet seemed to fly on without any effort on his part.

Just as he had almost given himself up for lost, and the grinning juniors were watching his wild gra-

WANDERING WILLIE TURNS (OUT) AN HONEST COPPER THIS WEEK!



1. While Willie was partaking the ether day of a nice hot dinner that had been offered him by Master Tommy Tucker, he was rudely interrupted by Jane, who had claim—with a chair—to the dinner herself. But—



2. Tommy unfortunately lolled up at the wrong moment, and the chair of the avenger missed Willie, and alighted with considerable force on the son of the house. Then—



3. Things began to hum, and Wandering Willie (who never could stand a row) made a bolt for the pantry in double-quick time. But—



4. Judging from the melodious sounds which were wafted from behind the pantry door, Willie failed to find any peace and quietness there, Tommy's ma arrived on the scene, and—



5. The discovery was made that Jane's pet Robert was in attendance, and Willie thought it was time to retire.