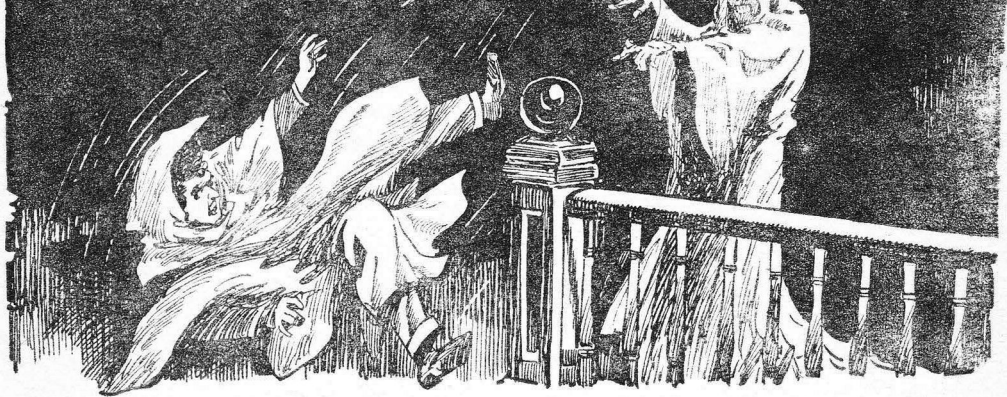


GHOSTS OF GREYFRIARS



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 boddle 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 josser 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!

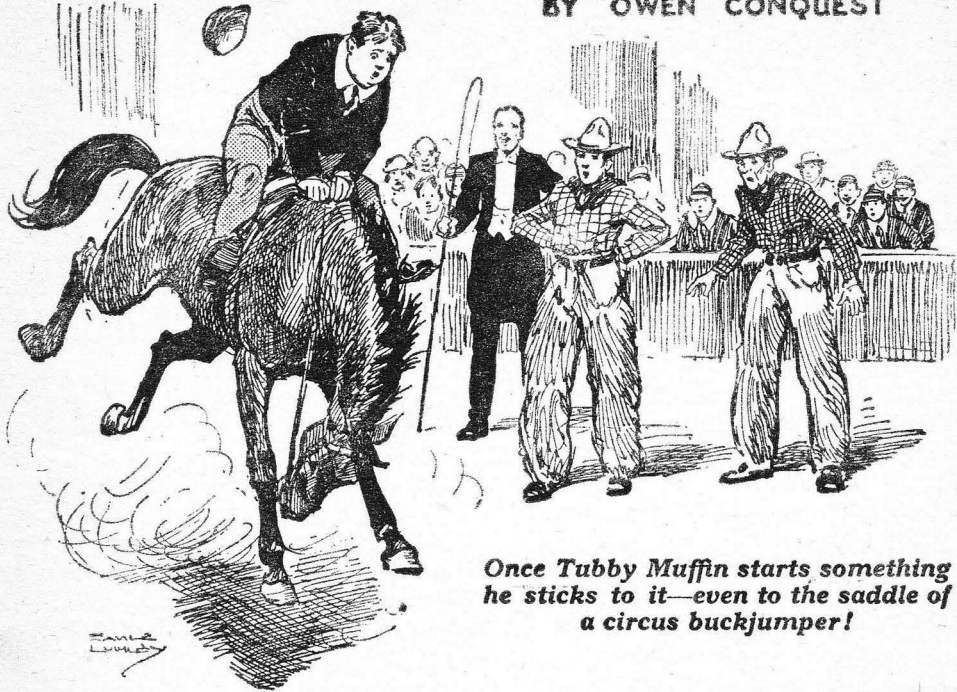
Alas! his inner man was packed,
The vital organs failed to act,
And with a wild and startled cry,
He sank, weighed down in anguish by
 Ten Doughnuts!

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 - m y 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 carcass 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!

