

THE ARRIVAL OF MARK LINLEY!

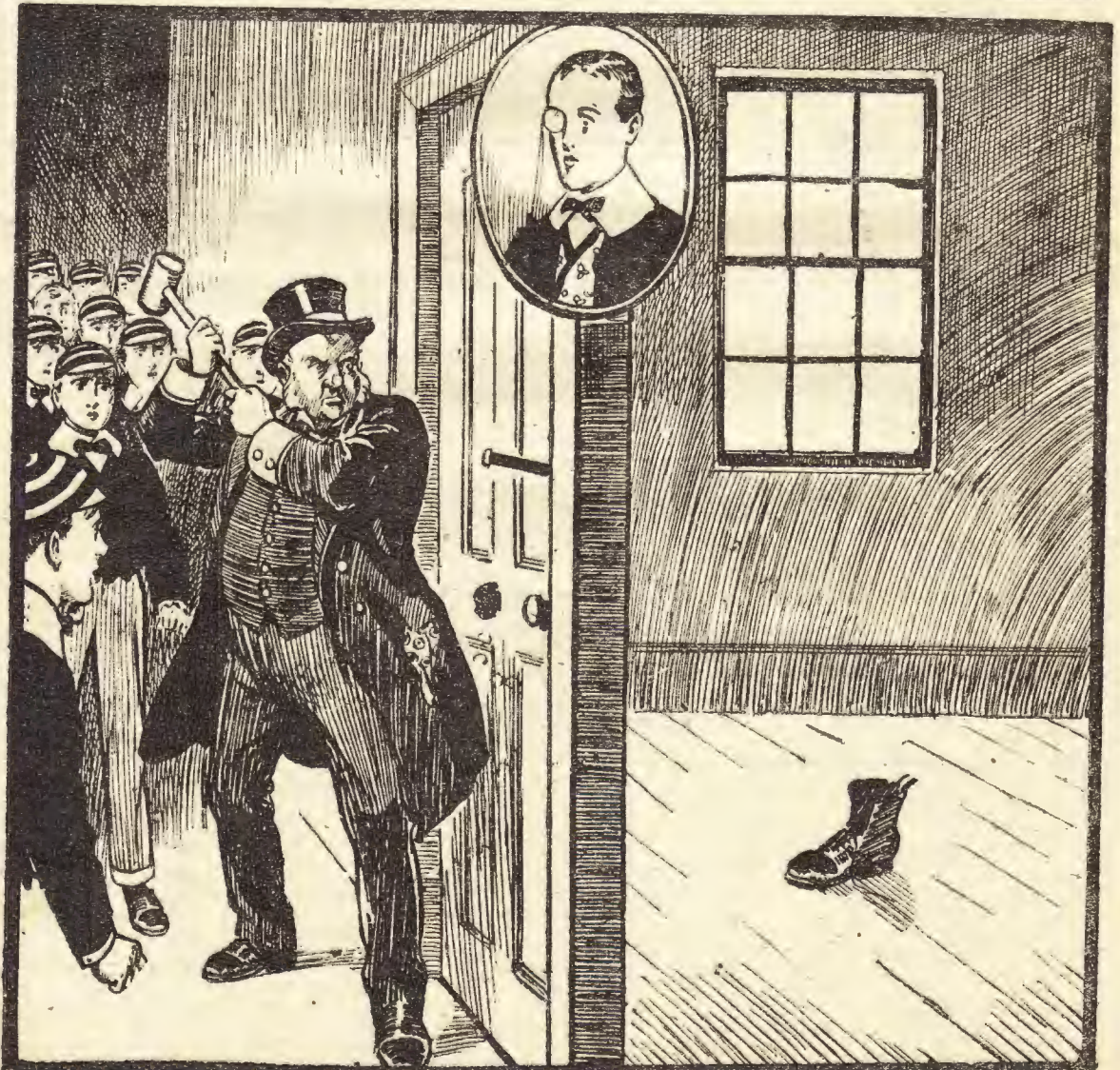
(See the Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. contained in this issue.)

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Three Complete Stories of—
HARRY WHARTON & Co.—JACK, SAM, & PETE—TOM MERRY & Co.



THE SECRET OF THE LOCKED ROOM!

(A Great Incident from the Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. contained in this issue.)

THE LAD FROM LANCASHIRE!

A
Magnificent Long Complete
School Tale, dealing with
the Early Adventures of

**HARRY
WHARTON
AND CO.**
OF
GREYFRIARS

BY
**FRANK
RICHARDS.**

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**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

**Wharton Does Not Lend a Hand.**

**H**ARRY WHARTON of the Remove at Greyfriars, looked amazed. He was alone in Study No. 1, sitting under the window, engaged in repairing a damaged football, when the door opened, and Bulstrode came in. There were no two fellows in the Remove on worse terms than Wharton and Bulstrode, so the visit was surprising in itself; but there was more to follow.

Bulstrode was looking serious and important, and there was nothing hostile in his manner this time. After him, four or five fellows came into the study, all of them looking just as serious and important as Bulstrode. They all belonged to the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton laid down the damaged football, and looked at the visitors. They did not look as if they had come for a "rag," but he could not imagine any other purpose for their visit.

"It's all right," said Bulstrode hastily, reading Harry's thought in his face. "It's all right, Wharton. We haven't come for a row."

"Not a bit of it," said Snoop. "Quite the reverse."

"Exactly the reverse," said Trevor. "We want your help, Wharton."

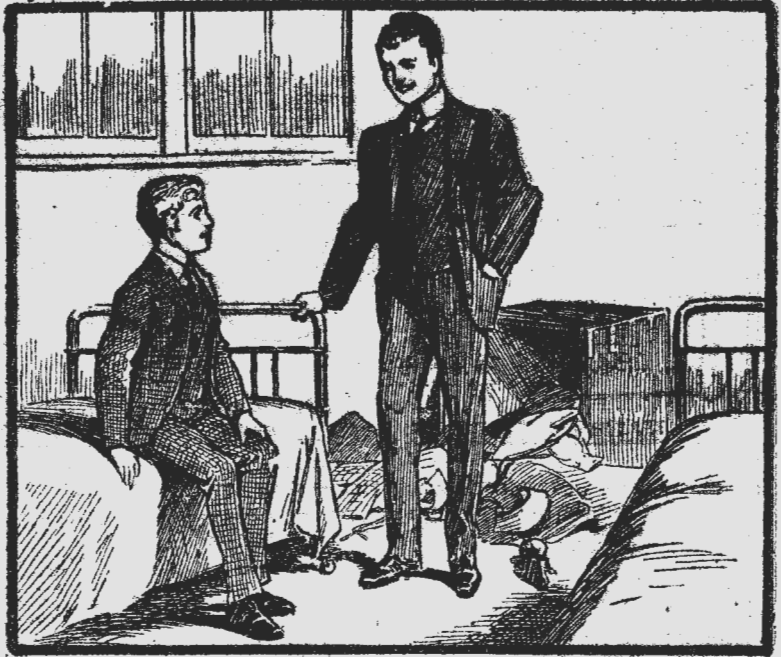
"Don't jaw, you chaps," said Bulstrode. "I can do the talking. The fact is, Wharton, you and I haven't been on very good terms lately—"

"Never, I think," said Harry.

"Well, never, then," assented Bulstrode. "But there are times when fellows who are not on good terms, can forget their little differences, and stand by one another for the good of the Form they belong to."

Harry Wharton could not help looking amazed.

"That's quite true," he said. "But excuse me, Bulstrode, you're not exactly



"You are a little chunk of real grit," said Wingate. "You are going the right way to work, and I think you'll pull ahead in time—with the best fellows in your Form, at any rate. Stick to it!" "I mean to!" said Mark Linley.

the kind of fellow I expected to hear that from."

"I don't expect you to do me justice," said Bulstrode. "But never mind that. The fellows in the Remove think you ought to be in this—ought to take the lead in it, in fact, and that's why we're here."

"Take the lead in what?"

"In the matter we've got on hand. It concerns the honour of the Remove," said Bulstrode, rather grandly. "If you don't take it up, we shall act without you."

"Here, draw it mild, Bulstrode," said Hazeldene. "You haven't given him a chance yet."

"Don't you interrupt me, Vaseline! This is how the case stands, Wharton. There's a new kid coming into the Remove."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Nothing amazing in that," he remarked. "We were all new kids once, and not so very long ago. Are you thinking of getting up a reception for the new kid?"

Some of the Removites grinned, and Bulstrode frowned.

"Well, as a matter of fact, we are," he said. "A warm reception—you understand?"

"No, I don't think I do, quite. I don't see how you can have anything up against the new kid till you've seen him, anyhow."

"That's because you don't know anything about the matter."

"Well, I'm willing to learn," said Harry Wharton patiently. "Suppose you explain?"

"It's one of those rotten Mowbray scholarships," explained Bulstrode. "I dare say you know that Bishop Mowbray was a governor of Greyfriars once—blessed if I know when—but it doesn't matter!"

"Reign of Edward the Sixth," said Barr.

"Thank you, Barr; but, as I said, it doesn't matter. You know the old founder founded some rotten scholarships to help poor boys to the benefits of a college education, and the rest of it—you know the piffle by heart, so I needn't repeat it."

"I don't see that it's piffle. It was jolly decent of the bishop."

"Oh, I might have expected you would say that, Wharton!" sneered Bulstrode. "I never knew a more contrary chap than you are. I shouldn't wonder if you set yourself up against us in this, out of sheer obstinacy."

"Oh, give him a chance!" said Hazeldene.

"Shut up, Vaseline! Well, we've had all sorts of chaps here on the scholarships—sons of officers killed abroad, and sons of poor parsons, and sons of poverty-stricken naval captains, and so on; but they've passed the limit this time. Who do you think is coming to Greyfriars on the Mowbray Scholarship now?"

"Blessed if I know—or care!"

"A mill-boy," said Bulstrode impressively. "A chap who worked in a mill—a carder, or minder, or shuttler, or loomer, or something—chap who has worked for his living!"

"Horrid!" said Harry gravely. "I suppose it's a fearful disgrace to work for one's living. Though I don't know how the world would get along if everybody chucked work."

"Oh, don't be funny! I've heard all about this chap from Carberry, the prefect—he was there when Dr. Locke was explaining to Wingate, our captain. Carberry is just as much down on it as we are."

"Yes, he would be," said Harry Wharton scornfully. "Carberry is a cad and a pub-haunter, and he has a lot of right to look down on anybody! Rats!"

"I told you he would be against us from the start," said Bulstrode, looking at his followers.

"Don't be in a hurry," said Hazeldene. "You haven't explained yet."

"Oh, do shut up, Vaseline! I've heard it all from Carberry. He says the doctor doesn't see anything wrong in it."

"He wants you chaps to open his eyes, I suppose."

"Well, we all know the doctor is a bit of a fossil," said Bulstrode. "I hear that this kid who is coming into the Remove—what's his name, now?"

"Linley," said Barr—"Mark Linley."

"That's it—Mark Linley. Well, this kid Linley has worked in a mill since he was a nipper, and used to buy books with his odd tanners; and study of an evening, and some local curate up there helped him on to getting this scholarship—like his check! And the long and short of it is that he's coming to Greyfriars—and coming into the Remove."

"Well, what about it?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Suppose he is? If a chap did what you say this chap has done, I suppose that isn't anything against him? A fellow who has as much grit as that ought to be encouraged."

"I knew he would take that line," said Bulstrode. "There's one thing you can always depend on with Wharton—he won't agree with anybody else."

Harry Wharton flushed red. His temper was perhaps a little uncertain sometimes, but it was his generous heart that prompted him to speak now as he did.

"I don't want to be contrary," he said, "but I don't think you ought to be down on the chap until he's done something to deserve it. Nobody but a fool would say that it is a disgrace to work with your hands for a living."

"Thank you," said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "I suppose I'm a fool, then, as I certainly don't intend to associate with a mill-hand."

"You mayn't be asked to. He may be a little particular himself."

Some of the Removites chuckled, and Bulstrode's brow grew darker.

"I suppose, then, that you're going to back this outsider up against the Form, Wharton?" he exclaimed savagely.

"Nothing of the sort. I don't even know him. But I do say that you won't get me to be down on a fellow who has done what anybody might be proud of doing."

"Oh, rats! Of course, he's a rough rotter—nothing like us—"

"Well, you are rather a pig yourself, you know, Bulstrode."

And the Removites giggled again. They rather liked Wharton's plain speaking.

"Well," said Bulstrode, bringing his fist down on the table with a thump that made the ink spurt out of the inkpot, "what I say is, we're not going to have this cad thrust upon us like this, and I'm standing up for the honour of the Form. Most of the fellows are with me, I warn you. If you don't like to join us, you can stand outside, but it won't make any difference to what we're going to do."

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"And what are you going to do?" "We're going to show this mill kid that he's come to the wrong place. We can't make the doctor send him away, but we can make him jolly glad to go away of his own accord."

Harry Wharton's lip curled.

"And that's what we're going to do," said Bulstrode. "We're not going to have mill-hands in the Greyfriars Remove. We'll explain to him first that this isn't the place for him. If he likes to go, that will settle it. If he sticks it out—"

"He will if he's got any grit."

"Very well, if he sticks it out, we'll make his life a burden to him till he decides to go."

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"And you've made up your minds about this," he said, "without even having seen the chap—without having a chance to know whether he's a cad or not."

"Well, he's a rotten outsider, anyway."

Harry Wharton laughed scornfully.

"I see, it's on the old principle, 'Ere comes a stranger—leave 'arf a brick at him!'" he said. "As a matter of fact, Bulstrode, whatever this mill fellow is like, he can hardly be such a hooligan as you are proving yourself at the present moment."

"Oh, you needn't preach to me! I told the fellows you would be up against us, out of sheer contrariness."

"It's nothing of the sort. If the new chap is a rotter, I sha'n't back him up in any way. If he's a cad, I shall be as much down on him as anybody. But if he's a decent fellow, I won't have a hand in ragging him because he started life worse off than we did. To be plain, Bulstrode, what you're playing now is a cad's game—a dirty, snobbish cad's game! That's plain English!"

"By Jove, it is!" said Barr. "You needn't amplify it, Wharton. That's plain enough. So you're up against us?"

"I don't say so. I don't know anything about the new chap. But I should say he's pretty decent to work for a scholarship and win it, and get a clergyman to help him. And if he's decent, he won't have me against him. That's all. And now you can get out. I'm not particular, but I don't like rank snobs in my study."

And Wharton turned his back on Bulstrode and his party, who looked at one another very uncomfortably, and walked out of the study.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Lancashire Lad Arrives.

"THERE he is!"

It was Bulstrode who uttered the exclamation. A little crowd of Greyfriars boys stood at the entrance to the platform in the station of Friar-dale. A train had just clattered to a standstill, and Bulstrode and his friends looked eagerly among the alighting passengers for the new boy.

"There he is!"

Bulstrode pointed at a lad of nearly fifteen, who had alighted from a third-class carriage. The stranger did not look much like a Greyfriars lad, but Bulstrode was certain enough of his identity. All the other passengers were grown-up country people, and this was the only individual who could possibly be supposed to be coming to Greyfriars; but at his appearance the Greyfriars fellows sniffed expressively.

He was not dressed in Etons, nor did he wear a topper. He wore a cloth cap, an overcoat substantial enough, but of a far from fashionable cut, and tweed trousers of a pattern that was not of the quietest. His gloves were thick and warm, but they did not, as Skinner suggested, look like boxing-gloves. His boots had evidently been designed rather for use than ornament, and they showed plentiful traces of long travel in muddy weather.

But the boy, whatever shortcomings he might have in personal attire, had a sturdy, well-set form, and a pleasant face. His eyes were dark, and very keen and earnest in their glance.

He did not look towards the crowd of boys at the gate. The moment he

stepped from the train he strode along quickly towards the guard's-van.

"Be careful with that skip, please!" he said.

The guard was bundling out a large cane basket, fastened by a zinc rod and a padlock. The boy's forehead wrinkled anxiously as it bumped on the platform, as if he feared that it would be damaged. It looked, however, as if it would stand a great deal of knocking about, and as if it had stood some already. The Friar-dale porter came along with a trolley, and yanked the cane trunk upon it.

The trolley trundled along the platform to the barrier, and the lad took out his ticket. He gave it up at the gate, and followed the trolley, and then for the first time noted the Greyfriars group.

Bulstrode winked at his friends, and the half-dozen juniors took off their caps with solemn faces.

"Master Linley, I believe?" said Bulstrode.

The new-comer nodded.

"That's my name," he said, in a pleasant voice, which had a musical trace of the Lancashire burr in it. "Mark Linley. Do you belong to Greyfriars?"

"Yes, we have that honour," said Bulstrode. "You are the new kid—the young gentleman from—from Northumberland, I believe?"

And Skinner and Snoop and Barr cackled.

"I am from Lancashire," said Linley simply.

"Ah, yes; I knew it was somewhere in the Arctic regions!" said Bulstrode, with a nod.

Linley stared at him.

"Are you trying to be funny?" he asked.

"Not at all. We've come down to meet you. We thought you'd like to see some of us before you got to Greyfriars—"

"Shall I put this on the 'ack, sir?" asked the porter.

"Yes, please."

"You can't lift that, old man," said Bulstrode. "We'd better come and lend you a hand."

"Thank you kindly, sir; but—"

"Not a word; we're going to help!"

And Bulstrode & Co. laid hold of the cane trunk, and helped. Of course, it came with a crash to the ground, and if it had not been of the solidest construction, it would certainly have burst open with the shock.

Mark Linley ran forward with an anxious face.

"Please, don't!" he exclaimed. "I don't mind a joke, but I can't afford to have my things smashed up. I'll help the porter!"

"Rats!" said Snoop. "We'll help the porter! Get back!"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, rats! Get back!"

And Snoop laid hold of the cane trunk again. A glint came into Mark Linley's eyes, and he pushed Snoop back. It was only a push, but there was force in it, and Snoop staggered back, and trod on Hazeldene's foot. Hazeldene gave a yelp, and shoved him off violently, and Snoop sat down.

"Let that skip alone!" said the lad from Lancashire.

"That which?" demanded Bulstrode.

"That skip."

"What on earth's a skip?"

"That," said Linley, pointing to the huge cane trunk. "Have you never heard of a skip before?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Then I suppose you're a skipper?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Linley smiled at the feeble joke, and helped the porter place the skip on the

hack. The hack-driver gathered up his reins.

"Don't be in a hurry to get off, Linley," said Bulstrode. "We haven't finished talking to you yet."

Mark Linley hesitated.

"I've had a long journey," he said. "I've travelled all the way down from Lancashire since this morning. I think I shall go in the hack."

"But we came down specially to meet you."

"That was very kind of you," said Linley, in a frank way, that would have won upon any heart but Bulstrode's. "I suppose you fellows know about me—that I am coming to Greyfriars with a scholarship?"

"Yes, rather!" grunted Bulstrode.

"I know there can't be many fellows who began life as I did at Greyfriars," said Linley, the colour coming into his cheeks a little. "I hope it won't make any difference—"

"There's none; you're the first."

"Then it's very kind of you chaps to treat me like this. A good many folks whoam—I mean, at home—thought—I mean, feared—that a fellow who had been in a mill would have a rough time at Greyfriars College."

Bulstrode chuckled.

"They were right!" he remarked. "As a matter of fact, young shuttler—I believe you were a shuttler when you worked in the mill—"

Mark Linley laughed.

"I was a minder," he said.

"Well, a minder, or a shuttler, or a loomer, it's all the same," said Bulstrode, rather vaguely. "You are right in thinking that a shuttler—I mean, a minder—would be out of place at Greyfriars College!"

"I—I suppose so," said Linley quietly.

"Oh, shut up, Bulstrode!" muttered Hazeldene. "Don't be a cad, you know!"

"Hold your tongue, Vaseline, or I'll jolly soon make you! Look here, young shunter, or shuttler, or whatever you are, we came down to meet you to have a little talk with you before you get into Greyfriars."

"Yes," said Linley quietly—very quietly.

He was beginning to understand now that the meeting was not intended to be a friendly one.

"It's very meritorious of you," said Bulstrode, in an airy way, "to get a scholarship, and to get to this college by your own efforts—"

"You couldn't have done it, old chap!" remarked Skinner.

"Oh, shut up, Skinner! It's very meritorious of this young shaver to educate himself, and all that, in the intervals of shutting a loom, or looming a shuttle, or whatever he did for a living. But Greyfriars wasn't founded as a home for the meritorious poor. We don't want mill-hands there!"

Mark Linley's eyes glinted, but he did not speak.

"We don't want to be hard on you, Linley," said the bully of the Remove, quite magnanimously, "but we bar mill-hands in the Remove at Greyfriars. You might find a fellow or two to back you up out of sheer contrariety, but the rest of the Form would be down on you. All the other Forms would be down on you. It would be very rough. Now, we want to do the fair thing. If you like to go back to Yorkshire at once—"

"Lancashire," said Mark quietly.

"Ah, yes, Lancashire! If you like to go back at once, we'll raise a subscription to pay your return fare, and leave you something over for yourself. What do you think of that?"

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"Do you want me to tell you what I think?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Very well, then; I think you are a snob and a coward!"

And Mark Linley stepped into the hack. The vehicle was driving away on the road to Greyfriars before Bulstrode could find his tongue. His companions were grinning. Ready as they were to back him up in ragging the Lancashire lad, there was little sympathy between them, and they enjoyed the discomfiture of the Remove bully.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth as he gazed after the station hack.

"So that's how he takes it," he exclaimed at last—"that's how he takes a generous offer! Well, we'll try what roughness will do next! He's had his chance, and thrown it away! I'll make him sorry he ever came to Greyfriars!"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### A Guest in Study No. 1.

MARK LINLEY came out of Mr. Quelch's study at Greyfriars after a brief interview with the Form-master, feeling somewhat encouraged.

The Remove-master's manner had been kind, though formal, and Mark saw very plainly that he would get on with Mr. Quelch if he worked hard and deserved it, and that was what he had already resolved to do.

For the boy who had worked as a half-timer in childhood, and who had spent long days in the mill after that, and had "swotted" at his studies by candle-light in the evening, hard work had no terrors.

The daily work of a junior at Greyfriars was child's play to the lad from Lancashire. There were many fellows in the Remove who groaned in spirit over the hardness of their tasks, but Mark Linley was looking forward to the same work as to a long rest after labour.

He stopped and looked about him in the wide, dusky passage. He felt very strange and lost, and was glad to see a junior coming towards him, holding out a friendly hand. The latter was Harry Wharton.

"Hallo!" said Wharton. "Are you the new kid, Linley?"

"Yes," replied Mark, "that is my name."

"Been to see Quelch yet?"

"Yes, I've seen Mr. Quelch."

"Find him all right?" asked Harry cheerily.

"Yes, thank you! He was very kind." Linley paused, and coloured a little. "Can you tell me where I can get some tea? I suppose it is tea-time?"

"It was tea-time nearly an hour ago," said Wharton. "I'm afraid it's all over now. But that's all right. I heard you were coming to Greyfriars this afternoon, and I came to look for you, to ask you to have some tea with us in No. 1, if you will. We're feeding a bit late, and we shall have a passable feed. Will you come?"

Linley hesitated.

"I should be glad to," he said, in his frank way. "I know no one here, and I can't say how I feel your kindness. But—but—" He broke off.

"But you don't want to come," said Harry, laughing. "It's all right. Don't make any bones about saying so, you know. We don't stand on politeness in the Greyfriars Remove."

Linley coloured painfully.

"It's not that, Wharton. But—but a good many fellows have already shown me how they feel about having a factory-hand in the school. This isn't the sort of place for a fellow like me, I suppose.

I think you will very likely make the other fellows angry with you if you have me in to tea, and your friends there may not like it, either."

"My friends haven't any objection, or I shouldn't ask you, Linley," said Harry quietly. "As for the other fellows, they can go and eat coke. Will you come?"

Linley smiled a little.

"As I said, I shall be glad to, if you bear in mind what I have said, and you don't mind what the others think."

"They can think what they like. Come along."

The juniors entered Study No. 1.

Nugent shook hands with Linley carelessly enough, but that carelessness put the new boy quite at his ease. Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh salaamed to him with Oriental grace.

"Salaam, sahib," said he.

"Go it, Inky!" said Nugent encouragingly. "I like to see you doing that. You ought to turn a complete somersault while you're about it."

"The jokefulness of my esteemed chum is great, and his asininefulness is terrific," said the nabob placidly. "I am heartfully glad to welcome to our humble roof this estimable stranger, who is doubtless feeling very lonesome solitary, so far from the old mokes at home, as the song says."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent. "You mean the old folks at home."

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh shook his head gently.

"The excusefulness is terrific," he remarked. "But I must really insist that my quotefulness is correct. I learned that ancient and honourable song under the best native master in Bhanipur."

"Well, he must have been a ripper!" said Harry Wharton. "Here's Billy with the grub. Buck up with the tea, Billy."

"I say, you fellows, I wish you wouldn't let Bob Cherry hang about me like a shadow when I'm doing my shopping. He seems to have an idea that I should bolt the sausages before I got them here."

"I jolly well know you would!" said Bob Cherry. "Nugent's got the frying-pan greased all ready, and so you can shove them on. I'm hungry."

The sausages were soon sizzling over the fire. Bob Cherry shook hands with Mark, suppressing any surprise he may have felt at finding him in the study. The Famous Four always backed one another up under any circumstances.

The scent of the warming sausages filled the study, and it was a very grateful scent to Mark Linley. He was decidedly hungry, though the excitement of his coming to Greyfriars had caused him to hardly notice the fact until now.

The feed was just beginning when the door opened and Hazeldene looked in.

"Come in, Vaseline!" said Nugent.

Hazeldene shook his head.

"Oh, no," he said. "I see you've got visitors."

And he scuttled off.

Mark Linley's face became crimson. The other juniors hurried in with their talk to cover up the unpleasant incident. Harry Wharton's eyes were beginning to glint dangerously.

He understood that this was the commencement of the persecution by which Bulstrode and his friends meant to drive the Lancashire lad out of the Greyfriars Remove.

"You play football, Linley?" Bob Cherry asked; and in the interest of that ever-absorbing topic Linley's face brightened up again.

"Yes, rather!" he said. "I was in the factory team—" He coloured again. "I mean, I used to play Rigger whenever I had the chance."

"Rugger! Soccer's the game here. Ever played Soccer?"

"No; but I can learn."

"Good! Do they play much Rugger in your part of the world?" asked Harry Wharton curiously.

Mark Linley smiled.

"Yes, certainly; more Rugger than anything else, I think. We have Northern Union matches to watch, and heaps of junior Rugger matches. But we're pretty keen on the other game, too. League football is followed awfully keenly in Lancashire, and we have some splendid teams in the English League. I've watched the game often enough, and I don't think I shall be slow picking it up to play."

"Good again! You'll have a chance. Football is compulsory here on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and every fellow who is worth his salt plays it every other day if he gets a chance, too."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Oh, excuse me, Billy," said Harry, laughing. "I wasn't referring to you. Of course you have to spend too much time in the tuckshop to have much left for footer."

"I don't want you to give the new chap the impression that I'm a greedy fellow," said Bunter. "I'm not greedy, only I like a lot. If I didn't keep up my strength by taking snacks now and then, I don't know what you fellows would do for a cook in the study. Hallo, there's Bulstrode!"

It was not Bulstrode who opened the study door; it was Snoop. He grinned in at the juniors.

"Hallo!" he said. "I hear you've got a visitor from the factories here."

"Get out!" said Harry Wharton angrily.

"Certainly! I'm rather particular who I associate with," said Snoop. "I bar mill-hands, and you can keep him all to yourself."

And Snoop went out, just in time to escape a pat of butter which Bob Cherry had picked up to hurl at him.

Mark sat with a crimson face. The wanton insult from a fellow he had never injured, and did not even know, stung him to the quick, and gave him a dreary impression of what his life was to be like in the Greyfriars Remove.

But the door remained closed only for a few moments. Bulstrode was the next to look in, and he grinned sneeringly at the tea-party.

"I hear you're— Ow! Ooooooh!"

The pat of butter caught Bulstrode fairly in the mouth, and he staggered back with a gasping yell. And the Removites yelled, too—with laughter.

Bulstrode wiped the butter off furiously, and glared in at them.

"You—you beast—"

"Are you going?" asked Bob Cherry calmly. "Or will you have the marmalade next?"

Bulstrode went.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Linley's New Quarters.

THE lad from Lancashire rose to his feet. His face was very white and strained.

Wharton looked at him quickly.

"You are not going?" he said.

Linley nodded.

"I think I had better," he said quietly.

"I can't have you fellows annoyed like this on my account. Besides—"

"The annoyfulness is nothing, and the fatheadedness of the honourable rotters is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. But Mark shook his head.

"I've finished my tea," he said. "Thanks awfully, you chaps. You've treated me very decently. I hope you

won't have to suffer for looking after me like this."

And Linley left the study.

He left the chums of the Remove silent, looking at one another. They were all feeling awkward and constrained. Wharton was savage. His guest had been insulted in his study, and he was inwardly resolving to call the ragers to account for it.

"Well, it's rotten!" said Bob Cherry.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

"He seems a decent chap enough."

Nugent remarked; "and he's not ashamed of where he comes from, either. A snob would try to keep the factory dark."

"He's all right," said Harry Wharton abruptly. "I'm going to stand by him, for one. Those cads shall see that they can't bully me into playing the cad, too. Linley's a decent sort, and I'm going to back him up."

"Right-ho! I'm with you!"

"Same here!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes," said Mark, turning round.

"I say," said Billy Bunter, "I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and it won't be coming till to-morrow morning. When it comes it will be for ten bob. Could you let me have the money now, and have the postal-order when it comes? That will really be cashing it in advance."

"I'm sorry. I haven't so much money," said Mark simply.

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"Hum! It's rather annoying," he said. "Still, if you can let me have five, and take half the postal-order to-morrow morning, it will do. I can manage."

"Yes, certainly."

Linley handed over the five shillings. Billy Bunter could hardly believe his eyes. The Removites knew him too well to ever lend him anything, and it was only a perfect stranger who could have any faith in his repaying a loan.

"Thank you, Linley! I shall let you



"Who threw that clod?" exclaimed the Lancashire lad, with blazing eyes.

"The backfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, it's not a bad idea, and the best way to back a fellow up is to stand him a good feed. If you like to have a feed in the study in Linley's honour, I'm quite willing to do the shopping for you, and the cooking as well, and make a really successful thing of it. I could do it for you in good style for about ten shillings."

"Oh, shut up!" said Nugent. "And look here, don't you start cadging of the new chap. He hasn't as much money to waste as we have."

"I'm hardly likely to start cadging of anybody, I hope," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I've never taken money in my life without putting it down on the account."

"Lot of good that does the lender," said Bob Cherry, with a grunt.

Bunter blinked indignantly at Bob Cherry, and left the study. He hurried after Mark Linley, and tapped him on the arm in the passage.

"I say, Linley—"

have this back to-morrow morning for certain."

"Please do, Bunter; I shall want the money to-morrow, I expect."

"You can absolutely rely on it, as, if my postal-order didn't come, I have a large sum of money coming in from another source. So-long!"

And Bunter hurried away.

Mark Linley walked on, keeping up a cheerful face, but feeling a little down-hearted. He passed the open door of the junior Common-room, and there was a howl as he was sighted.

"Hallo, here's young factory!"

"What price cotton, young shaver?"

"How do you shuttle a loom?"

Mark turned away. A yell of laughter followed him.

"Well, I'm glad he's got the decency not to shove himself in here with us," said Snoop. "I half expected him to come in."

"Shocking come-down for you, Snoop," said Temple, of the Upper

Fourth, with a sneer. "Your people are in the oil and colour line, I believe."

Snoop turned crimson.

"It's a lie!" he yelled.

"It's a what?" asked Temple, coming a step nearer.

"I—I mean it isn't so," stammered Snoop. "You're mistaken, Temple."

"Well, if it were so, there's nothing in it to be ashamed of that I can see," said Temple, who belonged to a good family, and could afford to take a broad view of the matter. "I think you're a set of yelping rotters to pitch on young Linley like that. He looks worth a dozen of you young cads. Besides, the Remove is the kind of Form for any waster to be shoved into."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

There was a Removeite yell, and ere long a scuffle and punching of noses. Then came a prefect with a cane, and exodus of the juniors from the Common-room.

Mark Linley had walked away feeling very heavy-hearted. He had looked for difficulties at Greyfriars, and had half-expected to be sent to Coventry by some of his Form-fellows. But this angry and savage reception was much more than he had bargained for. A fag met him in the passage, and called to him:

"I say, young shuttle-and-loom, Mr. Quelch wants to see you!"

Mark took his way to the Form-master's study. Mr. Quelch nodded to him gravely and kindly.

"You will share Study No. 12 in the Remove passage, with Russell, Lacy, and Wun Lung," he said. "You may take your books in there. Has your trunk been taken up in the Remove dormitory?"

"I don't know, sir. It was left at the porter's lodge."

"You had better see about it."

"Yes, sir."

Linley left the room. He decided to look at his new quarters first, and went up to No. 12 in the Remove passage. The door was shut, and a glimmer of light came from underneath.

Linley hesitated at the door, whether to knock or no. He had a right to enter his own study without knocking, and which ever way he decided his action would probably be misconstrued. He decided to knock, and did so, then opened the door.

Russell and Lacy were doing their preparation. Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, was curled up like a cat in the armchair. All three of the juniors looked up as Mark Linley entered.

"Hallo!" said Russell. "What do you want?"

"Mr. Quelch says I am to come into this study," said Mark awkwardly.

"Well, you've come in," said Lacy. "Now go out again."

"I—I mean, I'm to share this study with you."

"Oh, rats!" said Russell warmly.

"Quelch doesn't know what he's about. The room is too small for three, as it is, and I was annoyed with Quelch for putting that Chinese monkey in here. It won't do, my son. Go back to Quelch, and tell him to think it out and guess again."

Mark did not know much about public schools, but he knew too much to take a message like that to a Form-master.

"I'm sorry if I'm in the way," he said. "I suppose I must do as Mr. Quelch tells me."

"I suppose you must," grunted Russell. "Are you the new chap Linley, the fellow who worked in a coal-mine?"

"I am Linley, and I worked in a factory."

"Well, I don't see why you couldn't stay in the factory, and not come here

to take up a quarter of a crowded study. But I suppose we shall have to put up with it. Do you want to do your prep now?"

"My—my what?"

"Your prep. Great Scott! Don't you know what prep is? Your preparation; you have to prepare your morning's work overnight."

"Oh, I see! Yes, I suppose I must do it here—now—but I shall have to get my books out of my skip."

"Out of your what?" roared Russell and Lacy.

"My skip," said Mark simply.

"Ye gods! What is a skip?"

"My trunk, I mean."

"Well, if you mean a trunk, why don't you say a trunk?"

"Well, it's not exactly a trunk; it's a—"

"Skip!" grinned Lacy. "Of course. I skip, thou skippest, he skips. Well, suppose you skip off and find your skip, and let us finish our prep?"

Mark turned to leave the study. The Chinese boy sat up in the armchair, and blinked sleepily at the lad from Lancashire.

"Me tinkee you lookee aftel trunk," he said. "Bulstrode makee jokee, nic tinkee you bettel lookee aftel skippee."

Mark was a little puzzled to make out the curious words of the Chinese, but he nodded and left the study. He understood that some joke was intended upon his property, and he was anxious. He left the house and hurried down to the porter's lodge. Gosling was standing in his doorway, and Mark asked him after the famous skip.

"Which I've carried it hup," said Gosling. "And wot I says is this 'ere, it was thundering heavy, Master Linley."

Mark tendered the porter twopence, which was certainly quite sufficient in the way of a tip, as Gosling had good wages and ought to have been satisfied with them. Gosling put the twopence in the palm of his hand and inspected it carefully, and Mark walked away, leaving him still inspecting it. The porter grunted expressively. But his stare and his grunt did not have the effect of extracting a larger gratuity from the careful Lancashire boy.

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## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Mark Linley Loses His Temper.

**B**ULSTRODE & Co. were in the dormitory, in a group round the famous skip. The gas was lighted, and it glimmered on a curious scene. The skip was opened, and the ragers were dragging the contents of the basket-trunk out.

Bulstrode was standing on a bed, in the attitude of an auctioneer, with a mallet in his hand, which had probably been used in breaking open the new boy's trunk.

"Gentlemen, make your bids!" said Bulstrode. "Here is a pair of trousers, evidently a pair of Sunday trousers as used in Lancashire, as they are the only pair in this receptacle—this skip. Make your bids, gentlemen. I am offering you a pair of trousers of an unique cut. You see that the material is decidedly substantial, and, indeed, is quite thick enough to make tents or sails with—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the cut is unique. I can safely say, gentlemen, that a pair of trousers of a similar cut cannot be found in all Greyfriars."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let those things alone!" shouted Mark Linley, dashing into the dormitory, his eyes blazing with anger.

Bulstrode looked at him calmly, and took no further notice of him.

"Gentlemen, I can recommend these trousers, and I am surprised at receiving no bid. For uniqueness of cut, for novelty of design, for thickness of material, these trousers are unsurpassed. I challenge contradiction. Gentlemen, I am waiting for a bid for these unique and extremely valuable trousers."

The Removeites shrieked with laughter. Mark Linley forced his way through the crowd and faced Bulstrode.

"Let those things alone, you cad!" he shouted.

"My dear factory sweep, I—"

"Will you let them alone?"

"Well, hardly," drawled Bulstrode.

"Then I will make you."

Bulstrode grinned.

"Hold him, kids!" he said. "He is getting dangerous. I will give him a licking after the auction."

Skinner and Snoop and Barr and Trevor caught hold of the Lancashire lad, and held him fast, in spite of his struggles. Bulstrode grinned at his furious face, and held up the trousers to inspection again.

"Gentlemen, I am waiting for a bid. These unique trousers are going cheap—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will throw in this waistcoat with the same lot," said Bulstrode. "You will observe that the waistcoat is of a good ancient design, and the pattern is startling enough to wake you in the morning, if you place the thing beside your bed, and save the expense of an alarm-clock."

"Let me go!" shouted Mark Linley.

But they held him fast. Bulstrode dragged a couple of white shirts from the skip, and flaunted them in the air.

"What offer for shirts, trousers, and waistcoat?" he said. "Don't be backward in coming forward, gentlemen. What offers?"

"Twopence the lot," said Hazeldene.

"Any advance on twopence?"

"Threepence," said Stott.

"Threepence I am bid. Any advance on threepence?"

No reply. Bulstrode raised the mallet.

"Going for threepence the lot! Going—going—gone!"

The mallet came down, and smashed a little clock that had been taken out of the basket. There was a roar of laughter. Bulstrode tossed shirts, trousers, and waistcoat over to Hazeldene, who let them fall carelessly on the floor, where they were soon trodden underfoot.

Bulstrode dragged some underclothing from the skip, and held it up to view. Mark Linley made a desperate effort, and broke loose from those who were holding him.

"Look out!" yelled Trevor.

But the warning came too late. Linley went at Bulstrode like a bulldog, and in a moment had him round the neck, and was punching wildly at his face. Bulstrode gave a roar of surprise and rage, and tumbled headlong off the bed, with Linley clinging to him.

The bump on the floor was terrific, and both boys gasped with the impact. But Linley, clinging to his bulky enemy, was still punching.

"You noisy brats!" said the unpleasant voice of Carberry, the prefect, at the door. "What's all this row about?"

"It's the new fellow," said Snoop. "the factory rotter, Carberry! He's going for Bulstrode like a wild beast! Look at him!"

"Here, young shaver, stop that!" exclaimed Carberry. "Do you hear me? I'm a prefect, and if you don't obey me I'll skin you! My word!"

Mark was deaf to him. He was punching Bulstrode furiously, while the Remove bully, bewildered and dazed by the sudden attack, was hardly able to defend himself.

The prefect, with an angry scowl, stooped and dragged the new boy away from Bulstrode by main force. Linley seemed inclined to attack him in turn, but he saw in time that he was a senior, and restrained himself. Carberry shook him savagely.

"What do you mean by it?" he shouted. "Don't you know that you have to obey a prefect's orders, you factory whelp?"

"I—I am sorry!" gasped Mark. "I—I lost my temper!"

"Beastly tiger-cat!" snarled Snoop. "Look at Bulstrode! His nose is bleeding!"

"I'll smash him for that!" howled Bulstrode.

"What's it all about?" demanded Carberry, still grasping Linley by the collar. "I've a good mind to give you a hiding apiece all round!"

"It was that factory chap," said Snoop. "He's got a temper like a demon. He wants a good hiding. He wouldn't take any notice even of you, Carberry!"

"I'll teach you to take notice of a prefect!" said Carberry. "You young whelp, you oughtn't to come to a decent school! Why didn't you stick in the factory you belonged to?"

"Mind your own business!" said Linley.

Carberry stared at him, almost petrified, for the moment.

"You—you talk to me like that!" he gasped.

"I'll talk to anybody like that who insults me!" shouted Mark. "You're a bully and a cad, and these fellows are a set of eads and cowards, too. I'll take them one at a time, and give them a hiding. I could do it!"

"I'll give you a chance," said Bulstrode.

"Hold your tongue, Bulstrode! So I am a cad, am I?" said Carberry, with a glint in his eyes. "I think you'll have to learn better manners, you factory sweep! Lay him over the bed, kids!"

Half a dozen of the juniors hurried to obey. Hazeldene and Trevor and Skinner held back; but there were enough without them to handle the vainly-struggling lad. He was laid over the bed, face downwards, and the prefect took up a slipper that had been turned out of the box.

"This is the first lesson," he remarked. "If you ever want another, you'll get it—in the same place!"

Mark Linley gave a gasp of pain as the slipper rose and fell; but then he set his teeth, and remained silent under the shower of blows that followed.

His blood was at boiling point, and he was savagely determined that not a sound should pass his lips to gratify his enemies. And not a sound did pass his lips, though the punishment he received was a terrible one.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "Hold on, Carberry; that's enough!"

Carberry's reply was a cuff that sent Hazeldene reeling. Then the slipper rose and fell again with more savage force than before. There was a sudden shout from the doorway.

"Stop it!"

Wingate came quickly in. At the sight of the captain's angry face, Carberry's hand fell to his side, and the juniors released the new boy. But Mark Linley did not move. He still lay face downwards across the bed, shaking with pain, and unable to move a limb for the moment.

Wingate's brow was like a thunder-cloud.

"What do you mean by treating a kid like that?" he exclaimed.

"He clobbered me," said Carberry defiantly. "I'm a prefect, and I'm not accountable to you for my actions, Wingate. He's had his lesson!"

And Carberry hurled the slipper away, and strode out of the dormitory. Bulstrode & Co. followed him silently. They did not care to face the captain of Greyfriars just then.

Wingate lifted Mark Linley from the bed. The boy was staggering drunkenly, and his face was like chalk. He looked dazedly into the kind and anxious face of the Greyfriars captain. Big and rugged as he was, Wingate had a heart as tender as a girl's.

"I'm sorry for this, Linley," he said. "I don't know what you've done, but you've been treated badly. What was it about?"

Linley steadied himself on the captain's arm.

"It's all right," he said thickly. "It's all right!"

"It's not all right," said Wingate warmly. "I've a good mind to march you straight to the Head, and tell him what Carberry was doing!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Mark, in alarm.

"I—I don't mind! I'd rather not cause trouble. I don't suppose Carberry meant to hurt me so much. I—I don't want to get him into a row!"

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The captain of Greyfriars was silent. He recognized the true grit that showed in the Lancashire lad's words, yet he was greatly inclined to expose Carberry's brutality to the Head, all the same.

One thought restrained him—if Linley were placed in the position of having complained, the Remove would regard it as sneaking, and he would never be able to make his peace with the Form.

"I—I suppose I was a fool to come here," said Mark. "They don't understand. They don't like a factory lad among them. I suppose it's natural. Where I come from, we always thought a fellow a rotter who wouldn't work, and despised him, and here it seems to be a disgrace to have worked. I dare say I shall get along all right in time, when they get used to the idea!"

"You are a little chunk of real grit," said Wingate. "You're going the right way to work, anyway, and I think you'll pull ahead in time—with the best fellows in your Form, at any rate. Stick to it!"

"I mean to," said Mark quietly.

And Wingate left him, and Mark proceeded to repack the things that had been dragged from his "skip."

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

#### Mark Linley on His Mettle.

MARK LINLEY joined the chums of the Remove the next day on the junior ground for football practice before dinner,

and played for the first time the game of Soccer.

Harry Wharton smacked him on the shoulder in a hearty way as they came off the field.

"You'll do, kid," said Wharton. "You only want a bit of practice at the new game, and I rather think you'll be all right for the Form eleven."

Linley's eyes glistened.

"That would be ripping!" he said. "The rippingfulness would be terrific!" purred the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But behold the woeful countenance of our esteemed Bunterful chum."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, laughing. "What's the matter, Bunt?"

Billy Bunter blinked at them lugubriously.

"I can't understand it!" he said.

"What can't you understand? Expound it, and we'll try to work it out for you," said Nugent encouragingly.

"It's a mystery."

"What's a mystery?"

"Of course, it must be a mistake."

"What must?"

"I'm sincerely sorry to see such carelessness, but, of course, it's a printer's error."

Bob Cherry took the fat junior by the shoulder, and shook him forcibly.

"Explain yourself, you fat duffer!" he growled. "What are you talking about?"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I wish you wouldn't shake me! If you make my glasses fall off, you'll have to pay for them if they get broken. I—I—"

"What's the matter, then?" roared Bob Cherry.

"I don't mind so much on my own account," said Billy Bunter. "It's you fellows. You know I had entered for a competition. Well, I was depending on winning that pound a week to clear up all my old accounts, and start fresh. Then there's this new chap. I ought to settle up that five bob. He's a poor beggar from a coal-mine, or something—"

"A what?" said Mark Linley.

"Oh, really, Linley, I didn't see you there," blinked Bunter. "I mean you're a ripping chap, and I like you so much that I feel I ought to settle up about that five bob. That's what I really meant to say. But there's a mistake in adjudging the prizes, and I'm left out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites.

"It's no laughing matter, you fellows. It must be a printer's error, of course. The curious part is that in the list of answers there are a lot more printer's errors, as well, as very few of the answers given tally with those I sent in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it's a case of carelessness. I dare say they're busy, and it will be set right in next week's number. The prize will wait till then, only I hope it won't be sent by mistake to the chap whose name has been shoved in, instead of mine, as winner of the first prize. Now, the question is, how am I going to settle up all my old accounts?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Come in, you chaps," said Wharton.

"I'm hungry. You'd better get up a subscription in the Remove, Billy."

Billy Bunter grunted. The chums of the Remove walked away, laughing. But Harry's face became grave presently. Mark Linley had gone in first.

"The young ass!" he said. "I don't think I ever saw quite such a duffer as Bunter. The answers he sent in to the football pictures in that competition were

too idiotic for anything, and he wouldn't hear a word of advice on the subject. He thought he knew best. All the same, I don't like to see the young duffer in the dumps. Suppose we have a whip round for him? He will forget all about his disappointment if he has a good feed; and, besides"—Harry lowered his voice a little—"he has caged five bob off the new chap, who can't spare it, and he could pay up then."

"But would he?" said Nugent dubiously.

"Yes; I'd see to it."

"The honourable idea is good," said Hurree Singh. "I shall be pleasedly gratified to contribute the august sovereign."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No, you won't," he said. "We don't want any more than ten or twelve bob at the outside, and he can spare five out of that for his debt. As you are rolling in filthy lucre, you can stand five, and we'll make up the rest, as we're not giddy millionaires."

"The agreeableness of my worthy self is terrific."

And the whip round was promptly made. After dinner, Wharton looked for Bunter, and ran him to earth in a quiet corner. Bunter looked uneasy; he never quite knew what to expect when Wharton interviewed him. But the glistening of twelve shillings in the Removite's hand made his eyes sparkle.

"If you'd like to lend me a few bob, Wharton—"

"I wouldn't," said Harry, in his direct way. "We've had a whip round for you, to stand you a feed, and to help you pay your debts. Look here, you're to pay Linley his five bob, and keep the rest for yourself."

"Oh, bosh! Linley is going to have his five bob out of my postal order."

"He's going to have it out of this."

"I don't see why you should dictate to me what I'm to do with my own money, Wharton," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"But it's not your money till I give it to you. I can still return it to the subscribers if I like."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Of course, I should like to pay back Linley, and you can trust me to do so. That was what I really meant to say."

"I'm glad of that," said Wharton grimly, "because I'm going to see that you do it. You're to pay Linley before you spend any of the tin. I shall ask Linley about it, and so I shall know whether you have or have not paid him."

Bunter looked at the glistening coins, and then looked across at Mrs. Mible's shop. But, irresponsible as Bunter was, he had a glimmering of common-sense, and he knew that it would not do to trifle with Wharton when he was in earnest. He heroically turned his back on the tuck-shop, and looked for Linley. He found him in the Close, and tapped him on the arm. Linley looked round.

"Here's your five bob," said Bunter, with great dignity.

Mark slipped the money into his pocket.

"Have you had the postal order?" he asked.

"No; there has been some delay in that. But I have other sources of income," said Bunter, with dignity. "Look here, if you like to come to the tuckshop, I'll stand you some tarts. I'm in funds. I don't mind you being a chimney-sweep, or whatever it is you are, and I don't see why I shouldn't associate with you, so long as you realise the difference between us. I say, Linley, I wish you wouldn't walk away while I'm talking. I say! My word! He's gone! Well, of all the ungrateful rotters, I think that fellow takes the cake!"

And Billy Bunter went off by himself to the tuckshop. Mark Linley walked towards the football ground, a shade on his face. A group of fellows were standing by the pavilion, and Bulstrode's voice was heard in strident tones:

"Here comes the factory sweep!"

"What's the price of cotton just now, young factory?" called out Snoop.

"Shut up!" said Trevor.

Snoop stared at the speaker.

"What's the matter with you, Trevor?"

"Nothing," said Trevor, "only shut up, that's all."

Snoop shut up. He wasn't the kind of fellow to quarrel with anybody bigger than a Third Form fag. But Bulstrode was made of sterner stuff. Bully as he was, he had plenty of obstinacy and pluck, too.

He picked up a clod and threw it at Mark with a deft aim, and knocked the new boy's cap off. The clod caught Mark a clout on the head in addition, and he spun round with blazing eyes.

"Who threw that?" exclaimed the Lancashire lad.

The juniors laughed mockingly. Mark, leaving his cap where it had fallen, ran towards the group, his fists clenched hard. He had been very patient, but the time of patience was past.

"What coward threw that?" he cried.

"I threw it," said Bulstrode promptly.

"Got anything to say about it?"

"Yes. Put up your fists."

Bulstrode stared. There was no fellow in the Remove who could stand up to him, excepting Harry Wharton. The Lancashire lad did not look anything like a match for the burly Bulstrode. But he evidently meant every word he said.

"Put up your fists! Do you hear?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" drawled Bulstrode. "I say, chaps, let's bump him!"

"Right-ho! Bump the cad!"

"No, you won't!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, coming up in time. "Linley has challenged you, Bulstrode, and you can fight him! There won't be any bumping just now."

"Mind your own business!"

"That's what I'm doing. My business is to come down heavy on bullying, and I'm doing it. Why don't you fight him?"

"I could knock him into the middle of next week!"

"Do it, then. We'll see fair play."

Linley took off his jacket, and Bob Cherry held it. The Lancashire lad's eyes were burning, and his lips were white and hard set.

"Now come on!" he said.

"Oh, very well!" drawled Bulstrode. "If you'd rather have a licking, I'll give you one."

And he came on.

But there was a surprise waiting for the bully of the Remove. He did not walk over the new boy with scarcely an effort, as he expected. He found a pair of hammerlike fists too hard to pass, and those fists came home on his features with blows that made him stagger.

Bulstrode sprang back, tore off his jacket, and then, breathing fury, rushed upon his foe again, realising at last that the combat was serious.

And now the bully of the Remove put all his "beef" into it, but he had found a foeman worthy of his steel.

The Removites stood round, watching with keen delight. It was a fight such as had not taken place in the Remove since the historic encounter between Bulstrode and Harry Wharton.

In amazement they watched the form of the Lancashire lad. Mark Linley received plenty of punishment from Bulstrode's heavy drives, which he could not always stop. But punishment had no effect upon his spirit.

His left eye was closed up, his nose was swelling visibly, his mouth was contorted with pain, with a thin stream of red running from the corner. But he was game to the backbone. And hard as his punishment was, Bulstrode's was harder.

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Lancashire wins!"

Bulstrode had gone down under a terrible right-hander, and he did not come up to time. He sat up, blinking and dazed. Snoop tapped him on the shoulder.

"You're not licked, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode snarled.

"Get away, you whelp! Hang you! I'm done!"

Mark Linley turned away. He was staggering himself, half-blind, his senses reeling. But a firm hand supported him. It was Harry Wharton's.

"Well done, well done!" said Harry.

"That's a lesson to Bulstrode, and I think it will be a lesson to the Remove! Come on, you want looking after now, by George!"

Bob Cherry helped Linley on with his jacket, and he walked unsteadily away, leaning on Wharton's arm. Bulstrode glared after him sullenly, through half-closed eyes; but the looks of the other Removites were changed.

Pluck will always tell, and prowess in the fistical line appealed to the Greyfriars Remove more than anything else.

A fellow who could lick the bully of the Form was a fellow to be respected. And, strangely enough, but very pleasing to Mark Linley's ears, a cheer followed the Lad from Lancashire.

THE END.

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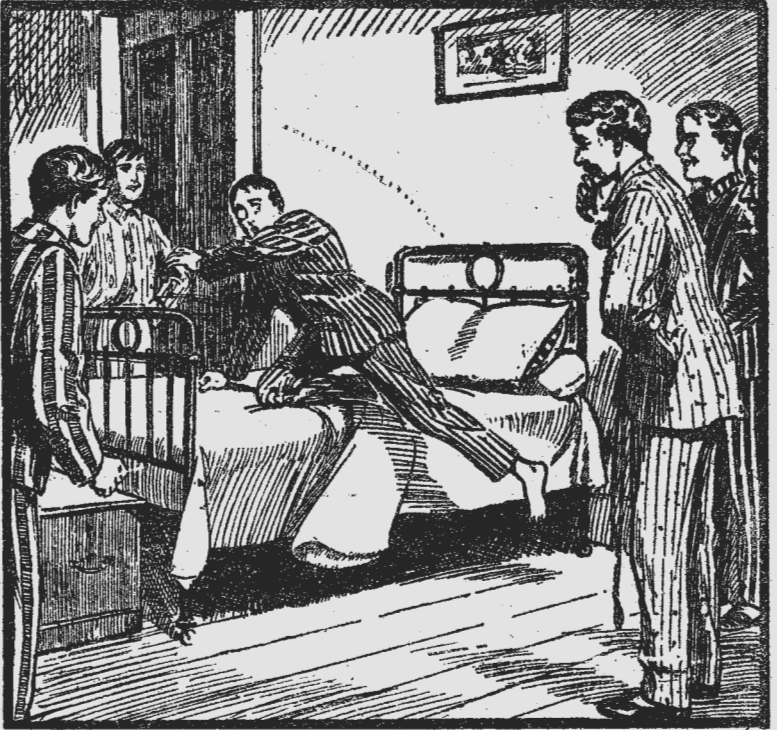
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## MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.  
Hats Off!



"Did you put Herries' bulldog under your bed, Gussy?" inquired Blake innocently. "Bai Jove! Certainly not! Do you mean to say that beastly bulldog is undah my bed?" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"TOM MEWWY, deah boy—" The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of the Shell—were sunning themselves on the steps of the School House, while they waited for the bell for afternoon lessons.

Tom Merry looked round lazily. A March wind was whistling in the old quad of St. Jim's, and leaves and dust were dancing in it. Fags were chasing their caps in the quad, lifted and tossed about by the playful breeze.

Arthur Augustus set his shining, silk topper more firmly upon his head as he came out upon the steps. It was seldom that Arthur Augustus wore a cap—toppers were more in his line—indeed, he was suspected of regretting the good old days when fellows played cricket in tall hats.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "I want to speak to you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, surveying the Terrible Three through his eyeglass. "I want you to back me up. I have twiced to make Blake and those other silly asses listen to weason—"

"Eh?" "I mean, I have twiced to make those silly asses in my studay listen to weason! I suppose you fellows know what to-mowwow is?"

Monty Lowther nodded. "Your birthday?" he suggested. And Tom Merry and Manners chuckled. D'Arcy gave the humorist of the Shell a freezing glance.

"Weally, Lowthah—" "Many happy returns of the day," said Lowther solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I regard you as an ass, Lowther! It is not my birthday to-mowwow! To-mowwow is the first of Apwil, and I have been thinkin' of celebwatin'—"

"Your birthday?" "Weally, Lowthah, don't be an ass, you know! I have been thinkin' of celebwatin' the first of Apwil by japin' the New House fellows—"

"Oh, you couldn't jape a fag!" said Manners cheerfully. "You'd better stay in your study all day to-morrow! It's a half-holiday, and—"

"I have a weally wippin' scheme—" Arthur Augustus broke off, and set his topper a little more firmly upon his head. He was standing now with his back to Monty Lowther, and Lowther had gently tipped the hat up from behind.

"Bai Jove, how the wind's blowin'!" said D'Arcy unsuspectingly. "Now, I was goin' to say— Bai Jove! I shall have to hold it on!"

It was jerked up from behind again, and Arthur Augustus clutched it just in time. He cast a suspicious glance round at Monty Lowther, but Lowther had his hands in his pockets, and was staring across the quadrangle, as if intently engaged in watching a group of Third Form fags who were punting a footy about. D'Arcy set his hat more securely upon his head, and turned to Manners and Tom Merry again.

"I was thinkin' of makin' Figgins & Co. sit up, you know. I've a jollay good ideah for takin' them in, you know. What do you fellows think?"

Tom Merry shook his head solemnly. "I think the same as Manners," he remarked. "You'd better stay in your study all day to-morrow, Gussy, especially as it's your birthday—"

"It isn't my birthday, you ass!" shrieked D'Arcy. "My dear chap," said Manners soothingly, "it's no good trying to conceal your age, you know. We know just how old you are. Now—"

"If you are goin' to play the giddy goat, Mannahs— Bai Jove! How this beastly wind catches a fellow's hat!" exclaimed D'Arcy, as his topper was jerked up again from behind. "Lowther, did you push my hat?"

"I!" ejaculated Lowther, in astonishment.

"Yaas, you ass!" said D'Arcy, turning upon the Shell fellow wrathfully. "I don't believe it was the wind this time."

Tom Merry reached out softly, and tipped the Fourth Former's hat over his eyes.

"Bai Jove! I suppose that was the wind!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tom Mewwy, you silly ass—" Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs, and made a stride towards Tom Merry. Manners, who was sitting on the stone balustrade, lifted his foot, and pushed the topper from behind with his toe. It slid over Arthur Augustus' aristocratic nose, and the wind caught it fairly, and whirled it away into the quadrangle.

"Bai Jove! My toppah! You ass!" "After it, Gussy!" shouted Tom Merry. But the swell of St. Jim's did not need bidding. He made a wild plunge down the steps in pursuit of the topper. The wind was whirling it along at great speed, and Arthur Augustus dashed after it with his eyeglass flying behind him at the end of its cord.

"Go it!" roared the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"You uttah asses!" gasped D'Arcy. He came up with the hat, but just as he stooped to seize it, the wind caught it again, and whirled it away towards the group of fags who were punting the footer about. D'Arcy minor—Wally, of the Third Form—was about to kick when the topper was blown fairly in front of him. He kicked, all the same, and the silk hat rose into the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fags. D'Arcy panted with wrath. "Wally, you young wascal—" "My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally. "I didn't know it was your topper, Gussy."

"Wun aftah it, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Pway catch it for me, deah boy!"

"Right you are! Come on, you chaps."

leave the footer alone!" called out Wally.

"What-ho!" grinned Jameson of the Third.

And the fags, with a whoop, rushed in pursuit of the silk topper. Arthur Augustus dashed along after them. Curly Gibson, of the Third, came up with the hat first, and he passed it skilfully to Jameson. Arthur Augustus gave a shout of wrath.

"You young rascal! How dare you kick my hat! You—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was only passing it," said Curly, dodging the indignant swell of St. Jim's. "Go it, Wally! Pass to Jameson!"

Wally passed.

Jameson captured the hat, and dribbled it across the quad in fine style.

Arthur Augustus panted after him. The beautiful silk topper was decidedly showing signs of wear and tear by this time, and Arthur Augustus had cause for anxiety. Arthur Augustus overtook Jameson, and shouldered him off, and the Third Former rolled in the quad.

"Foul charge!" roared Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Play the game, Gussy!"

"You young wottahs!"

D'Arcy made a dive for the hat. But the wind had it again, and the elusive topper flew into the air, and whirled away across the quadrangle. Out in the middle of the wide quad the wind was very strong, and the hat whirled round and round and to and fro, and the fags ceased the chase and stood yelling with laughter as Arthur Augustus panted after the damaged topper.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"On the ball!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Right over to the New House the topper went sailing. Three juniors were looking out of the doorway of the New House—Figgins, Kerr and Wynn of the Fourth. They watched the progress of the hat and its pursuer with broad smiles. Arthur Augustus waved an excited hand to them.

"Stop it, deah boys!"

"Right-ho!" called back Figgins. "All together, you fellows."

The hat had whirled up to the foot of the New House steps, and rested there for a moment. In another moment it would have been off again. But Figgins & Co. acted promptly, and with great presence of mind. They jumped together, and came down upon the hat.

Crunch!

"Got it!" roared Figgins.

They had got it; there was no doubt about that. But whether it was worth getting in the state they had reduced it to was another matter. The handsome Lincoln and Bennett was a shapeless rag under the boots of Figgins & Co. Arthur Augustus came panting up, crimson, and almost speechless with wrath.

"You—you uttah asses!" he panted.

"Got it!" said Figgins genially.

"We've caught it for you, Gussy. But for us, it might have gone on over the giddy house. Here you are! Get your boot out of it, Kerr!"

Kerr disentangled his boot from the ruins of the silk hat. Figgins picked it up, and handed it to D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's received it, gazing speechlessly at the hideous wreck. The topper bore some distant resemblance to a concertina, but none whatever to a hat.

"You—you fwabjous chumps!" gasped D'Arcy at last.

Figgins looked astonished.

"Well, that's rather thick, I must say, after we've taken this trouble for you!" he exclaimed. "Is that the D'Arcy brand of gratitude?"

"You feahful ass, you've wuined my hat! What do you mean by jimpin' on my toppah?" roared Arthur Augustus.

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"We meant to stop it for you!" exclaimed Figgins innocently.

"You—you—you——" Words failed Arthur Augustus. It was a time for action. He rushed upon the New House trio, hitting out furiously.

Figgins & Co. scattered before the wild attack, yelling with laughter. Arthur Augustus paused, undecided which to pursue. A bell rang from the School House, and Figgins & Co. rushed off for lessons.

"You wottahs!" roared D'Arcy. "Come back! I am going to give you a feahful thwashin'! Come back, you feahful wottahs!"

But Figgins & Co. did not accept that kind invitation. They ran on, laughing, and as the rest of the fellows were crowding into the School House for lessons, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy decided to follow.

He tramped away wrathfully with the wreck of the topper in his grasp, and was the last to enter the Fourth Form room. Figgins & Co. greeted him with cheerful grins, but the swell of St. Jim's went to his place with his nose very high in the air.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.  
The Shell is Alarmed.

KILDARE of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, put his head into the junior common-room in the School House, with his good-natured smile.

"Bedtime, you kids!"

Tom Merry rose to his feet with a yawn. He had just finished a game of chess with Monty Lowther, in which both parties had had the benefit of expert advice from Manners, with the result that they had fallen into hopeless confusion. Monty Lowther had been beaten, and he seemed to attribute it to Manners' well-meant efforts.

"Mate," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Yes; but I should have had you mate in two!" grunted Lowther. "This is what comes of Manners helping."

"I didn't help Tom!" said Manners.

Lowther grunted.

"No; he's won!"

"Look here, Lowther, you ass——"

"Peace, my children," said Tom Merry pacifically. "It's time we were in our little bunks, and don't forget the cricket-stumps!"

"Oh, all right!"

Kildare smiled. It certainly sounded rather odd for the Shell fellows to be talking of taking cricket-stumps to bed with them; but for a week or more past they had done so.

There had been an attempted burglary at St. Jim's lately. The cracksman had been arrested, but his confederate was still at large. The police believed that he had fled from the neighbourhood, as was, indeed, very probable, as he would have been in very great danger if he had remained there. But the alarm of the burglars was still in the air, so to speak, and the juniors took the most elaborate precautions when they went to bed.

Bernard Glyn, of the Shell, who was an inventive genius, had with difficulty been restrained from fitting up burglar alarms of his own invention. Some of the juniors took cricket-stumps to bed with them, and some of them had pollee-whistles, and several had dark lanterns and little electric torches.

If a cracksman had come to St. Jim's again just then, he would have found himself in a fortified camp, and he would not have stood much chance. Herries, of the Fourth, had gone so far as to propose introducing his bulldog, Towser, into the dormitory of a night—and it was only by the threat of instant slaughter that the Fourth-Formers had made him drop the idea.

"Get off!" said Kildare. "I don't think you need be nervous about burglars, you kids!"

"We're not nervous," Tom Merry explained. "It's a case of defence, not defiance, you know. If you are prepared for war, that's the best way of avoiding war, Kildare; I saw that in a newspaper somewhere."

The St. Jim's captain laughed.

"Well, well; off you go! So long as you don't lay in firearms, you can take what you like to the dormitory!"

"Nothing like being prepared," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathaji!"

"The best thing is to have a burglar alarm fitted up to every door and window," remarked Bernard Glyn. "I should be willing——"

"But nobody else would be willing," said Kildare, laughing. "Now, enough jaw; buzz off!"

And the juniors tramped up to bed.

The Fourth-Formers stopped at the door of their dormitory, while the Shell fellows went further along the passage to their quarters. Some of them looked under the beds when the light was turned on. As Gore remarked, there was nothing like making certain.

"Quite an easy thing for a burglar to get into the school, and stay hidden under a bed," Kangaroo remarked. "It is all rot to say that a burglar won't come. What's happened once may happen again!"

"Lightning never strikes twice in the same place," said Clifton Dane.

"But burglars do," said Tom Merry.

"There was a burglar here once who got in at the window of this very dormitory!"

"Yes, rather—can't be too careful!"

"Of course, we're not afraid of the rotters," said Tom Merry. "But it's no good blinking the facts. They have been here and they might come again—and that villain, Jerry Horrocks, is still loose!"

"And the other rotter had a revolver when he was caught," Manners remarked.

"I jolly well wish he would come again, and we'd have a chance to lay him by the heels!" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

And the Shell fellows turned in, their minds running upon burglars and burglaries. It was only natural, considering what had lately happened at the school. After Kildare had put out the light, and left the juniors to go to sleep, the talk ran on the same subject. Some of the Shell fellows, who wanted to jape the New House on the morrow, All Fools' Day, started that subject; but they had no chance—burglaries easily won, so to speak.

Manners told a story of a burglary he had heard of during the last vacation, and Gore capped it with a tale of a murder. Then Kangaroo told a story of a fearful outrage in a lonely Australian bush, which he had heard before he came to St. Jim's. By that time the juniors were very sleepy, but in such a state of uneasy shuddering, that they hardly cared to close their eyes and go to sleep.

"Goo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as Kangaroo concluded his thrilling yarns. "What asses we are to talk these things after bedtime. We shall dream burglars now!"

"—I believe I heard a sound!" muttered Skimpole.

"Ho, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed, but his laugh did not have its usual cheery and hearty sound. His nerves were a little shaken, too.

"Somebody tell a funny story!" said Glyn.

"Go it, Lowther!"

"All right!" said Lowther. "There's the story of the man with the iron saucepan——"

"Oh, we've had that!" said Gore.

"Then I'll tell you what happened to my uncle at Brighton——"

"Had that!" yelled Dane.  
 "Well, there's the story about the boiled cod—"  
 "Too old!"  
 "Look here," said Monty Lowther wrathfully, "if you're so mighty particular—"  
 "I'm going to sleep," said Manners, yawning. "Good-night, all!"  
 "Good-night!"

Monty Lowther's funny story was never told. The Shell fellows settled down to slumber; but as they did so, there came a sudden sound through the silence of the dormitory. It was a sound of a rattle at the high windows.

In a moment every fellow was sitting bolt upright in bed.

"W-w-what was that?" gasped Gore.  
 "D-d-d-d-did you hear it?"

"I—heard something," said Tom Merry, staring towards the glimmering windows. "It—sounded like the window rattling."  
 "Or—or a stone rattling on the window!" muttered Skimpole.

"Ass! How could a stone rattle on the window?"  
 "Someone might have thrown it, my dear Lowther."

"Futhead! There's nobody in the quad at this time of night; and if there were, I suppose he wouldn't be chucking stones up at this window!"

"Well, no," agreed Skimpole. "Probably not. Still—"

"Listen!" muttered Tom Merry. "Don't jaw! Listen!"

There was a tense silence in the dormitory as the Shell fellows listened for a repetition of the sound. There came a soft sound from the window, but it was the familiar sound of a shower of rain, driven on the panes by the wind.

"There's no one there!" muttered Lowther.

"It must have been the wind!"  
 "It's—it's all right!"

Tom Merry jumped out of bed. "The sound certainly came from the window," he said. "I'm jolly well going to see!"

The hero of the Shell mounted to the window, and opened it softly and looked out. There was a glimmer of starlight in the old quadrangle of St. Jim's. Below, Tom Merry could see a gleam of ruddy light from lower windows. Certainly, if a burglar were there, he had chosen a very early hour for his visit; it was as yet barely ten o'clock.

Tom Merry leaned out and scanned the dusky quadrangle below.

Save where the glow of light fell from the windows below, he could see nothing; the quadrangle was very dark and silent, the faint starlight only serving to make darkness visible, as it were.

Tom Merry searched the quad with his eyes, and scanned the ivy upon the wall below the dormitory windows. It was rustling in the wind, and the raindrops were dashing on it; but there was certainly no sign of a climber. Tom Merry shivered and closed the window, and dropped back into the dormitory.

"Well?" demanded half a dozen breathless voices.

"Nothing there!"

"Oh, I suppose it was the wind!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm going to sleep!"

Tom Merry got into bed again.

"I hardly think it was the wind," he remarked thoughtfully.

"Well, it was the rain, then!"

"I don't see how the rain could rattle the window."

"Well, what was it, then?" demanded Kangaroo.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Good egg!" suddenly exclaimed Manners. "If there was anybody prowling outside the window we shall find traces of him to-morrow, anyway. It's raining, and the ground down there will be soft and muddy."

"Lot of consolation that will be, if we get burgled!" said Monty Lowther, yawning. "Anyway, if I'm burgled I'm going to be burgled asleep. Good-night!"

And Monty Lowther went to sleep. And the rest of the Shell were not slow in following his example.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
 The First of April.

CLANG! Clang!  
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House and rubbed his eyes. The rising-bell was clanging, and the sun was shining in at the high windows. The rain had passed away with the night, and the sun of the first day of April was gleaming cheerfully upon the wet glass of the windows.  
 "Fine mornin', bai Jove, aftah the wain!" said D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! Certainly not! Do you mean to say that that beastly bulldog is undah my bed?" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

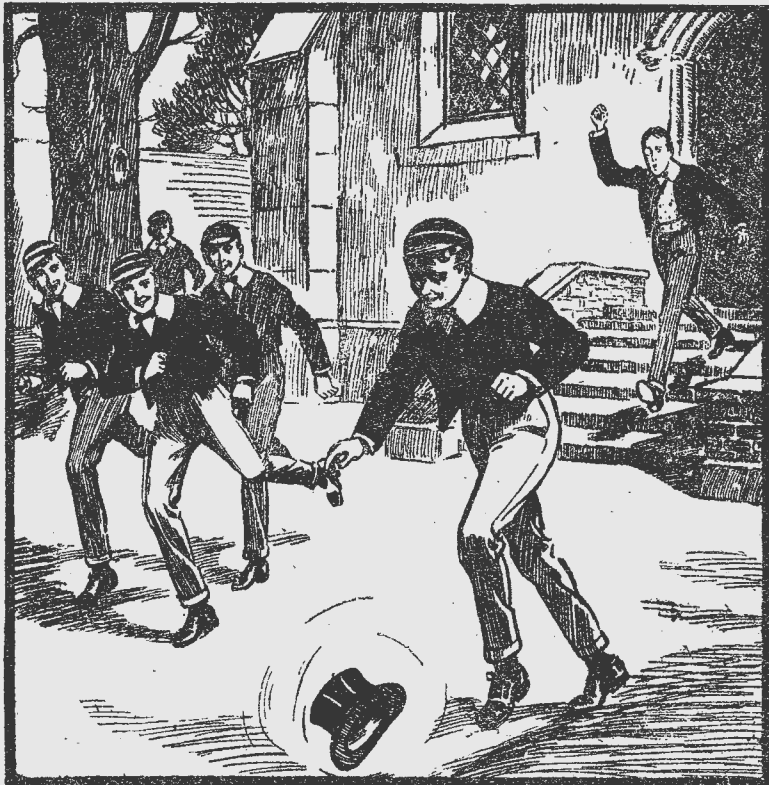
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Mind your calf!"  
 "Look out, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus had put one leg out of bed. He whipped it back again in the twinkling of an eye, and dragged the bed-clothes round him again.

"Hewwies, you ass—"  
 "Look out! Mind how you step!"  
 "Call the beast away!"

"Rats!" said Herries. "I'm not going to call Towser. Besides, he wouldn't come!"

"He's your wotten dog, and you ought to teach the feahful beast to obey you, Hewwies. I wegard it as disgustin' to bring that beast into the dorm. He has no respect whatevah for a fellah's twosahs!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"



"Come on, you chaps!" called out Wally. "On the ball!" "What-ho!" And the fags with a whoop, rushed in pursuit of D'Arcy's beautiful silk topper. "You young waeal!" roared Arthur Augustus, dashing after them. "How dare you kick my hat!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!" said Jack Blake, as he turned out of bed. "It would be rotten to have a rainy day for a half-holiday. Hallo, Gussy, old man!" he added, staring at the swell of St. Jim's with a startled expression.

D'Arcy groped for his monocle and jammed it into his eye and stared back at him.

"What's the matter, Blake, deah boy?"  
 "Nothing, only—"  
 "Only what?"

"Did you put Herries' bulldog under your bed?"

"What?"

"My hat!" said Herries, sitting up in bed and grinning. "Did you fetch Towser in here, Gussy?"

"Towsah?"  
 "Yes. Did you?"

"Drive him out before I get up."

"Can't be done!" said Digby, as he turned out of bed. "Jump out and chance it. If he fastens on you I'll go for him. Dogs are allowed one free bite, you know."

"You uttah ass—"

"Put your leg out and see if it's bitten. If it isn't, you can get out safe enough. D'Arcy darling!" said Reilly.

"You fwabjous chump—"

"Faith, and ye'll have to stay in bed if you don't get out!" said Reilly.

"Call that beastly dog away, Hewwies!"

"Rats!"  
 "I shall no longah wegard you as a fwield."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 The rest of the Fourth had turned out  
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now. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained sitting in bed in a state of great trepidation. Herries' bulldog, Towser, had sometimes a somewhat uncertain temper, and it was no joke to put out a bare leg within reach of his teeth.

"Blake, dear boy, dwive him away——"

"I couldn't, Gussy!"

"Lumley-Lumley, my dear fellow, will you dwive that howlid beast fwom undah my bed!"

Lumley-Lumley chuckled.

"I simply couldn't do it, Gussy," he said.

"Levison, dwive him away!"

"Impossible!" grinned Levison.

"Mellish, dear boy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to laugh at, Mellish. I regard you as a wottah! Hancock, old man, I wish you would dwive that beast away for me!"

"Impossible!" said Hancock.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little tighter into his eye, and simply glared at the grinning Fourth-Formers. They seemed to be taking the matter as a joke; but it seemed like anything but a joke to the swell of St. Jim's.

"I regard you as a set of wottahs!" he shouted. "Dwive that beast away. I can't remain in bed all the mornin', you silly asses!"

"Chance it, then," advised Blake.

"I refuse to chance it!"

"Jump out suddenly, and he won't bite you," said Herries.

"He might, you ass!"

"Well, dogs are allowed one free——"

"Pway don't be an ass, Digby. Look here——"

"Tell you what," said Blake, "jump from your bed to the next, without getting on the floor at all, and then you'll be all right."

"Bai Jove, that's a good ideah!"

Arthur Augustus threw back the bed-clothes, and rose to his feet on the creaking bed. Levison gave a sudden yell.

"Look out!"

In an instant the swell of St. Jim's was under the bedclothes again, dragging them round him, to form some protection against the teeth of Towser.

"Bai Jove! Is the beast comin'?" he panted.

"No," said Levison coolly. "I was only telling you to look out, on general principles, you know. Nothing like keeping one's eyes open."

"You uttah wottah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better make a rush for it," said Blake. "You'll be late for brekker."

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet on the bed again. He peered over the edge of the bed, expecting to see the bulldog's nose, but there was nothing to be seen of Towser so far. The swell of St. Jim's made a wild leap, and landed upon the next bed, and fell upon his knees there, and rolled off upon the floor on the other side.

"Look out!" shrieked Blake.

"Run for it!"

"Mind your eye!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled wildly to his feet, and leaped upon another bed, gasping.

"Bai Jove! Is he after me?"

"Oh, no, you're all right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwightful asses——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped down gingerly from the bed. He caught up a poker, which one of the juniors had brought up to the dormitory in view of possible burglars over-night. Then he turned a stern eye upon Herries.

"I am goin' to dwive that beast out of the dorm," he said. "If he twices to

bite me, Hewwies, I shall cwack his beastly head with this pokah."

"Go it!" grinned Herries.

Poker in hand, Arthur Augustus advanced cautiously towards his bed. He made a lunge under the bed with the poker, and shouted:

"Come out, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Bai Jove! Where is he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no sound from Towser. Arthur Augustus stooped lower, and looked under the bed. Blank space met his eye. There was no sign of Towser under the bed, or in the dormitory at all. Arthur Augustus stared blankly, and the expression on his aristocratic features made the Fourth-Formers shriek.

"You—you uttah wottahs!" gasped D'Arcy, whirling round towards the yelling juniors. "The beastly bulldog isn't there at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You told me Towsah was there, Blake——"

"I didn't," said Blake indignantly. "I asked you if you had put Herries' bulldog under your bed. Didn't I, you chaps?"

"Certainly," said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess I heard you."

"I was merely asking a question, not making a statement," Blake explained. "If you choose to jump to wrong conclusions, I can't help it. Chaps ought to be logical."

"You—you uttah ass——"

"And I only told you to look out—I didn't say Towser was there," said Herries.

"Blessed if I know why you jump to these conclusions without any evidence, Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwabjous asses!" yelled D'Arcy.

"You certainly led me to believe that that wotten bulldog was undah my bed, and——"

"First of April!" chanted Blake.

"First of April! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I forgot——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned very pink. He had elaborated a great joke himself for the first of April, with the assistance of his minor, Wally; but he had not been on his guard against the humorous attempts of his Form-fellows. He sniffed as he turned away towards his washstand.

"Look out, Gussy!" shouted Digby. "Don't tread on that nail!"

D'Arcy jumped.

"What nail? I don't see——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"First of April!" yelled Digby.

"You uttah ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### The Mysterious Footprints.

**T**OM MERRY & CO. were busy that morning.

The chums of the Shell had not forgotten the incident of the night, and after breakfast it occurred to them to look for possible footprints under the windows of the dormitory.

The rain of the night before had rendered the ground soft and spongy, and if a cracksmen had been prowling round the house in the night, it was pretty certain that he would have left footprints behind him.

Even on the gravel paths in the quadrangle there would be traces of feet, and the juniors, who had had a great deal of experience as Boy Scouts, rather prided themselves upon their ability to follow tracks. The Terrible Three strolled round the house to examine the ground under the dormitory windows, and several other Shell fellows followed them.

"Mind where you tread!" said Tom Merry warily. "If there are any

tracks here, we don't want to get them mucked up! You fags can clear out!"

"Rats!" replied Curly Gibson promptly.

Half a dozen fags of the Third were on the scene, and, in fact, quite a crowd of fellows had gathered to see the investigation. The Shell fellows had talked of the peculiar happening of the night before, and most of the School House had heard of it.

"Well, keep off the grass!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, you Shell chaps are a lot of giddy, nervous old hens!" said Hobbs, of the Third. "You see a burglar in every shadow, you know!"

"That's just what's the matter!" agreed Curly.

Monty Lowther made a movement towards the fags, and they beat a prompt retreat. But Lowther was recalled by a shout of excitement from Tom Merry.

"My hat! Look here!"

"What is it?"

"Footprints!"

"Great Scott!"

"The cracksmen!"

The Shell fellows stared at the footprints in surprise and some satisfaction. The alarm of the night had not been without grounds. Someone had evidently been prowling round the School House in the hours of darkness.

In the soft soil below the windows there were distinct footmarks. So deep, so distinct were the prints of the big, heavy boots, that it seemed as if the wearer of them had jammed his feet down specially hard in the soil on purpose.

There was a flower-bed along the wall at this point, and the soft soil was specially adapted for keeping traces of this kind. Deep in the soil showed the outlines of a very large pair of boots—going close up to the wall and then receding from it, back to the gravel path where the juniors were now standing.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another with startled faces.

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry at last. "There was really someone here in the night! No mistake about it now!"

"No fear!"

"Chap with jolly big feet, too!" said Monty Lowther, scanning the footprints. He took a tape-measure from his pocket, and measured the nearest track. "This chap took at least nine, I should think."

"Then it couldn't possibly have been a chap breaking bounds," Manners said thoughtfully. "Must have been a full-grown man!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hallo, you fellows! Found anything?" exclaimed Blake, coming up.

"Look there!"

"Phew!"

Blake stared at the tracks.

"The giddy cracksmen!"

"Only one of them, I think," said Tom Merry. "The tracks all seem to belong to the same feet." He had gone up close to the wall. "And look here! The ivy is dragged out in places, as if he tried to climb, and then found it wouldn't bear his weight."

"He must have climbed, if it was him we heard at the window," said Gore.

"Yes; that's so!"

"And he'd have got in, too," said Kangaroo excitedly, "if we hadn't been awake! It was our being awake last night that prevented a burglary!"

"Looks like it!"

"I suppose we'd better tell Mr. Railton," said Tom Merry. "The police ought to know about this. They may be able to catch the rotter."

"I don't see why we shouldn't!" said Blake. "I'd trust a Boy Scout to follow a track better than a policeman any day! Look here, it's a half-holiday to-day, and I think we might do worse than run him down!"

"Jolly good idea!" said Tom Merry. "What do you fellows say?"  
 "I'm game!" said Kangaroo.  
 "So am I!" said Figgins.  
 "And I!" said several other juniors.  
 "Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "We'll all meet directly after dinner and follow up the footprints."  
 "What-ho!"

Juniors of both houses were keen on tracking the cracksmen, and as soon as dinner was finished they met in the quad and marched out towards the gates.

"Let's look for the tracks along the road," said Blake. "My idea is that the villain bolted after he was alarmed last night, and very likely he came over the wall, and ran right across into the wood. He might have been afraid of having Taggles' mastiff after him. Don't you think so?"

"Very likely," said Tom Merry. "Then we'll begin here."

Opposite the school wall, across the high road, was the wood, and a deep ditch separated it from the highway. There were planks across the ditch in several places, and the ground up and down by the border of the wood was very soft and spongy from recent rain. The juniors filed over the ditch by the planks, and plunged in among the trees on the edge of the wood.

Certainly, if the cracksmen had been at St. Jim's, and had fled suddenly, it was very probable that he had taken directly to the wood to avoid pursuers. The juniors had high hopes of discovering tracks among the trees and underbrush.

"Mind you don't trample on any footprints!" Tom Merry called out, as the juniors scattered to search for traces. "Look where you go!"

"Yes, that's all right!"

"The chap who finds a track can whistle to the rest," said Figgins.

"All serene!"

To and fro, in the trees and bushes, on the border of the wood, the juniors went cautiously. All of them had measurements of the boots which had left tracks under the windows of the Shell dormitory, ready to measure and compare any tracks they might find in the wood. The ground was soft, almost sloppy, and there was no doubt that if anybody had been tramping there traces would be left. Wherever the juniors moved now, they left tracks in the damp and clinging soil.

Rain-drops fell upon them from the branches as they moved. There was much rain left in the wood, though the weather was dry and sunny now. But they did not mind a little wet. They were too keen on the search to heed little discomforts like that.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy plunged further into the wood than the other fellows, and disappeared from view.

"Don't lose yourself, Gussy!" called out Blake.

"That's all wight, deah boy!"

"And don't run into danger, you ass!" said Figgins.

"Wats!"

"I think I'll keep close to him, in case of accidents," said Blake. "He's an exasperating ass, but I shouldn't like him to run upon the burglar alone."

And Blake pressed on after the swell of St. Jim's. Suddenly, as he came upon an open patch of ground under the trees, he uttered an exclamation. There was a stretch of muddy soil before him, and the

tracks of Arthur Augustus' elegant boots led across it. But, apart from D'Arcy's tracks, distinct to the view, was the mark of a large and clumsy boot.

"My hat!"

In a moment Blake was on his knees on the ground, regardless of the mud and of his trousers, and was measuring the track.

It fitted exactly!

Blake rose and gave a shrill whistle. The signal was answered from all directions and the juniors came running through the bushes.

"Found it?" shouted Kangaroo.

"Yes!"

"Hurrah!"

"Stand clear! Don't tread on it!" shouted Blake.

"Right-ho! By Jove, here it is!"

The juniors gathered round the track in glee. They were almost as much surprised as they were pleased. They had hoped to find the trail of the cracksmen in the wood, but now that they had found it they realised how slight their expectation had been, though their hope was strong.

But they had found it! It was the track of a right boot—only the one boot, but it corresponded exactly with the track that had been found under the windows of the Shell dormitory at St. Jim's. Half a dozen of the juniors measured it, and it fitted the measurements to a hair.

"There's no doubt about it," said Tom Merry, drawing a deep breath. "Look here! Here's the very mark of a patch on the sole of the boot, just the same."

"It's the same, right enough!"

"Queer there's only one track, though," said Manners, with a puzzled look.

"Where did the chap put his other foot?"

"The track must be here somewhere."

"I can't see it."

"Perhaps he hopped along on one leg," said Blake.

"Rot!"

"Well, there's only one track, anyway. That's enough to follow. Let's look round and see where it leads."

"I dropped on this quite by chance, following Gussy," Blake explained. He put his hands to his mouth, and called out,

"Gussy, Gussy! Hallo!"

"Hallo, deah boy!" came back an answering shout through the wood.

"Have you seen any more tracks?"

"No, deah boy."

"Well, the silly ass would miss them, anyway!" said Blake, with a sniff. "Let's get on in this direction."

And the juniors pressed on eagerly in the direction in which the solitary footprint pointed. They were on the track, at all events.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

**K**EEPING a keen look-out now, and their cudgels ready for war, the St. Jim's juniors pressed on. Towser gave a growl occasionally, and their hearts leaped into their mouths; but each time it proved to be a false alarm. Towser was apparently simply exercising his vocal cords.

"Keep that blessed dog quiet, Herries!" said Tom Merry at last. "We don't want to give the rotter the alarm when we get near him."

Herries grunted.

"Rats! Towser won't give the alarm."

"Well, keep him quiet. Hallo, what is he after now?"

Towser had suddenly strained upon his chain, and he tried to bolt into the bushes.

Herries held fast on the chain.

"Hold on, Towsy!"

"Gr-r-r-r!" said Towser.

"He's on the

track!" exclaimed Herries excitedly. "He's smelt out the villain! Come on, Towser will lead the way!"

"More likely smelt out a rabbit," said Blake.

"Look here, Blake—"

"We're sticking to the trail," said Tom Merry. "Pull Towser in!"

"Rot! I'm going to follow his lead," said Herries.

And Herries followed the excited Towser into the bushes and disappeared. Tom Merry & Co. kept on the trail. They did not share Herries' implicit faith in the sagacity of the bulldog. And they were soon satisfied that they were right, for the footprint appeared again and again in the depths of the wood.

After a while the track led through the wood, back the way they had come. The fugitive had doubled on his tracks, that was evident. The juniors hurried on. Every now and then they lost the track, and some minutes were spent in seeking it; but they always found it again, and pressed on more eagerly than ever.

They reached the edge of the wood on the high road, opposite the wall of St. Jim's, within a dozen paces of the spot where they had entered the wood to begin the search, a good two hours before.

There they halted, looking at one another in wonder.

"He's doubled right back to where he came into the wood," Tom Merry said, at last. "Of course, he thought that would throw us off the track. He must know we're tracking him."

"Not so easy to throw the St. Jim's Boy Scouts off the track!" said Blake, with some satisfaction, which was surely justifiable under the circumstances. "He's taken to the road now."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows.

"It's odd if he ventured on the high road in broad daylight," he said. "His description is known all over the county. I wonder—"

"What?" asked Redfern.

"Let's look across the road."

Tom Merry crossed the ditch by the plank, and examined the road. There was a fresh track in the mud by the end of the plank, and another close by the school wall. Then another and another, leading along the wall.

"He's gone along here, keeping close to the wall," said Figgins.

"Looks like it."

At the end of the school wall were the palings of a plantation. Tom Merry examined the palings. The tracks ceased there, and on the damp palings were plain signs of someone having climbed. The wood was scored with scratches as of nailed boots.

"He's gone into the plantation," said Tom Merry.

"And we're after him," said Blake.

"Come on!"

Tom Merry climbed the palings. He dropped down inside among the trees, and the other fellows followed him fast. Excitement was now at fever heat. It seemed almost incredible that the fugitive should dare to seek refuge in the plantation under the very walls of St. Jim's. But the tracks told their own tale.

Among the firs and beeches of the plantation, the tracks were visible wherever the ground was soft and muddy. With beating hearts the juniors followed, and the trail led them by a roundabout way through the plantation to the east wall of the school. There they stopped, at the foot of the wall, and the juniors stopped, too, thunderstruck.

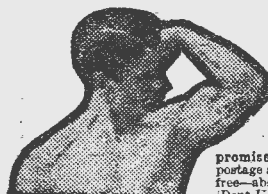
There was no doubting the amazing truth!

Whoever had left that trail had climbed the walls of St. Jim's on the east side, from the beech plantation, and was now within the precincts of the school.

Tom Merry & Co. were silent with sheer

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mazement. They knew that they must have been close upon the track of the unseen fugitive all the time, and they could easily guess that he had been rendered desperate by their close pursuit. But that he should adopt such a desperate, unheard-of resource as taking refuge in the precincts of the school itself was astounding.

Yet there could be no doubt. The trail stopped at the foot of the wall, and there was no sign that the fugitive had turned back.

"My hat!" said Blake, breaking a long silence. "I never heard of such nerve! The fellow is in St. Jim's—St. Jim's itself."

"He must be. Yet—"

"It's a cunning dodge," said Figgins. "Of course, he never thought that anybody would dream of looking for him in the school itself, and there are lots of old nooks and crannies in St. Jim's where a dozen men could hide. Only it wanted a jolly lot of nerve to try it in the daylight."

"Blessed if I catch on to it," said Redfern. "I say—"

"Well," said Tom Merry.

"I suppose there can't be any spoof about it?"

"Spoof! What do you mean?"

"Well, it seems jolly queer, that's all," said Redfern hesitatingly.

"What rot!" said Blake warmly.

"We've tracked the fellow for miles, and it's been the same track all the time. How could there be any spoof about it? You're an ass!"

"Anyway, we're going to finish the bizney now," said Tom Merry. "Follow your leader."

He leaped up, and caught the top of the wall in his hands. He clambered over, and the other fellows clambered over after him.

Inside the school wall at this side was a shady walk, shadowed by big elms. It was quite possible that the fugitive had climbed the wall, and dropped inside without attracting any attention.

Most of the St. Jim's fellows who were not out of gates were on the playing-fields. The elm-shaded walk was quite deserted. The gravel was wet with the late rain, and in the soft ground the juniors soon picked up the trail again.

There, in the soft gravel close to the wall, was the imprint of the burglarious boot—the same track that had been found under the Shell dormitory windows that morning—the same track that had led them on the long trail through the wood to the old castle, and back again to the walls of St. Jim's.

There it was, as clear and distinct as ever—as distinct, as Blake sagely remarked, as if the fellow had deliberately made it so to help them track him. There were other footprints near it, but they were not so easily discerned.

There was one most probable place where a fugitive might seek a hiding-place, and that was in the old tower of St. Jim's. The old tower was in a shaky condition, and although the fellows were allowed to enter it, they were not permitted to ascend to the top of the spiral staircase.

On the third story of the tower, the staircase was barred across, and any fellow who had gone farther, and was discovered, was certain of lines, if not of a licking. If

the fugitive knew of the place, what more likely spot for him to conceal himself in? And the track was found again, in the very doorway of the tower.

The juniors halted in the low, arched doorway with beating hearts. The track led inwards, but it did not lead outwards. And from the stone tower there was certainly no other exit. The rascal could not escape. He was fairly cornered at last.

On the lowest step of the tower was the print of a muddy boot. The stair was dry and dusty, and the muddy footprint was quite plain to see. It was the old familiar footprint again.

"He's here!"

"Come on!"

The juniors reached the second story of the tower. There was a wide landing, on the other side of which the spiral stair recommenced. On the landing were two doors, and one of them was closed.

Outside the closed door, clearly legible in the dust, was the final track of the boot they had followed so far. Further it did not go.

On the upper stairs the dust was undisturbed. It was clear that whoever had made that track had stopped at the second story, and the closed door told the rest.

Outside the door the juniors halted, breathing hard. Tom Merry tried the door, and found that it was fast. There was a ponderous lock on the door, and there should have been a key in it—the juniors remembered the big, heavy iron key that belonged to it. They did not doubt that it had been shifted to the inside. At all events, the door was locked.

"He's in there!" said Tom Merry.

"Cornered at last!" said Redfern.

Tom Merry knocked on the door.

"You are run down, you scoundrel!" he called out, through the big, old-fashioned keyhole. "You had better give in!"

There was no reply.

"Obstinate brute!" said Monty Lowther. "He wants to make us fancy that he isn't there. If he isn't, what's the door locked for?"

Knock, knock, knock!

"Open the door, you rascal!"

Silence.

"We shall have to break in the lock somehow," said Tom Merry, looking rather doubtfully, however, at the ponderous door.

"Better have Kildare up here first," said Blake. "It will make a fearful row and the Head might be waxy if we bust it in."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Good!" he said. "It's pretty plain that the villain doesn't mean to surrender, and Kildare will be useful if it comes to a scrap. I'll go and fetch him."

Kildare had just changed after playing football, and was chatting with Darrel and Rusden, of his own Form, when Tom Merry came panting up. The seniors were already aware that something very unusual was proceeding in the quadrangle, and they looked inquiringly at the hero of the Shell.

"What's the row over there on the east side?" asked Darrel. "Some of you rascals exploring the tower out of bounds?"

"No," gasped Tom Merry; "it's the cracksman!"

"The what?"

"The cracksman!"

Kildare looked at him sternly.

"If you are trying to play a First-of-April joke on the Sixth, Tom Merry, you are going the right way to work to get a licking!" he exclaimed.

"It's not a joke," Kildare, said Tom Merry earnestly. "It's honest Injun! We've been tracking the villain down, and he's been dodging us. He's hidden himself in the room on the second floor in the tower, and locked himself in."

Kildare jumped.

"Are you sure, Tom Merry?" he ejaculated.

"Quite sure!"

"You've seen him?"

"No; he kept out of sight. But his tracks—"

"The same tracks that were under the dormitory windows?" asked Darrel.

"Yes. We followed him by them, and they lead right into the tower, and up to the door of the room on the second story."

Kildare whistled softly.

"Blessed if I quite understand this," he said. "It's jolly extraordinary. But I suppose we ought to look into it, if it's not a jape."

"Honour bright, Kildare!"

"Well, I'll come."

The three seniors hurried with Tom Merry to the old tower. There was a buzz in the crowd as they appeared, and a sound of laughter.

"You're being spoofed, Kildare!"

"First of April, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare took no notice of the remarks. He entered the tower, followed by Darrel and Rusden and Tom Merry, and ascended the spiral staircase to the second landing, where the burglar-hunters were awaiting his arrival anxiously. Kildare looked at the door, and tried it with his hand.

"It's locked!" said Blake.

Kildare cast a sharp glance round upon the juniors.

"Look here, you kids, I know it's the first of April," he said. "This door may be locked on the inside, but the key isn't in the lock. It may have been locked on the outside, and the key taken away by a practical joker. Do you all say that this is not a jape, and that you have really followed the tracks here?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"Honour bright!" said Blake.

Kildare could not doubt their earnestness. If there was any practical joke in the matter, they were the victims of it, not the perpetrators, that was clear. They were all in deadly earnest.

Kildare nodded.

"Very well," he said. "Buzz off and fetch Taggles, one of you, and tell him to bring his tools for forcing a lock!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake.

And he dashed off.

Tom Merry pointed out the track of the famous foot in the dust of the staircase to Kildare, and the captain of St. Jim's could not help being impressed. It was the same track that he had examined under the dormitory windows in the morning, and if it was genuine then, why not now? And yet—the locked room was very silent—it was not easy to believe that a desperate criminal was lurking there. But soon all would be known, for in five minutes Blake returned with Taggles, the school porter and his tools.

Taggles was not in a good humour; his surly expression was evidence enough that he suspected a First of April jape. But he had to obey Kildare.

"Break in that lock, Taggles!" said the St. Jim's captain.

"Werry well, Master Kildare."

The lock, ponderous as it was, was old and rusty. Taggles drove an iron chisel between the door and the jamb, and dragged on it. There was a loud-sounding crack as the lock yielded.

Crack!

Kildare drew a deep breath. The juniors grasped their cudgels, and stood ready. Taggles hastily backed away. If there was danger in the room, Taggles had no intention whatever of bearing the brunt of it.

"The lock's broken, Master Kildare," he said, from the rear.

"Very good, Taggles!"

Kildare, with a firm hand, threw the heavy door open.

"Follow me!"

Write to the Editor of

**ANSWERS**

If you are not getting your right  
PENSION

The captain of St. Jim's strode into the room. Tom Merry & Co. dashed in after him, with cudgels uplifted.  
They were ready for the foe!  
But no foe was to be seen!  
Kildare's brows contracted into a frown, and a gasp of amazement and dismay escaped the juniors.  
The room was empty!

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.  
Who'd Have Thought It?**

**T**OM MERRY & CO. stared about them blankly.

There was no one in the room. The little barred window in the corner would hardly have afforded passage for a sparrow; it was quite certain that the fugitive had not escaped that way. Then where was he? He was not in the room!

The April sunshine fell in golden bars through the little window, and showed up every corner of the bare, unfurnished room. The man was not there! Had he vanished into thin air? For a moment the dumbfounded juniors were almost prepared to believe that he had!

"Great Scott!"  
"Gone!"  
"He—he can't have been here!" stammered Blake. "He couldn't get out, excepting by the door. And it was locked! What does it mean?"  
"It's—it's magic!" muttered Digby.

this. How did the man get out, and how did he come to leave a boot here behind him?"

"You young fathead!" roared Kildare. "He hasn't been here at all!"

"What?"  
"Not been here?"  
"Oh, draw it mild, Kildare!"

"He's not been here, you silly young asses! It's a jape—a first of April jape, I suppose, though I can't see who did it, or how it was done. I—"

"It—it can't be! I tell you we followed the tracks all the way—"

"And they led up here—"  
"Hallo!" exclaimed Darrel, who had taken up the famous boot and was looking at it. "There's a letter in this."

"My hat!"

Darrel had taken a folded paper out of the boot. It had been pinned upon the inside. He unfolded it in amazement, and looked at it, and then he simply staggered. The boot fell from his hand with a crash to the floor, and Darrel reeled against the wall, gasping with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Kildare jerked the note from Darrel's hand, and read it. Then he burst into a roar, and the tears of laughter streamed down his cheeks.

The juniors were amazed and exasperated.

"Show us the letter!" yelled Jack Blake.

caught it up and read it aloud. The juniors looked at one another. For a time they could not even speak. The stupendousness of the jape had taken their breath away.

This, then, was the jape Arthur Augustus had wished to propound to them the previous night; this was the wheeze he had offered in Study No. 6, and then to the Terrible Three, and then to Figgins & Co., and having been laughed to scorn by all of them, he had proceeded to work it against them, and to take them all in, in a body!

It seemed almost incredible. The proposal to follow the trail of the burglar, and to hunt him down, had been simply playing into the hands of the practical joker.

Monty Lowther held the note in his hand, gazing at it blankly, while Kildare and Darrel staggered helplessly out of the tower, weak with laughter. A shout of inquiry greeted them from the crowd outside, but the seniors could not reply to questions—they had no breath left.

"Have you found him?"  
"Where is he?"  
"Where's the giddy burglar?"  
"Ask Tom Merry!" gasped Kildare.  
"I can't speak! Ha, ha, ha! You can ask the kids in there! Oh dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush of the fellows into the tower. Lumley-Lumley was the first in

# THE GREAT DAY—APRIL 21st.

ON THIS DATE

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**TELL ALL YOUR CHUMS ABOUT THIS GREAT ATTRACTION.**

Kildare frowned darkly. He did not think there was magic in it, though for the moment it seemed so to the thunder-stricken juniors. Kildare strode across the room, and pointed to a large, ragged, muddy boot that lay in the middle of it.

The juniors gazed at it. Their voices seemed to have left them; they made no sound. The captain of St. Jim's looked round at them angrily, then, as he saw their dismayed faces, his own relaxed a little.

"Is that the boot that made the tracks?" he asked.

"Oh!"  
"Measure it," said Darrel, grinning.

Tom Merry silently measured the boot. It was exact! It was a boot belonging to the right foot, and it was the exact size, and there was the worn-down heel, and the patch on the sole that the trackers had come to know so well! What did it mean? Had the man been there, and vanished into space, leaving only a boot behind? Their brains reeled as they tried to think it out.

"That is the boot?" asked Kildare grimly.

"Ye-es; I—I think so!"  
"You young asses!"

"But I—I don't understand!" stammered Tom Merry. "How did it get here? It's the boot that made the tracks under the dorm window last night—or one of them—there were left foot tracks as well under the dorm window. I don't understand

"Hand it over!" roared Tom Merry, making a grasp at the letter. Kildare was laughing too much to reply. Tom Merry caught the letter from his hand, and the juniors crowded round him to read it as he held it up. They were able to read it at last, and this is what they read:

"April 1.  
"Dear Boys,—I offered to take you into my scheme yesterday, and you treated me with the grossest disrespect. You all said that I couldn't possibly take you in on the first of April.

"I rather think I have done it!"  
"The footprints outside the Shell dormitory windows last night were made by my minor, Wally, who put on an old pair of boots discarded by Taggles for the purpose.

"When you started to search for the burglar to track him down, I went with you, with one of the boots in my coat pocket. I made the tracks that you followed through the wood, keeping a little ahead of you all the time for that purpose.

"I rather think I have done you, dear boys!"

"I trust you will bear no malice, and will all join me in a feed now that the search is over, just to show that you can take a little joke. ;

"Yours always, A. A. D'ARCY."

Tom Merry read the letter, and then it fluttered from his hand. Somebody else

the room where Tom Merry & Co. were standing in dismay. He caught sight of the note in Monty Lowther's hand and understood. He caught the note from Lowther's fingers and rushed downstairs with it.

"Here, give that back!" shouted Tom Merry.

But Lumley-Lumley was already reading it out to the crowd.

Vells of laughter rose.

"Well, we're done!" said Tom Merry at last. "It was a jape of that boulder Gussy! Who would have thought it?"

"By Jove—who would?"

"And we told him he couldn't take anybody in!" murmured Figgins.

"My hat!"

"The cheeky young villain! We'll give him the bumping of his life for this, anyway!" exclaimed Digby wrathfully.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Redfern.

"Come on—let's have him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors tramped furiously down the staircase, and wild yells of laughter greeted them from the crowd in the quad. All the fellows, of all Forms, School House and New House alike, were shrieking with merriment over the first of April burglar-hunt.

"Here they come!"  
"Have you caught him?"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"First of April!"  
Tom Merry & Co. tramped through the

crowd with crimson faces, making directly for the School House. The crowd followed them, yelling and jeering, and reciting parts of the letter D'Arcy had left in the boot. One roar of laughter seemed to sweep across the quadrangle from the old tower to the School House. As they drew near to the house a well-known voice hailed them from above. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing at the window of Study No. 6, and his eyeglass gleamed in his eye as he gazed urbanly down upon the excited crowd.

"Gentlemen——"

"You rotter!" roared Figgins.

"You ass!"

"You boulder!"

"You spoofer!"

"Gentlemen and deah boys," said the swell of St. Jim's, "pway listen to me for a minute. I have locked the door of this study, and bawwicaded it with all the furniture, so you cannot possibly get at me. If you are willin' to make it pax I am

willin' to ovahtook your gwoss disrespect to me yestahday, n w that I have pproved to you that I can take you in quite easily——"

"You—you—you——"

"Pway take it smiling, deah boys, and come up and have a feed instead of getting watty," suggested Arthur Augustus. "I am quite willin' to be fwiends."

The juniors looked at D'Arcy, and looked at one another. The crowd round them were still laughing, and certainly they would not make the fellows laugh any the less by ragging the swell of St. Jim's. It occurred to them that it would be more sensible, and more sportsmanlike, to take the matter in a good humour. Tom Merry had already recovered his temper. He burst into a laugh.

"Gussy's right!" he exclaimed. "It's no good feeling sore about it—and it was a jolly good jape! Make it pax."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'm hungry——"

"Oh, all right," grunted Blake.

"But——"

"Is it pax, deah boys?"

"Yes."

"Vewy good. Pway come up—I've got a weally wipin' feed, and I'm sure you must be hungry."

They were. They had not noticed it in the excitement of the chase, but they were certainly very hungry; and when they crowded into Study No. 6, and found what a really royal spread the swell of St. Jim's had prepared, they were glad that they had made it pax!

Arthur Augustus did not crow over his victory, and ere long, under the influence of the good cheer, Tom Merry & Co. were able to laugh heartily themselves over the great jape with which the swell of St. Jim's had celebrated the historic date, and caused them to be pointed out by the whole school for some time to come as Gussy's April Fools.

THE END.

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# PETE AND THE SMASHER!

A Thrilling Long Complete Tale, dealing with the Adventures of **JACK, SAM, and PETE** the Three Famous Comrades.

— BY —

**S. CLARKE HOOK.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

**Pete Accepts a Challenge—A Job for Raja—The Arrival of Boppy.**

**J**IMMY TRAVERS, the circus proprietor, was savage. It took a good lot to vex him; but the rival showman, Boppy, as he called him, could always do it by pitching his circus close to Jimmy's, and this is exactly what he had done on this occasion. Pete, the negro lad, was making various suggestions, many of which were amusing to his comrades, Jack and Sam.

"If some of your suggestions were put into practice," said Jack, "we should soon all find ourselves in gaol."

"That's a fact, we should," declared Sam. "But Pete never gives a thought to the consequences."

"It seems not," smiled Jimmy. "You don't tink, Jimmy," said Pete, "if I was to turn Daisy, the elephant, loose, dat she would smash up his circus?"

"She might; but that isn't legal!"

"Well, it ain't legal for him to come and take half your profits, is it? And he's got a prize-fighting boy dere dat he is advertising all over de town. If dat boy is anything like his picture, I should say he wasn't so mighty pretty; but den, I know I don't always come out too beautiful in de pictures. His bills hab offered anyone ten pounds who knocks de Smasher out. De Smasher is de prize-fighting boy, you know. Now, what is to stop me knocking de Smasher out?"

"He might!" grinned Sam.

"I would gain nothing by that," answered Jimmy. "Boppy would never pay the ten pounds, and the fight would fill his circus. Then I should lose your services for the night, and he would gain them. No! I see nothing for it but to shift our pitch again! What do you think, boys?"

"Dat ain't a wise move, Jimmy," said Pete. "Would make de man tink dat he could shift you whenever he chose. Yah, yah, yah! What?"

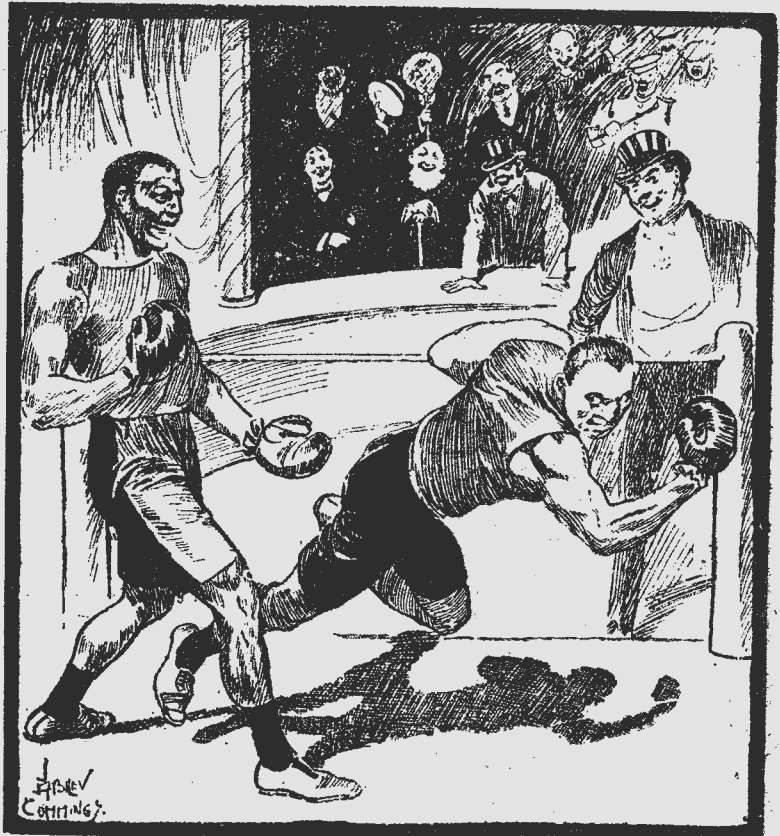
"I didn't speak."

"I know you didn't, Jimmy. Yah, yah, yah! Eh?"

"What are you guffawing at?"

"Was smiling at my toughts. We want a few posters to stick underneath his. Something to dis effect:

"Pete, the negro lad, accepts Smasher's challenge, for a hundred pounds a-side, to knock him out ob time. De fight to take place in Jimmy



Pete stepped on one side, and his adversary went sprawling over his leg.

Travers' circus to-morrow night. Come in your thousands to witness the great combat!"

"I'll romp dose posters underneath his, and if dat doesn't fetch de people, de few thousand handbills I distribute are 'most bound to! What do you tink ob dat, Sammy?"

"Not at all bad," replied Sam; "but I suppose you'd beat him?"

"Suppose this Smasher beats you?" said Jimmy.

"Don't see dat dat matters, Jimmy. We shall hab got de people, and Boppy's show will be empty. Dat's about what you want, ain't it?"

"Yes! It's not a bad idea, Pete. Let's come and do it at, once. I'll start Raja delivering the handbills. He will like to come down town with us, because he will think he is going to get a dinner. You two had better stay behind and keep an eye on things," he continued, addressing Jack and Sam.

Raja, the lion-tamer, raised no objections at all when Jimmy invited him to come down town. He did not seem to be quite so pleased when he found that his old enemy, Pete, was also coming, however. He was soon ready, and Jimmy got out some posters and short handbills, against time.

"Now, dear boy," he exclaimed, as he emerged from the printer's, "come and have a cup of tea, and I will explain to you what I want you to do. By the time we have finished, the bills will be ready. There are only a few words on them, but they are to the point!"

"Tea be hanged," growled Raja. "I hate tea!"

"But it's a soothing thing for the nerves, and you've got a heavy night's work before you!"

"Perdition! What do you mean?"

"Only that you will have to distribute a thousand or so of handbills. I shall be keeping my eye on you, so that if you don't give them to the likeliest parties there will be trouble for you. Come and have that tea!"

"I would rather have a dinner!"

"Yah, yah, yah! He ain't a bad judge, dat man, is he, Jimmy?"

"You keep your beasty mouth shut, you black nigger!" growled Raja. "Nobody asked you to make any remarks."

"I never wait to be asked," retorted Pete. "It doesn't do; besides, if I waited for you to ask me, I might be oberlooked."

"I suppose your idea is to set me to do all the work, and then when I've started on it, you and this dirty nigger will go and have a big dinner on your own!"

"I shall want it by the time I've got you to start work!" declared Jimmy.

"Don't be so disgustingly greedy. You have had your dinner, and don't require another one. Here's a place. We can get a cup of tea here for twopence."

The tea suited Pete all right; he guessed there would be supper to follow it. He had two cups, but the waitress took away the sugar-basin before he had the second one, because he had helped himself to about a dozen lumps, and was

crunching up others to gave a flavour to his bread-and-butter.

"A little more sugar, here, my dear, please!" he exclaimed.

"Your dear, indeed; and you will have no more sugar!"

"You seems mighty careful wid dat sugar!"

"It's more than you are, for you have nearly emptied the basin!"

"Should say dat basin could be filled again!"

"You've got enough sugar in your tea, and you will get no more!"

"Spect I'll do widout it, den; but I'm fond ob sugar, my dear!"

"So I have noticed, and I wish I had noticed it before you had emptied the basin!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Funny how careful some people are wid little tings! It won't take Raja long to deliver dose bills, Jimmy."

"No; it is merely child's play!"

"Den it is exactly suited for Raja. What's de man muttering at now? Funny ting I neber can please dat man, no matter how I try. But should say dose bills ought to be 'bout ready by dis time!"

At about nine o'clock that night, Pete had got his work done to his complete satisfaction. Whether it would be to Boppy's satisfaction was another matter, and one that did not trouble him in the slightest. Jimmy was so pleased with the result, and the notice taken of the bills, that he invited Pete to supper.

"How is Raja getting on wid his job, Jimmy?" inquired Pete, as they were seated at supper.

"He is looking about as amiable as a rattlesnake every time he hands a bill to anyone. I have told him I will meet him later on, and that gives him the impression that I am going to invite him to supper; but he is mistaken there. I don't like the fellow! I wonder what this Smasher is like. It's a bit risky to accept a challenge as you have done, without seeing the man first."

"Spect it'll be all right," replied Pete confidently. "I generally manage to come out on top wid dese travelling fighters. Anyway, we shall soon see, 'cos he'll be obliged to come to our circus for de fight. Won't old Boppy be angry! Yah, yah, yah!"

"You shouldn't be too confident about beating him," said Jimmy, with an expression of slight anxiety on his face. "I wonder what he's like?"

"I dunno, Jimmy; but if he's anything like his portraits, he's mighty hideous! Why, golly, if dis ain't Boppy coming in!"

"So it is. He must have seen the bills and followed us!"

"Dat man ain't seen the bills yet, Jimmy. I can tell by the cast ob his countenance!"

Mr. Boppy, dressed in a frock-coat and tall hat, strode into the room, and, with a theatrical wave of his arm, ordered supper. Then he seated himself opposite to Jimmy, and glared at him.

"Well, dear boy!" exclaimed Jimmy. "This is a pleasant surprise!"

"If you refer to our meeting, sir, it may be a surprise, but I do not see where the pleasure comes in!"

"Well, it's lucky, at any rate, because I am going to accept your challenge. My young friend Pete, here, has kindly consented to smash up your Smasher!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! You amuse me. Oh, dear me! 'This is truly funny! So you're going to meet the Smasher, are you, my lad?"

"You'm guessed first time, old hoss!"

"Don't you address me in that familiar strain!"

"Nunno, my poor old hoss. I say, Boppy, you hab taken on flesh since I saw you last. I'm tinkin you take too much food and too little work. You should change about for a bit!"

"You insolent young vagabond, I'll lay my stick across your shoulders if you address me like that! What time is the young fool coming to my circus?"

"He is not coming to your circus," answered Jimmy. "Your man is coming to ours!"

"I'll see you hanged, drawn, and quartered first!"

"You can't help yourself, dear boy. We have arranged it all, and if your man doesn't turn up, I should not be a bit surprised if my spectators go for him; then I pity you and your miserable little show. You will come and pitch it against mine once too often one of these days, and so I tell you, Boppy!"

"I regard you as the scum of the earth!"

"I don't care a brass button how you regard me, so long as you don't pitch your show just by mine. You have not got the gumption to find a suitable place for yourself, but have to look through my spectacles; but it won't come off this time!"

"Why not, miserable creature?" "Never your mind why. You will know why to-morrow morning. Besides, if I say it won't come off, you can bet that I am right!"

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Boppy Sees the Poster—The Fight—Jimmy Scores Again.

**B**OPPY looked rather uneasy. Past experience had taught him that Jimmy was a resourceful man, and there was no telling what move he was going to take. However, he ate his supper, just making as many nasty remarks as came into his head.

"All de same, dat Smasher has got to fight me to-morrow night, unless de

police prevent it, and dey won't do dat, 'cos we will show dem some mighty heavy gloves. He has got to be dere at seven o'clock sharp. And I somehow tink he will get de biggest hiding he's ober had in his life. When I hab done wid him, he'll be de Smashed, not de Smasher! Yah, yah, yah!"

"I suppose that is a nigger's idea of a joke?" said Boppy, in a superior tone.

"I do tink dat was rader a good one, don't you, Jimmy?" retorted Pete. "But mind dis Smasher ob yours arrives in good time, old hoss! If he doesn't turn up, we shall hab to send Jack and Sam along to fetch him!"

"You must take me for a fool, boy, if you fondly imagine I would allow any such thing!"

"Well, I certainly do dat. How would it be to show him one ob de bills, Jimmy?"

"Yes. Give him one. It's too late for him to back out of it now. If he does, it will so disappoint the people that they will cut his show!"

Pete placed one of the handbills in Boppy's hand. There were only a few words to read, and they were in large type, but Boppy sat staring at them as though in a dream.

"What!" he roared at last, rubbing his eyes, and looking at the bill again. "You don't mean to dare to tell me you have done this, Travers?"

"Certainly, dear boy. Why not?"

"You have distributed these bills?" "About a couple of thousand. I am going to have the rest distributed to-morrow. You see, they take some little time to strike off, but we are getting them out as fast as we possibly can."

"You dastardly vagabond!" "Libel, dear boy. Did you hear what he called me, waiter?"

"I did so, sir, and I would say the people in the street heard it also. You must not make that noise here, sir!"

"I'll make what noise I like!" hooted Boppy. "Here, this scoundrel has been and queered my pitch!"

"I don't know nothing about that; but if you kick up this row in this house there will be a bother, and so I tell you straight!"

"I'll—I'll have these bills de-destroyed, and I'll—I'll—"

Boppy did not say what else he would do; perhaps that was because he did not know. As a matter of fact, there was not much to be done; and the following morning, when he went round the town and saw the notices plastered under his posters, he raved so much that a constable ordered him to move on. At last he decided on making the best of a bad job, and he waited on Jimmy, accompanied by the Smasher.

"This is your opponent, Pete," said Jimmy, when that worthy entered the

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caravan, where Boppy was speaking some of his mind.

Smasher's personal appearance was not prepossessing. He was a trifle taller than Pete, and apparently he had not shaved that day. His nose had been broken in one of his previous encounters, and his hair was cropped short. His age might have been anything from fifteen to thirty; but, judging by his stubbly beard, he was nearer the latter age.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "It's a mighty long time since you were a boy, old boss. Still, dat don't matter. You see, our object is to fill dis circus. If you beat me, it will make all de difference to-morrow; but we shall hab taken de pieces for to-night, and dat's Jimmy's object."

"It is to be for a hundred pounds a-side," declared Boppy.

"Certainly, dear boy," answered Jimmy calmly. "That is, of course, if you are prepared to stake that amount of money."

"Who is to hold the stakes?"

"Oh, I can do that!"

"Do you think I would trust you with a hundred pounds?"

"I am quite sure you would not—for the simple reason that you have not got the hundred pounds to trust. If you want to put any money on the event, you will have to stake it, and we can place it in the hands of some party to be agreed on. Or I tell you what I will do. If Smasher beats Pete—and he ought to do so, seeing that he is a man, while Pete is only a lad—we will have the return match at your show to-morrow night. If Pete wins, then the Smasher must fight again here to-morrow night. You can use what gloves you like. Is that agreed?"

"Yes," cried Boppy. "You pay for the billing!"

"Well, I will even go as far as that; but we are pretty sure of full houses, especially if I get one to-night, and I think I shall!"

Later, Pete was telling his comrades, Jack and Sam, about the Smasher, and gave them a very amusing description of his appearance. He then informed them of the arrangement that had been made.

"Well, all I can say about it," exclaimed Jack, "is that Jimmy is backing you pretty thoroughly. He stands to lose a great deal if this Smasher beats you, my lad!"

"Oh, well," said Sam, "Pete generally does manage to come through these little affairs safely, and I suppose Jimmy is trusting to luck that he'll do it all right this time!"

"We'm got to wait and see," declared Pete. "But I fancy we'll pull through."

Jimmy was perfectly right about the full house. He was in that part of the country where a fight draws, and the circus was crammed.

The preliminary work seemed to give satisfaction; then, when Jimmy announced the principal event, the excitement became intense.

"I would like to add a few words, ladies and gentlemen," he said. "Pete, the negro, has performed before some of you, and, as you will know, he is a more lad. I am sorry to say that I have been deceived by my rival, who informed me that his man Smasher was also a lad. I find he is a man of twenty-five or thirty years of age, and, as he is bigger than your favourite Pete, the contest is scarcely a fair one. Nevertheless, even if Pete gets beaten, in his name I promise you a good exhibition of strength and skill, and remember that this is no put-up affair. I know no more than you do who is going to win; but it will be the best man."

"That was a very good little speech," said Jack to Sam, as they listened at the side.

"Yes," agreed Sam. "Jimmy has such a frank, straightforward sort of way of telling his audience what he wants them to know that it always goes down well. They know he is telling them the truth, and they appreciate it."

"Well, anyway, in spite of the fact that it is an uneven contest, I rather think Pete will win. At all events, I sincerely hope so."

"Same here," replied Sam.

Then cheers arose as the combatants entered the ring, though some rather nasty remarks were made concerning Smasher's age, for he looked older than when dressed in his ordinary clothes.

Pete at once determined to act on the defensive, and he was so quick at guarding and getting away that Smasher began to lose his temper. He had the feeling that he would be able to finish the fight with a single blow if he chose to do so; but Boppy had given him instructions to make a good fight of it, and, from a scientific point of view, there is not the slightest doubt that he was doing so; but the spectators preferred hard hitting to science, and they tried to urge Pete on.

That worthy was always ready to please the audience, but the task before him was too tough a one to throw away any chances, so he watched his opportunity, waiting for the Smasher to take the initiative.

Suddenly Smasher darted in, and he received a blow in the chest, and a second one on the jaw that staggered him; then they went at it, and the spectators cheered themselves hoarse. Boppy had stipulated for very light gloves, but this was all in Pete's favour, for the

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Smasher seldom got in a blow, while he received a good many.

Time after time Pete landed in his chest, and these heavy body blows were causing him to pant. The Smasher had lost his temper now, and was giggling away with far more strength than wisdom. He made a sudden rush at Pete, who stepped on one side, and his adversary went sprawling over his leg.

"Dat looks like de first round, Jimmy," said Pete.

"He hasn't a chance against you."

"I tink he is a bit out ob training, Jimmy. I would rader fight him dan Raja. Tink I could finish dis, but we hab got to make a fight ob it for de sake ob de people."

"I tink he'll win it right enough now," said Jack.

"It's a dead cert—absolutely," answered Sam.

For the next few rounds Pete certainly did make a splendid fight of it.

He got somewhat punished, but nothing like so much as did Smasher. That worthy's face was taking on odd shapes, while he got into such a state of fury that he scarcely knew what he was doing. Then Pete went in to win. He delivered a couple of blows in Smasher's chest, and a third one beneath the jaw that sent him to the ground.

"Don't tink he will fight much more, Jimmy; but de fight has lasted quite long enough. You might put me on for de next turn to let dem see I ain't winded."

"Good! I will. You look as fresh as when you started. Now, then, Smasher! Time! Pooh! What's the good of shaunting like that? If you are beaten, own it like a man, and don't flicker your eyes like a giddy owl! Are you coming up to the scratch?"

"He has injured himself in falling," declared Boppy.

"Rats!" exclaimed Jimmy. "The

fellow is only funking. It's over time, but I don't care. I'll give you half an hour, if you want it. Ladies and gentlemen, I claim my man to be the winner; and if my rival is not satisfied, they shall fight again here to-morrow for a thousand pounds a-side. The only stipulation that I make is that the money must be staked!"

And by the way Pete's other performances were cheered that night Jimmy knew that he had made a great hit. They did not fight on the next night: Smasher had had enough. Boppy realised that Jimmy Travers had beaten him again, and he could see that there was nothing for it but to shift his pitch. The public were not going to patronise his show after witnessing Pete's great performance.

"You have scored again, Pete," said Jack.

"Good for you!" declared Sam.

THE END.

Next Friday's long complete tale of JACK, SAM, and PETE is entitled:

## "SUMMONED FOR ASSAULT!"

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

Order your copy of the "Penny Popular" in advance to avoid disappointment.

## BETWEEN OURSELVES

A Weekly Chat between The Editor and His Readers.

### THE LAST WEEK!

This is the last week of our simple little competition. You have very few more days in which to collect the coupons, and I should advise every one of you to make the most of the time left to you. Don't forget that every coupon helps, and even one coupon may make the difference between success and failure.

Remember, all coupons must be sent to—The PENNY POPULAR, Picture Competition, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C., to reach that office not later than Wednesday, April 11th.

### THREE OF THE BEST!

The three stories in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR will, I feel confident, meet with general approval. First and foremost is, of course, the long, complete story dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., which is entitled:

"THE NEW SIXTH-FORMER!"

A new fellow named Ionides arrives at Greyfriars, and right from the beginning he gets on the wrong side of the Removites. The new fellow, who is an extraordinary fop, attempts to ride the high-horse with the chums of the Remove, and there are ructions with a vengeance. Wun Lung takes a hand in the matter, and, cute little beggar that he is, manages to take the new Sixth-Former down a peg or two, much to the satisfaction of the Removites.

The long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., the chums of St. Jim's, in our next issue, is entitled:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SPY!"

Tom Merry is asked to keep a certain matter secret, and promises to do so. The secret comes out, however, and Tom

Merry is accused of breaking his promise. He is scorned by many of the juniors for having broken his word, and matters are looking very serious for him, when Wally D'Arcy and his chums in the Third take the matter in hand, and bring the real spy to book.

The third story in our next issue is that dealing with the adventures of Jack, Sam, and Pete, the famous comrades. This story is entitled:

"SUMMONED FOR ASSAULT!"

and is full of humorous incidents from start to finish.

### GREAT NEWS.

At last I have much pleasure in informing all my loyal readers that I have come to a decision with regard to replacing the stories of Jack, Sam, and Pete with stories introducing Jimmy Silver & Co., and dealing with their early schooldays, at Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver & Co. WILL appear in the PENNY POPULAR, and the date of their appearance is the issue of the PENNY POPULAR dated April 21st. With the introduction of the Harry Wharton stories, the P. P. greatly increased in popularity; but I am confident that its popularity will be world-renowned when Jimmy Silver & Co. appear upon the scene.

With the issue dated April 21st, the PENNY POPULAR will become an all-school-story paper, and will, I am confident, be one of the most popular boys' papers on the market.

Tell all your chums about this forthcoming attraction, and persuade them to become regular readers of the PENNY POPULAR.

### A WORD OF WARNING!

I want to impress upon my readers how necessary it is for them to order their copies of the PENNY POPULAR in advance. Owing to the shortage of paper, it is quite possible that within a few weeks you will be unable to secure your copies unless you order them in advance.

Take my advice, therefore, and run round to your news-agent at once, and get him to save you a copy of the PENNY POPULAR every week. It will cause you very little trouble to do this, but it will probably save you many bitter disappointments.