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# The Penny Popular

No. 240.

Three Complete Stories of—  
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**THE LIMIT!**

A Great Scene from the Splendid Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry and Co. contained in this issue!

A Magnificent  
Long Complete  
Tale, dealing  
with the  
Early Adventures  
of  
Jimmy Silver & Co.  
at Rookwood.

# THE CAPTAIN'S SECRET!

By  
Owen  
Conquest

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### A Strange Meeting.

**L**OOK there! Did you see him?"  
"Who?"  
"There, he is again! No! He's down behind the hedge."  
Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Newcome and Raby—known as the Fistical Four at Rookwood—were returning to the school after an evening sprint.

The dusk was deepening in the lane, and the pace of the three runners had slackened as they came in sight of the school, looming up blackly over the trees.

There was a rush towards the hedge to which Raby was pointing, and a shrieking form was jerked out bodily into the lane.

A lad of about sixteen was revealed to view in the dusk. He was well clad, but his clothes were thick with mud and mire, his head was bare, his collar damped and soiled, and his whole aspect was one of fright and disquietude. His eyes rolled uneasily, and once or twice he tried to break from Jimmy Silver's hold, and run.

"You can't get away," remarked Jimmy. "Now, you young villain, what do you mean by following four highly respectable youths about like a giddy detective, eh?"

"I wanted to speak to you," said the white-faced stranger, "but I—I was afraid. I—will you take a note for me to Bulkeley, the captain of your school, and not breathe a word to a soul about it?"

The four Classics of Rookwood stared at the stranger in speechless amazement.

"What's that?" asked Jimmy Silver, at last. "What are you driving at?"

The pale, strange face had suddenly become earnest and eager. The trembling hand drew a note from inside his jacket. It was an odd sheet of paper scribbled on in pencil, and folded down.

"Will you take that note to Bulkeley?"

"Who are you?"  
"He—he will know. For mercy's sake do as I ask! It—it won't do any harm, and Bulkeley must—must have it. Will you take that note to him?"

"I suppose there can't be any harm in that?" Jimmy Silver remarked, taking the note from the shaking hand. "Yes, I'll let him have it."

"Heaven bless you!"

"It's nothing much," said Jimmy Silver. "But why on earth couldn't you post it—"

"I had no envelope, and I was afraid to— Never mind! Bulkeley will understand. You promise to give him that note?"

"Honour bright."

"Heaven bless you!"  
The strange, frightened figure disappeared through the gap in the hedge. Jimmy had let go his hold, and the fugitive was gone in a minute.

The Fistical Four stared at one another, and at the crumpled note in Jimmy Silver's hand, lost in amazement.

The silence was broken by a voice from the dusk, as a thin, sallow-complexioned youth came up from the direction of the village. He stopped and looked at the

four with a grin upon his ill-favoured features.

"What have you got there, Silver?" Jimmy Silver started, and turned his head. The sallow youth grinned at him.

"What have you got there?"

"Hallo! Is that you, Leggett?"

"Yes, it is. What's that note you've got for Bulkeley?"

Jimmy Silver's lip curled scornfully. "So you've been listening?"

"I heard voices as I came up," said Leggett.

Leggett belonged to the Moderns at Rookwood, and was the meanest boy in the Fourth Form, and of an inquisitive, prying nature that made him especially obnoxious to fellows like the chums of the end study.

Nothing ever happened at Rookwood without Leggett knowing all about it, a fact upon which he prided himself.

"Come on, kids!" said Jimmy Silver, turning away from Leggett.

The Fistical Four were not disposed to waste any more time on the sneaking Modern at the moment.

"I'll know what's in that note, all the same," muttered Leggett, as Jimmy Silver & Co. marched off. "I expect it's something disgraceful. It all looks jolly suspicious, anyway. I never liked Bulkeley, and I'd be glad of a chance to show him up."

The Fistical Four hastened to the school, and Jimmy Silver hurried at once to Bulkeley's study with the note. He found the captain within, and was received with a smile, for Bulkeley was the best-tempered fellow at Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver handed over the note, and explained how he had received it, and Bulkeley at once unfolded the paper. He glanced over it, and a startled cry left his lips.

Apparently forgetting Jimmy Silver's presence, he glued his eyes to the note, reading anxiously every one of the written words.

Jimmy Silver looked at him in amazement. The captain of Rookwood had become pale as death.

"Good heavens!" Then Bulkeley looked up quickly, and coloured as he caught Jimmy's startled glance. "It's all right, Silver," he said hastily. "You can go."

"Yes, Bulkeley."

Jimmy Silver turned to leave the study.

"You needn't say anything about this in the school, Silver."

"No, Bulkeley. Lovell, Newcome and Raby saw the chap give me the note."

"They will hold their tongues."

"Yes, but— Leggett saw him, too. I'm sorry."

"Well, it can't be helped," said Bulkeley, but he bit his lip. He knew Leggett.

"Run along!"

Jimmy Silver left the captain's study. As he closed the door he heard a sharp exclamation from Bulkeley.

"Oh, Arthur, Arthur!"

Jimmy hurried to the end study, and told his chums what had occurred. The chums whistled with amazement.

"Well, we'll keep it dark," said Lovell.

"That's not much to do."

"Hear, hear!"

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### On the Track of a Secret.

**L**ATER that evening Leggett was crossing the dusky quad, when a tall, athletic figure passed him in the dusk, and strode on towards the gates.

Leggett gave a little gasp. He knew whom it was. It was Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, and he was evidently going out. For any of the boys to go out after locking up was so unusual that Leggett's interest would have been aroused in any case. Now he felt that he was on the track of a mystery.

"It's the note," he muttered to himself. "He's gone to meet the chap who wrote to him—that skulking fellow who looked as if he were running away from the police. My hat! This is a chance, and no mistake. If I could only get a hold over Bulkeley. By gum!"

It was certain that the captain of Rookwood was going out. Leggett knew that the captain had a key to the gate, but he did not intend to attempt to follow him out there. That would be impossible.

The spy darted off to a spot well-known to the more venturesome of the Rookwood juniors, where the thick ivy on the old grey wall offered foothold to a climber, and many a time had assisted venturesome youngsters to break bounds.

The dusk of the evening shrouded Leggett's movements. He was soon swinging up by the thick ivy, and, getting over the wall, he dropped into the lane, and ran along in the shadow towards the gates.

Click!

He heard the shutting of the gate, and caught a glimpse of the athletic figure of the Rookwood captain striding away in the direction of the village.

In the thick dusk it was easy for Leggett to follow Bulkeley without danger of discovery. Not a thought of the meanness of the occupation crossed his mind.

He followed on Bulkeley's track like a sleuth-hound. The captain of Rookwood did not look once behind. He had not the slightest suspicion that he was being followed.

"Where is he going?" muttered Leggett. "To Coombe?"

It looked as if Bulkeley was going to the village. But about half-way he stopped at a stile which gave access to a footpath through a wood. He crossed the stile and vanished into the black shadows of the trees.

Leggett pressed on to the stile, and then hesitated. The trees looked so black and grim, and the darkness under their over-arching boughs was so dense, that his heart quailed within him.

After some hesitation he crossed the stile, but then he paused again. He dared not venture upon the black footpath under the trees.

The shadows seemed peopled with threatening shapes to his nervous fancy

He listened intently. Perhaps the captain of Rookwood had stopped.

There was a faint murmur from the wood. It was the sound of voices—and he thought he could distinguish the tones of the captain of the school. Bulkeley had met someone there under the trees. Whom?

Undoubtedly the fellow who had sent him the note by Jimmy Silver.

Leggett trembled with eagerness. His curiosity to discover more was almost strong enough to overcome his fear of the darkness, and of running into the talkers. He was still hesitating when he heard the sound of footsteps, and he crouched down among the bracken with a palpitating heart.

Two forms came out of the dim footpath towards the stile. Crouching unseen, Leggett watched them. One was the captain of Rookwood, the other the frightened-looking fugitive he had seen before. They stopped, and Leggett strained his ears.

"I have very little," Bulkeley was saying. "You are welcome to all I have."

He felt through his pockets. There was a jingle of coin, a glint of metal in the faint light of the stars. Leggett's heart beat faster.

Was his first suspicion correct—was it a case of blackmail? Or was this some fugitive from justice, whom Bulkeley was helping to escape from the meshes of the law?

"Thanks, old man. I—I am grateful. I—I shall be able to dodge them, I think. I—"

"Come along. You can't stay the night in the wood, anyway. It's going to rain."

"But—"  
"You can put up at the Bird in Hand to-night, at all events."

"But if they track me out—"

"They're not likely to, and you can give an assumed name. Then, to-morrow—"

Leggett heard no more. The two had crossed the stile, and were going down the lane towards Coombe. The spy rose shivering to his feet. The bracken was dripping with the night dews, and he was wet from head to foot.

But his eyes were gleaming exultingly.

He had heard enough to make him feel that Bulkeley was in his power. The fugitive was being hunted for by someone, and by whom? Whom could it possibly be but the police?

The mysterious meeting with the captain of Rookwood, the passing of money between them, and the suggestion of putting up at the Bird in Hand in Coombe under an assumed name, all pointed to the same terrible conclusion. "Arthur" was a friend or relation of Bulkeley's who was fleeing from justice!

Leggett gritted his teeth at the thought. "He's always been down on me," he muttered. "He licked me for lending money to the kids at interest—jolly moderate interest, too, considering. He first gave me the name of Shylock, and the juniors picked it up and stuck to it. I'll make him squirm."

Leggett stepped into the lane, and hesitated a minute or two there. The pair he had been spying upon were out of sight, but Leggett had learned enough, and was not inclined for further shudowing. He turned in the direction of Rookwood.

Nine o'clock was striking from the school tower as he came up to the gates. A feeling of terror seized him. Unless he was in time to go to bed with the Fourth Form, he would be missed and sought for. He ran along by the wall towards the spot where the ivy hung, and grasped it. A voice rang from the gloom behind him. "Who is that?"

Leggett quaked with terror. It was the voice of the captain of Rookwood.

The wretched junior dragged himself up the ivy. He realised that Bulkeley had returned now from seeing the mysterious "Arthur" to the village, and that he had caught sight of him near the school gates.

With terrified haste, Leggett dragged himself over the ivy. But the straining and creaking of the tough tendrils guided the captain of Rookwood to the spot.

Leggett heard him running up, and with a last desperate effort drew himself over the wall. A hand reached up from below and narrowly missed his ankle.

Bulkeley did not wait to speak again. He ran to the gate and let himself in, and came quickly along the inner side of the wall. Leggett was not prepared for such a swift movement.

He had swung himself over the wall, drenched with water from the wet ivy, and he dropped into the quad, gasping

"You have broken bounds—at night!"

"Yes," said Leggett sullenly.

"Where have you been?"

"To the village."

"To the Bird in Hand?"

Leggett did not reply.

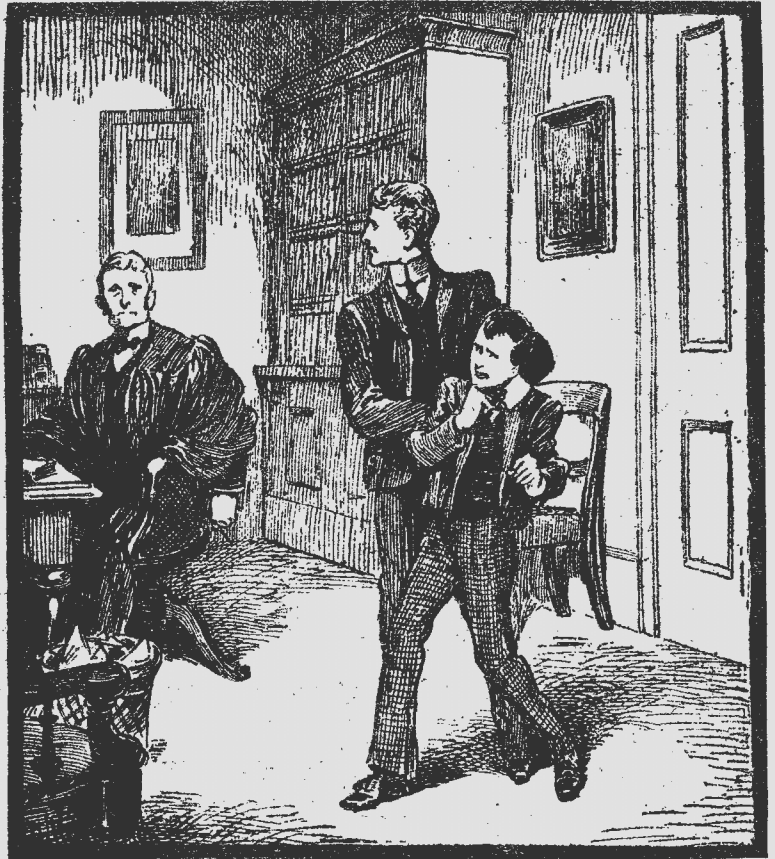
"If you had broken bounds to go to the tuck-shop," said Bulkeley quietly, "I could let you off with a licking, Leggett. A fellow might do that without being bad. But I am afraid your case is worse. There have been visits paid by Rookwood fellows to the Bird in Hand, as I know. I hardly expected to find a culprit in the Fourth Form. But—"

"I—I haven't been there."

"Well, then, where have you been?"

The junior was silent.

"Then I can only conclude that you are lying, Leggett," said Bulkeley sternly. "I cannot deal with this matter on my



"What does this mean, Bulkeley?" asked the Head, as the captain of Rookwood forced the junior into the study. "I have to tell you something, sir," he said.

for breath. He was trying to recover his breath, and shaking the water from his clothes, when a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder. He gave a cry of terror.

The grasp on his shoulder swung him round, and he looked into the face of the captain of Rookwood!

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
Leggett Makes Terms.**

**B**ULKELEY looked sternly at the wet, shivering junior. His grasp tightened on Leggett's shoulder. "Leggett! So it is you!"

Leggett made no reply. There was a desperate look in his eyes, which Bulkeley did not see.

own responsibility. You must come before the Head in the morning."

Leggett gritted his teeth.

"Better keep mum," he muttered.

Bulkeley stared at him.

"What did you say, Leggett?"

"You'd better keep mum, that's what I said," said Leggett desperately. "If you take me before the Head I shall tell him—"

Bulkeley's grasp tightened.

"What will you tell him?"

"Things you wouldn't like him to know," said Leggett defiantly. "One good turn deserves another. I'll keep mum if you do."

In spite of his impudence, Leggett trembled as he said this. It was a  
THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 240.

desperate throw of the dice for him. If he had been mistaken—if Bulkeley had no guilty secret— But the next moment he drew a deep, quivering breath of relief.

For Bulkeley's grasp relaxed, and he stood a pace away from the junior, and his face had grown pale and startled.

"Have you been watching me, Leggett?"

The captain's voice was very hard.

"Yes, I have," said Leggett defiantly.

"You saw me meet my cousin?"

Leggett grinned. He had not known that the mysterious "Arthur" was Bulkeley's cousin; he was gaining information!

"Yes," he said; "and I heard you, too!"

"Then you know——"

"Yes," said Leggett, gaining courage.

"I know all about it."

"You spying little hound!"

"Hard words break no bones," said Leggett, quite himself now.

"I know the whole business, from start to finish, Bulkeley. I saw you giving him money. I know your cousin is hiding from the police——"

Bulkeley gave a violent start.

"The police! Are you sure?"

Leggett was taken aback for a moment.

But his impudence was seldom wanting.

He saw that he was in rather deep waters now, but there was nothing for it but to brazen it out.

"Of course I am!" he replied coolly.

"You—you lie! You must be lying; the police cannot have been called in,"

muttered Bulkeley. "You—you cowardly little rascal! I've a good mind to give you the biggest hiding of your life!"

"I'll keep mum," said Leggett. "But one good turn deserves another. Keep my secret, and I'll keep yours."

Bulkeley was silent.

"Am I to come before the Head in the morning, Bulkeley?"

"Go!" said the captain of Rookwood, in a hard, strained voice.

"Go, you—you ear! Come into my study in the morning, and I will speak to you!"

Leggett cut across the quadrangle, and hurried in, in time to join the Fourth-Formers when they went up to bed.

The next morning Leggett did not trouble to report himself in the captain's study.

Bulkeley had told him to do so, but the junior did not intend to obey. He felt sure enough of his ground now to take no notice of the captain's order.

Yet he trembled a little when, after morning school, Bulkeley passed him in the quad. Was he about to be called to account?

The captain of Rookwood passed on, apparently unaware of his existence, and Leggett breathed again.

The affair of the previous night was not to be mentioned again, then! His disobedience of the captain's order was to pass unnoted and unpunished! Leggett's heart swelled with exultation. The captain of Rookwood was in his power, and great possibilities opened before the unscrupulous junior.

Leggett's curious manner during the day did not escape the notice of Jimmy Silver and his chums. The junior's swagger rather puzzled them.

"He's got something on his chest," Lovell remarked.

"Little rotter!" agreed Jimmy Silver.

"He was out last evening, and I'm pretty certain where he went to. Lucky for him Bootles didn't smell a mouse."

"There goes the little beast now," remarked Raby. "He's going to speak to Bulkeley."

Bulkeley had come out of the gymnasium, when Leggett sidled up to him. The captain of the school looked down at the junior with a steely expression.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 240.

"Do you want to speak to me, Leggett?"

"Yes, if you please, Bulkeley."

"Be quick, then!"

"I—I'm short of money, Bulkeley!"

"What has that to do with me?"

"I—I thought you might lend me half a sovereign, Bulkeley."

Their eyes met. In Bulkeley's was scorn and contempt, and hard-held rage; in Leggett's was cunning and the consciousness of power.

"You want me to give you half a sovereign, Leggett?"

"Lend it to me, I mean, Bulkeley."

"Don't tell lies! Why should I give you half a sovereign, Leggett?"

"Well, I'm keeping your secret, you know."

"Do you know what this amounts to, Leggett?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to say that this amounts to blackmail."

Leggett grinned.

"I don't see why you can't tip me half a sovereign if you want to, Bulkeley. I'm doing you a good turn. If certain parties knew who was staying at the Bird in Hand under an assumed name——"

"Hold your tongue, confound you!"

"Certainly, but——"

Bulkeley took a ten-shilling note from his pocket-case and pushed it into Leggett's hand. Then he strode away with a dark and moody brow.

The whole transaction had been witnessed by the astonished Fistical Four, and they caught the crackle of the note as it was thrust into Leggett's palm. The young rascal turned away, and found himself face to face with the chums of the end study.

He shrank a little, and thrust the note into his pocket.

"Why did Bulkeley give you that ten-bob note, Leggett?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Because he wanted to, I suppose."

"I've a good mind to——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Leggett.

He walked away. The Fistical Four looked at one another uncomfortably. The mystery was deepening, and mystery was decidedly unpleasant to them. What did it all mean?

Lovell gave a sudden start. Night had fallen again on Rookwood, and the four chums of the Classical side were doing a little sprint round the Close for exercise. Lovell suddenly pulsed his companions to a halt with an exclamation.

"Look there!"

Jimmy Silver, Raby and Newcome looked. They were near the gate of the school, and they saw the tall figure of Bulkeley stop at the gate. He had his overcoat on, and a key in his hand, and was evidently going out.

But it was not only Bulkeley whom they saw. A smaller figure was stealing through the dusk, in the Close, evidently watching the captain of Rookwood.

As Bulkeley unlocked the gate, the figure ran along the wall towards a spot well-known to the juniors, and ran right into the arms of the Fistical Four.

It was Leggett!

Jimmy Silver grasped him at once, and in a moment he was down on the ground, with the Fistical Four sitting on him. He gasped and struggled furiously.

"Let me get up, you beasts!"

"Not just now," said Jimmy Silver.

"We spotted you, you see. You were watching Bulkeley, and you were going to break bounds to follow him."

"I shall do as I like!"

"No, you won't!"

"Leggo! Lémme go! I—I'll tell Bulkeley!"

"Go into the house. And, mind, I could tick you with one hand, Leggett, and if you say another word I'll do it, too."

"You—you cad! I'll——"

Jimmy Silver's right came out, and Leggett measured his length on the ground. Jimmy stood over him with flashing eyes.

"Now get up, you cad, and take some more," he said, between his teeth. "Get up! You've been asking for a hiding for a long time, and now you're going to have it."

But Leggett jumped up and dashed into the house like a shot, and was not seen again that night.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Leggett Goes a Step Too Far.

THE next morning as Jimmy Silver was leaving Bulkeley's study after having delivered a letter to the captain, he passed Leggett who was about to enter.

Leggett had threatened the night before to tell Bulkeley that the Fistical Four had roughly handled him. From the vindictive scowl which the sneaking junior inflicted on Jimmy Silver, the latter wondered whether he was about to put his threat into action.

Leggett had entered the study without even knocking. Bulkeley looked at him sharply, the letter still in his hand.

Leggett smiled insolently. The captain's face was turned from the light, and the cad of the Fourth could not see its expression very clearly.

"What do you want, Leggett?"

"I want to speak to you, Bulkeley."

"Go on!"

"One good turn deserves another, as I said before. You go out of Rookwood at all hours to suit yourself. You've got a key, and I haven't. I usually get over the wall."

"You are very frank, Leggett."

"No reason to keep it dark now," said Leggett. "But some of those cads—I mean Jimmy Silver and his lot—have set themselves up to watch me, and so that I don't break bounds."

"Very right and proper of them."

"Perhaps so," said Leggett, with a sneer. "But it does not suit me, you see. I want to go out at all times, and I mean to."

"Is that so?"

The captain's voice was very quiet, so quiet that it deceived Leggett. The swagger in his manner became more pronounced.

"Exactly. I want you to give me a permanent pass, you see, so that I can go out when I like. Then these rotters can't interfere with me."

"Indeed?"

"And I want you to give Jimmy Silver & Co. a licking for going for me last night," said Leggett savagely. "The brutes set on me in the quad."

"You were going out, I presume?"

"Yes, I was," said Leggett defiantly.

"I'll go out when I like."

Bulkeley breathed hard.

"And Jimmy Silver and the others stopped you?"

"Yes, they did."

"Quite right. I shall speak to Silver, and direct him to keep an eye on you in the future, Leggett, and see that you do not commit any of these blackguardly actions again."

Leggett stared.

"Will you?" he said, between his teeth.

"Do you understand what you are saying, Bulkeley? You are in my power."

"Do you think so?"

"Hang you! You know you are!"

cried Leggett angrily. "You know very well you've been aiding a fugitive from justice, and giving him money, and helping him to pass under an assumed name. The Head would be glad to hear what I could tell him."

"Then you had better go and tell him."

"You can't bluff me like that," said Leggett, though he felt an inward tremor

of uneasiness at the captain's tone. "You wouldn't have given in so easily yesterday if you hadn't had something to be afraid of."

"Circumstances may have changed," said Bulkeley. "It might have been in your power to injure me yesterday, but not to-day, Leggett."

"Rot! You know the police would be after you, too, if they knew, and I can tell them where that chap is, too. If you dare to—"

"Dare!" thundered Bulkeley. "Do you know you are talking to your captain? Get out of the room at once! Go!"

Leggett gave a snarl like a spiteful dog. "If I go, I go straight to the Head!" he shouted. "Now, then!"

He opened the door and stood with his hand on it.

"Now, then, shall I go?"

Bulkeley strode towards him. "Yes, Leggett, you shall go, and I will come with you—to the Head," he said abruptly.

His grasp closed on the junior's shoulder, and Leggett was marched along the passage. The wretched junior tried to think that the captain was bluffing, that he would stop and turn back.

But Bulkeley's face was hard and set, his eyes gleaming.

Straight to the Head's study he marched the hapless amateur blackmailier.

The Fistical Four were in the passage, and they stared at they passed.

"He's got what he's been asking for," said Jimmy Silver, "and a jolly good thing too!"

"If—if you please, Bulkeley, I'd rather not go to the Head," whined Leggett. "I—I won't say a word. I—I'd rather not!"

"You've no choice now," said Bulkeley grimly, as he knocked at the Head's door. "Come in!"

The captain of Rookwood entered, forcing the junior to go in with him.

Leggett was trembling now, and fervently wishing that the floor would open and swallow him up.

"Dr. Chisholm looked at them in amazement.

"What does this mean, Bulkeley?"

"I have something to tell you, sir," said Bulkeley, "if you will kindly give me a few minutes."

"Go on, Bulkeley!"

"I have a cousin named Arthur Bulkeley, sir. He is—or rather, was—in the Fifth Form at St. Freda's. I have been rather worried about him lately, as he was—well, a little wild, and frequently got into trouble with his Form-master. The day before yesterday, sir, I had a note brought me by a junior. It was from my cousin. He told me that there had been a terrible row at St. Freda's, and he had struck the Form-master and run away from school."

The Head looked very grave.

"He asked me to meet him, and help him out of his difficulty," went on Bulkeley.

"I went to meet him that night, sir, and talked to him. Last night I visited him again, and succeeded in persuading him to return home and throw himself upon his father's mercy."

"Very right of you, Bulkeley," said the Head. "I am sincerely glad that the unfortunate boy had so kind and sensible an adviser at such a time."

"Thank you, sir," said Bulkeley. "Arthur is a good fellow, but wilful and—a little wild, but I think his father will be able to make his peace at St. Freda's, and the lesson will not be lost upon him. He has gone home, and I wrote to the head master at St. Freda's last night, and I have just had a reply to the effect that Arthur's fault will be overlooked, and he will be taken back if he will apologise to the master, and take his punishment, as I know he will cheerfully do, after what has happened."

The captain of Rookwood paused.

"But you will wonder what Leggett has to do with all this, sir," he went on. "The first night I went to meet my cousin this boy followed me. He knew that Arthur was hiding from someone, and saw me give him money, and jumped to the preposterous conclusion that I was helping a fugitive from justice to escape from the police."

Leggett trembled.

"He has endeavoured to make use of that knowledge in a rascally way," went on Bulkeley. "It would have been awkward if Arthur had been taken back to St. Freda's before going home to his father, and so to keep Leggett from speaking, although he was far from knowing the real facts, I gave him a ten-shilling note yesterday when he demanded it. To-day he has renewed his demands, so I have explained the whole matter to you, sir."

The Head's brow was like a thunder-cloud.

"You have done quite right, Bulkeley," he said. "I cannot blame you. As for this wretched boy, there is only one course to be taken. He shall not stay at Rookwood to contaminate honest lads by his presence. You will pack your box to-day, Leggett, and leave Rookwood to-morrow morning. I will write to your father, and explain."

The wretched boy fell upon his knees.

"Oh, sir, don't expel me! I—I—Think of my father, sir, and I will be flogged, only don't expel me! Speak for me, Bulkeley!"

"Have you the impertinence to appeal to Bulkeley, after—"

The captain's face softened a little.

"May I say a word for him, sir?" he said. "I should be sorry to be the means of getting any lad expelled from Rookwood. He has had his lesson. A flogging—"

"It shall be as you wish, Bulkeley. It is generous of you to speak for him after the way he has treated you. Leggett, take off your jacket."

And the captain of Rookwood quitted the study.

Five minutes later wails of anguish were heard proceeding from that apartment. The flogging that Leggett received then was one he was not likely to forget in a hurry.

It was his first and last experiment in the blackmail line, and, after that painful experience, no boy in the Fourth was so respectful as Leggett to the captain of Rookwood.

THE END.

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Next Friday's long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars, is one that I am sure you will all like. The title of this fine story is

**"THE SCHOOL DANCE!"**

In this story the girls of Cliff House make their appearance. Harry Wharton & Co. learn of their coming, and decide to meet them on the way from the station, and present their headmistress with a bouquet.

All goes well until Harry Wharton discovers that Bulstrode intends to let off a number of fireworks in the road to scare the girls. A fight ensues between Wharton and Bulstrode, and just at the critical moment the Cliff House girls come upon the scene with disastrous consequences for the well-laid plans of reception on the part of Harry Wharton.

However, Bob Cherry manages to present the bouquet to the headmistress who, delighted at the juniors well-meaning intentions, sends them an invitation for a forthcoming dance at Cliff House. The dance turns out exceedingly well, and there is great fun and amusement, especially when Ionides, the fop of the Sixth, makes his appearance in evening-dress, and is taken to be a waiter!

The second long complete tale in our next issue is that dealing with Tom Merry & Co., the chums of St. Jim's. The title of this story is

**"THE SCHOOLBOY MUSICIANS!"**

Tom Merry resolves to form a concert-party to perform at the Rylcombe fete. There is great excitement and also considerable noise over this venture which at first does not pan out very well. Wally D'Arcy & Co. offer their services which are, of course, declined without thanks.

Figgins & Co. are left out in the cold, but nevertheless, having heard of Tom Merry's wheeze, they form a band of their own which, strange to say, shows greater promise than Tom Merry's concert-party.

There is a rag between the rival juniors which ends in their combining their efforts for the good of the cause. All goes well until the day of the fete. Then there are ructions, in which Wally & Co. play a strong part.

The third story in next Friday's PENNY POPULAR is that dealing with the adventure of Jimmy Silver & Co. The title of this yarn is

**"THE ROOKWOOD MINSTRELS!"**

Topham, the dandy of Rookwood, is in a great difficulty. He has stolen money, and is unable to repay it. Jimmy Silver & Co. take compassion on the dandy, and decide to help him out of his difficulty. They hit upon the idea of forming a minstrel troupe, and giving entertainments. They expect that the money they will earn will be sufficient to get Topham out of his trouble. Whether the Fistical Four's plan is successful you will learn next Friday.

Don't forget, my chums, you must order your copy in advance. Fill up the form on page 9 without delay, and hand it to your newsagent.

**YOUR EDITOR.  
THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 240.**

A Magnificent  
Long Complete  
Story, dealing  
with the  
Early Adventures  
of  
Tom Merry & Co.  
at St. Jim's.

# The FORM-MISTRESS AT ST. JIM'S!

By  
Martin  
Clifford.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### The Fourth Form are Not Pleased.

**M**R. LATHOM, the Fourth-Form master at St. Jim's, was going away for the benefit of his health, and a Form-mistress was to take his place for the time being.

A woman take the Fourth Form of St. Jim's!

A girl attempt to, manage the Fourth! Petticoat-government in the Fourth Form-room! Blake and Figgins and Redfern, and all the mighty men of the Fourth, under feminine domination!

The whole school cackled when they heard of it.

The "Babes" of the First and Second Forms, certainly, were sometimes taken by the Head's niece. They didn't like it. But the Fourth! The Fourth Form of St. Jim's, every fellow of them, simply writhed.

Even Mellish was exasperated. And the worst of it was, that the other Forms took it as a huge joke. The Shell, instead of being properly sympathetic, as the unhappy Fourth had a right to expect, only chuckled over it.

The Fifth grinned hugely. Even the fags of the Third took occasion to be cheeky about it. D'Arcy minor—the celebrated Wally—congratulated his major on it, and Arthur Augustus, for once in his life, came very near boxing his minor's ears.

There were several fights on the subject in the junior common-room. The Fourth were exasperated, and they could not stand jokes about it. They "walloped" Third Form fags, and they fought with the Shell fellows.

There was some satisfaction, certainly, in punching the heads of fellows who joked on the subject. But that did not alter the awful fact. On the morrow morning they were to be taken by a woman named Miss Ponsobly as if they were a Form in a girl's school, or a First Form set of babies.

"I won't stand it!" said Blake wildly. "I'll run away from school!"

"Bai Jove, that's a wathah good ideah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We could wun away and become pirates, you know!"

"I've got an idea," said Mellish. "Oh, you can go and eat coke!" said Blake unthankfully.

"Yaas, wathah! You run away and play!"

"But it's a good wheeze," persisted Mellish. "We can rag her, you know. Women can't stand being ragged, and she'd be too tender-hearted to get us liked. We could rag her baldheaded the first morning, and make her sick of it!"

To Mellish's surprise, there was a roar of indignation from the Fourth. He regarded that as a very good idea, and did not see any objection to it himself. The reception it met with showed that the other fellows did, however.

"You uttah wottah!" said Arthur

Augustus D'Arcy. "Do you think that a decent chap could wag a woman?"

"Oh, he's a rotten cad!" said Blake.

"Don't you understand, you worm, that if she's too tender-hearted to have us punished, that puts us on our honour to behave well!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"As for being rude to a woman, that may suit you," said Reilly, with a sniff.

"But, faith, if I catch you at it, you'll have some lovely black eyes after it, bedad!"

"And thick ears!" said Herries.

"And swollen noses, bedad!"

"Ha, ha! How many?"

"We'll scalp Mellish if he begins any of his caddish tricks," said Macdonald. "But it's rotten for us, all the same."

And Mellish was hooted out of the common-room for his valuable suggestion.

That way out of the difficulty was barred, and as there seemed to be no other way out, it was clear that the Fourth Form were "in for it."

The Terrible Three came into the common-room smiling. The Fourth-Formers glared at them. They thought they saw the reason for those smiles.

"Well, what are you monkeys grinning at?" was Blake's polite query.

"Yaas, wathah! I object to those Shell boundahs grinnin' here."

"Congratulations!" said Monty Lowther blandly.

"What for?" demanded Blake.

"Your good luck," said Tom Merry.

"By the way, is it true that Miss Ponsobly is going to make you wear pinafores?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Shell fellows. Blake snorted.

"Chuck them out!" he roared. "I'm not going to stand their cheek! Chuck 'em out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here—hold on—I mean, leggo—oh!"

But the Fourth-Formers did not let go—they held on! The Terrible Three were seized by many hands, and hurled forth into the passage, and they rolled along the linoleum there with wild yells.

"That's better!" said Blake, panting with his exertions. "We're not going to have any cheek from the Shell on the subject, anyway!"

"Wathah not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Noble, of the Shell.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Blake, tuning on the Cornstalk wrathfully.

"Oh, nothing! I was only thinking that you'll have to stop those rough games when you have a lady teacher!"

That was enough! The Fourth-Formers rushed upon Kangaroo, and he went flying through the doorway.

"Any more Shell-fish got anything funny to say?" roared Blake.

"Not at all," said Bernard Glyn, dodging towards the door. "I think it's a jolly good thing for you. You will have to wash your faces to-morrow morning—"

They rushed at him, but he was gone. The Fourth Form went up to bed that

night in an excited frame of mind. Over in the New House, Figgins & Co. were as excited as Blake & Co. in the School House. The grins of the other Forms were wildly exasperating to all the Fourth.

As Blake and the rest were going to bed, Wally of the Third put his head in at the dormitory door.

"Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"Weally, Wally—"

"I've come to give you a tip," said Wally. "This is a serious matter. I'm not going to have you falling in love with your lady teacher. I—"

Biff! Biff!

Two pillows crashed on the door as Wally hurriedly closed it and withdrew.

Knox, the prefect, came to see the lights out for the Fourth. There was an unpleasant grin on the face of the prefect, which made the Fourth long to punch him; but it was rather a serious matter to punch a prefect.

"I hope you'll like your new teacher," said Knox.

"Well, anything's better than you, Knox," said Blake. "In the lowest deep there's still a greater depth; you know."

"Yaas, wathah! Upon the whole, I'm vevy pleased that we're not going to have you, Knox!" said Arthur Augustus. "Nothin's so bad but what it might be worse."

Knox scowled.

"I hear that Miss Ponsobly smacks her pupils when they're naughty," he said, "and makes them stand in the corner with their faces to the wall. I shall look in at the Fourth Form-room to-morrow to see how you're getting on. Ha, ha, ha!"

Whiz!

Prefect or no prefect, the Fourth were "fed" up, and a pillow flew through the air, and smote Knox on the nose, and the prefect sat down with startling and painful suddenness on the hard floor of the dormitory.

He was up again in a moment, red with rage.

"Who threw that pillow?" he roared.

"Yah!"

"Get out!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Knox made a rush at the shouting juniors. Five or six pillows and bolsters were hurled at him, and he rolled over again. He picked himself up more slowly this time, and gave the juniors a glare. But he did not attempt to come to close quarters again.

"Take fifty lines each!" he exclaimed.

And the Fourth-Form grinned and went to bed. That was Knox's way of getting out of a difficult position; he knew the juniors would not do the lines, but as he would not ask for them, his dignity would be saved.

It was just as well for him that he stopped short, for the juniors were quite exasperated, and Knox had come very near to being thoroughly ragged.

It was a long time before the Fourth-Formers slept.

For an hour or more there was a buzz of voices, and when the juniors slept at

last, some of them dreamed that they were dressed in pinafores, walking two and two to church with Miss Ponsonby in command.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nice for the Fourth.

MISS PONSONBY arrived the next morning.

Miss Pon, as she was sometimes called in the village and the school, was a very good-looking young lady, for her forty years.

Miss Pon thought she understood boys. Perhaps she did not understand boys so well as they understood her. Boys are a problem. They do not understand themselves, as a rule, and grown-up people are often sadly at a loss in attempting to grapple with the puzzle of boy-nature.

Miss Ponsonby had not really solved that riddle, although she fully believed that she had done so.

Before taking command in the Fourth Form-room, she had an interview with the Head, and she expressed views which left the good old doctor a little doubtful.

"All boys require is kindness and attention in minute details," Miss Pon declared. "I have always succeeded with my classes of girls. Why should boys be treated differently? Gentleness must be the watchword. Kindness is the thing, and affection. I shall rely upon their better natures, and appeal to that love of goodness which I am assured is born in every boy the same as in every girl."

"Ahem!" said the Head.

"I shall offer the head boy in class a pretty bow, which he will wear in the playground as a distinction," said Miss Pon.

"Dear me!" said the Head.

"And I shall call them by their Christian names, as I do my girls. Do you not think that that seems so much more sweet?"

"Ahem!"

And with these noble intentions in her mind, Miss Ponsonby entered into the lion's den, so to speak.

The Fourth were not yet there.

Morning school began at St. Jim's at nine, but at nine o'clock none of the Fourth had turned up.

Miss Ponsonby was patient.

At five minutes past nine a few fellows straggled in. Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence of the New House, were the first. They were scholarship fellows, and supposed to be unnaturally keen about lessons. Hence their arrival only five minutes late.

"Good-morning!" said Miss Ponsonby.

"Good-morning, miss!" said Redfern.

"Where are the other boys?"

"In the quad, I think, Miss Ponsonby."

"That is not right," said the vicar's sister gravely. "Nine o'clock is the time for first lessons. I hope you are not going to be careless, my dears."

The New Firm looked at one another in a sickly way. She had called them dears already. She would be kissing them next, as Owen whispered in a disgusted undertone.

"We are sorry, miss," said Redfern politely. "We thought you wouldn't mind, as it was first morning."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in. Arthur Augustus had intended to be in the Form-room on the very stroke of nine, in order to show that, little as he liked feminine government in the Form-room, he understood what was due to a lady.

Punctuality, the politeness of princes, was a great point with Arthur Augustus. Unfortunately, he had considered it only due to Miss Ponsonby to put on an extra special necktie, and it had detained him ten minutes at the last moment.

"Pway excuse me, Miss Ponsonby," said D'Arcy, in his graceful way, "I trust you will overlook this unpunctuality on my part for once."

"Certainly, my dear!" said Miss Ponsonby.

D'Arcy jumped.

The rest of the Fourth wandered in. The whole Form had rejected Mellish's suggestion of ragging the lady teacher, with indignation. But they had felt that discipline in the Form-room would be slack in feminine hands, and so they had naturally allowed themselves a little rope, as it were, about coming in to lessons.

They strolled in as if it were a meeting of the Hobby Club, and sat at the desks in careless attitudes. Arthur Augustus, indeed, sat bolt upright, as an example to the rest; but Arthur Augustus' example was not always followed; and it wasn't upon this occasion.

Miss Ponsonby greeted all her pupils kindly.

She had utilised the delay in sorting over Mr. Latham's books in his desk, and she was prepared for war, so to speak.

"Until I grow a little used to the Form work, I shall have to depend upon you for some assistance, my dears," she said, beaming.

The Fourth Form grunted.

"Arthur!"

D'Arcy looked up. So did Digby. So

at every possible opportunity. He was glad he had been called upon to construe first, as it enabled him to begin where he liked.

The new Form-mistress, of course, did not know what the Fourth had been doing, and Mellish had not done his preparation the preceding evening—a duty he frequently neglected.

If Mr. Latham had been taking the class that morning, there would have been trouble for Mellish; but under the circumstances he was able to avoid it, by starting at a place that was perfectly familiar to him, and to everybody.

"Gallia est omnis diviso in partes tres," said Mellish solemnly.

The Fourth Form stared.

Then they grinned.

Miss Ponsonby could not help being a little surprised.

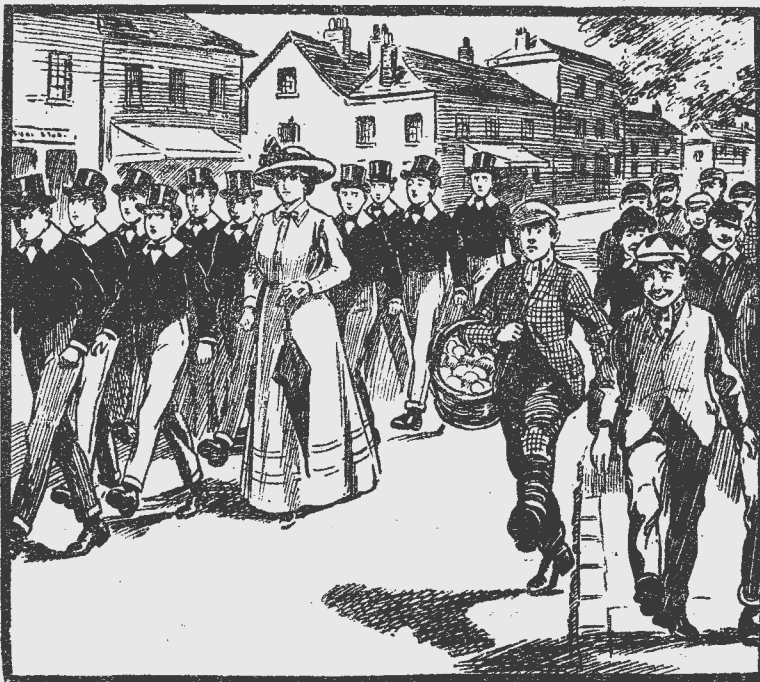
"Is that the right place, Mellish—Percy?" she asked.

"Yes, miss."

"You are quite sure?"

"Quite sure, miss."

"Indeed!" Miss Ponsonby would never have suspected anybody of telling an untruth, so she was only surprised. "Very well, construe."



Grimes led the village urchins along the street, marching abreast of the enraged Fourth Formers. Miss Ponsonby turned very pink and shook her parasol at the village boys. "Go away at once, you rude children!" she exclaimed.

did several other fellows who happened to-bear that uncommon name.

"Yes, sir—miss."

"Yaas, Miss Pon."

"Adsum!"

"H'm! I mean D'Arcy," said Miss Ponsonby. "D'Arcy, will you kindly tell me what book you are now using?"

"De Belloc Gallico," Miss Ponsonby.

"Which book?"

"Liber primus, Miss Ponsonby."

"Very good. You will commence, Percy."

Percy Mellish rose, colouring. Nobody ever called him Percy at St. Jim's—at all events, hitherto—though after that day he was Percied continually by humorous juniors.

Mellish was chiefly distinguished in the Form as a slacker, and for avoiding work

The Fourth-Formers looked at Mellish in wonder and disgust. His facility for telling lies was amazing.

The Fourth Form were, of course, far advanced in the Gallic War; and Mellish, with perfect coolness, had started at the very beginning of the first book, and was going to construe lines which he had known by heart when he was a fag in the Third Form.

"The awful wottah!" said D'Arcy, in a whisper to Blake. "It's amazin' to me how that chap can tell those whoppahs. He ought to be shown up."

"Can't sneak!" said Blake.

"I was not wpososin' to sneak, deah boy; but it seems wotten to see him talcin' in Miss Pon in that way."

"He's a rotter," said Figgins; "but it THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 240.

makes it easier for us. I only just looked at my prep. last night."

"Yes; we shall have to go on where Percy leaves off," grumbled Herries. "He's a cad, but it can't be helped; and it's all right for us."

"Yaas, wathah! But——"

"Please be quiet while your schoolmate construes, my dears," said Miss Ponsonby.

"Bai Jove!"

And the Fourth Form were silent while their schoolmate construed. Mellish went on with much fluency. As a rule, he was the worst in the class, but on the present occasion the veriest duffer at St. Jim's would hardly have faltered.

There was not a fag in the Second or Third who could not have informed Miss Ponsonby that ancient Gaul was divided into three parts, and specified the inhabitants thereof.

Miss Ponsonby nodded with approval as Percy Mellish told her without a fault that all Gaul was divided in three parts, of which one was inhabited by the Belgae, another by the Aquitani, and the third by those who in their own language Celts, and in ours, Gauls are called.

"Very good indeed, Percy," said Miss Ponsonby. "This shows that you have been very careful with your preparation."

"Yes, miss," said Mellish demurely; "I always make it a point to be very careful with my preparation, I look upon it as a duty that I owe to my parents and to my kind teachers."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake.

Miss Ponsonby beamed.

"You will take the head of the class for the present, Percy," she said.

Percy smirked.

He took the head of the class; the first time he had ever taken the head of any class. Glances were bestowed upon him by fellows he displaced. Even fellows who were not keen on Form-room work, felt insulted at being passed over by the biggest slacker and duffer in the Form.

"I am very pleased with you, Percy!" said Miss Ponsonby. "I hope your schoolmates will be equally deserving. I have decided to offer a little reward to the head boy of the Form."

Fatty Wynn pricked up his ears. Perhaps the thought crossed his mind that the reward might take the form of a visit to the school tuckshop.

"I am going to give a pretty bow to the top boy, which he will wear in the playground," said Miss Ponsonby.

The Fourth Form gasped.

Mellish turned quite pale.

Miss Ponsonby fished in her bag—of course, as a woman, she could not possibly come even into a Form-room without a bag—and drew out a really pretty bow, which would have delighted the heart of a little girl of five—but did not have that effect upon the Fourth Form of St. Jim's.

The Fourth Form looked quite sickly.

"There!" said Miss Ponsonby, holding it up. "I made it myself, and it will be a mark of distinction to the dear child who becomes head of the Form."

And the good lady placed the pretty bow in a prominent position on the desk, where it could be seen by all eyes, as an incentive to hard work.

The juniors looked at one another.

One thought was in every mind. Mellish had the head of the class, and Mellish would keep it. With that handsome reward in view, and the prospect of being made to look absurd to all St. Jim's, no one was likely to struggle to displace Mellish.

Percy certainly would have been very glad to be displaced, but no one was likely to give him the chance.

"Jack!" said Miss Ponsonby.

Three or four Jacks rose, but Miss Ponsonby's finger singled out Jack Blake, and Blake began to construe. He went on from where Mellish had left off, in lines

as familiar to him as his own name, but he made a woeful mess of them.

"Hi omnes lingua, institutis, legibus inter se diff runt," said Blake, and he proceeded with much solemnity to construe: "All these have instituted a lingo which is not legible."

There was a cackle from the Fourth.

Miss Ponsonby started.

"Jack!" she shrieked.

"Yes, sir—I mean miss."

"You have not prepared your lesson." "N-u-not this, miss!" stammered Blake.

"That is very wrong, Jack!"

"I—I——"

"I fear I must place you at the bottom of the Form."

"Thank you, miss—I—I—I mean yes, sir!" stuttered Blake.

"You will go on—what is your name, my dear?" asked Miss Ponsonby, looking at Lumley-Lumley.

"Jerrold, miss."

"Please go on, Jerrold, and show Jack how that passage should be construed."

"I guess I can do it, miss."

"Pray go on."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley construed.

"All these linger in institutions in different legs."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Miss Ponsonby, while the Form yelled. "You are a dreadful dunce, Jerrold. You will show him how it should be done, Patrick."

Reilly rose to the occasion.

"Hi omnes lingua——" he began.

"Yes, yes; construe," said Miss Ponsonby.

"Faith, all these lingoes are by institutions lawfully differentiated."

"Oh!" said Miss Ponsonby. "You have been neglecting your preparation. You seem not to be able to grasp the rudiments of Latin. I shall now take you through this instead of letting you construe."

And Miss Ponsonby spent the next half-hour drilling into the Fourth Form heads knowledge which they already possessed. They took it patiently. So long as they were not moved up to the top of the class the juniors were satisfied.

And it was not only in the Latin lesson, but in the other lessons that the Form-mistress found the Fourth woefully deficient. It seemed to be a Form full of duffers. It was not ragging, as Blake remarked; it was self-defence.

Nobody intended to go out of the Form-room after morning lessons with that ridiculous bow pinned upon him if he could help it. Miss Ponsonby came to the conclusion when lessons were over that the Fourth Form of St. Jim's was a dreadfully stupid Form, and she did not wonder that Mr. Latham was showing signs of baldness.

Even Mellish showed himself as stupid as the rest, in the hope of being deprived of his honourable place; but it did not avail him. He had distinguished himself once, and nobody else had distinguished himself at all, excepting for stupidity.

"Dismiss!" said Miss Ponsonby at last.

And as the Fourth Form marched out, she made Mellish stop at her desk, and pinned the bow upon his jacket. Mellish followed the rest of the Fourth out of the Form-room with a face as red as fire. He darted to his own room at once, and dragging off the bow Miss Ponsonby had presented him with, he put on one of his own.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The Little Boy Who Was Good.

**A**FTERNOON lessons in the Fourth Form-room were not a pleasure to the Fourth.

During the morning Miss Ponsonby had followed the usual routine of lessons, but in the afternoon she introduced some improvements, on the lines

of the girls' school in which she had been a teacher.

"I am going to give you children a pleasant change," she announced.

The juniors looked up eagerly. For a moment they hoped that Miss Ponsonby was going to excuse them from lessons. They would have been very pleased to play cricket instead. But Miss Ponsonby's next words dashed their hopes to the ground.

"I am sure you will all like a change from the class-room on a hot afternoon like this," said Miss Ponsonby. "I am going to take you out for half an hour, and we will sit on the grass, and I will tell you a story."

"Thank you, ma'am!" said Figgins faintly, as somebody was apparently expected to answer.

The Fourth Form were not sorry to get out of the Form-room, so far as that went. But they followed Miss Ponsonby into the quadrangle, with many misgivings.

Miss Ponsonby led them to the Head's lawn, where she told them to sit down and make themselves comfortable. Then she sat down on a camp-stool herself.

The juniors sat or reclined on the grass round her.

"Percy," said Miss Ponsonby, "you shall hold my sunshade. I always used to let the best girl in my class hold my sunshade, and you have been a good boy."

Percy made a horrible grimace, which, fortunately, Miss Ponsonby did not see. He stood beside the Form-mistress and held the sunshade.

"Now, what story shall I tell you, my dears?" asked Miss Ponsonby, beaming round upon the unhappy circle.

"Football," said Figgins.

Miss Ponsonby smiled.

"I'm afraid I should not be able to deal with that subject, dear."

"Cricket," suggested Redfern.

"Ahem!"

"Hockey," said Blake.

"I fear that that is also out of the question. Shall I tell you a story of a good little boy who was unexpectedly rewarded for his goodness?"

Now, if Miss Ponsonby had said to her former class of girls, "Shall I tell you a story of a good little girl who was unexpectedly rewarded for her goodness?" the whole class would have responded immediately, "Do, dear Miss Ponsonby!" with great enthusiasm.

But the response of the unhappy juniors was not enthusiastic.

Some of them had caught sight of Taggles, the school porter, who was doing a little gardening, and had passed in his labours to look on at the scene. They would have given weeks and weeks of pocket-money to throw Taggles into the lake. And they were in dread of the scene lasting after the other fellows had come out of the Form-rooms. As it was last lesson, school would soon be over, and if the rest of St. Jim's came and saw them sitting on the grass round their teacher, the Fourth felt that they would expire of shame. And there was no escape.

"There was once a little girl named Alice," said Miss Ponsonby.

The Fourth Form groaned.

"She lived in a little cottage ever and ever so pretty," said the Form-mistress. "Dear Percy, do not push the sunshade against my bonnet."

"I—I can't help it," muttered Mellish.

"My arm aches."

"My dear child! If you are tired you must not hold my sunshade a moment longer," said Miss Ponsonby. "Jack, would you like to hold it for me instead of Percy?"

Blake complied.

"Alice was a good little girl," continued Miss Ponsonby. "She loved her mother and her dear aunts and her kind teacher. She——"

"Excuse me, ma'am," said Lumley.



Lumley. "Wasn't this going to be a story about a good little boy?"

"Dear me!" said Miss Ponsonby. "Thank you so much for reminding me, Jerrold. You are quite right. There was once a good little boy named——"

"Percy," suggested Lumley-Lumley. "Yes, named Percy," said Miss Ponsonby brightly. "Of course, any name would do, and it is very sweet of you to suggest the name of a playmate you are fond of, Jerrold. There was once a good little boy named Percy."

"Haw, haw, haw!" Miss Ponsonby looked round. That unseemly interruption had come from Taggles. Taggles blushed as he caught Miss Ponsonby's stern eye, and immediately retreated and became busy in another part of the garden.

"This little boy," resumed Miss Ponsonby, with some dignity, "lived in a little cottage that was ever and ever so pretty. She—I mean he—had a teeny-weeny doll—I should say——H'm! Let me think a moment."

Miss Ponsonby thought a moment. Lumley-Lumley interjected a question.

"Was everybody fond of Percy, ma'am?"

"Yes; he was loved by all," said Miss Ponsonby.

"That reminds us of our Percy," said Lumley-Lumley.

Percy gave Lumley-Lumley a glance

so loud. The teacher looked round with a frown.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley.

"Shut up, you ass!" murmured Figgins.

The teacher asked who had dropped the doll—that is to say, the bat. Percy was very much frightened. He thought that the teacher might slap him!

"Poor Percy!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"That's different from our Percy, ma'am. He never has anything to do with cricket-bats."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who dropped that doll—bat?" asked the teacher, in ever and ever so loud a voice," pursued Miss Ponsonby. "And Percy rose and said nobly, 'Please, I did!'"

"With my little hatchet!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"What did you say, Jerrold?"

"It was ripping of Percy, ma'am. Just like our Percy; he'd rise up and tell teacher anything!"

"If it wasn't true!" murmured Herries.

"Now, my dear children, I should like to say that the teacher forgave Percy at once for being so truthful," continued the narrator. "But the teacher was cross, and she made Percy stand in the corner of the school-room for the whole afternoon. Percy was tired, and he had a big, big

But politeness carried to such an extent would really have verged upon hypocrisy. They did not reply.

There was a shout from the direction of the gate in the quadrangle. A row of faces belonging to Shell fellows looked over the gate, admiring the scene in the garden. Shell fellows and fags of the Third crowded there, greatly interested.

The Fourth-Formers were crimson.

"The rector said——" said Miss Ponsonby.

The Fourth Form rose as one man. "I will finish the story to-morrow," said Miss Ponsonby graciously. "You may go!"

"Thank you, ma'am!"

And the Fourth Form went. They never learned how Percy was rewarded for his goodness. But they did not feel very curious upon the subject.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER | 2  
A Kiss For Mellish.

THE next day several of the Fourth Form inquired of Mr. Railton, with much solicitude, how Mr. Lathom was getting on. Mr. Lathom was still at the vicarage, and Miss Ponsonby was still at St. Jim's.

It would have been very flattering to Mr. Lathom to hear how anxious his Form were about him. They were as eager to hear the latest bulletin as if he had been an emperor or a prince, at least.

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that was positively murderous. The Fourth-Formers grinned, feeling a little more satisfied since Miss Ponsonby had named the hero of her story Percy. It was some consolation to see Mellish writhing with suppressed rage.

"Percy had a little cricket-bat that he was very fond of," said Miss Ponsonby, giving the story a really boyish turn, as she fancied. "This cricket-bat had been given him by a kind uncle who loved him dearly. Percy was so fond of this little doll—I mean cricket-bat—that he used to take it to school with her—that is to say, him—h'm! Now, the school that Percy went to was ever and ever so big. Percy's teacher did not allow dolls—I mean footballs—that is to say, cricket-bats, to be brought into the school, and Percy always hid the cricket-bat under his little coat."

The juniors grinned cheerfully. They could imagine Percy hiding a cricket-bat under his little coat.

"But one day," resumed Miss Ponsonby, "when the teacher was not looking, Percy played with his cricket-bat. He pressed it to make it squeak—that is to say——"

The juniors chuckled. The cricket-bat was getting mixed with the doll of the original story again.

"That is to say, he allowed it to fall upon the floor," said Miss Ponsonby, with a really wonderful flow of invention. "The crash of the bat as it fell was ever and ever

ache in his little legs. Don't you all feel sorry for poor Percy, my dears?"

The Fourth-Formers, thus appealed to, looked simply idiotic.

"It was hard cheese!" gasped Figgins. "Yaas, wathah! I should have refused to stand in the corner. I should have insisted that it was infwa dig."

"My dear Arthur!"

"Weally, Miss Ponsonby——"

"To resume. While poor Percy was standing in the corner, feeling very tired and very, very much ashamed, the rector came in. The rector immediately saw Percy, and——"

There was a whoop in the quadrangle, announcing that the school was out.

The juniors made a general movement.

They simply could not endure to be found where they were by the Shell fellows and the fags, and yet it would be somewhat discourteous to interrupt Miss Ponsonby in the midst of her thrilling story.

"The rector said——"

What the rector said to Percy was never known. Mellish rose from the grass, with an ache in his legs from sitting in an uncomfortable position, which probably equalled that of the Percy of the story.

"Time's up, ma'am!" said Mellish sullenly. "The school's dismissed!"

"Would you not like me to finish the story, my dears?" asked Miss Ponsonby.

The Fourth-Formers wanted to be polite.

Mr. Railton gave them what satisfaction he could. Mr. Lathom was mending, but he was mending slowly. That was all the Housemaster could tell them, excepting that the master of the Fourth was not expected to return to St. Jim's for a few days, anyway. The Fourth heard it with long faces.

"Never mind!" said Blake, looking as if he minded very much, however. "We can stand it this morning! Thank goodness, it's a half-holiday this afternoon!"

"Yes; that's a giddy blessing," said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll lick those Shell bounders at cricket, and make 'em sit up for their cheek," said Figgins vengefully.

Tom Merry & Co. watched the Fourth-Formers go in to morning lessons, and they grinned. They were sympathetic, but they could not help grinning.

Miss Ponsonby was there, sweet and calm and smiling, as usual.

There was no chance for Mellish to repeat his performance of the previous day, nor, indeed, was the cad of the Fourth anxious to retain the top of the class. He did not want any more decorations.

Miss Ponsonby commenced with him, and the exceeding badness of his constring caused him to be moved down

several places, which happened to bring Lumley-Lumley into his place.

Lumley-Lumley glared at Mellish for thrusting this unsought honour upon him. Mellish grinned gleefully.

"You'll have a bow to-day, you rotter!" he muttered along the desks.

Lumley-Lumley's reply waited for some minutes, and then it took the form of a pellet of screwed-up paper, which caught Mellish with some force behind the ear.

Mellish clapped his hand to the affected spot and howled:

"Ow!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Ponsonby. "What was that?"

"Yow! Some beast chucked something at me!" growled Mellish.

"Percy!"

"Ow!"

"How can you use such an expression in description of one of your dear playmates, my child?" exclaimed Miss Ponsonby, very much shocked.

"Well, he is a beast!" said Mellish. "I am surprised at you, Percy!"

Percy rubbed his ear and growled.

"Which boy was it threw a pellet at Percy?" asked Miss Ponsonby, looking over the class. "I trust the delinquent will be frank enough to make himself known, when I undertake that he shall not be punished."

Lumley-Lumley made a grimace.

"It would be so painful to me to have to keep the whole class in," said Miss Ponsonby.

Very expressive glances were cast upon Lumley-Lumley by his Form-fellows. They didn't want to be kept in.

"If you please, Miss Ponsonby, I know who did it!" said Lumley-Lumley meekly.

Miss Ponsonby looked at him coldly. She did not encourage tell-tales.

"Indeed!" she said. "I do not wish you to name another boy. I asked the boy himself to own up."

"I guess I'm the boy."

Miss Ponsonby's face cleared.

"Oh," she said, "I understand! Why did you do it, Jerrold?"

"Just to make Percy sit up," said Lumley-Lumley. "I just wished to remind Percy that I was here, you know, ma'am, because I'm so fond of him."

"My dear Jerrold, that is most creditable to you!" exclaimed Miss Ponsonby.

"He's telling whoppers!" growled Mellish.

"Percy! What did you say?"

"He's stuffing you, ma'am!"

"What an extraordinary expression!" said Miss Ponsonby. "What do you mean?"

"He's pulling your leg—ahem—I mean, he's fooling, spoofing, telling whoppers!" howled Mellish. "He chucked that thing at me to hurt me, and it's hurt!"

"Sneak!" hissed half the Form.

Miss Ponsonby turned a very grave face upon Lumley-Lumley.

"My dear Jerrold, I am surprised and pained!" she said.

Lumley-Lumley turned very red.

"Come out before the class, Jerrold!"

The junior obeyed, wondering whether Miss Ponsonby was going to assume a Form-master's rights to the cane.

"Come here, Percy!"

Percy Mellish joined Lumley-Lumley very unwillingly before the class.

"Now," said Miss Ponsonby, "I'm sure you two boys do not really feel any ill-feeling towards one another. I am sure you are really fond of one another."

"H'm!" murmured Lumley-Lumley.

"Oh!" said Mellish.

"Now, shake hands with one another, like good little boys, and I will kiss you both," said Miss Ponsonby.

Mellish and Lumley-Lumley gasped. Probably Miss Ponsonby had composed many little differences successfully in that

way at her girls' school. But at St. Jim's such methods had never been tried.

"You'll—you'll what?" gasped Lumley-Lumley.

"You—you'll——" stuttered Mellish.

"I will kiss you both," said Miss Ponsonby, beaming. "Now, shake hands like dear little children!"

"Oh, my hat!" moaned Blake, "What next?"

"Bai Jove!"

Miss Ponsonby was waiting, in the evident expectation of being obeyed. Lumley-Lumley and Mellish, looking very shamefaced, shook hands.

"Dear children!" said Miss Ponsonby. She bent her head and kissed Mellish on the forehead. He jumped. Then she turned towards Lumley-Lumley. That cheerful youth was generally credited with possessing the coolness habitual to a cucumber, and with having the nerve to face anything. But there was evidently a limit even with Lumley-Lumley. He backed away.

"Oh, I say!" he gasped.

"Jerrold, my dear child——"

"I—I—— Oh——"

"Come here, dear!"

"If—if you please, I—I'd rather not!" said Lumley-Lumley, with a burning face.

"Jerrold!"

"I—I guess I ain't used to being kissed!" said Lumley-Lumley. "It serves Mellish right—I mean, it's all right for Mellish; but——"

Miss Ponsonby laughed.

"You are a silly boy!" she said. "You may go back to your place."

"Thank you, ma'am."

And Lumley-Lumley thankfully went.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.  
Walking Out!

"DISMISS!"

It was a welcome word.

The afternoon was a half-holiday, and the Fourth Form were looking forward to it with unusual keenness. They were going to play a Form match with the Shell, and they wanted very much to lick Tom Merry & Co. on the cricket-field. But their teacher was not done with them yet.

"One moment," she said, holding up her finger as the Form prepared to march out. "It is a half-holiday to-day, my dears, and I have planned a little excursion for you."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors could only look at their Form-mistress.

"I am going to take you for a little walk," said Miss Ponsonby sweetly. "Will you be all ready at three o'clock, and I will join you outside the House. We will have a little pleasant walk in the country, and I will give you some instruction in botanical subjects. I shall bring a little book with me, 'The Story of a Blade of Grass,' by Josiah Mugwump. A most interesting book."

"Oh!" said the Fourth.

They did not thank Miss Ponsonby for her thoughtful kindness. They couldn't. They left the Form-room, and grouped themselves in the quadrangle to talk it over. The Terrible Three joined the unhappy juniors, and they forbore from chipping as they saw how unhappy Blake & Co. looked.

"More trouble?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake growled.

"I think we shall be driven to running away!" he said. "The Form match is off for this afternoon."

"What!"

"We're ordered up for three o'clock, to be taken for a little walk."

"My hat!"

"Two and two, like a giddy girls' school, with a lady teacher and botany, and the

story of a blade of grass!" groaned Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter, you silly ass! Fellows have been driven to all sorts of things for less than this!" growled Redfern. "We barred old Ratty out of the New House for less than this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I won't stand it!" howled Mellish. "I'm not going to be walked out!"

"It doesn't matter about you. You don't want to play cricket, Percy."

"Oh, shut up, you fathead!"

"My dear Percy——"

Percy stamped away in a fury.

The rest of the Fourth talked it over. Some were inclined to rebel, and some to remonstrate, and some to bolt, and not turn up again till calling-over. But upon the whole they felt that it would not do.

Miss Ponsonby had to be treated with respect, and even if the juniors failed in respect, there was authority behind her. If their Form-master had ordered a little walk, they would have had no choice in the matter.

Their Form-master had too much tact for that. But Miss Ponsonby did not know the difference in taste between feminine classes and masculine ones. It seemed to her a delightful pastime to take a gentle walk in the country and investigate some of the beauties of Nature.

Blake & Co. thought of the chipping they would receive from the village boys if they marched two and two in charge of the vicar's sister, and groaned in spirit. Little matters like that did not even enter Miss Pon's mind.

At three o'clock the Fourth, in a state of suppressed desperation, lined up outside the School House. Miss Ponsonby came out with her sunshade and a book under her arm; a book which contained the most tiresome particulars as to the way blades of grass came into existence.

She greeted the juniors with a beaming smile.

"We shall have such a pleasant afternoon," she said.

"Yaas, wathah, Miss Ponsonby!" said D'Arcy feebly.

"Perhaps you would like to come?" said Miss Ponsonby, turning to the Terrible Three, who were looking on.

The chums of the Shell backed away in alarm. Only Monty Lowther retained his presence of mind in that emergency.

"Yes, yes, we should love it!" he exclaimed. "But we—we—we've got an engagement. We're late already, you chaps. Come on!"

And Tom Merry & Co. ran for their lives.

"Well, we are all ready!" said Miss Ponsonby. "Come!"

The Fourth Form started.

Miss Ponsonby did not seem to observe their unhappy expressions. Dr. Holmes happened to be crossing the quadrangle as the juniors marched to the gates, and he paused. The long array of Fourth-Formers lifted their hats.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, in surprise. "Are the boys going out, Miss Ponsonby?"

"Yes, I am taking the dear children for a little walk," said Miss Ponsonby, with a beaming smile. "I am going to give them some instruction in botany."

"Dear me!"

"We shall have such a pleasant afternoon."

"I—I hope you will, I am sure," said the Head.

But he looked on with a dubious expression upon his face as the unhappy procession wound on towards the gates, and after that the Head spent some time in serious consultation with Mr. Linton and Mr. Railton.

Meanwhile, the Fourth walked out.

They were arranged in twos, and made quite a long column, and Miss Ponsonby

walked beside them in the sweetest possible temper.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and the juniors would have enjoyed a cricket match, or a row on the river, or a picnic in the ruined castle; or simply a ramble in the woods. But to be walked out like this in their best silk hats under charge of a lady teacher was not enjoyment—very far from it.

None of the Fourth had ventured to disobey the summons to walk out; but several of them began lagging behind in the lane, in the hope of being able to slip away unseen. But Miss Ponsoby was very watchful.

"Percy, dear," she said suddenly, "are you tired?"

Mellish turned red.

"N-n-no," he muttered.

"Then why are you walking behind?"

"I—I—"

"Perhaps you are tired, my poor boy. Come and take my arm," said Miss Ponsoby kindly.

"It's all right," gasped Mellish. "I—I'm not tired."

Miss Ponsoby shook her head.

"You are quite flushed, Percy dear. I am quite sure you are fatigued. Come and take my arm, and I shall assist you."

There was no help for it. Poor Percy had to take Miss Ponsoby's arm, and he took it with his teeth set and his eyes gleaming.

Mellish's fate was a warning to the others. Nobody lagged behind after that. Nobody wanted to be accommodated with Miss Ponsoby's other arm.

The route lay through Rylcombe, and the juniors shuddered as they came into the old High Street. They had many foes there, and they knew that the enemy would not fail to take advantage of their present helpless position.

Fortunately, the fellows of Rylcombe Grammar School were playing an away cricket match, so they had no attentions to fear from Gordon Gay & Co. But the village boys—Grimes, the grocer's boy, and Pilcher and Craggs and the rest—where were they?

The juniors soon learned where they were. Almost the first person they beheld on entering the village was Grimes, the grocer's boy. Grimes had a basket on his arm, full of groceries, which he was conveying to various destinations. But Grimes was in no hurry to get them there. At the sight of the Fourth Form procession Grimes stopped, and set his basket down, and stared at them.

"Well, my boy!" he gasped.

Miss Ponsoby did not appear to notice him. But the juniors of St. Jim's glared at him in the most deadly way.

"My 'at!" gasped Grimes. "Is it a Sunday-school treat?"

"Weally, Gwimes—"

"Cut off, you rotter!" growled Figgins.

"I'll punch your silly head if you don't travel," hissed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grimes. "Going to a tea-fight, eh? One bun each, with one currant in each bun—I know. You there, too, Master Lumley-Lumley?"

"Yes, I guess I'm here, too, Master Grimes," said Lumley-Lumley cheerfully.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Grimes.

The juniors glared at him, and some of them stopped, strongly tempted to leave the ranks and bestow summary chastisement upon the humorous Grimes.

Miss Ponsoby looked back, frowning a little.

"Pray keep in order, my dear children," she said.

"Yaas, wathah, Miss Ponsoby; but—"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Please run away, you rude boy," said Miss Ponsoby. "I am shocked at you. Please run away at once!"

"No offence, ma'am," said Grimes.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

Jack Blake made a sudden jump out of the ranks, and seized Grimes round the neck.

Grimes returned grip for grip with great heartiness, and they struggled furiously on the pavement, and Miss Ponsoby shrieked.

Bump!  
Crash!

The two combatants fell across Grimes' basket, and there was a terrific smash, and broken eggs spurted over both of them.

"Oh!" gasped Grimes.

"Bai Jove! You've done it now, Gwimey, deah boy!"

Miss Ponsoby ran up in great excitement and alarm.

"Stop it! Stop fighting at once, you dreadful boys!" she exclaimed.

"I'll smash him!" roared Blake.

"I'll spifficate him!" bellowed Grimes.

"Yah!"

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

of the Fourth Form was quite broken up.

"Go it!"

"Bump the cads!"

"Yah!"

"Oh!"

Miss Ponsoby wrung her hands.

"Help!" she shrieked. "Help! Help!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.  
Very Pleasant!

"WOT'S all this 'ere?"

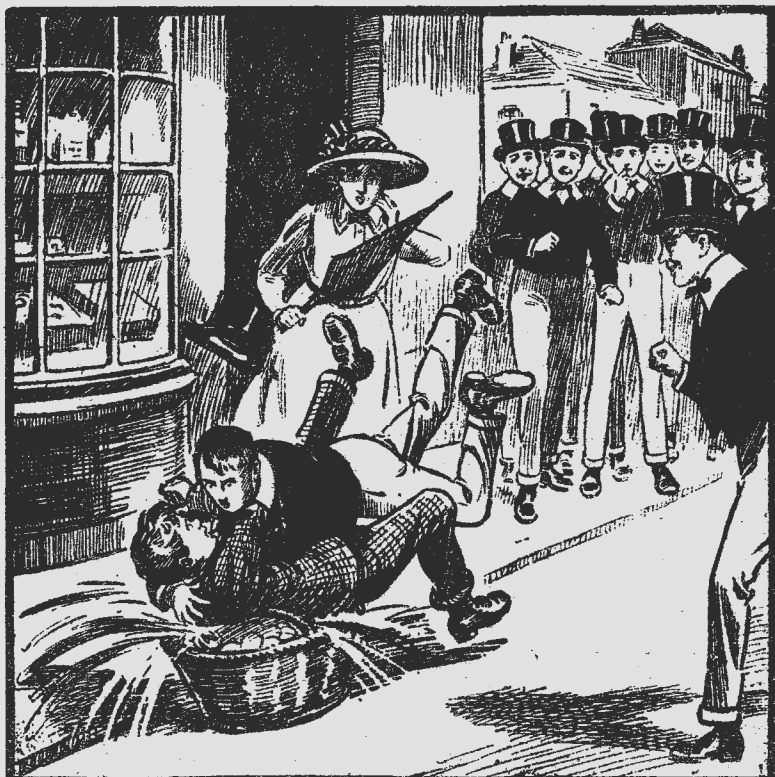
It was the awe-inspiring voice of P.-c. Crump, the representative of his Majesty's

Police Force in the village of Rylcombe.

The combatants separated as the stout policeman came up.

Grimes & Co. vanished, taking swollen noses and thick ears with them, and leaving some of the same with Blake & Co.

Miss Ponsoby ceased to shriek, but she was almost weeping with horror. It was only too evident that the boys had damaged one another.



Miss Ponsoby ran up in great excitement and alarm. "Stop it! Stop fighting at once, you dreadful boys!" she exclaimed. "I'll smash him!" roared Blake. "I'll spifficate him!" bellowed Grimes.

"Oh, separate them, separate them!" gasped poor Miss Ponsoby, wringing her hands. "They will hurt one another. I am sure they will hurt one another."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins. "I think that's very likely."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Separate them! I command you—I beg of you—"

Three or four of the village youths rushed to the aid of Grimes. As if by magic, they had gathered upon the spot.

Pilcher, the butcher's boy, and Craggs, the chemist's boy, and two or three others rushed up.

Blake's comrades, of course, were bound to take a hand then. In a few moments three or four distinct fights were in progress, and the beautiful marching order

"A' right, ma'am," said P.-c. Crump respectfully, "the young raskils are gone."

"Oh!" panted Miss Ponsoby. "It was dreadful! Thank you so much for coming, constable. Jack, my dear boy, I am afraid you began it."

"Very likely," said Blake gruffly.

"I fear you are a violent-tempered boy, Jack."

Blake grunted.

"Under the circumstances, Blake, I think I ought to send you back to the school, and refuse to allow you to participate in this pleasant afternoon walk," said Miss Ponsoby severely.

Blake brightened up wonderfully.

"All right, Miss Ponsoby," he said, "I'll go."

Miss Ponsoby relented. "No, Jack, you need not go," she said. "I do not wish to be severe. So long as you have a proper sense of your fault, I wish to be kind."

"I—I say, kindness is only wasted on me, ma'am," said Blake. "I think I—I ought to be punished. I ought to be sent back."

Miss Ponsoby looked very pleased. "I am glad to see that you see your fault so clearly, Jack. I shall overlook it. Come on, my dear little ones, and you must be careful not to become mixed up in any more quarrels with rude boys."

Blake snorted. The column marched on, some of the fighting-men dabbing at their noses with their handkerchiefs, or crossing eyes that showed some signs of discoloration.

"Werry glad to be of service, mum," said Mr. Crump. "I am very much obliged to you, constable," said Miss Ponsoby.

"Not at all, mum. Dooty, mum. Don't expect nothing for doing my dooty, mum!" said Mr. Crump, who, however, did seem to expect something.

"Thank you so much, constable." And Miss Ponsoby walked on. P.-c. Crump gazed after her with a very deep emotion expressed in his fat face.

"Not a bob!" he murmured. "Not a tanner! Well!"

And as his inward disgust was too deep for expression in the inadequate English language, P.-c. Crump finished with a snort.

The Fourth Form walked on. They had no doubt that Grimes & Co. would be looking out for them when they returned through the village, and that the trouble was not yet over. The prospect of another row with the village fellows was their only consolation for that pleasant afternoon's walk.

Miss Ponsoby led them up and down lanes, and paused in meadows and woods, and explained to the juniors many of the cunning ways Nature has in the vegetable kingdom. But it is to be feared that most of that valuable information fell upon inattentive ears.

The juniors were thinking of the cricket-field at St. Jim's, and botanical researches appealed to only a few of them.

"Never mind," murmured Redfern; "we'll have a row with Grimes & Co. as we go back."

"Yaas, wathah! That's one comfort!" "Percy, dear—" said Miss Ponsoby, looking round. "Dear me, where is Percy?"

Percy had vanished. He had taken advantage of the cover afforded by the woods to steal quietly away. His example was followed. About every five minutes the party was decreased in number by

one or two, and so Miss Ponsoby's procession was much less numerous as it turned back towards the village at last.

The good lady could not help noticing it, and she shook her head sadly.

"I am afraid some of the dear children have wandered away," she said. "That is very thoughtless."

"They'll turn up all right for call-over, ma'am," said Blake.

"Dear me! Where are you going, George?"

Herries turned red. "I—I was just going to—to stroll over there," he stammered.

"Please keep together," said Miss Ponsoby reprovingly.

"Ye-e-es, miss!"

They marched back towards the village. As they entered Rylcombe, they looked out for their enemies, and they saw them.

Quite a crowd of Rylcombe urchins had gathered to amuse themselves at the expense of the juniors of St. Jim's. It was not often that they had the Fourth-Formers at their mercy in this way. Grimes, without his basket this time, was there, and he had a score or more of young rascals with him.

They did not interfere with the St. Jim's procession.

They flattered it—if, as the old saying avers—imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

"Line up there!" said Grimes. And the village urchins, chuckling and grinning, lined up.

Grimes led them along the street, marching abreast of the St. Jim's column.

The young rascals assumed most serious looks, and walked in step with the St. Jim's fellows; and Grimes, walking beside them, and keeping them in order, gave an imitation of Miss Ponsoby's manner that was utterly absurd. Some of the juniors themselves could not help grinning.

Miss Ponsoby looked very pink. She shook her parasol at the village boys.

"Go away at once, you rude children!" she exclaimed.

"Whose road is it, ma'am?" inquired Grimes. "I s'pose we're free to walk on the public h'ghway, ain't we?"

"Weally Gwines, you wottah—"

"Horder!" said Grimes. "Lention! Keep in horder there, and don't look at them rude boys!"

"This is really intolerable!" murmured Miss Ponsoby.

"Shall we shift 'em, Miss Ponsoby?" asked Figgins eagerly.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway allow us—"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Miss Ponsoby.

"I forbid you to approach them! I will not have scenes of hoodiganism!"

"Weally, Miss Ponsoby—"

"We'll soon make 'em buzz off, you know!" said Blake pleadingly.

"I forbid you to do anything of the sort. Pray take no notice of those rude children!" said Miss Ponsoby.

The Fourth-Formers marched on, with gritting teeth. Grimes & Co. kept pace with them, Grimes imitating Miss Ponsoby and the village boys imitating the juniors with great fidelity. The Saints were growing more and more restive every moment.

Grimes' remarks, too, were very hard to bear in silence, Grimes had quite a flow of humorous language.

"Horder!" he said. "Don't look at them rude schoolboys. Don't you know that them boys are brought up in a school because they've got no 'omes, or else because their parents can't stand 'em about the 'ouse. You should feel sorry for them boys, my dears, but you should be careful not to mix with them or to imitate their bad manners."

The Co. chuckled.

"You must not laugh in the street, my dears!" exclaimed Grimes, in a shocked voice. "Leave that to them poor boys who are brought up without the advantage of a 'ome!"

"Oh, I shall go for him soon!" murmured Blake, in a choked voice.

"Cut off, you young sweeps!" roared Figgins.

"Don't answer that there rude boy!" said Grimes.

Figgins dropped out of the ranks. There would have been a combat in another moment, but Miss Ponsoby ran up in time. She pushed Figgins back into his place.

"You must not fight!" she exclaimed. "You must show your gentle and forgiving dispositions on an occasion like this."

"Oh!" said Figgins. He was feeling neither gentle nor forgiving at that moment.

Grimes & Co. accompanied the juniors half-way to St. Jim's. Then they stopped.

"We must go back now, my dears," said Grimes. "Salute them rude boys before you go. Right hands up!"

The array put up their right hands.

"Thumbs to noses!" said Grimes.

The order was obeyed.

"Fingers stretched out!"

The young rascals stretched out the fingers.

"Left hand up, thumb to little finger of right 'and, and fingers stretched out!" said Grimes, in the tone of a drill-sergeant.

And thus the young rascals saluted the St. Jim's juniors as they marched past, Blake & Co. marched on with crimson faces, Miss Ponsoby was watching them too carefully for them to get at the enemy, the good lady keeping herself carefully between the two parties.

Leaving Grimes & Co. performing that respectful salute, the juniors tramped on

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in a state of suppressed fury that was very near explosion-point.

14  
**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.**

Saved!

"IT'S the limit!"

"It's past the limit!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's too thick!"

"We're not going to stand it!"

Voices were raised in wrath in the Fourth Form-room at St. Jim's.

After that pleasant little walk, the juniors had re-entered the school in a sulphurous state. The last straw had been added when Miss Ponsonby told them sweetly that, instead of having tea in their studies that afternoon, they should come out and picnic on the lawn, and she would continue the story of good little Percy, who was unexpectedly rewarded for his goodness.

"Something's got to be done," said Blake. "Lathom has no right to catch a silly cold. He shouldn't have planted Miss Pon. on us, anyway. She's a good sort, but she can't handle the Fourth Form of St. Jim's."

"No fear!"

"We'll tell her plainly we won't have it!"

"Bravo!"

"Gussy had better be spokesman," said Blake hesitatingly. "He's more of a lady's man than I am, and—and it requires a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Good! Gussy's the man!"

The swell of St. Jim's shook his head in vigorous protest.

"I wefuse!" he exclaimed. "Undah wathah cires, deah boys, I should be vewy pleased to take the lead, but I cannot speak in a diswepctful mannah to a lady. It's impos."

"Look here, somebody's got to be spokesman!" said Blake, in exasperation. "If we're going to put an end to school-marring in the Fourth, somebody will have to explain it to Miss Ponsonby!"

All the Fourth Form were agreed that schoolmarring, as they called it, must end. They were all determined not to have tea on the lawn, and to listen to the urther adventures of good little Percy,

with the rest of the school chuckling at the spectacle.

What they desired could not be brought about without matters being explained to Miss Ponsonby. But at the idea of standing out before the Form-mistress and explaining, the boldest spirits felt their courage ooze out at their finger-ends.

"Look here, Blake's the man!" said Pratt. "It's Blake's idea from the beginning. Blake ought to pitch it to Miss Pon!"

"But I—I——" stammered Blake.

"You're leader!" grinned Figgins.

"You're the man! Go it!"

"Don't funk it, you know!" urged Kerr.

Blake stepped down off the form.

"I—I—I'll do it!" he said desperately.

Footsteps were audible outside in the Form-room passage. Blake turned pale. All the fellows had their eyes upon him, and there was no retreat now. He stepped to the door, and turned the key quietly in the lock.

"Blake! Weally, deah boy——"

Blake held up his hand.

"Quiet. She mayn't know we're here."

The handle of the door was turned. The door remained closed, and then there was a knock.

The juniors looked at one another in a guilty way, and remained as still as mice in the neighbourhood of a cat.

Knock, knock!

"My dear children, are you there?"

Not a word.

"My dearest children, please open the door if you are there!" said Miss Ponsonby from the passage. "I want to see you very particularly!"

No reply.

Knock!

"Speak up, Blake, you ass!" whispered Digby.

But Blake was silent.

"My dear boys!" said Miss Ponsonby again. "I'm sure you must be able to hear me! I wish very much to say good-bye to you before I go!"

The juniors jumped.

They could scarcely believe their ears.

"Go!" murmured Blake.

"Gweat Scott!"

Jack Blake turned the key in the lock back as silently as he could, and threw the door open. He tried to work up an expression of surprise upon his features as he saw the Form-mistress standing there. Miss Ponsonby's face was grave.

"Oh, Miss Ponsonby!" said Blake.

"My dear children," said Miss Ponsonby, "I am sorry I shall not be able to take charge of you any longer. We have got on together so pleasantly, with so much satisfaction on both sides, that this is a great disappointment to me. I am sure you feel it as much as I do!"

The juniors gave a murmur that might have meant anything.

"Dr. Holmes thinks that the work is too much for me, and he is so kind and considerate that I have not been able to convince him that I am really quite equal to it," said Miss Ponsonby. "The Fourth Form will be taken by Mr. Linton along with the Shell until Mr. Lathom returns to St. Jim's. I shall not, therefore, have the pleasure of seeing you again, and I have come to say good-bye!"

"Oh, Miss Ponsonby!"

"Bai Jove! I'm weally-sowvy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"No more pleasant little walks," murmured Lumley-Lumley.

And the whole Form said good-bye to Miss Ponsonby, and shook hands with her in turn, with the most cordial feelings in the world; and they gave their Form-mistress a cheer. They could afford to cheer now.

Tom Merry & Co. had the pleasure of Fourth-Form society in the Shell Form-room for several days, until Mr. Lathom returned to St. Jim's. It was, as Blake cheerfully remarked to Tom Merry, rather rotten to have to pig in with the Shell, but they put up with it uncomplainingly under the circumstances. And Mr. Lathom was received on his return with a welcome that was really flattering, and a little surprising to him. He did not know the dreadful experiences his Form had gone through in his absence.

THE END.

A Grand Long Complete Story of TOM MERRY & CO. in  
Next Friday's Issue, entitled

# "THE SCHOOLBOY MUSICIANS!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Please Order Your Copy of the PENNY POPULAR  
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There is, therefore, now no necessity for any man or woman to suffer from:

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# BILLY BUNTER'S PUPILS!

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

**HARRY  
WHARTON  
AND CO.**  
OF  
**GREYFRIARS**

BY  
**FRANK  
RICHARDS.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Professor Bunter.

"HALLO! What's on now?"  
The juniors were coming in to dinner, and a dozen pairs of eyes fell upon Billy Bunter, standing before the notice-board in the hall, his hands in his pockets, and looking up at the board with great satisfaction.

The fat junior had just pinned a notice up, among the host of others that filled the available space, and he was evidently much pleased with his work.

A group of juniors halted to read what he had written.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Skinner. "This is good. Look here, you chaps!"

And the Removites were soon reading the notice and chuckling over it. It ran as follows:

### NOTICE!

"William G. Bunter is open to give instruction in the art of ventriloquism to pupils on exceptionally reasonable terms.

"Full course of lessons given for the fee of five shillings, paid in advance.

"Proficiency guaranteed, if a sufficient number of lessons taken.

"Single lessons, 6d. each.

"All fees payable strictly in advance.

"(Signed) WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER,

"Professor of Ventriloquism."

"Lessons in ventriloquism," grinned Stott. "That's good! Where are you giving the lessons, Bunter?"

"In No. 1 Study."

"And when?"

"Oh, I suit my pupils' convenience as much as possible," said Bunter loftily, quite as if he were an old professor already. "You can have the lessons practically any time you like out of school hours, if you pay in advance."

"If we pay in advance, it's precious little lessons we shall get," grinned Skinner.

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"Oh, really, Skinner! I suppose you can rely upon my honesty."

"Ye-es, I don't think!" said Skinner.

"We should jolly well want to be sure

that you can ventriloquise yourself before we let you start teaching us," said Bulstrode.

"I think I've proved it," said Bunter. "Oh, he can ventriloquise," said Bob Cherry, joining the crowd. "He was a jolly long time learning, but he can do it now—sometimes. So you want the study, eh, Bunter?"

"Yes; I must have somewhere to receive my pupils."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at, Cherry. You know what a jolly ripping ventriloquist I am. Why shouldn't I teach others?"

"Certainly; why not?"

"And the fact is, I'm pretty hard up," said Bunter confidentially, in a lower tone.

"I told you I was expecting a postal-order this morning, Cherry, and you refused to lend me half a crown on the strength of it."

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, it hasn't come; there's been another delay in the post, and I haven't received it. I am thinking of writing to the Postmaster-General about it. This isn't the first time I've been disappointed over a postal-order."

"Ha, ha! I know that."

"But in the meantime, I'm stony. Of course, there's the home work I'm doing for the Patriotic Home Work Association. I am expecting to be getting in three pounds a week shortly from that. But

"But it hasn't started yet," grinned Bob Cherry.

"No. You see, the postcards I've coloured for them so far are not quite up to their standard of quality. It's rather disappointing, especially as I had to send them six shillings for the colour-box. Still, I suppose they have to be careful what they place on the market. Blessed if I can see what you're cackling at, Cherry. Look here, do you want to put your name down as a pupil?"

"Not to-day!"

"I say, Wharton, shall I put your name down?"

"Some other time!"

"Yours, Nugent?"

"Not this afternoon!"

"Oh, I say, you fellows, you might just let me put your names down, to encourage the others," said Bunter entreatingly.

"The kids are like a flock of sheep, you know—where you chaps lead they all follow. Suppose I put your names down for single lessons at sixpence each?"

"Tanners are scarce."

"Oh, of course, it's only a matter of form, just to encourage the rest."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, go ahead, then—put 'em down."

And Billy Bunter scribbled the names in his little book. Then he asked for further offers, but the Removites did not seem eager to come forward. Skinner offered to take a course of lessons free, and Stott offered to owe the money. Both offers were refused by the ventriloquist. But no others were made at all.

"We'll see you do some ventriloquism first," said Ogily. "So far as I'm concerned, I've only heard you talk about it."

"Oh, that's easy enough. I'll show you some—"

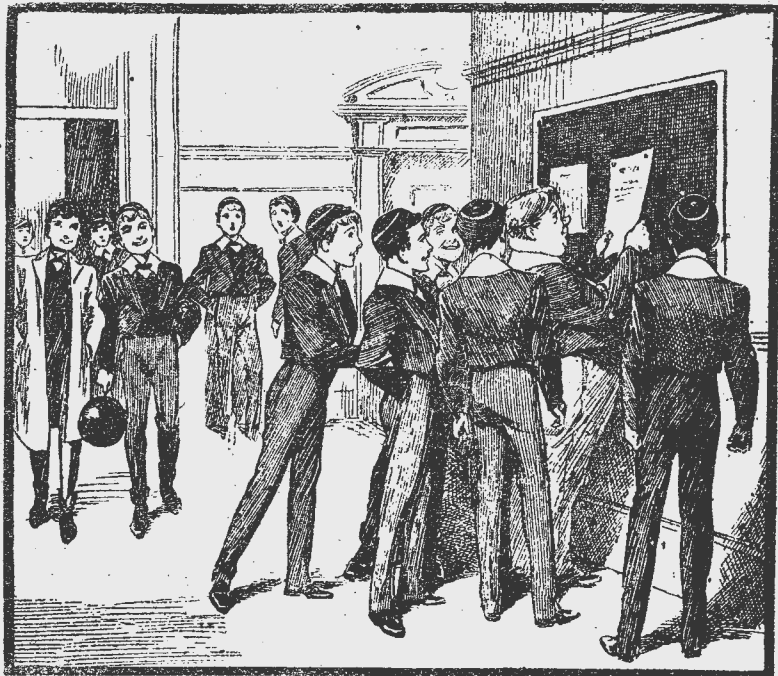
"Hallo, dinner's ready!"

"I'll show you—"

"Come on, kids—I'm hungry!"

And Billy Bunter's canvassing for pupils was cut short by the rush for the dining-room. During dinner Bunter's face wore a thoughtful expression. The great idea was working in his brain.

Bunter was always short of money. He borrowed a great deal in various quarters, and never repaid it; but it went as fast as it came, and he was always in a state of wanting more. Many and various were his devices for raising the wind. The home work id had only cost him money so far; but he had hopes for the future. Meanwhile, if he could get pupils, there was money to be made as a professor of



"Lessons in ventriloquism, by Professor William George Bunter! That's good!" grinned Stott. "Where are you giving the lessons, Bunter?"

ventriloquism. How to get the pupils was the question.

And Billy Bunter was so wrapped up in his meditations on this important subject that he actually forgot to ask for a second helping.

After dinner, while the juniors were spending their leisure time in the sunny Close, Bunter was still thinking over the scheme, and the wrinkle was still in his brow. He was giving the matter much and intense thought.

He looked up suddenly as three juniors hove in view. They were Ogilvy, Hazeldene, and Morgan.

"I say, Bunter," said Hazeldene. "I've been thinking over that ventriloquist business. I suppose I can have two single lessons if I like?"

"Certainly!" said Bunter. "Two lessons will cost you a bob." "Oh, good!" said Hazeldene. "Here's the bob. Now, when can I have the first lesson?"

"Come along to No. 1 Study directly after tea," replied Bunter. "I shall be ready for you. Now, what about you, Morgan? You going to have a couple of lessons?"

"May as well have a bob's worth," said Morgan. "Here you are; catch hold!"

"What about you, Ogilvy?"

"Put me down for two."

"Good!" Hazeldene wagged a warning finger at the fat junior.

"Mind you're there, ready for us," he said warningly. "We're not out to be swindled, you know."

"Oh, really," said Bunter, "I shouldn't think of swindling you."

"Mind, you'll have the biggest hiding of your life if you try to do us down!"

With that the three juniors walked off, leaving Billy Bunter, with a look of smug satisfaction on his face, gazing at the money in his hand.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Professor at Home.

**D**IRECTLY after tea that afternoon, Ogilvy looked round the door of No. 1 study in some surprise. The high back of the easy-chair concealed the fat junior from view, and the pupils of Professor Bunter naturally imagined that the room was empty.

"He's not here," said Ogilvy.

"The young bounder," growled Hazeldene. "I suppose he's in the tuckshop blowing our fees on grub."

"Faith, and it's right ye are."

"B-r-r-r-r."

"Hallo! What's that?"

"Sounded like some animal in the room," said Russell.

"It's something in that chair, I think."

"B-r-r-r-r."

"It's a snore!"

Ogilvy looked round into the big chair, and uttered an exclamation.

"Here he is!"

Bunter lay there, his face very red from the heat of the fire, his eyes closed behind his spectacles, and his mouth wide open.

The juniors gazed at him, and grinned at one another.

"The young pig," said Morgan. "He's been feeding here, look you, and now he's gone to sleep instead of getting ready for the lesson."

"I'll wake him up," grinned Ogilvy.

He took the inkpot from the shelf, and calmly started to put the contents into Billy Bunter's open mouth.

The juniors chuckled. It was an effective mode of waking the sleeper.

Billy Bunter moved and gurgled, and started into wakefulness.

"G-r-r-r—ow! What the—b-r-r-r-r!"

"Thought I'd wake you up!"

"Ow! You beast! Oh, really, you fellows! Ow, I'm poisoned!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 240.

"We're ready for the lesson."

Bunter pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped his mouth. He glared at the juniors in wrath. But sleepiness was still heavy upon him, in spite of the ink. He blinked behind his glasses.

"I'm jolly tired," he began.

"So are we—tired of waiting. Just you start off with that lesson, or return the fees. Catch me paying in advance again."

"All fees are strictly payable in advance—"

"Well, I suppose the lesson ought to follow, then," said Hazeldene. "Wake up, you sleeping beauty, and start."

"Come on, now; on the ball."

"I think, upon the whole, it would be better for you to come later," mumbled Bunter. "I—I'm turning it over in my mind, and I—b-r-r—snore."

"My only Aunt Sempronia! He's asleep again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ogilvy drew a pin from his jacket, and touched Bunter with the point. The fat junior came to himself with a wild yell.

"Ow! Oh! Wh—what was that?"

"Wake up! We're waiting for the lesson."

"You're a set of inconsiderate beasts. You can wait half an hour for your beastly lesson, I suppose?"

"Return the fees if there's to be no lesson, porpoise!"

"Fees are not returnable under any circumstances."

"Then go ahead with the lesson, or I'll jolly well start on you with the poker!"

Bunter groaned and yawned, and sat up in the chair. He was terribly sleepy, and he wished his pupils in any place but No. 1 Study, but there was evidently no help for it.

"Well, this is how you begin," he said.

"The first lesson in ventriloquism is to make the ventriloquial drone—"

"Yes; I remember you droning about the passages when you were learning," grinned Hazeldene. "Shall we have to make the unearthly row you used to make?"

"Oh, really, Vaseline! You see, you place your throat like this, and you make a drone like that, and you keep it up for a considerable time."

"Like this?" asked Ogilvy. And he allowed a terrible groan to escape him. The other fellows stopped their ears.

"Oh, no!" grunted Bunter peevishly.

"A drone, not a groan. This is the way. Now, you chaps can go to your own studies and practice that for half an hour."

"And what then?"

"Then the first lesson will be over."

And Bunter settled himself back in the easy-chair, with the evident intention of going to sleep again. The pupils glared at him, and then with one accord they hurled themselves upon their professor, and yanked him bodily out of the chair.

"Hold on!" roared Bunter. "I mean, leggo! What are you up to! You'll make my glasses fall off, you dummaics, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them!"

Ogilvy jammed him against the wall with a jar that made his teeth rattle.

"Now, you just stand there," he said determinedly, "and give us a lesson! You're not going to rope in the tanners so easily as all that, I promise you."

Bunter grunted discontentedly. But there was no chance of getting to sleep again, and the pupils were certainly determined to have their money's worth.

"Oh, very well!" he said. "I'll give you a half hour's lesson, but you're getting a lot for your money. Now, all of you drone together—like this."

There was a chorus of grunts and groans.

"Ow! Not like that. Like this."

And Bunter droned in the true ven-

triloquial fashion. One by one the juniors caught it up, and in a short time they were droning away in good style. The droning was in full blast when the study door opened, and the Famous Four came in.

Wharton and his friends stopped on the threshold, staring in amazement at the crowd of pupils in the study, all droning away for all they were worth.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What the dickens—"

"Ha, ha! It's Bunter's class."

The fat junior blinked round at them.

"Please don't interrupt, you fellows," he said. "I'm just in the thick of it. Perhaps you would like to join the class, though. I can give you single lessons at sixpence each. All fees are strictly payable in advance."

"We've come in to do our prep."

"Well, be as quiet as you can, then. Now, you chaps, sustain the sound a little longer, and—"

"Here, you dry up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "Do you think we can do our prep. with that unearthly row going on?"

"The unearthfulness of the honourable row is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I say, you fellows, the lesson's over now, as these chaps want the study," said Bunter. "Keep up that practice. The more you do the better, and you can do it anywhere—in your studies, or the passages, or the class-rooms—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"There'll be ructions if they start doing it in the class-rooms, I fancy."

"And we'll arrange about the next lessons, too," went on Bunter. "Now, what do you say to taking the full course? That will be five bob each."

"I'll see how this pans out first," grinned Ogilvy. "Five bob is five shillings. I dare say I shall soon pick it up."

And Ogilvy went out of the study—droning! The others followed him—also droning! And fellows came to their study doors on all sides to stare at them, and wonder what on earth was the matter. But the budding ventriloquists heeded not. They droned away manfully.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### The Mystery of the Packing-Case.

**F**RENCH first," said Nugent, as the Removites entered their class-room the next day.

"Hallo, Messoo's not here!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Who says leap-frog?" said Bulstrode.

"Can't waste the time waiting here for a beastly foreigner."

"I say, you fellows, if you like, I'll give you some more ventriloquial instruction," said Billy Bunter. "If you like to have single lessons, I'll—"

"Go ahead!" said Skinner.

"All fees payable strictly in advance—"

"Rats!"

"I say, Wharton, don't you think you'd like to study ventriloquism? I'll take you four at reduced fees, as you're friends of mine."

"The reducefulness will require to be great, my worthy chum."

"Well, look here, I'll take you at half-a-crown, payable in advance, of course."

"Not good enough."

"Go ahead with the lesson," said Ogilvy. "I'll take the course on the instalment system—a bob a week for five weeks."

"Very well, Ogilvy, as a special concession to a promising pupil—"

"Very promising," grinned Hazeldene, "if he keeps the promises—"

"Listen to me," said Bunter, taking up Mr. Quelch's pointer, and assuming the manners of a master in charge of a Form.

"Go it, professor."

"On the bawl."



The Removites entered into the joke. The boys took their places on the forms, and Bunter stood before the class, pointer in hand.

Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, was not punctual as a rule, and even if he discovered the Remove in the midst of the joke they did not care much.

Mr. Quelch was a man who would not be trifled with; but Mossoo was a tame little fellow, and his unruly pupils were in the habit of ragging him to their heart's content when he displeased them.

"Now, then," said Bunter, "you put your throat like this—so—"

"So," repeated the class.

"And you make a drone—so—"  
Drone.

"No, no, not like an old cow coughing," growled Bunter. "It has to be a drone like a bee, and that pr pares the organs for producing the ventriloquial voice."

"That's better. Now keep that up till old Charpentier comes in, and—"

A hand fell upon Billy Bunter's shoulder. He whirled round.

"Old Charpentier" had come in in time to hear the disrespectful allusion to himself.

"Ah!" said Monsieur Charpentier, "It is zat you mock yourself of your master, garcon? Vat is it zat you do viz ze pointer?"

"If—if—if—if you please, sir—"

"It is zat you give him to me."

Bunter handed the pointer to the French master.

"Zat you hold out your hand, Buntair."

"On, really, sir—"

"Zat you hold out your hand!" shrieked the little Frenchman.

He was unusually angry, and perhaps the fact that he was dealing with the Owl of the Remove made him additionally determined. If it had been Bulstrode, Mossoo would probably only have told him to go to his place.

"Don't do it, Owl," came a voice from the class.

Mr. Quelch would have had the speaker out in the twinkling of an eye, and thrashed him there and then; but poor Mossoo only pretended not to hear. He was not up to the form of the Remove in a struggle.

Bunter unwillingly held out his hand; but Mossoo only gave him a flick. He was a soft-hearted little man.

But Bunter gave a howl that might have been heard at the end of the passage. He did not like pain.

"Ah! Stop zat noise, Buntair!"

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"Zat you go to your place."

"Ow-w-w-w-w!"

"And stop zat ridiculous noise viz yourself."

Bunter went to his place.

The little Frenchman opened his books, and jerked the easel and blackboard into place. Then Bulstrode, in a spirit of mischief, started the ventriloquial drone, and the whole Form took it up joyously.

Drone!

Monsieur Charpentier whirled round to the class. The noise ceased at once. The little Frenchman was red and angry.

"Zat you are quiet!" he cried.

The class was quite quiet till Mossoo turned his back again. Then the drone burst forth once more. It filled the room with buzzing sound, and the little Frenchman almost jumped with rage.

"Ciel! If zat noise not stop I call in Monsieur Quelch!" he exclaimed.

The threat was enough. Mr. Quelch was busy that afternoon, and if he were bothered with his Forms in the French lesson the Remove knew the kind of humour he would be in. The ventriloquial drone ceased as if by magic.

"Little cad!" muttered Bulstrode.

"Oh, rats!" said Trevor. "The poor little beast can't handle us. Let him alone!"

Bulstrode did not reply, but he whispered across to Billy Bunter.

The fat junior nodded and grinned.

"Right you are, Bulstrode!" he murmured.

"There's that box of books in the corner," whispered Bulstrode. "You catch on?"

"He, he, he! Yes, rather!"

"Sumevun vas talking," said Monsieur Charpentier. "I will have silence in my class viz me, you hear?"

The next moment M. Charpentier jumped clear of the floor. A deep groan rumbled through the Form-room.

"Ciel! Vat vas zat?"

The sound was repeated.

All eyes were fixed upon a large packing-case standing in the corner of the room. It was a very large case, addressed to Mr. Quelch. Gosling, the porter, had dumped

M. Charpentier ran towards it with an agitated countenance.

"Ciel! Is zere somevun zat is shut up in zis case?" he exclaimed.

There was a faint moan.

"Great goodness! Zere is somevun in ze case!"

"Ehp!"

"Mon Dieu!"

"I—I—I'm suffocating!"

"Merciful heavens! Zis is terrible! Ze unhappy man is dying in ze packing-case! How is it that he is packed up in ze books? Ciel!"

"Ehp!"

"Helas, pauvre garcon! I will help you! I will have you out in ze jiffy!"

And M. Charpentier tore frantically at the packing-case. But it was a strongly made one, and nailed firmly together, and the little Frenchman had no chance of getting it open.

He gazed round him wildly. The suffocated voice still pleaded for aid.

"Ehp! I'm suffocating! Let me out!"

"Ciel! Vat shall I do? 'Eavens!"



The Juniors stamped, and shouted, and cat-called, and the din was terrific, whilst Monsieur Charpentier looked on in helpless dismay.

it down in the Form-room that morning, and from the labels the boys knew that it contained a consignment of books for the Remove.

M. Charpentier stared at the packing-case in blank amazement. So far as he could judge the groan proceeded from the packing-case, and yet he could hardly believe his ears. The packing-case had come down from London by the railway, and had not yet been opened.

The French master stared at the case, and then looked at his class. They were all staring at the packing-case, too, with preternaturally solemn faces.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bulstrode, in a strange whisper. "There's somebody shut up in the packing-case!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Skinner.

"He must be suffocating!"

"Ciel! It cez impossible!"

"Listen!"

The groan, fainter than before, came from the packing-case.

gasped M. Charpentier. "Skinnair, run to ze portair and borrow ze hammair and ze chisel. Quick!"

"Certainly, sir," said Skinner, springing up. And he dashed out of the Form-room.

He came back in a minute or so, with a hammer in one hand and a chisel in the other.

"Here you are, sir."

"Zauk you, Skinnair! Help me viz this!"

And monsieur hammered away, and Skinner chiselled, and the Remove giggled. They could not help it. The little Frenchman was so terribly in earnest.

But M. Charpentier never noticed the giggles. He was slaving away at the packing-case; but he was unpractised with tools, and Skinner lent him little aid.

"Ciel! Fetch in ze portair, Skinnair!"

"Certainly, Mossoo!"

-And Skinner cut off again.

Gosling, the porter, grumbling at the interruption of his work, followed the Remove into the school-house. In the passage they met Mr. Maddox, just coming out of a class-room.

"Dear me, what is the matter," he exclaimed.

"Man dying in the Remove-room, sir," said the voracious Skinner.

"Goodness gracious!"

And Mr. Maddox rushed into the Form-room with Skinner and the school porter.

M. Charpentier was hammering away at the packing-case, and a pleading voice was pitifully begging to be let out.

"Elp! I'm—I'm suf-suffocating!"

"Goodness gracious! It is evidently an uneducated person, but he must not suffocate!" exclaimed the mathematics-master. "Break open the packing-case, Gosling."

Gosling scratched his head, and stared at the case.

"Wot I says is this 'ere, sir," he said. "I don't understand it. I brought that there packing-case into this 'ere room myself, and there wasn't nobody in it then."

"You can hear that there is somebody in it now, Gosling."

"It do sound like it, sir, but—"

"Elp! Let me out!"

"Ciel! Zat you vaste no time!" shrieked the French master. "Ze poor garcon is dying vile zat you talk viz yourself."

"If he's been in there all the time the case was on the railway, he can't be in a hurry," grumbled Gosling, as he set to work.

He wrenched the nailed pieces off the top of the case with a din and clatter that could be heard far and wide.

The two masters watched him anxiously, while the Remove giggled.

Mr. Maddox glanced at them frowningly.

"Utterly heartless young ruffians!" he muttered. "They can laugh while a fellow-creature is expiring before their eyes. Wretched boys, be silent!"

But the Remove could not help it.

"There don't seem to be nobody 'ere," growled Gosling, as he dragged out the packing round the books. "Look 'ere, sir."

M. Charpentier and Mr. Maddox stared into the packing-case in dumbfounded astonishment. It was packed to the brim with books—books—and nothing but books.

Where was the suffocating victim?

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Comes Down Heavily.

"CIEL! I do not comprehend with myself!" murmured M. Charpentier. "I hear ze voice of ze person who suffocate, and zen zere is no vum in ze box."

"It is amazing!" gasped Mr. Maddox.

"Perhaps he's lower down, sir," suggested Skinner.

"Zere would not be room under ze books."

As if to give the lie to the French master, a faint, expiring voice was heard:

"Elp! Let me out!"

M. Charpentier jumped.

"Mon Dieu! He is zere—it must be some ferry small garcon, crushed under zese books! Zat ve clear zem away, zen."

"Quick!" cried Mr. Maddox. "Help here, you boys! Cannot you lend your aid when a fellow-being is suffocating before your eyes!"

"Yes, rather, sir!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

And the Remove rushed to the aid of the rescuers. Many hands made light work. The juniors dragged the books

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 240.

out of the case in double-quick time, hurling them right and left in their hurry.

Books and books, and more books. Right and left they went till the floor was thick with them, and the searchers went deeper into the packing-case.

At length it was plain that it was physically impossible for any human being, however small, to be packed in under the books. But the juniors did not cease their efforts. They dragged out the books, and scattered them far and wide with right goodwill.

"Zat you stop!" gasped M. Charpentier at last. "I—I am amazed! I am astonished! I am bewildered!"

"It—it is certainly inexplicable," murmured Mr. Maddox. "There—there was certainly a—a voice. Hark!"

"Elp! I'm suffocating!"

"Ciel! He is zere—but zere is not room for him! Is it zat I dream!"

"Elp!"

"Mon Dieu! It is not zat he is in ze box at all, but undair ze floor," said the French-master. "You see, undair ze floor of ze Form-room! How is it zat he got undair ze floor?"

"It—it is someone in the cellar playing a trick!" gasped Mr. Maddox.

"Ciel! I did not zink of zat."

Mr. Maddox rushed out of the room on vengeance bent, and Gosling grumbled and departed. M. Charpentier wiped his fevered brow. That someone was in the vault below—someone playing a trick under the Form-room floor, was the only explanation that occurred to him. He looked round at the scattered books in dismay, and then at the clock. It was time for Mr. Quelch to take his class. The half-hour that should have been devoted to French was gone.

The Remove did not mind; but the little Frenchman was much distressed. His discomfit increased when Mr. Quelch strode in, and stopped in amazement at sight of the endless litter on the floor.

"What—what does this mean?"

"Excusez-moi!" stammered Mossoc.

"Zat you excuse me, M. Quelch? It is that zere has been a trick played, and I zink zere was a person in ze packing-case."

Mr. Quelch looked at the French-master keenly, and then at the grinning Remove, and something flashed into his mind.

"Very good, Monsieur Charpentier," he said quietly. "I will take the class now."

"I am ferry sorry zat—"

"It is nothing."

And M. Charpentier left the room, looking very bothered and flustered. There was a peculiar gleam in Mr. Quelch's eyes—a gleam that the Remove had learned to know. They waited rather uneasily for him to speak. They had wrecked the cargo of books, and they were perfectly in the right, but they felt uneasy.

"You may pick up the books, and pack them in the case again," said Mr. Quelch.

It was done. Then the juniors returned to their seats. Mr. Quelch looked them over, with a grim smile upon his face.

"I understand," he said, "that the French lesson has been missed, owing to this disturbance in the class-room?"

"Yes, sir," said Wharton.

"The mathematics lesson was missed on a previous occasion owing to a somewhat similar cause?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is very curious, because you juniors appear not to have been to blame in the slightest on either occasion," pursued Mr. Quelch blandly.

The juniors looked more uneasy than ever. Mr. Quelch was so bland that they knew he saw it all, and was going to make them sorry for themselves.

"Nobody is to blame in the least," went on Mr. Quelch. "Both unfortunate occurrences are inexplicable; but one fact appears to be established—that you are not to blame in any way. It will perhaps appear unjust to you if I punish you when you do not appear to be to blame. But perhaps you know the old proverb which says that appearances are deceptive."

The Remove were silent.

"You have missed the French lesson," said Mr. Quelch. "You will kindly come into the Form-room after tea, and remain here for two hours, during which time Monsieur Charpentier will instruct you in that beautiful language. I shall personally request Monsieur Charpentier to devote two hours to you this evening, so that your pursuit of knowledge will not suffer, but rather benefit, by these unfortunate and inexplicable occurrences."

The Remove simply glared.

"And now we will proceed," said Mr. Quelch, with the same dangerous blandness. Bulstrode stood up in his place.

"If you please, sir—"

"Have you anything to say, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir," said Bulstrode sulkily. "It's not fair, sir, to punish us for—helping Mossoc to clear out a packing-case when he asked us to."

"Certainly not, Bulstrode. I am not going to punish you. I am simply going to take measures to insure that your studies are not interfered with by these accidents. If you do two hours extra French this evening, I have an idea that there will be no more of these curious and inexplicable happenings in the Form-room."

"But, sir, there—there is no connection—"

"Of course not. But if anything of the kind happens again, I shall keep the whole Form in for a half-holiday under Mr. Maddox."

Bulstrode sat down. There was no arguing with Mr. Quelch. The prospect of a whole half-holiday at mathematics under the ill-tempered Mr. Maddox was enough to scare the boldest of the Remove. Fellows were already whispering to Bunter that if he dared ventriloquise in the Form-room again they would skin him alive.

"Rank injustice, of course," grinned Bob Cherry, as the Remove came out after lessons. "But he gets there all the same. The Quelch-bird is a cute beast." And his chums ruefully agreed.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

M. Charpentier is Not Happy.

THE Remove came out from their lessons in a decidedly bad temper.

French was not popular as a study, but, as Skinner said, they could stand it in the regular doses. But to have two extra hours of French was unspeakable. And the fellows had plenty of things to do after tea, too.

Some of them had impositions to do, others had planned to sprint for exercise, some wanted to go to the gym, and others to a meeting of the Operatic and Dramatic Society. But Mr. Quelch's word was law.

They were doomed to turn up in the Form-room at half-past six, and continue there till half-past eight—a prospect that was dimaying to the stoutest heart.

"It's—its' unspeakable," said Nugent wrathfully. "Why, we sha'n't have time to do our own prep. unless we give up every minute between half-past eight and bedtime, or do some of it before tea."

"The unspeakableness is terrific."

"Of course, it's all Bunter's fault," said Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Of course it is," said Bulstrode.

"Bunter ought to go to Mr. Quelch and own up, and get the Form off."

"Why, it was you suggested to me—"

"Oh, don't jaw!"

"Bunter needn't do that," said Harry Wharton. "It wouldn't do any good." As a matter of fact, we've called the tune, and we've got to pay the piper."

"It's rotten injustice!"

"Stuff! Quelch knew very well that it was a rag. He's got no proof, but he knows it, and we know it."

"Of course, you back up Quelch," sneered Bulstrode. "You make it a point to jib against the Form every time."

"Nothing of the sort; but there's precious little good in jibbing against Quelch over this," said Wharton, shrugging his shoulders. "We're in for it, and we've got to go through it."

"Faith, and what price the Operatic Society, darling?"

"It will have to stand over."

"Oh, hang it," said Trevor, "I'm not going to stand it! Can't some of you suggest some way out of it?"

"Look here," said Wharton hotly, "what's the good of grousing? I suppose we knew we ran a risk when we ragged the master? You yourself put Bunter up to his tricks this afternoon. If you've got any suggestion to make, I'm willing to follow your lead. But you know as well as I do there's no bucking against a man like Quelch."

"But we're not dealing with Quelch. Mossoo's the detention master."

"Faith, and why shouldn't we rag Mossoo, and make him glad to let us off intirely?" exclaimed Micky Desmond.

There was a shout of approval at once. The idea caught on.

"Jolly good wheeze!" exclaimed Bulstrode immediately. "Of course, we can't expect Wharton to think of anything as good as that. I second the motion."

"And I third it!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"Anything's better than sitting down in the Form-room like a lot of silly sheep."

Wharton frowned a little. Bulstrode was watching him, and he burst out at once.

"Oh, of course, Wharton's up against it."

"I don't like the idea of ragging Mossoo," confessed Wharton. "He's such a poor little worm, and he isn't up to our Form."

"Didn't I tell you so! He's against it, of course."

"Oh, shut up! I'm willing to join in if the majority decide for it. I only said I didn't care for the idea."

"Faith, and it's an illigent idea intirely."

"I should say it is!" exclaimed Bulstrode emphatically. "I happen to know that Quelch is going out this evening, and we'd never have a better chance. We'll rag Froggy till he doesn't know whether he's on his head or his heels, and he'll be glad to dismiss us before the two hours are up."

"The goodness of the worthy wheeze is terrific."

The Remove were keen on the scheme at once. There was a very great probability of success, though Wharton could not help foreseeing that there might be trouble with the Form-master to follow.

But, like many lads in similar positions, Harry allowed himself to be led into recklessness rather than appear to hang back where others ventured.

The juniors discussed the scheme gleefully, and all kinds of preparations were made for the intended rag.

Some of the fellows put tin whistles in their pockets, and some of them had fireworks of various descriptions. The chums of No. 1 Study entered into the spirit of it, though it was against Wharton's better judgment. But there could be no doubt that there would be fun in it.

There were excited whisperings and mutterings during tea in Hall, and after tea the Remove prepared to go to the Form-room to take their detention.

They were in a state of suppressed excitement, which would have warned any

master but M. Charpentier that something was on the tapis.

But the little Frenchman was unsuspecting.

He only wanted to get on good terms with his class, and have a quiet time in the Form-room, and he was willing to put up with anything almost for that purpose.

Just as the juniors were going into the Form-room, Bulstrode caught sight of Mr. Quelch with his coat and hat on in the hall.

The Remove bully had had a doubt that the Form-master might change his mind about going out, under the circumstances; but it was evident that Mr. Quelch had not done so.

The juniors heard the door close behind him, and grinned gleefully. The "rag" could proceed now without danger of interruption.

Mossoo was too weak to deal with them; Mr. Quelch was gone, and it was hardly likely that the French-master would venture to disturb the Head in the bosom of his family in the evening.

Everything, in fact, was going swimmingly for the raggers, and the polite and ingratiating smile with which M. Charpentier received them did not soften the hearts of the Remove.

In fact, it encouraged them, for the little Frenchman's manner was a sufficient indication of the uneasiness he felt.

The juniors took their places at the desks with exemplary quietness, and M. Charpentier's hopes rose.

His smile widened, and he spoke in his most amiable tones, as he stood before the class, his thin figure tightly buttoned in a somewhat threadbare frockcoat. Mossoo was not a rich man, and he did not dress so well as the other masters; a fact that occasioned a great deal of amusement to some of the worse-natured boys in the Remove.

"Ah! I am sorry for zis detention," said M. Charpentier, "but if we have our leetle shoke, ve pays for our leetle shoke, eh? I tink ve takes ze first shapter of Madame Stael's Considerations—"

He looked at his books. The moment his eyes were off the class, Bulstrode started the ventriloquial drone.

In a second the whole Form was buzzing.

M. Charpentier looked up quickly. But the buzz did not cease. The juniors droned on under the very eyes of the master.

The Frenchman looked helpless for a moment. He realised now that the Remove meant mischief, and that their quiet behaviour hitherto was a delusion and a snare.

"Garçons! Mes garçons!"

Buz-z-z-z-z-zzz-z-z!

"Silence!" shouted M. Charpentier.

"Zat you keep silent viz yourselves!"

Buz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!

The little Frenchman looked inclined to tear his hair. Instead of that, however, he clutched up a pointer.

"Ze next boy zat buz-z-z I will gif him ze pointer," he shrieked.

The buzzing ceased.

"Helas! Vy is it zat you vill not keep ordair," said M. Charpentier plaintively.

"Zis extra lesson is not pleasure to me, mes garçons, any more zan it is to you."

"Then why don't you let us go?"

"It is by your Form-master's ordair zat you are detained, Bulstrode."

"It's not fair."

"You may discuss that viz M. Quelch. Now you vill attend to lesson, or I shall gif you ze caning!"

Bulstrode was not likely to discuss it with Mr. Quelch. He would probably have discussed it just as willingly with a lion in a cage. But he had no fears of the little Frenchman.

Monsieur opened his book, and they started. But never were Madame de Stael's valuable Considerations upon the

French Revolution received with less respect.

The sudden blast of a whistle was heard, and the whole class burst into a roar of laughter.

M. Charpentier threw his book down upon a desk.

"Ciel! Who blew zat whistle?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Zat you cease for to laff! You hear?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

M. Charpentier tore his hair and glared. Then he grasped the pointer again and came among the boys. He rapped knuckles to right and left, and the howls of laughter were changed into howls of pain.

"Ow! Groo! Hold on! Ow! Oh!"

M. Charpentier panted.

"I not like to punish you," he gasped. "But you drives me to him. I zink zat now ve shall perhaps have a leetle more quiet."

But Mossoo's hope was ill-founded.

Another whistle rang out, from a different quarter, and when M. Charpentier rushed off in search of the delinquent, a mouth-organ brayed out behind him.

He whirled round, just in time to see Bulstrode jamming a mouth-organ back into his pocket. Rather unexpectedly he grasped the Remove bully by the collar and yanked him out before the class.

"Mon Dieu! It vas you, you pad garcon."

"Lemme go!"

"Hold out your hand."

"Don't do it, Bulstrode," shouted a dozen voices.

"Zat you obey me, Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode put his hands into his pockets. The little Frenchman danced with rage. There was no hand forthcoming, and he suddenly seized Bulstrode by the collar and began to thrash him with the pointer.

Bulstrode roared with pain, and the Form with laughter. The Remove was a burly fellow, quite as big as the French master and much heavier and stronger. He jerked at his collar, and as M. Charpentier refused to let go, the Frenchman was jerked about the floor.

The sight of the burly Remove jerking away, and the little Frenchman clutching him and hopping after him, was inexpressibly ridiculous, and the Form simply shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!"

"Go it, Bulstrode!"

"Go it, Froggy!"

M. Charpentier was tired before Bulstrode was. He let the burly junior go, and Bulstrode, grinning, went back to his seat. He was not much hurt, and the French master was panting and exhausted.

"Ah! You vas determine to give mischief zis evening," he panted. "I zink zat I keep you in ordair, you vicked poys. Ve vill now resume—"

"Coek-a-doodle-do!"

"Ciel! Which garcon make zat ridiculous noise?"

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Zat you stop for to laff. I repeat zat I vill have ze work done, or I vill know ze reason vy. Stop zat noise."

The fellows at the back of the class were stamping their feet on the floor, and in the din it was quite impossible for the lesson to proceed.

The little Frenchman rushed round to the back row, pointer in hand, but the noise ceased before he reached the spot.

Then the fellows in another quarter started, and poor Mossoo rushed back again, red with rage and bewilderment.

His utter helplessness to deal with his rebellious class encouraged the juniors, and matters naturally went from bad to worse. From threats and expostulations the little Frenchman proceeded to entreaties, but such a confession of weakness was all the Remove wanted to make them throw off all restraint.

They stamped, they shouted, and they

cat-called, and the din was growing, as

Hurree Janset Ram Singh truly said, terrific.

M. Charpentier gave it up. He stood looking worn out and bewildered, not knowing what in the least to do with his unruly class.

"Garcous! I appeal to you—I—" "Oh, hang it," exclaimed Harry Wharton, "this has gone far enough!" He sprang to his feet. "Stop that row!"

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

#### Bunter Drops the Professor.

WHARTON'S voice rang above the din in the Form-room. Some of the fellows stared at him, and calmly went on eating and stamping.

Some of the more timid ones left off. Wharton's eyes were flashing, and he was in a mood that was not to be trifled with.

"Will you stop that row?" "No, we won't!" said Bulstrode. "If you're showing the white feather, that's no reason why we should mind our own business."

"This has gone far enough." "Ciel! Zat is ferry true," said M. Charpentier. "I appeal to you, mes garcons, zat you be quiet."

Stamp, stamp, stamp! Bulstrode restarted the stamping with extra vigour. Harry Wharton wasted no more breath in words. He seized the Remove bully by the collar, and dragged him out bodily from his seat before the class.

Bulstrode roared and struggled. With a twist of his arm Wharton sent him rolling on the floor.

The Remove ceased their disturbance in sheer astonishment.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "There's been enough ragging! Stow it!"

Bulstrode sprang to his feet. Careless of the presence of the helpless, bewildered French master, he charged at Wharton like a mad bull.

Harry was ready for him. He met the bully of the Remove with a right-hander that stopped his furious rush, and followed it up with his left, that laid him on his back with a bump that seemed to shake the floor.

Bulstrode lay for some seconds, dazed; then he jumped up again, and again rushed in. This time he closed with Harry, and the two reeled about in a savage grapple.

"Let go!" "Chuck it!"

A dozen juniors crowded round to interfere. Some dragged at Wharton and some at Bulstrode. It was not surprising that some were soon punching on their own account.

Nugent closed with Skinner, and Bob Cherry was quickly sparring away with Trevor. Micky Desmond, too highly excited to know or care with whom he was fighting, was pommelling away at everybody within reach of his fists.

M. Charpentier hopped and shrieked in his excitement.

There were a dozen or more juniors fighting now, fellows taking sides according to their humour, and those who were not fighting were shouting or stamping.

Harry's attempt to restore order had, unfortunately, the directly opposite result, and only made confusion worse confounded.

"Ciel! Vat is it zat I sall do?" ranted the unlucky little Frenchman. "Ah, zat I had nevaire taken zis detention class! Mon Dieu! Vat is it zat I sall do!"

The question was abruptly decided for him. A rush of the combatants overwhelmed him, and he went down in the midst of a struggling mass of juniors.

"Helas! Help! A moi! Save me! I am crush! I am keel!"

The door of the Form-room opened. Wingate of the Sixth looked in. The din had penetrated to his study, and he had come along with righteous wrath in his countenance and a cricket-stump in his hand.

The Sixth Former was accustomed to many outbreaks on the part of the most unruly Form at Greyfriars, but he had hardly expected to see the Form-room made the battle-ground of rival factions, with the detention master sprawling and screaming under the fighting juniors.

For a moment or two he stood and stared, hardly able to believe his eyes.

Then, without wasting time in words, he waded in with the cricket-stump.

The yells of the combatants had been loud, but as nothing to what they now became when Wingate got fairly to work with the stump.

The captain of Greyfriars laid on with the stump as if he were hammering nails, and the juniors received the lashes across their legs and backs, and yelled in dead earnest.

The factions separated in a wonderfully short space of time, the juniors rushing to and fro to escape the lashes; but Wingate was not satisfied yet. With great impartiality he thrashed every junior he could get within reach of, and the unfortunate Removites made a desperate break for the door.

In a few minutes the Form-room was empty. Then Wingate, a little breathless from his exertions, gave a helping hand to M. Charpentier, who was still sitting on the floor, looking dazed.

"All right, I hope?" said the senior cheerfully.

M. Charpentier rubbed his head as if to make sure that it was still upon his shoulders.

"Yes, I think so," he answered. "I zink zat I was keel at first. I am ferry much disturb—"

"No wonder! I'll report the young rascals to Mr. Quelch."

"Non, non! Some of zem was trying to keep ordair—Wharton and some ozzers. I not vish zem to be punish for trying to keep ordair."

Wingate laughed. "A jolly way of keeping order. But still, it would be rough, if they meant well. You don't know which were which, I suppose?"

"I zink not—I zink zat I punish none of zem," said M. Charpentier. "I zink, tee, zat I dismiss ze class now."

The class he dismissed itself. Wingate glinned, and left the Form-room. Some of the juniors were in the passage, and they scuttled off at the sight of the captain of Greyfriars with the cricket-stump in his hand.

A crowd of breathless juniors gathered in the safety of the Remove passage. Bob Cherry flung himself upon the easy-chair in No. 1 Study and roared. He had received several whacks, but he never bore malice.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Harry Wharton laughed, too. After all the detention had been escaped, and that was something. But most of the Removites were sore and furious. Billy Bunter, who had been careful to keep out of the way of hard blows, came along the passage, blinking at the suffering juniors.

"I say, you fellows—"  
"Ow! I got one on my funnybone!" groaned Skinner.

"The beast's nearly busted my back!" grunted Bulstrode.

"I sha'n't be able to sit down for a week," said Trevor plaintively.

"Faith, and it's aching all over I am." "I say, you fellows, if you'd like another ventriloquial lesson now, I can spare the time," said Billy Bunter, blinking round.

"I have decided, if I can get a large class of pupils, to reduce the fees. I can do single lessons now at threepence a time, all fees payable strictly in advance."

"You—you fat young rotter!" grunted Skinner, rubbing his tingling funnybones. "It's all your fault from beginning to end."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Of course it is!" said Hazeldene, rubbing a black eye that was growing more prominent every moment. "If you hadn't started your silly ventriloquial wheeze, and ventriloquised the masters, we should never have been detained."

"Oh, really, Vascline—"

"It's all Bunter's fault!" shouted Bulstrode, glad of a victim to wreak his wrath upon. "Collar the fat young rotter!"

"Oh, really—ow! I'm sincerely sorry—ow!—ow!"

Bunter dashed off, running the gauntlet, with the juniors dashing after him. He tore into No. 1 Study, collided with the table, and rolled on the floor, with a heap of books and papers and an inkpot rolling over him.

"Ow! Keep them off!"

But the pursuers had stopped at the bare Billy Bunter, and with his face streaming with ink, and groped for his spectacles and adjusted them on his little fat nose, and blinked indignantly at the grinning chums of the Remove.

"That's what comes of trying to teach fellows things," he grunted. "I'm going to give up teaching them ventriloquism and stick to home-work to make a little extra money. I shall shortly be making three pounds a week, so I sha'n't miss their rotten fees. Blessed if I can see what you fellows are cackling at!"

THE END.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled:

# THE SCHOOL DANCE!

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