

**SCHOOL STORIES FOR ALL!**

The  
**Penny  
Popular**

No.  
244.

Three Complete Stories of  
**HARRY WHARTON & Co.—JIMMY SILVER & Co.—TOM MERRY & Co.**



**EXPOSED!**

(A Great Scene from the Magnificent Long Complete Tale of  
Harry Wharton & Co., contained in this issue.)

# THE RIVAL SCOUTS!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

*A Magnificent Long Complete Tale, dealing with the Early Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.*

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Hidden Foes.

"WHAT the dickens is that, I wonder?"

It was Harry Wharton, of the Greyfriars Remove, who asked the question, as he looked round him with a puzzled expression.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the chums of the Remove were spending it in Friar-dale Wood.

After a long ramble down the banks of the Sark, they had stopped to rest under the trees, and then a bag was opened and a substantial lunch produced, to which the hungry juniors were doing full justice.

All the fraternity of No. 1 Study were there—Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Last but not least was Billy Bunter, who was busily engaged upon one of Mrs. Mimble's largest pork-pies, with a grin of great enjoyment upon his shiny fat face.

Bob Cherry was opening a tin of condensed milk, holding it between his knees as he sat in the grass, and jabbing at it with a pocket-knife, having carelessly left the tin-opener at Greyfriars in the study.

Bob, to judge by the perspiration on his brow, and the way he gasped for breath, was finding his task a trying one. Nugent looked on, and offered him advice, which was received with no acknowledgment but an ungracious grunt or two.

Harry Wharton laid down his sandwich, and looked round him. Round the juniors the trees were thick, with ferns and bushes growing between, and it was impossible to see far into the wood in any direction.

"What is it, I wonder?" said Harry again. "Did you hear it?"

Bob Cherry looked up, glad of a rest. "What is which?" he asked. "I didn't hear anything, except Nugent talking like an ass! Nothing new in that, of course!"

"I was only suggesting that you should try the short blade," said Nugent mildly. "It's stronger than the long one; and the way you are jabbing, you know—"

"Oh, rats!"

"There's somebody hanging round the place," said Wharton. "Three or four times I've heard a rustle in the thickets. Blessed if I know what anybody should want to come nosing about for!"

"Some of the Upper Fourth fellows, perhaps, out for a lark!"

Wharton rose to his feet. "More likely some of the village kids!" said Nugent.

"Here, look out, you chaps!" he said. "It may be a jape the villagers are going to spring on us! We don't want to be caught napping!"

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, springing up. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! If you kids are looking for trouble, come out and show yourselves!"

But there was no reply. There had been a faint rustling in the wood, but this ceased instantly when Bob called out.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 244.

Wharton knitted his brows. "That shows that we're their object," he said. "They're out for training, and they're going to use our camp here as the objective of an attack."

"I say, you fellows—"  
"Well, I'll jolly soon rout 'em out!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Just you wait a minute!"

And Bob dashed into the thickets. His chums waited. They heard a muffled shout, and that was all. They waited for Bob Cherry to return, but he did not come.

Nugent gave a low whistle. "Phew! Where is he?"  
"Bob!" shouted Harry. "Bob!"  
But no answer came back but the echo of Wharton's voice. Bob Cherry was gone. Where was he—in the hands of the hidden enemy?

"By Jove!" muttered Wharton. "Bob hasn't routed them out; they've collared him instead! We can't leave him in their hands! Come on, you chaps!"

"Here, I say, you fellows!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in alarm. "Don't you leave me here alone, you know! Suppose they come—"

"Come with us, then!"  
"What about the grub?"  
"Blow the grub!"  
"Oh, really, Wharton—"  
"Come on!" said Wharton quietly.

With Hurree Singh and Nugent, he rushed into the thickets where Bob Cherry had disappeared.

Billy Bunter gave an uneasy look round, but he could not make up his mind to leave the pork-pies. Harry Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh searched through the bushes, and shouted to Bob Cherry. But no reply came to their shouting, and they could not see a sign of Bob, nor of the enemy.

The skill with which the unknown foes had taken cover, and captured and silenced Bob, was a pretty plain proof that they belonged to the Boy Scouts of Pegg—the patrol captained by Trumper, the fisherman's son.

The Greyfriars lads were on their mettle, and they would have welcomed an attack; but it was not made. For ten minutes they hunted through the wood round the camp—in vain.

Then, disappointed and a little angry, they returned to the spot where they had left Bunter. But there a fresh surprise awaited them.

The pork-pies and the sandwiches, the lemonade and the tin mugs and the milk—all were there untouched, but Billy Bunter had disappeared.

Harry Wharton looked round him, and whistled. Billy Bunter was gone—the glade was deserted.

"My hat! This is getting rather thick!" Nugent remarked. "It must be the Boy Scouts playing a little jape on us. There must have been a struggle before they got Bunter away from the pork-pie, yet we never heard a sound."  
"The strugglefulness must have been terrific!"

Wharton's brows knitted a little. "Hang it!" he said. "We shall have

to go for them; they're laughing up their sleeves at us all the time! Let's have another look!"

"Right you are!"  
They hunted through the trees for Bunter and Bob Cherry. But there was no sign of them to be seen. After another five minutes of it, the juniors separated, and halloed to each other as they pursued the search in different directions.

But all at once Nugent ceased to answer to the hallos.

"Hallo, there!" called out Harry, stopping. "Inky!"

"Hallo, my worthy chum!" came back the voice of the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hallo, Nugent! Frank!"

But there was no answer.

Wharton and the nabob called to one another again, but Nugent could no longer be heard. It was evident that he was in the hands of the enemy. Yet not a sign had been seen of the foe. They were doing their work well.

"Hang it!" muttered Wharton, half laughing and half exasperated. "Where are you, Inky? We'd better stick together."

"Here I am, my worthy chum."  
The voice came through a mass of brambles. Wharton plunged through to join his Indian chum, but on the other side there was no sign of Hurree Singh. Wharton called to him in vain; the nabob's voice did not reply.

Hurree Singh, like the others, had fallen into the enemy's hands.

There was no doubt about it, and Harry Wharton cast uneasy glances round, expecting every moment to see one of the mysterious assailants.

He was the last left of the party, but he did not mean the Pegg fellows to take him by surprise. As he stood near the brambles there was a rustle, and a hand gripped his shoulder; but Wharton's left flashed out, and a Boy Scout rolled on his back in the bush.

Wharton sprang away.

"Try it again!" he exclaimed.  
"Ow!" murmured Dicky Brown, as he sat in the brambles and pressed his hand to his nose. "Ow!"

Wharton was on his guard. A sturdy fellow stepped out of the trees and confronted him—a lad of about Wharton's own age, with a tanned face and a pair of merry, dark eyes—whom Harry knew at once.

It was Trumper, the Scout-leader of Pegg. He was clad in the garb of a Boy Scout, with his sinewy legs showing under the short trousers, and a wide hat on the back of his head, a stout stick in his hand.

He grinned at the Removite of Greyfriars.

"I suppose you guessed it was us?" he remarked.

"Yes. Where are my friends?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Oh, don't cackle!" said Harry. "You've done us, but you haven't captured me, yet."

"That's soon done." Trumper imitated the cry of the culew, the signal of the Boy Scouts of Pegg, and three or four



sturdy youths in scout costume appeared from the wood, and surrounded Wharton—at a respectful distance, however. "Now, then, you had better surrender at discretion."

"Rats!"  
"Come," said Trumper impatiently, "you can't fight half a dozen of us! Give in while you've got the chance."

"More rats!"  
"We'll jolly well rush you if you don't!"  
"Rush, then!"

Harry Wharton placed his back against a tree, so that he could not be attacked from behind, and faced the scouts with his fists up, and his eyes gleaming behind them. He was standing up for the honour of the Greyfriars Remove, and he did not mean to surrender.

The scouts collected upon the spot till there were six stalwart lads ready to back up Trumper. Dicky Brown was mopping his nose with a handkerchief, but the others were all ready for warfare. Trumper glanced over his patrol with an eye of pride.

"Now then, collar him!" he said. And he led the rush at Wharton. But though the odds were on their side, the scouts did not have it all their own way. They had to deal with the best athlete in the lower Forms at Greyfriars, and the finest boxer in the Remove, who prided themselves upon being a fighting Form.

Wharton never faltered for a second. He hit out, and every blow was planted with an accuracy that Mr. Sullivan or Tom Sayers might have envied. Trumper rolled over on his back on the grass, without having a very clear idea how he got there.

Spriggs fell across him, and burped out what little breath was left in him. Dicky Brown received a fresh "dot" on precisely the same spot, and sat down with a suddenness that jarred every bone in his body.

Then Wharton's fists made play like lightning, and for some moments the rest of the scouts were kept at bay. As a matter of fact, strong and plucky as they were, they knew little of boxing, and Wharton's skill was worth the strength of three or four.

It was admirable to see the way the single lad held them at bay, giving far more hard knocks than he received. A fourth scout rolled on the grass, and then Harry was in the grasp of his assailants.

Even then he gave them a tussle, and when he went down, he dragged two foes with him. But the scouts were piling on him now, and with three of them sitting upon his chest, the Greyfriars lad had to admit himself beaten.

Trumper staggered to his feet, gasping for breath. He was a full minute before he could speak. There was a streak of crimson running from his nose, but there was nothing like malice in his honest, sunburnt face. He evidently admired the way Harry had given an account of himself.

"Go easy, kids!" he exclaimed. "Don't hurt him. He's a plucked 'un!"  
"You—you've got me!" gasped Harry, half laughing, and wholly breathless.

"Yes, it looks like it. You might as well have given in at first."  
"The Greyfriars Remove never gives in."

"Well, we've got you. Serve him the same as the others, kids."

Dicky Brown looped a handkerchief round Wharton's wrists, and tied it, then did the same with his ankles. Then the scouts rose breathlessly, leaving him sitting in the grass against a tree-trunk.

"Bring the others here."

Some of the scouts went into the wood, and from their places of concealment amid the brambles the captured juniors were brought. They were all bound, and each had a handkerchief rammed into his mouth for a gag.

These were now taken out, as the need for silencing them was past, and, having

regained the power of speech, they began to make remarks.

Bob Cherry's remarks were especially emphatic; but Nugent was a good second, and even the Nabobs of Bhanipur was expressive. But the scouts of Pegg took it all good-humouredly. They were the victors, and the laugh was on their side.

"Just you wait till we get loose, that's all," Bob Cherry finished up.

"You won't get loose in a hurry, then," grinned Trumper. "We sha'n't set you free till you give your parole for the day."

"Bosh! Rats! We won't!"

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We're done, though we really hadn't a chance. We'll make it pax for the day, Trumper!"

"The paxfulness is terrific."

"Yes, rather!" groaned Billy Bunter. "Who knows what may be happening to our grub all this time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"We'll make it pax, then, as you call it," said Trumper. "Let them loose."

The Greyfriars juniors, looking very red

The Boy Scouts were hungry, and so were the juniors; but there were plenty of sandwiches. But the late encounter was not forgotten. They were friendly enough, but they were rivals.

"You college kids should start some scout patrols," said Trumper. "We wouldn't mind giving you some points for a start."

Bob Cherry sniffed.

"I rather think we could give you some points, without starting a patrol," he said.

"The rafterfulness is terrific."

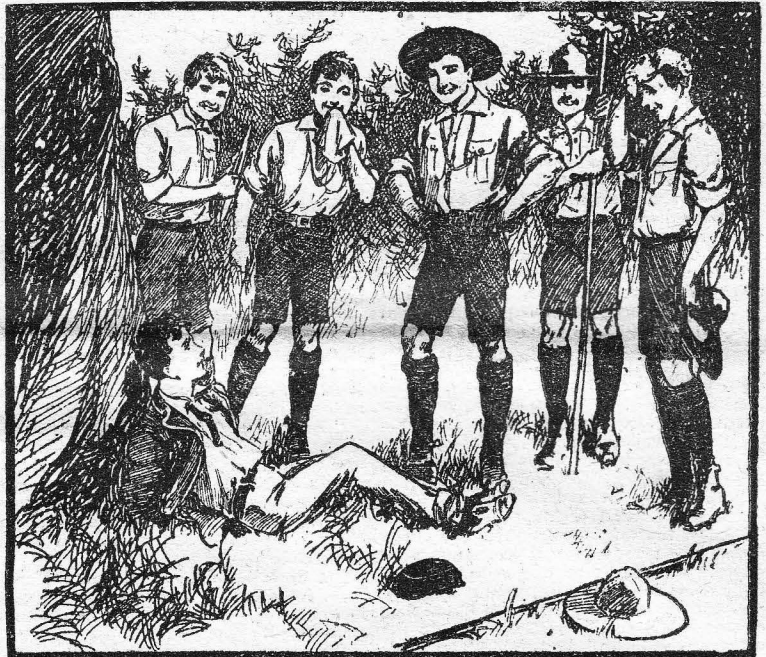
"Yes, it looked like it, didn't it, when we tackled you," grinned Trumper.

"Oh, rats! We were taken by surprise."

"Boy Scouts are never taken by surprise," said Trumper. "Our motto is 'Be prepared!' And we live up to it."

"Yes, rather," said Spriggs. "Of course, you chaps can't expect to do anything in the scout line. You're too—well, soft, you know."

"If we hadn't made it pax, I'd jolly well



"You—you've got me!" gasped Harry Wharton, half laughing and wholly breathless. "Yes, it looks like it!" agreed the scouts, propping him up in the grass against a tree-trunk.

and rumbled, rose to their feet. They dusted themselves down rather sheepishly, but Billy Bunter did not stop for that. He glided away at once in the direction of the glade, where the pork-pies were awaiting him. He was anxious about those pork-pies.

The Greyfriars juniors had given their parole, otherwise there would certainly have been a scrimmage upon the spot.

But Harry Wharton, though he was not exactly pleased with the result of the encounter with the Pegg scouts, was not one to bear anything like malice.

"You chaps must be hungry if you've had an afternoon out," he remarked. "We've got some grub yonder. Will you join us—as far as it goes?"

"Well, that's decent of you," said Trumper. "We will, rather!"

Billy Bunter looked rather dismayed as seven hungry young scouts sat down to the interrupted feast with the Greyfriars juniors. But a warning glance from Bob Cherry stopped the objections that rose to his lips. He comforted himself by wiring into the pork-pies at express speed.

show you," said Bob Cherry wretchedly. "We'd scout against you any day."

"Would you?" exclaimed Trumper instantly. "We take you on, then!"

"Well, I mean—"

"Come on, I take you at your word! We want somebody to scout against. It makes the practice more realistic. If you're as good as your word, we'll get up a contest with you."

"We're ready," said Wharton immediately.

"Good! Now, this is the idea," said Trumper. "Suppose you try to send a man through our lines, and we've got to spot him, and capture him. We fix on a certain locality, and keep guard there, and you've got to get a man through. What do you think of the idea?"

"Jolly good."

"Then we'll fix it. You can adopt any disguise you like—any trick—and get a man through to a certain point. If he gets through, you've won. If we stop him, you're beaten; and you sing small."

"We'll take it on," said Wharton. "It

will be fun, anyway. When shall it take place?"

"Next half-holiday."

"Right. Now for the place?"

"Take this wood," said Trumper. "It's big enough to give you a chance. You've got to send a chap from Greyfriars to get through the wood down to the shore, and we'll hold the wood. It's giving you every chance. What do you say?"

"We accept."

Trumper rose to his feet, grinning.

"Right you are, then. It's settled. Any details can be arranged by letter. Thanks for the feed—it was ripping. Get a move on, kids."

And the Boy Scouts marched off into the wood.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Makes a Suggestion.

HARRY WHARTON wore a look of great thoughtfulness at intervals during lessons the next day.

His chums had cheerfully left him the task of planning the contest with the Boy Scouts of Pegg, and he had to decide on a "wheeze"; but so far he had not succeeded in thinking of anything that would be likely to succeed.

After lessons that day there was cricket practice, but as the chums of the Remove came out of the class-room, Wharton called to them.

"Get to the study, kids!"

"Oh, stuff!" said Bob Cherry. "What's the game? We've got to play cricket!"

"We've got to hold a council of war!"

"Councils of war are off. Cricket's the word, my son!"

"Cheese it, and come on."

Wharton's word was law. He had the responsibility, and he had the authority, too. Bob Cherry grumbled and followed him, and Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh fell into line.

"Now, look here," said Wharton, as soon as they were inside the study. "It's Thursday to-day. We've got to face the Scouts on Saturday afternoon. It's time something was settled. One of us has got to get through the lines on Saturday. Which one of us is to try it?"

"Volunteers," said Bob Cherry.

"I don't mind trying," said Nugent. "I know the wood better than you chaps do, as I've been longer at Greyfriars than any of you. I may be able to dodge them. Only they're such keen young beggars, you know; and then they've a signal that can be heard nearly from one end to the other of the wood. If one of them spots me, I shall have the whole family on my neck in next to no time."

"That's the trouble," Bob Cherry looked serious. "It seems to me as if we've bitten off more than we can chew. It was really my fault."

"No good talking about that now," said Wharton, in his incisive way. "We're in for it, and we've got to go through with it."

"Right you are. If it were to take place after dark, we could send Inky. He wouldn't be seen after dark," said Bob regretfully.

"My worthy chum—"

"Me come in?"

It was a quiet voice at the door. Wun Lung, the little Chinese junior at Greyfriars, came into the study, with his usual bland and agreeable smile.

"Oh, come in!" said Harry. "What is it?"

"Me no wantee anything. Me helpoo you."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You can't help us, kid. We've got to send a chap through the Scouts in Friardale Wood on Saturday afternoon."

"Me knowee; Buntel tell me yestoday," said Wun Lung. "Everybody knowee."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 244.

Bob Cherry grunted.

"Of course that young ass would jaw. I suppose we shall have the whole Remove grinning at us if we fail to pull it off."

"The grinfulness will be terrific."

"Me tinkee me knowee."

"Do you mean that you've got an idea?" said Harry, more attentively. He knew that the little Celestial had a way of finding solutions for difficulties, and in some of the Remove "wheezes" Wun Lung's advice had been useful. "Go ahead, then, kid!"

"You goee in disguisee."

"We've thought of that," said Bob Cherry. "Only there's a limit to the disguises we could go in. It's no good putting on a grey beard like a chap in a detective story, or dressing up as a messenger boy or a Red Indian, you know."

"Me savvy."

"Then what disguise do you suggest?" asked Wharton. "I've run over pretty nearly everything in my mind, and I can't think of one that's at all feasible."

"Girls."

"Eh?"

"Goee as girlee," said Wun Lung. "What you tinkee?"

The chums of the Remove stared at him speechlessly.

They had thought of nearly every possible plan of hoodwinking the Boy Scouts, but the thought of a fellow going through their lines disguised as a girl had never even crossed Wharton's mind.

But immediately Wun Lung had spoken, the possibilities of the idea rushed into the brain of the captain of the Remove.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "Splendid!"

"The splendiddfulness is terrific, but—"

"There was something of the kind done by a Scout organisation in London," said Harry excitedly. "I heard some fellow speaking about it, now I come to think of it. It's a ripping idea, if we can work it."

"But can we?" said Bob Cherry doubtfully. "You see, how are we to make a boy's face look like a girl's? Boys' faces are rougher, you know, and not so—well, not so good-looking as a rule."

"Well, there are plain girls, too," said Nugent. "You would pass, as far as that goes, Bob."

"I wasn't thinking of myself," said Bob, frowning. "A chap may be good-looking, too, but not the same kind of good looks. Then there's the hair."

"Some girls wear short hair."

"Well, it would cause notice, and if we excite notice, we're done."

"What price a wig, then?"

"The wigfulness is the proper caper, my worthy chums," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "I think it a weezy good idea. Our Chinese chum has come to the rescue in the needful hour like an indeedful friend."

"Good old heathen!" said Bob Cherry, giving Wun Lung a slap on the shoulder that nearly felled him to the floor. "It's a ripping wheeze, whether we work it or not. But— He broke off, and his face changed. "I—I say, would it be considered—well, anything like disrespectful, to dress like a girl, because if so—"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Harry quietly.

"If the idea were disrespectful, we shouldn't think of it for a moment, of course. But I don't see that it is. Scouts in war-time have dressed like women, to observe the enemy or to get through an enemy's lines, as we're doing now; and, anyway, there can be no disrespect where none is intended. I think that's all right."

"Good! Then it is settled!"

"We shall have to think that out. I think it's a good idea; but which of us is going?"

Wun Lung glided out of the study with

his silent step, leaving the chums of the Remove looking at one another dubiously. They had all agreed that it was a good idea—but which of them was to dress as a girl to pass through the enemy's lines?

That was a different matter!

The absurdity of the situation if the individual should be caught was apparent to all of them, and no one liked the prospect.

Harry Wharton broke the silence, which had lasted some minutes. No one in No. 1 Study seemed to have any suggestion to make.

"We'd better get to business," he said. "Before we decide on the individual, let's settle whether the scheme's to be adopted. 'Yes' or 'No.'"

"Yes," said Bob Cherry and Nugent.

"The yesfulness is terrific."

"Good! I say 'yes,' too. Now, the individual has to be selected. There are no volunteers, of course?" Wharton paused for a reply, but one did not come. "Very well. Now, in the first place, Inky's barred, because his beautiful complexion would give him away at once. We couldn't palm him off on the Boy Scouts for a Hindu girl."

"Ha, ha! No."

"So it's among us three."

"I'm afraid it's us two," said Nugent. "Bob will have to be barred. I put it to you, did any girl in the wide world ever have feet that size?"

"You let my feet alone," growled Bob Cherry, who was rather sensitive on that point. "I'd rather have feet a chap can stand on, than little girly tootsies like yours, anyway."

"You mean feet that several chaps can stand on—"

"Oh, shut up! Let's talk business. If Nugent is going to be funny, I retire from the council of war."

"There's something in what Frank says though," said Wharton. "Your feet are ripping for getting goals with, Bob, but they're not what anybody would call ornamental. Besides, your legs are so jolly long, and then your face is all right for a boy, but a girl with a face like that—"

"Oh, keep it up!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Anybody would think I was anxious for the job. I shall be jolly glad to keep out of it."

"And, as a matter of fact, I'm not good-looking enough to pass for a girl under any circumstances," said Harry, a little hurriedly. "So you see, Frank—"

"Do I?" said Nugent grimly. "I don't!"

"You've got such a smooth skin—"

"Thanks!"

"And nice, soft eyes—"

"Nice soft head, too, if I took in all your soft sawder."

"And pretty hands and feet," urged Wharton, "and—"

"First time you've mentioned them."

"Well, there hasn't been occasion to mention them before. Then you'd have a good figure, too, if you wore a skirt and blouse—"

"Rats! I'm not a volunteer this time."

"Then we'll toss up for it," said Wharton resignedly.

"Oh, come off! If you chaps really think I should work it better, I'm willing to offer," said Nugent. "It's for the good of the cause."

"Well, I do think so, honest Injun," said Wharton. "You really have a nice, soft skin and decent eyes, and smaller hands and feet than the rest of us. Of course, you'll look a bit bulky as a girl, all the same; but, then, there are bulky girls."

"Oh, all right! I'm the giddy victim, then," said Nugent. "We've got to beat the scouts somehow. What about the disguise?"

"We shall have to keep it awfully dark, of course. I will cut down to Friardale on my bike now and buy some cheap



girl's clothes at the second-hand shop there. I can get them all pretty cheap; they needn't be first-class quality or fit, you know. You can wear a sash, and—"

"Oh, rats! I'm not going to wear a rotten sash!" grumbled Nugent, half repenting of his offer now that it was accepted. "You're not going to make me look more of a guy than is absolutely necessary."

"My dear chap, a girl has to wear a sash. I believe they all do. Marjorie wears a sash, so I should think a sash is good enough for you."

"I should think so," said Bob Cherry indignantly. "I'm really surprised at you, Nugent."

"Then there's the flaxen wig we wear in the private theatricals," said Wharton thoughtfully. "It's pretty well known at Greyfriars, but the scouts at Pegg haven't seen it. That suits Nugent's pretty milky complexion to a T."

"Oh, let my beastly complexion alone. Look here, I'm not going to wear a rotten wig."

"Can't be helped. It's only as long as Marjorie's hair, and if Marjorie can have the fearful trouble of wearing long hair always, I suppose you can have it for one afternoon."

"I should think so," said Bob Cherry. "Really, Nugent—"

"Oh, pile it on," said Nugent. "It's different. I believe girls like long hair. Never mind; I'll wear a wig, and a false beard, too, if you like. Don't mind me."

"Right; we won't. I'll go and get a pass from Wingate now, and buzz off to the village on my bike," said Wharton.

And he hurried away.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. No Feed for Bunter.

AS soon as Harry Wharton returned to Study No. 1, the plan of campaign was decided upon, and the chums of the Remove looked forward to Saturday very keenly. Nugent was not expecting to enjoy himself, but he was anxious to get it over.

The secret was kept from all who could not be absolutely relied upon. Hazeldene and Micky Desmond and Ogilvy and some others were let into it, but fellows like Bulstrode were strictly left out—and so was Billy Bunter.

They knew that something was going on, and they were very curious about it, but they were to know nothing till the contest with the Boy Scouts was safely over. Any indiscretion on the part of someone in the secret might have spoiled the whole matter.

Saturday came, and the juniors impatiently laboured through morning lessons. The welcome hour of dismissal came at last, and Harry Wharton and his chums poured out of the class-room, full of their scheme.

It was impossible, of course, for Nugent to don his feminine attire in the school—it would have occasioned too much remark.

A barn in a deserted place had been fixed upon by Harry for the change, and directly after dinner the juniors made tracks in that direction.

Nugent donned a pair of nautical trousers and rolled them over his knees, and then the stockings and boots, the skirt and blouse. The wig was carefully adjusted and fastened securely, and a pretty scarf was twined round his neck and the sash round his waist. Then Harry touched up his face with powder and paint.

"Faith, and it's lovely ye are!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, I'd never know ye from ye're own sister!"

"I suppose I shall pass all right," granted Nugent.

"Sure, the only danger is that the Boy Scouts may fall in love wid ye, and carry ye off wid them!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Harry Wharton stepped back to get a good view of his work, and he admired it immensely. "Miss Nugent" was a huge success.

"By Jove!" said Harry, "I hardly thought it would turn out quite so rippingly as this! Nugent's not only a girl, but he's a jolly good-looking one! The scouts will never dream that he's one of us!"

"Well, let's get off," said Nugent.

"I-I-I say, you fellows—"

Wharton uttered an exclamation. Bunter's spectacles were glittering at the open door of the barn. The Owl of the Remove had not been quite satisfied that it wasn't a feed, and he had followed them.

He blinked in amazement at Nugent. Bob Cherry was about to smite the inquisitive junior in his wrath, but Wharton signified to him to stop. Bunter evidently had not seen the dressing, and he did not know Nugent. He raised his cap as he came into the barn.

"Isn't there a feed?" he said, in a tone of disappointment. "I—"

"This is Miss Nugent," said Wharton. "Miss Nugent, this is Billy Bunter—you have heard of him."

Nugent grinned, and played the part.

"Oh, dear, yes," he said, in a high-pitched voice; "my brother Frank has told me about him. He's a greedy young rotter, isn't he?"

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

"Nice language for a lady!"

Bunter blinked at "Miss" Nugent.

"Is—is that Nugent's sister?" he said.

"I never knew he had one. She's awfully like him. I—I say, Miss Nugent, it's quite a mistake about my being greedy. Your brother doesn't understand a chap like me, you know. I'm of a delicate constitution, and I can only keep up by taking plenty of nourishment. Blessed if I can see what you fellows are cackling at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent roared as loudly as the rest. Bunter blinked at him again, and the truth dawned upon him. He saw Nugent's jacket lying on the ground, and understood.

"Oh, really, you fellows! It's Nugent himself! Is this what all the mystery was about? What's the game?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I'd have come here for this!" said Bunter peevishly. "I've fagged all this way, thinking it was a feed! If one of you fellows would lend me five bob off the three pounds I'm getting this evening, I—"

"It's all right," said Hazeldene. "If it's taken in Bunter, who knows you, it will take in Trumper, who's only seen you casually!"

"The take-infulness will be terrific."

"Come on, then," said Harry; "it's turned three."

Nugent started for the door. Bob Cherry gave a shout.

"Hold on; girls don't tramp along like that! You'd give yourself away at once."

"I suppose I must walk?"

"Yes, but not such jolly long steps—something like this."

Bob Cherry tripped towards the door. Nugent looked at him.

"Girls don't walk like that!" he said positively. "I've seen girls walk often enough, and they don't look like hens on hot bricks!"

"I wasn't looking like a hen on hot bricks that I know of," said Bob Cherry, turning red. "I mean that you must do something graceful!"

"Was that graceful?" asked Nugent, in astonishment.

"Look here—"

"Faith, and don't begin raggin' now. It's time Miss Nugent was in the wood."

"Right ho!" said Wharton. "Buzz

off, Frank, and do your best. We'll go down to the shore by another way, and we shall be there soon after you, if you get through."

Nugent nodded and left the barn. The chums of the Remove kept well out of sight in the barn. Now that Nugent was in his new attire, it would not do to be seen with him.

They grinned hugely as they saw the "girl" walking across the field. The deception was wonderful. The juniors, knowing the secret, could see a great many little faults that would otherwise have escaped their notice, but they all felt pretty certain that "Miss Nugent" would do.

"With decent luck, he'll get through," said Wharton.

And when Nugent was out of sight, the Greyfriars' juniors left the barn, and by a roundabout route, avoiding the wood, they made their way down to the shore.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### Through the Enemy's Lines.

MISS NUGENT" felt extremely uneasy as he—or, perhaps, we should say "she"—went down the lane to the wood. It was a very new experience.

The skirt seemed to hamper all his movements, and he felt a general feeling of being fastened in. But the wide-brimmed hat shaded his face from the hot sun, and that was one comfort. The shadow it threw on his face was also useful for the purpose of concealing the disguise there.

He stopped and looked at his reflection in a pond by the wayside, and started. The reflection was that of a very good-looking though very sturdy girl.

The fun of the thing began to appeal to Nugent, and he went on his way more cheerfully. He passed a butcher's boy from Friardale whom he knew by sight, and the butcher's boy stared at him in open admiration.

In a village row Nugent had punched that youth's nose hard only a few days before, and had he met him undisguised there would probably have been fist-cuffs. But the young butcher evidently had not the slightest suspicion.

As Nugent looked at him, he seemed encouraged, and winked. The junior could not help laughing as he hurried on.

His disguise had passed muster twice. There was no reason why it should not impose upon the Boy Scouts of Pegg.

But he felt uneasy as he entered the shades of Friardale Wood. The knowledge that six or seven fellows lurked unseen in the wood, ready to pounce upon him, was enough to make him uneasy.

He looked to and fro anxiously as he followed the footpath that led down towards the sea, winding through the shady old wood.

There was a rustle in the trees, and he started. It was certain that the footpath would be watched, and he was not surprised by the sight of the bare legs of a Boy Scout among the bracken.

Dicky Brown jumped out of the thicket. The young scout had heard footsteps on the path, and was on the alert; but at the sight of a girl all the alertness disappeared from his manner.

Nugent had started back, and Dicky Brown had the impression that his sudden appearance had startled the girl. Like a true scout, Dicky was all politeness and courtesy to a member of the gentle sex, and he lifted his broad-brimmed hat at once.

"Sorry I jumped out like that, miss!" said Dicky awkwardly. "I hope I did not frighten you."

Nugent drew a quick breath. Dicky Brown had been very near receiving an upper-cut from the charming young lady, which would have astonished him very much; but Nugent took his cue at once.

"Oh, dear!" he said, making his voice very high-pitched; "oh, dear! You won't hurt me, will you?"

"Of course I won't!" said Dicky. "I'm looking for a chap, that's all. Have you seen a chap—one of the fellows from Greyfriars—in the wood?"

"Greyfriars?" said Nugent inquiringly. "Yes; that's a school near here. You'd know the chap by his school cap. Have you seen one about?"

Nugent shook his head. "I haven't seen one since I came into the wood," he said.

"Oh, I'll have him, anyway, if he comes along!" said Dicky Brown determinedly. "You see, this is a scouting contest. They've got to get a man through our lines. I'm watching this footpath. There's another chap further along, in case the Greyfriars kid should be able to dodge me."

"Oh, is there?" murmured Nugent to himself.

"But he won't get past me!" said Dicky Brown. "I'm on the alert, I can tell you!"

"And you are really a Boy Scout?" murmured the "girl," with a look of such great admiration that Dicky Brown was immensely pleased.

"Oh, yes, rather!" he said. "I'm corporal in the Curlew Patrol. Trumper's our scout leader. He's all right."

"Is this the right way to the shore?" asked Nugent sweetly.

"Yes; you keep straight on, and don't leave the path. You'll pass another of our chaps—young Spriggs—but he won't hurt you."

There was a rustle in the thicket, and Trumper stepped out.

"Here, young Brown—hallo!"—he tilted his hat to Miss Nugent—"You're not keeping watch, you Brown!"

"Yes, I am!" said Dicky Brown indignantly. "Nobody will pass along this path without my knowing it, I can tell you."

"It's not in the scouting code to talk to strangers when on duty," said Trumper. "Sorry, miss, but I have to keep up discipline."

"I suppose it's a scout's duty to tell a lady the way?" said Dicky Brown scathingly. "What about the rule of always doing a good turn to somebody every day?"

"Oh, that's all right! I'll see the young lady safely through our lines!" said Trumper, with quite the air of a field-marshal.

Nugent could hardly help laughing at the way Trumper spoke of his "lines," as if he had been in command of an army corps at least. But he remained grave, and he gave the scout leader a sweet smile.

"Oh, thank you so much!" he murmured.

"Not at all!" said Trumper. "Quite a pleasure. You stand on guard here, Dicky Brown, and—"

"Hadn't I better show the lady the way?" said Dicky Brown. "You've had more experience than I have as a scout, and—"

Trumper waved his hand.

"Don't you start arguing with your patrol leader! I'm going to show the lady the way, and you can stay here and keep guard."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Dicky Brown. "This way, miss!" said Trumper gallantly. "I'll see you safe through."

"Oh, thank you!"

Trumper strode on his way, with Miss Nugent walking very demurely by his side. The chief of the Boy Scouts of Pegg was feeling very satisfied with himself. He would not have felt so satisfied if he had guessed the real identity of the "girl" at his side.

He explained the matter to his pretty

companion as they went on. Nugent listened with great interest.

"They won't beat us!" said Trumper. "It's turned half-past three already, and they've less than half an hour left. They have given it up, I expect."

Miss Nugent smiled.

"Halt!"

It was a sudden call, and Spriggs sprang out into the footpath. He seemed surprised at the sight of his patrol leader.

"Hallo! Is that you, Trumpy?"

"It's all serene!" said Trumper. "I'm seeing this lady through the lines. I'll be back with you in a jiffy. Keep your eyes peeled."

"Right you are!"

Trumper and Nugent walked on. Through openings of the trees came a glimpse of the wide blue of the ocean. Nugent's heart beat faster. He was very near the end of his journey now.

As they came out of the trees, in the distance on the shore appeared the boats of the fishermen, and near them the bright colours of many parasols. Nugent remembered that the girls of Cliff House were to be taken out for a walk that afternoon by Miss Penelope Primrose.

"Well, here you are, miss!" said Trumper. "I've seen you through, and I shall have to get back to my men. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" said Nugent softly.

He held out his hand. Trumper took it, and Nugent gave him a grip that made the scout leader jump.

He had never met a girl who could give a grip of the hand like that. He stared blankly at Nugent.

"Good-bye!" said Nugent, speaking in his natural voice now. "I'm awfully obliged to you for showing me through the wood, Trumper! I rather reckon we've knocked you into a coked hat this journey."

Trumper almost fell down. He stared at Nugent, his jaw dropping, his mouth and eyes wide open in the uttermost amazement. His expression was so astounded and almost idiotic that Nugent roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why—what—how—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Thanks so much, kid! My dear chap, you've been done! Don't you understand? D-o-n-e—done! I'm Nugent, of the Greyfriars Remove."

"Nu-Nu-Nu-Nugent!" gasped Trumper.

"Yes, rather!"

"Of the Remove!" said Trumper faintly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trumper glared. He was recovering from his stupefaction now, and he realised how utterly and hopelessly he had been done.

"You're Nugent! My hat!"

"Good-bye!" said Nugent. "You can go and tell the others."

And he strolled on. He left Trumper staring dazedly after him. The Boy Scout remained there, staring blankly, for a good five minutes, and then he slowly turned, and went back into the wood. The Boy Scouts would have been very glad to see Nugent come back through the wood again; but Nugent was too wise for that.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER. An Awkward Predicament.

**N**UGENT had beaten the Boy Scouts hands down, though they could hardly be blamed for their defeat, under the circumstances. But now he found himself on the shore, he was somewhat nonplussed.

He had expected to see his chums there, but his undelayed passage through the wood had taken little time, and Wharton, going a much longer way round, was not yet near the scene.

Nugent knew better than to go near the

wood again, and chance falling into the hands of the exasperated Boy Scouts. They would not have him hurt, but they would probably have given him an uncomfortable time.

He walked on slowly, swinging his parasol, and wondering how on earth the adventure was to end.

He had lost sight of the Cliff House girls, but suddenly rounding a big rock on the shore, he came upon them.

The girls were on the sands with Miss Primrose, and Nugent was in the midst of them before he realised it. Then it was too late to retreat.

When the Cliff House girls went out for a walk with Miss Penelope Primrose, they were very, very good. They walked in twos, and conversed with serious faces, or else kept a decorous silence.

When they were told they could rest, they rested in the same decorous manner. Sometimes, when Miss Penelope was not looking, girls like Clara were known to scatter sand about, and even to whistle; but they would not have shocked Miss Primrose for worlds.

But, fond though they were of the kind old lady, there was no doubt that those prim and orderly walks bored the girls to distraction—almost as much as schoolboys are bored under similar circumstances.

Any kind of an interruption was welcome, and so the sudden appearance of Frank Nugent caused glances to be thrown in his direction, and caused some interest. Not one of the girls had any suspicion that he was other than what he appeared to be.

As a matter of fact, a new pupil was joining Cliff House that day, and when Marjorie & Co. caught sight of Nugent, they imagined naturally enough that he was the new pupil, and had come to join them on the sands.

He was dressed differently from the fisher-girls of Pegg village, and neither did he look like one of the village girls from Friardale. His clothes were not of the best, but they had a town cut, and anyone would naturally have imagined that he belonged to Cliff House.

"By Jove!" said Miss Clara, an expression she had picked up from the Greyfriars boys. "Here is the new girl."

Marjorie glanced kindly at the newcomer.

"Come here, dear," she said in her soft voice.

Nugent coloured hotly.

He saw that the Cliff House girls did not know him, and he felt horribly mean at being resented with such kindness, yet a confession of the truth was not feasible. He had a keen sense of the absurd, and he had no mind to become the object of the ridicule of two score of laughing girls.

He came awkwardly towards Marjorie. The latter only intended to be kind to the new girl, and the evident bashfulness of Nugent did not deter her. It was only natural that a new girl should be a little constrained.

"I am so glad to see you, dear!" she said, in her kind, soft voice. "Have you seen Miss Primrose yet?"

"Yes—no!" muttered Nugent.

"What is your name?" asked Miss Clara.

"Nugent! I—I mean—"

"Nugent!" exclaimed Marjorie, with interest. "I thought I knew your features. You are a relation of Frank Nugent at Greyfriars, I suppose?"

"Ye-e-o-es!"

"How nice! I have a brother at Greyfriars," said Marjorie confidentially. "I suppose Frank is your brother? He is a very nice boy."

Nugent could not help grinning.

This was a good character, at all events, from a person whose good opinion he valued. Marjorie held out her hand.

"I am sure we shall be good friends," she said. "Come this way, and I will take you to Miss Primrose."



Nugent shook hands with her. He was so confused by this unexpected turn of events that he hardly knew what he was doing, and he gave Marjorie a grip of the hand almost as vigorous as that he had given Trumper.

The girl started.  
"Good gracious! How strong you are!" she exclaimed.

Nugent went crimson.  
"I—I—I'm rather strong," he stammered. "It's the exercise in the gym, you know, and the cricket and footer! I—I mean—"

He broke off dismally. He seemed to be getting deeper and deeper into the mire with every word he uttered.

The girls were all looking at him very curiously.

"You play cricket!" said Marjorie.  
"So do we. We beat Greyfriars Remove in a cricket match a little while ago."

"And footer!" said Miss Clara. "We don't play football. I should like to, but Miss Primrose would not approve."

"Fancy Miss Nugent playing football!" said Alice. "I did not know girls played football."

"You—you see," stammered Nugent, "when I—er—say football, I don't mean—er—exactly—football, you know!"

"No," said Marjorie demurely. "What do you mean, then? Hockey?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Miss Clara.

"You see, I—I—I—"

"Dear me!" said the voice of Miss Primrose. "Is that my new pupil? Come here, my dear!"

Nugent, inwardly raging, crossed over to Miss Primrose, running the gauntlet of countless eyes.

The old lady gave him a kindly smile.

"I am glad to see you, my dear," she said, stooping to kiss Nugent on the cheek. The boy started, but there was no getting out of it. "When did you arrive?"

"Er—er—I don't know exactly!"

"You did not notice the time? Have you been up to Cliff House yet?"

"N-n-no, ma'am!"

"Very good! It is time for us to return," said Miss Primrose. "Come with me, my dears! You walk by my side, dear!"—this was to Nugent.

"Yes, ma'am!"

Miss Primrose marched off, with Nugent by her side, and the girls followed in prim order. Marjorie was looking at Frank very curiously now. In his confusion, he had several times forgotten to put the high pitch in his voice, and had spoken in his natural tones.

Marjorie Hazeldene was not suspicious, but she was observant. She remembered that Harry Wharton had told her of the intention of sending a junior in disguise through the Boy Scouts' lines that afternoon.

A gleam of fun came into her eyes.  
"You must be tired, my dear, after your long journey," said Miss Primrose. "Are you hungry?"

"N-n-n-no, ma'am!"

"We shall be in time for tea, my dear. I think you will be very happy at Cliff House; you will find the girls very kind. Marjorie, you will look after our new young friend, will you not?"

"Certainly, Miss Primrose!" said Marjorie demurely.

She walked beside Nugent, apparently by way of looking after him for a start, and passed her arm through his.

Nugent writhed inwardly; he had caught a curious look on Marjorie's face, and he was afraid that she guessed.

He shivered at the thought of being marched into Cliff House. Once within the walls, what was to be done? There would be no escape for him, and when the inevitable exposure came, he shuddered at the thought of the ridiculous figure he would cut.

Miss Primrose might even imagine that

he adopted the disguise for the purpose of playing some trick at Cliff House; he might even be reported to the Head of Greyfriars.

He wished the Boy Scouts of Pegg and their challenge, and Wun Lung and his valuable suggestion of disguise, at the bottom of the bay altogether.

As he walked on, with Marjorie's arm through his, he revolved plans of escape. He caught sight of several juniors coming down through the village, and recognised his chums.

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped dead as they saw Nugent in the Cliff House ranks, and stared at him as if they could hardly believe their eyes.

Then Nugent saw Bob Cherry stuff his handkerchief into his mouth, and the nabob turn his back and become the prey to a kind of convulsion.

He simply snorted.

It was bad enough for them to have got him into a fearful fix like this, but for them to stand there laughing—that was too bad.

The procession of girls passed on, and the juniors of Greyfriars were left staring blankly after them.

And the chums of the Remove laughed in chorus. It was rough on Nugent, no doubt, but it was very funny. They followed the girls at a distance, keeping an eye on Nugent, wondering what on earth was to be done in the matter, without being able to hit on any scheme for helping the unfortunate junior out of his difficulty.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nugent Boits.

MARJORIE talked cheerfully and kindly to Nugent as they walked on to Cliff House. But her cheerfulness and kindness were wasted upon the wretched junior.

What did he care about the class-room arrangements and the meal-times at Cliff House, about the customs and manners and holidays there? He only wanted to escape. And he more than half-believed that Marjorie knew who he was.

As a matter of fact, the girl was satisfied on that point now.

Nugent's answers were so constrained



"Good gracious me!" gasped Miss Penelope Primrose, as Nugent's hat and wig came off in her hand. "It's not a girl at all! Good gracious me!"

"My only hat!" gasped Wharton.  
"That was Nugent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and he wasn't looking happy, either!" Micky Desmond remarked, with a chuckle. "Sure, I'd like the situation myself!"

"How on earth did he get with them?" said Wharton. "He ought to have had sense enough to keep out of their way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's beaten the Boy Scouts, at all events," said Hazeldene, grinning. "He must have chummed up with the girls on purpose."

"He didn't seem to be enjoying himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ha, ha, haffulness is terrific!"

"Poor old Nugent!" murmured Bob Cherry, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"Blessed if I know how he'll get out of it! They seem to have adopted him now. We can't rescue him, can we?"  
"Ha, ha! No."

and awkward, and in his unguarded moments his voice was so easily recognised, that the girl could not remain long in the dark.

But Marjorie thought he deserved to have a lesson for his impertinence in dressing in girls' clothes and deceiving them, and so she was not inclined to help him out of his difficulty yet.

Miss Clara, who was as sharp as a needle had come to the same conclusion as Marjorie, and she was struggling not to laugh. Her eyes were full of fun, and she was disposed to fully enjoy the joke at Nugent's expense.

"How your hair is blowing about, dear!" she said. "Shall I lend you a hairpin?"

"N-n-n-no, it's all right," muttered Nugent, in deadly fear lest his flaxen wig should come off under Miss Clara's hands.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Miss Clara. "It looks untidy!"

"Does it? N-n-never mind."

"Shall I tie it for you?"

"N-n-n-no, thanks!"

"No trouble at all," said Miss Clara, producing a bit of ribbon from her pocket. "I'll tie it up beautifully."

And she gathered up the long flaxen curls. It was clear to her, of course, that they were imitation as soon as she touched them, if she had not known it before. Her eyes were full of mischief. She caught up a straggling lump of seaweed that some fisher-lad had dropped in the path, and calmly tied it up in the ribbon with Nugent's false hair.

The junior had not the slightest suspicion of what she had done.

Only too relieved that she did not jerk his wig off, he walked on, with the seaweed straggling down his back over the blouse.

Marjorie tried not to laugh, but without success. The other girls were shrieking. Miss Primrose turned round to them.

"My dear children," she said gently, "you must not laugh loudly in public. It is very bad form indeed."

"I'm so sorry, Miss Primrose," said Clara.

"Oh, yes, dear Miss Primrose, we are all so sorry."

"Very good, my dears."

And Miss Primrose marched on again. They entered the gates of Cliff House.

By this time Nugent was desperate.

"My dear child!" exclaimed Miss Primrose. She had stayed behind to lock the gate, and as she came up the path she caught sight of the seaweed tied to Nugent's hair. "Whatever is that?"

"I—I—I—"

"What is tied to your hair?"

"My—my hair?" stammered Nugent.

"Yes! What is it?" Miss Primrose put up her glasses, and stared at the pendant seaweed. "Come here, child!"

Nugent approached her nervously.

"It is seaweed," said Miss Primrose, in wonder. "Seaweed tied to your hair! This is very strange indeed! Stand still while I pull it off!"

And she jerked at the seaweed.

The natural result followed. The flaxen wig came off in her hand, bringing Nugent's hat off with it.

Miss Primrose gave a faint cry. She was too astounded to move, or to do anything but stare at Nugent's bare head, and at the wig and hat in her hand.

The girls stared, too, blankly.

Nugent wished the earth would open and swallow him up.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Miss Primrose at last. "Goodness gracious me! What—how—Who are you?"

But Nugent did not reply to the question. All was up now, and only flight could save him. He broke into a wild dash for the gate.

The girls looked after him. The supposed girl clambered over the gate, and went rolling over to the other side.

Miss Primrose almost fainted at the sight.

"Goodness gracious me! It is not a girl at all! Goodness gracious me!"

Nugent rolled down into the road. To pick himself up and dash off was the work of a moment, and he went down the path with the speed of a racehorse.

He rounded a bend in the path, and dashed full into half a dozen juniors.

"Here she is, begorra!" shouted Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's the charming miss, my worthy chums."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you beasts!"

Nugent glared at his chums. But they were roaring with laughter; they could not help it. He glared, and then strode angrily away. Harry Wharton ran after him, and slipped a hand through his arm.

"Don't be ratty, old chap! It was funny, you know."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 244.

Nugent's face cleared.

"Well, I was an ass to go in for it, and I wouldn't do it again for a million," he said. "I suppose it was funny, but it didn't seem funny at the time, I can tell you."

"How did you get away?"

Nugent explained, and the Removites roared again at the mental picture of Miss Penelope standing petrified with the flaxen wig in her hands. That wig was lost for ever; but, as Bob Cherry said, the laugh was worth it.

Some distance down the road they met Trumper and his patrol. The Boy Scouts grinned ruefully at Nugent and his companions.

"You've done us," said Trumper. "We own up; but we'll go for you again some time, and make you sit up!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's all right," he said. "We'll be ready for you. I don't blame you for being taken in. The Cliff House girls were taken in by Nugent, too. He makes such a jolly good girl that it's a pity for him to change back."

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent. "Thanks awfully for showing me the way through the wood, Trumper!"

Trumper smiled a sickly smile, and the Greyfriars juniors walked on grinning. Nugent changed into his own clothes at the barn, and felt an immense sense of relief at being a boy once more.

"This is jolly," he said. "Let's get back. I'm ready for tea."

And by the time they had tea in the study, Nugent was quite prepared to laugh over the adventure. He had certainly gone through some harassing experiences, but the great point was that they had beaten the Rival Scouts!

THE END.

*Next Friday's Grand  
Long, Complete Tale of  
HARRY*

*WHARTON & CO.*

*Is Entitled:*

**"CORNERING  
THE  
CULPRIT!"**

*Please Order Your  
Copy of the  
PENNY POPULAR  
In Advance, and Hand  
This Number When  
Finished With to a  
Non-reader.*

## BETWEEN OURSELVES.

A Weekly Chat between The Editor  
and His Readers.

### FOR NEXT FRIDAY.

As an all school story-paper the PENNY POPULAR has greatly increased in popularity. Harry Wharton & Co. received a great welcome, and I am glad to be able to say that each of our splendid tales of school life is an immense favourite with all my readers.

There will be another long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in our next issue, entitled:

### "CORNERING THE CULPRIT!"

Mr. Quelch receives a very mysterious anonymous letter, which leaves no doubt but what the writer is a Remove junior. Mr. Quelch demands the name of the culprit, but the latter fails to own up. Bulstrode is strongly suspected, but proof of his guilt cannot be obtained. Harry Wharton & Co. decide to take up the case seriously, and set to work. There is great excitement in the Remove when the culprit is cornered and forced to confess.

The story of Tom Merry & Co. in our next issue is a very powerful one, and is entitled:

### "THE MYSTERIOUS 'X'!"

A well-known cracksmen, who, after committing a robbery, leaves the mystic sign of "X" behind him, is known to be in the vicinity of St. Jim's. The daring scoundrel actually rings Dr. Holmes up on the telephone and informs him that he intends to steal a valuable picture belonging to the Head at a certain time.

Needless to say, there is great excitement among the juniors; but there is a humorous side to the whole affair, especially when Bernard Glyn rings D'Arcy up on the telephone, and after telling the swell of St. Jim's that he is the mysterious "X," informs him that he intends to steal his gold ticker.

Whether the real cracksmen is successful in carrying out his threat you will learn when you read this great story. You may rest assured that there is no lack of thrilling incidents.

The third story in our next issue is, of course, that dealing with Jimmy Silver & Co. The title of this yarn is

### "HELD TO RANSOM!"

Jimmy Silver mysteriously disappears from Rookwood, and nothing is heard from him until his father receives a letter stating that the junior has been kidnapped, and that he will not be released until a heavy ransom is paid. Tommy Dodd & Co. play a very prominent part in this story, and you will admire them for the way in which they back up their Classical rival.

Bear in mind, my chums, that in these days of paper shortage, the only way in which you can make sure of securing your copy of the PENNY POPULAR is by ordering your copy in advance. Fill up the order-form on page 19 of this issue and hand it to your newsagent without delay.

YOUR EDITOR.



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

# THE SENTENCE OF THE HOUSE!

By  
Martin  
Clifford.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The New Boy.

"PWAY, can I help you, deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the question. He had just come downstairs, and he found a youth in Etons in the hall, looking about him in rather a lost way.

Arthur Augustus saw at once that the stranger was a new boy, and evidently at a loss, and with his usual urbane courtesy the swell of St. Jim's placed himself at once at the disposal of the stranger.

The new boy looked at him. "I suppose this is the School House?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!" "Two rotten Houses here, I understand," said the new boy discontentedly. D'Arcy looked at him.

"There are two Houses," he replied. "This is the School House. New chap, I suppose?"

"Yes. I want to see the Head." "Pway allow me to show you to his studay!" said D'Arcy.

"Thanks." "Not at all, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus led the way. He was not very favourably impressed with the new fellow, but he wanted to be civil.

"Just awwived?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"Coming into the School House?" "I don't know. I'm going into the Fourth Form."

"That's my Form!" said Arthur Augustus graciously. "I'm in the Fourth!"

"Are you?" said the new boy indifferently, evidently not taking the slightest interest in the fact that D'Arcy was in the Fourth.

The swell of St. Jim's coloured a little. "Heah's the Head's studay," he said, rather abruptly.

He tapped at the door, and opened it. The studay was empty.

"Bai Jove! The Head isn't heah!" he remarked. "You can't see him."

The new boy grunted.

"Beastly nuisance!" he remarked. "I want to know where my quarters are. I suppose I shall have a studay?"

"You'll share a studay with two or three othah chaps," said Arthur Augustus, inwardly hoping quite fervently that the studay would not turn out to be No. 5.

"Two or three? How rotten! I want a studay to myself!"

Arthur Augustus stared.

"Nobody undah the Sixth Form has a studay to himself!" he said.

"Oh! It's rotten to be crowded."

"Oh, it's all wright, you know! You'll soon chum up with the othah fellows in your studay."

"I don't know about that. I'm a bit particular whom I chum up with!" growled the new junior.

Arthur Augustus thought to himself that the new junior was looking for trouble, and would not look very long

without finding it. But he did not say so. He wanted to be civil to a new-comer who very evidently did not know the ropes.

"I want to see the Head. Where can I find him?"

"The Head is pwobably at tea with his family now," said D'Arcy mildly. "You can't see him. But if you're going into the Fourth, it's all wright. I'll take you along to Mr. Lathom's studay."

"Who's Mr. Lathom?"

"Mastah of the Fourth."

"Oh, very well!"

The new boy appeared to be quite unconscious of the fact that D'Arcy was obliging him in any way. From his manner, it might have been supposed that D'Arcy was paid a regular salary for guiding new boys about the School House.

The swell of St. Jim's suppressed his annoyance with some difficulty, and wished he had not been quite so obliging. However, he guided the new-comer to Mr. Lathom's studay.

Mr. Lathom was at home. He blinked at the two juniors over his spectacles, and told them to come in.

"A new chap, sir," said D'Arcy.

"He's goin' into the Fourth, he says, sir, so I've brought him to you."

"You are very good, D'Arcy," said little Mr. Lathom. "It is quite right; I was expecting you, my lad. Your studay has been arranged; perhaps you will show the new boy to No. 5 in the Fourth Form passage, D'Arcy—the studay next your own? I shall see you again presently. I have no time to attend to you now, Lorne."

The new boy gave a slight grunt, and followed Arthur Augustus out of the studay. He seemed very dissatisfied with his reception. It was easy for D'Arcy to see that he was a spoiled youth, and had been made very much of at home, and had had a vague expectation that he would be made much of at St. Jim's.

That expectation was likely to be disappointed. Among more than two hundred and fifty boys, the addition of Eric Lorne was not likely to create much of a sensation.

"Shall I show you where your studay is?" asked D'Arcy politely.

"Yes."

D'Arcy led the way in silence to the Fourth Form passage. He knocked at the door of No. 5, and opened it. Reilly and Kerruish of the Fourth were there. Reilly was frying rashers of bacon, and Kerruish was washing a teapot—preparations that hinted that the two owners of Study No. 5 were going to have tea.

"New chap for this studay, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

"Faith, and he can come in," said Reilly.

But Lorne did not come in.

He stood on the threshold, sniffing. Apparently he did not care for the scent of frying bacon. The scent of the bacon was reinforced by smoke from the fire, and certainly the atmosphere of the studay was a little thick.

The supercilious expression upon the new boy's face caused the cordial grin to fade from Reilly's countenance, and he frowned.

"Sure, and why don't ye step in?" he inquired.

"Is this a studay?" asked the new boy.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is cooking done in the studies? I should have fancied there was a kitchen for cooking."

"We usually get our own tea in the studies," D'Arcy explained patiently.

"It's a pwivilege, you know. You can have tea in Hall, if you pwefer it."

"My hat!" exclaimed Kerruish. "He can have tea in Hall whether he prefers it or not. He's not coming into this studay with his nose turned up!"

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Reilly.

"If that's a friend of yours, Gussy, I won't hammer him, but ye'd better take him away."

"And bury him!" said Kerruish.

"Ahem! He is a stwangah to me," said D'Arcy, who was by no means anxious to claim so extremely bad-mannered a youth as a friend. "I am just showin' him to his quarters, you know."

"Well, you can show him to some other quarters!" growled Reilly. "I don't like the looks of him, intirely."

"Shut the door after you," added Kerruish.

Arthur Augustus hesitated. The new boy certainly deserved to be left to his fate, but Arthur Augustus knew what a boy would naturally feel like in a totally strange place, and this particular new boy was not likely to make friends.

The swell of St. Jim's felt a sentiment of passionate concern for a fellow who evidently did not understand the manners and customs of the place he found himself in.

"I'll tell you what, deah boy," he said, as Reilly unceremoniously closed the door upon both of them. "I'll take you to tea in my studay, if you like. I suppose you're pwetty hungwy aftah your journey?"

"Doesn't the school provide tea?" demanded the new boy.

"Oh, yaas!"

"Then show me where it is."

"Oh, vewy well!"

"I shall complain to the Head," said the new boy, further. "I'm not going to be shut up in a poky little hole like that, with two low bounders for company. At home I have two rooms to myself, and each of them is six times as large as that."

Arthur Augustus smiled. At home Arthur Augustus himself had palatial quarters, as he had the good fortune to be the son of a noble lord; but at St. Jim's he did not expect the same, and he realised that the new boy had lessons to learn. In the kindness of his heart he resolved to teach him some of them.

"Pway allow me to give you a word of advice as an old hand," said Arthur Augustus. "If you turn up your nose

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 244.

at what you see here, you know, you will get the fellows' backs up, and that will be written for you."

"I don't care twopence for them!"

"They will take it as cheek, you know."

"They can take it as they like."

"I mean, you may get bumped."

"If I am bothered in any way I shall complain to the Head."

Arthur Augustus halted, and stared at him.

"Bai Jove, you mustn't do that, you know!" he exclaimed. "That's sneaking. Fellow who sneaks is sent to Coventry, you know."

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it."

Arthur Augustus clenched his hands hard and drew a deep, deep breath. The new boy, at that moment, was perilously near to being used as a duster for the dusting of the passage floor. But the swell of St. Jim's contained his wrath; he would not lick a new boy on his first day at St. Jim's.

"There's the dinin'-room," he said chokingly. "Good-bye!" And he walked away hurriedly, feeling that if he spent many more minutes with the new boy he would not be able to keep his hands off him.

He met Blake and Herries and Digby going up to Study No. 6 to tea, and confided to them that there was a new fellow in the Fourth—"an uttah wottah!"

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Cousin Ethel's Request.

**T**OM MERRY looked into Study No. 6 after tea. Herries and Digby had gone out, but Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were still there.

"Seen the new kid, Tommy?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Gussy says he's a rank outsider," Blake remarked.

"So he is," said Tom Merry. "I only saw him for a minute, but he certainly gave me the impression of being a rotter."

"Uttah rottah!" said D'Arcy. "I shall wefuse to speak to him. He has not the slightest ideah of good-bweedin'. If he hadn't been a new boy I'd have given him a feahful thwashin'."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, there's no need to have anything to with him," he remarked. "I dare say he'll get put into his place sooner or later. I've looked in for you fellows. Are you coming?"

"Where?"

"Cousin Ethel wants to see us," explained Tom Merry. "She brought the new kid down. Figgy has just told me."

"Bai Jove! It's a remarkable thing that Figgy—"

"Exactly. Cousin Ethel can't come to tea—she's had tea with Mrs. Holmes—but she wants to see us. Has something to tell us, I think. I thought I'd take you chaps along, if you'd like to come."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "I'm on! Where is Cousin Ethel?"

"Figgy says she's waiting in the Head's garden."

"How does Figgy know, deah boy?"

Tom Merry smiled.

"She must have told him."

"It is wathah remarkable—"

"Better not keep her waiting," suggested Blake. "You can give us your opinion of Figgy afterwards, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I fancy it's something rather important," said Tom Merry. "If there's anything we can do for Cousin Ethel, of course—"

"Of course we shall all be weady," said D'Arcy. "Wait a minute while I give my toppah a wub."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gave his topper a hasty polish, and the three juniors left the study. Outside the School House they found Figgy waiting. Figgy nodded very seriously.

"Come on!" he said.

They crossed towards the Head's garden.

"How did you know that Ethel wanted to see us, Figgy?" D'Arcy inquired.

Figgy stared.

"I—she told me," he said.

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I've been to tea in the Head's house," Figgy explained, colouring a little. "Ethel and Mrs. Holmes—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Here we are," said Figgy, opening the gate. "March in!"

"Yaas; but—"

Jack Blake took his elegant chum by the arm and propelled him into the garden, and Figgy and Tom Merry followed.

Cousin Ethel's pretty hat could be seen in the little summer-house. The girl rose to her feet as the juniors came up. Her sweet face was very serious in its expression.

"It is good of you to come!" she said.

"I—I want to ask a favour of you."

"Anythin' deah boy—I mean, deah girl," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gracefully. "We are quite at your service."

"Entirely," said Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

Cousin Ethel looked a little troubled.

"It's about the friend who came with me to St. Jim's this afternoon," she said.

"I have not had the pleasure of bein' pwsented to your fwiend, Ethel," went on Arthur Augustus, in a stately way. "I twust I shall see her."

"My friend is a new boy for St. Jim's," said Ethel.

"Gweat Scott!"

"You have seen him?" asked Ethel anxiously.

D'Arcy looked dismayed.

"Not a chap named Lorne?" he asked.

"Yes; Eric Lorne."

"Bai Jove!"

"Then you have seen him?"

"Yaas."

"We've all seen him," said Tom Merry, rather uncomfortably.

"And do you not like him?" asked Cousin Ethel.

"Ahem!"

"H'm!"

"Well, I wouldn't say that," said Arthur Augustus cautiously. "I—I have spoken to him. Of—of course you can't tell what a chap is like at first meetin'."

Ethel's face was a little clouded.

"I understand," she said quietly. "Now, that is the favour I want to ask of you. That is why I came down here with Eric to-day. Eric's sister is one of my best friends, and—and Eric is not a bad boy, but he has been very much spoiled at home. His sister is afraid that he will have a very unpleasant time at first at school, as he is so used to having his own way in everything, and—and as she knew I had some friends here, she asked me—"

Ethel paused.

"I see," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "She asked you to speak a word for the kid so that he gets some attention here, and be made to feel more at home. It's all right; we'll look after him."

"Certainly!" said Figgy.

"Y-a-a-s, wathah!"

"I know it is a great deal to ask," said Ethel, looking distressed. "But—but I really believe that all Eric's faults

are on the surface, and—and if he is treated kindly he—he will soon find his place. But I know that new boys are sometimes ragged, especially if they are supposed to put on airs in any way, and so—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's not asking much," said Tom Merry. "Fellows fresh from home often want their corners knocked off. I know I was a little bit out of the common when I first came to school. Miss Fawcett used to dress me years younger than my age, and the fellows chipped me to death at first. We'll look after Lorne, and see that he isn't scalped."

Ethel smiled.

"Of course I don't want Eric to know that I've spoken to you for him," she said. "He is very proud, and it would be very like him to quarrel with anybody he suspected of wanting to protect him."

"Oh!"

"But I promised his sister to do what I could; she asked me to," said Ethel. "That is why I came down with Eric. I should like to think that he was given a chance here."

"We'll give him a chance," said Figgy. "I shan't have much to do with him, I suppose, as he's a School House chap, and I'm in the New House. But I shall certainly do what I can."

"Yaas, wathah! You can wely upon me, Ethel."

"And upon me," said Blake.

"Same here," said Tom Merry heartily.

Ethel looked relieved.

"I'm so glad to hear you say so," she said. "It is very, very kind of you."

"Not at all."

"And I'll answer for the other chaps in the Shell," said Tom Merry.

"And I for the Fourth," said Blake.

"It will be all right. Lorne will have a chance to shake down and learn the ropes."

"Yaas, wathah! I should wefuse to allow him to be wagged."

"Thank you so much, all of you," said Ethel. "You are very kind. I was doubtful about asking you, but—"

"Wubbish, deah girl! You can ask us anythin' you like, and you'd always find us play up like anythin'," said D'Arcy.

"Yes, rather."

There was a step on the garden path. The new boy, Eric Lorne, came into sight. He glanced at the juniors with the supercilious expression on his face that seemed to belong to it.

"I've been looking for you, Ethel," he said.

"Yes, Eric?"

Tom Merry & Co. took their leave. They walked back into the quadrangle, looking very thoughtful. In the quad they halted, and exchanged glances.

"We must do our best to please Cousin Ethel," Figgy remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It won't be easy," Blake said slowly. "I never saw a fellow I felt more inclined to hammer at first sight."

"He seems to make that impression upon everybody," said Figgy ruefully.

"I was surprised that Cousin Ethel had a friend like that. But, you see, he isn't really her friend; he's her friend's brother. I don't suppose she likes him any more than we do, but she's promised to put in a word for him."

"After all, he'll soon get licked into shape," said Tom Merry. "It's only a question of being patient for a bit. We'd do more than that for Cousin Ethel."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Better tell the other fellows," said Blake.

"Right-ho!"

And the "Co." were duly informed of Cousin Ethel's request, and all the



fellows agreed that they would be very patient with the new junior, and give him a chance. But they did not know yet what demands would be made upon their patience.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tom Merry Does His Best.

ERIC LORNE came into the junior Common-room in the School House.

There were a good many fellows there. Most of the juniors had done their preparation, and were chatting before going to bed. Tom Merry and Manners were playing chess, and they finished a game as Lorne came in.

Lorne was looking surly and dissatisfied. After the way he had repulsed D'Arcy's advances, he was not likely to be treated with much friendliness, and his looks showed that he was feeling lonely and depressed.

"You're the new chap," began Tom Merry affably.

"I'm new here," said Lorne.

"Like the place?"

"No."

"Oh," said Tom Merry, a little disconcerted.

"I think it's rotten," said Lorne.

"We don't think it rotten," said Tom Merry rather warmly.

Lorne shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps you're more easily satisfied than I am," he remarked.

"You'll like it better when you've been here a bit," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps I could do something to make you a bit more comfy. I'm Merry of the Shell."

"Are you?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, determined not to take offence. "Have you got a good study?"

Lorne sniffed.

"No. I've been put into a poky hole with two other fellows in it—and I don't like either of them," he said.

"There are some chaps here who aren't pleasant," agreed Tom Merry. "Who have you been put in with?"

"I believe their names are Reilly and Kerruish."

Tom Merry frowned.

"They're both very decent chaps," he said. "Reilly is a kid from Belfast, and as good as gold; and Kerruish is from the Isle of Man, and we all like him."

"They may suit your taste."

"They do!" said Tom Merry.

"They don't suit mine."

Tom Merry was silent for some moments, nobly struggling with a desire to wipe up the floor of the Common-room with Eric Lorne. He conquered his inward longings, and went on, with unshaken politeness:

"You might be able to change into another study."

"I've asked, and it seems that I can't have a study to myself," said Lorne.

"There's only one empty study, and that's a room in an out-of-the-way corner, with stone walls, and I don't like it. It seems that it's only empty because nobody wants it, so it won't do for me."

"Oh, that's the room called Nobody's Study," said Tom Merry, smiling. "You won't want that; nobody likes it. It's supposed to be a haunted room."

"What rot!"

"Ye-es; it's rot," agreed Tom Merry sweetly. "But if you don't get on with Reilly and Kerruish, you're not bound to use the study, you know. You can keep your books in a locker in the Form-room, and do your prep in any other study—in the room of any fellow you happen to chum up with, you know."

"There's nobody here I feel inclined to chum up with."

"Oh!"

Lorne's manner was not encouraging. Tom Merry turned over in his mind what to say next.

It was only too evident from Lorne's manner that he had been hopelessly spoiled at home; and although he was feeling lonely in the new school, he was determined to repulse any offer of friendship, from sheer ill-humour and superciliousness.

"Do you play chess?" asked Tom Merry.

"No. Rotten game!"

Tom Merry might have asked him how he knew it was a rotten game, if he never played it; but he did not.

"You play cricket?" he remarked.

"No!"

"Don't care for the game?"

"I hate it!"

"What's your favourite game?"

in the same room with a lot of rotters, you know."

"I shouldn't recommend you to call the fellows rotters," said Tom gravely.

"They are liable to cut up rusty."

"I don't care if they do."

"I mean you might get ragged."

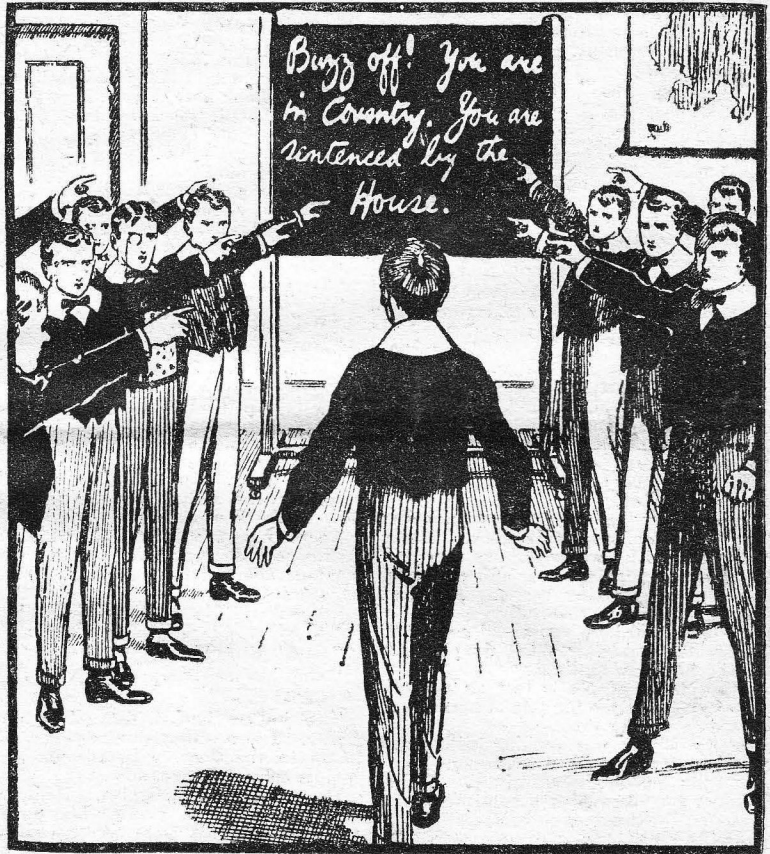
"I should complain to the Head."

"That would be sneaking."

"I've been told that before by a cheeky young rotter—that ass over there with the eyeglass," said Lorne, with a nod towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I told him that when I wanted his advice I'd ask him for it. I'll do the same to you."

Tom Merry flushed.

"Very well, you won't get any more advice from me," he said. "I was only giving you a tip, as you're new to the place."



Lorne gritted his teeth as he read the notice on the board. Hostile faces were on all sides of him, and not from a single direction did he receive a friendly look.

"I don't care for games."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry.

"I shall be bored to death here," said Lorne.

"What on earth did you come to St. Jim's for?" Tom Merry could not help asking.

"I didn't want to come. My father's just come home from India, and he sent me. My mother wouldn't have sent me. I don't get on with my pater."

Tom Merry was not surprised to hear it.

"I hear that you fellows sleep in a row of beds in a big room," said Lorne.

"Yes; every Form has a separate dormitory."

"I don't like the idea. I want a bedroom to myself. I don't want to sleep

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry contained his temper with an effort, and turned away. He rejoined Manners and Lowther, his face flushed and his eyes very bright.

"Got on with him?" asked Lowther, with a grin.

"No. I'm glad he isn't in the Shell," said Tom Merry. "He wants a licking more than any other chap I've ever seen. He's just an unlicked cub—a cub from the toes up."

"Suppose we give him a bumping to begin with," Lowther suggested.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I've told you what Cousin Ethel asked us," he said.

"Yes; but that's the best way of helping him on," said Monty Lowther

argumentatively. "A jolly good hiding to begin with would take some of the rot out of him, and then he'd have a fair start."

Tom Merry laughed. "That wasn't what Cousin Ethel meant," he said. "Patience, my son. I suppose he will get licked before long; but he needn't have it from us. Hallo, here's old Kildare!"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, put his head into the juniors' room.

"Bed-time, you kids," he said, in his pleasant voice.

"Right-ho, Kildare, my infant," said Monty Lowther.

And the juniors made a general move.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Fishy!

REILLY of the Fourth tapped D'Arcy on the shoulder in the Form-room passage after lessons the next afternoon.

Arthur Augustus gave him an inquiring look.

"I want you!" said Reilly mysteriously.

"Yaas, deah boy. What do you want?"

"I've got fresh herrings for tay," said Reilly. "They've been sent up specially. Will you come to tay, and bring the other chaps? Fatty Wynn is coming over to cook the herrings."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy!"

"It will be ripping!" said Reilly.

"First chop. Nothin' like good herrings well cooked, you know; and you know how Fatty Wynn cooks herrings."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And at tea-time the chums of Study No. 6 presented themselves next door, in Reilly's study, and found preparations for tea well advanced.

Fatty Wynn of the New House was there, in his shirt-sleeves, with a beautiful ruddy complexion, cooking herrings galore.

The smell in the study was very appetising, and decidedly thick. Reilly and Kerruish were dishing up the herrings, making the tea, and rendering themselves generally useful. The four juniors walked in cheerfully.

"Faith, and here you are!" exclaimed Reilly hospitably. "What do ye think of the herrings, darlings?"

The chums of No. 6 cast an appreciative glance at the big pile of herrings in the dish on the table.

Fatty Wynn was cooking still more, and the supply seemed unending.

"Jolly good!" exclaimed Blake. "Have you discovered a gold mine, and invested the proceeds in herrings?"

Reilly chuckled.

"Sure, it was a tip from my uncle in Belfast!" he said. "Sit down, and make yer-selves at home, kids!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sure, I'm sorry that I haven't got silver forks for ye, Gussy—"

"Pway don't mention it, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with perfect seriousness. "I'm sure it is all wight!"

And the juniors sat down to tea.

They had just started when the study door opened, and Lorne came in.

Lorne sniffed at the smell of herrings smote him, and stood scowling at the cheerful tea-party.

"Top of the afternoon to ye!" said Reilly sweetly. "Are ye hungry? Find a chair!"

Lorne sniffed again.

"Prime, isn't it?" said Kerruish, pretending to misunderstand. "Are you fond of herrings, Lorne?"

"I want to do my preparation," said Lorne.

"Ather tea, alanna!"

"I don't want to wait."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 244.

"Sure, we haven't asked ye to be a waiter, have we?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here! I don't like all this muck-ing in my study!" said Lorne savagely. "I don't see why you can't have tea in Hall."

Reilly's eyes began to gleam.

"You can do your prep after tea," he said. "And you can either have tea, or get out of the study. Take yere choice!"

"I want that table cleared!"

"Go hon!"

"And if you don't move that muck I'll jolly soon pitch it into the grate!" said Lorne.

"Eh?"

"Do you hear me?"

The juniors gazed at Lorne in astonishment. It seemed incredible to them that the weedy, supercilious fellow should really imagine that he could treat St. Jim's fellows in this high-handed way.

"Oh, he's off his rocker!" said Kerruish. "Pile in!"

"Faith, and he's dotty intirely!" said Reilly. "Look here, Lorne, if you can't behave yourself, we won't have you in the study at all! You hear me?"

"I want that table!"

"Oh, get out!"

Lorne strode towards the table, and caught hold of the edge of it, and raised it about an inch from the floor. The crockery began to slide.

Reilly jumped up in a fury.

"Leggo!" he roared.

"Sha n't!"

"Will you get out?"

"No!"

"Lave go that table!" shrieked Reilly.

"Will you clear it, then, and turn out these fellows who don't belong to the study?" demanded Lorne.

"Bedad, and I won't!"

"Then here goes!"

Lorne jerked up the table, and the crockery, the dishes, the herrings, all shot to the floor together.

There was a wild yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as half a dozen greasy herrings alighted upon the knees of his beautiful trousers.

"Yawooh! My twousahs! Oh!"

"Yah!"

"Great Scott!"

"Stop the cad!"

"Collar him!"

The juniors hurled themselves upon Lorne. The new boy went down with a bump to the floor, with two or three juniors sprawling over him.

He roared and struggled. Reilly sat astride of his chest, pinning him down.

Everybody had hold of him somewhere. Blake & Co. had completely forgotten their benevolent intentions towards him. They were as infuriated as the owers of No. 5.

"Bump him!"

"Squash him!"

"Hold on!" gasped Reilly. "He's spoiled the feed. The herrings are all on the flure! He shall have them now, whether he likes them or not! Hand them over!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reilly, regardless of the grease, took handfuls of herrings in both hands and jammed them over Lorne's face. The other fellows lent their aid.

Lorne wriggled, and gasped, and yelled, and struggled. But it was in vain. Herrings were squashed upon his features, and jammed down his neck between his shirt and his skin.

He was fishy from head to foot in a few minutes, and smothered with grease. He was so fishy that they did not care to touch him.

The juniors released him, and left him

rolling in herrings and grease. Lorne sat up.

"Oh, you villians!" he groaned. "Ow! Groo! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you like fish?"

"Have some more herrings?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lorne scrambled up.

"I'll go straight to the Head like this!" he yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head will know what you've had for tea if you do!"

"Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll go out of this study, anyway!" said Reilly, throwing open the door.

"Get out before I kick ye out, ye—ye polecat!"

Lorne staggered through the doorway. Two or three feet lunged out to help him, and he rolled into the passage, leaving greasy marks upon the linoleum wherever he touched it.

Reilly slammed the door upon him.

"Sure, and I'm sorry the tea's mucked up, darlings!" he said ruefully. "Sure, it wasn't our fault!"

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

"Some of the herrings are all right still," said Fatty Wynn. "I think I'll go on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, it's rotten!" said Reilly. "I won't have that cad in this study. If the spalpeen shows his nose here again I'll knock it off! You fellows can have him in No. 6, as you seem to be fond of him!"

"No fear!" said Blake promptly. "We've done our best, and I'm done with him, for one!"

"And I, for another!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! I am afraid that it is quite impos to stand by that uttah wottah any more!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, shaking his head.

"Look at my twousahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't wegard it as a laughin' mattah. My twousahs are uttably wuined. If you will excuse me, I will go and change them."

And Arthur Augustus left the study, carrying a scent of herrings with him.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

##### Tom Merry Interferes.

DURING the next two or three days Eric Lorne was left very much to himself.

Study No. 6, as Blake declared, had done with him.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy passed him without speaking when they came across him. They had done their best to please Cousin Ethel; but, as D'Arcy said, it was impossible to have anything to do with such an utter outsider.

The other fellows in the Fourth Form followed their example.

Reilly and Kerruish declined to have him in their study, and Lorne had to do his preparation in the Form-room by himself.

But probably he preferred that, as he was too sullen and moody to want to share a study with anybody else in the Form.

He had dropped into a sulky, sullen manner that never left him.

On Monday afternoon Tom Merry met him coming out of the Sixth Form passage, clasping his hands painfully together, and with thunder in his brow. It was evident that he was coming away from a prefect's study, licked.

Tom Merry stopped to speak to him.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

Lorne glared at him.

"It's Kildare!" he muttered thickly. "I'll pay him out!"



"What has he done?" asked Tom Merry, trying to look sympathetic, though he felt pretty certain that whatever the captain of St. Jim's had done, Lorne fully deserved it.

"He has caned me."

"What for?"

"Because I hadn't done some lines he gave me."

"Is that all? They are generally doubled if they're not done," said Tom Merry.

"I told him I wouldn't do them."

Tom Merry whistled.

"Oh, I see! You couldn't expect a prefect to take that, you know."

Lorne smiled.

"He'll take something else pretty soon!" he said savagely.

"I—I say, what are you thinking of?" asked Tom Merry, alarmed by the expression upon Lorne's face. "You can't go for Kildare, you know."

"Can't I? You'll see!"

"What are you going to do?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Find out!"

And Lorne strode away.

Tom Merry remained looking very perplexed and troubled. It looked to him as if Lorne had some desperate thought in his mind.

Tom Merry followed the new junior into the quadrangle and saw him stooping under the elms. He guessed what that meant, and he ran towards him. Lorne straightened up.

"What have you got in your hand?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Mind your own business!"

"Is it a stone?"

"I sha'n't answer you!"

"Look here, Lorne," said Tom Merry earnestly, "you can't do it, you know. If you were to chuck a stone at Kildare, you'd be flogged, and perhaps expelled."

"All the better. I'd be glad to go!"

"What about your people?" said Tom Merry.

"Hang my people!"

"Oh!"

"They sent me here!" snarled Lorne. "I didn't want to come. I'd be glad to be sent away. My pater couldn't send me again, anyway."

"You might be sent to a worse place."

"I don't believe there is any worse place! I hate this school! Let me alone. What does it matter to you what I do?" exclaimed Lorne passionately.

"You're not going to throw that stone," said Tom Merry.

"I shall please myself!"

"I tell you—"

Lorne swung away suddenly from Tom Merry. Kildare and Darrel had just come out of the School House, and were sauntering unsuspectingly across the quadrangle. Lorne's hand tightened upon the stone.

Tom Merry sprang towards him, and grasped his wrist.

"You mad fool!" he exclaimed.

"Drop it!"

"Let me go!"

"Drop it!"

"I won't!" shrieked Lorne, struggling. Tom Merry's lips set.

"Then I'll make you!" he said grimly.

He squeezed the new junior's wrist. Lorne uttered a cry of pain, and a heavy, jagged stone dropped from his fingers into the grass. Tom Merry kicked it away.

Then he released the young rascal.

"You'll be glad I stopped you, when you're calmer," he said.

Lorne faced him, trembling with rage.

"You cad!" he hissed. "You dare to interfere with me—to lay hands on me!" He struck out as he was speaking, and Tom Merry reeled back from the blow.

There was a shout from half a dozen

fellows who saw the blow struck. They came running up to the spot from several directions.

Tom Merry took a quick stride towards Lorne, his fists clenched and his eyes flashing. But he did not strike.

"Smash him, Tommy!" shouted Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry remained still.

Lorne gave him a savage look, and turned upon his heel with a sneering smile, and strode away. Tom Merry let him go.

"What are you doing?" yelled Manners. "Are you letting that chap punch you without hammering him?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Funk!" said Crooke of the Shell, with his unpleasant snigger.

Tom Merry turned upon Crooke. The cad of the Shell had spoken at an unfortunate moment for himself. Tom Merry was boiling inwardly, and he wanted to punch somebody. He strode up to Crooke with his fists clenched.

"I've promised not to lick that cad," he said, "but I haven't promised not to lick you, Crooke. Put up your hands."

"I—I—"

"Put them up, I tell you!"

Crooke had to obey, and the next moment he was rolling in the grass. He stayed there. Tom Merry thrust his hands deep into his pockets and stalked away.

"You're a silly ass, Tommy!" growled Lowther.

"I know I am. Shut up!" said Tom Merry.

And the subject dropped.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Chalky!

**E**RIC LORNE looked a little more cheerful—or, rather, a little less sullen—that afternoon. His triumph over Tom Merry, as he regarded it, had had a solacing effect upon him.

He did not realise just then that he had alienated the last fellow in the School House who was willing to be on friendly terms with him.

Tom Merry followed the way of all the others now. After what had happened in the quad, he refrained from licking Lorne as he deserved, but he could not have anything more to do with him.

Lorne had tea in Hall as usual. About half the fellows were there, and not one of them spoke to Lorne. But he did not notice that particularly, for he seldom spoke to them, and he had been growing more taciturn than ever during the past few days.

After tea he went up to Study No. 5 in the Fourth Form passage. He was tired of doing his preparation in the Form-room in the evening.

Lorne had thought the matter out, and decided to forgive Reilly and Kerruish, and condescend to share their study with them. He was about to make the painful discovery that it takes two sides to agree to a bargain.

Reilly and Kerruish were busy with their preparation when the new junior came into the study, with his books under his arm. They looked at him without speaking, in a peculiar, fixed sort of way.

"I want some room on that table," said Lorne.

No reply.

"I'm going to do my prep here."

No reply.

"Will you make room?"

Reilly and Kerruish exchanged significant glances, but did not speak. Lorne grew impatient. He began to push Reilly's books to one side, and laid his own upon the table. Then the boy from Belfast jumped up.

He did not speak; but he grasped the

new boy by the shoulder, swung him round, propelled him towards the door, and pushed him into the passage. Lorne staggered across to the opposite wall, and Reilly returned to the study table. The astonished Lorne looked in the next moment, his face crimson with rage.

"What do you mean?" he roared.

No answer.

"This is my study as well as yours!"

Silence.

"Why don't you speak?" shrieked Lorne. "Are you mad? What game are you playing now?"

Reilly looked very thoughtfully at the new junior. Finally he rose, took a chalk from his pocket, and chalked on the door:

"Go away!"

Lorne stared at the inscription.

It amazed him. He cast a glance almost of dread at the Irish junior, fearing seriously for the moment that Reilly had taken leave of his senses. Why a fellow who was endowed with the gift of speech should chalk upon a door instead of speaking was undoubtedly a great mystery.

"Wh-what does this mean?" stuttered Lorne. "Are you dotty?"

Reilly pointed in silence to the inscription on the door.

"Why don't you speak?"

Reilly shook his head.

"Has anything happened to your tongue, idiot? Why don't you speak?" shouted Lorne, turning to Kerruish.

Reilly had recourse to the chalk again. He chalked across the door:

"BUZZ OFF! YOU ARE SENTENCED BY THE HOUSE!"

"Blow the House!" said Lorne savagely.

Reilly and Kerruish pointed to the door solemnly.

"I won't go!" shrieked Lorne. "And if I'm shoved out of this study, I'll go straight to the Head and complain that I'm not allowed to work in my own study!"

Reilly almost broke silence at that; but he restrained himself and chalked:

"Sneak!"

"Sneak or not, I'm going to have my own study to work in."

Reilly looked at Kerruish, and Kerruish looked at Reilly. If Lorne laid the matter before the Head, there was no doubt that they would be ordered to admit the new boy to the study, and to allow him to work there. They could not get rid of him if he chose to invoke the authority of the headmaster. But there was another resource.

Reilly chalked once more:

"YOU CAN STAY HERE BY YOURSELF, THEN."

Lorne laughed angrily.

"I'd like that better," he said.

Reilly nodded.

The two juniors to whom Study No. 5 belonged gathered up their books and papers, and solemnly quitted the study. Kerruish went into Bishop's study, and Reilly into Study No. 6. Lorne was left in sole possession of No. 5.

He was satisfied with his victory. He had the whole study to himself, with a comfortable armchair, chairs, and a table, and a cheerful fire in the grate. He sat down in the armchair, and toasted his feet at the fire. But he was not left long in peace.

Kerruish and Reilly, having deposited their books, came back for their other properties. At St. Jim's the fellows furnished their studies at their own expense, only the chair, table, and a square of carpet being found by the school. Lorne stared at the two juniors as they entered. He did not know

anything about the ownership of the furniture, and he was far from guessing what they had returned for.

"So you've come back!" he sneered. Reilly caught hold of the back of the armchair and signed to him to rise. Lorne sat still. Reilly waved his hand. Lorne did not move.

"You're not going to take this chair, if that's what you mean!" said Lorne defiantly. Out came the chalk again.

"That chair is my property," Reilly chalked on the looking-glass.

Reilly did not waste any more chalk on the subject. He tilted up the back of the chair, and Lorne shot out upon the hearthrug. Reilly and Kerrish carried the armchair between them out of the study, and it shrieked along the passage linoleum on two castors and a half. Lorne picked himself up in a fury, breathing vengeance.

"Look here," he roared, as after about three minutes the two juniors came in again with solemn faces, "what are you taking those things away for?"

Silence.

"They don't belong to you!"

Still frozen silence.

Lorne had a great mind to charge at the juniors and hit out, but the thought was hopeless. He could not have tackled one of them successfully, let alone two.

He had to watch them with glowering eyes, unresisting, while they despoiled the study of everything it contained, excepting the study table, one rickety chair, and a square of extremely worn carpet.

Then Lorne was left to enjoy his victory. He did not enjoy it.

### THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

#### By Sentence of the House.

**M**OST of the School House juniors were in the Common-room, just before bed-time, when Eric Lorne came in. Some of them looked at him, some of them studiously looked another way. Some smiled, and some frowned. But no one spoke.

Lorne came sullenly into the room, and walked towards the fireplace. Two or three fellows, who were leaning on the big, old-fashioned mantelpiece, deliberately detached themselves from it and moved away.

Lorne bit his lips. He had, until this day, assumed in his manner that he had St. Jim's at his feet; that he could speak as rudely and unpleasantly as he liked, and never want for an answer; that there were plenty of fellows to be friendly if he chose to extend friendship to them. He was finding out his mistake now.

Cousin Ethel's request had caused Tom Merry & Co. to be very patient with him, but they had reached, and passed, the limit of their patience now. And the other fellows disliked him so much that most of them were inclined to take more active measures than sending him to Coventry.

Lorne glanced at Tom Merry, and tried to catch his eye. The captain of the Shell turned away his head.

The new junior strode towards him angrily.

"Look here, Merry," he exclaimed, "what does this mean?"

Tom Merry's lips moved, when Lowther jerked him by the arm.

"Shut up!" he murmured.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Will you answer me?" shouted Lorne.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"What is this silly game?"

Reilly of the Fourth chuckled, and drew a stump of chalk from his waist.

coat pocket. He chalked on the black-board:

**"BUZZ OFF! YOU ARE IN COVENTRY. YOU ARE SENTENCED BY THE HOUSE."**

There was a yell of laughter from the juniors.

Lorne gritted his teeth. Hostile faces were on all sides of him; not from a single direction did he receive a friendly look.

"That means that you won't speak to me?" he demanded.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Well, I don't want you to. You've been trying to be friendly, and I wouldn't be," said Lorne. "I suppose this is because I wouldn't have anything to do with you."

There was a laugh. Reilly chalked again:

**"RATS!"**

Lorne turned towards him, clenching his fists. But he restrained himself, and strode out of the Common-room, stamping as he went with ill-temper.

A yell of mocking laughter followed him into the passage.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"It's the only way," he said. "I'm sorry for him. The poor beast has been rottenly brought up, and spoiled, till he doesn't know what to do with himself. But he can't expect us to stand his airs and graces."

"Wathah not."

"I think we've done our best for Cousin Ethel's sake," said Tom Merry. "Everything we could do," said Blake. "That chap's the limit. We simply can't stand him, and it's no good trying to."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors did not see Lorne again till bed-time. When the School House portion of the Fourth Form went up to bed, they found the new junior already in the dormitory.

He bestowed a glare upon the juniors as they trooped in, and sat down on his bed to take his boots off.

The juniors talked and chatted after lights out, and called good-night to one another. Nobody spoke to Lorne, and nobody said good-night to him.

The new boy lay in troubled wakefulness long after the other fellows had fallen asleep.

It began to dawn upon his obstinate mind that he had made a fool of himself. So long as fellows were trying to keep on good terms with him, he had held his nose high in the air, and compelled them to eat humble-pie, or to leave him alone.

It had never occurred to him that the time must speedily come when their patience would be exhausted, and they would decide to leave him severely alone.

The time had come, and the prospect before him was dreary.

But Lorne's passionate and obstinate spirit was far from conquered yet.

He did not mean to admit himself in the wrong, or to ask pardon for wrongdoing. Besides, it was easier to achieve unpopularity than to undo it afterwards. He had made a bad beginning, and it was doubtful whether he would be able to set himself right with the fellows again.

He fell asleep at last, and slept uneasily till rising-bell.

When the Fourth Form turned out in the morning, the sentence of the House was rigidly enforced. No one spoke to Lorne; few even glanced at him. He might not have existed at all, for all the difference his existence made to the School House fellows.

Lorne went down to breakfast with a sullen brow.

At the breakfast-table it was the same, and as there appeared to be plenty of

room at the table, the seats on either side of Lorne were left empty.

At morning lessons, when the New House joined the School House in the Form-rooms, Lorne was left sitting alone at the end of the Form, fellows crowding up to give him plenty of room.

The New House juniors were evidently backing up the School House fellows in the matter. Lorne had made himself more obnoxious in his own House, of course; but the New House juniors had seen enough of him to dislike him.

He was an outsider—barred by the whole school!

### THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

#### Figgins Makes the Plunge.

**H**OW long are you going to be reading that letter, Figgy?"

Figgy started, and looked up, and coloured.

As Figgins had just had a letter, and had read it six or seven times, and seemed inclined to go on reading and re-reading it for ever and ever, Kerr felt that it was time to speak.

"I should think you knew it by heart by this time, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn. "It's from Cousin Ethel," Figgins explained.

Kerr grinned.

"I could guess that," he replied. "Is she coming to St. Jim's?"

"No."

"Any news?"

"No."

"Then six readings are enough," said Kerr. "Come down to cricket."

"Ahem!"

"Oh, come on!" said Fatty Wynn. "We've got to do some practice before tea, you know, and I'm getting-hungry already."

"Lorne has written to Ethel," said Figgins.

"Has he? The cad!"

"She's disappointed."

"Yes; I suppose so. I suppose he's given her a long list of complaints, and tried to make trouble between her and us," said Kerr savagely.

Figgins nodded.

"She doesn't say so, but I fancy it's something like that," he said ruefully.

"She doesn't ask us to take the cad up again, and coddle him, I suppose?" growled Kerr.

"Oh, no! She says she's sure that we did our best, and she's much obliged to us for having done it, and she's sorry it wasn't any good."

Kerr's face cleared.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said. "That's just like Cousin Ethel. She wouldn't let that cad put her back up against us. She takes it very decently?"

"Very decently," said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes, only it makes me feel that—that we might have done a little more," said Figgins hesitatingly. "The fellow must have some good in him—"

"Better get a microscope and look for it, then."

"And we ought to find it out, if we can, and—give him a chance."

"We've done that. You can write back to Cousin Ethel that he's an unspeakable toad, and nobody can stand him. Come down to the cricket."

Figgins thrust the letter into his pocket, and sighed, and followed his chums down to the junior cricket ground.

After the practice, while Fatty Wynn and Kerr went into the tuckshop to get the supplies for tea, Figgins strolled away by himself. He made his way into the School House, and looked into Study No. 5.

He found a junior sitting there moodily alone.



Figgins tapped at the door and entered, and Lorne did not look up.

"I—I say—" began Figgins. Lorne raised his eyes then, and stared at him uncompromisingly.

"Feeling a bit down?" asked Figgins. "No!" growled Lorne. Figgins coughed.

"Look here, you are getting on pretty badly in this House," he said. "Why don't you ask the Head to change you over?"

Lorne was silent. "You could come into my study," said Figgins.

"What for? What do you want me for?"

"I don't want you," said Figgins frankly; "but—but I don't like to see you like this. You'll never get out of Coventry if you don't make a change, and you must have found it pretty rotten by this time."

Lorne's lip quivered. "I've been miserable ever since I came here," he said. "Nobody likes me here. I don't know that I've done anything so very much amiss."

Figgins suppressed a smile. If Lorne did not realise that he had done anything very much amiss, Figgys felt that he must be very obtuse indeed.

"Well, come into the New House, and make a fresh start," he said. "Everybody in this House knows that you're in trouble, and the Head will be willing to change you over. Ask him."

"But—but why do you want to do this for me for?"

"To help you on a bit."

"Why do you want to help me?" "Because—because—well, I think perhaps you're not wholly a rotter—ahem!—I mean, I can't help thinking there's some good in you, and I want you to have a chance."

Lorne's eyes gleamed for a moment. He was upon the point of bursting out in his old fashion; but adversity had tamed him by this time. The sentence of Coventry in the School House was enforced as rigidly as ever, and it was weighing terribly upon the new junior's spirits.

He had learned his lesson to some extent, and he would have done a great deal to escape from the position he had placed himself in.

For once he held his unruly temper and awkward pride in check, and did not throw away the last chance that was offered him.

"I dare say I've been a bit uppish," he said. "Things were very different here from what they were at home. I've always had my own way, and I used to order my tutor about just as I pleased."

"Well, that wasn't any good for you," said Figgins. "It's not right for a boy to be able to order a man about, and the poor beast must have felt pretty rotten over it."

"I change my tutor pretty often," said Lorne.

"I have no doubt you did." "Look here, if you fellows will treat me decently, I'll come into the New House," said Lorne. And his tone implied that he felt that he was doing Figgins a great favour.

The old Adam was not dead in Eric Lorne yet.

Figgins swallowed something down, and nodded.

"Right-ho!" he said. "The Head's in his study now, and you can go and ask him. Tell him that I've asked you to come into my study, if you can change Houses."

"All right!" And Lorne, looking more cheerful, made his way to the Head's study. Figgins remained in Lorne's room,

drumming upon the table with his fingers. The door was opened, and the chums of No. 6 passed it as they came up to tea.

"Bai Jove!" said Augustus D'Arcy. "What are you doin' here, Figgy, old man?"

Figgins flushed. "I'm waiting for Lorne," he said. "Not speaking to him, are you?" demanded Jack Blake warmly.

"Well, yes." "Look here—Hallo, here he is!" Lorne came into the study. He had not been long with the Head.

"It's all right!" he announced. "You're coming over?" asked Figgins.

"Yes." "Good!"

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Herries.

"Lorne is changing into the New House," Figgins explained.

"Right as rain!" said Kerr. The two juniors paused. "They had just caught sight of Lorne in the study."

They fixed upon him glances that were far from agreeable. Lorne had sat down in the armchair, and put his feet on the fender.

"What's that fellow doing here?" asked Kerr.

Figgins coughed uncomfortably. "He's changed into the New House," he explained.

"Oh, has he?" said Kerr. "I suppose they haven't had the frightful check to stick him into this study, have they?"

"I—I asked for him to be put here."

Kerr and Wynn gave a simultaneous jump, as if they had touched the same electric wire at the same moment.

"You—you asked!" gasped Kerr. "You asked for him?" yelled Fatty Wynn.



Lorne jerked up the table, and the crockery, the dishes, and the herrings all shot to the floor together. There was a wild yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as half a dozen greasy herrings alighted upon the knees of his trousers. "Yawooh! My twouseahs! Oh!"

"Hurrah!" "By Jove! You're welcome to the wotah, Figgy!"

"You'll soon get fed-up with him!" said Digby.

"What do Kerr and Wynn say?" Blake asked.

"I—I haven't spoken to them yet," said Figgins. "It will be all right. Come on, Lorne! I'll help you carry your things."

And, to the amazement of Jack Blake & Co., he marched Lorne towards the New House.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. A Fresh Start!

"HERE you are!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, as he marched into the study, and deposited a goodly parcel on the table. "Got the eggs all right, Kerr?"

"Yes." "Doesn't that seem to you a bit like cheek, Figgy?" asked Kerr grimly.

"This is our study, as well as yours, you know."

Figgins turned red. "I wish you wouldn't put it like that, Kerr. I thought my own chums would stand by me when I'm trying to do the decent thing," said Figgins.

"Decent thing be blowed! We don't want that rank outsider here!"

"And we won't have him!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"He's fixed in the House now," urged Figgins. "He'll have to be in some study. It wouldn't be fair to plant him on other fellows when I brought him over."

"Then you can have him all to yourself!" howled Kerr. "I won't share a

study with that rotter! I'll ask Pratt to let me dig with him."

"Same here," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll pig in with Dibbs!"

"Look here," said Figgins, his temper beginning to rise, "who's chief of this Co.? Who's head of this study—eh?"

"You can be head of the study, and have it all to yourself!" said Kerr, with deadly earnestness. "You've no right to spring a thing like this on us, and you know it! As for the Co., the Co.'s busted! I'm off! Come on, Fatty!"

And Kerr and Wynn stalked out of the study. Figgins remained very red and angry. "I—I say!" Lorne rose to his feet. "This is pretty rotten for you, Figgins! I didn't know I was going to make all this trouble."

"It's all right," said Figgins heavily. "I'll get out, if you like."

"You can't. You can't ask the Head to change you back to the School House same day you've asked him to change you over here," said Figgins. "He would think you were pulling his leg."

"I could get into some other study, though,"

Figgins shook his head. "They wouldn't have you," he said.

"But if your pals don't come back?" said Lorne.

"I dare say they'll come round in time. If they don't, they needn't!" said Figgins bravely. "I believe I'm doing what's right, though I'm not surprised at their getting their backs up. Let's have tea! Can you make toast?"

"I've never tried," said Lorne. "Couldn't you tip one of the servants to make the toast?"

"Well, I could, if I were a purse-proud, uppish swanker," said Figgins.

"But I'm not, so I'll make it myself."

"Well, you've got a lot to learn yet, then!"

Figgins cut the bread and stirred the fire. Lorne watched him with a moody brow as he impaled the bread upon a toasting-fork.

"Give it to me," said Lorne.

"Oh, I'll do it!"

"Rot! Give it to me!" said Lorne, taking the toasting-fork from Figgins.

"I—I didn't mean to be swanking, Figgins, I didn't, really. I suppose it's just my way."

Figgins nodded.

"The mater always let me do as I liked," said Lorne uneasily. "Pater has only just come back from India. Perhaps it would have been better for me if—"

he'd been at home. I wonder!"

"I don't!" said Figgins. "But wasn't there an uncle, or an elderly cousin, or somebody, to give you a licking when you wanted one?"

Lorne coloured.

"Oh, you can pile it on!" said Lorne.

"I'm beginning to see that I've played the giddy goat; but I never meant to be such an ass! It was a big change coming here, after the way I used to live at home. It's taken some time to get used to it. The worst of it is, that my pater won't take me away. He actually wrote to me that all the hard knocks I got here will do me good, and that if the fellows have sent me to Coventry, he hasn't the slightest doubt that I deserved it."

Figgins grinned.

"Your pater seems to know a thing or two!" he remarked.

"Ye-es," said Lorne, very slowly, "I suppose he does."

And he was silent.

He made the toast very carefully, and tended the fire, and washed up teacups. He seemed bent upon making himself useful.

They sat down to tea. Figgins missed Kerr and Wynn very much, and he could not quite get the cloud from his face, although he wanted to be genial to Lorne.

They ate almost in silence, each of them busy with his thoughts. They had nearly finished tea, when Redfern of the Fourth looked into the study.

He bestowed a sniff upon Lorne, but no other sign of recognition.

"I hear from Kerr and Wynn that they're changing out of this study," he said. "Have you really taken up with that chap, Figgins?"

"Yes, I have!" said Figgins shortly.

"Sticking to him?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you haven't forgotten that he's in Coventry?" demanded Redfern wrathfully.

"No, I haven't forgotten."

"The fellows are very ratty about it. If you stick to him, you'll get sent to Coventry, too," said Redfern gravely.

"Let 'em send me, then!"

"I think you're off your rocker, Figgy!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Redfern retired, and slammed the door after him. Lorne slowly finished his tea, and then rose to his feet. He collected up his books.

"What are you going to do?" asked Figgins, looking at him.

"I'm going to get out!" said Lorne quietly.

"Where?"

"Oh, anywhere! Do you think I'm such a cad as to let you be sent to Coventry for me, and to part you from your own chums?" asked Lorne.

Figgins started to his feet.

"Look here, Lorne, I'm standing by you!" he said. "You haven't a friend in the school, and you'd better stick to me."

"It's my own fault, and I shall have to stand it," said Lorne. "I suppose I can't go back into the School House. But I have my locker in the Form-room; and I can do my prep there, and I sha'n't come into this study, Figgins. I mean it."

"But— I say!" stammered Figgins.

"It's settled. Good-bye!"

And Lorne left the study.

.

The gas was burning in the Fourth Form-room. A junior sat solitary at a desk, bending over his work.

The door of the Form-room opened quietly.

Lorne did not hear it, and he did not look up. Quite a little crowd of juniors came in. There were Tom Merry and Manners, and Lowther and Kangaroo of the Shell, and Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy and Figgins and Kerr and Wynn and Reilly and Kerruish of

the Fourth. Lorne started out of his moody reverie as they came up to the desk where he was sitting, and glanced at them in surprise.

"It's all right, Lorne," said Figgins cheerily.

"What do you mean, Figgins?"

"The sentence of the House is reversed," said Tom Merry. "We hear from Figgy that—that—"

"That you're not such a rotter as you've made yourself out to be," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And we're chucking up the sentence of Coventry, to give you a trial," said Lowther.

"Faith, and we'll give you the run of the study, and see how you turn out," said Reilly.

"I regard that as a good ideah, deah boys. I consider—"

"You see!" said Kerr.

"You are intewuptin' me, Kerr, deah boy."

"Yes, I know that, Gussy. You see, Lorne!"

"Weally, Kerr!"

"You see, if you mean to be decent, we don't want to be rough on you," said Kerr. "I believe in giving everybody a chance. You're a dog with a bad name at present; but if you like to toe the line—"

"And be decent!"

"It will be all right for you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Eric Lorne rose to his feet. He did not speak for a moment, and his voice was a little husky when he did speak at last.

"This is jolly decent of you fellows," he said. "I don't mind admitting that I've felt simply rotten the past week. And—and I know that it was all my own fault. I've played the giddy goat. I didn't know the ropes, that was what it was. And—and I don't think you'll ever find me playing the ass again in such a way."

"Bwavo, deah boy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, a chap can't do more than own up!" said Blake. "Blessed if I ever expected to hear you talk such sense; Lorne—excuse me."

Lorne smiled faintly.

"I shouldn't have expected it myself," he said; "but I've learned a few things since I've been here. That's all."

"Sure, and ye're a broth of a bhoey, intirely," said Reilly. "Come on, you belong to our study, and you're coming back. March!"

And in the midst of a crowd of cheery juniors, Lorne was marched out of the gloomy Form-room and back to the study in the Fourth Form passage. His face was very bright. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn walked home to the New House, all of them looking pleased, and especially Figgins.

"Didn't I say that Cousin Ethel was right?" he demanded.

"You did, Figgy, old man; and you were right, too. Hurrah!"

And that evening—the happiest in Eric Lorne's life—was only the prelude to many happy days that were in store for the fellow who had had such a bad time under the Sentence of the House!

THE END.

Next Friday's splendid, complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's is entitled

**"THE MYSTERIOUS 'X'!"** By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

: : Please order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance. : :



# THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVES!

A Splendid Long Complete Story, dealing with the Early Adventures of **JIMMY SILVER & CO.,** the Chums of Rookwood.  
— BY —  
**OWEN CONQUEST.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Private Detectives.

**W**HAT'S the trouble, Hooker, old man?" asked Tommy Dodd, leader of the Modern chums at Rookwood.

"Oh, go away, you beastly Modern rotters!" exclaimed Hooker angrily.

"But we are anxious to know if we can help you," responded Dodd, speaking on behalf of himself and his chums, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle. "We may be rivals, but when another chap is in trouble, be he Classical or Modern, we're always willing to lend a hand."

It was perfectly obvious that Hooker was in trouble, hence the inquiry from the Modern party.

The fact was Hooker was an enthusiastic stamp-collector, and had received that morning from his uncle a stamp he had long coveted—"a yellow-green 1864 Ceylon twopenny," as he termed it.

This stamp—which had cost his uncle £4—had arrived, in a letter, just as the bell rang for morning classes, and Hooker stolidly affirmed that he had left it in the envelope on his study table when he went in to class.

When he returned the letter was there, but the stamp had disappeared.

"Come on, old man, out with it!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"Well, if you must know, my yellow-green 1864 Ceylon twopenny, which only came this morning, has been stolen."

"Stolen!"

"I know I left the stamp on this table, and that it was taken while I was away."

"Have you complained about it?"

"No, Jimmy Silver is looking into the matter, and we hope to get the stamp back if possible without making a row."

"Good wheeze!" said Tommy Dodd approvingly; "but about Jimmy Silver looking into it, that's not much good. As leaders of the Form, that's for Cook and Doyle and me."

"You can look into it, too," suggested Hooker. "I don't mind who finds the stamp so long as I get it back."

"Right-ho!" said Tommy Dodd. "Come on, boys!"

He led the way to their study, and closed the door before he said a word on the subject. Then he looked at his chums, but he did not speak.

"Well," said Tommy Cook, "who's the giddy thief?"

"I can't think of anybody in the Fourth who'd be mean enough to steal anything," said Tommy Dodd. "Unless it's—" He paused, and looked at his chums.

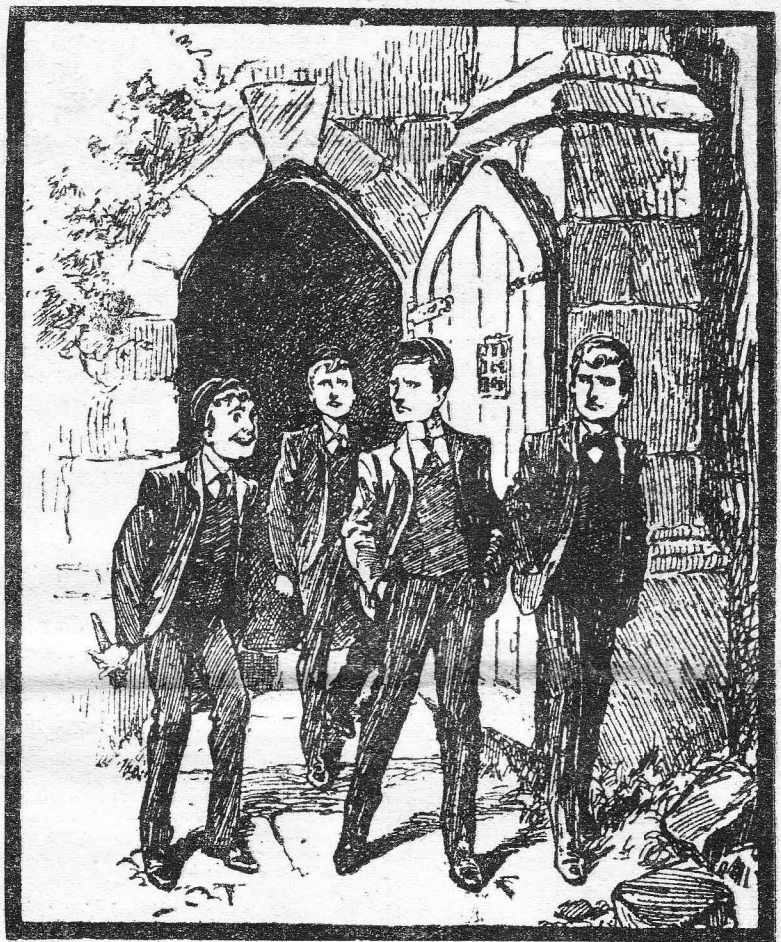
They nodded a full assent.

"Quite so," said Tommy Cook.

"You know who I'm thinking about?"

"Leggett!" answered Tommy Cook.

Tommy Dodd nodded.



The amateur detectives came ruefully out of the tower, and bestowed angry glares upon the cackling Hooker. They marched on without a word, and the cackle followed them.

"He's the thief, right enough. His game will be to lock it up in his desk for safety. It's easy enough to hide a stamp. We've got to examine his desk."

"Suppose it's locked?"

"It's pretty certain to be locked."

"You wouldn't break a lock, Doddy?" asked Tommy Cook, startled.

"For the honour of the Form, yes."

"But, I say," said Tommy Doyle, "Jimmy Silver may come along at the same game."

Tommy Dodd wrinkled his brow thoughtfully, and ran his fingers through his hair.

"H'm! We must take care that he doesn't!"

"How?" asked Tommy Cook.

The leader of the Modern chums gave a quiet chuckle.

"I've got an idea!"

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. Laying the Snare.

**L**EGGETT must have been the rotter, of course," Jimmy Silver said, in a lone tone, to Lovell, Newcome, and Raby, as the Fistical Four came out of the class-room

in the dusk after afternoon school. "There's simply no other fellow at Rookwood capable of it—excepting Beaumont, the prefect, and we can't very well suspect a prefect of stealing a stamp."

"Oh, it was Leggett, right enough!" said Raby. "And here he comes!"

Leggett was coming along the passage. He was a lad with a sallow face, and looked as if he were in want of fresh air and exercise—as, indeed, was the case.

He never went in for any sports if he could help it, and he had not the excuse of "swotting." He was idle by nature, and no credit to the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Raby was for tackling him there and then on the subject of the missing stamp, but Jimmy Silver hurriedly pointed out to him in a whisper the absurdity of such an idea, as Leggett passed them.

"We'll look into the matter without putting the suspected person on his guard first," grinned Jimmy Silver. "I reckon that's more like Nelson Lee or Sexton Blake!"

"Oh, have it your own way," said

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 244.

Raby; "but shut up—here comes those Modern rotters! They'll smell a rat if we're not careful!"

"Be careful yourself, and don't look so boastfully mysterious, or—"

"Oh, you—"

"Hallo!" said Tommy Dodd, as he strolled up with his chums. "Have you seen Leggett lately?"

"Yes."

"Have you noticed anything wrong with him?" asked Tommy Dodd seriously.

The Fistical Four stared at him.

"No," said Jimmy Silver. "He's not ill, is he?"

"Ill? Not that I know of. But don't you think he's been acting rather curiously to-day—as if he had something on his mind?"

Jimmy Silver stared.

"Have you thought so, Doddy?"

"Well, a chap has eyes in his head, you know," said Tommy Dodd. "But it wasn't so much that that I was thinking of as what— But never mind; I suppose it's of no consequence."

"What was it?"

"Why, it was just before afternoon school— But, there, I dare say he had a reason for going up the old tower, though I'm blessed if I can see why!"

The Fistical Four exchanged an involuntary glance.

"He went up into the old tower, did he?" said Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose it was nothing," he said. "Only what a chap should want to go up the old tower for just before afternoon school puzzles me."

"Quite so!"

"You see, when a chap looks worried, and then goes wandering up into a place like that—"

Tommy Dodd broke off suddenly.

"Hallo, there's Towle! I want to speak to him about those photographs. Come along, boys!"

And the Modern chums hurried off.

"My only hat!" said Lovell emphatically, "if Tommy Dodd knew what was on, and knew how much he had given away to us, I think he'd be ready to use his head for a football!"

Jimmy Silver grinned gleefully.

"I reckon so!" he said.

"We're on the track now with a vengeance!" exclaimed Raby. "It's as plain as anything that Leggett went up the old tower to hide the stolen stamp."

"I should think so!"

"Come along, me boys; let's go and look for it!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, catching Raby by the arm. "We can't go up the tower now, with those rotters in sight! They'd suspect something at once."

"That didn't occur to me, old son."

"We'll leave it till after tea."

"But it will be dark then."

"Well, it's pretty dark already inside the old tower, and what's the matter with taking a lantern, anyway?"

"Quite so," said Newcome. "Come along, and let's have tea!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. kept an eye on the Fistical Four as they walked away. They chatted for a few minutes with Towle, and then left him. They grinned joyously at one another.

"I think they took the bait, boys," said Tommy Dodd.

"Absolutely!" grinned his chums.

"They'll go up the old tower exploring for that giddy stamp!"

"They will!"

"And then we shall come on the scene—"

"What-ho!"

"And if they get out of the tower—"

again in a hurry, it won't be the fault of the Modern chums at Rookwood!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Catching the Fistical Four.

**T**EA in the end study was usually a leisurely meal, but on this particular evening the Fistical Four hurried over it. They had more important matters than tea to think about.

Their first essay as amateur detectives seemed certain to be crowned with success, and they were already anticipating their triumph over the Modern chums of the Fourth.

"The cream of the joke," Lovell remarked, "is that Doddy himself gave us the clue! He will want to kick himself hard when he knows all."

"I reckon he will!"

"It's a good idea to go after dark. We can slip away without being seen, and not light the lantern till we're inside the tower and have the door shut. Then there will be no danger of our game being spotted."

"That's so."

"Finished?" asked Jimmy Silver, getting up from the table. "Come on, then! We'll take my bicycle-lamp, as it's an acetylator, and shows a ripping light!"

The Fistical Four went quietly from the study and out into the quad.

It did not take them long to reach the old tower. The ancient structure was partly in ruins, the upper part being gone; but for a height of fifty feet it stood intact, with masses of thick ivy growing over it.

Within was a spiral stair, which led almost to the top of the remainder of the ancient edifice.

The tower was entered by a little door set in the heavy brickwork, which opened outward on shrieking, rusty hinges.

"By Jove, what a row that door makes!" muttered Newcome, as Jimmy Silver pulled it open. "Nuff to alarm the school. Close it gently, or we shall have some of the fellows nosin' round to see what's the matter!"

"You're right."

The four juniors entered the tower, and Jimmy Silver closed the door behind him. He did it as quietly as possible, but the hinges groaned as the door moved. Within the tower was impenetrable darkness.

"Don't move!" said Jimmy Silver. "I'll get a light in a jiffy. Keep still, which ever of you is moving!"

"Well, I—" began Raby.

"You ass, you've knocked the matches out of my hand now!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, stooping to search for the dropped box.

"I'm sorry, Jimmy!" said Raby. And he stooped to grope for the matches, unaware that Jimmy Silver was doing so.

There was a terrific yell from the leader of the Fistical Four as Raby's head came against his in the darkness with a crash.

"Ow! You utter idiot! Ow!"

"You clumsy rotter! You've busted my head now!"

"Ow! You lunatic!"

"You've nearly brained me!"

"You—"

"You—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Lovell. "What a row you make over a trifle! You'll have half Rookwood on the spot soon!"

"I reckon—"

"You—"

"Hush! Hark! What was that?"

It was a sudden, indefinable sound in the darkness. It came from the door.

"Blessed if I know!" said Jimmy Silver. "It sounded like somebody

knocking at the door, but it can't be that. My hat! There it is again!"

It was certainly the sound of a dull, thudding noise outside the door of the tower. Jimmy Silver started towards the door.

It occurred to him that it would be no joke—from his point of view, at least—if some mischievous junior had seen them enter the tower, and should fasten the door on the outside.

Unfortunately, Lovell was between him and the door, and Jimmy Silver's sudden movement in the dark sent Lovell reeling. He knocked his head against the stone wall with an audible biff, and the sound of a whoop rang through the tower, and echoed far and wide.

"Ow, ow! My head! Ow, my napper! Ow, ow!"

"What a row you're making over a trifle!" howled Raby.

"Ow, my napper! Ow—"

"Oh, dry up!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Anybody would think you were hurt!"

"I am hurt!" yelled Lovell.

"Well, then, be hurt quietly. Look here. I believe somebody's playing a game with that door!"

And the leader of the Fistical Four groped his way to the door and pushed it.

It did not budge.

Jimmy Silver put his shoulder against it, and exerted his strength. The door remained as firm as a rock. He set his teeth.

"It is fastened!"

"But there's no fastening on the outside!"

"It is fastened, all the same."

"You must be mistaken, Jimmy.

How can it be fastened on the outside, when there's no fastening on the outside of the door?" asked Raby.

"I reckon they've driven a peg into the ground close to the door. That was the noise we heard."

"They!" exclaimed Newcome.

"Who?"

Jimmy Silver laughed rather savagely.

"Tommy Dodd & Co., of course!"

"My only Panama hat!"

"They were fooling us with a yarn or having seen Leggett go up the tower!"

growled Jimmy Silver, whose keen brain was not long in arriving at a correct conclusion.

"Now I come to think of it, Doddy never said that he had seen Leggett do anything of the kind. He wouldn't tell a lie. He just hinted, and, like silly idiots, we swallowed the bait, and here we are!"

"It would have been better to take my advice, and—" began Raby.

"Oh, shut it! How are we to get out?"

"But—but if you're right, Jimmy, Tommy Dodd & Co. must know that we're playing the giddy detective, and that we suspect Leggett," said Newcome.

"Of course, they know it! I suppose Hooker has told them. They'd guess we suspected Leggett, because they'd immediately suspect him themselves."

"True!"

"And now"—Jimmy Silver exerted his strength on the door again, but it refused to budge—"we're shut up here like rats in a trap!"

"Let's all shove on the door at once," said Lovell.

"It's no good; but we may as well try, I suppose."

The four juniors put their shoulders to the door, and pushed with all their strength. But it did not move. It was clear that a peg had been driven solidly in outside the door, and a dozen men could not have moved it.

Jimmy Silver hammered on the door with his fist.



"Open this door, you beasts!" There was no reply, save the echoes of the shout, which filled the old tower with almost deafening noise for a few moments, and then died away.

"We'll skin you for this!" Still no reply. Tommy Dodd & Co. were probably not there. The Fistical Four shouted and kicked and beat upon the door. But no word, no sound, came in reply, and at last they desisted.

"It's no good," said Jimmy Silver. "We're prisoners here till they choose to come and let us out. We may as well make up our minds to it."

And the Fistical Four waited with all the patience they could muster, which was not much.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**

**Tommy Dodd Investigates.**

**"CAUGHT!"** Tommy Dodd murmured the word as he heard the hammering of the Fistical Four on the inside of the door of the old tower. And his chums murmured: "Absolutely!" The Modern chums had, of course, been watching near the tower for the time when the Fistical Four should arrive.

Tommy Dodd had had the peg and the mallet all ready, and to drive it into its place was the work of only a few seconds. The Fistical Four were prisoners, and

he had brought the mallet along with him.

"How are you going to open—" began Cook. A terrific crash answered him before he could finish, and the lock of the desk, and some of the desk, lay scattered in fragments on the study floor.

"My hat!" gasped Cook. "That's one way; but it's hard on the desk!"

"What can a chap expect who goes about stealing valuable stamps?"

"But suppose he didn't steal the stamp?"

"What's the good of raising difficulties?"

"Well, but—"

"That's all right. Let's have a look for the stamp."

The Modern chums set to work. They ransacked the desk thoroughly. They found some papers which proved that the cad of the Fourth had not quite given up his old game of lending money out at interest among the juniors.

They found several racing papers with marginal notes in Leggett's hand. Under the circumstances, Tommy Dodd did not feel justified in interfering with these.

He was after the yellow-green Ceylon stamp, and nothing else just at present. But the yellow-green Ceylon stamp was just the thing that he could not find.

There was not a quarter of an inch of space in the desk that the Modern chums

"Still, we may as well get clear. Come on."

The Modern chums left the study, having turned out the gas, went over to the Classical side, and sought out Hooker.

"I say, Hooker, you haven't heard of your stamp yet?" asked Tommy Dodd.

Hooker shook his head.

"Well, I have an idea that Jimmy Silver has gone to look for it in the old tower," said Tommy Dodd. "Why don't you go and see how he's getting on?"

"What on earth should he look for it in the old tower for?" demanded the astounded philatelist.

"Oh, some idea of his, I suppose!"

Hooker hurried off. He did not see how his missing stamp could possibly have come into the old tower, but if it was there, he was anxious to see it. Tommy Dodd winked at his chums.

"They've been shut up long enough," he remarked. "We can't keep them there over to-morrow, so they may as well be let out now. Hooker can do it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hooker soon reached the old tower. The door was closed, but he could hear a murmur of voices from within. He tried to open the door, but it was fast.

"My word!" exclaimed Hooker. "It's been pegged from outside!" He

**READERS OF THE PENNY POPULAR SHOULD NOTE THAT**

We shall in future print only the actual number of copies ordered through newsagents. To make sure, therefore, of obtaining your PENNY POPULAR regularly, fill in this form and hand it to your newsagent:

**ORDER FORM.**

To Mr. .... Newsagent.

Please reserve me each week, until further notice, a copy of the **PENNY POPULAR.**

Name .....

Address .....

the Modern chums listened to their vain hammering and shouting with great amusement.

"I fancy we score this time," said Tommy Dodd. "But we'd better be moving. Some ass may come along and let them out. We've got to get the search over in Leggett's study before they get loose."

"That's so."

The chums hurried away. The sound of hammering died into silence behind them as they crossed the shadowy ground towards the Modern side.

"Suppose Leggett is in his study?" asked Tommy Cook.

"He's not likely to be at this time; he's usually in the Common-room. But if he is, you must get him away with some yarn or other, while I do the trick."

"Good!"

But, as it happened, the study was dark and empty when the chums arrived. Tommy Dodd opened the door, and they went in.

"Shut the door, while I light the gas. Lock it. We can't allow Leggett to interrupt if he comes back."

Cook and Doyle chuckled and shut the door. The gas gleamed out, and Tommy Dodd turned at once to Leggett's desk. It was locked, as he expected; but Dobby had been prepared for that, and

did not carefully search. But there was no trace of the stamp.

Annoyed and fatigued, the chums gave it up at last.

"It's not here," said Tommy Dodd, "and as this is the only place where it could be hidden, it stands to reason that Leggett has got it about his person."

"Quite so."

"He's keeping it in his togs, and I'm pretty certain that he'll go off to-morrow afternoon to try and dispose of it," said Tommy Dodd sagely. "That's where we come in. We can't very well jump on him and search him in the quad, but as soon as he's outside the walls of Rookwood, we'll have that stamp, or bust something!"

"Good!"

"We'd better be off, now, I think, before Leggett comes back. I suppose it's no good trying to conceal the fact that we've been here?" said Tommy Dodd, with a rather rueful look at the smashed desk.

His chums chuckled.

"Rather not, I should say," said Tommy Doyle.

"Never mind, Leggett won't dare to make a fuss, for he'll know that, whoever busted his desk must have seen those sporting papers and the I O U's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

knocked on the door. "I say, are you there?"

"Yes," came the voice of Jimmy Silver in reply. "Is that Hooker?"

"Yes."

"Let us out, old chap, like a good fellow. We've been fastened up here by a couple of beasts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle over. Unfasten the door."

Hooker apparently saw something to cackle over, for he continued to cackle while he prised out the peg, and pulled the door open.

The Fistical Four came out ruefully. Hooker was still cackling. The chums glared at him, and marched off without a word. And still the sound of the philatelist's cackle followed them.

"It's beastly!" growled Lovell. "Hooker will tell all the Fourth how we were done in by those rotters."

"We'll get even with them," grunted Jimmy Silver. "Let's go and look in at Leggett's study now."

The Fistical Four entered the Modern side of Rookwood, and made their way to Leggett's study. Jimmy Silver lighted the gas, and then stared at the smashed desk.

"My only Aunt Jane! They've been here before us!"

The Fistical Four looked at the desk, and at each other, in dismay. And as they did so a footstep came along the passage, and Leggett entered the study.

He glanced at the lighted gas and at the four juniors standing there. Then his eye fell on the desk, and he gave a yell.

"What have you smashed my desk for?"

The Fistical Four stared at the furious junior. He sprang towards the desk, and glared at it and glared at them. His rage was too great for words. He mumbled at them, and it was easy to see that fear was a great part of the emotion he felt.

"We didn't smash your desk," said Jimmy Silver at last. "We have only just come in!"

"Liar!" spluttered Leggett.

Jimmy Silver turned red.

"Better language, you rat! I admit that it looks suspicious, but we have not touched your desk. It was done before we came here!"

"It's a lie! You've taken my papers—"

"Eh? What papers?"

Leggett bit his lip. He ran his eye quickly through the desk. He could see that the contents had been disturbed, but nothing appeared to have been taken away. Jimmy Silver made a quick step towards him.

"What's that, Leggett? Have you been up to your rascally tricks again?"

The question showed Leggett that it could not have been the Fistical Four who had ransacked his desk. He could have bitten his tongue out then.

"It's—it's all right," he stammered. "I—I believe you!"

"What have you got there that you're so frightened about?"

"Nothing! Leave my study. You say yourself that it looks suspicious. Somebody has broken my desk and searched it. I'll complain to the Head if you don't get out!"

It was evidently useless to linger. The Fistical Four went out into the passage. Jimmy Silver was looking worried.

"I guess it was Tommy Dodd & Co. who busted the desk and searched it," he said. "The question is, have they found the stamp?"

"No," said Lovell decidedly; "they haven't. Leggett was only nervous about his papers, whatever they are, and he said nothing about a stamp. It's pretty clear that the stamp wasn't in the desk, I should say!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I should say you're right. Those rotters haven't got ahead of us, after all, in spite of their confounded tricks! And I guess it's pretty certain that Leggett's keeping the stamp in his togs somewhere!"

"You're quite right, Jimmy," said Raby. "Well, we shall have to see that the rotter doesn't sell the stamp in the village."

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

##### Paying the Piper.

THE next morning Lovell contrived to ascertain whether Leggett was going to the village in the afternoon.

As Leggett usually spent his half-

holidays in the village, there was nothing unusual in that. But the Fistical Four needed accurate information to lay their plans.

"We don't want to follow the rotter from the school, you see," said Jimmy Silver. "Tommy Dodd & Co. may have their eyes on us, and they would tumble at once. We'd better be ahead of him, and drop on him suddenly from ambush—say, at a stile where there's plenty of cover for us in the trees!"

And so it was settled. After dinner the four juniors strolled down to the cricket-field, where a match was beginning, and thence by easy stages to the gates.

They slipped out, and sprinted along the lane to the village.

Meanwhile, Leggett, all unconscious of the plans laid for his discomfiture, put on his cap about half an hour later, and walked away from the school.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were lunging near the gates, with a great appearance of indifference; but their eyes were alert, and as soon as Leggett had gone out they followed.

The cad of the Fourth kept straight on towards the village without looking back once. Tommy Dodd chuckled as he and his chums shadowed the unsuspecting junior.

"We'll let him get as far as the stile," said Tommy Dodd. "That's about half-way, and a lonely spot. Then we'll put on a spurt and collar him!"

"Rather!"

Totally unconscious of the Modern chums' kind intentions, the cad of the Fourth kept on his way. He had reached the old stile, and the shadows were quickening their pace, when four forms started up suddenly from the bracken under the trees.

Leggett halted in astonishment. Before he knew what was happening, Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Newcome, and Raby were upon him.

"Collar him!" roared Jimmy Silver.

Down went the cad of the Fourth, under the combined grasp of the four chums. He lay and wriggled in the dust, with a knee on his chest.

"What—what—what do you want?" he gasped. "Have you gone mad?"

"Where's the stamp?"

"Eh?"

"Where's the stamp?"

"What stamp? Do you want a stamp?"

You can get one at the post-office!"

"None of your funny business!" said Jimmy Silver severely. "You know very well what I mean—the stamp you stole from Hooker's study!"

"I—I— You're dotty! I haven't stolen any stamp! I'll complain to the Head!"

"There was a sound of running feet in the lane, and Leggett yelled frantically:

"Help! Help!"

"Off you go!" roared Tommy Dodd, hurling himself upon Jimmy Silver, while Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle biffed into Lovell, Newcome, and Raby with equal violence. "That's our prisoner!"

"Rats! He's ours!"

"He's not; he's ours! We're after the stamp!"

"So are we!"

"I tell you—"

In a moment the Modern chums and the Fistical Four were engaged in a wild and whirling combat. Leggett sprang to his feet. The Fistical Four were too busily engaged to hold him now.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd reeled to and fro breathlessly. Tommy Cook was fighting valiantly, but Lovell and Newcome pinned him to the ground. A sudden shout broke from Tommy Dodd:

"He's gone!"

"Well, of all the burbling——" said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, of all the idiots——" said Tommy Dodd.

"Hallo, you chaps! What's the row about?" It was Hooker, the philatelist.

"We were after the stamp," said Jimmy Silver. "We should have had it, too, if these asses hadn't come up and mucked up the whole show!"

"You mean, we should have had it," said Tommy Dodd, "if you hadn't——"

"The stamp?" said Hooker.

"Yes."

"Oh, that's all right! I've found it!"

For a full minute the Fistical Four and the Modern chums were simply dumb.

Jimmy Silver was the first to break the silence.

"You've found it?" he said, in measured tones.

"Yes," said Hooker. "I meant to tell you at dinner, but I forgot. I found the stamp in my study. It had got shoved into a book that was lying on my table at the time, you see. Blessed if I know how, unless I put it there for safety, and forgot all about it!"

"Then it wasn't stolen, after all?"

"No, of course not."

"It wasn't stolen!" said Tommy Dodd.

"We've ragged Leggett almost out of his wits, and busted his desk, and generally made asses of ourselves, and it wasn't stolen!"

"And now you stand there as cool as a cucumber and tell us so!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Yes," said Hooker beamingly. "I'm jolly glad I've found it!"

"We'll pay Leggett for his desk," said Tommy Dodd; "but it occurs to me that this cheerful idiot has got something to pay for!"

"Rather!"

"I guess you're right for once, Duddy."

"Right-ho!" said Lovell. "Collar the howling idiot!"

"Here, what are you doing?" yelled Hooker, as they seized him. "I—I—I— Ow!"

They did not heed his remonstrances. They gave the philatelist the most terrific ragging that seven enraged juniors could give anybody.

When they left him at last, he sat up amid a mass of dry fern in the ditch, with his collar hanging by one end, his hair like a lump of half-picked oakum, his face dusty, and his clothes dustier, and an expression of absolutely idiotic bewilderment upon his face.

And then, somewhat relieved in their minds, the Fistical Four and the Modern chums returned to Rookwood, with a firm resolution in their breasts to very carefully consider the matter before they started in the amateur detective line again.

THE END.

Another Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR, entitled

**"HELD TO RANSOM!"** BY OWEN CONQUEST.

To avoid disappointment YOU must Order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance.