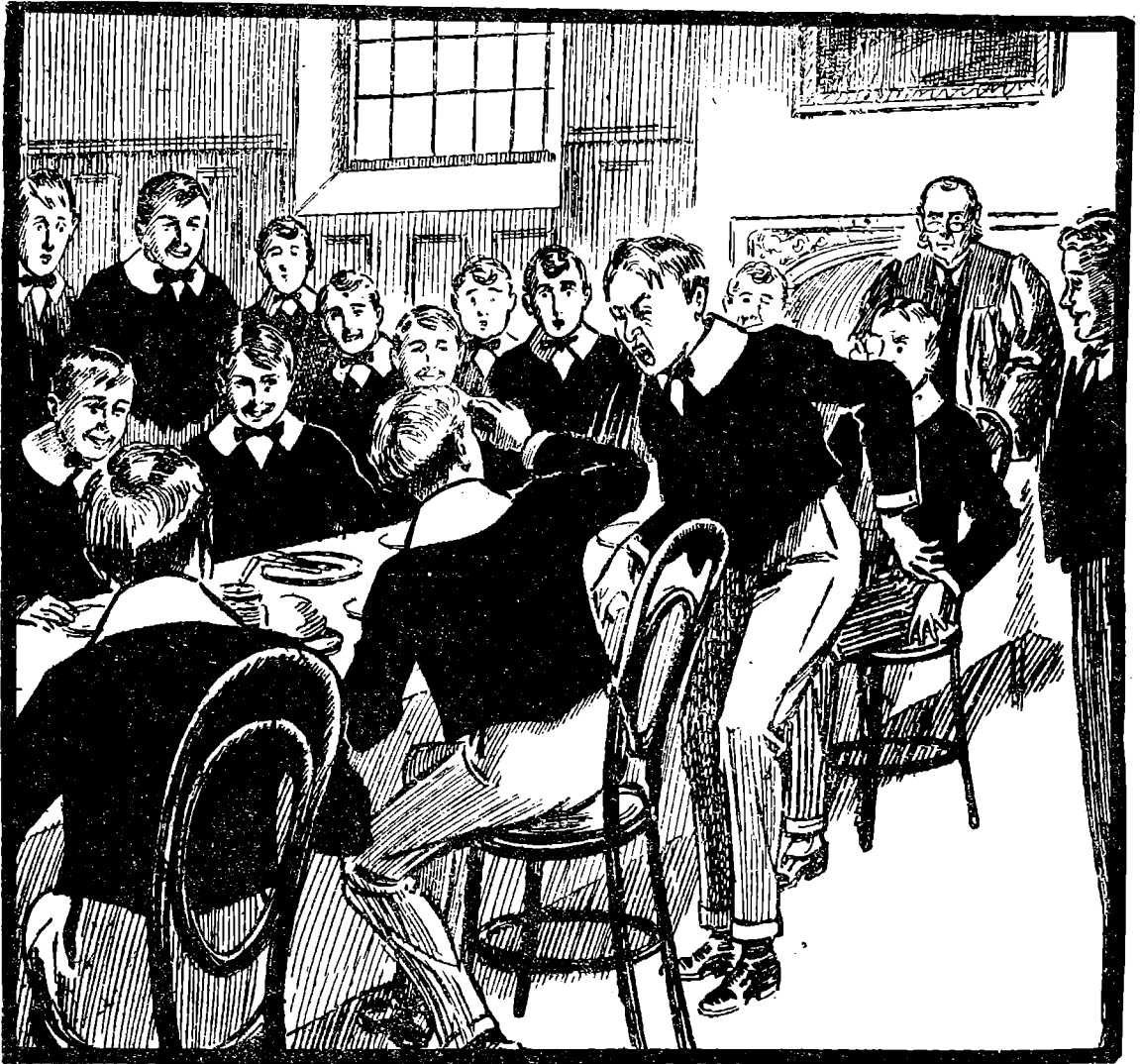


GREYFRIARS—ST. JIM'S—ROOKWOOD!

The
**Penny
Popular**

No.
247.

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



“OW—OW—OW—ATCHOOOOH!”

An Amusing Incident from the Grand Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.,
contained in this issue.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Levison and Mellish Do Not Like It.

TOM MERRY & CO. sauntered into the junior Common-room in the School House.

Quite a crowd of juniors had gathered there, and there was a considerable amount of excited discussion going on.

Levison and Mellish were looking very excited, and they had evidently been holding forth to the juniors. Crooke of the Shell wore a most indignant look. But most of the fellows were grinning, as at a good joke.

Tom Merry smiled as the crowd swung round at his entrance.

"Is it true?" demanded Clifton Dane. "Is Grimes coming here?" exclaimed Kerruish.

"The giddy grocer's boy?" said Bishop.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes."

"It's true!" exclaimed a score of amazed voices.

"Quite true!"

"But he can't come!" exclaimed Bishop. "How is he going to pay the fees? They're jolly stiff fees here! Where's he going to get the money?"

"Unless he robs old Sandy's till!" cried Hancock of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He wouldn't find enough there," said Gore of the Shell. "It can't be true."

"There's no secret about it," said Tom Merry. "I believe there are some fellows at St. Jim's who have their fees paid for them. Grimes' fees are going to be paid by the father of another St. Jim's chap."

"Who?" roared Gore.

"Mr. Lumley-Lumley!"

"Oh! The Outsider's pater?"

"I guess so!" said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

"Great Scott!"

"My hat!"

"Dear me," said Skimpole of the Shell, who had Socialistic tendencies except, as Blake had remarked, in his lucid intervals, "I regard that as an excellent arrangement. Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley will be handing back a portion of his wealth to a representative of the producing class from whom he has obtained it. I regard that as a very proper proceeding on the part of Lumley's father."

"I guess I'll tell him, Skimpole," said

the Outsider gravely. "He won't be happy till he knows that you approve."

"My dear Lumley-Lumley, I shall be very pleased to allow you to acquaint Mr. Lumley-Lumley with the fact that I approve of his conduct," said Skimpole.

"I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole blinked round through his big spectacles at the yelling juniors.

"I do not see any cause of laughter," he remarked. "I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to laugh at in a grocer cad coming to St. Jim's, either," said Crooke of the Shell. "I call it disgraceful!"

"Rotten!" said Levison.

"Shameful!" said Mellish.

"It is rather thick," agreed Bishop.

"I guess Grimes will manage to get on without your approval," Lumley-Lumley remarked. "Of course, he won't have anything to say to you chaps. My pal Grimes is rather particular whom he speaks to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The best thing you two chaps can do," continued Lumley-Lumley, addressing Mellish and Levison, "is to change studies. There won't be much room for four in No. 9, anyway."

Levison gasped.

"Do you mean to say that Grimes is coming into our study?" he exclaimed.

"I guess so."

"Grimes—the grocer—in our study!" yelled Mellish.

"I guess that's right. I want you two chaps to clear out. I've warned you already that you're not class enough to meet my pal Grimes."

The juniors roared.

"He sha'n't come into the study!" yelled Levison. "I'll kick him out!"

"Good. Let me know when you begin the kicking. I should like to see it going on," yawned Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, wathah! I wathah think you will find Gwimes a wuff customah, Levison."

"I—I'll smash him. I'll—"

"You're welcome to try, I guess."

"I think the whole school ought to unite on this subject, and send a round robin to the Head," said Crooke.

"No good," said Lumley-Lumley.

"There aren't enough cads in the school to make up enough signatures."

"Wathah not!"

"I know I sha'n't speak to him!" said Crooke savagely.

"Quite right; always respect your betters!"

"My—my betters!" yelled Crooke. "Why, you rotter—"

"Grimes will be civil to you," said Lumley-Lumley. "He knows you're a rotter, but Grimes isn't haughty. Of course, you couldn't expect a chap like Grimes to chum with you. He would draw the line at that."

Crooke gasped with rage. But he did not feel equal to carrying on a wordy warfare with Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, and he stamped out of the Common-room in a fury.

The juniors roared with laughter. Most of the fellows seemed to take the idea of Grimes of the Fourth as a great joke; and Levison & Co., much to their disappointment, did not see any chance of getting up a general demonstration on the subject.

The fact that Tom Merry & Co. had swallowed Grimes whole, so to speak, made a very great deal of difference. Fellows who might have been inclined to be snobbish felt that what was good enough for Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was good enough for them.

If Grimes had not been a decent fellow, they would certainly not have taken him up. And if they had taken him up, there was no reason why the rest of the school shouldn't.

And the fact that Kildare of the Sixth had shaken hands with Grimes in public was already known, and that fact had great influence upon the juniors.

Kildare was the idol of the Lower School; and like the king in the British Constitution, the captain of St. Jim's could do no wrong.

"If he comes into my study, I'll make him glad enough to get out, anyway," said Levison.

"Anybody would be glad to get out, if you're there," agreed Lumley-Lumley. "You're not exactly what one would call a nice chap to dig with. Of course, there's no need for anybody to explain to Grimes that you were nearly expelled from St. Jim's for imitating another chap's handwriting in a letter. Grimes wouldn't like to be in the same study with that kind of fellow, if he knew."

Levison turned livid with rage, and stamped away. Mellish tried to think of something exceedingly bitter to say, but it wouldn't come, and he stamped away after Levison. The cads of the

School House had been put to the rout.

Lumley-Lumley chuckled softly.

"My pal Grimes will be here to-morrow," he said. "Any chap who doesn't think Grimes good enough to know can drop my acquaintance, too. And any chap who is unconvincing to Grimes will be asked to step into the gym and have the gloves on with me. That's all. I guess I'm going to do my prep."

And Lumley-Lumley strolled away, leaving the Common-room in a buzz over the extraordinary news. But it seemed pretty clear that the School House juniors, upon the whole, were going to take the arrival of Grimes good-humouredly, and that only a few fellows meant to make things unpleasant for him.

And with Tom Merry & Co. backing him up, it seemed pretty certain that Grimes of the Fourth would be able to hold his own at St. Jim's.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Enough for Mellish!

GRIMES arrived the next morning. Grimes had been able to arrange matters with his old employer. Mr. Sands, of course, was greatly astonished. But probably he was not insensible to the honour of having his old errand-boy taken in as a pupil at St. Jim's.

And as Grimes had many friends there already, it would probably mean a good deal of custom for Mr. Sands. Grimes walked into the quadrangle of St. Jim's just after the boys were released from morning lessons.

The fellows were crowding out into the quadrangle when Grimes of the Fourth was seen entering at the old gates. There was a shout at once.

"Here he comes!"

"Here's the giddy grocer!"

"Where's your basket, Grimes?"

"What price eggs to-day?"

"How's bacon?"

Grimes came on with a good-humoured grin upon his countenance. The fellows who hailed him were laughing, and they were ragging him in a good-humoured way.

Grimes did not mind a joke, and he was not ashamed of his trade; he did not object in the least to the allusions to the grocer's shop.

"Did you take the shutters down this morning, Grimey?" asked Bishop.

"Yes, Master Bishop," said Grimes.

"Weighed out the bacon?" asked Levison.

"No," said Grimes. "Mr. Sands 'ave got a new boy. I shan't be weighin' out any more bacon, Master Levison."

"Smells of cheese, doesn't he?" said Mellish.

"What a ripping chap to come here and mix with the sons of gentlemen—I don't think!"

"They ain't raised any objection to me, Master Mellish," said Grimes. "All the gentlemen as I've met 'ere 'ave been very good to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo. "Ho's got you there, Mellish! You haven't been good to him."

Mellish turned red with rage.

"Why, you—you grocer—" he gasped.

"There ain't any 'arm in being a grocer, is there?" said Grimes.

"This isn't the place for a grocer," said Mellish loftily. "Chaps ought to keep in their proper place. It's not right for a low cad to come to this school."

"Wot are you doin' 'ere, then?" inquired Grimes politely.

There was a roar of laughter.

"Good for Grimes!" yelled Blake.

"First goal to Grimes! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mellish clenched his hands. Mellish was not a fighting-man; but he was bigger than Grimes, and felt that the grocer's boy would hardly dare to stand up to him.

He advanced upon Grimes with his hands up and his eyes gleaming.

"You rotten cad!" he yelled. "I'm going to lick you!"

"Go ahead, Master Mellish!" said Grimes.

"Bravo! Go it, Grimey!" yelled Figgins.

Grimes looked round for Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. Lumley-Lumley was at his side at once.

"You don't mind if I fight with Master Mellish, Master Lumley?" asked Grimes.

Lumley-Lumley chuckled.

"I don't mind at all," he said. "Go in and win, Master Grimes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grimes put up his hands promptly. Mellish was already hitting out. More than once Grimes and Pilcher and Craggs of Rylecombe had had their little rubs with the St. Jim's fellows.

Grimes knew how to use his hands quite as well as Percy Mellish did, and he had heaps of pluck, which was much more than Mellish had.

He met the cad of the Fourth more than half-way. Mellish's fists were knocked up as they drove at Grimes' face, and Grimes' right came home on Mellish's nose, and Percy sat down in the quadrangle with a mighty bump.

"Yow!" gasped Mellish.

There was a yell.

"Bravo, Grimey!"

"Go it, Grimes!"

"Jump up and tackle him, Mellish!" shouted Croke.

"I'm waitin'," said Grimes.

"I wathah think you'll have to wait, deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his famous monocle upon Mellish. "Our fwiend Percy is not in a huiwuy."

"Ow!" groaned Percy.

"Get up, you funk!" growled Tom Merry. "Don't disgrace the school! You started the row, now go on with it!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Redfern.

"Mellish is done!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mellish sat and caressed his nose. A stream of red was running over his fingers. Grimes of the Fourth had hit hard.

Levison helped him to his feet. Grimes dropped his hands. He saw that Mellish did not want any more, and Grimes was too generous a lad to want to triumph over a defeated enemy.

"Go in and win, Mellish!" whispered Levison.

Mellish snarled.

"Go in and win yourself!" he growled. "The beast has knuckles like chunks of iron. This is what comes of fighting with a cad. Grooh!"

"Finished with me, Master Mellish?" asked Grimes respectfully.

"I'm not going to fight a grocer!" snarled Mellish.

"Not when he's too much for you," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Percy Mellish walked away, holding his handkerchief to his nose. Lumley-Lumley slipped his arm through Grimes', and walked him on towards the School House. A good many fellows gathered round to say a cheery word or two to Grimes. Grimes' look grew more confident and cheerful.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was in the hall when they entered the

School House, and he looked at Grimes over his spectacles.

"New boy, sir," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Ah!" said Mr. Lathom. "Is this—er—Grimes?"

"Yes, if you please, sir," said Grimes.

"Very good," said Mr. Lathom. "Dr. Holmes has spoken to me about you, Grimes. It appears that you are to be in my Form."

"Yes, sir," said Grimes.

"Very well. You will come into the Fourth-Form room for afternoon lessons, and you will listen to what is done," said Mr. Lathom. "After lessons, you can come to my study at half-past five, and I will give you an hour. I hope it will soon be possible for you to do your work with the Form."

"Thank you, sir. You're werry kind, sir."

"Not at all," said Mr. Lathom graciously.

And he shook hands with the new boy, just as if Grimes had been an ordinary new boy, and not the grocer's lad from the village.

"Come up and see the study," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes, Master Lumley."

Lumley-Lumley led his chum up to the Fourth-Form passage, and opened the door of No. 9. Then a dark frown came over his face.

A large paper had been pinned on the wall opposite the door, and it bore the inscription in large letters, daubed in ink with a brush:

"GET OUT! NO GROCER CADS WANTED HERE! GET OUT!"

Grimes saw it the same moment as his companion, and he turned crimson.

"Oh, Master Lumley!" he exclaimed.

Lumley-Lumley strode across the study and snatched down the paper, tore it into fragments, and tossed it into the grate.

"I guess that's Levison's work," he said. "You're not to take any notice of his rot, Grimey. There's precious few chaps like Levison at this school, thank goodness!"

"A—a chap don't like comin' in where he ain't wanted, Master Lumley," said Grimes.

"Bless your innocent heart, you'll have to get over that!" said Lumley-Lumley cheerfully. "This is a rough-and-ready place, Grimey. All those fastidious ideas you've learned in the grocery business won't do for a public school. You mustn't put on side here."

"Side, Master Lumley!" ejaculated Grimes.

"Yes. You mustn't be haughty."

"Aughty! Oh, Master Lumley!"

"You must take things as they come, and be ready to rough it. If you're too sensitive, you'll soon get that knocked out of you. If a chap goes for you, go for him, and hit him as hard as you can. That's the game."

"I can do that, Master Lumley."

"That's right. And don't wear your heart on your sleeve for daws to peck at, as Shakespeare puts it," said Lumley-Lumley. "If you do that, you'll find plenty of daws ready to peck. I'll answer for that."

"I s'pose you're right, Master Lumley."

"Grin and bear it, if there's trouble, and always keep your end up," said Lumley-Lumley. "Don't bear malice, but always look out for yourself. Never take advantage of anybody else, and never let anybody take advantage of you. If a chap doesn't like you, let him lump you. There are always chaps who will like you, and you can let the others alone. Don't be too jolly sensitive, and don't mind what fellows say."

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"I won't, Master Lumley."
 "Levison and Mellish will both try to make you uncomfy in this study. All you've got to do is to give 'em as good as they send—make 'em uncomfy. Instead of being shoved out, make them glad to get out. See?"

Grimes grinned.
 "I see, Master Lumley."
 "There are your books," said Lumley-Lumley, nodding towards a parcel that lay on the table. "You'll find the whole lot you want there. You won't be able to read some of 'em yet, but we'll soon alter all that. Now, come up to the dorm, and get into your clobber. You will have to wear my clothes until you've been to the tailor's. I'll stand you my best Sunday suit."

"Oh, Master Lumley!"
 "Come on, and not so much of your Master Lumley!"

Lumley-Lumley marched his protege off to the Fourth Form dormitory. A quarter of an hour later Grimes came down in Etons, feeling a little uncomfortable in them, but looking very nice indeed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Joke for Joke!

TOM MERRY nodded pleasantly to Grimes as he met him going into the dining-room for dinner.

Grimes was feeling very uneasy, and holding tight to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's arm.

Grimes grinned sheepishly at Tom Merry. He felt every eye in St. Jim's was upon his new Etons. As a matter of fact, he attracted less attention in Etons than in his former clothes.

"Here we are again!" said Tom Merry. "Been fighting anybody since Mellish?"

"No, Master Merry."
 "Let me know when you've got another one on, and I'll hold your jacket," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I want you to show me that drive with the right in the gym, after lessons, Grimey, if you will."

"Pleased to, Master Merry," said the gratified Grimes.

"They went in to dinner."
 Grimes was given a place at the Fourth Form table, next to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, and with Jack Blake on the other side of him.

Levison and Mellish wanted to be near him, for the amiable purpose of ragging him during dinner, but they had to be content with being opposite.

However, they hoped to make Grimes feel exceedingly uncomfortable by watching him closely during the meal.

They succeeded in that kindly object. With two pairs of unfriendly eyes fastened on him from the other side of the long table, Grimes felt very awkward.

His fingers seemed to be all thumbs, and he turned red, and spilt the salt, and shook pepper into Lumley-Lumley's face and made him sneeze, and dropped his knife with a loud clang.

Mellish sniffed.
 "Nice kind of chap to bring to a decent table!" he muttered, loud enough for Grimes and most of the fellows to hear.

Grimes' face went crimson.
 "Disgusting!" said Levison. "See how he eats!"

"Yes, I say—yowp!"
 Mellish had not meant to say "Yowp." He said that quite suddenly as Jack Blake reached under the table with his foot and hacked him.

"Yowp! Yaroop! Oh!"
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Mr. Lathom looked down the long table over his glasses.

"Dear me, what are you making this disturbance for, Mellish?" he exclaimed peevishly.

"Yow! Somebody hacked my shins, sir!" yelled Mellish. "Oh! Ow!"

"Bless my soul! Did somebody kick Mellish?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

Silence.
 "Who kicked Mellish?" demanded the Form-master.

"I did, sir," said Blake.
 "Dear me! What did you kick Mellish for, Blake?"

"Bad manners, sir."
 "Really, Blake—"
 "I thought Mellish ought not to be encouraged in bad manners, sir," said Blake demurely. "I thought it was a bad example for him to set the new fellow, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"
 "What did you do, Mellish?" asked Mr. Lathom, eyeing the cad of the Fourth suspiciously. He knew Percy Mellish.

"Ow! I didn't do anything, sir. Yow!"

"Well, don't do it again, and be quiet!" said Mr. Lathom.

Mellish was quiet after that, excepting for an occasional grunt as he felt a twinge in his shin. Levison, keeping his legs carefully out of Blake's reach, continued the persecution of the unfortunate Grimes, however.

"Will you pass me the salt, Grimes?" he asked.

"Cert'nly!" said Grimes.
 "Thank you!" said Levison politely.

"May I have the pepper?"
 "Ere you are!" said Grimes.

"What did you say?"
 "Ere you are, Master Levison!"
 Levison looked round.

"Have you dropped something, Grimes?"
 "Me?" said Grimes. "No, I ain't dropped nothing."

"Sure?"
 "Quite sure, Master Levison."
 "I thought I heard an 'h' drop!" explained Levison.

Some of the Fourth-Formers chuckled. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy extracted his monocle from his waistcoat-pocket, jammed it into his eye, and regarded Levison with scorn.

"I wogard that as a caddish wemack, Levison!" he exclaimed.

"Go hon!" said Levison.
 "You are an uttah wottah, Levison!"
 "Thank you!"

"And a beastly cad!"
 "Good!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy relapsed into silence. Evidently Levison was impervious to his remarks. Levison took up the pepper-castor and contrived to loosen the lid, and send a spurt of pepper across the table directly into Grimes' face. Grimes was just raising a morsel upon his fork to his mouth, when the pepper reached him.

Fork and morsel dropped into his plate, and Grimes gave a choking gasp, and burst into a terrific sneeze.

"Atchoo! Atchoo! Atchooooooh!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!" said the worried Form-master. "What is the matter now?"

"Atchoo! Atchoo!"
 "Grimes—"
 "Choo—choo—atchooooooh!"
 "Dear me! My dear Grimes—"
 "Atchooooooooh!"

Grimes was upon his feet now, the water streaming from his eyes, and his face a fiery red. He sneezed and sneezed and sneezed.

Every eye in the old School House dining-room was turned upon the new boy. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster

who was at the Sixth Form table, frowned. Mr. Lathom looked very uncomfortable and annoyed.

"Grimes, I really wish you would try to control yourself—"

"Grooh—grooh! Atchooooooh!"
 "Grimes, Grimes—"

"Atchoo! Ow, ow! Grooh! Atchoo!"
 "He can't help it, sir," said Levison.

"It's the way he's brought up, sir. He doesn't know how to behave decently at table, sir!"

"Silence, Levison! Really, Grimes—"

"Atchoo! I—I'm sorry, sir!" gasped the unfortunate Grimes. "It was the pepper, sir! Atchoo! I'm sorry—atchoo—ow—ow—atchooh!"

Grimes did not say a word about the pepper having been projected at him across the table. Mr. Lathom had no suspicion of Levison's trick.

"You must be more careful, Grimes!" he said reprovingly.

"Yes, sir! Atchooooooh!"
 "You must try to eat like the other boys," said Mr. Lathom. "Pray be more careful in the use of condiments, Grimes!"

"Aytichoo! Atchoo! Yes, sir!"
 Grimes sat down, with eyes and nose and mouth streaming. He was too upset to be angry, and he could only sit and suffer discomfort.

"Oh, you cad, Levison!" said Lumley-Lumley, in a whisper.

Levison grinned.
 Lumley-Lumley gritted his teeth.

Grimes' purple and streaming face was funny from Levison's point of view.

But Lumley-Lumley did not see the fun. He kept his eyes on Levison, and looked for his opportunity. Levison had a bottle of ginger-beer on the table, and after his meal was finished he filled his glass to drink.

He lifted the full glass to his lips, and just as he began to drink, Lumley-Lumley reached across the table and knocked the bottom of the glass with his fork.

Splash!
 The contents of the glass shot over Levison's face—into his mouth, into his nose, into his eyes, and down his neck, and over his chest.

Levison dropped the glass with a wild gasp. It was shattered to a dozen pieces upon his plate, and the plate was smashed as well. The crash caused Mr. Lathom to jump up.

"Levison," he exclaimed, "how dare you?"

The Form-master was too short-sighted to see all that went on at the table, and his eyes had not been in that direction when Lumley-Lumley performed his little manoeuvre.

He only saw that Levison had broken his glass and his plate, and was streaming with ginger-beer, and coughing violently.

"Levison, this is disgraceful! I will not allow boys to guzzle in this disgusting way at my table!"

"He can't help it, sir!" said Lumley-Lumley, parodying Levison's own words.

"It's the way he was brought up, sir. He doesn't know how to behave decently at table!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Indeed, I think you are right, Lumley!" said Mr. Lathom. "Levison, leave the table at once! Your greediness in choking over your ginger-beer is simply disgusting. Go away! Not a word! Get out of my sight at once!"

And Levison, still gasping and spluttering, went, leaving the Fourth-Form table in a ripple of laughter behind him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
In Class.

A BELL rang, and the fellows in the quadrangle converged towards the School House. Grimes caught hold of Lumley-Lumley's sleeve. The Fourth-Formers were waiting in the Close for afternoon lessons. Grimes had bucked up very much, and he was enjoying himself. But as the bell rang for lessons all Grimes' uneasiness returned.

The Form-room was full of terrors for him; indeed, the Fourth-Form room might have borne over the door, like Dante's Inferno over the gate, the dreadful inscription, "Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate!"—to judge by the effect it had upon poor Grimes.

It amazed him to see the juniors streaming cheerfully towards the Form-room, which to him was indeed a place where all hope must be abandoned on entering.

"Buck up, Grimey!" said Lumley-Lumley. "What's the matter?"

"I—I s'pose I've got to go in?" stammered Grimes.

Lumley-Lumley laughed. "I guess so," he said. "Why not?"

"I—I feel afraid, Master Lumley."

"What for?"

"Everything," said poor Grimes.

"I guess there's nothing to be afraid of. Lathom's a good-tempered old duck, and you're not going through the lessons. You've only got to sit tight and listen," said Lumley-Lumley. "Keep hold of my sleeve if you like, and I'll steer you through."

Grimes grinned faintly.

"It's a big change for me, Master Lumley," he said. "If I was still at Mr. Sands', I should be going out on the afternoon round now."

"I guess you'll have to do harder work than that now," said Lumley-Lumley. "But cheer up! There won't be any shutters to take down to-morrow morning."

"I—I'd feel safer takin' down the shutters," murmured Grimes.

"Come on, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, slipping his arm through Grimes'. "Time for lessons, you know."

"I'm comin', Master D'Arcy!"

Piloted by Lumley-Lumley and Arthur Augustus, Grimes made his way to the Form-room in the crowd of juniors.

"Pound of bacon, please!" yelled a voice in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What price eggs?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grimes walked into the Form-room with a red face. He took his seat at the end of a form, and Lumley-Lumley sat down beside him. Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. placed themselves as near to Grimes as they could, anticipating some ragging during afternoon lessons, if Levison and Mellish could contrive it.

Mr. Lathom blinked at Grimes over his glasses.

"Ah, Grimes!" he said.

"Yessir," said Grimes.

"You will not—er—share in the work in the Form at present," said Mr. Lathom. "You will—ah—listen, and mark and learn and inwardly digest, Grimes. That is all you have to do at present."

"Yessir!"

Grimes was only too happy to have to take no part in the lessons. The lessons, when he listened to them, were so much Greek to him.

Grimes was no fool, and he could have beaten most of the Fourth at mental arithmetic, which he had been obliged to excel in at Mr. Sands' shop.

But in the ordinary work of the Form Grimes was, of course, utterly unversed.

He knew there was such a language as Latin, but that was all he knew of the tongue of Horace and Cicero.

When fellows stood up and construed, Grimes watched them open-mouthed. He felt some respect even for Mellish and Levison then.

Even Mellish, who was a duffer, especially at classics, and blundered through endless errors, seemed a marvelously clever youth to the hapless Grimes. Grimes wondered whether he would ever be able to stand up and construe that unknown tongue, and he felt quite hopeless about it.

Geography was more familiar to him, and he heard words he knew. But Euclid was more terrible to his eyes than Latin.

Grimes' attention began to wander. He had dutifully listened for a long time, as he had been bidden to do; but, not understanding what he heard, he could not keep his attention fixed.

Mr. Lathom was speaking, when a rumbling noise proceeded from somewhere, and he paused quite suddenly.

"Sn-o-r-r-r-r-re!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "Snore!"

"What—what is that?"

"Snor-r-r-r-re!"

There was a giggle in the class.

"Thunder, sir!" said Bishop. "I think there's going to be a storm, sir!"

"Snore!"

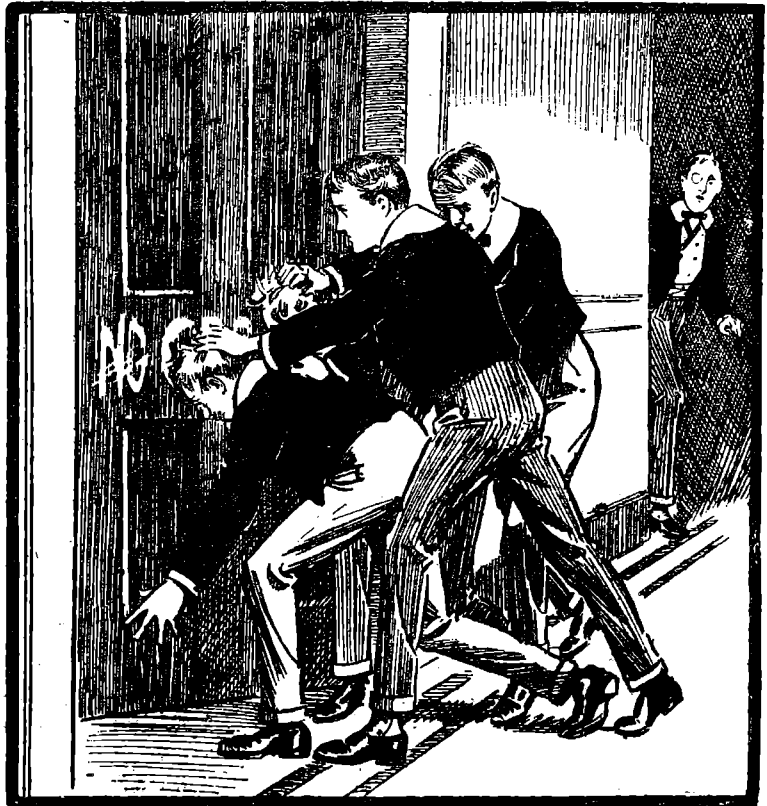
"Silence, boys! I forbid you to laugh! Someone has fallen asleep!"

exclaimed Mr. Lathom angrily. "Dear me! A boy asleep in the Form-room! Who is it?"

"Snore!"

Lumley-Lumley had begun to shake his friend. But Grimes was a heavy sleeper, and difficult to awaken. He snored!

"Wake up, you ass!" whispered Lumley-Lumley.



"Great Scott!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, dashing along the passage in great excitement. "What's the mattah, deah boys? It sounds like muddah bein' done." "They've been chinking on the door," explained Lumley-Lumley, rubbing away with Levison's hair. "Grimes and I haven't any dusters handy, so we're using Mellish and Levison as mops!"

It was a very hot day without, and suddenly Grimes found himself nodding. "My 'at!" he murmured to himself suddenly. "I'm goin' to sleep!"

He straightened up, and made an effort to keep awake.

Mr. Lathom was on ancient history now. There was a drone in his voice, and the Form-room seemed warm and close to Grimes. He nodded again, and the Fourth Form master's voice assumed a dim and far-away sound.

Grimes was asleep!

He slept peacefully.

Then there came an interruption to the drowsy proceeding in the Form-room.

He gave Grimes a violent shake. Grimes started to his feet.

"All right, sir!" he called out loudly. "I'm coming, sir! I wasn't asleep. I was sweeping the cellar floor, sir! I'm coming!"

There was a yell of laughter in the Form-room.

Grimes had evidently forgotten where he was, and had awakened fancying that he was back in the grocery-shop in Rycombe.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Even Mr. Lathom smiled.

"Grimes!" he exclaimed.

"Oh!" stammered Grimes, realising

where he was, and gazing about him in great confusion. "I—I—I— Oh!"

"You have fallen asleep, Grimes," said Mr. Lathom.

"I—I s'pose I did, sir," stammered Grimes. "I'm sorry, sir!"

"Well, try to keep awake now," said Mr. Lathom.

"Yes, sir. Oh, yes, sir!"

And Grimes sat with a face like a beetroot as the lesson proceeded.

He did not feel inclined to sleep again. He sat bolt upright and widely wakeful until the lesson ended, and then he heard the word "Dismiss!" with more gladness than he had ever heard Mr. Sands tell him that he could go home late on a busy Saturday night.

Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell met the chums of the Fourth as they came out. Tom Merry clapped the new junior on the shoulder in his cheery way.

"Well, what do you think of it, Grimey?" he asked.

"'Orrible!" said Grimes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That was Grimes' candid impression of his first day in Form. But Lumley-Lumley assured him cheerfully that he would get used to it. Grimes said that he hoped he would, but he could not help feeling doubtful.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rubbed Out!

NO grocers wanted."

That notice was chalked up on the outside of the door of Study No. 9, as Lumley-Lumley and Grimes came up at tea-time. Grimes reddened as he saw it.

Lumley-Lumley opened the door of the study, and looked in. Mellish and Levison was there. Lumley-Lumley pointed to the inscription on the door.

"Who put that there?" he asked.

"Guess!" said Levison.

"One of you, or both of you?" asked Lumley-Lumley quietly.

"You can put it down to both of us," said Levison, yawning. "It states the facts, you know. We're not thinking of going into the grocery business, and we don't want any budding grocers in this study."

Lumley-Lumley raised his hand, and pointed to the chalked notice.

"I guess you'll rub that out!" he said.

"Wrong!" said Levison. "Guess again!" And Mellish giggled.

"Do you want us to rub it out?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"You'll have to, if you want it rubbed out at all," said Levison.

"Very well, Grimey, old boy, will you lend me a hand?"

"Cert'nly, Master Lumley!" said Grimes.

"Take one of those mops, and help me rub it out, then."

Grimes looked round the study for the mops. He could not see any. But he soon caught on to Lumley-Lumley's meaning. Lumley-Lumley caught Levison by the shoulders, and yanked him out of his chair.

"Hallo! What are you up to?" roared Levison, struggling.

"I guess I'm going to rub out that chalking."

"Lemme alone! I'm not going to help you—"

"Yes, you are, my boy. I haven't got any other mop handy, and I'm going to use your top-knot!" explained the Outsider.

"What!" yelled Levison. "You— you—"

"This way!"

"Leggo!" shrieked Levison, struggling wildly. "I tell you— Ow! Grooooh!"

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Levison's struggles were not of much use. The Outsider of St. Jim's had a grasp like iron. He drove his knuckles into Levison's neck as he gripped his collar with both hands, and dragged the cad of the Fourth over to the open door.

Levison's strangled yells echoed down the passage, and there was a rush of feet as the Fourth-Formers rushed to see what was the matter.

"Better not wriggle," said Lumley-Lumley calmly. "You may get a knock or two on the napper if you do. There, I told you so!"

Crack!

Levison gave a yell of anguish as his head came into violent contact with the door.

"Yaroooh!"

"I guess you'd better take it quietly. Bring the other mop here, Grimey!"

"Wotto!" chuckled Grimes.

Mellish jumped up in great alarm, and backed round the table. He had had one taste of Grimes' quality that day, and he did not want any more. Grimes chased him round the table and Mellish caught up the poker desperately. "Stand off!" he yelled. "Hands off, or— Ow!"

Grimes' right caught Mellish on the chin as he was speaking. The poker went to the floor with a crash; and Mellish would have gone to the floor, too, if the grocer's boy had not caught him. Grimes' strong grip closed upon Mellish, and he was yanked over to the door beside Levison.

"Rub away!" said Lumley-Lumley cheerfully.

"Ha, ha! Orl right, Master Lumley!"

And two wildly-dishevelled heads were rubbed roughly up and down the door, to rub out the offensive chalking.

"Gweat Scott!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, dashing along the passage in great excitement. "What's the mattah, deah boys? It sounds like a murdah bein' done!"

"Nothing's the matter, I guess."

"What are you doing to those chaps?" shouted Tom Merry.

"They've been chalking on the door," exclaimed Lumley-Lumley, rubbing away with Levison's hair. "We haven't any dusters handy, so we're using Mellish and Levison as mops."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What a wippin' idea! I wegard that as funmay, deah boys! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crowded in the passage yelled at the peculiar scene. Mellish and Levison were still struggling, but they had no chance.

Levison's struggles were frantic, and Mellish's were feeble, but they were useless in both cases. Their heads were rubbed over the panels till their hair resembled chalky mops, and every letter of the offensive inscription was rubbed out.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the crowd in the passage. "Go it! Rub it in!"

"Rub it out, you mean!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" gurgled Mellish. "Leggo! You! I won't do it any more! Grooooh! Oh! Yah!"

"You—you beast!" shrieked Levison.

"Let me go!"

"I guess it's all rubbed out now!" remarked Lumley-Lumley. "We're done with these mops. Chuck 'em away! Look out, you fellows!"

The juniors in the passage crowded back. Mellish and Levison were hurled forth, and they went sprawling along the linoleum.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two cads of the Fourth sat up, gasping wildly. Their heads were wildly dishevelled, and their collars were torn out, and they looked complete wrecks.

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

The passage rang with laughter. Levison staggered to his feet, and shook his fist furiously at Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

"You rotter!" he howled. "I'll make you sorry for this! Ow! I'll make you squirm, you and your grocer chum! Ow!"

"Groo!" gasped Mellish. "I'll complain to the House-master! Ow!"

"Complain away!" said Lumley-Lumley calmly. "Here, where are you coming, Levison?"

"I'm coming into my study," said Levison fiercely.

"I guess not!"

Levison panted with rage as Jerrold Lumley-Lumley blocked up the doorway with his person. The Outsider of St. Jim's regarded him with calm determination.

"You're not coming in here!" he said. "Not coming into my own study!"

yelled Levison. "What do you mean?"

"Not until you've apologised to Grimey."

"Yaas, wathah! That's a good idea!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard an apology as bein' impewative in such a mattah!"

"Apologise!" said Levison, with a yell of furious laughter. "Apologise to that grocer cad! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then clear out!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"I'm going to have my tea—"

"Not here!"

"I'm coming in, hang you!"

"Try it, that's all!"

Levison did try it. He made a plunge in at the doorway, but he came out more quickly than he entered. Lumley-Lumley's left caught him under the chin, and he sat down in the passage with a heavy bump and a yell.

"I've got some more of those," said Lumley-Lumley calmly. "I guess you can have as many as you want! Walk up!"

"Ow! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "Go for him, Levison! Go and have some more! You want 'em!"

Levison staggered to his feet, red with rage.

"You rotter!" he panted. "If you keep me out of my study, I'll go and fetch a prefect!"

"Fetch one if you like!"

"Sneak!" roared the juniors.

"I'm not going to be kept out of my study!" shrieked Levison.

"Apologise to Grimes, then, for insulting him, you worm!" said Tom Merry warmly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm not apologising to any grocer cad! I'm going to fetch Kildare!"

And Levison tramped away furiously down the passage. A yell of derision and scorn followed him. To bring a prefect into a junior row was against all the rules. But Levison did not care whether he was called a sneak or not; he had not much reputation to lose.

"Look out for squalls, Lumley, old man!" said Jack Blake. "The cad really means to bring Kildare here!"

"I guess I don't care!"

"You wait till Kildare comes, you rotter!" snarled Mellish, mopping his nose, which had come into violent contact with the door during the rubbing-out process, and was streaming red. "You wait till Kildare comes!"

"Ow! My nose! Oh!"

"Here he is!" shouted Kangaroo.

Kildare of the Sixth came striding upon the scene. Kildare had been interrupted at tea with Darrel and

Langton, and he did not look good-tempered.

"What's all this?" he exclaimed sharply. "What are you keeping Levison out of his study for, Lumley-Lumley?"

"Cheek!" said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "What! What do you mean?"

"Have you told Kildare what you did, Levison?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"I've told him that you won't let me come into my study!" roared Levison. "If Kildare won't keep you in order, I'll go to the Head!"

"Hold your tongue!" said Kildare sharply. "Now, Lumley-Lumley, tell me what Levison has done!"

"Insulted my pal Grimes," said the Outsider.

"Yaas, wathah! An insultin' inscription on the door of the studay, Kildare, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly.

Kildare knitted his brows.

"I'm not letting him come in again till he's apologised to Grimes," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Quite wight, deah boy."

"Did you fellows see the inscription?" asked Kildare, looking round at the juniors.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Was it insulting to Grimes?"

"Yes, it was!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison and Mellish exchanged glances, and, almost stuttering with fury, they stumbled away down the passage, and the juniors hissed them as they went.

"Gentlemen," said Lumley-Lumley politely, "the circus is over!"

And he withdrew into his study. The crowd dispersed, laughing, and Lumley-Lumley closed the door of the study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Little Mixed.

TOM MERRY & CO. were in the Common-room when Grimes entered. Mellish and Levison were there, too, and they shrugged up their shoulders, sniffed, and walked out of the room with their noses high in the air. But Grimes did not even notice them.

"What's the mattah, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sympathetically.

"You look wowwed."

Grimes nodded.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy," he said. "Master Lumley 'ave give me a lesson. I'm learning Latin."

"Vewy good, deah boy!"

"How far have you got?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"First singular genitive," said Grimes, his memory rather hazy. "If you want to say an eagle, you say mensa; but if

must have been. Fancy a man talking to his table!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or to an eagle, for that matter!" said Grimes. "Funny, ain't it?"

"Bai Jove!"

"You're a bit mixed, Grimey," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You'll get used to it in time, and then it will come clearer."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Grimes nodded.

"I s'pose that's so," he agreed. "But it will take some getting used to, the idea of a man talking to a table. But I s'pose it will come in time."

"Yaas, it will come in time, deah boy!" said D'Arcy.

Grimes sat down, looking very thoughtful. The mysteries of the vocative case were evidently still occupying his mind.

Lumley-Lumley came into the room later on. He joined Tom Merry & Co. and Grimes.

Grimes looked up, with a cheerful grin.

"I ain't forgotten it, Master Lumley," he said.

"Good!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Give me the Latin words—what's eagle?"

"Aquila!" said Grimes proudly. "It's jest the same thing when you're talking to it, but if you punch its nose it's aquilam."

The juniors shrieked. Lumley-Lumley dropped into a chair with a gasp.

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"Then you've only got what you deserve, Levison, and you, Mellish," said Kildare. "Apologise to Grimes at once!"

"What!" yelled Levison.

"You hear me?"

"Apologise to a grocer's boy?"

"A rotten errand-boy!" yelled Mellish.

"You will apologise to Grimes at once, or I shall take you direct to my study and cane you, both of you!" said Kildare. "Choose—sharp!"

"I—I apologise!" stuttered Mellish.

"I—I'm sorry, Grimes!"

"Now you, Levison!"

"I—I—I'm sorry!" gasped Levison, almost speechless with rage.

"Good!" said Kildare. "Now, you sha'n't use your study again this evening, as a punishment for your caddishness. You can have your tea in Hall, and do your preparation in the Form-room. If they come in, Lumley, throw them out; and if I hear any row, I'll come up here with a cane, and they'll be sorry for themselves!"

And Kildare strode away. A loud cheer from the juniors followed him. Never had the captain of St. Jim's been more popular with the School House fellows than at that moment.

"Bravo, Kildare!"

"Hurrah!"

you are talking to an eagle, then it's an object."

"Eh?"

"If you're using an instrument, then it's in the ablative case," pursued Grimes brightly. "I s'pose that refers to chaps usin' saws and hammers and such. But wot seems queerest to me is that the Latins used to talk to their tables."

"Bai Jove!"

"Used to what?" asked Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Talk to their tables," said Grimes.

"Funny, ain't it?"

"Who told you that?" gasped Manners.

"Master Lumley-Lumley did."

"He must have been pulling your leg, then, you ass! I've never heard of the Latins talking to their tables," said Blake in astonishment.

"Master Lumley said so, and he knows," said Grimes, with perfect faith in his instructor. "There ain't any articles in Latin, so you call a table an object. And when you want to talk to it, you say mensa. I ain't surprised you're larking. Master Lumley 'imself said it was all singular, and I think it is."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I s'pose I shall get used to it in time," said Grimes. "But what knocks me over is, wot a funny lot them Latins

"Oh, my hat!"

"Isn't that right?" asked Grimes anxiously.

"I guess so; but call it the accusative case, for goodness' sake!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"I don't mind," said Grimes. "I'll call it what you like, Master Lumley."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Gwimey is a vewy obligin' pupil, Lumley, deah boy!"

"What's rogina?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"A queen," said Grimes promptly;

"and if you punch her nose—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then she's reginam."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "Grimey, you're going on the right way to sweep off all the giddy prizes! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But if you buy her a table," continued Grimes, "then you say mensa."

"What!"

"That's right, ain't it?"

"Oh, crumbs!" said his instructor.

"My mistake, p'raps," said Grimes anxiously. "But I'm almost sure you said that mensa means buy a table, Master Lumley."

"By a table—by, with, or from!" shrieked Lumley-Lumley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, give Grimey a rest!" said Monty

Lowther. "Let him sleep on it! To-morrow morning he will be telling us lots of things we don't know about Latin. It would be good practice for you, Grimes, to talk to your tutor in Latin, and I can give you a tip. When you address Lumley, you say anser—vocateive case, anser, just the same—and that will be the correct form of addressing Lumley."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, cheese it!" said Lumley-Lumley, laughing.

"But I think that's a good idea, Master Lumley," said Grimes. "Anser—"

"Eh?"
"Anser!" said Grimes. "I don't know what it means—"

"It means a goose, you fathead!"

"Oh!" said Grimes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare looked into the Common-room.

"Bed!" he said. "Grimes, your bed is next to Lumley-Lumley's in the dorm. Buzz off, you kids!"

And the juniors went up to their dormitories.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. A Dormitory Rag.

GRIMES did not fall asleep very soon.

There was the usual buzz of talk in the dormitory after lights-out; and when it died away, and the Fourth-Formers had dropped off to sleep one by one, Grimes remained awake. He lay very quiet, thinking.

The change in his way of life was great, and it had come so suddenly that he had had no time to get used to it.

Lumley-Lumley had given him no hint of his intentions until he had obtained his father's consent and assistance in carrying out his project.

The previous day Grimes had risen to go to the grocer's shop and take down the shutters as usual. To-day he was a St. Jim's fellow, dressed in Eton's, learning Latin; and, what was most surprising of all, on friendly terms with the best fellows in the Lower School. With a very few exceptions, all the St. Jim's fellows had been decent to him. Grimes was grateful.

And yet perhaps the change in his life did not wholly satisfy him. He had been taken away from all he knew, all he understood. His old pals—Pilcher, the butcher boy; and Craggs, the chemist's boy—would be far enough off from him now.

The little garret in River Lane had been bare enough and poor enough, but it had been his home. He had had some prospect of rising in his trade; what his new prospects might be he did not know.

He had been following a useful calling. His new life undoubtedly had its advantages, but he did not see that it was equally useful. He would not feel dissatisfied, for he felt that that would smack of ingratitude to his pal and protector.

But he wondered, as he lay there, whether, in his heart of hearts, he really preferred being a St. Jim's fellow or Mr. Sands' grocer-boy. He could hardly tell.

He was dozing off at last. Eleven had rung out from the clock-tower, and the Fourth Form dormitory was very silent.

There was a slight sound in the stillness, but Grimes did not notice it. He was gliding away into slumber.

Suddenly he started up, with a wild yell.

Swoosh! Splash! Splash!

A shower of icy water descended upon him in the darkness.

"Yaroo!" roared Grimes.

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He leaped up in bed.

There was a faint sound of a chuckle in the darkness.

It was drowned by Grimes' terrific bellow:

"Ow! Ah! Ow! Yowk!"

"Gweat Scott! What's the mattah?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, starting out of his sleep and sitting up in bed. "What's that awful wow?"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Is that you, Gwimes?"

"Yes!" gasped the unhappy Grimes.

"Wake up! Jump up, all of you! It's raining, and the roof's given in!"

"Wats!"

"I'm drenched!" roared Grimes.

"Ow!"

"Gweat Scott! It must be a wag!"

"A—a what?"

"Gussy means a rag!" chuckled Jack Blake. "Anybody got a match?"

Reilly struck a match and lighted a candle-end. The glimmer of light showed the unfortunate Grimes standing beside his bed, his pyjamas dripping with water, and water running down his face from his drenched hair. He was rubbing the water out of his eyes.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "What a rotten trick! Towel yourself down, my son, or you'll catch cold!"

"Right-ho!" said Grimes.

And he caught up a towel and began to towel away industriously. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped out of bed.

"What feahful wottah thwew that watah ovah Gwimes?" he exclaimed.

There was no reply to the question. Levison and Mellish, upon whom suspicion immediately turned, were lying apparently fast asleep, breathing heavily.

"Levison!" shouted Blake.

Levison opened his eyes and yawned.

"Hallo!" he said drowsily. "What's the row? 'Tain't rising-bell yet!"

"Did you chuck that water over Grimes?"

"What water? Hallo! You look wet, Grimes?"

"I am wet!" gasped Grimes, towelling away. "I say, it was a rotten trick. I might catch cold. Ow! If you did it, Master Levison, I'll trouble you to get outer bed and put your 'ands up."

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

"I don't know anything about it," said Levison.

"Was it you, Mellish?" asked Blake.

"Don't know anything about it," said Mellish.

"Well, whoever it was, he funks owning up!" said Digby contemptuously.

Levison turned red.

"I don't know about that," he said. "I'm not afraid to own up. If you're so mighty particular to know, I did it. I thought the grocer might want washin'!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish.

"Oh, you did it, did you?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Then you will kindly get out of bed, Levison, and take a feathful thwashin'!"

"Rats!" said Levison.

"You leave it to me," said Grimes. "I can manage him, Master D'Arcy."

"He's biggah than you, deah boy."

"I guess he's bigger than you, too, Gussy," grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"That is a different mattah, my deah Lumlay. I shall have vevy gweat pleasure in givin' Levison a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, go home!" said Levison, yawning.

Grimes finished towelling himself. He came over to Levison's bed.

"You'll get up!" he said.

"I think not," said Levison.

"You've drenched me with cold water,

and I ain't done nothing to you," said Grimes. "You'll get out of bed, Master Levison, and put your 'ands up!"

"Not this evening," drawled Levison.

"Some other evening."

"If you funk it—"

"Thank you, I don't fight with grocers!"

"You'll fight with this grocer!" said Grimes. "If you funk it, I'll swamp you with water, same as you did me. That's fair!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

"Can't oblige you," said Levison.

"I'm rather particular about soiling my hands, you know."

Grimes did not reply; he turned to the nearest washstand.

As he laid his hands on the jug Levison leaped out of bed on the other side. He saw that the new junior was in deadly earnest.

"Don't you bring that water near me!" he roared.

"Will you put your 'ands up, then?"

"Yes, you cad—and give you the lickin' of your life!" said Levison between his teeth.

"I'm willing to take that, if you can give it to me, Master Levison," said Grimes.

"Hold on!" said Jack Blake. "We'll have this thing in order. Levison, you've acted like a rotten cad! A rag is all very well; but drenching a chap with cold water when he's asleep isn't a rag—it's rotten hooliganism! What you want is a jolly good hiding; and I hope Grimes will give you one!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, don't jaw at me!" said Levison.

"I'm ready for the grocer cad, and I'm willing to give him all he wants. When I'm done with him he'll wish he'd stayed at home in the grocer's shop, sanded the sugar."

"I've never sanded no sugar!" said Grimes indignantly.

"And mixing up water with the butter to make it weigh!" said Levison.

"I ain't never done so!"

"We know you haven't, Grimey," said Blake. "Don't mind what the cad says. I'll be your second, Grimey—"

"I guess you won't!" said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. "I'm going to be Grimey's second. Make a ring, and let 'em have it out in style."

"Better leave it till to-morrow, and have it out in the gym," yawned Digby.

"I'll thrash the grocer now," said Levison.

"I'm ready!" said Grimes.

The whole Form were awake now, and very few of them were averse to a little scrap in the dormitory. Some of the fellows sat up in bed, and others turned out to form a ring.

Candle-ends were lighted, and stuck on washstands, and a blanket was laid along the door to prevent any tell-tale rays of light from escaping into the corridor. Grimes and Levison donned their trousers, but no other garments, and then they faced each other in the midst of the circle of juniors in pyjamas and nightshirts.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was Grimes' second, and Mellish acted for Levison. Their bare feet made little sound on the floor as they moved. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had constituted himself referee and timekeeper, produced his famous twenty-five guinea ticker.

"Weady, deah boys?" he asked.

"Yes," growled Levison.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy!" said Grimes.

"Time!"

And then there was a chorus.

"Go it, Grimes!"

Not a voice was raised for the cad of the Fourth.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Fight to a Finish.

TIME!

Levison advanced to the attack, his eyes gleaming over his clenched fists. Grimes met him steadily. Grimes knew at a glance that Levison was not likely to be so easy an opponent as Percy Mellish had been. Levison was harder than Mellish. He was in better condition, and he was a good boxer.

Levison seldom resorted to fisticuffs, preferring slyer and safer methods of wreaking his dislike upon fellows he had trouble with. But he had looked over Grimes carefully, and thought the matter out, and he believed that he could lick the grocer. And if he could lick Grimes to start with, his victory would give him a great advantage in persecuting the new boy.

The juniors looked on with keen interest as the first round started. They were curious to see how the grocer would shape. They had a pardonable belief that in boxing, as most other things, the real article was to be found only in public schools.

Their sympathy was with Grimes, as the injured party, and also because Levison was generally unpopular in the Form. But there were few present who did not expect to see Levison walk over the grocer.

And in the first round Levison certainly had the advantage. He had more science than Grimes. After a good deal of sparring, Grimes was knocked back into the arms of his second at the end of the round.

"Time, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

Grimes sank upon a bed, gasping. Levison, with a sneering grin, leaned against the wall.

"Had enough, grocer?" he asked.

"No!" gasped Grimes.

"You won't be fit to take down the shutters to-morrow after Levison has finished with you!" giggled Mellish.

"I ain't done yet!" said Grimes.

Lumley-Lumley sponged his heated face.

"Keep him at arm's length, Grimey," he whispered, "and let him have that drive with the right. Let him have it on the mark."

Grimes nodded.

"Yes, Master Lumley; I think I can beat him."

"I guess you've got to! If you let him beat you, I'll lick you myself!" growled Lumley-Lumley.

Grimes grinned.

"Time!" said D'Arcy.

The two adversaries walked up briskly enough. Levison attacked again in the same way, but he did not find Grimes quite so easy to handle this time. Grimes gave ground for a time, and then suddenly let out his right when Levison wasn't looking for it.

Levison caught Grimes' hard knuckles on the chin, and he fairly flew backwards, seeing more stars than were ever revealed by the telescope of Herschell or Sir Robert Ball.

Crash!

Levison landed on his back, and lay there, panting. There was a yell!

"Well hit, Grimey!"

"Count, Gussy!" shouted Blake.

"Count, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Count!" roared the juniors.

"Undah the cires—"

Blake jerked the timekeeper's watch away, and began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—"

Levison sprang up.

But for the delay of Arthur Augustus

D'Arcy in starting to count, Levison would certainly have been counted out. As it was, he looked extremely groggy as he renewed the round.

Grimes could have knocked him flying if he had chosen, but he contented himself with acting on the defensive till time was called. At the call of time, Levison staggered into Mellish's arms, and Mellish helped him to a bed, where he sat down.

Lumley-Lumley sponged Grimes' face.

"You silly ass!" he said politely.

"Eh?" said Grimes.

"What do you mean by it, you fat-head?"

"Oh, Master Lumley—"

"You could have knocked him into a cocked hat, and you let him off, you duffer!" growled Lumley-Lumley. "Do you think he would have let you off?"

"I s'pose not," murmured Grimes.

"Ass! Of course he wouldn't!"

"I think I can 'andle 'im all right, Master Lumley."

"Time!"

The third round started. Levison pressed the fighting. But Grimes was warming to the work now, and he pressed as hard as Levison, and so it was hot enough in the third round. The two juniors gave and received punishment, but at the end of the round it was clear that Levison had had the worst of it.

He was panting breathlessly as he sat down at the call of time. Grimes was breathing very hard, but it was easily to be seen that he was not nearly so pumped as his adversary.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "Gwimes is goin' to win, you fellows!"

"I guess I could have told you that!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

The fourth round was hard and fast. Hammer and tongs they went at it, amid growing excitement among the juniors. All the fellows were out of bed now, watching.

In their keen interest in the combat, the juniors forgot that they were in dorm, and supposed to be in bed, and that it was past eleven o'clock.

They clapped, and shouted encouragement to the combatants, with growing enthusiasm. It was at the close of the fourth round that Grimes brought his right into play with that heavy drive Levison was learning to know the weight of.

His hard knuckles crashed upon Levison's jaw with a crash that seemed to loosen every tooth in the junior's head. Levison went reeling backwards, and fell.

"Time!" said Arthur Augustus.

He called "Time!" again, but Levison did not move. Mellish was kneeling by his side, and he looked round with a scowl.

"Time!" repeated D'Arcy.

"My man's done!" said Mellish.

"Grimey wins!" yelled Lumley-Lumley. "Hurrah!"

"Good old Grimes!"

"Bravo!"

"Hold on!" gasped Blake. "We'll have the prefects here if you make such a thundering row. My hat! Cave!"

The handle of the door turned. The Fourth-Formers made a wild rush for their beds.

The door swung open, and Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, stood looking in with a stern brow.

He looked upon a very peculiar sight. Juniors were vanishing into bed on all sides. One or two, quicker than the others, had dragged the bedclothes over them, and were snoring loudly.

Others were plunging in, and some were sprawling on the floor, knocked over in the wild rush for the beds. Levison was still gasping on his back, and Grimes was standing, gasping, too. Arthur Augustus stood, watch in hand, quite taken by surprise.

"Boys!" came Mr. Railton's deep voice.

"Bai Jove!"

Snore! came from several beds. Mr. Railton could hardly suppress a smile. The hope that he would be taken in by that snoring showed a trustful innocence on the part of the snorers which was really touching.

"Boys, what does this mean?"

It was not really necessary to ask what it meant. Levison staggered to his feet, dabbling savagely at his nose with his handkerchief. He had been licked, but he was so sore and exhausted that he had hardly enough energy left to be furious. He reeled towards his bed.

"You have been fighting!" the Housemaster exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" said Grimes.

"Every boy in the dormitory will take two hundred lines, and stay in the Form-room to-morrow afternoon till they are written out!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "Now, go back to bed!"

The juniors turned in. Mr. Railton made a collection of the candle-ends—quite an extensive collection—and retired from the dormitory.

Blake chuckled when he was gone.

"Two hundred lines each isn't so bad, considering," he said. "If it had been Linton it would have been lickings! How are you feeling, Grimey?"

"Pretty rotten!" said Grimes frankly.

"Never mind; I expect the other man is feeling rottener!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Grimes sat up in bed.

"Levison," he called out—"Master Levison!"

"What do you want, you grocer cad?" came a growning voice from Levison's bed.

"It's all over now!" said Grimes.

"We've 'ad a good scrap, and I don't bear no malice! I don't want to be nobody's enemy. If you're willing to be friends, Master Levison, why, I'm more'n willing! That's all I've got to say!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"Yaas; I wergard that as put vewy decently, Gwimes, deah boy! I quite approve of your wemarks, Gwimes!"

What do you say, Levison, deah boy?"

"I'll make the grocer cad sorry for this!" growled Levison. "That's what I say! As for being friends with him, I don't go into grocer's shops for my friends! Ow!"

"I wergard you as a wotahh, Levison!"

"Orlright!" said Grimes. "I'm sorry it 'appened, and I don't bear no malice! That's all. Good-night, Master Lumley, and all!"

"Good-night, Master Grimes!"

And the Fourth Form settled down to sleep. It was time! The new boy had had quite enough excitement for one day; but there was to be still more excitement at St. Jim's for Grimes of the Fourth.

THE END.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 247.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
is entitled:
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MARJORIE'S PERIL!

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

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Girls Go Ahead.

"PHEW!" It was Bob Cherry of the Remove at Greyfriars who said "Phew!" and he said it with emphasis. He had glanced in passing at the notice-board in the hall.

There were often notices on that board that concerned the juniors—especially the cricket notices relating to their own matches. Bob had glanced at it quite carelessly, but suddenly his glance had become fixed, and he stared blankly at the board and said:

"Phew!"

The sight of Bob Cherry standing before the notice-board with his hands in his pockets and his eyes and mouth wide open naturally attracted attention.

Several more juniors strolled up, and there were polite inquiries as to whether Bob had selected that spot to have a fit, or whether he was off his rocker. But Bob Cherry only said:

"Phe-e-e-ew!"

"What's the matter, you image?" demanded Harry Wharton. "What's the—"

"Look!"

Wharton looked, and he too said "Phew!" and stared blankly at the notice-board.

"My only hat!" said Frank Nugent, as he fixed his astonished gaze upon the notice on the board. "This licks everything!"

"The lickfulness is terrific, my worthy chum!" murmured Hurree Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The charming misses are going it strongly!"

The notice that so amazed the juniors of the Remove was written in a very neat and graceful feminine hand. It did not need the signature at the bottom to tell the juniors that it was the work of Marjorie Hazeldene.

Things had taken a somewhat peculiar turn at the old school in the past few days. The discovery of some flaw in the foundations of Cliff House, the girls' school on the coast, near Greyfriars, had made it necessary for Miss Penelope Primrose, the head-mistress, to send her fair pupils away for a time, and they had been sent to Greyfriars temporarily. Most of the boys had welcomed them, but there had been trouble in some ways.

Marjorie & Co. were not by any means new women, but they had shown a decided indisposition to follow tamely the lead of boys. They believed in "keeping their end up," as Miss Clara termed it in the boy-language she had learned at Greyfriars, and from the first it was clear that they weren't going to take second place.

The boys, of course, intended to treat them awfully well. They were prepared even to play cricket with them—though the girls' cricket, according to Bob Cherry, might have made an angel weep.

They were thinking of letting them into the debating club, and extending to them the membership of the Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society—in fact, there was no limit to the good intentions of the

juniors—but— There was a big "But"!

Perhaps there was a hint of patronage in all these good intentions—perhaps the girls felt that they were being tolerated, and treated as weaker persons—which, of course, could not be endured.

At all events, Marjorie & Co. were "on their own," and insisted upon being on neither superior nor inferior terms. They were to be equals, or nothing. Hence the surprising notice on the board.

The notice was addressed to girls, but it was read by the boys with great interest. It was worded somewhat in the style of the notices Wharton, as captain of the Form, was in the habit of putting up for the edification of the Remove.

"NOTICE!"

"A meeting will be held in No. 2 box-room at seven sharp to discuss a question of great importance to all of us. No boys admitted."

"(Signed) MARJORIE HAZELDENE,
"Capt."

After the word "boys" another hand—doubtless Miss Clara's—had scratched in the words "or dogs." The notice read thus: "No boys or dogs admitted."

Nugent burst into a chuckle.

"This is funny!" said Wharton. "They're picking up our manners and customs wonderfully. I like the 'seven sharp.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No boys or dogs admitted!" grinned Bob Cherry. "That's a little bit personal, isn't it?"

"Oh, the dogs have been put in for a joke!"

"I wonder what the meeting's about?" said Nugent, chuckling. "I hear that the girls are rather edgewise about not having separate studies like ourselves. It may be a deputation to the Head they're thinking of, to allow them separate studies—or perhaps it's to plan a raid!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly good idea to bust up the meeting," remarked Skinner. "What do you say, Bulstrode?"

"Good wheeze!"

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton. "Let 'em alone. Why shouldn't they hold a meeting if they like?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "They only want to talk, the little dears—and let 'em talk, I say. They're safer talking than playing cricket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Cherry—"

It was a feminine voice that made that remark. The juniors swung round quickly.

A charming girl, with golden curls and vivacious blue eyes, was looking at Bob with great severity, and making mysterious passes in the air with her clenched hands. It was Clara Trevlyn, Marjorie's right-hand man—of rather girl—and the liveliest of the Cliff House party.

Bob looked at her in astonishment. She was winding one fist over another, as if unrolling an imaginary skein, and for the moment he did not understand.

"Did—did—did you speak to me?" he said.

"Yes. Are you looking for a thick ear?" demanded Miss Clara wrathfully.

"A—a—a—a—a thick ear!" stammered Bob.

"Yes. If you are, there's one ready," said Miss Clara.

"My—my hat!"

Bob understood at last what the mysterious revolutions of the little lady's clenched hands meant—she was putting up her fists to box!

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors, and Miss Clara looked round indignantly.

"Indeed, I mean it, Cherry. You have spoken disrespectfully—"

"Oh, no! I didn't mean to, really!"

said Bob Cherry earnestly.

Miss Clara, plighted, lowered her fists. "Oh, very well; I will let you off this time," she said magnanimously. "We're sorry we can't let you boys into this meeting. You see, we're going to discuss some important subjects."

"Something new in hats?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, no!"

"The latest thing in doing the hair?"

Miss Clara sniffed.

"We have much more important matters than such things as that to think of. Of course, you boys would be noisy, and interrupt the proceedings. We might let two or three nice boys come in and look on, if they promised not to talk."

"They wouldn't have much chance, would they?"

Miss Clara tossed her head and walked away.

"Narrow escape for you, Bob," said Harry Wharton, laughing, as he passed his arm through his chum's. "You nearly had the licking of your life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'd better be off," said Nugent, as the school clock chimed out half-past six. "We've got to get to the village and back before looking-up."

"Right you are."

The chums of the Remove went out into the Close.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Haunted Box-room.

BULSTRODE chuckled as he saw the chums of No. 1 Study cross the Close towards the gates. He was standing by a window, with his hands in his pockets, thinking. Skinner was sitting in the window-seat, and looking at him curiously.

"What's the joke?" asked Skinner.

"Wharton and his lot have gone out. I was thinking that it was a good chance for a jape, now that those interfering puppies are out of the way."

"About the girls' meeting in the box-room, you mean?"

"Yes. I was thinking that it would be a good joke to bust it up," said Bulstrode, grinning. "I don't see why we shouldn't rag them, if we choose. What's it to do with Wharton? Wharton has been too high-and-mighty for a long time,

and I don't see why he should dictate to us."

"Of course not. What's the idea?"

"Well, they're meeting in No. 2 box-room at seven. They won't allow any fellows at the meeting. You know there's a lot of empty packing-cases in the room. We could shove some of the chaps into them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The big case that Miss Locke's piano came in is there," said Bulstrode. "It would hold three or four of us easily. When they're in the midst of the giddy meeting, we would give a fearful yell, and make them jump out of their boots."

Skinner chuckled.

"Good! Let's get there before they start. Suppose we take Stott and Snoot with us? Four will be enough."

Bulstrode nodded, and they hurried away. In five minutes the four of them were in No. 2 box-room. It was a room little used. At one end was a stack of old boxes, and close to them a huge and strong packing-case. There was ample room in the packing-case for the four Removites. Bulstrode grinned with satisfaction as he saw it.

"This is simply ripping!" he said. "You see, there's one end knocked out. We can turn it over so that the open end is on the floor."

"Then how are we to get into it?" asked Stott.

"Ass! Get into it while we're turning it over—turn it over on ourselves," said Bulstrode. "It will touch the floor all round us, and hide us completely. Then when they're holding the meeting we can walk along, making the case go with us by pushing against it from inside. If that doesn't make 'em shriek—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of feminine voices in the distance.

"Quick!" whispered Bulstrode.

The four juniors grasped the big case, and turned it over themselves. It covered them wholly as the edges touched the floor, and there were sufficient rifts in the wood to allow of light and air to enter. The practical jokers crouched very quietly in the packing-case, and almost held their breath as a light footstep entered the box-room.

Marjorie Hazeldene looked round the room.

The golden sunset was gleaming in at the window, and in the light the girl looked very charming. She had soft brown hair and soft brown eyes, and the lines of her figure were grace itself. Clara followed her in, with Milly Brown and North Flynn.

"First in the field!" said Miss Clara. "This is a ripping place for a meeting, without any danger of being interrupted by noisy boys."

Marjorie laughed.

"I was not quite sure about excluding boys," she said, "but then that unpleasant Bulstrode might have come, and that stupid boy Stott."

"And that dreadful Skinner," said Milly.

"Yes, perhaps it was best, upon the whole. Here they come!"

The "they" referred to the girls. The greater part of the Cliff House pupils then staying at Greyfriars attended the meeting. The room was soon pretty crowded, and there was a merry chatter of tongues ere the clock chimed out the hour.

The girls were mostly excited. They had seen the Greyfriars juniors holding meetings, and they meant to hold a meeting too; but most of them had very vague ideas what the meeting was about.

"Ladies and gentlemen," began Marjorie, as soon as everybody was present.

"There aren't any gentlemen here," said Milly Brown. "Keep to the subject, dear."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Marjorie,

firmly—"I have heard my papa make speeches, and he always begins like that—if we are to hold meetings the same as the boys, we shall have to be business-like, like them. Ladies and gentlemen, we are met upon a most important occasion."

"Hear, hear!" said Miss Clara.

"The foundations of our own school having proved to be—to be—"

"Rocky," suggested Clara.

"Having proved to be rocky," said Marjorie with a nod, "we are taking up a temporary residence at Greyfriars. Most of the boys are nice—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But they all show a disposition to regard girls as something inferior to themselves—something to be encouraged and protected. Of course, that is all—"

"Piffle," said Clara.

"Oh, Clara!"

"Piffle!" repeated Miss Clara firmly. "Go on!"

"I will say nonsense," said Marjorie Hazeldene. "It is all nonsense. Girls can look after themselves as much as boys can. Why can't we have studies, and

"Shame!"

"We're going to make them take us seriously. Of course, there's no reason why a girl shouldn't be as brave as a boy, and take just the same risks, and—that sort of thing. We're going to show them that we've got as much courage, as much nerve, as much pluck, as much— Oooohohohoho!"

Marjorie's voice trailed off in a shriek.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Clara, in alarm. "What's the matter, dear?"

"That—that packing-case!" said Marjorie faintly. "It moved!"

The startled girls all looked round at the big packing-case. It was still enough now. Clara laughed.

"Nonsense, dear! How could it move?"

"I am sure I saw it move."

"Stuff! I— My goodness!"

Miss Clara shrieked, and most of the girls shrieked, as the packing-case visibly moved. It moved towards them, without any visible means of volition, and the girls gazed at it startled and terror-struck.

"It's—it's haunted!" gasped Milly.

And there was another general shriek.



Miss Clara gave a sudden cry of relief, mingled with anger. She had caught sight of several pairs of boots under the moving packing-case. In shoving it along, Bulstrode & Co. raised it a little from the floor, and that gave them away.

have tea in our studies, the same as the juniors?"

"Echo answer why?" said Clara.

"Why shouldn't we have—have rags, the same as they do? We are just as lively as they are; perhaps not quite so strong, but ever so much cleverer."

"Hear, hear!"

"Why shouldn't we stand a feed in the dorm, and break bounds to get in the—"

"Grub," said Clara.

"Oh, Clara!"

"Grub! Go on!"

"To get in the—the eatables," said Miss Hazeldene. "I don't see any reason why we shouldn't. It would impress the boys. We've got to keep our end up. We've already beaten them at cricket, but they only laugh when they speak of that cricket match. The fact is, the boys don't take us seriously."

The girls had heard the juniors talk of a ghost at Greyfriars, and for the moment it really seemed as if they were in a haunted room. But Miss Clara gave a sudden cry of relief, mingled with anger. She had caught sight of several pairs of boots under the moving packing-case. In shoving it along, Bulstrode & Co. raised it a little from the floor, and that gave them away.

"Don't be afraid!" cried Clara. "It's a jape! There are boys in it!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Fairly Caught.

MISS CLARA recovered from her consternation in a moment. Bulstrode & Co., in the packing-case, giggled gleefully, and allowed the case to rest for a moment. In that moment Miss Clara acted promptly.

She ran towards the case, and pulled herself upon it, and sat there. The others, catching the idea, followed her example. In a few moments there were a dozen girls sitting on the packing-case, till there was not room for another. And when the juniors underneath essayed to shove it along again, they found that it would not move. The weight was too great for them to negotiate.

"Quick!" panted Clara. "Run downstairs, Milly, and get a hammer and some nails out of the workshop. Quick!"

Milly dashed away. It was not far to the room which the juniors who studied carpentry used as a workshop. In less than a minute Milly was back with a heavy hammer and a dozen large nails.

Dismay had fallen upon the unlucky jokers in the packing-case. They had intended to frighten the girls, and then to pitch the case over and get out; but things had not gone exactly as they had planned.

With the weight of half the meeting upon it, the packing-case was jammed down to the floor, and all their efforts could not shift it.

And an ominous sound of hammering told them it was being yet more securely fastened down.

"My hat," said Skinner, in dismay, "we're in for it!"

"Shove again, you fools!" said Bulstrode.

"It's no good; we can't get it over."

"See if you can bust your shoulder through the side!"

"Rats! Try your shoulder!"

"Look here, Skinner—"

"It's no good, Bulstrode. We're done in."

Bulstrode gritted his teeth, and made a last savage and determined effort to throw over the packing-case, but it was in vain. The case did not even shake. The weight upon it was too great, and the nails were being driven in now.

Through the wood, and deep into the floor, the nails were steadily driven; Miss Clara beginning at the corners, and then going round the box hammering away scientifically.

The girls were still shrieking, but it was with laughter now. The idea of the practical jokers being caught in their own trap struck them as comical.

From within the packing-case came muffled voices, which could not be distinguished in the loud hammering.

Knock, knock, knock!

Bulstrode gritted his teeth with rage. His vain effort to move the immovable case caused him to sink exhausted on the floor, and he was still gasping for breath when the knocking ceased.

Miss Clara had driven in the last nail. "There," exclaimed that young lady, dropping the hammer: "I've finished. The naughty boys are safe enough."

"Let us out!" roared Bulstrode.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn the box over!"

"Hear us snigger!" said Miss Clara.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Snigger!" repeated Clara obstinately.

"Hear us snigger, you chaps! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us out!"

"Go and eat coal—I mean coko?"

"Will you unfasten this box?"

"Can't be done, dear boy! The nails are driven in, and we couldn't get them out if we wanted to. We haven't any pincers."

Skinner gave a gasp inside the packing-case.

"My word! She's right! They couldn't get those nails out again!"

"What on earth are we to do?" muttered Stott.

Snoop began to whimper.

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"We shall be suffocated in here. It's all Bulstrode's fault!"

"Shut up!" roared the exasperated Bulstrode.

"Yes; but I say—"

Biff!

Bulstrode brought his elbow hard against Snoop's chest, and the whimperer fell on the floor with a bump. Bulstrode glared down at him.

"Keep there!" he snarled. "If you get up again, I'll knock you down!"

And Snoop remained on the floor. There wasn't enough room in the packing-case for free movement, and the four juniors were feeling very cramped and confined. It was hot, too—very hot. And the savage temper they were getting into made them hotter. But there was no escape.

Bulstrode kicked savagely on the side of the packing-case.

"Will you let us out, confound you?"

"Certainly not!" said Clara resolutely.

"You got in there of your own accord, and now you can stay there. You can stay there till some of your friends come and let you out. We will let the Remove know where to find you. Good-bye!"

Bulstrode yelled and threatened, but the girls, laughing almost hysterically, crowded out of the room, and the silence soon showed the trapped jokers that they were alone.

"My hat!" said Skinner. "They're going to tell the Remove. We shall have a crowd to come and look at us soon."

And Bulstrode groaned.

There was a patter of light footfalls in the room, and Bulstrode tapped eagerly on the wood. Someone had entered the box-room.

"I say, who is it?" he called out. "Get us out of this!"

There was a faint chuckle—a chuckle he knew. The unseen junior was Wun Lung, the little Celestial.

"Wun Lung," shouted Bulstrode, "help us out of this!"

"Who callee?"

"It is I, Bulstrode; I'm in the packing-case!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You Chinese beast—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get us out of this, or I'll skin you presently!" roared Bulstrode, in a fury.

The little Chinese chuckled again. He put his mouth to a knot-hole in the wood, to speak in his quaint, chuckling voice.

"No lettee out."

"You heathen rotter, I'll pulverise you!"

"No catches. Bulstrode beast—bully!" said Wun Lung complacently. "He knoockee Wun Lung's headee 'gainst dool. He say he cuttee off pigtail. He beast! Wun Lung no lettee out. Wun Lung teachee lesson!"

"I—I—I'll give you a bob if you let us out before the fellows come!"

"No lettee out."

"Five bob—half-a-sovereign, if you like!" said Bulstrode desperately.

"Lats!"

There was silence for some minutes—silence on the part of Wun Lung. The imprisoned juniors were noisy enough. Then the little Celestial became audible again. He plumped something down on the packing-case that clanged like metal.

"He's going to break it open!" said Stott hopefully.

But Bulstrode was silent. He had no such hope. There was a sound of knocking, and chips of wood flew. Wun Lung was knocking holes in the packing-case over their heads.

"What on earth's he doing?" muttered Skinner.

They soon discovered.

There were half a dozen holes gashed in the wood in a few minutes, and then there was a splash, as a vessel full of liquid was inverted over the packing-case.

Bulstrode gave a yell as a shower came from above. Ink was streaming through the holes in the packing-case—streaming in showers over the four unfortunate jokers. The little Celestial had emptied a can of ink over the packing-case.

The juniors yelled and squirmed as the inky shower descended upon them. All four of them were in Wun Lung's black books, for bullying and domineering over the little Celestial; but it was certain that Wun Lung had "got his own back" this time.

The little Chinaman doubled up in a fit of silent laughter as he heard the gasps and exclamations from the interior of the packing-case.

Then he glided from the room, and he passed on the stairs fellows who had heard the news, and who were coming up to have a look at the captured japers. The box-room gradually filled, but no one seemed to be in a hurry to tackle the packing-case and release the prisoners.

There were few fellows in the Remove who had not at one time or another experienced bullying or ragging of some sort at the hands of Bulstrode, and, as his own special chums were in the packing-case with him, there was no one to extend him a helping hand.

Billy Bunter was the last to arrive on the scene, and he tapped on the packing-case.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Let us out!"

"I say, will you stand me a feed if I let you out? I'm rather faint from want of nourishment, and I'm afraid the exertion will be too much for me unless I have a snack. Will you stand me a—Ow! Oh, really, Russell—"

Trevor, of the Remove, grasped the fat junior, and yanked him away from the case.

"You mind your own business!" he said.

"Oh, really, Trevor—" said Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles at his assailant. "Oh, really—"

"Seat!"

And Billy, seeing Trevor double up his fist, "scattered."

Later on, the prisoners were released from the packing-case, and, in a very dishevelled state, they tramped towards the dormitory, to the accompaniment of uproarious laughter from the watching juniors.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Clara Means Business.

"MARJORIE!"

"Where's Marjorie?"

Clara and Milly were looking everywhere for Marjorie. It was growing thick dusk in the Close, and the girls were not allowed out of doors after dark. The slim form of Marjorie came from out of the shadows of the trees, and Clara uttered an exclamation of relief.

"Oh, here you are!" she said. "I was beginning to think that something had happened to you. What is the matter, Marjorie?"

"Nothing, dear."

"Well, you look a little—what do they call it?—down in the mouth," said Clara, peering at her chum in the dusk. "Is it that dreadful Bulstrode again? Has he been talking to you?"

"Oh, no; I am all right! Let's go in!"

They went in, Clara still looking a little puzzled and concerned. Marjorie was worried about her brother, but she assumed an air of cheerfulness to ward off the questions of her friends.

The girls at Greyfriars had their meals in the Head's house, under the charge of Miss Locke, the Head's sister, who was a mistress at Cliff House. They went in to supper, and there was a subdued murmur of talk at the meal.

The "Co." were full of the new idea that had been broached at the meeting in the box-room—especially Clara. Clara

was a determined young lady, and she never gave up an idea when it had once taken possession of her.

"You haven't forgotten about the—the feed, Marjorie?" she whispered.

Marjorie started.

"Oh, Clara! The what?"

"The feed in the dorm," said Clara obstinately. "You know we arranged to have a feed in the dorm, the same as the boys do."

"But—but—"

"I suppose you're not going to funk it now?" whispered Clara. "Nonsense—I mean piffle! Why, the boys would laugh at us!"

"Faith, and they would!" said Miss Flynn. "It's a good idea entirely!"

"But—but the school shop is closed," said Alice.

Miss Clara sniffed scornfully.

"Who's talking about the school shop? We're going to get the provisions—I mean the grub—from the village."

"Good!" said Milly Brown.

"But that will be breaking bounds, Clara dear."

"That's exactly the idea!" said Clara triumphantly. "If it wasn't breaking bounds, I shouldn't like the idea at all! The boys break bounds to go down to the village for grub, and we've got to show that we can do the same as the boys. You see, that's keeping our end up!"

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"We'll toss odd man out, to see who's to go," said Clara. "We can do that in the dorm. The girl who goes can be let out of a window downstairs—I've heard Cherry say how they have done it. Then you get over the wall and scoot—"

"Oh, Clara!"

"And scoot down to Friardale," said Clara firmly. "That's the—the wheeze. Don't say any more—Miss Locke is looking."

And the famous project was not discussed any more till bedtime. Marjorie was of a somewhat less adventurous disposition than Clara, though in a time of trial her character would have proved the stronger of the two, but she entered into the scheme keenly enough. As leader of the Co. she could not decline to do so, and, though she had her doubts, she was not afraid.

Miss Locke put out the lights in the girls' dormitory, and she bade them good-night and closed the door without a suspicion. Five minutes had not elapsed when Miss Clara sat up in bed.

"Marjorie—Marjorie!"

"Yes, dear?"

"We've got to toss up," said Miss Clara. "Odd man out—I mean, odd girl out!"

"No, no; don't do that!" said Marjorie quickly. "It's not necessary."

"But how are we to settle—"

"I shall go," said Marjorie. "I ought to go, as leader."

"Oh, very well, if you volunteer. Milly and I will come and help you out."

The three girls dressed hastily and stole silently to the door. The dormitory they occupied was the old Remove dormitory—the Remove sleeping in the Upper Fourth quarters while the girls were at Greyfriars.

From the passage outside an unfrequented staircase gave access to the back of the house, where there was a window in an obscure alcove which the Renovites had sometimes used for leaving the house. The three girls stole down the passage, with their hearts beating violently.

It was all very well to plan this sort of thing in the broad daylight, and even to discuss it in whispers at a crowded supper-table, but in a late hour of the night it was a different matter.

The passage was dark—the lights there being turned out at the same time as the lights in the dormitories.

The girls crept down the stairs, feeling their way in the dense darkness, and reached the window. It was unfastened.

Clara opened it softly and peered out into the gloom.

"Come on, kid!" said Clara. "Out you go!"

She dropped from the window into the grass beneath, and the others followed. Miss Clara reached up carefully and closed the window. Then the three girls crossed the gardens and made their way towards the wall which gave upon the Friardale road. Little did they dream that as they turned away a spiteful face was flattened against the glass of the window.

"My hat!" murmured Bulstrode, his eyes gleaming with malevolent pleasure. "I hardly expected a chance like this! Shut me up in a packing-case and set the whole Form laughing at me, will they? It will be weeks before the fellows leave off chipping me! Let 'em stay out!"

And Bulstrode fastened the window securely, and crept back to bed, chuckling.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Breaking Bounds.

"HERE'S the place, Clara?"

"I've heard Cherry say they climbed up a tree close to the wall."

"But there are a lot of trees close to the wall."

"It's where the ivy is."

"The ivy is all along."



Bulstrode and Skinner were chatting by the window, and they chuckled as they saw the chums of No. 1 cross the Close towards the gates.

"My goodness! I wish it wasn't so dark! We must find it somehow."

"Here it is," said Milly Brown. "I remember now—it was pointed out to me. It's this old, gnarled tree. I suppose it's easy to climb, with all these big lumps on the trunk. I'll help you, Marjorie."

"But—but the other side of the wall—"

"Did you think I'd forgotten the rope, you goose?" said Clara, uncoiling a thick rope from around her waist. "I bought this of Gosling specially."

"Help me up, then."

"Right-ho!" said Miss Clara cheerfully. "I'll give you a bunk up!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Rats! Are you ready?"

"Ye-es, I'm ready."

Marjorie took hold of the rough, weather-beaten trunk of the old tree rather gingerly. She was afraid for her frock and for her hands; but it was too late to think of that now.

Clara and Milly loyally bunked up their friend, and Marjorie clambered on the

sloping, knotted trunk and reached the lower-branches. With the aid of them, and of the strong tendrils of the ivy growing close to the tree, she managed to reach a branch on a level with the top of the wall.

"All right?" asked Clara.

"Ye-es, I think so."

"Then I'll come and help you with the rope. Give me a bunk, Milly!"

"Ye-es—miud my hat!"

"You shouldn't have put a hat on—I haven't. If I kick your hat—"

"If you kick my hat I won't speak to you!"

"Rats! Give me a bunk."

Clara joined Marjorie on the wall, and the rope was fastened to a branch. It dropped on the outer side of the wall into the road.

"Down you go, Marjorie."

"How dark it looks down there!" said Marjorie. "And how lonely!"

"Yes, but it will be dark and lonely till morning, and then it will be too late to go," said Clara practically.

"I know, dear. I will go."

"If you'd rather not—"

"Oh, no; I'll go! The boys would say we were afraid."

"Then go it, dear. Milly and I will come out in exactly an hour to help you in again, and if you're not here we'll wait."

And Marjorie swung herself down the rope into the road.

As her slim figure disappeared into the shadows towards Friardale, Clara descended from the tree, leaving the rope hanging inside the wall, where it was quite hidden in the ivy.

The two girls returned quietly towards the house. They reached the window from which they had emerged, and Clara tried to open it.

It did not move.

She tried again, and again, but the sash was fast. The girl turned pale.

"What is the matter?" whispered Milly. "Can't you open it?"

"No; it's jammed, or something."

"Oh, dear! Let me try!"

Milly tried, with the same result. The two girls looked at one another in utter consternation.

"It's not jammed," said Milly, in a low voice. "It's been fastened."

"My goodness!"

"Somebody has seen it unfastened, and put it right—or else some wretch has done it for a joke. Oh, dear! Whatever shall we do?"

"We—we had better wait for Marjorie to come back."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Well, it's no good crying! That won't open the window."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

The two girls, on the verge of tears, waited in the darkness—waited for Marjorie to come back. Though, as far as they could see, the return of Marjorie would not help them much. What was to be done?

Marjorie Hazeldene, quite ignorant of the catastrophe which had overwhelmed the Co., turned her back on Greyfriars with a beating heart, and plunged into the shadows of Friardale Lane.

She kept resolutely on, and darkness swallowed up the school behind her. Suddenly, in a part of the lane where the great trees met overhead and shut out every glimmer of a star, her eye caught a gleam of red light.

For a moment she thought it must be a light in some cottage window, and it gave her a sense of being less lonely. But that was only for a moment.

She remembered that there were no cottages near; and, besides, the light was red and glowing, and she soon saw that it was close at hand.

A smell of tobacco on the wind warned her of what it was. It was a cigar-end, THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 247.

and the pleasant scent of the tobacco told that it was a good cigar.

The girl stopped, trembling. A good cigar indicated someone decent, no doubt, and not the imaginary tramp she feared to meet. But a meeting in that lonely place, at such an hour, with anybody, was sufficiently alarming.

The light was moving, and it was steadily coming towards her. The girl stood rooted to the ground. A burly, uncouth figure loomed up in the gloom, and a husky voice exclaimed:

"Lummy!"

The girl's heart gave a wild throb. It was a tramp after all.

The cigar was evidently a stolen one. The man's clothes were ragged and foul-smelling, his dimly-seen face was bristly with unshaven beard, his eyes were red and bleared with drinking.

"Oh, Heaven!" murmured Marjorie, petrified.

She stood spellbound, unable to move a limb, while the tramp peered at her with astonished eyes in the gloom.

"Lummy!" he said again. "It's a gal! Lummy!"

He was evidently astounded by the meeting. He was too surprised to do anything but blink at the girl in the darkness.

"Fancy meetin' you!" he chuckled at last. "Ave yer lost yer way, my dear?"

"No—oh, no!" panted Marjorie. "Please let me pass—oh, please!"

"Lummy!" The ruffian chuckled again, apparently amused by her terror. "You ain't in such a hurry. 'Old on!"

Marjorie turned towards the school, but in a moment he was in her path. His red eyes were gleaming evilly.

"No, yer don't," he remarked. "I dessay you ain't come out without your purse, missy. I'm smokin' me last cigar. I got it cheap," he chuckled; "but it's the last. P'raps you kin spare a quid to 'elp a poor cove on his way."

"No, indeed, no, I—"

"Lummy! I—"

The tramp broke off suddenly. He had placed himself between the girl and the school, and cut off the first attempt at flight. But Marjorie was desperate. She turned suddenly, and before he could catch her she was running towards the village.

The tramp uttered an oath.

"Stop! Stop, I tell yer!"

But the terrified girl only ran the faster. Thud, thud, thud! The heavy footsteps of the tramp rang behind her, and filled her with terror. She ran, and ran, gasping for breath, her head swivelling with terror, with only one thought in her mind—to reach the village and escape the clutches of that horrible man.

Closer came the footsteps. She ran swiftly, but not so swiftly as the pursuer. He was gaining upon her—easily!

Marjorie cast a wild glance towards the hedges. She thought of taking to the fields, but there was no time. But that would not have saved her. The footsteps were close behind; she could feel the hot breath laden with the fumes of gin, and it sickened her with disgust and fear.

Suddenly a form loomed up ahead, dim in the gloom. A lad in cap and overcoat was standing in the lane, looking back. He had heard the footsteps, and turned back to see what was the matter. Marjorie caught sight of the dim form, and gave a cry. It might be another enemy—but it might be a friend.

"Help, help! Oh, help!"

There was an exclamation of amazement.

"Marjorie!"

The girl could have shrieked with delight; she knew the voice.

"Harry! Save me!"

Harry Wharton was at her side in a moment. The junior was in cap and

overcoat, and carried a thick stick in his hand. The tramp, dashing up breathlessly, almost ran into Harry. He stopped, and backed away a little, as he saw that the girl was not alone.

Harry faced him with blazing eyes, his right hand gripping the stick hard.

"You scoundrel! Get back!"

The man hung back for a moment. He was out of breath. Marjorie clung almost fainting to the Greyfriars junior.

"Has he hurt you?" asked Harry, between his teeth.

"No! Oh, no! But he—he was following me to—to rob me."

"The hound!"

The tramp was coming on again, his red eyes glittering. He saw that he had only a boy to deal with.

"Lummy! If I don't smash you, young shaver—"

"Stand back!"

The tramp muttered a curse, and sprang forward, and Harry struck. His face was as hard as iron at that moment, and all the force that there was in his strong right arm he threw into the blow.

The stick crashed across the face of the ruffian, and he gave a fearful yell and staggered back, and dropped heavily into the road.

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

He stood with the stick ready for another blow; but the tramp did not rise. Marjorie was still clinging to him, and crying softly.

"Don't be afraid," said Harry; "it's all right. The brute can't hurt you now."

The tramp stirred, and sat up in the dust of the road. His face was white, save where a terrible red mark ran across it—across forehead, and nose, and cheek—a mark that would not soon be effaced.

Slowly he rose, and Harry Wharton stood ready; but the ruffian did not attack him. He was dazed and stupefied by the blow, and all the fight was taken out of him. He blinked at Harry with his red, evil eyes.

"You—you whelp!" he muttered. "I'll meet you again, perhaps, and then—"

Harry laughed scornfully.

"I'm not afraid of meeting you at any time, you cowardly brute."

The tramp muttered a savage oath, and turned, and lurched away in the darkness. He went unsteadily, with his hand to his face. Marjorie shuddered.

"Harry, how—how brave of you to face that fearful man!" she murmured.

The junior laughed lightly.

"Lucky I had the stick," he said, "though I should have given him a bit of a tussle, anyway, before he touched you, the brute! But—but what on earth are you doing out here this time of night, Marjorie?"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

At Dead of Night.

HARRY WHARTON looked at the girl in amazement as he put the question. In the excitement of the sudden meeting and the encounter with the tramp, he had not had time to think of it. Now he was overwhelmed with surprise. What could Marjorie possibly be doing out of bed and out of school at nearly eleven o'clock at night?

The girl coloured deeply.

"It—it was foolish of me to come out," she said. "I can see that. It seemed so different—thinking of it in the daytime."

"But—but where are you going?"

"To the village."

"Then you had better let me see you there," said Harry, a little drily. "There may be other tramps on the road."

"Thank you, Harry."

They walked on in silence for some minutes. Marjorie was still trembling, and Harry felt the hand that was resting

on his arm still shake. The junior was lost in wonder.

"You—you don't know what to think of me, Harry?" said the girl, with a short, uneasy laugh. "You can't guess what I'm going to the village for?"

"No, I can't, Marjorie."

"I'm going to the tuckshop."

"The—the tuckshop!"

"Yes. We—we intended to have a dormitory feed, as you boys do," said Marjorie bravely, "and—and I volunteered to go down for the—the—the grub."

Harry stared at her, and then burst into a laugh.

"Excuse me," he said, "but—but it's funny, you know. You—you little goose, to even think of such a thing!"

"Of course, it was silly," confessed Marjorie. "I shall never do anything of the sort again. It seemed so different in the daylight. Not that I'm exactly afraid," she added quickly. "Girls are as brave as boys, you know."

"Of course they are," said Harry, "but in a different way. This sort of thing isn't in a girl's line."

"No—no, I suppose not."

They entered the village, and paused at the tuckshop. It was closed, and very dark and silent. It would have been no new experience for Uncle Clegg to be knocked up at night by a junior from the school, but he would certainly have been surprised to see Marjorie.

"Here's the tuckshop!" said Harry.

"Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

"What's the matter?"

"I've lost the money."

"Phew!"

Marjorie had dropped her little purse in the fight from the tramp. All her money was in it—her own, as well as the half-sovereign subscribed by the Cliff House girls for the surreptitious feed.

The tears almost came into her eyes, but she forced them back. It was too bad; the whole expedition had been unfortunate. It was worse than useless to knock Uncle Clegg up in the middle of the night to ask for credit. He wouldn't give credit in the daytime.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry!" said Harry, really concerned. "I wish I had some tin with me; but I didn't bring any out, you know, in case of accidents. I haven't more than sixpence in my pockets. Is it all gone?"

"Yes, and the purse."

"What rotten luck!" said Harry.

"I suppose it's no good going back along the lane to look for it?"

Marjorie smiled faintly.

"No, I think not." There was silence for a moment. "I shall have to give it up, that's all. It cannot be helped."

"Perhaps we'd better get back to Greyfriars?" suggested Harry.

"Yes," said Marjorie, "we will. But I say, Harry, what are you doing out of bounds?"

"I came to say good-bye to Captain Stump—you remember him, don't you?" explained Harry Wharton. "He's off to sea to-morrow, and he sent me a note to say that he would like to see me before he went."

"Oh, I see," said Marjorie, and she took hold of Wharton's arm as he led the way back to the school.

The junior grasped the stick firmly in his hand, and kept a keen look-out as they went down the dark lane. Once the boy thought he saw a moving shadow by the hedge, and stood ready; but if it was the tramp, he did not show himself. They reached the college, and stopped under the wall. There was no sign of Milly or Clara.

"I am late," said Marjorie. "It could not be helped, but—but I suppose they are gone in. There is a rope in the tree."

"Good! I'll jolly soon let it down to you."

Harry took a short run, and sprang, and

caught the wall with his hands. To clamber up and get into the tree was the work of a moment. He found the knotted rope and lowered it, and in a few minutes Marjorie had joined him.

He helped her down on the inner side of the wall, and followed. There was an exclamation from the shadows of the Close.

"Marjorie! Is that you?"

"Yes, dear; and Harry."

"Oh, I am so glad!"

"Why are you crying, Milly—Clara? What is the matter?" asked Marjorie anxiously.

"Somebody has fastened the window, and we are shut out!"

"Oh, dear!"

Marjorie looked utterly dismayed; and Harry Wharton gave a long, low whistle.

"My hat!" he said. "This is a bit rough! Don't fret; we shall find a way out of it somehow. You're certain the window is fastened?"

"We've tried ever so hard to get it open."

"H'm! I think we'll have a look at it, and if I can't open it we'll look further," said Wharton, who would not have been surprised to learn that the window had simply jammed, and defied the feeble efforts of the girls from outside.

They moved across the Close in the grim shadows. In the dismay of being shut out, neither Clara nor Milly thought of asking Marjorie where the expected bag of good things was. They would have been glad enough to get into the house without the anticipated feed.

They reached the window at the back, opening on to the foot of the back stairs. Harry Wharton knelt on the low window-sill, and peered through the glass before trying to open it.

Dim as it was within, he could see that the brass catch was flush with the glass—that is to say, that the window was not fastened.

He looked down at the girls with a quiet smile.

"It's all right," he said; "the catch is back."

Clara uttered a breathless exclamation:

"What! Is it unfastened?"

"Yes."

"Impossible!" said Milly. "We tried—"

"Quite impossible!" said Clara emphatically. "Why, I got on the window-

sill, and I could see the brass catch quite plainly. It was fastened—at right angles with the window!"

"Are you quite certain of that?" asked Harry, in an altered voice.

"Quite certain."

The junior's brows wrinkled in thought.

"Do—do you think there may be a burglar?" whispered Marjorie breathlessly.

"There was a burglar hero once before," said Wharton. "But I hope not."

He opened the window quietly. Within was gloom and silence. But the boy did not know what lurking figure there might be in those silent shadows. His heart throbbed a little as he dropped within, and grasped his stick firmly and looked about him.

No sound, no movement! It was past midnight now, and all Greyfriars had long been asleep. Not a light gleamed from a single window. The silence of the great building was only broken by the faint sound of a rat scuttling behind the wall.

Harry, reassured by the stillness, turned to help the girls in. Marjorie came first, and then Milly and Clara. They breathed more freely when they stood within the house safely once more.

Marjorie pressed Harry's arm.

"Oh, thank you!" she whispered.

"What should I have done to-night without you? Oh, I am so glad it is over!"

Harry closed the window and fastened it.

"I will see you to the door of the dorm," he whispered.

They ascended the narrow stairs cautiously. The shadows were full of terrors for the girls. Suddenly Marjorie caught Harry's arm, and stopped him.

"What is it?" he whispered.

"Look! There—there!" she breathed.

Harry looked. They had reached the upper passage, and at the end glimmered the tall window. The window was dim for the night was dark, but it showed up a glimmering square at the end of the passage.

And against the glimmer of the glass appeared the black outline of the head and shoulders of a man!

Harry's heart gave a throb.

That black outline was not outside the glass—there was a sheer drop of more than thirty feet outside that window.

It was within!

The mystery of the unfastened window was now explained. There was an intruder there—at the end of the passage they were now following. They had entered the house almost in the footsteps of the burglar!

"Quiet!" whispered Harry, fearing an outbreak of shrieks, which would alarm the housebreaker at once.

But the girls were too terrified to shriek. They crouched against the wall, breathing hard, their eyes dilated with fear. Even Marjorie was trembling like an aspen.

There was a glimmer of light at the end of the passage. Harry knew what it meant. The burglar had crept along the passage, and he had stopped there to light his lantern.

Of course, the ruffian had not the slightest suspicion of the youngsters up and awake, and so near to him. He had forced back the catch of the window with a flat blade from outside, little dreaming that he was opening a passage for them to enter by.

Harry had no time to think what he should do. The burglar was coming back along the passage, with the light gleaming low before him as he came. He had evidently missed the way to the great staircase in the dark, and gone on to the end of the corridor, and now he was coming back to look for it. The man was unacquainted with the interior of the house, and was feeling his way, as it were.

There was no time to dodge, to hide—even if the junior had wished it. A few seconds after the light had glimmered out the intruder was upon them.

The lantern-light glimmered on Wharton's face, and on the frightened girls, and the man stopped dead.

"Lummy!"

The exclamation broke from his lips involuntarily as he stared at the junior.

And then Wharton knew who it was!

It was the ruffian of the lane—the scoundrel he had already encountered once that night!

The savage gleam in the red-rimmed eyes showed that the burglar had recognised the junior at the same time.

"You again!" he said thickly.

Wharton grasped his stick—he knew what was coming. The light of the lantern was suddenly shut off. After the light the passage seemed black as ink. He could see nothing—he heard only a low

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breathing, like that of an anhaal in the darkness. He gave a shout that rang through the house.

"Help!"

The next instant the ruffian was upon him.

Wharton struck, and struck fiercely, but in the blackness there was no aim. The stick slid from a shoulder and jerked from his hand, and then the grasp of the powerful ruffian was upon him.

And the next moment the man and the boy were fighting desperately.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Struggle in the Dark.

"HELP!" shrieked Marjorie. And Clara and Milly added their cries. The house rang with the alarm, and doors opened on all sides.

In the darkness was heard a suppressed breathing and gasping, and the sound of trampling feet, as Wharton and his enemy fought grimly.

Wharton was strong for his age, and there was no junior athlete at Greyfriars who could compete with him; and he knew every trick of wrestling. In spite of the great difference in size and strength he held his own at first.

But the brute force of the ruffian was bound to tell. The strong arms crushed the junior, and he was slowly but surely forced back and downwards, and a hand groped for his throat.

Marjorie, shaking like an aspen, felt her way along the wall to where she knew the electric-light switch to be. She was almost fainting with terror, but she forced herself to move. Her hand touched the switch, and a flood of light blazed out in the dark passage.

It startled the ruffian, and his grasp relaxed for the moment.

There were hurrying footsteps in the passage, and calling voices, doors opening on all sides.

The man gritted his teeth, and leaving Wharton, he ran on towards the back stairs. The boy was in no condition to stop him. He was exhausted. Marjorie ran up to him, her face white as chalk.

"Oh, Harry! You are hurt!"

"No." He gasped for breath. "I'm all right! The brute will get away. This way, you fellows—this way!"

Wingate dashed up, with a poker in his hand.

"What is it? What's the row?"

"Burglars!" gasped Harry.

"Where?"

"He's getting away! There—quick!"

He pointed, and Wingate rushed on. He went down the back stairs three at a time. The fleeing burglar had reached the window, and attempted to throw it up. In the haste of the moment he did not reflect that it might be fastened now. The window held fast, and the man muttered a curse. It cost him only a moment. He would have had the window open in a moment more.

But that moment was not granted him.

Wingate was at his heels, and as the man unfastened the window he closed with the ruffian, and bore him back heavily against the wall. Half a dozen fellows were at Wingate's heels now, and they came to his aid. In the grip of three or four Sixth-Formers, the ruffian was dragged down and secured. He lay panting and muttering in the grasp of his captors.

"Have you got him?" called down Wharton.

"Yes, we've got him all right!"

"Good!"

Harry turned quickly to the girls.

"You'd better cut into the dorm," he whispered. "There's no need for anybody to know that we had just come in when we found the burglar; but if we're questioned we shall have to tell how it was. Buzz off!"

Marjorie smiled faintly.

"You are right. Good-night, Harry!"

"Good-night, Marjorie!"

The passage was filling with excited, half-dressed boys, all wanting to know what was the matter. The girls hurried into their dormitory, little noticed in the confusion.

Wharton was glad that they were gone before the Head appeared on the scene.

Dr. Locke was looking very much disturbed and alarmed. He shuddered as he looked at the savage, sullen face of the ruffian in the grasp of the Sixth-Formers.

"It's all right, sir," said Wingate cheerfully. "We've got him. It was Wharton gave the alarm, sir. He would have got away otherwise."

"Did he attack you, Wharton?" asked the Head, noting the junior's disordered clothes and flushed, bruised face.

"Yes, sir."

"But how comes it that you are out of your dormitory and fully dressed?" asked Dr. Locke.

"Captain Stump, an old friend of ours, sir, sent me a note to say that he was going to sea to-morrow," explained Harry Wharton, "and asking me to go down to see him this evening."

"Really?"

"Yes, sir; and, not liking to disappoint him, I broke bounds. I hope you will excuse me this time, only——"

The Head gave Wharton a kindly smile.

"Very good," he said. "You have done wrong certainly; but, considering everything, perhaps I do not blame you so much. You had better go to bed now. Wingate, will you wake Gosling, and tell him to get the trap out, and that ruffian can be taken to the police-station at once."

"Yes, sir."

Wingate hurried off; and Harry, surrounded by his chums—who, of course, had come out to see what the row was about—returned to the Upper Fourth dormitory. Before he was allowed to go to bed he had to give a detailed account of his adventures.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "You've had a night of it! But—my word!—of all the funny businesses, I think girls breaking bounds at night for a dorm feed are about the funniest!"

And the juniors generally agreed with Bob Cherry.

Wharton had done his best to keep the girls out of it, but it was not needed, as it happened. For the next morning Marjorie, whose conscience smote her, persuaded Clara and Milly to go with her to Miss Locke and make a clean breast of it.

And they did so, and were all the better for it, for Miss Locke, though greatly surprised, did not take too serious a view of the matter, and was satisfied with a promise of greater circumspection in the future.

"No more breaking bounds for me!" said Marjorie firmly to the Co., when they left Miss Locke's room. "And—and I don't think it's so very necessary to keep our end up, Clara!"

To which Miss Clara, who was quite in her usual spirits again now, replied, with more force than elegance:

"Rats!"

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Schoolboy Gardeners!

"IT'S a ripping wheeze!" said Lovell. "Hear, hear!" chorused Newcome and Raby.

"Well, if we can only get the Head to give us a plot we're all right," said Jimmy Silver.

The Classical chums were seated in the end study at Rookwood discussing the new scheme.

The "ripping wheeze" was Jimmy Silver's, of course. Most of the good ideas were evolved by the leader of the Fistical Four.

Jimmy had suggested that he and his chums should go in for gardening, and the proposal had been enthusiastically accepted by Lovell, Newcome, and Raby.

The juniors proceeded there and then to Dr. Chisholm's study, and were agreeably received.

The Head supported their idea wholeheartedly, and promised to give an order to the gardener to the effect that the juniors were to have a plot of ground assigned to them.

Lovell promptly armed himself with a book on gardening, and persisted forthwith to pore his chums with extracts from it.

"If everything goes on all right," said Jimmy Silver, "we shall put those Modern rotters in the shade!"

"Absolutely!"

Mr. McNab, the gardener of Rookwood, put his head into the end study after afternoon school that day, and the chums looked at him eagerly. They knew what he had come to tell them, and they were on their feet at once.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. McNab!" said Jimmy Silver. "Will you have a cup of tea with us?"

The gardener looked at the study tea-table. The stove was out, and the leader of the Fistical Four was adding tepid water to the leaves in the pot, which had been drained dry. Perhaps the sight did not tempt Mr. McNab. At all events, he shook his head.

"Heh, no!" he said. "Thank you, Master Silver, I've had nty tea. If you young gentlemen will come with me, I'll show you the plot which the doctor has told me to allot to you."

"We'll come at once, McNab."

The Fistical Four eagerly followed the gardener. Tommy Dodd & Co. spotted them in the quad, and looked amazed at the sight of the gardener with them.

"Hallo, what's on?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Are you going weeding, Silver?"

"You'll see soon," said Jimmy Silver loftily.

"I'm going to show the young gentlemen the plot," said Mr. McNab.

Tommy Dodd stared.

"The plot! What the dickens—"

The Fistical Four walked on with the gardener, leaving the Modern chums staring at one another.

"What was he driving at, kids?" said Tommy Dodd.

"Blessed if I know!" said Tommy Cook.

"Nor I!" said Tommy Doyle.

"McNab can't be in a plot with those rotters."

"Of course not!"

Tommy Dodd made a sudden gesture.

"My Aunt Jane Jemima! Of course! I've got it!"

"Got what?"

"The wheeze!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Those kids are going in for gardening, and they've got a plot of ground."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tommy Cook. "I shouldn't be surprised."

"Ha, ha! So they're going in for gardening, are they? Let's follow on!"

The Modern chums hurried out on the track of the Fistical Four. Tommy Dodd's eyes were gleaming with the light of combat.

"They fancy this will take a rise out of us," he exclaimed. "I suppose Jimmy Silver reckons he will raise vegetables to cook in the study, and so on. He's conceited enough for anything. We're on in this act, you chaps!"

"Rather!"

"They think they'll take a rise out of us, and get a lot of praise," said Tommy Dodd, with a sniff. "Well, we'll see! Perhaps their amateur gardening won't be a howling success, after all. Hallo, there's Lovell! What's that he's reading?"

The Fourth-Formers had entered the garden at the upper end of the quad. In the distance McNab could be seen talking to Jimmy Silver, Newcome, and Raby, but Lovell had stopped under a tree and was reading. The Modern chums joined him. Tommy Dodd tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo!" said Lovell, without looking up. "Is that you, Jimmy? I say, this is worth knowing, old chap. This month there is a great deal to be done by the amateur gardener. Watering will be required as the weather becomes drier, and with the quick growth of the young shoots there will be a great increase in the insects which prey upon them, and of the weeds that choke their growth. The young gardener must be watchful for greenfly and slugs, and never—Hallo!" Tommy Dodd's chuckle made Lovell look up.

"Hallo, what are you silly asses doing here?" he said. "I thought it was Jimmy Silver. Why don't you go and get some cricket practice, you two? You need it."

"Hallo, Lovell!" called out Jimmy Silver. "Come on!"

Lovell hurried away to join his chums. Mr. McNab had shown them the allotted plot, and had gone about his work. It was a pleasant little piece of ground, in a rather obscure corner, Mr. McNab perhaps thinking that junior gardening would not be ornamental, and wishing to keep the efforts of the Fistical Four out of public view. But there was no fault to be found with the ground.

"This is ours," said Jimmy Silver, waving his hand over it. "All within the chalk-lines is for us, and we can grow what we like—cabbages, and camellias, and vegetable marrows, and orchids—"

"I think a good crop of orchids would be a good idea," exclaimed Raby. "Some orchids fetch a guinea each, you know, and we could soon pay our expenses with them, and have something left in hand."

Jimmy Silver grunted.

"Do you think we could raise that kind of orchid, ass?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't. I don't believe in wasting one's time raising geraniums when orchids sell at a guinea each—"

"We should want glass, and expensive things of all sorts."

"But there would be a big profit—"

"Oh, rats!"

"You can have your own way, Jimmy, as it's your idea," said Raby. "But, if you ask me, I think we ought to raise orchids, and sell them at a guinea each. It would pay best in the long run."

"Tommy Dodd & Co. were talking to you just now, weren't they, Lovell?" asked Jimmy Silver, changing the subject.

"Yes; they seem to have got on to the wheeze."

"Well, it doesn't matter now. We're first in the field. If they take up amateur gardening, we can chip them about imitating our ideas, and make them sit up, I reckon."

"You're right!"

"McNab has lent us these spades and things. The first job is to dig the ground well, and turn it over. May as well start now."

The four juniors threw off their jackets, and, with shirt-sleeves rolled up, grasped the spades and began to work industriously. Tommy Dodd & Co. had disappeared. But not for long.

In a momentary pause from labour, the Fistical Four looked up, and found the Modern chums on the spot again, with about a dozen fellows belonging to the Modern side, looking on with great interest at the proceedings.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Little Watering!

TOMMY DODD nodded to the Fistical Four with a grin.

"Behold the amateur gardeners, gentlemen!" he exclaimed. "There is absolutely no charge whatever for looking at them, though they're funnier than most of the things you pay to see at a show."

"Rather!"

The Fistical Four turned red. They were red already with manual labour in the warm sun, but now they grew redder. Their audience was a large one, and increasing every minute. Fellows came from near and far to watch the efforts of the amateur gardeners.

"Oh, clear off, you silly ass!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, come now," said Tommy Dodd, "don't deprive us of an exhibition that beats a monkey-show into a cocked hat."

"It's all right, Silver," said Lacy, "we're interested."

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Towle. "Keep it up for a time while I go and

fetch my camera, and I'll take a snap of the Rookwood gardeners."

"If you bring your camera near here, I'll bash it with this spade!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, that's all right. I can take a snap from a distance," said Towle. And he bolted.

"Good!" said Tommy Dodd heartily. "Look here, you ass!"

"We're looking," said Tommy Dodd. "We're awfully interested in amateur gardening."

Jimmy Silver bent towards Lovell. "Go and borrow McNab's water-can," he whispered. "Mind you bring it full of water!"

"What-ho!" grinned Lovell. He darted away. Tommy Dodd & Co. glanced after him, and then resumed the cheerful and congenial occupation of chipping the gardeners.

"Go it!" said Tommy Dodd encouragingly. "You're resting from your labours too soon. You haven't half dug up the ground yet, and we shall expect a big crop of vegetable narrows next week. Of course, you'll supply fellows in the same form on very reasonable terms, won't you?"

"Quits so!" said Tommy Cook. "We shall expect oranges and bananas cheaper than we get them at the tuckshop."

"To say nothing of grapes!" exclaimed Leggett. "Grapes are expensive, and if Silver raises a really good crop—"

"And figs and dates," said Lacy. "I'm awfully fond of figs and dates, Silver. Do you think you'll have any ripe next week?"

"Hallo! Here's Lovell with the watering-pot," said Lacy. "Now we are going to see the Fistical Four really at work."

Jimmy Silver smiled grimly. The speaker was quite right, but not exactly in the way he meant.

"Go it!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, encouragingly, as Lovell handed the large green watering-can, nearly full of water, to Jimmy. "Let's see you water the crops—"

Jimmy Silver swung round the can. "Let's see you— Ow-ow! You're pouring the water on me!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy Silver grinned. "I'm watering the crops," he remarked. "There's a fine crop of idiots here, and in watering them. Have some, Cooky? Sou, too, Lacy? And you, Legget?"

"Ow! Ow!"
"Stop!"
"Chuck it!"
"You beast!"
"Ow!"

But Jimmy Silver did not stop. The huge rose of the water-can was sending a sweeping spray of water over the juniors, and the whole crowd came in for some of it. The juniors dodged and ducked to avoid the water, but there was no escaping it.

Tommy Dodd & Co. fairly cut and run at last, and the rest of the jaspers followed them. Jimmy Silver rushed in pursuit, and did not desist till almost the last drop of water was gone from the can.

Then he returned grinning to his chums, who were roaring with laughter.

"I reckon they won't come and look on at our gardening again in a hurry," Jimmy Silver remarked.

"I fancy they won't," said Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha! It was rather a cool douche for the Moderns. Hallo! Here comes Towle with his camera."

"Get some more water in the can, quick!"

Lovell rushed off with the empty can. Towle came up smiling with his camera under his arm. He seemed surprised to find the crowd gone.

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"Hallo! Have they left you alone so soon, Silver?" he asked. "I thought they took more interest in amateur gardening than that, I did really."

"Your mistake, you see."

"Never mind, I'm going to snap you. Stand there in your shirt-sleeves, holding the spades. You look rather dirty and disreputable, but that won't matter a bit. It will really add to the local colour. But where's Lovell?"

"Here he comes."

"Good! I'll take him carrying the water-can. Buck up, Lovell, come and— Ow! Gerrooh! What on earth are you doing with that water-can?"

"Watering a cranky photographer," said Lovell calmly, as the stream of water played over the astonished Towle.

"Here, chuck it—I—ow—you—oh!" The amateur photographer took to his heels, followed by a yell of laughter from the Classical chums.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We shan't be bothered any more," said Jimmy Silver. "But I think we'll keep that can handy in case we should be! Now to work!"

And the Fistical Four resumed spade-work, and ere darkness fell they had got through an immense amount of labour, and their clothes were sticking to their skin. But it was healthy labour, and they felt all the better for it, though a little tired, in the evening. And Jimmy Silver promised his chums that the morrow should see the first sowing.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tommy Dodd Has an Idea.

IT was all very well for Tommy Dodd & Co. to laugh, but the Fistical Four were not to be laughed out of their new hobby. It was quite possible that the amateur gardening idea would catch on at Rookwood, and, in that case, the Fistical Four would score a big point over their less enterprising adversaries. Tommy Dodd & Co. knew that very well, and they were not idle.

"Of course, the wheeze is going to be busted," said Tommy Dodd. "I hear they're sowing seeds to-day, and Lovell is gassing bosh out of his book all over the place. He's bored nearly to death everybody who will listen to him, and a hundred lines from Bootles for spouting that piffle in class when he ought to have construed Virgil. He forgot himself."

"Exactly."

"We're going to show them up and make them look asses," said Tommy Dodd. "As they are asses, you know, that ought really not to be very difficult. Suppose we go down and have a look at them again?"

"What price the water-can?"

"H'm! Well, perhaps it would be as well to give them a wide berth. No good getting soaked as we did yesterday. Jimmy Silver is a reckless beast with a water-can. I've still got a pair of trousers hanging up to dry. Hallo, there are the duffers! They look as if they had been through it."

The Fistical Four were coming in from the direction of the garden.

They looked very warm and dusty, and the thick boots they were wearing were encrusted with mud. But there was a healthy flush in their faces and a sparkle in their eyes. Gardening seemed to agree with them.

"We've got the wallflower seeds in now," Jimmy Silver remarked as they came by. Tommy Dodd & Co. were lounging under the elms, and the Fistical Four did not notice them. "I don't know exactly how long it takes for them to come up, but I think we can look for them pretty soon, kids."

Lovell stopped, and took his book out of his pocket.

"Wait a minute, Jimmy; I'll tell you—"

"Oh, never mind," said the leader of the Fistical Four. "We've had enough of that book. I verily believe you've read out half of it to-day."

"You can't do better than get a good book and follow the directions when you take up amateur gardening," said Lovell obstinately. "Lemme see—now's the time to sow aster, antirrhinum, carnation, calceolaria, marigold—"

"Are you coming along?"

"No hurry. It is now time to attend to the climbing plants, which should be trained so as not to become tangled—"

"Well, we're going in to tea," said Jimmy Silver. "You can read that out to the trees. Hallo! Here's Tommy Dodd & Co.; perhaps they'd like to listen."

"I'm as hungry as a hunter," said Raby. "Shut up now, Lovell, and come in to tea."

Lovell grunted, and snapped his book shut.

"You chaps won't make much of a success of gardening if you don't go in for it scientifically," he said.

"Rats!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "You're becoming a holy terror with that book! Come on!"

The Modern chums grinned as the Fistical Four walked on and entered the house.

"So they've been planting wallflowers, have they?" said Tommy Dodd. "Let's go and have a look at the place, kids."

Tommy Cook hesitated for a moment. "I say, Doddy—"

"Well?"

"It wouldn't be quite the thing to damage the garden."

Tommy Dodd slapped him on the shoulder.

"Quite right, Cooky. Who's talking about damaging the garden?"

"Oh, that's all right, then!"

"Come along, kids! I've got an idea working in my brain, and it wants thinking out. Come and have a look at the garden."

The Modern chums strolled away towards the plot of ground cultivated for the last two days by the Fistical Four.

It was really beginning to look very nice. It had been dug up and smoothed down, and the planting had been done carefully—so far as it had proceeded. It had not gone very far yet; a garden was not made in a day. The plot looked very neat and tidy.

"They're getting on," said Tommy Dodd thoughtfully. "You heard them say that they had put in wallflower seeds?"

"Yes."

"I don't know exactly when they come up, but there's no sign of them yet."

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle stared. "I suppose they couldn't be expected to come up in half an hour, Doddy."

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"Well, no; but it would be very pleasant for the Fistical Four if a crop of wallflowers sprang up in a single night."

"But they couldn't."

"Yes, they could—if we helped them," said Tommy Dodd coolly. "Those four chaps know absolutely nothing about gardening. I'll wager that if they found a garden full of wallflowers here to-morrow, all a-growing and a-blowing, they would think it was due to their careful gardening."

The juniors cackled.

"Oh, Doddy!"

"It's rather a good wheeze, whether they tumble to it or not!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "We could get the plants from Blum, the florist in the village, and tell him to call and see the Fistical Four about supplying more. He's anxious to deal with Rookwood fellows, and he'd jump at the chance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's take a stroll down to the village

now," said Tommy Dodd. And the chums walked down to the gates of Rookwood. From the windows of the end study the Fistical Four, who were having their tea, saw Tommy Dodd & Co. go down to the gates.

"We've done those rotters!" Jimmy Silver remarked, with a grin. "They don't know anything about gardening, and they can't keep level with us this time!"

"You're right, Jimmy," declared Raby. "But I think we ought to go ahead a bit more. If we made a profit out of the garden—"

"I've no objection to that, if it can be done," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, then, why not adopt my suggestion and grow orchids, and sell them at a guinea apiece?"

"Ass! I tell you it can't be done!"

"I don't see why it can't be done. Where there's a will there's a way, and surely it's worth trying when there's so much to be made out of it."

"You're an ass, Raby!" said Lovell, opening his famous book. "Listen to this—"

"I'd rather not."

"But I want to convince you."

"I'd rather not be convinced—I give in now."

"Oh, ring off, and listen! 'Orchids, especially Epiphytes—'"

"I say—"

"Require considerable heat, and are only suitable for culture where considerable attention can be paid to the requirements of each individual plant. The Cyripediums are the hardiest class, requiring the least refinement in their cultivation—"

"Cheese it!"

"But you're—"

"But they can only be grown in a special soil of fibrous peat under glass. They must always be kept moist and warm—"

"Ow! Cheese it! I give you best!"

"In summer they require an abundant supply of water—"

Jimmy Silver grasped the teapot.

"Are you going to chuck that, Lovell, or shall I chuck this?" he demanded.

"Oh, all right; if you prefer to remain in ignorance—"

"We do!"

"Well, I don't see why we can't cultivate orchids, and make a fortune," Raby remarked, as if he had not heard or heeded a word of Lovell's reading.

"If you say the word orchid again, you get this teapot on your napper," said Jimmy Silver darkly.

"Well, I—"

"Shut up, and pass the jam!"

And no more was heard of either Lovell's book or Raby's orchids during tea.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Wonderful Drop.

"GARDEN getting on all right?" Tommy Dodd asked carelessly the next morning. The Fistical Four had just come in from an early morning visit to the plot, and they were looking extremely pleased.

"Yes," said Jimmy Silver. "We haven't had much experience in this sort of thing, but I must say we're getting a ripping success—"

"Anything come up yet?"

"Yes; the wallflowers are just showing."

"Eh? When did you plant them?"

"Yesterday."

"And they're coming up already?"

"Absolutely."

Tommy Dodd closed one eye significantly.

"You can come and look at them if you like," said Lovell testily. "I know it's wonderfully quick work, but I attribute it to the careful way we manured the ground."

"You can come and see the garden for yourself, Dobby," said Raby. "I was surprised to see them coming up, but there's no doubt about it."

"Well, I don't want to doubt your word," said Tommy Dodd, with a shake of the head, "but I must say I'll believe that when I see it."

"Come and see it, then!"

"Certainly, if it's to be seen. Come on, kids! We'll believe this when we see it, eh?"

"Rather!"

The Modern chums followed the Fistical Four to the garden plot. Jimmy Silver, with a lofty smile, pointed out tufts of green showing above the soil where the wallflower seeds had been put in the previous day.

"That settles it!" he remarked.

Tommy Dodd nodded dubiously.

"Yes, I suppose so," he assented.

"Unless your fellows have shoved those in there just to take us in."

Jimmy Silver snorted.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were late for afternoon school. Mr. Manders, the Form-master, was heavily down upon them, and the Modern chums received imposts of a hundred lines each. But they took those imposts cheerfully. Perhaps they thought the game was worth the candle.

After school, Raby ran down to the garden plot to see how the wallflowers were getting on, while Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome were getting the tea in the study.

The junior was back in a few minutes, and he burst into the study so suddenly that Lovell dropped the teapot he was holding, and there was a crash of breaking china.

"I say—"

"You ass!" howled Lovell. "Look at that!"

"Never mind looking at that. Come and look at the wallflowers!"

"Anything wrong with them, Raby?"

asked Jimmy Silver anxiously.

"Wrong? No; they're out!"



"Let's see you— Ow! ow! You're pouring the water on me!" yelled Tommy Dodd. Jimmy Silver grinned. "I'm watering the crops," he remarked. "There's a fine crop of idiots here, and I'm watering them!"

"Yes, we should be likely to muck up our garden on your account," he said. "Anyway, you'll see the wallflowers themselves soon."

When Tommy Dodd & Co. were alone again they hugged each other in unspeakable mirth.

"Not a suspicion," murmured Tommy Dodd.

"Not in the least."

"They wouldn't dream that we paid the plot a visit overnight and stuck those sprigs in there."

"Hardly!"

"My hat! This gardening wheeze grows funnier every day," said Dodd.

"There's a big laugh coming, but it won't be for the Fistical Four, I fancy."

"No fear!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. paid another visit to the flower-bed after morning school. They worked there for some time, carefully avoiding disturbing the wallflowers.

After they had left the spot, the Modern chums appeared from behind the nearest cover, with huge grins upon their faces, and paper parcels in their hands.

"Out of the ground?"

"No; out in blossom!"

"Impossible!"

"I tell you it is so."

"Now, don't rot, Raby."

"I'm not rotting! I tell you the wallflowers are in full bloom, all-a-growing and a-blowing!" exclaimed Raby excitedly.

"It can't be."

"Come and see them!" exclaimed Raby, and he caught his chums by the arms and dragged them by main force out of the study.

"I say, the kettle will boil over."

"Blow the kettle!"

"But—"

"Come on!"

Jimmy Silver and the other juniors were catching Raby's excitement. It seemed impossible that the wallflowers had come up already, yet the early springing from the ground had been unusual. Who could tell what might not come of careful gardening, such as they had bestowed upon the plot?

The four juniors hurried out of the house.

"Hallo! What's the row?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

But they ran on without heeding him. The Modern chums followed, and the sight of the juniors running excitedly naturally drew other fellows after them, and quite a crowd arrived on the scene with the Fistical Four.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome uttered exclamations of amazement. True enough, the wallflowers were in full bloom.

The border planted with them was in a blaze with brown and yellow, all of them quite fresh and lively, and in the best condition.

"My hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Splendid!" said Tommy Dodd. "I think that's a record, unless you fellows are having a joke on us."

"Of course they are," said Lacy. "Wallflowers couldn't grow up in that time."

Jimmy Silver turned upon him.

"They have. I swear we put nothing but seeds into that border. It's the ripping way we manured it, I reckon. We've accidentally made a great discovery in gardening, that's what it amounts to. It must be the way we manured the bed that made the plants spring up in this wonderful way, and I'm going to make notes of the method and send them to the gardening papers. Everybody ought to know."

"You're right, Silver," said Raby. "We can't be selfish enough to keep a discovery like that to ourselves, though perhaps we might patent it."

"It's marvellous, that's what it is," said Newcome. "Yes, you fellows can cackle. Great discoverers always get cackled at. I think none of you ever knew us to tell lies, and we give you our word, honour bright, that we planted the seeds only yesterday, and haven't touched them since."

"Then it's a blessed miracle," said Lacy.

The juniors, some believing and some disbelieving, all puzzled, moved away, leaving the amateur gardeners to admire their wonderful crop of wallflowers.

The news spread, and fellows came from all parts of Rookwood to look at them. Seniors and juniors alike came to look, and the Fistical Four deemed it advisable to remain on the spot, in case curious fingers should pluck specimens up, and denude that flower border.

They explained to successive comers how they had put the seeds in only the day before, and in most cases were re-

warded with bursts of ribald laughter. Apart from the wallflowers, the visitors to the garden plot seemed to have some joke up amongst themselves, and at last one of the Fifth-Formers gave the Fistical Four the clue to it.

"There's something that concerns you chaps on the notice-board," he remarked, after listening with a broad grin to Jimmy Silver's explanation of the way he had manured that border, which accounted for the wonderful growth of the flowers.

"The notice-board!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, puzzled. "How—"

"Better go and look at it."

The fellows standing round roared. A sudden sense of something in the wind smote the Fistical Four with a chill of dismay. They walked away quickly, leaving the fellows yelling. They entered the hall quickly. A crowd was gathered round the school notice-board, chuckling and grinning and cackling. There was a shout.

"Here they are!"

The Fistical Four were allowed to approach the board.

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A paper was pinned up along with the notices, a paper that caught Jimmy Silver's eye at once.

It was a bill made out by Blum, the florist, and ran as follows:

"To wallflowers supplied to Master

Thomas Dodd, on account of James Silver, Esq., 6s."

Jimmy Silver gasped.

"What—"

"Done!" groaned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd & Co. "It cost six bob, but it was worth it!"

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

The Fistical Four stood absolutely speechless for a minute or so. The truth sank into their minds. The wonderful growth of wallflowers was not due to their marvellous gardening, but to the joking propensities of Tommy Dodd & Co. The flowers had been planted there over the seeds, and that was why the modern chums had been late for afternoon school that day.

"My—my only hat!" muttered Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grand old gardeners!"

"What price wallflowers?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotters!" yelled Jimmy Silver, and he made a rush at the convulsed Moderns. But the crowd closed round, and bore the furious Fistical Four back.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With the loud laughter ringing in their ears the Fistical Four moved away. The utter ridicule was too much even for their nerves. But roars of laughter followed them up to their study. There they looked at one another in grim silence for some moments.

"It's a do," said Jimmy Silver. "We ought to have known better."

"It would have been all right if you'd taken my advice and grown orchids instead of wallflowers," declared Raby.

"It all comes of not following the directions in the book," said Lovell, pulling the precious volume out of his pocket. "Here's the chapter on wallflowers; if you had read it carefully it would have been all right. Listen to this."

"No fear! Cheese it, both of you! We're done, and we can't wriggle out of it. Hark! They're still laughing!"

Faintly from below came the merry echo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"I reckon I'm done with amateur gardening for a bit," he remarked.

And Lovell, Newcome, and Raby "reckoned" the same.

THE END.

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