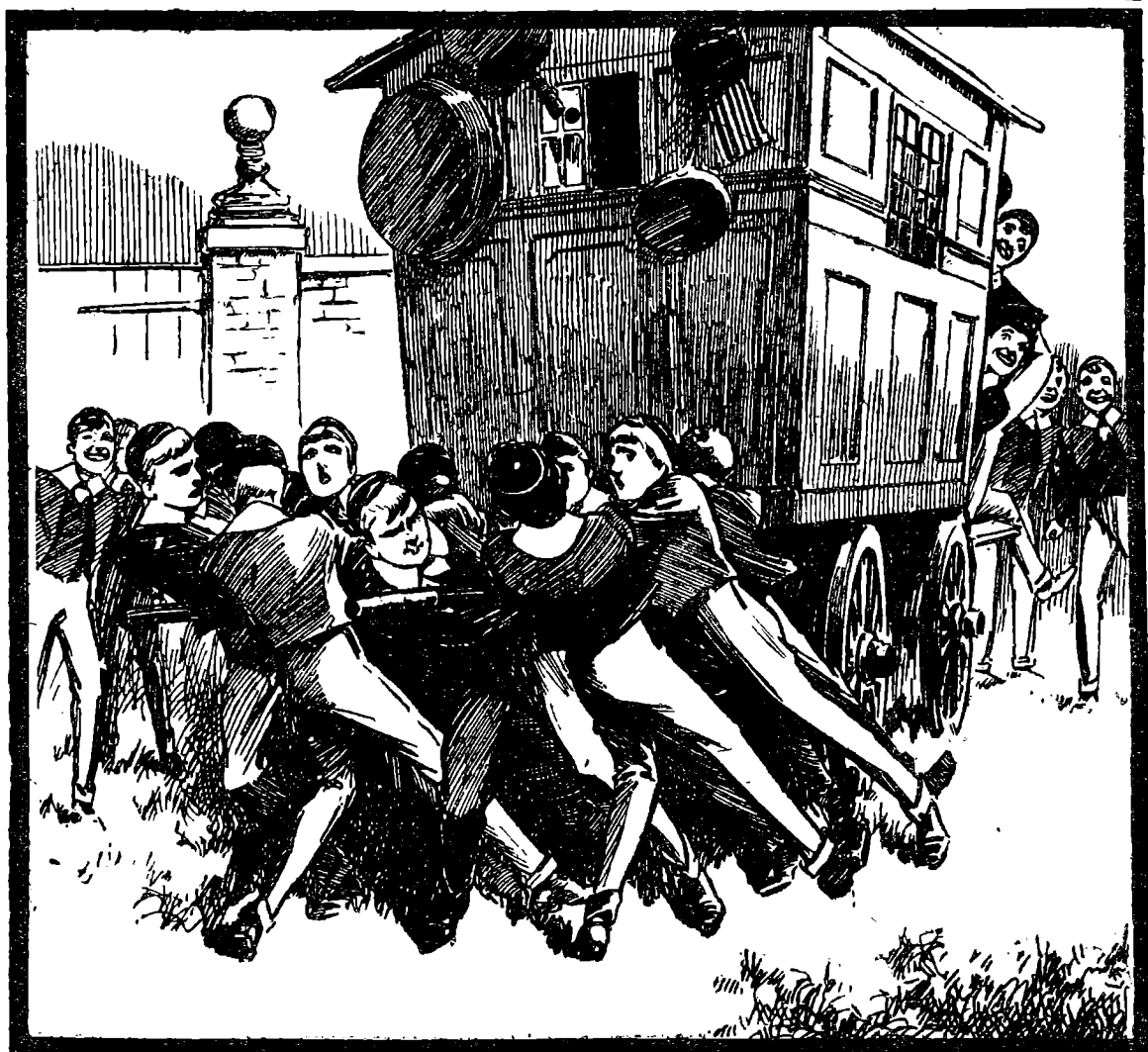


3 LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES

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



“ALL TOGETHER, BOYS!”

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

THE GREYFRIARS CARAVAN!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

How the Caravan Came to Greyfriars.

BUMP!

Clatter!

Clang!

"What on earth's that row?"

muttered Harry Wharton.

He peered into the darkness of the Friardale Road. It was a dark night, and Greyfriars School lay dim and silent. Only from the masters' study windows lights still gleamed into the leafy Close.

The junior studies and the junior dormitories were in darkness, and the juniors ought all to have been asleep. But two of them, at least, were wide awake, and out of doors.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, of the Remove, had just climbed the school wall, in the dense black shadow of the overhanging trees, and were about to drop outside into the road, when the sudden clatter came to their ears, and they paused.

Clatter!

Clang!

"What on earth—?"

"It's some giddy cart or other coming along," muttered Bob Cherry—"a market cart, I suppose, from the way it bumps. But—"

Clang! Clink! Clang!

"Blessed if I know what that means!" said Bob. "Better keep up here in cover till it's gone by, whatever it is!"

"Yes, rather."

Under the leafy branches, on top of the school wall, the two juniors remained as quiet as mice, and peered down into the road. A glimmering light came into view in the darkness, evidently carried by the as yet unseen vehicle.

Clang! Clink! Clang!

"I should say that chap had all his family tins and kettles hanging round his cart," muttered Bob Cherry. "What a ghastly row!"

The noise seemed greater in the dead silence of the night. It echoed along the lonely road, and through the dim wood on the other side. Wharton and Cherry waited impatiently.

They did not wish to show themselves to any passer, for they were breaking bounds, and they could not afford to run the slightest risk of that fact becoming known to the "powers that were" at Greyfriars.

Not that there was any harm in the little excursion, as far as that went. They were going to set some night-lines in the Sark—or, rather, Bob Cherry was going to do so, and Harry was going with him to keep him company. But it was against the rules, and any master or prefect who had discovered them at that moment might not have credited that their intention was so innocent.

Clink! Clink! Clang! Clink!

Bob Cherry uttered a suppressed exclamation.

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"It's a caravan!"

In the glimmer of the light the vehicle had come into sight at last—dim, but discernible. It was a gipsy caravan, drawn by a single bony horse, with a man sitting on the shaft.

The clanking and clinking came from a collection of pails, pans, and kettles, slung under the caravan. The horse was moving slowly and solemnly, and the heavy van rolled and bumped in every rut of the road.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" muttered Bob Cherry. "The beastly thing's stopping!"

"By Jove!"

The clatter and the clinking came to an end. The caravan halted just outside the gates of Greyfriars.

The gipsy slipped from the shaft, and his form was seen dimly approaching the gate, and he fumbled for the bell.

Wharton gave a low whistle.

"Look! He's ringing! What on earth does it mean?"

Bob Cherry shrugged his shoulders.

"Blessed if I know!"

The juniors were keenly interested now. They had expected to see the caravan pass on, and then they would have slipped down from the wall and gone on their way. Its halting outside the school gates surprised them; the sight of the gipsy ringing the porter's bell astounded them.

They crept further along the wall to obtain a better view of the gateway. The setting of the night-lines was a matter of minor importance now. What on earth could the gipsy want at Greyfriars College at half-past ten at night?

Ting-ting-ting!

In the quiet night, the juniors could hear the bell ringing in the porter's lodge. Bob Cherry chuckled as he pictured the expression on Gosling's face when he heard it.

Gosling, the school porter, didn't like being disturbed in the evening, even by the Head himself. It was a point of honour with Gosling to do as little as possible for his wages, and he made it another point to grumble at doing that little.

On the present occasion he allowed the bell to ring three times before he came out of his lodge, and he came out in a towering temper.

"Wot I says is this 'ere!" he growled, as he came down to the gate. "Why can't folks get in early, and allow an honest man to rest arter his day's work?"

The juniors suppressed a chuckle. They were near enough to Gosling to toss a stone upon his head, and they plainly heard his muttered complaints.

The porter did not suspect their presence. He went to the gate, and peered between the upright iron bars into the road. The sight of the gipsy caravan made him jump.

"Who's there?" he demanded angrily.

A dark, bearded face looked through

the bars, and a pair of black eyes glittered at him. Gosling started back a little.

"This is Greyfriars?" demanded a voice.

"Yes, it is," grunted Gosling. "Ave you woke me up"—the porter had not been in bed, but he was fond of making out as hard a case as possible—"ave you woke me up to ask fool's questions? Wot I says is this 'ere, you get along!"

"Nadesha is here?"

"Eh? Yes, the old woman's here, I suppose. Leastways, she was to-day, and I don't s'pose she's flown away!" said Gosling sarcastically.

"Tell her Tawno wishes to speak to her."

"Yes, I'm likely to go looking for a gipsy, to tell her another gipsy wants to speak to 'er this time of night!" said Gosling, with crushing irony. "Wouldn't you like to step in and 'ave a glass of wine with the 'ead?"

"Open the gates!"

"Ho, yes—I don't think!"

"Old Telengro is gone," said the gipsy, through the bars. "Nadesha was his relation, and he has sent her the caravan. He bade me bring it to her. Nadesha is here, and I have brought her the van!"

"I don't care tuppence for hold Telengro, whoever he may be, or for Nadesha, or for you, neither," said Gosling. "I ain't going to hopen the gates. You can't bring your trash in 'ere. Wot I says is this 'ere, you 'ustle hoff!"

"I have brought the caravan to Nadesha."

"Well, I'm goin' to bed!"

"Open the gates!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" Gosling retreated towards his lodge, and the gipsy shook the bars of the gate. "Yes, you can shake, my pipping, but you won't get that gate open!"

"I have brought the caravan—"

"Better send it by parcels post," said Gosling, still in the same ironic vein: "or you can let 'er 'ave it on a pitcher post-card. Good-night!"

"Then I will wait!"

"Wait, then!" grinned Gosling; and he went into his lodge and slammed the door.

The gipsy muttered something in the Romany tongue. The juniors heard him, and, though they did not understand the words, they knew that it was something very uncomplimentary to Gosling.

Then he led the horse to a belt of grass on the other side of the road, and tethered him to a tree with a length of rope, casting him loose from the harness.

The juniors watched him in wonder. It was evident that Tawno meant to keep his word, and not to leave the spot. Was he going to wait there all night?

It certainly looked like it, for he climbed into the caravan, closed the door after him, and was not seen again.

"He's gone to bed," muttered Bob Cherry.

"Looks like it."
 "I suppose he's going to wait till morning. Well, that needn't bother us. It's a rum business. Come on!"

The juniors dropped into the road. They were absent half an hour; and when they came back, eleven had struck from the clock-tower of Greyfriars, and the gipsy caravan was still by the roadside. The van was silent, the gipsy in it evidently asleep. The only sound in the silence was the crop-crop of the feeding horse.

The juniors climbed in, and, wondering what would come of the affair on the morrow, made their way back to the Remove dormitory and turned in. There was a yawn and a grunt from Frank Nugent's bed.

"You've been a jolly long time gone!"
 "Yes," said Harry. "We had to delay—you see, we—"

Nugent was asleep again, and Harry smiled, and postponed the explanation till the morning. In a few minutes he was asleep himself.

Meanwhile, the gipsy van remained stationary in the road opposite the gates of Greyfriars, while the dark hours rolled away.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nadesha's Property.

"I SAY, you fellows—"
 Billy Bunter uttered the exclamation excitedly. He was looking out of the staircase window, having glanced out as he was coming down from the dormitory that morning. What he saw rooted him to the spot with amazement.

"I say, you fellows—"
 "Hallo! What's the matter with you?" asked Bulstrode, as he stopped. Wharton and his chums were already down; Billy Bunter was generally one of the last to leave the dormitory. Bunter blinked round at the burly Removeite.

"I say, Bulstrode! Look there! Somebody's driven the hack on to the grass plot, and left it there!"

Bulstrode looked out of the window. He grinned at the sight of the stranded vehicle. Billy Bunter was remarkably short-sighted, or he would never have mistaken a gipsy caravan for the village hack even at that distance.

"A giddy caravan!" exclaimed Bulstrode, in wonder. "What on earth can it be doing there? How did it come in, too? There's no horse to it. I'm going to see what this means!"

And he went downstairs three at a time. Harry Wharton was in the lower hall, talking to Nugent and Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh. It was a Wednesday, and a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the chums of the Remove were discussing the programme for the afternoon.

A cricket fixture had been scratched at the last moment by a team that had been booked to visit the Greyfriars Juniors, and the chums were left with an empty half-holiday to fill up.

Bulstrode brushed past them, and ran out into the quadrangle, and Bob Cherry glanced after him in surprise.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's Bulstrode after, I wonder?"

"I say, you fellows—"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you downstairs for, Bunt? It's nearly three minutes to breakfast-time."

"Oh, really, Cherry— I say, you fellows, there's a gipsy-caravan in the Close. I saw it first, and—"

"In the Close!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in surprise. "Then that chap Tawno has got it inside the gates."

And the Famous Four ran out into the Close.

There was the caravan, sure enough, in the middle of that carefully-kept grass-plot, which was the pride of the Greyfriars gardener's heart.

Tawno, the gipsy, had been too considerate to leave it on the drive, where it would be in the way; but it was doubtful if either the Head or his gardener would thank him for the consideration he had shown.

The big, heavy wheels of the caravan had sunk deep into the grassy soil, and the horse's hoofs had kicked up the turf. There were already half a dozen fellows round the caravan with Bulstrode, very interested and curious, when Wharton and his friends arrived upon the spot.

"Well, this is a giddy curiosity!" said Temple, of the Upper Fourth. "How on earth did it get here?"

"Somebody dropped it from an aeroplane during the night, I should think," said Fry. "There's no giddy horse attached to the giddy show."

"There's a horse's tracks in the grass, though."

pur English. "The curiousness of my worthy self is also great."

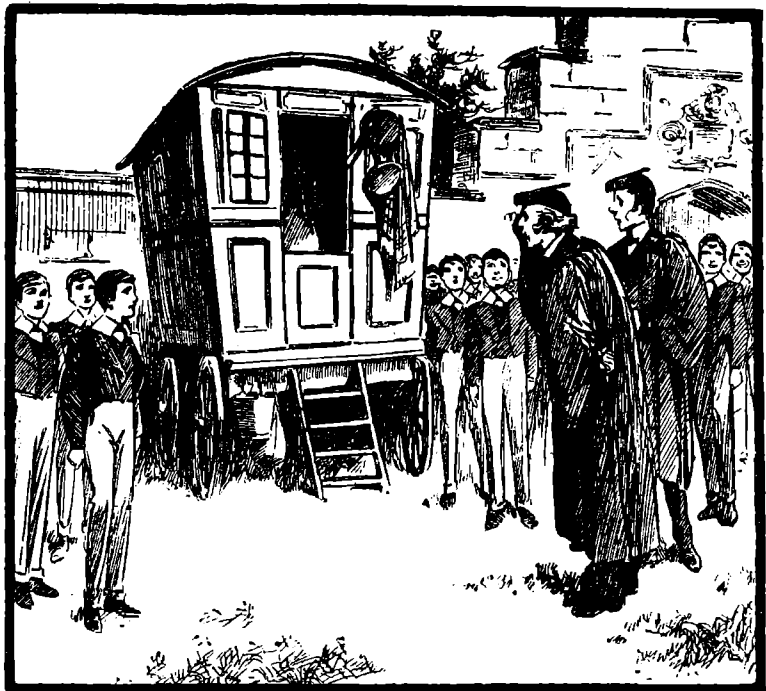
The door of the caravan at the back was unfastened, and the juniors soon had it open, and they looked in. The morning sunlight glimmered through the tiny windows, which were tightly closed.

Gipsies do not as a rule place much faith in fresh air, at least, in their movable dwellings. Perhaps they get enough outside their caravans. The interior of the van was stuffy, not to say mephitic, with the odours of stale bedding, ancient cookery, fried fish, and onions. Bulstrode gave a sniff and then a snort, and jammed open the little windows.

"My hat! This is rather thick!" said Nugent. "Fancy anybody sleeping in it! What are those rags in the corner for, I wonder?"

Harry Wharton laughed. "That's the bed, I imagine."

"My word! I should want it disinfected before I slept in it. But, I say, if it were clean, it would be jolly to go on the road with a thing of this sort,"



"Dear me!" said the Head. "This is—is most extraordinary! I should guess this vehicle to be a caravan, Mr. Quelch—one of those vehicles in which itinerant merchants travel."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"It's the same one, Harry," Bob Cherry remarked, looking over the caravan. "I'd know those beautifully carved cornices anywhere. Somebody carved them with a pick-axe or a crow-bar, I think."

"So you've seen it before, kid?" exclaimed Temple.

"What do you think?" said Bob Cherry, addressing Temple with that cheery air of patronage generally adopted by the Greyfriars Remove towards the higher Form. "We know all about it. Belongs to a friend of ours—a very old friend."

"Rats!" said Temple & Co., with one voice.

"Let's have a look in it," said Bulstrode. "As it's stranded here, I suppose we may squint in it?"

"The squintfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, in his Bhanu-

said Nugent, with a gleam of adventure in his eye. "I've often envied those gipsy chaps, going about in caravans and camping where they like. Ripping in the fine weather, at all events!"

"I wonder what the Head will say when he sees it!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Right on his darling grass-plot, too! That chap Tawno was a beast!"

"We might as well go and tell Nadesha."

"Hallo, here's Quelch—and, by Jove, the Head!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was walking in the Close with Dr. Locke, and talking to him, when he caught sight of the caravan. For a moment he remained petrified, and then he pointed it out to the Head. The Head put up his glasses, and stared blankly at the caravan.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "This is THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 250,

most extraordinary! 'This is a vehicle of some sort, Mr. Quelch."

"It certainly looks like it," agreed Mr. Quelch, concealing a smile.

"Yet there is no horse attached. How it can have come there is a mystery. Let us get a nearer view."

And the two gentlemen walked towards the stranded caravan. The boys respectfully raised their caps and made way for them. Dr. Locke walked round the caravan, examining it through his glasses with an air of amazement that, as Bob Cherry said, in a whisper, "wouldn't come off."

"Dear me!" said the Head again. "This is—is most extraordinary! I should guess this vehicle to be a caravan, Mr. Quelch—one of those vehicles in which itinerant merchants travel, gaining a livelihood by vending pans, kettles, clothes-props, and articles of that nature." Again Mr. Quelch smiled assent. "But the amazing thing is, how did it get there?" said Dr. Locke, as much astounded by the caravan in the Close as Robinson Crusoe was by the footprint in the sand. "Boys, do you know anything about this?"

Harry Wharton coloured for a moment. He didn't want to tell the Head that he had witnessed the arrival of Tawno with the caravan, from the top of the school wall, at an hour when all good juniors were asleep in bed.

"I think Gosling could tell you, sir," he said. "Shall I call him, sir?"

"Yes, certainly."

Gosling came back with Wharton in a few minutes. The Head turned his glasses upon the porter.

"Do you know how this—er—this vehicle came here, Gosling?" he asked.

"Which it was brought here, sir," said Gosling.

"I—er—guessed as much, certainly," said the Head. "But by whom—and why?"

"A gipsy cove," said Gosling.

"Extraordinary!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere, sir—"

"That will do, Gosling. Wharton, will you—er—inform Mrs. Nadesha that her—ah—property is here, and request her to take immediate steps to have it removed?"

"Certainly, sir."

And the Head walked away with Mr. Quelch. As he entered the School House, he cast a final glance back at the caravan, and said once more:

"Dear me! Extraordinary!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Shifting the Caravan.

NADESHA, the old gipsy, was at her door, looking out into the fresh, morning sunshine. Nadesha occupied a little cottage within the grounds of Greyfriars, but separated by the Head's garden from the broad Close.

In her little cottage Nadesha sometimes received visits from the boys, and especially she liked the visits Harry Wharton sometimes paid her. It was strange the deep attachment the old gipsy showed for the lad.

The old brown face lighted up, as Nadesha caught sight of the hero of the Remove coming up the little path to the cottage. Nadesha made a picturesque figure at the cottage door, in her scarlet shawl, with her swarthy face and black eyes. Wharton lifted his cap as he came up.

"It is good of you to come and see the old gipsy, my pretty chal," said Nadesha. "What have you to tell me?" she added as she noted the junior's smile.

"News of a legacy, Nadesha."

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"A legacy?" The gipsy looked puzzled. "What do you say?"

"Do you know a man named Tawno—a man of your race?" Nadesha nodded. "And had you a relation named Telengro?" Wharton's face grew grave as he remembered what Tawno had said, that the former owner of the caravan was "gone." Exactly what Tawno had meant to imply by "gone" Wharton did not know, but it might mean that the man was dead.

"Old Telengro? Yes—what of him?"

Wharton repeated what he had heard Tawno say to Gosling. Nadesha smiled.

"He is in prison again," she said. "In prison?"

"Yes. He has been there before for taking the chickens from the house-dwellers," said Nadesha. "The caravan was mine, but I did not want it, and I left it with him. Now he is gone off the road he has sent it to me. Tawno is a fool. I would have given it to him rather than have it sent here. But—how did you come to hear all this said, my chal, at such an hour of night?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Keep it dark, Nadesha—I was out of bounds." Her face grew grave, and he went on hastily, "Only to go with Bob Cherry to set some night-lines; you don't think I should do anything blackguardly, do you?"

"I know you would not," Nadesha said softly.

"But what are you going to do with the caravan, Nadesha? Can we help you in any way? That ass Tawno has shoved it in the middle of the Close, and taken the horse away. I suppose the horse belonged to him, and he was satisfied with delivering your property here," said Wharton, laughing. "The Head wants it shifted. It doesn't look pretty where it is."

"Tawno is a fool," said Nadesha. "The caravan must be taken away. I do not know what to do with it. I cannot keep it here—I do not want it. Gosling might have let him put it in the stable-yard—it could be taken there now, for the present."

"Good! I'll see to it for you. If we can't pull it I'll tip Gosling a couple of bob to put a horse to it."

"Thank you, my bonnie chal," said the old gipsy. And Wharton raised his cap, with as much respect to the old gipsy woman as he would have shown to a princess, and hurried away. A crowd of juniors were still waiting round the caravan.

"Well, what says the giddy heiress?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"It's to be shifted round to the stables for the present. Gosling ought to have put it there, only Gosling's a beast."

"Wot I say is this 'ere—"

"Hallo, you there, Gosling! No extra charge for my opinion of you," said Wharton coolly. "Can you lend us a horse to yank this van away?"

"Which I can't, Master Wharton."

"Get in the shafts yourself—a donkey will do," said Hazeldene.

Gosling walked away without making any reply to this remark. Harry Wharton lifted the heavy shafts from the ground, and gave a pull, but the caravan did not even budge.

"Line up, you chaps," he said. "About a dozen of us can do it if we put our beef into it."

A dozen Removites crammed themselves cheerily round the shafts, and grasped them.

"Some of you shove behind!" called out Wharton; and Bulstrode, Stott, Skinner, Snoop, and several others rushed to the rear of the caravan.

"Now, altogether!"

"The altogetherfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton & Co. dragged at the caravan with all their strength. But it refused to budge.

"Put your beef into it," gasped Bob Cherry, with perspiration running down his face. "She's bound to come!"

"Go it!"

"Another tug—all together, now!"

They tugged—they pulled—they hauled! Still the caravan did not move. Harry Wharton was astonished. Between those pulling and those shoving behind, the vehicle, heavy as it was, ought to have rolled along easily enough.

A cackle of laughter from the fellows who were looking on roused Harry's suspicions. He left his place at the shafts, and stepped back to look behind the caravan.

Instead of shoving behind, Bulstrode & Co. were hanging or sitting on the caravan, and chuckling away for all they were worth.

It was not surprising that the van had refused to move, under the circumstances. Wharton glared at the jokers wrathfully.

A water-can, which Gosling had brought out for early use, was standing filled beside the fountain at the end of the grass-plot.

Wharton did not speak, but he made a clutch at the water-can. In a moment he turned a sweeping spray of water over the back of the caravan and the practical jokers clinging to it.

There was roar.

"Ow! What's that?"

"Chuck it!"

"Oh! Ow! Groo!"

"Mm-m-m-m! I'm wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, as the practical jokers dropped from their hold, and scattered frantically from the shower of water. "Ha, ha, ha! No extra charge for a shower-bath, Bulstrode!"

"Ow—you beasts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton threw down the empty water-can with a laugh. The practical jokers had scattered far and wide, and at the next essay to move the van, Wharton shoved behind himself, and willing hands backed him up.

The big, heavy vehicle moved at last. With a bumping and a groaning it lurched away, and the tin pots and pans slung from the axle clanked and clinked cheerily.

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "That's a jolly sort of marching music, and no mistake. I should like to travel to that all day long—I don't think!"

Clatter! Clatter! Bump! Clank!

Swaying and lurching and bumping, the caravan rolled on its way. It went in a series of tacks, like a sailing-vessel beating up a river against the wind, first in one direction and then in another.

Sometimes it had a great deal of way on it, and went with a rush—then it would slacken, and almost refuse to move. But the juniors stuck to it.

It wasn't their fault if the van insisted upon taking in all the flower-beds possible en route, and if it bumped into a fence and broke it down, and crashed against a tree and deprived it of a couple of branches. The juniors were pretty well exhausted by the time the vehicle rolled clanking over the stones of the stable-yard.

Harry Wharton let go, and gasped for breath.

"My hat! Thank goodness that's done! How on earth does one horse contrive to drag a thing like that about?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Bob Cherry. "I shouldn't care to be the horse. Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's the breakfast-bell!"

And the juniors rushed off.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Wharton's Great Idea!

THE great idea came to Harry Wharton first of all. He was in the Form-room at the time.

Mr. Quelch and the Remove were enjoying—more or less—a thrilling excursion into the realms of Latin verbs, when the idea occurred to Wharton.

It was such a ripping idea that it made him start, and he involuntarily uttered a slight exclamation.

"By Jove!"

It was only a slight exclamation, but it caught the keen ears of the Form-master. Mr. Quelch was trying to make Billy Bunter understand that although "horror" was passive in form it was active in meaning, and Billy Bunter, the least promising pupil in the Remove, had apparently made up his mind not to understand anything that morning.

Thus the interruption did not find Mr. Quelch in an amiable mood. He turned round towards Wharton, whose face went scarlet at once.

"Did you speak, Wharton?"

"N-n-no, not exactly, sir."

"I thought I heard you speak, Wharton."

"I—I didn't mean to, sir."

"Ah! You were so much interested by the lesson, that you could not possibly remain silent while I was explaining to the stupidest boy in the class," said Mr. Quelch.

"N-not exactly, sir," stammered Wharton. "It—it was an idea that came into my head, sir."

"Indeed! Some new light to be thrown on the subject of deponent verbs, no doubt?"

"N-n-no, sir. I—I was thinking of something else."

"Well, you are frank, at all events, Wharton," said the Form-master, a little taken aback. "You will take fifty lines for thinking of something else in class."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

And Wharton breathed more freely. He had been afraid that he might be detained in the afternoon, which would have knocked on the head, so to speak, the brilliant idea that had flashed into his brain.

The lines could be done in the evening. The idea could be carried out in the afternoon. And it was such a ripping idea that Wharton could not help thinking of it still, although the eye of the Remove-master was turned suspiciously in his direction more than once.

Once or twice Wharton glanced out of the window. The weather was perfect—hardly a cloud in the blue sky. No chance of rain—at present, at all events—to spoil the best wheeze he had ever thought of.

He was anxious for the class to be dismissed. Seldom had morning lessons seemed so long. He was tempted to whisper his idea to Bob Cherry, or to Nugent, or Hurree Singh; but Mr. Quelch was too watchful. It was safer to keep it to himself till after school, and run no risks. An afternoon's detention would have been a crushing blow.

The welcome word of dismissal came at last, and Wharton jumped up like a jack-in-the-box. The Remove left the Form-room, and Wharton was immediately surrounded in the passage by curious inquirers.

"What the dickens was the matter with you in class?" asked Nugent. "You nearly caught it! Bunter was worrying Quelch into a fearful wax with his stupidity!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"It's a wheeze," said Harry, his eyes glistening. "a ripping wheeze for this afternoon!"

"Good! Go ahead!"

"We've got the afternoon free. What price a journey in the caravan?"

His chums stared at him for a moment, taken by surprise.

"Don't you see how ripping it is?" said Wharton eagerly.

"Old Nadesha would lend us the caravan like a shot! We could hire a horse in the village. It would be a ripping adventure. We might get a long way on the road, and not get in till locking-up. Wingate would give us a permit to cut early call-over. What do you think?"

"Jolly good!" said Bob Cherry. "I'd drive, and—"

"Ahem!" said Nugent. "I'd drive, and—"

"We could take some grub, and make a sort of picnic of it!" said Billy Bunter eagerly. "If you fellows place the funds in my hands, I'll look after the grub department, with pleasure!"

"I dare say you would!" grinned Nugent. "We'll look after the funds ourselves. It's a ripping wheeze, Harry, if Nadesha will lend us the caravan."

"I'm sure she will! I'll cut off and ask her, anyway. As a matter of fact, she'd be glad to get it taken out of the stable-yard and stowed away somewhere.

When we go to get the horse at Milson's we'll arrange for him to house the van when we've done with it—for the present, and save Nadesha bothering about it. You chaps be ready to come out immediately after dinner."

"I say, Wharton, you'd better let me get—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

And Harry Wharton hurried away to old Nadesha's cottage. He returned in five minutes, with a cheery face, and announced that the gipsy had gladly given him leave to do as he liked with the caravan.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry gleefully. "We'll buzz off to Friardale on our bikes after dinner and get the horse, and then—"

"Hurrah for the road!" said Nugent.

And immediately the juniors' midday dinner had been despatched they were whirling away on their bicycles to the village in search of a horse.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Getting Ready.

BOB CHERRY was having an exciting time.

The juniors had been to Milson's and had secured a horse. Bob Cherry had at once offered to ride the animal back to Greyfriars, but as the horse possessed a very refractory nature, Bob's task was not an easy one.

Bob got the animal as far as the school, and then the latter went along the drive with a clatter of hoofs. Immediately there was a scattering of fellows out of his way. They scattered, and they yelled with laughter at the sight of Bob Cherry clinging to the horse's mane. Bob did not feel very much like laughing.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wingate of the Sixth. "What's that young beggar doing? Get off that horse at once, Cherry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Temple. "He would if he could!"

Bob would gladly have obeyed, but he could see no other way of getting off the horse than by letting go his hold and rolling in a heap on the ground, and that way was too dangerous and too painful for him to adopt. So he sat tight.

"Stop the horse!" shouted Harry Wharton.

A crowd of fellows rushed to stop him, but the horse swerved away and escaped them, and clattered off towards the cricket-field.

A match was in progress there between

two senior elevens belonging to the Fifth and the Sixth.

Their feelings when the excited horse and its helpless rider bore down upon them may be imagined.

"Keep off!" roared Carberry, who was at the wicket. "Get away, you young idiot!"

"I—I—I—c-c-c-can't!"

"Faith, and I'll pulverise yez!" roared Burke of the Sixth. "Ye're messing up the game intirely!"

"I—I—I—c-c-can't help it!"

The horse's hoofs clattered over the pitch, and the fieldsmen scattered. Two or three of them rushed to secure him, but he avoided them easily, and rattled on. They drove him off the cricket-field with shouts and yells, and he galloped off in the direction of the Head's garden.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Wharton.

"The gate's open, and—"

"Phew!"

The horse dashed through the gate, and the juniors were almost petrified with horror as he trampled over the flower-beds.

There was an exclamation of amazement from the garden.

"Bless my soul! Who—what is this?"

It was the Head!

Bob Cherry would have given whole worlds and solar systems to stop the exasperating beast then, but he could not. And the animal was not in the least awed by the Head. He pranced on gaily.

"Boy!" gasped the doctor. "Boy!"

Mr. Quelch, who was chatting with the Head in the garden, ran quickly towards the horse. The master of the Remove was an active man, and he succeeded in grasping the rein, and brought the horse to a standstill. Bob Cherry, gasping for breath, streaming with perspiration, and as red as a poppy, slid to the ground.

"Th-th-thank you, sir!" he gasped.

"What does this mean, Cherry?" said the Remove-master sternly. "How dare you—"

"Yes!" said the Head sternly. "Bless my soul! How dare you, Cherry?"

"I—I couldn't help it, sir! You—you surely don't think I was doing it for fun?" gasped the junior.

Dr. Locke smiled slightly.

"Did the horse run away with you?"

"Yes, sir; the—horrid beast!"

"You should not have brought a horse within the precincts of Greyfriars."

"I—I didn't, sir! It brought me!"

"Look at my flower-beds!"

"I—I'm sorry, sir. I'll dig them up for you if you like, sir, and put some new seeds in, and set it all right again. I'm awfully sorry!"

The Head could not help smiling as he thought of the improvement an amateur gardener of the Remove would be likely to make in his well-kept garden.

"You see, sir," said Bob, "we were bringing the horse to take that caravan away, and—"

"Oh, in that case I'll excuse you! Take him away!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Bob Cherry, glad to escape so cheaply.

"Can you manage him now?"

"Oh, yes, sir; so long as I'm leading him! I wouldn't have got on his back if I'd known what a savage beast he was."

And Bob Cherry led the now quiet horse from the garden.

Harry Wharton and Nugent met him at the gate, and Harry took the horse.

"I can lead him all right," said Bob.

"That's all very well, old chap; but if you lead him as you ride him there will be trouble," said Wharton. "I'll take charge of him."

And Harry led the horse away to the

stable-yard. He was like a lamb now, and Bob Cherry thought he even saw a twinkle in his eyes.

"The rotter!" said Bob wrathfully. "Who'd have thought he was such a beast to look at him? He doesn't look as if he had so much go in him at all. He's an artful dodger!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!" said Harry, backing Dodger, as Bob had already named the horse, towards the caravan. "Hold up the shafts, you chaps!"

"But I say, Wharton, we shall want some grub—"

"You won't!" grinned Nugent.

"Look here! I'm coming with you. I suppose? I could have gone to Cliff House to tea if I had liked, and I had to put it off to come with you in the caravan," said Billy Bunter, blinking at him.

"Liar!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shove that harness on," said Harry. "The collar fits him like a charm. This is a better horse than that chap Tawno had. Shut up, Bunter! You can come with us if you like, but we'll look after the grub ourselves!"

"If you can't trust me with a few shillings, Wharton—"

"Well, I can't; so shut up!"

"I'll go and get my camera, then," said Billy Bunter. "I may be able to get some photographs on the road. I might get a series of pictures in some illustrated paper, called 'Pictures of Caravan Life,' or something of the sort. There's a great demand for good photographs in the illustrated Press. I'm expecting to get a lot of money out of it. At present I'm rather short. If you could lend me half-a-crown, Wharton—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"If you could lend me half-a-crown, Nugent—"

"Clear out!" yelled Nugent, picking up a strap. "By Jove—"

Bunter did not wait to hear the rest, but cleared out promptly.

The juniors harnessed the horse to the caravan. He submitted to the operation with perfect quietness. The harness was in very good condition, though greatly in want of cleaning. Bob Cherry remarked that they would set Bunter cleaning it at the first halt. Several juniors came to the yard to look on, among them Hazeldene.

"You're going out in that giddy show?" asked Hazeldene.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes. Will you come?"

"Yes, rather!" said Hazeldene, willingly enough.

And he joined the party, and lent a hand cheerfully in the work. The juniors received several offers of assistance and company from the other lookers-on, but Wharton declined them all with thanks.

"The caravan won't hold more," he said. "Not with comfort, anyway. We can't take the whole giddy school!"

"You can make room for me," said Skinner persuasively. "I know a lot of dodges about camping-out."

"Sorry; can't be did!"

"Oh, rats! I wouldn't come in the rattling old turn-out, anyway!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Good! Then we're both satisfied."

He threw open the door of the caravan, and the juniors turned out most of the contents. The foul old bedding was discarded. It was dirty, and it looked very much as if it might be the abode of insects.

Everything in the caravan was dragged out to air, and the windows were forced open, and left open. The stableman

lent the juniors a pail of hot water and a mop, with which they gave the interior of the van a cleaning such as it had long stood in need of.

With their sleeves rolled up, and stable aprons tucked round them, the boys set to work, mopping, sluicing, scrubbing, and scraping, and the change they wrought in the interior of the caravan was wonderful.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry, after half an hour's steady work. "You'd hardly know the thing now. What price giving it a name?" he went on thoughtfully. "The Saucy Susan' would look ripping, and I could easily shove it on in white paint."

"Good!" said Harry, laughing. "The Saucy Susan let it be, by all means. It's a ripping name. We shall want a nose-bag and some grub for the horse. You can let us have it, Mike?"

The stableman nodded assent. Supplies for the horse having been negotiated for, supplies for the juniors themselves were the next item. These had to be obtained at the school shop, and thither the juniors—after a wash and a brush-down in the stable—repaired.

They left the horse and van standing in the yard, all ready for departure, while they went to the shop; and then Harry Wharton proceeded to make extensive purchases, which delighted the heart of Mrs. Mimble, and made Billy Bunter's mouth water.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. The Raid of the Upper Fourth.

BILLY BUNTER looked on at the rapidly-increasing pile of good things on the counter, with his little round eyes glistening behind his big spectacles. Wharton was laying in a good supply.

They were going to have their tea on the road, and they would probably want an extra meal, too; and, anyway, what was left over would come in for the study cupboard.

While Harry was giving his orders, Hurree Singh went up to No. 1 Study for the utensils that would be required—kettle and teapot and crockery and methylated spirit-stove. He returned with them packed in a bag, and Harry borrowed a basket of Mrs. Mimble to pack the provisions in.

The juniors had been too busy to notice particularly that during the purchases the number of fellows in the school shop had increased. Their trip in the caravan was attracting a great deal of attention, so there was nothing remarkable in it.

But what was curious was that most of the fellows in the shop belonged to the Upper Fourth. And the way they grinned at one another indicated that something was afoot, if the Removites had noticed it.

Wharton, having packed his goods into the basket, slung it on his arm, and the chums turned to leave the shop. A crowd of Upper Fourth fellows filled the doorway, and did not seem disposed to let them pass.

"Let's pass through," said Wharton good-naturedly.

"Say 'please,' pretty," said Mills, with a grin.

"Oh, don't be an ass! Get out of the way!"

"Not to-day, thank you!"

"Will you let us pass?"

"Some other time, dear boy!"

And the Upper Fourth fellows drew closer together, grinning. Wharton frowned. It was a jape of the rival Form, of course; but the Removites weren't looking for a Form row just then. The afternoon was wearing on,

and they wanted to get gone in the caravan.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Wharton impatiently. "There's no sense in a jape like this. We don't want a scrap now."

"That's all you know," grinned Mills. "There may be more in it than meets the eye. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled his comrades.

Clank! Clatter! Clink!

The sound from the Close came clearly in at the tuckshop. Wharton started. It was the sound that had broken the silence of the night, when the two chums were on the school wall, and Tawno the gipsy had brought the caravan along to the gates of Greyfriars. Wharton knew it again at once. It was the sound of the caravan in motion.

In an instant he knew what the Upper Fourth were planning. These fellows had been told off to blockade the Removites in the tuckshop, while Temple, Dabney & Co. were raiding the caravan.

Clank! Clink! Clank!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry excitedly. "They've got our van! They're driving off the Saucy Susan!"

"Get out of the way!" roared Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you let us pass?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton wasted no more time in words. He dropped the basket, and made a furious rush at the doorway. The Upper Fourth fellows met the attack manfully, and Harry's chums backed him up with equal determination.

If Temple and Dabney escaped with the van into the road, and drove off, the afternoon's outing would be "messed up" with a vengeance.

After the Removites had fetched the horse from Friardale, and cleaned out the caravan, to have both of them collared by their rivals was too bad. The laugh would be up against the Famous Four with a vengeance.

They fought desperately for a passage from the tuckshop. Even Hazeldene, who was not a fighting-man as a rule, backed up the comrades with as much determination as themselves. Billy Bunter was pushed out of the way at the start—and he was quite content to be pushed out of the way.

The odds were greatly in favour of the Upper Fourth, but Wharton & Co. were desperate. They struggled and punched, and hit out right and left, careless of the knocks they received in return, and fairly fought their way through.

With a rush they came out into the open, the enemy still crowding round them. Harry looked quickly towards the gates. The caravan was just swinging out of sight into the road.

"Run for it!" yelled Harry.

He broke into a spurt for the gates. His comrades followed fast, leaving the Upper Fourth fellows roaring with laughter. They had carried out Temple's instructions, and stopped the Famous Four till the caravan was out in the road.

Most of them had had hard knocks, and weren't inclined for a foot race after the fight. They stood outside the tuckshop yelling with laughter after the running Removites, who were pelting desperately down to the gates. And a sudden thought struck Mills, which made him roar the louder.

"Ha, ha, ha! The grub!"

He rushed back into the shop. The basket of provisions had been left there by Wharton, forgotten in the excitement. Billy Bunter had just picked it up, with the idea of conveying it to a safer place. To sling Bunter out of the

way and open the basket was the work of a moment.

"To the victor, the spoils," grinned Mills.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the good things were handed out right and left, and the Upper Fourth, nearly choking between laughter and rapid eating, enjoyed themselves immensely. Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co. were tearing on in desperate pursuit of the caravan.

Temple, who knew how to drive, was at the reins, and Dodger was pulling away gaily. Dabney, Fry, and Jones were inside the van, looking back for pursuers, and they saw the five Removites whirl out of the school gates and come pelting along the road.

"Here they come!" yelled Dabney.

"Put it on, Temple!" exclaimed Fry.

"Make the old brute run!"

"What-ho!" said Temple, cracking the whip.

Dodger broke into a swifter trot. The caravan, which was never intended to travel at such a speed, rocked and swayed from side to side. The tins and pans and kettles slung underneath clanked merrily, making a great din.

"Music hath charms," grinned Fry.

"My hat, what a row! They're running well."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"But they won't catch us. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. certainly were running well. Hazeideng had dropped a little behind in the race; but Wharton and Cherry, Nugent and Hurree Singh were getting over the ground in splendid style.

Dodger was going very nearly at a gallop now, much to the danger of the caravan when it encountered a rut in the road. But the speed of the heavy van naturally could not be equal to that of a good runner—if the juniors could stay the pace long enough to make up for the long start of the van. And they did. They came up steadily, gaining at every stride.

"Whip him up, Temple!" shouted Jones.

"They're gaining!"

"He's going top speed now. I reckon," called back Temple.

"How far back are they?"

"Twenty yards now."

"And gaining?"

"Yes; hand over hand!"

"Then you'll have to keep them off."

And Temple gave all his attention to the driving, leaving the defence of the caravan to his comrades. The driving, indeed, needed all his care, for the horse was going at a perilous speed, and the rocking of the caravan threatened every moment to whirl it into the ditch.

"Steady, kids," said Dabney. "They'll be on us soon! Knock 'em off as fast as they come up!"

"Yes, rather!"

With a final burst of speed the pursuers came up. Harry Wharton made a desperate spring for the open door. Dabney leaned forward and gave him a push on the chest, and Wharton fell back into the road. He went down with a bump that made him ache in every bone, and raised a cloud of dust round him.

"Oh!"

His chums stopped, and the caravan increased its distance. From the van came back a yell of mocking merriment from the heroes of the Upper Fourth.

"We're off; good-bye!"

And the caravan, containing the Upper Fourth, clanked on, leaving the forms of Harry Wharton and his chums lying about the road. Victory for the time being was with Temple & Co., but, all the same, the Removites were not done with yet.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
The Disappearance of the Saucy Susan.

HARRY WHARTON staggered to his feet. He was aching a little from the fall, but as resolute as ever. He gasped for breath, and wiped the stream of perspiration from his brow.

"Come on!" he said.

And he darted forward again. His chums followed him fast. From the door of the caravan the Upper Fourth fellows waved their caps.

"Come on!" sang out Fry. "Take another little run! We'll knock you down as often as you like, dear boys!"

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

The Removites made no reply. They gained steadily on the lumbering vehicle, and Harry Wharton came within touch of the rear of the van. The defenders stood ready to knock him back as soon as he jumped. But he was not to be caught a second time in the same way.

Slacker—slacker—with that iron grip at his head, till he dropped into a walk, and Temple could not make him go faster.

Bob Cherry was on the step by this time, and Nugent on the shaft on the other side. Temple looked at them alternately, in doubt.

"You can come down feet first or head first," said Bob Cherry breathlessly; "but you're coming down, anyway!"

Temple burst into a laugh. He didn't want to risk breaking his neck, so he allowed the horse to stop, and descended from the driver's seat.

Fry, Dabney, and Jones jumped out of the caravan, and rushed to support their leader. The Upper Fourth did not mean to give up the caravan without a struggle.

"Well, you've caught up," grinned Dabney, "and now what are you going to do? If you like to cut off at once we won't lick you."



Harry Wharton & Co. dragged the caravan with all their strength. But it was not surprising that it refused to budge. Instead of shoving behind, Bulstrode & Co. were hanging on sitting on the caravan, and chuckling away for all they were worth.

He swerved a little to the left, and passed the van, and ran on abreast, gradually forging ahead. Bob Cherry followed him, and Nugent and Hurree Singh swerved to the right, and passed the caravan on the other side.

The Upper Fourth fellows looked a little dismayed. The object of the Removites was evidently to get ahead and stop the horse, and the raiders did not quite see how they were to be prevented.

Harry Wharton came level with the horse, and cast a glance up at the driver.

Temple caught up the whip.

"Keep off!" he shouted.

"Oh, rats!" gasped Harry.

"Mind the whip! then."

The lash curled round the junior. It was a stinging cut, but he did not care if he was hurt. He forged on and grasped the bit, and the galloping horse slackened down.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We've a jolly good mind to lick you, anyway, for giving us this run," he said; "but we'll let you off if you bunk at once."

"Rats, and many of 'em!"

"This is our caravan; we've borrowed it for the afternoon."

"So have we," grinned Temple, and his comrades chuckled. "You youngsters can bunk! If you set a foot on that van, Wharton, I'll have you off in a jiffy."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Wharton set a foot on the van, and Temple was as good as his word. He grasped the captain of the Remove, and whirled him off. They closed in a second, and struggled fiercely.

In a twinkling the rest were engaged in combat. It was four to four, for

Hazeldene was still at a considerable distance, coming on breathlessly.

The Upper Fourth were somewhat older fellows, and should naturally have had the advantage. But the Famous Four were the pick of the Remove, as hard as nails, and tough customers for anybody to tackle.

While the combat raged, Dodger walked to the roadside to crop the grass there, and, finding he was uncontrolled, he walked on further, and then the spirit of mischief seized him, and he broke into a trot.

The caravan went jingling away down the road, but in the excitement of the raging combat the juniors were deaf to it.

How the struggle would have terminated it is impossible to say, had not the arrival of Hazeldene turned the scale in favour of the Remove.

Hazeldene slipped into the fight at once, collaring Temple and dragging him away from Wharton. Temple was too exhausted to resist. He was rolled over to the ditch, and rolled into it, and he yelled as he splashed into the muddy, slimy water.

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet. In a moment he was helping his comrades, and between the five Removites the three Upper Fourth fellows were knocked right and left.

They were driven back towards Temple, who had dragged himself out of the ditch, with all the fight taken out of him by the ducking.

"Have you had enough?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh, we're done!" grinned Temple.

"Of course, we could go on, but—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's the caravan?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Temple. "It's gone!"

The juniors stared along the deserted road in dismay. The Saucy Susan had vanished. Faintly, from afar, came the sound of a clink-clank-clink—afar and faint. Dodger was travelling at a good speed. The Saucy Susan was gone!

"M-m-my only hat!" gasped Wharton.

The Upper Fourth fellows gasped with laughter, and walked away. They were quite satisfied. They had been licked, but it was by odds, and the bone of contention had disappeared. The five Removites remained in the road, staring in blank dismay at the place where the gipsy caravan had been.

"Great Scott!" said Nugent. "Of all the gorgeous sells! This is what we've been fighting for!"

"Let's go after it," said Bob Cherry.

"No good," said Wharton. "Blessed if I could put up anything like a run now. We could never catch that brute on foot. We shall have to cut back to Greyfriars for the bikes."

"Phew! We're nearly a mile from Greyfriars!"

"Can't be helped."

It was pretty clear that Wharton was right.

Chasing the caravan on foot was not to be thought of. Putting their dishevelled attire a little in order as they went, they retraced their steps towards the school.

They hurried towards the bicycle-shed, and in five minutes the chums of the Remove had their cycles out, and were pedalling away down the road in chase of the caravan.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Chase of the Caravan.

BUZZ! Ting-a-ling!
Five cyclists swept down the wide country road at top speed. There was reason for haste, and excuse for scorching.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 250.

What troubles the Dodger might get into with the Saucy Susan the juniors hardly ventured to think. Dodger was so very playful, and the caravan was not the steadiest of vehicles. Where was it now?

The chances were that it was overturned in a ditch, and that was one of the things least to be dreaded. It might have run over somebody, or it might be jammed in a shop-window in the next village, or Dodger might have taken it into his head to follow one of the paths which led down to the seashore, and in that case it was as likely as not that the caravan would be caught in the tide.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, as they swept on up the dusty road. "What a day we're having!"

"Rather!" grunted Nugent; and the Nabob of Bhanipur said that the ratherfulness was terrific.

They certainly were having a day of it! They had intended to spend the afternoon caravanning. They were doing it, in a way, but not the way they had intended.

The trouble with the horse had taken up some time, and then the trouble with the Upper Fourth! The chase of the caravan seemed likely to take up most of what was left of their half-holiday—even if it were successful.

"Never mind," said Wharton cheerily. "It's fun!"

"Ahem!" said Bob. "I've no doubt that it's fun—from the point of view of the Upper Fourth and of our friend Dodger. Blessed if I see where the fun comes in for us, though. But I'll take your word for it. I say, you chaps, this is fun!"

But the chaps did not reply. They were saving their breath for their work.

The juniors were fatigued with walking and running; but the cycling came easily enough, and they covered the ground in good style.

There was a long stretch of solitary country road to the next village, and the juniors rode over it, keeping their eyes open for the caravan.

Dodger, artful though he was, could scarcely have taken to the fields, even his powers stopping short of climbing fences and getting over stiles. But there were several turnings he might have taken, some leading inland, some down towards the sea.

Still, the chances were that he had kept to the road, and the juniors went straight to the next village. There they jumped down to inquire for the missing caravan. The main road ran straight through the village, and the Saucy Susan could scarcely have passed through the street without being stopped, or, at all events, seen.

A merchant of ice-cream was doing some business at the end of the street, and the thirsty juniors patronised his little cart generously.

"Suppose you haven't seen a caravan straying along the road, Mister Ice Creamio?" asked Harry Wharton of the merchant.

The man looked up. "My name Jones," he corrected. "Ice Creamio not be my name."

Another Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in Next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR, entitled:

"THE GREYFRIARS CAMP."

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Order Your Copy in Advance to Avoid Disappointment.

The juniors laughed. "Well, Mr. Jones," said Wharton, "have you seen a caravan?"

"Yes, I have," answered the ice-cream merchant. "Ten meenits ago a caravan passed by, and de owners den buy my magneificent ice-cream."

"What owners?" ejaculated Wharton. "De owners," said the man. "One was named Tadger, and de oder was named Duffy. Dey did like my ice-cream, dey did!"

"By Jove," exclaimed Harry Wharton, "some bouders have pinched our caravan! Come on, you kids! We've got to get that caravan back, or die in the attempt!"

The juniors mounted their bicycles, and began to race along in the direction in which the ice-cream merchant had seen the caravan pass.

They had not gone more than a mile when Bob Cherry pointed across an open stretch of country.

"Look!" he cried. "There it is! I suppose they've halted for a rest."

The juniors dismounted; and, leaving their bicycles at the side of the road they dashed towards the caravan, outside which two men were sitting.

The men were coarse-looking characters, and they gave the juniors critical glances as they dashed up.

"What do you want?" exclaimed one of the men, whose name was Tadger.

"We want our caravan," declared Wharton, "and pretty slick, too!"

"This isn't your caravan."

"It is!"

"Look 'ere," said Tadger, "we found this 'ere caravan. You say it's yours—"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is great, my esteemed rotten thief!"

"Well, we've took care of it for you," said Tadger. "If you can make it five quid, we'll give it to you."

"And 'earty," said Mr. Duffy. Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Why don't you say five hundred?" he asked. "Or you might make it five thousand. They're bigger sums, and you're just as likely to get them."

"Look 'ere, make it a quid!"

"Tell you what!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We'll give you chaps a hiding! I don't want you to go with nothing! Come on, kids! Let's give them a hiding!"

The juniors were nothing loth. They dashed to the attack. Messrs. Tadger & Duffy had been in doubt whether they would attack or not. When they found themselves attacked, their doubts vanished. They bolted!

But they did not bolt quite quickly enough! The active juniors were close behind, and Bob Cherry's boot—a large size in boots, too—came behind Mr. Duffy with a thud, and Duffy rolled over and over with a wild yelp.

Both Nugent and Hazeldene bestowed the same attention upon Tadger as he started running, and he rolled over his comrade.

"Give 'em another!" roared Bob. But the two rascals were up in a twinkling, and scouring away. They vanished from the sight of the Greyfriars juniors, followed by a roar of laughter from the victorious Removites.

"That's settled their little caper," said Wharton. "We'd better harness Dodger, and get the Saucy Susan home. We've had quite enough excitement for one afternoon. But I tell you what, kids. We'll make arrangements to have a good day out in the caravan on the next half-holiday."

"What-ho!" chorused the juniors. And so it was settled.

THE END.



THE NEW BOY'S SECRET!

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale
Dealing with the Early Adventures of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

—BY—

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Check!

PIFFLE!"

"Look here, Manners—"

"I repeat—piffle! Utter piffle!"

"You—you clump! You weren't there! You don't know anything about it!"

"That doesn't matter! I've got some sense, I should hope!"

"Not much good hoping!" said Tom Merry sarcastically. "I tell you—"

"Hallo! What's the giddy rumpus?" exclaimed a voice suddenly. "What are you kids rowing about?"

The Terrible Three looked round in surprise at the sound of the cool voice. It was a strange voice, and the words were spoken in a decidedly familiar tone.

The Shell fellows found themselves facing a boy of about their own age. He was slim and apparently wiry, and under a tuft of light-brown hair a pair of merry blue eyes twinkled. He stood regarding Tom Merry & Co. with a cool smile on his face.

"Were you talking to us?" asked Tom Merry, very politely.

"Yes. What are you chaps—"

"You said 'kids' just now!" interrupted Manners.

"Did I? Well, kids, then!" said the new-comer cheerfully. "I want to ask you a question or two!"

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. Whoever this fellow was, he didn't lack nerve, anyhow. Tom Merry stepped forward.

"Half a mo!" he said. "You're a little too fresh! Let me tell you we don't allow strangers to call us what they like!"

"No offence meant! I apologise!"

"Oh, well, if you put it that way—"

"All serene now? Good!" exclaimed the new-comer coolly. "I only said kids as a figure of speech, you know. I should have said the same to anybody else if I'd seen them before you. I'm the new fellow in the Shell—School House," he added confidently.

"New fellow!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Shell!" ejaculated Manners.

"School House!" put in Monty Lowther.

The Terrible Three glanced at one another again.

"Yes; haven't you heard? Do you mean to say I've been allowed to come to St. Jim's unannounced?" asked the new boy, in surprise. "Well, I call that too bad! I can understand now why there wasn't a crowd of chaps and a brass band waiting for me at the station!" he added thoughtfully.

"You cheeky young ass!" said

Manners warmly, looking at the other with renewed interest. "Are you really a new kid?"

"Yes, really!"

"And you're for the Shell?"

"So I've been told," said the new junior. "I'm to be a boarder in the School House."

"What's your name?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Denton—Philip Edgar Denton!"

"Oh, is it?" said the humorist of the Shell. "Well, Denton, you'll get a dent on your nose if you're not a little more polite to your betters! We're members of the Shell, and we don't allow new rotters to ride the high horse!"

"All right, my son! Don't get your rag out!" said Denton cheerfully. "Well, I'd better be getting indoors to— By the bye, where does a kid named Tom Merry hang out?"

Tom Merry stepped closer to the new boy.

"Where does Tom Merry do what?" he asked ominously.

"Hang out! Which is his study?"

"It may interest you to know that my name is Tom Merry!" said the captain of the Shell. "And it may interest you to know that I don't allow any new fathead to call me a kid! Understand that?"

Denton grinned.

"Well, I admit it interests me a little," he replied casually. "But, my dear kid, you seem to have an exaggerated idea of your own importance!"

Manners and Lowther glared, and Tom Merry drew his breath in sharply.

The new fellow was asking for it!

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "My hat!"

"Bump him!" said Manners, finding his voice. "Bump the young rotter for his rotten nerve!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther advanced upon Denton, with very warlike expressions on their faces. To their surprise, the new boy did not even back away, except to plant himself firmly at the bottom of the steps.

Tom Merry was foremost, and he lunged out at Denton's smiling face, with the intention of giving it a decided biff. But somehow that biff never got home, and before the hero of the Shell realised what was happening, he found himself picked up like a feather, and flung bodily into the arms of Manners and Lowther.

"Ow!" yelled Manners, as Tom Merry lit him on the chest. "I say—"

"Look out—!"

More than that Lowther could not get out, for he and his two chums rolled into the School House door in a struggling mass, the new boy looking on, chuckling merrily. As it happened,

another junior was, at that moment, emerging from the School House, and the Terrible Three hit him with considerable force, sending him flying.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wuffians—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House at St. Jim's, was the junior who had received the three Shell fellows in his chest. As usual, he was resplendent—exceptionally resplendent, as a matter of fact. His topper shone like a mirror, his boots rivalled it in brilliance, and his clothes were brushed with scrupulous care. In a word, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was elegant.

And then he was sent flying.

His topper crashed in one direction, his gold-mounted cane in another, and his monocle jerked from his eye and dangled at the end of its silken cord. D'Arcy sat on the School House mat, dazed.

"Gwreat Scott!" he gasped.

"You silly ass! What did you get in the way for?" shouted Manners.

"Weally, Mammah—"

"My hat!"

"You wuff boundahs!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Look what you have done to my toppah! Bai Jove, I wogard you as a set of dangewous lunatics!"

"Oh, shut up, Gussy!"

"I uttally wefuse—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The four juniors looked round at the sound of that laugh, and beheld Philip Edgar Denton standing at the bottom of the School House steps, laughing like a hyena.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he yelled.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Cool Customer!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY scrambled to his feet, jammed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed the new boy with a cold glare, which should have withered him up into nothingness, really. Apparently, however, the glare was wasted on Denton, for he returned D'Arcy's look with a smile and a nod.

"Sorry! Ha, ha!" he gasped. "I couldn't help laughing, though! You went over a treat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no reason why you should stand there cacklin' in that ridiculous fashion!" said D'Arcy frigidly. "My twousahs are fivghtfully dusty, and my toppah has the nap wubbed the w'ong way!"

"Oh, blow your giddy trousers!" growled Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, shut up, Gussy! This is our show!" said the hero of the Shell.

"Now, look here, you new kid," he went

on, facing Denton, "I don't want to be rough with you—"

"Go hon!"

"But you're evidently on the look-out for a row!"

"I'm not particular!" grinned the new junior coolly.

Tom Merry bit his lip. He hardly knew how to deal with Denton. The new-comer seemed to be quite at home, and was ready with an answer for everything that was said to him. Manners and Lowther were fairly itching to grasp him with a firm grasp and bump him hard. They stepped forward threateningly. Denton did not move.

"Want some, too?" he inquired genially. "Perhaps I'd better warn you that if you come too close you'll be served in the same way as your little chum."

And before Manners and Lowther could recover from their astonishment Denton turned and calmly walked into the School House. He strolled along the corridor, chuckling.

"Hallo! Who are you? And what's the cackle for?"

It was Jack Blake of the Fourth who asked the question. He had just turned the corner with his chums, Herries and Digby, and they were on their way to join D'Arcy. The famous chums of Study No. 6 had arranged to make a tip down to Rylcombe.

They stared at Denton curiously, and he nodded cheerfully.

"Hallo!" he said. "I'm the new chap."

"New chap?"

"Yes. Can you kids—"

"Us what?" interrupted Blake.

"Fellows, if you like it better. Can you tell me which is Tom Merry's study?"

"Yes; it's in the Shell passage."

Blake mentioned the number, and the new boy walked on.

"Half a mo!" said Herries. "Tom Merry's in the quad."

Denton grinned.

"I know that!"

"You know it—eh?" remarked Blake, puzzled. "Then what do you want to go to his study for? Manners isn't there either, or Lowther."

"I know that, too, my son; but it happens I'm to dig in Tom Merry's study while I'm at St. Jim's, so I want to see what sort of a hole it is!"

And Denton walked on, leaving Blake, Herries, and Digby looking at one another.

"My hat!"

"Talk about nerve!"

"Beastly!" said Blake indignantly. "Let's tell old Tommy."

"Come on!"

Blake & Co. raced down the passage, and found the Terrible Three on the steps, looking angry and indignant.

"If he thinks he's going to do as he likes he's jolly well mistaken!" Monty Lowther was saying. "Redfern & Co. of the New House were bad enough when they came, but this giddy dummy is ten times worse!"

"Got sauce enough for fifty!" ejaculated Manners.

"Yans, wathah!" put in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I heartily agree with you, dear boys, that the new boundah has wun away with himself. He will have to be strictly wepwimanded!"

"What's that?" demanded Blake, giving D'Arcy a slap on the back.

"Weally, Blake, pway do not be so wiff! I was just remarking that Denton, the new boundah—"

"Denton—eh? Don't think much of his name, anyhow!"

"Hewwics, you are intewwuptin' me,"

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said Arthur Augustus severely. "I was just saying—"

"You generally are saying something, Gussy," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We just passed the new chap in the passage," went on Blake, "and he called us kids!"

"Yes; and he said he was on his way to your study, Tom Merry," said Digby. "Our study?" chorused the Terrible Three.

"Said he's going to dig there with you—"

Tom Merry snorted.

"I know he jolly well isn't!" he shouted wrathfully.

"My only Aunt Matilda!" exclaimed Manners excitedly. "Have we got to have that funny-faced beggar in our study with us? Come on! We'll chuck him out on his neck if he's dared to enter our study!"

"Rather!"

And Tom Merry, Manners, and Monty Lowther hurried into the School House with determined looks on their faces, leaving Arthur Augustus to explain to his study-mates what had occurred.

Other juniors had strolled up—Bernard Glyn, Dane, Kangaroo, and some others—so D'Arcy had quite an audience.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the sun shone with exceptional brilliance on the old school.

It happened that there was no cricket on that afternoon, so the juniors found the time hang somewhat on their hands. Of course, Tom Merry & Co. had put in an hour on the field immediately after dinner, and so had the chums of Study No. 6; but now the time was getting on.

In fact, the Terrible Three had been discussing whether their funds would run to one of Dame Taggles' famous steak-and-kidney pies for tea, when Manners had started an argument. Then Philip Denton had put in an appearance, and since that moment tea had been entirely forgotten.

Tom Merry hurried upstairs to the Shell passage.

They burst into their study.

Denton was there, calmly seated before the open window, looking out on to the old quad with a thoughtful expression in his eyes. As a matter of fact, he was reckoning up how much money he had spent on his way to St. Jim's, and seeing if his balance was correct. Denton was nothing if not methodical.

"Hallo!" he remarked, looking up abstractedly. "You three again?"

"Yes, us three," said Tom Merry ungrammatically. "We want to know what the dickens you mean by walking into this study as if you owned it? This is our study, you understand—our study!"

"Our study!" chorused Manners and Lowther.

"And we're not going to have any blessed outsiders interfering when they're not wanted!" shouted Tom Merry, exasperated by the new junior's cool, self-possessed smile.

"My hat! I believe you're wild!" murmured Denton.

"Yes, I am wild!" roared the hero of the Shell.

"I'm beastly sorry I've upset you," went on Denton, "because you seem to be jolly decent chaps—"

"Thanks!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"And as I'm to share this study with you—"

"Who said so?" demanded Manners.

"One of the St. Jim's masters. As I was walking through the village from the station I met the master of this House," explained the new-comer.

"Fine-looking chap he is, and I'll bet he's popular!"

"Rather! He's a brick!"

"Well, Mr. Rail—Rail something—"

"Railton."

"That's it—Railton. Well, he said he'd forgotten to tell you that I was coming, and that I was to go straight to a kid—ahem!—chap named Tom Merry, and tell him that I had to share his study with two other fellows, all the rest being full up."

"That's right, too," said the captain of the Shell. "This is the only study with room to spare. Like your cheek, though, coming in the middle of term and putting three quiet, studious chaps like us to a blessed lot of inconvenience!"

Denton grinned.

"Don't worry," he said. "I shall only be here a month."

"Only a month at St. Jim's?"

"Just about."

"Well, that's one consolation, anyhow!" growled Monty Lowther.

The new arrival grinned again. Evidently he did not take offence easily. To tell the truth, the Terrible Three were rather beginning to like him, with his free-and-easy ways and frank apologies.

"But what's the idea?" asked Tom Merry. "Do you mean to say that your people have sent you to St. Jim's just for a month—that you're going to clear out then?"

"Something like that," answered Denton. "But I can't stop to explain now. There's my box to see to, and it's nearly tea-time. I suppose you have tea in the studies at St. Jim's?" he added.

"Rather!"

"Good! I'll stand treat to-night," said Denton generously. "Here's half-a-quid. You know how to lay in the grub best."

And before the Terrible Three could reply the new boy had taken his departure.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Levison Gets It Hot!

DR. HOLMES, the headmaster of St. Jim's, sat in his study. He looked up expectantly as a tap sounded on the door. In response to his invitation to enter Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came in.

"Ah, Railton, thank you for coming!" exclaimed the Head. "I just wanted to ask you about the new boy, Denton. He arrived this afternoon, I believe?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Railton. "I met him in the village, and spoke with him for a few minutes. Apparently he is sharp and intelligent, and ought to get on well."

"I do not think he will have much chance of getting on at St. Jim's," smiled Dr. Holmes. "He will only be with us for a month, or a little over."

Mr. Railton lifted his eyebrows.

"A month?" he inquired, in surprise.

"That is all, Mr. Railton. I should not have considered his entering St. Jim's had not the circumstances been unusual. It appears that Denton's father went out to Alaska—the Klondike—just over a year ago, leaving his son in England, in charge of a Mr. Robert Barratt, an old friend. Not a month since, news came from Alaska that poor Denton had met with a serious accident, and died in consequence."

"How terrible!" ejaculated Mr. Railton.

"Yes, it was very sad," agreed the Head, "for it left his son an orphan. But Denton had been so long away that the boy did not feel the shock nearly so much as he would have done under other circumstances. Mr. Barratt did not tell me the full details, but I gathered from his conversation that Denton left a con-

siderable sum of money, making it necessary for someone to go out to Alaska to clear the matter up. This duty Mr. Barratt decided to do himself, and requested me to take charge of young Denton until his return, Mr. Barratt being a bachelor."

Mr. Railton nodded.
"I understand, sir," he said. "It is a pity the boy will have to leave just when he is nicely settled down; but that, I suppose, is his guardian's business."

"Exactly, Mr. Railton. We have merely to take charge of the boy until Mr. Barratt's return from America."

After a few more minutes' conversation Mr. Railton left the presence of the Head, and made his way to his own study in the School House. As he passed along the Shell passage he smiled. From Tom Merry's study came the sound of many voices, intermixed with laughter.

"I do not think the new boy could have been placed among better companions," murmured the Housemaster to himself. "I expect he has already made himself at home with Tom Merry and his friends."

The new junior had! In the Terrible Three's study tea was just over, and the festive board was still loaded with good things. Monty Lowther leaned back and sighed.

"Blessed if I can eat another crumb!" he said contentedly. "After all, it wasn't such a sensible thing to lay in so much grub all at once."

"It'll do for to-morrow," said Denton.
"Quite so," said Tom Merry. "Now, what do you say to a stroll in the quad, Denton?"

"Anything you like," said Denton.
"Good!"

And the Terrible Three and Denton strolled out into the quad. Fellows of the Fourth and Shell who were out there looked at them curiously, for the news of the new boy's arrival had got about, and the juniors hardly expected to see Tom Merry and his chums on such good terms already. Kildare, the popular, manly captain of St. Jim's, passed and nodded good-naturedly.

"Glad to see you've chummed up already, you kids," he remarked.

"Oh, we're all right, Kildare!" said Tom Merry. "The new chap was a bit fresh at first, but since we've salted him he's been as meek as a lamb."

"You young rascals!"

Kildare smiled and walked on.
"Fine chap, Kildare," said Tom Merry—"one of the best in the school. Suppose we show the new chap over the gym?"

"Good idea!"

So they marched towards the gym. Suddenly a squeal sounded, but it was cut short immediately. It sounded like one of the Third Form fags in trouble, and Tom Merry looked round, with a frown.

"I'll bet that's Crooke or Levison bullying some fag or other," he said.

"Came from behind the gym," said Lowther.

They hurried round, without making any noise in their approach, and found Tom Merry's words to be true. Levison, the cad of the Fourth, was standing over Fane of the Third, with a cruel grin on his unpleasant features.

He had hold of Fane's wrist, and was twisting the fag's arm unmercifully. Fane's face was screwed up with pain, but he saw the new-comers.

"Rescue!" he yelled, in agony.
"You beastly cad!"

Before the Terrible Three could interfere with Levison, Denton had sprung forward, indignant and angry. Levison released Fane with a start, but a dark frown gathered on his brow when he saw who the new-comer was.

"You beastly cad!" exclaimed Denton hotly.

Levison scowled.
"Better mind what you're saying, you new bouncer!" he said darkly. "What's it got to do with you, anyhow? Why can't you mind your own affairs?"

"Because I'm not going to stand by and see a rotten bully do just as he likes!" retorted the new boy angrily.
"Clear off, before I lay hands on you! I may be a new kid, but I'm not going to have any nonsense from cads like you!"

"Better mind what you're saying," muttered Levison.
"Clear off!"

"Go and eat coke!" snarled the cad of the Fourth savagely. "For two pins I'd knock you down!"

"If you don't get out of my sight in ten seconds I'll give you something to remember me by!" said Denton wrath-

fully. "You beastly cad!" exclaimed Denton hotly.
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"Better mind what you're saying, you new bouncer!" he said darkly. "What's it got to do with you, anyhow? Why can't you mind your own affairs?"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Stranger.

PHILIP EDGAR DENTON stood over Levison with a grim expression on his face.

"That serves you right for playing a brute's trick!" he said hotly.

"Rather!" agreed the Terrible Three in chorus. "The rotter meant to kick you!"



"Come on, chaps!" roared Tom Merry. And the next moment the cottage door was burst open, and the whole troop of juniors crowded in. There were exclamations of rage and fear from the two men, while Levison turned as white as chalk. "By heavens! The young rascal has betrayed us!" cried Wright.

fully. "And leave this kid alone in future!"

Levison stepped forward.
"You'd give me something?" he sneered.

"Yes, and jolly quick, too!"

"I'd like to see you!" Levison shouted, lunging forward at the same time, hoping to catch Denton off his guard.

But somehow the lunge was parried instantly, and the new junior's fist shot forward.

Levison staggered back, and clapped a hand to his left eye.

"Ow!" he yelled. "You beastly—"

Then he seemed to go mad for a moment, for he suddenly flew forward at Denton like a whirlwind. The new boy didn't move.

Up came Levison's right foot, with the evident intention of giving Denton a cowardly kick. And if Denton had not

"Oh!" groaned Levison painfully.
"You beast!"

"Better mind what you're saying!" exclaimed Denton warningly. "Get up and clear off before I biff you again. Here, youngster," he added to Fane of the Third, who stood by rubbing his arm ruefully. "you'd better buzz off, in case you get in the wars again."

"Yes, I will," said Fane gratefully.
"Thanks awfully for—"

"That's all right, kid. Cut!"

And Fane cut.

Levison picked himself up, glared at Denton for a moment in bitter hatred, and muttered something under his breath. Then he strode off.

"I shouldn't think the fags at St. Jim's like that chap," remarked Denton thoughtfully.

"They hate him," said Tom Merry.

"Like poison," added Monty Lowther. "He's the meanest, most caddish beast the school's ever seen," supplemented the amateur photographer of St. Jim's. "Levison takes a delight in wringing the arms of some poor kid who can't retaliate. He— Pah!" Manners added disgustedly. "Let's talk of something decent."

"That's it; change the subject." And the four Shell fellows dismissed Levison from their minds, and entered the gym. But Levison didn't forget the encounter. He was still aching from his violent fall, and his left eye was beginning to look red and puffy.

A dark scowl marred his brow when he came face to face with Mellish of the Fourth under the old elms. Mellish was his study-mate and constant companion.

"Hallo!" said Mellish, grinning. "You look happy!"

"Shut up!"

"Oh, go easy, Levison—"

"Shut up, I say!" growled Levison fiercely.

Mellish backed a little, and in the moonlight noticed the dusty condition of Levison's clothes. He also saw the angry state of his left eye, and grinned again.

The sight of anyone in pain was always particularly edifying to Mellish. He delighted in jeering at anyone who happened to have received a severe caning.

"Don't get wild," he said. "What's happened? Tom Merry or one of his set found you teaching one of the Third-Form kids a lesson, and biffed you? I must say you look as though you'd been through a mangle—"

"Shut up, hang you!" roared Levison. "My hat, that eye will be a nice colour! Ow! Oooooop!"

Mellish sat down in the quad with terrific suddenness. Levison's fist had landed on the sneak of the Fourth's nose with considerable force, and Mellish staggered back with a wild yell.

"Yow-ow!" he howled. "Oh, you rotter!"

"That's to warn you to keep your confounded remarks to yourself!" growled Levison, with an unpleasant grin.

And, without waiting for Mellish to answer, he walked off across the quad.

Levison made his way in the direction of the woodshed. It was his custom to pay visits to the woodshed when he felt inclined for a smoke. Not that Levison enjoyed it; he made himself think he did, for it was, of course, "manly" to smoke.

"Just what I want to buck me up," thought Levison, as he crossed the quadrangle.

The cad of the Fourth wore an angry scowl as he entered the dark woodshed. His eye was giving him considerable pain, and his feelings towards Denton were not very loving.

Levison's nature was a peculiar one, and he would remember little injuries weeks after the other boys had forgotten them.

"I'll pay the brute out!" he thought vengefully. "Pay him out in a way he won't like! Hang him, this eye'll be black to-morrow!"

He sat down on a pile of old sticks, tenderly caressing his left eye, and trying to think out a way of getting even with Denton. Then he remembered the object of his visit to the woodshed, and fumbled in his pockets.

"Hang!" he muttered, after a moment. "Blow!"

He discovered that he hadn't a cigarette on him, having smoked the last one earlier in the day. Levison sat there undecided for a minute or two, savagely kicking the twigs about which lay at his

feet. Then he glanced at his watch; and came to a decision.

"Just time before locking-up if I hurry," he muttered. "I must have some cigs for to-morrow!"

He emerged from the shed, and hurried across the quad to the entrance-gates. Lumley-Lumley, Clifton Dane, and Reilly were lounging there, talking cricket. They looked up as Levison brushed past.

"Going down to Rylcombe?" inquired Dane. "You'll have to hurry!"

"I know that."

"Anything urgent?"

"Mind your own bizney!"

Levison walked on, and the three juniors grinned at one another.

"Nice-tempered beast, if you like!" remarked Lumley-Lumley. "I'll bet he's going into the village to get some ointment for that eye of his. Did you see it?"

"Hardly; it was just about bunged up!" chuckled Reilly. "Sure, he's more likely bound for the Green Man!"

Levison was known to be a visitor to the Green Man, a disreputable public-house in the village, but he would hardly venture there so early in the evening. Levison's visits were usually paid after lights-out, and when every decent boy was asleep.

He hurried down Rylcombe Lane at a half-trot, for there was not much time. The thick woods, with their leafless trees, lay on one side of the road, and the shadows were thick among the branches.

Levison hurried down the long hill. He almost wished he hadn't started now, for on reflection his object in Rylcombe didn't seem worth the double journey. But he had covered half the distance now.

Suddenly the bushes parted, and a figure appeared in the road. Levison paused, and his heart beat faster.

He knew that tramps sometimes spent the night in the woods, and before now had waylaid the juniors from St. Jim's. The memorable occasion when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been robbed and stripped of his clothes rose in Levison's mind, and he tried to hurry past the man who had just appeared.

"Not so fast, young shaver!"

Levison stopped. He was forced to, for the man barred his path. The cad of the Fourth was by no means a coward, whatever his other faults. When it came to a pinch, Levison could be remarkably cool and self-possessed.

Once, when Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was thought to be dead, and was lying in the vaults under St. Jim's, Levison had ventured down there in the middle of the night, and the experience had not affected his nerves in the least.

He stared at the man who had suddenly appeared from the woods in surprise, and with a quickening of his pulse. The fellow was short, well-dressed, and he wore a dark beard and moustache.

"Not so fast, young shaver!"

"What do you want?" said Levison, between his teeth.

The stranger placed a hand on the junior's shoulder, but Levison shook it off, and stepped back a pace.

"Hands off!"

"What's the matter, you young fool?" asked the man, in an amused tone. "I'm not going to harm you. I simply want you to answer a question. Is there a boy up at the school yonder named Levison—Ernest Levison?"

The cad of the Fourth started.

"My hat!" he ejaculated, in surprise. "How do you know my name?"

It was the stranger's turn to start.

"What's that?" he exclaimed quickly.

"I'm Levison," said the junior, recovering himself rapidly.

The short man grasped his arm again, and looked into his face searchingly.

"You're Levison?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm hanged if this isn't funny!" exclaimed the dark-bearded man. Then he saw a figure in the dusky distance, and went on hurriedly: "Look here, do you want to earn a few pounds for yourself?"

The question startled Levison.

"Because, if you do," went on the stranger, "be here, at this spot, at eleven o'clock to-night, after lights-out!"

"I—I—" hesitated Levison.

"That's all. And don't tell a soul you've seen me, and come alone. If you bring any other boys with you, I shan't be here. Understand?"

"Yes; but—"

"Then be here at eleven sharp!"

And the man with the dark beard left Levison's side, and disappeared among the trees of Rylcombe Woods. The cad of the Fourth looked after him uncertainly.

But a couple of seniors were hastening up the hill, and Levison didn't want to meet them just then. So he turned and made his way towards St. Jim's.

His mind was in something of a whirl. Who could the stranger be, and how had he got to know of Levison's name? The object of Levison's journey was entirely forgotten. He puckered his brows as he hurried along.

The man was aware, too, of his character at the school, or he would not have told him to be out in the lane after lights-out. What could it mean? But, whatever it meant, it looked decidedly shady and underhand.

Not that Levison cared for that; he was accustomed to performing underhand tricks, and had more than once escaped expulsion by the skin of his teeth. He thought of the strange meeting the whole way to St. Jim's.

"I'll go!" he decided, a gleam of anticipation in his eyes. "There's no telling, it might be something simple that I could do without a soul suspecting me. And I want four-pounds-ten just now to pay that confounded Joliffe at the Green Man. If I don't dub up soon, he'll get nasty, the beast!"

Mr. Joliffe was the landlord of the Green Man Inn, and it was no unusual occurrence for Levison to break bounds at night, and spend an hour or two in the little back room at the public-house playing cards.

But who the mysterious stranger could be the cad of the Fourth hadn't the slightest idea, and he felt impatient for the hour of eleven to arrive.

Taggles, the school porter, was at the gates with a bunch of keys in his hand when Levison slipped in. Taggles looked at the junior sternly.

"Another 'arf-minute, Master Levison, an' you'd have bin locked hout! I ain't sure now but what I ought to report yer!"

"Oh, rats!" said Levison. "The gates aren't locked!"

"Which it's the fault of my clock bein' slow—"

"More rats!"

"You young himp!" roared Taggles. "P!"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Levison crossly.

And he strode across the dusky quad, leaving Taggles speechless.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds.

TEN-THIRTY chimed solemnly on the still night air.

The Fourth Form dormitory in the School House was still and quiet. The long rows of beds contained soundly-sleeping forms—all save one. At

the stroke of ten-thirty, one of the boys had sat up and looked round.

It was Levison.

He remembered the appointment he had to keep in Rylcombe Wood at eleven o'clock. The cad of the Fourth felt rather curious. Lately he had been keeping to himself, for a narrow escape from being expelled from St. Jim's had made him more cautious.

But there was no harm, he argued, in slipping down Rylcombe Lane to see what the man with the black beard wanted. So Levison sat up in bed and looked round him.

"I say, you fellows!" he whispered cautiously.

No answer.

"Blake! You asleep, Blake?"

Snore!

Levison grinned in the darkness.

"I'm safe enough," he thought.

He rapidly dressed, then, with his boots in his hand, he crept towards the door. Levison was quite accustomed to walking about in the dark, and he lost no time in slipping out of the School House by means of the little window at the end of the Fourth Form passage.

The night was dim, for clouds had appeared. A cold breeze swayed the leafless branches of the old elms. The school buildings stood out clear against the sky, and one or two brightly illuminated windows told that Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton, perhaps, had not yet retired.

The cad of the Fourth stole across the quad quietly, and in a few minutes was out in Rylcombe Lane. He grinned to himself as he strode rapidly down the road. The adventure appealed to him, and he didn't feel at all nervous.

"This is the place, I reckon."

Levison stopped, and tried to pierce the darkness of the wood. The lane was absolutely deserted, and the only sounds which reached the junior's ears were those caused by the wind swaying the branches of the trees. Levison pressed forward.

"Hist!" he whispered. "Anybody there?"

No answer.

Levison stamped impatiently.

Then eleven o'clock chimed out.

There was a crackling of twigs, the trees parted, and a dark form appeared. "You are alone?" inquired a voice abruptly.

"You can see that, can't you?" said Levison, looking at the short, black-bearded man before him. "What's the game—what's all the giddy secrecy for? Why couldn't you have come out just now when I spoke?"

"Steady on! Don't get impatient. I wanted to make sure that you were alone," said the stranger coolly. "I've taken pains to learn all I can about you, my young friend, and I shouldn't trust you more than I could see!"

"What do you mean?" growled Levison.

"I mean that you are quite a character at St. Jim's—and not a very excellent character at that. Still, you'll do for what I want—"

Levison stepped up to the other.

"Look here," he said warnily. "If you're not jolly careful what you say, I'll go back, and then tell the police to-morrow that some shady character is—"

"Don't get excited, and don't talk rubbish!" interrupted the man. "I want you to do a little job for me—a job that won't take you more than ten minutes. I'll pay you well, and you won't stand the slightest chance of being found out."

"Well, I'm not going to get myself sacked from St. Jim's," said Levison.

The man laughed.

"Don't you worry about that," he said. "The risk will be nil, and when you've done what I want I'll hand you a liberal sum. I'll give you a fortnight, so that you won't have to hurry. But there's a chance of our being overheard here. Follow me."

"Where to?" asked Levison.

"You'll see soon enough."

And the man turned, and made off into the heart of the wood. Levison followed without hesitation, for he was decidedly interested. So far he knew absolutely nothing, but the chance of raking in a few pounds for performing a five-minute job was distinctly inviting.

Levison had no particular scruples, and it would be something to relieve the monotony. The cad of the Fourth was getting a bit "fed up" with Mellish and Crooke, and the rest of the school regarded him with more or less indifference.

"I wonder who the merchant is, and what he wants me to do?" Levison asked himself, as he followed the bearded man through the woods. "Anyhow, I mean to find out, whether he tells me or not."

They tramped on until at last they stood upon the edge of Wayland Moor. The dreary stretch of open country lay before them, and the wind blew coldly.

Levison shivered a little, but his curiosity was aroused, and he followed his strange companion without hesitation.

A little cottage lay near the edge of the wood—a ramshackle place which had stood empty for months. It was called Moor Cottage, and there was probably no other habitation for a mile.

The River Ryll flowed between steep banks close by, and the soft gurgle of its waters could clearly be heard. Once, months past, Dr. Holmes had been kidnapped, and held to ransom in the old cottage by a gang of villains.

"What's the idea?" asked Levison curiously.

"You'll see in a minute."

The man hurried forward, and a minute later pushed open the creaking gate, and walked up the grass-grown path to the cottage door.

A soft whistle left his lips, and the door opened, letting out a streak of light. The shutters of the windows were up, so no light had been visible until now.

"Got the kid with you?" asked a voice.

"Yes, it's all serene."

And the black-bearded man entered the cottage, Levison following, feeling more curious than ever.

He found himself in a bare room, the only furniture of which consisted of a couple of old boxes, a gladstone bag, and some blankets. A badly-smelling paraffin lamp burned on the tiny strip of mantel-piece.

"This young gentleman is Master Levison," said the man who had met the cad of the Fourth in the lane. "I reckon he'll suit our purpose to a tee, Wright."

"You're in a beastly hurry," growled Levison. "I want to hear what the game is before I consent to do anything for you. I'm jolly well not going to take any risks, so I tell you straight off!"

He stared at the two men defiantly, half wishing he had had nothing to do with the business. The man who had been in the cottage wore a heavy beard, and he stood a good six feet in his shoes. He looked at Levison searchingly, then laughed.

"My dear boy," he said, "there are no risks for you to take. Surely my friend Smith has explained to you that—"

"I haven't explained anything yet," said the black-bearded man.

"Ah, that accounts for our young

friend's hesitation, then," said the man named Wright. "We'll be perfectly frank with you, Levison. When we came to Rylcombe we set ourselves the task to find out the sharpest and cutest junior at St. Jim's; one we could trust, and one who hadn't any namby-pamby scruples. We hit on you immediately."

"Oh!" said Levison.

"We know that you are acquainted with the excellent Mr. Joliffe at the Green Man, and that you owe the gentleman something like five pounds—"

"Four pounds ten," said Levison sullenly.

"I wasn't far wrong," proceeded Wright easily. "Well, for that reason we requested your company here to-night. There's a little matter of business we want transacting, and you—"

"I've heard that before," interrupted Levison. "What's the game?"

"Simply this. There's a new boy arrived at St. Jim's, a youngster named Philip Denton—"

Levison started.

"Denton!" he exclaimed quickly.

"Exactly. I gather you've met the new boy?"

Levison frowned darkly.

"Yes, I have," he muttered, with vivid recollections of the moonlight encounter with Denton behind the gym. "The rotten outsider! I—"

"Ah, you don't like him?" asked Smith eagerly.

"He's a priggish cad," said Levison. "and I mean to make him jolly well sit up for sticking his rotten nose into my affairs!"

The two men exchanged glances.

"Well, our business is connected with this Denton," said Wright, bending close to the cad of the Fourth. "As you are at loggerheads with the new boy your task will be more congenial. It's a very small matter indeed."

Levison looked up. His eyes were shining eagerly. Here he saw an opportunity of getting even with Denton, and doing himself a bit of good at the same time. He nodded.

"Well, what's the simple matter?"

"We want you to procure for us a little package which Denton has among his property," said Wright eagerly. "It is nothing; merely an ordinary foolscap envelope, pale blue in colour, with a black seal. It is sure to be knocking about in Denton's box—"

"Half a mo'!" interrupted Levison cautiously. "If you want me to bone this envelope, and I'm found out doing it, I should be sacked from St. Jim's."

"But, my dear boy, there's no possibility of your being found out," declared Wright earnestly. "There'll be plenty of opportunities when Denton is out. You can do the business as simple as winking!"

"And what's in the envelope?" asked Levison cunningly.

"That's our business."

"I don't think! It's mine as well as yours, anyhow, especially as I'm going to get the blessed thing."

"You are too curious," said Smith sternly. "All you have to do is to hand the envelope over to us, and ask no questions."

"That's all very well—"

"Come, boy, don't be obstinate," said Smith impatiently. "We have no time to waste over you. If you do not wish to avail yourself of our offer you can return to the school, and we will accomplish our end in some other manner."

"Will you?" sneered Levison. "I could warn Denton—"

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Wright gripped Levison's shoulder firmly.

"You had better not try!" he said ominously.

"Why not?"

"Because we should know immediately. Then it would be a simple matter for us to write to your headmaster, and tell him that you are in Joliffe's debt to the extent of several pounds."

"I—I——" Levison turned pale. "Of course, if——"

"You think you see matters in a different light, eh?" said Wright, with a laugh. "If you act square with us, Levison, we will act square with you. The job is a small one, with no risks attached to it, and with the money we pay you you will be able to pay Joliffe his debt."

"Oh, all serene!" growled Levison. "I don't want to know what's in the giddy envelope. How much are you going to give me for the bizney?"

"Ten pounds—if you carry it through satisfactorily."

"Ten pounds!" echoed Levison. "My hat!"

"It is extremely liberal payment," went on Wright, "and you ought to jump at the chance. There's no hurry; you can await your opportunity, and earn the money in a few minutes. Will you agree?"

"Rather!" said Levison instantly. He had certainly expected no more than five pounds. With the ten he could pay the landlord of the Green Man, and still have a big sum of money in hand. The cad of the Fourth didn't hesitate now.

"I'll do the job for you," he said.

"Good!" said Wright, knowing full well that Levison would not play them false. "Remember, the envelope is a foalcap one, pale——"

"Pale blue, with a black seal," said Levison. "All right, I shan't make a muddle of it. I suppose I'd better not come here again until I'm able to bring the envelope?"

"No; there is no necessity to take unnecessary risks."

"All right; I'll get the bizney through as quickly as I can," said Levison, quite at his ease. Taking an envelope couldn't be called stealing, he argued; and, anyhow, he was doing it for someone else. Levison's conscience was quite clear.

"And about the tin?" he asked.

"Ah, yes!" Wright felt in his pocket. "I'll give you two pounds now, and eight pounds when you hand over the envelope. That's fair enough; and remember, Levison, we trust you to do your best."

Levison pocketed the sovereigns.

"Don't worry," he said coolly; "you'll see me again in a day or two."

And two minutes later the cad of the Fourth was hurrying to St. Jim's under the clouded sky.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Levison Gets to Work.

WHEN morning lessons commenced the next morning Levison was looking as cool and self-possessed as usual. Nobody, to look at him, would have guessed the object he had constantly in his mind.

Half-way through the second lesson Levison was called upon to construe. The cad of the Fourth stood up, and passed a hand across his brow. For over half an hour he had been looking rather ill, and Mr. Lathom had glanced at him once or twice.

"Now, Levison," said the Form-master, "you will proceed——"

Levison stood up, then swayed dizzily. The book fell from his hand. Levison pulled himself up with a jerk, and grasped hold of the desk.

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"Are you ill, Levison?" asked Mr. Lathom concernedly.

"I'm all right, sir!" muttered Levison.

Suddenly he swayed again, and fell heavily against the next desk. Clifton Dane sat there, and he held Levison up. The rest of the Form looked on in surprise.

"What's up with you, fathead?" whispered Dane.

"Good gracious, I trust you are not going to be ill!" ejaculated the little Form-master anxiously. He knew that Levison had been subject to peculiar, trance-like fits in the past, and he wondered if this was another of them coming on.

Mr. Lathom walked across the room, and bent over Levison. The cad of the Fourth was certainly looking very queer.

"I'm all right, sir!" muttered Levison.

"Would you like to lie down for a little while, Levison?" asked the master. "If you feel unable to continue your work you are at liberty to lie down in your dormitory or in your study——"

"I don't think so, sir," said Levison, pulling himself together.

His voice was hoarse, and Mr. Lathom was anxious.

"Yes, Levison," he said sternly. "you must leave the Form-room!"

"But I'm——"

"You are unwell, my boy. Either go to the matron and tell her you are feeling unwell, or lie down in your study for a little while. I insist, Levison!"

"Very well, sir," said Levison unsteadily.

He rose to his feet, swayed a little, then crossed rather uncertainly to the door. All eyes followed his progress. The door opened, and Levison passed out.

"The boy looks positively ill," said Mr. Lathom concernedly. "Now, boys, we will proceed."

"The giddy swanker!" muttered Digby, with a sniff.

"Yaas, wathah, Digby!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "Levison was shammin'. I expect the boundah wants to do somethin' pwivate, an' so pwetended to be ill. Bai Jove, I don't twust that wottah!"

"D'Arcy, you are talking!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom mildly.

"Yaas, sir."

"Take fifty lines, D'Arcy!"

"Vewy good, sir," said Arthur Augustus resignedly.

But the swell of St. Jim's had been very near to the truth in his surmise. Levison certainly had been shamming, and he certainly wanted to do something private.

As soon as he had reached his own study a crafty smile broke out on his dark face. He had remarkable control of his features, and it had been a simple matter for him to feign illness.

"Now to do the business!" he muttered.

He left his study, and passed down the deserted passage. Being mid-morning, everybody, masters and boys alike, were in the class-rooms, and this part of the house was quite deserted.

In three minutes Levison was in the box-room. His eyes gleamed as he saw Denton's box there in the corner. He crossed over to it, and tried to raise the lid. It refused to budge.

"Locked!" murmured Levison.

He grinned. The lock was of the ordinary common type, and should not prove a very formidable obstacle.

Levison dived a hand into his pocket, and produced a bunch of little keys. He always carried them about, and had found them useful on more than one occasion.

For two or three minutes he tried various keys, but none turned the wards of the lock. At last he had gone through the whole bunch.

One key had almost succeeded in turning, and he inserted this again. He turned it and twisted it, but it refused to unlock the box.

"Really, my dear Levison, you are having quite a job with that key!" said a voice suddenly.

Levison dropped the key as though it had been red-hot, and turned a pale face towards the door. It had opened silently, and Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, stood just inside the door. Skimpole stared down at the Fourth-Former through his big spectacles.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Levison fiercely.

"If you will listen, I will explain," said Skimpole. "You see, my dear Levison, I happened to tip my inkpot over a short while ago, and the ink unfortunately spilled itself on to Crooke's trousers. Of course, you will understand that it was no fault of mine. I was not to blame in any way. As a matter of fact, the accident was predestined, and nothing I could have done would have averted it. Crooke, however, became highly incensed, and immediately flung the whole contents of the inkpot in my face. Of course, it was most ungentlemanly of him, and I can only put it down to environment during his youth. Crooke could not be blamed for throwing the ink. Mr. Linton immediately——"

"You silly idiot!" cut in Levison.

"What are you doing here?"

"Really, Levison, there is no necessity to become enraged," said Skimpole, blinking. "I was ordered to go and wash myself. I have, as you can observe, already performed that task, and thought that it would be a fitting opportunity to search for a great book on Determinism by the famous Professor Balmcrumpet, which is in my box. I had no idea you would be here. However, since you are here, perhaps you will allow me to read you a few lines of my new book on Socialistic Reform——"

"Clear out!" said Levison, between his teeth, started at being disturbed in such a delicate task as he was attempting.

"Buzz off, you fatheaded chump!"

Skimpole backed a pace.

"Really, Levison——"

"Can't you see I'm busy?" roared Levison angrily.

The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's blinked at the box with the key sticking out of the lock.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "I am afraid you are making a mistake, Levison!"

"A mistake, you ass——"

"That box belongs to Denton, the new boy in the Shell," said Skimpole. "I presume you are endeavouring to open it while under the impression that it is your own."

Levison bit his lip. But he had perfect control of his features, and looked surprised. He took the key from the lock, and gazed at the name on it.

"Why, so it is Denton's!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "That's funny! I wondered why the key wouldn't fit!"

Skimpole beamed.

"I am glad to have been of some slight service to you, Levison," he said.

"Nevertheless, it is rather peculiar that you should mistake Denton's box for your own. The Fourth Form boxes are in the next room."

Levison laughed easily.

"Oh, that's nothing," he said. "I came along the passage, and thought I had entered the Fourth Form box-room. I say, there's no need to say anything

about this to the fellows, you know. They wouldn't understand like you. They might think I was trying to open Denton's box deliberately!"

"Oh, surely not!" said the genius of the Shell.

"I don't know. You won't say anything, will you?" asked Levison. "By the way, you may as well show me this new book of yours on Socialism—"

"My dear Levison, I assure you I shall say nothing about this little matter," beamed Skimpole, forgetting all else except his Socialism. "If you will come to my study I shall have much pleasure in showing you the manuscript of my great new book. You realise, of course, that it is not yet published in book form, but I am sending it to a big firm in London this week, and I confidently expect them to accept it immediately."

And Skimpole led the way to the Shell passage.

Ten minutes later Levison hung himself into his own study and slammed the door. A black frown was on his brow, and he scowled as he savagely kicked the fire.

"The interfering brute!" he muttered fiercely. "Just when I was on the point of getting the box open! Hang it! Hang Skimpole, and his rotten Socialism as well! The silly ass ought to be shoved in a lunatic asylum!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Like a Thief in the Night.

"FEELING better, Levison?"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Levison savagely.

Mellish grinned. It was bedtime, and Levison was still feeling savage at having been foiled in his object.

He had been forced to keep up his pretence of feeling ill, and had eaten sparsely in consequence. He was hungry now, and it did not tend to improve his temper.

Levison got into bed without delay. His mind was made up. He would go down to the box-room at about eleven o'clock and obtain the letter then. After all, it would perhaps be the least risky plan. If he took special pains there was no reason why he should be discovered.

"I'll get the beastly thing, and take it straight to the house on the moor," he decided, as he lay in bed. "It'll be done with then, and I shall have my ten quid—or more!"

After the usual animated conversation in bed the Fourth Form gradually dropped off to sleep. But Levison was wakeful enough. He lay there and listened to the school clock chime the quarter-hours. It was a tedious enough task, and Levison was impatient to get the matter settled and done with.

Eleven! Levison sat up, and cautiously looked round. A creak sounded from Blake's bed, but Blake lay perfectly still, breathing regularly.

"Any of you chaps awake?" asked Levison, in a low voice.

"Yes, I am," mumbled Herries. "Wha'ster matter?"

"Oh," said Levison, a little confused. "n-nothing, only I thought I heard a noise!"

"Oh, rats! Go to sleep!" grumbled Herries. "Wonder if Towser's all right?"

Levison lay back on his pillow with a muttered exclamation of annoyance. He had confidently expected the dormitory to be asleep, and Herries' ready answer had disconcerted him a trifle.

Fifteen minutes later he again put the murmured question.

Silence!

"Isn't there anybody awake?" asked Levison.

Not a sound.

"Good!" muttered the cad of the Fourth. "I'll go right off!"

He slipped out of bed. In a very few minutes he was dressed in his trousers, shirt, and coat. Then, with his boots in his hand, he crept to the door. It opened without a sound, and closed again.

Jack Blake sat up like a spring. "The beauty!" he murmured. "Off to the Green Man, I expect!"

Levison had been quick in getting into his clothes; Blake was about half the time. He simply jumped into his things, then crept from the dormitory.

He had heard Levison the first time, and had guessed that he had some game on. Therefore, Blake had kept himself awake.

The passage was deserted. Blake popped into the Shell dormitory and shook Tom Merry's shoulder. Tom Merry opened his eyes, and blinked.

"Hallo, what—who's that? What's the giddy game?"

"It's me!" whispered Blake urgently.

"Blake! Well, of all—"

"Ss-sssh!" murmured Blake. "Levison's just gone out of the dorm with his boots in his hand!"

"Phew! Do you mean to follow him?"

"Yes. Buck up!"

"I'm on!" said a voice behind Blake. Philip Edgar Denton slid out of bed and coolly commenced to dress.

"I say —" began Blake.

"What you say won't make any diff, my son," said Denton calmly. "I'm going with you chaps to see what game Levison's up to. I don't like that chap!"

In less than a minute Tom Merry and Denton were ready. Tom Merry or Blake didn't object to Denton accompanying them. They rather enjoyed the new junior's company, in fact.

They crept cautiously along the corridor. When they examined the little window which was usually used by the juniors when breaking bounds at night, however, they found that it was securely fastened on the inside.

"He hasn't been through here!" muttered Blake.

"How could he have got out, then?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Blake.

"Let's look at the side door."

The three juniors carefully descended the stairs. They crept along the passage to the side door. It was pitch dark there, and Tom Merry cautiously struck a match. All three examined the door. It was locked and bolted on the inside.

"You fathad, Blake!" said Tom Merry wrathfully, carefully stamping the match head out. "Levison hasn't gone out at all!"

"Then he's still in the house," grinned Denton.

"Go hon!" said Blake. "I can't make it out, though. Levison had his boots in his hand. If he didn't mean to go out, why did he carry his boots with him?"

"Perhaps he was going to clean 'em?" suggested Denton.

"Oh, don't be funny, Denton, old man!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "Come on, we'll go back and see if we can see any sign of the rotter."

They found their way back to the Fourth Form passage. Moonlight entered the windows in a stream, and suddenly Tom Merry pointed.

"My hat!" he murmured. "Look there! They're Levison's boots!"

A pair of boots had been placed close to the skirting. They had certainly not been there when the Fourth Form went up to bed, therefore it was quite obvious that they were Levison's.

The three juniors stood for a second looking at them. Then a creak on the

stairs sounded. Tom Merry tugged at his companions' arms.

"Look out!" he whispered. "He's coming!"

They scurried back into the dark passage, and stood there waiting. In another moment Levison appeared, and he paused before the window.

The moonlight shone in and clearly lit up Levison's form and features. The cad of the Fourth had not the least idea that he was being observed.

There was a smile of contentment on his face, and he held a blue, oblong envelope in his hand. He looked at it for a second, then stuffed it into his pocket.

Fortunately, the blue envelope crackled in the process, and so made a slight noise. But for this slight noise Levison would have heard something in the other passage.

For, at sight of the envelope, Denton took half a step forward, his eyes blazing excitedly and wrathfully. He was just on the point of crying out, when Tom Merry clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Shut up!" he breathed. "We'll see what Levison's going to do."

Denton controlled himself with an effort. His eyes were still blazing, and his breath came in quick gasps.

"The—the-awful thief!" he muttered. "That letter's mine—"

Tom Merry pinched Denton's arm.

The new boy took the hint and relapsed into silence. Less than a minute later Levison, with his boots on, cautiously made his way to the little window. He clambered out quickly, without a sound.

"The rotten thief!" said Denton fiercely. "He's pinched that envelope out of my box! He must know what's in it! It's worth thousands of pounds!"

"What?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Eh?" ejaculated Blake.

"It's true! The contents of that letter are worth thousands!" said Denton, his voice quivering with emotion. "Quick! We must follow him!"

Excited now, Tom Merry and Blake followed Denton up to the window. Suddenly Blake paused.

"I'll rush back and get some of the other fellows!" he said quickly. "I'll tell you what! You follow behind Levison, Tom, and Denton'll follow you. Then Denty will still be in sight when I come along. The others will follow me. There'll be a giddy procession of us!"

"Good idea!" said Tom Merry. "Come on, Denton!"

The two scrambled out of the window. Meanwhile, Blake hurried back to the Fourth Form dormitory. Rules and regulations were totally forgotten, and in practically less than no time Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries, Digby, Lumley-Lumley, and Reilly had scrambled into their clothes.

Then they rapidly slipped out of the window after Blake. Blake was at the other side of the quad, for he had gone out a minute or two before. He beckoned to the new-comers to hurry.

They did so. Once out in Rycombe Lane, Blake pointed down the moonlit road.

"There's Denton!" he said quickly. "He's keeping Tom Merry in sight, and Tommy's following Levison! You see, that way Levison won't have a whole crowd following him and giving the show away."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "That's jolly smart, you know!"

"My idea," said Blake modestly.

"Weally," Blake, you needn't crow about it—"

"Oh, come on!"

They hurried down the lane, for there was no necessity for them to spread out now. They were so far behind Levison that the cad of the Fourth could have no possible suspicion of their presence.

Levison would have received a considerable shock had he known that no less than eight juniors were hot upon his track.

Undoubtedly Blake's idea was an extremely good one, and admirably suited to the occasion, for it enabled the whole eight juniors to follow the cad of the Fourth without his being aware of it.

"Bai Jove, they've turned into the footpath leadin' through the woods!"

It was true, and very soon the crowd of juniors were following fairly close behind Denton. The new boy himself was feeling very indignant. He felt like hurrying on and forcing Levison to give up the valuable paper.

Such a course, however, might end in Levison's object remaining undiscovered for ever. Therefore Denton curbed his impatience and kept Tom Merry in sight.

Suddenly the hero of the Sholl stopped.

Denton came up to him breathlessly.

"Where is he?" he asked quickly.

"Just gone in that old cottage," said Tom Merry. "My hat, Denton, there's some underhand game going on here! Look, there's a light in that cottage! What the dickens is Levison doing there?"

"I mean to find out!" said Denton, through his set teeth.

"Bai Jove, heah they are, deah boys!"

"Sure, and you're right intirely!"

The others came up quickly, and Tom Merry rapidly told them what had happened.

Denton stamped about impatiently.

"I'm going!" he exclaimed firmly. "You chaps can—"

"We can go with you," said Tom Merry. "Look here, it looks to me as if there's some danger in this. I vote we spread out and approach the cottage from different directions. Then, if it comes to a row, we can rush in and rescue that letter."

The suggestion was acted upon immediately. Without loss of time the juniors, now thoroughly excited, spread out and crept towards the cottage.

Denton, Tom Merry, and Blake were the first to arrive, and they cautiously crept over the low fence and approached the window.

The blind was down, but there was about an inch slit left at the bottom, so that the occupants of the room were quite distinctly visible.

Denton and Tom Merry peered in cautiously. The two men, Wright and Smith, were standing before the fire, and Levison was on the other side of the table, looking hot and flushed.

"I want twenty pounds!" the watching juniors heard him say. "I very nearly got copped pinching that rotten letter, and it's worth twenty!"

Wright had the contents of the blue envelope spread out before him.

"This—is this the thing!" he said, with keen satisfaction. "Well, Levison, since you have been so prompt, I'll spring five pounds more than I offered, and let you have fifteen."

"What's it all about?" breathed Tom Merry, mystified.

"I can't explain now," said Denton quickly. "But we must get that letter back, Merry. We must! Good heavens, it'll be terrible if that thing's stolen—"

There was a sudden stumble in the darkness close by.

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"Bai Jove!" gasped a voice audibly. The sound of a startled exclamation came from within the cottage.

"Gussy's given the show away!" cried Tom Merry loudly. "Come on, chaps!"

And the next second Tom Merry burst the cottage door open, and the whole troop of juniors crowded in.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. The Secret Out.

THE two men started back with exclamations of rage and fear. The dramatic interruption had been so sudden that they had been totally unprepared for it. Levison, twirling round, turned the colour of chalk as he saw who the new-comers were.

"By heaven!" he muttered blankly. "Thunder!" shouted Wright. "The infernal young rascal has betrayed us! Quick, take these papers—"

A lithe form shot forward.

"I'll tako them!" cried Denton. And, almost before the black-bearded man could realise what had happened, the new boy at St. Jim's had sprung forward and snatched the precious papers from Wright's hand.

"You little thief!" snarled Wright. "They're—"

"Collar them!" shouted Tom Merry, in the confusion. "Pile on to 'em!"

The juniors complied with a will. They literally flung themselves at the two men, and by sheer force of numbers both Wright and Smith were bowled over like ninepins. They rolled on the floor, roaring out threats.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, utterly regardless of consequences to his elegant trousers, rolled breathlessly on the floor in a tight embrace with Smith.

Finally, Lumley-Lumley and Reilly came to the rescue, and D'Arcy sat up and groped for his monocle. He jammed it into his eye, and took a survey of the surroundings.

"Bai Jove!" he said excitedly. "We've got them, deah boys! We've got the wottahs!"

Arthur Augustus had spoken truly. Both of the men were on the damp floor of the cottage, with juniors literally swarming over them.

Levison stood close by, pale and trembling. All his cheek and boldness seemed to desert him, and he gazed at the triumphant juniors with consternation and alarm.

"You young scoundrels!" spluttered Wright furiously. "What is the meaning of this outrage? By thunder, you shall suffer—"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy suddenly. "Look at the boundah's whiskahs! Gweat Scott, they are comin' off!"

Blake leaned forward and gave Wright's whiskers a tug. They came off in Blake's hand. Denton uttered a cry of amazement, and turned white.

"Mr. Barratt!" he cried incredulously. "Yes, Phil!" said the now clean-shaven man hoarsely. "Order these ruffians to release me! I have been working in your interests, and—"

Denton recovered himself with his customary swiftness.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, in an even voice. "I think I can see through it all! You will have to tell your story to the headmaster, Mr. Barratt, and then to the police!"

"The police!" cried "Wright" wildly. "You don't mean to say—"

"I mean to say that you have tried to rob me!" flashed back Denton hotly. "Do you think you can bluff your way out of it after this? Come on, chaps; we'll take these rotters to the school, and have it out before the Head!"

And in a very few minutes the pair of

dejected and startled scoundrels were being marched through the moonlit woods. Levison, in a whirl of fear, followed close behind.

The gates of the school were reached, and Tom Merry pulled the porter's bell. It pealed out loudly, and after some little delay Taggles appeared, grumbling. He gazed through the bars at the crowd of juniors.

"Open the gates, Taggy!" said Tom Merry. "Buck up!"

"My heye! What's the meanin' of this 'ere?" demanded Taggles. "I never see such goin's on! You young rips ought to be in bed—"

"Open the gates!" roared Blake.

Taggles grumbled, but the gates were opened. As it happened, Dr. Holmes had only just left his study to retire for the night, having been kept up by some important examination papers.

He was amazed to see the crowd of juniors at his door, and still more amazed when he heard Tom Merry's account of the fight in the cottage.

"Good gracious!" said the Head. "You might have been injured, my boys! But I fail to understand it all! One of these men is Mr. Robert Barratt, who is your guardian, Denton."

"I know, sir," said the new boy. "He's a treacherous rotter!"

Dr. Holmes turned to the scoundrel.

"What is the meaning of this, sir?" he asked sternly. "I understood you to say, in my former interview with you, that you had gone to Alaska?"

Robert Barratt looked up wretchedly.

"That was my intention, Dr. Holmes," he said earnestly. "Heaven forgive me! I was tempted, and proved too weak to resist it! I will make a full confession."

And, now thoroughly cowed, Barratt told the Head how he had given way to temptation. It seemed that when Denton's father had died—or, rather, before he had died—he had made out a plan of a cache in the hills where he had hidden a considerable fortune of gold-dust and nuggets.

This plan he had managed to send to Robert Barratt, an old friend in England who had charge of his son.

Barratt had shown the plan to Denton, and had told the boy that it was necessary for him to go out to Alaska to clear up some minor points concerning Mr. Denton's death.

Barratt had left the plan with the boy, thus disarming Denton of any vestige of suspicion. Barratt had sent Denton to a public school, because it seemed to be the safest place for the boy to be at.

Then, while Denton was at St. Jim's, Barratt had come to the district with a confederate—both of them in disguise—and planned to rob Denton of the plan. In this way Denton would simply miss the plan, and know nothing about how it came to be lost. He could not possibly dream of implicating Mr. Barratt.

The guardian would return home after a month or two, and would say that all was ready for him to go out and fetch the gold. Denton would then have told him that the plan was stolen. How could Denton have guessed that Barratt himself was the culprit?

The scheme was certainly ingenious, and but for the cute juniors of St. Jim's would have been successful.

"It is a miserable story!" said the Head sternly, when he had heard it all. "In addition to robbing this young lad, you deliberately dragged into your plot another junior of the school—Levison. I will not say that Levison was not greatly to blame, but I have no doubt that you intimidated him into working out your rascally scheme!"

(Concluded on page 20, col. 3.)

TOMMY COOK'S "SISTER"!

A Splendid
Long Complete Story,
dealing with the
Early Adventures of
JIMMY SILVER & CO.
the
Chums of Rookwood.

BY
OWEN CONQUEST

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Moderns' Wheeze.

"SOMETHING'S got to be done about it," said Tommy Dodd to his chums, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle. "These rottenners have been scoring over us far too often of late!"

"That's so!" agreed the chums. "But what are we to do?"

"Ah!" said Tommy Cook. "Here comes the postman. I am expecting a letter from my sister Amy to say that she will be down here this afternoon."

"Good egg!" said Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle together.

Tommy Cook speedily perused his letter, which contained the disappointing news that his sister was unable to come to Rookwood that afternoon.

"It's put off," said Cook. "I'm sorry, kids, but—What's the matter?"

Tommy Dodd had given a sudden jump, as if struck all at once with a new and brilliant idea. He grasped Cook's arm.

"I've got it!"

"Got what?"

"The wheeze! Your sister is coming!"

"She isn't!"

"Yes, she is! You're awfully like your sister, and your face is smooth and plump; and you know how ripplingly you made up as a girl in the amateur theatricals, when I was spending the vacation at your place last Christmas?"

Tommy Cook started.

"I say, Dobby—"

"It's a ripping wheeze! We can go to the costumier's in Coombe, and give out that we're going to meet the train your sister's coming in."

"Ha, ha! But—"

"You'll come back alone, having missed us, and you'll take in the Fistical Four, and make regular asses of them, if you play the part well, and—"

Tommy Cook's face expanded into a grin.

"My word, Dobby! It's a great idea, if you think I can do it!"

"I know you can, if you try."

"Well, I'll try, anyway!"

"Come along, then!"

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook set off at once for Coombe, Tommy Doyle remaining behind, as he had some back work to make up.

Later in the afternoon Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Newcome, and Raby, the Fistical Four at Rookwood College, were seated



Tommy Dodd was just coming in, but Lovell shut the door with a slam. Tommy Dodd gave a yell, and hurled the door open the next second. "You howling ass!" he roared. "You shrieking idiot—" "I'm surprised at you," said Lovell severely, "You seem to have forgotten, Tommy Dodd, that you are in the presence of a lady."

in the study, when there came a tap at the door.

"Get along!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"We're busy!"

Tap!

"We can't be bothered now!"

Tap!

"Oh, hang!" growled Lovell. "I suppose it's those rotten Moderns come to bother us with some of their absurd ideas!"

"It isn't!" said Raby. "They've gone to the station to meet Tommy Cook's sister!"

"Didn't know he had one," said Lovell. "I—"

Tap!

"Oh, come in, fathead!" called out Jimmy Silver testily.

The door opened timidly.

The next moment the chums were on their feet, Jimmy Silver with a face quite scarlet with confusion.

For it was a girl who stood in the doorway of the study, looking in timidly at the Fourth-Formers.

A girl, seemingly about fifteen, with a pretty figure and a charming, plump face, and long, golden hair, inclined to rich auburn, and a large summer hat that threw her face somewhat into the shade.

"If you please—"

"I—I—I beg your pardon," stammered Jimmy Silver. "I thought—"

"Is this my brother's study?"

Jimmy Silver started.

The resemblance of the girl to Tommy

Cook had struck him at once, and he understood now how the case stood.

It was Tommy Cook's sister.

"Miss Cook, is it not?" said the leader of the Fistical Four, recovering himself a little.

"That is my name."

"Ah, yes! I heard that you were coming down this afternoon," said Jimmy Silver. "But your brother has gone to the station to meet you, I believe."

The girl looked disappointed.

"Oh, dear! I did not see him there!"

"Tommy Dodd has gone with him," said Lovell. "They must be a pair of duffers to miss you—I mean, it's an awful pity!"

"Yes, you're right!"

"Oh, dear! And isn't this my brother's study?"

The Fistical Four could not help grinning.

Of all the studies in the Fourth-Form passage, Miss Cook had happened upon the very one which contained the deadly rivals of her brother and his chums. But the Fistical Four were not likely to let her know that. Chivalry to the gentler sex was a ruling trait in the character of the four chums.

"No," said Jimmy Silver, this isn't Cook's study. But we know Cook awfully well. He's a very decent chap, and we all like him."

"Quite true!" remarked Raby.

"He's a champion!" said Lovell earnestly. "One of the finest chaps in Rookwood. I've often envied Dodd and Doyle having him for a chum!"

The girl smiled sweetly. "How kind of you to say so! Would you—would you mind showing me where my brother's study is, so that I can wait for him?"

"With all the pleasure of life!" exclaimed Newcome.

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Cook may wait for you at the station, Miss Cook. He may think you are coming by the next train. You may be hung up in the study all the afternoon if you wait for him."

The fair visitor looked distressed. "Oh, dear! What shall I do?" "No good waiting in their study," said Jimmy Silver. "As Cook's special friends, it's our business to look after you till he comes back."

"Thank you so much!" "Not at all! It's a real pleasure, to say nothing of obliging a chum like Cook!" said Jimmy. "You must be hungry after your railway journey. I wonder whether you would have tea with us?"

Miss Cook nodded. "I should be very pleased." The Fistical Four beamed at one another. To entertain a pretty girl in the study to tea was rather a novelty, and had hitherto only happened on such occasions as Speech Day, when the sisters and the cousins and the aunts of the Rookwood boys came down to the old school in force.

"That'll be jolly!" said Raby. "Well, I'll just show Miss Cook round while you get the tea," said Jimmy Silver.

"Thank you so much!" said Miss Cook. Jimmy Silver smiled triumphantly at his chums, and walked out with the smiling girl, picking up his cap as he went.

Lovell, Newcome, and Raby looked at one another. "Well, of all the cheek!" said Lovell emphatically.

"Well, of all the nerve!" "We'll get a ripping tea," said Lovell, "and we'll rag Jimmy afterwards for his cheek. Let's go down to the school shop and lay in a supply of grub."

"Right-ho!" The chums passed Jimmy Silver and his fair companion as they went down to the tuckshop. Miss Cook and Jimmy Silver were strolling towards the cricket-field, the girl looking up at him and chatting sweetly, and many fellows casting curious glances at Jimmy, who looked extremely pleased with himself.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Taken In.

"SHALL we have a look at that old tower?" said Miss Cook, with a nod towards the ruined tower, one of the most ancient relics of the former Abbey of Rookwood.

"Let's have a look at it, by all means," said Jimmy Silver. "It's a curious old place. Once you get inside there's no getting out again if the door gets fastened; and it's so far from the school buildings that there isn't much chance of being heard if you shout. That's how it was that we—that some fellows were kept there until your brother and his chums let them out."

"How interesting!" They strolled away to the old tower. It was, indeed, a very quiet and secluded spot, shaded by old trees, and seemed strangely silent after the liveliness of the cricket-field.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 250.

The old oaken door creaked on its rusty hinges as Jimmy Silver opened it.

Dark and gloomy looked the interior of the tower, though the hot, summer sunshine was blazing down outside.

The girl glanced in with a shiver. "How dark it looks!"

"Oh, you get used to that!" said Jimmy. "It's cool and shady. Look! This little door leads on to the spiral staircase that goes up half-way to the top. It's rotten further on, and you can't go higher."

"I should so like to see it." Jimmy Silver opened the staircase door. Dimly within could be seen the spiral stair, winding upwards, lighted here and there by shafts of sunlight through the crannies in the old wall. Miss Cook looked at it with another pretty little shiver.

"Dear me! What a mysterious-looking place! Would you dare to go up the stairs?"

Jimmy Silver laughed. "Well, I should say so," he replied, stepping through the little doorway. "Mind the door doesn't get shut, as it wont open from the inside."

He stepped up the stairs. He only meant to show Miss Cook that it was quite safe, and that he, James Silver, wouldn't have been afraid, anyway. He gave a start as he heard a click below, and turned back hurriedly. The door at the bottom of the stairs was shut.

"My hat!" muttered Jimmy Silver. "What on earth did she want to shut that door for?"

He tapped on the door. "I say, Miss Amy!"

"Yes?" "How did the door come shut?" "I just pushed it," came back a distressful voice, "and it checked shut."

"What did you push it for?" murmured Silver. "How exactly like a girl!" Aloud he went on: "See if you can find the lock, will you? It pulls back, you know. It's quite simple." Several minutes elapsed.

"Have you found it?" asked Jimmy Silver at last.

"I haven't got it open." "Pull it back!" "It doesn't move." "Great snakes! I reckon it's got jammed somehow. Pull harder!" Another minute of suspense.

"Is it moving now?" "No; it's exactly as it was." This was not surprising, as Miss Cook was not even touching it. But Jimmy Silver, of course, was not aware of that fact.

"My hat! It's jammed to a certainty! Never mind, Miss Amy. Don't bother. Go and tell the others, and they'll see to it."

"But I cannot go away and leave you in that dreadful place," came the distressed voice faintly through the oaken door.

"It's all right. It's not dreadful. I've been in here before. I sha'n't mind in the least if you'll go and tell Lovell."

"You might die of fright in the solitude." Jimmy Silver grinned.

"I don't think I should die of fright if there was any danger; and there isn't any," he replied.

"I can't bear to leave you there." "My dear Miss Amy, if you can't open the door you must go and tell Lovell."

said Jimmy Silver, with admirable patience. "I couldn't make anybody hear if I shouted, and I can't remain here all night."

"Shall I go out and scream for help?" "No!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"You are sure you don't mind my leaving you here?" "Not a bit!"

"Then I will go. Keep your courage up!"

"My courage is all right. There's nothing the matter."

"Then I will go." And Miss Cook's voice was heard no more. Jimmy Silver imagined for a moment that he heard a cluck through the oaken door, but he dismissed the idea.

He settled down to wait patiently—more patiently than would have been possible had he known how long that wait was to be.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Guests in the End Study.

"WHERE'S that bouncer got to with Miss Cook?" exclaimed Raby.

"I suppose he's forgotten all about tea," said Lovell, with a grunt. The chums had cause to be exasperated, and they were.

Jimmy Silver, with the coolness that was part of his nature, had walked Miss Cook off under their noses, leaving them the task of getting tea. Tea was ready now, and the leader of the Fistical Four had not returned, and there was no sign of him.

And it was, as Lovell said, a ripping tea.

The kettle was singing on the hob. Raby had lighted the fire to boil it, but it was dying down now, for the afternoon was warm. The window was wide open to let in the breeze from the Close and the distant shouts from the cricket-field.

"Where can that rotter be?" "The best!" "I'll see if the bouncer's in sight," said Lovell, crossing to the window and looking out into the sunny Close.

Then he gave an exclamation. "What is it?"

"There's Miss Cook!" Newcome and Raby looked out, too, and uttered exclamations.

"Dodd's with her!" There was no sign of Jimmy Silver.

Miss Cook was standing under the elms, talking to Tommy Dodd. Jimmy Silver had disappeared.

Miss Cook and Tommy Dodd were laughing over something. Lovell could see that, though he was too far off to hear what was said.

"My hat! I wonder where Jimmy has got to?"

"Yes. And how is it that Dodd hasn't come back with Cook?" Lovell chuckled.

"Oh, I dare say that Cook is still waiting at the station!"

"Ha, ha!" "This is rather rotten. Miss Cook will chum up with Tommy Dodd, as he's Cook's chum, and we shall be rather out in the cold."

"But she's promised to have tea with us—"

"It's all Jimmy Silver's fault! He ought to have kept her under his wing, and not allowed her to fall into Tommy Dodd's clutches," said Lovell, frowning. "Where can the bouncer have taken himself off to?"

"We'd better go and speak to Miss Cook, anyway, before she wanders away with Tommy Dodd," said Raby. "That bouncer would be jolly glad to take her away and leave us to eat our tea alone."

"Yes, rather! Come on!" Lovell, Newcome, and Raby hurried out of the house. Miss Cook looked up with a charming smile as they came up, and Tommy Dodd nodded coolly.

"Hallo!" he said. "I see you've made Miss Amy's acquaintance!"

"Yes, rather!" said Lovell. "As friends of Cook—"

Tommy Dodd grinned again, as much as to say that he would not give them away, and Lovell felt relieved.

"Where's Jimmy Silver?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"He was showing Miss Cook round Rookwood," said Lovell, looking puzzled. "Did he leave you, Miss Amy?"

"I lost sight of him about a quarter of an hour ago," said Miss Cook. "Then I met Dodd in the Close."

"I've just got in from Coombe," said Tommy Dodd. "When we got to the village Cook had to go—a sudden engagement. I missed Miss Cook, and here I am. Cook, of course, looks to me to look after his sister."

"That's not at all necessary," said Lovell. "We're looking after her. Tea is quite ready, Miss Cook."

"Of course you won't mind if my brother's friend comes to tea?" Lovell forced a cheerful smile.

"I was just going to ask him," he said.

"Well, that's really nice of you," said Tommy Dodd genially. "I don't mind in the least—in fact, I shall be pleased."

"Come on, then!" "But how about Doyle?" said Tommy Dodd. "May I invite him?"

"Oh, yes, do ask him!" said Miss Cook. "I have heard a great deal about him, and he is such a great friend of my brother's."

Tommy Dodd was just coming in, but apparently Lovell did not notice that, for he shut the door with a slam. Tommy Dodd gave a yell, and hurled the door open the next second.

"You howling ass!" he roared. "You gave me a biff—"

"Dodd!" "You shrieking idiot—"

"I'm surprised at you!" said Lovell severely. "You seem to have forgotten that you are in the presence of a lady!"

Tommy Dodd remembered himself. "I beg your pardon, Miss Cook."

"Oh, it is nothing!" said Miss Cook. "You were naturally startled. Ah, this is Doyle! I am very glad to see you, Doyle!"

Miss Cook shook hands with Doyle. "Tea's ready," said Lovell. "You might shut the door, Doddy."

Tommy Dodd shut the door, and the juniors seated themselves, and tea commenced.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Tea in the Study.

TEA in the end study at Rookwood was generally a cosy and comfortable meal, and on the present occasion there was an unusually excellent spread.

There was plenty of everything, and it was all of the best quality.

pliment than by making a good tea, and that she was certainly doing. Tommy Dodd was making a good one; too; and so was Doyle.

"It's very kind of you to entertain me like this," said Miss Cook.

"A real pleasure!" said Lovell.

"My brother will be very grateful to you," said Miss Cook. "It is very unfortunate that he had to go out this afternoon when I was coming down."

"Oh, he knew he could trust me to look after you!" said Tommy Dodd.

"And, of course, these other friends of Cook's were bound to come to the rescue."

"Isn't Silver coming to tea?" asked the girl, glancing at Lovell.

Lovell looked puzzled.

"I can't imagine where he's got to," he confessed. "He ought to be here, of course. He must have been called away, or something."

"It was very uncivil of him," said Raby. "I'll punch his head for it when I see him again!"

"Yes, that would do him good!" said Tommy Dodd. "He's rather a cheeky young bouncer, that Silver."

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Doddy—" began Raby.

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, if you're not—" "I'm surprised at you, Doddy!" said Lovell.

REMEMBER THE DATE—AUGUST 13th!

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Lovell made a grimace. "Certainly!" he said. "Just look for him, will you, Doddy, and bring him along by all means."

"We shall be pleased," said Raby.

"Right you are!" said Tommy Dodd.

He lifted his cap to Miss Cook, and walked away in quest of Doyle, and Lovell, Newcome, and Raby, after a last look round for Jimmy Silver, escorted Miss Cook up to the end study.

The disappearance of their leader was inexplicable. He might have been called suddenly away, but it was discourteous to Miss Cook to leave her in this way.

It was necessary for the other three to be additionally attentive to make up for the shortcomings of their chum.

"How sweet!" exclaimed Miss Cook, as she looked round the flower-scented and adorned study, with its clean, white tablecloth, and the array of shining crockery upon it.

"It is rather nice, isn't it?" said Newcome. "You know, we don't often have a charming lady visitor."

"You will sit by the window, won't you?" said Lovell. "You'd like this cushion, wouldn't you? I'll shut the door, in case there's a draught."

Lovell poured out the tea. Miss Cook sipped from her cup in a really charming way. She accepted the delicacies Lovell kept her supplied with without a single refusal; and certainly she had an excellent appetite.

"Sorry Cook isn't here!" said Lovell, feeling that he could safely express regret, as there was no chance of Cook getting there.

Tommy Dodd chuckled. Lovell looked at him frigidly.

"Anything wrong, Doddy?" he asked. "Not at all!"

"Oh, I say, Miss Cook, I'm really sorry your brother is not here!" said Lovell again. "It would make the party complete."

"It's curious," said Newcome. "You remind me very much of your brother, Miss Cook. You're very much like him."

"We're considered much alike," said Miss Cook. "Yes, I will have some jam, please, Raby."

Raby passed the jam. Miss Cook evidently liked strawberry-jam, for she had already made a deep inroad upon it, and now she made another.

The chums were pleased to see it. Miss Cook could not pay them a higher com-

"Oh, I beg your pardon again, Miss Cook!" said Tommy Dodd.

"It's quite all right!"

"Will you have another cup of tea, Miss Cook?"

"Yes, please!"

"(Can I help you to some cake?"

"If you please!"

"Would you like some cream-puffs?"

"Oh, please!"

"These are nice biscuits."

"I will have some, please!"

Lovell smiled with gratification. Not a single offer was refused. There was no nonsense, evidently, about Miss Cook. She had an appetite, and was not ashamed to own it.

The tea progressed swiftness. Tommy Dodd was not a guest whom the Fistical Four would have chosen, perhaps. He seemed more full of fun than they had ever known him before.

He continually mentioned matters they would have left unmentioned, and told Miss Cook several stories of defeats inflicted upon the Fistical Four, without mentioning names, of course, but in a way that made Lovell, Newcome, and Raby long to have him alone to themselves for a few minutes.

The worst of it was that Miss Cook seemed to be highly amused by Dodd's stories, and agreed with him that the unnamed "fellows" must have been duffers, asses, and mugs.

Directly tea was over, Tommy Dodd rose to his feet.

"You'll let me see you to the station?"

"Certainly!"

"Not at all!" exclaimed Lovell hotly. "We're going to see Miss Cook to the station, Dodd!"

"We are!" said Raby emphatically.

"Oh, no!" said Miss Cook. "I—I am anxious about Silver. I would much rather you went and looked for him."

"Oh, Jimmy's all right!"

"He doesn't matter, anyway!" said Newcome.

"I remember now," said Miss Cook, "he said something about the old tower. Suppose he has got shut up in it, and can't get out again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Tommy Dodd. "Oh, he wouldn't be such a duffer!" said Lovell. "No chance of that!"

"None at all!" said Raby.

"Still, I should be glad if you would go and see," said Miss Cook. "You may walk with me as far as the gate, and Dodd will take me to the station. I expect I shall meet my brother in Coombe."

"Of course, it's exactly as you wish, Miss Cook!" said Lovell.

"You don't mind looking for Silver? I have a feeling that he has somehow got himself shut up in the old tower."

"Well, we'll look," said Lovell, feeling that Miss Cook's anxiety was misplaced, but willing to humour her. "We'll go there first, if you like, before we see you off."

"Oh, no! I am afraid I shall be too late."

"Very well, then; let's go down to the gate."

Miss Cook put on her big summer hat, and the boys donned their caps and they left the study together—all except Doyle, who had not yet finished his tea. He appeared to be much too busy to take any interest in what was going on around him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for the Fistical Four.

MISS COOK took leave of the juniors at the gate. Lovell, Newcome, and Raby would willingly have wiped up the lano with Tommy Dodd, but under Miss Cook's eyes that was not feasible, so they maintained an outward show of bland friendliness, and mentally promised Dodd all sorts of things afterwards.

"Good-bye!" said Miss Cook, shaking hands with Lovell. "And thank you so much!"

"It's a pleasure, I'm sure!"

"Good-bye, Newcome! Thank you, also!"

"Delighted!" said Newcome.

"Oh, will you tell Silver—or, rather, will you give him this little note? I have written it for him," said Miss Cook.

Miss Cook passed a folded note into Lovell's hand. The junior took it mechanically. He had not seen Miss Cook write that note, and he wondered what it meant, anyway.

"Will you give that to Silver when you find him?"

"Certainly!"

"I have a feeling that you will find him in the old tower."

"We will look," smiled Lovell.

"Thank you, so much! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

The juniors strolled away towards the old tower. As they neared it Lovell gave a start.

From within the thick walls came the sound of a heavy thumping and a muffled voice, growing more and more audible as they came nearer.

"My hat! Somebody's there!"

"Then it must be Silver!"

"Let's look! I don't quite catch on to this."

They hurried into the tower. Certain enough, someone was thumping away furiously upon the inner side of the oaken door leading upon the spiral staircase.

Lovell pulled back the fastening.

The door swung open, and Jimmy Silver, looking very red and flustered, was visible in the gloom of the tower.

Lovell, Newcome, and Raby stared at him.

"What on earth are you doing here, Jimmy?" demanded Lovell.

"You asses!" roared the exasperated Silver. "Why didn't you come here before and let me out?"

"Eh? How were we to know you were here?"

"Didn't Miss Cook tell you?"

"Miss Cook? No! Did she know?"

"Know!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "I should say so! She shut me in, fooling about with the lock when I was inside, and couldn't open it again. I asked her to tell you, and here you leave me shut up all the afternoon!"

"But—but she never told us!" gasped Lovell. "She just mentioned before she went, now, that you might be in the old tower; that's all. We came along to look, because we said we would. We never expected to find you here, really!"

Jimmy Silver looked dazed.

"She didn't tell you she had shut me up here by accident?"

"Not a word of it! You must be dreaming!"

"I tell you she shut me in and couldn't undo the door, and went off to tell you!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Then I can't understand it."

"Didn't she explain at all?"

"Oh, here's this note for you! She gave it me for you just before she went."

Jimmy Silver tore open the note. He stepped out of the shady tower to read it in the sunlight. Then he gave a roar.

"Done!"

"What's the matter?"

"Done!"

"You ass! What's the matter?"

"It wasn't Cook's sister at all!"

"What! Who was it, then?"

"Cook!"

"Eh?"

"Read the note, and you'll see!"

Lovell snatched the note. Newcome and Raby read it over his shoulder. And the feelings of the Fistical Four may be imagined as they perused the following:

"Many thanks for a ripping tea and a howlingly good joke. Who's top of the Fourth Form now you silly duffers—eh?"

“(Signed)”

“THOMAS COOK, alias Cook's sister,

“THOMAS DOYLE,

“THOMAS DODD.”

THE END.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

(Continued from page 16.)

“Yes, sir; that's right!” said Levison eagerly.

“Silence!” exclaimed Dr. Holmes sternly. “Levison, you may go to your dormitory. I will deal with you tomorrow. I shall not expel you, because I believe you have been practically forced to do this man's will. Nevertheless, I shall give you a severe flogging! Go, sir!”

Levison went, feeling quite relieved.

“As for you, you scoundrels, I shall immediately send for the police—”

Denton interposed.

“Don't you think, sir, it would be best to let the matter drop?” he asked quietly. “We don't want a public scandal about St. Jim's, sir. And, after all, I've got the plan. Barratt's had all his trouble for nothing, so why not let him go? I'm sure I don't want to give him in charge of the police, although he deserves it!”

Dr. Holmes lifted his eyebrows.

The doctor thought for a moment, then he looked sternly at the two miserable men.

“Owing to this lad's kindness—the lad whom you tried to rob—you are being given a chance to escape!” said the Head coldly. “Go! And never allow your faces to be seen in the vicinity of St. Jim's again! If they are, or if you try to molest this lad further, I will immediately take steps to have you arrested. That is all. Go!”

Dr. Holmes pointed to the door.

A minute later the two scoundrels slunk out and vanished into the night.

The juniors kept their word. Not a word was breathed about the midnight adventure, and the rest of St. Jim's never knew about that exciting hour. Taggles was given a liberal tip to hold his tongue, and everything turned out satisfactorily.

Denton stayed at St. Jim's another ten days; then Dr. Holmes learned that a relative of one of the seniors—a nobleman's son—was travelling out to Alaska. Dr. Holmes arranged that Denton should go out to Alaska with this gentleman, and both were more than agreeable.

A big feed was given to Denton on his last night at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry's study was packed to overflowing. And the following morning Tom Merry & Co. were given leave to see Denton off at the station.

It was rather a regretful little crowd who tramped back to St. Jim's in the keen morning sunlight. Denton had made himself thoroughly at home while he had been at the old school, and the School House was very sorry to part with the junior who had been known so recently as the Terrible Three's new chum.

THE END.

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