

# BILLY BUNTER'S WINDFALL!

(A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of the Greyfriars Chums Appears in This Issue!)

## The Penny Popular

No.  
259.

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



“GERRAWAY!” CROWLED BILLY BUNTER.

(A Humorous Scene from the Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. contained in this Issue.)



# Billy Bunter's Windfall

A Magnificent Long Complete  
Tale, dealing with the  
Early Adventures of  
**HARRY WHARTON & CO.**  
at Greyfriars School.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Wanted!—William George Bunter.

**B**ILLY BUNTER tapped at the door of Dr. Locke's study and entered as the Head's voice hailed him to "Come in!"

"Ah! Is that you, Bunter?" said the Head.

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Locke picked up a newspaper that was spread out on his desk.

"I've got something here, my boy," he said, "which I think interests you."

Billy Bunter smiled.

"I read about that boat, sir. I thought—"

"What boat is that?" interrupted the Head.

"The Glengariff, which was sunk with all those provisions on board, sir," explained Bunter.

Dr. Locke frowned and handed his fat pupil the newspaper.

"Read that paragraph," he said, pointing to an advertisement under "Legal Notices."

Billy read the paragraph, and re-read it, and then whistled with astonishment. The Head watched him closely, and smiled.

"Read it out, Bunter," he said.

Billy took off his spectacles, rubbed them with his handkerchief, readjusted them, and read:

"Messrs. Laurie & King, solicitors, London, executors for the late Pheneas Cobb, of Cincinnati, U.S.A. (once known in England as Herbert Bunter), desire to know the whereabouts of William George Bunter. If the said William George Bunter will correspond with the above address, he will hear of something to his advantage."

Dr. Locke and Bunter smiled at one another.

"That certainly looks as though you  
THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 259.

"I suppose they have some money for me, sir," interrupted Billy.

"Without a doubt. They say 'he will hear of something to his advantage.' You must certainly write at once."

"Rather—I mean yes, of course, sir!"

"You may take the newspaper with you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"And just state in your letter your whereabouts, and—"

"Yes, sir." And Billy Bunter made for the door.

Meanwhile, during the interview between the Head and Bunter, a huge crowd had gathered in the passage outside Dr. Locke's door.

Gosling had told Bulstrode and Stott that Bunter had somehow got mixed up with the "nosepapers," and the Remove bully and his crony had soon spread the tale about Greyfriars.

The incident had got exaggerated, until it now assumed fearful proportions, and the crowd of juniors, and even seniors, which had now gathered in the corridor were expecting every moment to see Billy Bunter come out of the Head's study under the escort of a police-inspector, or even two.

It was a serious story which had spread so rapidly, and the juniors were talking in whispers of the exciting arrests they had seen policemen make, when William George Bunter came out of the Head's study with a contented grin upon his fat features.

"Trying to brave it out," muttered Stott, Bully Bulstrode's particular crony.

"Yah!" shouted Skinner, another of the bully's followers.

This one word seemed to relieve the tension in the crowd, and they surged round Bunter.

The fat junior of Greyfriars grinned.

"It's all right, you fellows!" he shouted. "I'll stand you all a jolly good feed when—"

were being advertised for, Bunter; and I am sure I am very glad to have been the one to have noticed the advertisement. I don't often—"

"Yes—when?" said Bulstrode sarcastically.

"Oh, I shall be able to buy you up!"

"What do you mean, you fat porpoise?"

"Oh, only that I've had some money left me!" said Bunter.

"Money!"

"Yes."

"Let us, you fat—you fathead?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you chaps!" shouted Bunter. "I've just heard such jolly good news that it's made me feel quite faint."

"What's the news?" said Blundell and Bland together.

"Some money been left to me."

"What for?" asked Bland.

"Buy a muzzle with!" shouted Bulstrode.

"Is that a fact, you fat—"

"Of course it is. Dr. Locke has just interviewed me."

Blundell and Bland, the two Fifth-Formers, looked at one another and winked.

"Come on!" said Blundell. "Catch hold of his arm, Bland, and get him to our study!"

"Ow!" cried Bunter, as he was pushed through the crowd. "Where are you taking me to, you rotters?"

"To our study, of course."

"Ow! Leggo! What for?"

"To give you a good feed, old chap," said Blundell.

The fat junior allowed himself to be hauled along.

"Thanks! I sha'n't forget you when I get my money," he jerked out.

After a hard struggle, the two Fifth-Formers managed to get their fat charge out of the crush, and they hurried up to their study to fete the fortunate Greyfriars junior.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter and His "Thousands."

**B**BETTER shove a notice up on the door, Harry," said Frank Nugent. "That's about the fifteenth ass that has come in to, ask if it's true!"

"Think that's what I had better do. Shove us over a sheet of—"

Bang, bang!

Harry did not complete his sentence,

as there was a terrific thump on the door of Study No. 1.

Bang, bang!  
Frank picked up a heavy lexicon from off the table.  
"Come in!"  
"Ow!"

Frank Nugent had flung his missile as the door opened, and the book caught Bob Cherry with a thwack in the chest.  
"Come on, Linley, and Wun Lung!" yelled the injured visitor to the two grinning juniors outside in the corridor.  
"Sock into these rotters!"

Wun Lung, the Chinese, and Mark Linley shared Study No. 13 with Bob Cherry, and they gave a cheer as their leader banged wide the door and grasped the laughing Nugent round the neck.

"Rescue, Harry!"  
"Right!" shouted the Remove captain. "Out of this study, you rotters!"  
Mark Linley caught up a cushion from an armchair, and hurled it at Harry Wharton.  
"Well played, Linley!" gasped Bob Cherry, who was sitting on Nugent's head.

"Lemme gerrup!" came in smothered tones.

Bob rubbed his victim's face deeper into the carpet.  
"I'll teach you—"  
"Ouch!"

Harry Wharton, with Mark Linley and Wun Lung clinging on to him, fell with a crash on Bob Cherry and Nugent, and there was a fearful mix up of legs and arms.

"I've got you!" muttered Bob Cherry ferociously, grasping his own leg in mistake for Nugent's.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Harry Wharton rolled over with Mark Linley, and the table overturned with a crash.

The inkpot fell on to Nugent's head, and the flow trickled down his face.

"Yah!" roared Bob, scrambling to his feet. "That will teach you rotters!"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent stood against the door, panting with their exertions, but with their fists up in businesslike fashion.

"What do you kids want in this study?"  
"Who are you calling kids?"

"Well, what do you want?"  
"We wantee to knowee all about Buntel!" exclaimed the Chinese junior.

"Right-ho, then!" said Harry Wharton. "Pax."

Bob Cherry glared at Frank Nugent, who looked very comical with the stream of ink down one side of his face.

"I'll make it pax now," said the leader of Study No. 13; "but we'll pay you rotters out for this!"

"Any time you like to try," laughed Wharton.

"Well," said Mark Linley, "is this true about Billy Bunter having a huge fortune left him?"

"Something of the kind, I believe."  
"Well, where is the porpise?"

"Here he comes," said Nugent. "Anybody can tell that awful tramp, tramp, coming along the corridor."

There was a shuffling sound of feet without, and the juniors waited expectantly.

"Thanks, you chaps!" came Bunter's voice.  
"That's all right," replied Blundell.  
"Quite all right. Ta-ta, old chap!" added Blundell.

And the two Fifth-Formers were heard to leave Bunter and walk on.

Billy Bunter opened the door of Study No. 1, and blinked at Nugent, who had just pulled the table up on to its four legs.

"Hallo, you fat porpise! What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I've just had a ripping feed in Blundell and Bland's study. I had six pies, a plate of new pastries, four sausages, a bag of biscuits, and three bottles of—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Bunter removed his spectacles and sat down.

"Look here, you chaps," he said, "you've no right to laugh at me, and I won't have it."

"Go hon!"  
"No, I won't, Cherry. You'll have to treat me with proper respect now—all of you. I've come into some money."

"What! Did you carry off the first prize in an eating competition?"

"I don't know what the amount is yet," continued Billy, ignoring Nugent's remark. "It's sure to be some thousands, though."

Bunter made this startling announcement with such coolness that the Remove juniors sat back and gasped.

"Some thousands?"  
"You?"

a notebook from his pocket. "I shall scratch your name, Cherry, and Wun Lung's from the list of chaps I intend to give a feed to as soon as I get my money."

"You fat guzzler!" growled Bob Cherry. "I don't want to come to your rotten—"

"When are you coming into your money, Billy?" interrupted Harry Wharton.

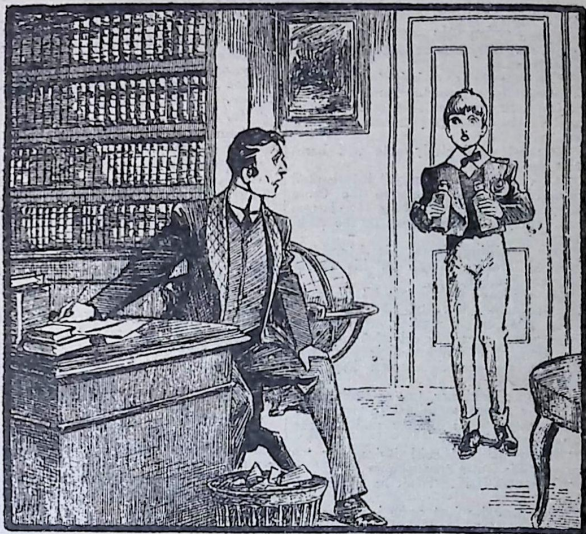
"I've got to write a letter now."  
"Good! Here's some paper."

"Get off that chair, Wun Lung!" said Bunter authoritatively.

"Me savvy."  
Billy Bunter sat down at the table, and drew the writing-blotter and inkstand towards him.

The Removees crowded round.  
"This is quite private, Wharton," explained Billy. "I've got to write to my solicitor—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"And I don't want you chaps—"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"



"Well, Cherry, what is it?" asked Mr. Quelch, turning from his desk. "If you please, sir," answered Bob, "I've brought the ginger-beer!"

"Yes, me, Wharton."  
"You fat bounder, now you can pay me back for that penknife and cricket-bat of mine you sold to Skinner!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Certainly, Nugent," replied Bunter, polishing his glasses.

"And that camera of mine you broke," said Wharton.

"And the tyres of my bike you burst," said Bob Cherry.

"Of course I will, Cherry. Pass me over that bag of apples. I think fruit is awfully good for you in this weather."

"Do you?" laughed Bob, taking an apple. "So do I, don't you, Wun Lung?"

"Me savvy," replied the Chinese, taking the remaining three apples and juggling them in the air, until they fell, one by one, into the pocket of his loose robe.

"Very well," said Bunter, taking out

"Poking your noses into my business," finished Bunter, in spite of the hilarious interruptions.

"Fathead!"  
"All right, Billy, we will leave you to yourself, but don't you commence gorging. Come on, you chaps."

And the juniors crowded out of the door of Study No. 1, and made for the playing-field, where they could practise shooting at goal.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**  
Bunter's Correspondence.

**A** QUARTER of an hour later, the door of Study No. 1 opened, and a dark face looked in.

"Hallo, Inky!" said Bunter, looking up. "Have you two penny stamps?"

The new-comer was Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, and

a gentle smile overspread his dusky features as he replied, in the wonderful English he had acquired at Bhanipur:

"Yes, my esteemed Bunter."  
 "You might let me have two, Inky!"  
 "The willingness is huge," said Hurree Singh, handing over to Bunter two penny stamps which he had taken from his pocket-case.

"Thanks, Inky, I will pay you for them, you know."  
 Hurree Singh knew his Bunter, and he held out his hand to receive the twopenny.

The fat junior pretended not to see this, and fumbled the two letters he had written into the envelopes which he had stamped, and he sat down to address them.

"Of course, you have heard I've come into some money, Inky."

"Yes," replied the Nabob. "The surmisefulness was terrific when the esteemed Bulstrode told me."

"Some thousands, you know, Inky," said Billy Bunter impressively.  
 "My worthy chum pays for the two stamps, then?"

"Of course, Inky."  
 Hurree Singh held out his open hand again, and Billy Bunter looked at it with a sickly smile.

"Can you change a bob?" he said.  
 "Easily, my worthy Bunter."

"Oh, well, you can't be in any great need for tuppence if you can change a bob."

"My esteemed study-mate will hand over the—"

"Of course I will, Inky," interrupted Bunter. "Come down to the Close now, and I will post these two letters and give you the tuppence in the tuck-shop."

"My willingness is terrific," asserted Hurree Singh in his extraordinary English.

Bunter picked up the two letters, and, with the nabob, left Study No. 1.

The two juniors walked out into the Close where was the school letter-box, and they then adjourned to see Mrs. Mimble, the old dame who kept the school tuckshop.

Snoop and Skinner, two of Bulstrode's followers, were standing in front of the counter when Bunter and Hurree Singh entered.

"Hallo, Billy!" said Skinner. "I suppose it's quite true about—"

"Of course it is! What have you got there?"

"New pastries just come in. They're ripping, aren't they, Snoop?"

"Spiffing!" agreed Snoop, cramming his third pastry into his large mouth.

"I suppose you've heard I'm giving a big feed?" said Bunter, drawing a chair up to Skinner and Snoop.

"You giving a feed?" chorused Bulstrode's two followers.

"Yes."  
 "When?"

"Oh, as soon as I get some money sent to me from my solicitors."

Skinner and Snoop were impressed, and they each handed Billy Bunter a plate laden with pastries.

"Thanks!" said the fat junior, in a deferential manner. "I'll just have one."

"When do you expect to hear from your—er—your solicitors?"

"To-morrow morning!" gulped Bunter, as he finished his pastry and reached across for another one. "I've just written, you know."

Hurree Singh grinned as he saw Skinner's and Snoop's faces lengthen as Bunter wired into the pastries, but the two toadies recognised that it would be diplomatic to pamper the fat Removite if he had come into a fortune.

"H-h-h!"

"Oh, you expect to hear from your—er—your solicitors?"

"To-morrow morning!" gulped Bunter, as he finished his pastry and reached across for another one. "I've just written, you know."

Hurree Singh grinned as he saw Skinner's and Snoop's faces lengthen as Bunter wired into the pastries, but the two toadies recognised that it would be diplomatic to pamper the fat Removite if he had come into a fortune.

"You might pass one of those pies over, Mrs. Mimble," said Bunter, as he finished the last of the pastries.

"Certainly, Master Bunter!" smiled the old dame.

Bunter took the pie and blinked across the counter at Mrs. Mimble, who stood waiting with her open hand held out.

"That's a threepenny pie, Master Bunter."

"It's all right, Mrs. Mimble," explained Skinner, throwing three pennies to the counter. "I'm standing this feed."

"Really, Skinner, that's awfully decent of you, you know! I was just going to pay, and if you will—"

Billy Bunter was interrupted as a crowd of flushed juniors came flocking into the shop. They were all very hot and noisy as they came trooping in from practice with the football, and Billy Bunter's face brightened up as he saw the possibility of his being still more feted.

"Hallo, you fat porpoise!" greeted Bob Cherry, slapping Bunter on the back. "Still at it?"

The fat junior grew red in the face and spluttered and gasped.

"Really Ch-e-r-r-y—"

Bunter was coughing so violently that he was unable to complete his remonstrance.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter staggered off his high chair in a fit of coughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—hem, hem!—you eads, I'll —"

"Pat him on the back, Inky!" yelled Harry Wharton.

"The pat him on the backfulness is right, my esteemed friend," replied the nabob, giving the choking junior a terrific pinch between the shoulders.

"Ow!"

The piece of pie was shifted, and Billy Bunter sat down and glared at the laughing juniors.

"I'll strike you all off!" he yelled. "Every one of you rotters will be barred from my feed. Everybody here, excepting Skinner and Snoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

If Bulstrode's two cronies had pampered Bunter, there was no chance of him being spoilt by the rest of the juniors.

Harry Wharton & Co. and all the Greyfriars fellows, with the exception of Bulstrode and his followers, did not take wealth into consideration when friendship was concerned.

Mark Linley, for instance, was one of their staunchest chums, yet Linley's father had to work doubly hard in a Lancashire factory so that his son could have a good education at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. chummed with Mark Linley because he was a good, healthy-minded Britisher—as all Lancastrians are.

So when Billy Bunter thought that his sudden good fortune would bring the boys of Greyfriars flocking round him he was sadly mistaken.

Of course, such boys as Bulstrode, Skinner, Snoop, and Stott are to be found in every school, but they are in a decided minority.

Bunter glared at the grinning juniors as he finished eating his pie, and then a scheme of revenge entered his head, and he saw that he could get his own back on Bob Cherry.

"H-h-h!"

A cough sounded at the door of the tuckshop.

"Cave!"

"Old Quelch!"

It certainly sounded like Mr. Quelch's cough, and the next moment any doubt

that the juniors might have had that it was not was dismissed.

"Is Cherry there?" came the Remove Form-master's voice from without.

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, please run up to my study with three bottles of ginger-beer. I have some visitors."

The juniors round the counter had a hard struggle to suppress their laughter as Mr. Quelch gave such an extraordinary order.

"Right, sir; I will!"

"Thank you, Cherry!"

They waited to hear the Form-master's retreating footsteps, but none came.

"Half a second!" muttered Nugent, creeping to the door. "I'll have a boss."

"My Aunt Matilda! He must have had his slippers on!" he added a moment after. "He's gone!"

Mrs. Mimble had heard the order, and she handed over three bottles of ginger-beer to Bob Cherry.

"Mr. Quelch will pay me for them in the morning, Master Cherry," said the old dame.

"Right-ho!"

Billy Bunter turned to Skinner with a broad grin as Bob Cherry left the tuckshop with the three ginger-beer bottles under his arm.

"That wasn't old Quelch's voice!" he spluttered.

"What d'you mean, fathead?"

"It was mine, don't it?"

"You've had too much to eat, you gourmandiser! Of course it was Quelch!"

Bunter blinked at Skinner in a knowing manner.

"I'm a jolly good ventriloquist, you know."

"Why, you—you don't mean to say—"

"Yes," replied Bunter. "I did it to pay Cherry out for nearly—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Choking—"

"Jolly good!"

"Me!"

Bunter managed to finish his sentence, and Skinner roared with laughter as the Greyfriars ventriloquist explained how he had sent Bob Cherry to Mr. Quelch's study with three bottles of ginger-beer.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Greyfriars Ventriloquist Causes Trouble.

"COME in!"

Mr. Quelch was writing at his desk when Bob Cherry opened the door and entered the room.

"Well, Cherry, what is it?"

"I've brought them, sir."

"What do you mean, my boy?"

"The gingerbeer, sir."

"Gin—ger—"

"Yes, sir. The three bottles."

Mr. Quelch looked alarmed, and he rose from his chair.

"Is this impertinence, Cherry," he demanded severely.

"It's the three bottles—"

"You had better sit down a minute, my boy," interrupted the Form-master in concern.

"Thank you, sir."

"Is your head all right?"

Bob flushed. He had received a pretty big bump on the side of his head when he had fought with Nugent in Study No. 1, and he wondered how Mr. Quelch could have gained any knowledge of the fight.

"Quite all right now, sir," he explained. "It wasn't very big, you know."

"Have you been out in the sun without a hat on your head?"

"What's he getting at?" muttered

Cherry to himself; and then aloud he said: "Out in the sun, sir?"

"Yes, my boy. Have you had the sun too much on the back of the neck?"

"Oh, no, sir!" replied Bob, with a sickly smile.

Mr. Quelch poured out a glass of water and handed it to the junior.

"Drink that," he said. "I'll just ring for Wingate."

Bob Cherry looked at the glass of water, and then at the gingerbeer bottles.

"Have your visitors gone, sir?" he asked.

The Form-master ignored the question, and walked across the room to ring the bell.

There was silence in the study for a minute or two, but it was dispelled by a loud knock on the door.

"Come in!" said Mr. Quelch.

Gosling, the porter, put his head round the door.

"Has your rung for me, sir?" he grumbled. "Hi was just a-sitting down to my—"

"That will do, Gosling," interrupted Mr. Quelch. "I want you to go to Mr. Wingate's study, and ask him if he will kindly come down here immediately. It is very important."

Gosling muttered some unintelligible remarks, and banged the door to violently.

Mr. Quelch strutted up and down the room, and glanced anxiously at Bob Cherry, who, in turn, was gazing with no little concern at his Form-master.

The Remove junior was just about to ask the master a question when there came a second knock on the door, and Wingate, the big Sixth-Former and captain of the school, entered the room.

"Ah, is that you, Wingate?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. Gosling has just told me you want me urgently."

"Hem!" coughed the master. "I want you to—just take Cherry up to the dormitory and see that he gets quietly into bed. The rest of the boys will be up presently, and I shall be obliged if you will see they make no unnecessary noise. I'm afraid Cherry is not very well, and he must keep—"

Bob Cherry jumped up from his chair.

"Me! Not very well!"

"Just take him up, Wingate, will you?"

"Yes, sir," replied the prefect, catching hold of the junior gently by the arm.

"Don't be an ass, Winny!"

"Now then, Cherry, my boy," said Mr. Quelch, "get quietly into bed!"

"Me, sir?"

"Yes. Now, go along."

"Bed!"

"Yes, you will be all the better for it—and I will come up later on and bring you some medicine."

And Wingate led the remonstrative junior out of the study.

"Look here, Winny, don't be a silly ass!"

The prefect smiled grimly, leading Bob along.

"You silly fathead! I'm as right as rain!"

"Well, Mr. Quelch thinks differently."

"Quelch must be off his rocker!" growled Bob. "He came to the door of tuckshop and asked me to run up to his study with three bottles of gingerbeer!"

Wingate smiled grimly.

"Well?"

"I took 'em up," continued Bob, "and he treats me as though I'd gone wrong in the onion."

The two had now gained the Remove dormitory, and Wingate led Bob in and shut the door.

"Well, buck up and get into bed, kid!" he said good-humouredly.

"Me got into bed?"

"Yes, buck up! The other chaps will be up in about an hour's time!"

"Right-ho, I'll wait for them!"

"No, you won't—you get into bed now!"

"Don't be an ass, Winny! If they come up and find—"

"Look here," interrupted the prefect; "don't you see that I shall get into a row from Mr. Quelch if I don't see that you get into bed?"

"Well, if you're going to put it like that," replied Bob, taking his coat off, "I suppose I had better turn in."

Wingate chuckled with amusement as the junior explained in full how he had gone to the Form-master with the three bottles of gingerbeer.

"Somebody must have been getting at you," he said, as Cherry scrambled into bed.

"What's only hat?"

"My only hat?" said Wingate, turning as he reached the door.

"My only Aunt Matilda!"

"Oh, shut up and get to sleep!" And the prefect left Bob Cherry to himself.

"My only hat!" muttered the junior, sitting up in bed. "It must have been that—that fat porpoise and his beastly ventriloquism! The greedy, fat, gourmandising rotter! I'll pay him for it!"

"Well, my only hat!" added Bob Cherry, as an afterthought, as he lay back on his pillow waiting for the rest of the Removites.

The hour passed very slowly, and in the subdued light and quietness Cherry was just dozing off when a wild scrambling of feet was heard in the corridor without.

The dormitory door was flung open, and Harry Wharton, who was the first of the Remove juniors to enter, staggered back as he caught sight of Cherry sitting up in bed.

Hallo! he gasped. "What's—what's the wheeze?"

"Who do you mean, dummy?"

Harry Wharton was pushed into the dormitory by the crowd of juniors behind him, and they all showered questions on Bob Cherry.

"Great Scott!"

"What are you doin'?"

"What's the idea, Cherry?"

"Doing the Sleeping Beauty wheeze?"

Bob glared at his questioners.

"Is that fat cormorant Bunter up here?" he roared.

"Our worthy corpulent friend is not up yet," replied the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I'll—I'll smother him when he comes!" spluttered Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, what's the trouble this time?"

"The trouble? Why, didn't he send me to Quelch with three bottles of gingerbeer, and—"

"Of course not!"

"He did!" roared Bob.

"He didn't!" shouted the Removites in chorus.

"He did, I tell you!"

"It was Quelch himself who told you to take them, and—"

"I swant! Quelch," replied Bob, glaring at the grinning juniors; "it was that fat porpoise's rotten ventriloquising!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I took the beastly gingerbeer into his study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he thought I'd gone off my onion!" roared Bob.

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

"And he sent me to bed to keep quiet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When that rotten, fat porpoise of a Bunter—"

"What's that, Cherry?"

The Removites turned round to the dormitory door, to see Billy Bunter standing there, blinking through his huge spectacles.

Bob Cherry flung himself out of his bed and made a dash for the fat junior.

"So you have come up to be fazed alive, hare you?" he roared, catching Billy by the ear and pulling him into the room.

"Ow!"

"Mad, am I? Ha, ha!"

Bunter's bobby face went livid.

"Rescue! he roared. "Rescue me, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue me from this mad ass, Wharton!"

Bob whisked his victim to the ground and rubbed his face into the carpet.

"Ow!" roared Bunter.

"I'll pay you, you fat gourmandiser! I'll—"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Cherry!"

Mr. Quelch was standing at the door with a bottle in one hand and a spoon in the other, and he rapped out Bob's name so suddenly that Bunter was able to tear himself away and scramble up.

"Yes, sir?" stuttered Cherry, as the Form-master strutted into the dormitory.

"Didn't I tell you to get into bed and keep quiet?"

"Yes, sir."

"And here I find you the chief combatant in a rough-and-tumble with Bunter!"

"Yes, sir."

"Am I to conclude that it is another symptom of your brain weakness?"

"Yes—I mean, no, sir!"

"Then why are you attacking Bunter in that ferocious manner?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

Bunter's face brightened up considerably when he saw that Bob Cherry was not going to tell Mr. Quelch the reason of his assault, and the fat junior saw his chance of doing Cherry a good service in return.

The Greyfriars' ventriloquist cleared his throat.

"Mr. Quelch!"

It was the Head's voice on the other side of the door.

"Yes, sir," said the Remove Form-master.

"You might just go into the Fifth-Form dormitory."

"Very well, Dr. Locke," replied Mr. Quelch, surprised—as were the juniors—at the strange request.

"Thank you!" sounded the Head's voice. And Mr. Quelch left Bob Cherry and the rest of the Removites.

"Hallo!" cried Nugent. "What's the matter with you, Billy?"

The fat junior's face had gone a deep red, and he was rocking about, with his arms clutched round his sides.

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"What's the joke, you fat duffer?"

"Quelch's—ho—gone—ho—ho—to chase my voice—ho, ho, ho!"

"Gone to what?" roared Nugent.

"That wasn't the Head. I ventriloquised his voice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, get into bed, you chaps," said Bob Cherry at last, "and when old Quelch returns he will have forgotten my scrap-up with that fat rotter."

"Really, Cherry," remonstrated Bunter, "I've no right to call me fat! I've not had much to-day; but when I get my fortune—Phew!"

And Billy Bunter clambered into bed to dream of the feeds he would have in the very near future.

THE PENNY POPULAR. No. 259.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Day Off.

THE rising bell had gone, and the Remove dormitory presented a busy scene.

"There was a crowd of juniors before a looking-glass, all awaiting their turn."

"Hurry up, Bulstrode!"

"Rats!"

"You've been fooling about with that tie of yours for about ten minutes now!"

"You shut up, young Linley," shouted the Remove bully, ewaling at the junior from Lancashire.

"You voley slow, Bulstrode," said Wun Lung, the Chinese.

"I'll pull your beastly pigtail if you don't stop grumbling."

"Me' no savvy which side the bed you gettee—"

"Cave!"

"It's old Quetch!"

The door opened, and Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form-master, looked in.

"Hurry up, you boys!" he said, with a smile, then he frowned and came further in.

"Is that a boy still in bed?"

"My only hat," muttered Bob Cherry, "it isn't that fat bouncer still asleep!"

Mr. Quelch walked down between the rows of beds and stopped at the foot of Bunter's. The fat junior was still asleep and snoring heavily.

"Why hasn't anyone awakened him?" asked Mr. Quelch, giving Bunter a shake.

"Gerraway!" growled Billy in his sleep.

"Bunter!"

"Shut up, you eads!"

"Bunter," said the Form-master, raising his voice.

Billy turned over and blinked.

"You're a rotter, Wharton!" he growled, yawning. "Why in the dickens can't you let a chap have a little extra—"

"Bunter!"

The fat junior jumped up in his bed as though he had had a pin jabbed into him.

"Mr. Quelch?"

"Yes, Bunter," replied the Form-master, "it is, and I want to know what you mean by—"

"I'm sincerely sorry, sir," said Bunter, pulling his spectacles from under the pillow, "but I didn't know it was you."

"I suppose not; but it is no excuse. Do you not know that the bell has been rung now some twenty minutes ago, and here you are still in bed!"

"Yes, sir, but it doesn't matter about me."

"What do you mean, boy?"

"I'm not going to do any work to-day, Mr. Quelch."

The Form-master coughed angrily as a distinct snigger came from the rest of the juniors.

"Oh, so you have decided not to do any work, Bunter," he said.

"Yes, sir—at-least—"

"Well, I have decided you must—and a bit extra. You will take fifty lines for not being up with the rest, and you will do fifty more for making such an absurd resolve!"

"Oh, sir, but Dr. Locke has given me leave to have the day off, and—"

"The day off?"

"Yes, Mr. Quelch."

"For what reason, might I ask?"

"To go and see my solicitors, Mr. Quelch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites roared with laughter as Bunter made his announcement, and the Form-master turned with a frown.

"Silence!" he ordered. "And you, Bunter, will get dressed immediately."

There will be no excuse for you not being down at breakfast to time!"

And Mr. Quelch stamped out of the dormitory.

"Have you really got the day off, you fat bouncer?"

"Of course I have, Bulstrode, and I want to speak to you on a serious matter before you go into class this morning."

"Oh!" exclaimed the bully wonderingly.

"Come on, chaps!" said Wharton, slipping on his coat.

"Right!"

"Half a second!"

"Me comce, Hally!"

"If the honourable captain will wait—"

"Very well, Inky," laughed Harry, "but buck up."

In a few minutes the dormitory was deserted save for Billy Bunter, who now stood before the wash-basin.

"Suppose I had better have a proper wash this morning," he muttered. "Ugh—ugh!"

The fat junior braved himself for the effort, and splashed himself freely with the water.

"Ugh—ugh!" he muttered again, as he dried himself. "I don't understand how those chaps do it on cold mornings."

Billy took particular care over his dressing, but he was not over particular whose property he donned.

Bob Cherry had a very nice pair of patent leather shoes, and the fat junior eyed them covetously as they rested by Bob's bed.

"I shouldn't think Cherry would be annoyed if I wore those shoes to-day," murmured Billy, taking them in his hands. "I'll shove 'em on and see what they look like."

In Bunter's estimation they looked ripping, and he then and there decided to borrow them for the day. He likewise borrowed Frank Nugent's tie, and by the time he had finished his toilet Billy felt very pleased with himself.

"Share my only Molly O'Hara!" whispered Micky Desmond.

"Look at Billy!"

The fat junior came strutting into the Hall with a contented grin on his flabby face.

"Ta, ha, ha!"

"Silence, boys!" snapped Mr. Quelch, rapping his knuckles on the table.

"Bunter," he added, "you will give me fifty lines this time to-morrow morning for being—"

"I'm sincerely sorry, sir, but—"

"Sit down, Bunter!"

And the fat junior subsided into a chair, and attacked the rashers of bacon before him savagely.

"Go it, piggy!" said Trevor, who was sitting next to him.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, it's all right. I only wanted to see whether you recognised your name."

Billy Bunter blinked through his enormous spectacles.

"Well, you wouldn't waste much time if you'd had as little to eat as I have the last two days."

"Why you fat cormorant, I watched you at supper last night, and you wolfed three times as much grub as anybody else."

The fat junior ignored Trevor's charge, and wired in with renewed vigour.

He was still munching away at toast and marmalade when the masters and prefects left the room.

The Sixth-Formers next trooped out in their usual dignified manner, and then the rest of the boys scrambled out.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent stopped Blundell and Bland, the two Fifth-Formers.

"I suppose you bouncers are prepared for it?" greeted Frank.

"Prepared for what?"

"For the hefty licking, Bland, dear boy, we're going to give you this afternoon!"

Bland scowled.

"Well I'll eat my hat if the Remove do beat us, you cheezy bouncer!"

Nugent and Wharton grinned and walked away.

"Do you think," muttered Blundell, with a frown, "that there is any chance of them pulling—"

"Seen Bunter?" interrupted Bulstrode, coming up to the two Fifth-Formers.

"Yes, saw the porpoise taking nourishment in the Hall. He's in there now."

"Thanks!"

Bulstrode strode into the Hall and saw Bunter still eating at the Remove Form table.

"Oh, is that you, Wharton?" said the short-sighted fat junior.

"No, it isn't, ass! It's me!"

"Oh, I'm sorry, Bulstrode. I thought it was Harry Wharton—"

"Well, it isn't. You said you wanted to speak to me."

Billy Bunter rose from the table and joined the Remove bully, who was standing at the head of the table.

"Yes, Bulstrode," he replied. "I want to ask you something."

"Well, what is it, fathead?"

"I hope you won't be annoyed about it, Bulstrode?"

"Have you sold something that belongs to me, you fat porpoise!" he roared.

Bunter started back in alarm.

"Really, Bulstrode, I hope you don't think I'm such a cad as all that. What I want you to do is to lend me twenty bob."

"Twenty bob?"

"Yes," continued Billy, quite unmoved by the consternation he had caused. "I've got six bob on me, but as I'm going up to London, and shall want something to eat when I'm there, I want you to lend me some more. Of course, I shall pay you back to-night—with interest, if you want it," Billy added, as an afterthought.

"You silly, fat dummy, how can you pay me back to-night if you've only got six bob on you now?" asked Bulstrode.

"Oh, I shall get my solicitors to advance me a few pounds."

Although Bulstrode was a bully, and the most obstinate pupil in the Remove Form at Greyfriars, his redeeming trait was generosity.

It was for this reason he had decided on asking the bully before any of his Form fellows in Study No. 1.

Bulstrode's father was a wealthy, self-made man of the world, and he kept his only son well supplied with pocket-money. Bunter knew all this, and the fat junior smiled as the bully put his hand into his trousers' pocket.

"Well, look here, you fat porpoise! If you don't pay me back this quid to-night I'll—I'll—"

Bulstrode gave a furious growl, and Billy Bunter's flabby cheeks shook with fright.

"That's—that's all right, Bulstrode!" he stammered.

The bully handed over the coin, and stamped off as Billy jerked out his gratitude.

"Suppose I had better start for the station now," he muttered.

And he ran upstairs and fetched his silk-hat and gloves, and walked out of the school building.

Gosling was standing outside his lodge smoking his pipe, and the Greyfriars porter's eyes opened wide as the fat Removite came towards him.

"Good-morning, Cossy!"

"What I see is this 'ere!" replied Gosling, ignoring Billy's salutation. "Why ain't you in class, Master Bunter?"

"I'm going up to London, Gossy."  
"You?"  
"Yes, to see my solicitors."  
"Up to Lunnion?"

Bunter smacked his cane walking-stick against his fat leg.  
"Yes, Gosling," he said. "You know, I've had a fortune left me by some American. I suppose he was an uncle or something of mine. Anyhow, I'm going up to London to-day to claim it."

The words "London" and "solicitors" impressed Gosling, and he opened the big iron gates with alacrity.

"Well, Master Bunter, what I see is this 'ere! I 'opes you won't forget the old Greyfriars school-partner when you're a rich gent'lman. Many's the time I've shut me eyes when you'd've smuggled tuck into the school. That's what I see."

"Of course I sha'n't forget you, Gossy!" replied the fat junior.

"And I'm pleased to 'ear it, Master Bunter."

"Well, good-bye, Gossy!"  
"Good-morning, Master Bunter!"

And Billy strutted on, little dreaming of the colossal disappointment he was to suffer before the end of the day.

"Phew!" he was muttering to himself. "Feeds every day! Phew!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Phantom Windfall.

"THEN we must have it in Study No. 13."

"There isn't room in there I tell you!"

"There is!"  
"There isn't, fathead!"

"Anyway, it's as good as Study No. 1."

"It isn't!"

The football match between the Remove and the Fifth had, strange to say, ended with a victory for the Remove, and Harry Wharton & Co. were greatly elated.

The Remove juniors had changed from their football clothes, and were now standing before the counter in Mrs. Mumble's tuckshop.

Harry Wharton had suggested in the pavilion that the Remove should celebrate the afternoon's match with a study feed, and at the same time entertain Billy Bunter, as the fortunate receiver of an unexpected windfall.

Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and Wun Lung had suggested Study No. 13 as the banqueting chamber, but Harry Wharton & Co. held out for Study No. 1.

The Remove captain smiled.

"Well, look here, chaps!" he said. "Billy's train gets in at half-past six, and it's twenty to now, so buck up and decide."

"Right!" exclaimed the leader of Study No. 13. "It must be ours."

"In ours?"  
"No, in ours!"

"Well, you said in ours."  
"I didn't, Nugent. I said in ours."

"Well, I agree, in ours!"  
"In ours, I tell you!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Do you mean in ours?" said Frank Nugent, in an aggravating manner.

"No, in ours, you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removeites, as Bob Cherry and Nugent glared at one another.

"Well, look here!" said Wharton, with a frown. "I think the feed should take place in Bunter's own study. He'll feel more at home there."

"I still think Study No. 13 is the

best," growled Bob Cherry; "but, of course, if you're going to persist, I suppose I'll have to give in."

"Of course!" muttered Frank Nugent.

Bob Cherry feigned not to hear the remark, and the juniors were soon engaged in making purchases for the great feed.

All the juniors were pretty flush, and soon a huge pile of "grub" had accumulated on the counter.

Mrs. Mumble smiled.

"Think you'll be able to carry all this?" she said.

"Yes, rather!"  
"Not half!"

"It's very heavy, though, with all those pies."

"The weightfulness is terrific!" assented Hurree Singh.

"Look here, chaps!" laughed Wharton. "Each take as much as you can. We needn't take 'em up on a tray."

"No, rather not. Come on, kids!"

And the juniors trooped out of the tuckshop heavily laden.

The table in Study No. 1 literally groaned with the weight by the time the

No. 13 to bring down some toffee which the Chinese had made earlier in the day, and when he entered the door he eyed the table with satisfaction.

"Lipping, you chappies," he said.

"It does look all right, doesn't it, kids?" agreed Bob Cherry. "Hallo!" he added. "I hope that fat porpoise won't keep us waiting much longer, for it's a quarter to seven now."

Frank Nugent looked at the clock which was ticking out so loudly.

"It's more than that," he said. "That rotten dial is slow. It's nearly five to."

Harry Wharton tipped the fizzling sausages on to a hot dish.

"Those are done to a turn, chaps," he announced.

"They do sniff all right, don't they?" said Bob Cherry. "It'll be a beastly shame—"

"Listen!" interrupted Mark Linley. "Tramp, tramp, tramp!"

"That's our fat porpoise's shuffle!"

"Yes, here he comes!"

Bob Cherry pulled out a comb from his pocket, and, wrapping a piece of paper round it, put it in his mouth.



"Bunter!" shouted Mr. Quelch, angrily, giving the fat junior a shake. "Why are you not getting up?" "Gorraway!" grunted Billy Bunter sleepily.

last of the packages had been put on to it.

"By Jove, doesn't it make your mouth water!"

"Rather!"

Harry Wharton grinned, and set light to the fire, which was already laid.

"Come on!" he said. "Bustle to!"

Bob Cherry untied the two parcels containing sausages, and slapped them into a frying-pan.

"Here you are, kids!" he said. "Shove 'em on!"

By the side of the frying-pan, there was only just room for the kettle, but the water was soon boiling, and Hurree Singh made some cocoa.

Six large dishes were required to display the buns and pastries to advantage, and with the addition of the jam-jars and butter-dish the table looked fit for a king to sit down to.

Wun Lung had been sent up to Study

He made an excellent attempt to play the first few bars of "See the Conquering Hero Comes."

Billy Bunter opened the study door.

Buzz-z-z-z, buzz-z-z-z, buzz-z-z-z—

"Whatever 's that fearful row?" asked the fat junior, blinking through his huge spectacles.

"Come on, you chaps!" shouted Bob Cherry, taking the comb from his mouth for a moment. "Come on, altogether: 'See the—'"

Giving his chums the start, Bob put the comb to his mouth once more.

Buzz-z-z-z, buzz-z-z-z, buzz-z-z-z—

Billy Bunter came into the room, and took off his silk hat.

"What's the matter with you, Cherry?" he said, in concern. "Don't you feel well?"

The leader of Study No. 13 continued THE PENNY POPULAR, No. 259.

his buzzing, but glared ferociously at his fat questioner.

Buzz-z-z-z—

The torturing music stopped suddenly, and Bob Cherry dropped his comb to the floor.

"My only hat!" he gasped.

"It isn't, Cherry," replied Billy, looking at the lining of his tall hat. "It's mine!"

"Well, my only Aunt Matilda!"

"What's up?"

"That fat cormorant! That overfed porpoise! That gournardising rotter's got my best patent shoes on, or I'll eat 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry rose from his chair and clutched hold of Bunter's left leg.

"I know them by a mark on the instep!" he roared. "Come on, up you come!"

"Ow! Look out, you cad!"

Bob gave a vicious pull, and the fat junior's leg came up.

"Ow! Look out, I'm—I'm going to

Thud!

Bunter crashed to the floor with a mighty bang, and the table shook dangerously.

"Great Scott!"

"That's smashed something!"

"It's sure to bring Quelch!"

Billy Bunter lay on his back, gasping,

as the juniors muttered in alarm.

"My only hat! Here comes some-

one!"

The door was flung violently open, and

Mr. Quelch put his head into the room.

"What has happened, Wharton?" he

said. "Has a chimney come through the

roof?"

"A chimney, sir?"

"Yes. What was that fearful

crash?"

"No chimney has fallen into this

study, sir. It must be in Study No.—"

"Oh-h-h!"

"Why, whatever is the matter with

Bunter?"

"Oh-h, I believe I am dying, sir!"

"What do you mean, boy? Get up

—"

"Mr. Quelch, has anything happened up here?" interrupted Dr. Locke's voice.

"Great Scott, the Head!"

The Remove Form-master opened the door wider to allow the Head to enter the study.

Bob Cherry had meanwhile been kicking Billy Bunter, who still obstinately refused to get up from the floor.

"Bunter!"

"Oh-h! Yes, sir?"

"Get up immediately!"

"Certainly, sir!" groaned the fat junior, scrambling to his feet.

"What is the meaning of this food on the table, Wharton?" demanded Dr. Locke severely.

"Oh, the food, sir?"

"Yes. Why is the table filled up with all this food?"

"Oh, yes, the grub, sir?"

"Answer me, Wharton, and don't be silly!"

"Well, sir," stammered Harry, "we thought we would like to entertain Billy—er—I mean, Bunter, on the occasion of his windfall—"

"Is that the terrible noise I heard just now?"

"No, sir; I mean the windfall Bunter has had left him."

"Oh, yes; of course!" said the Head, turning to Billy. "You have been up to town, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you found the solicitors all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's right," smiled Dr. Locke. "And how much money are you the fortunate possessor of now, my boy?"

Billy Bunter put his hand into his trousers-pocket, and drew out three coppers.

"Just threepence, sir," he said.

"No, no; I don't mean that, Bunter. How much money has that American man left you?"

"N-nothing, sir!"

"What?" shouted the Head, Mr. Quelch, and the juniors in chorus.

Billy Bunter blinked nervously.

"No, sir; nothing!"

It was plain to see that the fat junior was terribly disappointed, and the Head took him by the shoulder in his usual kindly manner.

"Tell me, my boy," he said.

"Well, sir," explained Bunter, "I went to my—to those solicitor chaps, and they laughed at me, and said that the William George Bunter they had advertised for was found in a workhouse. He was seventy-three years of age, and he had been left three thousand pounds."

Billy ended his explanation jerkily, and tears blurred the big spectacles of the fat youth.

"Well, never mind, my boy," said the Head. "I never ought to have raised your hopes as I did. We ought to have found out whether your father knew of any relations of his who had ever gone to America. I am very sorry I allowed you to go all the way to London to be disappointed like that—I am very sorry indeed, my lad!"

And Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch walked out of Study No. 1.

There was an oppressive silence in the room for a moment or two; but Harry Wharton at last dispelled it.

"Come on, Billy!" he said, slapping the fat junior on the back. "We've got a ripping feed ready for you!"

Bunter readjusted his spectacles.

"Well, that's jolly decent of you, you chaps!" he said huskily.

"Not at all!"

Frank Nugent picked up the plate of sausages from before the blazing fire, and Bunter's eyes brightened at the sight of them.

"Come on, you fellows," he said; "I haven't had much to eat to-day!"

And the Removites set to.

The topic of conversation while the feast was in progress was the football match between the Remove and the Fifth.

But Harry Wharton & Co. did not at that festive table, or ever after in Study No. 1 or in Study No. 13, mention any incident connected with Billy Bunter's Windfall.

THE END.

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# THE LAST HOPE!

By  
Martin  
Clifford

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Surprise for Tom Merry.

CUTTS, of the Fifth, came along the Shell passage, in the School House at St. Jim's, and tapped at Tom Merry's door.

"Come in!" called out Tom Merry's cheery voice.

Cutts opened the door. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther glanced at the figure of the Fifth-Former in the doorway.

They looked surprised—as they felt. Lowther slid his hand along to the inkstand, as if to be ready in case of emergency. Manners made a strategic movement towards an Indian club in the corner.

"Hallo, Cutts!" said Tom Merry.

"Can I come in?" asked Cutts.

"Certainly."

"My only hat!" said Monty Lowther, in amazement. "Are you ill, Cutts?"

"Ill? No."

"Not suffering from some pain or other?"

"No."

"Then what's the matter?"

"Eh?"

"What's made you so jolly polite all of a sudden?" demanded Lowther. "Last time you came into this study, you kicked the door open."

"And we chucked you out!" added Manners reminiscently.

Cutts grinned faintly.

"I want to speak to Tom Merry," he said.

"Well, go ahead," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "No charge."

"I—I want to speak to you—"

"That means that we're to get out, I suppose?" said Manners. "I can see it's something awfully important. Have the Fifth made up their minds to take their proper place at last, Cutts, and to bow to the Shell, and have they sent you as ambassador to tell us so?"

"No, you ass!" said Cutts.

"I don't approve of Tom Merry having secrets with these Fifth-Form chaps," said Monty Lowther, with a solemn shake of the head. "I think Cutts had better deliver his message to all of us. Pile in, Cutts."

"I want to speak to Tom Merry."

"Alone?" asked Tom Merry, puzzled. He had not the faintest idea what the Fifth-Former could have to say to him that his chums could not hear.

Cutts nodded.

"No larks?" asked Tom Merry suspiciously.

He could not help being a little suspicious of Gerald Cutts. Relations between Cutts and the Terrible Three had been very strained.

"No larks," said Cutts.

"Well, we'll clear," said Lowther, in response to a look from Tom Merry.

"But mind he doesn't lead you astray

while your uncle's eye isn't on you, Tommy."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Dry up, and clear out!" he said. "Right! Come on, Manners. We'll go and jaw to the chaps in Study No. 6 while Tommy is listening to the dread secret."

And Manners and Lowther, really not without some slight misgivings, quitted the study.

The door closed behind them.

Tom Merry looked curiously at the Fifth-Former.

There was real distress in Gerald Cutts' face, and there was no doubt that the Fifth-Former was in trouble of some sort; but why he should come to Tom Merry about it was a mystery. They were not friends.

Apart from the rivalry between the Fifth-Form fellows and the Shell at St. Jim's, fellows in different Forms did not chum together very often; and the difference between a senior and a junior was very marked.

And Cutts was not the kind of fellow Tom Merry liked. The hard, keen-faced Fifth-Former, whose reckless conduct was talked of in whispers in the Common-room and the junior studies, was not at all in Tom Merry's line.

Tom Merry could not help thinking of that now, but he was quite ready to help Cutts, if he could, whatever his trouble was. Any fellow in trouble was sure of finding a friend in Tom Merry of the Shell.

"Well, drive ahead, Cutts," said the junior.

"I'm in trouble."

"Sorry to hear it."

"Rotten trouble," said Cutts.

"You mean that I can help you?"

"Yes—if you will!"

"I'll be glad to do anything I can," said Tom Merry wonderingly. "Sit down, and tell me what I can do."

Cutts remained standing.

"I suppose you think it's a bit queer my coming to you?" he said restlessly.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Well, I do, as a matter of fact," he said.

"There's nobody else," said Cutts. "Nobody else who could and would help me, I mean."

"You've got plenty of friends in the Fifth."

"Yes—Prye and Gilmore and Jones major," said Cutts, with a nod. "But they can't help me in this. I—I've tried."

"Well, I'll help you if I can," said Tom Merry. "But I don't see how a junior can help you, if a senior can't. What's the trouble?"

"Money."

"Oh!"

"I want twenty quid!"

"Great Scott!"

"Will you lend me twenty pounds,

Tom Merry?" Cutts made a step towards the captain of the Shell, and his face was white and strained. "Lend me twenty pounds, or I'm ruined, and I shall be expelled from St. Jim's!"

Tom Merry stared blankly at Cutts.

"Twenty pounds!" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"But—but—"

"I'm in a hole," said Cutts. "I'm in a frightful hole! I've had cruel luck ever since the flat racing stopped, you know."

"—"

"You mean you've been losing money on horses?"

"Yes, and in other ways."

"I won't say it serves you right, or ask what did you expect," said Tom Merry. "But I must say—"

Cutts smiled bitterly.

"I know all that," he said. "I had faith in my luck, and my luck's given out. That's all. No good telling me I've been a fool. I know that. No good telling me to chuck it all and start fresh. I've decided on that already, if I can only get out of this hole."

"Well, that's one good thing, anyway."

"If I can once get clear—"

"What about your pater?"

"I've been too thick on the pater lately," said Cutts. "He's stood me over fifty pounds extra this term, and now—now he's written to ask me what I've been doing with the money. He hints that he's going to ask Dr. Holmes to keep an eye on me, and see whether I'm wasting too much money."

Tom Merry gasped.

"I've been trying to borrow the money," said Cutts wretchedly. "But—but it's not so jolly easy to borrow twenty quid."

"Then I don't see it's much use asking me," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry for you, and I'd help you if I could. But I can't."

"It would be only for a couple of days," said Cutts.

"How do you mean?"

"In two days' time I shall have plenty of money—by Friday," said Cutts. "I could settle up, then, every shilling, and interest, too, if you wanted it."

Tom Merry coloured.

"I'm not a rotten moneylender," he said. "I shouldn't want any interest if I made you a loan. But I can't do it."

"Then I'm ruined!"

"I'm sorry," said Tom Merry uncomfortably. "But I don't see what I can do. What is it—do you owe the money?"

"That's it."

"If you're going to have plenty of money by Friday, surely your creditor would wait till then—a couple of days."

Cutts shook his head.

"He won't wait after to-night."

"And if he doesn't—that will be done?"

"I shall be shown up."

"You couldn't put him off?"

"No."

"Who is it?"

"Man named Griggs—you've seen him."

"Griggs, the bookmaker?"

"Yes."

"That's the kind of man you've been having dealings with," said Tom Merry, with a curl of the lip.

"You needn't rub it in. I know I've been a fool."

"What is he going to do if you don't pay him?"

"Go to the Head."

"He wouldn't get the money then," said Tom Merry. "The Head wouldn't let you pay him. Gaining debts don't have to be paid."

"My father would pay it to stop the disgrace, if it all came out. But I should be ruined here—and at home. You can fancy the reception I'd get from my people when I was sent home for gambling."

Tom Merry was silent. He thought he could imagine it. He was sorry for Cutts; but he was feeling angry with him, too. What right had Cutts to come to him—a fellow he hardly knew—and burden him with his disgraceful secrets and his blackguardly troubles? That was Tom Merry's thought, though he would not utter it.

But at the same time the junior's generous heart was touched. He would have given a great deal to be able to help the reckless Fifth-Former out of the difficulty his recklessness had brought him into.

"Well?" said Cutts, at last.

"I don't know what to say," said Tom Merry. "I haven't the money, and I couldn't possibly raise it. I've got credit enough to raise a few quid among the fellows, I suppose, by way of loan, if I could rely upon you to settle with me, so that I could settle with them."

"By Friday I shall have plenty."

"But that would only be a few pounds—three or four. I couldn't possibly get twenty pounds. My dear chap, think of it. I don't suppose all the Shell have as much as twenty pounds in their pockets now, taking the whole Form together."

"Very likely."

"Then I can't do anything."

"You've got plenty of money, Tom Merry."

"I've told you I haven't."

"I mean, in your hands. You're treasurer of the Junior Sports Club, and of the Junior Dramatic Society. You've got their funds."

Tom Merry started.

"That's not my money," he said.

"But it's in your hands."

"Yes. But—"

"It's only for a couple of days," said Cutts. "I swear—I give you my word of honour—that by Friday night I'll return every penny."

"Do you know what you're asking me to do?" said Tom Merry. "That kind of thing is called embezzlement, when the money isn't replaced."

"It will be replaced. It's only a question of lending it to me for a couple of days—to save me from being expelled from the school. I know it's like my cheek to ask you—"

"I should jolly well think it is," said Tom Merry warmly.

"But—but it's the last chance!" Cutts' face was haggard. "I know we've not been friends, Tom Merry—"

"I'm not thinking of that."

"But you don't want to see me racked?"

"Of course I don't. But—"

"That's what it means," said Cutts

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 259.

huskily. "I shall be sacked from the school kicked out in disgrace—and marked for life. Being turned out of a school like this clings to a fellow as long as he lives."

"I know that."

"You can save me, if you like. I know it's asking a lot, but it means a lot to me. And I give you my sacred word of honour that I shall have the money on Friday," said Cutts. "Don't you believe me?"

"Yes, I believe you. But—"

"You don't want to use the money before Friday?"

"No. Some of it will be wanted on Saturday," said Tom Merry. "I've got some accounts for the football club to settle on Saturday, that comes to over twelve pounds."

"I shall return the money on Friday."

"But—but it isn't my money," said Tom Merry. "I've no right to lend it to you."

"I know," said Cutts. "But—but can't you stretch a point for once to save a chap from being ruined?"

"I would if I could. But—"

Cutts made a hopeless gesture. "Well, if you can't, you can't," he said miserably. "I suppose I was a fool to come here. I only came on the off-chance. I was a fool. I might have known that you wouldn't help me. No reason why you should, for that matter."

"It isn't that," said Tom Merry slowly. "If the money were mine—"

"I'm not asking you to give it to me," said Cutts. "I'm asking you to let me have it for forty-eight hours, and then it will be safe in your desk again."

"But I've no right—"

"Very well. I shall have to stand it, that's all," said Cutts. "Don't say a word about what I've said to you, of course."

"That's understood."

Cutts turned to the door.

"Hold on a minute," said Tom Merry. Cutts paused at the door.

Tom Merry was thinking hard. "Suppose you offered Griggs part of it," he said.

"I've done that."

"He's refused?"

"He says he wouldn't take nineteen-pounds-ten."

"The rotter!"

"Well, it can't be helped. It's all my own fault, and I shall have to face the music, that's all. If you'd helped me, I could have made a fresh start—got clear of all that, and started fresh. Now I'm ruined—for life! I'm sorry you won't do it, Tom Merry. You might have saved St. Jim's chap from going to the dogs, and you won't."

"It isn't that I won't," said Tom Merry, "but I can't. I can't lend you money that doesn't belong to me. Suppose anything happened to prevent you from paying it back—"

"I've given you my word about that."

There was a pause.

"When are you seeing Griggs about it?" asked Tom Merry. "He's coming here for the money—to-night."

"Here!" exclaimed the junior.

"I'm going to meet him outside—after dark. Look here!" exclaimed Cutts suddenly. "You can see him, if you like. Tell him you're helping me, and ask him if he'll take some on account, and give me time. He might—"

Tom Merry hesitated.

The idea of meeting Griggs, the bookmaker of Wayland, was not an agreeable one to him. Such a meeting, too, might get him into trouble if it were found out, but Tom Merry did not think of that at the moment. He was only thinking of

helping Cutts out of the difficulty the Fifth-Former's folly had landed him in.

"If you think it would do any good seeing him, Cutts—"

"It might. He doesn't believe me when I say I could pay if he gave me time. But he'd take your word, perhaps—he'd know you were square."

"Then I'll come with you."

Cutts looked greatly relieved. "You're a good chap, Tom Merry," he said huskily. "I sha'n't forget this."

"When are you going to see him?"

"Eight o'clock, outside the school walls."

"All right."

"You know the slanting oak?" said Cutts. "Be there at five minutes to eight, and I'll meet you, and we'll go together."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry.

Cutts left the study.

Tom Merry was left alone, in deep and painful thought. Cutts had played the fool—and worse than the fool. But if he repented of his folly, and wanted a chance to make a fresh start, surely he was entitled to a chance!

If Tom Merry could save him from being expelled—it was worth an effort, and worth risking trouble for himself. Cutts had told the truth when he said that the disgrace of being expelled from a school like St. Jim's would cling to him for life.

And his people—Tom Merry could imagine the averted looks, cold and cutting words, that would greet the disgraced fellow when he returned home, to say that he had been kicked out of school for disgraceful conduct. It was worth some trouble and risk to save a St. Jim's fellow from that.

Should he take the risk?

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Tom Merry Says "Yes!"

TRUE to his promise, Tom Merry met Cutts at the slanting oak at eight o'clock. He climbed over the wall, and followed the Fifth-Former down the lane.

Cutts did not speak; but Tom Merry could see that the Fifth-Former's usual coolness had quite deserted him. Cutts was full of suppressed excitement.

It was no new thing for Cutts to be outside the school walls after locking up. No new thing for him to meet even so disreputable a person as Mr. Griggs of Wayland.

His nervous excitement was evidently due to the state of his affairs—that state of affairs from which he hoped Tom Merry could be able to extricate him. Tom Merry, almost sorry that he had come, and yet anxious to do anything he could for Cutts, followed the Fifth-Former with a moody brow.

A squat figure was waiting under the shadow of the trees, a hundred yards or less from the school gate. It was Mr. Griggs. He wore a silk hat a little on one side, and a necktie that announced his presence at a considerable distance. Closer at hand, Mr. Griggs exhaled a genial odour of spirits and tobacco.

"Hallo!" said Mr. Griggs. "Who's this with yer?"

"A friend of mine," said Cutts.

Mr. Griggs peered suspiciously at Tom Merry in the gloom.

"Master Merry!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Cutts.

"He has come with me to—"

"Well, to what?" said Mr. Griggs gruffly.

"To speak to you!"

"That's it," said Tom Merry.

"Well," said Mr. Griggs, "if Maeter

Merry wants to put a little bit on a horse, I ain't the man to say no."

Tom Merry reddened. "It's nothing of that sort!" he exclaimed.

"Then wot's your business with me?" demanded the bookmaker angrily.

"It's about Cutts."

"You want to pay for Cutts—is that it?"

"No. But—"

"Then I can't see that you've got any business with me," said Mr. Griggs disapprovingly.

"I told you it wouldn't be any good, Merry," muttered Gerald Cutts.

"Cutts tells me that he owes you money, and that you won't give him time to pay, Mr. Griggs," said Tom Merry, as civilly as he could.

"Well, wot of it?" demanded Mr. Griggs.

"Cutts will have money on Friday."

"Ow do you know?"

"He gives me his word."

"Well, that's all right," said Mr. Griggs. "I know as Master Cutts is a fellow of his word, if you lend him the money, you'll get it back."

"It isn't that. Can't you wait till Friday?"

"No, I can't!" said Griggs gruffly.

"But you've said yourself that you rely on his word."

"That's all right!" said Mr. Griggs. "I'd take his word if I could wait, but I can't. Friday's no good to me. I'm short myself, and I must have the money to-night."

"But if Cutts can't pay—"

"If he can't pay, there's them as can," said Mr. Griggs, with a grin.

"What will you do?"

"Foller you back to the school, and see the 'Ead," said Mr. Griggs at once.

"He wouldn't pay you anything."

"I fancy 'e would, rather than 'ave an action brought," chuckled Mr. Griggs.

"But you couldn't get anything by an action. Cutts is a minor. Besides, gaming debts are not legal, and can't be collected."

Mr. Griggs chuckled explosively.

"But the action can be brought, young man, and the name of the swindler, and the name of the school and his End-master, can be got into all the papers."

"That's blackmail!"

"Not the kind of blackmail that's illegal, though," said Mr. Griggs coolly.

"That's my game if I ain't paid. I reckon I shall be paid."

"I don't think so. You'll ruin Cutts, and nothing more."

"I'll chance it," said Mr. Griggs.

There was a pause.

Tom Merry knew that if Mr. Griggs carried out his threat, whether he obtained his money or not, it would be certain ruin to Cutts.

There was no doubt whatever on that point.

"Well, wot's the game?" asked Griggs at last. "Ave you come to tell me that you can't pay, Master Cutts?"

Cutts nodded.

"And Master Merry 'ave come to tell the same—hey?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "And to ask you—"

"Ask me nothin'!" said Mr. Griggs. "I tell you I'm short of money. I've had losses, or I wouldn't be 'ard on an old friend like Master Cutts. Ain't I due on the course to-morrer, with 'ardly a brown in my pocket. I want my money."

"But—"

"There ain't any buts in the matter. Am I goin' to be paid, or am I not goin' to be paid?" demanded Mr. Griggs.

Tom Merry was silent.

"Come on, Merry," said Cutts hopelessly. "I told you it wouldn't be any good. Let him do his worst!"

"And I will!" said Mr. Griggs. "You leave me 'ere without payin', and eev wot will 'appen. I'm comin' straight on to the school."

"You know what that means to Cutts?" said Tom Merry.

"Wot's that to me?"

"You are a hard-hearted hound!" burst out Tom Merry. "I dare say you've made enough money out of Cutts to go easy with him for once."

The bookmaker scowled.

"A 'ard-hearted 'ound! That finishes it! Hand me over my money or clear out, and leave me to take my own way!"

"I've got no money," said Cutts.

"Then go your way, and I'll go mine."

Cutts moved away towards the school. Tom Merry hesitated a moment, but it was evidently useless to make any further appeal to the angry bookmaker. The Shell fellow followed Cutts, leaving Griggs still snorting and bristling with indignation.

he called before the Head when Griggs calls."

"What are you going to do?"

Cutts shrugged his shoulders again. "Bolt!" he said briefly.

"You are going home?"

"To explain to the pater before he hears from the Head? No, thanks!"

Tom Merry looked alarmed. "Then where are you going?" he asked.

"I don't know—anywhere."

"Look here, Cutts, this won't do. You can't bolt like that. You—"

Cutts caught his arm.

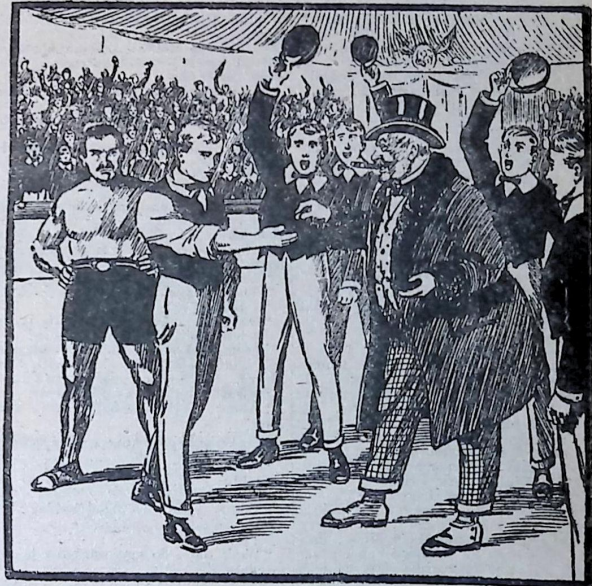
"Look!" he muttered.

The squat figure of Mr. Griggs passed them in the dusk, proceeding directly towards the gates of the school.

"You see that!" said Cutts. "What's the good of going back?"

"I—I wish I could—"

"You could help me if you like," said Cutts sullenly. "You heard what Griggs



Amidst great excitement and thunderous cheers, Mr. Jagers counted out twenty sovereigns from the purse, and like a fellow in a dream Tom Merry accepted them. Twenty pounds! He was saved!

"I'm sorry, Cutts," said Tom Merry. Cutts gave a hopeless shrug of his shoulders.

"Well, you've dished me now, if there was a chance at all," he said. "There was no need to call him namee."

"I'm sorry. But I don't see that it made any difference. He wouldn't let you off."

"No. I suppose he wouldn't."

"What are you going to do now?" Cutts gave a hard laugh.

"You can go in," he said.

Tom Merry paused as Cutts stopped.

"And you?" he said.

"Leave me here."

"But what are you going to do?" said Tom anxiously.

said—even he would take my word about paying on Friday. And you won't."

"I take your word, but—but—"

"Then let me have the money for a couple of days. You don't want it till Saturday; and what difference will it make to you?"

"None; but—"

"But you won't do it—to save me from being ruined!"

"I—I—"

"Why should you?" said Cutts bitterly.

"Well, let it go at that. Good-bye!"

"Hold on a minute!"

Tom Merry's brain seemed to be in a whirl. For himself, he would never have dreamed of touching the money entrusted to him. But—as Cutts said—it was only

a loan, to be replaced before the money was wanted. To save a St. Jim's fellow from ruin—surely it would be justifiable to use the money? Nobody would be wronged, as the money would be replaced. Surely he was carrying punctiliousness too far in keeping the money locked up in his desk while a fellow was being raised for want of the use of it for a couple of days?

"You—you're sure about the money on Friday, Cutts?" faltered the junior.

Cutts' face lighted up.

"Honour bright!" he said.

"Then—then—"

"You'll let me have it?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

The words seemed wrung from him.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Cutts. "You shan't be sorry for it. But—but perhaps it's too late. If Griggs has run—"

"Stop him!"

Cutts dashed after the bookmaker.

He rejoined Tom Merry in a few minutes.

"It's all right!" he said. "I stopped him in time. He was just at the gate."

"And—and—"

"He's going to wait ten minutes while I fetch the money."

"Very well," said Tom Merry heavily. "Come on—we shall have to be quick! He half-suspects it's a trick to gain time."

"Right-ho!"

They hurried back to the spot where they had crossed the school wall. Five minutes later they were in Tom Merry's study, in the Shell passage in the School House. Tom Merry took out a bunch of keys, and selected the key of his desk. Cutts closed the door of the study, and stood watching him with eager eyes and trembling hands.

"Quick!" he muttered feverishly. "Was he afraid that Mr. Griggs would not wait, or that Tom Merry might change his mind?"

Tom unlocked the desk.

He took out the money from a secret recess—two banknotes for five pounds each, and ten golden sovereigns. It cleared out his stock, with the exception of a half-sovereign and some silver.

Cutts took the money eagerly.

"If I don't have it back on Friday it means that I'm disgraced instead of you, Cutts," said the junior heavily.

"It's a dead cert for Friday."

"Then go and pay Griggs."

Cutts thrust the money into his pocket, and hurried out of the study. Tom Merry relocked his desk, and threw himself into his chair, with a wrinkled and gloomy brow. Had he done wisely—had he done honestly?

Suppose, by some wretched chance, Cutts failed to return the money? What was to happen then? The thought was like an icy chill to the junior. He had acted foolishly—wrongly—for another's sake. And how was it going to turn out?

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Tom Merry Makes a Discovery.

THE next morning Tom Merry felt—and looked—worried. He had not slept well, and that told upon him a little. And the twenty pounds he had lent to Cutts, of money not his own, was an ever-present weight upon his mind.

Jack Blake of the Fourth thumped him on the back as he met him in the Form-room passage.

"Glorious morning, kid!" said Blake. "Come down to the footer! Chance of a little decent practice at last!"

"I'll join you there."

"Come now!" said Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 259.

"Why not?" demanded Manners.

"Oh, don't bother!"

"What?"

"I—I mean let me alone for a bit!"

Tom Merry's sunny temper was suffering from the effects of mental worry. His rusty answer would probably have caused huffiness at any other time, but just now Manners was very patient. He only nodded, and walked away. Monty Lowther lingered for a moment, and then followed him.

Tom Merry remained in the Form-room passage as the juniors trooped out. A few minutes later the Fifth Form were released, and Cutts came out with Pryce and Gilmore and Jones major.

Cutts was looking quite cool and cheerful; he was quite the old Cutts again. He could hardly have been recognised as the same fellow who had come to Tom Merry's study the previous evening.

He did not see the Shell fellow until Tom Merry came forward to speak to him; then he nodded quite coolly.

"Can I speak to you, Cutts?" said Tom.

"Fags are not allowed to speak to Fifth-Formers," said Pryce. "Run away, little boy!"

"Go away and play!" said Jones major.

But Tom Merry was not in a mood for fun.

"I want to speak to you, Cutts," he said.

"Can't it wait?" said Cutts.

"No."

"My haf!" exclaimed Jones major warmly. "Of all the cheek! I suppose they haven't shifted you into the Sixth all of a sudden, and made you a prefect, have they, Merry?"

"No," said Tom Merry.

"I must speak to Cutts!"

"Oh, let him in!" said Cutts lazily.

"I'll join you fellows in a minute!"

The Fifth-Formers sniffed, and went on. Cutts remained behind with Tom Merry. His manner was not cordial.

"What is it?" he asked sharply.

"About that money," said Tom Merry.

"Well, what about it? Don't shout!"

"I'm not shouting."

"Well, get it over!" said Cutts irritably. "What do you want to say about it?"

"You're quite sure about Friday?"

"Haven't I told you so?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, do you want me to say so again?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "I—I've been thinking about it. I—I couldn't sleep last night for thinking of it."

Cutts stared at him.

"Well, you must be an ass!" he commented.

"I suppose I am," said Tom Merry bitterly. "I was an ass to lend money that didn't belong to me, that's quite true."

Cutts nodded calmly.

"You're quite, quite sure that you can let me have it to-morrow, Cutts?"

"Quite sure."

"It's a large sum."

"I shall have twice as much to-morrow," said Cutts, in an airy way.

Tom Merry's eyes opened wide.

"Twice as much! That would be forty pounds!"

"I know it would."

"You expect to get forty pounds to-morrow?"

"It's a dead cert."

"Well, that's all right, then," said Tom Merry, relieved.

"Of course it's all right, you young duffer! Did you think I was going to let you in?" demanded Cutts.

"Well, no. But accidents happen, you know."

"There won't be any accident this time. It's a dead cert—the dearest of dead certs," said Cutts confidently.

The words made Tom Merry uneasy again. Cutts had said last night that it was a dead cert; but Tom had not taken special notice of the words. Cutts was given to speaking in sporting slang. But the words now, as the Fifth-Former repeated them, struck upon his mind with a new meaning.

"Would you mind telling me where the money is coming from, Cutts?" he asked. "I don't want to inquire into your private affairs, of course, but—"

"But that's just what you are doing," said Cutts.

Tom Merry flushed.

"I don't mean to," he said. "But—but this is such a jolly serious matter for me, that I can't help feeling worried. I suppose you are expecting a remittance from your people?"

Cutts laughed.

"I jolly well wish I had some people who would remit me forty quid at a time!" he said.

Tom Merry's heart sank.

"Then it isn't a remittance?" he asked.

"Of course it isn't."

"As a present from somebody, then?"

"If you know any somebodies who make presents of forty quid, I'd be glad of an introduction to them," said Cutts.

"Then what is it?"

"It's a cert."

Tom Merry started.

"You—you don't mean that—that it's a race?" he gasped. "You're not expecting to win money?"

"What else did you think?"

Tom Merry seemed to see the Form-room passage and Cutts and everything else spinning round him for a moment. So that was it!

He found his voice at last.

"You—you villain!" he gasped.

"You swindler!"

Cutts laughed.

Truly, Cutts extricated from his difficulty was a very different person from Cutts in fear of the consequences of his reckless folly.

Tom Merry clenched his hands. He was tempted to plant his fist full in the laughing, cynical face of the blackguard of the Fifth.

Cutts drew back a pace.

"Don't be a fool, Merry!" he said harshly.

"You thief!"

"Don't be a fool! Hold your tongue! Do you want to get a crowd round us?" said the Fifth-Former savagely.

"I don't care!"

"You had better care. You can call me a swindler if you like. But what will the fellows call you when they know you've spent the money trusted in your hands?"

"Spent it?"

Cutts shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, disposed of it, at any rate," he said.

"I lent it to you."

"Not much good telling the fellows that when they want to know what's become of it," said Cutts, with a sneer.

"Better keep your temper, and hold your tongue. I tell you you're going to have the money back to-morrow. What more do you want?"

"Money won on a race?" said Tom Merry.

"It's as good as any other money, isn't it?"

"No," said Tom Merry, "it isn't. It's not clean money. No decent fellow would touch money made in gambling."

"My dear chap, we're not in a

Sunday-school now," remonstrated Cutts. "Don't give me that boss!"

"Oh," said Tom Merry. "If I'd known!"

"You wouldn't have lent me the tin?"

"No, I wouldn't."

"Then I'm jolly well glad you didn't know."

"You—you said you were going to chuck all that. To turn over a new leaf."

"Well, so I am," said Cutts. "I meant that I was going to be more careful and so I am. No more plunging for me. I'm not going to have any money on outsiders at fifty to one. It's too careless; they never really get home, only once in a blue moon. Nothing for me in future, unless I know the geegee is going to romp home. This time it's a straight tip from the stable—straight from the horse's mouth. The Kid is sure to get home."

"The Kid!"

"That's the name of the horse," said Cutts, in condescending pity for the junior's ignorance of the turf.

"And—and the money I gave you—it wasn't to pay Griggs, then—it was to make a new bet?"

Cutts shifted uneasily. Even Gerald Cutts was not quite dead to a sense of shame.

"Not exactly that," he said. "You see, Griggs was very rusty—very ugly indeed. I had to let him have his money, or he would have done as he threatened. He's not a weller. He plays fair, and pays when a chap wins and it was only fair to let him have his money. If he'd been a swindler himself he wouldn't have cut up so rusty; it was because he's always paid on the nail that he cut up so rusty about not getting his money. I had staked on my word, and I couldn't make my word good. It was fifteen quid I owed him, and he'd really given me a lot of time, too. And he was short of money himself. He had to have it, or he'd have gone to the Head."

"You said twenty?"

"Well, you see, I had this dead cert about the Kid—it's an absolute certainty. I've got it from a pal who knows the owner. The Kid's being kept dark, but he's absolutely certain to romp home. They're giving eight to one against—think of that—eight to one against a horse that will romp home as sure as a gun!" Cutts' eyes were shining with excitement now, the gambling fever was on him; and Tom Merry, looking at him, could understand how it was that honour, and principle, and everything else, vanished from consideration when the spirit of gambling seized upon its wretched victim. "I had to have fifteen quid for Griggs. It would have been a sin and a shame not to have another five to put on the Kid, to net a clear forty quid as easy as rolling off a log. Don't you think so?"

"I don't."

"Oh, rats!"

"Suppose the Kid doesn't win?"

"He will win."

"But suppose he doesn't?"

"What's the good of supposing an impossibility," said Cutts irritably. "I tell you it's an absolute dead cert—a straight tip from the stable."

"If it were my own money I'd lend you, I'd refuse to take it back from such a source as that," said Tom Merry.

"Then you'd be a fool."

"I'd rather be a fool than a gambler, but it wasn't my money, and I must have it back. I must."

"Well, you'll have it back to-morrow. And some more with it, if you like. Look here, it's not too late—a wire to Griggs."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, that if you've got a quid to spare, I can wire it to Griggs, and you'll have eight quid, and your own quid back, to-morrow."

"I wouldn't touch it."

"What rot!"

"If I get that twenty back, it will be all right," said Tom Merry. "But—"

"You'll get it to-morrow."

"When?"

"The race is run at two o'clock. The evening papers will have the winners in them," said Cutts. "You can get an evening paper in Wayland at eight o'clock, if you like." He paused. "But I shall have the money before then. Griggs is coming back here, and I shall see him in the evening, and he'll square up."

"After—"

"Yes, after what's happened. Griggs is a square man, in his own line. He's all right now he's got his money. He'll turn that fifteen quid into five hundred to-morrow, I expect. I only wish I had his chances."

"And if your horse is beaten?"

"He can't be beaten."

"If I'd known this," said Tom Merry,

"I'd have chucked you out of my study last night. But it's no good talking to you. I can see that. If you get this money, pay me the twenty quid you borrowed, and don't ever speak to me again."



Mr. Jagers makes an important announcement.

Gerald Cutts laughed.

"I don't exactly pine for the society of junior kids," he said. "I shan't bother you any more, I assure you. But don't go round with a face like a hatchet—the money will be here all right to-morrow. It's a dead cert!"

Tom Merry did not reply. He went out into the quadrangle, his heart as heavy as lead. Cutts walked away whistling, Cutts was very bright and cheerful that day.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The "Dead Cert."

MANNERS and Lowther were lounging in the doorway of the School House the next afternoon, when Tom Merry came out, with his cap on.

"Going out?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Anywhere in particular?"

"I'm going for a spin on my bike."

Lowther bit his lip. Tom Merry's reply was an evasion; he understood that. He would not say where he was going, and he did not want them to come!

The chums of the Shell looked after Tom Merry with lowering brows as he

walked away, round the house towards the bicycle shed.

They watched Tom Merry wheel his bicycle down to the gates. Tom Merry mounted, and pedalled away towards Wayland.

Tom had not seen Cutts that afternoon. The black sheep of the Fifth had gone out soon after lessons, and he had not returned. Tom Merry guessed easily enough that he had gone to see Griggs; but he could not wait for Cutts to return. He must know whether The Kid had won—whether he was to receive the money that evening, as Cutts had promised.

His thoughts were bitter enough as he pedalled through the dusky lanes.

What a fool he had been! He had trusted a gambler—he might have guessed what the result would be. He had lent money that should have been sacred to him—money he should never have touched for his own purpose.

He realised the seriousness of that now. His motive had been good and generous; but in effect it was the same as if he had squandered the money for himself. The money was gone, and he could not replace it. If The Kid did not win—

The Kid must win!

It was the wretched thought of the gambler—he felt that he was a gambler now. He was like the miserable man who stood upon the racecourse, with hearts palpitating between hope and fear—affluence on one hand, ruin on the other. The horse must win!

Like the trembling punters standing round the roulette tables at a Continental casino, watching for the number to come up—numbers backed by money they could ill spare, money sometimes not their own. The number must come up! But the number does not come up—and the horse does not win! And then—

Tom Merry thought of Cutts with bitter anger. Cutts had dragged him into this—had made a gambler of him, in spite of himself.

He rode into Wayland, and inquired at the first newsagent's for an evening paper. But Wayland did not receive its evening papers early. They were not in yet, and he had to wait—a weary wait.

He rode away on his bicycle, and spent a quarter of an hour riding about aimlessly. Then he came back; but the papers had not arrived. Then he waited outside the shop.

He pictured to himself Cutts, frequently engaged in that manner, waiting for the arrival of the news, eagerly scanning the racing columns to see whether his horse had won.

What was there in it—what but feverish anxiety and misery?

How could any fellow who was not a crass fool spend his time and money in such a way? It was Tom Merry's first experience of the gambling fever; it would be his last. It was bitter enough while it lasted.

The papers at last!

Tom Merry took the paper, and opened it outside the shop. In his anxiety he forgot the risk of being seen scanning the sporting columns of a newspaper in the public street. He could think of nothing but the Abbotsford Plate, and The Kid.

Had the horse won? Cutts' racing intelligence was generally reliable; certainly he had often won money. Had he been right this time, or was the dearest of dead certs a delusion and a snare?

He scanned the paper eagerly. He could not find the racing page at first, and when he found it, he found reports of various races, but the Abbotsford Plate was not among them. The race

was mentioned, but not among the results. The report was not there. The paper had gone to press too early for it. Tom Merry's heart sank within him.

After all this misery and anxiety he was not to know—not till he saw Cutts again. Then suddenly he thought of the Stop Press column. He sought for it eagerly. He knew that the results of some of the later races would be there.

Yes, here it was. Stop Press News. Abbottford Plate. Result: "King Cole. Merryandrew. North Wind."

What did it mean? There were only three names given, and the name of The Kid did not appear among them.

He knew what it meant.

King Cole had won, Merryandrew had been second, and North Wind had been third. The Kid had not even been placed.

The "dead cert" had failed.

The horse which was to "romp" home, the dead cert from the stables, the tip that was as good as straight from the horse's mouth—he remembered all Cutts' expressions—they had failed.

The Kid was not even among the first three—the only names that were given.

In a later paper his place might be given—fourth, or fourthteenth. It was all the same. He had not been backed for a place, but to win. And he had not even been placed. The Kid, instead of being a dark horse, and only a supposed outsider, was a real outsider, as most outsiders are.

He had lost the race!

Cutts had lost!

And Tom Merry?

The unhappy junior threw down the paper, and slowly and mechanically mounted his bicycle, and rode back to St. Jim's.

What was to happen now?

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Last Chance.

DIRECTLY he reached St. Jim's Tom Merry went up to his study and shut himself in.

At length the door of the study opened, and Manners and Lowther came in. They were both looking very grave. "You're coming out, Tom?" asked Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"There's a performance at Jaggars' Circus at Rylcombe," said Manners. "It's the last performance before they go. You must come and see the Japanese wrestler!"

"Thanks, I don't want to."

"Look here," said Lowther, "we were thinking that you might take him on. You're a topping wrestler, and in good condition, and you might be able to take the bouncer down a peg or two."

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"You must come out, Tom," said Manners.

"I don't feel fit."

There was a short silence in the study. Tom Merry knew that his charms were searching his face, and his glance dropped before theirs. It was the first time Tom Merry of St. Jim's had been ashamed to look his friends in the face.

"Look here, Tom," said Lowther at last. "This won't do. Tell us what's the matter. This can't go on!"

"It can't, Tom," said Manners.

Tom Merry groaned aloud. "Oh, what a fool I've been—what a fool!" he muttered.

"Tell us, Tom," said Monty softly. "We'll stand by you. And three can bear it better than one—whatever it is." "Shoulder to shoulder," said Manners. "You won't say that when you know," said Tom Merry dearily.

"Try us, and see."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 250.

"I suppose I may as well tell you now," said Tom, with an effort. "The whole school will know it soon, and they'll point at me in the quad as a swindler, till I get out."

"Tom," said Lowther huskily, "are you mad? Do you know what you're saying?"

"A—a—a swindler!"

"Yes."

"You're off your rocker, Tom!" said Manners, whose face had gone very white.

"You don't know what I've done."

"What have you done?"

"I've used the club funds!"

It was out now.

Tom Merry stood with his eyes upon the floor. There was a long, long silence—it seemed centuries long to the unhappy junior. When Lowther broke it at last his voice had a strange husky sound in it.

"You're joking, Tom. You haven't done that?"

"I have."

"The club funds—you're treasurer"

"Yes."

"You've spent them?"

"No. I've given them away!"

"I knew it wasn't so bad as you made out," said Lowther, with a breath of relief. "Tell us all about it, you fathead, and don't make yourself out blacker than you are. Tell us the facts, you silly ass!"

"It was Cutts, I know that," said Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"I'll give you the whole yarn," he said. "Cutts was going to be shown up by a bookmaking cad, if he didn't settle with him. It was a question of his being expelled. He asked me to let him have the club money to save him."

"The cad—the rotten cad!"

"I refused at first. I—I ought to have stood to it. But I saw the man, and he meant to ruin Cutts. And Cutts swore that I should have the money back to-day for certain. It was only loaning it for a couple of days—to save him from being disgraced and expelled. I gave way, like a fool."

"Like a fool—yes; but not like a rogue," said Lowther warmly. "The fellows will think you're a silly ass, if they know; but that's all."

"I hadn't any right to lend money that wasn't mine," said Tom Merry heavily.

"Besides, you fellows believe me, of course, but other fellows mayn't. All they know is, that I've got rid of the money that was trusted to me."

"I suppose so."

"And Cutts won't pay?" asked Manners.

"He won't be able to."

"How much is it?"

"Twenty pounds."

"My hat!"

Twenty pounds!

"Might as well be twenty thousand," said Manners miserably. "Why, we haven't the ghost of a chance of raising it!"

Monty Lowther gave a sudden jump.

"My hat!" he exclaimed.

"Monty—"

"Got Scott, I've got it!"

"Got what? The twenty quid?"

"No, ass; the idea!"

Tom Merry's face flushed with hope. "What are you thinking of, Monty?" he asked.

"Yoshi Kayeshi!"

"What?"

"The Japanese wrestler."

"But what—"

"Don't you see," exclaimed Monty Lowther excitedly—"don't you see, fat-

head? He challenges the public at every performance for a chap who can stand against him for five minutes, and offers twenty pounds to the chap who can do it. You're going to try, and do it!

See?"

Tom Merry put his hand to his brow. Was it a chance, after all?

"I—I couldn't do it!" he stammered.

"Rot!" said Monty Lowther emphatically.

"But—but—"

"No time for buts!" said Monty Lowther. "You're going to wrestle the Jap, and you're going to hold him for five minutes. You're going to bag the quids, and everything in the botanical department will be lovely! See!"

"But—"

"Shut up, and come on! You're going to do it, I say! We'll take a crowd of St. Jim's chaps to see fair play! Come on!"

"But—"

But Monty Lowther did not wait for any more "buts." He grasped Tom Merry by the arm, and rushed him out of the study.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Tom Merry for St. Jim's.

JAGGERS' CIRCUS was crammed.

In a front row sat the Terrible Three, supported on either hand by Blake & Co., of Study No. 5, and Figgins & Co., of the New House.

Tom Merry sat silent amid the hubbub of voices. His brow was knitted and moody. He had determined to take on the Jap wrestler's challenge, and do his best. But while all the other fellows were thinking of the excitement of the contest, and the glory that would accrue to St. Jim's if Tom Merry stood up against the Oriental champion, Tom Merry was thinking far other thoughts.

It was the last hope.

If he stood manfully against the professional wrestler, and held his own for the stipulated five minutes, he was saved. If not, it was ruin!

That knowledge was enough to make him grave amid the buzz of cheery talk. He hardly noticed the performance when it began.

He hardly saw the rapid riders, the acrobats, the clown, the lion-tamer, the various turns that preceded the appearance of the Jap.

A buzz at last told him that his prospective opponent had appeared. The Jap came into the arena.

He was a lithe, small man, not much bigger than the boy who intended to take up his challenge. But his form was splendidly developed, and he looked a mass of sinew and strength. If he was not a real Japanese, he was got up very well indeed to resemble one. He was in the scanty garb of the wrestler, and his bare skin glistened in the light.

"Here he is!" said Monty Lowther.

"Look at him, Tommy!"

That was not needed. Tom Merry was looking at him with all his eyes. His heart sank a little.

Yoshi Kayeshi would have been a tough opponent for a full-grown man, and a professional like himself.

And Tom Merry, strong, and well-trained and athletic as he was, was only a schoolboy—a junior schoolboy.

"Hallo, here's Jaggars going to speak! This is the challenge!"

Mr. Jaggars addressed the audience. He announced that Yoshi Kayeshi, of Nagasaki, would give an exhibition of various kinds of wrestling, and added that the Japanese champion had never found an opponent who could stand against him.

In proof of this, Yoshi Kayeshi offered the sum of twenty pounds to any member

of the audience here present who could stand against him for five minutes without being thrown.

Yoshi Kayeshi grinned at the audience, and showed his teeth. He looked towards the spot where the St. Jim's fellows were clustered, and his lip curled. "Is there no one who will try?" he exclaimed. "I will not hurt him. Is there not a schoolboy who will try to stand against Yoshi Kayeshi?" "Yes," roared Blake of the Fourth, "there is!"

Yoshi Kayeshi's eyes glittered. "Let him stand forth!" he said. Tom Merry rose to his feet. "I accept the challenge!" he said. "There was a deafening burst of cheering from the St. Jim's fellows. "Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!" "Play up, St. Jim's!" Tom Merry stepped forward into the arena. Mr. Jaggers met him with wide smiles. He was not afraid of the defeat of his champion, and such a contest gave an added interest to the circus performance, and was a good advertisement. Mr.

Jaggers was always glad to see Yoshi Kayeshi's challenge taken up.

"Welcome, young gentleman!" he said graciously. "If you care to strip, there is a dressing-room at your disposal."

"I'll have my jacket off," said Tom Merry; "that will be all right."

"Very good!—Yoshi Kayeshi, this young gentleman is ready to meet you." Mr. Jaggers took out a big gold watch. Several of the St. Jim's fellows came round to back up Tom Merry, and they timed their watches by the circus-master's. There was to be no doubt about the result.

"Ready?" asked Mr. Jaggers.

"Ready, sir."

Then the signal was given. And every eye in the circus was bent eagerly upon the schoolboy and the wrestler as they gripped, and the struggle commenced.

Tom Merry gave grip for grip, with all his beef in it.

At the first grasp of the Japanese he knew that he had an opponent to face

who was hard as nails, and wiry and alert as a panther.

Tom Merry was also wiry and alert. His chums watched him eagerly. The whole crammed circus was breathless with excitement. The general expectation was that the schoolboy would crumble up in the grasp of the professional wrestler.

When he did not, it looked as if Yoshi Kayeshi was purposely sparing him, in order to make the contest longer and more interesting to the audience. But the keener of the observers could see that this was not the case.

Yoshi Kayeshi's face was hard and bitter, and his eyes were like flints. He was straining every nerve to "down" the boy who was standing up to him, and he was not succeeding yet.

"Two minutes!" muttered Monty Lowther, his eyes on his watch.

"Bai Jove!"

And Tom Merry was still standing the strain.

The grip of the Japanese was like iron (Continued on the next page.)

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bands. The hard face and cruel eyes looked into his with a dark threat in them.

To and fro they swayed, grip against grip, strength against strength.

Tom Merry felt himself forced back.

Farther and farther, down and down—down, fill it seemed that he must yield, or break; and the hard face of the wrestler grinned above him.

His chums watched breathlessly.

Could he stand the strain?

And Lowther and Manners, who knew what there was at stake, almost groaned.

Their chum was failing.

But Tom Merry's face was still steady, his eyes clear, his lips hard. There was a sudden twist, snake-like, and the junior was erect again, still in the grip of the Japanese, but with his shoulders up, his head thrown back—unconquered.

And the struggle went on.

"Three minutes!" said Manners.

The audience hung on the struggle now.

The dullest of them could see that it was a very real one now, that the professional wrestler was doing his best to throw the schoolboy, and that as yet he could not do it.

Two more minutes, and Tom Merry would have won.

Two minutes!

Two centuries to the gallant lad straining in the iron grip of the wrestler.

One minute!

There was a slight cheer from the crowd.

But most of them were too excited and breathless to cheer. They watched with all their eyes. Whether Tom Merry won or lost, he had given an exhibition of pluck and iron endurance that was well worth witnessing.

Mr. Jagers was looking very serious now. He did not want to see his champion defeated. But he wanted fair play. He had no desire to trick. And with the audience keenly counting the seconds, and the St. Jim's fellows standing round tricky would have been impossible, if he had wanted it.

With the wrestler it was different. His face was growing flushed and savage, and his lips were drawn back in a snarl, showing the set teeth. He was putting all his strength, all his skill into it now.

And still the schoolboy was holding him.

Thirty seconds of the fifth minute were gone.

Tom Merry was still standing the strain.

It seemed to the boy that he could stand it no longer. Flesh and blood and bone could not bear the terrific strain Yoshi Kayeshi was putting upon him.

Yet still he stood his ground.

He was not down yet.

"Twenty seconds more!" breathed Lowther.

Tom Merry heard the words.

Twenty seconds!

Could he stand it so long?

How short a flash of time—a second, under ordinary circumstances. But now it seemed as if they would never tick away. Would it never be ended? The junior almost sobbed with the cruel efforts he was making. But he stood it yet.

"Ten seconds! Buck up, Tom!"

The Japanese made a last terrific effort.

Tom Merry put forth all his strength to meet it, but he was failing—failing. Flesh and blood could stand no more.

His brain was whirling.

How long? How long?

"Stand up to him, Tom. One second more—one second! For goodness' sake, stand it!" Lowther muttered hoarsely.

Then there was a roar

"Time!"

And then Tom Merry seemed to crumple up in the terrible grasp of the wrestler, and he went down, and down, and crashed into the sawdust.

But time was up.

"Five minutes and two seconds!" yelled Figgins, as Tom Merry's shoulders touched the ground. "A win—a win for St. Jim's! Hurry!"

" Bravo!"

They rushed to pick him up. Tom Merry leaned heavily in Lowther's arms—the circus, the faces, were spinning round him. His vision cleared.

Mr. Jagers' face was a study. Yoshi Kayeshi was gritting his teeth. Mr. Jagers whispered to him hurriedly. It was necessary to put a good face on the matter, at all events.

Mr. Jagers closed his big watch with a snap.

"Ladies and gentlemen—"

"Hurray!"

"I am pleased to say—"

"Hurray!"

"I am pleased to say that our young friend has stood against Yoshi Kayeshi for the stipulated five minutes—"

" Bravo!"

"And, therefore, wins the prize, which I shall have the honour of presenting to him immediately. The young gentleman has shown what British pluck can do," said Mr. Jagers, touching the right chord.

Thunderous cheers interrupted him.

Then, amid great excitement, Mr. Jagers counted out twenty golden sovereigns from the purse; and, like a fellow in a dream, Tom Merry accepted them.

Twenty pounds!

He was saved!

What he had risked by over-faith he had saved by pluck.

Tom Merry and his chums were doing their prep, later on in the evening, when Cutts of the Fifth looked in.

Manners and Lowther showed no disposition to leave when Cutts entered.

"Ahem!" said Cutts. "I want to speak to you, Tom Merry, in private."

Tom Merry looked at him steadily.

"You can speak before my pals," he said. "They know all about it."

Cutts flushed a little.

"Very well," he said. "I hear that you got twenty quid at the circus; in fact, I saw you bag it there."

"Yes."

"I've got a jolly good thing on—"

"Another dead cert?" asked Tom Merry, so quietly that Cutts was encouraged to proceed.

"Yes, that's just it," he said eagerly.

"A dead, sure snip!"

"Right from the stables, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Straight from the horse's mouth, in fact?"

"Yes, that's it exactly. If you care to risk a few quid—not that there's any risk in the matter—it's a dead, sure snip. I can get the money put on for you at seven to one, and you'll simply bag the cash. What do you say?"

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"What do I say?" he repeated. "I say that the sooner you get out of this study, Cutts, the better it will be for you!"

Cutts gritted his teeth.

"You cheeky young cub—" he began.

"Collar the cad!" said Lowther.

And in a moment Cutts of the Fifth was struggling in the grasp of the Terrible Three. But his struggling was useless against three indignant juniors, and then a loud bump in the passage, and then the study door closed upon Cutts of the Fifth.

He did not come back.

"That's over!" said Tom Merry, with a deep breath. "I don't think Cutts will trouble us with any more of his dead certs. I've been lucky—luckier than I deserved, I think—and it will be a lesson to me."

Outside Tom Merry's study the facts were not known. But the many friends of the captain of the Shell were glad to see that his trouble, whatever it was, was gone, and his sunny cheerfulness had returned, though they did not know that it was due to the success of the Last Hope.

THE END.

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**OWEN CONQUEST**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Burglary.

"IT'S absolutely the giddy limit!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver to his chums Lovell, Newcome, and Raby.

"Absolutely!" agreed Lovell. "Funny thing that nobody in the whole place heard a sound," remarked Raby.

"Don't suppose there was much sound, fathead!" ejaculated Lovell. "When anybody breaks into a place, they don't hang around kicking up as much row as they can!"

"No, but—"  
"Oh, shut up, ass! Whatever you say, the fact remains that the job was successfully carried out without any interruption."

The Fistical Four were seated in the end study at Rookwood School, discussing a most unusual event.

During the previous night a burglary had been committed at the school, the Head's study being the apartment which had suffered most severely at the hands of the invaders.

"They've apparently made a jolly good haul," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, yes!" replied Lovell. "A gold cigar-case, a silver, paper-knife, and several other things."

"All small things, though, that could be easily carried away in anyone's pockets."

"It's a rotten sort of thing, because everybody in the school is sort of under suspicion."

"Oh, I don't think so! Nobody's suggested that it might have been done by anyone at Rookwood."

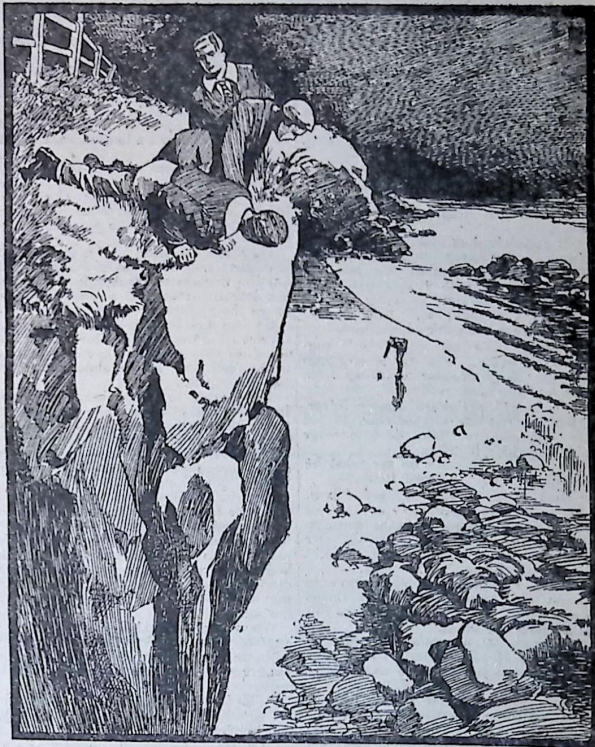
"Perhaps not; but the fact that there is no clue as to how the thief got in makes things look worse. If the window-latch had been broken, or anything like that, it would have been clear that it was done by someone outside."

"Yes, there's something in that. All the same, I don't see that we need feel uncomfortable about it."

"Anyway, I shan't feel easy in my mind until the whole business is cleared up," said Lovell.

"Hear, hear!" agreed Newcome and Raby.

"Well, the police have been informed and the matter is in their hands," said Jimmy Silver. "The most important thing for us to decide is what we're



The classical chums watched the man stoop and pick up from the sands something which looked like a small parcel.

going to do on Saturday. It's no good trying to fix up a footer match now."

"Well," said Lovell, "I suggest that we take that outing to the seaside you spoke of the other day."

"Rather!" exclaimed the others.

"There's no reason why we shouldn't," said Jimmy Silver. "Lymington beach is a gorgeous place, and it's only about fifty miles from here."

"It'd take us between an hour and an hour and a half," said Lovell thoughtfully. "That's not too bad. It's well worth it!"

"Oh, yes, it's worth it; and there's a good train early in the morning."

"Right! I'm on, then!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, for once we're all in funds, and there's no reason why we shouldn't have a jolly decent day by the sea."

"All agreed, then," said Jimmy Silver.

Then the four juniors excitedly began to discuss their programme for the coming day's excursion.

Later on that day a further sensation was created among certain of the Classical Fourth by the news that Hooker had been locked up in the detention-room.

The Fistical Four gradually gleaned the facts of the case from various sources, and it appeared that the Classical junior had been seen emerging from the Head's study about an hour before.

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, had seen him, and had asked what he had been there for. Hooker had given no explanation, and consequently Bulkeley had felt it his duty to report the matter to Dr. Chisholm.

In answer to the Head's questioning, Hooker had insisted that he had no explanation to offer as to his presence in the study.

Dr. Chisholm was very worried and upset by the burglary of the night before, and in his exasperation took a line which was very unpleasant indeed for Hooker.

"If you have no reason to give for your presence in my study," said Dr. Chisholm. "I must conclude, in view of what has happened, that you are in some way implicated in the events of last night. Therefore, as I have no time to waste, you will be placed in the detention-room for the present."

Hooker had accordingly been locked in the dreaded apartment, under suspicion of complicity in the burglary.

"I'm perfectly certain," said Jimmy Silver to his chums, "that Hooker is as innocent of the burglary as any chap among us."

"Then, why couldn't the silly ass give a reason for going to the Head's study?" asked Raby perplexedly.

"That's just what gets me," said Lovell.

"It certainly does look very bad," admitted Jimmy Silver thoughtfully, "but I'll never believe that Hooker has had anything to do with that rotten business. He's as straight as a die!"

"Well, I thought so," said Lovell. "He's always been one of the best."

"Perhaps he's got into debt," suggested Newcome, "and was enticed into the affair by a promise of money from someone."

"No fear!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Hooker's not the sort of chap to get into debt, and even if he did he'd never get in for giddy burgling."

"Why on earth can't he say what he was up to, then?" queried Raby.

"Give it up!" said Jimmy Silver. "Anyway, there's absolutely nothing we can do, except hope that the business will soon be cleared up. I'm jolly sure that when all the facts come to light Hooker will be proved innocent."

"Well, I suppose we shall have to get on with some work," said Lovell reluctantly; "but a rotten affair like this rather puts one off it."

The next day a special examination, held at the Head's request, was to take place, and the juniors were not looking forward to it at all keenly.

Exams were detested at the best of times, but this was not the best of times, by long chalks. The burglary and Hooker's imprisonment had aroused excitement, and exams do not go well with that.

When classes assembled next morning Hooker did not appear, so it was obvious to all that he was still in the detention-room.

"I think I'd rather face a giddy exam than be shut up in that hole all this time," said Raby.

"I should jolly well think you would!" replied Jimmy Silver promptly. "I bet Hooker wouldn't take long to make up his mind if he had the chance."

"Poor old chap!" said Lovell sympathetically. "He's evidently booked for the day, at least."

#### THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Great Discovery.

THE exam was over and the day had dragged wearily to its close.

The Fistical Four were seated once more in the end study discussing the all-absorbing topic.

"Hooker ain't out yet, then?" said Lovell.

"No," replied Jimmy Silver hopelessly, THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 259.

"and the police haven't tumbled on a single giddy clue."

"I suppose poor old Hooker will be kept under lock and key until the thing's cleared up."

"Looks like it."

"What are we going to do about our seaside trip to-morrow?"

"I don't feel very much like going now, after what's happened."

"It certainly takes the gilt off the gingerbread," admitted Lovell.

"All the same, we sha'n't do anybody any good by staying about here all day," said Jimmy.

"No jolly fear," said Raby. "Let's go and forget all about it."

"Yes; I think we may as well," agreed Lovell. "What time is the train in the morning, Jimmy?"

"Eight-forty-five!"

"We shall have to be up in decent time, then. There's a longish walk to the station."

"Yes. I do hope old Hooker's let out before we start!"

Saturday morning broke clear and bright, and the Fistical Four scrambled out of bed in good time for their journey.

They felt brighter and more hopeful than they had done the previous night, but the thought of Hooker in the cheerless detention-room cast a sombre shadow across the brightness of the morning.

He had not been released when they set out from the gates of Rookwood, and somehow they did not talk much as they made their way to the station through the sunny lanes.

The journey to Lymingbeach was done in good time, and while the day was yet young the Fistical Four found themselves in the little seaside town.

"Suppose we have a stroll along the cliffs for a start," said Newcome.

"We've got a long day before us."

"I'm on," said Jimmy Silver.

"Same here," chorused the others, as they set off for the sea.

Lymingbeach was a charming little place. The seashore was strewn with large rocks, and caves penetrated for long distances in the sides of the cliffs, which towered two or three hundred feet above the sand.

When the Fistical Four reached the edge of the cliffs, they threw themselves down in the long grass to rest, for the sun grew hot as the day advanced towards noon.

"This is great!" said Jimmy Silver, as he gazed out over the calm, blue sea, which stretched away before them.

"Perfect!" exclaimed Lovell. "I'm jolly glad we came."

"Hear, hear!"

"I wish I could forget old Hooker shut up in that beastly detention-room, though!" added Jimmy Silver.

"I should think we might get down into this little bay when we've had a rest," said Newcome.

"And have a dip," suggested Raby.

"Rather! There doesn't seem to be anyone about."

"Someone's just come round the bend in the cliffs," said Jimmy Silver.

The juniors were lying flat along the cliff edge, and they peered over as the leader of the chums spoke.

They idly watched the man below for some moments. He halted suddenly, and

glanced behind and around him. Then he stooped and picked up from the sand something which looked like a small parcel.

He stood for a few moments turning it over in his hands, then, with another glance around, he slipped it into one of his pockets.

"He's got hold of something he's no giddy right to," said Jimmy Silver, as they watched him moving along the shore.

"Looks like it!" said Lovell. "Now he's off further up the beach to the side of the cliff."

The curiosity of the Fistical Four was aroused as they intently watched the man below. Then, to their surprise, he came to a standstill by a large rock, which he began to push with all his strength. At last the rock rolled over to one side.

Then, crouching low, he disappeared in the side of the cliff.

"He's gone into a cave!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Sure enough!" replied Jimmy Silver. "There's something fishy about his little game."

The Fistical Four were thoroughly excited by this time.

"Let's go down and have a squirt," suggested Raby eagerly.

"It'll probably take us some time to get down," said Lovell; "and he'll very likely have gone by the time we get there."

"Oh, we'll go!" said Jimmy Silver. "I should like to know what the bouncer's up to. Besides, if we're going to have a bathe, we've got to go down. Can't bathe up here, you know."

The four juniors set off along the cliff path to search for the nearest way down to the shore.

In about five minutes they reached a narrow, rugged path, and, after a moment's hesitation, decided to risk the descent at that point.

They soon discovered that they were not going down by any recognised route, however, for in some places the little path was distinctly unsafe. In fact, it was hardly to be called a path at all.

But they were in a hurry to get on the track of the man below, and so they went on.

"I'll bet nobody's been down to the beach this way for a good long time," panted Lovell, as he slid down the path.

"I'm inclined to wish we hadn't come," muttered Newcome. "It's ten chances to one the man will have gone when we get there."

"Don't grumble, ass! What do you think you're doing?"

The latter part of the remark was uttered to Raby, who had slipped and fallen against Jimmy Silver as he was speaking.

"It wasn't my fault," retorted Raby snappishly.

"Shut up, and mind where you're going!"

After a lengthy struggle the Fistical Four reached the foot of the cliffs, panting and breathless.

"Well, it's a wonder we didn't break our necks," declared Lovell, glancing up the path by which they had descended.

"Rats! We haven't, so what's the use of talking?" said Jimmy Silver impatiently. "Pull yourselves together, and come on!"

It was not easy to locate the spot where the stranger had disappeared, but at last Jimmy Silver recognised a peculiarly-shaped rock which was situated just below their resting-place on the cliff, and thus found it.

Creeping up close to the steep wall of the cliff, the Fistical Four stealthily advanced.

"Steady!" whispered Jimmy Silver, as they neared the narrow cave entrance,

#### TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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Then he dropped on all fours, and crawling to the hole, peered into the cave.

It was all he could do to keep from shouting at the sight which met his gaze.

The man they had seen knelt inside, and before him was a number of articles of jewellery and other valuables. He was examining them closely. Among them Jimmy Silver recognised several of the things which had been taken from the Head's study.

Jimmy drew back hastily, and turned with excitement in his eyes to his chums.

"What is it?" whispered Lovell.

"Get back a bit—behind that rock there!" ordered Jimmy Silver.

The four chums withdrew to the shelter of the rock, and in excited tones Jimmy Silver told them what he had seen.

"My hat!" exclaimed Lovell. "Then he must be the rotter who broke into the school the other night!"

"Or an accomplice," said Jimmy Silver.

"What shall we do?" asked Newcome.

"Let's collar the rotter!" exclaimed Raby.

"The best thing to do," said Jimmy Silver, "will be to push the rock back, make him a prisoner, and then get help. He couldn't shift it from inside. It will

winning him that they were telling the truth, and, accompanied by a policeman, he set off with them to the seashore.

The little party found Newcome and Raby seated a few yards from the cave, and they reported that nothing had happened.

Arrived at the scene of action, the inspector adopted a very important and official air.

"Now then, you boys," he said briskly, "you just push the rock away, and my man will stand 'ere ready to pounce on the criminal if 'e shows fight!"

The inspector was evidently going to play the part of commander from the rear, for he stood well out of the line of action.

The Fistical Four ranged themselves at the side of the rock, and, with a tremendous shove, once more shifted it to his place.

The man inside made an instant dash for freedom, but the policeman clutched at his arm, and the Fistical Four flung themselves upon him, while the inspector rapped out orders to everybody.

The ruffian stood no chance against the burly policeman and the four stalwart juniors, and in a few seconds he was handcuffed, and ready to be led away to the police-station.

As a matter of fact he did mind, but it was impossible for him to refuse.

So the note was handed to the juniors, and they bade the pompous official farewell, in very high spirits.

"Are we going back to Rookwood straight away?" asked Raby.

"Rather!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Think of poor old Hooker, still in the detention-room! We must have him out of that!"

"How about a train back?" said Lovell.

"We'll go down to the station at once and inquire the time of the next one," replied Jimmy Silver.

They rushed for the station, where they found a train just about to leave.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, as he dropped into one of the corner seats in an empty compartment.

"Just in time!" panted Newcome, as the train moved out.

"By Jove, what a gorgeous capture!" ejaculated Lovell, his face aglow with excitement.

"Absolutely! I'm jolly glad we came!" said Raby.

"Hear, hear!"

"Fancy finding the stolen property at Lymingbeach!" said Lovell.

"When I come to think of it," remarked Jimmy Silver, "I remember

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only move sideways on account of the smaller rocks in front of it."

"Right-ho! Come on, then, before he clears off!"

The four juniors took up positions by the rock, and gathered up their strength for one mighty push, so that it would would roll into its place without giving the man in the cave any warning.

"Heave!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver in a low voice. And under the combined strength of the four sturdy juniors the huge rock rolled over with a thud.

"Got him!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Absolutely trapped the giddy rotter!" said Raby.

"You and Newcome had better stay here on guard," said Jimmy Silver, addressing Raby, "while Lovell and I go for the police."

"Right-ho! We'll see he doesn't get away."

"Oh, there's not much chance of that! But one of his pals might come along, so it's better someone should stay."

"Quite so!"

Jimmy Silver and Lovell rushed off to the town to inform the police of what they had discovered.

The inspector at the little station was inclined to be rather bad-tempered when the juniors first told their story, thinking it a hoax, but they succeeded in con-

Before setting off with their captive, however, the inspector entered the cave, and gathered together the various articles of value which were strewn about.

Jimmy Silver & Co. recognised several pieces of the Head's property.

Having packed up the stolen goods the happy band started for the town with the prisoner.

Great excitement was created amongst the townfolk at the sight of the triumphant procession, the inspector swelling with pride as he marched along on one side of the captive.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
The Mystery of Hooker.**

**W**HEN the prisoner had been put under lock and bar, the pompous inspector rather wanted to dismiss the Classical juniors.

But Jimmy Silver was not to be so easily put off.

"We should like a note from you to our Head, Dr. Chisholm," said the leader of the Fistical Four, "telling him what's happened. We should also like to take back to him his property."

"Can't be done!" said the inspector. "The property will have to be identified by an official representative of your Headmaster. But I don't mind giving you a note."

reading that there have been several burglaries at big houses round about there, and I expect most of that stuff we found in the cave comes from the neighbourhood."

The journey passed quickly to Jimmy Silver & Co. as they eagerly discussed the matter from all points of view, and they soon found themselves once more on the road leading to Rookwood.

"Hallo! What's brought you back so soon?" inquired Tommy Dodd, who was at the school gates with his chums, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle.

"Has Hooker been let out yet?" asked Jimmy Silver, ignoring the question.

"No. Why?" asked the leader of the Modern chums.

"We've got the boulder who broke into the Head's study!" replied Jimmy, as he hastened with his chums to Dr. Chisholm's room.

The Head chanced to be in his study, and disengaged, and Jimmy Silver handed him the inspector's note, and related the story of what had occurred at Lymingbeach.

"This is indeed good news!" said the Head, when he had finished. "I will communicate with the local police immediately."

Then, in answer to a summons from Dr. Chisholm, Bulkeley appeared.

"Please bring Hooker to me at once!" said the Head.

"Yes, sir!" replied the prefect, and withdrew.

In a few moments he reappeared with the unfortunate Hooker, who looked very pale and miserable. He had evidently had anything but a pleasant time in the detention-room.

"I find," said the Head, as the junior advanced towards the table, "that there is no sufficient reason for connecting you in any way with the thefts from this room."

"No, sir," replied Hooker faintly.

"I am very pleased indeed to be convinced of your innocence of any connection with that affair," the Head continued; "but I must still insist that you inform me of your reasons for being in this study the day after. What have you to say?"

"I can't explain," replied Hooker stubbornly.

"I insist!" rapped out the Head.

Then a startling thing happened. The door of the Head's study was burst open, and Johnson, a youngster of the Third, dashed in.

"Oh, sir," he cried, before the Head had time to speak, "I want to make a confession to you!"

Dr. Chisholm and the Fistical Four stared in amazement at the agitated junior, but Hooker looked at him with an expression of impatience on his face.

"Unless your confession concerns anybody here," said the Head coldly, "you will withdraw, and wait until I am free to listen to you!"

"It—it's about Hooker!" stammered Johnson.

"Indeed! Then I will hear what you have to say at once!"

The Third Form junior, looking very pale and scared, continued:

"The day before the exam I was passing this study, and the door was open, and I—I was tempted to come in and look on your desk to—see if the test-paper was there. I—I dreaded the exam, because I was afraid I should do badly. I've been cribbing all the term—I own it! The test-paper was lying on your blotting-pad, and—and I took it, and went straight back to my study to copy it."

Johnson paused, and looked appeal-

ingly at the Head. Then he continued, all in a rush:

"Just as I was going to copy out the questions Hooker came into my study, and before I had time to hide the paper he had seen it. He knew directly that—that I had taken it from this study, and took it from me. Then he—he jawed me, and I—I saw what a rotten thing I'd done. He offered to take the paper to your study if I promised never to do such a thing again. I—I promised him, and—and I mean it! I'll never be such a rotter any more!"

When Johnson had finished, Dr. Chisholm turned at once to Hooker, who was standing, with bowed head, looking much more ashamed of himself than there was any need for.

"I am more glad than I can say," said the Head, "to find that the reason for your intrusion into my study was one

There is a LONG COMPLETE TALE of JIMMY SILVER & CO. in this week's BOYS' FRIEND, entitled: "RAISING THE WIND!" By OWEN CONQUEST.

that reflects no discredit on you. I can only express my regret that I should have misjudged you, and offer my apologies for your confinement in the detention-room."

The Head turned to Johnson, his face stern and hard.

"I am sorry to find you guilty of having succumbed to such a base temptation, but as you have made a full confession, and, I think, have learned a lesson, I am inclined to deal leniently with you. You will, therefore, write me two hundred lines from Virgil."

"T-t-thank you, sir!" replied Johnson nervously.

"I am greatly indebted to you boys," said Dr. Chisholm, addressing the Fistical Four, "for the part you have played in capturing a dangerous character and assisting to recover my property. You may go!"

Jimmy Silver & Co., Hooker, and John-

son all trooped out of the study, and the Head proceeded to make arrangements regarding the recovery of his stolen property from Lymingbeach.

Out in the quad a crowd of excited juniors gathered round the Fistical Four to hear their story of the capture of the Rookwood burglar, news of which had travelled round the school from Tommy Dodd & Co.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were congratulated by Classics and Moderns alike, as was also Hooker for trying to shield Johnson from the consequences of his folly, though the congratulations, in this case, were mixed with a good deal of criticism of the "silly ass" type.

Dr. Chisholm's property was duly returned to him, with the news that two more of the burglarious gang had been captured.

It was learned also that the burglar had entered Rookwood through a kitchen window, which was easy to unfasten from outside, the catch being a simple one.

The man had been on the way to the hiding-place with the parcel the day after the burglary, when he saw someone sitting at the foot of the cliffs quite close to the cave.

He had sat down and waited for some time, but the stranger did not move, so at last he had scraped out a hole with his hands, into which he thrust the packet, with the intention of removing it the next day. He imagined he had buried it beyond the high-tide mark; but in this he was mistaken, with the result that when he returned, he found that it had been washed out of the shingle during the night, and was lying exposed.

When the part in the proceedings played by the Fistical Four became generally known, great admiration for their pluck and smartness was expressed.

Letters of congratulation reached them from several of the individuals to whom stolen property was returned, and they received invitations to more than one of the large houses at Lymingbeach for their next holiday.

The affair was a nine days' wonder at Rookwood College, where, much to the annoyance of Tommy Dodd & Co., for the time being the Fistical Four were the heroes of the Fourth Form.

THE END.

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