

SCHOOL STORIES FOR ALL!

The
Penny Popular

No.
266.

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



THE MIDNIGHT RAIDERS!

THE SMUGGLERS' CAVE!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter Makes Terms.

HARRY WHARTON, Nugent, and Hurree Singh came down the stony path from the upper road, and tramped across the sands to the sea.

It was a fine afternoon, a cold but clear November day, and the juniors enjoyed the tramp in the brisk air. They were looking forward to the pull round the bay, and the exploration they had planned for the afternoon.

At one end of the bay clustered the hamlet of Pegg, at the other the great Shoulder rose grey and grim, weather-beaten with the storms of a thousand years, with the seagulls flying round its summit as they had flown when the Roman vessels came creeping along the coast—as they had flown when Danish rovers had landed in Pegg Bay and fought with the Saxon fishermen there in the olden time.

And under the huge rocks of the Shoulder, so the fisherfolk said, were deep, dark caves that had been used by the smugglers in more modern times, till the freedom of trade had made smuggling no longer a paying game.

The caves undoubtedly were there, and Frank Nugent had explored some of them; but whether the stories of the smugglers were exactly veracious was another matter.

Harry Wharton glanced round for Captain Stump, who had been instructed to have the boat ready. The ancient sailorman was not in sight; but the boat was a dozen yards from the shore, with Billy Bunter in it, keeping it there.

Bunter blinked at the Greystriars juniors, who stared at him.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Nugent, in surprise.

"The esteemed Bunter himself!"

Wharton beckoned to the fat junior.

"Bring that boat in, Bunter."

"I say, you fellows—"

"We want that boat! Buck up!"

"You can go on wanting, then," said Bunter, who felt himself to be master of the situation.

"Why, you—you—"

"I'm coming with you."

"Rubbish!"

"Then you jolly well won't have the boat."

"If you make us come and fetch it—"

Bunter chuckled.

"You can come and fetch it, if you like. You'll get wet."

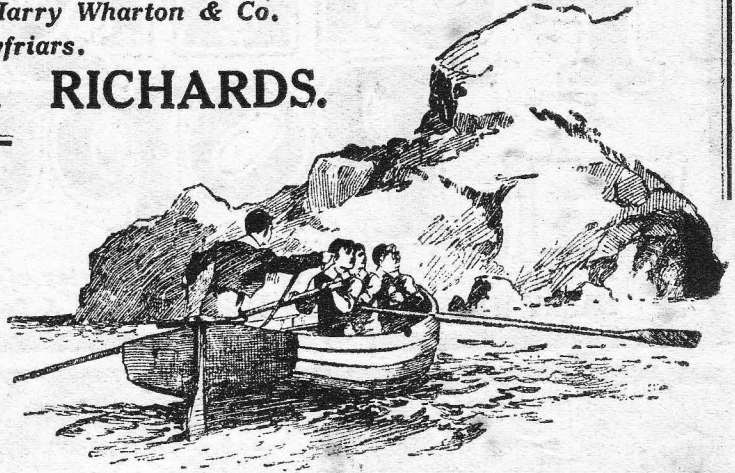
There was no doubt upon that point.

It was impossible to get at the boat without stripping and swimming out to it, and none of the Remove chums felt inclined to do that. As for going out to it in another boat, the fishers' boats were all at a distance, on the sands near the hamlet.

The fat junior grinned at them.

"Well, am I coming with you?" he asked.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 266.



"You fat worm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cackling little dummy!" exclaimed Wharton, exasperated. "I've a jolly good mind to swim out and give you a prize thick ear!"

"You'll get wet!" chuckled Bunter.

The three chums looked at one another.

Billy Bunter certainly had matters in his own hands; and it was easier to come to terms than to strip and swim out to the boat.

"Well, am I to come?" grinned the Owl of the Remove.

"Look here!" said Wharton. "You can come, if you like; but you won't like it. We're going to explore the caves under the Shoulder."

"Well, I'll come."

"Very well. Bring the boat in."

"It's pax?" said Bunter suspiciously.

"Of course, ass!"

Bunter allowed the boat to drift in. The tide was on the turn, and the waters were curling in over the soft, wet sands, though so slowly as to be almost imperceptible.

The three juniors jumped into the boat as soon as it was near enough. They looked grimly at the fat Removeite; but "pax" prevented them from wreaking vengeance upon him. Bunter, secure from reprisals, sat down in the stern with a fat chuckle. He felt that he had scored.

"Take the lines, Frank."

"Right-ho!"

Nugent took the rudder-lines. Wharton and Hurree Singh grasped an oar each, and sat down to pull.

The boat, propelled by a couple of oars in strong hands, was soon gliding among the rocks of the Shoulder.

At the foot of the great cliff, extending for some distance out to sea, was a range of half-sunken rocks, many of them completely covered by water at high tide.

On the outermost one, far outside Pegg Bay, a great rock rising grimly from the sea, stood the lighthouse.

Among the big rocks the water foamed and swirled, and in anything like rough weather no craft could have lived for five minutes there.

But the afternoon was quite calm, and the juniors, who knew the channels well,

had no difficulty in steering the boat to safety.

The tide, coming in faster, was flooding the rough rocks, and already washing at the foot of the cliff, and flowing with a hollow sound into the great cave at the base.

For the base was honeycombed with caves; most of them, however, were mere hollows extending a short distance, and narrowing as they extended.

Nugent looked out keenly for the opening of the deep cave known as that where the smugglers had landed and stacked their cargoes of old.

"There you are!" he exclaimed suddenly.

The rowers rested, and looked.

Deep in the grey cliff appeared a black gap—growing larger and larger to the view as the boat glided towards it.

It was a huge, deep cave, and the sea was flowing into it, with a depth of water sufficient to float the boat.

The rock was arched over the entrance, and there were signs upon it that the water sometimes, at least, washed right over the entrance. But the juniors did not think of that at present.

The boat glided on, the juniors no longer rowing, but punting along with a shove first on one side, and then on the other.

Nugent steered carefully.

High up over the boat loomed the rough, rocky arch of the cavern.

Billy Bunter glanced into the gloomy depths of the cavern, in which the flowing waters washed and echoed eerily, and gave a shiver. Bunter did not particularly enjoy exploring unknown places, especially where there was an element of danger.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"We're sliding in," said Nugent, as the boat glided under the rocky archway. "Good! There are a good many Pegg fishermen who don't care to sail in this part."

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say, you know, why not have the grub out here, now, instead of going into the cave at all?" said Bunter persistently. "It's better to have a feed out in the open-air."

"We didn't come here to feed, porpoise."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Steady there!" said Nugent, as the boat bumped on a rock inside the cave. "We can land further up—there's higher ground inside. You didn't forget to bring the lantern, Harry?"

"Not much!"

"Better light it."

Hurree Singh opened the lantern, and Wharton lighted the wick. The sunlight fell very dimly into the deep cave.

As the boat glided on up the channel the opening behind them became a glimmering patch, and round them was darkness.

The lantern gleamed out into the shadows of the cave. From the hollows and crannies of the cliff came strange murmurs of the water. Bunter shivered a little as he listened to it.

"Blessed if it doesn't sound like wild animals!" he murmured.

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"If we find a hippopotamus or a rhinoceros, we'll take him home and keep him stuffed in the study," he remarked.

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"I don't suppose, though, that we shall find anything more dangerous than lizards and crabs."

Bunter grunted discontentedly. The murmuring of the tide in the hollows of the cliff was very uncanny, and Bunter's nerves were not strong.

The boat glided on; the opening by this time had become a mere speck in the distance. The chums were in the very heart of the great cliff.

The keel bumped hard.

"Hallo! We're aground!"

"We land here."

Wharton flashed the light ahead. The floor of the cave, thick with a fine, soft sand, sloped upwards, kissed by the curling waves.

He jumped out of the boat.

Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh followed him, and the fat junior stepped gingerly out, looking uneasily at the dark shadows.

"Blessed if I know what you want to come to such a rotten place for!" he grumbled. "It's as black as a hat, and as cold as—as anything."

"Keep in motion, old chap—that's the way to keep warm."

Bunter sniffed. He was not fond of exercise.

"We'll explore the rest on foot," said Wharton. "Tie the painter to this rock. One can't be too sure. We don't want to be stranded here."

Nugent shuddered.

"Hang it, don't suggest such a thing!" he said. "You make my flesh creep!"

Wharton laughed, and secured the painter. Then he picked up the lantern again.

"I say, you fellows—"

"This way, Bunter."

"I'm hungry. I'd better have a snack."

"You'll have a fat ear if you don't get off that subject, Bunter. You can stay in the boat, though, if you're too lazy to walk."

"I'm jolly well not going to stay here alone!"

"Then get a move on!"

"But, really, Wharton—"

"Oh, don't jaw!"

"Shall we take the grub with us?" asked Bunter sullenly.

"No! We're only going to look round. Leave it in the boat, you porpoise! None of your little snacks on the way."

And the four juniors set out to explore the cave, Bunter lagging behind and grumbling all the way. The tramp over the rough rocks and through the crunching sand was a pleasant exercise to Harry Wharton and his chums, but Bunter was not in good condition, and he did not

enjoy it. He never enjoyed anything like exertion.

Deep and dark the cavern extended before the young explorers.

There were many fissures which branched off from the main cavern, but the juniors did not follow any of them, for fear of losing their way on their return.

The aspect of the cave made it quite probable that the stories of the old smugglers were true. In that cave, far from human sight, might be stowed endless cargoes. The tide, when it was a little higher, would float large and deeply-laden boats into the cave.

"Only the Revenue boats could get in as easily as the smugglers," said Harry Wharton. "The smugglers wouldn't find this much use, unless they had a secret storing-place, as the fishermen say."

But of the lost cave the juniors saw no sign.

Suddenly Nugent uttered a startled exclamation.

"Look!"

"Eh? What is it?"

"Bring the light here!" said Frank, in

The chums stared at it blankly.

The surprise of Robinson Crusoe at finding a human footprint on the shore of his lonely island was not greater than that of the chums of Greyfriars.

Who had been there?

Wharton raised the light from the footprint at last, and flashed it round the great cavern.

Nothing but high arches and grey walls of rock met his gaze—rock and sand, and deep, dark shadows—no sign of a human being.

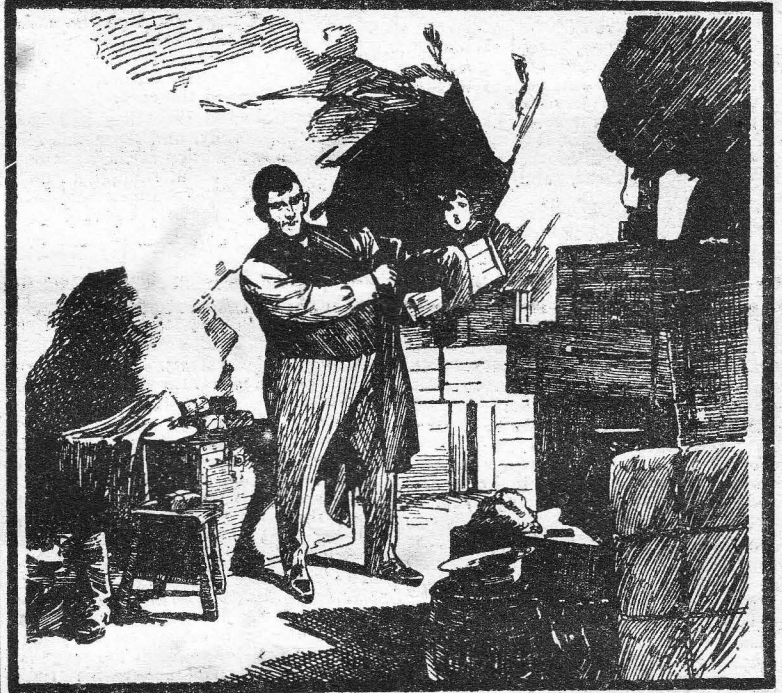
Yet the footprint was fresh in the sand. For the juniors knew that when the tide was at the full the water would cover that spot—the ribbed sand told as much.

That footprint had been left there since the last high tide.

High tide was not more than six hours ago.

At the earliest, then, the boot that had imprinted the track had trodden the sands of the sea-caves that morning, while the juniors were in their Form-room at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton and his chums looked at one another.



"Contraband!" murmured Frank Nugent, thrilling at the word, which called up associations of old-time smuggling gangs and desperate fights with Revenue officers on the sea-sand.

a voice trembling with excitement.

"Look at this! What does it mean?" He was pointing to the soft sand at their feet.

Harry Wharton flashed the light down upon the sand.

There was a general exclamation of amazement.

For there—clearly outlined in the sand—plain to their astonished gaze—was the track of a boot—a human footprint!

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Strange Attack.

THERE was no mistake about it! The imprint was that of a human foot—and it had not been made by one of the juniors. It was the print of a man's boot—of one of the big, heavy soles such as fishermen might have worn.

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said Harry at last. "Somebody has been here before us to-day!"

"Looks like it."

"My hat! Here's more footprints! Look! They lead away up the cave!"

The juniors looked eagerly.

True enough, the track in the sand led up the cave for a considerable distance, the trail extending into the black shadows of the distance.

"I—I say, you fellows!" murmured Billy Bunter. "Hadn't we—hadn't we better bunk? It—it may be some—some—anything, you know."

"One of the Pegg fishermen, perhaps," said Nugent.

"The perhapsfulness is great!"

"But why is he here?" said Wharton quietly. "The fishermen sometimes show

visitors the caves, but don't waste time fooling about here by themselves. If there were a visitor being shown over here there would be more than one set of footprints."

"True, O Daniel!"
 "The mysteryfulness is terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "What is the opinion of the worthy Wharton?"

"I say, you fellows—"
 "Shut up, Bunter! It looks to me," said Wharton, lowering his voice, "as if there might be something in the Pegg yarns that the caves are still used—"

Nugent jumped.
 "By smugglers?"
 "Yes."
 "Phew."

"Anyway, what's the chap doing here?"
 "I—I—I say, you fellows, hadn't we b-b-better get back to the boat?"
 "You can go back if you like."
 "I—I can't go alone—"

"Then stay where you are! Of course, it's no business of ours, chaps," said Wharton thoughtfully. "We're going to explore the caves, all the same."

"But—if it should be a smuggler, and we came upon him—"
 "It would be terrific!"

"I don't think so," said Wharton, laughing. "Smugglers don't go about with cutlasses and pistols as they used to in the days of the story-books. If we found him we should most likely find some waster who was too lazy to work for his living, and took to smuggling instead. Anyway, we're three, and we're not afraid."

"Not much!"
 "Oh, really, Wharton, we'd better go back—"
 "Rats!"

And the juniors kept on their way. As Wharton said, there was no reason why the finding of the mysterious footprints should make them give up their afternoon's excursion. It was quite possible, too, that the man who had made them had been gone for hours.

There were no return tracks to be seen, but he might have gone back by a different way. The cave was extensive enough for a dozen trails to lie in the sand without the juniors seeing them.

They pressed on.
 At length the juniors entered a large cave, and in it, just above the level of the tide, was a deep opening, a smaller cave piercing the side of the larger one above high water.

The juniors gave a sudden gasp of amazement, for in this upper cave a light was burning.

Nugent grasped Wharton's arm almost convulsively in the darkness. Harry turned to him.

"We've found it!" muttered Nugent excitedly.

"Found what?"
 "The lost cave."
 Wharton started.
 "The lost cave?"
 "Yes, the old cave of the smugglers."
 Wharton's eyes sparkled in the gloom.
 "By Jove, you're right!"

"It's the lost cave—the found cave now," said Nugent, with a chuckle.
 "By Jove!"

"But that chap, whoever he is, knows all about it."
 "And we're going to!" said Wharton determinedly.

He groped his way upon the rocks. Nugent and Hurree Singh followed. Billy Bunter was divided between the fear of following and the fear of remaining alone.

He finally decided upon the latter, with many muttered and angry expostulations. But the chums did not listen to Billy Bunter.

In silence, with a deep-drawn breath, the juniors crept on towards the light, which burned clearer and clearer as they approached.

Billy Bunter went back to the boat. He thought he would be out of danger there.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
 A Modern Smuggler.

THE lantern stood upon a shelf of rock. It was a large and bright one, and shed a clear light upon the narrow cave. In the streaming light from the wall a strange scene was being enacted, and the juniors had a full sight of it as they came up.

Keeping back in the shadows among the rugged rocks, they watched the solitary occupant of the "lost cave" with keen eyes and bated breath.

He was a young man of powerful frame, not much over thirty, as far as they could judge, with a keen, hard face, and light-grey eyes that looked like flints. His actions were so strange that they could hardly suppress exclamations of surprise as they watched him at work.

There was a large chest on the rocks, and in the shadows behind the juniors dimly made out several more. They were not old chests, either, left by former occupants of the cave.

A glance showed that they had been brought there lately, and there was only one possible explanation of their presence there. They contained smuggled goods. Smuggling, as the fishermen said over their ale at the Anchor, was not quite dead in Pegg Bay.

"My hat!" muttered Harry Wharton suddenly. "Look!"

"Yes, rather!"
 "The ratherfulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The astonishfulness is also great. The thinfulness of the esteemed smuggler is being transformed into the honourable fatfulness."

The juniors chuckled softly.
 They made no sound audible to the smuggler, and he went on with his work, totally unconscious of their presence.

His actions were curious enough to cause them astonishment, and yet so cunning that they could hardly help admiring his resource.

The man was slim in form, though powerfully built. While the juniors watched him he donned a suit of clothes over his own, only taking off his jacket, the second suit being much too large for him, and hanging about his limbs loosely.

Then he opened one of the chests and proceeded to take from it a number of carefully fastened little packets, which the juniors did not need telling contained tobacco and cigars.

"Contraband!" murmured Nugent, thrilling at the word, which called up associations of old-time smuggling gangs and desperate fights with Revenue officers on the sea-sand.

"Yes, rather!"
 "There must be thousands of pounds'

worth there, if the chests are full," muttered Nugent, in awed tones.

Wharton nodded.
 "Yes, and hundreds of pounds lost to the Revenue if they pass in without paying duty."
 "You're right. Careful! Don't let him hear!"

"Oh, he's too busy!"
 The man was hard at work, certainly, and all his attention was given to what he was doing. He was slowly and carefully packing away the little packets inside his clothes.

From a slim man he was growing into a fat one, and so well was the work done that the juniors could only gaze in wonder. The outward appearance of the man's padded limbs was natural enough to deceive anyone. He began with his lower limbs, and assumed the curious appearance of being a man with a thin body on an enormously fat pair of legs.

Then he commenced padding round his body, and gradually grew fatter and fatter, till he was of almost Falstaffian proportions.

Even then he was not finished. He packed more cigars inside his hat, a silk topper. Then he put up a little mirror on the wall, opened a small case, and began to bestow his attention upon his face.

The juniors could not at first see what he was doing, but presently he turned towards them, and they saw that he was disguising himself. He had come into the cave in one character; he was going to quit it in another.

Wharton chuckled softly.
 "Of course, it wouldn't do for him to be seen with the same face on a different body," he murmured. "Even the policeman at Friardale would suspect that something was wrong if he noticed that."

And Nugent grinned.
 The man was darkening his complexion, and the whole aspect of his face changed as he fastened on a long grey moustache. Then he affixed a beard of the same colour to his chin with great care, and finally a wig to his head, and donned the silk hat on top of it. Wharton grasped Nugent's arm hard as the man donned a pair of spectacles.

"My hat! Look—look!"
 Nugent hardly suppressed a soft whistle.

For now that the man was fully disguised, he seemed to be double his former age, and his aspect was not unfamiliar to the juniors. He was now a benevolent-looking gentleman of middle age, and the juniors knew him by sight.

They had seen him more than once in the village of Pegg, and had heard that he was a philanthropist much interested in the welfare of the fishermen.

"My only summer hat!" murmured Wharton. "You remember him, Frank? You've seen him in Pegg. I've seen him twice before."

"Yes, rather!" grinned Nugent.
 "The blessed humbug!"

"And he's a smuggler!"
 "The smugglefulness is terrific!"
 Wharton's face became grave.
 Quite by accident, in that afternoon's exploration, the juniors had stumbled upon a dangerous secret. There were others beside this man involved.

There must be an organisation behind it all; there must be a large capital—probably thousands of pounds—locked up in this nefarious business. The smugglers were not likely to stop at trifles to keep the secret of their operations.

Wharton signed to his companions,

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any newsagent to get it from:

**Messageries HACHETTE et Cie.,
 111, Rue Reaumur,
 PARIS.**

and they drew back further from the scene, where they could talk in safety.

"This looks like a serious matter," said Wharton, in a low voice. "That chap hasn't any idea we're here at present. If he knew—"

"Did you see what was lying on the rock near him?" whispered Nugent.

"No."

"A revolver."

"Phev!"

"He hasn't a pleasant face, either," said Nugent. "Look here, there's a lot of money and a lot of rascals in this matter. If that chap sees us, and knows we know all about it, he'll know, too, that we shall inform the authorities."

"That's what I was thinking; and what will he do?"

The juniors looked at one another with grave faces.

"I don't care to guess," said Nugent at last. "Look here, we shall have to get out without his discovering us."

"And let him escape?"

"Hang it!" said Nugent. "The question seems to me about escaping ourselves without bothering our heads about him."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Wharton slowly. "But couldn't we tackle him?"

There was a grim silence.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face.

HARRY WHARTON'S brow was dark with thought. He would have liked dearly to lay the smuggler by the heels, and the sight of the man's revolver would not have deterred him.

But Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked very doubtful.

"I'm no coward, I hope," said Nugent at last. "But it's not our business; and, hang it all, bare fists aren't much good against a pistol. It's a rotten idea, Harry, and that's the long and the short of it."

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

Wharton smiled slightly.

"Well, I don't like to let him go. We can inform the police and the coast-guards, of course, but he will be gone by then, and he will carry on the same game in another place."

"Yes, that's likely enough."

"Still, after all, we shouldn't be justified in entering into a conflict with deadly weapons if it could be avoided, I suppose," said Wharton reluctantly. "Blessed if I like to let him go, but our turn may come."

"Possibly."

"If we're not going to tackle the scoundrel, the sooner we clear out the better, before he spots us," said Harry.

"Right-ho!"

"Hallo! Look here!"

The light was glimmering nearer to them.

The smuggler was coming down the cave towards the water.

"Come on!" muttered Wharton.

The Greyfriars chums scuttled down towards the water.

There was a slight exclamation in the darkness behind them, and the glimmering light was seen to waver. The smuggler had heard a sound as they retreated.

"Hold on!" breathed Wharton.

They stopped, in dead silence. The light behind was waning to and fro.

"Stop! I see you!"

The voice thundered after them with a thousand echoes.

Wharton smiled contemptuously. He knew that the man could not see them. It was a trick to startle them into betraying themselves if they were really there.

"Rats!" murmured Nugent; and

Hurree Singh muttered softly that the ratfulness was terrific.

The boom of the echoing voice died away.

"Come back!"

Again the hollow cavern rang with a thousand echoes.

The juniors remained quite silent.

The light was stationary now, showing that the man had stopped to listen; but the boys, looking back, could not see him—only that point of light in the darkness.

He did not shout again. The silence had perhaps convinced him that his ears had deceived him, and there was no one in the cavern beside himself.

Wharton laid his ear to the ground, and listened. He caught the soft but steady sound of footsteps coming on. But the light was out now; the smuggler had extinguished it. Wharton rose quickly.

"He's coming on, you chaps!"

"Yes; let's bunk."

"We must get down to the water first. He must have a boat of some sort here; but we can get afloat first."

"Right-ho!"

They hurried on, as silently as they could.

There was a sound from the boat—the sound of a pair of active jaws steadily champing. In spite of the anxiety of the moment, the juniors could not restrain a chuckle. It was the sound of Bunter finishing up the provisions.

"Bunter!" said Wharton softly.

"Hallo! You startled me!"

"Quiet!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Hold your tongue, you duffer!"

But Bunter's incautious voice had reached other ears. The smuggler's footsteps were heard clearly now as he ran down towards the water.

Crack! Boom!

A thunder of echoing filled the cavern with deafening noise. It was caused by the report of a pistol.

Wharton clenched his hands convulsively.

Whether to frighten them or not, the ruffian was firing in the darkness. Wharton thought he heard the "pang" of a bullet flattening on the rocks.

The light of the lantern streamed out again, close at hand now. It streamed full upon the moored boat, at which Nugent was dragging to unloose it, full upon the juniors of Greyfriars.

Behind the light loomed the form of the smuggler; in his hand gleamed a levelled tube of steel.

Bunter gave a quaver of terror.

"Ow! Mercy! Ow!"

The juniors clenched their hands and stood still, silent. Against that deadly weapon they had no chance.

The man's eyes, gleaming with a reflection of the lantern, seemed to burn at them, as they were fixed upon them.

"You young hounds, you came spying!" he exclaimed. "Get out of that boat!"

The juniors did not move.

"Get out of that boat, or I will fire!"

There was no doubting that the villain meant what he said. They had cornered a desperate man, and a man who would stick at little.

Bunter, with a shriek of terror, squirmed out of the boat upon the rocks, and the others slowly and angrily followed his example. There was no help for it.

The man watched them with burning eyes.

"Go up into the cave!"

"But—"

"Obey me!"

Wharton gritted his teeth. He was inclined to rush straight at the ruffian, in spite of the levelled revolver. Nugent

grasped him by the arm, and hurried him on.

"Don't play the goat, Harry!"

Wharton nodded silently.

The four juniors went up to the cave, the lantern and the revolver gleaming behind them.

The smuggler watched them out of sight with a levelled weapon.

As soon as a rugged rock hid them from him, Wharton turned. Keeping under cover, he looked back.

The disguised villain had dragged a light skiff from a hollow of the rocks, and launched it. He fastened the painter to Wharton's boat, then, stepping into the latter, he pushed off upon the dark waters, taking both boats with him.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Good heavens! Do you see his game?"

Nugent nodded gloomily.

"Yes; we're stranded here."

"We can never get away without a boat," Wharton snapped his teeth. "Hang it, let's make a dash for it, and risk the revolver! He may not dare to shoot, after all."

But it was too late. Ere they could reach the water's edge, the boats had disappeared in the black gloom of the cavern, and the smuggler was lost to sight.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Abandoned!

BILLY BUNTER gave a howl, and sat down upon a jagged lump of rock.

"I say, you fellows, we're done

for!" "We're not dead yet," said Wharton quietly. "Don't howl till you're hurt, Billy."

"Oh, we shall starve to death here!"

"You won't starve for a bit, anyway," said Nugent savagely. "I suppose you had finished up all the provisions?"

"I had to have a snack—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Bunter whimpered into silence.

The situation was serious enough. Wharton had kept his lantern about him, and so it had not been lost with the rest of the things in the stolen boat. He had a box of vestas still. He lighted the lantern, and the dim flicker showed them their rocky prison.

Nugent pointed to the water.

"Look at the tide!"

It was nearly a foot below the rocks now.

Harry Wharton was not long in making up his mind.

"We can't be stranded up here!" he exclaimed. "We must go down with the tide."

"We have nothing to float on."

"We can swim."

Nugent whistled.

"All the time the tide is going down!"

"It seems to be going down pretty quickly, Frank. But we can find something to hold on to, you know. Have you forgotten those chests?"

"By Jove, I had! We'll get a couple of them along here. They're full of tobacco and cigars, I expect."

"It won't take long to empty them."

"True."

Bunter was in a state of collapse; but Harry, Frank, and the nabob returned along the cave to the spot where they had watched the smuggler disguising himself.

There, in the dim light of the lantern, they wrenched open a couple of the big wooden chests, streamed the contents out carelessly upon the ground, and dragged the chests away crashing and bumping towards the mouth of the upper cave.

There was no time to lose, for the tide was going down very fast, and by the time they arrived at the water's edge the water was nearly three feet below them.

They had a length of rope left, which had been on shore when the smuggler cast off in the boat, and with this the chests were lashed together and slid into the water.

They floated well, and although not large enough to form a raft, they were quite capable of keeping the boys afloat as long as they could hold on.

The juniors kicked off their boots, which they tied in one of the chests for safety, and then slipped into the water.

"Quiet!" said Wharton, in a low tone. "That scoundrel is out of sight, but he is still floating here somewhere. If he guesses what we are doing, he may return, and—"

He did not finish the sentence.

The lantern had been extinguished, and there was nothing to betray the movements of the juniors since they had taken to the water, except any slight noise they made.

Bunter gasped at the coldness of the water, but Wharton whispered to him to be silent, and the fat junior's complaining died away.

The tide was sinking fast.

The juniors kept in motion to keep their limbs from becoming numb, but they were careful to make no noise of splashing that might draw their enemy upon them again.

Owing, perhaps, to the formation of the cave, the water sank very quickly, and the wider and freer sweep of it showed Wharton soon that they were out of the chimney-like opening in the cavern's roof, and sinking towards the floor of the lower cavern.

He knew that it must be long past midnight now—though what the time was he had not the faintest idea.

"Hark!" he whispered suddenly.

The juniors held their breath.

It was the splash of an oar that came echoing faintly and eerily through the darkness on the face of the waters.

"The smuggler!"

He was near them, then!

A light gleamed—it was burning in his boat. They caught a faint glimpse of the man at a distance. He was rowing now, with a pair of oars.

He had no eyes for them—undoubtedly he believed them stranded in the cave, their escape cut off for ever.

But even had he been thinking of them, he could have seen them in the darkness. They hardly caught a glimpse of him in the light of the lantern.

"There he is—the villain!"

"Hush!"

"The hushfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But he is pulling. He must be making for the mouth of the cave."

"Looks like it."

"Then the tide must be low enough to allow him to get out," said Nugent. "Yes."

A few minutes later Wharton uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"I can feel the ground."

"Good!" said Nugent, with a gasp of relief. "I think I should have been numbed to death soon. How do you feel, Bunter?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" said Bunter.

"You fellows ought to be shot for bringing me into this! I hope you won't be the cause of my expiring of consumption, pneumonia, and chilblains, that's all!"

In a few minutes more they were standing in the water, and ere long it left them on bare rock. They squeezed the water out of their clothes as well as they could, and donned their boots.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 266.

"This way!" said Wharton.

Still in the darkness, they followed the direction of the receding water. There was a splash of an oar again from the gloom.

"The villain isn't gone yet."

"But he's going," said Wharton. "When you can't hear his oars any longer, he will be outside the cave."

The juniors listened intently.

There was a sound of rowing, gradually growing fainter and more distant, till at last it died away altogether.

"Gone!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath, when dead silence had reigned in the cavern for a full minute.

"Yes, thank goodness!"

"Only he's taken our boat with him."

"The beast!"

"The beastfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "How on earth are we going to get out of the esteemed cavern, my worthy chums?"

"Blessed if I know!"

Wharton thought hard.

"We've got to get a boat," he said, at length.

"How?"

"One of us must swim out to sea, and get a boat from Pegg."

"Phew! It's certain death!"

"It must be tried," said Harry quietly. "It's the only chance."

Nugent drew a deep breath.

"Who'll go?"

"I shall!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

HARRY WHARTON spoke quietly, without a tremor in his voice.

But he knew when he spoke that he was proposing to take his life in his hand—to venture among the whirling eddies, the black, sharp rocks, where he would probably be dashed to pieces.

But, as he said, there was no other chance. Better die fighting for life, than waiting for death like a rat skulking in a hole.

"You sha'n't go!" said Nugent. "Why shouldn't I go?"

Wharton laughed a little.

"I don't want to brag, Frank, but who got the best of the Remove swimming contests this season?"

"You did."

"I was a pretty good first—eh?"

"An easy first. But—"

"Then I'm the chap to go. But, besides that, I'm the leader here, and it's not the leader's place to skulk while the others go into danger. I brought you into this, and I'm going to get you out of it, or— But we'll hope it will turn out a success. It's not reason, but I may get through—I will get through!"

"But—but if you get out of the channel—there are breakers round the Shoulder!" faltered Nugent. "You will be dashed to pieces!"

"Not if I can help it!"

"Then, the swim across the bay—you could never hold out!"

"I have the best chance, you will admit."

"Yes," said Nugent slowly. "But—why shouldn't we all go together, and chance it?"

Wharton shook his head.

"No. You know what a rotten swimmer Bunter is."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Don't interrupt me now, Billy. He could never get out of the cavern, let alone across the bay. Better for one to get smashed up than four."

"But—but if anything happens!"

Nugent's voice broke. "Harry, I can't let you go! If anything happens to you we sha'n't know it! We shall go on waiting—"

"You will be rescued by the Pegg fishermen to-morrow, at latest."

"But they will not know."

"They will. If I am drowned," said Harry quietly, "my—well, my body will be thrown up by the tide. Anybody drowned in Pegg Bay is always thrown up, and found along the cliffs, as you know. I am going to write in my pocket-book where you are, and how you are to be found, and they will find it—read it—and come and save you."

"Harry!"

"Better to calculate all the chances, old chap. I don't want to throw my life away for nothing."

Wharton relighted the lantern, and by its dim flicker wrote in his notebook with a hand that did not tremble. On the outside of the book he scratched the words, "Open this," and then thrust it into an inner pocket, carefully wrapping it up to keep it as far as possible from the wet.

Then he was ready.

He pointed towards the mouth of the cave. There was a glimmer of silver light. The moon was glimmering on the sea, and the light was reflected into the now unbarred mouth of the Smugglers' Cave.

"I—I don't like your going alone!" muttered Nugent uneasily.

"You can see it's for the best, old chap?"

"I—I suppose so."

"Then say no more about it."

Wharton kicked off his boots. He shook hands with his chums, and then, with a simple good-bye, walked quietly and calmly straight out into the water of the channel, and vanished from their sight.

They caught a momentary glimpse of a dark head upon the shining water at the mouth of the cave, and that was all. Then they waited. Tramping to and fro in the wet sand of the cave to keep from growing numb, they waited in mute and tense anxiety.

Wharton swam with cool and steady strokes.

The tide was washing out of the cave with a continual murmur and gurgle, and the whirling currents came and went among the rugged rocks, and, if he had been off his guard for a moment, would have whirled him to death upon some jagged point.

But he was very careful.

So long as he was in the darkness of the overhanging cavern's mouth, he felt his way inch by inch through the water, and frequently hung on to some jagged rock while the water whirled and lashed past him, till he had a chance of getting safely on again.

A stream of moonlight over his head showed him at last that he was fairly out of the cavern. Out to sea—if he could have seen it—the wide ocean was rolling, with long, swelling waves—closer at hand the sea broke in long lines of white foam over the sharp teeth of the reefs.

Behind him, black against the silver sky, soared the huge mass of the Shoulder. Among the rocks at the Shoulder's base the sea ran with a thousand wild currents, and the strongest swimmer of Pegg would have hesitated to trust himself there.

But Wharton had no choice, and he faced the ordeal with grim calmness.

Amid the foam-crested seas that broke over the rocks, even in the calm night, he was whirled and buffeted to and fro.

He clung at last to a high jutting rock, and dragged himself from the water, to breathe and rest, ere he renewed the struggle.

For after this there was the wide bay to cross, ere he could reach the shore, to tell his news; and the conviction was being forced upon his mind that it would

he only his dead body that would be washed upon the sandy shores of the bay. Yet his courage never faltered. Harry Wharton was of the stuff of which heroes are made.

Suddenly, as he sat gasping on the jut of rock, he started—a new sound caught his ears in the lashing of the sea, and he looked down and clutched quickly as an oar was whirled past the rock.

He dragged it from the sea, and he knew it at once as one of the oars belonging to his boat—the boat taken by the smuggler.

He looked at it in amazement.

What had happened to the boat? Had the scoundrel, with the trouble of the second craft to look after, been wrecked on the reefs of the Shoulder, or—and the thought brought a flash of hope to the boy—had he abandoned the boat as useless as soon as he was fairly outside the cave?

Why, it was almost certain. He would have to land near Pegg, and he would not care to risk being seen in possession of the Greyfriars boat. Besides, if the boat were cast adrift, and knocked about on the rocks, and finally cast ashore, it would account for the disappearance of the juniors, and save any awkward questions being asked.

With a new flush of hope in his face, Harry Wharton climbed to the top of the jutting rock, and swept the sea round him with his eyes.

In the glimmer of the moon he could see far from where he stood. But he did not need to look far.

Scarce a dozen yards from the rock there was the boat, floating helplessly on the sea, buffeted hither and thither by the waves.

Even as he looked, it crashed against a rock, and slid off again, and went rocking towards the open sea.

Wharton drew a quick, deep breath.

"Thank Heaven!"

Grasping the oar, he plunged into the water again, and fought his way to the drifting boat. Ere long it would have capsized in the waves; and even now it was nearly half full of water. Wharton reached it, and hung on to the gunwale. The tilting of the boat under his weight brought a rush of water towards him.

But he tossed the oar in, and clambered in after it, and sank, almost exhausted, in the water that washed about inside.

It was for only a few moments that he lay thus.

Then he unslashed a baler and set to work. The water was hurled right and left over the gunwale, and he did not desist till there was less than an inch in the bottom of the boat.

He looked round anxiously for another oar, but he could not see one; the others had disappeared in the foam.

But he was too thankful for the mercy that had been vouchsafed him to complain of that. With the single oar, he began to paddle his way back into the cavern's mouth.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Back to Greyfriars.

BILLY BUNTER gave a sudden jump, and crept closer to Frank Nugent in the darkness of the smugglers' cave.

A strange sound had echoed through the hollow sea-cave, and it made all three of the juniors start.

"Wh-wh-what's that?" muttered Bunter. "It—it sounds like some wild animal."

"It's an echo."

"The echofulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But what is it the honourable echo of, my worthy chum?"

"Blessed if I know! There it is again!"

"Oh, oh!"

"Hark!" cried Nugent. "Listen! It's somebody calling. Listen!"

Again came the booming sound, and this time unmistakably from the direction of the sea.

"Hallooooo!"

"Hallo!" shouted Nugent, in return.

"Ahoj!"

"Show a glim!"

"My hat! It's Wharton!"

Billy Bunter gave a groan.

"Then he's failed, after all!"

Nugent did not reply. He lighted the lantern once more. The oil in it was very low, and the juniors needed to husband the supply. The dim light flickered through the sea-cave, and danced on the waters as Nugent held it above his head.

"It's Wharton!"

"And he's got a boat!" yelled Billy Bunter. "Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"The hurrahfulness is terrific!"

They rushed down to the water. The

dangers of the juniors might not even yet have been over. As it was, progress was slow; but at last the lights of the fishing-village came in sight.

"Here we are again!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as he allowed the boat to drift in among the fishing-craft.

"I say, you fellows—"

"There seem to be a lot of lights going on the shore," said Nugent. "I shouldn't wonder if the Greyfriars chaps are searching for us."

"Very likely."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, Bunter! Were you speaking?"

Bunter blinked indignantly.

"You jolly well know I was, Nugent! I was going to suggest that we should have a bit of a snack at the Anchor before starting for Greyfriars. I'm hungry."

"Rats!"

"But I say, you fellows—"

"You'll get a feed at the school," said Wharton. "The Head is certain to kill



There was a general exclamation of amazement as Harry Wharton flashed the light down upon the sand. For there, plain to their astonished gaze, was the track of a boot—a human footprint!

boat bumped on the sand. Harry Wharton gave Billy Bunter a hand in, and the fat junior sat down in the stern with a grunt of satisfaction.

"It's our boat!" said Nugent, in wonder.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"The scoundrel cast it adrift outside!"

said Wharton. "Get in! It was a stroke of luck that I came upon it."

"Give me an oar."

"There's only one, but we can manage."

And Wharton turned the boat, and it glided out to sea again.

The juniors, exhausted as they were, felt inclined to send up a shout of jubilation as the boat glided past the great Shoulder, and was paddled across the bay towards Pegg village.

The sea was fortunately calm, or the

fatted calf for us, when he knows how nearly he came to losing us."

"I don't think!" murmured Nugent.

The boat bumped on the strand. The juniors jumped ashore, and there was a sudden yell, and a rush of feet.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Hallo! Here's Bob Cherry!"

Bob Cherry, of the Greyfriars Remove, followed by a good many more Removeites, rushed down to greet them. He gave Wharton a thump on the back.

"Where on earth have you been? You're dripping wet!"

"In the waters under the earth," grinned Wharton. "It's a long story. Let's get back to the school."

"We've been searching for you high and low ever since call-over," said Mark Linley. "The Sixth are out in one

direction, but we guessed you'd been on the bay, and we hunted out Captain Stump, and he told us you had gone boating. We've been up and down the bay three times in the boats looking for you."

"Where on earth have you been?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"In the smugglers' cave."

"Phew! We looked at the mouth of the cave, but it was stopped up by the tide!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"And we were stopped up with it," laughed Harry.

"Find any smugglers?" asked Bulstrode sarcastically.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes; only one, though."

"Eh?"

"And we haven't captured him. Come on, you chaps; I want to get a change of clothes and some tommy!"

And they set off towards the school, Harry Wharton's friends thronging round him, most of them looking very perplexed. Bob Cherry nudged him in the ribs.

"I say, old-chap, that's spoof about the smuggler, isn't it?"

"Honest Injun!"

"My only hat! And I wasn't there!" growled Bob. "Might have captured him if I had been there, too!"

"The mightfulness is great, but the unlikeliness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, rats!" said Bob Cherry. "You fellows can come and have tea in our study, and tell us the whole story. Even Billy Bunter won't feel like getting tea when he gets in, after the time you've had—eh?"

"Well, that depends upon the kind of tea you've got," said Bunter cautiously. "What is it like?"

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"You see, you fellows—"

"Yes, I see a prize pig and a champion gourmand!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But you shall have a real, ripping feed, Bunt, I promise you that! Hallo! Here's Greyfriars! The Head wants to see you the moment you come in; but—ahem!—are you going to him in that state, kids?"

"Better," said Wharton. "Must obey orders, and if we leave any of the sea or the mud on his study carpet, that's his look-out."

"Good egg!"

They tramped in, and the four delin-

quents duly presented themselves in the study of Dr. Locke, the respected Head of Greyfriars School.

To say that the Head was astonished would be to put it very mildly indeed.

He stared at the four soaked and muddy juniors, and then adjusted his pince-nez and stared again, and at last found his voice.

"Boys! Wharton! What does this mean?"

"If you please, sir—"

"You are quite wet!"

"Yes, sir. That's on account of having been in the water, sir," said Wharton meekly.

"Wharton, kindly explain this—this extraordinary state I see you in!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"And then," said the Head severely, "I shall judge whether to punish you for this breaking of all the rules of the school. Your absence has caused me great anxiety."

"We are very sorry, sir!"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, illustrious Head Sahib!"

"Well, kindly explain yourselves."

And Harry Wharton explained.

When he came to the description of the smuggler, the Head started, and looked at him very keenly. A momentary suspicion had shot into his mind that the junior must be romancing; but one look at Wharton's face was sufficient to convince the Head—if he had really doubted—that the captain of the Remove was relating the sober truth.

Wharton went on quietly to the finish, the Head listening with the keenest and closest attention.

"Extraordinary!" he exclaimed.

"Most extraordinary!"

"You see, sir, we couldn't help being late back, as we were shut in by the tide," Harry concluded.

"Certainly not—certainly not. I do not blame you—except for your reckless behaviour in venturing into so dangerous a place. Still, you could not foresee that there was a successor of the ancient smugglers at work there."

"We had no idea of it, sir."

"No, no, of course not. As a matter of fact, there is supposed to be some smuggling going on in this neighbourhood, but the officers have never been able to get on the track of the delinquents. This information will be very useful indeed to the Revenue officers."

"I hope so, sir."

"I will see that it is conveyed to the proper quarter," said Dr. Locke. "Under the circumstances, Wharton, I pardon you and your companions, as you certainly could not help yourselves."

"Thank you, sir!"

"You have had a most providential escape. Now go and change your clothes, and get some refreshment; you must stand in need of it."

"Oh, yes, rather, sir!" said Bunter, with deep feeling. "I'm famished, sir."

"Dear me! You may go at once."

And the chums of Study No. 1 left the Head's presence.

"Two narrow escapes," chuckled Nugent. "One in the cave, and the other in the Head's study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors hurried upstairs, and soon had their wet limbs rubbed dry, and fresh clothes on. They found a ripping feed all ready in Bob Cherry's study, and they enjoyed it to the full—especially Bunter.

And while they ate they related their adventures for the second time; and Bob Cherry came very near punching somebody's head—so he declared—because he had not been in the party.

"Never mind; you'll be in the party next time," said Harry.

Bab stared.

"Next time!"

"Yes, rather! I don't believe either the police or the coastguards will capture that cunning rascal; and I don't believe he will give up the little game, either."

"Most likely not."

"He will simply wait for this to blow over, and then he'll be at it again. We'll wait, too. We've got a little score to settle with him," said Harry Wharton, with a glint in his eyes. "One of these days we'll be in the sea caves again—and on his track, and he won't be the chap who scores at the finish."

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

Harry Wharton was right, in one respect at least. The Revenue officers took possession of the smuggled goods in the "lost cave"; but they did not capture the disguised smuggler.

He had made good his escape, and seemed to have vanished for ever. But Harry Wharton & Co. hoped that the time would come when they would have another meeting with him; and perhaps they were not to be disappointed.

THE END.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

is entitled:

"THE FRENCH MASTER'S SECRET!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Please order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance.

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

THE GRAMMARIANS' RAID!

By
Martin
Clifford

THE FIRST CHAPTER. At Dead of Night!

TEN o'clock chimed out from the old tower of St. Jim's. Inside the school all was quiet, but outside four shadowy cyclists stopped their machines in the road near the wall of St. Jim's and dismounted.

Had there been any light, and had there been a passer-by, that passer-by could have seen that the four cyclists were Gordon Gay, Lane, Monk, and Carboy, of the Fourth Form of Rylcombe Grammar School.

Lights were out—for the juniors, at all events—at the Grammar School, as well as at St. Jim's; but Gordon Gay & Co. had evidently broken bounds.

But what they wanted at St. Jim's was another matter. It would have been difficult for Tom Merry & Co. to guess that.

"Quiet!" muttered Gordon Gay.

"What are you going to do with the bikes?" asked Carboy.

"Shove them in the hedge."

"Good!"

"I know where to get over the wall," said Gordon Gay; "I've been over it before. Only don't make a row. Taggles is sure to be up; and he looks round the quad every night before going to bed."

Frank Monk chuckled.

"We can handle Taggles if he turns up," he said. "I've brought a rope with me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet!"

The three Grammarians halted under the shadow of the slanting oak that grew over the school wall. Gordon Gay helped up Monk, Lane, and Carboy, and then was helped up himself from above. The four Grammarians dropped inside the school wall.

"Here we are!" breathed Frank Monk.

Their hearts were beating fast now. Their expedition was only a raid, such as was continually occurring between the juniors of the two schools; but at such an hour they ran a risk of being treated as burglars if they were discovered.

The juniors trod cautiously towards the dusky quadrangle.

"Here's the place!" whispered Gay.

He stopped under the window of the study belonging to Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor.

"That's the place!" said Lane. "You're sure the thing is there, Gay?"

Gordon Gay nodded.

"Yes, rather! I made a special note of exactly where it was. Glyn locked his study on the outside and took away the key, to keep the machine safe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So we sha'n't be in any danger of being interrupted!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Now I'm going up the rain-pipe!"

"It's jolly risky!" said Monk.

"Oh, that's right enough! I've seen Blake do it; and what Blake can do I can do, I suppose," said Gordon Gay.

Lane gave a sudden start.

"Hark!"

There was a footstep in the gloom, and a grumbling voice was heard:

"Now then! I'll report yer! You're out of your dormitory, I know that! I've 'card yer speakin', so you may as well show yourselves!"

It was the voice of Taggles, the porter.

"My hat!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Done!" muttered Lane.

"Quiet! He takes us for St. Jim's kids!" whispered Gordon Gay. "Keep in the shadow of the wall, and collar him as he comes up!"

"He'll yell—"

"No, he won't! I'll take care of that!"

The portly form of Taggles loomed up dimly in the gloom.

"I'll report yer!" he said, as he caught sight of the dusky forms. "I'll report yer! I'll— Ow! Oh!"

Taggles broke off suddenly as the four juniors seized him.

He made a wild attempt to yell; but as he did so Gordon Gay jammed a handkerchief into his mouth, and he gurgled instead.

"It's all right!" said Gordon Gay, in a whisper. "We're not going to hurt you!"

"Groo!"

"We're only going to make you a prisoner for a bit," said Gordon Gay.

"I suppose you know who we are."

"Yowp!"

"I am Captain Redhand, the Terror of the Rocky Mountains, and these are my trusty braves!" whispered Gordon Gay, in a thrilling voice. "A word, a movement, a struggle, and you are a dead school porter! Catch on!"

"Oh!"

"Bind him, my men!"

The "men" chuckled, and bound Taggles. He was jammed against the nearest tree, and the rope was wound round him, and the handkerchief tied across his mouth.

Taggles' brain was in a whirl. He did not believe that he had been captured by the Terror of the Rocky Mountains, but he was very much alarmed.

It was clear to him now that the juniors did not belong to St. Jim's, and he wondered whether they might possibly be some youthful gang of burglars.

Whether they were or not, they were free to do as they liked; the unfortunate school porter had no power to interfere with them.

Gordon Gay and Carboy climbed the rain-pipe like monkeys, and reached the window of Glyn's study.

It was the work of a few minutes.

Then there was a click, and the Gram-

marian juniors disappeared in at the window.

Gay struck a match in the study. His gaze lighted on a small object resting on the table. Gordon Gay knew only too well that it was a line-writing machine which Bernard Glyn had recently invented. The machine had saved the St. Jim's juniors hours of labour, and the Grammarians were specially anxious to obtain it. Hence the reason for their breaking bounds.

Gordon Gay grinned.

He lifted the line-writing machine from off the table. It did not weigh very much. Then he replaced the cover upon the base-board of the machine and fastened it down. Unless the cover were lifted no one could see that the machine had been removed.

An old box that had contained some of Bernard Glyn's supplies was dragged from under the table, and the line-writer was jammed into it, and Gordon Gay tied it up securely.

Then he attached a rope to the bundle and lowered it out of the window.

Monk and Lane stood in the quadrangle below to receive it.

Taggles, gasping, with the gag in his mouth, unable to give the alarm, watched the youthful raiders with growing uneasiness.

"All serene!" whispered Carboy.

"Right-ho! We've got it!"

Gay tossed the rope down after the bundle, and then the two climbed out of the window and closed it behind them.

Two minutes later they stood beside the juniors in the quad.

"Here we are again!" chuckled Carboy softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get it out into the road, and I'll look after Taggy."

And the line-writer was borne away in triumph.

As soon as it was safely over the school wall Gordon Gay returned to the bound school porter.

"Still comfy?" he asked.

"Groo!"

"Taggy, old man—"

Gordon Gay removed the gag. "Master Gay!" whispered Taggy, spluttering.

Gay grinned.

"Yes, you've got it!"

"I'll report yer! I'll—"

"Pax, old man!" grinned Gay. "Look here, this is only a jape on Tom Merry & Co.—no harm in it. I'll tip you half-a-crown if you'll say nothing about it—honour bright! If you don't promise I'll leave you tied up!"

"Oh! Groo!"

"It's only a jape!"

"Wot 'ave you took away?" demanded Taggles.

"One of Glyn's inventions, that's all!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 266.

And we're going to return it later, of course. It's only a jape on them."

"Hall right!" said Taggles. "It's a go, Master Gay. I take your word."
"Good!"

Gordon Gay released the school porter, pressed a half-crown into his hand, and ran after his chums.

Taggles returned, grunting, to his lodge. He knew that he could take Gordon Gay's word, and he was satisfied.

Four triumphant cyclists, bearing the captured line-writing machine among them, rode away in high glee towards the Grammar School. There was a surprise awaiting Tom Merry & Co. on the morrow.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Lines and Lines and Lines!

TOM MERRY opened his eyes and yawned as the clang of the rising-bell sounded through the keen air of the morning.

Clang, clang!

It was a bright morning, but rather cold. Bed was nice and warm, and early rising did not always appeal to the juniors. Lines for late rising, as a rule, checked any desire on the part of the juniors to indulge in another ten minutes in bed. But just now lines had lost their terror for Tom Merry & Co.

Tom Merry yawned, thought of the line-writing machine which Glyn had recently invented, chuckled sleepily, and turned over for another snooze.

Monty Lowther sat up in bed.

"You fellows getting up?" he asked.

Snore!

"I say, Tommy——"

Snore!

Monty Lowther chuckled, and settled down again.

The Terrible Three remained in bed, and so did Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane. The other fellows, who were not in the secret, turned out as usual.

"Aren't you getting up, Tom Merry?" demanded Gore, shaking the hero of the Shell by the shoulder.

Tom Merry opened his eyes and blinked at him.

"No!" he murmured.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing!"

"Why don't you get up, then?"

"Don't want to."

Gore stared.

"You'll have Knox up here!" he exclaimed.

"All serene!"

"You'll get a hundred lines, you ass!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"I don't mind."

"Well, I think you're a silly jay!" said Gore.

"Thanks!"

And Tom Merry closed his eyes again.

Gore, very much puzzled, went on with his dressing. The Shell dressed and went down, leaving six juniors still in bed.

Tom Merry sat up as the door closed. "Hang it!" he said. "This isn't very much fun, after all! I don't like slacking!"

"Oh, lie down!" said Kangaroo.

"Don't spoil the jape!"

"Yes, but——"

"Shut up! Here's a prefect!"

Tom Merry hastily replaced his head upon the pillow.

The door of the Shell dormitory opened, and Knox, the prefect, came in. He stared at the six slackers in amazement.

"Get up, you lazy young bounders!" he shouted.

Snore!

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 266.

"Tom Merry!"

"Hallo!" yawned Tom Merry.

"Take a hundred lines for staying in bed!" shouted Knox.

"All serene!"

"And if you're not down in five minutes, it's doubled!"

"Good!"

Knox stamped out of the dormitory. Bernard Glyn burst into a chuckle.

"Knox thinks he'll fill up the afternoon for us, and muck up the Grammar School match," he remarked. "Don't move, any of you. See what he says in five minutes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door of the Shell dormitory opened, and an eyelid gleamed there. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked in.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "What's the little game? What do you fellows mean by slackin' like this? What are you up to?"

"Getting lines!" said Kangaroo.

"Bai Jove!"

"Knox will be seeing red soon," remarked Manners. "It will be funny to see him ramp!"

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy retired, laughing. The five minutes had barely elapsed when Knox, the prefect, returned to the Shell dormitory. He hoped, as a matter of fact, to find that the slackers had neglected his warning.

It gave him a peculiar pleasure to pile up lines for them when they specially wanted to be free in the afternoon. That was one of Knox's amiable little ways.

He stared in angry amazement at the recumbent juniors.

"Not up yet!" he said grimly.

"No, not yet!" yawned Monty Lowther.

"Your lines are doubled!"

"Thanks!"

"And they are all to be written out, and handed in by tea-time to-day!" said Knox, with relish.

"Certainly!"

"If that mucks up your half-holiday, you will only have yourselves to thank!" said Knox, with a grin.

"Oh, that will be all right, Knoxy!" said Tom Merry. "Don't you worry about that!"

"Get up now, or I'll make it five hundred each!"

"Too sleepy!" yawned Lowther.

Knox stared blankly. He could not understand the chums of the Shell at all that morning.

"What do you mean?" he roared.

"Do you want impositions?"

"Yes; we're making a collection!"

Monty Lowther explained blandly. "Have you got any more to ladle out, Knoxy, old man?"

"You—your cheeky imp——"

"Go it!"

"You lazy, slacking, impertinent young rascal——"

"Pile it on!"

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came into the dormitory. He gave the slackers of the Shell a stern glance.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed.

"It means that these juniors are defying me, sir," said Knox savagely. "I have told them again and again to get up, and doubled their impositions each time, and they refuse to move!"

"Indeed!"

"I have just told them that they shall have five hundred lines each if they do not get up, and they will not stir!"

"What does that mean?" demanded Mr. Railton, looking at the juniors. "That is a very heavy imposition, but not too much under the circumstances."

"You see, sir——" began Lowther.

"Have you defied your prefect's orders, Lowther?"

"Yes, sir."

"What! And why, Lowther?"

"It's so funny to hear him rave, sir!" said Lowther blandly. "I'd like to see Knox in a tantrum, sir! It's as good as a Punch and Judy show!"

Knox turned crimson.

"Lowther," said Mr. Railton sternly, "you are impertinent!"

"Not to you, sir," said Lowther. "Only to Knox, sir. It's so comic to see him ramp, sir!"

"Take a thousand lines each for staying in bed and being impertinent to a prefect!" said Mr. Railton. "I shall expect the lines before tea! Now get up, or it will be the worse for you!"

And Mr. Railton left the dormitory, followed by Knox. Tom Merry & Co. turned out at once. They had no desire to disobey Mr. Railton. They chuckled as they dressed.

"Thousand lines each!" grinned Kangaroo. "That mucks up the footer match if Glyn's machine should bust!"

"It won't bust!" said the Liverpool lad.

"It will be funny to see Railton's face when we take them in," grinned Monty Lowther. "If Knox sees us playing footer, he'll make sure that the lines aren't done."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Shell, very much pleased with themselves, and the successful ragging of the unpopular prefect, descended to breakfast.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Missing Machine.

DURING morning lessons Tom Merry & Co. were remiss.

Like the savage in the story who went to war with another savage, not because there was any quarrel, but because he had a new club, the juniors raked in impositions, not because they had any cause to worry the powers that were, but because they had a line-writing machine at their disposal.

They were out for lines—and juniors who were out for lines were not likely to suffer from any shortage of them.

Both Mr. Lathom and Mr. Linton handed out lines that morning at a great rate, and both the Form-masters were greatly puzzled by the calmness with which the impositions were received.

After morning school the young scamps compared notes in the passage.

Of the dozen or so juniors who were in the secret there was not one who had a total of less than two thousand lines in all.

"Something like a shipping order for you, Glyn!" grinned Figgins.

The Lancashire junior laughed.

"Oh, I don't mind!" he replied. "I don't mind putting in a bit of extra work for the fun of the thing! Besides, as I'm not one in the eleven this afternoon, I can grind 'em out while you're playing footer, if necessary."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha! There never was such a rag!" said Tom Merry hilariously. "It will be ripping to see Knox's chivvy when the lines are handed in!"

And the juniors roared.

"Better go and grind 'em out before dinner," Tom Merry suggested. "Nothing like getting 'em done in good time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on, then!" said Bernard Glyn. "You'll have to write a line each, as usual."

"That won't take long!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

And the hilarious juniors trooped up to Bernard Glyn's study. They crowded

into the room, and Glyn locked the door carefully. He did not want to run any risk of being surprised by a prefect while the line-writing machine was in operation.

Then he unfastened the cover of the wonderful invention.

The next moment he gave a yell.

He had lifted the zinc cover, and revealed—nothing!

The line-writing machine was gone!

"Great Scott!"

Bernard Glyn dropped the zinc cover of the machine upon the floor of the study, in his startled amazement, and there was a clang.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and regarded the empty base-board of the line-writer in astonishment.

"Where's the machine, Glyn, dear boy?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"Where's the machine?" asked Tom Merry uneasily.

"Blessed if I know!"

"What?" roared Blake.

"You don't know?" shrieked Kerr.

"You've lost it!" gasped Kangaroo.

"Bai Jove!"

"It's gone!" said Glyn, staring at the empty board, in a helpless sort of way. "You fellows saw me put it here last night. It hasn't been touched since, so far as I know. The study door has been locked all the time. I wouldn't even let the maid in this morning. I tipped her not to dust my study. But it's gone!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, that's wotten!"

"I can't understand it!" said Glyn, rubbing his forehead in amazement.

Blake snorted.

"You've put it somewhere else, and forgotten all about it," he said.

"Rats! How could I? I tell you it hasn't been touched?"

"You've been walking in your sleep, then, and you've put it away somewhere," Clifton Dane suggested.

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, what's become of it, then?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "If it isn't here—and it certainly isn't—where is it?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Well, we're pipped, and no mistake, if the machine doesn't turn up!" groaned Manners.

"What about the footer match this afternoon? What giddy asses we've been!"

"Oh, Great Scott!"

"Wuined, bai Jove!"

"Clean done!"

The juniors gazed at one another blankly.

They had had, at first, some slight fears that the machine would go wrong, or break down, as Bernard Glyn's inventions sometimes did. But that it would disappear bodily they had had no suspicion. It seemed impossible that it was gone—and yet it was not in its place. How it had disappeared was a mystery.

"Well, it's gone!" said Tom Merry at last, breaking a painful silence.

"And we've got over two thousand lines each to do!" said Manners.

"Oh, my hat!"

"No footer this afternoon!" grunted Herries.

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

"I think we'd better bump Glyn for taking us in this way intirely."

"It isn't my fault," said Glyn, still amazed. "I haven't the faintest idea what's become of the machine. It's a giddy mystery! I suppose one of you fellows haven't hidden it for a joke?"

"Of course we haven't, ass!" said Figgins.

"Monteith will chortle over us, and no mistake!" said Kerr.

"We're done in!"

"Faith, and I think we'd better bump Glyn intirely—"

"We'd bump him right through into the study underneath if it would do any good!" growled Digby. "But it won't! We want the machine!"

"Somebody's raided it for a rotten joke!" said Bernard Glyn. "Some silly ass has got on to the wheeze and collared the machine!"

"But how?" exclaimed Kangaroo.

Bernard Glyn wrinkled his brows in thought. He went towards the study window and examined it carefully.

"The door couldn't have been tampered with," he said. "The lock is a Yale, and nobody could have a key to fit it. This catch looks as if it has been forced; and I am sure I fastened it last night. Somebody came in at the window!"

"But who?"

Tom Merry glanced carelessly at the postcard. Then he gave a shout.

The postcard bore the local postmark of Rylcombe. - And on the back was a simple line:

"Many thanks! Works beautifully!—GORDON GAY."

"What is it?" asked Blake.

"Look!" yelled Tom Merry.

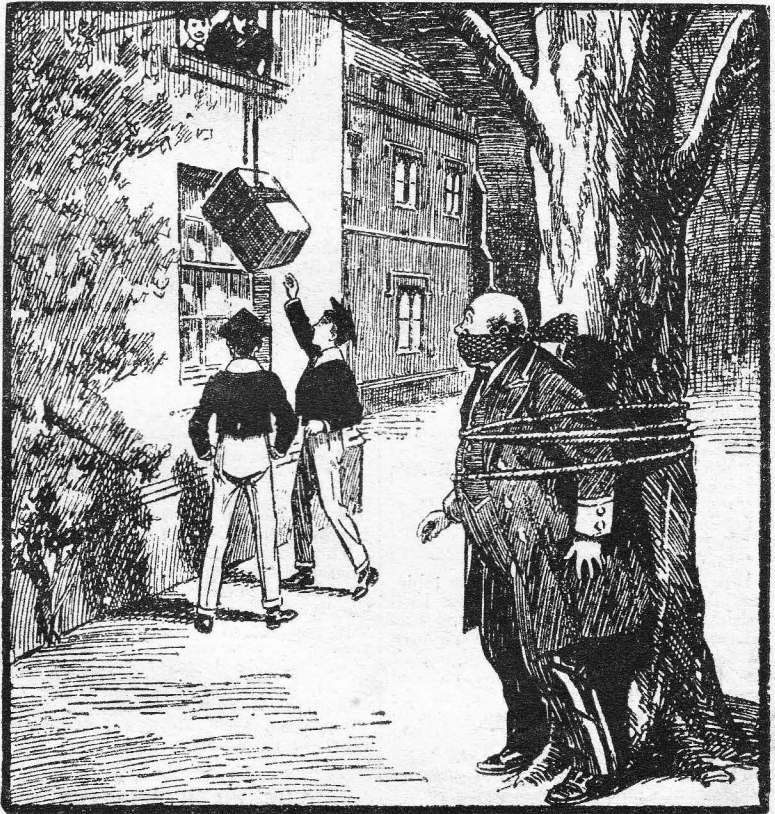
He held up the card. The juniors read the message, and they understood. There was a shout of wrath.

"The Grammarians!"

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
A Thunderbolt!**

"THIS is where we score!" It was Gordon Gay who made the remark.

And the Grammarian juniors, gathered in Gordon Gay's study in the Grammar School, chuckled in chorus:



Gordon Gay attached a rope to the bundle and lowered it out of the window. Monk and Lane stood ready in the quad to receive it, while Taggles, gasping, with the gag in his mouth, watched the youthful raiders with growing uneasiness.

That was a question to which the juniors could find no answer.

And they were still debating the matter in their minds when the bell rang for dinner.

The juniors went in to dinner in a mood of suppressed alarm and fury. If the machine did not turn up, what were they to do for the lines? And what was to become of the footer-match with the Grammarians.

The juniors ate their dinner in a gloomy mood.

When Tom Merry & Co. came out of the dining-room Trotter, the School House page, handed the hero of the Shell a postcard.

"Just come, Master Merry," he said.

"Thanks, Trotter!"

"What-ho!"

Gordon Gay stood at his table. Morning school was over at the Grammar School, but Gordon Gay & Co. were not out of doors. They were gathered in the Cornstalk junior's study, and upon the table stood the line-writing machine. Gordon Gay had been testing it, and it worked well. The Australian junior had soon fallen into the way of working it with success and despatch.

And Monk and Lane and Carboy and Wootton major and Tadpole stood round watching him with great admiration.

Hake, the prefect, had given them a hundred lines each that morning, and Gordon Gay was turning the lines off in fine style. He had already written out

several impositions long overdue to Mr. Adams, their Form-master, and Mr. Adams had received them without a suspicion.

"Shows what it is to have an inventive genius," grinned Frank Monk. "Tom Merry has got our postcard by this time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder what they'll do when they miss the machine?" Lane remarked meditatively. "I shouldn't wonder if we see them over here before the match."

And the Grammarians laughed loud and long.

"If they've got lines to do, we may lend them the machine, if they're good boys," Gordon Gay remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, they will have to promise to take care of it and to bring it back."

The Grammar juniors roared.

"Hark!"—exclaimed Wootton major suddenly. "That sounds like Hake."

There was a heavy step in the passage.

"Cover the machine up—quick!" gasped Carboy.

Gordon Gay threw a footer jersey over the line-writing machine. It was all he could do in the hurry of the moment, but the machine was by no means wholly hidden from view. The Grammarians grouped themselves round the table to hide it as much as possible as the door opened.

Hake, the prefect, came into the study.

Hake was looking very suspicious. He fixed his eyes upon the juniors in a very searching way.

"What are you young beggars up to?" he demanded.

"Snuff!" said Gordon Gay.

And the juniors grinned.

Hake scowled.

"What have you got there?" he demanded. "Mind, no footer this afternoon till you've written out your lines."

"That's all right, Hakey."

"What have you got there? What's the machine?"

"Private property," said Gordon Gay.

"Let it alone."

"Let me see it."

"Look here, Hake—"

But Hake pushed his way to the table, and dragged the jersey off the line-writing machine. He was very suspicious; but he might not even then have guessed what it was, but for the fact that Gordon Gay was half-through a page of Latin prose. The prefect stared at the machine and at the unfinished impot in amazement.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.

The juniors were silent with dismay.

"So that's how you were going to get your lines done, is it?" said Hake, with an unpleasant smile. "That's how you did the lines you handed in to Mr. Adams this morning, I suppose?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Gordon Gay.

"I shall confiscate this machine," said Hake. "It's a jolly ingenious thing, I must say. But you won't get any more lines done on it, I imagine."

"Look here, Hake, it isn't ours," said Gay desperately. "It belongs to Bernard Glyn, at St. Jim's."

Hake sneered.

"I suppose he made it for you?" he said sarcastically. "It must have cost pounds, I should think."

"We raided it."

"Well, it's going to be confiscated, all the same," said Hake. "I shouldn't wonder if it could be made use of for other things besides writing out impots. I'll see. Of course, I don't believe a word you've said. You made this thing here."

"We didn't. We—"

"Oh, rot!" said Hake.

He picked up the line-writing machine, THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 266.

and carried it out of the study. The juniors watched him in utter dismay. They could not resist a prefect. Hake had only to call upon their Form-master if they did.

The prefect tramped out of the study with the machine.

There was a long and painful silence in Gordon Gay's study.

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Monk, at last. "This beats everything!"

"The beast will never let us have it back again!" said Gay. "Poor old Glyn! He won't see his giddy invention any more."

"Of course, we couldn't foresee this," said Lane. "I—I wonder if we could get it back from Hake, if we appealed to the Head?"

"No fear. We can't go to the doctor and tell him that we've been writing out impots on a giddy machine."

"And we can't own up to raiding the Saints after lights-out," said Monk gloomily.

"By Jove, no!"

"It's rotten!"

"All these blessed impositions to write out by hand now!" groaned Gordon Gay. "No good taking in the machine-done lines now."

"Oh, blow!"

The triumph of the Grammarian juniors was over. They settled down with gloomy faces to write out their lines. They had plenty to do, if they were to be finished in time to play the footer match with St. Jim's.

Gordon Gay glanced out of the window when he had finished, and uttered an exclamation.

"Tom Merry!"

"He's come in answer to the postcard!" grinned Frank Monk.

"I wonder what he'll say when he knows that the machine is gone?"

"Well, it can't be helped."

Gordon Gay watched the junior in the quad. Tom Merry had just ridden in on his bicycle, and his looks showed that he had scorched all the way from St. Jim's. He was evidently in a very great hurry.

The Grammarians were feeling considerably "rotten" as they waited for Tom Merry to come in. They had raided the line-writing machine for a jape, but they had not, of course, intended to keep permanent possession of it. But now it was extremely doubtful if the St. Jim's juniors would ever see it again.

Gordon Gay was looking miserable enough as Tom Merry's footstep was heard in the passage.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hake Means Business!

TOM MERRY came breathlessly into Gordon Gay's study.

He had ridden hard from St. Jim's, after receiving the postcard from the Grammar School. The other fellows had deputed him to cycle over and explain how matters stood to Gordon Gay & Co., and ask for the restitution of the machine in time to get the lines done before the football match.

"You bounders!" gasped Tom Merry, as he came in.

"Hallo!" said Gay.

"You blessed burglars!"

Tom Merry had expected to find the Grammarians in high feather. He was surprised by the gloomy looks with which he was greeted. He glanced round the study, and the Grammarian juniors knew that he was looking for the line-writing machine. It was not, of course, to be seen.

"Where is it?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Where is what?" said Gordon Gay.

"You know what I mean. The line-writer—Glyn's invention?" said Tom

Merry wrathfully. "I never guessed what had become of it till I had your card. Where is it?"

The Grammarians were silent.

"You raided it last night from Glyn's study!" demanded Tom Merry.

Gordon Gay nodded.

"Well, that's all right," said Tom Merry, "a jape's a jape, and we're willing to admit that you've done us. But we want the machine."

"You see—" began Gordon Gay hesitatingly.

"We give you best, so far as the raid's concerned," said Tom Merry. "We'll take it out of you at footer this afternoon. But we simply must have the machine. We've been ragging this morning, and we've got over two thousand lines each to do."

"Pshaw!"

"Now, let's have the machine, like a good fellow," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to miss the match, and stay in all the afternoon, and most of the evening, too, grinding out lines by hand, if you don't give it up."

"I'm sorry."

"That's all right. Just hand it over, and all's serene."

The Grammarians were still silent. Tom Merry looked at them in a puzzled way. He could not understand the silence.

"A jape's a jape," said Tom Merry warmly, "but I suppose you don't want to land us in a beastly hole, do you?"

"Not at all, but—"

"Well, hand over the machine, then."

"We can't!" said Gordon Gay.

"Can't?"

"No!"

"Why not?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Because it's impossible!" said Gordon Gay desperately.

Tom Merry stared at him.

"It's been confiscated," said Gordon Gay, miserably enough. "Hake, the prefect, found us writing lines with it, and he's taken it away."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry sank into a chair in utter despair.

"We're frightfully sorry!" said Frank Monk. "Of course, we didn't mean to keep the machine; it was only a jape. But now Hake's got it!"

"But—but if you explain to him that it wasn't yours!" gasped Tom Merry.

"We've done so, but it doesn't make any difference. He doesn't believe us, or he doesn't choose to. You know what a cad he is!"

"By Jove, what are we going to do, then?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Perhaps if Tom Merry explained to Hake himself," suggested Lane.

"I will!" exclaimed Merry, starting up. "We simply must have the machine. Hake has no right to keep it when it belongs to Glyn, of ours!"

"He's a thorough rotter!" said Gordon Gay. "I know he'll keep it. But you may as well try. Come on, and I'll show you his study."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry followed Gay to the Sixth Form quarters. There was a sound of clicking from Hake's study as they approached the door.

"The beast is testing it," said Gay.

Tom Merry nodded.

He knocked at the door, and opened it before Hake had time to call out. He suspected that the prefect might lock the door if he knew who his visitor was.

Hake looked round with a snarl as the door opened. He was standing at the study table, with his hand upon the machine, and he had evidently been testing it.

"What on earth do you want here?"

he asked, in surprise, as he stared at the Shell fellow from St. Jim's.

Tom Merry pointed to the line-writing machine.

"I want that machine," he replied.

Hake laughed.

"Is that what you've come here for?"

he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, you can get out, then!" said Hake. "You won't have it!" Buzz off!"

"It belongs to Glyn, of my Form at St. Jim's," said Tom Merry. "Gordon Gay raided it for a joke—"

"Rats!"

"Look here, I can prove it—"

"Rot! Get out!"

Tom Merry's eyes blazed with wrath.

"Look here, you cad, do you mean to say that you are going to keep our machine?" he exclaimed.

Hake picked up a cricket-stump.

"I gave you two seconds to get out!" he said.

Tom Merry looked at him, his hands clenched, his eyes blazing. But there was nothing to be done. He could not fight a Sixth Form prefect, and carry off the machine by main force.

He stepped out of the study, and Hake's mocking laugh followed him. Gordon Gay was waiting for him in the passage.

"He won't give it up?" said Gay.

"No, the cad!"

"I knew he wouldn't," said Gay dependently. "We're awfully sorry about this, Tom Merry!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Tom Merry. "It was a jape, and you couldn't know how it was going to turn out. It's beastly for us. If we don't get the machine, we can't come over for the footer match this afternoon."

"Yes, I know it's rotten!"

"But we'll get it somehow!" said Tom Merry, between his teeth. "I'll buzz back now and tell the fellows how it is. You can expect us for the match."

Gordon Gay nodded. In two minutes more Tom Merry was on his bicycle, riding back to St. Jim's at a scorching rate, with very bad news for his chums.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Kerr Has an Idea.

THE St. Jim's juniors, in a state of great anxiety, were waiting for Tom Merry at the gates of the old school. They watched the road for the Shell fellow, and Arthur Augustus, who was the first to sight the figure of a scorching cyclist, uttered an exclamation at last.

"Here he is!"

Tom Merry dashed up to the school gates and dismounted.

"Have you got it, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"You ass!" hooted Blake. "Can't you see that he hasn't got it? Do you think he'll have it in his waistcoat-pocket?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Won't they give it up?" asked Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry gasped for breath.

"They can't!" he replied.

"Why not?"

"It's been confiscated by a prefect. Hake found them working it, and he's taken it away."

There was a general exclamation of dismay.

"Rotten!"

"But it's my machine!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn excitedly. "The cad has no right to keep my property! Why, it's worth more than ten pounds!"

"That doesn't matter to Hake," said Tom Merry. "He means to keep it. He's a cad, and I don't believe he's honest, either. I suspect that he's got

some dodge in his mind of making use of the machine—either to write out lines for himself and his friends, or to sell them to the other chaps at so much a page. You remember there was a chap here used to make money that way, only he wrote them out by hand, to sell. I dare say Hake could do a good trade among the juniors that way."

"Bai Jove! What an uttah wottah!"

"At all events, he's keeping the machine, though he knows it's your property, Glyn," said Tom Merry, wheeling his bicycle in the quad. "He knows you can't appeal to the Head without giving yourself away, and you can't appeal to his headmaster either without giving Gordon Gay away, and he knows we won't do that."

Bernard Glyn looked very gloomy.

"It's rotten to lose the machine," he said. "And that isn't all, I could make another, but what about this afternoon? We're all piled up with lines, and we can't go over to the Grammar School to play until they're done."

"Which means that we can't go over at all," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We've got to get hold of the machine again somehow," said Tom Merry.

"How? We can't raid the Grammar School in broad daylight, and yank the thing out of a prefect's study."

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; we could hardly do that."

"Then what's to be done, deah boy?"

"We must think of something," said Kerr. "We must have the machine back!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Quite wight, Kerr, deah boy! But the question is, how are we to get it back, you know?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a wise shake of the head.

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Suppose our Form-master went over to the Grammar School and saw Hake, and demanded the machine?" said Kerr. "He would have to give it up then."

The juniors stared blankly at Kerr.

"You ass!" said Blake. "If we say a word to Lathom on the subject he will know all about how we did the lines we've handed in. It would give the whole show away, and we should be detained for the afternoon for a dead cert., and most likely licked into the bargain. If you can't suggest anything more sensible than that—"

"Why don't you suggest sending the Head?" asked Kangaroo sarcastically.

"That would be even better."

"The Head's too tall."

"Too what?"

"Too tall," said Kerr calmly.

"Oh, he's off his rocker!" said Blake, in exasperation. "Right off his silly rocker, that's what's the matter with him! What's tallness and shortness to do with it, you frabjous ass?"

"Lots!" said Kerr cheerfully. "The question is, would Lathom be able to do it if we could send him over?"

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"But we can't!" howled Blake.

"I know that!"

"Then what are you talking out of your silly hat for?" said Kerr, laughing.

"I'm not talking out of my hat. You remember that I once got myself up as Lathom, and it was a great success—"

"My word!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I could do it again, and I'm willing to try if you fellows think it would be any good," said Kerr modestly.

"I don't know. Hake knows Lathom, you know," said Herries.

But Blake gave a shout of glee.

"Ripping! But there's no time to lose! Let's get to it at once!"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Hw-wah!"

Kerr's suggestion came like a ray of sunshine in a dark place. The juniors jumped at the idea at once. And no time was lost in carrying it out.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hake Has to Give In.

HAKE, of the Sixth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, was in high feather. Hake was a cool and unscrupulous fellow, and the juniors' suspicions as to what he intended to do with the line-writer were only too well founded.

Hake had tested the machine very carefully, and he was delighted with it. He had not the slightest idea of handing it back to the owner. He had called his chum—Finn of the Sixth—into his study, to show him his prize, and Finn was equally delighted.

"It's ripping!" Finn remarked, when Hake had turned out a dozen specimens on the line-writer. "I shouldn't wonder if that machine's worth money, you know; in the market."

Hake nodded.

"I'm going to look into that part of it, of course," he said. "The machine's mine now, to do as I like with. I shouldn't wonder if I'm able to sell it for a good sum. But at present I can make a good deal out of it. I shall have to do it through my fag, you know—selling lines to chaps who get impositions. You're a prefect, and we can work the game between us. You keep on imposing lines, and making the juniors bring them in promptly. My fag will supply them with lines at threepence a sheet."

Finn roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, we shall have to be careful not to be bowled out, that's all!" said Hake. "But it will work easily enough. I don't see why we shouldn't net quite a neat little income that way."

"Good egg!" said Finn. "Some of the kids have plenty of cash, and would rather be boiled than write out impositions. It will work like a charm."

"You can make up a list of the kids with most cash to spare, and always hand out lines, too, just after they get their pocket-money," said Hake thoughtfully.

"There ought to be a lot in it."

Tap!

Hake hastily threw a cloth over the line-writing machine on the table.

"Come in!" he called out.

The door opened, and a little gentleman in whiskers and glasses presented himself. Behind him came Bernard Glyn of the Shell at St. Jim's.

Hake stared at his visitors in astonishment.

"Mr. Lathom!" he exclaimed.

The little gentleman bowed.

"Ah! You are Hake, of the Sixth Form here, I think?" he said. "This lad has told me that this is Hake's study."

And he nodded towards Carboy, who stood in the passage. Carboy had shown the visitors to the study, without having the least suspicion of the real identity of the little gentleman, who looked so much like a St. Jim's Form-master.

"Yes, this is my study, sir," said Hake, somewhat surlily. "I'm Hake."

"Very good! Thank you, my lad!"

"Not at all, sir," said Carboy.

And he walked away. He was looking perplexed. He hurried up to Gordon Gay's study with the news that Bernard Glyn had come over with a St. Jim's

Form-master, news which Gordon Gay & Co. received with amazement.

"I have called to see you, Hake," said Mr. Lathom II., "at the request of this youth—Glyn."

Hake frowned.

"Oh!" he said. He did not ask either of his visitors to sit down.

"It appears, Hake," said Mr. Lathom, resting his hand upon the table, and regarding the prefect through his spectacles, "that you are in possession of a machine which belongs to this lad."

Hake looked astonished.

"What an idea!" he exclaimed. "I don't know who can have told you such a yarn as that, sir."

"Is it not the fact?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"I am very much surprised," said Mr. Lathom. "You still adhere to your statement, Glyn?"

"Yes, sir," said Glyn.

"Do you see the machine in this study?"

Glyn jerked the cloth off the line-writer.

"That is it, sir," he said.

Hake gritted his teeth.

"Let my property alone, you young hound!" he exclaimed furiously.

Glyn looked at him with a flash in his eyes.

"It's not your property," he replied.

"Ahem! I am afraid it will be necessary for you to explain, Glyn," he said. "I must have all the facts."

"Well, sir, it was a—line-writing machine. And, besides, it has got my name on it."

"There are more Glyns than one in the world, you—" began Hake.

"Ah, I see! A machine to enable you to write out lines, so as to fix the conjugation of verbs upon your memory," interrupted the little gentleman.

Hake laughed.

"More likely a machine to write out lines for imposts," he said.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "Is it possible, Glyn, that you have invented a machine for doing anything of that sort?"

Glyn was silent.

"That is very—er—wrong, and I shall, of course, confiscate the machine if it is taken back to the school," said Mr. Lathom. "You surely could not expect anything else, Glyn, when you called me into the matter."

"Anyhow, sir, I don't think Hake ought to have it," said Glyn. "It's my property."

"Yes, certainly—certainly!"

Hake bit his lip.

He had not thought that the St. Jim's junior would dare to own up to a master that he was in possession of a line-writing machine.

machine. Hake, his face flushing savagely, interposed.

"I forbid you to touch my property!" he exclaimed.

"Really, Hake—"

"You will oblige me, sir, by leaving my study, and taking this impudent young rascal with you!" exclaimed Hake.

The little gentleman looked at him steadily through his spectacles.

"It appears to me that you are acting dishonestly, Hake," he said.

"Mr. Lathom!" roared Hake.

"I have used the right word, Hake. You are acting dishonestly in attempting to detain a machine which can be proved to belong to this lad. I shall now proceed at once to your headmaster, Dr. Monk, and appeal to him for the restoration of the machine."

Hake started.

"To Dr. Monk?" he ejaculated.

"Certainly!"

"But—but— I—I say—"

"Well?" said Mr. Lathom sternly.

"I—I—I—"

Hake broke off in dismay.

"Well, Hake," said Mr. Lathom sternly, "are you going to give Glyn his property, or shall I proceed to ask Dr. Monk's assistance in the matter?"

Hake ground his teeth savagely.

"The young cad can have it!" he snarled.

READERS OF THE "PENNY POPULAR" SHOULD NOTE THAT

We shall in future print only the actual number of copies ordered through newsagents. To make sure, therefore, of obtaining your PENNY POPULAR regularly, fill in this form and hand it to your newsagent:

ORDER FORM.

To Mr.....Newsagent.

Please reserve me each week, until further notice, a copy of the PENNY POPULAR.

Name.....

Address.....

"It's my property, and you know it perfectly well. If you try to keep it, you are no better than a thief."

Hake clenched his fist, and made a step towards the Lancashire lad. Mr. Lathom interposed, raising his hand deprecatingly.

"I trust there is going to be no violence, Hake," he said mildly.

"Make that young cad hold his tongue, then!" growled the prefect.

"You should—er—moderate your expression in speaking to an elder boy, Glyn," said the little Form-master. "I am sure that Hake does not mean to act dishonestly. Besides, he will not be allowed to keep the machine if it doesn't belong to him."

"It does belong to me!" growled Hake.

"Will you explain where you obtained it?" asked Mr. Lathom.

"That's my business!"

"You did not make it yourself?"

"I decline to be questioned," said Hake loftily. "Let this young rascal prove that it is his. In the first place, he can explain what sort of a machine it is, if he's lost one. What was it used for?"

"I'd rather not explain that, sir," said Glyn, with well-acted confusion, as the Form-master looked at him.

Mr. Lathom coughed.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 266.

But it was evident that Glyn was prepared to go even that length to get the line-writer out of the hands of the Grammar School senior.

"Well, this machine doesn't belong to Glyn, Mr. Lathom!" said Hake angrily. "Let him explain how it came over here."

"It was raided last night from my study!" said Glyn.

"By whom?" sneered Hake.

"You, I suppose, as I find it in your study!" said Glyn cheerfully.

Hake started.

"You young rascal—"

"Ahem! Calm yourself, I beg," said Mr. Lathom mildly.

"I confiscated this machine, which was made by some juniors belonging to this school," said Hake. "I refuse to give it to any St. Jim's boy. The matter is now ended. I wish you a very good-afternoon, Mr. Lathom!"

"Ahem—"

"I have no more to say, sir."

"You can prove that machine is yours, Glyn?" said the little gentleman.

"Yes, sir."

"It's a lie!" said Hake.

"I can show receipts from the people I bought the parts of, sir," said Bernard Glyn. "And my name is engraved on the lever there, sir."

Mr. Lathom II. stepped towards the

"Take it, Glyn."

"Yes, sir."

"And take it, first, to Gordon Gay's study," said Mr. Lathom. "In order to make all sure, I will question him as to whether this machine is actually the one which you tell me he raided from your study at the school."

"Very well, sir."

Glyn picked up the patent line-writer, and bore it in triumph out of the study. Hake watched him with savage eyes.

Mr. Lathom, shaking his head over the depravity of the prefect, followed Glyn from the study. Hake closed the door after him with a slam that rang from one end of the corridor to the other.

"Phew!" ejaculated Finn, who had been a silent spectator of the scene. "It looks to me as if your little scheme has gone up in smoke, Hake, old man!"

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

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Little Surprise for the Grammarians!

GORDON GAY & CO. were waiting in their study. They had no doubt that Bernard Glyn had brought the Form-master over from St. Jim's to help him regain possession of his invention, but they could not understand.

They expected to hear something from Glyn before he left the Grammar School,

nowever, and they waited for him to come.

There was a tap at the door at last, and Bernard Glyn looked into the study with a grin.

"Can I come in?" he asked.

"Yes, you ass!" said Gordon Gay.

"Have you got the machine?"

"Yes, rather. Here it is!"

"What on earth did you bring old Lathom over for?" demanded Monk. "It was giving the whole show away. Old Lathom will— Oh! I—I beg your pardon, sir!"

Frank Monk broke off in great confusion as the little gentleman followed Bernard Glyn into the study.

"Ahem!" Mr. Lathom blinked at Monk through his glasses. "Were you alluding to me in those disrespectful terms, Monk?"

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" gasped Monk, his cheeks scarlet. "I—I had no idea you were there, sir."

"I cannot approve of alluding to Form-masters in this way, even if you do not know they can hear you."

"I beg your pardon, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Glyn.

The Grammarians stared at him.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Gordon

"Great Scott!" murmured Gordon Gay. "What does it mean? Is he tipsy?"

"Must be, I should think," muttered Carboy. "I'm blessed if I've ever heard a Form-master talk like that before!"

"Hallo!" said Gordon Gay, glancing from the window. "Here comes the St. Jim's team!"

Two minutes later Tom Merry opened the study door. The passage behind him was crowded with St. Jim's juniors.

Tom Merry burst excitedly into the study.

"Is it all right?" he gasped.

"All serene!" said Mr. Lathom.

Gordon Gay gasped.

"What the—what—"

Figgins gave Mr. Lathom a sounding slap on the shoulder.

"Bravo, old boy!" he shouted.

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove!"

Gordon Gay staggered back.

Mr. Lathom, instead of being angered by the familiarity of the juniors, grinned.

"Yes; I think I've worked it pretty well, old son!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ripping!" said Tom Merry. "How many lines have you turned out, Glyn?"

"Nearly a thousand already."

"Good! Skimmy's come over with us,

The Grammar juniors slapped him on the back, and roared with laughter and relief.

"I began to think I was dreaming!" Gordon Gay gasped. "So it was Kerr all the time! And—and you really bounced the machine out of Hake?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get down to the footer, and Glyn can write out the lines," said Tom Merry. "Join us when you've finished, Glyn. Skimpole's going to take the lines back to St. Jim's."

"Certainly!" said Skimpole. "I shall be very pleased. You will not forget to do my five hundred lines, will you, Glyn? In the time thus saved, I shall be able to devote some extra time to the study of Professor Balmcyrumpet's wonderful book, the—"

"Oh, come on!" said Gordon Gay.

"My dear Gay, you are interrupting me," said Skimpole. "I was saying—"

"Well, you can go on saying, you know," said Gay affably. "You don't mind if we play footer at the same time, do you?"

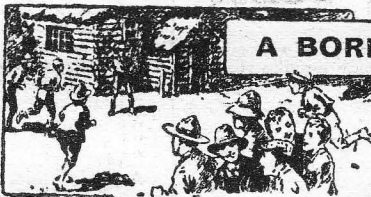
"Really, Gay—"

"Come on!" said Blake.

And the juniors trooped out of the

IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF
THE BOYS' FRIEND. 1d.

Now
on
Sale!



A BORROWED IDENTITY!

A Grand Story, dealing with Frank Richards' Schooldays.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Secure
Your
Copy!

Gay. "Lathom's got his rag out already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This unseemly mirth is quite out of place, Glyn," said Mr. Lathom severely.

"Pray be grave. I understand that you can write out impositions in a very quick way with that machine?"

"Yes, sir," grinned Glyn.

"Very well; let me see you do so."

"Certainly, sir."

Bernard Glyn had come provided with the necessary specimen lines for the impositions. He borrowed Gordon Gay's impot paper, and started.

The Grammarians stood looking on in wonder.

Glyn turned out a page in Tom Merry's hand, and Mr. Lathom blinked at it through his glasses.

"My hat!" he said. "That will take in old Linton a treat!"

The Grammarian juniors almost fell down.

To hear the grave, quiet, middle-aged little Form-master speak in that way was a most amazing experience.

They stared at Mr. Lathom, doubting their ears.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" gasped Gordon Gay. "W-w-what did you say, sir?"

"I said that would take old Linton in a treat."

"Oh!"

and he's going to take the lines back," said Tom Merry. "He will show them up to the masters and prefects while we're playing footer, and everything in the garden will be lovely!"

"Oh, ripping!" said Mr. Lathom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is this a—a dream?" gasped Gordon Gay. "Have I gone dotty, or have you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I can't understand it," said Frank Monk dazedly. "This—this is really Mr. Lathom, I suppose, and not his ghost?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does it mean?" roared Gordon Gay.

Mr. Lathom took off his spectacles. The Grammarians watched him curiously. Then he took off his whiskers, and the Grammarians gasped.

"Oh, hold me, somebody!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lathom's wig came off next, revealing the closely-cropped brown hair of a junior. Then Gordon Gay & Co. understood.

"Kerr!"

"Oh, you bounder!"

"You fraud!"

"You impostor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

study. Bernard Glyn and Skimpole remained alone there. Glyn locked the door in case of interruption; though Hake was not likely to interfere any further, with the fear of a visit from Mr. Lathom to Dr. Monk in his mind. Skimpole sat down with his book, and Glyn ground out the lines. Down in the playing-fields the St. Jim's Grammar School match was commencing.

Bernard Glyn worked industriously. The lines ran off the machine at great speed, and Glyn had them done in a wonderfully short space of time.

When they were finished, he put them into a packet and tied it up with string.

"Here you are, Skimpole!"

"Eh?"

"Here's the lines!" said Glyn. "Chuck that idiotic book away!"

"It is not an idiotic book, Glyn," said Skimpole reprovingly. "It is a book on the great and important subject of Determinism. It is quite a mistake to suppose that a Determinist and an idiot are one and the same thing. I—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Glyn. "Take the lines! Don't let on that you've brought them from here, you know. Just walk into Mr. Railton's study in the ordinary way. Say that you've brought in the whole lot because the other fellows are playing footer; but they're all done. See?"

"Certainly, Glyn!"

And Skimpole left the study, with the bundle of papers under one arm, and the famous volume of Professor Balm-crumpet under the other. Bernard Glyn saw him safely out of the gates of the Grammar School, and then hurried to the footer-field. The Lancashire lad had stood out of the match in order to help Tom Merry & Co.; but he did not mean to miss seeing it.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. An Unexpected Finish.

THE footer-match between the Saints and Grammarians proved to be a most exciting one, and ended in a victory for the St. Jim's juniors by two goals to one.

As soon as the game was over, the St. Jim's Eleven wended their way home through the evening dusk, and chuckled as they laid plans for new japes at the expense of masters and prefects, with the line-writing machine.

But a change came o'er the spirit of their dreams when they reached St. Jim's. Skimpole met them at the gates, and his look was dolorous.

"I'm so sorry—" he began.

Tom Merry felt a sudden alarm.

"You handed in the lines, you ass?" he exclaimed.

"I'm sincerely sorry——"

"Have you handed in the lines?" exclaimed Figgins.

"You see——"

"The lines, ass!" shrieked Blake.

"The lines!"

"Really, Blake——"

The footballers laid violent hands upon Skimpole, and shook him. Skimpole's spectacles slid down his nose, and he blinked helplessly at the excited juniors.

"I'm really sorry!" he gasped. "You see—I—I stopped for a little while on the road to read Professor Balm-crumpet's book. I had just got to the part about the descent of man from a floating speck of jelly in a primæval sea——"

"The lines!" roared Tom Merry, shaking him.

"I'm coming to that. I met Mr. Linton on the road, unfortunately——"

"Bai Jove!"

"He asked me if I had done my lines," said Skimpole. "Of course, I told him I had the lines ready, and that you fellows wanted me to hand in yours, as you were playing cricket."

"Cricket!" yelled the juniors.

"I mean football," said the absent-minded genius of the Shell.

"Oh, you frabjous ass! Go on!"

"Really, Merry——"

"Get on with the washing, you cuckoo!"

"Certainly! Mr. Linton seemed somehow suspicious. I'm sure I don't know why. And he seemed to think it odd that the lines should have been written out at the Grammar School."

"How queer!" snorted Blake. "You gave the whole game away, you ass!"

"I am sure I did not," said Skimpole. "But Mr. Linton is very sharp. When he found that I had all the impositions in my bundle, it seemed to make him very suspicious."

"Go bon!"

"It did really. And he made me go in to Mr. Railton; and then somehow it all came out. I'm sure I didn't mean——"

"You haven't mentioned the line-writing machine?" yelled Glyn.

"Oh, no! In fact, I did not explain at all. I simply said that the lines were done, and—and I think perhaps Mr. Railton has guessed something. I gather that, you know, from the fact that he wants to see you immediately you come in. You are all to go to his study—all excepting Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. I took their lines to Mr. Ratcliff, and he was quite satisfied, as Mr. Linton had said nothing to him."

"Well, that's one good thing," said Figgins. "I'm sorry for you chaps. I should advise you to suffocate Skimpole."

"Indeed, it was not my fault," said Skimpole. "Under the circumstances, I—— Oh! Ow!"

Bump!

The School House juniors marched on wrathfully, leaving Skimpole a wrecked heap in the quadrangle. It was quite five minutes before Skimpole recovered from the shock. By that time Tom Merry & Co. had presented themselves in Mr. Railton's study, with many inward misgivings.

Mr. Railton was there, and so were the impositions—in a heap on the House-master's table. The School House master looked very severely at the meek juniors.

"I have all your impositions here," he said. "Will you kindly explain to me how you came to do them at Rylcombe Grammar School?"

The juniors were silent for a moment. "We've been over there playing footer, sir," Tom Merry ventured to explain.

Mr. Railton's lips twitched slightly.

"Will you give me your word, boys, that you wrote these impositions out yourselves, and that there is no trick in the matter?" he asked.

Dead silence.

A jape was a jape, but there was not one of the chums who would have told

a deliberate untruth to save himself from a flogging.

Mr. Railton waited for an answer. But none came. The silence grew painful.

"Well?" said the Housemaster grimly. "You—you sec, sir——" stammered Tom Merry.

"Well?"

"A-a-ahem!"

"Did you write these impositions out yourselves?" said Mr. Railton. "Yes or no?"

"No!" said Tom Merry desperately.

"Ah, now we are getting at the facts!" said Mr. Railton. "It is a very serious matter—though you do not appear to understand it—to hand in impositions which you have not written out yourselves. I admit that in the writing there is nothing to convict you, and as it would be scarcely fair to make you answer questions for your own condemnation, I shall pardon you this time if you explain frankly what you have done."

"Bai Jove, sir!" said D'Arcy. "I must say that I regard you as a weak sportsman, sir!"

Mr. Railton could not help smiling. "Thank you, D'Arcy! Now kindly explain."

"There was no help for it. It had to come out, and it came out. Mr. Railton listened with considerable astonishment.

"I should be glad to see that machine, Glyn," he said.

"I'll fetch it, sir."

And he did. Mr. Railton, with a grim face, watched him work it. Whether he was angry or not, the juniors could not tell from his expression.

"Very ingenious!" said the House-master, at last. "Very ingenious indeed, Glyn. I have told you that you shall not be punished, and I shall keep my word. But I expect you all to promise me, upon your honour, not to use this machine again, or anything of the sort. I shall not confiscate it, because I know Glyn could easily make another, and because I know I can take your word."

"That you can, sir," said Tom Merry.

"We promise."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Very well, you may go."

And the juniors went, glad to escape so easily.

"Well," said Blake, in the passage, "it was a jolly good thing while it lasted; but I suppose it was bound to end some time. And Railton is a real sport."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Tom Merry & Co., upon the whole, were pleased with themselves and with their Housemaster. But from that day forth impositions were written out, in the old-fashioned way, by hand.

THE END.

Next Friday's Long Complete Tale of **TOM MERRY & CO.**
is entitled:

"THE SCHOOLBOY INFORMER!"

BY **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

Please Order Your Copy of the **PENNY POPULAR**
in Advance!

CAUGHT NAPPING!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Tommy Dodd's Parcel.

"WHAT the merry dickens is this?"

Tommy Dodd, leader of the Modern chums at Rookwood School, uttered this surprised exclamation as a parcel was thrust into his arms one morning as he was entering the Hall.

The parcel was soft and bulky, resembling, to some extent, a bundle of washing. He turned it over, and had just observed his sister's writing on the label, when the parcel suddenly leapt from his arms through a severe blow from underneath, delivered by another passing Fourth-Former.

"Rotter! I'll wipe the floor up with you!" cried Tommy Dodd angrily, making a dive for the parcel.

But before he could reach it it was grabbed by Towle. Tommy Dodd rushed at him, nearly knocking him off his feet, but by that time Towle had pitched the parcel over to Lacy, yelling "Catch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Roars of laughter burst from the crowd of Modern juniors who were looking on, and Tommy Dodd's anger rose to boiling-point as he dashed towards Lacy. That unfortunate youth went to the floor with a crash as Tommy lunged into him.

The parcel rolled from his hands along the floor, and Tommy Dodd made a hasty dive for it. He would have regained it, without a doubt, but for the fact that another Fourth-Former hastily bent down for it at the same moment.

The result was that their heads came into violent contact, and yells rent the air.

"Yaroooh! Ow-ooo! Ass!"

"Fathead! Ow! Ow! Oooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled. The show was getting interesting.

Meanwhile, the parcel had been kicked from between Tommy Dodd and his antagonist, with the result that some of the brown paper was being torn off, revealing something which was made of green silk.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lacy. "Someone's sent Dodd a new dress!"

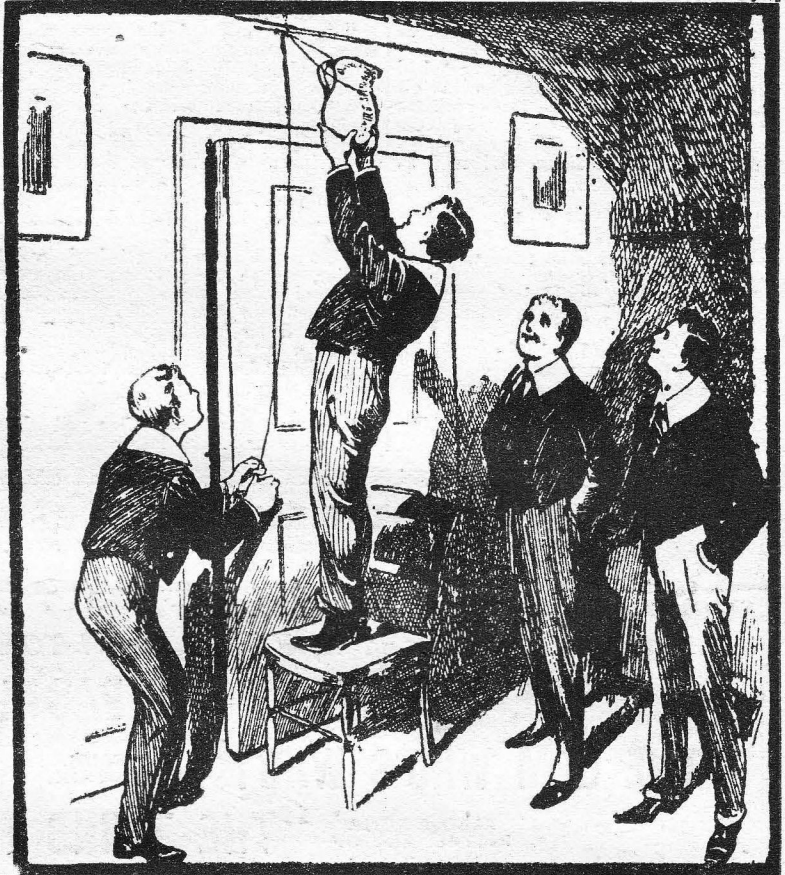
Tommy Dodd, flushed and angry, stood amidst a crowd of juniors, recovering his breath before starting on a fresh attempt to recover his parcel, which was now looking decidedly the worse for wear.

"Why don't you kids back up?" he demanded fiercely, turning to his chums, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle.

"We might have had the thing back long ago if you'd backed me up!" he continued bitterly.

As a matter of fact, his chums had been enjoying the excitement as much as the rest of the Fourth-Formers, and they had joined just as heartily in the laughter.

The parcel was still being kicked about by the juniors, when suddenly, with a snap, the string broke.



"All we've got to do now," said Lovell, as Jimmy Silver put the jug into position, "is to wait for the rotters to come along!"

Three separate articles flew in various directions, and a sheet of notepaper fluttered from among them.

"Cushions!" yelled several voices at once. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Towle grabbed the paper, and, screwing it into a ball, threw it towards Tommy Dodd.

"Here you are!" he cried. "You can have the letter!"

The Modern juniors were about to renew the scrimmage, there now being three objects to kick about instead of one, when a door opened, and Knowles, the Modern prefect, appeared on the scene.

"Silence!" he roared angrily, for he was a bad-tempered individual. "What's all this confounded noise about? Who do those things on the floor belong to?"

"They're mine," said Tommy Dodd, as he pushed in and out among the juniors collecting up the cushions.

"He, he, he!" sniggered someone in the crowd. "Dodd's getting feeble and rheumatically, and can't stand the hard

seats, so he's had some cushions sent down!"

"I'll show you whether I'm getting feeble!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "Just wait!"

"Silence!" roared Knowles. "Where have these things come from, Dodd?" he demanded, turning to the leader of the Modern chums.

"From home," replied Tommy Dodd. "But I haven't had a chance yet to find out why, because the giddy asses have been kicking the parcel about ever since it arrived!"

"Take the things to your study at once," ordered Knowles. "And take a hundred lines for letting the others get hold of them!"

This, of course, was an absolute injustice; but Knowles, who was a bully and a cad, hated Tommy Dodd & Co., and always made the most of any opportunity of displaying his dislike.

There was no kind of reason whatsoever for his prejudice. It was merely because the Modern chums were healthy

and straightforward fellows, and consequently did not belong to the same class of individual as Knowles.

The rest of the Modern juniors immediately saw the injustice of Knowles' order, and a murmur of dissent went round. Then Towle stepped forward and addressed the prefect.

"It wasn't his fault," he said.

"We—"

"You can take a hundred lines as well, for impertinence!" snapped Knowles.

"Now, clear!"

Towle realised that it was useless to say anything more, and the others could see no means of improving matters, so grumblingly they all cleared.

Meanwhile, Tommy Dodd had reached the study which he shared with his chums, and, throwing the three cushions down on to a chair, he smoothed out the crumpled letter in his hand.

It was from his sister, and read as follows:

"My dear Tommy.— We have a bazaar down here, in aid of the Red Cross, and I bought the three little cushions which I am sending you.

"I thought they would do for you and your friends, and help to make your study more cosy.

"We raised two hundred pounds for the fund. Splendid, wasn't it?"

"Do hope you will like the cushions.

"Your loving sister,

"DOROTHY."

through a wood, when Jimmy Silver suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"I've got a wheeze!" he cried, stooping to pick up a chestnut which had just fallen from a tree above them.

"What for?" demanded Lovell.

"For those Modern rotters, of course," replied Jimmy Silver.

"Good! Let's have it, then."

"The idea is to gather up a few of these chestnuts, with the prickles on 'em, and put them inside those cushions that Dodd received this morning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!"

"We can just cut the seams at the sides," continued Jimmy Silver, "without damaging the things in any way."

"It's a ripping idea!" said Raby.

"We shall score off the bounders a treat!"

The four chums forthwith set about gathering up a number of the chestnuts with nice, strong prickles, which were strewn about the ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Newcome.

"What a wheeze!"

"We shall have to get back a bit earlier, so as to get the things all arranged before they go in from footer practice," said Jimmy Silver.

"That'll be just right," said Lovell gleefully. "Because they'll be tired out, and'll flop down in their chairs directly they get in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should like to hear 'em yell when they go down on this lot," said Raby.

insert the prickly chestnuts, and in about ten minutes the cushions were re-arranged on the chairs with a fine selection of sharp points hidden by the covers.

"I think that'll do," said Jimmy Silver, as he laid his hand on one of the cushions and felt the prickles.

"I reckon the bounders'll jump about three feet into the air when they drop down on that lot!" said Lovell, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get along to our own study," said Jimmy Silver, "because they'll be in shortly, and I've just thought of something else."

"What's that?" asked Raby.

"I'll tell you when we get there," replied Jimmy Silver. "I want to call in at the dormitory on the way back."

As he spoke he led the way to the door, and his chums followed.

"I'll be down in a minute," added Jimmy, when they had reached the Classical side; and he bounded up the stairs to the dormitory.

The other three entered the end study completely mystified. They couldn't think what this latest move of their leader's was, but they were content to leave matters in his hands. When Jimmy Silver got on to an idea it was generally a good one.

In a few moments Jimmy entered the study carrying a large jug of water from one of the dormitory washstands.

"What the merry dickens are you

OUT NEXT WEDNESDAY!

Special Christmas Number of The "GEM" Library, 2d.

This issue will contain an extra long story of TOM MERRY & Co., entitled:

"THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!"

BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD

"THE GEM WHO'S WHO!"

A SPECIAL
ATTRACTION.

ALSO A LONG
INSTALMENT OF

"THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA."

Tommy Dodd grunted when he had read the letter.

"Wish she hadn't sent the beastly things!" he muttered. "We shall get chipped to death over this!"

It wasn't that Tommy Dodd did not appreciate his sister's kindness, for really he did. At the same time, he did not see how he was to avoid being made fun of by his chums in the Fourth Form, through the particular way in which she had shown her thoughtfulness for him.

Cramping the letter into his pocket, he left the study and made for his classroom.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Scheme and its Result.

IT was Wednesday, a half-holiday at Rookwood, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had decided on a long walk through the country, as it was a crisp, bright day.

As a rule, footer was the order of the day for Wednesdays, but, as there was no match, the Fistical Four had decided on the tramp by way of a change.

They were passing along a road

"Expect you will," said Jimmy Silver. "I reckon everybody within a mile from Rookwood will hear 'em!"

A sufficient number of the chestnuts having been collected, the Fistical Four stepped out on the return journey to the school.

When they reached their destination, Tommy Dodd & Co. were still at footer practice, and the Fistical Four strolled towards the racing juniors.

"Is that one of those cushions you're kicking about?" shouted Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"Rats!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Did you find 'em nice and soft?" cried Raby.

"More rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Fistical Four in chorus, as they moved towards the school door.

"Now's the chance!" exclaimed Lovell. "Let's get the things fixed up quickly. They'll soon be coming in."

They reached the Modern chums' study without encountering anyone on the way, and Jimmy Silver hastily produced a pocket-knife, and commenced to cut the stitches round the edges of the cushions.

A slit about two inches in length was a sufficient opening through which to

going to do now?" exclaimed Newcome in puzzled tones.

"Well," replied Jimmy, "it occurred to me when we were in Dodd's study that directly they get over the shock of the little arrangement that's waiting for them there they'll jump to the obvious conclusion that we're at the bottom of the bizney and come along here to pay us a visit."

"Yes?" said Lovell eagerly.

"This is just to provide a little entertainment for 'em when they arrive," said Jimmy, indicating the jug of water.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I begin to see daylight now," said Raby, grinning.

"You're a bit slow at cottoning on to anything, aren't you?" said Jimmy wittingly. "Just hand me that long piece of cord out of the table drawer."

Raby ignored the first part of the remark, and hastened to obey Jimmy Silver's order.

The leader of the Fistical Four speedily fastened one end of the cord round the handle of the jug, and passed a loop round its neck.

Then, dragging a chair to the door, he mounted it and threaded the other end of the cord through the picture-rail above.

Lovell, standing below, seized the end as it dropped, and affixed it to the door-handle.

Jimmy Silver then carefully arranged the jug so that the bottom of it hung just below the top of the door, while Newcome and Raby looked on, chuckling with glee at the prospect of Tommy Dodd & Co. receiving the cold contents of the jug on their devoted heads.

Jimmy was a past-master at schemes of this kind, and had arranged his wheeze with great care to avoid any breakage of crockery, and thus bring down trouble on the shoulders of himself and his chums.

When all was ready he stepped down from his perch and surveyed his handiwork. The expression on his countenance proved that he was satisfied with it.

"All we've got to do now is to wait for the rotters to come along," said Lovell.

"Yes; and I don't fancy we shall have long to wait," added Jimmy Silver, as he replaced the chair he had been using.

Sure enough, in about five minutes the four chums heard footsteps approaching their study.

"Sounds as though Dodd's coming by himself," remarked Newcome, as the sounds of only one pair of feet could be heard.

"Expect the others are creeping up behind," said Jimmy Silver. "Look out!"

The door-handle was turned, and then—swish! A perfect cascade descended upon the head and shoulders of the visitor.

"Ow! Ooooo! Phoo! What the

"Bulkeley!"

"That's done it!"

"My hat!"

A volley of exclamations escaped the lips of the Fistical Four as they realised that Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, had received the watery welcome which had been prepared for Tommy Dodd & Co.

Bulkeley stood in the doorway spluttering and wringing the water out of his hair. His clothes, too, were saturated, and all the starch had gone out of his collar.

He glared at the occupants of the study and at the water-jug, now empty, which was hanging above the door.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded, casting fierce glances from one to the other of the Classics.

"We're—we're awfully sorry, Bulkeley!" stammered Jimmy Silver, who had not yet recovered from the shock.

"Sorry!" yelled Bulkeley. "I should think you—"

"It wasn't meant for you," said Jimmy Silver apologetically. "I had no idea

"I shouldn't think you had!" interrupted Bulkeley contemptuously. "It strikes me you must find time hang heavily on your hands if you've got nothing better to do than work out schemes of this sort!"

Bulkeley was a good sort, really. In fact, he was quite the most popular fellow at Rookwood, and keenly appreciated the humour of the rivalry which existed between the Classical and Modern chums.

He had more than once had a good laugh at plots and schemes which had been arranged by the two parties to score off each other, and he was quick to realise that the little douching he had just received had been intended for Tommy Dodd & Co.

Bulkeley had a strong sense of humour, which was fortunate for the Fistical

Four, and they escaped lightly in consequence.

"You will write me a hundred lines each," said the captain as he turned to leave the study, "and they are to be handed in to me at half-past eight to-night."

"We're awfully sorry!" said Jimmy Silver again.

"Don't doubt it," said Bulkeley; "but sorrow's not much good to me when I've been drenched by one of your ridiculous plans. You've got something to do now besides being sorry, and if you fail to produce those lines at the time I have stated there'll be trouble for the lot of you. Now go and get something to wipe up this mess."

So saying, Bulkeley departed.

Now it so happened that Tommy Dodd & Co. had acted just as Jimmy Silver had predicted. They had gone in tired and breathless from their exertions in the quad, and had thrown themselves down wearily into their chairs.

Almost together they leapt into the air, letting out yells of wrath. A speedy investigation showed them what had occurred, and they stood rubbing themselves as they looked questioningly at one another.

Tommy Dodd voiced the thought which had flashed into each of their minds. His remark was brief and to the point.

"The Fistical Four!" he exclaimed.

"The rotters!"

"The silly asses!"

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle continued to utter comments which, to say the least of them, were decidedly uncomplimentary to the Fistical Four.

Suddenly Tommy Dodd made a suggestion.

"Let's go and tackle the bounders in their study!" he suggested desperately.

"And take the cushions with us!" added Tommy Cook. "If we shake those prickly things into one corner and then twist the cushions round a bit, we'll be able to give 'em a pasting they won't be likely to forget in a hurry!"

"Good wheeze!" said Tommy Dodd. "Come on! Let's strike while the iron's hot!"

The three angry juniors grabbed up their cushions and shook the chestnuts into the corners. Then, twisting them round two or three times, they turned to leave the study, led by Tommy Dodd.

They had a long corridor to traverse before they reached the Classical quarters, and they crept along stealthily in single file, keeping close to the wall.

They were within a few yards of the end study when the door suddenly opened.

Tommy Dodd darted through the open door of an empty study close at hand, dragging his two chums after him.

"Not a sound!" he whispered.

Footsteps were heard coming from the direction of the end study, and the Modern chums held their breath.

Tommy Dodd peered through the crack by the hinges of the door, and uttered a smothered exclamation as a figure passed outside.

"Bulkeley!" he exclaimed.

"What?" cried Tommy Doyle.

"Shut up, ass!" snapped Dodd. "We shall get nabbed!"

They were about to emerge from their hiding-place, when the door of the end study opened again and the Fistical Four emerged. They were going to get cloths to wipe up the water on the floor.

"That's done it!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, as the Classical chums passed out of the corridor on their way to the dormitory. "We'll have to go back

now. But I'd like to have a look in there first!"

"What the dickens for?" asked Tommy Cook, in surprise.

"I'll explain when we get back to our own study," replied Tommy Dodd.

Then he darted to the door of the end study and peered in. The water-jug was still hanging on its cord above the door, and a huge pool of water was trickling about the floor just inside the door.

Tommy Dodd gave a little chuckle and hastened back to his chums, who had returned to their study.

"What's happened?" asked Tommy Cook eagerly as he entered.

"Well, you see," replied Tommy Dodd, "when Bulkeley passed the door just now he was drenched with water, so I wanted to see where he'd got it from."

"My only hat!"

"I had a suspicion when we were behind that door," continued Tommy Dodd; "that was why I went to have a look in the end study."

"What about it?" asked Tommy Doyle.

"Nothing; only there is an empty water-jug hanging over the door, and a pool of water on the floor."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a wheeze!"

"Quite so," said Tommy Dodd. "But don't you see it was meant for us, fat-heads?"

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle pulled up, and stared at Tommy Dodd. "By Jove!" exclaimed Cook. "I believe you're right!"

"Sure!" said Tommy Doyle.

"Well, just listen to this," said Tommy Dodd. "I've just thought of a rattling wheeze!"

And the leader of the Modern chums poured forth his inspiration into the eager ears of the other two.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Catching the Moderns.

FOR once in a way, there was peace at Rookwood in the early evening, as Jimmy Silver & Co. were busily engaged on their lines for Bulkeley, congratulating themselves at the same time that they had escaped so lightly from the results of their wheeze in the afternoon.

They had seen nothing of Tommy Dodd & Co., though they had heard of the success of Jimmy Silver's little idea with the cushions.

Sharp at half-past eight, the four Classical chums trooped up to Bulkeley's study with their lines, and received a stern admonishment from the captain against a repetition of the absurd trick they had played.

They thanked Bulkeley and left the study.

Jimmy Silver half thought he caught a twinkle in the eyes of the popular Sixth-Former as he closed the door.

"That's done with!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver as they reached the end study once more. "We've come out of that very luckily!"

"True, O King!" said Lovell. "If it had been—"

"Hark! What was that?" interrupted Raby.

The other three juniors pricked up their ears.

"Can't hear anything," said Jimmy Silver. "What is it?"

"Sounded like a tapping on the win-

down," replied Raby. "Ah! There it is again!"

Each member of the Fistical Four now distinctly heard a very faint tapping on the window-pane, which might have been made with a very small pebble.

Jimmy crossed the room and threw up the window. There was nothing to be seen; it was pitch dark outside, and there was no sign of anything which might have caused the sound.

He dragged over a chair, which he mounted, and put his head outside, looking up and around.

Still he could see nothing. Then he reached out still further and peered down into the quad.

Suddenly there was a swish, and a yell from Jimmy Silver, and the leader of the Fistical Four almost fell back into the room with water pouring down his clothes. His hair was wringing wet, and he stood before his chums, spluttering and choking.

"Yow! O-o-o-o-o! My hat!"

Lovell, Newcome, and Raby stared at him in amazement, quite at a loss to realise what had occurred.

"Don't stand there like a lot of silly asses!" spluttered Jimmy Silver. "Get me something to wipe myself with!"

Immediately, the three juniors seemed to wake up to the situation and scrambled round.

Raby produced a large handkerchief, and Lovell seized a none too clean duster and thrust it into his leader's hands.

"Where the merry dickens did that come from?" exclaimed Lovell perplexedly.

"It's—it's a wheeze!" coughed Jimmy Silver. "Can't you see it's a wheeze?"

"But it must have come from our dormitory!" expostulated Raby.

"Well, what about that?" snapped Jimmy Silver. "Anyone can get into our dormitory, can't they?"

Meanwhile, Tommy Dodd & Co. were doubled up with laughter in the room above the end study. Of course, they were responsible for the event just recorded. It was the result of the wheeze which Tommy Dodd had planned earlier in the day.

They stood in the Classical dormitory

now, rocking with laughter; Tommy Dodd still holding in his hand an empty water-jug from one of the washstands. They could hear the conversation and the spluttering coming up from the room below, and they simply yelled.

They made so much noise, in fact, that it reached the ears of a passer-by in the corridor.

The door was opened, and a head and a pair of broad shoulders were thrust inside.

"Who's there?" demanded the voice of Bulkeley.

The dormitory was in darkness, as the Modern chums had considered a light both inadvisable and unnecessary.

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Tommy Dodd.

The captain stepped into the dormitory and struck a match, just as Tommy Dodd was endeavouring to replace the water-jug in its place without making any noise.

As the match flared up it revealed Tommy Dodd, looking very sheepish about to set the jug down where there wasn't a stand.

The other two Moderns tried to look unconcerned, while Bulkeley took in the position at a glance.

He noticed the empty jug and the open window, and he heard the sound of laughter proceeding from the dormitory a few minutes previously.

It did not take him long to put two and two together; and had it been a little less gloomy Tommy Dodd & Co. might have observed a little smile lurking round the corners of his mouth.

"More foolery!" said the captain severely. "Go to my study at once, and wait there till I return!"

The Modern chums did not try to make any explanation, as none seemed possible. They just replied:

"Yes, Bulkeley!" and trooped out.

The captain of Rookwood, however, hastened downstairs to confirm the idea that was in his mind.

He strode along to the end study, and looked in just as Jimmy Silver was vigorously rubbing his head with the duster.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Bulkeley, and withdrew.

The Fistical Four stared at one another

in amazement. The same thought had occurred to them all in the same instant.

"It couldn't have been Bulkeley!" said Lovell incredibly.

"It looks as though it was," said Raby. "What did he want to put his head in here and laugh like that for?"

"He wouldn't do a thing like that!" put in Jimmy Silver. "There's more in this than meets the eye."

"Well, there certainly isn't very much that meets the eye," said Newcome. "It's an absolute giddy mystery to me."

"I'm going to change my things," said Jimmy Silver, moving to the door, "and I might be able to explain things when I come back."

He left the study, and hastened along the corridor in the direction of the stairs leading to the dormitory.

He was just passing Bulkeley's study when Tommy Dodd & Co. emerged. At the same time he heard the captain's voice saying:

"You will bring me those lines to-morrow evening without fail!"

Jimmy Silver passed on, chuckling to himself.

When he reached the dormitory, and observed the open window, and the empty jug upon the floor, he knew that he had been right in his surmise.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he muttered.

When he returned to the end study about five minutes later, he explained the whole thing to his chums.

"It strikes me things are about level now," said Lovell.

"Well, they haven't scored," remarked Raby.

"Neither have we!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Bulkeley seems to be the only one who has scored out of this little affair," suggested Lovell.

"And he got a ducking!" added Jimmy Silver.

Then, as they discussed the affair, the humour of it struck them all, and they roared with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've all been caught napping this time!" laughed Jimmy Silver. "No wonder Bulkeley laughed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE END.

Another Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in
next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR, entitled

"THE TERRIBLE THOMAS!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

To avoid disappointment YOU must order your copy of the
PENNY POPULAR in advance.