

# THE STOLEN FEED!

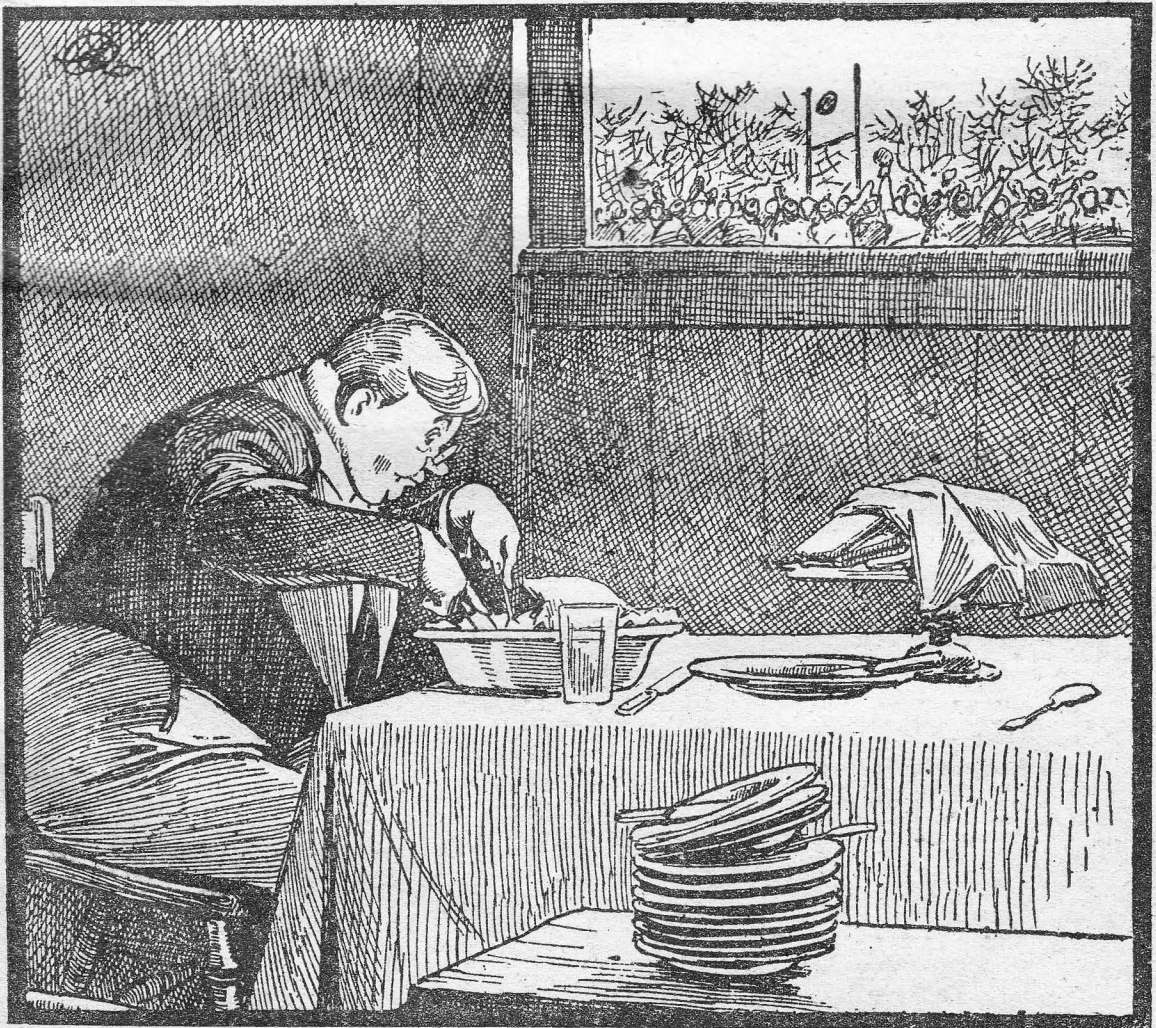
(See the Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in this Issue.)

## The Penny Popular

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



## BUNTER IN HIS ELEMENT!

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

26/1/18

# THE STOLEN FEED!

By FRANK RICHARDS:

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

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Rugger or Soccer.

**H**ALLO! Here are the Bolsover chaps!"

Thus Harry Wharton, of the Remove at Greyfriars. He was standing on the platform at Linfield Station with a number of other fellows attired in footer togs. Billy Bunter was also with the party, but as Bunter did not play football, he naturally wore his ordinary clothes.

The Greyfriars eleven had journeyed to Linfield to play the Bolsover school team.

Three fellows in school caps were coming along the platform. It was easy to guess that they belonged to Bolsover School, and had come to meet the Greyfriars fellows at the station and conduct them to the ground.

One of them, a handsome, red-haired Irish lad of about Wharton's age, greeted the juniors with a cheery voice and a merry smile.

"Sure, we're glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "You're the fellows from Greyfriars, of course?"

"Yes," said Wharton. "And you're from Bolsover?"

"Exactly! I'm Fitzgerald minor, junior captain," said the other. "Are you Wharton?"

"Yes," said Harry, shaking hands with the Bolsover fellow. "Glad to see you!"

"These chaps are Bull and Hilton, two of the team," said Fitzgerald. "We're jolly glad to see you over here. We've got a brake waiting outside. It's a mile and a half to the school. This way."

And they streamed out of the station.

The brake was a large, roomy one, and there was plenty of room for the Greyfriars crowd and the three Bolsover fellows. Billy Bunter, of course, was squeezed between Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh, but that was rather from choice on Bob's part than from necessity.

The brake rolled away from the station, and Bunter blinked round as his mouth almost watered as he caught sight of a pastrycook's in the street.

"I say, you fellows," he ventured. "Don't you think you ought to have a little refreshment before—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I'm hungry."

"Dry up!" said Bob Cherry. "Do you want to be shoved out of the brake?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Chuck it!"

And Bunter chuckled it and glowered. The brake rattled on through a wintry landscape. The afternoon was a fine, clear one, and cold; just the afternoon for a footer match. The Greyfriars juniors were in the highest of spirits. They chatted cheerily with the Bolsover fellows, and the mile and a half they had to cover passed very quickly under the wheels of the brake.

They came in sight of Bolsover at last—a grey, old, ivy-mantled building. Fitzgerald pointed it out.

"You'll see the playing-fields as soon as we get past the elms," he said.

Harry Wharton looked. The trees once passed, the playing-fields burst upon the view of the fellows in the brake.

A dozen lads were on the football-field punting a ball about. But it was not at them that Harry Wharton looked.

It was at the goalposts.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed, in amazement.

Fitzgerald looked at him.

"Eh! What's the matter?"

"Great Scott!"

"What—"

"The goals!"

"The goals!" repeated the Bolsover skipper, in surprise. "What about the goals? What's the matter with them?"

Wharton did not reply for a moment. His eyes—and all eyes in the brake—were fixed upon the Bolsover goalposts. For the Bolsover goals, instead of being of the familiar Association shape, resembled the letter H with the crossbars very high up; in a word, the goals were for the Rugby game.

"What on earth are you driving at?" exclaimed Fitzgerald, in amazement. "I don't understand you, Wharton."

"My only hat! You play Rugby!"

"Rugby! Of course!"

"And we—"

"Well, you—"

"We play Soccer."

"Phew!"

The fellows in the brake stared at one another for a few moments, and then burst into an irresistible shout of laughter. It seemed too comical.

The challenge had been sent, and had been accepted, and it had occurred to neither side to specify which kind of football they played.

It had been a ridiculous oversight; yet, as Bolsover were accustomed to always meeting Rugger teams, and Greyfriars to meeting only Soccer, it was not unnatural that such a detail should escape their attention.

"Well, that is curious, and no mistake!" exclaimed Hilton, who was a three-quarter in the Bolsover junior team. "We never thought of it. What on earth induces you chaps to play Soccer?"

"Well, it's the better game of the two, you see."

"Rats!" said Hilton warmly. "Why, Rugger is far and away the best."

"More rats! Why—"

"The bestfulness of the honourable Soccer game is terrific."

"But Rugger—"

"But Soccer—"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Wharton, laughing. "No need to argue that now. It's been argued out enough times already, without convincing anybody."

"Faith, and that's true."

"The question is, what are we going to do? We can't play one side Rugger, and the other side Soccer, that's certain."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Either Bolsover will have to play an eleven at Soccer with us, or we'll have to play a fifteen at Rugger with them," said Wharton, looking at his friends. "We can't miss the match altogether after coming all this way."

"Right!"

"The rightfulness is terrific."

Fitzgerald looked very thoughtful.

"Sure as the hosts we ought to yield the point!" he exclaimed. "But we've never played Soccer here, and, of course, you would walk all over us. We took it for granted, of course, that you knew we played Rugger when we sent you the challenge."

"Well, we'd better make it Rugger, as some of us play that game," said Harry Wharton. "Tom Brown here comes from New Zealand, and he always played Rugger at home; and Linley is a Lancashire chap, and was brought up on Rugger. We've dabbled in it at Greyfriars, and most of us have a bit of knowledge of the thing."

"Well, we ought to be able to keep our end

up, at least," said Nugent. "Let's make it Rugger."

"Well, that's hardly fair on you," said Fitzgerald.

"Oh, it's all right!"

"We shall walk all over you."

"Never mind; we'll walk all over you in the return match."

Fitzgerald laughed.

"Look here! I'd rather yield the point, and give you a chance!" he exclaimed.

"Toss a penny and settle it," suggested Ogilvy.

"Good egg!"

Wharton tossed the penny, and covered it with his hand.

"Head Rugger, tail Soccer," he said. "Is that all right?"

"That's all right!"

Wharton showed the penny; it was head.

"Rugger!" he said.

Fitzgerald nodded.

"Good!"

The brake halted. A crowd of fellows came up to greet the Greyfriars party, and there was a general grin as they discovered that the visitors had come over to play Soccer. Harry Wharton & Co. were shown into their quarters.

Wharton was looking a little serious.

"This won't be a joke when we start playing," he remarked. "We've only got two fellows who know how to play Rugger well, and the rest of us will be weak. Jolly lucky we brought some reserves with us, enough to make up the fifteen."

"Yes, rather!"

"The raterfulness is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "There are sixteen of us in all, including the honourable Bunter."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter! Now—"

"Look here, Wharton, let me speak! I was going to say that as you don't know much about Rugger, I shouldn't mind captaining the team," said Bunter. "I'm rather a dab at Rugger myself."

"Thanks awfully, Billy; but we won't accept the offer," said Wharton. "Linley, I want you to captain the side."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the Lancashire lad. "I'll back you up!"

Wharton shook his head.

"You play Rugger, and I have only dabbled at it," he said. "Either you or Brown—and you've been longest with us. You're skipper for this match."

The Lancashire lad's cheek glowed a little. "Well, if you wish it, I accept, of course," he said. "I shall be a three-quarter myself, and Tom Brown another. Hazeldene had better be full-back."

Mark Linley, who had captained Rugger teams at home in Lancashire in the days when he was a factory lad, and played football on the common on a Saturday afternoon, soon had his arrangements made.

"Be careful not to pass forward or knock on," he said. "In the scrum, stick to it for all you're worth. Tackle low, and mean it every time. That's about all."

"Good!"

And the Greyfriars fellows, having changed, issued from the pavilion. They found the Bolsover side in the field already, punting a ball about. A big, handsome fellow in a Norfolk jacket came up to them, and the resemblance told them at once that he was Fitzgerald major. Fitzgerald minor had told them that his major was captain of Bolsover, and was to referee the match.

The senior nodded to them with a smile.

"I hear this is your first Rigger game!" he exclaimed.

"That's right."  
"Bolsover are willing to play a couple of men short, to make things more even."

Harry Wharton shook his head quickly.

"Oh, no; we don't want that! If we're licked, we shall make it up in the return match. We'd rather take our chance."

Fitzgerald major laughed.

"I'm afraid it's rather a poor chance," he remarked. "But do as you like. You are plucky ones, anyway, and I like your nerve."

The teams went into the field. Billy Bunter blinked after them from the pavilion.

There was a decidedly discontented expression upon the fat junior's face. He could no more have played in a Rigger game than he could have sailed an aeroplane, but Bunter never believed that he couldn't do anything. He attributed his exclusion on all occasions to personal jealousy.

"I'm blessed if I know how I stand those fellows," he murmured. "I'm wasted at Greyfriars. I've never been appreciated—even at home they don't appreciate me. They don't like me to show form at football—and they cut up rusty when Marjorie Hazeldene shows that she prefers my company. I'm blessed if I know how I stand it. There they go—without caring a rap whether a chap's hungry or not."

And Bunter grunted with dissatisfaction.

As a matter of fact, the fat junior was hungry, and he was less interested in football at that moment than in getting something to eat.

It occurred to him that there was certain to be a collation prepared for the Greyfriars team, to be partaken of before they returned on the long journey to Greyfriars.

His eyes glinted behind his big spectacles at the thought.

Where was the collation?

Was it to be in the school or in the pavilion? The pavilion was a big and substantial building. Bunter decided to scout.

The attention of everyone was on the game now. Greyfriars had won the toss, and given the kick-off to their opponents.

The ball was rolling, and the teams were mingled in combat, and every fellow either in the pavilion or round the ropes was watching the players.

Nothing could have been better for Bunter.

He stepped quietly into the pavilion and explored it. His eyes nearly started from his head as he looked through a half-open door and saw a table laden with dishes, covered up with white cloths. There was the tea evidently, all ready to be laid out when the match was over.

Bunter gave a quick glance round, and then stepped swiftly into the room and closed the door. A second more and he was at the table and at work. Loud shouts rang from the football-field as the game progressed—but Bunter never heard them. He was as busy as the footballers, though in a different way!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.  
The Rugby Match.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were hard at work.

As Harry had told the Bolsover skipper, two of his team were good Rigger players, having been brought up on that game. Tom Brown of Taranaki and Mark Linley of Lancashire had taken kindly enough to Soccer, but they still had a weakness for their old love, so to speak, and were glad to play the old game. They had taught their chums a good deal of the Rugby game, too, so it was not quite strange to the Removites.

But against a team like the Bolsovers they had no chance. Tom Brown and Mark Linley were splendid, and their good play showed up well against the wretched performance of the others. But two players in fifteen could not save a side. The Bolsovers simply walked over them.

Mark and Tom, as three-quarters, showed that the Greyfriars crowd would have acquitted themselves with credit if they had been playing their own game, and in the scrummages the visitors showed plenty of strength and pluck, but they were not "in it" with the fellows who had played Rigger all their lives, of course.

But they played up manfully. Quickly enough during the first half the

Bolsovers scored—two goals, two tries, and a dropped goal.

The Greyfriars score was still blank.

Their faces were a little blank, too; but they stuck to their guns, determined at all events that it should not be wholly a walk-over for Bolsover.

And Mark Linley's chance came at last.

He received the ball from the scrum, and was away with it like lightning, dodging the Bolsover backs with ease.

Half a dozen fellows were rushing to intercept him. He eluded Fitzgerald's tackle, and left the Bolsover skipper on the ground. He glided like a snake between the two heavy forwards who were rushing in, and danced round Hilton, and dodged Bull. Then he streaked for goal, with only the full-back between him and his destination, and the Greyfriars players involuntarily gave a shout of encouragement.

"Go it, Linley!"

"Good old Lancashire!"

"Hurrah!" And the Bolsover crowd round the football-ground, like the Tuscans of old, could not forbear a cheer.

Mark Linley seemed to fly!

The Bolsover full-back was watching and waiting. He was well in advance of his goal, and directly in the Lancashire lad's path. Mark Linley seemed to be rushing straight at him, with the intention of overbearing him by sheer impetus.

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Who's going to take the kick?" said Harry Wharton. "You're captain, Linley."

Linley nodded, with a smile.

"You or Brown, Marky, old chap," said Bob Cherry.

"Right! Brown."

"Good!" said the New Zealander; and he trotted forward to take the kick.

The ball was carried out and carefully placed. Mark Linley placed it, and Tom Brown took the kick. It was at an awkward angle for a kick, for Mark had been compelled to make a wide swerve to avoid the full-back, but Tom Brown of Taranaki had brought off more difficult coups than that.

The kick was taken, the ball flew, and there was a yell as it sailed gracefully over the crossbar between the posts.

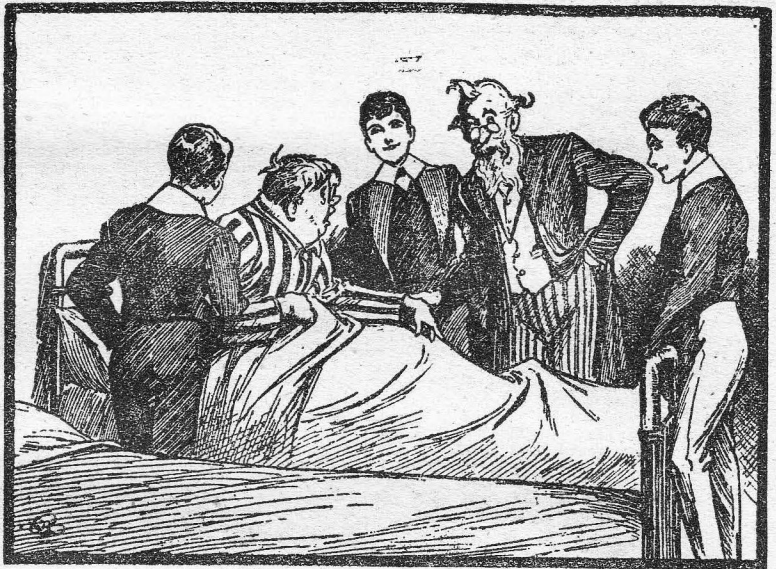
"Goal! Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The Greyfriars fellows had reason to cheer. A goal from a try counted, of course, five points, and they indulged for a moment a wild hope that they might at least make the game a draw. With two leaders like Brown and Linley, and the rest backing them up loyally, something might be effected.

The Bolsover men marked Linley and Brown, and kept their hands full after that, and Mark or Tom never had a chance of getting away.

The first half wore on to its end with the



"This will never do," muttered the disguised Nugent. "You seem to be most feverish! Three thousand beats to the second!"

The full-back, a strong and heavy fellow, grinned in anticipation, and prepared for a tackle which would put a sudden finish to the rush of the Greyfriars three-quarter.

But Linley was too keen to risk that tackle.

He was within a couple of feet of the full-back, and the tackle was about to fasten on to him, when he suddenly swerved off to the right—so suddenly that he left the full-back standing and staring.

Before the fellow could pursue him Mark was past, and keeping on at the same angle, he touched down over the line unmolested.

The Greyfriars fellows gave a perfect yell:

"Try! Try! Try!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Lancashire!"

Mark rose, smiling and breathless.

It was a try—the first score for Greyfriars. Even if it did not materialise into a goal, there was the try—three points for Greyfriars. They had broken their duck, at all events.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Jolly good!" said Fitzgerald, who had picked himself up and was wondering how he had come to be on the ground. "If they were all like that, Hilton—"

Hilton grinned.

"We might as well walk off, in that case," he remarked.

score unaltered till the very finish, when Harry Wharton had the ball, with five or six Bolsovers almost upon him.

There was no chance of passing with success, and the enemy were almost upon him. Wharton took a desperate resolve, and dropped a goal.

The ball touched the earth and rose, and he kicked, and away sailed the leather. The next second Wharton crashed on the earth, and a myriad of stars danced before his eyes, and he felt for a moment as if the universe had come to a sudden end.

What happened to the ball he didn't know; but as he recovered his faculties a roar of cheering came to his ears, and he knew then.

"Goal!"

Bob Cherry dragged him up.

"Look there, my son!" chuckled Bob. "You bouncer! Where did you learn to drop goals like that? Clean over the bar in the very centre! By Jove!"

"Ripping!" said Nugent enthusiastically.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I did my best," he remarked, "but it was at least half a fluke, to tell the candid truth."

"Fluke or not, it was a goal, and we're nine points now against twenty."

And the players trooped off to rest for the short interval.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Bunter, I wonder?" said Bob Cherry, as he accepted a lemon from a Bolsover fellow and began to suck it. "I'd forgotten him."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are!"

Bunter blinked at them. There was a shiny look about his fat face, and his little round eyes seemed to be almost closing behind his glasses.

"Yes, I'm here," he said. "How have you done?"

"Haven't you seen the game?" demanded Hazeldene indignantly.

"Oh, really, Vaseline, I've better things to do than watch a set of duffers playing at a game they don't know!" said Bunter. "I suppose you're about half the Bolsover score?"

"Less than half!"

"I told you so. I knew how it would be if I didn't play," said Bunter, with a shake of the head. "Do you think you could get Fitzgerald's permission to make a change now, Wharton, for the second half, and put me in instead of Cherry or Nugent or Tom Brown?"

"Why, you cheeky young ass—" began the New Zealander.

"You fat duffer!"

"You impertinent porpoise!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"I might get Fitzgerald to agree," laughed Harry Wharton. "I'm jolly well not going to try, though! Our chance is small enough as it is."

"Oh, really, Wharton! You see how the game has gone so far. It's really not like you to sacrifice the interests of the school to personal jealousy. I expect that sort of thing in Cherry and Nugent, but I really looked for something better in you. Ow! Who's that got hold of my ear?"

"You young alligator!" growled Bob Cherry. "I—"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"You expect what of Nugent and me?" demanded Bob, compressing his grip upon the fat junior's ear till Billy Bunter squealed.

"Ow! I don't expect anything. What I really meant to say was that you were above any feelings of personal jealousy!" waived Bunter.

"Ha, ha! You really mean to say that?"

"Yes. Ow! Yes."

"Then you've got a most unfortunate way of expressing yourself," grinned Bob Cherry, releasing the fat junior's ear.

Billy Bunter rubbed his ear and glowered. Harry Wharton had gone into the dressing-room, and he returned with a bar of milk chocolate in his hand.

"Here you are, Billy!" he said. "I know you must be famished. This will keep you going till the game is over, and then we shall have a feed."

"I really don't see why you should always be passing remarks on my appetite, Wharton. I know I've a delicate constitution that requires being kept up by plenty of good nourishment, but I'm not a greedy chap."

"You're hungry, I suppose?" said Wharton in surprise.

"No; I'm not!"

There was a general exclamation of astonishment.

"Not hungry!"

"You're joking, Billy!"

"This is a new wheeze!"

Bunter blinked indignantly round.

"I'm not hungry," he said. "I'll have the chocolate—to put in my pocket in case I should get hungry. It's just as well to be on the safe side."

"And you're really not hungry?"

"Certainly not, Cherry!"

"What silly ass was it said that the age of miracles was past?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whistle went at that moment, and the teams trooped back into the field for the second half of that peculiar match.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Why Bunter Went Early.

THE second half was to a large extent a repetition of the first. The Bolsover fellows did not score so quickly, however, for the Greyfriars lads were getting stronger in the defence, if not in the attack, and were falling more into the way of the scrum.

Hazeldene, at full-back, saved the situation several times, and Harry more than once

gave him a glance of the warmest approval. Hazeldene, once the waster of the Remove, had taken very kindly to football under Harry Wharton's eye, and he was turning out extremely well.

It had been an experiment, playing him in the junior team, and there were not wanting fellows in the Remove who hinted that Hazeldene was given his place, not on his own merits, but on account of his sister Marjorie.

But Wharton never allowed criticism of that sort to affect him. He was glad to help Hazeldene for Marjorie's sake, but he would never have allowed the lad to play if he had not believed him fit.

And Hazeldene was more than justifying his choice now—in a new game, too, that he was not accustomed to.

It would have been excusable in anyone to avoid some of the Bolsover rushes and tackles, for they certainly were a rough-and-ready team.

But Hazeldene stood to his guns.

The Bolsovers had at first taken the match more in the light of a joke than anything else, but the steady defence the visitors were now putting up nettled some of them.

They played with the most rigid fairness all the time, but some of them were a little rougher than there was any occasion for.

From a scrum near the home twenty-five the ball came out to Hilton, who eluded Mark Linley by the skin of his teeth, and dashed for the Greyfriars line.

Harry Wharton tackled him instantly, but not before he had succeeded in passing the leather to Fitzgerald.

The Bolsover skipper dashed on with the ball, while Hilton went sprawling in the grasp of Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry and Tom Brown both had a chance at Fitzgerald; but the burly Bolsover fellow left them both on the ground, and tore on.

Nugent and Ogilvy rushed in, too late. Fitzgerald, with a turn of speed remarkable in so large and powerful a lad, dashed on, and gave them no chance, and made straight for Hazeldene.

Hazeldene's colour wavered for an instant.

He was a slight lad, in comparison with the big Bolsover fellow, and he looked as if he could have stood Fitzgerald's rush about as well as a cow on a railway-line could withstand a locomotive.

The Bolsover crowd were already raising a cheer.

They fully expected Fitzgerald to touch down fairly under the bar, making the ensuing kick the simplest thing in the world.

Fitzgerald grinned as Hazeldene stood in his path. The Remove of Greyfriars set his teeth hard.

He faced the oncoming three-quarter with steady eyes.

Fitzgerald did not swerve. Hazeldene was light upon his feet, and would have been upon him like a cat. There was no dodging the full-back. But Fitzgerald had not the slightest doubt that he would send Hazeldene whirling with his rush, and pass over or round him under the bar.

Crash!

Right into the full-back rushed the Bolsover captain, and Hazeldene tackled hard.

There was a momentary whirling and staggering, and Hazeldene went down; but, to the unbounded delight of the Greyfriars fellows, the mighty Fitzgerald went down with him.

He was tackled!

The rest were on the spot in a twinkling, the ball was down, and the whistle went for a scrum. Harry Wharton helped Hazeldene up. The full-back was gasping, and his face was contracted with pain.

Wharton was concerned at once.

"Hurt, old chap?" he whispered.

"N-no," said Hazeldene, trying to keep his face straight. "N-no. Only—oh!"

"You are hurt!"

"It's my ankle!" muttered Hazeldene. "It's all right; only a twist. I can stand on it, but it does hurt."

"Let me look at it."

"Hallo! No harm done, I hope?" said the Bolsover skipper seriously. "I'm sorry, kid!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Hazeldene. "You have to give and take in footer, especially in Rigger."

"Faith, and you're right!"

"It's all right," said Harry, who had been examining Hazeldene's ankle. "But you can't play any more, Hazel. You'll have to get off."

"I suppose so," said Hazeldene ruefully. "I'm sorry to leave you in the lurch like this."

"That's all right. You can't help it. And you've saved a certain try."

"Faith, and he did! It was plucky."

Harry Wharton helped Hazeldene off the field, and the junior changed and sat down outside the pavilion to watch the rest of the game.

With a man short on the Greyfriars side, it was not likely to be much of a show for Harry Wharton & Co.

"You can play a substitute if you like, Wharton," Fitzgerald minor remarked, as the Greyfriars captain came back to the field.

Wharton shook his head.

"I haven't one here," he said.

"What about that fat chap?"

Harry laughed.

"He's no good."

A piping voice was heard from the direction of the pavilion, and Billy Bunter hopped over the rope and came upon the field of play. He was looking very excited, and his eyes were gleaming behind his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo!"

"I see Vaseline's hurt. I suppose you want a substitute. I'm quite willing to look over your conduct, Wharton, and play up for the school."

"You may be willing, Billy, but I'm not. Get off the field, please!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Buzz off!"

"This is the last time I shall make the offer!" exclaimed the Owl of the Remove wrathfully. "If it's not accepted, I shall wash my hands of the whole business!"

"I dare say it will do them good," remarked Bob Cherry. "Wash your neck while you're about it, Billy."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Get off the field, Bunter; you're in the way."

"Then I'm jolly well not going to stay here and see a game thrown away from motives of personal jealousy," said Bunter. "I'm going back to Greyfriars."

"Good!" Your return ticket's in my coat pocket. Take it and go!"

Bunter rolled away.

The scrum was formed, and the Greyfriars fellows managed to get the ball out, and clear it away from its dangerous proximity to their goal-line.

Ogilvy took Hazeldene's place at full-back, and a fellow had to be left out of the pack.

Fortunately for Greyfriars, the game was near its close now.

They had put up a good fight, but the only score in the second half was from a try by Tom Brown, and a dropped goal by Mark Linley.

When the whistle went the score was hopelessly against Greyfriars, the home team being twenty points ahead.

But under the circumstances, the Greyfriars side had no reason to be ashamed of their performance. That they had been able to break their duck at all was something to be proud of.

They trooped off the field, quite fagged out by the game, and changed their things.

There was no sign of Billy Bunter in the pavilion. His coat was gone, likewise his return ticket, and it was pretty clear that the fat junior had returned to Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton was decidedly puzzled.

"Blessed if I can understand this!" he remarked. "Bunter knew perfectly well that there was to be a feed after the match. I can't understand his missing the feed!"

"It's a blessed mystery!"

"The mysteryfulness is terrific!"

"My only hat!"

It was a sudden exclamation from Fitzgerald minor. He came out of the pavilion with a startled face.

"Anything up?"

"The grub!"

"Eh? What's the matter with the grub?" asked Hilton.

"It's gone!"

"Gone?"

"Well, most of it. Somebody's been at it, and wolfed nearly all the lot."

"Pshaw!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "That accounts for Bunter's going. The grub's gone, and Bunter's gone, too. I fancy they went together."

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### The Return.

THE Greyfriars juniors looked decidedly uncomfortable.

Billy Bunter had come to Bolsover with them, and for him to act in this unpardonable way was outrageous.

There was not the slightest doubt, of course, that the raider was Bunter.

"I don't understand it," said Hilton. "Who on earth could have got at the grub, or who would?"

Fitzgerald shook his head. "Faith, we'll settle that another time," he remarked. "Cut over to the tuckshop, Hilton, and make them send over a fresh lot instanter."

"Right you are!" Hilton ran off.

Harry Wharton stepped over towards the Bolsover junior skipper with a very red face. "I'm sorry for this, Fitzgerald—" he began.

"Oh, it's all right, we'll have a fresh lot, and—"

"I mean, I'm sorry because it was one of our fellows did it."

"Oh!"

"It was that fat rotter; he's gone now. That's why he's gone," said Wharton uncomfortably. "He is a rank outsider in every way, and we ought not to have brought him with us. I'm awfully sorry. It was a rotten thing to do."

Fitzgerald laughed good-naturedly. "Oh, it's all right! I remember the chap looked as if he could put away a good meal, and, faith, as if he had put away a good many, too!"

"Well, I can only apologise." "Oh, don't worry, lad; it's all right. We don't mind."

The fresh supply was soon forthcoming, and the two teams sat down to tea together on the best of terms. The winter dusk was now falling. The brake came round to take the Greyfriars fellows to the station.

"What about the return match?" asked Fitzgerald. "Are you still thinking of playing it?"

they simply won't be in the same street with you."

"The good opiniativeness of my worthy chum is full of the honourable gratification to me," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I do not boastfully pride myself upon my English, but I flatterfully consider that I speak that honourable language in the first-class stylefulness."

"You do, do you? The stylefulness is only equalled by the extraordinaryfulness," said Frank Nugent.

"Here's the station!" Arrived at the station the juniors were soon in the train, and speeding home to Friardale. From Friardale Station they walked to the school, and they were pretty tired when they arrived there.

The reception they met with showed that Billy Bunter had reached Greyfriars and spread the news.

Half the school seemed to be in the hall to greet them, with grins and chuckles and all sorts of remarks.

"Hallo! What game have you been playing?"

"How many points?"

"Was it a walk-over for somebody?"

"What sort of a licking have you had?"

"What brand of duffers do you call yourselves?"

"Well, mistakes will happen," said Bulstrode, "especially when the Form has such a jolly good captain as it has at present." "Oh, rats!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully. "How were we to know that Bolsover played Rugger, when they never told us so, and we'd never been to the place?"

ended the discussion. But there were a good many fellows in the Remove who more or less agreed with Bulstrode. They looked on it as a dangerous experiment to play Bolsover again within so short a time, at a game the Remove were not accustomed to.

But Wharton was accustomed to having his way. He was not the kind of football captain to be talked over or hectored over. If the Remove didn't like his methods, he was ready to resign; but even his opponents did not want that.

Bulstrode had been football captain before him, and under Wharton there had been a big change for the better. The Remove were not tired of winning victories. Under Harry Wharton's leadership, they had made the rival Form, the Upper Fourth, sing properly small.

"I think Wharton ought to be stopped from guying Greyfriars in this way," said Bulstrode, looking round as the Remove captain walked away.

"Oh, rats!" said Ogilvy. And that was all the reply Bulstrode received; whereat he scowled, and allowed the subject to drop.

"Where's Bunter?" Bob Cherry was asking on all sides. "Where's Falstaff? Where's the porpoise? We're going to slay him before tea? Where is the alligator who devoured the grub at Bolsover? Where is the beast?"

"Bunter!" said Stott. "He's ill." "Ill?"

"Yes. He's laying up." "Rats!" said Bob wrathfully. "He knows we're going to slay him for wolfing the grub at Bolsover, and this is only a little game. Where is he?"

"A football captain is supposed to know

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No. 8 NEXT FRIDAY.  
Gibson, Jameson,  
Wally D'Arcy.



1. Mr. Ratcliff.
2. Patrick Reilly.
3. Ephraim Taggies.

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton emphatically. "It's next Saturday, and on next Saturday afternoon we expect your fifteen at Greyfriars."

"Oh, we'll come!"

"We're going to slog at Rugger for a week, and we'll give you a better game than we gave you to-day," said Wharton. "I don't think you'll walk over us quite so easily."

Fitzgerald grinned.

"Well, all right. You put up a good game to-day, though you had everything against you. I must say I don't think you'll be first-rate Rugger crabs by next Saturday, but I've no doubt you'll give us a tussle."

"Well, we'll try to. Good-bye!" "Good-bye!"

The brake rolled off.

"Well, I like the Bolsover chaps," said Bob Cherry. "They're decent. And we're going to give them a jolly good whaling next Saturday, my sons, if it costs us a leg apiece."

"Yes, rather!" said a dozen emphatic voices. "The rutherfulness is terrific," said Hurree Janset, Ram Singh, in his soft voice. "We have a wholeful week in which to perpetrate the esteemed practice, and by the arrival of next Saturday I hope we shall all be in the perfection of the fitfulness."

"Good!" said Nugent. "If you pick up Rugger as you've picked up English, Inky,

these things, or to find them out," said Bulstrode.

"Well, yes, that's right enough," Harry confessed. "I ought to have made sure; but I admit it never crossed my mind that perhaps Bolsover played the old game. However, there's no harm done."

"Only a licking for Greyfriars," said Stott.

"Well, as we were playing a new game, we didn't expect to win; but we're going to level up next Saturday afternoon."

"How many points did they beat you by?" asked Bulstrode disagreeably.

"Twenty."

"My only hat! And you're going to play them again next Saturday?"

"Certainly!"

"Not satisfied with one licking, I suppose? You want to make a show of Greyfriars—eh? Of course, they will walk over you next Saturday the same as this time."

"That's what we're going to see," said Wharton quietly. "I hope we shall have a fifteen in form to meet them."

"Rot! You can't do it in the time." "We're going to try."

"In the dorm."

"Come up to the dorm, you chaps. Bunter's ill, and we're going to put him out of his misery."

"Ha, ha! Right you are!"

And half a dozen of the returned footballers followed Bob Cherry upstairs to the Remove dormitory.

"Go easy, though!" said Harry Wharton. "You never know. He might be ill—he eats enough pastry to make an elephant ill."

"Well, there's something in that," agreed Bob Cherry. "He may be ill after scoffing so much grub at Bolsover. I never thought of that."

"Tread lightly!" grinned Nugent. "Tip-toe!"

"The tiptoefulness is a wheezy good idea!"

And the chums of the Remove tiptoed into the dormitory.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.  
Spoofer!

**B**ILLY BUNTER lay in bed. Although the Removites were tiptoeing, Bunter had heard their voices in the passage outside, and he knew they were coming. He was blinking towards the door with an expression of resigned anguish on his fat face.

"I—I say, you fellows," he said feebly, "be quiet, will you, if you don't mind? I don't feel quite well."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Ill, Bunty?"

"Yes, Oh!"

"Where do you feel the pain?"

"It—it isn't exactly a pain."

"Is it an ache?"

"Well, not exactly an ache. It's a bit of each, with a dreadfully fatigued feeling—an awful attack of lassitude, mingled with shooting aches and pains in the arms, legs, back, and head," said Bunter.

"My only hat! What a variety!"

"I don't think you ought to be so heartless, Cherry. If I perish you will be sorry. I feel as if I shall very probably die to-night."

"We'd better send for a doctor, then!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Oh, no—oh, no!" said Bunter quickly. "I don't want a doctor. Nothing of the sort."

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry, with emphasis. "You need a doctor. Do you think we're going to let you die without medical assistance?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent. "You don't need medical assistance to die, but to recover."

"I know what I'm talking about!" retorted Bob Cherry. "A doctor has a natural right to assist at a death-bed. It's no good hang-

"I—I feel a little hungry, said Bunter hesitatingly. "A bag of tarts is what I fancy most just now."

"The ruling passion," murmured Bob Cherry. "It's strong in death, you know."

"The strongfulness is terrific."

"You can't have anything to eat now, Bunter," said Wharton gently. "It's through over-eating that you're ill."

"I—I think—"

"Try and go to sleep, Bunter, and we'll come up and see you again presently."

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter, rather sulkily.

And the Removites left the dormitory, leaving the candle burning.

"He really seems to be genuine this time," said Bob Cherry. "Of course, it's nothing serious—only acute dyspepsia, I expect, through reckless gorging."

"That's it. But I dare say he's in pain, and his face is ghastly, anyway," said Harry.

"He will get off that ragging."

"He generally does get off his deserts," said Tom Brown. "Still, I don't want to rag the poor beast, for one."

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful as he went into his study.

Bunter, as a rule, had the digestion of a horse or a walrus, and it showed what a tremendous feed he must have had at Bolsover to make him ill like this.

The chums went into Study No. 1, and Harry lighted the gas.

busy with his make-up box. "Nugent's busy!"

Bob Cherry grinned, and, taking the tarts, he left the study.

"Go in quietly," called out Harry Wharton. "He may be asleep."

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry ascended the stairs to the Remove dormitory.

The candle was still burning in the dormitory, and Bob Cherry saw the glimmer of light under the door.

He turned the handle silently, opened the door a foot or so, and peeped in. If Bunter was asleep he did not intend to disturb him.

He nearly gasped at what he saw.

Billy Bunter was sitting up in bed, and he had a bag open on the counterpane before him, and was calmly feeding on cakes and buns from the bag.

Bob Cherry stared at him blankly.

In the candle-light Bunter's face was as ghastly as ever, but there was a grin of enjoyment upon it that showed that he certainly was not ill.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The cunning rascal! My only hat!"

For now that the light streamed full upon the face of Billy Bunter, Bob Cherry noticed what had not been observable when the face was in the shadow.

The whiteness of the face was not equal all over—it showed red in patches—and, if

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ing a thing out. I'll wire for the medical merchant in Friardale."

"Oh, no, don't!"

"Why not?"

"I—I don't believe in doctors!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'd rather not have a doctor!"

"Let's have a look at you," said Harry Wharton, and he lighted a candle on a washstand near the head of Bunter's bed.

The juniors uttered exclamations as they saw his face. Bunter was ghastly white in complexion, and there were dark rings under his eyes. The juniors changed their tone at once. There was no doubt that the fat junior looked really ill this time.

"I say, old fellow," said Wharton, "you are ill, you know—you look simply ghastly."

Billy Bunter groaned.

"It must have been the grub he wolfed at Bolsover," said Bob Cherry. "We were going to give him a jolly good ragging for that, but it seems to me that the crime has brought 'ts own punishment."

"He ought to see a doctor."

"No, no!" exclaimed Bunter. "I don't feel as bad as that. It's—it's only the things I ate at Bolsover, you know."

"Well, if you're determined—"

"Yes, yes! I am, really. I shall be better presently."

"Can we do anything for you?" asked Nugent.

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"I suppose we'd better have the practice," he remarked. "Bunter can't hear us from here. Of course, if he were seriously ill I should be inclined to put it off. But that's not worth while now."

"Right you are!"

The Amateur Dramatic Society of the Greyfriars Remove had been very busy lately. A big performance was to come off shortly, in which the girls of Cliff House were to take a part.

The amateur actors were losing no time in getting as much practice as possible.

They had made great progress in the art of making-up, and of disguising their voices for the characters they meant to represent.

Their repertoire was a growing one, and Nugent, who could make up as anything, was quite famous in the lower Forms for his skill.

A dozen or more amateur actors met in Study No. 1, and they were soon busy.

Bob Cherry was looking thoughtful, however. At last he unburdened his mind.

"I wonder if Bunter might have a couple of tarts," he said. "After what he's put away, they couldn't do him much harm. It would comfort him."

"Well, I suppose he ought to be the best judge," said Wharton, laughing. "There are some tarts in the cupboard, if you like to take them to him."

"Good! Nugent will run up with them."

"Nugent won't!" said Frank, who was

short, it was quite plain that the ghastly complexion of the fat junior was caused by his face being chalked.

The dark rims under his eyes, too, were undoubtedly made by burnt cork.

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

The making-up of the amateur dramatic society had evidently furnished the fat junior with hints for this little deception, and he had made himself up like this from the materials in No. 1 Study before the footballers returned from Bolsover.

He had escaped the expected punishment for his raid, and was left in peace to finish the things he had brought home in his pockets from Bolsover. For he had stuffed his pockets full there, of course, as well as his interior.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry again.

His impulse was to rush into the dormitory, to startle the pretended invalid in the midst of his surreptitious feed, and to squash his cakes and tarts all over him.

But a new idea flashed into his mind, and he grinned, and stepped back quietly. The short-sighted Owl of the Remove had not seen the door open, and Bob had been too quiet for him to hear anything.

Bob Cherry closed the door quietly and withdrew.

He hurried downstairs and into Study No.

1, where the dramatic practice was going at full blast. Wharton's voice was heard as he approached:

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!"

"I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him!"

"The evil that men do lives after them,"

"The good is oft interred with their bones."

"So let it be with—"

"Bunter!" gasped Bob Cherry, bursting into the study.

"Eh? What?"

"Bunter! Is he worse?" exclaimed Wharton anxiously.

"Worse! No; he is well."

"What do you mean?"

"He was only malingering; it's all bunkum. He's not ill at all," said Bob Cherry.

"We've been spoofed."

"Spoofed!"

"That's it! Spoofed—diddled—dished—done!" said Bob Cherry graphically.

"He's chalked and corked his chivvy to take us in, and now he's sitting up in bed gorging!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Nugent.

"I never thought he was deep enough for that! The worm!"

"Oh, worms aren't in it with Bunter," said Bob Cherry.

"Let's go and have him out," said Tom Brown.

"Good egg! Come on!"

Bob Cherry held up his hand.

"Hold on!"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nugent wrathfully.

"He's going to be ragged! He's made us all look like hooligans to the Bolsover chaps, and now he's spoofed us! He's jolly well going to be put through it!"

"I know, but—"

"Well, let's have him out!"

"Hold on, I say! A wheeze—a wheeze!"

"Oh!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Medical Man.

**B**OB CHERRY blocked up the doorway, and kept the eager avengers back. He waved his hand to Nugent, who was very excited.

"Well, go ahead with the wheeze!" exclaimed Frank. "I expect it's rot, like most of the wheezes that come from Study No. 13."

"Listen to me, you infants!" said Bob Cherry. "We've got the clothes, the make-up, and the genius among us of a ripping dramatic society—"

"What on earth's that got to do with Bunter?"

"Listen, and I'll explain. Nugent made up as a medical man the other day to take part in a sketch, and he did it well."

"He did; but what—"

"Let me finish. Why shouldn't Bunter have a doctor?"

"But he's not ill."

"All the more reason why he should have a doctor to make him ill," said Bob Cherry cheerfully; "but I'm not suggesting Dr. Baggs, from Friardale. I was thinking of Dr. Nugent."

"Dr. Nugent!"

"Exactly."

"What the dickens—"

"Nugent in the medical man rig-out," explained Bob Cherry. "He could visit Bunter, and feel his pulse, and so on, and put him through it—all sorts of pills and potions and violent exercises, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors burst into a simultaneous roar at the idea.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton, with tears of merriment in his eyes. "This is the joke of the season. Nugent makes up well, and Bunter is short-sighted and the dormitory is dusky, so it ought to be easy."

"I'll try it," said Nugent.

"It will be jolly good practice for the dramatic society," grinned Ogilvy. "We can all stand round looking serious and grief-stricken, and keep up the game."

"Jolly good!"

"The goodness is terrific."

"Get into the clothes, Nugent," said Harry. "We'll make you up in next to no time."

"Right you are!"

Nugent selected a pair of black trousers, with a black frock-coat. He put them on over his own trousers, to give himself an appearance of stoutness. Then he put on large boots and spats, and his hair was powdered white, his eyebrows made up, his nose tinted red, and a false beard and moustaches of a grizzled colour fastened upon him.

The change in his appearance was astounding.

He looked exactly like a little old gentleman of the medical profession. He put on a silk hat, and the picture was complete.

"Where is my patient, gentlemen?" he asked, in a squeaky voice.

The juniors roared.

"Splendid! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ripping!" said Wharton. "Come up to the dorm now. Mind, you fellows, not a snigger, or you'll give the whole show away."

"What-ho!"

And Dr. Nugent ascended to the Remove dormitory, guided by Wharton and Bob, and followed by the rest of the dramatic society.

The juniors made plenty of noise as they approached, and Billy Bunter, who was getting to the end of his provisions, had time to shove the bag under the bedclothes and lie down in an attitude of slumber.

There were crumbs and smears of jam on his fat face, but of this the Owl of the Remove was not aware, and he breathed steadily and regularly as he heard the Removites enter the dormitory.

"Ahem—h'm!" coughed Nugent, coming in with his silk hat in his hand, and his powdered hair glistening white in the candle-light. "Where is my—h'm—patient?"

"You jolly well won't do anything of the sort!" he roared. "I'm not ill. I only want a rest. I told you not to fetch a doctor, Wharton."

"H'm—h'm! It is always best to have a medical man when you are ill, boy. Let me see your tongue!"

"My tongue's all right."

"Put your tongue out at once!" said the doctor sternly.

Bunter sullenly obeyed. He put his tongue out.

"Further out!"

"I c-c-can't!" stuttered Bunter. "How on earth am I to put it out further? It was all out then!"

"He suffers from having too long a tongue," said the medical man. "Does he use it often?"

"Practically continuously, sir," said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

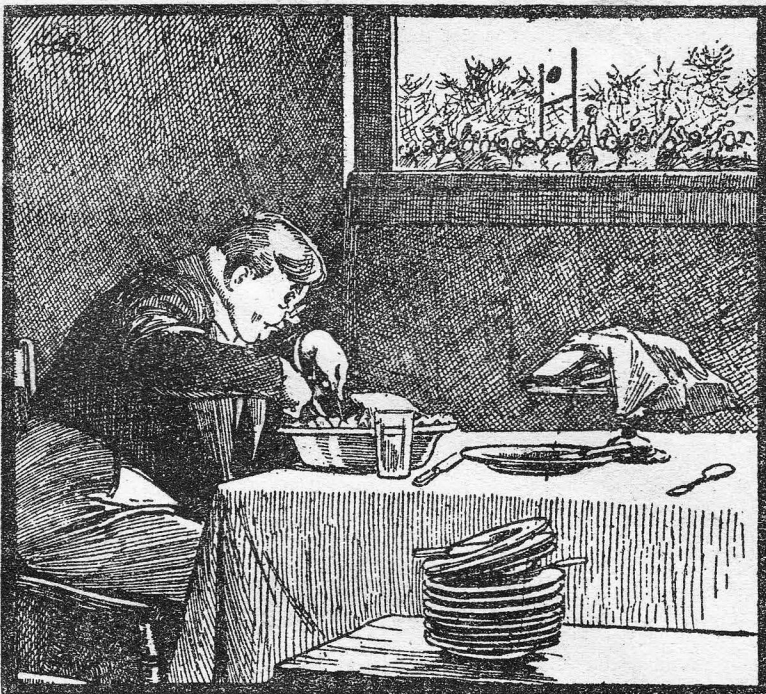
"He even talks in his sleep, as well as all day," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Dear me!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"A serious matter," said the doctor, shaking his head. "His complexion is of a very peculiar colour, too!"

"It's all right—"



Loud shouts rang from the football-field as the game progressed, but Billy Bunter never heard them. He was as busy as the footballers, though in a different way.

"He is here, sir," said Wharton respectfully.

"H'm—h'm! Light another candle, please."

"I will light the gas if you wish, sir."

"I said candle!" snapped the medical man.

"Certainly, sir."

A second candle was lighted, and both were placed so that the light did not fall on the face of the pseudo doctor.

Billy Bunter's eyes were closed as tightly as if they had been screwed shut, and he lay without motion or sound save his heavy breathing. The juniors knew perfectly that he was not asleep, and they exchanged a wink.

"H'm!" said the medical man. "H'm! The patient appears to be asleep. H'm!"

"Are you asleep, Billy?" said Wharton.

"Here is Dr. Skewers to see you."

"H'm—h'm!"

Bunter did not move or open his eyes.

"H'm—h'm! Don't wake him. I can see that what he wants is bleeding," said Dr. Skewers. "I will insert my lancet in his neck, and bleed him without waking him up. Then he will not feel the pain."

Billy Bunter woke up suddenly, and sat up in bed.

"It is not all right, Bunter! I suppose you will not set your childish opinion up against that of a medical man?" said the doctor severely.

"I got some chalk on my face, that's all."

"Ah, his mind is wandering!" said the doctor. "The case is more serious than I supposed at first. We shall have to be careful, or we may lose him."

"Ow!"

"Does he eat much?"

"Practically continuously—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Has he other bad habits? Does he tell lies or sneak?"

"Practically continuously."

"Ah! An unhealthy mind in an unhealthy body," said the doctor, shaking his head again. "This is very serious. We must cleanse this mind and this body. H'm! I will now proceed to bleed the patient—"

"Ow!"

"I find I have forgotten my lancet. However, a carving-knife would do. Will one of you go and fetch a carving-knife?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom Brown, leaving the dormitory.

"I won't be bled!" roared Bunter. "I—I won't! I'm not ill! I—I was only pretending! It was only a joke! I'm sincerely sorry! Ow!"

"His senses are wandering, you see. Does he usually talk nonsense?"

"Practically continuously, sir."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I am bound to give your medical man the facts, Billy. It's no good trying to deceive a doctor, you know."

"Look here, you beasts, I don't want a doctor! I don't—"

"It isn't a question of what you want, Billy, but what you need. We can't run the risk of losing a chap we're so fond of."

"I'm all right! I won't be bled! Besides, bleeding is a silly, cranky idea, and out of date. Doctors have new wheezes now, and all of them are about as good as one another. I won't have anything done to me! I'm not ill!"

"But you said you were, Billy."

"I—I—I was only joking."

"Let me feel your pulse, Bunter."

"My pulse is all right."

"Let me feel it, boy."

"Oh, all right! There it is!"

The doctor felt Bunter's pulse, and shook his head sadly. It was evident that he drew the most serious deductions from the state of Bunter's pulse.

"Ah! This will never do! Most feverish! Three thousand beats to the second!" said the doctor. "You boys do not know much about it, but you must know that that is a very high rate for the human pulse."

"I rather fancy it is!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"It's all rot!" howled Bunter. "My pulse is all right! Lemme alone!"

"Here's the carving-knife, sir," said Tom Brown, re-entering the dormitory with a formidable weapon in his hand.

Billy Bunter gave one yell at the sight of it, and bounded out of bed. The bedclothes tangled round his legs, and he came to the floor with a bump. He was up again in a second, and running wildly for the door in his pyjamas.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### A Sudden Disappearance.

"STOP him!"

"Billy! Come back!"

"You young ass! It's all right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The pseudo medical man and the juniors doubled up with laughter. Billy Bunter, before he could be stopped, had disappeared out of the dormitory. Billy Bunter's plump form was clad solely in a suit of highly-coloured pyjamas, and if he met a master in that state there was likely to be trouble.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

They rushed to the door after the fat junior.

There was the sound of a surprised voice from the passage.

"Bunter! Whatever does this mean?"

Bob Cherry gave a whistle.

"Quelch!"

"Great Scott!"

"We're in for it!"

"Perhaps not," said Mark Linley quickly.

"Nugent, get off those things—quick! Shove them under the bed—quick!"

"Good! Buck up, Frank!"

Nugent caught on at once. He stripped the medical man's disguise off in a few seconds, and the black clothes, the silk hat, and the beard and moustache disappeared under the nearest bed.

A wipe of a wet sponge cleaned his face of the make-up—at least, sufficiently to pass any but close observation.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was not enjoying an interview with the Remove-Form-master in the passage.

Mr. Quelch was astonished, and Mr. Quelch was angry. His Form was not a quiet or a very orderly Form, but he had never discovered any of them out in the passages in their pyjamas at an early hour of the evening before.

"Bunter!" The Form-master stared blankly at the fat junior, who had almost run into him, but stopped himself just in time.

"Bunter, what does this mean?"

"I—I—I—"

"Have you been to bed?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Why?"

"I—I was ill, sir! I caught a—a—an illness in the train, coming back from Bolsover, sir. I'm in a rather delicate state of health, and—"

"If you are ill, and in a delicate state of health, what do you mean by running about the passages in your night-clothes?" demanded the Remove-master sternly.

"You—you see, sir—"

"I do not see, Bunter, and I am waiting for an explanation."

"It—it was the doctor, sir."

"The doctor?"

"Yes, they would send for a doctor, though I told them I didn't want one, sir. The beast—I mean, the doctor—is in the dormitory now."

"It was quite right to send for a doctor if you were ill, though I should have been consulted. But that does not account for your flying about the passages in this state."

"He—he was going to bleed me, sir!"

"Impossible!"

"He was, sir! He had forgotten his lancet, and he was going to bleed me with a carving-knife!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Mr. Quelch stared at the fat junior for a moment, and then he took one of the fat ears between his finger and thumb, and compressed it with a grip like a vice. Billy Bunter squeaked with anguish.

"Ow! Oh, oh! Really, sir—"

"You must not tell me these absurd stories, Bunter. I am afraid you are a most untruthful boy. Your inventions lack even the semblance of truth."

"Ow! I assure you, sir, it's true! The beast's in the dormitory now. I only ran out in time. The fellows are all there; they'll bear me out."

"Ahem! I will see," said Mr. Quelch.

He strode into the dormitory. Billy Bunter followed him, blinking. The gas was alight in the dormitory, and a merry party of juniors were playing leap-frog up and down the long room. There was no sign of the doctor.

Mr. Quelch looked in, and the leap-frog ceased. Leap-frog in the dormitory was not forbidden, though it was not encouraged, certainly. The Remove-master's keen eyes, which his pupils had compared to a pair of gimlets, swept up and down the dormitory in search of the supposed doctor, without finding him.

"Boys," he exclaimed, "Bunter has told me an absurd story of a doctor being here,

who wished to bleed him with a carving-knife."

"Oh, sir!"

"Is there a doctor in the room?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Has there been a doctor here?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Well, I haven't seen one," said Nugent. "If there had been one here I suppose I should have seen him. And I haven't."

Billy Bunter blinked at them in amazement. For a moment he thought that he must have fallen asleep, and dreamed the whole matter. Mr. Quelch's brow grew stern.

"Bunter, this is not the first time I have found you out in palpable inventions. You will follow me to my study."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Follow me at once!"

Harry Wharton ran forward.

"If you please, sir—"

"Well, Wharton, what have you to say?"

"It—it was a jape, sir," said Wharton.

"Bunter thought there was a doctor here, sir. He was malingering, and one of us dressed up as a doctor to give him a scare. Of course, we weren't going to bleed him really."

"Oh!"

"It was only a lark, sir."

"There you are, sir," said Bunter, in an injured tone. "I hope, sir, that you'll believe me next time. I always tell the truth, sir. If I were to begin telling untruths, I should really give it away at once, sir, because it would be so new to me."

"Silence, Bunter! Either dress yourself, or get back into bed. If I find you out of the dormitory in that state again, I shall cane you."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"I suppose there is no harm in a joke of this description, and I have no doubt that Bunter fully deserved it," said Mr. Quelch. "At the same time, I recommend you to keep your sense of humour within reasonable bounds."

And the Remove-master quitted the dormitory.

"Good old Quelch!" said Nugent. "He didn't even ask which of us had dressed up as the doctor. He's a good sort!"

"The good-sortfulness of the honourable Quelch is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Well, you fat young duffer, you jolly near got everybody into a row!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I think it was heartless of you to play a joke like that on a chap who was seriously ill, and might have been at death's door."

"Only I saw you munching tarts, you see," said Bob Cherry, "and I knew you were only telling lies as usual."

"I—I feel quite ill! I think I will go to bed again!"

"I think you'll get into your clothes and go downstairs," said Harry Wharton. "We give you one minute. If you're in bed after that, you'll be bled!"

Billy Bunter plunged into his clothes.

He was dressed in record time, and he skipped out of the dormitory in a great hurry, and the Removites followed him, laughing.

That was the end of Billy Bunter's illness; but the fat junior had served his turn after all, for he had escaped the ragging he richly deserved for his raid on the provisions at Bolsover.

THE END.

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

# "THE GREYFRIARS FIFTEEN!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Please order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance, and hand this number, when finished with, to a non-reader.



# THE TYRANT OF ROOKWOOD!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The New Master.

"By gum! Have you seen him?"  
Thus Tommy Dodd, the leader of the Modern side at Rookwood, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle looked up in surprise.  
"Seen who?" inquired Tommy Cook.  
"The new master," explained Tommy Dodd.  
"The chap who's going to take old Manders' place."  
"What's he going to take Manders' place for?"  
"Haven't you heard?" asked Tommy Dodd gravely. "Manders has gone away for his health, and old Slogger's come to take his place."  
"Phew!" gasped Tommy Cook. "If the new chap is anything like his name, he ought to be pretty hot stuff."  
"He's a jolly sight worse," said Tommy Dodd firmly. "I caught sight of him in the quad just now. He looks an absolute Prussian!"  
"Faith, an' ye can't go by looks, Tommy darlin'," said Tommy Doyle wisely.  
"Oh, can't I?" growled Tommy Dodd. "You wait and see if I'm not right. If old Slogger doesn't turn out to be a regular tyrant, I shall be jolly surprised."

Clang!  
"Hallo! There's the bell for lessons," said Tommy Dodd. "Come on, you fellows!"  
The three Tommies wended their way at a leisurely pace towards the class-room.  
They entered the room slowly, and observed Mr. Slogger standing before his desk.  
Mr. Slogger, who was a thin man, with beady eyes and a prominent nose, gave them a severe glance.

"H'm!" he muttered. "You boys are walking very slowly."  
"I—I—I—" faltered Tommy Dodd.  
"Hurry up!" exclaimed Mr. Slogger, moving about impatiently. "I can't keep the class waiting for three lazy boys."

"But we came as soon as the bell rang, sir," said Tommy Dodd politely.  
"Don't argue with me!" snapped the new master. "What is your name, boy?"

"Dodd, sir!"  
"Very well, Dodd, you will take a hundred lines."  
"But—"

"Silence, boy! Get to your place this instant!"

"Oh, scissors!" groaned Tommy Dodd, as he walked to his place.

Every fellow was now in his seat, and Mr. Slogger frowned as he started the first lesson.

He turned to the blackboard, and his back being towards the class, Tommy Dodd leaned towards his chums and spoke in a whisper.

"What do you think of the old bird?" he said quietly.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Tommy Cook.

"There is talking in the class!"

Mr. Slogger turned round, and gave the three Tommies an icy glance.

"You were speaking Dodd?" he exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, sir, I—"

"What were you saying?"

"I was speaking, sir."

Mr. Slogger knitted his brows.

"Don't insult me, Dodd!" he roared angrily.

"I know you were talking, otherwise I should not have corrected you. What were you talking about?"

"I—er—that is—"

"Please be explicit, Dodd!" commanded the new master. "Don't beat about the bush!"

"I was talking, sir, about—about a bird, sir," said Tommy Dodd hesitatingly.

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir. I hope you don't mind, sir, but it was a very old bird."



The three Tommies had just seated themselves and snatched up their pens as the door opened and in stepped Mr. Slogger.

"You should not discuss birds in class, Dodd!" exclaimed Mr. Slogger. "You will take another hundred lines."

"Yes, sir," said Tommy Dodd meekly. "But this particular bird was a very obnoxious bird, sir, and the fact is, we were wishing we could get rid of it, but—but—"

"Dodd, you are being impertinent!"

Tommy Cook sniggered.

Mr. Slogger turned on him angrily.

"Cook, you are laughing!"

"Oh, no, sir! I—"

"I say you were laughing!"

"No, sir—I mean, yes, sir."

Mr. Slogger spluttered.

"How dare you bandy words with me?" he raved. "You will take two hundred lines!"

"Oh!"

Tommy Doyle whistled. He had not meant to do such a thing, but the new master's tyrannical methods proved too much for him.

Mr. Slogger turned to the Irish junior, and stared him hard in the face.

"You whistled?" he exclaimed harshly.

"Yiss, sorr!" gasped Tommy Doyle. "I'm sorry, sorr, but—"

"It is the wrong time to be sorry," said Mr. Slogger. "I will not countenance whistling in class. You will take a hundred lines."

"Begorra!" gasped Tommy Doyle.

"You will do me another hundred lines for making use of such a ridiculous expression!"

ordered the new master.

"Bejabers!"

"Another hundred lines!"

Tommy Doyle at last lapsed into silence. He was too dumbfounded to utter any more "Irishisms."

"We will now continue!" exclaimed Mr. Slogger emphatically. "And please under-

stand, any further interruptions will bring condign punishment on the heads of the interrupters. I insist upon my orders being obeyed!"

There was a general gasp from the juniors at the new master's announcement.

Not a junior dared to speak. Mr. Slogger's nasty habit of doling out lines did not appeal to the Fourth-Formers.

They realised the advisability of keeping a still tongue.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were extremely anxious for the morning lessons to end.

All through the lesson Mr. Slogger persisted in calling the juniors over the coals for the least little offence, and the consequence was that the phrase "a hundred lines" was continually heard in the class-room.

At last, however, the time came for the new master to dismiss the class. Tommy Dodd & Co. left the class-room with wrathful expressions on their faces, and with feelings in their hearts of bitter animosity towards the tyrannical new master.

"The beast!" growled Tommy Dodd, as soon as they reached their study.

"The double-dyed Prussian!" snorted Tommy Cook.

"Faith, an' he's an absolute outsider!" remarked Tommy Doyle.

"I thought Manders was bad enough," said Tommy Dodd. "But this Hun beats the giddy band! I believe he'd give us lines for merely looking at him."

"I vote we don't do the lines," suggested Tommy Cook.

"Imposs," said Tommy Dodd. "He'll probably double or even treble them if we start kicking. I'm going to wire in, and I advise you kids to do the same."

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"Oh, all right!" growled Tommy Cook, and he took Tommy Dodd's advice and wired in.

Needless to say, the three Tommies were feeling very disgruntled when they went into class that afternoon.

Mr. Slogger was on the war-path again, but by minding their p's and q's Tommy Dodd & Co. were able to emerge from the room without having had any lines inflicted upon them.

Nevertheless, Towle and Lacy and Leggett and one or two other juniors were not so successful.

Mr. Slogger's eagle eye flashed on them as they were committing acts of indiscretion, and lines were doled out liberally in the way of punishment.

Before many days had passed life became almost unbearable in the Modern Fourth owing to the tyrannical methods of the new master.

The juniors were never free from the zealous attentions of Mr. Slogger.

No matter where they happened to be, the new master had a peculiar habit of turning up, and if he saw an opportunity of doling out a shoal of lines he did not let the opportunity slip by.

"What the dickens are we going to do about the giddy business?" asked Tommy Dodd meditatively, as they were seated at tea one afternoon towards the end of the week.

"Better sit down, and do those lines, he gave us this morning," remarked Tommy Cook sagely.

"I'm fed up with lines, begorra!" groaned Tommy Doyle.

"You're not the only one who's fed up," remarked Tommy Cook.

"Pity we can't think of a wheeze to do him down!" remarked Tommy Dodd.

"H'm! We ought to do something," said Tommy Cook. "Soon we shan't be allowed to open our eyes without getting a hundred lines!"

Tommy Dodd rose from his chair.

"You might lock that door, Cook, old son," said the leader of the Modern chums.

"Lock the door? Why, have you thought of a wheeze?"

"No, I'm going to feed the mice," answered Tommy Dodd, moving towards the cupboard.

He drew from the top shelf of the cupboard a large box, which had been turned into a cage.

He opened the little door in front, and out ran three little white mice.

Straight up his arm they ran, and appeared out of the top of his waistcoat.

Gathering them up, he placed them on the floor near a little heap of crumbs, which had been collected from the plates, and which they speedily proceeded to devour.

It had been necessary to lock the door before this procedure, owing to the fact that a few days before an order had gone forth from Mr. Slogger that all pets were to be disposed of within a certain time.

That time had passed, and Tommy Dodd & Co. still retained their white mice.

They were quite fond of their pets, and although they realised that severe punishment would be bestowed upon them if they were discovered, they resolved to retain possession of the mice.

They agreed that it was very unlikely that the mice would be discovered out of sight on the top shelf of the cupboard.

"We shall have to take jolly good care that nosy beast doesn't find out about this," said Tommy Cook, as Dodd replaced the mice in their cage.

"Rather! He'll make us pay the giddy piper with a vengeance if he does!" replied Tommy Dodd.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Crisis.

MATTERS went from bad to worse with the Modern Fourth at Rookwood.

Moreover, Mr. Slogger's tyranny was not confined to the Modern side alone.

There were a few lessons in which Moderns and Classicals were taken together.

On these occasions Jimmy Silver & Co., the Fistical Four of the Classical side, came in for some of the new master's devoted attentions.

This was particularly galling to the Classical juniors, for they declared that Mr. Slogger was exceeding his authority, as they were really pupils of Mr. Bootles.

However, what they thought or argued was of little consequence to the new master.

He ruled both Moderns and Classicals with THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 277.

a rod of iron when they were under his jurisdiction.

The juniors walked about Rookwood in terror of the man, for he continually popped up at the most unexpected times and places, and always found some excuse for imposing lines upon somebody.

The climax came one evening, a few days later.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were seated at the table in their study, furiously scribbling off a hundred lines each, which had been inflicted upon them for some trifling offence during the day.

Suddenly Tommy Dodd threw down his pen with an exclamation of disgust and anger.

"Look here, you kids," he said, with an air of boredom, "I've only got about twenty more of my hundred to do, so I'm going to give it a rest for a little while."

"Hear, hear!" agreed his chums.

"Old Slogger will have to fish for his lines if they're not done to time," said Tommy Cook despairingly.

"Faith, an' I'm wid ye!" remarked Doyle.

"I'd rather have a licking now and again than keep scribbling beastly lines!" went on Tommy Cook.

"Yes; old Manders is an absolute gem compared with this new rotter," remarked Tommy Dodd, moving towards the cupboard.

In another moment he had withdrawn the cage of white mice from the top shelf, and set it upon the floor.

"Let's have a bit of sport with these young jokers," he added, opening the cage door.

"Make 'em race along the floor," exclaimed Tommy Cook, dropping on to his knees.

"Begorra! My mouss'll be all over your two," said Doyle. "Come here, Patrick, ye spalpeen!"

Doyle grabbed up one of the mice, and stroked its glossy, white hair.

The white mice had been taught by the Modern juniors to perform several neat tricks, and they had more than once been raced along the study floor.

On this occasion, however, they seemed to misunderstand what was required of them, and, instead of running a proper race, they scurried a few feet along the floor, and ran into each other, immediately rolling over in a jumbled mass.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Patrick! Patrick! Come here, ye scoundrel!" cried Tommy Doyle. "Ye're playing the giddy goat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some mouse!" remarked Tommy Dodd.

"Playing the goat! Ha, ha!"

The mice were recovered, and a fresh attempt was made to get them to race.

The little white rodents persisted in doing anything but that which was required of them.

Tommy Dodd & Co. quite forgot about the new master in their excitement, and what was of still greater importance they had forgotten to lock the study door.

Suddenly they were brought back with a rush to the dangers of the situation by the sound of Mr. Slogger's voice in the passage.

He was reprimanding a Modern junior for sliding along the floor.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were inwardly grateful to that junior, for the angry voice of the new master just gave them sufficient warning of his approach.

"Look out!" muttered Tommy Cook, scrambling to his feet.

Tommy Dodd snatched up the three mice, and, without waiting to replace them in their cage, put them on the top shelf of the cupboard, and shut the door.

The three Tommies had just seated themselves and snatched up their pens as Mr. Slogger opened the door and entered the room.

He had heard the sounds of laughter proceeding from the study, and expected to find the juniors engaged in some form of amusement, which he would have declared a waste of time.

It was a great surprise to him, therefore, to find them seated at the table, apparently busy at their imposts.

He concealed his surprise, however, and, with his nose in the air, proceeded to look around for something else with which to find fault.

"This study is in a most disgraceful state of untidiness!" he rapped out suddenly.

"Yes, sir," replied Tommy Dodd, looking up.

"Don't say 'Yes, sir,' to me!" snapped Mr. Slogger.

"No, sir!"

"Confound you!" cried the new master. "How dare you answer me back!"

"No—"

"Tidy up that desk immediately! And I'll warrant the cupboard is in the same filthy muddle!"

The hearts of the Modern chums sank to their boots as Mr. Slogger advanced to the cupboard.

He flung open the door, and a moment later a wild yell burst from his lips.

"Ow! Gurr-ugh! Oooooo!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. started up in amazement. Then they beheld one of the white mice emerge from the top of the master's waistcoat.

"Help! Ow!" yelled Mr. Slogger. "Take away these fearful animals!"

Tommy Dodd dashed to the rescue, and gathered up the three white mice from various positions in the master's attire.

Mr. Slogger was by this time quite pale with fright and anger.

It so happened that Mr. Slogger hated mice beyond anything else on earth, and, unfortunately for the juniors, nothing could be so scared and angered him.

The Modern chums quaked in their boots as they thought of what would happen to them as a result of this little episode.

Mr. Slogger quickly began to recover his composure, and the expression on his face boded evil for Tommy Dodd & Co.

"Put those mice in their cage at once!" he rasped in his severest tones. "And don't let any of them come near me again!"

Tommy Dodd tremblingly obeyed, and looked at Mr. Slogger.

"You will all accompany me to the Head's study immediately!" snapped the master.

"Bring that cage and the mice with you!"

He turned to the door, followed by the Modern chums, who dreaded to think what would happen next.

They were not left long in suspense, however, for the Head was exceedingly angry when Mr. Slogger had told his story.

Tommy Dodd and his chums each received a severe caning, and the cage of white mice was left in the Head's study.

The three Moderns returned to their room wringing their hands, vowing vengeance against the new master, and bemoaning the loss of their pets.

"That's about the last giddy straw!" groaned Tommy Dodd, breathing on his aching palms.

"Faith, but it wasn't much like a straw!" howled Tommy Doyle, recalling the mighty swish of the Head's cane.

Dodd and Cook grinned, in spite of their sufferings.

"I didn't mean the cane, you idiot!" exclaimed the leader of the Modern chums.

"I meant old Slogger carting us off to the Head's study like that."

"Well, bedad, why didn't ye lock the door before ye brought out the cage?" demanded Doyle. "I've lost my Patrick all through you!"

"I like that!" exclaimed Dodd, in injured tones. "Why didn't you lock the door yourself?"

"Why, ye didn't tell me to!"

"Well, I can't tell you everything you ought to do, ass! Besides, it wouldn't have made any difference; we should have had to let the rotter in!"

"Peace, you two fatheads!" commanded Tommy Cook. "It's no good quarrelling now. What are we going to do about the Prussian?"

"We shall have to rack our brains for a wheeze to get revenge!" declared Tommy Dodd.

"Hear, hear!" replied the others.

"Now, I suggest—"

Tommy Dodd broke off abruptly as the door of the study opened, and in walked Mr. Slogger.

"You have not brought your impositions to me," he remarked coldly.

"No, sir."

"What excuse have you to offer?"

"We—we haven't had time to finish them, sir," said Tommy Dodd slowly.

"Nonsense!" rapped out the new master.

"You have had plenty of time. In order that you may learn to obey my orders, you shall each do me another hundred lines, to be delivered directly after breakfast to-morrow morning."

With his nose held high in the air, Mr. Slogger turned on his heel, and took his departure from the study.

Tommy Dodd & Co. sauntered out in despair shortly afterwards, to seek sympathy in the Modern common-room.

They soon discovered, however, that they had gone to the wrong place, for they found

the rest of the Modern Fourth pretty full up with their own troubles.

Nearly all the juniors had had impots, and had just delivered them up, and were now almost in revolt against the tyranny of the new master.

Had the bell not rung for bed shortly afterwards, something desperate may have occurred.

As it was, they retired to their dormitories, breathing wrath and revenge upon the oppressor.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Fate Steps In.

IT was after morning classes the next day. Tommy Dodd & Co. and Jimmy Silver & Co. were standing in a group in the quad, engaged in a earnest discussion.

Under normal circumstances Moderns and Classicals were the keenest rivals.

To all who understood the signs at Rookwood, the sight of the Modern chums and the Fistical Four banded together in peaceful conversation meant trouble for someone.

On this occasion it meant trouble for Mr. Slogger.

That morning his temper had known no bounds.

Classicals and Moderns had been taken together for the first lesson, and in an excess of temper Mr. Slogger had thrown a book at Jimmy Silver's head.

Consequently, the two parties were amalgamated in the common desire for revenge, and the leader of the Fistical Four had just announced to eager ears that he had thought of a wheeze.

"We know he's afraid of mice," declared Jimmy, "so therein lies the solution of the giddy problem!"

"But we haven't got any mice now," said Tommy Dodd perplexedly.

"We can get some, though," responded Silver. "My idea is to get, say, just a couple of ordinary grey mice in one of those wire traps that catches 'em alive—"

"Where from?" interrupted Tommy Cook.

"We could get 'em from old Sergeant Kettle," continued Jimmy. "There's a lot in the old Tower!"

"Yes, that's all right!" urged Tommy Dodd.

"Then the idea is to lock ourselves in the spare study along the corridor," went on Jimmy Silver, "and when Slogger comes along, let the mice out of the trap so that they run under the door into the passage just as he passes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!"

"You see, if we're perfectly quiet, he won't think about anyone being in there, and he'll come to the conclusion that the mice have just run out of a hole."

"Quite so," said Tommy Dodd. "He'll get a dickens of a fright, and that's all that matters to us."

So the juniors parted, having decided to carry out their plans the coming evening.

A mousetrap, containing two live mice, was duly obtained from the old sergeant who kept the tuckshop in the old Tower, Jimmy Silver having carefully avoided mentioning for what purpose they were required.

News of the wheeze somehow travelled round the Fourth Form, and Moderns and Classicals alike looked forward eagerly to its carrying out.

After tea that evening the Fistical Four and Tommy Dodd & Co. made their way to the empty study with the mousetrap.

When they turned into the corridor, however, a most amazing sight met their gaze.

About twenty Modern and Classical juniors had gathered outside the door of the study with the object of seeing the result of the "wheeze."

"You're a pack of asses to crowd round like this!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, addressing the mob. "If old Slogger happened to appear now there'd be a dickens of a row!"

He opened the study door as he spoke, and passed inside, followed by his chums and Tommy Dodd & Co.

But not by them alone. The crowd excitedly pressed in after them, and in less than two minutes the comparatively small room was packed to overflowing.

And still some half-dozen juniors were pushing and struggling in the doorway to gain admittance.

"There's no room for any more," said Jimmy Silver frantically. "If you don't clear off we shall all get nabbed, and the wheeze'll be ruined!"

So saying, he urged his chums to assist him in getting the door shut, and after a few minutes of grumbling outside the disappointed juniors retired from the corridor.

The scene inside the study was one of struggle and turmoil.

Jimmy Silver, with much difficulty, turned round from the door, and, with a despairing expression upon his face, bade the juniors cease making such a row.

The crush was frightful, and several times the mice and trap were in danger of being trampled upon.

At last, however, a certain amount of order and quietness was obtained, and Jimmy Silver essayed to open the door a little way, for the purpose of keeping a look-out for the appearance of Mr. Slogger.

In a few minutes he gave a warning exclamation over his shoulder to the seething crowd behind him.

Mr. Slogger was coming down the corridor from the end farthest from the disused study.

There was a buzz of excitement in the room, which was speedily suppressed by a whispered caution from Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy Silver was about to draw back into the room and prepare the mousetrap, when Mr. Slogger disappeared.

He had turned off the main corridor into a little-used passage which led to the masters' box-room.

Jimmy Silver emerged from the study and crept along the corridor and peeped round the corner.

In a moment the crowd was pressing on behind him like a pack of sheep after their leader.

They had just reached the entrance to the little passage when a most amazing thing happened.

A black mass was seen to fall from the ceiling of the passage straight on to the head and shoulders of the new master.

At the same moment he threw up his hands and let out a wild yell of alarm and anger.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the excited crowd of juniors in chorus.

Mr. Slogger swung round, and came dashing towards them, streaks of wet filth running down his face.

The crowd at once dispersed, the juniors making for cover in all directions.

Tommy Dodd & Co. and the Fistical Four, however, were recognised, and Mr. Slogger, in a perfect fury, commanded them to follow him immediately to the Head's study.

In an absolute frenzy he stalked along the corridor, followed by the seven juniors, who could scarcely contain themselves at the sight of his streaming face.

The Fourth-Formers had quickly tumbled to what had happened.

Just above the spot where disaster had befallen Mr. Slogger was a trapdoor, which led on to the roof.

The black filth which had descended upon his head had come through that opening, but from what source the boys had no idea.

Mr. Slogger, however, had at once jumped to the conclusion that they were the cause of his present deplorable condition.

Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, started up in surprise as the new master entered his room, followed by the juniors.

Jimmy Silver thought he detected a slight smile at the corners of the doctor's mouth as he gazed at Mr. Slogger.

"My dear sir," he exclaimed, "what ever has occurred?"

Mr. Slogger, in an almost uncontrollable voice, related what had happened, and declared that "these little beasts" had done it.

The Head looked sternly at Jimmy Silver, and demanded an explanation.

"We know nothing about it, sir!" answered Jimmy fearlessly.

"It's a lie!" shrieked Mr. Slogger. "It's a lie!"

"Pray do not upset yourself, Mr. Slogger," said the Head quietly. "We will investigate this matter at once."

Dr. Chisholm turned to Jimmy Silver.

"Are you speaking the truth, Silver?" he demanded, turning to the juniors again.

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy. "We know nothing about this."

It suddenly occurred to the Head that workmen had been busy on the roof all day, and he thought that therein might lie an explanation of the affair.

"You will wait here, then, while I go with Mr. Slogger to see what has happened," he said.

The Head left the study, followed by the master, and made his way to the little passage.

On the way Mr. Slogger endeavoured to clean himself up with his handkerchief, but the result was more appalling than ever.

He smeared the dirt over his face until his appearance was absolutely frightful.

Arrived at the passage, they beheld a man mopping up the dirt from the floor and walls below the trapdoor.

"What are you doing?" demanded the Head severely.

"Little accident, sir," said the man. "Me an' my mates 'ad orders from the boss to finish this 'ere job to-day, and I was left 'ere late to clear up."

"Humph! You don't seem to have been very successful," remarked Dr. Chisholm quietly.

"Well, you see, sir," answered the man, "I was shovelling up some dirt, an' I forgot all about that there trapdoor, and a shovelful of it fell through!"

At that moment the man caught sight of Mr. Slogger, who was standing back in the shadow. He could not restrain a grin. He realised at once what had happened.

"Very sorry, sir," he apologised to Mr. Slogger. "It was quite a accident!"

Mr. Slogger growled something about a "clumsy wretch," and the Head remarked that it was "very careless" of the man, and the two returned to the study.

"You may go back to your studies," said the Head to the juniors directly he entered the room. "I am satisfied that you are guiltless in this matter. Mr. Slogger has been the victim of an accident."

The Classical and Modern chums filed out, and all returned to the end study.

When the door was shut they gave vent to their feelings and laughed uproariously.

Mr. Slogger, meanwhile, was nearly bursting with wrath and disappointment. He had hoped to see them all receive a severe thrashing, and, instead, they had escaped scot-free.

The next morning the junior school at Rookwood heard with joy and thankfulness that Mr. Manders was returning in two days' time.

"Thank goodness old Sloggerino's going to-morrow!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd that evening, as he and his chums settled down to do a hundred lines each, as a result of the master's bad temper during the day.

The mousetrap, with its occupants, was returned to Sergeant Kettle, as it was deemed unnecessary to use them in fulfilment of the original plan.

Fate had stepped in on behalf of the juniors, who had witnessed Mr. Slogger's humiliy with joy.

The next day happiness reigned supreme at Rookwood, for the tyrant of the school took his departure, never to return again.

THE END.

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR, entitled

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STORY, DEALING  
WITH THE  
EARLY ADVENTURES  
OF  
TOM MERRY & CO.  
AT ST. JIM'S.

# THE TERRIBLE THREE'S MISTAKE!

BY  
MARTIN  
CLIFFORD

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Paper-chase.

"IT'S rotten!" said Tom Merry. "Simply rotten!" said Blake. "Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dolorously. "Awf'ly feachfully wotten, deah boys!"

It was. For it was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the day of the junior House match, when Tom Merry & Co. of the School House had intended to give Figgins & Co. of the New House the licking of their lives, and Figgins & Co. of the New House had intended to give the School House fellows a never-to-be-forgotten whacking.

One side must have been disappointed in any case; but, as it happened, both sides were disappointed, for the ground was too wet for playing at all.

And Tom Merry & Co., as they stared out of the window into the quadrangle, grumbled.

It is an ancient British privilege to grumble at British weather, and the School House juniors were doing it. The sun had come out after the rain, and was shining merrily down in the quadrangle, making the rain-drops sparkle on the leaves and the grass. But the footer-ground was soaked, and play that afternoon was out of the question.

If it had been merely the senior House match, concerning the Sixth and Fifth, it would not have mattered so much, as Monty Lowther thoughtfully observed. But it was the junior House match, and concerned their noble selves.

That made all the difference, and Tom Merry & Co. agreed unanimously and emphatically that it was rotten.

Tom Merry had made a pilgrimage to the ground to see whether there was a chance. He came to the conclusion that there wasn't. And he came back to the School House with muddy boots and a frowning brow, and pronounced that it was decidedly, undeniably, and exceedingly rotten.

"The question is, what are we going to do with the afternoon?" growled Lowther. "Footer is off—right off!"

"Might be able to take some photographs!" Manners remarked, in a thoughtful way. "I'll let you fellows see me take some snaps, if you like."

"Br-r-r!" "Pewpaws we might get up a little concert," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I should be vewy happy to contwibute a few tenah solos."

"You might be!" agreed Lowther. "But the happiness would be strictly limited to yourself, you see."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What about a paper-chase?" asked Blake.

"Good idea!" said Tom Merry. "Who says paper-chase? Hands up for hare and hounds!"

Many hands went up. It was obviously the best way of filling up an otherwise empty afternoon.

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "Look out for the scent—Gussy's contributions to the next number of the 'Weekly' will do. Tear 'em up small—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"And Skimpole's scientific books," said Lowther. "It will save him from the awful labour of reading them. Who's going to be hare?"

"Three hares this time," said Tom Merry. "We three, as we're the best runners in the Lower School."

"Good egg!" said Manners and Lowther heartily.

The Fourth Formers did not say "Good egg!" They glared.

"Well, of all the silly asses!" began Jack Blake emphatically.

"Yaas, wathah! Of all the cheekay duffahs—"

"Of all the impudent chumps—"

"You chaps leave off talking about yourselves for a bit," suggested Lowther, "and let's get to bizney. I think we had better take some Thatcho with us, in case we get tired."

"What on earth for?" demanded Manners. "It's a hare-restorer," explained Lowther.

They fell upon Lowther, and smote him hip and thigh. Then the scent was made, all sorts and conditions of papers being torn up for the purpose.

Old exercises, and fly-leaves of volumes, and old magazines and numbers of Tom Merry's "Weekly," and scientific books belonging to Skimpole, and volumes of poetry belonging to D'Arcy, were added to the pile, and three bags were soon filled.

The word went round that hare and hounds were starting, and a large pack gathered. Figgins & Co., and a crowd of New House fellows, joined the pack, and more than a hundred fellows lined up in the quadrangle to start.

Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, was in the quad, and he smilingly agreed to start the hunt. The Terrible Three, looking very fit in their running clothes, with their bags of scent slung on, stood ready for the Housemaster to give the word.

The ground was wet, but there was a bright sunshine, and it was likely to turn out a very pleasant afternoon.

"The run goes round by the wood, over the moor, and back to Rycombe over the bridge, and the level crossing," said Tom Merry. "When you fellows get in, you'll find us at tea."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Go!" said the Housemaster.

The Shell fellows trotted off, and disappeared out of the gates of St. Jim's.

They had five minutes' start before the pack was let loose on them, and they made the most of it. The three hares were in splendid form, and they ran fleetly down the road, and took the path over the fields towards Wayland.

There the scent was dropped as they ran. They were in the midst of wide green fields when the sound of a bugle on the clear air was wafted to their ears.

"That's Blake's toot!" said Monty Lowther. "They're after us!"

"Come on!"

The hares ran on fleetly.

They turned into the wood, leaving the scent among the underbrush, and crossed the woodland stream wading. All the hounds who did not like water would have a long way to go round there, and the pack would be diminished.

On the opposite bank the scent was laid again, and the juniors came out at last on the high-road to Wayland. They turned off before they reached the town, however, and ran upon the wide, lonely moor, leaving the scent among the gorse and ferns.

Another ta-ra-ra on the bugle warned them that they were seen, and they looked back and saw the figures of the pursuers dotting the moor in the distance.

"They're sticking to us!" said Monty Lowther. "Let's give 'em a run across Mr. Oates' farm—Oates will make things pleasant for 'em!"

Tom Merry looked serious.

"Oates is a bad-tempered old chap!" he

said. "He may cut up rusty. You know, he's sworn a solemn swear that he won't allow schoolboys across his land, ever since the time he caught Levison and Mellish chasing his ducks."

"But we're nice good boys, quite Erics, in fact, and he ought to be pleased to see us."

"He ought to be—but he won't be!" Tom Merry laughed.

"And we shall get through all right, and we can leave the pack to argue it out with Oates, or go round!" added Lowther.

"Oh, all right!"

The juniors dipped into a deep hollow of the moor, that hid them from the sight of the pack. Keeping under cover of the depression in the ground, they left the scent along the hollow, and then through deep thickets, till they came to the first field belonging to the extensive farm of Mr. Oates.

It was very likely that they would get through Mr. Oates' land uncaught, but the pack would probably find trouble there. But that, as Monty Lowther observed, was their business.

Unfortunately for their calculations, it was the hares that found the trouble.

As they came dashing across the field, leaving the scent in their wake, a good distance now ahead of the pack, a portly gentleman in gaiters, with a very ruddy face, stepped from the farmhouse in the distance and sighted them.

His ruddy face became ruddier at the sight of the three schoolboys tearing across his fields, and leaving the trail of torn paper. He waved a riding-whip in the air, and shouted to them.

"Hi, there! Get off my land! Go back! D've hear?"

The juniors apparently did not hear. They kept on. The stout farmer began running to intercept them.

"It's all right!" panted Tom Merry. "We shall get past before he can stop us. The pack can talk to him!"

The three juniors dashed on. The farmer failed to intercept them, but he came thundering in their wake, gasping for breath as he ran.

"Hi, Garge! Hi, Garge! Hi, Joe!" he roared.

Two stout countrymen appeared from a haystack, with pitchforks in their hands. They looked at the farmer, and they looked at the running juniors.

"Stop 'em!" roared Mr. Oates. "Stop them! D've hear?"

The two yokels stood in the path of the Terrible Three, with the evident intention of stopping them.

"Bump 'em over!" said Tom Merry. "We can't stop now! I don't want to go back and talk to Oates!"

"Ha, ha! No!"

But it was not so easy to bump over the yokels. As the schoolboys bore down upon them, they put up their pitchforks in a defensive attitude, and the Terrible Three had to halt. They could not run on the prongs of the pitchforks. Garge and Joe grinned.

"Happen you'd better stop, young measters," said Garge.

"Let's get by, like good chaps!" said Tom Merry.

But Garge shook his head. Evidently he was not a good chap.

The Terrible Three looked back. Farmer Oates was lumbering on, and he had a big mastiff with him. The juniors did not like the look of the farmer, and they liked still less the look of the mastiff.

Tom Merry whistled softly.

"Oates is a bad-tempered old chap!" he

said.

Tom Merry whistled softly.

"Looks to me as if we're in a fix!" he murmured.

"Dodge them across the field!" said Manners.

But the farmer shouted again.

"Stop, you young raskils! Fetch 'em, Caesar! Fetch 'em!"

He came panting up.

"You try to run, and Caesar'll stop you, fast enough!" he grunted. "Mark 'em, Caesar!"

The mastiff showed his teeth and growled. Between the farmer and his men and the mastiff, the unfortunate hares had no chance. They had to stop.

"Look here," said Tom Merry: "we're doing no harm trotting over the field, Mr. Oates."

The farmer grunted.

"Some of you was chasing my ducks the other day—"

"That wasn't us! We wouldn't do it!"

"You're all the same," said Mr. Oates. "And ain't you seen the board—'Trespassers will be prosecuted.—By border?'"

"Yes; we thought that was your little joke, you know," explained Monty Lowther.

Mr. Oates grunted.

"You'll find it ain't a joke!" he said. "You belong to St. Jim's, I suppose?"

"Ahem!"

"I'll soon find out. I'm going to Rylcombe presently, and I'll take you in the trap, and drive you up to the school," said Mr. Oates. "I dare say your 'eadmaster will recognise you."

The juniors regarded one another in dismay. To be taken back to St. Jim's in Mr. Oates' trap, and delivered up to the Head—it was not to be thought of. But there was no escape.

"I say, Mr. Oates—" began Tom Merry.

The farmer interrupted him.

"Don't you say nothing," he said. "Tain't for you to talk. Bring 'em along, Garge and Joe, and I'll lock 'em up in the stable till we're ready to take out the trap! Pass the word round to the other 'ands that there are a mob of schoolboys yonder to be kept off the land."

And the Terrible Three, five minutes later, were disposed of in Mr. Oates' stable, and the key was turned upon them.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Dash for Liberty.

"MY only sainted aunt!" groaned Monty Lowther.

"Oh, dear!"

"Great pip!"

The Terrible Three bemoaned their fate.

The run that had started so cheerfully seemed likely to end in disaster.

They were locked up in Mr. Oates' stable, and they had to remain there till Mr. Oates was ready for his afternoon drive to Rylcombe. And then he would call at St. Jim's with the three juniors in his trap, to ascertain whether they belonged to that school—as he was pretty certain they did.

The juniors knew what the result would be. Dr. Holmes would have no choice but to punish them for trespassing on the farmer's land.

"Come to think of it, it's wrong to trespass!" said Manners thoughtfully.

Monty Lowther grunted.

"Only just thought of that?" he inquired.

"But Oates is a beast, all the same."

"Must be a direct descendant of Titus Oates, I should think!" growled Tom Merry. "Almost wish now that we'd fought for it. But you can't punch pitchforks and mastiffs!"

"We hadn't a chance! What a rotten end of a run!"

"Disgusting!"

"Rotten!"

"The farmer's men will be keeping the pack off, though," said Tom Merry thoughtfully, after a pause. "They'll have to go round—and it's a good way. If we could get out of this, we might get ahead of them still!"

"But we can't get out!"

"We'll try!"

Tom Merry tried the door of the stable. It was securely locked on the outside. There was a ladder into the loft over the stable, and he mounted into the loft. The loft doors were closed, but there was a little window, not made to open. Tom Merry looked through the window; it commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country.

For in the distance he could see back the way they had come, and he caught sight of the pack. More than fifty fellows in St. Jim's colours had been stopped on the border of Mr. Oates' ground by a group of farm-labourers, armed with pitchforks.

The pack were arguing hotly with the farmer's men, who evidently refused to let them pass, and declined to listen to their reasonings. Tom Merry could see Arthur Augustus D'Arcy laying down the law to Garge, who was grinning stolidly.

"Well, Sister Anne, do you see anything?" demanded Lowther. The chums of the Shell had followed Tom into the loft.

"They've stopped the pack!" said Tom Merry.

"That's good!"

"And I fancy about all the farm hands are over there—nearly a quarter of a mile away—blocking the way!" Tom Merry remarked.

"If we could get out of this, there wouldn't be anybody to stop us. The mastiff's over there, too—it's a case of all hands to repel boarders!"

Monty Lowther looked from the little window.

"I can't see old Oates among them, though," he remarked.

"Well, we could handle Oates by himself, without his blessed mastiff and his Garges and Joes with their pitchforks."

"This window isn't made to open."

"We can change all that, though. A window can be made to open—by shoving something through it. It's quite simple."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the only way, and the Terrible Three realised it. They did not want to do any damage to Mr. Oates' property, and if they could have smashed the window without damaging it they would willingly have done so. But it was evidently necessary to smash it, and the damage had to be risked. Tom Merry looked round for a weapon. There was nothing but hay in the loft.

"Shove an elbow through it," said Lowther. "Those rotten sashes won't stand a shove!"

"Good! Go it, Monty!"

"Eh?"

"I said go it!" said Tom Merry.

"I'm waiting for you to go it!" said Lowther pleasantly. "Might get cut!"

"Just what I was thinking," said Tom Merry.

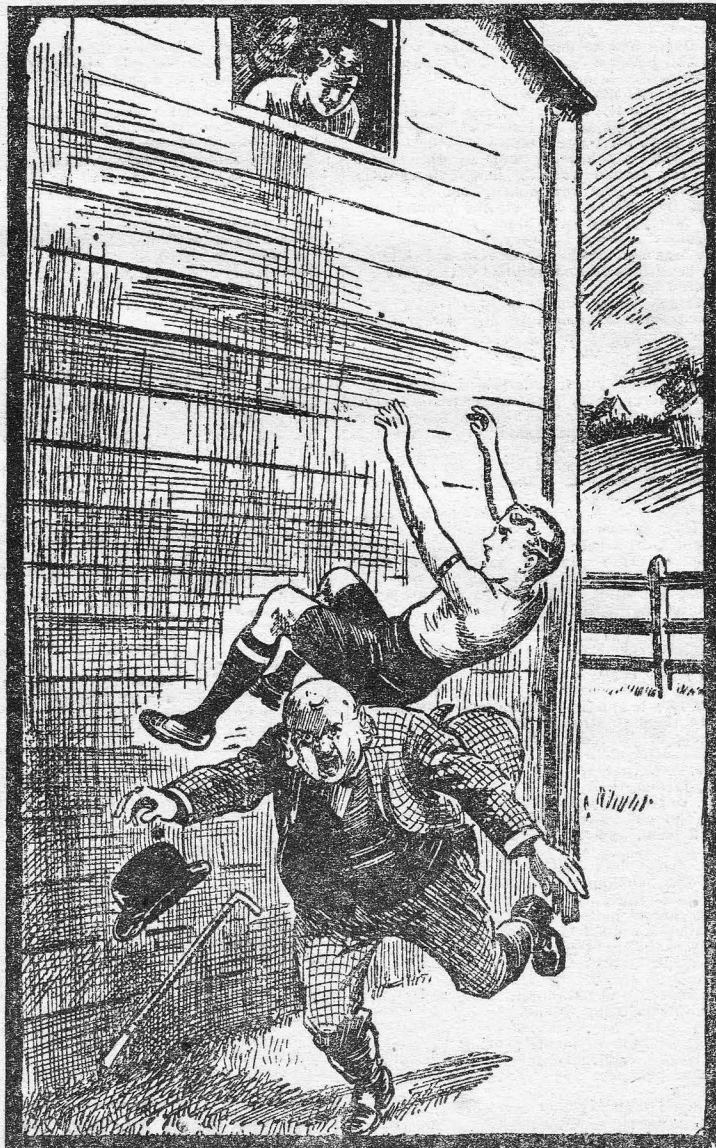
"Well, go ahead! The farmer may come any minute to take us to the school."

"Ahem!"

"A leader's place is to lead!" Manners remarked, in a reflective sort of way. "I may be mistaken, of course, but that's what I've always thought."

"Go it, Tom!"

Tom Merry laughed.



As the portly farmer arrived beneath him, Tom Merry let go, and he fell—and landed fairly on Mr. Oates' broad shoulders. Mr. Oates rolled over, and Tom rolled over him. "Quick!" gasped Lowther.

"Look here, you two fellows hold me up, and I'll try my boots on it!" he said.

"Well, that's not a bad idea." Tom Merry mounted on the shoulders of his chums, and crashed his boots upon the little window. The frail sashes and the glass flew out together.

Crash, crash, crash! There was a shivering of broken fragments of glass on the ground outside. Tom Merry jumped down from his chums' shoulders. "Buck up!" he said. "The farmer will have heard that. We've got to clear before he can call his men back."

"Quick's the word, then." Tom Merry, carefully avoiding the remaining fragments of glass, climbed through the little window, and hung on outside with his hands. There was then a drop of eight feet to the ground, but that did not trouble him much. But just as he was ready to drop, the stout farmer came tearing round the stable. He had heard the smashing of the glass.

Mr. Oates stood petrified for a moment as he saw the shivered glass on the ground, the broken window, and the junior hanging to the ledge.

Then he uttered an oath, and strode towards Tom Merry, grasping his riding-whip.

Tom was hanging in a specially favourable position to be lashed with the whip, and Mr. Oates had no doubt that after a lash or two the junior would be glad to scramble in at the broken window again.

But he did not know Tom Merry. As the portly farmer arrived beneath him Tom Merry let go, and he fell, and landed fairly upon Mr. Oates' broad shoulders.

His fall was broken, and, by the terrific roar the farmer gave, it might have been supposed that he was broken, too.

Mr. Oates rolled over on the ground, and Tom Merry rolled over him.

"Quick!" gasped Lowther. He was out of the window in a twinkling, and he dropped, and rolled on the farmer's gaitered legs.

Manners came bundling down the next moment, and bumped into Mr. Oates' chest. The farmer gasped and roared.

"Ow, ow! Oh, Garge! Joe! Caesar! Yow! Yah!"

The gasping juniors scrambled up. Tom Merry, with great presence of mind, picked up the farmer's whip, and tossed it upon the roof of the stable.

Then the juniors ran. The farmer staggered up.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Ow, Caesar! Garge! Joe! Groogh!"

He cast a vain glance round for his whip, and then dashed after the juniors.

The farmer's wife came running out of the house as they dashed away, but they avoided a collision, and ran round her, leaving the stout dame staring blankly after them as they sped across the fields.

"Make for the level crossing!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!" They ran fleetly on.

After them came Mr. Oates, lumbering along like a runaway rhinoceros, and shouting to them to stop—a thing they were very unlikely to do under the circumstances.

Field after field was crossed at a terrific speed, and that speed told sooner upon the stout farmer than upon the lithe juniors.

Mr. Oates dropped behind. At the end of the third field the juniors looked back, and saw the farmer at a standstill.

Mr. Oates had halted at the last fence, and was shaking both fists after them in helpless rage.

The juniors halted, too. The terrific burst had almost winded them.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "That was a run! We're well out of that!"

"He'll go up to the school and complain for a cert!" said Manners. "He can't have liked our dropping on him!"

"Ha, ha! No, come on! After all, he mayn't be able to identify us, if he goes to the Head! Sufficient for the run is the trouble thereof, anyway! Good-bye, Mr. Oates!"

Monty Lowther kissed his hand to the enraged farmer.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he called out. "We'll meet you round the bandstand another time, ducky!"

Whereas Mr. Oates seemed more furious than ever. He began scrambling over the fence, as if to take up the pursuit again, and the juniors started to run once more, dropping the scent as they ran.

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In a few minutes more they were past the border of Mr. Oates' land, and the farmer had disappeared from view. They ran on at a more moderate pace down towards the railway-line and the level crossing.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Gallant Deed.

THE Terrible Three chuckled as they ran.

They had escaped from duress vile, and if there was to be trouble afterwards, they could meet that when it came. It was no use meeting troubles halfway. They were still well ahead of the pack.

The pack would have to go round Mr. Oates' farm, and pick up the trail again on the other side, and they were evidently not round yet, for the hares could see no sign of them.

The Terrible Three felt that they were entitled to take it a little easy.

Ahead of them was the railway-track, with the level crossing. Beyond that was the lane to Rylcombe and the run home. It looked as if the hares would get home easily ahead of the hounds.

The level crossing was approached by a stile on either side, and the railway line was marked off by a low fence. There was a signal-box in the distance.

As the juniors came running easily down the green slope towards the railway they caught sight of the signal and a train in the distance.

"That's the London express," said Manners. "Better wait for it to go by! It passes this level crossing jolly quick!"

And the juniors slackened down to a walk. There was no hurry, and they did not want to be foolhardy. But suddenly, as they sauntered on towards the stile, Tom Merry gave a jump.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "What's the matter?"

Tom Merry did not reply. His face had gone suddenly white. Without a word he broke into a desperate run for the level-crossing.

"Stop!" roared Manners. "Stop, Tom, you ass! The express!"

"You can't get across in time!" shrieked Lowther. "Are you mad? Stop!"

Tom Merry did not heed, did not even hear.

He was running for the railway-line as if his life depended on it.

There was a screech from the engine as the train came thundering along the line. For a moment Manners and Lowther believed that Tom Merry had taken leave of his senses. Then they saw what he had seen.

In the very centre of the railway-track was a little girl of five or six. She was sitting there, and the high hedge hid her from the view of the man in the signal-box, and until he rounded the bend the engine-driver could not see her; and then, of course, it would be too late!

The unconscious child was in the path of the express, while a horrible death was rushing down upon her at lightning speed.

The juniors turned white as chalk.

They halted, petrified. The train would be by in a few seconds, before they could reach their chum to drag him back from death. For they knew what Tom Merry meant to do—to dash upon the railway-track and drag the child to safety, or—

They felt sick.

"There's no time!" panted Lowther. "He'll be— Oh!"

He could not finish. They watched, their brains in a whirl of horror.

A shriek again from the engine! The child, startled, looked round. Tom Merry did not climb the stile; he cleared it at a single bound.

Then he was upon the track. The train was rushing down upon him. The engine-driver had seen all now, and his face was white, for it was too late.

Tom Merry grasped the child. He could almost feel the rushing engine

upon him. He made one desperate bound for safety, with the child in his arms.

He was rolling on the ground the next moment, and the train was roaring by with a thunder of wheels.

Thunder, thunder! The express roared on.

Tom Merry staggered up dazedly. The child was in his arms, unhurt. The junior gazed almost stupidly after the vanishing train. He had succeeded, but he had been so near to death that his brain was swimming with it.

Not till the train had passed could Manners and Lowther see him again, and for those horrible seconds they did not know whether their chum was under the grinding wheels. But when the express had flashed by they saw him standing on the further side of the track, holding the little girl, who was crying with alarm.

"Tom!" yelled Lowther.

"Tom!" shrieked Manners.

"It—it's all right!" gasped Tom Merry.

A freckled, fresh-faced young woman came running from the adjoining field, shrieking hysterically. She clasped the little girl from Tom Merry's arm, weeping over her.

"It's all right now, miss," said Tom Merry. "She's not hurt!"

The girl could not reply. She could only sob. The juniors understood that the child was her little sister, and had wandered away, and the young woman had seen her on the railway-track only when Tom Merry seized her to spring for safety.

She could not speak, but the child was speaking, far from realising the fearful danger she had escaped.

"It's all right now," said Tom Merry confidently. "Nothing to cry about, you know."

"Oh, thank you, sir—thank you, sir! What would mother have said if—if—!" She could say no more.

"Jolly glad we came by in time!" said Tom Merry.

And the juniors raised their caps and walked on.

Manners and Lowther regarded their chum with somewhat peculiar looks. Tom Merry was silent. He had passed through the valley of the shadow of death, and for the moment his sunny face was clouded.

"Well, Tom?" said Manners at last.

"Well?" said Tom Merry, coming out of his reverie with a start.

"You awful ass!"

"Eh?"

"You frabjous fathead!" said Manners, in measured tones. "Do you know that when you started to run for that kid there simply wasn't a dog's chance for you?"

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"I'm afraid I didn't stop to think," he replied.

"Just like you, wasn't it?" said Lowther. "I suppose so," said Tom.

"And we both think you're a silly, fat-headed, frabjous ass, and the rippigest silly idiot in the world!" exclaimed Manners. And then he fell upon Tom Merry and simply hugged him. "Oh, Tom, old man—"

"Here, cheese it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Have you gone off your rocker?"

"You—you don't know what we felt like when we had to wait for the train to go by before we could see you," said Manners, with a break in his voice. "Oh, Tom, you fathead! Do you know I feel like blubbing?"

"My hat, don't do that! Let's stop in the village and have some ginger-pop at Mrs. Murphy's. It'll set you up."

And the juniors laughed.

"Not a word about this at the school," said Tom Merry, after the visit to Mrs. Murphy's, where the ginger-pop had been duly discussed.

"Why not?" demanded Lowther.

"He's afraid of being made a giddy hero of!" grinned Manners. "Why, I was thinking out a splendid descriptive article for the 'Weekly'—"

"Look here—"

"And I'm going to do a poem on the subject for the 'Weekly,'" said Lowther— "something in the form of a limerick, like this:

"There's a champion duffer named Merry,  
Who's a very soft idiot—very—"

"That's all right for the beginning, isn't it? Very descriptive, and—"

"Oh, dry up, Monty! Look here, don't jaw about this at the school, or it will come out that we're the three chaps who were on Mr. Oates' land, and jumped on him from his

### TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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own window. We don't want to give ourselves away."

"Something in that," said Lowther, with a nod. "But you are entitled to march home with musical honours—See the Conquering Hero Comes, you know—"

"Shut up!" roared Tom Merry. But it was agreed that the adventure should not be mentioned. The story would infallibly lead to the identification of the Terrible Three as the three juniors who had handled Mr. Oates so roughly.

The hares arrived at the school, and they changed out of their running clothes, and they were cheerfully sitting down to tea in the study when the pack, tired and exasperated, came straggling in.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Really Good Idea.

"**B**AI JOVE! Here the boundahs are!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark as he looked into Tom Merry's study. The passage was crowded with tired and muddy hounds.

The Terrible Three grinned at them serenely.

"Got home?" asked Lowther, in surprise. "Didn't expect you yet!"

"Look rather a muddy crowd, don't they?" remarked Manners. "You want a wash, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! I think I do," said D'Arcy. "I have had a tussle with a wuff farmah man. He wanted to pvenent me fwom followin' the twack, you know, and, of course, I insisted upon passin'. And the wuff beast dwooped me into a ditch, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "There is nothin' to laugh at, deah boys. It was wotten!"

"We had to go round Oates' land, and picked up the trail at the level-crossing," said Blake. "Of course, we should have caught you if it hadn't been for old Oates."

"Rats!" "We understood from the farmer's men that they had locked you up in a stable," said Herries. "How did you get away?"

"Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage," said Monty Lowther. "We hopped it. Go and wash yourself. I told you we should be having tea when you came back—so we are. Seat!"

"And the muddy pack scatted. "Beaten those kids!" said Monty Lowther, cracking a fourth egg with great satisfaction. "Of course, they didn't have a look-in!"

"Of course not!" said his chums, in hearty agreement.

"But I jolly well hope old Oates won't be along here to-morrow morning with a giddy complaint," said Lowther. "He looked very waxy when we left him."

"I don't suppose he'll be able to pick us out," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "If he complains that three fellows here trespassed on his land, he'll have to identify them. We shall look a bit different in Etons, you know. He saw us in running-things. And we might make ourselves look a bit different, too."

"Good egg! We'll disguise ourselves if he comes to identify us," said Lowther, with a chuckle. "I can squirt when I like. You can pull your faces a different way, you know, and look different. Let's do some practice after tea."

And when tea was over, the Terrible Three did some practice before the glass, and pulled the most horrible faces.

Blake looked into the study later, and he gave quite a jump as he saw Monty Lowther squinting horribly, and Manners with his mouth twisted up one side, and Tom Merry wrinking his brows in a dreadful frown.

Blake stared at them blankly.

"Gone dotty?" he exclaimed.

Lowther squinted at him, and Blake backed out in alarm.

The Terrible Three burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's all right, Blake."

"What on earth—"

"We're practising disguising our chivvies, in case Oates comes along to-morrow," Monty Lowther explained. "Do you think he'll know me with that squint?"

"Ha, ha! I fancy not! It makes you look horribly ugly," said Blake. "But it's a different kind from your natural looks—"

"What?" "Why not try to make-up as a good-looking chap?" suggested Blake. "Then there wouldn't be the slightest risk of identification"

A volume of Virgil hurtled through the air, and Blake retreated, chuckling, into the passage, and slammed the door just in time.

That the incensed Mr. Oates would come

up to the school to complain was certain. As had happened once before on a somewhat similar occasion, the Head would order the boys to be assembled, and the farmer would have to identify the culprits.

If he succeeded in identifying them, there would be a painful interview with the Head afterwards.

The scheme of altering their faces so as to escape identification seemed an excellent one to the juniors, and they did a considerable amount of practice.

When they came down to the common-room, after finishing their preparation that evening, they had on what Lowther called their new faces.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon them as they came in. "Gweat Scott! What's the mattah with your eye, Lowthah?"

"Ass!" said Lowther.

"Weally, deah boy—"

Lowther squinted at him.

"Do you recognise me?" he demanded.

"Yaas, you ass!"

"Well, Oates doesn't know me so well as you do. The squint will do for him. He'll remember seeing a nice-looking chap, and he won't know me if I squint."

"Bai Jove! That's wathah a good ideah!" said the swell of St. Jim's thoughtfully. "The old boundah is sure to come and complain. But why not disguise yourselves pwo-pahly, deah boys? You could put on false moustaches—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for laughter in that remark. There is nothing like a false moustache for a weally good disguise."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "I think I can see Ralton's face when he finds three kids in Hall with moustaches on!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins of the New House looked in. Lowther squinted at him, and Figgins stared.

"Got a pain anywhere, Lowther?" he asked.

"Oh, you ass!" said Lowther crossly. "Do you recognise me, too?"

"Know that face anywhere!" said Figgins cheerfully. "You don't often see a face like yours, Lowther, excepting on some old-fashioned gargoyles—"

"Look here, you New House bounder—"

"Don't want to, t'anks," said Figgins, and with that the New House chums took their departure.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Not a Success.

"**S**ISTER ANNE, Sister Anne, spottest thou anybody coming?"

It was Monty Lowther who asked the question the next afternoon. Figgins of the New House had kindly consented to keep watch for Mr. Oates, if he should appear in sight.

For if Mr. Oates came the Terrible Three had to carry out their new and first-class idea of disguising themselves from recognition by contorting their features.

It was Figgins whom Monty Lowther playfully addressed as Sister Anne. Afternoon lessons were over, and the farmer had not come, though the Terrible Three had sat through lessons in the momentary anticipation of hearing his voice.

That Mr. Oates would forgive them for the damage they had done—though quite against their will—was not to be hoped for; and it was only a question what time he would arrive to draw down the wrath of the Head upon them.

"Sister Anne! Sister Anne!"

Figgins grinned.

"Look out, you chaps!" he said.

"Can you see him?" asked the Terrible Three in chorus.

"Yes; I've just spotted Bluebeard in his trap. He's coming here."

"Oh, crumbs!"

Monty Lowther peered cautiously round a corner of the gateway. There was Farmer Oates, driving in his trap toward the school, red and ruddy as ever.

He did not look bad-tempered, certainly, but there could not be any doubt about what he was coming to St. Jim's for. The Terrible Three groaned.

"All because three innocent children trotted over his beastly land!" said Monty Lowther. "What on earth was land made for?"

"Direct descendant of Titus Oates, I know that!" grunted Manners. "I've a good mind to ask him after his ancestors!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get out of sight!" said Figgins. "He'll spot you as soon as he gets in here. Go and bury yourselves, and don't show up unless the school is called together."

"What-ho!"

And the Terrible Three promptly disappeared. Figgins took off his cap very respectfully to Farmer Oates as he drove in in the trap. The stout farmer drew up. He recognised Figgins as one of the pack that had been kept off his land, and prevented from following the hares, the day before.

"Hallo! You were one of the young rascals!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, please!" said Figgins. "I suppose you haven't come here to complain about yourself for keeping me off your land, have you?"

The farmer laughed.

"Haw, haw! No, young gentleman!"

Then he drove on, leaving Figgins in a state of great astonishment. The New House junior could not understand the farmer's good temper.

Figgins had heard of the famous gentleman who was the kindest-hearted man that ever cut a throat. Certainly Farmer Oates looked the best-tempered man that ever came to get a junior cased.

Mr. Ratcliff encountered Farmer Oates as the latter descended from his trap.

Mr. Ratcliff knew the farmer by sight, and as the portly gentleman naturally had no business at the school, the Housemaster guessed at once that he had come to lodge some complaint. That was a matter after Mr. Ratcliff's own heart, and he saluted the farmer very politely.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Oates!"

"Afternoon, sir," said Mr. Oates. "I've dropped in to see Dr. Holmes!"

"I trust none of the boys have been trespassing on your land again," said Mr. Ratcliff, not quite stating the facts. As a matter of fact, he trusted they had.

"That's it, sir!" said Mr. Oates. "Three young rascals, sir!"

"You know their names?"

"That's jest what I've come to find out!"

"Ah! Doubtless you could identify them?"

"Quite sure of that, sir!"

"Pray come in! I will take you to the Head at once. Dr. Holmes will do everything he can, I am sure, to see justice done."

"I hope so," said Mr. Oates, with a peculiar twinkle in his eyes.

Mr. Ratcliff graciously showed him the way to the Head's study. He presented Mr. Oates.

"Mr. Oates has called to complain of some of the juniors trespassing on his land yesterday, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I have taken the liberty of bringing him to you at once."

And Mr. Ratcliff retired, in the comfortable conviction that there was trouble brewing for somebody, and probably for the boys he specially disliked.

Ten minutes later the word went forth for the junior Forms to assemble in Hall.

Jack Blake brought the news to Tom Merry's study, where the Terrible Three were lying low. Monty Lowther met him with a horrible squint, and he recoiled.

"My hat! Don't spring that too suddenly on old Oates, or he'll have apoplexy!" he said. "You're wanted. All junior Forms to assemble in Hall."

"No chance for three kids to keep out, I suppose?" said Tom Merry, with a sigh.

Blake shook his head.

"No; the prefects have been instructed to see that all the juniors are there."

"Oh, rats!"

And the Terrible Three came disconsolately downstairs. After the feast comes the reckoning, and the hour of retribution had evidently arrived.

The junior Forms—the Shell, the Fourth, the Third, and the Second—assembled in Hall. The first—the Babes, as they were called—were not wanted. Shell and Fourth and Third and Second lined up, the Terrible Three keeping as far back as possible in the ranks of the Shell.

The prefects called over the names to ascertain that all were there. Then the Head entered the Hall by the upper doors. He was accompanied by the stout and ruddy farmer. Dr. Holmes glanced over the assembly.

"My boys," he said, "I understand that there was a junior paper-chase yesterday, in which most of the junior boys took part. There were three hares, and they crossed the land belonging to Mr. Oates, in spite of the prohibition. These three boys are wanted. Let them come forward."

There was no movement.

The Terrible Three looked as unconscious

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as they could. Kildare glanced at them, and Monty Lowther had the audacity to half-close one eye and wink at the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare almost burst into a laugh, but he turned it into a cough just in time.

"If the three boys do not come forward, Mr. Oates will identify them," said the Head.

Silence.

"Pray pick out the boys, Mr. Oates."

"Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Oates.

And the stout farmer descended from the dais and came along the assembled Forms. He scanned all the boys carefully as he passed.

He recognised many members of the pack, but he had nothing to do with them; they had not entered his land.

He paused as he came opposite the Terrible Three.

Monty Lowther was squinting atrociously, Manners had a big chunk of toffee in his cheek, giving him an appearance of bad toothache, and Tom Merry had twisted his mouth sideways in a really alarming manner. Thus they faced the inspection of the farmer.

In Etons and broad collars they looked, of course, very different from their appearance in running clothes, and, added to the contortion of their features, that should have saved them from recognition.

The farmer, in fact, did not recognise them, but he was struck by Lowther's squint, and he stopped and stared at him as if fascinated.

"Good heavens!" he murmured.

He was about to pass on when Mr. Ratcliff's rasping voice rapped out. Mr. Ratcliff really had no business there at all; but Mr. Ratcliff was a gentleman who had a finger in as many pies as he could.

Mr. Ratcliff was on the spot to lend any assistance possible in identifying the culprits. And Mr. Ratcliff spotted at once the facial contortions of the Terrible Three.

"Tom Merry!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?" said Tom, speaking with some difficulty, as he did not want to untwist his mouth while the farmer's eyes were upon him.

"Why are you twisting your face in that ridiculous manner?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff.

"Eh, sir?"

"Is it to prevent recognition, Merry?"

"Oh, sir!"

"Lowther, this is the first time I have seen you afflicted with a squint! Is it natural, Lowther, or is it assumed?"

"Oh!" murmured Lowther.

"Manners, take that out of your mouth, whatever it is!"

"Oh!"

"And kindly resume your normal appearance," said Mr. Ratcliff acidly. "I fear that you are attempting to deceive Mr. Oates."

The Terrible Three looked at Mr. Ratcliff as if they could eat him. The game was up now; and Lowther's squint and Manners' swelling in the face and Tom Merry's twisted mouth disappeared all together.

Mr. Oates uttered an exclamation.

"They are the three!"

"I thought so," said Mr. Ratcliff grimly. "Kindly step out here, Merry and Manners and Lowther!"

The chums of the Shell, with feelings too deep for words, stepped out.

"Ere they are, sir!" said Mr. Oates.

The Terrible Three followed him to the Head. Dr. Holmes looked at them over his gold-rimmed pince-nez.

"Merry! Manners! Lowther! You were the hares in the paper-chase yesterday afternoon," asked Dr. Holmes.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry resignedly.

"Why did you not come forward?"

"We—we didn't want to be licked, sir."

The Head coughed.

"They were attempting to avoid recognition, Dr. Holmes, by contorting their features," said Mr. Ratcliff spitefully.

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"As these boys admit the fact, the matter is now settled," he said.

"Not quite, sir," said Mr. Oates. "I've got a question to put to these young gentlemen, with your permission, sir."

"Certainly, Mr. Oates."

"If—if you please, Mr. Oates," said Lowther meekly, "we're awfully sorry! It was really your fault the window was broken."

"What!"

"If you had had your window made to open we shouldn't have had to break it, sir."

We tried to break it without damaging it, but it was impossible."

The doctor turned his head away, and Mr. Oates burst into a guffaw.

"I want to ask you young gentlemen a question," said Mr. Oates. "You dropped on my head from my window, and you run off. You got off my land afore I could catch you, and you went over the level-crossing?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, in surprise, wondering what was coming.

"Now," said Mr. Oates impressively, "which of you was it that took my little girl off the railway-line just as the express was comin' by?"

The Terrible Three jumped. A bombshell dropping into the old Hall would hardly have astonished them more than that unexpected question from Mr. Oates.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Tom Merry—Hero.

HERE was a buzz among the juniors crowding the Hall.

The Head was smiling.

The Terrible Three were silent. Mr. Oates was regarding them seriously. He turned to the crowded, eager fellows looking on.

"Young gentlemen," he said, "I dessey you thought I've come 'ere to have a lad punished for trespassing on my land. Well, I was coming here for that—specially after they broke my winder and dropped on my head! But after that I heard something, which I have told your headmaster. My eldest girl was out with my little Alice, and the kid had wandered away and got on the railway-line. She was right under the express, when one of these boys pulled her out, and nearly got hisself killed in doing it."

"When my girl came in, crying and in hysterics, I knew that it must have been one of them, 'cause it happened at the level-crossing only five minutes arter they'd got out of my stables. If they hadn't got out my little girl would have been cut to pieces by the train."

The stout farmer's voice shook. "The boy that did that was a hero. He was one of the best! I've come 'ere to give him a father's thanks, and to tell his school-mates to be proud of him. It was the bravest thing I've ever come across. And now I want to know which of you young gentlemen it was," added the farmer, turning to the Terrible Three again.

Tom Merry's face was scarlet. Manners and Lowther, delighted at the turn the affair had taken, pushed him forward.

"Here's the giddy hero, sir!" said Lowther.

"Shurrup!" murmured Tom Merry.

There was a yell from the juniors in the Hall.

"Good old Tom Merry! Bravo!"

"So it was you, young gentleman?" said Mr. Oates.

"I—I didn't know it was your little girl, of course!" stammered Tom Merry.

The farmer grinned.

"You wouldn't have left her there if you'd known that, I suppose?" he said.

"No, I didn't mean that! But—but it was nothing, you know. I couldn't have let the kid be run over, could I?"

"Yes, you could," said the farmer. "You could have thought of your own danger."

"I didn't stop to think," confessed Tom Merry.

"That's just it!" said the farmer. "If you'd stopped to think whether you'd risk it, my little girl would have been killed. I'd like to shake hands with you, young gentleman," said Mr. Oates, holding out a big, red hand. "I had been rough on you, and 'ard on you, and you saved my little girl from death, and you might have been killed yourself."

"I'm glad you came to no harm, sir, and I'm glad I stopped you coming on my land; and I'm glad you broke the window and dropped on my head, and it would have served me right if you'd dropped 'arder. And if you ever want to come on my land again, you're to do just as you like; it's free to you and all your friends. And when you feel inclined to drop into the farmhouse to tea, my missus will be more than glad to see you."

Tom Merry shook hands with Mr. Oates gladly enough. He was only too pleased to see the matter end that way.

"I am very glad that Mr. Oates has brought this matter to my notice," said Dr. Holmes. "Merry, I am proud of you. It was a very gallant action. You did wrong in trespassing upon Mr. Oates' property, but the result has been so happy that I am sure Mr. Oates is glad that you came there."

"Three cheers for Tom Merry!" shouted Figgins.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"And three more for Mistah Oates!" chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The old Hall rang with it. And the Head smiled approval. As the Head retired there was a rush of the fellows towards Tom Merry, and he was seized and hoisted on the shoulders of three or four juniors, and carried out of the Hall in triumph.

"Round the quad!" shouted Blake.

Tom Merry struggled.

"Put me down, you asses! Leggo!"

"March him round the quad, deah boys!"

"Hurrah!"

"Let me go!" yelled Tom Merry. "You silly asses! You frabjous chumps! Stop it! Don't play the giddy god!"

"True heroes are ever modest," grinned Blake; "but we're going to give you your proper allowance of glory!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Tom Merry was rushed out into the quadrangle, high on the shoulders of his schoolfellows, amid a cheering throng.

Blake produced a mouth-organ, and placed himself at the head of the procession, buzzing out "See the Conquering Hero Comes!" But Digby tapped him on the shoulder.

"Play something more appropriate, you ass!" said Dig.

Blake stopped his musical efforts for a moment to glare at Digby.

"Ass!" he said. "There isn't anything more appropriate than that!"

"Blessed if I see it! Why not play 'See the Conquering Hero Comes'?" said Digby.

Blake glared.

"You fathead! That's what I was playing!"

"Oh!" said Dig in astonishment. "Were you?"

Blake disdained to reply. He buzzed on again, and the procession marched. Right round the quadrangle they bore the crimson-faced and exasperated hero, amid thunderous cheers. There was only one glum face looking on—Mr. Ratcliff's.

Mr. Ratcliff would have stopped the demonstration if he had dared, but he knew that the Head was looking on from his study window, with a smile of approval. The good old doctor was very pleased to see the St. Jim's fellows recognise so spontaneously the heroism of their schoolfellow.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Bwavo, Tom Mewwy!"

Right round the quadrangle and back to the School House, where the flustered hero was set down at last on the steps.

"Speech!" shouted Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! A few graceful words suitable to the occasion, deah boy."

Tom Merry snorted.

"All right!" he said. "I think you're a lot of asses! If you collar me again I shall hit out! That's all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush, and Tom Merry vanished into the School House. Manners and Lowther found him in the study, smoothing out his crumpled attire and putting on a new collar.

"Tommy, we're proud of you!" said Manners.

Tom Merry did not reply. He picked up a big cushion and rushed upon his faithful chums, and smote them hip and thigh, and drove them out of the study.

After that there was peace for the hero of St. Jim's.

THE END.

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