

THE FLOODED SCHOOL!

(See inside for the Splendid Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.)

The Penny Popular

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



RESCUED FROM THE FLOOD!

(An Exciting Incident from the Long Complete Tale of TOM MERRY & CO., contained in this Issue.) 2318

THE FORM AGAINST HIM!

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

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**



"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Stop it! Ow! I—I—I'm sincerely sorry, I——" Bump! "I dare say you are," grinned Bob Cherry. "That will make you sorrier!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Something Wrong.

WHAT'S up with Linley?" Harry Wharton asked the question of his chums in Study No. 1, but it was a question that was being asked by almost every fellow in the Remove.

Just recently the Seymour Competition for the sum of twenty-five pounds had been held, and the lad from Lancashire had proved the winner.

The Remove in general, and Bulstrode & Co. in particular, had expected Linley to stand a Form feed with a part of the money. The scholarship boy, however, had declined to fall in with the suggestion.

Harry Wharton & Co. were surprised; Bulstrode and his set were distinctly annoyed.

"I don't understand it quite," remarked Harry Wharton. "We all know that Linley is poor, and twenty-five pounds is a large sum; but I do think he might have spared a pound, or even a half-sovereign, to do the proper thing. He must have known very well that the fellows expected it. It looks mean."

"It is mean," said Frank Nugent. "The meanfulness looks terrific; but perhaps the esteemed Linley has his own reasonableness for his honourable conduct," suggested Hurree Singh.

"Hallo, here's Bob!" Bob Cherry put a very red face into the study.

"Have you seen Linley?" "Not lately."

"I hear there's been a row in the Hall, and Bulstrode called him a coward."

"Yes; we were there."

THE PENNY POPULAR—No. 282.

"And Linley took it quietly?"

"Well, yes."

Bob Cherry snorted.

"I think Linley's gone mad!" he said. "I must say I don't feel so chummy towards him; but Bulstrode's not going to call a friend of mine a coward. Anyway, Linley isn't a coward, even if he's a bit close with the money. It's up to Study No. 13 to teach him manners."

"But——"

"I wanted to see Linley. He ought to fight Bulstrode. It's the only decent thing he can do. Don't you chaps know where he is?"

"No. Isn't he in No. 13?"

"No. Well, I'm going to look for him; and if I can't find him I'm going to look for Bulstrode. Somebody's got to stand up for No. 13, and if Linley won't, I will!"

"We'll come with you."

They looked for Mark Linley, but for a long time the quest was in vain. He was not in the common-room or the gym, and the box-rooms were drawn blank. And when they inquired for him the replies they received were couched in sneering tones.

"Oh, you won't find him!" said Skinner. "He's skulking, of course. He wants to keep out of Bulstrode's way."

Skinner suddenly found himself sitting on the floor, laid there by a mighty swipe from Bob Cherry. He was still sitting there when the chums walked off.

"Have you seen Linley, Snoop?"

The cad of the Remove sniggered.

"No. And you won't, either!"

"Why not?" asked Bob Cherry, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

"Because he's skulking away somewhere

—Ow!"

Snoop sat down violently, and Bob Cherry

rolled him over with his foot before he walked on. Bob was very red.

"Let's look in the Form-room," suggested Nugent, thinking that any further inquiries conducted on this system were likely to lead to trouble.

"Good! He might be there."

The chums turned in the direction of the deserted Form-room. The room, of course, was deserted on a half-holiday. There was no reason to suppose that Mark Linley was there, excepting that they could find him nowhere else in a search that had already lasted half an hour.

They came down the wide, deserted passage, and paused at the Form-room door. It was ajar, and Harry, looking in, could see a seated figure in one of the Forms.

It was Mark Linley.

But Harry did not enter.

He held up his hand as a sign to the others to be quiet, and they looked in over his shoulder in dumb amazement.

Mark Linley was seated at the desk, with his elbows upon it, his face in his hands, and a kind of convulsive trembling was running through him from head to foot.

He was crying!

The juniors looked on blankly. They had never seen Linley cry before; he was not one of the crying kind.

Wharton signed to the others to follow him, and stepped silently away. He would not intrude upon the lad at that moment.

At the end of the Form-room passage the juniors stopped, and stared at one another's faces in blank amazement.

"What on earth——" began Nugent.

"It can't be Bulstrode insulting him," said Wharton, in a low voice. "That wouldn't make a chap like Linley blub."

"Not much!"

"He must be ill."

"He doesn't look it."

"Perhaps he's had bad news," Nugent suggested. "You never know. There may be something wrong at home. He's had a rough time here, you know, but he's never blubbed before. It must be something awfully bad, I should think, to make him turn the water-works on."

Wharton nodded.

"Well, it's no business of ours," he remarked. "Better not let him know we saw him. It will make him feel rotten."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Where are you going, Bob?" asked Harry, as the burly junior strode away, with a grim expression upon his rugged face.

"I'm going to see Bulstrode."

"But——"

"You can see what it is. Linley's upset about something, and that's why he allowed that cad to insult him," said Bob fiercely. "He wasn't quite himself at the time. But Bulstrode's not going to slang Study No. 13 while I'm around!"

And Bob Cherry marched off directly to Bulstrode's study.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed him dubiously enough. Bob was strong and plucky, and a tough customer for anyone to tackle, but he was no match for the biggest fellow in the Remove.

More than once he had tackled Bulstrode already, and he had always come off second best, though Bulstrode certainly had not enjoyed it. But there was no stopping Bob now.

The juniors reached Bulstrode's study, and Bob kicked at the door. It did not budge as he turned the handle.

It was locked inside. Bob Cherry banged on the upper panes with his fist, and on the lower with his heavy boot.

"Bulstrode!"

"Hallo!"

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"I want to speak to you."

"The want is all on your side, then," replied Bulstrode, through the door. "Cut off! I'm busy!"

Bob Cherry kicked furiously at the door.

"Open this door, you rat!"

"Bosh!"

"Coward!"

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Rats!"

"Worm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry gave it up. He strode away, breathing vengeance, and the door of Bulstrode's study remained locked.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Bunter Makes a Suggestion.**

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Go and eat coke, Bunter!"
"Aren't you hungry?" asked Billy Bunter, blinking at the chums of Study No. 1. "It's a jolly cold night, and I always get hungry on cold nights. That bit of bread and cheese in the dining-room doesn't make much difference to me. It would be ripping to have a bit of supper in the study, I should think."
"There's a crust and half a sardine left in the cupboard," said Nugent. "You can wire in."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"
"Don't offer to go down to the tuckshop, Billy," said Wharton. "We know you don't mind taking the trouble for fellows you like, and that you'd do anything for us—at meal-times."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, I was thinking of a good supper—say ham and eggs, and some toast, and roasted chestnuts to finish," said Billy Bunter persuasively.

"Blessed if he isn't making me feel hungry," said Nugent. "It's bedtime in a quarter of an hour, too. You'd better stand a feed, Billy."

"That's exactly what I was thinking of."
"Come into a fortune," asked Nugent sarcastically, "or has the postal-order arrived at last?"

"No; there's been some delay about that, owing to the awful carelessness of the postal authorities," said Bunter. "I am going to write to the Postmaster-General, and complain."

"In time for supper to-night?"
"Oh, don't be funny, you know! I can't

room, and caught him by the sleeve. Bulstrode shook him off roughly. He was in an irritable temper.

"Keep your paws off me!" he growled.
"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"
Bulstrode grasped the fat junior by the shoulder, and slung him unceremoniously to the floor.

Bunter landed with a bump. He slowly scrambled to his feet, however, and blinked after Bulstrode.

Bunter was extremely short-sighted, and his big spectacles did not seem to make much difference to it. He saw a form in the passage, and rushed at it wrathfully. He hurled himself upon it, hitting out with both fists.

"There!" he spluttered. "I'll—I'll show you, chucking a fellow out of his own study, you— Oh!"

"Ow!" gasped the unfortunate recipient of Billy Bunter's blows. "Ow! You—you young ass! What do you mean?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
Bob Cherry grasped the fat junior, and rolled him over on the floor, and bumped him hard on the linoleum.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Stop it! Mind my glasses! If you break them you'll have to pay for them. Ow! I—I—I'm sincerely sorry, I—"

Bump, bump!
"I'm sorry! I—"
"I dare say you are," grinned Bob Cherry. "That will make you sorrier."

Bump!
"Ow!"

Bob Cherry walked on, grinning. Billy Bunter rolled on the linoleum in a state of dust and breathlessness.

"But it's a good idea, all the same. Let's get the fellows together, and talk it over," said Snoop. "Tell them to come to my study."

"Right you are!"
And the too least worthy specimens in the Greyfriars Remove separated.

Billy Bunter caught sight of a junior in the passage, and stopped to speak to him.

He stopped him by catching at his sleeve, in the objectionable way he had, and blinked at the fellow, whose face was not very clear in the dusky passage, especially to the short-sighted Billy.

"I say, Skinner," said Bunter, "I've got a good dodge on about that cad Linley, you know."

His hand was roughly shaken off.
"Hold on, Skinner, old chap! We're going to collar the mean beast, you know, and make him cash up some of the tin. Don't you think it's a good idea?"

"I am not Skinner," said a quiet voice. Bunter jumped almost clear of the floor.

"Linley! Oh, dear!"
Billy Bunter blinked in utter dismay at the Lancashire lad. It was to Mark Linley himself that he had been unfolding his precious plan.

"I—I was only joking, of course, Linley," he remarked. "I—I don't really intend to do anything of the sort. I like you too much, and I really feel very friendly towards you, though you're only a factory cad. I— Well, of all the rude beasts, to walk away while I'm talking to him. This is jolly well the last time that I'll take any notice of the utter outsider."

Billy Bunter was a little more careful after that to whom he propounded his plan.

**NUMBER 12.
THE "PENNY POPULAR"
PORTRAIT GALLERY.**



**NUMBER 13 NEXT FRIDAY.
Kit the Cipsy, Harry Noble,
Dick Brooke.**



1. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.
2. Buck Finn.
3. Eric Kerruish.

stand the feed just now, but if one of you fellows liked to advance me a few bob off the postal-order—"

"Rats!"
"Well, then, there's Linley!"

"What about Linley?"
"Why, he's got twenty-five pounds," said Billy Bunter, blinking. "He hasn't even stood a feed to his own chums in No. 13. My idea is that if he won't stand a feed, he should be forced to. What do you think of the idea?"

"Don't talk rot!"
"Oh, really! You see, we could rag him, and make him hand over one of the sovereigns, at least, and—"

"Shut up!"
"He practically agreed to go Co. with me, and share the prize," said Bunter. "He really owes me twelve-pound-ten. I think I'm entitled to it."

"Bosh!"
"I wish you fellows would be a little more sympathetic. You know I've got a delicate constitution, and can only be kept up by constant nourishment."

"Rats!"
Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully at the Removites, and went out of the study and slammed the door. His idea of forcibly taking possession of a portion of the Seymour prize was evidently not likely to find much favour there.

He met Bulstrode outside the common-

"Ow! Beast! Ow! Brute! Ow! Yow!"
Bunter picked himself up, rubbing his aching limbs. He staggered as a junior pushed past him.

"Oh, really, Elliott—" he began.
"He, he, he!" giggled Snoop.

"Oh, is that you, Snoopey?" said Bunter, blinking at him, and forgetting about his aches and pains. "I say, Snoop, I've got an idea. How would you like a jolly good feed?"

"Ripping!" said Snoop.

"Then suppose we get some of the fellows to make Linley pay up some of the cash?" said Bunter. "He's no right to keep it all to himself. Any other chap would have stood a Form feed at the least. We're entitled to it."

"Something in that," said Snoop thoughtfully. "It would be easy enough to get the chaps to rag Linley—he's not popular just now. But as for making him stump up—"

"Well, we could tar and feather him if he wouldn't," said Bunter.
Snoop sniggered.

"That's a jolly good idea!"
"Well, let's see if the fellows will take it up," said Bunter. "I really think that an example ought to be made of Linley, you know. He's mean. I hate meanness. I can stand a lot of things in a fellow, but if he's mean or despicable in any way, I bar him."

"You'll have to drop your own acquaintance, then, won't you?" sniggered Snoop.

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

Six or seven juniors willingly joined in the scheme, and in a body they went to look for Mark Linley. He had gone up to his study after leaving Bunter, not caring for the company of the common-room.

The party of young rascals made their way cautiously along to Study No. 13.

"We shall have to see whether Bob Cherry is there," said Snoop. "No good getting into a row with Cherry. He's sure to take Linley's part."

"Yes, the beast!"
"The Chinese doesn't matter."

Skinner tapped at the study door. If Bob Cherry were there, he simply meant to say it was time to get ready for bed. But it was Mark Linley's voice that replied.

"Come in!"
The ragers entered.

Mark Linley was in his chair, with his books before him. Whatever trouble he had on his mind, the evening preparation had to be done. And for once Mark was late with it.

Little Wun Lung was in the armchair, curled up in his usual comfortable attitude. The ragers took no notice of him. Bob Cherry, with his burly form and big fists, was a tough customer to get on the wrong side of, but the little Celestial did not count.

"Lock the door," said Skinner.

Stott turned the key. Mark Linley rose to his feet.

"What do you want here?" he asked. "We want a little talk," said Skinner blandly. "You're a disgrace to the Form. We want you to turn over a new leaf."

"Just so!" agreed Elliott. "It's a question of behaving decently over the prize," remarked Stott. "We're going to give you a last chance of dubbing up like a decent chap."

Mark's eyes gleamed. "You've come here for nothing, then," he said. "I have no intention of standing any thing—not even your insolence. You had better get out."

The juniors laughed. The door was locked, there was no rescue for the Lancashire lad, and matters were entirely in their hands.

"Why not act decently for once?" urged Skinner. "We're giving you a chance. Any other chap would have spent a lot of the tin royally."

"Get out, please," said Mark. "Then you're not going to play the game?" demanded Skinner threateningly.

"I have nothing for you." "Nothing out of twenty-five quid" said Stott. "Hark at the rotter! And he had it all in spot cash, too!"

"I have none of it left now," said Mark. "Then what have you done with it?" "That is my business."

"It's our business if a fellow in our Form acts like a mean cad," said Stott. "I have nothing more to say to you," said Mark.

"Mind," said Skinner, "we're here on business. If you don't do the decent thing, you'll suffer for it."

Mark did not reply. "Is that all you have to say, Linley?" "Yes."

"Then this is where the ragging begins," said Skinner. "Collar him!"

And with one accord the ragers rushed upon the Lancashire lad.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Rough on the Ragers.

MARK LINLEY put up his fists at once, his eyes gleaming over them. The odds were heavily against him, and the ragers were in earnest.

Mark hit out, and Skinner fell into the fender, and Stott dropped upon the hearth-rug. Then he was bowled over, and he went to the floor, with the ragers sprawling over him.

Wun Lung rose to his feet. The little Chinese was not of much use in a scrap. He ran to the door to unlock it, but Elliott caught him by the shoulder, and hurled him into the armchair again.

"You stay there!" he remarked. "Ow!" gasped Wun Lung.

"Let me up, you cads!" gasped Mark Linley, struggling furiously under the sprawling heap of juniors.

"Collar him!" "Sit on him!" Skinner scrambled out of the grate, rubbing his nose, which had come into violent contact with the fender. It was streaming with red, and neither Skinner's appearance nor Skinner's temper was improved thereby.

"Got the beast?" he exclaimed. "That's right; hold him!"

"We've got him!" "Sit on him! By George, we'll make him smart for this!"

"He's made you smart!" grinned Elliott. "Oh, shut up! Bunter, bring that ink-bottle here."

"Oh, certainly!" said Billy Bunter; and he handed the ink-bottle to Skinner. "Now, then, Linley," said Skinner, "you're going to be put through it!"

Linley gasped, but did not reply. He was powerless in the hands of the ragers, but he would make no appeal to them.

His flashing eyes looked up fearlessly at Skinner as the latter took the ink-bottle in his hand. Skinner hesitated a moment.

"Are you willing to do the decent thing?" he remarked. "Stand a feed to the whole Form, and make a public apology for being a mean beast, and we'll let you off."

"Hear, hear!" "What do you say, Linley?" "Nothing."

"You refuse, then?" "Yes."

"Then here goes!" Bang, bang, bang!

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It was a sudden and furious knocking at the door. Bob Cherry's voice roared through the keyhole.

"Open this door! It's past bedtime, Linley, and Carne is looking for you. Come out!"

"Bedtime!" growled Skinner. "Just our luck!"

"Oh, we needn't hurry!" said Billy Bunter. "You can explain to Carne, you know. Besides, the door's locked."

"Ass! We shall have to—"

"Why don't you open this door?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Rescue!" shouted Mark. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up?"

Bob Cherry shook the handle of the door furiously. Mark Linley struggled, and the ragers had plenty to do to hold him down.

Skinner upturned the ink-bottle, and sent out a great splash of the black fluid; but Mark's struggles had brought Stott's head in the way.

The splash of ink met Stott's ear, and smothered his face, and there was a terrific yell from Stott.

"Oh! Ow! You ass!" Stott jumped up, knocking Skinner backwards, and the ink-bottle crashed to the floor and broke. A shower of spilt ink scattered itself over the juniors.

"You clumsy ass!" yelled Elliott, who received a spurt of it in the eye.

"Ow! You duffer!" "You dummy!" "Ow! It wasn't my fault. The beast—"

"Idiot!" Wun Lung saw his opportunity, and whipped to the door and unlocked it.

Bob Cherry strode into the study, red with wrath.

"What are you up to here?" he roared. "Here, Wharton—Nugent—come in—come in and lend a hand, will you?"

Harry and Nugent came quickly along the passage. Bob was already getting to business. The ragers were defending themselves from his vigorous onslaught.

The odds would have told against him, but for the prompt arrival of Harry and his chum. They sailed into the melee without stopping to ask questions.

With the three champion athletes of the Lower School against them the ragers had a warm time, in spite of their numbers.

Mark Linley jumped up and rushed to the aid of the rescuers, and Wun Lung joined in, doing his little best.

The tables were turned now. Half the ragers were sprawling on the floor, and the others were driven towards the door under a rain of blows.

"Ow!" gasped Skinner. "Chuck it! We're going!"

"You are!" agreed Bob Cherry, giving him a powerful drive on the chest that flung him into the passage. "You won't come again in a hurry, either, I fancy."

"Oh!" "Out with them!" "Out they go!"

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Yah!" The unfortunate ragers were bundled out in a heap. They struggled and scrambled on the cold linoleum, with a wild chorus of yells and shrieks.

"Now bundle out the rest!" said Nugent, grinning.

And the ragers who had been floored in the combat were unceremoniously kicked towards the doorway, and added to the yelling heap in the passage.

Wharton burst into a laugh. "A jolly clean sweep!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!" There was an angry voice in the passage. Carne of the Sixth came along with a cane in his hand.

It was Carne's pleasant duty to see the Lower Fourth to bed that evening, and Carne did not like being kept waiting.

"Now, then, you rats!" The ragers in the passage scattered with loud howls as the cane began to lash. Then Carne looked into Study No. 13.

"Off to bed, you young sweeps!" He was inclined to use the cane again, but Harry Wharton & Co. did not look as if they would take it quietly.

"Get to bed!" snapped Carne. "Oh, all serene!" said Bob Cherry. "Come along, Bunter!"

"Ow!" "This way, Tubby!" "Ow!"

And Billy Bunter was led to the Remove dormitory with Bob Cherry's vicelike grip upon his fat ear. Bob did not relax it till they were in the dormitory.

He led Bunter to his bed, fopped him

upon it, and then finally released the ear. Billy Bunter at once clapped his hand to it, groaning.

"Ow! You beast! I'm hurt!" "Go hon!" said Bob. "Now, look here, Bunter—"

"Ow! Yow!" "Shut up, and listen to me! If you begin any more ragging, you'll get hurt. Do you understand? You're trouble enough as it is, without starting in life as a ragger. It's not your forte. You're to keep off the grass, Savvy?"

"Ow!" And the Remove went to bed. But it was very probable that the lesson was enough for Billy Bunter, and that his career as a ragger was over.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Form Against Him.

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, glanced at Mark Linley the next morning, when the Remove sat down to the breakfast-table.

The Form-master could not help noticing the signs of recent combat on Linley's face. But that was not all; the Lancashire lad's usually healthy face was very pale and worn.

He looked as if he had not slept; and, indeed, he had closed his eyes but little the previous night.

The Form-master did not speak, however, till breakfast was over. Then, as he left the dining-room, he called to Linley:

"Come into my study, Linley. I want to speak to you."

"Yes, sir." Mark followed the Form-master in, and closed the door.

"I wish to speak to you about the Seymour prize," said the Form-master quietly. "It is a rule of the competition that the prize shall be handed to the winner in money."

"Yes, sir." "You have received it. Your parents were, however, advised beforehand of your success, and naturally they would have a voice in disposing of so considerable a sum of money."

"Of course, sir." "I have heard some talk," said Mr. Quelch, "which indicates that there was some plan on foot among the competitors for the prize-winner to share out the money in case of success. The winner would not be allowed to do this without the consent of his parents or guardians."

"I suppose not, sir." "Then you were not under any agreement of this sort?"

Mark flushed. "No, sir."

"Very good. It was not a sensible plan, and I am glad you did not subscribe to it. You are not likely to waste your prize recklessly, either, I think."

"I hope not, sir." "Of course, there could be no objection to your expending a portion of it in any boyish celebration. But any reckless extravagance would be very much disapproved of by the Head. I should suggest, Linley, your placing the money in the hands of a master until you have heard from your parents. I should have said this to you yesterday, but you were not to be found after the prize was awarded, and then I went out myself."

Mark coloured again. "The money is already safe, sir!" he stammered.

"Is it still in your possession?" "No, no, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked hard at him. "I think it is my duty, as your Form-master, Linley, to ask you what you have done with it," he said. "I have kept an eye on you ever since you came to Greyfriars. You have had an uphill battle, and you have fought it bravely, so far. Your circumstances have been against you, and you would have done much better if you had had, as the others mostly have, the aid of money. I was sincerely glad to hear that you had won this prize, because I thought that it would help you out of this difficulty. It may mean a great deal to you. I think, therefore, that you should be very careful in the expenditure of it."

"Ye-es, sir." "It should enable you to purchase books that you have long needed, and a part of it might be set aside for the inevitable expenses when you pass into a higher Form," said Mr. Quelch. "I am speaking as your

friend in this matter, Linley, because I consider it my duty as your Form-master to advise you. I hope you understand that."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"Then I think you should tell me what you have done with the twenty-five pounds."

"I have placed it in my father's hands, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked at him dubiously.

"To be used for your benefit, Linley?"

"Well, sir, not exactly; but—" Mark broke off.

The Form-master's brow wrinkled a little. Mark Linley's people he had never seen, but he knew that they were poor, and in his mind's eye he saw a host of greedy relations taking to themselves the fruits of the lad's industry, careless of the fact that he would need every shilling of it if he was to go on as he had begun at Greyfriars.

The suspicion on the Form-master's part was a natural one, when he heard that the junior had parted with the whole of the prize, without retaining anything for himself.

"Very well, Linley," he said shortly. "I would be far from suggesting that you should not trust your father's judgment absolutely. You may go."

"Yes, sir."

And Mark Linley quitted the study. Mr. Quelch remained a few minutes in thought and then he took his way into the Head's house, where Dr. Locke was preparing for morning chapel. The Head nodded to him cordially.

"Can you spare me a few minutes, sir?" said the Form-master. "I have spoken to Linley on the subject of the prize."

"Certainly! Go on!"

"It appears that he has placed the whole sum in the hands of his father already."

The Head nodded thoughtfully.

"Of course, that is a wise step for any lad to do in similar circumstances," said the Remove-master. "His father is his natural protector and adviser. At the same time, it seems to me that someone ought to see that the lad's interests are protected, in case of any injudiciousness on the part of the parents. Such a large sum of money, coming suddenly into the hands of very poor people, is almost certain to be to a great extent wasted, or, at all events, to be used to meet family accounts which have nothing to do with the boy here. You agree with me?"

"Quite. Linley has acted well—at the same time, someone should be more careful of his interests than he is himself."

"Exactly, sir. Would you, then, approve of my writing to Mr. Linley, and pointing out to him the need the boy will have of the money, if he is to continue his education here with any prospect of success?"

"I certainly think it should be done," said the Head.

"Very good. Then I will do so. Mark Linley would be a credit to any school, and I am anxious that he should have every chance of success here."

"I fully share the feeling," said Dr. Locke. "Write to Mr. Linley, by all means, and let him know as delicately as possible how Linley's masters consider that his prize should be expended. That a certain proportion of it should be used to relieve his family is only just, but at least half should be reserved for the boy's own needs."

"That is just my view, sir."

And Mr. Quelch went back to his study, and the letter was written. Mark Linley, in happy unconsciousness of the step that was being taken to protect his interests, went into the Form-room after prayers with the rest of the Remove.

But it was pretty clear now that Mark Linley, though "with" the Remove, was not of them. Few fellows spoke or nodded to him.

All the success he had had in making his way in the esteem of his Form-fellows seemed gone now.

His conduct over the Seymour prize had lost him everything, and it had changed to dislike and contempt the indifference of many fellows who had never actively disliked him before.

Even his own personal friends had little to say for him, excepting that it was his own business what he did with his own money. But that was a lame argument, for his own chums had expected some sort of a festival, and had been disappointed.

Not that Bob Cherry and the others cared a penny for the feed itself. It was the fact that Linley was not willing to stand it that was cutting. And the Lancashire lad had

not spent a penny more than usual since winning the prize, either.

Twenty-five pounds seemed boundless wealth to the other fellows, who seldom had more than a pound at a time, when they were in funds.

The winner of such a sum, allowed to have the handling of it himself by the regulations of the contest, was expected to be at least a little free with his money.

Large subscriptions to the school funds would have come, as a matter of course, and various treats for the lucky winner's own Form. And Linley had done nothing, subscribed nothing, and spent nothing.

Even Bob Cherry had little to say; and, in fact, he did not see more of Linley than he could help now. An inevitable coldness grew up, which, however, Mark was as yet too much worried by other matters to notice.

Linley went out quietly after morning lessons. He strolled into the Close, few fellows speaking to him. The spring sunshine was falling brightly upon the green Close and the old elms, and it insensibly cheered up the Lancashire lad.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, that's what I call a ripping good idea!" exclaimed Skinner, glancing round quickly to see whether his victim was listening. "Linley's simply born for the part of Shylock!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He wouldn't have to make up for the part, you know," said Stott.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's ask him!"

"Good! Here he is!"

"Come on!"

The juniors crowded towards the seat where the Lancashire lad was sitting. They all began speaking at once.

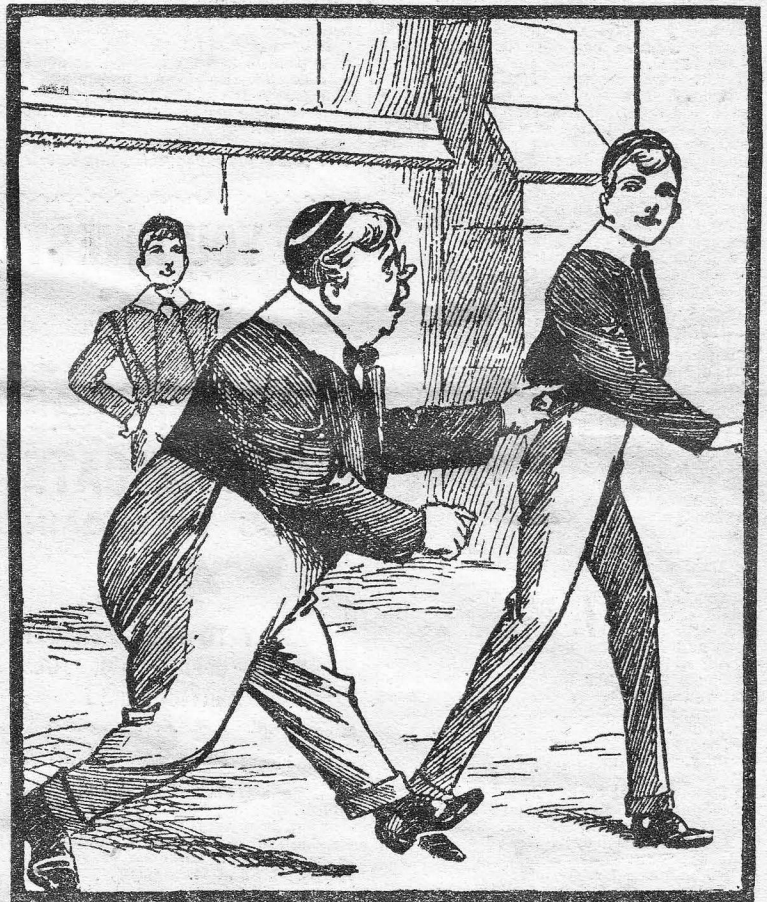
"I say, Linley, we've got a good part for you!"

"Will you play Shylock?"

"Just suits you, you know!"

"Your part to the life!"

Mark rose to his feet. He gave them a quiet glance of scorn, and walked away. They did not follow, but a loud shout of taunting laughter followed him.



"I say, Linley——" began Billy Bunter. Mark Linley turned round. "Well?" he said, rather curtly.

He sat down upon one of the wooden seats under the elms, and the sunshine fell warmly upon his face, showing up how pale and worn it was.

A group of juniors strolled under the elms, and halted near the seat to chat. Mark did not notice them for a few minutes, but the mention of his own name made him look up.

They were members of the Amateur Dramatic Society, and their raised tones showed that they intended their remarks to reach the ears of the junior sitting there. They were discussing an intended production of the Dramatic Society.

"Merchant of Venice!" said Elliott. "Good! And who are we going to cast for the part of Shylock?"

"Oh, Linley, of course!"

"Linley! What a jolly good idea!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
An Artist in Trouble.

"H E, he, he!"

Mr. Quelch heard Snoop's well-known chuckle as he came towards the Remove Form-room that afternoon.

The Remove-master was a few minutes late—an unusual occurrence with him—and the Lower Fourth were all in their places before he came.

That the boys would not sit quietly at their desks while they waited for him was a certainty, and the Form-master was not surprised to hear the sound of suppressed laughter as he came down the passage.

Mr. Quelch frowned a little as he pushed

open the door. Some joke was evidently on in the Remove-room.

The Form-master looked in. Snoop was standing at the blackboard, which had been placed on the easel ready for use.

It was facing the class, and some of the juniors were at their desks, and others were standing about Snoop, most of them grinning and chuckling.

Harry Wharton was looking very uncomfortable. Mark Linley sat in his place, looking straight before him as if he saw nothing. "Cave!" muttered Lacy.

The juniors made a rush for their desks as their Form-master appeared.

Mr. Quelch walked on grimly. Snoop made a desperate clutch at the duster that hung on one of the easel-pegs; then, abandoning his intention, he fled with the rest, and subsided into his place.

The Form-master stood before the board, looking at it.

He knew that Snoop had been chalking something there, something which had amused the rest of the Remove highly. He naturally expected to find some caricature of himself, or of some other master at Greyfriars.

But it was nothing of the sort. Snoop, who had a certain artistic skill, and could sketch a likeness, had depicted Mark Linley on the board.

The face was the face of Mark Linley, unmistakably, but the body was that of a bowed and ragged old miser.

The figure was seated in a depicted cellar, counting over a hoard of gold—the hoard being appropriately marked "£25."

Mr. Quelch's brow grew very stern as he looked at it. He could not fail to see the allusion to Linley and the Seymour prize.

Linley kept his eyes on his desk. He had seen the drawing on the board, but he made it a point not to look at it. Snoop caught the expression upon Mr. Quelch's face, and he trembled in his seat.

"Snoop!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Snoop.

"I think this is your work."

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"I did not know you were so artistic," Snoop said Mr. Quelch. "Stand out here." Snoop unwillingly obeyed.

"Take the duster and wipe that out."

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Now will you be kind enough to take in this note to the Head?" said Mr. Quelch, writing a note at his desk. "Your artistic talent is so great, Snoop, that I think it should be recognised publicly; and I do not want you to forget the occasion."

Snoop took the note in a shaking hand. He knew what taking a note in to the Head meant.

"And before you go," added Mr. Quelch, "I should be glad if you would apologise to the schoolfellow you have caricatured for your mean and despicable action."

"Oh, sir!"

"You will tell him that you are sorry, and that you will never be guilty of such a mean and cowardly action again," said Mr. Quelch inexorably.

Snoop flushed crimson.

"Do you hear me, Snoop?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Then you had better obey."

Snoop turned towards Mark Linley, who still kept his eyes on his desk.

"Linley," he began, "I—I—"

He broke off.

"Go on," said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I'm sorry I drew you on the blackboard—"

"That is not exact," said Mr. Quelch. "You will explain that you are sorry for your mean and despicable action, please."

Snoop writhed. There were boys in the Remove who would have been flogged a dozen times before they would have submitted to such a humiliation; but Snoop was not one of them. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"Linley, I—I'm sorry—"

"You are wasting time, Snoop."

"I—I'm sorry for—for my mean and despicable action," stammered Snoop.

"That is better," said Mr. Quelch. "I am sorry, too, that there should be so mean and despicable a boy in the Form under my charge. I am sorry that others of the Form have looked upon his mean action in the light of a joke."

The Removites shifted uncomfortably. Bulstrode, who had nerve enough for almost anything, rose to his feet. Mr. Quelch fixed a most disconcerting gaze upon him.

"Have you anything to say upon this subject, Bulstrode?"

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"Yes, sir. Snoop has only written down what we all thought," said the Remove bully. "Linley is jolly mean."

"Indeed!"

"The whole Form thinks so. Even his own friends don't uphold him—"

"That's not true," said Bob Cherry.

"The untruthfulness is terrific."

"Well, they think he's beastly mean, sir, the same as we all do, and they can't deny it," said Bulstrode. "Snoop's done no more than we all thought."

"I should be sorry to think so, Bulstrode. You have a right to associate yourself with Snoop in his meanness if you wish, but not the whole of the Lower Fourth."

"I mean to say, sir—"

"You have said enough, Bulstrode. You may sit down."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Sit down!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a sparkle in his eyes. And the Remove bully promptly obeyed.

"Now, Snoop—"

Mark Linley rose to his feet.

"If you please, sir—"

He hesitated.

"Go on, Linley," said Mr. Quelch, kindly enough.

"It's very painful to me, sir, to have Snoop punished on my account. I don't mind what he did. He doesn't understand, and I don't care! It's nothing to me, and—and if you'd be good enough, sir, I—I'd rather you let Snoop off."

Mr. Quelch's brows wrinkled for a moment. Some of the juniors expected him to call Mark

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out and cane him for his audacity, but he did not.

He hesitated several moments before he replied.

"That is a very peculiar thing to say to me, Linley," he said at last. "Snoop deserves to be punished. However, as you make the request, I grant it. Snoop, you may go to your place."

Snoop gasped with relief.

"Thank you, sir."

"I hope, Snoop, that you will bear in mind that you owe your pardon to the lad you have treated badly, and act accordingly," said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Yes, sir," said Snoop.

But his glance at Mark Linley, as he passed him in going to his place, showed exactly how much kindness or gratitude there was in Snoop's breast.

The afternoon's lessons began, and the incident of the blackboard was not referred to again. But when the Remove were dismissed, Mr. Quelch signed to Mark Linley to stay behind as the class filed out.

"Linley," said the Form-master, quietly, "I cannot help seeing what is going on, of course. Your Form-fellows have made a set against you in this matter."

"Yes, sir," said Mark quietly.

"I think they are wrong; but, upon the whole, is it wise of you to run counter to all their prejudices in this matter, Linley? Don't you think it would be judicious to show a more conciliatory spirit?"

"I cannot do as they wish, sir."

"Very well; it was simply a suggestion on my part, and I suppose you know your own affairs best."

And the Remove-master made a gesture of dismissal.

Linley left the Form-room without a word. He felt that he had sunk in the estimation of the Form-master, as well as of the Form, now; but there was no help for it.

As he went out into the passage, the fellows there drew to the right and the left to let him pass. No one spoke to him; but Linley was beginning to get used to that.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Good News.

WHEN the evening post came in, Mark Linley was in the hall, waiting for the postman; and he turned away with a darkly-disappointed face as he discovered that there was no letter for him.

He went quietly to Study No. 13, and worked, and he was left in peace there.

The ragers were keeping the peace; and Bob Cherry showed no great desire to spend time in his own study now. The coldness between the chums of No. 13 was growing, and Mark Linley's enemies saw it with satisfaction.

"I'm done with him," Billy Bunter announced in Study No. 1.

"Done with whom?" asked Nugent.

"Linley, of course."

"Poor chap!" said Nugent feelingly. "How he'll suffer! Won't you really speak to him any more, Billy, and borrow a bob of him when you're hard up?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Are you really going to wipe his name off your visiting-list, and off your list of creditors?" said Nugent, with emotion.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm done with him," he repeated. "I've been kind to him—very kind; but I've got the usual kind of gratitude you get when you take notice of the lower classes. They snap at the hand that feeds them."

"That's a thing you'd never do, would you, Billy?" said Harry. "You'd welcome any hand that fed you at any time with anything."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up!" said Nugent. "You make me tired, Billy—not to say sick."

"Well, I'm done with him," said Billy Bunter. "As for his twenty-five pounds, he can keep it if he likes. I wouldn't touch it now if he offered it to me."

"Ananias!"

"Oh, really, you know! But I was thinking, Wharton, it's jolly mean of Linley not to stand a feed out of his twenty-five quids; but you had five, you know, and you haven't stood anything yet."

"And I'm not going to," said Harry.

Bunter gave it up. He went out of the study, and slammed the door. Nugent looked rather curiously at Wharton.

"Some of the fellows have been thinking the same as Bunter, Harry," he remarked. "If Linley won't part, they consider it's up to you to celebrate the occasion."

"Let them consider."

"You're not going to do it?"

"No!" Harry paused a moment. "You see, I don't know what Linley's motive is in acting as he's done, but I suppose he has his reasons, and I'm not going to appear to want to show him up by contrast. See?"

"Yes, I see."

"The selfishness is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I quite agree with my worthy chum."

There was a light in the Remove dormitory when the Removites went up that night. Some of the Form had evidently gone up early. Wharton heard a chuckle as he entered, and he soon discovered the cause of it.

Bulstrode and Snoop and Skinner were there. They turned away from Linley's bed as the rest of the Remove came in.

Upon the white coverlet a single word had been traced in soot.

"Shylock!"

The Lancashire lad turned red, and then pale. He glanced at Bulstrode, whose fingers were yet black with the soot.

But he said nothing.

"He's getting quite tame," said Skinner, with a grin. "Not so long ago there would have been a fight for that."

"One licking is enough, I suppose," said Bulstrode, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"By George! We may get him to get out

of Greyfriars at the end of the term if we make things sufficiently warm for him. What price that?"

"Good!" said Snoop.
The Remove went to bed.
The next morning Mark Linley rose early, and without speaking to the Removites, he went downstairs into the quad.

It was a fresh morning, and the Lancashire lad paced up and down, all the while keeping his eyes on the gates, as though he was expecting somebody.

He was in a thoughtful mood, and thus he did not hear the shuffling footsteps of Billy Bunter behind him.

Suddenly the fat junior gave Linley a dig in the ribs.

"I say, Linley—" he began.
Mark Linley turned round.

"Well?" he said rather curtly.
"You needn't snap a fellow's head off," said Bunter plaintively. "I say, Linley, I'm awfully sorry the fellows are down on you. Of course, it's your own fault—I mean, of course, I don't side with them at all."

Mark Linley stared hard at the fat junior.
"I feel jolly sorry for you, really," went on Bunter. "I don't blame you for sticking to that twenty-five quid. I suppose you're keeping it so that you can have a lot of extensive feeds all on your own."

"Don't be a fool, Bunter!"
"Oh, really, Linley—"

"I shouldn't be such a fool as to spend so much money on food."

"He, he, he!" giggled Bunter. "You can't pull the wool over my eyes. I—"

Mark Linley shook himself free from Bunter's grasp.

"I say, Linley—" began Bunter. But the Lancashire lad had marched off.

Bunter blinked after him savagely.
"Beast!" he muttered; and, growling to himself, he went into the House.

Mark Linley continued to tramp up and down, and at length he stopped by the steps, his eyes fixed on the gates.

Harry Wharton came out, and gave the Lancashire lad a cheery greeting.
"Waiting for the postman?" he asked cheerily.

Linley nodded.
"Here he is!"

Linley ran quickly towards the postman. His face was flushed, and his eyes gleamed with eagerness.

"Anything for Mark Linley?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, sir."
"Give it me—quick!"

The Friardale postman fumbled in his bag. He was slow and uncertain, and he took his time, and the junior waited on tenterhooks of impatience while he was fumbling.

The letter came out at last, however.

"Here's your letter, sir."
"Thank you."

Linley took the letter, and opened it where he stood, tearing the envelope open with a hasty and nervous hand. His eyes ran swiftly over the contents of the letter.

"Thank Heaven!"

A flush of gladness came over the junior's face; he almost staggered with the overpowering emotion that seized upon him. Wharton came quickly towards him. He put out a hand, and caught the Lancashire lad by the shoulder.

"Thank Heaven!"

"Good news?" asked Wharton, with a smile.

"Yes; thank Heaven! She's out of danger!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Light at Last.

MARK LINLEY gasped out the words. It seemed as if a load had been lifted from the mind and heart of the Lancashire lad, and his face had grown years younger.

He looked at the letter again, and read it through. Then he looked at Wharton, a smile on his lips, and his eyes dancing.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed.

"What's all right?" asked the puzzled Wharton. "I don't know what you're talking about. What's all right—who's all right?"

"My sister."
"Your sister?"

"Yes, Mabel. You remember her. She came here once to see me. You helped me look after her when she visited Greyfriars."

"I remember."

"She's been ill."

"I didn't know—you didn't tell us."

"No."

"I think you might have told us," said

Harry Wharton warmly. "Hang it all, we all knew Mabel, and liked her. We ought to have known."

"What was the use?" said Mark quietly. "She has been in danger; she might have—have died." His voice almost broke. "There was no need to worry anybody else with it. But it's all right now. She's out of danger."

"Good! I'm jolly glad to hear it."

"The last letter was very different," said Mark, with a shade on his face. "It was critical then. It might have turned out either way. You don't know how I felt while I was waiting for news. I hope you never will know."

Wharton nodded.

He remembered the curious scene in the Form-room—Mark Linley, with his face in his hands, his form shaken by sobs—a scene which Mark did not suspect that the chums of the Remove had witnessed.

He remembered how the lad had hardly seemed to hear the taunts of Bulstrode while he was reading that letter from home. No wonder, Wharton understood it all now.

"Well, I'm jolly glad things are going on all right," he said. "I suppose that's why you've been off your feed lately?"

Mark smiled faintly.

"Well, I have been feeling rather rotten, of course."

"Yes, I suppose so."

Linley was calm again now. The usually quiet and self-contained lad seldom showed so much emotion; but the good news from the far-off home in Lancashire had stirred him so deeply that he had quite, for the moment, lost his usual reserve. He nodded to Wharton, and put the letter in his pocket, and entered the House.

The Remove went in to breakfast. As Mark sat down in his place, a flush came into his face. A sheet of cardboard had been laid upon his plate, and upon it was written:

"Miser!"

He crumpled it in his hand. Mr. Quelch glanced at him from the head of the table.

He had a pretty clear idea of what Linley's action meant, and he frowned; but he said nothing. After prayers, the Form assembled in the Form-room, and found Mr. Quelch already there.

The Form-master was seated at his desk, and he had an open letter before him. There was a thoughtful shade on his face.

"Good-morning, sir!"

"Good-morning, boys!"

The Remove went to their places. Mark Linley's eyes gleamed for a moment as he sat down.

The persecution by Bulstrode & Co. was quite systematic. On the lid of Linley's desk a word had been painted in white letters, which showed up plainly enough against the dark oak.

"Shylock!"

The paint was hard and dry, and it had evidently been done overnight. It would require some scraping to get it off the desk.

Mr. Quelch glanced at the Lancashire lad, and then at the glimmer of white on the lid of his desk, and came round to see what it was. His face grew dark with anger as he read the insulting inscription.

"Who has done this?" he exclaimed.

There was silence in the class. The juniors looked straight before them. There were at least a dozen of them who knew who had painted that taunt upon Linley's desk, but no one uttered a word.

The Remove-master looked over the class.

Then he returned to his desk, and took up the letter he had been reading. The Remove watched him curiously. They could see that something was coming. What it was they did not know.

"Boys," said Mr. Quelch quietly, "I have something to tell you—something that, I think, you ought to know. A boy in this Form won the Seymour prize—twenty-five pounds in cash. You have all believed that he kept his prize entirely to himself, and acted meanly towards his friends; and you have done your best, apparently, to make the lad feel your opinion of him in this respect."

The Remove sat silent.

"The true explanation of Linley's action is known to me," said Mr. Quelch. "I have learned it from this letter, which I have received this morning."

Mark Linley started.

"In order to do Linley justice, and to give you a lesson not to judge hastily and thoughtlessly, I shall tell you the facts," continued Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Mark Linley, turning crimson.

"I have learned all from your father, Linley. I wrote to him in connection with

the disposal of the prize-money, and in return he has explained to me."

"I—I—"

"You have nothing to be ashamed of, my lad," said the Form-master kindly. "You have acted nobly, bravely, and all the more so in saying nothing when you were persecuted by these thoughtless lads, who did not know your reasons."

A dogged look came over Bulstrode's face. But the rest of the Remove were intensely curious. Mark Linley's face went red and pale.

"Some of you are aware that Linley has a younger sister," said Mr. Quelch. "I believe the little girl came to Greyfriars once. This little girl has been dangerously ill, and her parents were warned by their medical adviser that there was little hope for her unless she could be removed to some place where she could receive trained care and attention, and the nourishment she required. For this a sum of money was necessary, and that sum was found by Mark Linley, who providentially won the Seymour prize, and immediately despatched the whole amount of the prize to his parents, to be used for the benefit of his sister."

There was a murmur from the Remove. Mark sat with his eyes on the desk, his cheeks burning. He would have given anything to prevent the disclosure; but there was no help for it now.

"I am glad to say," continued Mr. Quelch, "that Linley's unselfishness will have the desired result. I understand that there is now no doubt of the child's recovery. I only hope that you will try to do Linley justice now."

Bob Cherry waved a Virgil wildly above his head.

"Hurrah for Linley!" he shouted.

"Three times three!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Mr. Quelch tried to restore silence at last, but it was some minutes before he succeeded.

As the Remove crowded out of the Form-room there was a swarm of fellows round Mark Linley, and he was thumped on the back, and his shoulders were slapped and his hands were shaken till he was aching in nearly every bone.

"I knew it was all right," said Bob Cherry. "I knew he was decent all through. Didn't I tell you so?" And then he went on rather inconsistently. "How could I have been such an ass as to think you mean for a moment, Marky, old chap? Kick me, will you?"

Mark laughed.

"I—I'd like to say I'm sorry," stammered Bulstrode, coming forward with a very red face. "I—we—we've all been beastly to you, Linley, and that's the fact. I—I hope your sister will get well, too."

"It's all right now, thanks. Only a matter of time."

"I'm jolly glad!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I sha'n't shut up!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "I've got a jolly good scheme. I think I'm entitled to speak, as I'm practically the only fellow who stuck to Linley all along and stood by him!"

"Well—"

"My only hat!"

"Oh, really, you know, you must remember that I said all along that—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"It's a jolly good scheme. I think that as Linley's sister is getting well, her recovery ought to be celebrated somehow, and Wharton couldn't do better than blow his five pounds in standing a form feed to celebrate the occasion."

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"It's a good idea," he exclaimed, "and I'll do it!"

And he did. And at that feed the healths of Mark Linley and Mark Linley's sister were drunk in ginger-beer and lemonade with the greatest enthusiasm.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mr. Manders' Ordeal.

HEAR the latest?" Jimmy Silver asked the question of his chums, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome.

"No," replied Lovell. "What's up now?" "It appears that several complaints have been made by village people who have been snowballed as they passed the school," explained Jimmy Silver.

"Well, that doesn't concern us," remarked Raby disinterestedly.

"That's just where you're wrong, old son," said Jimmy Silver. "Old Manders stopped me as I was leaving the Hall, and had the impudence to ask me whether I had been chucking snowballs about."

"Blessed 'sauce!" cried Lovell indignantly. "That's what I thought," said Jimmy. "But you know what a suspicious old beast Manders is."

"But what's it got to do with him?" Jimmy Silver made a hopeless gesture.

"That's what I want to know," he said. "I told him that we shouldn't dream of doing such a thing, but I'll swear he didn't believe me."

"Just like him!" "The four juniors passed out into the quad, which was crowded with juniors.

"Manders would do better to look in his side for the culprits," said Jimmy Silver.

"You don't think Tommy Dodd & Co. had anything to do with it," asked Lovell.

"Shouldn't like to say," said Jimmy. "But whoever's guilty will get a thundering good licking if—"

"Hallo, who's going to get a licking?" Jimmy Silver looked round to discover Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern side at his elbow.

"Cheerio, Doddy!" said Jimmy Silver breezily. "What do you Modern bouncers mean by biffing passers-by with snowballs?"

"Look here, Silver, if you suggest—," began Tommy Dodd, giving the Classical captain a savage glare.

"Not at all," said Jimmy blandly. "But you know what you Modern asses are. It's just the sort of thing—"

"Oh, is it?" growled Tommy Dodd. "We'll see about that! Collar the bouncers!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Tommy Cook eagerly.

In another moment the rival juniors were engaged in a fierce struggle.

"Go for 'em!" bellowed Tommy Dodd.

"Give 'em socks!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver boisterously.

How the fight would have ended, had it been allowed to continue, there was no knowing.

The fact remains that just as Jimmy Silver had tightly embraced Tommy Dodd, and was preparing to rub the latter's head in the snow, Mr. Manders appeared on the scene.

"Boys!" he cried, in a stern voice.

In a moment the fight was brought to an abrupt conclusion.

"How dare you behave in such a disorderly manner," said Mr. Manders coldly. "You are a disgrace to your school. You will all do me a hundred lines by this evening, and if I have to make any further complaint, I shall double the imposition!"

"Oh!"

"Moreover," continued the Modern master, "I forbid you to throw snowballs until I have discovered who it was who disgraced his school by throwing snowballs at village people. I am determined to put down such gross behaviour."

With his nose held high in the air, Mr. Manders turned on his heel and entered the house.

Jimmy Silver gave the Modern juniors a wrathful glance.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 282.

"All your fault, you Modern bouncers!" he exclaimed.

"Rot!" cried Tommy Dodd disdainfully. "If you Classical asses hadn't—"

"Ring off, Doddy!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Look here—"

"Oh, go and chop chips!"

"I—"

"Come on, you fellows," said Jimmy Silver, turning to his chums. "Let's go for a stroll."

The Fistical Four left the quad, and walked down the road in the direction of Coombe.

A few minutes after they had gone, Mr. Manders came hurrying out of the House, and crossed the quad at a quick pace.

Tommy Dodd & Co. saw him go, and wondered the reason for his haste.

They little knew, however, the scheme that was working in the Modern master's mind.

Mr. Manders was firmly convinced that it was Jimmy Silver & Co. who had hurled the snowballs at the village people, and he was resolved to prove their guilt.

By the time he entered the lane leading to Coombe, the Fistical Four had disappeared from view.

But Mr. Manders was in no wise deterred. As he strolled along, he suddenly caught sight of a small, disused hut in the woods at the side of the road.

Mr. Manders saw at once that from the hut he could command a clear view of the road.

He forthwith quickened his pace, and, drawing up before the hut, he peered inside.

The door was a small one, and Mr. Manders had to bend his body to enter.

But once inside, his eyes glinted with satisfaction as he noticed that one of the boards in the roof had rotted and half broken away.

He thrust his head through the opening and at once caught a momentary glimpse of some youthful figures in the distance.

Before he had time to recognise any of the faces, however, a snowball, deftly aimed, caught him full between the eyes.

Then another, following close behind, landed upon the side of his face.

With a smothered exclamation of pain and anger Mr. Manders ducked down into the shed once more.

He mopped his face and dabbed his injured eye with his handkerchief, and at the same moment sounds of merry laughter reached him from the road.

"The little hounds!" he muttered viciously, confident that it was the Fistical Four who had hurled the snowballs. "They shall pay for this!"

He pushed hard upon the door to rush out and collar the junior offenders before they could make their escape.

But to his consternation and dismay the door was not open.

In a perfect fury he smote upon it and pushed and shoved, but it had become firmly jammed, and would not move.

The shed was a strong one, and was built of good solid boards, and though the roof was beginning to show signs of decay, the main structure was as firm and steady as on the day it was put up.

Mr. Manders was trapped!

He bobbed his head up through the hole in the roof again and glared round, as though he expected to see the culprits waiting to come to his aid.

But there was now no sign of the snowballers.

There was nobody within sight to come to the rescue of the unfortunate Mr. Manders.

He was about to cry out for help, but restrained himself as he realised that he would probably only attract to the spot a crowd of Rookwood juniors.

The thought of being found by them in his ignominious position made him shudder.

Consequently, he turned his attentions once more to the door, and began again to wrench and push at it.

His cramped position made it impossible

to put much strength into his efforts, and at last, in despair, he sank back into the shed to recover from the exertions of his fruitless labour.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Rescuers' Reward.

LISTEN! What was that?"

The Fistical Four had been for a long walk, and were returning along the road to Rookwood, when Jimmy Silver pulled up suddenly and made the exclamation.

"Didn't hear anything," said Lovell, as he and the others stood still. "What was it?"

"Thought I heard someone yell out for help," replied Jimmy Silver.

"You're dreaming, old son," remarked Raby, with a grin. "Who d'you think would be yelling for help in this neighbourhood? We're not in the wilds of Timbuctoo!"

Ignoring this taunt, Jimmy Silver walked on again, followed by his chums.

Suddenly the four pulled up simultaneously as an unmistakable cry for help reached their ears.

"I knew I heard something!" declared Jimmy Silver. "Listen!"

"Help!"

Again came the cry for assistance.

"Come on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "I'm going to investigate!"

With that Jimmy Silver set off at a run in the direction from which the cry came, closely followed by Lovell, Raby, and Newcome.

Just as the juniors arrived at the edge of the wood on the opposite side of the road, and were wondering from which direction the cry had come, another shout, this time much clearer, rang out to the right of them.

"Help! Oh, help!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Sounds like a Rookwood fellow!"

The Fistical Four plunged into the bushes, starting a number of young pheasants, which fluttered out of their path with loud squawks.

But the juniors gave no thought to the fact that they were trespassing.

They scrambled through the bushes, brushing all obstacles aside.

A minute later another shout directed them to the spot, where a most amazing spectacle met their gaze.

Lying upon the ground, moaning and writhing, was Topham, one of the nuts of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

At first the Classical chums could not see what was the matter.

Then suddenly Jimmy Silver noticed that one of Topham's feet was firmly gripped in the teeth of a powerful steel trap, which had been set to catch steats and weasels.

He darted forward at once, and with much difficulty wrenched open the trap and released the suffering Topham.

The nut of the Fourth sank to the ground.

"My hat!" exclaimed Lovell aghast. "He's fainted!"

"Get some water, quick!" commanded Jimmy Silver, raising Topham in his arms.

Raby ran off to a stream which ran along the outer edge of the wood.

He filled his cap with water, and returned with as much speed as possible.

A handkerchief was soaked with water and dabbed upon the unconscious junior's forehead, and in a few seconds he opened his eyes.

"It's all right, old son!" said Jimmy Silver sympathetically; "you're better now!"

Topham endeavoured to struggle up, but a twinge of pain in his foot made him sink back again.

"How the dickens did you manage to get into that thing?" asked Lovell, in a puzzled voice.

"Keeper was after us," answered Topham haltingly, "and I went plump into the beastly thing without noticing."

"Who else was with you?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Smythe and Townsend; but I lost them."

"What were you doing in here, anyway?" "We weren't in here. We were out in the field there, and—and he suddenly popped up from nowhere and started chasing us. We were obliged to bunk in here to get away."

Topham did not state that he and his fellow-nuts had been engaged in peeing Mr. Manders with snowballs.

"Well, it's no good hanging about here," said Jimmy. "Can you manage to walk, Toppo?"

"Oh, I'm all right now!" responded Topham, struggling to his feet.

Very gingerly he put his foot to the ground and tried it. It was very painful, but he managed to walk with an effort.

"We'd better have a look at it before you go back," said Jimmy Silver, "and we'll tie it up for you."

Topham sat down again, and, undoing his boot, removed his sock.

There were several ugly places round his ankle where the strong teeth of the trap had gripped, but there appeared to be no serious injury.

The ankle was considerably swollen and bruised, but the application of the wet handkerchief relieved the pain somewhat, and Topham replaced his boot and sock, and declared that he felt much better.

"Don't tell anyone about this," he added, when they were on their way back to Rookwood. "There'll be no end of a shindy about it if you do."

"We shan't say anything," answered Jimmy Silver promptly. "But what about Townsend and Smythe? Suppose they've been nabbed?"

"Well, if they have that'll just about put the lid on it!"

By the time the juniors approached Rookwood the colour had returned to Topham's face again.

His injured foot, however, was still pain- ing him considerably.

"I think I'll cut across this field to the school," he said, as they reached a stile at the roadside. "It's a bit nearer, and I'm anxious to find out if the others are back."

"All right!" said Jimmy Silver. "Sure you can manage all right?"

"Yes, thanks! Mum's the word, you know!"

"All serene!"

And Topham carefully crossed the stile and hobbled across the field.

"Wonder if he told us the truth?" re- marked Lovell, as the Fistical Four continued along the road.

"His yarn was certainly a bit fishy," replied Jimmy Silver. "My opinion is that those rotters were smoking and gambling."

"Well, it serves 'em right all they get," declared Lovell firmly.

"Quite so."

"If Torny and Smythe get nabbed, I can see there being a fine old shindy!" remarked Raby.

"Serves 'em right!" said Lovell, who had very little sympathy for the nuts.

"I——" Lovell broke off suddenly as the voice of Mr. Manders was heard from the other side of the hedge.

"Silver! Lovell! Come here at once!"

The Fistical Four with one accord peered over the hedge into the field they were passing.

"My hat!" exclaimed Lovell, with a grin.

His gaze had fallen upon the remarkable spectacle of the master of the Modern Fourth, who was still imprisoned in the shed.

His head was protruding through the hole in the roof, and he glared at the Fistical Four.

Raby was indiscreet enough to laugh aloud, which at once drew forth an angry exclamation from Mr. Manders.

"Come and release me immediately!" he howled. "How dare you stand there and laugh!"

"What a giddy sight!" muttered Newcome, bobbing down behind the shelter of the hedge to hide his grinning face from the angry eyes of Mr. Manders.

The other juniors followed his example, and they were all half doubled up behind the hedge in their efforts to compose themselves before approaching the furious master.

"If you dare to disobey me," yelled Mr. Manders fiercely, "I will have you all most severely punished!"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Jimmy Silver, controlling his features with an effort. "We'd better go and let the bouncer out!"

"How the merry dickens he got in there beats me!" exclaimed Lovell, breaking into a grin once more.

"I expect those asses, Dodd & Co., trapped him in there," remarked Raby.

"They wouldn't have the nerve to do it!" declared Jimmy Silver.

All the while the Classical chums were exchanging opinions Mr. Manders was angrily shouting to them, growing more furious every moment.

He had not a good temper at the best of times, but to be treated in such a casual manner by a number of juniors, after having been compelled to submit to such a humiliating detention for over half an hour, nearly drove him to distraction.

The Fistical Four made their way towards the shed, and Jimmy Silver mildly inquired what was wrong.

"Wrong? Wrong?" said Mr. Manders, spluttering with rage. "Can't you see that I am fixed in this confounded thing? Open the door at once!"

Lovell, Raby, and Newcome had been hid- ing their grinning faces behind Jimmy Silver's back.

They had tried to control their mirth, but it was no good.

Mr. Manders was, as Lovell expressed it afterwards, enough to make a cat laugh.

There were streaks of black slush down his face, and he was almost distracted with rage.

"How the dickens could we?" grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "It was a bit of a job, but the worst of it is he'll accuse us of all the trouble now."

"Oh, well, it can't be helped!" replied Lovell resignedly. "We've got to face it!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Surprise.

TOPHAM found his chums, Smythe and Townsend, in Smythe's study at Rookwood, discussing in fear and trembling his disappearance.

His entrance was greeted with exclamation of joy.

"Where the dickens did you get to?" cried Smythe, in astonishment.

"Nearly into the hands of that keeper fellow," replied Topham calmly; "but instead of that I got caught in a beastly trap."

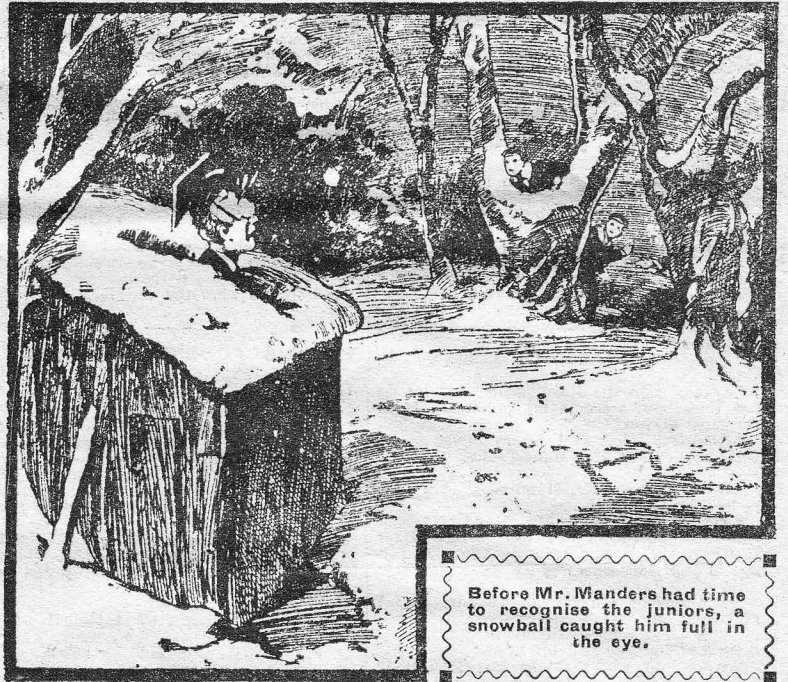
"Trap?" exclaimed his listeners in unison. "Yes," answered Topham. "And if it hadn't been for Jimmy Silver and those other rotters I should have been there now."

"But how the dickens——"

"I'll tell you," said Topham. And he gave a full account of his adventures.

"By gad!" exclaimed Smythe. "Did they see us shy those snowballs at Manders?"

"I don't know," said Topham, with a grin. "But they won't let on. I made them promise they wouldn't."



Before Mr. Manders had time to recognise the juniors, a snowball caught him full in the eye.

When Jimmy Silver moved to obey the master's command, Mr. Manders caught sight of the laughing juniors.

"You impertinent young sweeps!" he exclaimed savagely. "Your behaviour confirms my suspicions. I believed before that you were responsible for these snowballing outrages, and now I am certain that you were the culprits!"

Meanwhile Jimmy Silver was struggling with the jammed door of the shed, so Lovell thought it advisable to render assistance without further delay.

In a moment or two the door was wrenched open, and Mr. Manders crawled out.

He glared at the four juniors, whose faces were now perfectly serious.

"You will present yourselves in my study in half an hour's time!" he exclaimed angrily. "You will then receive condign punishment for your dastardly behaviour."

With that he rushed off in the direction of the school.

"Phew!" gasped Lovell, when he had disappeared. "That's put the lid on it!"

"Looks like it!" replied Jimmy Silver. "If you fellows had kept your faces straight we might have come off better!"

"Oh, good!" said Smythe, with a sigh of relief. "You're a cute chap, Toppo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Topham.

While the nuts were still congratulating themselves on their escape Jimmy Silver & Co. were standing before Mr. Manders in the master's study.

Mr. Manders' eyes were fixed on those of the juniors.

"I demand to know why you had the effrontery to hurl snowballs at me this afternoon?" demanded the Modern master.

"Throw snowballs at you, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver, aghast.

"Do not bandy words with me, you disgraceful boy!" said Mr. Manders, in a rasping voice.

"But we haven't thrown a snowball this afternoon, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"How dare you lie!" exclaimed Mr. Manders, spluttering with rage. "You threw snowballs at me whilst I was in that shed in the woods!"

"We did, sir?"

"Yes," said the Modern master, between his teeth. "I desire an explanation. For what purpose did you see fit to treat me in

such an outrageous manner? Was it solely for the sake of revenge, or—

Jimmy Silver's eyes flashed. "I think you must be mistaken, sir—" he began.

"I am not mistaken, Silver!" growled Mr. Manders. "Do not add insolence to your other misdeeds! I desire an explanation!"

"I have none to offer, sir," said Jimmy Silver calmly, "except that we did not throw snowballs at you."

"How dare you lie to me?"

"It's the truth, sir!"

Mr. Manders made a gesture. "Very well," he said coldly. "If you still persist in lying, I shall be compelled to take this matter before Dr. Chisholm. I would have preferred not to have done so, but you have left me no other course. You may go!"

"But—"

"Enough! I will not listen to another word!"

Utterly crestfallen at their treatment by the unreasonable master, Jimmy Silver & Co. left the study.

They went back to their own study, and sat down by the fire.

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Lovell. "This is the limit!"

"The absolute limit!" concurred Jimmy Silver. "The rotter has allowed his beastly spite to get the better of him!"

"He's not sure himself that it was you who snowballed him," remarked Newcome. "He's only jumped to conclusions."

"Just like him!" said Jimmy Silver. "I almost—"

"You fellows are to go to the Head's study at once!"

The Fistical Four looked round quickly, to observe Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, standing in the doorway.

"All right, Bulkeley, old man," said Jimmy Silver. "We'll go at once!"

"You'd better."

The Fistical Four wended their way to the Head's study.

Dr. Chisholm was sitting in his chair, his brows knitted, and a stern look on his face.

Mr. Manders was standing at his side, and there was a mocking grin on his face as the Classical juniors entered.

"Silver," said the Head austere, "I am extremely sorry to say I have received a very serious complaint concerning you. I understand from Mr. Manders that you had the effrontery to hurl snowballs at him this afternoon."

"No, sir!" said Jimmy Silver, in a ringing voice.

"Silver," said the Head coldly, "please do not raise your voice in my presence. I am surprised at you!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Jimmy Silver apologetically. "But Mr. Manders has no right—"

"Boy!" snapped Mr. Manders. "How dare you—"

"Please keep silent, Mr. Manders!" said the Head cuttingly. "I will correct Silver if necessary. Now, Silver, do you still persist in your innocence?"

"Yes, sir."

"You declare you did not commit the act of which you are accused?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy boldly.

Dr. Chisholm nodded his head.

"When did you first see Mr. Manders?" he asked slowly.

"When he called to us for assistance," stated Jimmy.

"But Mr. Manders declares he saw you throw the snowballs—"

"Mr. Manders did not see us, sir!"

Jimmy Silver's voice rose to a high pitch in his indignation, but this time the Head did not correct him. He turned to Mr. Manders.

"Is that true, Mr. Manders?" he asked. "Did you recognise Silver and his friends?"

"I—er—no!" replied the Modern master. "I did not exactly recognise them; but—but I am sure they were the guilty parties."

Dr. Chisholm smiled slightly.

"But, Mr. Manders, I cannot convict these boys on mere supposition," he said slowly.

"It is not supposition, sir!" said Mr. Manders, in a grating voice. "I am confident these boys are guilty. They are disgraceful young hooligans, and—"

"Mr. Manders!" The Head frowned. "You forget yourself, sir!"

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Chisholm," said Mr. Manders, flushing to the roots of his hair. "But if you are not convinced, perhaps you will ask these boys to give an account of their movements this afternoon?"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 292.

"By all means!" agreed the Head. "Silver," he added, and the kindly tone in his voice was not lost on the juniors, "where did you go this afternoon?"

"We went for a walk, sir."

"Where to?"

"To the other side of Coombe, sir."

"Which way did you come back?" asked the Head. "Did you come by the lane leading to Coombe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you by any chance leave the road on your return journey?"

"No, sir. I—er—"

Jimmy Silver broke off suddenly. The rescue of Topham had suddenly flashed across his mind, and he paled slightly.

The Head noticed the change, and he eyed Jimmy Silver critically.

"Do you persist in that statement, Silver?"

"No, sir," replied Jimmy faintly.

"You did leave the road, then?"

"Ye-es."

Mr. Manders grinned. Everything was now working out to his satisfaction.

"H'm!" muttered the Head. "Why did you leave the road?"

Jimmy Silver did not reply. He could not. He had promised Topham to keep silent over his predicament in the wood, and Jimmy never broke his word.

"Silver!" rapped out the Head. "I am waiting for your answer!"

Still Jimmy did not reply.

"Very well," said the Head at length. "I will not give you another chance. At first I believed you were innocent, but now I am convinced of your guilt. I am surprised at you! I thought you capable of far better behaviour. You have disgraced your school, and you must suffer the consequences. You will all be flogged before the whole school in the morning. In the meantime, you will remain in the detention-room."

The Head rang for Bulkeley. A few moments later the captain of Rookwood appeared.

"Bulkeley," said Dr. Chisholm, "please be good enough to take these boys to the detention-room."

"Yes, sir!" replied Bulkeley, amazed at the command.

The Fistical Four followed Bulkeley out of the study. Not a word was spoken as they walked to the detention-room.

The chums were too crestfallen to talk.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Playing the Man.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. are to be flogged!"

The news very quickly spread throughout the school. Fellows heard it and gasped.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were amazed when they heard of it.

"What the dickens have they done now?" he asked.

"They were caught biffing old Manders with snowballs," explained Leggett, who was the first junior to become acquainted with the news.

"My hat!"

Topham heard Leggett's statement, and he went pale.

"What's that, Leggett?" he asked.

"Haven't you heard?" said the cad of the Fourth. "Why, old Manders got shut up in a shed in the wood somehow, and Jimmy Silver & Co. biffed him with snowballs. I—"

My aunt! What's the matter with you, Topham?"

"N-n-nothing," replied Topham nervously. "You've gone quite pale!" said Leggett in surprise. "Don't you feel well? You—"

Well, I'm blowed!"

Topham had suddenly turned on his heel and bolted upstairs.

Leggett and the other juniors who had noticed the change in the expression on Topham's face stood and gasped.

Topham had received a great shock. He had never expected events to take this turn. He dashed into his study.

Townsend and Smythe were sitting by the fire as he entered, and they jumped up in alarm.

"What—"

"Haven't you heard?" exclaimed Topham.

"Heard what?"

"Why, Jimmy Silver & Co. are to be flogged in the morning!"

"Whatever for?"

"For chucking snowballs at Manders!" explained Topham.

Immediately the faces of the nuts changed colour.

"By gad!" muttered Adolphus Smythe. "How the dickens did they get accused?"

"Don't ask me," replied Topham glumly. "They've been accused, and—"

"Well, it's a good job we weren't caught!" said Townsend, with a sigh. "A good hiding will do those rotters good!"

"But—" began Topham.

"What the dickens are you looking so sick about, Topy?" asked Townsend. "We're all right."

"Yes; but—"

"But what?"

"Well, it's rather rotten that those fellows should be flogged when it was us who chucked the snowballs."

"Oh, rot!" said Townsend.

"I—I think we ought to confess," said Topham haltingly.

"Don't talk rot!"

"But supposing it comes out eventually that we—"

"It won't."

"But supposing—"

"Shut up, Topy!" growled Townsend. "Sit tight and say nothing!"

Topham remained staring into the fire for a few moments; then he turned on his heel and made towards the door of the study.

"Wh-where are you going?" asked Townsend slowly.

"I'm going to see the Head."

"Silly ass! You're—"

But before Townsend and Smythe could restrain him Topham had left the room, and was making towards the Head's study.

He drew up before Dr. Chisholm's room and tapped on the door.

"Come in!" sang out the Head.

Topham entered, and stood nervously before the Head.

"Well, Topham?" said the Head.

"I—I've come to confess, sir!" said Topham haltingly.

"Bless my soul!" muttered the Head. "What do you mean?"

"I—I think it's only right I should tell you that Jimmy Silver & Co. are innocent," murmured Topham.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the Head. "What do you know about the unfortunate affair of this afternoon?"

"I—I—"

"Do you know who threw the snowballs at Mr. Manders?" demanded the Head.

"Ye-es."

"Then please give me their names!" said Dr. Chisholm.

"I was one, sir," said Topham quietly.

"You!" The Head stared at the junior in amazement.

"Yes, sir," said Topham. "I'm sorry, sir, but—"

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head. "I am amazed! Who were your companions?"

Topham hesitated for a moment.

"I—I would rather not say, sir," he faltered.

"But I command you to tell me!"

Topham looked at the Head pleadingly.

"Do you think, sir, that—that it would be playing the game for me to tell?"

"H'm!" The Head pursed his lips. "Perhaps not," he added. "I think I can guess who the culprits are. I will question them. You may go. I shall want to see you again presently."

Topham went, with a very forlorn look on his face. He knew that he would receive condign punishment for his misdeed, but he was somewhat consoled by the fact that he had played the man.

Topham was not much of a hero, but he had certainly played up well in this matter.

Smythe and Howard duly appeared before the Head, and under severe cross-examination their guilt was proved beyond doubt.

The Fistical Four were released from the punishment-room and completely exonerated.

The nuts duly received the punishment that was due to them. Jimmy Silver could not help but feel sorry for Topham, for in spite of his many bad qualities he had certainly saved them from a flogging by turning up trumps.

THE END.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver and Co. is entitled: "A FAITHFUL FRIEND!"
By OWEN CONQUEST.
DON'T MISS IT!

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

THE FLOODED SCHOOL!

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Rainy!

RAIN!" said Tom Merry.
"Rain!" growled Jack Blake.
"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy disconsolately.
"And vewy wet wain!"
A group of juniors stood at the window at the end of the Form-room passage, looking out into the old quadrangle.

It was raining; it had been raining for a week. Football was off—very much off. In fact, the footer-ground had disappeared from view—it had been under water for the last two days.

"Look!" said Tom Merry suddenly. "The road's flooded now! We shall have it spreading through the quad next!"

"Oh, rotten!" growled Monty Lowther. "How much longer are we going to be stuck indoors?"

"Godness knows!" said Jack Blake. "I'm absolutely fed up! Isn't there something we can do?"

"What about leap-frog in the Form-room?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, rats!"
"Might do a rehearsal of 'Julius Caesar'!"
"Blow 'Julius Caesar'!"

"We shall have to sit round the Form-room fire and ask one another conundrums!" groaned Blake.

Monty Lowther brightened up a little. Monty Lowther was a determined humorist, and he was great on conundrums.

"That's not a bad idea!" he exclaimed. "Why is Gussy like this rotten weather?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"
"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron," said Blake recklessly.

"Ass! Why is Gussy like this beastly weather?"
"I wufuse to be compared to this beastly wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "I considah—"

"Because he never will dry up!" said Lowther.

But nobody laughed. They were past the power of conundrums. But when the humorist of the Shell once started, it was difficult to stop him.

"Why is a man with a cold like a quadruped?" demanded Lowther.
"Blessed if I know!" said Blake, yawning.

"You are an ass, Lowthah! A man with a cold does not resemble a quadruped in the least!"
"Because he's a little hoarse!" explained Lowther.

The juniors groaned.
"Don't!" said Manners. "This is worse than the rain!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Why is—"
"Ring off!" roared Blake. "It's bad enough to have this blessed rain, without its raining conundrums, too! Dry up!"

"Why is—"
"Cheese it!"
"Why is a high mountain like the tropics?" persisted Lowther.

"It is not like the twopics, deah boy."
"Because it's a dangewous climb," said Lowther cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass inquiringly upon Lowther. He seemed to be trying to make it out.

"I do not weward that as an answah, Lowthah," he said. "I'm willin' to admit, for the sake of argument, that a high mountain may be a dangewous climb; but how can the twopics be a dangewous climb?"

"Clime!" explained Lowther. "One's a

clime with a B, and the other's a climb with an E!"

"I have nevah heard of anybody climbin' with a bee—"

"B, idiot, not bee!" said Lowther. "C-I-I-m-b—see?"

"C-I-I-m-b-e!" exclaimed D'Arcy in surprise. "That does not spell a word at all!"

"My hat! C-L-I-M-B!" roared Lowther. "Do you know what that spells?"

"Yaas."
"And the other is C-L-I-M-E-I!"
"Is it?"

"Yes, fathead!"
"I wufuse to be called a fathead. I—"
"Do you see it now?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.
"No, I don't quite see it, deah boy, but I'm willin' to take your word for it."

"Oh, you ass! Listen, and I'll explain again—"
"Pwaw don't twouble, deah boy. I'm perfectly willin' to accept your assuwanse."

"One is a clime, and the other is a climb—"
"Oh, don't!" said Tom Merry. "Let it go at that. We're all satisfied."

"More than satisfied!" yawned Manners. "I'll give you another one, then," said Lowther. "I know lots. I make them up myself. I can turn out conundrums like anything!"

"You'll be turned out yourself if you don't cheese it!"
"Why is a cobbler—"

"Ring off!"
"Why is a cobbler—"
"Rats!"

"Why is a—"
"Shut up!" roared all the juniors together.
"Why is—"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "It's the only way to stop him when he starts punning. Bump him!"

"Why is a cobbler— Ow! Oh!"
Three or four pairs of hands seized the conundrum-merchant, and he descended upon the floor of the passage with a loud concussion. Lowther roared.

"Oh! You silly asses! Ow!"
"Bump!"
"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, grinning. "I weward that as funny. Anything to weliève the monotony! Bump the boundah again!"

"Ow!" roared Lowther. "Leggo! Ow!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther made a wild clutch at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and dragged him over. The swell of St. Jim's rolled on the floor, and there was a loud crack as his famous monocle came into violent contact with the linoleum.

"Bai Jove! You feahful ass, you've bwoken my monocle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther. "Serve you right! I—"
"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus hurled himself upon the humorist of the Shell. Arthur Augustus was generally a very placable fellow, but the loss of his eyeglass was too exasperating.

The Fourth-Former and the Shell fellow rolled along the passage in a loving embrace, collecting up the dust. The other fellows, cheered by this break in the monotony, cheered them on cheerily.

"Go it, Gussy!"
"Punch him, Lowther!"
"Give him beans!"

"Hurray!"

In the sudden excitement, nobody noticed the door of the Third Form room open, and nobody observed Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, step out into the passage. Mr. Selby did not observe the struggling juniors till it was too late.

They rolled against his legs with a sudden roll, and Mr. Selby disappeared suddenly into the classroom again. There was a sound of Mr. Selby sitting down, and a yell. "My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Cave!"

And the juniors fled.
But Lowther and D'Arcy did not have time to flee. They sat up in the doorway of the Form-room, breathless and dusty, and blinked at Mr. Selby. Mr. Selby sat just within the Form-room, and blinked back at them in speechless fury.

Mr. Selby was not a good-tempered gentleman, and in rainy weather he was troubled with rheumatic pains, which made his temper a little sharper than usual.

"You—you—you—" he stuttered.
"Sorry, sir!" gasped Lowther. "Quite an accident, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah! Awfily sowwy, sir."
Mr. Selby made a jump to his desk, and caught up a cane, and made another jump back to the juniors, who were scrambling up.

Mr. Selby was not a very active man as a rule, but he displayed a remarkable and troublesome activity now. He reached the two juniors before they had a chance to escape, and the cane rose and fell with wonderful celerity.

Thwack, thwack, thwack!
"Oh! Ow!"
"Yowoooh!"

"Gr-r-reat Scott!"
"Bai Jove! Ow!"
Lowther and D'Arcy fled. Mr. Selby chased them to the end of the passage, still flashing with the cane, and they darted upstairs and escaped.

Mr. Selby did not pursue them upstairs, fortunately. The two fugitives came along the upper passage at top speed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Well run, Gussy!"
"Bai Jove—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I fail to see anythin' to laugh at, you fellows! I am hurt!"
"Ow!" groaned Lowther. "Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"There is nothin' whatevah funnay in that frightfully bad-tempered boundah chasin' me with a cane."

But the other fellows seemed to think that there was. They roared.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Plenty of Water.

DURING the rest of that day the juniors were, to use Monty Lowther's expression, bored to tears. The rain poured down in torrents, and there was no sign of any cessation.

The flood-water had entered the quadrangle, and was rising higher. Taggles, the school porter, had been forced to leave his lodge and take refuge in the school.

The oldest inhabitant of St. Jim's could not remember such a flood. Even Taggles, who was popularly supposed by fags in the Second Form to be hundreds of years old, could not remember it.

The juniors were in a very disgruntled mood when they went to their dormitory that night. The flood did not appeal to them in the least. Half-holidays spent within four walls were not at all to their liking. They

would have much preferred a stirring game at footer.

There were sundry grunts from several beds ere the juniors fell asleep, to forget for a time, at any rate, the discomfiture they were suffering through the incessant rain.

The next morning the school was seething with excitement.

It was still raining, and the flood was spreading. The water was five feet deep in the quadrangle, and deeper on the playing-fields, which were on a somewhat lower level.

The rooms on the lower floor were flooded. The little tuckshop of St. Jim's was flooded, too, and the fountain in the quad had disappeared under water. The gym was washed out, and the crypt of the ruined chapel was overflowing.

There was water, water everywhere, to use the description of the Ancient Mariner; but, unlike the case of that old gentleman, there was plenty to drink, if anybody had wanted it.

The question at St. Jim's was whether there would soon be anything to eat. As Monty Lowther pointed out to a really alarmed group of juniors, the tradesmen's carts could not drive up through five feet of water.

Instead of chapel as usual, prayers were held in the lecture-room, and then it was announced that work would be given to the boys to do in their studies, instead of their assembling in the Form-rooms as usual.

The announcement was very agreeable to the fags of the Third and Second. They had no studies, and they therefore expected to escape lessons altogether. But the Third, at least, were doomed to disappointment. Mr. Selby was not to be escaped so easily.

The Third Form will assemble in the school library, Mr. Selby announced.

And the Third Form grunted discontentedly. The school library was not upstairs, but was on a higher level than the main building. St. Jim's had been built at various times, and the work of the fourteenth or fifteenth century was to be seen close beside the erections of the nineteenth and twentieth.

The library was up four steps from one of the long passages, and was a very ancient apartment, with panelled walls and deep, mullioned windows.

It was several feet above high-water mark of the flood, so far, and was supposed to be safe. The fags of the Third made their way there glumly. Mr. Selby's announcement had dashed to the ground their hopes of an easy day.

"Just like Selby!" muttered Jameson. "Why couldn't he give us a task, like the other fellows, and leave it to us to get it done?"

"Ear, ear!" said Joe Frayne. "And we should do it, of course."

"Oh, don't argue!" growled Jameson. "What a fellow you are for jawing! You'd jiv the ears of a donkey!"

"Hold 'em on, then," advised Frayne.

"Why, you ass—"

"Kindly do not chatter," said Mr. Selby's voice from behind. "Take fifty lines, Frayne and Jameson."

Frayne and Jameson gasped. The Third Form marched into the library. Wally cast a glance out of the window, in the faint hope of seeing the water rising. It had only to rise a few more feet to flood the library as well as the Form-rooms.

Some of the fags carried in chairs from the lecture-room, and the Third Form settled down to work. Mr. Selby left his class a little later, and, ten minutes afterwards, the Fourth Form came streaming in, carrying chairs in their hands.

The Fourth-Formers were looking simply wild. Mr. Selby had kindly suggested to Mr. Lathom that there was room for two Forms to work in the library, and Mr. Lathom had quitted the cheery fireside in his study with a sigh, at the call of duty and Mr. Selby.

The Fourth Form did not in the slightest degree appreciate Mr. Selby's concern for them. They could have missed the morning's work with perfect equanimity. Blake and D'Arcy, and Herries and Digby came fling in, and they planted their chairs at the other end of the long, lofty room. Blake cast a hopeful glance into the quadrangle, as Wally had done, and he grinned.

"My hat!" he murmured. "The water's rising fast!"

"Hear, hear!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Take your places, my boys," said little Mr. Lathom, blinking at his Form over his glasses. "I am afraid we shall be working under some inconveniences this morning, my

dear boys, but I shall not be exacting. We must all do our best."

"Yes, sir," said the Fourth-Formers loyally.

Then Mr. Selby's harsh voice was heard at the other end of the library.

"You will kindly pay attention to your lessons. I shall not allow the present confusion in the school to be made the pretext for any idleness or carelessness."

The difference between the two masters was very marked. The Fourth-Formers felt a little more satisfied as they looked at the Third.

Wally had a seat near a window, and he glanced out of the window continually. The water was rising fast, and it was evident that the torrential rains had done further damage to the dam on the upper river.

The wreck of the dam was probably nearly gone by this time, and the water was coming down in a terrific flood. There were a good seven feet in the quadrangle now, and the passages and Form-rooms were swimming with water, and it was only a question of a short time before it was in the library.

Wally was the only fellow in the room in a position to watch the progress of the water, and he wondered whether he had better warn Mr. Selby. Mr. Selby's sharp, disagreeable voice broke in upon his meditations.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Yes, sir?" said Wally, starting.

"If you look out of the window again, instead of attending to your lessons, I shall cane you!"

"But, sir—"

"Silence!"

"I was going to say, sir—"

"Take fifty lines!"

Wally held his peace.

But, in spite of Mr. Selby, he could not help stealing a glance out of the window a little later. The water was swishing almost as high as the stone window-sills, and an up-rooted tree floated by, its branches scratching the lower panes. And the water was still rising.

"It will be here in five minutes!" Wally said to Jameson, in a whisper.

Jameson grinned.

"What larks!" he murmured.

"But it will spoil all the books!" said Wally.

"Oh, blow the books!"

"Oughtn't I to tell old Selby?"

"Oh, blow Selby!"

Mr. Selby's voice rapped out again.

"You are talking, Jameson. Take fifty lines!"

Jameson grunted.

D'Arcy minor rose in his place. He felt it his duty to speak, in spite of Mr. Selby's forbidding aspect. The books in the library were of almost unlimited value.

Besides many valuable bindings, there were old manuscripts in the cabinets that could never be replaced—ancient blackletter records of the earliest days of St. Jim's. Mr. Selby fixed a basilisk look upon the scamp of the Third.

"If you please, sir—" began Wally.

"Sit down, D'Arcy minor."

"I think I ought to tell you, sir—"

"If you say another word, D'Arcy minor, I shall cane you."

"But, sir—" persisted Wally.

Mr. Selby strode towards him.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy minor!"

"Oh, sir!"

Wally was cowed. He sat down with a grim look, and was silent. If Mr. Selby was determined not to let him utter his warning, there was nothing to be done.

The lesson went on.

Outside the window a log was bobbing up and down on the flood, tapping gently against the window-sill. The rising of the water floated it upon the sill, and it scraped against the glass.

Several of the fags noticed it then, and there was a general exclamation. Mr. Selby's unpleasant voice rasped out:

"Silence in the class!"

"I say, sir—" began Frayne.

"Silence!"

Crash!

A rush of the water brought the log with a crash against the lower panes, and they were shivered to atoms. There was a rush of water through the broken glass. Then Mr. Selby understood, and he uttered an exclamation of alarm. Everybody in the library was upon his feet now.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, running towards the broken window in great agitation. "The room will be flooded! Surely you boys must have noticed—"

"I did notice, sir," exclaimed Wally, "but Mr. Selby would not let me tell him."

"Hold your tongue, D'Arcy minor!" exclaimed the Form-master angrily.

Blake & Co. rushed up at once.

"Shall we get the books out, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "All of you set to work at once; be very careful, take out the books, and carry them to the next floor above. Be very careful indeed. I will go and get the keys of the locked cases. Some of you carry out the cabinets as they are."

"Yes, sir."

And the Fourth Form and the Third set to work with a will.

Mr. Lathom dashed away, his gown fluttering wildly behind him, to seek the Head; and he returned in a few minutes with Dr. Holmes.

Bookcases were unlocked on all sides, and juniors, laden with great volumes, formed a procession out of the library door. Fellows came from all sides to help—the Shell, the Fifth, and the Sixth were soon busy.

And as they carried out books and cabinets and chairs and rugs, the water swamped in at the window where the glass was broken, and trickled in at the other windows. There was soon a foot of water on the floor, and the juniors trampled and splashed and plunged through it in high spirits.

They were making themselves useful, and, as Jack Blake remarked, it was better than lessons.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Quite Wet.

TOM MERRY & CO. "wired" into the work of clearing out the library with a will. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton gave directions, and masters and boys worked at saving the valuable property from the flood.

Mr. Selby stood upon a chair, frowning. All this disorder upset and worried him, and he was angry with the boys and angry with the flood. He looked as if he would have liked to have caned everybody present, from the Head downwards.

Wally & Co. had been whispering together, and now they came splashing towards their Form-master.

"Shall we help you out, sir?" asked Wally.

"D'Arcy minor, if you are impertinent—"

"Not at all, sir! Jameson and I and Curly could stoop down and lift up that chair, sir, and carry you out," said Wally.

Mr. Selby hesitated. It would not be an easy task; but it was certainly the only way of escaping from the flooded room without a soaking.

"Get some bigger boy to help you, then," he said.

"Yes, sir. Blake, come and lend a hand, will you?"

"What is it?" called out Blake.

"Mr. Selby wants to be taken out without getting wet."

Jack Blake snorted.

"I'm saving valuables," he replied.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Selby's eyes glittered.

Blake's reply hinted that he did not consider Mr. Selby very valuable, which was indeed his precise opinion.

"Come and lend a hand, Gussy!" called out Wally.

"Sowwy, deah boys. I'm diwectin' opewations here," replied Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus was indeed directing operations. Nobody was listening to his directions, or heeding them in any way, but that was not his fault. He was doing his best.

"Kidare," called out Mr. Selby at last, "will you come and help them get me out?"

Kildare growled.

"I am busy, sir. Surely you do not mind wetting your feet when we have so much to do? It would be necessary to carry you all along the passage."

"Kidare, pray do not be insolent!"

Kildare strode away.

"You'd better let us carry you out, sir," said Jameson. "The water's getting higher, sir. There will be six feet of it here soon."

"Seven or eight feet," said Wally.

"More likely nine or ten," said Curly Gibson. "Think how awful it would be if you should be drowned, sir! The Third Form would never get over it, sir."

"Darrel, will you lend some assistance here?"

"I have no time for it, sir!" said Darrel abruptly.

Mr. Selby gritted his teeth.

"Very well, D'Arcy minor; but pray be careful," he said.

"Right-ho, sir!"
 "Awfully careful now!" said Jameson. "Take one leg of the chair each. You take one, Wally, and Curly one, and I'll take one. Hobby, you come and take the other. Mind you don't upset Mr. Selby. He would get wet."

Hobbs grinned, and joined the fags in their task. They stooped down into the water, and each of them took a grip on a leg of the chair.

It swayed, and Mr. Selby panted.
 "Pray be careful—pray be careful!" he exclaimed. "I—I feel as if I were going over!"

"You're all right, sir," said Wally cheerily. "When we get the chair high enough, sir, you can sit on it, and then we can carry you out in good style, just like a Fifth of November guy, sir."

"What? You impertinent boy!"
 "Steady on!" shouted Wally. "One leg at a time!"

"You're pushing me!" gasped Hobbs. "Ow, it's heavy!" said Curly Gibson. "I didn't know you weighed so much, sir. But it's all right. We'll manage it somehow."
 "Now, then, all together! Heave away!"
 "Up she goes!"

Up she went, certainly; and, whether by accident or design, the chair turned almost completely sideways, and Mr. Selby went with a headlong splash into the water.

"Yaroo!"
 "Oh, dear!"
 "Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!" murmured Tom Merry.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Selby had fallen full length into the water. His feet were wet now, and so was the rest of him. He was wet from head to foot, and as he scrambled up the water ran down his infuriated face in streams, and it ran down his neck, and filled his eyes and ears and nose. He coughed and snorted furiously.

"Groo—hoo—yoooh!"
 "So sorry, sir!" murmured Wally.
 "You did that on purpose, you young villain! Groo—hoooh!"
 "Oh, sir!"
 Snack!

Mr. Selby's open hand caught D'Arcy minor on the side of the head, and the scamp of the Third staggered away with a yell. Then Mr. Selby went tramping and splashing out of the library and down the flooded passage, snorting.

"Ow!" said Wally, rubbing his ear. "Ungrateful beast! After all the trouble we've taken with him, too!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jameson.

"You young rascals!" said Kildare, laughing. "Don't waste time! Carry out some of those books."

"We had to look after our Form-master, you know, Kildare."
 "Yes, I know; and you deserved what you got," said Kildare.

Wally rubbed his ear ruefully; but upon the whole he was satisfied. He had got back a little of his own, as he expressed it, upon Mr. Selby.

The fags joined again in the labour of transporting the valuables out of the library and up the stairs to the next floor. They were kept busy till nearly dinner-time, and by that time there were five feet of water in the library. In the Form-rooms the flood was almost up to the ceiling.

The dining-room was flooded out, and dinner—a cold dinner—was eaten in a very scratch fashion in the upper passages.

Never before had there been such happenings at St. Jim's.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
 A Sudden Alarm.**

THE rain was still coming down heavily. From the windows of the School House the St. Jim's fellows looked out upon the sea of swirling waters, from which the old elms emerged with dripping branches.

From the New House the boats brought the New House fellows over for afternoon lessons.

Dr. Holmes and his staff were grappling with the difficulties of the situation most manfully, although their efforts were not exactly appreciated by the juniors. Lessons did not cease.

The Form-rooms being flooded, and even the library washed out, the dormitories were called into use, and at that safe distance from the surging waters, the juniors set to work as usual.

Tom Merry met Wally as they came out

after lessons. The scamp of the Third was squeezing his hands as he came along the passage, and the expression of his face was far from amiable. The captain of the Shell looked sympathetic.

"Catching it again?" he asked.
 "D'Arcy minor groaned.

"Selby's an awful beast!" he said. "He's started whacking us for the least little thing. But I'm not going to stand it. I'm going to wring old Selby's heart with remorse by committing suicide!"

"What!"
 "Don't you think he would go simply green if my dead body were found floating under the windows?" asked Wally.

"I dare say he would," said Tom Merry. "But where would you come in, you ass?"
 "I forbid you to think of anything of the sort, Wally, you awful young duffah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a shocked tone.

"Besides, it's impossible," said Monty Lowther. "You know the old proverb: Those who are born to be hanged cannot be drowned."

"Well, you'll see," said Wally. "I'm jolly well going to be found drowned, and you'll see what old Selby will say then. And you fellows are going to help me. I shall have to prove another alibi when the body is seen."

"What do you mean, you young ass?"

up somehow. The Head wouldn't let him rag us as he does if he knew."

"Wally, dear boy, I cannot consent—"
 "That's all right, Gussy; I can manage it without your consent," said Wally cheerfully. And he walked away to save further argument.

The next morning Wally and Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne were seen to be exchanging a good many whispers, and after dinner they disappeared into a box-room.

The Terrible Three gave them a look-in there, and found them very busy. Wally's oldest suit of clothes lay upon the floor, and the juniors were stuffing it out with straw and rags and all kinds of rubbish, into a semblance of the human form.

Wally was busily engaged in manufacturing a head to be fastened upon the figure. He had painted a football white, and was daubing features upon it, and the effect was ludicrous.

A wig, taken from the properties of the Junior Dramatic Society, was glued upon the end of the footer. The other end was fastened in the collar, and sewn upon the stuffing of the body.

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther. "It's awfully like you, Wally, only a little better looking. And that won't be noticed in the water."

"Ha, ha, ha!"



"Now, then," said Wally D'Arcy. "All together! Up she goes!"
 Up she went, certainly, and, whether by accident or design, the chair turned completely sideways, and Mr. Selby went with a headlong splash into the water. "Yaroo!"

said Tom Merry, laughing. "What wheeze have you got in your head?"

Wally lowered his voice cautiously.
 "I'm thinking of stuffing a suit of clothes, and dropping it into the water," he explained. "We can let it out on a string, and keep it bobbing up and down outside the window. Then, when I'm missing—"

"Bai Jove!"
 "It will give Selby a shock, and make him realise that he's on the wrong track," Wally explained. "When I turn up again alive and well, he will hug me like a long-lost son, I should think!"

"Yes, I can see old Selby doing that," said Tom Merry.
 "I don't think!" murmured Lowther. "It's rather too thick, Wally," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head.

Wally sniffed.
 "Well, if old Selby whacks me again, I'm going to do it," he said. "I'll make him sit

"It will take old Selby in when he sees it," said Wally, sewing away industriously.

"He will be sorry when his brightest and most promising pupil has been, drove to despair, as Frayne would say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Wally, old man, I should recommend you to draw the line," said Tom Merry seriously. "It will give Selby a turn; but when it comes out—"

"There will be a row," said Manners. "And a fearful licking for you, Wally," said Monty Lowther.

"I'm getting the lickings now," said Wally. "Old Selby can't be a worse beast than he is, anyway; that's one comfort. You chaps can keep out of it, you know. I don't want you to get into a row."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom Merry. "We're not thinking of that. We're giving you good advice—"

"Thank you for nothing!" yawned Wally.
 THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 282.

"I think we'll have a pair of your boots fastened on to it, Curly. I haven't any to spare."

"I think you won't!" said Curly very decidedly.

"Must have some boots," said Wally. "If you fellows want to make yourselves useful you can go and dig up a pair of old boots somewhere."

Tom Merry laughed, and fetched a pair of ancient, discarded boots. Having proved unable to dissuade Wally from his scheme, the Terrible Three lent him assistance in perfecting the weird figure, and it was satisfactorily finished before the bell rang for afternoon lessons.

The juniors went into the dormitories to their lessons. Mr. Selby was already in the Third Form dormitory when the Third came in. Wally was one minute late, and Mr. Selby did not let the opportunity pass.

"You are late, D'Arcy minor!" he rapped out.

"Only a minute, sir," said Wally.

"You will take fifty lines!"

The Third Form took their places in the rows of chairs which had been arranged in the dormitory in the place of forms. Mr. Selby was more snappish than ever that afternoon. He devoted his special attention to Wally.

Before the afternoon was half over Wally was in a desperate frame of mind; and when he was called out to be caned for the third time he did not stir.

"D'Arcy minor, come out here!" said Mr. Selby.

Wally did not move.

"Do you hear me, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then come out at once!"

"I think I've been caned enough, sir!" said Wally resolutely.

Mr. Selby gasped. So did the Third. The Form-master strode towards D'Arcy minor, caught him by the collar, and jerked him out before the class.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy minor!" he thundered.

Wally put his hands behind him.

"You'd better not touch me, sir!" he said.

"You'll be sorry for it. You'll drive me to jump into the water and drown myself, sir!"

"How dare you say such things, D'Arcy minor?" exclaimed Mr. Selby, shocked as well as angry. "I shall cane you severely for uttering such a wicked threat!"

"Well, you know what to expect now, sir," said Wally. "When I'm found missing you'll know what has become of me."

"Silence! Hold out your hand!"

Wally obeyed, and was caned. He went back to his seat with a dogged expression, and a gleam in his eyes. Mr. Selby glanced at him once or twice, and perhaps he realised that he had done enough, for he did not trouble Wally again that afternoon.

When the Third were dismissed Wally went out with the rest, with a grim expression on his face.

Tea in hall was no longer possible; hall was under water. The fellows who had studied had their tea there; but the Third Form had tea in the dormitory.

Mr. Selby had charge of them there, and when the Third assembled to tea D'Arcy minor did not appear. The Form-master noticed his absence at once.

"Where is D'Arcy minor, Gibson?" he asked.

As if in answer to Mr. Selby's question there came a sudden sound from the direction of the windows:

Splash!

Mr. Selby started up.

A loud cry rang in the air, and Mr. Selby, turning very white, rushed to the window and looked out. A dozen feet below the dormitory windows, the water washed against the walls of the School House.

The dusk was very thick in the quadrangle, and the branches of the elms cast deep shadows. But even in the dusk Mr. Selby could make out a form in Etons floating under the window.

He gave a stuttering cry:

"D'Arcy minor! Good heavens!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Found Drowned.

MR. SELBY gazed down from the window upon the dusky waters with a horror-stricken face. The

Third-Formers made a wild rush to the windows and peered out upon the waters. Curly Gibson gave a yell.

"It's D'Arcy minor! I know those clothes!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 292.

"Wally! Poor old Wally!"

"He's drowned himself!"

Jameson caught hold of Mr. Selby's sleeve in his excitement.

"Save him, sir!" he shrieked.

"What, what, what!"

"Save him, sir! Jump in after him!"

"What, what, what!"

"Are you going to let him drown, sir?"

shrieked Jameson. "Jump in, sir! Save him!"

"I—I—I cannot swim!" panted Mr. Selby. "It—it would be no use my jumping in! Oh, good heavens! The unfortunate boy! Help, help!"

"Jump in, sir!"

"Save him, sir!"

"Help!"

All the Third were yelling at the top of their voices. Mr. Selby's face was like a sheet. He gazed at the floating form, and could discern no sign of life. It floated with the motion of the water, and knocked gently against the stone wall below the window.

The face was almost hidden, but when it surged up from the water it was seen to be of a deadly whiteness. There was no doubt in Mr. Selby's mind—the chilling conviction forced itself upon him—the unfortunate fag was already drowned.

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Selby hoarsely. "A—a boat! Quick!"

He staggered away from the window.

Two or three of the fags rushed into the passage, shrieking for help. Tom Merry & Co. were the first to arrive upon the scene.

"What's the matter?" shouted Tom Merry, dashing into the dormitory.

"Wally—"

"He's drowned—"

"He said he would if Mr. Selby caned him again!" sobbed Curly Gibson.

"Silence, Gibson!" shrieked Mr. Selby. "I forbid you to say so! I—I—"

"You know he did, sir! Boo-hoo!"

"Get a boat! Call somebody! Help, help!"

stuttered the Third Form master.

The Terrible Three rushed to the window. They looked out upon the floating form, and drew back with horror-stricken faces.

"No good sending a boat, sir," said Tom Merry.

"It wouldn't do him any good now."

"Better recover the body, though," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"The body!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Oh, dear!"

"Poor chap!" said Manners. "I wonder what made him do this?"

"He said he would!" sobbed Curly. "Boo-hoo! Mr. Selby knows—"

"Silence, Gibson!"

"He mayn't be quite dead, sir," said Kangaroo. "Hadn't you better go in for him, sir?"

"I—I cannot swim, Noble!"

"Is this a time to think of that, sir?" asked Monty Lowther. "The whole school would admire you, sir, if you lost your life in attempting to save one of your Form, sir!"

Mr. Selby shuddered. He had no desire whatever to win the admiration of the school upon those terms.

"Run and fetch a boat!" he panted. "You boys—quick! Run, run!"

"Very well, sir," said Tom Merry. "Come on, you chaps!"

The Terrible Three dashed out of the dormitory and down the stairs. One of the boats that had brought supplies from Rylcombe was moored above the submerged steps of the School House, and the Terrible Three jumped into it and pushed off.

They rowed swiftly out upon the dusky waters, and came round under the windows of the Third Form dormitory.

From the window of a half-flooded room under the dormitory a grinning face was looking out, but they did not seem to notice it. They pulled alongside the floating body, which was bobbing up and down with the motion of the water.

Mr. Selby gazed down anxiously from the window above.

"Get him into the boat—quick!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir. Keep her steady against the wall, Monty, while I hook him in," said Tom Merry, standing up, boat-hook in hand.

"Right-ho!" said Lowther.

"I'll have him in a minute! It's only like catching salmon!" remarked Tom Merry.

"Merry, how can you be so heartless!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Take care!"

Tom Merry made a lunge at the floating figure with the boat-hook and drove it under water.

"Merry! Be careful!" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"It's all right, sir. He's past being hurt."

"Merry! I am astonished at you! I—"

"Come down to the door, sir."

"Yes, yes. I will do so."

Mr. Selby disappeared from the dormitory window. From the lower window a grinning face looked out, almost on a level with the water, and a voice whispered:

"Don't take that giddy body in, you chaps. Let it be lost in the flood."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry.

"Knock it to pieces with the boat-hook first. Don't want it to be found when the water goes down."

"Right-ho!"

Wally disappeared from the window of the flooded room. The Terrible Three pulled away into the deep dusk of the trees, Tom Merry trailing the body after the boat with the hook.

Under the elms, concealed from view by the branches, he smote the unoffending dummy with mighty smites, and it came to pieces, and the clothes and the boots and the painted footer floated away separately.

The Terrible Three chuckled gleefully.

"Shan't be able to take the body in now," grinned Lowther.

"No. Never mind. Save funeral expenses, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the chums of the Shell composed their faces into dreadful seriousness as they rowed back to the doorway of the School House.

Mr. Selby was there, in the midst of a huge crowd. The news of Wally's untimely death had spread over the House, and the Hall was crammed with fellows knee-deep in water.

Even Mr. Selby had forgotten his objections to getting his feet wet in the excitement and anxiety of the moment. He uttered a cry as the boat loomed through the gloom and bumped on the top step.

"Have you got it?" he cried.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"It floated away under the trees, sir," he said.

Mr. Selby groaned.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Brought to Book.

WHAT is the matter here?"

It was Mr. Raliton's voice.

The Housemaster of the School House came striding down the passage, his boots splashing in the water. Mr. Selby turned a haggard face upon him.

"It—it is D'Arcy minor!" he groaned.

"What has happened?"

"He is drowned!"

Mr. Raliton stood transfixed.

"D'Arcy minor drowned?"

"Yes!" moaned Mr. Selby.

"Impossible! How could he be drowned? Has he fallen into the water?" exclaimed Mr. Raliton. "Even so, D'Arcy minor is a good swimmer, as I know, and the water is calm. Is this some joke?"

"It is no joke!" muttered Mr. Selby. "The—unhappy boy has—has committed suicide!"

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Selby stiffened up.

"These boys went out to get in the body, sir," he said. "They can tell you."

The School House master fastened an expressive look upon the Terrible Three.

"Is it true, Merry?"

"Ahem, sir!"

"Has D'Arcy minor been drowned?"

"I—I think not, sir!" faltered Tom Merry.

"I think not, too!" said Mr. Raliton angrily. "What is this all about? I—"

"You think not, Merry?" shouted Mr. Selby. "You know perfectly well that D'Arcy minor threw himself into the water and was drowned!"

"Why should he do so, Mr. Selby?" snapped the Housemaster.

"He—he was punished this afternoon, and—and he said something of the sort," faltered Mr. Selby. "Of course, I took no notice of it at the time; but—but when I heard the splash I knew the foolish boy had carried out his dreadful intention. I saw the body floating."

"Did you see it, Merry?"

"No, sir," said Tom Merry.

Mr. Selby glared at him.

"Have you lost your senses, Merry?" he exclaimed. "Did you not go out to get in the body? Have you not just told me that it was lost among the trees?"

"It—it wasn't a body, sir."

"What! Not a body?"

"N—n—no, sir!"

"Then what was it?" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"Some old clothes, sir, that had got into the water somehow," said Tom Merry. "It—it really didn't look like a body when you got close to it, sir."

"Oh!"

"It is some foolish joke, I suppose, as I suspected at first," said Mr. Railton, frowning. "Where is D'Arcy minor?"

"Are you asking for me, sir?" said a weak voice on the stairs.

Mr. Selby swung round. Wally was on the stairs, just above the level of the water, looking down upon the wet crowd in the hall with an expression of innocent inquiry.

Mr. Selby stared at him as if he had been a spectre.

"D'Arcy minor!" he stammered.

"Yes, sir. Here I am, sir."

"Did you—did you jump into the water, D'Arcy minor?"

"I, sir? No, sir!"

"What have you been doing, D'Arcy minor?" asked Mr. Railton sternly.

"Nothing, sir. Only throwing away some old clothes, sir," said Wally innocently. "No harm in throwing away old clothes, is there, sir?"

"Old clothes!" shrieked Mr. Selby. "It was a body or—an imitation of some sort. I distinctly saw a face!"

"I don't see how the old clothes could have had a face, sir!" said Wally, in astonishment. "Of course, I don't dispute your word, sir. But I've never seen a suit of clothes with a face myself."

"There was a chuckle in the hall.

"Don't be impertinent, D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Railton. "It looks to me as if you have played a very reckless trick upon Mr. Selby."

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Selby was trembling with rage. He realised now that he had been taken in, and that all his anxiety and remorse were wasted. He was not feeling any remorse for his treatment of D'Arcy minor now. Quite otherwise.

"You—you young rascal!" he yelled.

"Oh, sir!"

"You deliberately plotted to make me believe that you were drowned!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Yes, you!" roared Mr. Selby. "You know that I should take that—that figure for your body, D'Arcy minor, when I saw it from the dormitory window!"

"But you couldn't have taken it for me, sir," said Wally cheerfully. "If you had believed that I was drowning under the window, sir, you'd have gone in for me. You would have tried to rescue me, sir!"

"Silence, D'Arcy minor!" said Mr. Railton, taking pity upon the shame and mortification in Mr. Selby's face. "You must not speak to your Form-master like that. You have played a very foolish and inconsiderate trick!"

"Oh, sir!"

"It is outrageous," said Mr. Selby. "The young rascal must be punished. I shall take him to the Head at once."

Mr. Selby grasped Wally by the collar, and marched him away.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Man Overboard!

WALLY returned to his chums, rubbing his hands sorrowfully. The Head had taken a serious view of his latest jape on Mr. Selby, and had laid it on pretty thick.

"Get it hot?" asked Jameson.

"Ow! Yow!" yelled Wally. "I hate old Selby more than ever! I—"

"Well, if you jape Form-masters, you must expect to get it in the neck sometimes!" remarked Hobbs. "Better give Selby a wide berth after this!"

"Rot!" said Wally. "I'm going to make him sorry for it, somehow!"

"My dear chap—"

"Look here, Jimmy, I'll tell you what you can do—"

Jameson made a negative gesture.

"I know what I can do," he said. "I can be off the grass!"

"You're a New House kid," resumed Wally, unheeding. "Selby takes you over to the New House in the boat after supper. Suppose the boat was upset—"

"Well, you ass," said Jameson, "we might be drowned!"

"Oh, you can swim, you know!"

"Selby might be drowned; he can't swim!" said Hobbs.

Wally looked thoughtful.

"Well, I don't know that I actually want him drowned," he confessed. "But a jolly

good ducking would do him heaps of good."

"Not for me!" said Jameson emphatically. "Besides, how the dickens am I going to upset the giddy boat? We shall have a couple of prefects in it, rowing it."

"Suppose you buff Selby over the side—"

"I jolly well sha'n't do anything of the sort!" said Jameson, with emphasis.

Wally snorted.

"If I were going in the boat, I'd jolly well manage it!" he said.

"Rats!" said Jameson.

"You're a blessed funk!" growled Wally.

"And you're a silly ass!"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

They finished the argument on the floor. Jameson rose at last, with red streaming from his nose. He dabbed it with his handkerchief, and glared at Wally.

Wally's methods of argument had not convinced his chum; indeed, Jameson was more determined than ever that he would not have a hand in upsetting Mr. Selby in the water.

He would have been as glad as anybody to give his Form-master a ducking; but, as he said emphatically, it was not good enough.

Wally stared gloomily out of the window. The rain had ceased at last, and the stars were glimmering down upon the wide waters, surging and murmuring in the quadrangle.

Out of the glimmering waters the great trees rose with spectral branches.

"Not even raining now!" growled Wally. "No chance of his even catching cold! Was there ever such rotten luck?"

"Never!" said Frayne.

"Well, hardly ever!" grinned Curly Gibson.

The juniors had finished their supper of bread and cheese, when Mr. Selby came into the dormitory. The master of the Third had his overcoat on, and a thick muffler about his neck.

It was his duty to take the New House portion of his Form over to the New House to retire for the night.

"New House boys will follow me," he said. "The others will go to bed here, and I shall

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see lights out when I return. I shall expect you all to be in bed."

And Mr. Selby marshalled his flock out of the dormitory. The New House Third-Formers descended the stairs of the School House to take the boat.

In the flooded hall of the School House the electric lights were burning, and strange enough was the scene, with the lights gleaming upon the waters surging in at the great doorway.

A boat had pulled away with the New House Fourth-Formers, and Figgins & Co. shouted good-night up to the window of Tom Merry's study.

Tom Merry & Co. were at their study window, with the blaze of light behind them. They waved their hands down towards the New House boat as it glided away over the flood towards the dark belt of trees.

"Good-night, Figgie!"

"Good-night!"

Monty Lowther thoughtfully drew a pea-shooter from his pocket.

"They're out of reach now," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I wasn't thinking of Figgins & Co.," said Lowther.

"Who, then?"

"Our respected and esteemed friend, Selby. He is going over with the Third Form fags who dwell in the tents of Kedar, otherwise the New House."

Tom Merry pushed the pea-shooter back.

"Don't!" he said.

"But he won't know what hit him!"

pleaded Lowther.

"He will jolly well guess. Better let him alone; it's like treading on a snake to jape Selby. He's certain to turn round and bite."

"But just one behind the ear—"

"Don't be an ass, Monty. You don't want to catch it to-morrow morning, do you?"

Monty Lowther sighed, and slipped the pea-shooter back into his pocket. The Terrible Three leaned in a row on the window-sill, and looked down at the radius of light outside the School House doorway.

There were a good many fellows at the other windows, watching the scene. It was a novel and interesting sight, fellows being ferried across the quadrangle of St. Jim's where the boys were accustomed to stroll in perfect safety.

"There goes the Third Form boat!" said Manners.

"And old Selby in it!" grunted Lowther. "Within easy range, Tommy! Shall I give him just one—say under the chin?"

"No, you ass!"

"Just one—for his mother's sake!"

"Fathead!"

The boat pulled out of the great stone porch of the School-House. It was crammed with fags, and Mr. Selby, sitting in the stern, had none too much room.

Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, was pulling, with Thompson of the Shell, and Mr. Selby steered.

"Keep her well away from the trees, sir," said Monteith.

"I suppose there is no danger," snapped Mr. Selby.

"Might run into the branches, sir: some of them are under water now," Monteith explained. "The boat might capsize if we buffed on a big branch just under the surface."

Mr. Selby glanced round him nervously on the dark waters. Outside the radius of light from the door and windows of the School House, the waters were very dark, and the glare of distant lights only made the sight confused.

The pale glimmer of the stars was lost as the boat glided under the trees.

Jameson was holding a lantern, which shed light upon the water as the boat advanced. Monteith and Thompson pulled steadily.

Scrape! And the boat rocked violently.

"Look out!" shouted Monteith. "We're getting on a branch! I can feel it dragging under the boat. Port!"

"Which—which is port?" gasped Mr. Selby, in confusion.

"Look out!" yelled Jameson.

The boat rocked violently as it dragged on the submerged branch, and as it rocked under the tree it glided beneath a low branch, which scraped along it as low as the rowlocks.

"Duck!" yelled Monteith.

Everybody ducked excepting Mr. Selby. That gentleman had quite lost his presence of mind.

As the low branch scraped along the gliding boat, knocking off the caps of the juniors, Mr. Selby, instead of flattening himself down in the boat, jumped up in great alarm.

The branch caught him fairly across the chest, and he was knocked backwards as if by a giant's hand.

Splash!

A shriek!

The boat shot onward, and bumped heavily against a trunk, and the fags were thrown over one another in confusion. Thompson let his oar slip into the water, and fell into the boat.

The lantern slipped from Jameson's hand as he was knocked over by Thompson's fall, and dropped into the water. Sudden darkness plunged upon the scene.

"Keep your heads!" shouted Monteith. "Steady!"

"Ow! Oh!"

"Gerroff!"

"Yow! Who's that on my chest?"

"Yaroo!"

"Steady!" shouted Monteith. "Keep still. What was that dropped overboard?"

"I—I've lost the lantern!" gasped Jameson.

"Thank goodness that's all! Wait till I get a light. Keep still!"

The boat was rocking violently, but the juniors, obedient to the voice of the prefect, ceased to struggle, and Monteith fumbled in his pocket for a matchbox.

He found it, and struck a match, and as he held it aloft the juniors scrambled back into something like order. The prefect glanced quickly through the boat.

"Mr. Selby! Where is Mr. Selby?"

"Isn't he here?"

"No, Mr. Selby!"

"Great Scott! That must have been the splash!" muttered Jameson, with frozen lips.

"He—he can't swim! He'll be drowned."

"Mr. Selby, where are you?"

The match went out in Monteith's fingers.

He listened in the darkness for a cry. The boat glided out from under the dark branches, and the starlight glimmered upon white and terrified faces. But to Monteith's shout there came no reply.

"Mr. Selby!"

But only the echo of the prefect's voice answered him.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

At the Risk of His Life.

TOM MERRY stared anxiously from his study window towards the gloomy shadows of the trees far out in the surging water.

The lights of the School House extended for some distance upon the flood. Beyond that radius all was blackness.

The water, with the flood of the river behind it, was flowing towards the School House, from under the dark trees, and the light glimmered upon a floating oar that came rocking by on the surge.

"They've lost an oar!" said Monty Lowther. "Bumped into a tree, most likely," said Manners. "I was sure I heard someone shouting."

Tom Merry raised his hand.

"Hark! What's that?"

From the distance, in the darkness of the flooded quadrangle, they heard the low tones of Monteith shouting for the lost master.

"Mr. Selby—Mr. Selby!"

The Shell fellows exchanged startled looks. "My hat!" breathed Manners. "Is Selby overboard?"

"He can't swim!" muttered Lowther.

Tom Merry leaned out of the window, scanning the glimmering surge with eager, anxious eyes. If Mr. Selby was overboard, the surge of the water should bring him from under the trees into the radius of light from the School House before it swept him past the building, and away into the flooded woods beyond.

A dark object glimmered into view, bobbing on the water from the shadow of the trees, and a hand was flung into the air.

"Tom Merry set his teeth.

"Good heavens!" he muttered. "It's Selby!"

"Where—where?"

"Look!"

They could see him now. The Form-master's gown was floating on the water. Again that despairing hand was thrown up into the air, and they caught a glimpse of a white face. But there was no cry.

Mr. Selby was evidently past crying out. Perhaps he was no longer conscious. While the chums of the Shell gazed in horror at the form as it floated nearer on the rush of the waters, it disappeared below.

It came up again nearer at hand, and Tom Merry scrambled through the window, and stood upon the sill, his face white and resolute.

"Tom," yelled Lowther, grasping him, "what are you going to do?"

"I'm going in for Selby."

"Tom, you're mad, I tell you—"

"Let go!"

Tom Merry jerked himself free from Lowther's detaining grasp. Lowther let him go. He knew Tom Merry meant to dive, and a grasp upon him then might have made the dive fatal.

Tom Merry put his hands together, and dived from the study window-sill.

Splash!

Deep, deep down he went, cleaving the waters—down, down, till it seemed that his descent would never stop, and a strong jar ran through him as his finger-tips barely touched something solid; but that was

the limit of his impetus, and he shot up to the surface again.

Up and up and up, till his head was in the air again and he could breathe, and he struck out with powerful arms.

His gaze turned wildly round for the Form-master, but Mr. Selby had disappeared. There was a shout from the study-window.

"There he is, Tom! On the left—on the left!"

The Form-master rose into view, and Tom Merry, guided by the shout from above, turned towards him, and with a few strong strokes reached him.

His strong grasp upon the sinking man brought his head above the surface again.

Two glassy eyes stared wildly at him, a frantic clutch was fastened upon him, and he was almost dragged under the water. Mr. Selby had not lost his consciousness, but he had lost his presence of mind.

"Hold on, sir!" gasped Tom Merry. "Hold on! Give me a chance to swim!"

"Save me—save me!" panted the Form-master in husky, inarticulate tones.

"I'm saving you, sir; but don't drag me down!"

"Save me! Save me!"

It was evident that the man was past reasoning with. Tom Merry took a firm grip upon the back of his neck, and held him there. So long as Mr. Selby did not struggle he could keep him afloat.

"It's all right, sir!" he gasped. "I've got you!"

"Save me! Oh!" moaned Mr. Selby.

The surge of the water dashed them on. They were being whirled towards the corner of the School House, and, once past the building, they would be swept away into the darkness—to death.

Tom Merry made a desperate effort, and succeeded in reaching the School House wall, where a rainpipe descended from the roof gutter. He caught the rainpipe in his free hand, holding Mr. Selby with the other.

"Catch hold here, sir!" he exclaimed.

But Mr. Selby was too far gone. He hung a helpless weight upon the junior. Tom Merry held him fast, and shouted for help.

The alarm was over the whole school now. Every window was crammed with faces, and a boat had put off from the School House steps, with Mr. Railton and Kildare and Darrel in it. Monteith's boat had pulled back through the elms.

Monteith would have had little chance of finding the Form-master in the dark, but for Tom Merry's dive to the rescue. But now it was only a question of Tom Merry holding on to the water-pipe until the rescuing boats reached him.

"Save me!" moaned Mr. Selby feebly.

"The boats are coming, sir," said Tom Merry encouragingly. "You're all right. Look, sir, there are the lights!"

Kildare was standing up in the nearest boat, holding a lantern. Tom Merry shouted to him, and Kildare's voice came ringing back over the surge of waters.

Mr. Selby's eyes blinked at the approaching light, and he understood. A little calmness came back to him.

"How did you come into the water?" he asked, in a shaken voice.

"I was at my study-window—"

"You jumped in?"

"I dived in, sir."

"For me?"

"Yes, sir. I saw you floating out from under the trees. Jolly lucky I saw you, wasn't it, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, indeed, for me," said Mr. Selby, in a choking voice.

"Here you are!" said Kildare, as the boat grated against the wall, and he reached out

and dragged the Form-master in. "Who's that—Tom Merry?"

"Yes, rather!" gasped Tom Merry. "Lend me a hand. I'm pretty well done, Kildare, old son."

Kildare dragged him into the boat. Tom Merry sank down exhausted, panting for breath, the water forming a pool round him in the boat. Mr. Selby sat exhausted beside him.

"Got him?" shouted Monteith.

"Yes; it's all right."

"Good egg!"

Kildare's boat pulled back to the School House steps. The two drenched figures were lifted into the House. Lowther and Manners rushed forward knee-deep in water to seize their chum and carry him in.

"Oh, Tom, you ass!" said Lowther, fairly hugging his chum. "You fathead! You might have biffed your napper on the ground and busted it! Oh, Tom, you silly jossler!"

Tom Merry laughed breathlessly.

"All's well that ends well," he said.

"Bravo, Tommy!" roared Blake. "Good old Tommy! Hooray!"

"Hip, hip, hooray!"

Mr. Railton pressed Tom Merry's hand.

"You have acted like a hero—like a hero!" he exclaimed. "We are all proud of you, my boy!"

"Bravo!"

Mr. Selby, drenched, dripping, but wonderfully good-tempered for once, clasped Tom Merry's hand, and shook it with great emotion.

"You have saved my life, Tom Merry," he said, "and it was at the risk of your own! I shall not forget it!"

"Neither shall I," broke in Dr. Holmes' voice, as he took Tom Merry's other hand. "We are all proud of you, Tom Merry!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwway!"

And Tom Merry was glad to be helped upstairs by his own chums, to be bundled into a warm bed, after a rough towelling, and to escape the cheers and congratulations of the whole House.

Tom Merry was as well as ever the next day; but Mr. Selby was laid up with a cold, which kept him confined to his room for more than a week.

During that time the flood went down, and St. Jim's resumed something of its normal aspect.

It was a pleasant time for the Third Form, and they did not look forward with pleasure to Mr. Selby's recovery.

But when Mr. Selby resumed his place in the Form-room, it proved that his cold, or his narrow escape, or something else, had made a change in him decidedly for the better. His temper was almost amiable, and he was kind even to D'Arcy minor.

After the first morning of the new regime, Wally rubbed his eyes as he left the classroom, as if in doubt whether he was dreaming. He met Tom Merry in the Form-room passage, and thumped him on the back.

"We were thinking of ragging you for fishing Selby out," he remarked, "but the washing must have done him good, or else something's gone wrong with the works. He's in a ripping good temper to-day! What do you think of that?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Try and make it last," he suggested.

"Well, I don't suppose it will last long," said Wally; "but it's a welcome change while it does last."

But as the days passed on it looked as if it would last, and the Third-Formers found it much pleasanter in the Form-room since the days when St. Jim's was flooded out.

THE END.

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