

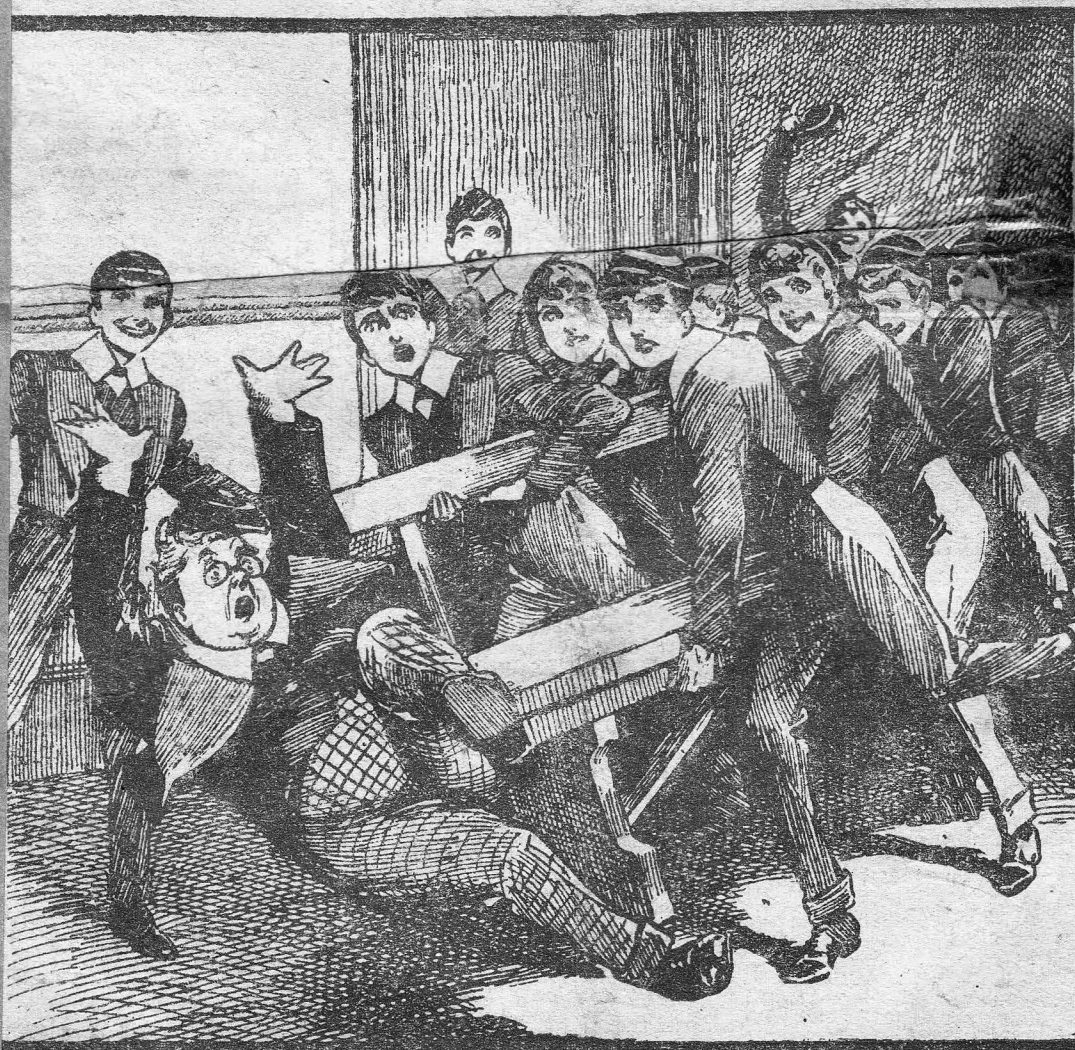
LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES!

The
Penny Popular

Week Ending
March 16th, 1918.

No.
284.

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



BOWLING BUNTER OVER!

(An Exciting Scene from the Grand Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
contained in this Issue.)

16/3/18

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Amateur Dramatists.

HARRY WHARTON grinned in the study as he heard the departing feet of the Removites. He had not heard the effort of the Greyfriars ventriloquist, but he guessed that some master's voice had interrupted the siege of Study No. 1.

Blessed silence settled upon the room, as the besiegers ceased to hammer and the door to rattle.

There were four juniors in the study—Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, to whom the study belonged, and Bob Cherry, from No. 13.

The four were busy, and they were not likely to allow their labours to be interrupted by the obstreperous members of the Lower Fourth.

"Thank goodness those duffers are gone!" exclaimed Wharton. "I wonder how they can expect us to admit the whole Form into a meeting in a study this size."

"The absurdfulness of the expectation is great," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, in his beautiful English.

"Brown, Linley, and Hazeldene might have come in, but we can't have the whole blessed Form," Wharton remarked. "We've got to talk the matter over and settle the parts. The play is to come off next week, and we've got plenty of rehearsing and learning up lines to do."

"Yes, rather!"
"The rutherfordness is terrific."
"I don't see that we can do better than choose Shakespeare," Harry went on thoughtfully. "Shakespeare's all right."

"You know what I mean. Just listen——"
"Look here, Nugent——"
"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears——"
"Sha'n't; your own are long enough."
"Look here, Cherry——"
"Look here, Nugent——"
Crash!

The amateur dramatists ceased their dispute, which was growing excited, suddenly. A terrific crash proceeded from the window. Fragments of glass flew into the room, scattering all over the carpet, as the end of a ladder suddenly jammed in through the window.

Wharton sprang to his feet. For a moment he could scarcely believe his eyes. But there was the broken window, with the fragments of glass scattered on the carpet inside; and there was the end of the ladder sticking through the gap.

"My only hat!"
"It's those duffers again!"
The next moment a face appeared at the gap in the window. It was the face of Skinner. Behind him there was a roar of voices.

"Go it, Skinner!"
"Get the door open!"
"Have 'em out!"
"You ass!" shouted Wharton, springing towards the window.

But he was too late to stop Skinner. The junior flung the window up, and hurled himself headlong into the room. He rolled on the floor, and crashed against the legs of the table; and sent that article of furniture whirling.

There was a roar from the juniors as the table crashed over, Nugent getting a lapful

Ogilvy and Bulstrode rolled over one another in at the window, and Russell, Trevor, and Tom Brown came hurtling in.

The study was getting crowded now. The Famous Four made a desperate effort to stem the tide of invasion, but in vain. There were long odds against them already, and more juniors were pouring in.

And now knocking could be heard at the door again. Ogilvy rushed across the study, unlocked the door, and threw it open.

A crowd of juniors poured in. Harry Wharton & Co. drew together, with a hopeless sort of grin. The meeting was "busted up" with a vengeance now. The study was crammed, and excited juniors were trampling over the books and papers on the floor.

"Here, hang it all, get out!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "This isn't a blessed bear-garden, you know!"
"Here we are!" exclaimed Bulstrode triumphantly. "I knew my wheeze of getting the ladder would work out all right."

"Hurrah!"
"Well, now you're here, what do you want?" demanded Nugent.

"We've come to the meeting!" shouted a dozen voices.

"It's a private committee meeting——"
"Private committee rats——"
"Look here!"

"Bosh! We're going to take part in the meeting. Why, the blessed play comes off next week!" exclaimed Russell.

"Yes, we're assigning the parts——"
"And that's where we come in," said Ogilvy, with emphasis. "We're jolly well not going to have the parts assigned in a private committee meeting."

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THE "PENNY POPULAR"
PORTRAIT GALLERY.

NUMBER 15 NEXT FRIDAY.
Mr. Linton, Roland Ray,
Darrel.



1. MR. RAILTON.
2. JOE FRAYNE.
3. JAMES MONTEITH.

It's a modern custom to run down Shakespeare, but there's no getting away from the fact that Shakespeare wrote some jolly good stuff."

"There's 'Hamlet,' for example," said Nugent. "The part of Hamlet would suit me down to the ground. I come out specially strong in the soliloquy. I'll tell you how it goes——"

"Oh, don't trouble now!" said Wharton. "I've decided on 'Julius Caesar.'"

"Good!"
"Now, I've ear-marked Brutus for myself."

"I don't mind, so long as I'm Mark Antony," said Bob.

"Here, I like that!" exclaimed Nugent indignantly. "What sort of a part am I going to have, then?"

"You can be Julius Cæsar."
"Blow Julius Cæsar! Why, he's killed almost in the beginning!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes; but that's all right. You can come on again as Octavius Cæsar," explained Wharton. "You get two whacks that way."

Nugent grunted.
"That's all very well, but I think Mark Antony is my little bit. Why, I could do the oration to the mob on my head."

"Well, that wouldn't be any good; Mark Antony has to do it right end up."

of pens and papers and ink, and Bob Cherry a crack across the legs from the table edge.

Wharton seized Skinner, who grappled with him and yelled desperately for help.

Stott and Hazeldene appeared at the window one after another, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh rushed to repel boarders.

But he could not hurl the besiegers forth without danger of breaking their necks, while they had no hesitation in clambering in.

Both of them came plunging desperately into the study, and as they rolled on the floor Hazeldene seized Hurree Singh by the leg and yanked him over.

"Oh!" yelled the nabob.
He bumped on the carpet, and Hazeldene rolled over him, and Stott sprang to grapple with Wharton, who was springing towards the window.

They closed, and fell on the floor, crashing upon Hazeldene and Inky, eliciting painful yells from both of them.

Meanwhile the window was darkened with head after head, as the exasperated Removites poured to the attack.

The assailants were in deadly earnest. It must have cost them a shilling at least in the form of a tip to obtain the loan of that ladder from Gosling, the school porter, and they evidently meant to get their money's worth out of it.

"Not much!"
"Hear, hear!"

"I know jolly well you'll be keeping all the fat for yourselves," said Ogilvy. "Now, I'm going to be Mark Antony."

"Oh, rats, Ogilvy!" exclaimed Elliott warmly. "I'm going to be Mark Antony. That's the part that just suits me. 'Friends, Romans, countrymen——'"

"You're both talking out of your hats," said Tom Brown of Taranaki. "I'm Mark Antony. Why, I'm perfect in the part! 'Friends, Romans, countrymen——'"

"I've played Mark Antony in private theatricals at home," Morgan observed. "Of course, Wharton was going to give that part to me."

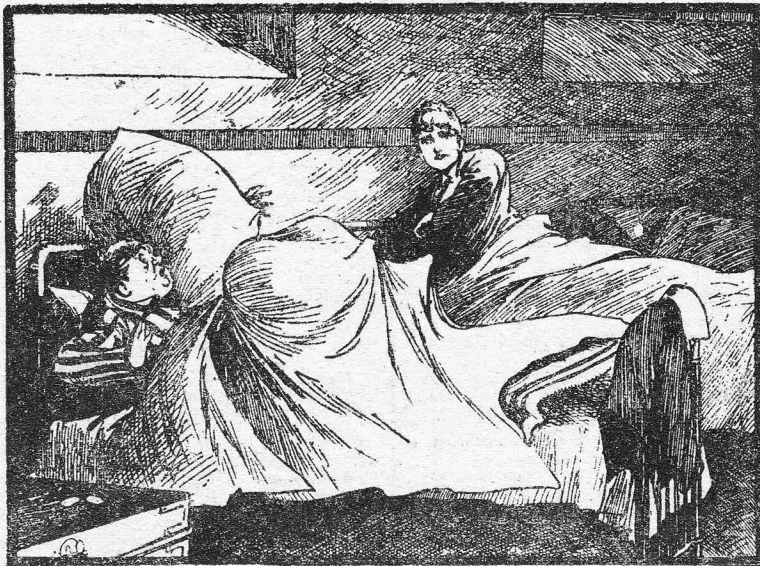
"Of course I wasn't," said Wharton. "Now, look here, Wharton——"

"Oh, shut up, Morgan! I don't say I think much of Wharton's brains as a rule, but I must say I agree with him there."

"Faith, and so do I!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "Sure and it's for me that Wharton's reservin' the part indiretly!"

"No good, Micky—Mark Antony hadn't a brogue."
"Faith, and sure I——"
"Look here——"

"I'm jolly well going to be Mark Antony!"
"You're jolly well not!"



A pillow whizzed through the air, and Billy Bunter suddenly collapsed into his bed with a gasp. "Now go to sleep!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Ogilvy—"
 "Oh, shut up, Trevor!"
 "I'll jolly well shut you up—"
 "I'd like to see you do it!"
 "Here goes!"
 "Ow! Take that!"
 "My only hat! They're turning this affair into a dog-fight!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Trevor and Ogilvy reeled to and fro in deadly combat; an example speedily followed by Micky Desmond and Morgan.
 "Go it, Micky!"
 "Faith, and sure I—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Get out of our study!" roared Wharton. "You can fight in the passage, you giddy asses! Outside!"
 "Yah!"
 "Chuck them out!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Let's get to business. Now, then, outside with all those silly asses!"
 "Yah! Rats!"
 "Let's chuck them out, and hold a meeting ourselves!" exclaimed Bulstrode.
 "The suggestion was greeted with a shout of approval."
 "Hurrah!"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "Chuck them out!"
 "Hold on!" shouted Wharton. "What do you mean? This is our study! Why, of all the cheek— Chuck it! Leggo! My hat! Oh!"

The Famous Four hit out in deadly earnest, but there was little room for hitting, and the odds against them were enormous.
 The rival claimants to the part of Mark Antony left off their private tussle, to join in kicking the Famous Four out of Study No. 1. Harry Wharton & Co. resisted desperately, but in vain.
 Fighting valiantly, one after another they were hurled forth, and rolled helplessly along the linoleum in the passage.
 They leaped up again and rushed to the attack, but forth they went spinning again, and then Ogilvy slammed the door and locked it on the inside.
 "My hat!" roared Bob Cherry. "Of all the cheek! I'll have the blessed door down! Kick it in!"
 The chums of the Remove kicked and hammered, but the door resisted all their efforts, as it had previously resisted those of the besiegers.
 They were still in the midst of their excited attack, when a cane whizzed through the air, and Nugent gave a roar as it thwacked on his back.
 Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, was on the scene, looking very red and angry. It occurred to the juniors—rather late in the day—that they had been making a great deal of noise.
 "Ow!" roared Nugent. "Stop that!"
 Swish! Swish!

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"Ow! Yow!"
 "Cut off, you noisy young sweeps!"
 "We're trying to get into our own blessed study—"
 "I don't care what you're trying to do!" Swish, swish! "Cut off!"
 And the Famous Four had to cut off, and Wingate followed them up the passage, accelerating their departure with lashes of the cane.
 The enemy were left in possession of Study No. 1, and they proceeded to hold their meeting there undisturbed by the Famous Four.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Not Toffee!

"THE question is, about Portia!" Harry Wharton remarked thoughtfully, the next day.
 The chums of the Remove had got their study to themselves, and had managed to get through the first rehearsal of "Julius Caesar."
 They felt extremely satisfied with themselves, and with the progress they were making in their parts.
 "Portia!" said Bob Cherry thoughtfully.
 "Yes. I don't see how we can cut Portia. Of course, we could cut it. But Brutus would be a great deal like Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark left out."
 "My sister!" said Hazeldene.
 "Hum!"
 The Removites looked at one another doubtfully.
 They all liked their girl chum, Marjorie Hazeldene. They thought more of her than of almost anyone else in the wide world.
 But, boylike, they had their doubts about a girl's abilities when it came to really doing anything.
 "Marjorie's awfully clever for a girl," Nugent admitted. "But then—"
 "You see, girls can't do things," remarked Bob Cherry.
 "We couldn't have a boy take Portia's part, though," said Russell, who was a soldier in the guard of Cæsar.
 "We could cut the part," remarked Tom Brown.
 "What do you think, Linley?"
 Linley, who was in the garb of a Roman senator, with a pair of football-boots showing under the ample robe, nodded.
 "I think Miss Hazeldene could do it," he said.
 "Of course she could!" said Hazeldene warmly. "If a girl's own brother thinks she can do a thing, there can't be much doubt about it, I should think."
 "Well, there's something in that," admitted Tom Brown.
 "Of course there is. She could do it."
 "We've never seen her act," said Nugent.

"We all like Marjorie, but it's no good saying a girl can do things like a boy. They can't."
 "Rather not!"
 "You see, they're not so clever as boys!" explained Nugent. "That's how it is. I wouldn't run down girls, of course; but what's the good of making out that they can do things like boys?"
 "No good at all."
 "Take football—or cricket."
 "Of course."
 "Well, if you come to that, take sewing, and knitting and things," said Hazeldene stentily. "You couldn't knit and darn socks and things like my sister does."
 "Oh, that's nothing!"
 "Well, take piano, then. Marjorie plays like anything, and you can't knock out a note, except Wharton."
 "That's different."
 "Take croquet. Marjorie knocked you all over the ground at the Cliff House garden-party."
 "That's different, too."
 "Take driving. Marjorie could drive your head off."
 "Of course, driving—"
 "Take cycling. She could cycle rings round you."
 "Very likely, but—"
 "Then acting—"
 "You see, acting's a different business altogether," explained Nugent. "That is where the masculine intelligence comes in."
 "Masculine rats!"
 "Look here," said Hazeldene. "If you talked any of this piffle before Marjorie, she would refuse to take the part, anyway. I'll speak to her. I'll ask her to let you see some specimen of her acting, and you can judge for yourselves."
 "That's a good idea."
 "The goodness is terrific."
 "Right-bo!" said Nugent. "Of course, you all know I shall be jolly glad to have Marjorie in the cast, only I don't think it's much good relying on a girl for anything."
 "Well, you'll see," said Hazeldene. "I'll cycle over to Cliff House after school to-morrow morning, and speak to Marjorie."
 "Good! That's settled."
 And the meeting of the amateur dramatic society broke up. They had been getting in some practice with making-up, and Harry Wharton carefully put the grease-paints away.
 He left a stick of grease-paint on the table, overlooking it in the multitude of things he was gathering up. Billy Bunter, who had been locked out of the study during the rehearsal, in case of any ventriloquial tricks, blinked in as the juniors who did not belong to Study No. 1 went out.
 "You fellows finished?"
 "Yes."
 "Blessed if I know what a school's coming prep done!" grumbled Bunter. "I think you chaps ought to help me."
 "Rats!"
 "Blessed if I know what a school's coming to, when a chap is locked out of his own blessed study!"
 "You could stay in if you would behave yourself."
 "Br-r-r! I don't want to stay in. It makes me sick, all this petty, personal jealousy that's shown of a chap's superior abilities! I suppose you haven't decided to let me have Mark Antony's part?"
 "Not yet," said Harry Wharton, laughing.
 Bunter grunted.
 "All right; if the play's a rotten failure, don't blame me. I'm willing to take the part, and make a success of the thing."
 Wharton laughed again, and took out his books. As he sat down at the table, he caught sight of the stick of paint he had left out, and he picked it up and dropped it into a drawer of the table.
 Bunter's eyes were following him. Those round little eyes blinked behind the big glasses. Billy Bunter was short-sighted, and he jumped to the conclusion at once that the chums of the Remove had locked him out while they ate sweets, and that this was a stick of toffee or butterscotch that had been left.
 "I say, you fellows—"
 "Shut up, Bunter!"
 "I jolly well know why you locked me out, now."
 "Oh, do shut up! We want to work."
 "Yes; but—"
 "Ring off!" roared Nugent.
 Bunter grunted, and subsided into silence. He sat in the armchair, and watched the

chums of the Remove at work. His thoughts were all on that supposed stick of toffee that he had seen Wharton put in the drawer.

He was revolving in his mind various plans for getting the chums out of the study for a minute, while he raided this drawer and seized the toffee.

His ventriloquism, as usual, was his resource.

"Wharton—quick!"
It was Bob Cherry's voice, faintly, from the passage. Harry started up.

"Is that Bob calling?"
"Sounds like it," said Nugent, rising too. "Rescue, Remove!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Wharton hastily. He ran to the door of the study, threw it open, and rushed out. Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh quickly followed.

Billy Bunter grinned.
In a moment he was on his feet and the drawer was opened, and he was groping in it for the stick of toffee.

He found it, and bounced back to the armchair in triumph. The next moment it was in his mouth, and his jaws were actively at work on it.

Wharton and his chums found the passage empty. They stared up and down it in blank amazement, but there was no sign of Bob Cherry.

Harry uttered an angry exclamation. "It's that confounded ventriloquist again!"
"Bunter! We'll squash him!"

The three juniors rushed into the study. Then they stopped and stared at Bunter. The fat junior was going through the most extraordinary grimaces in the armchair, and gasping and spluttering frantically.

"Ow, ow! Oh! Groo! Yow! I'm poisoned!"

"Great Scott!"
"The great Scottfulness is terrific!"
"What on earth's the matter, Bunter?"
"Ow, ow!"
"What is it, then?"
"Yow! I'm poisoned!"
"What the—"
"Groo!"

Bunter spat violently into the grate. Harry Wharton caught sight of the remains of the stick of grease-paint in his hand, and started to roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Ow, ow, ow!"
"Did you take that for toffee, Bunter?"
"Ugh! Ow! I'm poisoned!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Nugent. "This is too rich! Ha, ha, ha!"
"Ugh! Groo-o!"

"The richness is terrific! The esteemed Bunter must be feeling the estimable sickness at the present moment!"
"Ugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Nugent took the fat junior by the shoulders, and swung him out of the armchair, and helped him out into the passage with a gentle tap of his boot. Billy Bunter staggered out of the study.

"You can grunt and growl outside," said Nugent. "You make me feel as if I were on a blessed Channel steamer. Cut!"
"Oh, really, Nugent— Ugh!"

"Buzz off!"
"Ugh! Groo-o!"

Nugent slammed the door. Bunter "ughed" and "grooed" in the passage, to the accompaniment of yells of laughter from the study. That was all the sympathy William George Bunter received, or was likely to receive.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Nugent's Aunt.

H AZELDENE cycled over to Cliff House the following day, and came back, with a grin on his face, to announce that Marjorie was quite willing to take the part of Portia when the Remove Dramatic Society gave a representation of "Julius Caesar."

And that she would first submit a specimen of her powers as an actress to the Removites, so that they could judge whether she was able to do Portia justice.

When tea-time came round that day, the chums of the Remove were prepared for the visit. The study presented an appearance of unwanted tidiness.

There were no footballs or football-boots lying about the floor, no ashes scattered in the grate, no papers and books sprawling on

the table, no ink spilt on the tablecloth, and no unwashed teacups piled on the window-seat.

"All," as the poet says, "was calm and bright."

A cheerful fire glowed in the newly-cleaned grate, and a pile of buttered toast was keeping warm upon an almost aggressively-polished fender, over an immaculate hearth. Bright teacups and plates stood in array on a spotless tablecloth.

A cake, and a plate of tarts, as well as a new tin of sardines, graced the festive board.

The chums kept a keen eye on Billy Bunter, or these adjuncts to the tea would not have graced the festive board very long.

"Time Marjorie was here, isn't it?" asked Nugent, as the school clock struck six. Hazeldene nodded.

"Oh, you never know these girls!" Nugent remarked. "They're the same for taking a cue as for keeping an appointment. You can never depend upon them within an hour or two."

"Hallo! Here's Marjorie!"
The juniors were on their feet in a moment at the sound of a footstep outside, but it was Bob Cherry's red and flushed face that was thrust into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
"Want anything?" asked Hazeldene. "I've come to tea!" said Bob firmly.

He walked in.
Harry Wharton laughed.

"Good! You know you're always welcome, Bob, and there's no need to stand on ceremony with us. Marjorie may be here any minute."

"Good!"
"I thought I heard somebody arrive just now," said Nugent.

Bob Cherry chuckled.
"Oh, that wasn't Marjorie!"
"Who was it, then?"

"An old lady—a relative of one of the fellows, I think. A giddy terror, to judge by what I've seen of her. I just caught a glimpse of her in the hall. She was inquiring for somebody, and I caught the word Remove, so I suppose the unhappy relation is in our Form. Jolly glad it's not Robert Cherry, Esquire, that's all!"

"Here's somebody coming along the passage."
"That must be Marjorie."
Nugent stepped to the door.

"My hat! It's not Marjorie!"
"Who is it, then?"
"A giddy terror."

The juniors looked out. A little lady of uncertain age was coming along the passage. She had a face of a brick-red hue, and a

decidedly incipient moustache on the upper lip.

Her hair was pulled back tightly, and a hideous bonnet seemed to be glued down on her head. Her nose was red, and her brow lined, her eyebrows thick and black.

Her dress was of a loud greenish material, with a cut about as graceful as that of a wheat-sack. Her boots were large and heavy. She wore cotton gloves, extremely old and untidy, and carried a large, bulging umbrella.

"My only hat!" murmured Harry Wharton. "Who—who can it be?"

"Any relation of yours?" asked Nugent. "Oh, don't be funny!"

The juniors drew quickly back into the study as the old lady approached. Curious as she certainly was to look at, they had no desire to show any disrespect towards her.

But the strange lady did not pass Study No. 1.

She stopped at the doorway, pushed the half-open door, and looked in, adjusting a big pair of spectacles.

"Is this Study Number One?" she asked, in a squeaky, high-pitched voice.

"Yes, ma'am," said Harry.
"In the Remove?"
"Certainly, ma'am!"
"Is Nugent here—Frank Nugent?"

"I'm Nugent," said that individual, in surprise.

"Ah! My dear nephew—"
"What!" said Nugent faintly.

"My dear nephew, how happy I am to see you!"

And the little old lady marched into the study.

"Frank! My dear nephew!"
Nugent gazed at the little old lady in surprise and horror.

He had suggested, by way of a joke, that the stranger might be a relation of Harry Wharton's—that she might in reality be a relative of his own had never occurred to him.

He stared at her dumbfounded.
The old lady beamed at him over her glasses.

"How you've grown!" she said, in her squeaky voice.

"Grown!" murmured Nugent.
"Yes. Do you remember the last time you saw me?"

"N-n-n-no!"
"Then you were a tiny tot, and crying always for sugar!" said the old lady. "Are you fond of sugar now?"
"—I—"

"How you've grown! Deary me! You will be a man soon! You must be turned twelve!"



Thwack—thwack—thwack! "There!" exclaimed Aunt Matilda, a little breathlessly. "There, take that!"

"I'm jolly well fourteen and three-quarters!" exclaimed Nugent indignantly.

"Dear me! Aren't you going to ask your old Aunt Matilda to ~~ask~~ down, when she's come all the way from Yorkshire to see you?" asked the old lady.

Nugent pressed his hand to his feverish brow.

"There's some—some mistake!" he muttered. "I—I haven't at Aunt Selina—I—I mean, Matilda!"

"Franky!"

"I—I haven't—I haven't, really! You're looking for some other Nugent!" said Frank desperately.

"Is there another Nugent at Greyfriars?" squeaked the little lady, looking round at the juniors.

"No, ma'am," said Bob Cherry—"only Nugent minor; and he's Frank's younger brother."

"I knew I could make no mistake," said Aunt Matilda, with an affectionate look at Nugent. "Of course, you're glad to see me?"

"Of course!" stammered Nugent. "But

"You will take me round the school, and show me all your little games, and introduce me to your dear playmates."

"There's some mis-mis—"

"I have so longed to see you at your games!" said Miss Matilda sweetly. "You play marbles, of course?"

Nugent turned crimson. Such a question, put to the best winger in the Remove football eleven, was a deadly insult that could only have been wiped out in blood—from the nose, of course—if it had been from a boy. But he could hardly punch the nose of his venerable Aunt Matilda.

"Please sit down, ma'am!" said Harry Wharton, placing a chair for the old lady.

Harry was greatly inclined to smile, but Frank's distress was so acute that sympathy held back the smile.

"I see you expected me," said Aunt Matilda. "How nice of you to have tea all ready for me! I hardly thought you would have received my letter yet, Francis. Have you had my letter, my dear nephew?"

"N-n-n-no!"

"Call me aunt, my dear little fellow!"

"Aunt!"

"Yes; I will have some tea," said Aunt Matilda.

The fellows exchanged hopeless glances. The tea which had been prepared for Marjorie was evidently to go the way of all teas.

But was Marjorie coming? She was usually very careful in keeping appointments, and now she was very late.

Nugent hoped fervently that she would not come. He did not want her to meet Aunt Matilda.

"Pour out the tea, Franky!"

"C-c-certainly!"

Nugent poured out the tea. The boys sat down round the table in silence.

Hazelcane was grinning, and appeared to enjoy the situation, and Nugent longed to kick him out of the study.

But the sympathy for their unfortunate chum made the rest of the fellows serious.

Aunt Matilda made a very small tea, apparently not having brought a good appetite with her from Yorkshire.

Nugent had no appetite, either. He sat at the table, looking the picture of discomfort.

Billy Bunter, however, made up for all deficiencies. There was not likely to be anything left over while the Owl of the Remove was in the study.

"How kind of you dear boys to entertain me in this way," said Aunt Matilda, smiling sweetly. "And my letter has not arrived?"

"No, aunt."

"Well, I am not surprised! Franky darling, will you show me round the school now? I am so interested in your school."

"Ain't you tired?" asked Nugent eagerly. "You must be awfully tired after such a long journey."

"What a dear, kind, affectionate boy he is!" exclaimed Aunt Matilda, and Nugent coloured and felt frightfully hypocritical. "But I am not a bit tired, and I must look over Greyfriars to-day, as I shall not stay very long at the school."

"Very well, then."

"Let us go and see the football-fields!" said Aunt Matilda. "I suppose there will be a game going on at the present moment?"

"Well, no," said Nugent, driven into sarcasm. "We don't usually play footer after

dark. You see, it would be difficult to see the ball."

"Yes, yes, of course! Let us go and see the cricket!"

"Cricket!"

"You play cricket, I suppose, Franky?"

"Not at the same time of the year as football," said Nugent, still more sarcastically; "and not after dark, even in the season!"

"Dear me! I see I have a great deal to learn about school life," beamed Miss Matilda. "But come and show me round, Franky!"

Nugent rose unwillingly.

"Give me your arm, dear Franky!"

Nugent shuddered inwardly, and gave his arm. Miss Matilda leaned upon it heavily, and they walked out of the study.

Frank cast an imploring glance back at his chums.

They could not resist the appeal. And as Nugent and his Aunt Matilda went down the passage the chums of the Remove accompanied them.

Only Billy Bunter remained in the study, and he had strict orders to cut after them at once and bring the news if Marjorie Hazelcane arrived, though the juniors had almost given up expecting her now.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

An Astonishing Revelation.

AUNT MATILDA seemed very pleased with Greyfriars, and with the fellows she met. They, too, seemed very pleased with her—at all events, every fellow she came upon seemed unable to avoid breaking into a smile.

Nugent, with the face of a martyr at the

IF YOU INVEST

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stake, conducted her downstairs. He hated walking arm-in-arm with anybody, and with Miss Matilda! Words could not express his feelings.

Bulstrode, Skinner, Stott, and some more fellows were in the passage, and they stared blankly at the Greyfriars visitor.

"I say, Nugent, who's your friend?" said Bulstrode. "Introduce us!"

Nugent glared, and would have passed on, but Aunt Matilda stopped at once, regarding the Removites with a sweet smile.

"Pray introduce your dear playmates, Franky!" she exclaimed.

"Franky!" gasped Bulstrode.

"Oh, come on!" muttered Nugent.

But Aunt Matilda refused to come on.

"Oh, introduce them, Nugent!" said Hazelcane. "Your Aunt Matilda wants to know them."

"Aunt Matilda!"

"Nugent's aunt!"

"My only hat!"

Nugent had to do it. Aunt Matilda shook hands with all the juniors, beaming at them over her glasses.

"And you are all fond of my dear Franky?" she asked, in her queer, high-pitched voice.

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said Bulstrode solemnly; "we're all greatly attached to

Franky! We worship the ground he treads on!"

"Shut up, you cad!" muttered Nugent fiercely.

"And you love one another, as dear little boys always should!" went on Miss Matilda, with an affectionate smile all round.

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said Skinner. "We love one another like little William and dear little George in the story-books, ma'am!"

But, most of all, we love our dear playmate Nugent. The headmaster is sometimes moved to tears when he sees us walking hand-in-hand through the daisy-spangled meadows, with affectionate smiles upon our faces, reading from the same copy of 'Sandford and Merton,' or eating from the same stick of toffee!"

"How sweet!"

"Shut up!" muttered Nugent.

"Did you speak, Nugent?"

"Um-m-m-m-m!"

"How nice and kind of you!" said Aunt Matilda.

"It makes us happy, ma'am!" said Bulstrode, taking out his handkerchief to wipe his eyes. "Excuse these tears; I cannot help weeping a little when I think of how much we all love Nugent, and how we shall miss him when he dies of consumption, as good little boys always do in the good little books."

"A dear, kind boy!" said Aunt Matilda, feeling in her purse. "I must make you a little present!"

"Oh, not at all, ma'am!"

"Yes, yes, I insist!" beamed Aunt Matilda, still fumbling in her green purse. "You are a dear, kind boy, and you fully deserve it. You will, I suppose, purchase sweets, and in that case you will share them with your schooffellows. I should recommend, however, that you save one-half of my little gift, and expend the remainder in sweets, as I always wish to encourage habits of thrift among the young."

And the old lady pressed a coin into Bulstrode's hand.

Bulstrode looked at it. It was a penny! Aunt Matilda walked on, and the juniors walked on, too, leaving Bulstrode staring blankly at the penny in his hand.

The juniors were grinning now.

Miss Matilda Nugent did not seem the kind of person to perpetrate a joke, but certainly she had succeeded in perpetrating one, whether intentionally or not.

"And what are these rooms?" asked Miss Nugent presently.

"They're the Sixth Form studies, aunt."

"Oh, let me look into them!"

"Oh, you mustn't! The Sixth don't like being disturbed."

"Dear me!"

Ionides was looking out of his study. He stared blankly at the old lady.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, loud enough for her to hear. "What is that animal?"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Loder, who was standing there with him. "She's a queer old girl, certainly, but no need to insult her."

The Greek shrugged his shoulders.

"Bah! I shall say what I like, I suppose!"

"Oh, rats!"

Ionides stepped out of his study. His hatred for the chums of Study No. 1 made him eager to seize any opportunity for humiliating them.

"Who is this person?" he exclaimed. "How dare you bring such a person into the school?"

"It's my aunt," said Nugent, colouring.

Ionides stared, and then burst into a scolding laugh.

"Your aunt! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I am Franky's aunt from Yorkshire," explained the old lady, smiling at Ionides. "Are you one of Franky's friends?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Ionides!"

"Well, of all the odd old frights," exclaimed Ionides, "I think Nugent's aunt takes the cake! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are a rude boy!" said Aunt Matilda severely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Franky, I hope you are not on familiar terms with this ill-bred person?" said Aunt Matilda.

"Oh, not at all!" said Nugent, with a faint grin. "I never chum up with a chap in the Sixth."

"Very good! He is certainly not fit for you to associate with."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

The Greek scowled.

"Take that absurd old person away at once!" he said.

"I'm showing her round Greyfriars," said Nugent.

"Take her away at once!"

"Oh, don't be a pig!"

"Take her away! I will myself put her out of this passage if you do not obey me immediately!" exclaimed Ionides angrily.

Nugent's eyes flashed.

"Oh, shut up, you cad!" he exclaimed.

Ionides started forward furiously. But Aunt Matilda stepped before her nephew, taking a businesslike grasp upon her umbrella.

The umbrella swept in the air, and descended upon the Greek's shoulders with a loud-sounding thwack.

The Greek gave a roar, and the juniors gave another roar of laughter:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thwack, thwack, thwack!"

The umbrella fell again and again upon the Greek, until Ionides, gasping with rage and pain, was fain to beat a hasty retreat. Aunt Matilda followed him, and Ionides ran into his study under a shower of blows from the umbrella.

"There!" exclaimed Aunt Matilda, a little breathlessly. "There!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Good! Jolly good! Poor old Ionides!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I feel quite faint!" said Miss Matilda.

"I—I think I will go and sit down."

"I should jolly well think so," grinned Hazeldene.

"Come to the study," said Nugent, who was not sorry to have the tour of inspection over.

Aunt Matilda assented, and they returned to Study No. 1.

Miss Matilda sat down and rested.

"I—I think I should like a little water," she said faintly.

"I'll get it!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

He ran out of the study. In a few moments he returned with a bowl of water, with a sponge floating in it. The juniors stared at him.

"You ass!" muttered Nugent. "She wanted water to drink, not a blessed bowl of water to wash in."

He ~~was~~ chuckled.

"Now what I'm about, Nugent."

"Look here—"

"Thank you so much!" said Aunt Matilda.

"I will bathe my poor forehead."

She placed the wet sponge on her forehead, and to the surprise of the juniors proceeded to rub it all over her face. They watched her silently.

The little old lady's face was lifted up from the bowl the next moment, wet and shining, and there was a perfect yell of astonishment in Study No. 1.

"Marjorie!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
The Night of the Play.

MARJORIE HAZELDENE smiled at the astounded juniors. That swift sponging had removed the sallow complexion and the wrinkles and the crow's-feet, and the pretty, youthful face of the belle of Cliff House was revealed. The juniors stared at her blankly.

It was not Nugent's aunt, after all. It was Marjorie!

They could scarcely believe their eyes.

"Marjorie!"

The girl smiled at them. The sweet, young face seemed strangely at variance with the hideous bonnet and the horrid dress.

"Well?" said Miss Hazeldene.

Hazeldene went off into a roar of laughter. The chums of the Remove gasped for breath.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Hazeldene. "Do you think Marjorie can act now?"

"Marjorie!" gasped Wharton.

The girl laughed.

"Yes, it is I," she said. "You must forgive me for this little deception, but it was agreed, you know, that I should come and give you a specimen of my acting and make up. I think you will admit that I have succeeded."

"Marjorie!" said Nugent faintly. "Then—then you're not my Aunt Matilda?"

"Oh, no! Ha, ha!"

"I—I knew I hadn't an Aunt Matilda!" exclaimed Nugent, with a gasp of relief. "You—you boulder! Excuse me; I've had a fearful time."

"I am sorry," said Marjorie contritely; "but you thought I couldn't act, you know, and I felt that I ought to convince you."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry. "It was wonderful! We never had any suspicion—any of us!"

"Not a bit," said Bob Cherry.

"The not-a-bitfulness is terrific."

"I suppose Hazeldene knew it all along," said Nugent, turning a somewhat wrathful look upon that individual.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Hazeldene. "Of course I did. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I must go now," said Marjorie, smiling. "Do you think I can act?"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"Well enough for the Amateur Dramatic Society?"

"Oh, don't rub it in!" said Nugent, with a grimace. "Of course, you will put us all in the shade."

"Oh, no!" said Marjorie, laughing. "Still, I think my Portia will be passable."

"We shall be jolly glad to have you," said Bob Cherry. "Wharton thought all along it would be all right. We must admit that."

"That's so!" said Hazeldene. "Come on, Marjorie, and I'll see you back to Cliff House. I've got a pass."

"I can get one, too, I think," said Wharton. "Just wait a minute while I go and speak to Wingate."

"And—and I think I'll buzz off and speak to Quelch," said Bob Cherry. "No good all asking the same person. Wait for me."

"I'll just say a word to Barnes, the prefect," said Nugent.

And all three juniors rushed off.

They succeeded in getting their passes from those various sources, and Marjorie, having donned a cloak to conceal her Aunt Matilda dress, they left Greyfriars.

On the way to Cliff House all arrangements respecting the performance of "Julius Caesar" were made, and appointments for rehearsals.

After seeing Marjorie to the gate of Cliff House, the juniors were about to say good-bye when a cheerful face looked over the gate, and there was a soft laugh.

"Did it work, Marjorie?"

"Yes, Clara."

"Jolly good!" said Miss Clara. "Perhaps you fellows will think now that girls can do things as well as boys."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes, we give in," he said. "If I ever hear a chap as much as hint again that a girl isn't as clever as a boy, I'll punch his head."

And Marjorie and Clara laughed, and said good-bye, and went up the garden path. The Removites turned back towards Greyfriars.

"Well, it was a jolly good jape," said Nugent. "I never suspected that Marjorie could act like that. She kept up the character wonderfully well. But I think it would be a jolly good idea to give Hazeldene the frog's-march, anyway."

"Oh, cheese it!" grinned Hazeldene. "You wanted a lesson for your blessed conceit, and you've got it. There you are!"

"Well, anyway, we're sure about a jolly good Portia now," said Wharton, "and that's the main point, after all."

And the juniors agreed that it was.

They looked eagerly forward to the time when Marjorie was to come over for the first rehearsal, and when it came they were more than satisfied.

Marjorie had her lines perfect, and her acting was excellent; and the Removites could not help admitting to themselves that it was a little better than their own.

They looked forward with much more confidence now to the night of the play. Miss Clara had agreed to take the part of Caesar's wife; and though her acting was not as fine as Marjorie's, she made a very good Calphurnia.

When the night arrived upon which the play was to be given, there was a great deal of excitement in the Greyfriars Remove.

Nearly every member of the Amateur Dramatic Society was to be on the stage in some character or other—as a senator, a soldier, a citizen, or something.

Next Friday's
Grand Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled:
"THE REMOVE TO THE RESCUE!"
By FRANK RICHARDS.
Please order your copy of the
PENNY POPULAR in advance.

The costumes had been hired or borrowed, and the dress rehearsals had been considered very successful, and the juniors looked forward to a triumph.

Wharton, as stage-manager and Brutus, had plenty on his hands, and he began to experience the delights of an actor-manager. But he did very well.

Several of the masters and some of the prefects had promised to come to the performance, and there was to be a big crowd of fellows, seniors and juniors.

The play was given in the lecture-hall, where the stage was a fixture, and the juniors had only to arrange curtains and scenes.

Just before the curtains went up, Billy Bunter came behind the scenes, and poked Harry in the ribs. Harry was in Brutus costume, and looked very handsome as a noble Roman.

"I say, Wharton—"

"None of the public are allowed behind the scenes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Get out!"

"Yes, but—"

"Buzz off! I mean, get thee hence, catiff!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Avant, or die the death!" exclaimed Bob, drawing the stage sword with which he was girt. "Avant! Arount thee! Get thee hence! Buzz off! Bunk!"

"Yes, but I was thinking it's not too late—"

"The curtain's just going up," said Wharton. "Get out, Bunter!"

"Yes, but—"

Bob Cherry seized the fat junior and rushed him away across the stage. The audience were in their places, and the time was past for the commencement, and some of the younger members of the audience were stamping their feet as a sign of impatience.

The fellows appointed to manage the curtain pulled away, and it went up, unfortunately just as Bob Cherry was kicking Bunter along the stage.

The audience gasped.

The scene represented a Roman street, and along that Roman street Mark Antony was kicking a fat junior in spectacles.

The audience stared, and then burst into an irresistible roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled off the stage, and Mark Antony, suddenly aware that he was in full sight of a convulsed audience, gave a gasp, and popped back again behind the scenes. The curtain came down again with a run.

In five minutes the curtain went up again, the audience having composed themselves somewhat, and then the play commenced.

In spite of the inauspicious beginning, caused by Billy Bunter, the whole thing went off with a swing.

There were cheers at the end of the first act, and louder cheers, when, after labouring nobly for two hours, the juniors brought their play to a successful close.

It was admitted on all hands that Brutus and Portia were the finest actors; but the others were all cheered.

The Amateur Dramatic Society felt very proud of itself that evening.

"Jolly good!" said Wharton, when the Remove went to bed that night. "We'll get up the 'Merchant of Venice' next."

"Good!" said the Amateur Dramatic Society, with one voice.

And a voice was heard from Billy Bunter's bed.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say, you fellows, if you're going to do the 'Merchant of Venice,' I suppose you'll want me to play Shylock?"

"Well, it would be a jolly appropriate character for you," grunted Bob Cherry. "But we sha'n't want you, all the same."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Oh, go to sleep!"

"That's the worst of these amateur dramatic societies," said Billy Bunter. "There's so much petty jealousy, and a really clever chap is never given a chance. I—"

"Go to sleep!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Yes, but—"

A pillow whizzed through the air, and Billy Bunter suddenly collapsed into his bed, with a gasp; and his voice was heard no more that night in the Remove dormitory.

ONE WET WEDNESDAY!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Tommy Dodd at Work.

"SUSPOSING—" began Jimmy Silver, as he sat on the edge of the table in the end study at Rookwood.

Then he stopped. That was not the first time he had said "susposing" and stopped abruptly. He had already repeated the word half a dozen times at least.

He was evidently in doubt about something, and, therefore, hesitated.

The faces of Newcome and Raby became grimmer as they bent over their work, diligently plying their pens to evening prep.

"Susposing—" Raby looked up, and gave Jimmy Silver a savage glare.

"Will—you—shut—up?" he demanded, in measured tones.

Jimmy turned, and fixed his inquirer with a vacant stare.

"Susposing—" "Squash him!" exclaimed Newcome, starting up. "Drag him down!"

The leader of the Fistical Four was dragged to the floor with a loud bump, and Newcome and Raby sprawled over him.

"Leggo!" roared Jimmy Silver furiously. "Get off my face, Newcome, you silly idiot!"

Newcome shifted his position slightly. "Sorry!" he said apologetically. "Wouldn't make your face look worse than it does for worlds, Jimmy, old son!"

"Pathead!" snorted Jimmy Silver. "You're the pathead!" exclaimed Newcome emphatically. "Babbling a lot of silly rot whilst a chap's grinding at prep!"

"Well, susposing—" "There he goes again!" howled Newcome. "Bump his silly head against the table-leg until he shuts up!"

This proposal would for a certainty have been carried out, had not Jimmy reached up his hand for the teapot, and caused a gentle but steady stream of hot tea to flow down the back of Raby's neck.

The bread-board also fell with a hollow crack upon Newcome's head.

Jimmy Silver grinned in a satisfied manner. "Now, then," he remarked, shaking himself free, and reseating himself upon the table, "susposing it's wet to-morrow half, in fact, whether or no, the ground will be in no condition for footer. It's been raining cats and dogs all day, and is still going pretty strong."

"You don't say so," said Raby, who was scraping tea-leaves from the back of his neck. "For a silly ass, you're wonderfully observant."

"You've heard of a certain Tommy Dodd and Company over the way," said Jimmy Silver, becoming heavily sarcastic. "Or perhaps you haven't. They're a set of Modern cads, you know, and whenever an opportunity offers we must be up against them."

"Don't talk rot!" grunted Newcome, who was still sitting upon the floor, rubbing his head. "If you've—Yarroogh!"

His observations were cut short by the door being flung violently open, and banging against his head with much more force than did the bread-board.

It was Arthur Edward Lovell, the fourth member of the Fistical Four, who entered. His face was a little flushed with excitement, and he carried a folded newspaper in his hand.

"Do you know, you chaps—Hallo, Newcome!" He frowned at the unhappy Newcome, sitting on the floor. "Was it you who made that noise as I opened the door?"

Newcome gave him an icy glare.

But Jimmy Silver obviated the interchange of any pleasantries that might have ensued.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 284.

"Where's the grub?" he demanded. "We sent you out to buy to-morrow's grub, not blessed newspapers!"

"Grub? Oh, crumbs, yes! I forgot all about the giddy stuff!" Jimmy Silver eyed him icily.

"You forgot all about grub, did you?" "Grub be jiggered! Here's something that will make your hair curl—make you shiver all night, and keep looking under the bed for fear there's somebody hidden there! The extra special edition—just out. I bought it from a boy passing the gates."

He thrust the newspaper playfully into his leader's mouth.

Jimmy Silver slowly extracted the paper from his mouth, unfolded it, and began to read.

"Chess Problem, No. 22. Move—" "No, you ass!" exclaimed Lovell, snatching it from him impatiently. He stuffed the extra special into his pocket. "Do you remember Carlake? But you don't, of course. He was before your time."

"I remember the brute," grunted Newcome, unable to suppress a shudder. "I was a lag in the Second when he got the boot."

"He was the biggest, all-round, out-and-out cad and bully," said Lovell deliberately, "that ever is, was, or is likely to be! Beaumont is a gentleman in comparison."

"Jolly interesting," yawned Jimmy Silver. "Any more nice acquaintances of yours to tell me about?"

"He wasn't an acquaintance of ours, you ass! Newcome, Raby, and I were fags in the Second, and Carlake was a prefect in the Sixth. He smoked, drank, betted, and played cards in the study—"

"Charming young gentleman!" "But, worse than that, he got in with a lot of rotters at a gambling haunt in town. There is one thing I will say for him, though. He was a giddy wonder at amateur theatricals. He could make himself up and palm himself off as almost anybody—within reasonable limits."

"Quite wonderful!" said Jimmy Silver, with a bored air.

"These gambling rotters fleeced him, as they do anybody who comes their way. Then, when he couldn't pay his debts, one of them threatened to split to Dr. Chisholm. What did Carlake do—"

"Haven't an earthly!" "Shut up! What did he do but send old Mack on a wild-goose errand, and took his place in disguise! When the giddy gambling joker came along he collared him at the gates, said he had 'orders from the 'Ead' to chuck him out, and proceeded to do so. Unfortunately Dr. Chisholm himself happened along just as the wig, which had made him look rather bald in front, tumbled off in the tussle. He was bowled out, expelled, and went from bad to worse."

"How terrible!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "And after being sentenced at last to five years' penal servitude," went on Lovell, ignoring Jimmy Silver's attempt at sarcasm, "he swore before the whole court that Dr. Chisholm was the cause of his ruin, and swore to have a hefty retribution when he was released. And now he's escaped, after serving only half his sentence!"

"Has he?" "Has he, you block of ice! The paper says he's been seen heading this way—just outside the village, in fact!"

"Do you mean to tell me," demanded Jimmy Silver deliberately, "that a special paper has been issued just because a measty convict has escaped?"

"If you'd seen the way he handled that gambling johnnie," said Lovell reminiscently, "you wouldn't be so disparaging, Jimmy. He has the strength of an elephant. Though I was only an inky fag at the time, his image is stamped on my mind like—"

"When you young gents has done arguing—"

The Fistical Four looked round quickly at the sound of a strange voice, and beheld the portly form of Mack, the school porter, framed in the doorway.

He wore a thick overcoat, well muffled at the neck, and a woollen muffler hid three-parts of his face.

"Hallo, Mack, you old ruffian!" said Lovell. "Off to the North Pole?"

"I'm going nowhere of the kind," growled Mack unpleasantly. "I'll trouble you to be less impudent in future."

"Certainly!" said Lovell politely. "Any more orders to-day? What do you think of the weather? Ain't it—"

"Young rip!" snorted the school porter. "I ain't got no time to argue with you. I've come to tell you that you're wanted in the 'Ead's study hat once!"

"How good of you!" remarked Lovell. "But may I ask what you've reported us for now?"

"You wait and see," said old Mack stolidly.

The Fistical Four looked at one another apprehensively for a few minutes.

"Well, you can hop it now!" said Newcome savagely, observing that the porter still lingered. "You're no great shakes as an ornament!"

"You young scamps can git fust," said Mack stubbornly.

"Oh, all right!" The Classical juniors brushed past him, and made for the Head's study in varying stages of trepidation.

Could they but have watched the old school porter for the following few minutes they would have been considerably surprised.

Removing three greatcoats, one after another, in addition to a concealed bed-pillow, he revealed a slim figure clad in Etons, not altogether unlike that of Tommy Dodd of the Moderns.

When he had hung them up behind the door, and doffed the battered hat and muffler, the face was most certainly Tommy Dodd's, though the beetle brows and reddened nose still retained some resemblance to old Mack, the school porter.

Making as little noise as possible, the Modern chief piled up all the furniture and crockery in the middle of the study, and anointed the heap with all the ink that was available.

Upon the whole he placed the battered hat, inclined at a rakish angle.

He chuckled to himself when that was completed, and drew from his pocket a neatly-written sheet of foolscap, running thus:

"With Kindest Regards from
THOMAS DODD, ESQ.,
Whom the Classical Asses took for old Mack."

This he pinned upon the three greatcoats, and left the disordered study, feeling conscious of having accomplished a splendid little piece of work.

Meanwhile, the Fistical Four had paused uncertainly after tapping at Dr. Chisholm's study door.

They could hear him within pacing the room with rapid, agitated steps.

Arthur Edward Lovell nudged his leader. "You know who's put him in this stew?" he muttered.

"Not us, I hope!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Carlake!" said Lovell ominously. "Carlake!"

The Head of Rookwood was not exactly a funk, but the prospect of an encounter with the formidable Carlake naturally upset him. He found himself unable to settle to the simplest of tasks.

Jimmy Silver knocked again.

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

THE CAPTAIN'S RIVAL!

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Captain's Offer.

ERIC KILDARE, captain of St. Jim's, came down the steps of the School House with a shade upon his usually sunny face.

He seemed to hesitate for a moment, and then, with his quick, springy stride, crossed the quadrangle towards the New House.

"Hallo, there goes Kildare!" exclaimed Jack Blake, who was looking out of the window of Study No. 6, that famous apartment shared by the chums of the School House. "I wonder what's up? He wears a worried look."

"Oh, he's going over to the New House!" said Herries, looking out. "Going over to see cad Monteith about the footer, I suppose. Enough to make him look worried, going to interview that pig in his den."

"That's it," chimed in Digby. "There's been a meeting in Kildare's study, and I hear Monteith has asked for more New House fellows to be included in the team."

"Oh, what rot!" said Blake emphatically. "What do we want New House bouncers in the First Eleven for?"

"Quite so; but—"

"Oh, I know!" exclaimed Blake, in deep disgust. "It's Kildare's old idea—fair play all round, and peace at any price. He can't, or won't, understand that what Monteith wants isn't fair play at all. He wants to score off the School House, and make himself generally obnoxious. He's always been a thorn in Kildare's side."

"Still—"

"If I were captain of St. Jim's," said Blake, thumping the table to lend additional emphasis to his statement, "I'd never let the bouncer play for the school!"

"But as you're not captain of St. Jim's," remarked Dig, "and ain't likely to be yet awhile, come and help me do this beastly exercise, and leave off thumping the table."

And the indignant chief of the School House juniors subsided.

Meanwhile, Kildare, quite unconscious of the comments of the juniors, had crossed the quad, and entered the porch of the New House. He made his way directly to Monteith's study.

"Come in!" called out the prefect, as Kildare knocked. And the captain of St. Jim's entered James Monteith's study.

Monteith was not alone. There were three or four seniors of the New House with him, and they all turned and looked at Kildare, as if wondering what was implied by this visit to the enemy's camp.

"Hallo, Kildare!" said Monteith, not very gently.

"I've come over for a chat about the footer, Monteith," said the captain quietly, "if you have a few minutes to spare. If you're busy—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Monteith carelessly. "Sit down!"

Kildare sat down.

"I want to speak about it in a friendly spirit," he said. "There's been friction enough already, goodness knows!"

"Well, whose fault was that?" said Monteith tartly.

"We needn't go into that—"

"I'm afraid we can't help going into it. Practically the whole of the season you've only played one or two New House fellows in the team. It's practically a School House Eleven, and I'm not going to stand it any longer."

Monteith's manner was the reverse of conciliatory. But here Baker, one of the New

House seniors, and outside-right in the First Eleven, chimed in quickly.

"Let's hear what Kildare has to say, Monty," he said. Monteith bit his lip. He never could depend upon Baker to back him up in all his measures. Baker was loyal to his House, but he did not forget, like Monteith, that the New House was only part of St. Jim's, and that to the school as a whole his loyalty was also due.

And as Baker was a prefect, and had a great deal of influence in the New House, Monteith was compelled to pay some regard to his opinions.

"We're at an impasse now," continued Baker. "The New House is out of it so far as sports are concerned, and I, for one, don't believe in standing on our dignity, and letting the reputation of the college go to the dogs."

"Hear, hear!" said Webb, the treasurer of the school clubs. "I'm sure you agree with that, Monty."

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Monteith savagely. "I agree with that. If Kildare's got any reasonable offer to make, I'll jump at it. But I fancy it's only the same old tale, the New House has got to knuckle under to the School House."

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Kildare. "I never asked that or wanted it. In leaving out of the team players I consider not up to the mark, I only exercise my unquestioned right as captain of the Eleven. It is unfortunate—"

"Very unfortunate!" sneered Monteith.

"But I find no fault with you or Baker."

Monteith grunted.

"Well," he said snappishly, "the question is, are you going to play more New House members in the Eleven?"

"I have discussed the matter with my own side," said the captain of St. Jim's, "and we've made up our mind to make as big a concession as can be made without endangering the matches."

"You can leave all that out, and come down to facts."

Kildare's eye flashed, but he went on quietly:

"We want to meet you in every way. As captain, I cannot forgo the duty of selecting the team. It would be better for me to resign than that. But I am willing to take four New House men into the First Eleven on trial."

"Let's hear the names, by all means!"

"Yourself, Baker, Webb, and Gray."

Monteith was about to reply with a refusal, but he paused. He saw by the faces of his companions that they were willing to accept the compromise offered by the captain of all St. Jim's, and he was himself surprised by the extent of Kildare's concession.

The seniors named were all present, and they looked very expressively at Monteith. If he refused Kildare's offer, the danger of a split in the side, a dispute of his authority in his own House, was imminent. And so the prefect paused.

"Would you mind giving us a bit of time to think it over?" he suggested, at last.

Kildare rose.

"Certainly; I'm making up the eleven for the Headland match to-morrow. If you send me over a note presently, it will do, so that I can put the names on the notice-board for to-morrow morning."

"Very well."

And Kildare, with a pleasant nod, quitted the study.

The New House seniors looked at one another.

"I can see you're inclined to accept the offer," said Monteith coldly.

"I'm not," said Sefton promptly. "I'd stick out for half the team if I were you."

"Rats!" said Baker. "The offer is a jolly good one, and we ought to take it."

"My sentiments exactly!" agreed Webb.

"And mine," added Gray.

Monteith nodded shortly.

"Very well, as you seem to be agreed, we'll take the offer," he said. "But, you know, I don't trust Kildare, and I don't suppose this will set matters right."

"Well, you know, I always said you did Kildare injustice," remarked Baker. "His position isn't an easy one, and—"

"Well, we accept the offer," interrupted Monteith. "That's settled. I'll send him a note over by Figgins this evening."

The seniors, greatly pleased with the turn affairs had taken, quitted the room, discussing the Headland match, which was coming off next day. Only Sefton remained with Monteith. He looked inquiringly at the prefect.

"You don't think this will end the rows, do you, Monty?" he asked.

Monteith smiled in his sour way.

"No; I don't. I'd have flung Kildare's offer back in his face, but I don't want a split in the New House; and those fellows believe in Kildare, and in his talk about standing together for the school, and that rot. Kildare will think he has scored when he gets my note. But let him wait a little. This won't be the end of it!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Headland Match.

"MY Aunt Georgina!" exclaimed Blake, stopping before the notice-board in the hall the next morning. "Here's news!"

"What's up?" asked Herries, stopping also.

"Read for yourself, my son."

There was very soon a crowd round the notice-board. Every eye was glued upon a sheet of paper pinned there, in the well-known handwriting of the captain of St. Jim's.

It contained the list of names in the school eleven for the football match of the afternoon, when Headland College were to visit St. Jim's.

The eleven to meet Headland contained four names from the New House.

The list ran as follows:

Rushden; Gray, Knox; Webb, Darrel, Berry; Drake, Morgan, Kildare, Monteith, Baker.

Four of these belonged to the New House—Monteith, Baker, Gray, and Webb.

It was evident to all that a compromise had been arrived at, and that Kildare had made a great concession in order to bring the New House into line with the rest of the school.

"Well, I call that rot!" said Blake. "As if we couldn't have licked Headland without any of those New House bouncers in the team!"

"Peace at any price!" sniffed Dig. "You see how it'll turn out. They'll give the game away to Headland."

"If Kildare had taken my advice—" went on Blake.

"What a pity he didn't!" sniggered Mellish. "Why don't you go to his study and offer it to him, Blake? He'd be grateful!"

"I'll offer you something if you snigger at

me!" said Blake. "And you'll get it on the nose!"

Whereupon Mellish said no more, and the chums of No. 6 continued to discuss the situation with indignant emphasis until a senior appeared on the scene, when they all scuttled away.

But it was not only by the juniors that Kildare's action was criticised.

Kildare's position was a difficult one, and few of the fellows made full allowance for its difficulty. The dream of the captain was to get the two Houses to pull heartily together for the good of the school; but it was a dream difficult of realisation. He kept steadily at it, but he found it a very uphill task.

The Headland match was eagerly looked forward to. When the new eleven took the field it would be seen how the experiment was to turn out.

If the team pulled well together, and the visitors were beaten, it would be a triumph for Kildare's policy of conciliation, and it would settle a knotty point—the formation of the college team to meet Mexborough, a neighbouring town, with whom a fixture had long been arranged, and who were known to be extremely dangerous opponents.

So, when the afternoon came, there was a crowd round the football-ground, both Houses being strongly represented.

Headland arrived in their brake, and were accorded a warm welcome by the Saints. Headland were not by any means the most formidable opponents St. Jim's met, and Kildare had been wise to try the new team with them before committing the fate of the Mexborough Town match to it.

There was a hearty cheer as the visitors streamed into the field. They looked very fit, but the Saints had little doubt that the home team would come out victorious if they pulled together. That was the question. Could the New House fellows be relied upon to back up the captain?

Kildare did not permit himself to doubt it for a moment. And, indeed, three at least of the New House members meant to do their best. If a lingering doubt lurked in Kildare's mind, it was of Monteith.

But the New House prefect looked very fit as he lined up with his side, and he certainly looked as if he meant business.

The visitors won the toss, and it fell to the Saints to kick off, which they did against a keen wind. The afternoon was fine, though cold. Kildare kicked off, and the game commenced.

"Now," said Blake oracularly, "we shall see what we shall see."

What they saw first was the visitors coming down with the wind in a fine rush for the home goal.

Then Blake and Study No. 6 shouted:

"Back up, Saints!"

"Play up!" shouted Kangaroo of the Shell.

Whether encouraged by the attention of Study No. 6 or not, the Saints certainly did play up, and the Headland rush was stopped, and the ball went to midfield from Gray's foot.

It came down right to Monteith, who was on it like lightning. The New House prefect went through the Headlanders like a shot.

The spectators watched eagerly. Loud rang the cheers of the New House as Monteith covered the ground like a deer.

"Bravo, Monteith!"

Blake sniffed.

"If Monteith takes that goal," he said, "I'll say, 'Good old New House!' But he won't, my sons—he won't! Why doesn't he pass?"

Even as Blake spoke Monteith was checked by a Headland back; but he passed the ball to Kildare in time, and the captain of St. Jim's slammed it home.

"Goal!"

Things were looking well for St. Jim's. With the wind in their faces they had scored a goal in the first ten minutes.

But that success acted as a spur to the Headland team, and when they kicked off again they followed it up with a desperate attack. The tussle was hard and sharp.

Again Gray, at back, sent the ball to midfield when the visitors looked dangerous, and the New House cheered their man to the echo.

Two home forwards were on the ball in a moment, while Darrel was running up. It was a moment of tussle and wild excitement, and what followed happened like a flash.

Darrel, shouldered by a Headland for-

ward, reeled and fell against Monteith, who went staggering. But for that unfortunate chance Monteith would have got the ball away.

As it was, Kildare, who was a second behind him, captured it and took it up the field. Monteith, before he could regain his balance, went over in the rush that followed, and it swept past him, and left him gasping on the grass.

No one was looking at him as he slowly rose, his face white with fury. Every glance was following the game, sweeping on resistlessly towards the Headland goal. Kildare had the ball, and the other forwards were backing him up well.

With a beautiful exhibition of passing they bore it through the Headland defence, and then Drake, centring to Kildare at the psychological moment, the Saints' skipper sent the ball in with a shot that gave the goalie not the ghost of a chance.

St. Jim's roared over the second goal.

"But look at Monteith!" muttered Blake. The New House prefect was white with rage, and his eyes were burning. Darrel, glancing at him, remembered the tumble in the struggle for the ball, which had slipped his memory in the excitement of what followed.

"Sorry, Monteith," he said, as the players came back to the centre of the field—"sorry I was shoved against you!"

"It's a lie," said Monteith thickly—"it's a lie, and you know it! You did it on purpose!"

Darrel stared at him. "Don't be a fool!" he said shortly. "Do you know what you're talking about?"

"Yes, I do; and I know that it wasn't an accident made you shove me off the ball and give it to Kildare!"

Kildare caught those words, and his eyes flashed.

"Monteith!"

The prefect glared at him.

"Well, what have you got to say?"

"I've got this to say, that you'd better hold your tongue!"

"I shall say what I think, and—"

"Line up! Silence there!"

The prefect lined up with the rest, but his face was very black.

His heart was burning with passionate anger as the game restarted, and he was in a mood for anything—anything but good play and backing up Kildare.

Kildare noticed that he was playing slackly now, and his eye flashed, but he said nothing. But presently a Headland rush came right through the Saints, and Monteith, who had a chance to get the ball, let it pass him.

"Play up, Monteith!" cried Kildare.

The prefect gave him a savage look.

Kildare gritted his teeth; it came into his mind that the prefect was slacking on purpose—that this was Monteith's revenge for his supposed injury.

The backs succeeded in clearing, and a fine opening came to the home forwards. Monteith was on the ball quickly this time.

The enemy were rushing upon him; Kildare stood ready to receive the pass, and for a moment it seemed that the prefect would send him the ball as he expected.

But as he caught the captain's look, there seemed to Monteith's distorted imagination something threatening in it, and he set his lips spitefully.

Kildare uttered a sharp exclamation as Monteith miskicked, and the ball dropped just before a Headland forward, who sent it right up the field in a twinkling.

For a moment Kildare quivered with anger.

But it was no time for recrimination then. The game had to be saved; Monteith's bad play, or, rather, treachery, had to be retrieved.

But that was impossible, as it proved; the advantage given to the Headlanders was well improved by them, and a couple of minutes later the ball was in the home net.

Then the whistle went for half-time, and both teams trooped off for a much-needed rest. In the home dressing-room in the pavilion Kildare strode up to Monteith.

His eyes were blazing, and even the prefect, though he had provoked the conflict, shrank for a moment from his look.

"Monteith, I want to know your intentions!" exclaimed the captain. "Are you going to play up like a decent fellow, or aren't you?"

Monteith scowled.

"What fault do you find with my play?" "You deliberately gave the ball to the Headlanders, and threw away that goal."

"It's a lie!"

The veins stood out on Kildare's forehead, but with a mighty effort he controlled himself.

"I appeal to the team!" he cried, looking round.

"We all saw it!" exclaimed Darrel. "It was plain enough!"

The New House fellows were silent.

They were not inclined to think badly of their chief, nor to bear witness against him.

But the School House players backed up Darrel's words.

"We all saw it!" cried Rusden.

"Did you all see Darrel trip me up, too, so as to let Kildare get the ball?" sneered the New House prefect.

"That's a lie!" said Darrel unceremoniously.

"You know I did nothing of the kind, Monteith! I was shoved over myself, and couldn't help it."

"Well, I say you could help it, and that you did it on purpose! You saw it, Gray! What do you think?"

Gray hesitated.

"Well, it looked like it," he said. "But I don't think Darrel would do that, Monteith."

"Only a rotten cad would bring such an accusation!" exclaimed Kildare. "There's not a word of truth in it! Darrel had no intention of doing anything of the kind!"

Monteith snapped his teeth.

"I say he did it, and that it was done on purpose!" he cried. "I don't expect fair play from you, Kildare!"

"You mean," said Kildare quietly, "that you are looking for trouble. In that case, you had better get out of the team."

"I'm quite willing to go; but I shall not go alone. There are three here who will stand by me."

Grey, Webb, and Baker looked at each other dubiously.

To desert their chief at such a moment was difficult, but to desert the School Eleven in the middle of a hard-fought match appeared harder.

"I say, don't let us go any further!" exclaimed Baker anxiously. "Let us all play up for the school. The whistle goes in a minute. For goodness' sake let's stop rowing in the middle of a match! We can quarrel after we've kicked Headland!"

"I don't want to quarrel," said Monteith. "But Kildare has accused me of deliberately playing into the enemy's hands."

"He didn't mean that, I'm sure," said the pacific Baker. "We all know you wouldn't do such a thing. There goes the whistle! Come on; let's play up!"

There was no time for further discussion. The matter dropped just where it was, and the whole team turned out for the second half. But if ever a football team was in a state of mind unfit for winning a victory, it was the St. Jim's First Eleven at that moment.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Ordered Off the Field.

THE spectators crowded round the football-field knew nothing of what had passed in the home dressing-room, but the more observant of them saw that something was amiss as the Saints turned into the field for the second half.

Kildare, though he tried to recover his usual calmness, could not quite banish the cloud, while Monteith made no effort to hide his temper. The others were looking more or less disturbed and anxious, too.

From the kick-off the St. Jim's forwards got away finely, and the visitors' goal was besieged.

The wind was now in favour of the Saints, and as they had taken two goals to one with it against them, they were naturally expected to walk over the Headlanders now. But the crowd soon perceived that the second half was to be far from a walk-over.

The St. Jim's attack was a fine one, but there was a weak spot in the line, and that was at inside-right. Monteith was in too savage a temper to play up well.

One weak spot was enough for the Headlanders, and soon the backs succeeded in clearing, and the tussle went to midfield again.

Kildare's eyes blazed. Whether Monteith was doing his best or not, there was no doubt

"Come in!"
The pacing stopped, and the four entered. Dr. Chisholm looked much more haggard than usual, and they felt not a little uncomfortable in his presence.

"We—we've come, sir."
"So I perceive!" snapped the Head irritably.

"Mack told us you wanted to see us," explained Jimmy Silver.

"Then Mack is mistaken. I wish to be alone."

The quartette moved doubtfully to the door. Dr. Chisholm eyed them for a moment, then spoke.

"One moment, my boys!"
"Yes, sir?"

"You—you know what has happened—you remember—"

"About Carlake, sir?" cut in Lovell eagerly. "I will remember the bullying brute—ahem!—Carlake, sir."

"He was a great trial to me, a very great trial," murmured the Head, passing a weary hand across his brow. "I fear that if he returns he will attempt to do damage not only to myself, but to any pupil of mine who happens to cross his path. He is a dangerous person!"

"Hear, hear!" responded Lovell, Raby, and Newcome in one voice.

The Head turned to Jimmy Silver. "I wish you, Silver, to pin up this notice in the hall."

Very nervously he handed the Classical leader a typed sheet of foolscap, which he had crumpled somewhat in his agitation.

"Mack has strict orders to keep the gates locked until Carlake is captured, and no person under my charge is allowed out of the school grounds."

"Thank you, sir."
Jimmy Silver & Co. left the study, and the Head resumed his uneasy pacing.

"Here's a go!" said Jimmy Silver, leading the way into the end study, after pinning the notice in the hall. "Whether it's wet or fine to-morrow we must—Hallo! Jumping goliwogs! Somebody's been here!"

It required no gifted genius to see that Lovell, Raby, and Newcome gazed upon the wreckage, and professed themselves to be entirely in accordance with their leader's observation.

"Bookcase, crockery, chairs, fender, coal-scuttle, table, mirror," began Jimmy Silver, taking an inventory of the heaped-up articles upon his fingers. "Not to mention ink—"

"And that hat!" murmured Raby. "It seems familiar somehow."

"Oh, what asses you were!" said Jimmy Silver mournfully, as his eyes caught the greatcoats, muffler, and notice behind the door. "To think that whilst you were burbling and jabbering about how to make the Moderns sit up to-morrow, Tommy Dodd takes time by the forelock, bamboozles you into the belief that he's old Mack, and wrecks the good old end study! Ah, me! To think that I must go through life with such!"

With that he stretched forth his arms in a dramatic manner.

Lovell, Raby, and Newcome glared at him. They quickly reverted to something much more forcible than glaring, however, and, leaving their despondent leader to extricate himself from beneath the wreckage, they stamped out of the study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mack Entertains an Old Acquaintance.

"THIS 'ere's wot I calls life—with a vengeance!"
Old Mack, in his little lodge at Rookwood, presented the picture of contentment.

With his large and gouty feet resting upon a footstool, a glass of gin-and-water by his side, and the evening paper in his hands, he found life very well worth living.

He folded his paper into an oblong shape, took a large sip from his glass, and re-read a paragraph which seemed to afford him deep thought.

Then he laid the paper down. "So Carlake's a 'cadin' this way, is he?" he muttered, gazing into the roaring fire. "I knowed him well! Six 'ole years he was 'ere, and never a single tip! Ugh!"

Old Mack drank off the remainder of the gin-and-water in disgust.

Suddenly, whilst the glass was yet to his lips, he found his eyes riveted to the window.

Was it possible?
A moment later the door was flung open.

A man in a garb of broad arrows entered hurriedly, and closed and bolted the door behind him.

Old Mack spluttered.

"Wot? Carlake!"

With his back to the door the convict surveyed the old porter, his teeth bared in something between a smile and a snarl.

"Yes, old gin-and-water, it's me right enough!"

The evening paper fluttered from Mack's nerveless grasp, and he sat and stared open-mouthed at the intruder.

"Thought you'd be surprised to see me," observed Carlake, advancing. "And pleased, too—eh?"

"Y-y-yus!"

"Any whisky in, you guzzling old hound?"

"Honny gin, sir!" he muttered.

"Gin'll do for me. I'm not over particular, Mack!"

The convict coolly drew a chair up to the fire, and mixed himself a glass of hot gin-and-water.

"How this brings back the good old times, Mack, you Hun!" he said, with a sigh. "Don't you remember the day when you sat before the fire, just as you're doing now, the picture of docility and imbecility, and we shied rotten eggs in at you through the window?"

"No, I don't!" said old Mack gruffly.

"Or the night when we rigged up a booby-trap over the big gates," went on the convict reminiscently, "and as you closed them you

Old Mack did not reply.
He led the way stiffly along a musty passage, and stopped before an old wooden door.

"Help yourself to wot's in there," he said, opening the door, and stepping back.

Carlake peered in.
"You old fool!" he exclaimed. "There's nothing but coals—Oh!"

A violent push in the back sent him sprawling over the heap of coals. Next moment the door slammed, and the key turned.

The convict staggered to his feet, mad with rage, and thumped furiously at the door.

"You old villain! Open this door! Do you hear?"

Mack heard, but heeded not. He mounted the stairs with all the expedition his rheumatically limbs permitted.

Carlake tried to penetrate the darkness of the cellar with a savage glare. Finding that to be impossible until his eyes grew accustomed to it, he groped for the door again.

"This thing won't hold out against my weight!" he muttered. "I'll bash it in!"

He climbed half-way up the heap of coals, with the intention of taking a flying leap at the door, feet first.

But he paused suddenly as a splash of rain fell upon his hand.

"The coal-hole!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "The very thing!"

In a trice he was struggling through the narrow aperture, with the wet night wind blowing upon his face.



The chief of the Moderns piled up all the furniture and crockery in the middle of the end study. Upon the whole he placed the battered hat, inclined at a rakish angle, and withdrew, chuckling with satisfaction.

found yourself drenched in ink and soot and tar?"

"I remembers that," returned Mack, making a dismal attempt to look amused.

"Jolly old times!" sighed the broad-shouldered visitor. "Enjoyable times—eh, Mack, you old bouncer? Weren't they enjoyable times?"

"Wery enjoyable times," replied Mack weakly.

Carlake chuckled, and stirred the fire savagely.

Then, with startling suddenness, he turned upon the quaking old porter.

"You have another suit of togs besides the ones you're wearing?" he demanded.

"Yus, Mister Carlake."

"Where are they?"

"I—I'll show yer," muttered the school porter. "Just foller me."

He lit the candle with trembling hands. But his old eyes were glittering cunningly.

Carlake did not notice that. He paced the little lodge feverishly, and gnawed at his fingers.

He followed old Mack down a flight of steps.

"Queer place to keep your clothes—below stairs!" he grunted.

"Nowhere else to keep 'em, sir," said Mack plaintively. "My bed-room's not a large one."

"I remember it," said Carlake, grinning. "I believe I swamped it with treacle once, didn't I?"

The voice of Mack made him grin viciously. "Negro!" bellowed the old school porter.

"Where are yer? Negro!"

The expected bark of the mastiff, which should have been pacing the quad at that hour, did not come. Something was amiss with Negro, evidently.

Carlake darted round the corner of the lodge.

"You treacherous old hunks!" he grated, gripping the porter by the throat.

Old Mack jumped. He hadn't expected to see the convict again so soon.

"Oh, Mr. Carlake, don't!" whined Mack.

"I'm an old man now—"

"And an old villain, too!" hissed Carlake.

"I—I didn't mean—"

"To leave the coal-hole uncovered—no!" said Carlake, with a harsh laugh.

"Eh!" roared Mack frenziedly, feeling the grip at his throat tighten. "Eh! 'El—"

Carlake swiftly tore his cloth cap from his close-cropped head, and crammed it into the porter's mouth.

Then he tied it there with a bit of cord.

"Come on, you old fool!" he growled. And, catching Mack by the scruff of the neck, he dragged him backwards into the lodge, his heels trailing over the ground.

When Mack was deposited in a limp heap on the floor of the lodge, Carlake once more bolted the door.

"Now, where's your wardrobe?" he

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demanded, jabbing at the terrified porter's ribs with his foot. "Will you answer?"

In his rage he overlooked the fact that he had just gagged old Mack, and a verbal answer was out of the question.

He untied the cord, and dragged Mack to his feet.

"Show me the way," he growled; "and no monkey-tricks this time!"

Old Mack shivered, and led the way upstairs. He was in no mood for any more monkey-tricks.

Arriving at his bed-room, he opened a little cupboard, and held the candle for Carlake to inspect his wardrobe.

It was limited, but the convict found enough for his wants. A pile of folded handkerchiefs caught his eye.

They were not pretty ones, but he selected three and approached old Mack.

The latter regarded him apprehensively.

"Ere, you keep haff—" "I'm going to settle with you now!" was the disconcerting reply. "Keep still, will you?"

"Jemmo go, you—your convict!" Mack struggled furiously, but it was no good.

The first handkerchief was used to gag him. The second to bind his hands. And the third his feet.

Carlake used his boots to roll the helpless porter under the bed.

"It should work all right!" he muttered to himself, as he denuded the wardrobe of its apparel. "It did in the case of that sharper. I took the whole school in! But I've no make-up; there's the pull. Still, I can muffle up my face, and pretend to be ill! A little soot on my eyebrows and red ink on my nose will make me look sufficiently like that ass!"

He took the clothes into the room below, and sat before the fire with his chin supported on his clenched fists, glaring and muttering.

Late into the night he sat in this position. His unjust and bitter hatred of the Head of Rookwood grew deeper and deeper with the striking of every hour.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Carlake Redeems Himself.

AS Jimmy Silver had predicted, Wednesday turned out wet—very wet.

The Fistical Four met in the end study, which was a little more ship-shape by now, to discuss plans for presenting the Moderns with tit in grateful exchange for tat.

"Sure, an' have ye heard the latest, bedad?"

Flynn's grinning face was not quite so grinning as usual as he shoved it round the door.

"What is the latest, Flynn, old scout?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Ould Mack's mastiff! Found half-poisoned in the quad, bedad!"

"Crumbs! Any idea who the culprit is?"

"The convict, of course, ye omadhaun! The Head's looking loike a bilious banshee, and Mack himself is quite cut up. Faith, I niver thought he was so attached to the whip as all that! He doesn't look the same omadhaun!"

"Too much gin, I suppose," said Jimmy Silver un sympathetically.

"And too little water," added Newcome.

Flynn grinned, and withdrew.

"That Carlake chap, you know, might easily be hidden about the building," remarked Jimmy Silver thoughtfully.

"Entered by way of the keyhole, I suppose?" scoffed Lovell.

"Well, but— By Jove, if that doesn't offer the chance of a giddy wheeze! Quite evidently it was the memory of that Carlake bizney which prompted Tommy Dodd to disguise himself as Mack. Now, why shouldn't we make the convict serve our turn?"

Lovell, Raby, and Newcome scratched their chins dubiously.

"Anyway, we'll talk it over later," decided Jimmy.

"There goes the bell for lessons. No time now for gassing."

After morning lessons the wheeze was carried unanimously, and there was a vast amount of raking in property boxes.

But all that Jimmy Silver wanted was a convict's cap and some grease-paints and a pair of pyjamas, and they were quickly discovered.

By six o'clock the country around was in semi-darkness owing to the low, dense clouds and mist. Jimmy Silver could not have wished for more suitable conditions to serve his purpose.

He crept across the quad, and pulled up outside the window of the Tommies' study. It was an inch or two ajar at the bottom, and Jimmy Silver silently slid it up a foot or so.

"If that convict's here, he's going to be bagged by us!" Tommy Dodd was declaring to his study-mates, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle. "It will be one in the eye for the Classicals—"

His gaze suddenly became transfixed. His chums saw that he was looking straight past them, and they spun round to see what was amiss.

"The convict!" they all yelled.

"Grab his ears!" roared Tommy Cook.

"Whack him on the napper!" yelled Tommy Doyle.

As they made a simultaneous rush the face vanished. Tommy Cook flung up the sash as far as it would go, and peered eagerly into the dim quad.

He could just make out a semi-white figure retreating in the direction of the Classical side.

"He's still in his convict's dress!" exclaimed Tommy Cook excitedly, the idea of pyjamas never entering his head. "Making for Dr. Chisholm's study, by gum, to wipe up the room with him! He's our bag, you chaps! Hurrah!"

As they scurried down the passage Jimmy Silver beat back hurriedly, and clambered in at the open window.

He stood perfectly still for a few minutes, listening to the Tommies' footsteps pattering away towards the Classical side.

Then he chuckled.

"We'll see what I can do in the study-wrecking line," he murmured.

First of all he drew Tommy Dodd's kindly message from his pocket. Scribbling on the back of it a few words to the effect that James Silver, Esq., wished the Moderns who had mistaken him for a convict the best of love, he pinned it to the broad-shouldered cap, and hung up the latter behind the door.

Before very long he proved that Tommy Dodd had a very close second in the study-wrecking line of business.

Meanwhile the unsuspecting Moderns were investigating the Classical passages.

"Blow it!" grunted Tommy Dodd. "Here's that old ass Mack coming along! Better not let him catch us on this side!"

And thereupon they retreated, and took refuge in an empty study along another passage.

But that passage, apparently, was precisely what the porter was making for!

He approached in an unusually shifty and suspicious manner, passed the study which contained the three Tommies, and stopped outside Dr. Chisholm's.

Peeping cautiously out, Tommy Dodd saw that he was applying his ear to the keyhole.

"The old eavesdropper!" he muttered.

"Serves him right if we reported him, as he's always doing us! I wonder where that giddy convict's got to?"

When he peeped out again the porter had vanished.

"Come along, kids!" he said, strolling into the passage. "The coast's clear!"

The school porter had entered the headmaster's study without so much as knocking.

Dr. Chisholm started angrily at his feet.

"Mack," he said severely, "I make allowances for your illness, but—"

The porter's next move was to drag off a wig and bushy eyebrows and reveal a countenance that was but too familiar with the dismayed Head, in spite of the make-up.

"You remember me, Chisholm?" he snarled, with a savage grin.

The Head staggered back a pace.

"Carlake!"

"From prison! And this, the hour I have been looking forward to for nearly three years, has come at last!"

From a state of complete petrification the Head became highly animated. He flung up the window, and managed to utter one cry before the convict's fingers closed about his throat.

Gradually he found himself being forced over the sill, the set, line-marked face of the convict very close to his.

Possibly it was the sound of footsteps in the passage which stayed whatever purpose Carlake had in mind. Or possibly he found he didn't hate his old Head so deeply as he had imagined now that the coveted hour was at hand.

He slowly released Dr. Chisholm, and turned to behold the three Tommies, who entered, white-faced and alarmed.

But a cry behind him made him turn quickly about again.

Unable to regain his balance, Dr. Chisholm made a futile clutch at the sill, and vanished from sight.

White as a sheet, the convict looked out of the window.

Fortunately, Dr. Chisholm had managed to grasp a bunch of ivy a couple of yards below the sill. But his position was a perilous one.

"Help!" he groaned, hanging on desperately. "Oh, help!"

"Mattresses, quick!" hissed Carlake, the convict, to the three Tommies.

Tommy Dodd & Co. hastened to obey the order. They returned in less than a minute with the mattresses. Carlake grabbed them at once, and threw them out of the window.

Then, with set teeth, he clambered over the sill, and lowered himself down the ivy. His strong arm encoiled the Head as the latter's failing grip completely relaxed.

The tendrils of ivy showed ominous signs of giving way beneath this double strain. And they did!

Just as Carlake, with a great effort, hoisted Dr. Chisholm up to the sill the roots came out in his hand.

Dr. Chisholm, clambering safely back into his room, shuddered as he heard the body rustling swiftly through the ivy below him.

The mattresses had broken the convict's fall considerably; but even then he rolled over and over, and lay quite still.

Carlake suffered a long illness in the sanatorium at Rookwood. One leg was fractured, and several minor organs of his body had received a dangerous shaking.

Very slowly he began to recover. He made a clean breast of everything.

He told how he had climbed over the school wall in the old place that he had used for breaking bounds in his misguided schooldays. He related how he had thrown a slightly-poisoned bone to the mastiff, which completely recovered in less than forty-eight hours.

Old Mack had already been found, trussed up like an ancient chicken, under his own bed.

Dr. Chisholm spent much of his valuable time by the sick-bed. And as the patient improved bodily, he seemed to improve morally as well.

Whenever he appeared disposed to express his contrition, however, Dr. Chisholm waved him down with a kindly smile.

His great sacrifice had been sufficient proof of his repentance, and he and the Head found that they had something in common after all, and perhaps were never intended to be bitter enemies.

Carlake never went back to prison. He slipped into a suit of khaki, and atoned for a faulty past on the battlefield.

The news met with a great reception amongst the juniors, who for a long time retained remembrance of the strange happenings on one wet Wednesday!

THE END.

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

"SHUNNED BY THE FORM!" BY OWEN CONQUEST.

To avoid disappointment you must order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance.

But the prefect had become rather a hindrance than a help to his side.

The Headland attack swept up to the home goal, against the wind, and the St. Jim's players had to fall back to defend their citadel.

But the backs put their "beef" into it, and the Headlanders did not succeed in scoring, and the ball went out again from a press of players, and dropped fairly at Monteith's feet. The prefect fumbled with it, and in a few seconds a Headlander would have had it; but in the nick of time Darrel rushed up, and, shoving Monteith unceremoniously aside, sent the ball up the field with a powerful kick.

Had Monteith been playing the game as he should have done, the action of the centre-half would have been inexcusable; but, in point of fact, it was only Darrel's prompt action that saved the situation and relieved the home goal from heavy pressure.

But Monteith recked little of that. Darrel had barely taken the kick when the prefect swung round on him, perfectly white with rage, and struck him in the face.

The unexpected blow made Darrel reel. Phip! went the referee's whistle. The game stopped.

Kildare strode towards Monteith, his eyes on fire.

Darrel had seemed about to hurl himself upon the prefect, but he remembered in time where he was, and his hands dropped to his side, and he stood quivering with passion.

Kildare made an imperious gesture to the prefect.

"Get off the field, Monteith!"

"What?"

"Get off the field!"

"I shall not go alone!"

"Get off the field, I tell you!"

Monteith cast a glance at the other New House players.

"Come!" he said. "I told you we should get no fair play here! Come!"

He strode away towards the pavilion. There was a momentary hesitation among the others.

All were strung to a pitch of high excitement, and only one or two had a clear idea of what had happened, it had passed so quickly.

Monteith strode away without looking back. Then Gray turned and walked after him. Gray's example was all the others wanted. Baker and Webb followed him with downcast faces.

The Headland fellows looked at one another in amazement. Such a sight as this they had never seen on a football-field before.

Kildare was pale but calm. He had hardly expected this wholesale desertion by the New House fellows; but, even if he had expected it, he could not have acted otherwise than as he had done.

After Monteith's outrageous conduct, it was impossible to allow him to remain on the field.

But the most sanguine of the Saints looked downhearted at finding their ranks thus reduced to the hopeless number of seven players.

The crowd were silent. What was to become of this extremely peculiar situation they could not guess. Neither could the Headland fellows.

It was for Kildare to decide.

The captain of St. Jim's took about two seconds to decide. There was no time to think about the matter, and Kildare was not the kind of fellow to give in while a chance was left.

The referee looked at him inquiringly. Kildare gave a short nod. The whistle went, and the game continued.

St. Jim's had closed their ranks, and, of course, all their efforts were now devoted to defence.

Attack, under the circumstances, would have been folly, but there was a chance that, by a careful defence, the home team might keep their goal intact during the remaining twenty minutes of the second half. If so, St. Jim's would win by the goals taken before half-time.

But they would not do it if Headland could help it.

"Buck up, you chaps!" muttered the Headland skipper. "We're not going to let seven players walk off the field winners!" And Headland bucked up.

But, great as was the disparity of numbers, the Saints put up a really splendid fight. Kildare, at least, had now only men he could fully rely upon, and who were devoted to him.

The wind, too, was now very keen, and it was in the faces of the Headlanders. And Rushden in goal was a mighty keeper.

And so, for a time at least, the rushes of the visitors were checked, and though the struggle was now wholly in the home half, the goal long remained intact.

At last, however, a lightning shot from the Headland skipper found the net, and the teams had equalised. There were five minutes more to play.

And the St. Jim's boys longed for Father Time to hurry up a little and end their suspense. For it seemed impossible for Kildare and his men to hold the Headlanders so long.

In the excitement of the moment the deserters were forgotten.

Monteith had walked away straight to the New House, and Gray, after a few minutes, had followed him.

Webb and Baker remained, looking on, and looking about the most woe-begone fellows at St. Jim's. They had not had time to think before acting, and had followed their accustomed leader.

But their feelings were not to be envied as they stood by and watched their comrades gallantly fighting a losing battle.

The Headland attack was growing

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

After the Match.

HERE was a gloomy meeting in Kildare's study after the Headland fellows were gone. The captain of St. Jim's was looking and feeling extremely depressed.

His friends were none too cheerful, either, for, though what had happened had not more than borne out their anticipations, they realised what a blow it was for Kildare, and for the fortune of the college in the football-field.

Kildare had gone very far—too far, most of his House thought—to conciliate the other House, and this was the result. Four players had walked off the field in the middle of a game, leaving their side to win or lose, as it chanced.

Such a desertion was unpardonable. The state of affairs was much worse than it had been before the captain's well-meant efforts to bring the two Houses into line.

The school had cut a ridiculous figure in the eyes of the visitors, and that was what worried Kildare as much as anything.

He was very sensitive for the honour of St. Jim's. Then there was the Mexborough



Darrel had barely taken the kick when Monteith swung round on him, perfectly white with rage, and struck him in the face. The unexpected blow made Darrel reel.

desperate. But still Kildare and his men held their ground, and Rushden, between the posts, was a marvel.

He seemed to be all head, hands, or feet, just as the occasion required, and loudly the crowd cheered their splendid goalkeeper at every escape of the home citadel.

Phip!

It was the whistle. The keen suspense was ended. The strain was removed.

The game was over, and it had ended in a draw, two goals to two; and, under the circumstances, such a draw was more honourable to the gallant seven than an ordinary victory.

Fagged out by that last gruelling twenty minutes, the Saints left the field, while deafening cheers rang far over the ground.

But the New House fellows were mostly silent.

The School House had covered itself with glory that day, but the New House colours had never been brought so low.

Even Figgins & Co. had nothing to say. But Tom Merry & Co. were the last fellows in the world to "chip" their rivals in the face of a real misfortune like this.

Town match to be considered. Was it to be played by a wholly School House side?

"There's no question about that, I think," said Darrel, when Rushden made the remark. "Even Kildare won't think of playing those rotters again after this, I suppose?"

Kildare coloured.

"You needn't reproach me," he said in a low voice. "I can see that I have made a hash of the whole thing!"

"I didn't mean to reproach you, old fellow," said Darrel quickly, "and you haven't made a hash of it. You've done your best. But the best captain alive couldn't get on with Monteith!"

"I'm afraid that's the case," said the captain slowly. "I've made my last concession. He isn't fit to go on a football-field. He'll never play for St. Jim's again, as far as I am concerned!"

The School House seniors exchanged glances of satisfaction. This was the stand they had long wanted Kildare to take, and now that he had been driven to take it they knew that he would be firm.

"It's impossible to play him, of course,"

went on Kildare. "I'm sorry it's happened, but it's no good blinking facts. He deliberately slackened down in the game, and his going for Darrel was the climax. He's out of the eleven for good and all!"

"And a jolly good thing, too, for the eleven!" said Darrel. "Now the air's clear. But the New House are certain to get their backs up over it. Yet I don't see how even they can defend what Monteith did."

"And the others, too!" exclaimed Rushden. "Fancy walking off the field like that, and leaving us to be licked, for all they cared!"

"Well, do you know, I don't blame them very much," said Kildare slowly. "They had no time to think, it all happened so quickly, and they're used to following Monteith's lead. He called on them to back him up, and they obeyed. I believe they were more than half sorry for it afterwards."

"Possibly. But you don't mean to say that you'll let them stop in the team after what they did?" exclaimed Rushden, aghast. Kildare looked worried.

"It's no good closing our eyes to the state of affairs," he said. "We've got a big match on next week, and we want every ounce of talent we can find. Monteith is barred, but Baker is one of the best wingers we've got, and Webb showed up first-rate to-day, while Gray was a giant at back, and, I believe, saved us more than once."

"Oh, I don't find fault with their play, but what's the use of a good player you can't depend upon for five minutes together?"

"They followed Monteith's lead, as I said, and we ought not to be hard on them. If they stick to Monteith, and stay out of the team of their own accord, we shall have to try and fill their places somehow, though, in that case, I tell you plainly, I don't believe we shall be able to stand up to Mexborough."

"By all accounts, Mexborough have been pulling ahead lately; and, to tell the exact truth, they're above the weight of an ordinary school team, and it's a bit of cheek on our part to tackle them at all."

The others were silent. "As I said," the captain went on, "if they stick by Monteith, we've done with them, for he shan't play again as long as I'm captain. But if they choose to play without him their places will still be open to them."

"But will they?"

"I don't know; but for the sake of the school I hope so."

"But, hang it all, you can't make any advances to them!" said Darrel. "There can't be any question of asking them to play."

"No need. I shall post up their names in the list for the Mexborough match, and if they don't intend to play they will say so."

"They can't very well leave Monteith out in the cold, unless they make up their minds to throw him over."

"Well, they might do worse than that."

"True enough. I don't see how they can stand for their captain such a howling cad as that fellow. Still—"

"Well, we'll give them the chance to stick to their colours," said Kildare. "I'll put up the list on Monday, so as to give them time to think it over."

And so the discussion ended.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. One Against Three!

KILDARE'S decision as to the list for the Mexborough match was eagerly awaited at St. Jim's, and when it was put on the notice-board it was anxiously scanned at once.

The Headland match had ended with the most unpleasant incident that had ever happened on the school football-ground, and feeling ran very high in the School House.

The general opinion was that too much had been conceded to the New House, and that after this it was impossible for even the peace-loving captain to extend the olive-branch any more.

The School House took it for granted that he would form a team to meet Mexborough wholly from his own side.

The New House had little to say for themselves in the matter.

The keenest and most loyal supporter of Monteith could not deny that the New House players had gone too far, and that no captain could possibly tolerate such conduct in his team.

At the same time they were feeling very sore, and the fact that they had not a leg to stand on only added to their irritation.

When the list was put up, therefore, there

was a general gasp of astonishment in both houses.

The only name missing was Monteith's. The head prefect of the New House was barred. Even Kildare could not overlook what he had done. But Gray, Webb, and Baker were down to play.

"They won't play without Monteith," was the verdict of the School House.

And in that idea Kildare's followers found comfort. That they should not play without him was Monteith's own determination, but he found that he would have difficulty in getting his own way.

Webb and Gray sent word to Monteith that they would stand by him.

Baker said nothing. As Baker, with the exception of Monteith himself, was the best player the New House had ever sent out, the prefect was very anxious about him.

But in reply to a direct question, Baker only said that he was thinking it over. "Webb and Gray are standing by their house," said Monteith hotly. "Do you mean to say that you are going to desert your side, and let the School House triumph?"

"It isn't a question of New House or School House," replied Baker. "It's a question of St. Jim's winning or losing the match at Mexborough."

"Yes, that's how Kildare puts it, but you know that's all humbug."

"I don't know anything of the kind," replied Baker obstinately. "I know that if we don't stand in with Kildare over this match, St. Jim's will very likely get licked."

"And if you do, the School House will crow over us all along the line. That's what Kildare has planned all along."

"I don't believe it. I always said you didn't do him justice."

Monteith set his thin lips hard. "You'd better take a friendly word of warning, Baker. Any New House chap who sides against his own house will be cut by everybody here."

"Do you mean that I shall be sent to Coventry if I play?" asked Baker, in his direct way.

"Well, something like that."

"That won't make any difference to me," said Baker, after a pause. "It's a knotty point to decide, and if I play I dare say you can make things uncomfortable for me. But I'm going to think it over, and decide what I believe to be right."

"And, meanwhile, your name will remain on the notice-board?"

"Yes."

So the conversation ended, very unsatisfactorily for both. Monteith realised keenly enough how shaky his position was, and it seemed to him a time for bold measures.

If Baker refused to come into line with the rest of the House, he must be coerced; and if he refused to be coerced, he must be cut.

A few days in Coventry would probably bring him to reason. But would the New House back the prefect up in such a drastic measure? Monteith was determined that they should; yet in his inmost heart he felt a chill of doubt.

He called on Kildare the same day. He found him with Darrel and Rushden, both of whom gave the prefect decidedly hostile looks.

Kildare was icily polite; a very different Kildare from the one Monteith was accustomed to. The prefect realised that he had got the captain's back up at last.

The cheery, good-natured captain had shown an almost endless patience, which Monteith had mistaken for weakness. Now his patience was exhausted, and Monteith found him as hard and cold as steel.

"I want to speak to you, Kildare," said the prefect, with a meaning glance at the other two School House seniors.

"Quite at your service," replied Kildare. "Don't go, you fellows; Monteith has nothing private to say to me."

"As a matter of fact, I'd rather see you alone, Kildare."

"What is it about?"

"The footer."

"I don't see what you can have to say about that, as you are not in the team; but whatever it is, you need not say it in private. Don't go, you chaps. Monteith won't be staying long."

Monteith breathed hard. It was borne upon his mind then that all the cunning tactics he had been so satisfied about amounted, in effect, to a

twisting of the lion's tail—the lion being asleep. Now he had waked the lion.

"Well, I suppose it doesn't matter if Darrel and Rushden hear what I've got to say," he remarked, as indifferently as he could. "It's about the football, as I said. I see that you've got three New House names in the list for next Saturday."

"Yes."

"You have left mine out."

"Naturally, as you do not belong to the Eleven."

"Is that a definite decision, then?"

"Quite."

"And you think our fellows will play if their prefect is barred like this?"

"I hope so."

"Well, they won't!" said Monteith savagely. "Gray and Webb refuse."

"I shall be sorry to hear that they do."

"Well, you do hear it now."

"I shall not take off their names unless I hear from them personally. I must decline to accept any interference in the matter."

"Do you forget that I am head prefect of my House?"

"Certainly not; but that has nothing to do with the footer. The men are responsible to me, as their captain, and a House prefect has nothing whatever to do with it."

Darrel and Rushden looked at each other with grim satisfaction. They had never seen Kildare in this mood before; he had always been so good-natured that they had been hardly able to imagine him going on the war-path in earnest.

It had taken a great deal of provocation to rouse him; but now that Monteith had succeeded in provoking him to a conflict, he was hard as a flint. Monteith himself was surprised and considerably dismayed.

"Very well, you can try and ride the high horse if you like," he sneered savagely. "But I tell you that if any New House chap played for you after this, he would be sent to Coventry by the House. Not a man of our side will meet the Mexborough fellows!"

Kildare shrugged his shoulders. "I have said that I shall accept no statement from an outsider as to the intentions of my team," he said. "It seems to me useless to prolong this discussion."

The prefect glared at him. He was puzzled and dismayed by this new development of Kildare's character, and at a loss what to do and say. He had a curious feeling of helplessness in the presence of the captain in this unexpected mood.

"Very well," he said, "I've warned you."

"Thanks very much!"

Monteith strode from the study and slammed the door. Ten minutes later a tag from the New House brought a note to Kildare. He opened it, and frowned as he read it. It was brief, but very much to the point:

"Unless Monteith is included in the team, we are sorry we cannot undertake to play for the school against Mexborough."

"GEORGE WEBB.
"ALBERT GRAY."

Kildare tossed the note to his companions. "That's Monteith's reply," said Darrel, looking at it. "How will you answer?"

"That won't take long," replied Kildare grimly.

He wrote on the back of the note, with a pencil:

"Any member of the School Eleven who fails to play on Saturday against Mexborough, except through illness or other similar adequate reason, will never be allowed to play for St. Jim's again as long as E. Kildare is captain."

The tag carried that note back to the New House.

"Baker has sent no word," remarked Darrel thoughtfully. "It looks as if he is standing out against Monteith."

"Yes," said Kildare, with a nod; "and that was probably what Monteith meant by his allusion to sending to Coventry any of his fellows who played for the school. I've no doubt he tried to get Baker to sign that note along with Webb and Gray."

"Then that means—"

"A disagreement in the New House. From what I know of Baker, I fancy he'll stand by the Eleven, in spite of Monteith."

It was a split in the New House, and Monteith will have only himself to thank for it. Kildare was right; the threatened split in the New House side had come at last! Baker had refused to sign the joint note of Webb

and Gray. The two latter looked far from cheerful when the fag brought back Kildare's reply.

"So we're out of it," said Gray.

"It's a rotten business!" muttered Webb.

"We must stand shoulder to shoulder for the House," said Monteith, with an appearance of cheerfulness he was far from feeling. "Kildare will have to be brought to his senses. And Baker must come into line with us."

"It looks as if he is going to be obstinate."

"He'll smart for it if he is!" said the prefect savagely. And he went at once to Baker's study, where he found the fellow he sought, standing with his hands in his pockets, staring gloomily out of the window.

Baker turned at his entrance, with a not very cordial expression.

"Hallo! Don't start on that same old topic again, for goodness' sake!" he exclaimed, before Monteith could speak. "I'm sick of it!"

The prefect scowled.

"I want to know what you're going to do!" he snapped. "Gray and Webb have resigned from the team. Are you going to do the same?"

"No!"

"You will play for Kildare?"

"I shall play for the school!"

"It's the same thing. You've made up your mind?"

"Well, I hadn't quite, but now I will do it, as you're so pressing. Yes, I'm going to play for St. Jim's; and win, too, if I can!"

"Then you'll be sent to Coventry by the whole House!"

Baker's eyes glittered.

"I'm an easy-going chap," he remarked, "and you've found it pretty easy to lead me, Monteith. You won't find it so easy to drive me. You threaten me, if I stick to the team." He picked up his cap. "You shall see how much I care for that!"

"Where are you going?"

"To the School House!"

"What for?"

"To tell Kildare that he can rely upon me for Saturday!"

And Baker walked out of the room, leaving the prefect speechless with rage.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Split in the New House.

"HEARD the news, kids?" exclaimed Blake breathlessly.

"No. What is it?"

"There's a split in the New House!" was the startling reply.

"So it's come at last," said Herries, with a wise shake of the head. "How they could have stood Monteith so long I can't understand."

"There are lots and lots of things you can't understand, kid," said Blake; "but I agree with you there. Monteith is a bit too steep."

"But is it a fact?" asked Kangaroo.

"Solid fact! Webb and Gray are scratched off the list. They've resigned, but Baker's name is still there as large as life. I saw him come out of Kildare's study last night, but I didn't guess what he had come over for. But it's plain enough now. He's going to stick to the side and let Monteith rip!"

"Good old Baker!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"But it will mean a row in the New House," continued Blake seriously. "Cad Monteith will be like a bear with a sore head. I wonder if any of the others will back up Baker? I hope so. I should like to see Monteith take a giddy tumble."

Dig shook his head.

"I'll bet Monteith will look out for himself," he said confidently. "You'll never get a chap like that in a corner. He'll make things as warm for Baker as he can, but if the House sided with Baker, Monteith would turn round and pretend that was what he wanted all along."

Blake laughed.

"Shouldn't wonder. But to my mind it looks a good deal as if Baker will be cut by his House."

Blake's surmise proved pretty correct. The edict had gone forth from Monteith's study that he was to be sent to Coventry by the House, and all the prefect's loyal backers cut him dead.

But the Coventry was by no means so complete as Monteith desired. Many fellows persisted in speaking to Baker, in spite of the sentence, and when Monteith called them to account, gave unsatisfactory answers.

Still, Baker's position was extremely uncomfortable. He had to smart for the position he had taken up, as Monteith de-

clared that he should. But he did not waver.

He was an obstinate fellow, easy to lead, but hard to drive, and Monteith had succeeded in rousing all the obstinacy in his nature.

To all the condemnation of his House he opposed a stubborn silence, and went on his way without a sign of surrender.

He looked anxiously forward to Saturday, when the Mexborough team were to arrive at St. Jim's to play the Saints on their own ground.

For, what appeared an ominous circumstance to Monteith, the vacant places in the school Eleven had not been filled up.

The list was left on the notice-board, with no alteration, except that a pen had been drawn through the names of Webb and Gray.

As Kildare, of course, could not be intending to play two men short against the visiting team, it was a matter of conjecture whom he would play in the place of the deserters.

Monteith was both puzzled and worried. It looked as if the captain still thought that Webb and Gray might play in the match, in spite of their resignation. And the prefect ground his teeth at the thought.

If such a thing happened, there was an inglorious end to his campaign against Kildare. The captain of St. Jim's would win all along the line.

Had the prefect, in provoking this conflict, taken too big a task upon his hands—"bitten off more than he could chew," in vulgar phrase?

Monteith himself began to think so. But he stuck to his guns obstinately. There was nothing else for him to do, in point of fact, unless he chose to surrender.

This was difficult—more difficult than it would have been earlier, for now he would have to tamely accept his exclusion from the team. So that, during these days, Monteith was quite as much worried as Baker.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Big Match.

SATURDAY!

The excitement was keen in the school that morning. The notice on the board in the hall remained unchanged, as Blake ascertained as soon as he came down.

The vacant places were not filled yet. Was Kildare bent, then, on giving the deserters a last chance?

"That's the idea," said Blake confidently. "And if they don't come into line, Kildare's got his eye on the substitutes. Only he won't mention any names, you see, until he's sure about Webb and Gray, so as to save causing disappointment."

Which was doubtless the true explanation. The afternoon, to the relief of all, turned out fine. The weather was propitious, the ground in excellent condition.

After school Blake took another look at the notice in the hall. It was still unchanged. Kildare passed him, and he scanned the captain's face. But Kildare's face, except that it was calm and cheerful, expressed nothing.

The captain went down to the football-ground. Study No. 6 marched down together, and arrived at the same time as Figgins & Co. It was a rare opportunity for a row, but both parties were thinking too much about the coming match for that.

They joined in cheering Baker when he went into the pavilion with Kildare. They joined even more heartily in hissing when Monteith appeared in sight.

Monteith came down with Webb and Gray. The two latter were looking decidedly glum. They started at the sound of hissing, and Monteith looked round in search of the hissers, but the juniors left off in time.

"The cad has got those two silly duffers under his wing," said Blake. "He's afraid they'll change their minds at the last moment."

"I believe they would if Kildare said a word," said Figgins. "I jolly well wish they'd play. The New House has suffered too much on account of Monteith already."

"You're right. Hallo! There's Mexborough!"

"My hat! They look a tough lot!"

"They are."

"A bit over our weight—eh?" said Figgins dubiously. "It will be a fight!"

The Mexborough men were certainly tough-looking customers. They were, as a

team, older than the St. Jim's fellows, and mostly larger and heavier.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Herries suddenly.

"What's the matter, image?"

"Look at old Kildare!"

Every eye was turned at once upon the captain of St. Jim's. He had come out of the pavilion, and was walking directly towards the spot where Gray and Webb stood with Monteith.

The latter scowled blackly at him; his two companions looked awkward and uneasy. Blake gripped Figgins by the arm.

"He's going to get them in, you see."

"Bravo! Hope he does," said Figgins.

Kildare stopped before the trio of New House seniors.

"Are you going to play, you chaps?" he said, without taking any notice of Monteith. "The places are still open to you, if you like."

Webb turned red, and looked at Gray. Gray turned red, too. The prefect snapped his teeth.

"They are not going to play, Kildare!" he said savagely.

Kildare took not the slightest notice of him. His gaze was fixed upon the two deserters, and he appeared to be unaware of the existence of Monteith.

"We've got a hard fight before us," he said. "If we win, we shall only do it by the skin of our teeth. I appeal to you in the name of the school to play up for St. Jim's. Will you do it?"

Webb came to a sudden determination.

"You really want us?"

"Yes."

"Then I'm your man!"

"If Webb plays, I play!" said Gray.

Monteith opened his mouth to speak. But before he could say a word Kildare linked his arms in those of Gray and Webb, and marched them off to the pavilion. Monteith sprang after them.

"Webb! Gray! Are you going to—"

"We're going to play. We can't let the school lose for the sake of spite, Monteith," said Gray, without turning his head.

The prefect was left standing alone, grinding his teeth. The two reclaimed deserters disappeared into the pavilion with Kildare.

The captain had judged them rightly. They had been extremely dissatisfied with their position all along, doubtful as to the justice of their cause, uneasy as to the result of their action.

The captain's appeal had been made in the right way, and at the right time. And it had not been made in vain.

The juniors had not heard what was said, but when Gray and Webb walked off with Kildare and left Monteith standing alone, they knew, of course, what had happened. Blake threw his cap into the air.

"Hurrah!" he yelled.

And Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co. joined him with all the force of their lungs.

The news spread round the field like wildfire. The School House welcomed it; the New House did not know how to take it, but upon the whole they were glad to have three men in the team for the big match.

When the eleven came out into the field, with Baker, Gray, and Webb in the school colours, the New House cheered them heartily. Monteith stood alone.

He knew what this meant. The sentence of Coventry upon Baker had been rescinded by tacit consent. It had never been rigidly enforced, in spite of his efforts. Now it was over.

Phip!

"Now we shall see something," said Blake. "Go it, ye cripples!"

Mexborough kicked off. The match commenced. Kildare's prediction as to the tussle the school had before them was verified.

The men from Mexborough were decidedly the strongest opponents the Saints had ever had to face. Their rushes were deadly, and difficult to stem; their combination was good, and their passing very accurate.

The wind was against the visitors, but they came on splendidly, and the Saints fell back to defend their goal. But their defence availed them not.

Right into the net went a whizzing shot from the foot of the Mexborough skipper, and even Rusden could not save that shot. It was a goal! A goal to the visitors in six minutes!

"Buck up, Saints!" called out Blake, as

the sides lined up again. "Play up! You ain't playing dominoes, you know!"

But the Saints needed no urging to buck up. Kildare muttered a few words of encouragement to his men, and they faced the enemy again with a dogged determination. Again the Mexborough men came sweeping on. But this time a St. Jim's back cleared with a kick that sent the ball over the half-way line, and relieved the pressure when it looked deadly dangerous.

"Good old Gray!" shouted Blake.
 "Good old New House!" roared Figgins.
 And Gray was loudly cheered. Monteith was the only one of his House-fellows who was silent. And the cheers redoubled when it was seen that Baker had captured the ball and was away with it, taking it down the field with a lightninglike dribble.
 "Baker! Baker!"
 "Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The excitement grew delirious. The Mexborough defence seemed nowhere; Baker went through them like a shot, and kicked for goal, amid a tremendous roar. And when the Mexborough goalie was seen to grab at the ball, and miss—and the leather reposed in the net—then St. Jim's let itself go. The last vestige of Baker's unpopularity in his own House vanished in a storm of cheers. And right heartily the School House joined in that cheering.

"Goal!"
 "Bravo, Baker!"
 "Hurrah!"
 The sides had equalised. Kildare's face was glowing as they lined up again. The fight was hard and fast, but a good hope of victory was in the captain's heart.

But what pleased him best was the knowledge that his New House recruits were playing up so grandly for the school.

With the team pulling together so splendidly, they might accomplish anything. The game restarted. That goal had been rather an eye-opener for the Mexborough men, showing them that they were not to have things entirely their own way.

And now they put their "beef" into it, and played up for all they were worth.

And ere long a second goal rewarded their efforts.

Two to one against St. Jim's.
 But the faces round the ropes were quite confident.

They had full faith in their champions. And their faith was justified. Just before half-time Kildare led a gallant attack upon the visitors' goal, and the ball went in from the foot of the St. Jim's skipper.

"Goal!" yelled Blake. "Give us another, Kildare, old chap!"

But no more was taken by either side before the interval.

The first half ended with the score equal.
 "Jolly good game, ain't it, Monteith?" asked Figgins, with a grin.

He was prepared to dodge a cuff from the prefect in reply to his remark.

But, to his surprise, the usually sour face of Monteith was quite genial in its expression, and he nodded.

"Jolly good, Figgins! You're right!" Figgins stared.

"Old Monteith ain't such a bad sportsman, after all," he confided to Kerr and Wynn. "You see, he's as pleased as anybody at our keeping our end up."

Jack Blake heard the remark, and winked at his companions.

Blake was under no delusion as to Monteith's change of front.

The prefect knew that he was in a corner, and meant to wriggle out of it, and that, to Blake's mind, accounted for his changed expression.

But Blake and his comrades had no time to think about Monteith at that moment.

Just as the whistle went for half-time, there was a sound of wheels on distant gravel, and two minutes later there was a rush of footsteps towards the footer-ground.

Three sturdy juniors rushed into the crowd for places.

There was a roar from the juniors whom they displaced.

"Get out, Monty Lowther!"
 "Mind where you're showing, Tom Merry!"
 "Yah! Gerroff my foot, Manners, you ass!"
 "Here they are!" shouted Kangaroo.
 "Bravo!"

The Terrible Three had gone down to the village directly after dinner and had only just returned.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bravo, St. Jim's!

TOM MERRY thumped Blake energetically on the back.
 "How is it?" he roared.
 Blake gave a yelp.

"Broken, I think you silly ass!" he gasped.
 "Let my back alone!"

"Ha, ha, I mean, how's the score?"
 "Two to two."

"Yaas, wathah. Level, deah boys!"
 "Tooter-too," said Monty Lowther. "That reminds me of the railway-porter who said that—"

"Cheese it!"
 "The railway-porter who said—"

"Rats!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Who said 'The train departs any time from two to two to two-two—'?"

"Oh, blow the railway-porter and what he said! Here come the boys!"

"Hurrah!"
 "Good old Kildare!"
 "Play up, St. Jim's!"

The Terrible Three joined in the cheering with all the force of their lungs. Monty Lowther, in his enthusiasm, swept off Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's silk topper, and waved it frantically in the air.

-Arthur Augustus gave a yell.
 "Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hurrah!"
 "You'll damage my toppah!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Let me see if you've damaged it already."

"It's all right: I have," said Lowther calmly. "No need to look."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Lowthah! You uttah wottah—"

"Play up, St. Jim's!"
 The ball was rolling, and Arthur Augustus forgot even his damaged topper in the keen excitement of watching the second half of that great match.

"Go it, Kildare!" yelled Blake. "On the ball! Go it!"

"Yaas, wathah! 'Make 'em wun, Kildare!' 'Put her through!' yelled Tom Merry.

"We're here to back you up, Kildare! Put her through! Goal—goal—goal!"

"My hat!" said Blake. "That was a ripper!"

And the general opinion seemed to be that it was a "ripper." St. Jim's cheered itself almost hoarse over that goal. St. Jim's were one up now.

Even Monteith was seen to clap his hands and cheer, though exactly how much cordiality the New House prefect felt at that moment we cannot undertake to say.

But if Monteith did not feel enthusiastic, he found it necessary to assume a virtue if he had it not, to borrow an expression from the immortal William. And if he was assuming it, he certainly was assuming it very well.

"One ahead for us!" said Monty Lowther, quite as if he were a member of the First Eleven. "We're getting on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Beating them hollow!" said Manners jubilantly. "My hat! I'm going to have some pictures of this. Mind my place while I get my camera!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 The amateur photographer of the Shell was back in five minutes with his camera.

Manners was very enthusiastic in that line. On the never-to-be-forgotten occasion when Tom Merry's team had played the Thebans, Manners had actually stood out of the match for the purpose of taking photographs of it. The keenness of the amateur photographer could no further go.

By the time Manners returned, however, his place near the ropes had been filled by a New House junior—Thompson of the Shell.

"My place!" said Manners.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. is entitled

"THE ROAD TO RUIN!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

PLEASE ORDER YOUR COPY OF THE "PENNY POPULAR" IN ADVANCE!

"Rats!" said Thompson of the Shell politely.

"Clear!"
 "Bosh!"
 "I'll shift you!"
 "Do!"

And after that laconic dialogue Manners did. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co., as in duty bound, rushed to the aid of the New House fellow; and Tom Merry & Co. crowded to the assistance of Manners.

There was a terrific scuffle, till a couple of prefects came along with walking-sticks and restored order. But Manners was victoriously in his place, and after that the snapping of his camera was incessant.

Mexborough were playing up desperately now. The walk-over they anticipated had not come off, and the St. Jim's Eleven did not seem to be suffering much from leaving Monteith out.

The visitors played their hardest, and they succeeded in putting the ball in once more; and within ten minutes of time the score was equal again—three to three.

Tom Merry looked anxious.
 "This won't do!" he said, with a shake of the head.

There was a roar:
 "Go it, Kildare!"
 "Buck up, there!"

The St. Jim's forwards, passing like clock-work, were fairly away. They brought the leather up to the Mexborough goal with a terrific burst, passing and repassing it in wonderful style, and the Mexborough men seemed hopelessly bent.

Only the goalie remained to be beaten as Baker centred to Kildare, and Kildare slammed the ball in, beating the defender all the way. And St. Jim's roared:

"Goal!"
 "Hurrah!"
 "St. Jim's wins!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"
 Mr. Railton blew the whistle. The match was over, and it had ended in a glorious victory for the school. The Mexborough men had fought hard, but they had been beaten, and St. Jim's First was covered with glory.

And as the victorious team came off amid a cheering crowd James Monteith strode forward and held out his hand to Kildare.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm glad you won—jolly glad! And I could kick myself for not having had a hand in it. Will you take my hand?"

Kildare gave him a keen glance.

Then he grasped the New House prefect's hand in his old frank way.

"Yes; and glad to!" he said.
 "Hear, hear!" shouted Figgins. "Bravo! Hear, hear!"

And Kildare went off the field, his face glowing as the deafening cheers rang over the wide quadrangle and echoed round the old buildings of St. Jim's.

In Tom Merry's study, after the match, there was a large party.

The study was crammed with fellows till there was not even standing-room; and some fellows fed in the passage, and some went away with tarts and cakes in their hands to feed in their own studies.

It was a glorious celebration—to celebrate the victory over the men from Mexborough, and the renewed friendship between the captains of the two Houses at St. Jim's. The juniors had plenty of reason to celebrate, and they celebrated! And when Tom Merry gave a toast amid the crowd it was warmly applauded.

"Gentlemen, here's to us!"
 "Hear, hear!"

"May the School House and the New House be united, and may their shadows never grow less! And may we always be here to stand up for our Houses, and give each other the giddy kybosh to keep our hand in, and stand shoulder to shoulder for St. Jim's against all outsiders!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "Bravo!"

The cheering was deafening. And the toast was drunk with enthusiasm—lemonade and ginger-beer. And while Tom Merry & Co. were celebrating in the Shell passage there was a little tea-party in Kildare's study, and among the guests was Monteith of the New House. And there was great cordiality between the captain of St. Jim's and the captain's rival.

THE END.