

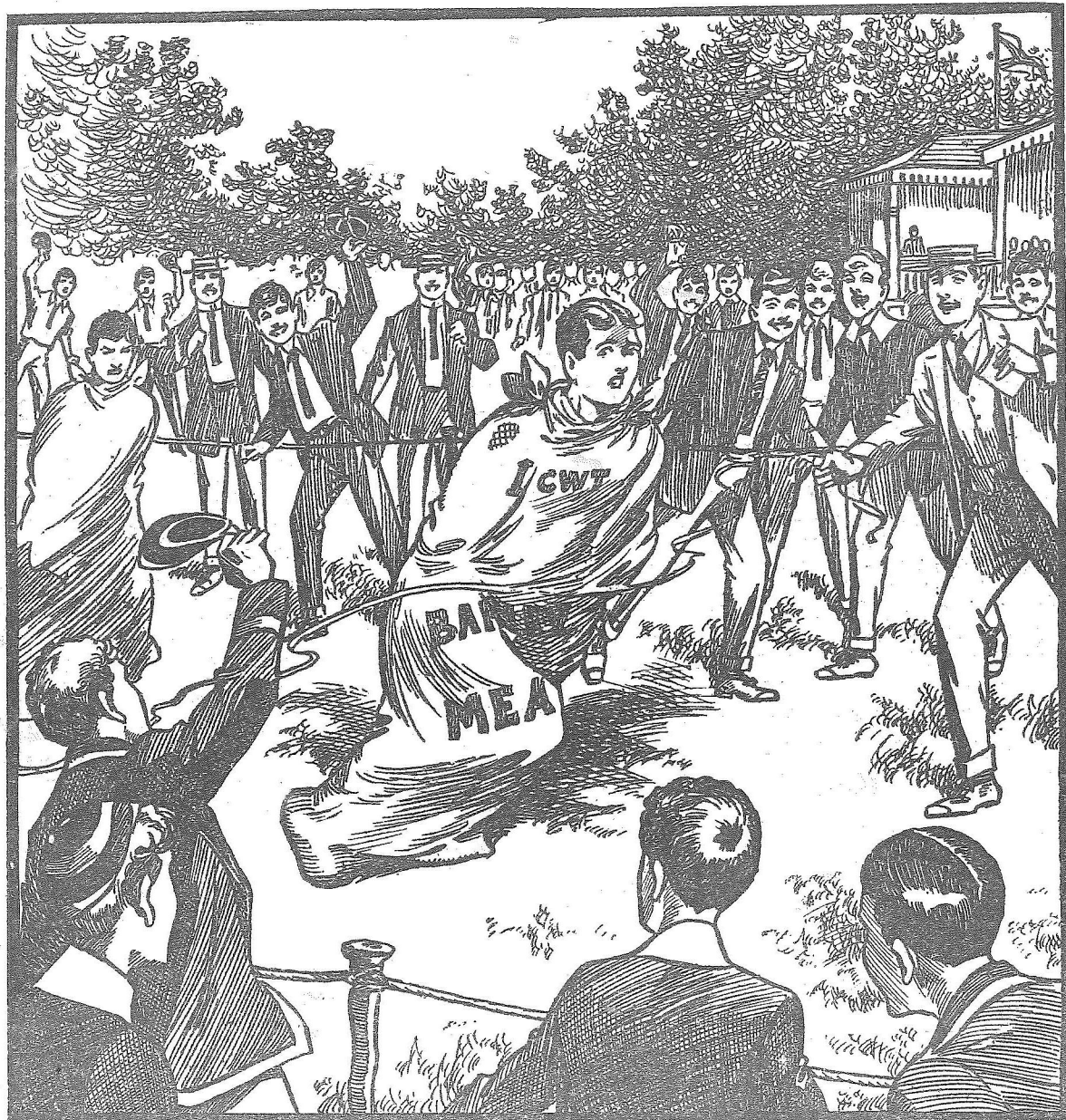
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# Sussex by the Sea!

A Grand Complete Story  
dealing with the Advent-  
ures of Harry Wharton  
& Co. of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Chapter of Accidents.

**"LAV!"**  
Sampson Quincy Iffy Field—Squiff, for short—gripped the ball tightly in his hand, and started to run.

The Australian junior was a good bowler and a very fast one.

Harry Wharton's team were at practice on Little Side, at Greyfriars, and Mark Linley was batting.

Squiff's delivery was fast and deadly; but the Lancashire lad got his bat to it, and the ball went soaring away into space.

"Good old Marky!" said Bob Cherry approvingly. "Let's have a few like that when we play Sussex!"

Mark Linley smiled, and prepared to meet Squiff's second ball.

Squiff took a longer run than usual, and his arm whizzed round like a catherine-wheel.

The Lancashire lad stepped forward confidently to smite the oncoming leather, when—

Smack!  
The ball, striking a mound of turf a few yards in front of the wicket, rose up suddenly, and struck the batsman full in the eye.

Mark Linley reeled, and fell.

With scared faces his schoolfellows rushed to the spot.

"Marky, old man!" muttered Bob Cherry. "Is—is it very bad?"

"I'm all right!" said Linley. "Don't worry about me!"

But his looks belied the assertion. His face was pale, and his eye was badly bruised.

Squiff looked the picture of remorse. "I'm awfully sorry, Linley—"

"That's all right!" said Mark, as Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry assisted him to his feet. "You couldn't help it."

"What's the trouble here?"

Wingate of the Sixth strode up to the group of juniors.

"Linley's been biffed in the eye by a cricket-ball," explained Johnny Bull. "It was an accident."

The captain of Greyfriars examined the injury, and his face was grave.

"You had better go along to the sanatorium, Linley. I'll fetch Dr. Short from Friardale."

"Is it necessary?" asked Mark.

"Of course it is! That's a very nasty knock! Go and bathe your eye in the sanatorium, and wait there until the doctor comes."

"Very well, Wingate!"

And the Lancashire junior, assisted by

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, went along to the sanny.

Wingate hurried into Friardale on his bicycle, and returned half an hour later with the medical man.

"Nothing serious," said Dr. Short, as he examined the injury. "He won't be able to take part in lessons or sport for a week, however. He must remain in a darkened room."

"My hat!" gasped Wharton, who, with Bob Cherry, had waited to hear the doctor's verdict.

This was a big blow to Harry Wharton, as well as to Mark Linley himself.

Wharton's team was about to proceed to Littlehampton to meet the boys of Sussex in the tour of English counties.

And Mark Linley, one of the star men of the team, was hors de combat.

"It's rotten!" said Wharton.

"Awful!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"Cheer up, you fellows!" said Mark Linley. "We'll manage all right without me."

"I don't know so much!" said Bob Cherry glumly. "You're one of our best players, Marky. It will be like playing 'Hamlet' with the Hamlet left out."

"Not so bad as that, surely?" smiled Mark.

"You kids had better clear off now!" said Wingate, turning to Wharton and Cherry.

And the two juniors went—leaving Mark Linley exiled for a whole week from the delights of the playing-fields.

The Famous Five gave up their cricket practice, and paced moodily up and down in the Close.

For some moments no one spoke.

Then Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! What's all this?"

Skinner and Stott, of the Remove, were coming through the old gateway of Greyfriars.

Leaning heavily upon them for support was Bolsover major.

Bolsover was limping painfully.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Wharton.

Bolsover's reply was brief and expressive. "Crocked!" he said.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Another one!" groaned Nugent. "How did it happen?"

"He tripped up on the kerb in Friardale," explained Skinner, who seemed to be enjoying the situation. "He won't be able to go with you fellows to Sussex."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Don't look so disappointed," said Skinner. "I can recommend a jolly good substitute for Bolsover."

"Yourself, I suppose?" said Wharton, with a curl of the lip.

Skinner nodded. "Why not?" he said. "It's about time I took a hand in this merry sports tour!"

"You'll take a boot, if you don't dry up!" growled Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five were not in a good temper.

Bolsover major was not one of the best athletes in Harry Wharton's party; but his absence would be felt all the same.

"That's two fellows who can't come to Sussex," said Bob Cherry. "Any more, I wonder?"

"Yes," said Monty Newland, coming up in time to hear Bob's remark. "Sorry, you fellows, but I can't come on the tour!"

The Famous Five stared blankly at Monty Newland.

"You—you can't come?" repeated Wharton.

"No."

"Don't say you've twisted your ankle?" said Nugent.

"Or stopped a cricket-ball with your eye!" said Bob Cherry.

Monty Newland smiled, and produced a telegram.

"I've been wired for by my people!" he exclaimed. "There's a celebration in the family—for a cousin just home from abroad—and I've got to be there. I've a long journey to make, and it's going to take up the best part of the week. The Head's given me permission to go, and—there you are!"

Bob Cherry groaned.

"Why couldn't they have postponed the giddy celebration until we'd got back from Sussex?" he growled.

"I'm beastly sorry!" said Newland; "but it can't be helped. I'd wriggle out of it if I could, but—"

"That's all right, old chap!" said Harry Wharton. "You've got to go where duty calls. But—but it's rotten!"

"Beastly!" said Frank Nugent. "What's going to happen next, I wonder?"

"I suppose we shall all be down with influenza, or something, by to-night!" said Johnny Bull.

But the chapter of misfortunes ceased at last.

There were no more casualties and no more telegrams.

All the same, there were three gaps in the ranks of Harry Wharton's team—three gaps which would not easily be filled. Indeed, it was difficult to see how they were going to be filled at all.

Harry Wharton & Co.'s tour to Sussex looked like proving a failure—unless a miracle happened.

'And, as Bob Cherry pointed out, miracles didn't happen in these days.

No. 1 Study in the Remove passage was not a place of festive jollity that evening.

Mark Linley was in the sanny, Bolsover major was hors de combat, and Monty Newland had already started on his long journey.

The Famous Five trooped up to the Remove dormitory in a dismal procession.

Even Bob Cherry—the sunniest-tempered fellow in the Remove—was silent and depressed.

And Harry Wharton, as he composed himself to slumber, reflected that even sporting tours were not all honey!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.  
Filling the Breach.

**I**'VE got it!"

Bob Cherry made that remark in triumphant tones next morning.

The rising-bell had rung, and Bob Cherry was his old cheerful self again.

The same could not be said of the other members of the touring-party.

They turned out of bed almost as cheerfully as Charles Peace on the morning he faced the hangman.

"I've got it!" said Bob Cherry again.

"Got what?" growled Johnny Bull.

"If you mean the hump, I'm with you."

"I've been thinking about our trip to Littlehampton," said Bob.

"Well?"

"There are three vacancies in the party now."

"Go hon!" said Nugent.

"There will be four before long," said Tom Brown.

"Bob's going off his rocker."

"Don't be an ass!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"All right, old scout. I know you hate competition!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton turned to Bob Cherry.

"Have you hit on a good wheeze, Bob?"

"Of course! This is the Good Wheeze Department!" said Bob Cherry, tapping his curly head.

"I was going to suggest how we could fill the gaps."

"Go ahead, then," said Wharton eagerly.

"All suggestions thankfully received. But for goodness' sake don't propose that we have Toddy, or Pendoff, or Dick Russell. We mustn't poach on Smithy's preserves."

"I wasn't thinking of doing that," said Bob Cherry.

"Then who on earth's going to fill the bill?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Outside Smithy's party and our own, there's no one in the Remove worth thinking about."

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry.

"I beg to propose, gentlemen, that the three vacant places are filled by Wun Lung—"

"What!"

"That heathen Chinese!" yelled Squiff.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"You—you must be wandering in your mind!" gasped Nugent.

"If he's got a mind left to wander in!" said Tom Brown.

"Wun Lung! My only aunt!"

"Who are the other two?" asked Wharton.

"Might as well hear the worst."

"There's Kippis—"

"That's better! Kippis is a better con-jur-ger than he is a cricketer, but he does know which end of a bat to handle. Who's the third?"

"Mauly."

"Great Scott!"

There was a general gasp.

Bob Cherry was not indulging in the gentle pastime of leg-pulling. He was seriously and solemnly advocating that Lord Mauleverer, the slacker and dandy of the Remove, should be given a place in Harry Wharton's touring-party!

Harry Wharton broke the painful silence which followed.

"My dear ass," he said, "you know jolly well that Mauly's hopeless—quite outside the pale!"

"He was born tired," said Squiff.

"He finds it too much fag to eat his meals, let alone play cricket."

"True, O King!" said Bob Cherry.

"But there are ways and means of reforming Mauly. If he were to rise to the occasion, he'd do great things."

"It!" snorted Nugent.

Bob Cherry lowered his voice, lest Lord Mauleverer, who was in bed close by, should overhear him.

But he need not have troubled, for Mauly was still sound asleep. The rising-bell conveyed no stirring message to Mauly's sluggish soul.

"Look here, you fellows," whispered Bob, "I happen to know a thing or two about Mauly. He's very keen on a certain girl—"

"My hat! You don't mean to say the silly ass has fallen in love again?" exclaimed Wharton.

"No. But there's a girl at Cliff House—a new girl called Mabel Kent—who Mauly likes very much. He helped her with her luggage when she arrived, and they got quite chummy."

"But what's this potty romance got to do with it?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Lots, my son! If we put it to Mauly that he'll please Mabel Kent by bucking up, he'll rally round at once. It will work like a charm. Instead of being a hopeless slacker, Mauly will have a positive thirst for cricket, and all that sort of thing. He won't fill Mark Linley's place, of course, but he'll be as good as Bolsover major."

"I doubt it," said Nugent.

And Hurree Singh remarked that the doubtfulness was terrific.

Harry Wharton reflected for a few moments.

"We might try the experiment," he said thoughtfully.

"I don't mind Kippis coming in, and it's just faintly possible that Mauly may put up a good show. But I draw the line at Wun Lung."

"He can bowl—"

"Yes—and he'd break the nappers of the Sussex fellows!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"He bowls at anything but the wicket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We won't take a twelfth man with us, as usual," said Wharton.

"We'll make it eleven, including Kippis and Mauly. It's a patched-up sort of team, but we may just manage to pull through. Do you agree, you fellows?"

The others nodded.

"Anything's better than putting chaps like Skinner in the team," said Nugent.

And Skinner, who heard the remark, scowled.

"I say, you fellows—"

The voice of William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, broke in upon the junior's conversation.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Just woke up, porpoise?"

"Look here," said Bunter, sitting up in bed.

"Where do I come in?"

"You don't," said Squiff.

"You stay out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter subsided with a grunt.

He had tried many a time and oft to secure a place in the Remove team, and his services were invariably declined without thanks.

The Removites finished dressing, and went downstairs—with two exceptions.

The exceptions were Bob Cherry and Lord Mauleverer.

The latter still slept soundly, until Bob Cherry effectively applied a wet sponge to his face.

"Yooohoo!" spluttered the schoolboy earl, sitting up in bed.

"Wharrer marrer?"

"Shake a leg, old scout!" said Bob Cherry.

"Train leaves for Littlehampton in an hour."

"L'ampton?" murmured Mauly drowsily.

"Was that got to do with me?"

"You're a member of our select touring-party," said Bob Cherry.

"Eh?"

"You're coming along to help us put the kybosh on Sussex."

"Oh, begad!"

"It's up to you, Mauly," said Bob Cherry.

"To turn over a new leaf. If you do it willingly, everything in the garden will be lovely. If you're not willing, your uncle will have to chastise you."

Lord Mauleverer blinked at Bob Cherry in astonishment.

"My dear fellow, you know I find games frightfully fagin'—"

"Rot! We're looking upon you as the hope of our side. You can play all right when you choose to exert yourself. And just think how Mabel will appreciate it."

Mauly flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Mum-mum-Mabel!" he stuttered.

"Yes; Mabel Kent, you know. She'll think the world of you if you put your beef into it, and help the Remove on to victory. It's the chance of a lifetime for you. Are you game?"

For some moments a struggle seemed to be going on in Lord Mauleverer's breast.

He liked Mabel; he loathed athletic exertion.

Mauly was at the cross-roads—torn between a desire to please Mabel and the more natural desire to cut sport out of his existence altogether.

Presently he spoke.

"I'm game, begad! Count me in!"

Bob Cherry thumped the schoolboy cart on the back with a vigour which made Mauly gasp.

"Good man!" said Bob. "I knew you'd come up to the scratch. Buck up and come down to brekker, and then we'll make tracks for Littlehampton."

Bob Cherry threw back the bedclothes as he spoke, and Lord Mauleverer, having taken the plunge, so to speak, started to dress.

His drowsiness slipped from him like a mask. He resolved, there and then, to give a good account of himself in the forthcoming tour.

Whether his resolve would fail him at the critical moment remained to be seen.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
A Close Game.

**H**OW ripping!"

Harry Wharton's touring-party, under the supervision of Wingate of the Sixth, sped through the green fields of Sussex.

The view, to right and left of the carriage windows, was enchanting.

A long range of downs stretched away as far as the eye could see, and closer at hand nestled tiny farms and picturesque cottages.

Wingate, who had read Kipling, recalled the poet's tribute to Sussex:

"Each to his choice, and I rejoice  
The lot has fallen to me  
In a fair ground, in a fair ground,  
Yea, Sussex by the Sea!"

The train rattled through Ford Junction, and slowed up at Littlehampton—not, perhaps, so famous a resort as Brighton or Hastings, but very quiet and charming, for all that.

Three taxis were waiting outside the station.

Wingate chartered them, and the party proceeded to the Norfolk Hotel, there to be entertained by a sumptuous repast.

Lord Mauleverer, however, ate little.

It was not because he was too lazy.

The usual born-tired expression had left Mauly's face, and his eyes danced restlessly.

He was waiting for an opportunity of winning his spurs—of proving to Mabel Kent that he was something more than a limp, lazy aristocrat.

He would show Mabel that he was not of the stuff of which Government office boys are made.

There was a two-hours' interval between lunch and the cricket match with Sussex.

In this interval Harry Wharton & Co. rambled through the town, taking stock of their surroundings with interest.

Kippis and Lord Mauleverer, the two new recruits to the team, hired a boat, and rowed up the river as far as Arundel Castle.

"Topping place, that!" said Kippis, as he rested on his oars.

"Wish I could go all over it!"

"Same here!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"But business comes before pleasure, dear boy!"

Kippis started.

"My hat! It seems strange to hear you talk like that!" he exclaimed.

"Turning over a new leaf—what?"

Mauly nodded.

"For a few days, at any rate," he said.

"Hadn't we better be getting back now?"

"All serene!"

The juniors went back with the stream to Littlehampton, where they joined forces with the rest of the party.

Then a move was made to the cricket-ground—a spacious field situated on the northern outskirts of the town, close to the famous Toddington Tea Gardens.

The Sussex team had not yet arrived, and Harry Wharton & Co. improved the shining hour by putting in some practice.

They were surprised to see how well Lord Mauleverer shaped.

The schoolboy earl stood up to Hurree Singh's deadliest bowling in a plucky and praiseworthy manner, and fully ten minutes had elapsed before the dusky junior knocked Mauly's middle stung out of the ground.

"Who is this man?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"He doth bestride the narrow world like an opossum," as Shakespeare says.

"Pathead!" said Squiff.

"Shakespeare said 'Colossus!'"

"Same thing," said Bob.

"But, I say, isn't Mauly shaping well? We shall be calling him the Viscount de Jessop soon!"

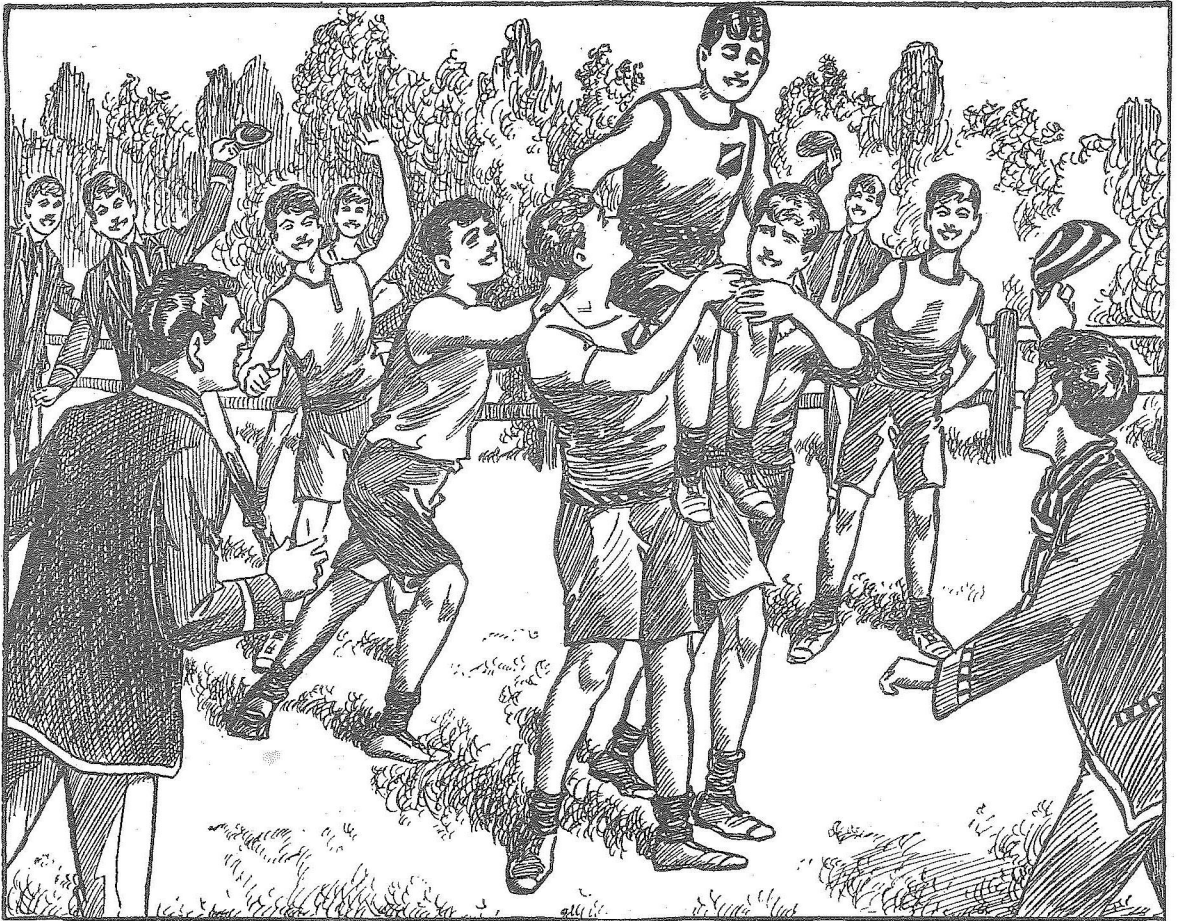
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were amazed at Mauly's exhibition.

On the rare occasions when he had played cricket at Greyfriars, his display had been

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 25.





Despite his protestation, Mauly was borne shoulder high. "We'll chair him back to the hotel!" said Bob Cherry. (See page 6).

"Hurrah!"  
 "You might as well order these doughnuts in advance, Carfax!" grinned Bob Cherry.  
 As the morning advanced, however, Bob changed his tune.  
 The high jump and the long jump both went to Sussex.  
 Fenner, the boy whose bowling had proved so deadly the day before, won both events.  
 The quarter-mile came next, and Johnny Carfax proved an easy winner. Indeed, he left the rest of the runners standing.  
 "Three to one against!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Looks as if I shall have to supply those merry doughnuts, after all!"  
 "Tug-of-war next!" announced Wingate. And the two teams lined up on the rope.  
 Harry Wharton & Co. looked grimly determined.  
 They were fighting with their backs to the wall.  
 Only one event—the hundred yards—had fallen to their portion, so far. And they were not accustomed to being trounced in this wholesale fashion.  
 What they had achieved against counties like Lancashire, Kent, and Hampshire, surely they could achieve against Sussex!  
 "Put your beef into it!" muttered Wharton.  
 The word of command was given, and the straining, heaving, tugging mass of humanity drew the crowd to the spot.  
 "Come along, Greyfriars!"  
 "Stick it out, Sussex!"  
 The first pull of the three was won by the Friars after a dour struggle.  
 "This won't do!" said Johnny Carfax.  
 "Rally round, you men!"  
 Sussex placed themselves on terms in the second pull.  
 And now came the real tug-of-war.  
 "Last pull!" said Wingate.  
 "And tug like the very dickens!" said Bob Cherry.  
 As the sharp command rang out, the Friars fairly hurled themselves backwards.

That first fierce effort nearly swept the Sussex team off their feet.  
 Carfax rallied them, however; and they in turn threw their united weight upon the rope.  
 "Good old Sussex!"  
 "You've got 'em set this time!"  
 "Bray-vo, my boys—bray-vo!" hooted an excited Sussex farmer.  
 Slowly the Friars yielded ground.  
 It seemed inevitable that they must be beaten.  
 But sturdy Johnny Bull stemmed the tide. The Friars asserted themselves again, and the Sussex boys, weakened and exhausted by their last straining effort, collapsed at the crucial moment, and came sprawling over the line—hopelessly beaten!  
 Bob Cherry threw himself into the long grass, almost sobbing for breath.  
 "My kingdom for a ginger-pop!" he panted.  
 Wingate smilingly appeared on the scene with a glass of lime-juice cordial. Bob Cherry gulped it down as if it were a draught of the choicest vintage.  
 "That's better!" he murmured. "Phew! Talk about exertion! You can thank your lucky stars you stood down from the tug-of-war, Mauly!"  
 Mauly nodded.  
 "I wouldn't have gone through that, begad," he said, "not for all the wealth of the Indies!"  
 The next item on the programme was throwing the cricket-ball—not quite such a strenuous pastime.  
 Harry Wharton's opening throw of eighty-eight yards seemed likely to remain unbeaten.  
 The efforts of the other competitors fell far short of this distance.  
 But the last thrower of all—Barnes, of Sussex—stepped up to the mark with a curious smile on his face.  
 Not only was Barnes an expert wicket-keeper, but he could throw a cricket-ball

farther than anyone of his own age in the county.  
 With a swift jerk of his arm, he launched the ball, which soared away into space.  
 The spectators waited breathlessly while Wingate measured the distance.  
 "Afraid he's topped my effort," said Harry Wharton.  
 And so it proved.  
 "Ninety-five yards!" announced Wingate, through his megaphone.  
 And there was a loud cheer from the Sussex supporters.  
 Bob Cherry groaned.  
 "The beggars are leading by four events to two," he said. "That means that we've got to pull off the last three items, or lose a perfectly good dish of doughnuts. Such is life!"  
 When Squiff won the obstacle-race, however, Bob Cherry brightened up again.  
 "If we can only win the sack-race and the mile," he said, "it will be all serene."  
 It was not often that a sack-race was introduced into the sports; but the authorities had done so on this occasion, and there was loud laughter from the crowd when a dozen fellows, encased in sacks, waddled to the starting-point.  
 Lord Mauleverer was among the entrants.  
 It was almost impossible for Mauly to preserve his dignity as he lurched from side to side like a Tank.  
 But he entered into the fun of the thing, and when the order was given he got off the mark in great style.  
 Johnny Carfax seemed quite at home in a sack. He overtook Mauly, and established a clear lead.  
 "My race, I think!" chuckled Carfax.  
 But pride goeth before a fall.  
 Just before the tape was reached the Sussex skipper came a very complete cropper. He lay wriggling on the ground like a conger-eel.  
 The crowd roared.  
 THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 26.



Rapidly the schoolboy earl gained on the fellows in front.

On and on he came, with a dash and vigour of which none would have thought him capable.

Bob Cherry at once began to sit up and take notice.

"Great jumping crackers!" he gasped. "Just look at Mauly!"

Carfax and Fenner were still swimming strongly, but their progress seemed puny and snail-like in comparison with that of Lord Mauleverer.

Mauly's stroke was a very fast and very exhausting one. He could not possibly have kept it up throughout, and he had wisely brought it into action when it was most needed.

The spectators craned forward to see the finish.

And what a finish it was! Carfax and Fenner, conscious of the fact that they were being gained upon by someone in the rear, struggled on valiantly.

But the Sussex skipper made the fatal mistake of trying to scramble ashore when he was still out of his depth. In so doing he lost a precious minute; and, with Fenner beginning to show signs of distress, Lord Mauleverer just managed to shoot past the pair of them and struggle ashore, the winner of one of the most exciting swimming-races on record!

Almost dazed by his exertions, Lord Mauleverer staggered away towards the dressing-tent.

And as he went the cheers of the crowd thundered in his ears.

Then during a brief lull Mauly distinctly recognised a familiar voice.

"Well played, Herbert!"

Turning swiftly, he caught a glimpse of the smiling face of Mabel Kent among the onlookers.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**  
**A Nine-Days' Wonder.**

**B**OB CHERRY drove the last nail into the Sussex coffin by defeating Johnny Carfax in a six-rounds boxing contest that afternoon.

Lord Mauleverer and Mabel Kent sat side by side in a packed audience to witness the fight.

Mauly, however, seemed to take far more interest in the young lady seated next to him than in the events of the boxing-ring.

Mabel did not conceal her pleasure at Mauly's recent performances.

"What a score I shall have over the other girls when I get back!" she said. "I urged Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn and Phyllis Howell to come down with me, but they pooh-poohed the idea that you would do anything great."

"Spare my blushes!" murmured Mauly. "It was nothin'—nothin' at all!"

"Nonsense! You were splendid!" said Mabel. "I only wish I could come over to Greyfriars sometimes to see you play cricket!"

Mauly's face glowed.

"It would be awfully rippin', dear gal," he said.

"But it can't be done," said Mabel. "Eh?"

"Unfortunately, I'm going away." Mauly's face fell.

"You're leavin' Cliff House?" Mabel nodded.

"My people are going to America next week," she said, "and I'm sailing with them. I haven't had time to form many friendships since I've been at Cliff House, but I shall always be proud of yours, Herbert. You'll write to me sometimes, won't you?"

"Yaas!" said Mauly, forcing a smile. "But—but this is awful!"

"What is it?"

"The idea of your goin' away! Just as we were gettin' on famously together, too!"

"It can't be helped," said Mabel. "You must come over to Cliff House to tea before I go."

And Mauly promised he would. When the boxing-contest was over the Greyfriars juniors returned to their hotel, and Mabel Kent accompanied them. She was speedily on the best of terms with Harry Wharton & Co.

The conversation centred round the recent events, particularly Lord Mauleverer's brilliant performances.

"This has been our most successful tour, so far," said Harry Wharton. "We made a bad start, but everything went swimmingly afterwards."

"We were rather lucky," you know," said Frank Nugent. "It was quite on the cards at first that Tom Merry and some more of the St. Jim's fellows would be in the Sussex team. It's their county, you see. But it seems that they couldn't get away."

"Jolly good thing for us!" said Johnny Bull.

And the rest of the Removites were agreed on that point.

Had Tom Merry & Co. competed on behalf of Sussex the sports tour would not have ended so happily for the Friars.

After a hearty meal the tourists packed their belongings, and headed for the railway-station.

Lord Mauleverer and Mabel Kent had a carriage to themselves.

Mauly did his best to fight down his disappointment at Mabel's impending departure. His tongue wagged gaily, and to see them chatting together one would have thought that their friendship was one of long standing.

At the gates of Cliff House, in the dusky evening, they parted. Only for a time, however, for Mauly had undertaken to turn up to tea at Cliff House next day.

Greyfriars was thrilled when Harry Wharton & Co. described the part played by Mauly in the recent tour.

Mark Linley, who was rapidly on the mend in the sanatorium, listened eagerly to Bob Cherry's vivid account of what had taken place; and Monty Newland and Bolsover major were no less impressed.

The question of the hour was—would Mauly keep it up?

The question was soon answered.

Next day, when Bob Cherry summoned Lord Mauleverer to cricket practice, he received no response.

Stepping into Mauly's study, he discovered the schoolboy earl lying fast asleep, with his head buried in the cushions.

"Mauly!" shouted Bob, in his dulcet tones. The sleeper stirred restlessly.

"Gerraway!" he murmured.

"Aren't you coming to the cricket?"

Lord Mauleverer slowly sat up, and blinked drowsily at Bob Cherry.

"I've done my bit," he said. "Do leave a fellow in peace, begad!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I thought it was too good to last!" he said. "Has Mabel thrown you over, old scout?"

"No."

"Then why not carry on the good work?" Mauly sighed.

"Mabel's goin' to America."

"Oh!"

"I don't want to be sentimental, begad," continued Mauly, "but the sunshine seems to be goin' out of my life."

"Draw it mild!" said Bob Cherry. "Mabel Kent's a stunning girl, but there are plenty of others."

"Not for me, thanks," said Mauly. "Now run away an' pick flowers, there's a good chap! I want to go to sleep."

"I've a jolly good mind to bump you."

"Hands off!" said Mauly, in alarm. "I'm due at Cliff House in an hour's time, for tea. I don't want my bags soiled."

"Burst your bags!" said Bob. "Still, I'll let you off this time, after the wonderful show you put up at Littlehampton. By the way—"

Snore!

Bob Cherry glanced at the sleeping figure, grunted, and gave it up.

"Once a slacker, always a slacker," he murmured, as he quitted the study.

From that day Lord Mauleverer took no active part in the sports of the Remove.

He had returned to his bad old ways, with a vengeance.

With the departure of Mabel Kent Mauly lost all interest in athletic pursuits. He toiled not, neither did he spin, and the playing-fields at Greyfriars saw him not.

A few days later a copy of the "West Sussex Gazette" was sent to Greyfriars.

Dr. Locke, at whose suggestion the sports tour had first been launched, read with interest the report of the recent tournament.

The headlines made the worthy Head gasp.

**"SCHOOLBOY EARL'S DASHING DISPLAY!  
LORD MAULEVERER'S SHARE IN GREAT GREYFRIARS VICTORY!"**

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head. "I had no idea that Mauleverer was an athlete!"

The report summed up Mauly's performances as follows:

"The success of the Greyfriars boys was mainly due to young Lord Mauleverer, who scored a great personal triumph."

"Not content with hitting up a brilliant thirty in the cricket-match, this young lord distinguished himself by winning two races in succession. These efforts were crowned by a magnificent swim, in which Carfax and Fenner, two local swimmers of great repute, were defeated."

"We venture to prophesy that Lord Mauleverer will go far in the world of sport."

The Head, who had seldom, if ever, descended to watch a junior match, turned up on Little Side to witness the Remove's next game with Highlife.

Eleven juniors batted in turn for the Remove, but Lord Mauleverer was not one of them.

Dr. Locke called Harry Wharton aside. "Is not Mauleverer playing for the Remove, Wharton?"

Harry could scarcely repress a grin. "No, sir."

"But I understand he performed exceedingly well in the recent tour?"

"It was a fiasco in the pan, I'm afraid, sir. The sort of thing that only happens once in a lifetime."

"Where is Mauleverer now?" Skinner, who was standing near, volunteered the information.

"Fast asleep in his study, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

And the Head, in common with the rest of Greyfriars, gave Lord Mauleverer up.

But Harry Wharton & Co. were never likely to forget how, under the genial influence of Mabel Kent, Mauly had bestirred himself for once, and covered himself with glory in the campaign against Johnny Carfax and his fellow-sportsmen of Sussex by the Sea!

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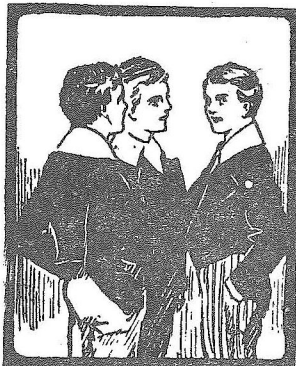
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# SMYTHE'S ALLY!

A New Long, Complete Story  
of JIMMY SILVER & Co., the  
Chums of Rookwood.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.



### THE FIRST CHAPTER.

#### The Tale that Tubby Told.

"My hat!"

Jimmy Silver, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, stopped suddenly and grinned as he was strolling down Coombe Lane towards Rookwood.

With him were Lovell, Raby, and Newcombe, who also stopped and grinned as their leader made that ejaculation, and pointed to a fat figure rolling across the field towards them.

"My hat!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "What's that coming towards us—a young buffalo or a baby Tank?"

Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled. "It's our own tame porpoise, Tubby. Seems in a jolly old hurry, too. Now, what's that fat beggar been up to, I wonder? He's running from that old barn. Perhaps he's—Hallo, here he comes—Yarooogh!"

Tubby Muffin had come. He came charging through the gap in the hedge like a mad bull, and Lovell's remarks ended in a howl as the fat junior's head butted him with a thump against Jimmy Silver. Next moment the Fistical Four and Tubby Muffin were mixed up in a struggling, gasping heap on the dusty road.

"You—your silly fat chump!" hooted Jimmy Silver, sitting up, with a gasp. "Why the thump don't you look where you're going, you dangerous maniac?"

"Scrag the silly ass!" roared Lovell. "Oh, my napper!"

"And my eye!" howled Raby. "Some ass biffed his elbow into my eye! I'll bump that fat beast!"

Tubby Muffin sat up breathlessly. "I—I say, you y' fellows!" he gasped, blinking round in alarm at the victims of his haste. "I say, I didn't see you, you know! 'Tain't my fault! I say, Jimmy, I was just coming to look for you!"

"Well, now you've found me, you'll jolly well wish you hadn't, old tulip!" exclaimed Jimmy wrathfully, jumping to his feet. "Collar the fat barrel, you chaps!"

"Here, I say—Leggo! Wow!"

Tubby's protestations ended in a wild wail of woe as four pairs of hands gripped him. Bump!

"Now again!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver grimly. "Altogether—"

"Help!" roared Tubby frantically. "I say, Jimmy, stopp't! I've got some news for you! Leggo!"

Jimmy Silver paused and eyed the fat Classical suspiciously.

"Oh, you've got some news, have you?" he exclaimed grimly. "Where've you been cavedropping now, you fat clam?"

"I ain't been cavedropping!" exclaimed Tubby indignantly. "Scorn to, in fact! I simply listened from—from a sense of duty. That's it! You fellows know I've a keen sense of duty! Besides, it was up to me to listen—as you're a big pal of mine, Jimmy! For the sake of a pal, y'know!"

"Oh, I'm a big pal of yours, am I?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "First I've heard about it, anyway!"

"For the sake of a pal," proceeded Tubby impressively, "I overcame my natural scruples against cavedropping—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And," proceeded Tubby, with a reproving frown, "I determined to listen to every word in order to frustrate the dastardly schemes of my pal Jimmy's unscrupulous enemies."

"Oh!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. fairly blinked at the fat youth.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 26.

"So it's something up against your Uncle Jimmy!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, with great interest. "Then that alters the case, Tubby. Let's hear it, my dear old pal!"

Tubby Muffin swelled visibly. "I heard every word!" he exclaimed importantly. "The smoky rotters little dreamed I was—"

"Half a mo', Tubby, pal o' mine!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Who are my dastardly enemies, and where, and why, and wherefore?"

"Smythe and Howard and Tracy and Towny!" gasped Tubby excitedly. "I guessed—saw in a flash, in fact—they were up to something when I spotted 'em sneaking out of gates. So I followed, determined to—"

"Sure you didn't think it was a feed?" chuckled Lovell.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I did," confessed Tubby calmly. "I thought they were going to have a feed in that old barn yonder. But they weren't. It was only a rotten card-party! I sneaked up the ladder after 'em, and peeped over the trapdoor. And, would you believe it, there the beasts were, smoking and playing rotten banker. Then the beastly tramp—"

"Tramp?" echoed Jimmy Silver & Co., in surprise.

"Yes, tramp!" chuckled Tubby. "Old Smythe and his lot didn't see the beggar at first—he was lying asleep on some straw in the corner of the loft. Then the smoky rotters started quarrelling about the cards, and woke him up. He, he, he! You should have seen Smythe's face when the old tramp popped up, and asked him for a fag—frightened him into fits nearly."

"It would do!" grinned Jimmy. "But go on, Tubby, old pal! That is interesting—what?"

"Well, old Smythe began to ride the high horse then. He told the tramp to clear out or he'd pitch him out. But the tramp—a dirty, scrubby-looking beast he was—only grinned at him. That's what gave Smythe the idea for his great wheeze—the tramp's grinning face."

"The tramp's grinning face gave him the idea, did it?" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Yes!" said Tubby cheerfully. "He said it just reminded him of Jimmy Silver's idiotic grin—"

"Eh! What's that?" roared Jimmy Silver. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lovell, Raby, and Newcombe.

Jimmy Silver glared. "What the dickens are you idiots grinning at?" he snorted. "Idiotic grin—eh? I'll smash the rotters! I'll—I'll—"

And Jimmy Silver, snorting like a war-horse, was about to dive through the hedge when Lovell dragged him back.

"Stop, Jimmy, you fathead!" he laughed. "Let's hear the merry wheeze first! You can slaughter Smythe & Co. afterwards, you chump!"

Jimmy Silver grunted. "All right!" he exclaimed darkly. "Smythe can wait, then! Buck up, lard-tub! What's the game?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Tubby Muffin. "It's a scream! I heard every word. I felt it my duty as your pal, Jimmy, to overcome my—"

"What's the wheeze, you fat chump!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Why—he, he, he!—he's paying that old tramp to come on the cricket-field at the match to-morrow and claim to be Jimmy Silver's uncle. Fancy that!"

"Wha-what?"

"It's true, every word!" gasped Tubby excitedly. "He's paying that old tramp a quid to walk on the ground an' demand to see

his nephew Jimmy. And Smythe's paid him half-a-quid in advance. I heard every word of it! Fact!"

"Great Scott!"

"If this is one of your wonderful yarns, Tubby—"

"I tell you it's true—every word!" spluttered Tubby. "And I came rushing to tell you, Jimmy, to save you from the dastardly schemes of your unscrup—Wow! Leggo! Yarooogh!"

"If you don't ring off an' stick to the yarn, I'll—I'll stick a pin in you and burst you, you fat windbag!" roared Jimmy Silver wrathfully.

"Well, I like that!" grumbled Tubby Muffin. "Rank ingratitude, I call it. After running all that risk to save you from the dastardly schemes of your—Leggo! Oh, my ear!"

Tubby roared as Jimmy Silver grasped his fat ear 'twixt finger and thumb.

"Now, look here, Tubby, my bosom pal!" exclaimed Jimmy grimly. "If you're stuffing us up with—My hat!"

Jimmy Silver released Tubby Muffin's ear in sheer astonishment as he started across the field. From the direction of the old barn a ragged and extremely dirty individual was approaching.

"It's the tramp—it's Sunny Jim!" gasped Tubby triumphantly. "Praps you'll believe me now, Jimmy Silver!"

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Lovell, as the tramp drew nearer. "Look at his grinning chivvy—no wonder he's called Sunny Jim! And—ha, ha, ha!—no wonder Smythe said he reminded him of our Jimmy Silver. Sure he isn't your uncle, Jimmy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver flushed and glared at his laughing chums. The junior captain of the Fourth was noted for his perpetual sunny smile. But even Jimmy Silver's smile was nothing to the approaching tramp's grin, which stretched from ear to ear, almost obliterating his blue nose and the rest of his dirty, unshaven face.

"Why, you—you cackling asses!" stuttered Jimmy Silver warmly. "I'll jolly well—"

Jimmy Silver broke off as Lovell gripped his arm suddenly.

"Quick! Behind this hedge, you ass! Yonder's Smythe and his Nuts coming! Don't let 'em see us!"

"Rats!" growled the exasperated Jimmy. "Leggo! I'm jolly well going to let 'em both see and feel me in a minute! Idiotic grin, eh! I'll smash the rotters! I'll—Here—what—"

At a nod from Lovell, Jimmy Silver's chums gripped their angry leader, and, despite his struggles, led him at a run across the road, and pulled him down behind the hedge. Tubby Muffin, with a fat, throaty chuckle, followed.

"Keep quiet, Jimmy, you ass!" warned Lovell quickly. "Never mind your outraged dignity now. I've thought of a topping wheeze to checkmate Smythe & Co., and you'll spoil all if you let 'em see you've spotted their little game."

Jimmy Silver grunted, and ceased his struggles. And next moment the tramp crushed through the gap in the hedge, and after a cautious glance around, shuffled away towards Coombe village.

"There goes Sunny Jim," murmured Arthur Edward Lovell. "First stop, the Bird-in-Hand at Coombe, to change Smythe's half-quid. Now for the other conspirators—shush! Here they come!"

Next moment four youths in Etons reached the hedge, laughing and talking loudly. The four were Smythe, Howard, Tracy, and Townsend—four of the nuttiest nuts in all Rookwood. And Jimmy Silver &



Co. realised that Tubby Muffin's wonderful yarn was not a flight of imagination at all—especially when they heard Adolphus Smythe's words as he crashed through the gap.

"It's a rippin' wheeze, you know—simply toppin'!" he roared. "Fancy that boulder Silver's face when Sunny Jim falls on the neck of his dear nephew—before all the fellows, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the nuts.

"Thought it all out in a flash, y'know," said Smythe modestly. "Spotted the resemblance between that beastly tramp's cheerful chivvy and Silver's idiotic grin straight away, by gad! Simple as A B C, y'know! Sunny Jim slips through that hole in the fence behind the pavilion, and tackles Jimmy Silver while all the chaps are watching the match—an' there you are! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, though, what'll happen when Jimmy Silver proves the beggar's an impostor?" exclaimed Townsend doubtfully. "He's bound to be stumped out eventually."

"That's not our bizney!" chuckled Adolphus Smythe. "The idea is just to make that cad Silver look a fool. What happens after is Sunny Jim's look-out. If it comes out, we simply swear we know nothing about the biz—see?"

Once more the shady rascals burst into a roar of laughter. And a moment later they had passed out of earshot. Then Jimmy Silver turned with grim, set lips and clenched fists to his chums.

"Now, then, what's your blessed wheeze, Lovell?" he exclaimed grimly. "If it's tarring and feathering that gang, and then boiling 'em in oil, I'm your man!"

Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled.

"Well, it's not exactly that," he grinned. "But I'll tell you the dodge when we reach our study," he added, with a meaning glance towards Tubby Muffin.

And Jimmy Silver, well aware that it would be as wise to post the details of the wheeze on the notice-board at Rookwood as to discuss it in the hearing of the garrulous Tubby Muffin, had to be content. And a moment later the juniors were following in the wake of Smythe & Co.

Before entering the school they made a call—at Tubby's earnest suggestion—at Sergeant Kettle's, the school tuckshop. Tubby Muffin felt that he deserved at least a feed as a reward for saving his pal Jimmy from the dastardly schemes of his unscrupulous enemies. And for once the Fistical Four agreed with the fat Classical, and they stood him a feed until the finances of the Co. gave out.

Then they left Tubby, and proceeded to the end study on the Classical Fourth passage, to discuss Lovell's scheme for dishing Smythe's great wheeze.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Not Nice for Smythe.

"THERE go the bouders—grinning like Cheshire cats!"

Raby made that exclamation as the Fistical Four descended the Classical steps at two o'clock the following afternoon. And it was the sight of Smythe, Howard, and Tracy, of the Shell, and of Townsend of the Fourth, that called forth the remark.

As Raby spoke, Adolphus Smythe turned a grinning face to the juniors; then he said something to his companions, and the four burst into a roar of laughter.

"Let 'em laugh!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, with a chuckle. "Let 'em rejoice, ere earth's sorrows turn their laughter to tears. But, I say, Lovell, old scout, sure you've got everything in that bag?"

"Everything, old top—tramp's complete outfit, up to a supply of grime and a five days' growth of whiskers!" grinned Lovell, giving the cricket-bag he carried a tender pat. "The only thing I lack to complete my proposed disguise as Sunny Jim is your idiotic grin, Jimmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Jimmy Silver, with some heat. "Give that rot a rest! Look here, we'd better make ourselves conspicuous on Big Side for a bit, an' let those cads see us, or they'll smell a rat. Come on! We can hide the bag behind the pavilion first, though."

A few minutes later this had been done, and the Fistical Four mingled with the crowd on Big Side. There was no junior match on, and practically all the Lower School, Classics and Moderns, had thronged to see the scratch match between senior elevens picked from the Classical and Modern Houses at Rookwood.

But for once the Fistical Four were not interested in cricket. Barely had the match started, when the four separated, and by devious routes made their way to the rear of the pavilion.

"Here we are," said Jimmy Silver, glancing round carefully. "Let's hope our friend Sunny Jim won't be long."

"S'pose he doesn't come at all?" grumbled Raby. "Whole half-day wasted, then!"

"Well, we'll console ourselves, in that case, by giving Smythe & Co. the licking of their lives!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "But he will come; half-quids are not picked up by blessed tramps every—Shush!"

From the road came the sound of shuffling footsteps, and through the interstices of the hedge they beheld the unprepossessing figure of Sunny Jim.

"Ready, you chaps?" whispered Jimmy Silver. "Let him get fairly through, then go for him!"

Next moment the footsteps ceased, and the tramp, after looking round him cautiously, dived through the hedge.

And the next second he wished he hadn't. As one man the Fistical Four charged, and bore him, struggling furiously, to the grass. It was a most unpleasant duty, for Sunny Jim was none too clean; but the job had to be done, and Jimmy Silver & Co. did it as expeditiously as possible.

After a very brief struggle Sunny Jim went down, and his wrists were tied quickly behind him.

"Now, my beauty!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver grimly. "No need to get the wind up; we'll not touch you if we can help it. Just sing small for an hour, and keep smiling!"

Jimmy added this last with a chuckle. Jimmy Silver's motto, "Keep smiling!" was obviously not the motto of Sunny Jim. Gone was the huge grin that had evidently earned him the name of Sunny Jim. In fact, he looked far more Horny than sunny, as it were, just then.

But a moment later his scowl changed to a look of amazement as he watched the further proceedings of the juniors. Amid many chuckles, Lovell opened the bag, and, taking from it a pile of ragged garments, some grease-paints, a mirror, and various making-up articles, began to get busy.

Lovell was an adept at the art of making-up. But Arthur Edward excelled himself on this occasion, and his chums gasped when he had finished. He might indeed have been the tramp's twin-brother.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, glancing from the original Sunny Jim to Lovell. "Topping, Lovell, old man! Smythe will never spot the difference. Blessed if I could, either! Your breath smells a bit sweeter, perhaps—"

"Ah, what a pity now!" exclaimed Lovell, with heavy sarcasm. "But if you chaps think there's time I'll run along to the Bird-in-Hand and disguise my breath!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" said Jimmy Silver. "But buck up! Smythe will be trotting round here to look for his pal. Come on, up you get, Sunny Jim!"

"Ere, what's the game?" growled the tramp hoarsely. "Undo my 'ands! I'll 'ave the law—Stoppit! Wow!"

But the juniors had neither the time nor the inclination to hear or heed Sunny Jim's expostulations and threats. With the help of the cricket-stump the astonished tramp was bundled quickly into the lean-to shed at the back of the pavilion. Then Jimmy Silver banged the door and turned the rusty key.

"That settles you, my pippin!" exclaimed Jimmy, with a grin of satisfaction. "And now, if the coast's clear, we'll wander forth, Lovell, old scout. You'd better give us a couple of minutes to get on the ground before you make your sensational debut as Sunny Jim."

And Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcombe slipped through the hole in the hedge, and a few seconds later were mingling with the crowd on Big Side.

"Yonder's Smythe!" exclaimed Raby suddenly. "My hat, he looks ratty!"

Smythe was standing with his fellow nuts on the fringe of the crowd near the pavilion. Smythe of the Shell was a Classical, and, as Bulkeley just then was making hay of the Modern bowing, he ought, as a loyal Classical, to have been looking chirpy in consequence.

But he wasn't. Smythe, in fact, was looking and feeling extremely exasperated just then.

"By gad, you chaps!" he was muttering savagely. "I do believe that beastly tramp's

let us down, y'know. And where's that cad Silver, too? Jolly funny—what!"

"Sunny Jim must have funked it after all," remarked Tracy gloomily. "But, I say—supposin' Silver's got wind—Hallo, there the rotters are all the time!"

Tracy pointed to where only a few yards away Jimmy Silver & Co. were standing—apparently watching Bulkeley's performance with enthusiasm.

"Yaas—must have only just come, by gad!" scowled Smythe. "Anyway, what's the odds if that beast of a tramp doesn't turn up? And I was fool enough to pay the dashed rotter half—Oh, by gad!"

Smythe's disgusted scowl vanished to give place to a smirk of satisfaction. From the direction of the pavilion a ragged and unsavoury-looking individual was hobbling, slowly but cheerfully.

"Good egg! He's come—Sunny Jim's turned up, you fellows!" he chortled gleefully. "Now for some fun, old beans! Better get nearer Jimmy Silver—got to point out the beggar to Sunny Jim!"

And, in order to carry out this kindly intention, Smythe & Co. strolled quite casually to within a few yards of the Fistical Four. There they halted in happy anticipation of witnessing the approaching discomfiture of Jimmy Silver.

But Smythe & Co. were booked for a surprise.

Needless to say, the advent of a ragged tramp on the playing-fields of Rookwood created quite a mild sensation. And even Bulkeley's great batting performance lost interest.

But the cold stares and icy glances of Rookwood failed to freeze or even to cool the cheerful grin of Sunny Jim.

"By gad!" ejaculated Mornington of the Fourth, staring at the vision half in horror and half in amusement. "Who on earth is the rag-and-bone merchant?"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Conroy. "Carthew's stopped him!"

Carthew of the Sixth, his face dark and menacing, had stepped in the path of Sunny Jim.

"Here, you fellow," he snapped, with lofty disdain, "d'you know you're trespassing, my man? Clear out, you beastly, low cad!"

The "beastly low cad" smiled cheerily up at Carthew. Possibly the real Sunny Jim might have been hurt at being addressed thus. But Arthur Edward Lovell was used to being called impolite names by Carthew of the Sixth.

"Same to you, and many of 'em, old top!" he exclaimed pleasantly. "You shove off—your face worries me! I've come to see my dear nephew Adolphus—Adolphus Smythe."

"Wha-what?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"My dear, doggy nephew, Adolphus Smythe!" explained Lovell, in a thick, assumed voice, and smiling round at the astonished Rookwooders. "I'm his Uncle Jim, you know. Where is my darling nephew, Adolphus Smythe? Ah, there the dear boy is!"

Adolphus Smythe was there right enough. But if the other fellows were looking astonished, then he was looking nothing less than flabbergasted. Since Sunny Jim's arrival he had been trying frenziedly to attract the supposed tramp's attention. But, strange to say, Sunny Jim was blind to his signals.

Plainly something had gone seriously wrong with his great wheeze.

But Adolphus Smythe had little time to ponder over this possibility. To that nutty youth's horror and disgust—and the delight of Rookwood—Sunny Jim wrapped his arms around Smythe with warm affection, and kissed him vigorously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" Smythe staggered back red and furious with mortification and rage most intense. Had the lofty and aristocratic Adolphus known it was Lovell, he could scarcely have been anything else but furious. But Smythe had no idea that it was Lovell, and the humiliation of being treated thus by a disreputable tramp before all Rookwood was—well, not pleasant, to say the least of it.

Sunny Jim, however, did not appear to notice that his affectionate attentions were unwelcome.

"My dear, dear nephew!" he cooed, advancing to repeat the performance. "Come to me arms—Oh crumbs! Yarooogh!"

Lovell jumped back with a yell as Smythe's fist smote his nose. But the

furious Smythe did not stop at that. Beside himself with rage, he flung himself upon Lovell, hitting out right and left.

That was too much even for Lovell—he forgot he was supposed to be Smythe's affectionate uncle—and next moment the pair were rolling over and over, pommeling each other often and hard, amid the cheers and laughter of the spectators.

"Go it, Uncle Jim!"

"Mop him up, nephew Adolphus!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cricket was forgotten, and a crowd of laughing and cheering Rookwooders surrounded the combatants as Carthew and several other seniors vainly strove to separate them.

"Bless my soul! Wha-what does this tumult mean?"

Little Mr. Bootles, master of the Fourth, rustled up, astounded and distressed. At the sound of the master's voice, Smythe and Lovell parted.

Smythe was still glaring Hunnishly at his supposed uncle. But Lovell was grinning ruefully as he mopped his nose.

"Bless my soul! Smythe—Good gracious! Who is this—this individual?"

"It's Smythe's uncle—Smythe's Uncle Jim!" announced Mornington, with a grin.

"It's not! It isn't! It's a beastly tramp!" raved Smythe frantically. "He's a dashed impostor, I tell you!"

"Of course he is—the fellow is a drunken impostor!" rapped out Carthew, with a disgusted glare at the disguised Lovell. "Shall I phone for the police, sir?"

"Dear me! Yes, I really think you had better!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles nervously, with a distasteful glance at Sunny Jim.

"Perhaps some of you older boys will hold this—this person. He appears to be a very dangerous character."

There was no immediate rush to carry out the master's request. Nobody seemed at all anxious to handle such an extremely dirty-looking tramp. But the "dangerous character" didn't intend to wait for the police. Lovell, in fact, considered the joke had gone far enough. He had an idea that discovery would have unpleasant consequences to himself.

Before anyone could raise a hand he made a sudden rush through the hesitating crowd, and was off like the wind.

Then the fellows woke up.

"Tally-ho! After him!" yelled Hansom of the Fifth. "Come on, you—Whoop!"

Hansom yelled, and sprawled full length in the grass, as Jimmy Silver thoughtfully tripped the Fifth-Former up. Raby also got in the way of Tabboys, as he jumped forward in pursuit of Arthur Edward Lovell.

But that was all Silver, Raby, and Newcombe could do to help their chum's escape.

A minute later a swarm of laughing juniors and not a few seniors were in full cry after Sunny Jim.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Raby, in alarm. "Shall we follow 'em, Jimmy?"

"Not yet—they'll never catch old Lovell. He's well away!" grinned Jimmy. "We'd better release the real Sunny Jim first."

Lovell was indeed well away. He was already two fields in front, his ragged coat-tails flying in the breeze as he vaulted the intervening fences. Behind him his pursuers streamed like a pack of hounds.

Breaking into a trot, Jimmy Silver led the way to the rear of the pavilion. Then he gave a start. The door of the rickety old shed was still locked; but a board in the side swayed outward suspiciously.

"Well, I'm blessed, the beggar's got away!" ejaculated Newcombe, peering inside the shed. "He's sloped!"

"Ha, ha, ha! So he has!" laughed Jimmy Silver. "Never mind; save us the trouble of letting him loose. Now, where's that blessed bag? Better take Lovell his clobber. Luckily, we arranged with him to make for the barn if things went wrong. Come on!"

And, carrying the bag containing Lovell's clothes, Jimmy was about to drive through the gap in the fence when he paused as a loud shout of anger and amazement came from the front of the building.

"What's up now?" breathed Jimmy Silver, dropping the bag and running round to the front of the pavilion. "Hallo! What's up, Neville?"

Standing at the top of the steps was Neville of the Sixth, with a look of alarm on his face.

"We've been robbed, Silver!" exclaimed Neville shortly. "Somebody's raided the blessed dressing-room! Look!"

Jimmy Silver and his chums entered the dressing-room and jumped as they beheld the scene of confusion within. Strewn about the

place were the clothes of the players in the wildest confusion, while on the floor were old letters and other things of little value to a stranger. The scene told its own story.

"I came for my handkerchief, and this is what I found," said Neville quietly. "My gold ticker's gone, and all my loose cash! I'd better go and inform Bulkeley."

And Neville ran down the steps and crossed towards the players in the field.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Raby in alarm. "That blessed tramp must have done this! There'll be the dickens of a row now!"

"Can't be helped!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver moodily. "Buck up! Our first duty is to get old Lovell out of the scrape."

And a few minutes later Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcombe were hurrying towards the old barn with Lovell's clothes.

Their little joke looked like turning out seriously—far more seriously than they could have imagined.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The End of the Chase.

"MY hat!" breathed Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lovell was standing staring into the barn with wide-open eyes.

He had easily outdistanced his pursuers, and whether they had given up the chase or gone on a false scent he did not know.

He had managed to reach the barn safely, hoping to hide therein until his chums brought his clothes, as they had agreed to do should it be found unsafe to change behind the pavilion.

But Lovell paused on the threshold of the barn, with the above quoted exclamation of astonishment, as his eyes took in the interesting scene within.

And no wonder! For seated on the bricked floor of the barn was the real and original Sunny Jim himself. As Lovell had last seen him only a short time before locked up in the shed at Rookwood, this was sufficiently astonishing in itself. But that was not all.

On the floor in front of the tramp was a little pile of purses, pocket-wallets, and watches, in addition to other odds-and-ends of value.

"My hat!" repeated Lovell—aloud this time.

Sunny Jim, who was engaged in pocketing the cash from the purses, looked up with a start, then he jumped to his feet with a snarl of anger.

"Ere, what d'you want, young shaver?" he growled fiercely. "Hop it, hang you! Quick!"

"I want you, my pippin!" exclaimed Lovell grimly, glancing suspiciously at the pile of valuables. "Where've you got that stuff from, you rotter? I jolly well believe you've robbed our pav—Here—"

Lovell sprang back as the tramp, an angry glare in his bleary eyes, flung himself upon the junior. Then the pair thudded to the floor, struggling fiercely.

The tramp was a full-grown man, and strong, to boot. But his dissipated life told upon him, and the athletic junior soon proved he was more than a match for him.

In a very short time Lovell's knee pinned him to the floor.

"Now, my friend!" gasped Lovell, banging the ruffian's head as a reminder what to expect. "Give in, you rotter, or I'll knock a hole in the floor with your napper!"

"Wow! Stoppit!" yelled Sunny Jim frantically. "I give in, young gent! Stoppit!"

Lovell grunted, but he did not get up. He was taking no chances, though Sunny Jim plainly had had enough. Five, ten minutes went by; then footsteps were heard outside the barn, and Silver, Raby, and Newcombe appeared, to Lovell's great relief.

"Good egg, Lovell old man!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "You managed—Oh, crumbs!"

Jimmy Silver jumped as he suddenly caught sight of the tramp's prostrate form.

"My hat! You've collared that merchant, have you?" he ejaculated in delight. "What luck! But buck up—"

"Single-handed!" chuckled Lovell, rising from the chest of Sunny Jim. "He's been making hay while the sun shines, too!"

"Never mind that rotter now; we'll attend to him!" said Jimmy, throwing the bag on the floor. "Get changed quickly! We spotted old Bulkeley near here. Some beggar—this blessed tramp, I suppose—has robbed the blessed pavilion! The match is stopped, and nearly all the merry school are out on the hunt for the giddy burglar. They'll be here in a tic, and—Oh, crumbs! Here's Bulkeley now!"

From outside came the sound of hurried footsteps; then came Bulkeley's clear voice.

"Here, you fellows, we'll search this barn! Seems a likely place."

Next moment the Rookwood captain, followed by a swarm of excited fellows, crowded into the barn. There was one simultaneous gasp of amazement as they viewed the astonishing scene. Bulkeley was staring, as if he could scarcely believe his own eyes, from Sunny Jim to his double.

Then Bulkeley gave a start, and with a muttered ejaculation he stepped swiftly forward and snatched Lovell's ancient hat from his head, and with it a tousled mop of rusty red hair.

"Ah—you, Lovell!" he exclaimed grimly. "What on earth is the meaning of this?"

Arthur Edward Lovell grinned sheepishly and remained silent. But if Lovell was reluctant to speak, Tubby Muffin, who was hovering excitedly on the fringe of the crowd, had no such scruples.

Tubby wasn't, as a rule, very bright; but on this occasion he showed unusual brightness in putting two and two together.

And Tubby Muffin loved the limelight; and here, indeed, was a chance to shine therein.

"I know all about it!" I overheard the whole plot, in fact! That man," said Tubby, pointing a podgy forefinger dramatically at the cowering tramp, was bribed with a quid by Smythe to appear on Big Side and claim to be Jimmy Silver's uncle. Fact! I overheard every word of the plot, and—"

"Wha—what?" ejaculated Bulkeley.

"And like a true pal," said Tubby, reveling in his unaccustomed importance, "I at once, without a moment's loss of time, related the whole foul plot to my pal Jimmy, to save him from the dastardly schemes of his unscrup—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But three juniors at least did not laugh at Tubby's sensational disclosure. Smythe and his three nutty pals, fearful and anxious to know the result of the chase, had joined in the search, and now heard Tubby's story with feelings too deep for words.

"It's a lie, Bulkeley!" shouted Smythe, almost quivering with rage as he realised how he had been done. "It's a rotten, dashed lie! I never—"

"Shut up, Smythe!" snapped Bulkeley curtly. Bulkeley knew from experience how much Smythe's word was worth. "Is this true, Silver?" he added, turning to the junior Classical captain. "Tell me, what on earth does this business mean?"

Jimmy Silver hesitated; but he realised that sooner or later the truth would have to come out. Tubby Muffin would see to that. And after a few stern questions from Bulkeley, Jimmy meekly related the full horrible story. And when he had finished the old barn echoed with the howls of laughter.

But Bulkeley was frowning sternly.

"I suppose you realise that I shall have to report this business to Dr. Chisholm?" he rapped out sharply. "Anyway, get back to Rookwood now—the lot of you! As for you, Smythe," added the captain, turning a glance of contempt on the scowling Smythe, "you have attempted to play a dirty, caddish trick, and you deserve all you get, and all I hope you'll get. Now clear!"

"But what about this merchant?" grinned Neville, nodding towards the shivering tramp.

"Better let the scoundrel go," said Bulkeley, with a frown. "Only mean a police-court job; and we don't want the public to know we've got fellows at Rookwood who engage the services of beastly tramps to do their dirty work. Let the brute go!"

And Sunny Jim went, minus the stolen property, but glad enough to escape so lightly.

The Fistical Four got off with a licking—light in comparison with the fogging Smythe & Co. received. But then theirs was a harmless jape compared with Smythe's shady scheme in introducing such an unsavoury character into the precincts of Rookwood to play a caddish trick on his schoolfellows.

But the fogging was not the worst, for all Rookwood roared over the story, and it was a long time before the Nuts of Rookwood heard the last of Smythe's ally.

# KILDARE'S BEST CHUM

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

BY  
MARTIN CLIFFORD



## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### A Job for Tom Merry.

"I SAY, Merry!" It was Darrel, of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's, who spoke, and he addressed Tom Merry, junior captain of the school.

"Yes, Darrel. What is it?" replied Tom. "I'm going to ask you to do something for me," said Darrel.

"You can count on me," Tom answered. He liked Darrel. All the decent juniors liked Darrel. Kildare, the handsome, genial skipper, might come first among the Sixth-Formers with them; but George Darrel was a very good second.

Tom noticed that there was some hesitation in the prefect's manner. But he judged it best to say nothing about that. He waited for Darrel to speak.

"Come to my study, will you?" asked the prefect.

"Right-ho!"

"Hallo, there, Tommy! Aren't you coming along to the nets?" called Manners from across the quad.

Monty Lowther was with Manners, and both were in flannels.

"In a few minutes!" Tom shouted back.

Then he turned away with the Sixth-Formers.

They reached Darrel's study, and the prefect turned the key in the lock as soon as they were inside.

Tom wondered what was coming. It all seemed rather mysterious. And Darrel's manner served to heighten the mystery. He was so very plainly ill at ease.

"I'm going to ask you to do something that you ought not to do, Merry," said the prefect, after a pause.

"I don't think you'll ask me anything that I'm not willing to do for you, Darrel," Tom said quietly, and with considerable earnestness. "It may be against rules, perhaps, but it won't be off the rails, I know."

"It will mean taking a risk," Darrel replied.

"I don't mind that."

"But the risk sha'n't be any bigger than I can help—that I promise you. If there's a row I'll bear as much of the blame as they'll let me—all of it if that's possible."

"I don't want that, Darrel. Hang it all, don't you know that I'm willing to do anything I can for you? So would Manners and Lowther be, I know."

"I hadn't any intention of telling them. I only want one of you. But, on second thoughts, I think they may as well know. I'm aware that you three don't like having secrets from one another."

"We don't, as a rule. But it's different when it's another fellow's secret. Those two won't want to pry into that. They're not Mellishes or Trimbles!"

"Well, you can do as you like about telling them. If they come with you they will share the risk—that's all."

"It sounds jolly mysterious, Darrel," Tom remarked.

"Oh, it isn't exactly that, though there are reasons for keeping it dark. I want you to second me in a fight."

"I'm on. It's quite an honour, I reckon!"

"Thanks! That's a nice thing to say. But

I'm not so dead sure, Merry, that the honour will make up to you for the row you will most likely get into. Naturally, it puzzles you why I shouldn't ask one of the other fellows in the Sixth—Kildare, for instance."

"I know very well why you can't ask Kildare. He's in no end of a row now, through that old sweep Selby. Everybody knows that much, though no one seems to know what it's all about."

"Will you tell me just how much you do know?"

"Oh, I'll do that, if you like, Darrel! But really I don't actually know anything—it's not much more than gossip."

"Let's hear the gossip. Then I shall know how much more it's up to me to tell you."

Tom took thought a moment before replying. He knew what close chums Kildare and Darrel were, and he did not want to say anything that might seem to reflect upon the skipper of St. Jim's, who, for the time being, was not the skipper, for he had been deposed, and the office was temporarily handed over to Monteith, head prefect of the New House.

But somehow no one could believe that Kildare would not regain his post. Monteith said quite openly that he only regarded himself as locum tenens, and that nobody would welcome Kildare back more gladly than he.

"Well," said Tom, "I reckon myself that the trouble started when Kildare told old Selby what he thought of him for slashing D'Arcy across the face with his cane. Selby's a revengeful old beast, and he's been lying in wait to get at Kildare. But the yarn goes that he's got at him at last by catching him spooning with a pretty girl who's playing in the revue at the Empire this week. I dare say you know better than I do whether that's true."

"It's not true!" replied Darrel sharply. "I'm not at liberty to tell you everything; but I can tell you that there was no question of spooning. The lady is an old friend of Kildare's—that's all."

"They say Selby's gone on her," said Tom. "Do they? That's news to me, and I must say it sounds rather absurd."

"It's right, though," Tom said. "I know it's right. We've proof of that."

"What proof?"

"I don't know that I ought to tell you, Darrel. Yes, I will, though. We've got to get this thing straight. I know it's right, because a fellow here—I'm not going to mention his name, and I know you won't ask it—"

"I won't ask you anything you don't choose to tell me, Tom Merry. But this is a confoundedly tangled affair; and what you can tell me might help me a good deal in trying to straighten it out."

"Well, some of the fellows got wind of Selby being gone on this Miss Graeme, and one of them sent him a typed letter, signed 'N. G.' Old Selby thought that stood for Nora Graeme, but Car—the chap that worked the spoof says he meant it for 'No good' or 'No go'—in small letters, you know."

Tom paused, looking hard at Darrel. He had very nearly let out the name of the

audacious spoof. But Darrel's face offered no evidence that he had guessed who it was.

And, after all, it did not matter so very much. The name might not have been difficult to guess. There were only two juniors at St. Jim's capable of carrying through such a wheeze, and Cardew was more likely than Kerr to have done it.

"Well?" said Darrel. "Go on!"

"The letter made an appointment outside the stage-door of the Empire, and the fellow went dressed up as a girl, with a thick veil on. He took old Selby in properly—until some rotter came along and ripped off his veil and skirt while they were standing on the bridge together."

"By Jove!" Darrel drew a long breath of amazement. "You mean to say Selby got on to it? Why, that means certain expulsion for the silly young ass!"

"I don't think so," replied Tom. "Anyway, he hasn't been hooped out yet, and he hasn't heard anything more about it. I reckon old Selby's afraid to report him, Darrel. The old Hun gave himself away too completely for that, while he still thought it was Miss Graeme."

"I see. Yes, it would be difficult for Selby to make a move. He'd prefer to have it lushed up. But it wasn't quite the thing as far as the girl was concerned."

"That's what I thought," Tom said frankly. "Still, it didn't really hurt her, for, of course, she knows nothing about it."

But there Tom was mistaken. Miss Graeme—who was really Miss Dalgeish, and Eric Kildare's cousin—had heard of it from Mr. Selby himself; and it was her open amusement at the trick which had driven him to seek revenge by reporting Kildare to the Head.

In his desire for revenge, too, he had been guilty of a very mean suppression of the truth. He knew of the relationship between the two. Miss Graeme herself had told him, hoping by this confidence to avert trouble from her cousin.

And Mr. Selby had practically promised that he would not report. A man of sensitive honour would have held what he had said as a promise.

But unluckily Mr. Selby was not a man of sensitive honour.

"The fight in which I want you to second me concerns Miss Graeme, in a way, though she knows nothing about it," Darrel said.

"There's a man—a regular wrong 'un—who has followed her down from town, and is annoying her. He's the kind of fellow a girl like Miss Graeme wouldn't touch with a barge-pole if she could help it; but that sort can make themselves very troublesome to a girl who has no man friend to protect her. He chose the wrong pitch at Wayland, though. He ran up against Kildare, and Kildare's going to fight him on Saturday."

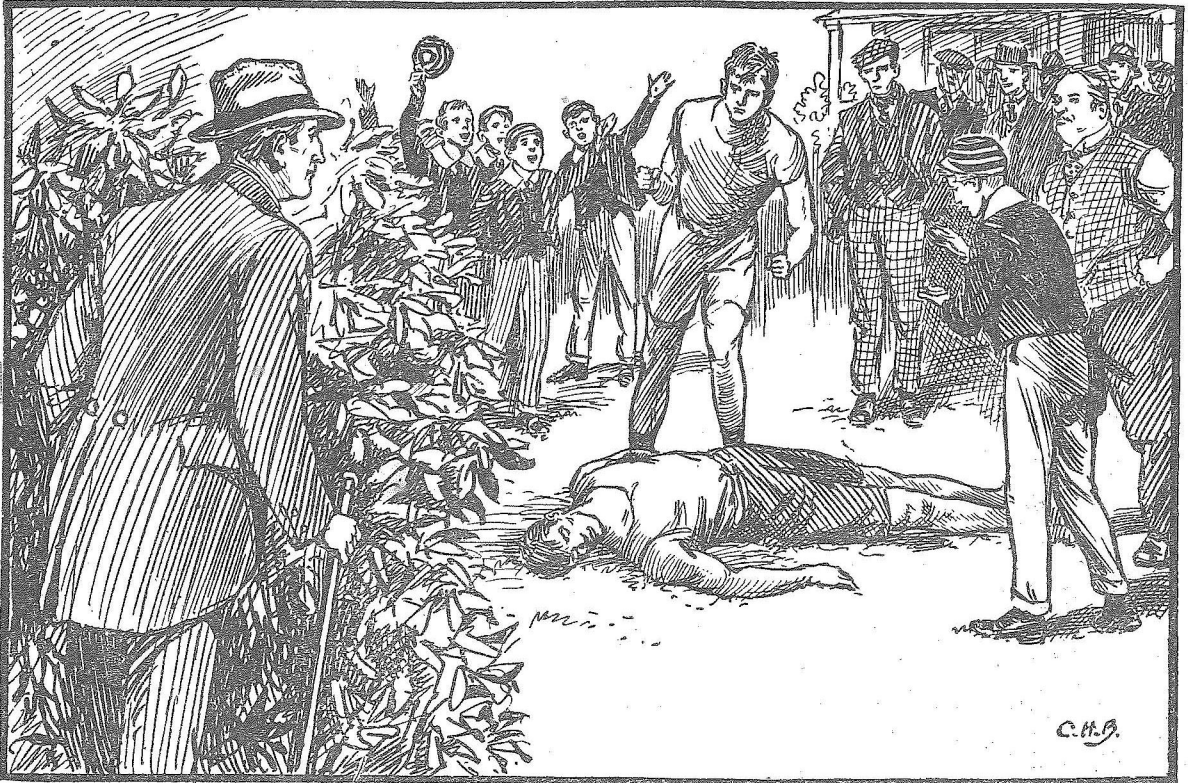
"I don't catch on, Darrel. Seems to me that it's Kildare who wants a second, not you."

"Oh, no, it's not, my infant! Because, you see, I'm going to fight the brute to-morrow!"

"I say, Darrel, Kildare will be frightfully wild with you."

"I can't help that, Merry. I'm prepared for it. If Kildare goes into Wayland to





Crash! Buck Williton went to the grass from a well delivered straight left. The juniors cheered their champion, and in the excitement that followed, none noticed the lean face of Mr. Selby, who had come upon the scene. (See page 15.)

worth gettin' even with. But those two blackguards—

Drawl and blandness alike had gone from Cardew's voice now, and his handsome face was grim as he broke off short in his speech. Levison and Clive did not doubt that he would manage to get even with his enemies. It might be soon, or it might be late; but some way and some time he would do it.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**

**Darrel, the Fighting-Man!**

"SEE here, Tommy," said Manners, "we're jolly well not going to have this at any price! If you're running your silly head into danger—"

"Then you want to run your silly heads into it, too?" snapped Tom.

"Of course we do!" replied Lowther. Tom Merry looked hard at his chums. They meant it. He knew that. But he did not half like it.

The Terrible Three seldom had secrets from one another, and Tom's natural frankness had made it difficult for him to keep this one.

Had Darrel said that he was not to tell it would have been different. He would have told his chums that the secret was another fellow's, and that he was bound in honour not to reveal it.

But Darrel had said he might tell Manners and Lowther if he wanted to; and that had made him uneasy under their interrogations. They had soon found out that any reason he had for keeping things dark was his own, not Darrel's; and after that queries had poured in upon him so thick and fast that in the long run they had discovered that he had something on hand with Darrel that entailed the risk of a big row—that his reason for not telling them about it was that he did not want them to share the risk with him—and that only he, not Darrel, stood between them and the opportunity of sharing that risk.

"If you don't tell us we shall jolly well keep a watch on you and follow you up wherever you go," Lowther said determinedly. "We're not going to have our Tommy sacked alone, are we, Manners?"

"Rather not!" replied Manners. "Oh, it isn't a bit likely to come to sacking," Tom said uneasily.

In his heart he was by no means sure of that.

"Are you sure?" asked Manners sharply. "Well, a chap can't be sure, you know. It means breaking rules, in a way, and—"

"That's enough!" broke in Lowther. "If we aren't allowed to break rules with you and take our chance of the Order of the Boot, the only thing for us to do is to go off and break them without you. Then we might get sacked, and not you. And you wouldn't like that, you know, Tommy, my dear boy!"

"I certainly shouldn't," confessed Tom. "Well, I suppose you've got to come in, though I'd very much rather you didn't. I'll tell you all about it."

And he proceeded to explain. "And you were going to keep us out of this?" said Lowther in accents of reproach. "Oh, Tommy, Tommy!"

"Ass! I was only going to keep you out of it for your own good," Tom replied.

"Brrrrr!" growled Manners. "Which, being interpreted, means that we're not exactly infants, and that having things done for our own good only arouses our natural cussedness," explained Lowther.

"Well, I suppose you'll have to come now," Tom said. "I'll speak to Darrel."

"I dare say he won't mind us riding behind, as long as we are careful not to look as if we belonged to the party," responded Monty Lowther, with deceptive humility, that failed to deceive Tom.

Darrel, however, made no objection to the company of all three. He was in rather a queer mood when they started out for Wayland, though, and all the way he rode in silence, with a set face.

He had had to dodge Kildare, and he did not like that. He knew that there would be trouble when Kildare knew what he had done, and he was not pleased with the prospect of that. But there was nothing in the actual task before him that he kicked at, and his set face did not bode any good to Mr. Buck Williton.

"I'm sorry to bring you kids here, but it

was the place appointed, and I couldn't suggest another," he said abruptly, as they reached the gate of a walled-in garden in a lane behind Wayland High Street.

"I see nothing whatever wrong with the place," said Lowther.

Manners pointed to the house to which the garden appertained. It was an inn—the White Hart—and, of course, any establishment of the kind was taboo for St. Jim's fellows.

But the breach of rules was a very slight one, if the place itself had been the whole extent of it. For the garden could be entered without going through the White Hart, though it belonged to that hostelry.

Darrel tapped at the gate, and it was opened to them by Mr. James Roshier, Williton's hanger-on.

Mr. Roshier grinned at the four in affable fashion.

"Thought you weren't coming, dear boy!" he remarked, with offensive familiarity.

"I am here at the time appointed, I believe," returned Darrel icily.

"Oh, don't get shirty! Buck's waiting; and Buck isn't a chap that likes waiting, that's all," said Mr. Roshier.

"It is possible that Mr. Williton will soon have to put up with something that is not precisely to his taste," Darrel answered. "But that he has had to wait for me I deny!"

And he stepped past Mr. Roshier.

That gentleman, a tenth-rate specimen of the fast, horsy type, favoured the three juniors with a wink and the remark:

"'Igh an' 'aughty, ain't he, sonnies?"

They did not answer him; but if Mr. James Roshier had been at all a sensitive person, their expressions might have shown him that they did not consider being addressed by him as "sonnies" exactly a gilt-edged compliment.

There was a bowling-green within the garden, and they found Williton pacing up and down this in vests and shorts, with rubber-soled shoes on his feet.

The fellow looked a formidable opponent. His arms and legs were muscular, and his

step was lithe enough. But his face rather gave him away. It bore the marks of years of dissipation.

At his best, and in proper training, Buck Williton might have been more than a match for Darrel, presuming him no more than the prefect's equal in skill.

As it was, he would need to be Darrel's superior as a boxer to stand any chance. Weight, and possibly sheer muscular strength, might be on his side; but his years and want of condition made more than a balance for these things.

He had no doubt about the issue of the fight. Mr. James Rosher had no doubt. Darrel and the three Shell fellows had no doubt.

But what Buck Williton and Jimmy Rosher were sure of was not the same thing that the St. Jim's fellows were sure of. In fact, it was precisely the contrary thing.

The Terrible Three knew Darrel's form. He was not only a boxer of rare skill and activity, but he was an unusually cool and determined fighter. And to-day he was very much on his mettle. He meant not only to defeat Mr. Williton, but also to thrash him so thoroughly that there should be no chance of his standing up to Kildare next day.

"Which of you kids is going to second our 'igh an' 'aughty young friend?" inquired Mr. Rosher, with another affable leer.

"I'm acting as Darrel's second," answered Tom coldly.

"Well, you needn't be as 'igh an' 'aughty as he is if you are. You and me haven't quarrelled, have we, cock-sparrow?"

"We haven't yet, but we very soon shall if you are not a bit more civil!" flashed Tom. He had taken a very decided dislike to Mr. Rosher.

"Oh-ho! So that's the ticket, is it? May I humbly ask, my Lord Duke, whether this fight is to be with gloves or without?"

"With, unless your principal objects," Tom replied.

He knew that Darrel had a pair of boxing-gloves as well as his kit in the bag he had brought.

"Then he does object!" said Mr. Rosher hastily. "Buck's a bruiser, and he prefers the bare knuckles. Ain't that the case, Buck?"

Rosher had raised his voice, so that both Darrel and Williton heard.

The latter nodded, scowling.

Tom looked at Darrel. Darrel nodded also. He did not scowl, but his face took on an even grimmer look.

"I don't half like it!" whispered Manners.

"Not sure that I do," said Tom. "But it's Darrel's bizney, and as he's going to lick that blackguard anyway I suppose it doesn't really matter much, especially as no one is likely to butt in on us here."

With the gate of the walled garden shut it did seem improbable that anyone would intrude. But it was not impossible, as Tom was to find.

"There's the dressing-room," said Rosher, indicating a summer-house close at hand.

Tom and Darrel went thither. Lowther and Manners remained on the edge of the bowling-green, feeling none too comfortable, while Williton and Rasher talked together at the other end.

Darrel was ready in a very short time. As he came out, with Tom in close attendance, Rosher said something to Williton, and then both laughed.

But Williton's laugh hardly rang true. Perhaps already the fellow had begun to wonder whether youth and agility, plus some probable skill in the fistic science, might not be a match for all that could be done by a bruiser whose best days were far behind him. Perhaps Buck Williton was wishing himself twenty years younger.

Even yet, however, he certainly had not realised what he was up against. Darrel was not an ordinary schoolboy boxer. Had his lot been cast in other places he might already have begun to make a big name in the ring.

Towels, basins, sponges had been provided, but no ring had been roped and staked out. It appeared that the whole green was to be looked upon as the ring. Darrel had no objection to that. It was in his favour, though his opponent might not have tumbled to that fact as yet.

Rosher stepped up to Tom again. "You're only a kid," he said, "and you can't be expected to know much about this sort of thing; but—"

"I dare say I know as much about it as

you do!" struck in Tom. "If you've anything to say, say it! But keep your confounded remarks about kids and cock-sparrows to yourself!"

Mr. Rosher, who had not the reputation as a bruiser which his friend enjoyed, shifted a pace or two backwards. He was a weedy specimen, and it had suddenly occurred to him that Tom Merry, if a mere kid, was an uncommonly hefty-looking kid.

"No offence!" he said. "I was only going to say that it's usual to have two seconds for each man in a fight."

"As far as we're concerned that's easily enough done," replied Tom. "Either of my friends will act with me for Darrel. But neither will take on the job for your man, I'm certain."

"Oh, I wasn't asking any such condescension as that!" sneered Rosher. "I'll have another second here for Buck inside a brace of shakes, if you say the word."

"As you like!" answered Tom indifferently.

Rosher whistled, and the next moment the Terrible Three gave simultaneous gasps of dismay.

For that whistle was plainly a signal. Into the garden, by the gate that opened into the inn yard, poured a score or more of the Wayland sporting set, several of them known by sight to the St. Jim's fellows.

They were all of the betting, billiard-playing, bar-haunting type. Not one among them all looked sound or decent. They were, on the whole, just about the last sort of people with whom any St. Jim's fellow would have cared to be seen by anyone in authority.

Darrel, whose back had been turned towards them, turned as he heard their raucous voices.

He opened his mouth as if to speak, but closed it again without a word.

He hated this. But, at all costs, he was going through with it. And, after all, it was no more than he might have expected.

Buck Williton had gathered together all the shady acquaintances he had made in Wayland to see him thrash a presumptuous schoolboy, who had failed to understand what a dangerous man he was.

But the presumptuous schoolboy had no intention of being thrashed; and as the Terrible Three saw the tightening of his lips and the gleam in his eyes they fancied that Mr. Williton might regret before long that he had invited any spectators.

The fellow who came forward to assist Mr. Rosher in his duties was one whom all the St. Jim's fellows present knew, and whom none of them liked. Mr. Griggs was a lawyer's clerk in the town, who had been mixed up in more than one shady transaction with members of the St. Jim's would-be smart set.

Lowther and Manners tossed a coin to decide which should aid Tom. Both were keen. Manners won, and Monty Lowther made a wry face.

The landlord of the White Hart was acclaimed by the general voice as the fittest person for the office of referee, and Tom raised no objection on Darrel's behalf.

Tom and Manners went to one corner, Rosher and Griggs to that opposite it. The portly publican took his stand on one side of the green, and Lowther, after a momentary hesitation, stepped to his side.

"I suppose you don't mind acting as time-keeper?" he said.

"Not at all, sir," answered the man, civilly enough.

There was, indeed, no disposition to be uncivil to the St. Jim's fellows. Probably quite half the crowd would have no objection to seeing Darrel win. Some of them evidently knew a little about his form, for they were backing him.

Bets were being made. That again was hateful to Darrel; but he did not show that he was even aware of it.

He looked all over the fighting-man as he advanced to meet his opponent.

At that moment the gate leading into the lane opened, and Cardew, Clive, and Levison walked in.

Levison was just closing it behind him when someone pushed at it from outside.

He turned, and saw seven of the fag tribe, his own minor among them.

"Here, none of that!" he snapped. "You kids can't come in!"

"That be blowed for a tale!" cried Wally D'Arcy. And he and his chums made a rush that carried them past the trio.

Levison looked angry and Clive dismayed. But Ralph Reckness Cardew only smiled.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Unexpected Spectators!

LEVISON and Clive had ridden over to Wayland with Cardew, without in the least knowing what he meant to do.

They were aware that their chum had used the telephone in the prefects' room the evening before, and that it had been a trunk call. They guessed that he had put himself into communication with some acquaintance in town, but for what purpose they had no notion. They knew, too, that he had received an express letter that morning, and that the contents had pleased him; but what those contents were they did not know.

All this was very like Cardew, and if they were a trifle annoyed they were not in the least surprised.

Cardew always would play his own game in his own way.

He was playing this particular game in a very unschoolboy-like manner.

But, then, Ralph Reckness Cardew was not exactly an ordinary schoolboy.

He had been spoiled by his grandfather, Lord Reckness. He knew more of the world than many fellows ten years older than himself. And he knew something of Mr. Buck Williton.

The object of that trunk-call on the telephone had been to find out more. The contents of the express letter had told more.

Cardew was determined that Williton and Kildare should not meet. To that end he designed to drive Williton out of Wayland before the time appointed for their meeting arrived.

And he believed he could do it. He was in Wayland to do it.

Clive felt very uneasy, and Levison was not quite comfortable when Cardew embarked at Wayland upon what looked like a complete round of the pubs. He did not ask either of his chums to go inside any of them with him; but he walked in himself in the coolest possible manner.

It was dead against all the rules of St. Jim's, of course; but Cardew never did concern himself much with rules. His object in visiting the licensed establishments of Wayland was, in his eyes, a perfectly proper and legitimate one, and that was good enough for him.

And, after all, he had not made a complete round. At the fourth call he found out what he wanted to know.

"You can cease lookin' shocked an' grieved, Sidney dear!" he said. "I assure you that not so much as a spot of alcoholic liquor has passed my virtuous throttle. I was merely inquirin' for a man, an' I have now obtained the information I sought. We will go an' find him."

"Ass!" returned Clive. "I didn't suppose you were on the randan. But there would be a row, and a jolly big one, if you were spotted, all the same! It's that sweep Williton you've been chasing, I know. Where is he?"

"At the White Hart Bowling Green," answered Cardew, with a grin.

"Another rotten pub!" growled Clive.

"Sidney, I'm afraid you will grow up a sad Puritan! Still, there's one comfort, it will take you quite a long time to grow up—years an' years an' more years!"

"Oh, you are an idiot, Ralph!" snorted Levison. "Come along, and let's get the job over, whatever it is! I'm not going to ask you that, for I know you won't tell us; but I must say that I never knew such a chap as you are for keeping things dark when you needn't."

Cardew did not reply to that. The three mounted their bikes again, and rode the hundred yards or so to White Hart Lane.

Just as they were turning the corner from the High Street they were sighted by Wally & Co., who had ridden into the town a quarter of an hour behind them.

"Hallo!" said Wally. "What are those chaps after? Let's follow them! I do believe there's something on!"

"My major won't like it!" said Frank Levison doubtfully.

But Wally and Reggie Manners, Hobbs and Jameson and Curly Gibson, were all of opinion that what Frank's major liked was of no consequence; and only Joe Frayne backed up Frank at all.

Frank and Joe had to give way. In the affairs of Wally & Co. a majority decided—unless Wally himself chanced to be in the minority.

Thus it was that Levison, Clive, and Cardew, reaching the gate of the walled garden, were followed immediately by the seven fags. They got a glimpse of those upon the green, and there was no holding them after that.

"A fight on!" cried Wally. "We've just as much right to see that as you fellows have!"

"Better bring your bikes in, an' ours, too," said Cardew. "It's no good arguin' with the infants, Ernest, dear boy. Their attitude is no more incorrect than ours. We were not invited; but I fancy I read your intentions an' those of the amiable Sidney rightly when I say that we mean to see what is to be seen, whoever objects."

"That's a different thing," Clive said. But he could not have explained why it was different.

Wally elevated a scornful nose at the notion of lagging for Levison & Co. But Frank and Joe Frayne and Curly Gibson brought in the Fourth-Formers' machines, and the whole ten were stacked near the gate.

Cardew led the way towards the green, and the rest followed him.

"Thought you were going to tackle Williton," said Levison.

"I shall defer our little conversation till this is over," Cardew replied.

"Hope Darrel will kick the cad!" said Clive.

"If I did not feel sure of that I should do what lies in my power to stop the fight," answered Cardew, quite gravely. "It would be difficult at this stage, but not necessarily impossible. But I feel sure Darrel will put him through it."

And then conversation ceased, for the fight had begun.

No one took very much notice of the new arrivals. Possibly no one but Darrel much minded their presence; and Darrel had other things to think of just then.

"Shake 'ands, gentls!" said the referee. But neither the schoolboy nor the man about town held out his hand.

This was not a friendly bout. Each combatant was out to hurt the other as much as he knew how.

Williton came with a rush. He thought it possible to swamp his lighter adversary, and get on top from the start.

Half a minute sufficed to show him his mistake.

Darrel's guarding arm was like a thing of steel. His left fist had behind it a driving-power that Williton realised very quickly.

It was not Darrel's policy to force the fighting. He intended that the enemy should finish in such a state that another combat on the morrow would be a sheer impossibility to him. And to that end he meant to get Williton blown and tired, and then to wade in for all he was worth.

So he acted mainly on the defensive throughout the first round. Yet, though Williton was punching all the time, and Darrel only now and then punched back, it was the older man who took the most punishment. Most of his blows were warded off or dodged; nearly all of Darrel's got home.

"By George, you've run up against hotter stuff than you fancied, Buck!" said Mr. Jimmy Roshier, at the end of the round, when both sponge and towels were needed in Williton's corner.

"If I was only twenty years younger I'd knock the stuffing out of him!" panted his furious principal.

"Why in the name of common-sense didn't you have a ring fixed up, Roshier? I'm not in condition for a running match, by gad!"

"Said you didn't want one!" grunted Roshier.

"Oh, I could have told you young Darrel was hot stuff!" remarked Mr. Griggs. "There ain't many round here who would care to take him on. But I thought you were a regular prizefighter, Williton!"

That had been pretty much the general notion. And there was something in it, too. Williton had been in his prime a very hard man to beat. He could still have thrashed most men of his own age out of training, for he had science and strength.

But he was up against science equal to his own, far greater activity and fitness, a stouter heart, and a steel-cold determination to put him through it.

He knew it. But his courage was not despicable; and he was too old a hand at the game to accept defeat before it had actually arrived. Always, as long as a man may hold on and put some powder behind his punches, there is a chance for him—the chance of a lucky knock-out blow.

And as yet he was by no means so definitely outclassed that he might not hope to deliver that knock-out blow without any special luck.

It was for that he fought through the next three rounds.

Now, Darrel had no wish to knock out Williton yet. Not until the fellow had

been well punished—not until there was in him little capacity to carry on—did the St. Jim's prefect mean to finish off the combat.

So Darrel continued to act more or less on the defensive, to keep moving, and draw his opponent after him all over the ground.

But it was no mere stone-wall defensive. Anyone who had counted the effective punches would have realised that it was the man apparently being hard pressed who got home most of them. And one flush hit to Darrel counted for more than two to Williton. For Darrel was fit to take heavy punishment, and his enemy was not.

Even at the end of the fourth round Darrel was scarcely breathed, and he was but little marked. Williton's broad chest was heaving; his breath came in gasps audible all round the green, and his dissipated face was getting puffy and swollen.

Tom Merry and Manners were delighted, though they would have liked it better had Darrel allowed them to do more for him. Cardew and Levison and Clive were delighted also. The fags fairly chortled with glee. More than half the Wayland contingent of spectators now openly cheered on Darrel, and the betting among them had gone to odds in his favour—odds that grew heavier with each round.

But no sign of pleasure appeared on the face of Darrel.

He hated it all—except the punishment he was giving Williton.

He had expected to put the affair through in private, with no other witnesses but the Terrible Three and Koshier. He had not bargained for the presence of half a score more juniors and a crowd of the Wayland blades. He resented the betting; he resented being cheered on by fellows to whom he would not have spoken in the ordinary way.

And it all made him more resolute to put Williton through it in a fashion that the blackguard should never forget as long as he lived.

Darrel had the born boxer's instinct for ringcraft. He had seen from the first what Williton hoped to do; and he was quietly confident that it could not be done to him under the conditions of this fight, with the ample space given him for manoeuvring. Williton was going for either the point of the jaw or the solar plexus; and Darrel was taking excellent care that he did not get home on either. For the rest, he felt sure that he could take all his opponent was able to give him, hard though Williton punched.

It was not until the fifth round that either man went down.

Williton went hard to grass then; and a roar of applause echoed from the walls.

"Bravo, Darrel!" shouted Clive.

It was not only Clive who shouted. Levison, Cardew, the fags, and most of the Wayland watchers, all roared applause.

But it was Clive's voice that came clearly recognisable to someone passing on the other side of the wall.

Mr. Selby halted a moment, listening to the shouts.

The Third Form master was in Wayland on business, and until that moment he had had no notion that any St. Jim's boys were also in the town.

Even now he failed to recognise the shrill notes of any of his own special flock, for they were mingled in the general shout. But Clive had given tongue just in advance of the rest; and Mr. Selby had recognised his voice, and had heard Darrel's name.

He pushed open the gate, and advanced into the garden.

At the sight that met his eyes, his lean, sallow face took on a look of spiteful triumph.

What a haul for him!

There was Darrel, the aider and abettor of Kildare in rebellion, standing over a fellow whom he had evidently just knocked down—fighting on licensed premises, and fighting without gloves, too!

There were the Terrible Three, and Wally & Co., and Levison & Co., all of whom Mr. Selby disliked intensely, breaking rules to witness the combat.

Why, if this matter were handled properly, there would be punishments in plenty—very likely expulsions! The Head could surely never forgive a prefect for such a gross misdemeanour as this. And Darrel was already in the Head's black books.

Mr. Selby was pressing forward to stop the fight and round up the St. Jim's criminals when the man who had been knocked down struggled up, and he saw the face of Mr. Buck Williton.

At that sight Mr. Selby halted. No one was looking his way. He stole behind a

laurel-bush, and peered round it to watch the rest of the fight.

For he had conceived a violent aversion for Buck Williton—a feeling that was by no means to his discredit—and he wanted to see that gentleman soundly thrashed.

Little as Mr. Selby knew about fighting, he was sure that Darrel was well on top. To thrash Mr. Williton would not extenuate Darrel's fault; to see Mr. Williton thrashed would gratify Mr. Selby extremely.

So he waited to see that, chucking meanwhile over the thought of what would happen to Darrel and the other wrongdoers afterwards.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Trouble All Round.

DARREL might have punched Williton again as he staggered to his feet, and such a punch as he could have administered then must almost certainly have ended the fight.

But he had no mind to end the fight yet, and even had he wanted to do so, his natural chivalry would hardly have allowed him to take that advantage. The rules of the game might permit it, but it was not in Darrel's line, even with such an opponent as this.

So he stood with his hands dropped to his sides until Williton was once more on his feet. And then, opportunely for the older man, came the call of time.

Williton lay back in his corner and let his seconds fan and sponge him. He was in a bad way. The fall had shaken and jarred him badly. But he was in no mood to throw up the sponge; and he swore luridly at Mr. Griggs when that worthy suggested that it was his only sensible course.

"Want to collect your winnings, confound you!" he snarled. "D'ye think I don't know that you've been betting against me?"

"And dashed lucky to get anyone to book my bets," replied Mr. Griggs, quite unperturbed. "I may be a bit of a mug, old pal, but I ain't mug enough to back you. Why, you're done already—beaten to the wide!"

The sneer roused Williton to tigerish fury. He did not look beaten to the wide as he rushed at Darrel upon the next call of time.

So hot was his attack that Darrel had no choice but to hit his hardest in return.

That sixth round saw heavy punishment given and taken on both sides.

Williton clinched once; but Darrel managed to break away. Then, as the furious man bore in again, a sudden spasm of disgust at the whole affair seized Darrel, and with it came the impulse to end it.

He could do it, he knew. Williton's guard had grown feeble and careless.

And he did it!

He stepped back a pace or two for room. Then his left shot out like a piston-rod, and full upon the point of the jaw it took Williton.

To earth the fellow crashed, and lay there stunned, and Monty Lowther, with joy in his face, counted him out.

The walled garden rang and rang again with the cheers.

Roshier and Griggs went to the aid of their man. Darrel, with just one glance at his defeated opponent, turned to the summer-house.

But a harsh voice called him back. "Darrel!"

The prefect swung round, and saw Mr. Selby.

He showed no sign of being taken aback. Strung up as he had been, he cared nothing even yet for any of the results of his course of action as far as those results affected only himself.

But when a general gasp of dismay went up from the juniors, Darrel realised what he had done. Somehow he had never thought of this as possible; and now his first impulse was to take all blame upon himself.

"It was my fault entirely, sir," he said. "You mustn't blame any of these fellows. They are only here by accident."

"An accident of which they shall all repent bitterly!" ground out the master. "You will find that you have enough to carry without trying to take the faults of others upon your shoulders, Darrel!"

Some of the Wayland blades were making off, keener on settling up their bets in the bar-parlour of the White Hart than on sharing in a row with a master from the school. But the portly landlord came forward.

"Excuse me, sir, but I'd really like to know who invited you into this garden, which

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 26.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

## Parted Chums!

AT the gates of St. Jim's the three Shell fellows and the three Fourth-Formers found Kildare waiting. They could see at once that he knew something, if not all. His usually good-tempered and cheery face was clouded—even more clouded than it had been during the last day or two.

"I want you fellows to tell me exactly what has happened at Wayland," he said abruptly, as they dismounted.

The half-dozen looked from one to another. They did not want to tell Kildare anything at all.

"Out with it!" said Kildare impatiently. "Ner, it's no good trying to talk to all of you at once. Tom Merry, I suppose you know as much as any of your crowd?"

"Yes. Perhaps a little more, Kildare," Tom replied unwillingly.

"Then I'll talk to you—or you can talk to me. Anyway, I've no use for the rest. Cut!"

The other five accepted this unceremonious dismissal. They were not sorry to get away.

Tom was left. But he was in no hurry to speak.

"Now, then, Merry," said Kildare impatiently.

"Before I say anything I'd like to be sure how much you know already, Kildare," admitted Tom.

"That's hardly like you. But everyone seems playing at mysteries and cross-purposes these days. Well, I've seen D'Arcy minor and his crew, and have had the pleasure of learning that my best chum has been fighting my enemy, and that a few of you young asses stand in danger of being sacked for getting mixed up in the affair!"

Kildare spoke bitterly; and Tom, remembering what he had said to Darrel when the prefect had told him of his plan, could not help counting himself among the prophets, though he felt no pride in his prophetic utterance.

"Well, I think that's about all there is to know," he said.

"I don't," snapped Kildare. "It seems to me that I've a right to hear why Darrel did this. I take it you're aware that I was going to do my best to thrash that black-guard to-morrow?"

"Yes, I know that. But I don't see that it's for me to tell you why Darrel did what he did. I think you'd better ask him."

"You young ass! I know why he did it, and why you went over to second him, and to get yourself into this beastly mess! You both thought that you were doing me a good turn, didn't you? I suppose I'm an ungrateful bounder, but I feel raving mad with him and you, too! Oh, you absurd idiots!"

"I'm sorry, Kildare!" replied Tom humbly.

Kildare was right—to a certain extent, anyway. The attempt to help him had resulted in a wretched mess for everyone concerned, and for some who had not even known of it. Yet Tom felt that if it had to be done over again, he would have done it. And he had never liked Kildare better than in that moment when the senior was slanging him.

"Darrel's on his way back, I suppose?" said Kildare.

"Yes. I should think he couldn't be far off now," Tom answered.

Without another word Kildare strode out of the gates, and took the road that led to Wayland Moor.

He had not gone more than half a mile before he met Darrel.

The prefect jumped off his machine. In that last round he had taken two or three heavy blows in the face, and he showed their effects. The bruised countenance softened Kildare's anger for a moment. But the first words that Darrel spoke hardened it again.

"I say, Eric, you're gated, you know. This is—"

"That's enough!" snapped Kildare. "I've never had a better chum than you, Darrel. You've done for me to-day what no one else would have done—and I hate you for it!"

Darrel stared in something like consternation.

This was more than he could understand. He forgot the wild Irish blood in Kildare; he failed to realise how bitterly his chum must feel the trouble that was coming to him—Darrel.

appens to be the private property of your humble?" he asked, with laboured sarcasm.

Mr. Selby waved him aside.

"I decline to talk to you!" he said angrily. "You may think yourself exceedingly lucky if you do not lose your licence when you next appear before the magistrates for its renewal."

The red face of the publican blanched at that. Mr. Selby had found the joint in his armour. He stammered something apologetic, and then beat a hasty retreat.

Williton, still half-dazed, had been lifted to his feet now, and his seconds were helping him away.

"Darrel," snorted the master, "get into decent clothing, and go back to the school at once!"

The prefect moved away. It was useless for him to say anything. Mr. Selby had the whip-hand.

And Mr. Selby knew it. There was undisguised triumph in his face as he addressed the others.

"Merry—Manners major—Lowther—you were all taking part in these abominable proceedings, and I think you know what you have to expect! Cardew—Levison major—Clive—your guilt is but little less, and you also will rue your reckless folly! As to you boys of my own Form, I cannot find words to express myself as to your conduct at the moment; but I think you know me well enough to be very sure that I shall find more than words later!"

They did know that, and even Wally had nothing to say. They stood shamfaced before their tyrant.

"Go at once!" he thundered. And they went.

He turned to watch their exit, and Cardew at once started for the other gate.

"Here, I say, Cardew, where are you going?" asked Clive.

Mr. Selby heard that, though Clive had not meant he should, and he swung round again.

"Come back at once, Cardew!" he bellowed.

"But I shall only be a minute or two, sir," replied Cardew protestingly. "I have business—"

"You will have business with the headmaster of your school within a very short time," replied Mr. Selby grimly. "Any other affairs that you may happen to have must wait until after that has been transacted. I should not be at all surprised if you found yourself with plenty of leisure for anything else you may wish to do then."

Audacious as Ralph Reckness Cardew was, his nerve was not quite equal to flat and open disobedience of Mr. Selby at such a crisis as this.

He came slowly back.

"You idiot, Clive!" he snapped.

"You're the idiot!" said Levison sharply. "I suppose you were going to speak to that cad, with the notion of putting things right for Kildare? But can't you see that Darrel's done that? The sweep will no more be able to stand up to Kildare after this than Baggy Trimble would be to stand up to Bombarrier Wells!"

"I'm not so dashed sure of that," replied Cardew. "An' it was so simple, if only I could have got a word with Williton. I'd only to breathe a name in his ear, an' he'd have bolted. There's a man he daren't face. I've found out all about it, an' I was goin' to tell him that that man was close handy."

"But is it true?" asked Clive.

"True? Oh, how very simple you are, Sidney dear! What's that matter? If it's not true it might be, an' if it cleared out the blackguard my hardened conscience wouldn't kick at such a very small white one!"

Clive was about to make some reply, but Mr. Selby did not give him time.

"You will leave this place at once!" snorted the master. "On arrival at the school you will report yourselves to Mr. Railton. No, on second thoughts, I prefer that you await my arrival. Go!"

They went, the Terrible Three and the Fourth Form trio together.

Mr. Selby lingered a moment, as if he had something more to say to Darrel. But, after a glance at his watch, he decided that anything that was to be said could wait, and he hurried off.

He took the words at more than they really meant. For they only represented a phase of feeling that was bound to pass quickly.

So hurt, so indignant was he that he could not speak.

"How could you do it?" went on Kildare. "It was my quarrel—my right! And if you're sacked, how do you think I'll feel all my life long to remember that it was through my fault?"

Still Darrel could not speak. His eyes met Kildare's almost imploringly; but his lips were dumb.

"But I'll not have it! You sha'n't suffer for me! I'm going straight to the Head, and I shall take all the blame on myself! I'll asked to be kicked out—that ought to do it. At any price, I'm going to save you from that!"

Then Darrel's anger, slower to wake than Kildare's, slower to be appeased, leaped up.

"Thanks!" he said, with a harsh laugh. "But, as you hate me, that's hardly worth while, is it? And I'll not take any such choice; you can't shoulder the blame of it. You've no evidence that I considered you in the matter at all. I quarrelled with that howling cad, and I fought him, and thrashed him. That's my own affair—at least, that's the way I look at it."

"You've dragged others into it!" retorted Kildare. "There's Merry—as decent a kid as ever stepped! How shall you feel if he gets the sack through your folly?"

A spasm of mental pain distorted the face of Darrel. He had been thinking very hard on that subject during his lonely ride back over Wayland Moor.

"He sha'n't suffer—at least, he sha'n't suffer more than an ordinary punishment, that he'll take cheerfully enough," he replied. "Nor the others. Some way I'll make sure of that. I shall have to go, there can't be much doubt. But that's a small matter; and, anyway, I shouldn't care to stay on here if—if—with you hating me! You needn't do that. You can take it that my fight to-day was no concern of yours at all, Kildare!"

It was a lie, and Kildare knew it. Even in his rage he recognised the generosity of it. But he recognised also the bitterness that had helped to prompt it, and he resented that.

"Very well," he cried. "I'm bound to accept your word, of course. But you can take this from me, Darrel. I'm going to Wayland to-morrow to see that skunk. I don't suppose he'll be fit to stand up to me after your hammering—I know that you're my master at that game. But if he's not actually in bed from the effects of it I can horsewhip the brute—and, by Jove, I will!"

"If you do that—but I know you'll do it, as you say you will. Well, there's no more to be said—except this. It's an ungenerous spirit that can't take what's freely given, and— But what am I saying? It's all rot. It wasn't done for you at all—and no one shall suffer for it but me—and—"

Darrel broke off abruptly, mounted his machine, and pedalled away.

Kildare stood staring after him, his brain in a whirl.

What had he done? Broken for ever with the best chum he had, refused to accept a sacrifice such as no one fellow in ten thousand would have been capable of making? Had he done that?

It seemed to him that he had. But there he was wrong. No split between two such fellows as those was likely to last for ever. They were bound to come together again, even if both had to leave St. Jim's.

But whether they both had to go, and how they and the others concerned met the reckoning, and of the part that Cardew played at the finish, another story must tell.

THE END.

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