

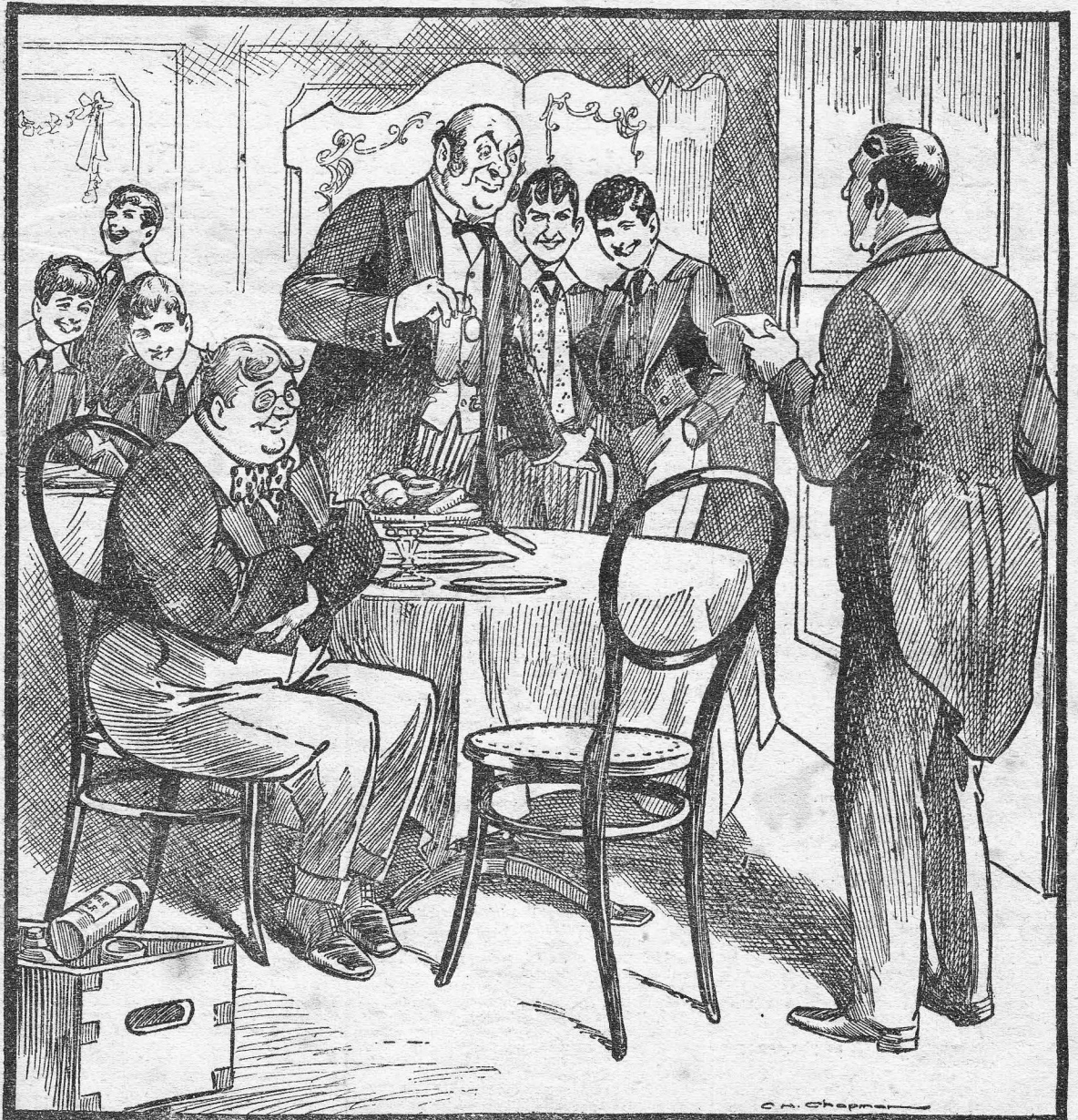
# GRAND NEW STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.

# The Penny <sup>1 1/2</sup> Popular

Week Ending  
August 23rd, 1919.

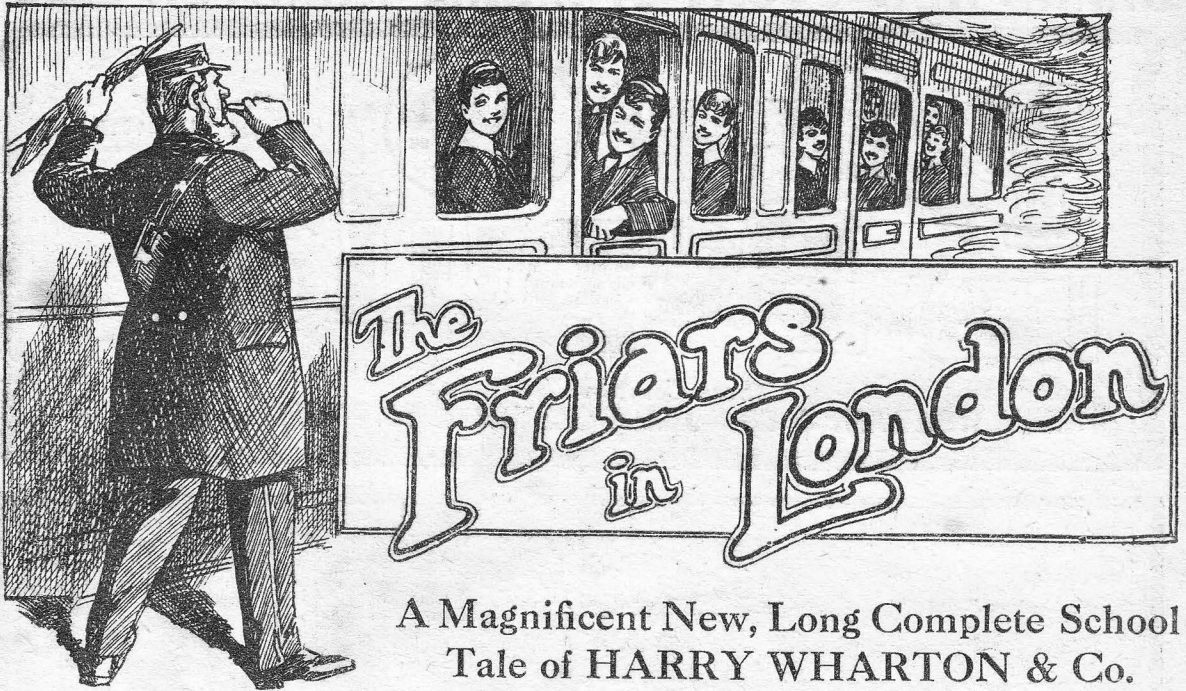
No. 31.  
New Series.

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



## BILLY BUNTER'S STAGGERING BILL!

(An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of Greyfriars in this issue.)



## A Magnificent New, Long Complete School Tale of HARRY WHARTON & Co.

### THE FIRST CHAPTER. Whacked to the Wide!

**T**AKE your seats, please!" The ancient guard at Friardale station flourished his ancient flag, and the train moved slowly out of the little platform. From a couple of carriage-windows leaned a happy crowd of Greyfriars juniors. Their happiness was due to the fact that they were about to enjoy a week's immunity from lessons.

"Soon we'll be in London Town.  
Sing, me lads, yo-ho!"

chanted Peter Todd.

"You're off-side, Toddy!" remarked Vernon-Smith, who captained the Greyfriars team. "We sha'n't touch London to-day."

"What! You mean to say we're not going up to town?"

"No. Harrow's our destination—Harrow-on-the-Hill. That's where we meet the Middlesex fellows."

"Isn't there a school of some sort at Harrow?" murmured Bulstrode.

"Yes; I think there's a kindergarten, now you come to mention it," said Vernon-Smith. "Not a very well-known school, of course, compared with Greyfriars."

Gwynne of the Sixth, who was in charge of the party, gave a chuckle.

"Faith, an' I wouldn't mind betting Harrow could lick Greyfriars seniors into a cocked hat, let alone Greyfriars juniors!" he said.

"Rats!" retorted Peter Todd. "What do you think about it, Dutton?"

"Eh?"

"Don't you think we could put it across Harrow?"

"My hat!" said the deaf junior. "On a day like this, too!"

"What!"

"Fancy being frozen to the marrow on a scorching day in August!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter from the occupants of the carriage, with the exception of Peter Todd.

Peter Todd did not laugh. The look he darted at Tom Dutton was almost homicidal.

"I said 'Harrow,' ass—not 'marrow!' growled Peter. "If we met Harrow at cricket, don't you think they'd go through the mill?"

"I should advise you to see a doctor, Toddy!" said Tom Dutton bluntly.

"Eh?"

"If you've caught a chill, as you say, you shouldn't neglect it."

"Oh, help!" groaned Peter.

And then, raising his voice to a roar which drowned the rumble of the train, Peter shouted:

"I was talking about Harrow—Harrow-on-the-Hill!"

"You needn't keep drumming it in," said Tom Dutton. "That's about the third time you've told me you're frozen to the marrow and you've got a chill!"

"That was too much for Peter Todd. He gave it up.

The train, gathering speed, rushed through the hop-gardens of Kent, and at the end of an hour it thundered through the south-eastern suburbs of London.

"Thought you said we shouldn't touch London, Smithy?" said Dick Penfold.

"My mistake," said the Bounder. "We've got to change at Charing Cross for Harrow."

The journey was short, by comparison with previous journeys to other counties.

The sun was in the meridian when the Greyfriars tourists stepped out at one of the many stations at Harrow.

To the stranger, Harrow is a perplexing place. There are so many districts, called by separate names, and so many distinct railway stations, that it is difficult to tell which is Harrow proper.

Gwynne, however, remembered having visited Harrow, as a junior, to play in a cricket-match. He knew his bearings, and directed his charges to the famous King's Head Hotel, patronised mainly by friends and relatives of the boys at Harrow School.

Lunch was served, after which the tourists, arrayed in their cricket-flannels, strolled out into the summer sunshine.

"We've got hours to kill!" said Vernon-Smith. "The sports with Middlesex don't start till to-morrow."

"What are we going to do with ourselves?" asked Bulstrode.

That, as Hamlet remarked, was the question.

The juniors stopped short in the roadway, exchanging baffled glances.

The afternoon stretched before them, and they were at a loss what to do.

"I only wish we could play a friendly match with Harrow!" said Vernon-Smith, with a sigh.

"Same here!" said Dick Russell. "We should simply putterise them!"

A couple of boys wearing straw-hats, and pushing their bicycles, were in the act of passing as Dick Russell spoke.

They stopped short, and surveyed the group of Greyfriars fellows with amused smiles.

"Harrow might be a decent school," said Ogilvy, "but it's not a cricketer school. Every year, in the match with Eton at Lords, they get hopelessly beaten. They've not won a match since 1908!"

"Eleven years ago!" murmured Dick Penfold. "Just think of it!"

"It was the same this year," continued Ogilvy, "and it will be the same through all the years to come, I expect. I don't know

whether the Harrow kids specialise in hop-scotch, but—"

"Excuse me!"

One of the boys with bicycles stepped up to Ogilvy.

"I overheard your rather unkind criticism of—"

Ogilvy flushed.

He realised that he had let his tongue wag too freely. For the boy who had accosted him was an Harrovian!

"I—I—" stammered Ogilvy. "P'raps I piled it on a bit too thick. But you must admit you're rather weak at cricket."

"I rather fancy," said the other boy, "that our House-team—of which I have the honour to be captain—would be too good for Greyfriars."

"Of course!" said Gwynne. "That's just what I've been impressing on these kids. But they don't seem to believe me."

"We don't!" said Vernon-Smith.

"No jolly fear!" chorused the others.

The captain of the House-team smiled.

"Would you care for a game this afternoon?" he asked.

"Jump at it, Smithy!" urged Peter Todd. Vernon-Smith needed no urging.

"We'll play you, with pleasure!" he said.

"Very well. If you will come with us to the school-ground I'll get permission from the Housemaster for the match to be played."

"Good!"

The Greyfriars juniors were in high spirits. The question of what to do with their afternoon was solved. They were to meet a Harrow eleven on the field of play.

"I shall have to wire to Wharton about this," said Vernon-Smith. "My hat! What a score if we lick Harrow!"

"There's a mighty big 'if' about it!" said Gwynne.

But the Greyfriars juniors ignored the prefect's remark. They were beginning to regard Gwynne as a pessimist and a wet blanket.

Permission for the match was readily forthcoming, and shortly afterwards the opposing team turned out.

Vernon-Smith noticed that some of them had won their House-caps, and for the first time the Bounder began to feel uneasy.

Was it possible that the Harrow boys had been misjudged in the matter of their cricketering ability?

Ogilvy, however, who was well versed in cricket facts and figures, was convinced that the Removites would have no difficulty at all in scoring a victory, especially as they were in the pink of condition.

"If you win the toss, put 'em in first, Smithy!" said Ogilvy.

That was precisely what the Bounder did do. He afterwards had cause to regret it.



The first Harrow pair strolled on to the pitch in a careless, nonchalant way, without a trace of nervousness.

Quite a large number of Harrow boys turned up to watch the game, and the road which skirted the cricket-field was thronged with spectators.

Vernon-Smith started to bowl. His first delivery was smacked contemptuously to the boundary.

"My hat!" gasped the Bounder.  
"What a howling fluke!" exclaimed Peter Todd.

The batsman overheard Peter's remark, and he proved that the effort wasn't a fluke by repeating it.

Vernon-Smith had no less than sixteen runs knocked off his first over.

The Harrow boys were chuckling softly—and so was Pat Gwynne, who was one of the umpires.

At the other end Dick Penfold bowled. He was dead on the wicket, and he kept a good length. Nevertheless, runs came freely.

The score rose swiftly. Fifty went up on the board with the first Harrow pair still together.

"I thought you said the Harrow fellows couldn't play cricket!" growled Vernon-Smith, glaring at Ogilvy.

"I—I can't understand it!" stammered Ogilvy. "I was under the impression—"

"Bless your impressions!" snorted Vernon-Smith.

And he resumed the thankless task of trying to take a wicket.

The batsmen continued to hit merrily. Every ball came alike to them, and they could do nothing wrong.

When the hundred went up, Vernon-Smith tossed the ball to Peter Todd. The Bounder was in despair by this time.

"Shift the beggars, Toddy!" he groaned.

Peter Todd's bowling served no useful purpose, except that it gave Dick Russell, who was fielding on the boundary-line, plenty of work to do.

"This is too awful for words!" gasped Vernon-Smith. "Our bowling seems to be a lost art!"

"It isn't the poorness of the bowling so much as the brilliance of the batting," said Gwynne. "You're a set of silly young asses! You didn't know what you were up against when you agreed to tackle Harrow!"

But regrets were useless now. The Greyfriars fellows had to go through with it.

"It's no good!" exclaimed Peter Todd, at length. "I can't shift them for toffee!"

"Better let Dutton take a turn, then," said Vernon-Smith. "Hi, Dutton!"

The deaf junior, who was fielding at point, looked up.

"Did I hear anybody whisper my name?" he asked.

"I want you to relieve Toddy with the ball!" shouted Vernon-Smith.

"So did I!" said Dutton.

"What!"

"I knew all along that Harrow would make us look small!"

"Oh crumbs! Bowl, you duffer—bowl!"

The Bounder went through certain deaf-and-dumb motions, and Tom Dutton comprehended at last.

But the deaf junior's bowling was very erratic. The ball usually pitched on the leg-side—a sure boundary to the batsman.

Tom Dutton was taken off at length, but not before a good deal of damage had been done.

Dick Russell, Dick Rake, Bulstrode, Wibley, and Morgan went on to bowl in turn. Their efforts were futile.

With the score at 200 the first-wicket partnership was dissolved. A smart throw-in by the Bounder resulted in one of the batsmen being run-out.

The innings was then declared closed. "Two hundred!" gasped Vernon-Smith.

"For one wicket!" groaned Peter Todd.

By this time the Greyfriars juniors were devoutly wishing that the earth would open and swallow them up. They had bitten off far more than they could chew.

But there was worse to follow.

Harrow's bowling was deadly.

The Greyfriars wickets fell like ninepins before the fierce attack.

Four men were out before a single run had been scored. And then Dick Penfold made a stubborn stand, and actually mustered two runs before he was clean bowled.

Penfold was destined to be the top scorer for the side.

Dick Russell, Ogilvy, and Hazeldene managed to scrape a run apiece; and there were two leg-byes.

The Greyfriars Reserve were all out for 71.

Such a low score was almost without parallel in the history of Greyfriars cricket.

"Did you say you were going to wire to Wharton, Smithy?" inquired Peter Todd.

"I was going to, but I've changed my mind," said the Bounder ruefully. "Wharton would have several sorts of a fit if he knew what had happened!"

"We must keep mum about this," said Dick Russell. "If the fellows at Greyfriars get to know, we shall never hear the end of it!"

Unfortunately for the Friars, however, there was a sporting scribe present on the ground, and a full report of the farcical match appeared next day in the "Sportsman."

The Harrow captain politely suggested sending the Friars in again; but Vernon-Smith declined. He had had quite enough cricket for one day.

A grinning crowd watched the Greyfriars juniors leave the field.

"It's like a blessed nightmare!" muttered Ogilvy. "Never mind! We'll take it out of the Middlesex team when we play them!"

And that was the only prospect which afforded the Friars any consolation in that hour of defeat.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Saving the Situation.

**A**FTER a sound night's sleep the Greyfriars juniors felt less concerned at their recent reverse at the hands of Harrow.

As Peter Todd remarked, it was the future that mattered, not the past.

Shortly after breakfast a move was made to the recreation-ground at West Harrow, where the boys of Middlesex had already assembled.

Jack Norman was the leader of the party; and he and his colleagues were bigger and broader fellows than Vernon-Smith & Co.

The necessary introductions between the two teams were performed, and the sports tournament commenced.

The programme was a mixed one.

The comic races, such as the sack-race and the potato-race, came first. The sterner events, like the mile and the Marathon, were last on the list.

"Pile in, you fellows!" said Vernon-Smith. "We're up against the hottest crowd we've met, so far! All the London sporting talent's here. We must show 'em that Greyfriars isn't a back number!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bulstrode.

The Friars went into battle with keen determination.

What they had accomplished against Surrey, Essex, and other counties, they hoped to accomplish again.

But in spite of their efforts, all the opening events were won by the boys of Middlesex.

"This won't do!" said Peter Todd emphatically. "We're getting licked at every twist and turn!"

"This is one of our off-days!" said Hazeldene. "Never mind! We shall come into our own soon."

And it really began to look like it when Vernon-Smith put up a record leap in the high jump.

However, Norman, of Middlesex, went one better; and the Friars relapsed into a state of gloom. Their repeated failures were disheartening.

The Middlesex boys, spurred on by their early successes, went from strength to strength.

They won the long jump, the quarter-mile, the mile, and throwing the cricket-ball. There seemed to be no end to their list of achievements.

The last event of the morning was the Marathon Race.

"I hate to pile on the agony!" remarked Jack Norman to Vernon-Smith; "but this is where you get another nail driven into your coffin. We've got a fellow here called Brooks, who's finished first in every Marathon he's taken part in."

"Oh, my aunt!"

The Greyfriars juniors glanced dismally at Brooks. He was a tall, wiry fellow, with the stride of a giant.

The course was a long one. It led from Harrow to Uxbridge and back by another route.

It was not a nice day for a Marathon, from a runner's point of view. The sun beat down mercilessly; and the roads were dusty and uneven.

"We simply must pull this off, somehow!" muttered Vernon-Smith, at the outset. "Will you make the pace for me, Toddy?"

Peter Todd nodded.

"I'll run till I drop!" he said.

The big race started; and in the early stages most of the runners took things easy.

Peter Todd was not one of them, however. He went away at a rattling pace, and Vernon-Smith hugged him close.

On and on they went, through the charming villages of Pinner and Ruislip, and along the terribly hilly road which led to Uxbridge.

Gwynne of the Sixth loomed up on his bicycle.

"Stick it out, you two!" he said. "You're half a mile ahead of the next batch!"

"And I feel like dropping already!" groaned Peter Todd.

"Nonsense! It isn't like you to admit that you're beaten, Todd."

But Gwynne did not realise what a tremendous pace Peter had established from the start.

Vernon-Smith realised it, and he was grateful. If he won—and he seemed to have a good chance—he would owe his victory to Peter Todd.

The two juniors emerged into Uxbridge at length. Then they started on the return journey to Harrow.

"I should slow up a little, if I were you," said Gwynne, still riding abreast of the runners.

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"Slowing up is fatal," he said. "It's the preliminary to giving up altogether. Go ahead, Toddy!"

And Peter obeyed, covering hills and level ground alike with his long, sweeping stride.

After another hour's hard running, Vernon-Smith glanced back over his shoulder.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated. "Here's that fellow Brooks!"

"Then I'm afraid it's your good-bye to our chances, Smithy!" gasped Peter Todd.

"I'm afraid so!"

But the runner—who was coming along at a rattling pace—was not Brooks.

It was Dick Penfold, of Greyfriars.

On his approach, Peter Todd sank down by the roadside, overcome.

Peter had carried out his task of setting the pace faithfully and well. And now, as he explained to Vernon-Smith, his bolt was shot. He would rest, he said, and then finish the journey by easy stages.

"Well played, Kid!" said Gwynne, as Dick Penfold jolted to a breathless halt. "I didn't expect you to be so far in front."

Penfold smiled wearily.

"This is my last spurt," he said. "I'm about on a par with Toddy now. In fact, I don't know which is the bigger creak of the two."

And Penfold joined Peter Todd on the bank.

"Go right ahead, Smithy!" he jerked out.

"I put the pace on in order to tell you that Brooks isn't far in the rear. And he's fairly flashing along!"

"Then I'll do the same!" said the Bounder.

And, with a grateful nod to Peter Todd, to whom he owed his lead, Vernon-Smith again took up the running.

Gwynne rode beside him, throwing out a word of encouragement occasionally, but being careful not to overdo it.

The prefect knew that most runners, after they had completed many miles under the most trying conditions, preferred to be left alone.

The Bounder was hard as nails. But for this fact, he would have shared the fate of Peter Todd and Dick Penfold.

As it was, his pace began to slacken, and Gwynne regarded him in some anxiety.

"Think you can stick it out?" he asked.

"How many more miles to go?"

"Three—and a bit!"

As a matter of fact, it was four and a bit; but Gwynne considered that the lie was excusable, in the circumstances.

On and on the Bounder plodded; and then, when he was two miles from home, Gwynne gave the alarm.

"It's Brooks this time!" he said.

Vernon-Smith rallied, with the strength of desperation.

Behind him, he knew, came a fellow who was essentially a Marathon runner—a fellow who had never yet been content to take second place in any race for which he was entered.

Brooks was not fresh.

He, like all the rest, had borne the heat and burden of the day.

But, by comparison with the Bounder, he was as fresh as a daisy.

Gwynne noticed, with some apprehension, that the Middlesex boy was gaining.

"Keep pegging away!" he said to Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder completed another mile by

sheer will-power, only to find that the end was not yet.

There were still a couple of stiff hills to surmount before Harrow was reached. And he and Brooks were now running level!

Vernon-Smith's brain worked swiftly.

He knew that, in the ordinary course of events, he must be beaten. He, therefore, lit upon a ruse.

Pretending to be much more exhausted than he really was, he stumbled along the road.

The Bounder hoped, of course, that Brooks, thinking there was no need to force the pace, would slow up, too.

If this came about, Vernon-Smith would continue to travel at a snail's pace, and then suddenly spurt when the tape came in sight.

But the best-laid schemes of mice and Marathon-runners "gang aft agley."

Brooks did what any sensible youth would have done in like circumstances.

The more his rival slacked, the more he himself spurted.

Gwynne groaned aloud.

In his opinion, Vernon-Smith had thrown the race away.

The end was in sight now.

The judges could be seen in the distance, waiting beside the tape.

Vernon-Smith recruited his flagging energies, and determined to make a fist of it. But he knew that, unless an accident befell Brooks, the latter would beat him.

And an accident did happen at that moment—not to Brooks, but to the Greyfriars junior.

Vernon-Smith stumbled against a loose stone, and pitched forward on his face in the roadway.

"Oh, crumbs!" he murmured. "It's all up now!"

But it wasn't!

A forlorn figure came flogging his way along that last stretch of white road—a forlorn and drooping figure—but he was gaining on Brooks!

"Bravo!" exclaimed Gwynne, who was as excited as a fag.

Vernon-Smith sat up and stared at the newcomer, with wonder in his eyes.

"Rake!" he exclaimed. "Oh, well run, Dick!"

Brooks was nearly at the tape now. But just before he breasted it, Dick Rake leapt past him, snatching an unexpected victory.

"By Jove!" gasped Brooks.

And he kept repeating the phrase to himself, like a parrot. He was never more surprised in his life.

The tape had fluttered to the ground, and the victorious runner dropped in a huddled heap at the feet of the judges.

Vernon-Smith, who finished a good third, knelt beside his schoolfellow.

"Buck up, old man!" he said.

Brandy was administered by one of the officials, and Dick Rake was assisted to his feet.

"Talk about miracles!" exclaimed Gwynne. "Faith, an' how did you manage it, kid?"

And then Dick Rake explained.

He had covered the first half of the course, he said, without undue exertion, intending to go all out over the latter half. In short, he had run a well-judged race, and won!

Ten minutes later, two more runners-hove in sight. Walkers would have been a more correct term. They were Peter Todd and Dick Penfold.

"Greyfriars seems to be well represented!" said Vernon-Smith, with a laugh. He could afford to laugh now.

"How has it gone?" asked Peter Todd breathlessly.

"Your man won," said Brooks, indicating Dick Rake.

"Hurrah!"

"Come to my bosom and weep!" invited Dick Penfold.

There was an interval of a quarter of an hour, and then a whole batch of runners appeared. There were half a dozen Middlesex boys, and a similar number of Greyfriars fellows.

Great was the rejoicing when the result was made known.

Although beaten in all the lesser events, the Friars had made good at last.

Dick Rake had averted what would have been a tragic situation.

When the last runner had toiled to the spot, the Greyfriars party returned to their hotel.

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The swimming sports were to take place later in the day; but for three long hours the juniors rested from their labours, besides partaking of much-needed refreshment.

And, needless to state, Rake of the Remove was the hero of the hour.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Unwelcome Guest.

RESTED and refreshed, the Greyfriars juniors joined the boys of Middlesex, and the whole party proceeded by Metropolitan Railway to Baker Street, and thence to Westminster.

Their destination was the Great Smith Street Swimming-baths, at which many an historic encounter had taken place.

"My hat!" exclaimed Peter Todd, stopping short at the entrance to the baths. "Sweet are the uses of advertisement, as Shakespeare says!"

Posters were prominently displayed outside, bearing the announcement:

"GREYFRIARS SCHOOL versus BOYS OF MIDDLESEX!"

And then followed a list of the various events.

"What do you think of our chances, Gwynne?" inquired Vernon-Smith, pausing in front of his dressing-box.

"I think they're rosy," answered the Greyfriars prefect. "London fellows are tip-top sportsmen, but swimming's their weak point, as a rule. They don't get the practice that you kids get. All the same, I wouldn't be too cocksure, if I were you. These fellows may be exceptions to the rule."

As a matter of fact, they were. The first race proved that.

Two lengths of the bath constituted the course; and Jack Norman, swimming strongly and in style, won with ease.

"Rotten!" growled Peter Todd, shaking himself like a drenched terrier. "Looks as if we're booked for another series of lickings!"

Middlesex also gained the honours in the second race, though not quite so easily.

Only one length had to be covered in the third event. But, as the swimmers had to wear heavy garments, it was equivalent to three lengths in the ordinary way.

Peter Todd, clad in a very ancient suit of clothes, and a pair of sea-boots several sizes too big for him, lined up with the other competitors at the starting-point, and glared down at the placid water as if he owed it a grudge.

"It's about time we won!" he growled.

"Why not make a start yourself, then?" sneered Hazeldene, who, having finished last in the previous race, was beginning to feel fed-up.

Peter Todd turned to the speaker.

"I'll wager you half a dozen jam-puffs," he said, "that I pull off this event!"

"Done!" said Hazel promptly.

The order was given, and the swimmers, the personal appearance of whom caused vast amusement to the crowd, plunged in to their task.

Peter Todd was the first to break away. He kicked out with great vigour, hoping that his large sea-boots would come off. Free of this encumbrance, he could have won hands down.

Unfortunately, the sea-boots stayed where they were; and Peter's progress through the water was painfully slow.

However, he was leading, with Norman, of Middlesex, plunging along just behind him.

The clothes, bulging with water, seemed to drag Peter Todd down. But he realised, with a feeling of great joy, that there was barely a quarter of a length to go.

Peter struck out with all his strength. Norman followed suit.

And then a voice sounded in Peter's ear.

"That's the way, Toddy! Pile in! Bravo, Study No. 7!"

Peter Todd's astonishment was so great that he was compelled to slow up.

For the voice was the voice of Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove!

"Go it, Toddy! Only a few more strokes!"

Peter Todd inclined his head, and saw Billy Bunter gesticulating frantically from the side of the bath.

This sudden apparition so startled Peter that he could no longer concentrate upon the race.

The result was that Jack Norman won, with several yards to spare.

Peter Todd dragged himself up the ladder, and squelched his way towards Billy Bunter.

"You silly, fat porpoise!" he exclaimed, flourishing his fist in the fat junior's face. "What are you doing here? You lost me the race!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"You put me off my stroke, you Owl!"

Billy Bunter blinked through his spectacles at his wrathful study-mate.

"My hat!" he said. "Talk about black ingratitude! I was giving you valuable encouragement."

At that moment Gwynne strode on the scene. Behind him came the rest of the Greyfriars party.

"Bunter!" exclaimed the prefect.

"Yes, Gwynne?"

"What the thump are you doing in London?"

"Oh, really—"

"Have you taken French leave, and bolted from the school?" demanded Gwynne.

"Of course not! The Head gave me permission to come."

"Gammon!" said Dick Rake.

Gwynne's hand fell upon the fat junior's shoulder.

"Tell me the truth, Bunter!" he said sternly.

"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Dud-dud-dud! don't shake me like that, or you'll make my glasses fall off, and then you'll have to take me to the optician's and get me a new pair!"

"Tell me the truth!" repeated Gwynne.

"How did you get here?"

"By train, of course!"

"And you mean to say the Head consented for you to come?"

"Certainly!"

There was such a ring of sincerity in Billy Bunter's tone that Gwynne was impressed.

Was it possible that Bunter was departing from his usual practice, and telling the truth?

"Buck up, you fellows!" called Jack Norman from the other end of the bath. "Time for the next race!"

"Carry on, you kids!" said Gwynne. "I'll keep an eye on this beauty!"

"Oh, really, Gwynne!" protested Billy Bunter. "Anyone would think you were a beastly warder!"

"I'm not letting you out of my sight!" said the prefect grimly.

And from that time onwards he occupied a seat next to the fat junior.

The next race was a most exciting one.

Each competitor had to swim the length of the bath, carrying a candlestick with a lighted candle. If the candle went out the swimmer had to return to the starting-point and get it relit.

Speed counted for nothing in a race of this description. It was the steady swimmer who stood the better chance.

Brooks, of Middlesex, swam on his breast, with his head thrown back, and with the candlestick in his mouth. This was a safer means of progress than by carrying the candle in the hand, for the light was not so liable to be put out by the inevitable splashes of water.

At the same time, one has to be an expert to carry a candlestick in one's mouth for long.

When Brooks had covered three-quarters of the course the candlestick fell with a splash into the water.

Brooks promptly dived to recover it, but he lost a lot of time in so doing.

Vernon-Smith came steadily on, with his right hand uplifted from the water. Several times his light flickered, as if on the point of going out; but the Bounder managed to complete the course with his candle still in flame. He finished first, and it was the Friars' first victory.

There were no more races of an amusing nature.

The remainder of the programme consisted of stern tussles, all of which were won by Jack Norman & Co., with the exception of the last.

Fifteen lengths of the bath was the distance prescribed for the final race.

"It's a tall order!" said Peter Todd.

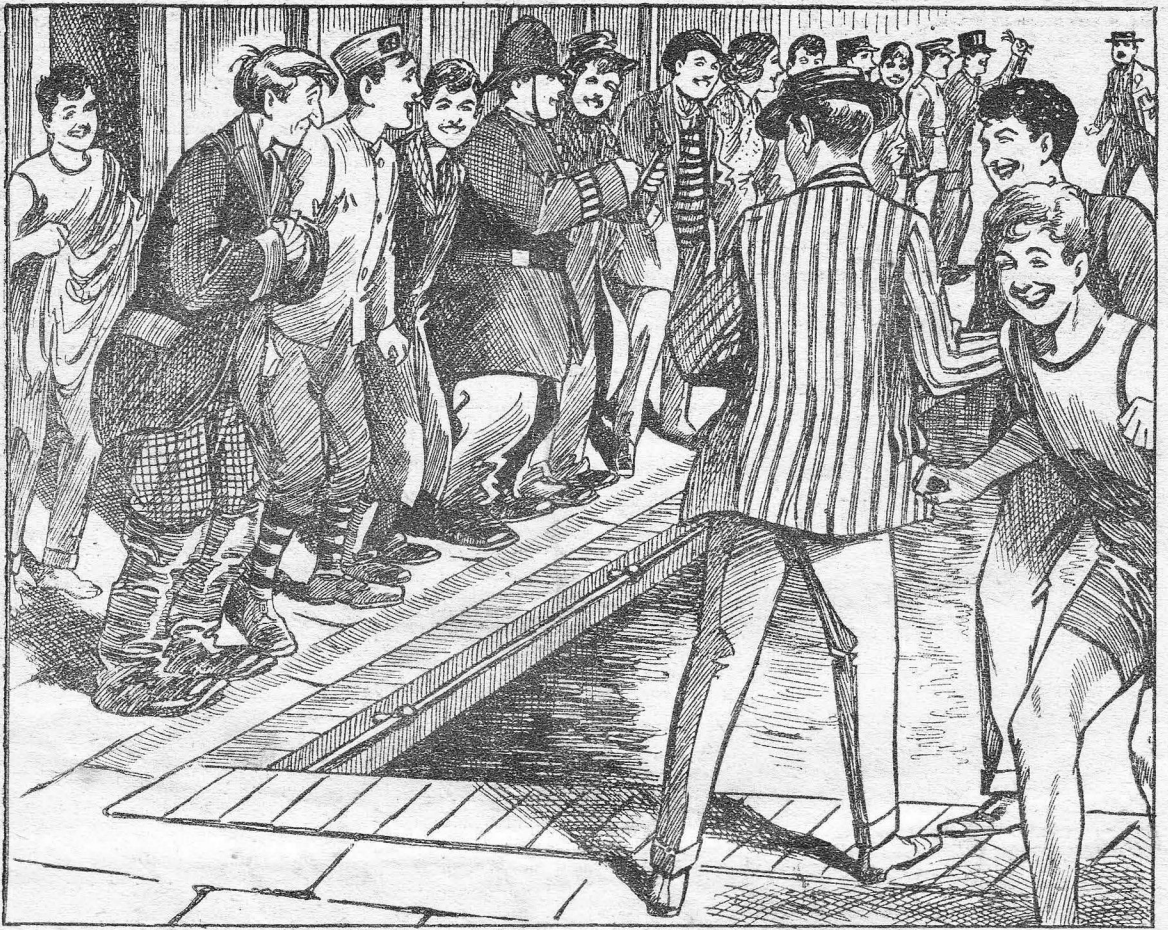
"Would you like to wager me another half-dozen jam-puffs that you win?" said Hazeldene, with a grin.

"No, I wouldn't! If it hadn't been for that crass idiot Bunter, I should have won my last wager!"

Only half a dozen Greyfriars fellows entered for the last race. An indifferent swimmer would only have been a handicap to his fellows.

The six entrants were Vernon-Smith, Peter





Peter Todd, clad in a very ancient suit of clothes, and a pair of sea-boots several sizes too big for him, lined up with the other competitors at the starting point. (See page 4.)

Todd, Dick Penfold, Bulstrode, Dick Rake, and Dick Russell. Of these Vernon-Smith was the fancied favourite.

Middlesex were also entering six competitors—all good swimmers.

The word of command was given, and there was a buzz from the spectators as the race started.

This event was the tit-bit of the afternoon.

Billy Bunter added his voice to the rest. "Go it, Smitty! Go it, Toddy! Go it—Yarooooop!"

That was not quite what Bunter had intended to say, but a sudden cuff on the head from Gwynne had changed his shout of encouragement into one of anguish.

"Dry up!" growled the prefect. "We don't want any more races spoilt!"

But although Billy Bunter ventured no further comments, misfortune overtook the Greyfriars swimmers.

An attack of cramp midway through the race compelled Peter Todd to retire. And shortly afterwards Dick Rake was disqualified for unintentionally obstructing the progress of one of the Middlesex swimmers.

Vernon-Smith and Jack Norman swam side by side, as if bound to each other by a rope. They enjoyed a good lead, and the crowd anticipated that the race would result into a duel between them.

Just as the last length was about to be contested, however, Vernon-Smith shared the fate of Peter Todd.

The Bounder fought hard against his attack of cramp, but he failed to ward it off, and Norman shot ahead.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Middlesex!"

Jack Norman now appeared to be a certain winner.

He appeared to be, but appearances are often deceptive.

Dick Russell, of Greyfriars, had been biding his time. And now he came on with strong, sweeping strokes.

Jack Norman was unconscious of the fact that he was being hotly pursued until it was too late.

"Look out, Jack!" shouted his supporters. But the warning ought to have been given a moment previously.

To the delight of the Greyfriars spectators, Dick Russell rapidly gained on his man.

Six strong strokes, and Russell was level. A couple more, and he was ahead!

Jack Norman, now fully alive to the situation, struck out with all his strength.

But Dick Russell was out to win, and he finished three yards to the good, amid a chorus of applause.

Russell was better known as a boxer than a swimmer, but he had certainly won his laurels on this occasion.

"And now," said Gwynne, when it was all over, "we'll get back to our hotel."

"That's the ticket!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm jolly peckish! Is the hotel just across the road?"

"No; it's at Harrow!" chuckled Peter Todd.

"Harrow! Oh, my hat! Make it Land's End!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gwynne's heavy hand descended upon the fat junior's shoulder.

"Come along!" he said grimly. "I've got a little business to transact before we go back to the hotel!"

And he marched Billy Bunter away, the rest of the Greyfriars juniors following in a merry procession.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Astonishing!

**B**ILLY BUNTER blinked at Pat Gwynne. "A—a little business?" he stammered.

"Yes," said Gwynne. "Get a move on!"

"Oh, crumbs! Where are you taking me?"

"To the nearest post-office, my pippin!"

"What for?"

"You'll soon see."

On arrival at the post-office Gwynne wrote out a telegram, and despatched it.

The wire ran as follows:

"Dr. Locke, Greyfriars School.—Kindly wire if Bunter has permission to be in London.—Gwynne."

"This is where Bunter gets it in the neck!" said Ogilvy.

But the fat junior did not seem to be unduly alarmed. He assumed an air of lofty unconcern. The other fellows regarded this as bluff on Bunter's part.

The fate of the Owl of the Remove hung in the balance.

If Dr. Locke confirmed Bunter's statement that he had permission to be in London, all would be well.

If, on the other hand, the Head denied the fact that permission had been granted, there would be short shrift for the fat junior. He would be taken back to Greyfriars under escort, and severely flogged when he got there perhaps expelled, for Bunter was an old offender.

Most of the juniors were fagged out by the time they reached their hotel.

The day's programme of sport had been an unusually heavy one, and the running and swimming contests had taken toll of their energies.

Gwynne was not feeling fagged; but he

felt decidedly ruffled. He anticipated having to pay for Bunter's meals, in which case the funds he carried with him for the four would speedily be exhausted. Billy Bunter ate as much at one sitting as the average fellow consumed at half a dozen.

Dinner was served at the hotel. It was an excellent dinner as to quality, but Billy Bunter had cause to complain of the quantity, which in his case was decidedly limited. And Gwynne assured him that there would be no second helping.

"It's a shame!" hooted Bunter. "I'm jolly well famished!"

A benevolent-looking gentleman was seated at the next table. He turned to the Owl of the Remove.

"Might I inquire what is the matter, my boy?"

"Ow! I'm ill!" groaned Bunter.

"In that case a doctor had better be summoned."

"Nunno!" said Bunter hastily. "It's lack of nourishment that I'm suffering from. You see, I don't get sufficient to keep body and soul together!"

"Dry up, you fat toad!" hissed Bulstrode.

"If I could only get a good square meal," continued Billy Bunter, blinking at the benevolent-looking gentleman, "I should feel tons better!"

"Don't take any notice of him, sir," said Gwynne, in tones of indignation. "He's shamming!"

"Oh, really, Gwynne—"

The old gentleman was evidently not only benevolent, but gullible. In spite of Bunter's overfed appearance, he imagined that the fat junior's grievance was genuine.

"Will you sit at my table?" he asked.

Billy Bunter jumped up like a Jack-in-the-box, and, before Gwynne had time to stop him, he had planted himself beside the old gentleman.

"This is awfully decent of you, sir!" he said. "You've saved my life. If I'd gone without nourishment for another twelve hours, I should certainly have starved!"

"Bless my soul! Waiter!"

The waiter promptly appeared.

"Yes, sir?"

"Kindly execute this young gentleman's orders!"

"Very good, sir!"

And the waiter glanced inquiringly at Billy Bunter.

The fat junior did not stop to pick and choose.

"Bring me everything that's on the menu!" he said loftily.

"Well, that's one way of doing it!" muttered Peter Todd.

The Greyfriars juniors were half angry, and half amused. They would cheerfully have dragged Bunter away by the scruff of his neck, but they hesitated to offend the old gentleman who was playing the part of host.

Billy Bunter disposed of his soup with noisy gusto. Then he committed assault and battery upon a harmless-looking fish. After which he attacked a joint.

"Dear me!" murmured the old gentleman, in astonishment. "You do not appear to have partaken of a solid meal for days!"

"I haven't!" mumbled Billy Bunter, whose jaws were working overtime.

Gwynne started up from the table in disgust.

"Faith, an' I'll drag the fat gormandiser away!" he muttered.

Vernon-Smith shot out a restraining arm.

"Let Bunter go ahead!" he said. "When the old gent gets a bill for about four quid it'll be a lesson to him!"

"Hear, hear!" said Peter Todd.

And Gwynne resumed his seat.

Billy Bunter, having finished the solids, made short work of the custards and jellies. Then, like Alexander of old, he looked round for fresh worlds to conquer.

"Are the pangs of hunger sufficiently appeased?" asked Billy Bunter's benefactor.

"Eh? Why, I've only just started!" said the fat junior. "Waiter!"

The waiter bustled to the spot.

"Have you any pastries—nice, tempting pastries, that fairly melt in the mouth?"

"I'll bring you an assortment, sir."

"That's the idea! Very sensible sort of chap, that waiter!" added Bunter approvingly.

The pastries arrived, to disappear at record speed.

By this time the bill had reached alarming proportions; and the benevolent-looking gentleman was beginning to feel less benevolent.

"Really!" he protested. "This is developing into quite an orgy!"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly across the table.

"Didn't I tell you I was starving?" he exclaimed.

"I fear that was a perversion of facts."

"It wasn't! It was jolly well true! I never get enough to eat. I've had nothing since I left Greyfriars this morning, and then I only had half a dozen rashers and a few fried eggs!"

"Bless my soul!"

The old gentleman gasped as Billy Bunter proceeded to stuff himself with Swiss-roll. At length, unable to stand it any longer, he sprang to his feet.

"This bestial orgy must cease!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, really, you know—"

The old gentleman dragged the dish of pastries out of Bunter's reach, and then requested the waiter to bring the bill.

The harassed waiter was obliged to transform himself into a ready reckoner, and it took him quite twenty minutes to account for everything Billy Bunter had eaten.

"Five pounds six and tuppence-ha'penny, sir!" he said, at last.

The benevolent-looking gentleman nearly swooned.

As for the Greyfriars fellows seated at the next table, they roared with laughter.

"Feeding the lions at the Zoo is nothing to feeding Bunter!" said Peter Todd.

The fat junior was leaning back in his chair, with his hands crossed in the region of his lower waistcoat-button. He was breathing stertorously, and in a few moments was fast asleep.

The gentleman who had entertained him glared at the bill, and then at Bunter. It looked for a moment as if he would haul the fat junior from his seat, and proceed to shake him. But he controlled himself, with a great effort. Having settled the bill, he tottered out of the hotel.

"There goes a ruined man!" said Bulstrode.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Vernon-Smith.

Billy Bunter was still snoring in his seat when the page-boy entered with a telegram, which he handed to Gwynne.

"Now we shall know whether the fat rascal has permission to be in London or not!" said Gwynne.

"He hasn't, you bet!" said Hazeldene.

The prefect ripped open the telegram, and the juniors jumped up from the table and glanced over his shoulder.

The next moment they gave a gasp of astonishment. For this is what they saw:

"Bunter has my full permission to be in London.—Dr. Locke."

Gwynne gave a groan.

"That settles it!" he said. "Bunter's in the right, after all. We shall have to endure his company as best we can."

"And you've got to feed him?" exclaimed Dick Penfold.

"I suppose so."

"My hat!"

"The funds will be exhausted by to-morrow, I expect," said Gwynne. "We shall either have to brain Bunter on a dark night, or have a whip-round to pay his expenses."

And the latter plan—which was the only feasible one of the two—did not sound very inviting.

Looking after Bunter was a very thankless and expensive business. The only person who didn't seem to mind was Billy Bunter himself, who reclined at peace with the world, almost shaking the room with his unmusical snore.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### A Great Recovery.

EARLY next morning the Greyfriars tourists explored Harrow and the surrounding district.

They found much to interest them. There was the famous Peachy Stone, where, according to tradition,

"Byron lay, lazily lay,  
Hid from lesson and game away."

There was the historic church on the hill, from the churchyard of which a view could be obtained of the surrounding counties.

And, of course, there was the famous Harrow School itself—an institution which stands in the very front rank of English public schools, side by side with Eton and Winchester and Charterhouse.

"I shouldn't criticise Harrow again in a hurry!" said Ogilvy.

"I should jolly well think not!" said Vernon-Smith. "It's a topping school!"

"All the same, give me Greyfriars every time!" said Peter Todd.

"Hear, hear!"

The only junior present who wasn't loyal to his own school was Billy Bunter, who pointed out that the Harrow boys had a much nicer tuckshop than Mrs. Mimble's moth-eaten establishment in the Close at Greyfriars. Billy Bunter's estimate of a public school was based upon the quality and quantity of the tuck served upon the premises.

At the end of their ramble the tourists adjourned to the recreation-ground, where Dick Russell was to meet Jack Norman in fistic encounter.

There was a great gathering of the clans to witness the contest.

Jack Norman was known throughout Middlesex as a first-class fighting-man, and local opinion pointed to the fact that Dick Russell would be beaten.

Local opinion, however, is often wrong. And this was a case in point.

Dick Russell used his left to such good purpose that Jack Norman was floored in the second round.

After this the Middlesex boy never rallied, and in the fourth round Russell sent him to the grass for the last time.

"Well-played, Dick!" said Donald Ogilvy.

"Greyfriars is coming out strong at last!"

"If we can only win the cricket-match," said Vernon-Smith, "everything in the garden will be lovely!"

The juniors, however, did not feel over-confident concerning their chances.

After their terrible rout at the hands of Harrow they were prepared for any emergency.

The cricket-match was the last item on the programme, and it was being played, by special permission of the M.C.C., at Lord's.

At eleven o'clock all was in readiness.

The weather was on its best behaviour, and the sunshine streamed down upon the green, freshly-rolled turf.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, as the Greyfriars party walked across towards the pavilion, "Smithy's a very poor cricket captain. I don't think he knows his job—"

"What!" roared Vernon-Smith.

Billy Bunter struck a dramatic attitude.

"A cricket captain should be a daring, dashing sort of fellow," he said. "You chaps want somebody who will inspire you, and lead you on to victory. And you needn't look further than me!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" murmured Dick Penfold.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"These Middlesex beggars are hot stuff," continued Billy Bunter. "No common garden team, led by an indifferent skipper like Smithy, can hope to beat 'em. But with me in command—"

Billy Bunter's self-praise was cut short very suddenly by Vernon-Smith, whose fist shot out, catching the fat junior full in the chest.

With a yell of anguish the Owl of the Remove rolled over in the grass.

"Good shot, Smithy!" said Peter Todd.

"Now, what about rolling the pitch?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors passed on, and Billy Bunter flourished a fat fist after them.

"Yah! Beasts! Rotters!" he roared. "I shall refuse to skipper the side!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's refusal met with a roar of laughter. Evidently the side considered that they would be much better off without Bunter.

Jack Norman won the toss.

"You'll put us in first?" queried Vernon-Smith.

The Middlesex skipper smiled.

"I'm not quite such a fool as I look!" he said. "We'll take first knock."

"And may you be all out in less than an hour!" said Peter Todd.

Many a true word is spoken in jest.

A couple of new bowlers were tried for the Remove—Bulstrode and Hazeldene—and these two bowled unchanged throughout the Middlesex innings.

The bowling, the catching, and the fielding were alike superb.

Jack Norman rattled up twenty before Bulstrode spread-eagled his wicket; but the rest of the Middlesex boys fared badly, with the result that the team was all out for the moderate total of 45.

"This is the sort of thing that makes life worth living!" exclaimed Peter Todd, as the Greyfriars fieldsmen trooped back to the pavilion.

"All out for 45!" chortled Dick Rake. "Why, Smithy will beat that off his own bat!"



And Vernon-Smith did.

The first innings of the Friars closed for 90, of which the Bounder had made half.

The only other batsman of note was Dick Russell, whose patient innings of 14 not out was heartily applauded by the spectators.

Lunch was served in the refreshment-rooms at the back of the grand stand.

The Removites hurried over their lunch. They were anxious to get back to the cricket. Their clear lead of 45 runs on the first innings stimulated their hopes to victory.

Jack Norman, in the second innings, did a rather daring thing—he reversed the order of batting, sending the weakest players in first, and reserving the good wine till last, so to speak.

The result more than justified the experiment.

Although the Remore bowlers had little difficulty in disposing of the first three wickets, they came to a full stop after that.

"The beggars are going to give us a hard fight, after all!" said Dick Rake.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

When the 100 went up, with only three wickets down, Bulstrode and Hazeldene were relieved, and Dick Russell and Ogilvy took a turn with the ball.

Two more wickets fell as a result of this change, but Brooks remained hitting out like a juvenile edition of G. L. Jessop.

"Going to stay there all night?" asked Dick Russell banteringly.

Brooks grinned.

"Certainly!" he said.

"Well, I'll jolly well see that you don't!" And Russell sent down the best ball he knew. Brooks promptly despatched it to the boundary.

He had got the measure of the bowling by this time, and the Middlesex score rose by leaps and bounds.

The second hundred went up just before the last man came in to join Brooks.

And the last man was not the puny sort of batsman that the tail-end usually produces. It was Jack Norman!

Brooks winked knowingly at his captain as the latter strode to the crease. The wink seemed to say, "Now for a real good partnership, old man!"

And this might have come about but for the agility of Peter Todd, who, fielding deep in the slips, brought about Jack Norman's downfall by means of a wonderful catch.

"Hurrah!"

"Well held, sir!"

But the exuberance of the Greyfriars juniors soon died away when they realised that they needed no less than 156 runs to give them the victory.

The outlook was rendered doubly black by the fact that Peter Todd, in catching the ball, had hurt his wrist rather badly.

"Afraid I sha'n't be able to bat, Smithy," he said.

"Oh, crumbs!"

The loss of Peter Todd was a shattering blow. Peter, on his day, was one of the best batsmen in the Remore eleven.

"Perhaps you'll feel better later on, Toddy," said Vernon-Smith.

But the hope was a very frail one. Peter Todd's wrist was already limp and useless.

Vernon-Smith took Hazeldene in with him to open the innings; and Hazel's wicket fell in the first over.

But Bulstrode, who took his place, played delightful cricket, and he and the Bounder took the score to 50 before they were separated, Bulstrode being caught at the wicket.

Thanks to Dick Penfold, who followed on, the good work continued.

Penfold made some very risky shots, and he was very nearly caught on two occasions. But he profited by his escapes, and he and Vernon-Smith stayed together until the 100 was hoisted.

Hope returned to the Friars in full flush.

"A hundred for two wickets!" said Peter Todd, nursing his damaged wrist.

"We shall do it!" said Dick Russell.

"Yes, rather!"

Jack Norman, however, believed in the policy that a game isn't lost till it's won.

The Middlesex bowling and fielding reached a very high standard, and Vernon-Smith and Penfold were both sent back before many minutes had elapsed.

Dick Russell and Ogilvy then came together, and these two staunch chums could generally be relied upon to render yeoman service to their side in a crisis.

On this occasion, however, they were unlucky.

Russell was given out "leg-before-wicket"—a rather doubtful decision; and Ogilvy

slogged a ball into the long-field, and was easily caught.

"A hundred for six doesn't sound nearly so attractive as 100 for two!" said Dick Rake. "We're up against it now, and no error!"

Morgan and Wibley, who were in together, managed, by a miracle, to scrape ten runs. Then Wibley was sent back to the pavilion; and the batsman who took his place followed him a moment later.

"It's all up!" said Vernon-Smith glumly.

"That's not saying much for my abilities as a batsman!" said Dick Rake.

And he picked up his bat, and went in to join Morgan at the wickets.

Dick Rake started off as if he intended to beat the record for fast scoring.

He got the full face of the bat to the ball, and drove it three times in succession to the boundary.

"That's the style!" chortled Bulstrode, from the pavilion. "Dick Rake means business!"

Morgan, although not at all comfortable against the bowling of Jack Norman, managed to keep his wicket intact. He made no effort to get runs. That part of the business could well be left to his partner.

In less than half an hour 150 went up on the board, to the accompaniment of cheers and hand-clapping.

Greyfriars needed 6 to win!

But before the applause had died away Morgan's middle-stump lay flat.

"All over!" said Vernon-Smith, in tones of resignation.

But he was too premature.

"I'm going to take a hand!" said Peter Todd.

The Bounder stared.

"My dear chap," he protested, "you'll be a mere passenger!"

"That's all right! I'll leave it to Rake to knock off the runs, while I keep my end up, somehow."

There was determination in Peter Todd's voice. Vernon-Smith saw that he was not to be reasoned with.

Minus pads and batting-gloves, Peter Todd went in to bat.

He was compelled to use one hand only—a difficult, almost an impossible achievement.

Brooks, who was bowling, send down a very slow, simple ball, which the batsman easily stopped.

"Stow it!" said Peter Todd. "You're not being fair to your own side by doing that sort of thing. Never mind about my being a crook. Bowl as hard as you like!"

"All serene!" said Brooks.

And the remaining balls of his over were so fast that Peter Todd could not get near them. Fortunately, they all skimmed the balls.

It was now Dick Rake's turn.

Rake knew, as he faced the bowler, that the six runs must be obtained at once, for Peter Todd would not survive another over.

The first ball was tapped back to the bowler.

The second was snicked through the slips, and the batsman ran twice. It was a big risk, but Dick Rake realised how essential it was that he should retain the bowling.

The third and fourth balls of the over got up awkwardly, and Dick Rake left them severely alone. Had he attempted to smite them, he would undoubtedly have been caught.

The fifth ball was a beauty, from the batsman's point of view.

It pitched short; and Dick Rake, running out at it, sent it soaring away, to land with a thud beyond the boundary-line.

In spite of the injury to Peter Todd, in spite of the deadliness of the Middlesex bowling, the Friars had won!

A moment later Dick Rake, flushed and radiant, was borne shoulder-high by his exuberant chums to the pavilion.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### The Fate of a Truant!

THAT evening a happy procession streamed in at the old gateway of Greyfriars.

The faces of Vernon-Smith & Co. were wreathed in smiles.

After a disastrous start they had more than held their own with the boys of Middlesex.

Even Peter Todd, who would play no more cricket for a week, on account of his wrist, was merry and bright.

Only one person was plunged into despondency. That was Billy Bunter.

The fat junior was obviously ill-at-ease, and

he made more than one attempt to wrest himself from the strong grasp of Pat Gwynne.

"No, you don't, my fat pippin!" said the prefect. "I've got to make a few inquiries about you first."

"Oh, really, Gwynne—"

"I've got more than a suspicion that you had no right to be with us," said Gwynne.

"But you got the Head's telegram—"

"That's just the puzzling part of it. I can't understand the Head giving his consent. You were neither use nor ornament to the sports party."

"Here's the Head himself!" muttered Vernon-Smith. "Perhaps he will throw some light on it."

Billy Bunter's complexion turned a sickly yellow. He looked appealingly at the flagstones in the Close, as if imploring them to open and swallow him up.

"Ah, Gwynne!" said the Head, as he approached the party. "You have had a pleasant tour?"

"Most enjoyable, sir!"

"Ripping, sir!" chorused the juniors.

Dr. Locke's eye lighted on Billy Bunter.

"I notice you have brought Bunter back with you," he said. "Did you meet him in London?"

"Oh crumbs! Yessir!" gasped the fat junior. "For three days and nights I've sat by her bedside, sir, holding her hand. The doctor says that her recovery was entirely due to my help and sympathy, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Dick Penfold.

"What an awful whopper!" gasped Bulstrode.

Gwynne glared at Billy Bunter, and then turned to the Head.

"There appears to be some mistake, sir," he said. "Are you under the impression that Bunter went to London in order to visit a sick aunt?"

Dr. Locke nodded.

"That is the case, Gwynne," he said.

"But—but he's been with us all the time, sir!"

"I—I—it's a lie, sir!" he stammered feebly. "I've been with my aunt day and night, sir! The fellow who Gwynne mentions must have been my double."

The thunderclouds were gathering on Dr. Locke's brow.

"You are a perverse and wicked boy, Bunter! You have deceived me!"

"You led me to understand that your aunt was lying seriously ill—"

"So she was, sir. Dying, in fact!"

"Be silent, wretched boy! On the strength of your statement, which appeared to be borne out by a letter from your aunt, I allowed you to go to London. I now find that you did not visit your aunt at all. You spent your time with the members of the touring-party. Such conduct is unpardonable!"

"Oh dear! I—"

"Follow me to my study immediately!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the angry Head.

"It—it wasn't my fault, sir! I didn't ask Skinner to fake that letter from my aunt. He did it off his own bat, sir!"

Dr. Locke stood thunderstruck.

"Do you mean to say that Skinner concocted the letter purporting to come from your aunt, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir—I—I mean, no sir! That is to say, I don't know, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Greyfriars juniors, unable to repress their merriment.

"I will send for Skinner," said the Head, "and question him."

Skinner of the Remore was duly summoned. Skinner was a crafty youth, but he quite collapsed under the Head's severe cross-examination, which was aided from time to time by incriminating evidence on the part of Billy Bunter.

"You are a pair of utterly incorrigible boys!" said Dr. Locke, as soon as the case against Skinner and Bunter was complete. "I will deal with you both as you deserve! Follow me!"

Shortly afterwards a steady, swishing sound could be heard, punctuated by yells of wild anguish.

In the Head's study, Billy Bunter and Harold Skinner were going through the mill. And the experience was far from pleasant.

"Serves them jolly well right!" growled Bulstrode.

And his opinion was shared by the rest of the juniors.

Whilst the execution was still in progress Vernon-Smith & Co. passed into the building, to recount to eager listeners the tussles and triumphs which had befallen the Friars in London!



# TUBBY IN TRAINING!

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

BY OWEN CONQUEST.



## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Tubby Muffin's Resolve!

**O**UT of the way, fatty!" Tubby Muffin got out of the way. In fact, he got out of the way quicker than he meant to have done. He could not help himself.

Peele & Co., the cads of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, were coming along the passage when Tubby Muffin got in the way. They were not polite enough to ask the fat junior to make way for them.

They gave Muffin a push that sent him with a bump against the wall, and Tubby gave a gasp and slipped to the floor. "Ow! You rotters!" he howled. "You've busted my arm!"

"Shouldn't take up half the blessed passage, Tubby," said Peele cheerfully.

And Peele & Co. walked on, chuckling.

Tubby Muffin was still sitting on the passage floor, with his back against the wall, when Jimmy Silver & Co. appeared.

The four juniors stopped as they came up to the fat junior.

"Hallo, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver. "That's a funny place to rest!"

"Ow! The rotters—"

"Hallo again!" said Jimmy Silver. "You've been pinching somebody's grub, have you?"

Tubby Muffin dragged himself to his feet, and rubbed his elbow.

"No, I haven't, really!" he said. "Peele & Co. bumped me up against the wall."

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared.

"What for?" demanded Newcome.

"Blessed if I know," said Tubby Muffin plaintively. "I was walking along the passage when the rotters yelled, 'Out of the way.' Then they bumped me into the wall."

"Just like the rotters!" said Jimmy Silver disdainfully. "Why didn't you punch their silly heads for them, Tubby?"

Tubby Muffin started. Peele & Co. were never to be considered as fighting men, but Tubby Muffin possessed little fistic ability himself.

But Peele had hurt the fat junior, and if Tubby lacked skill in the noble art of boxing, he had plenty of courage.

"I'll jolly well go and do it now!" he said angrily. "I never thought of that, Silver!"

Jimmy Silver nodded his head solemnly.

"You should always think, Tubby," he said severely. "If I were you, I'd go and slog into the three of them. They're absolute rotters, and I'm sure you could make rings round them!"

"Or rolls!" chuckled Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin flushed.

"I say, you chaps," he said in a low voice, "do you think I could lick them one at a time?"

The Fistical Four nodded their heads emphatically.

"Easy as eating pie!" said Raby seriously.

"No doubt about it, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver. "Why, a Second Form kid could do it!"

Tubby Muffin left off rubbing his elbow, and pushed back his cuffs aggressively.

"Blessed if I don't do it, too!" he said firmly.

And Tubby Muffin marched off down the passage to look for Peele & Co.

Jimmy Silver & Co. waited until he had disappeared round the corner before they looked at each other. The exchange of glances was the signal for a simultaneous burst of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, the Merry Muffin, Fighting Fourth!"

Former!" howled Raby. "Oh, hold me up, someone!"

"Tubby on the warpath!" shrieked Newcome. "Who'd have thought Tubby would come to this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently the idea of Tubby Muffin, the fat Classical junior, looking for Peele & Co. in order to fight them one by one, was something new to Jimmy Silver & Co.

It was a few minutes before they controlled themselves.

"Come on, there's going to be some fun!" said Jimmy Silver, wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes.

The Fistical Four, their conversation broken now and again with chuckles, marched down the corridor after Tubby Muffin.

They had not far to go. Tubby had run Peele & Co. down in the Common-room, and had lost no time in announcing his intention of wiping up the floor with them one by one.

Peele & Co. had been surprised. Tubby Muffin as a fighting man appealed to them as being humorous. But Tubby was decidedly serious this time!

Failing to obtain anything but derisive sneers from the lips of the three cads, Tubby Muffin suddenly smacked the side of Peele's face with his open hand.

"Now perhaps you'll fight, you rotter!" roared Tubby.

And the fat junior danced round the astonished cad, brandishing his fists in a most warlike manner. Peele, once he recovered from his astonishment, lost no time in obliging the fat junior.

With a roar like an enraged bull, Peele went for Tubby Muffin.

The fat junior certainly had weight on his side, but Peele had the advantage of being quicker on his feet. He swept the branished fists of the fat junior to one side, and dealt him a blow on the top of the nose that brought tears to his eyes.

Tubby Muffin sat down suddenly.

"Ow!" he yelled.

Peele, thoroughly excited and roused, danced round the fallen junior.

"Get up, you fat toad!" he exclaimed. "Get up, and be licked to a frazzle! You cheeky worm!"

But Tubby Muffin declined to get up and be licked into a frazzle. He felt safer on the floor.

He looked up at Peele.

"Oh, really, Peele!" he said remonstratively. "I wasn't ready!"

"Get up!" roared Peele.

It was at this point that Jimmy Silver & Co. came on the scene. They took in the situation in one glance.

Tubby Muffin was where they expected to find him—on the floor. But Tubby looked very offended.

"I say, Jimmy Silver," he said, "Peele hit me before I was ready!"

Jimmy Silver frowned.

"Is that so, Peele?" he demanded shortly.

Peele danced round Tubby Muffin excitedly.

"No, it isn't!" he exclaimed. "The fat bouncer challenged me to a fight. He punched my face! Get up, you—"

"Oh dear!" said Tubby Muffin, scrambling to his feet.

Peele promptly knocked him down again, and the juniors waited for the fat Classical to howl. But for once Tubby did not howl.

He went to the floor with a bump; but, with surprising agility, he jumped to his feet again.

Then he went for Peele with arms that beat the air wildly. Only two of the blows

caught the cad of the Fourth, but they were hefty blows. Peele howled at each one, but continued to hit the fat junior right and left.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared. They had never seen Tubby Muffin so warlike before nor had they ever seen him in so grim a mood as he tackled Peele.

But Peele was too good for the fat junior, and Tubby Muffin had to give in at last. His face was always fat, but it was puffed in several places when the fight finished.

Peele was blowing hard—smoking ruined his "wind." But he was unmarked. He glared wrathfully at Tubby Muffin.

"Perhaps you won't come here again," he said, with a sneer. "I can oblige you with a licking every day, if you like!"

Tubby Muffin wiped his face with his handkerchief before he answered. He was surprisingly cool and collected.

"Well, we'll see!" he said slowly. "I'm going into training!"

"What?"

"Training, I said!" repeated Tubby Muffin, looking round at the surprised juniors. "Then, when I'm fit, I'm going to give Peele the biggest licking of his life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peele. "Hark at him, chaps!"

The chaps "harked," and apparently it appealed to them as funny. Tubby Muffin, besides being the fattest junior at Rookwood, was probably the laziest.

He had little liking for any kind of exercise, having far more liking for a jolly good feed. But there was no doubt about this. Tubby was in earnest for once.

Jimmy Silver controlled his laughter with an effort.

"Look here, Tubby!" he said. "If you really mean to go into training, I'm willing to be your trainer!"

Tubby Muffin's eyes shone hopefully.

"Really, Silver?" he said quickly. "Then I'm on! I'm going into strict training, and when I'm fit I'm going to fight Peele, then Gower, and then Lattrey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peele & Co.

"You laugh now!" said Tubby Muffin hotly. "But you won't laugh by the time I've finished with you!"

"Oh, spare us, great fat one!" implored Gower. "Most humbly do we beg you to let us off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats!" said Tubby Muffin angrily. "Just you jolly well wait! Come on, Silver!"

And Tubby Muffin left the Common-room to the accompaniment of roars of laughter from the juniors.

Despite the seriousness with which the fat junior had stated his resolve, the Classics did not believe he would carry it out. But they were wrong.

Jimmy Silver & Co. went with Tubby Muffin to his study, and the fat junior closed the door behind them.

"Are you serious, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver at once.

Tubby Muffin nodded his head emphatically. "Certainly," he affirmed. "Peele can't fight for toffee!"

Raby chuckled.

"He can lick you, though!" he said. "That's because I'm out of training," said Tubby quickly. "But he jolly well won't lick me next time."

There was a light of determination in Tubby's eyes. Jimmy Silver & Co. wanted to laugh at him, but Tubby was very serious, and Jimmy Silver was always ready to encourage sportsmanship in the Classical Fourth.

"Right you are, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver. "I'm your trainer! You'll obey orders, of course?"



"Certainly," said Tubby firmly. "I'm going to train until I can lick Peele & Co.—if I have to fight them a dozen times before I eventually lick them!"

"My hat!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, in surprise. "You're dead-set on Peele & Co., Tubby!"

"I am," said Muffin warmly, and turned to Jimmy Silver. "What's the first item in the giddy training, Silver?"

"Are you going to start at once?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"This giddy minute!" declared Tubby. Tubby Muffin was full of surprises that morning. Jimmy Silver & Co. felt bewildered.

Tubby took off his coat, and flung it on a chair.

"Better go for a run first, I think," he said. "Is that all right?"

"Quite!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Tubby as a runner was too much for the Classical leader. He broke into a peal of laughter. But Tubby affected not to hear, and left the study.

Five minutes later the fat junior was trotting round the quadrangle, with his elbows to his side, and perspiration rolling down his fat cheeks.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Tubby in Training!

**T**UBBY! Jimmy Silver called to the fat Classical immediately afternoon lessons had terminated.

Tubby Muffin turned round quickly. "Hallo!" he said. "Hurry up, Silver! I've got a lot to do!"

"My hat!" said Jimmy Silver, in surprise. "Are you still going to stick it, Tubby?"

"Must have lost three hundredweight already!" said Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Newcome," said Tubby plaintively. "I'm in training, you know, and a chap must have a run now and then to keep himself fit!"

"Oh, hold me up, someone!" said Mornington, coming up in time to hear Tubby.

"It's Peele & Co. who will want holding up!" said Muffin darkly. "Are you coming, Silver?"

Jimmy Silver jumped.

"Y-y-yes," he stuttered. "If you really mean it, Tubby!"

"I do!"

And Jimmy Silver and Newcome went to the quadrangle with Tubby Muffin. The fat junior usually called at the tuckshop immediately after lessons, never caring that a meal was ready in the House dining-room.

Tubby could shift that meal and a few others at one sitting. But it was not to the tuckshop he went with Jimmy Silver and Newcome.

Once he reached the quad he set out at a brisk trot round the square, leaving Jimmy Silver and Newcome to stare after him.

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "The fat chump is in dead earnest this time."

"It won't last!" declared Newcome. "Fatty will soon get tired of this game."

Jimmy Silver shook his head doubtfully. "I'm not so sure!" he said.

Half a dozen times Tubby Muffin went round the quadrangle before he pulled up before Jimmy Silver and Newcome. His breath was coming in pants, and the perspiration rolled down his fat face.

"Good enough?" he panted.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Yes. What about a go in the gym now?"

"Right!" said Tubby.

And, without waiting to see if Jimmy Silver was following, Tubby set his arms to his side, and ran off. Jimmy Silver had only half meant what he said, but if Tubby was willing, then so was he.

"I'm going to get some tea!" said Newcome. "These surprises are too much for a little fellow like myself, Jimmy. I'll save you some."

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver. "And save some for Tubby!"

"Eh? You're not going to bring that fat cormorant into the study, are you?" demanded Newcome.

"Yes; he's working hard, and it's up to me as captain of Classical games to encourage it," said Jimmy Silver firmly.

"Oh, my hat!" said Newcome, and he turned and went into the House.

Jimmy Silver reached the gymnasium only a few seconds after Tubby Muffin, but the fat junior was already on the parallel bars.

Jimmy Silver patiently explained the most

beneficial exercises, and Tubby equally as patiently carried them out. He was almost hopeless at first, for the parallel bars and Tubby Muffin were complete strangers.

But when they left the gymnasium nearly an hour after they had gone there, Tubby Muffin was able to perform quite a number of feats on the bars.

"Tubby," said Jimmy Silver, as they went into the Classical House, "there's some good stuff in you, my son!"

Tubby nodded.

"I know there is," he said; but there was no boastfulness in his tone. "And I'm jolly well going to knock stuffing out of Peele & Co. before very long."

"You've a lot to learn yet, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "No good rushing a job like this, you know."

"No; you're right!"

They reached the Fourth Form passage, and Tubby turned to go to his own study. But Jimmy Silver laid a hand on his arm.

"No; come and have some tea with me," he said quietly. "I asked the chaps to save some for us."

Tubby Muffin stared. It was very seldom anybody asked him to tea.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "That's jolly good of you, Silver!"

"Come on!" laughed Jimmy Silver. He led the way to his own study. Newcome, Raby, and Lovell had finished their tea, but there was plenty left for Jimmy Silver and Tubby Muffin.

The chums of the Fourth had had their doubts as to whether there would be sufficient for Jimmy Silver after Raby had been in the study five minutes.

But there was another surprise in store for the Classical juniors.

Jimmy Silver passed over a plate containing two eggs and two rashers of bacon which Raby had cooked for them.

"Here you are, Tubby!" he said. "Something extra special!"

Tubby wamped it aside, with a frown.

"Don't tempt me, Jimmy Silver," he said hastily. "I'm in training, you know. If I eat that stuff I shall get fatter than ever. I've got to get my weight down a bit, you see."

Jimmy Silver & Co. could only stare. Never in the history of Rookwood had such an astonishing thing taken place.

Tubby Muffin had actually refused eggs and bacon!

"My only topper!" ejaculated Raby, staring until it seemed as if his eyes must drop from his head.

"My hat!"

"J-j-j-jiminy!"

"I say, you chaps——" began Tubby.

"Aren't you well?" asked Jimmy Silver hastily.

Tubby Muffin made a noise uncommonly like a snort.

"Fit as a fiddle!" he said. "But——"

"And you—you don't want eggs and bacon?"

"No; it wouldn't do me much good just now. But if——"

"Not feeling faint?" demanded Newcome.

"Oh, really, you chaps! I only want a little bread-and-butter," said Tubby. "It's very decent of you, and all that, but I really mustn't have eggs and bacon while I am in training."

"Jumping Jehosaphat!"

"What silly ass said the age of miracles was past?" murmured Raby.

Tubby did not wait any longer to be helped to bread-and-butter. He took one piece, and poured himself out a cup of tea. The Fistical Four looked on in amazement.

"And to think you've pinched half the grub that's gone astray at Rookwood!" said Newcome.

"Oh, really, Newcome! There are times when a chap can control his appetite, you know!" said Tubby.

"M-m-my hat!"

"Besides, I shall never lick Peele & Co. if I put on more flesh," went on Tubby, as he munched contentedly away at the plain bread-and-butter. "You see, a chap in training must look to his grub quite as much as the physical exercises!"

"Oh!"

"No good trying to make yourself fit if you stuff fattening grub all day," went on Tubby, helping himself to another piece of bread.

"You only have to start all over again. I want to get fit quickly!"

"Oh!"

That was all the Fistical Four could say. They had never seen the fat Classical in this mood before.

They were far more used to seeing Tubby

Muffin creeping out of somebody else's study with jam all over his fat face, or a big cake under his arm.

But here he was now, sitting down with eggs and bacon going begging, so to speak, and contenting himself with plain bread-and-butter.

It was all wrong!

But Tubby Muffin was evidently determined to go into the strictest of strict training. Only three pieces of bread-and-butter would he have, and flatly refused to have any cake.

Then he pushed back his chair. Jimmy Silver had not started his tea at the same time as Tubby—he was too surprised. So Tubby, for perhaps the first time in his life, was finished first.

"I'll wait for you in the gym, if you don't mind, Silver," he said. "I'll just try those exercises over again!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Raby. "You've gone potty, Tubby!"

"Oh, really, Raby!" remonstrated Tubby.

"However, thanks very much for the tea—very decent of you. Shall I see you later, Silver? Perhaps you wouldn't mind having the gloves on with me?"

Jimmy Silver choked.

"Y-y-yes—anything to oblige, Tubby!" he stammered.

And with a nod and a smile, Tubby Muffin hurried from the study.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at one another, but they did not laugh. The situation no longer appealed to them as humorous—Tubby was far too serious for that.

"The—the blessed fathead!" exclaimed Raby. "Fancy laying himself out to do all this for the purpose of licking Peele & Co.!"

"Who'd have thought it?" cried Newcome.

Nobody would have thought Tubby Muffin would ever have refused eggs and bacon. Far rather would they have thought that Tubby would have admitted having had a sufficiency after consuming a hundred eggs and two hundred rashers of bacon.

"But I'm going to help the fat chump!" said Jimmy Silver firmly. "Goodness knows what will come of it—still, I'm going ahead!"

"What about prep?" said Newcome.

"Blow prep!"

"Blow it as much as you like, old scout, but it will have to be done!" chuckled Raby.

"I'm going to have the gloves on with Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver.

And hurriedly finishing his tea, the Classical leader made for the gymnasium.

Tubby Muffin was seated on the floor when he arrived, staring dazedly at the punching-ball. He had gloves on his hands, one of which he was using to rub his head.

"Hallo!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Been trying conclusions with the ball, Tubby?"

"Ow! Yes!" said Tubby. "I say, Silver, you have to be mighty quick to get out of the way, don't you?"

"You don't get out of the way, fathead!" said Jimmy Silver. "You stand up to it—keep it away from you with your fists!"

"Oh!" said Tubby. "But that wants a bit of doing, doesn't it, Silver?"

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"That's what you've got to do, my son," he said. "And until you can do that, you're not much good!"

"Oh!"

"Good for your wrists, too," went on Jimmy Silver. "Go on, Tubby, have another go at the ball!"

Tubby Muffin jumped to his feet, and attacked the ball with renewed vigour. He got several nasty bumps in various parts of his face, but he stuck it manfully.

Jimmy Silver, a boxer of no mean order, watched his charge with critical eyes. Tubby improved every minute.

Tubby Muffin jumped back at last, panting and blowing.

"Now I'll have the gloves on with you," said Jimmy Silver, slipping his hands into a pair of boxing-gloves.

"Good!" said Tubby; and he spoke enthusiastically.

To expect the fat junior to put up much of a fight with Jimmy Silver was expecting too much. Jimmy Silver was one of the finest boxers at Rookwood, and had had considerable experience.

But Tubby went for him as soon as he called "Go!" and with such rush and vigour that Jimmy Silver had all his work cut out to defend himself from the wildly-flying gloves.

Tubby, as was to be expected, tired himself out. Jimmy Silver let him take his own course until, panting and blowing, the fat junior dropped his hands.

"Hope I haven't hurt you, Silver?" he said anxiously.

Jimmy Silver laughed. "You haven't hit me anywhere where you can hurt me," he said. "Now, using your giddy fists like flails won't pay, Tubby. You tire yourself out. You have to take it coolly—like this!"

And Jimmy tapped the fat junior gently on the nose.

"Ow!" cried Tubby. Then he did his best to defend himself. But Jimmy Silver was far too good for him, and landed light blows where he wished.

"Time!" called Muffin frantically. Jimmy Silver dropped his hands, and smiled at his pupil.

"You savvy that now?" he asked. "Ow! Groogh! Yes!" wailed Tubby. "I say, Silver, I wish I could fight like you!"

"You will be able to lick Peele if you stick to it," said Jimmy Silver. "A run in the morning, followed by a swim, then a light breakfast, is the order of things for the morning."

"Good!" said Tubby. "But I should like another round now, Silver—that is, if you don't mind, of course!"

"Anything to oblige!" said Jimmy Silver, with a laugh.

And they had another round, after which Jimmy Silver gave the fat junior a short lecture on the art of boxing.

Then the juniors had to go up for prep.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Tubby, the Fighter.

"STICK IT, Tubby!" It was Peele who shouted that remark to Tubby Muffin early the following morning.

Peele was leaning out of the Classical Fourth's dormitory, grinning with amusement as he watched the fat junior's running round and round the quadrangle.

Tubby, if he heard, heeded not, but continued to run. He had an idea that Peele would change his opinion as to his fistic abilities before very long, and he was content to wait until that time should arrive.

Tubby Muffin stuck to his training, but Peele, although he well knew that the fat junior's purpose was to lick him, did not for a moment think it would be necessary for him to go into any kind of training.

Jimmy Silver did not enlighten the cads as to the progress his fat pupil was making, but he told his own chums, Raby, Newcome, and Lovell could hardly believe all that was said of Tubby Muffin, and said so.

But later, when they had seen Tubby at work on the punching-ball, they altered their views.

"If you ask me," said Raby emphatically. "there's a thumping licking in store for Peele!"

"What-ho!" said Jimmy Silver. "I tell you Tubby has got a hefty punch with him now— plenty of weight behind it, you see!"

"I'm sorry for Peele!" murmured Lovell.

"More than I am!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

"The rotter deserves all he gets!"

Saturday morning dawned, and with it the tenth day of Tubby's training. Jimmy Silver and the fat junior were in the gymnasium before breakfast, enjoying a round with the gloves.

When they had finished, Jimmy Silver turned to Tubby and extended his hand.

Tubby Muffin took it, and shook it heartily.

"That means I can tackle Peele?" he said quickly.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"You can—and Gower and Lattrey with him!" said Jimmy Silver. "And I must say I'm surprised you have stuck to it, Tubby."

"I meant to!" said Tubby. "When Peele shoved me against the wall, he hurt me. Then—he he licked me in the Common-room. A chap must stick up for himself sometimes, you know."

"I didn't give you credit for much go, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver. "However, I'll second you when you fight Peele!"

"Thanks awfully!" said Tubby gratefully. "I'll hump him round the gymnasium after lessons this morning."

Tubby Muffin hardly knew how to sit still during morning lessons, he was so anxious to get at Peele. The cad of the Fourth caught his eye more than once, and a bitter sneer curled at the corners of his lips.

Tubby thought of his chances of removing that sneer. He owed much to Jimmy Silver and the patient training he had received, and Jimmy Silver had announced himself satisfied that he could lick Peele.

That was good enough for Tubby.

The bell rang at last, and Tubby jumped up with alacrity. He was first of the juniors to reach the door when Mr. Bootles, the Form-master, gave them permission to leave the class-room.

Peele followed very soon afterwards, and Tubby Muffin stepped forward and tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"I want a word with you, Peele!" said Tubby ominously.

Peele turned to Gower and Lattrey, who were with him, and laughed.

"I suppose the ass wants another licking!" he said languidly. "Is that so, fatty?"

"Yes—if you can give it to me!" said Tubby Muffin quietly.

Peele did not like the cool way in which Tubby spoke. In former days the fat junior had been wont to work himself up into a state of excitement bordering on hysterics on occasions such as this.

But the cad put on a bold front. "I suppose I shall have to oblige, then!" he said. "Where do you want to go?"

"In the gymnasium," said Tubby Muffin quickly. "I'll meet you there!"

The news of the coming fight spread very quickly. The fact that Tubby Muffin and Peele were to be the combatants would have failed to cause very much interest had it not been well known that the fat junior had been training under Jimmy Silver.

And the idea of Tubby Muffin as a fighting-man appealing to the humorous natures of the Classical juniors, they made for the gymnasium in their crowds.

True to his word, Jimmy Silver was on the spot to second Tubby Muffin, upon whose hands he tied the gloves, whispering a few words of warning as he did so.

"Remember, Tubby," he said softly, "if he hits you on top of the nose, don't sit down and howl. Keep cool, and punch like I have shown you!"

"All right!" said Tubby. "I'm out to play the game as I've been taught!"

"That's it!" said Jimmy Silver enthusiastically. "I fancy you will prove a bit too much for the rotter."

"I hope so!"

"Then keep cool!"

Three minutes later and the two juniors faced one another. A ring had been formed by the Classical juniors.

Lovell was appointed timekeeper and referee, and Morington volunteered to second Peele. But Gower eventually took over the job.

"Time!" called Lovell.

Tubby Muffin did not rush at Peele in his

old way. He stepped quickly towards the cad, and lashed out a hard right. Peele swept it aside, a smile of contempt flashing across his face.

Peele swung his left, then his right, and Tubby Muffin received a blow on the side of his fat face.

The juniors got ready to shout, for they fancied that blow would finish Tubby Muffin. But they were greatly mistaken.

Tubby flinched slightly, and for the moment his eyes glistened wildly. Then there came to him Jimmy Silver's warning words—"Keep cool!"

Tubby kept cool, and returned blow for blow. The first round ended without either gaining any advantage, and the juniors retired to their respective corners.

Tubby was not blowing in the manner that Peele was. The cad's face showed his anxiety. He had expected Tubby to go for him in the same old whirlwind way, not in this cool, deliberate manner.

"Time!" called Lovell.

Tubby advanced quickly to the centre of the ring, and Peele followed reluctantly. It was plain he had no liking for the game.

From that moment Tubby Muffin carried the attack. He went for Peele, lashing out right and left, left and right, and nearly all the blows landed.

One particularly hard right caught Peele on the top of the nose, and the cad sat on the floor with a bump.

"Ow! Yow!" he roared.

"Get up!" said Tubby contemptuously.

"Yowow! Ow! Oh dear, I can't breathe!" howled Peele.

It was perfectly obvious to all that Peele would not continue the fight, and Tubby looked round for fresh worlds to conquer, so to speak.

"Is Gower there?" he asked calmly.

"Gower!"

"My hat!"

Gower was there, and was pushed into the ring by the juniors.

And in a few minutes he was feeling in much the same way as his crony, Peele. He stood up to Tubby longer, and suffered more punishment.

Tubby did not escape scot-free. His right eye was fast closing by the time Gower admitted himself beaten, and his nose was fatter than usual.

But the defeat of Gower warmed his blood, for he was shouting for Lattrey almost before Gower had crawled out of the ring.

Highly delighted, the juniors pushed the reluctant Lattrey into the ring—and he put up his fists in a very half-hearted manner.

He survived one round, and then Tubby was seized, and carried out of the gymnasium shoulder-high. It needed nearly a dozen juniors to carry him, but they succeeded.

The junior's fat face was wreathed in smiles. For once, Tubby Muffin was the hero of the hour.

Jimmy Silver watched the procession, a smile of contentment on his face.

"He does me credit!" he said to Raby.

"But if anybody had told me a fortnight ago that Tubby Muffin could lick Peele, Gower, and Lattrey at one standing, I'd have told them to go and eat coke!"

"Same here!" chuckled the Co. "But he's done it!"

"Now, the question is, how long is he going to keep it up?" said Lovell.

But what followed Tubby Muffin's fight with Peele & Co., and the effect it had on the fat junior, another story must tell.

THE END.

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# KERRUISH V. KERR!

A Magnificent New, Long,  
Complete School Tale of TOM  
MERRY & Co., at St. Jim's.  
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Kerruish's Idea.

"IT'S about time we did something to show that we are alive," said Eric Kerruish, the junior from the Isle of Man, to his chums in Study No. 5 on the Fourth-Form passage at St. Jim's.

"Does anybody really doubt it?" inquired Dick Julian mildly.

"Sure, an' if they do they need only be after applyin' to this address, an' it's meself that will be showin' them!" said Patrick Reilly, from Belfast.

"That's all very well, but I know what Eric means," Harry Hammond said. "We haven't exactly been much in the public eye lately."

"Do we want to be?"

"That was Julian again, mild as ever. But there was a twinkle in his fine dark eyes. He knew how to rouse Kerruish, and he liked doing it.

Those four were very good chums indeed, though they differed strikingly in appearance and temperament. Kerruish and Reilly had points in common; there was Celtic blood in both.

But Julian and Hammond were as far apart in most ways as two fellows well could be.

Julian quite expected the words that came next from Kerruish.

"Call yourself a leader, Dick?" snorted the Manx junior.

"I don't usually call myself anything. Other people call me all the names I get in this study."

"Sure now, Dick, me darlint, rouse yourself an' do something!" pleaded Reilly.

"Oh, you can see what Eric means as well as Hammond?" said Julian, his eyes still gleaming with quiet humour.

"Ah, an' so can you, you bounder!"

"Well, I suppose he's alluding to the fact that it's some time since we played a jape on anyone."

"That's it!" Kerruish said. "I knew you weren't quite the awful duffer you look, Richard!"

"But as far as I can remember the last few japes we tried weren't conspicuous successes," said Julian.

"I don't know about that. Why weren't they?" demanded Hammond.

Julian's robin fluttered from the table to his master's shoulder, and was lifted thence to be placed on his knee, where it stood looking up at him with round bright eyes, and chirping gleefully.

It was Julian's robin, because he had found it in the quad broken-legged, and brought it in, and put its leg into splints, and nursed it back to health. But it was also the property of all four in another sense, and none of them would have hesitated at putting up his fists to defend it, had it needed defence.

Julian's forefinger stroked ever so gently the tiny head now, and he said:

"This little chap reminds me of one of our japes that wasn't a big success, do you know?"

"It didn't pan out well, I own," said Kerruish. "But that was through Racke's butting in and trying to poison old Towser.

Herries ought to have known that I shouldn't have done a thing like that. But I'm not grumbling at Herries; we made it up all right, and I've liked him better ever since."

"We'll leave our next-door neighbours alone this time, though, I think," Julian said.

"If you like, old top, though it's always easy to get at Gussy and Herries. Blake and Digby are a heap sharper, but they can be got at."

"So can anyone, if you only think out how to do it," Julian said.

"If you want a real 'ard nut to crack, Eric, think of something up against those bouncers in No. 9," suggested Hammond.

"Oh, I could think out something that would take down their number all serene!" Kerruish replied. "Levison and Cardew are jolly wide, I admit; I don't admit that Clive's wider than other people. But it wasn't those three I was thinking of at all."

"Bedad! an' who then?" asked Reilly.

"The New House chaps. It's a long, long time since anyone over here has fairly done them brown."

"If you mean Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, I—"

"Of course I mean Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, Dick, you donkey!"

"Well, they're not absolutely the only chaps in the New House, old fellow," returned Julian, lifting Bob, the robin, on the palm of his hand to peck at a piece of cake held between the teeth of Hammond.

"They count for more than any of the rest, don't they? I'm not denying that Redfern and Owen and Lawrence are pretty hefty, but they don't come up to Figgy & Co."

"Sure, an' it's not all that easy to take in Kerr," Reilly remarked.

"If it was all that easy it wouldn't be worth doing," answered Kerruish. "But it can be done, and I've a notion for doing it."

"An' what's the notion?" Reilly asked.

"You remember when Kerr played Walker—silly new chap that came along here and did all sorts of queer things?"

"I remember," said Julian.

"Sure, an' we all remember. Who'd be after forgettin' it?—Tom Merry an' those fellows were done fairly brown. An' Gussy, too. Bedad! wasn't it a lark when Walker stuck his umbrella through Gussy's new topper? But what's Walker got to do with your wheeze at all, at all?"

"Well, those chaps might be done down the same way," said Kerruish.

"I thought you thought you'd thought of something?" Julian put in very gently.

"Haven't I?" snorted Kerruish.

"Well, I should say Kerr thought out that wheeze."

"It ain't original," said Hammond, swallowing the cake to give himself a chance to speak. "I'm disappointed in you, Eric. I didn't exactly 'ope for anything really brilliant, but—"

"We didn't bargain for a crib like that," Reilly finished for him.

"Asses! Chumps! Fatheads! Can't you see that to take in Kerr the same way that

he took in our idiot over here would be a bigger score than doing it in a new way?"

"Besides not needing such a lot of thinking out," murmured Julian.

"What's that you say, Dick? But never mind what you say. It's jolly sure to be rot. Can't you silly chumps see?"

"Bedad! and there's something in that, too," said Reilly.

"Lots in it, if it can only be done!" agreed Hammond.

"If? It can be done—of course it can!"

"But who's going to play Walker the Second?" Julian asked.

"Well, you can't, Dick, that's a sure thing!" replied Kerruish. "With your dark hair, and that face of yours, and your nose, you—"

"I certainly shouldn't propose to play Walker the Second, or any other role, without my face and hair and nose!" said Julian, smiling. "The hair might be disguised, but I—"

"The nose couldn't. Oh, I've no objection to your nose, ass! It's quite a stylish nose in it's style, but—"

"I see; the supposed new boy isn't to be a Jew," Julian said. "Go on, Eric! I can't say I hanker after the part. You're not hurting my feelings, either."

"You're an idiot if I am! I never meant to. Reilly's nose puts him out of court, too."

"Sure, but you're hurtin' my feelin's, an' I'll be after hurtin' yours, good an' hard, in a moment if ye don't apologise or explain!" cried the Irish junior. "What's the matter with my nose, then?"

"It's all right to sniff with," replied Kerruish, dodging behind the table. "And it's not too offensive to look at that it spoils any landscape that it gets into. But no one could mistake it. Kerr would know it like a shot! So would Figgy and Fatty, though they're not so keen as Kerr. And there's your brogue, too."

"My brogue is ut, then? I haven't the laste trace of an accent at all, at all—have I, you fellows?"

"It will 'ave to be either me or you, Eric," said Hammond.

"You? Why, you're dead off, you silly kid!" replied Kerruish.

"Ow's that?"

"Out!" said Reilly, grinning.

"Stands to reason you can't fake yourself up to look like a stranger."

"You reckon as 'ow you can, then?"

"Well, look at me. Honestly, now, is there any of you three that could begin to look like anyone else as well as I could?"

They looked at him, and they had to admit to themselves that he was right.

Kerruish had nothing marked about his features. He was not at all bad-looking; but such good looks as he had were much what thousands of other fellows have. His nose was like any number of other noses. His hair was tawny-brown, with nothing distinctive about it, like Kerr's red poll, or the bluish-black of Julian's head-covering.

"Faith, an' you're like nobody in particular an' everyone in general!" said Reilly.

"You're the sort of fellow whom no one would remember after five minutes, Eric," agreed Julian. "I've only to shut my eyes, and I can forget completely what you are like."

"I'd rather 'ave a face myself!" Harry Hammond said. "But I dare say it's 'andy sometimes to 'ave a what-is-it instead!"

"Oh, you've got a face all right, old bean! Be thankful you haven't two of 'em I shouldn't think anyone would want more than one of that sort!" growled Kerruish.

"Let's chuck compliments, and get on with business," said Julian. "It's settled that Kerr—including Figgy and Fatty, but if Kerr is done brown so will they be—it's settled that Eric, here, is to take in Kerr. What's our share in the great vangle?"

"I've got to think that out," answered Kerruish. "I shall want your help, of course. But I don't just know in what way yet."

"Come along, Second and Third Grave-diggers, and leave Hamlet to it!" said Julian.

And the three left the study that Kerruish might have time and space for thought.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Figgins & Co. Meet Angle.

"**C**ARE to come over to Wayland with me this afternoon, you fellows?" asked Dick Julian of Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, meeting them in the quad between classes and dinner on the next day, which was Wednesday, and, of course, a half-holiday.

There was nothing to arouse suspicion in that invitation. Julian was on friendly terms with the three.

"What's on?" asked Figgins.

"Oh, nothing in particular. But my uncle is away for a holiday, and he told me that I might use his show to entertain some of my friends any time I liked. There's a decent garden, you know, and the raspberries aren't all over yet—he has some of the late sorts—and his housekeeper will get tea for us."

"Let's go!" said Fatty eagerly. "It's ages since I went out to tea anywhere—ages! It will be a good tea, won't it, Julian? But I know it will. And raspers—oh, my hat! You fellows would never be such silly asses as to say 'No'!"

"You're a pig!" Figgins said. Figgy was sometimes more candid than polite. "But it's not half a bad wheeze, either. There's no cricket that matters on this afternoon, and we hadn't anything very special to do."

"What do you say, Kerr?" asked Julian.

Kerr was rather more by way of being Julian's friend than either Figgy or Fatty.

But that fact did not make Julian any the less keen to hoax Kerr. He was really keen now. It was worth doing, for Kerr was not easily taken in. And it all counted in the friendly feud between School House and New House.

"After Fatty's made it so clear that he longs for your charming society, and Figgy that he would chuck any other engagement like a shot for your sweet sake," replied Kerr, with a touch of sarcasm, "what is there left for me to say except that I'll come, for the sake of tea and raspberries, and because I haven't another blessed thing in the world to do."

"Ass!" snorted Figgins.

"Sarc's cheap!" said Fatty placidly. "But I don't get what I should call a real good tea every day, or every other day. Are the rest of your crowd coming, Julian?"

"Reilly and Hammond will come along with us; but I don't fancy we shall see Kerruish till after tea, if then. He has other fish to fry."

"He could bring them along and fry them at your uncle's show, couldn't he?" Figgy said. "Old Fatty would help him. He's a wolf for fried fish!"

"Oh, don't you try to be funny!" groaned Fatty. "Kerr's sarc is bad enough, but your cheap wit's worse. You can book us, Julian."

"Right-ho!" answered Julian; and he walked away smiling.

The six set off after dinner. They intended visiting the picture show before going along to the hospitable house of Mr. Moss. It was hot for such an entertainment—very hot; but Julian had asked them whether they cared about it, and the chance was too good to be missed by fellows whose funds did not run to cinema shows just whenever they chose.

Dick Julian always had plenty of cash—

far more than any of the five who were riding into Wayland with him. His uncle, Mr. Moss, kept him well supplied.

There had been a time when few St. Jim's fellows would have cared about visiting the house of Mr. Isidore Moss. That gentleman had carried on a moneylending business in Wayland, and stories had been current of harsh dealings on his part with those who had got into his clutches.

Perhaps some of those stories had been true. But the worst of them were not. And there was another side to the character of Mr. Moss, as Dick Julian had known all along, and as others had come to know now. The moneylending business was a thing of the past, and the fortune that would be Dick's some day was far smaller than it had been, and that was chiefly due to the boy's influence.

Mr. Moss had helped more than one St. Jim's junior out of a difficulty; and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had a very high standard of conduct, for himself as well as for others, had been heard to say that Mr. Moss was "one of the very best." Which, as that mocker, Ralph Reckless Cardew, would have remarked, settled the question.

Figgins & Co. would not have gone to Mr. Moss's in the old days. They were quite willing to go now, and only sorry that Julian's uncle was away from home, though, of course, that did mean a little more freedom for the whole party.

Nothing more was said about Kerruish. That junior watched the six wheel their bikes across the quad, and grinned in anticipated triumph.

Kerruish was very confident—none the less so because he had no past reputation as an expert in impersonation to maintain.

Monty Lowther, Kerr, Cardew, and one or two others had done that sort of thing, sometimes with success, sometimes otherwise; but Kerruish was making his first attempt.

He reckoned that this was all in his favour. Kerr was the less likely to suspect him.

It was School House v. New House—it was Study No. 5 of the School House Fourth Form against Figgins & Co. But essentially it was Kerruish v. Kerr.

That was how Kerruish looked at it, anyway. He was sure that no danger of discovery was to be apprehended from Figgins or Wynn; and he regarded Julian, Reilly, and Hammond as mere supernumeraries.

They had their little parts to play; but Julian had not been far wrong when he had suggested that they were merely three gravediggers, while Kerruish was cast for Hamlet.

There are only two gravediggers in "Hamlet," but a little thing such as that is of no consequence.

Kerruish, having watched confederates and expected victims depart, proceeded to get busy.

When he left St. Jim's some time later he looked his usual self. He carried a suit-case, upon which were the initials "W. A." That suit-case belonged to a youngster in the Third named Wilfred Ambrose, a recent arrival at the school from Kerruish's native island. But the name to which Kerruish proposed to fit those initials was William Angle, or W. Angle, or Wangle, if you like.

Kerruish thought that no end smart. It would be a score against Kerr and his chums when the comedy was played out.

There were a few things inside that suit-case, and when Kerruish, having plodded over to Rylcombe station with it, got into the train for Wayland, he was careful to choose a compartment with no-one else in it.

He did not look like Kerruish when he got out. His brown hair was covered with a black wig, and his eyebrows were darkened to match the wig. He had been tempted to do quite a lot of making up; but he remembered the heat, and forbore anything of the kind except a line or two, which seemed to him to alter the contours of his face.

He wore a tie such as no St. Jim's junior would have thought of wearing. Gussy's taste in ties often provoked the derision of his chums; but Gussy would never have worn anything that shrieked as that tie did.

The socks of Kerruish—or, rather, of Angle—did not exactly match that tie. It is doubtful whether it could have been matched anywhere. But, as the tie had all the primary colours and several others, and the socks had several of the colours in the tie, there was between tie and socks a certain harmony. W. Angle also wore white kid gloves, and carried an umbrella. It was quite a nice umbrella. It belonged to Gussy, and Kerruish had borrowed it when he was not looking.

Julian and his guests had been to the cinema. They had hunted over the raspberries for the fruit that still remained, and he found enough to satisfy Fatty Wynn as well as the rest.

They were at tea in the pleasant garden when Mr. Moss's elderly housekeeper came out to speak to Julian.

"There's a young gentleman called to see the master, sir," she said. "I thought perhaps you would see him, as your uncle's away. But, of course, if you don't want to, Master Dick— And he is rather a queer young gentleman, I must say."

"Oh, I'll see him!" said Julian readily. "Did he say what his name was, Mrs. Isaacs?"

"Bangle—no, that wasn't it, either. But it was something like that, too."

"Why, I know him! It's Angle—Bill Angle—they used to call him 'Bangle,' so you're not far wrong, Mrs. Isaacs. Perhaps he said 'Bangle'—he's an absent-minded beggar."

Julian went off. Reilly and Hammond looked as unconcerned as they knew how. Probably it was lucky for them that Kerr did not spot them looking unconcerned, though, for each considered the other over-did it.

But Kerr, like Figgy, and—at a distance—like Fatty, was busy with the excellent tea Mrs. Isaacs had set before them.

"Bangle," murmured Figgy, helping himself to another slice of cake. "Queer name that!"

"If he's Bill, he must be William, so he would be 'Wangle'—that's still queerer," said Kerr.

Reilly touched Hammond's knee under the table. Had Kerr got on to it already?

But it did not appear that Kerr had.

In a few minutes Dick Julian reappeared, with a fellow about his own age.

Hammond touched Reilly's knee now, and winked at him with the eye that was farthest from Figgy & Co.

It looked all right to Hammond, and Reilly also was satisfied. Certainly neither of them would have known the black-haired fellow with the loud tie and socks, the white gloves, and the umbrella, for Kerruish.

The wig fitted well, and Kerruish's somewhat ordinary features did not give him away. He had changed his expression. As Hammond said cuttingly afterwards, "He seemed to have stopped bothering not to look a silly ass, and just let his face slide. Certainly he looked a silly ass then."

"I say, you fellow, here's news!" said Julian. "This is Bill Angle—chap I've known some time—and he's coming to St. Jim's! His people sent him along to my uncle, not knowing the old boy was away; but as things are, I suppose he'd better come along with us to-night, though he may not be expected till to-morrow."

This was not the frozen truth, of course; but Dick Julian, ordinarily as truthful a fellow as one might readily find, saw no harm in a few whackers that were really only part of a play.

"Introduce us!" said Kerr, smiling.

Figgins did not smile. He contemplated Angle without the least sign of enthusiasm. And Fatty Wynn gasped. The new fellow did not appeal to the taste of Fatty.

"This is Kerr, Bill!" said Julian, indicating the Scots junior.

"How do you do, Kerbil?" said Angle, grinning inanely.

"Not Kerbil, but Kerr, ass!" Julian corrected him.

"Beg pardon, Kerass!" Angle said meekly.

"Oh, let it go, Julian!" Kerr said. "I am quite well, I thank you, Wangle, and I wish you the same, and many of them!"

Again Reilly and Hammond wondered whether Kerr was on the track of the deception. But they concluded that he was only talking rot because Angle struck him as funny.

"Figgins!" said Julian.

"Pleased to meet you, Figgins!" squeaked Angle.

There was wrath in the eyes of George Figgins; but politeness tied his tongue and his hands, and he only murmured something that might have been quite civil.

"Wynn!" Julian said.

"My word! Not half fat, is he?" chuckled Angle.

Fatty's plump cheeks were tinged with pink, and his china-blue eyes gleamed. But he said nothing—literally nothing. He simply allowed Angle to grip his hand.

"Reilly!" was Julian's next announcement.

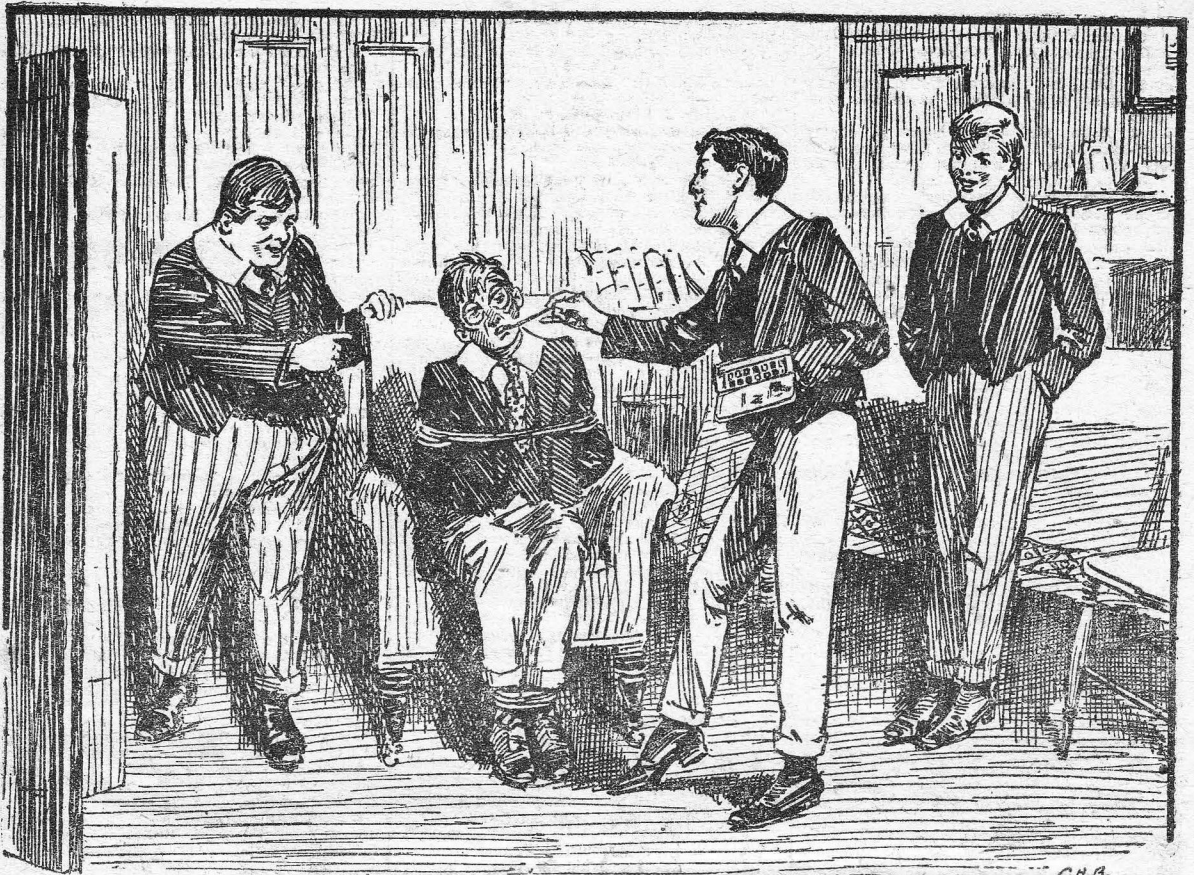
"Irish!" squeaked Angle. "Can't say I like them. I don't think I shall be at all pally with Reilly."

"Ye spalpeen!" muttered the Belfast boy.

"Hammond!" said Julian.

"Not the hatter's son, surely?" exclaimed





"Yaroo!" roared Kerruish. "I don't want that paint brush in my mouth—!" "Keep it shut then!" replied Figgins coolly, and he proceeded with the painting under the helpful direction of Fatty Wynn. (See page 15.)

Angle. "Dear me! I am so pleased to meet you, Hammond! I always wear your father's hats, you know. They are dear, but so good! I dare say he allows some discount to your friends. I do hope you are in the New House?"

"I say!" gasped Figgins. "I say, though! You're not booked for the New House, are you?"

"Oh, yes! Didn't you know? I told Julian, here, so almost the moment I saw him."

"I kept it back as a pleasant surprise for you fellows," said Julian.

"Oh, my hat!" Figgins gasped. "Don't mind me, Angle, it's the heat, you know. Oh, my hat!"

Reilly and Hammond roared. Kerr and Fatty did not. They stood looking at Angle, and, if their faces afforded any clue to their feelings, those feelings were at least as intense as those Figgins had expressed with some confusion, but too plainly for anyone to mistake.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**

**Angle Goes to the New House.**

"SIT down and have some tea, Bill," said Julian.

"I thank you, Richard! I will do so," replied Angle gravely.

Kerruish was in high feather. He fancied that he was playing his part no end well. He had not as yet been guilty of any serious blunder; but over-confidence was not likely to help him. Kerr's eyes were very keen, and Kerr's wits were as keen as his eyes.

Angle sat down in a lounge chair, and passed a handkerchief over his heated face. He smudged it slightly in doing so.

"You've picked up some blacks from the engine-smoke, Wangle," said Kerr.

An expression of alarm crossed the face of the pretended new boy as he glanced at his handkerchief. He wished he had resisted entirely the temptation to use make-up.

"Oh, yes!" he said. "Thank you, old chap—I mean, Kerass!"

Kerr gave him a sharp look. The Scots junior had not got on to the deception yet; but there was something about Angle that already puzzled him.

"Old chap," too. There had been a familiar ring about those words, about the tone in which they were spoken.

But he forgot his doubts during the next few minutes.

It was Julian rather than Angle who made him forget them. Julian talked of things he and Angle had done and seen together in the past, and he talked quite convincingly, causing Reilly and Hammond and the impostor himself to wonder. Dick was not in the way of drawing the long-bow like this, they thought.

But Julian was keen to carry the thing through, and he treated it entirely as an effort of imagination. He did not think of Angle as Kerruish, but as Angle, and he invented episodes in Angle's past to fit him. They were mostly comic episodes, showing up Angle as an ass. But as Figgins & Co. had quite made up their minds that Angle was a most stupendous ass, that was all right.

"Remember when you bet Simpson that you would butt a bobby in the back, Bill?" said Julian, his fine eyes twinkling. "I tried to keep you out of it; I didn't want to go to the station as an accessory before the fact. But—"

"You didn't go!" growled Angle. "Because I didn't—"

"I know you didn't give me away—you couldn't very well have done, as I wasn't guilty!" cut in Julian. "You fellows may think it a bit mean to have deserted a pal—"

"I don't!" snorted Figgy. "I'd jolly well have deserted him, I know! Where's the sense of butting bobbies in the back?"

"The other side's best, isn't it, Figgy?" gibed Kerr.

"Rats! I don't do that sort of thing—can't see the fun of it. Look here, Angle, don't you try that kind of game on at St. Jim's!"

"I never did! I— Julian's pulling your legs!" stammered Angle.

Julian shook his head gravely.

"Not a bit of use trying to disguise what a reckless, dashing blade you are, Bill!" he said. "These fellows will soon find you out; they're no end keen—especially Wynn. You're as keen as a razor, aren't you, Fatty, old dear?"

"I'm not so keen as Kerr," replied Fatty. "Kerr's the keenest chap I know. Nobody's going to take him in."

Reilly and Hammond looked at one another again, and Angle felt uneasy for a moment.

"I suppose that we ought to be getting on, as this chap is to go back with us," said Julian.

"I say, though, he hasn't a bike," objected Figgins.

"Oh, there's one here he can have. No difficulty about that."

"But—look here, you know—he wasn't coming till to-morrow, was he?"

Somehow Figgy did not appear at all anxious to stand as one of Angle's sponsors in the New House, so to speak.

"That doesn't matter," Julian answered.

"As my uncle's away—"

"But Mrs. Isaacs could put him up all serene. She's a good sort, and—and I'm sure she'd like to have him."

Figgy carefully avoided the eyes of Angle as he made his suggestions and excuses.

"It would be dull for Bill," said Julian thoughtfully. "No, we can't leave him here."

"Ratty's a queer old stick, you know. He may not like Angle coming a day early," Figgins said desperately.

"That's all right. He needn't show up till to-morrow. You've more than one empty bed over on your side, haven't you?" returned Julian.

Figgy gave it up. It was plain that he and his chums were to be saddled with the unspeakable Angle, whether they liked it or not.

But Reilly and Hammond noticed that Kerr

said nothing. Was there any reason for his not sharing Figgy's objection to Angle?

Julian got out the spare bike. None of the other juniors had ever heard of Mr. Moss riding a bike; but there was nothing much in that—unless one already cherished suspicions.

They bade the housekeeper a cheery "Good-evening!" and ran out the bikes. Mr. Moss' house was in a quiet street, and no one was passing as they came out.

Angle had put on his white gloves again, and he had the umbrella and suit-case to hamper him.

He showed considerable clumsiness. It was not natural clumsiness. Eric Kerruish could have managed a bike, a suit-case, and an umbrella without getting things mixed up. But Bill Angle somehow barged the off pedal of his machine into the front wheel of Figgy's, breaking a spoke or two, and forcing Figgy to dismount so hurriedly that he finished up sitting, while at the same moment he got the ferrule of his gamp into Fatty's left ear, and dropped his suit-case upon the toes of Kerr.

"He, he! Isn't that funny?" gurgled Angle.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Julian and Reilly and Hammond.

"You clumsy idiot!" roared Figgins.

"Steady on, you know! I don't want my head punctured!" grumbled Fatty.

"He, he! It's too fat for that!" sniggered Angle.

Kerr said nothing. He had lifted the suit-case, and it struck him as being very light. Kerr was growing thoughtful.

Julian whispered in the ear of Bill Angle a warning to go slow for a bit. After all, this game could not last beyond the time when the patience of Figgins & Co. became exhausted.

There was no particular reason why they should cherish a supposed new fellow. They did not possess the high-flow politeness of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They had not—at least, Figgins had not—as much patience as Tom Merry, who was always decent to new boys.

Of course, they had been asked to Mr. Moss' on purpose to meet Angle, and thus have him put upon a footing with them which would have been hard to ensure in any other way.

But, once clear of the hospitable house in which they had met him, they were in some sort released from any strong reason for being polite to him.

And the whole wheeze depended so very much on his being able to do things in his assumed character which he would not have ventured to do as Kerruish.

Figgy was morose for quite ten minutes on the way home. It was seldom Figgy could keep it up longer than that. Fatty evinced no desire to talk to the stranger. But Kerr, having helped him to attach suit-case and umbrella to his bike, engaged him in conversation.

"I hope Kerruish won't go givin' the game away, bedad!" whispered Reilly to Julian.

"Sure, an I'd rather see him talkin' to the other two, so I would. Kerr's fly."

"Can't be helped," replied Julian. "Eric's in it right up to the neck now, and he'll have to carry it through on his own."

"Been to school before, Wangle?" asked Kerr.

"Oh, yes, of course, Kerass," replied Angle.

"My name's Kerr. I'm not such an ass as I look, you know," said the Scots junior quietly.

"Ear that?" hissed Hammond to Julian.

Figgins and Fatty were riding ahead with Julian, Reilly, and Hammond behind them, and Kerr and Angle in the rear.

"Hear what?" demanded Figgins, turning his head.

"Oh, nothing!" answered the little Cockney in haste.

"Look out, you fathead! You'll have me over if you get yawing across the road that way!" howled Fatty.

"I only turned my head, chump!"

"You turned your front wheel, too, and jolly nearly barged into me! If you want to talk to those chaps behind—"

"I don't want to talk to you, anyway!" snapped Figgy.

"Well, don't, then! I'm sure I don't want to hear you jaw!"

This slight jangle took off the attention of the three from what was being said behind them for a moment. What they next heard was:

"At Douglas."

"Ah! In the Isle of Man, eh?"

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"Begorra, there's an omadhaun for ye!" snorted Reilly.

"Yes—that is, no—I mean Douglas in Scotland."

"Don't know it," said Kerr. "I'm a Scot, too."

"It's only a little place."

"Are the colours you're sporting your old school's?"

"Yes; neat, aren't they?"

"They are neat, but not gaudy, as the devil said after he'd painted his tail red, green, blue, and yellow! Did all the fellows at your school wear white gloves?"

"Oh, no. But I like to wear gloves. I consider it gives a finish to a fellow's appearance," replied Angle primly.

"Puts the lid on, so to speak, eh? It does all that."

Kerr went on asking questions, and Angle went on answering them. But he was no longer taken by surprise, and he did not blunder badly.

Nevertheless, Julian, Reilly, and Hammond were far from easy. If there had been anything really important hanging upon Kerruish's wheeze they would have been very uneasy indeed.

But it was Kerruish's funeral, as Julian said. He had kept the thing so very much in his own hands that it had become a contest between him and Kerr to a much greater extent than a School House attempt to take down the number of the New House.

The three were relieved when at length the gates of St. Jim's were reached. In a few minutes their part in the business would be over. Kerruish would be left to it, and in the event of discovery Kerruish would be left single-handed to the tender mercies of Figgins & Co.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Caught Out!

AS the seven pushed their bikes across the quad they met Levison, Cardew, and Clive taking a stroll before prep.

"Hallo, Julian!" said Clive. "I was looking for you. That bird of yours is out. I saw him a few minutes ago, but he wouldn't let me get my hands on him."

"That's all right, thanks, Clive," Julian replied. "He often gets out; we can't keep the window shut this weather, you know. I'll have a squirt round for him if he isn't in our study when we get up. But he generally flies back pretty soon."

"New fellow?" asked Levison, with a nod towards Angle, who had passed on with Kerr.

"Yes—confound him!" growled Figgins. "New House, as well as new fellow?" inquired Cardew.

"Yes—bust him!"

"He's the atrocious limit," said Fatty Wynn sadly.

"Don't trouble to introduce us," Cardew said blandly. "We know all the New House fellows we want to. But I should think he would suit your crowd down to the ground, if he's really the atrocious limit. By the way, where's Kerruish?"

"He didn't come out with us," replied Julian innocently. "I'll tell him you want him when—"

"But I don't, old gun! I can't imagine myself wantin' Kerruish. I only wondered that he was not with you, that's all."

"Lucky Kerr didn't 'ear that!" Hammond whispered to Julian.

Levison & Co. passed on, grinning.

"What have you fellows got up your giddy sleeves?" asked Figgins, rather crossly. "You keep on whispering to one another like a blessed lot of girls!"

"Sure, Figgy doesn't like girls!" remarked Reilly.

"I don't!" snapped Figgy.

"We'd better say good-bye for the present!" Julian said. "Figgy isn't feeling very amiable, I'm afraid. But Bill Angle will cheer him up, I'm sure."

"Bill Angle had better not let me catch him trying to cheer me up!" snorted Figgins. The two New House juniors ran their bikes into the shed, and hurried after Kerr and Angle, who had put up theirs. Julian and the other two stood at the door of the shed watching them as they passed over to the New House.

Just before they reached the door something happened.

A bird fluttered down from one of the old elms, circled round the four, and alighted on Kerruish's shoulder.

"Ang it all! That does it!" said Hammond.

"Not necessarily. Depends upon what Eric says," replied Julian.

Angle came very near indeed to giving the game away.

"Why—" he began. He was going to say: "Why, it's Bob!" But he changed it to:

"Why, what's this?"

"Julian's robin," answered Kerr. "See if he'll let you take hold of him."

Angle's hand went up before Angle had taken time to think. Bob allowed himself to be handled.

"He's very tame!" muttered the impostor, flushing.

"Very—with you," replied Kerr drily.

"Let him go," Figgins said. "Julian, here's your bird!" he called.

Dick Julian gave a chirrup that Bob knew, and the red-breasted morsel of life left the open hand of one friend to fly across to another.

"Come along!" said Kerr.

Both Fatty and Figgins, though neither of them could be said to be more than commonly observant of small things, noticed a change in Kerr's voice. There was something almost triumphant in it.

Did Angle notice?

It would almost seem that he did, for he hung back an instant.

But he thought of the chipping he would get from his chums if he drew back now, and he nerved himself to go through with the business.

After all, it was not certain that Kerr had spotted him.

He could not help feeling suspicious that Kerr had, however, and as he followed the three into the New House his brain was busy with schemes to do something startling enough to justify all the trouble he had taken, and to get out again in all possible haste.

At the turn of a passage Kerr caught Figgy's arm by one hand and Fatty's by another, and held them back momentarily.

Angle was thus left ahead. He went on without hesitation in the right direction, though he had a choice of ways.

Even when he heard Kerr chuckle behind him he did not realise what he had done. In itself it was a very small thing. But it happened to be the last test Kerr wanted to put.

Kerr was quite sure now.

He had suspected from the moment when he lifted that suit-case, which was now in Angle's hand.

Even before that Kerr had felt vague stirrings of something that was almost suspicion. But the lightness of the suit-case had been the first tangible thing.

Once having had his suspicions aroused, he should have known at once that the pretended stranger was Kerruish; it might be thought. But he had not been quite sure. The expression of the face was not like that of Kerruish, and the Manx junior had never been credited with any special ability in the acting line. Moreover, the wig fitted so well that Kerr had not been able yet to assure himself that it was a wig, and the eyebrows were darker than Kerruish's.

But not the eyelashes—Kerr noted that now, and told himself he ought to have noticed it before. Angle had forgotten the eyelashes.

"Here's our study," said Kerr, pushing open the door.

Angle glanced around, and sniffed.

"I don't think much of it!" he said.

"If you smell anything nasty, say so; don't sniff like that!" snapped Fatty, who seldom snapped at anyone.

"Oh, I don't know that there's anything the matter with the smell! A trifle musty, perhaps. Comes from not having the window open often enough, no doubt. But I don't like it. I sha'n't come in here with you fellows."

"You certainly won't!" said Figgins emphatically.

"Would you like to see Ratcliff at once, Wangle?" asked Kerr.

"Oh, no, not in the least! I'm in no hurry," replied Angle, speaking in a hurry, however.

Kerr gave Figgy a wink that Figgy did not understand at the moment.

"You'll have to see him, you know," he said.

"But Julian said to-morrow would do for that," protested Angle.

If he were taken to Mr. Ratcliff the whole wheeze was bound to end in disaster. For the master of the New House was not expecting an addition to the boys under his control; and directly he began to make inquiries, the game was up, as Kerruish saw.

"You don't know our dear Ratty. He's a queer old stick," said Kerr. "I wouldn't



answer for the row there might be tomorrow if he found out that you'd come overnight and hadn't reported to him."

"I'll chance that!" said Angle recklessly. "It was not so very reckless, either, as he had no intention of staying more than a few minutes longer, at all. He had begun to think that he could feel satisfied if he got clear of the New House with his imposture undetected."

But he wanted to do something first—something that he could tell the other fellows about when he got back to his own study.

He looked round for something that might be done, but failed to find anything.

Of course, it would be possible to punch the head of Figgins or Kerr or Fatty, or two of them—there would not be time to punch all three heads—and then bolt.

But it was hardly worth while to have gone to all the trouble of the disguise for so small a triumph as that. And—there was no blinking the fact—he would have to pay for it afterwards. George Figgins was most unquestionably above Kerruish's form; Kerr was a far cleverer boxer; and even Fatty might lick him if he went all out to do it.

"Where do you think you're going to hang out until you see Ratty?" asked Figgins, with rather an edge to his voice.

"Oh, I shall be all right here, I suppose!" answered Angle.

Kerr had got behind him now, and as he said that the Scots junior lifted his hand.

Fatty Wynn's round eyes went rounder yet as that hand hovered above the head of the pretended new boy. He nudged Figg.

"Don't you think you would be just as well in the School House, Kerruish, you old ass?" rapped out Kerr.

And as he spoke the Manx junior's name he snatched off the wig.

"My hat! It's Kerruish!" gasped Figgins. "The cheeky spoofer!" exclaimed Fatty hotly.

Kerruish swung round. It was plain to him that the time had come to do something and escape.

The sudden swerve took Kerr unprepared, and knocked him off his balance. He crashed down before the hard shoulder-charge that Kerruish gave, and Figg tripped over the foot that the impostor stuck out.

Kerruish made for the door, and he might have got clear away had not temptation seized him.

Fatty was making for him. Kerruish snatched up a waste-paper basket, and brought it down over Fatty's head, eclipsing him completely. But Fatty, reaching out blindly, grabbed him, and held on.

A screen was in the way of Kerruish. He tried to dodge round it; but Fatty fell on top of him, and the screen came clattering down on top of them both.

"Don't let the bouncer go! Sit on him, Fatty!" howled Figg.

"I'm trying to, ass!" came, muffled by the waste-paper basket, from under the screen.

Kerr, scrambling up, snatched the thing away. Fatty, his head still in the basket, had somehow managed to get above Kerruish. As Kerr relieved him of the encumbrance, he squirmed round and took a seat on the waist-coat of the detected japer.

It was no joke to be sat upon by Fatty Wynn. Kerruish thought the whole affair had gone far enough now.

"Pax!" he said.

"Pax be hanged for a tale!" yelled Figgins.

"You think—"

"Steady, old man—steady!" said Kerr.

"You don't want Ratty up, do you?"

"It would serve this bouncer jolly well right if he did come up!" said Figgins vengefully.

"The cheek of the School House worm! The blessed cheek of him! To think he could take us in—us!"

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Vengeance!

"I DID take you in!" gasped Kerruish. "Yoop! Get up, Fatty, you ton of blubber—you're squashing me!"

"So I will squash you!" retorted Fatty. "We'll teach you School House duffers to try your silly japes on us! You might have known we should see through it!"

"Duffer yourself! Fat duffer! You didn't twig me, and neither did Figg, and you wouldn't ever have done, either of you! It was Kerr who got on to me, and he didn't do it all at once!"

"No, Wangle—no!" answered Kerr. "I didn't get on to you quite at once, though I might have done, for that really was rather a silly name to take, wasn't it? I'm not sure

that that wasn't the thing that first set me wondering. On the whole, though, it wasn't so badly stage-managed—for kids like you. Quite a hefty notion, Julian's taking us along to tea at Mr. Moss, and a new chap turning up unexpectedly there—chap he'd known before. But that was Julian's share of the plot, I suppose, not yours."

"Yes, Julian thought of that," admitted Kerruish. "Yow! If you must sit on me, Fatty, you beast, do sit still! When you wriggle like that you churn all my inside arrangements up. Yoop!"

"Let's tie him up, Kerr!" said Figg. "We shall have to send him back looking nice, you know; and I don't believe he'll sit still while we do the necessary improvements unless we do tie him up."

"I say—Oh, chuck it! You don't want to—"

"Your mistake, Kerruish, dear boy! We do want to, and we're going to!" said Kerr cheerily.

Figgins produced some rope, strong but not too thick, and he and Kerr tied up Kerruish in the most scientific manner.

Only when the hands and feet of their victim were fast bound did Fatty arise.

Kerruish made no further protest. It was useless, he knew. A captive in the fortress of the enemy, he simply had to go through with it.

They sat him in the armchair.

"Oh, you mug!" Figg apostrophised him.

"You utter mug! To imagine you could take us in—us!"

"I did! It was only Kerr who spotted me. I knew all along that I should be safe from the long-legged duffer and the fat ass. It was only the red-headed bouncer I had any doubt about. Tell us how you got on to me, Kerr."

"No time for that," said Figgins. "Where's that paint-box?"

"Oh, it won't take more than a minute or two!" Kerr said. "And it may be useful to Wangle when he tries to wangle again. Can't say I think a lot of this attempt, though it might have been worse. In the first place, Wangle, my pipkin, your name rather suggested something in the way of an attempted do, you know. Still, William Angle is quite a possible moniker, and that in itself didn't completely give the show away!"

"I want to know what did, not what didn't, chump!" growled Kerruish.

"Well, there was your absence, for one thing. Julian & Co. were one short. But there wasn't a fat lot in that, either. A make-up's a mistake on a hot day, though. You didn't really need any make-up apart from the wig, and the change of colour in your eyebrows—which you remembered—and your eyelashes—which you forgot, dear boy!"

Kerruish gave a little groan. He had quite forgotten the eyelashes. But that was so small a thing that only eyes as keen as Kerr's would have noticed it.

"There was something in the way you said 'old chap' that was familiar to me, and when you wiped your silly face—you did make it look even sillier than usual, I'll admit, and that takes some doing—the smear on it wasn't quite like a smear from smoke-blacks, though I did suggest that, as you didn't seem able to think of any excuse yourself."

"You never gave me time!" protested Kerruish.

"But still all that didn't amount to so very much; and you might have been at school at Douglas—in Scotland, of course—without being Kerruish. But it really was a rummy thing that a new fellow should be trotting round an empty suit-case, and that he should put up Mr. Moss' Sunbeam bike in the place where Kerruish usually puts his Sunbeam, which was conveniently empty for it. Queer, too, that Wangle should know the way to this study, though it was to be presumed that he had never been inside the place before. But it was queerest of all that Julian's robin, which isn't afraid of anybody, but doesn't like being touched except by you four, should light on your shoulder, and let you take him off."

"I'll wring that blessed bird's neck!" fumed Kerruish.

"Can't we see you doing it? Paint-box ready, Figg?"

"Look here, you're never going to paint my face? I—"

"Of course not. What on earth could make you think that? Why, you wouldn't like it a bit; and you surely don't think we'd do anything to hurt your dear little feelings after you've been so very kind to us!"

"You barged against me on purpose, and

broke three spokes in the front wheel of my bike, you bouncer!" said Figg.

"And you said nasty rude things about me being fat!" growled Fatty Wynn. "You thought I shouldn't punch your head because I reckoned you were a silly new ass, but—"

"Oh, get on with it, and get it over!" Kerruish said desperately. "It will be time for prep in a few minutes, and if I'm seen over here after that there will be a jolly row!"

"Why, I thought you'd made up your mind to stay the night, Wangle!" gibed Kerr.

"Prussian blue or crimson lake for his nose?" asked Fatty.

"Blue, I think," Figgins said, contemplating Kerruish with his head on one side. "Yes, blue for his sniffer, and circles of lake round his eyes. Chin, orange; cheeks, green."

"There isn't enough paint in the giddy box for, all his cheek," Kerr remarked.

Figgins got to work.

Protests were unavailing, and Kerruish knew it. Nevertheless he could not wholly still them. He had to protest when Figg thrust a brush loaded with green paint into his mouth; and he also voiced objections to paint in the corners of his eyes.

Kerr and Fatty watched with cheerful grins.

"Just fancy a School House bouncer having the giddy nerve to think he could do us down!" said Fatty.

"I did!" retorted Kerruish. "I did you and Figg—Yaroooooh! I don't want that paint-brush in my mouth, you fatheaded idiot!"

"Keep it shut, then," replied Figgins coolly.

"Think that will do, you fellows?"

"Green ears required," said Kerr.

"Right—ho!"

And the artist proceeded to endow Kerruish with green ears.

"That's about it," he observed complacently, standing back to admire his work.

"Can we spare the waste-paper basket?" asked Kerr.

"Oh, I guess so. It leaks, and we can always shove any waste-paper we have in the grate," Figg answered. "Why?"

"Because, with a little trimming, it would make quite a first-class hat for the spoofer."

"Oh, good!" chortled Fatty. "Let's take his socks off, and trim it with them. Then wind that awful tie round the thing."

"Wish we'd got some flowers to stick in it, though," Figg said.

"I can get some," said Fatty eagerly.

"Reddy's got an old hat of somebody's he was saving for some wheeze or other. Woman's hat, I mean—lots of flowers and things!"

"Oh, fetch it!" Figgins said. "Tell Reddy that it's to adorn a School House bouncer who's been vainly trying to score off the New House, and he won't mind."

Fatty hurried off.

"I say, you're never going to—"

"Oh, aren't we, though?" chuckled Figgins.

"It's time for prep, you know!"

"We're postponing prep to-night," Kerr said, "and our highly-esteemed visitor will have to do likewise. Besides, new chaps aren't bothered with prep until they have been into class, Wangle, old bird!"

Fatty came back with the hat.

No doubt it had been quite a nice hat once—from the feminine point of view. But it was not the kind of hat Kerruish would have chosen to wear in any case, and its stay in Redfern's trunk for the greater part of the term had not improved it as a hat.

Even so, however, Kerruish would rather have worn it than have had its trimmings transferred to the waste-paper basket, in order that that article might be made into a hat for him.

"I'll do this," said Kerr.

He set to work with deft fingers, and Kerruish watched him from his crimson-circled eyes.

"Quite a nice lot of trimming on it," said Kerr approvingly.

"Reddy said it was almost too good for any School House bouncer," replied Fatty. "But he let me have it. He's passing the word round, and when this School House specimen wanders across there will be quite a lot of chaps making grand stands of the windows."

"You don't think I'm going across in that thing, do you?" snarled Kerruish.

"We don't think—we know you are!" replied Figg.

"Well, you'll see!"

"We shall. So will everybody else. That's the point of the thing, old bean!"

Kerruish could not quite see how they were going to make him. He had forgotten a somewhat similar experience which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had undergone once. There was a wastepaper-basket in that. Also a kilt;

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and Gussy would not have come across the quad thus garbed if he had had any choice in the matter. He has gone, though.

"My word, you do look nice, Kerruish!" said Kerr, planting the terrible thing on the School House junior's head.

"Why didn't you say 'My hat'?" asked Fatty.

"Because it isn't mine. It's Kerruish's now. See how we return good for evil! He tries to take us in, and we sent him back with gifts!"

"You've forgotten the socks, ass!" said Figgy.

"So I have! Take them off him, Fatty!"

Fatty obeyed. Kerruish's legs were tied, and he could not prevent his boots and socks being taken off. Kerr seized the hat, if that it might be called, and twisted the socks cleverly into the interstices of the wicker-work. The tie he had used as a streamer, and the trimmings from Redfern's contribution were disposed all over the thing. No truly fashionable hat ever looked more weird.

"You'll have to put his boots on again, Fatty," Figgins said.

"Oh, hang all that! Why can't he go across barefooted?"

"Might hurt his poor little tootsies," answered Kerr gravely. "Don't be cruel, Fatty, old dear."

Grunting and grumbling, Fatty Wynn knelt again, and put Kerruish's boots on.

"He's got his nice white gloves," Kerr said. "Pity we can't allow him to show them off properly. But if we unfastened his hands he might get doing things to his hat. No telling what a fellow will do when he's really potty. Might unfasten his legs while you're down there, Fatty."

"Want me to do everything, don't you?" growled Fatty.

"I shall kick as soon as you've undone my legs!" said Kerruish desperately.

"Try it on, dear boy, that's all!" replied Kerr.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Kerruish Meets Ratty.

ON the whole, Kerruish decided not to kick.

He was beaten, and he must take his licking decently. But he felt as though he would never be able to hold up his head again after the horrible passage across the quad which he had now to face.

"Oh, wait a moment!" Figgy said, struck with a new idea. "There's that old tablecloth. It would make a fine skirt for him!"

"You're too generous, Figgy! You want to give away all the blessed fittings!" answered Kerr, shaking his head. "Good thing I'm a Scotsman, isn't it? But have your own way."

Kerruish could almost have shed tears at this further indignity. But he did not do that, and he still refrained from kicking, even when the old, shabby, ink-stained, torn tablecloth was draped around him after the manner of a skirt.

He fancied he could kick it away before he emerged from the door of the New House into the quad.

But there he did George Figgins an injustice. Figgy did his work with great thoroughness. It would need the use or hands to get rid of that skirt.

"Now he really is complete!" said Kerr. "We shall have to lead him down and put him out. Sorry I can't escort you across the quad, Miss-Kerruish, but other engagements forbid."

Fatty opened the door, and immediately there arose a cry of derisive delight.

Dick Redfern had passed the word, and the New House juniors were at their study doors, ready to watch the escorting of Kerruish downstairs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! Did anyone ever see such a guy?"

"Send him home to his own kennel!"

"Who's cock house? Why, New House!"

"Never say die!"

"Shut up, you silly asses!" snapped Figgins. "You'll have Ratty up!"

"We're supposed to be at prep, I believe," said Kerr mildly.

The three hustled Kerruish downstairs. His hands were tied behind him, and he could not resist.

But he was not minded to be thrust out into the quad.

If he could break away, it was just possible he might dodge out of the New House by a back door, hide in one of the outhouses at the rear, and somehow get rid of hat and skirt and war-paint before he went back, he thought.

So on a sudden he bolted.

He gave a leap like a kangaroo, and reached a landing several steps ahead of Figgins and Fatty. Kerr was behind them.

Recklessly he blundered down the next flight. He could hardly see at all, for the perspiration had made some of the paint run into his eyes.

"Cave!" shrilled someone.

As if by magic the fellows on the floor above disappeared into their studies.

Kerr bolted back. His action was due to the natural instinct of self-preservation; but he would not have scuttled had he taken a second to think.

For Figgy and Fatty Wynn it was too late. And Kerruish—alas for Kerruish!

He heard that warning cry. But what could he do?

In front of him he saw a lean, gowned form and a sour, angry face—the face and form of Mr. Ratcliff!

He saw them but dimly, however. His eyes were so much obscured that he could see nothing clearly.

He thought himself at the foot of the staircase when he was still three steps above it.

And he plunged forward desperately, with no definite hope of eluding the Housemaster, but with a wild desire to get out of the place without a second's delay.

Biff!

"Yooooo! I— Good gracious!"

Kerruish had stumbled forward. Right amidst him he had taken Mr. Ratcliff, with the impact of a battering-ram.

The master sat down with a thud and a yell.

His foot had been on the lowest step when Kerruish smote him, and he went backwards like one shot.

Kerruish sprawled right on top of him.

"My good woman—really— Oh, good gracious! Oh, I am hurt—I am injured infernally—I—"

The Manx junior scrambled somehow to his feet, in spite of his tied hands and his smarting, half-blinded eyes.

There was no chance of paying any special attentions to the feelings of Mr. Ratcliff. Kerruish had to do his best for himself. He did not put his foot hard down upon the waistcoat region of the overthrown master out of malice, or by choice; he did it because he could not help it.

But he did not stay to apologise. Perhaps he did not know what he had done.

As he rushed out of the door the hat fell from his head.

He would not have waited to pick it up even if he had had time. He was only too glad to get rid of it.

Across the quad he bolted, amid the sound of half-suppressed cheers and gibes from some of the New House windows. And there were faces at the School House windows, too—faces full of amazement, which soon changed to amusement.

He dashed in at the School House door. He rushed upstairs, seeing no one until he reached the study floor.

But all along the Shell and Fourth passages doors flew open and laughter rang.

"Who is it?"

"Bedad, whoever 'tis, somewan's been after puttin' him through it!"

"Bal Jove! Can that be Kewwuish?"

"Oh, not likely, Gussy! Kerruish wouldn't tog himself up as a charwoman."

But the bolting of the fugitive into No. 5 told them all that it was Kerruish.

Over in the New House, Figgins came down the stairs and assisted Mr. Ratcliff to rise, while Fatty stood above, looking anxious.

"Who was that atrocious female, Figgins?" roared the irate Ratty.

"Female, sir? I didn't see. Oh, I see! Er—are you hurt, sir?"

If Mr. Ratcliff could be left under the delusion that it was a female who had bowled him over, it would be quite a good thing alike for Kerruish and for Figgins & Co. Figgy saw that.

But there really was very little chance of any such escape for them, and what little there might have been was completely

squashed when the eyes of Mr. Ratcliff fell upon the "hat."

"Why—oh, bless my soul! No woman—not even a charwoman—would wear such a thing as that!" exclaimed the master. "Figgins, Wynn—this is one of your absurd and disgusting practical jokes! Where is Kerr?"

"I don't know, sir," answered Figgy.

It was true. He was not really in much doubt that Kerr was in their study; but he did not know it.

Kerr was not actually in the study. He was listening from above, waiting to make sure whether it was up to him to join his chums.

But he knew Mr. Ratcliff well enough to be sure that his absence would not be regarded as clearing him. And the next words the master spoke put a notion into his head.

"I see it! I see it all! That ridiculous figure was Kerr in disguise!" thundered Ratty. Fatty had his mouth open to deny it, but the elbow of Figgins took him in the ribs, and he said nothing.

"Very well! Very well indeed! I will be with you in a few minutes, as soon as I have made sure of the extent of my injuries," grated Mr. Ratcliff.

He would come, they knew that; but what Figgins did not know was whether to be worried or relieved that he did not come at once, to find that the fugitive could not have been Kerr.

Ratty departed, fuming. Figgins and Wynn went sadly upstairs.

They found Kerr busy with the paint-box. He stood before the looking-glass, and the face that he turned to them had all the appearance of a face that had been painted and then imperfectly washed in a desperate hurry.

"You silly ass!" snapped Figgy. "What are you doing?"

"Only playing up to Ratty's delusion, dear boy!" answered Kerr calmly.

"You sha'n't! It's all very well to let him think it was you; but I'm hanged if we're going to have you convict yourself like that! Help me to get the idiot down and wipe that stuff off, Fatty!"

"Don't be potty, Kerr!" pleaded Fatty dolefully. "You might be sacked, you know!"

"We can't have Kerruish sacked, can we?" Kerr asked.

"He wouldn't be, anyway. Railton wouldn't have that. Wipe it off, chump!"

"Well, I'll do that," said Kerr, almost regretfully. "But I'm not going to tell the old brute who it was. He may think it was me, for all I care!"

"Do you think we mean to tell?" growled Figgins.

And they did not tell when Mr. Ratcliff came up; and the master, having kept one eye on the quad while inspecting his injuries with the other, did not see how Kerr could have got back unperceived by him.

But of the wrath of Ratty—of the measures he took to find out who the fellow who had barged into him was—and of all that came of it, another story must tell.

THE END.

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